



# Vengeful Pawn

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**Category:** Erotic, Romance, Adult, New Adult

**Description:** From the bestselling Author KL Donn comes an intense hurt/comfort, surprise baby romance with a man who is drifting through life and a woman who only wants to help him heal.

I'm not worthy.

Of her. Of life. Of anything.

A pawn in a war that was not my own, I came back with scars.

More than any one person should bear.

When I met MiaBella Dion, I didn't know...

She was the sister of an MC President,

Innocent as the day is long,

And carrying my baby.

Every instinct I have says to claim her.

My obsession grows day after day.

I'm. Not. Worthy.

But that all changes when she's attacked.

I was once a pawn; now vengeance is my future.

**Total Pages (Source):** 31

# Page 1

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## CHAPTER 1

Hendrix

The burn from the expensive whiskey faded to numbness long ago. Most will assume it's because I've been here drinking all night. The truth is, the numbness set in the day Santi Cardarelli and I killed those child soldiers overseas.

An ambush gone wrong.

There are a hundred stories exactly like it in every war. Grown-ass men pretending to be tough guys for whatever cause they've convinced themselves is justifiable. What they do, what they did, is and always has been the same bullshit told in history books.

Burning villages.

Raping women.

Killing children.

Forcing other children that they didn't kill by some godforsaken fucking miracle into soldiers carrying guns bigger than them. And so, as Santi and I were patrolling a village, protecting the remaining women and children, we were attacked.

We would have...should have...died.

We huddled down. Took cover. Held the fucking line. Did everything we spent years

training to do. We stood our ground, remained strong until an opening presented itself. By the time we realized what had happened, it was too late.

Blood pooled on the ground under the bodies of countless children with holes from bullets we put in them. I still wish we'd have let the scumbags who sent them into battle take us out. And now, I drown their crying, their whimpering, their cold, lifeless stares with as much fucking liquor as possible. So, the burn? If I feel it or don't feel it, that's my price. I deserve worse. Death would be too kind for an asshole like me.

"You want another?" Rock, the lone prospect to the Deviant Sinners MC, holds up the bottle I've slowly been emptying all night.

Checking my watch, I shake my head. "Nah, they should be back any minute." A meeting has been set with the MC about putting up another safe house in their area, so they don't have to keep sending girls to Lilith's baby, Sparrow House, in Pensacola.

"There's their bikes now." He nods, placing a fresh bottle of water in front of me before filling up a coffee cup. The boy is learning.

It takes another five minutes before Castle enters the bar, his crew following behind. As soon as he spots me, he motions towards his office, where Cross and Prince make their way, as well. The others spread out through the bar to grab tables or stools.

Reaching for the coffee, I down the hot brew in one gulp. If Rock can do anything, it's make a mean cup of joe. "Thanks, kid." I wrap my knuckles on the bar top and head over to Castle.

"Not a kid," he mutters, and I grin.

He's not. He's a big fucker with a mean temper, but he's still only twenty-two and hasn't learned yet what life is about. Still a kid.

"Hendrix." Castle offers a hand before pointing to a chair. I take a seat, and he dives right in. "We've been shopping around, found an old sanitarium that needs some work, but it's twice the size of Sparrow House, and there's room on the land to build cabins, barns, turn it into a real sanctuary." Pushing a folder towards me, he sits back in his chair.

I open it and check out the pictures first, knowing the details won't matter if it fits what we'll need. "Can it be secured?" Being out of the city and on a few acres of land could leave the house vulnerable to attack.

"Cameras, sensors, walls with razor wire can all be managed. It's not far from here and less than a mile from my place. Staff could be hired from the service, too. An added layer of protection."

He's thorough.

Closing the file, I tap it on my leg twice and say, "Make it happen. Hire whoever. I'm certain my aunt will want to come and see the property as well as help with the construction and decorating. She's pretty fucking particular about what goes into these houses."

"I'll make an offer and get back to you once the paperwork has gone through." Shaking hands again, I get ready to leave, already knowing that driving home is impossible. "Cross is going to give you a ride to my condo downtown. It's clean, quiet. A spot to sleep it off." I recognize an order when I hear one.

"Appreciate it."

Following Cross out, I salute Rock when he gives a wave and then hop in Cross' truck for the silent ride into the core of the city. After being given the keys and condo number, I head up, a hot shower and cool set of sheets the only things in my future until the door across the hall opens. The most stunning creature pops out, wearing tiny-ass shorts, a see-through white tank top, her hair a mess on top of her head, and an empty pizza box in her hand.

“Oh, hi.” She smiles when she notices me staring at her. Those long fucking legs of hers would look real good wrapped around my head.

I grunt out a response and stick the key in the lock and turn it, opening the door and leaning against the jamb as she walks away—no shoes, her door propped open, humming as her ass shakes. Licking my lips, my cock stirs for the first time in too many fucking years, and I know without a doubt that I'm taking this hot piece of ass to bed tonight.

Crossing the hall as she rounds the corner, I lean in her doorway, waiting for her to come back. It's less than a minute later that the slam of a metal door rings out, probably a garbage shoot for the building. When she saunters around the corner again, she halts mid-step at seeing where I'm located.

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Her arms cross her chest, hiding the roundness of her luscious tits and the fact her nipples are rock hard. She walks several hesitant steps forward, stopping a few feet away.

“Can I help you?” Her lyrical voice washes over me like a warm, soothing shower.

Scrubbing a hand across my chiseled jaw, my gaze slowly crawls up and down her body like a pleasing caress before replying, “I’d like to spend the night rocking between your creamy thighs and hearing you moan out for more of the pleasure only I can give you.”

Her lips twitch at my cockiness as a blush rises sweetly up her chest, neck, and into her pale cheeks. “By force?”

Smart girl.

“Not unless that’s what you’re begging me for.”

I push off the wall and stand straight, taking a step closer. She doesn’t back away. In fact, her eyes, the color of freshlybrewed coffee, seem to light up at the prospect of us getting horizontal all night long.

“I don’t even know you,” she whispers, shivering when I move nearer still. Her thighs rub together like she’s trying to stem the flow of pleasure between her legs.

“Name's Hendrix. I’m in town for the night and would definitely like to get to know you better. Specifically, where you’d prefer me to mark your sensitive flesh.”

Another shiver sends goosebumps across her skin as I await her answer.

## CHAPTER 2

MiaBella

The devil lives in his eyes. I can see pain lurking behind the darkness in the pupils, the way his heart hammers against his chest. The rapid pulse in his neck. There are ticks in the way he waits for my answer. I should call my brother and tell him that some creep he leant his condo to is trying to hook up with me.

So why don't I, is the question.

Cause you like it, that pesky inner voice challenges.

She's right, I do. I love that he doesn't filter his words for my sake. If I had to guess, he has no idea who I am, but he certainly knows Castle. My brother is the president of an MC club in the city of Mobile, and he wouldn't let this man stay here unless he trusted him on some level.

"Hendrix." I repeat his name, and he lets out a guttural groan.

"Add a little whine to that, and you'll have me by the fuckin' balls, princess."

I try not to bristle at the nickname. He can't know how much I hate it when the brothers of Castle's club call me that.

I take a step towards him slowly at first, until I can reach out and touch him. I run my finger up his tattooed arm, and the corded muscles ripple from my touch. Meeting his stare, I whisper, "Hendrix," on a throaty sigh, and he snaps.

Wrapping a hand around the side of my neck, he drags me into his body, and his lips brush softly against mine at first, testing me, making sure I'm in. I am. I am so all the way in on this. I've never reacted to a man this way before, and I doubt I ever will again.

My body is on fire when he intensifies the kiss and threads the fingers of his other hand through my hair, tilting my head so he can get deeper still. His tongue sweeps through my mouth, licking, tasting, swallowing every whimper and moan that steals through my body without permission.

"God, you taste so fucking good. Like freshly picked cherries on a bright summer morning."

He grunts like a hungry wolf as he attacks my neck, biting hard enough to mark me before sucking until there'll be bruises for days. I should be appalled, but I want more. All over my body, in places people won't see but will remind me he's been there.

"Hendrix," I gasp when the door slams, and my back hits it with a heavy thud. "That feels incredible." His muscular thigh settles between my legs, rubbing back and forth against my sex. Bumping into my clit with each rocking motion.

His hands move along my body, gripping my clothes and tearing them off until I'm in nothing, while he's still fully clothed. I've never been ashamed of my body. I put in a lot of effort to stay fit and lean, and the way he steps back and his eyes devour me from top to bottom is worshipful.

"You are a drink of water in the middle of the desert." He adjusts his growing erection behind his pants. Intimidated by his largeness, I swallow around a tight throat as he steps back into my space.



“Where’s your bedroom?” His eyes are so glazed over. Is there even a man inside his body still?

“Down the hall.” I point in the direction behind him. “Second door on the left.”

Dropping a shoulder, he hauls me over his back and storms towards my room. A second later, I’m tossed onto the bed, and he begins removing his clothes. Scars, so many scars cover his chest and arms. They spark a million questions, but I get the feeling this is a one-night stand for both of us.

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Clothes gone, he kneels on the bed and settles his face between my thighs, not hesitating for a second before diving in, wrapping his lips around my clit, and sucking until he extracts an orgasm from my body. Crying out in pleasure, I sink my fingers into his dark hair and pull until he gives me some relief.

“Delicious...little...cherry...pie.” He kisses between words.

Whimpering as he grips the backs of my thighs and pushes them up to my chest, exposing every vulnerable part of me, I close my eyes and wait for what comes next. When I feel the flick of his tongue against my tight rosebud, I’m grateful I went for a Brazilian waxing yesterday. The type of pleasure his tongue provides is unlike anything I’ve felt before. It’s dark and erotic. Forbidden and filled with this craving for something more.

“Oh god,” I gasp wildly when he applies more pressure. “Hendrix?”

“Sshhh, princess, I’ll take care of you.” And somehow his dirty promise just adds to the appeal of exploring this darker side of sex. I’m no virgin, but I’ve never had this type of experience before.

“More,” I plead.

His eyes shine in the moonlight with vows of wicked delight, and as much as I want to ask, I keep quiet and moan from mybelly when his tongue pushes against me. He grunts and growls as he slips two fingers inside my pussy, pumping mercilessly while massaging all the sensitive spots inside my channel.

“Need to get this greedy pussy ready for my big dick.” He spits on my back hole before dragging his tongue up and down until my body becomes overstimulated and arches for more.

“It’s too much.” Tingles overwhelm me from the tips of my toes to the roots of my hair. My nipples ache, and my pussy throbs around his fingers while blood pumps furiously through my veins.

After kissing my pussy a few times, he begins working his way up my body, keeping my legs firmly pressed to my chest as he settles between them. His hot cock nudges tightly to me as he sucks on one nipple then the other before licking up to my throat and nibbling on my ear.

“You on the pill?” Being so drunk on lust, I barely comprehend his question. I nod and moan a second before he slams inside me. “Fucking tight,” he grunts through clenched teeth.

“Too big,” I hiss, gripping the sheets in greedy fists. “Too much.” My whiny tone makes him chuckle.

“No, just fucking perfect, princess.”

Our mouths meet as he begins to fuck me, slowly at first, allowing me to adjust to his size. Once my body relaxes marginally, he starts throwing power into each thrust that makes me see stars and feel nothing but delight.

Eventually, one orgasm rolls into two, and so on to the point that his skin touching me is painful, and yet, he doesn’t stop. Not until he’s completely satisfied, and I’m so worn out, I crash before he pulls free of my body.

## CHAPTER 3

Hendrix

Staring down at the woman I spent all night fucking, I feel a twist of regret in my gut as my written note drops on the pillow next to her head. The simple ‘thank you’ is pathetic and far less than she deserves. She doesn’t need a broken asshole hanging around, either, so it’s for the best.

Grabbing my boots on the way out the door, I quietly lock it before putting them on and heading for my truck, which one of the bikers brought over after I was dropped off and left the keys with the doorman. In the lobby, I exchange the condo keys for them and begin the drive back home to my own shitty apartment in Pensacola.

I’ll make my way to Lilith sometime today, but right now, it’ll have to be a cold shower and about ten hours of sleep to make up for the little I got with...fuck. What is her name? I gave her mine, but getting between her thighs was the primary goal.

I’m an asshole of the worst kind it seems. More reason to steer clear of the woman.

Stopping first for the largest black coffee around, I make it home and trudge up to the bathroom, chugging the hot brew like my life depends on it. After an ice-cold dowsing, I crash in bed for a few hours, my sleep assaulted by dreams of the woman from the night before.

Upon waking, I gaze at the ceiling as my phone rings on the bedside table, the sun shines through curtains I left open, and I acknowledge my fucked-up behavior. I should have known better than to take her to bed. I should have fucking walked into the condo, shut the door, and slept my drunk ass off. I should never have touched her because now I want more. So much more. More than I deserve.

“Fuck!”

Grunting while tossing off the covers, I grab my phone, which hasn't stopped ringing for close to ten minutes. "What?" I snap through the line without looking at who it was.

"Well, hello to you, too, sweetheart." My mother. Talia's voice is sugary-sweet like always, and the guilt is instantaneous.

"Sorry, Mom. I was just waking up." That should tug on her sympathy.

"On the wrong side of it, obviously." With some snark. "Is everything alright, Hendrix?" I detest the worry in her tone for me. It's been there far too long.

Pounding my thigh with a fist, I exhale slowly. "Yeah, just a rough night of tossing and turning." Not mentioning that it's because of a woman. She'd get her hopes up, and I won't allow that to happen to me.

"Oh, well, maybe it's time to think of some sleep aids to help?" She's been suggesting them since I retired from the service.

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“I’ll think about it.” It’s my same rote answer. “Was there something you needed?” Being an ass isn’t intentional; it just comes naturally.

“I was wondering if you’d come to dinner this week? It seems like I haven’t seen you in a month.” Probably because she hasn’t, and I feel like shit for it. It’s hard to be good company while being so fucking miserable all the time, and I never know what’ll trigger me.

“Yeah, Mom, I’ll be there tomorrow.” I’ll try, anyway.

“Oh, good!” She’s likely jumping up and down with excitement. “I’ll make some of your favorites.” She starts naming off everything she has in mind, and I try not to let the guilt swallow me whole if I wind up cancelling on her like the last few times.

“I’ve got to go, Mom. I’ll see you tomorrow.” My throat is already tightening.

“I love you, sweetheart. I can’t wait to see you.”

Hanging up, I drop back onto my bed and pinch the bridge of my nose, trying to stem the headache brewing in my skull. Flashes of creamy skin flicker through my mind with the sounds of breathy moans, making everything worse. My cock stirs again, thinking about my princess. Those melting chocolate eyes, her silky soft, nearly black hair. Her thick thighs wrapped around my hips. She’s an addiction that won’t stop invading my brain.

“Fuck. Fucking hell.”

Leaving bed, it's off to the shower again and a quick clean up before calling Bishop to ask him to meet me at King and Lilith's house.

Shame beats a steady drum in my chest as I pull up to the estate where I spent some of my youthful years. I don't deserve my family, considering all I've done. I don't deserve much of anything but have always been too much of a fucking coward to end my life.

"Hey, man, you good?" Bishop asks as I approach, leaning against his truck.

"Yeah." I frown before really looking at him. "Why?"

Bishop has always seen through me better than anyone in the family, with the exception of my younger sister, Hadley. Sometimes I think the two of them know me better than I know myself.

"You look different."

"What the fuck does that mean?" My scowl only exacerbates the headache.

Bishop shrugs and says while walking away, "Not sure, but there's something different."

Following behind him, not really wanting to know but asking anyway, "Different good, or different bad?"

He glances back at me before shrugging again. I'd like to punch him in the back of his damn head right now, but the door opens, and Lilith greets us with a smile.

"Boys!" Her worried gaze floats to me. The fucking concern everyone seems to be pressuring me with makes me sick.

“Hi, Lil,” I say, and accept her hug as she leads us inside to the office. “Castle created a folder for the land with pictures and detailed information, and the estimate of what it’ll cost to renovate the house and outer buildings before starting to expand farther outwards. He’s thinking that hiring retired vets for security would help with the size of the property.”

