



PUMPKIN PIE



WEST GREENE

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SHORT MM ROMANCE

SLICE OF FOREVER

BOOK 2

WEST GREENE

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*For Riley, my reason for everything that I do.
For all the lovers of Thanksgiving.*

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Asa

I heaved a heavy sigh, glancing at the clock on the wall behind the register. The overnight girl was an hour late. And I hated that she and the overnight manager were so freaking close. Because of it, she'd never get fired so we could get someone more reliable.

This happened *all the time*. Every evening shift I worked, I ended up being the last one out the door because the overnight girl couldn't ever show up on time. And I hated that I was always scheduled like this, too. I mean, Margo did her best to make it a little easier on me so I wasn't so slammed, and it wasn't her fault that I was always scheduled like this; she was just a shift manager—nothing more. She didn't make the schedules.

“Still hasn't shown up?” Margo asked as she popped out of the back, her smoker's voice a bit raspy and low.

I shook my head as I wiped down the bar for the umpteenth time. It was thankfully slow, only two booths occupied, and they'd already paid. They were regulars, so they knew that I wanted to be out the door as soon as I could, and they didn't take offense to that. They always ordered everything they wanted, went ahead and had me ring it up, and paid, even if their food wasn't done yet.

“I don't know why Rachel can't be a decent manager and fire her,” I grumbled. God, I was so tired. I glanced down at my painted nails, frowning. The pink on one of them was

chipped. I needed to get in to get another manicure. “There’s a difference between being someone’s friend and being an employer.”

Margo grabbed me a soda and set it in front of me before gently squeezing my shoulder. She was a couple of inches taller than me at five foot five, so she was able to comfortably lean her head on mine. “Just keep sticking it out, hun. Maybe one day it’ll change.”

It sure didn’t feel like that, but before I could say anything, the bell above the door jingled. I jerked my head up, hoping it would be Anslee, the girl that was so very late, but nope. It was another customer. He was wearing an Army uniform, the name Sloan on a patch on his chest. He was holding his hat in his hand. Dark hair fell onto his forehead just the tiniest bit, the sides cropped close.

He had a grumpy, aggravated look that made tingles rush down my spine, momentarily making me forget about how tired I was. There was something about his face that just made me want to crawl onto his lap and nestle against him, even though he looked mean as hell.

“So glad you guys are open twenty-four hours,” he said, dropping into a seat in front of me at the bar. He was a huge man—well over six feet with bulky muscles that strained against his uniform jacket. “I’ll take a coffee and a stack of pancakes—extra syrup.”

I smirked over my shoulder at him as I turned to put the order in on the computer, though I already knew Jack was firing up the griddle. “You’ve got to be new in town or something,” I said. “Don’t get many unfamiliar faces in these parts.”

He shrugged. “Somethin’ like that. My grandmother retired here a couple of years ago; I’m here to visit her for Thanksgiving.”

I nodded my head to let him know I’d heard him and grabbed him a mug, beginning to pour coffee into it. “Sugar? Cream?”

He just shook his head as I set the coffee in front of him. Snatching it up, he took a tentative sip of the scalding coffee. I began wiping the counters again for the umpteenth time, my gaze flicking up to the clock again.

An hour and fifteen minutes late.

Fuck.

“Don’t want to be here?” the grump in front of me asked.

I looked back at him. “It’s an hour and fifteen minutes past the time I was supposed to clock out,” I informed him. He arched a brow at me. “Overnight girl always shows up late,” I explained.

He snorted. “And she’s not fired?”

I just shook my head. He grunted, shaking his head. “Just fucking clock out and leave,” he said. My lips twitched in amusement. If I did that, I’d be fired because unlike Anslee, I wasn’t BFFs with the fucking manager. “It’s not your responsibility or your problem if they don’t have a server. It’s their problem for keeping someone unreliable.”

My lips quirked the slightest bit. “That your solution to everything—leave it to someone else?”

He just shrugged. “I don’t know; I don’t have to deal with punctuality issues. Hence why I like the military.”

I snorted. “Not all of us are built for the military,” I retorted.

