

## Chapter Four

Sarah woke feeling as if she hadn't slept at all. She lay in bed slowly piecing together the disaster that was her marriage and wondered just where she would go from there. Some part of her had always known Lucas would never have feelings for her and that it was foolish to hope otherwise. He probably had forgotten all about the incident in the schoolyard. It was clear he didn't remember her at all.

Me-row?

She turned her head to see one of Ya-Ya's cats staring at her from the bedside table. Vaguely she wondered what this one's name was. There were always several cats around and Ya-Ya was able to tell one from the other with ease. Since they were usually just plain black it was impossible for anyone else. Sarah looked back up at the ceiling not wanting to acknowledge the sunlight creeping past the blinds. As long as she remained in bed time would stop.

Not wanting to be ignored the cat hopped onto the bed and curled up beside her. Once settled it contentedly purred. Absent-mindedly she stroked the soft black fur listening to its constant, soft rumbling. The sound slowly seeped into her easing her anxiety and lulling her to sleep.

She wasn't certain how long she dozed before she heard the baby's cries from the next room. A few minutes later Aubrey was up quietly padding across the hall to comfort the restless and hungry baby. Sarah listened to the tender sounds of mother and infant. Her vision blurred.

She reached up to wipe away the tears that had come unbidden. What would it be like being awakened by her own precious little one? To hold a tiny bundle knowing they would be your whole world, and you theirs? Now that her marriage was over she supposed she would never know. She would never experience that joy.

Her body shivered as a new wave of sorrow assailed her. Was that why this failure hurt so much? It was not just about her and Lucas but about what they would never share together.

The sounds from the next room quieted as Aubrey headed downstairs no doubt to start breakfast. Ya-Ya was an early riser but Aubrey was not. Perhaps having a baby forced her habits to change. Sarah lay for several more minutes before reluctantly rising. She couldn't expect time to stop forever. Pulling her sweater on over the tank top Aubrey borrowed her last night Sarah headed downstairs with the cat following behind.

As expected smells enticed her to the kitchen. There she found Aubrey generously adding cinnamon and vanilla to an egg mixture in preparation for French toast. The radio was playing at a low volume in respect to those possibly asleep in the house as Aubrey danced to the music.

Sarah stied a laugh. It was just like their college days in their cramped, little apartment. Late at night they would congregate in the kitchen dancing to whatever was on the radio as they made their midnight meals. Some things never changed.

Her gaze ickered to the table where Jamie lay in his baby seat happily wiggling to the music. Some things never changed...thankfully some things did.

"Morning Sleeping Beauty," Aubrey greeted startling Sarah from her thoughts.

"Good morning," Sarah moved to the table. "French toast?"

"I craved something sweet," Aubrey bopped her head. "Hey there, Jim."

Sarah followed her gaze to see the cat had followed her down, "His name is Jim? I was wondering since he decided to visit and curl up in bed with me."

"He curled up in bed with you? He must like you. He's never curled up with me."

"How do you know this one is Jim? I thought they all looked the same."

"They do but Jim is the only one who comes in the house. The others are too feral," Aubrey explained. "How'd you sleep?"

"Fine."

Turning Aubrey faced her with a warning glare, "Girl, I know you didn't just ne me. Don't you dare lie to me. This is me you are talking to."

Sarah sucked in an uneasy breath, "I barely slept a wink."

Aubrey nodded and waited for her to continue.

"I just keep reliving everything. Thinking if maybe I did something differently...maybe things could have been different, but it's over." Sarah shook her head. "I just feel so stupid. It's not like he ever cared about me in the rst place. He made that perfectly clear on our wedding night."

"What an ass," Aubrey shook her head. "I have half a mind to hop the next ight to New York and slap him silly."

"Please don't," Sarah said. "It's over so let's just move on."

"And you won't have to go back?"

"No. Uncle Tailor said that unless he contests the divorce agreement I won't be needed. I'm not taking any of the assets so there's no reason for him to contest it."

"You should take him for everything he's worth and make him crawl."

"I don't need any of it and I don't need him to crawl. Let's face it, my expectations were too high," Sarah sighed. "I thought over time we would at least be friendly."

"Enough depressing talk," Aubrey declared. "Let's talk about something important, like Mardi Gras. It's just around the corner and, girl, you need it."

