



# THE MEN OF CCD:

## *Help Wanted*



*Marie Rochelle*

*The Men of CCD:*  
*Help Wanted*

A novel of interracial erotic romance by

Marie Rochelle

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# Dedication

To Mr. Little,  
Without you, I wouldn't have become a writer.

# Chapter One

*Thick black smoke filled Keira's lungs as she tried to crawl through the debris that covered the carpet floor. It was so dark that she could barely see her hand in front of her face. She heard the moans of the people around her and tried her best to help them. Without a doubt in her mind, she had to get up off this floor and walk; it was the only way that she would be any assistance to anyone. She ripped a piece of fabric from the arm of her uniform and covered her mouth hoping it would keep some of the smoke from overwhelming her.*

*Sticking her hand out next to her, she felt around in the darkness until her hand touched the side of a seat. She grabbed it and pulled herself up. The smoke made it harder to breathe and she coughed several times. Shaking off the frantic feelings rushing through her fatigued body, she tried to slow her pounding heart.*

*She had to get herself back under control. It was her job to help those around her. She didn't have a clue where the plane had crashed or how many people were still even alive.*

*She moved the cloth away from her mouth and hollered. "Can anyone hear me? Is anyone hurt? Please scream out and let me know."*

*Time seemed to tick by forever before she finally heard a response.*

*"Yes...I'm over here. I need some help. I can't move my legs. I think one of them got broken by the seat in front of me when the plane went down."*

*Keira slowly made her way towards the sound of the man's panic-filled voice. She was halfway there when the sound of something snapping caught her attention, and the part of the plane she was trying desperately to reach gave away and disappeared from sight...*

\* \* \* \*

"No!" Keira screamed as she bolted up in her bed. The sheets were twisted around her sweat-covered body plastering her nightgown against her skin.

She scanned the dark bedroom trying to remember where she was. It took her a while to realize that she was at home and not back in the nightmarish wreckage of the airplane crash or still inside the hospital. Reaching across the bed, she fumbled with the lamp switch before she finally got it to come on and light the room.

Bringing her legs up to her chest, she dropped her head down on her knees and took several deep breaths. *I have to stop having these nightmares. The plane crash happened over eight months ago.*

She couldn't understand why she wasn't getting any better. She wouldn't get her job back unless she got a grip on her fears. She *loved* being a flight attendant and she didn't know what she would do if she had to give it up.

Untangling her body from the sheets, Keira got out of the bed and slowly made her into the bathroom. She flicked on the light and stared at her reflection in the mirror. The frightened woman gazing back at her wasn't the person she wanted to be anymore. She missed laughing, having fun with her girlfriends and flirting with hot guys.

Her friend, Charisma, had invited her over several times to see the new baby, but she wasn't up for that yet. Everyone had been so worried about Charisma because she had gone into labor six weeks early.

Jenisha told her that Dave had practically made the entire hospital staff crazy with all of his questions and demands. He had almost been banned from the waiting room by hospital security until Clinton calmed him down. What hurt the worst is she wasn't here with her best friend when she needed her the most. She had been overseas on a flight when Dave Jr. was born.

However, everything turned out perfectly in the end because now Charisma and Dave were the proud parents of a healthy eight pound baby boy. Charisma had emailed her a couple of pictures and he was absolutely beautiful. He was really going to be a heart breaker when he grew up.

She was ecstatic that all of her girlfriends were married to the loves of their lives with beautiful and happy children, but she had to be honest with herself. She was more than a little envious too. It just seemed like everything was going so wrong for her.

For years, she thought she would be 'the one' who would get married first and have a house full of children, but it didn't turn out that way. She was the single one living vicariously through her friends' happiness.

Plus, her father passed away from Alzheimer's a week before the airplane crash and she still hadn't recovered from that loss. He had been her only parent since she was thirteen years old. Her mother had gone into the hospital to have her appendicitis removed and ended up dying on the operating table because she waited too long to go.

Her mother had hated doctors, needles or anything that involved medicine. The loss had devastated her father and she always wondered if he really ever had got past losing his true love. Everyone thought the disease had taking him away from her, but she truly believe he had died from a broken heart years before his Alzheimer appeared.

She had to get herself together so she could deal with the guy coming tomorrow about the shop. She still couldn't believe her dad had sold the bike shop without talking her to first about it. How did she know that the disease



hadn't already started to take over by then? Maybe this guy had tricked her poor unsuspecting father without him even knowing it

Dennis Winters had loved his motorcycle shop *Choppers*. When she was a little girl she would come home from school and often find him there working on a new bike. The look of happiness on his face always amazed her because she never got what he found so appealing about it.

He tried teaching the family business to her, but she just wasn't interested. Now because of her indifference, a total stranger was going to be working in the family business right next door to her house. She hated it, but there was nothing she could do. Before his death, her father had made the contract legally binding.

Keira brushed her hair off her face and grabbed a washrag off the rack by the sink. She turned on the faucet, dampened the cloth and ran it over her face hoping it would relax her and help her get back to sleep without any of the nightmares coming back to haunt her. After she finished, Keira turned the water off, hung up the cloth and returned to bed.



## Chapter Two

“Uncle Jim, do you want to come outside and race cars with me?”

Jim Russell looked down into the adorable face of Kevan Campbell. The five-year-old looked at him like he was dying for him to say yes. He knew something was up, but he couldn't figure out what was going on with Hayward's oldest child.

“I'm sorry I can't. I have to leave in a few minutes. Why don't you find Dylan and play with him?”

“I can't. He's taking a nap and so is my brother Evan. I don't have anyone to play with,” Kevan whined.

“Kevan Campbell, aren't you supposed to be upstairs taking a nap?” True came into the living room carrying the latest addition to the Campbell family.

“I don't want to take a nap.” Kevan pouted. “I want to race cars with Uncle Jim outside on the sidewalk.”

Jim laughed as True gave Kevan a stern look. “You are going to take a nap Kevan. All of the other kids are asleep, but you.”

“My'kael isn't asleep,” Kevan said, pointing to his baby brother.

“He will be as soon as I feed him. Your baby brother Kyle is already asleep upstairs in his crib,” True said.

“I'm not a baby. I won't take a nap and you can't make me.”

Jim watched as True's eyes widened behind her glasses before she looked in his direction. *Lord...what was she going to make him do?* “Jim, will you give My'kael his bottle while I deal with my outspoken child?” True handed him the squirming baby along with the bottle before he could tell her no. Spinning away from him, True picked up a crying Kevan and carried him out of the living room and upstairs.

He glanced down at the cute baby in his arms and found a pair of hazel eyes staring back at him. “Do you want this, little guy?” He held the bottle against the baby's mouth and My'kael sucked it right in.

The sight of Hayward's son taking his bottle made him get lost in the memory of the few times he was able to feed his own son. He had stayed so busy with working odd construction jobs that he traveled a lot. However, he made sure that Trevor always had food on the table despite what his bitch of an ex-wife Kathy told their son.

God, if he hadn't come home early from work that day he wouldn't have caught her in bed with his twenty-one year old co-worker, Jackson Morris. The

next day he made a trip to his lawyer's office and had the divorce papers drawn up. He wasn't about to stay with a woman who had been cheating on him for God knows how long.

Kathy had tried to drag out the case as long as she could, but she finally signed the papers. He was so damn happy to finally be free of her and all the lies she had loved to tell him over their seven year marriage. Now he could focus all of his time on his son and running the dream bike shop he had just bought.

He finally knew how Dave felt when he started working in the business department of Campbell Construction Design. He wasn't upset when Dave left working as a construction worker to get an office job with CCD. He had been so proud and that made him pursue his dreams even more. He was thrilled about finally having his own business. He had secretly been talking to the bike shop owner for the past couple of years, but everything became final with the guy's death. It had taken a lot of sacrifices on his part to save up enough money to buy that shop from Dennis Winters, but he was proud he had done it. He had to pick up the keys and paperwork today from his daughter. Glancing down Jim noticed that My'kael was done with his bottle. Setting the empty bottle on the table next to him, he placed the baby on his shoulder and gently rubbed My'kael's back so he could burp.

"Should I be jealous that another man has my son?"

Looking over his shoulder, Jim saw Hayward standing next to Clinton and Dave, a huge smile on his face. "No, I think he would rather you burp him than me," Jim replied.

Hayward came into the living room and took My'kael away from him. He resumed patting his son on the back. "Where's True?"

"She's upstairs with Kevan. He didn't want to take a nap."

"Yeah, he's been having a problem with that lately. He's getting a horrible independent streak now. He wants to do a lot more stuff on his own now that he's turned five. But he isn't big enough yet and his new personality is driving True crazy."

"I have to make sure to keep Dylan away from him." Clinton laughed as he took a seat across from Jim. "I don't want my little boy acting like that. He's a good son and I want him to stay that way."

"I think Dylan is the one who gave it to Kevan. My son was a perfect angel until his cousin came along," Hayward laughed.

"My son didn't do anything. I believe he was taking his nap when we left my house," Clinton tossed back. "Jenisha would agree with me if she wasn't at the doctor with the baby."

"How is Parker doing?" Dave asked touching My'kael's hand before taking a seat on the sofa.

"He's amazing." Clinton bragged like a proud father. "I swear he's better looking than me, and Dylan loves him to death. He likes the idea of being a big

brother so much. He's already trying to tell his little brother what to do. It's so cute."

"Were you disappointed that Jenisha didn't have twins?" Jim asked getting back into the conversation. He remembered how excited Clinton was at the thought of the possibility of having twins like his brother and True.

"No, we are just thrilled to have another healthy addition to our family," Clinton said. "Jenisha never thought she would be a mother and now we have two beautiful kids. I would have loved Jenisha without kids, but our sons bring so much more to our lives. We don't know what we would do without them."

"I know what you mean. I'm so glad that Charisma and Dave Jr. are doing better now. I don't think I could have gone on without them," Dave cut in. "Charisma has been trying to get Keira to come and see the baby, but she won't."

"That is one woman who needs an attitude adjustment." A frown crossed Jim's handsome face "I swear, I believe she's worse than Kathy."

"Keira isn't nastier than your ex-wife," Hayward interrupted holding his sleeping son against his chest. "She's very nice. Maybe you just rubbed her the wrong way. I heard about the disagreement the two of you got into at the airport. I thought it was kind of funny to be honest."

"I didn't have an argument with her," Jim said. "I only told her to stay out of Dave's relationship with Charisma. It wasn't any of her business."

"Are you telling me that you haven't thought about Keira since then?" Dave asked. "She's very pretty. You usually like those types. I know she's single. I could have Charisma put in a good word for you."

"No, I haven't thought about Keira. She's too much drama for me." Jim wasn't about to admit that the sexy flight attendant had crossed his mind several times since their brief encounter.

"I think Keira would be a perfect match for Jim," Clinton said, adding his opinion to the conversation. "I think they would make a good-looking couple."

"I would never date one of them," Jim retorted and then quickly realized how his comment may have sounded to the men around him.

"What do you mean by 'one of them'?" Hayward asked in a dangerously low voice.

"Yeah, what in the hell do you mean?" Dave and Clinton demanded together.

Jim knew that he had to clear this mistake up very quickly or he was going to lose his three best friends along with all the fun and enjoyment they brought into his life with their families.

"I'm not referring to her race. I'm talking about her being a know-it-all. I bet she has an opinion about everything. I was already involved with one of those types. I don't want or need it again."

"So, you have thought about Keira." Clinton teased easing the thick tension in the room. "I think she's cute."

“Who do you think is cute and should I tell True about this?” Jenisha asked coming into the room carrying a car seat “You know that she has my back.”

“Don’t be jealous.” Clinton got up, kissed his gorgeous wife on the mouth and then took the car seat from her. “How is Parker doing? Did the doctor agree that he’s as perfect as we think he is?”

Jim watched how Clinton looked at Jenisha with such love in his eyes and was a little envious. He was glad that his buddy had found true love, but he was jealous that he was still alone. The guys didn’t know it but he was tired of going home to an empty house every night unless Trevor was spending some time with him. He would love to walk in his front door and find someone there waiting with open arms.

“The guys are trying to fix me up with Keira, but I’m not interested,” Jim said filling Jenisha in on what was going on.

“Why aren’t you interested?” Jenisha asked. “I’ve always thought you should ask Keira out on a date. She would be so good for you. She could make you get over the way your abusive ex-wife treated you for all of those years. I swear she’s Satan reincarnated.”

Jim knew that he had to get out of here before things got any worse for him. He wasn’t interested in getting involved with Keira no matter how attractive he found her. He would keep telling everyone that she wasn’t his type until the matchmaking crew left him alone.

“I have to go.” He got up, made his way towards the front door and then hurried out before anyone could stop him.

Outside Jim shook his head at the people inside Clinton’s house and wondered when they were going to give up trying to fix him up. He loved all of them like they were his second family, but they were wrong. He wasn’t interested in Charisma’s attractive best friend. He would be doing wonderfully if he never had another meeting with Keira ever again.

# Chapter Three

Keira stood inside the bike shop glancing around at everything that had been a part of her life of so many years. She hadn't been in here since her father passed away. It had just been too hard to even think about stepping through the front door.

Plus she was still trying to get over the plane crash and all the bad memories it kept bringing back to her night after night. The airline offered to pay for counseling, but she wasn't ready.

She wasn't very open to telling someone about her nightmares. It was still too fresh in her mind. She couldn't even talk to Charisma about how it felt and she was her best friend. She could still hear the screams and moans of several of the passengers before the plane broke apart ending their lives in a matter of minutes.

There was just too much going on inside of her head for her to handle it all at once. In addition, she had to see this stranger who her father sold his precious business too. He wanted total control over what her father had spent most of his life building up. She didn't feel right handing over the keys to her father's long time passion to a man that she wasn't aware existed in the world until several months ago. It just didn't sit well with her.

She ran a hand over her dad's prized custom made Harley Davidson. Her father had redone the bike her senior year in college. He adored this particular motorcycle and took it out any chance he got.

How was she going to be able to give this bike away to a new owner? She knew nothing about this man. She wasn't even sure this guy knew anything about motorcycles. *I can't do this. I won't let a stranger take over my father's business. I'll learn how to work here. I can do it to honor the memory of my father.* The sound of the bell ringing above the front door drew Keira's attention back to the entrance of the shop.

"Hello, is there anyone here?" A masculine voice called out.

Keira took a quick look at her watch frowning at the time. She hadn't realized how late it was. It was time for the guy to show up for the keys. She hoped that Jim Russell understood when she gave him the bad news. She just didn't understand why his name seemed so familiar to her. Oh well...it didn't matter. He would be a distant memory in a few minutes anyway.

"I'm coming," Keira yelled, coming back towards the front of the building. She came around the corner and saw a tall, white man with long, dark brown hair

pulled back into a ponytail looking at a couple of the older Harley Davidson's that her father had kept proudly on display.

One was a 1979 FXEF that showed the tachometer mounted below the speedometer. Her father had restored it to its original condition. The second bike was a 1980 FXB Sturgis. She recalled seeing him ride that bike about three or four times when she was a little girl. This shop had been her father's world, but no matter how many long hours he spent in the shop, he always made enough time for her and anything she wanted to do when she was growing up.

Keira stared at the man for a second or two wondering why he looked somewhat familiar. Maybe he had been a passenger on one of the flights she was on a while back before the crash. Well, she wasn't going to worry about it because it would come to her soon enough where she knew him from.

"Excuse me sir, may I help you?" she asked.

"I'm here about the bike shop. I'm Jim Russell the new owner," the guy said as he turned around.

"I can't believe it!" Keira gasped. "There is no way in hell my father sold our family business to you." How was it that bad luck seemed to follow her no matter where she went now?

"Well, if it isn't Miss Butt-into-other-people's-business." Jim glared back at her. "You can't be the daughter Dennis bragged about. She sounded very sweet and understanding. We both know that isn't you."

"How dare you assume you know who am I? We only had about a two minute conversation."

"It was the longest two minutes of my life," Jim snapped back. "Just give me the keys to the shop and I'll be on my way, sweetheart."

Shaking her head, Keira crossed her arms over her breasts. "First, my name isn't sweetheart. It is Keira Winters, but I rather you call me Ms. Winters. Furthermore, I'm not giving you the keys to my father's business today or any other day for that matter."

Keira secretly congratulated herself for not moving when Jim closed the distance between them. His gorgeous hazel eyes, that looked more green than brown, flashed down at her from a truly handsome face. She hated that she was even mildly attracted to the domineering man in front of her.

"What are you talking about?" he demanded. "Why aren't you giving me the keys? I gave your father a shit load of money for this place and I want those keys."

"I'm going to run it myself to honor my father. I'll give you all your money back and you can be on your way. Let me go and grab my checkbook." Keira spun around and was about to walk away, but gasped instead when Jim wrapped his large calloused hand around her bare upper arm.

"Not so fast, Keira," he whispered by her ear sending a tingle of excitement racing through her body. "I never said that I wanted my money back. I bought

this place from your father in good faith and I'm not giving it up just because his spoiled daughter wants it now."

Jerking her arm away, Keira pivoted and stared up into Jim's face. She hated the smirk she saw plastered there and how it didn't take away from how appealing he was. "You have to let me buy the shop back from you. I'm sure there's another business in town you can buy."

"I agree with you. I'm sure that there is, but why would I want to buy another one when I already own a perfectly good one," Jim taunted.

She swallowed hard, lifted her head another inch or two and boldly met his gaze. "I'm not going to let you get away with this. I'll get my dad's business back from you. You may think you're so damn smart, but I'm smarter than you and I'm going to prove it."

"Fine, I'll let you buy this place back from me if you can answer one question; however, if you get the answer wrong the discussion is over. I own this place and you will accept it."

"I'll take you up on that deal." There was no way she wouldn't be able to answer any question Jim asked her.

"Besides a Harley Davidson, can you name three other types of motorcycles?" Jim asked.

The confident smile Keira had a few seconds ago slowly slipped off her face as she realized the huge hole she had dug herself into. Jim tricked her! He knew that she didn't have an answer to his question and that's why he asked it.

She quickly chastised herself for even thinking Jim would be fair or honest with her. She knew nothing about him except that he was Dave's best friend. "You know that I don't have a response to that question," Keira accused. "You tricked me!"

His stare drilled into her as he listened to her rant and rave. "I did nothing of the sort. I thought it was a very easy question for you because your father had this place since you were a little girl. I'm sure you have seen a variety of bikes coming in and out of here."

Keira hated that Jim was right, but she'd been too busy trying to live her own life instead of becoming more aware of what her father did in here. She knew a few things; however, she didn't know this.

"I don't know of any more," she finally admitted. "I'm not that good when it comes to the other designs of motorcycles. I know they exist but I'm not positive about their names."

Just thinking about Jim owning this place shattered her as she watched him move away from her over to a table beside them. He picked up a motorcycle helmet that she hadn't noticed was there until now.

"I guess I'll be seeing you bright and early tomorrow morning." Jim strolled towards the front door. "I'm not a horrible person. I'll give you today to have some more time with your father's shop."



Opening the door, Jim was about to walk out before Keira stopped him, “Wait. Aren’t you going to tell me the answer to the question?”

“Sports bike, Trail bike and Custom bike,” Jim told her and then continued on to the door without a second glance in her direction.

Standing there watching the door as it closed behind Jim made Keira more uncertain than ever. She couldn’t believe how irritating Jim Russell was. He had to be the most self-centered man that she had ever met. She wondered how long it would be before they jumped at each other’s throats. What else might happen, she wasn’t in the mood to think about.

## Chapter Four

“Tell me how to get rid of him. I don’t want him coming back tomorrow,” she complained. She had thought long and hard before coming over here, but she couldn’t think of any other place to go about her problem.

“I can’t believe I’ve been asking you for weeks to come over and when you do it is to complain about Jim.” Charisma sighed as she placed Dave Jr. back into his bassinet.

Keira felt horrible. Charisma was right. She wasn’t being a good friend at all. Her problems weren’t that big compared to what Charisma had been through these past couple of months worrying about her baby.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “I shouldn’t be over here tossing my problems in your lap. You have enough going on in your life. Jim Russell is my headache, not yours.”

“I think Jim is a great guy,” Charisma said brushing a lock of hair off her son’s forehead before joining Keira on the couch.

“You would like him. He’s nice to you. He was a pain in the ass the first time I had the misfortune to meet him and the months that have passed haven’t changed his personality.”

“Jim has been through a lot in the last couple of years. He isn’t as bad as he came off to you at the airport. How about we forget about Jim for a minute and talk about you?”

“What about me?” Keira looked warily at her friend.

“Have you started going to those counseling sessions yet? I know you mentioned those months ago and I never heard another word about them from you. Are you still having all those horrible nightmares?”

Jumping up from her seat, Keira paced in front of Charisma. It was too painful to think about, let alone talk about, to anyone.

“I can’t get into this with you,” she said shaking her head. “It’s too much for me to handle. Don’t you remember all that news coverage? I was the only person who survived that damn crash. There were 147 people who died when that plane broke apart.”

Tears filled Keira’s eyes, but she quickly blinked them away before they started to fall. She wasn’t going to start crying in front of Charisma. “It isn’t fair to all of those other people that I’m alive and they aren’t. Maybe if I hadn’t been knocked out and moved a little faster I could have at least saved someone.”

“Honey, you have to stop blaming yourself. It’s not your fault that the crash happened. You tried to save that man, but you couldn’t. You were lucky enough to have survived. God blessed you that day. Please don’t take it for granted. I want my son to get to know his godmother and tell him stories about his amazing mother.”

“It wasn’t right that he died.” Keira continued as if Charisma hadn’t spoken. “He was married with three kids and another one on the way. I was frozen with fear. If I’d moved faster I could have saved him. It was my job to help the passengers and when I was supposed to protect them the most...I failed them.”

“Keira, I hate that you are shouldering so much of the responsibility when nothing, and I mean nothing, about the accident was your fault. I want you to get some help because I miss the fun-loving woman that I went to Jamaica with. I love you so much and it’s killing me to see you like this.” Charisma got up from her seat and wrapped her arms around her best friend’s shoulders pulling her closer to her body. “Why don’t you pack a bag and stay with me and Dave for a couple of days. You know that there’s plenty of room in this huge house. Sometimes, I think I might get lost in here.”

Keira understood what Charisma was trying to do and she loved her so much for it, but she needed this time alone. “No, that’s okay. It’s very sweet of you to offer, but I’m going to head back home.” She pulled free of Charisma’s embrace, picked up her purse and rushed out of the house before Charisma could talk her into staying.

## Chapter Five

Tossing his helmet on the couch, Jim sauntered into the kitchen and grabbed a beer out of the refrigerator. After twisting off the lid, he took a long sip and thought about everything that had occurred today.

He couldn't believe the motorcycle shop that he dreamt about owning for the past couple of years brought the ultra sexy, yet overly bossy Keira Winters back into his life. He didn't know how Hayward and the rest of them put up with her for so long. Sure, she had a rocking body, but he wasn't going to let that sidetrack him.

He was going to be back at the shop first thing in the morning to get the keys from her. God, she knew nothing about being the owner of a custom made motorcycle business. Keira couldn't even answer his question today. Any true motorcycle owner wouldn't have to even think about the answer.

*I'm going to be able to deal with her. Maybe I'll get lucky and she will get sent on an overseas trip for a while leaving me alone with the shop. I would be able to make it into everything I have wanted and more,* Jim thought.

Keira's father had kept Choppers in pretty good shape, but there were a couple of more up-to-date things he wanted to do with it. It would draw in more customers and expand the business making it more accessible to everyone.

For some reason, he got a sneaky feeling that wasn't about to happen anytime soon. Keira came off like she didn't give up anything without a fight. He loved a woman with some spunk and Keira had a truck load of it and then some. However, he didn't want to go through the hassle of fighting with her.

Maybe he could talk to Charisma and she could get Keira to give him what he wanted. They were best friends and would do anything for each other. Keira might actually listen to Charisma.

Jim finished off the last of the beer and then tossed the empty bottle into the trashcan. He couldn't let Keira ruin the rest of his day because he had to deal with Kathy in less than an hour.

His ex-wife was bringing Trevor over for his weekly visit and he prayed that Kathy wouldn't go into her rant about needing more money for their son. Hell, she wasn't even using the money she was getting now for him. Just last week Trevor called him wanting a new video game. He sent Kathy more than enough money to buy little gifts like that for Trevor and then have more than enough money left over for her expensive tastes.

He was trying his best not to take Kathy back to court for full custody of Trevor. But if she kept spending all the money he sent on herself instead of their son something was going to change. Kathy wasn't going to mistreat Trevor and give the young lovers in her life anything they wanted. She was the poster image of a woman being a cougar. The last time he'd gone to pick up Trevor from his ex-wife's house, he'd found a guy there who, if he had to guess, wasn't older than twenty.

What was Kathy thinking? She couldn't let guys come in and out of Trevor's life like that. His son loved the both of them so much and he knew that his son had a spark of hope his parents would get back together.

Jim had tried numerous times to make Trevor understand that there was no way he was going to get back with his mother. However, Trevor still held out for that prospect.

*I might really have to talk him to again. I should take him on another camping trip. It's been too long.*

Trevor was the carbon copy of him and he loved his son dearly. It pained him that it wasn't able to see Trevor more than he did.

Leaving the kitchen, Jim strolled back into the living room to wait for Kathy and Trevor. Sitting down on the couch, he picked up the remote control and turned on the television to ESPN. He had been watching a NASCAR race for about twenty minutes before the front door swung open and a bundle of energy raced through it.

"Dad, I was thinking about you all day at school. I was so excited to be spending the entire week with you instead of the weekend like I usually do!" Trevor shouted as he jumped on the couch next to him.

"Son, I'm glad you're going to be spending extra time with me too. Do you want to order a pizza tonight and watch some movies? We can rent something off the television," Jim said, hugging his son.

"Dad, I'm too old to be getting hugs. I'm not a baby." Trevor moved back from him and got off the couch. "I'm going to start on my homework, so I'll be finished before dinner." Trevor raced back to his bedroom and slammed the door behind him.

"You know that he really isn't going to start on his homework, don't you?" A snippy voice complained behind him. "You let him get away with too much. That's why he's so unruly when I get him back from you. He has no rules at your house at all. He's horrible the way he can do anything he wants over here. I'm the only one who punishes him for doing something wrong."

Jim got up from his seat and glared at his ex-wife. There wasn't a time that Kathy hadn't dropped off their son and complained about something. She was such a negative person. She hadn't been this way when they first got married. She wasn't the most positive person back then; however, she never constantly saw the bad in everything and everyone.

“Nice to see you, Kathy,” Jim said trying his best to be civil for Trevor’s sake. “How are you and Donnie doing?”

“Stop trying to be nice to me. We both know that we can’t stand each other and you know that I’m not dating Donnie anymore. I haven’t been dating him for months. He went back to his ex-girlfriend and they are expecting a baby next month.”

“Kathy, I was just trying to be cordial because of Trevor. He doesn’t have to hear us fighting every time one of us drops him off at the other person’s house,” Jim said, trying to keep the peace because he wanted to enjoy this time with his son.

“Fine,” Kathy snapped. “I won’t go into what a dead beat father you are. I heard about the huge amount of money you spent on that damn bike shop. How could you waste money like that when Trevor needs new clothes for school?”

Jim knew Kathy was standing there lying to him. He bought his son new clothes two weeks ago and took them over to her house, so she wasn’t about to get any more money from him to spend on her young boyfriend.

“I just got him some things. Where are those clothes?”

“Trevor is a growing boy and he constantly needs a new pair of shoes or a new shirt,” Kathy told him. “You have money and should want him to have nice things.”

“Don’t you mean that you want nice things?” Jim retorted as he slowly began to lose his temper. It was past time for Kathy to leave and she knew it. Why was she still here anyway?

“I’m not getting into this with you. If I stay any longer I’m going to be late for my flight. Cameron is waiting for me at the airport and I don’t want to be late.” Kathy spun around and headed for the door. “Don’t forget that Trevor has an allergy to peanuts. Make sure that he doesn’t get into anything with nuts in it. Also remember that he needs a refill on his medicine. He only has a little left in his bag.”

He hated when Kathy talked to him like he was stupid. Of course, he knew to keep Trevor away from peanuts. He was the one who figured out about the damn allergy in the first place. This wasn’t the time or place for him to lose his temper. That was what Kathy wanted him to do, so he would look bad in Trevor’s eyes and it wasn’t going to work. He was done doing this same song and dance with her.

Walking past his ex-wife Jim stood in front of the open front door. “I think it’s time for you to leave. I would hate for you to miss your flight with your new boy toy.”

“Have fun with Trevor, but don’t let him get away with murder,” Kathy snapped as she stormed out the door and down the driveway to her car.

Standing in the open doorway, Jim made sure that Kathy got into her car and drove off. He didn’t want her coming back to stir up any trouble. She had a bad

habit of leaving and then coming back five minutes later to start up a new fight him.

*God, I'm glad she's gone. I have to find a way to get full custody of Trevor. Kathy doesn't know how to be a good mother. She's too busy trying to relive her youth with guys who don't want her and never will.* Closing the door, Jim turned back around and found Trevor standing behind him.

"Trevor, how long have you been standing there?" Jim asked.

"I was in the hallway listening to you and Mom fight and then I came in here when I heard her leave. Why are you two always upset with each other? The two of you aren't ever going to get back together.

"Trevor, what have I told you about me getting back together with your mom? She has a boyfriend and they're going away on a trip. I'm not ever going to get back with your mom. I really want you to understand that."

"Daddy, I know you're mad at Mom now, but I know the two of you will get back together. You have done it before, why not this time?" Trevor asked, staring at him.

An oval face with perfect dark mahogany skin and huge brown eyes flashed before his eyes and Jim shook his head to get rid of the image. Shit! Why in the hell was he thinking about Keira Winters? There wasn't any reason she should even be a thought in his mind as late as it was. She had rubbed him the wrong way from their first meeting and his opinion hadn't changed about her since their second meeting.

Unlike Hayward, Clinton and Dave he wasn't looking for the love of his life. He had already been through a hellish marriage and he wasn't able to go through that again. He only wanted to spend more time with his son. However, he was having a battle getting more quality time with him because his ex-wife was being such a bitch. She always found a way to make sure Trevor never got to spend more than a couple of hours with him.

There were always programs on television about deadbeat fathers and how their absence influenced their children's lives. Yet here he was trying to be a part of his son's life and Kathy stopped him at every turn. He was getting so tired of this shit. He needed to go back to court and fight for full custody.

It wasn't like Kathy was the best parent in the world. Half the time, she was at her boyfriend's house and dropped Trevor off to spend with her parents. His son needed him in his life because these were the best times of his little boy's life. It was when his personality was starting to form and he was getting more independent. He didn't want to miss any more of these years than he already was.

"Daddy, are you listening to me?" Trevor demanded, hitting him on the arm.

"Yes, Trevor, I hear you," Jim answered. "Like I told you before, I'm not getting back with your mother. We got a divorce and she has a new boyfriend. Don't you like Cameron?" God, he hoped that he had the right name. Kathy was forever changing the men in her life and bed.



Trevor shrugged his little shoulder. "I guess he's okay, but he isn't you. I want to spend more time with you, but I'm always at Grandma and Grandpa's house. Why can't I come and live with you? I know you have to be so lonely being here all by yourself. We would have so much fun together if I lived with you."

Jim was stunned that Trevor was so worried about him. He didn't want his son to miss out on being a kid because of him. He was the parent, not his seven-year-old son. From now on, he had to make sure that he kept his fights with Kathy away from Trevor. It would be hard but he was going to try his best. Kathy may not care about what Trevor was feeling but he did.

"Hey, do you want to go for a ride on my bike? I'll take you over to Clinton's house and you can see the new baby."

Trevor's face lit up at his suggestion. "Will Kevan and Evan be there?"

His son loved playing with Hayward and Clinton's children because he was older than them and they followed him around the house like he was their big brother. He could keep them entertained for hours and True liked that her sons had an older boy to play with instead of each other all the time.

"Yes, they are still here and I know Dylan will be excited to see you too."

"Okay, let me grab my backpack off the bed," Trevor said rushing back towards his bedroom. "I want to show them the new video game that man got for me."

Jim laughed at his son's excitement as he grabbed his keys off the coffee table. He didn't know how much True was going to like Kevan and Evan playing video games at five years old, but he didn't have to heart to break Trevor's bubble.

He would let Hayward or True make the decisions about the video game since they were staying with Clinton and Jenisha for a while. Since they had so many children now, Hayward was building on to their house in Montana. Hayward was even considering buying a place here in Los Angeles too as a vacation home during the colder months in Montana.

*I don't know how Hayward can handle having four children under the age of six years old. Trevor is more than enough for me and he's seven.*

"Daddy, I'm ready." Trevor rushed back into the room with his backpack on. "Do you think Mrs. Campbell will let me hold one of the new babies?"

"I'm not sure. Why don't you ask her when we get there? Now, if she doesn't let you I don't want you to get upset, okay?" Jim turned and headed for the front door.

"All right," his son mumbled as he followed behind him. "Daddy, can I ask you a question?"

"Sure, what is it?"

"When are you going to have another kid so I can be a big brother? Most of the kids in my class have younger brothers or sisters. I want to be a big brother." Jim stopped in his tracks as Trevor's words hit him. Great! It wasn't like he

didn't already have enough on his plate with dealing with Kathy, fighting with Keira about who really owned the bike shop, now he had a request from his son to make him a big brother. Damn! Was it possible for his life to get any more hectic?

"How about we discuss this after we come back from Clinton's house?"

"Are we really going to talk about it when we get back home?" Trevor asked.

"Yes, I promise you we will talk about why you aren't a big brother yet."

Jim opened the front door and went out with Trevor behind him.

# Chapter Six

“Isn’t that the cutest sight you’ve ever seen?”

Keira glanced at True who joined her at the kitchen table and handed her a cup of coffee. She still couldn’t believe that her friend had already lost most of the baby weight she’d gained having My’kael and Kyle. No one would ever know that True was the mother of four boys. She looked amazing, like she was in her early twenties instead of early thirties. Keira noticed Charisma coming into the room behind True carrying a plate of cinnamon rolls.

“What are you talking about?” she asked taking a sip of her French Roast coffee while not taking her eyes off the guys.

“Trevor, Jim’s little boy asked me could he feed Kyle since My’kael was taking a nap and I let him. He looks so cute doing it. He’s over there sitting beside Hayward on the couch in the family room.”

Glancing across the room, she smiled at how adorable Trevor did look feeding the baby. “Sorry, I didn’t see him at first. He does look very cute doing that. You should take a picture for Kyle’s baby book,” Keira suggested.

“Hayward already took one with his phone. I think he’s going to email it back to our home computer, so he can print it out when we get back,” True replied.

“I know why Keira didn’t see Trevor,” Charisma chimed in setting the plate of sticky goodness on the table next to Jenisha. “She was too busy looking at Jim. I saw how he looked at you when he first walked in. I think we might have a love connection in the works.”

“More like a match made in hell.” Keira frowned. “I can’t stand him. He won’t let me have my father’s bike shop back. I can’t believe anyone would be so cruel and unfeeling.”

“Keira, why are you complaining about that motorcycle shop? You never showed real interest in it while your father was alive. You were gone most of the year because of your job anyway. Why are you fighting him so hard on it? It’s not like you’re going to learn how to build a custom bike anytime soon,” Jenisha said. “Jim has talked about owning a bike shop for years. He knows his way around a bike. Any time Clinton’s motorcycle needs something done, Jim is the only person he lets touch it.”

Keira couldn’t believe this. Why was everyone on Jim’s side? The motorcycle business had been in her family ever since she was a child. She had a

right to fight the ownership of it if she wanted to. She wished that her best girlfriends would be a little more understanding.

"I don't know why the three of you are so upset. It's not like Jim doesn't have the shop. He's going to be working there while I figure out what I'm going to do about the papers my dad signed."

"Are you trying to say that your father wasn't in his right mind when the business deal took place?" True asked. "I thought all of the important documents had been taken care of and looked over by a lawyer a year before your father got sick."

