



COURTING
Curves

TEMPTING

the judge

TORY BAKER

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“Passion’ a word which involves so many feelings. I feel it when we touch; I feel it when we kiss; I feel it when I look at you. For you are my passion; my one true love.”

S. Richardson

CHAPTER 1

I look in the full-length mirror I have propped up in my walk-in closet, the true selling point in my condo because let me tell you, the bedrooms are teeny tiny, to the point where the only thing that fits in mine is a queen-sized bed with a nightstand on either side. Not even a dresser could work anywhere in the postage stamp of a room. The second bedroom is a makeshift office/library, more for books than work any day of the week. I do enough of that, well, at the work.

My golden-colored hair is perfectly in place—an inverted low bun, upswept hairstyle, not a lock of hair out of place. It can't be a hindrance while at work. The understated makeup I put on took me less than ten minutes to do. The majority of that time was spent on my eyelashes, curling them, coating them in a thick layer of mascara, taking breaks in between and switching out different brands of tubes as well. A pair of pearl earrings are adorning my first hole, leaving the second empty. This is the work-dressed Eden, not the hanging-out-with-friends Eden. Those are two completely different people, business oriented versus the thirty-year-old who lets her hair down, drinks a few too many beers, and has no problem staying up or out well past three o'clock in the morning. Or I should say that was myself until a few months ago. Now I'm caught in a tidal wave of emotions, the ups and downs of what not to do, and I've got a list that plays on repeat in my head.

Things not to do:

1. *Don't fall for your boss who's fifteen years older than you.*
2. *Don't touch your boss.*
3. *Don't have sex with your boss.*
4. *Don't have a threesome with your boss and your boss's friend.*
5. *Don't engage in said behavior in the judge's chamber with the judge you work with and his friend who just so happens to be the bailiff.*

Except that's what I did. That's what I continue to keep doing. And while I know it's illicit, will explode like a grenade in a war-torn country, shrapnel not giving a shit who it hurts in its wake, I won't put a stop to it either. Honestly, I can't. The forbidden has never tasted so good. It's like blood running through your veins and the air you so desperately need to breathe.

I turn my thoughts back to getting ready, knowing what will happen if I'm late for Judge Kavanaugh's court hearing. I'll be in even more trouble, and not in the dock your pay, receiving a written or verbal warning. That's not his way. I make sure my black blouse is tucked into my white midi-skirt, the whole outfit is tight fitting and hugging my curves in all the sinful ways, stopping at my calves. It's exactly what Kavanaugh prefers. A full-body quiver works its way down my spine when I think about the note he sent me late last night, along with a package. Inside sat a gold and nude color confection, with hand beaded floral embroidery to cover my nipples. Other than that, it was entirely see through, the softest material that has probably ever touched my skin. The low-slung thong matches in color and sheerness, leaving nothing to the imagination. Thankfully, my standing wax appointment keeps me completely bare; otherwise, it would pull away from the effect completely. The only bad thing is if Kavanaugh so much as looks at me, I'm toast. The panties are so miniscule, I'm sure to leave wetness in my wake. I turn away, knowing if I keep thinking about any and all things Judge Samuel Kavanaugh, I'll never make it out of here. My eyes peruse the

plethora of heels I keep in my closet. Walking in them isn't hard, especially for the short amount of time I'm on my feet. Wearing the highest heel for what it does to my ass, legs, and stature is what I'm after. You know what they say. *Beauty is pain*. My hand reaches for the way-too-expensive red-bottom soles, a splurge I allowed for myself after saving for nearly a year. They're black patent leather, timeless, and pull this outfit together entirely. One last look in the mirror, then I'm heading out of my closet, grabbing my bag that carries everything I could possibly need for work.

"Phone, check. Keys, check. Sunglasses, check. Bag, check," I say, going through another checklist, this one out loud instead of in my head. I'm a list queen—written down, electronically, it doesn't matter; I use them in any way possible. I'm just putting my sunglasses on, keys in hand to lock the front door, when my phone buzzes. I glance down, worry settling in my stomach in case it's Mom or Dad texting this early in the morning. If that's the case, it could only mean something is wrong. Thankfully, I'm wrong, and it's a certain man who plagues my thoughts night and day.

Judge: Baby girl. My chambers. Thirty minutes. I'll be checking.

His text shouldn't make my nipples pebble or my core clench. Being told what to do should be a major turn-off, but it's not, at least for me.

Eden: And if I don't do as I'm told?

Judge: My hand will be meeting your ass, over and over again.

I don't respond. That's an answer enough from him. I need to get my butt moving; I'm already pushing it. The last time Kavanaugh doled out a punishment, it was not easy to sit for the rest of the day, though the orgasm he gave me afterwards made it completely worth it. He may be fifteen years my senior, a man of authority, dominating in bed, a complete and total hot shot of a judge, commanding a room with one look, yet I'm the one he wants.

CHAPTER 2

The clock in my chambers ticks the seconds away, winding down the minutes until Eden is meant to be here. A hopeful part of me craves she'll be late. There's an itch in the palm of my hand that is ready to land on her ass and pussy, seeing her milky skin turn a pretty shade of red, knowing she'll feel me the rest of the day.

I settle back in my chair. Looking over today's schedule is doing nothing to deter me from what I've got planned after work. The last time we had Tyler join in our fun, my hips were pistoning back and forth, the tight clench of her pussy attempting to pull the cum out of my body long before I was ready. That's not where it ended either. She was bent over at the waist, my hand was in her hair, holding it in a ponytail, manipulating how she worked her mouth on Tyler's cock.

Rules are necessary when it comes to bringing someone else in. She and I made sure they were in place. No way would he have his cock in her pussy or her ass. Hands and mouth were okay, and I had no problem with his mouth on her tits, sucking the sweet berry-ripened tips or him lapping at her clit while I took her lips with mine. More than that is not happening especially his mouth on hers, not a fucking chance.

After work today, it's going to be something different, a fantasy of Eden's that will be played out, so long as she's not late getting here. A knock interrupts my thoughts. I check the time on my computer. There's only one person I know who would slide in with less than a minute to spare.

"Enter," I tell the person on the other side of the heavy wood door, clicking the button that unlocks it beneath my

desk. Tyler does his job, opening the door for Eden, then closing it just as quickly. Some things are better kept away from prying eyes. I watch as a blush darkens her cheeks, head dipping low in order not to make eye contact with him. Fuck, I hope Eden never loses that innocence about her in public because while she's prim and proper for the world to see, my baby girl is something spectacular to watch behind closed doors.

“Pushing it, I see.” She drops the handle of her rolling bag to the side of the door, walking slowly to me with a sway to her hips, unknowingly so. The beauty of Eden is that she doesn't know how gorgeous she is. Her hair is up in a tight professional hairstyle. When it's down, well past her shoulder blades, the color is a soft brown with blonde throughout, straight with not a hint of a wave or curl. Eden curses about it often, the fact that it doesn't matter what she does, holding a curl is impossible, even after a night of my hands delving into the locks. What does take a beating are her pouty lips, plumper than usual, unlike this morning, a hazard from Eden not staying with me last night. A meeting with the district attorney and friend, Oath Larson, had me cancelling plans with her. It seemed he needed advice. Judging by the way he couldn't keep his eyes off the bartender, it wasn't hard to tell what has him tied in knots. Not that I was in a position to give him any. When I told him about my and Eden's relationship, the arching of his eyebrows was his only response. We shared a few drinks between friends, shooting the shit while we talked quietly at the bar that's known to have cops, lawyers, judges, and the lot hang there frequently. As for now, I'm keeping the relationship between Eden and myself a secret for a multitude of reasons. I'm technically her employer, which is a conflict of interest to say the least. Not to mention I'm fifteen years older than her. I don't see a problem with our relationship. Others will, though, especially at the courthouse. A few hours later, Oath and I called it a night. Since it was too late to call Eden or head over to her place, home was where I went. That didn't stop me from sending something to her house with a written request.

“Maybe. How are you this morning, Samuel?” She stops in front of my desk, running her hands down her skirt. My eyes

clock in on her curves, her hourglass figure, breasts that barely fit in the palm of my hand, slim waist, rounded hips, a peach-shaped ass, and thick thighs that make my mouth water thinking about the way they press against my ears when I'm eating her pussy.

"I'd be better if you weren't standing over there and were sitting here, showing me if you've been a good girl or not." I push my chair out, giving her the room she'll need to make her way to me. "And how are you this morning, Eden?" She places one foot in front of the other, the tight skirt, showcasing her body. I almost hate what Eden is wearing, giving this view to other peeping eyes, men and women alike.

"It's been full of surprises, that's for sure. Is this where you want me, Judge Kavanaugh?" Her body is right in front of me, hands behind her on the desk, holding it tightly, knuckles turning white as I move closer. My fingers inch up the skirt that stops below her knees. A slit in the back allows her to walk with ease while giving any passerby a peek of her shapely legs.

"This is exactly where I want you, Eden Powers. Now, let's see if you did as you were told." The tips of my fingers start below her knees, I watch as more skin becomes visible, as shapely calves give way to her thighs, so close to where I want my mouth. Sadly, there won't be enough time for me to fuck her pussy with my fingers, let alone my tongue, or for us to clean up, and make it inside the court room. I should have demanded her here earlier. If I did that, though, she'd have had to wake up even earlier, and Eden is not one to be woken up at an ungodly hour.

"Samuel." I pull her away from the desk, the fabric bunching around her delicious ass. She looks perfect the way she is right now. It's not stopping me from running my hands around the back of her thighs, going beneath the skirt, cupping the cheeks of her ass as I pull it the rest of the way up.

"Baby girl." My nostrils flare. I'm at a crossroads, wanting my hands on her ass yet dying to feel the wetness that's coming to light when the fabric finally gives way and is bunched up around her stomach. I do the next best thing,

dipping my head, smelling the scent of her arousal, tonguing her slit through the thin flimsy fabric. She was in fact a good girl, wearing what I sent over. She and I both will be reaping the benefits of this reward. My mouth covers her center while I keep hold of her ass, using my hands to lift her up, until she's on the edge of the desk, legs opening for more. Of course, that's when there's another knock on my door, this one not announcing someone's presence but instead giving me a heads-up that it's time to wrap up my time with Eden.

"No, no, no," Eden bemoans when I pull away. We'll both be left wanting one another, her with wetness coating the lips of her pussy, and me with my cock so hard it's a damn good thing I'll be wearing a robe.

"Later. Now be my good girl and get ready for court." I stand up from my seat and help Eden down, this time keeping my hands off her body. If I were to touch her, we'd be late to court, and that's hard to explain when it's the first hearing of the day.

"You're a tease, Judge Kavanaugh. I have no doubt that you timed this all out." She shimmies her skirt down. Not only am I unimpressed, my cock is as well.

"Soon, Eden, soon." I've yet to kiss her. Tasting her lips between her legs was my priority. I dip my head, mouth still wet from licking her only moments ago. This way we both get her flavor, and I'm not sure which I prefer more—Eden's pussy or her mouth. It's a good thing I get them both. Another knock on my door has our kiss ending too soon.

"Ugh, I hate early court hearings." I chuckle at Eden's antics. Knowing her, she's yet to hit her caffeine quota for the morning. It doesn't matter the form—coffee, tea, soda, or energy drink.

"You picked the wrong career. Check the fridge. There should be one of your drinks. Make it fast, though. I can only hold the people over for so long." She walks her fine ass to the mini fridge in my chambers and bends over, giving me a view of her ass, and now I'm cursing the fact that our schedule is full this early, too.

“I know, yet here I am,” she replies. I shake my head, watching as she takes the first sip of her preferred watermelon-flavored energy drink.

“And I’m enjoying every minute of it, too.” The smile she gives me tells me Eden is all the answer I need.

CHAPTER 3

I received one last kiss from Kavanaugh once my energy drink was finished, a whisper in my ear that I should be prepared to stay late tonight and that he has another surprise for me that doesn't include the expensive delicate fabric I'm currently wearing. It was hard to leave him after that, wanting to know what the surprise was going to be, the excruciating need to question what exactly his plans were. What can I say? Surprises are hard for me. Not in the way that I don't like them. Believe me, I do. The hard part is not knowing. When he smacked my ass while on my way to leave his chambers, it didn't help either. It was the nod to the bailiff, Tyler, who in turn had a smirk on his face that had me scurrying to my workplace. My mind has since created a variety of ideas that Samuel Kavanaugh would make up. It's been four months since we started this somewhat illicit affair. It started with a few lingering glances from him sent my way, a touch here and there, then he was asking me to his chambers. We took off from there. One dinner out turned into another, then another, neither of us wanting to leave each other's presence at the end of the night. The way he seemed to know exactly what and who I am, a woman who can drop her inhibitions with the right man without feeling like I'm someone less. Samuel had my back pressed against a brick wall after a night out in a smaller town where we were both nobodies with nothing to lose should someone stop us. You see, Judge Samuel Kavanaugh is well known in our community. The fact that it's frowned upon for a court reporter and judge to have a relationship sucks. Believe me, my boss, Cam Tervis, stated it very clearly while going over the contract. To me, it's hard to do anything or lean a certain way

when you're literally typing the report. A few dates in is where Judge Kavanaugh became Samuel to me. The judge is the man, and the man is the judge; there's no changing or denying it. Not that I would want it any other way. I'm slowly falling in love with every facet of him, the dominant man awakening cravings in me that one would only think about having in her wildest dreams, yet Samuel makes them come true.

That was four months ago. Our relationship is still on the quiet side of things, especially after I re-read my contract I signed in front of Cam. She still annoys me till this day for no other reason except she walks around with her nose tipped up like she's better than the rest of us. Which sucks because it means we have to keep things hush-hush, a total bummer, but there is no way either one of us is willing to go without the other. It leads us to hiding in plain sight. Sadly, my contract is for a year, which means I have too many months left to count. It's a waiting game, one that I loathe entirely, but it's either that or I try and transfer to a new courthouse or be reassigned to another judge here. Neither of us wants that, so here we are at a stalemate.

