



THE NEW YORK  
BOOK  SIX  
**NIGHTHAWKS**  
- SERIES -

# HOT RECEIVER

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
**FIONA DAVENPORT**

# HOT RECEIVER

---

THE NEW YORK NIGHTHAWKS

FIONA DAVENPORT


Copyright © 2022 by Fiona Davenport

Cover designed by Elle Christensen

Edited by Jenny Sims (Editing4Indies)

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

 Created with Vellum

# CONTENTS

Hot Receiver

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Epilogue

Epilogue

About the Author

## HOT RECEIVER

From *USA Today* Bestselling author Fiona Davenport comes a marriage of convenience, age-gap, sports romance with a wide receiver who's ready to do whatever it takes to permanently catch the woman who crashed into him.

Dempsey Tate was closing in on the end of his career as a professional football player. To make his lifelong dream come true, he needed to secure one final endorsement deal. Only the company wanted a family man, and he hadn't dated in forever.

Then the perfect solution literally slammed into him—Skye Baird. She thought Dempsey was joking when he proposed after she spilled hot coffee on him. Little does she know their marriage of convenience will last forever.

**M**y phone vibrated on the top shelf of my locker, and I stopped undressing to grab it. “Hey,” I greeted my agent, Gil, when I answered. I’d been waiting for this call for a week.

“So I got a call from one of the Best Sports reps—a friend of mine.”

“Did they offer?”

Best Sports was a huge chain of sporting goods stores. They started out as one mom-and-pop shop and practically grew into a dynasty. But the company was still family run and owned, which was one of the reasons I loved the idea of being their spokesperson. I knew they wanted the face of the company to have a role model without scandal or anything that would be damaging to the spokesperson or the company.

I’d always been all about my job. I hadn’t even gone on a real date in more years than I could count, so nothing in my past would keep me out of the running. After meeting with the owners, I was confident that I had an excellent shot at being signed for this deal.

It was also a long-term gig, which was exactly what I was looking for. They wanted someone who would represent them long into their old age, who would become a member of the family.

This endorsement would get me what I needed to finish a project I’d had in the works for nearly a decade.

I came from a low-income area of New York City. My parents had me in high school and worked their asses off to make sure I had a good education and kept me out of trouble with community sports. Although the center had some state funding, the teams and equipment weren't free, so my parents had scrimped for every penny. I'd been lucky to get one of the limited spots those first years. A lot of kids hadn't been able to afford it, or simply missed applying until they were already full.

Not all of those kids had gone on to have a troubled youth, but more than there should have been. My best friend had joined a gang by the time he was twelve. When he was killed at fifteen during a retaliation shooting by a rival gang, I swore to do whatever I could to help as many kids as possible.

I wanted to build centers that offered more competitive sports options, classes that taught basic skills as well as nutrition, and even some job training. A few places provided similar classes and activities, though not all, but not only were they few and far between, they cost more than a lot of families could pay in those areas.

My goal was to open centers with an alternate funding source so that almost everything they offered was free. And I wanted a lot of them.

I'd been drafted at eighteen, and it hadn't taken long for my skill to earn me a high salary. But even before I had money to put into the project, I started working on it. Even when I became one of the highest-paid receivers in the NFL, I knew I couldn't make this happen on my own. Still, I'd kept working on it, buying up land, making deals, finding donors, anything I could do to pave my way toward my ultimate goal. I could have paid to build a few of the centers on my own, but I wouldn't be able to sustain them long-term on my income, especially after I retired. And though I had a long list of donors, the centers needed a continuous stream of money.

I'd been smart with my money over the years, and I would be able to live out my retirement very, very comfortably. There were other long-term endorsement deals that I'd secured, but when I found out Best Sports was looking for a new face, I



was willing to jump through any hoops they wanted. Every penny they paid me was going right into the coffers for the community centers. The signing bonus from the deal would be enough to build and furnish over a dozen, and the income would go a long way in keeping them funded.

Gil sighed, bringing me out of my thoughts. “The rep was doing me a favor and called to warn me. You’re the one they want. They think you’re the perfect fit, except for one thing. And it’s important enough that they might go another way.”

“Okay. What is it, and how do we make it happen?”

There was a long pause before Gil finally spoke again. “They want someone more settled. You’re not exactly young, and even though you’ve got a clean rep, they’re looking for someone who fits the description of a family man for their campaign.”

“A family man?” I asked as I grabbed a clean towel and used it to wipe at the sweat still trickling down the back of my neck. “What does that mean? I’m very close with my parents and brothers.” I sat down on the bench and picked up my water bottle.

“Not family like siblings, dude. Family as in a wife and kids.”

I’d just taken a huge gulp of water, and at Gil’s announcement, I nearly spat it across the room. “What the fuck?”

My teammates stopped whatever they were doing and turned to stare at me in surprise. I was generally a very easy-going guy and rarely raised my voice unless I was on the field or very, very pissed. Or, in this case, shocked as hell.

“They want the picket fence image for their spokesman.”

“That’s...” I didn’t know what it was.

“Look, D, I’m not saying it’s logical. I’m just passing along the info. It’ll be a few more weeks before they make a decision. Maybe you can do something to change their minds? I’ll keep doing what I do, but you might want to think about this and decide if it’s worth it.”

“Worth what, exactly?” I huffed, frustrated and bewildered at the same time.

“That’s for you to figure out. I’ll let you know if I hear anything else.”

He hung up before I could say another word, and I pulled my phone from my ear to stare at the screen as though it would answer my questions.

“Yo, D,” Ames, one of our offensive linemen and my best friend, called out. “Everything okay?”

I nodded and pushed to my feet, tossing my phone back into my locker before stripping off the last of my gear and clothing. Wrapping a towel around my waist, I ran over the conversation with Gil in my head. What the fuck was I supposed to do?

Every muscle in my body protested as I marched into the showers. This had been a grueling practice, but we had a big game coming up, and we were gonna be ready. I didn’t have time to be thinking about other shit.

The hot water eased some of my aches, but I was still strung tight as I returned to my locker to get dressed.

“Seriously, D,” Ames pushed as he plopped down on the bench in front of the locker beside mine. “What’s got your panties in a twist?”

I rolled my eyes and shook my head as I yanked up my jeans and buttoned them. “Best Sports,” I grumbled.

“They go with someone else?” he asked, suddenly serious. He knew what this meant to me.

“Not yet, but Gil called in a favor and found out they have some conditions I don’t meet.”

“Conditions?”

I pulled on a T-shirt and sat beside Ames to put on my socks and shoes. “Apparently, they’re looking for a family man.”

“I’m guessing they mean a serious relationship?”

“Like rings and a picket fence.”

Rigby, one of our punters, had been looking at his phone, but he put it down and twisted to look at me. “So make it happen.” If it had been Ames talking, I would have laughed hysterically at the absurd suggestion. But Rigby wasn’t a joker. He was a good guy, one of the best, but he was a grump and serious all the time.

“Make it happen? Like get married?”

Rigby nodded and stood, retrieving his keys and wallet from his locker before shoving them in his pocket. “Yeah. If you’re serious about this gig, do what it takes, man.”

I gaped at him as he clapped me on the shoulder and strolled out of the locker room. When the door shut behind him, I swung my head around to stare at Ames. Instead of wearing an equally astonished expression like I’d expected, he looked thoughtful.

“You can’t seriously agree with him,” I practically sputtered.

“Well, I mean. If you didn’t live like a fucking monk, you’d have a few girls to choose from.”

I shot him a look, and he just grinned. The fucker didn’t have any room to judge on that front. I hadn’t seen him with a woman who wasn’t family in...I didn’t even know how long. We’d both been too focused on our careers to deal with the bullshit that came along with a relationship.

“D, you’re a hot receiver for the New York Nighthawks,” piped up Colt, a long snapper in his rookie season. “It shouldn’t be too hard to find a woman to wear your ring. You could probably ask the next woman on the street, and she’d fall at your feet.”

I was about to tell him how fucking ridiculous that idea was when our team captain—and starting quarterback—Prentice walked up and shot Colt a disapproving frown. “Don’t do something stupid like getting engaged to a random jersey chaser. You’ll have a fuck of a lot of explaining to do when you finally find your woman.” He turned his intense

gaze on me and raised an eyebrow. “And you’d be seriously fucked if you’re still married to someone else.”

I nodded, acknowledging that I’d heard his advice loud and clear. He returned the gesture and stalked to the exit, probably off to meet his wife and child. A small trickle of envy sifted through my veins, but I shook it off.

I wasn’t going to marry just anyone in order to secure the endorsement. I’d have to figure out something else.

**A**s a budding chef, I was particular about my ingredients and was happiest when I could use the best of the best. Unfortunately, my budget didn't allow me to indulge often, except for when I was cooking on someone else's dime. But every so often, I treated myself to a mini splurge. And as a coffee aficionado, the least expensive way to get in a little gastro-pampering was with a trip to one of the amazing cafés in the city.

Waiting in line, I stared at the bakery case, debating if I should shell out several extra dollars for one of the scrumptious pastries. It would mean that I'd need to live off ramen for the next week, so I decided against the additional splurge. Although I spruced up the cheap packets a little with homemade broth, green onion, egg, and sriracha, one decadent slice of lemon loaf wasn't worth the sacrifice...no matter how delicious it looked. Four dollars went further at the grocery store than people thought when you made everything from scratch. I could've made a batch of beans and rice that would have fed me for days with that much money.

Of course, it wouldn't have been such a big splurge if my roommate hadn't just up and decided to move in with her boyfriend, leaving me with a rent payment I could barely afford since the lease was in my name. New York City was beyond expensive, and things were always tight, but paying the full rent meant not having much left over for food.

When I reached the front of the line, I reluctantly dragged my gaze away from the baked goods and smiled at the barista.

“Good morning, can I get a small lavender cold brew latte please?”

“My favorite,” she chirped at me with a smile. “They’re brand-new on the menu and amazing.”

I hoped she wasn’t exaggerating how good the drink tasted. Handing over six dollars for a twelve-ounce drink made me cringe, so it had better be worth the ingredients I could’ve bought with it instead.

Luckily, after waiting for a good five minutes for my tiny cup of coffee, I discovered that she hadn’t been overselling the new menu item. Just walking through the door of the café had been a treat to my senses but lifting my to-go cup to my lips for that first taste of cold brew was the absolute best.

I was savoring it so much that my head was still in the clouds when I headed outside with my treat. That was the only possible explanation for how I ended up crashing into a huge guy only a few steps onto the sidewalk.

He had to be a full foot taller than me, so I had no excuse for missing him. Not that I was really surprised. The kitchen was the only place where I felt graceful, so I was used to being clumsy when I wasn’t cooking. But at least it was just me who normally paid the price for my lack of coordination instead of other people. Until this poor guy got drenched in coffee, courtesy of my clumsiness.

“Crap,” I muttered as my delicious lavender latte knocked into his cup of hot coffee, both drinks practically exploding as they smashed against his broad chest before falling to the ground.

And what a chest it was...which I didn’t fully realize until I was patting all of those muscles with a napkin. One that wasn’t doing any good because it was already covered in my cold brew since it had been wrapped around my cup to keep the condensation to a minimum.

My cheeks heated as I lowered my hand to my side and stared up at my victim. With his auburn hair, dark blue eyes, and muscular body, he was probably used to women gawking

at him on a regular basis. Although the hot coffee bath was likely a new experience for him.

“I am so sorry.” My gaze dropped back down to his chest, and I grimaced as I cleared my throat. “At least mine was a cold brew. Please tell me that yours had the chance to cool off before I crashed into you. I’d hate to think that you’re hiding burns beneath that shirt.”

His lips curved into a grin that sent butterflies swirling in my belly. “I guess it’s a good thing I had the barista put in a heavy dash of oat milk because I don’t think I got burned.”

The mention of oat milk took a couple of points off the hotness scale since I tended to be a food snob, but I figured I should cut the guy some slack, considering the situation. And maybe he was lactose intolerant or something, which had to suck because there were so many incredible dairy ingredients he’d miss out on if that was the case.

My random train of thought came to an abrupt stop when he bent over to pick up our now-empty cups, twisted around to toss them into the trash, and then lifted the hem of his shirt to check to make sure he wasn’t burned. And revealed his six-pack abs to my hungry gaze. “Holy crap.”

He lifted his shirt higher and asked, “Do you see a burn?”

That was as good of an excuse as any that I could come up with for my reaction to his ripped body. I wasn’t about to tell some random guy that I wanted to lick the line that ran down the middle of his abdomen. Especially not when the impulse was out of character for me. I was the girl who spent all of her time in the kitchen and never dated, let alone accosted strange men at coffee shops. “Um, maybe not. Sorry, I thought I did for a second, but it must’ve been a trick of the light or something.”

“See, no harm, no foul.” He let the hem of his shirt fall back into place and then glanced down at the brown splotches covering the front of his big body. “Well, nothing permanent anyway. The clothes can easily be cleaned, but a burn might’ve made me questionable for Sunday’s game.”

