



*Changing*

**GRADUATES**

BACK IN THE DAY SERIES

EMBER DAVIS

*Changing*  
**GRADES**

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Changing Grades (Back In The Day Series) by Ember Davis

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For those who have found that going back can sometimes lead  
to your future.

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# CHAPTER 1

## *SIENNA*

Dress that looks damn good on me and hugs all my curves in just the right way? Check. Hair done and looking better than it has in a while considering messy buns are life? Check, check. A night out where I know I'll probably hate every second of it, but I won't turn it down because being a single mom is rough? Check, check, check.

I look over my make-up one more time and nod at my reflection. This is, literally, the best it's going to get. I'm not going to this reunion to impress anyone anyway. Hell no. I'm going so I can get out of the house for a night and be around adults.

Adults who will probably want to tell me all about the success they've had over the last 15 years. They'll want to parade their partners around or maybe relive their high school glory days. As if any of it makes a damn bit of difference at night when you're all alone with your thoughts, even if you share a bed with someone.

I have a feeling I'm going to hate every minute of tonight, but I also can't resist. It's a right of passage, just like high school was with all those milestones we couldn't wait for because we had no idea what real life was going to be like. Or how hard it would be.

It was all shiny lights and idealized versions of ourselves when we looked out into the future, but now we're here. Or there. Whatever. Now we must face the reality that we had no idea what we wanted. Fuck, we barely knew who we were.

I'm not sure I have a better handle on it now, but I do know what is important in my life.

As if my thoughts conjure her into existence, my bedroom door opens and my almost 12-year-old daughter, Callie, walks into the room. She looks at my outfit and makes a motion with her hand for me to spin around, which, of course, I do. I've

done the same to her so many times and I guess it's time for a little payback.

“You look amazing, Mom,” Callie gushes and my heart fucking swells with the love I have for her.

Getting pregnant with her was not planned and, in many ways, it derailed my entire life, but I wouldn't change it. There were some very tough times, but I devoted my life to being her mom and doing the best for her I could. I've never wavered in my devotion from the moment I looked down at the pregnancy test to find everything had changed.

My parents were a little disappointed when I left college, without my degree, and returned home to Denver to have Callie. They supported me and they never shunned me. Most importantly, they never treated Callie like she was a mistake.

I suppose I could have stayed on campus and tried to finish out the year, but it felt like such a big thing. Especially after Callie's father, who I had been dating at the time, started to spread rumors about me and my pregnancy. He told people I cheated on him, and he wasn't the father. If that wasn't bad enough, people believed him. He was very good at being charming and manipulative. I didn't want to see the truth before everything went to shit, but it became much harder to ignore after I told him I was pregnant.

He's never been in Callie's life. He's never tried to contact me to find out if he had a son or a daughter. As far as I'm concerned, he's Callie's sperm donor and nothing more. I've done everything I can to ensure she doesn't feel rejected by him. Still, there are times when she gets a look of longing in her eyes, and I wonder if she's missing out on having a dad in her life.

If there is a man out there who is supposed to fill that role for her, we'll find him. When the time is right. I've been devoted to my little girl and making sure we have the best life we can with what we have. I haven't had time to date a lot and I'm more than okay with it.

Being with her father all those years ago and his reaction to my pregnancy left me feeling more than a little sour about the



opposite sex. I haven't been ready to jump feet first back into the whole dating thing. Not as a single mother and not as someone who has been burned before.

No, thanks. I'm good.

I shake off those thoughts and focus on the only thing that really matters to me—my daughter. “Are you excited about spending the night with Grandma and Grandpa?”

Callie's eyes light up as she nods. “We're going to make cookies and Grandma said I could stay up as late as I want.”

I barely hold in a groan. She's so good for me and is always following my rules. Having one night without those same restrictions isn't going to hurt her. Let's not look too deeply at the fact that my parents were strict with me. It's different when it's their granddaughter, I get it. Mostly. Kinda.

“Just not too late,” the words slip out, but all Callie does is roll her eyes.

I can't help but smile at my daughter. She's turning into a wonderful young lady, and I can't wait to see the woman she grows into. I hope I've given her a great foundation so she'll always respect herself, be strong, and know her independence is a strength and not something she has to give up for someone else.

I know the time when she'll be interested in boys is right around the corner. I hope I've instilled the self-confidence she'll need to navigate puberty with grace. I felt like a damn albatross as I went through all those changes, but I think I did better than others.

I was nice to everyone and friendly with a lot of different groups of people in school. I wasn't one of the mean girls because we definitely had those. I didn't judge others. I dated, but I was never part of one of those ‘it’ couples. You know the ones. I was considered one of the smart girls but was still relatively popular.

I hope Callie is like me. She started middle school just a few weeks ago and is so grown up in so many ways. It's

killing part of me, but the rest of me is so damn proud that I'm able to push away that sting of my baby growing up.

"Come on," I glance at the mirror one more time and smooth down the skirt of my dress, "this is about as good as it's going to get."

Callie smiles warmly, her eyes which are like mine, thankfully, are filled with love. "You look amazing, Mom. She comes over to me and grabs my shoulders, looking very serious for a moment. "I know you've only cared about being my mom for a long time, but tonight I want you to go and have a good time. An actual good time. Don't worry about me, I'll be fine."

I blink at my daughter, and I swear I see her twenty-year old self standing in front of me instead of the eleven-year-old. I swallow hard and nod slowly. "Stop trying to be so grown up, you're still the kid here," I tease her which earns me a giggle.

When we get to my parent's house, she gives me a quick hug and is out of the car quickly, while throwing a goodbye over her shoulder. I watch as she goes up to the door where Mom is standing and waving at me. I know she's probably hoping for the same thing Callie is—that I have a good time and forget, even if only for a night, about all the responsibilities on my shoulders.

I take one more look before I drive away and head to the high school. It's not far away from my parent's house considering they still live in the same place they did while I was growing up. It's not the richest neighborhood, but it's comfortably middle class. The school is situated in such a place, though, that it pulls from a few different neighborhoods, some which weren't as well off as mine and some even more so.

It was always a hard balance to find, and money often seemed to be the dividing line between classmates. It wasn't right and the judgement some kids came up against always turned my stomach. I hated it, but I had no idea what to do

about it as a kid, even though I loved to think of myself as more grown up than I was.

Now, I've struggled with my own place in the world when it comes to what I earn because I made the choice to leave college. I always thought I'd go back, but I didn't. It's not something I can regret anymore. I refuse to look back.

I'm nervous when I get to my old high school, a little surprised the reunion is in the gym and not some hotel conference room, but there's a sense of nostalgia as I pull up and take in my old stomping grounds. I haven't been back here in years, and it looks like there have been some updates. That's probably why they decided to have the reunion here—I bet they're going to try and get some alumni donations out of us for even more renovations.

There are a few people walking in from the parking lot, but no one I recognize right away. I'm thankful for it because I don't know if I'm ready to confront all of those 'what are you doing now' questions I know are waiting for me. I'll have to deal with them soon and being here alone isn't going to help matters.

Fuck. Maybe this was a bad idea.

When I force my feet to step up to the table set up in the vestibule of the gym, the streamers and balloons decorating the area in the school's colors make me smile. I force myself to keep my smile in place when I notice the woman sitting at the table eyeing me. I don't look all that different, I don't think, but how would I be able to tell that?

Sharon was both smart and one of those mean girls, it was kind of an awful combination. Thankfully she didn't fully fall into the cliché of being head cheerleader as well. No, but her best friend was. Sharon also happened to be the class president senior year.

I guess it makes sense she's sitting front and center at a table filled with nametags.

"Sienna?" Sharon's voice is just as annoying as I remember it being. She stands up quickly, comes around the table, and

hugs me before I can put a stop to it. “Wow.” She pulls away from me and holds me at arm’s length. “You look amazing. I don’t think I’ve seen you since graduation.”

“You look great too, Sharon,” I force my voice to be brighter than I’m feeling.

It all feels so fake. Was it always this way and I just didn’t notice back then? I’m already exhausted.

“I’d love to catch up with you, but I have to man the table for a little while longer and greet everyone.” She turns and plucks my nametag from the table and hands it to me. “You go inside and see who there is to see. I’ll catch up with you. I want to hear all about what you’ve been up to for the last 15 years.”

I smile at her and nod. “Sounds good,” I chirp, not feeling the words at all.

I’m a horrible actress and she can probably see right through me, but I don’t care. I’m already striding away, feeling more and more inferior with every step. How am I going to get through tonight?

Everyone—from my parents, the teachers, and even the other students—had high expectations of me back in school. I got into a prestigious college and thought I had everything planned out. It was going well too...until it wasn’t.

Not that I regret Callie, not at all, but it changed the path of my life. I’m sure other people stayed on their paths. Maybe others went even farther than they thought they were going to.

Part of me doesn’t even care. Another part is desperate to know.

I make a beeline for the bar, noticing right away how many people are looking at me. I wouldn’t mind, but there is more than one guy leering at me, and it only makes it hit home that I’m alone here tonight. No date. No one to buffer unwanted advances.

Maybe I won’t stay long. I can only hope to get out of this with my dignity and my self-worth intact.

I shouldn't have come.



## CHAPTER 2

### *GRIFFIN*

As I look up at my high school, a place I haven't been since I graduated 15 years ago, I regret letting my friends talk me into coming here. I don't have a damn thing to prove to these people. I shouldn't give a flying fuck what anyone thinks of me, and I don't.

Yet here I am.

The day after I found out about my reunion, I was quieter than normal while working with the rest of the guys of my construction crew. They all picked up on it. I should have known Lawson, our foreman, wasn't going to just let it go without asking what was going on with me.

He's like that and it's one of the reasons he makes a great leader for our crew. He also wants to make sure our heads are in the game. It might not always be dangerous on site, but it's not some cushy desk job either. Fucking thankfully. I would pull my hair out if I were stuck in some cubicle somewhere.

"What's eating at you, Griffin?" Lawson was looking at me curiously and before I could even open my mouth he added, "Don't try and tell me nothing either. It's written all over your face."

I let out a long-suffering sigh and my shoulders slumped. "I found out about my 15-year high school reunion. I avoided the last one and didn't give a fuck about not going. Found out, dismissed it, and then didn't think about it again."

"But this one, you can't seem to let it go," he didn't pose it as a question, just as a fact and I nodded as I noticed everyone was listening in.

Court, who isn't usually one to get involved, came closer and mused, "Sounds like you need to go."

"I don't have anything to prove to anyone I went to high school with," I scoffed.

“Maybe not,” Court agreed with a shrug, “But maybe you need to prove something to you.”

I narrowed my eyes at the man who was speaking way too much fucking truth. He walked away and let his words sink in while Lawson gave me a weighted look. I didn't need to be the former Valedictorian of my class, which I wasn't anyway, to interpret it.

Hell, I wasn't much of anything in high school. I had a few friends, people from my neighborhood, the same one filled with struggling single moms just like my mom. They tried their best, but there was a huge socioeconomic gap amongst the students.

I felt the judgement from the popular kids in school because I didn't give a fuck about name brands or how rich someone's daddy was. Those same kids were probably sure I wouldn't amount to anything.

The thing is, what they never could have predicted, was I had a plan. I always knew I wasn't going to go to college, and I was okay with it. It's one of the reasons I made sure to focus when it came to our Career Tech class. I needed a skill that I could hone because I was going to get my mom and sister out of the neighborhood and make sure mom didn't have to work so hard.

It didn't take nearly as long as I thought it would. I love working with my hands and my woodworking skills have only gotten better.

Now I'm about to face the people who thought their big plans of four-year universities and big-wig jobs were better than an honest wage for an honest day's work. I'm sure for some of them, they're exactly where they want to be and will continue to look down on me, just like they did then.

They won't care that I bought my mom a house and then restored it before moving on to my own house. They won't care that I've been helping to put my sister, Salem, through college and she just started her senior year. They won't care that I can build something out of nothing using my hands and



wood. Or that people want me to make them those things and are willing to pay for them.

I slam the door to my truck with a little too much force, annoyed at myself for the need to be here at all. As much as I was dreading this, with every step I take toward the gym something feels lighter in my chest. It makes no damn sense, but now I feel like I need to get inside even faster.

What the fuck is that about?

When I step into the vestibule, I notice Sharon, who I would recognize anywhere, sitting at a table covered in name tags. Sharon had a lot of people fooled. She seemed sweet on the outside, but she was always rotten on the inside. She looked down on me because I didn't live in the same neighborhood as she did or because I usually had one pair of shoes to get me through the entire year. Which, by the way, was enough for me.

She was the kind of girl to wear a different pair of shoes every day at school, all to match her outfits, which had to be color coordinated from her clothes to her purse and her accessories. I shudder to think about the kind of guy she ended up with. She dated one of the football players back in the day, but I doubt she stuck with him. She probably wanted a bigger fish to hook.

Poor guy.

Well, maybe not, because if he's the kind of guy to stand her then he's probably not much better.