The one thing I'm worried about is that maybe I'm feeling more than Samuel is. I'd like to think that's just my overactive imagination, except besides dinners at his house, restaurants, and spending the night, there's been no talking about where this is going. Yet, I'm the one who's falling for the man who doesn't mind sharing certain parts of my body with Tyler, his preferred bailiff. Don't get me wrong, it's hot, scorching hot. There is nothing like having a man sliding in and out of you, skin on skin, holding your breasts, offering them to another man while he takes turns sucking on one, then the other, his other hand sweeping over your clit, heightening your pleasure. It requires a trust that is most definitely earned, which is why I'm having all of these doubts. Would he share me if he loved me, or wouldn't he? Either way, I'm going to have to set time aside for us to truly talk, which is another problem, because the second we're behind closed doors, our clothes come off, our hands, mouths, and limbs are in a tangle with one another until both of us are completely wrung out and sleep is taking over. This weekend will be different, well, after whatever

surprise he has planned. Afterwards, I'll confront my insecurities, because that's what they are, mine and mine alone.

I get lost in my work, which is better than rethinking everything else that's rattling around in my head, listening with my ears while watching the inner workings of the courtroom. Today, it's a hearing for a contested will. It's sad the things you see day in and day out, people's lives taken for granted, fighting over this or that. It seems no one knows how to get along anymore. It's a rare occasion when both parties settle, and if that's the case, I'm rarely needed since all that's needed is a signature from the presiding judge.

"We'll take a brief recess for lunch. If you'll notate, Miss Powers, that court will resume in one hour from now." I nod and finish typing what I need to do on my stenograph. My own hunger pain hits me when I least expect it, as well as the rumbling in my stomach, echoing the fact that I've yet to eat today and I'm surviving on caffeine only. What a rookie move on my part.

"All rise," Tyler announces. We stand up as one, waiting for Judge Kavanaugh to clear the room. Then I'm tidying up my workspace, grabbing my wallet and phone out of my bag. The courtroom will be locked, allowing me to leave my stuff out without having to worry about packing it up only to unpack it when I return. As much as I'd love to eat lunch with Samuel, that's a no-go when everyone is here for the day. Plus, a few minutes outside of the air-conditioned building, the sun beating down on my skin, a sandwich, some chips, and a sweet tea while listening an audio book is right up my alley.

CHAPTER 4

The first thing I do the minute I'm back in my chambers is take off my robe. It's fucking hot as balls beneath it, and even with most of the judges complaining that the courtrooms aren't cold enough, if we kicked the air conditioner down any further, others would freeze to death. Fuck, I should just go naked beneath my robe. I would, too, if it weren't for a certain court reporter who is seated in front of me. A whiff of her intoxicating scent, and my cock would be harder than it already is. Christ, I need that woman something fierce, and it's only been a couple of days since I've had her to myself, not counting the rare occurrences she's able to meet me in my chambers. That shit doesn't fucking count, unless it's well past quitting time and there isn't another hearing looming in the near future.

"Hey, you got a minute?" Tyler asks me after we're both inside. Part of his duties is to make sure my office is secure, then he'll go and lock the courtroom on his way out for his lunch break.

"I do." I move to my small fridge to grab something to eat that I had ordered with the rest of my groceries that are sent to the house weekly. The cafeteria is brutal to get in and out of, plus you've got people who want to stop and pick your brain or want to chat. Your hour for lunch goes by too quickly as it is.

"I'm going to have to take a raincheck on this evening. A mandatory meeting hit my email while in court." Tyler is the only man I'd use as a third when it comes to Eden says. He's been a bailiff in my courtroom for years, one of the few men I

trust, especially when it comes to Eden. I'm more territorial than I've ever been with any other previous relationships. It seems Eden has me feeling things I've never felt before.

"Alright. It's not like I can be upset with that. Though, Eden may not be very pleased." I think back to our time earlier today when I got a sweet taste of her pussy. It wasn't nearly enough to hold me over until we get home. The plan was to take her here, bend her over my desk, my cock in her pussy while she sucked Tyler the way she spoke about after the last time we were together. "I've got no problem with that. Let me know when you're available." If it weren't for the fact that I knew Tyler was single, unwilling to settle down in a relationship, and that I could believe in the fact he could keep his mouth shut, he wouldn't be anywhere near Eden and me.

"She's not the only one." Tyler runs a hand through his hair. He holds himself back, a hazard from his past,

"We'll reschedule. There's no time preference. It will be here, though," I tell him, another boundary we've set. He may get a piece of her body, but he won't get a place in her heart or in either of our homes. A hotel, my office, a club, but never our beds.

"You got it. Thanks, Kavanaugh."

"Anytime. See you later. I hope the meeting isn't bad news," I tell him.

"It shouldn't be. Usually, someone screwed up, so we all have to feel the brunt of it, or there's a job position opening up for someone to move up in rank." Tyler wouldn't be a bailiff if it weren't for the injury he received while working as a detective, a bullet to the thigh and hip, along with rehab for six months and a limp that's more predominant than he'd like. The only time he's comfortable is standing, which he gets as my bailiff. A desk job was out, and so was working on the streets or riding in a car all day. It worked in my favor. I've known him most of my adult life, so putting in a good word for him to be in this courthouse wasn't a hardship. I had no idea that he'd be assigned to me, though. It's also why I felt confident in asking him to play out a fantasy of Eden's.

“Keep me posted if you need anything.” Another reason why I chose Tyler, he’s not the man who would stay behind even if Eden asked for more, which she won’t. A fantasy of being with two men at one time while adhering to the rules we stated was all we both wanted. Tyler has no problem with that.

“Will do. Enjoy your lunch,” he states before leaving. I walk around to my desk while loosening my tie, ready to be off for the weekend and shuck the clothes I’m expected to wear while at work. Another reason Eden has me wrapped around her finger, the woman can rock the business attire like no other. The same could be said for what she wore on our nights out—short mini-skirt, a top that showed off her tits in a tasteful way while still being the seductress she is. Then there’s the Eden I get first thing in the morning, wearing a set of pajamas or one of my discarded shirts, hair in a ponytail, face clear of any makeup, and still, she’s a fucking work of art. I’m ready for the weekend to start.

CHAPTER 5

“I’ve got bad news, baby girl,” is what I’m greeted with after another four hours of work. I daydreamed while typing on the rare occurrences Samuel would speak, stern in that delicious rasp that wraps around your body, molten freaking lava. That’s what his tone of voice does to me—it melts my insides. I can only imagine what it does to other women and men in the courtroom, when he commands the place with one word.

“I’m not sure you’re capable of giving me any bad news as long as it means I’m not spending another night without you.” I sit down in the chair in front of his desk. Tyler did us a solid before leaving and made sure the room was clear so I could sneak back here while Samuel wraps things up for the day. If I were at his house or my place, I’d be taking my shoes off, pulling my shirt from my skirt, and relaxing further. Since we’ll eventually have to leave and keep up with appearances sake, it’s not going to happen, sadly.

“Well, I had a plan, one that required you naked, laid across my desk, taking me from the back while you took Tyler from the front.” My core clenches as a visual plays out in my head, my naked and slick body sliding across the desk with every deep thrust of Kavanaugh’s hips, wondering how I’d take Tyler with my mouth or with my hands. Either way, I know he’d make sure it would work in all of our favors.

“That can still happen, obviously minus one person.” I swear all day, my desire has been on a slow simmer, and now that it’s only the two of us, I’m about to get on my knees to beg for what my body is so desperately craving.

“Yes, it can, but we’re going to save that for another day. Right now, you’re going to walk your fine ass over here, kiss me, and then go to my place.” He’s in the mood to play, which works in my favor because I was not kidding. One flick of his finger or one swipe of his tongue along my slit, and I would soar so high, it’d be like I’m flying in the sky.

“That I can do,” I tell him as I pull my shirt away from chest, trying to get some air to my now heated body.

“That’s not all you’ll do. I want you in my bed, hands above your head, in nothing but what I sent you this morning. You can keep the heels on, though.” My breathing deepens, chest lifting, nipples pebbling. My panties are more than likely soaked through, and now I’m going to have to walk through the building like I’m not a strolling orgasm on heels. Thankfully, Samuel likes to make sure our Fridays are done early. Maybe he won’t spend a lot of time after I leave, I won’t get stopped on my way out, and maybe traffic will be a minimum. “Come here, Eden.” There’s no denying him. I want his lips too badly, never mind the things he’s going to do to my body. I stand up and place one foot in front of the other, moving until I’m right where I was this morning, in front of him as he sits back in his chair, two fingers along his full upper lip, elbows on the arms of his chair, watching and waiting to see what I’ll do. Samuel’s jet-black hair is slowly giving way to salt and pepper, a sign of his years, but that doesn’t deter his looks. He still has that whole brooding alpha male vibe going on. His beard shows more of the grey hair he sports, covering his jaw and around the lips that I know I’ll have pressed against mine sooner rather than later. It’s the way his eyes are eating me up, eyes that are dark normally, but right now, they’re even darker. The crinkles surrounding them only make him look that much hotter. My gaze traces the slope of his form. Never in my life did I think a throat could be sexy. Yet his is, smooth compared to his jaw, thick and corded, Adam’s apple bobbing as I use my hands to lift myself up until I’m sitting on the edge of his desk, crossing one leg over the other. I’m cursing the length of a midi-dress instead of wearing one of my minis where he could see exactly what he’s doing to the flesh between my legs.

“Well then, I guess you better kiss me, Judge Kavanaugh.” I put the ball in his court, ready to see if he’ll do anything to hold me over until he finally gets in bed with me.

“I guess I better, except now you’re too far away, and that won’t do.” Samuel takes his time, bringing his chair closer to me, hands going to each ankle until my legs are no longer crossed and he’s sliding them up while simultaneously gliding his big hands up my limbs, taking the fabric with him as he does until I’m planted in his lap with my skirt back around my waist. “That’s what I wanted to see. Fuck, this is a pretty sight, Eden.” His eyes are locked on my pussy, thumbs so close to where my inner thighs and core meet that I can feel the heat of their presence.

“Samuel.” My hips rock on their own. Desperation in my voice. He holds me steady, not allowing me to get off. Sometimes, I could really curse how easily he withholds himself from me until he’s well and truly ready. Other times, I want to throw myself at his feet with the way he plays my body like only he can do.

“Lips, baby girl.” Finally, he gives me what I want, pulling me close until we’re pelvis against pelvis. The rough ridge of his bulge along with his zipper makes me ache for more. When our mouths meet, Samuel takes over like he does in every aspect of our sex life, leading the way, coaxing me with a flick of his tongue, invading me the way we both get off on. My hands grip his hair, holding on as I arch further into him, thinking I’ll get a kiss and an orgasm. No such luck. He abruptly ends our kiss. “Not yet, and don’t even think about using your fingers to take the edge off. I want you ready to explode the second I slide inside your tight wet cunt.” He brushes a kiss along my lips one last time. I pout. After being on edge all day, an hour or so feels like an eternity.

“Then I won’t keep you.” He helps me off his lap, ever the gentleman, copping a feel of my ass as he tugs my skirt back in place.

“See you soon, Eden.” I give him one last look. He isn’t unaffected either. His cock is harder than ever. We’ll both be coming multiple times tonight. Of this, I have no doubt.

“Soon.” I grab my bag and roll it behind me, using the door that leads out to the employees only area, thankful that no one is around. It’s not unheard of for court reporters to go over work with their assigned judge. The hardest part would be hiding the rapidly beating of my heart, the blush I’m sure is covering my cheeks, or the way I know I’m quaking from the inside out.

CHAPTER 6

Finally, I pull into the garage later than I anticipated. Of course, Clark stopping me only fifteen minutes after Eden left my chambers derailed me getting home earlier. I could throttle the old crotchety asshole. Any other judge would take his case next week for one of his appointments. Why he's asking me after I've done him more favors than I should, I have no idea. All I knew was that in order to move things along, it took me agreeing and for him to hem and haw for another ten minutes, blathering about the weather, how he needs his prostate checked, and that he's contemplating retiring after this year. Like I said, no one needed to know all of that, especially out in public on a Friday when all anyone wants to do at the courthouse is get the fuck out of there.

An hour, that's how long I've been away from Eden. Too damn long. And if Clark delayed me to where she's asleep in my bed, I'm going to be pissed, which I already am at myself. I should have walked away when he called my name. Too much of a schmuck is what I was to him. I shut down my car and close the garage door behind me. Eden's is in the space next to my own, and I like that more than I ever thought possible. I've got one thing on my mind, and that's getting inside. It doesn't take me long to move out of the garage and into the laundry room, where I step out of my shoes and socks, wanting to be light on my feet and Eden to be unaware when I round the corner and see her in my bed. My tie was the first thing that went after I left my office. The judge in me is out of the office. If for some reason I'm needed for an emergency hearing, that's the only way I'll be working this weekend. It's not even my weekend to be on-call; it still doesn't stop a few

attorneys from calling in favors from time to time. I make my way toward my room. It was smart of me to purchase a single-story house when it came on the market in a new development. Everything was built to my specifications—taller kitchen cabinets, a massive walk-in shower with a built-in bench, and the pool was all done before I moved in. I'm lucky Eden and I are reaping the rewards of all three of those, me taking her on the kitchen island at the perfect height, the shower where we've had sex numerous times, her sitting on the bench while sucking my cock, her front pressed against the cold tile as I fuck her, and the pool. Goddamn, the pool has to be my favorite of all. Eden naked, the water glistening along her skin in the sunlight. Another added bonus to this development is that houses are spread far apart. No other two-stories homes are allowed to be built. The privacy fence is all we need, and even then, it's more of a just-in-case than a necessity.