“Sunday’s game?” I echoed.

My confusion made him smile for some odd reason, and he nodded. “Yeah, I’m a wide receiver for the Nighthawks.”

“Oh, I see,” I mumbled, pressing my lips together in a flat line. Not only had I embarrassed myself in front of the hottest guy I’d ever seen in person, but of course he had to also be a professional athlete.

He stretched his arm in my direction. “Dempsey Tate.”

“Skye Baird,” I replied, sliding my palm against his. His hand dwarfed mine, and I was surprised by how much I liked it. “Um, about your clothes...and cleaning them. I’ll pay for that since it was totally my fault they’re covered in coffee. And if you have time to wait for another, I’ll get you a replacement drink. I’m so sorry that I wasn’t looking where I was going.”

Stopping in for a coffee instead of making a cup at home had already strained my meager budget, so offering to pay for his dry cleaning and a drink to replace the one I’d made him spill was going to hurt. But it was the right thing to do even though I wanted to cry over the fact that I’d only gotten one sip of my delicious indulgence before it landed on him and the sidewalk.

He shook his head. “That’s not necessary.”

“No, really,” I insisted, instead of taking the out he was so kindly giving me. Like I should since he could clearly afford to pay for dry cleaning more easily than I could. “It’s only fair since I’m the one who caused this mess.”

His blue eyes deepened to navy as his gaze swept down my body. His stare was so intense, it almost felt as though he was touching me, and goose bumps followed in the wake of his look. “If you really want to make it up to me, you could marry me instead.”

My jaw literally dropped at his words. The proposal—from a hot stranger I’d drenched in coffee—had to be a joke. This wasn’t one of the romantic comedies my former roommate loved to watch. There was zero chance that this guy had fallen



in love with me at first sight. Not when he looked the way he did and played professional football, and I was...well, me.

The idea was so absurd that as I shook my head, laughter bubbled up my chest and spilled from my lips.

**D**amn, I'd never seen anything more beautiful than this curvy brunette laughing—or as arousing. Granted, I wasn't happy that Skye hadn't taken my offer seriously, but I couldn't really blame her. How often does a man you just spilled coffee on ask you to marry him? Especially one who was a decade older.

The words had just kind of spewed from my mouth before I could stop them. Once they were out, I immediately knew I was completely serious. This woman was mine. It was ironic that we'd been discussing asking some woman on the street to wear my ring, then I bumped into—literally—the woman I wanted to wear it permanently.

Now, I just had to convince her that I wasn't joking.

As Skye's laughter waned, I took the opportunity to openly admire her for a few seconds. She was drop-dead gorgeous. Her soft brown hair hung just below her shoulders and framed her heart-shaped face with layered wisps. She had big brown eyes that reminded me of a sweet doe, a cute nose, and round mouth with plump lips. At six-foot-three, I towered over her by at least a foot, and even though my two-hundred-and-twenty-pound body would dwarf hers, I knew we would fit perfectly. She had big tits that would most likely overflow from my hands and completely fill my mouth. And her wide hips were perfect for grabbing onto while I drove inside her... and for carrying my babies.

That thought nearly caused me to stumble backward, not from fear or anxiety, but from the anticipation that slammed into me. I couldn't fucking wait to see Skye with my ring on her finger and her belly round and swollen with our child.

First thing to do was convince her to marry me, then I'd work on knocking her up. It would be one more tool in my arsenal to make sure she stayed mine forever.

"Baby, if you keep laughing at my proposal, you'll hurt my feelings." I gave her my best pout, and her cheeks turned pink as she giggled again. I sighed as though I was terribly wounded, then held my hand out toward the coffee shop. "Okay, I'll take you up on the dry cleaning and that coffee, but only if we have it now and you are willing to at least *discuss* marriage." I tapped the duffel bag slung over my shoulder. "I'll even dress for the occasion."

Skye rolled her eyes and smiled with fake exasperation. But something flashed in those pretty brown orbs as she turned to walk inside that gave me pause. It looked for a second like she was worried.

As we entered and walked toward the counter, I put my hand on her elbow and leaned in close. "If I'm making you uncomfortable, please tell me. I would never do anything to hurt you."

She suddenly stopped and turned her head, tilting it back so she could look at my face. "I've known you for maybe five minutes, and I already know you would never hurt me." Relief flooded me and pleasure at knowing she felt the connection between us. "If you want to keep proposing, who am I to stop you? It certainly does wonders for my confidence." Then she winked, making me laugh.

Damn, she was adorable.

I let her go ahead of me as we once again headed to the counter. Not just to be polite, but because her ass looked absolutely amazing in her jeans. I needed a second to ogle, then adjust myself. Her body was made to be loved, and I had every intention of being the only man who would ever have that privilege ever again.

We reached the register, and she waited for me to place my order, but when the cashier looked at her, she just shook her head. “That’s all.”

I frowned. “You just spilled your coffee,” I stated as I glanced pointedly at my shirt and pants, as if she wasn’t already aware that I was covered in both of our drinks.

Skye shrugged and looked down at her purse as she set it on the counter. “I wasn’t all that thirsty anyway. Why don’t you go get changed while I wait for our order?”

Something felt very off, and I had a feeling I knew what it was, but I didn’t want to embarrass her. So I just nodded, then leaned in and kissed her cheek before making my way to the restroom.

Once I’d washed up a bit and put on clean clothes, I stepped out of the bathroom and scanned the shop. Skye was waiting near the pickup area, and since the restroom was located just around the corner from the order window, I took a chance that she wouldn’t see me.

I only had to wait for one person before I was standing in front of the same girl who had taken Skye’s order minutes before. I pulled out a fifty-dollar bill and showed it to the cashier. “Hello,”—I glanced at her nametag—“Nina. If you can remember what that woman ordered when she was in here about ten minutes ago...” I trailed off, and Nina’s eyes lit up.

“What’s her name?” she asked as she typed something on her computer.

“Skye Baird.”

“Ten minutes ago?”

“Right around then.”

Nina hit a few more keys than the tiny printer next to her spit out one of the order stickers they put on the cups. She handed me the slip, but I shook my head. “I’ll take one of those and make sure they call her name, not mine.”

“Sure thing.” She rang up the drink, and I paid for it. Then I handed her the tip.

“Excellent service, Nina, thank you. Oh, and please add her last name to the label so she doesn’t think it’s a mix up when her name is called.”

Nina smiled brightly and tucked the extra money into her pocket.

I stepped away from the counter and spotted Skye sitting at a table by the window, staring outside. When I approached, her head lifted, and she smiled.

“Wow,” she breathed as she looked me up and down. “You clean up good.”

I laughed and took a seat. “We had some PR interviews before practice this morning, so I just happened to have my suit with me.”

She eyed my clothes once more, then shook her head as she pushed a drink across the table to me. “I don’t want to know how much that suit is worth, I’m just going to thank my lucky stars that’s not what you were wearing when I spilled coffee all over you.”

“Skye Baird!”

Skye’s head whipped toward the sound of her name being called, and her eyebrows shot up. “That’s weird. My name isn’t exactly common.”

“Probably because that drink wasn’t meant for anyone else,” I responded dryly.

“But...” Her eyes narrowed on me. “Why would you buy me a drink?”

“Well, you spilled yours as well,” I explained as I picked up my cup and took a sip of my coffee with a splash of oat milk. In season, I tried to eat healthy, but I needed something to cut the bitter taste of the brew.

“Yeah, but I bumped into you.”

“Which is why I agreed to the dry cleaning.” Although, I had no intention of actually letting her pay for it. “Now, why don’t I go and get your coffee for you, and then we can discuss the elephant in the room?”

“The elephant?” she echoed, her brows drawing together as a cute wrinkle popped up in the middle of her forehead.

“Yes. Our wedding date. I’m still waiting for a yes, but we can hammer out the details and get back to that part later.”

Skye’s smile lit up her face when she laughed, and my already aching cock twitched. *So fucking gorgeous.*

I went over to retrieve her beverage and held it in front of her when I returned. She reached up to take the cup, and I made sure that my fingers brushed along hers during the exchange. Her little shiver sent a streak of satisfaction through me at the knowledge that the attraction was mutual.

“Now, I realize that most women dream of a fairy-tale wedding, and while I’m perfectly happy to do that, it will have to be a renewal of vows because I’m not waiting a year to marry you.”

Skye cocked her head to the side and grinned. “Wow, you’re really committing to this. Well, for your information, I’ve never really thought about my wedding. I guess I was more focused on it being with the right person, so when and where don’t matter as much to me.”

“You become more and more perfect every fucking second, you know that?” I complimented, enjoying the pink stain it brought to her cheeks.

“If you say so,” she chuckled.

I observed her in silence for a moment, then decided it was time to be serious and find out where we stood so I knew where to go from there. “You really don’t believe I’m serious, do you?”

Skye laughed and took a sip of her drink. “A professional football player gets coffee spilled on him and immediately falls for the clumsy woman, sweeping her off her feet and whisking her away for their happily ever after.” She shook her head, but there was a wistful quality in her eyes that gave me hope. “Life isn’t a romantic comedy. But you’ve turned my crappy day around, so for that I sincerely thank you.”

It was time to fall back and regroup. Figure out my next play.

“Hmmm, well, we’ll see about that. In the meantime, how about you give me your contact information and we can coordinate on the dry cleaning?”

That flash of worry passed over her eyes again, and I gritted my teeth to keep from telling her to forget it. I didn’t like her worrying, but I also wasn’t going to give up my only surefire excuse to see her again.

We exchanged numbers, and I escorted her outside. It took everything I had to watch her walk away, but I comforted myself with the promise that very soon, she would be mine, in every way possible.

Dempsey didn't waste any time when it came to getting his ruined clothes cleaned. Only a few hours after we parted ways at the coffee shop, he texted me with the address of the dry cleaners he'd dropped them off at and let me know they'd be ready the next morning. I agreed to meet him here at ten o'clock, but I showed up early in case the cost was more than I was expecting, and I had to split the bill between my debit and credit cards. Since I only had about twenty dollars in my bank account until I got paid for a catering gig I did last week, that was a very real risk.

The bell above the door rang when I walked inside, and I flashed the cashier a nervous smile. "Hi, I'm here to pick up a dry-cleaning order for Dempsey Tate. He's meeting me, but I was hoping you could grab it now."

I had expected her to balk at the idea of handing over his clothes to someone without the claim slip, but she just nodded and walked toward a rack of plastic covered clothes. I could've been a stalker with a fetish for football players for all she knew, but I wasn't going to lecture her about maintaining Dempsey's privacy when she was doing what I wanted. Although I would probably suggest that he switch dry cleaners after we left.

It didn't take her long to find his order. Moving it to the small rack near the register, she tugged the slip from the top and looked at the total. "That'll be twenty-six dollars and nineteen cents."



I gulped as my glance slid toward the shirt and pants hanging next to me. I had entire outfits that cost half that much but considering how expensive the suit he'd changed into looked, I shouldn't have been surprised by the price to have his casual clothes cleaned. The man lived in a different world than I did, which was why his joke about us getting married had been so darn hilarious, even though he'd tried to play it off as though he was being serious with his questions about what kind of wedding I wanted.

“Um, is there any chance I could split the charge across two cards please?”

She quirked a brow and heaved a deep sigh. “You sure you want to be paying for this guy's cleaning if you can't afford less than thirty bucks?”

“Never mind,” I mumbled, not wanting to get into a whole explanation of what had happened when Dempsey could show up any minute. Yanking my credit card from my wallet, I slid it across the counter. “Charge it to this one.”

Just after she swiped the card and was handing it back to me, the bell above the door chimed. Proving that nothing could go right when I was around the hot football player that I hadn't been able to get off my mind all night, he walked up as she rolled her eyes and said, “I guess you were right to want to split the cost between two cards because this one was declined.”

“Crap, sorry.” I pulled out a ten and a five before starting to dig through my coin purse, hoping there was enough change in there to cover the difference. “Let me pay in cash instead.”

“That won't be necessary.” My cheeks were beet red as Dempsey whipped out his wallet and handed her a platinum Amex. “Charge it to this.”

I lowered my head to stare at my feet while he took care of the bill, not saying a word as I fought to keep my tears at bay as I tucked my cash back into my purse. After signing for the transaction, he put the card and receipt back in his wallet, yanked the clean clothes from the rack, and guided me out of the store by placing his hand on my lower back.

“It looks as though I owe you another apology,” I whispered when the door shut with a jangle behind us. “I’m not sure why my card was declined. I just checked the available balance on it this morning, so I must have forgotten something that was due to be charged today. I swear I’ll pay you back.”

I mentally tacked a “somehow” onto the end of that sentence instead of saying it aloud since I didn’t want to embarrass myself any more than I already had.

“I don’t give a fuck about the money, Skye,” he grunted, gliding his palm around my side to cup my elbow. “Or the damn clothes.”

“Then why did we even come here?” I cried, the tears finally spilling onto my cheeks.