Handing her the folder, she looks through it with the critical eye she’s developed since creating her foundation to help domestic violence victims, and after meeting the MC, the now innocent immigrants attempting to flee violence in their own countries are also included.

Castle’s younger sister works as an advocate for those seeking a better life for themselves and their families. We haven’t had a chance to meet her yet, but she’s got to be one tough chick to work in this field.

“This is perfect. Has he made an offer yet?” Lil glances up at me as King enters the office.

“A soft one, until you had a chance to see the property,” I respond.

“Do it. Tell him to make the purchase and fast-track the process; we need this land sooner rather than later.” Nodding, I send the man the message.

“That all?” I ask, my body buzzing to escape the disconcerted looks I keep getting.

“Hendrix.” King barks my name, and as if I were a soldier again, my body snaps to attention. “What the fuck is going on with you?” Grinding my teeth until my jaw hurts, I suppress an answer. “Your parents are worried about you. Your sister walks on eggshells when she’s in the same room as you, and now you’re showing a lack of respect I’ve never seen before.”



Shit. I don't like talking about this shit. Feelings? Who the fuck wants them? Not me. And to rip the wounds of my past open in front of people I love and respect, hard fucking pass.

"I drank too much last night, just got a bad headache." Neither of those is a lie; they're just not the truth about my problems. Nobody else needs that shit on their shoulders. "I've got to go."

I leave before anyone can stop me, heading to a hole-in-the-wall bar where no one fucking knows me and won't try to analyze my behavior to death.

### CHAPTER 4

MiaBella

TWO MONTHS LATER.

“Well, it’s not what you were thinking,” Dr. Rhodes says as she enters the exam room with a folder open in her hands.

“Just tell me.” I try to stifle my panic. Losing nearly twenty pounds in the last couple of months is cause for panic. The vomiting all day, every day, is slowly killing me.

“It’s not cancer.” Relief releases some of the tension I’ve been carrying around. “You’re pregnant,” she says, a hesitant smile on her lips.

“I’m what... What?” Speechless is a good start. “I haven’t...there isn’t...I’ve been on the pill for ten years!” I shout the last two words, and we both wince. “Sorry.”

“This is a good thing, Mia. This is easily fixable in whatever way you’d like.” She waits for me to acknowledge her words, so I nod my head and roll my hand for her to continue. “There are medications to ease what we now know is morning sickness. I can set you up with a nutritionist to help alter your diet so we can get you gaining weight again.”

“You assume I’m keeping the baby.” My blunt words take her by surprise.

She blinks rapidly before recovering. “Well, yes, of course, you have options whether

to keep, terminate, or adopt.” She’s flustered; she keeps glancing down at the folder. “Do you want the medication until you decide? Then you’re at least comfortable.” I agree and wait for her to write the prescription. “You should take folic acid, as well, in case you decide to keep the pregnancy. It just gets you started earlier.”

“Yeah, sure.” I’m still reeling and not paying attention to what she’s saying. Thankfully, she’s written everything down for me as she passes me the prescription and a few pamphlets about all my options.

After making another appointment for next week, I sit in my car and scream. Not sure how long I’ve been here for, but my windows are fogged over, and my body aches from the tension.

I’m supposed to have lunch with my older brother, Castle, but I don’t have the energy to keep this type of secret from him, so I shoot him a quick text explaining how horrible I feel and make plans for another day. He’s frustrated but understands. I’m relieved I didn’t tell him about this appointment now. He wouldn’t have let me off the hook otherwise.

I need time to process before sharing any details with others. There’s no question that I’m keeping the baby. I’ve wanted children my entire life, and even without knowing who the father is, I’ll love him or her with my whole heart.

Of course, I could always ask Castle who the man was that he allowed to stay in the condo that night. But then I’d have to tell him why, and he and the rest of the club would go on a manhunt. At least, I could say I tried.

“Oh my god.” It finally sinks in.

I’m going to be a mom.

A baby? I'm having one.

I'm at a complete loss. How do I proceed? Who do I tell? Castle is my only family, and while he'll be supportive of me as long as I'm excited about it, he'll also want a word with the father.

My brother has been protective of me since day one. Even before our parents died, he was there for me. He always had my back. When he joined the Deviant Sinners MC, his brothers became mine, too. I love them all to pieces, but they can be a bit much. It's why my last boyfriend and I broke up six months ago.

He didn't jive with their overbearing attitudes.

Translation: He was a weak excuse for a man.

He already had a tough time handling the fact that I didn't bow down to him. I refused to give up my independence because Jeff wanted us to live together. It had to be at his place; I had to do all the cooking and cleaning. I was allowed to hire a laundry service if I needed to, and when we got married, he wanted me to quit my job and devote myself to him.

Why I stayed with the man for over a year is beyond me. I was lonely, I think. My brother had the club and his brothers there, but I only had two friends I considered close, and no one else outside my job. Which is fulfilling. Helping women and children escape violence is a life worth living. Quitting is not an option. Not when there are so many people who need help. Being in a position to do so is something I'll continue until I can no longer. Except for today. Today, I'll wallow and cry and try to eat something after filling this prescription, hoping it works.

Sitting inside the pharmacy as I wait, my eyes snag on the aisle for baby supplies and spot this cute little multicolored plush duck. Picking it up, the soft fur tickles my

fingers. The aisle, for whatever reason, opens this whole new world for me, and all I can think about is how my future will change.

Long, sleepless nights. Dirty diapers. Crying, so much crying. And I'm about to do it all on my own. Do I truly want to, when I have the option to figure out who Hendrix is?

A thought strikes, and I carry the duck back to my seat.

Dropping into it, I'm horrified to realize that the father didn't even ask my name, and I didn't offer it to him. Growing up, I swore I would never have a one-night stand, would never be one of those girls in the position I'm currently in, because I didn't want to ask for a name.

"Stupid, M.B. So freaking stupid." He could have given me much worse than just a growing life inside of me. So many STDs to contract.

Sure, I went and got tested a couple of days later, and everything came back clean. But I still can't believe how abhorrently dumb I was. I never had a lapse like that before, but his achingly deep blue eyes foolishly sucked me in like a vacuum.

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And now I'm having his baby like an idiot.

### CHAPTER 5

Hendrix

#### TWO MONTHS LATER.

Every fucking night for four months I've been dreaming about my princess. She haunts me each time my eyes close, and if I concentrate hard enough, a whiff of her raspberry-peach scent will tickle my nose. The most significant problem is that no matter how hard I stroke my cock, I can never get off. That woman has me in a chokehold, and I'm lost as to how to get a grip.

I've tried hooking up with a couple of other women, but nothing has worked. A month ago, I broke down and went back to her condo, only to discover that she'd moved a week prior, and the doorman wouldn't give me her name, forwarding address, or phone number.

Leaving a note with my contact information didn't feel right after the way I'd left, and regret starts burning a gastric hole in my gut. When we hooked up, I hadn't imagined having this kind of need for the woman. For any woman. I've always been able to walk away without a problem.

Maybe it's my own trauma and the solace I found in her body. The nightmares have been less daunting since meeting her. In fact, there've been fewer and fewer, which has led to less drinking. No more blackouts and hangovers. I've been spending more

time with my family, which makes my mother and sister happy as hell.

“You’re tense, son,” Mom says from the seat behind my dad as I drive us into the Deviant Sinners compound. The new property isn’t ready yet, so we’re picking up two young girls after they were rescued by the Sinners from an abusive relative.

“I’m good, Mom, promise.” I offer a half smile and try to relax.

Before we leave here today, I intend to ask Castle who the woman is that lived across the hall from his condo. After waking up in a sweat and unable to find relief, I know now that I can’t go another day without discovering her identity and seeing if she’s feeling even half of what I am.

I put the SUV in park and shut off the engine. My dad glances at me with a questioning glare, only getting out when I give him a nod. They’ve been concerned about me for so long, I don’t think they know any other way to be.

“Hendrix, nice to see you,” Prince greets us before we enter the building. “The girls are a tad nervous about moving, so Castle is sending his sister with you guys. You got room for her?”

“Not a problem,” Mom answers as we enter the building. “We have lots of room in the Tahoe.” The woman’s smile always warms the room and puts people at ease.

“Ladies first.” Prince holds the door open and winks at my dad. Wrong fucking move.

Immediately, Dad has him pinned to the wall with a forearm at his throat and growls in his face, “Watch your fucking tongue, boy.” Many people have tried to flirt with Mom and failed miserably, quickly learning not to mess with Castiel Adair’s woman.

“No harm, papa bear, no harm.” His hands raise in surrender.

Dad pushes him harder one more time, then releases him, and we enter behind them. Mom is already sitting at the bar next to a dark-haired woman while I get struck by a familiar scent I haven’t been able to shake in months.

Slowly gazing around the room in search of my princess, disappointment overcomes me when I don’t see her. It’s not until I hear a mesmerizing laugh that I zero in on the woman my mother is talking to.

Striding towards them, I lock in as I approach. “Princess,” I growl, leaning into the back of her head and inhaling deeply until her scent infuses my veins like a drug.

“Hendrix!” She gasps and spins around.

My hands were on her hips, so when they glide across a small bump in her belly, my eyes drop, and I don’t know whether to be furious or scream at the injustice of it.

“What is this?” I croak through a constricted throat, my mind spinning out of control.

I feel eyes on me and know they’re Mom’s, but I can’t look elsewhere. Not yet. Not until I’m composed and don’t feel the need to drown my sorrows at the bottom of a bottle.

“I didn’t know how to find you,” she whispers, her eyes wide with her own surprise.

“Find me?” I can’t help repeating the words.

The feel of her soft fingers gripping my hand and placing it over her bump drags me out of my haze as I meet her eyes. “It’s yours, Hendrix.”



Bewildered, I blink slowly, allowing her words to sink in. Without much thought, my lips drop to hers in a fiery kiss, and I drag her into my arms before she can pull away. My tongue dips into her mouth, taking everything she holds back and more.

When her hands wrap around my neck, I pick her up until her legs cling to my hips and ignore the crowd murmuring behind me as she moans into my mouth.

“What the fuck!” someone bellows, and my girl freezes before pulling away.

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“Castle,” she whispers, her eyes moving to where the man stands behind me.

“No fucking way,” I hiss. No way he gets her.

“Take your fucking hands off my sister, Hendrix, or we’re going to have a fucking problem.” Shit. My princess is his sister.

A million emotions flash in her eyes as she stares up at me. The strongest being confusion, and as much as I’d like to alleviate that, I can’t when Castle is breathing down my neck.

“Sorry, princess.” After one more quick peck on her lips, I let her slide down my body, still amazed at the bump she’s showing off. Turning around, it’s clear that Castle is ready to kill. “Didn’t know she was your sister when we met,” I explain, but he’s not having it.

“You motherfucker. You fucked her, knocked her up, and fucked off with your life. I should skin you alive.” Castle steps forward, only stopping when Cross slaps a hand across the large man’s chest.

“Wasn’t like that.” Except it fucking was. “I went back for her. I tried to, but she disappeared.” Glancing at my girl, I recognize guilt on her face, and I frown as I really think about it. “How long have you known?”

Standing straighter, her eyes narrow on me. “About two months. You left a thank you note; you don’t get to be mad.”

“A thank you note?” Castle chokes, and I hear a scuffle behind me, but his sister has my sole focus.

“I’m sorry about that, princess.” I shake my head because that was a dick move. “Can we go somewhere private and talk?” She softens slightly before nodding her head and clasping my hand.

Castle curses behind us, and I briefly glimpse my parents' shocked faces where they stand at the bar. If I know Mom, she’ll calm Castle’s ruffled feathers better than I ever could.

Princess leads me down a hall and through a kitchen before we enter a bedroom in the back of the bar. “It’s kind of a spare room,” she says, closing the door. It’s sparse, with a loveseat, a queen-sized bed, and a small table with a window above it.

Sitting on the bed as she takes the sofa, the silence makes me question the idea of speaking privately. I’ve never shied away from anything in my life; however, this has me more nervous than when I was medically discharged from the Army.

## CHAPTER 6

MiaBella

My heart rate accelerates, and I’m afraid I’m about to pass out. The butterflies erupting in my stomach don’t do much to help the situation, either.

Castle had been pissed when I wouldn’t tell him who the father was, and I’ve been waiting for him to calm down ever since to ask how I could get in touch with Hendrix. I had no idea he was so closely associated with my brother’s club, or I’d have never let the man into my bed. Gazing at his eyes now, I know that’s a lie. This man has some kind of hold on me, and I’m not sure why.

“Tell me something, princess.” His calling me that slightly rewires my hate for the pet name.

“What?”

“Your fucking name.” He appears ashamed, asking that.

Snorting out a laugh, I ease his suffering. “MiaBella Dion.”

“MiaBella.” It’s his turn to laugh. “Fitting. Beautiful.”

We’re quiet again, and I wait for Hendrix because I don’t know what to say. This wasn’t the situation I thought I’d find us in.

“The note was a dick move on my part. I was in a bad place.”

“It’s not like either of us thought a baby would be a result.” I’d been on the pill for years, never changing brands, never forgetting to take a dose. I wanted to wait until I was in a stable and committed relationship before having children.

“Yeah, I suppose.” Hendrix blows out a deep breath. “I’m not partner material. Hell, I don’t even think I’m father material.”

Anger bubbles up inside me. “I wasn’t asking you for anything.”

“I know. I know.” His head drops, and he says something, but given the quietness of the words, I realize it’s not directed at me. When he lifts his head again, his eyes are as lifeless as the night we met. Hendrix has some demons, more daunting than I anticipated. “I’m not trying to blow you or the baby off.” His eyes meet mine for the first time, and the flicker of vulnerability simmers my anger down. “I want to do the right thing, to help you take care of the baby. I’m just not worthy of you...of them.”

“Not worthy?” I force the words out. “Who the hell has put that in your head?” That damn anger is back again. I don’t know Hendrix very well, but the fact that he’s so concerned tells me his opinion is wrong.

“Me,” he groans, closing his eyes and dropping his head back to stare up at the peeling paint on the ceiling. “I’ve done things, Mia, bad things, to innocent people. I’m not worthy of anything anymore.”

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“Bullshit,” I say sharply, getting to my feet and crossing my arms. “I don’t believe that for a second. I don’t know you, not enough, but I know a good man struggling with demons when I see one.”

Rising to his feet, his height should be intimidating given how far I need to look up, but I’ve had this man inside my body; I know more than he thinks I do.

“I killed children.”

The absolute torture in his tone says more than his words. He has a heartbreaking story to tell, but I’m damn sure he didn’t do it for pleasure and maybe not even by choice.

Reaching out for him, I cup his jaw in my hands and step into his body, forcing him to put his hands on me. “You’re hurting, I can see it, so I’m going to let your shocking confession go...for now. Tonight, we’re driving these girls to Sparrow House, then you’re going to take me to your home, and we’re going to have dinner, then sleep, because if I’m honest, I am having a hard time doing both of those things lately.” I don’t add that it’s partially because after only one night, I was addicted to the safety and comfort of his arms. He doesn’t need the added pressure.

“You don’t deserve my bullshit.”

“I don’t like your excuses.” He seems shocked at my defiance. “Can we just try my way, please?” Popping out my bottom lip, I work my best pout, and he caves with a curt nod.

Before I can pull away, he groans my name. “Mia?”

“Yeah.” My body buzzes from our close proximity.

“Can I kiss you again?”

The question is not what I expected.

“Yes, please.”

I meet him halfway, and our mouths clash, teeth clacking together as his tongue pushes past my lips and deep inside my mouth. Airborne, Hendrix picks me up and spins us around to lie on the bed. Careful of my belly, he doesn’t hesitate to dominate my body.

“I haven’t slept right in months because of you, princess.” His lips move down my jaw to nibble on my ear. “But thoughts of you have kept the nightmares away.” Holding my breath as he speaks, I feel a tear slide down my temple. “I need you, princess, but I’m not worthy of wanting you.” I hate that he feels that way.

