
Chapter 1

Rowena

"**R**o?" She ignored the softly spoken name. There was no time to stop and chat; there was work to be done. Hard labor, intensive work, the kind of work that kept you distracted from all your troubles.

Rowena shook her head. No, she wasn't going down that path again. It had taken her an hour to quit crying and then another hour to stop the hiccupping sobs. She was not going to start again. She was done crying.

Instead, she swung the sledge hammer, widening the hole she had already started. Knocking the shiplap to the ground and creating a small plume of dust, she got three more swings in before her sister started talking.

"Rowena, your husband is only twenty minutes behind us, and if you want us to be able to run interference before he starts paddling your ass, I suggest you start talking to us." Teagan definitely didn't sugar coat. Shaking her head, she continued, "You're wearing a fucking skirt and flip flops. You

know how Jay reacted when Evie worked in her heels here a couple weeks ago. O is going to be pissed that you're wearing those dollar store shoes in here as they offer absolutely no protection. A rogue staple, let alone a nail, and you're going to need stitches. We all know how our men feel about safety, so I'm just trying to keep you from getting a second ass beating on top of the one I'm sure you have already earned. Seriously, put down the sledge hammer and tell us what is going on."

Her breath coming in pants, Ro ignored the scolding sister in favor of the silent one. "You're going to get wrinkles if you keep looking at me like that, Fancy."

"That's what you have to say to us? We've been looking for you for hours, and we were all worried sick." Evelyn explained, her expression changing from one of worry to one of anger. "We called. Why the hell didn't you answer your phone?"

With the hammer, Ro pointed to the shattered device on the other side of the room. The screen was splintered into a million little shards. "It broke when I threw it across the room. Didn't think my husband would much like me getting a shard of glass in my finger trying to answer his calls."

"You threw your phone so hard against the wall that it shattered?" Teagan took hold of the other end of the hammer, gently taking it from her, concern laced in her tone when she spoke again. "Talk to us, Ro. What the fuck happened?"

A bitter laugh bubbled up from her belly. Speaking between her bouts of laughter, Ro explained, "You want to know what happened? The mother we met a couple months ago and had been meeting with every two weeks since she *chose* us, has decided to keep the baby." The laughter grew harsher. "Want to know why? Because her boyfriend came back. Her strung out boyfriend came back. The same one who sent her to the hospital three months ago after shoving her down the stairs. The same one who punched her so hard, he broke her

eye socket. They're going to raise the baby together." How her sob didn't physically tear her in half, she wasn't sure, but in a second, her manic laughter turned to hysterical crying. "They're going to raise my baby in that environment."

As she collapsed to the floor, Ro folded in on herself, hugging her knees to her chest. "I can't give him a baby, and now I have to tell him that the one we had already started to love and cherish is being torn from our lives before we even get a chance to be his parents."

In an instant, her sisters had her wrapped in their arms, each of them joining her on the floor.

"Oh, Ro. I'm so sorry," Evie stated as she started rocking their little huddle.

Ro's words were broken up by the sobs. "I knew better than to get excited. They warned us. Of course, I did it anyway."

Teagan scoffed, "Of course you're going to get excited. You've wanted to be a mom for a long time and you thought it was finally going to happen. No one blames you for getting excited or for hoping, Ro. You love fast and fierce, and we love that about you."

The three of them sat in silence for a few minutes before the sound of a car door sounded from the front of the house.

"Ew! Did you just wipe your nose on me?" Evelyn's arms stiffened as she pulled away from her sister.

"No. Good God, even *I* wouldn't do that. It was just my damp cheek." Ro pulled her arm free to wipe at her eyes as heavy foot falls sounded, announcing O's presence on the porch. "He's mad."

"No, he's worried," Tea reassured her.

"He must have broken every speed limit between the office and here," Evie mumbled as the door swung open.

"Rowena!"

"Don't bellow; we're all right here, bear." Ro tried to

extract herself from the mess of limbs surrounding her, but neither woman was in a hurry to release her. "Guys?"

"Not until we know he isn't going to spank you until *after* he talks to you," Tea stated as she rose to her feet to square off with the big former Navy SEAL. "Octavius, listen, she was upset and needed time to process everything."

"Teagan Ann, I suggest you let me get to my wife." O's voice couldn't be described as anything other than a growl.

"Not until I know you'll hear her out." Teagan crossed her arms over her chest.

"Tea." Rowena pulled on her sister's arm.

"Teagan. How long have you known us?" When O's question was met with silence, he continued. "Do you really think I would do anything without talking to her first?"

Teagan's arms fell to her side. "No."