“Shit, fuck, don’t cry.” His expression turned frantic as he dragged me down the sidewalk toward a black Lincoln Navigator parallel parked a few cars down. After ushering me into the passenger seat, he tossed the dry-cleaning bag into the back seat and hurried around to the other side of the vehicle.

Once inside, he turned toward me and interlaced our fingers, tugging my hands onto his lap and stroking his thumb across my palm. “I am so fucking sorry.”

I took a shuddering breath and pulled myself together enough to ask, “Why are you apologizing? None of this was your fault. I’m the one who spilled coffee all over you and then embarrassed both of us by offering to pay for your dry cleaning when I couldn’t afford it. If anyone needs to ask for forgiveness here, it’s me. Definitely not you.”

“Except you never would’ve been in that position if I hadn’t latched onto your offer as an excuse to see you again,” he explained with a sigh.

“I don’t understand,” I whispered, shaking my head.

“So here’s the thing...remember how I asked you to marry me yesterday?”

A watery laugh sputtered out of my mouth. “Um, yeah. That’s something I’ll never forget.”

“I’m glad my proposal was memorable.” His dark-blue eyes burned into mine. “Because I meant it.”

“No way,” I breathed, my mouth slackening. “I thought you were joking.”

He chuckled. “Yeah, I got that by how hard you laughed.”

“Crap, if you were being serious”—which was very hard to believe—“I owe you yet another apology.”

“No, that’s on me, too,” he insisted. “Although you’re gorgeous as fuck, having some guy pop the question minutes after you meet has to be pretty damn unbelievable.”

My cheeks heated at his compliment, which he seemed to actually mean judging by the sincerity shining from his eyes. “It doesn’t make much sense. You could literally marry anyone you wanted, so why me? I’m a total mess.”

“I like your mess.” He lifted one of his hands to rub his thumb across my cheek. “It makes you more interesting.”

Those butterflies that seemed to always be around when Dempsey was near took flight in my stomach again. “Okay, setting aside how smart you are to recognize my awesomeness when I haven’t even cooked for you...why propose to a woman you just met at all? Is there some inheritance you’re going to miss out on if you’re not married?”

“Close.” His deep laughter filled the interior of the SUV as my eyes widened. “I’m in the running for a big endorsement deal that will let me turn a lifelong dream into a reality, but my agent found out that they’re balking at using me because the company wants someone more settled to represent their brand. To them, that means a family man, and my close relationship with my parents and brothers doesn’t count.”

A lock of my hair fell over my shoulder as I tilted my head to the side, mulling over his answer. “This lifelong dream of yours is important enough to marry someone you don’t even know?”

He blew me away when he explained about the community centers he wanted to open. I’d already figured out he was a nice guy, but his desire to help kids went beyond being kind

and proved that Dempsey was a man any girl would be lucky to have in her life. “And there isn’t a woman in your life you could ask instead of me?”

“I couldn’t even tell you how long it’s been since I dated anyone.”

His admission made me a little too happy, considering he was just proposing a marriage of convenience, not confessing his undying love at first sight to me. The scariest part of this whole thing was the very real possibility that I would fall head over heels for him and end up with a broken heart when this was all over.

“Is it okay if I take a little time to think about it?” His lips parted, but before he could tell me he needed an answer right away, I rushed to add, “Because I can’t say yes when I can hardly wrap my head around the idea of getting married, even if it’s only for convenience and not forever.”

My phone rang, and I nearly fell off my treadmill in my haste to pick it up and see who was calling. When I saw Skye's picture on the screen, my heart rate doubled, pounding hard even after I'd paused the machine and slowed to a stop. I'd been a professional football player since I was twenty-two, played against some of the meanest and most formidable opponents out there, taken hits that almost ended my career...and nobody had made me as nervous as the nineteen-year-old who I hoped to marry soon.

However, I managed to keep my tone level—even more impressive considering I'd been running a few seconds ago—when I answered. “Hey, baby. I hope you're calling to tell me that you're accepting my proposal.”

“Such as it is,” she muttered so low I almost missed it.

I grinned since she couldn't see me. *That's what you think, baby.* She had no idea how real this marriage was going to be, but it wasn't the right time to tell her.

“Um, I...I have a couple of questions.”

“Shoot.” I grabbed the hand towel hanging on one of the bars and wiped my forehead as I left my home gym and headed to the master suite.

“Well, I was wondering if this arrangement would require us to...live together.”

I wondered if her hesitancy in the question meant she was really asking if we would be sleeping together. My instincts

told me to hold off on that conversation until our wedding night. “Yes.”

“The thing is, I have a lease—”

“Baby, stop worrying about that shit. I’ll take care of you.” Once she moved in, she was never moving out, and I’d happily pay to buy her out of her lease. I made a detour on the way to the bathroom to pull out a pair of boxer briefs. “It has to look like a real marriage.” It would most definitely *be* a real marriage. “A piece of paper isn’t enough. They’ll want to see that I’m settling down.”

“And this would just be until I finish school?”

“Something like that,” I hedged as I put the phone on speaker and set it on the marble counter. I didn’t want to outright lie, especially since I was already manipulating the whole situation to get what I wanted.

“Well...” She went silent, and I waited for her to work everything out in her mind. If she said no, I’d just have to come up with something better to convince her.

I stripped off my sweaty clothes and walked over to my shower—that could easily fit six people...or two who needed plenty of room to fuck—and set the temperature on the controls, then flipped on the water.

“I guess my answer is yes.”

I grinned and gave myself a mental high five. “That’s great, baby. I’m going to grab a shower, then I’ll swing by, and we can have dinner and go over everything.”

“Shower?” Her voice was breathless, and my cock twitched. “You’re...”

“Bare-ass naked,” I supplied when she trailed off. Her quick intake of air went straight to my dick, and my shaft began to lengthen and swell. “I was working out when you called so I’m all sweaty. Figured I’d clean up before taking you out.”

“Sweaty...”

She sounded a little dazed, and I swallowed a laugh. It was satisfying to know that I had an effect on her. Hopefully, I could fan it into the same level of burning desire I felt for her. Although, I doubted she would ever have my level of obsession. She was all I'd thought about since we'd met. It was a good fucking thing we hadn't had a game in the past couple of days. I was crossing my fingers that finally having her in my space, with my ring on her finger, would give me the ability to focus on something else. Like my job, so I didn't get my ass kicked on the field...or by the coach.

"I'm gonna go, baby. Send me your address, and I'll see you in about an hour."

She cleared her throat, and her voice was much clearer when she responded. "Yes. Okay. See you then."

Just under an hour later, I caught a lucky break and found a parking spot in front of Skye's building. It was a typical New York City old-school brownstone, red brick that had faded and chipped over time but still faring well in the East Coast weather because these places were built super fucking sturdy. Most of them had basements that were designated bomb shelters.

So I didn't think much about where Skye was living until I stepped through the front door. Like so many of these buildings, the bottom level was a long, narrow hallway with a few doors, a set of mailboxes, and stairs leading up to the next floor.

There was an intercom, but it had been taped over to let people know it didn't work and the front door was open. There were two doors to go through, and from the overwhelming scent in the tiny vestibule, it had obviously doubled as a toilet.

The entry was dim because several lights were burned out. I didn't want to know what the linoleum floors were stained with, and dirt was caked in the corners. A couple of the mailboxes were busted, and although there was a tiny elevator—one I wouldn't even fit in—it had an out of order sign.

I'd grown up in one of the poorest neighborhoods in New York City, yet my apartment had been in better shape than this.

My parents, along with most of our neighbors, took pride in what little they had. Our building had been clean and—despite our useless, lazy-ass super—well maintained because we all pitched in with any skills we had to make the place we lived a home.

The fact that my woman lived in a place so dirty and unsafe had my temper flaring. By the time I'd ascended the third set of stairs, my plans for the night had completely changed.

Once I was at apartment 2B, I forced myself to knock gently so that my anger wouldn't bleed through and scare her. The door to the right opened, and a half-dressed man, with bloodshot eyes telling me he was high as a kite, stepped out and sauntered down two doors before disappearing inside.

I took one step toward the room he'd vacated and glanced inside. *Oh, hell to the motherfucking no.* It was a bathroom. A shared fucking bathroom. It didn't escape my notice that unlike every other inch of this place, the bathroom was scrubbed clean—no doubt the work of Skye.

The realization that she used a shared bathroom was the last straw. If I hadn't already been planning to take her home with me, I sure as hell would be now.

“Dempsey!”

Skye's shocked gasp took my attention off the bathroom and how fucking dangerous it was for my woman to be in there, naked and vulnerable. *Fuck.*

Staying calm, I put on a fake smile so she wouldn't be freaked out by the raging feelings of possession and obsession that were clawing at my insides. “Hey, baby. Ready to go?”

She glanced behind her nervously, then gave me a smile as fake as my own as she stepped into the hall and pulled her door closed. “Yep. I'm sorry, I wasn't expecting you to come in. I was going to meet you outside.”

Before she could close her door completely, I flattened my palm on the flat surface and held it open. Then I used the other



hand to gently push her stomach so she backed up into the apartment.

Glancing around, I was impressed with what she'd done to the shoebox she lived in. The place was clean and tidy, and she'd hung posters of beautiful paintings on the walls. She also had personal photos scattered around, as well as little knickknacks and flowers to make the space homier.

And when I used the word "space" I was being incredibly generous. The room couldn't have been more than one-hundred square feet. There was a sink, mini oven, and mini fridge in one corner. The kitchenette didn't have any counter space, but Skye had one of those small, rolling islands to give her a place to prep her cooking.

The back wall had a loveseat situated next to what looked like a very tall, large cabinet that had to be a murphy bed. On the opposite wall was a little table with seating for two and a tall dresser.

Despite admiring how she'd worked with what she'd been given, there was no fucking way she was spending another night in this shot hole. Especially not when the locks on the doors were so damn flimsy.

"I like what you've done with the place, Skye," I complimented, to soften the news I was about to deliver.

Her cheeks turned pink, but I could tell some of it was from lingering embarrassment. I hated that she thought I would judge her for where she lived.

"This building reminds me of the one I grew up in," I offered as a way to help bridge the imaginary gap she saw between us. "We kept it in much better condition, taking pride in making it a home, just like you've done with this room."

Her eyes went round, and some of her tension began to ease. "You grew up in a building like this?"

I chuckled and crossed my arms over my chest, then leaned back against the wall. "Yup. I wasn't always a pro-athlete. I lived in Harlem until just a few years ago. Granted, I'd moved into a much bigger apartment and moved my

parents into one as well. But my friends and family—blood or otherwise—were there, and I’ve never let go of my roots. I only bought my current place because the penthouse was a good investment and closer to the stadium.”

“I didn’t know that about you.” Her smile was genuine as she relaxed and stopped worrying.

“That being said. Get your shit because you are going home with me tonight.”

“Wait...I’m what?” she sputtered.

“My fiancée is not living in this shithole with locks that a toddler could pick, and a shared bathroom that is used by pervs doing fuck all knows what in there. So pack a bag and I’ll get the rest of your stuff moved to my place tomorrow.”

“But...”

“No arguments, baby. You can do as I’ve asked and we can get the hell out of here, or I can shove some shit in a bag and carry you out over my shoulder.”

After a few seconds, her mouth snapped shut and she walked toward the only other door in the place—probably the closet—mumbling about how I’d ordered, not asked.

Damn straight.

“You have ten minutes. I’m just going to step into the hall to make a quick phone call.”

Skye huffed in annoyance but opened the closet and dragged out a small carry-on.

Satisfied that she would do as she was told, I walked back into the hall and closed her door behind me. I dug my phone out of my pocket and scrolled through my contacts until I found the number for my friend and lawyer, Aidan Bryant.

“Dempsey,” he greeted when he picked up after two rings. “How’s it going? You’re killing the season so far and—” A woman’s voice said something in the background, and he stopped talking to listen. Then he chuckled. “Bianca wants to know if you’re coming to the barbecue next weekend. She’s

insisting that I do something lawyer-y to force you not to cancel again.”

I couldn't help smiling. Aidan's wife, Bianca, was adorable and had become like a little sister ever since she married my friend. Their kids even called me Uncle Demy—it was how their daughter Jaelynn had pronounced my name as a toddler and it just kind of stuck. “Tell her I'm sorry and I'll definitely be there. I'll even bring my wife.”

Aidan was silent, and I could practically see him gaping at the phone. “Wife?” he finally choked out.

“Well, not quite yet. Which brings me to why I called. Do you think you could get Judge Lambert to waive the waiting period and marry my fiancée and me tonight?” Aidan had worked with Dillon Lambert for years, and he'd performed a quickie wedding for Aidan and Bianca. “I'll explain it all another time, but for now, I just need to get my ring on my woman's finger before she changes her mind.”

Aidan burst into laughter, and I waited impatiently for him to get control of himself. “Sure, D. I'll give him a call. He'll text you if he's available tonight and you can meet him at his office.”