Shifting my hips, I arrange my legs to wrap around his back and lift for the friction I know he’ll give me. “Hendrix,” I gasp when he grinds down into me. “More, please. I missed you.” I didn’t think it was possible to grieve for a loss I never had until seeing him today.

A loud banging on the door makes Hendrix growl into my neck, sounding like a feral animal. “Fuck off!” His shout makes me stifle a giggle when there’s another pounding.

“Get out here!” I pause at Cross’ amused tone. “Castle wants to speak with M, now.”

“Fucking pushy ass bikers,” Hendrix bitches.

“They care about me,” I try to soothe.

His eyes narrow as he stares at me. “Better not be more than that.”

I smile at his possessive tone. Hendrix isn’t nearly as resistant as he wants me to believe.

“It’s not, trust me. All these guys helped raise me; if anything, their love is brotherly concern, nothing more.” Brushing my hand up and down his jaw, Hendrix closes his eyes and turns into the touch.

“I’ll trust you, not them.”

I’ll take it.

Patting his chest, I give a little push, and he reluctantly gets up. “Come on, big guy, let me talk to my brother, and then we’ll get on the road.”

Hendrix stops before opening the door, eyes on my belly. “Can I touch it?” His voice is so quiet, like he’s afraid the question will somehow harm us. I grab his hand while lifting my shirt and place it over where I’ve felt the most fluttering. “You’re beautiful,” he says, his gaze darting to meet mine, and I offer a smile.

Releasing my hold, I wait patiently for him to get his fill before we exit the back room and head out to the bar. Castle is in a heated discussion with someone I assume is Hendrix’s father. His mom is at the bar, sipping on a drink, an amused smile on her face until she spots us.

She lights up, and I grow nervous.



“Hendrix, sweetheart, are you going to introduce us now?” She’s already reaching out a hand for me, and her eyes drop to my belly. “A baby,” she whispers.

“Sorry,” Hendrix mutters down to me. “Mom, this is MiaBella Dion; Mia, my mother, Talia, and father, Castiel.”

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“I’m so pleased to meet you. We’ve never met any of Hendrix’s girlfriends before,” Talia says.

“Not his girlfriend,” Castle barks before I can say anything.

Narrowing my eyes on my brother, he crosses his arms.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you both.” I shake their hands. His dad gives me chills as he eyes me up and down like a bug under a microscope.

“Ignore him.” Talia elbows her husband in the ribs as she takes a step closer. “He’s naturally grumpy but will warm up.” Castiel grunts but doesn’t disagree with her. “Your relationship status isn’t what’s important here, either.” Her gaze strays to Castle, who remains unmoving. “I’m just really delighted to meet you and to know I’m going to be a Nana!”

I hadn’t even thought about that. I barely hang on most days, so family hasn’t been a concern, but now...now, we have the chance to expand the family. Glancing over to Castle, he must read my thoughts because he softens and opens his arms for me.

Without hesitation, I run into his embrace and sob silently into his solid chest. “It’ll be okay, kid. I promise.” He hugs me tight, ignoring everyone around us. “I’ll behave, I promise.” Nodding against him, I glance up, dark eyes so similar to my own, and he asks, “Can I talk to you privately, though?”

“Of course,” I reply and follow Castle into the club office. He closes the door behind us and flips the lock.

I lean against the oak desk, waiting for him to speak. Castle sighs and finally opens up. “He drinks, M, heavily and frequently.” It’s not exactly illegal, and after some of the things he’s said, I can only imagine the turmoil he’s trying to run from.

“Okay.”

“He’s dangerous,” Castle tries again.

“I’m aware; I know men like him. He doesn’t have the violence inside of him to harm an innocent person. He won’t hurt us.” I’m more sure of that than anything else at the moment.

“You can’t know that,” Castle growls. “He’s got PTSD, and that can’t be controlled. It’s unpredictable and violent and sneaky as it takes over your mind and makes you think you’re somewhere you’re not.”

“We’re not even together, Castle. It doesn’t matter yet.”

He scoffs at that.

“Don’t do that. Don’t push my feelings aside because of your preconceived notions. I’m an adult. I’m perfectly capable of deciding whether to be with someone or not.”

“I don’t want you or the baby hurt.” He softens again.

“Neither do I, but the worst Hendrix could ever do to me is break my heart because he’s already convinced he’s not worthy of either of us. Tell me how that’s a man who plans to hurt me?”

## CHAPTER 7

Hendrix

My eyes remain glued to the door between me and Mia. I dislike her being in a room with another man, even if it is her brother. I can't protect her when I can't see her.

Mom is speaking with the two young girls we're bringing home, while Dad stands a few feet back, observing everyone. The clubhouse is quiet right now because they don't want the girls spooked. I prefer it this way because it means no other men are around my princess.

"Son." Dad's tone breaks my focus. "Your mother." He nods to her, where she's turned back to get my attention.

"Sorry, Mom." I walk over, introduce myself to the girls, and try to ease some of their fear. "This is how you contact me for anything. No matter how big or small, I'll be there." Charlotte, the older of the two, accepts the card and phone I give her while holding her sister closer with her other arm.

"Thank you," she whispers, and I feel for them both. They grew up in a loving home, were orphaned, and then suffered nothing but abuse and betrayal.

"I promise, you'll be safe now. We've got your backs." They both nod and seem to relax slightly.

When the office door opens, Mia looks stubborn, and Castle appears frustrated. They walk away from each other. Castle gravitates towards the bar where Rock offers him a shot, and Mia approaches us.

"Ready to hit the road?" She smiles warmly with no hint at whatever just happened with her brother. The girls agree, and soon we're out the door.

“I’ll be right there,” I say to my parents, waiting until they’re outside before making my way towards Castle. “I know you don’t like this; you don’t trust me with her. But I’d die before I ever hurt her or the baby.”

“Who the fuck gave you permission to even touch her, Hendrix? What the fuck were you thinking?”

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I can't be pissed about his anger. My reaction was the same with my own sister and her husband. I wasn't very nice to Hadley, though.

"If I'd known she was your sister, I never would have touched her. I thought we were two single people having a good time." I pause so the words sink in. "I don't regret it. Mia is special, and while I know I don't deserve to have her in my life, I'll do everything possible to make sure she's safe and happy, even if that means it's without me."

Castle finally looks at me, his eyes a mixture of disbelief and confusion. "You'd let her find happiness with another man? You'd allow another man to father your child?"

"It'd kill me, but if that's what she wants, yeah." I fucking hate the thought of it. "I only want what makes her happy, and being with me will do more harm than good, but I'll help take care of her and the baby if she lets me."

Shaking his head, Castle downs the remainder of his drink. "You truly believe that, don't you? That you're not good enough for her."

"I'm not good enough for any kind of relationship. I'm too fucked up." There's no doubt about it.

"Self-awareness is an admirable trait, Hendrix, but don't let it be what keeps you from a life with them when you can get help and heal for her." He walks away after dropping that bombshell. It's not an approval of Mia and me together, but it's probably as close as it's going to get.

Stepping outside, I see everyone loaded up in the Tahoe, except my dad.

“Everything okay, son?” I nod, keeping my inner struggles to myself. “You’re driving.” He tosses me the keys and hops in the passenger seat as I head to the driver’s side.

The drive back to Pensacola is primarily quiet, broken up by a thunderstorm that rolls through quickly and the hushed murmuring from the girls in the back as they speak to each other. Our first stop is Sparrow House, where they will spend a couple of nights as more details are worked out for their permanent housing.

Because of house rules, Dad and I stay outside as Mom and Mia get them settled and introduce them to the ladies of the house and other guests.

“So.” Dad’s gravelly voice breaks the silence of the cloudy day. “A baby.”

I blow out a breath, still shocked at the news. “Seems so.”

“You sure it’s yours?” At his question, my head whips to the side so fast I get dizzy. “What? It’s been four months, and she didn’t bother to get in touch with you.”

“It’s mine, Dad. I can’t explain it, but I know she’s not like that.” There wasn’t a sliver of doubt from the second I realized what happened. “I know it’s my baby.”

“You going to marry this girl?”

Jesus.

“Not likely.” That leaves a sour taste in my mouth.

“Why?”

His tone is so casual. Where is he going with this?

“Seriously?” How does no one understand? “I’m fucked up, Dad. I can’t put her through my shit.”

“How do you figure that?” He stands up straighter after leaning on the SUV.

I furrow my brow and twist my lips, then answer, “I wake up in the dead of night from flashbacks. I get locked in that final mission for hours, sometimes days. I have to drink even to get a moment of rest. I can’t bring that shit around her and a baby.”

He blinks a few times and stares at me before shaking his head. “You know how your mother and I got together, right?” I nod. It was brutal and savage. “Then you know that love can help heal some wounds. It’s not an overnight fix, you have to put in the work and desire to be the kind of man she needs, but it can be done.”

“It’s not the same.” I realize he’s trying to help, but our situations are vastly different. “I can’t risk them. Not when I know the consequences.”

I stride away before he can argue further and walk the perimeter of the house to ensure everything is secure. Reaching the back, I spot the younger girl sitting in front of the upstairs windows. Her new room, I surmise. She waves hesitantly, and I offer one back. I’m not a completely heartless bastard. She gives a tentative smile before sitting back and taking in her view.

Last summer, Bishop, Holden, Nolan, and I built a tree house and swing set for the kids who come through here. They’ve been well used and loved since then. We don’t get many teenage girls, but a gazebo with cushioned benches might be attractive to them.

Standing in front of the swing set, I grab the chains and imagine a life in the future.



One where I might be pushing my own child in this seat, hearing him or her laugh as they go higher and higher. Seeing their smiling face as we race to the slide. Or when we build a sandcastle at the beach and the ocean waves roll in to destroy it. Picturing a future where I'm not just in my child's life, but I'm involved in their every day with MiaBella as her husband.

For so many years, I've accepted that my future wouldn't involve a wife or children. I'd be the fun uncle who couldn't do any harm for a few hours a week. However, finding Mia that first night changed something inside me. These past four months have been spent thinking of nothing but her. Thinking of that future and if our powerful one-night connection could lead to more.

"Fuck," I grunt, stepping back from the swing. I swore to never allow myself that kind of happiness because of that last mission. Ten lives were ended by me that day. Ten innocent lives, who had no idea what was happening or why they were there.

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“Hendrix?” Mia’s soft tone washes over me like a morning mist. “Are you alright?” Her hand settles on my shoulder, and I shudder. She steps around me, her palms resting on my chest as she stares into my eyes. “What’s going on?”

How the hell can she read me so easily already?

“Fine,” I choke out, and she frowns.

“No, it’s not.” Her head lies against my chest, right over my heart, as her hands wrap around my back. She holds me tightly, and I have a terrible time pushing her away. In the end, I give in and hug her back. The comfort she offers is modest, but it washes away the horrendous memories and offers a sliver of hope at the end of a pitch-black tunnel.

“I need help.” It’s the first time I’ve said it out loud. The first time I’ve even thought of asking for it.

Tilting her head up, Mia’s compassionate eyes meet mine. “We’ll get it for you.”

Pressing my head to hers, I lower my eyelids and wait for the familiar dread and shame to creep up and overtake the comfort she offers me. “I want to be better for you both. I want to be part of your lives.”

She nods as she rubs her hands up and down my back. “You will be.”

I want to believe her, but having lived with this shame for so long, it’s hard to imagine hope.

## CHAPTER 8

MiaBella

When we arrived at Hendrix's apartment, I wasn't sure what to expect, but it was welcoming, with a cream-colored sofa full of throw pillows, potted plants on various shelves, and a dinette to the side of the kitchen, adorned with fresh flowers. He noticed my shock and explained it was his mom and sister who made it so homely.

That might be true, but I think he likes it, too.

I ordered dinner for us shortly thereafter, and we sat on the couch, a movie playing in the background, but I don't think either of us paid much attention.

When the pizza was delivered, we ate and talked a bit, shared some food likes and dislikes. He asked about anything I was having trouble eating and if I suffered from morning sickness. After explaining that I had to take medication to help with the nausea and watch certain foods, his mood shifted to concern about us.

I won't lie, it was nice. The first month was spent keeping the pregnancy to myself while navigating my feelings about it and figuring out my limits. This past month has consisted of many hours arguing with my brother about the father.

That all backfired today because now the cat's out of the bag, and I'm sure there will be more fighting to come because neither man believes Hendrix is good enough for me. I can't quarrel with them both, so something has got to give.

For the last hour, Hendrix has been asleep beside me. The man is both mentally and emotionally exhausted from trying to hold himself together. I have no doubt his family would gladly take as much of his burden as they could, but he won't share it with them.

Talia spoke about her concerns once we had settled the girls at Sparrow House. She fears she's losing her only son, and she doesn't know how to help him.

When he'd confessed that he needed help, I knew, I absolutely knew, this was a man more than worthy of my love and loyalty. He'll be a fantastic father to our child, and come hell or high water, I'm getting him the help he's so desperately searching for.

Now, I'm doing some research into therapists who specialize in PTSD, specifically veterans. There are two promising candidates in the area, and after sending inquiry emails to both, I close my laptop and get up to go to the bathroom but stop when I feel a sharp pain in my side.

"What, what is it?" Hendrix is on his feet before I can straighten, one hand on my hip and another on my back. "Mia, princess, what's wrong?"

Leaning into him, I breathe slowly in and out. "Just a sharp pain. I've never felt it before."

"Should I take you to the hospital?"

Fear tingles up my spine.

"No, I'm fine." I groan as it hits again.

Hendrix scoops me up in his arms. "We're going." He grabs my purse because that's where I told him I keep my anti-nausea meds.

He's gentle as we exit his building, and he places me in his truck, grabbing a blanket from the back and draping it over my legs before getting in. Every other minute, he asks how I'm doing, and I feel so foolish because I haven't had any other pain again.

Reaching a hand over to him, I lay it on his arm as he navigates the quiet night streets. “You’re going to be an amazing father.”

Startled, his eyes meet mine, and he tries to hide his doubt behind a smile before giving the road his attention. We screech to a stop in the ambulance bay, where security attempts to tell him he can’t park, but they stop when his towering frame takes an aggressive step towards them.

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“Please be nice,” I say.

He grunts out a response, and that’s as good as I’ll get when he’s this worried about me.

“Maternity,” he barks at a nurse who raises a brow at us. Another pain hits, and I cry out. She hops to her feet and tells him to follow her.

“What’s the problem?” the nurse asks as I curl into myself in his arms.

“She’s four months pregnant, has hyperemesis gravidarum, and started having cramps twenty minutes ago.”

I’m impressed that he remembered the technical term for my morning sickness.

“Medications?” the woman asks as we enter the maternity ward. Another nurse spots us and quickly points towards an empty bed where Hendrix gently lays me down.

“Metoclopramide,” I grit through my teeth. I’m generally not a wimp when it comes to pain, but it feels like my insides are being pinched with lobster claws.

As more nurses enter and then a doctor, Hendrix steps back when all I want is for him to be closer so I can touch his skin. He must see it on my face because he slides in by my head, staying out of the way, as I’m hooked up to IVs and monitors.

It’s a flurry of activity, and after an ultrasound, while the pain was at its peak, they discovered gallstones.

“You’re certain Mia and the baby are safe?” Hendrix asks for the fourth time.

“Positive. They’re small and will pass relatively easily. She’s getting fluids and pain management. We’ll keep her overnight and reassess in the morning.” The woman leaves us alone with the promise of a private room in a few minutes.

A sob breaks out of my chest, and poor Hendrix is on his feet again. “You can’t cry, I don’t do tears, and I can’t handle anything else tonight. Are you okay? Is there something else wrong?”

“No, nothing else,” I reply. “Will you hold me?” I blurt out the question without thinking.

Careful of all the wires and cords, Hendrix slides into bed with me, allowing me to lie my head on his chest. Wrapping one arm around my back, he holds my free hand with his other one.

“Everything will be fine.” His tone is steady in a storm of emotion, making me wonder if I can do any of this alone anymore.

“I want you with us, Hendrix,” I say, tilting my head up to see his face. “I don’t just want you around on weekend visits or sending money if we need it. I want you to be part of our lives. Every single day.”

