

USA Today Bestselling Author

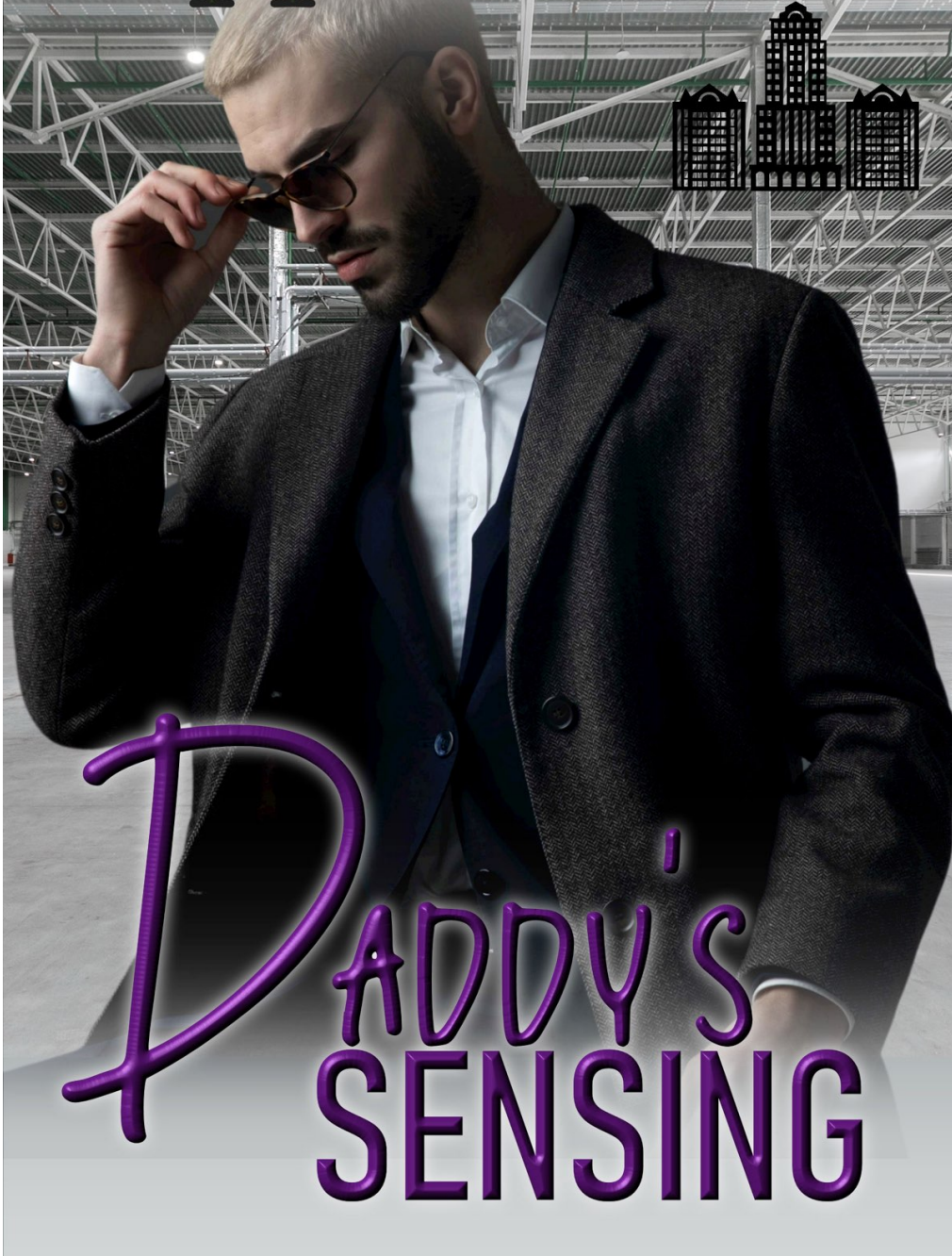
Pepper North



DADDY'S SENSING

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AUTHOR'S NOTE:

The following story is completely fictional. The characters are all over the age of 18 and as adults choose to live their lives in an age play environment.

This is a series of books that can be read in any order. You may, however, choose to read them sequentially to enjoy the characters best. Subsequent books will feature characters that appear in previous novels as well as new faces.

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CHAPTER 1



Tim spent the time traveling from his brother's house to his new job reviewing all the information he had ferreted out about Edgewater Industries prior to applying for the job as the Chief Supply Chain Officer. The company had impressed him before he applied, but after working with the corporate headhunter he'd suspected had championed his selection, Tim knew he had made the right decision to leave his previous job.

"I'm pulling up to the gate. There are a few cars in front of us. Are you sure you want to stay here on the campus? Sally and I don't mind picking you up and dropping you off," Jeff assured him.

"Your family needs to get back to its own routine. Boston and I have interrupted your lives for too long," Tim informed him.

"The kids are going to miss you, but I may come to sleep on your couch. They're a rowdy bunch," his brother conceded as he slowly followed the line of vehicles checking in at the gate.

"You wouldn't miss a minute of your time with them. I envy what you and Sally have. Maybe someday, I'll find my one. For now, I'm just excited to work at a company that

seems to be as happy I'm coming on board as I am to have a new chance to make a difference."

"You certainly had no reason to give your expertise to a company that virtually abandoned you when you needed some modifications. I have a feeling they're going to call and beg you to come back," Jeff suggested.

"I doubt it. By the time they figure out they're screwed with the young buck they jumped at having me train this last week, they're going to be struggling to survive. Besides, I don't plan on answering their calls," he stated firmly.

"Here we are," Jeff told him as he pulled up to the gate.

Tim looked across his brother's body as Jeff lowered the driver's window. After being hit by a car, most of his physical injuries had disappeared with time and therapy. His eyesight had not. His visual acuity had taken a colossal hit. With special devices on a computer, he could increase the font size to read and write. He could see vague shapes at a distance. His sight impairment had forced him to rely on his other senses. Tim could move around better every day. When he had his guide dog, Boston, at his side, Tim felt almost normal—or at least somewhat independent again.

"Mr. Simmons! We've been expecting you. Sharon is waiting for you at B Tower to get you settled in your apartment. I'll look forward to meeting you at one of the weekly pizza parties in B Tower. I'm Pete, one of the security guards."

"Nice to meet you, Pete. This is my brother, Jeff. Does he need a special pass to be on campus?" Tim asked.

"Sharon's okayed a pass for both your brother and sister-in-law to drive on campus," Pete informed him. "I'll hand

these to you, Jeff. Usually, people find it easiest to just leave them in the glove box of the vehicles. We'll also have your name on file if you're here without it."

"Thanks, Pete. You've got us set," Tim smiled. He continued to be amazed by Sharon's thoroughness.

"Just follow the signs to B Tower," Pete directed before patting the side of the car to signal they were free to advance.

"Is everyone this helpful?" Jeff asked as he cleared the gate.

"They were just as cordial when I arrived in a ride share for my interview," Tim confirmed, watching closely to pick up on large markers that could help him navigate around the campus.

"You were sure you'd get the same treatment here that you put up with at your old firm."

"Everyone helped. Even without knowing that I have challenges."

"If I know you, you did your best to avoid cluing them in," Jeff jabbed at him. "I thought Sally came on too strong, pushing you out the door for the interview when you refused to take Boston."

"That wife of yours is scary smart."

"Sometimes just scary, but somehow she's always right." Jeff turned into the parking lot. "Here's a woman with brown hair. Would that be Sharon? She has a gigantic man standing next to her."

"That's Sharon and Knox. He's the head of security."

"A bunch of guys are jogging up to join them," Jeff reported.

“She said she’d arrange for some help to get my stuff up to the apartment,” Tim replied, watching the group of shadowy figures grow.

“You need more stuff. It’s going to take one trip with all this manpower,” Jeff announced in a pleased tone.

Tim opened his door carefully and shifted one leg outside to allow Boston to step out of the car first. This was always a tricky moment for people meeting a guide dog for the first time. It pleased him that everyone waited for him to get out and get Boston settled by his side. Boston wasn’t a simply a pet. He was a highly trained professional.

As he stepped up onto the curb, Sharon greeted him. “Hi, Tim. I’m so glad we’ve got you here. Welcome to Edgewater Industries.”

“Sharon, I’m glad to be here. This is my brother, Jeff, and Boston, my guide dog. I’ll share that if Boston has his harness on, he’s working. Please don’t distract him by speaking or petting him while he’s on duty. Out of the harness, he’s a goofball that will love to meet everyone.”

“Thank you, Tim. I’ve circulated some guidelines for the staff. Knowing what works specifically for you is always best,” Sharon shared.

Tim nodded his appreciation. Of course, Sharon had already paved the way for him. What a difference between his initial impression of this job and his old one.

“This is Knox. He’s provided some staff to help get your things up to the apartment. What’s the best way to get you acclimated? Would you like to walk up to the apartment with me to get an idea of the route before the chaos of the move?” Sharon suggested.

Holding out his hand to the large man, Tim greeted him. “Knox. I’m glad to meet you in person. Thank you for the maps and procedural information.”

“Glad to help. I’ll get you set up for your badge whenever convenient. I’m at the security desk in the lobby of B Tower until five today,” Knox answered after shaking his hand.

“Perfect.”

“If you’re ready, I’ll show you to your apartment,” Sharon suggested.

“Lead the way.” Tim tightened his hold on Boston’s harness, bringing the dog into position. He followed Sharon into the building, noting that everything was designed to make navigating with an impairment as easy as possible. He appreciated Sharon’s silence. Pleasant chatter interfered with his ability to focus.

“There are three elevators. The call button is next to the first one. Your name badge will have your picture on it and a chip that signals the elevator to go directly to your floor. You may change the destination inside if you wish to visit a friend, go to the gym, or access any floors you’re cleared for in B Tower or in the other two towers.”

Tim followed her into the middle open car. As it rose, he noticed the beeping floor signal. At seven tones, it opened.

“You’re on the seventh floor, apartment 718. It is three apartments down to the right,” Sharon shared before leading him down the hallway.

When they reached the correct one, she walked him through the process of registering his fingerprint to open the door. “We can register Boston’s paw print as well if you’d like. I could match your badge with the door, but that would allow

anyone with your badge into your apartment. This is a very safe area, but Knox vetoed that practice.”

“I agree. Get Boston set up. I can teach him to open the door if my hands are full.”

With that accomplished, Sharon led the way into the apartment. She stood out of the way as Tim and Boston explored.

She continued to impress Tim. Sharon didn’t put out any hurried vibes. It was obviously important to her to get him settled. When they returned to the main living space, he thanked her. “This is lovely. I’ve been staying with my brother and his family. They’re amazing, but with 3 kids, private space is impossible. I’m going to love it here.”

“The staff always stocks the kitchen for new residents. Let me show you where everything is.”

A few minutes later, Tim shook his head in amazement. “I’ve already thought this a million times. Thank you, Sharon. You’ve thought of everything. Even Boston’s food is here and in a place for him where I won’t trip over his dishes or his bed.”

“Oh, you’ll find things I forgot. I’m going to trust you to ask. I’ve done some research to fill in gaps in my information on what Edgewater can do to support all employees. You’ll meet Easton on Monday. Feel free to share any needs with him as well. Employees’ health and happiness come first with him. We’re lucky to have a boss who realizes that providing employees with the things they need to work effectively benefits the business.”

“Ready to have everyone bring up your possessions?” she asked.

“That would be great.”

Within minutes, the men had everything set where Tim requested and had disappeared.

“I’m out of here, brother,” Jeff said, patting Tim on the back. “You’re in a good place. Call if you need me.”

“Thank you.” Tim stepped forward to give him a hug.

A prickle of awareness grabbed his attention. Tim turned to see a curvy shape in the doorway. “Hi. Are you one of my neighbors?”

“This is Aspen Summers. She’ll fill in as your assistant for as long as you like while you choose someone permanent,” Sharon introduced the new arrival. “Aspen, this is Tim Simmons, Edgewater’s new Chief Supply Chain Officer, and his brother, Jeff.”

“Nice to meet both of you,” she answered with a quiver in her voice that signaled Tim that she was nervous.

Something about her resonated inside him. He was surprised to find himself more concerned about this stranger than he was getting acclimated. Tim tried not to stare noticeably her way but knew he failed when his brother spoke to fill the silence.

“Hi, Aspen. I’m sure we’ll run into each other.”

Turning to his brother, Jeff added, “I’m out of here, Tim. I promised the kids I’d take them roller skating this afternoon.”

Tim shook his head as his brother disappeared. “I’m sorry I’m missing that.”

“Hi, Mr. Simmons. I’m excited to be working with you. Please let me know how I can support your transition here,” Aspen said nervously.

“You’re not working on a Saturday, are you?” he questioned. Using social niceties to satisfy his desire to touch her, Tim walked forward to offer her his hand.

“Oh, this isn’t work. I volunteered to show you to your new office so we could meet before Monday,” Aspen said quickly.

“I appreciate that. Thank you.” He stared at her, truly missing the clarity of vision he’d had before the accident. There was something about her that drew him. A gentleness ebbed from her. Tim liked it. A lot.

“Sir?” she asked, the nervousness increasing in her voice as he studied her.

“Excuse me, Aspen. I didn’t mean to stare. I’m sure you’re aware I have a visual impairment. I study people a bit closer than others are used to. My apologies.”

“Oh, no. It’s fine. I’m sure we’ll get used to each other quickly,” Aspen assured him.

“If you’ll excuse me, Tim, I’ll leave you to get settled. You already have my number and the security desk’s contact information. Feel free to reach out if there’s anything we can do for you,” Sharon said as Knox appeared in the doorway.

Tim had no problem identifying the large man’s shadowy appearance. “Knox. Do you work out in the gym?” he asked before the couple could leave. Tim had no doubts that these two were involved personally.

“I do. If you’re interested, there’s a couple of us who exercise after work. I’ll be glad to show you the equipment,” Knox offered.

“Maybe in a few days. Say, Wednesday?” Tim suggested.

“Perfect. Pedro Morales, the Cyber Security Officer, and I always hit it hard on Wednesday. No worries. We always take it easy on the new guy,” Knox said with a companionable laugh.

“I’m in trouble, aren’t I?” Tim joked. He liked Knox already. “Thanks. I’ll look forward to it.”

When the doorway cleared, he asked Aspen, “They’re holding hands, aren’t they?”