“Thanks, Aidan. I owe you.”

“Just come to dinner. You make my wife happy and you don't owe me anything.”

“Deal.”

We hung up, and I entered Skye's little apartment again. She was just zipping up her little carry-on, and when she saw me, she picked up a shoulder bag and set it on top of the suitcase before wheeling it toward me.

I took the bags from her and carried them as I placed my other hand at the small of her back to guide her out of the apartment. Once we were outside, I led her to my SUV and put her bags in the trunk, then helped her into the passenger seat. I went around to the driver's side, and just as I was hopping in, my phone dinged with a text. After pulling my door closed, I retrieved my cell from my pocket and checked the ID. The

message was from Judge Lambert. He was available for the next hour, then he was leaving town for a week.

Well...no time like the present.

I checked to make sure Skye was belted in, then latched my own and started the car.

“Where are we going?” she asked softly as I eased out onto the narrow, one-way street.

“The courthouse.”

When I called Dempsey to share my decision to go through with the marriage of convenience that he'd proposed, I expected to have some time to get used to the idea before we actually said our I do's. Considering how quickly he'd talked me into an engagement, I shouldn't have been surprised to find myself at the courthouse only a couple of hours after agreeing to be his wife.

"I thought we were going to have dinner and talk about everything?"

Keeping one hand on the wheel, he reached over to thread his fingers through mine and squeezed. "One of my friends was able to pull some strings for me, so there's been a slight change of plan."

"The kind where we can skip the line to get our marriage license?" I asked hopefully. "Waiting in government offices is the worst, so that would be awesome."

"Then you're going to be very happy with what I've set up for us," he drawled.

His smug grin made those butterflies swirl in my belly again, but from nerves as much as attraction. "Is there a special waiting room for VIPs or something?"

"Even better than that."

He avoided telling me what to expect when we arrived at the courthouse, and I finally understood why when we were led directly into a judge's chambers. Getting married right

away was just about the only thing I hadn't guessed because I didn't think it was possible, but Dempsey had somehow managed to get the twenty-four-hour waiting period waived.

I was in a stunned stupor as he introduced me to the judge his friend had talked into marrying us today. Glancing down at the simple cotton dress I'd thrown on for what I'd expected to be a casual dinner out, I grimaced. "I'm sorry that I'm not exactly dressed for the occasion, your honor. But I didn't know that I was getting married today."

"Don't worry, dear. This isn't my first time officiating a surprise wedding for an unsuspecting bride. And please, call me Dillon." He quirked a brow at my very soon-to-be husband. "Although I hadn't realized how much you and Aiden were alike when it came to your women until he called me with your request. When you boys fall, you don't let the grass grow beneath your feet, that's for sure."

"Oh, that's not—"

Dempsey stopped me from spilling our secret—or at least I assumed that's what he was doing—by squeezing my hand and saying, "I'm just glad I caught you before your vacation."

"Me, too." Dillon beamed a grin at his assistant, Brian, as he joined us so he could serve as our witness. "I would've hated to miss out on helping with another of these rush weddings. They're a lot of fun."

"You won't hear me complain about witnessing them either." Brian shot a lopsided smile at Dempsey. "Even without the front row tickets at the fifty-yard line that Aiden promised me on your behalf if I finessed Dillon's calendar so he could squeeze you in today."

"Let me know which game you want to attend, and I'll hook you up. It's a small price to pay for your help."

The judge chuckled. "Well played, Brian. You made out better than me, and I'm the one marrying them."

"I'll get you a damn box for the Super Bowl if we can get this done," Dempsey grumbled.

"Well, in that case, I suppose we should get started."

Dempsey and I moved to stand in front of the judge, facing each other. Dillon didn't waste any time moving through the ceremony, which felt like a whirlwind up until the moment when he asked us about rings.

I was just about to explain that we could skip this part when Dempsey pulled a ring box out of his pocket. He had been full of surprises since we met, but the solitaire engagement ring and platinum band he slid onto my finger when we got to that point of the ceremony were the biggest shocks of them all. There was no way anybody could miss them since the diamond was big enough to be seen from outer space. "Where in the world did you get these?"

He winked at me before teasing, "The jewelry store, of course."

I rolled my eyes at his reply. "When did you have the chance to go there?"

"I bought them yesterday," he admitted softly.

I shook my head, my eyes going wide. "How is that possible? I hadn't even agreed to marry you until today."

The judge let out a coughing laugh, and Dempsey glared at him before returning his attention back to me. "I'm a big believer in being prepared to take advantage of an opportunity when it comes my way, so I wanted to be ready for when I convinced you to be my wife."

That was an understatement if I'd ever heard one, considering how he'd made the most of me crashing into him at the coffee shop. "How did you know my ring size?"

"I have the jeweler to thank for that." He brushed his thumb against my skin, right above where his rings now encircled my finger. "I was going to buy a six since that's the most common size for women from what I found when I looked it up online, but he suggested a four when I told him how tiny you are."

This time, Brian was the one who tried to choke back his laughter. He didn't do as well as his boss, and I huffed in annoyance as I glared at him. Not that it did any good. He just

shrugged and murmured, “You have to admit that you’re an interesting pair. Dempsey is big, even for a professional football player, and you’re just an itty-bitty thing.”

My almost-husband really didn’t like his explanation. A deep growl rumbled up his broad chest, and he took a step toward the judge’s assistant. I wrapped my hands around his biceps to hold him back as Dillon said, “Relax, big guy. I’d hate to toss you in jail for fighting in my chambers on your wedding day. Brian didn’t mean anything by stating the obvious. He’s no threat to you, let alone when you’ve already gotten the girl to agree to marry you.”

I wiggled my fingers, the light sparking of the huge diamond Dempsey had picked out. “I don’t think you have to worry about anyone hitting on me when we’re married. You’ve already marked your territory with this thing.”

“I definitely wasn’t trying to make a pass at the bride in the middle of the ceremony. I don’t have a death wish, man.” Brian’s eyes widened as he held his hands up in a gesture of surrender. “It’s just that you make a cute couple with the whole super big and tiny combination. That’s all.”

The tension seeped from Dempsey’s body, and I flashed him a reassuring smile as the judge pronounced us man and wife. Before Dillon had the chance to announce that it was time to kiss the bride, my husband’s mouth crashed against mine, his tongue sweeping inside when I gasped. The kiss he planted on me was quick, but it still left my head spinning.

The next half hour was a blur as we signed the paperwork, then said our goodbyes before Dempsey hustled me back to his SUV. I was so focused on the possibility of him kissing me again so that we could sell the story in public about us being married that I missed the drive to his building. It wasn’t until he leaned over the console to cup my cheek and turn my head so I was staring into his eyes that I realized we’d made it all the way to his parking garage.

There was a concerned gleam in his deep blue eyes as he asked, “Are you okay?”



I nodded. “Yeah, sorry. I guess I’m a little overwhelmed by everything that’s happened today. New home. New husband. It’s a lot to wrap my head around.”

“I’m sorry I rushed you into this, baby.” Hearing him use a pet name for me in his deep voice was something I could get used to way too easily. “But the clock is ticking on the endorsement deal, and my schedule is jam-packed since the season has already started.”

“I understand.” Although that didn’t stop me from wishing he had other, more personal reasons for wanting to rush me to the altar.

“Let’s get your things upstairs so you can get settled into my room, and then you can relax,” he suggested.

“Your room.” I bit my bottom lip. “Are you sure you want me to invade your space? Since you’re in the penthouse, there has to be at least one guest room. I’d be more than okay there.”

“Our marriage has to look real,” he reminded me, his gaze dropping to my mouth as he tugged on my lip to free it from my teeth. “And the easiest way to make sure nobody questions it is for us to act like husband and wife, twenty-four seven.”

“Like with the kiss at the end of our ceremony?” I asked.

“That one and many more,” he murmured before he tilted my head back to brush his lips against mine. When I let out a little sigh of pleasure, he deepened the contact, and our kiss quickly heated to the point where I had to press my thighs together to ease the ache in my core when he finally pulled away.

**T**hat kiss we shared in the car made me painfully hard, and I was on the edge of losing my mind. I doubted Skye had any idea how she affected me, and I told myself to slow the fuck down so I wouldn't terrify her with the intensity of my hunger.

I rushed around to her side of the car, opened the door, and reached down to help her out. Fuck, I loved the way her delicate little hand felt enveloped in mine. Tugging her to me, I bent my head down and pressed another hot, needy kiss against her soft, slightly swollen lips.

I flicked my tongue against the seam of her mouth, and she opened for me. Then she whimpered, making it clear that she was as hungry for this kiss as I was. And fuck, the sound added fuel to the burning need inside me. It hadn't even been a minute since our lips had been pressed together in the car, but I was already greedy to taste her again. I slid my arms around her waist and down to cup her ass. With a firm grip, I lifted her and cradled her against my chest as I bumped the car door closed with my hip. For who-the-hell-knows how long, I plundered her mouth until we were breathless.

The sound of an engine turning over reminded me where we were, and I reluctantly set Skye back on her feet. Then I grabbed her bags from the back before I clicked the key fob to lock the car, keeping one arm around her waist as I quickly steered her to the elevator. I held her curled into my side, not wanting to break the contact because I loved feeling the heat between us.

I punched the button to call the elevator so hard I nearly broke it, then I looked down at her with heavy-lidded eyes, and my cock pulsed in response to the haze of lust in her beautiful brown eyes.

When the lift arrived, I pulled her inside and swiped my card for the penthouse before wrapping her up in my arms again. My engorged shaft pressed into her belly, and I didn't bother trying to hide what she was doing to me. "You are so fucking gorgeous, baby," I rasped, my voice tight from the effort it was taking to stay in control.

Skye bit her lip, and her cheeks flushed a sweet pink color, reminding me just how innocent she was. If I didn't rein in my passion, I was going to hurt her, and that was the last thing I wanted.

But I didn't have it in me to play games. My ring was already on her finger, so although it was soon, maybe it was time to give her a glimpse of what I felt for her. I wanted my wife to understand what was between us, and what it meant for our future.

I grabbed Skye's wrist and guided her hand between us, pressing her palm onto the large, thick bulge in my pants.

"Do you feel what you do to me, baby? I want you so bad it hurts."

Skye's eyes widened, and she glanced down at my throbbing cock, then up at me through the dark fringe of her eyelashes, not realizing how sultry and sexy it made her look. She looked hesitant, but it was outweighed by curiosity, and after a second, she gently squeezed. I groaned at the heady sensation and bucked against her hand but held back the impulse to grind my raging hard-on against her palm.

"It hurts?" she asked timidly.

I nodded and framed her face with my hands, staring at her with unshuttered eyes. "Bad enough that I'm tempted to fuck you right here in the elevator. I want to bury myself deep inside you and hear your screams bounce off the walls." Her mouth formed a cute little O, and she blinked rapidly, clearly

taken aback by my bold words. “That’s how much you affect me, Skye. My self-control is hanging by a very frayed thread right now.”

The elevator came to a stop, and I shifted her so she was tucked into my side as we exited, wheeling her carry-on with the shoulder bag on top. I used my key card again to open my front door, then I slammed it shut, let go of her bags, and pushed her back up against the hard surface.

She’d bit her lip again and was chewing nervously as she carefully avoided my gaze.

I tugged her lip from between her teeth and nibbled it as I slipped one of my hands beneath her dress and slid it up her curvy thigh until I was cupping her sex. Her panties were soaked through, and the heat from her pussy practically burned my hand. “I know you want me as much as I want you,” I said raggedly.

Skye slowly brought her eyes back to meet mine, and I was so fucking proud of her when she didn’t shy away from me and nodded.

At her admission, I almost passed out as all the blood in my body rushed to my dick. Then she moved, shifting her legs so they were slightly apart. Pink flooded her cheeks, and I marveled at how she could be so damn adorable and sexy at the same time.

It also prompted a question I needed to ask.

“Baby, are you a virgin?”

Her cheeks turned a pretty shade of crimson, and she bit her lip before nodding.

I had a feeling. “That’s...thank you for giving me your first,” I murmured as I brushed a soft kiss over her lips. *And only*, I added to myself.

She smiled shyly, and it was like a shot of lust straight to my dick. I reminded myself that her innocence, along with her tiny size meant I needed to be gentle with her. To prepare her before I filled her with my long, fat cock. I wanted her first time to be so incredible that she became addicted to me. It was

only fair since I'd become a junkie the moment we met. And I knew it was only going to get worse once I tasted her.

My breathing turned ragged as I slipped my hand inside her panties so I could palm her naked mound and dip two fingers between her slick folds.

“Fuck, baby, you're so wet.” I groaned and buried my face in her hair, breathing in the floral scent of her shampoo, shaking with need as I coated my fingers in her pussy juices, then slid my fingers up to massage her clit.

“Dempsey...” Skye moaned, gripping my biceps, her fingers digging into the muscles.

Pre-come leaked from my cock, and I gritted my teeth as the caveman inside me demanded I take my woman and make her mine.