I travel down the hallway, unbuttoning my long black-sleeve dress shirt as I go. The less time it takes me to undress, the more time I'll have with Eden, and right now, she's the only thing on my brain. Fuck work, the outside world, or anything else that will try to come between us.

“Christ, baby girl, look at you, doing exactly as I asked.” There, in the middle of my bed, on top the black sheets, a work of pure art is lying exactly the way I want. Slender arms above her head, hands holding on to the slatted bedframe. Eden's breathing intensifies with every step I take closer to her. I watch as she slowly spreads her legs, showing me more of her beauty.

“Samuel, please,” she begs. The ache in her voice tells me that waiting is killing her. Little does she know it's doing the exact same thing to me. The pretty confection wrapped around her body leaves little to the imagination. Her nipples are pebbled, beading through the delicate lace, and wetness coats the gusset of her thong, seeping out unto her thighs. My mouth waters at the vision.

“Hmm, should I start with my lips wrapped around your nipples?” I take another step closer, ripping my shirt out of my pants then taking it off the rest of the way, dropping it behind

me as I finally make it to the end of the bed, which leaves me in only my pants, they're fucking constricting my cock. "Or should I take your needy little cunt with my mouth?" I ask, knowing that if I were to loosen my belt, unzip my pants, and step out of them, I'd be inside her slick wet heat, and seeing how part of my game is the anticipation, I won't do that, yet.

"I want your cock, please, Samuel." It's hard to deny Eden that when it's what we'll both benefit from.

"Then that's what you'll get. Later, you can repay me when you're sucking my cock, then I'll fuck your pretty tits, coming all over them and your face. Seem fair?" I go ahead and take the rest of my clothes off.

"Whatever you want as long as you get inside me." Her claws come out to play, and I'm ready to feel her pointed talons in the shape of her nails along my skin as I fuck her into the mattress.

CHAPTER 7

“**F**uck, Eden, you’re a dream come true.” Samuel drops the remainder of his clothes, still entirely too far away for comfort. His sinewy muscle trails from his neck down to his calves. I know he stays in shape for not only his health but his stamina, or at least that’s what he tells me. While I enjoy sleeping until I have to wake up, Samuel is up at five o’clock in the morning Monday through Friday, pre-workout drink in hand before he hits his home gym. It isn’t until he’s coming back into the bedroom to shower that I start to wake up for the day and get to enjoy the fruits of his labor. My arms are above my head. I didn’t keep them like that the entire time he wasn’t home; it was only when I heard the garage door open that I lifted them in place, locking my fingers around the slotted headboard. This isn’t our first time, and it probably won’t be our last.

“Between my legs would be amazing.” I widen my legs even further, a task I thought would be impossible, given that they’re already spread. Samuel is still standing at the foot of the bed, completely naked, cock lying against his stomach, thick and hard.

“You’d like that, wouldn’t you. The only problem is, there’s something that I’m either going to rip to shreds or peel off your body.” Both ideas are perfectly okay with me, though I’d probably mourn the thought of losing a set of lingerie this luxurious.

“Or I can take it off for you.” I go to move my arms, the tips of my fingers the only thing holding on, waiting for the sign that I’m free to move.

“Tsk, tsk, it’ll be me who does that for you, baby girl.” My hold tightens when he climbs between my legs. I watch each flex and pull of his muscles. Then his head dips low, and he drops a kiss to the inside of one thigh. His tongue slides along my skin, and he repeats it on the other side. My body is trembling, ready for more, almost at my breaking point of letting my hands drop and attempt to take over. It wouldn’t last. Samuel might allow me to believe I have the upper hand for a few minutes, but then I’d be flat on my back, his hands on my wrists, pinned to the mattress as he takes what I willingly give. He kisses a path further up the insides of my thigh until he’s at the apex of my center. The wetness that was created this morning, carried into the afternoon, and well into the now has made me crave him so badly that by the time his nose glides along my slit, I’m practically vibrating. “All this sweetness, and it’s just for me.” His hands slide to the side of my hips, and I’m unprepared for what he’s going to do or how he’ll strip me of the thong he bought.

“It really would be a shame if I only got to wear these once, Samuel.” I lift my head to get a better view of what he’s about to do.

“You think I wouldn’t buy a store out to see you like this again?” The deep timbre of his voice slides along my skin. He doesn’t tear the fabric from my body, torturing the both of us as he slowly pulls my legs up in the air. I close them for him, my thighs clenching together. Samuel takes his time, delaying the process until he’s finally inside me.

“I have no doubt you would,” I reply. Finally, the panties are off my body, flung somewhere, and then he’s back between my legs, this time with nothing between us. Samuel must not care about the fact that my bra is still on, and truth be told, it doesn’t bother me in the least. My pebbled nipples scraping against the lace only makes the experience that much better.

“Baby girl.” His hands move to the back of my knees, pushing the top of my thighs on the mattress. “Hold them up, Eden, don’t let them go,” he orders. I do as Samuel says so easily, at least in the bedroom. I watch as his hand wraps around his thickness, moving closer until the tip of his cock is

notched inside of me, holding himself still when all I want to do is flex my hips, getting him to sink inside further.

“Samuel.” It’s a plea of everything I want and need all wrapped in one, more than ready for him to thrust his hips.

“Fuck, I can feel you, baby girl. The rippling of your cunt, attempting to suck me in, and I know once I’m deep, there’ll be no stopping me,” he grunts. In one solid thrust, he’s completely seated, filling my body up with his length. His head is tipped back, throat on full display as he swallows. The way his Adam’s apple moves, it’s so damn sexy. What starts off slow and sweet turns hard and rough. His threat of fucking me into the mattress is more of a promise and less of a threat. I tighten my pelvic muscles as he hits my G-spot over and over again. Samuel’s eyes lock on mine. Gone is the man trying to hold it together. We both need to come like we need to breathe. Sure, it would have been fun in his office, but that’s all it would have been. A fun moment in time. This right here between only us is more than fun, it’s everything. The way he’s looking at me, I know he feels it, too.

“Samuel, right there, don’t stop,” I mutter, eyes shuttering closed. The sensation is too much. I’m so close to the edge, feeling the perspiration along my body.

“Come for me, baby girl, fuck my cock and soak me.” One of his hands moves until he’s pressing down on my lower abdomen.

“Yes, God, yes.” My voice trembles. Samuel gives me another deep thrust, tipping me over the edge. I’m coming on one long purr. Whatever energy I had is gone. I’m a boneless heap as he continues to use my body, chasing his own orgasm, and the lucky one is me, because I get to watch every nuance, the way he clenches his jaw, holding back even though I’ve come already. Our foreplay seemed to last all day. How he’s able to control himself throughout our time together, I have no idea.

“Goddamn it, even after you come, your pussy still holds me like you’re scared I’m going somewhere,” he admits before he finally comes on one long groan. My hands come

down from the headboard and cup his cheeks, pulling him closer so I can kiss him as I feel him coat my insides with one powerful jet at a time. Samuel takes over the kiss and lets my thighs go. I wrap them around his waist, not willing to let him go as his tongue tangles with mine.

“Samuel,” I breathe against his lips when he pulls back, our chests rising and falling with how much we’re panting.

“It was worth the wait, wasn’t it?”

“Yes,” I agree, then add, “Even though you’re gloating right about now, Judge Samuel Kavanaugh.”

“You act like you’re not gloating as well, Eden Powers. The way your cunt is pulsing along my length, keeping me rock fucking hard.” Okay, he’s not wrong. One orgasm after being teased for a solid twelve hours and not having him for almost forty-eight, it’s hard on a woman.

“Round two?” I question.

“Fuck, yes.” He lazily pulls out before moving back inside me. The intensity is gone. There’s no rush. It’s softer and slower. That doesn’t mean it won’t feel just as good because with Samuel, it always does.

CHAPTER 8

This morning came too fucking early, and my internal alarm that wakes me up during the week seems to have transferred to the one day a week I'm not ready to get up. Eden is currently wrapped around me, my arm beneath her neck, a leg thrown over my own, both of us plastered to one another as my hand holds her close around her shoulder. Her head is in the crook of my neck, and if she weren't so tired, I'd wake her up. She prefers to sleep in, especially on a Saturday morning.

"Samuel, stay," she groans in her sleep. I kiss the crown of her head as I move slowly out of her grasp.

"Sleep, baby girl. You're going to need it." Her eyes flutter open for a moment but then close just as quickly.

"Fine, I'll just snuggle into your pillow." I chuckle, already knowing that's what she'll do. I've seen it with my own eyes many times, it never gets old.

"You do that, baby girl. Find me when you wake up." If this were the middle of the week, I'd hit my home gym. Since it's not, I walk to the dresser, open the drawer, grab a pair of swim trunks, slide them up, and walk toward the bedroom door quietly. I take one last look at the beautiful woman in my bed, wishing my body wouldn't wake me up at this Godawful time, as she likes to put it. Years, that's how long it's been since I've been able to sleep in. During my stint in college, I took as many classes as I could while working at a law office as an assistant in the hopes that I could get on as an intern. After graduation, I hit the ground running, days and nights, not stopping until I hit a personal goal. The past few years, I

changed directions, ready to take on a different avenue in the legal system, tired of doing all of the work and only getting gray hair in the end, and a fat paycheck. That way of life only fills a void for so long. Once a seat became available, I was able to slide right in, and that's where I've been the past four years. I'm in my element. The work is hard, but nothing like being an attorney where you've got to be on one hundred percent of the time and prove yourself to everyone, day in and day out.

I make my way through the house. The sun is already up. The plantation shutters that came with the house block the majority of the rays of light that are trying to work their way inside the room. The bedroom is darker, the sun not rising on that side of the house. Along with the shutters, it helps keep it dark, aiding in Eden's penchant for sleeping the morning away. A cool house, little to no light, and me wearing her out make it perfect for her. The kitchen is my first stop. I flip the switch on the coffee pot, so it's brewed by the time I'm done swimming my laps. Plus, if Eden decides to grace me with her presence, a form of caffeine will be readily available. A quick trip the fridge, where I grab a couple of bottles of water, then I'm opening the sliding glass door, leaving it ajar since the weather isn't too brisk today.

I toss the bottles of water on the edge of the pool near the deep end and dive in. Water sluices along my skin as I get lost in the moment, my head nowhere except on keeping my movements fluid, my breathing under control, and relaxing after a long week at work. It's unlike when you're working out. There are more breaks in between each set, allowing your mind to wander. Usually, mine is on Eden, coming up with the next time I'm with her, or what emails need to be responded to, or thinking about what court cases will come across my desk.

My head lifts to the side to take a breath of air before returning to my free style. One hand pulls the water in a cupping manner while other is out in the air, ready for the next stroke until I reach the end of the pool, where I do a flip kick to start all over again. It isn't until I'm ten laps deep that I notice the shadow of a body I know like the back of my hand.

A smile tips my mouth. It seems Eden can't stay away from me either.

CHAPTER 9

I got cold. It's the only reason I would willingly admit to being out of bed this early on a Saturday morning. It's not the actual truth, though. The truth would be that I woke up when Samuel left, and while he told me to go back to sleep, the bed was lonely, he was gone, and I got cold without the warmth of his body snuggling into me. The only good thing about waking up this early was coffee. The delicious scent permeated the air with its rich dark goodness. That's when I said, *fuck it*, got out of bed, traipsed to his closet like a zombie that I still currently am, grabbed a hoodie, and slid it over my head and down my naked body. A brief trip to the bathroom, not bothering to look at what I'm sure was sleep lines slashed across my face and hair a ratted mess. I left the bathroom, grabbed a pair of clean panties to put on beneath the warm fleece material that smells of Samuel Kavanaugh, woodsy with a spicy undercurrent of oranges.

The only thought in my mind was getting to the pot of coffee, where of course he had everything laid out for me, minus my preferred sweet cream coffee creamer. A cup of piping hot coffee in hand, I realize why I was so cold is right in front of me. Samuel left the sliding glass door open to the back patio and pool deck.

"I should have stolen a pair of his socks, too," I grumble as I walk out onto the cold concrete beneath my feet while taking my first sip of coffee, humming in happiness even though the sun is bright, the air is cool, and my toes are probably going to fall off from hypothermia at some point. Samuel's house really is freaking awesome, not a bachelor pad by any means, more set up for a creature of comfort. It's not overly large yet bigger

than my childhood home with its four bedrooms, three bathrooms, and three-car garage. I'd say the biggest expense would be my current view right now—the pool. Where the man of the morning is currently gliding through the water as if he were a natural born swimmer. Not that it doesn't surprise me. The man can do anything, literally and figuratively speaking.

The further I walk out onto the patio, the warmer the pool deck feels underneath my feet, probably because the sun was beating down on it. You still wouldn't find me swimming in a pool at this time of year, even if Samuel's pool is heated all year long. If it's not at least eighty degrees for weeks at a time, it is not for me.

My eyes watch him as I move to the edge of the deep end, where I take a seat, legs criss-crossed. His long hoodie helps conceal the fact that I'm only wearing a thong beneath. The fabric is big enough to hit well past mid-thigh. Being on the shorter side does come in handy, though I wasn't always as upbeat about my stature as I am now. I hated how short I was compared to everyone else in my family when I was growing up. Friends were taller, too. It wasn't until I found high heels that I gained the confidence boost in how they elongated my small stature. It was a game changer; plus, it made my ass look good, too. It also worked out that Samuel Kavanaugh is taller than me, way taller than me. My five-foot three-inch frame to his six-foot-plus one, he somehow manages to make us fit together—in bed, out of bed, anywhere, it doesn't matter.