“Newly married, sir,” she confirmed.

“Thank you. As my administrative assistant, I’m going to rely on you for things I can’t pick up visually. If I ask you something that bothers you, let me know,” he requested.

“I’m glad to help. And I’m just a temporary assistant for you, sir. You may work better or have the need for more unique skills than I have,” she said quickly.

“Do you want the job?” he asked.

“Yes, sir. I’ve been at Edgewater for four years. I’m excited to have the opportunity to work with you in shipping. I’ll learn fast,” she promised.

“Then we’ll just dispense with the interviews of other admins until you decide it’s not for you,” Tim directed.

“I don’t think that will happen,” she assured him.

“Would you walk with Boston and me so we can get oriented to our new routine?”

“Of course. Just tell me where you want to go.”

“First off, let’s head to the office. The shipping department is in C Tower, correct?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Call me Tim, Aspen.” The word Daddy flashed into his brain, making him pause. *She can't be?*

“Of course, Tim. What’s the best way for you and Boston to learn the route?”

“It helps if you’ll be quiet to allow us both to concentrate. Boston is amazingly smart. We’ll test him to see if he can lead us out of the building.” Tim called Boston from his safe spot on the large dog bed Sharon had provided for him and captured the dog’s harness.

“Okay, boy. Let’s go out.”

Boston immediately walked to the door and led the way to the elevator and back to the ground floor. He hesitated at the front door, waiting for instructions.

“Good job, Boston.” He looked over his shoulder at Aspen who had followed behind.

“That’s amazing,” she commented before immediately adding concise instructions. “We’ll go out the doors to the main sidewalk and turn to the left.”

Tim held up his hand signaling her to stop. With Aspen and Boston’s help, he navigated across the campus to the C Tower and located his office. “I’ll leave all the details of the office until later,” he suggested. “I’ll take time on Monday to memorize the layout.”

“Would you like to walk back and forth again?” Aspen asked.

“That would help.”

Her presence next to him was soothing. Aspen was quiet and unobtrusive but responsive and caring. He knew Sharon couldn’t have chosen a better administrative assistant for him.

That hint of something exceptional that hovered around her intrigued him. Tim had searched for someone very special for a long time.

After repeating the path between the office and his apartment, Aspen asked, “What else can I do to help? Would you like me to help you unpack?”

“I’ll be fine bumbling about to get my clothing organized where I can find them. I’ll let you go enjoy your afternoon. I don’t want to take all your time off,” Tim told her, feeling his lips curve at the edges.

There hadn’t been a lot for him to smile about after the accident that took most of his sight. The job at Edgewater had come at just the right time. Even without twenty-twenty vision, Tim had seen the writing on the wall. He’d become a liability at his old job.

Mentally shaking off his negative thoughts, Tim instructed, “Go do something fun. Boston and I will see you on Monday.”

“Can I come check in with you tomorrow?” she asked.

Tim needed to rely on himself now. This new job was a way for him to take charge of his life again. His accident had ripped everything away. He opened his mouth to tell her he’d see her on Monday at the office but paused when Aspen stepped a bit closer.

“Mr. Simmons, I’m not pushy and I won’t imagine that you’re attracted to me. I’m just your administrative assistant. Let me assist,” she suggested. Her hopeful tone made him agree even as he bashed himself over the head for nodding his agreement.

She disappeared as soon as he approved her suggestion. Tim closed the door and turned to stare into the new space. He

tried to push Aspen from his mind, but her words echoed inside him as he unpacked his things.

I won't imagine that you're attracted to me.

CHAPTER 2



“Do you like ice cream?” she blurted when her new boss opened the door.

“Yes.”

“I’m going to treat myself to a scoop in the cafeteria. Would you like to join me?” Aspen asked.

He could hear the nervousness in her voice. What was she worried about? “Suddenly, ice cream sounds amazing. I’d love to have a scoop.”

“Hooray! The cafeteria is in A Tower. It’s the opposite way from our office. We’ll explore the other side of the campus today,” Aspen shared.

With Boston called to his side and his sunglasses in place, Tim picked up a weathered tennis ball and stuck it in his pocket. “I’m ready.”

As they passed others enjoying the beautiful day outside, Tim concentrated on the route and appreciated that the other employees heeded Sharon’s warning that Boston was working and shouldn’t be petted or distracted. People called greetings, but no one invaded a bubble of private space around him. The preparations Edgewater Industries had taken to allow him to work effectively impressed Tim.

“Doggy!” A toddler’s voice alerted him first as Boston halted and backed up next to Tim’s side, drawing him to a stop.

“Anabel. No pets for this dog. He’s working,” a caring voice explained as she scooped the child off the sidewalk. “Sorry. Anabel loves everything with four paws.”

“No problem,” Tim accepted the apology easily.

“This way, Tim,” Aspen directed, slipping her hand under his elbow to re-acclimate him to the correct direction.

Immediately, Tim struggled away from the controlling touch. “Never take my arm. Offer yours or refrain from touching me completely.”

He heard the mother’s quick intake of breath as her feet whispered across the grass to back away from him. From the stranger’s reaction, Tim knew he had spoken too harshly.

“I’m sorry,” Aspen apologized immediately.

“Ice cream,” he redirected her. Tim did not apologize for his tone. If they were going to work well together, she would have to be willing to deal with hard lines of what was acceptable or unacceptable for him to maneuver in his new reality.

They continued to walk in silence. Tim could feel from her rigid posture that she was on edge. He allowed her time to process through her thoughts.

“Are there any other no-no’s that I need to avoid?” she asked.

“Yes. I can’t sum them all for you on a tidy list. I’ll be honest. I don’t know them all yet.”

“So, you’ll just tell me if I do something wrong?” Aspen suggested.

He could hear and feel the positivity returning to her voice and body language. *She needs boundaries. Aspen is happier when she’s operating within guidelines.*

“Yes.”

“Okay,” she answered. “We’re almost at the door of the cafeteria. The space is organized in categories—like sandwiches to the right, drinks in the middle, etc. It’s kind of a mess.”

“We’ll figure it out,” Tim assured her.

“You and Boston are a great team.”

“We are. I, however, was referring to you and I.”

“Really? I feel like I’ve made a bunch of mistakes,” Aspen confessed. “We’re here. Do you want me to guide you to the ice cream section?”

“I would like that. Are you okay with me holding your arm?” Tim asked.



“Of course.” Aspen moved closer and held her elbow away from her body to allow him to wrap his fingers around the inside of her upper arm.

The feel of his skin against hers was remarkably intimate—warm. She tried to control the shiver that ran through her body and failed. Her arm sagged against her body, and Aspen realized that the back of his hand pressed against her plump

body. Immediately, she flapped her arm out away from her body to prevent him from being repelled by the extra flesh she hated around her bra straps.

“Stop,” he commanded quietly, and without hesitation, she obeyed. Traffic moved around them in the popular cafeteria, creating a bubble of privacy.

“Relax, Aspen. I lose clues about the path if you hold your arm rigidly away from your body. I can have Boston follow you if you would be more comfortable without me touching you,” Tim explained.

“Oh, I’m just not in great shape. I didn’t want you to have to touch me. You know—get grossed out,” she whispered, feeling her face blush with heat. What a conversation to have with your new boss before your first official day as his admin!

“Lush bodies do not repel me, Aspen. If you’re okay with my touch, let’s try again.”

“Okay,” she whispered, and relaxed her arm back against her side. *Lush?*

“Perfect. Now, lead us to the ice cream,” he requested, drawing her from that word vibrating in her mind.

“Almost there.”

When they stopped in front of the counter, the attendant greeted her, “Hi, Aspen. Today’s special is chocolate hazelnut.”

“Yum. Hi, Samuel. This is my new boss, Tim Simmons.”

“Hi, Tim. Welcome to Edgewater Industries. What kind of ice cream do you like?” Samuel asked cheerfully.

“Definitely, chocolate,” Tim answered. “What’s your darkest flavor?”

“Double dutch dark,” Samuel supplied. “It’s fantastic in a sundae.”

“I bet. I’ll take a scoop of that,” Tim agreed. “What would you like, Aspen?”

“I’ll try a scoop of the special in a sugar cone,” she answered.

“Put mine in a cup, please,” Tim requested. “Could I also have a small cup of whipped cream as a treat for Boston?”

“Of course.”

Within a couple of minutes, Samuel had created their treats and carried them to the cash register. Aspen led the way and leaned away slightly to grab her phone wallet from her pocket to pay.

“This is mine, Little girl,” Tim growled quietly next to her.

She froze and pushed the case back into her pocket. She could tell from his tone that she shouldn’t protest. Curious, Aspen watched him pay with his credit card. It hadn’t ever dawned on her how much you’d have to trust vendors if you couldn’t see. They could put any amount on the card. To cover her observation of his actions, Aspen grabbed a bunch of napkins.

“Find a spot for us to sit where Boston can be out of the traffic lane, please,” he requested after situating the two cups in one hand and replacing his hand on her arm.

“Got it. Let’s go over here.”

Aspen guided the way, licking her ice cream cone to keep it from dripping. She should have gotten a cup like him. That would have been much neater. “This one is good. If you sit here, Boston can be away from everyone.”

“Thank you.” Within seconds, they were situated.

Tim’s first concern was for Boston. She liked that they took care of each other. Tim’s fingers tangled in the dog’s soft black fur, and she could feel the silent communication between the two. With his tail thumping happily, Boston lapped up the whipped cream treat before licking his owner’s hand.

“Good boy!” Tim praised him before settling the dog under his chair. “How’s the ice cream?”

“Delicious!” Aspen answered. “I think you’ll like it. They get it from a local dairy so it’s super fresh.” She tried not to watch as Tim maneuvered the spoon into the dish and carried it to his mouth.

“Yum. This is delicious.” After taking another bite, he added, “I’m counting on you to let me know if I have chocolate on my chin.”

He sounded more cheerful than he had since they’d met. That gave her the courage to ask, “Why did you call me, Little girl?”

“Am I wrong?”

“I don’t understand. What do you mean by that?” Aspen asked, trying to cover her growing panic.

“I think that is the first lie you’ve told me, Aspen. Perhaps I’m miss-reading you, but I would bet almost anything other than Boston that you understand the term ‘Little girl’ and identify with it.”

Tim’s directness took away any disguise she might have hidden behind. “How did you know?”

“Just a feeling. The way you hold yourself, your kindness, your enjoyment of little things like the flowers and butterflies

as we crossed the green space are notable. Most of all, I sense from you a desire to please and to be appreciated.”

Aspen stared at him. No one ever looked at her that closely. She laughed. “I like that person you’ve imagined in your mind. She sounds amazing,” Aspen said to deflect the question that still loomed between them.

“I like her, too,” Tim said gruffly. “I won’t push you, Aspen. When you’re ready, we can talk.”

“Okay,” popped out of her mouth before she could stop it. She felt her cheeks heating and knew she was blushing. It was a dead giveaway that she did indeed understand what the term ‘Little girl’ meant.

“Did you get everything unpacked?” she asked quickly to change the subject.

“I did. I even called security and they came up to wrestle the boxes out of my way.”

“Everyone here is very helpful,” Aspen confirmed. She licked her ice cream cone and settled back in her chair. “I can’t imagine working anywhere else.”

“I’m glad to hear that. In fact, I haven’t heard anything negative from anyone.”

“You probably won’t. Everyone is pretty loyal. We even had a cyber attack that rocked the company, but everyone worked together to get everything restored quickly.”

Tim scooped up the last of his ice cream. “That was the best. I’ll have to come here again.”

“Samuel runs the ice cream booth. Now that he knows you, he’ll help if you call his name,” Aspen suggested.

“Do you come here for lunch?”

Recognizing that Tim had changed the subject, Aspen cursed herself. She needed to stop offering to help.

“Maybe once a week. I usually just bring my lunch.”

“Saving your pennies for a new car or something shiny?” he asked.

“Maybe? I just don’t know many people. I could eat down here alone or at my desk and get some things done. Usually, I choose to eat at my desk.”

“You might know more people if you came here regularly,” he suggested.

“Probably,” she shrugged. “I’m quiet and I’ve worked in the departments with a smaller number of immediate staff. Take yours, for example. There aren’t a lot of people working in the office area. It’s a huge, massively important department, but low on the personnel needed to sit within a small range of each other.”

“And you live in B Tower, too? Didn’t I hear about pizza parties for the staff?”

“I’ve been invited a few times. I just haven’t gone,” she admitted. “Would you like to do anything else?”

“I’d love to give Boston some fun time. Could you find us a place where I can throw a ball for him, and he can run around?”

“Sure. There are lots of empty spaces for people to enjoy the day. I’ll throw your cups away,” she suggested as she stood.

“I’ll take care of it, Aspen,” Tim assured her. “Lead the way out of here and stop at a trashcan.”

Following his instructions, Aspen negotiated through the cafeteria and allowed him to toss the cups in his hand. He was a very independent type. She wondered how much he'd changed after his accident.

“How about here? There's an enormous expanse of lawn in front of us. Ummm,” she hesitated, trying to estimate the size. She wasn't ever any good at judging what ten yards vs ten feet were. “I'm not sure how to tell you how far it is for Boston to run.”

“Is there somewhere to sit or should we stand?” he asked.

“There are people around the benches behind us. We could stand or sit in the grass.”

“Perfect.”

Tim turned to Boston. He ran his hands over the dog's face and back to his harness that proclaimed him to be a guide dog. Unhooking it with quick agility, Tim unleashed Boston. “Go potty first, Boston,” Tim instructed.

While the dog stepped away slightly to relieve himself, Tim pulled a baggie from one of the side pockets in the harness and unfurled it. With Boston's help, he took care the remains and dropped the baggie next to the harness.

The dog's behavior flipped when Tim asked, “Ready to play?” As Boston jumped and ran in excited circles, Tim drew his arm back and threw the ball. Immediately, Boston chased and pounced on it.

“How much further could I throw it?” Tim asked as Boston returned.

“Four times as far,” Aspen answered. She loved seeing the hard-working dog having fun as a typical pooch.

Tim picked up the ball Boston dropped at his feet and tossed it again. He repeated this until Boston was panting with exertion but still eager to chase that magical ball. “Time for a break,” Tim announced.