I might have told Skye this was a marriage of convenience to get her to agree to marry me, but I'd been all in since the beginning. I was in so deep I wouldn't be able to live without her. There was no going back now. I would never let her go. I needed to show her just how serious I was about building a life with her.

I hoisted Skye up, wrapping her legs around my waist and nestling her sweet pussy over my stiff cock. It was straining against the fabric of my pants, and I was a little shocked my shaft hadn't ripped right through the material. As I walked us back to my bedroom, the movement caused friction between our centers, and Skye whimpered and squirmed.

Grabbing her ass in a tight hold, I looked her in the eyes and gritted out, “Baby, if you don't stop that wiggling, you're gonna find yourself shoved up against the nearest wall with my big cock filling your tight, virgin pussy. And I refuse to take you like that for our first time together.”

Skye sucked in a breath, and my knees went a little weak at the fire burning in her gaze. For a second, it looked like she might actually argue with me.

“Don't test me, Skye. If you break my control, once you've recovered, I'm going to redden your ass until you can't

sit down for a week.”

Her mouth fell open, and I used the opportunity to cover it with my own, sweeping my tongue inside and devouring her as I stalked to the bed.

When I finally let her up for air, her flushed skin and kiss-swollen lips tempted me to dive back in, but I was impatient to finally feel her skin against mine. I needed her naked. Needed to touch every inch of her silky skin. I was fucking desperate to be inside her, but that would have to wait because I wouldn't take her until I'd made absolutely certain my sweet little virgin bride was ready for me when I entered her for the first time.

I gently set her down next to the bed, and my eyes swept over her pretty dress. “I need to see all of you...now,” I demanded.

Skye smiled shyly and lifted her arms above her head. I helped her take off her dress, then unhooked her bra and groaned when her big tits spilled out into my waiting hands. If I hadn't been so desperate to bare her completely, I might have paid them some attention right then, but I would have plenty of time for that. We had all night.

I dropped to my knees and cupped her hips, pulling her forward so I could bury my nose between her thighs. After a deep inhale, I dipped my fingers into the waistband of her panties and dragged them down so she could step out of them.

“Sexy as fuck, baby,” I grunted, licking my lips at the sight of her glistening folds and the shine of her arousal coating her thighs. I leaned in and placed a gentle kiss just above her neatly trimmed slit, then stood back up. With a hand on each shoulder, I pushed her down onto the bed, then nudged her to lie back. Then I gestured for her to move to the center, and she scooted over, keeping her legs pressed together.

I shook my head. “Don't hide from me, Skye. I'm your husband”—I loved the sound of that—“so spread them.” My lips curved into a satisfied smile when she slowly parted her legs, giving me room to kneel between her thighs and push them as wide as they could comfortably go.

“Um...” She blushed but didn’t take her gaze from mine as she asked, “What about you?”

“I need to keep my clothes on for right now,” I explained. “It’s pretty much the only thing keeping me in control.”

Sliding my hands up her thick thighs, my mouth watered at the feel of her hot, silky skin. I used my thumbs to open her pussy lips, and my cock leaked. Not that it mattered, I could feel the mess I’d already created in my pants. They were ruined anyway.

Without taking my hands from her folds, I maneuvered down to lie on my stomach between her legs, wedging my shoulders in to keep her spread nice and open.

“I thought we were...um...”

I glanced up to see Skye propped on her elbows, watching me with a confused expression. It seriously turned me the fuck on that she was so damn innocent. Knowing I would be her first and last everything was a heady sensation.

Smiling tenderly, I petted her pussy and crooned, “Soon, baby, but I need to make sure you’re good and ready for me. Just lie back for me, good girl. Relax, baby. Let me eat this sweet pussy until you see stars.”

“Oh,” she breathed as she lay back.

I buried my face between her thighs and licked up her center, then curled my tongue around her clit.

Skye gasped and tunneled her fingers in my hair, squirming as I lapped at her juices, then thrust my stiffened tongue inside her. “Oh, Dempsey,” she hissed, “That feels so good.”

She began writhing against my mouth, bucking her hips as I pumped my tongue in and out of her tight channel. When she was crying out for more, I licked up her dripping-wet slit and sucked her clit into my mouth. Then I captured her sensitive bud between my teeth, and she let out a little scream of pleasure. I lashed at the bundle of nerves with my tongue, then swirled around it before stabbing my tongue into her tight hole. Then I did it all over again until she bucked wildly,

riding my face as her climax approached. When her release slammed into her, her back bowed, and she screamed so loud it rang in my ears.

I didn't stop there. I kept working her, sliding a finger inside her tight channel and gently pumping, pushing her toward another climax.

"Dempsey," Skye gasped. "You're going to make me come again."

I only stopped eating her pussy long enough to look up and lock gazes with her, licking her sweet juices off my lips before I gave her a wicked grin. "That's the plan, baby."

Leaning back down, I nipped her clit again, then swirled my tongue around it until she shook and a low moan built in her throat. Then I slid a second finger inside her, gently working and stretching her pussy to get her ready for my cock.

"Come for me again, baby," I demanded, massaging her clit with my thumb. Her pussy spasmed around my fingers as she fell apart once more, shouting my name.

*Fuck.* Hearing her say my name in the throes of ecstasy nearly pushed me over the edge with her.

When she slumped back on the mattress, panting and glowing from two orgasms, I slipped my fingers out of her and stared into her heavy-lidded eyes as I sucked them clean. Then I scooted back and went up onto my knees, admiring the sight of my woman laid out for me on our bed.

Skye's gaze dipped to the bulge in my pants, then flicked back up to my face. "Is it your turn yet?"

I grinned at her shy question. "This time will be for both of us, baby." I hopped off the bed and stripped in record time. After climbing back on the mattress, I stroked my throbbing cock, already dripping with pre-come, and gazed down at my beautiful, perfect Skye.

Her gaze was locked on my groin, seeming unsure and nervous.



“I can’t stop it from hurting this first time, Skye. But I promise, baby, I’ll do my best to make you feel so fucking amazing that you won’t notice the pain for long.” I went down onto all fours and covered her body with mine, dropping my head down for a kiss. “Trust me,” I whispered against her lips.

Skye swallowed and pressed her lips harder to mine for a moment, then she pulled back and kept her eyes on me as she nodded. “I trust you.”

There was only one phrase I wanted to hear from Skye besides that one. But it was too soon for the other, so I let the fact that she trusted me fill me with warmth. “Thank you, baby.”

I kissed her once more before trailing my lips down the column of her throat, all the way to the tips of her breasts. The puckered peaks were pink and begging for my mouth, so I sucked one hard and deep.

“Oh, yes!” Skye yelped, arching her back and pressing her tit farther into my mouth.

She was so damn sensitive. I couldn’t wait to explore all the ways I could make her come. But I’d waited long enough. After loving on her tits until she was fully primed, I shifted into position, notching the tip of my cock at her entrance.

My mind flashed to the box of condoms in the bedside drawer that I’d bought the night I first proposed. It made me a bastard, but I immediately dismissed them. No way was I wrapping it up. I wanted to feel Skye with nothing between us. I wanted to fill her with my come, to mark her inside and out. And yeah, the image of her carrying our baby might have clinched the decision. I wanted my seed to take root and plant my baby in her belly.

I’d known I wanted a family with Skye, although I hadn’t realized I would be on board so quickly. It would tie her to me permanently and give her more of a reason to stay in this supposed marriage of convenience. I wanted her forever, and if this was what I had to do to make that happen, then so be it.

I bent my head and kissed her—hot, deep, and possessive. Then I decided to go about this a different way. I rolled her on top of me, putting her in control. Stroking my hands down her sides, I cupped her hips and gave those delicious curves an encouraging, appreciative squeeze.

“We’ll go at your pace.”

Skye bit her lip and nodded, placing one hand on the center of my chest and using the other to guide my cock inside her. My balls clenched at how tight and hot she was around me as she slid down the length of my shaft, inch by excruciating inch, until I was balls deep inside her.

Skye made a sound somewhere between a moan and whimper, and a tear streaked down her cheek. I stroked my hands over her back, pulling her down so I could kiss her again while I gave her a moment for the pain to subside and for her to adjust to my cock filling her, stretching her. I nuzzled her neck. “You okay, baby?”

“Yes,” Skye whispered and shifted hesitantly, experimenting with a roll of her hips. “I—it doesn’t hurt anymore—oh, Dempsey!” she exclaimed, her eyes rolling to the back of her head when I bucked my hips lightly and circled them.

“You good?” I rasped, giving everything I had to keep from flipping her over and ramming into her like a beast in heat.

“Oooh, that’s—oh, yes!” She rolled her hips again just as I thrust up.

“You feel so good, baby, so perfect,” I growled as I nipped her neck. Skye’s pussy clenched around my cock, and it broke the string holding me together. I felt feral as I growled and gripped her ass possessively, pumping in and out of her wet heat, hard and fast. “That’s it, baby,” I groaned, gliding my hands up to cup her generous tits. “Ride me hard. Fuck! Yes, fuck!”

After toying with her nipples for a few thrusts, I slid my hand down between us and pinched her clit. Skye threw her

head back and screamed as her climax crashed over her.

That was all it took to push me over the edge. I roared as my orgasm barreled through me like a fucking tornado. I exploded inside her, spilling my seed and filling her until she was stuffed full. Then I took her mouth in a deep, soul-stealing kiss before collapsing back onto the pillows still cradling her against my chest.

After a few minutes, our bodies calmed. Skye sighed contentedly and shifted her body, nestling herself against my side with her head resting on my chest. I grabbed the comforter and pulled it over us, then wrapped my arms around my wife. *Wife*. I fell asleep with a smile on my face.

**I**t was amazing what a difference a day could make. I'd gone from living in a literal rathole that I could barely afford—with a bathroom I shared with creeps—to the penthouse in one of the nicest buildings in the city. And from being a virgin to having mind-blowing sex several times throughout the night. As I shifted in Dempsey's embrace, I felt a twinge of discomfort between my thighs, which wasn't a surprise, considering how big he was...all over.

At my little groan, Dempsey stirred. His voice was raspy as he murmured, "Are you okay, baby? Was I too rough on you?"

"No." My cheeks filled with heat as I buried my face in the pillow, graphic images of all the things he did to my body playing through my head.

He gently turned me over to scan my face, a furrow popping up in the middle of his brow. "No, you're not okay? Or no, I wasn't too rough last night?"

"You were perfect," I reassured him with a soft smile, my heart soaring over how worried he was. He truly was perfect... and mine. At least for now.

In our rush to the altar, we had skipped over hashing out all of the details for how long we were going to be together. And after experiencing the bliss of being with him, I was afraid to ask too many questions because I didn't want to put a damper on what was happening between us. No matter what, I was determined to make the most of the time I had with him,

however long that was. Sometime between the first and second orgasm last night, I decided to just go with the flow and hope that my heart wasn't too beat up at the end of all of this.

"I'm glad you think so." He brushed his lips against mine before pulling me close to bury his face in the crook of my neck. "But last night wasn't perfect because of *me*, baby. It was *us* together."

I loved how he was the exact opposite of what most people would expect from a super-hot, professional football player. So humble and kind. Like a big, sexy teddy bear that I wanted to climb on a regular basis. "How is it that you seem to always know the absolute best thing to say?"

"Only with you, baby." He stroked his hand down my arm, sending goose bumps in the wake of his touch. "Even dousing my clothes with coffee, you bring out the best in me."

Rolling my eyes, I grumbled, "I'm never going to live that down, am I?"

"Nope." He rolled onto his back, taking me with him as he chuckled. "Sorry, but it's too good of a story."

"Fine," I huffed, pretending to be offended while really, I liked that he was thinking about how he would share our meet-cute with other people. Even if it was just to convince Best Sports that he'd be their perfect spokesperson. "I guess I can deal with it."

"Good." His gaze slid toward the clock on the bedside table. "It's a good thing you woke up when you did because I forgot to set my alarm last night. As much as I'd love to stay in bed with you all day, I need to be at practice in an hour."

"Ugh, so much for a relaxing day in bed," I complained.

"Do you have classes today?"

I shook my head. "Nope, you picked the perfect week to surprise me with a wedding because we have faculty seminar days. I'm not back on campus until Monday."

"Perfect." He tightened his arms around me and rolled off the mattress, striding into the bathroom without putting me

down. “You can take a bath while I make breakfast, and then you can come with me to the stadium and watch my practice.”

“Can you cook?” I wrinkled my nose. “Because I’m picky when it comes to what I put in my mouth.” His eyes heated, and my cheeks heated as I realized how that sounded. “Food... I’m fussy about food since it’s kind of my thing with me being in culinary school.”

“I’m looking forward to having you cook for me, but taking a hot bath to loosen your muscles is more important this morning.”

He set me on the edge of the deep tub that was big enough for both of us to take a bath together before leaning over to turn on the tap. Then he rifled in the cabinet beneath the sink for some bath salts and sprinkled them into the water. “You’ve given me a reason to be grateful for this gag gift my brothers got me,” he said with a teasing smile. “Just don’t ever tell them I said so.”