*Don't be as bad as they were to you. It's not worth it.*

Fuck. Thanks conscience. It's almost a shame my mom raised me to be better than that. I wish I could be petty for a little while longer.

Sharon narrows her eyes at me, and I smirk. I'm wearing a pair of jeans and a button-up shirt underneath my leather jacket. I'm not here to impress anyone, but my jacket is handmade and fucking gorgeous, butter soft leather. If she bothers to look past who she thinks I was back then to see who I am now she might actually be impressed.

Her eyes rake over me and I almost shudder. I've grown into my body in the last 15 years. I was a little lanky in high school, more height than bulk, but working with my body has changed that. Not that I'll be letting Sharon closer than she is right now to find out exactly how much I've filled in. No thank you.

"Griffin Welch," my voice is clipped as I watch her eyes widen.

She reaches for a nametag and starts to hand it to me as she clears her throat. "It's so good to see you again, Griffin," she coos.

"I'm sure it's not, Sharon," my voice is smooth and not as biting as my words, not even close. She blinks at me and starts to sputter, but I shrug casually and grin. "I'm not one for fakes and liars. Never was."

When I start to move away from the table, her mouth drops open, and I barely stop myself from barking out a laugh. This is probably bordering on cruel considering how much enjoyment I'm getting from it. Is that going to stop me? Hell no.

The moment I walk into the gym and take in all the decorations, it reminds me an awful lot of the homecomings and proms I didn't go to. It wasn't that I couldn't get a date, I probably could have, but Mom needed me to watch Salem and I wasn't going to put her in a bind. Not when she's done so much for me.

I was always more than happy to stay home and not put on some suit and go to a dance with awkward, hormone filled teenagers trying to look cool. Not my scene.

Spending a night with Salem was always better. She was always making up stories and acting them out for me on weekend nights. I should have known she'd be a theater major and want to make it her life's work.

My chest tightens with pride knowing I've helped my sister do something I never had the hope to do. She's getting her education and she's thriving because of it. I can only hope that

continues for the rest of her life. I desperately want her to be happy.

I look around the room and don't see a single person I'm interested in talking to. I had a few friends back in high school, but I don't see any of them. I'm already hooked up with them on social media and know what they're up to in their lives. Maybe I'm too early and they'll show up before I blow this fucking popsicle stand.

I should have asked if they were coming, but I was worried I wouldn't come if they said no.

Everyone has fake smiles plastered on their faces while trying to look far more important than they probably are. It reminds me of how they were back then.

I look toward the bar and my lungs deflate with a woosh. The only real person in the place is standing at the bar, looking uncomfortable, but just as gorgeous as she did back in high school.

Sienna Erickson.

Fucking hell. I had a crush on her back in school, but she was out of my league. She was out of everyone's league really. The light inside of her shined so bright and it was wrapped up in a beautiful, smart, and kind package.

That was the best and worst part.

She had that girl next door thing going on, without any artifice. Without any expectation. Without anything but truth.

I only talked to her a few times in school, but it always gave me a little slice of peace.

She looks a little lost and I notice quite a few guys looking at her with hunger in their eyes, even the ones who are clearly with someone. It has me glaring at them. Part of me can't blame them because Sienna is the sexiest woman I've ever seen.

The dress she's wearing hugs every single one of her curves. She didn't get a lot taller than the 5'5" she was in high school, which means I have some inches on her, but I have no

doubt she'd fit against me perfectly. Her dark hair is hanging down her back and I wonder how it would feel slipping through my fingers as I run them through her tresses.

Then what would it feel like to grip the strands so I could tip her head back and kiss her until we both forget how much we don't want to be here?

She has to be here with someone. Right? As I watch her, my gut screams at me that she's alone. It doesn't mean she's single, but I want it to be true.

I notice one of the football players, fuck if I remember what his name is, start to make his way toward Sienna and something roars inside of me. Sienna looks up, sees fuckface coming toward her, and grimaces. It has my feet moving faster.

"Sienna Erickson," the guy schmoozes.

I roll my eyes as fire races through my veins. My woman looks like she's at a loss. Why does that feel so right? *My woman.*

I want her. I didn't know how to approach her back then, but I do now. Something in me yearns to know everything about her and to have her in my life. It's a strange sensation, but it feels right.

"Uh, hi," her voice is unsure as she speaks to jockstrap stuck in the past. When I stop next to Sienna, she looks up at me and her eyes widen as she sucks in a sharp breath. "Griffin? Griffin Welch?"

A slow smile spreads across my face. In part because she remembers me and the rest because the dude who thought he could even breathe my woman's air is clearly, and thoroughly, dismissed. She doesn't even glance at him as she looks me over, attraction in her gaze.

"Sienna," my voice is low and husky, making me wish I wasn't at our reunion for a whole other reason. "Damn, you look amazing," I suffuse as I lean against the bar. I nod toward the drink she's holding. "You want another?"

She smiles up at me. “With you?” I find myself nodding without even meaning to. “I’d love to have a drink with you.” There’s something forward about her words, but the way she’s looking at me and the slight pinkening of her cheeks is full of shy innocence. Still. She giggles softly and looks away. “I used to have the biggest crush on you.”

My heart starts to hammer inside my chest. She looks up at me with big, wide eyes as if she didn’t mean to say those words.

“I felt the same way,” I admit, not wanting to hold back and needing her to know.

I swear the woman leans into me. For the first time since I found out about the reunion, I’m fucking ecstatic I decided to come. I want to soak up all the sweetness Sienna exudes and I’m going to. Every single drop.



## CHAPTER 3

### *SIENNA*

I can't believe I admitted I used to have a crush on Griffin. Or that he felt the same way about me. It makes me feel a little drunk, like the possibility has me floating on air. I never want my feet to touch the ground again.

His dark eyes are filled with promises, ones I'm not sure I should indulge in, even though I desperately want to. He's so fucking handsome now. He was always an attractive guy, but now he's so much more. It's almost funny because I thought he was the hottest guy back then and now I realize I had no idea what hot was. The man standing in front of me is beyond my wildest expectations of such a mundane descriptor.

Griffin's shoulders are broad and it's clear he's strong and muscular, but it's the kind of strong you don't get in the gym. His hair is longer on top and shaved on the sides and right now it's tied back and away from his face. I desperately want to pull the tie off and run my fingers through his hair.

Would he let me?

I probably shouldn't ask. It would be strange.

Just like it would be strange if I were to run my fingers along the short beard on his face just to feel the stubble against my fingers. Yup, totally weirdo behavior.

Let's hope I can keep my shit together and not make a fool of myself. Well, more of a fool out of myself considering I've already admitted I had a crush on him.

Griffin nods to the bartender who gives him a beer and brings me a fresh drink which is just a virgin Shirley Temple. I'm really living it up on my night away from Callie. But can you blame me? I don't want to be here and the last thing I need to add to the mix is alcohol.

"Sienna," he says my name like pure seduction, and it has my entire body perking up as he takes hold of my elbow and

leads me over to some tables in the corner of the room, “it might be the most cliché question, but what have you been up to for the last fifteen years?”

I take a big drink to try and give my mouth a little moisture back because his voice is too sexy for me to handle. Then there’s the uncertainty about answering his question. It’s a simple one, I know it, logically, but will he look at me differently once I spill all my secrets? I could try and keep the whole truth from him, but I’ve never been ashamed of Callie or who I am and I’m not going to start now.

I heave a big sigh and Griffin tilts his head to the side, his dark eyes boring into me as if he’s trying to see the deepest parts of me. The thing is—I want to show him who I am.

“I went off to college, but it didn’t go how I thought it would go,” I admit quietly.

“Don’t tell me that a good girl like you got sucked into partying and stopped studying. You were always one of the smartest people here while also being popular and nice.”

I duck my head slightly, a little embarrassed at his assessment of me, but he doesn’t let me get away with it. His fingers are cool from where he was holding the chilled glass of his beer when he grasps my chin and tips my head back up. There’s a softness in his eyes, one that thrills me and makes me want to be wrapped up in it.

“It wasn’t like that. I was still committed to my studies.” He lets go of my chin and I look away, thinking about that time in my life. “I had big dreams, ya know?”

“The dreams of kids are usually innocent, but life has a way of making them much harder to achieve,” his voice is gentle and lulling.

I nod slowly and swallow hard. “Things didn’t go my way, that’s for sure.” He stiffens and I figure it’s better to just jump in with both feet. “I was dating this guy and I got pregnant. He didn’t want anything to do with me after I told him. I ended up dropping out and coming home.” I feel a smile lift my lips. “Callie is almost 12 now and just started sixth grade.”



Griffin sucks in a sharp breath which has me quickly looking at him. There are so many emotions flitting across his face and I'm not sure where to start sifting through them. He's pissed, but I know it's not at me. He's curious and it makes my heart beat faster. He's still attracted to me, and my body responds to the lust in his gaze.

"You have a daughter?" Even though there is no judgement in Griffin's voice, I still eye him warily. I'm not at all prepared for the slow smile to overtake his face. Strange. He doesn't seem to mind that I'm a single mom. Is this a reunion or a parallel universe? "I bet you're a great mom."

"I try to be," my voice is small, "but I'm not sure if I succeed most of the time. She's a great kid and has kept me grounded. It's hard to wallow in what might have been when you have a child depending on you."

His voice is quiet, and I have to strain to hear it, "Do you regret it?"

"No," the word comes out fiercely, like a shot. "I could never regret having Callie or giving up what I thought my life was going to be like. Being her mom is a blessing and she's made my life so much richer. I have all these happy memories of her," I chuckle, "and some not as happy, but they made me grow into a better person."

He reaches over and wraps his large hand around the back of my neck, giving it a squeeze, seriousness lining his face as if his next words will hold only truth in them. "You're a strong woman, Sienna." He gives me a boyish grin that has my pussy clenching. "Gorgeous too." I roll my eyes and huff out a laugh, but the intensity in his eyes won't let me push away the compliment completely.

The warmth from his palm and the way his calloused thumb brushes back and forth over my skin has me almost panting. I don't recall ever wanting a man as much as I want this one in front of me. It doesn't make a lot of sense, but he hasn't run away from me yet, even when I led with the whole single mom thing. Hope might be a thing with feathers, but what if this time it can soar on the air currents and lift?

His eyes go a little unfocused before he chuckles and looks at me. “I wasn’t going to come tonight. I figured I didn’t have anything to prove to people who made assumptions about me and what I would amount to, and I don’t. Something was telling me to come, though, and I couldn’t shake it.” He gives the nape of my neck a squeeze, reminding me he’s still touching me when it felt so comfortable that I had forgotten all about it. “I think I was supposed to come so I could see you again.”

I bite my lip, trying not to feel the impact of his words as deeply as they want to hit. I can’t remember the last time someone was as focused on me as Griffin is right now. I can’t remember the last time it felt like someone was seeing me and really seeing me, not just the single mom, not just the person who didn’t realize their full potential.

“I just figured I’d get a night out with adults,” I joke. “I wasn’t looking forward to being here and being judged. You haven’t done that.”

“I never will, Starshine.”

I blink at his nickname for me. “Starshine?”

“You always shone bright like the stars on a cloudless night in the mountains. Anyone could see it. Life might not have gone the way you thought it would, but you’re still shining.”

“Griffin,” I breathe out and he smirks like he knows I’m a heartbeat away from launching myself at him. Which would be bad form at our reunion. Probably. I clear my throat. “You asked me what I’ve been up to, and I answered, now it’s only fair for you to do the same.”

He chuckles, the sound rich and smooth like melted chocolate and I fight the urge to crawl into his lap to explore the decadence of him. As he starts talking and telling me about his life, his job, and his family, I can feel the pride pouring from him. It makes me ache with the desire to be part of what makes this man proud. I want to help give purpose to his life, which he has already molded in a way that deserves to be praised.

I hang on to every word, listening intently, when he talks about restoring a house for his mom and himself. I'm kind of in awe of him and I don't recall ever being in awe of a man. Not like this. He's so much more than the handsome package in front of me.

He's caring, thoughtful, and driven. It's sexy as hell and I don't want this night to end anytime soon. I don't notice anything else going on around us other than hearing the music, which were hits 15 years ago, playing through the speakers.

Part of me wonders what would have happened if we had gotten close in high school, but I don't let the thought go very far. I had to take the path I did because if I didn't then I wouldn't have Callie and I was being honest when I told Griffin I could never regret my daughter.

"I bet your house is beautiful," I can't keep the note of hope out of my voice as I say the words. When I hear them out loud, they make me feel awkward, like I'm inviting myself into his home and his life. I shake my head and flash him a smile. "It sounds like you put a lot of work into it while still preserving the history of it."

"I did. I didn't want a cookie cutter home and it had good bones to work with." He nods toward my now empty drink on the table. "Do you want to go and grab another drink?"

"Sure," my voice is breezy even though I'm worried he's done talking to me and wants to find an out.

As we stand and he leads me over to the bar, the hand he places on my lower back feels like a brand against my skin. I shouldn't read too much into it, but it's difficult not to. I want to believe it could mean something...or everything.