He kicked his feet to see if he still stood next to the harness. When he located it, Tim sank down to the ground and pulled out a small collapsible bowl and a small flask of water. Using his fingers to tell him where to pour, he filled the container and offered it to Boston. When the dog finished, he dumped the remainder and stowed everything away.

“Want to sit down and enjoy the day for a few minutes?” Tim suggested to Aspen, who still hovered by him.

“Sure.” She tried to sit down gracefully and collapsed to the green grass. “It is a gorgeous afternoon.”

“What time do you generally get to the office?” Tim asked as he ruffled Boston’s fur.

“I’m supposed to be there at eight but I’m an early bird. I’ll get there in time to make coffee for you to have when you arrive,” she promised.

“By eight is fine. It will take me a bit to get into a routine. I am not expecting you to live at the office or bring me coffee when I bellow from my office,” he said with something that sounded like humor.

“Do you bellow?” she asked.

“Not at Little girls who are doing their best.”

Silence stretched between them. Aspen forced herself to ask, “Are you going to replace me if I am a Little girl? I promise I’ll work hard.”

“Being Little and having the position as my administrative assistant are totally separate issues. Have you ever considered there might be another reason why I even ask if you’re Little?”

“Why do you?”

“Because every Daddy searches for the one Little who will make their life complete.”

“You’re a Daddy?”

“I’m...”

“You look like you’re settling in,” a deep voice commented.

“It’s Easton and Piper,” Aspen whispered to Tim before greeting the corporate leader. “Hi, Mr. Edgewater. Have you met Tim Simmons? He’s your new Chief Supply Officer.”

“Please, don’t get up, Tim. We’ll collapse on the lawn with you if that’s okay.” Easton lowered himself athletically to the ground with a bundle of material and string, before helping the sweet woman by his side to settle close to him.

“Let me welcome you to Edgewater Industries,” Easton said as he reached out to take Tim’s hand and shake it.

“Hi, Tim. We’re glad you’re here,” Piper chimed in. “We’ve been flying kites today. It’s not quite windy enough.”

“I’m sorry. I love seeing the octopus floating over the towers,” Aspen shared.

“There’ll be better days. I just enjoy getting some fresh air and sunshine,” Piper told her. “What are you all doing?”

“We went for ice cream and then here to play ball with Boston.”

At the sound of his name, Boston rolled over to share his belly with the young woman who he'd been introduced to outside of his duties. They were becoming fast friends.

"Ice cream," Piper hummed. "That sounds good. Can I have some ice cream?"

"It does sound good. Tim, I'll look forward to talking with you on Monday." He stood and held out a hand to boost Piper to her feet. Holding the kite in one hand and his Little girl's in the other, Easton lead her away.

"They're holding hands, aren't they?" Tim asked.

"Yes. They're definitely perfect together," Aspen answered, trying to keep the sigh of regret from her voice.

"I'm glad they've found each other. Time for Boston and me to let you enjoy the rest of your day," Tim said, reaching for the harness. Immediately, Boston jumped to his feet and got in position.

"Can I walk back with you to Tower B?" Aspen asked.

"Where are you parked?" Tim asked.

"I don't have a car."

"Do you live on campus?" he asked as he stood to take hold of the harness and pick up the poop baggie.

"I live in Tower B as well. On the eighth floor."

"Then you can help me test how Boston is learning his way around." Tim shook the harness gently. "Take me home, Boston."

Immediately, the dog stepped forward. Aspen followed quietly behind, marveling at the dog's skill and intelligence. The combination of the two was remarkable. She tried to keep

her gaze focused on Tim's wide shoulders, but her eyes betrayed her, drifting to his trim waist and tight waist. She bit her lip in confusion as her thoughts flew all over the place.

CHAPTER 3



Aspen debated whether to wait for her boss at the bottom of the elevators the next morning. *I could just hang back and make sure he gets there. He'll never know.*

A flash of insight made her walk away. Tim Simmons would not appreciate her doubting whether he could navigate from point A to point B. Aspen knew that whatever happened, Tim would triumph over any obstacles. He obviously hadn't hidden inside his apartment after she'd met him on Saturday. He and Boston had been comfortable walking across the campus with her on Sunday.

When a mental image of the dominant man barricaded on the seventh floor popped into her mind, Aspen laughed. He was too dynamic to allow anything to keep him from taking charge. Walking onto the first floor of C Tower, she waved to the security guard as she headed for her first day in her new job.

She realized concern for him had wiped out her nervousness about starting a new job. Now hesitating at the door, Aspen wiped her palm against her skirt before triggering the door to open. With a deep breath in, she stepped across the threshold and into the receiving area. Her name plate shone brightly on the desk, making her smile.

“Good morning, Aspen,” Tim’s voice called from the private office beyond her desk.

“Good morning, Mr. Simmons.” Aspen rushed forward to set the bags she’d brought with her on her desk. The toe of her pump caught on one of her chair wheels and she tripped with a yelp as her possessions went in all directions.

“Aspen? Are you okay?” Tim appeared in the doorway, holding on to Boston.

“Stay there. I’m afraid I scattered stuff all over the office. I’ll get everything all picked up,” she spoke quickly, afraid he would trip.

Tim ignored her and walked forward confidently. He drug his feet lightly over the carpet, scooting any obstacles out of his way. One tissue box, a bag of chocolates, and her lunchbox later, he stood in front of her.

“Are you okay?” he asked with concern etched on his face as he reached down to help her stand up.

“Just klutzy,” she answered, glad he couldn’t see her clearly as she scrambled ungracefully to her feet.

“Ouch!” she squeaked as her hand brushed over her skirt. She raised the hemline to see her now skinned up knee.

“What did you do to yourself?” he asked.

“I scraped my knee on the carpet. I’ll get all this cleaned up and find a bandage. Sorry, boss. Would you like me to bring in some coffee for you?” she asked, trying to distract him from her incompetence.

“Let me see what you’ve done to yourself. Take a seat on your desk,” he instructed, moving closer to her.

Aspen followed his instructions automatically and pulled her skirt up slightly to keep her oozing knee from ruining the material.

“How bad is it?” Tim questioned.

“Barely a scratch,” she lied.

“Little girls who lie earn consequences. This is your one warning,” Tim informed her.

“Really, it’s okay. A bit raw, but it’s fine.”

“Hmm,” Tim answered skeptically. His hand explored the edge of the desk and found the top side drawer.

Pulling it open, he asked, “Do you see a tape dispenser?”

“No, just a stapler,” she answered, not understanding why he was asking.

“I’m not going to staple my handkerchief to your skin,” Tim laughed. “We’ll have to tie it around your knee until we find the bandages.”

He pulled a pristine white fabric square from his suit pocket and shook it out. Stretching it from corner to corner, he brushed over her calf to where her leg bent and lifted her leg up with one hand. Quickly, he tied the cloth around her knee.

“That will hold you until we find the bandages.”

“Could you just go into your office and pretend I didn’t get here yet? I’ll get everything cleaned up and we’ll start again,” she whispered.

“Not a chance. You don’t know how many times I’ve taken a tumble in the last few months. I appreciate you going first in here, so I don’t feel bad when it happens to me,” he reassured her. “Think you can stand?”

“Oh, I’m fine,” she assured him as she scooted toward the edge of the desk, not realizing how close they were until she stood up to find herself pressed against his hard body. “Oh!”

To her surprise, Tim didn’t back up immediately. His arm wrapped around her waist to steady her against his frame. “Good morning, Little girl,” he greeted her. “Stop me now.”

Holding her breath, Aspen watched him lower his mouth to hers. The soft kisses that followed startled her more than vivid passion would have. Tim wooed her. Tempted her. Tantalized her until she completely forgot where they were.

A jingle of Boston’s harness pulled her back to reality. “Mr. Simmons!”

“I think you can call me Tim, Little girl. That will do until you’re ready to call me something else.”

She nodded before realizing he couldn’t see her answer. “Yes, Tim.”

“Good girl. Do you need help picking up your things?”

“No. I’ve got everything.”

“Then, when you’re settled and have treated your knee, bring the two cups of coffee into my office. We’ll look at the schedule and figure out what’s going on today,” Tim directed before stepping away.

Instantly, she missed his heat. “You got it, boss.”



The next mornings followed the same pattern. Tim would be at the office when she arrived. Aspen would get herself

settled and pull up the calendar before grabbing coffee and reporting to his office.

By Friday, she was amazed how proficiently Tim and Boston learned to navigate around the campus. Those first couple of days, he had meetings held in his office in C Tower. After that, Aspen learned Tim preferred to walk to someone else's office. Not only did that help him get acclimated, but it prevented someone from taking up too much of his time as he explored how his predecessor had done things. She learned to schedule in time for him to take care of Boston and himself.

“Is he in?”

Aspen looked up to see the CEO himself at her desk. “Yes, Mr. Edgewater. Would you like to talk to him? I know he has a meeting in a few minutes, but he'll want to see you.”

“Easton, come on in. I almost have my report ready for you. Want to see the preliminary data?” Tim greeted his boss from the doorway.

“I would love to see what you'll tell the board tomorrow,” Easton answered as he walked forward to shake Tim's hand. He brushed the back of his hand over Tim's to help him participate smoothly.

“Aspen, I have a meeting with HR in a few minutes. Would you reschedule that to next week with my apologies?” Tim asked.

“Of course.”

“Would you like coffee, gentlemen?” Aspen offered.

“Water would be great. Would you order me lunch, Aspen, and ask them to deliver it for me? I'm starving. Whatever the special is would be great,” Easton requested.

“On it. I’ll order yours as well, Tim,” she informed her boss. She’d already discovered that he worked too hard and forgot to eat.

“Thank you, Aspen,” Tim said quietly before turning to lead Easton into his office.

Picking up her phone, Aspen ordered one special and a roast beef sandwich on white bread. She’d learned from watching Tim that especially during working meals, the easier his entrée was to eat, the more he could concentrate. The spaghetti special would have created problems for him to eat it.

When it arrived, she had the cafeteria worker carry in Easton’s as she took command of Tim’s. Placing it in front of him, she said quietly, “Sandwich at three o’clock and chips at nine.”

“Perfect, thank you.”

The conversation resumed quickly as she ushered the other employee from the room. Returning to her desk, she noticed a message and clicked on it.

Could you order lunch for Easton?

Quickly, she typed a response to Piper. *One special just delivered for the CEO. He’s eating.*

Thank you! See you at dinner tonight.

Dinner?

There are a bunch of us having dinner tonight. I can’t wait to get to know you better. Thank you again for taking care of Easton for me.

Aspen stared at her computer. Surely, Tim didn’t mean to take her out to dinner with the movers and shakers of the

company. Dismissing that thought as ludicrous, Aspen forced her attention back to the task Tim had asked her to gather information about.

“Thanks, Tim. I like your solutions. Keep me updated,” Easton requested as he walked out of the room. “Aspen, thank you for lunch. I’ll see you at dinner.”

Aspen smiled at the charismatic CEO as he moved on to his next meeting. “Good meeting, huh?” She completely ignored the dinner comment.

“He’s very responsive to my ideas. I appreciate his time. So, dinner tonight,” Tim broached the subject.

“Sounds like a lot of movers and shakers will be there. You’ll learn a lot from everyone about the company.”

“You will as well. The invitation is for both of us. We’re going to some fancy French restaurant. I’m going to pull up the menu on my screen so I can decide before we get there,” Tim shared.

“Oh, I don’t have to go, but that’s nice of them to include me,” Aspen answered quickly.

“Do you not wish to go? I’d like to spend time with you,” Tim probed.

Aspen blinked the tears from her eyes. She thought so highly of her new boss. It was easy to fantasize that he was her Daddy, but she forced herself to be realistic. “I’d think you’d be tired of me already.”

“Come into my office.” Tim’s tone brooked no argument.

Standing, Aspen wiped away her tears, confident that he would never know that she was sad. As she walked past him, Tim closed the door behind her.

“I need to hold you, Little girl,” he shared quietly and opened his arms.

With a small, involuntary cry, Aspen jolted forward to press her cheek to his broad chest. Tim closed his arms around her, hugging Aspen tight to his body. He didn’t say anything but allowed silence to wrap around them. His steady heartbeat drummed under her ear. Slowly, she relaxed against him.

“That’s my girl. Can you tell me why you don’t want to join me for dinner?”

“All the important people will be there. You don’t want me hanging around,” Aspen pointed out.

“I like having you close.” One of his hands rubbed the length of her spine. “The invitation came from Easton himself. He asked if I would be available to join them and bring you. There is someone named Fane who thinks very highly of you.”

“Fane’s amazing. He works for the second in command and does a lot with the administrative assistants. I didn’t know he even knew who I was until he asked me to interview for this position.”

“Then you can go and thank him for thinking of you. I owe him my gratitude as well,” Tim stated firmly.

“Why?” she asked, peeking up at him.

“He brought the two of us together.”

“We’re together?” burst from her lips before she could stop it. That sounded too pathetic.

“We are together. I’ve waited for you to get used to the idea. I’m not a prize, Aspen—a mostly blind guy with a dog that sheds over everything, who’s having to rebuild his career with a new company.”

“A Daddy that I’ve always dreamed of finding,” she whispered before a horrid thought flitted through her brain. “I don’t want you to settle for me because you have difficulty seeing. That’s not fair to me.”

“Settle?” Tim recoiled away. He cupped her shoulders and moved her gently away from his body. “I never want to hear you speak of yourself in such a negative light. You, Aspen Summers, are amazingly kind, intelligent, and dedicated to everything you undertake.”

“I sound like Boston,” she whispered.

“I do not wish to trace every curve on Boston’s hairy body with my tongue,” he answered bluntly.

“You... You want to do that to me?” Aspen stared at him, shocked and simultaneously thrilled by his blunt answer.

“Yes. Over and over again. I’ve cursed my accident every day since it happened. I realized the first day we met that had my injury not happened, I would have never met you. My burden has become my biggest blessing.”

“So I should go this evening?” she whispered, not sure if she could believe what she heard.

“Now that I know you’re attracted to me, Aspen, I won’t let you hide from this. Will you be brave and see if our relationship can be as magical as I think it will be?”

“You want me to be your Little girl?”

“Yes.”

“Okay. I mean... I’d like to see if this is possible.”

“Thank you for being brave, Aspen.” Tim drew her close before cupping her cheek with one hand. He pressed his mouth

to hers, deepening the kiss when she responded with a silent gasp.

