

# Mel and Tia - A Special Valentine

By Sienna Mynx

*Sleep, I need more sleep.*

"I missed you. Damn baby I'm glad you're home." Mel's whisper is as soft as his touch. There are two things about my man that always keeps me yearning: his deep voice, and that woody scent of the exotic blooms he cares for embedded in his skin. Oh yes, and my hubby's arms. They're strong, hard as granite. When he touches me I melt. I swear no man before or after him could ever evoke the joy and passion I feel when I'm in his arms. Tonight while wrapped up tightly in his embrace I savor the comfort of being home.

"You tired baby?" There's a tinge of disappointment in his voice.

He knows the answer. Mel always knows how I'm feeling and what I need. Am I tired? It's more of a statement of our life now than a question of how I'm feeling. I told him I could do it all. Be his super woman and keep my career on track. Sometimes, when my job takes me away from the life we're building I have to wonder if it's even worth it. Because laying here with him now is where I find some of my greatest joy.

Mel caresses my hip, and his lips brush my shoulder. To be honest I'm really tired, and if Mel didn't welcome me home this way I don't know if I could sleep.

It's my first night home this week. I've missed him and my baby. Unexpectedly on Tuesday I learned that I needed to be in St. Louis for three days. Tomorrow's Valentine's Day and then comes our anniversary. Despite the shady weather I made it back just before dinner. I don't even want to think of being stranded at an airport away from my family. Mel hasn't complained at all about my leaving so close to our anniversary. Though at times I think he and Nicole barely notice when I'm gone. Oh yes! That's her name: Nicole Margene Reed. We named her after his baby brother Nikki. She's the sweetest, prettiest baby on the planet.

Work is different. I find it hard to focus. But I'm managing. I've only been back for just over two months. It's amazing how royally screwed up I found things at the office. I'm still doing damage control before the year-end budget rolls in and costs my division next year's bonuses. And I still love my job. I'm so lucky to have a guy who supports me either way. Speaking of which he's really amorous tonight and I am so tired. *Should I tell him?* When I yawn to give him a hint he presses his erection against my backside. I can feel his desire mounting. *Hmmm, I know what that means.*

"I'm okay, a little sleepy Mel. Nikki just went down. And this house was a disaster, what you did to my kitchen, oh never mind." I yawn again, this time genuine. He isn't a man easily discouraged. His legs shift under the covers and his right knee pushes under the crease of mine to split my legs apart as I lay on my side. His hand goes down my pelvis and cups my sex. His palm is hard and firm and it's warmth makes me wet with desire.

"What if she wakes again?" I plead.

"I got her, you know this, sorry about the kitchen babe. Fight with me later about it. Damn place can never stay clean." His words are coming faster, chopped and broken toward the end and I can tell he's turned on. But I'm not done with him yet. I touch his hand to stop his molestation.

“Margie wants to help, she says you told her no?” I look back over my shoulder at him and that hungry lustful stare that greets me in those sexy green irises of his makes me weak. I have to look away to maintain my train of thought. “You should take her to Margie during the day when you’re working.”

“No. Nikki stays with me. You know this.”

*Here we go again!* Mel works at the store with our daughter strapped to his chest. Now that’s she’s bigger he puts her in swings and walkers around his gardens. He even cleared out a room and converted it into a nursery. I have to agree with Margie it’s too much. Still it makes him happy so I told Margie to back off and let me talk to him. My big sister frets that our daughter should be under her care like all the children born into the Jackson family. It’s not going to happen on my husband’s watch.

“Tia, c’mon, turn over and let me love you.”

Mel can be a little rough at times when he’s anxious. Not intentionally, but when he gets like this he’s all man. I roll over to my back and part my thighs accepting his weight as he presses down on me. He already has my nightgown up around my waist.

“She’s just three months. She can be handful when you’re running things at the shop. Maybe you should at least take her to Margie for half of the day.” I say through a smile. His nostrils flare and his jaw tightens with forced restraint. Mel and I don’t argue often. But he gets so uptight when I try to remind him that our extended family can help us. Maybe this isn’t the time to discuss baby care. I’m killing the mood. “Forget it, let’s talk about it later.” I scoot back into the pillows and pull down the front of my gown. I expose my breasts to him and his gaze lowers. He groans. They are still quite full even after I stopped breast-feeding. A delicious quiver goes through my belly and weakens my thighs making me part them wider. My sex is now pressed up against his abdomen. Mel head goes low. He rolls his tongue over my exposed nipple and I’m gripping the sheets.

“Right. Talk later. Damn babe you smell good, let me taste.”

My breath shortens to strained gasps when he draws my sensitive nipple in between his teeth and then sucks it soft and slowly. My hand lifts to stroke the top of his head and I can see it trembling. Gosh he hasn’t even slipped in me and I’m trembling with need all over. Gently I push on the top of his head so he can really do what I desire. His gaze flickers up and locks with mine. Then he scoots in under the covers cupping the both halves of my butt cheeks.

My vagina is pressed into his face and his tongue does a long swipe that makes me cry out. I bite down on the inside of my jaw and force myself to be silent. His tongue parts the lips of my vagina and then captures my clitoris with a torturous long suck.