"They were, but I still don't like the fact a stranger is the one my father went to instead of me. Why didn't he have any faith in me?"

"I think you're looking at it the wrong way. I think your father thought he was helping you out by taking care of getting the shop sold before he got any sicker. He knew how much you loved being a flight attendant and he didn't want to take away from that." Charisma tapped Keira on her arm. "Now, why don't you just let Jim work there and the two of you try to find an equal playing field. I like Jim and I believe you will too once you get to know him."

"I will never like his arrogant ass," Keira said glancing over at Jim. "He thinks he can say anything he likes to me and I shouldn't comment back to him. I'm not going to be one of those women who think he has that sexy bad boy look to fall all over."

"Which one of us at this table said Jim had a sexy bad boy look?" True asked, grinning at her. "I believe you were the one who brought that up."

Keira bit her lip and mentally kicked herself for her slip. She wasn't interested in dating him at all. She only wanted to get over the airplane crash and move on with her life. She wasn't thinking about finding a man and having babies like the women around her. She had always been career minded and that hadn't changed over the years.

"I was just calling it as I saw it," Keira said correcting True. "You have to agree that Jim does have an attitude problem."

"I think you're just mad at him because he told you to stay out of my relationship with Dave when he had that huge argument. If the two of you had met under different circumstances I know you wouldn't be bad mouthing him right now," Charisma said.

"I agree. Jim is coming out of a bad marriage, so his opinion is a bit jaded when it comes to females. Take some time to get to know him and you will like him as much as we do," Jenisha said before she checked on Parker in the car seat next to her. "You have been single for way too long. It's time you started dating again."

"I just got out of a relationship with Bradley." Keira wasn't much of a dater, but Jenisha was acting like she was an old maid or something.

"Bradley...isn't he the one that wanted you to be his woman on the weekends while he still living with his wife? I thought he was an asshole the first

time I met him at the airport. I didn't like his toothpaste smile. It was very phony to me." Charisma sat back and crossed her arms. "If I had known he had a wife then I would have given him a piece of my mind."

"I ended things as soon as I found out he was married," Keira said. "I'm just glad that I didn't sleep with him. I would hate to think of myself as someone's mistress."

"I'm glad that I'm happily married and don't have to do the dating scene anymore," True chimed in. "I couldn't ask for a better husband than Hayward."

"You got lucky. I'm pretty sure that I won't luck out like the three of you did," Keira said smiling at the women sitting at the table with her.

"Don't worry, your time will come and when it does don't fight it. I swear you will be so thrilled that you didn't," Jenisha told her. "In addition, be honest with him. Lies almost cost me my marriage and I wouldn't want that to happen to anymore else."

"Clinton forgave you for not telling him your secret and now look, the two of you have two beautiful children," True pointed out. "People go through stuff before they end up happily married. It doesn't matter as long as it turns out in the end."

"So, the three of you are thinking my Prince Charming is right around the corner," Keira joked.

"No, I would say he's right across the room," Charisma said looking over her shoulder at Jim sitting next to Dave.

Keira started to tell Charisma that she was wrong, but decided to keep her mouth shut. It wouldn't do her any good anyway because when the trio got their minds set on something nothing was ever going to change them.

# Chapter Seven

Early the next morning, Jim parked his motorcycle in front of *Choppers* hoping Keira was in a better mood than she had been yesterday. He had waited and saved up for too many years to let her take his dreams away from him. Why in the hell did she want to stay with a business she truly had no interest in?

Maybe Keira's attitude yesterday was partially his fault. He had already been in a bad mood after worrying if Kathy was going to be a pain in his ass and he took some of that out on Keira. Yet, he still thought sixty percent of their argument yesterday came from her being so stubborn.

*Shit!*

She couldn't even name the different bikes. How in the hell would she know how to repair one? It would be only a matter of time before she would have a lawsuit against her for destroying someone's prize motorcycle.

"I guess I need to go on in. There's no telling what kind of trouble Ms. Winters has already gotten herself into."

Getting off the bike, Jim took off his helmet and ran his fingers through his long hair. He had toyed with the idea of cutting it for the last couple of months, but he wasn't ready to give in to the thought yet. He loved how it drew female attention to him despite the fact he wasn't interested in dating anyone.

Jim took one last glance at his bike to make sure it was parked correctly before he went inside the shop. He stopped dead in his tracks at the sight of Keira standing in front of him. He couldn't believe what his eyes were seeing.

"What in the fuck are you doing?" Rushing over to her, he snapped the open-ended spanner wrench out of her hand and tossed it back into the tool box on the floor. Lord, she was working on someone's bike! He didn't know if she had already done some damage and was making it worst.

"Where did you get this bike from? Who would be crazy enough to leave it with you?"

Narrowing her eyes, Keira took a step closer to him. "Don't you ever take something out of my hand like that again," she yelled. "I know what I'm doing."

Jim seriously doubted that Keira knew what she was doing. Damn it! She was going to ruin his shop before he even got it off the ground. Well, he might as well forget thinking that today was going to start off on a good foot. He was about to piss off Keira and right at this second he didn't care!

"Okay, Little Ms. Mechanic, what exactly did the customer want you to do?"

“An hour ago a guy came in and he wanted his bike cleaned and for me to check for leaks.”

“You were going to do what!” Jim couldn’t believe Keira had enough gall to tell a customer that she knew how to do something so complicated. Without a doubt, she didn’t know the different leaks to even check for. “You could have destroyed this motorcycle by not knowing what to look for. Have you lost your mind?”

“I don’t know what side of the bed you rolled out of this morning, but you need to readjust your attitude,” Keira warned. “I won’t have you talking to me like that. I’m not dumb enough to try to fix this bike without instructions, Mr. Russell.” Moving away from him, Keira snapped a sheet of paper off the floor and then brought it back over to him.

“See, here are step by step instructions at how to check for leaks.”

Taking the paper from Keira, he read over it before balling it up and tossing into a trash can a few feet away from them. “That only tells you how to check for one certain kind of leak. What about the other four?”

“I didn’t know I had to check for more than one,” Keira admitted, clearly stunned by the news.

“Yes, there are several fluid carrying components on bikes and I know how to check for every single one of them,” Jim said. “You know how much your father cared about this shop. You have to realize that he wouldn’t just sign it over to just anyone.”

“I only thought he wanted some help with the books and maybe on a bike or two. I couldn’t and still can’t believe this place is no longer a part of my life.”

“You live right next door to the shop. It will always be a part of your life, but this place is mine now and I want us to be able to get along. However, if you don’t think we can I’ll look for a new location for *Choppers* and you won’t have to see me or it again.

Jim didn’t want to move the location of the motorcycle shop. It was in the heart of the town and once the word got around at how good he was at fixing motorcycles, this place would be a hot spot for any motorcycle lover. But he wouldn’t be able to do any of this if Keira kept getting in his way.

“Do you want me to leave? I can start searching for a new building today.”

“No, I don’t you to leave the building. I think I can handle you being here instead of my father. It will take getting used to, but I’ll do the best I can,” Keira said as she moved away from him towards the front door. “I need to take care of some stuff in the house. The bike owner’s information is by the phone. You might want to call him and make sure I have everything that he wanted correctly recorded.”

As Jim watched Keira practically run out of the shop, he felt a little bad for the way he had treated her. She was only trying to reconnect with her father through this shop. He shouldn’t have been so harsh with her. She did at least try to find some information about motorcycles on the computer.



*I'll apologize later, he swore. However, I need to check with the customer to see how soon he wants his bike back.* Jim pushed the incident with Keira to the back of his mind for the moment because he didn't want any distractions while he was working.

\* \* \* \*

Hours later, Jim wiped his hands off on the oily rag before placing it on the counter next to the phone. He couldn't believe that he had worked right through lunch. It had been a while since he'd been so involved with a job that food never entered his mind. But it had taken longer to find the oil leak on the motorcycle than he had hoped.

The leak wasn't a hydraulic fluid, gas leak, suspension-fluid leak or coolant leak because he checked all of those spots several times before finding it was an oil leak inside the engine drain plugs. There was no way in hell that Keira would have been able to locate that spot and fix it correctly. She would have done more harm than good.

Finding the leak had taken up most of his day, so he'd finish working on the rest of the motorcycle tomorrow. The guy wanted him to make sure the tires were in good condition, correctly inflated and mounted. If any one of those things were wrong it would lead to trouble because the tires were the most essential connection between the bike and the road.

While looking around the shop he noticed that there wasn't a pressure gauge to check the tires, so he was going to bring the extra one he had at home to the shop. He really should make a list for any missing tools, so he wouldn't run into a problem later on.

Walking around *Choppers*, Jim checked it one last time just to make sure everything was in the correct spot. He wasn't going around the shop for a third time because it needed it. He knew the real reason he was stalling for time—Keira. He hated to apologize and especially when he *knew* that he was the wrong party. He'd had no reason to snap at her this morning. She was only trying to find a way to pass the time since she wasn't a flight attendant at the moment.

If he really thought hard about it he could probably find her something to do, so she wouldn't go stir crazy inside that huge house next door. He'd only seen parts of it when he was there to sign the papers her father wanted, but it seemed too big for an attractive woman to be living in by herself.

*Whoa! What in the hell is wrong with me? Keira isn't the type of woman I need to be looking at. She's too high society for me. She wouldn't know how to eat peanuts out of a bowl in a bar at the end of town,* Jim thought. *Plus there is no way in hell Keira Winters would drink a beer out of a bottle. She's the type to ask for it to be poured inside of a glass and presented on a silver tray.*

A part of him always wondered how men found those types of women exciting because they never appealed to him at all. He was worried about Dave

when he first met Charisma because she came across as the high society type too, but after getting to know her, she wasn't like he first thought. She was head over heels in love with Dave. She even moved her sports agency business to Florida so she wouldn't have to travel.

He wasn't about to think he would luck out and find an amazing woman like his friends had. He didn't mind being alone, but he was starting to feel lonesome. He wasn't about to admit that to Hayward, Clinton and sure in the hell not Dave.

They all thought Keira would be a good match for him, but he didn't think so. She was too interfering for him. She was probably interested in a man who would jump at her every whim. She would never date a man who had grease under his nails after a hard day's work.

*Why am I even thinking about Keira like that? All I need to do is apologize for what I did earlier and then head home. I have a frozen dinner with my name on it.* Jim turned off all the lights, locked the shop and then made his way towards the house next door. He hoped that Keira was in a good mood and wouldn't slam the door in his face.

Walking up the front steps to Keira's house, he noticed how it had such a homey feel with the furniture on the porch. He liked the potted plants on the banister near the front window. His place was clean and neat, but it was totally a bachelor pad. It was missing a woman's touch.

Hell, he was missing a woman's touch too if he was begin honest with himself. It was getting hard to be around his friends and see how happy they were when he was so unenthusiastic with his life.

Honestly, he was pushing at finding a woman to the back of his mind for now. He had to focus on raising his son since Kathy was too busy dating a variety of guys. At least, Trevor was old enough to know that *he* was his father and not those other men Kathy was determined to shove in and out of his life.

*I need to get a grip and get this over so I can go home.* Knocking on the door, Jim waited for someone to answer. He had been standing there for about five minutes before he saw Keira coming towards him through the glass door.

"Mr. Russell, do you need something?" she asked, standing in the open doorway.

Jim eyed the '*kiss the cook*' apron Keira was wearing before he looked at her. Against his will, his eyes were drawn to how perfect her blemish free skin looked with a speck of flour on her left cheek. Her black hair was pulled back in a ponytail that was brushing the back of her neck. He had to admit that Keira was a very good-looking woman and if things were different between them he might have asked her out on a date.

"Can I come in?"

Moving back, Keira waved him inside and then shut the door behind them. "Is there something wrong with the shop?" she asked coming to stand in front of him. "Did I not take the guy's message right?"

“No, I didn’t come to see you about that,” Jim quick corrected. “I want to talk to you about my behavior this morning.”

“Fine, but can we do this in the kitchen?” Keira asked. “I’m cooking supper and I don’t want it to burn.” Pivoting, she didn’t even wait to see if he was going to follow her as she headed for the kitchen at the end of the hallway.

“I guess I don’t mind,” Jim mumbled under his breath as he trailed behind her. He tried not to moan as the scent of fried chicken filled his nose. God, he didn’t know the last time he had a home cooked meal.

Sure, he knew how to toss together a couple of decent meals for him and Trevor, but he couldn’t fix fried chicken. Of course, it was one of Trevor’s favorite meals so usually he took him to the local chicken place anytime he wanted some.

“Have a seat at the table. I need to check on the chicken and then we can talk.” Going over to the stove, Keira removed a couple of perfectly fried pieces of chicken and placed them on a paper towel covered plate before placing a couple of more pieces inside the hot oil.

“Okay, what do want to discuss with me?” Keira wiped her hand on a towel before joining him at the table.

Jim tried not to look at the flour on her cheek, but she just looked so cute with it. “You have something on your face.”

“Where is it?” Keira asked trying to brush the spot off her cheek, but missing it by a few inches. “I always get flour on my face every time I fix chicken.”

“It’s right here.” Leaning across the table, Jim rubbed his thumb across the spot until the flour disappeared. He tried to move back, but he couldn’t look away from her dark eyes. They were beautiful as dark satin.

For a long moment, she looked back at him. She studied his face unhurriedly, feature by feature. “Hmm...Thanks for your help,” Keira whispered as she leaned back from him.

“No problem,” Jim replied as he retook his seat. What the fuck was wrong with him? He shouldn’t have touched her. He was acting like he had never been around an attractive woman before.

“Mr. Russell, you wanted to talk to me about the shop? Did something happen today that I should know about?”

“I want to apologize for the way I treated you this morning. I wasn’t in a good mood and I took out my anger on you.” Jim apologized as quickly as possible so he could get out of here and away from Keira. She was starting to bother him in a way that he didn’t want her to.

“Apology accepted and I should give you one too. I shouldn’t have bothered that customer’s motorcycle. I know nothing about bikes and I could have really messed up today.”

His body stiffened in shock. He hadn't expected her to apologize. He thought that she wouldn't take blame for anything, but she surprised him by doing so. Maybe he had misjudged her a tiny bit.

"No problem. I took care of everything. He'll be by at the end of the week to pick up his Harley," Jim said as he got up from the table. "Well, I better get home. I have a frozen dinner waiting for me."

Standing up, Keira went back over to the stove to turn over the chicken. "Would you like to stay for dinner? I know that I have enough food here for the both of us."

Jim stared at Keira with utter disbelief. Had she really invited him to stay for dinner? When had their relationship taken that kind of turn? Just this morning they had argued with each other and now they would be sharing a meal. Why the sudden change?

"You can tell me no if you want to and I'll be fine with it," Keira said interrupting his thoughts. "I just thought we should try to be friends since our best friends are married to each other; however, it doesn't seem like you want to do the same thing."

Jim hated to admit that Keira was right. They couldn't be at each other's throats all the time since all of their friends were married to each other. If she was trying to extend an olive branch, he would take it.

"Thank you for the dinner invitation. I would love to stay for dinner. My son is having a sleep over at one of his friend's houses, so I don't have to worry about him tonight and I haven't had a home cooked meal in months," Jim confessed.

"Wonderful, it will be nice to have someone to eat with instead of eating by myself." Taking the rest of the chicken out of the skillet, Keira turned off the stove. "You can wash up in the bathroom at the end of the hallway and then join me at the table."

"Give me a few minutes and I'll be back." Leaving the kitchen, Jim made his way towards the bathroom. In the back of his mind, he wondered what the guys would think if they knew he was having dinner with Keira.

## Chapter Eight

“How did last night go? Did you have a lot of fun? I know that it’s been forever since you’ve done something like that.”

Jim stopped packing up his tools and glanced over at Dave who was sitting in a chair by his office door holding his son. His best friend had decided to come with him to CCD while he picked up the last of his items.

“What are you talking about? Did I have a nice time doing what?” He was totally blank about what Dave was referring to. As far as he knew he hadn’t done anything special in the last couple of days except try to get all of his work supplies placed at *Choppers*.

“Are you going to deny that you had dinner with Keira last night?” Dave asked. “I’m only asking how it went since you swore you weren’t attracted to her.”

Jim placed the screwdriver in his toolbox and closed the lid. He didn’t know how to answer this question because Dave would only take his respond the way he wanted to. Instead, he decided to go a different route. “How did you find out about that?”

“Charisma called Keira to invite her over for a late dinner because we had a hard time getting Dave Jr. down for the night, but she turned us down saying that she already had dinner plans with you. Imagine our surprise at hearing that little piece of information.”

“It’s not how you’re making it out to be. I was on my way out the door to go home and eat a frozen dinner. Keira asked if I wanted to stay for dinner since she cooked so much food. It had been a while since I’d eaten a home cooked meal, so I said yes. Nothing else happened or is going to happen for that fact. Keira and I are only trying to be cordial to each other.”

“Are you sure that you didn’t want it to? We all still think that Keira would be the perfect woman to help you get over Kathy and fall in love again. The two of you are so right for each other. I thought I would never see a couple meant to be together more than Hayward and True until I saw you with Keira at the airport that time. The sparks were so hot and heavy. I felt like I was the third wheel.”

Jim wasn’t going to let Dave know that he had sensed the same thing. He wasn’t ready for a relationship and not with a woman like Keira. No, she was just too much for him to handle even with her toned down personality at the moment.

“You’re wrong. Keira would drive me up the wall each and every day. I can’t stand that type of outspoken female.” He hoped that Dave would drop the

topic of Keira because after he went home last night she dominated his dreams way more than he wanted her to. Did she know how those dark eyes of hers could seduce a man? He didn't have the time or energy to get involved with Keira Winters. She had something about her that made him want to save her from whatever demons seemed to be chasing her now.

He thought his feelings were crazy because he really didn't know anything about her or anything she might be going through at the moment. He was just probably having those thoughts because everyone was trying to shove the two of them together for some odd reason.

He wasn't interested in dating Keira or any other woman for that matter. All he wanted to do was raise his son and get his new business off the ground. Both should be fairly easy, but they wouldn't be, so he had to find a way to make both things work.

"Dave, I know you're only trying to help, but stop with the matchmaking. You are worse than True and you know that I love Hayward's wife to death, but she lives to fix people up. I don't need that in my life."

Dave placed his sleeping son back in the car seat next to his chair and covered him with a blanket. Leaning back in his chair, he crossed his legs at the ankles. "Jim, I know that your divorce from Kathy was a hard battle. She tried to pull every dirty card that she could to keep you from getting joint custody of Trevor. I wouldn't want to get involved with another woman either after that, but you can't let that bitch win. She has a man in her life and hasn't given your failed marriage a second thought.

"Why aren't you ready to show her that you can do the same thing? I'm fine if you don't want to get into anything romantic with Keira. However, I can't see you not married again with a couple of more kids."

Jim was touched that Dave cared so much about him. He really was a good friend. "I'm glad you want me to be involved with someone again, but I can't see me wanting another woman in my life any time soon. So, how about we drop it for now?" he suggested "Let me drop you and the baby back off at Clinton's house. I need to go to the shop and take care of a few items. Mr. Winters had an amazing set up, but I want to make *Choppers* more of my own style."

"Do you think Keira will get upset about you redoing her father's business? Or has she gotten over him selling it to you?"

He wasn't sure where Keira's mind was at the moment, but he hoped that she didn't give him any problems at his shop. Because she had to realize she had no say in what went on inside there now.

"I don't know the answer to either question. Keira is a very complex woman. She's kept me guessing since I first met her. I'm pretty sure that isn't going to change."

Picking up his tool kit, Jim made his way towards the office door. It was a bittersweet moment for him to know that this would be the last time he would be

inside this space. He had spent the last twelve years of his life being a construction worker while he saved up money for his dream job.

He was finding it a little hard to finally believe it was coming true. If he'd been a crier, he might actually have shed a few tears, but he wasn't, so there would be no tears from him today.

"Come on, Dave. Let's go. I need to get to the shop and back home before Trevor comes over. He's spending the weekend with me."

"Why?" Dave asked as he picked up the car seat off the floor. "I thought Kathy hated when you spent extra time with Trevor."

"Would you believe that she's going to Las Vegas with about six of her girlfriends?" Jim opened the door. "I swear I don't think she spends half the child support money I send her on our son. He constantly needs something new when he comes for his visits with me. Just last week I had to buy him a new backpack for school along with a pair of tennis shoes."

"Have you complained to the court about Kathy's misuse of the money?" Dave asked as he followed him out of the door. "I wouldn't let her get by with that if I was you."

"I was going to, but I know my ex-wife. She would find a way to have the joint custody changed to piss me off. The last time I lost my cool in court the judge almost threw me in jail. The only reason he didn't was he decided to take pity on me. Kathy had been pushing my buttons all while we were there. So, I can lose a little money to see my son. I can buy Trevor anything he needs as long as he tells me about it."

"Damn man, I didn't know it was that bad," Dave stopped beside Jim's car. Opening the back door, he placed the car seat inside, secured it and then closed the door back making sure it locked.

"I hope that Charisma and I never get divorced. I don't know how I would handle it. She's everything to me."

"Dave, I wouldn't worry about that. I've seen the way Charisma looks at you. I believe you're in store for a very long and happy marriage." Moving around his best friend to the trunk, Jim opened it up and placed his tool kit inside. After the trunk was closed, he made his way back towards Dave.

"I'm ready to hit the road if you are," he said patting Dave on his wide shoulder.

"I'm ready. Tonight is our last night staying with Clinton and Jenisha. Our house should be completed and ready to move into tomorrow."

"I'm glad to hear that," Jim said as he got into the car. He waited while Dave got in and buckled his seat belt.

"Charisma is very excited about it. We didn't realize how fast her house would sell especially with how the real estate market is with the economy the way it is now."

"How do you feel about moving from Florida to California?" Jim asked as he started the car and pulled out into traffic.

“At first, I wasn’t too thrilled to move from Florida because my whole life was there. Plus I just landed that nice position at CCD that I worked my ass off at college for. However, when Clinton offered me a higher management position I accepted. Charisma was thrilled she wouldn’t have to close her sports agency business and relocate to Florida. I think it all worked out for the best.”

“I’m glad that I’m no longer in a relationship. I don’t want to have to worry about compromise.” Jim stopped at a red light.

“Buddy, you’re too funny.” Dave laughed shaking his head at Jim.

“Why are you laughing at me? What in the hell is so funny?”

“I’m just waiting for you to fall in love. I bet you will fall harder than the rest of us.”

“If I was a gambling man I would take that bet. Yet I’m not, so you’re lucky.” Jim pulled back into traffic.

“I have no doubt that I would win hands down,” Dave tossed back as Jim continued to drive to Clinton’s house.



## Chapter Nine

*“Ms. Winters, can I ask you what you’re doing in my shop again? This is the second time I walked in on you doing something that you shouldn’t. Care to share why I don’t have the right to have the locks changed against you?”*

*Keira hung up the phone and leaned back on the counter drawing Jim’s eyes down to the deep v-neck in the front of her t-shirt. He had always been a breast man and Keira’s were about the most perfect he had ever laid his eyes on. He felt his cock stir against the zipper of his jeans and was happy his shirt was pulled out to cover up his semi-erection. The last thing he needed was for Keira to notice that she was turning him on. He wasn’t going to let them cross that line.*

*“Don’t get all territorial on me, Mr. Russell. I wasn’t going to destroy anything in the shop. I had to make a phone call and instead of going back home I used the phone in here.” Moving from behind the counter, Keira walked toward him. “You come off like this badass, but you’re nothing more than a cry baby and worry wart. I’m leaving. So, you don’t have to worry about me being here anymore.”*

*Before he knew what he was doing, Jim grabbed Keira by her upper arm and pressed her back against the wall. She was pushing his buttons and she knew it. “I wouldn’t toss around words like that, Keira,” he whispered getting closer to her face. “Besides, I don’t think you’re telling me the real reason you came inside my business.”*

*He let go of her arm and slowly trailed his fingers down her body until his hand came to stop at her hip. Jim didn’t miss the soft gasp that flew from between Keira’s lips. He secretly wondered if they tasted as good as they looked. Keira tried to push him away with her hands, but he grabbed the left one with his hand and held it down next to her leg.*

*“Stop trying to act like you don’t like having me this close to you. I’ve been around the block too many times not to notice when a woman is attracted to me.”*

*“I’m not attracted to you” Keira said with a shake of her head. “It’s all in your mind. Now move back from me.”*

*“Are you saying that your nipples aren’t hard for me? It isn’t cold inside the shop, so what is the other reason? Why are they outlined against your t-shirt like this?”*

*Cupping her left breast in his hand, Jim brushed his thumb across the hard nipple. “God, you feel so good in my hand. I wonder, would you taste even better*

*in my mouth.” He slowly lowered his head and was about to draw the hard nipple into his warm waiting mouth when a loud buzzing sound interrupted them.*

\* \* \* \*

“What in the hell?” Keira pushed the covers off her head and glanced around her bedroom as it dawned her that she was only having another one of her nightly dreams about Jim Russell.

*God, I have to stop fantasizing about him. He has been in my thoughts since I invited him to stay for dinner.*

She couldn’t believe she was actually having sexual thoughts about Jim. He was so far off the scale of the men she usually dated and found attractive.

That long, thick brown hair he wore back in a ponytail gave him a very rebellious look, and that sexy goatee and all the tattoos that covered his arms only enhanced his sex appeal. Jim was the perfect image of a Haley Davidson riding bad boy.

She wouldn’t tell the girls, but she was a little intrigued by the man who bought her father’s business. Jim came across like he didn’t have a clue in the world and if someone didn’t like him then to hell with them. She would bet that he wasn’t scared of anything. She, on the other hand, was a totally different story.

Just the thought of getting back on an airplane panicked her. Charisma was constantly on her case about it, but she just wasn’t ready to get back onto a plane yet. She wasn’t sure she would ever be ready to tell anyone about the dreams or the horrible guilt she still carried around about not telling everyone the entire truth about the crash.

# Chapter Ten

“Good morning, Jim, I thought you might like a cup of coffee.”

Jim spun away from the blank wall at the back of the room and glanced at Keira standing behind him with a steaming cup of coffee in her hand. He had been thinking about a way to design the empty space to make it a part of him.

“Thank you,” he said taking the cup from her. He tried not to notice how good she looked in her tee shirt and red shorts. He already woke up this morning with a hard on after having a hot dream about her.

“I wasn’t expecting to see you this morning. You look like the type to sleep late on the weekends.”

“There’s a lot you don’t know about me, Mr. Russell,” Keira said as she turned away from him. “I hope you have a nice day.” Keira was out the door before he could stop her.

“Way to go, you idiot,” Jim said to himself. “Keira was trying to extend the olive branch further and you just snapped it in half.” He took a sip of the coffee and was pleasantly surprised at how good it tasted. Most people didn’t know that he liked his coffee with one sugar with a splash of cream. Even fewer people remembered his preference after he informed them, but last night at dinner he had told Keira and she remembered it. Keira was slowly making him see a new side of her. Maybe she wasn’t as self-absorbed as he first thought she was.

Standing back from the wall, Jim took a long look at the blank space. It just didn’t fit in with the image he wanted for *Choppers*. He had to turn this building into the most talked about spot for motorcycle repairs in town and the outdated layout of the place wouldn’t let that happen.

“Have you gotten so old that you have to stare at an empty wall for entertainment?”

“Dave, you’re going to make me put that irritating bell back above that door.” Jim jumped then looked back over his shoulder at his friend. “I have to be prepared for unwanted visitors.”

“I can leave if you want me to.”

“No, have a seat. You know that I’m kidding with you. My morning just got off to a bad start. I’m glad you came for a visit. I wanted you to see *Choppers*.” Jim moved away from the wall and took a seat in one of the two chairs in the building.

“What brings you here?” he asked Dave.

"I wanted to check in on you and Keira. I had to make sure that neither one of you had taken each others' heads off. Charisma was also worried about how you were getting along with Keira, despite the fact that her best friend had shared a home-cooked meal with you. My wife knows how hard-headed and stubborn the two of you are apart, and so together she thought it might turn into WWII."

Jim loved how the women took care of each other, but Keira wasn't in any danger from him. Charisma should know that he wasn't the type of man to ever lay a hand on a woman. "I haven't done anything to Keira. She was in here before you came to pester me and bring me a cup of coffee. He held up the cup to Dave before placing it on the counter. "We're getting along fine with each other."

"That's good to hear. Charisma and the girls will be happy to know that. Have you asked her out yet?"

Jim pushed his coffee cup around on the counter and cursed underneath his breath. Dave wasn't going to let it go. His buddy was turning into a worse matchmaker than his wife. "Why do you keep trying to fix me up with Keira?" *Why doesn't everyone get it through their heads I'm fine with being single.*

"It isn't me." Dave held up his hands in protest. "I was only wondering why you wouldn't mind just going out with Keira. I'm not asking you to propose to her."

A sneaking feeling started to work its way up Jim's spine. There was another reason that everyone was trying to get him out on a date with Keira so badly and he was going to find out what it was.

"Dave, why don't you tell me the real reason you want me to go out with Keira?"

Dave stared at him like he was debating on telling him the truth. Jim knew that his buddy was an honest guy, so he wouldn't be able to lie about it.

"You have to promise me that you won't tell Charisma or the rest of the gang I said anything to you. They will be pissed if they knew I didn't keep the secret."

"We have been friends too long. I won't ever betray your confidence," Jim said. Now he was even more curious about what was going on.

"My wife is very worried about Keira. She has noticed a change in her since the plane crash. Do you know that she was the only survivor?"

"Shit," Jim said. "That would play with anyone's mind. What a horrible weight to carry on her shoulders."

"Now you understand why all of us are so worried about her. I mean Keira isn't the same funny loving, outspoken woman I hung around with in Jamaica. Charisma is concerned Keira will get so withdrawn that no one will be able to reach her. The plane crash, her father's death along with losing the shop came pretty close together. She was only thinking maybe you could take her mind off her problems for a while."

“How does Charisma even know that I would be interested in getting to know Keira any better? Did any one of you think I might already have someone that I was dating?”

“Are you saying you would rather lie about dating some imaginary person than help out one of my wife’s closest friends?” Dave’s dark brown eyes flashed with sudden anger as he got up from his seat.

“Jim, I thought better of you. You may come across as an unyielding bastard to most people, but I always defended you. I guess I can’t do that anymore. Don’t worry, I won’t tell Charisma how pissed you were at the thought of helping out the godmother of our child. We’ll think of another way to reach out to Keira.”

Spinning on his heel, Dave stormed towards the door as Jim stared after him in stunned disbelief. A tight knot grew in the center of Jim’s chest at the thought of his second family disowning him because they might think he didn’t like Keira.

The real problem was that he had been drawn to her since their first meeting at the airport. His uneasiness grew the more he spent time around her because his attraction for Keira was getting hotter by the moment, but it was a chance that he was willing to take.

“Dave, wait a damn minute!” he yelled at his best friend’s back as Dave’s hand wrapped around the doorknob.

“What? I don’t have time to listen to you bad mouth Keira for the hundredth time. I have to meet Charisma for lunch and then go baby shopping for Dave Jr.”

“I’ll do it.”

“You’ll do what?” Dave faced him.

“I’ll try to get closer to Keira and bring her out of the sadness all of you are so bothered about. I’m not saying I’ll have any power to make her like me, as I know she hates me with a passion.” He hoped that was true because it would be a lot easier to keep his growing feelings at bay instead of acting on them.

“Oh, I think Keira likes you far more than she’s admitting. Thanks for doing this. Charisma will be so pleased that you said yes. Also, it will give her one less thing to think about. I’ll talk to you in a couple of days.” Dave waved at him before going out of the door with a huge smile on his face.

Jim wished that he could smile, but he was scared he might end up falling hard for Keira and he wasn’t sure if that happened he would really be able to make a true commitment to her.

## Chapter Eleven

“I’m surprised to see you still here so late. I thought you would have left hours ago since Clinton and Jenisha were throwing that house warming party for Dave and Charisma.”

Jim finished washing his hands in the sink and wiped them dry before he gave his attention to Keira. He had been thinking about her ever since Dave left. She was truly a gorgeous looking woman. Even the thick black hair that she usually had pulled back into a loose bun at the back of her neck did nothing to take away from her. It only seemed to enhance the rich darkness of her skin and seductive quality of her bedroom brown eyes.

He liked that she wasn’t overly tall or too short, but right in the middle maybe around five feet five inches tall. It gave her body all of those sexy curves black woman seemed to have been blessed with naturally. Curves that he would love to run his hands over if he ever got the chance.

No, Dave was *so* wrong. It wasn’t going to be hard for him to spend time with Keira at all. “I told the gang I was going to take a rain check,” he finally answered after he finished staring at her pretty face. “Why aren’t you there?”

Keira shrugged her shoulder. “I wasn’t in the mood to be around a lot of people tonight. I’m just going to relax in front of the television.”

“I have a better idea,” Jim said as he walked towards Keira. “I still haven’t repaid you for that wonderful home cooked meal. Let me take you to one of my favorite hangouts. The food isn’t as good as yours, but I’m sure you’ll like it. I’ve never had any complaints about it.”

“No, I don’t think that’s a good idea,” Keira said shaking her head.

The panicked look in Keira’s eyes didn’t escape his attention. He didn’t like this scared side of her. He would rather see the feisty woman who got in his face at the airport. He was beginning to see why Charisma was troubled about her.

“It’s a good thing your opinion doesn’t matter.” Picking up a helmet, Jim handed it to Keira. “Come on let’s go.”

“I’m not getting on your motorcycle. Are you out of your mind?” Keira followed him out the door.

Jim took the time to make sure everything was locked up properly before he tried to ease Keira’s mind about his motorcycle. “Sweetheart, I never took you as the type of woman to be scared of a bike. I promise I won’t let you fall off.”

“I’m not scared of you or your bike.”

“Excellent! That is so good to know. Now let’s hit the road.” Going past Keira, Jim gave her a light tap on her ass before hopping on his Harley Davidson. He liked how Keira glared at him with her mouth open and the helmet hanging from her cute little hand.

“How dare you hit me on my ass!” she sputtered.

“I know I’m not the first man to give your luscious ass a tap. Now get over here and get on this bike. I’m starving for some buffalo wings and beer.”

“What if I don’t come over there?” Keira asked placing her hands on her hips.

“Keira, you don’t want me to get off here.” The warning was loud, clear and not up for debate.

Stomping over to the bike, Keira glared at Jim. She didn’t want to do this at all, but she wasn’t going to let him get the best of her. She wasn’t about to admit that she was scared as hell.

“How do you get on this thing?

“Swing your leg over and place your butt on the seat, wrap your arms around my waist. But the first thing you need to do is place that helmet on your head. Charisma would kill me if you got hurt while you were riding with me.”

“See, that’s a good reason for me to not go with you,” Keira said trying to get out of it one last time.

“Nice try. Get on and hold on tight.”

Jim waited while Keira did as he instructed. He could tell she was scared as hell, but trying to hold it in. He couldn’t blame her. Anyone who hadn’t been on a bike before always harbored a hint of nervousness.

His body reacted the instant Keira slid behind him and the warmth of her body touched his. It was like nothing he had ever felt before. He had to calm himself down or he wouldn’t be able to control the motorcycle on the road.

“Okay, I’m on,” Keira said wrapping her arms loosely around his waist. “Let’s go, so I can get back. I’m taking you on your word that this place serves good food.”

“First, you need to move closer to my back and wrap your arms tighter around my waist. Without a doubt, you will fall off before we get half way there.”

“Mr. Russell, you are getting on my nerves,” Keira complained as she did as he instructed.

Jim’s cock jumped in his jeans as Keira pressed her breasts against his back and wrapped her arms around him. He had forgotten how good it felt to have a woman pressed to him especially one as attractive as Keira Winters.

He quickly started the motorcycle and pulled away from the curb before he said something that would get the both of them into trouble. He was trying to build a cordial bridge between him and Keira, so he couldn’t do anything to burn it down before the first piece of it was formed.

