



THE TWELVE DATES OF CHRISTMAS



# Gift WRAPPED

JADE MARSHALL

# Gift Wrapped

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For Roelien Uys

Merry Christmas you weirdo.

Thanks for the laughs.

Here's to next couple of drinks.

Oi Oi

# Content Warning

## **Authors Note:**

Gift Wrapped may contain triggers for some. As a reader, I find trigger warnings to be spoilers, but as an author, I understand that they are sometimes necessary. Although I am not going to list each one, there are many. Please feel free to email me at [author.jmarshall@gmail.com](mailto:author.jmarshall@gmail.com) with your specific trigger(s) and I will let you know if that trigger is in this book.

For those of you that wish to go in blind, please remember that this is a work of fiction, and I DO NOT condone any of the situations or actions of the characters.

# New Member Profile



Welcome to Love-N-Shenanigans, the last dating app you'll ever need. Your best match (or matches) are just a few clicks away!

## **Basic Information**

Name: \*\*\*\* \*  
\*\*\*\*\*

Screen Name: Ligress28

Age: Twenty-eight

Species: Ligress

Job Description: Personal Assistant

Marital Status: Single

Dependants: None



Describe yourself using 10 words or less: Outgoing, Friendly, Helpful, Social, Happy

Person who referred you: Damian, the barista at Serendripty

**Additional Information**

Sexual Designation: Female

Sexual Orientation: Heterosexual

Are you Monogamous, Swinger, Polyamorous? Monogamous

Are you willing to date outside of your species? Only under special circumstances

Hobbies: Reading, cooking, singing, and dancing

Do you have any kinks you would like to be taken into consideration? I have never been in a situation where I can experiment but I would like to try.

Please describe your perfect partner/partners: I would like someone open-minded Someone who is willing to take the time to show me the ropes and allow me to experiment. I want to be able to try different things until I find what I like or don't and I need a partner that will be patient with me throughout this experience.

**Additional Notes**

I would consider dating outside of my species, but I would like to stick to a feline shifter. Preferably something on the larger side like a lion or a panther.

# Chapter One



## *Lake Roman*

“I’m done,” I say, exasperated at the entire situation.

“What do you mean, you’re done?” Chad asks with a frown.

His big ass is lounging on my soft caramel leather couch in front of the tv.

Do you know that moment when you realize you have been wasting your time? That nothing you do is ever going to fix or change the situation and you just have to cut your losses? Yeah, this is that moment.

“I mean,” I say slowly, trying to make sure that he takes in every single word that comes out of my mouth. “I am done with this relationship.”

I am brutally aware that this is a shitty time of the year to do this. It’s only eight days before Christmas and I am ending our relationship and kicking him out of my apartment. And maybe if I could stand his smug face for a minute longer, I would wait until after the new year.

He laughs, never looking away from the screen. “Babe, be serious.”

This is the attitude that makes me not care about the time of the year or anything else. I simply want this over.

“I am serious.” I glare, trying to keep a grip on the last bit of my control.

“So, you are just going to throw away the last eighteen months? I thought you were happy.” he looks skeptical, finally facing me.

I growl low in the back of my throat. “You’re an idiot.”

“Lake, listen,” he starts in a patronizing tone, but I cut him off.

“No! It’s time for you to listen to me.” I pace the length of the lounge, taking deep breaths to steady myself.

I always get like this in these kinds of situations. Like a caged tiger, my mother used to say. He isn't listening to a word I have been saying for the last hour, only hearing what he wants, and it is driving my temper to its peak.

Taking a deep breath, I try again.

"I'm not happy. I haven't been for a while now, but I kept on trying to fix us. I was sure we could be happy if I just put in more effort, but it's not working. But I am tired of being the only person in this failing relationship that is doing anything."

"What are you saying?"

He has a grin spread across his lips; the same one he has used to get out of fights before. He is trying to seduce me, but it won't work this time. My temper snaps and the words leave me before I consider the consequences.

"Get the fuck out!" I roar.

A split second later, Chad has me pressed against the front door. His claws are already extended, the black bear beneath already pushing to the surface. The pressure on my throat is harsh and I can't draw in a breath.

"You really don't want to piss me off Lake. Remember who and what I am."

The tips of his sharp claws dig into my skin before releasing. The coppery smell of blood quickly permeates the air around us.

Yeah, yeah. I know. Don't date outside your species and all that, but I simply couldn't resist him. The man is massive, built like a mountain. Long black hair, black eyes, thick thighs, and massive hands. The first time I saw him live on stage playing his bass guitar, my ovaries basically exploded.

So yes, I let my pussy lead my decisions.

Obviously, it wasn't the best choice.

Sadly, Chad is not what I thought he would turn out to be. He is lazy and

indecisive. I've been taking care of him, our rent, and everything else for the bigger part of our eighteen-month relationship.

And don't even get me started on the sex. Urgh. The man is selfish with a capital S. As long as he is getting what he wants; he doesn't give a shit. I have been responsible for my own orgasms for the past six months.

For the millionth time, I wonder how the hell we ended up here. Things were great at the beginning and I can't figure out where we went wrong, but that doesn't matter now. All I want is to get it over with.

"I'm going to work, Chad. You know that thing that only I do," I verbally jab at him as I grab my purse. "This isn't a discussion. We are done. When I get back, don't be here."

"And if I am?" he challenges.

I'm not stupid. I may be a big, beautiful beast when I shift, and I can cause some serious destruction, but a black bear is going to fuck me up. I won't be threatening violence because I know it won't work. There is only one thing that can put a wannabe alpha idiot on his ass.

"I'll call your mother."

I don't wait for him to respond as I stride out of my apartment and slam the door behind me.

"Good for you," Mrs. Anderson from 208 smiles as I make my way down the stairs. "I never liked that one."

"Sorry for the noise," I blush.

My neighbors have been forced to put up with our escalating arguments and I feel terrible about it. At least now that will also come to an end and I can finally face them again.

"Nothing to apologize for, dear. I'm just glad you finally kicked his butt to the curb." She is wearing one of the ugliest Christmas sweaters that I have

ever seen, with a blinking red Rudolph nose.

I laugh at her sentiment and her sweater. I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders. “Want me to bring you something from the store on the way home Mrs. A?”

“Nothing today, dear, but we need to have dinner after Christmas. I have a craving for your meat lovers’ lasagne.”

“Definitely.” I smile and wave as I leave. I need my coffee fix and then to get to the office. As it is, I’m cutting it pretty close. Luckily, my favorite coffee shop is on the way to the office.

“What’s up, buttercup?” Damian, the barista at Serendripty, calls as I walk in.

“I need a macchiato, stat. I’m going to be late for work.”

“Gotcha.”

He moves fluidly behind the counter. He is super-efficient and he will have my order ready in less than no time. Sometimes I wonder if there is something a little supernatural about him, but I can’t just come right out and ask, you know? It’s a big no-no for a supernatural creature of any kind to out ourselves to any human. People tend to eradicate anything they don’t understand, and people definitely won’t understand the existence of the supernatural.

I take in the beautiful Christmas decorations in Serendripty. It’s a smaller chain of coffee shops that have steadily been opening across the country. The Christmas tree is massive, with all kinds of gold and red trinkets hanging on its branches. Fairy lights flash in various colors and Christmas jingles play through the overhead speakers. I love this time of the year. Even now that both my parents have passed, I still feel like a little kid when it comes to Christmas.

“Tell me before you leave,” he says, drawing my attention back to him but holding the lifesaving caffeine just out of reach, “What has you glowing this morning? You finally get some good D?”

Did I mention I over share? A lot. But then again, so does Damian. We have become gossip friendly over the counter while I wait on my daily order. He knows about me and Chad and how unhappy I have been. He has been there with friendly advice but never says anything that may be held against him if I decided to stay with Chad.

“I kicked him out.” I can’t stop smiling.

“Finally!” he does a little happy dance behind the counter before handing over my drink. “So?”

“So what?” I take a sip and hum in satisfaction.

Coffee is life!

“Are you on the prowl now?”

I burst out laughing. “I’m not a cougar, you know?” It slips out before I can stop it.

“Of course.” He looks offended that I would say such a thing. “You’re too young for that.”

I breathe a sigh of relief that he took it as a slang term and not literally.

“But,” he grins widely, “we do need to get you some big dick energy. The kind that knows what they are doing.”

“Oh. My. God!” I gasp and look around to see who may have heard, but the coffee shop is unusually empty at this time of the morning.

“Don’t look so scandalized. We both know you need it.” He disappears beneath the counter, and I can hear him rummaging around. “My bestie swears this company is the reason why he walks funny.” Damian grins as he hands over a business card.

I read the card out loud. “Love -N- Shenanigans. A dating site? Really?” I ask with no amount of disbelief in my voice.

“Couldn’t hurt,” Damian shrugs.

“I’ll think about it,” I say over my shoulder as I head out the door, but I know the moment I have some spare time, I will be signing up. As Damian pointed out, I need to get laid. Properly.

“See you tomorrow!” Damian calls, but I am already out the door and walking as fast as these deep blue stilettos will carry me. Time to get to work.



*Wilder Smith*

Sitting behind the large mahogany desk in my office on the top floor of Titan Industries, I flip through my emails, my mood sour. I haven’t had sex in three months and the lack of decent orgasms tends to make me moody. And



my hand in the privacy of my shower hasn't been cutting it since the first week.

The last woman I had in my bed wanted me to marry her a month later. Fucking gold digger. Came over claiming to be pregnant with my child but I knew that wasn't a possibility.

Tiger shifters have a beautiful safety feature built into our DNA. I can only procreate with someone that has the same genetic markers as I do. That keeps us from cross-breeding and creating God knows what.

Isn't nature wonderful?

Besides, she was a human. Not that I have anything against humans, they just have limitations that shifters don't. But she is definitely the last human I will be taking to my bed. They are much too fragile and have too many limitations for the things I enjoy.

Women look at me and see a virile man with lots of money and they want a part of that for themselves. No one ever looks beyond the thousand-dollar suit or expensive dinners to see the man, or the tiger, beneath. And I am so fucking tired of it.

I want more from life.

I'm thirty-five for Christ's sake. I want to find a good woman that wants to settle down and maybe even have a cub or two, but it doesn't seem like that is in the cards for me. Instead, I've settled for the shallow dating pool of shifters here in Hawaii.

Closing my emails, I pull up my profile on Love -N- Shenanigans and check if there are any matches to suit my criteria. I check my profile every day and find myself disappointed every single time.

A knock sounds at my door and I slam the laptop shut. I don't know what the hell I am trying to hide or why I would feel guilty for being on a dating

site, but that is a question for another day.

“What?” I call loudly.

My frustration with everything else in my life is bleeding through to my business.

The door opens and my accounts manager enters. I have no fondness for the overweight, bald man, but he is good at his job, so I keep my features neutral.

“How can I help you, Mr. Albright?”

I have never addressed him or any other employee by their first name. It gives a sense that we are equal, and we aren't. I am his boss.

Yes. I am an asshole.

