

Epilogue

Rafael

Seven Thanksgivings later. . .

The kitchen is already clanging with activity by the time I wander downstairs for coffee. Jake, Elena, and my mother got in last night so they could get an early start on Thanksgiving dinner prep.

I've never understood why it takes all day to cook one meal, but my mother and sister seem to enjoy it. They've managed to recruit Alex to partake in the madness, and the three women are bustling around, sliding sideways and lifting plates overhead as they pass one another on the way to the oven.

Jake is stirring the cranberry salad with his four-month-old baby propped on his hip. Elena wanted to take a break from dance to start their family, and she's opened a nonprofit ballet academy that trains dancers with disabilities.

My youngest, Hugo, is careening around the kitchen with his Tonka truck, making loud truck sounds and occasionally bumping into someone's ankle.

"Whoa!" I boom, scooping him and the truck up off the floor before he can crash into Alex, who's carrying two pies. "Where do you think you're going, little man?"

"To the table for breakfast," my wife replies sternly, setting the pies down and turning to the stove, where she's making scrambled eggs.

I plop Hugo down beside the table, then swoop over to greet my mate. "Morning, kitten," I growl, wrapping my arms around her middle and planting a kiss on her neck.

"Morning," she sighs, leaning back against me and reaching up to run her fingers through my hair.

I take the spatula from her and flip the eggs, continuing to pepper her neck with kisses. "Did you sleep well?"

"About as well as anyone sleeps with two little monsters hopped up on sugar constantly visiting in the night."

I nod. I have a few hazy memories of carrying the kids back to their rooms last night after they came slinking into ours. "I'll have a chat with Mamá . . . tell Abuelita to lay off the cookies."

“I think that would be wise.”

“Where’s Mia?” I ask, glancing around.

“In your office,” Alex says with a sigh. “She absolutely refuses to come out until she’s met with you this morning.”

I chuckle and release my mate, plating the eggs with one hand and pecking her on the temple. “Wish me luck.”

Leaving the controlled chaos of the kitchen behind, I pad down the hallway to my home office and rap my knuckles on the door. I can’t remember a single time in my life when I knocked on the door to my own office, but nothing humbles you like becoming a parent.

“Come in,” trills Mia.

I open the door and poke my head inside just as my chair swivels around.

My six-year-old daughter is perched behind my enormous mahogany desk, looking as though she’s being swallowed whole by the huge leather executive chair. She’s dressed in a pink Frozen nightgown, and her dark hair is a tangled mess. She’s consulting with her two favorite stuffed cats, and she’s got the cord from my landline phone wrapped around her and the chair.

“Daddy! Finally. I’m on the phone with Beijing.” She gestures to the receiver propped on her shoulder, and her clipped tone is such a perfect imitation of Alex that it’s all I can do to withhold my snort.

Having a freelance journalist for a mother and a CEO for a father means she’s overheard way more business calls than any six-year-old should.

“I just came to tell you that breakfast is ready.”

Mia huffs and throws up a hand. “But it’s Thanksgiving!”

“Yeah, well . . . dinner isn’t going to be ready for quite a while. That’s why they invented breakfast and lunch.”

“How come I have to eat eggs?” she huffs. “Why can’t I have pie?”

“Because your mother made you eggs, and pie isn’t breakfast food.”

“Why not?”

“Because it’s got too much sugar.”

Mia seems to think about that for a moment, her little six-year-old brow scrunching up in the most adorable way. “Cocoa Pebbles are a breakfast food, and Mom says it has a ton of sugar.”

I have to hand it to the kid — her logic is sound. “That’s true . . .” I admit, choosing my words carefully so I don’t end up shooting myself in the foot. “But you can’t have pie.”

“Can I have Cocoa Pebbles?”

“Not today.”

“Why not?”

“Because your mother made eggs.”

Mia groans and throws her head toward the ceiling in exasperation.

“I’ll tell you what,” I say, sitting down on the edge of the desk. “If you go out there and eat the breakfast your mother cooked for you, you can have an extra-giant slice of pie for dessert tonight.”

“With snow cream?” she asks, her little brown eyes lighting up.

“Yes, with snow cream,” I say with a chuckle, my chest squeezing with love and pride. Mia is only in first grade, and the kid is already one hell of a negotiator.

“Okay!” she says, bounding up out of the chair in a way that tells me she’s totally satisfied with the outcome. She gets caught in the phone cord she wrapped around herself, and I hurry over to unwind it.