He ran his eyes over me, a deep rumble sounding from his chest that sounded suspiciously like agreement, but it didn’t offend me. My smirk widened. “Like what you see?” I teased, pushing my fingers through my black, curly hair. It was my natural hair color, and I loved it.

He hummed, his eyes darkening. My blood pounded in my veins, and I prayed my dick would behave. It rarely ever did though.

The bell sounded from behind me, and I quickly spun around to grab his pancakes. “Hey, Jack, can I get more syrup?” I asked the cook.

He flashed me a grin. “That bear out there need some sweetening up?” he teased, shooting me a wink.

I flushed. He *knew* I had a thing for big, growly men. Laughing, he set more syrup on the plate, not saying another word, but there was a knowing look in his eyes. I quickly set the man’s pancakes in front of him. He nodded approvingly and began to cut up all his pancakes before pouring every bit of the syrup I’d given him all over it.

“That’s a lot of sugar,” I commented before I could stop myself.

He glanced up at me from beneath his lashes. “I like sweet things, pretty boy.” My entire body flushed. He took a bite of his pancakes and chewed for a moment, his eyes *slowly* running over me for the second time that night. My entire body tingled. “You a sweet boy or are you a bratty one?”

Oh, dear God, help me.

I leaned my elbow on the bar, arching a brow at him. “Wouldn’t you like to know?” I teased.

His lips quirked the tiniest bit—barely even moving—but I noticed it. “Definitely a brat.”

I gasped in mock hurt. This time, he did smile.



BY THE TIME Anslee strode through the door, I’d come to learn that Sloan’s first name was Rip, he was a Sergeant First Class, and he *definitely* was *not* straight, which made me all giddy inside.

“You’re late,” I grumbled to her when she was stowing her bag beneath the bar.

She rolled her eyes. “Get over yourself, Asa. And get a manicure, yeah? Nails look like shit.”

I clenched my jaw, opening my mouth to call her a piece of shit, but Rip beat me to it. “First of all,” he grunted, drawing her eyes to him. I bit my lip to hide my smile when her eyes

widened, clearly as drawn to him as I was, “Asa has had to stay for two hours past his shift time. He has every right to be pissed off about it, and frankly, he was a hell of a lot nicer for just calling you out on it because I wouldn’t have been as nice. Second of all, maybe if he didn’t have to cover your ass all the time, he could spend more time on himself. Did you ever think about that? It’s two in the morning. I’m sure by the time he manages to get up in the morning, the day will already mostly be gone.”

She flushed, embarrassment reddening her cheeks. Rip stood up. “Come ring me out, pretty boy.”

With that, he strode over to the register, leaving both of us gaping after him.

... And maybe I was hard as steel in my jeans, too.

Rip

“Imagine you want to crash tonight when you get home, but I’d like to spend more time with you,” I told the pretty boy in front of me. Asa was something incredible; I knew that the moment our eyes connected when I walked in here. He was a tiny bit bratty, a bit cocky, yet still sweet and tender. He was the perfect combination that I’d been looking for in a boy.

He shrugged. “I’m actually off tomorrow.” He flashed me a smirk. “I’m all yours, grumpy.”

I shot him a scowl, but he just sweetly smiled up at me. “Go on; clock out,” I told him. “I’ll wait.”

He quickly went to get the manager, and within five minutes, he had all of his tips cashed out and was ready to go. We walked outside together. “I normally walk,” he told me with a sheepish shrug when I asked him where his car was.

I gripped the back of his neck, drawing his eyes up to mine. “You wanna repeat that?” I asked him, my voice low.

Pink tinged his cheeks, and if I wasn’t so concerned with the fact that he walks home at night, I’d have found it fucking adorable. “I normally walk. I don’t have a car. It’s not far. I’m just down the street—”

I pressed a finger to his lips, all of my possessive, protective, caveman instincts kicking into overdrive. “Not

another word,” I growled. I grabbed his hand in mine and led him to my truck. “Get in.”

