



**SINNER LIKE ME © 2014 Avril Ashton**

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## **Dedication**

Sinner Like Me, and all the Free Reads in the *Brooklyn Sinners* universe, is dedicated to the lovers, and the haters. Much of loving yourself and what you do is about flipping your fingers up to those who watch from the sidelines and criticize.

Here's to good loving, hard loving, and knowing when to shut up 'cause you've got that loving.

*Av*

## Chapter One

Fifteen minutes late. He looked at the watch on his wrist then at the clock on the wall in the hotel bar. Yup. Fifteen minutes late. He'd give his date another ten before he walked out and never looked back. He didn't do rejection. He damn sure didn't get stood up. But he should have expected it, shouldn't he? Late hours, always the late hours working. And where did that leave him? Waiting in a dimly lit hotel bar on their anniversary.

He eyed the bottles lining the wall behind the bulky bartender. Times like these he wished he was a lover of alcohol. He'd be drowning his sorrows in something dark and expensive guaranteed to burn and make him forget. At least for a few.

With a heavy sigh, he pulled his cell phone from his jacket pocket and checked it. No missed calls. No unchecked texts. No surprise. A shadow fell across his table and he looked up at the waitress. A tiny black t-shirt stretched tight over her tits, barely reaching her pierced navel. Her jeans looked painted on her generous hips and thick thighs.

*Thought this was a respectable joint.*

The woman batted her fake lashes and placed the glass on her tray in front of him. "Compliments of the man over there." She flicked a thumb and he followed where she pointed.

A man sat across the room, his back to the wall in a booth all by himself. He couldn't make out the stranger's face, cloaked as he was in shadow, but he shook his head and looked back the waitress.

"No thanks. I don't drink." Her gaze dropped to the glass of clear liquid he'd been sipping on. "That's water. I don't drink, but you can relay my thanks." He dismissed her by

dropping his gaze back to his phone. He waited until she moved away then looked up. Mystery man was gone.

He couldn't remember the last time he'd been hit on. Maybe tonight he gave off the pissed and desperate vibe. It was his own fault really. He knew what he was getting into falling for someone who worked so hard, who gave his all to the job.

*Shit.* He drained the last of the water in his glass and got to his feet, making his way to the bar with long strides. "Water," he said to the bartender. "In a bottle, please." He sat on the closest stool and tried not to feel as let down as he felt. As disappointed. He tried, sure, but fuck it, he failed. Miserably. Wasn't the first time. Wasn't the second. He had decisions to make, now. Did he allow it to continue or did he call everything to a halt?

Something to think about.

"You look like someone kicked your puppy."

He froze at the low, husky voice then chanced a glance to his right. A man stood next to him. *Leaned*, more like. He leaned against the bar, his gaze heavy. The mystery man from earlier. He hadn't seen the man's face, but somehow he knew.

He wasn't in the mode for small talk, so he ignored the man.

"You don't look like you belong in a place like this."

All right, so mystery man wasn't taking the hint and definitely wasn't going away. He threw the guy a frown. "What do you want?"

Humor glinted in the man's dark eyes when he shrugged. "Just trying to make a new friend."

He rolled his eyes. "I'm not interested in making friends. Go away." He brought the bottle of water to his lips and took a swallow. Mystery Man's gaze dropped to his throat and didn't budge.

How rude.

"In town on business?" Mystery Man's dark eyebrow lifted.

"What's it to you?" And why was he engaging this uncouth stranger in conversation?

Mystery Man shrugged again, his wide shoulders moving under the black shirt and jacket he wore paired with jeans and black shoes. His body looked nice—Okay really fit and tight, but he wasn't really looking.

"You look lost," Mystery Man said, "But I'm loving the way that suit fits you."

Fucking cheesy pickups. "I'm not lost."

Mystery Man sidled closer, until his body heat was...unmistakable.

"Do you always insist on staying where you're not wanted?" He tried leaning away from Mystery Man's heat, but the bastard jostled closer.

"Do you always insist on being so rude?"

"I'm rude?" He swung around and stared into Mystery Man's laughing eyes. "Fuck off." He licked his lips and didn't miss the way Mystery Man's gaze turned all hooded and hungry. *Okay. Nope.* He hopped off the stool, stepped away, and Mystery Man blocked his path. "You have two seconds to get away from me. I won't ask a second time."

The sides of the stranger's mouth quirked up. "You look angry. Do you need to let off some steam? If so I'm your man." He winked.

He scoffed. "I'm not interested." He stepped around the man who grabbed his wrists. He looked down, staring at the rough fingers clamped around him. *Oh man.* Some kinda touch. His

heart raced, like he was out of breath. “Don’t touch me.” But he didn’t even try to shake off the man. Or pull away. And he sounded breathless. *What?*

Mystery Man just looked at him, his gaze penetrating, making him squirm. He held on to his stoic expression with an effort, trying his best not to give away how much that touch was affecting him.

“Your pulse is racing.”

*Well fuck.* He took a deep breath. This night was turning out to be all kinds of interesting, wasn’t it?

“Don’t tell me you’re not affected,” Mystery Man said. “I can see it in your eyes, the way you tremble when I—”

He closed the short distance between and kissed the man. To shut him up. Yes. But soon enough he was whimpering when Mystery Man held him tightly against his chest and plunged his tongue into his mouth. *Oh man. Yess.* Now he could cop to the trembling. And the hard dick between his legs. And loving the way the man kissing him smelled, decadent and hot.

Mystery Man broke the kiss and continued talking, “You taste so fucking fine.”

*Jesus.* He couldn’t believe he was doing this. He felt eyes on him and looked around. People were definitely staring. “You wanna talk or do you have something else on your mind?”

Mystery Man’s eyes flashed. Hot. Hmm. “I’ve got a room upstairs.”

*I just bet you do.* He didn’t allow himself to think beyond now, to regret the move he was about to make. He just gave himself permission to get swept away in the moment, in the heat and taste of a complete stranger. “Take me there.”

The second the hotel room door closed behind them, Mystery Man slammed him into the door, kissing him hard and deep. And wet. He writhed against the man, rubbing against him with needy sounds rumbling in the back of his throat. He buried his fingers in the other man's short hair, tugging, pulling as the stranger bit his bottom lip hard then sucked at the pain.

"Tell me your name," Mystery Man whispered against his jaw.

"No names." He pressed his erection into the stranger's middle as they fumbled around. Yanking away the stranger's jacket, he flung it across the room then tore apart his shirt.

"Fuck."

Buttons popped and scattered.

Mystery Man's teeth grazed his throat, nipped his collar bone and he threw his head back, knocking it against the door. He hissed when fingers cupped him through his pants, fondling him, squeezing. The stranger turned him until he faced the closed door, kissing his nape and licking his earlobe.

"You got someone waiting for you at home?" Mystery Man stroked him through his pants, root to tip.

He huffed out a breath. "Not tonight I don't." He pushed into the touch, begging without words. He wanted it rough and fast, anything to wipe out the doubts in the back of his head. The words begging him to be cautious. He reached behind and hung on to Mystery Man's neck, grinding on the hard cock poking his ass.

His jacket had long been discarded, he couldn't remember when. Now Mystery Man did away with his shirt and licked his way down his spine. He writhed, arching into those soft lips, trembling when his ass was palmed, squeezed.

Some fucking touch. He loved it. Fingers dipped under his waistband, scraped against the soft, sensitive flesh of his wet cock head and he groaned.

“Fuck.” He rocked forward, into the touch, then back onto the cock nestled between his ass cheeks. “Fuck me,” he begged. “Do it hard.”

Mystery Man dropped to his knees, yanking at his pants, and too late the act registered. The man froze.

“Panties.” The word was a mumble. “Nice.” He sank his teeth into his ass cheeks, biting him through the panties. “Sexy.”

“Then fuck me, don’t make me wait.”

Mystery Man pulled the black lace down, but not all the way. He left them bunched around his aching balls and turned him until his bobbing cock was in the stranger’s face.

“Do it,” he urged. “Suck me.”

Mystery Man bent his head and swallowed him down, his hot throat sucking him deeper and deeper.

“Shit.” He grabbed the man’s head and anchored himself. Then he went to work, hips snapping forward, sinking into the man’s convulsing throat with shaky moans. “God. God. This shit...” The man’s mouth was magic, and he loved it. His partner loved sucking cock, the enthusiastic moans gave him away. So he gave him what he wanted, fucked his mouth, fucked his throat until the other man gagged, until the fingers clamped on his hips dug deep enough to leave marks later.

Fingers hefted his balls, rolled them around and his legs buckled. Wet fingertips traced his crack, circled his hole and his legs collapsed. Crap. He was gonna come, gonna fucking lose himself.

“Please. Oh God.” He’d been turned into a beggar, and he did so proficiently. “Please.”

The stranger pulled off his cock and picked him up without a word. He wrapped his legs around the man’s waist and took his mouth, sucking on the tongue stabbing down his throat. He humped the cock right there, teasing at his ass. *Jesus*. He didn’t even know when his pants and panties had come off, but they were gone, and the hot length of cock at his ass sent him into a frenzy.

He bucked and Mystery Man pulled his ass cheeks apart, teasing his hole with that wet cock head.

“Fuck me.” He threw his head back when they started moving, bouncing in the man’s arms, trying and failing to get that cock where he wanted it. Fingers pinched his nipples, twisted them. He yelled and the stranger swallowed the sound before throwing him onto the mattress.

He bounced.

“Hands and knees.”

He trembled at the growled words and did as commanded. On his hands and knees, he buried his face in the pillows, pulling on his erection when two fingers pushed into him, slick, cool, zeroing in on his knot in a blink. Fire zinged through him, lightning fast. He undulated and slammed back on those digits. Two became three and he wailed at the pressure, biting the pillows, rocking back, knees apart, ass in the air as he took it.

Mystery Man’s palm came down on his ass in a blistering smack.

“Goddamn!” He shouted and clamped down on the base of his cock, stopping the orgasm in its tracks. “Fuck.”

“Can’t keep my eyes off that ass.” Mystery man licked his ear, bit the lobe. “Love the way it bounces for me.”

For him. Yes. All for him. There was no one else, not then, not when he was surrounded by everything hot and sexy and right.

The stranger covered him, front to back as he brought his slick cock to his entrance and pressed in. The burn dried out his mouth, and moistened his eyes. He breathed in and pushed out, taking it, because fuck if he didn't want it. All of it. He got it, and he was so lost in all the sensations swamping him he forgot to be scared of the position they were in, of being taken like he was being taken.

A long drawn out wail forced its way past his swollen lips. Soft words drifted to him through the fog of lust and pain, encouragement and carnal promise. He listened and soon heavy balls slapped up against his ass. He was filled, all the way full. He clenched at the thought and the stranger grunted, tightening his hold.

“Tell me when.”

He swallowed, clutched the sheets. “When.”

Stranger pulled out then slammed in, driving him higher. He shouted. The bed rocked. He pushed back on the monster cock in his ass. Dipping his head, he lifted his ass higher, and *motherfucker*, that cock sank even deeper.

Mystery Man fucked him at a punishing pace, one hand fisted in his hair, the other clamped down on his hips, holding him open to he could take it all. He took it, took that dick as it dug him out, broke him into pieces. There was no way to experience the pleasure without the pain, no way to get the fire without the burn. He sweated through it, each thrust sending his face smashing into the padded headboard. His cock was hard beyond belief, dripping pre-cum all over the mattress, and he rubbed all over the sticky wet spot.

He screamed all the way through the pounding, throat sore. He felt drunk and out of his mind. He didn't want to stop, didn't want it to end. And Stranger seemed to read him, his mood, his need, because he barreled through his channel like a battering ram, making his inner muscles burn and convulse.

He missed it, being handled like this. Rough and wild. He missed screaming out his enthusiasm until his throat hurt.

Stranger switched up his position, hit his prostate dead on, and he shouted, clawing at the mattress, trying to get away from the pounding. Rough fingers held his hips, yanked him back and he froze, body seizing up as he took that punishment.

“Oh God, I can't!” He couldn't fucking take more. Stranger stroked his cock, blunt fingernail scraping his corona. His body went haywire, shaking. His words hiccupped. “D-Don't. G-Gonna come.”

“Then do it.” Mystery Man twisted his wrist, jerked him off. “Come for me.” He kissed his neck, bit him.

He let go and pitched forward, coming and coming with a scream. Mystery Man fucked him through the orgasm, kept thrusting, and he kept coming, soaking the sheets with his seed.

“Feeling you come.” Mystery man's voice sounded strained. “That's the shit.”

He contracted at those words and that was all she wrote.

“Oh shit!” Stranger sounded surprised. He came, the spreading heat of his cum drawing a gasp.

They collapsed onto the bed, Mystery Man half on, half off his back. Fingers touched his, slid between them, held him. He eased up his grip on the sheets and squeezed those fingers. Man he loved those fingers.

Warm breath kissed his ear. “Happy Anniversary.”

*Hmm.* He grinned and turned his head, kissing those lips. He loved those lips, too. “Back at you, Marshal.”

Soft laughter teased his ear. “You totally got into that role, didn’t you?”

Syren laughed. “Hell yeah.” He nipped Kane’s shoulder. “I don’t do anything half-assed, you know this.” He winked.

“But we agreed we’d use names.” Kane pouted.

“Changed my mind. Was hotter that way.” He slid a hand down Kane’s back, cupped his ass. “You were a stranger, so I kept referring to you as Mystery Man in my head.”

Kane rocked into him, softened cock still inside Syren. “Fuck, it was.” He scrapped his nails over Syren’s flank. “We should do this more often.”

Syren sighed and rolled away, Kane’s shaft sliding from him. It was hard to let go like they just did with a young daughter in the house. He’d felt Kane’s frustration, which was why he’d suggested they do this fantasy thing in the first place.

Kane’s phone rang and he crawled off the bed to get it. He checked the screen then grinned at Syren.

Syren shook his head. “It’s her, isn’t it?”

Kane didn’t answer, he simply put the phone on speaker and sat next to Syren. “Càtia.”

“Daddy, I can’t find Amy.” Their daughter sounded as if she was close to tears.

Kane lifted an eyebrow at Syren.

“The teddy bear Gabe bought her.”

“Ah.” Kane turned back to the phone. “Càtia, have Auntie Nina help you look for Amy, okay?”

“Can you and Papa come help us look?”

Syren took the phone. “Càtia, your daddy and I will see you tomorrow, remember? Have Auntie Nina look for Amy in the chest with O.G.’s toys.”

Càtia sniffed. “Yes, Papa.”

“It’s time for your bedtime, isn’t it, baby girl?” Kane asked.

“Yes, Daddy.”

“So go find Amy, and your papa and I will see when you come down for breakfast.”

She didn’t speak.

“Càtia?” Syren called softly.

“Yes, Papa?”

“We love you, okay?”

“Love you, too.”

“Go to bed,” Kane said.

“Okay. Bye.” She hung.

Kane looked at Syren. “She misses us.”

Syren nodded. He knew that. He missed her, too. She’d gotten used to having him home all the time now, and this was the first time he’d been gone overnight since they’d made Kane a part of their family. They still haven’t found a good balance between being parents to Càtia, and their relationship. It had been hard work, but Syren wouldn’t trade a day of it. Not all of their issues were resolved, but the most important ones were.

Kane loved him and Càtia. Càtia considered Kane her daddy. Syren smiled. He’d cried the morning she’d so causally called Kane “Daddy” over the breakfast table. Kane had gone silent for a long time. Càtia had blown away his ability to speak for a while there.

“Do you think it’s time to think about giving her what she asked for?”

“Hm? What?”

Kane brought their entwined fingers to his mouth and kissed it. “She wants a baby brother. Don’t you think we should work on giving her one?”

## Chapter Two

Kane grinned when Syren's jaw went slack, his eyes bugging out of his head.

"What?"

"I meant the words I spoke in our vows, you know." He cupped Syren's face, brought their foreheads together. "I want to have children with you."

Syren blinked. "Yeah, but that's—It's only been a year."

He actually looked scared and Kane frowned. "Is there a set period of time we should wait before trying?"

"No. I—" Syren licked his lips, shaking his head slowly. "I'm kinda shocked."

Why would he be? "Why are you shocked?" Kane asked. "You know I want more children."

"Yes, but I—" Syren pulled away from him and rolled off the bed. He paced the floor, his cock impressive even in its flaccid state. "I thought we had more time."

Kane stared at him silently. Today marked their one year anniversary as a married couple. They'd gotten hitched in Connecticut, his home state, two months after the day he'd gone to Syren in Costa Rica. Their life together was completely different than anything Kane had experienced, that was for sure. They had a daughter. That entailed PTA meetings and doctors' visits, and bedtime stories with the most wonderful little girl. He loved Càtia. She was his, in every way. But she'd asked them for a little brother not too long ago. Syren and Kane had been too stunned to say anything other than "uh huh", but Kane wanted more children. They had the money, the resources, and most importantly they had the love to give.

He didn't understand why Syren was hesitant.

“Do you need more time?” Kane asked his husband. He’d give Syren whatever he needed, even if that meant more time.

Syren stopped mid-pace, fingers tugging at his white-blond hair. His eyes, a spectacularly vibrant purple were soft, dream-like. “Do you know sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and just look at you?”

“You do?”

Syren nodded, his eyes glittering. “Because in my dreams you’re not here, in my dreams you’re still the unattainable Kane Ashby.”

Kane went to him, catching Syren’s face in both hands. “But I’m here with you. Because I love you.”

Syren stared up at him, tears in his eyes. Kane’s throat hurt.

“Why?” Syren whispered. “Why are you here? Why do you love me?”

It wasn’t a selfish question. Kane knew his husband too well. Something was going on with him. His old doubts were back and it was Kane’s job to get rid of them. He took Syren into his arms, holding him against him, naked skin on warm, smooth naked skin. He inhaled Syren’s scent, and with a hand at Syren’s nape and another cupping his jaw, Kane spoke.

“I’m here because this is where you are,” he said softly. “I’m here because this is where I want to be. Anywhere you go, I’ll be next to you, because you’re mine.” He kissed Syren’s nose. “You’re amazing, your strength, your capacity to love, to endure. Fuck, to survive and thrive. Your heart is so big, babe.”

“I didn’t have one,” Syren said brokenly. “I didn’t have a heart, until I saw you, until you touched me and brought me back to life.”

“You did, you had a heart. You had C`atia and Henri and Isa.” Kane smoothed his thumb over Syren’s trembling bottom lip. “I was the one not living, just existing, and you came into my life and blew everything apart. You with your feisty fucking attitude and your gorgeous sad eyes, and your sexy panties.”

Syren smiled as a tear rolled down his cheek. Kane wiped it off.

“I’m yours,” Kane said. “Always.” He held up his left hand, showed the platinum band on his ring finger. “You made sure of it.”

“I had to lock you down.” Syren shrugged.

Kane chuckled. He tucked Syren’s face into his chest and spoke into his ear. “You did, and that’s just what I wanted, because I got to lock you down as well. Got to make you mine.”

Syren shivered. “I’ve been yours for forever.”

“And now we’re together.” Kane tugged on Syren’s hair until their eyes met. “Don’t let the dreams keep you from reality, because I promise,” he scraped his fingernails over Syren’s scalp, watched his pupils dilate, “reality is so much better.”

Syren touched him, gentle fingers gliding across his jaw. “I never envisioned this, you know. When I closed my eyes and imagined us together, I never got as far as this.”

“Marriage and children?”

“I watched you stand next to your brother when he and Angel got married—”

“You were there?” Kane didn’t remember seeing Syren there. He would have remembered someone who looked like Syren. And the wedding was a very small, very intimate and brief affair in Boston.

“I hid behind potted plants and doors and shit.”

“Why?”

Syren's smile was self-deprecating when he said, "I don't think I was ready to be face to face with you."

Kane kissed him, slow and deep. Syren clutched him tightly, pressing closer. "I'm glad we met, because I can't imagine my life without you in it. Can't imagine life without our daughter." Whenever he called Càtia his daughter, his breath caught and his throat closed up. He never thought he'd have it, the family he'd wanted for so long. "You gave me this, you know. A family. A daughter. The ability to say that beautiful little girl is mine. You gave me that."

"She's ours." Syren kissed his throat, nosed him there.

Kane wrapped his arms around Syren's smaller frame and just held him, Syren's face pressed to his neck, his hands buried in Syren's hair. Words weren't always needed. Not when they had this. He held Syren and rocked slowly, side to side, dancing without moving his feet. A sound left Syren's throat and reverberated in Kane's chest, as his husband moved with him.

They danced to the imaginary music, in a silent hotel room in New York City. Their one year anniversary as a married couple. It was a year Kane wouldn't change for anything. Getting to know his husband, learning even more about him. Being there for Càtia. Sharing in the raising of that little girl. His life was filled with precious moments, some big but most of them small. He loved his life, loved the quiet moments that were now so few and far between.

"The first time I saw you I knew you'd change my life," he murmured.

Syren swayed with him. "And I wanted you to change mine."

"Then we got what we wanted, didn't we?"

"Not yet, you haven't." Syren stopped and stepped back. "You want a son." When Kane opened his mouth, Syren waved his hand. "Don't use our daughter. Tell me."

Kane nodded. "Yes."

Syren smiled. “You think you can deal with another child in the house, plus O.G.?”

“Of course.”

“And you do realize this means our sex life will be fucked, and not in the good way right?”

Kane narrowed his eyes. “Better not be.” He stepped closer. “Is that a yes?”

“Did you think I’d say no?”

Did he? “No. I know how much you love being a father.” Syren was a completely different person when he was with Càtia.

“So you’ll get your son.” Syren looked up at him through his lashes. “Two is enough, right? Because I gotta tell you, we are not having a fucking football team.”

Kane laughed. “Two is good. A boy and a girl, perfect for us.”

Syren hugged him close. “One of each?”

“Yes.” Kane fisted Syren’s hair and yanked his head back. “Do you know how much I love you? How much I would die for you?”

Syren’s gaze was steady on his face, eyes bright. “I do, because I feel the same.”

“Then we’re on the same page.” Kane glanced at the rumped bed, at the mattress jacked sideways. “I brought the handcuffs.”

Syren shivered. “Fuck.”

“Indeed.”

### Chapter Three

“When will you be back, Daddy?” C`atia stared at Kane with sad eyes from across the breakfast table, syrup from the waffles on her chin.

Syren knew how she felt, but unlike C`atia he kept the words to himself. Kane had been called to testify in a Brooklyn court on a case he’d worked before he retired. Instead of making the trek home to Connecticut and back to New York every day until he was done testifying, he’d opted to get a hotel in Brooklyn. He’d be gone for a couple days at least, and C`atia was sad.

Syren was too. This would be the first time they’d spend a night apart since that day Kane came to him in Costa Rica.

“I’ll be back in a few days, baby girl.” Kane gave their daughter a wide, bright smile. “In the meantime you and Papa can call me or text, we can even video chat. Would you like that?”

She nodded slowly. “Yes.”

“Good.” Kane licked his thumb and leaned across the table to wipe at the syrup on C`atia’s chin. He sucked it off with loud noises. “Mm. You taste really sweet, baby girl. Like syrup.”

“Daddy.” She giggled. “That’s not me, that’s the syrup from my waffle.”

Kane winked. “So you say.”

Syren drained the last of the orange juice in his glass. “Finish eating, C`atia. Auntie Nina will be here soon to take you to school.”

Nina had followed them to live in Connecticut to be their babysitter. Syren would never leave her all alone, and Kane had no problems when Syren mentioned buying Nina a condo near their home. She wasn’t with them twenty-four seven. Only on the days when Syren and Kane

had business to take care of, like today. Normally Syren would be the one taking C`atia the twenty minute drive to and from the private school she attended.

This morning he'd be driving Kane into the city and meeting with a potential client interested in hiring his security company. He'd taken his resources, and Billy's expertise, and started up an online security firm, providing security for companies doing the bulk of their business online. He'd been worried his face would have been recognizable, that people would know he used to be Faro. So far he hadn't had any incidents and the business was operating smoothly.

Billy did most of the heavy lifting though. Syren was only the face sent to reel prospective clients in. He didn't mind it. It kept him working from home where he could be with C`atia and Kane. His husband was a man of leisure for the moment, and a silent investor in Syren's business. During the day Kane did work on their backyard. Something Syren silently thought Kane should let a professional handle, but hey, his man wanted to do things himself. So even when Kane messed up and busted the pipes underneath the ground in the backyard intended for the new pool, or when he accidentally cut down the trees they'd intended to use to build a tree house in for C`atia, Syren cheered him on.

Neither of them needed to work. God knew they had more money than Isa had red bottoms, but Kane wanted to keep busy and Syren, well, he was never one to lie around eating bonbons and watching soaps.

He dressed C`atia and had her dark brown hair brushed and in something resembling a ponytail by the time Nina let herself in with the key Kane had made for her. Armed with her Hello Kitty backpack and lunch bag to match, dressed in her uniform, C`atia stood at the door and looked at Kane as he knelt in front of her and cupped her chin.

“Don’t be sad, okay?” He kissed her nose. “I’ll call you before bedtime for sure, and you can text me when you get home from school.”

Her big brown eyes filled with tears, and her little chin trembled, but she nodded. Syren swallowed the lump in his throat and bent, kissing the top of her head.

“Daddy will be home before you know it,” he promised. “And I’ll be here when you come home from school.” He waited until Kane hugged her then he did the same. “Go on, Nina’s waiting.”

She went, walking slowly hand in hand with Nina. Kane and Syren stood next to each other in the doorway, waving as Càtia looked over her shoulder and did the same. When they drove off, Kane cursed.

“Damn, I didn’t expect that to hurt so much.” He rubbed his chest. “I miss her already.”

Syren smiled sadly. “I know. I did it for seven years.” He closed the door and stood there. “I don’t think she’s used to it, me being here all the time. She still expects us to be gone when she wakes in the mornings.” It hurt, knowing it was his fault. Knowing he was the reason his daughter was so scared of goodbyes, but expected him to leave at any time. “I fucked her up for life, didn’t I?”

“Hey, come on.” Kane shook his head. “You did what you had to do.”

“No.” Syren’s lips twisted. “I did what I *wanted* to do, and my daughter paid the price.” He turned away, walked into the kitchen, and stood staring at the dishes still on the table. Warm arms surrounded him from behind. Kane kissed his nape and Syren leaned back against that solid chest, sighing. “I have so many regrets,” he confessed softly. “And everyday I’m reminded of just how much and how far the consequences of my actions reverberated.”

“She’ll be fine. C`atia will be fine.” Kane spun him around and cupped his jaw, earnest blue eyes staring into Syren’s soul. “She’ll be just fine because she has us now. And we’re never leaving. Never. When she’s old enough to understand we’ll tell her why her early years were the way they were.” The corners of his mouth lifted. “She’s your daughter so I know she’ll understand why you had to do something.”

Syren chuckled. “You think so?” God. He wished. He hoped.

“I know.”

He allowed Kane to hold him for another few seconds before he took a breath, put away his temperamental emotions, and stepped back. “Okay. Enough hand holding, Marshal. You’ve got a date with a judge, and I’ve got a client to schmooze.”