Aspen closed her eyes as his tongue swept into her mouth. His taste was indescribable—sweet as the mints he kept on his table, but underlying was his own flavor. One that beguiled and pushed her worries away. Her focus narrowed, shutting out everything around them as she clung to his hard body. Tim became her anchor in a whirlwind of sensations and wonder.

When he lifted his head, she stared into his face. His light blue eyes focused on her as if he could see her clearly. “You are so beautiful,” he told her, “both inside and out, Little girl.”

“I feel pretty when you look at me like that,” she confessed.

“I’m glad. I need to hold you for a few more minutes. Come sit on my lap.” Tim wrapped an arm around her and guided Aspen around his desk. He settled himself in the rolling chair before reaching out to help her settle into place.

Aspen tried to offset some of her weight with a foot on the floor, but Tim swept her legs to the side. “I’m too heavy,” she protested, wiggling on his lap.

“You are perfect,” he reassured her. “Now, dinner tonight. I plan to wear a suit. What are you going to wear?”

“A dress?”

“If you would like. Have you been to Les Trésors de la Mer before?”

“Oh, no. That’s a place for special events,” she pointed out.

“Then it is the perfect restaurant for our first date.”

“Are we dating?” she asked.

“We are way past that, Little girl. My goal is to convince you that I’m the Daddy you need.”

“I’ve never had a Daddy,” Aspen confessed. “Have you had a Little girl?”

“I have had two Little girls. Neither relationship was meant to be in the long term. Both the Daddy and the Little girl need to be a perfect match.”

“Do you think we’re right for each other?”

“I do.”

A rustle sounded in the outer office. Aspen scrambled to get off his lap. Tim helped her stand before trapping her in place with hands around her hips.

“Take a deep breath.”

He waited for her to follow his instructions. As she exhaled shakily, he squeezed her softly. “Everything is okay.”

“Better than okay?” she asked.

“Much better,” he confirmed with a smile.

Aspen nodded and then remembered he wouldn’t see that. She patted one hand on her side and stepped away. Pausing in the door, she looked back to see him leaned back in the chair watching her leave. She loved the expression on his face. Feeling her heart flutter with happiness, she turned to greet the man at her desk.

CHAPTER 4



“**T**o Tim! Thank you for coming to join the Edgewater family,” Easton proposed, raising his wine glass.

After taking a sip of the delicious wine the waiter had brought her, Aspen set the beautiful crystal glass on the table in front of her. She’d felt out of place at the gorgeous restaurant for only a short time. Everyone had welcomed her warmly and those nervous butterflies in her stomach had settled down.

She sat next to Tim and had gravitated toward his warmth. Aspen tried to tell herself that his beautifully tailored suit drew her eye, but she knew that was a complete lie. Handsome and fit, Tim wasn’t a mass of strength like Knox, a silver fox like Easton, a cyber-smart triathlete like Pedro, or a tattooed hunk like Fane. His gruff honesty captivated her—not to mention his rock-solid body.

How is he interested in me?

He covered her knee with his hand as if sensing that her thoughts had turned negative. Tim tightened his grip in a quiet warning.

“Can you tell me what you envision for Edgewater Industries, Easton?” he asked when the conversation came to a lull.

“Business-wise, I want to place the company in the top tier of international businesses. Personally, I’m thrilled to see the employees who support the company reaching the height of their possibilities. I’m not just talking about work.”

“Be careful, he may just take over the world,” Piper chirped.

“It sounds like I need to up my game to make sure you’re ready to ship to all corners of the globe,” Tim suggested.

“We needed that yesterday,” Elaine confirmed. “Our shipping has definitely restricted the expansion plans.”

“I would like to thank you for bringing me on board,” Tim said quietly. “I was very loyal to my last company. Unfortunately, they were not willing to help me continue to serve their needs. I promise to work hard to support Edgewater Industries.”

“No thanks are needed,” Easton assured him. “Did you know you were my corporate headhunter’s first acquisition?”

“I didn’t know that. Sharon has been amazing to work with.”

“I was glad to help you acclimate here. I think Aspen had a bigger role in helping you settle into place than I did,” Sharon pointed out.

“I researched after closing time but didn’t find any regulations barring fraternization between employees,” Tim said, carefully.

Aspen held her breath. She knew he was correct to ask, but they’d just found each other. She didn’t want to be separated from him.

“We do not evaluate our employees’ private lives. We only ask that you dedicate yourself to the position that you’ve earned. Anything that happens outside those activities is in the hands of the two consenting adults,” Sharon said quickly. “You can see we live by that philosophy.” She wafted her hand toward the couples sitting at the table.

Relaxing slightly, Aspen placed her hand over Tim’s on her knee. It was going to be okay.

“Happy employees stay productive. If you have found someone who fits perfectly into your life, I wish you my congratulations,” Easton said, raising his glass to toast the newest couple.

“Thank you, Easton.” Tim spoke from the heart as he interlaced his fingers with Aspen’s, squeezing her hand. “Now, I understand this restaurant is special to many of you. Anyone want to share recommendations for dinner?”

“Steak Oscar!”

“Lobster mac and cheese.”

“Anything!”

Laughter encircled the table as everyone called out their favorites. Aspen and Tim bent over the menu, discussing different suggestions. She loved being close to him. Even in a group, Aspen felt like he focused on her. She’d never been someone’s center of attention. It was a heady sensation.

By the time the group had completed dinner, she felt at ease. As they waited for their cars to be brought around, the conversation was familiar, as if they’d been friends for years. Knox and Sharon claimed she, Tim, and Boston for the ride back to the Edgewater Industries campus.

As they stepped out of the car in front of Tower B, Tim shared their thanks for allowing them to carpool together. After waving goodbye, Tim wrapped an arm around Aspen's waist to hug her to his side.

"I need to see to Boston and give him some exercise. I don't want to say goodnight to you yet," he shared.

"It's still early. Shall I go get changed and then come up to your room in a half hour?" she proposed.

"Yes," he answered, simply giving her a squeeze. "Get comfortable."

"Beware. I might just show up in my pajamas," she joked.

"I can live with that," he answered, before winking at her. "Go on, Little girl. Thirty minutes or I come looking for you."

With an eep, she turned and hurried away. Pausing at the door, she looked back to find Tim leaning over Boston to remove his harness. She could hear him praising the dog as he pet his service animal. The two were an impressive combination.

Kinda like him and me.

She liked having a deadline. It would never take her thirty minutes to change and get up to his apartment but knowing he would come looking for her thrilled her deep inside. Rushing into her apartment, she dropped her purse on the entry table and walked into her bedroom.

Did she dare wear her pajamas to his apartment? Hers were soft and roomy. She stepped out of the fashionable pumps and kicked them out of the way. Contorting her shoulders, Aspen managed to unzip her dress. With a relieved sigh, she dropped it to the floor. Daringly, she unfastened her

bra and dropped that into the laundry basket. He couldn't see clearly, so he'd never know, right?

Returning to the bedroom, she glanced longingly down the hall. Could she take a quick shower? Aspen didn't want to risk being late. Rummaging through her drawer, she pulled out a fresh pair of pajamas and shook the wrinkles out. She loved the pastel ice cream decorations.

Before she could change her mind, Aspen dressed in the soft flannel. Returning to her closet, she stepped into her pink fuzzy slippers. Each step was like walking on a squishy cloud—so much better than her dress shoes. Stomping the cushions playfully, Aspen walked to the bathroom, washed her makeup from her face, and pulled her hair into a messy bun on the back of her head. After brushing her teeth, she used the toilet and headed for the door.

Halfway down the hallway, she remembered that she'd forgotten her phone but decided not to go back for it. She didn't have anyone she wanted to call.

Arriving at 718, Aspen hesitated before knocking on the door. When the door opened, she stared at the man silhouetted inside. Tim stood framed in the doorway. His shirt was unbuttoned and pulled from his waistband, revealing his toned torso. Her gaze traced every muscled groove leading downward.

“Aspen?” he asked quietly.

“Yes. It's me. Sorry!” she apologized, trying to tear her eyes away from the sight before her.

“Come in, Little girl.”

Tim stepped back and ushered her inside. His hand pressed on the small of her back. “I like these. They're so soft. Good

choice. Take a seat on the sofa. I'll be right back," he promised.

With her settled, Tim walked toward the bedroom, pulling the shirt off as he walked. Aspen stared openly. He wouldn't know. She could look. Easing to the edge of the couch, she peeked around the corner and saw the flash of his belt as he tugged it free from his trousers. His body was hidden from her view by the angle of the wall.

Cautiously, she stood and moved closer. Boston rose from his dog bed at the side of the room and approached. Aspen tried to get him to be quiet, but the tags on his collar clicked together, drawing Tim's attention.

"Boston? What's wrong?" Tim appeared in the doorway wearing only a pair of body-hugging briefs. The dog immediately reported to his side and pressed against him before stepping forward toward her.

His gaze focused on her. "Aspen?"

"Sorry. I dropped something and moved to retrieve it. That must have disturbed Boston. I'll go sit down," she promised.

"Were you being naughty and trying to watch me change my clothes?" he asked.

Unable to lie to him, she nodded.

"Use your words."

"Yes. I'm sorry. Do you want me to leave?" she asked, mortified to have been caught.

"No. But you have earned a punishment. Come stand in the corner of my room."

Tim held a hand out for her and bravely, she walked forward to take it. His hand squeezed her reassuringly as he

led her to the corner next to his bed. “Press your forehead against the paint, Little girl. Perhaps I need to get a bell to put around your neck. Then I’ll know what you’re up to.”

“I’ll be good. I promise.”

“I know you can be good, Aspen.”

Stepping away, he left her staring at the white wall. She could hear the rustle of him moving and had to steel herself not to look. Finally, when she almost couldn’t stand it, he traced his fingers lightly down her arm to intertwine his fingers with hers.

“Let’s go sit down in the living room,” he suggested.

Eagerly, she followed him out of the corner and back to the sofa where he’d left her. She devoured his casually dressed form in athletic pants and a snug T-shirt. When he sat down, she perched gingerly on the edge of the cushion.

“Was standing in the corner my punishment?” she asked nervously.

“No, Aspen. Now will be your punishment. What did you do wrong?”

“I took advantage of you not being able to see and I tried to watch you change clothes,” she confessed in a rush of words.

“And what else?”

“Mmm! I looked at you?”

“Yes, I understand that, but what excuse did you use when you were caught?” He helped her walk through the process.

“I told you I’d dropped something. That wasn’t true.”

“So, you lied to Daddy?”

“Yes,” she whispered.

“What do you think was the worst infraction? Staring at Daddy’s body or lying to him?”

Aspen stared at him, unable to decide which would get her in more trouble. “Both,” she admitted.

“Correct. I understand your curiosity about me. You thought that because I couldn’t see well, you wouldn’t get caught.”

“I’m sorry. Do you want me to leave?”

“No. Come stand between my legs, Aspen,” Tim instructed, pointing to a spot between his outspread thighs. With a hand on her hips, he steadied her.

“What kind of punishments do Little girls get in those books of yours?”

“They have to stand in the corner, write lines, or... Get spanked.”

“There are many other ways for a Daddy to correct his Little. He might put a reminder in her bottom to help he keep his instructions in mind. You might lose free time to do something you love or go to bed early.”

“I don’t think I’d like any of those,” she answered.

“No. I don’t think you’d like any of those or other negative consequences. First, I need to know that you want me to correct your behavior. Only a Little girl’s Daddy should punish her.”

“You want me to choose you to be my Daddy?” she asked.

“Yes. From the moment you appeared in my doorway, I knew I needed to pay attention to you—that someone precious

had just entered my life. Search your heart. Do you feel drawn to me? Is there something deep inside that tells you I'm the one you've been looking for?"

Aspen exhaled strongly and admitted, "I would love for you to be my Daddy, but you don't know what I look like. You're a ten and I'm like a five on a good day."

"I do not need perfect vision to see you, Little girl. I know you are deliciously curvy. I am looking forward to memorizing your form." Tim slid his hands up and down her sides. "I know your lips are sweet and your taste drives me wild. Your heart is pure gold, and you treat others kindly. That's all I need to see."

Aspen held her breath, scared that she was sleeping and this was all a dream. "So, we do this?"

"Yes, Little girl, we do this." He pulled her close and hugged her tight. His cheek pressed against her breasts. Tim turned his face as if he couldn't resist and kissed one erect nipple that thrust through the material.

With his hands on her hips, he moved her a few steps backward. Tim unbuttoned her top. He stopped when she crossed her hands over her chest. "Your punishment should fit the crime, correct?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Did you sneak around the corner to see my body?" he asked.

"Yes," she squeaked in discomfort.

"Then your spanking will occur when you, too, are naked."

"Spanking?" she wailed.

"Yes. Put your hands down by your sides," he instructed.

Slowly, she forced herself to follow his demand. As soon as her hands rested by her thighs, her Daddy resumed unfastening her top. The air swirled around her exposed skin as it gaped open. Aspen fought her desire to cover herself. Whether or not he could see, she still felt incredibly vulnerable.

“Has a man seen you naked, Aspen?” he asked as he pushed her top off her shoulders and down her arms.

“Only my father when I was young,” she answered as he dropped it to the floor.

“You are a virgin?”

“No. I kind of had sex with Mitchell Gandry on a bet in the eighth grade. But I didn’t take off all my clothes,” she assured him.

“But not since then?” he asked, hiding a smile as he tugged her pajama bottoms over her hips.

“No. I didn’t like it very much,” she confessed.

Once the material was below her hips, her soft pants cascaded to her feet. His hands traced over her lacy underwear.

“My Little girl loves fancy underwear,” he complimented as his fingers stroked over the delicate fabric.

As his fingers neared her core, he commented, “You’re so wet, Aspen. Are you excited to be naked in front of Daddy?” he probed as he tugged her panties down her legs.

“Let’s leave those panties around your ankles to remind you that you’re not wearing anything, just as you tried to peek in on Daddy.”

Aspen dropped her head in shame. That was such a terrible decision. She regretted it completely.

“Over my lap, Little girl.”

Awkwardly, she allowed him to guide her into position. His hand stroked over her bottom and up her spine before returning to coast over her rounded cheeks and down her inner thigh and calf to tug on her panties, reminding her that she was completely exposed.

