



Chapter Twenty-seven: **The Right Spot**

I gasped loudly in surprise. There was just a split second where his gray eyes stared into mine angrily. His face was twisted into a furious mask that frightened the hell out of me. Then he lunged for me. His rough hands instantly went to my throat, throwing me against the wall across from the closet, cracking the mirror on it. My back slammed against it painfully. The shards fell around our feet.

This was not our tiny terrorist.

Somehow, I was calm. Having a vise grip around my neck didn't scare me as it would most. I was used to it. He was squeezing hard, but not enough to crush my airways. It was more to keep me in place. He wasn't trying to kill me, just make me still and quiet.

I knew exactly what to do. My fingers went to his belt, working it off quicker than I had ever done so before. It was so fast he barely had time to look down and register what I was doing. It slid from the loops with a snap. When he looked up again to meet my eyes, I struck him with all my might in the face with the buckle.

He roared in pain. It made him back off of me, stumbling a couple of steps. Both of his palms went to his jaw, where it had stabbed into his skin. I tried to twist towards the door with the belt still in my hand, but he turned and grabbed my other arm to yank me back.

There was a frantic knocking at the entrance. "Mrs. Hale?" The security guard called through it. "Are you alright?"

"NO! HELP!" I shouted but remembered he didn't have a key to come inside. Jasper did, though. Aid would be coming soon, but I was on my own until then. Spinning, I struck the man several times with the looped-up leather strap as viciously as I could. It was thick and mean, cutting across his skin. He tried to smack it away, but I got him more than I missed.

He grabbed me by my hair and threw me onto the ground. My head bounced against the floor hard, knocking my vision out for a second. It was dark before everything went white. That didn't stop me from kicking and flailing the entire time, though. If there was one thing I was good at, it was struggling with someone who wanted to cause me pain.

His hand went back to my throat. "Little bitch, if you want it that bad, I'll give it to you," he snarled in my face as he tried to force my skirt up. My shoes dug into his calves as I dragged my nails across his cheek, where I had already blooded him, and tore at his flesh. He shrieked in agony, kneeling me in the gut before he head-butted me.

I spit blood in his eyes before slapping him with the hand that was free. In revenge, he bit my arm as he struggled to keep it down. I had never screamed so loud in my life. It echoed in my ears until they were ringing.

Then he was being lifted off of me. In a flash of movement, my husband had him down on the ground on his back and began punching him repeatedly in the face. He sat on his chest and just pounded away. It was only four or five before he stopped putting up any struggle, but he didn't stop.

One of the security guards helped me to my feet. I tugged away from him and dashed to the closet. "Jasper!" I shrieked to get his attention. I held up his handcuffs, then threw them at him. He caught them in one hand. For just a split second, he stared at them in surprise, like he

didn't know what to do with them. Then he rolled the groaning bastard onto his stomach. He pulled his arm behind his back and slid it onto his wrist as tight as it would go.

"You have the right to remain silent," he snarled in his ear as he grabbed a fistful of his short, bleached spiky hair to force his face up to make sure he had his attention. It was already starting to swell and warp with bumps and bruises, his eyes rolling in different directions. It was smeared with blood. It dripped from his lip and nose. "Anything you say or do can and will be used against you in a court of law." He leaned in close. "You have the right to an attorney, and if you can't afford one, one will be appointed to you. You can exercise any of these rights you are very lucky to have at any time. Do you understand?"

The man only grunted. He shoved his face down into the ground, into a puddle of his own blood.

Jasper stood and looked at me. He was trembling, his bloody fists at his sides. The guy didn't even get a chance to get a hit in. The other security guard returned with an actual Dallas police officer.

"Are you okay?" He asked me.

Nodding, I stumbled a few steps towards him, and then all of a sudden, I was lying on the bed and staring at the ceiling. He was looking at me worriedly as someone I didn't know touched my wrist. I whined in annoyance as I tugged it away. When I tried to sit up, they pushed me back down. "No," I whimpered. I didn't want anyone but him to touch me ever again.

"Darlin, you need to lie down."

"No," I repeated, pushing myself up again. My belly ached, as did my head.

"Ma'am-" the skinny woman started in a calm voice. I wouldn't have any of it.

"I need to pee!" I snapped in her face, and the shock of my bluntness gave me enough time to sit up. I was quicker than I looked.

Instead of arguing with me, he grabbed my arm to make sure I didn't fall or pass out along the way. Carefully, Jasper made sure no one was in there. Thankfully, there was no blood when I used the toilet. I washed my hands. There was gore underneath my nails. When I glanced up at my face, I gasped in surprise. I had a huge knot on my forehead, blood dripping from my nose, and a split lip. Dark bruises were already forming around my neck.

"Where is he?" I asked when I came out. There was just carnage where he used to be. The paramedic ran back to me. Others were coming in with a stretcher. It should have been for him, not me. I could walk. But I couldn't see him.

“Mrs. Hale, please,” the woman said to get my attention. “Can you lay down for me?”

“Come on, darlin,” Jasper breathed, walking me to it. Gently lifting me by my hips, he helped me on. I hissed in pain as I brought my hand to my abdomen. “What did he do?”