Kane hauled him back against with a wiggle of his eyebrows. “If I help load the dishes in the dishwasher that should give us, what? An extra five minutes?”

“For what?” Syren placed both hand on Kane’s shoulder and frowned up at him. “Do you have to make a stop?”

“Uh-huh. To the bedroom.” He let Syren go and slapped his ass. “You’re gonna get out of this robe,” he fistfisted Syren’s short purple silk robe, “and get in the shower, where I’m gonna join you after I put the dishes way.”

*Well.* “You ain’t said none but a word, Marshal.” Syren ducked away from Kane’s hot perusal and raced to the stairs. “None but a word.”

“I’m late.” Kane groaned as Syren pulled up near the courthouse.

“It’s your own fault.” Syren grinned. “We didn’t need to use the—”

“But it was fucking hot.” Kane kissed him, a loud smack on the lips. “No cutting corners when it comes to making you scream.”

A blush heated Syren’s face. “I don’t fucking scream,” he growled. He did not.

“Yeah, I’ve got your voice on tape recorder proving otherwise.”

Syren stared at him. “You recorded us having sex?” He lunged at Kane, but the bastard opened the car door and raced out. “I’m gonna kill you.”

“Oh look, time for me to go.” Kane bent and looked at him through the open driver’s side window. “I’ll call you when I can.”

“Don’t forget to call Càtia to tell her goodnight.”

Kane smiled patiently. “I won’t forget.”

“You mean like you forgot to kiss me goodbye just now?” Syren hiked up an eyebrow, chuckling to himself when Kane grumbled and dove back inside the car, half of his body lying atop Syren. He caught Kane by the neck, holding him tight as his husband fucked his mouth at 10:03 a.m. on a busy Brooklyn street.

“Hm, I gotta go.” But Kane didn’t budge from where he was, lips pressed to Syren’s.

Syren smiled. “You should go, Marshal.” He tunneled his fingers through Kane’s short hair, rumpling it. He pulled back, catching Kane’s face in both hands. “You look really fuckable in that suit, did I tell you that?”

He’d introduced Kane to his tailor and had his husband now sporting the same well-tailored look. Today Kane wore a dark one, white shirt and black tie. He looked like a freaking model with the striking blue eyes and two day salt-and-pepper scruff on his chin.

“You did tell me,” Kane murmured, “but I’ll never tire of hearing it.” He stared up at Syren, expression so warm and open. All that love. It took a while to get used to all that love being directed at him.

“I love you.” One last kiss and he pulled back, releasing Kane. “Go before they send marshals for your ass. I’m not dressed to fight burly men off you today.” Tom Ford suits weren’t made for that.

Kane leaned back, trailing a finger down Syren’s cheek. “Love you. Be good.”

“Aw man.” Syren pouted. “The fuck do you mean *be good*?”

“I mean it.” Kane stood and wagged a finger at him. “Be good. All that bad shit belongs to me.” He snapped a salute and turned away, racing across the street, weaving and dodging the four lanes of traffic.

Syren watched him go, ogling that ass all covered up in Hugo Boss, and squirmed in his seat. Damn. And it was all his.

The Chester restaurant was located inside the Gansevoort Hotel in the Meatpacking District, and empty except for the staff when Syren strode in at 10:45. Not the place he would have chosen to meet, but the client picked the spot. He followed the waiter to his seat and perused the restaurant’s signature Breaky menu while waiting for brunch date to arrive.

Movement to his left caught his eye. He turned that way. A burly man dressed all in black stood next to his chair, hands behind his back, a bulge in his waistband. Syren tensed. Movement to his right made his glance that way. Same deal. Burly man. All black. Same bulge.

*Well, this isn’t good.*

“Hello, Faro.”

The familiar name and voice made him jerk and he jumped to his feet as Monica Delatorre slid into the seat opposite him. Two hands on opposite sides of his shoulder pushed him back down onto the chair.

Shock wasn't the word for the cold gripping him, but he stared at the woman and shrugged off the hands still on him.

"Monica." He eyed her up and down. "You don't look like an Alberta Clemente."

She shrugged. "My alias. Couldn't very well have booked face time with you as the widow of your former boss, now could I?"

There was something in her eyes, a fierce and dark look, not dissimilar to her son's. Thiago. There was a name he wished he could forget. "Why couldn't you?" he asked calmly, despite his heart beating out of control. Despite the cold sweat dampening his hair line. Something was out of place. He knew it. He felt it. And the woman across from him smelling like expensive stink, clothed in Carolina Herrera, and drenched in memories was the cause.

"Would you have met with me?" She smiled at him, lashes dipping then lifting in what was probably meant to be seductive. Teased within an inch of its life, her hair was a black puffy cloud around her head, and the rings on her fingers glittered when she picked up his glass of orange juice and sipped.

"What do you want, Monica?"

"My money." She put down the glass and looked him in the eye. "The money that disappeared the same time you did. The same time my husband died and my son went poof."

Syren sat back and eyed her. A beautiful woman. Spectacularly beautiful, but she would be in order to be seen on the arm of Delatorre. She didn't look like a forty-nine year old mother of three. Her figure was still snatched tight. Tits perky, lips pouty. Thirty years with that monster

didn't show on her flawless olive skin and black hair. Her lips were painted with something nude, her perfect cheekbones with something to give the illusion of a blush. She was dressed befitting a woman of her station, had her husband still been alive. As it stood, Monica Delatorre should be homeless, so why was she here, looking like she'd hit the Brazilian lottery?

“What money?” Syren asked. “Looks to me like you're doing just fine. Got yourself a new sugar daddy?”

Her eyes sparked fire, but her voice was cool and controlled when she spoke. “I was approached to take up where my husband left off in his business.”

*No. No.* Syren dropped his hands into his lap and gripped the sides of his chair until his knuckles hurt.

“His associates made a very compelling offer. I couldn't refuse.” Her lips twitched as her gaze rose to the men flanking Syren then dropped to him. “I'd expected you to be among the first to be there, asking me to take up the mantle. Where were you, I wonder?”

He leaned forward, but she wasn't finished.

“I find you a changed man, Faro.” She snapped her fingers and the man to his right handed her a folder. She opened it and pulled out what looked like pictures. Syren's gut clenched and the dread, it cramped his stomach. “I find you a married man. A father. With a new name, and lots and lots of secrets, no doubt.”

His mind blanked. She knew about his family. Oh that, that was unacceptable.

“I especially like this one.” Monica pushed a photo forward. “I can see how much you love them.”

He glanced down and swallowed the gasp. He and Kane and Càtia in a park near their home. Kane was pushing her on the swings, and Syren was in front, pretending to catch her.

Monica had been watching. They'd been under surveillance and he'd noticed nothing. Nothing. He balled his fists.

"You love them," Monica said softly as she put her elbows on the table and leaned toward him. "Therefore I'm giving you the chance to save them. I want the money, all the money you stole from my husband. From me. Give it to me and your family remains the same." A hard cold look hardened her gaze. "It's more than you ever did for me."

He sat back in silence and stared at her, at the smug expression on her face. It wasn't a surprise she turned out to be just like her husband. It wasn't a stretch they'd raised a rapist for a son. He took a breath, allowed the rage and panic to subside.

"You know nothing about me, but I knew who you were long before you even knew my name, Elizabeta Silva."

She blinked when he used her real name. Syren didn't smile, not yet.

"It surprises no one that a street rat who grew up whoring herself out in the favelas would once again be here, begging for money." He leaned in. "You don't want to make me your enemy, Elizabeta." Smiling, he said, "Your family, the monsters you pretend to care about, is your weakness. My family is my strength." He jumped to his feet and took a few steps away before looking back. "Fuck with me and I'll put you down, like the rabid, well-used bitch that you are."

## Chapter Four

“No further questions for this witness, Your Honor.”

Kane sat back in the witness box, hands folded in his lap as the judge turned to the defense table.

“Mr. Banner, any cross for Mr. Ashby?”

The lead lawyer for the defense shook his head as he got to his feet. “Not at this time, Your Honor, but we reserve the right to re-call.”

“Very well.” The judge looked over at Kane. “Mr. Ashby you may step down.”

Kane nodded his thanks and quickly left the courtroom with a small sigh. He always hated when he had to testify, but this time was relatively painless. Errol Painter had killed one of their colleagues in a convenience store hold up a year before then went on the run. Kane’s office had aided the Brooklyn office in finding the fugitive. Painter had engaged them in a standoff for hours, shooting at the officers, and getting a bullet in the torso for his trouble. He’d then accused the officers of abuse, and as one of the first marshals on the scene, Kane had been called by the prosecutor to testify to Painter’s words and actions during the entire ordeal.

His testimony lasted for the better half of the day and he was hungry and his eyes gritty. He wanted to drop onto a soft place and sleep. He couldn’t leave New York yet, since the defense could still call him back to the stand, but he missed his family. Damn. Missed them like a physical ache.

Outside the courtroom he turned back on his cell phone and his phone immediately went off, beeping to indicate missed calls and texts. All from Syren. He frowned. Before he could make out the texts his phone rang.

“Hello?”

“Hi Daddy.”

He smiled and sank onto a bench placed along the wall. “Hey, baby girl. How was school?”

“I had to leave early. Papa said so.”

“Uh. Okay.” He hadn’t been aware Càtia had early dismissal. “So what are you doing now?”

“Watching movies. Papa says I can make popcorn if I finish all my homework.”

“That’s great. Càtia, let me talk to Papa.”

“Okay. Bye, Daddy.”

Syren came on the line. “Marshal.”

“What’s wrong?”

‘N-Nothing’s wrong.’

Kane narrowed his eyes even though Syren couldn’t see. “You’ve been blowing up my phone. Why?”

“I just wanted to make sure you’re okay.” Syren sounded...weird. More so than usual.

“I’m okay. Why wouldn’t I be?” Kane looked around then lowered his voice. “Why do you sound so strange?”

“I don’t sound strange.”

“Yes, you do. What’s wrong?”

After a long drawn out silence, Syren finally sighed. “I just wanted to hear your voice. I was...down for a second and I wanted to hear your voice. And I wanted to say that I miss you, and you owe me big time for having to sleep all alone in our big bed tonight.”

“Don’t.” Kane scrubbed a hand over his face. “Don’t deflect. I asked you a question. I expect an answer. What’s wrong?”

“Not over the phone,” Syren said softly. “We can talk when you get home. And I expect you home, Marshal. Always. Do you understand?”

Kane nodded. “Yes.” He didn’t know what the hell was going on, but he’d damn sure find out.

“Okay.” Syren sniffed then said, “I gotta go, your daughter is burning the popcorn.”

Kane chuckled. “Bye.”

“I love you, Marshal.”

Syren hung up and Kane sat staring at the phone in his hand. Falling in love and marrying a man as complex and complicated as Syren had its adventurous and fun moments, but there were also those moments like now when Kane wished he knew what was going on inside his husband’s head. Getting Syren to talk to him wasn’t as hard as it was when they first got together, but it still wasn’t as easy as it should be. Syren was used to handling his stuff alone, he was used to keeping shit close to the vest, and he hadn’t yet broken out of that cycle. Kane learned that pushing put Syren on the defense, and ignoring him wasn’t an option. He’d taken to seducing most things out of Syren. It was enjoyable for them both and very effective.

He’d have to do the same this time, he already knew it. He dialed a Paris phone number and waited. He didn’t even know what time it was over there, but he didn’t care.

“Hello, Kane.”

He grinned. “Isa, how’s my favorite sister-in-law?”

Isa huffed. “It’s too damn late for the bribery, Kane. I’m your only sister-in-law.”

“Yeah, but you’re still my favorite.” He chuckled when she snorted, very unladylike of her. “I need your help. I’m in New York and I need to know where to go to buy Syren some goodies. Lace goodies.”

“Did you mess up?”

He rolled his eyes. “No, I didn’t mess up. Now, tell me.”

“Agent Provocateur.” She gave him a Madison Avenue address. “Ask them about the waspies.” She paused. “Do you know his size?”

Heat washed over his face when he flushed. “Um. Nope.”

She snickered. “Important things. You must know this if you plan to butter him up with lace goodies.”

She was right, of course. He didn’t usually buy Syren’s panties. He tended to let Isa do that. She gave him Syren’s size, and then Kane asked, “Have you spoken to him? Do you know why he’s acting so weird?”

“Weird? Isn’t that an everyday thing with your husband?”

“Weirder than usual, Isa. He’s sounds off somehow.”

“No,” she said slowly. “We haven’t spoken today. I called, but he didn’t answer.”

Then something was definitely up. He thanked Isa for her help and hung up.

Someone touched his shoulder. “Hey.”

He looked up and smiled. “Vince.” He shot to his feet and pulled Vince into a loose hug. “Hey man, what’s up?”

Vince shrugged. “Same as you. Got called to testify.” He eyed Kane up and down. “You look good.”

Kane sat back down and motioned for Vince to join him. “I feel good, man. How are things at work? Everyone good?”

Vince nodded. “They’re the same. We miss you there, though.” He looked away then back at Kane, Adam’s apple shifting. “I miss you.”

“I miss you guys too, can’t lie about that.” He slapped Vince on the back. “How have you been?” He knew he hurt Vince, which was never his intention, but they’d been friends and partners for years. He didn’t want to lose that friendship. Vince was a great guy. And he did look good, if a bit on the smaller side.

“I’ve been busy,” Vince said. “Work’s hectic, but I’ve put in for some time off.” He rubbed a hand over his head. “I seriously need some down time.”

He did look ragged, now that Kane looked closer. New lines bracketed Vince’s eyes and mouth. “What will you do?”

“Sleep for a week nonstop.” Vince laughed. “Just rest, man. I need to recharge.”

“I hear that.” They sat in a thick silence, their past unspoken but still there, hovering between them.

“Heard you got married.” Vince spoke the words so low, Kane had to lean closer to fully understand them.

“Yep. One year last week.” He didn’t want to brag or hurt Vince more than he already had so he kept it short.

Vince sat with his palms flat on his thighs, knees apart, looking everywhere but at Kane when he asked, “Are you happy?”

“Vince, look at me.” Kane waited until Vince met his gaze before he said, “I’m sorry I hurt you. I shouldn’t have started something with you knowing it would never work. I shouldn’t have leaned on you, made you think we were more than we were. I’m sorry for that.”

Vince’s skin went pale, but he nodded.

“I was in love with someone else, and used you as a substitute for who and what I really wanted. It was a dick move, and one you didn’t deserve.”

Vince bit his bottom lip and glanced away. “I was willing to take whatever you were willing to give.”

Fuck. Kane felt so bad for the other man. He touched Vince’s arm. “It should never have to be that way. You should never have to settle for less than what you want and deserve.”

“Don’t you think I know that?” Vince shook his head “I’m not proud of it, but I wanted you and I was willing to do anything…”

That was all kinds of fucked, wasn’t it? “Vince, listen to me. You deserve someone who can feel for you what you feel for him,” he said harshly. “Don’t sell yourself short. Don’t settle, please. Don’t make do.” He tightened his hold on Vince’s arm. “If you want it all, then that’s what you should have and if any man can’t give you that, you move on.”

Vince smiled, a tremulous curve of his mouth. “You’re different.”

Kane narrowed his eyes. “Different how?”

“Alive. On your toes and in the moment.”

“Being the father to a third grader will do that to you.” His smile fell away when Vince’s eyes went wide. “I’m sorry.”

“You have a child?”

He nodded. “Yes. We—We have a daughter.”

Vince pursed his lips and closed his eyes. “I’m—I bet you’re great with her. You’d be great.” The words sounded like they were difficult to speak.

“Vince.”

Vince shot to his feet. Hands shoved into his pockets he paced the small space in front of Kane. Back and forth. Back and forth. Until he stopped and looked Kane dead in the eye.

“I’m still in love with you.”

The blurted words rocked Kane and appeared to shock Vince as well because the other man cursed viciously.

“Fuck. I swore I wouldn’t tell you that.”

“Vince.” He didn’t know what to say. How did he respond without hurting Vince even more?

“I know. I need to get over it and I will.” Vince balled his fists. “I will.” He smiled down at Kane, heartbreak etched into every angle of his face. “Your husband, he’s the luckiest man.” He turned away, gave Kane his back. Then swung around again. “If he breaks your heart…”

Kane stood and pulled him into a hug. “Be happy, Vince.”

Vince shook in his arms and clung to him. They stood locked in that embrace, until Vince lifted his head and pressed his lips to Kane’s.

Kane pulled away and looked around. “In public?” He smiled. “You’re getting braver.” He knew Vince had never really stepped out of the closet.

“I’m definitely getting braver.” Vince grinned. “The guys at work know.”

“You told them? That’s great.” Kane knew what a really big step that must have been for Vince. “I’m so proud of you.”

Vince shrugged. “Small, but necessary steps.”

“Good steps.” Kane cupped his jaw. “Don’t settle, Vince. Take only happiness.” He patted Vince’s cheek and walked off.

The defense rested its case that evening without recalling him to the stand, so he did some shopping and took the packed rush hour train back to Connecticut. He got home in time to help Càtia in the bath and read her a bedtime story before she fell asleep. He was exhausted for damn sure, but when he stepped into their bedroom after his shower, and saw Syren standing in the middle of the room, he was wide awake. And energized.

He wore his purple robe slash kimono thing that Kane really liked. And he just stood there, his hair a mess around his head and his eyes hooded. The shopping bag Kane had brought with him was on the floor next to Syren’s feet, on its side, empty.

“I got your gift,” Syren said softly.

“Did you?” Kane licked his lips. “Where is it?”

Syren spun around, giving Kane his back, and undid the sash holding the kimono closed. The material slid down his back and off his body, down to the floor.

“Fucking fuck.”

He’d followed Isa’s advice and bought the waspie thing with matching thong. He didn’t know what it was, or how the scrap of material would even fit Syren. Now he did. They were black silk, the thong low slung with satin straps and crisscross details at the center back.

“I love your ass,” he whispered in reverence.

“You should. It’s yours.” Syren faced him and Kane made a sound like a whimper. The waspie was a sort of corset, only much tinier with the same satin straps and crisscross detail that fit around Syren’s waist.

“Like what you see, Marshal?”

Kane cleared his throat. “Fuck. I don’t even know what to say right now.” He removed the towel from around his waist and stepped forward. Syren rushed into his arms.

Kane fisted his hair and kissed him, thrusting his tongue into Syren’s mouth. His husband whimpered and latched on to his tongue, sucking it, the pull echoing in his balls. They rubbed against each other. So good. The heat guaranteed to blow the top of his head off. Kane bared his throat when Syren broke the kiss and nipped him there before dipping his head to flick his tongue against Kane’s nipples.

He held Syren’s head, tugged on his hair as Syren kissed his way down his body, tongue tracing his abs and dipping into his navel before Syren fell to his knees. He cupped Kane’s balls, rolling them around in his palm as he swallowed him.

“Ugh.” Kane bucked, his cock grazing against Syren’s teeth. “Fuck, baby.”

Syren moaned around him and sucked hard, bobbing up and down. Kane used Syren’s hair as a leash, using it to pull him off and push him on his shaft. His grunts filled the room and he tried to stifle them, but he couldn’t, not with Syren’s wet mouth and throat working him over.

Syren hummed and Kane snarled a curse. “That fucking mouth. Want to stay like this.” He threw his head back. “Fucking your mouth, watching you on your knees.”

Syren looked up at him, nostrils flared, purple eyes wide and hazy, mouth full of cock.

“I love watching you like this,” he whispered. Syren’s lashes fluttered and Kane continued. “Love your mouth, love knowing no one’s ever fucked that throat but me.” He gripped Syren’s hair, held him still and eased in and out slowly. “Love those sounds you make when my cock’s digging out your throat.”

Syren whimpered, his throat contracted and Kane hissed.

“Shit.” His ball hurt already. “Gonna use you, baby. Gonna do it rough, because you like it, don’t you? You want me to force my way down your throat until you gag, until it hurts so fucking good.” He rammed in without waiting for an answer, all the way.

Syren gagged. His nails sank into Kane’s upper thighs then raked down. Kane bucked, shoving himself deeper. Syren made a wet sound. Kane pushed him down and down, until Syren’s nose was pressed to him, then he held him there. All the while they maintained eye contact. He saw how dilated Syren’s eyes were, how flushed his skin was.

Kane pulled him off. Syren gasped for air then came back at Kane, taking him into his mouth again, sucking him deep again. Like he was starved for it, like he needed it to live. Kane gave it to him. Syren was rough the second time around and pretty soon, Kane’s knees were noodles, buckling under the intense pleasure. Syren didn’t appear to want to release him and Kane had to yank him off.

“Fuck, you’re trying to kill me.” He picked up Syren and threw him on the bed. “Gimme that ass. I want to see that ass.”

Syren rose on his hands and knees and Kane slapped an ass cheek. Watched it bounce and ripple. He licked Syren from the dimples above his ass, down his crack, and circled his hole. He sucked the strip of thong into his mouth while spanking Syren’s ass.

“Fuck.” Syren pushed back onto his face, pulling his ass cheeks apart.

Kane smacked his hand away, bit him on the ass.

Syren yelped.

Kane spread him, licked his hole, dipped inside while Syren rolled his hips in slow motion. Kane loved that. His man moved like a sensual creature, all slick and sexy. He ate Syren’s ass, using a finger to pull the thong to the side as he fucked that wrinkled hole, got it wet

and open for him. Syren's cries were muffled, but he reached behind and pushed Kane's face into him as he humped.

"Jesus, Kane. Don't fucking stop."

Like he ever could. Kane hummed and pushed saliva slick fingers into Syren, sank deep. Syren trembled under him, body rocking. Kane twisted the fingers, grunting when Syren's muscles contracted around him.

"Fucking tight, baby." He licked around the fingers. "Hmm. Fuck my face." He pulled away and laid down on his back, yanking Syren backward until he hovered over Kane, balls in his face. "Sit on my face."

Syren did, tugging on his balls, lifting up and down on Kane's stiffened tongue. Kane held him steady, an ass cheek in each hand and lowered him hard. Syren had one fist in his mouth, and his cock in the other, grinding down on Kane's face as his cock dripped pre-cum on Kane's forehead and nose. Kane could come from just this alone, but he wanted to prolong it, wanted to wait.

"Kane. Kane," Syren cried out. "Oh God."

"Lube. Get the lube," Kane barked. He was out of control, couldn't feel his limbs, and he needed to feel Syren. Wanted to feel him all over. "Now."

Syren scooted backward and slicked Kane up with the lube he had yet to see. Syren flung the lube away and slammed down on Kane, panties pulled to the side.

"Oh fuck! Oh fuck!" He couldn't catch his breath, the burn and the pain snatched it away. But Syren didn't seem to feel it, he was too busy slamming up and down on Kane's cock. His hair covered his eyes as he bounced. His ass was a furnace, burning Kane to a crisp. He was making too much noise, he knew that, but damn.

He grabbed Syren by the hair, yanked him down and took his mouth while thrusting up. Syren met him, matched him, his movements fierce, out of control. Their teeth nagged together, Kane tasted blood. Syren's nails raked down his chest, over his nipples.

“Jesus Christ.” What the fuck? Kane writhed.

“Harder.” Just the one word, all breathy and pained.

Kane dug his heels into the mattress and slammed up. Syren wailed, long and drawn out. His muscles squeezed Kane and cum poured from Syren, dripping onto Kane's belly. Syren threw his head back and his hips sped up. Kane bit his tongue and came. The orgasm was an explosion in his balls and he filled Syren, never stopping until Syren collapsed onto his chest.

He woke to a dark bedroom and an empty bed. Kane checked the time on his phone. 1:41 a.m. He rolled out of bed and pulled on a pair of briefs before going in search of Syren. He found him in Càtia's bedroom, sitting cross legged in the fluffy arm chair in the corner, staring at their sleeping daughter.

“Hey.” Kane tiptoed in and knelt in front of Syren. “What's going on?”

Syren didn't speak for a while then he whispered, “Do you know she does this thing where she laughs in her sleep?” He smiled. “Deep belly laughs.” He rubbed his chest. “I think it's my new favorite sound.”

“She's having happy dreams.”

Syren pursed his lips and nodded. “Happy dreams.”

Kane picked Syren up in his arms. “Let's let her sleep.” He brought Syren to their bedroom. He placed Syren on the bed and sat next to him. “You wanna tell me what's going on with you?”

Eyes sad, Syren said, "My old life. It's not going away, you know?"

Kane shook his head. "What do you mean?"

"What if the time comes when I have to be Faro again?" Syren asked. "How would you feel about it?"

"What do you mean? You're always Faro. You're always Marcos. You're always you."

He cupped Syren's chin. "Those men are you, and you are those men. Always."

Syren looked away.

"You're keeping something from me." It wasn't a question, but Syren nodded.

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"I don't want to tell you. I don't want this to change. I don't want to lose us." Syren's voice broke. "I'll tell you soon, I promise."

Kane wanted to force Syren to confide in him, but he couldn't. Syren had to open up to him all on his own. In the meantime. "Okay. I wanted to talk to you about something, anyway."

"Okay."

He laced their fingers. "I want you to make love to me."

Syren frowned. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, I want you to take me. To top."

Horror came and went on Syren's face. "No." He snatched his hand away. "No."

*Whoa.* "What? Why no?"

"I'm not interested in doing that. Not ever."

Kane stared at him, at the stubborn set of Syren's jaw. "Again, I ask why not?"

"Why change things?" Syren asked. "I like things the way they are."

“Well, I don’t.”

Syren gaped. “What?”

“I want you,” Kane said softly. “I want to feel you, I want us to share that. I’ve never done that with anyone, and I want to give you that.”

Syren blinked. “Never? Not even with—”

“Not even with Bailey.” He took Syren’s hand again. “I’ve laid my claim to you. In every way, but I’ve been waiting for you to do the same. I’ve been waiting for you to take charge, take the lead and stake your claim on me.”

“But I—” Syren just stared at him, fear and reluctance in his eyes. “Why didn’t you say something?”

“I shouldn’t have to tell you that I want you,” Kane said. “I shouldn’t have to beg my husband to claim me. I shouldn’t have to wait to see if you’ll love me, all of me, like I do you.”

Syren’s bottom lips trembled. He shook his head. “I can’t.”

“I want to give you something I’ve never shared with anyone else.” Kane’s voice went hoarse. “I want us to have that.”

Syren licked his lips. “I’m sorry. I can’t. I—” His face went blank and his voice hardened. “I’m not interested, and I don’t want to discuss it ever again.”

Kane didn’t have words. He just sat there, mouth hanging open. That reaction was nothing he’d anticipated. At all. The vehemence in Syren’s voice as he slammed the door on the gesture Kane just made was not what he’d expected.

Syren took a pillow off the bed and walked to the door. “I’ll be downstairs.”

“The hell you will.” Kane jumped up. “Get in the fucking bed. Now.”

Syren swung around. “Excuse me?”

