

*Billionaire*  
**BOSSHOLES**

**MY**  
*Sweetest*  
**OBSESSION**

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

**S H A W H A R T**

# MY SWEETEST OBSESSION

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BILLIONAIRE BOSSHOLES  
BOOK 2

SHAW HART

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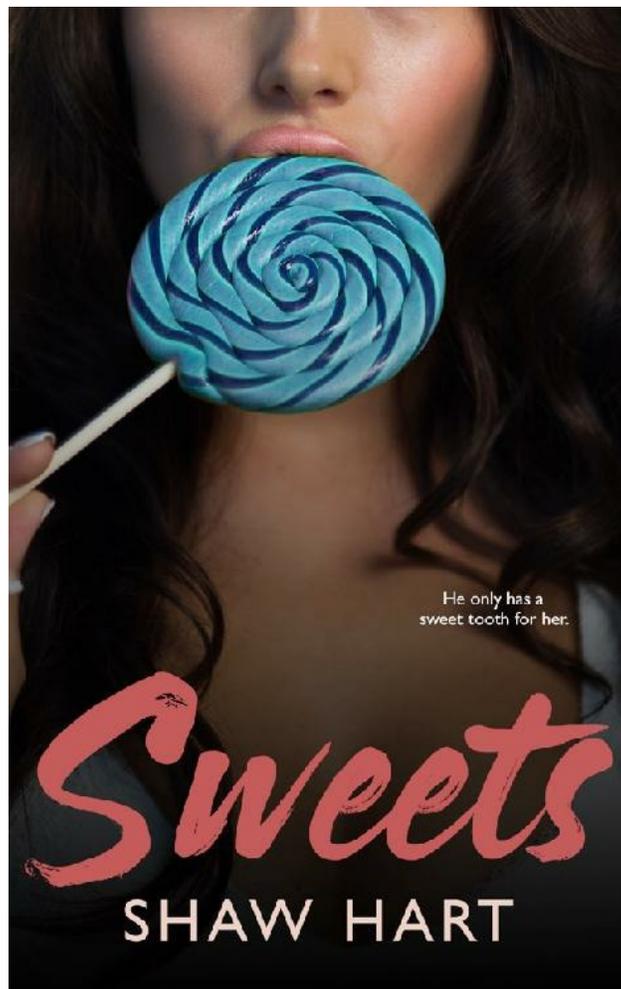
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**Dear Diary,**

I'm going to get caught; I just know it.

My boss still isn't suspicious, but I'm a terrible liar, and I know that he'll catch on soon, and then what will I do? I need this job, and I can't afford to lose it.

He's been giving me more attention than usual, and I'm embarrassed to say that it took me a while to realize that he was interested in me. I've been trying to hide my crush on him since I started working for him, and I can't believe someone like him would want to be with me. Dating him feels like an unnecessary risk though.

I know that I can't be with him, but there's no harm in fantasizing about it....

Right?

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ONE



Pia

YOU'VE GOT THIS. *Just win the interviewer over and go home tonight with a job. Any job.*

I take a deep breath as I step off the elevator and into York Technology. It's a busy place, and my palm starts to sweat as I see all the people bustling about. They all seem so put together, so confident and smart. I feel out of place next to them. Like an imposter.

I kind of am.

I smooth my black shoulder-length hair back, trying to tame any flyaways as I walk up to a bored-looking man holding a clipboard. It's obvious that he's in charge of organizing the interviews. He's handsome with short blond-hair and dark brown eyes. He gives me a once-over as I come to a stop in front of him.

*I wonder what he sees.*

*A college dropout?*

*A scared, nervous girl?*

I paste a smile on my face, tipping my chin up and trying to appear confident as I check in for my interview.

"Hi, I'm here for my interview with Mr. York," I tell him.

"Name?" He asks in an uninterested tone.

"Pia Lucian."

"I'll let them know that you're here. You can take a seat over there."

He points behind me, and I follow his finger towards a little waiting area that's filled with other applicants. I swallow hard as I make my way towards them on shaky legs and plop down into the only available seat.

Everyone else is ignoring me. Maybe they've already sized me up and determined that I'm not a threat. Maybe they're just focused on preparing for their own interviews.

I try to take a few deep, calming breaths, remembering what Lila told me this morning as I was getting ready.

*Any company would be lucky to have you. You just need to remember that and you'll start to portray confidence. Soon, you'll be getting job offers left and right!*

I can picture her frail, smiling face as she says it, and a wave of sadness threatens to crash over me and carry me out to sea.

The truth is that I need this job. My one at the diner near our apartment building is barely covering the bills, and with Lila getting worse, I need more money, a higher salary as quickly as I can get one.

She was diagnosed with leukemia a few months ago, and she's been getting treatments ever since, but none seem to be working. There's a surgery that she can get, but we need to be able to pay for it first.

Lila lost her insurance when she was laid off from her job a few months ago, and we've been struggling to survive ever since.

I would work twenty-four, seven if I could, in order to keep her here with me. Lila is my family. We've been best friends since we were in diapers. She's the only family I have left, and I just can't lose her.

*You won't lose her.*

I square my shoulders as the man calls my name, and I stand and follow him back to a small conference room.

*Fake it until you make it. Sure, everyone else in the waiting area seems like they would be a better fit here, but who knows? Maybe a miracle will happen, and I'll get this job. That would be amazing since York Technology pays better than every other job I've applied for.*

I walk into the room, a serene smile curving my lips upwards as I take in the two men sitting on the other side of the table.

"Hi, you must be Ms....Flowers," the man says as he scans the resume before him.

I open my mouth to correct him when he finally looks up, and his light green eyes snag mine.

The whole world seems to grind to a halt as we stare at each other. He's the most attractive man I've ever seen in real life, and I can only gape at him as I stand motionless across the table from him.

My body feels like it's burning up, and I wonder briefly if I have a fever.

*Maybe I'm coming down with something.*

His light brown hair is pushed back from his face, showing off his strong cheekbones and those kissable lips. He's wearing glasses that have partially slipped down his nose, making him look more adorable than sexy. It also makes him look more approachable and down to earth.

"Cool eyes," the other guy says as he swishes back and forth in his chair.

The spell is broken, and I quickly sit down, smiling faintly at the other man.

"Thanks."

I get that a lot. Not many people have purple eyes. I'm told that I got them from a great-great-grandmother. They're my best feature, and the one people comment on the most.

The man I was staring at nods, clearing his throat as he looks between his friend and me.

"He's married," he tells me, and I blink.

"Oh, I wasn't hitting on him... if that's what you mean," I say in confusion.

"No! No, sorry, I just..." he trails off, and I glance between them.

The man who commented on my eyes is grinning at his friend like he knows something that we both don't, and I have the strongest urge to figure out what that is.

"I'm Adrien, by the way. I own the company one floor down. I was just coming up here to help Levi here with some interviews."

"You can go now," Levi tells him, and Adrien laughs, clapping Levi on his back.

"I know. You're hired," he tells me, and I blink in surprise.

"I am?" I ask, looking to Levi, the man who actually runs this place.

"Yeah, you're hired. You start tomorrow."

"Really?" I ask because this all feels like a dream.

"Yeah. I'll get all of the paperwork together for you to sign tomorrow. I'll see you at nine am, Ms. Flowers."

My heart sinks as I realize he thinks I'm someone else. This Flowers girl must have a strong resume. I should tell him that I'm not her... except the

pay and benefits here are too good to pass up.

Out of all the jobs I applied to, this is the one I wanted the most. It seemed like a cushy job, but it was more than that. The pay and benefits were way more generous than any of the other job listings.

*I can be his assistant. I'll be the best assistant he's ever had, and it won't even matter that he calls me by the wrong name.*

“Great! I’ll see you then,” I say as I push to my feet.

This time, the smile that curves my lips is genuine. It seems to catch Levi off guard, and he blinks, staring at me again until Adrien shoves him gently.

Adrien offers me his hand, and I shake it before I turn back to Levi and do the same thing. As soon as his skin touches mine, electricity skates up my arm and sends tingles and shivers all over my body.

“Welcome to the team,” he says softly, and I smile.

“Thanks. I’ll see you bright and early tomorrow morning,” I promise him.

He nods, and I grab my purse and hurry out of the room before he can change his mind. I hit the button to the elevator, smiling as I step inside with a few other people. I can hear the man with the clipboard announce that the position has been filled, and I grin to myself as the doors close, and I’m whooshed down to the lobby.

Today is turning out better than I could have ever imagined. I can’t wait to get home now and tell Lila all about my new job.

That excitement is short lived though.

I hop on the bus, and as we start to head towards our apartment, guilt starts to hit me. I should have told him right then and there that I wasn’t who he thought I was. This Flowers lady might have needed a job just as bad as I did, and I stole it from her. Not to mention that my resume probably wasn’t nearly as impressive as hers.

*You’re doing this for Lila, I remind myself.*

I just hope I can keep up the façade of being this Ms. Flowers long enough to save up enough money to save my best friend.

## TWO



Levi

I HAD BEEN BORED out of my mind doing the interviews. Actually, I had been trying to solve a glitch with one of our new products while I listened to candidate after candidate drone on about their skills and past jobs. It all sounded exactly the same, and I'm sure that any one of them would have been a good hire, but none had really grabbed my attention.

Then she walked in.

As soon as I saw her, my heart felt like it had just shot up into my throat, and all I could do was stare as she stood across the conference table from me.

With one look, I knew that she couldn't work here. She's the sweetest thing I've ever seen, and this fast-paced, cutthroat business isn't for her.

Still, I couldn't let her go. When Adrien told her she was hired and her remarkable purple eyes lit up, I couldn't tell her no and make that look disappear. I couldn't be the one to hurt her.

*Damn, those eyes.*

I've never been very artistic, but seeing those eyes made me wish I was. I would paint nothing but them, trying to get the emotions hidden in them just right. I would write whole sonnets about those eyes and how having them on me makes me feel things that I've never felt before.

It's a comforting feeling, like yearning. Almost like... love.

"Damn it. I should have thought this through. I can't be pining for my assistant. I can't hit on her or ask her out or anything when she's working for

me,” I grumble as I watch the elevator doors close and whisk my new assistant out of sight.

“Why not? I did, and it was the best decision I ever made,” Adrien says as he leans back in the office chair.

“What if something happens? She could sue me or something,” I point out.

“What are you planning on doing with her?” Adrien asks skeptically, and I roll my eyes.

“Normal things.”

“Okay, then, I don’t think you have anything to worry about. When she first walked in here, you guys just stared at each other for like a solid minute. There’s definitely something there between you, and I know she feels it too.”

“I didn’t even look at her resume,” I grumble, and Adrien laughs.

The resumes are a mess in front of me, and I pick up the first one.

*Was this hers?*

“It’s an assistant position, and your girl seemed more than qualified for that job,” he assures me, and I sigh as I set the resume on the pile.

“Maybe I should get Theo’s opinion on all of this,” I murmur, and Adrien barks out a laugh.

“Get Theo’s opinion on what? Dating? Winning over a woman? Because I can assure you that you don’t want his advice on either of those things. I mean, you’ve seen him with Clara, right?” He asks me, and I huff out a laugh.

“Yeah, I’ve seen him with Clara. I think his eye is still twitching from that damn chair she put in his office.”

“I know. I’m surprised that he’s kept it in there.”

“A bet’s a bet, I guess,” I say, and he nods. “I meant I should get his advice on dating a coworker. Someone who works for me. Maybe there’s some form I can have her sign that will protect me in case things go bad.”

Part of me wonders if this is way too premature. I just met this girl, barely spoke a handful of words to her, and already I’m imagining a life that revolves solely around her. That’s crazy.

*Is it, though?* My subconscious asks.

I’ve always thrown myself into projects and passions. I guess that my passions have just always been business and technology. I’ve never been interested in dating or having a girlfriend. I was always too busy with school and then making my business the best it could be.

*I succeed in that now, so maybe it's time for me to focus on settling down a bit. This... Nichole, I think as I read her name off of the resume before me, hoping that it's the right one, well, she just might be the one for me.*

"Let's go see Theo then," Adrien says, clapping his hands as he stands and starts to stride out of the room.

