

Chapter 2

Gauntlet

Gavin and Rita Heatley pulled into the driveway at the Molinskys' house. "You didn't say two words on the way over here," Rita said. "What are you thinking?"

"I don't have enough information to think anything yet," Gavin answered.

"Not even a feeling, an impulse?"

"That's your job, not mine," he said with a teasing smile.

"You think Chuck is telling the truth? That he didn't know anything about this?"

"Rita, Chuck would have to be a pathological liar—"

"Oh, he would not." Rita rolled her eyes in frustration, and got out of the car.

"What if he was trying to protect Bobbi?"

"Would you lie to protect her?" Gavin waited for her to round the car and join him.

"I might. After all she went through, I just might."

He gave her his patented shame-on-you middle school principal headshake. "Lies never shelter and protect. Only the truth can do that. Shielding Bobbi is exactly what Chuck wants, what we want, and that takes truth and trust." He took her hand. "Your job is to be the strong, supportive, big sister you always are."

"You said it with a straight face."

"I've been practicing," he said, then rang the doorbell.

Gavin may have been teasing, but Rita intended to take Bobbi's side, no matter what.

When Bobbi's eyes met her sister's, she felt a release that comes only in the presence of those who have walked through the fire with you and for you. Chuck wanted to talk, to reason, to think aloud. She needed bolstering, and vindication, not more words. Rita understood that.

She pulled away after a long embrace, and Rita's hands slipped down to hers. "Not even sweaty," Rita said, as if that was some sort of bonus.

"It's an act." Bobbi stretched up to hug Gavin. "I'm counting on your judgment, Gavin. I don't trust mine or Chuck's right now."

"Don't second-guess yourself."

"Easier said than done." But even for Rita and Gavin, there were appearances to keep up. "There's coffee." Bobbi led them back to the kitchen. Two coffeemakers stood on the counter, plainly labeled after Chuck ended up with an exotic coffee one too many times. "Mine or Chuck's?"

"What is yours?" Rita asked.

"Italian," Bobbi smiled.

"That I can handle. Now when you do Turkish or Indonesian, those are too strong."

"Gavin?" Bobbi poured a cup for Rita.

"No, thanks. It's way too hot outside for coffee."

"That's why I have air conditioning." Bobbi closed her eyes as she sipped from her own cup, savoring the aroma, enjoying the warming sensation, treasuring the momentary respite.

"Baby, you should make commercials," Rita kidded.

Bobbi held up her finger. “Coffee is my one luxury.” She heard a car door slam out in the driveway. “I think that’s Ann.” She gulped from the cup, and then set it by the sink. “Chuck wants everybody in the living room.”

Chuck wants. Not “we want.” Somewhere between Chuck’s office and the retreat to their separate corners at home, their partnership dissolved subtly, reflexively. She had no doubts he’d battle Tracy until his last breath, but he’d leave her behind to do it.

Bobbi met Chuck in the foyer. “You wanna let Mom in?” he said. “I’m gonna get another chair for Glen.” The intensity in his eyes, the gravity in his voice should have reassured her, but the mundanity of his comment stopped her cold.

She fought off the urge to grab his shoulders as he passed and scream, "This is not some stupid staff meeting!" She wanted him to stop his planning and strategizing and acknowledge the bitter fear churning and swirling inside her. Instead, he disappeared around the corner into the dining room.

Fine. We’ll play like it’s the most ordinary thing in the world. She opened the front door, and reached to hug her mother-in-law.

“I can’t imagine what you’re going through,” Ann said. “I had to pick my own jaw up off the floor to drive over here.”

Bobbi lowered her eyes. “It’s like it was the first time. That feeling of being lied to... I mean, I know he didn’t, but ...”

Ann reached out, and took her by the arm. “I don’t blame you. That’s a perfectly understandable reaction.”

“Thanks for the reassurance.”

“Now, me, I worried. What would this do to you, how would it affect your marriage, what would the boys say, how would little Shannon feel, what was this woman after ...”

“You’re very efficient.” Bobbi managed a smile.

“I have years of experience,” Ann said with a wink.

“Can I get you some coffee?”

“No, I’m fine.”

“Glen should be here any minute now. Chuck wants us in there.” She pointed to the living room off to the left. Again, just Chuck.

Ann nodded. “I appreciate his urgency, but he isn’t going to resolve this in one afternoon.”

