

Chapter Nine

Crowds lined the infamous Bourbon Street as tourists and locals mingled in the festive atmosphere. Until now Sarah had avoided most of it preferring to stay with Aubrey and Ya-Ya at home with the occasional late movie night while she nished her book. Now that it was done and sent off to her editor Sarah had fewer distractions so this day was well-timed.

Sarah was nally beginning to feel like her old self and now was a good time to step back into the world. Luckily Aubrey held her hand guiding her through the crowds and hitting her favorite spots. Sarah lost track of how many parades they had seen since they headed over at noon. They both wore several strings of beads, ashing crowns and bobbing ower antenna. Sarah no longer remembered where they received these prizes as they snatched them from the oat riders, who tossed handfuls of prizes as well as toys, plastic coins and others.

She had been hesitant to come out but now she danced with Aubrey to the jazz music permeating the air. They weaved through the crowds Aubrey ever in search for her favorite spot for the next parade. Sarah didn't mind being dragged along. The long, brightly colored cup in her hand was lled with a brew she no longer remembered what it was. She was never much of a drinker but it was nice every now and again to let loose.

She had missed this. Why hadn't she visited Aubrey more often? Maybe she would have left Lucas sooner if she realized how much she had sacrificed over the years. But tonight wasn't the time to think about it. Tonight was about letting her hair down and enjoying herself.

Eventually they made it to Canal Street and needing a moment of relative quiet to prepare for sundown when the real excitement began they ducked into Witch's Brew. The bar was small with natural brick walls. Large wooden spools that once held industrial wire were turned on their sides to make tables. Smaller tables were made from barrels. The stools were mismatched, found in various locations and sales but it gave the bar its own kind of charm.

The décor was decidedly witchy with a taxidermy crow, owl and a few small mammals; skeletons both real and faux; a mummied cat; potion bottles and even a cauldron behind the bar. Most of the drinking glasses were stoneware crafted by Aubrey's mother. In one corner was a small stage where musicians, comedians, slam poets and karaoke divas could perform depending on the night.

In honor of Mardi Gras purple, green and yellow lights were strung up and the speakers played jazz between the musicians scheduled throughout the day and night. Aubrey retrieved drinks and appetizers from the bar joining her at the barrel that served as their table.

"Having a good time, baby girl?" Aubrey asked.

"Yes!" Sarah laughed. "I needed this!"

"That's right!" Aubrey held up her shot glass for a toast before they threw them back in unison.

A ring sounded as Sarah's phone suddenly buzzed. Almost falling off her seat she struggled to take it out of her pocket. She hesitated when she saw the call was from Tailor. Biting her lip she answered, "Hi, Uncle Tailor."

"Hello Sarah. Sounds like you're having a good time."

"Well, it's Mardi Gras," she laughed. "Is it possible not to have a good time?"

"I've got good news."

"Oh?"

"You're ocially divorced, or will be in six weeks give or take."

"Oh."

"You okay?"

"Yes. I'm good."

"And Rosemary? What about her?"

"She'll be ne. We both will be. We always are."

"All right. Call me if you need anything."

"I will. Thanks."

"Take care."

"You too." Sarah sighed as she ended the call.

"What is it? What's wrong?" Aubrey asked as she set the phone down.

Sarah was quiet for a moment before saying, "I'm divorced. It's done."

Aubrey stared at her with a sympathetic gaze. Neither one was a stranger to heartbreak but it wasn't easy for Sarah to face. Aubrey knew she had a crush on her husband since their school days and always hoped that maybe he would come around. She wasn't naïve enough to expect love, but at least friendship. Aubrey admired her desire but it put a lot of pressure on her.

"Are you...good?" Aubrey asked. "You want to go home?"

"...No," Sarah held up her glass. "Let's drink! It's time to celebrate!"

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Sarah woke up with a cotton mouth and a pounding headache. She was fairly certain she really hadn't drunk that much but it was her rst night out in a year so perhaps a hangover was inevitable. This time there was no cat to wake her up as she rolled over and immediately had to sprint to the bathroom.

After emptying her stomach into the toilet she stumbled downstairs looking for something to sooth her throat and head. Ya-Ya was already up and puttering around the kitchen. Seeing Sarah at the door she motioned for her to sit as the kettle whistled. Without a word she steeped green tea and handed it to Sarah with a knowing look. Sarah sipped it letting her grumbling stomach slowly settle.

"Have a good time?" Ya-Ya asked.

"Yeah, what I remember of it," Sarah said. "I don't remember drinking that much...but I think we had two King Cakes."

Ya-Ya chuckled. It wasn't unusual for people to get carried away during Mardi Gras even locals who were used to it. It certainly wasn't Sarah's rst Mardi Gras but after the last three years she needed to decompress so it wasn't a wonder it had all come spilling out.

"We are all entitled to a moment of excess."

Sarah sighed, "...I'm divorced."

Ya-Ya paused glancing her way.

"It's ocial, mostly. Uncle Tailor said the judge signed and it's all led. So...I'm divorced."

"And how do you feel about it?" Ya-Ya asked.

"Honestly I don't know," Sarah shook her head. "Is it wrong if I hoped he would ght it...just a little?"

"No sweetie," Ya-Ya joined her at the table and patted her hand. "You wanted acknowledgement, everyone does. There is nothing wrong with that."

Sarah hesitantly smiled.

"Mark my words...that boy will learn. He'll realize the mistakes he made in time. When he does you'll have a decision to make."

Sarah shook her head, "That won't happen, Ya-Ya. He never cared about me so he's not going to start now. Now he can marry the woman he really loves."

"People can surprise you," Ya-Ya said after a moment. "But in the mean time you'll have plenty to do. Here you are. I just nished it yesterday with Laveau's help."

She handed Sarah a key ring. Beads and polished rocks were strung and woven with a leather strap in a pattern of purple, red and green with an iridescent black feather at the bottom with gold beads. Aside from the style of beads and stones it was very similar to the one Sarah knew Ya-Ya gave to Aubrey.

"What's this for?" Sarah asked looking at her in confusion.

"It's for protection," Ya-Ya said as if it should be obvious. "For you and the baby."

"Ya-Ya, I'm not pregnant."

"You sure about that, honey?"

"How could I be? Luke and I were only..." Sarah hesitated but Ya-Ya already seemed aware.

"Once is more than enough, sweetie."

"But I..."

"Trust me, get yourself a test."

"Test for what?" Aubrey emerged carrying Jamie. She looked from one to the other then spied the charm. "Oh, my god. Sarah? Are you..."

"I don't know," Sarah wanted to deny it, insisting she couldn't be, but Ya-Ya's conviction was too great. Could it be true? What was she going to do? How was she going to raise a child on her own?

"Sarah, that's fantastic!" Aubrey exclaimed.

Sarah blinked looking at her. Was it?

"We can raise our babies together!" Aubrey gushed.

Oh. That's right.

She wasn't alone. How stupid could she be when she was right there with Aubrey and Ya-Ya? There was no doubt they would help. And she had Ruth and Tailor as well. What family could be more perfect than that? It was just like the crows. She had plenty of helpers.

"I should get a test done before we start planning, don't you think?"