“Ugh! Yes. Yes sweetie.” I groan. He’s licking, sucking then thrusting his tongue in and out until my ass is bouncing on the mattress and I’m thrashing about like a mad woman. He pins me down with a hand pressed hard to my belly and forces me to release all the pressure building deep in my core. It’s like fireworks on the fourth of July. I come with a silent cry of ecstasy lodged in my throat and his mouth hungrily devouring every drop of my essence. Sure enough, a low rumbling growl escapes his throat as I release and capitulate fully.

“Lord have mercy!” I wheeze when his head lifts. I’m kicking my feet through the after shocks. He drops on me and his tongue pushes past my lips and thrusts against my tongue. His hands squeeze my ass as he lifts his hips ready to slam inside me. “Wait, stop, stop.” I’m panting

trying to slow him down. Our gazes lock. “Slow down Mel, I’m yours baby. I don’t want to rush things tonight.”

He licks his lips and nods that we can enjoy each other, all night since tomorrow is Saturday. To be honest our sex life has become a series of frequent drive-by’s. Nikki demands so much of our attention even when she sleeps we limit our time between her needs.

He looks at me. I look at him. I like it best when he stares at me like this.

“You miss me *Daddy?*” I ask with my mouth just centimeters from his.

“Mmm.”

“You feel so good Mel, I was so lonely for you in St. Louis.” I purr as his erection slips between the folds of my sex.

“Don’t tease me.” He flicks his tongue at my lips and tries to kiss me but I turn my head. With a light giggle bubbling in my throat I push on his chest and roll him over to get on top of him. He lies back with his arms going behind his head, a satisfied smile to his face. He needs a shave. I’ll make sure of it. Running my hands over his chest I’m grateful. My man keeps his body nice, firm, the way I like it. “Mama’s going to give you a reward for being such a good boy.”

“Mmm.” He moans. “Yeah, I’m feelin’ that.”

My hand closes around his semi-erect shaft giving it one long slow stroke. That’s all it takes for him to be ready. All it ever takes. He licks his lips and I lick mine. I love sucking him off, I’ve become really good at this over the years. My baby told me so. When I peek up at him before taking the plunge a noticeable shiver goes through him.

*Yes, he’s completely under my control.*

My head dips for a taste. I can’t help but run my tongue over the swollen mushroom top of his penis first. With my tongue flat at the V just under the rounded cap of his member my mouth slowly descends down. I’m only a third of the way before he’s hitting the back of my throat. Sucking, holding the base of his shaft, massaging and tugging at his scrotum I relax my tongue and jaw muscles further to take more of him in. It makes him crazy. *It makes me so damn crazy.* He’s so thick and hard I can only last minutes before my jaws give under the working strain. Lifting my head with his penis glistening with my saliva I can see his back arched from the bed. He’s ready.

Just as I move up him to get on top we both are greeted by the familiar sounds of Nicole’s sleepy cry through the monitor. Our daughter waits a beat then screams her frustration. My head drops to his pelvis and his back goes back down on the bed. The moment is lost.

“I’ll get her princess, give me a sec.” He wheezes.

“No. Mommy’s home, she knows it. I’ll get her.” I sigh, wiping at the corners of my mouth. I give one last look to his erect penis waving temptingly at me. “Can you...keep him ready for me?”

Mel smirked and winks. This means yes! Yay! I put on my robe and enter the dark hall. I’m quick to dart from our room to hers. I can’t begin to tell you how hard it was to get Nicole out of our bed into her own crib. Daddy was going through major withdrawal, up every hour on the hour to check on her. He amped up the security on the house as if someone would creep in while we slept and steal her away—I doubt anyone with half a brain would try.

“Hey sweetie, mama’s here.”

Nicole blinked those large round eyes up at me, tears slipping out the corners. Her bottom lip pokes out and I can tell she’s disappointed. That was a daddy cry we heard. Guess I was wrong. “Papa’s coming on the next round okay?”

Once she's in my arms I can feel us both relax. She fits so snugly, and smells so sweet (baby powder and lotion) I inhale her. Her little round head is smooth with wisps of curling hair. She has more of my color than I thought she would since she's a part of us both. But she has Daddy's smile and his temper. She screams in my face when I linger too long. Then my nose catches the whiff of something not so nice. Now where are her pampers? I place her on the changing table and click on the overhead light. Shadow starts to spin slowly for my little girl. It calms her immediately. She stares up at the dazzling display mesmerized then starts waving her chubby hands trying to catch the shadows.

"Ooooooh well lookie here...you saved it up for mommy huh? Wow, this is a big one. Daddy needs to lay off the peas." I chuckle. Nicole gives me a quizzical look. Changing her is easy, because she's mine. I was never really good at this. Plenty of chances to practice with my nieces and nephews, something I definitely avoided. But when it's your baby things are just so much clearer.

"Here." Mel says behind me as I fasten her pamper. He sets a bottle of formula next to my hand.

"I thought you were going to wait on me?" I pout, looking back at him.