“I think that’s his plan though.” Bobbi glanced around the living room as she took a seat on the sofa beside her sister. This wasn’t like before. She wasn’t isolated and alone. Rita and Ann were here. She and Chuck were on the same side. Right? Things had to be different this time, didn’t they?

“Sorry to keep you waiting,” Glen Dillard said, as he shook hands with everyone, and then slipped into the only open chair.

“I never heard the doorbell,” Bobbi said.

“Your husband caught me before I rang it,” he answered, pointing toward Chuck, who was gingerly stepping around the coffee table to stand in front of the fireplace. Chuck apparently carried the dining room chair the long way through the back of the house to avoid passing her in the foyer.

Chuck had straightened his tie, and re-buttoned his cuffs. His glasses were clipped in his shirt pocket beside his Cross pen. He cleared his throat and began presenting his case. Her greatest fear realized was just another case to him.

“Thank you for coming on such short notice. You’ve been right there with us in the past, and Bobbi and I know that you’re willing to walk through this with us.” Chuck turned toward Ann and Glen. “Here’s what’s happened. Bobbi got her class list today, and one of her students is the son of the woman I had the affair with seven years ago.” Chuck paused, and looked at his mother. “It looks like he’s my son.”

Ann couldn’t hide a quiet gasp, and Bobbi dropped her eyes to avoid her mother-in-law’s glance. Even empathy cut to her core.

“I think she purposely put the boy in Bobbi’s class,” Chuck continued, “but who knows what she’s up to.”

“You gotta find out, Chuck,” Glen said. “You’re gonna have to confront her.”

“Absolutely not!” Bobbi said, her shoulders stiffening. “I don’t want him anywhere near her.”

“How do you know he’s yours?” Gavin asked.

“I don’t,” Chuck answered. “We’re just going by his birthday, and what he looks like.”

“You’ve seen him?”

“Gavin, I’m sure it was him,” Bobbi said. “He was on the playground this morning, and he looks just like Joel. Just like him.”

Gavin scratched at his beard, and leaned forward. He looked at Bobbi, then at Chuck. That meant he sided with Chuck. Her protests were doomed before she uttered them.

“I agree with Glen,” Gavin said. “You have to get some proof about this boy. There’s no sense worrying over speculations—”

“Gavin!” Rita broke in, “Bobbi just said she doesn’t want Chuck around this woman. How can you even suggest—”

“I’ll go with him.” Gavin frowned, his brow furrowed. “She’s baiting Chuck. She wants to see him, and she knew this would get his attention.”

“Oh, it got my attention all right,” Chuck muttered.

Bobbi twisted on the sofa to look at Gavin. “Have you forgotten she sued Chuck for a quarter of a million dollars? Why would she want to see him all of a sudden?”

“Is it about money?” Rita asked. “Like she regrets dropping the lawsuit and this is all part of a shakedown? Maybe the kid’s not even Chuck’s.”

“She’s not getting his money,” Bobbi said, crossing her arms. “She’s not getting anything from him.”

“I don’t think she’ll go away until she sees him,” Gavin, the traitor, said with a shrug.

Chuck moved over to sit on the coffee table in front of Bobbi, and took her hands in his. “I trust Gavin and Glen with my life.”

“Do you trust them with mine?” Bobbi said. “See, it’s not just you. This is going to impact our whole family. It scares me to death.”

“If Gavin goes with me, I think it’ll be okay.”

“It sounds like you want to see her.” Bobbi pulled her hands away. “Are you trying to prove something?”

“I don’t want her showing up at school or here at the house. I want to call the shots on this, take the fight to her.”

Bobbi looked at Chuck then at Gavin, and sighed deeply. He had outmaneuvered her again. Case closed.

Chuck leaned forward to kiss her, and she turned her cheek to him. “Mom? Rita? You agree?”

“This is Bobbi’s call,” Rita said. “I don’t want her hurt again.” Bobbi wondered if Chuck picked up the subtle threat in her voice.

“Nobody does,” Chuck said. “Mom?”

“Does this have to be done now? Today?” Ann asked, frowning. “I doubt the girl rolled into town last night and set this all up today. Couldn’t you take a few days, think about it, pray about it, and consider all your options?”

Bobbi almost smiled. He couldn’t argue with that one. But he did. He shook his head and emphatically answered, “No.”