I sigh as I push to my feet and follow after him. We head into the elevator and hit the button for the top floor. As soon as the doors open to Theo's law firm, we head past all of the desks and cubicles to the hallway that leads back to his office.

Clara, his assistant, is sitting at her desk just outside of his office, a tired look on her face.

"Hey, Clara. How's it going?" Adrien asks her as we approach.

"Boring. We just finished a case, and he's been taking it easy ever since," she tells us.

"I literally just took on three new clients today!" Theo yells from his office, and she rolls her eyes.

"Yeah, boring ones," she whispers to us. "My eyes are glazing over just thinking about them."

"They're not boring," Theo says as he stops in his doorway and glowers at her.

"Yes, they are," she mouths to us.

"I think that I'll take a long lunch," she says to Theo, and before he can respond, she's grabbing her purse and phone and heading off down the hallway.

"And you wanted to come to Theo for lady advice," Adrien says with a chuckle.

"For *legal* lady advice," I stress.

"Oh, God. What did you do?" Theo asks with a pained expression.

"He hired the love of his life," Adrien informs him.

Theo just sighs as he turns and heads back into his office. We follow after him and drop down in the seats across from his desk.

"You found a new assistant then?" He asks me, and I nod.

"Yeah, Nichole... something... I think."

"You think? You don't even know her last name, but she's the love of your life?" He questions, and I shrug.

"You had to be there," Adrien tells him.

"You were there?"

“Yeah, I was helping him pick a good assistant,” Adrien says.

“No, Goldie is out for a dentist appointment, and he was bored, so he crashed my interviews,” I tell Theo.

He snorts as he starts to shuffle some papers on his desk.

“But I do like her, and I was hoping for some legal advice before I try to woo her,” I admit.

“Woo her?” Theo asks with a disgusted look on his face. “Yeah, I think you’ll be safe from any legal trouble if you go around talking like that.”

Adrien snorts, and I feel my face heat with embarrassment. We met in college and became fast friends. When we graduated, we moved to Los Angeles and eventually were all able to start up our businesses in the same building. Now, we can pop in on each other whenever we want. We also have a standing dinner every Thursday night.

Out of the three of us, I’m the worst with the ladies. I’m the dorky nerd, whereas Adrien is tall, dark, and handsome. He’s so charming, and that’s part of what makes him so great at his job in advertising.

Theo is the bad boy, the grumpy loner who is mysterious. Women see him and want to fix him, make him smile, and bring him out of his shell. I doubt that will ever happen, and if it does, then I know that it will have been Clara who did it. She’s the beauty to his beast, but he would never admit to being into her. Instead, they snap back and forth at each other, trading barbs and jabs constantly.

“When does she start?” Theo asks me.

“Tomorrow,” I tell him.

“That’s not enough time to draw up paperwork or to give you tips on how to get a girl,” he says.

“Dude... You’re so screwed,” Adrien adds, and I sigh.

“Yeah, I know,” I sigh as I lean back in my chair. “I know.”

I scrub my hands down my face, and as I close my eyes, I see her purple eyes in my mind.

I’ve never been surer that she is meant to be mine. I’m just not sure how to make that a reality.

Guess I better figure it out.

And fast.

## THREE



Pia

SHOWING up to York Technology the next morning is nerve-wracking. I keep expecting someone to point at me and shout, “Hey! Who are you? You don’t belong here!”

And they would be right.

Even as I step onto the elevator and start the ride up to York Technology’s floor, my heart is racing. Although, that could be because I’m anxious to see my new boss again.

Levi York is quite the visionary. At least, that’s what several articles online said of him. He’s worth billions, is a literal genius, and has been on every eligible bachelor list since he started this company just four years ago. In short, he’s incredible.

And incredibly good-looking.

The doors open on my floor, and I swallow hard as I step out with a few other people. They head back to their workstations, talking amongst themselves, and I stop near the front desk, wondering what I should do and where I should go now.

“Nichole,” Levi says, smiling as he comes out to greet me.

*Nichole? Shit, how am I going to fix this?*

“Good morning,” I say, pasting a smile on my face even as my stomach churns with anxiety.

“Morning. How was your commute?” He asks with a soft smile.

*Terrible. The bus broke down, and I had to run eight blocks to catch the next one.*

“Good,” I lie.

“I thought I would show you around this morning, and then we can go over some paperwork and all of that,” he says.

“Sounds good.”

He’s wearing a dark brown suit and a crisp white shirt. The whole outfit probably cost more than I made in the last six months. I look cheap in comparison in my thrifted black pumps and old purple dress. The material stretches over my curvy frame, and I know I need to lose a few pounds if I have any hope of wearing my old wardrobe around here.

*Maybe I should spend some money on some new clothes. Try to fit in a little better around here.*

I hate to do it though. Every penny needs to be saved for Lila’s surgery.

“So, this is reception, then over on this side of the floor is research and development. We’re split up into four teams.”

He motions to the four sections, and I nod, trailing after him as we head further back on the floor.

“Back that way is the break room. There’s a fridge in there for your food, and we have drinks and snacks available. Did you bring a lunch today?” He asks me, pausing outside of the breakroom door.

“No.”

In truth, I brought two granola bars. It was the only thing that we had available at home.

*I’ll need to go grocery shopping tonight,* I think with a sigh.

My body feels tired already just thinking about running to the store after work. I’m weary, tired down to my bone, and I shouldn’t be. I’m only twenty-three. I have my whole life ahead of me, but it doesn’t feel like that. It feels like I’m stuck, trapped even, and I don’t know how to fix that.

“We’re back here,” Levi says, leading me to the left side of the floor. There’s a wall just past the conference room, and he leads me over to a desk situated outside what must be his office.

“This is us. You can get settled here, and I’ll pull up the paperwork,” he says with a kind smile.

“Thanks.”

I set my purse down on the desk and take a seat. The chair is super comfortable, and I adjust it down a bit so that my feet can touch the floor. I

drop my purse into the bottom drawer of the desk and look around. I didn't bring any trinkets from home because I wasn't sure if they were going to really hire me. Maybe, if I make it through the paperwork, I'll bring in a picture or two from home.

I turn in my chair, and my eyes lock with Levi's. He gives me a small smile, and I stand, heading into his office.

"Ready to start signing?" He asks, and I nod.

I sit down across from him. His office is decorated modernly with dark blue walls and shelves filled with gadgets and books.

"So, here's the employee contract, a non-compete agreement, and a standard nondisclosure agreement," he says as he sets three stacks of paperwork in front of me.

I look down and want to groan when I see that the first question is name.

*What the heck am I supposed to put down? He keeps calling me Nichole, so do I write that? What last name do I put?*

I grab the pen and chew on my bottom lip as I start signing Pia Lucian to all of the forms. I'm hoping that he won't look too closely. Maybe I can make up some story and ask him to call me Pia instead of Nichole. Surely someone else here could be named Nichole, too, and maybe I can use that as an excuse to change my name. I'll just say that it's a nickname.

Reading through and signing all of the forms takes longer than I thought. By the time I pass them all back to him, it's already after noon. He's been working, taking calls, and answering emails while I signed, but I know I felt his eyes on me more than a few times. I avoided his gaze, worried he would see the deceit written across my features.

"All done?" He asks me, stacking them neatly on the corner of his desk.

"Yep."

"Perfect. It's lunchtime. Why don't I take you out for a quick lunch? Welcome you to the team, and I can show you around the building a little bit," he offers.

My stomach growls, and I blush a beet red. Levi just smiles as he pushes to his feet.

"It's settled then. Come on. My treat," he says, and I can't resist that. This might be the only whole meal that I get today.

"Thanks," I say as he holds his office door open for me.

We walk side by side back to the elevator and step on.

"Have you lived in Los Angeles long, Nichole?" He asks me as we ride

down to the lobby.

“Pia,” I blurt out, and he frowns.

“What?”

“Um, everyone calls me Pia. It’s been my nickname since I was a kid,” I lie.

“Pia,” he says, and my name rolls off his tongue like warm honey.

My body warms, and I have the strangest urge to ask him to say my name again. I’ve always kind of hated my name and thought it sounded strange, even childish. When Levi says it, though, I feel different. I feel special and desirable.

“Have you lived here long?” He asks me as we step out and head across the lobby.

“Yeah, what about you?”

“I moved here after college.”

He turns left once we hit the street, and we walk down a block and a half to a deli that’s bustling with people. The smells coming from inside are amazing, and my mouth waters as we head in and up to the counter.

“I have a meeting to get back to in forty minutes,” he says almost apologetically. “I can take you out somewhere nicer for dinner.”

“Oh, you don’t have to do that. I need to go grocery shopping and then head home.”

He nods, looking disappointed, but that can’t be right. We’re next, so I don’t have time to ponder his reaction. We each order the club sandwich and a bag of chips. Levi pays, and I thank him as we move to wait for our food.

“Were you born here in Los Angeles?” He asks, and I decide to tell him the truth. After all, he doesn’t know this Nichole either.

“Yeah, I was born here and grew up downtown.”

“Do you like it here?” He asks as our food is set on the counter for us to grab.

“It’s all I’ve ever known,” I say with a shrug. “We never had money for trips or anything.”

“I’ll take you wherever you want to go,” he says, and I blink.

I’m not sure what to make of that.

*Does he mean on like work trips? He must, right?*

“Is your family still local then, too?” He asks as we take a seat.

“My parents passed away a few years ago. I was an only child, so it’s just me and my best friend now.”

“Pia, I’m so sorry,” he says, and I take a bite of sandwich so I don’t have to respond.

We eat in silence for a moment, and I get distracted by the murmur of voices coming from nearby tables.

“My parents retired and moved to Colorado a few years ago. I don’t get to see them as often as I’d like to. We’ll have to take a trip soon.”

“To visit your parents?” I ask, and he nods like any of this is normal.

“How’s your sandwich?” He asks before I can ask any more questions, and I let him steer the conversation from there.

He asks me what my favorite color is, my favorite animal, my favorite TV show and movie. I learn that his favorite color was blue, but it’s recently changed to purple. He’s always wanted a dog but is worried he won’t have enough time to take care of it properly, and he doesn’t remember the last time he watched TV or went to see a movie.

We head back to the building, and Levi hurries into his office to get ready for his meeting. He rushes back out a second later and smiles at me.

“I won’t have time to go over duties today. Why don’t you take off early today and get your errands done? I’ll see you in the morning.”

“Are you sure?” I ask him, and he nods.

“Yeah, I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Thanks, boss,” I say with a grin as I grab my purse and push my chair in.

His smile falters when I call him boss, but it’s barely noticeable, and I’m too busy mentally making a grocery list to worry about that.

I wave as I head towards the elevator and step on. Since it’s not rush hour, it only takes me half an hour on the bus to get home. Lila is asleep on the couch, her face pale, and my good mood takes a sharp turn.

I tiptoe back to my room and change out of work clothes and into a pair of yoga pants and a tank top. My diary is lying on my bedside table, and I sit down, picking it up and twirling the pen between my fingers.

I’ve been keeping a journal since I was a kid. It helps me when I’m feeling overwhelmed like I am right now. It helps me to sort my thoughts, and I need that now. I start writing, chewing on my bottom lip as I scrawl my thoughts across the page.

DEAR DIARY,

TODAY WAS... *I don't know. It was stressful but also wonderful and exciting. I hate lying to Levi or anyone at the company, but man, I really need this job. I'm making almost double what I was at the diner, even on the best of tip days, and it's fewer hours.*

I THINK *that I'm really going to like working for Levi. He's so sweet and thoughtful. Okay, yeah, and he's also totally hot and sexy.*

HE MAKES ME FEEL SPECIAL. *He makes me feel beautiful and like I belong there. Oh, Diary, I stood out like a sore thumb when I first got there. Everyone was in such nice clothes, and they all seemed so confident. All of the women were also at least four sizes smaller than me, which didn't help, but when I was around Levi, I didn't notice any of that.*

IT'S TOO *bad that I can't date him. He doesn't even know the real me. I mean, I feel bad enough for lying about my name and taking this job. Now that I have it, though, I can't lose it. Lila needs that surgery, and soon. She's counting on me, and I won't let her down. I can't let her down.*

*I've got to go run errands, but I'll be back later. I have a feeling that I'm going to need to continuously need the reminder that Levi is off limits and you're the only one to be able to do that for me.*

XO,  
*Pia*

I FEEL BETTER after getting out some of my feelings, but it hasn't fixed the main problem. My body still goes all tingly and hot whenever I so much as think about Levi.

