

MOUNTAIN
SHIFTERS
OF
COLORADO

*Her Billionaire
Shifter Valentine*

LISA CULLEN

HER BILLIONAIRE SHIFTER VALENTINE

MOUNTAIN SHIFTERS OF COLORADO

LISA CULLEN

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Lisa's Insider Club

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DESCRIPTION

Milo Mason is a jerk.

He's also my boss and the man who plays the leading role in all my fantasies.

So, when he invited me on a business weekend trip to Manitou Springs, I thought nothing of it, at first.

Despite what my best friend and my roommate say.

I wasn't Milo Mason's type. I was the complete opposite.

I should have listened to them.

For two blissful days, I discovered just how much the real thing compared to my imagination, and it was better than I could have hoped for.

But as soon as the weekend was over, things returned to normal.

One month later, I have the surprise of a lifetime.

But Milo Mason isn't a family man. He's not even the relationship type.

I have to tell him before I start showing.

The only problem is, I keep talking myself out of it, and his office has become a revolving door for the blonds he normally prefers.

PROLOGUE: OLIVIA

“I hate you, Milo Mason,” Olivia muttered under her breath as she sat on her hands and knees while digging through the closet of her bedroom in her shared apartment for a suitcase or duffel bag... anything that would hold a few sets of clothing for this weekend’s business trip with her boss of whom she had just announced she hated.

Olivia could have sworn she had both items stowed away in her closet, safe and sound. At least, she was sure she had them at one point in the past. But her closet apparently liked to eat things, or it was some sort of magical portal to a different world. Because it didn’t appear to matter how much she searched the small space for the things she needed, she wasn’t going to find them.

“I have way too much stuff,” Olivia added with a groan.

“Those are not kind things to say,” Maxine, Olivia’s best friend said over the call Olivia had on speaker. The phone rested on the floor, freeing up Olivia’s hands so she could desperately search for luggage that apparently didn’t want to be found.

“Yeah, well, they are true,” Olivia said, sticking to her word.

“First of all, there is no such thing as too much stuff. Not for you,” Maxine argued. “And your boss can’t be all bad if he’s bringing you here to visit me.”

“That’s the thing. He’s not bringing me to visit you,” Olivia said. “Visiting you is both a bonus and a coincidence.”

And something I'm going to make sure happens or I may murder him. Besides, I shouldn't be going with him at all."

"But you are coming," Maxine said.

Olivia sat back on her knees. She let out a heavy sigh and stared at her now-destroyed closet with not so much as a hint of the location of her missing luggage in sight. "I won't be coming with any of my things if I can't find my luggage."

"And we are going to hang out," Maxine added.

"Yes," Olivia said. Her response came out breathy. "With or without clothes apparently."

Maxine chuckled. Olivia missed the sound of her best friend's laugh. They had spent their entire childhood laughing together. It was a sound Olivia found comfort and joy in. Maxine was a big piece of all of Olivia's fondest memories. And she was excited to finally have the chance to see her. Especially after how much time had passed since they were last able to hang out with each other.

"You're so dramatic." She let out a long, sigh. "I seriously freaking miss you."

"I miss you too," Olivia said, voice soft.

Olivia rolled her head on her shoulders to try and release the tension building within them, but it wasn't doing her much good. Her boss wasn't exactly a patient man, and he didn't forgive incompetence. At least, not during the time Olivia had worked for him. So, going on a business trip with no clothing because she couldn't find a bag was something Milo Mason would see as unforgivable.

Carrying her things would likely be looked at more severely.

"I've said it before, and I'll say it again," Olivia started, "Milo Mason is a jerk."

"Come on, he can't be all bad," Maxine said.

Olivia leveled her gaze at her phone and then stood from the floor, picking it up as she righted herself. "Oh, you have yet to discover the jerk he is. Give him five minutes and I

guarantee you're going to agree with me. No. Not even five minutes."

"Trust and believe, I'm fine without meeting him... for now. But I can't wait to finally hang out with you though," she said.

"What are you not telling me?" Olivia asked, picking up on the hint her best friend had not so subtly dropped on her lap.

"Nothing," she said, playing coy.

Olivia shook her head. She knew when her best friend was hiding something from her, and she knew when she wasn't going to be able to drag it out of her too. "Very well. And again, I can't make any guarantees about being able to visit. I'm sure as hell going to try, though."

"Come on, now. He can't have control over every minute of your time and life," Maxine said, trying to sound reasonable.

Normally, it would be reasonable to say not every minute of Olivia's day would be pre-planned. But Milo wasn't normal. He was overbearing. In everything she knew about him. Still, that didn't mean she was going to let him stand in the way of her visiting her oldest and dearest best friend.

Olivia snorted and thought to herself, "He wishes he had that sort of power."

She hopped in place, trying to see into the back of her closet, along the top shelf.

"Maybe he knew I lived here?" Maxine offered. "He might be trying to be nice to you for once."

After several unsuccessful attempts at peeking into the top of her closet, Olivia gave up and panted for breath while adjusting her clothing. She knew her luggage had to be around here somewhere.

Evidently, the closet wasn't it.

"Nice isn't a word I would ever use to describe that man on any given day. Nice doesn't come close. Not by a long shot.

I highly doubt the word exists in his vocabulary.”

“Fair enough,” Maxine said. “You know... thinking about it all, I agree it’s weird he’s bringing you along to a business meeting... and for the whole weekend? It doesn’t add up.”

“It is very weird,” Olivia agreed and picked up her phone before sitting on the foot of her bed. She sighed as she stared at the condition of her closet. She never thought she would believe it, but she truly did have too much stuff. She promised herself once she got back from her trip, she was going to weed through everything and get rid of what she really didn’t need.

“Well, you know my theory,” Maxine said.

Olivia scoffed. “How could he possibly know about you living there?”

“You would be surprised,” she replied.

Olivia shook her head, though Maxine couldn’t see it. “We’ll see about that. But for him to have known where you lived and set up this whole trip for my sake, he would have to have some sort of interest in me, and I am so far from registering anywhere close to his radar, it’s not even funny. I’m the complete and total opposite of the girls he chooses to date. Besides, he’s probably only going to make me work the entire time. I would be lucky if he let me sleep.”

Maxine laughed. “So dramatic.”

Olivia shrugged. “It’s all true... well, maybe not the sleeping part.”

“I still think you should sneak away when his back is turned,” Maxine said. “I would love for you to meet my men and Phineas.”

Ah, yes. Her new relationship came in the form of three men and a teenage boy. It didn’t surprise Olivia in the least her friend had hit it off with the kid. She relates to kids in ways Olivia was never able to understand. It was almost like she had the ability to tell exactly what they needed as soon as she settled her attention on them. Perhaps, it was because she was a kid at heart too.

Or it was she was just that good.

And Olivia was incredibly happy for her.

A little jealous, truth be told... but happy all the same.

Olivia sighed. "I promise I'm going to do everything I can to come and visit you."

"You better," she said. "Any luck finding your bags?"

"No," Olivia's voice came out sharp. "You're hilarious if you think I would be that lucky."

"Damn right, I'm hilarious," she said and got quiet for a few moments.

Olivia withdrew into her thoughts, racking her brain, trying to figure out what she had done with her luggage. She hadn't seen them since she moved into this apartment over a year ago.

Thinking about that time, she might have put them anywhere. And go figure, she forgot exactly where that was. Knowing herself as well as she had, she probably thought she was being clever by putting them in such a great hiding spot. Now, she was kicking herself for not recalling what she had done with them.

"Do you want help?" she asked.

"You gonna fly here?" Olivia asked. "Because I could use the extra eyes."

She chuckled. "I wish I could fly, though. But have you checked under your bed?"

"Ye—" Olivia started to reply and stopped herself as she gave more consideration to Maxine's question "No. I haven't."

"Try there," she said as Olivia was already in the process of standing up and placing her phone on the foot of the bed so she can peek underneath.

Sure enough, they were there. And it made so much sense too. It was a clever spot. Too bad Olivia didn't think to look there first and save herself so much stress and time.

“Found them!” I shouted. Relief flooded through her system. “God, you are amazing at that.”

She giggled. “Thank you.”

“No,” Olivia said and picked up the phone. “Thank you. Seriously, I would totally kiss you right now, if you were standing in front of me.”

“Well, it’s a good thing you’re gonna see me later, huh?” she asked through a laugh. “You can kiss me then.”

“I think you might have saved my life,” Olivia panted out as she pulled on the luggage.

“I doubt that,” Maxine said.

Olivia let out a deep breath, releasing the tension that had built up in her shoulders. She checked the time and did some quick math. She had forty minutes to get her stuff packed and she wasn’t even fully dressed yet.

And judging by the condition of the luggage she had pulled out, covered in dust and who knows what else, she was going to need to clean it before Milo Mason would allow it to grace the inside of his trunk.

That meant, she had to get off the phone.

“I better let you go,” Olivia said. “I have to wash off my luggage before I can pack, and my boss is going to be here pretty soon.”

“Kay, love you,” she said. “See you soon.”

“Love you too,” Olivia replied and ended the call.

She wasted no time in dragging the suitcase to her shower and rinsing it off before taking a rag and wiping it down. Once the bright purple poked through, looking almost brand new, she called it done enough.

Olivia checked the time again and cursed under her breath.

Cleaning the luggage had taken more time than she had wanted to give. Ten minutes longer. She was now down to thirty minutes to finish. So, she rushed into her room, tossed her suitcase onto the bed, grabbed the clothes she had

previously pulled out, and carefully folded them into the suitcase before tossing a few shoes in, along with her toiletry bag.

Once her things were finally packed, she took the suitcase to the door before rushing to finish getting ready.

After wrapping up everything, she impressively had fifteen minutes to spare. So, she took a seat at the little kitchen table and took the opportunity to drink another cup of coffee. Meanwhile, the ticking of the clock she and her roommate had up on the wall just across from her, grew louder with each passing second.

Five minutes passed agonizingly slowly.

Then her doorknob jiggled. The bolt lock clicked over seconds before the door opened, and Olivia's roommate, Morgan stepped through.

Morgan took one look at the bag and then settled her eyes on Olivia.

OLIVIA

Morgan, my roommate, had just stepped through the door of our shared apartment minutes before I was due to leave for my business trip with my boss. Her soft brown eyes took in my appearance before settling back on the suitcase sitting next to the door.

“I take it you are going somewhere?” she asked as she closed the door behind her. She had her long brown hair pulled back into a ponytail, revealing her zodiac tattoo stamped on the back of her neck.

I was always surprised to see it as she never really kept her hair up. I kept forgetting the tattoo was there.

She turned around to face me and I nodded and sighed. “I’m going to Manitou for the weekend. A business trip with my boss.”

Her eyes widened as her mouth formed an “O” shape. “Your boss, boss?”

I nodded.

“The one you can’t stand working for because you’re convinced, he’s flaunting his stick-figure, blonde bimbo girlfriends in front of your face?”

I bit my lip and nodded again.

She nodded once as she stepped farther into our shared apartment. “Interesting.”

I chuckled under my breath. “That’s one word for it.”

“How did this come to pass?” she asked, setting her purse on the table.

I shrugged. “He just approached me and told me I was going. And because I don’t have any other job prospects lined up at the moment, I sort of have to still jump when he tells me to.”

She took a seat at the table. “Yikes.”

“I know right?” I asked.

She nodded. “So, Manitou, huh?”

“Yup,” I said then took a sip of my coffee. It was helping to ease my nerves... contrary to popular opinion.

“Isn’t that where your childhood best friend lives?” she asked.

“Uh-huh,” I said.

“Damn,” Morgan said, folding her hands on top of the table. “Developments happened while I was away.”

“No kidding,” I said. “How is your friend doing?”

“She’s a lot better,” she said, smiling. “Figured I would come home for a bit.”

I nodded.

Morgan had been spending most of her free time helping out a friend, nursing them back to health, and taking care of the animals while the friend was under the weather. With how much time she was gone, I didn’t have much of a chance to see her over the past couple of weeks.

That was Morgan though. She had a deep love for everyone she considered a friend of hers. She was such a great friend, devoted and kind. She had a habit of dropping everything and running to help anyone who needed her. And every single one of us—her friends—would do the same for her.

In a heartbeat. No questions asked.

That’s how much she meant to all of us.

I took in a deep breath. “Well, I’m happy I get to see you for at least a few minutes before I have to leave.”

“What about your date?” she asked, rounded eyebrows drawing closer together.

I sighed.

Right. Him.

His name was Benjamin and he was so cute and nice and almost perfect.

Morgan had talked me into setting up an online dating account. It wasn’t an easy thing for me to do. Especially with all the horror stories. I ended up hem hawing around about it for quite some time. At least until she started threatening to do it for me. So, not wanting that to happen, I jumped in. Morgan had helped me get my profile set up and vetted through some of the less-than-stellar profiles. With some of her pointers, I had a better idea of what to look for.

So, when this particular guy messaged out of the blue, I handed her the phone and she did some digging.

Turned out, the guy was legit. And he was the first guy who was genuinely interested in me. And after months and months of an agonizing dry spell, I had to cancel our first date.

Lucky for me, he was super understanding, and we agreed to reschedule once I was back and had a better idea of how things were going to be moving forward.

“I had to reschedule with him,” I said with a wistful sigh.

He was super cute. Dark brown eyes. Dimples. Muscles for days...

Bummer.

She frowned and then stood from the table to head toward the coffee pot nestled in the corner of our kitchen, just feet away from me. “You’re leaving around noon?”

I glanced at the time. Five minutes to go. “Noon-ish.”

“Noon-ish?” she asked, facing me with an arched eyebrow. A smile toyed the corner of her lips. “He’s not very upfront on

the details, is he?"

I chuckled. "Knowing him, he would keep me waiting just to spite me."

She shook her head. "So, are we sure that he doesn't have some dark hidden agenda with this impromptu weekend business trip?"

I blinked at her, confused as to what she was insinuating. Then she flashed a devious smile, and after several seconds she bobbed her eyebrows.

What she was inferring suddenly dawned on me. And I laughed. "Of course, you would think that."

She shrugged. "Eh, you're gorgeous and any man would be blind to not want you."

I snorted. "Yeah right."

She shrugged. "You never know. He is a man, after all."

I narrowed my eyes at her. "He's a man with very specific tastes of which categories I do not fall into."

Morgan held her cup closer to her mouth as she stared at me. "Uh-huh."

I shook my head and took a sip from my mug.

"So, when will you be back?" she asked and retook her seat at the table.

"Sunday evening, I presume," I said.

She leveled her gaze on me. "He hasn't told you when you're coming back."

I shook my head. "Milo Mason is not a man who reveals his plans to his secretary."

"No, but he certainly is a man who takes his secretary away on weekend trips," she said, winking at me from over the rim of her cup.

"Business trip," I corrected and stood to take my mug to the sink.

"We will see," she said.

I sighed and shook my head. Milo having a kinky hidden agenda had about as much hope as a snowball's chance in hell. There was no possible way that my boss... the dark, handsome, jerk of a man, would ever look at me in that way.

Like, never.

Though, if I was being honest with myself, I did get a strange sort of excitement in the idea. He had played the lead in so many of my private fantasies. The number of times I toyed with the many ideas of how his lips would feel on mine. How much pressure his fingertips would have as they dug into my hips...

So many things...

I cleared my throat as heat flushed through me. A wet sensation flooded my sex.

My arousal spiked hard, and it wasn't going to go away without force. But I didn't have time to—

My phone buzzed. I glanced at the thing to find Milo's name on the screen.

"I'm here," he texted.

I let out a deep breath as my heart skipped a beat and then raced to catch up. I stood from the table and started to grab my things. "Time to face the music."

"Was that him?" she asked. "The asshole can't even do you the courtesy of coming to your damn door?"

I nodded. "It's him and no... apparently not."

"Well screw him. But you have fun," she said with a devious smirk. "I expect a full report once you're home."

I laughed under my breath. "Don't have too much fun while I'm gone."

"You're not fair," she said standing from the table. "But I'll miss you."

She approached me and gave me a big hug.

“I will talk with you in a couple of days,” I said. “Once I’m home.”

“You better,” she commented as I stepped out the door. “Full. Report.”

I laughed and then stepped out into the hallway. I headed toward the stairs... all the while my heart was damn near in my throat, and I was horny as hell.

This weekend just might be the death of me.

MILO

Sitting in the back of my large, black, SUV, I thumbed through my phone, swiping through my endless emails as my driver jerked the vehicle to the side of the road and stopped.

“Sir?” he asked.

I dragged my gaze from the phone and settled it on the reflection of his dark brown eyes from the rearview mirror. “Yes, Zeke?”

“Are you sure this is the right place?” he asked.

“You put in the address I gave you into the GPS, correct?” I asked.

“Yes, sir,” he said. “The location...”

I turned my attention out of the window, settling onto the solid four-story, red brick building. It was an older apartment complex, stationed in a lower-income neighborhood. Graffiti marred the face of the building. Thin plywood took the place of a window on one side of the door into the place. Smaller windows, presumably ones belonging to apartments, on the bottom floor had wrought iron covering them.

The landscaping left a lot to be desired. If what the property had done could be considered landscaping. It was like they took the cheap option with the least amount of commitment and effort. No grass. Just rock.

Even the parking lot was in disrepair with chunks of pavement missing, and that was in just the parts I could see.

With a frown, I determined the location was subpar and I wanted to spend as little time in the area as possible.

What was Olivia thinking when she moved into this place? She should have done better for herself. There was nothing to be desired in the area and I couldn't fathom why she would stoop so low as to live in poverty-like conditions. Especially with how much I pay her.

It did little to improve the opinion I had already formed of her. However, it was making me reconsider how highly I thought of her. By the looks of the area, she had little to no self-respect. Regardless of how much sun shone on the place, it was a dump. And I was almost embarrassed just sitting out in front of the property.

This was absolutely unacceptable, and I was going to do everything in my power to change it.

"Then yes, unfortunately," I muttered as I met his waiting gaze.

Zeke nodded once. "Very well."

After another dismal glance at the area surrounding us, I searched through my phone for Olivia's contact information. Out of respect for her privacy and to keep my interest in her a secret, I saved her contact under a nickname of sorts. And it was one I had zero intention for her to hear until I was ready to share that information with her. That was if I would ever be ready. I still struggled to figure out what it was about the woman that called to me so loudly.

I continued scrolling until I came to the name, Goddess and tapped it.

Then I tapped the message icon and then let her know I had arrived. Once I hit send, I set the phone on my lap and stared out of the window and wondered how long she was going to make me wait. It was a game I found myself playing often. And when things finally got started between the two of us, I was going to punish her for every minute she made me wait.

My lips curved upward at the thought.

One strike on her plump, round ass for each minute I had to wait.

The idea of my red handprint marring her porcelain skin made my dick start to harden.

The woman was astounding in ways I had yet to discover. She seemed so eager and so willing to please me by immediately rushing off to fulfill all my requests the second I had delivered them.

That was another game of mine. The enjoyment I received from sending her to do mundane things was almost too much to bear.

For example, it would take her six minutes to bring me coffee. Another ten minutes to fetch a fax, and twenty minutes for anything that had to do with leaving the floor.

The door to the building opened, pulling my attention toward it. Zeke also climbed out of the driver's seat as Olivia's form came into view from behind her building's door.

I checked the time. Three minutes.

Interesting. I had hoped for slightly longer. At least two more strikes worth of waiting.

I took in her appearance and was rather impressed. She was dressed in a pink pencil skirt and matching jacket. Underneath was a silver, lowcut, sweater blouse that showed off her cleavage in delightful ways. A long string of pearls, likely fake, rested on her breasts. Her black hair was done up in a bun centered on the crown of her head. A few loose strands danced around her face. And her eyes were an exceptionally magnetic blue.

She smiled at Zeke, and I almost lost my senses. So dazzling and delightful.

Minutes later, Zeke held the passenger door open for her to climb in on the seat next to me. She smiled again and uttered a quick thanks before her plump ass slid along the leather seat, closer to me. She turned her gaze to me with a smile as the door closed, sealing us in the back of the SUV.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Mason,” she said.

I nodded once. “Thank you for not keeping me waiting long.”

She sucked in a breath and then let it out in a rush. “You’re welcome.”

I took a deep breath in and froze. My hands clenched and I narrowed my gaze on the woman’s form. Olivia had always smelled amazing. In the years she had worked for me, I couldn’t recall a time when she didn’t.

But this time?

She smelled better than ever, and my mouth watered at the spike of arousal that settled underneath the scent of her flowery perfume.

Until now, I always had... distractions... that kept my mind busy from the way she always rubbed her ink pens along her lips. Or the way she would stare off and lick them. Even the way she set me on fire with her blue eyes.

But those distractions apparently weren’t cutting it anymore.

Olivia certainly knew how to drive me crazy... and I couldn’t way to find out if that was in a good way or not. I was banking on the former.

Zeke graciously pulled away from the curb and headed down the street as I fell into my thoughts.

Truth be told, I wasn’t sure what had possessed me to demand that she accompany me on this trip. Perhaps it was my tolerance breaking. My restraint was faltering, so to speak. Under normal circumstances, I would attend these sorts of meetings on my own. But everything was said and done by the time I realized what I was doing and hoped that I could come up with a better plan before the day arrived.

Now we were at the day, and I still didn’t have a plan. At least, one outside of the room I had booked at the local bed and breakfast.

Perhaps, I could think about that while on the road. But the more I tried to plan the next steps, the more I thought about her choice of living conditions and my curiosities had gotten the better of me.

“Why do you live like that?” I asked before I realized the words escaped my mouth.

She turned her attention toward me and stared with confusion. Her eyes barely flicked toward the window next to me. “Like what?”

I gestured to the sorry excuse for living arrangements that were now, thankfully, behind us. “In squalor.”

She scoffed. “Appearances can be deceiving, I assure you.”

“I doubt that,” I said, staring at her.

She briefly met my gaze. “You would have figured out how wrong your doubts are if you had the decency to pick me up from my door. Instead of sending out an impersonal text.”

I almost laughed. Instead, the sound came out more like a snort. “This isn’t a date. This is business. And you are my secretary. Even if it had been a date, I wouldn’t lower my standards enough to step a hair inside that building. Even for you.”

She chuckled. “You are giving yourself way too much credit.”

“Is that so?” I asked, keeping my voice low and dark.

She nodded. “Yes. I would ever date you.”

Anger flowered through me. “I pay you enough money to live better than that. You will move into a better location by the beginning of next month.”

“No, I’m not leaving my apartment,” Olivia said.

“Yes, you are,” I argued.

“No, I am not,” she said and shook her head. Her black eyebrows drew together into a delightful “V” shape. “I am in a lease, and I have a roommate.”

“You have to move. I pay you too much to live like that,” I said.

“I can’t move, and I won’t,” she said, pressing her back into the seat and crossing her arms over her chest. “I like where I am at.”

“You can and you will,” I said, voice clipped. “That’s final.”

“Why?” she asked, scooting herself into the corner of the seat, farther away from me. She crossed her arms over her chest and glared. “Because you said so? You can’t just snap your fingers and expect me to live my life according to you. You don’t have the first clue as to what I can and can’t afford. And I’m not moving. That’s final.”

“I will make you,” I warned her.

She scoffed. “You know, it’s too damn bad your money can’t buy you a better attitude and personality. The one you have now really stinks.”

I smirked. My voice came out dark and low as I said, “You don’t say...”

She stammered. “Yes, I do.”

I chuckled darkly. “This is going to be a fun weekend.”

She shook her head and then turned her attention out of the window. She muttered under her breath, barely above a whisper, “Not likely.”

We shall see, my darling. We shall see.

OLIVIA

I knew Milo Mason was an asshole but the start of our drive to Manitou took the cake and showed me exactly the kind of man he was. Thanks to this trip, I now hated the man even more than I did before. And I didn't think that was possible.

So, tell me why I was turned on even more by him.

Was I twisted in the head somehow? Was there something off about me? Why did I want a man who was so nasty and brutish?

I squirmed in my seat and squeezed my eyes closed as the friction along my clit caused my arousal to increase.

Whatever. It didn't matter. Nothing would come of my desire for him except for the leading role in all of my fantasies. And I was perfectly okay with keeping things the way they were. He could be a jerk all he wanted to, he was my boss and that's where things ended.

Besides, I had a gorgeous guy waiting for me when I got back home. One who wouldn't dare make demands of me as though he owned me. One who knew how to ask. A gentler man.

I conjured up the image of one of his profile pictures. And all the heat that had built up between my legs started to quickly cool.

Ugh.

My arousal was fading, and I was feeling slightly disappointed.

I had no idea what was wrong with me, but it didn't bode well for this weekend. Not that I had an iota of a clue as to what to expect. I decided to try to find out.

"Mr. Mason, what am I to expect over this weekend?" I asked.

He hummed. "You want to argue that too?"

I shook my head. "I would like to have an idea of what to expect so that I am aware. Nothing more."

He huffed.

That was it?

No answer?

I glared at him, wishing my eyes were lasers that could blast him to smithereens as he kept his eyes glued to the world passing by the window in a blur. He didn't seem bothered in the least to answer my question which only fueled my anger and my arousal.

Interesting. Maybe he had shown me the ticket to my desires. Hate sex.

Perfect.

A little over an hour into our drive, we hit Manitou and I smiled for the first time since climbing into the backseat of Milo Mason's SUV. The little town was gorgeous with the historic buildings and homes lining both sides of the main street into town.

There was something about the air too. It was lighter, cleaner... crisper.

Minutes later we pulled up to the front of a lavish bed and breakfast I didn't catch the name of. It sat against the foot of mountains blanketed in a fresh coating of snow. Best of all... it looked almost like a castle. Complete with turrets and pointed roofs.

The charm of the place had me instantly in love.

As much as I loved where I was at in my life, I felt called to the area. I was mesmerized. It was like coming home for the first time in ages.

At least the weekend wouldn't be a total loss. I had the chance to stay in a place that looked regal and way out of my budget, and I was going to see my childhood bestie for the first time in forever.

As soon as the engine stopped, I opened the door.

“Let Zeke do it,” Milo said.

I turned my attention to him, meeting his eyes with a glare. “I got it.”

I continued stepping out of the car, dodging out of the grasp of Milo's outreached hand. There was no way in hell I was going to stay cooped up on the seat, close to my irritating asshole boss longer than was necessary. And I was perfectly capable of opening the car door on my own. Besides, the man was going to have a rude awakening if he honestly thought he had any sort of control over me or my personal life.