He quickly climbed into the truck, and I shut his door before striding around to the driver’s side. Didn’t he know that nowhere on this damn earth was actually safe? People were killed, raped, and mugged in small towns, too. And the thought of him becoming one of those victims made my stomach hurt and anger flood my veins.

“Where am I going?” I asked, glancing over at him once I had the truck started.

He nervously twisted his fingers in his lap, looking unsure of himself now. With a heavy sigh, I reached over and grabbed both of his hands in my much larger one. He jerked his pretty, green eyes up to mine. “Stop fidgeting. Just tell me where I’m going,” I instructed.

He nodded. “Um, down the street, first road on your right. I’m on the left in house three-fifty-nine.”

I nodded, and with my hand still covering his, I backed out of the parking spot and headed in the direction he told me to. His house was small but very cute, and it looked to be in a quiet, decent neighborhood, which helped me relax a bit. I pushed the gear shift into park before pushing open my door. He reached for his. “*Aht*,” I halted him. “Wait.”

He nodded and sat back in his seat, dropping his hand back on his lap. Once I had his door open for him, I reached up, grabbed his waist, and lifted him down. He was so much smaller than me, and fuck if I didn’t want to just wrap his tiny body up in my arms and protect him from everything in the world that could harm him or make him unhappy.

I barely knew two things about this boy, and already, I was in deep.

Once we were inside his house, we kicked our shoes off by the front door. I shrugged my coat off and hung it up before following him deeper inside. “I know it’s not much—” he began, but I cut him off.

“It’s just fine, pretty boy,” I assured him, running my hand over his dark locks, sinking my fingers in for a moment. His hair was so damn soft.

He flushed so fucking prettily before moving into the kitchen. “Do you want some pumpkin pie?” he asked me. “I have some here.”

I nodded. “I’ll take a slice.”

As we ate the pie in his living room with a Hallmark Christmas movie playing in the background, he seemed to loosen up and relax again, which I was thankful for. I didn’t want to make him uncomfortable, but I also wasn’t going to let him try to run me away.

I wanted him.

“Where do you live?” he asked, turning to face me on the couch once he set his empty plate on the coffee table.

I grabbed his feet and began to massage them. He moaned low in his throat, his head leaning back on his shoulders for a moment, and fuck if I didn’t want to suck at that throat, leaving my mark all over him.

“I’m about to live in Germany as soon as Thanksgiving is over,” I told him.

His eyes widened. “Germany?” he squeaked. I nodded. “That’s really far.”

I chuckled. “Yes, pretty boy, it is. Hence why I wanted to come see my grandmother. She’s up in age; I know her time is limited.”

He shook his head in amazement. “I always wondered what it would be like outside of Crooked Creek,” he told me. “Never been anywhere but here.”

I’d have to change that.

I didn’t say that out loud, though.

I just continued rubbing his feet, and he relaxed further and further against the couch. Then, I slowly moved my hands up his legs. He moaned softly, his legs parting. When I looked at

his face, his eyes were slitted, and he was staring at me, lust shining in their pretty depths.

“What?” I asked him.

That bratty smirk played on his lips. “You going to keep teasing me, or are you going to actually do something here?”

With a growl, I moved over him, my lips molding to his. He whined low in his throat and began to push his hands under my shirt as his mouth moved with mine. He tasted so fucking good—like pie and something that was definitely all him. I took the time to learn every curve of his mouth, letting my tongue dance with his as I worked us both out of our clothes.

I wasn't prepared for the sight of my baby boy beneath me.

He was so small, so fragile, and fuck, I wanted to cherish him. His prick was a little smaller than usual, and damn if I didn't love it.

“I know I'm not—” he started.

I kissed him again. “Don't,” I growled, already knowing what he was going to say. But I didn't want him to feel insecure about anything. “You're fucking perfect.”

With that, I shoved his thighs open and back, forcing his knees to his chest before I began to rim him. He cried out, his back arching. His fingers slid into my hair as I tongue-fucked his sweet ass, loving every sound that poured from his plump, kiss-swollen lips.

“Daddy,” he gasped out.

Ah fuck. Never knew I had a fucking thing for that, but apparently, I did.