"I got you baby, you know this." He says, slipping his arm around my waist to hold me. I can feel the pulse of his erection beating against my backside to emphasize the point. Lifting Nicole I give her a sweet kiss to her tiny mouth to which she releases a soft gurgle. "Did you miss mommy?"

She pokes out her lip again head moving around mine to peek at her daddy. There's my answer. Picking up the bottle and moving out of my husband's hold she's mine for the time being. We sit in the rocker, and I immediately offer the ultimate peacemaker. She latches on and her hands go up to grip the bottle and hold it.

"When did she start this?" I gasp.

Mel smiles, his chest expands with pride. "Let go of the bottle. She'll try to hold it."

I do and Nicole struggles to hold on to the bottle, which drops to her chest. But her hands never leave it. I guide the nipple back to her mouth.

"The other day I swear she was going to take it from me."

I shake my head smiling. Now I'm missing the little sweet moments. I did go through withdrawal when breastfeeding ended. That was hard for me. I loved the connection we shared. It was all us, and so natural. But with the return to work I moved her to formula. Mel is cleaning up behind us and I watch him while rocking our daughter.

"So tomorrow's Valentine's Day, you know we have to head out to Margie's early."

"I have to open the store for the boys in the morning and then it's all good babe."

"Huh? Why?"

He gives me some look I can't read it but it's clear he's hiding something. No way in hell he 'has' to open the store for them on Saturday. They can make their deliveries around him they do it all the time. Something's up." Well don't take too long. You know how Margie is. It's Sherry's anniversary and Kevin's here now so we got plenty to celebrate."

He smirks. "Has your man ever let you down?"

I hear the soft suction sounds of air. Our angel's fat jaws are pumping hard taking in gulps of air. "That was fast." I chuckle. "She's sleep."

Mel comes over and takes her from me to put her in the crib. I watch them together. He really is good at being the family man. Really good. I love the way he takes care of us. I love him.

“Come here.” he says and I do, I walk over to his side. He’s leaning on the crib with one arm, reaching to make sure she’s covered. He looks up at me his eyes glistening but clear. “I love you mama.”

“I love too daddy.”

“See this right here. Me, you and Nicole, this is our family, you got your man so damn happy he has to keep checking himself to believe it. I want you to trust me. Just like I trust you to manage things with this career of yours that takes you from us...”

“Mel...”

“I’m not complaining baby. I’m just saying I want you to stop thinking you need to manage things with me and Nicole. I don’t want to take her to Margie’s. I love being a full time dad, and I can do it. Feel me?”

I stroke the back of his head. “Yes sweetheart. Margie just wants to help. It’s totally up to you. I just wanted to make sure you two are okay when I’m not here. Can’t blame me for worrying.”

“I can never blame you babe. And I love Margie, but Nikki’s mine. Tell her to back off.”

I almost chuckle. I don’t, because I know he’s serious. They think I exaggerate about Mel’s attachment to our daughter. They have no idea. “Yes sir.”

Mel visibly relaxes. His territory is clearly marked. “You up for some surprises this anniversary, Princess?” He towers over me bare-chested in his stripped pajama pants. I look at his chest and then up at him and nod with a small smirk.

“I’m up for whatever you got baby.” Smiling my arms go around his neck.

*I hope so. I want her to know how proud I am of her.* Tia is so damn beautiful now. Her hair is longer, just past her shoulders. And she’s softer now too. I can’t keep my hands off her. Even when she’s sleep I’m rubbing her ass, her thighs, her breasts. My dick was hard for three days in bed alone missing her. Strange but every married man I talked too said this would ease. My burning desire to have my woman with me all the time. With Tia it just keeps getting worse. I’m trying to be patient, but I wished she would have just let me fuck her and get it out my system then we can talk, cuddle, or make love. But it’s not easy for a man to say this and not come off looking like an ass. So I’m chilling. But damn it’s hard.

Our anniversary is Sunday. I’m not good at gifting, hell, but Princess is, she wants every damn thing to have meaning. Always. I’ve been beating myself up for weeks trying to find the meaningful present. Its lame of me to think that anything store bought could make her as happy as she’s made me, but what’s a man to do to express his heart.

She starts kissing me under the neck and talking about taking care of me now that she’s home. *Fuck this shit.* I’m losing my cool all over again. Baby knows better than to tease her man. Taking her by the arms I lift her throw her over my left shoulder. She gasps, but stops herself short of squealing to keep from waking Nicole. Kicking her feet in protest and hitting my back she’s carried by me from our daughter’s room to ours where she belongs, back in bed with me. Three days? Fuck that. That was three days too many. I told her I can deal, yea I can deal—work

is work, but that travelling shit has to stop. Throwing her on the bed she laughs. I love her laugh. Always been a sucker for it. And she's been doing it so much more now. We both have.

My landing on the bed next to her has her laughing loudly, which I quiet through a mouth watering kiss I've wanted since she walked her fine self in the door in that grey suit and fuck-me-Mel-on-the-countertops-pumps. Princess has the sexiest feet on the street. I love it when my wife is all dolled up in her professional gear. Gets me horny quick, add to that she's got more curves since the baby. Thicker hips, a rounder ass, even a little pouch she cries and bemoans about. I'm digging it all. I've always been a man who appreciates an extra helping of sexy.