No. I don't give a shit about anyone's opinion of me.

“I'm sorry to bother you with something this trivial,” he starts with the ass-kissing, and I cut him off.

“Get to the point.” I want to get him out of my office as quickly as possible.

“I need a new assistant.”

“What's wrong with yours?”

This is something he could have easily handled with human resources, and I feel my disdain rise at being bothered by this kind of bullshit. He blushes beat red from the collar of his shirt to the shiny bald spot on his head.

“Um.”

“Spit it out. Or keep the assistant.” I bark, making him jump.

“She's too...sexy.”

That has my attention. None of my employees are hired based on their looks, but at the end of the day, a bunch of number-crunching accountants are rarely the most attractive people. We all spend inordinate amounts of time sitting in chairs facing screens. And very few do anything to keep active or take care of themselves.

“Does she dress inappropriately for work?” I ask, trying to figure out what the problem is.

“No, no. She is dressed professionally. Black suit pants with a jacket. A white button-down shirt and those damn blue heels.”

“I don’t see the problem?”

Although him knowing, in detail, exactly what she is wearing is a little concerning. I am getting frustrated with this endless conversation that doesn’t seem to be heading anywhere and it is conveyed in my tone.

“Because you haven’t seen her,” he sighs, wiping sweat from his forehead. “The girl could wear a plastic bag and I would still have the same problem.” He stares at me for a beat before continuing. “I’ll trade you!”

“Excuse me?”

“I’ll take Mrs. Deeley and you can have Miss Roman. She is very efficient, never late...”

I hold my hand up to cut him off again. “Will that get you out of my office?” He nods enthusiastically. “Fine.”

I press the button on my desk that signals my assistant. Shortly after, the older Mrs. Deeley comes in carrying her notepad. “Sir.”

“Mrs. Deeley, you are being transferred to Mr. Albright’s department.”

The stricken look on her face says that she is worried it is something she has done. I never took into consideration that this may feel somewhat like a demotion to her.

“He requires a more experienced assistant.” I try to placate her.

Mrs. Deeley’s frown turns to a smile. She nods before she turning and leaving my office to gather her things.

“Thank you,” Albright says, before scrambling after her.

Usually, I would have just sent the man on his way to human resources, but

in the past year we have had two sexual harassment cases brought against the company. Albright bringing this to me before he fucked up is something I appreciate, and the only reason I handled the situation. After all, how bad can she be?

Re-opening my laptop, I try to forget about the dating site and move on with my regular day-to-day but I don't get much done before my phone rings.

"Your new assistant is on her way up," Mrs. Deeley says before hanging up.

Time to meet this woman that has my staff all in knots.

# Chapter Two



## *Lake Roman*

“What?” I nearly shout when my boss informs me that I am being transferred. “Why?”

“I need someone a little more experienced for the new customer I acquired, and the boss man has agreed that this would be the best solution.”

“So, I’m going to be working for Wilder Smith directly?”

“Yes. But a word of warning, he is a lot more formal than our department.”

“Don’t care,” I reply as I scramble to gather all my things. “Thanks, Mr. Albright,” I smile as I hurry my ass out of the shared office and over to the elevator.

This is exactly what I need.

A brand-new start.

I took Damian’s advice and filled out the dating application form, just like we both knew I would. It was a little different from the forms I have seen before, but that didn’t matter. I filled that sucker out and hit send before I could second-guess myself. Now, I have a new, more prestigious job and I finally got rid of my deadbeat boyfriend. For a Monday, this day is going fantastic.

Hitting the button for the top floor, I smile to myself as I wait for the elevator to carry me toward newer and better things.

Exiting the elevator, I turn left and walk right into a mountain of solid muscle and fall flat on my ass. My gaze travels from expensive shoes, over a tailor-made suit, up thick thighs to a broad chest, and on to a scowling face.

Shit.

If he didn't look at me like something stuck to the bottom of his shoe, I might think he was attractive. His hand reaches down to help me up.

"I'm sorry," I say. "I wasn't looking where I was going."

"Miss Roman, I assume," his deep voice washes over me.

"Lake."

"I am Mr. Smith," he turns and walks down the corridor, clearly expecting me to follow.

Usually, something like that would grate at my nerves, but I simply scamper along after him. This man puts off alpha energy like he took a bath in it. I can't help myself. Looking around, I notice that this floor doesn't have a single Christmas decoration, even though the entire building, including the elevator, has been decorated.

"Here is your desk," he gestures to the left side. "Unless I buzz you, I am not to be interrupted."

"Ever?" I ask.

"Never." Then he strides away from me and closes the door to his office.

Well, that was...weird? Interesting? I don't know how to describe that interaction. The man has a magnetism that would turn the head of every female everywhere, but his personality may need a little work.

Instead of thinking too hard about that, I take my seat and get everything ready for whenever my new boss calls on me. I boot up the computer on the desk and log in with all my credentials before checking my emails.

My phone pings in my handbag and I pull it out. A match on Love n Shenanigans. That was fast.

I take a long look at the closed door to Mr. Smith's office. Fuck it. I can't wait until I'm home to check this. I need to do it now. Opening the app, I find a notification with a brief message I quickly click on.

*Congratulations! We have selected a match for you based on your specified criteria. Below is all the information you could require to assist you in making a decision on whether to proceed with or decline this match. For your protection as well as that of your match, we keep your identity private.*

*Happy Dating*

There is a link below the message that leads me to the profile my match created. I contemplate waiting until I get home to view it, but I have never been known for my patience. Also, I am curious as hell right now, so I open the link.





## Potential Match Profile



According to the profile you completed when signing up with Love-N-Shenanigans, we have selected the best match for you. For your safety and those of our other members, all names are hidden. If you choose to disclose any information, including your name, this is at your own risk.

### **Basic Information**

Name: \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

Screen Name: DomBrae

Age: Thirty-five

Species: Tiger

Job Description: Business Owner

Marital Status: Single

Dependants: None

Describe yourself using 10 words or less: Attentive, Considerate, Demanding, Professional, Hard Working

Person who referred you: The Owner, Destiny Truegood

### **Additional Information**

Sexual Designation: Male

Sexual Orientation: Heterosexual

Are you Monogamous, Swinger, Polyamorous? Monogamous

Are you willing to date outside of your species? I would prefer to date within my species, but as long as the other person is not a human or a smaller shifter, I might be convinced.

Hobbies: I don't have many. But I do like boating and fishing on the odd occasion.

Do you have any kinks you would like to be taken into consideration? I have experience with most things and if I find something I haven't done yet, I am always open to new experiences. I am a very dominant person in and out of bed and that should be made clear.

Please describe your perfect partner/partners: I need someone who is strong physically but not afraid to show vulnerability. The person should be able to follow directions. I won't stand a brat.

### **Additional Notes**

As stated before, I would like to be matched to a physically strong shifter. I also need someone that knows the value of discretion.



I smile as I reread the profile a second time. This is exactly what I need. This Monday couldn't get any better if it tried. I fire off an in-application message and hope that my match responds sooner rather than later.

The intercom on my desk goes off and I hurry to answer it, blushing deeply from the guilt of being caught goofing off at work. I know he didn't see me, but it feels like he had a sixth sense about what I was doing and is going to call me out on it.

“Yes, Mr. Smith,” I say too cheerfully.

“Bring a notepad. I need you to sit in on this call.”

He disconnects without saying anything else. Asshole. I quickly grab my tablet and stylus before heading to his office. After knocking, I let myself in.

Wilder is seated behind an exquisite desk with the most beautiful view of the island just outside his window. I wouldn't be able to get a single thing done if I had a view like that. No wonder he faces the other way.

He scowls at me before directing me to a chair in front of his desk.

"Continue," he says.

A voice with a French accent floats from the speaker of his telephone and I get to work taking notes and trying not to steal glances at my unnecessarily hot boss.



## *Wilder Smith*

The moment I laid eyes on her, I knew she was going to be a problem. I could see exactly what Albright was complaining about. She may be dressed in perfectly acceptable work attire, except for those damn heels, and there is no cleavage or some such on display, but that doesn't make her any less sexy.

Her curves are visible even with the pants suit she is wearing. There is no way any amount of clothing could hide the way her body looks.

Full breasts, wide hips, and thick thighs. I lick my lips just thinking of Lake sitting in the reception area of my floor. I could scent the fact that she was a shifter the moment we collided in the hallway. She has the air of a predator, a meat eater. It's easy to see the way she moves and how she carries herself. She knows she is at the top of the food chain and that confidence simply adds to her appeal.

Sadly, she is an employee, and short of firing her first I could never lay a hand on her. And I may be a massive asshole but I won't fire a young woman only so I can get her into my bed.

The ringing of my direct line pulls me from my thoughts and I glare at the offensive item.

"What?" I ask harshly.

"Wilder, my friend," Thomas Paige says in return. "As friendly as always."

Already his French accent grates on my nerves and I consider hanging up on him, but I know I can't. He is my business partner, after all, and we need to have our weekly meeting.

"Hold on."

I put him on hold and summon Lake to my office via the intercom. She needs to sit in on this meeting and take notes. When she enters my office, I can feel my scowl deepen as my cock strains against my slacks. She really is a sight to behold.

Ignoring my erection, I indicate which seat she should take before continuing with Thomas.



In all my years as the head of Titan Industries, a meeting has never felt like it lasted forever, and I work with some of the most boring people in the world. The truth of the matter is, I had to constantly stop myself from openly staring at my stunning assistant. She is an absolute distraction, and all I could think of was stripping her down and mounting her over my desk.

My cock still hasn't gone down, and she left ten minutes ago. I wonder if I should take myself in hand just to take the edge off, but a notification sounds on my laptop, drawing my attention.

It takes me a moment to figure out what the noise was and when I reopen the minimized window, I see that the Love -N- Shenanigans website has found a match for me.

It has only been two weeks since Destiny Truegood floated into my office and demanded that I manage her fortune. Little did I know that the little hippie woman was worth more than any of the other accounts I have.

She piqued my interest and after we finished sorting her finances, I finally asked how she had amassed her wealth. Being told it was through a dating site had me laughing at first, but curious afterward. And that's how I ended up filling out a profile.

Now, after two weeks, I finally have a match. Nervously, I read through the application twice. The fact that this woman is a Liger shifter counts to her advantage. What I don't like is the fact that she hasn't done anything remotely kinky in her life. Down to my bones, I am a kinky man. There are no two ways about it.

My finger hovers over the mouse pad, ready to dismiss the match, when a message pops up.

Ligress28: Hi. Not exactly sure how to do this. I've never used one of these sites. I would love to chat. Let me know.

My mind runs a mile a minute. Perhaps her inexperience with kink is a blessing in disguise. She doesn't have any bad habits that I need to reteach. Everything else about her profile is exactly what I want in a sexual and life partner. Without taking time to work through my pro and con list again, I answer her message.

DomBrae: Hello. To be honest, this is my first time on a dating site as well. I was just about to give up hope.

Ligress28: I'm glad you didn't.

