

Bestselling Author
FIONA DAVENPORT



FIGHT ME,
Bowling

FIGHT ME, BABY

FIONA DAVENPORT

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FIGHT ME, BABY

Angelique Butler didn't want to prance around in front of a crowd in a bikini, but the situation her brother landed her in had left her no choice. Then the decision was taken out of her hands when Michael "Saint" St. John tossed her over his shoulder and carried her away.

As a champion MMA fighter, Saint was used to taking hard hits, but nothing prepared him for his reaction to Angelique. The gorgeous blonde was meant for his eyes only, and he was more than willing to get the message across to her brother—in and out of the ring.

SAINT

“Well, well, well. If it isn’t Michael St. John,” Knox, the head of security for the Lennox Hotel and Casino, greeted me with a chin lift. I rolled my eyes, and he grinned. “You ready for tonight, princess?”

I squinted at him in annoyance and grunted, “Fuck you. When have I ever been unprepared for a fight?”

Knox smirked, and I considered giving him a tap on his face...with my fist. He was deliberately trying to get under my skin. We’d known each other for years, ever since we started competing in small-time fights in our twenties. He’d gone into security, only fighting for an outlet, whereas I’d gone pro and made a name for myself as a deadly MMA champion. Between my fight salary, sponsorships, and fight night bonuses, I was the highest paid MMA fighter in the UFC this year. I could have retired as a millionaire several years ago, had even decided that if I retired, it would be in Vegas, and bought a big ass house on a horse ranch nearby. But I enjoyed the sport, and nothing else interested me, so I’d keep fighting until I had damn good reason not to.

Knox was frequently at my fights and loved to bust my chops. I gave as good as I got, but in the end, it was all just friendly bullshit. If either one of us ever needed something, the other would be right there to help. I knew I could count on Knox to bring the shovel and find a place where no one would ever find the body.

Tonight was the finals, the match that would decide who fought in the championship. I’d won the belt three years running, and this year would be no different. I was looking forward to going up

against my next opponent. I knew Sam a little, and I'd followed his season. He was going to make me work for it, so it would be a fun fight.

"There something you need, Dawson?" I asked as I wrapped up one hand.

"I wanted to give you a heads-up. There's been a change on the roster for tonight."

My head snapped up, and I stopped what I was doing to stare at Knox. "Where's Sam?"

Knox folded his arms over his chest as his brow furrowed. "In the hospital with a broken leg, three cracked ribs, and seven broken fingers." His expression turned dark and suspicious. "A couple of my men found him in the garage getting the shit kicked out of him by at least six guys. They jumped in to help and managed to do some damage before the fuckers ran off like pussies."

"Robbery?" I asked, unable to say much else because I was still reeling from the news. Sam was a big fucking guy and a straight arrow, so I assumed it had to be a robbery.

Knox shook his head. "I don't think so. It doesn't make sense, though. One of my men said he recognized a few of them as thugs who worked for Jimmy Benton."

My eyebrows shot up. "The bookie?" My head automatically began to swivel from side to side, a denial rolling off my tongue. "No way. I've never met anyone more straitlaced than Sam."

"I agree. But I also trust my guys. Something isn't right here, and I'm going to look into it."

An offer of help was on the tip of my tongue when we were joined by Drew Lennox, the co-owner of the arena, and he cut me off before I could speak. "We'll take care of it, Saint. Focus on the fight."

I wanted to argue, but he was right. Especially now that I was going to be up against an unknown opponent. "Who's the replacement?"

"Vince Butler."

"What the fuck?" I shouted, making the spectators nearest my corner jump. I ignored them as I fumed, "How the fuck did that scrawny motherfucker end up competing in the finals?" This was Vince's first year in the UFC, and nobody had expected him to make it past his first few opponents. He was a shit fighter, but the little asshole fought dirty. Though we couldn't prove anything, we all sus-

pected that he'd cheated his way to the top. I'd been happy to see him take a beating in the pre-qualifiers and lose the fight. But with Sam out of the competition, it seemed he'd scored high enough to be the wild card.

Drew blew out an agitated breath and stuck his hands in his pockets. "I don't usually put any stock in rumors, but the word is that Vince is in deep with the seedier side of town. In this instance, I'm inclined to believe it."

Knox glared at the Octagon as though the fucker was already in there. "Watch your back, Saint. If the talk is true, he's probably desperate, and that can make him easy pickings or very dangerous."

The conversation was getting in my head and distracting me. Not fully concentrating on my opponent could cost me the fight or even get me injured. Knox knew that, which was probably why he took the opportunity to make another dig at me, particularly my reputation for stellar footwork. "Just be on your twinkle-toes, princess."

"You're cruisin' for a bruisin', Dawson," I growled.

Just then, Zack Parker, the owner of The Artemis, the neighboring hotel and casino, walked up to our trio. He and Drew had partnered up to build the arena between their two establishments. "Saint," he said in greeting. "From the look on your face, I assume they've told you about the switch up in opponents tonight."

I nodded and cracked my knuckles because the sound reminded me of broken bones, which Vince would have plenty of by the time I was done with him. I was about to respond when something caught my eye, and I spun around to fully face the ring.

The world around me seemed to stop with one exception. Climbing into the ring from the opposite side was the most stunning woman I'd ever seen in my thirty-five years. She was tall and slender, almost a little too thin but with just enough curves to her hips that they would be perfect for holding while I fucked her. Her tits were on the small side, but they were perfect to me. Round and perky with hard little nipples that made my mouth water. She had shoulder-length blond hair, and when she stood and her eyes swept the area around her, I almost got lost in their turquoise depths. They were unique and amazing.

As I drank in the sight of her, my mood began to plummet, and I felt my expression harden. The reason I was able to admire her so closely was because she was practically fucking naked. Her tiny

black bikini top (if you could call two triangles and a piece of string a top) barely contained her tits, and the thin material made it very clear she was a little cold. The bottoms were tied at the sides, hanging low on her hips, and I was almost positive that if she moved the wrong way, the fabric would no longer cover her pussy.

Possession slammed into me, and an inferno raged inside me. No one was allowed to see her like this but me. She walked over to the referee, and he handed her large white cards with numbers on them. She was a ring girl?

"Oh, fuck no," I snarled. I charged to the ring and swung myself up on the side before quickly climbing over the ropes. By the time I reached her, I'd pulled off my long, silver robe and threw it over her shoulders, covering what was for my eyes only.

She gasped as I tied the robe tightly closed but didn't have a chance to say anything because I lifted her over my shoulder in a fireman's hold and marched back over to one side of the Octagon. I maneuvered us over the ropes and then jumped to the ground, easily landing on my feet. Keeping her firmly in my grasp, I stomped over to Knox and gently set her back on her feet. "Hold this for me," I growled.

ANGELIQUE

Hold this for me?! What in the heck just happened?

Fisting my hands at my hips, I turned to glare at the guy who'd just carted me out of the ring and into a corner of the stadium. He was so darn tall, I had to tilt my head all the way back to meet his dark eyes. I gulped a little when I took in how gorgeous he was with chiseled features, lush lips, and thick, dark hair. But just because he was sexier than any guy I'd ever seen before didn't mean I wasn't going to give him a piece of my mind. He started to walk away, and I shouted, "Hey, wait! You can't just pick me up, put me where you want me, and tell some strange guy"—I hitched my thumb in the direction of the man he'd given his ridiculous command to—"to hold me for you...while calling me a 'this.' I'm a woman, not a thing."

He pivoted back around, and his gaze swept down my body, which was now covered by the huge robe he'd thrown over me. When his eyes came back up again and met mine, they'd darkened a shade. "I'm well aware that you're a woman. The scraps of material you're wearing that are supposed to pass for a bikini made it more than clear. I could see just about every inch of your delectable body, including your pebbled nipples pressing against the top."

One of the guys behind me chuckled, and I turned to direct my glare at him as my cheeks filled with heat. He held his hands up in a gesture of surrender, and said, "I'm not laughing at you. I swear, it's aimed one hundred percent at Saint."

Saint?! Oh, crap! No wonder he was so strong he could pick me up and carry me as though I weighed no more than a small child. He

had to be the reigning MMA champ who my brother had somehow weaseled his way into fighting against. I swiveled my head back to Saint and asked, "You're fighting Vince Butler tonight?"

His eyebrows lifted as his head jerked back in surprise. "Yeah, I just found out about what happened to Sam. How did you know about the switch before me?"

"That's an excellent question," one of the other guys drawled as they all moved to stand next to Saint. I was all by myself, opposite the line of three hot guys in suits and Saint in nothing more than a pair of fighter shorts and a shirt that did nothing to conceal how muscular his chest was.

"I'm Knox Dawson, head of security for the Lennox," the biggest of the suited-up trio introduced himself before jerking his chin at the other two. "This is Drew Lennox, owner of the Lennox, and Zack Parker, co-owner of The Artemis. Both of whom own this arena. As the hosts of the match, we have too much on the line to tolerate security breaches of any kind."

Intimidated beyond belief by the three of them, I took a tiny step back and crossed my arms over my chest. A deep growl rumbled up Saint's chest, and he stalked to my side, wrapping his arm around my waist to pull me close. "Knock it off. You're scaring her."

"Relax, Saint. I don't think she's the breach. I meant some Joe Blow on the payroll who's running his mouth when he shouldn't," Knox explained. "Sometimes, guys get dumb around pretty girls and say shit they know they should keep quiet because they're hoping to impress them."

Saint's arm tightened around me as I groaned, "Eww! That's not what happened at all."

"How'd you find out about the switch, angel eyes?" Saint asked.

"My brother told me," I admitted softly, turning my head to search behind me for Vince because I knew he wouldn't like me tattling on him to these guys. He'd already been on edge when I'd talked to him in the locker room, and I didn't want to give him a reason to aim his anger my way.

Saint shifted his hold on me so I was looking at him instead of Knox, Drew, and Zack. I relaxed a little as I stared up at him. Even though Saint should've been the scariest of the bunch, I felt safer with him for some reason. "Who's your brother?"

"Vince."

My one-word reply dropped like a bomb into the silence surrounding us as I watched Saint's dark eyes fill with rage. His nostrils flared as he looked over my shoulder at his friends. He took a few deep breaths before his gaze dropped back to my face, and most of the anger had drained from his eyes. "Did your brother get you the job as a ring girl?"

"Yeah," I confirmed, thinking about how he'd had to pester me into doing it. I wasn't comfortable walking around barely dressed, let alone in front of a huge crowd of mostly men when I'd be the focus of a lot of their attention as I carried number signs around the Octagon between rounds. Vince hadn't cared about what I thought about it, not when I'd pull in five thousand dollars in one night since this was a pay-per-view match against the champion. I still hadn't wanted to do it and had only caved when he'd warned me that if he didn't find a way to pay off his gambling debt, then his bookie was going to come looking for me too.

He shifted his focus to Drew. "Pull one of the showgirls and have her take over as the ring girl for the match."