I need to get my libido under control.  
And fast.

## FOUR



Levi

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN EXCITED to go to work before, but it's hit a whole new level now that Pia is working for me. I practically leaped out of bed as soon as my alarm went off this morning, and I smiled through my whole morning routine and drive in today.

I paced like a lovesick fool, waiting for her to arrive. I thought that having her close by and in my eyesight would calm me down a bit and then I could focus on work, but that hasn't happened.

She's been here for three hours already. I spent the first hour and a half going over her duties and helping her get set up on her computer. The last hour and a half, I've spent trying to work, but my eyes keep straying to her every few minutes. It should be maddening, but every time my eyes land on her, my heart kicks in my chest, and all I feel is hopeful.

I need to figure her out so I can try to come up with the best way to ask her out. Step one of that plan is to have lunch with her again and try to get to know her more. I ordered us some food from a nearby burger joint that should be here any minute.

As if on cue, the delivery guy comes around the corner, and I smile as I walk out to tip him.

"Thanks," I say, taking the bags from him.

"No problem. Have a great day."

He turns to leave, and I glance at Pia. She's staring at the takeout bags in

longing, and I smile.

“I got us lunch. Why don’t we eat in my office?” I suggest.

She blinks, those beautiful purple eyes widening.

“Oh, you didn’t have to do that,” she objects, but I just smile and pull her chair out for her.

“I wanted to. Come on, you must be hungry by now.”

Her stomach growls as we head into my office, and I make a note to have more snacks on hand here for her. I don’t want my girl to be going hungry.

She takes a seat at my desk, and I decide to sit in the chair next to her instead of across. She’s wearing a white button-up shirt that can barely contain all of her mouthwatering curves and a black skirt that ends a few inches above her knees. She tugs down on the skirt self-consciously as I start to take out the food, and my mouth waters. I’d much rather take a bite out of her right now than anything that’s in these bags.

“You look lovely,” I tell her, and she blushes.

“The clothes are kind of...old. I think I need to get a new wardrobe if I want to stay working here,” she laughs, and I tense.

*Was she thinking about leaving already?*

“Did someone say something to you?” I ask, ready to fire anyone who might have hurt my Pia’s feelings.

“No! Nothing like that. I actually didn’t even talk to anyone here yesterday... or this morning. Maybe I should be eating in the breakroom.”

“No! No, I want to get to know you a little better.”

Her cheeks heat, and I hate to think I’m making her uncomfortable.

“I want to make sure that you feel comfortable here. Were you able to look around all of the software programs and all of that? Did you have any questions?” I ask her, and she relaxes.

“Yeah, it seems pretty standard. I’ll ask if I have any questions.”

“Good, good,” I say, passing her a burger and some fries. “I got us both cheeseburgers. I hope that’s okay.”

“It’s perfect. Thank you.”

She unwraps her burger and takes a big bite, moaning slightly as the flavor hits her tongue. I freeze, my eyes locked on her full mouth as she chews. She licks her lips, and I bite back a groan. I’m seconds away from coming in my pants like a teenager, and all she’s doing is eating. God help me if she ever tried to seduce me. I think that I would come on the spot.

“It’s so good. Thanks again,” she says, and I nod, trying to get my body

under control.

“What’s your favorite food?” I ask her as I unwrap my own burger.

“Pizza,” she says right away.

“Pepperoni?” I ask, and she grins.

“Of course,” she says with a laugh. “What about you?”

“Same, though I have more of a sweet tooth, so maybe I should say ice cream.”

“What flavor?” She asks.

“Mint chocolate chip.”

She scrunches up her nose adorably, and I laugh.

“Not a fan?” I ask her, and she shakes her head.

“I’m a moose tracks or cookies and cream kind of girl,” she tells me.

I make a note of that and take another bite of my burger.

“Where did you work before here?” I ask her, and she tenses.

I’ve noticed that whenever I ask her about her past, she seems to freeze or get nervous. I’m not sure what she could be hiding or worried about, but I intend to figure it out.

“Oh, just odd jobs here and there,” she says evasively, and I nod, trying to remind myself to pull her resume later so I can look it over.

“What did you go to college for?” I ask, and she seems to tense even more.

“Um, business.”

“Where did you go?” I try.

“UCLA.”

“That’s cool. Did you like it there?”

“Yeah,” she admits in a sad tone.

I wonder what happened. I get the feeling that if I ask though, she’s only going to clam up more.

“So, I’ve been researching dogs,” I tell her, and her face lights up.

I’ve always wanted a dog, but I’ve never gotten one because I was always too busy. When Pia told me that they were her favorite animal too, I decided that now was the time to get serious about adopting one.

“Did you find one that you want to get already?” She asks me, leaning closer in her chair.

“No, I’m still narrowing it down. I’d love to get your thoughts on some, though.”

“Sure, I’m always down to look at dogs,” she says with a laugh.

We spend the rest of her lunch break scrolling through the local animal shelter's adoption page. Pia coos over all of them, and I know it will be hard to get her to narrow it down to just one or two.

"I should get back to work. Thank you again for lunch," she says as she pushes to her feet and starts to throw away her trash.

"It was my pleasure. We'll have to get pizza tomorrow," I tell her, and she smiles.

"I'd like that," she says quietly.

She heads back out to her desk, and I throw our trash out and sit back behind mine. As I try to get back to work though, I find that I'm still just as distracted by her as before lunch.

Every time she moves, my eyes are drawn to her. Whenever she answers the phone or someone from the office comes to welcome her to the team, I find myself straining to hear what she says.

I'm addicted to her, and I only see it getting worse the more time we spend together. For some reason, though, I don't care. I'm fully prepared to make Pia the center of my world. It's where she belongs, after all.

## FIVE



Pia

I MADE it to Friday without anyone questioning what I was doing at York Technology or throwing myself at my boss! That feels like a huge accomplishment, especially because Levi showed up to work today in this suit that perfectly highlighted his green eyes. He looked even more handsome than usual, and it was hard to stay focused on work when he was walking around looking so good.

It's after five, so I log out and push my chair in, making sure that I have everything in my purse before I make my way to the elevator. The rest of the office finished up a project this week, so Levi sent them all home at noon. He had offered to let me go home, too, but I wanted to get caught up on some emails. Besides, I kind of love it when it's just the two of us in the office.

Things have been going well here. I've mastered the phone lines, and I'm getting pretty good at organizing his calendar and inbox.

He's been feeding me lunch every day, and I'm starting to crave those hours. I'm trying to tell myself that it's just because he's paying for our lunch, and it's helping me save money, but I know it's more than that. I love having his attention on me. I love getting to know him, and I get all tingly inside when he laughs at my jokes or takes an interest in me.

I've had to be careful, though. He keeps asking me questions about what I did before I came to work for him, and it's hard to answer. I don't want to say anything that wasn't on Nichole's resume. The more time that's passed

though, the more I think that he isn't checking the resume and is just curious about me.

I turn to say goodbye to Levi, but he's on the phone still with Adrien, the man I met at my interview, so I just smile and wave at him through the glass walls of his office.

I grab my things and head towards the elevator. It comes fast, probably because everyone else who works in this building is already headed home.

*I wonder what Lila is doing? Maybe I should make us some soup and grilled cheese. That always cheers her up. She's been losing so much weight recently, and I hate to see her looking even more frail or pale than she does now. I should text her and check in before I get on the bus.*

I grab my phone from my purse as the elevator doors start to close when suddenly, a hand shoots in between and pushes the doors open.

I stare wide-eyed as Levi steps onto the elevator. He's facing me, never once looking at the panel filled with numbers, and I swallow hard.

I've never seen him look so focused or determined before. His green eyes are dark and locked on me as he swallows and takes a step closer to me. His suit jacket must still be in his office, and my eyes roam over him. The white of his button-up shirt stands out against his black dress pants. The material drapes over his muscled form, making him look like a statue of a Greek god.

"Pia," he says, and his voice comes out low and gravelly.

"Did I forget something?" I ask.

My desire disappears in the blink of an eye when I realize he might have rushed on here because he realized I'm not who he meant to hire.

*Oh my gosh, is he going to fire me? I can't let that happen. I need this job. I need him.*

I shake my head, trying to clear that last thought away as Levi takes another step towards me.

"Have dinner with me tonight," he says, and I'm not sure if I should panic or sag in relief.

Instead, I end up standing there, staring at him with my mouth hanging open and my eyebrows pulled down in confusion.

"What?" I sputter.

"Go out on a date with me tomorrow night. Let me take you out to dinner," he says again.

"A date?!" I squeak out as he takes another step towards me, his big body crowding me against the back wall of the elevator.

“Yeah, a date,” he says quietly, and my mouth grows dry at the heated look in his eyes.

In all of my daydreams, I never thought that this would happen. Levi is so sweet; I can’t see him being this forward.

*This has to be a dream.*

I pinch myself, swallowing a yelp at the sting that follows. My hot boss is asking me out. It’s a literal dream come true, but...

“I don’t think that’s a very good idea,” I tell him.

“Really? I think it’s the best idea I’ve ever had.”

I open my mouth to say yes or no; I’m not sure. Nothing comes out, and I can feel myself start to waver.

*Dang it! Where’s my diary when I need it? I should be writing out; I will not date Levi over and over again until I can get it through my thick head.*

I’m so tempted to say yes. I’ve been struggling to survive and keep Lila alive for years, and the thought of a handsome man like Levi sweeping in and taking over sounds so good.

Levi frowns slightly at my hesitation before his eyes darken with determination, and he leans in a little more.

“Great then. It’s a date. I’ll pick you up tomorrow night.”

He plucks my phone out of my fingers and presses a few buttons. His phone starts to ring in his pocket, and he smiles as he hands my phone back to me.

“Great, now we have each other’s numbers. Text me your address, and I’ll see you tomorrow night,” he says with that familiar smile of his.

The doors of the elevator open behind him, and he places his hand on the small of my back, steering me out. I turn and look back at him as the doors start to close to take him back up to our floor, and he grins at me. He winks, and my knees start to feel weak. Luckily for me, the doors close before I can make a complete fool of myself.

I stand there for another minute, trying to gather my wits before I make my way out to the bus stop on wobbly legs. I make it just in time to catch my bus and take a seat near the front as the bus pulls out into traffic. I stare out the window, trying to make sense of everything.

*What the heck just happened?*

*And what am I going to do about tomorrow night?*

## SIX



Levi

I CAN'T DESCRIBE JUST how relieved I was when Pia finally texted me back. I was worried that she wouldn't, and I wasn't sure what I would do about our date tonight. Luckily, she did and put me out of my misery.

I'm taking that as a good sign. I was worried that I had come on a little too strong in the elevator. Something just came over me, and after spending time with her all week, I couldn't hold back any longer. I don't want to be like Adrien and still pining after my assistant in two years.

*Speaking of Adrien...*

I bring up his number and hit call, adding Theo in once the call connects.

"Hey, what's up?" Adrien asks.

"She texted me. We're on for tonight," I tell them.

"That's good. Where are you taking her?" Adrien asks.

"Ciao," I tell them, naming an upscale Italian place nearby.

"Cool. Have fun," Theo says, obviously distracted.

"Are you at work?" I ask him, and he grunts.

"Dude, you need to get a life," Adrien tells him.

"For real. Why don't you call up Clara and see if she wants to go out tonight," I suggest.

"Not a chance in hell. I have that business trip in a few weeks, and I need to be prepared for it," he says, obviously trying to change the subject.

"Are you taking Clara with you on this *business trip*?" Adrien asks, and I

can almost picture Theo's eye twitching.

"Not decided yet. Anyways, have fun tonight, Levi."

"Thanks. Any tips?" I ask them.