“Again,” I growled.

“Daddy, please,” he whimpered.

I worked a finger inside of him, finding the softness of his prostate. I slid my finger against it over and over until he was crying out my name, his head thrashing against the couch cushion as his cum spurted over his belly.

Hot as fuck.

“Lube?” I asked him.

He took a moment to answer, and I patiently waited—some fucking how. “My bedroom. On the nightstand,” he finally managed to get out.

I quickly got up from the couch and moved towards the room off to the side of the living room. Thankfully, it was his. I snatched the small bottle of lube up and went back into the living room. He slowly opened his eyes, already on the verge of falling asleep.

But not yet. I wanted his tight ass wrapped around my cock. I needed him to come again with me inside of him.

“Stay awake for me, pretty boy,” I begged him, leaning over him to press my lips to his. “Can you do that for me?”

He sleepily nodded. I kissed him again, my tongue sliding between his plump lips. He moaned into the kiss, quickly responding, his mouth just as hungry for me as I was for him.

I slathered my fingers with lube and worked them inside of him one at a time, scissoring my fingers apart to stretch him as much as I could. I was large, and he was small; I wanted this to be as painless as possible for him.

“Daddy,” he whined, his kiss turning sloppy as he panted into my mouth, “I need—”

“I know, pretty boy,” I soothed. I knew exactly what he needed, but I didn’t want to hurt him.

I slid on a condom and slathered my cock in lube before working myself inside of him. I had one knee bent on the couch, my other foot planted on the floor, and I was holding his hips up so I could get inside of him.

As soon as that first ring of muscle gave, I moaned, my eyes falling shut for a moment. *Fuck*. I knew he was tight, but *goddamn*.

“Uhn,” he moaned, his hands reaching for me. “More, Daddy. I need you down here. Please.”

“Hold on, pretty boy,” I rasped, slowly working myself inside of him. As soon as his ass cheeks were flush with my

pelvis, I leaned down, covering his tiny body with mine before I began to fuck him, claiming this sweet, bratty boy as mine.

His cock was bouncing between us, already hard and ready to cum again. His words were incoherent as I pounded him into the couch, but I knew by the blissed-out look on his face that he was fucking loving this. His pretty nails were clawing at my back, shoulders, and arms, breaking the skin and drawing blood, but I didn't care.

“You going to come for me, pretty boy? Need you to come for Daddy,” I growled, sucking at the skin of his neck, marking him all over.

“Daddy!” he cried out, right before his cum splashed out of his cock again, this time also getting me in the abs. With a growl, I pumped into him two more times before emptying into the condom.

Asa

I woke up alone. After getting my brains screwed out last night, Rip had bathed me in the shower and then put me to bed before sliding in behind me. I'd thought he would stay the night, but waking up alone made me realize how naïve I'd been.

I'd been nothing but a damn lay. I fucking hated that. Why couldn't men just want me for more than my body? I thought we had actually connected last night. The way he had been growling my name, how sweet he'd been while fucking me—

I was just stupid, apparently.

Ignoring the ache in my chest, I quickly got dressed in a pair of black sweats and my mesh crop top, fully intending on pigging out on the rest of my pie so I could eat my feelings. It was my coping mechanism? Was it healthy? Nope. But I didn't give two fucks.

When I stepped out of my room, the front door opened, and my eyes widened at the sight of Rip walking in, a pair of shorts riding low on his hips, sweat running down his body, his hair damp.

"Um ..." I reached up to make sure I wasn't drooling. He smirked, and my cheeks flamed red. "I thought you left," I dumbly said.

He shook his head as he kicked off his sneakers. "Nah, pretty boy. Just went on a morning run." He walked over to me

and gripped the side of my neck, pressing his lips to mine. “I’m going to grab a shower real quick. Think you can scrounge us up some breakfast? I want to spend some more time with you before I go see my grandmother.”

I nodded, lost for words. He actually wanted to spend time with me? He’d only left for a morning run and not actually left for good?

My brain was struggling to catch up.