“I didn’t stutter.” Kane glared at him. “Do you think you get to dropkick my fucking gesture then slink away like you were the one wronged?” He pointed to the bed. “Get in the bed. We’re sleeping together and I’ll be holding you all night.”

“Kane.”

“Neither of us sleeps well unless the other is there so no,” Kane said sharply. “You’ll be staying your ass in our bed. With me.” He stood with his arms folded as Syren huffed and made his way back to the bed. Kane turned off the lights and climbed in after him, pulling Syren close, burying his face in his husband’s nape.

Syren sighed and snuggled closer.

The discussion wasn’t over. Not by a long shot. Things were out of sync and Kane would damn sure find out why and fix it.

## Chapter Five

A slammed door woke Syren. At least it roused him from the deep sleep he'd been enjoying. Footsteps in the bedroom made him lift his lashes. Blinding light assaulted his eyes and he groaned and rolled onto his stomach, burying his face in a pillow that smelled like Kane.

"Your breakfast is getting cold." Warm lips brushed his ear and Syren shivered

"Go away," he muttered into the pillow. "I need more sleep."

"No." Kane smacked his blanket-covered ass. "What you need is to come eat before O.G. takes the bacon off your plate."

Syren shot upright. "That fucking dog!"

Kane laughed at him, standing there in pajama bottoms, his chest all naked and glorious. Syren brushed the hair away from his face. "I'll be down in a sec." He rolled off the bed, naked as well, and made his way to the bathroom. "Keep your dog away from my food," he said over his shoulder.

He ignored Kane's chuckles and went about brushing his teeth and washing his face. He was going to tell Kane all about Monica. He needed to know and they had to come up with some kind of plan to keep C`atia safe while Syren figured out the best and quickest way to dispose of that hateful bitch. Threatening his family was unacceptable behavior, and Monica had to know that. Syren would deal with her, but first he had to tell Kane. He'd been so scared after meeting with Monica he'd come straight back to Connecticut and pulled C`atia from school.

Good thing this was the weekend. They had a couple days to think up something. But C`atia had to be protected. She was priority.

He finger-combed his hair away from his face. He'd wanted to tell Kane all about it last night, but the words stuck in his throat. He didn't want to remind Kane of who he used to be.

And he knew if Kane found out about Monica he'd want to help. Syren would never allow Kane to be in harm's way. This was his problem, he had to deal with it himself. Speaking of which. He ran back to the bed room and sent out a group text to a few of his friends.

He had friends. And he had Kane, who needed an explanation. And who apparently wants Syren to fuck him. Talk about a shock. He'd never seen that particular request coming. His heart hurt, but saying no was the right thing. He couldn't. Couldn't do what Kane wanted. He hoped Kane would understand and let the topic drop.

He hoped.

After pulling on one of Kane's t-shirts that reached almost to his knees, he made his way downstairs and frowned at the quiet. In the living room he stepped on one of C`atia's dolls and almost lost his balance.

"C`atia, please pick up your toys." He walked into the living room and looked around. Kane sat at the table, but no C`atia. "Where is C`atia? She left her doll on the living room floor." He picked up Kane's glass of orange juice and drank.

"I had Nina pick her up and take her to the park."

The glass of juice slipped from Syren's fingers and shattered on the floor, liquid splashing everywhere. "What?" His body felt encased in ice, and he couldn't hear anything but the roaring in his ears.

Kane grabbed his arm. "She's with Nina. What's the problem?"

"No! Call Nina." Syren grabbed Kane's shoulder. "Call Nina. Tell her bring C`atia back now." He spun around, slipping and sliding on the slippery floor as he raced out the room.

"Syren!" Kane was following him, but Syren couldn't slow down.

“Call Nina,” Syren roared. “Oh God.” He couldn’t find his phone. “Càtia’s in danger.” He raced up the stairs and into the master bedroom. His phone was on the bed and he picked up. His fingers trembled so badly he couldn’t get it to swipe the screen. His vision blurred. Càtia and Nina were out there, unprotected. He got the phone to work finally, it dialed, but just kept ringing and ringing and ringing.

“Answer, Nina.” He collapsed onto the bed. “Oh, my God.”

Kane walked into the room, his phone at his ear, his face a mask of fury and anger and fear. “Nina. Nina, where are—” His face went blank then it was terror, all in his eyes, all on his face. Terror.

Syren fell to the floor on his knees.

“Who is— Yes. I’m listening.” Kane’s voice was a hard monotone. He moved the phone from his ear, put it on speaker. “We’re both listening.”

“Hello again, Faro.”

Syren closed his eyes. “Monica.”

“Yes. You should have listened to me, all of this could have been avoided.”

“Please.” Syren clasped his hands together. “Don’t hurt them. Don’t hurt them.”

“I’m afraid it’s too late for that.”

“No.” Anguish tore Syren up. He couldn’t look at Kane. “Monica—”

“You have twenty-four hours to deliver the money you stole from me.” She sounded so calm, so sure of herself. “All fifty million, in US Currency. I’ll call you back with more instructions.”

“Where’s our daughter and Nina, you bitch?” Kane’s roar brought goose bumps to Syren’s skin.

“Tsk. Tsk. Watch what you say to me, Mr. Ashby,” Monica said. “Otherwise I’ll have to tell your husband you were in the arms of another man yesterday, kissing him, touching him.”

Kane tensed. Syren gasped.

“Your daughter is fine and will remain that way, as long as I get my money.” She paused. “The babysitter is a bit banged up, but she’ll live. For now.” She ended the call.

Kane flung the phone away. It landed on the bed.

“This is what you didn’t want to tell me?” Kane stood over Syren, his fists balled. “This, this is why you’ve been acting strange?”

“Yes.” Syren struggled to his feet. He reached out for Kane, but his husband flinched away from him.

“Who was that?”

“Monica Delatorre. She wants the money that I took from Delatorre.”

“She has our daughter.” Kane’s voice was a broken thread of sound. He just stared at Syren. “She has our daughter.” He slumped against the wall and slid down, hand over his eyes.

Syren just stood there, tears running down his face, and nodded. “Yes.”

“Why?” Kane looked up at him with red eyes. “Why didn’t you tell me this? Why didn’t you tell me our family was being threatened?”

“I didn’t want you involved.”

“Are you fucking stoned?” Kane rushed to his feet. “I am involved,” he yelled. “We’re married. I’m involved.”

“Kane, please.” Syren reached for him again and again Kane moved away from his touch. “I didn’t want her getting near you. I knew you’d want to protect me and I can’t let that happen,” he whispered.

“My choice.” Kane pounded his chest. “You have no say in whether or not I protect you. Whether or not I lay my life down for you and C tia. It’s my choice,” he shouted. “Not yours. I needed to know!”

“I didn’t want you getting hurt.”

“Really? So you decided you’d hurt me instead.” He shook his head. “You’re such a selfish son of a bitch.”

“I—” Syren choked. “I’m sorry.” He covered his face with both hands. “I’m sorry.”

“I can’t even... I can’t look at you.” Kane turned away and Syren grabbed his arm, held on.

“Don’t leave. Please.” He dropped to his knees and wrapped his arms around Kane’s waist. “I should have told you. I thought I could deal with her on my own, but I was wrong. Please. Marshal, don’t leave.”

“I’m so angry at you.” Kane stared down at him. “I’m so angry at you, and I can’t—I feel so helpless.”

Syren knew that feeling, and he knew too that if he gave in to the fear, he might never recover. So he embraced the anger instead, that was a guaranteed motivator. Monica would be dealt with a fitting manner, but he had to make sure his relationship would weather the coming storm.

*I’ll have to tell your husband you were in the arms of another man yesterday...*

He ignored the words. They weren’t important, not right now. One crisis at a time.

Kane’s phone rang and he pulled away from Syren. One glance at the caller ID and he looked back at Syren.

“This might be her again.” He handed Syren the phone.

“Hello?” He put it on speaker and sat on the bed.

“You don’t sound too good there, Faro.”

“You’re playing a dangerous game, Monica. One you’re guaranteed to lose.”

She laughed in his ear. “Don’t know about you, but my team is looking mighty fine. Mighty fine.” She rattled off an address. “Be there tomorrow evening at six with my money. I don’t have to tell you how things will go down if you deviate from the plans I’ve set. I know your husband is retired law enforcement, but I’m sure you know cops should never be involved.”

“I want to talk to Nina. Now.” He heard some shuffling and a muffled cry then Nina’s voice came on the line, shaking.

“Syren?”

“Nina, oh God.” His throat hurt. “I’m so sorry. How are you, how’s Càtia?”

“She’s okay, she doesn’t know what’s going on.” Nina paused. “I told her we’re going on an adventure with one of Papa’s friends.”

A sob wrenched from Syren’s throat and he doubled over. Strong hands caught him, held him.

“Nina, what about you?” Kane asked. “Are you okay?”

“I will be.” She sounded too vague for Syren.

Syren fisted his hands. That bitch Monica was dead. “It’s going to be okay,” Syren promised. “I promise. I’ll bring you two home safe.”

He heard the smile in Nina’s voice when she said, “I never doubted that for a second.”

“Enough.” Monica came back on the line. “Time’s wasting, Faro. Tick tock on my money.”

“Time will continue to waste unless we speak to our daughter,” Kane said.

“Daddy?”

Syren buried his face in Kane’s chest, smothering the sounds of his sobs. He shook so badly he could hear his teeth chattering.

“Hey, baby girl.” Kane kept his voice soft and low, but his words trembled nonetheless. “How are you?”

“I’m fine, Auntie Nina and I are on an adventure with Papa’s friend.” She paused. “Her hair’s really big.”

“That sounds nice.” Kane’s voice cracked and he cleared his throat. “Papa wants to say hi.”

“Hi Papa!”

Syren swallowed. She sounded so carefree, so loud and cheery. So Càtia. “Hi, baby.”

“Papa, you and Daddy sound really funny.”

“That’s because we miss you, and can’t wait to see you.”

He could picture her with her head cocked to the side, so much like Kane. “Okay. But not yet, ’cause it’s an adventure so we have to do it right.”

“I know. Be good, okay? I love you. Daddy and I love you very much and we’ll see you soon.”

“I love you and Daddy, too. I have to go.”

Just like that his daughter was gone. His body went limp and if it wasn’t for Kane he’d have fallen to the floor. Syren held on to him, held on tight through the sound of his heart breaking.

“You have the time and place,” Monica said. “I get my money, you get your family back.” The phone clicked off.

Kane released Syren and got to his feet. “Son of a bitch!” He kicked the nightstand, sending the lamp tumbling to the floor.

Syren curled into a fetal position as Kane went wild, kicking and punching the wall. All the noise and ragged, heart wrenching sounds Kane made as he grieved, and Syren could do nothing but witness it all. It was all his fault, after all. He couldn’t blame Kane for being so mad at him, for wanting to be anywhere but near him. He had no words to soothe Kane. No real explanation for keeping Kane in the dark. He should have trusted Kane to have his back, but he hadn’t. That was the issue, wasn’t it? He didn’t trust his husband to have his back. Next to him his phone beeped, incoming text message.

He picked it up. Two pictures, side to side. Kane and Vince. Kane’s hand on Vince’s face in one, and the next, they were in each other’s arms.

Kissing.

He was pretty sure if he’d been standing he’d have staggered under that blow.

“What is it?” Kane asked.

He exited the screen. “Nothing important.” Not right then it wasn’t.

Kane came over and knelt beside the bed. “I don’t care what you have to do, who you have to blackmail or bribe, we’re getting our daughter back.” His gaze was fierce as sweat poured down his face. “Do you get me? I want our daughter and Nina back.”

Syren nodded. “Yes.”

“Be who you need to be, do what needs doing. I’ll be right there with you. No matter what.”

He glanced at the phone in his lap. “Monica is going to have to die.”

Kane shrugged and got to his feet. “Bitch asked for it.”

“I gotta make some calls.” When Kane turned to walk out the room, Syren grabbed his hand. “Thank you for forgiving me.”

Kane shook his head and pulled out of Syren’s hold. “I’ll do anything to get C`atia and Nina back, but I haven’t forgiven you. Everything else takes a back seat to all this shit, but trust me, our relationship will be the first thing we discuss once we have C`atia and Nina back.”

Syren spent hours on the phone, calling in favors, and blackmailing anyone who hesitated. He didn’t have time for finesse. Now he had one last phone call to make.

“What’s up, man?”

“Billy, I need you hack into Kane’s phone.”

“What?” Billy spluttered. “Why?”

“Monica Delatorre kidnapped C`atia.”

“Holy shit.”

“Yes, she called us on Kane’s phone and I need to know the location she called from. Maybe she’s still there.”

“Jesus Christ, I’m so sorry.”

“Save that sorry for Monica, that bitch is on a suicide mission. Get to work on Kane’s phone. Let me know the instant you get something, and I don’t have to tell you to keep this convo between you and me right?”

“Yeah man, I got you. Lips zipped.”

“Thanks, Billy.” He hung up as the doorbell rang. He walked out of the bedroom and was halfway down the stairs when a loud voice rang out.

“Someone called for backup?”

He had to smile as Mateo Oliveros stepped into the house, his husband Tommy right behind him. Yankee cap perched atop his head, dark shades covering his eyes, Mateo was dressed in all black, t-shirt and leather jacket, belted jeans still sagging, the hems of his jeans jammed into tan Timberlands.

“Teo.”

Mateo stepped around Kane and looked up at Syren. “Dude, you look like shit.”

“You do know how to flatter me.” He walked over and pulled Tommy into a hug. The slender Tommy’s dark hair was shaved on one side and he wore a simple white t-shirt with the words “Bottom’s Up” in black and black skinny jeans. “Thanks for coming.”

“Shit, you know we’d do anything for Ms. C`atia. Who else is gonna call me Uncle Matty?” Mateo looked Kane up and down. “Fed.”

“Teo.” Kane nodded at him.

“That’s Mateo to you, Fed.” Mateo hugged Kane, slapped his back then stepped away. “Get that frown off your face, the cavalry is here.”

## Chapter Six

Kane couldn't stay still. He kept pacing, first one end of the living room where Syren and Mateo and Tommy were huddled over a phone, and then the other side. He'd called Gabe and Angel, and they were waiting for Syren's plane to touch down. In the meantime, they had nothing but time as they waited for Billy or Tommy to pinpoint Monica Delatorre's location. Or at least the place she'd been when she called earlier.

The situation was hard to wrap his mind around, to fully grasp. His daughter was gone, snatched from them. Nina taken as well. Things that could have been avoided had Syren only told him what the hell was going on. Why was that so hard for his husband to do? Why was it so hard for Syren to understand that Kane would want to know some shit like that?

He strode out the room and out into the backyard where they'd let O.G. out to run around. The dog bounded up to him and licked his fingers with a whine.

"I know." It was like O.G. could tell shit wasn't right. That they were out of their minds with grief and worry and...

He didn't want to contemplate what that Monica chick would do to Nina and Càtia. He did know that if one hair on their heads was out of place, he'd be slicing that bitch up himself. After the last phone call Syren had come clean, explaining that Monica had posed as a potential client to get a meeting with him. The meeting where she'd shared the surveillance photos taken of them, their family.

Kane sank onto one of the wrought iron benches they'd placed around the large backyard. He should have been told. He couldn't understand that shit. He needed to know right away. And along with the heartbreak of having his child stolen, he had to deal with the fact that Monica had taken an innocent encounter with Vince and turned it into something Syren might never get over.

He stared down at his bare feet in the grass, O.G. sitting next to him, long pink tongue hanging out as he stared at Kane with a quizzical expression. Their lives were turned upside down in a fucking blink and he—he balled up his fists and rested them on his thighs—he was helpless to do anything. He couldn't go to the authorities, couldn't call any of his friends because that could get the girls hurt. Not to mention the fact that every fucking body inside his house was a criminal in some kind of capacity.

Not that he cared about that. If anybody could get Càtia and Nina back it would be the men inside that house.

The back screen door flapped and he looked up as Mateo stepped outside. They'd met for the first time when Syren came back with Kane from Costa Rica to plan the wedding. Kane hadn't thought Syren had many friends. Or any for that matter, beside Angel. He'd been surprised when the doorbell rang one evening and Mateo Oliveros stood there, a younger man who turned out to be Tommy by his side. They'd had dinner, some conversation, and before Kane knew it, those two were a fixture in his house. Mateo was a tough nut, and took some getting used to, but Tommy made up for Mateo's brash and rough attitude. He'd grown on Kane for sure. Enough for Mateo and Tommy to be a part of their wedding in a very surprising way. Càtia had even taken to calling them Uncle Matty, which Mateo hated, and Uncle Tommy.

"You look like you lost your best friend, son." Mateo sat next to him, leaning over to scratch O.G.'s belly. "What's up?"

"What do you mean what's up?" Kane stared at him, incredulous. "My daughter is fucking gone, man. Gone. Nina is gone, and I'm here, helpless."

"You blame him."

"What?"

“Your man told us everything.” Mateo glanced over at the house. “I have to say, if T did the same, if he kept something like that from me, I’d be right there with the anger and the blame.” He turned back to Kane. “But this isn’t the time for that. Your man is in there, barely holding himself up, and you’re out here and you can hardly stand. I want to know why you’re here and he’s there. Why you’re not there holding him up so he can do the same for you.”

Pain made Kane’s gut clench. “I can’t—” He shook his head. “Fuck, man. I just—”

“So you’re going to leave him?”

“What?” Kane gaped. “Who said anything about leaving?”

Mateo shrugged. “He thinks he’s lost you, that this is something you won’t ever be able to forgive him for.” Mateo took a breath. “Okay, listen. I don’t know shit about relationships except what works for me, yeah? That man you married is really amazing at fixing things, getting things done, but he’s not that good at allowing himself to be taken care of. Am I right?”

Nailed it in one. Kane nodded. “Yeah.”

“He’s not good at sitting back and having someone else do for him, he’s a take charge kind of man.”

Except in the bedroom, but that was yet another topic that had to take a backseat.

“You can’t be mad at him for doing what he’s always done,” Mateo said softly. “He’s always been the one to deal with his problems, alone. You can’t be mad at him for that. It’s what he’s used to.”

“I can and I will be mad.” He glared at Mateo. “I’m not just some random fuck. I’m his husband, I’m his daughter’s father.”

Mateo grinned and threw his hand up, palm out in surrender. “Aight, but you can be mad and still be there for him, allow him to be there for you, yeah?” His smile fell away. “He really things he’s pushed you too far and it’s killing him, man.”

Kane got to his feet. “I love him. Just because I’m mad doesn’t mean I’m going to walk away from my family.”

Mateo shrugged. “Don’t tell me, fool. Tell him. Get that shit taken care of so we can get to work. The promise of violence has my dick on ‘H’.” He squirmed on the bench with a wink.

Kane snorted and jerked his chin in silent thanks before walking to the house as Tommy came out the door.

“Hey.” Tommy smiled at him. “You okay?”

“Not yet, but I will be.” Inside the doorway he glanced over his shoulder in time to see Tommy slide onto Mateo’s lap. Mateo held his husband close, arms around his waist, as Tommy leaned back into his chest.

Kane swallowed and made his way to the living room. Syren’s voice reached him before he entered the room.

“Don’t fuck with me, Dutch. She’s not allowed to live, do you understand? Not after she took my daughter and Nina. Not ever. That bitch is toast and if you feel you need to stop me, try. I like you, but not that much. My family comes first and if you’re a threat you’re dead. It’s that simple.” He ended the call and cursed viciously.

Kane stood there with his arms folded and took him in. He’d gotten dressed before Mateo and Tommy came over. A white shirt tucked into the waistband of dark trousers, sleeves rolled up to his elbows. His feet were bare though, and Kane grinned at the purple nail polish he and Càtia had put on Syren’s toes days before. Syren’s hair was a mess, but Kane liked it.

He cleared his throat and Syren spun around, eyes wide, his face so pale he was damn near translucent.

“Kane. How long have you been standing there?”

“Long enough.” Kane strode over. “Sit, you look like you’re going to fall down any minute.” He pointed to Bailey’s chair. Syren had insisted they keep it right where it was. “Sit,” he insisted when Syren hesitated.

Syren sat and Kane fell to his knees before him. He didn’t like the wary fear in Syren’s purple eyes.

“Do you remember when we made love here, on this chair?”

“I-I wouldn’t call it making love.” Some of the tension on Syren’s face and in his shoulders melted away when the corners of his mouth quirked. “It was—”

“It was me, making love to you.” He rubbed his palms over Syren’s thighs. “I loved you so much, I couldn’t find the words to adequately describe it.” He cupped Syren’s face. “It was a fierce burning thing inside me, eating me up, consuming me. Taking you here, on this chair, was the first time I told you I loved you. Only I didn’t use words.”

Syren’s lips parted. His thighs trembled under Kane’s touch.

“That was before,” Kane said.

Syren closed his eyes. “Before what?” he whispered. “Before I kept secrets? Before I put our family in danger?” Moisture glittered on his lashes. “Before I lost you?”

Even though Syren couldn’t see him, Kane shook his head with a smile. “Before you forgave me for accusing you of the worst kind of betrayal. Before I dropped to my knees on that beach with a ring.”

Syren’s eyes flew open, wet and shocked.

“Before you stood with me in our backyard and said ‘I do’. Before you gave me a daughter.” Kane paused and cleared his throat. “You will *never* lose me. You *will* piss me off and make me angry, you *will* push me, but lose me?” He leaned up, lips hovering over Syren’s. “Never that. Never that.”

Syren’s face crumpled, bit by gorgeous bit. He caught his bottom lip with his teeth and he stared at Kane, his body shaking. “Marshal.”

“I thought I was in love with you before,” Kane said, “But now, every day, I love you more. Every time C`atia calls me daddy, I love you more. Every time I kiss you and you make those sexy fucking whimpers, I love you more.”

Syren circled his neck, pulled him close and Kane went into his husband’s arms, kissing Syren’s neck.

“I’m in love with you,” he continued against Syren’s neck. “More now than ever. You can get me angry, but you can never get me to leave you, to leave this family. My heart is here, with you and C`atia, so wherever you are that’s where I’ll be.”

“I didn’t mean to hurt you,” Syren replied. “I just want you safe. I just want you here.”

“You’re used to doing things alone.” Kane leaned back, met Syren’s eyes. “But you’re a married man now. That ring on your finger means you’ll never be alone ever again. And if you share things with me, if you’re open with me, you’ll never hurt me.”

Syren nodded slowly, his nose red.

“I’m not scared of who you used to be, baby. You’re good at that shit, and I married you knowing about all of it. I will never be mad at you if your enemies target our family, as long as I know about it. As long as we’re prepared to deal with it. Together.”

Syren's bottom lip quivered. "I knew you would be perfect for me the first time I saw your photo. The reality is so much better, Marshal. So much better."

"Of course it is. You deserve it, and I want to give it to you. All the time." Kane kissed him. A quick peck then he went back for more, slower this time, tongue sliding in when Syren opened for him. A familiar dance, but kissing Syren was never quite the same all the time. There was always something new to learn, to discover about the man in his arms.

"Ow, my eyes!"

Kane jerked upright as his brother and Rafe walked into the room. "Gabe." He got to his feet and pulled Syren up. He hugged his brother, held him tight when Gabe didn't let him go. Rafe and Syren hugged as well. When Gabe finally released him, Kane shook Rafe's hand.

"Thanks for coming."

"Shit. Where else would we be?" Gabe looked Syren up and down. "You hanging in there, Tiny?"

"I'll be fine." Syren's refusal to rise to the bait was telling. Kane hugged his husband.

"We brought two more guns to the party." Rafe jerked his head toward the doorway.

Juan Pablo Castillo and his husband, DEA agent Shane Ruskin-Castillo stood there. Kane wasn't over that fucking kiss between Syren and Castillo, but he'd learned to deal. He greeted the men and thanked them for coming.

There was a certain loyalty Rafe and Castillo had to Syren, and Kane was damn thankful for it. He'd want those two men on his side rather than against him any day of the week. Mateo and Tommy came back inside and Kane ordered pizza, hanging up just as Syren's phone rang.

Everyone tensed.

"It's Billy." Syren answered on speaker. "Billy, you're on speaker. Go."

Billy took a breath. “Okay. She called from a moving vehicle, the signal pinged on at least three different cell towers, but I can tell you the route she took. She also didn’t turn off the phone, so I can tell you where it is now.”

“Give it to me.”

“A hotel two towns over.”

“Okay thanks, Billy.” Syren ended the call and faced the room. “I’m going there. Now. Tommy, I need you on the computer. Find a way into that hotel’s security feed. We need to cover our tracks, boys. Shane, you and Gabe stay with him. Please. Just in case.”

Kane was already moving out the door when Syren said, “Shit. Wait. Hold up.”

Kane whirled around at the panic in Syren’s voice. “What?”

“How did she know who I was?” Syren looked around. “Only you guys know that I’m Syren, everyone knows me as Faro. She knew our business, my family, our address, where Càtia goes to school, where Nina lives.” He dropped onto the couch. “She knows every fucking thing. How is that?”

Castillo stepped forward. “You thinking one of us gave you up?” He didn’t sound angry, just curious.

Syren waved away Castillo’s words. “Actually no. I trust you guys with my life, more importantly with Kane and Càtia’s life, so no.”

“Then what are you thinking?” Kane asked.

Syren held up a finger as he hit redial on his phone. “Billy, get me everything on Monica. Who she’s been meeting with and all her travel information from the second news broke that Delatorre died.” When he hung up, Syren looked up and around the room. “This isn’t a coincidence, not a fucking overnight plan. She knew too much. And she knew where to hit.”

Kane frowned. "She's working with someone?"

Syren nodded, his hair falling into his eyes. "And I'm guessing she's not the mastermind."

"Shit," Rafe cursed. "You got any ideas?"

Syren laughed, but it wasn't an amused sound. "Faro's enemies are numerous. Too many to name."

"We'll find out," Kane said with vehemence. "We'll find out, but right now let's move."

"We got a plan or we gonna go in guns blazing?" Mateo asked. "I'm good either way."

"Calm your ass down." Pablo glared at Mateo who shrugged.

"What? I'm on one."

"I want answers first. And Monica is mine, everything else is fair game." Syren got to his feet. "We have to find out where she's keeping C`atia and Nina, because I doubt she's keeping them in a hotel room."

They loaded up Mateo's SUV, Kane driving with Syren riding shotgun. His husband had dark glasses on, his face emotionless. The other men piled into the back. With one hand on the wheel, Kane used the other to seek out Syren's. He laced their fingers, squeezed Syren's and prayed. He fucking prayed.

Getting into the hotel was easy enough. They all walked in like they were supposed to be there. Their target was on the twelfth floor, but they needed key cards to get the elevator doors working. They couldn't use the stairs either since *all* doors were opened only with those fucking key cards. In the end, Syren booked a room while the men fanned out, keeping their eyes peeled.

Kane stood next to Syren his heart thumping in his chest. Anxiety dripped cold sweat down his back. The inactivity as they went through the process of booking the room grated on his every fucking nerve, but finally they were done.