"You want tips on dating from me?" Theo asks like I'm insane, and I roll my eyes. "Man, if you're coming to me for advice, you're already screwed."

"Just be yourself," Adrien tells me. "She already likes you. You'll be fine."

"Yeah, she agreed to the date, so you're good," Theo adds.

"Thanks. I'll tell you all about it on Monday."

"Can't wait," Theo deadpans, and I laugh.

"Enjoy your weekend," I tell him, and he sighs before he hangs up.

"Have fun, man," Adrien says, and I smile.

"Thanks. Tell Goldie that I said hi. I'll talk to you later."

"Will do."

Adrien and I hang up, and I head into my bedroom to flip through my closet once again. I know she likes me in that blue suit, but do I need to wear something so formal for our date? I grab a light blue button-up shirt and a pair of dark wash jeans.

I've already called the restaurant and made a reservation for this evening. I still have an hour before I need to leave to pick her up. I wish that it was time to leave already. I'm starting to feel anxious and second-guessing everything I've done so far.

*Is Ciao the right restaurant? I know she likes Italian food, but maybe I should have picked someplace fancier.*

*Should I dress fancier or more laid back? She mentioned needing to redo her wardrobe, and I don't want to make her feel underdressed.*

Ugh, I hate this. I'm starting to remember why I never bothered with dating in high school or college. Well, it's more than that. I was never interested in anyone before Pia.

I hop in the shower, trying to kill some time and clear my head. By the time I step out and finish getting dressed, I'm feeling more confident about tonight. It's like Adrien said, she already said yes so that has to be a good sign. She must be interested in me, too, then, right?

I plug her address into the GPS and battle traffic across town to her apartment building. It's a rundown-looking place in a shady part of town.

*I wonder if I could convince her to move in with me or at least into my apartment building. Maybe I could tell her that an apartment came with the*

*job. That way, she'll be safe and closer to me. Would she buy it, though?*

I circle the building twice, trying to find somewhere to park. Eventually, I find an open spot, and I park, hurrying across the street and into her building. She lives on the fourth floor, and the elevator has a sign that says broken. It looks like it's been broken for quite some time, and I make a mental note to get her moved out of this place as soon as possible.

I find her apartment and knock on the door. My heart is racing and my palms grow sweaty as I wait for her to open the door. Luckily for me, it doesn't take her long.

The door swings open, and my heart lodges in my throat as I take her in. She's always beautiful, but right now, she looks almost ethereal, like an angel.

Her black hair is pulled back and so shiny under the harsh lights in the hallway. She's wearing a tight dark blue dress that only accentuates her purple eyes and shapely figure. All of her curves are on display, and I have the strongest urge to shove her back into her apartment where no one else can see her. I don't want anyone ogling my Pia except for me.

"You...look...wow," I end in a whisper.

"Thanks," she says, her cheeks heating with a blush.

She looks so innocent and sweet with her cheeks that color, and I can't help but reach for her and pull her closer to me.

"Ready to go?" I ask her, and she nods, her breath coming out faster as our bodies press together slightly.

*Good. It's nice to see that I seem to have the same effect on her as she does on me.*

I take her hand in mine as we start to make our way down the stairs. We head over to my car, and I open her door for her.

"How does Italian sound?" I ask as I slip behind the wheel.

"Delicious. Always delicious," she says with a laugh, and I grin as I pull out into traffic.

"I made us a reservation at Ciao. Have you ever been there?" I ask her.

"Are you kidding? No way. I could never afford to go there. I've heard that it's amazing, though."

"I've only been once, but it was good," I tell her.

We talk restaurants that we like on the drive to Ciao, and I try to remember all of the ones she wants to try or likes so that I can take her out on a date there next.

I pull up to the valet stand and hop out, hurrying over to get her door before the valet can. I hold out my hand to her, and she smiles as she slips her hand in mine, and I pull her out of the car.

She's looking around with big eyes as we walk inside and up to the hostess stand.

"Hi, reservation for two. Should be under York," I tell the hostess.

"Of course. Right this way," she smiles at me, and I turn to Pia, squeezing her hand as we head back to our table.

I had requested a private booth, and I smile as we're seated at one in the back. The hostess hands us our menus, and I watch Pia's face as she peruses the options.

"It all looks so good," she says as she glances up at me.

"Want to get one of everything?" I ask, and she laughs like I'm joking.

"No, I'm not *that* hungry," she jokes as she goes back to looking over the menu.

"What do you usually order at places like this?" I ask her.

"I don't usually go to places like this," she reminds me. "Normally, Lila and I just order a pizza or something."

"Lila?"

"My best friend and roommate."

"Ah, that's right."

I briefly remember her mentioning her friend at one point this week, but I was too focused on Pia to ask any other questions.

"How long have you two been friends?"

"Since diapers. She's my family."

She sounds almost sad when she says that, and I want to ask her to elaborate, ask if she misses her parents and more about her friend, but we're interrupted by our waiter first.

"Welcome to Ciao. Can I get you two started with something to drink?" He asks, staring at Pia.

"Did you want wine?" I ask her, and she bites her bottom lip.

"Just water for me," she says, and I nod.

"Same for me."

The waiter nods, his gaze lingering on Pia, and I want to growl at him.

"What about you? You're friends with Adrien. When did you two meet?" She asks me once he's gone.

"College. Theo, Adrien, and I were all on the same floor. We were

roommates and suitemates, actually. We've been best friends ever since. We all moved to Los Angeles after graduation, and now we all have offices in the same building."

"That's cool. It's like you guys are plotting world domination," she says with a laugh, and I grin.

"Something like that. I think that Theo has the best shot at it."

"He's on the top floor? The law office?"

"Yep. The guy practically lives there."

"I guess it's nice that he's doing something that he loves."

I want to tell her I'm not sure love is the right word, but the waiter is back.

"Ready to order?" He asks, and I nod for Pia to go first.

We spend the next hour playing a version of twenty questions. I learn that her favorite color is blue, that she loves winter, and Christmas is her favorite holiday. She hates olives but loves seafood and pickles.

"Any luck finding a dog?" She asks me as the waiter clears away our dishes and leaves the check for me.

"Not yet. I can't get a good read on pictures, though. I want to go and meet the dogs. See their personalities and all that."

"That makes sense."

"We should go this weekend. I'm sure that there are a few events around here for adoptions tomorrow."

"Maybe. I'll have to see if Lila has any plans for us."

"Let me know," I say, trying to sound casual and not like I'm dying to see her tomorrow.

"You didn't have to get all of this," she protests as I sign the check.

I smile at the takeout bags filled with pasta and four different kinds of desserts. Pia might be protesting, but I can see the happy look in her eyes. She likes me taking charge and taking care of her. That's a good thing since I like it too.

I help her carry the bags out to the car and then open the door for her. I tip the valet and climb into the driver's side.

The drive back to her place goes way too fast for my liking, and when I find a parking spot right out front, it feels like the world is against me.

"Thanks for dinner," Pia says as I shift into park. "And for my dinner and dessert for the rest of the week."

She laughs, and I grin.

“Of course. Anytime. I’ll help you carry all of this upstairs.”

I turn the car off and climb out before she can protest. I open her door before I grab the bags from the back and take her hand in mine.

We make our way up the same stairs to her apartment door, where she turns to face me.

“Thanks again.”

“Anytime. I mean it. In fact, we should do this again. Maybe tomorrow night. After we go look at dogs?”

“Maybe,” she says coyly, and I grin down at her.

Her cheeks start to heat again, and I wonder if she’s thinking about kissing me goodnight, too.

My heart is racing as we stare at each other in the dimly lit hallway, the soft hum of the overhead lights providing a cocoon of intimacy around us. Pia’s eyes are locked onto mine with a mixture of anticipation and warmth. It’s a look that I want to remember for the rest of my life.

*Our first kiss.*

My hand reaches out, my fingers brushing against her cheek and then down to the back of her neck as I pull her towards me. A current of electricity passes between us, a magnetic pull that I’d felt ever since the day we met, growing stronger and stronger as our lips inch closer toward each other.

"Pia," I say, my voice coming out as a husky whisper. "I've been wanting to do this for a while now."

Her breath catches in her throat as his lips met mine, soft and sure. I see her eyes flutter closed as she gets lost in the sensation, the world outside our embrace fading into insignificance.

My hand moves down from her hair to the small of her back, pulling her closer until there is no space left between us.

She pulls back, trying to catch her breath, and I chase after her. I’m not ready for this moment to be over.

My mouth claims hers once again, my lips moving against hers passionately. It’s like I’m trying to show her what she means to me with this kiss. I’m pouring all of my feelings, all of my wants and desires for her into this.

She drops the takeout bags, and her hands find their way to my chest. I wonder briefly if she can feel the way that my heart is racing underneath her palms.

Footsteps sound in the stairwell behind us, and I reluctantly pull away

from her. We're both breathing heavily as we stare at each other. Her bright purple eyes are at least two shades darker and her lips are plump and swollen from mine. Seeing her like that only has me wanting to kiss her all over again, but the footsteps are growing closer so I force myself to take a step back from her.

"Tomorrow," I tell her softly, and she shakes her head but smiles.

"I'll see you at work," she says.

I watch as she grabs the takeout bags and unlocks her front door. She gives me one last smile before she heads inside and closes the door behind her.

I smile to myself as I turn and start to head down the stairs.

## SEVEN



Pia

WALKING BACK into work on Monday has the same butterflies in my stomach as last week. This week, though, they're there for a different reason.

Levi spent the whole weekend texting me. After our date, I was half in love with him, but then spending the whole weekend texting with him and smiling over his sweet words, and now I'm pretty sure that I'm completely in love with him.

I was this close to going and looking at dogs with him, but Lila wasn't feeling well, and I couldn't leave her. He seemed to respect that when I told him on Saturday morning that I would be staying home all weekend, but I could tell he was disappointed.

I was a little disappointed, too.

He's just so darn sweet and charming. I've never had anyone pay me as much attention as he does. It's like he's fascinated with me. It's like he's in love with me too.

That can't be right, though. Why would a handsome billionaire, who is sweet, funny, and charming, fall for someone like me?

Why hasn't anyone else snapped him up yet?

He told me on our date that he was busy with work and studies in college, but surely there must have been some time to date.

I head back to my desk, and I'm not surprised at all to see that Levi is already in his own office. He smiles and jumps to his feet when he sees me,

hurrying out to greet me.

“Morning,” he says, pulling me into his arms and dropping a kiss on my lips before I can react. “I missed you.”

“You sent me messages all weekend,” I remind him with a laugh.

“It’s not the same as being with you.”

I set my purse down on my desk, trying to hide my smile, and that’s when I spot the gorgeous bouquet on the corner of my desk.

“What are those for?” I whisper.

I’m not even sure why I’m whispering; it just comes out that way.

“For you. They look almost as beautiful as you do, and I just knew you needed to have them.”

My heart flips over in my chest, and I bite my bottom lip. This is what I’m talking about. How am I supposed to not fall for him when he says things like that?

“You didn’t have to do that,” I tell him quietly, and he smiles.

“I wanted to.”

“Well, thank you. They’re gorgeous.”

“You’re welcome,” he says, dropping another quick kiss on my lips.

He makes it seem so natural like we’ve been a couple for years instead of only meeting a week ago.

“I have a meeting, and need to run upstairs and check in with Theo and Adrien this morning. I’ll be back to take you out to lunch, though,” he tells me.

“Okay. Do you need me to do anything specific in the meantime?”

“No, just get caught up on emails and all of that from this weekend.”

“Got it, boss,” I tell him, and he smiles, squeezing my hand as he heads out to his meeting.

I take a seat at my desk, smiling as I admire the bouquet of roses and baby’s-breath. I’ll have to bring them home. I can’t wait to show them to Lila. Maybe they’ll brighten her day like they did mine.

We spent the weekend talking about him and weighing the pros and cons of getting closer to him. Lila is all in favor of me seeing where this goes. She wants me to be happy. The problem is that I need this job in order to keep her alive, and I really, really, want to keep her alive.

“Getting settled in here?” A girl asks and I look up to see her leaning against the wall that separates Levi and me from the rest of the office.