He smirked down at me. “Not so bratty in the mornings?” he teased.

I shook my head, blinking up into his icy blue eyes. “I thought you’d left,” I repeated.

His features softened, and he tugged me against him. I didn’t even care that he was sweaty. I inhaled the masculine scent of him as I wrapped my own arms around him. He pressed a kiss to the top of my head. “Didn’t leave you, pretty boy. I’m not that kind of guy.” He ran his hand down my bare back where my shirt didn’t cover. “You okay now?”

I nodded my head. He cupped my face in his hands and pressed his lips to mine. “Breakfast, Asa. You need sustenance after last night.”

With that, he strode off to my room, snatching a duffel bag off my couch as he went. I blinked after him, a bit dazed. The man who had just walked into my house was so much different from the man who’d walked into the diner last night, though I knew they were the same person.

Finally shaking my head, I quickly moved into the kitchen and scrounged up eggs and bacon, making extra for Rip because he looked like the kind of man that could eat a lot. He came out of my room freshly showered right as I turned the burners off, and he pressed a kiss to the tip of my nose before grabbing both plates and carrying them into the living room.

After pouring him a cup of coffee and grabbing an orange juice for myself, I sat beside him. “Thank you, pretty boy,” Rip rumbled as he leaned forward to kiss me, taking the coffee mug from my hands.

We ate breakfast in peaceful silence, the TV being our only bit of noise. After that was done, Rip washed the dishes while I dried them and put them away. It was strangely domestic, and I was becoming addicted to it, which was really bad.

“When do you need to—oomph,” I gasped when he settled me on the kitchen counter, stepping between my legs.

His lips met mine, and his hands ran over my body as he thrust his tongue into my mouth. I whimpered low in my throat and twined my arms around his neck, plunging my fingers into his hair. I ground against him, our cocks rubbing together at the height I was sitting at. He growled and clutched my body closer to his, letting me rut against him until we were both coming in our pants.

“Fucking hell, that was hot, pretty boy,” he rumbled, pressing kisses all over my face.

I giggled. “I need a shower, Daddy.” It wasn’t yet, but I knew my cum wouldn’t take long to become sticky and uncomfortable.

He lifted me off the counter, and once my legs and arms were securely wrapped around him, he carried me to the bathroom. “You want to get your nails done today?” he asked me once we were beneath the shower head, the water pouring over both of us.

I looked down at my nails, nodding my head. “Definitely, but it takes me a while to get them done,” I warned him.

He shrugged. “I’ll drop you off and go visit my grandmother.” He brushed his nose with mine. “Get a pedi while you’re at it; my treat. And when you’re almost done, I’ll come pick you up. Sound good?”

I beamed at him. “It doesn’t bother you I like girly things?”

He shook his head, running his hands down my damp sides. “You’re perfect just the way you are, pretty boy.”

Unable to help myself, I dropped to my knees and showed him just how appreciative I was of him with my wet mouth.

Rip

Spending the week with Asa was the best time I'd had in *years*. At thirty-two, the Army had sucked most of the joy out of my life. But Asa brought so much color to my world. The sex with him was out of this fucking world, but just being around him was just as damn addicting.

There was so much innocence about him, even when he opened that smart-ass mouth. But today was bittersweet.

Because today, I had to head to the airport. But I had a surprise for him, and I was hoping he'd like it and wouldn't think I thought of him as a charity case.

He was keeping my truck. I didn't want him to be without a vehicle; I needed to know he was safe. I would continue to make all the payments on it and pay the insurance, but I had this insane need for him to have it.

This wasn't the end of us, and I also needed the truck to serve as a reminder to him that just because I had to leave, that didn't mean our time together was done.

Because I would be back for him.

I wrapped my arms tighter around him, not ready to get out of bed yet, though my alarm had gone off five minutes ago. I knew I needed to get a shower and pack all of my things back up to take with me, but fuck, I wasn't ready to get up yet. Because if I got up, that meant I only had a tiny bit of time before I would have to deal with only seeing Asa's gorgeous

face through FaceTime calls and hearing his voice through the fucking phone.