"Hey, wait!" I cried. "You can't do that. My brother got me the job, and I really need the money."

"No way in hell are you going out there. Not when I'm about to kick your brother's ass for getting you a job that has you walking around practically naked," Saint growled. "Between what I'm being paid just to be here, sponsorship money, fight bonuses, and pay-per-view points, money isn't something you'll ever have to worry about again."

My brow wrinkled in confusion as I tried to work through how what Saint made led to me not having to worry about money. The other guys were no help as they each nodded as though they totally got it. Drew pulled out his phone, fired off a message, and said, "They'll have a new ring girl before the end of the first round."

"Perfect." I still hadn't figured it all out when Saint dropped a kiss on the top of my head before pointing at Knox. "Take care of her while I'm up there."

"Will do, man," he promised. I watched Saint stride away before Knox gently gripped my elbow to lead me closer to the ring, with Drew and Zack following close behind us. The aisles were packed with people making their way to their seats, but everyone moved

quickly to get out of our path, so it didn't take long for us to reach the front row.

"This is us," Knox explained as he lifted the reserved signs off four of the seats.

My legs felt weak, so I dropped onto the chair to his right that he pointed at without arguing. Rubbing my hands over my face, I sighed, "I don't understand what's happening here."

"What's your name?" Drew asked after a moment.

I hesitated, not really sure I wanted them to know my name, but then finally answered. "Angelique."

"Well, Angelique. We'd tell you, but it's more fun to discover on your own," Drew said with a smirk as he took the seat to my left.

"It's good for Saint that our wives aren't here because they'd definitely fill you in," Zack added, taking the seat on Drew's other side. "And then you might get it in your head to run in the opposite direction."

"Not that it'd do you much good," Knox chuckled, shaking his head as he leaned back in his seat and stretched his long legs out in front of him.

"True," Zack conceded with a nod. "But it makes it more fun for those of us enjoying the show when they try to resist."

"I'm not sure what's going on, but I know my brother isn't going to like it," I mumbled.

"I wouldn't worry about him being pissed at you, Angelique." Knox patted my shoulder. "Vince was already outmatched in the fight against Saint. Now that he's managed to piss him off and make it personal, the little asshole is about to get what's coming to him."

A big part of me wanted to cheer at the thought of my brother being taken down a peg or two by Saint after all the trouble he'd put me through over the years. But not when his threats about what his bookie would do to me still swam in my head...unless Saint really meant it when he said I'd never have to worry about money again.

SAINT

I hated leaving my girl in the hands of another, but at least I knew they would protect her with their lives. Plus, all three of them were happily married and only had eyes for their wives. This was the only reason I was able to get my head back in the game. Like Knox had said, in a fair fight, Vince wasn't worth shit in the ring. But he didn't come to play fair, which meant that even though I knew I'd win, I still had to watch my back a little more than normal.

I walked up to an outside corner of the ring where my manager, Bobby, was waiting and noticed that the referee looked mad as hell while he yelled into his phone. When he snapped it shut and shoved it into his pocket, he turned to glare out into the audience. I knew exactly who he was directing that nasty look at, and I grabbed the lowest rope, prepared to launch myself up and give the guy a piece of my fist.

Bobby grabbed my arm and held me back, murmuring, "Save it for the little fucker you're facing off with, Saint. The ref is an asshole, but he's not worth the fine and possible suspension if you go after him."

I could have easily broken his hold, but his words sank in and helped me calm down. He was right, I didn't want to take a chance at not having the opportunity to wipe the floor with the scum that should be protecting their sister and not throwing her to the wolves to save his own pathetic skin.

The announcer began his spiel, and I removed my shirt before climbing into the ring. Bobby situated himself behind me, balancing on the edge of the platform and holding the ropes. His assistant

brought over a couple of spare water bottles and towels, ready to pass them up for me when needed.

We discussed a few points of strategy from the little we knew about Vince. Normally, I would have studied my opponent until I felt like I knew his every strength and weakness. It wasn't like I hadn't had to unexpectedly fight a new guy. I was known for being adaptable and rolling with the punches. But it wasn't common when you reached this stage of the competition.

I heard my name being called, and the entire arena erupted with noise. The energy coming from the audience was contagious, and it surged through me. I bounced on my feet a few times and stretched my shoulders and neck.

Vince was just entering the ring when they announced his name, and there was a noticeable drop in volume. The sound lowered to a fervent murmur, and by the expressions of those I could see through the blinding lights, it was clear that they were confused and shocked by the change.

Vince's face twisted with anger, and it pronounced the sharp angles of his face, making his ugly mug downright repulsive. He glanced around, and his mouth drew down into a deeper frown as he clearly didn't see what he was looking for. Anger flared in his beady eyes when he caught sight of her sitting with my friends, and I wondered again what the fuck he was holding over his sister's head to convince her to take a job as a ring girl. I intended to find out and take care of it. Then I'd handle Vince more permanently than the beatdown I was about to give him.

When his eyes finally landed on my face, I saw a flicker of uncertainty before he covered it with a cocky smirk. He spat in my direction and received a chorus of boos.

Tuning everything out, I prowled to the center of the ring where the ref was standing. Vince joined me, and we bumped knuckles. Then the ref gave us the go-ahead before scampering out of our way.

Vince attempted to catch me off guard by throwing a fast jab the second the whistle blew, and I decided to let him have one to build up his attitude. The cockier he was, the more likely he would make a mistake.

We circled each other a few times before he attempted another strike. This time, I danced out of his reach. He'd gone for power over speed and accuracy, so he couldn't catch his footing and stumbled. I

caught him as he fell...with my fist. First, his chin and then his stomach. I doled out a few more combos before backing away and giving him a few moments to recover. Taking him down in the first few minutes of the round didn't seem like much fun.

As far as hits, I took it fairly easy on him in the first round, but I had him running all over the place, and it was clearly wearing him down. He did have decent speed in his blows when he wasn't overcompensating with an attempt to hit hard rather than fast. But I took a few jabs here and there when he changed up tactics. When the bell rang to signal the end of the round, he was puffing so hard, his face was a little red.

Another girl in a tiny bikini grabbed a white numbered sign and walked around the Octagon, and he dragged his sorry ass over to his corner. I gave him a sinister smile before retreating to mine.

"Playing with your food," Bobby muttered with an eye roll. I just grinned and shrugged. "When there's no challenge, might as well have some fun." I downed a bottle of water and a sports drink. As I wiped the minimal sweat from my brow, I glanced toward my angel eyes and frowned when I saw her worried expression as she stared in the direction of her brother.

Drew caught my eye and shook his head, then glanced down at her knuckles. They were white from tightly squeezing the arms of her chair. Then he discreetly pointed at me and nodded. Her head swung in my direction, and what I saw in her turquoise eyes surprised me. While there was worry swimming in them, there was also a spark of hope. I instinctively knew that she was concerned over what would happen to her brother now that she wasn't getting paid and if he lost the fight. But it seemed she was also hoping I'd been honest when I'd told her I would take care of everything. It made me even more confident that I would be able to gain her trust quickly, and then her love would follow.

It was time for round two, so I tore my eyes away from my girl and realigned my thoughts, focusing on what I had to do so I could get back to her. Vince mean-mugged me as I approached the center and then snarled, "I don't know what the fuck you think you're doing with my sister, but you aren't going to use her against me. She'll do anything for me, including giving her cherry to whoever I tell her to, if it will save me."

Even though I saw red, I had spent the majority of my life learning to control myself, so I managed to stay calm and calculated. I needed something to satisfy the rage I was suppressing, so instead of continuing to string Vince along, I put power behind each and every punch.

Vince was getting redder and redder as his anger built. By the end of the round, he was bloodied and bruised, but I'd made sure not to hurt him so much that it ended the fight right then. He'd gotten in a few decent blows, but the bruises from those would be minimal. With the adrenaline flowing through me, I didn't even feel them.

When the third round began, I was ready to unleash hell. But I didn't put enough stock in Vince's desperation, and while I was trying to keep my eye out for dirty and illegal tactics, being prepared for them was nearly impossible. I'd grabbed Vince in a clinch, and the next thing I knew, he'd headbutted me so fast, even I would have doubted it happened if I hadn't felt the pain. I didn't lose my footing, but my grip on him slackened just enough for him to break free and deliver a piledrive, "spiking" me on the head. The ref caught the second move and shouted a warning at Vince, who held up his hands and tried to look contrite.

I was done fucking around.

The round only lasted a few more minutes because that was all it took for me to beat the living shit out of my girl's asshole brother. The ref and my manager had to rush into the ring to stop me from killing him. But I was too far ahead in points for the deductions that caused to keep me from being named the victor. Besides, the cable networks and the UFC shareholders overlooked a lot of shit if it boosted their ratings.

The press was already clamoring for interviews when I hopped down from the Octagon. The crowd kept me from going straight to my angel eyes, and I almost laid a few of them out when I saw her jump to her feet and take a few steps in her brother's direction. I breathed easier when I saw Knox gently grasp her arm and say something that halted her steps.

"Saint! Saint!"

A million questions were being thrown at me, and I held up a hand, gaining immediate silence. "I'm giving you three minutes. Now, one at a time."

I answered a few reporters about my reaction to Sam's accident and who he was replaced with. When we neared the end of the three minutes, I thought maybe I'd gotten off easy. Then Porter Grange, who worked for *Fighters Now*, the biggest MMA magazine in the world, piped up. "I've never seen you go at an opponent that hard, Saint. You're known for your control. Was Butler actually able to get under your skin?" He grinned, knowing his inquiry would irritate the fuck out of me.

"You should know what a dumbass question that is, Grange," I sneered. Bobby surreptitiously yanked on my arm hair, causing me to swallow a wince. It was his way of silently warning me to watch my mouth.

"Okay," Porter replied with a smirk. "If it wasn't because you lost your cool, then why the calculated and unusually harsh beating?"

I knew Bobby would want me to play it off, to deflect and sway them to believe that I hadn't acted out of character, that it only seemed harsh because Vince was a weakling, or that I'd had one too many sports drinks...what-the fuck-ever. The last thing he would want was exactly what I said.

"Because the motherfucker had it coming."

ANGELIQUE

Watching Vince get creamed by Saint was difficult for me. Although I knew he more than deserved it, he was still my brother. I couldn't help but remember the boy who'd played with me when I was little. How he'd made sure I got to school early for free breakfast and all the kids knew not to mess with me or they'd have to answer to him. But everything changed when I got to high school. It wasn't my brother and me against the world anymore. He started to care about only one person—himself.

When the fight finally ended, I jumped to my feet and started toward Vince. I knew if I didn't go check on him that he'd find a way to make me pay for it. My brother had grown into the kind of man who never forgot a perceived slight, even if it came from the sister he used to protect.