There are a lot of people around the bar and people start recognizing me instantly while giving sidelong looks at Griffin. I smile up at him, hoping he won't leave my side. There's something about him that makes me feel stronger and, as if in response, he puts a little more pressure on where he's touching my back. It's reassuring and grounding which is just what I need.

Sharon is there along with a man I assume is her husband. There are other people who were on the student council as well as some former football players. I talk politely with them, but I don't give any of them as much information about myself as I already have given Griffin. He might not have judged me, but they will.

The only time Griffin steps away from me is to grab another beer for himself and another drink for me. I almost melt into a puddle when he leans down, his lips brushing the shell of my ear as he whispers, "I'll grab you that drink, Starshine, and be right back."

I believe him too and he doesn't disappoint, appearing back at my side moments later. People start asking him questions about what he's doing with himself, which he answers honestly and without being boastful. He could brag about his accomplishments left and right just like most of the people around us are, but there's something sexier about him being confident in himself and not needing to use his deeds to impress anyone.

When the night starts to wind down, my heart sinks. I don't want to leave him. I want more time.

I can't remember the last time I wanted more time around a man, and I have no idea what to do about it.

Griffin, being the gentleman he is, doesn't leave room for argument when he tells me, "I'll walk you out to your car, Sienna."

The glint in his eyes tells me there's no use in trying to argue with him. All I can do is nod, not wanting to end this any sooner than I have to. He wants to walk me out? It means I get a few more minutes.

I was dreading coming tonight and as I say goodbye to a few people, I know it would have been awful if I hadn't found Griffin as early as I did or if he had left me to the wolves. I'm grateful. But there's something deeper I'm feeling as well.

Every step has my chest feeling a little hollower. It's a loneliness I've been able to ignore over the last 12 years

because I was focused on Callie. Even when she went to school and didn't need my undivided attention, she still needed me more than I needed to find something or someone to fill that loneliness. I never wanted her to feel like she wasn't enough.

I point out my SUV and notice how my hand is shaking. Griffin doesn't comment, but he must see because he grabs that same hand and gives it a squeeze. It's only when we're standing next to my vehicle that I get the courage to look up at the man who has made this night bearable. No, he's made it exceptional and far better than bearable.

"Thank you for hanging out with me tonight," I force the words past my lips.

Griffin huffs out a breath, his dark gaze gaining intensity as he looks down at me. My mind races with the desire growing in me to pull him down and kiss him until we forget everything but each other. I don't get the chance though.

Because my mind blanks when he wraps his hand around the nape of my neck again. It's warm and comforting, but it only makes me want him more. The next thing I know, his lips are pressing against mine and we both make noises of contentment in the back of our throats.

The idea that he wanted to kiss me just as much as I wanted to kiss him settles in me and makes me feel brave. I wrap my arms around his shoulders, my fingers playing with the short hair on the back of his head, not caring even a little bit who is seeing us like this.

Why does kissing him feel like coming home?

When he nips at my bottom lip, I gasp and his tongue is there, exploring my mouth and making my knees go weak. His strong arms keep me in place—plastered against his firm chest as tingles spread through my body. They tell me that this man is more than I could hope for but is still right here with me.

It's almost too good to be true.

When he slows the kiss down and pulls back from my lips, I groan in annoyance. Griffin's dark eyes sparkle under the

moonlight shining down on us as we stand in the parking lot of our high school, a place which changed both of us and never knew the people we would become.

He presses his forehead against mine and takes a deep breath. "I want to see you again," he rasps. "Can I take you out on a date? It can be just us; I can plan for that. Or it can include you and Callie, I can plan for that too."

I blink up at the man in front of me as he tugs free a piece of my heart and soul, capturing it as his own.

"I'd like that," I whisper, afraid to talk too loudly and ruin the gentle peace existing around us, one I haven't felt in so damn long.

After exchanging numbers, he opens the door for me and then buckles me in once I'm inside. The chaste kiss he gives me has me wanting more, but he pulls back. It won't be the last time I see him which is what I hold onto as I head home.

After so many years alone while wondering about my path in life, I think I'm finally right where I'm supposed to be.



## CHAPTER 4

### *GRIFFIN*

While walking up to the townhouse where Sienna lives, a peace settles over me. I've been nervous to see her again all day. It was so bad that the guys in my crew were giving me shit most of the day, not that I would expect anything less from those asshats. Now though, when my heart should be pounding in my chest from nerves, all my worries seem to melt away into excitement.

I knock and I can't wait for her to open the door. I desperately want to see her. I can't even put it into words how much I've been looking forward to this.

Back in the day Sienna was unattainable, someone who would have never looked at me twice. She was gorgeous and everyone expected so much from her. I could see her still wrestling with what was expected of her when confronted with it at the reunion. It was clear she didn't regret where her path took her because of her daughter, but that doesn't mean it's easy to swallow.

The way Sienna lit up when talking about Callie made me want to meet her little girl. Part of me wishes she would have wanted our date tonight to include Callie. But I'm also looking forward to seeing if the connection I'm feeling is true before bringing a child in to the equation.

I don't have a problem with Sienna being a single mom. I know how hard it was for my mom and it only tells me how strong my woman is. I can only hope when I meet Callie everything clicks into place the same way it did when I saw Sienna again.

When the door swings open, I find myself staring at utter perfection. "Wow," I mutter as I take my woman in. She's not dressed up in some fancy clothes, but she doesn't need to be. The jeans she's wearing are molded to her legs and the top



she's wearing shows off her cleavage. "You look amazing, Starshine."

"Thank you," there's a hint of shyness in her voice which goes straight to my heart.

We've talked a little in the few days since the reunion because I couldn't hold off and I've learned a lot about my woman. She hasn't dated since she had Callie, who is the most important person in her life. If she deems me worthy to have a little space in her life, I'll count myself a lucky man.

Without thinking about it, I reach out and pull Sienna into my body, our arms wrapping around each other instinctively. She lets out a little sigh of pure contentment and I feel it reverberate through me.

My hand slides up her back until I'm gripping the nape of her neck and tipping back her head so I can look into her eyes. In the light, the hazel of her eyes seems to sparkle, and I hope I can always make them do that. I kiss her softly, needing to feel the connection between us, but I keep it short because I do want to take her out and show her what being with me will be like.

"Ready to go?" She nods slowly and I let out a heavy breath. "Good because if we stand here much longer, I won't be held responsible for my actions." I lean down and run my nose along the side of her neck, loving the way she shivers in my arms. "I want you, Sienna, but I'm willing to wait until you're ready because once you give yourself to me, I won't be letting you go."

"Griffin," my name on her lips is a breathy moan that makes me rethink this whole date thing.

I shake my head to get rid of the lust fog rolling in, stand up straight, and offer her my arm so I can lead her to my truck. The small giggle that comes out of her is fucking dancing starlight. Fucking perfection.

I ask a few questions about the last few days as we drive to the restaurant, one I was able to get a table at because I have a

connection to the owners. I want Sienna to have a good time and great food. I want her to see she's worth the effort.

After parking, I lead her inside and she blinks a few times before leaning into me, "I thought it was hard to get a table here. I hope you didn't do anything crazy to get in."

I chuckle and kiss my woman's temple because she's fucking adorable. "I know the owners," I keep my voice mysterious, just for fun, loving the way Sienna narrows her eyes at me.

It's hard to focus on the food during dinner because I can't stop watching how my woman's mouth forms words and how much I want to kiss them until our clothes have no other option than to melt away. I don't remember ever wanting a woman as much as I want her.

"I really appreciate you not pushing me to meet Callie already," her voice is soft, but there's a weight behind it I can't ignore, and I push aside all my lustful thoughts.

We've been getting to know each other all night, the conversation flowing easily between us, but this is more. I can feel it. I reach across the table, past the dessert we're sharing, and cover her hand with mine because I need to touch her, to have the connection.

"I want to meet your daughter because she's part of you, but we'll go at whatever pace you feel comfortable with, Starshine," I tell her gently and watch as her eyes get glassy with unshed tears. I can understand them, she's been on her own, even if she had help from her parents, for a long time. "I never thought I would be interested in a ready-made family, but then I saw you the other night at the reunion and I knew you were always meant to be mine." Her eyes round as she looks at me and I swallow past the lump in my throat. "I'm sorry I wasn't there to help you when you needed it. I'm sorry it didn't happen sooner."

The smile that curves my woman's lips is soft and sweet. "I think meeting you again, and actually talking to you this time," she sasses me a little, "happened at the right time. I've been so focused on Callie and being a good mom who can

give her a good life. I don't know if I would have been ready to appreciate what you seem to be offering."

"Oh, I'm offering," I growl the words, my cock throbbing behind the fly of my dress pants and causing Sienna to laugh, the sound husky and not helping matters at all. I take a deep breath and let it out slowly before I go on, "I understand what you mean though. You've been so strong, Sienna, and I hope you'll let me help with some of the burden from now on. I'd really like to be the man you rely on."

"I'd like that too," she whispers the words, almost too softly for me to hear, but I do, and they make my blood sizzle.

I give her hand a squeeze. "I know we're done eating, but I don't want the night to end."

The smile she gives me this time is wicked, conjuring up naughty thoughts I'm not sure she's ready for, no matter how much I wish she were. "How about you show me the house you renovated? We talked about it so much at the reunion and I'd love to be able to see it."

I narrow my eyes at her. "I was pretty sure you tuned out most of that conversation, especially when I started talking about band saws and grout."

She laughs and shakes her head. "You were so passionate about it; it was easy to get swept up in your pride and excitement. I'm not super handy, but I know the difference between a Phillips Head and a Flat Head screwdriver, and I'd love to see the masterpiece you've created."

I stare at her, wondering if she knows what she's really asking me. I'm not sure if I can take her to my place and not take her to bed. Her gaze is steady and sure, heating the longer we're staring at each other. It's all I need to see.

Getting out of the restaurant and home seems like it takes forever. I try and stuff down my need for my woman and remind myself I'm playing for keeps. There's no need to rush anything. I should give her a tour of the house, the one I hope she shares with me, one day, along with Callie.

I should.

I know it.

The moment the door closes behind us, something breaks loose inside of me. I pin her to the door, lift her with a firm grip on her thighs, and groan as she wraps her legs around my waist. Our bodies are pressed together, but it doesn't feel close enough. Will anything be close enough?

Her fingers run over the short hair of my beard before reaching up and pulling the elastic band from my hair. When her fingers start to rake through my hair, I'm barely hanging on.

"Sienna," I grit out through my teeth, "I need you to tell me right now if you're not ready. I want you and I'm so close to losing control."

Her hazel eyes look up at me, hooded and filled with lust, as she assesses me. "Is this just a one-night stand?"

"No," I practically roar the word, but she doesn't flinch. Instead, she gets a smug look of satisfaction on her face. "Everything I've said to you is true. I can't explain it, but I know you're meant to be mine. I'll cherish you and our family until the day I die and then longer still."

"Then what are you waiting for," Sienna purrs and if I could make the clothes we're wearing disintegrate right now I would. Since I can't, I pull away from the door and head toward the bedroom. Her laughter fills my home, and I don't think I've ever heard anything better. "I thought you were going to show me the house."

"I'll give you a tour later, Starshine," I speak against her skin as I start to pepper her neck with kisses. I mumble, "You'll be living here soon enough if I have my way."

Sienna stills with my words and I know they sound slightly unhinged, but I can't find it in me to care. Before she can think too much about it, I walk through the door to my room and stride across it until I can lay her down on the bed. My movements are gentle, and I can only hope she can feel how precious she is to me.

She stares up at me, but she doesn't fight against my words. I peel her clothing off her slowly, soaking up the sight in front of me. When she's naked, and I'm still fully clothed, I can see a hint of vulnerability in her hazel gaze.

I stand up and start to strip, moving much faster with my own clothing than I did hers. She licks her lips, her gaze heated as she watches me, but I can also see her getting more insecure with every breath she takes. When she starts to move her hands to cover herself, I shake my head.

"No, Starshine, don't cover your gorgeous body. I want to be able to see you," I rasp the words as I bare myself to her fully.

"But," she protests, her fingers running over some lines on her abdomen, probably left over from her pregnancy, "I have some flaws."

I grab her wrists gently, but firmly, with one hand and push them up until her hands are over her head as I crawl over her body. Feeling her skin against mine makes it hard to concentrate, but I keep it together. Fucking barely.

I kiss my woman hard, needing her to feel just how much I want her and how beautiful I think she is. This is more than words and it's clearly what she needs. The way her legs wrap around my waist while grinding her pussy against my dick, letting me feel how wet she is for me, is any indication.

When I pull away from her lips, she's panting and moaning with every kiss I plant against her skin. I move along her jaw and down her neck. "You're gorgeous, Starshine," each word comes with the press of my lips on her body, and she shivers underneath me. "I could worship you for the rest of my life and still not be satisfied."

The way she arches her back, pressing her body against mine, is fucking stunning. Watching her steals my breath and makes emotions well up inside of me that are almost too much. I push away the overwhelming onslaught to focus on my woman.