## Chapter Twelve

Keira couldn't believe she was on the back of a motorcycle with a man that she barely knew. It was just a couple of days ago that Jim was her most hated enemy. Now, he was taking her to his favorite restaurant for hot wings and beer. What was going on with her?

She shouldn't be doing this with him. She needed to be at home figuring out if she might have to change careers. The nightmares weren't getting any better. In fact, they were getting worse. As much as she wanted to tell Charisma about it she couldn't because her best friend would do nothing but worry and then drag her to the shrink's office. A place she wasn't ready to visit yet.

Anyway, Charisma had her own family to take care of now. She was woman enough to deal with her own issues and overcome them without any outside help. She would go back to her job in her own good time. Plus if the worst happened and she couldn't go back to being a flight attendant then she would deal with it and move on.

Taking her mind off her problems, Keira focused her attention more on how good Jim's body felt beneath her fingers. She ran her fingers across the flatness of his stomach and liked the hardness she found there. It was like Jim spent as much time working out as he did at *Choppers*.

All of her girlfriends seemed to think Jim was so nice and would make the perfect boyfriend for her, but she thought he was a little too domineering. He came across like a man who loved to get his way and wouldn't take no for an answer.

Jim had already proven her half right by not taking the offer she gave him for her father's shop. It wouldn't have killed him to let her buy it back from him. Sure, it might have been his dream for years to own a motorcycle shop. However, *Choppers* has been in her family for years and she had more of a right to it than he did.

Maybe over dinner, she could plead her case again and he would give it back to her. She wasn't expecting him to hand the keys over to her, but it was worth a shot. Keira noticed that Jim pulled into a bar at the very end of an alley where several motorcycles were already parked along with a few cars. A huge sign with the word '*Dante's*' was positioned on the roof of the building. It looked like the ultimate biker bar on the outside. She could only guess how it looked on the inside.



Jim pulled his motorcycle into an empty parking spot and then turned it off. He took off his helmet placing it on the handle bars and then looked back over his shoulder at her. "Are you okay back there? It looks like you made it all in one piece."

Keira took off her helmet and handed it to him. "I'm fine. I have to say that I enjoyed the ride a lot more than I thought I would."

"Good, I'm glad you did. Maybe after tonight you might be up for another ride." Jim got off the motorcycle and helped her off after placing her helmet on the other handlebar.

"I never said that," Keira said tugging down her shirt that had risen up during the ride. "Let's just see how tonight goes. I haven't been out in a while, so I might not be the best company."

"As long as you can carry on a decent conversation with me over dinner and know how to enjoy the best hot wings in town, I think the two of us will get along perfectly. Are you ready to go inside?"

"Sure, why not?" Keira smiled at Jim as he took her by the elbow and lead her inside the building.

\* \* \* \*

The second Jim walked inside *Dante's*, his hideaway, all of his worries from the day left his body and the familiar smells of food and beer filled his senses. The jukebox was playing an upbeat country tune. Dave had introduced him to this place several years ago and he had been coming back ever since. There was something about *Dante's* that really relaxed him making him become more of a frequent customer while going through his divorce from Kathy. This was the place he would come after Trevor was asleep to get away from Kathy's bitchy ways and any argument she was trying to start. It gave him peace and solitude.

"This place could have been in the movie *Road House*," Keira said.

Moving his attention away from her and back to the busy establishment, Jim realized that Keira was right. *Dante's* did have a *Road House* feel to it. He was surprised that he never noticed it before. "How about we grab a booth unless you want to sit at a table?"

"No, a booth is fine with me." With his hand still on her elbow, Jim took Keira to his favorite booth in the back of the room. He knew what he wanted, so he didn't even bother looking at the menus already placed there.

"How often do you come here?" Keira asked looking at him from across the table.

"At least twice a week," Jim answered. "If I can make it three I do. I love it here. I find it very relaxing."

Keira tried not to let the loud country music get under her skin, but it wasn't something that she was used to hearing. It wasn't her favorite style of music.

"So, you're a regular?"

"I guess you could say that I am." Jim nodded. "The owner and I have become pretty good friends. I've done some work on his bike. He's a good guy. What about you?"

"What about me?" Keira leaned back in the booth like she was preparing herself for his next question.

"I know that you're a flight attendant, but what do you do for fun when you aren't working? You're a good-looking woman. I'm sure that you get asked out on dates a lot."

"Nothing...work usually keeps me pretty busy. So, I don't have time for a huge social life. I mostly just work, stay at home or visit Charisma and the baby. I could ask you the same question." Keira tossed the ball back into his court. "You aren't too bad looking with your long hair and goatee. Most women would find your bad boy image very appealing, maybe down right sexy. Why aren't you remarried or at least dating someone?"

"I'm not interested in dating a woman who thinks I might ask her to marry me in the future. One bad marriage is enough for me in the lifetime. I want to focus my attention on making *Choppers* over and raising Trevor. Any woman who enters my life would have to understand those two things come first."

Keira couldn't blame Jim wanting to give most of his attention to work and his little boy. Those two things would keep him from getting his heart broken. She had heard Charisma and Jenisha talking about how nasty his ex-wife Kathy was, but she never got involved in the conversation about her.

"How is Trevor doing? He's a very cute little boy."

"My son is getting smarter every day. Sometimes I forget that he's only seven because he acts so much older. I don't know what I would do without him in my life."

"I can tell that you love him a lot."

"I do. He's a wonderful kid." Jim grinned like the proud father he was.

"Jim, I thought you might not show up this week," a female voice gushed over Keira's shoulder. Instead of turning around, she waited for the woman to come to them. Keira didn't have to wait too long, because a second or two later a statuesque red-head with huge robin's egg blue eyes wearing a black waitress uniform stopped at their table.

## Chapter Thirteen

“Where have you been keeping that gorgeous body of yours? You know that my day hasn’t been made until I’ve seen you.”

Jim looked at Keira and then back at the overly friendly waitress. “I’ve been busy with the motorcycle shop I bought. I haven’t had the time to come here until now,” he answered.

Keira didn’t know what to say about what was going on in front of her. The waitress was flirting with Jim like she wasn’t even at the same booth as him let alone in the same building. If this was a real date she wouldn’t stand for getting disrespected like this.

*Hell, wait a second!* She wasn’t going to let it happen even if she wasn’t on a real date with Jim. She was with him right at this moment and this chick shouldn’t treat her like she was invisible.

“Excuse, me, miss.,” Keira interrupted. “Do you mind taking our order instead of gushing over Jim? Yes, he’s a nice looking man, but I came here to eat not to see you come on to him.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t realize you were so hungry for something to eat,” the waitress exclaimed giving her a hateful look.

“Bambi, be nice. Keira wasn’t being nasty to you,” Jim chastised.

Bambi...Jim had to be kidding. No one named their child after a Disney cartoon deer. It had to be a nickname, but she was going to keep her opinion to herself.

Blue eyes flashed with anger as Bambi glared at her. Keira was dying for her to say something so she would be able to respond. Bambi had already pissed her off and she was ready to give her a piece of her mind.

“Jim, would you and your date like to order now? Or are the two of you still looking over the menus?”

“We’re ready,” Jim answered. “We both want a plate of hot wings and a pitcher of beer.”

“Thanks.” Bambi wrote down the order without even glancing in her direction. “I’ll be back in a minute or two with your food.” Spinning away from the booth, Bambi left without even giving her another look.

“Did I step on her territory or something?” Keira asked as soon as the waitress was out of hearing range.

“No, Bambi isn’t anyone important to me,” Jim replied. “She’s just a waitress I talk to when I come here.”

Leaning across the table, Keira got closer to Jim enjoying the hint of cologne as it filled her nose. "I think she wants to be more than your friend. Hell, I'd even go so far to say that she's jealous that I'm having hot wings and beer with you tonight. She doesn't understand there isn't anything going on between us."

"Don't pay any attention to Bambi. She gets off on pushing people's buttons, but she is a lot of hot air and nothing will come of it. However, I want to know why you think that we wouldn't be on a real date with each other?"

Keira let several thoughts run through her mind. She wondered if Jim was pulling her leg. He couldn't be serious. They were barely out of the enemies' level when it came to the two of them. How in the world would he think they could ever go out on a real date? It just wasn't a possibility in her book. Jim scared her. He was the type of man she stayed away from because he could make her tell him all of her secrets.

"We aren't two people who would ever hook up with each other. You have this hint of wildness in your personality that I usually avoid in guys. I try to get involved with men who are more like me."

"I think you are a very self-assured woman, so you are bound to clash with any man who isn't as set in their ways as you are."

"I'm not set in my ways," Keira snapped insulted that Jim could read her so well. "I know how to do stuff in the heat of the moment."

"Sometimes I hop on my bike and go for a ride at two o'clock in the morning. I don't see you doing anything like that at all. I think you need to stop being so controlled. Learn to let go a little more."

"I told you that I'm not..."

"Jim, what are you doing insulting such a beautiful woman? I've never known you to do something like that before."

Keira stopped talking as a deep rich male voice broke into her conversation with Jim just before a platter of hot wings, two glasses and a pitcher of beer was placed on the table between them. Her stomach started growling at the delicious smell of the hot and greasy food that she almost missed the handsome man standing next to her.

Eyes that were a startling gray-green were fixed on her, long black hair rested on wide shoulders and a slight smile pulled at the corner of full, firm lips. If Jim didn't already have her interest captivated this hunk wouldn't have had a problem pulling her into him. He was totally the kind of man women would stop in their tracks to look at.

"I see why Bambi didn't want to bring your food back out to you. Your date is beautiful." He winked at Keira.

"Dante, can you stop flirting long enough to at least acknowledge me?" Jim laughed looking at his friend Dante then back at her.

"I never miss the opportunity to know a pretty woman," Dante said still looking at her instead of Jim. "Hello, I'm Dante Braden. Can I get your name?"

Keira would usually blow someone like Dante off because he was too cocky, but tonight she was enjoying the attention. “Hi, I’m Keira Winters. Nice to meet you.”

“Nice to meet you too. How did you meet my old friend here?” Dante asked finally glancing away from her over at Jim.

She noticed how the smile slipped from Jim’s face at Dante’s term of ‘old friend.’

“Do I have to remind you that you’re older than me by two years? I think Keira would rather date me being forty-one instead of a forty-three year old. Now, why don’t you leave her alone? I brought her here to have a little fun, not to get hit on by you.”

Keira observed how Jim’s personality changed the second Dante came to the table. There was a hint of tension in the room. She was surprised that he was taking what Dante said to her so seriously. It was just a lot of harmless fun. Did Jim not just tell her less than five minutes ago that she needed to open up more?

“Hey, sorry I didn’t know there was something going on between the two of you. I wasn’t trying to get involved with your woman. Please enjoy your meal and it’s on the house.” Dante winked at her before walking away.

“I wouldn’t take Dante’s flirting too seriously. He’s more of a bachelor than I am,” Jim told her as he poured beer into their glasses and then grabbed a hot wing off the platter.

She wasn’t positive, but Jim was coming across like he was jealous of the attention Dante had given to her. “Thanks for the warning, but I think Dante is very attractive. I was quite flattered by his compliments.”

Jim finished off his hot wing and tossed the bone back on the plate. “Would you feel the same way if I gave you the same compliments?”

“I would have a hard time believing you because of everything that has already happened between us.” Keira picked up a wing and took a bite out of it.

The spicy tanginess from the hot sauce filled her mouth making her remember how much she loved eating hot wings. They had to be hands down her favorite appetizer in the entire world.

“Keira, you have to know you’re super hot. I didn’t think I would have to state the obvious to you.” Jim grabbed another wing and took a bite out of it.

Keira’s heart sped up at the off-handed compliment that Jim gave to her. She couldn’t let herself become attracted to Jim because she had too much going on in her life right now. Too many personal issues had to be dealt with first before she even thought about being in a relationship with anyone.

“How about we stop talking about me and get onto a new topic?” she suggested.

“Like what?” Jim asked before taking a sip of his beer.

“I was wondering why you got a divorce.”

## Chapter Fourteen

Jim slowly placed his glass back on the table. He was surprised that Keira didn't ask a softer question. Most people didn't ask him out right about his divorce. Even Dave had waited for a while before asking what the final straw had been that sent him running to the divorce attorney.

"I thought someone else would have already told you the reason for my divorce."

"I've heard different reasons, but I want to hear it from you. Isn't the best way to get the truth to get it from the source?" Keira asked.

He had to admit Keira did have a point, but he wasn't ready to tell the entire story of his horrendous marriage to Kathy. If Trevor hadn't come out of it, he would think that he wasted almost six years of his life.

"I'd rather not get into my messy divorce tonight. I brought you here to *Dante's* as a thank you dinner for feeding me the other night. How about we just leave the conversation off the heavy stuff and enjoy the rest of our night?"

"I think I like the way your mind works," Keira said then picked up another mouth-watering hot wing off the plate.

For the rest of the night, Jim talked to Keira about a variety of topics from sports, television shows and their favorite meal besides hot wings. He couldn't get over what a good time he was having and it surprised him that he didn't want it to end, but he had to get Keira back home. It was almost ten o'clock and the ride from the bar back to Keira's house was close to an hour.

"Are you ready to go?" Jim asked as Keira wiped her hands on a napkin.

"Yes, I'm ready." She tossed the napkin on the empty plate in front of them. "The food was delicious. You have to tell Dante how much I enjoyed it. Do you think that you're okay to drive your bike?" Keira got out of the booth and stood by the side of the table.

"Yeah, I've been eating and I didn't even finish my beer. You're safe in my hands. I promise you will get back home all in one piece," Jim said as he slid out of the booth.

Taking her by the elbow, he led her towards the front entrance. "Thank you for coming with me. I had a good time."

"Did you really?" Keira was surprised by his confession. "I didn't think we talked about a lot of stuff over dinner."

"That's why I had such a nice time. The whole evening is what I need from all of the problems I have going on around me." Jim pushed opened the door,

escorted her outside and over to his motorcycle. "This is the first time in a very long time I didn't mind eating dinner with someone else at *Dante's*. I thought when we had such a great time at your house it had to be a fluke, but I'm beginning to see that it wasn't."

Keira wondered what Jim was talking about. Why was he thinking about her in a different way now? Was she hearing what she thought she was? Or was she reading more into the situation than Jim was giving to her? Since she really wasn't sure about what was going on she pushed the wandering thoughts from her head.

There was nothing going on between the two of them. She was allowing Charisma and the rest of them to get into her mind way too much. Jim and she would never have anything romantic between them.

"Keira, here's your helmet." Jim touched her on the arm making her look at him. "Are you listening to me?"

"Yes, I hear you," she answered placing the helmet on her head. "We should be hitting the road. I have an early morning appointment tomorrow."

Climbing on the bike, Jim put on his black helmet and waited while she got on the back. "I can't let the princess miss her beauty sleep now can I?"

Jim started the motorcycle and sped off before Keira could even say a word, but she had more important subjects on her mind. So she allowed Jim's comment to go right over her head. She would deal with him later when she had more time.

# Chapter Fifteen

“Do you really think that Jim and Keira will end up together?” True asked as she joined the other couples at the picnic table. “The two of them are so strong-willed.”

“I have faith that the more time Jim spends around Keira and gets to know her, the attraction between them will only get hotter and hotter until the love will appear without them knowing it,” Dave added.

“Is that how you fell for me?” Charisma folded her arms over her breasts and stared at him.

“No, I’m saying that is how you fell in love with me.” Dave grinned back at his wife.

“I can’t believe you.” Charisma rolled her eyes, but everyone at the table heard the love in her voice.

“I think if we push them too much it will back fire in our faces. I would hate for the two of them to resent us later if there is no chemistry between them. Maybe we shouldn’t force something that might not be there,” Jenisha said.

“Sweetheart, I know that Jim is attracted to Keira,” Clinton said. “I know the look when I see it. I saw it with Hayward when he looked at True and Dave had the same expression when he used to watch Charisma. We just need to let them move at their own pace,”

“Clinton, I only want Keira to be like her old self. I’m sure that Jim can bring it out of her,” Charisma added, concern in her soft voice. She missed her outgoing best friend and wanted her back more than anything in the world. “Is there something wrong with that?”

“No, there isn’t. However, I think we should let Keira move at her own pace. A lot has happened to her in a short amount of time. She needs time to digest everything. I’m sure the old Keira that we all love will be back before any of us know it.”

“I hope so.” True added knowing how much Charisma missed the way Keira used to be with them.

“Let me say something,” Hayward interrupted finally jumping into the conversation after listening to what everyone else had to say. “I know that when I went away to live in Montana, I wasn’t interested in hearing anyone’s opinion. It was my life and I was going to live it anyway that I wanted. I was positive I was going to be alone until a sexy woman moved next door to me. She kept coming around until I couldn’t go a day without seeing her.”



“You better be talking about me or you’re in some deep trouble,” True teased, smiling at her husband who was sitting across from her.

“Of course, you’re the woman I talking about,” Hayward retorted with a wink. “I don’t know how my life would be now without True and the boys. They are the world to me. All I’m trying to say is don’t force the situation between Jim and Keira. I’m not blind. I see the attraction too, but if we try to force it, they will work harder at denying it.”

“I understand your point of view,” Charisma admitted, “but I just feel so bad that all of us have found the love of our lives and Keira is alone. Have you noticed that she avoids coming to our parties now? She never used to be like that with us. I think she feels like the third wheel or something. She’s my dearest friend and I want her around.”

“Hmmm, I believe Keira turns down our invitations because of Jim. She knows she’s drawn to him and is trying to not be around him at every turn. I think it’s kind of cute,” Jenisha said and then took a sip of her juice.

“How about we drop the Jim and Keira topic for a little while and just enjoy the rest of our day since our children are at daycare and we have this time to ourselves,” Dave suggested wrapping his arm around his wife’s shoulders.

“Sounds good to us,” the other couples agreed at the table.

## Chapter Sixteen

“Do you know how much it will cost to store these bikes while I redo the interior of the shop?” Jim wandered around the shop pointing out to Dante the six bikes on display. He had three to fix before the end of the month, but he couldn’t seem to keep his mind focused on work since his date with Keira. He really had an unbelievable time with her. He was waiting for the right time to ask her out again.

She hadn’t been around the shop in the last two days and he wondered if she was avoiding him. He was going to track her down after Dante left. He enjoyed their date too much not to go for another one.

“Why don’t you store them at my house in the garage? I seldom use it and it has more than enough room for all of them. You know that I had it redone last year when I had all of those trees and debris removed from the back.”

“Are you sure?” Jim was shocked. He didn’t want to put Dante out by putting all of these motorcycles on his property.

“I couldn’t have got my club without your help. Yeah, you can keep them there as long as you want. I want to repay the favor.”

“Well, I’ll take you up on that offer. I’ll rent a big enough u-haul and get the guys to help me bring them over there.”

“Will Keira be with you?” Dante asked.

“Why are you asking about Keira?” Jim looked at Dante with a lethal calmness in his eyes and a hint of suspicion in his voice. Dante didn’t need to be bothering Keira. He wasn’t the kind of man she needed in her chaotic life at the moment. She had enough going on without adding Dante and his playboy ways into it. He would put a stop to his friend’s sudden interest. He thought he had already taken care of this at the club, but he guessed he was wrong.

“I was only asking about her. Keira is a nice-looking woman. I wouldn’t mind asking her out unless the two of you really have something going on. I know that she was with you at the club, but I didn’t sense anything romantic between the two of you.”

Jim hesitated, his emotions conflicted. He wasn’t sure what to tell Dante about his relationship or lack of it with Keira. All he knew was that he didn’t want Dante around her while he was trying to figure it out.

“I would rather you not ask her out,” Jim admitted, honestly.

Dante arched an eyebrow. “Are you saying Keira might pull you out of the dating slump you’ve been in?”

"I don't know for sure. All I can say is that I like being around her."

"Enough said," Dante replied, holding up his hand. "I won't let that thought enter my mind again. She's all yours."

"I can't say Keira is all mine because we haven't gotten that far yet. I only know she makes me want to be around her more and more. I never got those feelings with Kathy."

"How did you stay married to her for so long? I know I wouldn't have made it as long as you did."

"I did it for Trevor. I would do anything for my son I made a vow to myself to hang onto my marriage for Trevor's sake, but Kathy's cheating got too much for me to handle. I had to let her go before the situation drove me crazy."

"I understand what you're saying. If I had kids, I would do the same thing." Dante got up from his seat and headed for the door. "I better leave. I have a delivery coming in about an hour and I want to be at the club to get it. Good luck with Keira. From what I can tell she comes across like a nice girl. I wouldn't let her go if I got her to be my woman."

"Thanks for your advice. I'll remember that." Jim waited until Dante had left before he locked up the shop and went over to Keira's house. He was going to find out why she had been avoiding him lately.

\* \* \* \*

"Dr. Gearan, I don't think I need to come in today. I've been doing a lot better with the nightmares," Keira said as she tried to get out of her visit with the psychologist. Why did he keep calling her? She hadn't been to any of the scheduled appointments yet and if she could find a way out of the rest it would make her year.

Dr. Gearan wasn't going to trick her into talking about the plane crash. She would get through this all by herself. She wasn't a charity case that someone needed to take care of and was fed up with everyone not listening to what she was telling them.

"Keira, you really need to see me. How do you expect to go back to work without my approval? I know how much being a flight attendant means to you. Do you really want to give all of that up because you're too scared to see me?"

She couldn't deny that Dr. Gearan was telling her the truth. She loved her job. Having a career where she could travel from city to city had always been a dream of hers, so she had never thought about doing anything else but getting a job with the airlines.

For the past nine years, she had no difficulty getting out of the bed every morning until that one horrible day. Now, it took all of her energy. Of course, she knew that she wasn't the same woman, but a lot had happened to her in the past several months to diminish the spark in her that she loved so much. It was more of a flicker now than a flame.

“Keira, are you still there? Will you be in to see me today? I don’t mind staying late so you can make it after my last appointment is over.”

Talking to a shrink wasn’t going to help her with anything. She wasn’t crazy. She was the only survivor in a plane crash. She needed help, but not the kind that he wanted to give her. She didn’t need to be judged and especially not by someone who wasn’t aware of who she was as a person. Dr. Gearan was only seeing her as a name in his appointment book and nothing else.

“No, I’m not coming. Thanks for the trying but I don’t need to talk about the accident. The less I talk about it the sooner it will go away.”

“You can’t keep hiding from...”

Keira hung up the phone and placed it back on the table. She wasn’t about to let some doctor give her insight into her own mind as if she wasn’t aware of what was already there.

*I’m going to take a shower and order some Chinese food. I’m not going anywhere else for the rest of the day.* It wasn’t quite six o’clock yet, but she was more than ready to turn in for the night and get lost in some meaningless television program.

Keira left the living room and was on the way to her bedroom when a knock on the front door stopped her. “Who in the world is that?” She wasn’t expecting anyone because Charisma was having a special date night with Dave while Jenisha and Clinton watched Dave Jr. She loved getting visits from her friends, but tonight truly wasn’t one of them.

Making her way over to the door, she opened it and stared in astonishment. Why was Jim standing on her doorstep looking too sinful for words? She hadn’t seen him since he had taken her on that motorcycle ride to *Dante’s*. He was all she could think about after he dropped her off, so she had made a conscious decision to stay away from *Choppers* and Jim.

Now here he was standing in front of her looking gorgeous in all black. Was he trying to turn her on more than he already had?

“Hi, Jim,” Keira said. “Can I help you with something?” *Keep the conversation short and to the point.* It would make him leave sooner and give her a chance to think more about him while he was gone.

Jim smiled at her making his goatee even sexier. Most of her girlfriends and female co-workers hated facial hair on a man, but she had such a huge weakness for a hot guy with facial hair and Jim fell right into that category.

“I think we are better acquaintances now that I should get more than that cold greeting, don’t you?”

She hated to admit that Jim was right. They were almost like semi-friends now. She guessed that she could try to take some of her aloofness away when it came to him. “Sorry, come on in.” She moved back and waved Jim inside. “I had a hard day, but I shouldn’t have been so curt with you. Do you have a question about the shop?” she asked closing the front door with a click. Keira turned around and found Jim standing there right behind her.

“No, I was worried about you.”

“Why were you so concerned about me?” She tried to move around Jim; however, he only stepped closer to her until he had her backed against the door.

“What are you doing?” Keira questioned, shoving at his chest. “Move out of my way. Why are you standing in my personal space?”

Placing his hand next to her head, Jim leaned in the last few inches until his chest was brushing hers. “Do I make you nervous? Is that the reason you have been hiding in this house most of the day?”

Keira was at a loss for words. Jim coming to her house like this had truly taken her off guard plus he seemed to be peering at her so intently like he wasn’t going to leave until he got an answer.

“You’re wrong. I haven’t been hiding in here all day. I did get out for a little while, but I wasn’t aware that I had to run my daily schedule by you,” Keira said softly, her eyes narrowing at the man blocking her path.

“When you’re confronted you sure do like showing your claws, don’t you, sweetheart?”

There was a trace of laughter in his voice that didn’t go undetected by her.

“I’m not scared of being confronted by you or anyone else. I only wanted to know why you cared that I wasn’t around today.”

She wondered if Jim could hear the pounding of her heart. It felt so hard in her chest. He was bound to see how turned on she was getting with him this close to her body. Why was she so attracted to Jim one minute and hating him in the next?

“Maybe I missed you,” he whispered tracing the side of her neck with his finger. “I’ve gotten used to you telling me how to run the shop although you don’t know a thing about motorcycles or any other bike for that matter.”

She didn’t like how Jim was picking at her. He was enjoying making her uncomfortable. She had spent too much energy dealing with that damn shrink today and it was too much to add Jim to the list. She would get rid of him so she could take her shower.

“Jim, I think you should...” The rest of her sentence was cut off as Jim captured her mouth in a hot kiss.

Jim placed his other hand against the side of Keira’s head and completely pressed his hard body into hers. She felt every angle as his lips took control of hers.

Her mind reveled in the velvet warmth of his kiss as it continued to melt her bones until all she could do was wrap her arms around Jim’s wide shoulders and get lost in the sensation he was causing in her body.

Leaving her mouth burning with fire, he kissed the beating pulse at the base of her throat. “Baby, do you know how good you taste?” he whispered against her skin. “I could go on kissing you for the rest of the night and I still wouldn’t be full.”

Without giving her a chance to respond, Jim reclaimed her lips with his, slowly slipping his tongue inside of her mouth. The kiss sent the pit of her stomach into a wild whirlwind of passion. Before she knew what had occurred Jim swept her up into his arms and carried her over to the couch. He laid her down gently and quickly covered her body with his large warmer one without breaking their kiss.

Placing his hands on her legs, he spread them wider causing her short red skirt to rise up above her hips. He thrust his denim covered erection against her drenched panties. She pulled at his hips trying to get him closer to her.

“Shit, you’re so hot that you’re burning me through my jeans. I have to touch you.” Jim eased his hand between their bodies and inside her underwear.

Keira jumped at the unexpected thickness of Jim’s fingers. She had forgotten how good it felt to have a man touching her again.

“Oh, that’s feels so amazing,” she moaned moving her legs.

“Let me see if I can make it any better for you.” One hard pull from Jim’s hand completely removed her soaked panties from her body. He dropped them on the floor next to the couch and worked two thick fingers inside of her.

“How is that? Does this feel more intense than before?” The tone of his voice dropped even lower as he ran the tip of his tongue along the edge of her earlobe.

Using his free hand, he slid it up over her taut stomach until he stopped at the swell of her breasts. The gentle caress sent a current of desire through her. He was hitting all of her pleasure points that most men in her past missed or didn’t care to even find as long as they could get their own orgasm at the end.

“Yes,” she whimpered. Reaching up, Keira removed the rubber band from Jim’s thick hair and ran her fingers through it.

“Mmmm...keep doing that,” Jim growled by her ear as his fingers moved in and out of her body at a rapid pace.

“I will.” Keira scratched his scalp with her nails. She was getting lost in Jim’s masterful touch when all of the sudden he removed his hand from her body.

“No!” she yelled. Taking her hand out of Jim’s hair she reached for his hand so he wouldn’t stop what he was doing to her.

“Don’t worry, sweetheart. I’m not done with you.” Jim laid her hand back down on the couch and then got up. He started stripping out of his clothes and as each piece fell away she got to see how perfect his body truly was.

## Chapter Seventeen

Keira couldn't take her eyes away as each article of Jim's clothing hit the floor until he stood naked in front of her. His powerful well-muscled body was dusted with dark hair that only made him look more powerful and masculine. Keira couldn't help but take in his tempting, attractive male physique.

Moving back over to her, Jim helped her get undressed until she was as naked as he was. "Damn, sweetheart, your body is perfect. He stroked her skin like he was learning every single detail and was burning it into his memory.

Every time his gaze met hers, her heart skipped a beat because Jim looked at her as if he were photographing her with his eyes.

"Sweetheart, I'm dying to make love to you. Do you want that?"

Keira's heart hammered against her ribs as a delightful shiver of wanting ran through her. She nodded her head dying for Jim to continue.

"I want to hear the words," Jim said as his fingers played with her swollen nipples.

"Yes, I want you." Keira confessed the words as quickly as she could so Jim wouldn't stop touching her body.

Scooping her body up in his arms, Jim sat down on the couch and then repositioned her body above his throbbing erection.

\* \* \* \*

Jim couldn't keep the low growl from slipping from his throat as his cock slowly entered Keira. She was so *hot*! He had never been inside anyone who felt this unbelievable before. It was a dream come true for him. Just a few more inches and he would be balls deep within her. Most women had a problem taking him all the way because of his thickness, so he wanted to go slow with Keira. He didn't want to cause her any discomfort.

"Wait!" she cried out. "You have to wait. I need to get used to you. God, you're so big."

He was dying to thrust the rest of the way inside of her, but he would give her time to adjust to his size. He kept trying to think of different things hoping to get his raging body to calm down until Keira was ready.

"Baby, I don't think I can hold on much longer."

“Hmmm, I’m ready,” Keira whispered staring into his eyes. Her dark gaze was filled with desire as he worked his cock the rest of the way in until her shapely legs were on either side of his hips.

“FUCK!” His hands lightly traced a path over Keira’s damp back as he pressed her plump breasts to his chest. The shapely perfection of her naked body would taunt his mind and body after they were finished.

Tightening his grip on her hips, Jim lifted Keira up and brought her back down on his aching erection. He loved the way her wetness sucked at him like she never wanted to let him go. Jim dropped his head to suck on one hard nipple. It reminded him of a chocolate covered strawberry.

As her hips matched his pace, he made his thrusts harder and stronger until the only noise in the room was the sound of their sweating bodies making love.

“Mmmm,” Keira whispered, tilting her head to the left giving him a clue to what she wanted.

Letting go of Keira’s tasty nipple, he rained kisses down the side of her neck and got lost in the sweet taste of her skin.

“Please,” she begged tugging at his hair.

“It’s okay, darling.” Jim moved his mouth away from her neck and ran his tongue over her bottom lip drawing the sweetness from her mouth back into his.

“I need...” Keira moaned as she tore her mouth away from his.

“Take what you need, sweetheart,” he growled as he pumped into her.

“Give me more.”

Getting up from the couch, Jim laid Keira down on the carpeted floor spreading her legs as wide as they would go allowing his thrust to go deeper. The sensation of her walls tightening around his cock was becoming too much for him to handle. He could barely keep a rational thought in his head and he sensed the second Keira noticed the difference too because her eyes grew two shades darker and a panicked expression crossed her stunning face.

“I can’t...it’s too much.” She reached out to touch his shoulders with her hands, but he caught her slim wrists in one large hand and pulled them above head.

“Don’t be scared. I promise you that I’m not going to hurt you.” He planted a hard kiss on her swollen lips cutting off any other words that might have come out of her delectable mouth.

A second or two later Keira tore her lips away from him as her orgasm hit her making her back lift slightly off the floor.

“Yes!” She screamed as she tugged her arms, but he didn’t let her go. He wanted her to feel everything that was happening to her. He wasn’t going to let her hide from this like she was from everything else in her life.

Jim knew that he hadn’t seen a more beautiful sight as Keira having an orgasm from their love making. It was enough to send him over the edge. Tossing his head back, Jim squeezed his eyes closed as everything around him



disappeared and a loud roar erupted from his mouth as he spilled his seed deep inside of Keira's welcoming heat.

## Chapter Eighteen

Keira woke early the next morning with something tickling the top of her breasts. She tried to lift her hand to brush it off, but something was weighing it down. Turning her head slightly, she swallowed down her stunned gasp at seeing Jim lying next to her in bed asleep with his long hair loose and spread out brushing the top of his shoulders.

*SHIT!!!!*

Last night hadn't been one of her vivid dreams. She had actually slept with Jim starting downstairs on the couch and on the floor before he carried her upstairs. They'd made love three more times before finally falling into a well-deserved and much needed sleep.

Jim was better in bed than *any* of her past lovers. He even made the stripper named Thunder who had taking her virginity seem like he didn't have a clue what he was doing. She hadn't slept with a lot of men. She could count all of her sexual experiences on one hand. Never in her life had she let herself completely get lost when making love. Hell, she never thought it was possible and not with the man snoring lightly next to her.

How in the world did she face him now after losing control like a woman who had been starving for some toe-curling, earth-shattering sex?

She needed time to think which meant time away from Jim's hard temping body, a body that could make her agree to anything in a hot minute without even a second thought. Using the back of her free hand, Keira slowly moved Jim's hair off her body. She froze as he mumbled something in his sleep, but thankfully he didn't wake up.

Next, Keira gently lifted up Jim's thickly muscled arm and settled it on the bed between them. She lay perfectly still to make sure her touch hadn't awakened him because she wasn't ready to explain her actions yet.

Inching her way over to the side of the king-sized bed, Keira eased out of it. Once her feet hit the floor, she made a beeline for the bathroom closing the door as quickly and quietly as she could behind her. She let out a breath that she didn't know that she'd been holding. She ran her fingers through her hair while she thought of ways to handle the new and difficult situation she had placed herself in with Jim now.

Hell! She'd been on her last nerve when Jim surprised her with the knock on her door last night. He was the last person she had been expecting to pay her a visit especially since she hadn't laid eyes on him all day. She had just dealt with

Dr. Gearan on the telephone and wasn't thinking straight when she invited Jim inside her house.

*Yeah, keep telling yourself that and you might actually believe it after awhile* She made her way over to the mirror.

Keira didn't recognize the wanton woman staring back at her with her hair tumbling down her shoulders in a wild mess; with eyes still glazed over from lingering desire and swollen lips that Jim couldn't stop kissing last night.

Damn it! If spending one night with Jim did this to her body, what in the world would happen being around him for an entire week or longer?

"I woke up and you were missing." Jim's voice complained tearing her away from her inner thoughts.

Keira turned her head away from the mirror so fast she was surprised that she didn't get whiplash. She couldn't keep her mouth from falling open at the sight of Jim standing in all of his beautiful naked perfection in her bathroom doorway.

"I didn't hear you come in here." She was trying her best not to stare at his huge cock that was fully erect and ready to go. Her heart sped up like she had been running a marathon at the thought of Jim being buried deep inside of her body again.

"I know you weren't aware that I was here," he answered as he continued on into the room until he was standing directly in front of her. "Do you want to tell me why you left me alone in your bedroom?" Cupping her right breast in his large palm, Jim ran his nail over the tight bud.

"I was going to let you sleep. You looked so peaceful." Keira tried not to move as Jim's other hand moved down between her legs before he worked his thick middle finger inside her body.

"It wasn't," he moaned against her neck.

"It wasn't...what?" she asked trying to keep her mind focused and not on what Jim's touch was doing to her body.

"A dream," he finally replied after he had maneuvered his finger inside her wetness a time or two. "I thought I dreamt how sizzling hot you were wrapped around my cock last night."

Keira closed her eyes tight as a wave of pleasure rushed through her body. Jim was turning her on again making her want to lose her well-placed control and it scared the hell out of her.