"Then, *please*, move so I can get to my wife." As soon as Tea stepped aside, Ro's chin was caught in her husband's hand as he crouched in front of her. "Talk to me, baby."

"They're keeping him."

"Sunshine." In an instant, he took her from Evie's arms and pulled her into his lap as he sat on the scarred wood floor. "We knew this was a possibility when we decided to go this route of adoption. They warned us."

"I know, but it wasn't supposed to happen to us. It was supposed to be easy. We were supposed to have a baby." Ro didn't bother to move her face from his chest as she spoke. She didn't need to; he knew what she was saying.

Octavius allowed her to cry in his arms a few minutes as he rocked her back and forth, her sisters on either side of them clasping her hands.

When her hiccups slowed, his chest rumbled under her ear. "What happened to your phone screen?" When she stiffened in his arms, he continued. "Rowena?"

With her eyes tightly squeezed shut, Ro answered the

question, "I threw it across the room. I got sick of it making so much noise when I was trying to work."

"For a hippie, you're pretty destructive." All eyes went to Evie. "What? She is."

Octavius' eyes narrowed. "You threw it?"

"That was my response, too." Teagan chuckled.

Ro's butt clenched at her husband's low growl. "I was emotional."

"Up." Octavius hauled the two of them to their feet, Evie following suit. "We're going home."

"Bear."

O's brow moved toward his hairline. "Don't whine at me, little girl."

"But I'm working." Rowena gestured to the hole she had started.

"Yeah, about that." Evie bit her lip. "That, ah, was one of the walls that was supposed to stay."

"To the bedroom, Sunshine," Octavius said as soon as they pulled into the garage and he killed the engine.

"But, bear." Ro was back to whining.

As he shifted in his seat, he pinned her with a hard look. "Are you going to argue with me?"

Chewing her lip, she felt the tears fill her eyes. "I'm hurting. I need you."

A soft chuckle filled the cab of the truck. "Baby." Moving his seat back, he pulled her onto his lap so she was straddling him, her back to the steering wheel. "I never said you wouldn't have me."

"But you're sending me to the bedroom by myself. And—"

"And that usually means I expect to find you ready for punishment. It's a wonder you have any lip left with how much

you nibble on it." O pulled her lip from between her teeth. "Don't get me wrong; you're definitely in trouble."

"But—"

"I swear to God, Rowena, if you interrupt me with a whiny 'but' one more time, your *butt* is going to be sore for a good long time." He paused, waiting for her to cut in. "Like I was saying, you're in trouble for a couple different reasons, but I'm not the growly bear you claim me to be. I know you need me to hold you first and last, but I also know that in the middle there, you need your punishment. Am I wrong?"

Despite the future condition of her bottom, Rowena smiled. "No, Sir."

"Good girl. Now how about you follow the direction I gave you and go to our bedroom? I'm going to lock up the house and I will be right up. Get ready for bed."

"It's only seven." She ground her hips over his lap, his pained groan forcing her to bite back a smile.

He wrapped an arm around her middle, lifting slightly so he could pull the long, flowy skirt she wore up to her hips. "Is this appropriate clothing for a working construction site, little girl?"

"No, Sir."

"When we get to the punishment part of the evening, remind me to add it to the tally." His hand slipped between her legs, pausing when he was met with no barrier between his hand and her heat. "Ro."

"It's not my fault!"

"Not your fault? How is it not your fault? You know this drives me mad, and you promised to wear them with skirts."

"It wasn't like I did it on purpose."

"How do you go pantyless by accident?"

"I hate it when you raise your eyebrow at me like that."

"And you know how much it drives me mad when you don't wear panties under your skirts."

Ro shifted over him as the back of his fingers brushed lightly over her naked sex. "I cannot be held responsible for your inability to control your reaction when you're faced with the knowledge of my lack of panties."

As soon as the words left her mouth, the back of the seat fell back so she was lying belly to belly over her husband. She didn't even have time to protest before her ass was exposed and his heavy hand connected with her bottom in three solid spans. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry!" She wiggled as best she could, but his next four swats still met their mark, all of them landing in the same spot as the first three.

Octavius took hold of her chin, their positions making it a bit awkward, but his point still clear. "You are an amazing lawyer, but you know better than to let your lawyer loose on me, don't you, sunshine?"

"Yes, Sir." She wanted so badly to rub her butt.

"Are you done then?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Good." As soon as he spoke, his fingers thrust into her core.

"Holy fork," Ro moaned as her husband chuckled beneath her. "Don't laugh at me."

"You can say fuck when we are actually fucking, baby."