Without giving me time to feel awkward about being completely naked in the bright morning light shining through the high windows, he settled me into the tub and brushed his mouth against mine. “Take your time, baby. I’ll have food ready and waiting for you when you’re done.”

I couldn’t remember the last time anyone had pampered me. It felt amazing to be able to lean back and enjoy the warm water swirling around my body and easing the aches our lovemaking had created. After I climbed out of the tub and padded back into the bedroom, I found my suitcase in the entryway of the walk-in closet.

A big grin spread across my face when I found my things hanging opposite his. I didn’t have much, but I got a little thrill from seeing my clothes sharing space with his. It somehow made this whole thing seem more real.

My good mood got even better when I made my way down to the kitchen and found Dempsey sliding an omelet onto a plate. “Perfect timing. Breakfast is ready.”

“If that omelet tastes as good as it looks, you’re not going to get any complaints from me when you want to take over kitchen duty.” I beamed a smile at him. “And there aren’t many people I’d say that to.”

“I’m honored, baby.”

He slid the plate across the counter toward me and dished a second omelet up for himself while I poured myself a glass of fresh-squeezed orange juice. The eggs were pretty good, although I would’ve added some fresh herbs if I’d been the one cooking. But I couldn’t complain since I was eating better than I had in a long time. Which was proven by how quickly I wolfed down the entire thing, even though he’d probably used three eggs in mine.

Patting my stomach, I hummed, “Mmm, delicious.”

“Remind me to set the alarm an extra hour early tomorrow,” he muttered as he gathered the plates to rinse them off before putting them into the dishwasher.

Tilting my head to the side, I asked, “Why?”

“Because watching you enjoy your food like that gave me a hard-on that’s gonna be a killer if it doesn’t go down before I get on the field.” He adjusted himself in his shorts, making me giggle. “If I had more time, I could actually do something about it before we left. But if we don’t leave now, I’m gonna be late, and Coach will ream my ass.”

“Well, we can’t have that. Your butt is too nice to let anything happen to it,” I teased.

Wrapping his fingers around my wrist to lead me toward the door, he wagged his brows. “You like my ass, huh?”

“Now you’re just fishing for compliments.” I giggled and shook my head as we boarded the elevator to head down to the parking garage.

Our conversation during the ride to the stadium flowed easily, but as soon as we left the vehicle and headed inside, I got nervous. Almost as though he could see inside my head, Dempsey pulled me against his side and murmured, “Don’t worry, baby. Everyone is going to love you.”

“I should’ve baked something. Like protein muffins since you’re all athletes.”

He came to an abrupt stop to turn and stare at me, and I would have fallen if he hadn’t caught me as I stumbled forward a step. “What kind of protein muffins?”

“Any flavor you want,” I boasted. “You married a budding chef, remember?”

“Married?” The security guard manning the player entrance echoed, his eyes going wide.

“Now that Charlie knows I have a wife, I don’t have to worry about how long it’ll take to let everyone else know. He’s the biggest gossip around here,” Dempsey warned with a satisfied smirk. “But just remember...your muffins are all mine, baby. And I don’t like to share.”



If the past three weeks were any indication of how the rest of my life would be, I was the luckiest son of a bitch on the fucking planet.

Skye amazed me more every day. She was dedicated to her craft, independent, smart, funny, and drop-dead gorgeous. And a hidden tigress had begun to emerge in the bedroom. My little wife could be insatiable, and I loved every fucking minute—pun intended.

“Are you about ready to go, baby?”

“Yes, just give me five minutes,” Skye responded, then leaned into the mirror to put color on her lips. She didn’t need a speck of makeup to be the most beautiful woman in the world, but that didn’t mean I didn’t appreciate the way she enhanced her features when she dolled herself up. I loved her...all of her.

I’d admitted how I felt to myself after the last football game when she’d thrown herself into my arms with a scream of excitement because we’d won. Naomi, Prentice’s wife, had chuckled and mumbled something about newlyweds in love before shooting me a wink.

Yeah, I’d known that was where this was headed, but her words made me realize that I didn’t just love Skye, I was head over fucking heels in love with her.

She’d come to every game and had even gone with me to practice whenever she wasn’t in class. When I wasn’t with the team and she wasn’t in school, we spent every minute

together. She was easy to talk to, but we also felt comfortable just being together in companionable silence.

Her taste in movies was questionable—watching historical romances was more boring than watching paint dry—although she'd redeemed herself when she admitted that she was also a sucker for the cult classics. We started many movie nights, but they'd almost always ended up with us making out on the couch...and fucking soon after.

I wasn't sure how she'd done it, but Skye was not only the love of my life, she'd also quickly become my best friend.

My gaze scanned her body, admiring her curvy hips and spectacular ass in the slacks she was wearing. Then I looked into the mirror to check out the teal sweater that hugged her shape, accentuating her big tits.

“Stop it,” she demanded with narrowed eyes.

“Pardon?” I adopted my most innocent tone and expression.

Skye shook her head with an exasperated chuckle. “I'm nervous enough without having to worry that your family will take one look at me and know that you've just had your wicked way with me.”

I grinned and sauntered over to her, cupping her hips and pulling her back against my front. “You shouldn't be nervous, baby. They are going to love you. And we're newlyweds. They already know I've been having *my wicked way with you* every chance I get.”

She smiled, but it didn't quite reach her eyes.

“What's wrong?”

“Nothing.” Her smile was blatantly fake this time.

“Skye,” I growled as I turned her around to face me. I raised her face with a finger under her chin and stared down at her in a silent command for answers.

“I just...” she sighed, and her shoulders drooped. “I just wish this was...I don't want to lie to your family. They'll hate me when this ends.”

I gritted my teeth, seconds away from saying fuck it to my subtle plan and telling her that this would never end. But even though we'd grown incredibly close, and not just sexually, I wasn't sure if she'd fallen in love with me yet. "It's not a lie, baby. You live with me, sleep in my bed every night, spend all your free time with me...if this isn't a real marriage, what is?"

She opened her mouth, then shut it. Then her lips curved into a sexy smirk. "Maybe we should stay here, and you can show me how a real marriage feels when I'm riding it."

With that image firmly planted in my mind, I ran football plays in my head, trying to soften my very hard dick.

"Stop trying to distract me," I admonished playfully. "I promise, they are going to love you, no matter what." I brushed a kiss over her mouth to stop myself from adding that I would know because I already loved her. "Let's go before we're late and my mom kicks my ass."

When I received my signing bonus from the Nighthawks, one of the first things I'd done was buy my parents a nicer apartment. I knew they'd want to stay close to their friends and family, so I found a big, three-bedroom loft in a safer part of Harlem. My youngest brothers, Markus and Mykel—seventeen-year-old twins—still lived at home. However, even though my middle brothers, Foster, Brennan, and Atlas, had all moved out, they lived within an hour of my parents.

I couldn't let them find out about my marriage from anyone but me, so I'd had to tell them right after we tied the knot. After putting them off for three weeks, I'd had no choice but to agree to dinner during my next bye week.

But I wasn't worried about what they would think of my wife. Skye was perfect for me, and they would know that as soon as they met her.

She was chewing on her lip when I pulled the SUV into my parents' guest spot in the garage. I reached over and tugged it free. "Do I need to remind you that the only teeth allowed to nibble on your delectable lips are mine?"

She giggled and looked up at me through her lashes. “Maybe. If I recall, you’re the only one allowed to play with *all* of my lips.”

I groaned and hurried out of the car, jogging around to open her door. As I helped her out, I muttered, “My parents knowing we have sex and walking into their house sporting a motherfucker of a hard-on are two very different things, baby. If you don’t stop tempting me, I will put you over my knee when we get home.”

As I suspected, my family adored Skye. My mother even dropped some not-so-subtle hints about giving her grandchildren. I’d seen the longing in my wife’s eyes and hoped that meant she wouldn’t try to kick my ass when I knocked her up. She’d never brought up contraceptives, and neither had I. I wasn’t sure if she just hadn’t thought about it or didn’t care. Either way, I took full advantage of her willingness to go without them and was doing my very best to put my kid in her every chance I got.

And my little temptress definitely earned herself a spanking when we got home.

---

“BABY! I’M BACK!” I shouted as I kicked the front door shut behind me. The coach had put us through a particularly rough practice, and I was dying to take a long, hot shower. With the right company, it would heal all of my aches and pains.

“Kitchen!” she called back to me.

“Come shower with me,” I requested when I popped my head into the kitchen.

Skye turned around, and my mouth watered. Fuck, she was gorgeous. Even in her frilly, polka-dot apron. She was wearing a pretty white top and a black skirt that made her legs look a mile long. Legs I wanted wrapped around my head before I put them around my waist.

“Sorry, Dempsey,” she said with a pout. “I’m cooking, and if I stop, it will ruin the food.”

She looked genuinely put out that she had to abstain from showering with me to cook. Which was a testament to just how fucking awesome I was in bed because she loved to cook more than just about anything else.

“Your loss,” I quipped with a teasing wink. She mumbled something under her breath, and I laughed as I headed straight for our bedroom.

After cleaning up, I pulled on a pair of jeans, not bothering to button them since I was perpetually hard around my wife. Then I donned a white T-shirt and meandered back to the kitchen.

I silently admired her as she set the food out on the table. She could be a little absent-minded and clumsy from time to time, but when she was in her element, she was as graceful as a swan.

“Do you have any idea how fucking beautiful you are?”

Skye paused and turned her head to look at me with a beaming smile. “You’re not so bad yourself, handsome.” Returning her attention to the table, she straightened a plate, then fixed a knife before seeming satisfied. “Dinner’s ready.”

I prowled toward her and wrapped my arms around her waist, nuzzling my face in the crook of her neck. “Looks fantastic, baby. And I bet it tasted even better.” I nibbled on the bottom of her earlobe and whispered, “I can’t wait for dessert.”



“That meal was incredible, baby. Now, about my dessert.” Dempsey’s eyes were dark, dilated almost completely black with lust, as he gripped my hips and sat me down right on the edge of the table.

I couldn’t help chuckling at that. “Um...dessert is in the refrigerator.”

“Wrong, baby.” He leaned down, kissing and nibbling the column of my neck. The sensation of his lips and teeth on the sensitive skin of my throat sent white-hot tingles straight to the pit of my stomach and heated my core, winding me tighter and tighter with every feather-light brush of his mouth. The surprising scrape of sharp teeth against the softness of my skin every so often ratcheted my need even higher. “The dessert I want to eat is right here, already on the table. You’re an amazing chef, but nothing will ever taste as perfect to me as your sweet little pussy.”

I shuddered with pleasure at his words and the throbbing, wet heat they elicited between my legs. Gasping, I wrapped my arms around his neck, buried my fingers in his hair, and kissed him, arching and molding my body’s soft curves against the muscled planes of his chest. His hard, athletic body was nothing short of glorious, and I wanted to run my fingers over every spectacular inch of him.

Slipping my hands under the hem of his shirt, I let my fingers stroke up and over his washboard abs, tracing the outlines of his muscles. I loved how he pressed into my touch

with a soft growl. I broke the kiss just long enough to brush the tip of my nose against his and ask him the question burning at the forefront of my mind. “Do you really enjoy eating me out that much?”

“Why don’t you lie back and let me show you just how much I fucking love it, baby?” Dempsey flashed me a wicked, bone-melting smile as he pushed me back so I was lying flat on the table. He slid my skirt up to my waist, and peeled my panties off, tossing them carelessly aside.

I pressed my thighs together, not sure how I felt about being so exposed on the kitchen table. But I reveled in the friction that squeezing them together created.

Dempsey clicked his tongue at me and shook his head. “None of that now, baby. Spread your sweet legs for me and let me see that pretty pussy of yours before I eat it.”

I didn’t hesitate to do as he asked since I’d learned how much I liked his bossiness in bed during our time together. I also loved that he was so hungry for my body, so desperate to look at me, taste me, give me pleasure. Opening my legs wide for him, just like he asked, I shivered at feeling so exposed, but the look in his gorgeous blue eyes was worth it.

“Good girl.” Dempsey’s praise made every muscle in my core clench with pleasure, and he hadn’t even touched me yet. Not really.

I bit my lip to stifle a moan as he pressed a kiss to the inside of my knee, trailing his lips all the way up the inside of that thigh until he reached the apex between my legs. I sucked in a gasp, thinking he’d bury his face between my legs and start eating me out, but he seemed to be in a mood to savor things and make them last because he mirrored what he’d just done on the inside of my other thigh.

“Dempsey.” I whimpered the word, squirming and dying of anticipation by the time he was done.

I had never imagined that what we would have together might be like this. Ours was supposed to be a marriage of convenience, but Dempsey made me feel like the most



beautiful woman in the world. And the things he did to my body. Whoa, boy! He made me feel things I didn't even know how to articulate.