“Yep,” I say with a smile.

I still haven't really met many people that work here. Levi likes to keep me all to himself. Maybe this is my chance to try to make some friends here.

"I'm sure you are," the girl says snidely, and my stomach cramps.

"What? What do you mean?" I ask weakly.

"I think that you know," she spits at me.

I swallow hard, and she glares at me as she takes a step closer to me.

"Just so you know, everyone here knows what you are. We all know you're trying to sleep your way to the top."

"Top of what?" I blurt out, and she grinds her teeth together as she stares at me with malice in her eyes.

"The last secretary thought that she could do the same thing. Look where that landed her," she warns me, and I stifle a laugh.

"His last secretary was sixty and she retired," I remind her and it looks like steam should be coming out of her ears.

"Is that what he told you?" She taunts me, and I nod, but doubt starts to fill me.

*Could she know something that I don't?*

*I don't see Levi lying about that. Why would he? Still, could she be telling the truth? That might make more sense than him being into me.*

The girl must be able to see that her barb hit its mark because she smirks and spins on her heel, stomping back to her desk as I stare after her.

I try to get to work, forcing myself to focus on the emails in my inbox for an hour. After I get them cleared out, I can't help but mull over what she said.

Instinctively, I grab my diary from my purse and start to write.

DEAR DIARY,

*I'M SO LOST. I have no idea what I'm doing. Why did I think dating my boss, the boss I'm lying to, would be a good idea?*

*I'M in way too deep now, and I'm scared.*

*Scared that I'll let Lila down.*

*Scared that Levi will find out and hate me.*

*Scared that I'll fall in love with him even more and lose him.*

WHAT DO I DO NOW, *Diary*?

*I KNOW that I should probably be looking for and applying to more jobs, but I know what's out there, and York Technology is the best I'll get. I need this job so that I can pay for Lila's surgery.*

I SET my pen and diary aside when I felt the tears stinging the back of my eyes. The words on the page were starting to become blurry anyway, and I take a deep breath, trying to stem the flow of tears before they can spill over onto my cheeks.

*What do I do now?*

That's the one thought that keeps repeating over and over again in my head.

Unfortunately for me, I don't have an answer.

I work hard to get myself under control, and by the time five o'clock rolls around, I've mostly succeeded.

I avoid Levi as I pack my things up and hurry to the elevator. I need to be alone tonight so that I can try to figure out a plan.

My stomach cramps, and I sigh. I have a feeling that in the end, I'm going to lose. I just don't know if it will be Levi or Lila that I let down.

## EIGHT



Levi

I'VE BEEN WATCHING Pia all day. She seemed to be alright this morning, but then after lunch she got melancholic and she seemed even more secretive and closed off than normal. When she started to gather up her things, I was ready. I was two steps behind her but somehow still managed to miss the elevator she got on.

*No worries. I'll use my key.*

I race back to my office and grab my elevator key. I'll be able to ride the elevator all the way down without stopping by using this. I've never had a reason to use it before, but now that I have Pia, I do.

I'm impatient and unable to stand still as I ride down to the lobby. I'm hoping that she's still in the building. I wanted to talk to her, drive her home, and spend more time with her. We barely got to talk all afternoon, and I feel like I'm going into withdrawal.

The doors open and I spot Pia right away. She's headed for the front doors, frowning up at the dark sky as she walks outside.

I start running to catch up with her, and I make it to her before she can reach the bus stop. There's a crowd around the bus stop awning, and I frown at a few seedy-looking men who are eyeing up the woman standing there.

"Let me give you a ride home," I tell Pia, already leading her into the parking garage and over to my car.

"You don't have to do this," she tries to argue but I just open up the

passenger door for her in response.

I climb behind the wheel and back out of the spot.

“You should have told me that you ride the bus. I would have driven you to and from work,” I tell her as I pull out of the parking garage.

I would have offered to buy her a car, but I have a feeling that would have scared her off. I can’t come on too strong here. I can’t lose her.

“I don’t mind the bus,” she says but I can hear the distaste in her voice. It has to make her commute at least twice as long and I’m sure that she’s tired after working all day.

“Are you hungry? We could stop for dinner somewhere.”

“Oh, I don’t want to take up that much of your time,” she starts to argue, and I shake my head.

“You’re not. I offered. I want to spend time with you.”

She starts to chew on her plump bottom lip, and I try to hold back my groan. I wish that it was my teeth doing that to her lip. I can’t get our kiss out of my head, and clear my throat, trying to keep my thoughts on the road and off Pia’s curvy little body.

“I’m not that hungry,” she says, and I frown.

“Something quick then? What’s your favorite fast food place?”

I’d rather take her somewhere nicer, but if fast food is what she’s more comfortable with, then I’ll have to take it.

“In-N-Out Burger, but you really don’t have to get me dinner,” she insists.

“No, burgers sound good.”

The sun starts to peek out from behind the clouds as we head towards her apartment building. There’s an In-N-Out Burger just a few miles from her building, and I pull in there.

“What are you doing tonight?” I ask her as we join the end of the drive-thru line.

“Probably just hanging out with Lila. I need to do some laundry and clean the apartment a little bit.”

“Should we get Lila something?” I ask as we inch forward.

“Um, sure.”

“What does she like?”

“The original burger, no onions,” she rattles off.

I want that with her. I want to know all of her favorite things. I want to know everything about her. If I get my way, then I will soon enough.

“What do you usually get from here?” I ask her.

“The original burger and a chocolate shake. What about you?”

“I can’t remember the last time I was here, but that sounds good.”

“You don’t eat out a lot?” She asks me.

“I go out for dinner with Theo and Adrien once a week, or we have lunch at the office together, but it’s usually from places closer to the office.”

“Fancier places,” she says, and I shake my head.

“No, just closer. Half of the time it’s just a sandwich or some chicken. Anything but tacos.”

“What’s wrong with tacos?” She asks, sounding almost offended.

“Theo hates them.”

“Oh. Why?”

“It’s a childhood thing,” I say vaguely, and she frowns but lets it go.

“Do you like tacos?”

“Love them,” I tell her, and she relaxes.

“Good. Me too.”

We’re next, and I roll down my window to place our order. The sun ducks back behind the clouds, and I see Pia frown.

“I didn’t think that it was supposed to rain today,” she says, and I shake my head.

“Me either. Hopefully it passes.”

We pull up, and I place our order, adding another chocolate shake in case Lila wants one, too. I still haven’t met her roommate and best friend. Maybe that’s the next step. Meeting each other’s family.

I haven’t talked to my folks yet, but I know they’ll be over the moon excited to meet Pia. They’ve been hinting about wanting to see me settle down and have kids for a few years now, but I’ve never been interested in anyone before Pia.

I pay for our food a moment later, and then they pass me the box of our food and drinks. Pia pops a few fries into her mouth as we pull back out into traffic.

“Thanks for dinner. You really didn’t have to do that.”

“I wanted to. I like spending time with you,” I tell her, and she blushes.

“Any big plans for this week or weekend?” I ask.

I’m trying to figure out when we can go on our next date without being too obvious.

I’m not sure that I’m pulling it off.

“No, just work and some errands as of right now.”

“Maybe we can grab dinner together again then. Say, on Friday?”

“Maybe,” she says, and I can see her smiling shyly.

That’s a yes, then.

I smile, popping some fries into my mouth as I pull into a parking spot right outside of her place. I shift into park and turn to face her. A mist is starting to cover the windshield, and I sigh. It looks like the rain isn’t going to pass. I should tell her to go inside now before it really starts to rain, but I don’t want to let her go just yet.

“I should head in,” she says, like she can read my thoughts.

“Yeah, here, let me get this covered for you,” I say, taking out my burger and fries and leaving the box for her.

“Thanks,” she says, her fingers brushing mine.

She looks up at me, and my heart starts to race as our gazes remain locked. Anticipation starts to fill me as she sways toward me slightly.

Her purple eyes are dark in the cloudy light, and I reach for her, tucking some of her dark hair out of the way so that I can see her clearly.

“So beautiful,” I murmur, and she licks her lips.

I almost moan at the sight of her tongue smoothing over her lips, and know I can’t hold myself back any longer. I pull her closer to me, over the center console, and her eyelids close as my lips connect with hers.

A light sound of rain starts to hit the roof of my car, cocooning us inside. She’s so warm against me, and I want more of that. I need it. Her warmth. Her kindness. Just her.

My heartbeat is echoing in my ears as her lips move underneath mine. My hand smooths over her cheek, cradling her in the palm of my hand.

I swear I can feel my love for her growing at this moment. It happened so fast, changing from interest and infatuation to something more, something real. She’s burrowed inside of my heart now and I don’t ever want to try to get away from her.

A siren goes by nearby, and Pia pulls away. Her lips are red and swollen from mine. I want to pull her back. I want to get lost in her again, but I know she needs to head inside at some point, and I’ll never want to let her go.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” I tell her softly, and she nods.

“See you.”

She grabs the food and her purse and hurries through the light drizzle and inside the building.

“I love you,” I whisper as she disappears.

I pull away from the curb a moment later and make the drive back to my empty apartment. As I go, I can't help but wonder when I'll be able to say those three words to her face.

*Not anytime soon, I guess. Not unless I want to freak her out and scare her off.*

*And I definitely don't want that.*

## NINE



Pia

I'M SO SCREWED.

I love Levi. I think I've loved him from the first moment that I saw him, and I was just lying to myself all this time. Now, I can't deny it anymore and I don't know what to do.

I can't keep seeing him or working for him when he thinks I'm someone else. I mean, this relationship is doomed since we started on a lie. How will he ever be able to trust me again?

The guilt is starting to eat me alive, and I think Levi is picking up on it. I've been pulling away from him little by little, and I can see him getting worried about what could be wrong. He's already questioned me to see if something happened at work to upset me, but that's not it.

I sigh, sitting down on the couch and scrubbing my hands down my face.

"What's wrong, Pia Pie?" Lila asks as she shuffles into the living room and sits down next to me.

"It's Levi."

"What about him?" She asks. "Oh, shit. Did he find out that you're not Nichole?"

"No, I don't think he even suspects anything about that."

"Then what is it?" She asks me.

"I'm in love with him," I admit to her.

"Well, duh!" She says with a laugh that quickly turns into a cough.

I hurry to get her a glass of water, and she smiles weakly at me as I hand it to her.

“Thanks.”

“Of course,” I tell her. “How are you feeling?”

“I’m fine. Don’t change the subject, though. What’s going on with you and Levi?”

“I can’t keep seeing him or working for him. Not when I feel like this about him. I can’t keep lying to him.”

“What have you really been lying about, though?” She asks me gently, and I scrub my hands down my face again.

“He never would have even hired me! He thinks that I’m someone else. I’m not sure what her resume said, but what if he thinks I have skills or qualifications that I don’t? What if he thinks that I graduated from Harvard or something? Then, when he finds out that I barely managed to graduate high school, he’s going to be so disappointed.”

“Will he though? What Harvard graduate is going to be working as a secretary?” She asks me with a laugh and I chuckle.

“Okay, maybe not Harvard, but you get it.”

“I know, but I don’t think that he will be. You’re amazing, Pia. He can see that. That’s what he’s drawn to. I’m sure of it.”

“You haven’t even met him,” I point out.

“Pia.”

“I just can’t!” I say, leaping to my feet. “I can’t keep doing this.”

She can see how upset I am as I try to blink back tears.

“Okay,” she says softly. “You don’t have to. I just want you to be happy, Pia Pie. You deserve it.”

She looks so sad for me, and I swallow hard.

“It has to be done.”

“Why don’t you take some time and think on it? Maybe we can figure something out in the meantime.”

“Maybe,” I say, but I don’t have much hope.

“Go get some rest,” she says, and I nod, heading into my bedroom and collapsing onto the bed.

My diary is on the bedside table, but for the first time in forever, I don’t want to write in it. I know that I would only try to talk myself out of resigning and calling things off with him. It’s what needs to be done though.

I stare up at the ceiling, trying to compose myself. I’m not sure how much

time passes before I sit up and grab my phone.  
I pull up his email and start typing.