"It's a habit."

"God, you're cute." O's eyes rolled back when her hands started working the fly of his jeans.

"Why are you allowed no underwear?"

"Because I'm the boss." Pulling his fingers from her core, he pushed his pants down just enough to let his stiff cock spring free. "Are you going to complain about my lack of underwear or are you going to ride me?"

She didn't have to be asked twice. Taking the hand he offered for support, Ro lined his cock up with her entrance. Holding his eyes with hers, she slid slowly down his shaft.

"Fuck."

Loving the sight of his eyes rolling back in his head, Ro tightened her muscles around him, pulling a groan from her husband.

"I swear to God, if you keep teasing me—"

"What?" Her muscles constricted once more.

In a heartbeat, she was on all fours on the bench seat with her head near the passenger door. "If you're going to tease me, you don't get to set the pace." He pounded into her from behind with rough, fast strokes.

"Yes, Sir."

Octavius paused mid stroke. "You manipulative little brat. You knew I would take over."

"You always do, but usually I get at least three glides out of my ride. You were extra impatient today."

"Brat."

"No, I just know my husband."

His hand bounced off her ass as his laugh filled the truck cab. "Ready, baby."

"God, yes. Please fuck me, bear."

"With pleasure." He took hold of her hips, pulling her back on him as he moved forward. Her breath hitched every time he bottomed out. "Play with your clit, baby. Make my girl scream."

Her hand slid down to where their bodies met, her fingers wrapping around the base of his wet cock. She loved to feel him disappear inside her.

Ro cried out when he smacked the side of her thigh. "Ow."

"Is that what I told you to do?"

"Do you not like it?" She bit her lip as she looked over her shoulder.

"It feels fucking amazing, but the whole point was to get

you off. All you're managing to do is pull me closer to the edge."

Her panting broke up her words. "I'm close."

It took two more smacks to her thigh, moving her even closer to her oblivion, before she pulled her hand away from his shaft. "Fingers on your clit. You have sixty seconds; if you don't come before then, you won't come."

As she worked her clit, she pouted, "That's not fair."

"Forty-five seconds."

"Please."

The words had just left her mouth when her hand was pushed away and Octavius took over. He expertly rolled the pad of his thumb over the sensitive bundle of nerves with just the right amount of pressure. "Thirty seconds, baby."

"It's right there. I can feel it, bear. It's—"

Rowena didn't get to finish her statement as her husband's fingers flicking over her clit sent her over the edge.

"Thank God," O roared as he buried himself as deeply as he could, stilling as her internal muscles contracted around him.

As her husband collapsed over her back, she looked over her shoulder. "Ten seconds to spare."

"You're such a brat!"

How in the hell did she end up here?

That was a rhetorical question; she knew exactly how she had ended up with her nose pressed into the junction of the corner, naked from the waist down and her hand clasping her wrists behind her back. Hell, she knew she was going to end up here the second she'd answered the phone from the adoption agency, but she had done it anyway.

"Come here, sunshine."

As she turned from the corner, Ro swallowed hard. Resting on the bed next to her husband's thigh was the one thing she didn't want to see: the bath brush.

"You're not moving, little girl."

"I...not the brush, please."

Octavius simply pointed to the open space between his knees, his brow high on his forehead. "If I have to ask again, you're going to get more than I had planned."

Chewing her lip, she stayed put. "How many were you planning to give me?" Without warning, her husband started to rise. "Okay, Okay!" She ran the few feet to stand in front of him.

"Good choice, baby, but you're a little late." O's hand bounced off her ass in five solid strikes. "Next time I tell you to come to me, you do as I tell you the first time."

"Yes, Daddy. I'm sorry."

Three more swats connected with her butt before he sat back down and pulled her between his open knees and into his arms. "What has gotten into you, sunshine?" When her only response was to sniffle into his chest, he pressed forward, "Did you know it was the adoption agency calling when you answered the phone? Your silence tells me you did. Are you supposed to answer their call without me around?"

"I didn't think before I picked it up." She shook her head. "I knew the second she said my name that something was wrong."

"Where were you when they called?"

Rowena pushed from his chest and lifted her eyes to meet his. "I was driving back to the office. When she started talking and I felt like my world was crumbling, I pulled to the side of the road. I don't even remember her hanging up with me. All I remember is her saying they decided to keep him, pulling over, and the next thing I know, Officer Foxx was knocking on my

window. She got me calmed down enough to drive to the house, and you know the rest."

"Eyes, little girl." As soon her eyes met his, he started talking. "Remind me to thank her next time we see her. When did you break your phone? How many times did you ignore my calls before your tantrum took over?"