"I can't let you do it," Knox rumbled, gently grasping my arm to stop me. "You go over there to check on your brother, and Saint will lose what's left of his mind. I wouldn't put it past him to beat the shit out of your brother even more after they put him on the stretcher he's already going to need to carry him out of here."

With the head of the Lennox's security holding me back, at least I had an excuse if my brother got the chance to confront me over it. And if Saint meant what he said, then maybe I wouldn't have to worry about the threat to my safety anymore.

Knox must have misinterpreted my silence because he added, "I get that he's family, and you're worried about him. But they'll make sure he gets medical attention for his injuries, even if the little bastard doesn't deserve it."

"I know," I whispered as my gaze shifted to Saint. As freaking inappropriate as it was since he'd been up against my brother, watching him fight had turned me on. The six-pack abs, bunching biceps when he punched, powerful legs, animal magnetism...he was lethal grace in motion. I'd never seen anything like it before.

I stared at Saint as he did his interviews, expecting it to take longer than the few minutes he gave the throng of media. Before I knew it, he was stalking toward where I stood with Knox. Without saying a word, he hefted me over his shoulder. The crowd surrounding us cheered his name while Knox chuckled. "You're welcome," he called out as Saint strode away with me.

Saint lifted his free arm and gave Knox a quick wave as we moved through the crush of people. Everyone wanted to talk to him, but he didn't stop. He kept moving until we hit the locker room with his name on the door. He slammed it shut behind us, set me on my feet, and twisted around to flip the lock. When Saint turned back to me, his nostrils flared, and his chest rose and fell as he took several deep breaths. "Explain."

Although he still looked angry, I somehow knew it wasn't aimed at me. But that didn't mean he wasn't intimidating. Because he was.

Taking a small step back, I stilled when a growl rumbled up his chest. My gaze locked with his and saw his eyes soften. "You're safe with me. I would never hurt you, angel eyes."

"Angelique," I corrected when it dawned on me that he hadn't been there when his friends asked for my name.

His lips kicked up in a grin. "It sounds like the nickname I picked for you was more perfect than I thought."

My curiosity got the better of me, and I asked, "Why do you call me angel eyes?"

"Because the last thing I want to see before I go out of this world are those gorgeous eyes of yours."

He put it out there so matter-of-factly, as though his admission wouldn't rock my world. But it did. This incredible man seemed one hundred percent sincere as he claimed to want me in his life...forever. After spending less than five minutes with me. The whole thing should've had me trying to get past him to the door, but his declaration settled something inside me. The part that was already braced for the other shoe to drop. For the people in my life to disappoint me. Like my brother, the person responsible for me being in this

mess—that just might turn into the best thing in my life—in the first place.

Swiveling on my heel, I crossed the small room and dropped onto the low bench against the wall. After patting the spot next to my right, I waited for Saint to join me before I said, “You might want to get comfortable. This could take a while.”

He untaped his hands, got up to grab a towel to rub over his sweat-dampened hair, took some pain relievers, and downed a sports drink. Once he was done, he returned to my side, lifted me up, and settled me on his lap so I was straddling him. One of his arms was wrapped around my lower back to anchor me in place, and he lifted the other to tuck a stray lock of hair behind my ear. “There. Now I’m ready to hear whatever you need to tell me.”

“Right here? Like this?” I gasped, wiggling on his lap until I felt his cock harden beneath my butt.

“Exactly like this.” His arm tightened around me. “I’m not letting you go now that I’ve gotten my hands on you.”

The tiny bottoms of my ring girl uniform grew damp, and I wondered if he’d be able to feel it. My cheeks reddened as I whispered, “It’s not your hands that I was talking about.”

He brushed a kiss against my forehead and lifted his hips to press more firmly against me. “Me getting hard around you is something you’re going to have to get used to, angel eyes. It’s going to happen often. As in, all the time.”

“Alrighty then.” I cleared my throat and did my best to ignore the incredibly hard and large bulge beneath me. “I guess this is the part where I explain how I ended up here, huh?”

He cupped my cheek with his hand. “Please.”

I nodded, and the calluses on his palm rubbed against my skin, sending a little shiver down my spine. “My childhood wasn’t all that great, and Vince used to be the only person I could really depend on. But all that changed three or four years ago. It was like my brother turned into someone I didn’t know, into someone I didn’t even *want* to know, even after everything he did for me when we were kids.”

“What’d he get into?” Saint asked after I paused to pull myself together so I didn’t end up bawling in his arms.

“He fell in with a bad crowd and wasn’t around as often. Started to drink a lot and dabbled with some drugs here or there. But it wasn’t the drugs or alcohol that got him into trouble.” I dropped my

forehead against Saint's shoulder. "It was the gambling that turned out to be his real vice. He doesn't think straight when he's at the tables, and he risks way more than he can afford. He's always been able to figure out a way to pay off his gambling debts in the past, but this time is different. I don't know how much he owes, but it has to be a lot—like enough to beat the shit out of him if he didn't get the chance to fight you tonight—a lot. Enough for him to tell me the five grand I'd earn by being a ring girl during the match would barely put a dent in his debt but might be enough so his bookie wouldn't come after me, too."

"That fucking motherfucker," Saint growled. "He deserves a hell of a lot more than the beatdown I gave him in the ring for putting your safety at risk."

Shrugging my shoulders, I lifted my head to offer him a small smile. "I don't think he ever thought about what might happen to me in this whole mess. Not until his bookie took notice of me."

"Who's his bookie?"

I shook my head. "I don't know. I never asked because it didn't really matter since I didn't have the money to pay off his debt. I was going to give Vince what I earned tonight so he could hand it over."

"It's got to be Jimmy Benton," Saint rumbled.

"I've never heard of him."

"Forget I mentioned his name," Saint commanded. "He isn't someone you need to worry about anymore."

I felt exhausted after everything that had happened in the past twenty-four hours, and I was starting to freak out because Saint looked angrier than he had when he'd been fighting my brother. Squeezing my eyes shut, I voiced my biggest fear, "Does that mean you haven't changed your mind about what you said before? How I'll always be safe with you and don't need to worry about money again?"

SAINT

Angelique's question was uttered in a tiny, hesitant voice, and it killed me that she didn't believe I meant what I said. I couldn't blame her, though. It sounded like everyone in her life had let her down, and we'd only met a few hours ago. I could tell her over and over, but I knew it was actions that would finally convince her to trust me.

"Angel eyes, there is nothing you could say or do that would change my mind about you." I tucked another wayward strand of hair behind her ear and leaned my forehead against hers.

"Despite who my brother is?"

I lifted my head to stare into her turquoise pools. "I don't care about anyone but you, Angelique." My mouth twisted as my thoughts darkened from the mention of her brother. "I only wish I'd killed the son of a bitch when I had the chance." She looked a little shell-shocked, so I gentled my tone when I continued. "I won't kill him," I promised on a sigh. "That would only take me away from you. But you're done with him." Her face softened and hope lit her eyes. "I'll handle everything. I will always protect you, angel eyes." I made sure our gazes were locked and let her see the emotions and need I felt for her. "You're mine."

She sucked in a breath, and we were so close that her nipples brushed my naked chest. The tiny pieces of fabric shielding them would be so easy to rip away so I could suck on those peaks like a Jolly Rancher, my favorite candy.

I held myself back, though, afraid to go any faster and spook her. We were already taking things at warp speed, and I had no intention

of slowing down. But then she licked her lips and looked up at me through her long lashes. Her cheeks bloomed with color, and in the next instant, she pressed her mouth against mine.

From the innocent air surrounding her, plus her shy reaction to the feel of my rock-hard cock beneath her ass, I was confident that Vince hadn't been fucking with me when he mentioned Angelique's cherry—my girl was a virgin. Which led me to assume that instigating intimacy was new to her. I struggled to allow her to take the lead, but I wanted her to break out of her shell with me and feel confident and sexy.

However, her light, exploring touches eventually became too much for me. I used my thumb to gently pull down her jaw, opening her mouth so that I could plunge my tongue inside. I groaned at the first taste of her flavor and shifted in my seat because my cock became so thick, the skin around it was painfully stretched. It stood at attention, poking out of the waistband of my shorts. It didn't help that I could feel the heat of her pussy bathing my dick through the thin cloth. The urge to rip her tiny bottoms off and sink inside her hot pussy was incredibly difficult to ignore.

Angelique moaned and scooted forward, wrapping her legs around my waist to bring our centers flush so her pussy cradled my dick. I dived one hand into her hair and gripped it so I could tilt her head and deepen the kiss. The other grabbed a handful of her ass and jerked her forward as I lifted my hips. She broke our kiss and dropped her head back, moaning long and loud. The sound shot straight to my cock, and a little come oozed from the tip.

"Have you ever had a man between your thighs, angel eyes?" I rasped as I glided my lips down the slender column of her throat. I looked up to see Angelique's face blushed crimson, and she shook her head. "I'm the only man who's ever going to know that pleasure," I grunted. Her answer had nearly made me climax, and my dick spurted even more come, making a sticky mess between us. My hands shook as I fought hard to keep from shoving my fat dick into her cherry tight hole and filling her until one of my boys took root.

"Saint?" Angelique's soft, confused voice pulled me back, and I focused on her to take my mind off my body's desires. "I feel...what's happening to me?" she panted.

"Trust me, baby," I murmured as I rocked my pelvis into her. "Let it happen. Let me make you feel good." Her turquoise eyes had been swirling with trepidation and lust, but the second she decided to trust me, the fear disappeared, and she gave in to the passion.

Her lids descended, and she dropped her head back, moaning and gyrating her hips, searching for relief. "Fuck, angel eyes," I groaned. "I love hearing those sexy sounds. Don't hold back, baby. I want to hear you scream my name."

Angelique shuddered, and her breaths became fast and choppy, making her tits jiggle. I gave in to one of the needs clawing at me and took my hand from her hair to yank her bikini top down, causing her tits to spill free. "Perfect," I mumbled before bending my head and sucking one puckered, coral nipple into my mouth. "I'm going to fuck these one day." Angelique shuddered again, and I let her nipple go with a pop to straighten so I could study her face. "Does that turn you on, angel eyes? Do you like it when I tell you what I want to do to you?"

She swallowed hard, then whispered, "Yes."

"My girl gets off on dirty talk? Could you be any more fucking perfect?"

Angelique blushed even harder, and I punched my hips forward, then in an upward motion to make sure I rubbed against her clit as I growled, "I can't wait to sink my tongue inside your tight little pussy, baby. Then I'm going to impale you on my big, fat cock and fuck you so good you won't be able to sit the next day." I repeated the motion, and she sucked in a harsh breath.

"Please," she begged. She'd been gripping my shoulders, but she moved one hand to reach down and take hold of one of the strings that kept her bottoms on. I grabbed her hand and brought it to my mouth, brushing a soft kiss over the back before returning it to my shoulder.

"We'll get there, angel eyes," I promised. "But our first time together isn't going to be a quick fuck in my dressing room. Don't worry, though. I'm going to make you come and take the edge off."