"Mel, we have to be quiet...we'll wake up Nikki." She warns, as I unwrap this lush bod of hers. She knows me. I might bring the roof down tonight I want to be inside of her so bad.

"Compromise?" I give her a wicked smile. She knows what that means. I'll be quiet if she lets me get it from the back, front, sides until I'm done. No quickie's tonight. She stares at me for a second then smiles, then turns over and grips the top of the bed, placing her face in the pillow to stifle the cries. Good move. Perfect move. Princess knows the game, she knows it well. Running my hands up the sides of her thighs she bends her knees and lifts her ass for me. This man goes weak over this position. With skin so smooth and the pillows of her ass soft and supple I can't wait to get inside of her wet heat. So I'm on my knees, with my dick in my hand and my chest is so damn tight I have to remind myself to breathe. Believe it or not princess has been so busy the past week and half I haven't gotten my dose. Work should be outlawed in my house. This here is what I need, on the regular.

*Yeah, she's ready.* I rub my cockhead against her tight hole and resist the urge to dip my tongue in it instead. One thrust gets me halfway in, immediately she works her ass drawing me the rest of the way—an easy glide.

*Aww baby I love it when we're like this...*

My lids lower then shut. I'm biting own on the inside of my jaw to the sweet delicious way her pussy clamps with gentle squeezes. My thrusts at first methodical to ease both our suffering grow intense and more precise as I stroke it, work it, pump my hips with all might. Got a man balls swinging, hitting the thick lips of her pussy, and I'm lost. So fucking lost. Loving this woman as I do this here is a timeless dance that'll I never tire of.

Over and over I'm working it from all sides, sinking in wet tightness. Her pussy is combusting with heat that damn near gives me body seizures. She shows no mercy. She's rolling her ass in perfect synch with my thrusting rhythm. She lifts her head and looks back at me with those sexy lips and smile and she breaks me down. Pulling out I can't stand it. She flips to her back, panting, open for me, when I drop down on her I ease back in and she's mine. My hands go to hers raising them above her head, our fingers intertwining. She kisses me. It's soft and sweet despite the manic way I'm beating my pussy. I've lost all my cool, fuck she's all in my head now, blowing my mind, my senses, my control. I have no reason to fuck her so desperately, only love her, and love her for as long as I can because she's mine. Slowing down, thrusting in and out of her I want to cum, she's moving that sweet body beneath me and I'm almost there. I can feel the tremors between her thighs. I know baby is there with me, as she should be. Yeah, I got this. I reclaim control and hit that spot, stroke this pussy until she's gasping and arching up rubbing those thick hard nipples across my sweaty chest. My strikes are purposeful, my mouth possessive, and soon we're knocking the bed against the wall. It comes fast for us both. With my eyes shut

tight I have to bury my face deep in the crook of her neck to withstand. She stiffens under me, shakes, purrs and I'm done.

"Damn baby."

She giggles running her hand over my ass. "You like that huh?"

"You know I do." When I look up she's smiling at me, but her breathing is just as shallow as mine. I kiss her nose. "You know what I like most?"

"What?" she sighs closing her eyes. "Tell me Mel, what do you like the most?"

"You don't get your period anymore, now I can get it every day."

*What did he say?*

I blink up at him and he grins easing off to roll over to his back. My period? Why the hell wasn't I checking for my period? I just...I didn't think about it. After Nicole I bled a little, but I got cut, I had stitches so that was expected. It took so long for my va-jay-jay to heal I didn't think. Damn it. Then last month I spotted for two days. So that counts for a period. Where's my period?

When I look over the man's sleep. Reaching for the phone I grab it and hurry into the bathroom. I can feel his seed seeping out of me. Dialing fast I'm looking at myself in the mirror and I swear my heart is beating outside of my chest.

"Hello?"

"Margie!"

"Tia what the hell..."

"My period. It's not been coming on like it should. When was I supposed to get it?"

"Huh?"

"My period damn it! When does your body stabilize and starts coming on regularly?"

"What the hell is wrong with you calling me at two in the morning about your period..."

"Margie answer me!"

"Go to bed! We'll talk in the morning."

She hangs up on me. Damn it. Holy crap. Please...please God, I wasn't thinking but please...

## **Valentine Day**

I can hear Nicole in the living room crying and giggling, trying to decide on which. She's in her walker, but it's nothing but a chair for her. Her fat legs barely drop low enough for her feet to touch the floor. When I return with her bottle I hear the door slam to a car and I know it's my sister. I'm at the door opening it before Pam can knock.

"You got it?"

"Girl I had to drive all the way to Cleveland street to find a store that..."

Snatching the bag from her hand I run up the stairs. "Nikki is in her walker get her and bring her upstairs."

My sister is left with her mouth open to complain. Mel's off on his little secret mission and I'm about to lose my damn mind. I called Margie this morning but of course she has no time for my drama, getting ready for Valentine's reservations and catering at the restaurant and our own family dinner. I called Alicia and she laughed so hard she hung up the phone accidently. I called

Sherry and I think she and Kevin were in the middle of their anniversary celebration. All I got from her was soft sighs and ‘mmhmm’s’. It’s Pam that saves the day. Thank God for her.