She shivered in place as her fantasies and the reality of his hard body combined. Aspen had always tried to imagine what a spanking would feel like. Balanced over his lap, her fingers barely reached the carpet, and her toes brushed the flooring.

The first spank made her freeze in place as the stinging sensation spread over her skin. Additional swats followed and she wiggled to avoid his hand as it descended. “No. That hurts!” she cried, feeling tears gathering in her eyes.

“Yes, Little girl. A spanking hurts your bottom,” he answered evenly as he continued to pepper her bottom with swats. “You will tell me when you’ve had enough. Not with your lips but with your mind.”

“My mind. My mind has had enough,” she promised as the heat gathered until her bottom felt like her skin was on fire.

Her Daddy didn’t answer but continued her punishment. As tears dripped from her eyes, Aspen allowed herself to soften. Her struggles to get away ceased and she accepted her punishment.

“Good girl, Aspen.” Instantly, a soothing caress replaced the stinging swats. Was that all she needed to do? Accept her punishment?

Tim lifted her easily to hold her next to his body. He held her close to his body and pressed a soft kiss to her temple. “Well done, Little girl. I’m proud of you.” Rocking her back

and forth, Tim wiped the tear tracks from her cheeks as he held her naked body close.

When her tears subsided, Tim grabbed a soft throw from the back of the couch and spread it over her trembling body. His soft words didn't register at first, but soon, she was able to pull out the most important parts.

"I'm very proud of you, sweetheart. You took your punishment well."

"My bottom hurts."

"I bet it does. That's the best part of a spanking: You'll get to wear it around for the next day or so to remind you to make good decisions."

"That's the best part?" she asked skeptically.

"The very best part is that you know your Daddy cares about you enough to take care of you so that any poor decision can be wiped away."

She nodded against his chest before turning to press a kiss against him. "You forgive me?" she asked, unable to let go of her feelings.

"I forgave you the minute you admitted what you'd done. The spanking was for you, not for me."

Aspen pondered this for a while before giving up. Her mind was too shattered to put everything in a tidy package. She decided to focus on how good it felt to be in Tim's arms. If only time could freeze.

"I can't believe I found you, Little girl."

She lifted her head to offer him her lips. The explosive kiss that followed made her toes curl. Aspen didn't hold back her

feelings. Raw and emotionally fragile, she clung to her Daddy, allowing him to show her how much he cared.

The couch dipped slightly next to them, and Aspen felt a wet lick on her ankle. Giggles burst from her lips, disrupting their kiss. When Tim lifted his mouth from hers, Aspen explained, “Boston wants kisses, too.”

Tim reached down to rumple the dog’s soft fur and scratch behind his ears. “It’s a good thing you’re off the clock, buddy. Settle down with us. There’s plenty of room.”

Boston walked around in a circle before flopping against Aspen’s side. Settling into position, the dog settled his head on her lap.

Enchanted, Aspen reached out to stroke his coal-black fur. She stopped and looked at her Daddy for permission. “It’s okay to pet him?”

“When he’s off duty, Boston is just like any other pooch. I’d say he’s chosen you as well.”

“I like that,” Aspen shared, stroking her fingers through his short fur. Boston licked her fingers before nestling a bit closer.

CHAPTER 5



Warmth surrounded her as she blinked her eyes open. His hard body curved around hers. She wiggled toward the side of the bed and froze at the feel of his hard shaft nestled against her bottom. His hand pressed against her tummy, drawing her back firmly.

“I have to pee,” she whispered urgently.

“Go, Little girl. I’ll be right here,” he told her as he released the pressure against her abdomen.

Quickly, she scrambled away and tugged her pajama top down over her hips to hide from his perusal as she left the room. She rushed to the toilet, peeing quickly, before she washed her hands and rinsed out her mouth. Aspen tried to smooth her hair as she approached the enormous bed. She paused to pat Boston’s head as he lay on his dog bed.

Tim flipped back the covers for her to scramble back into the warmth. “Thank you, Daddy,” she said, trying out the new title she bestowed on him. She’d fallen asleep while watching a movie with her Daddy and Boston. She could barely remember her Daddy guiding her into the bedroom and tucking her in his bed.

His arm towed her close so he could kiss her thoroughly. “I like hearing you call me Daddy, Aspen. Did you sleep well,

baby?”

“I did. I only woke up once,” she shared.

“I slept well with you snuggled against me, too.”

“Boston snores,” Aspen reported.

“Just a bit. I like it. I always know where he is in the dark.”

“I didn’t think of it that way,” Aspen said with a smile. “I guess Boston is on monster patrol down there, too.”

“Definitely. No monsters allowed under the bed or elsewhere.”

“Daddy?”

“Yes, Aspen.”

“Last night, you told me to let you know when I was ready...” Her voice trailed away as she tried to gather her courage to finish the sentence.

“When you were ready for me to make love to you?” Tim suggested.

“Yes. Is this morning too soon?”

“Now is a perfect time if you’re sure.”

Aspen leaned close to press her mouth against his. She tried to emulate the kisses she’d read about in books. His hand cupped her cheek, but Tim didn’t take control of the kiss. He allowed her to explore and opened his mouth when she stroked her tongue across the seam of his lips. When she touched the tip of her tongue to his, he groaned deep in his throat, making her wiggle with delight. She loved pleasing him.

His hand stroked over her soft top and scooted under the bottom edge to grip her bottom. He swallowed her gasp as the spanked skin stung in response. When he stroked up her

sensitive side to brush his fingertips across the lower slope of her breast, Aspen almost forgot what she was doing. His tender lips reminded her as he deepened their kisses.

Aspen curled her fingers into his broad shoulders. She waited for the moment of panic to signal to her that this was a mistake, and she should run away. Nothing but heat filled her tummy. She wiggled closer to press herself fully against him as Tim pulled her lower body flush against his hard shaft. Freezing as she felt his thick erection pressing into her lower abdomen, she wondered how he'd ever fit inside her. He was much, much larger than Mitchell Gandry had been.

Tim raised his lips from hers to growl, “Stop thinking—just feel. Daddy will take care of everything.”

“You promise?”

“Definitely.”

Aspen nodded. She lifted her lips for more kisses. Her Daddy would make everything alright for her. Or, maybe, even better. His lips captured hers and explored her mouth thoroughly as his hand cupped her bottom, keeping her close. His fingers were so close to her most intimate spaces that she hoped he couldn't feel her wetness.

“Daddy's going to know all your secrets, Little girl,” he whispered against her lips. “That's the way it should be.”

His gaze held hers until she nodded. He would demand everything of her, and she wanted to give it to him.

Tim pressed her back against the mattress. Those slow, drugging kisses continued, but he stroked a hand down her side to span her rounded tummy. When she quickly contracted her stomach muscles to make herself appear thinner, he lifted his mouth from hers.

“I want you exactly as you are. Your curves draw me. I want to explore every inch of your delightful form. My eyesight may not be clear, but my sense of touch is eager to memorize you.”

Slowly, she relaxed her muscles. Tim rewarded her by kissing along the column of her neck as his hand caressed a path upward. Cupping one full breast, he pressed fiery kisses across her sensitive mound. She held her breath as he pulled her tight peak into his mouth. Wet heat surrounded her nipple as his tongue whipped across the tip. Aspen thrust her fingers through his short, sandy-blond hair.

She held her breath as he drew a tantalizing path to her other breast and lifted his lips from her nipple with a loud pop. The slow kisses from one peak to the other built her anticipation.

“Breathe, Little one,” he commanded against her skin.

Exhaling a shaky gust of air, Tim rewarded Aspen for following his directions by lavishing attention on her breast. He kissed and nibbled a path along her pale skin, never caressing the taut nipple. Aspen tried to wiggle into a position where his path would cross her nipple when he didn't seem to understand where she wanted his mouth.

“Daddy, please.”

“Talk to me, baby. You can tell me anything you need.”

“Would you kiss my nipple?”

“This one here?” he asked, pressing a kiss to the first peak.

“No, the other, please,” she moaned.

“This one?” he asked, kissing another path around her budded tip.

“Yes, please.”

“You’re so polite, Little one. You deserve a reward, don’t you?”

“Please, Daddy?” Aspen asked.

“Good girl,” he praised her. He lowered his mouth to pull the nipple deeply into his mouth as stroked over her tummy and down to trace the seam of her pussy.

Drawn in two directions, Aspen tried to pay attention everywhere, but failed miserably. All she could do was cling to him and enjoy the pleasure he lavished on her. He dipped his fingertips into her hot juices, exploring her. A moan of delight burst from her lips when he brushed over her clit. Never rushed or hurried, he dipped one finger into her tight channel before moving it around her sensitive entrance.

That one finger became two. She bit her lip at the burn as he scissored his fingers inside her, stretching her tightness. His teeth nibbled at her nipple, distracting her just long enough for the discomfort between her legs to become pure delight as he located all her responsive triggers.

Without thinking, she widened her thighs to invite further explorations. She didn’t know what she was asking for but wanted him to have full access to pleasure her. In response, her Daddy pressed heated kisses along her torso as he moved his hard body between her legs in answer to her silent invitation.

He isn’t going to...

“Mmm.” Tim tasted her. His hands pressed her thighs fully to the side, exposing her completely to him.

Bracing an arm behind her head, Aspen watched him. Completely turned on, she didn’t think of denying him anything. When he dipped his mouth down again to nibble at

her inner folds, she lifted her hips slightly, asking for something Aspen didn't really understand. His lips sealed around her clit and repeated that same sucking sensation he'd lavished on her breasts along with shiver-inducing brushes of his tongue across the tight bundle of nerves.

"Ah!" she gasped as a hard orgasm burst over her body. The pleasure he drew from her body didn't compare to the climaxes she'd given herself with her vibrator. Aspen clung to his shoulder. Her Daddy was her rock in the face of all the swirling emotions and sensations.

Panting when she remembered to breathe, Aspen felt his mouth gentle against her, allowing her to descend from the sizzling heat. Lifting his mouth from her, her Daddy looked over her body to meet her gaze. She looked at him openly, not trying to disguise the emotion and desire in her expression. Aspen hoped he could see how he made her feel.

"Little girl," he whispered. "I need to be here." Her Daddy curled his fingers inside her to rub against something electric inside her tight channel.

"Are you ready to be mine?"

"Please!" she urged him.

Sliding his fingers from her body, he rose to his hands and knees and prowled over her. He leaned down to press a passionate kiss to her lips.

Her own flavor tantalized her. It seemed so intimate and naughty to taste her own juices. Aspen slid her hand from under her head to wrap around the back of his head to deepen the kiss. Being with him gave her the courage to explore and experience everything without concern about what was right or wrong. The taste of his flavor mixing with her own was

intoxicating. She protested wordlessly when he lifted his mouth from hers.

“Let me take care of you, Little girl,” he reassured her.

Reaching to the side, he opened the nightstand’s drawer and removed a strip of condoms. Tim tore one off, tossing the others into the drawer. She watched as he opened the small packet. A bright blue condom was tucked inside.

Before she could stop herself, she commented, “Blue?”

“That’s always been my favorite color,” he answered, and dropped a quick kiss on her lips. “Let’s hope it will be yours, too.”

She felt her cheeks flush and knew she was blushing at his insinuation. “Daddy!”

Chuckling, Tim leaned to the side and fitted the condom over his thick erection. He moved back over her and rubbed his shaft against her pink folds.

She loved the feel of his heat moving against her. He stroked over her clit, rekindling those tingly feelings. Aspen wanted to feel more. She wanted him inside her. Wrapping her legs around his hips, she wiggled, trying to entice him.

Bracing one forearm on the bed next to Aspen to support his weight from crushing her, Tim shifted his hips to press the broad head of his penis at her entrance. Pinning her in place with one hand wrapped around her side, he eased his way inside her body.

Instantly, Aspen tightened around him as his cock stretched her. He wasn’t going to fit inside her. Aspen opened her mouth to protest and was distracted as his lips covered hers in a fiery kiss. His tongue slid into her mouth to explore and thrill her, mirroring the glide of his shaft inside her. Her panic

subsided as he took control. She met each of his demanding kisses, allowing her body to relax naturally around him as he advanced and retreated.

Welcoming the slight burn as he stretched her tight channel, Aspen focused on each sensitive spot he triggered as he entered. Shivers of delight rocked her, and she loved feeling his cock jerk inside her in response. A feeling of feminine power and desirability filled her.

Her eyelids burst open to look into his pale blue eyes when his pelvis finally rested against her. Fully inside her, he filled her completely. Aspen didn't know where he ended and she began. Tim released his dominant hold on her pelvis to thread his fingers through her hair.

“Are you okay, baby?”

She nodded eagerly before urging, “Can you move?”

“Hold on to me,” he ordered, and kissed her hard.

Aspen wrapped her arms around his torso and clung to his muscular form. She loved the feel of his hard body moving against her. Rubbing her breasts against the rough hair scattered over his chest, Aspen didn't think his lovemaking could get any better. Then, he moved.

“Oh!” she gasped as he withdrew and slowly filled her again, brushing past all those tingly spots inside her.

“Just wait, baby,” he whispered into her ear.

“More?” she asked.

“So much more.”

Tim stroked into her again. This time, he changed the angle slightly. Her fingers tightened on his skin as heat flared into life within her. “There?” he asked.

“Please!”

To her delight, he repeated the movement several more times before tweaking his entrance again. Instantaneous delight cascaded over her as she climaxed around him. Aspen tilted her head back as her eyes closed to enjoy the sensations.

“There,” he confirmed with a satisfied tone that told her he enjoyed her pleasure as well.

Their bodies moved together. Sweat gathered on their skin as Aspen savored the feeling of being joined together. Her Daddy’s fierce expression revealed his arousal, and she treasured the knowledge that he wanted her—just as she was. Breathing deeply, Aspen reveled in the sensuous scent of his aroused body.

This. This is so worth the wait.

Repeatedly, he coaxed orgasms from her, making her feel more beautiful and desirable with each one. When Tim finally allowed himself to join her in pleasure, she held on to him tightly as sensations rocked her body. His joyous shout into the room thrilled her to the core.

Even in the aftermath, he held her tenderly as if he were afraid she’d disappear from his arms. After taking care of the condom, her Daddy cradled her close and pressed kisses against her hair.

“You okay, baby?”

She laughed, unable to staunch the happy sound, and he leaned back in concern to look at her directly.