I put both hands on her ass and helped her rub against me, pushing her toward completion. She cried out over and over, getting louder the closer she got.

"Good girl, angel eyes. Let me hear what I do to you while you take what you need."

I went back to loving on her tits while she sped up her pace, and after a few more thrusts, she screamed my name as she broke apart in my arms.

I was absolutely mesmerized by the sight and barely noticed that I came right after her. She was gorgeous in the throes of passion, and this was only from a little dry humping. Imagining what she would look like when she came with my cock buried deep inside her almost destroyed what was left of my control.

While I waited for her to float back down to earth, I held her tenderly in my arms and tried to calm my own racing heart and overwhelming hunger. Eventually, her breathing returned to normal, and she collapsed against my chest.

After a few minutes, I helped her sit up and righted her clothing, before lifting her and setting her on the bench beside me. Then I stood and walked to a table laden with snacks and drinks, but I ignored all of that and snagged my black duffel bag from underneath it. I returned to the bench and set the bag down before rummaging around inside until I found what I was looking for. I withdrew a black T-shirt and shrugged it on, then rooted around some more until I found the spare I kept in there.

I grinned as I approached Angelique, feeling possessive and cocky at the blissed out expression on her face. When I tugged the shirt over her head, she blinked a few times and seemed to come back to reality. She helped me get her arms through the holes, then looked down and pulled it away from her body. The shirt engulfed her, and her eyes went wide. "Holy cow. You're huge," she mumbled. Then her eyes slid over to stare at the large bulge so clearly visible through the loose fabric of my shorts.

I chuckled as I threw my gear into the bag and zipped it up. "Don't worry, angel eyes. I might be a big guy, but you were made for me."

ANGELIQUE

My brain couldn't quite wrap around how much had changed since Vince brought me to the stadium for his bout. I'd walked in there dreading the time I was about to spend in a tiny uniform, but Saint had changed that when he threw his robe over me and carried me out of the Octagon. I'd been scared for my safety, and he insisted he'd keep me safe. I'd been a virgin who'd never had a guy give her an orgasm, and he'd changed that too—in a mind-blowing way.

While I was still feeling the high from my release, Saint led me out of the locker room and through a back hallway where we didn't see anyone. I stared at him from the passenger seat of his truck as he pulled out of the parking garage, not sure what to think about everything. The silence surrounding us was thick, and I blurted out the first thing that popped into my head. "I don't think I've ever seen such a nice truck before."

"You like my other girl?" Saint's lips curved up in a grin as he winked at me. "I just got her last month."

"Your other girl?" I echoed in confusion.

His grin widened, and laugh lines bracketed his dark eyes as humor shone from them. "The Ford F-250 Super Duty Platinum might be a big fucking truck, but I still think of her as my girl." He patted the steering wheel and added, "She was my only one until today."

It was hard to believe this sexy older man was referring to me as the girl in his life along with his fancy truck with all the bells and whistles. Saint was a freaking world champion in mixed martial arts with huge endorsement deals. He could get any woman with a snap

of his fingers, but for some reason, it seemed that I was the one he wanted. I wasn't going to talk him out of it, though. Not when he was the answer to my prayers. It was too early to tell if he was going to be around for the long haul, but I was going to go with the flow for the moment and see where this thing with Saint led me. It couldn't be any worse than the position I'd been in with my brother.

When Saint pulled up to a huge house about fifteen minutes later, the degree to which my living situation had changed became much clearer. Even back when our parents were around, I'd never lived in anything but dingy apartments or rent by the week motels. Saint's garage was bigger than the entire place I'd shared with Vince up until a few weeks ago.

I was already intimidated before we stepped foot into the actual house, but he didn't seem to notice as he led me through a quick tour of the downstairs before we circled back to the kitchen. It looked as though it could've come straight out of a magazine with marble countertops, stainless steel appliances, and shiny pots hanging from a rack over the island. I was afraid to touch anything, so I stood there awkwardly as Saint moved with confidence.

"I'm going to make myself a recovery drink to tide me over while I make dinner." He pulled a container out of the pantry and set it on the counter next to the sink. "Do you want one, too? It doesn't have anything that'll hurt you. The ingredients are organic. There are carbs, proteins, electrolytes, antioxidants, and some immune system boosters."

It had been way too long since I'd had a decent meal, so I wasn't about to turn down anything. Not even if I wasn't too sure about the stuff he was mixing into cold water. "Sure, I guess I could give it a try."

He poured me a glass of water and dumped a scoop of the mix in, stirring before handing it over to me. I took a small sip and smiled when the berry lemonade flavor hit my taste buds. "It's pretty good."

"I'm glad you like it." He put the container back in the pantry and headed over to the fridge. "How do you feel about grilled chicken breasts, brown rice, and zucchini?"

It sounded like the best meal I'd had in a long time. "I like all of it."

He flashed me a grin before pulling the chicken and vegetables out. I finished off my drink as he started to get things ready. When it was gone, I walked over to the sink and rinsed out the glass. "Can I help?"

"Sure. You can be in charge of the zucchini," he offered before heading outside to start the grill to cook the chicken.

As I cut the vegetable into chunks, my stomach let out a loud growl right as Saint walked back inside. His attention zeroed in on me, and his dark eyes narrowed. "When's the last time you ate?"

My eyes went wide, and my cheeks heated as I bit my bottom lip before I answered his question. I was embarrassed to admit how long it'd been, but the look he gave me made it clear he wasn't going to let this go. "I had some toast this morning."

"Motherfucker," he bit out, pinching the bridge of his nose between his forefinger and thumb as his nostrils flared. "Are you telling me you've been hungry this whole damn time?"

I nodded, and tears filled my eyes. I dropped my head and squeezed them shut, jumping a little when he crossed the room and wrapped his arms around my back to pull me into his chest. "Relax, angel eyes. I'm not mad at you."

"Okay," I sniffled into his shirt.

"I'm pissed at myself for not thinking to ask sooner, and at your brother for not taking better care of you." He pressed a kiss to the top of my head. "But don't worry. I won't make the same mistake again."

He led me over to the stools lined up at the counter and got me settled on the one at the end. Then he stalked over to the fridge and pulled out some hummus and carrots. After dumping about half the bag of carrots onto a plate, he spooned up a huge portion of the hummus and brought the plate over to me. "Snack on this while dinner is cooking." He followed that up by grabbing a chunk of cheddar cheese, cutting half a dozen slices, and plating them up with a row of crackers. "And this."

When he headed back to the fridge a third time, I figured he'd keep going until there was more food in front of me than I'd have any hope of eating. "Stop. This is plenty. I need to save room for dinner, too."

"You sure, angel eyes?" he asked, his hands clenched into fists at his sides.

"Yeah." I smiled at him as he walked over to where I'd been chopping the zucchini earlier to finish the task. "Hummus is one of my favorites. I could eat it every day."

"Good." Some of the tension eased from his body. "I'll be sure to stock up on it so you'll always have some."

"Thanks," I mumbled before shoving a carrot in my mouth, so I didn't do something stupid like ask how long he thought he'd want me around.

Saint's dark eyes were filled with anger as he asked, "Were things bad enough with your brother that he didn't make sure there was food in the house?"

"Worse, I guess." I shrugged, my cheeks heating in embarrassment again. "Vince blew through our rent money last month, and I've been staying on friends' couches since then. They're cool about it, but I already feel like a mooch. So I've been careful about what I eat until I could figure out how to save up enough to get my own place."

"You've got to be fucking kidding me!" Saint slammed his palms against the counter hard enough that I would've worried about him damaging it if they weren't made of marble.

"It wasn't as bad as it sounds, Saint. It's only been a few weeks," I hurried to explain.

"Michael," he corrected.

My brow wrinkled in confusion since I wasn't following the direction our conversation had suddenly turned in. "Pardon?"

"My full name is Michael St. John. Saint is a nickname," he explained. "But everyone else uses it, and you're special. I'd like you to use my name instead."

"Michael," I repeated softly with a shy smile. "Yeah, I can do that."

"Good. I'm looking forward to hearing it from you often." He brushed a kiss against my cheek. "But for now, let's table any talk about your brother since he's my problem. Not yours."

"Okay." My eyes practically devoured him as much as my mouth did the snacks while he finished making our meal. He kept our conversation light over dinner, and I was grateful. Today had already been heavy enough, and the distraction of being able to talk about nothing important made me feel more comfortable by the time we were done.

The long day combined with too many restless and uncomfortable nights left me exhausted by the time we finished cleaning up the kitchen. "You ready to head to bed?"

"Yeah." I yawned so big a tear leaked out of the corner of my eye.

"C'mon." He tugged on my hand to lead me upstairs.

The bedroom we went into was huge, with a California king bed and decorated in muted, masculine colors. It even smelled like him, all dark and delicious. "Is this your room?"

"Yup." He nudged me toward the en suite bathroom. "Use whatever you'd like while you get ready for bed. I'll grab you a different shirt to wear."

"This one's fine." The shirt was more than fine, actually. It was soft and felt as though I was wrapped up in Saint's embrace. I wanted to keep it forever. Which reminded me of something I should've remembered hours ago. "Hey, my backpack is still at the stadium. Could you ask your security guy friend to hold onto it, so I don't lose everything in there?"

"Will do." Saint's response was a low murmur through the door, but it was enough for me to know he had the situation covered.

I found an extra toothbrush in the medicine cabinet and used his soap and toothpaste. Since I didn't have my bag, I was stuck with the bottoms from the ring girl uniform instead of panties. At least I could strip out of the top so I would be a little more comfortable. When I was done, I felt super nervous about what was going to happen next. After the explosive chemistry between us in the locker room, I figured I wouldn't make it through the night with my virginity. But I was wrong. After he finished up in the bathroom, Saint climbed into bed next to me, wrapped me up in his strong arms, and cuddled me to sleep. It made me fall for him even harder.

SAINT

The warm little bundle in my arms stirred and snuggled in closer. I inhaled deeply, breathing her scent into my lungs. This was the way I intended to wake up every morning for the rest of my life.

Angelique sighed and wiggled her ass a little, making me groan as she rubbed against my morning wood. She froze, and I chuckled, burying my face in her neck. "Ummm, is it always like that in the morning?" she squeaked.

This time, I full-on belly laughed. "All men wake up hard, angel eyes." I kissed the shell of her ear and whispered the rest, "But I've never woken up this hard and swollen in my life."

I loosened my hold and rolled her onto her back beneath me. Looking deep in her turquoise eyes, I let her see everything I was feeling, instead of masking it like I normally did. "I've never felt hunger and passion this deep, Angelique. Not until the second I laid eyes on you."

Her eyes widened, and her plump lips parted. I licked my lips as I stared down at her, then bent my head to capture her mouth in a sweet, unhurried kiss. Angelique moaned and lifted up a fraction, which brought her tits into contact with my bare chest. Even through the material of my T-shirt, I could feel her taut nipples poking through. Her hands dived into my hair, and I shifted so I was lying on top of her, my body covering hers from head to toe.