DomBrae: It may be a little soon to decide if you mean that.

Ligress28: I am having the best Monday of my entire life. This is meant to be.

DomBrae: Are you one of those?

Ligress28: One of what?

DomBrae: Those people that believe in fate and soul mates?

Ligress28: Not at all. I do believe that there are people more compatible with others.

DomBrae: And if I am not one of those people?

Ligress28: Then I had a conversation. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, and all that.

I chuckle at the sentiment. I could be wasting five minutes talking to a random stranger and then calling it quits or we could get to know one another. Who knows?

DomBrae: Why are you on this site?

Ligress28: I just got out of a relationship. I need something new in my life.

DomBrae: Already looking for the next guy to tie down?

It's a dickhead thing to say, but I don't have time for games.

Ligress28: Not at all. I am tired of being down. But I wouldn't say no to a night or two of fun.

Jesus. I wasn't expecting her to be so up front about it. I generally prefer women who let me take the lead but for some reason find it refreshing that she is the pursuer at this moment.

DomBrae: Tell me what exactly you want and maybe I can help you out.



For five long minutes, she doesn't reply, and I fear that I might have scared her off. I may have started out unsure about the match or even talking to her, but I find that the longer it takes her to reply the antsier I get.

Ligress28: Sorry. I'm at work. And that is the most loaded question I have ever heard. If I answer that here, at my desk, and my very unfriendly boss finds out? I will probably end up fired.

DomBrae: Wouldn't want that. What time do you get off?

Ligress28: Should be home by six.

DomBrae: I'll talk to you then.

I can't believe that I've set a chat date with this woman. I know nothing about her. What I should do is get my private investigator to try to find out who she is and make sure this isn't some kind of trap or scam. But that doesn't feel right. Like I would be cheating. Destiny Truegood assured me that her dating site works if everyone trusts the process.

Instead of calling in my PI or letting my mind wander back to our conversation, I close the site down. I need to get some work done. Between the Love -N- Shenanigans website and my distracting new assistant, I haven't gotten shit done, and it's already after noon.

Well, the upside is that it's only five more hours before I can chat with my match again.



It's almost half-past five when a knock sounds at my office door.

"Come in."

I assumed that my assistant had already left for the day, but find myself proven wrong when she pushes open my office door.

"I know you said not to disturb you," she says demurely. "I just wanted to make sure you don't need anything else before I leave for the day."

I stare at her in dismay. Our business hours are from nine to four. I fully believe that overworked staff causes problems.

"Do you know our business hours?" I ask.

"Yes sir," she says and diverts her gaze to her feet for a moment. "But I didn't want to leave without speaking to you first, and I was still busy in the copy room."

She has a brilliant submissive streak to her. It's rare to find it in predatory shifters and that only makes it all the more exquisite.

"You may leave for the day," I say, looking away from her. She is beyond off-limits to me, so I need to stop thinking of her in any other way. "And don't stay late again," I chastise. "It lowers efficiency and productivity. There is always tomorrow."

"Yes sir," Lake says before leaving and closing the door behind her.

She is going to be a problem in the future. I will have to find a different position for her as far away from me as possible. But I can't just pass her off to the next person. I need to figure out if she is competent first.

Opening a blank document on my laptop, I draw up a list of projects for her to complete in the next few days. It's almost Christmas after all, and perhaps I can gift someone a brand-new assistant. Even if the thought of her working for anyone else makes my tiger uncomfortable.

# Chapter Three



## *Lake Roman*

The apartment looks the same as it did when I left, minus Chad's shit all over the place. I was worried he would trash the place, but I'm happily surprised. I start my laptop, grab myself the biggest glass of wine I can, and change out of my work clothes. The entire day, I have been looking forward to chatting with *DomBrae*.

When I finally get back to my laptop, I see that he has already sent me a message.

DomBrae: Tell me about yourself.

Ligress28: What do you want to know?

DomBrae: I've never done this before. Traditional dating is hard enough.

Ligress28: I get what you're saying. My last boyfriend was an asshat, and we actually spent time getting to know one another. Shouldn't this be easier?

DomBrae: I hope it is. The last woman I had in my life only wanted my money.

Ligress28: I hate women like that. They give the rest of us a shitty reputation.

DomBrae: Meaning?

Ligress28: Well, you're currently skeptical of all women because of what she did. But take me, for instance. I have my own money. I inherited a bundle when my parents passed. My apartment is paid for. I have a really good job that I love. I don't need a man to take care of me. Does that make you feel better about me? Probably not. And it's because of what she did.

DomBrae: But the same goes for your asshat ex.

Ligress28: I know. But as long as you don't want to spend the next eighteen months having me take care of you while you forget that I'm part of whatever this is, we'll be fine.

DomBrae: I'm sorry that happened to you.

Ligress28: I let that happen to me. No more though. I am ready to move on with my future.

DomBrae: That's good.

Talking to him has me relaxed or that may be the wine doing its work. My phone rings and I set the laptop aside to take the call. I don't recognize the number, but I'm not the type of person to just let it go to voicemail.

Ligress28: I'll be right back.

"Hello," I answer.

"Babe," I hear Chad's slurred voice down the line.

"What do you want, Chad?"

I know he is drunk and probably in some kind of bar. I can hear the music in the background.

"I love you," he mumbles. "Can't we talk and fix this?"

"No."

"How can you be so heartless?" he complains. "It's basically Christmas."

"It's simple Chad. You don't love me, I'm just another person you can use to get whatever you want and I'm tired. And you hate Christmas, so don't try to make me feel bad."

"You know what?" he snaps down the line. "I'm glad this is finally over. I don't have to pretend to love you. Hell, I can't even stand looking at your fat ass."

There's that ugly side Chad hides so well when he is sober.

"Fuck. Off." I hang up and throw my cell phone down beside me on the

bed.

I chug the glass of wine before refilling it. I didn't think there was anything else he could do to hurt me, but clearly, I was wrong. He always told me how much he loved my curves, but now I know it was all a lie.

Ligress28: Do you like curvy girls?

DomBrae: What brought on that question?

Ligress28: I hate when people answer a question with a question, but I will give you that one. I just had an argument with my ex, and he said he was glad he didn't have to look at my fat ass again.

I watch him type a reply, but he never sends it. Then he types again and again.

DomBrae: Here's my number. Send me a photo if you want an honest opinion.

I stare at the screen for so long that the words swim in my vision. Do I want an honest opinion?

Do I care what a stranger thinks? Jumping from the bed, I rip off the t-shirt and shorts that I'm wearing. Standing in front of my full-length mirror, I take no less than ten photos of myself in my lacy purple underwear before I find one that I like. I crop out my face, save his number under the same name as his screen name, take a deep breath, and send. It takes a moment for him to reply, and he doesn't use the app, instead texting me directly.

DomBrae: You take good care of yourself. That much is clear. You have beautiful legs, and your tits are stunning. I would never use the word fat to describe you.

Ligress28: Flattery will get you everywhere.

DomBrae: I don't have to flatter you. You could decide to never meet me.

I let his words sit with me for a moment. He really doesn't have any ulterior

motives. We may or may not meet each other. I read his words again. Looking at myself in the mirror, I try to see myself the way he would. The way a stranger would. I smile.

DomBrae: Will you tell me now?

Me: What?

DomBrae: I want to know about this big dick energy you're looking for.

I use my hand to fan my face. It's a strange thing talking to this man I have never met. I have been more honest with him in our little chats than I have ever been with anyone in real life. It's liberating.

Also, thinking of all the dirty things I have always wanted but never had the courage to speak out loud has me kind of turned on. Will he find my fantasies disgusting or will they seem tame compared to the things that he has done before?

A thought hits me and I laugh out loud, alone in my bedroom, sitting in my underwear drinking wine. It doesn't matter what he thinks or feels. For the first time in my adult life, I am doing something for myself. If he doesn't want to be part of that, fuck him.





## *Wilder Smith*

God knows the moment the photo came through on my phone, my cock kicked to life in my sweats. What are the chances that I would find two perfectly voluptuous women in one day?

At least this one isn't off-limits. I wait, not so patient as she types out her reply.

Ligress28: This is a loaded question. But what I want is one night. I may even be talked into an entire weekend. But what I want is a sexual experience that will ruin me for all other men.

DomBrae: And what would that night look like?

If she is looking to get fucked properly, I will probably need more than a weekend, but let's start with baby steps.

Ligress28: I want it to be anonymous. I want to meet you somewhere that's neutral, like a hotel. I want to be blindfolded. I want to give all my power over to you. But most importantly, I want to be tied up when you take me.

Fuck. My. Life. She may be inexperienced when it comes to any form of kink, but she sure as shit knows exactly what she wants from this. My dick gets harder and harder at just the thought of what she is describing. She isn't asking for much. It isn't some fantasy that should make anyone uncomfortable. I wonder why she has never done it before.

DomBrae: And if I said I could give that to you?

Ligress28: I just might take you up on that offer.

DomBrae: Let's try something else first.

DomBrae: Can I call you?

My phone rings with her screen name scrolled across the screen. Again, she is taking the lead, and I find that I'm not hating it.

"Hello," I answer.

"Hi," her husky voice drifts down the line.

"I said I would call you." I chastise her.

"Does it matter?" she asks.

"Yes. If you want to do this with me, we need to build up our trust. If I say something, I need you to trust that I'm not just doing it to mess with your head, but because it will enhance your experience. Do you understand?"

"Yes. I understand."

"Good girl. For our first trust exercise, I am going to describe what I want from our first meeting. If at any point you want me to stop, just say dodo."

She laughs on the other end of the line. "Why dodo?"

"Because it's not an everyday word, and it lets me know that you are unhappy or uncomfortable," I say. "This is very important. Don't forget it."

"I won't," her voice is soft and melodious, and I wonder what she would sound like moaning my name over and over.

"Good. I read through what you want, and I think I can do a little better. I will book us a suite downtown. I want you to book in the previous night. Enjoy the room, go to the spa, whatever you want." I know she said she has her own money, but a woman still likes to be spoiled.

"Then at exactly seven o'clock I want you to dress in the set of underwear I will have sent to you before putting on your blindfold and kneeling in front of the bed to wait for me."

My ligress makes a mewling noise on the other end of the line and I hear her move.

"Am I getting you all worked up pretty girl?" I press down on my throbbing

dick.

Clearly, I'm getting us both worked up.

"Yes," she moans down the line.

"Will you touch what I can only imagine is a juicy pussy while I tell you the rest?"

I have my cock in hand before she replies. The sounds she is making and the vision of what I want to do with her are enough to have my control slipping.

"Oh my God," she sighs. "Will you tell me more?"

"Only if you describe what you are doing right now."

A little growl comes from down the line before she speaks. "I used my left hand to push my panties aside. My pussy is warm and when I run my finger between the lips I can feel the slippery wetness."

"Fuck," I feel almost feral as I stroke my cock. "Do you want me to tell you about our date or about what I'm doing right now?"

She remains silent for a moment, the only sound between us that of our labored breathing.

"I want to know what you're doing now," she replies.

