

Chapter 4

Donnie paced nervously back and forth on the balcony, taking angry puffs from his cigarette. A myriad of scenarios raced through his mind, and his phone conversation with Danny had provided little comfort. As he waited for his oldest friend to arrive, his gaze drifted back to his left hand, and the wedding band that seemed to mock him. "Fuck!" he mumbled. He desperately began to grasp at any memory he had from the previous evening, quickly becoming frustrated when there weren't many. The ones that were clearest were the ones that had transpired after he and the bombshell had returned to his room. A hint of laughter; his own giddiness as they tickled one another under the sheets; her moans as his hands caressed the outsides of her thighs, those same thighs squeezing him tight as he tasted her, again and again. Damn, why couldn't he get that memory out of his head?! He subconsciously licked his lips as he remembered her sweet ambrosia taste, complimenting her scent.

A loud knock at his room door jolted him out of his reverie, and signaled Danny's arrival. Donnie stamped out his cigarette and adjusted himself as he made his way through the open hotel room. Sexual memories were getting him nowhere except frustrated. He pulled open the door and stalked away, leaving Danny to let himself in. Danny stepped in, taking in the room, and then shut the door behind him, focusing on his friend. His forehead wrinkled, "Remember anything?"

Donnie had been taking his last swig of Red Bull, and at Danny's question, flung the empty can across the room in the general direction of the wastepaper basket. It hit the wall and bounced off the rim, landing on the carpet. "Not a damn thing," Donnie raked both of his hands through his hair and let his breath come out in a huff. "Unless you count what happened after we came back here."

Danny raised an eyebrow, but didn't push further. "Where is the certificate?"

Donnie handed him the paper, watching him intently as he studied it. After a minute, Donnie broke the silence. "What do you think? Is it real?"

"I don't know, man. I mean, it looks for real, but I'm no expert." Danny looks at the paper again. "Raven, huh? Have you called down to the front desk to see if anyone is here by that name?"

"They can't 'divulge that information'," Donnie stated, his tone mocking as he quoted what the front desk had said. He never dreamed he would be on the receiving end of a statement that had

been uttered over himself a million times. He stood in the middle of the room, trying to collect his thoughts. The two men were silent for a few moments, then Donnie spoke up.

"Twitter."

"What?"

"Well, the internet in general." Donnie was already moving to get his laptop. As much as he loved his "CrackBerry", the internet was still easier to navigate on an actual computer, especially the kind of searching he was about to do. He looked at Danny as he was waiting for the laptop to boot up. Danny seemed to be on the same wavelength. "While you search for her, I am going to make some calls, see what I can find out about this certificate."

"Good idea, man," Donnie replied, already on Twitter. A quick search for "Raven Sanders" yielded no results. An even quicker search for "Raven" yielded too many. This was going nowhere fast.

Facebook. Donnie didn't use the site himself, but it was the next best guess. This time, searching for "Raven Sanders" was more successful; however, still not ideal. He had no idea what she looked like, how old she was, what city she lived in, even. He tried narrowing the search to Las Vegas, but came up empty. So much for technology. Donnie was going to have to rely on old-fashioned sleuthing.

Danny was busy on the phone to the front desk, asking them who-knows-what. His voice was low and persuasive, and Donnie knew Danny worked better undistracted. He stepped onto the balcony for another cigarette.

He couldn't remember the last time he smoked so much in so few hours. Ever the voice of reason, he was now a bundle of nerves. He worked on slowing his mind, so he could concentrate on one thought at a time. How did this happen? Did he meet her at the after party? After that even? He didn't even remember leaving the party, or how long he stayed. And if she had expected to get anything out of the 'marriage', why did she leave? Of course it had occurred to him that she was after his money- but then it didn't make sense for her to high-tail it out of there this morning. He smirked. And honestly, why would anyone leave after finding out they were hitched to him? He inhaled deeply, the smoke filling his lungs, and then exhaled slowly. Did she have a key to his room? Maybe she'll come back. The thought caused an extra beat of his heart

that he knew was irrational. He should be questioning her motives. Instead he was saying her name over in his mind, trying desperately to put a face to the beauty he knew she was. Once again, he stamped out his cigarette and headed back inside. Whatever their next move, one thing was certain- he had to make sure that if she did return, he didn't lose her this time.