Gripping my thighs, he pulled me closer to the edge of the table and finally buried his face between my legs, dragging his tongue up and down my folds in long, slow, measured strokes that I was certain were intended for the sole purpose of driving me insane. He was licking my pussy like it was an ice cream cone, and I squirmed with pleasure, wiggling my butt in an effort to move things along and reach my orgasm a little more quickly. I knew the sooner I came, the sooner he'd bury himself to the hilt inside me, and that was what I really wanted.

Dempsey chuckled at my attempt to rush him. I gasped when he gripped my hips and held them perfectly still so he could continue his methodical licking, sucking, and nibbling.

"Dempsey—" I panted his name this time, burying my fingers in his hair so I could tug on the thick locks, trying to make him go faster. I was so, so close to coming already, but he paused and tugged free of my grip on his hair to look up at me, arching a brow in challenge. "I'm so close—"

"Patience, baby. All things in good time, I promise." His voice was a deep, velvety purr, and his expression was all mischief and havoc. The combination turned my insides to molten lava.

My nipples pebbled to diamond-hard peaks from the delicious ache that was building between my thighs as he continued with the slow, methodical strokes of his tongue. He was pushing me toward an impossibly high peak of pleasure. My whole body hummed and throbbed with the rhythm he set with his mouth.

Sliding my hands over my body, I cupped my breasts through my top. It was a good thing Dempsey had gotten me over any self-consciousness I might have had because I felt comfortable massaging my nipples, rolling and tweaking them between my index finger and thumb. I was so ready to feel

him inside me that I was determined to help this process along one way or another.

Dempsey looked up at what I was doing and groaned, but my tactic worked because he caught my clit between his teeth, licking and sucking like a madman on a mission until I came for him, screaming so loud that I was certain everyone else in the building was going to hear me. I arched, and my body shook, squeezing my eyes shut as I rode the wave of pleasure until I thought I might pass out. When the shudders passed, I slumped back against the table, limp and sated, but Dempsey was far from done.

He stood, freed his dick, and drove into me with one powerful thrust that ripped a guttural moan out of my throat. When he took me like this, I couldn't help but feel as though he was using his big, strong body to tell me wordlessly that I was his, and he was mine.

"Yes." I panted, wrapping my legs around his hips, angling mine so I could take all of him inside me. I wanted this. I wanted him, and I never wanted this to end. I grabbed Dempsey's hand, interlocking my fingers with his, and stared up into his eyes. "I don't want you to be gentle this time. I'm not fragile."

Dempsey's eyes dilated to almost completely black, and his nostrils flared. "Are you sure, baby?"

"I'm absolutely positive." I squeezed my legs around his hips a little harder, forcing him deeper inside me. "Give it to me like you mean it."

That was all the confirmation he needed. Gripping my hips, he pulled almost all the way out, then plunged back inside me, ramming himself home hard enough to make me scream my pleasure for the whole world to hear.

"Yes." I dragged him down and kissed him with all the fire and passion I felt welling up inside me. Our tongues tangled as we pushed and pulled, trying desperately to devour each other. My breath came in short gasps as he plunged into me, over and over. "Harder," I begged.

He squeezed his eyes shut as he took deep, bracing breaths and slowed his strokes the slightest bit. “You’re going to end this much more quickly than I want if you keep talking like that, baby. I want to make this last and make it so good for you that you can barely even stand the pleasure.”

I nipped his earlobe. “You make me feel more incredible than I ever knew possible every single time we’re together.”

I tightened my legs around his waist, just the slightest bit, to accentuate my point. Dempsey grunted in response, nuzzling my neck and biting it just hard enough to make me gasp and writhe beneath him.

“Did you like that, baby?”

“Yes.” I hissed the word through clenched teeth, lifting my hips to meet his thrusts. “I didn’t think I would, but...there was something so deliciously primal about how that felt. Like you were trying to mark me so everyone in the world would know I belong to you.”

“Fuck, baby, you’re going to make me come.” Dempsey growled the words through tightly clenched teeth, making any embarrassment I felt over my soft admission disappear. “You have no fucking clue what hearing your sweet voice talking dirty does to me.”

My lips curved into a smile of pure feminine satisfaction at Dempsey’s growled warning. “But I bet you’re going to show me, aren’t you?”

Dempsey’s nostrils flared as he leaned closer, and I knew he was barely holding on to his control. I loved when he let loose with me, so I feathered kisses along the line of his jaw, doing my best to drive him completely wild with every touch of my lips. I even traced my tongue along the outer shell of his ear before I whispered, “Please.”

“Oh, I’m gonna fucking show you all right.” His fingers dug into my hips hard enough to leave marks, but I loved seeing the signs that he’d taken me each morning when I showered. “I’m going to fill you up to overflowing, and you’re going to feel me for days, baby. Every step you take will

remind you of how it feels to have my cock deep inside your sweet pussy.”

“Oh, yes,” I gasped, digging my nails into his thick shoulders.

His strokes turned feral, rocking the whole table. “I’m going to be dripping down your thighs when we get up to walk away from this table after we’re done.”

I knew we’d been taking giant risks by having sex so often without protection, but I couldn’t find it in myself to care. It felt too good when Dempsey took me with nothing between us. “I’m so close.”

His lips crashed down on mine in an all-consuming kiss. His thrusts turned wild and ragged until he buried himself inside me with a deep, satisfied cry of pleasure that made me come, too. We stayed connected like that while we tried to catch our breath. After a few minutes, Dempsey pulled out and helped me slide off the table to my feet. Suddenly light-headed from getting up too quickly, I swayed against him, my stomach roiling until I pressed my face against his chest and dragged his masculine scent deep into my lungs. I wasn’t sure what it was, but I’d found myself addicted to his smell the past few days.



When the ringing of my cell phone woke me, I almost shut it off and snuggled back into bed. I'd kept Skye up pretty late, and we both needed the rest. But as I reached over to decline the call, I saw Gil's name on the screen. I'd never dreaded hearing from him before, and I should have been racing to answer, considering the information I was waiting for.

No matter which way it went, his news would change everything. There would be no more ignoring the future and hoping that Skye would want to stay when the time came. Wishing she'd fallen as hard for me as I had for her. The what-if was here, and I had to face it one way or the other.

I hit the answer button and whispered, "One sec," into the phone before setting it back down. Slowly, I extricated myself from being wrapped around Skye and slid out of bed. Finding my boxer briefs on the floor, I tugged them on, grabbed my phone, and went to my office.

"Gil," I finally greeted as I dropped onto the big chair behind my desk. "What's the word?"

"Are you sitting down?" he asked, his voice thrumming with excitement.

"You pulled me out of a warm bed with my very naked, sleeping wife. Spit it the fuck out, Gil."

"Best Sports sent over an offer."

I was elated and disappointed all at the same time. “That’s great, Gil. Thanks. Email it to me, and I’ll look it over as soon as I’ve had some coffee.”

“Uh...did I miss something? Why the hell aren’t you celebrating, D?”

“I am...I...” I held in a sigh. It was hard to explain without admitting to a fake marriage, no matter how real it was to me. “I just haven’t woken up yet.”

“Sure. I guess we’ll talk later?” He sounded worried now, but I had too much on my mind to care.

“Later.” I hung up and leaned back in my chair, staring up at the ceiling and trying to figure out what to do next. I was ecstatic about the endorsement and the fact that my dream was finally going to become a reality. Except, it wasn’t as important to me as it used to be. Skye was my top priority now, and without her, everything else would lose its luster.

I opened the top drawer on my left and picked up a small velvet box, then flipped the lid open. A diamond-encrusted infinity band winked at me in the rays of the sun coming through the floor-to-ceiling windows.

As I studied the ring, renewed determination filled me. Why the fuck was I sitting here moping like a pussy? I’d already decided I wasn’t letting her go. I would fight to the death, and if I’d been reading her right, I wouldn’t have to. I was confident that Skye was in love with me, and I saw it in everything she said and did. Which meant that this news would be exciting to both of us. A new adventure to dive into together.

With that in mind, I turned on my computer and got to work on making plans.

---

A FEW DAYS LATER, I lit the last candle and looked around to make sure everything else was set up just right.

The room was filled with vases of Skye's favorite flowers, and the lights were dimmed so that all the votives around the room cast a romantic glow. Dinner for two from Skye's favorite restaurant was spread out on the dining room table, with two tall candles, two flutes, and a silver bucket filled with ice and a bottle of sparkling cider.

I wasn't sure if that last one was necessary, but I was hedging my bet that several weeks of unprotected sex—multiple times a day—had knocked up my wife. And wouldn't that just be the icing on the cake? Best Sports, Skye, and a baby? It seemed like too much good for just one person, but I didn't care. Fate would have to pry them all from my cold, dead fingers.

Glancing at the clock, I saw that Skye had finished class thirty minutes ago, which meant she'd be home any minute. I'd picked a day when her class load was light so she wouldn't be exhausted. She'd been more tired than usual lately, and I wanted tonight to be a celebration, rather than something else to exhaust her.

I was waiting in the vestibule outside our front door to intercept her when she arrived home. "Hey, baby," I greeted her with a tender smile.

"Hey." She beamed at me and came easily into my arms when I pulled her in for a deep kiss.

"I have a surprise for you."

Skye lit up and bounced on the balls of her feet, making me laugh. My girl loved surprises.

I turned her so that her back was to my front and covered her eyes.

"How am I supposed to walk if I can't see?" she asked with a giggle.

"Do you trust me?"

Her voice was soft when she answered, "Yes."

"I'll guide you where you need to go," I crooned in her ear. Then I walked her inside and back to our bedroom where I had



an outfit laid out for her on the bed.

“Ready?”

Skye bounced again, widening my grin. “Yes!”

I removed my hands, and she gasped when she spotted the soft pink, silk dress she’d admired in Saks Fifth Avenue last week. It was flowy and comfortable while being classy and incredibly sexy.

“Why don’t you get changed and meet me in the front room for the rest of your surprise?”

Skye spun around and threw her arms around me. “There’s more? Dempsey, the dress is a wonderful gift, I don’t need anything else.”

I chuckled, and she frowned at me. “I’m not laughing because I think you need more, baby,” I explained when I realized where her mind had gone. “I’m laughing because you seem to think I’m going to stop spoiling you at some point. Skye, I will never stop. I love pampering you, spoiling you, doing anything that will put that beautiful smile on your sweet mouth.” I gave her a quick kiss and patted her on the ass. “Now get changed.” Then I spun on my heel and marched out of the room. If I stayed while she attempted to change, we’d never make it to dinner.

When she found me in the dining room, I was standing by one of the tall windows, staring at the view. But at the sound of her gasp, I turned and my mouth went completely dry. “Wow,” I croaked. “You look...” Words failed me.

Skye’s cheeks turned the same shade of sweet pink as her dress, and she did a little twirl. “Thank you. For the dress and the compliment.” Then she swept her hand out. “And all this...did I forget something?” She chewed her lip, but when she saw my scowl, she immediately stopped.

“No, baby, you didn’t forget anything. I want to talk to you about something important and then we’ll celebrate together.”

“Oh?” Her interest was piqued, and when I crossed the room to take her hand, she looked up at me expectantly.

I didn't say anything as I led her to the table and helped her take a seat. "Patience, Mrs. Tate," I teased.

Her lips pinched, but she didn't voice the retort I knew was rolling around on her tongue.

I waited until I was seated around the corner of the table from her, then reached across to take her hand. Smiling, I drew little circles on her palm, enjoying the way it sent a path of goose bumps up her arm.

"First," I began, staring into her deep brown eyes, "Gil called. Better Sports made an offer. A very generous one. But the best part is that when Gil told them what I wanted to do with the money, they offered to donate a large portion of the equipment."

Skye's eyes went wide, and her mouth formed a little O. Then, out of nowhere, her entire face crumpled, and she burst into tears. It was the opposite of the reaction I'd been hoping for.



With the candlelight and flowers, the dinner Dempsey had planned was the most romantic thing anyone had ever done for me. I thought for sure it was because he was going to tell me that he'd developed feelings and wanted our marriage to be real. But instead, he'd gone to all of this trouble because he was excited about the endorsement deal.

“Shit, baby. I thought you'd be happy to hear that Best Sports decided to go with me,” he muttered, rounding the table to drop down in front of me. Taking my hands in his, he stared up at me, his eyes filled with concern. “I don't know how I managed to fuck this up so badly, but I'm sorry. Please tell me what's wrong so that I can fix it. I'd do anything for you to never cry again.”

His words only made more tears stream down my cheeks as I sobbed harder. He swore again before getting to his feet and scooping me into his arms. Striding into the living room, he dropped onto the corner of the couch and cuddled me against his chest while I cried it out.

When I finally took a shuddering breath and sniffled away the last of the tears, he asked, “Did I fuck things up so badly that you want to leave me?”

My head jerked up at the hint of insecurity in his tone. “What? No.”

“Okay, good. Thank fuck.” He heaved a deep sigh. “Then I can fix whatever is wrong.”