When I suck her nipple between my lips and swirl my tongue around it, she keens, “Griffin. Please.” Her words string together, but I can hear her clearly, “It’s been such a long time and I ache for you. Make it go away.”

I pop off her nipple, nipping a line across her chest to the other side. “I’ll give you exactly what you need, Sienna, because you’re going to give yourself fully to me. You’ll be mine.”

She lifts her head slightly and looks down at me as I bite on her pebbled nipple, and she jolts. Her voice is shaky, “You’ll be mine, too?”

“Always,” I vow before I let go of her wrists.

Her delicate hands find my shoulders right away and she presses her fingertips into my body, grounding both of us in this moment. I trail my hand down her body, barely grazing her as I do. The goosebumps on her skin as I touch her makes me smile.

“So responsive,” I growl with the pleasure of being right where I’m supposed to be. When I slide two fingers along her slit, she’s soaking wet, and I groan. “So fucking wet for me.”

“Fuck,” she gasps and tries to move her hips to get some friction where she wants it.

I plunge two fingers inside of her and she pushes her tits toward the ceiling as she cries out, pure pleasure on her lips. Her walls stretch around my fingers, and I already know burying my cock inside of her is going to ruin me for anyone else, as if I’m not already.

I finger fuck her, my thumb toying with her clit, until I can feel her pussy start to flutter, and I know she’s right on the edge. The blissful expression that washes over her face makes me almost regret what I’m about to do. Almost.

When she’s teetering, right there and not at the same time, I pull my fingers free. Her eyes fly open and the heat there is enough to scorch my skin.

Her voice is full of chastisement, and I have to stop myself from chuckling, “What the hell, Griffin?”

“The first time I make you come, it’s going to be on my cock, Sienna,” I grit out through my teeth, my dick so fucking hard that it throbs with every beat of my heart and is bordering on painful.

I reach over to my bedside table and grab a condom, tearing it open and rolling it on as I tell her, “The next time we do this, I’m going in bare, but we’ll wait to have that conversation when we’re not both too drunk on the electricity between us.”

When I position myself over my woman, her legs hook around my thighs and pull me closer, making me feel the heat of her wet pussy against the tip of my dick. The pleading in her eyes is what does me in. As I slam my lips down on hers, I slide into her tight, wet heat, not stopping until I’m buried all the way inside of her.

We both moan, the sound just as tortured as it is reverent. I take a few deep breaths to get myself under control because my body is tightly coiled. She’s going to come first. She’ll always come first.

As I start to move, she moves with me. My first few movements are slow and even, but when her pussy clamps down on me and her nails dig into my back, I can’t hold back any longer. I fuck her, moving harder and faster with each stroke until the sound of our skin slapping together is almost louder than my woman’s moans.

We chase. We pull. We seek. We find.

“Come, Starshine,” I growl, and she does. Like a fucking goddess.

Only when she starts to come down do I give in to what my own body demands of me. I pump rope after rope of my cum into the condom, kissing her as I do. We share breaths while coming down from our pleasure high, but also something so much more profound.

It’s possible she can’t see it yet, but I do. Our future is right there for the taking, stretching out before us. I was from the wrong side of the tracks back in the day and she was far too good for me, probably still is, but somewhere along the way

something changed, and our paths merged. I'll show her I'm the man for her because she's mine and that's all there is to it.





## CHAPTER 5

### *SIENNA*

It's been a few days since my date with Griffin and it feels like he's taken up a huge space in my life, an empty spot I didn't even realize was there. We haven't been able to see each other since waking up together the morning after our date, but we've been texting and talking as much as possible. It's kind of strange having someone other than Callie in my life.

I haven't allowed myself to dwell on letting Griffin into my life because I don't want to overthink it or jinx it. At least, I was doing a good job of that, but today it was like I couldn't shake it. I'm full of doubts and worries.

Normally I only worry about Callie, but now I'm worried about what this next part of my life looks like and if it's real. Or is it too good to be true?

Callie is a part of my worrying since I don't have the first clue how to introduce Griffin and Callie. I've never considered how I would bring someone into her life because being in a relationship wasn't even a blip on my radar. Now it's more than a blip.

I know eventually I have to get them together and see what happens. That's a whole other fear filled with swirling questions.

Will Callie like him? Will he be the man I think he can be to her? Will the reality of having her in his life not live up to whatever he thinks is going to happen?

I can't be with a man who won't accept my daughter. It's not even a question. If it doesn't go well with the two of them then there's no future here.

The thought of not having Griffin in my life makes my chest ache like there's a giant gaping hole right in the center. Which is kind of strange considering we've only been on one

date. Still, I can't ignore how much I hate the thought of not being with him.

That's a good sign, right? A sign we should be together? Or am I just so desperate that I've latched onto the first seemingly good man who has come along?

I let out a big sigh and the sound of my mom's amused chuckle has me snapping my gaze up to look at her. Honestly, mentally, I wasn't even in her living room while Callie is off somewhere doing something, probably on the phone I got her for her birthday last year.

She'll be 12 right before Halloween and it hasn't hit me yet. The first few birthdays with her were hard because it felt like I was losing my little baby, and I was, but I also knew it was the natural order of things. Now, it won't be long until she's forging her own life and it's hitting me in a whole new way.

"You've been sighing quite a bit today." Mom studies me, her eyes gentle and her voice filled with curiosity, not concern or judgement, "Is this about the guy you went on a date with? Want to talk about it?"

I look around, stalling while also making sure Callie isn't close by to listen to the conversation. I've been very vague with my daughter when it comes to Griffin, which has felt wrong in so many ways. But also right because I'm her mom and I'll always protect her.

Even from my own decisions.

"He's great, Mom," I admit softly. She nods as if pushing me gently to continue. "Is it possible he's too great?"

Mom throws her head back and laughs which has me letting out an annoyed huff. She waves her hand as she gets herself under control. "If you think a man is too great then I definitely need to meet him."

"You know what I mean," I defend. "He's perfect. He's smart and driven. He renovated the house he lives in and it's gorgeous."

It is too and I could picture myself and Callie living there. It was a thought I shouldn't have had, but once it was there it

was like it wedged its way deeper into my mind. Callie would love it, especially the huge kitchen because she's always loved cooking with me. The kitchen in our townhouse is a galley style and there is nothing top of the line when it comes to the appliances, not like Griffin's kitchen which looks like a showroom dream.

Complete with the clean lines and classic look of white subway tile as a backsplash.

The kitchen is just one piece of the larger beautiful house picture.

"It's okay to want it to work out and be scared," Mom's words are soft, but weighted.

"I don't want to get hurt. Not again." I glance toward where Callie probably is in the house. "I don't want Callie to get hurt either."

"Sienna," there's a hint of that mom voice in her words, "you can't keep hiding away from life because of what the sperm donor for your amazing child did and said." I freeze and swallow hard.

Callie's father spewed some vile things at me when I told him about being pregnant. It was a horrible experience and it made me feel lower than I already did because I knew my dreams would probably have to wait when I had been working toward them for so long.

He accused me of trapping him. He accused me of cheating on him. He accused me of lying to him.

He didn't want me to have Callie.

I saw a side of the man I had been with for a while, a side I didn't know existed. It scared me. Being so far away from my family, being scared, and having no idea how I was going to be a mom are the things that pushed me to drop out and come back home.

I'm glad I did, and I've never regretted it. Then I closed myself off and focused on giving Callie the life I was so afraid I wouldn't be able to give her.

“She didn’t have to feel that sting of rejection. I never want her to,” I whisper the last words softly, one of my deepest fears bubbling to the surface.

“Do you want your daughter to think she’s the reason you won’t allow yourself to find happiness?”

I gasp, “What? I am happy with her and being her mom. I love her.”

Mom reaches over and pats my knee, reminding me with a simple gesture that she’s my mom and has a little more experience than I do. “Callie is a smart girl. She knows that you don’t date or go out, that you’ve put your life on hold for hers.”

“I’m her mom. It’s what I’m supposed to do,” I defend myself.

Mom shakes her head slowly. “No, you should also look for opportunities and people who make your life richer.” She tilts her head to the side as she looks at me. “Does Griffin do that?”

“Yes,” I breathe out. “He does. I had so much fun the other night with him,” I gush. “He’s easy to talk to and he’s just,” I sigh, “perfect.”

Mom shakes her head. “No one is perfect, especially a man.” She arches an eyebrow, challenging me, “That doesn’t mean he’s not perfect for you. Though, he’s still human. He’ll probably mess up, more than once. You’ll probably mess up too. You might overthink it or not grab everything the man is offering you. Both would be big mistakes.”

I scrunch my nose up and give my mom a look which tells her I don’t appreciate all the logic she’s bestowing upon me... and that I love her deeply for it.

“She’s right, ya know, Mom,” Callie’s voice has me almost jumping out of my skin as my heart starts to pound in my chest.

When I look up, she’s leaning in the doorframe that leads into the living room we’re sitting in. How long has she been standing there? How much did she hear?

I keep my voice neutral, “What are you talking about?”

Callie rolls her eyes before she walks over to an oversized chair and plops down with a huff. “I’m talking about how you’re overthinking this and worrying yourself when I don’t think you need to.”

Mom is smug as hell, a knowing look in her eye, as she prompts my daughter, “Why not?”

“Because he’s made her happy.” She shrugs as if she didn’t just drop a bomb into the middle of the room in sentence form. “She’s been almost giddy since she went out the other night. I knew she had a date and she’s never gone on one before that I can remember. She’s been smiling a lot more and I don’t even think she realizes it.” She looks at me and smiles. “I have a good feeling about him, Mom, you need to give him a real chance.”

“You’ve never met him; how can you have a good feeling about him?”

Callie gets a thoughtful look on her face and starts to rub the center of her chest absently. “I can’t explain it, it’s just a feeling.” She shrugs like she’s not rocking my entire world right now. “Maybe it’s because you’ve been so happy?”

“He’s very nice,” I hedge, unsure how to navigate these waters even though Callie seems to be taking it all in stride.

Maybe I’m not giving her enough credit. No, in fact, I’m definitely not. She’s always been a perceptive person. It was one of the many things which made raising her relatively easy. She, somehow, knew when she could push me and test her boundaries while also knowing when I was teetering right on the edge and barely keeping my balance.

That was when she would pull the big guns out and be super sweet, melting my heart and my frustrations in seconds.

I might not have been as young as a lot of moms are when I had Callie, but in a lot of ways we grew up together. I had to mourn the loss of what I thought I was going to have and who I was going to be, but I had to do it while learning how to be a mom. I never wanted to let her down.

I can only hope she doesn't feel like I did.

Callie comes and sits next to me and snuggles into my side, something she hasn't done in a little while. I've missed it, but I also know she's growing up into a young woman and she needed to start to set her own boundaries for herself. That doesn't mean I don't soak up her affection and love right now.

"Is he handsome?" Her voice is sassy with an edge of innocence, and I can't help but smile when I think of Griffin. "Oh, that look on your face tells me he is."

I laugh, the sound of my daughter's joy joining me.

I nod slowly. "He's very handsome, but there's more to Griffin than his looks."

I shoot Callie a look because we've talked a lot about how the way someone looks doesn't define them, it is only part of them. I never wanted her to wrap her worth up in appearance and I never wanted someone to be able to tear her down or falsely build her up because of the way she looks. Both are dangerous and I wanted her to know her worth, from the inside out.

Callie sighs, a slight whine to her voice, "I know, Mom, but you deserve a guy who you find attractive and makes you feel butterflies."

"What do you know about feeling butterflies?" I screw my face up and my daughter giggles like it's the funniest thing I've ever said. Except I'm serious. Mom chuckles and shakes her head when I shoot her a questioning look. I can't help but ask, "Have you been feeling butterflies?"

"Ew," Callie wrinkles her nose, "no. All the boys in school are gross. I'm not interested in any of them, but that doesn't mean I don't understand that it won't always be that way. At least that's what Grandma says," she adds dismissively.

I want to smack my forehead with my hand, but I stop myself. Instead, I settle in and tell my daughter and my mom everything I know about Griffin. I leave out the X-rated stuff, obviously, but I tell them everything else.

I tell them how he makes me feel like I'm the most important person in his world. How he listened to everything I had to say with interest that wasn't fake. How he wanted to learn so much about me while also being open with himself.

I swear Callie and Mom both swoon the more I talk about him, and it only makes me smile. It settles some of the worry inside me. If things go well, I'm going to have to let Griffin into Callie's life. I never want her to feel like she's holding me back and I want the future I'm afraid to hope for, but desperately want. One where my daughter has more than me, where she has a father figure, a family.





## CHAPTER 6

### *GRIFFIN*

It's been a few weeks of dating my woman and it feels like everything is settling into place. Well, almost. There is still one thing missing, but I'm hoping that after today I'll be able to ease Sienna's concerns and she can see just how right we are together; how right we are as a family.

I totally understand why my Starshine has been hesitant to let me meet Callie, especially after what happened with the sperm donor who will get a punch to the face if I ever meet the man. As much as I hate that it hurt Sienna, I'm glad he's not in either of their lives. They're better off without him.