I enjoy the view along with my coffee, simply watching the man who has slowly taken over my life in the best way possible, knowing the feelings I have for him continue to grow on a daily basis. My body protests the cool weather wrapping around me, sore from the way Samuel worked my body yesterday. It wasn't long after the first round that he made a call, ordering two pizzas, one a white for me, a meat lovers for him as we huddled in his bed, uncaring about the crumbs or the mess we made. We were only going to do the same again later that evening. Which we did, in fact. The leftovers were moved to the floor the second we were through eating, and Samuel was taking me again. Then the sheets were changed

and showers were had. I was exhausted, catching up from not sleeping all that great the night before. The minute everything was done, we were sliding beneath the sheets, me taking over the middle of the bed to get as close to Samuel as possible, needing his warmth and body surrounding me in order to not have another fitful night of sleep.

“Well, this is a pleasant surprise. You got any more in there for me?” Speaking of the man himself, he bobs out of the water, undeterred by the fact that the air is cool. I will never understand how he can work out as much as he does and still have the energy to keep moving. Whether it’s work, leisure, or whatnot, you’ll always see a small motion, a beat of his finger along his desk, the way his foot taps while sitting in one place for too long. The man does not sit still.

I scrunch my nose, unwilling to give him the second half of my cup just yet. “Your bed was cold once you left it, and I don’t think you’ll like it very much.” Two cups of coffee probably would have been the smart thing to make. Not knowing he’d be stopping this early had me second-guessing my plan.

“I’ll be the judge of that.” Water slides down his body, glistening from not only being in the pool but also the sun blazing in the sky. Instead of going for my cup of coffee in my hand, he lifts his body out of the pool, fingers wrapping around the edge of the bull nose pavers, using his arms and upper body alone. Then his lips are pressing against mine while he holds himself up as he takes from me, tongue sliding out to flick at my lips. My mouth opens for him, and Samuel slides right in, much like he did to my heart. “Tastes better coming from your lips, but I’ll take your cup now, too.” He backs away from me. My eyes are locked on his form as he manages to hop out of the pool without soaking me, hand reaching out to help me up from place on the ground once he’s got two feet on the ground and taking my cup of coffee out of my hand.

“Hmmp, that’s not fair. Do you know how silly I’d look if I even attempted to do what you just did?” His fingers lace between mine, and he leads me back to the covered patio.

“I’d enjoy the show all the same.”

“Of course, you would. Naked, too, I’m sure?” He looks over his shoulder, licking his lips and causing me to shudder in my steps.

“Promise?”

“Maybe. Dry off. I’ll go make you a cup of coffee.” Skinny dipping isn’t something we’ve done yet. That will probably change since opening my mouth planted a seed of hope in Samuel’s head. I walk into the house. The tile beneath my feet is cooler than the pool deck, and I’m half tempted to abandon my task of making him a cup of coffee or even refreshing mine to do something about warming myself up.

“There’s no maybe about it. It’s happening. This weekend, if I have my way.” I was barely out of his sight for thirty seconds when he walks through, announcing his presence. My back is to the door, my eyes on the task at hand when he comes up behind me, engulfing me with his heat.

“We’ll see about that.” He dips down, bracketing the outside of my legs with his, pushing closer to me until I can feel his length press into my body. Samuel Kavanaugh doesn’t play fair, and he knows I won’t put up a fight.

“Yes, we will.” My hands shake as I pour his cup of coffee, then my own, a tremble caused by the way my body reacts to his. Thankfully, he backs away, right as I’m turning around to hand him his cup. I take a deep breath of air, knowing that I’m about to admit exactly how I feel about him.

“Samuel.” His eyes don’t close as he takes his first sip; instead, they’re laser-focused on mine, brows arching up in an answer. “I know it’s been a few months of us being together, but I need to get this off my chest.” A flurry of nerves hits my stomach, causing me to stop from carrying on.

“Eden, if this is you breaking shit off with me, it’s not fucking happening.” Well, okay then, not sure how he came to that conclusion, but we’ll go with it, though I do have to say it does make my heartbeat beat rapidly knowing that he cares so much. It should make getting this out that much easier.

“No, no. it’s not that. It’s definitely not that. It’s the other way around, really. I’m falling for you, Samuel Kavanaugh. I know we have to keep things quiet because of my contract, but there’s no way I can hold this in any longer.” I hide my hands beneath the sleeves of his hoodie in order not to wring my fingers together in nervousness. My head is tipped down, anxious about how he’s going to respond to my admittance.

“Then it’s a good thing I’m falling for you, too, Eden Powers. I’d say fuck your contract, the bullshit red tape they put you through. Unfortunately, you love your job too much, and I’m not so much of a dick that I’d ask you to leave either. We’ll get through this, figure things out. If you think for a second about leaving me, I’ll follow you and bring you right back here to me.” That’s all he needs to say. My insides turn to mush. Samuel prowls the short distance between us, coffee mug abandoned, and dips his head until his nose slides along my cheek in a whisper motion, not realizing that he’s given me more than I could have ever asked for.

CHAPTER 10

“Hello. If it isn’t my long-lost daughter,” my mom says as I open the door to my parents’ house the Monday after I spent the weekend with Samuel. Now that we both laid it out, acknowledging that we mean something to one another, I told him it was time I tell my parents about the man who’s swept me off my feet, well, minus the sexual stuff, that is. There are certain things a parent does not need to know, and our sex life is one of them.

“Hello to you, too, Mother.” I close the door behind me and drop my small wristlet bag on the entry table. “I’m your only daughter, your only child for that matter. Where’s Daddy?” It’s well after six o’clock. His truck isn’t in the driveway, but I knew Mom would be home from my phone call to her during lunch today. Which reminds me I need to call my best friend, Amelie. An update on each other is a necessity, like, yesterday.

“You might be my only child and only daughter, but it’s always, *where’s Daddy*. Not a hug for your mother, I see.” She’s sitting on the couch, knitting a blanket for someone at her work who’s having a child, and yes, we’ve had that talk, too—husband, kids, the whole spiel.

“I’m coming, I’m coming. Hold your horses, lady.” I make my way toward her. She doesn’t put down her needles, instead giving me her cheek to kiss.

“That’s better. Your father is still working, but dinner is in the oven. Chicken divan, as you requested. The topping is all that’s left. We can finish it up when we hear the backup

beepers.” She looks up from the colorful pattern, finally done with counting the row to set aside the bright pink blanket.

“That’s fine. I’m going to pour a glass of wine. Want one?” I slide one heel off, then the other. My back, legs, and feet are happy to finally relax since I put them on this morning. If I were smart, I’d grab my clothes from the car, shower in my parents’ bathroom, and put pajamas on. Except that would raise more questions, and while I’m prepared to tell them about Samuel, I’m smart enough not to go into too much detail.

“Yes, there’s a new box of white zinfandel in the fridge.” My mother doesn’t discriminate against wine—bottle, box, small cartons to-go, she’s game for whatever is on sale. A frugal woman through and through, not that I blame her. Both of my parents instilled in me at a young age to save what you can, spend when it’s a good investment, and to always keep a cushion to fall on in your bank account.

“I see we splurged on the big stuff this week.” I open the fridge and pull the wine out, knowing I’ll need to fiddle with the spout. Doing it while letting the bought air out of the refrigerator would have Mom telling me I was wasting money. Yes, I’m thirty years old. That doesn’t mean she or Dad have a problem getting on to me.

“The big box store sale had it. Since you mentioned that you’d be stopping by for supper, I couldn’t pass it up.” I grab two glasses out of the cabinet, no need for anything fancy when it’s in the rosé family, and fill them halfway. I’ll only allow myself the one glass so I can drive home. Sure, my parents still have a spare bedroom in their house that is available, but that would mean going a night without seeing Samuel, and neither of us were willing to allow one another to sleep alone.

“Here you go.” I take a healthy sip. Mom does the same. She looks like she’s barely nearing her forties instead of her fifty-two years of age. I’m thankful that I take more after my mom’s side than Dad’s. Even if that does mean I’m on the shorter side, well, even smaller than Mom in height, but grandma was similar to my build, so that’s where I must have

gotten it from. Grandma Nancy was a hoot, fun-size in package, a personality as big as the sky. God, do I miss her.

“Thank you. Now, as much as I love having you over for dinner, spill the beans.” I choke on the sip of wine; it goes down the wrong pipe. “Call it a mother’s intuition. While you still call me and your father daily, there’s a different tone in your voice. You’re happier, more settled. Tell me all about the man who stole your heart.”

“Wow, I was kind of hoping to talk about him while you and Dad are both here. It might actually work in my favor for us to talk first.” I chew on my bottom lip, trying to figure out where to lead this conversation.

“Get it out already. You act like we’ll judge you or something. We would never.”

“I know that, but it’s no easy when I’ve been dating Judge Kavanaugh for nearly four months. He’s years older than me.” I’m not touching on the fact that fifteen years are between us. “And, well, I’m falling in love with him.” The words fly from my mouth faster than necessary. Mom doesn’t say anything. Maybe this is too much. I mean, he’s my boss, closer to Mom’s age than mine, and I’ve been holding out on her. We talk, always have. Communication was the biggest rule in the house growing up, and while I’m an adult now, this time around, I didn’t, mostly because it was new, exciting, and I wanted to see where it went before broadcasting it to the world.

“And is he falling love with you?” Mom asks.

“He is. We’ve got some hurdles to jump, but we’re both willing to figure things out. Together.” I take another sip of my wine.

“Then that’s all I care about. Bring him around whenever. We’d love to meet him.” She comes closer, wrapping her arm around my waist. My head going to her shoulder.

“I’ll make that happen.” She kisses my forehead, neither of us moving until we hear the backup beepers on Dad’s work truck. We smile at one another and then get to work on

finishing my favorite dish with chicken, cheese, broccoli, cream of chicken soup, an unhealthy amount of mayonnaise, and then the crushed-up croutons to broil on top. If Kavanaugh is lucky, I'll even bring him leftovers.

CHAPTER 11

“**M**y parents want to meet you,” Eden says, curled up next to me, her head on my chest as I lazily trace patterns on her bare back. The fact that she’s telling me this after I took her in the shower doesn’t deter my cock in the least. Feeling her naked tits against my skin, knowing what she tastes like, and how she screams my name when she comes, doesn’t do shit to the flesh between my legs.

“Set it up. We’ll do dinner here. If you can make it on a Saturday or Sunday, even better, so nobody will be scrambling around, getting home from work.” Her eyes focus on mine. The lamp on my side of the bed is the only light in the room. Neither of us was ready to fall asleep yet. So, instead of turning on the television, we slid beneath the sheets, talking about everything except work.

“You don’t mind? I’ll supply the food and drinks. Obviously, I’ll help cook, too,” she offers. There’s something to be said about an independent woman and feeling the need to do more than what’s necessary.

“I wouldn’t have offered if I did. We’ll hit the grocery store together. Figure out what we need, and a date, and go from there. My dad will be in town in the next couple of weeks. If you think your parents wouldn’t mind, we can have it with all of us together.” She stopped at her parents’ house after work, needing to spend time with them, talk to them, and clue them in on our relationship. I kind of assumed Eden had already told her parents, since my father knows about her. My father is retired. The two of us call or text daily, especially after we lost Mom five years ago, well before her time on

earth was up, due to cancer. He hung his robe up early on in life. Now he golfs with his buddies, touring this country as well as others when he gets the chance. If only he'd start dating. Dad has told me time and time again, the one woman who was made for him was taken away from him, and he's not willing to replace her with a woman he couldn't give his whole heart to. For the longest time, I didn't understand it. Being with Eden shows me exactly how he feels. She lifts up, blue-green eyes staring at me, a look of pure seduction and happiness written across her face. Her hair is falling down, a strand curling around a peaked nipple. My hand moves from its place on my chest, traveling the length of the brown-blond lock, watching as her flesh pebbles when I drag the tip of my finger around the pink tip. Eden is always so ready for me, much like I am when it comes to her.

“We're really doing this, aren't we?” she asks. If it were up to me, we'd be a lot further along. That thing about having a self-sufficient woman doesn't stop at her wanting to pay for groceries; it's the fact she'll try to buy our dinner, which gets shot down with only a look, or she spends ninety percent of her time here, yet if I were to bring up her moving in and giving up her apartment, the scathing look she'd give me would make for an argument neither of us wants or needs.

“We're really doing this. I'm more than ready. It's you who needs to catch up, Eden.” Her breath hitches. Our talk this weekend gleamed a light on how she feels. She might have been falling for me, but I was already there. “In case you don't know by now, baby girl, what I feel for you goes deeper than love, and I'll be giving you those words soon. Tonight isn't the night. When it happens, we'll have all night for me to prove it to you.” Eden plants her face in my chest. I can feel the way she's inhaling and exhaling against me, letting her have this moment to gather her thoughts. All I can do is hold this woman closer to me and never let go.

“Okay, I'm better, promise, and I can't wait to hear those three words later.” Her gaze is back on mine, gracing me with a smile.

“Good, if you’re ready to sleep now, I’ll turn the light off. Some of us wake up early, you know,” I tease her. My hand that was on her back slides up her spine, fingers burrowing under her hair. She gets the memo, head dipping lower until our lips meet one another’s. I’d have her flat on her back, hips wedged between her thighs, if not for seeing the tiredness linger around her eyes.

“Not all of us can be as spry as a chicken either, Samuel,” she says right before I take her mouth, nipping at her bottom lip, pulling on it as she sighs in pleasure. My tongue wraps around hers, giving us both the type of kiss we hunger for. I’m about to say *fuck it*. The need to feel her flesh ripple around me. My cock is in full agreement even if my mind is telling me to reel it the hell in.