The second my feet were on the sidewalk, I turned in a slow circle, taking in everything around me, including the bed and breakfast aptly named Manitou's Pride Bed and Breakfast. The air was filled with the scent of burning wood from fireplaces and wood-burning stoves, and there was something enticing about the old-fashioned streetlamps that dotted the street. Each of them was decorated with glittery ribbons.

I was finally in Manitou. And I couldn't wait to get away so I could see my best friend. But I was here for a job. So, the job came first. My friend had to come second.

All too soon Milo Mason and his stinky attitude joined me on the sidewalk. He stared down at me with his deep brown eyes.

“Are we going to have a talk about insubordination today?” he asked, keeping his voice low. His eyes were glued to mine.

“Are we going to have a talk about managing your expectations when it comes to what is okay for an employer to

demand of his employee and what isn't?" I asked back. Two could play this game.

"You're fighting against me," he said, stating the obvious. "Why?"

I took a deep breath. On the exhalation, my shoulders dropped. The pent-up tension melted away. His question was a good one and though I did have an answer, I didn't have the desire or energy to get into another argument. I just wanted to get through the rest of this weekend and put it behind me.

"You know what? I'm sorry. I shouldn't be acting like this," I said. "I must not have slept well last night."

A shadow flew across his gaze as he nodded. He gently pressed his hand against the small of my back, guiding me toward the front door of the bed and breakfast which faced the corner of the sidewalk and street. Once inside, I became lost in all the pictures from the past that hung on the walls. An aerial view of the land from before the town's establishment and of the building we stood in.

"Olivia," Milo said, pulling my attention.

I set my gaze on him and he nodded toward the direction he was heading. I followed him. Zeke took up the rear, carrying our bags.

"Do you want some help?" I asked, setting my gaze on him.

The driver was probably around Milo's age. He had short, curly blond hair and deep brown eyes...almost the same color as Milo's. I wondered if they were somehow related. Cousins maybe.

He shook his head and flashed me a nice smile. "I've got this covered, my lady."

I nodded and continued following Milo, forcing back the blush from the driver's endearment. I half expected him to walk me to my room. Instead, when he stopped at a door, he said, "This is us."

"Us?" I asked, arching an eyebrow on my forehead.

He nodded. “Is there a problem?”

“You want me to stay in the same room as you?” I asked.

“There’s more than one place to sleep,” he said.

“So?” I asked. “I’m perfectly fine with finding other arrangements if you can’t afford to provide me with a private room. But I’m absolutely not sleeping in the same room as my boss.”

“You’re staying in this one,” he said with his no holds barred tone.

I really didn’t have the energy or desire to argue. I groaned. “Fine. Whatever.”

He nodded again. Another shadow floated through his eyes and his lips curved slightly downward. Before I could get a solid glimpse, he turned his back to me and unlocked the door. I truly didn’t care, but it was odd to see the same reaction twice in a row. Both times following the moment I gave in and let him have his stupid way.

It was a theory I would have to test at some point, but at the moment, I didn’t care to.

Once Milo had the door open, we stepped into an elegant, romantically styled room and the first thought that hit me was Morgan’s question about hidden agendas. This was the first time I questioned everything.

But there were two beds. Technically.

One of them just happened to be a pullout. At least, I assumed that was the case. Rather, I hoped that was the case. Though, looking at the thing, I couldn’t see how a bed would unfold from such an extravagant, elegant piece of furniture, but I had seen it done before.

The room featured cream walls, smooth white crown molding, and solid hardwood floors. The decorative rug reminded me of a Victorian style which matched the glamor of the fireplace, and other décor. Even the bed with the sleigh style headboard and footboard.

Zeke brought the bags in and wordlessly returned to the SUV.

“Where is he staying?” I asked.

“That’s not your concern,” Milo said and checked his watch. “I’ve got a meeting to go to.”

I shrugged off his snobby comment and nodded. “Okay.”

“Stay here and wait for further instructions,” he added.

I gaped at him. “Actually, I was hoping I could go spend an hour or so with a friend of mine. She has a shop down the street.”

“No,” he said. “I expect you to stay here and be here when I get back.”

I quirked an eyebrow. He stared at me as though he was waiting for me to argue with him. And boy did I have some doozies ready on the tip of my tongue, but this was one of those moments that was a prime opportunity to test my theory.

With a sigh, I said. “Yes, sir.”

Not.

The amount of anger boiling through me nearly had me ready to explode. But I sucked in another deep breath and rolled out the tension building within my shoulders. I took a seat on the couch and crossed my legs as I watched Milo immediately turn his back toward me and started moving through the room.

Damn. Another time then.

Within ten minutes, Milo was out the door, without a word. I stared at the thing, waiting for him to walk back in. When he didn’t, I sighed and took a seat. It was the first moment since this trip began when I felt relaxed.

Another ten minutes later, I stood up and walked to the window to see if I could see any hint of him. When I couldn’t, I gave myself a few more minutes before pulling out my phone. I swiped to the screen with the directions to Maxine’s shop and walked out the door.

Milo Mason was many things. My master wasn't one of them, and if he honestly thought he had an iota of control over me, then he had a seriously rude awakening.

MILO

I arrived at the club and took some time to take in the area. The building was mostly plain. I could see little that hinted of the place being a nightclub. No signs. No windows. Only one entry. Though I had next to no information on why the business was suffering, the lack of anything on the outside labeling what it is might have something to do with it. At least, in some way.

Under normal circumstances, I would have turned around and left things as they were. But I was here as a favor. And those were things I didn't give out freely and weren't repaid without considerable thought.

Spencer was a friend who worked for the SOTF. I owed him a favor, and he had called that favor in. Technically, it was for me to invest in this business. He wasn't at liberty to share any other information. He told me he wanted me to meet with the current owners and hear them out. But I knew he had high hopes I would invest in the club.

It wasn't too far off from something I would do. I mainly invested in shifter-owned businesses. Spencer knew that.

The area surrounding the club was quiet apart from the businesses and restaurants that lined the street across from the club. Behind the club was a residential neighborhood, separated by a large privacy fence. So far, nothing stood out as a bad investment. The location was good. Better than I expected.

Once I was ready, I met a tall, black man at the front door. He seemed out of place when standing against the side of a plain brick building.

“Good evening,” I said as I approached. “Is this the Tiger’s Eye?”

“Hello, sir,” he replied with a nod. “Yes, it is.”

I nodded. “I am—”

“I know exactly who you are, sir,” he said, interrupting me as he reached for the door handle and pulled it open. “We have been expecting you.”

I nodded. We were off to a great start, with the exception of cutting me off. So far, I figured this business deal had some real promise. Though it had taken quite some time for Spencer to call in his favor, I was impressed. He knew exactly what I looked for when considering investing in a business.

I just might owe him a serious debt of gratitude. Because had he not told me it was him calling in his favor, I probably would have let this thing go without a second thought.

Once I was inside the club, the gentleman who stood outside of the door led me through a short hallway, into a large, open room. Tables and chairs lined the walls, and in the center was a dance floor. The bar took up the far wall and there was another short hallway to the side of it. I assumed that led to the kitchen, office, and bathrooms.

I nodded to myself as I took mental notes of everything that would have to change for a business like this to succeed. The décor was dated and cheap, the walls were in dire need of a fresh coat of paint at the very least.

Hell, the outside was in desperate need of an update... there wasn’t much I couldn’t see to change. Not if these owners wanted to be successful.

“Right this way, sir,” the man from the door said, pulling my attention to him as he headed toward the hall off to the side of the bar.

I followed him, shoving a hand into my pocket as I moved. There was a story about why this business needed an emergency investor. And I intended to find out before I did anything else in terms of planning.

The tall, black man and I stopped outside an opened door that led into a larger office space. The gentleman knocked on the door.

“Milo Mason is here,” he said, voice deep.

“Thank you, Ghalen,” another male voice said. “Please send him in.”

Ghalen twisted to face me and then gestured for me to step into the room. “Thank you, Ghalen.”

“My pleasure, Mr. Mason,” he said.

I entered the large office area and found three men with their attention set on me, standing at the far end of the room. One of them sat behind a desk with the other two standing on opposite sides of him. I assumed the one sitting was the alpha.

I nodded in greeting. “Good afternoon, gentlemen.”

“Milo Mason,” the center one said and stood. “It is a pleasure to finally meet you.”

“Likewise,” I said, taking his outstretched hand and giving it a firm shake. “You are?”

“I’m Malachi,” he said.

He had a strong jaw. His long hair was pulled back into a low ponytail and his face was covered by a thin goatee. He was a mountain lion shifter. That made this business decision slightly easier. His handshake was firm as well. Not insipid like some people I’ve met. Of course, I had to consider a few of those circumstances was due to the fact they knew I was a dragon shifter, and they were afraid of me.

All three of them were mountain lion shifters. I could smell the cat on them.

Working with shifters allowed me to be candid about who I was and what I did. I could be more open with them about

myself. Moreso than when working with humans.

Malachi took his seat and the man to his right held out his hand. "I'm Dallas," he said.

He too had his hair pulled back low. He wore a T-shirt and jeans with a studded belt. I gave his hand a firm squeeze.

The man to Malachi's left wore a suit shirt tucked into slacks with his hair combed back. It was a thicker, shorter cut than his partners. He held out his hand to me. "I'm Steele."

Now that the introductions were done, we could get down to business. I folded my hands together, resting them over the buckle of my belt, and rested my gaze on each one of the men in front of me. "It's a pleasure to meet you, gentlemen," I said.

"Please, have a seat," Malachi gestured to one of the chairs sitting on the opposite side of the desk from him.

I nodded, took my seat, leaned back, and then said, "Tell me why you need me to invest in your business."

"What has Spencer shared with you?" Dallas asked.

"Nothing outside of your business needing emergency funding," I said.

Steele huffed. "Well, at least he kept his word."

Malachi held up his hand. "Allow us to fill you in then."

I nodded. "Please."

"Our alpha," Malachi started.

"Wait," I said, holding up my hand to stop him from continuing. "You're not the alpha?"

"I'm the acting alpha," he said, emphasizing "acting."

Steele added, "Our current alpha is in jail."

I sucked in a breath. This wasn't looking as good anymore. It was one thing to come in and do a facelift, provide a stable income for the employees, and turn a profit following a successful relaunch, but revamping a business blacklisted due to crime was a whole other ballgame. One I would rather not have involved myself with.

But I promised to hear the men out, and so that's what I was going to do.

"Okay. Continue."

"She took money from clients, members of our pride and she had us do unspeakable things to her particularly favorite victims," Malachi added.

Steele leaned on the desk. "SOTF got involved, arrested her after she tried to incriminate our mate, and now all funds are frozen until the government decides what to do with her."

I nodded. "I see."

"This business is our only means of making a living. This is the only way we are able to stay afloat. Our members are relying on us to find a way to make this work," Malachi said.

"How has business been since taking over?" I asked.

"Business has plummeted since her arrest and news of what she had done spread," Dallas said. "We're sinking and we need help."

I nodded. This place was going to need a serious overhaul for things to pick back up.

"So, what do you think?" Malachi asked. "Can you help us?"

I shrugged. "This place has potential. And in order for your business to work, it's going to need a serious overhaul. Something that will separate you from your alpha officially."

"Agreed," Malachi said.

"If I invest, you have to agree to let me do what I need to in order to get this place back up and running. Once the reopening happens, you'll take over and run this place as you see fit. So long as I get my percentage and fees, I'll stay out of your hair."

The men nodded.

I gave them the rundown of my fees and what things would look like. Once I finished, I asked, "Do you agree to these terms?"

“May we discuss this for a few moments?” Malachi asked.

I stood up and nodded. “Absolutely.”

I left the room. It was smart that they wanted to discuss the terms. My fees weren't cheap. And my advance repayments came off the top of everything the business would get. But if they followed my instructions to a “T” and didn't deviate from the plan, they would make several times my fees and percentages. It would be nominal in the grand scheme of things.

Ideally.

While waiting in the hall, I phoned the bed and breakfast. I asked the woman who was operating the front desk to send Olivia shopping for a dress for dinner. Once I was off the phone, I did a quick search for a local restaurant that would fit my needs and then called in a reservation for one of the local Italian restaurants.

By the time I had done all of that, Steele appeared in the doorway.

“We're ready,” he said.

I nodded and followed him back into the office. I stopped between the two chairs, opposite Malachi, and asked, “You've decided?”

“We have a deal,” he said.

“Excellent,” I said. “I'll have my secretary draw up the papers. You should have them by the end of the weekend. Take your time, look over them, and call me with any questions.”

“What are the next steps?” Dallas asked.

“You sign the papers,” I said. “From there, I write the check and start the renovations. You'll likely see me once or twice a week for the next few months.”

“Sounds good,” Malachi said.

“So, just to clarify,” Steele said, “we will have money before the end of the weekend.”

“Yes,” I said. “Any other questions?”

“No, sir,” Malachi said.

“All right,” I said. “It was a pleasure meeting with you, and I look forward to getting your business up and running again.”

I turned around and left the office. My phone rang and I instantly answered it.

“Mr. Mason,” a male voice said. “I have no tables available. You’ll have to go somewhere else.”

“I will pay you twice the amount you make on a normal Friday night,” I said. “Money isn’t an issue.”

Zeke opened the door for me as I climbed into the SUV.

“I’ll give you a table, but I’m not closing business,” he said.

“Deal,” I said. “Seven, sharp.”

I ended the call.

“Where too, sir?” Zeke added.

“Take me back to the room,” I said.

With a nod, he pulled out of the parking spot, and we were on our way. I couldn’t wait to see Olivia and see the surprise on her face.

I was in a celebratory mood, so maybe that would rub off on her.

OLIVIA

I walked into Maxine's shop as she was busy helping out a customer. She didn't turn around to look at me. Only turned her head to the side to say, "Hello, let me know if you have any questions."

I looked around, not responding because doing so would have given me away. There was a kid behind the counter, standing at the register, thumbing through his phone. It wasn't a hard guess to realize he was the kid brother of one of her men, and the one she hired to help around the shop. She had told me his name was Phineas. I loved the name. And he was every bit as adorable as she had described him. Even the babyface cheeks.

I couldn't imagine what his older brother's appearance was compared to Phineas'. Maxine had told me he was an older, darker version of him. But I couldn't conjure the image. I would meet him soon enough, though. And then I would be able to place Maxine's explanation.

The customer she was helping had walked away, searching the store for whatever it was she had just spoken to Maxine about, leaving my best friend to work on a shelf, dusting and organizing the items.

I approached her from behind. "Boo."

She initially had a look of confusion when she turned around. But then her eyes recognized mine and they widened, and she smiled big.

“Aye-ee! You made it!” She threw her arms around me, squeezing me tightly into her frame.

I laughed, squeezing her just as close to me. It felt amazing to hug my best friend again, and entirely too long since we were last able to hang out.

“Wait,” a male voice said.

Maxine and I pulled away to see the kid standing next to us in the middle of her shop.

“This is the friend?” he asked, pointing at me.

She nodded. “This is Olivia.”

He held out his hand. “I’m Phineas, the big brother.”

Not only did the kid smile hugely and proudly, but he emphasized big.

I arched an eyebrow and laughed. “What?”

Maxine giggled and ended it all with a sigh. “I was holding off on telling you until you were in person. But... I’m pregnant.”

I thrust my hands toward her belly. “No way!”

“Way!” She laughed.

I shook my head, unable to believe the news, and yet unable to stop my lips from stretching from ear to ear. “Congrats!”

“Come on, let’s go catch up,” Maxine said. To Phineas, she added, “You know where to find me.”

“Got it, Captain,” he said.

She giggled, shaking her head as she moved through the shop toward the back of the building where a set of stairs climbed to the apartment above the shop.

I wasn’t surprised in the least to find plants everywhere. She had a green thumb that made me jealous. I couldn’t keep a plant alive to save my soul.

The bright area was warm and inviting and had every bit of Maxine’s style. Eclectic with a farmhouse/greenhouse twist.

“Want some tea?” she asked.

I sighed wistfully. “I would love some.”

She filled the kettle and then put it on the stove to warm. While we waited, she rummaged through her fridge for some veggies and pulled out a bag of baby carrots.

“I have to eat often, or the morning sickness takes me out,” she said. “Are you hungry at all?”

I shook my head, waving a hand between us. “You take care of yourself and that little baby growing inside you.”

She laughed around a bite of carrot.

I squealed as I imagined my best friend’s stomach growing large and round. “I can’t believe I’m going to be an aunt!”

“Well believe it, sister,” she said. “Because nothing is stopping this baby from coming.”

“I’m so going to spoil the thing,” I said as excitement rippled through me.

The tea kettle started to whistle. Maxine headed toward it, removing it from the stove and setting it on top of a clay stand. She then reached into the cupboard directly above that to pull out two mugs.

I looked around and noticed a door at the back of the building. “What’s out that back door?”

“My patio,” she said.

“You have a patio?” I asked.

She laughed. “Wanna hang out there?”

“You don’t think it’s too cold?” I asked.

She shrugged off my concern. “Nah. The cooler air helps me. Plus, Quinn put a chiminea out there.”

“Ooh, fancy,” I said with a sigh. “I so wish I had someone who was half as attentive as your men are.”

“Boss man isn’t doing it for you anymore?” Maxine asked as she brought me one of the mugs and then started for the back door.

I snorted. “Bossman thinks he’s in control.”

Maxine laughed. “Give him time.”

“For what?” I asked. “He’s perfectly fine where I have him.”

She settled her gaze on me as she took a seat at her patio table. “Uh-huh.”

I took a seat. “I’m serious.”

“Tell me about it,” she said.

I did, divulging every detail of his questioning of my life’s choices. She cracked a few jokes that had me laughing and never wanting to go home. An hour later Maxine and I were laughing and having a great time.

That was until there was a strange, guttural growl that filled the air on the side of Maxine’s building. She and I exchanged a confused expression seconds before someone bounded up the heavy metal stairs attached to the side of her building.

Milo-fucking-Mason popped into view. The second his fiery gaze fell onto mine, he snapped, “There you are.”

“Uh, hello,” Maxine said, wiggling her fingers at him.

He barely cast a glance and a nod of acknowledgment toward my best friend.

I stood up and glared at him. “How the hell did you find me?”

He charged toward me. I backed up, trying to get out of his way, but it seemed I was his target, and I didn’t know if I liked that so much. When he reached me, he forced me back so fast that I nearly lost my footing. He didn’t stop pushing against me until my back pressed up against the outside wall of Maxine’s home. He placed both hands on either side of my head and leaned in close.

I sucked in a deep breath and tried to keep my nerves in check.

He lowered his mouth to my ear. His voice was low, sending chills down my spine as he said, "I might have to punish you if you continue to misbehave."

Just like that, the floodgates opened between my legs.

He pulled back and I met his gaze as my lips parted. And I had never been more confused in my entire life.

"Punish me?" I asked, voice coming out meek.

"Say goodbye to your friend," he said with a nod. "You're mine now."

My brain ceased all non-vital functions. I only knew simple, basic things. Like how to nod and walk toward my friend. Simple words. No complexity. Just automatic things.

"I'm Maxine," she said to Milo.

"Milo," he said and took her hand.

"You better take good care of her," she said then smiled at me. "He's intense."

"Yes," I said and hugged her. "Talk soon."

"I hope so," she whispered as we hugged. "I want details."

I turned around and joined Milo at the top of the stairs. He escorted me down them and out down the street toward the bed and breakfast. All the while, I tried to make sense of what was going on with my body.

When did I do things like that? How did he make me want to moan? When did my hate for Milo Mason (outside of my fantasies) turn into a pure, primal reaction to his beck and call?

I was so lost in thought, time became relative and however much of it later, we were inside the room, and I approached the bed which had a brand-new evening dress. It was a v-cut long dress with a slit up the side. The color was like sapphires. Even the light in the room caught some of the soft glitter within the fabric.

My breath was stolen by something so beautiful.

“Mr. Mason,” I breathed. It would have been too much to assume the dress was for me. I couldn’t have been. He clearly was expecting someone. There was no way he could have known my size.

“Put it on,” he demanded.

For a brief second, I froze.

The dress was for me?

“Now,” he added with more force.

I barely met his gaze, nodded, and picked up the dress, taking it to the bathroom. I felt Milo’s eyes on me the whole time, and I imagined he could somehow watch me dress through the walls.

Once I had the dress on, I stepped out and his eyes took me in. They were predatory, and I was almost afraid of the man they belonged to.

Almost.

Truth be told I was more afraid of myself and the things my body was doing. I was weak, and Milo Mason had played the lead in almost all of my fantasies. I hated him. Don’t get me wrong, but there was a small part of me, especially after what happened at Maxine’s, that was curious about him. Fascinated even.

And that was precisely why I was afraid of myself.

No woman in her right mind would be turned on by such animalistic behaviors.

“I need help with...” I cleared my throat. The weight of Milo’s gaze made my knees weak, and my throat dried up. Once I had a good hard swallow, I finished, “The zipper.”

He nodded. “Come here.”

I obeyed and closed the gap between us. His lips curved up slightly at the corners and I realized I was nothing but a pawn in his game, forced to obey his commands until this weekend was over. What happened afterward was anyone’s guess. For the time being, I needed to focus on playing my cards right.

Men like Milo ate women like me for breakfast. I had to be on my toes if I wanted to survive him.

“Turn around,” he said.

I did so, slowly.

His fingers brushed along my skin, creating goosebumps as they pulled on the zipper.

My stomach growled once the dress was firmly in place, hugging my curves.

I took a step forward then turned around and faced my boss.

“What is the occasion, Mr. Mason?” I asked.

“Dinner,” he said.

“Why?” I asked.

“Because that is what I want,” he said and stood from his seat. He gripped my arm just above the elbow and dragged me with him out of the room and to the SUV.

MILO

On the way to the restaurant, I thought about everything that happened leading up to this moment.

And now that things were calming down, I was able to reflect on my reaction particularly. Especially when it came to Olivia's absence. I had no idea what had come over me, or what had possessed me to behave as though Olivia belonged to me, but the moment I stepped into the hotel room and discovered Olivia had gone against my orders and left the room anyway, a fire I had never felt before burned through me. She had gone and visited her friend despite my orders otherwise. Seeing the lack of her presence within the room damn near made me lose my mind. I sniffed the air that was almost completely absent of her scent.

Why? Probably to determine how long ago she had left. And considering there was barely a hint of her scent in the room, I wagered she left not long after I had.

Anger and possessiveness flooded through my system as I charged out the door, out of the bed and breakfast, and onto the street.

I raked my darkened gaze in a circle, sniffing for the hint of Olivia's trail.

Once I finally caught wind of it, I rushed to follow it, heading down the street to the right of the entrance of the bed and breakfast. Without a moment's hesitation, I stormed down the sidewalk, dodging the people in my way and knocking over a few of them.

I didn't stop to make sure they were okay like a decent man would.

But I wasn't a decent man.

I cared about one thing and one thing only. And that thing had run away from me and disobeyed my order to stay put.

I continued dashing down the sidewalk, sniffing the air like a rabid animal, following her scent that grew stronger with each step I took came to a building reminiscent of the wild west days and considered breaking down the front door just to get to the woman. Olivia's scent was the strongest here.

This must have been the shop she mentioned her friend owned. There was a boy in the shop, standing behind the register, thumbing through his phone. I growled. There was no sign of Olivia.

Then her laugh echoed to me from somewhere outside... around the side of the building, toward the back. I hastily followed the direction of the sound and found a flight of iron stairs belonging to a fire escape. It climbed the side of the building between the two stores to an open area. The direction of where her laughter came from.

Without a second thought, I charged up them two at a time until I reached the top.

Instantly, our gazes met, and I was overcome with a new sensation. One I had no idea I could feel and didn't have the words to describe the sudden assault on my senses. Her eyes widened with shock. That did things to my body. Powerful and damn near all-consuming things.

The spike in her arousal only made me hungrier for her. But I had a plan and enough restraint to make sure our more basic, survival needs were met first.

But once we were full of the feast I had planned for us, I was going to take what I wanted... and what she clearly wanted to give... and I wasn't going to stop until she was all used up. And that dress I had helped zip up was going to end up as nothing more than ribbons once I finished ripping it from her body.

Needless to say, it had been difficult to keep my distance on the way to the restaurant. She was so close. Each breath that filled my lungs was bathed in her scent. Her sweet, delicate, decadent scent.

All I had to do was reach out and touch her. And judging by the strength of the scent of her arousal, she would melt in my hands at the slightest touch. Imagining what that would look like had me clenching my fists to fight off my erection.

Soon enough, we were sitting at a private table in a secluded corner of the restaurant, complete with personal waitstaff.

“Mr. Mason,” Olivia said, drawing me from my thoughts.

I settled my attention on her and said, “Yes, Olivia.”

She squeezed her eyes closed and visibly gulped and then asked, “What is this about?”

“It’s called dinner,” I said with a smirk.

She huffed and rolled her pretty, little dark blue eyes. “Yes, but why?”

I shrugged. “I like to celebrate the close of business deals with dinner.”

“With your secretary, though?” she asked, cocking her head to the side. “Privately.”

I stared at her as one of the wait staff poured us a bottle of the wine I had ordered. She was beautiful in every way. How could she not be aware of that? But it didn’t matter. I was the one in control here and I was going to keep that control.

“Are you not enjoying yourself?”

She blinked at me. And though she tried to not squirm, I saw her shiver slightly. “Yes.”

“Then nothing else matters,” I said.

Minutes later, our plates were put in front of us. I had already ordered for us before arriving. It left me time to focus on Olivia who stared at her plate with wide, glittering eyes.

“This looks delicious,” she said.

I nodded. “Then eat.”

She licked her lips and picked up her fork and knife then dug into her breaded chicken breast resting on a bed of pasta coated in butter, spices, and parmesan cheese. She speared the bite onto her fork before plopping the thing into her mouth.

Her eyes widened and then rolled. Moans of delight filled the air between us, and I gripped the sides of the table with my tight fists. I seriously considered flipping it to tackle her to the ground. But I couldn't bring myself to move. I could only watch and stare as my pants tightened around my waist. My dick hardened as she licked her lips clean from the juices that coated her lips.

“Oh my God,” she said. “That was better than I expected.”

“Yes, it was.” I nodded. “Continue.”