Everyone filed in to the elevator once Syren used the key card, no one speaking. Syren grabbed Kane's hand again, and Kane squeezed him. Soon enough they were at their destination. The hallway was empty, but lined with security cameras.

Mateo knocked. "House Keeping. I've got some clean towels for the bathroom."

Castillo grunted. "Really?"

"Hey, I'm improvising here," Mateo whispered.

Kane just rocked back on the balls of his feet and waited. Footsteps shuffled within.

"We didn't ask for towels," someone called out from the other side of the door.

"Hey, I was told to bring it, so I brought it," Mateo said. "You want it or not?"

The knob twisted, the door creaked opened and Castillo grabbed the man who peeked out by the neck.

"Hello."

Kane kicked the door wider and everyone rushed in as Castillo walked the man backward. Two others were in the room and they jumped to their feet, but only one had his gun drawn in time. Kane launched himself at the one with the gun, holding him in a headlock while Rafe grabbed the other

"Drop it." Kane pulled his gun from his waist and pressed it to the man's temple.

"Where's Monica?"

"We don't know any Monica."

Syren took the gun from him and handed it to Mateo. “Then I’ll deal with you.” He screwed on the silencer on his gun. “That phone on the table, who does it belong to?”

No one spoke. Castillo tightened his hold on the other man’s throat and he gurgled. Rafe didn’t have a gun, but he did have a wicked blade in his hand that he pressed to his captive’s throat.

“I think you guys better start talking,” Rafe said. “It’s only gonna get worse if you don’t.”

All three men were obviously not American, they spoke with a heavy Brazilian accent. The shorter of them, the one Castillo held, shrugged.

“It’s my phone.”

Syren pulled the trigger, shooting the man Kane held in the knee. He collapsed with a shout of pain. “I don’t have time to make you fucking suffer, but I’ve got just enough time to kill you,” Syren said calmly.

Kane had never seen him in this light before and damn it, he liked it.

“Tell us where you got the phone.” Castillo slammed the guy he held into the wall.

“No. Don’t do it, Rico.” The man on the floor at Kane’s feet writhed, grabbing his bleeding knee. “Don’t tell them nothing, man.”

Syren shot him. In the throat.

“Nice,” Mateo murmured.

Kane’s dick got hard.

Syren faced Rico as the one on the floor bled out. “Monica took my daughter. I will kill every fucking one of you to get her back. So, I’m asking you one last time, where did you get the phone?”

“M-Monica gave it to us.” Rico’s dark eyes were wide with fear, his face going from red to purple as he fought to breath against Castillo’s hold.

“And where is Monica?” Kane asked. ‘Do you know where she has our daughter?’

Confusion flashed in Rico’s eyes.

“Yes, our daughter.” Kane gestured between himself and Syren. “We’re married.”

“But— You’re Faro.” Rico gaped at Syren

Syren grinned. “I am. Which should have been your first clue not to fuck with what’s mine. Where is Monica?”

“She left hours ago. S-she didn’t say where to.”

“But you know where she’s holding Càtia and Nina, don’t you?” Syren prompted.

“We were there.” Rico nodded. “We took them.”

Kane breathed through his mouth in an effort to calm his blood lust. “Well. You’re gonna have to pay for that. Where are they?”

“An abandoned house in Hartford.” Rico’s voice shook as he gave the street address.

“Monica said you stole from her, from Delatorre,” he told Syren. “That’s why we helped.”

“And that’s why you die.” Kane didn’t think twice before pulling the trigger. Rico’s head lolled to the side, a red dot in the middle of his forehead. Castillo released him, and Rico’s body slumped to the floor.

“Let’s go get my niece,” Rafe said. He looked down at the man he still held at knife point, a hand over his mouth. “Oh, my bad.” A flick of the blade and the man pitched forward, his throat cut from ear to ear.

Syren's phone rang. "Dutch. Yep. Twelfth floor, room 12C. You'll need bags for three." He paused. "No. My guy is taking care of the cameras. Bye." He hung up then turned to Kane and the rest. "Dutch's crew is on their way to clean up." He held out a hand to Kane.

Kane grabbed it and brought it to his mouth, kissing Syren's knuckles. "Let's go get our daughter."

Mateo pouted as they got into the elevator. "I got dibs on the next kill, ya heard?"

## Chapter Seven

They opted to wait until dark. The hardest thing Syren ever did. Wait. But it was a good plan they'd come up with. Now he just had to wait for that zero hour. His body was a vibrating mess of nervous energy he didn't know what to do with.

He paced. Hell he'd even went outside to play fetch with a much-neglected O.G. The distraction didn't work though. He kept replaying all that happened in the hotel room. He'd always tried to stay away from violence, preferring the less messy method of money and blackmail, but damn if he didn't feel a sense of rightness when he pulled that trigger today.

Dishing out that kind of fury was not as hard as it should have been with his husband right there, watching his every move. Kane surprised him, killing that Rico guy. And Syren saw what he'd been trying to avoid, having Kane go down that road. Syren had no problems doing what needed to be done, getting his hands bloody, but he didn't want the same for Kane. It was funny though, he'd been so fucking turned on when Kane pulled that trigger. It was all he could do to not attack the man right there, not to fall to his knees and blow him while Kane pulled his hair.

*Damn.* He squirmed on the couch. He did love when Kane pulled his hair.

*Focus. Focus.*

They were still waiting for Billy, who was working to figure out who gave Monica the information she had on Syren. He didn't think the culprit was anyone he knew. His inner circle was small and tight for a reason. The people he surrounded himself with were too loyal for that. He never thought they'd turn on him. His money was on someone from Faro's past. Someone he'd did business with, maybe.

That list would be a very long one to comb through, and in the meantime he had to sit on his thumbs and wait. Waiting was never a word in his repertoire.

He rubbed his churning stomach. Kane had forced him to eat a slice of cold pizza, but Syren could barely hold it down. How was he supposed to eat when his daughter was out there alone with a fucking mad woman and God knew who else? At least they were only a couple weeks away from summer vacation. They'd been thinking about spending the summer in Costa Rica.

*Jesus.*

He rubbed his forehead. He could be strong, he had to be. It just...was hard. The hardest thing he'd been through, and he'd been through some shit.

The house phone rang. Tommy looked at Syren then at it since it was at his elbow.

Syren nodded as he leaned forward. "Answer."

Tommy did, flicking his hair over his shoulder. "Hello?" He paused and then nodded. "Yeah, this is the right number. Hold on." He put a hand over the receiver then looked around. "Where's Kane? It's for him."

"Who is it?"

Kane walked into the room as Tommy asked, "Who's calling?" He lifted his head. "It's Vince."

Kane's step faltered. He looked at Syren and Syren looked back, held his husband's gaze.

"It's not what you think."

Syren smiled at the panic on Kane's face. "What do I think?"

Kane glanced at Tommy. "Tell Vince I'm busy." He walked over to Syren and sat beside him. "That kiss wasn't anything like you're thinking."

“Whoa.” Gabe stood over them, fury in his eyes. Fury directed at his brother. “You kissed someone else? You kissed Vince?” The words were loud bombs dropped into the quiet and everyone turned, stared at them.

“Gabe, chill. It’s not a big deal.” Kane turned back to Syren, his expression apologetic, but his brother wasn’t having it.

“What do you mean? How do you kiss another man when you’re married?” Gabe stood there with his hands on his hips, staring down at Kane.

“Gabe, come on.” Rafe pulled on his arm, tried to get Gabe away, but he wasn’t having it.

“How could you do that?”

“Gabe—” Kane got to his feet, held out a hand to his brother, but Gabe knocked it away.

“Damn it.”

“Gabe, it’s none of your business.” Rafe tugged on his husband’s arm. Gabe shrugged him off and stepped forward to Kane.

“No, I wanna know,” Gabe said. “How do you do that? Kiss someone else when you’ve got Syren, when you’ve got a family.”

“You don’t know anything,” Kane started.

“Then make me understand,” Gabe shouted.

“Enough,” Syren roared.

Everyone fell silent.

He stood. “Gabe, thank you for trying to stand up for me, but I’m a big boy. I’ll deal with your brother when I’m ready. It’s not your job to defend me.” He smiled despite the pain in his chest. “I’ll be upstairs.” He walked out the room, all eyes on him, and up the stairs.

In the bedroom he climbed onto the bed, shoes and all, and buried his face in the pillows. He didn't want to dwell. He just needed some time to think. To be alone.

The sound of paws on the floor alerted him to O.G.'s presence. He rolled onto his side with a smile. O.G. sat beside the bed, staring at him. "You can't come up, so don't even give me that look." Kane had banned O.G. from being on the bed.

O.G. drew closer and licked his face.

"All right, damn it. Come here." He opened his arm and O.G. leapt up, licking all over his face. "Ugh." He closed his eyes. "Ever heard of breath mints, boy?" He hugged O.G. close, surrendering to the wet rough slide of O.G.'s tongue over his nose. "Damn it, dog. Don't be doing that shit." But he allowed it anyway.

"Get off the bed, O.G." Kane entered the bedroom. "He's not supposed to be on the bed."

"Lots of things aren't supposed to happen," Syren said calmly. "Doesn't mean they don't anyway." Still he shoed O.G. off the bed and out the room.

Kane closed the bedroom door with a sigh and got in the bed with him. "Come here." He pulled Syren onto his chest. "I wasn't kissing Vince. He pecked me on the lips, a goodbye peck. We met there at the courthouse, and I apologized for using him when I knew I was in love with you. I told him he deserved someone to love him fully, and that he shouldn't settle for less."

Syren shook his head. "I didn't think you were kissing him or having an affair or whatever with him, but why didn't I know about it?"

Kane shrugged. "Because I really didn't see it as anything other than me saying sorry and goodbye."

Syren pulled his phone from his pocket and showed Kane the picture.

"Christ! Where did you get that?"

“I’m thinking Monica sent it to me. She’s had us under surveillance, remember?” Syren double tapped the screen and zoomed in on Vince’s face. “You didn’t think it was a big deal, but he clearly saw it as something more.”

Kane swore. “Clearly.”

Vince’s heart was in his eyes, plain as fucking day. “He’s still in love with you, Marshal,” Syren whispered.

“Yeah, he—” Kane’s gaze danced away. “He told me he was.”

Syren digested that bit of news. “Obviously you didn’t do a thorough enough job of letting him know you weren’t interested.” He pulled away from Kane and sat up. “Now he’s calling our home.”

Kane sat up next to him. “I know, and I’m sorry. I did nothing to lead him on, to make him think there was a chance. I swear.”

Syren shrugged. “You were nice to him. Because you’re a nice guy, and you didn’t want to hurt his feelings.” Kane stared at him quizzically and Syren smiled. “I know you, husband.”

Kane kissed his shoulder. “You do.”

“Yes.” Syren leaned into him. “I know you, and I know you’ll want to deal with Vince personal-like before I get to him.” He lowered his voice. “We don’t want me to get to him.” Because he’d just shoot the son of a bitch in the stones. “He doesn’t care about the ring on your finger or our family. He wants you.”

“I’ll deal with it when this is over. I promise you that.”

And just like that Syren was alright, because his husband kept his promises.

Kane slid an arm around his waist. “Did you see how Gabe defended you?” he whispered. “I think he likes you.”

Syren bumped his shoulder with his. “No way.” He peered at Kane through his lashes.

“You think?”

Kane grinned. “Oh yeah, he’s totally on your side now.”

“Knew I’d wear him down eventually.” He took Kane’s hand in his, traced the ring on his finger. “You killed a guy today.”

“Uh-huh. So did you.”

“You got me hard. The way you squeezed that trigger. I wanted to fucking devour you right there.” He panted. Remembering.

Kane looked at him, expression incredulous. Eyelids on low. He fistfisted Syren’s hair, brought them closer, nose to nose. “When you shot that dude in the throat, I almost came. Wanted to jack off on your face.”

Syren climbed him, sat on his cock, already hard. “We’re so fucking weird.” He kissed Kane’s neck, licked the pulse as it raced.

“Hell yeah.” Kane’s hips rolled, dick pushing against Syren’s ass. “Totally weird.” Their lips met, kisses wet and sloppy and nasty as Syren humped him.

Panting breaths, heavy sighs. Hair pulls and that cock at his ass, like flesh covered granite. So hard. And Syren was dripping, wetting his pink panties. His blood sang, an amazing tune as he loved on his husband. A moment of familiarity snatched away when his phone rang.

He groaned and rolled off Kane. It was Billy. He answered quickly on speaker. “Billy, what do you have?”

“Okay. I think we have a winner.” Billy sounded weary, burned out. Syren would have to make up for monopolizing his time. Maybe a week in the Caribbean for Billy and his husband when all of this was over and done.

“Monica’s had a lot of callers and visitors since her husband died, but only one has been visiting her consistently, and only that one person had her staying with him at his villa in Switzerland.”

*Oh fuck.*

“Who?” Kane barked.

“Casimir Zaretsky.”

*Sweet motherfucking Jesus.* Syren slumped against Kane. Bad. This was bad.

“What? Who is he?”

“Russian mobster,” Billy explained. “Delatorre’s biggest rival in the gun trade. He’s now top dog in that arena.”

And he wasn’t to be fucked with. As Faro, Syren had had to deal with him, but it came at a cost. Always at a cost. Jesus. Everything was beginning to come together, painting a picture Syren wanted to douse with gasoline and light afire.

“Thanks, Billy.” He ended the call as Kane grabbed his chin. Their gazes met.

“Who is he, this Zaretsky guy?”

Syren licked his lips. “He is who Billy said he is, and more. Much more.”

Kane’s eyes narrowed. “Are you-are you afraid of him?”

He knew his lips trembled, but he couldn’t help it. “Yes.”

“Why? What did he do?”

Kane touched him, touched his cheek and Syren started shaking. Full body shakes. He kept his eyes open, kept his gaze on Kane’s face, his husband’s face when he said softly, brokenly, “He owned me.”

Kane shook his head. “Wh-What does that mean?”

“He was the first man I was sold to when I was ten. He owned me, as Marcos.” The panic was fresh, the memories a fucking movie playing out in front of his eyes in 3D. He wanted to run away.

Horror paled Kane’s face. “Oh my God!” He hauled Syren close. “Why is he still alive?”

Syren buried his face in Kane’s shirt. “I didn’t know who he was. He was the only one I couldn’t identify. I was so young then, still so afraid, I wasn’t paying attention to names and markers to identify them. Then I started working with Delatorre.” He pushed Kane away and sat back. “He was the rival, but I didn’t know until I was ordered to meet with him, to broker a deal of sorts.” He took a breath. “There was something about his eyes, I couldn’t figure out why he gave me the creeps. But then he spoke.” The remembered horror flooded back and he hiccupped. “His voice. I remembered it clearly. I couldn’t do anything without revealing who I was, and then he came on to me.”

*Came on to* was the softest phrase for what Casimir had done. He’d accosted Syren time after time, trapped him in a hotel room and tried to get in his pants. He’d fucked someone atop his desk while Syren sat on the other side, trying to conduct business. His attempt to prove that he could do anything, that he was untouchable, and that he could have Syren at any time.

“Does he know who you really are?”

He shook his head. “No. I got sidetracked by Delatorre and gave all my energy to dealing with him.” But he never forgot.

“Then what does he want?” Kane looked and sounded confused.

“Me.” He inhaled, let it out slow. “He wants me. In his bed.”

“That’s never going to happen.”

He sighed. “He wanted what I would never give. Attempted to seduce me more than once. And the last time when he bloodied my face and tried to take me without my consent, I slashed his face.” That was a good memory, the surprise on Casimir’s face. His expression as blood ran down his cheek. Syren had caught him off guard, left his mark. “I’d like to think this isn’t about just getting me in bed, or making me pay for turning him down, but he is that type.” Casimir was vindictive and a fucking pervert. No way was that son of a bitch getting anywhere near him.

“Are you sure he doesn’t know that you’re that boy? Maybe that’s the reason he’s been coming after you so hard.”

Syren shrugged. He didn’t know for sure, he’d never knew for sure unless and until he and Casimir met face to face. Disgust rolled down his back at the thought. “If he wanted to find me, he could. His money reaches into long dark places.”

Kane rested his forehead on Syren’s. “Whatever he does. We’ll deal with it together.” He shook Syren slightly, kissed his nose. “I’m with you all the way.”

Syren nodded. He’d have to deal with Casimir. He’d have to go down that road when he swore he’d never do it ever again. He’d have to do it all to protect his family.

A knock came on the bedroom door. “Yo, climb off that ‘D’ and let’s move,” Mateo spoke from the other side.

Syren looked up at glanced out the window. Yes. It was dark outside. Kane got off the bed and took his hand.

“You ready?”

Oh yeah. He was so ready. “I am.” Kane hugged him, kissed him, and then they were walking out the room. Together.

The abandoned house didn't look at all abandoned, but at least there weren't any neighbors close by to hear any gunshots. Kane parked the SUV under an alcove of trees and they all filed out. Pablo and Rafe went first, casing the place, running around back.

Mateo stayed near the SUV—actually he was on top of the SUV, laying on his stomach, his rifle all put together and ready to go. There was one light on in a room on the first floor, and one on the second.

Someone moved near the lit window on the first floor.

Syren's phone buzzed. "Go."

"Two on the second floor," Rafe whispered. "They're watching TV." He paused then said, "The Monica chick is here, upstairs with the girls."

Syren's heart skipped a beat. "You got eyes on Cãtia and Nina?"

"Pablo has eyes on them, yeah. How do you want to play this?"

Syren looked to Kane who was also listening in.

"You two secure the upstairs, keep Monica alive," Kane said. "We'll take downstairs."

"Done." Rafe signed off

"Let's move." Syren looked up at Mateo. "Do you have a visual?"

Mateo didn't move a muscle. Hell, Syren didn't even think the man's mouth moved when he said, "Yeah. Got one standing by the window."

"You can have him on my signal." Syren moved with Kane, one step forward. "When we knock on the door."

They raced to the house. Kane had his gun. Syren had his gun. And his heart in his throat. Fucking hell. He never wanted to do this shit again. They crept up the front steps on silent feet. Just as he put his hand out to knock, his phone buzzed.

“Go.”

“Upstairs secure.”

He put the phone in his pocket and knocked. A second later a ping sounded, and the window to his left spider webbed. Something hit the floor and Kane kicked the door down. A body lay right there.

A shot rang out, the other guy, jumping over the couch and rushing toward them. Kane fired and missed by a fucking breath. But then the guy jerked once and crumbled with a surprised look on his face.

Mateo.

Syren didn't wait for the body to hit the floor, he ran up the stairs with Kane on his heels. Sounds of a scuffle drew him to the room with its door open and he barged in.

“Oh God.”

“Papa! Daddy!” Càtia ran toward them and Syren fell to his knees. Kane was there too, all three of them hugging and him trying not to damn cry, but God. He'd never felt so much like breaking down. He buried his face in Càtia's hair.

She still smelled like the coconut shampoo he washed her hair with. She still felt so warm and tiny and helpless in his arms. She still felt like his daughter and he had her back. He lifted his head and handed her off to Kane.

His husband's eyes were wet and red, and he hugged Càtia so tight Syren didn't think she could breathe. He smoothed her hair and touched Kane's face then turned to the room.

Nina sat crossed legged on the floor, her face black and blue, lips swollen and cut.

“Nina.” He rushed to her, pulling her into a hug. “I’m so sorry.”

She shook her head and pulled back. “Don’t apologize.” Her face hardened as she looked over her shoulder at Monica where she sat, flanked by Pablo and Rafe. “I promised her she was making a mistake, but she didn’t believe me.”

“Guys, please take C`atia downstairs. Nina too.” He nodded when Rafe lifted an eyebrow.

“Papa, I didn’t like this adventure very much,” C`atia said from behind him. “I didn’t do anything except sit and watch TV.” She pouted. “I’m sorry.”

Syren smiled. “Don’t be sorry. You’ll have an even better adventure soon, I promise.” He took her hand and gave her to Rafe. “Go with Uncle Angel. Uncle Matty is downstairs.”

Her eyes lit up. “Really?”

Kane chuckled. “Yes, baby girl. Really.”

C`atia tugged on Rafe’s hand. “Let’s go, Uncle Angel. I have to tell Uncle Matty about my adventure. He knows all about adventures.” Rafe rolled his eyes, but went along. Syren helped Nina to her feet and watched as she leaned heavily on Pablo as they left the room.

When only he and Kane remained, Syren turned back to a still seated Monica. He sat down next to her while Kane circled her and stood at her back.

“I hear tell you’ve been dealing with Casimir Zaretsky.”

She didn’t talk, all that defiance in her eyes. She wasn’t dressed the way she’d been when they met in New York. Today she wore jeans and a white blouse, her hair pulled back into a ponytail. Still so very beautiful. The faade still so flawless.

“I bet you thought you were gonna get all he promised.” He chuckled. His phone buzzed and he answered when he saw Dutch’s name on the caller ID. “Dutch,” he answered on speaker.

“You ready for clean up?”

“I’ll need five more minutes before you swoop in.” Syren met Kane’s gaze. “Should be enough time, right?”

Kane nodded. “Just enough.”

“You’ll need three body bags.” He hung up and refocused on Monica, on her pale face and wild eyes. “Monica, you’ve got that look in your eyes. It’s the same look I saw in Thiago’s eyes when I stabbed him in the jugular and watched him bleed out.”

“You killed my son! You killed my son!” She launched herself at him, but Syren was prepared. He grabbed her by the throat, held her aloof.

“Yes, I killed your son. Even chopped him up into bite sized pieces and dropped him into the Pacific Ocean.” He cocked his head to the side. “Where do you think I’ll drop your body parts?”

“Casimir is waiting for you,” she spat. “He’s got plans, big plans for you.”

He squeezed her neck, watched her eyes bugled, and he took pleasure in it. “Yeah? Same plans he had for you? Sharing you with his ten closest associates, humiliating you, making you feel less than shit?”

Her eyes flashed. She didn’t have to say a word. He knew how Casimir operated.

“You should have known better, Monica, but I don’t even know why I expect more from someone like you.” He eyed her up and down with disdain. “Casimir could never have me so he sued you to get to me, and here you are, thinking you could ever fuck with me.”

He looked at Kane. “Take her.”

Kane stepped forward and grabbed her, holding her when Syren let go. He got to his feet and looked around. A coil of bloodied rope was thrown over in a corner and he picked it up, brought it over.

“My husband and I would like to convey just how we feel about you stealing our daughter from us.” He circled them, stood behind her and wrapped the rope around her neck. Kane held her when she jerked, and Syren pulled, tightening the rope into a noose.

“You’re gonna die tonight, Monica,” he whispered in her ear, “and you’ll die knowing that I wiped out your entire family.”

She struggled, but Kane’s hold didn’t relent.

“I had no beef with you, until you brought it to my doorstep.” He wrapped the ends of the rope around his hand and yanked. Her head fell backward. The sounds she made, gasping, choking. He got off on it. “Allow me to finish what you started.”

Kane rose slowly, removing his hands from around Monica’s neck, and Syren kicked the chair forward with her in it while yanking the rope backward. A low crack and she was done.

He didn’t let go until Kane touched him, took the rope from his bleeding hands. “Hey, it’s okay. We’re all done here.”

He looked up at Kane, saw nothing but love and acceptance and he nodded. They were all done. “Let’s go.” One down. One more to go.

## Chapter Eight

By the time they got back home it was well after midnight. Syren and Kane had made the choice to send C`atia and Nina to Costa Rica with an escort of five men courtesy of Dutch. He trusted Dutch with the women in his life, and they'd stay there until the threat to their family was dealt with. Isa was also on her way to Costa Rica. She jumped at the chance to spend time with her niece, she said, but Syren knew she wanted to be close to Nina. Why Isa wouldn't come clean with her feelings for Nina he would never know, but hey, who was he to judge?

All the men joined them at the private airstrip to say goodbye to C`atia and Nina. She'd been sad. C`atia didn't understand why they'd had to leave immediately, but of course he couldn't explain. There would never be a good enough explanation. And once again he would be without his daughter, but at least she was safe, and she'd remain that way as long as he had breath left in his body.

Exhaustion battered him, as did the sadness that came with waving goodbye to his daughter, and he leaned on Kane's shoulder on the ride back to the house. Everyone was silent, the mood heavy. He was lucky, he knew that. He had people in his life who'd drop everything and run to him should he ever need them. For the longest time it was only Isa and Henry in his life and now, his family had expanded beyond anything he'd ever imagined.

It would grow more. He promised Kane a son. A son. Just those words made him smile. He had a future to build and nurture, and Casimir Zaretsky wasn't allowed to fuck with it. He was already formulating his plan of attack, but he'd need sleep before he could get the ball rolling like it should. He wasn't in a rush. Casimir wasn't going anywhere, and he and Dutch had decided to keep Monica's well-deserved demise on the down low until the time was right.

Enough time and energy spent on other people. There were more important things to occupy his mind tonight. He took Kane's hand and exited the SUV before following the men inside the house.

O.G. bounded up to them, tail wagging. "Put him outside," Syren told Kane. "I'm gonna go shower." Upstairs, he scrubbed from head to toe under the relaxing spray of the water. Damn, but he needed that. And now that his pace had slowed down, energy buzzed through his veins. The fatigue melted away like it'd never been. That was good, because he had plans.

Clean and refreshed, he donned one of Kane's crisp white shirts and a pair of red bikini panties before going back downstairs, his hair still damp. At the bottom of the stairs he stopped. Moans drifted to him from the living room and he frowned then peeked in. Tommy was lying on his back half on, half off the couch and Mateo was between his legs, sucking him off.

"I know you're not fucking on my couch."

Mateo flicked him the bird, but didn't stop what he was doing. Syren grinned and left the two alone. In the kitchen he found Angel and Gabe. Angel had Gabe pressed up against the island, his back to Angel's front. Gabe's hands were up around Angel's neck, fingers buried in his hair as they kissed and rocked against each other.

Syren had always liked watching those two make love. They didn't really seem to care much about being watched. He stood there, bottom lip caught between his teeth as Angel's hand disappeared down the front of Gabe's jeans.

They were hot the way they moved together. Gabe's eyes were closed, but Angel's weren't, his lashes were lowered, head bent as he bit Gabe's neck.

Gabe jerked. "Fuck." He spun around in Angel's arms, a blur, and they were kissing, Gabe's ass against the counter, his legs around Angel's waist.

“I’m sure I don’t have to tell you kids to clean up when you’re done?” He didn’t expect an answer, but Angel grunted his way so he took it, licking his lips as he walked away. He opened the backdoor expecting to see Kane and O.G. in the backyard, but instead got an eyeful of Pablo and Shane.

Now that one was a surprise. Juan Pablo was in Shane’s lap as they sat on one of the wrought iron benches, his chest bare and his jeans in a pile on the ground. Shane’s jeans were around his ankles and Pablo was riding him, slamming up and down on Shane’s cock.

Fuck. He spun away and made his way back to the stairs.

“God. Fuck, T. Fuck me harder.” Mateo’s voice was low, but definitely not low enough. And was everybody a switch except him?