“One day, Eden, one day.” She shakes her head no. The girl does love her sleep. “Good night, baby girl.”

“Good night, Samuel.” She settles back in the middle of the bed with my arm holding her to me, my other taking care of the light, shrouding us in darkness. A yawn is the last thing I hear coming from her. My own eyes close, and I find sleep with what my parents once had together.

CHAPTER 12

“**F**inally. Eden Powers, if you ever go another week without calling me back, I’m going to fly to you and kick your ass.” I met Amelie in college. She’s from Louisiana, and we’ve been friends ever since. I stayed local. Paying out-of-state tuition was way more than I could afford. Plus, debt was not a good idea if it wasn’t necessary. Amelie’s situation was different, and moving away to Nevada helped spread her wings significantly.

“I know. I suck. I’m sorry. Promise it won’t happen again.” Samuel is currently working out in the pool house turned in-home gym, and the only reason I’m awake this early is because he was adamant about waking me with his head buried between my legs, licking, sucking, and biting at my clit until I came awake, flooding his mouth with my wetness. I returned the favor, my head over the edge of the bed in an upside-down manner, sucking on his length, cradling his balls in the palm of one hand as he took over the pace with the pistoning of his hips, and when he came, I swallowed his cum as his body trembled with his orgasm.

“It better not. Catch me up on everything. I see that just-fucked look written all over your face,” she says. We’re on FaceTime, a routine we usually stick to weekly, except I missed the last few weeks and resorted to texting or calling on my way to or from work.

“Okay, well, you’re about to get more than you bargained for, and this early in the morning, too.” Though, she’s ahead a couple of hours because of time zones, the root of all evil as to why we don’t get to talk longer like we’d both prefer.

“Then hurry up before the judge gets back in the house, duh!” Amelie takes a sip of her coffee; I turn around to grab my mug and do the same.

“Well, things have gotten serious. I mean, we’re the real deal. We both admitted our feelings to one another. Not the *L*-word, yet.” I make the quotes in the air when I talk about the four-letter word.

“Wow, I’m happy for you, so happy.”

“I can hear the *but* coming.” She snorts. I laugh because we both take it a different way, reverting to a teenage boys’ state of mind. It goes on for a few more minutes. Every time we try to talk again, the laughter bubbles out of one or the other.

“Okay, that’s out of the way, promise. How’s that going to work out with the other dude?” She wipes the tears from beneath her eyes. My cheeks hurt from smiling, and I take another sip of coffee to make me think of something else besides butts.

“You know Samuel and I have rules. It works for us, and when it doesn’t, we’ll talk. Plus, there’s no *peen-etration* for one thing. Mouths only, as long as it’s not on my mouth. Hands, yes. Rules are rules. They’ve yet to be broken, and it works for us. And let me tell you, girlfriend, there is nothing better than knowing the man who’s tunneling in and out of your body likes to give you more pleasure than you’ve ever felt before while keeping you safe.” Yes, I used *peen* like that. She gets me. We’re best friends for a reason. Amelie had her fair share of fun in her college days while I was more reserved. Now our roles are reversed.

“Good, as long as you have boundaries. There’s nothing wrong with what you’re doing. I’m happy for my *favorit-ist* person. Now, when are you coming to visit me?” The last time I was down in New Orleans, I learned my lesson with beignets as well as Sazerac, a local drink New Orleans is known for. Bitters and absinthe are no friend of mine, and adding those two combined on little to no food, dancing, having a great time with Amelie, was more fun than I bargained for. It wasn’t until

we made it back to the hotel, each of us running for the bathroom and having to sleep on the cold tile floor when we weren't hugging the porcelain throne, that we found our arch enemy, the one that stares back at you through the mirror, only having ourselves to blame.

"You could come to Nevada, you know. It's been years," I counter bargain.

"Ugh, I wish I could. Getting away from my father sounds glorious, except the fact that he and Mom are currently at each other's throats, so now I'm playing moderator while being stuck in the freaking middle." It's then I notice the dark circles beneath my friend's eyes. This is so not fair to her. Though, to be honest, her dad is a Grade-A dick. Hopefully, her mom doesn't back down on whatever it is they're arguing about because he'll railroad her until she lies flat, letting the train go full steam ahead across the tracks.

"The offer is always here, and if it gets to be too much, I have some vacation days; I'll come to you." I kind of feel like a dick for even suggesting that it's been longer since she came here. "Or we can meet each other and have a girls' weekend?" The idea pops up in my head. It may work better than her leaving her mom for too long.

"I'll keep you posted regardless, but no more text or phone calls. FaceTime, or I'm going to spam your phone with numerous amounts of selfies, videos, and embarrassing footage that Kavanaugh may or may not see." It's funny. I introduced Amelie to Samuel as Samuel Kavanaugh. She picked up on it right away that using his first name was for only certain people. I and his father are those people. A little piece of the man I love, reserving himself in more than one way for those he cares about.

"I do solemnly swear to FaceTime you weekly, no matter what." The videos and picture Amelie possibly has are enough to terrify me.

"I wasn't aware court was in session, ladies." Samuel walks in, sans shirt, body dripping with sweat. He takes my

cup of coffee even though we both know it'll be too sweet for his liking, yet he drinks it anyways.

“Hi, Kavanaugh. Eden, I love you, but I’m not going to watch as you eye-fuck your man.” She rolls her eyes.

“Hello, Amelie.” Samuel’s voice is full of mirth, one hand still wrapped around my stolen coffee mug.

“Love you, Amelie, bye,” I reply, not looking at the screen. I’m in fact staring at the deliciousness in front of me.

“Bye.” The phone hangs up.

“What were you two talking about that had you swearing to video call her weekly.”

“Tell me how much you heard first.” I arch my eyebrows.

“All of it.” His arm bands around my lower back, pulling me into his sweaty body. My hands move to his chest, unable to keep him at arm’s length even if it means taking a shower before work.

“Then you know the answer, Judge Kavanaugh.” His hand that was at my lower back travels up my spine one devastating inch at a time. My head is tipped upward, waiting for his lips to land on mine. I slide my hands up his chest, telling him without saying the words. He finally gets the memo, his head dips low, and he gives me the kiss I’ve been after since he made his presence known. I can taste the coffee along with the sweat on his lips from working out. My core grasps at nothing at the thought of watching as he goes through each interval in the training of his body.

“Legs, baby girl.” Samuel pulls back from my lips. I do exactly what he wants, wrapping my body around his. His mouth comes back on mine, and he continues what he started. I know we’re both going to be rushing out the door this morning. One thing is for certain, it’ll be worth it.

After hearing Eden's conversation this morning with her friend Amelie, I knew today was the day to set something up with Tyler. Which is what I did. I got here before Eden and called him in. He was more than ready.

Now we're nearing the end of the day, and since she left my house this morning, meaning there was no way she could sneak into my chambers before court was in session, it was hard enough to not give in to the temptation to walk with her into the building and kiss her senseless, needing her taste one more time to hold me over for the eight or so hours. I refrained, begrudgingly. It's going to be a long-as-hell seven or so months.

"At this time, the defense rests its case," the public defender says in the case about an armed robbery at a convenience store. It seems this week, we're starting off on the right foot, since we're ending the day. Now I have to decide what's going to happen to the man who decided it was a good idea to attempt to steal a few thousand dollars and is now looking at jail time.

"Do you have anything to add?" I look at Oath Larson, the district attorney. It must be a slow day for him to be sitting in on this case.

"No, your honor." Oath sits back down. I take a deep breath before telling the defendant what's going to happen.

"Mr. Mills, in the state of Nevada, you have committed a felony offense. The evidence speaks for itself with the video surveillance as well as your fingerprints at the scene of the

crime, plus your weapon that is registered to you. You will be sentenced to five years in prison. This is my final judgment. Thank you for your time and service.” My gavel hits the wood block, dismissing court. I close out my computer system and watch until Mr. Mills is taken into custody. This isn’t even my case to preside over. It’s Clark’s, and him roping me into taking over since my day was free, I’m beginning to think he studies everyone’s schedule so he can find some fool to pick up his slack, a game I won’t be playing anymore if he stops me in the hall to ask.

The only good part of the day is watching Eden. I talked more than I normally do in regard to making sure evidence was entered and having both lawyers approach the bench. And each time, my peripheral vision clocked the deep inhale of breath she’d take or the crossing and uncrossing of her legs, hiking the knee-length skirt up with each movement.

“Officer Perry,” I get Tyler’s attention. He walks toward me. There’s a way to get Eden in my chambers without it raising any suspicion, and my bailiff is the one who can make it happen.

“How can I help you, Judge Kavanaugh?” he replies, once he’s in front of the courtroom bench.

“I’m heading to my chambers. Please escort Miss Powers as well, so I can clarify a few things.” I stand up. Tyler nods in answer, coming around in order to open the door and do a sweep of my office just in case.

“I’ll be back with Miss Powers momentarily,” he tells me. I’m already taking off my robe, hanging it on a hook behind the door, then working my way to my desk, pulling my tie off along the way. I sit down in my chair, wake the computer up, and start sifting through work emails until Eden and Tyler are in my office.

That’s when the real fun is going to begin.

I’ve already cleared it with the courthouse that I’d be off limits, needing to take care of some administrative shit. My phone will be off, and my door will be locked.

“Judge Kavanaugh.” I could recognize that soft feathery voice anywhere. My focus is on her, watching as she walks closer to me. Tyler isn’t in here yet, still making sure everyone has cleared the court room before locking it down. I’ve got this completely set out. Now it’s time to put my plan into motion.

“Drop your bag, baby girl.” I sit back in my seat, watching as her bag she was wheeling in is dropped from her hand, and her suit jacket gets draped along the back of the two chairs sitting in front of my desk.

“Now what?” she questions, so impatient and always ready for whatever comes next. The trust Eden has in me, that she has in us, it’s the greatest gift possible.

“Strip for me. Everything except your shoes, Eden.” I’m eager for the show I’m about to receive, starting with her taking down her hair. The clip comes out, and she tosses it on the chair. Her hands slide to the bottom of her top, pulling it up and over her body. Her tits are wrapped in another set I purchased for her. Sheer lace appliqué flowers cover the cups, still showing off her distended nipples.

“Ah, you’re right on time,” I tell Tyler as he steps into my chambers, flicking the lock in place. “Don’t stop, baby girl. Give Tyler a show we both want.” Eden’s eyes become hooded in desire as her hands move to the back of her body.

“May I?” Tyler asks me instead of Eden. A nod is all I give him. The only noise in the room is her heavy breathing. The air is thick with desire, and I’m about to watch my woman come with another man’s hands on her body.

I'm not sure whose heat I feel more—Samuel's with his wicked gaze or Tyler's with his large presence behind me as he pulls the zipper of my skirt down. My eyes never leave Kavanaugh's. In this moment, he's not Samuel. He's the man who takes charge and gives me pleasure unlike I've ever experienced before.

"I wish you could see what I see, baby girl," the man behind the desk states, mimicking the desire I'm sure is written all over my face as Tyler's knuckles travel lower, gliding along the thin fabric between the globes of my ass.

"Step out, Eden," Tyler commands, deep and throaty, as Kavanaugh moves from his chair. I shimmy my skirt the rest of the way down my body, doing as I'm told, bending over. "Son of a bitch," a hiss leaves Tyler as his hands go to the cheek of my ass, cupping it while his thumb skims precariously close to the seam of my pussy. I can feel his hardness beneath the uniform he wears along my heated skin.

"Stay." Kavanaugh reaches me. My hands are holding the silk skirt, not wanting any more wrinkles to appear. I will have to eventually walk the halls to leave the building when this is over. He extends his hand, and I give him the clothes. He's gone for no longer than a second. My hands go to the floor, keeping my balance. The same can't be said for the blood rushing to my head or the wetness coating my core.

"Tyler, switch places with me." A mewl leaves me. I'm impatient; it's who I am and who I'll always be. One man's heat and presence is swapped for another, this one taking full advantage of my folded-over position. "I'm going to take your

pussy, baby girl, while Tyler fucks your mouth.” I moan in response. Kavanaugh doesn’t bother taking my thong off. The fabric has enough elasticity to slide it to the side as his thumb trails me from clit to ass, dragging my wetness along the way. “You’d like that, wouldn’t you, my hand fisting your hair, guiding you as you take his cock. Should I let him play with your tits the way you like?” Kavanaugh doesn’t give me the time to answer as my head lifts up, using Tyler’s thighs to guide me until my back is straight and my eyes are on his thick bulge. One flick of his nimble fingers, and my bra drops, one arm and then the other, as it falls to the ground. “Answer me, baby girl.”

“Please.” My hips push back, begging, aching, and slowly dying inside if he doesn’t get inside of me. This morning, we were rushing around, and sadly, it meant our time in the shower was a tease, literally, rubbing against one another, his cock hard and pressed against his abdomen, my body quivering, in need of a release. Samuel being Samuel kept us both on a slow simmer, and now I know why.

“Tyler, I think she needs something in her mouth, don’t you?” The dual rasp of belts clinks, all while Kavanaugh keeps working my center, two fingers thrusting back and forth. My mind focuses on nothing except the pleasure that’s starting to build within me, watching as Tyler’s cock appears in front of me.

“She does.” Tyler is not a man of many words. My hands move along his thighs. Apparently, neither man is getting naked, only me, and that’s alright. The sensation is heady, knowing that these two men, especially Kavanaugh, want me so desperately that all they care about is getting inside of me however they can.

“Kavanaugh,” I groan, losing his fingers. The hand that was holding my hips moves up the base of my spine. I’m prepared for what’s about to happen as the head of Tyler’s cock presses against my lips as Kavanaugh thrusts inside me, grabbing ahold of my hair. The promise he made earlier is happening. My mind shuts down as the two of them take over, alternating on how they work their lengths into two entirely

different holes of my body. That doesn't mean I'm not getting off on it. Believe me, I am. Tyler's hips rock back and forth, and Kavanaugh's drive is stronger than ever.