“He was in the closet, waiting. He grabbed my throat, but I beat him with his belt,” I explained stupidly and too simply. He would need more detail than that, but I couldn’t get my brain to process the words. “He hit my stomach.”

“Okay, lay back,” he instructed gently, but there were tears dripping from his eyes.

“Don’t worry. It looks worse than it is. You got here quick. Just my head hurts a little,” I promised as I smiled at him. I brought my hand up to his cheek. “It’s okay. You got him.”

“He was going to rape you,” he began to cry in earnest. He couldn’t keep it in. “All this security and we’re all too stupid to sweep the room properly. I am so sorry.”

The paramedics were fluttering around us, putting things on my arm and finger to check my pulse and blood pressure. The other put gauze on my arm to stem the bleeding. I wanted to reach out to touch him, but I couldn’t. I needed his comfort.

“No. Please don’t. I need you. Please, sir. Please,” I begged in a little voice. It made him instantly stop and suck in a breath through his quivering lips. “I love you. It’s not your fault.”

“We need to get her to the hospital,” someone spoke behind my head, but I couldn’t see them. More cops showed up. It seemed to happen so fast, but time was blurring together for me.

They rushed me to the emergency room, where they started doing a full battery of tests. It wasn’t a small list. Cat Scans, MRIs, and blood was drawn. All I cared about was the baby, though. Anything he did to my outsides was superficial.

As soon as we were in a room, they brought in an ultrasound machine. I was already in a gown. Without being asked, I pulled it up. The grim-faced tech kept the screen turned away from us, and it didn’t feel like a good sign. Shaking, I held Jasper’s hand as tightly as I could.

It took an agonizing amount of time until she found the right spot. Then the nurse pressed a button. The bomp, bomp, bomp filled the room.

I wailed in relief at the sound. He squeezed my fist, sitting as close to the bed as he could. When they were satisfied that they could show us, they pushed the screen in our direction. This time, I could see their face perfectly. It was a much more detailed machine than

the one before. Their nose and chin were in profile. One of their arms was stretched out above their head, and the other was by their mouth. Its little legs kicked angrily, and I realized the fluttering I was feeling was them. If the wand hadn't shown me where they were, I would have never thought much of it. I had been feeling it all day.

"We're waiting for a few more tests, but he seems okay," she told me after looking at the baby in several positions. "We're going to monitor his heartbeat for a while to make sure, though."

"It's a boy?" I questioned in a small voice. I wasn't positive if she was just using those pronouns or if it really was a male.

Nodding, she brought up a certain picture. It was at an odd angle, and I wasn't entirely sure what I was looking at. Then she typed on it. "Leg. Boy. Leg." In the middle, it was hard to miss the bits once I knew what I was seeing.

I laughed as I lifted my hand to my mouth. Leaning my head back, I closed my eyes. I rubbed some of my tears away. "I can feel him. He's okay."

After she strapped the fetal heart monitors into place, everyone left. For the first time since the morning, we were alone. There were FBI agents now stationed outside my door, and Sam had the blond man in custody. I laid on my side and gazed at my hero with a slight smile.

Jasper's knuckles were bandaged. What he did to them when he punched King was nothing compared to this. I reached for him. He quickly gave me his hands. I kissed both of them lightly, over the gauze, then his fingertips. Then I pressed one of them to my heart.

"We're going to have a son," I grinned. I wasn't going to let anyone take anything else away from me. He was right. Happiness was a choice, and I was going to be. It didn't matter that I was dirty, tired, and sore. They wanted to take my joy away, and this was the best revenge I could think of. "And when he kicks, it feels like butterflies. He'll be so beautiful. I hope he has your eyes. He has that sharp chin, just like you and your dad. And your nose."

He was crying silently, tears running down his cheek. Pressing his face against my chest, he wept all of his fears out. Jasper was shaking with his emotions, his palm resting on my hip. "I'm so sorry."

"No." I shook my head. "There isn't-"

"He could have raped and killed my wife and child while the stupid security guards I hired listened outside. I should have checked the room better. Fuck, fuck, fuck."

Gently, I played with his hair. "We're fine. We're tough. You know I can handle myself. I'm okay, and your boy is healthy. It's not even that bad. Just a headache and a bite mark. Hey, look at me." He refused to move. "Look at me, please," I pleaded. Still nothing, so I lifted his chin. I could feel his tears on my skin. "Be happy with me for just a minute. The only person to blame is in handcuffs, which is the first step to finding out who else is going after us. That means this is almost over." I smoothed away a drop from his cheek with my thumb. "I am so excited right now. What should we name him?" I asked eagerly.

He laughed only briefly as he wiped one of his eyes. "I have no earthly idea, darlin'."

"Maybe we can name him after your dad. Justin?"

He shook his head. "That's too many J names running around. What about after yours?"

"Charles?" I drew out slowly as I laid back against the pillow. "Call him Charlie, maybe." I shrugged. "I don't know, perhaps. Charles Whitlock Hale."

"No, ma'am," he said instantly, making me laugh. "We're not saddling this poor kid with that awful old man's name."

I pushed his hand along the exposed part of my belly with a smile. "Well, we have time. We'll think of something."