“I’m good. Better than good. I don’t even know how to describe it,” she rushed to reassure him.

“That’s the way it should be,” he said tenderly and leaned forward to kiss her gently before gathering her back against him.

Thoughts swirled in her brain. No one would have treasured her body as her Daddy had. She loved that he talked to her. Checked to see what felt wonderful and how he could make it better. Aspen didn’t know much about sex, but she did know people. This man was special.

CHAPTER 6



At her door, she paused and turned to look at the handsome man and his faithful dog beside her. Her Daddy had redressed her in her pajamas and walked her to her apartment on his way to take Boston out to potty. She liked that he took such good care of the guide dog.

“Go take a shower. Put on some casual clothes and come down to play with Boston and me in the green space between B and C Towers. We’re going to make today a celebration day,” he declared.

Holding up a hand before she could ask a million questions, her Daddy told her, “We’ll make plans when you join us.”

She nodded and rushed inside to peek at him through the peephole. He had to know how handsome he was and at least guess how she’d rate for most men. Her Daddy seemed to have his own scale and she, as his Little girl, topped everyone.

Stripping off her clothing, Aspen blushed at the sight of small spots he left on her skin during their lovemaking. She traced a finger over her puffy lips. His drugging kisses had left them swollen but still wanting more. Quickly, she showered and pulled on jean shorts and a T-shirt to match his casualness.

Aspen raced to the green space and found Boston and Tim playing ball. She walked over the lush grass to join them. “Is that his favorite toy?” she asked as her Daddy turned to greet her. Accepting his hand, Aspen allowed him to pull her close for a hug.

“Definitely. Mr. Mouse comes in a close second, but a tennis ball is his favorite. Hold out your hand as he comes back, and you can throw it for him.”

Leaning forward eagerly to greet the canine, Aspen laughed as the pooch dropped it on her palm. “Yuck, Boston. You slobbered all over it.”

“Just like his owner,” Tim said cheerfully, patting Aspen on her bottom.

“Daddy!” Aspen said, scandalized as she looked around.

“I heard the D word,” Piper cheered as she and Easton jogged by. They both gave her a high thumbs up over their heads as they passed by.

“They know,” Aspen whispered, feeling her face heat with embarrassment.

“They already knew, baby. Everyone knew last night.”

“Really?” she squeaked. Then, seeing Boston bouncing in anticipation of the next toss, Aspen lobbed it in the opposite direction, glad to have something to do as a distraction.

“If there ever was a place to be a Daddy or a Little girl, it’s Edgewater Industries. I may have trouble seeing, but even I can tell there was a secondary reason for the towers to be named ABC.”

“Like for Littles?” she said in surprise.

“That would be my guess. We can ask Easton on his next lap,” Tim suggested.

“No! Don’t!” she protested quickly.

He held out a hand for hers and tugged her back to his side. “Fane told me last night while you were talking to Piper that he suggested you for the position as my administrative assistant deliberately. He stated you’ve definitely distinguished yourself through your dedication and skills, but that many had noted that you excel in empathy and willingness to help. Those were the skills that Sharon had determined would support me best in my new job.”

“Wow! That’s very nice of him.”

“I think Fane is a straight shooter. He’s also driven and very observant.”

“And a Daddy,” she whispered.

“Exactly.”

Tim squeezed her hand before throwing the ball again for Boston. “We’ve worn him out. He’s panting. It’s time for his breakfast. Want to go out for a celebratory breakfast? I’ll let you drive,” he suggested with a wink.

“I love breakfast out. But... It’s lonely by myself. I rarely go out to eat,” she confessed.

“It’s a good thing I’m here to be your plus one.”

“For how long?” popped into her mind and Aspen clamped her teeth to keep from asking the question aloud.

They walked back into B Tower together in silence. Stepping into the elevator, Aspen moved to the side away from her Daddy. Worries flooded her mind. She didn’t want to get

too attached. What if he got rid of her? If he wasn't really into her, but she just made his life easier.

"You're thinking very hard, Little girl. I can hear you worrying all the way over there. Want to tell me what's bothering you?" he asked quietly.

"No."

"Why not?"

"I'm just being silly."

When the elevator opened, Boston led the way from the car, pausing when his owner stopped, extending a hand for Aspen's. She linked her fingers with his and walked down the hallway at his side. Aspen wished she was brave enough to just ask him all her questions. He was the only one that could answer them. But could she trust him to tell the truth? A tiny voice in the back of her mind reminded Aspen that she had chosen him to be the first man she had sex with. That had to mean she was sure he was the right man.

Reaching his apartment, Tim ushered her inside and closed the door. He efficiently moved around the space to feed Boston before returning to her. "Let's sit down on the couch, Little girl."

When they were settled, Tim pulled off his sunglasses. He set them on the cushion beside him before turning to Aspen. "I was involved in a freak accident caused by a torrential downpour. When I woke up in the hospital, everything was blurry—like it was out of focus. At first, everyone hoped it might resolve, but it didn't."

"I'm sorry," she whispered. "That had to be scary."

"It was scary. I definitely didn't realize how much my normal routine depended on being able to see. When I

couldn't... Well, it was a long adjustment."

"At first, I tried to hide my vision loss to everyone. It didn't help that the company I worked for suddenly viewed me as useless. I even offered to pay for equipment to enlarge the documents I needed to do my job effectively, but they weren't interested."

"They're idiots."

"I agree... Now. Then, I thought everything was lost. I took a chance with applying at Edgewater, and even showed up without my cane or Boston. Several people had to redirect me to the correct office for my interview. Once there, I was abrasive and gruff because I was sure Edgewater Industries would judge me as worthless as the company that was working to get rid of me. Sharon saw something in me that made her investigate. Thankfully, my reputation was still intact, and the shipping manager recommended me highly."

He squeezed her hand slightly before continuing. "Over time, I'm getting more used to how my life is today. My family says I almost look the same. My eyes are a lighter blue than they used to be. I had my sight for so long, I act like I can see. For example, I still look at people when they speak. My brother still waves his hand in front of his body occasionally to double check if my vision has come back."

"Could it come back?" she asked.

"Maybe? The doctors say it's unlikely now. Too much time has passed."

"I'm sorry."

"Some days, I think it's the worst thing that ever happened to me. Other days, like now, I realize that if I hadn't lost my sight, I'd still be back at the same uncaring company and most

importantly, I'd have never met you, Little girl. All of this," he said, waving a hand over his face, "is worth finding you."

"That's sweet of you to say." She tried to dismiss his words.

"I am definitely not sweet, and I'll spank your bottom if you won't listen to your Daddy." He hesitated for a few seconds, as if making sure she was tuned in.

"My eyes may be damaged, but my heart isn't. I've searched for my Little girl for forever. When my vision evaporated, that was the one thing I despaired about most. I can hire a driver. I have Boston to make life easier. I work for a company who cares about their employees and who provided me with the equipment I needed to do my job. But I didn't have the Little girl I'd been looking for."

"And now you didn't have your eyes to see her," Aspen added.

"I didn't. Losing my sight forces me to rely on my other senses. The feeling of your sweet curves under my fingertips. The taste of your excitement as it coats you intimately. The sensuality of being buried deep inside your body, feeling the quivers of your excitement before you burst into flames around me. But most of all, that sweet rush when I sensed you at my apartment door."

"You couldn't have known I was your Little girl when I came to show you around," Aspen protested.

"I didn't know. I sensed you were someone special. The one who had eluded me."

Aspen nodded. She understood that. Every warning system inside her had gone off the first time they'd met. She scooted a bit closer to him on the couch.

“I’m sorry, I don’t come to you without challenges. I can’t drive you to breakfast. We’ll have to be a team together—Daddy and Little girl,” he suggested.

“I don’t want you to be stuck with me just because I can see,” she blurted.

Appalled by revealing that crappy thought repeating in her head, she whispered, “I’m sorry.”

“I’m not. I always want you to tell me what you’re worrying about. There can be no barriers between a Daddy and his Little girl. Promise me you’ll always come to me when something pops into your mind that upsets you,” he requested, lifting his other hand to stroke up her arm and cupping her face.

“I promise.”

“Good girl.”

Tim leaned forward to press a sweet kiss to her lips before drawing away. “Now, listen to me closely. You, Aspen Summers, are my Little girl. You are the only one I want and the answer to my hopes and dreams. I plan to keep you close for the rest of my life, making love to you so often you remember how much I treasure you, and punishing you when you lose confidence in yourself. We haven’t known each other for long but you’re already part of my heart. I love you, Aspen.”

“I love you, too, Daddy,” she sobbed, wiping away the tears that had begun to fall as he set her straight.

“Come here. I need to hold you, Little girl.” Tim scooped her up in his arms and hugged her tight.

Aspen laid her head on his broad shoulders and wrapped her arms around his neck. Closing her eyes, she tried to

imagine how she'd feel if she couldn't see. It was overwhelming. Her Daddy was so brave and strong.

He loves you.

Opening her eyes, she pressed a kiss against his jaw. He had chosen her. Inwardly, she vowed to dismiss any lingering doubts that she was attractive enough or sufficiently exciting to be his Little.

Whack! Aspen sat up and squirmed on his lap when he administered one stinging swat on her full bottom.

“I chose the exact Little girl I'm supposed to have. Do you need a full spanking to process that and wipe away the bad thoughts?”

“No!” she denied quickly.

“Good girl. Want to drive your Daddy to the best breakfast spot around? We need to celebrate.”

“What?”

“The future before us.”

“I like that,” she whispered.

“I do, too.” Her Daddy hugged her tight.

CHAPTER 7



“I am so stuffed,” Tim commented as they walked out of the hole in the wall diner Aspen had driven them to for breakfast.

“I told you the biscuits and gravy were amazing,” she reminded him with a laugh.

“You didn’t tell me I’d get a platter of them!”

“I told you we could share them, but you wanted your own plate.”

“Next time,” he promised, wrapping his hand around her arm so she could help guide him.

When they got to her car, Tim asked, “How would you feel about stopping at a pet store? I’d like to get some of Boston’s favorite treats.”

“Of course. There’s one not too far from here,” she said, watching the dog focus on their path. “He didn’t even look up when you said the T word.”

“Boston is trained to ignore everything except for his responsibilities as a guide dog. It’s pretty spectacular how they train them.”

“Here’s the car. Careful with the curb,” she warned, leading him to the edge of the sidewalk.

“Thanks, baby.”

In a few minutes, Aspen backed out of her parking spot and headed for the pet store. “Can we walk by the animals that are up for adoption?” she asked.

“Of course. You’ll have to describe them for me,” he requested.

After looking at the kittens and cats available for new homes, Aspen led him to the dog food area. “What brand are you looking for?” she requested.

Tim provided the name and flavor that Boston preferred. When she tried to carry the bag, he held out his free arm. “No way, Little girl. I can carry that.”

“But then you can’t hold on to me,” she protested.

“I hold on to you because I like touching you. Boston will follow you if I ask him to.”

“Daddy!” she protested. “Really? I don’t help you at all?”

“I’m teasing you, Little girl. You always help me so sweetly,” he assured her. “Let’s make a stop at the toys. Mr. Mouse is getting pretty threadbare. I think Boston needs a new friend.”

“Doggy!” a small boy’s voice sounded, growing closer as he ran forward.

Tim looked up immediately and moved Boston behind him for safety. “He’s a working doggy. Do you see the harness he’s wearing?”

“Yes,” the boy said, trying to circle behind them.

Aspen moved closer to block his way as his mother called his name. “Doug! Stop right there.”

Immediately, the boy looked back at his mother. “I just wanted to pet the dog,” he whined.

“What have we practiced when we meet someone with a dog?” she asked, drawing closer.

“Hi. Can I pet your dog?” Doug recited.

“No. Boston is working now. He’s a guide dog. He helps me see and needs to focus right now,” Tim explained.

“Just a quick pet?” Doug asked.

“No means no, Doug. Thank you for the explanation. I’ll help him understand if you don’t mind if he watches Boston work,” the mother requested.

“Of course not,” Tim allowed.

“Come stand over here with me, Doug. Watch how this specially trained dog helps him negotiate through the store.”

“Toy aisle, Aspen,” Tim reminded her.

“This way.”

Aspen led the way. She looked back frequently to see Boston lead Tim around obstacles and paused to check for traffic when they reached the end of the aisle. The mother’s voice drifted to her as she explained what Boston was doing.

“He led him around that cat tower!” Doug said in surprise.

“That’s why he can’t be distracted by pets. We’ll always look for the service dog vest and we can see how smart they are from a distance,” his mother answered.

“They’re special.” Doug’s voice barely reached them as they turned into the toy aisle.

“That was a good mom,” Aspen commented.

“He’ll remember from now on and be excited rather than disappointed that he doesn’t get to pet the animals,” Tim noted.

“So how do we pick a toy for Boston?” Aspen asked, reaching out to stroke the soft fur of a bright green alligator that caught her eye.

“We don’t. Boston needs to choose.” He knelt by Boston’s side and stripped off his service vest and harness with the skill of someone who’d done it a million times.

Patting him on the butt, Tim instructed, “Choose a toy, Boston.”

As he stood back up to take her arm, Aspen watched the off-duty dog lose himself in the excitement of his task. “He’s sniffing each bin and all the toys hanging up on the shelf. Boston is having the best time.”

Plucking the alligator from the hook it hung on, she offered, “How about this one, Boston?”

He obediently came to sniff the reptile but immediately turned away. Aspen squeaked the toy to try to tempt him and laughed at the groaning sound it made. Boston didn’t even perk an ear her way. Aspen didn’t know why the alligator made her happy, but she didn’t put it back on the peg. She’d try again later. Maybe she could convince Boston.

After an extensive search through all the bins, Boston returned with a florescent pink ball and nudged it into Tim’s hand. The dog sat in front of his master waiting to hear his decision as Tim rotated it carefully in his hands, as if assessing it’s worth.

“This is an incredible choice, Boston. It needs to go home with us. Now, choose a squeaky toy. A quiet one, please,” Tim

requested, drawing a giggle from Aspen.

“Let me guess—it’s loud at night?”

“I almost fell out of bed once. Some are noisier than others. Like yours. It’s perfect. A low growling noise,” he complimented.

“Oh, it’s not mine. It’s just so darn cute, I thought I might tempt Boston with it again.”