"I'm looking at the photo you sent me. My right hand stroking my fat cock as I imagine all the dirty, depraved things I can't wait to do to you."

For a moment it sounds like the call may have dropped, but then I hear her moaning again.

But it sounds far off. I don't get the chance to question her before a text with an attachment comes through on my phone. I nearly come like a teenager the moment I have it open.

The photo is taken from her chest down. She has both bra cups pulled down, exposing her erect nipples to my gaze. But the thing that catches my

attention is the sight of two fingers pushed halfway into her pretty pink cunt. I can see the wetness on them.

“Fuck me.” I groan, squeezing my cock tight to stave off my impending orgasm. “That photo is stunning. Good girl.”

While I’m talking to her, I have put her on speaker and I’m making a short clip of me stroking my cock. But I don’t send it to her. No, I will wait a few days to send it, build up the anticipation.

“I can hear you’re getting close. I want you to know something, though. On our date, I’m going to tie you to the bed and eat that pretty pink pussy until you cry.”

Those are the words that set her orgasm off, sending her into bliss. My name tumbles from her lips, but it’s not the name I want to hear.

“Oh god Brae,” she moans with abandon and sets my own orgasm into motion.

I can’t wait to hear her call me Wilder while I shove her full of my fat dick. This female is going to be the fucking death of me.

# Chapter Four



## *Lake Roman*

I know that great sex can have you feeling relaxed. What I didn't know was that a self-inflicted, semi-assisted orgasm would do the job just as well. I wake up refreshed after sleeping like the dead. Each night I talk to DomBrae on the phone. We talk about regular mundane things like our favorite meals or movies. But before we end the call, he always tells me dirty fantasies he wants to play out with me, and I can't wait for tomorrow and our official date.

Lying in bed as the morning sun peeks through the light blue curtains I think of everything that was said and done last night. A smile spreads across my face with the memories and I know that I won't be disappointed in spending time getting physical with him.

How could I?

With a smile on my face, I start to get ready for the day that lies ahead. The only thing dampening my mood is my new boss and the foul mood I am sure to find him in once I reach the office. Though, his sullenness can only affect me if I allow it so he can go suck a lemon.

I have been working as his assistant for four days and except for the list he handed me on my second day, he seems to have locked himself in his office.

The tasks he wanted me to accomplish were menial at best, and it seemed like he was testing me to make sure I could do my damn job. Well, he can kiss my ass. I finished his list the first day I had it.

I haven't even seen him the entire week, except yesterday. The moment I arrived at the office he was waiting beside my desk to chew me out for finally

decorating our floor with Christmas decorations. He wanted maintenance to take the decorations down but once he was informed I paid for them out of my own pocket, all I received was a grunt and a glare. I took that to mean I could leave them up.

Today, nothing and I mean nothing, is going to ruin my good mood. I take my time in the shower, shaving my legs and pampering myself a little. After all, I deserve to feel good about myself. I take my time choosing my underwear, a bright fuchsia-colored set with lots of lace. Any woman can look good but it's not as easy to feel good. I learned a long time ago that I can wear anything I want as long as I pick the right underwear. Starting with a good base is a great way to feel confident and sexy all day long. It's like putting on armor.

I grab my handbag and keys before leaving but run into a solid wall of muscle as I leave the apartment. Before I can stumble, I am caught by large hands.

Looking up I find the one person that might have the power to fuck up this beautiful morning.

"Not today," I say as I attempt to extract myself from Chad's grasp.

"Lake, babe, don't be this way," he says.

"Chad," I breathe deeply through my nose before speaking. "I don't want to have this conversation with you. Much less today. And I need to get to work."

He shoves me back into the apartment and this time I do end up on my ass. It's been less than a week since I last saw him, but he looks disheveled and tired.

"We are going to work this out," he grumbles as he closes and locks the door. "I don't give a shit about your job or anything else. Neither of us is



leaving until this is fixed.”

Slowly I rise from the spot where I fell and straighten my clothes. “This is my home, and you aren’t welcome in it anymore.”

Chad turns to me, and I know that I said the wrong thing. His eyes are black with the finest ring of gold as his animal tries to force his way out. This man is holding on by a very thin thread and I would be wise not to push him.

“I don’t want to fight,” I say instead as I gingerly try to move away from him.

Perhaps I can get behind the sofa? Just put something between us.

“I’m not here to fight. I’m here to fix this mess,” Chad says as he prowls closer to me.

Right now, I need to make a choice. I can either play the simpering idiot and take him back out of fear or I can stand my ground and hope that he doesn’t kill me. But it isn’t really a decision, right? My pride won’t let me take the safe route, so I put my foot down.

“There is nothing to fix, Chad. We both know that you don’t love me, I’m just a means to an end for you.”

“That’s not true!” he roars. “I love you.”

“You don’t. You love the idea of me and what I can offer you,” I sigh. “Hell, just the other night you made it clear that you couldn’t even stand the sight of me.”

He balks at my words. “I was drunk. You know I didn’t mean a damn word I said.”

“That’s the problem though. You did mean it, and we both know it.”

“Babe,” he starts but I cut him off.

“It’s over,” I say slowly and clearly. “There is nothing you can say or do that will change that.”

My phone chooses that moment to chirp from inside my discarded bag and Chad leans down to grab it. I don't know what it is he sees but his features change from curiosity to dismay to all-out rage.

"Now I understand," he says with a calm, flat voice that has fear skittering through my senses. "This isn't something I can fix because I'm not the problem."

He tosses my phone on the couch as he continues to move closer to me. There isn't anywhere I can flee to, nowhere I can hide. I see the madness in his eyes. And even though I never would have believed Chad capable of hurting me before today, I know that he is past the point of no return.

Before I can try to dodge him, he wraps a big meaty hand around my throat and shoves me against the wall so hard I hear frames falling to the floor. The sound of glass shattering is loud in the silence of my apartment.

I can feel my airway being constricted as the tips of his elongated nails break the skin. If I'm lucky he will simply rip my throat out and be done with it.

"You kicked me out so you could fuck some other asshole?" he asks lowly.

When I don't respond, because I can't, he lifts me clear off the floor before slamming me against the wall again. Stars dance across my vision. I try clawing at his hand and kicking at his legs, but nothing is helping. He knows I can't shift when he has me gripped like this.

"When I'm done with you, no other man will ever want you."

"I would put her down," I hear a deep voice say from somewhere far away.

Chad tightens his grip and the darkness seeps in around the edges. My blood is pounding in my skull, and my survival instincts are screaming at me to do something. Anything.

"Who the fuck are you?" Chad asks, his voice coated in venom.

“That doesn’t concern you. What does concern you is the fact that I have this all recorded and the police are on the way.”

I know that voice. Where do I know that voice from? My muddled mind is trying to piece together things that don’t matter right now. Darkness is consuming me, and I hear Chad scream something at the stranger that I may or may not know but I can’t figure out the words.

It’s too late. The darkness has me.



## *Wilder Smith*

I know that I am a hypocrite. I'm at work and in my office every morning at seven. There are no exceptions. Yes, my staff work far fewer hours than I do but this is my business and I know what I am capable of and how far to push myself.

But today is different. My drive is non-existent. And even though I am in my office, seated behind my desk, I am sure as shit not working. No. Instead, I have the photos that my seductive ligress sent the past four days pulled up on my phone. My cock is rock hard behind my slacks, and I want nothing more than to pull down my zipper and let it free.

But I am still somewhat of a professional and that will have to wait. Instead, I pull up the short video I made the first night and send it to her. Our date is tomorrow, and I want her to feel the same way I do.

I need her to be as lost to this lust as I am.

In all my years I have never felt this way. The clawing need to get her here beside me, beneath me, is all I can think about. But I need to put her out of my mind until I can talk to her again tonight and focus on the task at hand. My new assistant.

I pull up the list of tasks that I wanted her to perform this week and I know she has already completed it. She really is a very efficient employee and damn good at her job. If I didn't want to lay her across my table and fuck her until she cried, I would be happy to keep her. As it stands, I have avoided her since Tuesday.

There was an incident yesterday that forced me into her presence, but I didn't talk to her directly and I certainly didn't touch her.

She decorated the entire floor with Christmas crap. I don't celebrate the holiday. I don't have family to spend it with and it has just become another reason for the corporate companies to make money off stupid people. I do decorate the rest of the building for my staff. But my floor has always remained untouched.

Until Lake. She purchased the decorations with her own money, and I just couldn't bring myself to have it taken down. So I let her be.

Pulling up my calendar I make sure that everything is covered so that I don't need to speak to her. I will find her another position in the company, somewhere away from me.

But when I scan down my appointments for the day, I realize the massive mistake that I have made. With the switch between assistants, avoiding the voluptuous girl that sits outside my office, and my general irritation at the world around me these past few weeks I have completely forgotten about the meeting I have with Dillon Trask this morning. I need to have Lake with me for that to take notes. The problem is, if I wait for her to arrive at nine – as I specified – we will definitely be late for the meeting. I can't afford to lose this client because of something as ridiculous as a new assistant.

Grabbing my phone, I call Seline in human resources as I stride toward the elevator. "I need the address for Miss Lake Roman," I command the moment she answers the phone.

"As your head of human resources," Seline starts but I cut her off.

"I don't want to bother the woman at home. But I did neglect to mention that we had an early meeting with Dillon Trask this morning on the other side

of town,” I hate that I have to admit any kind of weakness. “I need to pick her up so that we can be on time.”

“That makes sense,” she says calmly, and I hear the rattle of her keyboard as she types in the background. “Thirteen Vista Terrace, apartment nine. That is what she has on record with us. But she has only been employed here for a couple of weeks so it should be correct.”

“Thank you,” I reply tersely as I slide into the driver seat of my sleek, black Jaguar.

I know the area well and those apartments aren’t cheap. If she only started working at Titan Industries recently, she isn’t paying it with her salary. She must be living with a boyfriend or husband. Hopefully, it won’t be someone that will cause any problems when I show up there unannounced and unexpected.

Pulling up beside the building I rush inside. There isn’t much time to spare, and I hope that I catch her before she leaves. I should have asked for her contact number. As I come up the stairs, I see an older woman wearing what I would categorically classify as the ugliest damn Christmas sweater I have ever seen. It’s bright red with a green tree in the middle. An elf is on the edge, and it’s covered in tinsel. Yes, the actual decoration is stuck onto it.

“Please help!” she implores, and I hasten to follow her. “My friend is in there and her ex-boyfriend is hurting her.”

“Are you sure?” I ask even though every instinct I have is screaming at me to do something. Now.

“Yes, yes,” the older woman frets. “She kicked him out, but he came back and there was screaming and glass falling.” A tear trickles over her cheek and my cold heart feels a sharp pain at the sight.

“Wait over there,” I nod to the open door of what I am assuming is her

apartment.

She nods and scurries away as I turn the handle on the door. It's locked but I don't knock, I just ram it with my shoulder, and it flies open.