“Why not?” Bobbi demanded.

“You want me to wait around for parent orientation night? Let her breeze into your classroom? I won’t give Tracy the opportunity to catch you at school or anywhere else. Not after that ambush at the coffee shop.”

“Son, things are not always what they seem, and there are some very unstable young women out there.”

Was Tracy unstable?

“She’s not like that,” Chuck said.

“How can you be sure?” Bobbi asked. “You don’t know anything about her.”

“I know Tracy.”

“No, you just slept with her,” Bobbi muttered.

“I don’t need you to remind me of that,” Chuck said, his voice low, his eyes locked on hers.

“Then how about this one? You have a son with her. She will never go away. Going to confront her tonight, next week, or next month won’t solve anything.” Bobbi stood and started to walk away, but then she turned back to him. “*She* has the child. *She’s* calling the shots.”

“Then dropping this boy in your class is her opening move. Now I have to respond.”

“You’re not gonna let this die, are you?” Bobbi said with too much frustration. She took a deep breath and closed her eyes. What was she doing? Having it out with her husband, here, in front of everyone. Ashamed at her loss of poise, and obviously outgunned, she relented. “Go ahead, but take Gavin.”

“Of course,” Chuck said, and then he turned to Gavin. “Shannon goes to bed at eight. I’ll pick you up after that.”

“All right,” Gavin nodded.

“Folks, let’s pray over these guys, and remember to be praying at eight o’clock tonight,” Glen said. Over the rustling of movement, as everyone shifted to bow their heads, the pastor began to pray.

“Dear Jesus, there are more questions than answers right now, but you know what’s ahead. This seems like the best course of action, and we ask that you prepare the way for these two men. Protect them in every way. However, if this is not the way to proceed, help us be aware of your leading. We want to do this your way. Be with Bobbi, especially, right now. Help us all be a help to her and Chuck. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

In spite of Glen’s prayer, an uneasy tension hung over the room, so Bobbi could hardly blame everyone for making a quick exit.

“Bobbi, I swear I’m not trying to make this harder on you,” Chuck said, once they were alone.

“I don’t think you realize what this has triggered in me.”

“I know it’s intense.”

“Can we just come to an agreement right here? I can’t define reasonable for this situation. I’m not even sure it exists. Don’t tell me how I feel. Don’t tell me how I *should* feel.”

“Bobbi—”

“Chuck, I love you, and I do trust you, but you need to respect me enough not to minimize what you did to me.” She sighed and spoke softly, as though she were letting him in on secret. “The scars are very deep.”

Chuck reached for her hand and nodded. “We’ve done so well, for so long. I’m sorry.” He swallowed hard. “But I need you to understand that you’re not the only one struggling here.”

“Excuse me?”

“I have a son.”

“Yes, I know. That’s what started all this today.”

“I’ve never been lied to like that.”

“It hurts, doesn’t it?” She smirked.

“I thought you of all people would be sympathetic.”

“Chuck ... leave. Just go somewhere else.” She walked over and swung the front door open. “If you stay here and keep talking like that, I’m not gonna be responsible for what happens.”

“I need your help.”

“No, you don’t! This meeting? It was a sham! You decided at your office you were gonna go confront Tracy, and you engineered this so everyone would approve.”

“I had no idea what Gavin and Glen were gonna say!”

“If they’d disagreed with you, we’d still be meeting. I know you, Chuck. I’ve been married to you for twenty-five years now. I know how you operate.”

He sighed and rubbed his eyes. “Bobbi, I am flying blind here. I need some answers, and if you know how I can get them other than going to see Tracy, I’m listening.”

Of course. How could she deny him finding his answers? She slammed the front door and stalked back toward the family room.

“I’m gonna go run. When I get back, I’ll go get Shannon, then we can grab some dinner somewhere.”

“I don’t have an appetite.”

“We’re not going to see Tracy at the restaurant.”

“Oh, but that would be a timesaver. Why not call her up and have her bring Junior!”

“Bobbi, I am not looking forward to seeing her again. I don’t want to ...” He caught up with her in the family room. “I don’t want to drag you through this again. I don’t want to have to face the guilt and the shame ...” He looked away, but she could see his tears. “If this is how you felt ... when I betrayed you ...”

“This is exactly what I mean. If you continue to suggest that what you feel right now ... It’s insulting.”