I ran my tongue along her lip, and suddenly, she yelped and attempted to push me away. Worried that I'd somehow hurt her, I immediately moved off her, and she jumped out of bed and dashed to

the bathroom. "Angelique? What's wrong?" I asked as I hurried after her.

When I reached the still open door to the bathroom, I stopped and blinked a few times, confused. She was standing at the sink with a toothbrush stuffed into a foam-filled mouth, looking at me like a deer in headlights. "Mrning brif," she mumbled as she scrubbed with the toothbrush.

I smiled and shook my head when I translated that into morning breath. "You tasted sweet as sugar."

She rolled her eyes before bending over the sink to spit and rinse her mouth before responding with, "Bull manure."

I burst into laughter and sputtered, "You're too damn cute, angel eyes." I couldn't remember the last time I'd smiled or laughed so much. I didn't take life too seriously, but just in the small time we'd had together, Angelique made me realize what I'd been missing.

Angelique blushed and shifted awkwardly from foot to foot, pulling at the hem of her shirt. Crossing the distance between us, I smiled tenderly, then pulled her into my arms and gave her a gentle hug. The tension immediately drained from her, and she slipped her arms around me to return the embrace.

After a few minutes, I kissed the top of her head and used my index finger under her chin to tilt her face up. "How about a shower?"

She beamed at me and nodded enthusiastically. Her excitement over something so small, something I clearly took for granted, made my anger at her brother begin to resurface. I quickly tamped it down, not wanting Angelique to see my fury and think it was directed at her.

Grabbing her around the waist, I set her on the long, marble vanity top, then placed a quick kiss on her lips before walking over to the large glass enclosure. After turning on the shower and fiddling with the keypad until it was the right temperature, I made my way back to her.

When I grasped the bottom of her shirt and started to draw it up, her cheeks bloomed with crimson, but she didn't stop me from dragging it all of the way up and over her head. My eyes dropped, and my mouth watered at the sight of her puckered nipples. "You have perfect tits, angel eyes."

Angelique snorted in disbelief, and her arms came up to cross over her chest. "They're too small," she argued.

I shook my head and pried her limbs away. "Perfect." I glanced up at her and winked. "I'll prove it." I used one flat palm to push her back until she was resting on her elbows. Then I wrapped my lips around one diamond-hard peak and tugged on it before spreading my mouth open and taking as much of her breast in as I could. Angelique moaned and arched her back as I sucked on her delicious tit. After a minute, I licked around her nipple before raising my head and grinning. "See? A mouthful is all I need, and these beauties are even more." I moved to the opposite breast and murmured, "Lucky me," before giving it the same treatment as the first.

Angelique's breathing sped up, becoming choppy, and her legs wrapped around my waist as she moaned. I gave myself a stern lecture to remind me that I couldn't take her for the first time on a bathroom counter. With every bit of my strength, I withdrew from her breasts but gave each tip a light kiss before pulling away completely and removing her legs from my waist.

She blinked a few times, trying to clear away the fog of lust, and then confusion churned in her stunning eyes. I put my hands on her hips and scooted her off the marble, putting her back on her feet. "The bathroom counter in our house isn't any better than the bench in my locker room for our first time, angel eyes." Her face softened, and she looked up at me dreamily. I winked at her before dropping onto my haunches in front of her. When I saw the bottoms to her ring girl outfit, a growl escaped my chest as possession and jealousy slammed into me. Those needed to go, much like the brother who'd forced her into them.

I fisted the fabric and ripped it away, tossing it over my shoulder. Angelique gasped, and I looked up at her, adopting an innocent expression. "Oops." My tone wasn't the least bit contrite. To my surprise, Angelique didn't look upset; instead, there was fire burning in her eyes. My already hard-as-steel cock twitched, and I nearly swallowed my tongue. Clearing my throat and shoving away my own desire, I stood and took her hand. I led her to the shower and opened the door, then patted her ass as she stepped inside.

My eyes dropped to my boxer briefs, and I sighed. It wouldn't be much help, but I supposed it was better than nothing. Leaving them on, I ignored the tented front as I joined my woman in the shower. Angelique was standing under the spray, her eyes closed, and her

head back. She looked as though she was in complete bliss, and it brought back memories of watching her come the night before.

"Fuck," I rasped as I pinched the base of my cock, trying to halt my approaching orgasm. She glanced at me, and her gaze dropped to my underwear, which was plastered to my skin and didn't hide anything about the way my body was reacting to her. In fact, having her eyes on my dick had it fighting to breach the waistband of my boxer briefs. The angry, purple tip was just visible, and despite the water raining down on it, a white pearl of pre-come had gathered over my slit before sliding down the side of my cock and into my underwear.

Taking a deep breath, I tried to ignore the way her body shimmered with water sluicing over it, the way her tits bounced slightly from her elevated breathing, and I specially tried not to pay attention to her bare pussy.

I grabbed the soap and focused on the task at hand, washing her from head to toe. After she was squeaky clean—I should get a fucking medal for cleaning between her legs without making her come—I quickly washed myself as well. Then I turned her so her back was to me and shampooed and conditioned her hair. The cleanser held a bit of a masculine scent, and although I loved the idea of her smelling like me so that every man who came near her would know she was taken, I needed to fill the house with her things. "Make me a list today, angel eyes, and I'll send someone to get you anything you need or want."

She moaned and leaned back against me, causing her ass to cradle my erection. The wet fabric was useless between us. With a deep breath, I nudged her shoulders, encouraging her to turn and face me. Her head fell back, and I ran my fingers through her hair, rinsing out the conditioner.

I made hasty work of washing my own hair, especially when I felt the heat of Angelique's naked body pressed against my back. Her hands glided up my sides and around to my front to splay on my chest. Her cheek and tits were resting on my back, so I felt her take a deep, shuddering inhale before one of her palms began to descend, heading for my straining shaft.

My breath caught in my throat when she hesitated at the last second, but then she finished the journey, tunneling into my underwear and wrapping her fingers around my big, fat cock. All of the air in

my lungs whooshed out, and I felt lightheaded, but I managed to stay steady on my feet. With one firm but gentle squeeze, I was fucking done.

After slamming the heel of my hand on the button that shut off the water, I spun around and scooped Angelique into my arms. Using my shoulder, I pushed open the glass door and stalked into the bedroom.

ANGELIQUE

Saint dumped me onto the bed, completely naked and dripping with water. I let out a squeak when he landed on top of me, his large body pressing mine into the mattress. My legs cradled his hips, and the only thing between his rock-hard length and my core was the wet material of his boxers. Without it there, he could slide his dick inside me without any resistance—except for my virginity. Not that I was going to let it stop me from having sex with Saint. He was the first man I'd ever responded to this way, and I wasn't about to let this opportunity pass me by.

Twining my arms around his neck, I pulled his head down until his mouth met mine. A groan rumbled up his chest, and his tongue swept against my bottom lip. I opened to let him in, and he took my breath away. His fingers tangled in my hair as he tilted my head to deepen the kiss. There was so much chemistry between us, I felt as though it was going to burn me alive. Writhing beneath him, I mewled in need when he lifted his head again. "Don't worry, angel eyes. I'm going to give you exactly what you need."

He started to move down my body, his mouth hot against my skin as he sucked and nibbled his way along my curves, pausing to pay attention to my breasts before he moved down to my belly. "I'm finally going to sink my tongue inside your tight little pussy and get a taste of you. I've been dying for it, baby."

My hips jerked up, and he wrapped his hands around them to hold me in place as he wedged his shoulders under my thighs. My wits scattered when he lifted my ass higher and buried his face between my legs. His tongue circled my clit, and I dug my fingers into

his hair. I wanted to keep him right where he was, with his mouth working me into a frenzy. My legs clenched as his tongue flicked down my slit to thrust inside me. "Oh, wow. That feels incredible, but I need...more."

"I'll always give you what you need," he swore, releasing his hold on one of my hips. If I hadn't been halfway out of my mind with need, I would've questioned how permanent he made that sound. But I was teetering over the edge and couldn't think clearly.

His palm glided across my upper thigh, his thumb coming to a stop directly above my clit. I tried wiggling so he'd stroke me where I wanted him to, but his other hand kept me firmly in place. He kept moving his tongue in and out of me, but he didn't move his hand again until I pleaded, "Please, Michael."

"Fuck, I love hearing you say my name in that sexy little whimper." He circled my clit with his thumb and began to work a finger inside me. "But what I really want is to hear you scream it."

I wanted the same thing, but I didn't have the chance to tell him because we both got what we wanted when he started to pump his finger in and out of me and tossed me over the edge. But he didn't stop there. He kept working me over with his mouth and hand until I came a second time. Then he shifted to his knees, shoved his boxers down, and lined up his hard length with my entrance. "I think you're finally ready for me to impale you on my big, fat cock."

I thought I was ready, too...until he started to stick his dick inside me, and it felt as though he'd never fit. "You weren't kidding when you called it big."

"Compared to you, every part of me is huge," he groaned as he worked the tip all the way in. "But I'll make it up to you, angel eyes."

"Make what up to me?" I asked just as he pulled back a tiny bit before powering into me, his cock tearing through the proof of my virginity with one powerful thrust. The sharp bite of pain had tears gathering in my eyes, and he lowered his head to kiss them away when they slid down my cheeks.

"Shh, baby," he whispered against my ear, cradling my head in his palms. "Give it a minute, and you'll feel better."

How this big brute of a man could be so darn sweet to me, I'd never know. But I was grateful because I wasn't used to being treated with care. I did as he asked, breathing through the pain as I stared

into his dark eyes. A couple of minutes later, the sting faded and only a feeling of fullness remained. I wiggled my hips to see what happened, and the new angle drove Saint deeper inside me. His hands drifted down my body to grip my hips. "Don't move until you're sure you're ready. Your tight pussy feels too damn good wrapped around my cock. I'm barely holding on to my control here, and I don't want to hurt you."

"The pain is gone," I reassured him, running my palms down his back to dig my nails into his butt cheeks. "And I want more."

"Then more is what you'll get." Heat flared in his eyes as his hips drew back until only the tip of his cock was lodged inside me. "So much of me that you'll still be able to feel where I've been inside you tomorrow."

I had no doubt he'd fulfill his promise when he drove back inside me over and over again. His eyes never left mine as he continued to move, his chest heaving with exertion and sweat dripping down his face. He slid his palm up my belly to cup one of my breasts, his thumb toying with my nipple.

"Yes. Michael, yes!" I moaned and writhed beneath him, my nails digging into his skin as I held on while he powered in and out of me.

He gave my pebbled nipple a final tweak before his hand slid lower. His fingers hovered over my pulsing clit. "I can feel how close you are to coming again with your pussy clenching around my dick so hard. Give it to me, Angelique."