"I want you again." Spinning her around, Jim made her look at her reflection in the mirror as he pressed his cock against the curve of her ass. "I don't think I can hold off much longer."

Her eyes snapped open meeting a blue-green stare in the mirror and she was enthralled by what she saw there. There was an invitation to intense pleasure in their smoldering depths that made a part of her want to run from it while the other side of her wanted to grab it with both hands.

"We shouldn't," she mumbled trying to be reasonable against a losing battle.

Jim slowly dragged his finger from her body and then spun her around sitting her on top of the vanity. He spread her legs wide before stepping between them.

“Are you sure you don’t want me?” Placing a hand on her hip, he steadied her while pushing only the head of his cock inside of her.

Reaching out, he cupped her breasts before he pinched the nipples. “You have such beautiful plump breasts. I could spend hours sucking on them. Would you like for me to do that, Keira?”

Jim continued to play with her breasts while feeding her his cock inch by delicious inch. He was halfway in before he stopped. “I’m sorry. You told me that you weren’t interested in having mind-blowing morning sex.” He started to pull out of her but she wrapped her legs around his waist.

“I’ve changed my mind. I wouldn’t mind if we continue.” Keira slid her hands through Jim’s hair.

“I like the sound of those words,” Jim said a second before he entered her fully.

## Chapter Nineteen

“Where have you been keeping yourself the last couple of days? I’ve called you several times and you haven’t returned any of them. I thought I might have to send a search party after you.”

Keira walked next to Charisma as they strolled through the mall shopping for a present for Dave’s birthday which was next Saturday. She hadn’t wanted to go because her mind was still a wreck about sleeping with Jim and without any protection too. God, what in the hell had gotten into her? She knew one thing. There was no way in hell that she could tell Charisma about this. She wouldn’t hear the last of it.

Her best friend would have her buying wedding magazines and looking for a place to have the event before she knew what had happened.

No way Charisma would be told what occurred last night and early this morning. She had been so exhausted after the last time, Jim had tucked her back into bed and kissed her goodbye. She planned on staying in bed for most of the day since she wasn’t scheduled to be anywhere, but all of that changed because Charisma called forty-five minutes later asking her if she wanted to go shopping.

She knew that she couldn’t turn Charisma down because she just blew off the dinner party. She’d received an invitation from Jenisha and said no. So, now here she was worn out after having marathon sex with Jim walking around the mall filled with overly rude teenagers and old retired men trying to kill some time in their day.

“I’ve been busy,” Keira finally replied.

“I hope it’s been with Jim. He needs something to keep him busy besides redesigning the bike shop and worrying about what Kathy is doing to their son.”

“I haven’t been doing anything with Jim.” The words tumbled from her mouth so fast; she wondered if Charisma understood any of them.

Charisma walked over to a white bench and pulled the baby stroller next to her. “Sit down.” She patted the seat next to her. “I want to talk to you.”

Keira warily took the seat wondering what was up. Charisma wasn’t the type to take a break in the middle of a shopping trip.

“Why do you want to talk?”

“You haven’t mentioned the plane crash any more to me. Does that mean you’ve been talking to your psychologist? Is he helping with your recovery so you can return to work?”

Charisma must have ESP or something because Dr. Gearan had been leaving a message on her answering machine when she was walking out of the door to meet Charisma at the mall. "I haven't been to see him. I'm not sure if I'm ever going back to work."

Working for an airline wasn't the only thing she could do with her life. She was young enough to have a career change, something that would be less dangerous and she wouldn't be responsible for any other people's lives.

"Keira, when are you going to snap out of this depression and constant fear you seem to be living in? What happened to the devil may care woman who went to Jamaica with me? You used to be so fearless and you didn't let a thing stand in your way. Don't you miss that part of you too? Or am I just talking to hear myself talk?"

Charisma didn't understand. Going back to work had been the foremost thought in her mind since she got out of the hospital, but the nightmare started and the airlines told her that she couldn't come back until she had a clean bill of health.

No one understood how much she wanted to return to work. However, how could she look into everyone's eyes and hear all the welcome backs when she was the only one who knew what truly happened before the last part of the crash happened?

Keira had to get Charisma off this topic because she wasn't ready to get into it with anyone. "I just need a little more time to clear my head. I swear that you haven't lost that woman who went on vacation with you. She's still here."

"I hope you're telling me the truth," Charisma said looking at her with a doubtful expression on her pretty face.

"I am." Keira was relieved that she'd dodged another bullet with Charisma.

## Chapter Twenty

“Daddy, it’s so cool that you have your own motorcycle shop. I love it here. When I tell the other kids at school about this they are going to be so jealous.” Trevor wandered around *Choppers* while Jim boxed up the last of the motorcycle parts, so he could get the space ready for a new coat of paint and the redesign he was planning.

“Now, Trevor I told you about bragging to make other people feel bad. I don’t like when you do stuff like that. You shouldn’t ever want to make anyone feel beneath you. Who did you get that idea from?” He was trying his best to raise his son to be a good person, but he was going wrong somewhere if Trevor was saying things like that.

“Mom is always saying, if you have something good you need to tell people about it. It’s not your fault that they can’t afford the best things like you can.”

Jim had to swallow a couple of times to keep from losing his cool. Kathy was ruining every good lesson he was trying to teach his little boy. He couldn’t allow Kathy to turn Trevor into a smaller greedy version of herself.

He was going back to his lawyer for full custody. The only reason his worthless wife gave him such a battle for Trevor in the first place was for the money. Kathy was getting more from him by having Trevor with her instead of his son being with the parent who truly loved and cared about his feelings.

Trevor deserved to be in a good caring and loving home. He wasn’t getting that from Kathy and the different men popping in and out of her life every two months.

Jim hadn’t grown up in the best family environment himself, with both of his parents constantly cheating on each other. He lost count years ago of how many half brothers and sisters he had, but the sad thing was his parents never got a divorce because they didn’t believe in the word.

His parents wedding anniversary was coming up in a couple of weeks and they had invited him but he wasn’t sure if he was even going to show up for the party. He didn’t want to deal with the two of them. Maybe because his mom gave birth to him at fifteen she thought she had missed out on something during her life. His father wasn’t much older than his mother. He had just turned sixteen the day after Jim was born.

Thank God, his grandparents were still young enough to step in and help his parents out while they finished up high school and then college. He always knew who his parents were but he always thought of his grandparents as his true

parents. They taught him how to be giving, loving and understanding of other people. He was going to pass those qualities on to Trevor with or without help from his ex-wife.

Jim looked at his son trying to find a way to answer him without making his mother look bad. He didn't want to put Trevor in the middle of what was going on with him and Kathy. "Trevor, when you hear your mom tell you stuff like that, don't pay attention to her. Anytime you aren't sure about anything she tells you always remember you can come and ask me, okay?"

"Mom tells me that you're a liar and won't be honest with me. How do I know who to trust?" Trevor asked him.

A deep, unaccustomed pain filled his chest at the doubt in his little boy's voice. He never wanted Trevor to be worried that he would never tell him the truth.

"Trevor, no matter how much you might not like my answers all of the time, I will always tell you the truth. You can ask and know that I will not lie to you."

Hazel eyes a shade darker than his stared up at him with a huge amount of trust in them. He hoped that Trevor never lost his belief in him because of lies that his mother filled his head with when he wasn't around.

"I believe you, Daddy. I know you will always tell me the truth."

"Good, now will you take that small white box by the wall out to Dante in the truck? I don't want to leave it here. I need this space completely empty for the painters."

Running away from him, Trevor grabbed the box off the floor. "Do you think he'll let me play some games on his cell phone?"

"Ask him and see what he tells you," Jim yelled as Trevor ran out the front door.

Shaking his head, Jim smiled at the abundance of energy that his little boy constantly seemed to be filled with. *I don't ever remember having that kind of get-up-and-go when I was his age.*

Moving around the room, Jim took in the empty space hoping the vision he had for it would come true. The painters wouldn't be coming until next week because he was having the bathroom's plumbing fixed along with checking the lighting.

The place would take almost two months to get in shape, but the wait would be worth it. He was even getting a new black and gray sign made to have placed on the roof. The new *Choppers* sign was the biggest investment when it came to the redo because he was having it custom made by a new designer who was friends with Dante. He had seen this young man's work and Romalliti was the hottest artist out there.

As the thought of redoing something crossed his mind, the memory of yesterday and what happened with Keira lingered around the edges of his brain. He couldn't shake the vivid recollection of how good the two of them were together...*no, how perfect they were together.*



Who knew that the tightly wound Keira Winters would be so sexually compatible with him? The second he slid his cock inside of her he hadn't wanted to leave the unbelievable paradise that he had found there.

He hadn't fathomed being with too many women since his divorce. Bambi held on to the belief that she might spend a night or two in his bed, but he never wanted her in that way. Hell, he never contemplated he would be interested in spending more than a night with a woman until sleeping with Keira.

Even when he was younger he never had the staying power he'd possessed last night with Keira. He would never forget a single detail of her face as her beautiful body bounced up and down on his cock while she was straddling his thighs. Honestly, ending up in bed with Keira wasn't a part of his plan when he knocked on her door to check up on her, but he sure as hell wasn't upset that it was where the two of them ended up for most of the day and night.. Shit, he was hoping Keira wouldn't pretend they hadn't spent yesterday learning what pleasures they could give to each other.

Even after he finally left this morning after kissing Keira goodbye, she filled his thoughts until he couldn't do anything else but focus only on her. The date he went on with her to Dante's restaurant ranked pretty high for him—like an eight out of ten. Plus the sex was off the charts. He was more than ready to carry her over his shoulder back to the closest bedroom.

All of what he was thinking was good for him. Yet, he wasn't too sure where Keira's mind was today. She might be taken aback by his sudden interest in her after all of the disagreements between them. Keira was very skeptical when it came to things. So, he might have to take moving things to the next level with her very slowly because he wasn't positive about what the next step should be himself. All he knew was that he did enjoy the short period of time they'd shared together.

He was man enough to acknowledge that he wouldn't be against having another dinner date with Keira. Maybe the next one could be a little more romantic. She might try to blow him off and pretend that last night didn't blow her mind too, but he wasn't going to let her do that. He was going to break that hard shell of hers down even more until it no longer existed.

Doing a favor for Dave wasn't the reason he wanted to go out with Keira again and surprisingly the mind-blowing sex wasn't the deciding factor either. The only reason he was interested in seeing Keira again was he found her extremely attractive and more challenging than any woman who had been around him in such a very long time.

It was intoxicating to him how Keira, although still not totally back to her old self, still found a way to make him pursue her. The chase was giving him a thrill that he never imagined it could.

He hoped Keira was playing her best game because he didn't mind losing, but he wasn't going to give up until he got what he wanted which was her.

# Chapter Twenty-One

10:45 am

*Prison Work Crew*

*Los Angeles, CA*

The hot sizzling sun beamed down on the top of his head causing more sweat to fall down his forehead into his eyes as he picked up the pieces of paper, soda cans and the other variety of litter that was scattered across the sides of the highway.

He couldn't believe that he had been locked up for almost seven years before they even thought about allowing him to qualify for this fucking work release program. He shouldn't have been given any prison time in the first place because he hadn't done anything wrong.

Wiping the sweat off his forehead with the back of his hand, Dalton Blake glanced at the low life criminals working around him complaining about how uncomfortable they were working out in all of the heat.

God, why was he even in the same space as them? Damn it! He had MBA from Harvard. He should be working at a high paying job instead of being out here with these part-time drug dealers, car thieves and petty delinquents.

*I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for that lying bitch True Williams...no True Campbell.* A car zoomed past him, the occupants yelling some kind of offhanded insult.

Since the first day when the guards dropped him off at prison, he'd been fighting off sex starved men from making him their new boyfriend while praying his cell mate didn't want to make a late night call to his bed.

His backstabbing ex-girlfriend was tricking some rich idiot into placing a ring on her finger. True had gotten everything she ever wanted whilst he'd been living in his own personal hell.

*I have to pay her back. If she hadn't testified against me I wouldn't have ended up in prison. She's even the reason my brother Mark is dead now. He went after her best friend Jenisha and ended up dying in the fire he'd set for her.*

Dalton could feel his hatred for True boiling up in his gut and working its way through his entire body. He had to get out of jail and the quicker he did the sooner he could pay his bitch of an ex-girlfriend back for sullyng his near perfect life.

All he needed was an opportunity to sneak away from these other inmates. Continuing on further down the road, Dalton noticed how far out the guards had

brought them to clean off the highway. He wasn't dumb. He could figure out a way to escape the next time he came here.

He wouldn't be able to do it today because the guards were paying way too much attention to them. He had to wait for the right opportunity and then plan his freedom. The second he did get free True would get everything she deserved for crossing him in that court room all of those years ago.

"Dalton, get your head out of the clouds and get your ass back down here," the male guard yelled at him. "I took this job for the extra money, not to baby sit your grown ass. We're leaving. We don't have all day to wait for you."

Dalton opened his mouth to yell something nasty back, but quickly snapped it shut. He couldn't afford to do anything to get him taken off this cleaning crew. It was the best thing that had occurred in his life in a very long time. In addition, this job might be his only chance at an escape and he wouldn't fuck it up. The taste for revenge was too sweet.

"Yes sir, I'm coming," he yelled walking faster to catch up with the other prisoners who were already in line waiting to get back on the bus.

## Chapter Twenty-Two

Standing at the side of the curb, Keira stared into the huge canary yellow moving van at her father's motorcycles. She remembered that Jim had mentioned in passing he was thinking about redoing her father's old floor plan for *Choppers*, but she didn't think it would be this soon. Jim hadn't been the new owner for that long.

How could he know this quickly that he couldn't or wouldn't be able to deal with *Choppers* the old way? He could have at least given her some warning that he was going to do this today since they knew each other on an intimate level now.

*Wait until I see him. I'm going to give him a piece of my mind...hell, I might give him more than that* Keira stormed towards the front door and into the shop.

Once she got inside Keira looked around, but Jim was nowhere in sight. As she spun around to leave she ran into a hard, warm chest. Tilting her head back, Keira's eyes connected with Jim and before she could utter one word he kissed her until she wrapped her arms around his neck, and continued to kiss her until she felt her knees go weak.

"I missed you," Jim whispered against her mouth before stepping back. "I came looking for you when we brought the van here, but you were gone."

Keira wondered how Jim could even form a sentence when her mind and body were still buzzing from their kiss. She was having a hard time trying not to kiss him again and he wanted to carry on a conversation.

"Keira, are you going to answer me?"

"I was at the mall with Charisma shopping for a birthday present for Dave. She called about forty minutes after you had left." She speculated why Jim had come looking for her. Did he want another replay of yesterday and this morning? Or had he come looking for her about something else?

"What did you want?"

"I wanted to ask you out on a real date. I know that we've done things a little differently. So, how about we try it the correct way? After I get the motorcycles dropped off at Dante's place I can go home, change and pick you back up around six o'clock," he suggested. "I know this perfect out of the way restaurant that I've wanted to take someone to. I would like for it to be you."

"Don't you think all of this is happening pretty fast? Maybe we should rethink going out with each other again."

She was trying to back away from Jim, but he was one step ahead of her. Keira could tell he was going to put up a fight instead of backing off like she hoped he would. Her interest in Jim was piqued as well as her curiosity about him. She was eager to see what new side of him might show itself surprising her more than he already had so far.

“No, I’m not going to rethink anything,” Jim said as he pulled her closer. “Furthermore, I’m rejecting your feeble attempt at telling me to back off. I’m going to be at your house tonight. You better be ready or you’ll wish that you had taken my invitation seriously,” he threatened softly.

“What will happen if I don’t agree?” He wasn’t about to do anything to her.

“Baby, you don’t want to test me and find out,” Jim teased giving her another kiss before patting her on the ass and then moving away.

Keira stood motionless in the middle of the room as she realized how excited she was about going out on another date with Jim. She was intrigued by what thrilling something else he might offer her.

If she said yes right now and made a decision quicker than she thought she would, Jim might think he had the upper hand on her. She should make him work a little bit harder at getting her to go out with him again.

Spinning around, she caught sight of Jim as he grabbed his helmet and keys off the counter. Her eyes wandered over his back remembering how tight his ass was when he was walking around naked in her bedroom. It was a sight that she could get used to seeing more often.

“I’ll be ready and you better be a man of your word. I expect to be impressed by you.”

Jim stopped in his tracks on the way to the door. She knew that he’d heard her and she was counting the minutes until he told her what he thought about her comment.

“I thought I proved last night that I was a man of my word. I guess if you need a refresher course in my skills, I’m more than happy to give you another class anytime you want, sweetheart.” Jim continued on out the door leaving her to think about what he’d just told her and making her wish it was already time for their date.

## Chapter Twenty-Three

“Dante, I want to thank you again for watching Trevor. I thought Kathy would be at home tonight, but she has a date with another new guy. I swear I have to get my son out of that house and away from that woman and her circus of men.”

Jim snatched his jacket off the back of the kitchen chair and shoved his arms into the sleeves. He couldn't believe that he was actually still talking about his ex-wife while getting ready for another date with Keira. He was excited and a little nervous about tonight. He wanted things to go really well, but it wouldn't if he didn't get his mind off Kathy and all of her nonsense.

“Kathy isn't going to change, so why waste time worrying about her? Trevor is with me tonight. He's going to have some of my famous spaghetti and meatballs. After dinner I told him I would play a video game with him. There's nothing for you to be worried about. You only need to focus all your energy on your gorgeous date; unless, you'd rather I step in and you stay home with Trevor. I'll give Keira your apologies.”

Jim knew Dante was only trying to test his patience and it was working. Women were constantly throwing themselves at his friend, but he wasn't going to allow Keira to get that close to Dante.

“Thanks for the offer, but I think that I can handle going out on a date with Keira without any help from you. I think you have enough women dying to date you.” Jim left the kitchen and stopped to check his reflection in the mirror by the door one last time. He wasn't the type of guy to go over how he looked, but he did want to look especially good tonight. This would be his first 'real' date since his divorce from Kathy.

“Hey, you can't fault me for trying. I thought you might tell me no, but I asked anyway.” Dante followed him into the room. He picked up the remote control off the table before taking a seat on the couch. “You better get going before you're late. Keira doesn't seem like the type of woman who would appreciate you standing her up.”

“I'm leaving,” Jim said, opening the front door. “Don't forget to make sure Trevor has finished all of his homework before he plays any video games. Hopefully, he won't still be mad at me and take it out on you.”

“Trevor will get over you going out on a date with Keira. He was only mad because he couldn't go with you. I'll talk to him about it over dinner if he's still mad at you.”

Pausing in the open doorway, Jim looked back over his shoulder at Dante. Doubt about going out with Keira tonight eased into his mind. He didn't want to let Trevor down like his mother constantly did by breaking his promises to him.

"Maybe I should stay at home. I've never seen him act out like that before. Trevor is usually so tough and independent even at seven years old because of growing up around Kathy more than me. He counts on me because he knows that he has no one else in his corner. No, I'm not going. I'll call and cancel with Keira. She'll understand."

He wasn't about to bail on his little boy not even for a date with Keira— no matter how much he was planning on showing her a good time. He was a parent first and anything else in his life came second including *Choppers*.

"I know you aren't serious," Dante said, tossing the remote control down on the cushioned seat next to him. "Trevor was only trying to make you feel bad and he's doing it. He'll be okay with me for a couple of hours. Go out. Have some adult fun and conversation. Leave me here with the kid. Now, I would leave before Keira changes her mind and not even open the door when you show up."

Jim hated that Dante was right. Trevor was only testing him and he shouldn't fall for it. He might need to have a talk with his son tomorrow about how he was too old to throw a temper tantrum.

"You're right. I'm leaving, but call me if you need to. I'll come right back and deal with Trevor."

"I doubt I'll need to," Jim heard as he went out the door closing it behind him.

## Chapter Twenty-Four

The lyrics from *Purple Rain* filled Keira's house as she finished getting ready for her date. The need to call Charisma and share her news was eating at her, but she changed her mind at the last second. Her hand had actually touched the phone before she snatched it back. Tonight she just wanted to have fun with Jim and not have any other worries on her mind.

It was amazing how elated she was about going out with Jim again. He had already whisked her away on one adventure by getting her on the back of his motorcycle. He challenged her and a man hadn't done that in God knows how long. She had a good idea it would be a very long time before another man like Jim would come along.

Unlike her, Jim knew how to live life with such passion like he didn't have a care in the world. She wanted some of his zest for living to rub off on her. She was tired of being cautious and by the book when it came to her life.

There was nothing predictable or planned out when it came to Jim Russell. He was very aware of his personal needs, wants and desires more than any man she had ever known in her life. Without a doubt, the short amount of time she had been around Jim she learned one important thing about him— he loved being a leader and having people follow his ideas and he wouldn't stop until they gave in.

It was almost like he was on a personal mission and he had no doubt that it was the most important thing going on. Jim had a clear vision about what he wanted for the motorcycle shop and was pursuing it endlessly.

Thinking of *Choppers* as Jim's now and not her father's was getting a tad bit easier, but she still wished she had a part in it some kind of way. Sitting at the sidelines watching other people do the same thing she desired was hard for her.

She could tell Jim wasn't a man who let the word *failure* enter his vocabulary. He only focused on being successful. Jim wasn't aware that she had been watching how he interacted with the people around him. He wasn't worried about what other individuals were doing or even what they thought about him. He only paid attention to his game plan and how to win at it.

"I'm not going to fall head first into tonight's date with Jim," Keira promised herself as she moved around her bedroom putting things away she'd decided not to wear. She had changed clothes four times before she picked out the white dress she was wearing now. She thought it was a mixture of temptation and sex appeal combined that was meant to slowly drive a man crazy with lust.



*Girl, don't lose your common sense over dinner and end up back between the sheets with Jim.* That was a one time incident and something that she wouldn't allow to happen again. She wouldn't be blindsided by Jim's raw masculinity again.

Confusion still clouded Keira's mind at her unexpected response to Jim's touch and mixed feelings surged through her at the possibility of seeing where things could go between them. One minute they were at each other's throats and now she was going out with a man who she thought was a jackass when she first met him. Life sure did have a way of tossing a person's words back at them.

*I hope Jim didn't ride his motorcycle, because I'm not hopping on the back of that wearing this dress.* Picking up her high heels off the floor, Keira headed towards the living room when the doorbell buzzed. Her pulse rate jumped as she tried to throttle the dizzying current racing through her.

The memory of the last time Jim was in her house came rushing back to her full force. Running her fingers through her hair, Keira took several deep breaths to calm down the last of her nerves before she went to answer the door.

## Chapter Twenty-Five

Words were lost to Keira as she stared at Jim standing on her porch step with flowers in his left hand. She was shocked at how good he looked...not that he usually looked bad, but he was a downright walking wet dream.

He stood there, devilishly handsome with his long, brown hair flowing down to just a little below his collar. The rich outlines of his muscular arms strained against the black coat he was wearing. The whiteness of his shirt made his naturally tanned skin stand out even more. The shadow of his beard slightly blended in with his goatee giving him an even manlier aura.

Jim didn't possess the classically handsome features that most women loved, but his look tonight was definitely capturing her attention and would any other woman who looked in their direction during dinner.

"You look stunning in that dress. Maybe we should stay at home instead of going out," Jim said, drawing her attention away from her inner thoughts. "I don't need to get into a fight at the restaurant keeping the men away from you."

"I have to say that you look very handsome yourself. I'm not use to seeing you in anything but jeans and a t-shirt."

"I thought I should dress up a little since I wasn't taking you to *Dante's* again. Is it okay for me to come inside? Or are we going to continue to have our conversation out here on the porch?"

"Sorry about that." Keira stepped back and waved Jim into the entranceway and then closed the door behind them. "Go into the living room. I need to turn off the music before we can leave and make sure everything is locked up." She tried to move past Jim, but he touched her on the arm stopping her.

"Why don't you stop in the kitchen so you can put your flowers into some water?" He handed her the beautiful roses and then planted a soft kiss on her lips.

"What was that for?" Keira asked.

"You looked so damn kissable that I couldn't resist. I've been thinking about doing that since I asked you out at the shop."

"I've been thinking about you too," she confessed softly almost like she didn't want Jim to know. She moved away from him and headed for the kitchen.

"Have a seat. It will take me a few minutes to put these roses into a vase. I need to find where I placed the one I have. It's been a while since anyone has brought me flowers."

"I'll rather walk around and take a look at the place. I didn't get a chance to notice much when I was here last time."

The second the words were out of his mouth Jim wished he could take them back. They both knew what happened the other day when he made a surprise appearance. He shot Keira a look as she continued into the other room like she hadn't heard him, but he knew she had.

For the rest of the night, he was going to try to choose his words more carefully and not blurt out the first dumbass thing that popped into his head. It would truly be best for him if he thought before he spoke.

While Jim strolled around, he decided to look around while Prince played in the background. He couldn't remember the last time he'd heard 1999. He wasn't a huge fan of the artist playing, but he was fond of some of the songs. He had to admit that the guy did have an amazing talent.

As he moved around the room, Jim noticed the oak woodwork, leaf green walls and crisp white accents adding a hint of freshness to the spacious room in the remodeled vintage home. When he was here before he didn't see the large area rugs covered up stunning hardwood floors adding a hint of warmth to the room; in addition, he liked how it defined the seating area.

Working in construction for so many years had taught him how to notice when a building would hold up for a long time and Keira's house looked like it had a lot of good years left in it. Her decorating style only enhanced the charm of the living room. An off-white sofa was accented with a mixture of black, white and patterned pillows making a usually dull piece of furniture, in his opinion, stand out even more. It was like the main focal point in the room.

Keira had also placed an armful of pillows next to a black slip-covered ottoman. Even the lush green houseplants played up to the relaxing theme in the area making it even more welcoming to anyone who came to visit her.

Walking over to one of the walls, Jim studied the framed photos that were placed there. There were a variety of pictures of Keira from when she was little girl, her college years with Charisma at their sorority and a few more recent ones.

In all of them she had a smile that lit up her dark, mysterious eyes. He even noticed the hint of mischievousness there too. He was only used to the outspoken or sexy Keira who wasn't a bit shy in the bedroom. He wanted to be allowed to see more of the woman revealed in these pictures. He would love to have her smile like that around him.

"I love that picture of me and Charisma together. Someone took it right after we had left a strip club," Keira said coming up behind him. "She was so crazy that night. I thought we might end up going back to the hotel with one of the guys."

"Do you have a crazy side that you're keeping hidden from me?" Jim asked, facing Keira.

"I used to but I think she disappeared a long time ago. I might have left her down in Jamaica while Charisma was falling in love with Dave. I haven't smiled like the girl in those pictures for a very long time."

Slipping his arm around her waist, Jim pulled Keira to him. “How about we see if we can slowly bring her back from her self-made vacation? I want to meet the smiling woman in those pictures behind us. Don’t you want to see if you can find her again for me?”

“I’m not sure if she even exists anymore. I haven’t been that happy in a very long time.”

“Baby, that is a challenge if I ever heard one.” He was getting turned on by the fact that he could be the man who would bring back the Keira everyone loved so much.

He hated the sudden sadness on her face and in her eyes. It brought out a protectiveness in him that he only thought was for his son. Keira might refuse his help, but in the end she would accept it along with everything else he might have to offer her.

## Chapter Twenty-Six

Keira walked next to Jim as they followed a waitress to their table in a secluded part of the restaurant. Tonight was turning out to be such a surprise for her, but she wasn't quite sure if she was ready for anything else out of the blue to take place.

Jim had promised back at her house that he was going to get her out of the depression she was in. He acted like just being around him would stop her from thinking about the crash. If Dr. Gearan couldn't do it, what magical powers did Jim possess to get it out of her?

However, he did look good enough tonight that she might ask him to skip dessert at the restaurant and have it at her house instead. She wasn't blind. She saw how the waitress's eyes almost popped out of her head when Jim walked up asking about their reservations. It had taken her a few seconds for the young girl to even realize that she was Jim's date. Yet, Jim acted like he wasn't aware of how cold the waitress's attitude had grown towards them.

"Here are your menus," she said once both of them had taken their seats. "Someone will be by in a few minutes to get your orders." The waitress placed the dark brown menus in front of them and then stormed away.

Keira couldn't help but shake her head and laugh at the young woman as she practically ran from the table back to the front of the restaurant. God, why did the girl care if she was out on a date with Jim? It wasn't like she didn't have the right to be out on a date with anyone she wanted.

"What's so funny?" Jim asked as he reached for his menu.

"I think the waitresses have a thing against me after they see me with you. First, it was Bambi at Dante's and now with that one...Donna. She was so thrilled to see you until she figured out I was your date."

"Dawn...and don't give her another thought. This night is all about us and not her or her close-minded opinions."

"Who's Dawn?"

"The waitress who is jealous of you...is named Dawn, not Donna. Like I said earlier she isn't important at all and neither is Bambi. I'm not interested in getting to know them, only you."

Against her will, Keira had to admit that a slender delicate thread of understanding was beginning to form between them. "I'll take your compliment for now because I might say something later that will place me on your most hated list," she teased.

"I can promise you that you never were on my most hated list," Jim corrected.

"What list was I on instead?"

"Overly bossy, too-nosy, gorgeous but a pain in my side, but like I said, you never landed a spot on my hated list."

Keira wondered if she should be insulted or pleased by Jim's semi-criticism of her personality. She never thought of herself as overly bossy or too nosy. She was a woman who knew how to speak her mind and wasn't too worried about who liked it or not.

"It wasn't a condemnation if that's what you're thinking about," Jim commented grabbing her attention. "I see now that you're just passionate about your family and friends. Most people nowadays only care about themselves and you don't. You're a unique woman. You should be very proud of that."

"I never said I wasn't proud of how I am when it comes to the people I care about." Keira was beginning to rethink her initial opinion of Jim from their airport encounter. He might not be as condescending as she initially thought.

"Keira, I'm starting to like you more and more. I can see why Charisma and everyone else loves you so much."

"Thank you," Keira said. "However, I'm not seeing any changes with you at all, Mr. Russell."

A teasing light came into Jim's hazel eyes as he stared at her from across the table. "Keep talking to me like that and I'll have to teach you how to speak nicer to me."

"Oh, I'm so scared." Keira laughed, enjoying her second date with Jim more than her first date. She would have never bet in a million years that Jim would show her such a wicked sense of humor. She couldn't wait to hear what else Jim was about to tell her, but got extremely disappointed when a loud, whiny female voice behind her interrupted their conversation.

"Jim, what are you doing here with this woman? Who is with Trevor this time of night? You're constantly on my ass about not spending enough time with him and look at you. So, once again who in the hell is this woman?"

Keira clamped her jaw as tight as she could as the woman moved around her and stopped not five feet from Jim's chair. The scent of her perfume was so strong that it almost made her gag. It was a good thing that she hadn't already eaten or the food might have made a re-appearance.

After looking at the woman a second time she knew without being told that this was Jim's ex-wife Kathy by the way his eyes lost their sparkle and grew darker with loathing. She sent up a silent prayer that Jim never looked at her like that.

If she had to pick Jim's ex-wife out of a crowd, this chick would have been in the top five. Kathy was model tall, thin, with strawberry blonde hair, blue eyes and fair skin. She was the brand of female that most dark-haired men like Jim married in her humble opinion.

“Kathy, what in the hell are you doing here?” Jim snapped, annoyed.

“I’m on a date. I do have a right to go out with my boyfriend,” she tossed back. “I shouldn’t have to stay at home and become an old maid because of Trevor. Aren’t you out with this person?” Kathy gave her a once over like she was wondering if she was good enough to even be in the same room as her.

*Enough was enough.* She was fed up with the way this heifer was treating her. “Do you have a problem? You’re looking at me like you do.” Keira said dying for Kathy to say something to her. She wouldn’t let Jim’s ex-wife or anyone else disrespect her.

“When I want to say something to you I’ll make sure you know it. Until then stay out of my conversation with my ex-husband. Do you understand what I’m telling you?”

*Oh, no that bitch didn’t... I’ll teach her who she’s talking to.*

“How about I tell you how well I...”

“Keira, stay out of it,” Jim barked jumping into the conversation. “Don’t say another word to Kathy.”

Keira was so proud of the fact that her mouth didn’t hit the table. Jim actually told her not to tell his ex-wife off despite the fact the underweight cougar needed her eyes opened? Well, she’d leave both of them to fight without her around. She’d too much stuff going on to add Jim’s baggage to her life.

“Excuse me. I didn’t know I was overstepping my bounds,” Keira said in a low voice as she jumped up from her seat. “I’m out of here. You can stay and deal with the drama you are constantly complaining about.”

“Yes. It’s best if you do leave. Jim doesn’t need your help and I sure in the hell would never ask for it,” Kathy spat.

Keira strolled up to the other woman until only less than an inch separated them. “I’m going to let it go for tonight because I don’t want to get escorted out of here for kicking your bony butt. I have no need to spend the night in jail because I know your crazy ass would press charges.”

Storming past Jim, she shook off his touch when he tried to touch her on the arm. “Don’t touch me!”

“Keira, come back here!” Jim yelled after her. “How in the hell are you going to get back home?”

## Chapter Twenty-Seven

Keira continued on out the door leaving Jim back at their table to deal with the drama that was his ex-wife. Kathy wasn't her problem and she wasn't going to let her become her problem either. She didn't get dressed up for this shit! The front entrance was within reach when a hand wrapped around her upper arm halting her steps.

"Baby, I'm sorry," Jim whispered against the back of her neck. "I shouldn't have let Kathy stay at our table as long as she did. She had no right to talk to you like that. Come back to the table. We can forget she was even there. I want us to enjoy our dinner."

Did he think she was going to let him get off that easily after what he said to her? Jim was clearly out of his mind.

"Our date got ruined the second you told me to stay out of it. Now are you going to take me back home or do I need to catch a cab?"

"I'll take you back home," Jim replied stepping back from her. "Let's go."

Taking her by the elbow, Jim escorted her outside and gave the ticket stub to the valet. She was itching to tell Jim what she thought of him and his bitchy ass ex-wife so much that she had to bite her tongue to keep quiet.

How dare he embarrass her like that in front of a restaurant full of people? She wasn't a dumb woman, but she'd made an idiot decision tonight. She went out with a man who she knew had baggage from a previous relationship and stuff like that never went away. No matter how much you may wish for it to.

"I'm not going to allow you to act like I'm not standing here next to you," Jim snapped moving from her side to stand directly in front of her getting all up in her personal space.

"How can I forget you're here? You are big as a house."

"Good. Now let me apologize again and again until you believe that I'm truly sorry for the way I acted inside with Kathy." Jim ran the back of his knuckles down the side of her cheek. "Please go somewhere else with me. I would hate for this night to end because I let a situation get out of hand. You look too breathtaking to go back home and be mad at me for the rest of the night. Let's make the best of this and not let it get utterly ruined."

"I need to get home." Keira wasn't going to let Jim sweet talk her into changing her mind.

"Please, baby." His lips brushed over hers as he spoke. "I asked you out on another date to get to know you better."



“No.” The words were firm and final.

Jim’s mouth recaptured hers, more demanding this time. His kiss was urgent and exploratory. She had a burning desire, an aching need to agree to his demands because he was making one hell of a case with this kiss.

Slowly, Jim separated their lips until they were not quite touching. “Have I changed your mind?”

Damn him! He knew he had after a lip lock like that!

“You better be glad you’re one hell of a kisser or your ass would be taking me home instead of to another restaurant.”

“I guarantee the new place is much better than this one and there won’t be an ex-wife around bothering us.”

“I hope you’re right because you already have one strike against you,” Keira said poking her finger in his chest.

“What will take place if I get three?”

“How about you never find out?” Keira replied, but she secretly wondered if Jim would be able to keep his promises to her.