He inhales deeply, and it’s apparent that he’s fighting a war in his head. Finding excuses and reasons he can’t be with us.

“I have a spare room in my house.” Hendrix frowns, but I forge on. “I know you don’t trust yourself yet, and I won’t rush you.” Pausing as a wave of nausea hits, I breathe deeply before speaking again. “Our night together meant something to me. It wasn’t supposed to, but even before I learned about the baby, I recognized a

connection between us.”

Brushing his fingers through my hair, he tilts my head up farther. “So did I. I’ve spent the last four months regretting not getting your name and number. In my head, you’ve just been my princess. I had planned on asking Castle who you were when I got to the clubhouse today, but there you were. Gorgeous as ever and carrying my baby.”

“I think my heart stopped for a minute.” I honestly hadn’t expected to see him again until I went looking for him.

“Why didn’t you ask your brother who I was when you found out?” Searching his eyes, I’m relieved he doesn’t appear angry about that.

“I feel like I’ve been in a processing mode from the moment the doctor said I was pregnant. There was denial, then fear, and then, ‘Oh, shit, how am I going to do this alone?’ Then, when I got around to thinking about you, your note gave me pause.” The comment isn’t meant to hurt him, but we need as much honesty as possible between us. “I wasn’t sure if it would be the kind of news you wanted, so I decided to wait until Castle cooled down, because a month ago, he was ready to kill you. And I wanted more time to myself without having to worry about your feelings. That sounds selfish, but it was my reality.”

“It’s not. At all. I’m glad to be part of your lives now.” His lips lower to kiss my forehead as he whispers, “I’ll get better for both of you.” And somewhere deep inside my heart, I know he’s going to, and this time next year, we could be a genuine family.

Hopefully.

## CHAPTER 9



Hendrix

Nearly a month has passed since the gallstones scare that left me more shaken than I ever thought possible. Even when Hadley was kidnapped, I'd never been so scared. I think it's because with Mia and the pregnancy, I have no control over what happens.

She's bounced back like nothing occurred. Meanwhile, I'm still concerned about all the things that could go wrong. I spent more time reading about pregnancy than I should have, and now that I know all the complications women can face, I worry Mia may have those same troubles.

"Hey, you good?" Bishop slaps my shoulder as we approach the dock where Seven and Severo are gliding in with a family from Panama City. They drove from Panama to Fort Walton before hopping on the boat because the man these people are running from is in the police force, and it was the best way to keep him guessing where they would wind up.

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“Fine,” I grunt. “A lot on my mind.” Like my next therapy appointment tomorrow.

Mia has been driving down to Pensacola the night before every appointment because she wants to support me. She’ll spend a couple of days here with me before heading back home. Fridays, I go up to her and drive home Monday mornings. I fucking hate the separation.

“How’s Mia?”

Bishop is the only one I’ve confided in about my fears. He’s the only one I’ve spoken to about seeking out therapy, too. Not because I’m embarrassed, but because I’m not sure it’s working.

“Good. She should be at my place within the hour.” I don’t like not being there when she arrives, but she’s got a key, and I’m also needed here.

“You know the sex of the baby yet?” He’s been badgering me since I told him about Mia.

“She wants to be surprised. The doctor was able to do so during the ultrasound a couple of weeks ago, but Mia just wants to concentrate on a healthy pregnancy.” Right now, that’s the only thing on my mind as well.

As the boat slides into the dock, we each grab a rope tossed to us and tie it off before helping the family out. “Guys, this is Emma and her son Kenny,” Seven introduces.

“Pleased to meet you.” Bishop smiles as he helps the boy steady himself on the

rocking dock while I grab their bags.

“We’ve got some extra clothes and essentials packed in the truck for you both, too. The house will have more, and they’ll help get anything you can’t find,” I explain.

Emma smiles, but she’s exhausted. I can see it in the way she has trouble staying still and sways.

Hanging back with Severo as Bishop and Seven guide the pair to the waiting truck, Severo is breathing deeply, trying to control his temper. “When we got there, the boy was locked in a closet and his father was about to rape her.”

“Shit.” There’s nothing the men in my family hate more than violence against women and children. “He still alive?”

“Unfortunately,” Sev grunts. “We didn’t have the time we needed to make it appear like an accident.”

“We’re doing what we can, man, don’t let it get to you.” Slapping his back in support, I say, “Nolan and Bea are at the house, ready to welcome them.”

Sparrow House doesn’t allow men inside; however, when Lilith opened Haven House, she decided that men needed to be on the premises to show the survivors that not all men are bad. Some are protective.

Arriving at Haven House, Bea is quick to welcome the pair and show them to their room for the near future before offering them a meal in the kitchen. Nolan hangs back and allows his wife to work her magic. Bea comes from a tragic past, but watching her now, you’d never know it. Haven House has been her baby. She was involved in every aspect of building, designing, and decorating the place. She even chose the name.

“I’m heading out,” I tell Bishop, who pats my shoulder, knowing exactly where I want to be tonight.

“Hey!” he calls out to me. “She’s good for you. We all see it.”

Nodding my appreciation, I get in the truck and head home, stopping to grab flowers for Mia and a pint of her favorite peanut butter cup ice cream.

As soon as I enter the apartment, I recognize that something is wrong. Her car is in the parking lot, her purse sits on the counter, and her sweet scent is in the air. I lock the front door, put the flowers and ice cream container on the counter, and quietly walk back to my room, where Mia is sitting on the end of the bed with tears streaming down her cheeks, an envelope in her hand.

Dropping to my knees in front of her, I cup her hands in mine. “Mia, princess, what’s wrong?”

“I hate that name,” she hiccups. “The club always called me that growing up. I hated it. Then one night with you, and I love it.”

“Please tell me what’s wrong.”

She hands me the envelope clutched in her fist, and I quickly open it and dump the contents out. Sucking in a sharp breath, I keep my rage in check. Pictures taken of Mia in private moments litter the floor next to me.

Mia in the shower. Changing in her room. Coming and going from the clubhouse. Leaving her work. Sitting at her desk.

The ones of her sleeping, with the person clearly in her room, are the most disturbing. Another has a hand reaching out and touching her hair as she sleeps soundly. The

worst is of her pregnant belly and scratch marks across the photo, clearly threatening our child.

“You’re staying here!” Pulling her sobbing body into my arms, I pick her up and lay her down in bed. “I’ll keep you safe, MiaBella, both of you.”

That promise is one I won’t break. Even if that means taking her to my parents' estate, where no one can gain access.

## CHAPTER 10

MiaBella

Tornadoes and whirlwinds.

Typhoons and tropical storms.

That describes my emotions right now. I'm shaking and spinning, rocking and crashing, unable to get a foothold on anything. I'm drowning and floating at the same time. Hendrix won't let me go, and yet, I can't seem to shake free, so here we sit together in his therapy session because he insisted that he couldn't take his eyes off me. He needed to see for himself that I was safe. I offered to put in earbuds and listen to music or an audiobook, but for whatever reason, Hendrix wants me to be present during the session.

"How have you been sleeping, Hendrix? Have the nightmares been present?" the therapist asks him. His hands ball into fists on his thighs before he relaxes his fingers and stretches his arms down his legs.

Our eyes meet briefly before he answers. "Some nights are better than others. Mission nightmares aren't as bad anymore, and when I have them, they're less rushed. Almost as if they're in slow motion and I can see everything happening in a way I haven't before."

"Are you discovering anything new?" She leans forward, excitement shining brightly in her inquisitive eyes.

"No." His eyes drop. "Sort of." I reach out a supportive hand, hoping to encourage

him to be as honest as possible. “I remember the first shot. The one I took before Santi joined the firefight.” She nods reassuringly while I hold my breath. “I remember the sounds, the smells, the vibrations of my weapon as the bullets flew.”

“What else?” she...Elsie...asks quietly as Hendrix focuses on a painting across the room while vocalizing his revelations.

“The dust. The wind had picked up, drawing up dirt and dust from the ground, making their cover more solid. Making it easier to get the boys into place and hide themselves.” His eyes shine with dread and remorse, while my heart breaks for him. “They never had a choice.”

“Do you mean chance?” His eyes dart to Elsie and narrow on her. I know what she’s doing. Challenging his way of thinking so he can learn how to forgive himself.

“No. They didn’t get a choice. From the day they were born, their lives were forever going to end in the fortunes of war.” His voice cracks with emotion as he closes his eyes and balls his fists again.

Scooting closer, I rest my head on his shoulder. Immediately, his hand finds my belly, where the baby has been moving more and more lately. It’s one of the few things that keeps him in the present when he has an episode.

“Mia.” I glance at Elsie. “What have you noticed at home?”

“Oh, uhm...” I hadn’t anticipated being involved. “He’s not as restless at night.”

It used only to be that when he was holding me, he’d calm down and sleep. Now, even when I’m right next to him, and he hasn’t got me wrapped up in his arms, he settles down.

“That’s a good sign and fits with what he’s been telling me. Hendrix, how are you feeling about doing the EMDR?”

Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy has been shown to help those with traumatic memories. In the past, I’ve helped victims of violence find therapists who use the technique.

He turns his head towards me, eyes searching mine at the same time the baby kicks, drawing a smile to his lips. “Yeah, I’ll do it,” he responds. “I need to. I need to be better so I can be present.”

It’s my turn for tears, it seems. While this is helping Hendrix heal from his military past, he’s doing it because he wants a future for himself and me. He wants to be the best dad he can be to our child.

“I’d like to do another session to prepare you for how the therapy is done, the side effects afterwards, and how we’ll proceed after it’s over.”

I’ve heard it can be intense and exhausting.

As the session ends, the toll it’s taken on Hendrix is obvious. He’s more relaxed but emotionally exhausted. After setting up his following appointments, I take the keys from him and drive us back to his apartment.

Walking hand in hand down the third-story hallway to his apartment, he drags me behind him when we notice a manila envelope taped to the door.

“Oh no.” Dread nearly drags me to the ground. Opening the one yesterday that was slipped into my purse while I was in the Social Services office sent terror racing through my veins.



Turning to face me, Hendrix cups my jaw in one hand and holds me around the back with the other. “Don’t do that, don’t go worst case scenario. Not yet. Let me handle this, and then we’ll decide what to do. Deal?” My eyes move to look at the door when he whistles. “Eyes on me, princess, or I’m not letting you go.” He waits until I take a few calming breaths and nod my agreement.

“Good.” He kisses my forehead before moving to my mouth. “You’ll go inside, I’ll grab the envelope, then we’ll deal with the contents.” He says this while unlocking the door and blocking me from seeing it.

The way Hendrix consistently works to protect me, to show me that he’s the wall between me and the unsavory characters of the world, it makes me realize...

I love this man.

Unequivocally and completely.

*Source Creation Date: July 6, 2025, 5:39 am*

Five months ago, I was attracted to him. Three months ago, I was angry with him. One month ago, I had no idea what to do with him. But in the last few weeks, he's done nothing but show me how much we mean to him. And not just because of the baby, but because we share a soul-deep connection.

I've never felt like this with anyone before, and now that I have him, see him working to heal himself, I know for sure this is the man I wish to spend my life loving.

### CHAPTER 11

Hendrix

Staring at the note on the counter, I fluctuate from rage to blind fury. The threat is obvious and filled with intent. Telling her that she can't hide from him. I don't care who the fuck they think they are, Mia is under my protection, and I won't let anything happen to her.

She's in the shower now, trying to calm her hyper-sensitive nerves, while I'm supposed to be making her dinner. I have every intention of taking Mia to my parents, but I also know that I need to call Castle to make him aware of the threats to his sister. He's going to insist I bring her back home. The problem is she'll be more exposed to whoever is after her while she's there.

After checking on Mia to find her still in the shower, and as much as I'd like to join her, I go back to the kitchen to make the chicken, bacon, and ranch salad she requested with strawberries and watermelon. The chicken and bacon have been chopped and are cooking while I wash the vegetables for salad.

It's another twenty minutes before Mia appears, wearing one of my T-shirts and a pair of thick socks, with a towel wrapped around her hair.

"It smells good, Hendrix."

I can't keep my eyes off her as she approaches, taking a seat at the counter and reaching for a carrot.

"Buttery steakhouse seasoning," I tell her, tossing the cut vegetables into a bowl and mixing them. "You want something to drink?" Tugging open the fridge door, I let her have a look.

"Cranberry ginger ale, please."

I watch her rubbing her stomach as I pull a can out and pop it open.

"Ice?" She declines the offer and takes a sip after I hand it to her. "Are you feeling okay?"

"Just stress from what's going on has my stomach upset." I watch her take another sip before pulling out a bag of crackers.

"The pills still working?" She shrugs her shoulders. "What can I do, Mia?"

Sighing, she nibbles on a cracker as she stares down at the counter. "I don't know." The vulnerability in her tone cracks my heart open. "This wasn't how I pictured my life being, you know?"

"I do." More than I could ever explain. Being a broken man hadn't been what I envisioned as a child.

Her eyes meet mine briefly, and I see a flicker of empathy before she drops them again. “Can I tell you something without you being angry?”

“Of course.” I don’t think I’ve ever been intentionally angry towards her before. At least, I fucking hope not.

“When I thought of having kids, I had always imagined being married first. Creating a home with a husband who loved me fiercely. Not a one-night stand gone wrong.” The tension in her shoulders tells me she still anticipates my anger.

“Do you believe I can’t love you, MiaBella?”

Placing my hands on the counter, I study her body language. Each inhale of breath, the stress lines she tries to hide on her face. The tension in her shoulders and neck...even the way she’s hunched over. The expectation of rejection is all over her.

“I wouldn’t blame you if you couldn’t. It’s not like you asked for this.”

Jesus. Have I really given her that impression?

Rounding the short island counter, I cup her chin in one hand and bury my other in her hair, shoving the towel off her head. “Do you know the first thing that crossed my mind when I saw you?” She swallows roughly, biting her lip. “How much I wanted you to be mine.” Her eyes widen in shock. “If there was ever anyone who could convince me to want a life with a woman and children, it was always going to be you.”

“Really?” Her eyes water as she gives me a half smile.

“Fuck yes.” I can’t believe I ever ran away from her. “I took the coward’s way out because what you made me feel was scary as fuck, but I knew after a week of

dreaming about you that I was always going to find you again.”

Blowing out a deep breath, Mia rests her hands on my chest and opens her thighs so I can step in closer to her. “You genuinely believe you can love me?”

Bending forward, I press my lips to hers. “MiaBella, my beautiful girl, I’m already halfway there.” Without letting her get a word in, I deepen the connection, sweeping my tongue into her mouth and kissing her lazily. Taking my time to taste and explore because every time I get my hands on this woman, I discover something new to enjoy.

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Before I'm able to pick her up, her stomach grumbles in protest. Her nourishment comes before my wants or desires, so I pull back. Pushing her hair off her face, I lean down to take another kiss, however.

"Food first." We eat together, mostly in silence. As I'm cleaning up the dishes, my phone rings and Bishop's name flashes on the screen. "Hey," I answer.

"I got a grainy image from the building's security. You can't see his face, but he's driving a white Tacoma, and there's a blue and gold arrowhead sticker on it; Mississippi College is my guess."

"Thanks, man, I owe you one." Bishop always comes through for me.

"You'd do the same for me, man. You know I've always got your back."

After we hang up, he sends me the pictures. He wasn't kidding about the image quality.

"Is everything okay?" Mia comes up beside me.

I slide the phone to her so she can look at the pictures. "Bishop couldn't get a clear image of the guy's face, but the truck with the sticker could come in handy."

"Jeff." She hisses out the name.

"What?" I stand up straighter.

“My ex, Jeff Gold, he went to Mississippi College.” She swallows before looking up at me. “He drives a white Tacoma, too.”

The fear that enters her eyes pisses me off. There’s no way in hell I’m going to allow this to slide. This asshole is mine.

Pulling her into my arms, I begin formulating a plan to get this guy off her back and maybe have him meet a watery grave if he further pisses me off.