"Fuck, baby girl, your cunt is like a vice around my cock." I can feel myself dripping along his length, the folds of my pussy, the insides of my thighs, adding that to what I'm doing with my mouth. It's as if my body isn't my own. A moan leaves the back of my throat when I feel the tip of Tyler's cock go further. Kavanaugh's hand clenches the ends of my hair, pulling on the strands in a way that has my body tingling.

"I'm not gonna last much longer," Tyler admits. My eyes shutter closed when I feel him palm my breasts, thumbs and fingers pulling on my nipples, pushing me to the edge as well, literally. If Tyler doesn't come soon, I will, then all this effort of sucking his cock will have to be rebuilt again. And honestly, after the way we've been going, I'll be lucky if I don't pass out asleep right after coming.

"Pull out and come on her tits." His cock is taken away from my mouth. Hands that were on breasts are gone, too. Kavanaugh uses my hair as his personal rope, lifting me until my back is to his front. He sets a different pace, one that's harder, deeper, and I'm practically his rag doll.

"Oh fuck." Tyler jacks his cock, the saliva from my mouth gliding the way. It's hot as hell watching how he gets off with my body. That's all he'll have, too, because the man behind me screwing the life out of me has my all—heart, body, mind, and soul.

"Look what you do to him, baby girl, watch as he paints your skin with his cum," Kavanaugh growls into my ear. My core clenches around his cock when I feel the first rope of cum splatter across my chest.

"Samuel." It's quiet and breathy, somehow managing to keep myself from screaming like I usually would in the comfort of his home. My head tips back, looking for his lips as my orgasm washes over me, pulling him right along with me, only he's inside of my body, and damn, do I love everything about Samuel Kavanaugh.

W rung dry, that's the only way to describe how I'm feeling. Leaving Samuel after that experience is the hardest thing ever. His arms are where I want to be. Our time inside the courthouse was winding down, and soon, it would have been hard to explain why he and I were the only ones left in the building. Samuel reiterated that while we enjoy bringing Tyler in for fun, that was all he ever would be. As if he needed to make sure I knew that; I was well aware, and while it's fun, if it ended tomorrow, there'd be no pain involved whatsoever. I believe the exact words he used were, *'Our love is ours and ours alone.'* Though, the memory is foggy because I was quite literally drunk on sex, completely unaware when Tyler left. All I know is I floated back to earth completely clean of the mess Tyler made on the front of my body, wrapped in Samuel's arms, and still feeling the slickness of our combined cum between my legs. It was when I was getting dressed that Samuel demanded I keep myself just like I am until we made it back to his house. He wanted his own taste of the two of us, and he got no argument from me.

We've still yet to say that three-letter word to one another. I was tempted to do so while Samuel had me on his lap, sitting sideways, my head tucked into his neck, breathing him in, the tip of my tongue at the ready to speak. I chickened out. Tonight, when we're back at his place, I'll make it a point to say those words even if the man thinks it should be his to say it first. I roll my eyes as I walk down the empty corridor toward the entrance and exit of the courthouse. It doesn't matter if you're an employee here or not, everyone uses the same area. The only difference is, if you have a badge, they

move you to another line that's a whole lot quicker. I'm just opening the door from Samuel's designated courtroom and chambers to the outdoor concourse. The warmer air is a big change from sitting inside a freezing room all day. I take a deep breath, letting it soothe my oversensitive skin.

"Eden, there you are." I turn around at hearing a voice calling behind me, dread like no other filling me because the owner of the accent, a twang that's syrupy sweet and full of condemnation, is none other than my boss. I've been able to avoid one-on-one conversations with her for quite a while, mainly because I hide when she's around or leave quickly after our team meeting. It's a me issue, not a her issue, even if her voice annoys the ever-loving shit out of me. The worst part of this equation is the fact that I quite literally show what I'm thinking in the facial expression department, and now the high of my time with Samuel and Tyler is definitely going to plummet.

"Hi, Cam." I plaster a forced smile on my face.

"Hi, I wanted to talk you. Do you have a moment to come to my office?" Shit, shit, shit. I'm going to have to be quick on my feet. The thought of being alone with her in a small office when I'm sure I smell of sex and depravity is not a great combination.

"Actually, I have an appointment I need to head to. Is it okay if we set something up tomorrow?" I've pulled a fast one, even for myself.

"That will work. Eden, I don't know any other way to say this, but there have been rumors, serious ones, allegations that you've been seen far too much with Judge Kavanaugh." Her voice carries across the concourse. I take a step back, because what part of tomorrow did she not get? Even if I'm in the wrong, her broadcasting this right now is not the time or the place, plus her voice doesn't get any less aggravating.

"That's interesting." I'm so close to escaping this conversation. The exit is in sight, a taste of freedom right in my grasp. Of course, that's when this day goes from amazing to what the hell did I do to the Monday gods and goddesses.

There, in the distance, is not only Samuel but also Tyler. I can feel a flush take over my face even though their backs are turned to us.

“Yes, the sources are of a variety, seeing and hearing, bringing it to my attention, Eden Powers.” She raises her voice a notch, garnering attention that I do not need nor want. Why Cam chose to use my last name and become proper all of a sudden must be to show who’s in charge. Either way, I’m unimpressed. If she knew it would be this serious, the meeting I suggested we set up would have been more appropriate.

“Understood. Please email me a time and date of when you’d like to talk about this in a more professional setting, and I’ll make it happen,” I attempt to stop this from escalating. Samuel and I have a lot of talking to do the minute we get to his house. My only hope is that Cam didn’t read into both men looking over their shoulder when she raised her voice. That would only mean trouble for more than just myself.

“I think now is perfectly okay,” she presses on.

“Mrs. Tervis, if you have an issue, it will be addressed during working hours, and not in front of others, or I will be going to human resources to talk to them about badgering an employee.” Now it’s her sputtering in disbelief. I leave her standing there because I’m over it. Today has gone from amazing to disastrous in two minutes flat.

CHAPTER 16

“I ’m turning in my two weeks’ notice. That was freaking mortifying. Please tell me no one else heard what Cam Tervis had to say?” Eden must have taken a different way to my place or driven around to wrap her head around the way her boss had no problem trying to drag her down. It backfired, though; she made an ass out of herself.

“No, you’re not. Sit tight on quitting. First, tell me everything she said.” Eden is standing still by the door, bag in her hand, not even taking off her heels like she usually does the minute she walks through the doors. I walk toward her, seeing as she is frozen in place, chest heaving, cheeks red. It pisses me the fuck off that the reason isn’t from desire but instead from the thought of potentially losing her job.

“Talking. Apparently, someone is either telling her about you and me, or she’s assuming. I can’t figure it out. We’ve been so careful. I understand this goes against everything in my contract, but who could I have possibly pissed off? I keep to myself for the most part, even at lunch. I’m either talking to Amelie or my mom. If I’m not doing that, I’m reading.” Her face scrunches up in confusion when I’m in reaching distance. “You don’t think Tyler would have talked to others, do you.” I see a whole different emotion, a look of betrayal like I’ve never seen on her face before. I’m not even getting into the fact that Cam Tervis garnered attention to others. Eden would lose her ever-loving shit.

“Listen to me. You know what they say about assuming; it makes an ass out of you and me. Now, the same could be said to Tyler, but I know without a doubt he’d never say a word. He

has as much to lose as you do. He's in this for a bit of fun, not to ruin his career. What I think is Mrs. Tervis is reaching. Tomorrow, I'm going to make it a point to prove she's wrong even though we aren't exactly doing what your contract states. I'm not violating a code of ethics by any means, and neither are you." Eden takes a shuddering breath. The weight on her shoulders slowly leaves her body. My arms wrap around her, pulling her to my body, wanting her to lean on me in a time of need.

"God, this is a mess. I can find a job with another courthouse or a different agency. As much as I love my job working beside you, court reporters have options. Judges probably don't," she says into my chest.

"Look at me, baby girl." My eyes are on the crown of her head. That won't do. I'm ready to see her blue-green eyes without the dread in them.

"I'm sorry, Samuel, so sorry."

"You've got nothing to apologize for. You may have tempted the judge." I smirk before continuing, "It was me who went after you. I admit, the skirts, the heels, the way you carried yourself, all that attitude in the sway of your hips, it only helped make me more aware of what I was going after, and I wasn't going to let you get away." The brightness in her eyes changes. The forlorn look is gone, and in its place is a happiness we've created together.

"I don't know about that; you were pretty tempting yourself. All that confidence, the way your presence fills a room, how you take care of me, it's everything. You're everything." Fuck, this woman, she does it for me.

"I love you, Eden. You're not going to lose your job over something as simple as this. Let me make a phone call. Cam Tervis doesn't have as much pull as she thinks she does." The Chief Judge at the courthouse owes me a favor or two, and it's time I cash it in.

"Samuel, I've wanted to say those three words and hear you say them. I didn't realize how much I needed to hear them. You've shown me you love me, which is more than

enough, but those words... I love you too, so much." The jut of her chin tells me what she wants. My body dips, hands going to her hips, mouth sliding along hers. She playfully drags her teeth along my bottom lip, and that's all it takes. I walk her back until she's pressed against the wall, taking over the kiss. My goal right now is to take her mind off anything Cam or work related. Her hands tangle in my hair, one leg hiking up on my hip, completely lost to me and to me alone. Fuck, this woman is everything I had no idea I ever needed, wanted, or dreamed about. I'm going to do whatever it takes to make sure her job is secure, and with the pull I have, I don't see her having a problem at all with keeping her position in the same courthouse but with a different judge. It'll suck at first, not seeing her while behind my desk, but at least this way, we won't have to hide our relationship.

I really should have called in sick today. There is nothing quite like losing your sense of bravado. Samuel, the amazing man that he is, told me everything would be okay. That's hard to believe when your job is at stake. And while I have money in the bank and can afford to take time off until the next job pops up, it's hard to even fathom. My independence, the need to stand on my own two feet, especially since I've never not had a job, and the thought that it could potentially happen, it'll be a tough pill to swallow. Speaking of Samuel, he was out the door earlier than me this morning. He had a meeting with the Chief Judge before his court hearings today, a later start, which means I was left to sit around and do nothing but play the what-if game for a solid hour. Finally sick of myself, I got up, went to my favorite bookstore with a to-go coffee in hand, and found a new book to read. If anything can get me out of my head, it'll be a good romance novel.

Thankfully, the line doesn't take that long, and no one is wanting to chit chat. Small favors sure are nice to come by. I keep my head down, so even if someone wanted to talk, the way my eyes are glued to my phone gives me that allure of being unapproachable. Texting Amelie is much needed right about now. During lunch, I'm going to need her to be awake and listen to this clusterfuck of a situation.

Eden: 911. I'll be calling the second I'm on lunch. I hope you're available. I could really use your advice right about now.

If Samuel were anywhere near me right now, I can only imagine the look he'd give me while also threatening to delay my gratification in the orgasm department for letting my emotions eat me up inside.

Amelie: Who do I have to kill? Please don't say it's "the judge." If he's the reason, I'm doomed in the man depart for sure.

A snort leaves my body before I can control it. Way to keep to myself. Amelie always thinks she'll end up old and alone. I think that has a lot to do with her parents more than the men around her. No matter how many times I tell her being an old bird lady isn't in her future, she shrugs me off. What can I say? My best friend is a bird mom—inside, outside, it doesn't matter, they're all her friends. And you'd think cats and dogs wouldn't bother her. They do because they scare her pretty babies away, causing her to cuss up a storm and clap her hands to get them away from where the birds birch on the feeders or play in the bird bath.

Eden: The judge is in the clear. My job, not so much. I'd say you finding Mr. Right is still in your future.

Amelie: That's the tits. You'll figure things out. The judge will make sure of it. Call me the second your ass hits lunch. Xoxo!

Eden: Will do, love you!

My best friend is quirky, and I love her dearly. Anytime I can talk to her, whether it's to catch up on each other, the latest gossip in town, or to calm one another on the drama in our worlds, I will. I'm about to put my phone into my suit jacket pocket when it starts vibrating in my hand. My stomach sinks to the ground. When you know something is wrong, you know. It's a feeling that takes over your body, fight or flight coming to mind. While I just made it into the concourse, I'm spinning around and walking right back out.

"Mom, what's wrong?" I answer the phone. We never talk in the mornings. She's doing her thing, getting Dad out the

door, and then doing the same herself. Dad is not self-sufficient in the morning. We're two of a kind when it comes to waking up; neither of us likes it, and the snooze button is hit repeatedly. I'm hurrying until I'm out of the building, the security guards looking at me like I've got two heads. Worry saturates my every pore.

"It's your father. He was out helping his friend Ralph on the roof." I close my eyes. God love my father. The man is retirement age, not that he'll admit defeat in settling down when it comes to any type of handyman work there is; he's all for it, all the while working at his full-time job.

"Is he okay?" I ask.

"Well, honey, he fell." It's taking Mom longer than normal to get it all out, which is fine because I'm still a bit away from my car, and there's nothing she hates worse than me driving while on the phone even if it is hands free.

"I'm on my way. Just tell me where I need to be, Momma." I'll email my boss as soon as everything is figured out and I'm off the phone.

"The hospital. We called the paramedics. He fell off the roof feet first. I'm pretty sure both hips are broken, and goodness knows what else. They were worried about internal issues. I'm following them in the car. I hate to even ask, but will you meet me there?" The independent streak runs strong in our family gene pool. I know what that took her to ask, much like I'd have rather quit my job than to ask for help.