Which is why I haven't pushed Sienna to go faster, to make things between us even more official. I want her to be comfortable and I want her to trust me. I need her to feel our connection and lean on it when she needs to instead of being afraid of it.

Today is one of those make it or break it moments and I have no intention of breaking the burgeoning trust and love between us. I want it too badly. I need it too badly.

It's like everything in me shifted the night I saw Sienna again, which I could have never predicted would happen at my high school reunion. I thought for sure I'd have a miserable night, but it would be something I would look back on later and not regret missing out on. Now I'm grateful as fuck that my friends gave me the small push to go. If I hadn't, I don't know how long it would have been before I met Sienna again.

I have no doubt that we would have found a way to each other, even though I never really believed in fate before meeting her. Now, I know it's real because we were both where we were supposed to be right when we were supposed to be there.

It was kismet, or whatever. If that makes me sound sappy, then so be it. I wouldn't change what happened and how my

woman came into my life. Consider me a believer in all things right and fated in the world.

The last time I was out with Sienna, she surprised the fuck out of me by blurting, “I think it’s time for you to meet Callie.” My eyes were almost bugging out of my head, and I was frozen, staring at her and trying to process her words. She fidgeted a little in her chair and started to trip over her words, “I mean, if you still want to do it. I just figure there’s no reason to put it off any longer, if-.”

I cut her off, “I desperately want to meet Callie because it means you’re giving me even more of your trust. I was just surprised that you were ready. I didn’t want to push you, but I know how important she is to you, and I’ve really wanted to meet her. I know she’ll be an amazing little girl all because you’re her mom.”

The nervousness in my woman’s hazel eyes evaporated. I started to breathe easier, not even realizing how scared I was that she would change her mind because I was caught off guard and didn’t react well.

Sienna gave me a shy smile, her voice soft, “She’s excited to meet you.”

My chest puffed up with her words as pride filled me. “You’ve told her about me?” She nodded and that feeling only grew in the center of my chest, engulfing my entire body. “Can I,” I swallowed hard, suddenly nervous before I pushed it aside and tried again. “Can I plan a day for us? Would you be okay with that?”

“Are you sure?” She didn’t sound suspicious, just curious.

“I am. I want to plan something special for both of you. You’ve been doing it all on your own for so long, the only one planning things to do with your daughter. I want to take that on.” I teased her, “You can score me after and let me know how I did.”

“Okay,” she whispered as her eyes sparkled with something deep, something fathomless.

Now our family date is here, and I hope I chose the right activity. Sienna was off today, and I left the jobsite early, all the guys telling me to go and get my family, supporting me and telling me not to be nervous. They all know how important this is to me.

I hope Callie likes me, that she can trust me to be in her life the same way her mom is doing. I only want the chance to be what she needs me to be. I'm not her father, at least not biologically, but I've listened to my woman talk about Callie and watched the way she lights up whenever she does. Part of me is already in love with the little lady.

I park my truck in front of their townhouse, only a few minutes early because I'm excited. I know Sienna picked her up from school about an hour ago because I've become very familiar with their schedules. If I want to be part of their life, their schedule will influence mine and I'm more than ready for it.

I hop out and stride up the walk, trying to push away the nervousness. Just like it did the night I stood right here to pick my Starshine up for our first date, a peace settles over me. This will be fine and we're going to have a great time.

*There's no other way it can go.*

Before I can knock, I see the curtain move near the front window and a moment later the door is swinging open to reveal a miniature version of the woman I've fallen in love with. I blink once, twice, almost not believing how much Callie looks like her mom. As Callie puts her hand on her hip and pops it out, the movement pure sass, a slow smile creeps up my face.

"You must be Callie. I'm Griffin," I tell her softly.

"You're the reason Mom has been so happy recently," she doesn't pose it as a question, she states it as a fact. Her easy words make me want to let out a whoop full of rejoicing excitement, but I keep it inside.

"I hope so. She told me that she's told you about me." Callie nods slowly, the hazel eyes she shares with her mom

assessing me. “Do you have any questions for me before we get our night started? I’m taking you ladies somewhere and I think you’re going to like it.” I lean toward her a little bit and lower my voice, “I’m a little nervous you won’t, but I’m hopeful you will, at least.”

Callie’s face softens and the next thing I know she’s wrapped her arms around my middle and is squeezing. My heart clenches as she tightens her grip and this little lady, one who is the spitting image of Sienna, has stolen the parts of my heart my woman didn’t already claim for herself. I will stand between this girl and hellfire to make sure she’s safe.

I gently run my fingers through her brown hair, soaking up the sweetness and the love exuding from this young woman. Her voice is muffled, “You’ve given my mom something to smile about, something other than me. I don’t care where we go, I’m going to love it.” I fucking melt. “It won’t be long until I’m all grown up and I was starting to worry Mom would be all alone.” Callie pulls back a little and peers up at me. “You aren’t going to let that happen.”

Even though she didn’t ask, I still feel compelled to answer. “Never. I’ll never let that happen. I plan to be in your mom’s life, and yours, for the rest of mine.”

Callie’s smile takes over her whole face and she gives me one more squeeze before letting go and turning around. When we look up, it’s to find Sienna standing there, her eyes glassy with unshed tears. I don’t know how much she heard, but it was enough.

“You ready, Starshine?” I rub my hands together and wiggle my eyebrows comically. “I have quite the night planned, and we don’t want to miss anything.”

“Yeah,” my woman’s voice is thick with emotion, and it feels like she’s agreeing to so much more than tonight, “I’m ready.”

I wink at her as Callie wraps an arm around my forearm and leans into me. This girl and her mom. I’m theirs. Fucking completely.

I help Callie get into the backseat of my truck before doing the same with Sienna, giving her waist a little squeeze. I desperately want to kiss my woman, but I don't know if she would be okay with it in front of Callie. Still, I need to be near her and take a moment to stretch her seatbelt across her body and buckle her in.

Before I can pull away and close the door, Sienna grips my shirt, twisting her fingers in the material and holding me in place. She closes the distance between us and kisses me. It's short and sweet, but it means everything to me that she's not pulling away or putting distance between us in front of Callie. It makes me feel accepted, like this really could be our life.

One where we're together. One where we're a family.

I kiss her forehead as Callie giggles from the backseat before I close the door and practically skip around to the driver's side of the truck. If I didn't know gravity was working against me, I would swear I'm floating.

The conversation is light and flows as I drive to our destination. I take the opportunity given to me to ask Callie about herself and school. It's clear she's a smart girl, which she clearly gets from her mom. Not only does she do well in school, but she enjoys it.

When we pull up to the aquarium, I get nervous again. Maybe this is too young for her, but considering how passionate she sounded about school, I hope this was a good choice. I look back at Callie once I park and her eyes are sparkling with happiness which eases some of my worry.

"We have enough time to see a few things before the show begins. Then I'd like to take you two lovely ladies to dinner."

Callie's voice is full of excitement, "Show? What show?" Before I can answer, she gushes, "I haven't been here in a few years. Seeing the animals was really cool last time."

I grin and then look over at Sienna to find her smiling, a little secret smile filled with relief and adoration—for her daughter for sure, but, maybe, also for me. I reach over and give my woman's knee a squeeze before I hop out of the truck.

I help Sienna out first and then Callie, knowing my truck is a little tall for my girls.

As we make our way through the aquarium, I'm blown away with how many facts Callie knows about some of the exhibits and how excited she is. I was worried for nothing, but, then again, maybe that's just fate at work.

When we get to where the show will be taking place, Callie gasps when she sees a poster displaying what will be happening in the tank in front of us. "A mermaid show," her voice is breathless, and I know I made the right choice to come here tonight.

"I thought it might be fun," I hedge.

Callie throws herself at me and I catch her easily, hugging her small frame to me as Sienna leans into my side. "This is perfect," Callie mumbles.

Then she's off and gets as close to the tank as she can. We hang back a little bit, while making sure Callie is in our line of sight. I wrap an arm around my woman's shoulders and tuck her into my side.

"Callie has always been a happy child, easy to be around and quick to love." Sienna looks up at me, her eyes glassy, "This is even more than I was expecting. You chose the perfect kind of night for her, for us, and she's accepted you fully." She clears her throat and I lean down to give her a quick kiss, needing the contact. "Thank you," she whispers, a little brokenly, but full of strength.

"It is my pleasure to give my girls what they want and need. I'll be by your side, and Callie's, for as long as you want me there." I look over at the young woman who already has me wrapped around her finger. "I can't imagine my life without both of you in it now."

I know my mom and sister are going to love Callie as much as I do and the same is true for Sienna. The people in my girls' life will expand and they'll have more support and love.

"I can't imagine my life without you either," Sienna's voice is soft as she rests her head against me, snuggling deeper into

my hold.

Fucking perfect.





## CHAPTER 7

### *SIENNA*

It's been a few weeks since Griffin and Callie met and it's becoming harder to keep some separation in our lives. If I were honest with myself about what I want, I would be with him all the time. I have a feeling Callie feels the same way, but she isn't pushing me about it. We spend a lot of time with Griffin, but tonight is one of the rare nights that I'm not working, and we didn't have dinner together.

Griffin has been trying not to push me and scare me by moving too fast, but I think I need a little shove. Everything is great and while things have moved quickly, I know in my heart that being with him is right. I can't explain it and if you had told me a few months ago I would be feeling this way then I would have called bullshit. As it is, I know this relationship is the real deal, and I don't gain anything by going slow.

Well, except for lost time.

Time we could spend together as a family. Time I could watch the way Griffin dotes on my daughter. Time with his arms wrapped around me.

I don't want to waste that time. I crave being with him and my gut tells me it isn't going to change any time soon.

Callie has been asleep for a few hours, but I was restless and was trying to watch something in the living room. It's no use, though, because I can't seem to focus on anything. There's this throbbing feeling in my soul that wants Griffin. It's not going away, but I can't really do anything about it either.

I'm stuck.

I stand up and stretch, preparing to go and pretend to get some sleep, when there's a soft knock on the front door. It's late and I'm certainly not expecting anyone, which has me approaching the door cautiously. When I look out the half

circle window, I'm surprised and thrilled to see Griffin standing on my small porch as he roughly pushes a hand through his hair.

As I swing the door open, I launch myself at him and he catches me with ease. His chuckle is low and filled with amused relief. I can't help myself and cling to him, loving how my body molds against his. He's all hard planes of muscle and I'm softer, but it doesn't matter because we fit.

We fit.

"I missed you," I mumble against his neck where I've buried my head.

He holds me against his chest with one hand under my ass while the other runs up and down my back, soothing the restlessness in me while also igniting my need for him. While we've spent a lot of time together and Callie has stayed with my parents a few nights when I've gone out with Griffin, he hasn't stayed over when Callie has been home.

I don't think this is sustainable. I need him too much.

He must know it too because he starts to kiss my neck. "Do you need something, Starshine?"

"You." I tighten my hold on my man. "I need you."

"Can't have you all needy and achy," his voice is husky, sending a delicious thrill through my body.

Griffin doesn't let me go as he walks through the front door, closing it and making sure it's locked behind him before he starts to walk through the house toward my room. My pussy is already wet, and my nipples are so hard that I'm sure he can feel them pressing against his chest.

His voice is hesitant, like he doesn't want to ask or know the answer, but has to, "Are you sure this is okay? With Callie home?" I pull back a little so I can look up into his eyes, which are filled with concern. "I really came over because I needed to see you and hold you, if only for a few minutes."

I run my fingers through Griffin's hair, which is loose tonight and hanging around his face. I close almost all the

distance between us, my lips barely touching his as I plead, “Stay. Please, stay. I want you here.”

That’s all my man needs to hear. He walks through the door to my bedroom and gently closes the door behind us as I press my lips to his, everything relaxing as I kiss him. I didn’t even realize how wound up I was. Probably because I was trying to ignore it.

I was trying to stay strong, just like I’ve had to be for years. Maybe I don’t have to be quite as strong. I can lean on Griffin and let him take some of my stress, some of my burden. I’ll never regret Callie, she’s my life, but that doesn’t mean life was easy. Far from it.

Now I have a chance for something more and Callie will benefit from it. I know it deep in my soul.

Griffin turns and lays me down on the bed, one of his hands running up underneath the tank top I have on until he gets to my breast. He squeezes my flesh before plucking my nipple, as if it wasn’t already hard and begging for his touch.

I reach down and tug at the hem of the henley he has on, needing it off so I can touch him properly. His skin is always so warm. When it seeps into me, it makes me feel like I’m touching the sun. Maybe I am.

“Starshine,” he groans as he shifts, lifting off me and reaching back to pull his henley off and dropping it to the floor. His eyes are hooded as he looks down at me. I reach for my clothes, wanting both of us naked, but with a shake of his head he holds me captive. “You’re so beautiful and I’m going to undress you and then myself. I’m going to do it slowly so by the time we’re both naked you’ll be begging for my cock.”

His words are almost too much for me to handle. Then his hands ghost over my skin, leaving trails of fire behind them as he follows through with his words. It feels like he pushes my tank top off one millimeter every minute and it is pure fucking torture.