He switched up his long strokes for short ones, circling his hips until he hit me in a spot that made my eyes cross. I gasped, my legs tightening around his hips. "Right there, huh?" Saint grunted as he thrust against me again. I threw my head back, and his mouth crashed against my damp skin. His teeth scraped against my throat while he drove into me. Then he pinched my clit between his forefinger and thumb. White-hot pleasure ripped through my body, making my toes curl. Having him inside me as I came made the incredible orgasms he'd given me earlier pale in comparison. My entire body tensed as I shuddered. I'd never felt anything like it before, this never-ending bliss as he continued to thrust in and out until he finally anchored himself deep inside and followed me over the edge. Hot streams of his come filled me to overflowing as I collapsed against the pillows.

Cuddled between his soft mattress and hard body, I felt boneless and was so relaxed that I drifted off to sleep. When I woke up again about thirty minutes later, Saint wasn't in bed with me. A feeling of abandonment crept over me—something I was used to—but it was different this time. Not just because I'd given Saint my virginity but also that I hadn't expected him to walk away from me so easily after everything he'd been saying.

Pushing my disappointment deep down inside, I rolled off the mattress and pulled on the shirt I'd worn to bed last night and padded into Saint's ridiculously large closet to grab a pair of his boxers. After rolling them at my waist, I headed for the bathroom to brush my teeth and clean up a little. Once that was done, I went off to search for Saint.

I found him in the kitchen, stirring something in a saucepan on the stove. He was wearing a pair of gray sweatpants and nothing else, looking just as sexy as he had in the ring last night. I jerked my head up so I wouldn't visibly drool as I asked, "Could you give me a ride back to the stadium?"

His shoulders tensed at my question. He turned off the burner, moved the pan to the other side of the stove, and turned to stare at me. "What?"

It felt as though I was pinned into place by his dark gaze, making me nervous. "I really appreciate you letting me crash here last night."

"Crash?" he echoed softly as he stalked toward me. "What the hell do you think is going on between us?"

Taking a small step back, I shrugged. "I don't know. I've never done the morning after thing before."

"You need to get something straight in your pretty head, angel eyes." He reached out to grab my hand and tugged me close. "This is forever."

SAINT

Just the thought of Angelique walking out of my life had my throat closing up with panic. I wasn't used to feeling any sort of weakness, and it made me a little gruffer than I'd intended.

I fisted a hand in the hair at the back of her head and used a firm grip on her hip to plaster her body to mine. Using gentle force, I pulled her head back so I could cover her mouth with my own. Just before I lost all control and took her to the floor, I pulled back and stared into her lust-fogged eyes. "Do you understand me?" She nodded, but I still caught the hint of doubt clouding her gaze. I knew she'd been on the end of plenty of broken promises, and though I wanted her acceptance immediately, I reminded myself that talk was cheap. I would have to prove to her that I would always be by her side.

Sighing, I kissed her again, just to reassure myself that she was real, in my arms, and protected from the evils of the world. Namely, that motherfucking brother of hers. The thought tarnished the moment, and I reluctantly released Angelique's lips. I had a lot of shit to accomplish, and if I didn't stop, we'd spend the rest of the day fucking on every surface of our home.

I didn't want the situation with her brother hanging over our heads, especially once we had a family. And I intended to put a baby in my woman as soon as humanly possible. I groaned and pushed the image of her round and swollen with our child out of my head. It was yet another path that would lead me away from what needed to be done.

"Let me finish making you breakfast, then we can talk about what comes next."

Angelique's eye brightened, and she peered around me to look eagerly at the stove. "You were making me breakfast?" I could see the hope that sprung into her eyes. Obviously, if I was cooking for her in the morning, I'd intended for her to stay.

I gave her a quick kiss, then turned her toward the island and gently patted her on the ass. "Go sit, angel eyes. Do you want some juice?"

She nodded as she practically skipped over to take a seat. "Yes, please." The smile she gave me when I placed the glass in front of her was breathtaking. I wanted to see it every day for the rest of my life, and I had every intention of making sure that happened. I was a man who went after, and got, what I wanted. Keeping Angelique safe and by my side was no exception.

I asked her about the foods she liked and if she was allergic to anything, so I'd know what to cook for her and also to simply get to know her. Once I'd finished making us omelets, I set hers in front of her and sat across from her to dig into mine, which was easily twice the size of hers.

Angelique giggled, and a smile automatically curved my lips. "Something funny, angel eyes?"

She pointed at my eggs and laughed a little harder. "It's just...everything about you is big. Even your breakfast."

I smirked and winked. "As I recall, you were pretty happy with my size this morning." Her eyes heated while she blushed to a deep crimson. I chuckled and pointed at her breakfast. "Eat, baby. We have a ton of shit to do today."

She shoveled a few bites into her mouth, moaning with each one and making me hard as fuck. Thankfully, she distracted me after a few minutes. "We have stuff to do? Like what?" she asked as she glanced at me with curiosity.

"First, we're going to go grab your shit and bring it home. I'll send movers over to get the big things tomorrow. Once you're settled, I need to run a couple of errands. I won't be long, but it will give you a chance to take a nap. You're going to need your strength for what I have planned for you tonight."

"Home?" Angelique's soft echo and brow furrowed with confusion, twisted my heart.

“Yeah, angel eyes. Home. Here with me, where you belong.”

I waited for her to say something, but she just beamed at me and went back to eating. She finished her breakfast with gusto, only pausing here and there to ask questions, obviously wanting to know more about me. I answered each one honestly and told her she could always ask or tell me anything.

After we cleaned up the kitchen, I led her to the master bath and told her to take a shower. She looked at me expectantly, and when I shook my head, she pouted adorably, almost causing me to give in. “The next time I make love to you, I’m going to take my time and worship every inch of your gorgeous body.” I winked, and she blushed before scampering into the room and shutting the door. I’d already hopped into a quick shower before making breakfast, so I headed to my closet. Digging around, I managed to come up with a T-shirt that had shrunk in the wash that I hadn’t gotten around to getting rid of. It was still pretty big on her, loose and hanging off one shoulder, but it didn’t look like a tent or go all the way to her knees. She giggled again while I rolled up some sweats so she wouldn’t trip on them and pulled the drawstring as tight as it would go. Satisfied that she was covered and wouldn’t lose her pants, I quickly ushered her out to my car, anxious to get everything taken care of so we could put it all behind us.

She gave me an address, and I smothered my frown, not wanting to upset her, but I was familiar with the neighborhood. Thinking about my woman living in that drug-infested hellhole only ratcheted up my need to drain the fucking life out of her brother.

When I pulled up in front of a building that looked as though it should be condemned, I squeezed the steering wheel so hard it creaked. After a few deep, calming breaths, I shut off the engine and climbed out before going around to the passenger side and helping Angelique.

It took a monumental effort to keep my grip loose as I held her hand while we approached a door on the ground floor with an eviction notice taped on it. The dirty window beside it was cracked and duct taped, the door was barely hanging onto its hinges, and the jam was a mess, obviously having been kicked in multiple times. When we reached it, she pulled out a key, and I was surprised the door didn’t simply collapse inside from one light touch.

She pushed it open and started to enter, but I held her back. "Stay here for a minute, angel eyes." I didn't like the thought of her outside by herself, but I was more concerned about the possibility of danger inside. She nodded her acceptance, and I did a quick check of the living room, kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom. By the time I returned to her, I was seething with untold fury.

The "apartment" was littered with molding food and old take-out containers. There was trash and drug paraphernalia scattered all around. A dirty, ragged old couch and a busted coffee table appeared to be the only furniture, other than a dingy and probably disease-infested mattress in the bedroom. What infuriated me the most, though, was the small corner of the bedroom that was neat and tidy, with several clean blankets made up to look like a bed. A few books were stacked next to a desk lamp on a little wooden table, and a canvas knapsack was stowed underneath.

The sink in the kitchen had been scrubbed clean, as well as the microwave, though the rest of the room was in the same condition as everywhere else I'd seen. It was clear that someone had tried to keep the bathroom, which was the size of a stall in a public restroom, clean, but from the stains on the toilet, sink, and shower floor, the effort had been in vain.

I schooled my expression and gentled my tone when I spoke to her. "Let's get your things, baby."

Angelique shrugged as she walked inside, sidestepping all the shit in a way that told me she was used to it. "I don't really have much. My brother sold everything to pay the rent." I bit my tongue to keep from retorting that it was more likely he sold everything to pay his bookie and dealer.

We went to the bedroom, and she grabbed the bag and started filling it with her things. While she folded up some clean clothes from the closet, I stepped into the hallway, staying where I could see her, but she wouldn't hear me. I dug my cell phone out of my pocket and hit one of my speed dials contacts.

It rang twice before Knox picked up. "Saint. I was just about to call you."

"Whatever it is, it can wait," I growled. "I need your help."

"Shut the fuck up for a minute and listen, man. My information more than likely applies to your request."

I grunted in response.

"I did some digging into the situation with Sam. Turns out my guy was right. Sam was jumped by a bunch of thugs who work for Benton. I talked to some sources, and the word is that Butler is in deep with the bookie, as well as Marlan Leek."

"Son of a bitch," I growled. Marlan was the lowest of the low. He had a hand in everything from drugs to human trafficking.

"There's no way to confirm it one hundred percent, but I'd stake my reputation on the fact that Sam was taken out so that Vince could win the purse."

"But he lost," I murmured.

"Right," Knox agreed. "He's on the run."

A sinister smile crept onto my face at Knox's smug tone. "You know where he is, don't you?"

"I'm insulted you had to ask."

I rolled my eyes. "I'm sure your fragile ego can handle it. Now send me the fucker's location."

"I'll text it to you."

"Thanks."

I hung up and immediately shot off a text to a friend of mine. My phone dinged with the message from Knox just as Angelique exited the bedroom. Curling my arm around her, I kissed her head as I tucked my phone back into my pocket. "Let's get the hell out of here."

She nodded and leaned into my side as we made our way back to the car. On the way home, my phone chirped with a text alert, but I waited until I'd parked in my driveway to look at the message. My friend had come through. I forwarded him the information he needed and a time to meet.

Angelique had fallen asleep on the drive home even though it had been less than a half hour. She'd already been tired yesterday before I wore her out, so I hoped she'd continue napping while I transferred her to our bed. Luck was on my side because she didn't even stir, other than to mumble my name as she curled up to my pillow. I was so tempted to crawl in beside her, but I wouldn't truly be able to relax until this was done.

Writing her a note and then sending a text to her phone to make sure she saw it, I instructed her to rest, then unpack and explore the house. I added a winky face before suggesting she snoop all she

wanted. Then I told her that if she stepped one foot out of the house unprotected, I would spank her ass raw.

I changed into an old pair of basketball shorts and a T-shirt that should probably have been thrown out long before now. No sense in ruining perfectly good clothes with blood. After giving my girl one last kiss on her forehead, I grabbed the keys to my Harley and locked the house up tight.