## CHAPTER 12

MiaBella

Processing what I’m seeing after staring at the images in front of me for what feels like hours now is mind-numbing. Jeff and I spent a year together. He wasn’t a man who took my breath away like Hendrix does, but he was good to me. Respected my desire for independence and didn’t press me for more than I was willing to give. However, my first red flag should have been his disdain for my brother.

Initially, I ignored it because I wanted it to be first-interaction jitters or something. Unfortunately, as each encounter occurred, Jeff became increasingly obsessed with taking me away from that life. Inferring that their criminality infected me.

Eventually, he hinted at something more serious, but I preferred keeping it casual while still being committed to each other. We didn’t live together, and before we broke up, he had started pushing for it. In all honesty, I think that’s what made me call it quits. I hadn’t wanted to lead him on when I knew there was no future for us.

By the time I’d broken it off with Jeff, and he didn’t go ballistic or give any indication that he was this upset, I’d been shocked. I was prepared for a fight. He’d been sad, shed a tear or two, begged a little, but I thought he’d moved on.

“MiaBella?” Hendrix’s sleepy voice calls to me like a beacon. The way he says my name is purely erotic. It slips out in this smooth timber, sending chills down my spine. “Come to bed.” With any other man, I’d balk and protest that growled command.

“What is it about you?” I wonder, looking over my shoulder to find him bare-chested and nearly naked in nothing but a pair of boxer-briefs that highlight the prominent bulge between his legs. The scars hurt my heart, now knowing what they’re from, but I’m insanely proud, as well, because he stood up for what was right in that moment. Even though it ended in great tragedy.

“What about me?” His hands grip the doorframe above his head. The muscles in his arms bulge while his body ripples. The sheer strength coming off this man makes me ache in ways I never could have imagined.

“Any other man demands something of me, and I’d tell them to fuck off, but you...you soak my panties by just saying my name.” It seems the darkness of night makes me a little braver.

“Is that so?” His cocky lop-sided grin melts away the stress and pressure he’s constantly under. I nod slowly as my eyes eat up his frame. “How about you come over here and show me just how soaked you are.”

My heart skips a beat at the heat in his words. Putting the images on the table in front of me out of my mind, I go to him, still in nothing but his shirt, panties, and the warm socks I like. When I’m a foot away, I slide the panties down my legs and offer them to him.

He’s quick to snatch them from my hand and inspect them, growling when he sees my truth. Our eyes meet like magnets as he brings them to his face and inhales deeply. A loud groan rumbles from the depths of his chest and weakens my knees.



Taking a step forward, I drop to the ground in front of him, our eyes remaining locked, and I reach forward to the waistband of his underwear. With his one hand still on the frame and the other holding my lacy fabric to his face, I hear the groan of wood as his grip tightens. Grasping the elastic band, I slowly begin to lower it. Knowing that Hendrix is large, it's no shock when the bulbous tip pops out as soon as I move the material out of the way. I drag it down his thighs and get my first close-up look of the man, and I am shook.

He's thick, long, and the veins are so pronounced that they look ready to burst. The tip leaks his desire, making my mouth water for a taste. This is the first time we've been intimate in the month that we found each other again, and I'm vibrating with need to feel him inside my body.

"Does it hurt?" I whisper, scooting closer to him. I feel the heat of his cock on my face before rubbing my cheek along the side of his length.

"Yeah," he croaks out. "It aches for the warmth of your body."

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“So soft,” I whisper, kissing the side as I grip him in my hand. “Strong.” Glancing upwards, he now has my panties between his teeth, and both hands are back on the door frame again, the wood barely holding up under the power of his strength.

“Killing me here, princess.”

My tongue flicks out, and his voice catches on that last word, causing me to smile. I lick along his length like a lollipop, not pausing until I’ve tasted every inch of him.

“Mmm, yummy,” I whisper against him as I cup his balls in my other palm and massage the sensitive globes. His hips thrust forward, clearly asking me to take him in my mouth, but I want to tease him a little longer.

“Princess,” he snarls, eyes narrowed and looking fierce. “Don’t fucking tease me.”

Flattening my tongue against his tip, I take a long, languid lick, slurping up his fluid before closing my eyes to swallow on a groan. Doing this before never brought me joy, but with Hendrix, there’s this sense of erotic danger. I know he won’t hurt me, but he can’t help being fierce in his lust for me.

“I would never,” I purr before wrapping my lips around the head and sucking him to the back of my throat, moaning when I feel him flex.

Dragging my nails along his balls, he grunts and thrusts forward a little deeper. I nearly choke but hold it in while pulling back and tasting him while slowly sliding up and down his length. I’m so lost in giving Hendrix pleasure that when his fingers dig through my hair, securing me in place so he can do the work, I don’t realize tears are

leaking from the corners of my eyes.

I'm not sad, or scared, not of this man, but I'm overjoyed with the trust he's placed in me to be so vulnerable in this position.

"God, princess, you're fucking killing me with that damn mouth." His fists tighten, tugging strands of hair in my scalp. I swallow around him on a moan as my hands work the part of him I can't fit. "You're going to make me come."

Closing my eyes, I inhale deeply, tilting my head back and allowing him to slide deeper into my throat before swallowing around him again and massaging what I can with my tongue. Hendrix loses control, hugging my face closer with a hand on the back of my head and snarling out his release. He coats the back of my throat with his essence, tensing until he's empty before dragging me up by the hair, yet somehow remaining gentle.

He lifts me, my back hitting the door jamb as he slams inside of me, and covers my mouth with his, fucking me with his tongue and still hard cock.

"Fuck, do you have any idea what you do to me?" He raises my hands above my head, securing me in place with one hand while the other tears his shirt from my body, the ripping sound sharp in the apartment. "I could fuck you every minute of every day and never feel like I've had enough of you."

"Never," I gasp when he plows in deep, my eyes crossing.

"As soon as this baby is out, I'm working to put another in there. You going to tell me no?" The tears being withheld spill over, and his face softens, but he still fucks me ruthlessly. "Those good tears or bad ones, princess?"

God, I love how he can go from gruff to gentle in a flash. "Good." I lean forward and

smash my lips to his, fucking his mouth with my tongue this time.

He flashes me a smile before burying his face in my neck and sucking on the flesh until my pussy gushes around his length. His free hand grips my ass cheek until I'm sure there'll be a Hendrix hand-sized bruise, and the filthy man will love it. So will I, if I'm honest with myself.

"Harder," I gasp when he slows down. "Don't stop, Hendrix, please don't stop."

"Dirty, dirty girl likes it rough, does she?" His head lifts to watch my face. I swear his eyes glow with wantonness.

"Yes," the moan escapes. "Once this baby is out, I expect to hurt so good. For your big dick to break me in half." He's holding back for the baby's sake, but I wish he wouldn't. The doctor said it's safe and has even suggested a few positions as my belly grows. Biting his lip until I break skin, I lick him and mutter in his ear, "I want it so hard you'll worry I'm dying from the pleasure." Lord, I don't know where these words come from, but I know they're filled with truth.

"How the fuck did I get so lucky?" he grumbles, licking up my jaw before drawing back his hand and slapping my ass hard enough to jerk my body. The sound echoes like a love song.

"So good, big boy." I drop my head back. My hands are still pinned to the door jamb, and Hendrix refuses to release me when I try to tug on them.

"Big boy, huh?" His hips draw back, and he rams into my swollen pussy, the walls gripping him like a suction cup. "I'll show you big boy with this dick deep in your tight little ass."

My eyes widen at the threat. I've never done that before, and I think he knows it by

the predatory smile he sports.

“As soon as you’re clear, it’s mine.” He finally releases my hands as both of his go to my ass, pulling the cheeks apart so he can press one fingertip to the tiny entrance. Pushing until his digit sinks deep inside.

Wrapping my arms around his head, I draw him in close and whisper against his ear, “Add another.” He does so without hesitation, making my pussy even tighter around his dick. “One more,” I hiss, enjoying the slight burn and discomfort.

“Dirty fucking princess.” He adds a third, scissoring his fingers around until I’m relaxed enough that he can thrust them in and out.

“Only for you, big boy.”

His eyes narrow, I smirk, and he slams so powerfully inside me that I come apart like shattered glass. Screaming loud enough, I’m sure his neighbors hear me, but I don’t care because my body flies apart in a million pleasurable directions as he keeps fucking in and out until he jerks inside of me and bites my neck as he groans his own climax.

Clasping onto him tighter, my body aches in the best ways, and I whisper in his ear, “Tell me you’re not done yet? Please, I need more. God. So much more.”

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*Source Creation Date: July 6, 2025, 5:39 am*

Taking me to the bedroom, his dick still pulsing inside me, he drops onto the bed so I'm on top and grins. "Show me what you got, princess."

Challenge accepted.

## CHAPTER 13

Hendrix

My woman. My fucking woman. She's a masterpiece in heart, mind, and spirit. She's strong, fierce, and loyal to degrees I never understood until now. She's expressed her desire to help me, to be there while I heal from past scars, but until last night, throughout the night really, I hadn't realized just how therapeutic she is for me.

Until today, I'd woken up with dread settling in my chest. Afraid and angry about my actions in war, the nightmares that have followed, and the shame that resides inside my soul.

Sure, therapy has been helping; I'm seeing my actions for what they truly are. However, with MiaBella at my side, I've felt the shift in my head and heart. I've felt the healing in my body as I slowly learn to accept the past for what it is.

The past.

I no longer need to suffer for my transgressions, even if they were accidental and unintentional.

I'm not only moving forward into a future that offers me peace, but I'm also looking forward to the future and planning it with Mia. I notice the hope and relief in her eyes every time I mention something I want to do. Even if it's just planning to see my parents or sister.

"You focused, man?" Bishop asks from beside me as Saint approaches.

"Yeah, just having revelations."

Bish cocks his head in confusion but doesn't comment.

"What's the plan?" Saint asks as we lean against Bishop's truck. Mia has mine so she could do things with my mom today. She needs to have some control while she's here.

Retrieving the folded picture of Jeff Gold that I snagged from Holden when he hacked the DMV to get a clearer image of the man, I hand it over to Saint. "He's the target. Thinks he can harass Mia. Leaves images of her in her car, at her job, and recently taped to my apartment door. He needs to learn some manners."

Saint cracks his knuckles. There's a particular rage that this giant human reserves for men who harass women. Given Lake's most recent breakdown and refusal to leave the house or even see him, the one person she has always considered her safe space, he's filled with fury.

"I'd like to get my hands on him, Saint." Meeting his black eyes, I wait for the frenzy to clear before he nods.

Mr. Jeff Gold works in an accounting office in Mobile, Alabama. Bishop enters the building first, while Saint begins his walk around the ten-story structure. I wait out front until receiving a text from Bish that Jeff is in the office and not currently in an

appointment.

Two security guards share a look before one shakes his head, deciding that approaching me is a bad idea, while I make my way to my friend at the elevators. As the doors open, two men and a woman halt briefly, giving us a hesitant look before stepping off and allowing us entry.

“It’s like they haven’t seen large men before.” Bishop rolls his eyes and scoffs.

“As long as they stay the fuck out of my way, I don’t give a shit.”

We stride down the hall, leading into a bullpen of cubicles, where little men with no lives sit, typing away, before I spot Jeff in a back corner office.

He’s taking a call, a pinched expression on his face when he realizes there’s complete silence beyond his open door. Popping his head up, he looks around until he spots me and Bishop storming his way. His face pales, and the phone drops from between his ear and shoulder. He slowly stands, stepping back as his chair rolls to the side, before realizing he can shut the door and tries to beat me to it.

“I don’t think so, little man,” I growl, my anger reaching a boiling point now that he’s within reach.

Grabbing his collar, I lift him off the ground and bash him into the bookshelf against one wall. There’s a cracking sound, and he whimpers as Bishop closes the door, locking it and shutting the shades in the room. Leaving us completely alone.

“W-who are you?” He shakes in my hold, his feet dangling a good foot off the ground.

Smirking, the predator in me takes immense pleasure in the fear rolling off him. “I’m



MiaBella Dion's man." If possible, he pales further, and the stench of nervous sweat pours out of him. "She's being harassed, and it all leads back to you." Slamming him against the shelf, his head cracks off a book. "I'm here to make it stop."

He swallows and looks to Bishop, a plea in his eyes.

"I'm only here to keep security away. He's your master now."

Tears spill from the man's eyes at the realization of how screwed he is.

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“She led me on!” he screeches. “For a year, she made me believe we’d be together forever. I only want what I was promised.” His sniveling annoys me.

“So, you thought the way to get what you wanted was to threaten her? Make her feel unsafe in her home, her work, her own fucking car?” I slam him back again for emphasis, when what I want is to throw him out the fucking window. “You entered her home while she was sleeping and touched what’s mine. Do you know how dangerous that is?” My snarled words have him blubbing further, and the smell of urine permeates the air. Glancing down, I see he’s soaked himself. “I don’t know what the fuck she saw in you, but I swear to god if you ever come near her again, I’ll rip your arms off your body and beat you to death with them. Are we fucking clear?”

Shaking him some more, he stutters, “Y-y-yes. Crystal.” And with one last smack against the shelf, likely breaking a rib from how he cries out, I release him. He sobs as his body crumbles to the floor.

“Don’t make me come back for you, Jeff. I won’t be as nice.” He nods his head, wheezing as Bishop opens the door and slams it shut behind us.

Four security guards approach, and we exchange a look. I’m jonesing for a fight, but not with people who’ve done nothing to me. Doesn’t mean I won’t clean their clocks if need be.

Bishop raises his hands with a smile on his face. “We’re leaving, boys. Nothing to worry about. I’d have a word with dear old Jeff’s boss about his stalking tendencies, and let’s not forget breaking and entering and threatening my friend’s pregnant wife with the killing of their child.” That sets off a ton of murmurs, and a few people

glance back at the office we've left with disapproving looks.

"She's not my wife," I tell Bishop, the grumble in my tone expressing my displeasure over that fact.

"Yet." He grins as we step onto the elevator.

We find Saint lounging in the lobby with everyone giving him a wide berth. The man is larger than life with a deadly scowl on his face.

I ask, "You good, man?" He seems more intense than when we went up.

"Lake." He hisses her name like a prayer and a curse.

Neither of us asks for more because he likely won't tell us anything, but on the off chance he wants to talk, it'll be on his own time. Saint is a different breed. He's possessive, obsessive, and more caveman than modern-day man. He grunts and growls to communicate, only enjoys the company of Lake, and when he does spend time with someone else, it's his sister, Scotlyn, and her kids up in Baltimore.

That's when he's not burying bodies, of course. Because he's taken to doing what Holden has been for years. Something none of us knew about until Holden found a life with his woman, Noelle. Vigilante killers in the dark of night.

"You know she's going to trust you eventually, right?" I say. He grunts and shakes his head as we leave the building, and without a goodbye, Saint is gone.

Bishop and I jump into his truck, heading to the Deviant Sinners clubhouse so I can have this conversation with Castle in person. He's been grumpy that Mia is spending so much time with me when I haven't committed to her or the baby. Not to his knowledge, at least. Mia knows exactly where I stand with the two of them.

“You ready for this? Big brother isn’t going to be a happy camper with all that’s been hidden from him,” Bishop warns as we pull into the parking lot. Prince, Cross, and Joker are outside working on a bike.

“You forget who my father is?” I snort.

There are few men scarier than Castiel Adair. If you don’t count Carver and Saint, that is. I don’t frighten easily, and while being damaged, there’s nothing I won’t face for Mia, including her brother.

“Look who the cat dragged in.” Cross stands, squaring up his body. The intimidation won’t work on me.

“Castle around?”

He eyes me up and down before Joker nods towards the door.

“She okay?” Cross asks, and all three men stand and wait for my answer. It’s then that I realize she isn’t just Castle’s little sister, she’s theirs, too. They all raised her together after her parents died, and they’re every bit as protective and invested in her well-being as Castle is.

“She is. She’s with my mom today; they’re shopping and doing girl shit.” I wouldn’t be surprised if Hadley and Aria were with them as well.

“Good. She deserves it.”

I agree and head inside. Bishop hangs back. The clubhouse is mostly empty for this early in the afternoon, so it isn’t hard to find Castle in the back office.