“Tia? Tia?”

“In here.”

Unzipping my pants, grapping the band of my panties I’m pulling them down so fast I tumble back and sit on the toilet. I haven’t peed since she called and said she would pick it up for me. I’m damn near about to explode down there. I stick the wand between my legs and try to take aim at the little tab. Pam is at the door watching me with Nicole. Both of them wearing curious frowns, one thing about Jackson’s girls we all have our father’s eyes. Even my baby has her grandfather’s eyes. She’s so beautiful. *But another kid? Now? Oh hell no!*

“How long does the box say?” I nod at it sitting on the edge of the sink.

Pam picks it up. “It says wait five minutes and...”

“Shit!”

“What?” Pam says.

I barely lift the wand from between my legs before I see two lines. TWO LINES! I’m pregnant. I can’t be. I just had a baby. This has to be some grand cosmic joke. It’s not possible.

“What does it say?”

I turn the wand around for her. Pam smiles. “Well lookie there Nikki, mama going to have another baby.”

“Shit!” Dropping my head back I want to cry. “This can’t be right. I mean it wasn’t even a minute and it popped up. The thing is defective. I need another one.”

“Tia.”

“NO!”

“Tia!”

“Pam I can’t have another baby, I just had one. Who gets pregnant again? That fast?”

“Girl do you pay attention. Didn’t I tell you to get on the pill first thing! Didn’t I? You’re fertile Tee.”

“No! Call Margie. This isn’t right she will know what to do.”

Pam sighed and walked out. Throwing the EPT wand into the sink. I want to cry. Hell I think I am crying. I love Mel, I do, and lord knows I love little Nikki. She’s my everything, my angel, but I don’t want to go through it all over again. It’s too fast, too soon. I thought maybe in two years, maybe three. Oh God help me!

“Tia, Margie’s on the phone.”

Rising I wipe, flush, draw up my panties and pants then wash my hands. Pam has Nicole on the bed talking gibberish. My daughter laughs rolling to her side. Pam looks up at me grinning. Well she would grin. My sister loves making babies. Thinks it brings her closer to God. She passes me the phone. “It’s okay girl. Get them both out of the way and then you’re done. Look at it that way.”

Nicole laughs out loud then sucks her fist.

“Hey.”

“What is this emergency Pam’s talking about? You know I got to cook all this damn food, and Chuckie is going to make me pop him one. I can’t even look at him right now. And to top it all off that man put my roast back in the freezer last night. Got drunk and confused saying he thought it would spoil. Who does that! I swear if...”

"I'm pregnant."

Margie stops a beat.

"Come again?"

"That's what I was telling you. I hadn't had a period. Pam just brought over a test. Margie what am I going to do?"

"Have a baby."

"You know what I mean! I just got back to work. I can't have this baby! I got clients that I'm barely getting under control. It's the wrong time. It's not fair!"

"Then you and Mel need to stop humping like rabbits." Margie chuckles.

"I'm serious! I can't have another kid now! I won't!"

"You talking crazy. Of course you gone have the baby. Get dressed and get over here. We'll talk when you get here."

I hang up. She's no help. Damn it no one is. Not now. I've screwed up royally. I look over to the bed. To my daughter and my sister, babies...family that's my life. I signed on for this. Right?

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Princess is giving me the silent treatment. Maybe she's pissed about me dipping out this morning. It's not my fault. The engraving took longer than I thought. Sipping my beer, I can see her in the kitchen. She's sitting there staring down into the wine she hasn't touched while her sister's run their mouths at once, taking things in and out of the oven. Might as well get it over with so she can give up the 'tude and we can enjoy the day.

"Where you going bro?" Chuckie asked.

"Check on Tia."

"Let me holla at you for a sec." Chuckie says. Jackson is sitting in his chair with Nicole, rocking her. She went to sleep. Other than me Jackson is the only other man in the family she gets calm with. That's my girl. I rise and look once more in at Tia. Her head lifts. She looks at me, and then cuts her eyes away. Yeah I need to pull her aside and get to the bottom of the issue before it spills over into our anniversary. Chuckie walks ahead of me toward the garage. When I finally join he's pacing. Never good when my man is pacing. "Sup Chuck?"

"Margie's going to kill me."

"What else is up?" I chuckle, drinking my beer. Chuckie cuts me a look. There's no doubt, my man is stressing. Lowering the beer I can't ignore the pain in his eyes. "Okay talk to me. What's going down?"

"My marriage! Didn't you hear me? I was up all night trying to figure this shit out and I can't. She's going to kill me. Fuck. I really fucked up."

"Slow down, talk to me."

Chuckie heaves a burdened sigh. He walks over and hands me something. A piece of paper damp from his palm sweat. And his face is pale. Hard to see a black man go pale, but Chuckie looks like he's going to be sick. Setting the beer down on the worktable next to Jackson tools I unfold it. "What's this?"