"I don't think I'll be in a party mood for a while."

"Not with an attitude like that," Aubrey glanced at the radio hearing a familiar riff. "Let's work on that right now."

She stepped closer to the radio and turned up the volume ooding the kitchen with Bon Jovi's It's My Life. Grabbing the spatula Aubrey held it like a microphone and crooned at the top of her voice, "This ain't a song for the broken-hearted. No silent prayer for faith-departed...I ain't gonna be a face in the crowd. You're gonna hear my voice when I shout it out loud...It's my life! It's now or never...I ain't gonna live forever. I just want to live while I'm alive..."

Sarah rolled her eyes trying not to laugh as Aubrey danced around the kitchen like she was on stage. Aubrey had a rather husky voice when she sang but she never bothered about what other people thought. Music was food for the soul and meant to be enjoyed. If people didn't like the way she enjoyed it they could wear earplugs.

"Come on, girl!" Aubrey beckoned. "I know you know the words! My heart is like an open highway. Like Frankie said, 'I did it my way.' I just want to live while I'm alive...It's my life!"

Sarah hesitated a moment before allowing Aubrey to draw her to her feet and grabbed the spatula as the second verse started, "This is for the ones who stood their ground. For Tommy and Gina, who never back down. Tomorrow's getting harder, make no mistake. Luck ain't even lucky, got make your own breaks..."

"Yeah girl!" Aubrey laughed as they danced singing to their audience as the baby watched from his seat. "It's my life! It's now or never. I ain't gonna live forever. I just want to live while I'm alive...My heart is like an open highway. Like Frankie said, 'I did it my way.' I just want to live while I'm alive. It's my life!"

"Better stand tall when they're calling you out," Sarah said.

"Don't bend, don't break, baby, don't back down," Aubrey countered before they sang together, "It's my life! It's now or never. I ain't gonna live forever. I just want to live while I'm alive...My heart is like an open highway. Like Frankie said, 'I did it my way.' I just want to live while I'm alive!...It's my life!"

As the last riff faded Aubrey and Sarah clung to each other laughing. For the rst time in months Sarah felt lighter. It was good to unwind and forget. In his seat Jamie raised his arms and babbled as if calling for an encore.

"Sounds like we're having fun in here," Ya-Ya said as she entered carrying a small basket.

Today Ya-Ya wore a bright gold blouse and a green tie-dye patterned skirt. Her long, black hair was tamed by a red sash. Large hoop earrings hung from each ear and a purple crystal glistened from a simple leather necklace. Both arms had numerous bracelets crafted from beads and stones of varying colors all meant to attract various aspects: happiness, abundance, health. Even if it weren't for the cats and crows that frequented their property it was easy to see how Ya-Ya earned her nickname, Witch of Baudin. It was a name she took very seriously and with great pride.

"Oh Ya-Ya, I'm sorry if we woke you," Sarah said trying to calm down as Aubrey seized the spatula and went back to her work.

"Honey, don't you dare apologize for having a good time," Ya-Ya admonished.

Sarah blushed.

"Come here and let me have a look at you," Ya-Ya set her basket down to cup her face in her hands. "Good. You got some color back in your cheeks. I can't tell you how worried I was when you got here. You looked like you'd seen a ghost."

"I'm sorry about that."

"You don't need to apologize," Ya-Ya waved off her concern. "You are always welcome here. I told you before; our home is your home."

"Thank you."

"So what are your plans for today?" Ya-Ya asked.

"Well, we have to go shopping," Aubrey said. "Miss Thing here left New York with nothing but the clothes on her back and as much as I don't mind here...there are some articles of clothing that are sacred."

The pair shared a chuckle. In college they often raided each other's closets but they had a very strict rule. The underwear drawers were off-limits. Oddly enough the rule did not apply to bathing suits.

"Good. You girls can go shopping," Ya-Ya agreed tickling Jamie's cheeks. "My little sugar and I will stay here so you two can catch up."

"You hear this?" Aubrey demanded looking at Sarah. "I gave birth to him but he belongs to her."

"Oh hush," Ya-Ya said. "You gonna get cooking or are you just posing for Louisiana Cookin'?"

Aubrey shook her spatula at her aunt in warning. Then she turned back to the griddle and picked up where she left off. Soon the smell of French toast lled the warm kitchen.