“About fucking time,” he growls, shoving back from his desk to approach me.

“Things have been happening,” I reply as we square off.

“Like what?” He’s entered big brother mode. I would do the same for Hadley.

“You should sit down.”

He cocks an eyebrow but realizes I won’t budge until he does. A few seconds pass before he makes the first move. I follow suit, sitting in a chair in front of his desk.

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“Get on with it, Hendrix, or I’m going to lose my fucking patience.”

Snorting, I shake my head. He doesn’t realize how little he intimidates me.

“Mia has had someone sending her images of herself in private settings. Places they shouldn’t be.” I raise a hand when he’s about to interrupt. “She only told me recently, and I’ve just come back from handling it.”

“By handling it, I hope to fuck you mean killing the motherfucker.” He’s on his feet again.

“It was her ex, Jeff Gold, and no, I didn’t kill him; however, he received a very clear message about what happens if he so much as thinks about her again.”

Castle rounds his desk, a lion looking for a fight. “Why the fuck is he still breathing? You care so fucking little about my sister and your baby?”

“It’s because I care that I didn’t cut his head off and mount it to my fucking wall. There were witnesses, and I wasn’t risking getting locked up because some pussy thought he could target her. It’s handled.”

“Fuck.” Castle drops his head back, closes his eyes, and breathes deeply for a few minutes before glancing at me again. “What about the two of you? What’s going on there because, pretty soon, she won’t be able to keep driving down to you.”

“I’m aware, and I’m working on it. Whatever she wants is what will be done.”

His eyes work me over. “You going to marry her?”

“If she’ll say yes.”

“Don’t give her a choice,” he smirks.

Not sure how we went from hostile to making his sister mine forever, but I’ll take it.

## CHAPTER 14

MiaBella

“How are you feeling, dear?” Talia offers me a smile, and the care in her eyes continues to amaze me. It’s been too many years since I’ve felt any type of motherly affection. I love my brother and his club brothers, but spending my teenage years being raised by gruff men wasn’t conducive to many tenderhearted talks or physical touch in the way a young woman needs.

“Good. He or she is moving around a lot and playing kickball with my ribs.” I’ve been filled with nervous energy today; not quite sure why, but it’s causing the baby more stress than I would like.

“Oh boy, do I remember those days.” She gets a faraway look in her eyes. “Hendrix was always giving me heartburn and beating on my ribs and bladder. I cursed that boy at least twice a day.”

“And Hadley?” Spending lunch with her was enjoyable before she had to get back to her husband’s club. Hadley had the fun idea of opening a recreational facility for children, with swimming pools, hockey rinks, indoor soccer fields, and so much more. All they need to do now is work out the logistics.

“She was a wiggle worm. Moved around more than her brother but took it easy on my ribs.”

Taking a sip of my drink, I hesitate to ask the question.

“Spit it out, Mia. No sense in holding anything back.”

Letting out a sigh, I hope Hendrix doesn’t get angry with me. “Do you know what happened to him overseas? Has he spoken to you or Cas about it?”

“Nothing specific. We hardly know any details, but he’s said that he did something too shameful to share with us. It’s been eating him up for so long.” Her tears pull at my heartstrings.

“He’s getting help now,” I reassure her, and she lights up. “He says it’s helping. He feels like there’s a future in his life now.”

She reaches across the table for my hands. “That’s because of you.”

Taking the credit doesn’t feel right. “It’s him. The baby motivates him, but he wouldn’t follow through if he didn’t want to begin the healing journey.”

Talia nods in agreement, and we get back to looking at the baby furniture. She and Castiel have graciously offered to buy us an entire baby suite. Crib, dresser, chair, change table, and bookshelf. All I need to do is decide where we’re going to set it up.

“It’s you, too, Mia. There’s a lightness, a happiness to him when he speaks about you. That doesn’t happen if he doesn’t care.”

Hopefully, she’s right. We’ve expressed a desire to be together, but there’s been no profound declarations, just what-ifs and maybes. And for now, that’s okay. We have



so much time to get to know one another. Even with the baby coming, we can co-parent apart while figuring out how or if we're together.

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“Have you guys thought about where you’ll live? If you’ll live together?” She pops a fry into her mouth, lessening the pressure on the answer.

“He’s mentioned wanting to live together, but not where.” Sipping on my lavender tea seems to help with the nausea. “I own my home in Mobile, and he rents his apartment, but I could never ask him to leave his family. That would be unfair. Especially when there are so many of you to support him and love the baby. I just have my brother and the guys in his club.”

“This is true, however...” Talia pauses until I look up from the computer. “However, you should be where you feel the most comfortable and supported. Considering the baby, this is a decision for you to make that works best for the two of you.” I hadn’t thought about it like that. “I want you to know, we will be there for you as much as you want, need, or allow. You’re family now. Even if you and Hendrix don’t find a path together, we are all in your corner, as well. You’re not alone, Mia.”

Tears sting my eyes, and Talia pulls me in for a lengthy hug filled with all the promises she’s just made. “Thank you. I can’t express how much that means to me.”

We spend a few more hours at her family home, shopping online, before receiving a call from the sisters that this family helped me find a new home for.

“Miss MiaBella?” The younger girl's scared voice makes me sit up straighter.

“Coral, are you okay? Where’s Charlotte?” They’re nearly inseparable.

“There’s a man here. I thought you said no men?” The two girls spent years being

assaulted by men in their home. Their fear can be all-consuming when it comes to strangers. “Charlotte went shopping with Miss Emily so we can make a seafood boil.”

There’s no time to ask her why she didn’t go because I hear banging on the other end, followed by masculine shouting.

“Is anyone there, Coral?” Running for the front door, I grab Hendrix’s truck keys on my way. “Are you alone?”

“I’m alone,” she responds. “I wasn’t feeling good. Everyone went to the store.” Her tone is terrifying.

“Mia, wait!” Talia races after me. “I’ll get the boys out there; you shouldn’t go.” Her eyes are on my belly.

“I’m sorry,” I say while getting in the truck and peeling out of the driveway at full speed. “Talk to me, Coral. Are you hiding?”

“No,” she whispers, but the yelling has stopped.

“Where are you?”

“Upstairs in my room.”

“Lock the door, shove something in front of it, and hide in the bathroom.” One thing we’ve always done is make sure all the rooms have their own washrooms. “Lock that door, too, and hide in the tub.

“Yes, Miss Mia.” There are sounds of shuffling around before she comes back. “I did it.”

“I’ll be there in ten minutes. Hang on, sweetheart.”

Never in my life have I driven so recklessly. Blowing through stop signs, ignoring yellow lights, weaving in and out of cars who just aren’t going fast enough. But I can’t fail this girl when she’s already been carelessly tossed aside by the system. I’m the line in the sand, and I refuse to allow her to be another statistic.

The street is quiet as I slow down a few houses away, coming to a stop. Quietly, I get out but don’t lock the truck door. The keys in my hand are woven between my fingers as a weapon should I need it.

“Coral, are you still there?” I had put the phone down while driving, not to be even more distracted.

“Yes.” She’s barely audible.

“I’m here. Stay where you are, I’m coming to you.”

She makes a sound of agreement as I walk up the path to the house. The door is busted open, and there’s a mess of broken furniture and potted plants as I enter. Dread makes each step feel like lead.

I should call Hendrix. Every instinct tells me to contact him, but he’s gone up to Mobile to deal with Jeff and wouldn’t be able to do anything, anyway. I must do this for Coral.

Talia has called the police, and listening carefully, I hear sirens in the distance. They’ll be here soon.

“Hello!” I call out, staying near the door. “Whoever you are, the police are on their way. Now is the time to leave.” A crashing sound comes from upstairs, but it’s on the

opposite side of the house from where Coral is, so I remain in place.

Sirens get closer, and I make a move to the staircase, wincing when one of the floorboards creaks. It's not like the person doesn't already know where I am. I just don't want to give myself away too much.

Footsteps thunder from upstairs before the man comes barreling down, almost like he's flying. I have no chance to move before his hand clasps around my throat, pinning me to the wall behind where the front door used to be.

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With feet dangling off the ground and my throat so constricted, I can't inhale properly. I claw at his hands, scraping until he bleeds, only angering him further.

"Where the fuck is she?" he snaps in my face. The rage in his eyes is petrifying, and my mind blanks.

"Who?" I gasp painfully.

"Rebecca Harding. My fucking wife. My fucking children." He shakes me roughly. "Where the fuck are they!" he screams again, as my vision blurs, on the cusp of blacking out.

## CHAPTER 15

Hendrix

Driving across the Perdido Bay Bridge back into Florida, my phone chimes with text notifications before the ringer blows up.

"Grab that?" I ask Bishop, recognizing the importance if they can't wait for me to respond.

"Your mom," he says before hitting the answer button. "Hey, aunty, we're almost at Paradise Beach."

"No time," she interrupts, and I immediately press harder on the pedal. "Mia went to Haven House because Coral called, and now, I can't get her on the phone. There was

an intruder. I called the police, but I don't know what's happening." Her sobs at the end set me on edge.

Bayou Cove is twenty-five minutes out; we'll be there in fifteen. "We'll get there, Ma. Is anyone else on their way?"

"Hadley and Ashton were in the area already. I called Easton, too. Aria and the boys left this afternoon for the airport." Hearing my mother cry hurts, but I need to block that out.

"I'll call you once I've got eyes on her, Mom."

Bishop hangs up as I blow through the red light of a busy intersection, horns blaring in our wake.

"Want me to call Castle?" Bishop asks, and I shake my head. Until I know what's happening with Mia and that she and the baby are all right, I can't care about anyone else.

Christ, how do I cope if something were to happen to either of them? The guilt and shame that's been there for so many years come roaring back, and my body readies itself to be tossed back in time.

Fighting off the emotions nearly cause me to slam into a gravel truck as I burst through another intersection.

"Jesus," Bish mutters, making the sign of the cross and glaring at me.

"Sorry," I mutter, renewing my focus and getting a grip on myself while trying not to lose sight of the present and what's most important.

The closer we get, the tenser I grow, and my breathing becomes labored, expecting the worst.

“Slow down, man,” Bishop warns as we enter the neighborhood. Cops are everywhere. Not just standing in front of the house, but searching the yards and streets, as well.

Rolling to a stop outside the blocked-off perimeter, I take a cleansing breath like I’ve been working on, not wanting to get stressed enough that I’m back on those streets in Iraq.

As soon as we exit the truck, four officers approach us, one holding his hand up. I ignore it. “My wife runs Haven House. She was checking on one of the girls when my mother lost contact with her. You’re not keeping me out.” Who cares how many lies fly from my mouth; they all back off, and I’m able to sprint up the block to find Mia.

“Mia!” No response. “MiaBella!” I try again, catching the attention of nearly everyone around me, but not the woman I need to lay eyes on.

Dashing up the front steps, a pool of blood spreads next to the front door, and my own runs cold with renewed fear.

“Hendrix?” I spin at Coral’s soft voice. She is sitting on a couch in the living room with Easton standing guard behind her.

“Where’s Mia?” It’s difficult to keep the growl from my voice. I’m unsure if I’m successful, and I can’t bring myself to care just yet.

“They took her away in an ambulance about five minutes ago,” Easton says, and I nearly choke.



“Which hospital?”

“Can I come?” Coral asks, fresh tears streaking down her face. “She saved my life.”

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When I say yes, she's up and at my side as I wait for Easton's answer.

"Baptist," he replies, following us out of the house.

I grab hold of Coral's hand as we run to my truck, ignoring everyone attempting to keep the girl at the scene. I don't fucking care about protocols right now. Coral doesn't feel safe, and the woman who stole my heart could be injured. She's coming with me.

Bishop jumps in the truck with us, not saying another word, but offering what support he can. We've always been as close as brothers, so he anticipates my thoughts better than anyone. When I tell him to call my mom, he's already doing it.

Images of Mia flash through my mind, and the horrific thought of not hearing her snort while she laughs, or seeing the twinkle in her eyes when she teases me, or the wonder on her face when the baby moves, it's almost too much.

"You need to calm down, man."

Bishop's words penetrate, but they don't stop me from seeing Mia's head tossed back in pleasure as I eat her pussy from one orgasm to another, over and over until neither of us can move.

We were getting to a good place. A place of accepting that we were more than a one-night stand. We were going to be a family, and if I lost either of them, would I want to carry on with life?

It's a selfish thought. My family alone is plenty of reason to live, but handling a world where Mia isn't part of it is unthinkable.

"Who was it?" I blurt out. I'd been so focused on Mia that the intruder never crossed my mind.

"I don't know," Coral whimpers as she grips her knees tightly, nails digging in. "I was so scared. Mia told me to hide, so I did." She's openly sobbing now, and I take her hand.

"It's not your fault, Coral. Mia is a fierce protector; she never would have allowed you to be hurt." The truth of that kills me. "Did you see her?" Do I even want to know?

"No. They took her to the ambulance before I was even out of the tub. I don't know anything. I wish it was me." The near-silent confession makes me hit the brakes and pull over to the side of the road.

Gripping Coral's shoulders, I turn her to face me. "Listen. There isn't a world in which that should have been you. It shouldn't have been Mia, either, but if given the choice again, she would have done the same thing. I hate that she's likely hurting, but she wouldn't want you to blame yourself or wish for it to have been you. She got you and your sister out of your situation because you both deserve to have an amazing life." Giving the girl a quick hug, we drive the rest of the way in silence.

Bishop is working to find out who broke in and hurt Mia, and as soon as he has a name, the man is fucking dead.

"Go. I'll park," Bishop offers as I screech to a halt in the ambulance bay.

"Come on." I hold Coral's hand again as we rush inside. Thankfully, the triage nurse

isn't busy and waves us over. "I'm looking for my wife, MiaBella Dion; she was brought in by ambulance."

The woman taps away on a keyboard before a noticeable change overtakes her expression, and the fear I've been fighting off sails in like a wrecking ball.

"She's in surgery." My heart plummets to my toes. "I'll get a nurse to come down to get you. She'll be able to give you a far better update than I can."

Thanking her for her help, we move over to the waiting room chairs and drop into them. Coral slumps next to me, appearing every bit as torn up as I am.

"How long have you known Mia?" I ask.

"Six or seven months. She met Charlotte first." I never got the details of their situation because, if I'm honest, it never mattered to me. They needed help, and I was there and willing to do it. "I met her about a month later, I guess. She's the one who convinced us to come forward. Then Castle and Cross got involved, and that's when..."

When Mia worked her magic to get them into Haven House.

## CHAPTER 16

MiaBella

Everything hurts like little fires lit all over my body. My throat hurts, my head pounds, breathing makes me want to cry, and as I move my fingers, I whimper. At least, I think I do because I don't hear anything above the incessant beeping sounds.

Movement in my belly sets off a chain reaction of agony, and I try to scream but am

unable to do so. The room is blurry when my eyes crack open slightly, but I can't see more than a few feet in front of me. Closing them again, I count down from one hundred until my nerves have calmed some and stopped the imminent freak out. Recalling what happened brings on an agonizing headache, so I start counting again.

“Miss Mia? Are you okay?” Coral's sweet voice is like a violin at a symphony. Welcoming and calming.

Raising my hand slightly, the warmth of hers holding onto me is soothing. She rests her hand on my palm and quietly cries in the room.

When she collects herself, she says, “I'll get Mr. Hendrix. He went to grab us some drinks and snacks. He didn't want to leave you, I swear, but me wandering around alone was not a good idea, either.”

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I give her a thumbs up because nodding isn't in the cards for me right now.

She releases my hand after another squeeze, and the door whooshes open and closed as she leaves. My memory struggles to come up with what happened that landed me in the hospital. There's this sense of urgency I feel to my marrow, but I can't figure out why. The more I try to remember, the harder my head pounds, until all that's left is a ringing in my ears that makes things ten times worse. It's not until hands on my wrists pull them away, and I realize that I was digging my palms into my eyes, trying to stem the pounding.

"Princess." Hendrix's smooth voice makes me sob as he draws me gently into his chest. "Sshh, baby, everything is okay now. You're fine, the baby is fine. I'll take care of you."