"I wanted to do something righteous man, she works so hard. I thought I'd invest and we'd make a come up. My boy had a solid thing. It was solid. I invested only because it was a sure thing."

"Eighty G's? Are you fucking nuts?" I shout.

"It's gone partner. Every dime, all the money Margie and I put away for the kids. All of it. Fuck...shit man...fuck." Big Chuck drops on the car. He puts his hand to his eyes. "Man I don't want no fucking divorce. I aint getting no fucking divorce!"

"Margie isn't going to divorce you. Murder you... yeah it'll be homicide."

"Thanks a lot."

"Chuck, man this shit is crazy. How you get caught up in a scam like this?"

Chuckie nostrils flare his face flushes with anger and I swear my man bulks around the shoulders and chest. Yeah, he's fearless. There isn't a dude standing that he'll take shit from, but when it comes to his wife it's a different story. Hell I think he might drop tears on me. "Tell you what, let me get Tia on it. She's pretty smart. Got all those legal friends, maybe she can find a way to get the money back."

"She'll tell Margie."

"No, you tell Margie, and you tell her quick. Don't sit on shit like this. It's worse than the truth."

Chuckie slaps himself upside the head and growls deep in his throat. "My baby is going to lose it. Fuck it, I'll tell her after Valentine's day. But I aint getting no damn divorce, I'll just have to find a way to get us out of this."

I can't say I blame him. Margie's so unpredictable he needs to be ready for the fall out. And yeah, this here is going to go down bad.

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"Okay. Just calm down." Margie grins at me.

I have to look away from her. Calm down? I wish. I can't stop pacing. When I look up Pam's grinning only makes my stomach hurt worse. Sherry is barely listening texting on her phone and Alicia face is twisted in knots because Margie told her to shut up.

"I'm pregnant. Jesus, Joseph, Mary, to even say it aloud makes me want to scream."

"Don't blaspheme, Jesus aint got nothing to do with this so leave him out." Pam snorts.

"Oh that's right. She can't call on him but you can every time you run up in here carrying another one of Clarence's spawn. Then we all got to hold hands and give thanks to the Lord!" Alicia rose from the bed. "You messed up Tia. And there are ways to fix it. Options."

"Hey! That's enough!" Margie claps her hands together.

Alicia whirls on their older sister with her hands to her hips. "What? She has options. We all know she does."

"Alicia is right she can have an abortion if she wants." Sherry chimed in.

Margie shot up from her chair. "That's enough. She aint killing no baby of mine and let me tell you two something if I ever hear that either of you even think of it."

"Would you all stop it!" I yell over them. "I wouldn't do that to Mel."

"It's not even a baby yet." Alicia shrugs.

"You the devil!" Pam shouts.

"Stop it!" Margie is staring at me hard, they all are. Truth is I could never do that. Still I'd be lying if I didn't say I want a way to roll the hand of time back. Fix it. "I'm having a baby." I sigh.

Margie laughs. "Damn right you are. Come here." She walks over and hugs me. Eventually I'm hugging her back. Margie kisses my cheek. "Look at it this way, if it's a boy, you done. They'll

be close enough in age you don't have to be running around here wiping asses when you're old and grey like me."

"You crazy." Alicia says. "She could barely get through her pregnancy with Nikki without driving us all nuts. Now we got to go through this all over again?"

Sherry shrugs and comes over and hugs me. "Well you aint the only one. I was going to tell Kevin tonight. I'm pregnant too."

"WHAT?" Everyone says in unison.

Sherry nods. "Yep, got pregnant yesterday."

"Wait...hold up? What the hell do you mean you got pregnant yesterday?" Alicia asks.

Sherry looks from one sister to the next and smiles. "I can tell. I did it on purpose. I know my body."

"Baby-girl you skipped a couple of health classes when you was getting all those degrees huh?" Margie says.

We all laugh but Sherry doesn't. "I did it to get him to marry me, I did it again, maybe he'll get out of the service this time. Obama is sending everyone home. He has the option."

Our laughter dies down. We all look at her. Sherry's pregnancy with KJ was an accident or so we thought. Her confession strikes us all hard. Sherry puts her hand to her eyes. "I thought if we got pregnant and married he'd get out. I'm scared. He talking crazy about joining some special forces. I can't do this anymore. It's too damn hard. He has me and KJ and we should be his priority, not the damn military."

I'm the first at her side. Sitting on the bed next to her I pull her into my arms. Margie looks away. At a loss for words. So is Pam. Even Alicia mouth opens then closes. So I guess it's on me. Making babies to keep your husband is the oldest trick in the book. And certain to fail, I just thought she knew better. "Hey, Kevin loves you. You didn't have to make a baby to do that."

"You don't understand Tia. You got Mel worshipping you and he's here. My man is gone. He's raising his son on skype."

"You knew that before you walked down the aisle. Kevin is a lifer. We all see it." Alicia tossed out.

"He was getting out. I wanted to get married. He wanted to wait until we were more settled. So I got pregnant. And he re-enlisted. Who does that!" Sherry began hyperventilating. I rub her back. My little sister was the master manipulator. Always have been, and we tolerated it. This time it backfired.