The sight that greets me has every predatory, possessive, and protective instinct I have in me rising to the forefront like a damn tsunami. A mountain of a man with long dark hair has Lake pressed against the wall. Shattered picture frames and glass litter the floor by their feet. Lake's eyes are barely open, and her lips have a blue tinge to them due to the lack of oxygen.

"When I'm done with you, no other man will ever want you." I hear the man say to her.

"I would put her down," I say trying my damndest to keep my tiger at bay.

I don't want to scare the old woman to death when she sees a four-hundred-odd-pound Bengal tiger in the hall.

"Who the fuck are you?" the man asks angrily.

"That doesn't concern you. What does concern you is the fact that I have this all recorded, and the police are on the way."

I can hear the sirens in the distance and assume that one of the neighbors must have called them. The cell phone in my hand hasn't recorded a damn thing but there is no need for him to be aware of that. I watch as Lake's entire body goes limp. The man is screaming at me, but it all sounds like I am underwater. Stepping into the apartment I charge at the man. He wasn't expecting me to do anything and isn't prepared for when I throw him clear across the room. My tiger has pushed forward enough that I am more beast than man at the moment.

Both me and my tiger want to attack this man and tear him limb from limb but we also both know that we need to protect Lake at all costs. A strange calmness sweeps over me as my tiger and I are in sync for the first time in a

long time. He has never agreed with my choices when it came to women, but he is all in right now.

Dropping to a crouch in front of Lake, I glare at the man as he gets to his feet. The sirens are getting closer and indecision wars on his features. Stay, and try to finish the job, or run and live to fight another day.

He turns and bolts from the apartment and I turn to Lake to assess what damage has been done. Some of her color has returned and she is breathing although it sounds labored. I feel relief like I never have before as I gingerly lift her into my arms and carry her over to the couch.

As I lay her down, I see a cell phone. I reach out to move it, but the screen catches my attention and my blood runs cold. Playing on a repeat loop is the video I sent to my ligress less than an hour ago. I watch in horror as my hand strokes my cock until I come all over my stomach and the video starts again.

Lake is my Ligress.

Fuck.



# Chapter Five



## *Lake Roman*

Opening my eyes, I try to turn away from the bright light trying to blind me. “Hold still,” Mrs. Anderson says. “Let the paramedic check you over.”

I sigh knowing that as long as I am still alive the shifter magic in my veins will help me heal at an accelerated rate. By tomorrow evening this will be nothing more than a bad memory. That is, if I can get away from all the people worrying over me right now so I can find a spot in the tropical foliage on the outskirts of town to shift.

I take in the scene around me. There’s a man dressed as a paramedic, Mrs. Anderson, and Wilder Smith.

Fuck! What is my boss doing here?

I try to push up again but the glare he throws my way has me remaining in my spot. “She seems to be fine,” the paramedic addresses Wilder. “But I still suggest taking her to the emergency room for a full workup.”

He starts to pack the little bag with all the items he used to assess me. “I will take her as soon as possible,” Wilder says in a tone that leaves no room for argument.

“We need to get her statement,” a police officer I didn’t see says. Wilder levels him with a glare that could peel paint off a building. “Unless she isn’t pressing charges.”

“No charges,” I croak.

My voice sounds strange and my throat hurts like a mother fucker. It feels like I tried to give a cactus a blowjob. I don’t want to press charges. I don’t

want to deal with anyone. I just want to be left alone to lick my wounds, literally and figuratively. My gaze clashes with Wilder's, begging him to do something.

I still don't understand why he is here but when he starts ushering people out, I couldn't be more grateful. After the last person leaves, I get off the couch and head toward my bedroom. I need to change out of these clothes and into something less constricting. My ligress is prowling the corners of my mind begging for the chance to shift and start to heal. She is also highly bloodthirsty at the moment.

"Where are you going?" Wilder asks me.

"I need to change."

"Lake."

He reaches out to touch my shoulder before dropping his hand by his side. He thinks I'm damaged by what Chad did, that any man's touch right now will send me over the edge.

"We both know I need to shift," I say, and his eyes widen. "What? Do you think I didn't pick up on your animal the moment I walked onto your floor? You're a predator, Mr. Smith. Probably some big ass carnivore."

He nods as a small smile twitches at the side of his mouth. "We do need to talk."

"No, I need to run," I close the door to my room to afford myself some semblance of privacy.

Wilder Smith has me twisted in knots. One minute I want to be a smart mouth brat and the next I want to fall into his strong arms and just be held like some damsel in distress.

I'm putting on a big show at the moment but inside I'm dying. I don't know what the fuck to do. My apartment is supposed to be my safe space and Chad

has violated that. He took something from me that I hadn't realized was my most prized possession. The door to my room swings open and Wilder strides inside before pulling me against his muscular chest.

"It's all right, Lake. I've got you," he runs a hand up and down my spine trying to soothe me.

It's only then that I realize I've been crying. Slowly, my tears dry but I don't pull away from my boss's grasp. My ligress purrs happily to be in his arms but I know it won't last. He is only trying to make me feel better before he leaves.

"Pack a bag," Wilder says as he holds me at arm's length.

"What?" I ask confused.

"Get something together for a couple of days. I can't let you stay here until I know that asshole has been taken care of."

"Wil," I start but catch myself. "Mr. Smith. I am thankful for your assistance, but I can take care of myself."

Taking my chin in his hand he stares at me, making sure he has my full attention. "It wasn't a request, Lake. Pack. Your. Shit."

I feel the need to fall to my knees before him and offer myself to him. His dominance. His pure male alphaness is enough to have my knees shaking. He only releases my face after I nod in acceptance.

"Good girl."

A shiver works its way up my spine. Who knew those two little words would have me feeling giddy? Why do they feel so familiar? A moment later Wilder has his phone out of his pocket and is making calls and barking orders at people as I try to clear the cobwebs from my mind. The man is like a potent drug working his way through my system. I need to get away from him before I embarrass myself.

It only takes me five minutes to gather everything I will need to get me through Christmas at a hotel. I don't have any family and the few friends I have are more like acquaintances. We get along just fine but there isn't anyone I could call up to stay with.

Walking out of my room I take in my apartment and the damage that Chad has wrought. My Christmas tree is tipped on its side, and ornaments are strewn all over the place. The frames I had against the wall are smashed on the floor, glass covering the hardwood I had installed last year. More tears sting my eyes as I take it all in, but crying isn't going to solve a damn thing.

"I have someone coming in to clean everything up," I jump when Wilder speaks but I don't turn to face him. "I'm also getting someone to replace your door and install a better lock and a new security system."

"That's not," I start to argue but he grips my shoulders and turns me to face him.

"It is necessary Lake. If I had been even two minutes later, we wouldn't be having this conversation," he frowns.

"Why are you here?" I ask curiously.

"I forgot to tell you about a meeting we were supposed to have early this morning. I wanted to pick you up on the way."

"Shit."

"Don't worry about it," he says while leading me to the door. "I already moved the meeting to the new year and Trask was more than happy to oblige. Titan Industries will be closed from tomorrow into the new year so you can stop worrying."

I didn't even realize that we had reached the bottom of the stairs while he had been talking. Wilder opens the door to his sleek black car and helps me get inside while dropping my bag on the back seat. He stalks around the front

before sliding in beside me and pulling away from the curb. His presence fills the entire vehicle and I start to get a little dizzy from his scent.

“You can just drop me at a hotel,” I say while staring out the window at the buildings passing us by.

“You’re not going to a hotel, Lake.”

“What do you mean I’m not going to a hotel?” I glare at him, and he smirks. I want to smack him but hold back because he’s driving.

“I have a house on Moloka’i. You can rest there.”

“I’m not going to an island with you!” I yell in the confined space of his car. “Yesterday you couldn’t stand to look at me and now you want me to go to a remote island with you.”

“Lake,” he sighs as he turns into the marina. “I can’t leave you here, in town, with that fucker on the loose. I have someone looking for him, but it could take a couple of days.”

“That still doesn’t mean,” but he cuts me off.

“It’s secluded. You can have the freedom to shift whenever you want. Heal without having to worry about someone catching you.”

Fuck.

That sounds good. Shifting whenever I feel like it, not being concerned about someone seeing me. But I can’t go with him. The man is my boss for God’s sake.

“Mr. Smith.” I sigh loudly.

“Wilder.”

“What?”

“I think the line between employer and employee is pretty much non-existent now. You can call me Wilder.”

“Wilder, this isn’t a good idea,” I say as he cuts the engine.

“Probably not,” he agrees as he gets out of the car and comes to open my door. “But it’s still happening.”



## *Wilder Smith*

Lake has been through a traumatic experience. I mean she could have died today but she has been eerily calm since she stopped crying. She shows little bouts of backbone but then recedes into herself just as quickly. On the other hand, I barely have any control at the moment. My tiger is pushing to be released, begging me to let him hunt down the coward who laid his hands on her.

I don't understand the possessiveness I feel toward her. Yes, I want to fuck her, but I've been with many women and I've never felt this way.

It could have something to do with the fact that I know she is my mystery ligress. Knowing that I am the reason she is hurt has me seeing red. I never meant for any of this to happen. Nonetheless, this is the situation we find ourselves in.

"Wilder," she says softly, and I stop to face her.

She looks so lost and scared that I can't help but wrap my arms around her. I want to comfort her and make her feel safe. The only way I know how to do that is to take control of the situation.

"Lake," I say into the crown of her head. "Let me help you. It's the least I can do."

Confusion covers her face at my words, and I know that I will have to tell her the truth at some point, but for now, I just want to get her somewhere safe.

I turn and lead her toward the gleaming white speedboat and help her aboard. Neither of us speaks as the pilot starts the engine and points us in the



right direction. The bright sunlight washes over us, Lake's hair whipping behind her in the wind. A smile crosses her face and I have to hold myself back. I want nothing more than to kiss the ever-loving shit out of her.

I saw it on Monday when she walked into my office. She is a stunning woman, all curves and natural beauty. Even with the bruises and cuts around her neck, she is still stunning. But I can't touch her, I won't, not until I tell her the truth.

About the dating app and who I am, and about my part in her assault today. She deserves that much.

Sitting back, I watch her instead. Her face tilted to the sky, basking in the early morning sunshine with her eyes closed. I lose all sense of time as I stare at her and before I know it, we are docking and disembarking the speedboat.

Taking her bag and her hand, I lead her up the path toward my favorite place in the world. I hear her gasp behind me as we walk up to the house I had built many years ago. It's nothing elaborate, certainly not somewhere you would expect a man of my wealth to live but I love it. and I hope she does too. I'm not sure why but I want her to be happy here.

"Let me show you to your room," I say as we walk through the glass sliding doors that face the beach.

Graciella, my housekeeper, has already left but I know the fridge and pantry are stocked and we won't need anything for at least two weeks.

"Wow," Lake turns to take in the view. "This is beautiful."

"I'm glad you like it," I smile, as I lead her deeper into the house.

There are only three bedrooms and I lead her to the one beside mine. I'm still working out how to tell her everything I know, but I am certain I want her as close to me as possible. When I tell her the truth, she may never want anything to do with me again so I should enjoy the time I have.