"What happened?" I ask between sobs as my chest threatens to explode.

Hendrix pulls back, and there's quiet tension in the room as a warm cloth gently wipes at my eyes. I blink a few times until my vision clears, well, mostly. Apparently, I have at least one black eye because my sight out of it is deplorable, and it feels tender as I blink.

"You don't remember?" Hendrix finally asks, his gaze unwavering from mine.

"I'm trying, but my head pounds when I think too hard." Could I have a concussion? And hearing my voice now, there is something wrong with my throat. It hurts to speak, to swallow the little saliva in my mouth, and my voice is hoarse.

“Let’s get the doctor or nurse in here, and then I’ll get you an explanation, okay?” He helps me lie back down, taking as much of my weight as possible so that the places where I currently ache don’t tense or stretch.

Hendrix then leaves the room quickly. Coral sits in a chair in the corner, appearing pale and absolutely terrified.

“Coral?” The girl’s head snaps up, and I offer a hand, reaching for her. She immediately moves closer, careful of where she’s touching, until I pat the bed beside me. “Lay with me,” I encourage, and after a few minutes, she’s cuddled into my side, her head resting on my shoulder and her arms hugging mine to her chest.

I feel the rigidity in her body as she struggles to hold it together. “I’m sorry, Mia.”

“I may not remember what happened, Coral, but I’m certain it’s not your fault.” Patting her arm is all I’m able to do, but after a couple of minutes, she relaxes again, and by the time Hendrix is back with a doctor, Coral is out cold.

“Miss Dion, I’m Doctor Jules Perry. How are you feeling?” The woman is tall, wears large glasses, and has blonde hair in a messy knot on her head. The lab coat hides her figure, but I like the way her eyes focus on me.

“Like I’ve been hit by a truck.”

I cough from the apparent damage to my throat, and Hendrix brings over a cup with a straw, offering me a drink of ice-cold water. I thank him.

“That’s to be expected.” She grips my wrist to check my vitals before writing notes in my chart. “Do you remember what happened?”

“I’ve tried,” I reply. “But my head starts pounding, and I have to stop.”

“That’s to be expected. You have a grade 3 concussion, and based on the information provided to me, you were likely unconscious for nearly ten minutes.”

“Does that mean I’ll never remember?”

“Not at all. It just means you need to rest and focus on healing.” I’m almost afraid to ask what my injuries are.

“Healing...from what, exactly?” Hendrix squeezes my hand, and fear strikes my heart. “The baby...I felt it moving before. I wanted to die, but he or she was moving. Is something wrong?”

“No, not at all. Shockingly.” Frowning at the doctor’s comment sets off a new wave of nausea. “Breathe in and out slowly.” Listening to her instructions, she waits until the feeling has passed. “So, here’s the damage.” She sits on the bed at my feet. “Three bruised ribs, a small spleen laceration, which we fixed with surgery. The concussion...you have ten stitches in your head for that. Also, multiple bruises on your face, arms, and legs.”

“Oh my god.” I press my palm to my chest, trying to ease the rising panic. Being clueless about what happened is killing me. It clearly had something to do with Coral, but apparently, nobody was with me or has any idea what occurred.

“Just breathe, Mia. Everything is going to be okay.” Jules offers me an oxygen mask to help regain my control and ease the panic. “You are going to be fine. The baby is fine. We’ll talk about restrictions until you give birth in a little bit. For now, just relax with your husband and daughter, and I’ll be back to check on you in a little while.”

I wait until the doctor leaves before addressing Hendrix. “Daughter? Husband?”

Red tinges his cheeks as a crooked smile lifts one corner of his mouth. “It was the



only way we could get in here.”

Staring down at Coral, the sweet, tortured, thirteen-year-old girl, I can’t bring myself to dismiss the idea. “And they believed you with our ages?”

“It’s not like they asked her age. She’s kind of small; it could be believable.” He shrugs and makes me smile.

This man is so complex. There is no doubt he’s as deadly as they come, but he’s got a soft heart for us.

“She could be...” I say.

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Coral and Charlotte are technically wards of the state of Florida due to the living situation with their uncle, after the death of their parents.

“Yeah, they could,” he replies, and when our eyes meet, it’s obvious that he’s thinking the same thing. “If you wanted to.”

“Do you?” I formed a close connection with the girls from the first day I met Charlotte. It feels like a lifetime ago.

Hendrix hesitates, blowing out a breath, and I suddenly feel foolish. It’s not like we’ve decided to be together. He doesn’t owe me this type of commitment.

“It’s okay. It was a silly idea,” I say, closing my eyes, letting him off the hook, and resting as instructed.

## CHAPTER 17

Hendrix

Ifucked up. Royally. She gave me the perfect opportunity to convince her I’m interested in a relationship, and I remained silent. Not because I’m opposed to the idea of making the sisters a permanent part of our family, I’m not. They’re both incredibly sweet and resilient after all they’ve gone through. It’s me. I’m afraid to fuck them up even more, to be the reason they falter. To have them feel like being part of our family leads to destruction.

Enhancing their life is the goal. Whether it’s with us, another family, or they age out

of the system and flourish on their own.

It's the middle of the night now. Coral has been passed out in bed with Mia since around nine. After getting them both to eat something. Mom and Dad brought Charlotte around about an hour before that and stayed for a bit. When they left, Charlotte remained with us, not wanting to leave her sister just yet and hesitant to ask for what she needed.

With encouragement from me and Mia, she ate a little bit after the other two had finished. She's now on the cot that was brought in for me, not wanting her to be uncomfortable. I haven't been able to think of sleeping, either, because I need to know who the asshole is that hurt Mia before ever resting again.

Getting Coral to open up to me about who was there and who he was looking for has been difficult. She's traumatized and badgering her for answers won't help anyone.

For the last few hours, I've been looking at houses in both Pensacola and Mobile. Mia should have options, and if this is something I can take off her plate, I'll do it. And surprisingly, Castle was helpful when inquiring about her style preferences.

She favors more outdoor space than indoor space. A vegetable and fruit garden is a must, with lots of space to plant flowers and create an outdoor living area. The baby and both girls will need their own bedrooms, plus more, so we can expand our family.

A suite with our own bathroom, closets, and seating area is crucial for me. Spending time with Mia is my top priority.

"Why are you still awake?" Mia's sleepy voice pulls me from the laptop screen.

"Can't sleep when someone has hurt you, but I can't leave until I know all three of you are safe, either." We still don't know if the man who attacked Mia was one of the

girls' other uncles looking for revenge.

"We're alright, Hendrix. You can sleep because you won't be useful to anyone if you're too exhausted to function." Christ, I love how strong she is.

Moving to the side of the bed where Coral feigns sleep, I sit next to Mia's hip, lean forward a hair away from her lips, and whisper, "I wasn't there to protect you when you needed me. Let me do this." Pressing forward, our lips meet, and for a split second, I forget the world around us, hoping she does, too.

"Okay, Hendrix. Tonight, you can be our knight. Tomorrow, you sleep." She points a finger at me and arches a brow.

I know a demand when I hear one. "Yes, ma'am."

With one last kiss and the assurance she has everything she needs before fixing the blanket on Charlotte's sleeping body, I take my seat again. Apparently dozing off after putting a bid in on a house in a gated community in Pensacola. The plan is to close quickly and get the nominal amount of furniture in before the week is out. It's likely not possible, but I offered several thousand dollars extra in cash beyond the price of the house.

The smell of caffeine hits me before my eyes open, and the sound of quiet female laughter fills the air, warmth spreading throughout my chest. I groan as I roll my neck, cracking the stiffness out of it.

"Good morning, sleepy head." Hadley's chipper voice is not one I expected.

"Hi, squirt." She tosses a wrapped breakfast sandwich at me before Charlotte hands me a cup of coffee. "Where's Ashton?"

Her man and I got off on the wrong foot when they started seeing each other, but I like to think we're friendly now. He loves Hads and has proven it every day they've been together. Can't begrudge him anymore.

"He had a meeting at one of the clubs. Mom and Dad drove me. They went to harass the doctors about when we can spring the prisoner here."

Mia is sitting up in bed, with Coral and Charlotte sitting on either side of her as the three of them share a breakfast of pancakes and bacon.

"Do you girls want to go down to the cafeteria and grab something more?" My dad being here has me a little more willing to leave Mia for a brief period, but they both shake their head no.

"Relax, Hendrix. I swear, we're all fine." Even in my darkest thoughts, she hears everything I don't say.

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“He’s always been a bit of a hot head. Thinking he needs to do everything for everyone else and forgetting to take care of himself.” Hadley’s pointed glare after saying this speaks of the last couple of years. Of all the pain I’ve gone through since my final mission. The one that nearly killed me in the end.

“I’ve picked up on that,” Mia says with a smile, her eyes warming when she looks at me. The emotional display gets my dick jerking behind my zipper. This woman can rile me up like nothing else, and she has no idea just what that means.

“Hendrix.” At Dad’s voice, I glance over to see Mom entering the room with a nurse. The girls shuffle off the bed and move to sit on the cot, while Hadley finds a corner to stand in, next to Mom. “Let’s talk.”

“I’ll be right back,” I tell Mia, making sure the girls are settled before following my father out.

“Holden has a name. He’s waiting on you downstairs.” He must notice my hesitation. “Luther and King are already on their way up. We’ll protect her, son. Go get the son of a bitch who nearly killed my grandbaby and daughter. Make him hurt.”

“Thanks, Dad.”

I shouldn’t be surprised by the anger in his tone, by the thirst for blood that the older men in our family always have a need for. They grew up on the streets, fought their way to the top, and shed more blood than anyone knows in order to maintain control.

We grew up with the same intensity, but we never wondered if we were loved

because the moms made sure we all knew it. After a quick goodbye with Mia, where she couldn't ask too many questions because of the nurse, I head down to find Holden waiting for me.

“Where's Bishop?” I ask. He wouldn't miss this.

“He and Castle are following the asshole. Making sure they don't lose him. A few more guys from the MC are prepared to do a snatch and grab.”

I was aware that Castle rode down this morning, but hadn't realized he brought anyone with him, though I shouldn't be surprised.

“So, what do you want to do?”

The million-dollar question. “I want to gut him and light him on fire.”

Holden whistles with an amused smirk. “Like father, like son, huh?”

That story is infamous in our family. How my dad did the same thing to my grandfather that he had done to my mom, what he had still planned to do at the time.

“A perfect way to make sure he knows who he fucked with,” I retort.

Holden is no stranger to violence. It's been a few years since the family learned about what he was doing in the dead of night when he found a person who didn't get the justice they deserved. There's no judgment coming my way from him.

Calling Bishop, I tell him, “Take him to Beechmont.” The warehouse on the docks has long since been a place for this type of situation. Spending a lot of time with this asshole will be my pleasure and it provides the needed privacy.

## CHAPTER 18

MiaBella

“Did you mean it?” Coral asks once everyone leaves, and we’re playing a game of Go Fish in bed while waiting to hear about my release.

“Mean what?” I ask, my voice casual.

“That we could be part of your family.”

Charlotte sits up from the cot where she was watching a movie on my phone. “You said that?” I’m not sure if Charlotte is angry or skeptical. Maybe both.

“I did,” I say to Charlotte. “And I did,” I tell Coral. “I didn’t realize you were awake.” Her cheeks tinge pink. “If it’s something you two would like to discuss, you should. If you already know you don’t want it, that’s okay, too.” No matter what, I’d like to be in their lives.

“So, you’d be what...like our mom?”

You can’t miss the hope in Coral’s tone, despite her shooting looks at her sister for approval. Whatever Charlotte decides, Coral will do the same, even if it’s not what she wants.

Laying my cards down, they both get my undivided attention. “I would be whatever you want me to be. Don’t feel pressured to decide right now; these things take time, and we have plenty of it. If you want me to petition the courts for fostering, I can do that, and we can test the waters.”

I glance between the girls. They are having a conversation with their eyes and facial



expressions. Their bond is unmistakable and strong. Something I hope they will always have, no matter where they end up in life. If I can provide support, then I will.

“Where would we live?” Charlotte asks. And boy, is that a good damn question.

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“That is a little complicated right now.” I wish it weren’t. “I’m not sure what’s going on with Hendrix and me and the baby. It’s unclear whether we’re together or not, but I promise, I will have a home for you.”

They’re quiet for a moment before Coral leans forward and fake whispers, “Can we know the sex of the baby?”

Getting in even closer, I mimic her actions. “I don’t even know yet.”

Her sweet giggles are a welcome sound. Since meeting Coral, she’s been more closed off than other thirteen-year-olds, but I get it, knowing what she suffered through. Charlotte is the one I worry about the most. She shielded her little sister as much as possible until I could get them out.

When Charlotte moves to sit on the bed next to me, reaching for her sister’s hand, then grasping mine, I’m shocked when she says, “We want to be yours.”

“Hendrix’s, too, if he wants us,” Coral adds quietly, like she’s afraid of immediate rejection.

“I do.” We all jump slightly at the masculine tone as the man himself enters the room he left us in hours ago. “I want all three of you to be mine.”

“You’ve been listening.” I raise my chin in challenge with a crooked smile.

“For a few minutes.” There’s no shame in his confession. “I’m sorry I wasn’t clear about that last night.” My heart pounds in my chest as he comes closer, a bag of

delicious-smelling food in one hand. Hospital food is not all it's cracked up to be. "Anyone interested in seeing the house we could be living in here?"

The girls jump with excitement. Unfortunately for me, the jostling makes me wince and want to cry out in pain. Instead, I bite my lip because they'll feel guilty.

"Whoa." Hendrix rushes over. "How about we hop off the bed so Mia can lie back and rest some. Here, Charlotte, you can pull the food out. It's grazing-style, so a little bit of everything for everyone."

The girls are quick to do as they're asked. The table we'd been playing cards on gets moved away from the bed, and everything is set up so I'll be able to grab what I want, too.

"No problem... Dad." The hesitation in Charlotte is rewarded by the biggest grin I've ever seen from Hendrix. Pride puffs out his chest, and the girl relaxes when she realizes he likes it.

"Dad," I whisper, a tear in my eye.

"I like the sound of it," he confesses as he slides in next to me, allowing the girls to plate up their food and get settled together on the cot. "You get to leave tomorrow morning before end of shift. We'll go to my parents' place, but I'd like you to look at the house I bought today."

My eyes widen. "You bought a house? A whole house?"

"Yes?" he stammers.

"So, we'll be living here?" I don't mind. I love Castle and the club, but here the girls will have even more family, more cousins. The baby, too.

“Well, we’ll also have your house in Mobile. I know you spent time making it a sanctuary, and it’d be nice to have something there for when we visit your brother.”

“You think of everything?”

He shrugs, pulling me into his side, and we sit and watch the girls chat and eat, making plans for their rooms once Hendrix shows them that they have their own suite in the new house. There’s a bathroom that opens into both of their bedrooms, and they’ll share an enormous walk-in closet but still have the privacy of their space. Their excitement makes me emotional, and when I begin to cry, Hendrix panics, but after expressing that it’s a good thing, he calms down.

“We’re really doing this,” I say to him after the girls have fallen asleep together on the cot. I’ll never understand how they both fit.

“We are.” He kisses my temple sweetly. “I’m leaving for a few hours. Holden and Easton will be outside the room if you need anything.”

“Where are you going?” I likely already know the answer.

“To have a word with the man who hurt you.” I have mixed feelings about that.

Resting my head against the pillow, I struggle to find my words. “I still don’t remember what happened.” And it’s killing me. I dream about it because I wake up feeling panicked and terrified, only getting flashes of what happened, but no memories.

Hendrix grabs his phone from the table and taps a few times before showing me an image. “This is him. His name is Roger Harding, and he was looking for his wife, Rebecca, who had left Haven House a week before. He was never going to find her because she has a new name now.”

Closing my eyes, I remember her name being screamed in my face, the hand around my throat, and the panic I felt about being choked to death. “He was choking me.” My fingers flutter to my neck. “Screaming her name, demanding to know where she was.”

“That tracks. Roger became increasingly violent in their marriage. He nearly killed her twice before Noelle offered help.”