She glanced at me. “What about your food?”

“Don't make me repeat myself,” I said, voice thick with a warning. There was a time for talking. And watching her eat wasn't a moment I wanted to waste with words. I was too enamored by the sight of her eating to carry on any semblance of a conversation, to begin with. I was overwhelmed and consumed by the idea that such a simple act could be so arousing.

“You're staring at me,” she said around her bites. She had grown a little self-conscious of me watching her. But I couldn't stop. It was too amazing to look away... for even a second. And why would I want to? Watching her eat was the most erotic thing I had ever experienced in my life.

I couldn't get enough of it.

“Less talking,” I said, snapping my fingers and then pointed toward her plate. “More eating.”

She gulped then stammered, “Yes, sir.”

She dug into her food, eating up everything. And when she slurped the last of her pasta into her mouth with her pursed

lips, it took everything inside me not to fuck her hard on the table right then and there.

My tolerance was running out.

My food had grown cold.

My wine was forgotten.

And I needed Olivia more than I needed air to breathe. I couldn't get enough of her or the seductive way she ate. I had to have her.

Most of all, I needed to figure out what it was about her that drove me so wild.

"You didn't eat," she said.

"I will, soon enough," I said and stood from the table. "Are you satisfied?"

"Yes," she said with a smile. "Thank you."

I held out my hand for her to take. "Then it is time for dessert."

She slid her soft, porcelain hand into mine and I pulled her from the seat. Minutes later we were inside the SUV, and I kept staring at her. Maybe if I looked hard enough, I would discover the answer to my most burning question.

Why her?

But by the time we had arrived back at our room, I was still without an answer.

OLIVIA

What a night. And it wasn't even over yet.

I wasn't sure if I had walked into a strange portal and ended up in the twilight zone or what the deal was. Because the man who had taken me to dinner was not the Milo Mason I knew and had worked for over the past few years. Sure, he was bossy and demanding like the man I knew him to be, that much was for certain. He had the same face, the same smell, and he dressed the same way. But it was certainly not him. Not his personality anyway. Not his attention... and certainly not his advances.

Because Milo Mason never looked at me in the way he was staring at me before.

As though I was enticing, beautiful, and alluring.

Like I was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

And I was turning him on just by eating the food he had ordered for me while his plate remained untouched.

It was an expression I had imagined dozens of times in my fantasies. But never had I ever thought I would get anything close to that look in real life. Especially now. Because it was impossible. Not in this lifetime. Not with me. Not this body.

I was the opposite of the type of woman Milo went for. In damn near every way. I had black hair where he went for the box blondes. I was thick and curvy, where he went for the stick-figure, swimsuit models. I was also pale white. His women tended to have fake tans.

Once I was too full to eat another morsel, having finished my plate under his watchful eye, Mr. Mason took me back to the suite we were sharing for the weekend... still much to my chagrin. I leaned against the wall and racked my brain, trying to make sense of everything that happened over the course of the day on the way back. Nothing made sense.

And I hated every second of it.

We walked to the door in silence. Milo stuck the key into the lock on the handle and the door was opened. He gestured for me to step in first. I did so, heading straight for my clothing so I could change out of the dress.

When I turned around, I found Milo leaning a shoulder against the wall, watching my every move. His predatory eyes made my pulse quicken, and there was something about the intensity in his dark brown eyes that caused a flood between my legs.

I was a haphazard mess of a woman who didn't know what was good for her.

"Thank you for a wonderful meal," I blurted out.

He nodded and continued to stare at me. He didn't seem inclined to speak any words after standing in front of him for several seconds. But I was becoming uncomfortable and sighed to ease the uneasiness settling on my nerves. I didn't know what else to say so I started to head for the bathroom.

"Where do you think you are going?" he asked as I started to walk past him.

I stopped just before stepping into the bathroom and faced him. "To change out of this dress."

"Did I give you permission?" he asked, quirked an eyebrow.

"Did I really need it?" I asked back.

His eyes took in the full length of my body. Without thinking about it, I bit my lip. My arousal spiked.

"Don't do that?" he said, voice dark.

“Do what?” I asked, confused. There were a lot of things that happened in those few seconds of silence. He needed to be more specific. Far as I knew, he could have been talking about breathing or glaring at him.

“Bite your lip.” His dark gaze focused on my mouth.

And though I found his demand a bit charming, I was getting tired of him bossing me around. So, in spite of whatever control he thought he had over me, I bit my lip again. He might have been my boss and the leading man in almost all my fantasies, but he was not, in any way, shape, or form in charge of me.

Milo instantly removed himself from the wall and took one large step toward me. He moved so fast. Everything happened in a blur. I sucked in a breath, dropping my clothes to the floor the moment before Milo’s body crashed into mine. His arms wrapped around me, squeezing me to him as his mouth collided with mine, kissing me hard and feverishly.

His teeth scraped against the sensitive flesh on the inside of my lip, and I tasted a hint of copper.

His mouth tasted sweet, almost like honey, and the way he slid his tongue along mine sent warmth rushing over me and the floodgates between my legs opened even more. My mind screamed at me to stop. My body ignored it. My heart hammered in my chest thrumming excitedly.

Though everything inside me wanted to continue, my brain understood how wrong this was. A woman should never sleep with her boss.

Ever.

But I couldn’t stop. The feel of his warmth around me was too good to pull away from. I melted into him.

My hormones won out.

Milo Mason’s mouth devoured mine, rubbing my face raw with the rough stubble that coated his face. His fingers dug into my shoulder blades as my arms wrapped around him and I gripped two fistfuls of his shirt, tangling the cloth between my fingers.

It was hard to breathe being pinned against the rock-hard firmness of his frame and the wall, but I didn't mind. I loved the sensation of being pressed against him. Especially the way his erection pressed against my solar plexus, increasing my arousal.

Milo sucked in a deep breath as his fingers raked against the skin of my back toward the zipper of the dress. On his exhale, he ripped the garment from my frame. The cloth tore under the pressure of his tugging. Cold air brushed against my heated skin as the shredded fabric fell from my body.

He then guided me toward the bed. Once the back of my knees rested against the mattress, I sat on top of it and then scooted toward the center. Milo stood back, staring down at me with eyes that were darkened almost to black. There was a dangerous glint in them. One that made me want to shudder, but the woman in me refused to cower.

With a satisfied smirk, he continued to stand over me, raking his dark gaze over every inch of my curves. He flicked his tongue along her lips as though he found my body appetizing before shucking his clothing from his body, revealing rippling muscles covering his entire frame.

I gaped at him as his body stood naked before me. And holy hell was the view better than I had ever imagined it to be.

I bit my lip again. It couldn't have been helped. The delightful sensations that rippled through me were impossible to ignore. My body had a mind of its own and it was acting of its own accord. He really shouldn't blame me for responding the way I was. It was all his fault.

Milo growled then used my legs to flip me over to my stomach. A loud smack echoed through the room while a sharp, stinging pain resonated through my right ass cheek, leaving in its wake a pleasant burn. I never realized pain could be so enjoyable.

Seconds later, barely enough time for me to recover from the heat of the slap on my rear, another pain entered my left ass cheek. This one was slightly different and had more

pressure like a pinch, but I could have sworn his stubble poked into my skin.

“Ow!” I screamed.

He chuckled. “Don’t disobey me and I might not have to punish you.”

“Did you just bite me?” I asked, ignoring his words.

“Does it matter?” he asked.

“Yes,” I said. “No.”

He chuckled as his hand slipped between my legs and settled on my sex, his fingers dipping between the delicate folds, finding my sensitive clit. I shuddered as pleasure bled through me, erasing the pain in my sore rear.

“You were saying?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” I muttered into the blankets followed by a long, pleasurable sigh.

My God, he put his fingers to good work.

I rolled to my back as Milo continued to finger me, dipping inside my entrance and curling before pulling out most of the way, only to slide them deeper inside me.

Minutes later, I cried out my pleasure as my climax rocketed through me.

Better than ever.

My imagination did not do him or his skills justice.

Milo shifted, hovering over me as the tip of his erection pressed against my entrance. His eyes captured mine and as he slowly slid himself inside me, stretching me with his massive girth, I shuddered and closed my eyes as he stretched me to my limits. A soft tearing sensation added a brief hint of burning that slowly faded into pleasure.

He moved inside me, slowly building another orgasm.

I struggled to control my breathing. I didn’t want to rush through any moment of this. Especially since sex with my boss was happening for real and not just in my fantasies. No, I

needed to savor every second of what could possibly be the best sex of my life and likely would never happen again.

I leaned into the feelings that were rushing over my body.

Milo's lips brushed along the sensitive spot of skin at the base of my neck. Heat washed through my system, leaving my skin chilled. One arm slid underneath the base of my neck while the other braced himself upward, giving him just the right angle to push into me.

I widened my legs, wrapping them around his waist, letting him sink even deeper inside me. The tip of his rock-hard cock slammed into the top of my organ, sending sharp pains throbbing through my core.

All of it worked to increase my pleasure, sending me closer to my climax.

And within seconds, I was crying out my pleasure again.

I had heard of orgasms zapping through energy with how explosive they could be. But that had yet to happen to me. In fact, it seemed the opposite effect had come over me. I became energized with each orgasm.

So far anyway.

Though I was sure there was going to be a point where I wasn't going to be able to take it anymore and my body would become drained from exerting myself... at some point. I would deal with that when it came.

Right now, I was going to make sure all my fantasies came true.

"Tell me what you want, my precious," Milo Mason growled into my ear, sending ripples of warmth and chill through my body. I almost shivered.

I sucked in a breath and moaned out, "All of you."

He growled as he suddenly pulled away from me. His dick slipped out of my sex, and I opened my eyes, seeing bursts of tiny lights exploding in the air. It was almost like the air had become palpable and filled with static and as it moved little tiny bursts of lightning exploded.

I gasped at the sight.

“On your knees,” Milo commanded.

I glared at him. “Bossy.”

He narrowed his eyes at my form. “Do I need to punish you?”

There was something dark in the way he said those words with a thinly veiled promise of pleasure too. I was wet all over again and damn near climaxed just at the sight of him. My lips slowly pulled into a grin, and I rolled to my knees, sticking my white, round ass into the air.

“Like this?” I asked.

“Perfect,” he said, keeping his voice deep and low.

The tips of his fingers brushed along the roundness of my rear. He dug them in, placing pressure on my body... gentle pain that had me biting my lip and pushing my ass against him. He chuckled as the tip of his dick slid into my entrance.

He teased my sex with his dick, slowly sliding in just ever so little before pulling most of the way out only to slide in a little farther. I clutched the blanket in my fists and pushed him inside me.

He ticked his tongue. “Now I’m going to have to punish you.”

He slammed inside me. I thought he had impaled me with his massive dick. Pain blistered through me, and my eyes nearly bulged out of their sockets. I almost fell face-first onto the bed but thankfully my arms held out.

Again, he slammed into me.

The pain that centered within my sex was a deep ache. One that took away all thought. The slap of his body against my ass came like tiny pins and needles.

The last forceful blow into me, I almost cried. “Stop.”

He did so, bending over and placing a kiss on my back. “I’m sorry. I’ll be gentle now.”

I nodded after several seconds.

Milo moved inside me, slower, smoother. He leaned over me, reaching an arm underneath me, and brushing his fingers along my sex. I licked my lips as the pain that filled me once again bled into pleasure.

Minutes later, my climax hit.

Milo's form stiffened against me. He let out a grunt as hot liquid spilled inside me. His movements were jerky for several seconds as I continued to cry out my pleasure. Once he stilled, my orgasm ended, and he collapsed onto the bed next to me.

The unceremonious way he slid his dick from me let me know the deed was done.

I watched as he stared at the ceiling, and I memorized the line of his profile. My body relaxed into the mattress and sleep beckoned me not too long after that. I closed my eyes and drifted off to sleep.

MILO

My body and my mind wouldn't settle. Normally, I would have been sleeping like a baby by now.

Olivia was. At least I had done something right tonight.

It didn't take her very long to fall asleep either. And I had no idea that she had until her breathing evened and her body had stilled. Not long after noticing her eyes were closed, she softly snored. She was curled up in the bedding we had just made a mess out of. An adorable thin line of drool trickled from the corner of her lip to the mattress beneath her. Her dark black hair poured over her back and the bed like a dark waterfall, splintering out into winding rivers.

She looked so perfect lying in the bed next to me, dreaming away. I almost wondered what she was dreaming about. Was she dreaming about me? The urge to know increased, damn near to the point of waking her up to ask. But I wouldn't. I was an asshole, but even I respected a person's need to sleep.

But as I watched her sleep, I wanted her again.

I wanted more.

I wanted things I never wanted before. Things that I never believed in before. Until now. She made me want those things. Those damning desires that had a nasty habit of driving lesser men crazy.

I imagined what it would be like to see her every day. To sleep with her every night. To have her each time I wanted her.

I also needed her in ways I never expected I would, and I wasn't sure what to do with that. Sex with her was supposed to be a means to an end. A way to get her out of my system. This entire weekend was only meant to be a means to an end, so I could get back to what I did best come Monday.

This wasn't how things were supposed to go.

She wasn't supposed to be the one.

Relationships weren't my thing. Never had been and I never wanted them. I avoided them like the plague... until her.

Who was this woman?

How did she have power over me?

I huffed and pinched the bridge of my nose. How did my plan go so wrong? Nothing made sense to me. It was as if my whole world's gravity suddenly shifted, and now everything I did and ever wanted to do orbited around her.

My mind started to spin out of control with all my thoughts. Carefully, without disturbing the sleeping beauty lying in bed next to me, I climbed out of the bed and got dressed. Minutes later, I was out the door and standing in the middle of the street in the center of Manitou.

The town was dead. No one was awake. All the shop windows were dark. Not so much as a whisper filled the air.

I closed my eyes and focused on the bite of the icy air. After several seconds, my nerves were even more tangled. Part of me felt pulled to rejoin Olivia in the bed.

I shook my head. No. Sleep would have to wait. There was a new ache inside me that needed to be addressed. One I had neglected for far too long.

I needed to fly.

It was the next best thing to do that might clear my head.

So, I headed out of town, toward the mountains.

About an hour later, I was out of sight high up on the side of a large mountain. I turned around to view the small town beneath me. Nothing more than a few twinkling lights and

buildings. Up here, I could get some perspective. Up here, I could see things clearly.

My animal twisted and turned inside me, anxiously awaiting the chance to be freed.

I nodded to myself and carefully climbed out of my clothes, biting against the chill of the air against my human skin. After folding my garments carefully and stacking them neatly on the ground, I stretched out my limbs and took a deep breath.

It had been a long time since I shifted. Too long, to be perfectly honest. And that meant this shift was going to hurt.

A lot.

I called my dragon forward, giving into his control.

He rushed forward, taking over. Heat blasted through every nerve ending as my dragon started stretching my skin, tearing and ripping it away as my frame grew and morphed, changing from human to my great, black dragon.

My spine elongated, stretching into a massive tail with a pointed end. Wings sprouted from my back, under my shoulder blades, as black scales covered my raw muscles. My head and mouth elongated; sharp teeth protruded through my maw. Horns grew from my head and my hands and feet swelled and darkened as they turned massive with razor-sharp talons protruding from each digit.

Within minutes, the shift was complete, and I shook out my massive form, taking a few steps before stretching out my wings and giving them a few flaps. Then I launched myself into the air, forcing my wings to flap hard.



I HAD FORGOTTEN how freeing flying was. It had been so long. And as the years blink by, finding time to shift had grown more and more difficult. Not just for the time, but for the place as well. More and more of the world was being populated, shrinking my ability to shift and stretch my wings.

I flew lower to the town of Manitou, just to see how things looked and I was curious about how Olivia was doing.

And if I was being honest with myself, being closer to her eased my frazzled nerves and racing mind more than anything else in this world.

But as I flew close to the window of our room, I saw a form, poking her head out.

Our eyes met. Her mouth parted. She shook her head and then turned away from the window.

My heart thrummed in my chest. I wasn't ready for her to see me like this. Not in my dragon form.

As it was, the sun was going to come up soon and I needed to land, shift back, dress, and make my way back to the room all before she woke up.

I couldn't shake the idea of finding out her thoughts about seeing me from my mind.

OLIVIA

Comfortable warmth bled over me as my eyes blinked open to the bright room, I was sharing with my boss... the same boss who fucked me silly the night before. The same boss who blew my mind and stepped out of my fantasies, if only for one night.

The sun filtered in, shining on the cream walls. I smiled and stretched as more warmth bled through me. I felt amazing. In fact, I hadn't felt this great in longer than I could remember.

I sat up as the sex I had with my boss seated itself fully in my brain. I had sex with my boss.

My lips stretched wide.

I had sex with my boss.

Mind-blowing, toe-curling, explosive sex that would ruin any experience I would have with another man ever again and for the rest of my life.

Not that I needed more reasons to hate Milo Mason. And it was hard to put the wonderful orgasms and sex with him under the hate column.

Although it occurred to me as wrapped the sheet around me, I couldn't have hated him all that much if I had the best sex of my life with him. Not that it mattered. I knew this game well, thanks to my many office romance books.

This would be all over come Monday. And I wouldn't be the woman Milo chose.

It didn't matter how I played the cards. I wasn't Milo's type. I never was. I never will be. I was simply an easy target, and I gave in to him. I played right into his hand, and I couldn't bring myself to regret a single moment of what we had shared.

I stood from the bed and headed into the bathroom to freshen up and empty my bladder. Once I was finished, I washed my hands and took a long, hard look at myself. My black hair was a mess, sticking out every which way.

With a sigh, I grabbed my brush from my toiletry bag and started trying to tame my out-of-control mane. Once I had taken out the last tangle, I slipped the brush back into my bag and took another look at myself.

"You should be ashamed of yourself," I said to my reflection.

I simply stared back, a smile toying at the edges of my lips. It was almost as if the woman in the mirror was enticing me to consider the goddess I was last night.

"Damn straight," I said to myself and then giggled.

Maybe I was losing my mind. Or I was possessed by some sex-crazed spirit desperate to complete their unfinished business before crossing on. Then again, I should stop with the fantasies and root myself more in reality because that last one was a bit out there.

I shrugged as I continued to stare into my deep blue eyes and wondered if I should want to chide myself. Because I didn't. And it was plainly evident in my eyes. They were filled with joy and pride and satisfaction.

Who was I to put a black mark on what I did? I could have said no. I didn't. And I got to have the real thing instead of living under the gross lie of my fantasies. Now, they would forever lack color and appeal when compared to the real thing.

The door to the room opened, jarring me from my thoughts, and I hurried to lock the bathroom door. Seconds later, the handle jiggled. When the door didn't open, a knock sounded against the wood.

“Who is it?” I called out, my voice cracking as my throat suddenly went dry.

“Who do you think?” Milo asked. “Why is the door locked?”

“I’ll be out in just a minute,” I said. “I’m getting dressed...”

I turned around in a circle, searching for anything to pull over my body but the clothes I had on yesterday and had left in the bathroom were no longer where I had left them. I stared at the ceiling and silently groaned, kicking myself for getting caught up in my fancies yet again.

I just might be a hopeless cause.

“You don’t have clothes in there with you,” Milo’s voice said a couple of minutes later.

I gaped at the door. “How could he possibly know that?”

“Is someone in there with you?” His voice filtered through the door with enough threat to put a chill in my blood. His words came out rushed too.

“No,” I quickly said. “I was talking to myself.”

“Open the door,” he said.

“What?” I stammered. “No. I’m not decent.”

“Open the door and prove to me that you are alone,” he said. “Or I will knock the door down and find out for myself.”

“You wouldn’t knock down the door,” I said.

A loud bang resonated through the door, vibrating it, nearly knocking free of the hinges. I jumped back, startled by the sudden loud sound.

“Oh, for heaven’s sake,” I muttered and stormed forward, twisted the lock on the handle, and then gave it a turn. The door clicked open as I took a step back from it, clutching the sheet to my body.

Milo took one dark glance at me before rushing me, pushing my body against the cold of the bathroom tile wall.

He ripped the sheet from around my body and the shock of the cold tile against my skin caused me to shriek. Milo chuckled before hiking my legs up around his waist. His mouth crashed into mine and I wasn't sure what was happening anymore. I could have been dreaming. There was a magical sort of glow on my skin as I stared at myself in the mirror.

I was dreaming.

Yeah... that was it.

That was the only explanation for the reason Milo Mason was all over me again.

Reaching around my thick thighs, he managed to free his massive erection while keeping me pinned against the wall.

His mouth claimed mine again as his dick slid inside me, filling me to the brim. While he moved inside me, I wrapped my arms around his shoulders. My orgasm started to build, and I panted for breath, with my mouth close to his ear. I wiggled in his arms, furthering my orgasm along.

A brief sensation of spinning and floating overwhelmed me before my ass was planted firmly on the bathroom counter. I leaned back, resting my hand against the mirror as Milo continued to move inside me.

He reached a hand beneath my legs, flicking my sensitive clit with the pad of his thumb. That small touch was all it took. My climax hit and I cried out my pleasure into the hollow air of the bathroom.

“That’s my girl,” he murmured, moving inside me. “Sing to me.”

Seconds later, with his dick still inside me, Milo picked me up and carried me into the room and laid me on the bed. He made it seem as though I was so light, and I was so protected, furthering my belief that I was dreaming.

Once my back was firmly on the mattress of the bed, Milo picked up the pace of his motions without losing a beat.

“I take it you missed me?” he asked.

“What makes you say that?” I asked through pants for air. God, he made me feel amazing.

“You’re wet. Slick with desire,” he said.

I shrugged. “Could be I’m just horny.”

“Is that your final answer?” he asked, staring down at me.

“It might be,” I said.

He smirked and pulled out of me, lowering himself to my sex. He draped my legs over his shoulders and then slid his tongue between the folds of my skin, brushing the tip along my delicate clit.

I gasped and shuddered.

“You were saying?” he asked.

“Where did you go?” I asked.

“I needed some air,” he said. “Now, about my question.”

“Since last night?” I asked, continuing to evade his query.

He gazed up at me from between my legs, dark brown eyes staring at me with a predatory glint in them. I gasped as his tongue continued to flick my clit, forcing my thighs to twitch. Pressure started to build deep between my hips.

“Why didn’t you stay in bed,” he said against my sex.

I groaned and clutched the fitted sheet on the mattress and arched my back, fighting the urge to rock my hips against his mouth. “I needed a drink of water.”

“And?” he asked.

“And what?” I responded. My eyes rolled into the back of my head. I was so close. The pressure was almost too much to bear.

“What else did you do?” he asked, taking his time to slide the tip of his tongue along my clit.

I shuddered and sucked in a gulp of air. “I looked out the window.”

Why in the world could that be important?

“And what did you see?” he asked, voice dark and low. The vibration of his words nearly put me under.

I clamped my mouth shut... well, sort of... it was difficult to breathe with the things he was doing. But when I didn't answer, he stopped, and I glanced at him.

His eyes were serious. “What did you see, Olivia?”

I shuddered at the waves of warm air that flowed over my sex with each word he spoke. I sucked in a breath as I tried to get my mind to process thoughts beyond the sensations still working through my sex.

As though I needed further coaxing, Milo slowly teased my sex with his tongue. I groaned. He was teasing my orgasm closer, and he was doing a damn good job of it.

“Tell me,” he said.

He continued to tease my sex, holding me agonizingly close to the edge of my climax.

I whimpered. “The town.”

“Uh huh...” He dragged out the word.

I listed all the more-sane things, all the while balancing on the delicate ledge of pleasure. One Milo kept me on, waiting for an answer only he knew in his head. There was one detail I left out. One I wasn't sure about sharing because I didn't want to sound crazy.

Maybe it was my sleeping brain processing a plane weirdly. I wasn't sure, and I could only continue to guess. But that didn't mean I wanted to share that detail.

“You're leaving something out,” he said.

Oh, but the agony of hanging on the precipice of an orgasm. I wanted to come. To scream his name into the air. To writhe against that wonderful mouth of his.

“Tell me, my sweet Olivia,” he coaxed.

“A dragon!” I screamed as my patience failed. “I know it sounds insane, but... Oh my God!”

Milo lapped hungrily at my sex, forcing me over the edge. My climax rushed forward, gushing into his mouth as I wiggled and writhed on the mattress while crying out my pleasure.

The second my orgasm started to fade, Milo climbed over me, slamming his hard-as-rock cock inside me, slamming against the roof of my sex, pounding into me with so much force we scooted across the mattress.

He grunted and growled and pounded into me like he had waited too long for his dick to get wet, and I had teased him to the edge of his tolerance. Minutes later, his movements stuttered, and his face contorted as hot liquid spilled inside me again.

Milo buried his face into the crook of my neck as he kept moving, easing me through the small orgasm that flushed through my system. Then we lay on the bed together, with him still inside me. My eyes closed, and right as his soft snores filled my ears, sleep once again took me away.

MILO

Monday rolled around and it was almost like the weekend spent wrapped up inside Olivia never happened. At least for everyone except for me, apparently. Everyone else was going on about their day as though it was just a regular old Monday.

Even Olivia. Especially Olivia.

And that pissed me off.

Did what we shared mean so little to her? It wasn't possible she hadn't enjoyed herself as much as I had. I made sure of it. So why was she acting like the weekend never happened between us?

Maybe it was how easily she was able to snap back into the old and familiar routine that had my nerves tied in knots. And it was simply because I couldn't do it, matters were made worse.

I had hoped that since I had spent the weekend getting Olivia out of my system, I could move on with my life and focus on what I needed to do. And now that she was supposed to be out of my system, I figured I could finally move forward in my life and not keep getting snagged by the site of her doing unseemly things with her writing tools.

I took a seat at my desk and stared at the screen. A list of emails waited for my attention. I huffed, unable to focus on any of the words staring me in the face.

Without a direct cause, my eyes flitted to Olivia and then narrowed in on what she was doing.

She traced the outline of her lips with the tip of an ink pen's lid as she read something on her computer screen. Her bright blue eyes were oblivious to what she was doing as they traced lines of text.

But I wasn't oblivious, and the sight not only caught me off guard, but it also turned me on.

Dammit.

My cock hardened as I watched her doing that one damned thing again with her pen. The move where she drags the tip of it ever so gently along her bottom lip. The move had me harder than stone within seconds. The move had me wanting her all over again.

Fuck my life.