He went back to the bedroom and stood at the window overlooking the backyard, watching as Pablo got fucked. Syren couldn’t hear his cries, but he saw them. The floodlights out there were on, and the full moon helped to illuminate the two men’s faces. His own groin throbbed. He did like watching, and tonight was a revelation.

Turning his back on the window, he sat cross legged in the middle of the bed. Footsteps sounded in the stars then two seconds later Kane was there.

“Did you know every damn body is fucking downstairs?” He shook his head and kicked the door closed. “It’s like a Roman orgy down there.”

Syren grinned and got up. He walked over to Kane, pressing himself to Kane’s back when he turned to toe off his boots.

“I like it.”

Kane chuckled. “I bet you do.”

Syren kissed him, the middle of his back, licking the ridges in his spine through his t-shirt. Kane trembled for him. Syren wrapped his arms around Kane's waist and laid his head there, on his back. And Kane remained there with him, standing still so Syren could indulge in the feel and the smell of his husband, in the texture of his skin and the musk of his sweat.

Kane touched his hands where they connected at his midsection. "You want something?" Oh, the pretend innocence in that question, all fake nonchalance, as if he didn't know how much Syren was needing him. As if the strained lines of his own body didn't broadcast his own wanting.

Syren didn't speak, he just stood there, and Kane grabbed his wrist, slung him around until Syren was thrown into the door, back first. He stayed there, eyes on Kane's, on the concentration on his face and the stark hunger in his blue gaze. And when Kane got close, Syren fisted his hand in Kane's t-shirt and yanked him closer, until their chests bumped.

"I want you fuck me." He licked a wet trail from Kane's shoulder up to his ear lobe, nipped him. "Make it nasty," he whispered.

Kane's mouth tipped up. "I can do nasty."

Syren let his eyelids droop and looked up Kane through his lashes. "Yeah? You think so?" He slid his hand down Kane's chest, over those abs where the muscles contracted for him and cupped Kane's erection. "I want this inside me in the worst way. Want to feel you digging me out, breaking me apart."

Kane tore at the shirt Syren wore, buttons dropping at their feet. He mashed their mouths together, tongue stabbing inside. Syren surrendered to him with a whimper, a leg coming up to hook around Kane's waist. Kane pressed their middle together, rubbing against him with sharp thrust of his hips. Syren clutched at his shoulder, his waist. Wanted to touch him all over.

“Love when you get greedy.” Kane bit his bottom lip, bit him hard enough for it hurt like a motherfucker, but Syren grabbed his ass, pulled him in.

Calloused fingers trapped his nipples, pinched them as a hand swept down over his crotch and palmed him through his panties. He whimpered and moaned, head banging against the door. Kane’s touch on his skin was like gasoline on a bonfire. No rhyme or reason, but it was good, too good to pass up, to lose.

He leaned forward, nipping at Kane’s chest through his t-shirt. The hands on him retreated. Kane stepped away.

“Fuck no.” He made a grab for Kane but his husband stepped out of reach, walked over and stood next to the bed.

“Come here.”

He went, gaze stuck on the fire in Kane’s eyes, at the adoration on his face and the wet swell of his lips.

“Panties. I want them.”

Syren stepped out of the pink Vickie’s, handing them over when Kane held out a hand. Kane bunch them up and brought them to his nose. Inhaled loud enough for Syren to hear, for his body to clench.

“Knees.”

Syren got on his knees, head tipped back to look up at Kane. The other man dropped the panties on the bed and pulled off his t-shirt and stepped out of his jeans, keeping his dark blue briefs on.

Kane just looked at him and Syren knew the next command. He buried his face in Kane’s groin, mouthing his balls through the underwear, lungs shuddering as he inhaled Kane’s scent.

Like a fucking drug how that scent shot straight to his brain and took him to his happy place. He sucked Kane through the cotton of his underwear, used his teeth, but Kane loved that, short, sharp nips that had Kane pushing his hips forward, fingers plunging and tightening in Syren's hair.

He moaned at all the sensations, thrusting into the air, pre-cum drip, drip, dripping. He pulled down the elastic waistband of Kane's briefs, hooked it around his balls.

Kane stopped him before he could dip his head. He looked up. The fierce need on Kane's face took his breath away.

"I want your mouth on open." Kane guided his cock to Syren's mouth, tapped it against his lips. "Want to fuck it, watch you swallow me until your eyes water and you gag."

Syren opened. As if he'd do anything else. Kane pushed in, no finesse, no soft shit, a ramming down Syren's throat that immediately fucked with his gag reflex. His head snapped back as Kane thrust in and out, fast and hard. Using him up, surrounding him. He held Kane's gaze, hollowed his cheeks and let his husband go to town.

With a quirk of his lips, Kane jammed in and stayed. The tip of his cock felt as if it was lodged at least halfway down Syren's windpipe. His vision swam, his scalp burned where Kane pulled his hair and his balls hurt. All that pain you'd think he wanted it to ease. No. He gave Kane his fingernails, racked them down his upper thighs, dug them in, and Kane moved then with a shout.

The force of his thrust rattled Syren's teeth. He smiled in his mind. He swallowed when Kane pulled back a little, lashes fluttering at Kane's sweet n salty pre-cum. He loved it and wanted more, but Kane pulled away, all the way out.

He grunted his frustration.

“So greedy.” Kane swiped a thumb over Syren’s bottom lip. Pushed two fingers in his mouth, thrusting them in and out if they were his cock. Syren latched on, sucking them with loud wet sounds, moaning around them as Kane jerked himself off. Syren reached between his legs to fondle his balls.

“No touching yourself.” Kane moved the fingers and Syren grabbed his wrist, held him steady and bobbed on the three fingers in his mouth, slobbering all over them. His saliva dripped down into Kane’s palm. Kane smiled at him, all white teeth, expression predatory. “I love you like this. Inhibitions cast aside, dirty as you wanna be.” He pulled Syren off his fingers. “Get on the bed.”

Syren couldn’t stand, he tried twice but his legs wouldn’t cooperate. Kane helped him, lifted him with a kiss to his nose, and deposited him on to the bed.

“On your back.” Kane stroked himself, his cock purple-red, shiny with pre-cum and Syren’s saliva. “I want to watch your eyes. Want to lose myself in your gorgeous eyes.”

Syren licked his lips flipped onto his back, crab walking until he was in the middle of their bed, his head on the pillows.

Kane threw him the bottle of lube on the nightstand. “Two fingers. Prep yourself while I watch.”

“Ah fuck.” He couldn’t fucking think straight as he slicked up his fingers. He planted his feet flat on the mattress, knees apart and reached down. Kane’s gaze was on his fingers as Syren fed them into his hole. One. He sank in to the last knuckle, breath stuttering in his chest.

Kane’s jaw tightened. His lips parted and he groaned when Syren groaned, cock dripping a steady stream of pre-cum.

He paired the fingers. Pushed in number two, twisted. “God.” His cock jerked where it lay atop his stomach, wetting his navel with the sticky-sweet shit.

“I love you,” Kane whispered. His gaze was haunted as he looked from Syren to the fingers in his ass and back. “Love the shit outta your ass.”

“M-Marshal.” He couldn’t get his tongue to work right. “Love you too.” He fucked himself with the two fingers, pushing them in and out, grazing his prostate and retreating quickly before he lost his mind.

“I love your rough edges, all the scars, all the things that make you you.” Kane moved between his legs, pulled out Syren’s fingers and sealed his lips over Syren’s hole.

He screamed. Honest to God, he was aware of it as his hips lifted off the bed. Kane held his knees apart, tongue circling him there, pushing in and in.

“Ungh.” Syren grabbed Kane’s hair, holding his head where he wanted it as he lifted his lower half off the bed. He rolled his hips, head falling back as Kane’s wet tongue fucked him open. “Fuck. Fuck. Goddamn it, I love when you eat me.”

Kane chuckled and the vibrations rocked him, cracked him.

“Damn it,” Syren babbled. “Yess. Right there.” Tongue and fingers, Kane’s, stretching him wider and wider. “Shit,” he hissed. “Fucking tongue is a monster.”

Kane moved away and Syren looked down. His husband was breathing hard, chest rising and falling, his face red and wet, eyes wild. He lifted Syren’s left leg, hooked it around his waist and guided himself home.

Syren watched him, he wanted to, had to, but with every inch Kane fed into him, his head fell back a little more. And when Kane’s balls slapped up against his back, Syren was staring up at the ceiling, eyes wet from the burn, gasping for air.

“Like this?” Kane pulled out and slammed in.

“Fuck!” Syren vaulted upright then fell back. “Yes. Fuck me, harder.” He put both legs on Kane’s shoulder, lifted his ass and took the pounding as Kane began a punishing pace on his ass.

“You gonna scream for me, baby?” Fingers dug into Syren’s hips as Kane held on and rode him like a fucking champion jockey. Every thrust rocked Syren to his core.

“Yes.” There was no sense in denying his marshal had turned him into a screamer. “Make me scream.”

Kane switched up his temp, his sweat dripping onto Syren’s stomach. Syren swore he heard every drop sizzle when they landed on him.

“Deeper.” He yanked Kane down, grabbed his ass, pushing him deeper. “Oh God, Marshal, I need to feel you. In my fucking throat. Deeper.”

“Then you will.” Kane bit him, on his left pec, pinched a nipple.

Syren clenched around him and Kane swore.

“Fucking love how you squeeze me.” He licked Syren’s cheek, his nose. “Makes my balls ache.”

Syren did it again. “Love you.” He buried his fingers in Kane’s hair. “From the tips of my toes to the top of my head, and everything in between,” he panted. “I love you.”

“You’d better. Got me beasting out for you.” Kane’s teeth flashed. “Got me killing for you.” He swiveled his hips, cockhead dragging over Syren’s prostate.

“Ungh.” His body spasmed. He clawed at the sheets. “You loved it.” He writhed, cock sliding against Kane’s belly, leaving a sticky trail behind. “You loved pulling that trigger for me.”

Kane's cock jerked inside him. "Fuck yes," he grunted. "I did." He kissed Syren, breath hot. Kissed him with sloppy, hurried strokes of his tongue. "You're a bad influence. Gonna have to fuck that outta you."

Syren locked his ankles above Kane's ass. "You can try." He met Kane, stroke for stroke. "Deep and hard, like I like it."

Kane's groans grew louder, the fingers at Syren's hips grew painful. "Damn."

"Yeah. Yeah." He bit Kane's shoulder, bit him hard. Until his man cried out. Until his thrusts grew desperate. "Just like that. Just like—fuck! Ungh." His words devolved into stupid, senseless chatter. "Feel you. I feel you, breaking me open. Oh God."

Kane hit his prostate dead on. Battered it, until sparks flew behind Syren's eyes and all he could do was hold on and scream through the inferno.

"Oh God. Oh God." Cum shot, all over his stomach. He spasmed as the orgasm blew him apart. And he heard his voice as it rose loud in the room. He sounded lost, adrift. But the touch of rough hand on his cheek and he was fucking anchored. He was home. Safe. And empty because Kane pulled out of him, making him wince and babble. "Fuck. No. No, please."

But Kane climbed him like a jungle cat, limbs shaking where they touched Syren. He sat on Syren's chest, hands a blur as he stroked himself.

"Fucking yes." Syren palmed his ass, held him. "Do it. On my face, paint my face with it."

And Kane did, coming with a loud rumble in his chest, cum splattering over Syren's face and neck. He writhed under the thick heat of it and Kane was there, stretched out over him, licking it off, pushing his tongue into Syren's mouth so Syren could taste it, taste him, and lose

his fucking mind all over again. He held Kane, pulling his hair when Kane would've moved off, trapping him with his thighs, as he sucked on Kane's tongue like he'd done his cock.

Kane rocked on him, softening cock pressed against Syren's. And they kissed. Just kissed. Because Syren loved it, loved kissing his husband, loved how Kane's arms trembled around him, loved how he sighed for Syren.

He broke the kiss to swipe a finger through the cum he knew was still on his forehead and wipe it over Kane's lips. Kane licked it off. Syren did it again. And again.

"Nasty." Kane kissed his finger, sucked it into his mouth.

"Which you love."

"Because it's nasty." Kane sobered. "You're amazing, you know that? I'm so proud to call you mine. My husband. My partner."

Syren's eyes misted. "Someone's angling for a round two." Kane just grinned at him and Syren cupped his face. "We're two very lucky sons of bitches, Marshal. I love you, you love me, and that's all we need."

"Along with our daughter." Kane grinned, his chin on Syren's chest, gaze dancing. "And the men fucking like rabbits all over our house."

"And lots of nasty sex."

"Shit." Kane hardened against Syren's thigh. "I'm gonna need me a round two."

## Chapter Nine

Once Kane fell asleep, Syren crept downstairs for a cool drink. He paused in the living room. Mateo and Tommy were curled around each other, Mateo's head on Tommy's chest while the younger man held on to his husband tightly.

Tommy's lashes fluttered and lifted. "Hey." He smiled and Syren grinned down at him.

"You okay?" He brushed a lock of hair out of Tommy's eyes. He and Tommy had gotten really close since the wedding and Syren really liked the mild-mannered younger man. Tommy was exactly who Mateo needed in his life. "Need another blanket or something?"

Tommy shook his head. "Thanks, but we're good."

"I see that." Syren winked. Tommy blushed and Syren walked away chuckling. He didn't see Angel and Gabe, but he entered the kitchen to find Pablo standing in front of the open fridge, wearing only jeans and boots, jeans that did nothing to hide the crack of his ass.

Syren took a moment to admire all the fine things Pablo's physique had to offer, before clearing his throat. Pablo turned around, a bottle of water in hand.

He grinned at Syren then gave a low whistle. "Lookie. Did not peg you as a screamer." He shook his head as his eyes laughed. "Learn something new every day."

Heat flooded his face, but Syren stood his ground and fired back. "Didn't peg you as a bottom."

Pablo stalked toward him with a shrug. "Why would you? The only person who pegs me is my husband."

Syren rolled his eyes. He grabbed the bottle of water from Pablo and took a sip. Pablo sat on a stool at the island and stared at him.

"What?"

“You’ve got a little some’n.” Pablo licked his thumb and reached out, but Syren hurriedly stepped back.

“What the hell?”

“Your husband left a lil some’n some’n behind.” Pablo’s gaze flicked to Syren’s forehead, his lips curving. “Y’all are just two weird freaks behind closed doors, aren’t you?” He reached out to wipe at Syren’s forehead again, but Syren waved him off.

“Leave it.” He wanted Kane’s cum on him. He’d begged for it. Begged for Kane to mark him. A tangible claim. Only when Kane had asked for the same, Syren had shut him down. He leaned against the counter and met Pablo’s gaze. “Can I ask you something and have it stay between the two of us?”

“If you’re gonna ask to watch me and Shane again, I’m gonna have to pass. He’s not a fan of your eyes on us.” Pablo looked genuinely apologetic.

Syren laughed. “No, no that.” He grew serious quickly. “Have you always been a switch?”

“What makes you think I switch?”

He frowned. “You don’t?” He hadn’t expected that.

“I do, but you shouldn’t be assuming shit.” Pablo took the water from Syren and swallowed a mouthful. “I hadn’t really taken the catching position, not until Shane. Up ’til then I’d done it once, but it wasn’t anything to write poems about.”

“And this time around?” Syren crossed his arms and waited, but the soft look on Pablo’s face said it all.

“I only submitted to Shane the night before I sent him away.” He eyed Syren. “You remember that time. I wanted to give him something of me, something I’d never really given anyone. I wanted him to claim me.”

*Claim me.* “And?”

“And he did.” Pablo leaned forward, gaze searching. “Why all the questions?”

Syren swallowed. “Kane asked me to top.”

Pablo looked lost. “Okay, and?”

Syren looked down. “I said no. Told him I wasn’t interested.” Silence greeted his words and he looked up. Pablo was still staring. “What?”

“Was that the truth?”

Fuck. He hadn’t really examined the words or the reasons why he’d denied Kane’s request. But he’d have to now, especially now with Casimir back in his life. “I don’t know if it’s the truth. I just know I wasn’t prepared for that request and I-I shut him down.”

“What’s the reason you’re scared to make love to him?”

Pablo sounded way too shrink-like for Syren’s peace of mind. “What makes you think I’m scared?”

“Your eyes.”

Syren scoffed at that, but Pablo kept speaking. “Listen, it’s cool if you’re not that type. Some men only catch, some only pitch. It’s cool if that is the reason you said no.” He paused. “But I don’t think that’s you. At least I don’t think that’s the whole truth.”

Syren kept quiet.

“Making love to my husband, having him reciprocate, there’s nothing better than that,” Pablo said. “I love the connection and the intimacy of it, and for me, I think if we’d kept it one-

sided, we'd feel like something was missing. For me. I can beast out on Shane and claim him, which I do, but there's nothing like having him handle me." He winked. "I happen to love being handled." He patted Syren's shoulder. "Be honest, with Kane and with yourself."

Syren nodded. He understood what his friend said. He just had to let his brain catch up with his body and he had to tell Kane why, explain the reason he'd said no. "Thanks." He smiled at Pablo. "You're not so bad at this whole advice thing."

Pablo grinned. "I've been working on it. Can't be all solemn and closed off when I'm a father."

"That's right. How is Heather?" Pablo and Shane were using Shane's sister-in-law as their surrogate.

"She's beginning to show." A light went on in Pablo's eyes, as if someone had turned on a light switch. "We're supposed to bring her pickles and sour cream when we get back." He grimaced. "Don't understand the weird cravings, but whatever." He shrugged.

Syren grinned. "Are you scared, being responsible for a brand new life?"

"Shitless." Pablo shook his head. "But I'm also excited." He laughed. "Shane hadn't slept since we found out Heather was pregnant. He's gonna be a worrier."

Syren just looked at him with a smile. He remembered the first time he'd met Juan Pablo Castillo, he remembered all the things the other man had been through. He remembered it all and to see where Pablo was now, the place he'd ended up, Syren couldn't believe it.

"You're staring."

"I'm happy for you and Shane," Syren said softly. "Happy that you're getting what you want. Happy to see you happy and content. It's what I want for all my friends. For my family."

Pablo nodded. "Some of us have it easier than others."

Namely Angel and Gabe. Fate was really kicking those boys' hearts around like a football. Just before they'd come to Connecticut Gabe had called to say they'd lost another pregnancy. The defeatist look in their eyes was hard to watch and Syren wished he could do it, could make a call and make things okay for them.

"Hey."

They looked up. Shane stood in the doorway.

"You coming to bed?"

"Yep." Pablo stood and pulled Syren into a hug. "Talk to Kane."

He nodded and he didn't miss the way Shane's jaw tightened as Syren held Pablo close. When Pablo pulled away and walked toward Shane, Syren called out.

"Shane."

Shane held his gaze, silent and watchful.

"I've never said it and I should have," Syren said. "I'm sorry. For then. For being stupid and insensitive, and for making you doubt me even now." He didn't look at Pablo, but he felt the man's surprise. "You're the best thing that could have happened to him, and I'm grateful to call you both family."

Shane shock registered on his face. He grabbed Pablo's hand and nodded at Syren.

"Forgiven."

The two men walked away and Syren slumped against the countertop. He had lots of things to think about. And a perverted bastard to neuter.

Casimir was in Brazil. Probably awaiting Monica's return. The perfect place to get him unawares. Too bad Monica wouldn't be putting in an appearance. Syren knew all of Casimir's

movements whenever he visited Brazil. He had done his homework the first time around, once he'd figured out just who Casimir Zaretsky was. And Casimir was a man of habit. His wife's family estate—yes, he'd married a former Brazilian supermodel—the whorehouse, the family restaurant. And let's not forget the apartment he'd set up for his mistress.

He was a man who spread himself thin. He had to have it all, and he didn't care about anything other than his own needs.

Syren sat outside the whorehouse in a van, all the boys piled in with him as they waited. He was a business man and as such he'd cultivated an overflowing dossier on people who'd be useful to him. Right now he awaited the arrival of Maritza, the proprietor of the whorehouse Casimir frequented. Maritza had been one of Delatorre's employees, but like most of them, she'd hated the man. Syren had seen that hatred burn in her eyes one day when Delatorre pressed a gun to her mother's head in order to grab more money from her in exchange for letting her operate in his territory. Syren had stepped in and cooled things down, and cultivated a relationship of sorts with the woman. Nice words and a smile went down far easier than threats and a gun.

He'd also saved her son from getting caught up in a drug bust.

He was owed. Time he collected.

The van door opened and Maritza got in, eyes flaring wide when she spotted him.

"Faro." She pulled him into a tight hug, pressing his face into her large and sweaty bosom, rapid Portuguese falling from her lips. "Where have you been? They said you were dead."

"Maritza." He pushed at her. "Let me breathe."

The men chuckled and he shot his husband a glare. She released him and he straightened his tie. "I'm afraid I'm very much alive, which I'm sure will disappoint a rather large number of people." He kissed her hand. "Maritza, looking fuckable as always." He winked and she blushed.

Maritza was pushing sixty with a plump body and those notorious tatas. Her waist length hair was a curly mix of black and silver and her eyes were an intriguing mix of green and hazel. A looker, especially with a set of full lips and sky-high cheekbones. She'd tried her charms on him once or twice, and he'd had to let her down gently. She hadn't taken it personally.

"Mari, I'd like to introduce you to someone." He took Kane's hand, held it. "This is my husband."

She gasped. "No! Really?" She squealed and launched herself at Kane. "He's pretty." She pinched Kane's cheek and his husband went as red as a tomato. "Ooh." She pinched his forearm. "Big and strong, too."

"And my friends." He introduced her to the rest of the gang then proceeded to the real reason they were there. "Casimir Zarestsky."

She sat back in the seat. "He's on his way here." She looked worried. "You bringing trouble?"

"Don't I always?" He patted her hand. "I'm here for him, yes, but no trouble for you. Quiet."

She stared off into space. "He likes Paulo," she said softly. "He's twenty, but looks like a baby."

Casimir's type.

"Paulo wants nothing to do with him, but he's scared, and I can't afford to go against Casimir. Word is, he'll be taking over Delatorre's business."

“Don’t listen to the word on the street.” Syren nodded to Tommy. “He’s going in with you. He’ll let me know when Casimir comes in.” He motioned to the rest of the men. “We’ll come through via the back.” He lifted an eyebrow. “I’m guessing you still haven’t fixed that little hidey-hole?”

She shrugged. “Comes in handy every now and again.” Then she clutched his hand. “What about the after? I can’t have bad publicity.”

“We’ll take care of that,” Kane spoke up.

They’d have to figure that out. Syren hadn’t consulted Dutch on this job. He didn’t want to ask more from the FBI agent than he could afford to, and he didn’t want Dutch to overplay his hand. No one could know about Dutch’s extra-curricular activities, or that the man wielded more power and authority than he should.

Maritza nodded. “Okay. Let’s go.” She kissed Syren on the lips. “For luck, eh?” She patted his cheek and exited. Tommy followed her until Mateo called out to him.

“T.”

Tommy poked his head in. “Yeah?”

“Watch yourself, otherwise I’m gon have to beat that ass.” As Tommy turned red, Mateo grabbed him by the hair and planted a hard kiss on him. “Go.”

Tommy did.

“Aww.” They all made kissing noises at Mateo as he played with a knife.

“I’ll have to stab someone if you fucks don’t shut it.”

They grew silent. The van was parked in the alley behind the whorehouse. There was no exit, no doors there, so no one should be coming that way. Now they just had to wait until Tommy let them know that Casimir was in the building.

Kane's cell phone went off and they all looked at him. He looked at it then swore.

"What?" Syren asked.

"Text from Vince. He's leaving on his vacation next week and wants to have drinks before he does."

"I'd love to have drinks. Tell him yes."

Kane cleared his throat. "Pretty sure he means only me. Besides, you don't drink."

Syren lifted his head from where he'd been lying on Kane's shoulder and met his husband's gaze. "I'd love to have drinks. Now, text him back a yes." About time Vince was shown his place. Next thing to tick off on his to-do list. This mess has been going on long enough.

Syren's phone went off next. *He's here. Two guns.*

As Syren thought. Casimir wouldn't waste his good guns on a whorehouse, one he'd been frequenting for years. Especially when he'd assured that everyone would be afraid of him. He took a breath, stuffed the phone into his pocket. "All right men, we're up."

Everyone except him pulled on their ski masks. Guns at the ready, they filed out the limo and Syren pried apart the piece of plywood about seven feet high that served to block the chunk of wall that had been missing for years. God bless Maritza for never fixing it.

The rickety stairs leading to the second story was to their immediate right, ensuring no one down on the main floor would see them. Casimir, man of habit that he was, always used the one room overlooking the street. To see who'd be coming for him, if anyone did. Showed his hubris that he didn't think to look in the dead end alley out back.

*Sucks to be him.*

At the top of the stairs, Pablo, who was in front, stopped. Then he beckoned them forward. Syren caught sight of Casimir's men, or man. Only one was outside the door, playing guard. Where was the other?

They didn't have time to find out.

Pablo ran up on him, catching the man with his back to them. He knocked him on the back of the head with the butt of the gun. The man buckled and Pablo looked back at them.

"We need to keep him out of sight."

Gabe pushed open a nearby door and poked his head in. "In here." The two of them dragged the body inside the empty room and stuffed him into the tiny closet.

Syren knocked on the door of the room Casimir was in.

"What?"

He froze at the voice. *Fuck*. Someone touched him and he shook away the dark blanket of memories that covered him. No time for that. He wasn't going back there. Ever. He stepped back, Mateo kicked in the door and they were in.

Casimir and someone who appeared to be his other guard was double teaming a slender kid on the bed. That wasn't a grimace of pleasure on the young man's face, not with two cocks stuffed into his ass and the chokehold Casimir had on him.

Mateo waited a second for the guard to attempt to reach the gun on the floor next to the bed then pulled the trigger. Blood sprayed. The young whore screamed...until Shane clamped a hand over his mouth.

Casimir schooled his shaken expression into something not-quite-blank as he stared up at Syren from the bed. "Faro, you came to me."

He would think that, wouldn't he?

“Get out of here,” he told the young man gently. “Go to Maritza, she’ll take care of you.” The naked young man was hardly steady on his feet as he looked from the body on the floor to Casimir then back to Syren. “Paulo, is it?”

Paulo nodded.

“Paulo, trust me. He’s out of your life,” he said firmly. “As of now, you’re free of him. Now go.” Paulo went, scurrying out the door. He turned back to Casimir. “Get up.”

Casimir did, slowly. “Now, Faro. If you wanted me all you had to do was say so.” He looked down at the guard. “No need to kill for me.”

Kane made a sound, but Syren shook his head. *I got this*. With the gun trained on him, he guided Casimir to the table outfitted with two chairs over in the corner of the small, hot room. He prodded Casimir with the gun until he sat and then Syren did the same across from him.

The Russian had regained his equilibrium, and he sat back, a lazy smile on his face as he regarded Syren. “Deadly. That is the sexiest thing.” His voice, it rumbled over Syren like an earthquake, unearthing so many memories that had long been buried. “There was always more to you, I knew that. Always something that escaped me, something I couldn’t quite put my finger on.”