## Chapter Twenty-Eight

*Antonia's* was so beautiful that Keira had a hard time believing Jim even knew of a place like this. It used to be a large loft but the owner of the property turned it into an intimate restaurant. The entire place consisted of about ten tables that were spread throughout the building along with two booths that were tucked over in the far left corner. Jazz music played in the background just loud enough for you to hear it, but not so distracting that it would drown out your conversation.

The waiter came and took their order within ten minutes of being seated. Honestly, Keira was positive it might have been quicker than she first thought. Everything from the dimmed lights, white and black tablecloths, to the framed photos on the wall screamed romantic. *Antonia's* was the kind of a place a man took a woman he wanted to romance and make feel like she was the only woman in his life.

Jim surprised her having this place in his arsenal of seduction. He already had her with his charm and wit. One thing was for sure, any place Jim wanted to take her was never boring. Something always took her breath away about each. He was definitely delivering novelty to her life that had been missing for a very long time.

"This place is stunning," Keira said, staring at everything around her. "I could look at the beauty of it forever."

"You're right. The view is quite captivating." Jim said looking at her and not his surroundings.

"You aren't looking around you, but at me."

"I know what my eyes were on and I meant every word."

An unexpected thrill hit her body at the flirty compliment Jim gave her. He was full of admissions tonight, but she wasn't going to let them go to her head. She and Jim were still on shaky ground when it came to each other. Yes, the sex between them was off the charts, but bed shaking, screaming at the top of your lungs intercourse wasn't a reason to start a relationship. He might have another agenda going on that she wasn't even aware of.

"Keira, I want to apologize for the way I acted back at the other restaurant. I really had no clue Kathy would be there. If I had the slightest warning I would have brought you here first and avoided her altogether."

"She's a very spiteful and unhappy woman," Jim said. "She doesn't care who she drags down into the pit of gloom that she permanently resides in. I used

to think I did something to make her that way, but now I see it's all her. She thrives on being a vicious person."

The sincerity in Jim's voice caught Keira off guard. She wasn't expecting him to bring Kathy up again. She had placed that nutcase in the back of her head, because if she ever saw her again she wouldn't be responsible for her actions. Jim was an ever-changing mystery and against her better judgment she was beginning to really like this new side of him.

*Slow down, girl! Don't read more into what is happening than there is.*

"I've had the displeasure of meeting women like Kathy before. I've learned the best thing to do is to move away from them. Let's push her out of our minds. I thought you were curious about me. This is your chance to find out more about me unless you've changed your mind."

"I do want to find out everything I can, but I want you to be honest. One thing I can't stand is being lied to," Jim told her.

"Now, I'm not promising to answer every question you might ask, but the ones I do will be with the truth. Fair enough?"

Hazel eyes pierced the short distance between them. His gaze searched her face like he was trying to read her most private thoughts. "Fair enough," he agreed. "Did you think I was an asshole when we first met each other?"

Whoa! Jim didn't even give her a chance to be prepared before throwing the first hard ball question out there.

"Yes, I thought you were a world class asshole. I couldn't believe you were telling me to butt out of my best friend's relationship. Charisma is like a sister to me. I wasn't going to let Dave break her heart. I was going to make him see what a jerk he was being towards her. Charisma is such a wonderful woman and I wanted her to be with a man who respected her."

"I think the slap at the back of the head you gave him taught him a lesson." Jim chuckled. "I know you made his hangover worse."

Keira laughed at the memory. She had forgotten all about the slap. It was a good thing Dave hadn't held it against her. She was good friends with him now. He was like a big brother to her.

"He deserved it back then. I'm glad he and Charisma worked things out. They were meant to be together and Dave Jr. proves it. Charisma found her Prince Charming after dating a pond full of endless worthless frogs."

"Are you looking for your Prince Charming? Do you think your future husband is out there waiting for you? Everyone around you is married with children. Does that make the urge for you to get married even greater?"

Keira was about to answer, but stopped when she noticed the waiter coming back with their orders. It only took a few minutes to set out the food. The delicious smell of steak and potatoes surrounded them. Instead of answering Jim's question, she cut into her well-done t-bone steak and took a bite. She closed her eyes as the meat seduced her tastes buds.

"I'm jealous. I thought I was the only thing that could put such a look of pleasure on your face," said Jim.

After Keira finished chewing, she wiped her mouth with a napkin, "Don't be jealous. I haven't had anything to eat, so I'm starving. This food is outstanding and to answer your first question. No. I don't have a need to get married at the moment. When the time comes I'll know it."

"Glad you like it. I love pleasing a woman. Are you ready for more questions?"

"Go on. I'm ready for the next one," Keira said.

"Do you like being a flight attendant?" Jim had heard Charisma talk about Keira's job off and on, but he never really heard her bring it up in conversation. "Are you ever planning on going back to work?"

"I love it!" Keira gushed. "It's as close to my dream job as I can get. I fell right into it without too much trouble. I'm able to deal with the heavy workload and roll with the punches extremely well. A lot of it might have to do with my age. I wasn't fresh out of school when I landed the job. I worked at a couple of other jobs first before deciding to apply for a flight attendant position."

"Did you have to return to college for any more training?" Jim asked.

"No, I already had a bachelor degree in business administration. I could have applied with an associate's degree or a high school diploma. I was told recruiters were impressed with applicants who finished what they started.

"Now, some of my co-workers did go back to college and take extra classes like communications, nursing, police or fire science. Yet I didn't see a need for me to do it. I think the two years I worked as an assistant manager at a shipping business sealed the deal for me."

Keira took another bite of her food while Jim did the same. It felt somewhat strange to be talking about her job and she hadn't been near an airport or flown since the crash.

"Why do you think that job helped you?" Jim asked, jumping right back into the conversation without missing a beat.

"Having a background in customer service is also very important when airlines think about hiring you for a vacant position. They want to make sure you can handle any kind of situation when it comes to the public. I guess it shows you might be better seasoned to deal with a problem if it occurred in the air.

"A majority of people most of the time are loud, abrasive, aloof and downright condescending if they choose to be." Keira knew this from personal experience. "I guess the only downside to the job are two things."

"They are...?" Jim pushed, wanting her to continue.

"Sometimes the airlines will ask you to relocate to another city where they have a flight attendant base. Of course, if you say yes to the move your options are greater and if you turn the move down your flights are more limited."

“I guess since you have the ability to speak your mind even without provocation, you wouldn’t have any nervousness about doing it in front of a packed plane of passengers.”

“Keep it up and I’m not going to tell you the second downfall of my job.” Jim would stop teasing her because he would want to know.

Jim picked up his water glass, took a long sip before waving his hand for her to finish. God, she was right. He would keep quiet, so he could finish hearing about her job.

“With the airline industry, seniority rules within every position that is held, from the customer service agents, mechanics, flight attendants and pilots. All of us have pay rates, schedules and benefits based on the length of time we have been at our jobs.”

“I didn’t know pay rates went that deeply with your job,” Jim said. “Are you up near the top when it comes to seniority?”

She wished!

“No, I’m still a reserve. I won’t be a line holder unless someone retires and I don’t see that happening anytime soon.”

“Reserve...Line holder? What are those? What is the difference between the two?”

“Sorry, I’m just used to talking about my job to other flight attendants. A line holder is the position every reserve dreams about getting in their future career. They get their flying schedule at least one month in advance. They even have knowledge of when and where they’re going to work plus what airplane.

“A reserve is used to fill in an open flying time spot or take the place of a line holder when they are sick or on holiday. Since I’m still a reserve my day usually begins with a call from a crew scheduler. She usually asks me what flight I want for the following day.” Keira was growing tired of talking about her job. She was very curious about Jim and beyond ready to learn more about him.

“I think I’ve talked about myself enough for one night. Why don’t you tell me more about you? What made you stop being a construction worker hottie to becoming a hunk who owns a motorcycle shop?”

## Chapter Twenty-Nine

A woman's opinion about his looks never mattered much to him, but he liked that Keira found him attractive. He wanted her to be attracted to him as much as he was to her. He would have lost money if someone told him the woman he argued with at the airport a little over a year ago would be his dinner date tonight.

Shit, he would have lost money about being on a date in general because he had sworn off getting involved with anyone, but there was just *something* about Keira that made him get rid of his no dating rule.

"I've always had a vision of owning my own motorcycle shop. Motorcycles became a passion of mine when I was a little kid. Other kids in my neighborhood wanted to be the usual like a cop, lawyer or sports pro, but I was the odd ball by saying I wanted to take apart and rebuild motorcycles.

"A man who lived next door to me had a vintage Harley Davidson and I would watch him any chance I got when he worked on it. As soon as I was old enough I got a job and bought one. I owned it for years, but something came up so I had to sell it."

Jim missed the hell out of that motorcycle. She heard it in his voice despite the fact he was trying his best to hide it from her. "Why did you have to get rid of it?" Yeah, she was being nosy, but who cared.

"I got into some financial problems right after I got married to Kathy. I didn't want to go into debt and have a bad credit rating in case I got lucky enough to buy a motorcycle shop. So, I sold my prized Harley Davidson to pay it off."

"Was it your debt or your ex-wife's?"

"How did you know that?" Jim asked, clearly surprised that she was able to figure it out so easily.

"You don't come across as the type to rake up a lot of debt. Also, after having the unfortunate pleasure of meeting Kathy, she was the picture of a woman who knew how to waste a lot of money and not give a damn about it."

Jim chuckled at Keira's assessment. She had read his ex perfectly. Kathy loved money and especially if she didn't have to work for it. He knew that she wasn't about to find a job with the child support and alimony he was sending her every month.

Why should he lie?

“You’re right. Kathy blew through three of our credit cards in under three months. I was so busy working at CCD that I didn’t know the damage she had done until the credit card companies started to call.”

“Is that another reason that pushed you to get a divorce?”

He wondered when that question was going to come up. He hated telling people the real reason for his divorce. Kathy’s cheating still left a bad taste in his mouth. He knew that after Trevor was born their relationship started going downhill. Honestly, it was over before then, but he’d wanted to give it his best shot. He should have been smart enough to break ties then and move on.

Now, there was this doubt in the back of his mind about why Kathy strayed from their marriage bed in the first place. Had he not been a good enough husband? Or had he truly married an untrustworthy bitch and not been aware of it beforehand? He remembered how Dave told him that Kathy had come on to him numerous times when he had come to their house looking for him.

“No, I divorced Kathy for another reason entirely. We just weren’t compatible anymore and we parted ways.”

“How was that on Trevor? He’s such a sweet little boy.”

“Trevor is an amazing kid. He’s the only good thing that came from my horrible eight year marriage,” Jim said.

“Do you think you will ever get married again?”

“I would never get married again. I’m not dumb enough to make that mistake twice in my life.”

“Hayward thought the same thing and now look, he’s married with four gorgeous children,” Keira pointed out.

Yeah, Jim never thought Hayward would get over the death of his first wife and child, but he did with True. True was a special woman and the perfect match for Hayward.

“I’m glad Hayward found love again; however, I’m firm in my decision. I’m not crazy enough to get caught up in another marriage with a money-hungry woman. My best friends lucked out with their wives, but they were willing to take that chance. I’m not.”

Keira watched him for a while like she was trying to determine if he was telling the truth and whether or not she could call him on it. He hoped that she spoke her mind because he found her never-mince-words attitude very refreshing. She wasn’t into playing games like some women he had come across.

“You shouldn’t let Kathy have so much control over you. Yes, you had a bad marriage with her, but it doesn’t mean a second marriage will end up the same way.”

“Thanks for the advice,” Jim retorted. He was nice enough to listen to what she had to say, but it wasn’t going to make him change his mind. Marriage was 100% out of his future!

“I can take a hint,” Keira said. “I won’t bring up the horrible “m” word again. So, what else should we do?”

Standing up, Jim held out his hand. “How about we get in one quick dance before I have to take you back home?”

Keira took his hand and let him pull her out of her chair. “I’m surprised you know how to dance. I don’t see you showing off your moves on the dance floor.”

“Baby, if you thought I could work your sexy little body in the bedroom, wait until I get you out on the dance floor.”

Oh shit!

She hadn’t forgotten about her night with Jim and if his dance moves were that good then she was in for one hell of a dance.



# Chapter Thirty

“I’m too good to be doing this meaningless job. I deserve better than this and everyone knows it,” Dalton complained as he poked another piece of litter with the stick in his hand. He wasn’t going back to that shitty bus today. He’d come to that decision when he got up this morning and found his new cellmate standing over him with that ‘look’ in his eye. He had been alone in his cell until two days ago when the guard brought him his new addition, Bam Bam.

Bam Bam stood six feet six inches with muscles in places men shouldn’t have them. He made it known the first night he was there that before the week was out the two of them were going to become *very* good friends. The hell he would be Bam Bam’s personal ass toy. He would get himself shot by a guard first before he’d allow that man anywhere near his ass.

Looking around, Dalton noticed that the guards weren’t paying a lot of attention to him because they were more focused on the two prisoners mouthing off to each other a few feet in front of them. Keith and Bucky were always into it about something. They hated each other. He might even go so far as to say their distain might be greater than his for that bitch True.

The noise coming from the two a distance away made him suddenly realize how much he had to get out of here. He was lucky enough to be put on a crew with other prisoners that were determined to have a very low escape risk.

He truly got lucky when he got approval from the strict classification review team for this job to develop good work ethics, expand his work expertise and abilities while providing a service to the community.

God, if three women hadn’t been on the review panel this time and found him attractive he wouldn’t have found a way out of his cell. He had applied several times before and gotten turned down by an all male committee.

General labor wasn’t his type of work at all. Who in the world dreamt about working in landscaping, carpentry, maintenance, sweeping or fucking janitorial work? When he’d had his old six figure position, he’d never bothered learning the names of people who worked those meaningless jobs and now he was one of those losers!

After he had been chosen the committee tried to convince him how rewarding it would be for him. What a load of crap! The only reason the Prison Work Crew Program existed was it gave the community cheap labor, and the jails got more notice for trying to help criminals learn a skill so they might be able to put it towards a ‘real job’ after they got released.

Now all he had to do was find a way out of here!

Since he was on the litter crew, he was minus the handcuffs around his wrists and ankles. It would be a breeze to get out of this stupid job. They were off the highway more totally than yesterday. The spot was closer to the woods. All he had to do was cause some kind of distraction and then he could make a break for it.

Without a doubt, if he didn't escape today, Bam Bam was going to visit his bunk. He wouldn't be able to handle a night of Bam Bam proving to him who was the boss.

"Come on, think of something to get away from these guards," Dalton mumbled as he picked up a can and tossed it in the bag tied to his belt. He only had about thirty minutes left before they had to get back on the bus and go back to the prison.

Maybe he should forget about a plan and make a run for it. The guards might shoot him down. No! He couldn't go out like that. He had to go through with his plan to pay True back for crossing him.

In jail, he would read all of those business magazines about how she and Hayward would travel back and forth between Montana and Los Angeles for his construction job during the summer. She was even bold enough to show off her children in those magazines.

True sold him out to get her dream family. Well, it was about time True stopped living the ultimate reality and came crashing back down to earth with the rest of the common people.

"Man, I told you that if you brushed against me again I was going to kick your skinny ass!" Keith snapped.

"Do it you crack head! I dare you to touch me! I'll beat you so bad your own mother won't even recognize your ugly face," Bucky hollered back.

Spinning around, Dalton saw the two guys from earlier were back into it again. He noticed how the guards were rushing over to break up the fight before it grew into something worse and more uncontrollable.

"Let them fight," one of the other male inmates hollered. "I haven't seen someone bloody in a hell of a long time."

"Harrison, shut up!" Correction Officer Kirk bellowed, running towards the two men. "We don't need a fight."

*Yes we do*, Dalton thought to himself as he slowly untied the trash bag from his belt.

It would only hold him down after he made a mad dash for the forest behind him. This was going to be his only chance at getting away from the guards. He was positive the prison wouldn't let all of them come back out here after this fight.

*Keep fighting so I can get away.*

The entire cell block knew of the hatred between Bucky and Keith. They were constantly trying to find ways to hurt each other. Dropping the bag on the

ground, Dalton inched his way back until he was at the very edge of the woods. He saw that Officer Thompson was trying to get the other men back on the bus so a crowd wouldn't be around to encourage Bucky and Keith.

It only took a split second for him to make a mad dash into the woods. He kept running until he couldn't hear the yelling and screaming from the guards or other prisoners. He was almost free and nothing was going to stand in his way of making a surprise visit to True Campbell and her picture perfect family.

# Chapter Thirty-One

“I hate to admit it, but that darker color on the walls does make the shop look bigger. You were right to fire the painters you hired and do the work yourself. The white paint they wanted to use would have made the space look smaller instead of larger. Do you think I can hire you to paint a room in my house?” Keira sauntered up to Jim. “I have one room in particular that really needs some work done to it. How much do you charge for an hour or two of your time?”

Tossing the paint roller into the paint tray on the floor, Jim slipped his hand through Keira’s belt loop and tugged her against his body. “I wouldn’t charge you anything,” he replied kissing the side of her neck. She moved her neck to the left giving him more access to her spot. Jim took the hint and nibbled at it causing moisture to pool into her panties.

“Do you know how much I wanted to spend the night with you yesterday?” Jim confessed. “You were all I could think about after I dropped Trevor back off at Kathy’s last night. I almost called to see if you would want to come over.”

“Hey! I’m not a damn booty call,” Keira snapped slapping Jim hard on the arm. “I won’t come over to your house just because you have an itch.”

“Keira, I know you aren’t a booty call,” he quickly corrected. “I was missing you and was dying to have you in bed next to me.”

“Nice save, Mr. Russell.” Keira moved back into Jim’s arms and wrapped her arms around his neck. “Do you need some help painting these walls? I’m bored out of my mind inside my house. I’m not used to having this much free time on my hands.”

“Do you know how to paint?” Jim asked, his voice filled with semi-doubt.

“I’ll have you know that I have painted more walls than you can count. Charisma constantly called me to help her. Who do you think helped her paint Dave Jr.’s room while big Dave was at work?”

“Great. I would love your help.”

Keira stepped back to move out of Jim’s embrace, but he wouldn’t let her go. “What is it?”

“Have you really gotten over me owning your father’s business now? I can’t read you when it comes to this. I think we should get everything out in the open before we get any deeper into what we are trying to build here.” His eyes took her in and never left hers for an instant. He wasn’t going to let them go anywhere until she told him the truth.

“Honestly, it still stings that my father sold his life’s work to a stranger. I know that I wasn’t interested in rebuilding bikes, but he should have of at least given me the chance to see if I could have figured it out. Yet, he gave everything he worked his fingers to the bone for to a man that I had only met once and didn’t have a very high opinion of.”

“Are your emotions still so raw that you won’t ever be able to give this weird connection between us a chance to move on further?” Jim questioned with more than a hint of uneasiness in his deep voice.

“I think I’m open to see where things could go as long as you understand that I’m going to be myself no matter what. I’ll give you my advice whether you think it’s good or bad. When you’re being an ass I will tell you. Can you handle that?” Keira loved who she was and she wasn’t about to change for any man...not even a man who could make her toes curl just from one kiss.

“Sweetheart, I can handle anything you toss my way,” Jim told her then planted a hard kiss on her mouth before stepping back.

“Let’s get these walls done because I have a surprise for you later.”

“Surprise? I love surprises. What is it?” Keira was excited.

“Paint the walls and you’ll get it after that. Or can you not live up to your words? Maybe you aren’t as good as you bragged about to me.”

Keira was never the type to back down from a challenge. Picking up a dry roller off the floor, she dipped it into the paint tray between her and Jim. “You’re in for it now, Mr. Russell” she threatened rolling the first coat of paint on the wall. She was going to show Jim who he was messing with.

Jim watched Keira for a few minutes thinking how lucky he was to have found someone like her and for once the thought of getting remarried didn’t scare the hell out of him.

## Chapter Thirty-Two

“Have you talked to Jim lately? I haven’t seen him around the house. I wanted to thank him for the baby gift he got for Dave Jr.” Charisma asked her husband as she placed their son back in his crib. Dave Jr. was so much like his father that it was scary. She loved both of the handsome men in her life with everything in her heart.

“No, I haven’t spoken to Jim lately. He’s been busy with remodeling *Choppers* and dealing with Kathy about the way she treats Trevor. She’s been spending up the alimony and child support money on other things instead of their son. I think he’s about at his wits end with that woman. Hell, I’m not even sure if he’s on speaking terms with Keira. I know that I asked him to keep an eye on her. Maybe try to get her to open up to him a little since he was around her so much. I might need to go and see if he has made any progress on my suggestion.”

“You know those two are like fire and oil. Anytime they are both in a room together at the same time an explosion happens. It’s the best thing to watch in the world,” Charisma said with a laugh.

Coming further into the nursery, Dave kissed Charisma on the cheek before glancing down at his son asleep in his crib. “When do you think the two of them are going to finally figure it out?”

“Keira is very stubborn. She might not admit to her feelings for a while.”

“I know of another woman like her. It’s a struggle to deal with a female with such a strong-willed personality.”

“Keep talking about me and you’ll end up sleeping on the new couch you begged me to let you get last week,” Charisma threatened taking a peek at her handsome husband from the corner of her eye. Dave added so much to her life that she hadn’t known was missing until he showed her.

“I’m not worried about you kicking me out of our bed.” Dave grinned as he picked her up in his strong arms.

“Why not?” She couldn’t wait to hear this.

“Dave Jr. needs a baby brother, so we need to get busy working on that and I know you always put your all into everything you do.” Carrying her out of the nursery, Dave headed for their bedroom at the very end of the hall.

“How do you know me so well?” Charisma asked.

“It’s a gift.”

## Chapter Thirty-Three

The hot spray from the shower pounded down around them as two large hands rubbed the body wash into Keira's stiff back and then moved around to give her breasts the same attention. It was absolutely the best feeling in the entire world. It was almost enough to make her hate showering alone.

"Does that feel good?" A hot, warm breath whispered by her ear as fingers pinched her nipples.

"Yes," Keira moaned as Jim eased his thigh between her legs. "I need..."

"What? Tell me what your body wants me to do."

Why was he playing with her? Jim *knew* what she was dying for.

"You."

"Me?"

"Yes!"

Removing his leg, Jim thrust his middle finger deep inside of her wetness. "Shit!" He growled and gently bit her shoulder. "You're so snug. Do you how incredible your body feels wrapped around my finger?"

Keira nodded her head, but that wasn't what Jim sought after. Letting go of her breasts, he slid his hand through her hair and tugged her head back. "Answer me...don't nod your head. I need to hear the words."

"I feel it," she whispered, completely lost in the sensations he had racing through her entire body. "My body never seems whole now unless you're touching it or buried deep inside of me. It's like I'm missing a part of me."

Using his knee to spread her legs even farther part, he worked two more thick, calloused fingers into her body. She *was* so close to an orgasm. All she needed was a few more minutes and she would be there. As she was about to achieve the ultimate pleasure Jim whispered four words that shocked the hell out of her.

"Don't you dare come."

No! She had misunderstood him. Keira tried moving her hips, but Jim placed a hand on her waist stilling her movements. She couldn't believe he was teasing her like this! She had to come. She wasn't going to be able to hold out much longer...no matter how much he told her not to come.

"Do you want me to stop?" he questioned while he brushed his erection against her back. It felt thick, hard and ready to go. Why was he torturing her like this?

“No! Don’t stop! Please...don’t,” she cried as Jim sped up the movements of his fingers.

The water continued to pour around them, but Keira blocked out everything except Jim’s hands and what they were doing to her body. Shit! Her hair was going to be a mess in the morning because she wasn’t wearing a shower cap, but it was a price she would gladly pay to keep Jim where he was

“How about we get out of this cold shower?” Reaching past her, Jim turned off the water and removed his fingers from her body. Seconds later, the glass door was pushed open. Jim stepped out and picked her up into his arms.

The trip to her bedroom took less than a minute. Placing her near the middle of the bed, Jim grabbed her by the ankles and moved her down until her ass was almost hanging off the edge.

“Remember you can’t come.” That was the only warning she got before Jim dropped to his knees, spread her legs wide and ran his thick, rough tongue against her wet core.

Keira nearly came on the spot. The wild emotions Jim was causing in her body scared the hell out of her. She had to make him stop.

“You have to...” Lifting her hand, she weakly pushed at his shoulder only to have her hand brushed away.

“Baby, I’ll tell you when I’m ready to stop. Let me finish. Let me make you feel good, Keira.” Opening his mouth even wider, Jim lapped up even more of her juices into his mouth.

She needed to come so badly. It was driving her crazy to hold back this long. Jim actually couldn’t think she would be able to hold off much longer. What had she done to Jim for him to treat her like this?

Her heart raced when Jim moved away from her body and then repositioned her back in the middle of the bed. She couldn’t look away from how the sweat mingled with the water from the shower made his body seem hotter, sexier and he was all hers—to love.

Whoa! Jim wasn’t in love with her and she didn’t have those feelings for him either. They were only enjoying each other’s company with some hot sex added in to the mix. She pushed the wayward thought from her mind as she gave her attention back to the man standing between her legs.

Jim quickly covered her waiting body with his placing the head of his cock at her wet core. “Keira, you belong to me in and out of the bedroom. Do you understand me?”

“I belong to no one, but myself.”

“You’re wrong.” Jim worked more of his cock into her body. It felt like he was touching her womb and he wasn’t all the way in yet. “You’re mine. I won’t and don’t share.” Leaning forward, he nibbled at her bottom lip thrusting inside of her the last few inches.

She felt the heady, drugging awareness of his lips against her skin. Moving down he kissed the pulsing hollow at the base of her throat.



“Tell me what I want to hear,” he demanded against her damp skin.

“I belong to myself,” Keira whimpered as Jim flexed his hips driving his cock deeper into her.

“Wrong answer, sweetheart.”

Grabbing her wrists, he tugged them above her head and held them there with one of his hands. His free hand moved down to play with her swollen nipples that had been begging for his attention all night.

“I love your nipples. They remind me of ripe blackberries. I could suck at them for the rest of the night until early in the morning.”

With each stroke of Jim’s cock, Keira sensed she was losing a part of herself to him. He was playing her body like a well-tuned instrument.

Keira mewled in the back of her throat when Jim gave her nipple a small bite before moving over to her right breast. She wasn’t going to last much longer. With each movement of his hips, Jim was driving her closer and closer to the edge of her orgasms.

“Can I come now?”

Please let him say yes!

“Do you belong to me?” Jim stilled his actions suddenly shocking the hell out of her.

“What...are you doing?” Keira practically cried the words.

“Stopping until I get the answer I want to hear and it better be the right one,” he warned gently.

Damn him and his need to control everything!

“You...I belong to you.”

Without a single warning, Jim pulled out of her until only the thick head was left before thrust back deeply and completely inside of her.

“Come for me...Keira. Do it now!”

No more encouragement was needed as she came long and hard screaming Jim’s name as her orgasms raced through her making everything around her disappear into the background. Jim wiped every ounce of strength from her body and all she could do was close her eyes and fight off sleep. Hell, she had just come down from the best earth-shattering release in her adult life.

When Jim was sure Keira had got what she needed, he grasped her hips riding her and pushing her body to the limits again. “Yes...Shit...Yes!” He screamed as he continued to pump into her wet core. He let go of her wrists to grab her waist instead. The bed creaked from the pounding it was getting from their lovemaking and the sound was turning her back on.

With a loud growl, he tossed his head causing the ends of his hair to brush over them as his orgasm rocketed through his entire body almost causing him to black out from the sheer pleasure of it. He collapsed on Keira’s soft body after it was over.

Keira felt her breasts crushed against the hardness of Jim’s hard chest. Skin to skin, they were like one person. Closing her eyes, she tried to relax as Jim

separated their bodies and fell on the bed next to her. Her skin still prickled with heat even after their love making was over. Keira vaguely sensed Jim covering their drenched bodies with a light sheet, kissing her on the forehead and pulling her exhausted body close to his before drifting off to sleep.

## Chapter Thirty-Four

*“You let me die,” the man yelled at her. “You were supposed to save me but you didn’t!” He took a step towards her with this crazed look in his light blue eyes.*

*“I’m so sorry. I should have helped you,” Keira cried as the man ran up to her. He grabbed her by the arms and shook her so hard that her teeth rattled. “Damn you! I had a family to get back to. You should have died instead of me!”*

*“Stop...” Keira yelled, shoving at the man, but he wouldn’t stop shaking her. “Let go of me!”*

*“Not until you admit what you did,” he threatened shaking her harder than the first time.*

*“Leave me alone!” Keira was totally lost in the nightmare completely and utterly caught up with fighting the man who had been haunting her subconscious for months. The more he touched her the more she tried to get away from his touch, but he wasn’t going away no matter how she prayed for him too.*

\* \* \* \*

“Keira, wake up!” Jim yelled shaking her for the fourth time. He’d been sound asleep until he got awakened by her frightened screams. He never thought after the surprise shower and outstanding sex they shared Keira would have a nightmare screaming and yelling about the plane crash. As long as he lived he would never forget the first scream that shook him from his sleep.

“Baby...wake up!”

“No!” Keira hollered sitting straight up in bed with a wild-eyed look, shaking with sweat pouring down her beautiful face. “What happened?”

“You were having a bad dream about the plane crash,” Jim pulled Keira against his chest and rubbed his hand down her damp back. “Do you want to talk about it?”

“I can’t...I won’t.” Keira tried to move out of his arms, but he tightened his grip. He didn’t have a clue Keira was being so tormented by what happened to her. She couldn’t keep this all bottled up inside for much longer.

She needed to talk to someone. Maybe he could get the ball rolling first and then find a professional for her to see. The thought of his woman being so terrified made him sick and angry all at once. He would be able to fight a man if

he was physically harming her, but he couldn't fight the nightmares running around in her head.

"Keira, please open up to me. It tore at my heart to see you so upset and I couldn't do anything to help you because it's in your mind. Let me in," Jim asked, softly.

"I'm not used to depending on someone else for support," she confessed. "I usually bounce back from things pretty quickly, but not this. It's horrible and painful how the crash is staying with me. I should have died with everyone else, but I was spared for some reason."

"You went through a traumatic experience, some of it's bound to stay with you; however, you can't let it eat you up from the inside. That's the worst thing you can do."

Unable to take what Jim was telling her, Keira shoved him away and got out of the bed. Picking his t-shirt off the floor, she pulled it on covering herself. "You aren't getting it," she said as she paced in front of the bed. "I have tried to get over it, but I can't. It's burned into my memory forever."

"Do you know that for a month after the crash while I was in the hospital I would scream in my sleep 'Grab your ankles', or something else my flight attendant training taught me? I was in really bad shape."

"Sweetheart, why didn't you tell Charisma about this?" Jim asked.

"How could I burden my best friend with this after she went through such a difficult pregnancy and labor with the baby? I wasn't about to be so selfish. My problems were nothing compared to hers."

"You know Charisma would have helped you the best way she could. The two of you have been friends since college and a friendship like that can hold up through anything. You and Charisma are more like sisters instead of best friends."

Keira wasn't going to do what Jim was pushing her to do, so she wished that he would stop pressing her. This was her life and no one else's.

"Death is a hard thing to swallow in general, but when you're the only survivor on a plane full of people it becomes ten times worse. Do you know that I keep having recurring dreams about the same man? He continues to die and each way gets more painful. The one I had last week showed him with no limbs. How could he save himself without those?" Keira waved her arms in the air. The longer Keira spoke about the crash the worse Jim felt. He had thought so many bad things about her when they first met and a few more after she gave him so much trouble about her father's shop, but that entire attitude was hiding so much pain. Pain that he vowed to take away if it was the last thing he would do. Keira didn't deserve to be carrying this weight around on her small shoulders.

"I can't talk about this anymore," Keira said. She stopped pacing and stood at the foot of the bed looking worn down and stunning all at the same time.

"Baby, you have to unburden yourself. Is there more you aren't telling me?"

Of course there was more, yet she wasn't going to tell Jim the worst of it. He may not love or care about her, but this confession would make him hate her. It was better left unsaid and in the back of her mind.

"Keira, I asked you a question."

"Yes, there is something else. I can promise you that if you hear this you will walk out of my door and never set foot in my house again."

"Sweetheart, I'm older than you and have lived through some horrible things that none of the guys know about. I'm positive whatever secret you're holding in about the crash won't scare me away from you."

She hadn't realized what a powerful opponent she had chosen to discuss the plane crash with. She couldn't deny the truth any longer. She was falling in love with Jim and she didn't know when those emotions had wormed their way into her heart.

Would she be able to handle it if Jim did walk out after he found out the truth? Quickly, she banished the thought from her mind. There wasn't time for such thoughts. She could think about them later if Jim did run after her confession.

Wiping her sweaty palms on Jim's shirt, Keira calmed her nerves while she got her thoughts together. "I haven't been completely honest about the plane crash," she confessed, softly.

"What have you lied about?"

"The man didn't happen to go over the cliff. I let him fall."

# Chapter Thirty-Five

Pensively, Keira looked at Jim from her position at the foot of the bed. She began to wonder if she should feel some guilt from the relief she felt for telling someone about what really happened with the plane crash.

The event had been holding her down for so long that she never thought she ever would be able to confess to anyone about what she had done. She would understand if Jim got dressed and ran from the room like the hounds of hell were after him.

She was curious that the calm expression on Jim's face hadn't changed since she'd spoken her deepest secret. It was almost like he hadn't heard her or he was in total shock that he had been sleeping with a murderer.

"Did you hear what I just told you?" Keira asked.

"Yes, I heard every single word that came out of your mouth, but I know you don't expect me to believe you killed a man in cold blood because I won't. So, why not tell me all of the events on the plane leading up to the crash?" Jim patted the spot on the bed next to him.

Keira got back on the bed and tucked her legs at the side so she was facing Jim. How could she penetrate the deliberate confusion Jim was trying to give to her? Taking a deep breath, she had to fight her own battle of personal demons not to freak out while telling the story.

"Everything was going perfect that day from arriving at the airport early, checking our emergency equipment and catering supplies. The greeting of the passengers went the smoothest it had gone in months. Even the first class passengers weren't throwing a fit if their wait was a little longer than usual.

"See, usually there is one person, maybe two, that want their stuff and they won't stop bothering you until it's up to standard for them. None of that occurred the day of the crash and should have been a warning sign to all of us.

"While the other flight attendants were making sure the overhead bins were secure and helping out anyone who might be having a problem, I was doing a second passenger count. Some companies don't require it anymore, but the pilots still like it so I did it. After all of the overhead bins were shut and the passengers were seated, the flight was ready for departure.

"Before the door was closed Tiffany handed me a copy of the manifest that consisted of all of the first class passengers, passengers who might have any special needs which might include the meal, and the gate connections.

“After that we pointed out the exits, enabling the slides to inflate if the doors come open. We got through the safety video, one final cabin walk through and then Tiffany, Amanda, and I strapped ourselves in for the long flight. God, we leveled-off to 10,000 feet without a problem and all of us were talking about how amazingly good things were going for us that day. Now, I think we might have cursed ourselves by being too happy.”

“Why would you say that?” Jim said as he reached out and placed his hand on her knee.

“It wasn’t two hours later when somehow we suddenly hit some unexpected turbulence. The beverage cart flew by and crashed into the rear of the cabin. Oxygen masks started falling down which sets off a chain reaction and then people were praying, screaming and clutching each other in fear.

“I started telling passengers to prepare just in case we crashed and soon as the words are out of my mouth, we felt the jolt from the plane hitting something and I mean not three seconds later the plane starts going down and I mean a FAST!

“After that everything is such a blur.” Keira cried brushing away tears. “I do recall Tiffany and Amanda yelling my name before something hit me on the head and everything went black.”

“Something hit you...I never knew that,” Jim said rubbing her leg.

“I told you I hate talking about this. It makes the hole in my heart even wider. Can’t you leave it alone? Just leave it alone,” she pleaded.

“No, you need to get through this first time. It will help you get out the rest of the ordeal.”

The undeniable and dreadful facts were Jim was telling her the truth. She did need to get some of this off her chest before she thought about going seeing Dr. Gearan, because she wouldn’t be able to get her job back without his approval.