It was bad enough that I couldn't stop thinking about her or didn't have the ability to stop myself from looking over at her porcelain face. I was unable to stop recalling how her lips felt, or the smoothness of her skin. The contrast between the tones of our flesh. I also wasn't able to get the taste of her sweet, juicy pussy out of my mouth. And the second the flavor started to fade, I realized that I was going to crave more of her.

Hell, I already was. And all it took was her gliding her pen along her lip. Next to watching her eat, the pen thing was the most erotic thing she ever did, and she was completely oblivious to thing things she did. The ways she drove me crazy so easily and with so little effort.

It didn't seem to matter what I did. The distractions I took, and the measures I went through to ensure she wasn't a constant point of tension.

She was always there.

Always.

Every single damn second.

Unless...

Unless I sent her on an errand.

I would have to make it a good one so I could have at least a couple of hours to clear my head and get some work done. Not having her as a distraction would be one of the best things, I could do for myself and I should have thought about this before now. Usually, my errands were simply a test for her. She was always so willing to do my bidding.

Now I needed her to be out of my sight.

Without another moment's thought, I stood from my desk and stormed to my doorway, I swung open the door to my office and cast my glare out onto Olivia's perfectly curved body. Her eyes widened and she stood from the desk the instant she saw me.

"Is everything okay Mr. Mason?" she asked.

I barely shook my head. "I need you to run an errand for me, Olivia. It may take you a while."

She smoothed the palms of her hands over the front of her skirt as she nodded. "What is it, sir?"

Come fuck me silly in many of the same ways we had over the weekend.... I cleared my throat. "I'll make a list."

She nodded and I disappeared from her sight. I took a seat at my desk and pulled out a pen and paper. I barely glanced at Olivia who had bitten her lip. I growled and jumped up from the desk to close the blinds giving me a full view of my opened office space. I also engaged the lock on my door.

On my way back to my desk, I unbuckled my belt, unlatched the button of my pants, and pulled down the zipper, releasing my massive erection. My pants slid down to my ankles and I took a seat in my chair, slouching in it for comfort.

Then I gripped my dick in my warm hand and slowly slid the first three fingers along the shaft toward the tip, imagining them to be Olivia's mouth.

A thought occurred to me... would she come into my office and put her mouth on my dick? Would she allow me to

take her on my desk? Could she find me worthy enough to fuck me on my chair?

I cleared my throat. The idea was exciting and warm and smooth and...

I grunted into the air of my office as my orgasm spewed from the tip of my girth. A few more pumps and I was done. I used some leftover napkins in my desk drawer to clean up the mess and pulled my pants up once more.

I would have thought jerking off in my office would leave me a little more satisfied than I was, but it was enough to take the edge off. But if Olivia did something else to entice me, I shouldn't be held responsible for my actions.

I downed the last of my coffee and winced against the bitter taste. Next, I picked up a pen and quickly jotted down a list of things for her to pick up. I pulled out a couple of crisp hundred-dollar bills and folded them into the note. I took it all to Olivia, holding the whole collection out to her.

She nodded, stood from her seat, and took the paper. "Thank you, sir."

"I expect you won't have any problems finding the things on this list," I said.

She opened the note, collected the money, and briefly glanced over it. "I shouldn't."

I nodded. Yes, she would. Some of that stuff didn't exist and would likely keep her busy for hours searching for them. "I'll expect you back by the end of your shift."

She glanced at the clock and then nodded. "Absolutely."

She gathered the rest of her things then turned around and headed out of the office. I watched her round, ample ass shimmy from side to side as she moved. She understood damn well the things she did. No one could be so oblivious.

I was hard, all over again.

I frowned. I was going to have to increase her workload as punishment for teasing me in the way she was and for so often.

And she had to have known what she was doing, the vixen. Especially after the weekend we had shared.

Needless to say, I still wasn't able to figure out what it was about her that had me so completely enthralled. And I was probably going to go bankrupt before I figured it out.

She was bad for business. But I also couldn't seem to fire her.

OLIVIA

I stepped through the door and carefully slipped out of my shoes before carrying two bags of Indian takeout to the patio where my roommate patiently waited with a bottle of wine and two glasses. Though after the day I had, I probably would end up simply drinking out of the bottle.

Hell, I needed two bottles.

This was our weekly ritual. On Monday nights, we would take turns on who bought the food and who bought the wine. Alternating each week. We would sit out on our patio and talk about our week and what was going on in our lives.

Morgan was chomping at the bit for me to reveal the details of my weekend with my boss. And I knew she was going to tell me she told me so when I let her in on the events. But I had gotten in late last night and was desperately needing to shower before crawling into bed and waking up early to go to work.

But there was a small part of me that flirted with the idea of keeping the details of everything that happened a secret. I didn't understand why, but there was something intimate and special about the way he had touched me, and I was protective of that.

I stepped onto the patio we covered with a rug, sealed in with retractable and magnetic screens, and added an electric heater for warmth.

“There you are!” Morgan said, holding up her wine glass.

I chuckled. “That’s me. The woman of the hour.”

“Of the night,” she said and held up her glass of wine. “Sorry, got started without you. But I bought extra.”

“Good. Because I need it,” I said.

“Really?” she asked. “You’re not upset?”

“Nope,” I said, setting the bags on the table. “Should I be?”

She shrugged. “I suppose not.”

“I bought Indian,” I said, gesturing to the food. “I had a craving.”

“Spicy. Love it,” she said, grinning from ear to ear.

I took a seat on the other side of the table and picked up my glass and the bottle. I poured a full glass before setting the almost empty bottle back on the table.

“You weren’t kidding with needing extra, were you?”

“Nope,” I said, holding up my glass. “Cheers.”

“So, do you want me to go first, or do you want me to beg you to tell me what you did over the weekend?”

I laughed. “If you are giving me the option, then I say you go first.”

She groaned, tossing her head back to stare at the ceiling of our little patio. “You’re killing me, smalls.”

My laugh came out harder. “Well, die slower so you can tell me what’s going on with you.”

“You’re so not fair,” she said, narrowing her brown eyes at me. “You do realize that, right?”

I shrugged. “It’s worth the wait though. Trust me.”

“I seriously have nothing,” she said. “I was only being polite by offering to go first.”

“Liar,” I said, playfully calling her out.

She scoffed though a smile toyed the edges of her lips. “Prove it.”

I took a sip of my wine and sighed. “So, the weekend went about as well as you had expected.”

“You fucked him?” she asked. Her voice was enthusiastic, and she had twisted in her seat to face me with eyes wide and hopeful, and her mouth stretched into a full grin. “Tell me you fucked him.”

“More like he fucked me,” I said.

Morgan kicked out her feet several times while squealing. It was a wonder how she didn’t spill her drink all over her.

I shook my head, smiling at my roommate, and continued, “More than once, and it was a lot better than my fantasies, I’ll tell you that much.”

“I’m so happy for you,” she said and leaned in closer, propping her elbow on the arm of her chair and staring at me with excitement in her eyes. “So did he at least have some flowers waiting for you on your desk this morning?”

I barked out a laugh. “You are so hilarious. No flowers. In fact, it was a typical Monday where Milo pretended, I didn’t exist except for when he needed me to do his bidding. Which ended up sending me on a wild goose chase for items that I had later found out didn’t exist.”

“What? Are you serious?” Morgan asked, leaning forward, eyes wide with shock.

I nodded. “I know, talk about mindfuck. It was like he was trying to get rid of me on purpose.”

She whistled and shook her head, leaning back against her seat as she slowly took a sip of her wine. “That doesn’t make any sense.”

“It’s almost like there are two different versions of him,” I said, speaking my thoughts out loud. “The weekend toe-curling, mind-blowing sex one, and the work one.”

“Two different personalities?” Morgan asked. Her voice was full of concern.

I nodded and shrugged. “I have no other way to describe him.”

“Well, in that case, it looks like you might have dodged a bullet,” she suggested, tucking one of her feet under her.

“Maybe,” I muttered and stared out into the darkened night sky and took another sip of my wine. The flash of the form floating through the air rushed through my mind and I was almost desperate to see it again. So, I could be sure I wasn’t crazy.

Or... at the absolute least... losing my mind.

I shook the thought from my mind as I realized what I was doing. Besides, this was a night shared with my friend and roommate and she had to share her stuff with me.

“You know,” Morgan started, pulling my attention to her. She smiled. “He might have sent you out like that because the mere sight of you turns him on and all you were doing was distracting him from working.”

I snorted. “Never in a million years.”

“That’s what you said about your boss having a hidden agenda,” Morgan said.

“The point of our special Monday night hang-out sessions is for both of us to share,” I said, changing the subject.

“True,” Morgan said. “But I don’t have anything near as exciting as what you have. And Nice try, by the way.”

I shrugged. “I wished my weekend wasn’t as exciting as it had ended up being, to be perfectly honest.”

“What?” Morgan snorted a chuckle. “That’s ridiculous.”

I shrugged. “It’s true.”

“Why?” she asked with a high level of curiosity in her voice.

I huffed. “I am not all the sure.”

Things were quiet between us for a long time until sat up and knocked back the rest of my wine. “Now, what about you?”

“Well, I did meet someone,” Morgan started.

“Yeah?” I asked, perking up and twisting in my seat to face her. “Do tell.”

She giggled. “He’s cute. Quiet. Reserved.”

“Uh huh... and?” I asked dragging out the word.

“He’s a new guy at work. All the skinny girls were all over him, but he didn’t bother talking to them. He spoke to me though. Once. He’s nice,” she said.

“I smell romance!” I squealed.

“Too early to tell for sure,” she said, casting me a sideways glance. “But it is possible. I also have this hot guy on my dating app.”

“Yeah?” I asked and then chuckled. “Rolling in the men now, huh?”

“I wouldn’t say that,” she said. “And you’re one to talk, miss sleeps with her boss.”

“I would say that, and I did,” I said and chuckled. “And sleeping with my boss is different.”

“Uh-huh,” she said and took a sip of wine. “I don’t know much about the guy from work yet. And as far as the dating app is concerned, I have my suspicions. I think there may be more to him than meets the eye. But he was just too damn cute to pass up.”

“So... any dates scheduled?” I asked.

She scrunched up her face, shaking her head.

I sighed. “Well, I think you should make the first move.”

She laughed sarcastically. “I’ll make the first move with the men in my life the second you confront your boss about the shit he pulled not only over the past weekend but from today as well.”

I cast my gaze over our patio. Was it worth it? Or were the things between Milo and I better left alone? And if I angered him, would he fire me just to be rid of me for good? There was so much at stake. After several minutes I shook my head. “Nah. Never gonna happen.”

“Chicken shit.” Morgan’s voice came out low and flat.

“Speaking of chicken, are you hungry yet?” I asked, thankful for a way out of this conversation. I was tired of thinking about it. I was tired of the subject, and I certainly was over the whole idea of him for the rest of the night. “Our food is getting cold.”

We dished up our food and dug in. About halfway through the meal, Morgan shrugged. “I’m not sure I’m ready for a relationship yet. I’m pretty comfortable with the way things are.”

“Not only can I understand that, but I can respect it too,” I said around a bite of Tikka Masala. “Because I think I’m in that same boat.”

“So, if you’re not going to confront the boss man on his motives, then what are you going to do?” Morgan asked after a few minutes of silence had settled between us.

“Move on,” I muttered. “It’s all I can do.”

“Eh, I suppose you could,” she said. “But I think you’re simply too scared things might be more between you two.”

I leveled my gaze at her. “Trust and believe when I say it was only a fling, it was nothing more than a fling.”

“We’ll see,” she said with a wink and a smile before shoving her mouth full of her food.

I shook my head. But the idea did cause my pulse to race. Perhaps Milo and I could be something more...

Before I allowed my mind to become too carried away with the possibilities, I had to plant my feet firmly on the ground. Because if it was one thing I wasn’t willing to do, it was to have my heart broken by my boss.

MILO

I arrived a couple of hours early to enact my punishment. After doing some research, I found a digital filing system. I had about five hundred files that needed to be converted. So, I got to work and made sure all the files that were in my office were stacked up on and around her desk.

Once I was finished, I took a seat at my desk, attended to some trivial things and emails, and when Olivia finally walked in, I leaned back with a satisfied smirk stretching my lips and watched her reaction as she took in the disarray through the window that overlooked her desk and the main lobby.

Olivia approached the desk with wide eyes, gaping at the piles and piles of files stacked several feet high. I had run out of space on the top and was forced to stack some on the floor as well. She managed to set her coffee mug down on what space was available on the surface of her desk and fingered through a few of the files before glancing toward my office and back to the files again. A crease appeared in the center of her forehead.

The questioning and confusion within her eyes were exactly what I was going for in terms of reactions. But the real joy would come from watching her endure the punishment.

While she stared at the nearly endless stacks of files surrounding her desk, I stood and headed toward the door. Once I was in view, I shoved my hands into my pant pockets and leaned against the doorway.

“Good morning, Olivia,” I said, keeping my voice deep.

“Good morning, Mr. Mason,” she said, setting me ablaze with her sapphire eyes.

I loved it when she referred to me as Mr. Mason. My dick hardened at the sound coming from her sweet, tantalizing lips. Lips panted the sweetest, softest shade of pink. I cleared my throat as an image of her wrapping them around my swollen dick entered my mind, forcing my dick to throb with need.

“Good morning,” I said again with a curt nod.

“What is all of this?” she asked, gesturing toward the mountains of files that had overwhelmed her desk and my lobby.

“A new system is being implemented,” I said.

“I didn’t know anything about it,” she said.

“You do now,” I stated sharply.

“But, why?” she asked, voice soft and sweet.

“Paper files are obsolete. Not to mention bad for the environment. Check your emails, Olivia. You’ll see the new program, instructions on how to download and install it, and also a walkthrough on how to operate it. You will be in charge of converting all paper files into digital format.”

She sighed as her head slowly nodded. “Okay.”

“Once you are done with these, you will come to me, and I will give you some more.” I leveled my gaze at her and waited for a response.

“There’s more?” she asked, eyes wide with shock.

I nodded once. “This will be done before you leave for the day.”

“You’re joking, right?” she asked, leveling her gaze on me.

“Do I look like I’m joking, Olivia?” I asked, pushing a level of warning into my voice. This was her punishment. She needed to accept it and do it.

She huffed. “No, sir.”

“I suggest you get started. It’s going to be a late night for you,” I said.

She barely met my gaze with hers, which made me wonder why she couldn’t allow herself to meet my gaze. “Yes, sir.”

She frowned as she took her seat and pulled up her email. I waited for another response, but after several seconds of her ignoring the fact I was still standing in my doorway, I glared at her.

“I’m going to need a lot more coffee for this,” she muttered under her breath as I took myself to my desk and stewed over what happened during our little interaction. But after several minutes, my gaze shifted to her beautiful face and the expression of utter misery that covered her face.

I smirked to myself.

This was her punishment. She needed to accept that. And if she behaved herself and did what she was told, I might reward her later for that.



AT THE END of the night, I sat in my office and judged the amount of work Olivia had done throughout the day. She had made a considerable dent in the stacks of files I had piled on and around her desk. She only had a few more stacks to go and then she was done.

Needless to say, I was impressed. She took the punishment like a champ.

My stomach growled and my dick ached. I was hungry and I had the perfect reward for her in mind. So, I stood from my desk, gathered my jacket, and headed out the door.

“Enjoy the rest of your night, Mr. Mason,” she said and picked up another file.

I stopped in front of her and waited for her to meet my gaze. She eyed my cock, hidden beneath my pants. It had barely started to harden. She bit her lip. Then her eyes met

mine and I nodded. I wanted her to know I had caught her, and I wasn't mad. I was encouraged.

“Did you need something, Mr. Mason?” she asked.

Your lovely mouth around my dick would be nice... I cleared my throat. That wouldn't work. Instead, I asked, “Are you hungry?”

She slowly nodded; her eyes strained to keep mine as my dick noticeably hardened in my pants. The slight blush in her cheeks told me she wanted it. The way she licked her lips had me wanting to fuck her in the middle of the lobby. Maybe on her desk. Or even pinning her against a few of the walls.

There were a number of positions I had thought about putting her through just to see if she could handle them with me inside her.

All in due time.

Meanwhile, I held out my hand for her to take. She stared at it for a few seconds then set the file she was clinging to on her desk, took my hand, and let me pull her from her seat. I tucked her hand into the crook of my arm and escorted her out of the building and into the back seat of our SUV.

I held my breath as confusion riddled every nerve in my body. I had never referred to my SUV as ours before, and the fact that I had and felt great about it was both shocking as much as it was comforting.

“Where to, sir?” Zeke asked from the driver's seat.

I gave the directions and settled back into the seat. Once the SUV pulled away from the curb, I twisted to face Olivia, slid my hand along the side of her face, ignoring the expression in her eyes, and brushed my lips over her delicious mouth.

Once I pulled away, she gasped. “Mr. Mason... I thought you...”

“I what?” I asked, keeping my voice low and deep.

The scent of her arousal filled the space between us, coating the air with the hint. I slipped my fingers under her

suit jacket, diving lower to brush along her sex, separated from my fingers by a thin sheet of fabric that would be so easily ripped apart.

She sighed, head resting against the back of the seat. “I thought we were going to dinner.”

“We are, I’m simply enjoying a little appetizer first,” I said and coaxed her to lie down on the seat. My fingers unlatched the belt around her waist and then undid the button on her pants. With one quick tug, I pulled her pants down her legs, peeling back her dark, purple, lacey underwear.

I held them up and gave her a look of approval. “Nice.”

She shrugged. “They’re my favorite.”

I chuckled and lowered my mouth to her delicate mound, tasting the flavor of her sex and delighting in the feel of the silky-smooth skin surrounding mine. Her sweet scent and taste drove me crazy. It was like a drug I couldn’t get enough of.

I was addicted to her in all of the delightful ways.

Her legs started to quake and close around me, I dug my fingers into her thighs and held them open. She softly moaned.

I lifted up. “Not a sound, my sweet.”

“How do you honestly think I’m going to...” she whispered as I started licking her again. “Oh, dear mother of God.”

She hit the back of the leather seats as I continued to eat her swollen, thick pussy. Right when she was about to come, I shoved a finger into her entrance, and then another. I bent my fingers inside her, pressing against the underside of her organ.

She squeaked and bit her lip as her orgasm hit. Liquid pleasure filled my mouth as I continued to lap up every delicious ounce of her juices. She was exceptionally gorgeous from this angle, washed in pleasure, desperately trying to keep herself from crying out through her climax. Her eyes were squeezed closed, and she covered her mouth with her whole, tight fist. Bright pink lips encompassed the width.

My dick throbbed as I imagined my girth filling her mouth in much the same way.

I groaned against her, and she wiggled underneath me as her fluids continued to fill my mouth, tantalizing my senses and making me hunger for more of her.

Minutes later, we pulled up to a curb.

“We’re here, sir,” Zeke said. His voice was angled away from us, which was a wise decision considering what was happening. Plus, I knew him well enough to trust he wasn’t watching or peeking in the back seat.

Olivia, face flushed, pulled on her clothes, and righted them as I used the back of my hand to wipe off my face.

“Thanks, Zeke,” I said.

He nodded once. “You’re welcome, sir. Enjoy your meal.”



DINNER WAS as erotic as the last time I had taken her out and I was going to have to start having meals delivered just so I could give in to my wanton needs. Olivia’s eyes were closed as we drove to my place. When we pulled into my lavish driveway, she woke up and peered out of the window.

“Where are we?” she asked.

“I thought I would bring you home with me tonight,” I said. “Pick up where I left off.”

“Mr. Mason,” she started.

“I’ll have Zeke take you home once we are done if that is what you wish,” I said.

She clamped her mouth shut as a war raged on behind her eyes. I could tell she was conflicted over having sex with her boss. She always had been, but all it took was a soft touch or a kiss... and passion would ignite between her legs, putting that conflict on hold.

And soon, we were inside my home, climbing the stairs to my bedroom, where I had her stand in front of the foot of the bed, slowly taking her clothes off, allowing me to see all of her... every last curve and creamy inch of her porcelain skin.

Within the hour, she would be screaming my name, begging me not to stop... and I had little intention of doing so.

OLIVIA

It had been one month since my last fling with my boss. Whatever it was I had done, I wished I could undo it. Because he never touched me again. Not after that night spent in his home, wrapped in each other.

I was put back on the shelf as an employee. The friend zone would have been more comfortable. Except, Milo Mason and I weren't friends. We were far from that.

It seemed he had gotten what he wanted out of me and once he had his fill, like many of the other women who have come and gone out of his life, I was thrown away like yesterday's trash.

And to be honest, it hurt.

Not that any of that mattered. I was sick to my stomach. I had been fighting it off for the past few days, but it didn't seem to matter what I did. I couldn't get over it. But if I didn't find a way out of this soon, I wouldn't have a job.

Milo Mason wasn't a patient man in any sense of the word. He tolerated absence less than he tolerated throwing up into the trashcan at a desk. But I wasn't about to embarrass myself or him by doing that.

So, I stayed home. And in bed.

Morgan knocked on my door. It had been a couple of days since we were able to catch up. She had left a note on the table last night, in our kitchen, letting me know she wanted to talk to me before I left for work today. I expected her to show up,

but she probably wasn't expecting me to still be in bed, clinging to my blankets and what warmth I was able to have.

"Yeah?" I called out. My voice cracked and came out hoarse.

She opened the door enough to poke her head in. Her concerned expression fell onto my face. She pouted and said, "You sound horrible."

I nodded. "I feel it too."

She stepped inside and approached my bed, taking a seat on the side. The back of her fingers brushed against my forehead. Her eyebrows drew closer together. "Hmm... you aren't warm at all."

I shrugged. "That's surprising. I'm freezing. My body aches too. I also can't keep anything down."

"I'll head to the store to pick up some stuff for you," she said, removing herself from my bed.

I shook my head. "Don't bother yourself for me. I'll be fine. This will probably be over within a day or so anyway."

"You don't think the fish we ate yesterday was off, do you?" she asked.

I shrugged. "This has been coming on for a couple of days now, so I doubt it."

"Okay," she said, giving my leg a pat. "You get some rest. I'll see you when I'm off and home later."

"What about what you needed to talk to me about?" I asked.

She waved it away. "Rest first. Chat later... if you're better and able to keep some food and water down."

I smiled. She truly was a caring friend. "Okay."

She walked out the door and I nestled deeper under my covers, closing my eyes against the world, hoping a little rest would be just the thing I needed to find my way back to better health.

But rest would not happen. Oh no. Not for me. God, no. I wasn't ever that lucky. Instead of resting, like I wanted to be doing, I spent most of my day in the bathroom, praying to the porcelain gods to have mercy on my unfortunate soul.

Peace and mercy weren't in the cards for me.

And neither was food. The mere thought of anything going in my mouth had my stomach churning.

I never once thought I would vomit enough for my stomach muscles to be so sore.

Once my stomach finally calmed down enough to allow me to have some semblance of rest, Morgan came home. She knocked on my door to check on me.

"Yeah?" I called out. My voice carried the frustration that had filled me.

She opened the door enough for her to poke her head in again. "How are you feeling?"

"Like hammered shit," I grumbled. "How was your day?"

She stepped into the room and leaned against the door. "It was okay."

I nodded. "Well, at least it was better than my day."

"So, I was thinking..." she said, opening the door the rest of the way and leaning against the jamb with her arms crossed over her chest.

"That sounds dangerous," I said, trying to have some humor in my day.

She chuckled. "Oh, just you wait until I say what has been on my mind. You haven't heard dangerous yet."

"Oh, lord," I muttered. "What were you thinking about?"

"Hear me out before you freak out, Okay?" she asked.

I stared at her as confusion settled in the center of my forehead in the form of a pinch. "Okay..."

"It's been a month since you and your boss tangled, right?" she asked.

I nodded. “Yeah. About that long ago anyway.”

“You haven’t asked me to borrow anything for your period... in a long time.” Her eyebrows raised high up on her forehead.

It never failed. At least once per month, despite tracking my periods on a calendar, I forget to buy myself enough of what I needed and had to take something for protection from Morgan.

But as I thought about what she said, it occurred to me what she was implying, and I sucked in a breath of shock. Fear frayed my nerves.

“Nope.” I shook my head and waved my hands in front of me to ward off the very hint of where she was leading. “Nope. I’m not late. And that’s not possible.”

“Yes, you are my dear,” she said. “I checked the calendar. And it is possible because you told me he didn’t use protection.”

She was making more sense than I cared to give her credit for. As the fact started to hit home, I stared at her. “You’re not funny.”

“You’re so mean,” she said through a fake pout. “But I’m not joking, either.”

I sat up and instantly regretted it. A wave of dizziness and nausea washed over me. But I had to find out for myself. It couldn’t be. I didn’t want it to be. That would make things so much more complicated than they already were, and I still wasn’t entirely sure of what I had done wrong.

The last thing I needed was a pregnancy or a baby.

Or more time off.

Ugh.

I dizzily crawled out of bed and made my way to the calendar we kept up on the wall next to the fridge and I flipped to the last month. I found my last period date and then counted forward. My eyes widened as I realized how horribly late I was. Three weeks.

I was three freaking weeks late!

I never even thought to check. My periods were always on time, running like clockwork. I trusted in my body, but I never once thought of how long it had been since my last period.

Morgan showed up at my side and held out a pregnancy test for me.

I stared at it. “You went to the store to buy a pregnancy test before you came home?”

She shook her head. “I keep a few on hand, just in case.”

It had never occurred to me to keep some pregnancy tests on hand for moments like this. Of course, I wasn’t sexually active enough to get pregnant, and I almost always used protection. So, I supposed it made sense that Morgan kept some on hand. I nodded and took the test. “All right then.”

“It’s a formality, really,” Morgan said. “You’ve never been late before.”

“Welp, there’s a first time for everything,” I said as I walked into my room and headed toward my bathroom.

“Let me know how it goes,” she said.

“Will do,” I called out from my bathroom.

I stared at the box. I didn’t want to do this with every fiber of my being. But I also had no choice. It was better to find out now than months down the road or whenever my brain decided to catch up with my body.

After quickly reading the instructions, I sat on the toilet with the stick aimed under my stream, clipped the lid back on, and then sat it on the back of my sink. The box said I had to wait three minutes.

I grabbed my phone then set a timer and sat on the edge of my bed while I waited.

Three minutes never felt so long before.