I shook my head, nerves unsettling my stomach. “I wish it were that simple.”

Pressing a finger against the bottom of my chin, he tilted my head up so he could stare into my eyes as he vowed, “I will do whatever it takes to make you happy.”

“Even stay married to me after you’ve clinched the deal that was the only reason we’re together in the first place?” I whispered.

The concern in his blue gaze was replaced by a burgeoning hope at my question. “Is that what all those tears were about, baby? You thought I arranged this fancy dinner so I could let you down easy now that I’ve gotten what I wanted?”

The lump in my throat was too big for me to speak, so I just nodded.

“Nothing could be further from the truth, Skye.” Shifting me onto the cushion next to him, he slipped his hand into his pocket and pulled out a jewelry box before getting on his knees in front of me. When he flipped open the lid, I peered down at the diamond encrusted infinity band nestled inside. “Opening the community centers has been my dream for so long, but they’ll mean nothing to me without you in my life. I want you at my side every step of the way. The two of us building a family while we achieve more together than we ever could on our own, as an unbeatable team. For-fucking-ever.”

His declaration was the most beautiful thing I had ever heard. This time, the tears that streamed down my cheeks were from pure joy. There was only one small thing missing. “I think you forgot the three magical words that I’ve been waiting to hear. I promise I’ll say them back to you, but I’m feeling super emotional right now and really need them to come from you first.”

I shouldn’t have been scared because he didn’t hesitate for even a second. Sliding the infinity ring onto my finger, he declared, “I love you, Skye Tate.”

“I love you, too,” I admitted softly, feeling overwhelmed with happiness as my emotions got the better of me.

“C’mon, baby. You have to stop crying. It’s killing me,” he pleaded, gliding one of his hands up the outside of my thigh to grip my hip as he reached up with the other to wipe away my tears.

I flashed him a watery smile. “I can’t help it. This moment is so perfect. It’s definitely the proposal we should tell our children about.”

“No way,” he disagreed with a shake of his head. “I love our origin story.”

“Of course, you do. You’re not the one who embarrassed themselves,” I sighed.

“That’s what you think, but only because you don’t know about the advice I got from one of my teammates before you poured scorching hot coffee all over me to get my attention...”

I poked him in the chest and mumbled, “That’s not at all what happened, and you know it.”

He pasted an innocent expression on his face. “I thought we agreed I could tell this however I wanted.”

“Nope.” I shook my head. “That’s definitely not true because it doesn’t sound at all like something I would say.”

“What is one-hundred-percent accurate is that one of the rookies heard about the reason Best Sports was balking at inking the deal with me and made the harebrained suggestion that I should marry the first woman off the street who agreed.”

“Is that where you got the idea for a marriage of convenience? And then I literally bumped into you on the sidewalk.” My shoulders slumped as I muttered, “I always wondered what made you ask me like that.”

“Nuh-uh, baby. My proposal was spur of the moment and entirely because of my reaction to you.” He chuckled and shook his head. “Even without the spilled coffee, you made one hell of a first impression. I’d already decided I couldn’t marry just anyone because I didn’t want to ruin my chances

with the woman who was meant to be mine...and then there you were. Our marriage has never been about convenience, but my proposal sure was because it gave me the perfect excuse to tie you to me forever right away. And then I did everything I could to make sure you didn't want to break that connection."

As I thought about the likely outcome of what he—more like we since I'd been a willing participant each and every time—had done to ensure we were connected forever, I twisted my hand back and forth as I stared down at the infinity band. Knowing what my husband felt for me, I loved what the ring represented. "My present for you isn't nearly as expensive as this ring, but if what I suspect is true, I think you'll appreciate it just as much for what it represents."

"You didn't have to get me anything, but I'm sure I'll love whatever it is," he reassured me.

"Oh, you'd better." I giggled as I pressed his palm against my stomach. "Because I'm almost positive that you already got your wish for the family you said that you want to build with me."

His gaze was locked on our hands, and his deep voice was whisper soft as he asked, "You're pregnant?"

I nodded. "I think so. I haven't had a period since we met, and we've had a lot of unprotected sex."

"Fuck yeah, we have."

He kissed me breathless before jumping to his feet. "Where are you going?"

"I want to know for sure, so I figured I'd run to the store to grab a test. Or two. Maybe even three."

I laughed softly and rolled my eyes. "I had a feeling one test wouldn't be enough for you, but I hope two will be because that's all I bought when I stopped at the store on my way home from class today. That's what I meant about my present not costing as much as my ring. The same wouldn't be true if I was talking about the pregnancy or baby."

"Good point." He tugged me to my feet and patted my belly before asking, "Where are the tests?"

“They’re in my purse, but I think they’re supposed to work best first thing in the morning.”

“I don’t want to wait. If these are duds because I made you take them at the wrong time, I’ll go out and buy some more,” he promised, excitement shining from his deep blue eyes.

It turned out that I hadn’t needed to be worried...two pink lines popped up on both testing sticks. Probably because he hadn’t just gotten me pregnant with one baby. It was twins.



## **EPILOGUE**

Caden, my four-month-old son, blew a raspberry, then giggled, making me grin as I bounced him in my arms.

Not to be outdone by his older brother, Cameron—who was cuddled up in my wife’s arms—shouted gibberish, then laughed like he’d just told the world’s funniest joke.

“I can’t believe this day is finally here,” Skye chirped, her eyes scanning the building in front of us.

The first Dawson Tate Community Rec Center—named after my best friend and my father who’d been instrumental in helping me develop the project way back at the beginning—was finally opening its doors. And the community football team, the Harlem Nighthawks, had their first practice in the facility tonight. Coached by two of my teammates.

When the owner of the Nighthawks, Lennox Madison, got wind of my project, he’d let me have it for not coming to him for help, then asked me how much to make the check out for. He also donated a portion of ticket sales as a steady income stream for the centers.

I’d been blown away when most of my teammates offered time and money as well. Because of their generosity, the next two centers would be up and running in the next couple of months.

“Dempsey,” Lennox called to me and waved me over to the front doors where he was talking with Peter MacDonald—the CEO of Best Sports. I handed Caden to my mother and

made my way over to the small group gathered to one side of the giant red ribbon blocking the entrance.

Roan, a teammate and good friend, handed me a giant pair of scissors and grinned. “Try not to fumble these and maim yourself, D. Got a game tomorrow.”

I rolled my eyes and took the prop, muttering about smart-ass ballers. Although I had planned to retire last season, Skye had talked me into putting it off for a year so we’d at least have pictures of the boys in the stadium watching me play, even though they were too young to remember.

The crowd went quiet when I walked to the center of the ribbon.

“Speech!” Nixon—another teammate and neighbor—shouted. His wife whacked him on the shoulder, and he just shrugged with a dopey smile.

“Welcome,” I said. “Thanks to everyone who helped make this happen.”

That was as much of a speech as they were going to get. I cut the ribbon and smiled from ear to ear at the cheer that erupted from the crowd. Skye beamed at me, and the pride and love shining from her beautiful brown orbs fell over me like a warm, snuggly blanket. I loved my wife so damn much.

She’d finished culinary school shortly before the twins were born. But rather than take one of the many offers to be a chef at a high-end New York City restaurant, she’d decided to stay home with our boys and use her skills in other ways.

To my surprise, she approached me with the idea of a cafeteria for after-school snacks, as well as during games. She also wanted to use the kitchen to cater any events we held at the center. She dove right in, designing the spaces, working up menus and recipes, and training staff to do things “the right way.”

This became our dream instead of just mine. We’d created it together, just like our little family.

I walked back to my wife and children, giving each one of them a kiss—although I lingered a little longer on Skye’s lips.

The heat in her eyes tempted me to skip all this and take her home to bed. She must have seen my intentions on my face because she took a step back, shaking her head. “Oh no, Dempsey Tate. We are going to celebrate with everyone.” Then she gave me a sassy smile. “Save all this for tonight.” She gestured up and down my body, making me grin.

“Like what you see, Mrs. Tate?”

She bit her lip, then released it with a giggle when I glared at her. “Definitely. You are one hot receiver, Mr. Tate.”

## **EPILOGUE**

**B**efore I met Dempsey, I thought my life calling was to be a chef. As happy as I was in the kitchen, I enjoyed being a wife and mom so much more. And the times when I could combine my favorite things were the best. Like when I was giving the boys a cooking lesson this morning.

“Can I put the bacon on the pan?” Caden asked.

“No, I wanna do it,” Cameron whined.

He was only five minutes younger than his twin brother, but that didn’t stop him from pulling the baby card when it might improve his odds of getting his way. Which it often did because Caden took his role as the big brother very seriously.

“Sure.” My oldest son stepped back to make room for Cameron, and I shot him a soft smile of gratitude.

“Alright, boys. Here’s what we’re going to do.” I showed them how to stretch the bacon lengthwise inside the pan, and then they took turns doing a few pieces each. “Now, remember, the oven is hot, so Mommy will put these inside.”

Nodding, they stayed put while I slipped an oven mitt on my hand and opened the oven door. “And even though the pan isn’t hot, I still have to be careful while I stick this in there, right?”

“Safety first,” Caden echoed the phrase I repeated every time they were in the kitchen with me.

Dempsey came through the front door just as I closed the oven. “I’m home!”

“Daddy!” the boys screeched.

“We’re in the kitchen,” I called out.

He made a beeline for me, dropping a quick kiss against my mouth before he murmured, “Morning, baby.”

Tilting my head back, I smiled up at him. “How was your workout?”

The house we bought in Long Island wasn’t far from several of his old teammates, and they got together at least once a week in the morning to exercise and catch up without little ears listening in since we all had kids. It was one of the only times they could swear without being glared at by one of the wives. “Really good.”

“I’m glad.”

He gave an exaggerated sniff as our sons tackled his legs, wrapping their little arms around his huge thighs. “What are you guys making?”

“Bacon,” Cameron cried.

“Eggs and toast, too. And Mommy said we get to use the special yummy jelly today,” Caden added.

“She did, huh?” They nodded enthusiastically.

Dempsey grinned down at them. “Even better.”

“Uh-huh,” Camden agreed with a nod.

The boys were adventurous eaters, and they enjoyed spicy foods. Which probably explained why I had craved curry when I was pregnant with them. So they loved the mornings when I brought out the raspberry jalapeño jelly.

Dempsey glanced at the oven. “How long until breakfast is ready?”

“Not long enough for you to take a shower unless you’re super-fast,” I answered. “The eggs and bacon will be ready in less than ten minutes.”

His gaze slid toward the empty stovetop and back to me again. “Umm, Are you sure?”

“Of course, I’m sure.” Pointing at my ample chest, I added, “I’m a chef, remember?”

“Ahh, yeah, baby. But...”

I took pity on him, knowing that he had to be very confused since a wrinkle had popped up in the middle of his brow. “I’m doing poached eggs in muffin tins and bacon on a cookie sheet, so everything is in the oven.”

“Not the toast, though.” Cameron tugged on the hem of my shirt. “Right, Mommy?”

“Right, sweetie. If you get the bread out of the pantry, Daddy can pull out the toaster. Then you guys can pop the slices in there.”

I normally used the toaster oven on the counter, but the slide down one was easier when the boys were helping me.

While they scampered over to the pantry closet, Dempsey asked, “Since when do you cook bacon and eggs in the oven?”

“When there are precious baby boys in the kitchen who I don’t want to get splattered by grease while they help me,” I explained.

“You’re such a good mom.” Leaning close, Dempsey’s breath was hot against my ear as he whispered, “The smell isn’t too much for you?”

“So far, so good.” I hadn’t experienced morning sickness with the twins, but I hadn’t been so lucky this time around. Which had made it difficult to keep the news from the boys, but we had wanted to wait until the end of the first trimester. We only had another week to go, and then we had a whole announcement planned for them, with special T-shirts announcing they would have a little sister soon.

“Good.” He cupped his hand over the slight swell of my belly for a moment before shifting his attention to the boys as they raced back over to us. “Are you guys being good for Mommy?”

“Always,” they chirped in unison.



At six years old, they could be rambunctious at times, but they really did tend to be on their best behavior for me. They saved most of their rowdiness for their daddy, just like he'd taught them. We'd waited so long to get pregnant again because we'd had our hands full with them and opening the community centers. But now that they were established and running like a well-oiled machine, it was time for us to add to our little family. I couldn't wait to see them dote on their little sister when she was born, just like their daddy was sure to do.

In the mood for another read with an age gap? Jump into the Silver Saints MC series with [Mac](#)!

And if you join our [newsletter](#), you'll get an email from us with a link to claim a FREE copy of The Virgin's Guardian, which is no longer available on Amazon.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

The writing duo of Elle Christensen and Rochelle Paige team up under the Fiona Davenport pen name to bring you sexy, insta-love stories filled with alpha males. If you want a quick & dirty read with a guaranteed happily ever after, then give Fiona Davenport a try!

Don't miss out on new release news and giveaways; sign up for our [newsletter!](#)