My tiger roars in my mind at the thought of losing her and an involuntary shudder rips through me as the realization slams into my skull. Lake isn't just some woman I want to fuck. There is a reason my tiger reacts to her the way he does. She is our mate.

This entire situation just got so much more complicated than I ever thought possible. "I'll make us something to eat while you get settled. Not sure if you prefer to shower before or after shifting?" I say with a strained voice.

"After." Her gaze bounces around the room decorated in white with turquoise accents.

"I'll be in the kitchen if you need me."

"Wilder," she calls as I reach the end of the hallway. It hits me like a gut punch, hearing my name fall from those pouty fucking lips and I have to take a deep breath before I face her.

"Thank you." She smiles softly.

Nodding, I make my way to the kitchen and grab everything I need to prepare some sandwiches for us. She needs all the energy she can get. Healing will take a lot out of her. I pour us each a glass of juice and slice up some fruit before she appears.

She is wearing a pair of neon pink running shorts and a white tank top that show off her gorgeous tits and a sliver of skin across her belly. I've never been so grateful to have a large kitchen counter I can hide my erection behind.

"You don't have a Christmas tree," she murmurs.

I'm not sure I was supposed to hear the comment, but I am coming to find that it's hard to miss anything about Lake. I still can't figure out how I missed that she is my mate in the first place, not to mention the whole dating app thing.

“I don’t usually celebrate but we can get one if you want.”

She chuckles. “I’m aware of how you feel about Christmas.”

She is referencing the incident at the office, and I lower my gaze in embarrassment. “You don’t have to go through the extra trouble,” Lake says before taking a seat across from me at the counter, but I have already sent Graciella a text and know it will be here within the hour.

I would go to the ends of the earth to make sure she is happy even if she doesn’t know it.

“Eat,” I push a plate in front of her. I can see she wants to tell me to fuck off. She doesn’t like me telling her what to do. But it only takes a moment for her to realize it’s what she wants, what she needs, so she complies. After we finish our sandwiches, I load the dishes into the dishwasher and turn to her, my hip leaning against the counter.

“I know you didn’t want to come here but I want you to relax and enjoy the week.” She nods but doesn’t speak or make eye contact. “I’m going to grab a shower. Give you some privacy to shift.”

She chuckles before finally facing me. “I’ve shifted in front of strangers before. It comes with the territory.”

I don’t like the idea of her being naked in front of anyone except me, and neither does my tiger. The possessiveness we feel toward this woman, our mate, is insane and like nothing I have ever experienced before.

“That may be true, but you’ve been through a lot in the past couple of hours.”

“Will you stop glaring at my neck?” she growls.

“I find it offensive,” I snap.

“You find it offensive?”

“Yes Lake,” I sigh in exasperation. “It offends me to know that there are

men in the world that think they have the right to hurt a woman. It pisses me off to see dark bruises and claw marks along the column of your neck, marring your perfect skin. The only bruise any woman should wear is one she begged for.”

Her eyes widen at my words. Both of us are breathing harshly. This seems to be our dynamic. We are either pussyfooting around each other or being blatantly honest. “I can’t find my phone,” Lake changes the subject.

“It’s on charge in my room. I’ll give it to you when you get back.”

Nodding, she rises from her seat and walks outside onto the wooden porch that surrounds most of the house. She starts undressing as she goes, first removing her shirt and then pushing her shorts to the ground. It takes every ounce of willpower I have to turn and walk away. I want nothing more than to lay her flat on the deck and make her scream my name.

Instead, I slam the master bedroom door as I stride inside and go straight to the shower. Stripping quickly, I step beneath the freezing spray of the shower. I was praying a cold shower would help my cock to go down but there is no such luck. Wrapping my right hand tightly around my length I place the left on the cold tile. And with thoughts of Lake moaning over the phone last night I find my release in a less-than-satisfactory orgasm.

# Chapter Six



## *Lake Roman*

I'm pushing his buttons and I fucking know it, but he started it. The way he speaks to me like he knows me grates on every one of my nerves. How fucking dare he? But that isn't really the problem. No, the problem is I enjoy it. I am more grateful than I will ever be able to express that he took control of the situation after chasing Chad off. I know that I have protested every step of the way. But that's what I am supposed to do, right?

I can't be some damsel in distress, can I?

It's the twenty-first century for crying out loud. I am a strong, independent woman and I have been taking care of myself for years now. I don't *need* a man to rescue me. But dear lord does it feel good to have Wilder do it anyway.

So yes, I push back. My pride won't allow anything else.

I start undressing in front of him as I walk out of the beautiful white house built into the side of a hill, hoping I can get a rise out of him. When I turn back to look at him, he is gone. I push aside the disappointment I feel and allow my ligress to push forward. I have been shifting for as long as I can remember and although it doesn't hurt there is still some discomfort as my skin and bones shift and contort before my paws hit the ground.

I can feel the magic working its way through my system, healing me. I hear a door slam in the house and if I could, I would smile. Maybe, I do affect him after all.

I don't think about that for too long. My ligress is ready to take off and explore the island. The greenery is lush as we pad our way around the house.

Shifting here is different than it was at home. I had to shift quickly in the city and get it over with, always simply pacifying my beast. Now, we walk around leisurely, smelling flowers, feeling the sand beneath our paws, and breathing in the fresh air.

My ligress smells fresh water and bounds in that direction and soon we find a small waterfall nestled in between the greenest trees I think I've ever seen. It doesn't take her a moment to jump into the water, cooling us down in the tropical heat.

After what can't be more than fifteen minutes, she exits the pool and pads her way back to Wilder and the pretty white house. She couldn't be bothered about anything, tail swishing and purring loudly as she lays out on the deck to dry in the sun.

"Fuck me. You're stunning," Wilder says when he finds us laying in the sun.

My ligress purrs louder at his words, stretching out her limbs.

"May I touch you?" His hand hovers over my left flank.

Usually, my animal doesn't like being touched. She has been that way since I can remember. But she doesn't seem to mind Wilder, as she rolls to her back and presents her belly. Confusion rolls through me at her actions but Wilder only chuckles before hunching down and rubbing the soft fur. He runs his fingers through it reverently, seeming to enjoy it just as much as we are.

"I've never seen a liger, much less one that's a shifter."

My ligress takes pride in the fact that she is his first and I mentally snort. This man is nothing like us. He isn't inexperienced and he sure as shit would never be afraid to say what he wanted.

After long minutes of basking in his attention, he stands and places a towel I didn't see he had on a chair.

“When you’re ready I will be inside. There are some things we need to talk about.”

My ligress yawns lazily as she rolls to her side and starts washing her paw. She’s ignoring him, unhappy that he has stopped giving her attention. Wilder must pick up on this because he leans down to scratch behind her ear.

“I’ll see you again soon beauty, but I need to talk to Lake.”

She purrs loudly at his words before standing.

As Wilder moves back into the house she allows the shift to fall over us and in moments I am myself again. Well, sort of at least. My mind whirls with confusion as my ligress continues to purr in my mind, her satisfaction palpable. It’s the first time in my life that my animal has behaved this way and it’s disconcerting, to say the least.

Grabbing what I originally assumed was a towel, I find that it is indeed a robe. Shrugging it on, I cinch it around my waist and take a deep breath before going to find Wilder. But my attention is drawn by the explosion of red, gold, and green that has transformed the room.

“What did you do?” I gasp.

“Didn’t do a thing, he replies. “Graciella, my housekeeper came over and did it.”

“Wilder.”

“I know you love Christmas and I want you to enjoy your time here.” He doesn’t say anything else by way of explanation.

I see my cell phone in his hand and move toward him. I need my phone to let *DomBrae* know that I have gone out of town for a while and our *date* will have to wait for a while. I hope he is willing to wait.

“Before I give this to you, we need to talk,” Wilder says before gesturing to the seat across from him.



I frown and want to argue but I can see this is going to be something I need to be seated for.



## *Wilder Smith*

When I walk out of the house after Graciella leaves, I only want to see if I can spot Lake. I don't expect to find four-hundred-pound golden beauty sunbathing on my deck. She is exquisite and I can help but want to touch her. What catches me off guard is her ligress's willingness to allow me, making herself vulnerable and exposing her soft belly to me. I get lost in the softness of her fur, the loudness of her purr, and the way her color shimmers in the sunlight. Her stripes are much lighter than mine but no less pronounced on her lighter coloring.

Her ligress has clearly figured out that I am her mate. I wonder why Lake hasn't clued in yet?

I want to leave her to bask in the sun but there are things that we need to talk about and to get that done I need her to shift back into her human form. It takes me a minute and some sweet talking before her ligress allows it, but eventually she does.

I wait at the kitchen counter for her, in the same spot it was when we had lunch. Her face morphs into an expression of joy when she sees what Graciella has done to the inside of my house. But it doesn't take her long to spot her cell phone. As she takes a seat across from me, I take a deep breath before speaking.

"The man this morning," I start.

"Chad. He's my ex-boyfriend," she inserts.

"Yes, him," I say lowly before getting myself under control. "Has he ever been violent before?"

Lake stares at me before laughing loudly. “You saw my animal. Do you think he’s been violent before?”

I nod, understanding what she is saying. He caught her off guard today. If she sees him again, her animal is liable to force a shift so she can kill him. Our inner beasts are very protective of our softer, human sides and won’t allow any harm to come to us if they can avoid it.

“So, something set him off?” I’m treading lightly. If I’m lucky he never saw the video and my conscience will be cleared.

Lake watches me for a moment before sighing. “Not that it’s any of your business but I met someone online. While we were arguing something came through on my phone and it pushed him over the edge. I’m assuming it was a message from him.”

“And you don’t know what it was?”

Guilty and anger churn in my gut. Why the fuck did I send her that video? I hold her phone so tightly in my grasp I hear the item protest and so does she.

“What aren’t you telling me?”

Unlocking the phone, I slide it across the counter, the clip already playing. Lake gasps before clasp her hand over her mouth. She watches the clip play out before turning her phone face down on the counter. She pushes her chair back harshly, flattening her hands on the counter and leaning forward. The robe she is wearing has slipped open and her heaving breasts are on display as she angrily glares at me.

“You had no fucking right,” she seethes, and I watch her eyes change from brown to gold and back again. “That’s an invasion of privacy.”

I love that she rises to challenge me and that she won’t back down, but I need her to know the whole truth.

“It was playing on repeat when I laid you on the couch,” I reply calmly, my

gaze finally leaving her tits to settle on her face. “Besides, I only invaded the privacy of the person that sent it to you.”

“Fine,” she throws her hands up in the air. “Technically, you’re right. But that still doesn’t make it okay. What else did you snoop through on my phone?”

“Why would I go through your phone?” I ask, a little taken aback.

“How the hell should I know?”

Lake gestures with her hands as she talks, and each movement has the robe slipping open just a little more. Saliva pools in my mouth at the thought that I might get to see more of her.

“I don’t need to snoop on your phone.”