“You’re gonna leave me to figure this out for myself?”

She slid a hand across his back. “Go run. Clear your head. We’ll talk when you get back.” He pulled himself away, and she paced until she heard him close the front door.

She wanted to hold him, and soothe him somehow, but every tear he shed stung her soul. Yes, he’d been deceived by a conniving woman, but she’d been betrayed by the love of her life. There was no comparison. As much as they needed comfort, they couldn’t help each other right now. Tracy was driving a fresh wedge between them.

She slouched onto the sofa, but then a photo of her boys on the shelf of the entertainment center caught her eye. Ten-year-old Joel grinned, showing off the new patches on his scout uniform. The boy on the playground again.

She got a photo album from the built-in bookcase, and brought it to the recliner. She paged through it until she found a good clear picture of Joel as a six-year-old. Cold, nauseating reality stared back from the photo album pages.

Jackson Ravenna was Joel's mirror image, right down to the same bangs-over-the-forehead, little boy haircut. She raised a hand to her mouth. *They could be twins. The boy has to be Chuck's. Dear Lord, what are we going to do?*

Chuck rounded the corner onto a well-used bike and jogging path, and soon his breathing and footsteps fell into a regular rhythm. Clear your head, Bobbi said, as if the pounding would knock everything swirling around his brain into some coherent order. Not likely. Too much to process.

Blind fury at Tracy tore at every fiber of him while shame burned through his core. He was disgusted with himself for being so stupid, and sick for causing Bobbi such fresh heartache. Tracy said not to worry and he just believed her. Why? He never "just believed" anybody. And he remembered Bobbi's cold stare when she asked if Tracy was pregnant. "No," he'd said. "She told me she used a patch." She told me. Pathetic.

How could she keep the pregnancy a secret? Why didn't some county agency notify him as soon as the boy was born? Unless ... unless the boy really wasn't his. So the boy resembled Joel. Bobbi latched onto a worst-case scenario. He couldn't blame her, but they were all overreacting.

Tracy didn't deserve this much control over him, over his emotions. He was not the same man she seduced. He had to face her, and then she'd see she couldn't play games with him. If she persisted in this harassment, then he'd get a restraining order and keep her and her son from getting anywhere near his wife or his children.

He looped back around to Danbury Court, and slowed to a walk, and then he saw Bobbi sitting on the front step holding a bottle of water. He trotted into his yard. “Toss me the bottle. You don’t want me any closer.”

“I’ll be all right.” She stood and stretched her arm over to him.

He uncapped the bottle and poured water in his mouth and over his head. “Thank you.”

“So, clear head?”

“He’s not mine.”

“But Chuck, I saw him.”

“That doesn’t mean anything. If that were the criteria, no one would believe I was Brad and Shannon’s dad. Besides, the county would have notified me if I was the boy’s father.”

“What if she told them she didn’t know who it was?”

“She has to name the father.” He gulped the last of the water. “So tonight, I’ll tell her to stay away from you and the kids, and I’ll get a restraining order.”

“And that will be enough?”

“That’s all I can do. She hasn’t committed a crime or anything.”

“Yet.”

“Bobbi ...”

“All right, so I assume the worst about her. You, however, assume the best, but you don’t grasp that neither one of us is right about her.”

“I have to believe I’m right, or I can’t function.”

“But I can’t trust your decisions if you’re not being objective. Do you see what this is doing to us? It is setting us against each other in a completely different way.”

“We’re on the same side this time.”

“But we’re being forced into isolation, insulating ourselves against each other. It hurts too much when we reach out, so we’re both retreating.”

“You told me to go run.”

“I did. And it helped, didn’t it?”

He took her hand. “This will all be over after tonight.”

“I wish I could believe that.”

At twenty after eight, Chuck and Gavin drove down a narrow street in an upscale neighborhood, trying to find the house listed on the student information sheet. “It’s that one,” Gavin said, pointing to a two-story brick, two houses down on the left. “The one with the Lexus in the driveway.”

“A Lexus,” Chuck muttered. “It figures.” He parked in front of the house, and got out of his car. “This is a lot more domestic than I would have pictured for Tracy.”

“Maybe she’s changed.”

“Doubt it.” He strode onto her porch, and rang the doorbell. After an uncomfortably long pause, the porch light came on. Chuck hoped Gavin didn’t see him flinch when the door opened.