“Me. I was what you couldn’t put your finger on.” Syren leaned forward, elbow on the dusty table. “You couldn’t touch me, my body, so you went instead for my heart. Isn’t that right?”

Casimir went for confused. “What? I don’t know what you mean?”

“You concocted this to get to me, didn’t you? Setting Monica Delatorre on my trail, having her steal my daughter and bring her back here, to your stomping grounds. This way I’ll

come running, ask you to make Monica give her back and in turn what, what happens? I owe you?"

Casimir steepled his fingers, brown eyes calm as he stared Syren down. "Yes. It wasn't hard to find you, not with my best investigator on the case. And my money gives me connections inside the FBI."

Those words were a surprise, one Syren didn't allow to show on his face. Dutch would have to do some housekeeping ASAP.

"So I come running to you, you save the day, and I'd owe you?"

"Of course." Casimir tsked. "Nothing is free. I want what I've always wanted. You. Your body." He grinned. "So now we wait, for Monica to bring me word on your daughter."

Syren burst out laughing. The men around him chuckled. "Oh, did I bury the lead here?" He pulled two photos from his left side pocket, spread them out on the table and pushed them toward Casimir. "Monica Delatorre. Word is she hung herself." He shook his head mournfully. "I think it got to be too much, the thought of being homeless. Penniless. Sad stuff."

Casimir's smile went away.

"The problem with a fuckup like you, Cas, is that you never do your dirty work yourself. Same as Delatorre. No fortitude for the blood and the guts. Would you like me to describe what it felt like to choke the life out of Monica?"

Casimir's nostrils flared and Syren smiled.

"No balls." He reached up. Took Kane's hand. "Have you been introduced to my husband?"

Kane pulled off his mask and Syren stood. Kane took the seat and Syren sat down on his lap.

“You made a mistake, thinking I wouldn’t go to hell and back for my family, for our daughter,” Syren said. “Your mistake is my victory. You’re going to die. In a nondescript whorehouse in the middle of Rio, you’re going to die, and when you’re dead, we’ll dump you in the landfill. No one will know you’re dead, no one will miss you,” he whispered. “No one will care.”

Casimir ignored Syren and stared at Kane. “You’re not good enough for him. He needs a real man.”

Kane grinned, head cocked to the side. “You think so, huh?”

“He should be mine.” Casimir lurched forward and Kane punched him the face. Bone crunched. Blood trickled from Casimir’s nose down to his mouth and dripped off his chin.

“Keep talking,” Kane said calmly, “and I’ll keep punching. Works for me.”

Syren touched Kane’s arm. “You’re going to take your own life.” Casimir’s eyes widened and Syren chuckled. “You think I’ll do it, make it easy for you?” He reached into his jacket pocket, the right side and pulled out the photos. “You do your homework, and I do mine. I’m very thorough.” He place them right-side up.

Casimir’s mother, father, wife and the daughter away in boarding school in France.

It was the first time he saw Casimir blink.

Got him. “You’re good, but I’m better,” Syren said. “I wish I could spend time on you, make it hurt like you so love to, but my daughter is waiting for me. If you don’t pull the trigger, I’ll make you watch as I kill every fucking one of these people.” He nodded. “Every one. Make you watch and feel a scintilla of what I felt when my daughter was taken from me. I will wipe out your fucking lineage and when I’m done, I’ll make my husband slit your throat and fuck me on top of your dying body.”

Casimir choked.

Syren shrugged. “We recently found out that watching him kill gets me hot.”

“We’re weird,” Kane said. “We know.”

“And I’ll cum all over your corpse.” Syren winked. “So what’s it gonna be, Cas? You or your family?”

He’d debated for the entire plane ride over if he should let Casimir know who he was. How they’d originally met. Syren was all set to do so, but now, he wouldn’t. That part of him would never be fully healed, but the wound had scabbed over, picking at it would help nothing. He damn sure wasn’t about to give Casimir any ammunition over him.

Kane put his gun on the table, in the middle.

“I could take this gun,” Casimir said, “and shoot you. I might die, but I’ll be taking at least one of you with me.”

“You could try.” Syren got up from Kane’s lap. “If this is your final answer then I’m afraid we’ll have to move on to round two. First stop is Russia.”

Casimir grabbed the gun. Behind him, Angel moved in close and pressed his gun to the back of Casimir’s head.

“What’s it gonna be, Cas?”

Casimir smiled up at him, the thin scar Syren had given him long ago stretching. “You’re even sexier than I imagined. Like this. If I’d seen this side of you before, I would have battled the devil himself for you.”

“He’s taken.” Kane rose and leaned over, getting in Casimir’s face. “And if you don’t pull that trigger in two seconds, I will.”

Casimir's teeth flashed. "See you on the other side, Marcos Inácio de Melo." The gun went off as Syren gasped. Warm liquid splashed onto his cheek and dotted his dark suit.

His knees buckled and strong arms grabbed him. "He knew. He knew who I was." He turned around, burying his face in Kane's chest. Kane rubbed his back.

"Sh. He's gone. He's gone and we're free." Kane kissed his temple.

Syren nodded. He was free. They were free. He wiped his eyes and faced the room. "Clean up, boys. We promised Maritza."

They did indeed dump Casimir in the local landfill. The bodies of his two guards keeping him company. Syren had been silent all through it. Now they were on a plane back to New York before setting out to pick up Nina and Càtia in Costa Rica.

Kane did his best to make sure Syren was there in case he needed to talk. His husband spent most of the flight on the phone with Dutch, letting him know of the mole he had inside his organization. Through it all, Kane was there. He was ready for some down time, ready for family time.

His phone went off. He checked the Caller ID. Goddamn. Vince was really pushing it.

Curled up next to him, Syren shifted. "I'm guessing that's your not so secret admirer?"

"It's Vince, yes." Kane couldn't think of anything he'd said or done to make Vince think he had any hope. He'd tried to make sure Vince knew he was in love with, and loved, his husband, but Vince was purposely ignoring the message. After the shit they'd been through, Kane wasn't up to dealing with this crap. "You want me to take care of this when we land?"

Syren shrugged. "Up to you, Marshal. I follow where you lead."

Kane snorted. Yeah right. “Then we’ll do this.” He texted Vince that he’d be in New York within the hour. Vince texted back his hotel and room number.

*Yeah. Time to put this to bed.*

The rest of the guys followed Mateo and Tommy to their home, and Kane decided he and Syren would get a hotel room for the night. He was too tired for them to make it to Connecticut. In the morning they’d go home, get clothes and other stuff then pick up the guys before they headed to Costa Rica.

Now, he watched the floors pass as they rode the elevator up to Vince’s room. He’d called his former partner once they’d touched down. It was almost ten at night, but Vince had been enthusiastic, encouraging Kane to come on up.

The elevator stopped and they got off. He held Syren’s hand as they stood in front of the door.

“No violence,” he cautioned. “If there’s need for it, I’ll handle it.” Because it was his fault. He knocked.

The door jerked open and he blinked. Vince was shirtless, his skin wet as if he’d just stepped out of the shower. He wore jeans, but even though they were zipped, they weren’t buttoned. Kane gulped.

“Well, this is awkward.” Syren sounded way too calm.

Vince gasped, horror and shame in his eyes as he looked from Kane to Syren and back. Syren used the heavy silence to push open the door and step inside.

Kane followed.

Dim lights. Champagne in a bucket.

Syren whirled to face them, a raised eyebrow directed at Vince. “Someone was feeling lucky.”

Vince’s mouth opened and closed. He was pale and Kane wanted to feel sorry for him. He really did.

“Oh, forgive me. We’ve never been properly introduced.” Syren stepped forward and held out his hand, his left hand, where his wedding ring glittered in the light. “Syren Rua-Ashby.” He jerked a thumb toward Kane. “The old ball and chain.”

## Chapter Ten

“You brought him?” Vince kicked the door closed and rounded on Kane, anger warring with embarrassment on his face. “I thought—”

“You thought what?” Kane looked him up and down. “He’s my husband, he goes where I go.”

Something popped and Kane looked over his shoulder. Syren had opened the bottle of champagne and was doing a slow look around the room. “I’m sure Kane told you I don’t drink alcohol, so this must be for you and him.” His lips twisted. “Where are the glasses? Or was he supposed to drink it off your chest?”

Syren’s eyes called out for blood. Kane shook his head slightly. He didn’t want Syren to have to fight this battle, not when Kane was there and capable of doing it himself. Syren sat in one of the chair in the room, and Kane turned back to Vince. His friend—former friend now—and partner just stood there.

“Let’s say I hadn’t brought Syren with me, Vince. Let’s say I’d come here all by myself. What do you think would have gone down?” He cocked his head. “Do you think I’d have succumbed to your well-planned seduction? Do you think I would have jeopardized my family for you?”

Vince’s face grew redder. He glanced at Syren then at Kane, expression so wounded. “I just— We just needed some time together.” The words were tinged in desperation, the likes of which Kane had never heard from Vince.

Syren made a sound.

“You’re fucking disrespectful,” Kane barked. “Disrespecting me. You know nothing about me if you think I’d cheat on someone I’m committed to. You disrespected my relationship. You know nothing about us if you think I’d ever leave my husband’s arms.”

Vince stepped forward, a hand out, and Kane side-stepped him with a grunt of distaste.

He’d tried for nice. He’d tried to make sure he kept the friendship he and Vince had developed over the years working together, but Vince didn’t care about any of it. Right now Kane couldn’t care about hurting feelings, about burning bridges.

“I made a huge mistake,” he said. “Turning to you when I wanted someone else. I told you that, I apologized at the courthouse. How much clearer could I have made it, Vince? How should I have spelled it out so you know you didn’t have a fucking chance before Syren came into my life, and the instant he did, it was a wrap?”

Vince blanched. “I was there first. I waited for you to finish grieving Bailey. I waited for you to see me.” He pounded his chest. “I’m not about to let some well-dressed criminal push me out of the way.”

“You think I’m well-dressed?” Syren queried. “Thank you. That means so much.” The words weren’t threatening, but the tone said differently.

“I’m not your fucking prize to win,” Kane told Vince. “And even if I was, you’d have lost. And you will continue to lose, again and again. I don’t want you, Vince. I never did. I used you to try to forget Syren. I used you because he wasn’t there. I used you, can’t you see that?”

Vince stood there, defiance in the set of his jaw and in his eyes. He wasn’t listening to anything Kane was saying. He wasn’t getting the message. Frustration boiled in Kane’s gut.

“There’s a reason I never slept with you, Vince. I didn’t want you that way. There’s a reason I am where I am, with my family. It’s where I want to be, where my heart is. I’m not

about to let anyone, especially someone who I was never even remotely interested in, fuck with my happiness, to threaten my family.” He balled his fists. “I will drop you where you stand.”

Vince’s composure crumpled bit by bit, color leaching off his skin. “I love you,” he said simply. “Is that so hard to understand? Does it make me a bad person for loving you?”

“Not if you’d kept that shit to yourself,” Syren answered quickly. “But since you decided to be all stalkerish and a pain in the ass then yes, you’re a bad person.”

“Babe, I got this.” Kane glanced at Syren. His husband winked at him.

“Oh, my bad. G’head then.” Syren waved at him.

Kane smiled. He knew this wouldn’t be the route Syren would take to deal with Vince. Violence wasn’t off the table, but Kane had dibs on that. He sank into a chair and watched Vince. He didn’t recognize the man anymore. How did Vince go from being in the closet to this, attempting to derail Kane’s relationship?

“You kissed me,” Vince said. “You kissed me.”

“And that kiss gave you leave to do all this?” Kane waved his hand at the room. “It’s been ages ago, but yes, we kissed. That was it. Nothing more. I moved on, Vince, and trust me when I tell you I do more than kiss my husband. You don’t see him acting the way you do.”

“To be fair, I’d act much worse.” Kane shot him a look and Syren shrugged. “Full disclosure, Marshal.”

Vince dropped to his knees in front of Kane and grabbed his hand. Kane jerked away. In his peripheral vision he saw Syren move.

*Damn it.*

The glint gave away the knife Syren had at Vince’s throat. “I warned you about touching what doesn’t belong to you, didn’t I?”

“Syren.”

His husband ignored him. “Now, my Marshal is a nice guy, you feel me? He wants to believe your ass isn’t as coo coo for coco puffs as you appear, but you and I know different, don’t we, Vince?” He bent and spoke the last bit at Vince’s ear. “He might not want to spill your blood, but I’m not suffering from that particular affliction. I will gut your disrespectful ass in a New York minute.”

“Syren.” Damn it, this was Kane’s battle to fight, but Vince was hell-bent on ignoring anything he said. “Put away the knife, babe.”

“You’re not right for him.” Vince held himself still as he addressed Syren. “He’s not your equal. You’re lucky he has you.”

Syren sputtered. “I’m lucky— Dude, have you *seen* me? My marshal hit the motherfucking jackpot with me.”

Kane had to grin. “I am a lucky bastard. I have a gorgeous husband, Vince, one I will never, ever leave. I have a daughter I will kill to protect. I have a family I’d dare anyone to try to break up.” He pushed Vince away and got to his feet. Vince remained on his knees. “I thought I could keep our friendship, I never wanted you gone completely from my life. You’ve decided you have no place anywhere near me. You can’t be trusted and you have no idea how hard it is for me not to have my husband do what he wants with you.”

“I’d have some of my guys pay you a visit,” Syren said. “Give you a proper beat down.” A gleam appeared in his eyes. “They wouldn’t have touched your face, because despite you needing a straight jacket stat, you are a pretty one.” His tone dropped a few octaves as he gazed down at Vince. “I mean the eyes and the lips...nice. They might have to just break your knees,

'cause I'm thinking it would be a crime to mess up that slab of brick you have for a chest. Hm hm. A fucking crime."

Kane snapped his fingers. "Stay on point, babe."

"Oh. Ahem. Yeah. Beat down. Broken legs. Good times." Syren cleared his throat. "Kane never wanted to hurt you, Vince. I can't say the same, and if you even so much as look us up in the phone book I will have to end you." He shook his head. "It won't be pretty."

"Vince, you won't ever find what you're looking for with me." Kane grabbed Syren's hand. "I'm in love with my husband, and the fact that you knew that and didn't let it deter you, proves that you're not the man I thought you were. It appears I thought more highly of you than you did of yourself. Don't ever contact me, my family or my friends. If you come near us I won't think twice about kicking your ass."

"I just want to be happy again." Vince hung his head. "I lost it and you," he jerked his head up, "you made me feel it. You brought it back." His eyes were filled with sorrow.

"I'm not where you find happiness," Kane said gently. Something was wrong with Vince, he saw that now. Something was off in his head and Kane's heart hurt for him. "Take that vacation you were telling me about. Get some rest. Relax."

Vince pressed the heel of his palm to his eyes. "I'm so tired," he whispered. "Of fighting. Of hiding. Of lying."

Kane frowned. "What are you lying about?"

"Being close to you made it better." Vince's eyes pleaded with him. "Please."

Syren's fingers tightened around Kane's. "You need help," Syren said softly. "You have to get some help, Vince. Don't let whatever is happening beat you down."

Vince's nostrils flared. He jumped to his feet and advanced on Syren.

“Whoa.” Kane put a hand on Vince’s chest, halting his movements. “Don’t even think about it.”

“I’ve been so good and I lose him to you,” Vince raged at Syren. “You with your fucking suits and those weird eyes. You’re like all the other common criminals out there, and with all your sins, you get to have him and I don’t?”

Kane shook his head. Vince needed more than they could give. Words weren’t working. “Vince. You can’t lose what you never had.”

Syren gazed up at Vince. “Vince, trust me, you’ve never met a sinner like me. You never will.” He winked. “One of a kind.” He tugged on his suit. “Now, my husband and I are jet-lagged, so we’ll be going.” His tone softened. “I hope you get some help, because I think you really need it. But make no mistake, I will never forget what you tried to do here tonight. And if I were you I’d sleep with one eye open.”

He walked away, over to the door, and stood waiting.

“You need some time alone to figure out your life,” Kane told Vince. “You also need to talk to someone. A shrink or anyone who can help you find answers. You don’t love me, Vince. Maybe you see me as safety, but you don’t love me. Love is what I see when I look into my husband’s eyes. Love is what I feel when my daughter hugs me. Love is what I have now, and it’s what I will never give up. Not for anything or anyone.”

He turned his back on the tears falling from Vince’s eyes and walked out the hotel room, hand in hand with his husband.

## Chapter Eleven

By the time they made their way to their hotel and the room they'd booked, Kane was beat. Dead tired. Syren remained next to him, silent since they'd left Vince. Kane didn't know what he should say. He hadn't expected that shit Vince pulled. He was angry for fucking sure, but Vince needed some kind of help. And for that Kane felt sorry for him.

He didn't want Vince to become a specter over their lives, the way Bailey had been in the beginnings of his relationship with Syren. Different situations, sure, but he didn't want his husband to go back to doubting himself and them.

Inside their hotel suite, he kept with the silence as Syren walked away from him and sat in a chair and pulled off his shoes. Kane knelt in front of him and pushed Syren's jacket off his shoulders. His husband only met his gaze once Kane began unbuttoning Syren's shirt.

"Tired?" he asked.

Syren nodded. He leaned forward and pressed his forehead to Kane's shoulder. Kane tapped on his nape, drawing small circles.

"How about a bath? I can take care of it while you finish getting undressed."

Syren pulled back a little. "You trying to take advantage of me, Marshal?"

"You saying you're not a sure thing?" Kane lifted an eyebrow in mock surprise.

"Never." Syren winked at him, fingers going to Kane's shirt, reciprocating by unbuttoning him. "I'm never a sure thing. You'll have to put in work."

Kane grinned. God. It amazed him how just a few simple words from Syren could make him smile even in the most tense circumstances. The many facets to his husband never failed to surprise him. When Syren finished unbuttoning his shirt, Kane got to his feet.

“One bath coming up. Don’t fall asleep on me.” He dragged his fingers through Syren’s hair, nails scraping his scalp.

Syren shuddered, a small whimper falling from his lips. “You know fucking well no sleep will be had when you do that shit to me.”

“What shit?” Kane walked away chuckling as Syren cursed him. In the bathroom he filled the Jacuzzi-type bathtub with warm water and poured in the sage and lemongrass scented bubble bath soap. He kicked off his shoes then went back for Syren. His husband remained seated. His pants were off, shirt was hanging open, and his panties were on full display. A stripy pink pair, trimmed with black lace. Kane had been the one to give the nod on that one when Syren had been shopping for them online. The description had called them Cheekies, made to keep the swell of the ass cheeks exposed. Kane could get behind that all the way.

“Go gonna just stare at me or bathe me?” Syren’s eyes were closed, but a secretive smile played on his lips all the same.

“Thinking of just staring at you, actually.” Kane didn’t budge from where he stood feet away. “Get up. Walk to me.”

Syren’s left eye peeked open. “You ordering me, Marshal?” But he moved, got to his feet. The two halves of his shirt fell back, exposing him. His chest, his lithe, pale frame. He strutted over to Kane, all sexy and coy. When he stood in front of Kane, he said throatily, “You called?”

Kane ignored the familiar pull and tug in his gut, the stirrings in his groin, and pointed to the bathroom. “Go on, let me see your ass move in those drawers.”

Syren’s lashes dropped then lifted, his purple eyes flashing fire as he twirled a lock of white-blond hair around his finger. “Only ’cause you asked so nicely.” Then he was walking

away, pale ass peeking out at Kane under the shirt tail. In the bathroom doorway, Syren paused, back still to Kane, and shrugged off the shirt. The white material floated to the floor, exposing the most beautiful view, despite the scars on Syren's back.

"Don't move." Kane reached him in four strides. With Syren's naked back pressed to his front, Kane slid a palm up his nape and gripped a fistful of hair. Syren inhaled sharply. He made as if to turn, to look at Kane, but Kane held him still, kept him facing forward as he sank his teeth into Syren's right shoulder.

"Oh fuck!" Syren's body dipped as if his knees were giving out. Kane tightened his hold on his hair. Arms went around his waist, Syren hanging on to him awkwardly in that position.

"You're sexy as fuck, you know that?" Kane nosed Syren's nape, inhaling the warmth of his skin, grinning when Syren pushed back on him, shoving his ass onto Kane's hard dick.

"Move," Kane said hoarsely. "Move on me. Do what you want."

Syren did, hips rotating slowly. Excruciating as he rubbed and writhed on Kane. The movements caused the rough material of his jeans to scrape over his cock since he wore no underwear and he gritted his teeth. He kissed and nipped Syren's nape, his shoulder, tugged on his ear as Syren undulated against him, ass cheeks parting to lodge Kane's jean-covered dick in between.

"Fuck." Kane growled. "Love watching you. The way you move."

Syren whimpered. His head fell back onto Kane's shoulder. "You love me." He sounded fucking breathless.

"I love you."

And Syren slid down his body, back still to Kane, in a smooth move. He dropped to his haunches between Kane's legs then shifted forward, until he was on all fours. Panty-covered ass in the air. Kane smacked him there, on his right cheek. Immediately the skin reddened.

Syren inhaled. His body shook and his head tipped down toward the floor as his ass lifted higher. Kane hit him again, the next cheek, and he continued hitting him, sharp blows, alternating until both cheeks were red, until he saw his palm print there. Until Syren's nails were scraping the tiled floor, soft cries falling from him, skin raised and flushed with goose bumps. Until a sheen of sweat made his body shine.

Until Kane's hands ached. Then he stopped and pulled on the panties, giving Syren a wedgie. The soft material lodged between Syren's ass cheeks, and Kane pulled, making sure it scraped his hole.

"Marshal. Damn it."

Kane moved away. His cock throbbed fiercely, but he could wait. He grinned when Syren glared up at him. Before he spoke, Kane scooped him up and dumped him in the bath. Water splashed onto the floor. Syren spluttered.

"Shit." He narrowed his gaze at Kane. "That wasn't a very nice thing to do." He reached out for Kane, who stepped way.

"I didn't know you were a fan of nice." Kane stepped out of his jeans, not missing the way Syren licked his lips as his gaze lowered to Kane's crotch. "I'm just gonna give you a bath."

"And that's it?" Syren screeched. His eyes promised murder.

Kane shrugged, faking nonchalance. "You look tired. You need rest."

Syren flipped him off with a finger covered in bubbles. "Fuck you. I'm never tired. Never too tired."

“So you say.” Kane knelt beside the tub and picked up a wash rag. “Here, let me scrub your back.”

Syren jerked away. “If you touch me in any other capacity than to fuck me, I will set you on fire. With gasoline. And a match.” He had that determined look in his eyes.

Kane dropped the rag and held up both hands in surrender. “You are just violent right now. Violent.”

Syren snorted as he scooped the suds up to his chest. “I’m freaking mellowed out. This is me, all mellow and shit.” He nodded at his own words.

“Really?” Kane lifted an eyebrow as he dipped a hand into the water and slid his palm over Syren’s thigh. “Mellow, huh?” He tugged off the panties and tossed them to the side.

“Is your boy Vince floating face up in a pool of his own blood, a bullet between the eyes and his hands cut off at the elbows? Nope.” Syren shook his head. “Like I said, mellow.”

“That’s an oddly specific scenario for a man who claims to be mellow.” Kane slid a finger between Syren’s toes. His husband jerked, nostrils flaring.

“I have daydreamed about it a time or five.” Syren shrugged.

They went silent until Kane cleared his throat and found the words to say, “I’m sorry.”

Syren looked up at him. “For what?”

“Vince. For tonight. For not seeing that he needed help before now.”

“Oh, Marshal.” Syren dropped his head back on the edge of the tub, one knee lifting out of the water when he bent his leg. “I can’t blame him for loving you. You’re easy to love.” He sighed. “I wish he’d have stayed wherever he was for the past year and some. I wish I didn’t have to remember that time in our lives.”

Kane understood that. He wished the same. “It’s because of me that all this happened and I’m so sorry.” He touched Syren’s cheek with a wet finger. “I wish I could take it all back. Those wasted months we spent apart.”

Syren swallowed, Kane watched his Adam’s apple bob, but he didn’t speak.

“Babe.” When Syren still didn’t speak, Kane said, “I never want you to question us. I never want you to doubt my love. Because I love you so much.” He found Syren’s hand under the water and linked their fingers. “I’ve watched you this past week. I’ve watched you and I just—there’s so much to you. Always something new to discover. Your strength and your drive, your fierce protection of those who you love.”

Syren closed his eyes, but his fingers tightened around Kane’s. “I protect what’s mine. Is as simple as that.” He paused then said, “I never ruled out having to kill once I begun on the path I chose, but in the past I’ve always kept it simple. Money. That and blackmail always went down more smoothly than the thought of taking a life. But my family hadn’t been threatened before. My daughter hadn’t been kidnapped before. The *same old same old* didn’t apply.”

Kane got into the tub, sliding in behind Syren so his husband sat in his lap, his back against him. “I don’t care about that. I never did. All that shit went out the window the instant they took Cãtia and Nina,” Kane said vehemently. “I loved watching you, in case you didn’t know. Loved that ruthless side of you. I love that nobody else gets to see all the different flavors of you. The businessman, the lover, the killer. The man who wears the hell outa some lace, who loves getting his hair pulled and his ass spanked is the same man who wields power like nothing else. He’s the same man who rubbed elbows with the most notorious criminals, who battled and overcame fear and the worst kind of childhood.”

Kane rubbed his nose against Syren's damp nape, and some strands of Syren's wet hair dripped water on his nose. "Vince got it so wrong," he said softly. "I'm the lucky one. Wining your love," his voice thickened with emotion, "getting you to love me after all the betrayals you've seen and experienced. After all the shit you've been through, you had it in you to love still. To love me. It's a gift. I know that and it's one I treasure."

He'd never take it for granted. Never. He held Syren close despite their bodies being slippery with the soapy water.

"For the longest time I had only Càtia and that was enough," Syren said. He rubbed his palm over the back of Kane's hand. "Sure, I had Isa and Henri, but that was a more familial love as well. They were family. I didn't think I deserved to be loved in any other way. I didn't think I was missing anything either. I never had it, so I didn't know what it really meant. Until I saw you." He twisted slightly until their gazes met. "Then I saw you, Marshal, and I knew no one would love me but you. I wasn't meant to be loved by anyone else. I let myself wonder then." He smiled, a sad smile. "The first time I let myself dream of more. Dream of you. If you didn't love me, no one else would." He shrugged. "It was the way I wanted it, because I wanted no one else but you."

Kane's heart melted all over again. He touched Syren's chin, held him steady, and kissed him. Kissed him deep, searching, their tongues twisting around each other in an all too familiar dance. He loved that dance. He tasted Syren, always a decadent sip, as he buried his hands in his husband's hair.

Syren pulled away slowly, allowing their lips to cling to each other. "Took a while for me to believe I could have it. That I could love and be loved, but the first seeds of hope were planted

with our first kiss.” His breath warmed Kane’s face when he whispered, “It was an out of body experience, Marshal, tasting my future on your lips.”