Alternating squeaks between a wedge of cheese and a hotdog captured her attention. “Looks like he’s deciding between a couple and testing the sounds. He really does understand you.” Aspen turned to hang her choice back in place.

“Let me see what you have chosen,” Tim asked, holding his hand out.

When she placed it in his hand, Tim ran his fingers over the soft fur to determine what creature had caught her attention. “A gator, huh?”

“He has the best expression. A big goofy grin,” Aspen shared.

“That’s the final deciding factor,” he stated, putting it under his arm.

“But Boston didn’t like it,” she protested.

“I’m not buying it for Boston. Little girls need toys, too.”

The dog’s return kept her from answering as he squeaked a relatively soft noisemaker inside a yellow wedge of cheese. Tim knelt on the floor to take the toy from Boston before redressing him in his guide dog gear and harness.

It fascinated Aspen to see the dog change from off-duty to on-duty. Neither yellow cheesy toy nor the ball recaptured his attention as Boston moved into position at Tim's side. Aspen tried to put the alligator back on the shelf, but Tim reclaimed it.

"Don't be naughty," he warned.

"Sorry."

At the cash register, Aspen set the dog treats down on the belt as Tim added the toys. She watched him complete the purchase and wondered at how he accomplished everything.

When the cashier pulled a treat from a large jar on the counter and held it up to her, Aspen held up her hand. "Tim, the cashier would like to know if Boston can have a T-R-E-A-T." She spelled carefully to disguise the question.

"Would you allow me to take it with me and give it to him when he's off duty?" Tim asked.

"Of course," the young man agreed and set it on Tim's palm when he held it out.

"Thank you. He'll love it," Tim said, placing it in his pocket.

"That's just dumb. Let the dog have his *treat* now," an elderly woman behind them deliberately pronounced the word and stressed it loudly.

When Aspen turned to explain, Tim picked up the bag and requested, "Let's go."

Immediately, Aspen closed her mouth and led the way through the exterior doors to her car. "Do you run into mean people a lot?"

“Not often. Most people are good to the core. Every once in a while, I’ll find someone who deliberately overcharges me or who tries to sabotage Boston’s efforts to guide me safely. Some of it is ignorance and some is evil. She thought I was being harsh with Boston. She didn’t realize that he loves his job and delaying having something extra to eat isn’t as much of a thrill as earning my appreciation.”

“I love my job, too,” she whispered as she opened the trunk for them to store all their purchases.

“I love having you close to me—whether that be in our office or tucked in bed,” Tim whispered back before admitting, “That’s a total lie. I love having you near me at work. I’m now addicted to having my Little girl’s sweetness pressed to me in bed.”

“Daddy!” she protested, looking around to see if anyone was listening. Thank goodness, several rows separated them from anyone else.

“Such a shy baby,” he observed, cupping her face before leaning in to press a kiss to her lips.

Suddenly, Aspen really didn’t care what anyone else saw. She returned his kiss eagerly until Boston pushed against their legs, alerting the couple that a car was getting too close. Aspen immediately urged Tim away from the car trying to park in the empty spot next to them.

When they got out, she acknowledged their thanks with a dismissive wave of her hand as she fumed inside. There were a hundred other parking spots. Why did they have to choose that one?

“Let it go, Little girl,” Tim urged as he got into the passenger seat. “Take my word for it. Life’s too short to waste

on being angry.”

“Sorry, Daddy.”

“Shall we take the toys home so you and Boston can play?” he asked, changing the subject.

“I’d like that.”

“What are you going to call your alligator?” he asked.

“Ally. She has the longest lashes.”

“I love it. Will she be okay in the trunk?” Tim asked.

Aspen paused for a minute to think about that. “She’ll be fine. There’s lots of space back there. Ally and Boston’s cheese can play catch.”

When they turned the first corner, a crinkling sound preceded a ball bouncing off the side wall. Tim turned to Aspen and announced, “Let the games begin!”

She giggled all the way home.

CHAPTER 8



As they tried out the new ball in the greenspace that afternoon, Aspen's heart ached. Could this relationship last? Each moment she spent with him made her want more.

"My spidey senses are in alert mode. What are you worrying about, baby?"

"I just want to remember all this," she answered, skirting the issue.

"We can do it all again tomorrow or next weekend or next year," he assured her.

"Will we be together next year?" she whispered.

"We'll be together for as long as you'll put up with a bumbling boss," he said, obviously trying to lighten her mood.

"I'm scared," Aspen admitted.

"Boston, to me!" Tim immediately called the dog back to him before brushing his hand through her hair. "Don't be, Little girl. We need to talk if you haven't realized yet that I'm not going anywhere."

"Really?" she whispered.

"Abso-fucking-lutely," he assured her, drawing a grin from her. Aspen had never heard him swear before—ever!

A couple minutes later, she held Boston's slobbery ball as they made their way to B Tower. At the elevator, he asked, "Where would you feel most comfortable talking?"

"Your apartment," she answered immediately, picturing Ally in her mind. Her stuffie was taking a nap on his couch while they took Boston out.

"Perfect."

The silence could have been deafening in the few seconds it took to rise to his floor, but Tim stayed in constant contact with her, rubbing her back to reassure her. When the doors opened, Aspen led the way down the hall. When he triggered the lock, she rushed in to sit on the couch, hugging Ally to her chest as she watched Tim remove Boston's harness and gear to send the dog over for a drink and a rest in his bed. When she saw him gather a magnifying glass, a large pad of paper, and two pens from his workspace, Aspen sat up straight.

"Am I going to write something?"

"We're going to write something." Tim sat next to her on the couch and tore several sheets of paper off the pad for himself before handing it to her.

"Really?"

"First, write important on the top line and number down from one to three," he instructed as he lowered himself to sit on the carpet in front of the coffee table to use it as his desktop. Using the magnifying glass, he followed his own directions.

When he finished, he looked up at Aspen. "Write the three most important things you need to feel secure in our relationship."

“Can’t I just tell you?” she asked, her heart breaking to see him working so hard to write.

“No. Write them out,” he directed.

“But...”

“No arguments, Little girl,” he interrupted as he bent over his paper.

Instantly, she tore her eyes from his paper and wrote in large block letters.

1. *I need to feel like I’m a choice not a convenience.*
2. *I need frequent reminders that I’m cared for.*
3. *I need _____.*

Aspen couldn’t finish number three. She wanted to write love but there was no way he felt that strongly about her in such a short time. Peeking at his page, she discovered he had placed a hand over his answers to make sure she didn’t read his as he worked. A few minutes later, Tim finished.

“I’m ready. We’ll both share our lists and then we’ll answer any questions. Read me yours.”

“Could you go first?” she asked nervously.

“Of course. Number one, I need to spend lots of time with my Little girl—not just in the office but during our free time as well. Number two, I need her to know how strongly I feel about her. Number three, I need her emotional commitment to me and me alone. I will not tolerate another Daddy or boyfriend in our relationship.”

“I wouldn’t...”

“Read yours and then we’ll discuss them,” Tim interrupted brusquely.

Looking down at her page, she wished she'd made them more interesting. Aspen read through her list quickly and broke off in the middle of her third item, not knowing how to finish.

"You couldn't come up with a third item?" he asked quietly. "Or you didn't want to write down what you really need?"

"I don't know what to say. It's impossible at this point—maybe in the future," she suggested.

"Look at my number two. Read it aloud so we both hear it."

"I need Aspen to know how strongly I feel about her," Aspen read.

"Do you believe some people are drawn together for a reason, Aspen?"

"You mean like us being matched together with me as your administrative assistant?"

"Even more important than that. My folks met at a spring dance before my father was due to join the service. They got married two days later and have been together for almost forty years. Dad went to that dance only because a guy going with Mom's best friend owed him ten dollars."

"They got married two days later?"

"They both knew they were right for each other," he shared. "Do you know what I felt the first time I saw you?"

"What?" she whispered.

"I didn't want to let you go, but I had to. You weren't mine yet. And what did you do?"

“I left?”

“You made sure I’d let you come back the next day before you left. I bet you even thought about following me to work on Monday so you could make sure I got there without having trouble,” he suggested.

She looked at him with her mouth gaping open in shock. How did he know that?

“I didn’t do that,” Aspen rushed to assure him.

“I know. I would have felt you there. And thank you for having confidence in me. I need supportive people around me. Working at Edgewater Industries has given me back confidence in my professional abilities.”

“You’re amazing. I watch people walking out of your office, shaking their heads as they mutter, ‘Why didn’t I think of that?’ under their breath,” she shared.

“I love that,” he said, smiling at her. Awkwardly, he rose to his knees to sit next to her on the sofa.

Taking her hand, he continued, “Most of all, I need you. You’ve brought the joy back to my life. It hasn’t been very long, but I know how I feel, and I think you need to hear that I love you.”

“You love me?” she gasped.

“More and more with each minute I spend with you. I hope someday you’ll feel the same way, but for now, will you explore this relationship with me until you’re ready to make it permanent?”

“Permanent?” Aspen realized that she sounded like an echo repeating his last words.

“Forever and ever, Little girl. Does that help you fill in your top three list?”

Aspen picked up her pen and filled in the last entry. *I need my Daddy's love.* She looked at it as tears poured down her cheeks. Who knew that writing down three sentences would help her work through what her heart already had figured out.

“Read them for me again, Aspen, so I can memorize all three.”

Stumbling over some words when her emotions overwhelmed her, Aspen read the three powerful sentences to him again. When he repeated each one, she held her breath.

“You are always my top choice. I plan to make sure you remember how much I love and treasure you. Can you come sit on my lap? I need to hold you.”

In a flash, Aspen dropped her list to wrap her arms around his neck as she perched on his hard thighs. Held tight to his body, Aspen reveled in the connection that bonded them. She pushed her worries about the future out of her mind. Her Daddy loved and wanted her.

CHAPTER 9



“Tim? Your two o’clock appointment is here to see you.”
Aspen’s sweet voice came through the speaker on his desk.

He felt his lips curve with fondness at the sound as he pulled up his schedule to confirm who he was slated to see next. Then, Tim reached for the button and answered, “Send her in, Aspen. Thank you.”

Standing up behind his desk, he waited for her to enter. “Hi, Sharon. What can I do for you?” He waved her toward a chair.

“Hi, Tim. I wanted to check in with you to see how everything is going.”

“Over the last three weeks, I’ve implemented several changes that should affect Edgewater’s bottom line. There’s a great staff here. I’m enjoying working with them.”

“Easton will be happy to hear that. Anything else you need to allow you to do your important work?” she asked.

“You can take the temporary away from my administrative assistant’s designation. I’m keeping her.”

“Professionally or personally?” Sharon asked with a laugh.

“Both. It was the best decision ever to take a risk on that job interview.”

“For Edgewater as well. I won’t take up more of your time. I’m a phone call away if you run into anything else that will make your job easier,” she related as she stood.

“Thank you, Sharon. Tell Knox to take it easy on me on Wednesday, would you? That mountain of a man thinks everyone should push themselves to the max,” Tim joked.

“A bit sore on Thursday, hmmm? Don’t tell anyone but I had to slap some lidocaine patches on him last week,” she confided before adding, “You don’t know anything about that.”

“My lips are sealed,” he promised and relaxed against his chair.

When his office was again quiet, Tim texted Aspen, *Drink your water.*

I’m sick of water. Can I have a soda?

When you finish your water.

Fine!

He heard a small trickle of water from the outer room. Standing, he waved Boston back under the desk as he walked to her office. Tim picked up the trashcan and shook it. Water sloshed inside.

“You heard that?” she asked aghast.

“Looks like you’ll draw that last card from the punishment jar.” Tim pictured the vase with cards shuffled all over the dining room table in his apartment. Standing in a corner and no dessert after dinner lay in a neat pile with a few the other

punishments he written on cards and dropped inside. There was only one left.

“I don’t want to wear that in my bottom,” she protested, thinking of the thick anal plug he’d purchased for her.

“I wish you’d thought of that earlier. No worries. I’ll take it out before work tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow?” she gasped.

“Better be on your best behavior. Every negative act will lengthen the time that plug fills your tight channel. I’ll just leave this here.” He set down a posted note with two hash marks on it.

“Two?”

“Lying to Daddy and not drinking your water. That’s an hour. Get five and that will be past your bedtime.”

“You won’t wake me up?”

“Little girls need their beauty sleep,” he assured her.

“Can I hide it in my desk?”

“No. It needs to stay right there so you’ll remember how much your Daddy cares for you.” Tim dropped a kiss on her head.

“There are other ways to show how much you care,” she suggested.

“The plug will make that more enjoyable as well,” he assured her.

“Daddy!”

“Always, baby.”

She knew he didn't need his sight to sense she was wiggling in her chair with more anticipation than worry. Her Daddy knew all her fantasies. He'd make sure she enjoyed her punishment.

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5.0 out of 5 stars

Great series starter

A fabulous story with just a bit of suspense. Sweet yet kinky series starter that makes me excited to read the rest. Great premise with a bit of kink!

One person found this helpful

5.0 out of 5 stars

A wonderful fantastic series

This is going to be one hot series. Piper thought she had found her daddy in Gabriel until she found out he has taken advantage of her. After she left town and her family she found other job at Edgewater Industries and she would be the administrative assistant to Easton the owner and he was looking for his Little Girl. Now you will have to read his wonderful book to see if Easton finds his Little Girl. This book will make you want to go to work for Edgewater Industries.
Enjoy

Daddy's Waiting

Chapter 1

“Ms. Townie is here, Mr. Edgewater.”

“Please send her in, Sharon,” Easton requested, standing and circling his desk to greet the prospective interviewee. He couldn’t prevent the smile on his face as Piper Townie entered.

Dressed in a knee-length brown skirt with a copper blouse that highlighted her brown eyes, Piper looked like she had stepped out of a marketer’s dream ad. Nothing flashy or eye-catching, Piper had pulled her brown hair up at the nape of her neck and wore stylish pumps with a small heel. She looked efficient and capable.

“Ms. Townie, please come in. Thank you for interviewing with me today,” Easton greeted Piper.

“Mr. Edgewater, I am very glad to meet you. I must be honest, I wasn’t expecting to speak to the head of the company today,” Piper confessed, with a hint of a nervous tremor in her voice.

“You can thank my current administrative assistant for the change in plans. Please come in and take a seat,” he encouraged.

