

Chapter Two

Harrison's POV

'Cadell Security how may I help you?'

I grit my teeth as the sound of our overly enthusiastic and relatively new receptionist oats through to my oce.

It's been two years and I still wonder how the hell I got here. Two years ago, I was a Marine, Special Forces, serving my country, standing beside my brothers as we stepped into more volatile situations than I care to count.

My brother, our best friend and I would spend so much time talking about reaching seventeen, joining up and ghting to protect people that couldn't protect themselves.

Gage and Callan both chose the Army as their second home, but I had my heart set on the Marines and they couldn't persuade me to go with them when they went to enlist.

I walked into the recruitment oce the day of my seventeenth birthday and signed away four years of my life without a second thought.

I loved everything about being a Marine, so when Gage and Callen didn't re-enlist after their rst service, each of them returning from war with scars that couldn't be seen on the skin, they decided to join my father's private security rm.

I was happy to sign over a further four years of my life though, wanting to remain at the side of my brothers in arms, ght for what was right.

It seems that fate had other plans for me though, because only six months into my second term, my team and I were deployed on a rescue mission deep within an enemy territory.

The mission was supposed to be straight forward, a simple breach of a small militant group that had captured a reporter and were demanding weapons for her return.

We planned the mission in ne detail, knew the layout of their camp from surveillance and the ocers were sure it would be an easy extraction, sending only a six man team for the op. Things went sideways within minutes of our breach, the militants were no longer working alone, and the repower of the group that had taken over their little franchise was more than we could handle. All ve of my brothers were killed, the hostage was slaughtered on a live feed to our government, and I managed to crawl from the wreckage of the gun ght barely alive. I was evacuated from the hot zone, and got myself a year in a military hospital trying to remove the bullets that were embedded in my leg as everyone praised my bravery, then gruelling months of rehabilitation to get me walking again.

Once I could stand up, I was given a nice shiny medal, a rm handshake with a 'thanks for your service' before being unceremoniously shown the door with an honourable discharge.

Still walking with a prominent limp, reliant on a walking stick, and with nowhere to go, no support from the people I gave up over ve years of my life too, I ended up back on my dad's doorstep.

He welcomed me back, set me up in my old room that still held the posters of scantily clad girls draped over muscle cars and hired the best physiotherapy team he could nd to work on me.

Thankfully, I no longer need a walking stick to get around and only really suffer badly if I put too much pressure on my leg or overexert myself in the gym.

I instinctively rub my ngers over the scars that are hidden by my jeans. Fourteen months on and my left leg has so many scars I can't bear to look at it and never wear shorts even in the warmest of Maine weather.

'Mr Cadell?' comes our receptionist's voice uncertainly and I glance up to nd the brunette hovering in my door, biting her lip nervously.

Candy, Clara, whatever the hell her name is, has that deer caught in the headlights look, as though I'm about to rip her apart.

'What?' I growl in annoyance, the way she skitters around me annoys me, probably more than it should, but I hate how everyone seems nervous around me, like I'm f*cking fragile or something.

'I just wanted to ask what you wanted for lunch' Courtney or Ceecce mumbles fearfully. 'I'm just heading down to the bakery on Main to get everyone's order.'

'He'll have the smoked bacon and chicken with ranch on rye, Iris' my brother announces as he slides past her into my oce, giving her a wink as she giggles and quickly writes down the order before disappearing. Looking at the man, is like looking in a mirror, we're identical. Same piercing blue eyes we inherited from our father; same sandy brown hair that's kept cut short. Whilst we served, all three of us sported haircuts, shaved in the severe style of the Military, but once my brother returned home, he grew his hair longer, his body losing the strong denition of the harsh training we had to do, making it easy to tell us apart, but now I'm out again, I've allowed it to grow a little meaning only those who know us well can tell us apart now.

Many people are fooled by my twin's easy smile and laid-back attitude, but I know that underneath his façade, is a man that saw things which changed him, as did our friend Callan. Both use different techniques to cope with what they've seen, our best friend f*cks the nightmares from his mind with any willing body, Gage buries himself in the job, taking any contract he can to keep busy.

'Who said that's what I wanted?' I huff, grabbing some folders out of the top tray on my desk and starting to thumb through it.

