

Chapter Three

Loca Moca

It's hot outside.

Like, "die already!" hot.

I'm not going to beat around the bush. My balls are stuck to the inside of my leg. And they won't unstick 'til about the middle of October. You want dry balls, you buy a place up north. You don't live in South Florida during the summer months. Me? I happen to like the heat and humidity.

Hot and sticky balls come with it.

Here's something else to chew on.

I just walked out of the Mental Wellness Group of the Palm Beaches. It's a two-story clinic comprised of Dr. Ang and her colleagues, who all specialize in nutjobs. The entire parking lot from front to back is full of Beamers, Benzes, and Range Rovers. Rich people are fucked up too.

Makes you think maybe the grass isn't greener.

Once you have money, you realize it doesn't fix shit.

Trust me, I know. I have it. I'm not Bezos, but I don't have to work either. Before I became a cop, I was a professional MMA fighter. Way back when. Back before the UFC turned into a bunch of Hollywood pussies, I was the Heavy Weight Champion.

I got hurt.

The money stopped.

Thankfully along the way, I married a woman with a little sense. She tightened my belt and began building a nest egg for us. Before the baby arrived, she "suggested" I sell one of my two Porsches. Later, after the divorce, I sold the other one.

I now drive an American classic.

I bought a behind-the-garage, rusted-out '69 Camaro SS for a song from a woman nearing ninety. I rebuilt it from the ground up. I call her Loca Moca after the ex-girlfriend I dated during the rebuild. Her name was Monica A. Cuban. Sometimes, she went a little crazy. Hence the pseudonym.

It stuck.

The Cuban did not.

Loca Moca is breakneck fast and obnoxiously loud. She's pearl-white with a pair of powder-blue racing stripes running down the middle. The engine runs hot and the air-conditioning sucks. Most people don't want to ride with me. Which just so happens to suit me perfectly.

I'd parked Loca Moca under a ficus tree at the back of the parking lot. I walk over. As I'm unlocking the door, I hear my phone ringing from inside. I lean in and grab it, but I missed the

call. And apparently seven others. I'd love to know from whom, but I'm simple. My phone is not, even though it's the original iPhone.

Like the first generation.

A gift from another ex-girlfriend.

I'd always had the Plain Jane Nokia. With actual buttons you pressed. Green for *speak*. Red for *go away*. No touch screen. No camera. No apps. A simple phone, made for the simple man. This girlfriend, this ex, called me a dinosaur. She wanted me to trade up. I didn't. She eventually did.

Married a defense attorney if you call that a trade-up.

Anyway, she sent me this "smart" phone a year and a half post-breakup for Valentine's Day. Had to be a gag gift. I mean, it was more than a decade old at the time. She wrote her new number inside the card with a little heart and told me to call. I threw the phone and her card in the back of a cabinet in the garage. Later that same week, I dropped my Nokia in the toilet.

I took it as a sign.

Hooked up the iPhone.

The fucking thing is a mess now. It's constantly beeping, vibrating, or flashing with *SYSTEM ERROR* messages. Every time I try to use the thing, I have to *X* my way through a thicket of virus pop-ups. And forget about using most of the apps. Of course, I can't remember the passwords or email addresses I used to set them up anyway.

I finally make it to my missed calls. Right as I do, the fucking thing rings.

Mia Zorillo.

She's my partner, or well, my partner before the suspension.

I answer, “What?”

“I’ve been calling you all morning, Storm.”

“How many times?”

“How many times what?”

“I have eight missed calls. I’m trying to figure out from whom.”

“Both you and that phone have a mental disorder.”

“My new hot doctor doesn’t seem to think so.”

“Give her time. And change your voicemail. It’s offensive.”

“It’s Will Smith...from the Oscars.”

“I’m well aware, Storm. I’m not the one living under a rock.”

“Did you call just to bust my balls, or do you actually want something?”

She takes a second to answer. “We just pulled a Jane Doe from the water in front of Singer Island—”

“I’m suspended. Beat it.”

“Let me finish. You’re going to want to hear this. Last week, while you were in the Keys fishing, we pulled the first Jane Doe out of the water in front of the Island of Palm Beach. Right in front of the Breakers Hotel. Today’s number two.”

“Coincidence?”

“Not on your chinny, chin, chin. The killer left behind a riddle.”

“Wish I could help. Send the chief my love.”

“He’s been trying to reach you too.”

“He sus-pend-ed me! Tell him I’m nowhere to be found.”

“Negative. I just sent him a text. Told him you’re on your way in.”

“Some partner you turned out to be.”

“I need you on this one, Storm.”