My time went off and I hesitantly stood up to walk into the bathroom. Morgan appeared in my doorway. “Want me to look first?”

I sighed. “Tempting. But I think I should do it.”

I picked up the stick. Two pink lines showed up in the window. I looked at the box to see what that meant.

“No. It can’t be,” I said, unwilling to believe my eyes.

“It can,” Morgan said, appearing in my bathroom doorway. “And it is.”

I glared at her.

She smiled. “Congrats!”

I stared at my friend. “I can’t be pregnant.”

“What are you going to tell your boss?” my roommate asked.

I shrugged. “What am I supposed to tell him? I finished converting all the files to the digital format, Mr. Mason. OH and, by the way, you knocked me up?”

Morgan chuckled. “Well, that’s a start, but I would seriously try to come up with a smoother way to slide that one in.”

I groaned.

I didn’t even know how to take the news. I highly expected Milo Mason, the jerk that he was, to laugh me out of his office. I was sure with the long line of women he had walking through his door on a regular basis, one or two of them had to have already pulled the pregnancy card before.

So, me walking in there this long after we had sex? I didn’t see that going too well.

“I don’t think I’m going to tell him anything right now. Not until I can wrap my head around it,” I said.

“Are you sure that’s a wise thing to do?” Morgan asked.

“Wise or not, I can’t believe this myself,” I said. “And if I can’t believe this, there is no way in hell I’m going to be able to convince my boss.”

She nodded. “Fair enough.”

Now that I had said it out loud, it was starting to feel more real. But I meant what I said. The best thing I could do for right now is keep this news to myself. At least for now.

MILO

I had fallen into a strange, new routine. One where I showed up early for work and was able to get a plethora of things done before Olivia showed up and distracted me for the rest of the day. And she was a huge distraction, and it was starting to interfere with my livelihood. And though I wanted nothing more than to spend all my time with her, it wasn't feasible. I had a business to run. Of course, I had considered how much easier things would be if she just gave me a reason to fire her.

If she no longer worked for me, I would be able to make her mine for as long as she lived, and she would never have to spend a day alone ever again, for the rest of her life. My progress from the time she showed up until the time she left was always slow, but it no longer bothered me in the ways it used to.

Perhaps my acceptance of such things was because I had resigned to what was. There was no use fighting it. So, I stopped, and life had been kinder ever since.

But after a few hours into my day, I checked the time and there was no sign of Olivia.

I pulled out my phone and scrolled to her contact, "Goddess." I tapped on the message icon and my fingers danced along my screen. "Why are you so late?"

I set the phone on the surface of my desk and then stared at my computer screen, waiting for her response. Knowing her, she would be quick to send a reply. I chuckled to myself. I

loved how she was so eager to please. But I also loved the hint of disobedience she had hidden deep inside her. I wasn't sure if she was aware of its existence until our weekend together. Or if she was even aware of when she did things she wasn't supposed to.

She was innocent like that. And then again, she wasn't.

Fifteen minutes passed and I still hadn't received a reply from her. I huffed and picked up my phone, furiously typing out, "Are you avoiding responding to me?"

I set my phone down and considered the off chance she was sick. I had noticed she was more pale than usual over the past couple of days. Maybe she caught a stomach virus or had some sort of food poisoning.

Perhaps that was why she wasn't responding to me.

Fine.

I submitted myself to calling and once again picked up my phone, this time tapping the phone icon to call.

The line rang several times before the click of an answer sounded. "Hey, it's me..."

Her sweet, honey-coated voice filled my ears, and I squeezed my eyes closed through the rush of relief I got from the sound. It was like I was a junkie, and I was getting my fix after being denied a few minutes too long.

I wasn't sure I wanted to leave a message. What would I say? I hated voicemails. They were so impersonal. I called to talk to the person, not a machine. I covered my face with my hand and groaned.

"You know what to do," her voice finalized.

A second passed and a high-pitched tone followed.

"Olivia, this is your boss. You are late and you haven't called to report. Get ahold of me immediately."

I tapped the red phone icon to end the call.

My message was probably not the best way to handle a voicemail. Especially with her. But again, I hated them, and I

didn't think to hang up until after the recording had already started.

Still, I tried to continue with my day, but it was difficult not knowing what was going on with my almost-too-hot-to-handle secretary. Not only was I unable to watch Olivia sitting at her desk, doing the things she did that drove me crazy with desire for her, but she also had yet to return a single text or my phone call.

She had better have a valid excuse for avoiding me. Otherwise, I might be forced to punish her again.

By early afternoon, I picked up my phone and checked my notifications. I held my breath as I scrolled through the seemingly endless list of random notifications. Not a single one of them was a response from Olivia.

My hand tightened around the device. The plastic clicked and popped under the pressure. Anger boiled through my blood.

Now I knew for certain she was avoiding me. Because, surely, by now she would have gotten my messages. She should have responded already.

But she had not.

That meant she was avoiding me. Why? What in the world did I do to make her behave this way?

I was pissed off, to put it overtly simply. I didn't like feeling like I was being ignored. But I was also on the precipice of being worried and behaving irrationally. I didn't want to go through that. Hell... nobody wanted to see that.

I dialed her number again. It rang several times only for the same voicemail greeting to fill my ears. With a growl, I ended the call. My fingers furiously rushed over the screen typing out my message.

“Olivia, call me immediately. Your job is on the line.”

I immediately stood from the desk and slipped my phone into my coat pocket. If she was going to play this game and pretend, I didn't exist, I was going to give her a rude

awakening. Ignoring my calls and my texts was completely uncalled for and I didn't much care for the cold shoulder she was giving me.

And she had better have a damn good excuse for not coming in to work.

This behavior of hers was completely uncalled for and out of character for her.

And if my last line didn't light a fire under her ass and kick her into gear, then I wasn't sure what would.

But I had somewhere to go. And that meant I had to put whatever was going on between us on hold.



LO AND BEHOLD, another two hours later, there was still no response.

I stared at the clock on my phone screen and considered my options.

One: I could leave and go to her house to check on her. She wouldn't be able to avoid me if I was standing in front of her. Then I would refuse to leave until she told me what was going on. I deserved the chance to fix things dammit.

Two: I could call her behaviors by what they appear to be and file her lack of response and showing up for her shift as a no-call, no-show, and fire her.

This option was the most intriguing for me. The only downside was the fact that she wasn't responding to me and seemingly avoiding me. If I fired her, she would likely disappear from my life forever, and I didn't see myself tolerating her absence well at all.

Three: I could spend the rest of my day driving myself crazy by constantly texting and calling.

I wasn't her boyfriend yet, and that last one made me cringe.

I was sure there were more options available to me, but I refused to consider those. And of the ones I had acknowledged, I liked the one where I could drink her in with my gaze better than anything. Because being in her presence would make the agony of not seeing her disappear.

Breathing in her scent would ease my nerves.

Tasting her would curb the growing ache inside me.

Of course, I recognized I was being overly possessive and probably a tad bit co-dependent, but I had grown accustomed to our little game. Our charades. I needed it... I needed her more than I needed the air in my lungs.

But if I gave up on my job for her, even for the day, I wouldn't have my company for very much longer.

As much as I hated to admit it, continuing to periodically call and text her was the only logical option that would allow me to still do what I needed to have done. I figured we would talk about things when she came in the following morning... address this issue of ignoring my texts and avoiding returning my calls.

I might lose my self-control and bend her ass over my desk and fuck her hard.

OLIVIA

Sleep was playing peek-a-boo with me, and I was desperate for every minute I fought to have. But with the way my stomach had been churning and the knowledge that I was pregnant, sleep was a struggle.

Late in the evening, barely conscious enough to have coherent thoughts, I sat up and stared at the ceiling. My phone started to ring. It was my boss, thanks to the “Your boss is calling” ringtone. And I was going to heed the part that said, “Do not answer the phone.” The whole thing had a warning horn blowing in the background. After a brief second of silence, the sound started again.

I groaned. It was the fifth or sixth time he called today. I couldn’t be bothered to figure out why he was calling so often. He was probably angry I wasn’t there to fetch his coffee, run his errand or finish uploading his files to the new system.

Tossing myself back on top of my comforter, I grabbed a pillow from the head of the bed and placed it over my head. I didn’t have the energy to reach for my phone. It was on the charger, on my desk, across the room from my bed. I barely had the energy to grab the pillow. Still, I realized I wasn’t going to sleep much at all unless I turned the ringer off. Especially since my boss hadn’t gotten a clue.

“Why can’t he accept what was and leave me the hell alone?” I said into my pillow, making my words come out muffled and disjointed.

Earlier in the day, I messaged him, letting him know I was sick and not coming to work, but he apparently never got the memo. Or he wasn't accepting the fact I was, indeed, unable to keep anything down, and figured I should work my scheduled shift regardless.

I frowned.

That probably was it.

Maybe I was better off finding a different place to work. It wasn't like I was going to be able to hide this baby for long. A few months and I would start to show. And Milo had kept his distance from me since the night I spent with him in his lavish home. Whatever happened, and for whatever reason, we weren't a thing and I highly doubted I would ever be touched by him again.

So, to keep things from becoming very awkward, I probably needed to consider finding a different job.

Silence blared through my room with the sudden stop of my loud and obnoxious ringer. A sigh of relief seeped between my lips, and I closed my eyes. The sensation of melting into the bed washed over me and my lips stretched into a soft smile. Maybe I could finally close my eyes for a bit for some much-needed rest.

But not even two minutes later, Milo Mason called me again.

"This is ridiculous," I snapped out and left the comfort of my bed to grab my phone. Once I reached my desk, I snatched the thing off the charger and then slid the icon to the left to ignore the call.

Milo Mason needed to snap out of whatever mindset he was in that gave him the slightest hint that he was in control of me or anything like that.

The second before I set the phone back down, I noticed that I had a large number of text messages.

"Dear God," I muttered and decided to start thrumming through them.

Amazingly, not all of them were from Milo. But a good majority of them were. I clicked on the first message and my eyes fell on the message I had sent him this morning. At least, I thought I had sent him considering the whole thing still sat inside the text box... unsent.

I rolled my eyes, cocking my head back, and glared at the ceiling. I never sent the stupid message. My delirium, it seemed, was only going to become worse. The most fun of all was the fact that I was partly to blame for Milo's persistence.

In the middle of scrolling through all the messages he had sent with varying implied tones; I received a new message from him.

"That's it, I'm coming over."

My eyes widened at the message as a certain level of fear washed over me, furthering the upset in my stomach. Sour covered my tongue, and I bent forward through the clench of pain that sliced through my midsection.

"God no," I muttered through clenched teeth.

The last thing I needed was Milo Mason to show up at my door demanding answers and seeing me in my condition. I quickly hit the call icon and waited for the line to connect. Once it did, it rang once before his voice came over the line.

"It's about time you figured out how to return a phone call," he growled out.

"Sorry," I forced out the word as coherently as I was able to. My voice sounded rough. "I've been sick."

"You never have gotten sick before, Olivia," he snapped, clearly not buying my excuse. "What is really going on?"

I huffed over the line. "I already told you. Just because you don't believe me, doesn't change the facts. I am too sick to work, Mr. Mason. I'll be happy to bring in a doctor's note once I'm feeling better, but I'm afraid I won't be making it in for a couple of days."

"Days?" he asked as though he hadn't heard me correctly.

“Yes, sir,” I said and sucked in a breath. It was taking the rest of the energy that I had inside me to make it through this conversation. I didn’t have nearly enough to keep myself from getting an attitude back with him. My patience was also running out. “I’m sorry for the inconvenience.”

“I expect you to call me every—” his words came out clipped.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Mason, but I have to go now,” I said, not willing to drag out the inevitable longer than necessary. “Please don’t come over. I’m not well. I’m going back to bed now.”

I ended the call and set the phone on my nightstand before lowering myself back under my covers. I needed rest and lots of it. Not to mention a way out of this nightmare. And since I wasn’t in the position to make any decisions sleep-deprived, that was the first thing I was going to do.

And before falling asleep, I turned off the volume on my phone. I wanted to sleep for as long as possible, and with the way I felt, it was going to be several weeks.

MILO

The call was dropped.

Well, that's what I told myself. Her hanging up on me wasn't an option I was willing to consider. The idea of her doing something so brash and disrespectful created a fire within me. And that didn't bode well for anyone. Especially her, and I had little standing in the way of me storming myself to her apartment and fucking her silly. I wouldn't have given a damn about her being sick.

So, I stuck with my deluded and more passive idea of the call having been dropped and headed directly to a local spot known for its amazing soups and bread bowls. To the untrained eye, it was nothing more than a basic soup truck, with really, really fantastic food. But to the trained eye, it was the best-kept secret in the entire state of Colorado.

I frequented the spot often enough the employees knew me by name... and my order.

But I didn't show up for me. I couldn't stand the idea of Olivia not being well and I wanted to do something special and nice for her. I wanted her to know that I valued her. I wanted her to feel special and warm. And I wanted to help her get better.

To look forward to another day without her beautiful face being present was an agony I didn't want to endure. Though she probably took my questioning her "few days" comment as an argument. I simply didn't like the idea of not being able to

see her or smell her for that long. Having gone as long as this was hard enough.

I walked up to the side of the truck with the opened window and stared at the menu that hung from the window by two hooks.

The owner, Luciano, came into view and nodded in greeting. “Good evening, Mr. Mason.”

“Hello, Luciano,” I said. “How is the family?”

He shrugged. “Can’t complain, ya know? We’re all doing just fine. Did you decide to try something different tonight?”

I dragged my gaze to the man standing within a small window inside the trailer converted into a soup kitchen. “I’m not sure. What works for a sore throat?”

He was an older man. A wolf shifter. He had no pack to speak of, but he had a family and that was what he considered his pack. He had a bit of a habit of taking in wayward kids from time to time and devoted a chunk of his day teaching them how to work in the kitchen and help clean up the neighborhood.

The guy was a gold-star humanitarian.

I never saw him outside of the food truck, but every time I visited, he wore a faded pair of blue jeans with a black t-shirt and a white towel draped over his shoulder. Never failed. I often wondered if he had a separate wardrobe.

He shrugged. “That depends. Do you have a fever?”

I chuckled, and said, “No. It’s not for me. It’s for my secretary.”

His eyes glistened with some hidden information I didn’t mean to give him. He smiled. “Ah. Does she have a fever, then?”

“I’m not sure. I could ask, but she sounded rough and needs her rest,” I said. “What works for everything? She’s so out of it she can’t even come into work.”

He nodded and jabbed a finger into the air. "I've got just the thing."

He disappeared from sight. A couple of minutes later, he returned with a plastic tub full of soup. Though the plastic wasn't entirely opaque, I could tell there was a lot of broth, vegetables, and some pasta.

"On the house," he said.

I nodded. "Thank you, Luciano."

"Anytime, Mr. Mason," he said. "And do tell the lady I said to get better soon. There's also plenty more where that came from, so no need to be a stranger."

I smiled politely. "Will do. Thank you, Luciano"

"Any time, Mr. Mason," he said as he wiped off his hands with the towel that was draped over his shoulder. Once he finished, he draped it over his shoulder again. "Any time."

I took the soup and sat it in the cup holder built into a folding armrest in the back seat then had Zeke drive me to a local florist. Also owned and operated by shifters.

Needless to say, I also invested in these companies and could vouch for the quality, and for Olivia, only the finest would do.

The florist was a bit on the eccentric side, so I tended to make my interactions with her as brief as possible. The bell attached to the door announced my arrival and I knew Janeen was somewhere in the back.

I headed toward the more expensive arrangements and pulled on a bouquet that reminded me of Olivia then took it to the counter. By the time I made it to the register, Janeen joined me. Her coke bottle glasses rested on the tip of her nose, and she cast her head high to look at me through them.

"What a surprise, Milo," she said, always insisting on referring to me by my first name despite how many times I asked her not to.

I nodded. I kept my voice low and even, lacking any emotion. "Hello, Janeen."

“Who is the lucky lady?” she asked as she took the flowers and gave them a final touchup.

“A sick friend,” I said, leaving it at that.

She nodded. “That’s so sweet.”

I tossed a couple of hundred dollars onto the counter and gathered up the flowers. “Keep the change.”

She collected the money and tucked it under her bra strap. “Uh-huh, you have a good night, Milo.”

A couple of hours later, armed with a container of soup and some flowers, I stared up at the building and groaned. I hated this neighborhood and still despise the fact that Olivia lived in it. Of all the places a giant metropolis like Denver offered, she chose here.

I shook my head and squeezed my eyes closed. The things this woman made me do. But she was worth it and she had better show some damned gratitude for me subjugating myself for her.

“Good luck, sir,” Zeke said as I started to climb out of the back seat.

I settled my gaze on him.

He nodded once.

“Thank you,” I said and climbed out of the back seat. Minutes later, I stood outside Olivia’s door. I huffed as I stared at the door then raked my gaze around me. The hallway smelled funny. I couldn’t place the odor. It was chemical, damp, and burned my nostrils. A few plants, probably fake, took up the far corner of the hall, standing guard on either side of a window with the blinds closed, sealing the sight of the wrought iron bars from view.

Muted sounds from TVs seeped into the silence of the hall. A few kids screaming added to the overall ambiance of the wrong place for Olivia. She would have to give in eventually. I wasn’t going to give her the choice. I simply dropped the matter temporarily.

I loudly tapped the knuckles of my left fist against the outside of the door and then checked my phone for the time.

It was a little after eight in the evening. The soup was getting cold, and the flowers needed to be put into some water soon.

After several minutes of waiting... at least, what felt like several minutes. Honestly, every second spent in this place was a second longer than I ever wanted to spend, but I was here for Olivia, and I wasn't going to leave until I accomplished what I had set out to do. There was no answer.

I knocked again.

I recalled she had a roommate and couldn't understand why neither of them felt compelled to answer the door. Of course, I realized the roommate had a life. And I knew better than to believe Olivia had lied to me about how she felt. I huffed a breath of hot air out of my nose and pulled out my phone to dial Olivia when something brushed up against the door.

"Who is it?" Olivia's voice filtered through the thin plank of wood, muffled, and still sounding rough.

"It's me," I said.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, words rushed.

"Open the door and you will see," I said, a smile toying my lips as I imagined her face when she opened the door and settled her gaze on the items I held in my arms.

"What?" Her voice filtered through the wood higher than normal. "No. Go away!"

I glared at the door. "Stop being obstinate, Olivia. I brought you something to help you improve."

"Leave it at the foot of the door and go," she said.

"Olivia," I started, voice firm.

"No!" she said. "You absolutely cannot see me like this."

I huffed. "Open the door, my hands are full and I'm certainly not leaving these on the floor."

“I’m sick, Mr. Mason. Not only that but I don’t want company,” she said. “I told you not to come over. Please, just leave the stuff at the door and go. If you’re not comfortable with that, take them and go. I’m going back to bed.”

I growled. “I could knock down the door.”

“No, you won’t,” she said, sharply. It was the first time she had taken a tone like that with me. The kind that threatened all sorts of harm if I followed through on my threat.

I huffed. She wouldn’t dare.

“Goodbye, Mr. Mason,” she said through the stupid door.

I could barely hear the shuffling of her feet leading away from the door.

I glared at the object keeping me from seeing the woman who had captured my heart and my mind and waited for her to change her mind and come back. After several minutes, I was getting the point that she did exactly what she said she was going to do. So, when she didn’t come back, I gave in.

I stared at the soup and flowers in my arms.

Did I trust leaving this stuff at the door?

I snorted in response to my own question. No. Hell no, I didn’t. I didn’t even trust the neighborhood much less the ground it sat on. But I wanted her to have them. I needed her to have these things.

I half suspected she was still standing on the other side of the door, waiting for me to leave the stuff and go.

Before fully relenting to her request, I reconsidered knocking the door down. I could easily pay for the building and all of the repairs, much less the door alone. But I needed to take my next steps carefully. The last thing I needed to add to my plate was a nose neighbor to call the police on me, forcing me to explain everything in detail.

I absolutely refused to explain myself.

I was the last thing the people in this building needed to worry about. And considering I was a dragon shifter, my not

being the worst thing in the hallway was really saying something about the condition of the place.

Still... I gave up on the idea of forcing any repairs or remodels and set the soup and flowers on the floor. I stood up and pressed my hand on the surface where I had knocked only moments ago.

“I hope you feel better soon,” I said softly, removed my hand, and walked away.

I hoped she recovered soon, and when she did, I would finally see her again.

OLIVIA

I walked away from the door. I was tired, and not feeling well, and Milo Mason had pissed me off. I had no idea what he had brought to help me feel better, but I was sure I wanted nothing to do with it. Knowing him, it was probably some sort of medicine that he expected me to take so I could show up to work.

With everything in me, I tried to sleep, but the more I thought about the things he said, the more awake I became. Less than ten minutes after he left, I knew I wasn't going to be able to sleep. And the more awake I was, the less angry I became... however, in its place came confusion. And lots of it.

My mind raced with all the things Milo Mason. None of it I could make any sense of. And it seemed the more I tried to make sense of everything, the more I started to question everything.

Once I had given up on the sleep thing, I opened the door and was startled not only by the delicious soup but by the beautiful and thoughtful flowers. They were a collection of red, pink, and white flowers. A few of them were roses. The first sight of them had taken my breath away.

What was going on between us? Did we have more between us than I thought there was? Sure, we slept together. Yeah, he got me pregnant, but he wasn't aware of the baby yet. But it had been about a month since he touched me. I thought I was nothing more than a fling. Another notch in his belt.

But if being another notch was the case, then why bring the soup and flowers? Did he know about the baby? Or was he seriously trying to do something kind and thoughtful? And if that was the case...

I was driving myself crazy with all the questions.

And don't get me started on the pregnancy thing. I had no idea morning sickness could last all day, which makes the whole term somewhat of an oxymoron.

I would call and talk to someone about it, but I wasn't willing to accept the fact I was pregnant. And that was also part of what made me not want to face Milo. I wasn't sure how to take the news myself. There was no telling what he would think or say or do.

Knowing him...

Oh, who the hell did I honestly think I was kidding?

If recent events were anything to go from, I clearly didn't know him as well as I thought I had. So far, I had been so wrong on all my assumptions—well, most of them—and I knew better than to make another. But to put it in the least assumptive way possible, Milo Mason never struck me as the family man. And as much was made evident by the fact he changed out women routinely. He never dated the same woman for long and he had some moments in the past few years where he had dated multiple women.

I sighed as I stared at the ceiling. I was uncomfortable and didn't want to lie in bed anymore. So, I hopped off of the mattress, wrapped my warm, fuzzy robe around me, and headed into the kitchen to make some tea. From there, I stepped outside and called Maxine.

Why?

Because she usually had an answer for everything. And if I could count on anyone's advice, it was hers.

She answered on the third ring.

"Hello, my Sistah," she said.

I smiled and then scratched out, "Hey."

“You sound terrible,” she said. “What’s going on?”

“Oh, I’m sure you understand morning sickness...” I said with a sigh and held my breath for her reaction.

“Well...that explains the fish dreams,” she said. “I thought it was you too. But I wasn’t sure. The messages weren’t all that clear.”

“Fish dreams?” I asked letting go of the air I was holding.

“Yeah. It’s supposed to be symbolic of pregnancy,” she said. “Of course, there are other things too.”

I arched an eyebrow high up on my forehead. I focused on the railing surrounding the porch. “Oh.”

It wasn’t possible to have been friends with Maxine for my entire life without learning she had certain abilities. I never dug deeper than the surface because I never understood it. I simply accepted things as they were. Maxine’s gifts were part of what made her so incredible.

“So... on a scale of one to ten, how excited are you?” she asked.

I blew out a raspberry. “Do negative numbers count?”

“He must not be aware of the baby yet,” Maxine said.

“Nope,” I said. “And he was what I was hoping to talk to you about... not the telling him about the baby thing. The whole subject matter of Milo Mason.”

“He was certainly intense when I met him that day, I can imagine there is a lot to unpack with this,” she said.

I sarcastically chuckled. “You are not wrong.”

“How can I help?” she asked.

I loudly sighed. “I feel like something had changed between us and it’s taking me a while to catch up to everything.”

“How so?” she asked.

I thought about her question. Hell, I wasn’t even sure of the how. I just understood that it simply was. “Well, for

starters, I never once considered myself as registering anywhere close to his radar.”

“Mm-hmm,” she said. “I remember that.”

“And then we had the weekend we shared together,” I added.

“Where you got to see me!” Maxine said in a sing-song voice.

“That was one of my favorite parts of the trip, you do realize,” I said.

“It had better be,” her voice carried over the line bouncing on a laugh.

I was silent for a few moments as I went back to that weekend. I revisited every single second as though it had happened in fast-forward right in front of me. I bit my lip. “Those moments were the most mind-blowing. The things he did to me. The orgasms I had... It was like he couldn’t have enough of me.”

“Uh-huh...” she said, dragging out the word. She sounded more and more thrilled with the more I told her, and I wasn’t sure if that was a good thing or not. Honestly, on the inside, I was extremely confused and overwhelmed. I didn’t think I could take much more than what I was already going through.

I closed my eyes and took a few deep breaths to calm my nerves. When I opened my eyes again, I softly sighed.

“Anyhow, I figured once the weekend was over, things would go back to normal,” I said and took a sip of my tea which had cooled until it was lukewarm.

“But they didn’t,” Maxine said. Her voice floated over the line as though she was moving around.

“Well, not immediately,” I said with a shrug. I stared into my mug of tea, watching the lights from the street vibrate through the ripples of the liquid. “At first, things seemed like they were going to head that way. Like, the first Monday back, things were normal. But the following day, he had piled every file he had on my desk, told me I had to convert them to a

digital format, and took me out to dinner. Afterward, we headed to his place where we eventually had sex again.”

“Then what happened?” she asked. Sounds in the background let me in on her making tea.

I shrugged even though she couldn’t see it and sighed. “Things finally returned to normal. And had been until tonight.”

“What happened that was so different tonight?” she asked.

“He brought me flowers and soup,” I said.

“Soup?” she asked.

“Yeah, I told him I was sick,” I said. “Of course, it’s morning sickness, but still.”

“Wait,” she said, halting the conversation. “You didn’t go to work?”

“No. I could barely make it out of the bathroom,” I said. “There was no way in hell I was going to be expected to do my job. Just wasn’t happening.”

“Oof,” she uttered. “I do not miss that.”