Tracy looked at Chuck as if it were the most natural thing in the world to see him at her door. She wore shorts and a tank top, just like the night Chuck stopped at her house

to fix a ceiling fan seven years ago. He knew that was no coincidence, and he willed himself not to stare.

“Chuck, that didn’t take long.” She smiled and opened the door to let them in. “I’ll be right with you,” she said, and then walked back through the house.

The sofa, coffee table and easy chair hardly filled the immaculate living room, and a small rectangular table seemed lost in the spacious kitchen. The light oak flooring in the entryway gave way to new carpet in the living room and tile in the kitchen. Everything was fresh, but neutral shades. There was nothing personal anywhere, no knick-knacks, nothing indicative of any outside interests. Except for the pictures.

Dozens of pictures hung in clusters on the walls, all of her son - as an infant, a preschooler, casual, formal, and everything in between. Bobbi hadn’t exaggerated. It *was* like looking through the photo albums at Joel. Both boys had the same dimples, and the same crooked grin. Just like his.

He glanced over, and Gavin scowled, and then adjusted his glasses. “Doesn’t prove anything,” Chuck whispered. And it didn’t. That quickening of his pulse was nothing more than anticipating unloading his anger at Tracy.

“Jack! Bedtime!” she called.

“Who was at the door, Mommy?” Chuck stretched forward to see the boy.

“Someone I used to work with,” Tracy answered. “Did you brush your teeth?”

“Yes,” he huffed, and then quick as a flash he ran from the back of the house, pausing for a moment at the stairs just a few feet from Chuck. “Hi!” he said with a wave. Then he called “Bye!” and scampered up the stairs.

“G’nite, buddy,” Chuck called before he realized what was happening. It was an easy, natural reflex. Gavin raised an eyebrow and Chuck felt a flush of heat. What if? What if the boy really was?

He eased his hands into the back pockets of his jeans so Gavin couldn’t see them shake. A son. He didn’t want to believe it, refused to allow the thoughts to form, but that squeezing crush in his chest forced him to face reality. That boy ... Tracy’s son ... could be ...

“Now then, gentlemen,” Tracy said when she came back downstairs. “I’m sorry to keep you waiting, but Jack comes first.” She walked past them and into the living room. “Who’s your friend, Chuck?” she asked, without bothering to turn around.

He glanced at Gavin and nodded. They weren’t dealing with abstracts anymore, but he didn’t have the luxury of thinking this through. “What? Oh, this is Gavin Heatley.”

“Mr. Heatley, I’m pleased to meet you,” she said. “I hope you haven’t believed the things Chuck has said about me. Please, come and sit down, gentlemen.” Tracy motioned them to the sofa, while she curled up in the easy chair across from them. She glanced at Gavin, and with a bit of a smirk she asked, “Are you afraid to be alone with me, Chuck?”

Seeing Tracy again brought every detail of every moment they were together to the front of his mind. Images of her flashed through his memory. He knew his face was flushing and he was furious with himself, ashamed that she still caught his eye, and disappointed that she could get a reaction out of him. “After what I did to my wife, yes,” Chuck answered firmly.

“Speaking of your wife, isn’t it against the law for her to give out her students’ personal information?”

She had a lot of nerve, accusing Bobbi. “You knew this would happen when you put him in her class.”

“Oh, I expected you.”

“Then you know why I’m here.” Chuck’s jaw tensed. Now the fight began.

“Of course. This is the part where you demand to know if Jack is your son.”

“Is he?”

“No.”

“You’re lying.” Wasn’t she?

“Am I?” She smiled and crossed her arms across her chest.

“His birth date is nine months after we were together.”

“That doesn’t mean anything.”

“He looks like me.”

“He is much cuter, much more handsome than you are.”

Chuck rolled his eyes at her uncharacteristically juvenile jab. “You named him Charles. I don’t believe that’s a coincidence.”

“What if he is your son?” She dropped her arms and leaned forward. Her charm evaporated, and her eyes narrowed. “What are you going to do about it?”

He didn’t have an answer. He came over here denying that the boy was his, but if —since — he was, what was his plan? He glanced at Gavin and before he knew what was happening, words were spilling out. “I’m going to be his dad.”

“His dad?” Tracy mocked. “Two days ago, you didn’t know he existed, and suddenly you have all these paternal instincts?”

“He needs a dad.”