“Yes...I think it was a piece of luggage or something. When I woke up all the back end of the plane was gone and so were most of the passengers. I was in such shock I couldn’t do anything at first, but stand there and look around. But it didn’t last long before my training kicked in. I checked the other passengers that were still strapped into their seats, but none of them were alive either. I tried to get to the cock pit, but it had caved in.

“I started screaming for anyone to say anything if they could hear me. It seems like I waited for hours and I thought I was truly alone until I heard a faint sound coming from the back of the plane. Which I thought was impossible since most of it was completely gone and a huge hole was left in its place.

“However, I ran over there despite the fact my head was still spinning and blood was pouring down the left side of my face. If there was somebody out there who needed my help I was going to give it to them no matter the cost.

“Stepping as close as I could to the opening I saw a man hanging onto a thin piece of metal with two hands and half of the missing passengers were broken on

the rocks below him. I had no clue that I could scream so loud until I spotted Tiffany and Amanda down there among the dead.

"The man kept hollering at me to calm down so I could help him back into the plane," Keira said as she looked past Jim and found a spot on the wall to concentrate on instead of his eyes.

"Keira, look at me," Jim demanded. "I need to see your eyes to make sure you are still with me and not back in your memories."

"I won't be able to finish the story if I look at you. I swear I'll be fine. I need to get all of this out in the open, however, I can't stand to see the pity hidden in your eyes. I won't have the power to do what I have to do."

"Baby..."

"Jim, let me do this my way or I'm done talking about it," Keira warned.

"Go ahead." Jim grabbed her hand, but didn't do anything else.

Keira fought away the urge to snatch her hand away. She wasn't used to depending on too many people in her life besides Charisma and her family. Having Jim here with her like this was a bit unsettling, but she would have to teach herself how to accept help more.

"I had to fight off going into negative panic pretty fast or I was going to be in bad shape and someone was counting on me to save his life too. It took me less than five minutes to get myself under control to help the man."

"What did you try to do?"

"I got down on my stomach and reached my hand out for him to take it, but he was scared because of our height and weight difference. He was about six feet one and around a hundred eighty five pounds. I assured him he had nothing to be scared of, that I would be able to pull him back into the plane.

"He stared at my hand for a minute or two before he let go with his left hand and reached for mine. I was able to grab it pretty quickly, but I slid more towards the edge and that's when panic set in. All I could think about was what would happen if I let him go and he fell down there with all other poor people."

"Keira..." Jim whispered, rubbing her suddenly cold hand.

"His name was Josh Strickland? I learned that after he was dead."

"Sweetheart, you left out something. How did Josh fall?"

"Don't you know? I wasn't strong enough to hold on to him. He lost his grip with his right hand that was holding the metal rod and went down taking me with him. But somehow I got tangled up in something and didn't hit the rocks like he did. I'll never forget his '*please God save me*' screams."

"I should be dead with everyone else, but I got spared and I don't see why?" Confused, Keira tried to tug her hand away from Jim; however, he wouldn't let her go.

"I can tell you why that," Jim said as he laid her down on the bed covering her body with his. "You were meant to be here to make a change in someone's life. The day of the crash wasn't your day to die and you should be so thankful. I know that I'm very grateful you're still here."



“Why? When we aren’t making love we’re at each other throats about everything from the shop to your ex-wife.” She was realistic and wasn’t about to let Jim pretend the only thing they had in common wasn’t sex.

“Keira Winters, I want you to listen to me because this is the last time I’m going to tell you this. I’m here with you because I like how you make me feel.”

“How do I make you feel?”

## Chapter Thirty-Six

Jim hesitated, measuring Keira for a moment. His mind was congested with a touch of fear at telling her how he was growing to care about her. Every fiber in his body pushed him to do it, but there was a nagging doubt in the back of his mind that Keira could hurt him worse than Kathy ever had, but it wasn't going to let that stop him.

"You make me feel like I'm the most important man in the world. Do you know that you're the only woman who gets what makes me tick? You're so refreshing from the other women I've dated in my past before my marriage and after.

"Even when you aren't around all I have to do is think about you and I get this smile on my face. I used to tease the guys about how quickly they fell in love with their wives, but I'm beginning to see that when you have a good woman in your life, it's hard not to jump in feet first into a relationship and give it all that you got plus more."

"Are you telling me this because you don't want me to feel bad about killing Josh?" Keira asked tracing the side of his face with her fingertips.

"No...I'm telling you this because it's how I feel. You're quick to give out 'helpful advice' to show me or anyone else they can do better. At first, I thought you did it to be malicious, but I know that I'm wrong now."

"I never want to hurt anyone by being honest. I only point out errors because I want my friends to live up to their best potential."

Grabbing the edge of his t-shirt, Jim dragged it inch by inch up Keira's body until it was off her and tossed over the side of the bed. "Do you think I've lived up to my best potential when it comes to you?" he questioned as he ran the palms of his hands over her nipples. "I mean I'm not against you pointing out things I might need to improve to make you happier."

"Hmmm...I can't think of anything I have a problem with," Keira moaned lifting her back slightly off the bed.

"I have a feeling you aren't telling me the entire truth." Leaning down, Jim licked at the tips of her breasts before drawing a nipple into his mouth. He rolled his tongue around Keira's plump nipple like it was a sugary Werther's Original.

"I'm not," Keira panted as her hands pulled at the sheets.

He released her nipple with a loud pop. "I still don't believe you. I think I need to find a way to make you want me so badly that you will go crazy from it.

Nothing else in the world will matter except how soon it will be before I'm back between these beautiful, smooth thighs of yours."

Jim fondled one of Keira's breasts with one of his hands making sure to keep the nipple hard in case he craved another taste. His free hand slid down her taut stomach to the swell of her hips.

"Did you know that these are the first things I noticed about you?" Jim asked as he spread her thighs wider and slipped his body between them. "You were walking away from Dave at the airport after you had slapped him and your uniform was hitting in all of the right places."

"I thought the only thing you noticed about me that day was my bitchy attitude."

"I may have thought you needed to take it down a notch, but I know a stunning looking woman when I see one. Dave even made a comment about it, but let's not talk anymore. I have something better in mind."

"Oh, I like the way you think," Keira whispered as she rubbed her lower body against his erection.

His cock jumped to life even more and grew another inch. Jim was amazed at how his body never seemed to tire of Keira. It might have to do with the fact she was the most perfect looking woman he had ever laid eyes on. From her full, plump breasts that constantly called to him, down to her flat stomach and long, limber legs. He couldn't find one part of Keira he wasn't dying to touch each and every day.

Jim's breath caught in his throat when Keira worked her hips enough to slip the head of his cock inside of her body. "Shit!" He wasn't going to be able to make it last if Keira kept doing stuff like that. He had plans for her so he better get control of the situation before it was out of his hands.

Easing his erection out of her body, Jim repositioned Keira on the bed until he was level with her tight, moist curls. The scent of her was intoxicating driving him to lick at the cream pouring from her wet center. "Do you know how much I want you? How I wake up when I'm alone at home with a raging hard on that I can't get rid of?"

"I dream about you too," Keira whimpered running her fingers through his hair slightly scratching his skin.

The light caress sent tiny shock waves through his body down to his cock. It jumped with the need to be buried inside of her until he wiped any of her past lovers from her mind. Bringing his head back down, Jim held Keira's hips down as his tongue worship her quivering flesh.

"Please stop torturing me. I need you!" Keira screamed pulling at his hair.

Jim gave Keira's delicious vagina one more lick before he moved her hand from his hair. He slid his way back up her body and brushed the head of his cock against her wetness. "How bad do you need me?" he asked pushing his erection inside of her until only the thick head was in. "Bad enough to tell me that you care about me and this is just more than sex between us?"

“Yes!” Keira tried to raise her hips to slide him in further, but he held her by the waist, so she couldn’t move.

“Not good enough.” Jim drew one of her hard nipples into his mouth while easing his cock in and out, but not enough to give her any form of release. He wanted to hear the words. His body was barely holding back the need to thrust inside of Keira’s welcoming heat. The need to feel her wrapped tightly around him was making him clench his teeth, but he knew he could hold off until he got what he wanted from her.

“Jim, we have more than hot sex,” Keira whispered. “We have something good. Please show me how good we can be together.”

Letting go of Keira’s breasts, Jim recaptured Keira’s swollen lips with his and pushed deeply into her tight, welcoming heat until he was buried to the hilt. He thrust into her over and over like it hadn’t been less than two hours since they’d made love, but Keira was addictive. He couldn’t get enough of her. The more he got the more he wanted. He wasn’t sure if he would ever be able to get enough of his woman.

The thought of Keira being his woman didn’t stop him cold in his tracks. It made him want to make her pregnant with his child and he was going to do everything in his power to make that happen.

Wrapping her legs around his hips, Jim continued to work Keira’s flawless body until she threw her head back and screamed her release.

“That’s it baby. Let me know how you feel. I know that I’m the only man who has ever loved you this good and the only one who ever will.”

Jim felt her inner muscles tighten around him and he sped up his movements. Grinding his teeth, he tossed back his head as his orgasm hit him hard making him spill his seed deep into Keira’s womb.

Too weak to move Jim collapsed on Keira’s body enjoying the feel of her soft breasts pressed against his hard chest. If he had any doubt in his mind tonight erased all of them. Keira was *his* and no one else’s. She’d better not ever think about leaving him because it wasn’t going to happen.

First, he had to talk her into seeing someone about the plane crash and the nightmares. After all of that was taken care of he was going to see about making Keira his...permanently.

## Chapter Thirty-Seven

“I’m not sure about this. I think I made a mistake agreeing to do this for you. I can take care of myself. How many times do I have to tell you that before you believe me?” Keira glanced out of the car window staring at the building to her left with the tinted windows. She wasn’t in the mood to do this today, but Jim practically dragged her out of the bed and into the shower for this meeting.

“Keira, you’re lucky that when I called Dr. Gearan he said he would see you today. I know you told me about the crash, but you need to speak to a professional. Besides don’t you need the all clear from him before you can get back on an airplane?”

“I thought you loved being a flight attendant and wanted to go back to your job unless you want to be my assistant at the shop,” Jim teased. “I wouldn’t mind having you within hands reach all of the time.”

“I know you would, but I want to go back to work. I miss my co-workers and the travel. I should have been back months ago, but the crippling nightmares kept me from going back. I’m still not sure about going to see Dr. Gearan.”

“What’s with him? Do I need to come up there with you for your first visit? I can call Dante and he’ll meet the plumbers at *Choppers*. I really don’t need to be there for any of that.”

“No, you go ahead back to the shop,” Keira said. “I need to go inside by myself or I won’t ever be able to come back here again. This is going to be the first step into getting my old self-esteem back and I can’t do it if you hold my hand.”

“Can you blame me? I care about you and so does everyone else. We all want the old Keira back telling us all what to do and how to act.” Jim winked at her.

“I’m glad to know you care about me,” Keira said in a teasing tone. “I wouldn’t want to have to trade you in for Dante. He’s very cute and not as opinionated as you.”

Turning in his seat, Jim faced her looking her directly in the eyes. She smiled at the jealousy she saw hidden there. It felt really good to know that Jim didn’t want other men lurking around her even if it was just Dante. “Stay away from Dante,” he said, a thread of warning in his voice. “He already thinks you’re hot. I don’t want to lose my best friend because of you, but I will punch him if he even thinks about touching you.”

“Sweetheart, I don’t see Dante in a romantic way at all. Yes, he is gorgeous and I would have to be blind not to see how attractive he is, but I’m in lo... in a relationship with you and it is where I want to be.”

Keira congratulated herself on stopping before she told Jim had she felt about him. She was still amazed herself at how fast her feelings had grown for him. They had only been seeing each other for about two months and her life was totally different now.

He was building back her confidence with his passionate, challenging and involved attitude. She had to admit, he was inspiring her to take on the nightmares head on and push them into her past. It was beyond time that she got over what happened to her, so she could move on with her life and get things rolling the way they should be.

“Good, I’m glad you see it my way.” Jim smirked.

“Now, wait a minute, I have become friends with Dante and that isn’t going to change. I like hanging out with him when you can’t do something with me. You do know that I can have as many friends as I want to.” She wasn’t about to become his ‘yes’ woman and jump at everything he wanted her to do. She was still her own person and did anything she wanted to without his approval.

”As long as I keep the top position on your list then I guess it will be okay for you to keep Dante as a friend,” Jim said tersely. “He already knows that I have placed a *hands-off* sign on you anyway.”

“Are you serious?” Keira’s disbelief showed in the tone of her voice.

“Baby, you don’t have time to get into this with me. Aren’t you going to be late for your first appointment?”

Keira glanced at the clock on the dashboard and cursed under her breath. She only had about two minutes to get inside and up to her appointment with Dr. Gearan. Jim had done this on purpose and she was going to get him back for this.

“This isn’t over,” Keira warned as she opened the car door and got it. “We will discuss this later on at your house.”

“We can’t. Don’t you remember that Trevor is joining us for dinner?” Jim said .

“Are you sure he won’t be upset that he isn’t spending time alone with you. I know how hard it is for you to get Kathy to agree to the joint custody half of the time. I can have dinner with you another night.”

“Keira, it’s time for Trevor to get used to us being in a relationship. I’ve already told him that the two of us are going out now and he only had a problem with it that one time. He’s been good since then.”

“Okay, I’ll come but if I see Trevor isn’t going to like me being there I’ll leave.” Keira closed the door and strolled towards the entrance of the building.

Jim watched Keira until she was completely inside the building before he drove off and headed for his business.

Sitting outside in the waiting area, Keira lost count of how many times she swiped her sweaty palms down the front of her jeans. She couldn't remember ever being this nervous before about something in her life. Even getting interviewed for her flight attendant position hadn't made butterflies in her stomach. She had been avoiding Dr. Gearan for so long that she wasn't sure what his reaction might be to her, so she was prepared for anything.

When the office door finally opened Keira's eyes froze on the tall, handsome blond man who looked like he should have been on the cover of a Viking romance book as he strolled towards her with a friendly smile on his face.

"Good morning, Ms. Winters. It's so nice to finally meet you. I'm Dr. Thad Gearan." He extended his hand.

"It's nice to meet you too, Dr. Gearan," Keira said as she stood up and shook the warm hand.

"Sorry, my secretary wasn't out here to greet you. She's at home with her sick husband." Dr. Gearan released her hand. "How about we head on into my office and we can get better acquainted with each other?" Moving back, Dr. Gearan waved his hand towards his office and waited for her to go past him.

Once they got inside he closed the door and took a seat in a brown leather chair in front of a matching brown leather couch. "Why don't you have a seat and we can get started?" he suggested.

Keira took a seat and tried to calm down so she wouldn't blow her first visit. She wasn't quite sure how many of these meetings she'd have to make but she prayed that they went by fast.

"Keira, tell me why you're here?"

"Don't you already know that?" she asked taken aback a little. How could she get help if the shrink didn't know why she was even here? She knew she didn't come here for nothing.

"I have what the airlines sent over in their reports, but that isn't the real reason you came to see me today after months of avoiding me. So, why are you here today?" Dr. Gearan asked again.

Looking at her doctor, Keira knew that he wasn't going to give her permission to go back until he was 100% positive that she was ready to go back up in the airplane. She couldn't deny the truth any longer. She was tired of the woman the plane crash had turned her into: scared, nasty and no longer wanting her mind filled with sour thoughts.

"I'm here today because I'm ready to get my life back. I'm fed up with being afraid to go to sleep in fear that the nightmares about Josh will come back. I have a right to live my life without allowing the unknown to have controlling power over me all the time."

"That was a very powerful speech you just made." Dr. Gearan smiled. "Do you think you're up to doing the work to make it happen for you?"

“I have that and ten times more because I’m pissed at this new me and the stronger side of me is dying to get back out there with the living.”

“Wonderful. How about you tell me about the crash? I need to hear your version of it so I can see why your mind might be holding on to memories instead of letting them go. I know with the two of us working together you will be back at your job in no time.”

Keira was impressed with the obvious confidence Dr. Gearan inspired. Just from these few minutes she had been speaking with him she sensed a new strength of independence coming back to her. She was elated by the real possibility that she could be back up in the air before the year was out.



## Chapter Thirty-Eight

Leaning back against the car seat, Dalton glared at the laughing people as they went in and out of the house like they didn't have a care in the world. Seeing how happy all of them were pissed him off even more and made him want to get revenge. He hated Hayward, Clinton and Jenisha with the same passion, but the smaller woman wiping off the little boy's face he despised with every fiber of his being. He wanted to make his move so badly right now, but he couldn't because everything wasn't in place yet.

The surprise he had for True only deserved the best and he was going to make sure that happened. It was hard to stay hidden since half of the police force was looking for him. He'd been able to sneak into a busy department store the other day and watch the news coverage about his escape. It was the hottest thing on television at the moment, even Nancy Grace devoted some of her precious time to him.

Well, he was going to make even more news stations after he finished with his masterful plan. He had to get this done right for the memory of his brother Mark. His brother came to the prison to see him every visitor day. It wasn't fair that Mark died trying to get back at the bitch who put him here.

*I better get going. I don't anyone noticing how long I've been parked here staring at the Campbell's house.* He was stunned that the wealthy construction worker didn't live in a gated community or he wouldn't have the easy access like he did now.

The sound of True laughing with her friends came through the open window of his stolen car. He was going to need to take another car before he went back to his hideout. He was pretty sure that the owner of this Lexus had already reported it stolen and the police were out looking for it and him. He only hoped that he got a chance to do what he had been planning before the cops caught him.

"You better enjoy all of that happiness now Ms. True Campbell because everything you hold dear in your world is about to change. I'm going to love every minute of the pain and agony my idea will toss your way."

Starting the car, Dalton pulled away from the curb and drove off glancing at True and the rest of her friends and family before he turned the corner disappearing out of sight.

## Chapter Thirty-Nine

“Trevor, I want you to be on your best behavior tonight when Keira gets here for dinner,” Jim said as he checked on the meatloaf inside the oven. He’d picked up Keira earlier after her visit with Dr. Gearan and taken her home because she wanted to shower and change clothes. While he was there he gave her directions to his house.

Everything had gone so smoothly there but here at his house Trevor was trying to fight him on Keira joining them for dinner. Why was Trevor behaving so badly when it came to Keira now? He used to like her so much when he saw her at Clinton and Jenisha’s house. Now, he acted like Keira was the worst person in the entire world.

“I don’t want to eat dinner with her! She isn’t my mother!” Trevor screamed.

“Trevor, Keira isn’t trying to be your mother, but she’s the woman that I’m dating now. I’ve told you numerous times that I’m never going to get back with your mother. She has a new boyfriend now and she doesn’t want to get back with me either.”

“How do you know that?” his son asked coming further into the kitchen. “Mom isn’t happy that you’re dating Keira either. She said that Keira needs to stay away from her family because she will never have a place in your heart like she does.”

Finally! Trevor was telling him where his new dislike for Keira was coming from. He would have a long talk with Kathy the next time he saw her. She needed to stay out of his life because he sure in the hell wasn’t interested in her biased opinion.

“Trevor, we aren’t going to get into this tonight because Keira is on her way, but you will be nice to her or you won’t be going to the motorcycle show with me and Dante his weekend. Do you understand me, son?”

“I hate Keira. I wish she would go away and never come back!” Trevor ran out of the kitchen and a few minutes later Jim heard his son’s bedroom door slam.

“Damn it!” Jim shouted running his fingers through his hair. Kathy had too much of a hold over Trevor and he was going to put an end to it. She was meddling in his love life, but constantly told him to stay out of hers.

First thing tomorrow morning, he would call his lawyer and see about having the custody agreement opened back up. He had been putting it off because

he didn't want to put Trevor through another trial, but he was done being nice when it came to his ex-wife. Kathy wasn't fit to be a parent and he was going to sue for full custody of Trevor. His son's whole future was at stake and he couldn't let his part-time mother Kathy ruin it for him.

*I better check on Trevor and get him back out here before Keira shows up. He will sit at the kitchen table and eat with us tonight. I won't tolerate him hiding out in his room through dinner. I raised him to have better manners than he's showing.*

Walking out of the kitchen, Jim was going towards Trevor's bedroom when the doorbell rang. He glanced down at his watch and shook his head. "I should have known that Keira would be early." Spinning around, he went to the front door and opened it smiling at the stunning woman standing on the other side.

"I'm a few minutes early," Keira said. "I hope that's okay."

Jim pulled Keira into his arms planting a long, slow kiss on her mouth. "It's just fine," he breathed against her mouth. "I'm happy you were able to find the place. Come on in."

"The place fits you," Keira said as she strolled around noticing how well the dark browns and hunter green furniture and designs worked together. "I can definitely tell a man lives here."

"I moved into this house after my divorce. It needed a lot of TLC but I did the work myself and this is the end result. I had a lot of offers from people who wanted to buy it, but I turned them down. I love this place and so does Trevor. I could never think about selling it."

"The location is amazing because it's still halfway in the city, but there's this country feel to it too. Never thought a biker like yourself would like being a Mr. Mom," Keira teased.

Quickly closing the distance between them Jim wrapped his arms back around Keira. "Keep talking like that and I'll have to prove to you that I'm no Mr. Mom"

"I have to say that you're a lot sexier than Michael Keaton," Keira said as she ran her fingers through Jim's hair. "I like that you wore your hair down tonight. It looks nice."

"Anything for you, baby," Jim whispered and then gave her another kiss. "Shit, I could make out with you for the rest of the night. But I need to take dinner out of the oven and drag Trevor out of his room."

"Trevor hates that I came to dinner, doesn't he?" Keira already knew the answer, but she wanted to see if Jim would tell her the truth.

"He's wasn't too happy, but he'll get over it. He has to understand that I'm not interested in getting back with Kathy *ever!*"

"Jim, I hate to think I'm coming between you and your son. He's only seven. I can understand why I'm not his favorite person."

“You may not be his at the moment, but you are mine. Would you like to spend the night? I promise you will love having a sleepover with me. Tomorrow is Saturday and I’ll make you breakfast in bed.”

“Isn’t Trevor going to be spending the time?”

“No, he’s only having dinner with us and then Kathy is going to pick him up. He has a soccer game tomorrow afternoon. The park is closer to Kathy’s house than mine, so will you stay?” His seductive hazel eyes sparkled with hope as he looked at her.

“I didn’t bring anything to sleep in,” Keira said.

“I have never known you to sleep in a nightgown. I like having you better naked anyway.”

“Shame on you,” Keira scolded hitting Jim on his arm. “Trevor is right in the house. He doesn’t need to hear you talking about seeing me naked. I don’t want him to hate me more than he already does.”

“Are you going to give me an answer?” Jim asked.

“Let’s see how well dinner goes and then I’ll give you my answer after Trevor leaves. Now, why don’t you go and get Trevor. I’m pretty sure I can find the kitchen and take our meal out of the oven and, by the way, the food smells delicious.”

“Just remember, I don’t like hearing the word no.” Jim nibbled at the corner of her mouth before letting her go and walking in the direction of Trevor’s room.

\* \* \* \*

Keira shook her head at the gorgeous man as he walked to the closed door at the end of the hallway. Jim knocked once before going inside and shutting the door behind him. She was a little worried that Trevor might stay in his room just to prove a point to Jim about how unhappy he was with the two of them dating each other.

“I better find the kitchen and get the food out of the oven before it burns.” She found it at the other end of the hallway and took the meatloaf out sitting it on the rack next to the stove. Keira was turning off the oven when Jim came in with a sunken looking Trevor.

She was going to try to make the best of a bad situation. Trevor looked like he wasn’t pleased to see her at all. “Hi Trevor, how are you doing?”

“I’m fine, Ms. Keira,” he mumbled under his breath.

“Thank you for inviting me to dinner. I’m really excited about being here with you and your daddy.”

“Yeah, my daddy is happy you’re here too. Can we hurry up and eat so I can go back to my room? I want to play another video game before my mom comes and picks me up.”

“Trevor, I told you not to be rude to Keira. We aren’t going to hurry up and eat for you,” Jim said, frowning at his son.

“Jim, it’s okay. I wouldn’t mind eating now. I skipped lunch so I am a little hungry.” Keira could really see that Trevor was trying his best not to run back to his room, so if he wanted to eat early she could do that.

“Keira, you don’t have to do this.” Jim looked at her like he couldn’t believe she was taking up for his son.

“Trevor is right. If I was seven I wouldn’t want to have a long dinner with some boring adults if I could play video games.”

“Fine, if you two want to eat then we can eat. Keira, why don’t you go into the living room with Trevor and I can get the food ready. I think the meatloaf is still too hot to cut, but I’ll see.”

“No. I don’t want her to come into the living room with me. I’m not a baby,” Trevor yelled running out of the room.

“Trevor, I told you...” Jim started after his son, but she stopped him.

“Hey, it’s okay. I’m not hurt. How about I help you fix the plates. I would love to spend some more time with you. Unless you’d rather be in here all alone without a cute assistant to help you out.”

“I’d rather you assist me in other areas but I’ll take your help in the kitchen for now,” Jim said then patted her on the ass. “Let’s get food on plates and pray my son doesn’t turn into more of the bad seed than he already has tonight.”

## Chapter Forty

Washing off the last of the dishes, Keira placed them inside the dishwasher while Jim was outside dealing with his ex-wife. Halfway through dinner, she had shown up demanding that Trevor come with her. Jim thought Trevor would say no, but he shocked his father by getting up from the table and going with her.

As much as she cared about Jim...hell it was time to stop lying to herself, she was in love with him, she couldn't keep being the focal point of the battle he was having with Kathy. It was past time she took herself out of the situation. Jim could come back to her when he was ready to devote more time to their relationship and not be worried about his ex every ten minutes.

Drying her hands on the towel, Keira folded it over the faucet and left the kitchen at the same time Jim walked through the front door. "I can't believe she came over here to get him early. She knew she wasn't supposed to be here until nine o'clock." Jim slammed the door behind him.

"I'm sorry that Kathy ruined your night," Keira said as she picked up her belongings. She wasn't going to get into this again with Jim. She was tired of hearing him complain. He had invited her to dinner so she could spend time with him and Trevor, but the night took a totally different direction. She wasn't the type to take a backseat to another woman and she wasn't going to start now.

"I think you need some time alone, so you can cool off and get your thoughts together. I'm going home. I also think you need figure out what you want with me before you call me again." Moving around a clearly stunned Jim, Keira opened the front door and went outside to her car. She was about to unlock it and get inside when Jim's hand came down on her shoulder stopping her.

"Where are you going? I thought you were going to spend the night so I could fix you breakfast in bed in the morning?" Jim questioned.

"I know what you thought, but it isn't going to happen. You aren't ready to be in a relationship because you can't let go of your ex-wife."

"Keira, I want to be with you." Spinning her around, Jim looked down into her eyes. "I'm falling in love with you. You have to know that. I'll agree with you that I do let Kathy get to me too much, but I don't care about her in any way, shape or form. I want to be with only one woman and that is you."

Standing on tiptoe, Keira kissed the corner of Jim's mouth. "I wish I could believe that, but you have let her ruin our time together one too many times. This is strike two against you and the way things are going. I don't think you will be around me to even worry about strike three coming your way."

“Keira, I’m not going to let this night be strike two against me,” Jim said. “You aren’t going to use what happened tonight to push me out of your life. I won’t stand for it. How about you stay and we can work through this? I wanted to go over a few new product ideas with you about the business too. I would love your input. Just don’t go.”

“I’m leaving and you aren’t going to change my mind. You’re too involved with your past for me. I love Trevor. He’s an adorable little boy, but he’s where I draw the line. I understand why he’s upset about us. Most children do want their parents to stay together and don’t welcome a new person coming into their lives. Kathy’s problem with us is a whole different story altogether.”

Keira pushed him back from her so she could get inside her car. She took the time to fix her seatbelt. “Please don’t try to bring this up again to me. I’ll be more than happy to discuss *Choppers* with you, but our former relationship is off limits.” She looked at Jim one last time before pulling out of his driveway and going down the street. Keira waited until she was away from Jim before she allowed her tears to fall.

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“I can’t believe you’ve been dating Keira for months and none of us knew about it,” Dave complained as he took a sip of his beer. “The last time I talked to you I had to force you to even think about checking on her from time to time for my wife.”

Jim was at his wits end about finding ways to get Keira to see him. It had been days since he had even laid eyes on her since she drove off from his house. “I thought I might go on two dates with her and that would be it. How did I know I would end up falling madly in love with her? Shit! I can’t believe Keira dumped me because of my problems with Kathy.”

“Have you tried talking to her?” Hayward asked reaching for a hot wing on the platter in the center of the table. “I know how much True loves talking about her feelings. I didn’t used to be that way, but now I am and it really helps us break through any problems we might have.”

“I haven’t been able to catch her. Every time I’m at work she has an appointment with Dr. Gearan. He has been seeing her to make sure she’s ready to go back up in the air. I think she’s avoiding me on purpose. Damn! I can’t lose Keira. I love her so much!”

“Keira isn’t like that,” Clinton said. “She’s very outspoken and would tell you if things were truly over between the two of you. I think she’s still upset about Kathy ruining the family dinner you were trying to have with her and Trevor, but she’ll come back to you.”

“I wish I could believe that, but you didn’t see the look on her face. She stared at me like I was a total stranger and she was out of my life for good. I’m

thinking about going to her house and just waiting there until she comes home. I'll demand that she talk to me."

"Do you think that's a good idea? Keira might not like you staked outside of her place like that. It might make things worse between the two of you instead of better," Dave said cutting in.

Jim had invited the guys to lunch at *Dante's* so they could help him out, not try to talk him out of getting back with his woman. Today wasn't going as he planned at all.

"Are you seriously telling me if the shoe was on the other foot with any of you that none of you would do the same thing?"

"I wouldn't have waited this long if it was Jenisha," Clinton admitted.

"Me either," Hayward and Dave said in unison.

"Finally...all of you sound like the men I know. I'm going to get my woman back." Standing up, Jim tossed some money on the table for the food. "Tell the girls that Keira will be busy for the rest of the day."

"Don't wear her out too much or Trevor might end up being a big brother like he's been wanting," Clinton yelled after Jim as he left.

"That's the plan," he responded before going out of the door.

\* \* \* \*

Juggling the shopping bags with her left hand, Keira tried opening the front door with her right, but it wasn't working. She had gone on a shopping trip after her visit with Dr. Gearan. He was really impressed with her progress so far. He mentioned moving up her appointments from one time a week to two times a week. She agreed because she was ready to get back on a plane and to her job.

The nightmares were almost gone now and she was ninety-five percent back to her normal self, but the happiness of her recovery wasn't as exciting because Jim wasn't around. She'd hated leaving him, but he spent too much time worrying about Kathy and her drama instead of trying to build their commitment to each other.

"Are you out here because you knew I would be coming by to see you?" a voice asked behind her.

Twirling around, the bags fell out of Keira's hand spilling some of the contents on the porch. "God, you scared the hell out of me. What are you doing here?" She bent down and picked up the scattered items placing them back in the bags.

"I came to see you. I want to talk to you about the crazy act you did at my house. I know you weren't serious about breaking up with me. I can't let you leave me. I love you and you feel the same way about me. We tried to fight our feelings for the longest time, but they happened anyway."



“Jim, we have nothing to talk about. You’re too caught up in your past while I’m trying to move ahead with my future. I can’t be the other woman while you’re working on figuring out your past.”

Bending down next to her, Jim handed her the last of the items that had fallen out. I won’t allow you to break up with me. We’re perfect together.”

Keira stood up surprised that Jim actually thought she was going to let him back into her life. He might believe he was in love with her, but she knew the real truth.

“Thanks for your help.” She picked her bags back up and worked on unlocking the front door until it finally came open. She went inside and was about to close the door behind her when Jim’s hand shot out stopping her.

“What are you doing?” she asked glancing down at Jim’s hand and then back up into his eyes.

“Fighting for what I want.” Jim pushed his way in closing the door behind him. “I’ve been patient long enough waiting for you to come to your senses. I’m done with leaving it up to you.” Taking the bags from her hands, he dropped them on the floor before yanking her into his arms.

“If you think you can manhandle me you’re out of your...”

Jim cut off the rest of Keira’s sentence by kissing her.

The feel of Jim’s firm lips brushing over hers sent a pool of moisture straight into her underwear. He slowly licked at the corner of her mouth trying to gain entrance. Keira tried to fight the urge to open her mouth, but it didn’t work. She crumbled and opened her lips allowing Jim’s tongue to slip inside.

The kiss was electric, making her want to experience how well Jim could send her body into a tailspin, but she wasn’t going to do it.

Placing her hand in the middle of his chest, she shoved Jim away from her “No, we aren’t going to do this. I can’t let you do this to me. I will have willpower when it comes to you.” Keira placed her fingers against her swollen lips and took a huge step back. “You need to leave. I have to be somewhere in an hour.” She was lying but Jim didn’t need to know that.

“Where are you doing? Are you doing to see Dante?” he accused. “I know how much you like him.”

“No, I’m not going anywhere with Dante. We are friends and nothing else. Why would you think I was seeing him?” Keira couldn’t believe how Jim’s mind was working. She had stopped going out with him because Kathy was a constant fixture between them, so why would she go and do something she was against?

“Dante likes you and I thought maybe he jumped in since he’s a born flirt. If he tried to take you from me I wouldn’t let it happen. You’re my girlfriend not his. I’m never going to give up getting you back. I love you too much to lose you.”

Keira was dying to believe Jim, but she wasn’t dumb. His life would never be his to give because of his former marriage. No matter how much he wanted to commit to her it wouldn’t ever be possible.

“Those are just words. I can’t let you drag me into your problems. Please leave.” Moving away from Jim, she opened her door and waved him out.

“I’m not going to beg to be in your life,” Jim snapped as he stormed past her.

Standing in the open doorway, Keira watched as Jim hopped on his motorcycle and took off without looking back at her. For a second, she instantly regretted her decision to toss Jim out; however, she quickly got herself back under control.

“I have to stay strong. I told myself a long time ago that I wouldn’t get involved with a man that I could lose myself too. I need to get myself back together and hopefully Jim can do the same thing for himself.” She closed the door.

## Chapter Forty-One

“Keira, you have improved so much in the last couple of weeks. You aren’t the same woman who first came to see me,” Dr. Gearan said taking off his glasses. He placed them on the notepad by his chair. “I think you’re almost ready to go back up in the air. How does that sound to you? Are you ready to be a flight attendant again?”

“I’m more ready than you would ever know. I’m mad at myself that it took me so long to come to see you in the first place,” she confessed.

“You were suffering from a deep trauma. It can often combine guilt, depression and anger. Sometimes it can go into deeper things like: sleepless nights, digestive issues, heart problems and high blood pressure.”

“I never had those latter things, but I know I was having problems with trauma. I couldn’t even think about coming to see you until Jim talked me into doing it.”

“How is that relationship going? You need all the support you can get while you’re going through counseling. The more people you have around you the better your sessions will go.”

“Everything is fine. I do have a lot of support from friends and family. I wouldn’t know what I would do without them.”

Keira wasn’t going to tell Dr. Gearan about her breaking up with Jim. She wasn’t quite sure what he would tell her about it. Besides, she was trying her best not to call Jim as it was. She noticed him the other day going back into *Choppers*. She almost went over there to see him...almost.

“Keira, are you sure that you’re okay?” Dr. Gearan asked, watching her closely. “You seemed to space out for a few minutes there.”

“No, I’m fine. I was just thinking.”

“I hope it was about the group session my colleague runs on Mondays to Thursdays. I think you might get some insight hearing from other people who have been through the same thing as you.”

Talking about her nightmares in front of a group of people she didn’t know? No, she didn’t think something like that was for her.

“Thanks again for the offer, but I’m doing just fine with you as my psychologist. I don’t mind coming to you now at all. In fact, I look forward to our scheduled meetings and after I leave I always have something to think about and bring to our next session.”

"I'm glad to hear that. I'm truly impressed at how fast you've come along. Are you still having nightmares?"