“Well, I can’t wait for it to be over,” I said. “I’m just getting started and I’ve already had enough.”

“It won’t be forever,” Maxine said, her soothing voice promising me the end of my misery. “Then the real fun begins.”

I chuckled. “Well, I hope so because I hate vomiting.”

“I am right there with you, sistah,” she said. “But you were telling me about your man.”

“He’s not my man,” I said, sitting straighter. My heart started to hammer in my chest, and a blast of heat filled my neck.

Maxine laughed. “You know what I meant.”

I sighed. My heart started to slow. “He showed up tonight and threatened to knock my door down because I wouldn’t open it and allow him to hand me the flowers and soup. I

refused, put my foot down, and demanded he left everything at the door and leave.”

“Which he did,” she guessed.

“Yes,” I said, confirming her suspicion.

“Initially, I wasn’t going to check. But I couldn’t sleep. I was so upset and weirded out by everything. And when I settled my gaze on the flowers and the soup, I felt guilty and the idea that he went through so much trouble to do something to help make me feel better has got me confused all over again.”

“It’s not truly all that hard for you to figure out, is it?” Maxine asked.

“No. But that’s the thing. It doesn’t make sense. The man who delightfully made me scream and bought me nice things for my health is not my boss,” I said and stopped talking.

“Who is he if not your boss?” she asked, curiosity coating her words.

I sucked in a breath. “He’s an alien.”

Maxine barked out a laugh. She started to reply to me, but a strange movement caught my attention. I focused on the thing that pulled on my gaze. A dark, shadowy form flew through the night sky, blotting out the stars. I caught sight of it and gaped.

“What the…” my voice trailed off.

“What’s going on?” she asked.

“Uh…” I wasn’t sure that I could share those things with her. Sure, she was my best friend. And she was probably the one least likely to question my sanity. But I simply didn’t have the words to describe what I swore my eyes had taken in.

As it was, the form had left my view and I started to question if I even had seen anything at all.

“Olivia,” Maxine sang.

“Yeah?” I said blinking my eyes and losing sight of the figure.

“What is going on?” she asked.

“Um... I thought I saw something. That’s all,” I said, hoping she would leave it at that.

“Like what?” she asked, curiosity covering her words.

“That might be harder to explain,” I said.

“How long have we been friends?” she asked. Her voice came out higher pitched. This was the start of her “I’m going to win this” statements. And they usually worked. So it was only a wasted effort trying to fight it.

I adjusted myself in my seat and said, “All our lives.”

“All right, enough said,” she said. “Now tell me.”

“I could have sworn I saw... a dragon,” I said, blurting the last part out really quickly, though I realized she heard every single syllable. “And it’s not the first time too.”

“Interesting,” she said.

I rubbed my temple on the side of my head to ward off the ache starting in the center of it. “You don’t have to say it, I understand I’m losing my mind.”

“No, no. You’re not losing your mind, I promise,” Maxine said.

I snorted. “Then what do you call it?”

“An explanation is owed to you, but it isn’t one I can give,” she said.

“You’re so helpful,” I muttered and stared into the sky again. “Incredibly helpful. But, whatever it was... it’s gone now.”

“I’m sorry,” she said. “I wish I can be of better help, but I can’t.”

“Thanks anyway,” I said. “For everything.”

I truly meant it too.

“However, I think you should tell your boss he knocked you up. And the sooner the better,” she said. “You don’t want

to wait until it's obvious. Besides, he deserves to be made aware."

I nodded. "Yeah. I guess."

A yawn forced its way out of me.

"That's a good sign," Maxine said.

"Yeah, I guess I better go get some sleep," I said.

It wasn't long until we were off the phone, and I was curled up under my comforter, eyes closed, drifting off to sleep. Finally.

MILO

Late that night, after leaving the soup and flowers resting at the base of Olivia's door, she sent me a text thanking me for them. She also said it was incredibly thoughtful. I thumbed back a quick response and hit the send icon. With a sigh, my lips drew into a smile. I tried to fight it, but my body won out. It felt good to have her thank me for something. Moreso, it was amazing to experience her genuine appreciation.

She was a real woman. Someone who understood me in ways no one else had come close to. She had me in the palm of her hands, and I wasn't sure what to think about that.

I decided to let things be for a while. I wasn't willing to wait forever but discovering that she had appreciated such a small gesture encouraged me to take things more at her pace. At least for the time being.

An entire week passed with not much of a word from her. I was losing my patience and I was starting to wonder if I had gotten things all wrong. And as much as I hated to consider the option, I wondered if I needed to hire a replacement or even a temporary fill-in.

I didn't want to bother her. I knew she was seriously ill but avoiding me wasn't the answer or the way. Especially when I signed her paychecks.

Right when I picked up my phone to text her, she walked into the office and sat her stuff on her desk. I gaped at the beauty she held from within the confines of my office. Staring

at her through the window. She didn't notice me, and that was just fine by me.

How could she ever think she was anything less than a goddess?

My heart almost fluttered and I had the sudden urge to sigh wistfully like a lovesick puppy.

What the hell was I thinking?

What had this woman done to me?

No other woman had ever reduced me to such a puddle of goo as the gelatinous mass I was sitting at my desk gawking at Olivia. I wasn't behaving like myself. I didn't do such things. I wasn't a patient man. I wasn't a man who went for relationships. I wasn't the man who spent money and time pondering and fussing over a woman.

In all my years, it took her.

Olivia.

She had started some irreversible change in me. She had cast her spell, and I was forever enchanted, mesmerized, and enthralled.

There was no turning back for me. She was mine.

My mate.

I would die than to be with another woman.

And I had waded through the agony of not seeing her this close to me for days. I, of course, carefully flew near her apartment late at night. If only to temper my unwarranted need to make sure things were secure. I couldn't help it. My dragon couldn't either. We had no choice but to make sure she was safe.

To bear witness to her that briefly on a daily basis was enough to take the edge off.

It was enough to carry me through at least, and not all that easy either. Though I never would have figured that much out until setting my gaze on her beautiful porcelain features. She sighed as she took a seat in her chair and then popped a mint

into her mouth. The glow of the computer screen cast a blue haze on her features as she turned her computer on and waited for it to load.

She was positively glowing. And not because of the light. But even more so against the light of the computer screen.

I clamped my mouth shut, stood from my desk, and then sucked in a deep breath as I thought of what to do. I needed to be near her, but I had no reason to. So, I racked my brain. Because I needed to do something.

At the very least I recognized I should acknowledge her presence and thank her for coming back in. Hell, I would do whatever it took to never have to live another day without her.

With a tap on the surface of my desk, I shoved my other hand into my pocket and approached the door to my office. I swung the thing open, stepped out of my office, and cut a path to her desk without setting off her internal alarms.

I was a man on a mission. Just not one that would have her emotions fluctuating or in a tizzy. I sucked in a breath and slowed myself down a tick. Her sapphire eyes shifted to mine and brightened. She placed her hands on her desk and started to stand.

I held out my hand to stop her. “No, don’t.”

She blinked at me and nodded, allowing her round ass to rest on the seat again. Barely above a she whisper, said, “Um, okay.”

My mind emptied of all sense. Standing before me was the most beautiful woman in the world. The rarest creature of all. My heart skipped a beat and then raced faster as though it was trying to catch up. My lungs fluttered, and I huffed to calm my rapidly fraying nerves. I clenched my hands into fists to steady them next to me.

All of which Olivia had observed.

“Is everything okay, Mr. Mason?” she asked with a small crease above her nose. “I realize I promised a doctor’s note, but...”

Her voice was so sweet, soft and full of concern. The next breath in I caught a hint of something different in her scent. I didn't understand what that meant, but I wondered if perhaps she had worn different perfume or bathed in different soap.

Whatever the change was, she was only made more desirable.

I squeezed my eyes closed and forced back the surge of need that burned through me. Once I had shoved it as deep as it would go, I opened my eyes and let out a smooth sigh. "I only wanted to let you know that I'm glad to finally see you come in."

She smiled, her cheeks turning a soft pink color that made me want to reach out and brush the color away with the tips of my fingers. "Thank you, sir. It's great to be back."

I wordlessly nodded, fighting against the desire to touch her, hold her, kiss her... fuck her on the desk in the middle of the lobby of my business, without a care in the world as to who might walk in on us. Let someone find me claiming my woman. Let the world observe.

She sat back in her chair, pulled her gaze away, and focused on something on her desk. After several seconds she looked up at me again.

"Is there something else, Mr. Mason?" she asked.

I realized the moment was awkward and I didn't know what the proper thing to do next was, so I turned around and returned to my office, silently kicking myself for being such a blubbering idiot.

The second I was inside my office, I shut the door and returned to my desk. I stared at Olivia for the longest time, trying to figure out what was so different about her. She smelled different, but only slightly. She had an inner glow, but I couldn't place why. And part of me was insecure about it all.

Because she acted as though she wasn't bothered enough to acknowledge what we had shared.

Strange.

It still eluded me as to why I cared so much. But I did. More than I should have, and I blamed her.

There was something about her I couldn't get enough of, and now that I had tasted her, I wanted more. So much more. More than I had ever cared to want before. But it seemed with her casual approach and title for me, it might be possible she didn't have the same desire for me.

Perhaps what we had was nothing more than a short-lived office fling.

I sat back in my chair as my lungs expelled all the air inside them. The thought was like a punch to the gut.

That was what had been different about her. She moved on.

I was too late.

OLIVIA

Things over the past couple of weeks had been... well... something. For me anyway. And I wasn't sure how to go about unpacking it all.

Falling back into the routine was familiar and comfortable and I took to it as a fish to water. The routine was simple. Easy. Not complicated. I knew what to expect and there were no wrenches to speak of. And time started to pass fluidly.

Before I blinked, two weeks had passed.

And once I realized how much time had passed, I kicked myself. I was such a freaking coward. Especially when it came to Milo, and exceptionally so when it came to telling him about the baby. Emphasis on the last part.

Every time I tried to tell him, he glared at me with his cold, dark eyes as though I had interrupted something devastatingly important. That look alone always made me clam up and remember my place and decide it wasn't the right time, and I would offer to grab him coffee or see if he had any errands for me to run before I left for the day. It always depended on when I had worked up the courage to try.

After that first, awkward chat of ours when I came back, Milo Mason was ever the asshole I had known him to be.

Needless to say, his mood or the tone in his voice worked exceptionally well at keeping my mouth closed. I had no idea what I had done wrong or why I deserved to take such huge steps backward with him, but it didn't make it any easier for

me to tell him he knocked me up and find out what he wanted to do about it.

He would probably laugh in my face though. Claim I was only looking for some sort of payout, or any number of negative outcomes that had played out in my head dozens of times before. And the second he took that sort of tone with me was the second he made things that much harder to get up the nerve to tell him next time.

I groaned while sitting at my desk, struggling with making a decision. In an effort to release some of the tension building in my shoulders, I buried my face in my hands. After a few seconds, I peeked over the tips of my fingers and stared at the time. I was at the end of my shift, yet again. My tasks were done and all I had left to do was stand up from my desk, walk to his office and tell him.

I mean, I had to do something soon. I was going to start showing my condition before too much longer. Then there would be no more hiding what had been going on with me. Though Milo would definitely discover my little secret, and I didn't believe for one second that he would appreciate finding out like that.

So, I had to tell him. I couldn't keep putting it off.

Right as I was about to stand up to go do exactly that, one of Milo Mason's signature blonde bimbos walked into the office. She glanced at me from the corner of her green eyes, a prideful glint sparkling in them. Her lips, painted bright red, curved up in the corners. She was dressed in a pink, form-fitting pencil dress with a tiny, white, leather belt hugging her waist. She even had on a tiny, waist-length fur jacket that matched.

Her box-blond hair spilled over her shoulders in wide curls as she moved toward me. Her dark roots had just started to show on the top of her head. She leaned forward on my desk and smiled. "You must be Olivia."

I nodded and tried to plaster on my fake smile. She was not the first woman who came into the office this week. But she was the first to speak to me and address me by my name

“I am, would you like me to let Mr. Mason know you are here?”

She giggled. “Nope. I’ve got it.”

I nodded. “Okay.”

“In fact,” she added, fake smile still stretching her red lips wide. “I’ve got everything from here on. Okay? He doesn’t need you anymore.”

“Excuse you?” I asked.

“He’s mine now,” she said as she stood straight and examined her well-manicured fingers.

“Um... congratulations?” I said, my words coming out sounding like a question.

She acted like she hadn’t heard me when she said, “He will look better with me strapped to his waist too.”

I scoffed. “I have no idea what you are talking about. I’m just his secretary.”

I typed a few things on the keyboard and moved my mouse around, pretending to be involved in work.

She giggled. “Sure. Is he in his office? I’m here to surprise him.”

I frowned at her, narrowing my dark blue gaze at her, wishing my expression really could kill. Normally, I would instantly regret that notion, but today I was feeling particularly hormonal. Not to mention it was the confirmation of what I had suspected all along.

I was another notch and nothing more.

The sour taste of jealousy coated my tongue and my stomach churned.

This woman was the third blonde to visit my boss’s office in the week.

“He’s in there,” I said and nodded toward the door.

She smiled wide. “Thank you.”

I glared at her back, then the door, and finally at the window, sealing the office away behind blinds that had been drawn closed, providing privacy for him and his latest fling.

At least he was back to his normal self. Right down to his typical choice of women. Skinny. Blonde. Model. Everything I was not.

I supposed this was my reward for keeping things as normal and as chill between us as possible.

I huffed as I stood from my desk. A pinch entered my forehead as I gathered my things. I once again revisited the idea of keeping my pregnancy to myself for at least a little while longer. I wasn't opposed to keeping the baby a secret for as long as I could. Hell, maybe I would luck out and be one of those women who hid their pregnancies to full term.

Then I could simply bow out, disappear and never have to be bothered by Milo Mason again.

After gathering up my things, I headed toward the office door and lifted my hand to knock on the surface. I needed to let him know that I was on my way out and find out if he needed anything before I called it a night.

A bubble of high-pitched, plastic laughter echoed through the slab, and I dropped my hand to my side. I frowned at the door as I imagined the blonde sitting in his lap, with the buttons on his shirt undone, revealing the curves of his pecks and abs. I imagined her raking her fake fingernails down the length of his torso.

I imagined the way his arms wrapped around her tiny frame, holding her close, and the way their lips mingled and twisted around each other as they kissed.

My hands clenched into fists so tight, my nails bit into my skin, snapping me out of the imagery my cruel brain had conjured with the sound of the woman's laugh.

I let out a sobering breath. Whatever was going on behind the door, I wanted no part of, and I certainly didn't want to be responsible for interrupting.

Instead, I turned around and headed out the door... feeling ever more the coward, wishing I had the confidence and poise to stand my ground when it came to Milo Mason. But for some reason, all he had to do was give me that dark gaze, and I was reduced to a weak, pathetic excuse for a woman.

I had to figure out a way to get a grip.

MILO

I was angry. And I normally didn't get angry. Instead, I got even.

And though I didn't want to do that to Olivia, she was giving me no other choice. So, getting even was what I did. By using Melody. But I wouldn't have had to go through the lengths of punishing Olivia if she hadn't acted like nothing ever happened between us.

Ever since she came back, she kept herself distant. Acted like she was nothing more than an employee to me. It was as if she couldn't be bothered to at least acknowledge the fact that I had given her a part of me. I took her rejection hard. And that's how I saw things.

She rejected me.

There was no other way around it.

A couple of weeks after spending the night with me, she had gone out on a date with some guy she didn't even know. He blew it, of course. I had never seen her as bored as she appeared that night, sitting across a table from the douchebag. I thought about stepping in, rushing in to put a stop to her brazen behaviors. Eventually, I held back. My desire to see where she thought things were going to go with him had won out over my desire to step in and remind her, she belonged to me.

Once I saw how the guy blew the date Olivia didn't seem too interested in, to begin with, I hired Melody. She was an actress and was supposed to be one of the women I was fake

dating. And right on schedule, she sauntered through the door. I shifted my attention to her and nodded once in greeting.

“Close the door.” My words came out flat.

“As you wish.” She smiled and closed the door softly before turning around and approaching my desk.

“Did she take notice of you?” I asked, getting down to business.

“Honey, I made it hard not to notice me.” Her voice was smooth like velvet and thick like honey. She tossed a thick, blonde curl over her shoulder and took a seat on the opposite side of my desk. “Now, why did you want me to do that?”

I narrowed my gaze at her. “I don’t pay you to ask questions.”

She shrugged off my comment and then folded her hands on her lap. “No. But you do pay me to make her jealous, and I like to know what I’m getting myself into. It helps me fill in the blanks for a more, well-rounded character.”

“Whatever,” I said, waving away her inquiry. “I want to know the details of your interaction.”

She smiled. Her artificially white teeth glittered in the soft light filling the office. Spring was right around the corner, so the sunset was coming later and later. The muted orange glow created long shadows as it entered my office. It was the sign of another day coming to a close when Olivia wasn’t in my bed.

The woman in front of me shrugged. “She got in a full glimpse, paled a little, and then put her attention on her computer.”

“And then what?” I asked.

She settled her gaze on me.

“I want details,” I added.

“I leaned forward, asking her if you were in the office,” she said, pretending to remove a hair or lose thread off her perfectly smooth skirt.

“Go on,” I said, voice deep. I was looking for something. A specific reaction that would tell me I hadn’t lost the only woman I ever wanted more than the air I breathed or the money in my bank.

Melody shrugged and then sighed. “She told me you were in here. I made a mention that you belonged to me.”

My eyes widened and I smiled at the clever quip. “You did?”

She nodded and waved my compliment away. “Yeah, well, she said congratulations and put her attention on her computer. She acted like she was typing some message and then moved her mouse around, clicking on different things. I don’t really know because I couldn’t see her screen.”

“And?”

“And nothing. She didn’t seem inclined to bite the bait, so, I came in here.”

I leaned back and huffed. “That’s it?”

She shrugged. “The long and short of it.”

I shifted my attention to the door of my office and thought about it. It seemed my plan hadn’t worked out as well as I hoped.

“It may be none of my business,” she started.

“Then don’t insert yourself into that business,” I muttered, setting my hardened gaze on her again. Though the woman was beautiful, I had no idea what I had seen in her type. She wasn’t anything like Olivia. They never were.

Perhaps that was the reason for me not having much commitment to them.

A shadow showed up from underneath the door of my office, pulling my attention to it. Melody smiled and laughed. The shadow disappeared and I let out the breath I had been holding.

Melody said, “You’re not going to get anywhere with her by doing this. She’s not going to respond in the way you want

her to. If anything, you're only pushing her farther away."

I stared at the woman in front of me. How did I ever prefer her type over Olivia? "Is that so?"

"I am simply offering an explanation," she said.

I smirked sarcastically. "And what makes you think I need advice from you?"

She smiled and chuckled under her breath. "You hired an actress to make your secretary jealous. That tells me you have some sort of history between you two and things ended on a note you didn't care for. You're also inexperienced when it comes to relationships, or you would be talking to her instead of trying to enact whatever revenge you think you are getting from this arrangement of ours."

"I see," I said, glaring at the woman in front of me.

"Take it and do with it what you will," Melody said and stood up. "Now, if you are no longer in need of my services, I will go."

I stood up and held out my hand. "I don't require your time any longer."

She smiled. "Excellent. I'll send an invoice tonight."

I nodded. "Thank you for your services."

She chuckled under her breath. "Thank you for the opportunity. I wish you luck."

I nodded and half-assed waved as she walked out the door of my office, leaving me in silence. I stared at the opening she had disappeared through and after several seconds, headed toward the door only to confirm my suspicions regarding the shadow from under the door just a few minutes before Melody left.

The shadow did belong to Olivia, and she thought better than to knock during my meeting with Melody. That was good for her.

Well, if what the woman had reported regarding Olivia's reactions were anything to go off of, Olivia couldn't have

cared less about Melody. But I had my suspicions and planned to hover a bit closer to her apartment tonight to see if I could catch wind of any conversation.

Still, Olivia's reactions, or the lack thereof only pissed me off more. I was going to have to do something drastic. Something to snap her out of whatever funk she was in.

There had to be a way to make her see the error of her ways.

OLIVIA

A week filled with different blonde bimbos every day passed by, and I had reached my tolerance. Not only did each one had something awful to say to me, but they all had the same snobby “I’m better than you” attitude as well. It was bad enough that their cheap perfumes were making me sick to my stomach. I nearly lost my lunch half a dozen times over.

It just so happened that once the latest blonde had left, wiggling her fingers at me, I glared at her and stood up from my desk. The second she was through the door of the firm, I stormed into Milo Mason’s office.

“What the hell do you think you are doing?” he snapped and stood from his desk. Leaning over, and without giving me the time to respond, he added, “You will knock before you barge in.”

“Why? You don’t seem to hold any sort of regard for my feelings or well-being bringing two-cent hookers into the office. Don’t you have any self-respect?” I snapped back.

He huffed. “I’m warning you...”

“Shut the hell up and listen,” I said, pointing a finger at him. “I have no idea who the hell you think you are or what the hell I had done to you to deserve you flaunting your flat-chested bimbos in front of me, but let’s get something straight, I’m done.”

“Olivia,” he growled out in warning.

I ignored his very clear warning because I was on a roll, and I wasn't about to stop. Not until I had said everything I needed. Not until he has heard everything. I held up my finger to stop him and ignored his glare. He leaned forward onto the desk and kept his dark brown eyes on me.

“And another thing,” I said, raising my voice, “I thought I should let you know I'm pregnant with your child, you insensitive prick. Figured you might want a say in what to do about it.”

I clamped my mouth shut and nodded. My heart hammered against my ribcage so hard I could hear my pulse swooshing through my ears. I sucked in quick breaths through my nose, and I stood with my feet planted firmly on the floor in front of him, waiting for him to react.

Or not.

I stared at him as a pinch started to form in the center of my forehead.

It was as if I was in some sort of simulation and the whole program was paused on him glaring at me.

I started to wonder if I broke him.

My nerves were shot, and I wasn't sure what to expect in terms of a reaction from him outside of the numerous scenarios where I imagined him cussing me out and calling me a liar. But keeping his eyes on me, not moving, not even breathing, unnerved me more than anything I had ever imagined.

After several seconds, I sighed and demanded, “Say something, dammit.”

He blinked then let out a huff of air from his flared nostrils. I gulped as he calmly stood straighter. I sucked in a breath as he stepped around his desk. He continued to the door, shut it, and twisted the lock on the handle. I sucked in a shuddering breath as he turned around to and settled his darkened gaze on me once more.

Then he started to move toward me, taking confident steps forward, closing the gap between us. He didn't stop moving,

and he had the same look on his face.

I sucked in a breath as fear washed over me. I thought for certain he was going to hurt me, but he stopped suddenly, moments before crashing through me. The toes of his shoes stubbed mine.

Then he gently placed his hands on either side of my cheeks and brought his face closer to mine. He kissed me. His mouth moved against mine, starting slow, but growing with passion and ferocity, and need with each second that passed.

I wasn't sure what was going on, but I certainly wasn't going to stop it.

In terms of reactions, this one took the cake. I was blown away.

Milo tugged on my shirt, pulling it out from my slacks, and freeing it from them. Then he unbuttoned my pants, slid the zipper down, and dropped them to my ankles seconds before forcing my back to him and launching me toward the desk. He bent over the top, I braced for what would come next.

My lips stretched into a secret smile.

My panties were ripped from my hips.

I started to turn around. "Hey!"

He forced me to face the desk again. "Don't you dare move."

"Those were on of my favorites." I pouted. They were a silver pair. Lacey. And a gemstone on the waistband. They hugged my curves in all the right places and provided exceptional support. So, yeah, I was a bit upset that Milo had just ripped them off of me.

"I'll buy you more," he promised, voice dark. "And I won't skimp on the price either."

Pressure from his fingertips were placed on my back to lower myself to the surface of his desk. I pressed my body onto the surface, wrapping my fingers around the edge above my head.

Milo's large, engorged dick slipped inside me, not so gently either. He was rough and primal and forced himself into me over and over again. I closed my eyes and braced myself against the forcefulness of his movements. My knees banged against the back of the desk, becoming bruised as I clung to the other side.

Milo slammed into me with such force that the desk slid across the floor. Moments before the thing hit the wall, he pulled me up by my hair, slipped himself out of me, and turned me around, forcing my ass onto the desk.

Holding my legs up, fingers digging into the flesh of my thighs, he slammed himself inside me again. I grunted against the force of his entry. Each thrust in was met with a bite of pain. I was worried about the damage he might be doing. But soon, the pain bled into heat and that heat soon gave way to pleasure and pressure started to build and grow with a budding orgasm.

I moaned softly.

Milo growled and shoved everything off the desk. He barked out his command, "Lay down."

I did so, taking the small break before he would surely send me to my knees. He moved to my feet and stared down at me possessively. The glint in his eyes nearly made me shudder. Goosebumps prickled along my skin.

He leaned forward and dug the tip of his fingers into my thighs, dragging them up to my knees. Slipping his fingers underneath, into the bend of my legs, he gripped and pulled. My ass slid along the surface of his desk.

With my legs up in the air, he lowered his mouth to my sex and hungrily lapped at my juices. His fingers slid inside me, and I instantly was thrust over the edge and into a climax.

I cried out my pleasure into the air of Milo's office. As soon as my cries started, he used his thumb to rub against my clit so he could say, "That's right Olivia. Announce it to the world that you belong to me."

The possessiveness in his voice increased the pleasure tenfold and I felt a gush of warm liquid sprayed from my sex.

He groaned as he licked his lips and went to town, lapping up the mess I made and growling as he did so.

Once he had his fill of my sex, he lifted up and gripped his massive erection. He pressed the tip of it at my entrance and teased my opening. I wiggled and squirmed, almost begging for him to slide inside me. I met his gaze. He smirked. Then he slammed his dick inside me once again and roughly fucked me on his desk, staring into my eyes with predatory need, until his movements turned jerky.

Another orgasm started to build, and I wiggled underneath him to catch up to him.

As hot liquid filled me, he grunted and shoved my fingers between us, brushing along my sensitive mound, and pushing me over the edge. I cried out again, this time, into his shoulder, clinging to him as much as I could. Desperate for more waves of pleasure.

The moment his movements stopped. He planted a long, smooth kiss on my lips before slipping himself out of me. I sat up as he collected my destroyed panties. He handed them to me. I pulled up my pants, still catching my breath, and adjusted my hair.