It wouldn't be the same, and I knew withdrawal from my bratty boy would be a fucking bitch to deal with.

“Daddy, you need to get up,” Asa mumbled against my chest. But he snuggled closer, so I knew he wasn't ready for this either.

“I'm not ready to let you out of my arms yet, pretty boy,” I said softly, sadness thickening my voice.

His voice wobbled when he spoke. “You'll come back, right?”

I cradled the back of his head, my heart already fucking breaking, and I hadn't even let go of him yet. “I'll always come back for you, my boy. Don't ever doubt that, you hear me?”

He sniffled and nodded. I rolled him to his back and kissed him. The kiss was soft and gentle, not hungry and passionate like our other ones. Then, with a heavy sigh, I heaved myself off the bed, padding naked to the bathroom. When I didn't hear him moving behind me, I turned to look at the bed. He had pulled the blankets over his head.

My heart broke a little bit. “Pretty boy, if you don't get your cute ass off that bed and come get in this shower with me, I'm going to bend you over my knees and spank your plump ass red.”

He squeaked and jumped out of bed. Normally, he'd continue being stubborn, but I knew he didn't want to do anything to waste our last bit of time together.

I bathed him, kissing him as I did so, not ready to let his sweet mouth go yet. And he did the same to me. I heard my alarm blaring from the room again, and I cursed, realizing we'd spent too much time in the shower.

“That's the alarm to leave for the airport, isn't it?” my sweet boy asked sadly.

I nodded. “It is.” I kissed him again. “Come on. We need to get dressed. We’ll grab breakfast on the way.”

Sighing, he nodded. As I dressed, I watched him pull on a pair of skin-tight skinny jeans and one of his crop tops, his curly hair falling wet over his forehead and over his ears.

I didn’t want to leave him.

For once, I really fucking resented my job and my duty to the fucking Army.

Shaking my head, a sudden lump burning in my throat, I quickly snatched up my duffel bag, grabbed his hand, and led him out to the truck.



“HERE,” I said, dropping the keys to the truck in his small hands. Asa’s eyes widened in surprise as he stared at me. I glanced toward TSA. I knew I needed to get my ass over there, but I just wanted a couple of more minutes with him. “I want you to keep this truck. *Use it,*” I said, giving him a pointed look. A pretty blush stained his cheeks. “This is my promise that I’m coming back for you. And when I do, you better be ready for me, pretty boy, because I’m marrying you and taking you with me.”

His eyes widened. “Marry?” he squeaked.

I nodded, glancing down at my watch. *Fuck.* I grabbed his face in my hands and kissed him hard and hungrily. “I love you,” I rasped, saying it for the first time. But God, I fucking meant it. “I love you so fucking much, pretty boy. You better answer your phone when I call you later.”

“And if I’m at work?” he saucily asked, challenging me.

I gripped his chin, narrowing my eyes at him. His lips twitched. “Don’t play with me, boy.”

He cracked a grin. “I’ll be waiting on my spanking when you get back, Daddy.”

Sighing, I kissed him again before walking off toward security. “Daddy!” I heard him shout from behind me. I spun around, catching him just as he launched himself into my arms. I braced an arm under his ass and wrapped an arm around his back. He squeezed his arms around my neck. “I love you, too, Daddy.”

With that, he pressed a kiss to my cheek and then slid down my body. I ran my hand over his hair and then stepped into the line for security, casting my bratty boy one last longing look over my shoulder.

EPILOGUE

Asa

Nine months felt like forever when the man you loved wasn't with you every fucking day. My bed had never felt lonelier, and the smell of Rip had left the truck. I missed him so damn much, but every week, I had a new package in the mail. Three weeks ago, he'd sent me a brand-new outfit, which I was currently wearing as I drank tea with his grandmother. It was a pair of short booty shorts and a silver mesh crop top. I was wearing it with my favorite pair of sandals; I'd even taken the time to do my make-up today.

"You've got to teach me your secrets," his grandma said, her hand shaking a little as she lifted her glass of tea.

"Secrets?" I asked her, laughing. What this woman was on about now, I had no idea.