An hour later, I drove my bike into the parking lot of a rent-by-the-hour motel. It was mostly empty, with the exception of a few other bikes and a couple of trucks. When I parked and shut off my engine, the drivers of those vehicles headed my way.

I held my hand out to a beefy guy with a buzz cut and dog tags hanging over his white tank. "Bik," I greeted him. "How's Sam?"

"He's a stubborn motherfucker, as usual. Won't do what the doctor tells him, but he's on the mend."

"Glad to hear it." Sam and Bick had been together for five years and were engaged to be married in the summer. I figured if anyone had a right to be here as much as me, it was Bik.

The rest of the small group were other fighters. Friends of mine and Sam's, most of them had trained with and had their asses kicked by me. There was a running bet to see who could best me, but so far, no one had won, and it was usually something we ribbed each other about. However, the mood tonight was dark and intense. We were here to right some wrongs.

"Room twenty-seven," I murmured, then I pivoted and prowled in the direction of my prey.

AFTER TOSSING the bloody clothes into the motel room trash, I then washed my hands and pulled on the spare clothes I'd brought with me. I exited the room and walked toward the group of men who'd helped me mete out a fitting punishment for Vince Butler.

"Should we take him to a hospital?" one of the guys asked, his tone dripping with disgust.

I shook my head as I stepped over the beaten and bloodied rat sniveling on the floor, begging for help. "Leave him. Just like they left Sam. Somebody will come along eventually." I stopped beside

Vince and bent over to look him in the eye that wasn't quite swollen shut yet. "I suggest you get the fuck out of Dodge. If I can find you, so can Benton and Leek."

Vince cried and begged for help, but I ignored his pleas. "And Butler"—my tone hardened to steel—"if you ever so much mutter Angelique's name ever again—and trust me, I'll know—I will return to finish the job. Got it?"

He glared at me and muttered, "Fuck you, Saint."

"Not the answer I'm looking for," I sighed. Then I put my boot on his groin, making him scream in pain. "Got it?"

"Shit! Yes, I got it," he cried as he curled into the fetal position.

"Good." I turned to face my friends and gave them a lift of my chin in thanks. "Let's get the fuck outta here."

With that taken care of, I breathed a little easier with every mile that took me closer to my forever.

ANGELIQUE

Waking up alone in Saint's house should've freaked me out, but the note and text he'd left had soothed any nerves I'd had about him not coming back. After unpacking my meager belongings, I explored the house, snooping in all of its nooks and crannies. I liked that he didn't feel as though he needed to hide anything from me, and I felt a surge of relief when I didn't find a single hint of another woman in his home. All of the colors, furniture, and decorations were ultra-masculine, just like him.

I was about ten minutes into a recently released action movie, comfortably settled into one of the reclining seats in his home theater, when Saint returned. I paused the film and juggled the bowl of popcorn in his direction as he dropped into the seat next to me. "Want me to restart this at the beginning so you can watch the whole thing with me? I haven't been watching long."

"Sure," he agreed before taking the remote from my hand and setting it on the armrest between us. "But first, I have something I need to tell you."

I braced myself, expecting bad news based on his tone and serious expression. My fear must've shown on my face because he took the bowl of popcorn from me, set it on the chair next to him, and lifted me out of my seat and onto his lap. Wrapped up in his embrace, I felt safer as I asked, "Where were you? What happened?"

"I went to see your brother." He dropped his verbal bombshell as though it was no big deal, while my mind was blown.

I twisted in his lap to stare up at him in shock. "You did what?"

He cupped my cheeks in his palms and gently brushed his lips over mine. "Vince needed to be taken care of, so I had Knox hunt down his location. Some friends and I paid him a little visit to make it painfully obvious that he needs to get out of town and stay away from you."

"It doesn't matter how clear you made it, I can't see Vince leaving Vegas unless there's something in it for him," I warned. "And he's always thought of me as...a tool he could use when he needs me. He won't let go of that without a fight."

"Then I guess it's a good thing there wasn't any fight left in your brother after I was done with him." He traced a finger down my cheek.

Even though we were completely alone, I lowered my voice as I asked, "Wait. Did you go beat him up?"

"Yup," he confirmed with a satisfied smirk. "The beatdown I gave him in the ring wasn't enough. An unquestionable message needed to be delivered in a way Vince would understand. Along with a reminder that the pain he endured tonight was nothing compared to what his bookie will do to him if he doesn't either pay up or leave town."

"I can't believe you did that for me." I shook my head, trying to make sense of the lengths Saint had gone to in order for me to be safe. "What if you get caught? I wouldn't put it past Vince to go to the cops just to mess with you. You could get kicked out of the UFC, or even be sent to jail."

"It's not gonna happen," he assured me. "Your brother knows how bad things will go for him if he tries to turn me in."

"He can be vindictive when he thinks someone has crossed him." I wrapped my arms around the front of my body as I remembered some of the crap he'd pulled on me in the past few years. "He might file charges before he leaves town, even if he wouldn't be here for a trial. Getting you arrested would be a major win in his book, even if you get bonded out right away."

"You're worrying for nothing." He loosened the hold I had on myself and twined my arms around his neck. "Even if Vince was that dumb, the cops wouldn't be able to file any charges because your brother doesn't have any proof of what happened tonight. The shithole of a motel I found him in didn't have security cameras, his injuries can be explained away by our well-publicized fight for the

UFC, and I have a group of guys who'll serve as my alibi since I wasn't alone during my visit."

The tension drained from my body, and I relaxed into Saint's hold. "It sounds like you thought of everything."

"I tried to cover all the bases," he murmured, giving me a little squeeze. "It was important to me that this shit didn't blow back on you. Not when the reason I went after him was because of how badly he fucked up with you in the first place."

"I still can't believe you went to all that trouble just for me." I rested my cheek against his shoulder as I patted his chest. It was difficult for me to believe that we'd only met yesterday, and he'd already done so much to improve my life—giving me a place to live, making sure I had plenty of food to eat, and taking care of Vince so I didn't need to fear for my safety. After my childhood and the crap my brother had pulled in recent years, I wasn't a trusting person. The walls I'd built around my heart were sky high, but this incredible man had somehow managed to work his way past each and every one of them in record time.

I was struggling a little with the realization of how strong my feelings for him already were when he blew my mind by admitting, "I get that it'll take a while for you to really believe me, but I'd do anything for you. Even if everything had gone wrong tonight and I ended up in jail, it would've been worth it to know you'd be safe."

"You can't possibly mean that." I lifted my head to stare into his dark eyes in awe.

"Of course, I do," he insisted, cupping my cheeks in his palms as he claimed my mouth in a passionate kiss. Our tongues tangled until I was panting. If I hadn't already been breathless, I would've been when he added, "I know most people would say it's too early, but that doesn't change the fact that I love you, angel eyes."

"You love me?" I whispered, tears filling my eyes and spilling down my cheeks.

He kissed the wetness away before answering, "From the moment I first laid eyes on you, I knew you were meant to be mine. But I still wasn't prepared for how hard and fast I fell for you. You scored a knockout hit to my heart without even trying, just by being your sweet self."

"I love you, too," I replied softly, taking a leap of faith because Saint had done more to prove I could trust him to catch me in one

day than anyone else had done in my entire life. My heart thundered in my chest when his body tensed beneath me. It felt as though I waited forever for his response to my admission, but it was probably only a few seconds at most.

"Thank fuck," he breathed, shooting to his feet with me in his arms. He set me down and dropped to one knee. I didn't understand what he was doing until he reached into his pocket and pulled out a black jewelry box. My hand flew up to cover my mouth as I gasped in surprise. Then he flicked it open with his thumb, and my eyes widened at the sight of the three rings nestled inside.

The diamond solitaire engagement ring had to be at least four carats, but it was the bands on either side that surprised me the most. I traced the wider one with my fingertip. "Is this turquoise? I don't think I've ever seen wedding bands quite like these before."

"I wanted something special, and when I told Drew's jeweler about how beautiful your eyes were, he suggested this set," he explained as he pulled the engagement ring out of the box. "I love the idea of wearing something every day that reminds me of them."

"That's so sweet," I sniffled.

"Does that mean you'll marry me?" he asked.

"Yes," I cried as I held my hand out for him to slip the diamond solitaire onto my finger.

He flicked the ring box closed as he surged to his feet. Tucking it into his pocket again, he said, "I better keep these close because I plan on hustling you down the aisle before you have a chance to change your mind."

"That's not going to happen," I assured him as he swept me into his arms.

"I think I'll demonstrate why I'll make the perfect husband for you, just in case," he suggested as he carried me through the house. When we got to the bedroom, he did an excellent job of showing me the orgasmic perks of being his wife. Over and over again.

I hadn't realized that when Saint said he wanted to marry me as soon as possible, he meant the very next day. But I didn't hesitate to become his wife when he brought me to the wedding chapel at the Lennox the following afternoon. After a lifetime of bad luck, I was more than ready to start my happily ever after with my gorgeous groom.

EPILOGUE

SAINT

“Wake up, angel eyes.” I kissed Angelique’s forehead and ran a finger down her soft cheek. I hated to wake her, but people were about to arrive, and if she missed any part of this party, I would pay for it with her tears. My wife had been planning this event for months, and I wasn’t going to be the reason she missed it.

I’d won the championship right after we were married and had taken her on a monthlong honeymoon to Hawaii. I hesitated to fight another season, not wanting to be away from my wife. But Angelique wanted to travel with me, and since she’d never been anywhere besides Las Vegas (and now Hawaii), I was happy to give in to her request. As much as I enjoyed simply having her with me, it was incredible to watch her wonder and excitement at each new place we went.

When we found out Angelique was pregnant, we agreed that I would finish out the season and then retire for good. My wife then decided that we needed to have a huge party to celebrate my retirement and hopefully, another championship. I didn’t want her to overdo it, but she convinced me by assuring me that she would have help from Knox’s sisters, who ran the wedding chapel at the Lennox.

I took home my final belt with my sexy wife, round with our child, cheering me on from the first row. She’d been practically vibrating with excitement over the party, so here I was, about to wake her when I knew, at eight months pregnant, she was exhausted.

After tenderly kissing her lips, I pulled back to find gorgeous turquoise eyes beaming up at me sleepily. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to fall asleep.”

"You should have been resting all day instead of running around on your swollen feet," I admonished her with a mild frown.

Angelique rolled her eyes, and her lips started to curve up, but then her mouth suddenly flattened for a moment, and she rubbed her belly. "Are you in pain?" I asked suspiciously.

She grunted and sat up on the couch. "Nope. It's just getting hard to maneuver with your giant offspring inside me." She laughed as she held out her hand so I could help her to her feet. When she saw my furrowed brow and narrowed eyes, she clucked her tongue at me like I was a naughty child. "Don't be such a bear, Michael. I'm completely refreshed from my little catnap."