I took a deep breath, letting it out in a long sigh, and settled my attention on Milo.

“That was not at all what I was expecting, but I’m glad that it happened,” I said.

“You’re pregnant?” he asked. “For real?”

I nodded and leaned into the answer with a sigh. “Yes.”

He covered his face as his lips stretched into a wide smile. His eyes lightened and softened, and he sucked in a deep breath before dropping his hands to his sides. “Wow.”

“Really?” I asked. “You think so?”

“I’m going to be a father?” he asked more of himself than me. I think he was trying to come to terms with it, but he

wasn't freaking out about it.

I nodded. "Looks like it."

"That's why you were sick?" he asked. "Wasn't it?"

I bit my lip and nodded. "Yes."

"What took you so long to tell me?" he asked.

"Are we seriously going to have that talk right now?" I asked, leaning against the desk he had recently finished fucking me on. I crossed my arms over my chest.

"No. We have time," he said. "We have plenty of time for that talk."

"A few months at least," I said sarcastically. "Like, eight, I think."

He withdrew into his thoughts. His face became a mask of undetermined emotion. I held my breath because I thought for sure this was where he was going to start poking holes into my story and calling me a liar.

After a few long, nearly breathless moments, he twisted to face me. His lips parted, and he said, "You're fired."

My breath left my lungs in a rush. "What?"

My heart skipped several beats before doing a strange sinking sensation. It was too good to be true. His words kept repeating over and over in my mind.

"You heard me," he said.

I scoffed.

Milo Mason was an asshole. Not only did he fire me from my job, but he knocked me up too.

And he made me out to be a fool the entire time.

MILO

“Are you freaking kidding me?” she asked. Her voice was starting to come out shrill.

She continued to lean against the edge of my desk, staring at me with her hardened sapphire eyes, arms crossed over her chest. Her hair was a tangled mess from fucking her on my desk, with her black strands sticking out every which way.

The sight was as beautiful as it was humorous.

I almost chuckled. She certainly was adorable. And the idea that she believed she had anything on me was exceptionally cuter. I would let her take me if only to turn the tables and dominate her all over again.

The idea almost made my dick hard again.

It took everything inside me not to smirk in response to her attitude. My feisty kitten. Although it wasn't like I had the room to blame her, it truly was fascinating to me that she thought she had the ability to aggressively force me to do what she demanded. Far as I was concerned only one person was in charge here, and that was me. I saw no point in changing things.

She did deserve an explanation. I just wasn't able to give her one yet. Not one she would accept.

I had no idea what had come over me when she first told me about the baby. My mind wouldn't allow me to process the news. It had stopped working and had completely shut off. But seeing her stand her ground did things to my body. I found her

exceptionally attractive at that moment. So, my body took control while my brain was on a hiatus.

It wasn't until I had my release that I was able to think about the things she had said to me. My heart pounded in my chest as I finally processed her news. I was going to be a father. I had a baby on the way.

I never thought about using protection with her. Usually, I was a stickler about it. But with Olivia? I never wanted to. The thought had never crossed my mind. The ramifications of unprotected sex never occurred to me. My need—my desire for her—was too strong for foresight.

Standing in the middle of my now destroyed office, I finally had the ability to think. And a lot of things were racing through my mind. Almost all at once. I had to focus to keep things straight. I simply didn't have the ability to sort through anything or make sense of what was happening with Olivia around me. She was my biggest and most welcome distraction, after all. But I needed the space and the peace to work through some things.

I could tell by the hurt in Olivia's eyes, my firing her wasn't on the list of things she was expecting. But I didn't have time to explain. There was a reason for what I had done, and I wasn't going to be bothered to get into it with her right now.

I suddenly had a list of things that needed to be taken care of, and I didn't have the time or the energy to do anything else but take care of my list. Anything else had to come later. Including her deeper explanation.

So, all I expected Olivia to do was obey my order and do as she was told. But she wasn't budging from where she planted herself. She stared at me and honestly expected me to answer her question.

“No. I'm not kidding.” My voice was low. “What makes you think I am joking?”

“Is that a serious question?” she asked, staring at me like I had grown a second head.

“Was your question a serious one?” I asked. “Are we seriously going to go back and forth on this, because I don’t have all night? I have things I need to attend to, so it would be great if you just accepted what I told you and left.”

“So, you are firing me?” she asked. “Minutes after you finish fucking me?”

“You’re pregnant,” I said as though it was supposed to be obvious to her. It was to me.

She shook her head. “You do realize what time era you are living in right?”

“Please, Olivia, do as you are told,” I said. “I don’t have time to explain. I don’t have the patience to go over every little detail with you. Leave. Go home. Stay put.”

“No. Fuck that,” she said, cutting her hand through the air before pointing a finger at me. “You owe me a better explanation than what you are giving me.”

I arched an eyebrow. Oh, this was too much. I had to admire her spunk. Her tenacity. I did love bringing these things out of her. I tried to keep all my humor out of my voice as I asked, “Do I, now?”

“Yes, you do. Hell, I think I have earned a better response than getting fired,” she added.

I smirked. It was a dangerous expression mixed with the fiery emotions flowing through my veins while standing in front of Olivia. She certainly was a firecracker. I saw glimpses of the part of her she kept hidden. The parts of her I brought out.

When I didn’t respond she huffed. Her guard was starting to fall and tears started to fill her beautiful dark blue eyes.

I gaped at her.

“What do you mean I’m fired?” she asked. Her voice cracked and it was plain to see it was taking everything inside her not to break down. “I don’t understand. Just please, tell me why and I will go.”

“You can’t work for me anymore,” I said with a shrug. Not now. I moved toward my desk and started picking everything up. I didn’t feel like she needed a deeper explanation than what I had already given her, and I wasn’t intending to give her any more than she had already gotten.

“But... why?” she asked, moving away from the desk, setting me ablaze with her sapphire eyes. Her arms were still crossed over her chest.

I shook my head and growled. “We’ve been over this. Just go back to your place and wait there.”

She opened and closed her mouth, gasping at the air as though she was a fish out of water. She squeezed her eyes closed, pinched the bridge of her nose, and then shook her head. “I don’t know what to do with all of this.”

I stopped what I was doing and stared at the ceiling. This woman was testing my patience to the very last inch.

“Do exactly as I told you,” I said, facing her directly. “Stay home until you are told otherwise.”

She shook her head, clamped her lips shut as tears filled her eyes, and sighed. Her arms fell slack to her sides, and it took her several moments of staring at a spot on the floor to get up the energy to remove her ass from my desk.

“Do not make me ask again,” I warned.

She snapped her gaze toward me. She let out a sarcastic chuckle. “You’re a real piece of work, you know that?”

I huffed. “And you are trying my patience.”

She shook her head. “Milo Mason, you are an asshole. You are not in control of me, and if you really are firing me, you don’t have a say over where I go or what I do... not that you did in the first place. But if you insist on casting me away like this, I promise you, you will never see me again.”

“Don’t make this harder than it needs to be, Olivia,” I said, leveling my gaze on her. “I would especially watch what you say next.”

I didn't mean to hurt her. But I didn't see how she would work for me and carry my child at the same time. Things were going to change for her. She simply needed to give me the time to set things right. Everything was overwhelming and I couldn't think straight. Especially with her standing in front of me.

“So, this is it, then?” she asked. “You're not going to give me anything else? You're just going to give me your lame demand? Fuck me then fire me? Why?”

Lame demand? Now, who was being petty? Whatever. I nodded. “That's all you need for now. Go. Stay home and wait there.”

She scoffed and stormed out of the room. Under her breath, she muttered, “Unbelievable.”

I smirked as she disappeared from view. The woman may very well end up being the death of me. But I was loving every single second of it.

OLIVIA

I stormed through the door to my apartment and found my roommate in the middle of baking cookies in the kitchen.

With the sound of the door slamming shut, she stopped what she was doing, turned around, and set her alarmed, light brown eyes on me.

“Bad day?” she asked as her expression changed to one of curiosity and concern.

“Sorry,” I said and pouted as I rested my back against the now-closed door. My heart sank and hot tears started to blur my vision. Right before they started to fall, I watched the expression on Morgan’s face turn from surprise to pity.

I thought about everything that had happened over the past few hours and I lost control of myself and started bawling my eyes out. My knees gave out on me, and I slid against the door to the floor. My ass plopped onto the linoleum, chilling my ass. All of my bottled-up emotions and hormones came out of me in the form of tears, sobs, and snot that dribbled out of my nose. I hiccupped a few times and covered my face with both of my hands.

To say I was a blubbering mess was a complete and total understatement. And I couldn’t stop. No matter what I did, I couldn’t get myself under control. And who could blame me? Everything in my life had just been flipped upside down. All by Milo fucking Mason.

I was embarrassed because I couldn’t keep myself pulled together. I was jobless, thanks to my boss firing me minutes

after he finished screwing me on his desk. I was also emotional partly due to the pregnancy, and the guy who was responsible had cast me out of his business as though I was nothing more than a piece of garbage.

I was overwhelmed and stressed and didn't have the first clue as to what I was going to do with myself. Everything appeared to be so hopeless and damning.

Morgan rushed to me, lowering herself to the floor and wrapping me in her arms. She shushed me and rocked me and patted the side of my head in an effort to help soothe my broken heart.

Her arms were warm and comforting. The soft brush of her hushed words into my ear was relaxing. Her simply making herself available for me... It was working.

Albeit... slowly. She didn't seem to mind.

About half an hour later, my tears had slowed, and my head rested on Morgan's chest, listening to her heartbeat. I sniffed as my tears started to slowly stop.

"Are you okay now?" she asked, her voice still soft and soothing.

I nodded and pulled away from her arms. "I think so."

My nose was stuffed up, forcing my words to come out sounding half-formed.

"Sorry for the mess," I said.

"Don't worry about it," Morgan softly said. "Okay. I think what we need is to clean ourselves up and have some tea on the couch with a warm blanket."

"That sounds amazing," I said with a nod.

"Maybe, if you are comfortable with it, you can tell me all about what just happened," she added.

I barely met her gaze and nodded. She deserved to be let in on what happened. After all, the fact that I was now jobless was going to very much affect her.

"Want some help up?" she asked.

I shook my head. “I think I got it.”

“Okay,” she said and stood from the floor. Her footsteps shuffled away toward her room. Before closing her door, she added, “See you in a few minutes.”

I nodded and let out a shuddering sigh before climbing back to my feet and heading to my room and bathroom to clean up and put on more comfortable clothes. I chose my favorite pair of period sweatpants and a chammy with a sweater jacket. My typical lounging clothes. I sat on the couch where Morgan was already waiting with a plate full of warm chocolate chunk cookies.

I didn’t allow myself to think about everything that happened. Each time I felt those intrusive thoughts creeping in, my emotions started to whirl through me again, and I forced myself to take a deep breath. Sometimes, it was a shuddering sigh. Other times, it was less so. But I was practicing deep breathing, and that was what mattered.

I sat down on the couch, joining my friend and roommate underneath the huge plush blanket, I was much calmer than I was before. And I could start to think about the things that happened without being reduced to the mess that I was in front of my door not more than an hour or so ago.

Even when I met Morgan’s soft, emphatic gaze. I still could hold back the onslaught of tears and keep myself pulled together. At least, mostly.

“Are you feeling better?” she asked, voice gentle.

I nodded.

“Do you want to talk about that yet?” she asked.

I nodded again. “I am not sure where to start.”

“Start from the beginning,” Morgan said, voice soft and soothing.

I let out a deep breath and settled my gaze on the tea sitting on the table next to me. Steam rose from the cup, and I smiled, eager for the heat to warm my hands that seemed to turn suddenly cold. Clutching the hot mug, feeling the heat seeping

into my skin, I gently blew over the rim to cool the liquid more and then took a small sip. From there, I let out a deep sigh as the liquid's warmth bled through me.

I nodded and sucked in a breath. On the exhale, I said, "Milo fired me."

"What?" she said, voice flat and slightly louder. To say she was shocked and surprised was the very least.

"Yup." I nodded. "Right after fucking me on his desk."

Her head dropped lower as her eyes widened and hardened. "That mother... Wait. You said he fucked you? How did that come about?"

"Oh, it gets better," I said.

"Are you sure you want to tell me all of this?" she asked, rising to my rescue. "Because I already want to murder him."

"You might as well hear the whole story," I said, settling my gaze on my friend. "You know, justifiable cause and whatnot."

She leveled her eyes on me. "Are you sure?"

I nodded. "Yeah. I'll even help you bury the body."

She chuckled and reached for a cookie. "Okay, I'm all ears."

"All week long he had some blonde chick, his typical type, coming in and out of the doors. Never the same girl twice. And they were all at different times. Every single one of them had a snooty attitude and made a point of telling me how Milo belonged to them. I got pissed off and fed up with being held under multiple boots, so I stormed into his office, and I told him about the baby." I took another sip of my tea.

"I'm gonna kill him," she muttered. "I'm confused about the order of this..."

"Sorry. I can fix that." I sucked in a deep breath. On the exhale, I said, "I told him about the baby after this blond bimbo left his office. Then he fucked me on his desk. Then he fired me. Then he told me to come home and stay here."

“Wait, what?” she asked, holding up her hand. “He had the audacity to command you after firing you?”

I nodded. “I had the same thought.”

I was starting to become angrier and angrier over everything all over again. And knowing Morgan was behind me in all of this only helped justify my anger.

“Oh honey,” she said and rubbed her hand over my shoulder. “I’m so sorry. The guy is an asshole, and you are so much better off without him. The only positive thing he did for you was gave you that little blessing. That’s if you decide to keep it. And if you do, Aunty Morgan is going to spoil the thing rotten.”

I laughed and started thinking about the baby. Could I do things on my own? Probably. But should I keep the baby?

I shrugged. “I have no idea what I’m going to do yet.”

“I can understand how his reaction wasn’t what you were expecting,” Morgan started.

I snorted. “I wasn’t really expecting anything. At least, not beyond my made-up scenarios where he laughed me out of the office.”

Morgan cocked her head to the side and rubbed a hand up and down my upper arm. “Fuck him. He’s a dirtbag who doesn’t deserve you, a minute more of your time, or to be the father of that baby.”

“Isn’t that the truth,” I muttered then took another sip of the tea. With each sip, I was doing better and better. The world started to seem brighter, and warmer, and things were so damned overwhelming.

A yawn crawled through my throat. I tried to fight it, but there was no use.

“Tired?” she asked.

“I guess so,” I said.

“Welp, your body is going through a lot of changes,” she said.

I snorted. “That’s the understatement of the year.”

She chuckled.

Morgan and I munched on a few of the warm chocolate chip cookies. She wasn’t worried in the slightest bit about how we were going to make rent, buy food, or anything of the sort. She was simply there for me.

“Are you sure we’ll be okay until I can find another job?” I asked.

She waved my concern away, and around a bite of cookie, she said, “Yeah. I’m positive. We’ll be fine.”

I sighed and nodded.

And after another hour, the entire plate of cookies, and two more cups of tea, I felt better than ever and was confident about the future being much brighter than moments ago. Though I still had not decided what to do about the baby, I decided I was going to find another job by the end of the week and leave Milo Mason as a closed chapter in my past.

I yawned again. “I should go take a nap.”

“You should,” Morgan said. “Sleep well. You and the baby deserve and need it.”

I softly chuckled under my breath and leaned in for a hug. She wrapped her arms around me and squeezed me close.

“Thank you for being such a wonderful and amazing friend,” I said.

“It’s my pleasure,” she said.

I pulled away and headed to my room where I promptly crawled underneath my warm covers and closed my eyes, shutting out the world and the day, and most of all, Milo Mason.

MILO

The SUV swerved toward the curb of a busy storefront. Zeke shifted the vehicle's gear to park and then twisted in the driver's seat to stare at me. I met his gaze with an arched eyebrow.

"Is there something I can help you with?" I asked, not bothering to hide the annoyance in my tone. Judging by where we were and the expression on his face, he had an opinion about what I was about to do.

"Are you sure this is what you want to do, sir?" he asked. "It's been a while since we've seen her."

I stared out the window at the storefront. The collection of expensive jewelry glittered in the light of the setting sun. Several posters filled a few of the windows, enticing the passersby to step into the store.

Did I have to do this? Technically.

Did I want to?

My heart palpitated, urging my body toward the store. I huffed before setting my gaze on Zeke's.

"Yes," I said. "Not only is it the right thing to do, but she really is the one."

"But I've never seen you get serious with anyone," he said. "What is it about her that is so special to you?"

"She's my mate, Zeke," I said, plainly... firmly. My tone left little room for argument and if my driver was smart, he

would leave the rest of what he had to say unspoken.

His expression changed. As though he had never paused to consider I, of all shifters, could have a mate. “Oh.”

I nodded once then turned my attention back to the store we had parked in front of. I placed my hand on the door handle and glanced around me. For what? I wasn't sure. I often believed when I found the one the world would end, so maybe that was it.

“Good luck, sir,” Zeke said.

“Thank you,” I replied and climbed out of the vehicle. There was no time like the present, but I had anxiety making a mess out of my system. With the way things were left between us, I wasn't sure if she would agree to have me.

I was an asshole. I had never denied that face. I was also hardheaded, stuck in my ways, and needed things to go my way. Stubborn might be a characteristic used to describe me. Maybe even to a fault.

Once my feet were on the sidewalk, I adjusted my business suit jacket and took my first step toward the rest of my life.



AN HOUR LATER, I held the box in my hand. The one-karat round diamond was surrounded by several overlapping, interwoven rings. The whole thing was cast in white gold and sized to her perfect fingers.

Looking at the ring was almost like staring at the rings surrounding Saturn. It was a unique halo style that reminded me of Olivia and what she meant to me.

No matter what I tried to do, I always came back to her. Everything came back to her. It didn't matter how much I fought against the inevitable. The end was always the same and would always be the same.

For me, there was no one else in the world. She was made for me. And I was made for her.

I was an asshole. I knew this better than anyone else in the world. And I didn't deserve second chances or a shot at redemption, but I would consider myself the luckiest and richest man in the world if she decided to let me be her husband. If she let me complete our family.

Hindsight was always twenty-twenty, and I sucked at forethought when it came to my actions. I realized as I sat in the back seat of my SUV with the ring in my hand, driving toward Olivia's apartment, my actions earlier in the day might have come across as a bit brash and firing her without explanation.

She had no idea what was going on in my head and I stubbornly wouldn't let her in. But it was becoming plain to see, that little by little, piece by piece, she was punching holes into the wall I had built around my heart.

I was turning soft. But only for her. And my baby. No one else would have the privilege to see that side of me. And if it weren't for her in the first place, no one would have seen it. Hell, I wasn't even sure it was there.

But she somehow knew.

She was changing me in ways I never understood, and she was the first person who ever made me second-guess myself in the ways I had recently. Maybe Melody, the girl I had hired to make Olivia jealous, was right all along.

I just hoped I wasn't too late to show her how much she meant to me.

Regardless of the answer she would give me, the ring was hers. And regardless of our future together, she was still pregnant with my baby, and no son of mine was going to grow up without his father. And if the baby happened to be a girl, no daughter of mine was going to know how cruel life would be without the love of her father.

That baby was mine. Olivia belonged to me.

One way or another, I was going to be involved.

And with the perfect ring in my hand, I stared up at the apartment building. A slight smirk stretched my lips as I

recalled the argument, we had about her living here. If she chose me, she would be leaving here, regardless.

My heart palpitated in my chest as an uneasy sensation washed through me.

What if she said no?

I sucked in a breath. I had never known fear before. Not in the way it coursed through my veins, stilling my breath.

“Sir?” Zeke asked, snatching me from my thoughts.

I settled my fearful gaze on my driver’s. “Yes, Zeke?”

“Good luck, sir,” he said. “I’m sure she’ll say yes.”

I let out a deep breath and nodded. “Thank you, Zeke.”

“Absolutely, sir,” he said.

With a deep breath to calm my nerves, I climbed out of the back seat of the car and headed up to Olivia’s door. The last time I stood on the outside of this door, I held soup and flowers. Little did I know at that point, her illness was due to being pregnant with a shifter.

Now that I knew, I was going to do whatever it took to make sure her pregnancy was as comfortable as possible.

No matter what the outcome of tonight was.

I knocked on the door. Minutes later a brunette with light brown eyes answered the door. She stared at me with a cold expression. “Yes?”

“Is Olivia here?” I asked.

“That depends,” the roommate said. “Are you Milo Mason?”

I cocked my head. “What does that matter?”

“It matters because I’m her friend and roommate. It matters because I care about her. It matters because I had spent hours helping her pick up the broken pieces of her heart. So, I’ll ask you again, are you Milo Mason?”

“I am...” I said. “You spent hours doing what?”

“Please tell me you are honestly not that deluded,” she said narrowing her gaze at me.

I scoffed. “I knew she was upset...”

“You hurt her,” the roommate corrected none too gently. “She wants nothing to do with you... so go away.”

The door started to close. I used my hand and foot to keep the door from closing all the way and said, “Wait. I can explain.”

“You better have a damn good one,” she said. “Or this door is shutting.”

I pulled out the ring and showed it to her. She gasped and opened the door more. “What the hell?”

I nodded.

“Explain, now.” Her eyes had darkened, and she crossed her arms over her chest.

I kept my voice low, giving her everything that happened. She nodded as though she was already made aware of certain details and when I was finished, she stared off to my right. After several long moments, she settled her gaze on me again. “Are you going to hurt her again?”

I frowned. “Hurt her?”

“That’s what I said,” the woman said, standing guard in the doorway.

I shook my head. “I had no intentions...”

She scoffed and shook her head. “Men really are dumb.”

“I know I messed up. And I don’t expect her... or you... to forgive me very easily, but I hope this is a start.” I gestured to the ring. “So, may I come in?”

She stared at me coldly for several seconds, wordlessly studying me. It was almost as though she was poking holes into my demeanor and purpose for buying the ring.

I sighed. “Look, I understand you are protective of her. I am too, though my past actions might not show it. But I do

care for her very much. Please, if you would be so kind, ask her if she is willing to see me for a few minutes. Just long enough for me to explain my actions and beg forgiveness.”

“And if she isn’t,” the woman crossed her arms and leaned against the doorway.

“Then I will wait here until she is,” I said.

She let out a quiet sarcastic laugh and shook her head. “Fine. Wait here.”

Before I could respond, the door slammed in my face. I shoved my hand with the ring in my pocket and stood outside the door, waiting.

And waiting...

And waiting...

Minutes passed like hours.

I wondered if the friend had even told Olivia about me waiting for her.

And just when I was about to knock on the door again, the handle twisted. The door opened once more with Olivia in the doorway. I gaped at her, breathlessly.

“What do you want, Milo?” she asked.

I slapped my mouth shut. It was the first time she had called me by my first name and it didn’t leave her lips with any amount of politeness.

I nodded. “I’m sorry about earlier. Can I come in and talk?”

She huffed. “I don’t know. Are you going to fuck me and leave?”

I clenched my jaws. That stung. “No. I don’t intend to leave your side ever again.”

“Why?” she asked. “Because I’m carrying your child?”

I shook my head. “Because you are carrying my heart.”

She gaped at me. A crease marred the smooth skin on her forehead. “What?”

It came out barely above a whisper.

I gulped. I hadn't wanted to do this in the hallway, but I was being forced to swallow my pride and humble myself. And for her, I would spend the rest of my life doing so. Might as well start now.

I bent my knees, kneeling at her feet as I pulled on the box again.

OLIVIA

Morgan came to me while I was in the middle of a bath to let me know my ex-boss and the father of my unborn child was standing in the hallway of our apartment building. She also mentioned he was willing to stay there for as long as it took.

“I say we test just how long he will wait and how truthful he’s being,” Morgan said with a wink

I smiled. “I so agree.”

Morgan left me to finish my bath and went off to do something on her own. I suspected there was a lot she wasn’t telling me. I had heard her talking to someone not long before she came into the room. She didn’t sound happy from what I could pick up. But Morgan didn’t let on to anything. At least nothing except for the fact Milo Mason was standing in the hallway.

Let him stew, I thought and took my time finishing my bath. And once the water was cold and the bubbles were completely gone, I climbed out, dried off, and rubbed my skin down with some extra moisturizing lotion. Then I took my time getting dressed.

Sure, I knew Milo was waiting, but he deserved to wait. Especially after what he did and what he said. The asshole wasn’t anywhere near lucky enough for me to continue to jump when he requested or demanded me to. He should have thought about that before firing me.

He screwed me over in more ways than one. I owed him nothing.

My whole process took about a couple of hours. What could I say? I was being petty and a part of me wanted to know just how serious he was about waiting. But two hours was the max I was willing to be on him for. And maybe not even that.

Once I let out a deep breath and gave myself a once over, I headed toward the door.

“Are you sure you don’t want to make him wait longer?” Morgan asked from her bedroom. Her voice came out flat. “I would make him wait an eternity.”

“I love that about you.” I smiled. “I’m sure. Besides, I highly doubt he’s still out there.”

She frowned, clearly bummed I didn’t take her idea. “Okay... if I were you, I would have made him wait longer.”

“I know, and again, I love that about you,” I said.

She stood and approached her bedroom door. “I’ll give you two some privacy. But I’m letting you know if I hear so much as a snuffle, I’m coming out there to draw some blood and he won’t like it either.”

“Thank you,” I said with a chuckle.

She shut the door, leaving me to stare at the door wondering if I had made him wait long enough or if I should do it longer. I bit my lip and sighed.

Nah, it was better to get whatever he needed done and over with.

I faced the door to our apartment and let out a deep breath before gripping the knob and giving it a turn.

As he was revealed, my heart skipped a beat. That wasn’t the reaction I was expecting. Especially from my heart. But it did and it was hard not to drink him in. It was exceptionally difficult to remember I was angry with him. And for good reason.

I tried to keep up the act of being angry, but my heart wasn't in it. And when he got down on one knee, my lungs froze.

"Will you marry me?" he asked, dark brown eyes holding on to mine.

Morgan cleared her throat and that snapped me out of whatever spell I had just been held under. I turned my attention to her. I thought she was going to give us privacy. It was probably a good thing she did sneak out and was nearby. Otherwise, I might have let him swoop me up into his arms again and completely ignored all the hurt he had put me through earlier.