Her nightmares were making an appearance less and less now. Maybe she got them once or twice a week now instead of every night; it was such a huge improvement.

"No, I have to say they are almost gone thanks to you."

"Don't thank me," Dr. Gearan smiled. "You've been the one doing all of the work. I only took you in the right direction."

"When do you think you'll give me the all clear to return to work?" Keira asked.

"I'm still a little concerned about the nightmares you're still having. I would rather they not be there at all. I want to be able to give the airlines a perfect bill of health when it comes to your return."

Keira sighed, clasped her hands together and stared at them as an odd twinge of disappointment unexpectedly hit her. "Great...it might be another two months before I get my job back."

"Don't look so upset," Dr. Gearan said leaning forward in his seat. "You'll be back up in the sky before you know it."

Unclasping her hands, Keira rested her back against the couch. "I'm not upset. I'm pissed at myself that I didn't get over my fears sooner. I could be back at my job traveling to a new place instead of here with you."

"How about we forget about the past and deal with the future? You want to get your job back and I'm here to help you achieve that goal. How about we see each other again on Friday? I have a cancellation and I can fit you in."

"I'll be here," Keira said, standing up.

"Wonderful...I'll tell my secretary to add you to the appointment book." Dr. Gearan stood up and escorted her to the door.

"I'm looking forward to seeing you," she replied and then left.

\* \* \* \*

*I need to see you. Can you come by my house?*

*Jim*

Holding the sheet of paper that she found taped to her mailbox in her hand, Keira read the note several times debating if she should go and see what Jim wanted. She'd just come from her session with Dr. Gearan not twenty minutes ago. She'd been finding ways over the past week to avoid having any contact with him and it hadn't been easy on her part.

"I can't pretend that he doesn't exist. I'm going to run into him sooner or later. I might as well get it over with now. I just have to make sure he doesn't get to me. I have to stay strong and make sure to not let him touch me or I'll be a goner."

## Chapter Forty-Two

“I got the note you left at my house. What do you need to see me about?” Keira asked as she stopped next to Jim as he worked on his motorcycle in his driveway.

“I wasn’t sure you would show up since you’re done with having me in your life.” Tossing the rag into a bucket next to his prized Harley Davidson, Jim turned around to look at her.

“I never said that and you know it.”

“The only thing I know is my girlfriend thinks I’d rather be around my ex-wife than her. Kathy isn’t the woman I dream about every night when I go to bed...you are.” Moving close until he was in her personal space, Jim traced her jawbone with his index finger. “Have you forgotten about the first time we made love?”

“No, it’s burned into my memory. I’ve dreamt about it a lot since we broke up,” Keira admitted against her better judgment.

“Baby, we aren’t broken up. You’re still mine. I told you before, I’m not letting you go.” Easing his hands around her body, Jim slipped them underneath her short denim skirt and cupped her bare ass.

“Why in the hell aren’t you wearing any underwear?” He worked two thick fingers inside her until he was knuckle deep. “Fuck!” he growled. “I have missed the hell out of you.”

Jim nibbled at her neck while his other hand still held her butt. “You can’t tell me you haven’t missed this too. I know what we have is unique. You won’t be able to find this with another man. Hell, I won’t allow it to happen.”

Without giving her a chance to answer, Jim laid her down on the thick grass and replaced his fingers with the tip of his cock. Keira didn’t even know how he got his pants undone and at the moment she wasn’t too concerned about it.

“Tell me you don’t want this and I’ll stop. As much as it will kill me I’ll stop, but I’ve been thinking about being like this with you since you walked out of my house.”

“Yes! I want this,” she moaned pulling at Jim’s hips. Keira didn’t care that she was outside about to make love. The need to be with Jim was too strong for her to deny it this time.

Shoving her skirt until it was above her waist, Jim pushed her legs further apart and took her in one sure thrust. “Shit!” Jim hollered as Keira’s walls clamped around his cock. “You can’t deny us this anymore. We are meant to be

like this for the rest of our lives.” The last of his words were smothered on her lips.

The last of Keira’s calm was shattered with the hunger of his kisses. Wrapping her legs around Jim’s waist, she pulled him deeper into her body. His hand unbuttoned her purple shirt, moving it away from her chest until her matching bra was exposed. He didn’t waste a second before he eased the lacy cup of her bra aside and sucked a swollen nipple into his mouth.

Keira was frantic with the need to keep Jim buried balls deep inside of her. Holding onto his shoulders, she met the smooth, steady rhythm Jim set as he held her bare ass in his hands.

“Ooooooh...Yes...yes,” she screamed as she tore her mouth away. The orgasms hit her hard, so hard that her eyes rolled into the back of her head. Her body went limp beneath Jim when she finally came down from her high.

Jim waited until he was sure Keira had reached her release before he thrust a couple of more times filling her with his seed. Once his heart finally got back down to its normal speed, Jim gently pulled his cock out of Keira’s wonderfully tight heat. He fixed her clothing and then his own before getting them both off the ground.

“I’m officially a super freak like Rick James sang about.” Keira laughed trying to shake off her embarrassment.

“There is nothing wrong with a woman being adventurous with the man she loves,” Jim said pulling her close.

“Have you been adventurous with other women in the outdoors before?” Keira wanted to hear what Jim was going to tell her and whether or not it would be the truth.

“Yes, I have. I’m not going to lie. A lot can happen when a person goes camping, but it was just something I did a long time ago when I was a teenager.”

“What else did you do when you were young and trying to have fun?”

“I’d rather do something else than talk about my rebel ways when I was younger,” Jim said as he took her hand leading her towards his house.

“I hate to see what is lurking behind that door,” Keira teased before Jim dragged her inside.

\* \* \* \*

“These designs are amazing.” Keira flipped through the sketch book of ideas for the clothing and accessories Jim wanted to start selling at *Choppers* when it was reopened. “I can’t believe you can do this. Do you know how much this will cost?” She couldn’t believe how excited she was about these new suggestions Jim brought up to her.

“I have a friend who designs motorcycle gear and he’s going to do the helmets, leather jackets and gloves. I think having *Choppers* sell biker gear will

draw up more business.” Jim leaned over Keira’s shoulder and planted a kiss at the side of her neck. “I’m glad you’re for this. I thought you might fight me.”

“Baby, I love you. I want you to succeed with your dreams. No, I know my father would have loved something like this. I’m surprised that he didn’t think of it himself, but I believe he was more into working on bikes than selling gear.”

“*Choppers* will be a huge success with my brilliant mind behind it.” Jim grinned, a teasing twinkle in his eye, and closed the sketch pad on the kitchen table. “We can talk about the rest of the designs later. I want to know what’s going on with you. Now are you going to tell me about how your meetings have been going with Dr. Gearan? Does he think you’re ready to get back on an airplane?”

“Dr. Gearan is very impressed with my progress. He thinks I need a few more sessions and I agreed to start seeing him twice a week instead of once. I’m really hoping that I can be back at work before the end of the year is out. I missed interacting with my friends and the passengers on the plane.”

“Sweetheart, you’re a beautiful, strong and intelligent woman. I know that you’ll fly through these last couple of sessions and be back at your old job before you know it.”

Getting out of the chair, Keira moved around it and wrapped her arms around Jim’s neck. “Thank you for your vote of confidence. I have no doubt in my mind that I’ll get my spunk back. I feel like I’m half way there already.”

“Hmmm...I’m a little scared now. Maybe the old Keira might find a way to kick me out of her life since I’m just a blue collar man.” Jim teased, but Keira heard the truth in his voice.

“I hate to break the news to you, Mr. Russell, but you’re stuck with me. You won’t be able to get rid of me no matter what you do.”

“I’m glad to hear you say that because I want to ask you something,” Jim said.

“Oh, it sounds so ominous.”

“Do you think you’re up to an outing with Trevor? He wants me to take him to the zoo tomorrow and I want you to come along with us. I know the second time will go better than the first. I’ve talked to Trevor about us dating and he seems to be taking it better than he did the first time.”

Keira stepped back from Jim giving him a wayward look. “Are you sure? I still think Trevor isn’t too keen on us dating each other at all. I don’t want to pressure him into liking me.”

“My son is an important part of my life just like you are. I just think Trevor wasn’t having a good day and took it out on you.”

She sensed that Trevor wasn’t as accepting as Jim was trying to make her believe, but she was willing to give it another shot. She loved Jim and Trevor was a part of his life. She knew his son was only scared she was going to take his father away which wasn’t true at all. She would do her best to make Trevor feel like he was a part of their relationship.

"I would love to go." Keira smiled pushing all of her worries to the side. "How about we go get something to eat? We can talk about more ideas for *Choppers*."

"No, I don't want to discuss anything about work or your session with Dr. Gearan for the rest of the night. I only want to spend the night enjoying your company."

"Keep talking like that and I might end up spending the night instead of going back home," Keira teased.

"That's my plan, sweetheart," Jim said before he pulled her into his arms and kissed her.

\* \* \* \*

Despite the fact he tried to sweet talk Keira into staying the night with him, she decided to spend the night at her house instead. Folding his hands behind his head, Jim laid in bed thinking about how well the day had turned out between him and Keira. He left the note at her house as a last chance effort to get her back into his life and it worked — *Thank God!*

He was slowly losing his mind without her and now that he had her back he wasn't about to make any kind of mistake and lose Keira again. The short period of time she was away from him made him realize how much he truly loved her.

Keira was able to size up any situations with her quick wit and charm enticing him even more. She wasn't predictable at all and he wanted her to stay that way. The more he got to know her, the more she surprised him. God, he knew nothing about Keira was ever going to be predictable while they were together.

She was so talented with everything she touched. It didn't matter if it involved music, cooking, business or social skills. Keira blew it out of the water and he was proud to call her his woman and soon he would be calling her his wife.

None of the fear he thought he might feel about getting married again came to him when he thought about proposing to Keira. He had it all planned out including the when and where he was going to pop the question. He thought long and hard about the place and finally decided the reopening of *Choppers* would be perfect. Keira loved the shop as much as he did now. Plus it would give Keira another connection to her father which he knew would mean so much to her. It was his goal to make each and every one of her dreams come true.

She constantly presented him with something he wasn't prepared for or counted on. He hadn't truly lived until Keira came into his life. He couldn't think of a better step-mother for Trevor.

"I have to make sure that the proposal is something for her to remember for the rest of her life," Jim said to himself. He needed to talk to Charisma and see if



he could make the day any more extraordinary for her than what he already had planned.

“In less than two weeks, Keira is going to be wearing my ring on her finger and then I’ll be a step closer to making her my wife.”

## Chapter Forty-Three

Jim watched as his son walked a little ahead of him and Keira eating a strawberry ice cream cone. The trip to the zoo with Keira and Trevor turned out way better than he thought it would. He wasn't sure how things might turn out when he told Trevor he needed to sit in the backseat and give Keira the front seat next to him. Trevor had looked at him like he was going to throw a fit, but changed his mind and got in the back.

"Do you know how pretty you look in your jeans, t-shirt and tennis shoes?" Jim whispered against Keira's neck wrapping his arm around her waist. "If we weren't out in public in the park like this I would kiss the hell out of you."

"Oh, you have a problem kissing me in public?" Keira teased leaning away from him.

"Baby...I don't have a problem with that at all." Before she could move Jim captured her mouth for a long, slow, wet kiss, the kind that makes a woman's stomach do somersaults and her heart kick up to another level.

"I'm glad my shirt is long enough to cover up the effect you're having on me." Jim breathed against her swollen lips.

Keira moved out of Jim's embrace hitting him on the arm. "You are so bad. We better catch up with Trevor before he leaves us."

Linking their fingers together, Jim walked with Keira as they followed behind Trevor who was headed for the swings. "He was so much better today with you at the zoo than he was at that horrible dinner party. I think he might be coming around to the idea of the two of us dating."

She wasn't as convinced as Jim that his son was into the thought of another woman in his daddy's life, but she couldn't be for sure so she would keep her opinion to herself. Why ruin the day for Jim? Let him think what he wanted; however, she did notice Trevor giving her a hateful look when he didn't think she was watching him.

"Yes, today was a lot better than the dinner we tried to share together. Trevor seems much happier around you. He really does love you a lot."

"I'm glad you noticed that because I'm going to sue Kathy for full custody. I have an appointment with an attorney tomorrow."

The news shocked Keira so badly that she stopped in her tracks. Was Jim out of his mind? There was no way in hell Kathy would let him get full custody of Trevor and lose all of the alimony and child support he was sending every month. She would fight him until both of them were old and gray.

“Do you think that’s a good idea?”

A frown marred Jim’s forehead as he paused next to her a few feet from the swing set. “You don’t think it’s a good idea for me to try to get custody of my son?”

“No, I think you’re a wonderful parent and deserve full custody, but I’ve met Kathy and she doesn’t seem like the type who’ll give up all of that money without a fight. I’m just saying you might be in for a very hard battle with her. Also, have you talked to Trevor about this? You’re going to go into court and tell a lot of people how unfit his mother is. Will he be able to handle that?”

“Keira, I know what’s going to happen. I’ve been through it before with my ex, but I want and need the two most important people in my life around me every day. I’m tired worrying if Kathy is feeding my son three meals a day and keeping his clothes clean. I have enough money from working at CCD to take care of all of us.”

“Wait a minute,” Keira cut in. “I have a good job. I don’t need you to think I want you to ‘take care’ of me.”

“Honey, I know your independence and love it with everything in my heart, but humor me a little and let me take care of you a tiny bit...please,” Jim whispered. Wrapping his hand around her wrist, he tugged her closer to his body. “I like the idea you might have to lean on me a tiny bit.”

“Oh, I’m not sure I can give my Miss Independent card back. The other girls in the club might disown me.” Keira laughed loving how good she felt when Jim teased her like this.

“I won’t tell them if you don’t.”

“I might need more of a persuasion than what you’re giving me. I mean, it took me a very long time to get my membership.”

“Daddy, will you buy me a hot dog?” Trevor yelled breaking into the cocoon Jim and Keira had built for themselves.

“I can’t get into this now, but after we drop off Trevor at Kathy’s house I have a few techniques that might make you only use the card part-time,” he growled by Keira’s ear.

“Promises...promises.”

“Daddy!”

Jim gave Keira’s ass a quick tap and then quickly stepped back. “Let’s go. Trevor is acting like I haven’t fed him all day,” he joked.

“He’s a growing boy and he wants a hot dog, so let’s buy him a hot dog.”

“Will you give me what I need later?”

“Only if you’re a good boy for the rest of the day, I’ll think about it.”

“Do more than think,” Jim said before he grabbed her hand and took her in the direction of Trevor and the hot dog vendor.

## Chapter Forty-Four

A week later Keira sat in the backyard next to True, Jenisha and Charisma laughing at Jim as he played with Hayward's and Clinton's kids in the backyard. He loved kids so much. It made her wonder how he would be with their kids if their relationship got that far.

"Are you really going to sit there like you didn't walk into the get-together holding hands with Jim?" Charisma asked. "When did the two of you start dating...forget that. When did the two of you start doing the mattress dance? I've never seen Jim so relaxed and happy in my life. He's usually nice enough and that's about it."

As much as she hated it Keira stopped looking at Jim and focused her attention on Charisma and the other women grinning at her with a knowing sparkle in their eyes. "We are in the getting to know you stage," she answered.

"If the getting to know you stage in anything like I experienced with Clinton you will be married before you know it and a baby on the way before your first anniversary," Jenisha laughed.

"I think Dave didn't even take as long as Hayward or Clinton," Charisma said. "Everyone knows that he kissed me the first night we met."

"I never heard a complaint from you," Jenisha said.

"Look at my gorgeous hunky husband. Who would complain about being kissed by him?"

"All of you are jumping the boat here," Keira said. "Jim and I are only having fun. Sure I'm falling in love with him, but I haven't thought about marriage. He has enough going on with Kathy and this new custody battle. She isn't pleased at all that Jim wants full custody. I swear that woman is worse than Faye Dunaway in Mommy Dearest."

"Kathy is a piece of work," Charisma agreed. "Dave told me once she tried to kiss him while she was still married to Jim. What kind of woman does that?"

Keira mouth fell open and she quickly snapped it closed. "Are you serious?"

"Yeah and a while back she was flirting with Dante at his own club right in front of Jim but they were divorced by then. I'm surprised she gave Dante any attention at all because he's way older than the men she usually dates."

"I did see her once when I was leaving Dr. Gearan's office walking down the street with some guy young enough to be her son," Keira said.

"Oh, how are the doctor's visits going? Will you be cleared to fly again soon?"

“Charisma, Dr. Gearan is thrilled with my success. I only have to see him three more times and I’m crossing my fingers he will sign the papers I need to fly again.”

“I’ve seen Dr. Gearan and he’s very attractive,” True said. “I know Hayward would have a problem with me seeing him with all those hidden jealousy issues of his. What does Jim say about it?”

“Jim hasn’t said anything because he’s never been introduced to my doctor and if he did have a problem I wouldn’t stop seeing him. Dr. Gearan is my doctor and friend. Nothing is going on between the two of us. Dante is my friend too and Jim doesn’t have any trouble with that.”

All three women’s eyes connected with each other and then they stared at Keira for a minute or two. “You’re friends with Dante? Lord...you can’t tell Jim. Dante is smoking hot! I know I’ve been married the longest here, but I even take a second glance at him when he walks into the room. If sex could be turned into a man and walk the earth it would be Dante,” True said.

Laughing, Keira couldn’t believe True just said that. It was just too damn funny! “Dante doesn’t come across to me like that. Now, I know those green eyes of his are hypnotic, but I’m totally into moody ass Jim Russell. He can be a pain in my ass most of the time; however, I love the feeling I get when he’s around me.”

“What about one of you?” Keira asked Charisma and Jenisha. “Would one of you trade in your husband for Dante?”

“I might if Dave didn’t take out the trash when I asked him to,” Charisma joked.

“No, I already have one arrogant and overly protective green-eyed man. I don’t need another one in my life,” Jenisha replied. “However, the woman who lands Dante is going to be very lucky because he is one good-looking man.”

“Speaking of a good-looking man, Keira’s is headed this away,” True said seconds before a kiss was planted at the back of Keira’s neck.

“Hey baby,” Jim whispered against her skin. “I missed you. Are you ready to go? I forgot that I need to show you something at *Choppers*.”

Keira noticed the knowing grins on the women’s faces in front of her. Jim was ruining the speech she just gave them. She wasn’t going to be able to deny anything they tossed her way now.

“Can what you have to show me wait a little longer?” she asked.

“Keira, why don’t you go ahead and leave?” Jenisha said. “I know when Clinton has to show me something it usually can’t wait that long.”

Keira’s face grew warm as her girlfriends broke out into laughter around her. God, they were embarrassing her and loving every second of it, but if the roles were reversed she would be doing the same thing to them. So she couldn’t be too mad at them.

“Okay, I’m ready to go,” Keira said standing up excited about what Jim’s little surprise might turn out to be. The last time she got swept away by Jim they ended up having sex in his front yard.

“Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do,” Charisma yelled at her as Jim placed his hand in the middle of her back and escorted her out the backyard.

“I think your girlfriends love the fact we are together and that they could tease you about it,” Jim said as he opened the car door for her and waited while she got inside.

“Yeah, I can say that they do.”

He slammed the door shut, ran around the front and got inside. Before driving off he leaned across the seat and gave Keira a quick kiss on the mouth.

“I love you.”

“I love you, too,” Keira replied surprised by the declaration, but enjoying it all the same.

“That’s really good to know,” Jim said and then drove off to the surprise he had waiting for her.

\* \* \* \*

“What do you think?” Jim asked as he closed the door. “It’s not completely done yet, but I wanted to show you how far it’s come along. I think it’s going to look pretty good once everything is in its place. It’s not the same place I bought from your father all of those months ago.”

“Sweetheart, this place looks amazing.” Keira walked around *Choppers* taking in how the new shelves on the wall, stainless steel sinks, new floors and desk in the far corner enhanced the wall color she’d help paint with Jim.

“*Choppers* will be the hottest motorcycle shop in town. Do you know where you want to set up the display for the clothes? Have you thought about what you are going to put on that far wall yet? I see that it’s still bare.”

“I have a couple of items running through my head, but I haven’t committed to anything yet. I want it to be perfect because I don’t want to paint over any design I might grow to hate later,” Jim said as he walked closer to her pulling her into his arms.

“Are you going to show it to me before it goes up on the wall?” Keira asked circling her arms around his neck.

Sliding his hand under her ass, he lifted Keira up so she could wrap her legs around his waist. “No, I want you to be as surprised as everyone else when I reveal it at the grand opening.” He walked over to the desk and sat Keira on top of it. “Now, you might be able to persuade me into giving you some kind of hint.”

“I don’t know if I have that kind of ability,” she replied easing her hands up the back of his shirt. Keira ran her nails down his back making his cock leap to life with the flirty touch.

"I think you have more power over me than you will ever know," Jim said before he lifted Keira's shirt and pulled it over her head tossing it somewhere behind them on the floor. Long, calloused fingers suddenly made quick work of her bra and added to her shirt somewhere on the floor.

"I swear you have the most beautiful breasts in the world. I know that I'll never get tired of seeing these. They are so big, brown and creamy...so mouth-watering."

His words were blunt and honest...words that made her feel and know how much Jim loved her body.

"Are you going to show me how much you love them?"

Taking a nipple between his forefinger and thumb, he worked it until the nipple became pebble hard and a low moan eased between her lips.

"Hmmm...that feels so wonderful." Keira arched her back pressing her breasts more into Jim's touch.

"Sweetheart, you are so responsive." Lowering his head he took the raised nipple into his mouth and gave it a slow heated lick with his tongue.

Jim lifted his head and was about to suck Keira's other nipple when the ringing of his phone stopped him. Closing his eyes, he rested his head against a smooth brown shoulder and slowly counted to ten. He had to answer this call. The only person who called him this time of day was Trevor.

"Baby, I have to get this. It's Trevor." He reached over and grabbed Keira's clothes off the floor and handed them to her before answering the call.

"Trevor, what's wrong?"

"Dad, I'm at the mall with mom. Can you come and pick me up? I'll be outside waiting for you. I told mom I was calling you and she didn't care," Trevor said.

"Son, this is your week to spend with your mother. Are you sure that she doesn't care that you want to spend it with me instead?" Jim didn't want to agree to get Trevor and then have him act out when Keira was over at his house. She was as much a part of his life as his son was.

"Dad, she really doesn't care. Will you come to get me?" His son asked again.

"Yes, I'll be right there. Make sure that you stay inside the mall at the area around the arcade games."

"I promise," Trevor said. "I'll be there waiting for you."

"You better." Jim hung up the phone then slid it back into the front pocket of his blue jeans. "Do you care if I drop you off at my house first before I go and pick up Trevor? He's having problems with Kathy."

"No...I don't mind at all," Keira answered. "Let's hit the road. I can fix my famous chicken pot pie for dinner."

"If you keep this up you're going to make me fatter than a Thanksgiving turkey." Jim grinned.

"I thought I heard the way to a man's heart was through his stomach."

“Keira, you already have my heart so you don’t need to do anything else to gain any more of my love.”

Joy bubbled in her laughter as Keira shook her head at Jim. He presented her with relentless enjoyment with his sweet talking way. Who knew a big bad biker was such a hidden romantic? “Come on silver tongue...let’s go and pick up Trevor.”

“Maybe after Trevor is asleep tonight maybe I can find other ways to keep you entertained with my silver tongue,” he suggested in a low, sensual voice.

“Maybe...maybe not,” Keira teased as she moved towards the exit sign.

“You won’t know until after Trevor has a visit from the sand man.”



## Chapter Forty-Five

*I'm trying my best to get along with Trevor, but he's making it so hard for me.* Jim left Trevor with her while he went to the store to get milk for Trevor's supper. Ever since Jim had walked out the door his son hadn't been listening to a word she told him.

"Trevor, do you want to put that video game down and help me with supper?" Keira asked as she spread the pre-made pie crust into the pie pan. Seconds tickled by, but Trevor didn't raise his head from the video game. In fact, Trevor pulled his baseball cap even further down on his head like he was doing his best to block out the sound of her voice.

*That was it,* her mind thought. Trevor isn't going to ignore me like I'm not even here.

Keira flung the dishrag on the island and marched over to Trevor. She snatched the baseball cap off his forehead and pitched it on the table. She was surprised he could even see out of it as far down over his eyes as it was.

"Hey! Give that back to me!" Trevor yelled reaching for the black cap. "I need that."

"Not until we have a talk."

Trevor turned sideways in his chair forcing her to talk to one side of his face. "I don't want to say anything to you. It's not like we're ever going to be friends or anything. My dad will go back to my mom. He's just mad at her right now."

Whoa! Did Jim know that Trevor still thought there might be a reconciliation between him and his mother? God, she was clueless what to do about this. Taking a deep breath, Keira moved around the table and stared down into Trevor's face when something by the side of his eye caught her attention.

"What is this?" Keira touched the side of his cheek and moved his face so she could get a better look. A dark bruise was forming at the side of Trevor's eye like someone had either slapped or punched him.

Anger she'd never experienced before swelled in the middle of her chest making her blood pump faster through her veins. Who in the hell hit Trevor? There was no way in hell that Jim had seen this because he would have hit the roof by now.

"Who hit you?" she asked, touching the side of his face.

"Nobody," Trevor yelled as he jerked his head away from her.

“Sweetheart, you can tell me. I promise that your father won’t be mad at you.”

Trevor snatched his baseball cap off the table and placed it back on his head fixing it so it covered most of his face. “You better not tell my dad about this or you’ll wish you hadn’t. I hate you! I wish you’d never come into my dad’s life.”

Keira shook off Trevor’s outburst. She was more concerned if Jim was going to send his son back into an abusive situation. She had to tell Jim about this. She wasn’t about to keep it a secret.

“Trevor, we can tell your dad together and he will protect you from whoever hit you.” She reached to touch his face again, but Trevor slapped her hand away.

“Don’t touch me!” he screamed.

“What is going on here?” Jim demanded as he came into the kitchen carrying Trevor’s back pack and a grocery bag. “Why are you yelling at Keira?”

“Jim, you need to...” Keira tried to tell Jim about Trevor’s face, but didn’t get the chance because of his son.

“I hate being here! I want to go back to my mom’s.” Trevor threw his video game down on the table and raced from the room back outside.

Jim stared after Trevor in utter shock before he glanced over at her. “What did I walk in on? Why is he acting like this?” he asked placing the backpack and grocery bag on the table. “Trevor is usually so calm.”

Right at the moment, Keira decided it might be for the best if she didn’t tell Jim about the bruise while Trevor was so distraught. She would pull him to the side and tell him about it later when Trevor wasn’t around.

“He’s mad because I asked him to help me with supper,” she lied hoping she was making the right decision.

“Trevor knows better than to act like that. I haven’t raised him that away.” Jim sighed running his fingers through his hair. “I have to get him away from Kathy. I have another appointment with my lawyer this week and I’m going to tell him to speed up the court hearing.”

“I think you’re right about wanting to get full custody.”

“Thanks for your support, sweetheart,” Jim said. “You don’t know how much it means to me. I came in here to tell you something, but hearing Trevor hollering at you almost made me forget. While I was outside Clinton called me and invited us over for a barbeque. Are you interested in going? I know you were going to cook, but under the circumstances I thought going over there might be a better idea.”

“I couldn’t agree more,” Keira said. “Why don’t you go outside and check on Trevor while I get the kitchen cleaned up. Talk to him. Maybe you can pull out of him why he’s so mad all of the sudden.”

“Baby, you’re the greatest. Even after my son threw a tantrum on you for no reason you’re concerned about his welfare. Damn, I love you.” Jim kissed her on the cheek and left her alone in the kitchen.

Keira started cleaning up the kitchen and putting the ingredients for the chicken pot pie into the refrigerator praying that Trevor would be the one who told Jim about his black eye instead of her because she didn't know how to break the news to Jim that someone was hitting his child.

\* \* \* \*

"I guess it's okay for me now to believe you and Jim are officially a couple?" Jenisha asked as she stood next to Keira watching Jim playing with Kevan, Evan and Trevor in the playroom off at the side from the living room.

"Yes, we're a couple and I've never been so happy in my life." Keira grinned.

"I knew the two of you would hit it off," Charisma chimed in. "Dave was concerned Jim might not be able to open up after having such a horrible marriage, but I knew you were the woman who could do it."

"Stop bragging." Dave laughed as he came up to his wife and kissed her on the cheek.

"I thought the four of you were outside staring at the grill," Jenisha said to her husband as Clinton grabbed a potato chip from the bowl on the table.

"We knew that our women were missing us, so we came in here to see you." Hayward wrapped his arms around True.

"I guess I can let you believe that's the real reason you came back inside." True placed her hands on top of her husband's arm. "I checked on the babies and they're sound asleep. I'm glad they're sleeping better now."

"I need to stop hanging around all of you before the love bugs bites me," Dante laughed as he joined in on the conversation with the people around him. "I'm not interested in walking down the aisle anytime soon."

"I remember being like you until I saw Charisma and after that all I could think about was babies and marriage. Ask Jim. He's a step away from proposing to Keira."

"Don't put Jim into something he hasn't even mentioned to me. We're dating, but the talk of marriage has never come up. I really believe Jim is against the whole marriage idea." Keira had to correct the way everyone's mind seemed to be going.

"I'm willing to bet if you brought up getting married to Jim, he wouldn't totally blow you off," Dante said.

At Dante's statement, Keira began to acknowledge her own needs and a surprising realization washed over her. She did want to get married to Jim. It seemed like when they first met they had disagreed about anything and everything, but their arguing was hiding something so much deeper and meaningful.

Looking back, she knew she sensed Jim could be the man for her yet she'd fought it at every turn like he had. They were more like each other than either one of them ever wanted to admit back then.

The more she thought about it the better she loved the idea of being married to Jim, but she quickly banished the thought from her mind. There'd be time for such thoughts later.

"I'll let everyone know when and if Jim asks me to marry him. Until then I'm just going to take each day as it comes."

"Okay, we'll leave it alone." True sighed. "However, when you need help picking out baby names let me know because I hate to brag, but I think I'm pretty good at it."

"True, stop messing with Keira. Give her time to get used to being with Jim instead of adding in babies," Hayward gently scolded before Kevan ran across the room up to him.

"Daddy, can Evan and I go outside to play?"

"Do you promise to stay in the yard and not go into the street?"

"Yes, we'll stay in the yard," Kevan promised and turned away running for the door. "Come on, Evan and Trevor!"

"Keira, see all of the fun you have to look forward to," Dante teased.

"I see it."

Keira's eyes swung over to Jim. She hadn't let the idea of them having kids with Jim enter her mind in a long time. Jim had his hands full with Trevor. Would he even let the idea of having another child come into his thoughts?

\* \* \* \*

"Dad, can I go outside too?" Trevor asked the second Evan left him and ran after his big brother.

"Sure, but be sure not to let Kevan and Evan go in the street," Jim said. "They're younger than you and I expect you to watch over them."

"I will." Trevor turned away from Jim at the same time he reached out to pull the baseball cap up further on his son's head so he could see better, but instead Jim accidentally knocked it off Trevor's head.

Jim noticed the bruise by his son's eye the instant the baseball cap hit the floor. Anger he never felt before formed in the pit of his stomach and worked through his body drowning out the conversation from the other people going on around him. He wasn't sure why he hadn't spotted it before, but he saw it now and Trevor was going to tell him how in the hell it got there.

"Trevor, wait!" He touched his son on the arm to keep him from running outside. Cupping his son's cheek in his hand, Jim turned the bruise towards the sunlight filtering through the living room curtains in Jenisha's house.

"Son, who put this on your face?" he questioned and then lowered his voice when Trevor jerked his head away and moved back.

*I need to calm down or I'll make him too scared to tell me the truth..*

"I don't want to tell you," Trevor whispered. "You wouldn't believe me."

"Trevor, I'll believe anything you tell me as long as it's the truth. Now tell me who hit you." It had been Kathy's week to keep Trevor and if one her boyfriends placed a hand on his son they were going to get their ass kicked by him.

"I can't tell you."

"Trevor, tell me who hit you!" Jim yelled, growing more upset by the minute that he hadn't been there to protect his son.

The sound of his hollering drew everyone from the living room into the playroom. He hadn't meant for them to get involved with this, but maybe one of the women could get Trevor to tell them the truth.

"Jim, what is all of the noise about?" True asked concern etched on her pretty face as she looked back and forth between him and Trevor.

"Look at his face," Jim said pointing to the bruise. "Someone hit him and he won't tell me who did it."

"Screaming at him won't get you anywhere," Jenisha told him as she squatted down and ran a finger across the bruise on his son's cheek.

He still couldn't believe he was just now seeing this. How in the fuck did he allow Trevor to hide this with a baseball cap?

"Trevor, can you please tell us who did this to you?" Charisma asked, softly. "You aren't in any kind of trouble. This person is a horrible person for hitting you and we only want to know who it is. I know your daddy will promise not to let them around you again."

"Is that true? If I tell you who hit me you won't let them around me again?" Trevor asked looking away from Jenisha and Charisma up at him.

"Trevor, I promise that this low life won't get a chance to ever be in the same room with you again." Jim prayed his son would finally tell him who it was.

Trevor glanced around the room and everyone before dropping his head and whispering, "It was Keira. She slapped me for not wanting to help her with the chicken pot pie for supper. You walked through the front door right after she had done it. Don't you remember?"

The silence in the room was deafening as everyone registered what Trevor just confessed to them. It was like all of the air had been sucked out of the room by a vacuum without anyone being prepared for it to occur. Everyone was trying to process the accusation that Trevor just tossed out there.

The truth slammed down on Jim's head like a ton of bricks. He did remember walking in on Keira bent down in front of Trevor touching the side of his face, but he hadn't given it a thought. Now, his son was telling him that the woman he was in love with and was planning to propose to in a couple of days had struck him.

"I didn't touch Trevor," Keira said rushing up to him at the same time Trevor stepped behind him.

"You lying bitch!" Jim snapped. "Look, my son is terrified of you."

"I don't believe it," Charisma said, cutting in. "I've known Keira most of my life and she would never slap a child. There has to be a mistake."

"I don't believe it either," Jenisha butted in defending Keira too.

"There isn't a fucking mistake." Jim moved closer to Keira. "I thought you were different from his mother, but I can see now that you're worse."

"I'm not," Keira denied, vehemently. "I love Trevor. I would never, and I mean never, hit him." She wasn't going to stand here and let Jim talk to her like this when she wasn't the person who hit Trevor. She knew Jim's son had issues with her dating his dad, but she never thought he would lie like this!

"Are you calling my son a liar? Trevor wouldn't lie about you hitting him! God, I kept getting on Kathy about having worthless characters around my son and I was the one who was placing Trevor in harm's way. Kathy was a better judge of your character than I was. What a damn idiot I've been for these past two and a half months."

"Jim, I swear to you that Trevor isn't telling you the truth." Keira had to make Jim believe her. She would never hit a child.

"Jim, I'm not saying that Trevor is lying, but something isn't right here," Dave said finally giving his opinion. "Charisma and I have left Dave Jr. with Keira several times and never been worried about anything happening."

"You're the reason I'm in the living hell right now," Jim shouted, focusing his angry on Dave.

"What are you talking about?" Dave frowned.

"If I hadn't gone out with Keira as a favor to you because you wanted help with her, she wouldn't have slapped my son."

"As a favor to you," Keira said, looking back and forth between Jim and Dave. "What are the two of you talking about?"

"Dave and everyone else in the room besides Dante had been so worried about you since the plane crash. They weren't sure what was going on with you. So, Dave came to me and begged and I do mean he had to plead with me to do him a favor. He wanted me to keep an eye on you. At first, I was like no way, but after he kept pressing me I finally gave in and agreed to help him."

She took a quick sharp breath. Keira couldn't believe what Jim was telling her. The only reason he ever dated her was a favor to Dave. None of those times they were together had meant anything to him. The shock of the discovery hit her full force.