"He says it's hard to be gone, he said he misses us...so..."

"So you think you get pregnant he'll just up and leave the service?" Margie asks. "He re-enlisted Sherry, he has no choice but to serve. Baby-girl what are you thinking?"

"I don't know." She cries.

Alicia and Pam just shake their heads. "It's okay," Is all I can say. "Look its your anniversary, and Kevin's home on temporary leave, everybody's here. Let's enjoy it. Okay?" I look to my sisters who all look on worried. "We'll figure it out for Sherry after today. Together, like we always do."

To this they all seem to relax and agree.

"Good lord what's with the women in this family?" Alicia rolls her eyes.

Margie hugs Sherry grinning. "It's okay sweetie, you need to get out there and enjoy your time with your man. We all do. I'm even giving Chuckie a little reprieve."

"Why are you being so mean to him?" Pam asked.

“Teaching him a lesson about messing with our accounts. He thinks he lost something. You’ll understand baby when you get a little more time in the married game. Sometimes you got to let a man be a man but keep his ass on a short leash.”

“That makes no sense.” Alicia says.

“Yeah, what did Chuckie do?” Sherry asks, wiping at her eyes.

“Never mind that, let’s get dinner out and ready.” Margie says walking out. We all exchange looks and follow. Margie never makes sense, yet her rules always seem too.

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Princess loosened up at dinner. She even got into it when the family started teasing each other, like we did at most dinners. The Jackson family finds a reason to celebrate no matter what the holiday. Traditions. Since moms and pops went I’ve been missing that. Still can’t get over how good life is despite it all. My gaze lifts to the rearview mirror. Our angel is tucked safely in her car seat. It’s turned away from us but I got a little mirror above it so I can see her. She’s awake. Eyes wide open as she sucks on that pacifier. *Damn can she get any cuter?* My big princess riding next to me is staring straight ahead. She’s quiet again. “You okay babe?”

She smiles and nods. I reach over and she takes my hand resting it on her thigh, where I like to keep it. “I got to tell you my man Chuckie is in trouble. We might need to help him.”

“That pyramid scheme he sunk their money in?” she asked.

My brow lifts. We coast on the highway. Now I’m more than curious. “How do you know?”

“Margie knows everything. She’s torturing him. She found out about the withdrawal he made the day after he did it. She went down to that bank and raised so much hell she was able to, tracked down Henry. She forced him to give the money back. Threatened him to bottom Chuckie out, so she says, whatever that means. Anyways she got the money back. But she has Henry making Chuckie believe he lost it all.”

“Huh?”

“Margie, is Margie. It’s crazy. Chuckie should know he couldn’t keep that from her.”

“Damn, Chuck is really twisting on this one. It’s cruel to let my man flip out for this long.”

Tia smirked. “That’s Margie and Chuckie, you just got to let it go. Let it run its course. I bet he’s all freaked out thinking he’s getting a divorce.” Tia shakes her head smiling. “You’ll get used to the drama Mel.”

“Nah, I’ll never get used to that. I’m just glad it’s not us. I don’t like secrets, games, sneaky shit. None of it. I don’t give a damn how bad or scary the truth is I want it. All of it.”

Tia goes silent. My lady isn’t like that. It’s one of the reasons I dig her. She never holds back on her man. Well she did once, but I doubt that will ever happen again.

“I want you to open your anniversary gift tonight.”

“What? Why?” she asks.

“Why not? Nicole’s awake. She slept mostly in Jackson arms. And I can’t wait to give you your gift. Hell it’s close to midnight.”

“But what about our plans for tomorrow?”

“I was thinking if we keep her up tonight, we can sleep in.” I give her a sideways look. She laughs.

“It’s your libido that keeps getting me in trouble.” She says under her breath.

“Trouble? What kind of trouble?” I ask as we pull into the driveway.

Tia looks away. "Fine let's open presents. I'm game."

Something in her tone sounds a bit distant. "What's bugging you." I stop her from opening her door. She gives me a shocked look of denial. "I'm not stupid babe. You've been sulking all night. What is it? What aren't you telling me?"

Tia looks down. "I don't want to talk about it right now. I just need a minute to get my head right. Okay."

What do I say to that? She's unhappy and that always makes me worry. But sometimes I have to let things run their course with Tia. She'll talk to me when she's ready. I think it's a good idea to give her, her present. It might relax her. "Fine babe. We can talk about it later."

I hop out my ride. As soon as I reach for little Nikki my baby girl starts to grin. She's ready for our anniversary too. Awe, this is what it's all about. Being a dad, a husband, so many young and old bloods get it wrong. This is who I am, what I am, and I know it's right. Tia beats us to the door. She holds it open for me, with the baby bag on her shoulder. We kiss before I carry my little princess inside. It all goes down in the entertainment room. We had a great Christmas and a long night of love making on New Years Eve. Nicole slept through it all. Now it's Valentines Day and I'm feeling good. Tia smiles and I see she's feeling it too. "Mommy ready for her present?"

She takes Nikki from me and nods. Nicole whines in protest. "Let me change her," Tia turns on her heels before I can stop her. When she's gone, I remove the keys from my jean pocket and rush back out to the truck. I only have minutes to set up.