I sucked in a breath and stared into Milo Mason's dark brown eyes.

"Why should I?" I asked.

He stammered.

I wanted to smirk. Good. He should understand he fucked up.

"First, I tell you I'm pregnant, then you fuck me on your desk and then you fire me," I said, not holding back the hurt or the anger I felt.

"I understand why you are upset, but I have a perfectly good reason," he said.

"Is that so?" I asked, crossing my arms over my chest. "And what reason is that?"

"I'm an asshole," he said.

I gaped at him. My arms started to slacken over my chest.

Morgan cleared her throat again.

I clamped my mouth shut. "That's not good enough."

He nodded. "I don't blame you for feeling that way either. But I would love to spend the rest of my life making it up to you. I should have made myself clearer. I will be taking care of you from now on. I want to. I want to be the one who provides for you and our child. You don't need to work

another day again. I will do whatever it takes to keep our family safe and cared for.”

I gaped at him again. Sure, what he was saying helped. But it wasn't enough. I needed to hear more. But damn he was off to a good start. “Go on.”

He nodded and poured his heart out to me. I learned that he was a dragon shifter, and when we spent that weekend together, he knew then he couldn't live without me. But it terrified him, and because he thought I didn't want to be with him, he hired actresses to make me jealous, thinking that would get me to come crawling into his arms.

“You were the one I saw?” I asked.

He nodded. “And I thought you had seen me. And more recently too.”

I nodded. It made sense. My best friend even told me there was an explanation and though I could choose to freak out about that, I would take things one step at a time.

He realized he had made mistakes. Horrible ones that he never expected forgiveness for, but he was going to spend the rest of his life making up for them.

His words touched my heart, and I was moved by his willingness to swallow his pride and be vulnerable for me.

Just after midnight, officially on Valentine's day, I sucked in a deep breath and said, “Okay, fine. But on one condition.”

“Name it,” he said, eagerly willing to do whatever it took to keep me by his side.

“Never hurt me again,” I said.

He nodded. “I promise.”

“Now,” I said with a smile, “Stand up and kiss me.”

He did so, slipping the ring onto my finger. Once I got a solid look at the thing, I gasped.

He explained the symbolism of the ring. How I was the galaxy, and he was caught in my orbit.

“I’ll forever follow you,” he said. “To the ends of the universe.”

I smiled.

“Cute,” Morgan said with a smile. “You’re engaged on Valentine’s Day.”

I checked my phone which was sitting in the back pocket of my jeans. Sure enough, she was right. I had lost all track of time and it had never dawned on me what the date was.

“Perfect timing,” I said.

Milo smiled. “My forever Valentine.”



THREE MONTHS LATER...

The movers had just finished unloading the last of the boxes when Milo stepped into view and took my hand. He smiled. “I have something to show you.”

I nodded and allowed him to pull me behind him, out the back of his mansion and up a winding path to a large opening in the side of a mountain.

“What is this place?” I asked taking a look around the massive cavern with rough, jagged rock covering the ceiling and the walls and smooth dirt covering the floor.

“This is where I shift,” he said.

I settled my gaze on him. “Your dragon?”

He nodded once. The corners of his lips curved upward.

“You’re finally going to show me?” I asked.

He shrugged. “I had to wait a little bit. Didn’t want the jolt of adrenaline hurting our baby. Plus, I thought it would be special to commemorate you moving in with me.”

I laughed under my breath. “Morgan is still not sure what to think of you, you know.”

He smiled. “I like it that way.”

He had paid for her rent for two solid years. It was the most she would accept. And it gave her time to look for a new roommate if she even wanted one.

Then she joked, “Nah, it will become my cat yoga studio.”

She gave me a hug as the movers loaded up the last of the boxes. With a promise to meet up every other week at least for a lunch date, I took the first step of my new life and moved in with Milo Mason.

“Are you ready?” Milo asked, pulling me to the present.

“You’re going to do it now?” I asked. “In daylight?”

“Yes,” he said.

I gasped. I wasn’t sure what to say. I nodded and took a step back, pressing my back against the side of the cave’s opening.

Milo took off his clothes. The movement of his muscles caught my eye, and I focused on each one. Once he was fully naked, he stood in the middle of the cave.

“No matter what, I’m okay. Don’t come too close to me, because I may accidentally hurt you,” he said.

I nodded. “Okay.”

He nodded once and knelt on the ground.

I stared in awe as his skin took on a silver sheen, stretching and growing. The tone darkened underneath. Then his skin peeled, revealing black-as-night scales. Wings sprouted from his back as his hands and feet grew to my length, tipped with curved, razor-sharp talons.

There was so much happening all at once, it was almost too much to keep track of. A tail flicked furiously back and forth as Milo’s head stretched and elongated, turning just as black as the rest of his body.

He groaned and clawed at himself until he was fully shifted and stretched his frame out, wings and all.

His whole body barely fit the massive cavern and I realized why the place was so huge. It was to give him room.

He stretched his wings and shook out his body, removing the last few remnants of his human form.

I gaped in awe.

Milo's head was crowned with two horns that curved toward the sky. From where I stood, it appeared that each one had thorns. His eyes were a deep electric blue that stole my breath away.

Before I realized it, I was drawing closer to him.

Milo kept an eye on me and as I approached him, he lowered his head. A low guttural purr bounced around in his throat. I placed a hand, dwarfed by Milo's sheer massive size, on his snout. The sunlight outside of the cave caught his scales, shimmering in silver and white.

I sucked in a breath and whispered, "You're beautiful."

He uttered a sound somewhere between a chuckle and a growl. I imagined he was laughing at my sentiment. Then he nudged me, and I met his gaze. He gestured with his head to climb on his back.

I shook my head. "Oh no. I don't think I'm ready for that."

He let out another terrifying chuckle.

"That sound is going to take some getting used to," I said.

He nodded and rested his head on the dirt-covered floor.

"So, is shifting back the same?" I asked.

There was a twinkle in his eyes and his form started to vibrate.

I blinked, and the dragon part of him burst into glitter, falling onto the ground around us. Milo reached through the mass and pulled me into his arms and planted a kiss on my lips. Instantly, I was aroused and allowed him to pull me into the darker part of the cave, so that my cries of ecstasy could echo over the valley.

EPILOGUE: MORGAN

Late in the afternoon, I was enjoying the fresh air on my patio when there was a knock on my door. I turned my head toward it, just to make sure it wasn't my imagination. When the knock came again, I stood up, set my coffee on the table, and headed to answer the door.

The peephole was closed, and I smiled. "Who is it?"

I already had an idea of who was on the other side of the door. She had made a habit of hiding who she was when she came over and tended to be the only person to do so.

Instead of speaking, she knocked. A short giggle echoed through the door.

I flipped the locks and pulled the door open, resting my eyes on my very pregnant best friend. She threw her arms into the air and came in for a hug. She smelled amazing.

"That money is doing you some good," I said.

She giggled. "Milo wishes."

I invited her in and we both sat outside on the patio, catching up and sharing laughs.

"I miss this," Olivia said.

"I do too," I said and patted her hand. I watched as she rubbed her belly. "Is he kicking?"

"She, dammit," Olivia said with a chuckle. "Between you and Milo this kid is going to be confused."

I shrugged. “Maybe. Maybe not.”

I stood up and placed a hand over her belly. In response, I felt something push against my hand. I sucked in a breath. “So strong!”

“Tell me about it,” Olivia said. “Day and night, my insides are getting bruised by this kid.”

I laughed.

She bent over and reached into her purse, and pulled out a black and silver envelope. She handed it to me. I took it from her fingers and sat back down.

“What’s this?” I asked.

“Just open it,” she said.

I did, sliding my finger along the fold to separate the envelope. I pulled out a thick card and held it up, reading the floral lavish script of their official wedding invitation.

“Request the honor of my presence,” I said, smiling. “Damn straight. That wedding wasn’t gonna happen without me.”

I still thought I should be one of the bridesmaids, but they were keeping things small, and she had her childhood best friend as her maid of honor.

“You’re bringing that cute guy from the office,” Olivia said. “I won’t take no for an answer.”

I laughed. “All right, I will.”

“Good,” she said and leaned back into the chair with a sigh.

“I really wish I could have thrown you a bachelorette party for the books, but little baby here had other plans,” I said.

She shrugged. “I don’t mind not having some guy gyrate his junk in my face. And Milo is a bit possessive for that to fly.”

“He wasn’t going to know,” I said then took a sip of my tea. “At any rate, I’m happy I got to see my friend before Milo

steals you away from me forever.”

She laughed. She was doing a lot of that recently. It was good to hear. She was glowing too. I was so happy to see her as happy as she was. She deserved every bit of it she could get.

“So, a shotgun wedding huh?” I asked, staring at my friend from the corner of my eye.

She snorted. “I guess. There’s no hiding this baby now!”

I giggled. “And why would you want to hide him?”

“Her,” Olivia said.

“We’ll see...” I said.

Olivia couldn’t visit for much longer. She had another thing to take care of. Still, a part of me was sad to see her go.

The next day at work, I strolled up to Bryan. The quiet guy. The one who I could hang out with if I just got over my anxiety by asking him out. Why was I so afraid? I had no clue.

He met my eyes with his pretty blues, and I was almost breathless. “Hey, Morgan.”

“Good morning, Bryan,” I said. “Having a good day so far?”

He nodded, stopped to think about my question, then shrugged and nodded again. I laughed.

“Are you sure about that?” I asked. “You might want to reconsider again.”

“I’m sure,” he said. “Got something on your mind?”

I nodded. “I do...”

“And that is?” he asked, dragging the last word out.

“What do you have going on this weekend?” I asked and bit my lip.

He chuckled. “I have a thing with family.”

“Can you break it to go to my friend’s wedding with me?” I asked, rushing the words out and trying to make it sound like

he would be doing me a huge favor. He would be doing me a favor, but I would never tell him why.

“I’m sorry,” he said holding his hands up with his gorgeous smile and single dimple on the right side of his face. “My hands are tied.”

I nodded. “Bummer.”

“Sucks you have plans though,” he said. “I was going to see if you wanted to come with me.”

I smiled wider. “Maybe there is a way we could do both? Tit for tat?”

He chuckled. “I like the sound of that.”

I nodded. “What time is the family gathering?”

A horn blew through the room and that meant it was time to work.

“I’ll catch up with you at lunch,” he said.

I nodded. “See you then!”

But when lunch came around, he was nowhere to be found. And I searched for him at the end of the shift. He just vanished out of thin air.

I frowned because I realized I must have come off too eager. Too desperate. Too much altogether. There was always some reason why the men I liked didn’t want me. I almost thought I had some weird compass that pointed me to all the wrong men.

Normally, I would go home, put on some sappy romcom and drink a bottle of red all by myself. But I decided I could use some time out on the town instead and wound up at a local country bar. I took a seat at the bar and nodded to the bartender.

He smiled at me as he rubbed a towel on the inside of a glass. Once he was done, he set the glass beneath the bar and approached.

“I haven’t seen you in here before,” he said.

He was cute. Short dark brown hair. Spiked on the top. His dark brown eyes glittered in the lights dangling from the ceiling. And his smile. Good God, I didn't think they made smiles like his anymore.

I shrugged. "Thought I would try out something new."

"Well, I'm glad you did," he said. "What can I make you?"

I squinted and cocked my head to the side as I thought about a drink I wanted to try. "How about you surprise me."

He smiled even bigger, with two dimples. I was a sucker for dimples. "I got just the thing for you."

He went to work on a drink, pouring various liquids into a glass filled with ice cubes. Once he was finished, he set the drink in front of me and then said, "On the house."

I smiled wide. "Well thank you. I really needed that."

"My father always said, beautiful women should never have to pay for their own drinks," he said.

I nodded. "Your father is a very smart man."

I took a sip and my eyes widened with surprise. It wasn't an overly sweet drink. It wasn't sour either. I wasn't able to pick out a hint of alcohol, though I knew for certain there was plenty. I had watched the man make them.

"What do you think?" he asked.

"I love it," I said. "What do you call this?"

"I have no idea," he said. "What would you call it?"

I shrugged. "Sweet Release?"

"I like it," he said pointing at me. Then he held his hand out to me. "I'm Jake."

I smiled and took his hand. "Morgan."

"I'm glad you came in tonight, Morgan," Jake said.

I nodded. "Me too."

I wound up spending the entire evening there, long past the last call. Jake and I parted with a long kiss, a selfie, and a

promise to see each other again.

Yes, Morgan gets her own story soon. *While, you're waiting for that one, how about checking out the entire series here?*

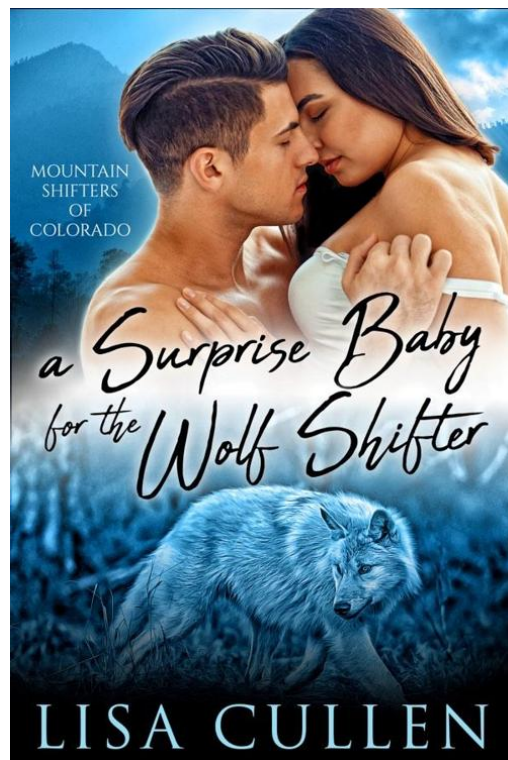
And don't forget to read more of Maxine *here in Three Shifters for Christmas*

Three sexy shifters who know how to keep things warm as winter settles over the town of Manitou Springs.

They all want a piece of me, the new witch in town, and they are all willing to do what it takes to make me theirs by Christmas.

GRAB NOW!!!

A SURPRISE BABY FOR THE WOLF SHIFTER (SAMPLE)



DESCRIPTION

It all started with a kiss...

One hot, blissful night with a sexy as hell guy I would never see again.

Six weeks later, I discover I'm pregnant.

A baby wasn't part of the deal.

Luckily, Weylan and I had a connection that night... one we both can't describe.

We told each other almost everything there was to know about ourselves, including where he lived.

Prompted by my best friend, Cassidy, I go to find him, so I can tell him about our little *surprise baby*.

And I get a surprise of my own.

Not just because of his crazy ex, but because *they are shifters*.

Weylan turns into a wolf, and his ex is a mountain lion who's eager to rip me to shreds simply because Weylan wants me.

This is more than I can take.

I surely have a big decision on my hands.

There's a baby I'm absolutely unprepared for.

PROLOGUE: GEMMA

It started with a kiss...

Well, sort of.

It actually started with a night out with Cassidy and an outdoor party celebrating St. Patrick's Day within the heart of Denver.

Gemma rushed to the public bathroom's mirror. She ripped off a piece of toilet paper from a nearby stall, wrapped it around her fingers, and lightly traced the outline of her lips. Once she was done, she stood back and looked at her finished look.

"Not bad," she said to herself before rushing out of the door to her waiting best friend.

There was something about this party that had Gemma buzzing with excitement.

"Where to now?" Cassidy asked. Her short blonde hair was done up in a faux side buzz. Rows of braids had black and green ribbon woven through her hair. It suited her. Much like many other things that would make Gemma crazy with jealousy if she stopped to think about them.

Her bright blue eyes were outlined in black, and a shamrock was painted on her cheek from her event with her students earlier in the day. She wrapped her black sweater jacket around her a little tighter as a breeze blew around them.

"Let's get out of the breeze, for starters," Gemma said and escorted her friend to the massive pavilion that stood center

stage of the park surrounding them. Gemma had always wanted to go to an event here, and it just so happened that she had stumbled across the event list when she was booking the location for a photoshoot.

Gemma smiled as the massive stone structure grew within her vision. It was a pillar of Greek architecture. And the fact that it was being used to celebrate an Irish holiday wasn't beyond her. But the pavilion was used for many, many things.

For this particular event, green and orange lights shone on the outside of the white marble. The colors of Ireland. Fitting for the holiday. Green flags filled the spaces between the pillars, decorated in silver glitter, catching the light and refracting it back toward the world.

And tonight, it was the location of her and Cassidy's girl's night out.

Gemma looked forward to her bi-weekly ritual with her best friend forever. But, in truth, it was growing stale. Normally, they would go for dinner at their favorite restaurant, followed by either a couple of rounds of pool, some dancing, or a combination of the two. However, Gemma decided to switch things up a bit. Throw in a little flavor.

Bam! St. Patrick's Day Celebration in the park!

"Who was it that put this on again?" Cassidy asked.

Gemma shrugged as she took in all the glory. "I didn't recognize the name. I think it was some frat of a college nearby. Don't quote me on that, though."

"There is no way all of these people are college kids," Cassidy said as she raked her gaze over the patrons.

Gemma shrugged. "I did say 'I think.' Maybe it's some sort of mixer."

"You have no idea what this party is about do you?" Cassidy asked as she stopped her friend and leveled her gaze on Gemma's. "Who are you and what have you done to my friend?"

"I have no idea what you are talking about," Gemma said.

“You don’t do half-cocked ideas,” Cassidy continued, pointing a finger at her friend’s chest. She playfully narrowed her eyes. “Really, who are you?”

“Relax, it’s me... I already told you what happened. But now that we are here, this is clearly something very, very different.” Gemma looked around and shook her head.

“All this for an experiment,” Cassy muttered under her breath. “This reminds me of some sort of secret society gathering with only so many tickets sold...”

“There were no tickets,” Gemma interrupted. “Relax. I have a plan.”

“And that is?” she asked, quirking an eyebrow.

“We check it out, get a feel for everything. If we don’t like what we see, we can go to dinner and pretend this mistake never happened,” Gemma said.

Her friend considered her words for several moments then nodded. “Deal.”

As they finished the walk to the pavilion, Cassidy added, “I feel like I have to let you know that I totally approve of spontaneous Gemma. She should come out more often.”

“Sorry, this was a once-in-a-decade event,” she said through a giggle.

“We shall see,” Cassidy said.

Not much longer, and they both had drinks in their hands, standing next to the bar, watching as people filed in under the pavilion. As Gemma watched the people, she realized Cassidy was right. This wasn’t an ordinary party.

This was most definitely different. Much more than what she was expecting.

While Cassidy was off to the girl’s room, a couple of guys approached her.

“Where did your friend go off to?” The tall and rugged one asked. He had kind eyes though, which Gemma appreciated.

“She’ll be back in a couple of minutes,” she said. “Why?”

“Not the sort of party girls like you should be attending alone,” he said. “I’m Guy.”

He held out his hand and Gemma stared at it.

“You said your name is Guy?” she asked.

He nodded. “My parents weren’t all that original.”

Gemma laughed. “I’m Gemma.”

“This is Weylan,” he said.

Weylan was a tad bit more standoffish. He seemed uncomfortable and on alert.

“Is he okay?” Gemma asked, cautiously staring at the incredibly handsome man.

“I’m fine. Just keeping an eye out for your friend,” he said.

“How noble of you. She can handle herself,” Gemma said.

His light brown eyes took her in and stole her breath. A small crease appeared between Weylan’s eyebrows. His lips parted, and all she could think about was the shape of his mouth and wondering how it would feel on hers.

And just like that, her nerves ignited in the most delicious burn she has ever felt in her life.

She smiled, unable to fight her lips. Weylan stepped closer.

“You have very pretty eyes,” he said.

She giggled. “Thank you. You do too.”

And they were the most beautiful brown eyes she’s ever seen. They were faceted with shades of yellow, green, and brown, interlaced and overlapping creating a dazzling web of color and beauty.

She had never seen eyes like his before.

“What did I miss?” Cassidy asked as she approached Gemma’s side.

Gemma managed to pull herself from Weylan’s enchanting gaze to address Cassidy. “These two are looking to entertain us for the evening.”

“Fantastic,” she said and turned to Guy, “But don’t get any ideas. I’m taken.”

“Oh. Then challenge accepted,” Guy said and smirked. He held out his hand. “I’m kidding, I’m Guy.”

Cassidy took his hand. “I hope so. I’m Cassidy. Interesting name you have there.”

“That never gets old,” he said and chuckled.

“His parents had no originality,” Gemma offered.

“It’s a family curse, I’m afraid,” Guy said. “All joking aside, how did two beautiful ladies such as yourselves manage to land an invite to this exclusive party?”

Gemma shrugged. “I might have seen it on an event list.”

Weylan stepped closer to her. “So, it’s just happenstance meeting you here like this?”

“Maybe,” she said, playing coy and buzzing with arousal.

“Shall we dance?” he asked. He breathed in deep the scent of her perfume.

She nearly swooned. “I would love to.”

She flashed a grin to Cassidy and Weylan whisked her off to the dance floor and spent the next however long in a dizzying array of fire and ice. And once the last song ended, he kissed her.

The rest of her time at the pavilion was a blur. A blissful, acholic blur. When it was time to go, Weylan took her keys.

“Hey! Those are mine!” Gemma said.

Weyland chuckled. “You’re in no shape to drive. I’ll drive you home.”

“How will you get home?” she asked.

“You let me worry about that, okay?” he asked, pressing his hand onto the small of her back.

She sighed and said, “Okay.”

By the time they made it to her apartment, she had electric sensations rippling all over her body. She was going to ask him inside, and then into her bed.

This wasn't her usual behavior. But there was something about this man that got to her. He crawled under her skin and stayed there. Nice and warm.

And she wanted all that she could have of him. Even if it was only for the night.

She didn't even have the chance to open her own door. Seconds after her vehicle was put in park, he was at her door, helping her out.

It was the perfect segue.

"So, are you going to help me up to my apartment too?"

"I wouldn't dream of anything else," he said.

Gemma giggled and patted him on his face. She sighed. "You're too much."

"Not yet, anyway," he said.

"Oh, come now. With that face? Bet you make all the ladies melt," she said.

"I've been known to melt one or two," he said, helping her to the main entrance.

"Humble too," she said as she pressed the button for the elevator.

"Naturally," he agreed.

A few short minutes later, the couple was at her apartment door. She slid in the key and twisted, the knob turned, and the door opened in. No sooner than she was inside, he pulled her to him. His mouth collided with hers. Her back was pressed against the wall.

She was dizzy. Her nerves burned like fire. Electricity danced along her skin, and an ocean flooded the space between her legs.

"Bedroom. Now," he said between kisses.

“Door on the left,” she mumbled around his lips.

He picked her up. She wrapped her legs around his waist, and he carried her to her room. Once her back was on the mattress, he quickly undressed.

Gemma started to do the same.

He pushed her back to the bed and kissed her deeply. He growled out, “Don’t you dare do my job.”

She smirked, wondering if this was what it was like to feel worshiped by a man.

Her clothes were ripped from her and Weyland appeared above her again, nestled oh so delicately between her legs. The tip of his hard erection pressed against her swollen, wet entrance. His mouth claimed hers as his dick slowly slid inside her.

She sucked in a breath, eyes rolling into the back of her head as she arched her back against his methodic movements.

He gripped her legs, placing each of them over his shoulder, and moved even deeper into her.

Gemma couldn’t think straight. The delightful sensations rushed over her in waves of pleasure that was divine, otherworldly, and just pure ecstasy. And the way he was controlled in his movements was mind-blowing.

Pressure started to build within her center. Her breaths became more ragged. Her nails raked along the peaks and valleys of muscle that covered his arms.

And then it hit.

The orgasm of orgasms.

The pillar of pleasure.

The ultimate climax.

She cried into the air of her apartment as he moved in her, still controlled, still mind-blowing.

He settled her legs on either side of him. “Can you do anymore?”

She stared at him as though he spoke a different language.

“Are you worn out?” he asked.

“That was a powerful orgasm. I don’t know if I have any more in me,” she said.

“I appreciate your honesty,” he said and plowed into her with surprising force. He plowed into her pussy so hard and fast that she wasn’t sure if her wall was going to have holes in it from the bed frame.

After about two minutes of being torn from the inside out, she orgasmed again. She tightened her sex around his organ and buried her face into his neck. All the while she kept thinking of how he was full of wonderful surprises.

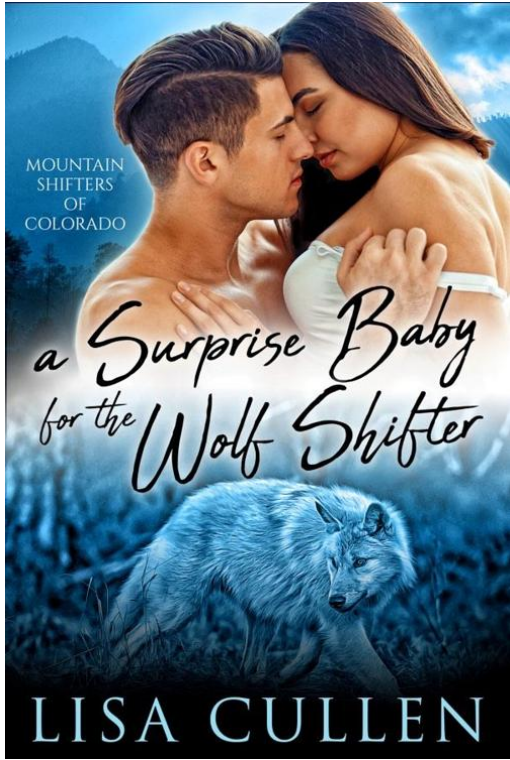
Weylan bent over her and grunted, slipping his fingers into Gemma’s hair and clutching a fist. The feel of his body over hers was amazing and warm and smooth. His movements turned jerky, and he grunted more. Then hot liquid spilled inside her and she sucked in a breath, letting it out in a slow sigh.

He ended their night of sex with a kiss and helped her under the covers. She closed her eyes, falling asleep to the warmth around her body.

In the morning, she woke to find him, and his wonderful warmth, missing. He had left.

It was better this way.

Find out what happens next. Grab ***A SURPRISE BABY FOR THE WOLF SHIFTER NOW!***



MOUNTAIN
SHIFTERS
OF
COLORADO

*a Surprise Baby
for the Wolf Shifter*

LISA CULLEN

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