“Always,” Kane whispered back, “I will always be your future.”

“I know.” Syren gave him a cocky grin. “I know that.”

“Good.” He picked back up the rag and squeezed water onto Syren chest.

“I never told you why I said no,” Syren said suddenly.

“Hm? No about what?”

“That request you made.” Syren’s voice was so low, Kane had to lean closer. “Making love to you.”

Kane froze. With everything going on he’d allowed that to slip out of focus. Now, he recalled Syren’s unusually harsh dismissal. “Are you set in your role?” he asked slowly. “Is that it? You prefer me to be in charge all the time?” He didn’t hate the idea, but he’d wanted and still wanted to feel Syren, to experience Syren making love to him. He also wanted to give Syren that gift, of having a part of Kane no one else had.

Syren pulled away from his arms and turned until they were facing each other. His eyes were sad, expression serious, as the ends of his hair dripped. “I don’t know for sure that I’m set in my role. I just—” He shook his head. “I’m scared.”

“What?” Kane grabbed his hand with a frown. “Why scared?”

“I don’t want to disappoint you. What if I suck?” His teeth appeared. “In a really bad way, I mean.”

Kane shrugged. “I haven’t done it before from that end, so I wouldn’t know, but I doubt you would.”

“Why haven’t you done it before? You and Bailey were together for ages.”

“Bailey was a bottom, and I knew that before we even slept together that first time.”

Kane sighed. “I didn’t need it or anything, because I already acknowledged it was off the table.”

Syren’s eyes narrowed. “Why don’t you think it’s off the table with us?”

“Dunno.” Kane stared at him. “Is it off the table?”

Syren drew closer and touched his cheek with a hand covered in suds. “Marshal.” He closed his eyes briefly then opened them. “The second person who bought me was a woman.”

Kane’s heart lurched. He didn’t like the way Syren spoke those words, so grave, as if there were more where they came from. He held himself still, tried to keep any expression off his face as he waited for Syren to go on.

“She bought me for her husband. He wanted to be topped, by someone like me. And she wanted to watch.” Syren looked away then back at Kane. His lips twisted. “You know, it doesn’t fuck with my head as much as it used to, the memories. It’s like watching mental photos of someone else’s life.” He touched his chest. “It doesn’t hurt as much as it used to. It’s an ache, but a dull one.”

“I’m glad.” Kane hauled him close and kissed his nose, water sloshing over the sides of the tub with the movement. “I’m so glad.”

“Anyway, back to the reason for me denying you.” Syren breathed in deeply. “They bought me to top the husband. I mean I was a fucking kid and no way could I really do anything substantial, but they didn’t seem to care. I was...not good. I couldn’t touch him without shaking, puking, screaming.” He chuckled without humor. “Got many beatings, went lots of days without food, before they finally sold me off. It was six months there, but I promised myself I wouldn’t ever do that. I couldn’t see the fucking appeal.”

Kane had been caressing Syren's shoulder as he spoke and when his husband paused, he asked. "What happened to them, the couple?"

Syren's eyes lit up. "By the time I got around to dealing with them, the husband had died of lung cancer. A painful, lingering death I was told. The wife, it was fun to see the fear in her eyes when I showed up at the nursing home she'd been hauled off to when her husband died. I gave her a choice and she choose door number two, jumping off the roof of the nursing home." He shrugged. "It was a very long way down."

"Why didn't you tell me that before now?"

"I didn't think it would be an issue. You didn't strike me as the type to want to give up control like that, and I damn sure wasn't about to suggest it."

Kane cupped Syren's chin, making sure their gazes held when he said, "I want you. I want to feel you taking me. I want us to experience it together. I want you know how much I love you."

"I know how much you love me." Syren shook his head. "I don't need your ass to know that."

"But I need it. I want it. To give you something I've never given anybody else." His body grew hard as he spoke and he rubbed against Syren's leg under the water. "I want you to know what it feels like, losing yourself inside the man you love, watching him lose his mind because of you. Watching him fall apart under your touch. I want your cum inside me, flooding me. Marking me. I want your fucking marks on me."

Syren stared at him, pupils dilated, parted lips all pink and moist. Kane bent, rubbing his stubble against Syren's smooth cheek. "You'll do it like you do everything else, beautifully. But I want you to keep your panties on as you take me however you want. Fast or slow. Hard or soft.

I want it.” Syren’s pulse raced under his touch and Kane reveled at the catch in his husband’s breathing. “On the bed or the floor, wherever. Fuck me like you own it. Because you do.”

## Chapter Twelve

He still couldn't make himself speak. Syren rubbed the towel over his still-damp hair and looked around. Kane was in the bathroom brushing his teeth. After saying his piece, he'd helped Syren out of the tub and dried his skin. He'd said what he had to, and it was Syren's move.

Did he want to make that move?

He'd seen the earnest need in his husband's eyes. Kane wanted what he'd asked for. He wasn't put off by the story Syren shared. His stomach still churned with nerves as he sat on the edge of the bed. He wanted to give Kane what he needed, but it couldn't be all about him doing it just for Kane.

Did he want it? Did he want to experience making love to his husband, sharing something special like that? He knew how he felt when Kane made love to him, when Kane seated himself so deep in his body Syren choked on him. He knew what it was to break into a million pieces simply at Kane's touch. The feeling was indescribable.

He wanted Kane to feel it.

Syren laced his fingers in his lap as water ran in the sink in the bathroom. He'd pulled on his last pair of clean underwear stuffed in the duffle bag they'd brought with them to Brazil. The bright purple hip huggers were a snug fit, covering him fully in the back, sporting a bow in a paler shade on the front, the same pale colored dots all over, and lace overlay on both sides. He paid attention to the details in his panties.

The faucet turned off in the bathroom. He crossed his ankles and bit his lip. There really was no denying the anxiety mixed liberally with excitement in his gut. He never thought he'd do it again, touch someone in that way, but Kane wasn't just any old someone. His husband didn't ask for much so Syren would give him, give them, this.

He took a breath when the bathroom door opened then closed behind Kane as he stepped fully into the bedroom. He only looked at Kane when his husband stood directly in front of him, near enough to touch, but still giving Syren space if he wanted. Kane wore only a pair of black briefs, his toned thighs on display, as was the chest Syren loved to stroke, all tanned and muscled with only a smattering of hair. He loved Kane's body, loved his skin.

He lifted his gaze higher, meeting Kane's gaze. Kane just watched him, expression open, devoid of expectation. His hands hung loosely at his sides and they just eyed each other. Syren got to his feet and took the one step that brought them chest to chest.

Other than a darkening of his gaze, Kane's expression didn't change, so Syren smiled up at him. A hesitant, crooked smile. "What do we do now?" He felt like he was doing everything for the very first time. Everything. In that moment, Kane felt like a stranger, too. Not in a bad way, though. Like a familiar someone, a person he wanted to know, to learn, to discover.

"What do you want to do?" Kane murmured.

"Kiss you." He looked up at Kane from below his lashes. "I want to kiss you."

He heard Kane's heavy inhale, saw the slight quiver in his jaw. "I want that, too."

So Syren bent and pressed his lips to Kane's chest, the left side, above his heart. Kane made a sound, like a surprised explosion of air from between his lips. Syren circled his waist and kissed him again, this time on the right side, before tracing his tongue over his collar bone. Kane shuddered, and Syren could tell his husband wanted to grab him, but he held himself back, allowing Syren to set the pace.

He stepped back. Kane's hands were fisted at his sides, the knuckles white. His cock was outlined against the black of his underwear, so hard Syren swore he saw the thick veins as they

pulsed for him. He responded to that, his body, like a beacon. His panties felt tight as his dick stretched the material. He licked his lips.

The pulse in Kane's throat sped up.

"Get on the bed," he said softly. He had to clear his throat, clear the cobwebs out before continuing, "Face down." It felt weird to take charge. Yeah. Weird. But the fucking happiness on Kane's face, the way he took a flying leap and landed on the mattress, face buried in the pillows.

That was *everything*. Every. Fucking. Thing.

He just stood there for a while, staring at the man on the bed. The man in his life. The man who *was* his life. This was one of those pinch yourself moments. Pinch yourself, make sure you're not dreaming. But he wasn't. This was no dream, the ache in his fucking balls, the bang of his heart against his ribs, the butterflies in his stomach. Oh, those made it real. So real.

Finally tearing his gaze away, he searched through the duffle bag until he found the bottle of lube. They'd long learned never to leave the house without lube, and he was a happy camper. He turned back to the bed. Kane was still lying face down, but his right leg was rubbing restlessly against the sheets. The same sheets he held tight with both fists. He didn't do a thing except wait patiently for Syren to make his move.

He got on the bed. Kane tensed slightly then his spine relaxed. Syren placed the lube next to them on the bed and draped himself over Kane, covering his back with his front, head to toe. Kane shifted, in slow motion, rubbing his hot naked skin against Syren's.

Syren groaned. Contact. Blessed, sexy, fucking *skin contact*. Kane groaned, ass lifting, pushing back into Syren's groin. He kissed Kane at his nape then down, licking his spine, never breaking the straight line that led to the twin indents above Kane's ass. He tasted clean, salty

skin, inhaling the scent he'd be able to identify in the middle of a stinky landfill, blindfolded. His husband's natural musk.

At the base of Kane's spine, Syren hooked two fingers in the waistband of Kane's briefs and tugged them down, placing kisses on the skin he exposed. He nipped and sank his teeth into a taut ass cheek while smoothing his palm over the other. Kane's heavy breathing sounded extra loud in the room, as did the low grunts he made. Syren pulled the briefs down all the way down and tugged them off then he sat up.

"Ass up." He scooted back as Kane did it, his knees widening as his back arched and his ass rose higher. "Hm. Damn, Marshal." He shuddered. "You don't even know what you do to me, what you're doing to me right now." He smoothed a hand over Kane's flank.

"I might have an idea." Kane sounded muffled by the pillows.

Syren smiled. *He might.* He moved back into position and traced Kane's crack with a finger. It was Kane's turn to shudder. Syren pulled apart his ass cheeks and stuck his tongue out, flicking it over that dark, wrinkled hole.

"Fuck!" Kane's body quaked under Syren's hands. "Oh man."

Syren licked him again. And again. And with each swipe of his tongue Kane grew louder, his groans getting deeper as he pushed back on Syren, searching for more. Syren gave him more, burying his face in Kane's ass. He kissed him there, tasting him, wetting him. He teased that hole mercilessly until it loosened for him, until it relaxed enough for him to poke his tongue through.

"God." Kane's voice and scent surrounded him.

Syren rocked hard onto the mattress, pushing his aching groin into the firm surface. Fiction. He needed it. He fucked the bed while he ate Kane's ass. He heard the sloppy, wet sounds he made, heard both his hungry, starved moans, and Kane's ecstatic cries, and didn't

want it to end. He wanted to stay where he was, on his knees, fingers gripping Kane's ass cheeks, holding them apart, while he ate his husband, tongue burrowing in and out of that untouched hole.

“So fucking good.” Kane humped his face. “So good.”

Heat washed down Syren's spine. All he wanted was to please Kane. That was all he wanted. He grabbed the lube and drizzled some of the slick on Kane's crack, watching it make a slow trek to his hole. Then he flung the bottle to the side and eased a finger in. Slow going. The guardian muscles clamped down on him instantly, holding him in a death grip.

He paused, but Kane made a sound. “Do it,” he said harshly. “Just fucking do it.”

So impatient. “You're topping from the bottom, Marshal.”

“I'll show you topping from the bottom if you don't get those fucking digits inside me.”

His ass contracted with the words, squeezing Syren's finger.

“Shit.” He pushed in, sank deeper. The intense heat inside Kane was unreal. His muscles were rippling, pulling on Syren's finger until he was all in. Last knuckle. He twisted the finger.

Kane yelled out and there went those Goddamn ripples. Syren wiggled the finger, thrust in and out, and soon Kane was rocking with him, hips rolling with him.

“More.” Kane lifted his hip higher, a hand going under his body to tug on his shaft. “I want more.”

Syren eased in another finger and sound gurgled in Kane's throat.

“Oh God. Yes.” Kane's head thrashed back and forth on the pillow. “Fuck, yes. Move them.” Syren did, thrusting in and out. “Like that. Hell yeah. Just like...ungh.”

Syren fucked him with his bottom lip caught between his teeth, humping the mattress as heat singed his spine. He didn't know how he managed to hang on to his control, going slowly

when he ached to just plunge his cock into Kane and ride him into the next day. He might want that, Kane might want it, but things needed to be kept at a slow pace. This was Kane's first time and Syren wanted to make sure everything was perfect.

He inserted another finger, added more lube. Three fingers that he used to stretch Kane, twisting them, plunging in and out when the muscles gave for him. With every squeeze of Kane's ass around his fingers, Syren came closer and closer to losing his mind and coming on himself. He nudged Kane's prostate with the tip of a finger.

Kane shook. "Shit!" His hips bucked as he stroked himself. "Babe...Oh God."

"You liked that?" Syren grinned. "How about now?" He did it again. Harder.

Kane yelled. "Fuck! Fuck!" His pants reverberated through his body as he looked over his shoulder at Syren, fire in his eyes, sweating beading on his forehead. "Don't play. I want you."

"You have me."

"Not inside me, I don't."

"Yeah?" Syren leaned forward and sank his teeth into Kane's ass cheek. The muscles around his fingers went crazy, contracting. "You want me inside you?"

Something dark and dangerous flashed in Kane's eyes. "Three seconds," he growled, "otherwise I'm just gonna fucking take it."

Syren pulled out his fingers, pushed his panties down until the elastic hooked under his balls, and lubed up his cock. "Oh, you're gonna get it all right." He winked when Kane growled again. "On your back, Marshal." He stroked his cock leisurely, shaft jumping when Kane dropped his gaze and licked his lips. "I want you on your back."

Kane turned over in a blink, arms and legs splayed wide like he was making a snow angel. Syren shook his head.

“Look at you,” he said hoarsely. “Looking like a high I wanna be on. Making me wanna climb you like a fucking tree.” He fisted Kane’s dick, swiped his thumb over the head and Kane threw his head back, undulating.

“Do it.” Kane jerked when Syren squeezed his erection. “Hard, because I need it like that. Deep, ’cause I want it like that.”

Syren touched him, touched his hole, pushing a lubed finger in and twisting, then he pulled that out and lined himself up. He stayed there, rubbing himself over Kane’s hole, his flared head shiny with lube and pre-cum, sliding up and down Kane’s crack.

Kane rocked, one knee bent, grabbing the sheets. “Syren.”

“Yeah, Marshal?” He flicked his hair out of his eyes, met his husband’s glare.

“Remind me to kill you when we’re done here.”

In answer, Syren pressed into him. Oh the fucking torture. Veins bulged in Kane’s neck. His eyes remained open and Syren saw the painful expression wash over his face. He froze.

“Marshal.”

Kane gulped in air. “Fucking hell. Shit is crazy.” He held Syren’s gaze. “Give me more.”

Syren did, sinking in inch by slow, heated inch. Kane clamped down around him, and Syren’s mind blanked at the raw pleasure. He dove deeper, seeking out the source of that mind-numbing sensation.

Kane’s chest rose and fell in rapid beats. Syren pulled back, feeling those muscles cling to him, hindering his retreat. He thrust forward and Kane’s body bowed, coming off the bed.

“Jesus. Yess.” Kane hissed. “Fucking do that again.”

Syren did, thrusting sharp. Kane's erect cock flopped back and forth on his hard stomach as he jerked and bounced, fucking himself back. Every movement wrapped around Syren's shaft in delicious ripples, racing up the back of his leg and spine. He moved, sliding in and out, losing himself in all that welcoming heat.

"Ung. That's the shit." Kane arched. "Talk to me," he said. "Give me your words."

A broken sound left Syren's throat. "Fuck, Marshal. I don't have words." It was all he could to keep himself from blasting off and leaving Kane unfulfilled. All he could do to stay upright when he wanted to just sink into all things Kane and lose his mind. His back ached, his knees cramped and his balls protested their prolonged release.

"Yes, you do." Kane reached up and touched his face. Syren turned and pressed a kiss to his palm. "I love hearing you talk, so talk. Tell me." He lifted his legs, wrapped them around Syren's waist as he thrust back.

Syren lowered himself onto Kane's chest, inhaling sharply when their damp skin made contact. He took Kane's mouth, fucking his tongue deep without waiting, taking his mouth like he took his ass. Kane met him move for move, thrust for thrust, in every way. His equal in everything.

"I'm in love with you." The words burst from him.

Kane reciprocated with a pained chuckle. "Tell me something I don't know."

Syren buried his face in Kane's neck, slowing up the tempo, grinding against Kane as his husband bucked. Kane's arms circled him, held him tight, caging him in, as he locked his ankles above Syren's ass.

"I can't describe the way you feel," Syren whispered in his ear. "I can't describe the way you make me ache."

Kane's fingers tunneled through his hair, hooking and tugging hard, the way Syren liked. His pulse leapt and he slammed forward, burying himself in Kane's hot depths.

"You make *me* ache." Kane nipped his ear. "*You.*" He slid both hands down to cup Syren's panty-covered ass, kneading him, squeezing hard. Then he pushed Syren into him, held him there, and plunged up and down on his cock.

Syren threw his head back and cried out, nails digging into Kane's shoulder. "Yes. Yes." He pressed closer, rubbing against Kane's cock trapped between their bellies. "God, Marshal."

Kane tugged his head down with a hand in Syren's hair. Their lips met somewhere in the middle, teeth banging, tongues lashing around each other. Kane pulled his hair, gave him that sweet pain he loved and Syren slammed into him.

Kane grunted, kissed him deeper.

Syren slammed into him again, keening when those muscles massaged him just right.

Kane broke the kiss long enough to bark, "Fuck!" Then they were kissing again, and Syren was banging away at his ass again, plunging in, grinding their hips together then pulling out to do that nasty shit all over again.

*Fuck* was right. It was good. He broke the kiss. "It's good," he panted against Kane's lips. "So good."

"Yes." Kane bit his shoulder, bit him hard. "Fucking good."

The pain of the bite ricocheted through Syren and coalesced in his balls. He pistoned into Kane, uncontrollable thrusts.

"Right there." Kane arched beneath him, his pre-cum sticking them together. "Gah...yes, right there." His fingers yanked on Syren's hair. "Hard."

Syren was a man possessed as he reared back and slammed in, a punishing stroke he knew his husband would love. Kane went wild underneath him, bucking up, head thrown back, groans rising higher and higher. He lost his mind there too, left all that shit by the wayside as he gave himself over to the sensation of loving on his husband, while Kane loved on him.

Kane spasmed around him. Virgin territory. All his. Fuck. That thought made him want to fucking pillage and plunder. He grabbed Kane's face in both hands, held him still until the lust fog over Kane's eyes cleared a bit.

"This is mine." His. He pulled out, until his cock head was barely inside then slammed deep. Kane's eyes closed on a shout. "I'll be fucking it on the regular, planting a flag in there to let everyone know I've laid claim to it."

Kane's mouth opened and closed. He touched Syren's hip, clawed at him, and Syren retreated then slammed in again. His eyesight shorted out, his balls churned, heavy with the need for release, but he wanted to see Kane break first. He angled his hips, thrusting with sharp, short strokes.

Kane's fingernails raked down his back. "Don't. Fuck. I can't—"

"You can." Syren smoothed a hand over his chest, caught one of Kane's nipples and scraped it with a fingernail. "I want to see it, watch you fragment for me." He swiveled his hips. "Because of me." He bent and licked Kane's mouth, licked his bottom lip then caught it between his teeth. "I love you, Marshal. Wanna fall asleep in your ass and wake up fucking it."

Kane made a sound, half laugh, half sob. "Shit. You talk too much."

"You love when I talk." Syren whispered, "Come for me. Let me see you." He pulled back slightly as Kane's insides starting trembling. He plunged in at an angle calculated to nail his

prostate. He did because Kane's eyes widened impossibly and his head fell back as he vaulted off the bed.

"Son of a bitch." Kane clutched the sheets as cum shot, creamy and thick, three spurts across his chest and torso. His ass spasmed, painful. A velvet fucking vise, heated for Syren's pleasure, guaranteed to rob him of his senses.

He let go, tumbling after Kane, the orgasm ripping through him toes up. He heard his cries from far away, unaware of anything but the snap of his hips as he buried his cock inside his husband, emptying his balls, filling him up.

Kane kept contracting around him, milking every dollop, ass hungry as he sucked him dry. Syren's back protested the position he was in, his thighs trembled, and he collapsed onto Kane's chest, Kane's cum acting as glue, keeping them locked in place.

Kane grabbed him—always with the grabbing, that one—and kissed him. Syren whimpered for him, kissing him back with slow twists of their tongue. Kane panted when they broke apart. He pressed his forehead to Syren's, hand on his chin, and they breathed each other in. The scent of their sex hit the air and Syren inhaled deeply, taking it into his lungs.

"I wish I had pretty words right now," Kane said hoarsely.

Syren grinned. "I don't really care for pretty words."

"No?" Kane lifted an eyebrow. "I loved the look in your eyes when you entered me. You were fucking possessive and in charge, and you fuck the way you kill...mercurial. How's that for pretty words?"

Syren shuddered, heat washing over his face in a blush. "Damn. Fine." He mewled. "I love pretty words."

Kane stroked Syren's cheek with a finger, and winked. "We're definitely doing it again."

“Killing?”

Kane’s mouth quirked. He shook his head and brushed a thumb over Syren’s bottom lip.

“The other one.”

## Chapter Thirteen

Syren kept his promise. He slept in it. Woke up in it. And the subsequent plane ride to Costa Rica was a very uncomfortable one for Kane. But the soreness was one he'd never experienced and he welcomed it. He also didn't miss the shit-eating grin his husband kept sending him every time Kane squirmed in his seat. That one was all kinds of conceited in the aftermath.

He had all rights to be.

Kane enjoyed every minute of it. And yes, he'd be going back for more. That would be a staple on their bedroom menu from now on. Lots of things to look forward to.

Hours later they were at the beach house, surrounded with their family. Because that was what the men around them were. Family. He might not have picked them if given the choice in the early days. He was glad he wasn't given the choice. Syren, Càtia, and even he, would have missed out on some really great people. They were loud, especially Mateo, talking shit. Ribbing each other. Càtia was on Angel's lap, one finger tracing the tattoos on his biceps that peeked out from under the sleeve of his t-shirt.

There was definitely something going down with Isa and Nina. Syren had pointed it out to him, but he'd dismissed it. Now, he saw the way they looked at each other, Isa's perusal bold and darker. Nina's much more subdued, hesitant. Shy even. But Kane grinned. He loved the two women for so many different reasons. They'd each been through their own versions of hell. To see them find each other was great.

He walked outside to the verandah. The air was getting cooler now that the sun was setting. From their position atop a hill, the setting sun was visible, swathed in a gorgeous array of fuchsia, purples, and blood orange. The beach below was almost deserted, the voices of the few

stragglers carrying on the gentle breeze. He loved it here. The contentment. He was glad he'd convinced Syren to keep the house when he'd proposed the idea of selling.

Someone touched his shoulder. "Hey."

He glanced at his brother as Gabe stood next to him, staring out at the sunset. "What's up?"

"Did you fix whatever it is you'd done to hurt your husband yet?" Gabe's jaw ticked, but he didn't look at Kane.

Kane sighed. "Syren and I are fine. Things weren't what they appeared to be."

"Meaning what?" Gabe faced him this time, and Kane saw the disappointment in his brother's eyes. Kane frowned.

"Gabe, do you seriously think I would cheat on Syren? That I'd put my family in jeopardy?"

"I wouldn't have thought it." Gabe shrugged. "But then I hear you kissed someone else, and I had to consider it."

"No, you don't." Kane explained the entire Vince situation to Gabe in a clipped tone. Gabe snorted with disbelief when he finished.

"And Syren didn't fuck him up?"

"It wasn't his fight. That was mine, and I dealt with it." He shook his head. "I still can't believe that shit. He's completely lost it."

"Obviously something else is at play here." Gabe slapped his back. "I'm glad you took care of him. Wouldn't have wanted to see how Syren would have handled it. Although," he growled, "if someone took that kind of liberty with Angel, things would not have gone down quite so neatly."

Kane chuckled. "You've been around Angel way too long."

Gabe shrugged. He crossed his arm across his chest. "One year later," he said smugly. "How are you liking married life, big brother?"

"Loving it. No regrets." But then he'd known the rightness of it, felt it in his bones the day they'd spoken their vows.

Gabe smiled, his gray eyes twinkling. "Didn't think you had any. You're good for him, and you, he's good for you. I see *you* again, not the man filled with pain and guilt." He glanced away. "It's really fucking good to have all of my brother back."

Kane stepped up and pulled his little brother into a hug. "It's good to be back." He patted Gabe's back, eyes squeezed tight. "Really good." He pressed a kiss to Gabe's temple then stepped back. Holding the back of Gabe's head, he peered into his brother's red-rimmed eyes. "How are *you*?"

Gabe flinched and stepped away. No other words were needed to clarify the meaning of Kane's question. Kane couldn't imagine the toll that losing yet another pregnancy was taking on Gabe and Angel.

"Gabe." He placed a hand on his brother's shoulder when Gabe didn't speak. "I'm so sorry."

Gabe nodded. His face was expressionless, but his eyes. Fuck, they killed Kane. "Me, too." His chin quivered. "I'm sorry, too."

"It'll happen." He didn't know what the hell he was going to do, but he had to make it happen. "Gabe, look at me." When his brother met his gaze, eyes overflowing with sorrow, Kane heard his own heart crack. "It will happen. I promise."

“When?” Gabe demanded. “When, Kane? Because I’m tired of this empty feeling inside me. I’m tired of the guilt, and the blame my husband puts on himself. I’m tired of feeling so fucking helpless.” Fists balled, his shoulders slumped in obvious defeat. “It hurts,” he whispered. “And I don’t know if the pain will go away.”

*God.* All Kane could do was gather him in his arms again. Gabe trembled against him, and Kane just held him. “I’m sorry.” He didn’t know what else to do, what else to say to take away the heartbreak in his brother’s eyes. In his voice.

“There are no explanations,” Gabe murmured against his neck. “We’ve been tested a million times. Everyone’s been tested. Nothing’s wrong, and yet, *every fucking thing* is wrong.” He shook his head then shifted away. “I don’t know how much more I can take. Seriously. I can’t do it anymore. I’m not sure if any of this is worth it.”

“Don’t say that.” He’d never seen Gabe like this and he didn’t like it. “What does Angel say?”

“He’s not saying much of anything. When he does broach the topic, it’s with guilt. He thinks it’s all his fault. He beats himself up and I—” Gabe turned back to stare down at the beach with a sigh, running impatient fingers through his hair. “Reaching him in those moments is impossible.”

Kane didn’t like how his brother sounded. “Gabe, are you guys— Are you okay? The two of you?”

Gabe was silent for so long, Kane started to panic.

