

Claimed by my Brother's Best Friends

Chapter 27

Alyssa

"Where is my Zuri?" Niko's voice fills the room as he strides through the front door, his eyes immediately seeking out the kitchen. I'm feeding Zuri her breakfast, and the sound of his arrival makes her tiny face light up.

Sebastian insisted on making sure Zuri had a full meal before everyone arrived. He said it would keep her content while I deal with the mess of reconciling with my brother. My heart pounds as I think about seeing Gray again. It's been too long, and the distance has only made everything between us more complicated. But it's time to tell him what happened with Isaac and introduce him to his niece.

When Zuri spots Niko, her little arms stretch out toward him, her smile making my heart warm. Niko looks at me, silently asking permission to pick her up. I force a smile. "Go ahead. She's done eating anyway."

Niko's grin widens as he carefully removes the tray from her chair, unbuckles her, and picks her up. Unlike the first time he held her, he seems confident, the bond between them natural and adorable.

"I'll get her cleaned up and changed, okay?" he offers, and I nod, trying to push down the nervous energy swirling in my stomach that my brother will be walking in here any second.

As Niko carries my daughter upstairs, King appears on the staircase, wearing a gray T-shirt and jeans. He and Niko exchange whispered words, and King's gaze locks onto mine, drinking me in with a smirk that never quite reaches his eyes.

"Ready for the shitshow, kitten?" he asks, his tone light but hollow.

I bite my lip. "Is it really going to be that bad?"

He shrugs, his nonchalance failing to hide the tension in his body. "Depends on whether Gray wants to be an asshole today. Jet lag might just bring out the worse in him. His finger hooks under my chin, lifting my face until our eyes meet. "Just remember our agreement, okay?"

I nod, my voice caught somewhere in my throat.

A moment later, the door swings open, and my big brother steps inside, a woman on his arm. Mason trails behind them, his expression unreadable as usual. Gray releases the woman briefly to pull me into an awkward hug.

"Hey sis. It's been a while," he mutters before reclaiming her hand, as if he can't stand to be apart from her.

Time has aged him, or should I say running a gang has. His once unruly brown hair is styled in a short crop top fade, and there's a new depth in his hazel eyes—a wisdom that wasn't there before.

The tension in the room thickens, almost suffocating. I can feel King and Mason lingering around, the air practically buzzing with unspoken words. Something's off, and I can't shake the feeling that I'm missing something important.

What the hell is going on?

"Hi, who's this?" I ask, doing my best to keep my voice polite.

No one mentioned that Gray would be coming back with anyone, but considering how they kept his whereabouts a secret, I'm not exactly surprised. Still, why wouldn't the boys just tell me?

When I glance up, Mason looks away, while King settles into his chair, his gaze steady on mine as he sips from a glass of something dark. Damn, isn't it a little early for that?

"Alyssa, this is Christine. Christine, my sister, Alyssa."

Christine gives me a surprising hug, her voice cheerful and slightly nasal. "Sorry, I'm a hugger. I've been dying to meet you."

And I have no idea who the hell she is.

I laugh nervously, pulling away. "Gray, if I had known I was meeting your girlfriend today, I would've dressed a little better."

My jeans and tank-top feel suddenly inadequate compared to Christine's designer dress and heels. Her sleek black hair is pulled into a ponytail, not a strand out of place, while I just threw my hair in a bun at the last minute.

"Oh, I'm not his girlfriend," she says with a smile. "I'm his wife."

The words hit me like a punch in the gut. My brother, married? My breath catches in my throat, and for a moment, the room spins. All these years apart, and I missed his wedding? I always imagined standing by his side, welcoming his wife as my sister, sharing in their joy. Instead, I'm a stranger in his life.

I blink, still trying to process what I just heard. "I'm sorry, what was that?"

Gray's arm tightens around Christine's waist, but he allows her to speak for him. "Gray and I got married two months ago. Just now got back from our honeymoon, since work keeps my hubby so busy. Right, babe?"

I stare at my brother, the hurt unmistakable in my voice. "You...got married? And when were you going to tell me?" My voice trembles, betraying the turmoil of emotions churning inside me. Anger, confusion, heartbreak—they all collide into one, leaving me breathless.

I glance at King, silently demanding answers, but he just meets my gaze with that infuriating, unflinching stare. I can see the tension in his shoulders, the way his fingers drum lightly on the armrest, but he says nothing.

Nothing at all.

A bitter laugh escapes me, one I can't hold back. "Are you fucking kidding me right now? This is what you kept from me?"

Gray's eyes harden, his jaw clenched as he looks down at Christine. "Yeah," he replies callously. "Why invite you when you were obviously too busy living it up with your rich husband to say goodbye to our dying mother...or even bother attending her funeral?"

As Gray's harsh words hit me, my throat goes dry, and I can't stop the way my heart races, pounding against my ribcage like it's trying to escape. Living it up? Is that what he thinks I was doing all this time? Was getting my ass beat by my husband every day considered 'living it up'?

"Gray," King growls out a warning. There's a murderous look in his eyes, and I'm sure he would've across the room to snap my brother's neck if they didn't have the whole 'brotherhood gang' thing.

Before I can tell him how fucking wrong he is, Niko returns downstairs, Zuri giggles filling the room as he bounces her on his hip.

Gray freezes when he sees my daughter, his eyes bouncing back and forth between us. "What...the...hell? Alyssa you had a baby?"

Now he knows how it feels to be left out of the loop. Although, I'm surprised none of the boys told him. They keep surprising me more and more. If they're not careful, I may end up fully trusting them one day.

I jerk my chin up, refusing to show guilt for something that wasn't my fault. "Yes I did. Meet your niece, Zuri."