MR. YORK,

**THIS EMAIL IS to formally notify you that I'm resigning as your assistant, effective immediately.**

**I WANT to say thank you for the opportunity to work for you. It was truly a life-changing experience, and I can't thank you enough.**

**I WISH you and the company nothing but continued success.**

SINCERELY,  
**Pia Lucian**

I HIT SEND AS the tears start to spill onto my cheeks. I know that at some point, Levi will be calling me to ask what happened. I can only hope that I'm more composed by then.

Lila must hear me crying because she shows up in the doorway a moment later.

"Oh, Pia," she says sadly, and I nod.

"I quit," I tell her, and she nods.

"It will be okay," she promises me as she sits next to me on the bed.  
"We'll be okay."

She wraps her arm around me, and I lean my head on her shoulder, letting the tears fall as I think about everything that I just gave up.

She holds me for a few minutes as I sob. I can't imagine loving anyone

else, and it's not just because the breakup is so recent. I've never been interested in anyone before Levi, and I don't see that ever changing.

My phone starts to buzz on my nightstand, and when I see Levi's name on the screen, I can only cry harder.

Lila holds me through it all, and I wonder what I would do without her. I just hope that I never have to find out. I haven't checked the savings account for her treatment in a while. I can only hope that it's close to what we need.

I can't lose Lila, too.

## TEN



Levi

I KNEW something was off the second I got Pia's email. She never emails me, not even at work. She always just walks into my office and asks me whatever she needs to know.

As soon as I opened it and read her resignation, I had gone cold all over. I had reread her words a dozen times, trying to wake up from this nightmare. I kept waiting, wishing for the words to change on the screen, but they never did.

She quit.

*Why? What happened? What did I do to mess this all up?*

My heart feels like it's broken in my chest, the shards slicing me up with every breath. I thought that things were going so well between us. What could have happened to have her quitting? I haven't even really talked to her that much today.

I sit down on a chair in my living room, staring off into space. I'm trying to make sense of it, trying to figure out what could have happened, but I can't. I can't process what's happening.

Yesterday, I had everything that I could ever want. I was happy, on top of the world happy. I'm head over heels in love with Pia, and I'm not just going to let her go. Not without a fight.

I try to call Pia, but it gets sent to voicemail. The same thing happens the second, third, and fourth time I call too. I know that I'm coming across as

clingy and desperate, but, well, I am. I need Pia. I love her.

As her voicemail kicks on, I grit my teeth and hit end, calling Adrien and Theo instead this time. Theo picks up first, and I can hear a printer or something in the background.

“Are you at the office?” I ask him, and he groans.

“Are you going to start nagging me about my hours too?” He asks.

“Too?”

“Clara and my aunt have been on my case all week,” he tells me.

“Well, maybe they have a point. There’s more to life than work.”

“I’m fine. I like working,” he half snarls, and I choke back a laugh.

“Clearly.”

He sighs as Adrien answers the call.

“Ah, happy to hear from you both, too,” he jokes.

“Shut up,” Theo tells him, and I laugh.

“What’s up?” Adrien asks.

“Theo is working too much. This is an intervention,” I tell him.

“Oh, good. I wish I had more heads up. I would have prepared something, but I guess I can just wing it,” Adrien says.

“You two are hilarious,” Theo spits out, and I chuckle.

“What are we really doing here?” Theo asks, and my good mood plummets when I remember the email from Pia.

“Pia resigned.”

“What?” Adrien asks in shock.

“What did you do?” Theo asks me.

“Nothing! Well, not that I can remember. It just happened, and she doesn’t say much in the email. Just that she’s resigning, effective immediately.”

“So, what did you do?” Theo asks again.

“Nothing!” I insist. “Everything was good between us yesterday. We’ve been going strong since our first date. Everything was going great... or I thought it was anyway.”

“Could it be something in her personal life?” Adrien asks.

“Or maybe someone at work said something to her?” Theo adds.

“I don’t think so, but honestly, I have no clue.”

“You need to ask her then,” Theo says.

“I’ve tried that. She’s not answering my calls.”

“So go to her place,” he says.

“Should I give her time? Wait until tomorrow?” I ask them.

“Do you want to wait?” Adrien asks.

“No, not at all. I want her.”

“Then go get her. Ask her what’s going on and get to the bottom of things,” Adrien encourages me.

“He’s right,” Theo adds. “You can’t plead your case when you don’t even know what the charges are.”

“Okay. Thanks, guys,” I say sincerely.

“Of course. Let us know how it goes,” Adrien says.

“I will. Get some rest, Theo,” I say, and he sighs.

“Good luck,” he tells me before we all hang up.

I sigh, trying to shake off the doubt as I push to my feet and grab my keys. It’s time for me to go get my girl back. I can fix this, whatever this is. I have to.

I head out and battle the Los Angeles traffic over to Pia’s apartment building. The sun is starting to set now, and I hurry inside and up to her apartment. It’s quiet on the other side of the door as I take a deep breath and raise my hand to knock.

I wait a moment, but there’s still no sound from inside her apartment, and I wonder if she’s out. I knock again, and this time, I hear movement from inside.

A moment later, a pretty brunette answers the door, and I blink.

“Hi, is Pia home?” I ask her.

“She’s asleep,” she tells me, and I frown.

I want to ask her to wake her up or let me in, but it is kind of late.

“Oh, okay. I’ll try to come back tomorrow,” I tell her, and she nods, glancing over her shoulder at a hallway.

Part of me wonders if she’s lying, and maybe Pia told her that she didn’t want to see me if I came by. It would make sense. After all, she’s not taking my calls right now either.

“Have a good night,” I tell her, and she nods.

“You too,” she says softly.

She closes the door, and I make my way back to my car dejectedly.

*Don’t worry. You’ll go get a good night’s sleep and be back first thing in the morning;* I promise myself as I slip back behind the wheel.

I sigh as I drive back home because I know it’s a lie. I’m not going to get any sleep tonight. Not with my future with Pia up in the air.

I need to win her back and then make sure she can never leave me again. I drive past a jewelry store as I pull out of her neighborhood and get a great idea.

I smile as I pull into the parking lot and park.

## ELEVEN



Pia

I'VE MANAGED to avoid Levi all weekend. Mainly by spending all of my time either locked in my room with Lila covering for me and telling him that I was out or sleeping or driving around town looking for jobs that I could apply for.

Now that it's Monday, I think I've bought myself a window to relax. Levi will be at the office all day so I can hang out with Lila in the apartment and apply to as many jobs as I can find.

So far, it's nine a.m. and I've already applied to a dozen different places. I'm hoping that if I spend all week applying to open positions, then maybe I'll get a call back early next week and start a new job soon.

I checked the savings account, and we're close to being able to afford the surgery soon. We just need to pinch a few more pennies.

A knock sounds at the door, and I frown. Lila is at her doctor's appointment right now. I had offered to go with her, but she insisted she would be fine by herself. Her doctor's office is only a few blocks away, and I know she can get sick of me hovering over her, so I relented and let her go.

*So, who is at the door?*

I stand, setting my laptop on the couch before I head over to answer it. When I swing the door open and see Levi standing there, I swallow hard.

*Should have checked the peephole.*

Though, with the determined look on his face, I doubt that he would have

just left. The fact that he's here when he should be at work and that he's been by every day means that he's not just going to let this, or me, go.

"Levi," I choke out.

"Pia. We need to talk," he says, pushing his way past me and into the apartment.

"About what?" I ask, feigning ignorance.

"You know what," he snaps.

I close the door and turn to study him. He looks like a wreck. Dark circles are under his dull green eyes. His hair is a mess, like he's been running his fingers through it all night.

I hate seeing him like this.

"So, you got my email then," I try to joke, and he glares at me.

"Yeah, and I'm here to find out what happened."

"What happened?" I ask.

"Yeah. I thought that we were happy. I thought that everything was good. Then, out of nowhere, you quit. What happened?" He asks me.

I swallow hard, torn between telling him the truth or making up some lie so that he doesn't hate me for lying about who I really was when he hired me.

In the end though, I can't lie to him anymore. That's why I quit in the first place because I didn't want to lie to him anymore.

"You should sit down," I tell him with a sigh, and he looks concerned.

He makes no move to sit. It's like he wants to be ready to catch me if I try to make a run for it.

"What's going on? Talk to me, and we can figure it out. I can help you," he promises me, and I want to burst into tears.

"You're too nice. I don't deserve that," I choke out, and he frowns.

"Pia," he says softly as he tugs me into his warm embrace. "Please, just tell me what's going on. I've been so worried."

His hands smooth over my back, trying to comfort me as my tears seep into his suit. I'm not even sure when I started crying, but now that I've started, I can't seem to stop.

"I lied to you," I mumble against his chest.

"What?" He asks, pulling away slightly.

"I lied to you," I tell him, louder this time. "I can't keep working for you."

"Okay, why not?" He asks.

"I just... I can't," I say, chickening out.

“Okay, I don’t understand, but maybe in time, you’ll trust me and open up. I still want to see you though. We can still be together,” he tells me as he tries to wipe away my tears.

“No!” I blurt out. “No, we can’t.”

I try to pull away from him, but his grip on me tightens.

“Pia,” he starts, and I shake my head.

“I can’t,” I say, a fresh wave of tears spilling onto my cheeks. “You’ll hate me.”

“I could never hate you,” he tells me vehemently.

I can’t take it anymore. I can’t keep lying to him. I can’t keep putting off the inevitable.

“I’m not Nichole,” I tell him, ripping myself out of his hold.

He reaches for me again before he blinks.

“What?” He asks.

“I’m not Nichole. I don’t know who she was or what her resume said, but I’m not her. When you offered me the job and called me Nichole, I should have corrected you. I didn’t deserve the job. You were offering it to someone else. I’m so sorry. You must hate me,” I tell him dejectedly.

I don’t know what reaction I expected from him. Confusion or anger, maybe even betrayal or disappointment.

Instead, what I get is laughter.

Levi starts chuckling and then full-on laughing, and I frown.

“What? What’s so funny?” I ask, swiping the tears from my cheeks.

“You thought that you had stolen someone else’s job?” He asks, still grinning, and I nod.

“Yeah, and I’m really sorry. I’ve felt so bad this whole time, but I really needed that job,” I try to explain.

“You didn’t steal the job, Pia. The only thing you stole was my heart.”

My mouth drops open, and he closes the distance between us, wrapping me up in his arms.

“I didn’t know who you were or what resume I was even looking at. I just wanted you. I was offering you the job. I fell in love with you. Not some Nichole or whatever,” he tells me, and a sense of relief washes over me.

Then his words catch up to me, and I freeze.

“Wait,” I say, looking up at his handsome face. “You love me?”

## TWELVE



Levi

“OF COURSE I DO,” I tell her gently.

I can see the hope shining in her pretty purple eyes, and I cradle her face in my hands as I stare down at her.

“I think I’ve been in love with you from that first moment.”

“Me too,” she whispers, and my heart soars.

“Say it,” I beg her, and she smiles sweetly.

“I love you, Levi.”

My lips crash down on hers in an instant. I want to ask her to say that again. I want to feel her whispering those three words against my skin, branding me as hers, but it’s been too long since I’ve kissed her.

My heart finally feels whole for the first time in days, and I hold her closer to me. It’s like I need the reminder that she’s really here.

Her soft curves press against me, and I moan against her mouth. Her fingers tighten on my arms before they slide up and she wraps her arms around my neck. She’s clinging to me, just as desperate to be with me as I am to be with her.

*Fuck, I’ve missed this. I’ve missed her.*

She pulls away, sucking in air, and I start to kiss my way down her neck.

“I love you, Pia,” I say in between kisses.

She tilts her head back, giving me more access to her flawless skin.

“Levi,” she moans, letting out a gasp as I nip at her skin.

“God, I love hearing you say my name like that, baby.”

“Levi,” she moans again, and I swear I almost come in my pants.

I’m desperate to have her, but we need to clear the air first before I claim her as mine. I need to make sure that we’re on the same page about our future together before we go any further.

We pull apart, both of us breathing heavily, and I keep my grip tight on her.