“Angel is my first priority. My only priority.” Gabe pounded his fists on the verandah rails. “We don’t have a child, we might never have one.” His voice cracked only a little, but he continued. “I have my husband, and I will always have him. I can’t forget that. I won’t. We’ll be

okay.” He squared his shoulders and faced Kane. The smile on his face wasn’t the biggest or the brightest, but he smiled. “I’ll make sure of it.”

“Damn right you will.” Kane cupped his brother’s face with both hands. “I’m so proud of you.”

Gabe grinned. “Me too.”

They chuckled and Kane patted his cheek as someone cleared their throat. He looked over to the doorway. Nina and Syren stood there, hovering.

“Hey.”

Syren smiled. “We didn’t want to interrupt.” His eyes said they’d heard the conversation.

“You’re not.” Gabe pulled away. “Come on.” He motioned for them to come on over and stepped back from Kane. “I’m gonna go find Angel.”

“Càtia has him in her bedroom, brushing his hair.” Syren snickered. “Poor guy.”

Nina touched Gabe’s hand as he walked by her. “Gabe, can I—” She cast a nervous glance to Kane and Syren. “Can I say something to you?”

“Of course.” He looked confused, but Gabe smiled at her anyway. “What’s up?”

She bit her lip. Kane frowned at the nerves in her stance and in her expression.

“I-I...um. I heard you and Kane talking and I wanted to say...” She took a breath. “I’d like to give you something. If you’d agree. I’d like to be your surrogate.”

Syren gasped. Kane’s breathing cut off. Gabe paled and staggered backward.

“Wh-what?”

Nina wrung her hands. “I’d like to give you a baby. If you and your husband agrees to it. I’ll sign anything you want me to.”

Gabe braced himself with one hand against the wall. He looked bewildered and more than a little lost. He shook his head and Nina blanched.

“I-I’m sorry,” she stuttered, “I s-shouldn’t have—”

“Angel.” Gabe looked lost. “I need Angel.”

“I’ll get him.” Syren raced into the house.

“I didn’t mean to upset you,” Nina said softly. “I just, you’re good men and I want to give you this. I want to give you a child. I’ve never been interested in having any of my own, but I’d like the chance to make your dreams come true.”

Gabe made a sound. Hell, he looked like he was in pain. Kane went to him.

“Gabe, talk to me.”

But Gabe just shook his head, eyes closed, lips moving without sound.

“What’s going on?” Angel stepped out onto the verandah, Syren on his heels. “Gabe?”

Gabe held out a hand, and Angel took it immediately and stood at his husband’s side.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nina—” Gabe looked up at Angel and Kane had to glance away at the naked emotion in his brother’s eyes. “Nina has something she wants to ask us.”

Angel frowned as he looked from Gabe to a very nervous Nina. “Nina?”

“I heard Gabe talking about you losing another pregnancy,” she said. “I offered to be your surrogate.”

Angel blinked. His mouth opened and closed. Fingers slid into Kane’s palm, twisted around his. He squeezed Syren, silently thanking him for the support he didn’t even know he needed as he looked at Angel and Gabe. He felt as if they were intruding on something personal,

something intensely private. Especially watching the hope blossom in Angel's eyes then fade fast.

"Nina." Angel cleared his throat. "I don't know what to say right now."

She nodded slowly.

"This is a monumental decision to make on the spur of the moment." Angel kept his face expressionless when he said, "It's also a very complicated process. One we've been through too many times to count." He paused. "One I'm not sure I want to put us through again."

Gabe sagged into Angel's solid form.

"I understand," Nina said.

"Gabe." Angel looked down at Gabe with so much love in his eyes, that shit was blinding. "Our marriage is much more important." He cupped Gabe's face. "I swear to you, cop. It's much more important than anything else. We have us," he said fiercely. "I have you."

Gabe's head jerked. "I know."

Angel's eyes glittered. Kane could tell that to the two men, nothing else existed. Angel cupped Gabe's face, bent to press their noses together.

"Your choice," Angel whispered, but Kane was close enough to hear. "Whatever you decide, I'll be behind you one hundred percent. I promise. No wrong answers. Go with your heart." He reached down, linked their fingers. "Choose for us."

Gabe wrapped his arms around Angel's waist. He didn't break the stare he had with his husband when he spoke to Nina. "Nina, thank you." His voice trembled, hell Kane saw his entire body tremble when he said, "We'd be honored to have you as our surrogate."

*Fuck.* Kane let out a breath, blinking his wet eyes. Syren leaned into him. Nina was beaming. And Gabe, Gabe was in his husband's arms, fingers buried in Angel's hair, kissing his man.

## Chapter Fourteen

Playing host to a bunch of rowdy men wasn't as hard as it should have been. Syren just stood back and gave everyone free run of the house. That worked better. He watched as Angel, Gabe, and Nina disappeared into her bedroom to do a Skype call with their fertility doctor.

He was still shocked by Nina's generosity. Her selflessness. He'd expected none of it. He'd spent the plane ride to Costa Rica wracking his brain to remember if he had any contacts, anyone he could call on, to give Gabe and Angel what they so desperately wanted. Maybe Nina would be the answer to their prayers. One could only hope.

He'd keep his fingers crossed that this was their miracle, but just in case he had the name and contact information for a Romanian adoption agency. He could help them adopt for sure, but he knew they wanted a biological child more than anything.

Càtia had talked her daddy into taking her for a walk on the beach so those two were missing in action. Pablo and Isa had cooked up a feast for an army and everyone was lounging after eating their fill. They had put off talking to Isa, he and Kane. He'd mentioned their intent over the phone before, but they had to find the time to sit and fully discuss what they needed from her.

His breathing grew shallow for a second there. Planning for a future was no small thing. Not after the life he'd led. Babies. A husband. He had to smile.

"You look like you've got a secret." Mateo walked over to him, Tommy at his side.  
"What's got you smiling?"

Syren shrugged. "Just thinking about my life." He eyed them. "You guys good?"

Tommy nodded and a lock of hair fell forward, covering his right eye. “Is it true Nina is going to be Angel and Gabe’s surrogate?”

“She offered, but of course there are still lots of things to be done before they get to that point.” He lifted an eyebrow. “Why? Thinking about hatching some little Mateos?”

Tommy turned bright red, but Mateo glared at Syren.

“Watch your mouth, smallest, you don’t want me to catch a body up in here.” He hugged Tommy close. “T and I aren’t ready for kids.”

Tommy snuggled into Mateo’s side, sliding his left hand over Mateo’s chest in a soothing gesture.

“Soo…” Syren glanced back and forth between them. “No kids? Ever?”

Tommy shrugged. “Maybe someday. We’re not saying never. Just, no time soon.”

“We like being uncles, though, so you can go ahead with the plans for a son.” Mateo chuckled when Syren blinked. “Kane told us you’re giving him a son.” His gaze slid down Syren’s body, a smirk on his lips. “You don’t look knocked up to me.”

He flicked his hair away from his forehead and winked. “Not for lack of trying.”

Tommy blushed, eyes wide.

Syren laughed. “Dude, you’re married to this one and you can still blush?” He turned to Mateo. “Thought you’d have spanked that out of him by now.”

Tommy made an embarrassed sound as Mateo glared at Syren. “You’re this close to me kicking your ass, smallest,” he growled.

Syren laughed softly then reached over and tousled Tommy’s hair. “Tommy knows I love him. I’m just kidding. A little.” When Tommy smiled up at him, Syren asked. “So what did you crazy kids do for your anniversary?”

Tommy looked like he wanted to melt into the floor and Mateo, well that one had a very feral gleam in his eyes, and a self-satisfied grin on his face.

“We stayed in.” A wealth of meaning was behind those words, but Mateo’s expression dared Syren to say something else. He didn’t. He knew when to shut up.

“Uh-huh.” Syren looked at Tommy. The younger man had his bottom lip between his teeth, gaze darting all around the room. “Something you wanna share, Tommy?”

“Thank you.” Tommy met his gaze squarely. “For sharing your day with us. You didn’t have to.”

“I didn’t have to, but I wanted to. I was happy to do it.” He tucked an errant lock of hair behind Tommy’s ear. “I made the decision when this one here,” he jerked his thumb toward Mateo, “dropped to his knees with that huge rock. I’m honored that we got to share it, all of it.”

Mateo’s gaze and tone softened considerably when he said, “Of course, we had to have a second ceremony to appease my moms. She still brings it up when she wants me to do something.”

Syren chuckled. He’d met Mateo’s mother only once, but just like her son, she’d made quite the impression. Pablo called out to Mateo from the other side of the room, and after a nod in Syren’s direction, the two men walked away, arm in arm. He watched them go, a nostalgic smile on his face until he caught movement at the corner of his eye. He glanced over to see Shane walk outside, his hands shoved into his pockets.

He’d never really had a chance to sit and talk with Shane the way he’d done with any of the other men. That was his fault, though. Because looking at Shane had always brought into focus what he’d done, that selfish kiss he’d shared with Pablo. He knew he’d hurt Shane with that act, and he hadn’t wanted to see it in the DEA agent’s eyes. But Shane had accepted his

apology, and Syren really wanted to know how he and Pablo were dealing with the impending prospect of having a baby.

He hurried after Shane and found him standing in the far corner of the verandah, under the mounted lights, staring up at the dark sky.

“Hey.”

Shane looked over his shoulder then went back to staring at the sky. “Hey.” He didn’t sound put off or hesitant, but he wasn’t welcoming either.

“How are Heather and the baby?” He’d heard Shane and Pablo talking on the phone earlier, checking up on Heather and their baby.

“They’re good.” Shane’s shoulders lifted. “She’s got swollen feet and fucked up taste buds, but they’re good.”

“You must be thrilled.” Syren leaned against the verandah, eyeing Shane’s still frame. The other man nodded.

“I’m happy, yes.”

But he didn’t sound it. Syren just stared at his back, saying nothing until Shane heaved a sigh and finally turned to face him.

“I am happy, but I’m also scared and asking myself *what the fuck?*” He ran his fingers through his hair, an aggressive act. “What if we mess up?”

Syren smiled.

“What?” Shane frowned.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen you this frazzled before.” He lowered his lashes. “Kinda sexy on you.”

Shane stared at him, mouth hanging open. “You coming on to me?”

Syren burst out laughing. “You wish. Did you tell your man about all this, what you’re feeling?”

Shane’s shoulders dropped. He grunted. “I can’t. He’s so freaking happy, it’s unbelievable.” He went back to staring at the sky. “I don’t want to dampen this for him.”

“I don’t think you can dampen it, but I do think you need to tell him what it is you’re feeling.” He stepped forward and touched Shane’s arm. Hm. Hard muscle under his fingertips. That boy was built, wasn’t he? “You should be in this together. What you feel is what you feel, but I think sharing it with your husband can help do away with the guilt.” He gave a dry chuckle. “I’m speaking from experience, by the way.”

Shane glanced over at him, his expression unreadable. “You know, you’re nothing like what I imagined you to be the first time we met.”

He nodded. “I know.”

“He loves you.”

Syren blinked. “Uh...Who?”

“J.P.”

“Uhm...” Syren froze. What should he say?

“It’s why we’re here,” Shane said softly. He didn’t sound angry or sad. His tone was controlled. Even. “It’s why we’ll always be here when you need us. Because he loves you.”

“I’m-I’m sorry.” Jesus, what did he do in a situation like this one?

“No. I mean, I get it.” The corners of Shane’s mouth curved up. “I see why Angel loves you, why J.P. loves you, why Mateo loves you.” He crossed his arms over his chest. “There’s something about you that pulls people in, and I honestly don’t think you even know or understand what that is.”

“I—”

“You look like you’re helpless, with that gorgeous face. You’re all tiny and doll-like.”

Syren couldn’t tell if that was a compliment or an insult to his small stature, but he didn’t say a thing. He just watched Shane as he spoke.

“Your eyes give away your strength, but for someone to see that strength they need to get close enough to you.” Shane chuckled. “That’s the rub, though. Because you don’t let people get close, and if you ever do, they don’t live long enough to see what’s hidden in the depths of your very pretty eyes.”

Syren cocked his head. “Is that a read, agent?”

With a shake of his head, Shane said, “Just calling ’em like I see ’em.”

“You don’t like that your husband loves me?” Syren asked pointedly. “That he comes running when I call?”

“Actually, I don’t care that he loves you. I’m not threatened by that love because it’s a brotherly love, a familial bond. I know that. He’s loyal to you.”

“As I’m loyal to him.”

“Exactly. We come because you need him, and because I know that if we ever need you, you’ll come just as fast.”

“Always.” Syren stepped forward. “I love those men just as much. I appreciate their presence in my life. You guys, you’re my family. The people I chose to be near me, my daughter. You’re family, Shane, and I’ll fight and die for family.”

After a pregnant pause, Shane nodded.

“I know I had to work to get your trust after what I did—”

“You didn’t really do anything. J.P. had to earn my trust, he owed me something, not you.” Shane shook his head. “I was leery of you, because I didn’t know you like I know you now. I knew of Faro. Not Syren. I had to get to know you, but there’s always been that deadly shit lurking in your eyes, waiting to explode.”

“I’m a complicated mess,” Syren acknowledged. “I know.”

Shane snorted. “You’re not that complicated. You’re a family man, you’re a husband, and you’re a little blood thirsty.” He shrugged. “But then so are all of us, really.”

What could he say? Shane got him, summed him up in a nutshell. “I’ve always thought Pablo was a lucky man. Glad I was right. I was worried about him for a long time,” he said. “You make him happy and you let him be him. Thank you for that.”

“I happen to love J.P. when he’s being all J.P.” Shane’s teeth flashed. “Nothing sexier.”

“Right?” All those tattoo and the naked skin and the...Syren hummed and Shane cut him a look. “Oh, you know, totally innocent stuff.”

“You’re picturing him naked, aren’t you?”

“Fuck yes.” They chuckled together and when they finally sobered, Syren said, “I think you’ll be great parents. Your baby is going to be loved and cherished.”

Shane’s eyes glittered. “Heard you’ll soon be in this position.”

“Yep, Marshal wants a son. And what my husband wants, I make sure he gets.”

## Chapter Fifteen

Kane split his attention between Syren and Isa as they walked toward him on the beach, and C`atia as she sat on a bench at the surf spot owned by two of Syren's acquaintances. He didn't really care for Derrick and Casper and the things Syren had share with them, but they were cool men. So he tolerated them.

C`atia drank coconut water from the source with a straw, waving at Isa and Syren when they grew closer. "Papa! We caught a crab." Her face fell despite the excitement in her voice. "Daddy made me set him free."

The beach was already vacant and quiet, save for the gentle sweep on the calm waves onto shore and the rush of breezes through the tree overhead. It was night now, the sun having set a while ago, but the lights overhead, and those from the surf shop, brightened up the small area where they were.

Syren and Isa sat next to him on a bench just outside the surf shop.

"A crab?" Isa always looked put together and flawless, whether she was wearing a couture gown or jeans, tight t-shirt and Keds, hair in a messy ponytail, like now. She lifted an eyebrow at him.

Kane shrugged. "Don't look at me. Those things scare me, but she doesn't have that problem." C`atia was an adventurous little girl, caring and brave, much like her papa. Kane looked over at Syren, nudging him with a shoulder. "You okay?"

Syren granted him a wry smile. "Yeah. Figured this was probably gonna be the only time we get to talk to Isa since we head back home tomorrow."

Kane linked fingers with Syren then turned to Isa. “What do you think? Ready to be our baby mama?”

She grinned. “I’ve been ready, just waiting on you two to decide the timetable.” She grasped his hand. “You’ll be amazing, the both of you, and I’m so glad to be a part of it.”

A weight lifted off Kane’s shoulders and eased in his chest, making breathing that much easier. “Thank you.” He kissed Isa’s knuckles. “Thank you so much.” She’d been the one to offer back in the early days when they’d just gotten back together, and were contemplating their future. She’d been the one to suggest they use her to expand their family, and now they were one step closer to making it reality.

“No need for thanks. It’s my wedding gift to you.”

That wasn’t true, she’d been more than generous at the wedding, but Kane didn’t call her on that.

“You and Nina...” Syren said.

“Will be fine,” Isa said. “We’re going to try at a relationship, yes. But I told her upfront what I’d planned to do, and she’s doing the same, giving Gabe and Angel the same gift.” Her gaze softened. “We want to be aunts, not mommies. So, we’ll be just fine.”

Kane kissed her forehead. “You’ll be an awesome, kickass auntie.”

Isa frowned.

“Also stylish,” Syren added quickly.

She beamed. “Of course.”

Kane chuckled. “Well, that goes without saying.”

She glared at him. “Not really. You should say it.”

“Yes ma’am.” He released Syren’s hand and touched her face. “You’ll be a kickass, sexy, and the best fucking dressed auntie ever.”

She laughed. “Much better.” She stood, dusting off her jeans. “We’ll talk the heavy stuff later. I’m coming with you guys back to the States tomorrow, so we’ll take it from there.” She looked from Kane and Syren. “Good?”

“Better than good, Isa.” Syren looked like he wanted to cry so Kane hugged him close.

Isa smiled. “Okay. I’m going back to the house.” She waved at them and C`atia still sitting off to the side and walked off.

“You okay?” Kane tilted Syren’s chin until their gazes met. “You look sad.”

Syren shook his head. “Not sad. Happy...Just happy.”

“Oh, babe.” Kane brushed his lips over Syren’s. “Me too. So happy.” Syren’s lips parted for him and he sank in slow, deepening the kiss with a groan, tasting the whimper that rolled up from Syren’s throat.

Syren clutched him and moved onto his lap. Kane grunted when Syren rubbed against his erection, and just as quickly he broke the kiss with a curse. He lifted his head. “C`atia.”

Their daughter remained seated on the bench, her legs swinging as she stared at them, a curious expression on her face.

“She’s staring at us,” he whispered to Syren who snorted.

“Not the first time, Marshal.” He looked over at C`atia. “Come over here, baby.” He climbed off Kane and straightened his clothes, before making room so C`atia could sit between them.

She did then turned to Kane. “Daddy, can I have a puppy?”

He frowned. “Why? We already have O.G.”

She shook her head. "But he's not a puppy. I want a baby one."

Kane looked at Syren who then looked at C`atia. "What do you mean a baby one?"

"You're going to have a baby so I want one, too."

Well crap. "Who told you we were having a baby?" Kane asked. He and Syren had agreed they wouldn't tell her anything until Isa was indeed pregnant and far enough along. He looked at his husband who shrugged.

C`atia bit her lip. "I heard Uncle Matty talking to Uncle Tommy about it." Her eyes filled with tears. "I won't be your baby anymore." Fat tears rolled down her cheeks as she sobbed.

"Aw, baby. That's not true." Kane ignored the helpless feeling in his chest, the same helpless expression now on Syren's face. She'd asked for a sibling, but now that the idea might be a reality C`atia didn't seem to be happy about it. He pulled her into his arms. It was way too damn early to discuss this, but it seemed they no longer had the time to prepare her. "You're our baby, you'll always be our baby."

Syren rubbed her back and kissed her head. "It's all right, C`atia. Listen to daddy."

"But I'm not a baby," she said with that defiant tilt of her chin. "I'm a big girl."

"Yes." Syren nodded. "But you're our baby. It doesn't matter how old you are, or how tall you grow." His smile trembled. "You'll be our baby forever."

She sniffed, brown eyes glittering with tears. "Even when I'm ten?"

Kane supposed to an eight year old, ten must seem like ancient.

"Yes," Syren said softly. "Even when you're ten."

She looked at Kane. "Do you promise, Daddy? I'll be your baby even when I'm ten?"

Aw man. Kane's heart couldn't get any fuller. He kissed her little nose. "I promise." He kept his voice low, grave. "I promise you'll be my baby no matter how old you get."

She paused, seeming to consider their words. “Why do you need another baby?”

Syren answered before Kane could. “Because we have a lot of love in our hearts, in our family, to give. We want to love another child just the way we love you.”

“And because we want to give you a brother,” Kane said. “Or a sister.” He smiled down at her. “Wouldn’t you like that?”

“Karina has five sisters.” She wrinkled her nose. “They’re loud and they fight a lot.”

Kane vaguely remembered Karina as one the kids in her class. “Siblings do that.”

“But Uncle Gabe is your brother and you don’t fight.”

“Not now, but when we were younger we did.” He placed her between him and Syren. “Siblings fight and get loud, but they also love each other fiercely, too. They get to be best friends and share things that no one else can.”

“You’ll have time to get used to the idea of a sibling,” Syren said. “It’s not going to happen for a while.”

“Do you promise to think about what having a sibling would mean?” Kane asked.

Càtia’s face was serious when she nodded. “Yes, Daddy.”

“Thank you.” He kissed her cheek. “Why don’t we go home, give you a bath, and I’ll read you a bedtime story?” Syren tugged gently on her pigtails. “And Papa will brush your hair until you fall asleep.”

She smiled. “And can I have warm milk?”

Kane lifted an eyebrow at Syren who chuckled. “Yes.”

“And a puppy?”

Kane hid his smile in her hair. “We’ll talk about that later.”

“Okay.” Càtia wrapped her arms around Kane’s neck. “Let’s go home.”

Syren put aside his tablet when Kane stepped into the bedroom. “Is she asleep?”

He nodded. “Yeah. Finally.” He tugged off his shirt and climbed onto the bed. When he was next to Syren he sat back on his haunches. “Um. I may have caved.”

Syren paused in the process of leaning over to put the iPad on the night table. “Caved how?”

Kane knew better than to look his husband in the eye when he said, “I told Càtia she could have a puppy.” He stared at Syren’s legs, inwardly cringing as he waited for the explosion. He didn’t have to wait long.

“You did what?”

He sighed and finally looked into Syren’s narrowed eyes. “She was looking at me with those big brown eyes, and you know I can’t say no to her when she gives me that sad look.”

Syren sat back against the headboard, arms crossed over what looked like one of Kane’s shirts. “You let your daughter sucker you into getting another puppy?”

“Oh, *my* daughter, is she?” Kane straddled Syren’s legs, palms flat on Syren’s exposed thighs. “You know she gets that devious streak from you.”

Syren rolled his eyes, but his expression softened. Somewhat. “Don’t try those fucking pretty words on me.”

“Why not?” He slid a hand up under the shirt Syren wore and touched lace. “You love those pretty words.” He scraped a fingernail across Syren’s hip bone, watching his husband’s nostrils flare.

“We said we’d talk more about the puppy thing, Kane.” Syren tried for serious, Kane could tell, but he didn’t pull off a good job. Not with the way he licked his lips, and the faint tremor in his voice.

“I know and I’m sorry.” He tried for a sad face. “She was so sad about the new baby thing, I just wanted to see her smile again.”

Syren stared at him for so long, Kane began to think he’d really stepped in it.

“Ugh. You know I can’t stay mad at you when you give me that look.” Syren glared at him.

“What look?” But he knew the one and he did it again, stared at Syren with his eyelashes lowered. “This look?” He pouted.

“Damn it.” Syren hit him in the face with a pillow. “Yes, that one. Don’t look at me like that.”

Kane grinned. “Why not?”

Syren stopped moving under him, gaze serious. “You know why,” he said softly.

“Tell me anyway.” He wanted to hear it. And he wasn’t above a little underhanded play. He leaned forward and unbuttoned Syren’s shirt. He blew against Syren’s collar bone then pulled back to watch his handiwork.

Syren’s eyes were slumberous, face rosy, and his lips parted. The ends of the shirt hiked up just enough to expose his black panties.

“Tell me,” Kane prompted again.

Syren’s tongue flicked out, wetting his bottom lip. “Because... You know when you give me that look that my panties will be coming off.”

Kane grinned. “And what will you be doing?”

Syren's lashes lifted. The full force of those gorgeous purple eyes was trained on him. Kane cupped Syren, squeezed his already hard cock and lifted an eyebrow.

"What will you be doing?"

"Going down."

Kane squirmed, trying to ease the press of his zipper against his hard cock. He traced the throbbing length of Syren with a fingertip, feeling him pulse. "Going down on whom?"

"My husband."

"Fucking A right." Kane pushed off Syren's thighs and waved a hand. "Hands and knees, grab the headboard."

Syren flipped over and got into position. Despite being unbuttoned, his shirt remained on, covering his back, but his ass was exposed. The black panties he wore had bunched up into his crack, exposing the undersides of twin rounded ass cheeks. Kane loved that sight.

He salivated. He bent and took a bite out of that ass. Not too hard, but not gentle either. Syren hissed and bucked.

"Marshal."

Kane looked up, met Syren's gaze as his husband looked back at him over his shoulder.

"I love it," Kane said. "The sound of you. Breathless. I love it."

Syren's gaze was tender, the look in his eyes hot enough to melt. "And I love that you make me breathless. With a touch, a word, a look."

Kane licked the area he'd bitten, feeling the indents of his teeth on that smooth skin.

"Because I love you."

White teeth flash. "What a relief, Marshal. I happen to love you, too."

Kane straightened on his knees, palm smoothing over Syren's ass. "Want to eat you until you scream." He loved those screams and he didn't care if the house full of people heard them. Càtia's room was far enough away.

Syren's eyes flashed. "I don't scream."

Kane pulled his phone from his jeans and pulled up the voice recorder app then hit play.

*"Oh fuck. Marshal, harder. Yes, oh God! Oh God!"*

Syren's jaw dropped when he heard his voice.

"Told you I had you on tape." Kane smirked. "If I'm not mistaken, that is you, husband, screaming as I fuck you."

"You are so fucking dead."

"Am I?" Kane dropped his phone on the bed and kissed Syren, hard, shoving his tongue deep before Syren could react. When he did get his bearings, Syren grabbed his neck, kissing him back with loud moans. Syren cupped him through his jeans, and Kane rolled his hips with a grunt and a shudder.

"You want my ass, Marshal?"

He chased Syren's mouth, licking his chin, biting him. "Fuck. Yes. Always."

"Delete the tape."

Kane tensed. He eyed Syren, gaze narrowing at the calculating look in his husband's eyes. Always a look to be wary of. "You trying to bribe me, babe?" Syren rubbed against him. Kane swallowed a groan. Damn if Syren didn't feel good. And he knew just how he affected Kane, too. "I can't be bought."

“No?” Now Syren was the one smirking. “You’re hard for me. Wet for me, too, I’ll bet.” His tone was fucking with Kane’s control. That low, husky voice crawled over his skin, down his spine, and made his balls tighten. “Delete the tape, and you get to fuck me.”

Kane frowned. “I get to fuck you anyway.”

Syren chuckled. “Yes, but if you delete it I’ll be sliding up inside you, too.”

Kane snatched up the phone and hit delete. For now. He could always record Syren again. He looked up as Syren grinned.

“Kiss me, Marshal, and I’ll let you get in my panties.”

He’d be getting in Syren’s panties regardless, but Kane did it anyway. He kissed Syren, long and deep. He sucked on his tongue, stopping briefly to gulp in air. “Nice deal you made there, husband.”

Syren smiled against his mouth, fingers going to Kane’s zipper. “I’m a business man and I’m your weakness.” He winked. “We both win.”

**End**

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