"You tried calling me twice before I threw it across the room."

"How many messages of mine did you ignore?" He moved on, when her only response was a shrug of her shoulders. "And the others? How many times did you ignore their attempts to help me find you? Don't look away from me, Rowena. I need an answer."

"Too many to count, Daddy." Octavius took a deep breath as he pinched the bridge of his nose. It was when he looked at her again, that the concern in his eyes hit her square in the chest. "Bear?"

"You said you were going to get lunch, and then nothing. Complete radio silence. No one heard from you for hours. For all I knew, you were in a ditch somewhere, hurt or worse. Hell, I even had the thought of Branson sending one of his goons after you. I was worried sick, baby. I-I don't ever want to feel that again."

Tears fell freely down Ro's face. "I'm sorry, bear. I didn't stop to consider how my actions would affect anyone else. All I felt was my own heartbreak. I'm sorry. Please believe me."

"Sunshine."

She climbed into his lap, curling into his chest. "It was like losing all our babies all over again. Like my heart was being pulled from my chest."

The sound of her sobs had Octavius' arms tightening around her. "We knew this was a possibility. That was why we agreed you wouldn't answer the calls without me around."

"I know. I hit the button before I thought better of it."

Rowena took a deep breath before letting the next words fall from her mouth. "I keep giving away a piece of my heart, only to have it destroyed every time a baby is torn from my body and our future. I'm not going to have any pieces left if I keep giving them away."

"Sunshine, you love deeply and there is nothing wrong with that." His lips brushed the side of her head. "Let's get ready for bed, baby. I need to hold you."

"What? No." She watched his expression darken the slightest bit. "I mean, I need...I need this."

Octavius studied her face for a few minutes before he nodded his head. "Okay, but not a punishment." Turning, he handed her the bath brush. "Put this away, and then come back to me."

Taking the hated implement, Ro did as she was told. "Do you want me to bring back something else, bear?"

When she peeked her head out of the closet, her husband had resituated himself at the head of the bed, his legs stretched out in front of him. "No, sunshine, I need to feel our connection."

Knowing that he was going to use his hand on her had her belly doing crazy things as well as her feet shuffling.

"If you're not over my knee in the next ten seconds, I'm going to have to reconsider just using my hand." In a few quick steps, Ro all but threw herself over his lap. "Baby."

As she looked over her shoulder, she gave a little shrug. "Your hand is hard enough; I don't want to tempt you with more."

Shaking his head, he shifted her into position, pulling her shirt higher, exposing the top of her butt. "This isn't a punishment. We can stop at any time."

Rowena turned back, resting her chin on the duvet. "I need this. We need this connection." Hiding her smirk in the

blanket, she let the next words fall from her lips, "Do your worst."

His first spank connected as his chuckle bounced around the room. "Be careful what you wish for." He focused first on her right cheek, smacking the same spot until she started to squirm and whine before moving to the left to give that cheek the same treatment.

When he paused, she clenched her cheeks. She knew her sit spot were about to receive the same treatment only to be followed by her thighs. "Bear?"

"Yeah, sunshine?" Without words, she held the hand that wasn't pinned to the side of her body back. "Need some help, baby?"

"Please." She relaxed as soon as his long fingers wrapped around her wrist securing it to the small of her back. "Okay, I'm ready now."

Octavius continued his assault as she knew he would. It didn't take nearly as many smacks on her sit spots to get her squirming this time, but he didn't stop. Instead, he gave them the same treatment as he did her full ass.

It was when he moved to her thighs that the struggle to stay still became all too real. Gone, was the good girl who wanted him to hold her hand for comfort; in her place, was the wife who suddenly wasn't so sure she wanted or needed this spanking.

"You have your safeword. Use it or settle down, baby."

The final word he spoke broke her. Tears she had previously thought all cried out raced down her face. "Stop calling me that. Fucking stop." A bitter laugh left her lips as a particularly hard swat connected, her reprimand for the curse. "I can't give you a family, I sure as hell don't deserve the pet name."

In an instant, Octavius had her repositioned and was lying on the bed with her head resting on his chest. He gave her

warm ass a hard squeeze. "Baby. Baby, baby, baby. You are *my* baby. Do you know why I call you that? I don't just want a shake of your head; I want a verbal response."

"I don't know why you call me that, Sir."

"Because you are my world. You are the reason I wake up every morning and the person I thank God for every night. You are my world."

"I can't give you a family, O."

"Don't you get it? You *are* my family."

With fresh tears blurring her vision, she buried her face in the crook of his neck, silently hoping
it was enough.