Four years ago, I would have laughed if someone had said that I would end up behind a desk, dealing with paperwork, and bullsh*t people who thought themselves above everyone else. Unfortunately, with no idea what to do with myself and struggling to ingratiate my way back into the civilian world, my father's pushing for me to join his rm had worn me down. His arguments about my tactical skills being utilised for security events, and my brother's constant nagging about working together, just became harder and harder to turn down until I found myself behind this desk in a stuffy suit, wearing a f*cking tie that might as well be a noose for the way it constricts my neck. I was born for combat gear, a gun and stealth ops, not shadowing people with more money than sense and wiping the asses of stuck up rich kids who think we're their f*cking servants.

'That's what you always order' my twin retorts, reaching over my desk and stealing one of the mints from the little dish I keep beside me.

'You need to stop growling at the staff' Gage adds thoughtfully, 'Iris is a nice girl, and she works hard, stop trying to scare her away with your angry asshole routine.'

I snort, pulling out one of the les from the bundle in my hand and throwing the rest back in the tray. 'You're only being nice because you want between her legs' I retort scowling.

Gage gasps, pressing his hand to his chest as though I've seriously wounded him. 'I have not now, nor will I ever, dip my nib in the company ink' he scoffs. 'I don't even touch the clients, former or current! Everyone knows you don't mix business with pleasure little brother, f*****g the people who pay our wages or need us to pay theirs is always a bad idea.'

I laugh harshly, because my brother has never had any issue when it comes to bed companions, and he certainly didn't have a lot of morals as we grew up.

'Please, if a bombshell walked in here and asked to hire us, you'd be licking Dad's ball sack so he would assign you to her just for the chance to get her on her back.'

Gage pulls a face, 'rstly, never and I do mean never mention our father's ball sack and licking in the same sentence again' he groans, 'and secondly, I do not need to lick any part of our father to get the hot women assigned to me.' He winks, 'with you refusing to take any job that involves the female s*x, Callan and I just have to pick up the slack.'

My brother isn't wrong, since I started at the rm, I've always turned down any job that means I have to babysit the young daughters of high-powered men who seem to think that having a guard will somehow stop them from spreading their legs after a few tequila shots. Every one of those assholes thinks their female offspring are virtuous, innocent, naive girls. I can tell you, from the two jobs I did take at the beginning, they'd be damn wrong, and I will never babysit another college princess again.

My brother is still talking but I've zoned him out, concentrating on the information about an upcoming job that I will probably eld out to Callan.

Speaking of the man, the broad shouldered form of our best friend enters my oce and takes the other chair in front of my desk.

'You having a mother's meeting and not inviting me?' he leans back and makes himself comfortable through his dark brown hair as he leans back and makes himself comfortable.

'Do you not have work to do?' I grumble, not even looking up at our friend.

'Nope' the asshole replies with a sh*t eating grin, 'just cleared the last case off my desk this morning.'

'Good, here's a new one' I grouch, thrusting the folder toward him aggressively.

'Well since you asked me so nicely' Callan coos leaning forward to take the le, 'I'd be happy to take over this job for you, anything to help my friends.'

A rap on my door draws all our attention, the three of us turning as one to face my father, whose broad frame lls the door easily.

'My house, tonight, all of you' he orders abruptly, obviously expecting us to obey, as he always does, Henry Cadell doesn't ask anyone to do anything.

'Mr C! You're back' Callan calls out, waving at my father like the jackass he is. It's probably why he's our best friend, he was the only one who never showed fear when faced with our father. I think he actually managed to impress the old man when he convinced Gage to sneak out and steal Dad's car. They wrecked it before they even managed to reach the end of the block, but the old man just said he hadn't even heard them leave and asked them how she handled.

'Why do I employ you?' my father grumbles, eyeing Callan in exasperation.

'Because I'm the only person outside of these two that can deal with your sunny personality for more than a few minutes at a time' Callan requires.

'I have the Dallas party tonight' I growl, 'I need to be there, he's an important client.'

'Get Lincoln to run point instead, I need you all at the house, that's non negotiable' our father orders.

'What's up Daddy-o? Why the call back to the house?' Gage asks curiously.

He and Callan share a house on the other side of town, they usually come by on Sunday so dad's housekeeper can feed as even now, the old man insists on a family meal, them but other than that it's not often they get called to the house.

My father growls in frustration, 'I got married' he huffs, 'you need to get your asses to the house so you treat her with f*cking respect when she arrives.'

My mouth falls open, what the f*ck did he just say? A f*cking step mom?