“I’m sorry that I quit. I just... I was so afraid that you would hate me for lying to you,” she tells me, and I tuck a loose strand of her hair behind her ear.

“I could never hate you. To be honest, I never even looked at the resume until I had to say your name. I couldn’t take my eyes off of you.”

It’s a relief to be honest with her. I held myself and my feelings back, worried that I would scare her off if I came on too strong, but she seemed to love it. She’s just as into me as I am in her, and it’s fucking amazing.

“I didn’t lie about anything else, though,” she tells me, and I smile.

“I know. You’re too good to do that. I only wish that you had said something earlier. I hate to think that you’ve been stressed about this.”

“I just, I couldn’t lose that job. I needed the money,” she tells me.

“For what?” I ask, and she looks away from me, pulling out of my arms slightly.

“You know my best friend, Lila? My roommate?” She asks, and I nod.

“Yeah, I officially met her the other night when she lied and said you were asleep or out.”

Her cheeks heat with a blush, and I smile.

“She seemed nice. Loyal to you, which I love,” I add.

“She is. She’s the best. She’s my family. Always will be.”

I nod and wait patiently while she composes herself, and my stomach tightens into a knot. I already know that I will do everything in my power to make sure that Pia and Lila are safe and happy. I don’t want anything hurting my girl. I won’t allow it. She should only ever be smiling.

“She’s sick,” Pia chokes out, and my heart breaks for the pain written all over her face. “Leukemia. She’s been on treatments, but none of them have worked yet. There’s a promising experimental surgery, but we couldn’t afford it and her insurance won’t cover it.”

“And you were working to save up for it,” I finish, and she nods.

“Yeah. I don’t know how much longer she can wait, and my waitressing

tips just weren't cutting it anymore. That's why I interviewed with you."

"Thank god you did."

She smiles, leaning into me more, and I tighten my hold on her.

"Well, I'll cover it. We can get another opinion. We'll get her the best care possible," I promise her, and a fresh wave of tears fills her eyes.

"Really?" She asks as the first tears spill onto her cheeks.

"Yes. Ah, baby, I hate to see you crying," I tell her as I reach up to wipe some of the tears away.

"I can't help it. I thought I had lost my chance with you and was letting Lila down, and now you're giving me everything," she hiccups.

"I'll always give you everything," I promise her. "I love you, Pia. You came into my life and made me see that there's more than work. You woke me up. You make me smile and laugh. I've never been happier than I was with you these last few weeks."

She buries her face in my chest, and I wrap her up tight in my arms, kissing the crown of her head and breathing in her lilac and honey scent.

"Everything is going to be alright," I promise her, and she nods.

It takes a while, but eventually, her breathing evens out and her tears dry. The energy around us starts to change from sadness and stressful, to desperation to finally be back together, to something else, something languid and sexy.

Pia tips her head back, her purple eyes staring up at me, and I look down to her lips. Her breathing changes, becoming faster as she waits for my lips to claim hers.

She doesn't have to wait long.

I can't resist the sight of her perfect, bee-stung lips, and I close the distance between us.

The intensity rocks her back on her heels, and I push her up against the wall next to her bedroom door as I slip my tongue into her mouth to tangle with hers. She tastes like hot chocolate and whipped cream.

"I need you," she whispers as I pepper her face with kisses.

"I need you too," I whisper back before I plunder her mouth once again.

She kisses me back, just as needy as I am. Her hands twist in my dress shirt, and I tangle mine in her hair. When she starts to unbutton my shirt, I pull back.

"I can wait. We don't have to—" I start, but she cuts me off with a smile.

"I need you, Levi. Don't make me wait."

I can't deny her.

I help her undo the rest of the buttons and toss my shirt aside before I reach for her top and tug it over her head. She's not wearing a bra, and her perfect tits spill out. My hands reach for them, and I groan at the heavy feel of them against my palms.

"So damn perfect."

She arches against me, a moan getting caught in her throat as she looks up at me.

"More," she begs as my fingers toy with her stiff nipples.

I nod, dipping my head and sucking one peak into my mouth. She cries out at the contact, and I vow to make her say my name like that every day for the rest of my life.

Her fingers are pulling at my belt, and I reluctantly step back and hurry to shed the rest of my clothes. She's doing the same, both of us eager to be skin-on-skin with each other.

"Bed," I order her, and she nods, hurrying over to it.

I'm right behind her, and I push her down on top of the messy sheets. She falls, and her legs spread open slightly. I get my first look at the heaven between her legs and send up a silent prayer to God that she was sent to my office to interview.

"I need a taste," I tell her, and she blinks at me in confusion. That look clears when I drop to my knees at the edge of the bed and tug her closer to me.

"Levi," she starts, but I cut her off by burying my face between her thick thighs.

She tastes like cotton candy, and I moan, my tongue licking up more of her juices. I'm instantly addicted to the taste, and hold her in place as I explore her puffy folds and tight little hole.

Her clit is standing at attention by the time I lick my way up there. As soon as I suck that little pearl into my mouth, she starts to scream. Her legs snap shut around my head and she arches against the mattress.

I moan, rolling my tongue over the bundle of nerves over and over again. She's wound so damn tight, and I know that it won't take her long to come.

"Levi! Oh, God!" She shouts up to the ceiling as she comes against my mouth.

I lick up all of her pleasure, wanting more of the taste, but she's tugging on the strands of my hair.

I kiss my way up her body, and she moans as I kiss her, the taste of her orgasm passing between us.

“Whoa,” she whispers, and I grin down at her.

“We’re just getting started,” I tell her as I press my hips against hers, letting her feel my hard length.

“I’m not sure that you’ll fit,” she says nervously, and I smile.

“I will. I’ll go slow. I never want to hurt you,” I tell her, and she smiles slightly, nodding at me.

My lips find hers again, and I start to rock against her, lubing my cock up in her sticky release. With every pass over her clit, she tightens underneath me and spreads her legs a little wider in invitation.

I continue to kiss her. I want her to be relaxed when I finally start to push into her. My tongue plays with her, and she lets out a frustrated sigh as I pass over her clit once more.

I smile.

She’s ready.

On the next pass, I angle my hips, letting the tip of my cock notch inside of her. Her breathing falters, and she seems to hold her breath as I slowly push in. I rock against her, just giving her the tip of my dick over and over again until she’s almost shaking with need underneath me.

“Levi,” she groans in frustration, and I nod.

She’s not the only one on edge. I’m close to busting my nut and I’m not even inside of her yet.

I kiss her harder and sink an inch into her. She breathes a sigh of relief, and I grit my teeth to stop from coming. Her fingers tangle in my hair, and now she’s kissing me as I push in another inch. I can feel her cherry then, and I squeeze my eyes shut.

I don’t want to hurt her, but I don’t know any way around it either.

“Levi,” she says softly, and I kiss her hard as I thrust inside of her.

She moans as I pop her cherry and sink fully into her.

“Fuck,” I hiss as her velvet walls tighten almost painfully around me.

“Uh huh,” she gasps, and I pull back to make sure that I’m not hurting her.

“Pia,” I start, and she blinks those big eyes up at me.

“It feels so... good,” she groans, her walls rippling around me.

“Fuck,” I repeat, and she lifts her hips, signaling for me to move.

I pull out slowly and then push back in just as slowly. We start an easy

rhythm, both of us learning to move together. Soon though, I can't hold off any longer. I can tell that Pia is close to coming too, and I want us to go off together.

"That's it, baby. Just like that," I tell her as I reach between us and find her clit.

Her whole body tightens up as I strum my finger over that little bundle. With each stroke, she tightens around me, and I grit my teeth. I'm not coming until she does.

My thumb presses down on her clit, rolling it beneath my finger, and she goes off like a firework.

"Levi!" She screams, and I bury my face in her neck as I find my own release.

"Pia," I moan as I come deep inside of her.

My orgasm leaves me feeling breathless, and I roll onto my side before I can crush her. We're both panting and covered in sweat as I pull her against me.

"Whoa," she says again, and I smile, kissing her head.

"Yeah. Whoa," I agree as she snuggles up next to me.

We're silent for a moment, enjoying being together again and catching our breaths. My eyes are closed when she stirs against me, and I look over at her.

"When can we do that again?" She asks, and I grin as I roll her under me once again.

## THIRTEEN



Pia

I WAKE up with Levi plastered against my back, his arm thrown over my waist. I'm close to overheating, and try to wiggle out from under him, but he keeps tightening his grip on me.

We stayed in bed for most of yesterday, only coming out to eat and for a quick introduction when Lila got home from her appointment. She had just given me a saucy smile as Levi dragged me back into our bedroom. I took that to mean that she approved of us.

I drag the covers off of my legs and try to scoot closer to the edge of the bed again.

"Morning," Levi grumbles in my ear, his voice rough with sleep.

The sound of it sends shivers racing down my spine. I shift against him, and we both moan as I rub my ass over the hard length of his cock.

"Morning," I whisper.

His fingers trail down from my hip to the juncture of my thighs, and even though I'm sore from last night, I still push into his touch.

He took me home with him last night, and it feels strange to wake up in a man's bed. I suppose I'll have to get used to it since we're officially together now.

I roll over to face him, and he pushes me onto my back, coming down over me as his lips meet mine. Our lips fuse together, and I open for him instantly. Our tongues tangle together as the hard planes of his body press me

deeper against the mattress.

“Fuck,” he moans against my lips.

He starts to kiss his way down my neck, and I sigh as I feel his lips wrap around the stiff peak of my nipple. My body turns wanton and needy beneath his, and I spread my legs wider in invitation.

“Ready for me already?” Levi asks as he grins up at me.

My cheeks heat, but I know that he likes it when I say dirty things to him.

“Always,” I say quietly, and he groans as he kisses his way between my legs.

He shoulders my legs even wider, and I lean up on my elbows and look down at him as he lowers his head to my drenched core. I can feel his hot breath as it fans over my sensitive skin and I swear I’m close to coming already.

My back arches off the bed as his tongue circles my clit, and he chuckles.

“I love how responsive you are to me, baby.”

“I love it too,” I say without thinking, and he laughs again before he goes back to driving me crazy.

He pushes one thick finger inside of me, and I arch again, gasping out his name. His tongue and mouth seem to be everywhere at once and it’s making me lose my mind.

I can feel my orgasm building like a wave inside of me, and I let out a scream as I come against his mouth. My eyes are squeezed shut, my fingers twisted in the sheets, as Levi licks me through my orgasm.

I’m lying spent on the bed as he crawls up my body. As soon as his cock nudges against my opening, I’m ready for round two.

I have no point of reference, but I’m not sure if I should be this insatiable for him. It’s like I can’t get enough. Even last night, I was so tired after our first time together, but as soon as we got back to his place, I wanted him again.

His green eyes meet mine as he starts to push into me, and I try to hold his gaze as pleasure courses through my veins.

He leans down and kisses me slowly as his cock slips in another inch, and I can’t help but moan at the feel of him stretching me and filling me up.

He starts to move inside of me and I cling to him, my nails leaving scores on his arms as I hold onto him. He thrusts into me, lighting up all of my nerve endings, and I can feel myself tightening around his thick length as my orgasm starts to grow stronger inside of me.

“Levi!” I shout as he starts to pound into me, and I know he’s close to coming too.

“Fuck, Pia. So damn tight. So damn good,” he grits out, and I lose it.

I love how he takes control. I’ve been taking care of Lila and everything else for so long, and I just need someone to take over every now and then. Levi does that. He takes over and I love it.

“Come for me, Pia. Come all over my cock,” he orders, and I go off at his words.

“Levi!” I scream, my nails scraping against his skin as I come all over his cock.

“Fuck!” He shouts, and I feel his own release inside of me.

We’re both covered in a fine sheen of sweat as he rolls onto his side, and we both catch our breath. I snuggle up closer to him, and he smiles down at me. He leans forward, kissing my forehead as he wraps his arms around me. My eyes drift closed, and I smile as I enjoy being in his warm embrace.

“Move in with me,” he says out of nowhere, and my eyes snap open.

“What?”

“Move in with me. I want to wake up like this every day. I want to be with you every second that I can. I love you, Pia.”

“I have Lila. I can’t just leave her,” I tell him.