I can’t do anything other than lean into the feeling, letting the lust he makes me feel course through my veins. My pussy

is throbbing by the time we're both naked. There's a feral hunger in his dark eyes as he looks down at me.

When he leans down and starts to kiss and lick up my legs, I cry out, my back arching. I swear I'm right on the edge from the slightest of touches because I need him so much. Everything in me is screaming for him to take me. To claim me.

Griffin tsks me, mischievousness dancing in his eyes, "You need to be quiet, Starshine."

I let out a low groan as I look down the length of my body to find his mouth hovering right above my pussy. I raise my hips, but he moves away, not giving me what I want.

"Please, Griffin, I need you," I plead.

"What do you need?"

I swallow hard and push past the embarrassment which wants to rise in me. I wasn't with many guys before I met Callie's sperm donor. Then I didn't even bother. Griffin is the first man I've let past my walls in a long time.

He's never made me feel less than enough.

He's never made me feel ashamed.

He encourages me and wants me to be myself, even if it means finding myself first.

I take a deep breath and let it out slowly and I feel him do the same, his breath rushing over my glistening pussy. "I want you to taste my pussy, please," the last word comes out as a long moan as he dives between my thighs and gives me exactly what I want.

Shockwaves flow through my body, the pleasure almost too much to take. I don't remember it ever being like this before. I'm not surprised, none of them were Griffin. None of them were right, but this is. He is.

When he sucks my clit into his mouth and his teeth graze it, I press my palm to my mouth, trying to stop the scream that is working its way up my throat from escaping. As he pushes

two fingers inside of me, I suck in a sharp breath and grind down, seeking more, seeking everything.

The coil in my belly starts to twist and tighten, pushing me closer, closer, almost to that blissful release I'm seeking. But right as it is about to explode out of me, Griffin pulls his fingers from me, and he kisses one of my hips and then the other.

My hand falls away from my mouth as it opens and closes, my brain not totally online and no words forming. What the hell?

As Griffin prowls up my body, my legs fall open, making room for him and he doesn't hesitate to settle right in the cradle of my body. I narrow my eyes at him, but I know my angry expression doesn't phase him by the rakish grin he flashes me.

He kisses me hard, sharing the taste of my arousal with me which causes me to moan against his lips. "You know the rules, Sienna. You come on my cock first," there's steel in his voice, as if he expects me to argue with him.

Yeah. Not going to happen.

He wants to fuck me until I come on his cock, and I go boneless? Sign me the fuck up.

"Then you better fill me up," I try and tease him, but my words are a little too slurred with lust to be effective.

Griffin winks at me and kisses me again as he slides his hard, thick length inside of me. We did have that contraception conversation and he knows I'm on birth control to help regulate my periods. Since then, we haven't used a condom.

I'm not going to lie, part of me wants to fall into the small percentage of women who get pregnant while on birth control. Callie would make an amazing big sister and I always thought I would have more children. It wasn't the right time before, but now? With Griffin? Maybe it is.

As if he can read my mind, Griffin pulls back from my lips, his gaze possessive as he starts to roll and pump his hips until the edge of my vision starts to dim a little. "One day,

Starshine. I'll give you as many little shooting stars as you want."

My pussy clenches around his cock and he growls in response before moving his body faster and harder, taking me higher and higher. We're running toward that place where pleasure becomes fireworks. I hope I can stay quiet when we get there.

I'm not sure I can. By the way Griffin moves harder, his eyes flinty and challenging, he knows it too. I tighten my thighs up around his waist and roll my hips to meet his thrusts, needing more, needing everything he can give me.

"Sienna," he grunts, and I reach up and caress his jaw, the roughness of his beard a contrast to the soft way he's looking at me.

"I know," I whimper. "Give it to me. Fill me up and make me come all over your cock."

"Fuck," he barks out, the sound slightly pained, like he's trying to hold tight to his control, and I've made some of it fray.

Good.

When he kisses me, it's teeth and lips, moaning praises and feral need. Griffin's pace stutters and I dig my nails into his shoulders, knowing I'm going to need to ground myself to stop myself from screaming. I moan loudly, but he swallows down the sound.

One more thrust has him grinding against my clit and the coil unspools as we come together. I try to stay quiet, but it's difficult. I'm grateful my man is there to muffle the sound. My skin is sensitive and tingly as we ride our pleasure.

Together.

I only want us to be together from now on.

Forever.

"Stay," I whisper because I know he'll be worried about it.

The feeling of him positioning me in his hold and the hope for him to stay with me, for tonight or much longer, is the last thing I remember as I slip off into dreamland.





## CHAPTER 8

### *GRIFFIN*

When my eyes slowly open, I hear footsteps moving down the hallway and immediately glance down to find Sienna still pressed up against me. And we're covered by the sheets and comforter on her bed. Thankfully.

I didn't think about pulling my boxers on last night. I was too focused on the feel of my woman's skin against my own. At least, if Callie came in, everything is covered. It's a relief because I never want to do anything to upset my woman.

I climb out of bed and pull my clothes on so I can go down and grab the bag I threw in my truck last night. Just in case.

I wasn't sure if Sienna would let me in. I wasn't sure if she would let me stay. Either way, I wanted to be prepared.

I slip downstairs and out the front door, grab my bag and am back inside quickly. When I step into the living room, Callie is standing there with her hands on her hips. I'm sure she's trying to give me a look of admonishment, but it's ruined by the huge smile on her face.

"Did you spend the night?"

I blow out a breath and hope this conversation goes well. "I did. I wanted to see your mom because she calms me and everything in me tells me I should be near her. And you," I add, swallowing hard. My voice is tentative, "Is that okay?"

She taps her chin like she's thinking about it. "I don't know," she holds the words out. "Can you make pancakes?"

I scoff. "Can I make pancakes?" I push even more offense into my tone, "Can I make pancakes?"

"Well?" She taps her toes on the ground, goading me, and it's adorable as hell.

I puff my chest out and wink at her. "Of course I can make pancakes. I have a little sister who loved pancakes growing up

and I needed to know how to make them because my mom worked so much. There were times I was in charge of feeding Salem.”

Callie’s smile drops slightly, and my eyebrows pull together. “I kind of wish I had a little brother or sister I could help take care of.”

My heart aches, but it also soars because I want nothing more than to make her wish come true. If it were up to me, I’d already be working on it with my Starshine. I kiss the top of Callie’s head before clapping my hands together.

“Making pancakes is a good skill so you can take care of yourself as well,” I point out and Callie shakes away the hint of sadness around her and grins up at me. “That means you are now my kitchen assistant.”

“Sous chef,” she sasses me, and I can only shake my head.

I didn’t know she would know that term, which is why I went with assistant. I should have known better. She sure as hell is smarter than I was at her age.

While we get the pancake batter together, we talk in hushed voices. I wasn’t aware I could love Callie even more, but I feel it happening. She’s insightful and kind. She’s compassionate.

I see such a bright future ahead of her and I desperately want to be a part of it. I’ll take whatever I can and be there in whatever way she wants.

I think last night was a turning point for Sienna and me. It was a big step for her to let me stay with Callie in the house. I understand why she was hesitant, and I can’t blame her for it. She was being a good mom and I would expect no less.

I don’t ever want to push her too hard or too fast, but I want this so damn badly. I want to wake up with my woman in my arms. I want to help Sienna get Callie to school. I want to pick her up from school if needed and be there for dinner and homework. I want my family.

I swallow down the desire to make it happen now because I can’t force it. No matter how much I wish it were happening right now.

As we start to mix up the batter and talk about what else we should make for breakfast, I'm not sure who is the kitchen assistant and who is the chef. Spending time with this young woman, who I consider mine just as much as I do her mom, feels like champagne bubbles filling me and popping, leaving behind laughter and light.

She's going to be a force when she grows up and I can't wait to see it. I'll also make sure she's protected. If someone hurts her, they'll have to deal with me.

I flex my hand thinking about the boys, who probably weren't taught any respect and are filled with hormones, who will try and turn her head. I know she's strong with a lot of self-confidence while also being levelheaded, but I hope whoever she lets into her heart is good enough for her.

If I teach her anything, I hope it's that. I hope she'll look at the way I feel about her mom and want the same for herself.

Callie has been quiet for a few minutes as we wait for the first batch of pancakes to cook. I almost drop the spatula when she blurts, "Do you love Mom?"

"Callie," I rasp and clear my throat. She's looking at me with the hazel eyes she shares with Sienna, and I know nothing less than the truth is going to work here. "I love her so much. I can't even put it into words." Callie smiles at me as her eyes turn a little glassy. "I love you too, sweet girl. You are so easy to love, the same as your mom." I chuckle softly and flip the first pancake. "You know, when we were in high school, I had a crush on your mom. I thought she was the prettiest girl I'd ever seen. That hasn't changed at all. When I saw her at the reunion, I knew she was the woman for me. I wish I would have taken a chance when we were in school, but I can't regret it because then she wouldn't have had you and I wouldn't trade you for anything."

A gasp from the doorway of the kitchen has us turning to find Sienna standing there, her hand covering her mouth and her eyes wide. I don't see fear there, which is a relief, but I wasn't planning to tell her how I feel by her overhearing it. Doesn't make it any less true.

Callie doesn't miss a beat and chirps, "Mom. We're making pancakes for breakfast. I tried to talk Griffin into adding chocolate chips, but he said no." She pouts slightly. "Can you believe it? No chocolate chips?"

Sienna recovers, but it takes her a moment. She looks at me and her eyes soften which tells me we'll be okay. I won't be leaving this house without telling her exactly how I feel. She'll hear it directly from me. I'm glad she's not running or trying to throw up walls between us though.

"That's a crime," Sienna plays along with Callie, infusing faux outrage into her words. "Everything's better with chocolate chips."

I heave a big sigh and give in, as if I wasn't going to do that from the beginning. "I guess I could do a batch with chocolate chips."

My girls cheer and everything is right in the world. Well, except for the big elephant sitting in the corner. That'll be cleared up, though. I'm not even worried about it.

I'm pretty sure I fell in love the moment I saw Sienna again. If I were honest with myself, I was probably half in love with her back in high school. I just never thought I was good enough for a girl like her.

Maybe I was all along.

As we sit around the table and eat breakfast, including the chocolate chip pancakes, I can't help but smile. My girls are chatting and I'm soaking it all up. I love it. I want this all the time.

When I see my chance in the conversation, I seize it. "I understand your birthday is coming up soon, Callie. A few days before Halloween, right?"

Callie shoots me a shy smile and nods. "Yeah. It's a school night, so I just want to do something small. Just dinner with my family." Her eyes light up and hope fills her face. "You'll come, right?"

I get choked up with the knowledge that she considers me family and wants me there. My voice is thick, "I wouldn't

miss it.” I shift a little in my seat. “Do you think I could invite my mom? I’ve told her all about my girls and she would love to meet you and help you celebrate such a big day.”

Callie’s smile widens and Sienna looks a little surprised. “I was going to invite my mom and dad over here, along with you,” she adds on quickly. “I don’t know if we’ll have enough room,” she says more to herself than to me.

“We can do dinner at my house,” I offer without even thinking about it.

Sienna gives me a grateful smile and it feels like everything, including that elephant, disappears. “That would be great. You wouldn’t mind?”

“I insist,” my voice is firm.

I’ve been thinking about a gift for Callie, and this will give me the perfect opportunity to enact my plan. I only hope I’m not overstepping. I don’t think I am, but I’m not entirely sure. I guess I’ll just have to wait and see.

“There’s a big Halloween party I’ve been going to the last few years out at the Suburban Outcasts mansion. They do a more family friendly thing during the day and then a party for the adults at night. I’d love if you’d both be my dates.”

“Yes,” Callie shouts.

“The Suburban Outcasts? Like the rock band?” Sienna looks a little dazed as I nod.

“Yeah, a guy on my crew met his wife through a stranger photoshoot.” I wave my hand. “It’s a whole thing, but the important part is the photographer is part of this giant family which includes the SO guys. Because of Jameson, the rest of the crew are like honorary members. And, actually, my foreman, Lawson, has a twin brother who is head of security at a club some of the family owns.”

“That sounds complicated,” Sienna muses, her eyebrows furrowed together.

“It’s not really. They’re a family. I’m family adjacent. We go to the party.” I look at Callie to find her practically

bouncing in her seat and wink at her. “This year’s theme is *Jurassic Park*. So, what do you say, dinosaur family, wanna go?”

“I’m going,” Callie says firmly which has Sienna laughing right along with me.

“Guess we’re going,” Sienna agrees with a shrug.

“I need to go search for a costume.” Callie jumps out of her seat, grabbing her plate and taking it into the kitchen before she disappears up to her room.

Silence descends and I swear I hear the trumpeting of an elephant in the distance. I guess it’s time. I stand up and move around the table, pulling Sienna’s chair back and angling it toward me before I crouch down in front of her. I grab her hands and give a squeeze, hating the hint of wariness I see in her hazel eyes.