“You’re going to kill him.” It’s not a question. It’s a fact.

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“I can hand him over to the police, but then they’ll demand to know where Rebecca is, her new name. He’ll have access to her again.... To you. I can’t let either of those things happen.”Neither could I.

I open my eyes, and the warrior Hendrix has been his entire life is there in the fierce expression on his face. Placing my hands on each cheek, I pull him closer until our lips meet. “I love you, Hendrix Adair. Please make sure you come back to us.”

His eyes widen with shock this time as he bombards my mouth with his range of emotions, not voicing them but ensuring I get his meaning by his touch. Watching him leave is the hardest thing I’ve ever done, but he needs to do this, and I agree that some people simply need to die.

## CHAPTER 19

Hendrix

Ididn’t want to leave my girls in the hospital, but this needs to be taken care of before anyone discovers the man is missing. Castle, Cross, Prince, and Joker have been meting out their own torture all evening long. Not killing him, but not allowing him a moment of peace, either.

“Roger!” I shout his name as I pour a small jerrican of gasoline over his head. While I might want to spend days or weeks making him suffer, I have a woman who needs my support when she leaves the hospital in the morning.

“What do you want now?” His pain-filled groan has the men around me chuckling.

Saint walks up behind him and shoves a blade into his shoulder, burying it to the hilt. The bastard's screams echo through the empty warehouse.

"How's Lake?" I ask Saint, knowing it will rile his anger because she is not doing well. We found out one of her tormentors has been stalking her, but making it appear accidental. She hasn't left her house in weeks now.

Saint growls and bares his teeth at me like a rabid wolf. "Don't fucking say her name." Worse than I thought.

Glancing at Nolan, the sorrow in his eyes over what's happening with his sister is gut-wrenching.

"Roger, you nearly killed my woman, you terrified my daughter. And you could have hurt my unborn baby. Any one of those things would mean your death. Combined, however, means suffering." Fear streaks across his face, and the smell of urine mingles with the gas fumes.

Flicking my lighter to life, no time is wasted as Saint shoves his knife into the helpless man's gut three times before I drop the flame in his lap. Everyone winces at the tortured screams, but the smell of burning flesh makes me back away.

"Christ, you are gruesome," Castle mutters as he stands next to me. "Anything happens to my sister because of your issues, and I'll be doing the same thing to you." The warning is one I can respect.

The bikers leave once the screams have stopped, but I don't move until the flames die. Minutes, hours, I have no idea until I step outside and see the sun begin to rise, and Saint is sitting by himself on the tailgate of my truck.

"You need to talk?" I ask, only having about an hour before Mia and the girls will be

awake.

“I need their names.” Saint’s growl is a permanent part of his voice now. “I need to make the nightmares stop and show her that I’m not like them.”

Whoa. That’s new information. “Has she said you are?”

“Not directly, but I see the fear in her eyes when I’m around. Luther, Nolan, Damien, they don’t get that same expression.” His misery is palpable.

“They’re her family, man. She doesn’t have to fear them for nothing.” I get where he’s coming from, though. “It’s not you specifically that she fears, Saint, it’s your intensity. She’s afraid of what will happen when you lose control. And my friend, you will lose control when she finally accepts all of you, too. I think she’s a little afraid of her reaction when you do.”

He stares at me, blinking rapidly while digesting my words. I don’t expect any grand revelations. Saint has always been a man of few words and keeps most of what he’s feeling close to the chest. The only people who genuinely know what’s inside his head are Lake and his mother, Meadow. His father, Carver, might understand his actions and feelings, but they aren’t the heart-to-heart kind of people.

“Hey, talk to Scotty.” His younger sister has always been able to talk sense into him.

“Scotty.” He says it like he’d forgotten he had a younger sister. “Yeah, thanks.”

I watch as he walks away. He drove my truck here, but he wants to be alone right now, so I’m sure he’ll find his way home.

On my way back to the hospital, I decide to stop at my apartment and shower first. The last thing I want is for there to be any evidence of what I was doing left behind.



Mia will know, no matter what, but the girls don't need to.

After cleaning up and grabbing some clothes for Mia, I'm at the hospital in no time with coffee and breakfast. I arrive just as Mia emerges from the bathroom.

"You were gone all night."

Setting the stuff down, I help her back into bed. "I'm sorry." I have nothing else to say.

"Is it over?" she asks, reaching for the coffee I brought.

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“Yes.” No sense in lying. She nods and reaches for the bag of food. “Hungry?” I ask.

“Starving,” she whispers, not wanting to wake the girls. “I feel like I haven’t eaten in days, and peanut is making their displeasure known.”

“Mom said I was like that, too.” I hand her a muffin and a breakfast wrap, then open a small container of fresh fruit.

“You are beastly.” She winks to take away the sting; however, she’s not wrong. “The nurse has already been in. She said it’d be about another hour or so for the doctor to be on shift.”

“No rush. Do you want to shower before putting these on?” I hold up the bag of clothes. “I can help if you need it.” The bruising and stitches in her body might enrage me, but I’ll do anything for this woman.

Just as Mia finishes eating, the girls begin to stir. Hopefully, they don’t realize I was gone all night and ask questions. I don’t want to lie, but I’ll have no other choice, either.

“Do we get to go home today?” Coral asks excitedly as I hand her a juice and a container with bacon, eggs, and French toast, with a cup of fresh fruit on the side.

“Yeah, Cors, we’re going home today,” I tell her.

Both girls smile before digging into their breakfasts, chatting happily about home-cooked meals and family game nights.

I had no idea this was the life I would be gifted with when I met Mia all those months ago, but I couldn't be happier about the end results.

## CHAPTER 20

MiaBella

I've been out of the hospital for a month, still have no memory of what happened that night, and now we're finally moving into the house Hendrix bought for us.

The first few days at his parents' home were stressful and filled with pain. In the hospital, I'd been given medications primarily through IV, so I hadn't realized just how bad my injuries were beyond waking up the first time. It took us a few days to figure out a routine that kept the pain almost non-existent. I've healed well. My ribs still hurt, I continue to get awful headaches, and the surgery site gives me fits at times when I overdo it. But overall, everything is on schedule.

Obtaining custody of Coral and Charlotte was challenging at first due to their circumstances and the presence of living relatives. It's only because of my meticulous notes and recorded sessions with the girls that we were granted full custody a week ago after an emergency hearing, which included the judge in Alabama who testified for us.

"Don't lift that," Charlotte growls at me as I go to grab my suitcase from the back of Hendrix's truck. A lot of his family has been helping us move into the house and arranging things as I like, at the insistence of Hendrix and Castiel. They refuse to have a piece of furniture touch the off-white hardwood floors without my approval. I had to come outside to get some air because all I want to do is lie in bed and sleep for a week.

The baby has been growing like a weed, and the women of the family are taking bets

that I'm carrying a boy because of how low he's settled in my stomach and the heart rate. All myths, of course, but it's fun seeing a family unit bond this way. Coral and Charlotte have begun opening up more and more every day, thanks to the positive attention they receive and the help of their therapists.

"I wasn't touching it." My hands raise as she eyes me skeptically.

"Dad, come get your wife in line!" she yells, and Hendrix immediately rushes out to see what's going on.

The girls don't trust a lot of men, but Hendrix holds their adoration. Castiel, Bishop, and Saint have also been around so much that they no longer hesitate to interact with them.

He growls. "What are you doing, princess?"

"Sitting?" I smile sweetly.

He snorts, rolls his eyes, and picks me up to sit fully on the tailgate. Pointing at Charlotte, he orders, "Keep an eye on her."

"Well, okay then," I grouch halfheartedly. "What do you want for dinner, sweetheart?" I have this wicked craving for jalapeno cheese garlic bread loaded with hot sauce.

"Spaghetti?" Charlotte offers. Which also sounds fantastic.

"Why don't you go grab your sister and Hadley, and we'll hit the grocery store."

Hadley has been amazing with both girls. She's taken on more of a best friend role than an aunt, and I think they've needed that. They've done pizza nights and movie

marathons while I recovered, and now that we have our own home, I'm thinking about a monthly backyard BBQ with the entire family.

Charlotte runs inside as I slowly get up and walk to my car. Luckily, I brought my purse out with me, so I don't have to trek back up those steps to find it and get in someone's way.

I insisted that the girls' rooms were the first areas put together furniture-wise, and thankfully, that's done. Now the guys are moving in the new appliances for the kitchen, so I'd rather not trip anyone up with how slow I can be.

"Dinner shopping?" Hadley says while she and the girls come bouncing out of the house. Hendrix stands in the doorway with a stern expression on his face.

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Waving my fingers at him, he shakes his head and gives a slight grin. As we pull out, Hadley looks at me. “You make him happy.” There is emotion in her tone. “Thank you.”

I nod in response. If I speak, my emotions will get the best of me. Hendrix has come so far since I met him. I can’t imagine how his family has felt with his struggles and being kept in the dark, for the most part.

“When we were younger, Lake and I used to climb trees like crazy. We’d go so high that the branches would become slimmer and start cracking, and the top of the tree would sway. Hendrix and Saint would get so mad.”

“Did it ever break?” My eyes shift from the road to Hadley’s amused face.

“Once, but it was a small tree, and the fall was maybe ten feet. I had a few scrapes and bruises, but Hendrix was even more vigilant after that.” She’s telling me this for a reason, so I remain silent. “He joined the military because of his insane protective instincts. I know he thinks he screwed up on that last mission. Maybe he did; he won’t share the details with me. But I know he’ll protect the four of you with every breath in his body.”

“I know that, too.” That’s never been in doubt.

“Please, just don’t break his heart.” The affection in her tone, the fear that I could ever do that, is something I struggle with as well.

Reaching over, I grip her arm as I pull into the grocery store parking lot. “I have

every intention of protecting him just as fiercely.”

“Yeah, I figured as much.” She wears the grin of a girl who proved her point. “So, did we decide on dinner?”

“Well, Char and I decided on spaghetti, but with so many people, I’m thinking of just tossing it on the counter.” Three confused looks focus on me, and I laugh before explaining. “Cover the countertops with tin foil or parchment paper, toss the cooked noodles and meat sauce over it, and grab a fork! No dishes. Well, barely any.”

The girls giggle in the backseat, and there’s the widest grin on Hadley’s face. These girls are going to get me into some troubling situations with Hendrix in the future, and I won’t have a single complaint.

The more I get to know Hendrix’s family, especially the women, the more comfortable I feel about settling down in Florida instead of closer to home. It won’t take much to get a transfer for my job, especially with the outreach work I do. Now, convincing Castle and the guys that the move is the best choice for the baby and me is another story.

After our shopping is done, I’m beyond exhausted and ask Hadley to drive us home. Minutes later, I’m asleep but waking to the feeling of Hendrix’s arms around my body as he carries me inside.

“Next time, just order it to be delivered.” He kisses my head as he places me in our new bed. “Sleep, I’ll cook and come get you once it’s ready so you can do this spread the girls are so excited about.”

My eyes close before he’s finished speaking. For the first time in my adult life, I’m surrounded by people who genuinely care about us, and it feels like the family I lost out on in my youth.

“Mom, wake up.” Whispers surround me as I break free of my nap and the comfort of a warm bed. “Dinner’s ready. Dad figured out how to do the counter toss thing.” Coral’s happiness shines brightly on her young face as I reach a hand out to touch her cheek. She leans into my touch and smiles.

“I’m sorry for what happened to you girls, but I’m so happy to have you both in my life.”

Climbing into bed, Coral’s tinier body cuddles into me as I wrap an arm around her and let her cry. She hasn’t done this nearly enough in my opinion, and I’m glad she trusts me to hold her through the storm.

A few minutes pass before Charlotte and Hendrix come looking for us. Sharing a worried look, Hendrix settles in at my back, while Charlotte lies behind her younger sister. I don’t know how long we lay like this, but eventually my grumbling stomach breaks the mood, and everyone laughs as we climb out of bed.

“We good?” Hendrix looks each of us in the eye, waiting until we nod before ushering us downstairs, where everyone is enjoying dinner off the large island and chatting and laughing about it. These are the kind of family nights I want for the rest of my life.

“Everywhere you go, you make an impact.” Hendrix kisses the shell of my ear, wrapping his arms around my waist.

“I love your family,” I say, then turn in his arms and inhale his scent. “But I love you more.” Holding my breath, I await his response.

Brushing his hands through my hair, he tilts my head and brings his lips to mine. “I love you too, MiaBella, my sweetprincess with a heart of gold. I love you more than I ever thought possible and the life you’re creating for us.”



Lifting to my toes, I take the kiss I so desperately crave. This man holds me while I explore his mouth, not stopping until the catcalls and hollers to get a room interrupt and make me blush furiously.

“Forever, Mia. We have forever.” Of course, he’s right.

Epilogue

HENDRIX

Eight Months Later.

“Jesus, princess, are you trying to get me to commit a felony?”

The kids are at my parents for the weekend, and we came up to Mobile to spend some adult time at Mia’s brother’s clubhouse. Currently, she’s dancing her way through the room in a skimpy crop top and short skirt, never allowing anyone to touch her but me. What no one else likely notices is the tiny pregnancy bump of the twins she’s carrying. We only found out last week, hence the trip. Exhaustion already calls her name quite frequently, and she wanted a safe night out after a close call a few months ago with Hadley, Noelle, Bea, and Aria.

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A group of guys thought the women were fair game at one of my brother-in-law's adults-only clubs, and well, my wife gave them one hell of a wake-up call before anyone could get to them. She broke one guy's jaw with a right hook she's been hiding from me and split another one's head open with a bottle she smashed over it.

Pretty sure that was the night we created the twins. I couldn't get enough of her. She's attractive as hell, but knowing there's this wild streak inside of her sets me on fire. I spent three days fucking her anywhere and everywhere I could until she literally told me to stop because she was so sore.

Now, I'm renovating one of the spare rooms into a nursery for two. We haven't told anyone but the girls yet, and they're bursting at the seams for more babies in the house. They've been a huge help with our son, their brother, and they adore taking care of him. I just need to keep my cool until Mia's ready to tell our families, because lately, I've been a feral beast, snapping and snarling at any male within a two-foot perimeter of her. I hate men around her. She's mine, and it's best they know that before I snap their necks.

Watching Mia sway in the middle of the bar with a couple of other girls hanging around, I get pissed when one of them moves to touch my woman's toned body, grazing her fingers across Mia's stomach. Her eyes meet mine, and I know trouble when I see it as she moves closer to the other woman.

"That's enough of that shit." I smack my beer bottle on the counter harder than I need to and storm over to Mia, picking her up and taking her to the upstairs room that belongs to us when we come. If we have the kids along, we stay at Mia's old house, but this works for the two of us.

“You trying to get in trouble, princess?”

The door slams shut behind us, and I toss her on the bed and watch as she scrambles towards the headboard, spreading her legs wide to reveal that she’s not wearing panties, then lifting her shirt so her full breasts pop out.

“God, yes. It took you long enough.”

Whipping off my shirt, I unzip my jeans, drag my cock out through the zipper, and ignore the pinch of pain. I grip Mia’s ankles and yank her down the bed until she’s close enough that I can spank her bare pussy.

“Bad girl,” I grunt; she yelps.

Thrusting deep inside her body with no hesitation, I love the way she screams my name.

“God, yes, Hendrix, harder.” Her nails dig into my scalp as she pants in my ear. The burn racing straight to my balls, makes my dick throb relentlessly. “Fuck me harder. Everything aches for you.”

“How the fuck did I get so damn lucky?”

Adding more power to my movements, I hold her tight and give her what she pleads for until she screeches and is unable to move from pure exhaustion.

Pulling out, I flip her over to her belly, drag her hips up, and fuck into her soft cunt. My release races to the surface, and I plow into her one last time, holding still until my limbs regain feeling.

“Fucking love you, princess,” I whisper into her ear.

She turns her head and smiles while murmuring, “Ditto,” before passing out.

After freshening up, I bring a warm cloth to clean my MiaBella before stripping off her clothes and getting her settled in bed. Staring down at her, I relish just how lucky I am to call this woman mine.

The End!