"For this tea," she gushed. "It's so different than anything I've had."

"It's the lemon," I told her. She needed it, especially with her age. So, when I was here with her, I slipped it into just about everything I could.

She shook her head. "Got to be something else. I don't know what it is, boy, but you've got a sweet tea gift."

I snorted. "I don't know if a sweet tea gift is a thing, granny," I laughed. That was another thing that had changed. She was now granny to me. She'd ordered me to call her that the first time I met her, and it had stuck.

She patted my hand. "It's a thing if I say it is, boy," she assured me. "I think I'm old enough to have that right."

I barked out a laugh and went into the house to get the second pitcher because, at this rate, the first pitcher was going to be gone in no time.

I spent a lot of my time over here, especially on my days off. And Granny lived for my visits, and even more, she loved that her grandson chose me. She thought we were absolutely perfect together.

When I stepped outside, I gasped, the pitcher of tea falling out of my hands, shattering on the porch. My eyes widened as I stared at Rip.

"Dammit, pretty boy," he growled, his boots crunching over the glass. He scooped me up into his arms, carrying me back into the house. "Stay right there while I clean this up."

The floodgates opened. I latched onto him when he tried to walk away and started sobbing. "You're here," I cried as he enveloped me in his arms. "You're really here. I missed you so fucking much."

"Language, pretty boy," he scolded, but his words were still gentle as he ran his hands over my back. I squeezed him tightly, crying so hard I could barely breathe. But I eventually got it under control, my chest aching afterward.

I sniffled. "Sorry," I mumbled. I swiped at my cheeks. "I can wait now. I just needed a hug."

Rip pressed his lips to mine. "I'll give you all the hugs you need in the world, pretty boy."

After the porch was cleaned up, he led me back outside and sat across from Granny, pulling me onto his lap. He rocked gently back and forth as I wound my arms and legs around him. His hand ran up and down my back. "Sorry about the pitcher, Gran," Rip apologized.

She waved him off. "It was just a cheap pitcher from the dollar store," she told him. "You going to finally make an honest boy out of him now?" she bluntly asked, making me

giggle. She and Rip were so alike; it was easy to tell who he'd taken after the most in his family.

Rip grunted. "Soon as the courthouse opens tomorrow," he assured her.

I lurched back, and he quickly caught me before I landed on my back on the wooden boards. The disapproving look he shot me didn't faze me a bit after the bomb he'd just dropped. "You're not even going to ask me?" I sassed.

Rip arched a brow at me. "I told you before I left that when I came back, I was marrying you," he reminded me.

I huffed and crossed my arms over my chest. "I still would have liked to have been asked," I grumbled. "And maybe I don't want a courthouse wedding. Maybe I want to walk down the aisle wearing a white dress."

Rip pinched my hip, making me squeak. I locked my eyes back on his. "I'll bend you over my knees right here in front of Gran," he warned me. "You're already owed a spanking from the airport; I haven't forgotten." Pink stole over my cheeks. "Now, let me finish." He dug a ring from his pocket and slipped it on my finger. "I don't need to ask because I know you'll say yes. You've been begging me to come home and make you mine for the last two months." My cheeks got even darker.

"Just blurt out all my secrets in front of Granny, why don't you?" I mumbled. He swatted my ass.

"We're getting married at the courthouse tomorrow, and then we'll move out to Germany—you, me, and Gran. And we'll have a wedding out there with my friends and anyone you want flown in. Does that sound good?"

I squished his cheeks in my hands and leaned forward, planting a loud kiss on his lips. "Sounds perfect, Daddy." Granny didn't even flinch. I'd slipped up once in front of her when I was on the phone with Rip, and when I began to apologize, *both* of them had scolded me for being anything but myself.

He deepened the kiss for a minute, not even caring about his Gran sitting right there. I melted into him. “I love you, pretty boy,” he rumbled against my lips, his words vibrating all the way down to my soul.

I beamed at him. “I love you, too, Daddy.”

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

West Greene is a romance author that specializes in short, steamy books and serials.

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