"Are you telling me instead of ordering a help wanted ad in the newspaper, my so-called friends pressured you into helping their 'semi-crazy' friend. Well...now I know what all of you think about me." Keira looked at everyone in the room and then finally back at Jim. "But I'm not lying to you about Trevor. I didn't touch him. Trevor thinks you're going to get back with Kathy, but you

can't do that with me in your life. So, he had to find a way to get rid of me and he decided to lie about who really hit him."

As their eyes met, she felt numbness run through her at the coldness in Jim's. "Sweetheart, if you're trying to make me choose between my son and you, I want you to know that you will lose every single time and I MEAN every damn time. Do you understand me? Kathy may be an unfit mother, but you're nothing more than a charity case I took on out of pity. You have replaced my ex-wife at the top of my most hated list. I can't believe I was actually thinking about building a life with you. I'm so glad Trevor told me how you really were because I would have hated to get married to a lying..."

"Stop right there. You aren't going to call me a bitch again," Keira hollered. "I haven't done what Trevor is accusing me of and I know the truth will come out. However, when it does I don't want your apology. Keep it to yourself. Hearing the words coming out of your mouth will mean *nothing* to me after this conversation. I'm through with you. I shouldn't have gotten involved with you. My first impression of you was correct...you're an arrogant son of a..." Keira stopped herself when she saw that Trevor was looking at her.

"Don't lose a night's sleep worrying about if I'll come knocking on your door because I won't. I should have stayed away from you like I wanted. I thought the worst day of my life occurred when I married Kathy, but I was wrong. The worse day of my life started when I brought you into my son's life.

The slap came so quickly that Jim stumbled back from the impact. "There now you have something else to replace it," Keira said in a choked voice. "This is strike three for you. Please forget that we ever knew each other because I know that I sure in hell will." Rushing over to the chair, she snatched up her purse and ran towards the front door.

"Keira, how are you doing to get home?" Charisma yelled as she moved to follow her best friend outside, but Dante stepped in front of her blocking her way.

"Let me take her home. I think after the blow out here tonight I might be the only person she will let take her home."

"Okay, I believe you're right." Charisma touched Dante on the arm. "Can you make sure she's okay and let her know that I'll call her tomorrow? She's my best friend in the world besides Jenisha. Keira was the one who told me to give Dave a chance. I was only trying to help her. I never thought it would turn out like this."

"I'll do the best I can," Dante said before he rushed after Keira.

"How could you say those things to Keira?" Charisma screamed at Jim hitting him on the arm. "You know that Keira isn't the type of slap a child."

"I've seen her slap someone before," Jim said. He wasn't going to let everyone in this room turn on his son. Trevor wasn't a liar. If his son pointed out Keira as the person who hit him then he was telling him the truth.

"Who has she hit?" Dave asked, jumping into the conversation.

“You at the airport or have you forgotten?”

“Keira was defending Charisma and she had every right to do so after what I said to her best friend. I got over that tap as soon as I got on the plane. It was a totally different situation and we both know it.”

“Jim, I’m having a hard time believing this myself,” Hayward admitted.

He was getting more displeased by minute. All of his supposed friends were calling Trevor a liar right in front of his face. They all saw his son standing there in the room with them. He wasn’t going to stay here and let this continue.

“Come on Trevor. We’re leaving.” Touching his son on the back, Jim led him towards the front door. “I guess I wasn’t as close to all of you as I thought I was if you would take Keira’s word over my son’s.”

“Jim, you need to stay so we can figure this out.” Dave was trying to be the level-headed person tonight. He had to calm things down before some things were said that couldn’t be taken back. “Let Trevor go outside and play with Kevan and Evan. You know how much he loves being around them.”

“I think I need to get my son home. I’m too upset to talk to anyone else tonight. I’m not sure if I want to even be associated with any of you anymore after tonight.” Jim opened the front door and went out with his son slamming it shut behind him.

\* \* \* \*

“I can’t believe tonight took such a wrong turn. What in the world happened?” Jenisha asked walking around the room. “Jim and Keira were so happy when they walked in the door and now they hate each other. Jim didn’t even try to stop Dante from going after Keira.”

“He believes that Keira hit Trevor. We all saw that bruise on his cheek,” Clinton said.

“Do you think Keira truly slapped Trevor?” Hayward asked his brother.

“No, I think Trevor is lying for some reason.”

“Trevor has wanted his parents to get back together ever since the divorce and I believe he lied to get his father away from Keira just like she told us,” Dave pointed out. “Don’t most children of divorce dream about being a real family again with both parents?”

“Trevor knows he’s lying. How long do you think a seven-year-old can keep this secret to himself?” Charisma wondered out loud.

“I’m more worried about how Jim is going to feel when he learns Trevor wasn’t telling the truth and how he’s going to get Keira back,” True said. “He said a lot of terrible things about her.”

“Sadly, he may not be able to get close to Keira ever,” Charisma said. “I’ve known her longer than any of you and when my best friend makes up her mind it’s very hard to change. I think Jim made the biggest mistake of his life today.”



"Maybe you're wrong," Dave said. "Jim needs Keira and vice versa. They are more than perfect for each other."

"I hope that I am, but I seriously doubt it," Charisma said but the doubt in her voice was loud and clear in the room.

"This day can't get any worse," True said.

\* \* \* \*

"Mommy! Help me!" Evan screamed from outside in front of his uncle's house.

All of the adults were replaying the events of the day in their minds when the childlike screams of Evan Campbell made all of them rush out of the front door to see what was wrong. True was the first one to reach her son in the middle of the street.

"Evan, what's wrong?" True asked. Looking around she noticed that Kevan was nowhere in sight. "Where's your brother?"

"I tried to stop the man from taking him, but he shoved me down and put Kevan in his car. I told Kevan to come back from the car, but he wanted to see the puppy," Evan cried.

Fear set in the hearts of everyone standing there as they listened to Evan. "What man? Who took your brother?" True screamed shaking Evan. "Tell me what happened!"

Evan started to cry even harder as Hayward pulled his son away from True. "Son, where is your brother? Is he playing hide and seek like he used to? Remember we told the two of you that the game wasn't funny."

"Daddy, I'm not lying. A man pulled up in a blue car with a puppy and was calling us to the car to pet it. I knew we shouldn't go to the car, but Kevan ran up to him and soon as he got there, the man opened the door and then pulled him inside. I ran over to the car, but he shoved me back then he hit Kevan and drove off." He pointed to the very end of the street.

"Oh my God...no!" Hayward hollered as visions of his past came rushing back to him. He couldn't lose another son. It would kill him. They had to find Kevan! He wasn't going to believe...

"No...not my baby!" True screamed as she fell to her knees in the middle of the street.

"I'm going to call the police." Clinton took his cell phone out of his pocket and moved over to the side. "We have to get this called in as soon as possible."

"We need to talk to Evan and see if he can tell us any more about the man," Dave said worried about True's oldest child.

Jenisha rushed over to True and tried to help her out of the street. "True, you have to get up and come with me. We can't have you in the street."

"NO!" True shoved Jenisha away from her. "Someone took my son. Don't you understand! I have to find him!" Jumping up, True took off towards the end

of the street. “KEVAN!” she screamed taking off in the direction Evan pointed out the car had gone.

The sight of True running wildly down the middle of the street shook Hayward out of his shock. “I have to go and get her. She can’t run off like that. I need to know where she is.” He tried to move away from Evan, but his son wrapped his tiny arms around his leg.

“Daddy, don’t leave me,” he cried. “I’m sorry I didn’t help Kevan better.”

Dave touched Hayward on the shoulder. “You take Evan and get everyone back in the house and wait for the police. I’ll go after True and bring her back.”

Hayward looked like he wanted to argue but instead he nodded at Dave. Picking up Evan, he watched as Dave took off after True. “Please God...don’t let this happen to me twice in my life,” he prayed as tears poured down his face. “The police better find the son of a bitch who took my son before I do because if they don’t I’m going to would kill the bastard.”

## Chapter Forty-Six

*Two days later*

“Dad, can I talk to you?” Trevor asked as he sat down in a chair next to Jim’s outside on the patio.

“I thought you were in your room playing a video game,” Jim said looking over at his son. Trevor had been staying with him instead of Kathy ever since he found the bruise on his son’s face. He wasn’t letting his son go back anywhere near that environment.

“No, I’ve been thinking about something you told me.”

“What is that?” Jim loved his son dearly, but he didn’t want to get into a long conversation. All he wanted to do was sit out here and think about how he could have been so wrong about Keira. It had been close to forty-eight hours and he couldn’t believe that he had broken up with her.

“Remember you told me that you will always love me no matter what?”

“Yes and it’s true. I’ll always love you no matter what. You’re my son and even if you make a huge mistake in life I’ll love you.”

“Does that include telling a horrible lie about someone?” Trevor asked nervously.

“Who did you tell a lie on, son?”

Looking down at his tennis shoes, Trevor kicked a rock around with the toe like he didn’t want to come clean but he knew that he had to. “Dad, did you love Ms. Keira?”

Jim thought about lying but changed his mind. Trevor needed him to be honest. “Yes, I loved her very much Trevor. That’s why it hurt so much when you told me she was the one who hit you. I’m so sorry that I let someone like her around you. I can promise you’ll never see her again.”

“Keira didn’t hit me,” Trevor blurted out. “I lied. I didn’t want you to leave me for Keira. Mommy was the one who really hit me. She was buying her boyfriend something with the money you sent for me the day I called you from the mall. I told her that I was going to tell you that she didn’t buy me the new shirt I needed and she slapped me. She told me I better not tell you because you were tired of my asking for stuff and since you have a new girlfriend I didn’t matter to you anymore.”

Jim closed his eyes, feeling utterly miserable. A deep, unaccustomed pain filled his chest as the words he’d spat at Keira came rushing back to him like a landslide. “Trevor, do you know how much damage you caused with your lies?”

“Dad, I’m sorry. I was scared you wouldn’t love me anymore if you married Ms. Keira. I know mommy doesn’t care about me and if you didn’t care anymore, I wouldn’t have anyone.”

“Trevor that is no excuse for lying on Keira,” Jim said trying to keep calm. “Do you know if I had reported Keira to the police how much trouble she could be in because of your lie?”

“I know,” Trevor said still looking down at his shoe. “I can apologize to her and that will make her care about us again.”

Jim doubted any kind of apology from either one of them would get Keira to stay five minutes in a room with him or his son. The knowledge of that twisted and turned him inside out. “Trevor, go back inside. I need some time alone to think about what I’m going to do.”

Standing up, Trevor looked at him. “I promise to tell Ms Keira I’m sorry when she comes back and I won’t cause anymore problems with her,” his son said and then ran back into the house.

Jim waited until he was sure that Trevor was gone before he dropped his head into his hands. The pain he felt as the reality of his situation set in tore him to shreds. Keira had been telling him the truth! He had ripped the woman he loved apart. The insults that came out his mouth were barbed and hurtful. Dave warned him to stop, but he didn’t listen. He had been intent at lashing out towards Keira.

Tears burned his eyes as the look in Keira’s beautiful eyes flashed in front of his face the second before she’d hit him and told him to stay away from her. How could he do that now? She was his everything. He was having a hard time staying away before Trevor told him the truth. There was no possibility of him not trying to win her back now that he knew she wasn’t responsible for the slap.

He had to mend the love between them and there was no time like the present. Lifting his head, Jim got up from his chair and pulled his cell phone out of his pocket. He pressed one on his speed dial and waited for Keira to pick up. She might not answer the phone once she saw it was him on caller id, but that wasn’t going to stop him. The phone rang three times before her answering machine picked up.

“Hello...I’m not home. Please leave your name and number. I’ll get back to you as soon as I can.”

Jim waited for the beep and left a message.

“Keira...Hmmm...Baby, we need to talk. Please call me,” Jim discontinued the call and shoved the phone back into his blue jeans. He knew that Keira wasn’t going to call him. Hell could freeze over and she wouldn’t pick up that phone. So he needed a second plan to get Keira back.

He couldn’t believe that he would never wake up again during the middle of the night to find Keira’s leg slid between his or find her hand wrapped around his hair. He loved all of these things about her and they all might be gone out of his life because he’d rushed to judgment.

“Shit!” Picking up a small table, Jim threw it across his backyard. “I have to think of a way to apologize to her. She can’t keep me out of her life forever. I need her too much.”

Not knowing what else to do Jim retook his seat and dropped his head back into his hands scared that he might have lost the woman he wanted to make his wife.

\* \* \* \*

“True, I’m so sorry to hear about Kevan,” Keira said as she sat beside her friend on the couch and took her hand. “Is there anything I can do for you? Have you heard anything from the man who took him?”

“No, Dalton hasn’t contacted me at all.” True cried brushing away her tears “I’m pissed the police didn’t let me know as soon as he had escaped from prison. They shouldn’t have expected me to have seen it on the news.

“I swear if he hurts my son in any way I’ll kill him. I can’t take much more of this. I haven’t eaten or slept in days. How can I think about taking care of myself if I don’t know how Dalton is treating Kevan? All of this is my fault. If I hadn’t gone to California and testified against him, none of this would be happening.” She wept out loud, rocking back and forth on the couch with her arms wrapped around her.

Placing an arm around her shoulder, Keira drew True closer to her body until her head rested on her shoulder. “You have to get yourself together because you need to be strong when Kevan comes back home to you. Can I get you something to eat? Where are Hayward and the boys?”

“Hayward and Clinton took them to see his father because he was scared for them to be here with Dalton running around. I told him I wasn’t leaving until I got my baby back. I know he blames me, but he’s not saying anything to my face.”

Keira was torn about what she could do to help True. It was hard for her to be here because she didn’t want to run into Jim. He had left a message on her phone, but she wasn’t about to call him back. After the cruel and horrible things he’d said to her nothing he had to say would *ever* make her see him in the same light she used to.

“Honey, I know how much Hayward loves you and he wouldn’t ever think anything like that about you. Where is everyone else?”

“Jenisha went out with Charisma and Dave to get me something to eat. Jenisha wanted to stay here with me, but I told her to go. I needed some time to myself to think. They should be back any minute.” True moved her head off her shoulder and brushed the remainder of her tears away. “Hey, how are things going with you and Jim? I heard that Trevor told the truth about who hit him.”

“Jim isn’t in my life anymore and that’s all I have to say about him. However, I do have some excellent news. Dr. Gearan signed all the forms I need

to get back in the air. My first flight is in two days and I can't wait. I've missed being a flight attendant."

"Keira, I'm so happy for you. I know how hard it was for you to get over those nightmares and go see Dr. Gearan about them. Have you told Jim about this?"

"No, it isn't any of his business. He has his own life now and I have mine. I'm not going to take someone back who talked to me the way Jim did."

"I think..."

The sound of the front door opening and closing drew Keira's attention to the entrance way of Jenisha's house. She silently sent up a prayer that the person she didn't want to see wouldn't make an appearance, but her prayers weren't answered. Jenisha, Charisma and Dave walked in and a few seconds later Jim appeared behind them.

His eyes zoned in on her the second she got up from the couch and Jenisha spoke to her. "Keira, I'm glad you could make it over here. I was concerned about leaving True by herself while we went out for food; that's why I called you when we were at the restaurant."

"Oh, it wasn't a problem, but since all of you are back, I need to leave." Looking down at True, she touched her friend on her shoulder. "Please call me if I can do anything else. I'll make it back over to see you soon and hopefully we will all be celebrating Kevan's return."

Keira made her way towards the three people and then slid her way past them without touching Jim. She was halfway to the door when a hand wrapped around her arm and a voice whispered by her ear. "Are you really going to leave like you never saw me?" Jim asked. "Baby, we need to talk...please."

She shook off Jim's touch and then spun around to look at him. She tried her best not to get lost in his eyes. "This isn't the time or place for you to be bothering me. We are over. I'm not interested in what you have to tell me. You said enough the day Trevor accused me of hitting him. I replay your comments in my head over and over."

"If you give me a chance to apologize I can wipe all of those horrible words from your mind and replace them with words of love...because I do love you with everything I have in me. Trevor is so upset that you aren't around anymore. He wants to talk to you and tell you how sorry he is."

"No, I see that this relationship wasn't going to lead anywhere especially since you only went out with me as a favor to Dave. I have my confidence back and I don't need to be with someone who never truly cared about me. I'm looking for a man now who isn't put off or scared by a strong and independent woman."

Spinning around, Keira headed for the door only to be stopped by Jim grabbing her arm again. "I swear if I find out another man has touched what is mine, I will kill him. I..."

“You have no right to tell me any of this because we aren’t together anymore. Maybe you can do Dave another favor and ask him if he has another woman who needs some help, but I’m no longer that woman. You did your job well. I’m completely healed. Hell, go find Bambi. I’m sure she won’t turn you away.”

“Fuck Bambi...I’m not in love with that girl. I love you. Hell, you made me want to get married again. I never thought I would want to take that plunge with another woman until you came into my life.”

Shaking her head, Keira wished that they could go back in time but they couldn’t, so it wasn’t any use in trying. “Jim, we are over. Just let it go. True is going through hell right now and she needs all of the support and positive thoughts she can get. I’ll make a real effort to be cordial when we happen to run into each other here, but nothing has changed between us.”

Hell...he wasn’t going to beg for Keira to be with him. He was a man, for God’s sake. If she didn’t want him then he was fine with it. He knew of plenty of women who he could call and they would be at his door step when he got home.

“You know what. You’re right. Why bother trying to fix something that isn’t worth fixing. I might give Bambi a call after all,” Jim tossed back pissed he wasn’t getting through to Keira. She was out of her mind if she truly thought he wanted any other woman but her.

Keira didn’t even acknowledge Jim’s outburst. Instead, she turned away from him, opened the door and walked out closing it softly behind her.

“DAMN IT!” Jim shouted as he punched his fist through the nearest wall.

“What in the hell is going on?” Dave asked as he ran into the entranceway.

“Keira won’t listen to me. She told me to find another woman because she was going to find another man. I warned her that I would kill any man who touched her and she just brushed off my comment,” Jim said holding his bleeding fist. “Shit! I have to go and find her. She isn’t listening to me but I can make her. I always find ways to make her listen to me.” He started to leave, but Dave stepped in his way.

“First, we need to see if your hand is broken and get it bandaged up. Secondly, you need to calm down. Ordering Keira around isn’t going to get her to come back to you. I learned that first hand with Charisma. Let’s go into the bathroom. You don’t need to drip blood on Jenisha’s hardwood floors anymore than you already have.”

“Didn’t you hear what I said? Keira is going to find another man. I can’t let her do it.”

Dave pushed Jim in the direction of the bathroom. “I heard you but I don’t think a new man is going to appear tonight. Take care of your hand and then we will think of a way to get Keira back where she belongs.”

## Chapter Forty-Seven

"I never thought when I finally got my dream that I would give it up for something more important," Jim said as he stood outside next to Dante staring at Keira's house. "I saved up for years to be the owner of a motorcycle shop and I can't get any pleasure from it because the woman I'm in love with hates me."

"Keira doesn't hate you. She's just upset about the way you treated her. I know the two of you will get back together."

"Oh, how can you so sure. Have you *seen* Keira? She's stunning and could have any man that she wants. Why would she even think about coming back to me? I ruined any chance I had with her."

"You act like you're Frankenstein or something, but I don't think Keira dated you for your looks. I believe she truly fell in love with you and wanted to build a life with you."

"Are you trying to cheer me up because you're doing a horrible job," Jim snapped moving away from Dante.

"I don't believe in withholding the truth. Keira loved you and you ruined it because you wouldn't listen. Now, do I think you can win her back? Yes, I do but you can't let too much more time pass or you will lose her."

"Who is she seeing?" Jim demanded spinning back around. "I'll kick his ass for even looking at my woman."

"I'm talking about Keira. She will get back into the pace of being back at work and shove her love life to the side. I get she's the kind of woman who will let work consume her and not give a second thought about it."

"What are you talking about? Keira isn't back at work. Dr. Gearan hadn't cleared her yet," Jim said.

Dante gave him an odd look. "You didn't hear? Keira is scheduled to go back to work the day after tomorrow? Dave told me about it at work yesterday. She told True when she came to visit her the other day."

He was crushed. Keira hadn't shared her good news with him, but after thinking about it why would she. Didn't he tell her the only reason he had dated her was out of pity?

"No, she hadn't told me. Dante, I have to get her back. I can't be at work each and every day with Keira next door and not in my life."

"It's going to take something pretty special to get Keira to love and trust you again."



"I know and I believe I have just the thing. All I have to do is get her to come to the grand opening of *Choppers* tomorrow," Jim said.

"How are you going to do that? I'm pretty sure she'll stay as far away from here as possible."

"With a little help from a couple of friends anything is possible."

\*\*\*\*

"Stop that stupid crying and eat this food," Dalton yelled as he placed the fast food bag in front of True's son. He didn't know what the child liked to eat, but he got him some chicken nuggets at a drive thru on the way back to the abandoned building he was hiding in for the moment. He was about to make contact with True and he couldn't have the brat crying in the background.

"I want my mommy," the little boy cried pushing the bag away from him. "I want to see my daddy!"

"Listen, you aren't going to see either one of them again if you don't stop crying. Now tell me your name."

"NO!"

Dalton resisted the urge to shake the little boy until he told him what he wanted to know. "You will tell me your name or I'll go back to your house and hurt your brother. Do you want me to that?"

"Don't bother Evan!" he screamed. "Or My'kael or Kyle...leave them alone!"

True had four brats running around. Hell! He never knew she was able to pop out babies like that. Well...at least she was good for something because she was a horrible girlfriend.

Bending down, he got right in the boy's face surprised by how dark blue the little kid's eyes were. He did look more like Hayward than True. He had read an old article in prison about how Hayward Campbell's first family died, so this must be killing him wondering if he was going to see this little pain in the ass again. "Are you going to tell me your name?" Dalton asked again.

"Kevan," the boy mumbled then wiped his nose on his sleeve.

"Good...now eat your food while it's hot." He didn't rob two different women to feed this damn brat for him not to eat. "I can't let your mommy and daddy think I didn't feed their precious baby."

"I'm not a baby," Kevan hollered. "I'm five years old."

"If you want to see six you better eat those chicken nuggets and shut up!" Dalton picked up the disposable phone he got while he was out. "Tell me your phone number."

Kevan looked at him and shook his head.

"Do you want to talk to your mommy?"

"Yes, let me talk to my mommy." Fresh tears started to fall down his fat cheeks as he reached for the phone Dalton was holding in his hands.

"Give me your phone number and I'll let you speak to her."

Kevan gave him the number. Dalton quickly dialed and waited while it rang. He was about to hang up when he heard True's soft voice come on the other end.

"Hello...?"

"True, how are you doing? You have a cute little boy. Would you like to speak to him?" Dalton taunted.

"You bastard!" True screamed. "Bring my son back to me. You have a problem with me not my little boy."

"I guess you know who this is?"

"Dalton, I could never forget your voice. It haunted my dreams for months. Where are you? Give me back my son, you son of a bitch!" True screamed.

"Mommy!" Kevan cried in the background.

"Shut up!" Dalton shouted as Kevan tried to take the phone out of his hand.

"Kevan, can you hear me? I love you! Dalton let me talk to him. Put him on the phone! Please don't hurt him."

Dalton loved hearing the panic in True's voice. This was what he had been waiting for all those years he had been sitting in that damn prison cell. True was begging him to help her out just like she used to beg him when they were dating all those years ago.

"I'll let you talk to him, but on one condition."

"Anything," True agreed without even hearing his conditions.

*Yes, he had her right where he wanted her.*

"I need you to meet me, so you can trade places with your little boy. I never wanted him in the first place. I took him to get to you. Do you love your little boy enough to give your life for his?"

"Yes."

Dalton handed the crying child next to him the cell phone. "Here, talk to your mommy and tell her how much your crying has been getting on my nerves."

Kevan took the phone from him and held it up to his ear. Bending down, Dalton listened in on the conversation to make sure True wouldn't try to find out any information from him. It wasn't like a five year old could tell her that much since he was knocked out when Dalton carried him into the building.

"Mommy, I'm sorry that I went to the car. Please come get me. I'm scared," he whimpered.

"Kevan, sweetheart, I love you," True cried. "I'm not mad at you. Can you tell me where you are? Is the man who took you still there?"

"I don't know..."

Dalton took the phone back before Kevan could say anything else. "There, you got to talk to him. I'll call back later to tell you where I want to make the trade." He snapped the phone closed as True pleaded with him to let Kevan go.

"I want my mommy and daddy," Kevan cried then kicked him in the leg.

"You little brat!" He raised his hand to hit Kevan then thought again and dropped it. "You better eat those chicken nuggets because you aren't going to get

anything else for a while.” Storming out of the room, Dalton closed the door locking it behind him drowning out Kevan’s crying.

\* \* \* \*

“True, who was that on your phone?” Hayward asked coming into their bedroom. “I heard you talking to someone when I was coming up the stairs. The police want us to tell them as soon as that bastard Dalton Blake makes contact. I still can’t believe they didn’t let us know he had escaped from prison. What in the fuck is wrong with them allowing him to work on a work release program? I don’t care if he got convicted of a white collar crime. He’s still a criminal and now he has my son because he wanted to take revenge out on you.”

True jumped up from the chair as soon as the words left Hayward’s mouth. “You do blame me for Kevan getting kidnapped, don’t you? If I hadn’t testified against Dalton and got him sent to prison none of this would be happening.”

“Baby, no. I don’t blame you at all.” Hayward reached for True, but she slapped his hand away. “It didn’t come out right.”

“No, you do blame me. I can see it all over your face. I need some air. I can’t take this.” Turning away from Hayward, True left the room, went downstairs and out of the front door.

Outside she held the phone to her chest hoping Dalton would call her back. She knew him and he didn’t wait long to demand that she trade places with Kevan. She couldn’t let Hayward or the police find out what she was planning to do. Kevan was her oldest child and as his mother it was her job to protect him no matter the cost.

True lost track of time as she paced back and forth in the driveway waiting for Dalton to call back. She had to stay away from Hayward, because he wouldn’t let her go to Dalton in order to get Kevan back. She wasn’t going to let anyone stand in her way of doing this.

“True, someone spotted Dalton,” Hayward yelled as he ran out of Clinton’s house over to her.

“What! Where?” she asked running up to him. *Lord, please let it really be him.*

“He was at restaurant drive-thru buying chicken nuggets and the girl who gave him the money recognized him. She told her manager. They called the police and gave a description of the car. Luckily, a police officer was a couple blocks away and was able to follow him. He’s hiding out at an old abandoned factory about twenty minutes out of town. The police have the building surrounded and are about to go in.”

“Have they seen Kevan?”

“Yes, one of the officers spotted him through a window towards the back of the building. They’re trying to get him out before Dalton knows they’re there.”

“We have to go there. Kevan has to see us as soon as they get him out. He’s going to be scared,” True said as she ran for the car with Hayward behind her.

“I swear I’m going to beat Dalton to within an inch of his life when I see him. He’s going to pay for doing this to my family,” Hayward swore.

Stopping, True spun around and looked at her husband. As much as she was dying to do the same thing Hayward did they couldn’t. “Don’t do a thing to him. I can’t have you in jail with that bastard. Kevan is going to need both of us. If you lose your temper Dalton will get what he wanted. We just need to get Kevan back safe and sound. He’s our main and only priority.”

“Baby, you’re right. Let’s go get our son back.” Hayward kissed True before they got into the car and drove off.

## Chapter Forty-Eight

“Dante, are you positive that Jim is gone? I don’t want to run into him at all. He’s been calling and bothering me nonstop since we broke up. I have no need to see him or hear anything he has to tell me,” Keira said. *God, she hoped that Dante believed her lies.*

Dante had come by her house to tell how about how the police had found and arrested Dalton which meant Kevan was safe and sound with his parents. She had wanted to be there for the small welcome back party everyone had thrown for True and Hayward, but she had a final meeting with Dr. Gearan and then the airlines about her getting her old job back. She was going to go and see True tomorrow before Hayward took her and the kids back to Montana.

“Yes, the grand opening happened hours ago. Jim locked up and left about twenty minutes ago after waiting two hours for you to come home. He was devastated that you weren’t here to see the big reveal.”

“I had no reason to be there. The grand opening was for Jim’s friends and family and I’m not either.”

“Keira, you have to know that Jim is still in love with you. Hell, I don’t think there was a time when he wasn’t,” Dante told her. “He searched the place all night hoping you would make an appearance.”

“Can we stop talking about Jim? I thought you were going to show me *Choppers*.”

“I can’t. I have to get back to the bar, but you can go in there and see for yourself. After you’re done you can lock up and leave the key in the mailbox.” Grabbing her hand, Dante placed the key in the palm of her hand closing her fingers over it and then walked over to his motorcycle.

“I’m not going in there by myself. It’s no longer my property,” Keira said.

“Don’t be scared. Nothing is going to happen to you.” Dave waved and drove off leaving her alone in the middle of the sidewalk.

Keira twisted the key around in her hand debating if she should go inside or not. “Hell, I need to see the completed look for my father.” Unlocking the door, she went inside shutting the door behind her and then turned on the light.

She stared, speechless at the sight before her. She had been in here days ago with Jim, but it hadn’t been totally finished, but now it was and it brought tears to her eyes. All of her father’s prized motorcycles were on display around the room.

The variety of clothing Jim had shown her designs for were on racks at the right side of the room. Tools and other motorcycle supplies were organized on

racks hung on the walls. *Choppers* looked like the high-class business her father spent years trying to achieve, but never quite did.

"Do you like it?" a deep voice asked behind her. "I want to make it as much of me as possible with a hint of your father added in."

"I thought you weren't going to be here," Keira said spinning around to find Jim standing about ten feet behind her. Her mouth watered at how good he looked in the black slacks and crisp white shirt with his long dark hair brushing his wide shoulders.

"Dante lied to me. I need to go. I don't have time for this or you." She brushed past Jim and went for the door as fast as her legs would carry her.

"You made me feel love again. I thought Kathy had killed that emotion in me, but you proved me wrong."

Keira stood still a few seconds then glanced at Jim over her shoulder. He was still standing in the same spot where she had left him.

"Why are you telling me this? We aren't together anymore. From what you told me we were never truly a couple because you went out with me out of pity. I don't need your pity. I was fine without you and I'll be even better once I leave you standing there."

Turning around, she moved towards the door again only to be stopped by Jim's voice once more. "How about you have some pity on me and take me back? Baby, I love you so damn much. I shouldn't have ever said those things to you. I was upset and I let words come out of my mouth that I shouldn't, but I honestly do love you. Hell, I think I fell for you the first time I saw you. I was a little jealous that Dave knew such a gorgeous woman and never introduced me to her."

Keira hadn't realized Jim had moved closer to her until she felt his hands on her shoulders. "Keira, I can't think about spending another moment without you in my life. Let me show you how much I care about you." Jim slowly turned her back around so she was facing him.

"Jim, you aren't going to win me over with sex."

"Sweetheart, I don't want to have sex. Well, at least not right now." He smiled. "I need to show you something. I was hoping you would be here tonight for the grand opening and would see it when I showed it off to everyone else, but you weren't so you will get your own private showing."

Taking her by the hand, Jim led her over the far wall he was going to have a design painted on. Keira stopped in her tracks when she laid eyes on what Jim had done. It was a drawing of Jim on his motorcycle with her standing next to him wearing a form fitting outfit with the word "*Choppers*" air brushed in silver and gold above the heads.

"How in the world did you do this?" she asked staring at the picture with tears forming at the back of her eyes.

"Do you like it?"

"It's beautiful, but why did you add me to the picture?" Keira asked.

"I want my wife to be apart of this place as much as I am," Jim answered as he let go of her hand.

*Wife?*

Twirling around, Keira looked down and found Jim down on one knee with a ring box in his hand. "Keira, I have so much love in my heart for you that I think it might burst from it. I used to think my dream was all about owning this shop, but I was wrong. My real dream is for you to forgive me and take me out of this misery I've been living in and become my wife.

"I know we had a rocky start and a lot of obstacles thrown in our way, but none of that ever stopped me from loving you. If you still feel half of the love you used to for me, will do me the greatest honor and marry me?

"You don't want to get married. You just feel remorse for the way you treated me and want to fix it," she whispered.

"Yes, I do," Jim said, standing up. "I never knew how much I wanted to get married until you walked out of my life and I couldn't get you to come back." The look in his eyes was so tender and filled with so much love that Keira couldn't move as he came closer to her.

"I thought I could bury what I felt for you, but I couldn't. Each and every day I resisted coming over to your house and knocking the door down begging you to take me back," Jim confessed as he rested his forehead against her. "Keira, I have never felt so alone in my life.

"I'm getting too old to fight off advances from waitresses in bars who I don't want. I thought I was content on raising Trevor and losing myself in work, but I see I need—no crave—more than that now."

Lifting his eyes, Jim stared at her until Keira was positive that she could see a part of his soul through his eyes. "I've said this several times to you, but I've never meant it as much as I do now. Baby, I love you and would love for you to marry me."

"Hmmm...I don't know," Keira said as she leaned back from Jim. "I love you, but I don't know if I'll be able to marry you."

"Why in the hell not?"

"You fell in love with the Keira who Dave told you to help. I'm not quite sure if you'll be able to handle the strong, sassy Keira Winters that I truly am."

"Oh, I think I'll be able to handle her." Picking her up, Jim laid her down on the floor and covered her with his warm body.

"You sound very sure of yourself. How do you know that you can?" Keira asked as she started working on the buttons on Jim's shirt. She already knew she was going to marry him and so did he, but she couldn't wait to hear what his answer was going to be.

"It doesn't matter if you are weak or strong because you are still the same woman who makes my heart skip a beat every time I look into your beautiful eyes.

“Besides what real man doesn’t want a feisty woman to fight with and of course love? It only makes the sex better and I’m all about having mind-blowing sex with a good-looking woman especially when she’s going to be my wife,” Jim whispered into Keira’s mouth a second before he kissed her.



# Epilogue

*One year later*

"I've been meaning to ask you. How does it feel?" The question was tossed at Jim as he joined the other men at the table in Dave's backyard.

"How does what feel?" Jim asked, clearly confused by the question.

"Leaving bachelorhood behind and joining us in the old married men club," Hayward joked. "I know you were determined to stay single for the rest of your life."

"I only said that because I hadn't found the love of my life yet, but when I did I wasn't going to let her get away."

"Just think, none of us would be married to the women of our dreams if we didn't open our hearts and minds to their love," Clinton said looking at Jenisha who was playing with Jim's newest addition to his family. "How does Trevor like being a big brother?"

"He loves Drew so much. Trevor is like a different little boy now since I got sole custody of him. I thought Kathy was never going to give up with the custody battle."

"Yeah, she only gave up after you signed over a huge check to her, the judge never found out about," Clinton said. "I still can't believe she would give up custody of Trevor like that and then move out of the state. How are Trevor and Keira doing now?"

"For the first couple of months of our marriage Keira wouldn't be alone with Trevor for anything in the world. However, I made the two of them have a long talk while I was in the room and they are so much better now. I'm thrilled about it. Trevor wanted to be close to Keira again and now he is."

"Everything is going good with me too," Hayward said. "True and the boys are doing amazing. I was surprised by how fast Kevan bounced back after the kidnapping."

"Guys, do you realize that we're talking about how much we love being married with kids?" Dave pointed out. "When Hayward first hired me at Campbell Construction and Design all I thought about was making money. Now all I think about at work is how soon I can get home to my wife and son."

"It's the same with me," Clinton admitted. "I adore Jenisha and my kids. She truly is the love of my life."

“I totally agree. I don’t know what I would do if I didn’t get to see True and my sons every day,” Hayward added. “Look at them. None of them know how much they changed our lives for the better.”

All four men stopped talking to watch the four beautiful women who’d come into their well-balanced lives when they least expected it and changed them for the better because of three little initials: CCD.

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*Coming soon*  
*Dante’s Way*  
*Book # 1 in the Bikers and Bars series*