By the time we get back to the kitchen, Alex is busy corralling Hugo into the chair. Elena is already seated at the table, nursing her little one while eating pumpkin pie straight out of the tin. I shoot my sister a wide-eyed look, glancing pointedly at Mia, and she shoves the pie tin to the side, brushing a few crumbs off the baby.

Alex sets a sippy cup down in front of Hugo while squeezing ketchup onto his plate, her eyes glazing over in that busy way of hers that tells me she forgot something for the kids’ meal.

But before she can wander off in search of a fork or bib, I grab my mate around the waist and haul her into my lap. Alex giggles and pretends to fight it, but I can tell her heart’s not in it. It takes a minute, but then her body relaxes, and she nuzzles her nose against me.

“How did you get her to come out?” she murmurs, reaching up to run her fingers over the stubble along my jaw. “Last I heard, she was on a very important conference call with Beijing.”

I shrug. “I made her an offer she couldn’t refuse. We’ll be paying her off later in pie.”

Alex snorts, and I breathe in her delicious chocolate-and-caramel scent. With my mate’s perfect curves nestled against certain parts of my anatomy, it’s all I can do to keep things G-rated in front of my family.

It’s only been an hour since our drowsy lovemaking this morning, and already I’m imagining all the things I’m going to do once I finally get Alex alone.

“You know what I was thinking,” I whisper, bringing my mouth close to her ear.

“What?”

“I was thinking I could do the dishes tonight since you guys are doing all the cooking.”

“Ooh. Tell me more . . .” Alex purrs in an exaggerated seductive tone.

My heart beats faster at the images forming in my mind, and I glance down to the end of the table to check that my sister isn’t listening. Elena is busy burping the baby, and she doesn’t have incredible shifter hearing the way Jake and I do.

“I really want to make sure we get that kitchen island cleared off . . . in case we feel like reenacting our first Thanksgiving together.”

“Ahh,” Alex sighs, wriggling in my lap so her ass just barely teases my cock. “You know how I love a clean kitchen island.”

“Well, it won’t be clean for long,” I admit, stroking my thumb along the inside of her knee.

“Yes, well, a woman’s work is never done,” says Alex in a breezy, sarcastic tone.

“Work is definitely not what I had in mind,” I growl. “Unless you’d like to get going on baby number three . . .”

“Hmm . . .” Alex’s voice cracks with amusement as she leans in closer. “I don’t think we need to worry about that anymore.”

“And why is —” I break off, staring off into space as the realization hits me. I lean forward so I can see Alex’s face. She’s grinning like the Cheshire Cat.

My heart is racing. Fireworks are going off in my brain, but everyone else at the table is totally oblivious. “Wait, are you —”

Alex nods, pressing her lips together to keep that giddy smile from morphing into a giggle.

I open my mouth, but I’m completely speechless. All I can do is wrap my arms around my mate and squeeze her tight against me.

I don't have time to process the news before Jake and my mother join us at the table. Elena hands the baby off to her mate so she can scoot down on the bench and make room.

Hugo's place setting is already smeared with ketchup, so no one tries to get closer to him. Mia is chatting animatedly to the table at large about her idea for cat-sized dollhouses as she swings around a forkful of egg.

As I watch my two little monsters, my chest swells with such love and contentment that I feel as though it might explode. These two are my whole world. I'd make seven more of them if I could.

Looking around the table at my family, I've never been so happy in my entire life. I have the world's most incredible woman as my mate, two beautiful pups, and one on the way. I have more than any man deserves.



There are two types of people in Aspen — people with money and people with fuck-you money.

Can you guess which one I am?

I'm Garrett Von Horton — heir to the Von Horton oil fortune and alpha of the Burnt Mountain pack.

That's lose-nine-mil-in-a-poker-game kind of money.

Private-island-in-the-Bahamas money.

I've always been the king of controlled self-destruction, but when the cute new barista spills a cappuccino all over me, my life takes on a whole new meaning.

Ava is my undoing.

My salvation.

My mate.

My wolf is growling at me to claim her as my own, but Ava has other plans.

Four months later, I learn that she's pregnant with my pup. My mate is hell-bent on raising the baby all on her own, but I'll be damned if I let Ava slip through my fingers again.

Even if it means taking on my conniving siblings to fight for the woman I love.

Even if it means losing it all.

The Billionaire Alpha's Surprise Baby