"I'm already back at my car. I'll meet you there. It shouldn't take me longer than twenty minutes. Call me if anything changes. I love you."

"I love you, too, honey. I don't know what I'm going to do if I lose your father," she admits. I don't bother getting off the phone with her.

"Nothing's going to happen to that stubborn man; you'll make sure of it." Even if I have to gang up on him, Dad is still in good shape for his age. That doesn't mean he should be climbing a metal roof, and clearly without a harness.

“You’ve got that right; we’re pulling in now. Call me once you’re here, and be safe. God, I can’t have anything else happen today, so stay off your phone.” I’ve yet to even reverse out of my parking spot, yet she was the one talking on the phone while driving. Talk about do as I say, not as I do in parent language.

“I am. Going to send a quick email, and then I’m leaving.” We hang up. I make a phone call to Cam, but it goes to her voicemail. I leave a message telling her that I’ll be out for the day, if not longer, then draft an email stating the same thing. I may be in the hot seat, but no way am I not covering my ass. Then I call Samuel, already knowing he won’t be able to answer, but he’ll respond when he can. I wait until the beep and then start, “Hey, Samuel.” I suck back the tears that are threatening to fall. “Dad fell off a roof. I’m on my way to the hospital. Love you.” This week is turning out to be a big pile of poop. First work, now Dad. The only good thing that’s going is Samuel telling me those three words. *So, there is that*, I think to myself as I put my car in reverse and make my way to my parents.

“It’s not a violation in ethics at all. Probably a conflict of interest, but nothing we can’t fix. What I’m more concerned with is how it was handled. Eden can be transferred to a new judge, if she wants, for the time being, or stay with you. And tell her not to worry. I’ll be handling Mrs. Tervis. She overstepped her bounds. Majorly.” I gave Michael, the Chief Judge in our building, a small rundown of yesterday while we were on the phone, only getting into it further when our meeting took place, leaving Tyler out of the mix entirely.

“Thank you. I’d appreciate it. She was ready to put in her two weeks’ notice and call it a day,” I tell him.

“That won’t be necessary. I’m going to review the contract. There were revisions to be made after last year. Clearly, they haven’t been fixed.” Michael, much like me, met his now wife in this very courthouse. Only Jen is a court clerk. When everything was said and done, she was able to maintain her job, which means so should Eden.

“She’ll be relieved, that’s for sure. Thanks again for seeing me on such short notice.” I stand up from my seat, hand going out to shake his.

“Never a problem. If she’s uncomfortable in the meantime, tell her to take a sick day. I’m going to get to the bottom of this today. The way it was handled wasn’t professional, and you weren’t the first phone call I received either. Eden is well loved here. A few of the security guards were unimpressed to see her being cornered and scorned out in public.” He shakes my hand. “And don’t mention it. You helped me before. It’s only fair I return the favor.”

“That was a long time ago. Glad you found someone in the long run,” I tell him, talking about the fact that he asked me to be his attorney in a divorce hearing before I took my job as a judge.

“It looks like you may have found someone yourself,” Michael replies. He’s not wrong. I see Eden and me together for the long haul, as soon as we get this job situation squared away.

“You’d be right about that. Alright I better get to work. See you later.” I leave him in his office. When I look for my phone in my pocket, I realize it’s not in there, which means I left it in my own chambers. Fuck, now it’s going to take longer before I can tell Eden the good news. Last night, there wasn’t any way I could keep things off her mind permanently. The only thing that helped for a time was our shower together, where I got on my knees, one of her thighs hitched over my shoulder, her other foot walking outward until she was fully open for me. My mouth was on her clit, sucking the firm bud with deep pulls, two fingers thrusting in and out of her velvet heat, pulling my digits further inside. After she came, Eden returned the favor, pushing me until the back of my knees hit the bench, and then it was her between my spread legs, one hand cupping my balls, massaging them the way I like, with the perfect amount of pressure, while taking my cock to the back of her throat, swallowing around the head and making me lose my mind. Needless to say, it didn’t take her long to suck the cum right out of my body. That’s where the worry-free Eden ended and the woman who let a shrew of a bitch consume her returned. Our dinner was quiet. She pushed her food around, barely touching it. A book didn’t pique her interest either. The only time her mind shut down was when we finally went to bed. The only reason I know she slept peacefully was because I stayed awake, my body wrapping her up from behind and not falling asleep until she was finally at rest.

“Judge Kavanaugh,” Tyler greets me as I get close to my office.

“Hey ,there, you have a minute?” I ask as he opens the door.

“Of course. I’ve got some news to share with you.” Hopefully, Cam Tervis wasn’t that much of a harpy and tried to make Tyler’s life miserable, too.

“I’m all ears as long as it doesn’t involve Eden’s boss,” I grumble. My eyes lock on my phone that’s on top of my desk, face down.

“This have to do with her being talked down to yesterday while we were all leaving?” Tyler stands straighter in his gear, legs shoulder-width apart, arms crossing over his chest.

“That would be Cam Tervis. Michael’s is on it. I’m pulling in a favor. No way I’m going to let her ruin Eden’s career over some dip shit morality clause she’s trying to pull on her. Anyways, enough about that.” I move to the small bar in my office. I’d prefer to start with liquor right about now, but that would be frowned upon, so instead, I make a mug of coffee. Stupid one-cup thing, when I’ll need at least three more to get me through the day.

“I got the transfer. Get this. Alaska. I’m fucking stoked, man. I’ve lived in Nevada long enough. It’s hot as hell, and living remotely sounds like a damn good way to exist.” I had no idea he was looking at transferring. I’m not surprised, though; ever since his incident, he’s more subdued, unlike he once was.

“Congrats, man, happy for you. I’m guessing this was the meeting you were called to?” My coffee is abandoned, as I’m ready to congratulate him with a handshake.

“Yeah, it was.”

“Good, glad for you.” I grab my phone off the desk once we’re done shaking hands and see there’s a missed call on my phone. “Give me a minute. Eden called and left a message.” Tyler nods, heading out of my office door. Little did I know that not even a minute later, I’d be walking out, practically sprinting out of the courthouse, calling Michael while doing so. Eden’s in the hospital, and there will be no way I’ll be able to sit in on hearings, not when she isn’t answering her damn phone.

“I ’m going to go take a walk. Would you like more coffee?” We’ve been sitting in the waiting room for hours. They rushed Dad in, immediately taking him to radiology because his spleen had ruptured. Surgery was necessary for his spleen but also his hips. Rods, pins, physical and occupational therapy, extended hospital stay, all kinds of words were thrown our way. My head is spinning. What I really got from his doctors was that his recovery time is going to be long and hard. Mom is worried, and I’m over here dreading how to keep him from overdoing it.

“No, thank you, honey. I’ll call you if the doctor comes out.” I nod, squeezing her hand, and make my way toward the elevator, head pounding and needing to get the smell of antiseptic out of nose even if it’s only for a few minutes. The ding of the elevator announces that it’s here. The doors open up, and I step inside. It’s empty, no beeping noises, no chatter, just music that would put anyone to sleep. My hands clutch the rails behind my back, my head tips up, and my eyes close. Breathing deeply is doing nothing for the ache in my chest. I could have lost my dad today. That feeling didn’t hit me until I was on my way to the hospital. My strong dad could have tumbled to his death, leaving us behind. My mom would have been a widow all too soon, and I know she’d never find another man like him; not that she’d allow herself to love another. I’d never get the chance for my father to walk me down the aisle on my wedding day or watch his first grandchild call him grandpa.

“There’s no one here by the name of Eden Powers. Are you sure you have the name correct?” I hear my name

immediately when the doors open and make quick work of leaving the elevator, heading to the reception desk. There, looking like he's put through the wringer, running his hand through his dark hair, tousled in the way it usually is after we have sex, stand the man I love. I'm glued off to the side, stunned speechless. Why is he here? Samuel should be at work. I never expected he'd drop his schedule to come to the hospital.

"That's her name. I'll try her cell again. Thanks." He starts to walk away, and I find my voice.

"Samuel." My feet carry me toward him when I finally come out of my stupor. "Samuel, what are you doing here?" He meets me more than halfway, scooping me up in his arms.

"Fuck, baby girl. I got your voicemail, and all I could hear was *hospital*. It cut out. I thought the worst. What's going on?" He sets me down on my feet, cupping both of my cheeks, dipping his big body so we're on eye level. A sense of calmness ashes over me, and I realize that I needed him here more than I could fathom at the time I placed the call.

"My dad; he fell off the roof. He's in surgery." I blink rapidly. Once again, tears are trying to take over, only this time, if I allow it, there will be no stopping the waterworks.

"Eden, shit, I'm sorry. Come on, let's get out of the way." Samuel brings me closer, hugging me tightly to his body while walking me backwards. My eyes close, my shoulders that were at my ears loosen, and I let him take care of me. His scent, the feel of him, it's the only thing calming my imagination from going crazy.

"I'm sorry I worried you. And my phone is in my pocket, but service really does suck here. It's about as good as the parking garage, clearly." I lift my head once Samuel stops moving us.

"You've got nothing to apologize for. Hate that you're making it a habit, too. Twice in two days is two times too many. You called me, I came, much like you'd do for me, okay?" Our eyes lock on each other's.

“Alright. I was going to get coffee and take a walk, but I’d really like you to meet my mom, if that’s okay with you?”

“Of course, you don’t ever have to ask.” Samuel grazes my lips with his, hand sliding to my lower back, and then he’s guiding me to the elevators I just came from. This time around, there are a few other people with us. I rest my head against his chest, feeling needier than ever with the way he’s grounding me in my emotions right now.

“Thank you, Samuel, so much,” I whisper to him, uncaring that there may be others watching our interaction.

“You never have to thank me for being here, Eden. It’s where I want to be.” He walks us into the elevator, silence between us because of the others, not that I’m truly up to talking when we’re in a six-by-six-foot square.

“I will anyways,” I say in a shushed tone, straightening my back and putting on my game face for my mother. There’s no need to add to her worry any more than I need to.

“I’m sure you will,” Samuel replies, a smirk on his face. A few steps off the elevator, a right turn, and a short walk later, my mom comes into view. The soft brunette hair with natural blonde throughout she’s given me is still true in color, not a gray hair that I can see. She truly is beautiful. I make a mental note to head to her and Dad’s house once he’s out of surgery. She’ll need a change of clothes, toiletry, yarn and needles to keep her busy while she sits and waits.

“Mom, I have someone I want you to meet,” I get her attention. She comes to her feet quickly.

“You must be Samuel. It’s so good to put a face to a name. I’ve heard so much about you.” She doesn’t shake his offered hand but instead hugs him, and Samuel doesn’t miss a beat in returning her embrace.

“Only good things, I hope,” Samuel says as they pull apart. “Anything I can get you ladies? Coffee, snacks, a magazine?” he asks.

“Oh, my girl. She’s got nothing but heart-shaped eyes for you.” Moms, I tell ya; they let the cat out of the bag in the

weirdest of times. “I’m okay for now, thank you,” Mom responds, head swiveling toward me, winking while mouthing, *He’s a keeper*. I’m not sure if I should be appalled or happy. I guess he’s won her over with only a few words spoken between them. I get it because Samuel Kavanaugh won me over with one look.

CHAPTER 20

“Don’t forget the crossword puzzles I picked up for your dad,” Samuel tells me while he makes a cup of coffee for his morning commute. It’s been three days since Dad came out of surgery, upset with himself for being injured and hearing the news that he’d be down for six to eight weeks.

“They’re packed. Thank you for stopping at the store to grab them. Are you meeting me at the hospital after work, or will I see you here?” I ask. I’ve yet to go back to work, though that will change come next week.

“Here, unless something comes up and you all need me up at the hospital. I’m going to cook dinner for us and your parents to take them tomorrow.” A literal saint. Hospital food sucks. Dad grumbles about it incessantly. Mom doesn’t say a word, only dealing with it. My goal today is to shoo her out of the room to go home, grab a nap, a shower, and real food. The first time all week, if I can make it happen.

“Thank you.” I walk toward him, needing to make a cup of coffee myself. The goodie bag I’ve been preparing is abandoned.

“I keep telling you to stop thanking me.” I shimmy between him and the counter, arms going over his shoulders, playing with the hair at the base of his neck.

“Thank you.” I kiss the underside his jaw. “Thank you.” I move to his cheek. “Thank you.” My lips land on the corner of his lips. “I’m always going to thank you, Samuel. You’ve done so much for me, and don’t think we won’t discuss the fact that

I got a call from Judge Michael's this morning. You wouldn't happen to know anything about that, would you?"

"I told you I'd take care of you, and I'm doing exactly that. Did you decide if you're taking the offer?" Judge Michael's called my cell phone early this morning, unprepared for what this call could be about. The Cliff Notes were that he didn't want me to leave; it was up to me with three options: stay as a court reporter with Samuel, I could be reassigned to a new judge, or I could take a different position, one with more pay and also more of a headache. I still have yet to make up my mind. A change in job sounds fun, but do I want that on my shoulders? There's so much to think about, and with Dad in the hospital, I've yet to come to a final decision.

"Is it bad that I may pass up the position? If the fraternization clause is gone, I'd kind of like to stay where I am. With you." I must have given Samuel the right answer. His hands grip each of my hips, lifting me up off the floor until I'm wrapping my legs around his waist, still in my nightgown, unlike him in his suit pants. The feeling of him pressed against my core leaves little to the imagination.

"That's exactly where I want you, Eden." My ass and thighs meet the cold countertop. He steps closer, hand between us, mouth attaching to mine in a mind-numbing, soul-consuming kiss. I hear the clank of his belt, the rasp of the zipper, and then I'm feeling the head of his thick and heavy cock, bathing himself in my wetness.