"We have a surprise for daddy don't we?"

Nicole grins as I change her. I then slip on her 'I love daddy' onesie. All day I've been moping about this pregnancy and I feel really guilty. This news is going to make my husband so happy. If he thinks it's not the same for me it'll crush him. I really do have a lot to be grateful for. I kick off my shoes and walk into my room. In the top drawer is where I tucked away the little box I wrapped earlier for him. My life keeps throwing me surprises. To have planned out every detail of my life prior to meeting Mel, to now, rolling with marriage and what it brings, I'm not sure how I feel. It's scary, exciting, and always different. This pregnancy shouldn't be that big of a surprise. It's not like I did anything to prevent it. It's as unexpected as the first but still I can't help but feel the magic of it all. We'll figure it out. Right now I want to give my sweet guy the anniversary gift he didn't know he wanted. He's going to be a dad, again.

Below I can hear him. Doors opening and closing, soft curses, what is he doing? Nicole drops her head on my shoulder as we walk down the stairs. The closer we get the more excited I am. She lifts her head at the sound of her daddy's voice. "You ready?" I whisper to my daughter. "Ready to tell daddy?"

She pulls my hair. I take that as a yes.

"Surprise! I didn't have a chance to wrap it."

"What on earth?"

He grins looking down proudly.

"Golf clubs?"

"A new set, monogrammed clubs, see...." He pulls out a club. "I heard you on the phone mentioning you need to get back on the course, it's where those deals are made. Right? Me

keeping you locked up you've been out of that circuit, those haughty friends of yours, right, lady executive. I'm thinking maybe I'll learn too. Not to crowd you, you do your thing, but maybe I can try."

I'm standing there shocked.

Mel smile fades. "Do you like it babe? I thought... shit, I only wanted."

I burst into tears.

Mel rushes me and Nicole looks up at me confused. "Hey? Sweetheart? What is it? Don't cry."

I can't stop. He hugs me and I hug him. "I feel so bad. I can be such an idiot. You did this for me. I love it."

"Then why are you crying?" he asked alarmed.

"Because I'm happy."

Mel frowns. He takes our daughter. I wipe my tears and force a smile. It's true. I am happy and sometimes I forget the reasons why. "It's so sweet of you Mel. I do miss golfing. I can't believe you paid attention."

"I always pay attention to you Princess. That's not all. Open it." He points to a wrapped gift on the coffee table. I walk over and sit down to the present waiting for me. I place his on the seat next to me. "You sure you want to do this now?"

"Open it."

Nicole bucks in his arms as I rip into the shiny paper. Just as I thought. Laughing I hand her some and she crumbles it in her hands. Mel keeps it out off her mouth. I love gifts, but my eyes keep going to the clubs and I see how much love he has for me. He listens. I was talking junk about not playing, and missing tennis. Things I know he doesn't do. He truly does listen and care.

He's trying to encourage me to get back into work and it's all been turned upside down. Lifting the box cover then peeling away the tissue paper my breath catches and my heart expands. There's nothing but more love looking up at me. A silver framed black and white photo of him and Nicole. He's not wearing a shirt and Nicole is naked as a jaybird. The photographer has them against a black background. Our daughter sleep in his arms, it's beautiful. "Oh my gosh...this..."

"For your office, so we're with you."

"Mel?"

"Say you like it baby."

"I do." Wiping at my tears I can barely say anything. He comes over to my side and kisses me, a soft sweet, kiss that completes me. He completes me. "It's your turn." I reach to my side and pick up his gift. He looks at the present and nods. He reaches for it while I take the baby. Then he shakes the box that rattles. "Let me guess. A watch?"

I just smile.

He peels off the paper, talking to Nicole, giving her some of the papers edge to rip. My baby does her best, but leans out of my lap to drop her mouth on it to see if it passes the taste test. We both laugh. Mel rolls off the last of the paper and lifts the lid. His smile soon fades, his brows dent in confusion.

"Happy anniversary Daddy..."

He picks up the wand and reads the stick. He's too silent. Then he looks over to me and I can see him clearly.

"Yeah I was surprised too."

"This is a good thing?" he asks and I hear the worry in his voice. Have I really been that way? He thinks that golf clubs and that funky office of corporate climbers is the dream. Maybe I have. I will admit to not jumping up and clicking my heels when I saw it. But with Nicole in my arms, and him at my side I feel nothing but love. Now we got the promise of more. No games, no pretense, I am the lucky Jackson sister, this here is real and it's all mine.

"It's the best thing..." I lean over and kiss him. The shock soon wears off. He grabs my face kissing me back, longer and stronger. His tongue taking deep dives that has me catching my breath. When he releases me he's grinning so bright I want to kiss him again.

Nicole reaches for him. He takes her smiling and she opens her mouth covering his with her on messy kiss. Mel laughs. I shake my head. "Already competing with mommy huh?"

She snuggles him. Reaching down for my photo it's beautiful. I can't be any happier.

"You happy?" I ask him rubbing the smooth surface of the picture.

"Babe...you have no idea!"