

Barrett: Last Man Standing – Book 4

by Lucinda Race

EXCERPT

Chapter One

“Uncle Barrett, you came!” A tiny tornado leaped into his open arms as he knelt down on the slate stone path.

“Jessie, I haven’t ever missed your birthday party. I was the first one of your daddy’s friends to hold you after you were born.” His goddaughter was five with enormous green eyes and fiery-red curls that were secured in two pigtales. What she lacked in size she made up for in personality.

She planted a noisy kiss on his cheek and slipped from his hug. “Come on. Daddy said we had to wait for you before we had cake.” She finally noticed that he had kept one arm behind his back and she raced to his side and squealed. “Is that a present for me?”

“I don’t know of another godchild having a birthday today.” He handed her the bright-green bag with the purple bow holding it closed.

“What is it?” The look on her face was pure adoration and curiosity.

Before he could answer, one of his best friends jogged down the steps and stuck out a hand. “Barrett, I was starting to wonder if you were stuck at the office or if a beautiful woman had captured your attention for a half second.”

He clapped his hand on Julian’s shoulder. Jessie was the spitting image of her dad with the red hair and green eyes, but she was petite like her mother. “And miss the party of the year? Not a chance.” He winked at Jessie. “Let’s go see about that cake, shortcake.”

She took the oversized bag from him and disappeared inside the house, calling to her mom that they could light the candles now.

The two men took a detour around the outside of the house. “Am I the last to arrive?”

“Carson and Beth just got here with the new baby, and Teddy and Clara and their four got here about a half hour ago, so yup, you’re the last.”

He glanced over his shoulder at the driveway. “A lot of cars out there for just four families.” And he had noticed there were a few cars without car seats.

“You know my wife likes to invite the world to our cookouts so she invited a few friends from work, and of course our parents are here too, so it’ll be the usual chaos.”