“She can move in, too. I’ll take care of everything. We can hire movers today.”

“It’s more than that. She’s sick. I need to be able to take care of her,” I explain.

“I’ll take care of that too. We can find her the best doctors and care,” he says.

“I... This is too much. You’re being too generous.”

“It’s not. I want to spoil you. I want to take care of you. I have more money than I know what to do with, but now I know what it’s all been for. Let me do this for you,” he tells me, and I can feel tears welling in my eyes.

“Don’t cry, baby,” he says quietly. “I hate seeing you cry.”

“It’s happy tears,” I promise him.

He kisses them away, and I smile.

“Okay,” I tell him, and he grins.

“Promise?” He asks, and I huff out a laugh.

“Yeah, I promise to move in with you and let you take care of me,” I tell him.

He kisses me then, and I smile against his mouth. I know everything is moving fast with Levi, but it feels so right, so natural.

Being with him is where I'm meant to be.

I just know it.

## FOURTEEN



Levi

“I THINK that these are the last of the boxes,” one of the movers tells me, and I nod.

“Thanks, you can just put them against that wall.”

He does, and I grab a pen, signing the form he hands me.

“Thanks again,” I tell him, and he nods, following the rest of the movers over to the elevator.

Lila and Pia didn’t have much, so we were able to get them packed up and the boxes moved into my penthouse in a day. Now, we just need to unpack everything, but I think that will have to wait until tomorrow.

I smile to myself as I go to find my fiancé. It’s still sounds foreign, even in my head, to call Pia that. I’m hoping I don’t get used to it because she’ll be my wife sooner rather than later.

“Hey, getting settled in?” I ask Lila as I pass by the guest room that she chose.

“Yeah, thanks for doing this,” she says softly, and I smile.

“Of course. Are you hungry?” I ask her. I know we just ate an hour or so ago, but she didn’t have much then.

“No, I’m just tired. I think I’m going to go to bed early tonight.”

“Okay, good night. We’ll see you in the morning.”

She smiles tiredly at me, and I keep walking until I reach the master bedroom. I’ve already called a few doctors, and I’m hopeful that we’ll be

able to get Lila seen by them soon. I know how much she means to my Pia, and I won't let anything bad happen to her.

Pia is inside the walk-in closet, folding some of her clothes and stuffing them in the dresser.

"Hey, how's it going?" I ask her as I wrap my arms around her from behind.

"Slow. I didn't think that I had this many things."

I smile, burying my face in her neck and taking a deep breath.

"Did the movers leave?" She asks me, and I nod.

"Yeah, the rest of the boxes are at the top of the stairs. Lila said that she's turning in for the night," I tell her.

"I figured. It was a busy day. Even I'm tired," she says as she turns in my arms.

"Want a little snack before bed?" I ask her, and she smiles.

"What did you have in mind?"

"Maybe something sweet, like you?" I ask, and she grins up at me.

"Sounds good."

I smile, taking her hand in mine and leading her out of the bedroom and down the stairs.

There's a reason why I had the boxes all put upstairs. I didn't want a bunch of boxes cluttering up downstairs for this exact moment.

As soon as we step off the stairs, Pia sucks in a breath.

"Where did all of this come from?" She whispers as she looks around at all the roses filling up the living room and spilling over into the kitchen and downstairs hallway.

"It's for you," I tell her as I lead her into the center of the room.

Her hand is shaking slightly in mine as I turn to face her, and squeeze her hands in reassurance.

"Pia, I love you," I start, and she smiles.

"I love you too."

"I know we haven't been together for very long, but I don't need time. I've known since I first saw you that you were the one for me. You've changed my whole world just by walking into my office. You made me see that there's more to life than just work. Hell, just being with you has inspired my work. I've come up with more projects since you started working for me than in the year prior."

She smiles wider, tears shimmering in her purple eyes, and my heart

pounds in my chest.

“I love you, Pia. I need you. Will you marry me?” I ask as I drop down to one knee in front of her.

She sucks in a sharp breath and nods, the tears spilling onto her cheeks.

“Yes, Levi. Yes,” she says, her hands trying to wipe away the tears.

I grab her left hand and slide the pear-shaped ring onto her finger. It fits perfectly, and I smile as I see it there.

She’s mine.

“It’s gorgeous,” she whispers almost reverently.

“I had to try to find something to match how beautiful you are,” I whisper against her lips as I pull her against my chest.

She rests her hand against my shirt, her eyes bright as she moves her finger back and forth and watches as the light catches the diamond.

“It feels like a fairy tale,” she tells me. “Like I don’t deserve any of this and I’m going to wake up at any moment and realize that it was just a dream.”

“It’s not. You deserve the world, Pia, and I’m going to give it to you.”

She tilts her face up, and I can’t hold back any longer. My lips find hers, and those same sparks that always happen between us start to go off inside me.

“I love you,” I whisper against her lips before I dive back into her mouth.

Her lips are soft as they move against mine, and I swallow up all her moans as I pull her closer.

The toilet flushes upstairs, and Pia pulls back, smiling.

“Maybe we should take this upstairs.”

“Mrs. York, you’re a genius,” I say as I bend down and scoop her up in my arms.

She just laughs as I carry her up to our bedroom, and I smile.

If you had told me a month ago that I would be engaged to the love of my life, I would have said that you were crazy. One month with Pia, though, and I can’t imagine my life without her. She’s meant to be mine. I’m sure of it.

Her ring sparkles in the moonlight as I set her down on our bed, and I smile.

She’s mine.

And she’s right where she’s meant to be.

FIFTEEN



Pia

FIVE YEARS LATER...

I HURRY to finish writing my latest diary entry as I hear the front door close. I know that means Levi and our daughter, Annie, are home from the park, and my alone time is over.

HE DOESN'T KNOW YET, *Diary*, but *I'm pregnant again! I'm going to tell him tonight, and I know that he's going to be so excited that we're going to have another baby.*

I JUST HOPE *that Annie is excited to be a big sister, too.*

TALK SOON, *Diary!*

XOXO,  
*Pia*

TINY FOOTSTEPS FOLLOWED CLOSELY by dog paws sound on the stairs, and I smile as I close my diary and stand, ready to go greet my family.

“Mommy!” Annie shouts with a giggle as she runs at me with open arms.

Minnie, our six-year-old border collie mix, is right behind her, and I smile, scratching her ears as she sniffs around me. We adopted Minnie right after we moved in together. She’s a total sweetheart, and we’re so lucky to have her as part of our family.

“Hey there, little one,” I coo as I pick her up and start to carry her back down the stairs with Minnie trotting along behind us. “Where’s daddy?”

“Getting us a snack,” she says as she swings her legs.

“Oh, I wonder what he’s making for us,” I say as I carry her towards the kitchen.

“She requested apples and peanut butter,” Levi says with a smile as we walk up behind him.

“Did we have more apples?” I ask him.

“No, we picked some up on our way home. How’s Lila?”

“She’s doing good. She goes in for a check-up next week, so hopefully the scans all come back clean.”

“I’m sure they will. Are we going to have lunch with her and Warren after her appointment?” He asks, and I nod.

That’s been the usual routine for the last five years. At first, it was a way to cheer her up and give her something to look forward to whenever she had to go to the doctor. Then, once she met Warren and they got married, it became a way for us to catch up.

We both still live in Los Angeles, but it’s not the same as being roommates. We still talk every day, and they have a son that they adopted a few years ago that is the same age as Annie, so we get together for play dates.

“Yeah. Speaking of food, what were you thinking for dinner?” I ask him as I steal an apple.

I take a bite before Annie steals the rest of it from me, and I smile at her.

“How does steak with sauteed mushrooms and onions sound?” He asks, and I’m bent over the trash can before he can finish his sentence.

The thought of sauteed onions has my stomach rolling, and I take a few deep breaths through my mouth.

Lately, my stomach has been upset at just the thought of certain foods. I never had morning sickness when I was pregnant with Annie and I hate it. I'm hoping that it's over soon.

"Pia!" He shouts, grabbing Annie from me and reaching to pull my hair back. "I'll call a doctor."

"No, no, I'm fine. My stomach is just feeling weird," I tell him.

I'm doing my best to reassure Levi and Annie that I'm fine as I get cleaned up and try to settle my stomach. Minnie even looks worried as she trails behind me over to the kitchen sink. Levi sets Annie in her high chair with her snack before he comes over to me.

"Okay, how about some soup for dinner then," Levi suggests once I'm feeling better.

"Sure, that sounds like a good idea."

"Why don't you go lie down for a bit? Get some rest."

"I'm okay," I try to tell him, but he's already moving to carry me upstairs.

"Annie, sit tight. I'm just going to tuck mom in," he tells our daughter.

"Okay."

She's happily coloring, strapped into her high chair and I smile as Levi starts to climb the stairs.

"Get some rest, or I'll call the doctor," he warns me as he tucks me in, and I smile slightly.

"I don't need a doctor... I've already been to see one," I tell him, and his face turns pale.

"What? When?" He asks, dropping down onto the bed next to me.

I smile slightly, taking his hand in mine. He looks so worried so I scrap my original plan of the onesie in the closet and decide to just tell him.

"I'm pregnant."

His mouth drops open, and he blinks. I grin at his reaction.

"I found out officially this morning. It was my doctor's appointment this morning, not Lila's. I wanted it to be a surprise," I tell him.

"Nailed it," Levi blurts out, and I burst out laughing.

"Are you happy?" I ask him, and he laughs.

"Of course I am. I love you, Pia. You and Annie. More than anything."

"We love you too."

He leans forward, capturing my lips with his. Just like every time we kiss

or touch, I lose track of everything except for him. Luckily for me, he's more aware and breaks the kiss.

"I left Annie in her high chair downstairs."

"Okay, I'm going to take a little nap."

"Good. I'll bring your soup up once it's done."

I nod, pulling the covers up around me as he heads for the day.

"Oh, and Pia?" He asks, stopping at the doorway. "I'm coming to every other doctor's appointment."

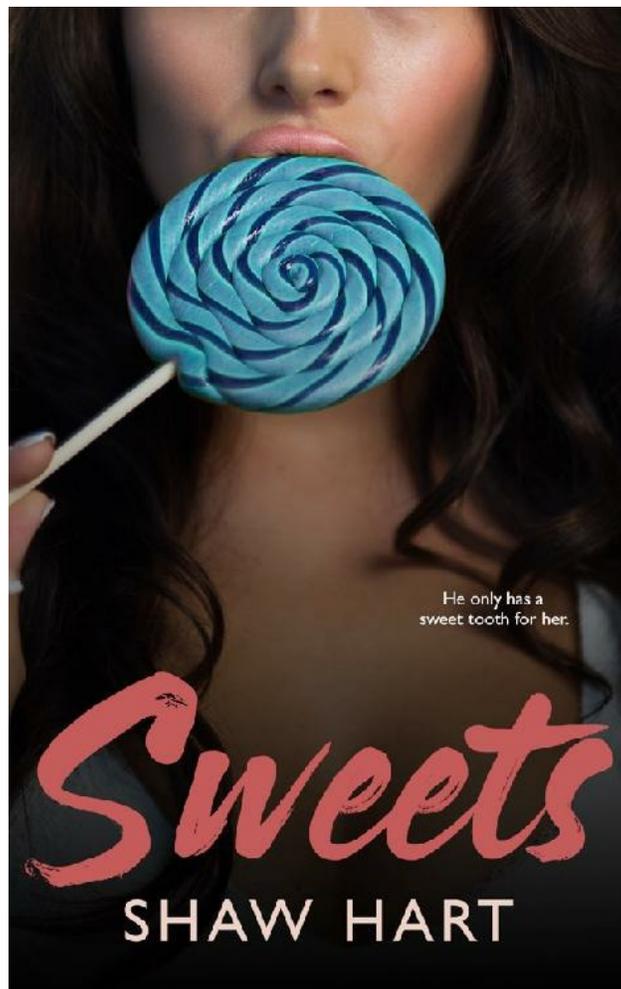
I smile, nodding at him as he heads downstairs.

I rest my head on my pillow and grin as my eyes close and I drift off to sleep.

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