I unlock my device and slide it across the counter to her. It is already opened to the chat thread from a few nights ago. Her eyes grow large as the realization finally dawns on her. Her gaze finds mine and I can see a million thoughts and emotions filter across her face.

“No.” The word escapes her on a whimper.

“Lake,” I start but she cuts me off.

“This cannot be happening.” She runs a hand over her tangled hair exposing more of herself to me.

I only have so much control and at the moment it is frayed pretty thin. I’m not thinking logically. My tiger is prowling my mind, ready to pounce, wanting nothing more than to claim our mate. My cock is harder than a lead rod and I am struggling to hear her over the blood pounding through my veins. One more shift and she will be fully exposed to me. And I can’t be held responsible for what I do then.

“You need to calm down,” I say lowly.

“Don’t tell me what to fucking do!”

It's those words that have me finally snapping. I round the counter and back her up against the wall with such speed she didn't even know it was happening before it was done.

"What," she starts but I silence her with a look.

"I'm trying to be a fucking gentleman. Neither of us asked for this situation but it what it is," I run my finger from her clavicle down between her large breast, over her softly rounded stomach only to stop above her shaved sex. "Your robe is slipping, Lake. I'm just a man. Don't push me."

She moans and I see her clamp her thighs together.

"We can work this to our advantage and enjoy each other as we had planned, or we can go back to the way things were before you knew I was the man you met online." Slowly I close the front of her robe. "Either way, you're fired."

# Chapter Seven



## *Lake Roman*

“Fired?” I gasp.

“Yes Lake, fired. I can’t work with you. Not knowing what you sound like when you come. I have dreams about the sounds you make. How am I supposed to remain professional? And I know that I won’t be able to let you work with another man in my building.” He tries to explain his rationale to me. “I can’t be your boss knowing what you hide beneath those perfectly acceptable work suits.”

“So you’re punishing me?” I ask, sadness coloring my tone.

“No Lake, if I wanted to punish you, we wouldn’t be talking.”

I push against his chest trying to get away from the wall, away from him. “It sure feels like a punishment. I have a good job at a prestigious firm and now I’m being fired.”

“Yes,” he nods. “But I will find you another job. A better job.”

“Really?” I raise an eyebrow. “Why would you do that?”

“Because I can’t fuck my employee and I really want to bury my cock deep inside you,” he answers crowding me against the wall again, his finger tracing my cleavage lightly. “God knows I should walk away from you. I have already been the cause of you getting hurt but I can’t. All I can think about is tying you to my bed and fucking you until you I cry.”

A whimper leaves me, my pussy clenching down on nothing. The image he conjures with his words is pulled directly from my fantasies and he knows it.

“I want to show you the kind of marks I would leave on your body,” his lips are close to my ear, his hard cock digging into my stomach. “I want you

begging for more.”

“Wilder,” I’m breathless and more than a little aroused.

“Say yes, Lake. Accept that you’re fired and let me take control.” He runs his nose down my neck, inhaling me deeply. A finger ghosts across my left nipple and my damn knees nearly buckle beneath me.

“And if I don’t?” I challenge.

I know I’m going to say yes, even if he doesn’t help me get a new job. This is what I wanted. I want someone to take my control from me. I want him to pleasure me, use my body, push me to limits I didn’t even know I had. I’m just being a brat.

“We are going to be here for a week Lake. Do you really think you can hold out that long?” His voice is almost a purr in my ear.

He presses his jean-clad thigh between mine, rubbing the fabric against my overly sensitive pussy. My head falls back against the wall and I moan loudly at the contact. Maybe there is something wrong with me after all. How can I be so wildly turned on by Wilder when I almost died this morning? How can I trust this man, essentially a stranger with my safety after someone I thought I love almost killed me?

“I can feel the heat coming off that juicy cunt,” he growls before nipping my ear, pressing his thigh against my sex harder. “I can smell your arousal and it is driving me insane.”

I have never been the type of girl who liked a vulgar man, but it seems that Wilder is the exception. His dirty-talking mouth is only working me up more.

“Say yes, Lake,” he whispers into my ear. “This is what we both want.”

“Yes,” I moan writhing on his thigh like the wanton slut I apparently am.  
“Yes, Wilder.”

“Thank fuck,” he replies pushing my robe off my shoulders and letting it



pool at our feet.

He doesn't waste any time dropping to his knees in front of me. His hungry gaze takes in every inch of my exposed skin. Wilder covers my sex with his mouth and worships me with his tongue.

I always thought I didn't enjoy oral sex. Turns out, the guy I was with was just doing it wrong. It feels like mere seconds before my orgasm crashes over me, stealing the breath from my lungs. I have my hands thrust into his hair, twisting the strands in my fingers.

"Again," Wilder rumbles against my sex when I try to pull his head away.

"It's too much."

"It's not, and we are only getting started." Wilder bites the inside of my thigh and the pleasure/pain combination makes my pussy flutter. His fingers delve into my sex, prying my lips apart before he blows on my oversensitized clit. Jesus Christ. What the fuck is he doing to me?

"Wilder," I moan loudly, clawing at the t-shirt he is wearing.

"I fucking love hearing you moan my name."

His lips suction around my clit, his tongue flicking quickly over the little bundle of nerves. Grabbing the back of his head I press him deeper into my sex, rubbing myself all over his handsome face.

The image of this mountain of a man, this dominant shifter, on his knees between my leg has me clenching my thighs around his head. Wilder slides two fingers inside me, pumping harshly, drawing more sounds from my lips. My ligress purrs loudly in my mind as my orgasm crest and slams into me.

"Wilder!"



## *Wilder Smith*

She goes off like a fucking firework. I barely had to touch her, and she was done for. I feast at her pussy like the fucking fiend I am. I know what she wants, and I will give it to her, but this is for me. She tugs at my hair, trying to tilt my head but I don't care. She can pull it all out by the roots, I'm not fucking moving until she comes again.

"Wilder," she moans loudly and my tiger roars with pride, knowing that we are bringing her this pleasure. We are causing our mate to moan in abandon.

I thrust two fingers into her slick channel and that's all it takes for her pussy to contract with her second orgasm. She moans loudly, pushing harder against my face with her sex. Her body twitches and spasms and I lick her until she is pliant in my arms. Slowly I lower her leg to the ground and rise to my full height. Lake has a dazed look on her face and a satisfied smile caressing her lips.

"Are you still with me?"

She nods and I take my chance and fuse my lips to hers. The kiss isn't soft or exploratory. No, this kiss is a dark promise of things to come.

"Go to the master bedroom and wait for me as we discussed," I say as I caress her neck.

"Now?" she asks looking shocked.

"I'm nowhere near done with you, my pretty little ligrass."

Lake stares at me with wide eyes and I wonder if it's too much for her. I need her with me every step of the way. Her come is still glistening on my

lips, her smell and taste intoxicating me. The need to fuck her, to claim her, to mark her as mine rides me hard. The thought shocks and scare me.

Claim her? Do I want to keep her?

My tiger roars in outrage in the recesses of my mind. He won't let our mate go. We almost lost her and now he wants to make sure she is bound to us forever. Now I just need to make sure Lake is onboard and with me all the way.

“What's your safe word?” I ask pulling back just far enough to look at her.

“Dodo,” she says softly.

“Good. If at any time you want me to stop just say dodo.”

She nods with a shy smile, and I can't resist kissing her again. Turning her body, I push her lightly in the direction of my room before giving her a smack on the ass. “Be ready.”

I watch her naked ass sway as she makes her way down the hallway before disappearing into my room. I need to give her a minute to get ready. To remember that this is what she wanted. It's hard staying here when I know she is in there, naked, ready. But I force myself to remain. I wait five full minutes before I stride toward her.

I find her kneeling on the ground before my bed in all her naked glory. I walk past her and into my closet where I retrieve five of my most expensive silk ties. I don't have anything else to tie her up with.

“Do you still want to be blindfolded?” I ask and she nods her head. “Use your words, Lake. Tell me what you want.”

I use my index finger to tilt her chin up and force her to look at me. I need to see her eyes and make sure that she is okay. What I see has my heart tripping in my chest. Fear and arousal mixed with curiosity.

“I wanted a stranger to blindfold me so I could walk away afterward,” she

says softly. "I may know who you are now, but I still want the experience you promised me."

I nod and wrap the tie around her head, making sure she can't see anything. "And the rest?" I ask.

"Please," She begs in a breathy tone.

"Get on the bed and lie flat on your back," I instruct.

She jumps to comply with my command, but I grab her elbow as she stumbles. Guiding her to the bed, I lightly shove her onto her back.

"Spread your legs, Lake. Let me see you."

This time she hesitates for a moment before complying and I slap her pussy as an admonishment. She makes a keening sound but doesn't close her legs.

"Good girl." I praise her before placing a kiss on the pinkness I have left on her mound.

Taking her left arm, I use a single-column knot around her wrist to secure her arm to the bedpost before doing the same to her right hand. She moves her hands testing the knots. I proceed to do the same with her legs, spreading her as wide as she can go. Looking down at her body I feel a sense of pride. She trusts me, a virtual stranger, to bring her deepest desires to life.

Slowly I caress my hand from her cheek, down to her breast where I test the weight in my palm before plucking harshly at her nipple. Lake's back bows off the bed with a moan. I wait until she settles back before I continue my course.

"You're fucking gorgeous," I say absent-mindedly.

Lake turns her face away from me and I smack the inside of her thigh hard enough that she screams and my fingertips tingle. Her breathing is ragged as she frowns at me while I rub her thigh.

"Don't look away from me Lake. Don't hide. I will never say anything to

you that I don't mean." A tear escape from beneath the tie and I catch it with my lips. "I don't have to say pretty words to get you in my bed, you're already here."

Lake smiles softly before nodding. "Thank you."

"Don't thank me yet."

From the back pocket of my jeans, I remove the only other item I took from my closet. I insert the small white vibrator into her.

"Wilder?"

"Shh. I got you," I say before switching it on to the lowest setting.

I watch as her hips undulate trying to get more friction. But that's not what I want. She isn't supposed to come from the vibrator, that's my job. I just want to keep her needy. "I'll be back," I say before kissing her lips and leaving the remote in the center of her chest.

# Chapter Eight



## *Lake Roman*

What. The. Fuck.

He left me here. Tied to his bed with a vibrator inside me. He called me beautiful and then he walked out of the room. What kind of twist bullshit is this? My body strains against the bonds even though I know that I won't be able to free myself.

“Wilder!” I scream but nothing happens.

Where the fuck did he go? Yelling won't get me anywhere. I know we are miles from the nearest people and even if we weren't I don't know if I want anyone to find me like this. I feel vulnerable and exposed.

My body is begging for a release, for Wilder. And he is off doing God knows what. With every second he is gone my temper rises. My ligress however is purring gently in the recesses of my mind. She knows that Wilder wouldn't hurt us. That doesn't stop him from pissing me off.

After what feels like an eternity, Wilder returns and I can hear him speaking to someone. No other voices are in the room so I know he must be on his cell phone. I remain silent, waiting for him to finish his conversation.