“No, he doesn’t!” Tracy pointed at Chuck. “He doesn’t need you, and I don’t need you!”

“Why did you put him in Bobbi’s class if you didn’t want me to find out? You’re not making any sense.”

Tracy walked toward the front door. “You know, Chuck, you made it very clear you didn’t want anything to do with me when you blew me off.”

“Blew you off?” Chuck exploded off the sofa, catching up with her in two strides. “I ended an extramarital affair with you! Then you sued me!” He felt Gavin’s hand on his shoulder, pulling him back.

“I think you’re through here,” Gavin said with quiet strength.

Chuck twisted away from him. “Wait a minute. If you’d followed through with the suit, I would have found out you were pregnant. That’s why you dropped the lawsuit, isn’t it?”

Tracy jerked the front door open. “Go home, Chuck. Go back home to your perfect wife, your perfect sons and your perfect little girl, and leave me and Jack alone.”

“This isn’t over. I’ll find out the truth about Jack.”

“You do that,” she replied. “Mr. Heatley, goodnight.”

“Ms. Ravenna,” Gavin said with a slight nod as he shepherded Chuck through the door.

“This is not over!” Chuck called as Tracy slammed the door behind him. He clenched his fists and half moaned, half yelled, “How could she do this to me?”

“She had no compunction about committing adultery. It’s no stretch that she would lie to you about something this big.”

“But why? Nearly destroying my marriage wasn’t enough! She had to get pregnant and then use that against me.” He jerked his car door open and dropped in the driver’s seat. His pulse pounded in his neck, and Gavin had barely closed his door before Chuck pulled away from the curb. “She set me up.”

“How do you know she did this on purpose?”

“Because that’s how she is!”

“Maybe she is, but every kind of birth control can fail. This may have been an unplanned pregnancy.”

“Nothing that woman does is unplanned.”

“All right, so she intended to get pregnant. She obviously doesn’t want anything from you.”

“It’s not about what she wants! It’s about what this is going to do to my wife!” That crushing squeeze returned to his chest. “I have to walk in my house, look Bobbi in the eye ...”

His vision blurred as tears welled up in his eyes. He paid for this sin already - six long months of separation from his wife, counseling and more counseling. “I gotta, I gotta pull over,” he murmured, and drove his car into a parking lot. Resting his head on the steering wheel, he choked back tears. “That boy is mine. I know he is, but ...”

“You said you wanted to be his dad.”

“Yeah, I mean I have to, right? I have an obligation to him.” He ran a hand back through his hair. “But Bobbi? How can I ask her to ...” He shook his head and let a long breath escape. “I can’t. I can’t ask her to have anything to do with this. Then there’s Brad, Joel, and Shannon. How do you think the boys are going to take this?”

“They’re young men now. They’ll be much more concerned with how it affects Bobbi and Shannon.”

“I’m gonna have to take her to court.” He laid his head against the headrest and sighed. “So what do you think?”

“About?”

“Tracy and Jack. You think he’s my son?”

“Without question.”

“So what does she want? What is she doing?”

“She’s a scorned woman who has come back to prove she’s a better mother than Bobbi.”

“That’s crazy! Bobbi ... Being a mother is who she is! Teaching is just an extension of mothering. Tracy could never be! So does she think I’m gonna leave Bobbi now? When I see what a great mother she is? That’s delusional.”

“I don’t think she wants you. She just wants to show you what you walked away from.”

He shook his head. “No. There’s something else going on.”

“Then it might be best to slow down.”

“But what’s Jack gonna think if I don’t try to get to know him?”

“You’re going to try to build a relationship with him? Bring him into your family?”

“You don’t think that’s the right thing?”

“You just said you couldn’t ask Bobbi to be part of this. Now you’re talking about being his dad. You’re not making any sense.”

“You’re right, you’re right.” He blew out a deep breath. “She makes me nuts.”

“Yeah, and the less contact you have with her the better. Better for you, and better for Bobbi.”

“I know that, but I don’t see what other choice I have. You make it sound like I have to choose between Jack and Bobbi. I don’t want this to come between us, but I can’t pretend that Jack doesn’t exist. He’s my son.”

“And Bobbi is your wife. You can’t decide this unilaterally.”

“What if she doesn’t want anything to do with Jack?”

Gavin took a long slow breath. “Then I think you should honor that.”