“Thank you,” she murmured politely before sitting exactly where Sharon had sat two days before.

“Sharon flagged your application for my consideration. The two of us have worked together since Edgewater Industries had been merely a dream. When she announced she needed to

leave for personal reasons, Sharon decided she needed to find her replacement. So far, she has sent me exactly one applicant. You.”

“That’s... intriguing.” Piper finished her sentence after a brief pause.

“I thought so, too. What can you tell me about yourself?” he asked, sitting back in his chair.

“I’m a dedicated employee. I work hard and am conscientious about my duties.”

“Why are you leaving your present job?”

“I would like to pursue new challenges,” she answered with a completely expressionless face.

“That’s the first lie you’ve told me. Try again,” he prompted.

Piper froze, and Easton could tell an internal battle had begun inside her brain. Finally, decision made, she answered, “Thank you for your time.” Piper stood and held her hand out.

“One reason my company has succeeded is that I have the ability to tell when anyone is lying,” Easton explained, ignoring her outstretched hand. He did not stop her as she walked toward the closed door.

Halfway there, Piper turned and looked back at him.
“Anyone?”

He smiled at her inquisitive nature. “Anyone.”

“That’s quite a power,” she answered with a twitch at one corner of her mouth.

“Try me. Tell me two true statements and a lie.”

“Like the old game?” she questioned, arching one eyebrow in amusement.

“Exactly.”

Piper walked forward to rest her hands on the back of the chair she’d vacated. She hesitated before ticking three statements off on her fingers. “My most prized possession is a stuffed bear. I’m afraid of the dark. I really need this job.”

“True. True. True. You forgot to lie.”

She stared at him in shock before shaking her head slowly.
“I’m not scared of the dark.”

“Someday you’ll tell me the full truth. But I can wait until you trust me,” Easton commented softly before changing the conversation. “Would you come sit down and finish the interview? I think Sharon may well be right this time as she always seems to be.”

“Is there anyone who can fool you?”

“No.”

Piper pivoted and returned to her previous seat. “I left because I accepted the wrong man’s proposal and he’s sworn to never let me go. When he invaded my parents’ home to leave me a message, I knew he was a threat to them as well.”

“Truth once again. You need a safe place to live and work,” Easton suggested.

“Yes.”

He smiled inwardly as she adopted his one-word answering style. “Thank you for telling me the truth. Let me tell you how I can help you.” Easton explained the benefits package he could offer her and the bonus of a small apartment in a very protected space—in the B tower of the office complex.



“Oh, employees can rent a room there?” she said in relief as she sagged against the back of the seat.

“I provide space, free of charge, for Littles who work for the company. It is my way of protecting them.”

“Littles?” Piper repeated. Her hackles rose as she stared at him in disbelief. What message was she sending out that all these men kept picking up on?

“Yes.”

“Like children?” she asked, trying to lead the conversation in another direction. “Isn’t that against the law?”

“No, I only employ those eighteen or older here. My suspicion is that you have known you’re a Little for a long time. I take it from your defensive posture that your former fiancé called himself a Daddy?”

Piper stared at him in shock. *How does he know all of this?*

“Not all who call themselves Daddies have the caring, nurturing capacity that role demands. Some pervert that title to take away a Little’s power. Never allow anyone to do that.”

Finding herself unable to lie to him for something other than the simple reason he would immediately know, Piper clutched at the situation. “I prefer to keep my private life and my career separated.”

Piper’s mind raced as she tried to digest his word. *Pervert. Are there Daddies who don’t use their Little’s fantasies for their gain?*

Mentally, she shook her head to concentrate on the man before her. Forcing her hands to relax in her lap, she tried not to give away any secrets to this extremely observant man. To her relief, he shifted the conversation.

“Understandable. If you would like, Sharon will give you a tour of the apartment available before you train with her,” Easton suggested.

Tensing, she curbed her body’s instant reaction to his gentle smile. Why was she responding so quickly to this man’s acceptance? Forcing herself back into proper interview demeanor, she asked, shell-shocked, “That’s it? You’re hiring me to be your administrative assistant?”

“If you would like the job, it is yours. I think we would work well together. Sharon will stay on for one week to assist in the transition. Then she has offered to be a phone call away if you need her.”

“Yes. That sounds amazing. I’ll take the job, thank you.” She smiled at her new employer, feeling relief flood her body. *Please let this be the answer I’ve searched for! Let me be safe here.*

“You are very welcome, Piper. Welcome to the Edgewater Industries family.”

A jingle at the door drew both of their attention. “I have the key to apartment five eleven. It’s available tonight. Let’s take a walk, Piper,” Sharon suggested.

“O-Okay.” Piper stumbled at the fast pace of her life changing. Standing, she looked back at Easton Edgewater. “Thank you, sir. I’ll work very hard to be, if not the best assistant you’ve ever had,” she paused, looking at Sharon before meeting her new boss’ gaze, “at least an extremely strong second place.”

“I will see you later this afternoon.” He accepted her promise with a nod.

Piper followed Sharon out of the office and to a different elevator than she had ridden up that morning. Sharon fit a small key on the ring she held into a slot and the door opened immediately. As they stepped in the mirror-lined car, Sharon pushed the button labeled L. Piper noticed that there were only three: T, L, E. She quickly translated Lobby and Easton, correcting herself to Mr. Edgewater.

Forcing her mind away from the mesmerizing man, she asked, “What does T stand for?”

“Tunnel. This is the key to Mr. Edgewater’s private elevator. You are not to invite anyone else to ride with you—other than Mr. Edgewater, of course.”

“I understand,” Piper murmured as she thought, “A private elevator?”

The doors opened to a quiet corridor and Sharon gestured at the glass exterior doors a few steps away. “Outside those doors is Mr. Edgewater’s parking spot. Your parking spot will be next to his if you ever need it. Most days, I bet you’ll choose

to walk across the grounds from your apartment in B tower to this A building. Let me show you how you can avoid bad weather or if it's dark. We'll come back by the outdoor path."

"Will I need to be on call twenty-four hours a day?" Piper asked in concern.

"No, you need only work from eight to five with an hour lunch break. If, however, you wish to arrive early or leave late, this is another option for you," Sharon answered smoothly as she pressed the T button. "We do have torrential rain and a trace of snow from time to time."

The elevator opened to reveal a brightly lit vestibule feeding into a passageway to their left. Sharon beckoned her into the tunnel and set a quick pace to the next building. Along the brightly colored walls, pictures of the history of Edgewater Industries hung along with highlighted employees from the many departments that filled the three towers. The impression was that the company treasured its employees.

Everything kept turning out better than she'd dreamed. Piper was glad she had comfortable shoes. The tunnel was longer than she expected between buildings. Walking underneath one massive tower to another gave her a greater feeling of their size. Finally, they came to another wide opening. A painted 'B' on the wall announced their destination.

"Here's your new home. Normally, you'll need to put the pink key in the elevator and press your forefinger to the reader. We'll put you in the system when we reach your new

apartment. I'll press my finger instead this time. We'll double-check that everything works before we leave," Sharon reassured her.

"Thank you. The security here is quite extensive."

"It is. Mr. Edgewater protects his employees. Especially in this building."

Before Piper could ask why this building in particular, the elevator doors opened and the women stepped inside. Sharon inserted the key again and pushed the fifth floor button. The car moved smoothly upward as Piper watched the numbers flash as they rose.

"Here we are. Your new apartment is five eleven. It's to the right." Sharon led the way.

"I didn't ask if you preferred a furnished or unfurnished apartment. This one has the basic furniture inside. If that doesn't work for you, I can move you to an empty one," Sharon assured her as she opened the door with the gilded numbers 511.

"It's lovely," Piper said in amazement as she looked around the small apartment. The first large room was open with a kitchen in one corner and living space filling the others. A large, overstuffed couch and chair invited her to come sit down and relax. The kitchen island separated the cooking space and, while small, even had a dishwasher, to her surprise.

Without waiting for Sharon, Piper walked to the hallway. To the left was a bathroom with a tub/shower combination. She peeked behind a set of louvered doors and found a stacked washer and dryer. To the right, the bedroom beckoned. It had a large bed with a railing at each side of the headboard that seemed to roll into the wall. Tearing her eyes away, she noted the immense dresser with a padded top and no mirror. Perhaps the last resident had a destructive cat?

“I’ve never seen a queen-sized bed with a railing around it,” Piper mused. She tugged the edge by the nightstand. It glided down the side of the bed. Piper pushed it back into the wall to allow herself access to the interior of the bed.

“A new safety feature,” Sharon commented smoothly.

Piper sat in the immense chair by the window. “It’s a rocker. I’ll love to sit here and read,” she mentioned.

“Perfect. You’ll love the light that streams in this side. There are office buildings beside the apartment, so be sure to close your windows,” Sharon cautioned.

“Good reminder. I must admit I’m amazed by this apartment. I had been living on my parents’ farm recently. This is completely different.” Piper tried to keep her tone light but knew her eyes shone with tears when she thought of Gabriel having those she loved as possible targets.

“I’m glad you found your way to Edgewater. Perhaps a new beginning is just the thing you need,” Sharon remarked softly.

“Thank you. Is it okay if I move my suitcases in tonight? I can start work now. I know I only have you around for a week,” Piper asked, eager to get started.

“Let’s get your fingerprint in the apartment system and we’ll walk back to the main building by the outdoor path.” Sharon led her over to a pad by the door. She typed a few strange letter combinations and a green glowing fingertip appeared.

“Press whichever finger from either hand on the pad. I always advise your non-dominant hand. That’s usually the one you use to carry something. This way you don’t have to juggle.”

Piper stepped up to the glowing display and pressed her left thumb to the screen. She stepped back when Sharon approached again. Watching over the other woman’s shoulder, Piper jumped when the screen flashed to red.

“Now, press a finger that you want to use as an alert that something is wrong,” Sharon instructed.

“Is this a dangerous neighborhood?” Piper blurted apprehensively.

“No. It’s incredibly safe here. There are guards at the entrances and security patrols on the grounds. Our highly classified contracts require heightened entry screening. More important, Mr. Edgewater wishes to ensure everyone’s well-being. You’ll find he takes care of his employees. Easton lives here himself.”

“Really? In this building?”

“No, his apartment is attached to his office so he can easily go back and forth if needed. Now, choose a finger you’d never naturally press against the screen,” Sharon encouraged.

Piper stepped back to the screen and carefully pressed her middle fingertip to the screen. At the sound of Sharon’s laugh, she looked over her shoulder to see the other woman’s relaxed expression. “It seemed appropriate?” she said with a shrug.

“Mine is exactly the same finger. I think we’re going to get along fine. Great minds and all of that! Come on. Let’s go get started. You’ve got a lot to pick up.”

Sharon handed her the keys and opened the door. When Piper had relocked it, she led the way back to the elevator. As they reached the elevator, a plump blonde emerged through a nearby door marked STAIRS.

“Hi, Regina. This is Piper. She’s moving in after work.”

“Hi, Piper. Welcome! I’m in five twenty-three if you need anything or just want to chat. Everyone is super friendly here. I’m off to pick up something for Mr. Walker that I left in my apartment. Knock if you need some help getting stuff upstairs. I’m trying to lose a few pounds.” Regina gestured at the stairs.

“I could use some exercise, too,” Piper laughed. “But after I lug everything upstairs.”

“Good plan!” With a wave, Regina rushed down the corridor.

Reassured that she'd have at least one friendly person on the floor, Piper smiled to herself. She'd loved seeing Sharon smile, too. It seemed she had a nonprofessional side as well.

Riding to the lobby this time in the elevator, Sharon had her practice using her fingerprint and her key to make sure it worked. Like magic, pressing her fingertip to the screen called for the doors to open. Sharon waved her across the lobby and stopped to introduce her to the guard sitting at the large reception area just inside the doors.

“Piper, you're in luck. You get to meet our head of security. This is Knox Miller,” Sharon said, smiling at the enormous man behind the counter.

“Hi, Piper!” His voice was low and gravelly, the perfect match for the muscled man. He hit a few keys on the computer and looked at her. “You're staying in apartment five eleven and working for Mr. Edgewater. Hold still for a photo.”

He paused for a few seconds as she processed his words. When she smiled automatically for a photo, he lifted a small eyeball camera. “Thank you, Piper. I'll process your ID badge and have it here at the desk after work. If you have things to move into your apartment, ask at the desk for help. We always have powerful guys around to help.”

“Thank you, Knox. I appreciate the help. I'll be sure to talk to the attendant here at the desk.”

“My pleasure. That’s what I do around here. I’m sure we’ll run into each other frequently,” he said, stroking his thick black beard.

Piper nodded and turned to look at Sharon. She felt like he knew all about her. Not much would escape the sharp eyes of the security head.

“Shall we continue the tour?” Piper asked.

“If you’ll excuse us, Knox, we’ll be on our way.” Sharon stepped away with a wave.

“Of course. See you soon, Piper.”

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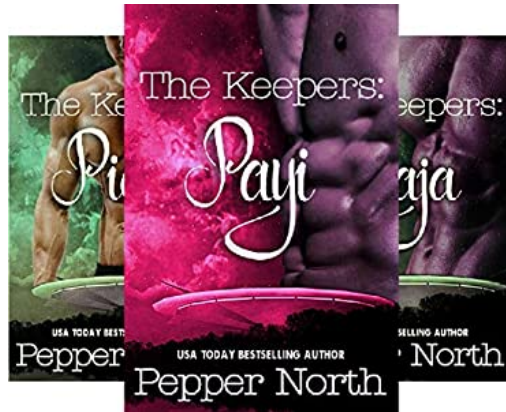


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The Magic of Twelve features the stories of twelve women transported on their 22nd birthday to a new life as the droblin (cherished Little one) of a Sorcerer of Bairn. These magic wielders have waited a long time to take complete care of their droblin's needs. They will protect their precious one to their last drop of magic from a growing menace. Each novel is a complete story.

Available on Amazon



Ever just gone for it? That's what *USA Today* Bestselling Author Pepper North did in 2017 when she posted a book for sale on Amazon without telling anyone. Thanks to her amazing fans, the support of the writing community, Mr. North, and a killer schedule, she has now written more than 80 books!

Enjoy contemporary, paranormal, dark, and erotic romances that are both sweet and steamy? Pepper will convert you into one of her loyal readers. What's coming in the future? A Daddypalooza!

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