“I didn’t mean for you to hear what I said to Callie,” my voice is soft, and I hate when she flinches slightly, “but that doesn’t mean I didn’t mean it.”

“What?” She breathes out, her words rushing out of her, “But we just met up again, really, for the first time. We just started this.”

I shake my head, my voice firm, “It doesn’t matter. I know what I feel. I knew it the moment I saw you there standing at the bar looking like you were wishing you were anywhere else. I knew. Right away.” I pause and search her eyes to find so much hope there that it takes my breath away for a moment. “I love you, Sienna, my Starshine. I love you so much. I wish I had gotten the chance back in the day to know you, but our paths weren’t meant to cross then. I was meant to find you again, now. You and Callie. I love you so much, both of you. I want this family. I want all of it.”

Sienna’s eyes fill with tears, and she pulls her hands away, a crack forming in my heart. When she cups my face in her hands, it starts to heal. Then her lips hover over mine and she whispers, “I love you too, Griffin.”

Her words make me fucking invincible. I will fight to always be at their side. I will come home to them, no matter where home is, and find happiness. I will show them they are the most important people in my life.

She doesn't need to hear the words; she can feel them pulsing between us as she presses her lips to mine. They're tattooed on my very soul, binding me to her, our love making it unbreakable.

I couldn't change my class back then, I was who I was, but it doesn't matter anymore. My path led me here and I'm right where I'm supposed to be.





## CHAPTER 9

### *GRIFFIN*

I look over at my girls who are sitting at my table along with Sienna's parents and my mom. My girls are glowing, and it comes from the inside out. It's their happiness. It spills out of them, and no one can ignore it.

Today Callie is 12 and being allowed to not only celebrate her birthday with her, but host it at my house, is an honor. I don't know if I'll ever be able to express to her how much her acceptance means to me. I hope I can honor the gift she's given me by loving her for the rest of my life.

I don't know if it'll ever be enough, but I'll try.

Then there is her mom. My Starshine.

Saying those words, letting her all the way into my heart and telling her, has fundamentally changed something in me. I knew she would be my priority, but now it's a reality and it makes me feel like a better man, a stronger man. A man who is a step closer, every day, to being worthy of her.

We're eating dinner and my heart feels full of the love and smiles that surround my girls. I knew my mom was going to fall in love with Sienna and Callie and I was right. She took one look at them and hugged them. I think she even got a little teary eyed, not surprising me at all.

Mom has always had a soft spot for her kids, no matter how strong she had to be and no matter how hard she had to work. We were a weakness she embraced and made into a strength. I can't remember many times in my life when Mom cried because she always wanted to put on a brave front, no matter how hard things got.

She cried the day I graduated high school, and she cried when Salem did the same. I knew it was her pride and her love no longer being able to be contained, but it struck me, deeply, how much those days meant to her. It wasn't about her

obligation at raising us being done either. It was about seeing us reach such a big milestone in our lives and doing it with pride and fortitude.

Now, Salem will graduate college at the end of the school year. I hope this year is everything she wants it to be. I spoke to her not long ago and she sounded a little distant. I need to make it a point to talk to her more often and make sure this year isn't stressing her out.

She wants to succeed because she views what Mom and I have done to help her pay for school as a sacrifice, but it's not. It's pure fucking love and I would do it over and over again. For her.

Hell, if Salem wants to continue with more school, I will gladly pay for it, no matter how much work I would need to put in to make it happen. I'll make sure Callie gets the opportunity to go to school too if that's what she wants.

At least I have a few years to plan and save for that. A little less time as of today. I hope celebrating her birthday around this table becomes a tradition.

Callie looks over at the neon wreath Mom made her for her birthday and gushes, again, "I can't believe you made that. It's so pretty."

Mom beams at the girl who has already wormed her way deep into her heart. "I'm glad you like it. I wasn't sure if you'd like all the colors, but I'm of the mind that you can never go wrong with rainbow neon or glitter."

"I love it," Callie giggles. "Everything is better with glitter."

"Except when you have to clean it up," Sienna gripes, but the smile on her face shows she's not serious.

"It can get everywhere, kind of like sand," Mom muses.

My heart warms at how well everyone is getting along. When my mom arrived, she gave hugs to Sienna's parents like they were long lost best friends. Then they put their heads together and I'm pretty sure the moms were making plans for the wedding.

They were clearly scheming about something. It's not as if I mind because I know the path that I'm on now. I'm going to get my ring on my woman's finger. I'll get both my girls in this house. We'll grow our family.

It's just a matter of time.

After finishing up dinner, we light the candles on the cake, sing 'Happy Birthday' and watch as Callie blows them out. I can't help but wonder how many more birthdays she'll let us spend with her like this. Will she decide she'd rather be with friends as she gets older?

I won't get nearly enough time with her.

When I look up as Sienna's mom cuts the cake and starts passing it out, Sienna catches my eye. There's a knowing look there, as if she can read my mind. Maybe she can.

The soft smile she gives me tells me everything is going to be okay.

How does she do this? How has she let go in little increments as Callie has grown up? How does she not resent it?

My Starshine leans closer to me and whispers, "It's not easy to do, but it's the order of things."

Fucking hell, did I air my worries and fears out loud or has my woman just gotten that good at reading me? When she winks at me, I have my answer.

Not giving a single fuck who is in the room with me, I gently grasp her chin and kiss my woman, needing her sweetness, needing her to remind me that right here and now is where I am.

Callie starts to giggle, and I glance over at her when I pull back from Sienna to find her cheek smeared with a little icing. Everyone is looking at us with fond affection. This is family.

Callie opens some more presents as everyone has some cake and I start to worry about what I got her. It's not exactly something you can put a bow on, and I hope she likes it. I

hope Sienna doesn't think it's too much or tells me I've stepped over the line with it either.

Fear grips me, but I keep a smile on my face as plates get cleaned up, brightly colored papers are tossed in the trash, and the grandparents of the birthday girl, which now includes my mom, give hugs and well wishes on their way out the door. Now it's my turn to give Callie her gift and I'm nervous as hell about it. Granted, Sienna's mom knows what I did, because I needed her help with a few things, and thought it was a great idea. That doesn't mean my girls will like it.

I take a deep breath and let it out slowly. "You haven't opened my present," I pretend to pout and Callie laughs as she gets up from the table where she was looking at the diary she got from Sienna, complete with a lock and key.

Callie wraps her arms around my neck and gives me a squeeze. "You didn't need to get me a present. This has been the best birthday already." Her smile turns shy. "I really like your mom."

"Well, she loves you," I tell her honestly. "And of course I had to get you a present. I hope you like it." I glance at my Starshine before I add, "I hope you both like it."

"Are you hiding it somewhere? Is this like a treasure hunt?"

I laugh at how sneaky Callie sounds, and it helps some of the tension fall away. I unwrap Callie's arms from my neck and stand up. I offer her a hand and she doesn't hesitate to slip hers in. When I do the same to Sienna, the same thing happens.

"Bring your wreath," I tell her which earns me a suspicious look from both my girls.

I lead them upstairs to what used to be a guest room. It's not anymore. There's a hook on the middle of the door because I knew my mom would make Callie a wreath. My mom has embraced her craft room and *all* the crafts since she's retired, but wreathes are some of her favorites to make, especially as gifts.

I gently take the wreath out of Callie's hand and hang it on the door. Sienna squeezes my hand and when I look down at her, she's giving me a searching look. I give a squeeze back.

"Go ahead, Callie." I nod toward the door. "This is for you."

Callie doesn't hesitate to open the door and I'm not sure what the gasp that comes out of her means. She steps into the room, taking in the light turquoise walls, the brand-new bed, complete with bedding, the bean bag chairs and small reading nook, and the vanity all set up for her. I got some help from Sienna's mom when it came to getting her some outfits so she would have some here already along with some books for the shelves. She also let me know about Callie's favorite colors.

I guess this isn't just a surprise for Callie. Sienna is frozen next to me, and my heart starts to pound in my chest.

I clear my throat and Callie whirls around with tears in her eyes. "I wanted to give you a space here that is all yours. A place where you feel comfortable. There are some outfits in the closet for you, just in case. I want to give you," I look at Sienna to see a few tears trailing over her cheeks which causes my words to come faster, "both options. If you come over here for dinner, I didn't want you to have to rush off. I hope you like it. I hope it's not too much," I direct the last part to Sienna, worry filling me.

Callie doesn't say anything and neither does Sienna. It has my heart sinking and I look down at the floor. Uncertainty fills me at what I should do now. Before I can backtrack or, I don't even know what, I feel arms wrap around me. Sienna and Callie's arms.

"You gave me a room in your house," Callie's voice is strained. "Thank you. I love it."

"It's not just my house. You are welcome here. Always," I rasp the words.

Sienna sniffs and pulls back, wiping the tears from her cheeks. She looks at her daughter with so much love. "Since

your backpack is in the car, do you want to stay here tonight? That bed looks pretty comfy.”

“Really?” Callie gives me a squeeze before hugging her mom. “I’d love to.”

Sienna nods and kisses Callie’s forehead. “Don’t forget to brush your teeth before bed and if you want to go down and grab your presents, you can.”

“Love you,” Callie practically shouts before going over and diving onto one of the beanbag chairs before she runs her finger along the books.

I’m not sure who she’s talking to, but it doesn’t matter. I soak up her words.

“Love you, Callie-bug,” Sienna whispers.

“Happy birthday. Thank you for letting me share it with you.”

Sienna pulls me out of Callie’s room and over to mine, closing the door behind us. When she pushes me against the closed door, I don’t fight her on it. Partially because I’m not sure if she’s pissed at me or what she’s thinking.

“Is it too much? Did I overstep?” Worry seeps into my voice, “I’m sorry if I did. I just wanted her to be comfortable here and give her something here in case you guys wanted to spend the night. I didn’t want you to worry about her having a place here. I didn’t want her to worry about it.”

“Griffin,” Sienna looks up at me, tears glistening in her eyes, but she doesn’t let any more of them fall, “that is the nicest thing anyone has ever done for me or Callie.” She shakes her head as if trying to shake away the disbelief surrounding my actions. “You’ve treated her like your daughter since before you even met her. I’m in awe of you.” She reaches up and cups my face in her hands. “I love you so much.”

I pull my woman tighter against my body, loving the way her curves give way to my harder planes. It’s sexy as hell when she presses against me and lets me feel all of her.

“If it were up to me, you’d both be moving in here with me permanently.” I press my forehead against hers as she sputters, shock written all over her face. “Before you say it; yes, I know it’s fast. I also know what I feel for you. No one will ever compare.”

I can see the indecision in her mind, but the fact that she’s not mad about Callie’s room and that it’s a space she loves is enough for me. Hell, it’s more than I probably deserve.

“Think about it. I’ve already done the research and I’m in the zone for Callie’s middle school.” I smirk as her eyes go wide with the knowledge that I looked into it. “We don’t live that far from each other,” I remind her. My voice changes, becoming softer, “The offer will always stand, Starshine.”

Sienna nods slowly and then she shocks the fuck out of me by dropping to her knees. She makes quick work of my jeans and tugs them down my legs along with my boxers. I groan at the sight of my woman in front of me. Could anything be better than this?

When my woman’s tongue lashes across the crown of my dick and my eyes roll back into my head, I find the answer to my own damn question. She wraps her lips around me and starts to bob her head up and down my length.

The wet warmth of her mouth is fucking perfection. When she starts to use her hands, stroking the part of my length she can’t fit in her mouth, I almost lose control.

I push my fingers through my woman’s dark brown hair, gripping the strands and holding her in place for a moment as I sink my cock into her mouth until it hits the back of her throat. I can tell she wants to swallow my cum from the way she hollows her cheeks and gives control over to me. I don’t want to come yet and that has me focusing.

On what I can control.

On how much I want her.

On how much her love means to me.

I slowly fuck her face and she takes as much of me as she can. Her hands fall away as I move my hips, taking from her.



The lust in her hazel eyes as she looks up at me sears my skin. There's a give and take when it comes to being with Sienna and I'll be making sure she gets a reward for this.

When she flicks her tongue against the underside of my dick, I'm powerless to stop my balls drawing up and the fire rushing through my body. With a muted shout, I fill her mouth with my cum and she swallows all of it.

As I pull out of her mouth slowly, she cleans my shaft and smiles up at me. She's seductive innocence, and I can't wait to have her.

I lift her from the floor and place her on the bed, air still sawing in and out of my lungs with how damn good she just made me feel.

"I'm about to worship you, Sienna," I grunt. "You're going to come so many times that you forget your own name."

"Promises, promises," she challenges.

It's a promise I follow through on and every time I bring her to orgasm is better than the last. I need her in my life and now that I've told her that I want her to move in, I just need to wait.

I know this is right. I know she'll move in here and Callie's room will become hers, permanently. I have faith it'll happen. We are meant to be. Maybe we always were, but we had things this life needed to teach us and changes we had to go through before we could be what the other needs.

"I love you," I whisper against her lips after collapsing next to her, both of our skin slick with sweat after I showed her exactly how much she means to me.