Shaking my head, I sighed but lifted her to her feet. Before she could try to walk, though, I swept her into my arms and made my way out to our large backyard where everything was set up for a barbecue. I set her down on one of the overstuffed loungers and ordered her to stay put. The doorbell rang just as she was opening her mouth, no doubt to argue with me, and I pointed a warning finger at her before heading back inside.

When I opened the door, a wide smile split my face at the sight of the man and woman standing there. "Justice?"

Justice Kendall and I had been friends for a long time but rarely got to see each other because he lived in New York City. He'd also been my investment manager since he started his company with his brother, Thatcher. They'd flown out for my final championship fight, but I didn't know Justice and Blair were still in town.

He grinned and shook my hand. "Your wife is very persuasive, and somehow, she convinced us to extend our trip to be here for your party." It might not seem like it to some people, but this was a big deal for these two. They hated being away from their children for more than a few nights.

"Thank you for coming," I said gruffly, trying not to sound like a pussy even though I was touched by their gesture. Blair went up on her tiptoes and kissed my cheek, ignoring Justice's growl. I almost laughed except for the fact that I was just as possessive of my wife.

"We wouldn't have missed it. Thatcher and Imogene aren't far behind us."

I nodded, again trying to repress the pussy I was apparently becoming. I showed them out to the backyard where they greeted my

wife, who had been obedient for a change and stayed in her seat. Blair rubbed her large belly and smiled. "Not long now, huh?"

Angelique beamed and shook her head. "We can't wait to meet the little guy." Her face twisted in pain for half a second, but it was long enough for me to notice.

I rushed over and crouched down at her side. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," she assured me brightly. "He just likes to practice his boxing moves a little too enthusiastically sometimes."

My eyes searched her face, looking for any sign that she was still in pain, but I didn't find any. I slowly straightened up, and when the doorbell rang again, I reluctantly went to let in the next guests. By the time everyone arrived, the backyard was filled with people.

Angelique convinced me to let her mingle a little, but I watched her like a hawk until she scolded me for being rude and ignoring everyone else. I didn't want to listen to her because every once in a while, I caught that same little hint of a grimace, and she would rub her tummy. However, she teared up, and I immediately went to talk with Justice, Thatcher, and Knox, just to get her to stop crying.

I finally relaxed a little when Blair and Knox's wife, Addilyn, promised to keep an eye on Angelique. Not twenty minutes later, Addilyn sidled up to Knox and whispered something in his ear, making him frown. She glanced at me, making me narrow my eyes on her and look around for my wife. When I didn't see her, my scowl swung back over to Knox and Addilyn.

"I'd be pissed as fuck if no one told me, baby. I'm not going to risk my pretty face by distracting a champion MMA fighter," he said with a shake of his head. He flinched when she glared at him but turned to look at me. "Apparently, Angelique isn't feeling well. Blair took her inside and instructed my wife to request that I distract you so you would enjoy the rest of the party." Addilyn huffed, and Knox pulled her into his arms. By the way she melted into him, I assumed she'd already forgiven him.

Rolling my eyes, I sighed and mumbled my thanks before sprinting back to the house and into our bedroom. Angelique was sitting on the side of the bed, bent over, holding her stomach, while Blair rubbed her lower back.

My chest squeezed at the pain I saw in Angelique's face. Since no one was around, she wasn't bothering to try to hide it, and it struck fear into my heart. "What the fuck?" I almost shouted but lowered

my voice at the last minute so I wouldn't upset her even further. "What's wrong?"

She tried to smile at me and panted, "Nothing, babe. Go back to the party. I'll be down there in a few." Blair rolled her eyes and silently shook her head.

I took a deep breath, trying to stay calm, and knelt in front of Angelique before I took her face between my palms. "Have you been feeling like this all day, angel eyes?" Her eyes began to widen with innocence, and I knew she was about to lie her pretty little ass off but was derailed by another grimace and groan of pain.

"Maybe a little," she conceded when the pain seemed to let up. "But I didn't want to spoil the party. Let's go back out there. I'm fine."

"Um, Angelique," Blair murmured, "I'm pretty sure you're in labor."

My wife bent over with another wave of pain but managed to turn her head to the side and glare at her friend. "Traitor."

"Let's go," I stated firmly as I got to my feet. She protested weakly as I swept her into my arms, and I scowled at her as I stormed from the room. "Not another word, angel eyes. You've already earned yourself a red ass for keeping this from me all day."

Angelique gasped and smacked my chest. "You can't spank a pregnant woman!"

I glanced down and despite my worry, I smirked at her. "I can wait until the doctor gives you the all clear."

We reached the car, and as I was helping her into the passenger seat, she mumbled, "It's not like you'll remember in six weeks."

I scoffed and carefully pulled the seat belt over her large belly. "I will never forget this, angel eyes." After shutting the door, I raced around to my side and got in. I headed toward the hospital, and with every mile, my worry increased. Especially as Angelique's moans became more anguished. To take both of our minds off the situation, I blurted, "And don't think you've gotten out of the spanking you earned for last week."

Her head popped up and swung in my direction. "What, are you keeping a tally or something?" she asked incredulously.

"Yup," I replied simply.

Before she could respond, we pulled into the emergency room drive, and I hopped out to grab someone with a wheelchair.

Six hours later, my exhausted wife cuddled our little boy in her arms and beamed up at me. "We did good."

I was still in awe of her and shook my head. "You were incredible, angel eyes. I just stood there and watched."

A sly smile slipped across her face as she looked up at me. "Still think I earned those spankings?"

I chuckled and gave her a soft kiss on the lips before brushing my mouth over the top of my son's fuzzy little head. "After watching you give birth, I'm not sure there is anything you could do to earn a pink handprint on your ass."

Angelique giggled, and her eyes gleamed devilishly as she winked. "I'm sure I'll come up with something."

EPILOGUE

ANGELIQUE

“**N**o. No way.” I shook my head and crossed my arms over my chest. “My precious baby boy isn’t going to do a sport where the whole point is for someone else to try to beat him up.”

My gorgeous hubby met my glare with a grin, tugging me close and pressing a quick kiss to my lips. “You’re so fucking cute when you go all mama bear over the kids.”

“Don’t even try to charm me into changing my mind,” I warned as I wagged my finger at him.

He nipped the tip with his teeth, sending a shiver down my spine. “Would I try to do a thing like that?”

“Absolutely,” I grumbled, narrowing my eyes. His grin widened because he knew darn well that he could charm me into almost anything. With the way I reacted to him, it didn’t take much effort on his part, either. Just his brief kiss and smile had me second-guessing myself already. “But I managed to withstand the puppy dog eyes Marcus flashed my way when he came home talking about karate lessons. That should tell you how against the idea I am since he has me wrapped around his little finger. He’s like his daddy, nearly impossible for me to resist.”

“Nearly impossible, huh?” He slid his hands down my back to cup my butt cheeks as he pressed his hard-on against my core. “Maybe I need to test how strong your willpower truly is by devouring your little—”

I slapped my hand over his mouth to stop the flow of words, my eyes darting over to the other side of the room where our toddler, Aria, was showing her big brother her newest dolly. We bought it

while we were at the mall having girl time. We'd had a great day...up until the moment Saint and Marcus returned from their boy time, and my son chattered nonstop about the karate lessons he wanted to take. I wasn't surprised he was interested in them since he was a mini-me version of his daddy, but I thought I'd have more time before something like this came up. He was only four, way too young in my mind for him to be taking martial arts lessons. "He must be even more excited than I thought if you're already bringing out the big guns to try to talk me into karate."

"Maybe I just wanted to remind you how big my gun is since we were interrupted before I had the chance to use it this morning," he grumbled.

"Daddy has a gun?" Marcus shrieked, running over to us. "Can I see it? Have you ever shot someone?"

"No, he doesn't have a gun," I corrected, bending low to pick Aria up when she trailed him.

She had her new doll cradled in her arms, but as soon as she noticed I was standing next to her daddy, Aria dropped it like a hotcake and reached for him. "Daddy!"

Saint caught her as she leaped into his arms, and he swung her around in a circle. My lips curved up in a smile as her giggles echoed around the living room.

"Why did Daddy say he had a big gun?" Marcus asked with a pout, tugging on my pants to get my attention.

"It's a figure of speech," I explained. "He was talking about something else and used 'big gun' as a metaphor."

Marcus's little nose scrunched up as he considered what I'd said. "What's a meatyfour?"

Saint shifted his hold on Aria to flex his arm. "It's when you use a different word to describe something, like when someone calls their biceps the big guns."

"Oh!" Our son nodded, and a lock of his thick, dark hair fell on his forehead. "I get it!"

"Me," Aria garbled, mimicking her brother's head movement.

She didn't like to be left out of anything, which gave me an idea that might just get Saint on my side. "How young can the students be at the karate place you guys found?"

"Marcus would be in their toddler program for now, with the two- to four-year-olds. It'll give him a chance to learn the ropes be-

fore he moves on to the children's class," Saint explained.

"Two?" I echoed with a mischievous grin.

"Yes," he drawled, setting Aria on the floor as his eyes narrowed in suspicion. "Why?"

I waited until Aria toddled off to the toy box on the other side of the room with Marcus at her side. "I think we should sign both of them up for the class. Together."

"Both of them?" His dark gaze slid to our daughter, and he emphatically shook his head. "No fu—reaking way is my little princess taking karate."

I quirked a brow at him. "But it's fine for my precious baby boy to do it?"

"Crap, you've got me there," he groaned, making me giggle because even after four years, I wasn't used to his semi-cleaned up language. He pulled me close and conceded, "If you're really against the karate lessons, we can talk to Marcus together and let him down gently."

I loved how Saint was willing to see my side of things as much as I hated disappointing Marcus. I glanced over at him and thought about how excited he'd been when he was telling me about the class they'd watched this afternoon. "I guess if the karate is for toddlers, it can't be too bad."

"The kids were cute as hell in their little uniforms." He tugged me into his embrace, my back pressed to his chest and his chin resting on the top of my head as we watched our children play together. "I think you'll be surprised by how the classes go. The kids run through extremely basic kata, and there's no physical contact among the students. They're nothing like my matches, more of a Matchbox car compared to a semitruck."

"Go ahead and sign Marcus up, and I'll look for a tumbling class or something so Aria won't feel left out," I offered as I rubbed my thighs together, remembering how turned on I got whenever I watched him fight.

"Thanks, angel eyes. You're such a good mom," he murmured against my ear. His hot breath sent a shiver down my spine that intensified at the heat in his tone when he added, "I think you need another baby, and I'm going to use my big gun to give you one tonight."

He followed through on that promise...times two.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The writing duo of Elle Christensen and Rochelle Paige team up under the Fiona Davenport pen name to bring you sexy, insta-love stories filled with alpha males. If you want a quick & dirty read with a guaranteed happily ever after, then give Fiona Davenport a try!

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