Yeah, no. I'm not going to make a sound while anyone can hear me on the other side of the phone.

“Thank you, Gerald. I appreciate all you've done,” Wylder says. “Do me a favor though. Put me on speaker and leave the phone there. You can come back in thirty minutes.”

“Yes Mr. Smith,” I hear the other man reply, as Wilder sets his phone to speaker before placing it beside the remote for the vibrator.



I hear heavy breathing on the other end of the line but I'm not sure what the fuck is going on.

"Say hello to our friend," Wilder whispers in my ear.

"Hello?" I say with a strained voice.

"Lake! Lake! Is that you baby?" Chad calls out. "What the fuck is going on."

I remain silent, not knowing what to say. Wilder waits for a moment to see if I will continue but takes over once he realizes I am out of my depth.

"You fucked up Chad," he says tightly. "You had the chance at an amazing woman, one of a kind. And instead of cherishing her, you laid hands on her."

"You motherfucker!" Chad roars.

"Now she is going to find out what a real man can do for her." Wilder grabs the remote and flicks it on high.

An involuntary moan escapes my lips. Yes, I want to get some form of revenge on Chad but this never crossed my mind. I was thinking more along the lines of ensuring he gets an ass-kicking for what he did. I'm not sure I want this though. But I don't stop Wilder. I have the power to end this right now, and I don't. The thought of using my safe word never once crosses my mind.

"What the fuck are you doing?" Chad yells.

"Anything she wants," Wilder smiles before drawing a nipple into his mouth, eliciting more sounds from me.

"Lake, baby," Chad says in a lower tone, but I can't talk right now, my orgasm is cresting, and a scream tears from me.

"Yes. Yes. Yes." I chant over and over finding the release I was being denied while he was on the phone. The vibration tapers until it stops completely. Chad has gone suspiciously quiet.

“Did he hang up?” I ask breathlessly.

“No Lake. He can’t. He’s tied to a chair in the basement of Titan Industries.”

“What?” I can’t believe what Wilder just said.

“He hurt you. Now, someone else is going to hurt him.” He tells me this like he would tell me he is going to the store like this is completely normal for him. “Do you want me to end the call?”

“No.” I shake my head.

The fear and panic I felt at his hands rushes back to me instantly and I want to hurt him. I want him to feel powerless as I did. “He deserves everything he gets.”

“Good girl,” Wilder praises as I hear him undo his belt and lower his zipper. Each sound is loud in the room and amplified because I can’t see what he is doing.

For the first time since he put the blindfold on me, I wish I could see him, take in every inch of his naked form. But I know that there will be time for that later.

“Open your mouth Lake,” Wilder commands. He fists my hair harshly as I comply. “Spread those pretty, pouty lips I have been dreaming of.” I feel him kneel beside my head, saliva pooling in my mouth at what I already know comes next. I notice that his leg is against my arm, allowing me the ability to tap out if I need to, although I’m certain that I won’t.

“Motherfucker!” Chad screams on the other end.

His revulsion and anger only spur me on, and I open my mouth even wider before sticking out my tongue.

“If you need me to stop for any reason just tap my leg,” Wilder says before he pushes his length into my mouth, using my hair like a handle. “Fuck.

Lake, this is going to be rough. Breathe through your nose.”

I understand what he means a moment later as he pulls me off his cock roughly only to force me back down again. I gag and tears burn in my eyes as his length hits the back of my throat. Already, saliva spills down my chin.

“Goddamned beautiful taking my cock,” he praises, and I feel my pussy clamp down on the now still vibrator wishing it was him.

Wilder continues to fuck my mouth, using me, drawing foreign sounds from me. All the while Chad is screaming obscenities on the other end but the words don’t reach me. I’m too focused on Wilder. Taking in his every reaction. His breathing speeds up and his thighs flex beneath my palm.

Suddenly, he rips his cock from between my lips and steps away from me. Did I do something wrong?

“I promise to come down your throat next time. For now, I need to be inside you.” I can hear the smug smile in his voice. He reads me so well already.

“Please,” I beg yet again.

He removes the vibrator while Chad curses up a storm on his end. But I don’t care. This is the final nail in the coffin that was once our relationship. If Wilder lets him live, which I’m not sure he will, Chad needs to know I have moved on.

The blindfold is removed, and I blink several times to accustom my vision to the light. I can finally see Wilder in all his naked glory. I stare at him, not even trying to disguise my lust.

“Looking at me like that will get you fucked,” he says lowly.

I can’t tear my gaze from him. All the rippling muscles and the dark, intricate ink he hides beneath his expensive business suits have me entranced. Not to mention the monster cock he has sticking out between his thighs.

“Promises, promises.”

I shouldn't have poked him. In one swift move, he empales me with his engorged cock. A scream tears from my lungs and Wilder stills.

“Fuck. Lake. I'm so sorry.” He pats me all over trying to get me to relax so the pain can fade.

“How the fuck are you this tight?” he asks in a strangled voice.

A tear leaks down my cheek as Wilder remains perfectly still. “I've never been with anyone except Chad.” I sniffle.

“Baby,” he says with sadness. “I'm so sorry I hurt you. I didn't know.”

“I should have said something when I saw your size,” I moan as Wilder lightly pets my clit. “I knew it was going to hurt.”

Chad screams something and Wilder ends the call. This isn't about making a point anymore. This is about us now. He runs his hand along my body.

“I've never had perfect pussy like this, gripping me so tightly,” Wilder groans when my walls flutter along his length. “I need to move.” He must read the panic on my face because he kisses me. “I'll go slow. Talk to me, Lake. Tell me what you like or if it hurts. That's how we make sure this is good for both of us.”

I nod and Wilder swivels his hips, hitting a different spot. My nipples contract and I realize it no longer hurts. My body has grown accustomed to his size. All I feel now is an overwhelming fullness.

“Wilder,” I moan his name.

“Yes!” He hisses. “I love hearing you moan my name. I've been dreaming about it.”

His gaze is feral and I see his tiger shimmer just beneath the surface. I may have wanted to stop moments ago but the pain has faded. Now all I want is to

experience Wilder when he loses control. Even if that means I can't walk tomorrow.

"Please, Wilder," I beg, knowing it will drive him crazy.

"Tell me to stop."

He moves harder and faster with every snap of his hips, the headboard banging loudly against the wall as the entire bed shifts with his motions. His fingers dig into my hips, and I know there will be bruises tomorrow. But Wilder was right, they are the kind of bruises a woman begs for.

"If you don't use your safe word, I'm going to fuck my seed into your womb and mark you as mine," he hisses through his teeth. "Do you understand me, Lake? If you don't stop me, I'm going to claim you as my mate and you will never be able to get away from me again."

I know what he is saying and it finally all makes sense. The reason why I trust him so implicitly, and why I feel drawn to him like no one else. He is my mate. He realized it a hell of a lot sooner than I did but now that I know there is no going back.

Do I know him well enough to make this decision at this moment in time? No.

Am I going to let that stop me? Hell no.

Tilting my head to the side I expose the column of my neck to Wilder. Fate brought us together and I'm not going to fight it.

Wilder's thrusts become harried and I know he is getting close. He slams into me harshly pushing me closer and closer to my own orgasm. His roar fills the room as he starts to come deep inside me. His elongated teeth sink into my shoulder and the mixture of pain and pleasure sends my orgasm crashing down over me, stealing my breath and my vision.

I don't know how it happened, but I find myself folded into Wilder's lap as

he cradles me to his chest. Tears stream down my face as I cling to him.

“It’s okay. I got you.” He murmurs into my hair.

# Epilogue



## *Lake Roman*

**W**ilder and I have been a mated couple for six months and I never knew my life could change so drastically. I went from unhappy in my relationship to so happy I could cry. Wilder is the man every woman secretly dreams of having. In public, he is the perfect gentleman. Opening doors and pulling out chairs. But in our home, in private, he is the perfect alphahole. Fucking me on every available surface and using my body in ways I had never imagined.

Stepping off the elevator on the top floor of Titan Industries, I nod and smile at Derek, his new assistant before walking into his office. He is standing in front of the floor-to-ceiling windows staring down at the street while he speaks harshly into his phone.

“I don’t fucking care what it costs. Get it done.”

Wilder slams the phone down on the receiver before he sees me leaning against the door. “Lake,” he says my name like it’s a prayer like just seeing me soothes his soul and the beast inside him.

I turn the lock on the door before slowly making my way to him. His gaze never leaves me, darkening with every step I take.

“Derek has gone to lunch,” I smile as I kiss his jaw.

“And who gave him permission for that?” My mate asks as his hands fondle the globes of my ass.

“I did,” I say, my voice husky. “You see, my mate left me to wake alone in bed this morning. Didn’t even say goodbye.”

“You were sleeping,” he starts to explain. “You need your energy.”



Slowly I push him down into the chair behind his desk.

“What I need is my mate,” I respond as I sit on the edge of his desk. “You promised you would always be there.”

My words find their mark and Wilder looks stricken at the idea that he has somehow let me down. Not that he ever has. My wishes always supersede his and I never want for anything. Slowly I start to undo the coat I am wearing, and Wilder's gaze follows the movement of my fingers.

“You see,” I say as my breasts come into view. “When I woke up this morning my breasts were heavy, and my pussy was wet.”

Wilder makes a choking sound in the back of his throat and I'm not sure it's because of my words or the fact that I am now completely bared to his gaze. His hands frame the small bump of my belly where his young is growing stronger by the day.

“And when I went to find my mate to help me take care of the problem,” I continue. “I found myself alone.”

“Lake,” he starts but I cut him off.

“Do you want to know what I did, Wilder?” I ask as I touch my breasts and he nods, before placing a kiss on my baby bump. “I used the purple vibrator you bought me. I lay alone, in our bed, and brought myself to orgasm. Because my mate wanted to let me sleep.”

‘Fuck, Lake,’ he murmurs. “I'm sorry baby.”

“And now I've sent your assistant to a nice long lunch so that you can make it up to me.”

I never used to be this open or honest about what I wanted but Wilder has opened me up to a lot of things since that first day I fell on my ass in the hallway.

The words barely leave my mouth before Wilder has his head buried

between my thighs, worshipping me like some kind of deity. My mouth falls open as I lean back on my elbows and moan. My orgasm sweeps over me and my thighs close around his head. He continues to lap at my center until the last of my orgasm has ebbed away.

“I fucking love how you taste,” Wilder says as he kisses his way up my body and takes my nipple into his mouth.

I hear the loud sound of his zipper sliding down before he nudges at my entrance. He kisses me gently before sliding his cock into me and I can help but shiver at the pleasure that flows through every inch of me.

“I love you, Wilder,” I moan as he thrusts into me.

“And I love you, my little liggeress.”

**The End**

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## About the Author



Jade Marshall was born in South Africa where she still resides with her husband. Since 2020 she has had thirteen novels published as well as stories featured in several Anthologies. Jade is also the author of the Katu Wolves series. When not working or writing she enjoys photography.

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