"Griffin," she sighs, her fingers skimming my beard, "I love you so much. Thank you for loving not just me, but Callie too. We need you in our lives."

"I'm not going anywhere," I vow. "You're both my girls and that will never change as long as I live."

I had no idea that my high school reunion would change my life. I thought it would be a lot of puffed-up chests and people

trying to impress the other with lies and half-truths. I'm sure other people had to deal with that, but I didn't. Instead, I found my Starshine and found my purpose.



# EPILOGUE

## *SIX-ISH WEEKS LATER*

### *SIENNA*

I held out for almost a month before I gave into the desire to move in with Griffin. I'm sure people will judge me for moving so fast with him, but it won't be the first time nor the last. Judgement in this life is inevitable. I didn't let what others thought about me being a single mom who dropped out of college bother me. I won't let someone's opinion of being with the love of my life, who is an amazing father figure to my daughter, get to me either.

Who needs to let judgement have a space in their soul when there is love to be had?

After Griffin showed Callie her gift, her very own room in his house, I knew it was only a matter of time before we merged our lives, and we moved in. Not going to lie, I love Griffin's house so much more than the townhouse I was renting. It really was a no-brainer.

I put all thoughts about moving to the side as we went to the Halloween party Griffin invited Callie and I to, the one at the SO mansion, which I was still having problems wrapping my mind around. It was the most fun I've ever had while celebrating Halloween. They went all out with the decorations, and I swear I was on one of the *Jurassic Park* sets.

I got to meet all the people who make up the family Griffin was telling me about and some of those guys were intimidating as hell. It didn't take long to figure out the huge military guys who now run a security company and the tattoo artists were all just big softies. All of them have wives and kids and you can see how much they adore the people they love.

Those giant teddy bears.

The family opened up their hearts to my daughter and me, which amazed and humbled me. I've gained friends, which I hadn't had time to have in a long time. Being a single mom and providing for Callie was my focus and I didn't have time for anything else. I'm learning I can have it all, especially when there are people in your life you can lean on.

We spent Thanksgiving with the family, with my parents and Griffin's mom joining us in the feast. It was delicious, fun, loud, and it made my soul so damn happy.

It was a few days later when I was driving Sienna to school when she asked me, "When are we moving in with Griffin permanently, Mom? I know you want to. I already have a room there."

I almost choked on air and struggled to get myself under control. I wasn't expecting her to ask me that, but I should have known because my daughter has always been perceptive and too smart for her own good. Or, maybe, my own good.

"How do you know he's asked us to move in?"

"Mom," she held the word out like I was torturing her, in the way only a preteen girl is truly capable of. It made me smile. "It's so obvious," she said like I should know the answer already. "He loves you. He loves me. He wants us to be a family."

"Do you want to be a family with him? Do you want to move in?"

"Yes," Callie told me simply. "I love him too. He's the only Dad I've ever known. I haven't called him that, even though my heart tells me I should." She shifted in her seat, shooting me a worried look, her voice full of vulnerability, "Do you think he'd mind?"

"No," I almost shouted before getting myself under control, "I don't think he'd mind at all. I think it would make him really happy."

"I want him to be happy just like I want you to be happy. Being together, being a family, makes all of us happy."

I nodded, knowing I was going to tell Griffin it was time for us to take the next step.

I could barely hold the choice inside, but I made it through the day without saying anything. I wanted to wait until we were all together. When I got home from work at the end of my day, dinner was already on the table at Griffin's house. My two favorite people in the whole world were laughing and smiling.

I barely got into the kitchen, where they were setting the table, before blurting, "We're ready to move in. If you still want us."

Griffin's head snapped up so fast I was afraid he hurt himself before he looked back at Callie, hope shining in his eyes. He croaked, "Really?"

Callie nodded slowly and I whispered, "Yes. We want to be a family. We love you and you love us. There's no reason to wait. We have all waited long enough to find the family we were always meant to have."

Griffin looked at me and I could see the tears glistening in his eyes, but he didn't let them fall. He opened up his arms for his girls and we rushed into them, knowing where we belong, knowing where we're safe.

With the help of all the people who have adopted us into their family, we moved in last week and now Christmas is right around the corner. I did not think this is where I would be a year ago. I had no idea what was coming for me, but I wouldn't change a thing about it.

Griffin's sister, Salem, is in town with the two men she's seeing and we're going to be meeting up with them along with the rest of the family for their Friday Night Beer Night tradition. We don't always go, and I usually work on Friday night, but with Salem in town, I made sure to take a few days off.

My man is acting strange, and I can't put my finger on why. His mom is downstairs already because she's hanging out with Callie tonight. There were quite a few totes of wreath supplies

that Griffin dragged into the house so I'm sure they are going to have a great time. I have no doubt there will be a new holiday wreath on the front door by the time we get back.

I turn as I finish putting my earring in and almost let out a shriek when I find Griffin standing there staring at me. He chuckles and I narrow my eyes at him. My voice is full of suspicion, "What are you up to? You've been acting weird."

"Have not," he scoffs.

I put my hands on my hips and continue to glare at him. Nothing, and I mean fucking nothing, could have prepared me for Griffin closing the distance between us and dropping down to one knee as he pulled a ring box out of his pocket.

"Holy shit," I breathe as I stare down at the man in front of me and my heart pounds against the inside of my chest.

"Sienna, my Starshine," he begins, pausing to swallow hard, "I love you so much. When you told me that you were ready to move in and ready to be a family, I knew I would find myself right here soon. I can't stop myself from asking you any longer. We are a family. You are my future, you, Callie, and any other kids we might be blessed with. You are everything and I want you to be mine in all ways. Will you marry me?"

"Yes."

Griffin surges to his feet and cups my face in his hands, wiping away the tears I didn't even realize had fallen. When he slips the ring on my finger, something inside of me clicks into place.

We found each other at the right time, after being shaped by life in ways we needed to be. To be who we are today. To be able to accept each other. To be able to love fully.

He pulls me against his chest and right before he kisses me, he whispers, "I love you, my Starshine."

I pour everything I feel for my man into our kiss. I don't need to say it, he knows, but when he pulls back, I still gasp out, "I love you, Griffin. Always."

**Want more Griffin and Sienna?  
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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

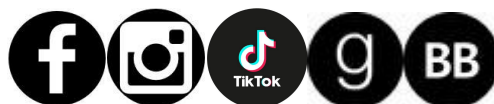


Ember Davis loves alpha heroes with a range of emotions, but a strong sense of how to take care of their women. She loves her heroines from all walks of life, just like her heroes, and she wants them to be real and relatable. Her heroines tend to be sassy, opinionated and smart.

Ember is a stay-at-home mom of two who recently refound her love of books and all things romance and is so glad that she did. She's always been creative but writing and creating stories that she would love to read satisfies dreams she had as a little girl. She loves butterflies, the color purple and enjoying time with her family.

Psst...it's totally a pen name, but everything above is 100% true.

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[Finding Luck Again \(Get Lucky Series\)\\*](#),  
[After the Rain \(Man of the Month Club\)\\*](#),  
[Securing His Heart \(Higgins Security Book 6\)](#)

[Rock & Crank \(Dirty Sinners Series\)\\*](#)  
[Letters From Hometown USA \(Loving My Soldier Series\)\\*](#)  
[Scarred Beginnings \(Heart of a Wounded Hero Series\)\\*](#)  
[Another Notch on the Bartop \(Notchin' Boots Series\)\\*](#)  
[Popping Her Hood \(Good With His Hands Series\)\\*](#)

[Sweetwater Valley Series:](#)

[Unexpected Love \(Sweetwater Valley Book 1\)](#)  
[Measured Love \(Sweetwater Valley Book 2\)](#)  
[Ask Me to Stay \(In Praise of Older Women\)\\*](#)  
[Getting Back His Rhythm \(Rock My World Series\)\\*](#)  
[Burning Love \(Cinnamon Roll Saviors Series\)\\*](#)  
[Celebrated Love \(A Country Christmas Series\)\\*](#)

[Wanderlust Series:](#)

[Lost Lust \(Wanderlust Book 1\)](#)

[Ellie's Stranger Shoot Series:](#)

[Off Limits \(Stranger Shoot Book 1\)](#)  
[First Look \(Stranger Shoot Book 2\)](#)  
[Hate to Love You \(Stranger Shoot Book 3\)](#)  
[Blast From the Past \(Stranger Shoot Book 4\)](#)  
[Timeless Connection \(Stranger Shoot Book 5\)](#)  
[Less Than Strangers \(Stranger Shoot Book 6\)](#)  
[Series Collection \(Novellas 1-6\)](#)  
[Bred Under Contract \(Baby Breeder Series\)\\*](#)

J&J Construction:

[Grating on the Boss \(The Boss Series\)\\*](#)

[Dad Bod Foreman \(Dad Bod 2.0: Large And In Charge\)\\*](#)

[Off Field Drama \(Class in Session Series\)\\*](#)

[Changing Grades \(Back In The Day Series\)\\*](#)

Denver Mustangs Series:

[Flag on the Play \(Gridiron Love Series\)\\*](#)

Sullivan Protection Series:

[Room Three: They Like to Bite \(Club Sin Series\)\\*](#)

[Bites in Paradise \(Temptation in Paradise Series\)\\*](#)

[The Way Her SEAL Cares \(Real Hot SEAL Series\)\\*](#)

[Never Going to Care \(Sullivan Protection Book 1\)](#)

[The Puck Stops Here \(New York Storm Hockey Series\)\\*](#)

[Fudge Around and Find Out \(Merry Fudgin' Christmas Series\)\\*](#)

[Tied Up in Tinsel \(XXXmas Series\)\\*](#)

[Two Pink Lines for Christmas \(The Naughty List Series\)\\*](#)

Vibrant Ink Series:

[His Wild Rebel \(May-December Romance Series\)\\*](#)

Broken Road, Texas Series:

[Broken Road Wishes \(Broken Road Texas Series\)](#)

[Dreams From Broken Road \(Everything's Bigger in Texas Series\)\\*](#)

Jasper Ridge Series:

[Mail Order Bride for the Scrooge \(Mistletoe Love Series\)\\*](#)



Screaming Woods:

[Knot Running From Fate \(Monster Between the Sheets Series\)\\*](#)

[Stalking From the Shadows \(Monster Between the Sheets: Season 2\)\\*](#)

[Monsters In The Woods](#)

Guidice Crime Family Series:

[Flames and Flowers\\*\\*](#)

[Flowers and Moonlight \(Mardi Gras Menage Series\)\\*](#)

[Room Five: What You Can't See \(Club Sin: New Orleans Session 1\)\\*](#)

[Room Eight: Cinched Up Tight \(Club Sin: New Orleans Session 2\)\\*](#)

Devil's Saints Motorcycle Club:

New Orleans Chapter:

[Devil's Return \(Devil's Saints Motorcycle Club: New Orleans Chapter Book 1\)](#)

[New Tune, Old Vinyl \(Man of the Month Club '24 - Magnolia Ridge\)\\*](#)

Seattle Chapter:

[Biker \(KNK Matchmaking Agency Series\)\\*](#)

[Falling Feathers \(Dark and Twisted Tales Series\)\\*](#)

Agosti Crime Family Series:

[Where Roses Lay \(Criminal Desires Series\)\\*](#)

[Room Six: Breathlessly Devoted to Them \(Club Sin: Chicago Series, Session 1\)\\*](#)

[Lilies and Lies \(Endless Obsession Series\)\\*](#)

[Plucking His Daisy \(The Auction Series\)\\*](#)

[The Taste of Temperance \(Vices & Virtues Series\)\\*](#)

[Room Four: Wrong Guys, Right Praise \(Club Sin: Chicago Series, Session 2\)\\*](#)

[Blossom in Shadows \(Dark Reign Series\)\\*](#)

[King of Pain and Petals \(Short Kings Series\)\\*](#)

[Possessing Her Petals \(Dark Hearts Mafia Series\)\\*](#)

[Vows & Vendettas Mafia Anthology](#)

McCarthy Irish Mob Series:

[Sweet Ruin \(Sweet but Twisted Christmas\)\\*](#)

Orlov Bratva Series:

[Snowed In With the Bratva Boss \(Snowed In Series\)\\*](#)

[Gilded Thorn \(Dark Reign Series\)\\*](#)

Club Sin: Chicago Series:

[Room Six: Breathlessly Devoted to Them \(Club Sin: Chicago Series, Session 1\)\\*](#)

[Room Four: Wrong Guys, Right Praise \(Club Sin: Chicago Series, Session 2\)\\*](#)

[Room Eighteen: My Pain, Their Pleasure \(Club Sin: Chicago Series, Session 2\)\\*](#)

[Chicago Collection](#)

Other PNR Titles:

[Bonded Beyond Lies \(Fighting Fate Series\)\\*](#)

\*Book part of a multi-author series. May not be part of series it is listed under expressly but contains a character within that series.

\*\*Companion to Beads on a Bombshell. May not be part of series it is listed under expressly but contains a character within that series.