"Samuel, please," I beg against his lips, widening my thighs. His hands move from between my thighs, where he's notched at the entrance to my pussy, traveling up my arms until he's pulling the straps of my nightgown down. I know what's going to happen. I'm going to lose his mouth to my nipples. Samuel has an obsession with them, sucking them as hard and deeply as he can, until I feel my core pulse around him the longer her plays with me.

"Fuck yeah, I'm going to take you hard and fast, my cum inside you, knowing you've got a piece of me with you for the rest of the day." One powerful shove of his body, and he's inside me completely, head dipped low, tongue tracing the

slope of my breast, heading toward a nipple. I find purchase in his hair, sliding closer to him with every push of his hips.

“As long as I’m on you as well.” My body shudders in response. Last night, it was Samuel who brought up the idea to keep our relationship of only the two of us for the next year or so. We were both still young and could start a family after we traveled and spent enough time together without the pitter-patter of soft feet interrupting a moment like this. I’d be lying if I said the thought didn’t thrill me. A child with his dark hair and dark eyes, I don’t care if it was a boy or a girl as long as they take after their father.

“Fuck yes, baby girl. Your cunt is trying to drain me dry, and I’m not ready for this to end yet.” He drags his cock out of me then powers back in, building up the orgasm inside of me.

“Don’t stop. Oh God, Samuel, don’t stop.” My nails dig into his scalp, pulling him closer even though there’s barely any room between us as it is.

“I’ll never fucking stop, Eden, never.” My ankles lock tightly at the base of his back, heels pressing in, spurring him on.

“I love you, Samuel,” I moan as my body locks up tightly, trembling when my orgasm takes over, and I know the man I love will be joining me in only a matter of moments.

“Fucking love you, too, Eden.” Five thrusts for five of the most amazing words I could ever hear tumble from his lips, and he’s coming inside me, making good on his promise. I am one lucky, lucky girl.

Epilogue

Three Months Later

“Hey, Lex, what’s up?” I answer a phone call from an old college buddy, Lexington Ashford. I’d have let it go to voicemail if Eden were awake, since I’ve fucked her into a coma while simultaneously making her my fiancée. I figured picking up the phone for what I’m sure will be a quick conversation isn’t a bad thing. If it is, I’ll hang up the phone and turn the damn thing off.

“Not much. This a bad time?” he responds. I take a deep breath, glad he’s not calling me for a favor. It’d be kind of hard to do with being across the ocean. It took three months to make this trip happen. Eden’s dad has completely recovered after lots of therapy, downtime, and rest. Neither Eden nor her mom refused to leave his side. I thought Eden’s mom was going to be at her wit’s end by the time he started walking on his own. It’s also part of the reason this vacation was three months in the making.

“Nope. Sitting on a balcony overlooking the Seine, waiting for my fiancée to wake up.” I prop my legs up on the chair in front of me, content in the fact that I was sliding inside her while I slipped her engagement ring on her finger, an oval cut diamond ring, platinum, one and a half carats. I almost went bigger but then thought better of it. Eden isn’t flashy in the way of jewelry; she’d rather save that for her shoes. Another gift for her to open once she wakes up. A box is sitting beside her. Shoes and lingerie. The first for her and the second for me.

“Ah, this can wait. I’m in town, but since you’re thousands of miles away in another country, that won’t be happening. Congrats, man,” Lex states.

“Thanks, man. Sucks that I’m here and you’re there. How long are you in Nevada for?”

“Not long. Next time you’re my way or I’m back here, we’ll get together. I’ll have to meet the woman who finally tamed your ass.” I chuckle. He’s not wrong. Took me a damn long time to find the woman who matches me in every way imaginable. Tyler heading to Alaska didn’t make our sex any less hot either; it showed us that it was fun, not a necessity, and the need for one another only burned brighter.

“We’ll make it happen. Good to hear from you. Don’t be a stranger,” I tell him.

“Same, man.” We hang up the phone with one another right as two arms wrap around my shoulders from behind.

“Samuel, you spoil me too much,” she whispers against my ear. My hands cover hers.

“Not enough. Come sit on my lap, Eden.” I move my feet off the chair, planting them on the ground. Her skin is pressed against my naked back. It’s then I realize she’s wearing what I purchased for her. My eyes travel the length of her body. The silk and lace baby doll with matching G-string panties in the soft nude color make it look like she barely has anything on, and I know I’m going to enjoy taking it off her beautiful body.

“Is this where you want me?” Doing the exact opposite of what I expected, my soon-to-be wife is full of surprises. She straddles my lap, her core notched along my hard cock. I’m ready to slide the fabric to the side, pull my shorts down. A forceful thrust of my hips, and I’d be exactly where we both want me to be.

“This is exactly where I want you to be. I hope you’re ready to start planning our wedding. I’m not going to wait a long time. I want my last name to be yours, the sooner the better.” My hands engulf the globes of her ass, bringing her closer. Eden gets the message.

“I’ll start planning it the minute we get back home. It won’t take too much work as long as you don’t invite the whole town, Judge Kavanaugh,” she says right before pressing her lips to mine.

“Eden, the only people I care about are our few friends, your parents, and my dad. The rest can fuck right off,” I tell her before I take our kiss deeper, showing Eden exactly how I feel about making her my wife.

Epilogue

Two Years Later

“Jesus, I’m fucked.” I run a hand down my face. In the crook of my arm lies our two-month-old baby girl, asleep, full from her mother’s breast milk, and smiling in her sleep.

“You are. Your mother said something similar the day you were born. She figured it would be her turning all the girls away in your teenage years. She wasn’t wrong. Those brazen girls would start calling before you even got home from football practice.” Dad shakes his head, lost in a memory. Eden being the amazing woman she is named our little girl after her. I don’t know who cried more when she presented the idea to my dad and me. I’m pretty sure it was a combination of all three of us shedding a shit ton of tears. Even though Dad and I tried to shrug it off like it was no big deal when in fact it was, she gave us the best gift possible.

“She’d love our little Marie,” Dad replies, right as the front door opens. It’s been Grand Central fucking Station since we got home and told everyone they could come. I never thought it would be all day of every weekend, sometimes during the week, too, when I was working.

“Where’s my goddaughter?” Amelie announces her presence. She comes into town every other month lately.

“Shhhh, she just fell asleep,” I tell her. I’m going to lose my girl from my arms as soon as Amelie can get her out of my grasp.

“Fine, I’ll go see Eden. Is she asleep, too?” Amelie puts one hand on her hip and arches her eyebrow, red hair going perfectly with the attitude she throws everyone’s way. One day, she’s going to meet her match, and it’ll take one determined person, too.

“No, she’s out on the back porch enjoying the sun on her skin.” Marie has been keeping us up at night. Her days and nights are completely off track, which is why after Eden was done nursing Marie, I told her to go take a break. That’s also about the time my dad, her parents, and now Amelie made themselves welcome.

“Good, I’ll go join her.” Amelie kisses Marie’s forehead.

“I’m going to see what we can scrounge up and start the grill. May as well make myself useful around here.”

“Thanks, Dad. I’m going to attempt to put her in the bassinet in our room. We’ll see how that goes. It seems the second she’s out of anyone’s arms, she wakes up.” We created this beast; now we’re paying the price. That’s okay. Marie will only be little for so long; we may as well enjoy it while we can.

“We’ve all been there. You and Eden will find your groove.” Dad claps my back and heads toward the kitchen. There are chicken wings in the fridge I was going to grill later today, along with vegetables and fries.

“Come on, sweetheart. Let’s see if you can’t sleep for a couple of hours before you wake up asking for your mom’s boob again. You’re lucky you’re cute because there’s only one person I’d share them with, and that’s you,” I tell the beauty who has her mom’s soft brown and blonde hair, blue-green eyes, and the same cupid’s bow lips. She’s going to be a damn heartbreaker. That thought makes my chest ache. Shit, maybe I should talk to Eden. Another boy in the house might not be a bad idea. We should start trying, and soon. Some might think having two children close in age is crazy, but I’m not getting any younger, and the bond the two might have after their teen years won’t be bad either.

I lay her down on her back. The bassinet is placed beside Eden's side of the bed. I watch as her lips start moving in a discontented way. Sure she's going to cry to be held, I coo softly until Marie settles down. I stay where I am, watching as she falls asleep, when two arms wrap around my waist from behind.

"We're so lucky, Samuel, you know." Eden places a kiss along the spine of my back. I move so my arm is up and around her shoulder, bringing her closer to me, looking down at her tired eyes. She can't stay away from Marie either.

"We are, Eden. God, are we ever." I don't bring up the idea of having another right this minute, but it's coming soon, and I have a feeling she'll go along with my plans. If not, I know how to persuade my wife while her body is on full display, hands wrapped around the headboard, and my head buried between her thighs until she gives me the answer we both want.

"Love you, Eden," I tell her, my eyes bouncing from Marie's to hers.

"I love you, too, Samuel, so very much."

Coming Next

Ledger and Tulsa Rosa's story the 2nd book in the Men in Charge series releases March 26th

Staking His Claim

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Prologue

Ledger Sinclair, age 27

I never thought I'd be in the position I am now, my best friend gone, way too soon, and way too fucking young, Montgomery Williams. The same age as me, childhood friends, they'll be

no more dinners, no more sitting on the front porch shooting the shit while enjoying a beer at the end of a long as hell day. How the hell this could happen, to a man as loyal as Mont, I've got not damn clue. The call I received in the middle of the night jarred me awake, nothing good comes from the phone ringing at two o'clock in the morning. The person on the other end of line, Tulsa Rose, seventeen years old, a girl turning into a woman. Only two people on this earth could have been calling me, Mont or Tulsa, considering there was a shit ton of sniffing going on from the other end of the line, I knew, my stomach sunk to my feet. Neither of us said a word, feeling like I was about to be sick, I swung my legs over the edge of the bed one hand holding my cell to my ear, my forearm on my thigh, trying to gain my composure before making my next move. What seemed like a lifetime later when in fact it was only fifteen minutes, I was dressed, out the door, driving the few short minutes between my place and the Williams. The two cop cars were parked behind Tulsa's car, Mont's truck wasn't in his usual place, and the second I was out of my truck long limbs were pumping their heart out, tears streaked down her face, hair flying behind, and I had to brace for impact as she leapt into my arms, feeling her tears saturate me as Tulsa let loose. It was only once she fell asleep in my arms after hours of sobbing while I sat on the front porch steps that the two deputies told me what happened, one a friend of mine and Montgomery's, the other one an older gentlemen that'd been on the force for years told me Mont was traveling home, when he was t-boned by a drunk driver, dead on impact, at that point I was holding tighter to Tulsa than I probably should have and it was me that had wetness coating my cheeks. That was less than a week ago. Today is the funeral and to say that things aren't going well would be putting it lightly, Tulsa has completely shut down, eyes downcast, body sunken in on itself, can't say that I blame the girl. The Williams family has not had it easy, shit that comes in three's fucking suck, especially for the girl standing next to me.

"We're so sorry for your loss," those words are repeated over and over again at the graveside service we're having for Montgomery, his final resting space right beside his family in what is now a family plot.

“Thank you,” I respond, Tulsa’s body is leaning on mine, her hand goes from its place on my bicep down to my fingers, entwining our fingers together. A twitch in my body takes place at the wrong fucking time. Montgomery knew that Tulsa had no problem prancing in front of me, so close to being eighteen, figuring that the look she gave me was one-sided, it absolutely was not, and I had to talk myself out of so much as glancing in her direction when she would walk outside through the house in her bathing suit on her way to the pool out back of the Williams house. I curse myself at the feeling of her tits pressed against my arm. She’s too young, gone through too damn much in her short life to be saddled with someone ten years older than her

“Ledger,” Tulsa squeezes my hand to get my attention.

“Yeah, Tulsa?” her head tips up slightly as mine lowers.

“I need to get out of here, it’s too much,” blood shot eyes that are usually clear hazel eyes.

“Go ahead, I’ll handle the rest of this. It shouldn’t be too much longer,” Tulsa wraps her arms around her frail body, and I’m going to have to make sure she takes care of herself.

“Thanks,” she nods before taking off, the black dress whips around her body with the wind, you can smell the air, a sure sign of the rain to continue. Hopefully this will be wrapped up, we can head to the attorney’s office, Tulsa will eat then finally get some damn sleep and me, I can drown myself in a bottle, it doesn’t matter what kind of bottle it is either, beer, tequila, vodka, whisky, or bourbon, all five would be good with me right about now. Anything to drown out the thoughts of how Montgomery is gone, and I’m left with the memory of how Tulsa and her firm little body feels against mine.

Tulsa Rose, age 17

If someone told me I’d lose three of the most important people in my life within years of one another, I would have told you

it's impossible. There's no way my mom would have passed away at the age of ten, a massive heart attack while dad was at work. I was at school, and my brother was away at college. My father greeting me at school in the middle of the day should have been a warning, the turmoil was written all over his face except I was young, not realizing what was going on, running towards him, a smile plastered on my face thinking he got off of work early and was treating me to a day away from school with ice cream. That wasn't the case, dad didn't hear from mom at her usual check in time around lunch, he had a weird feeling that something was wrong, went home and found her unresponsive, it was only years later that I learned she died from a massive heart attack, two years later dad passed away in his sleep, a broken heart. Montgomery, God how I'm going to miss my big brother, he picked up the broken pieces of our life, became the brother, father, and friend wrapped up all in one and now I'm not going to ever get to have those talks over ice cream when a boy at school annoys me or it's that time of the month and the world feels like it's hitting me at every single angle. God, I could use him right about now.

Instead I'm sitting in an attorney's office in town, Ledger sitting beside me as we hear the final words of Montgomery's last will and testament.

"Tulsa, Ledger, hate like hell that I'm once again here with your family," Mr. Flay says.

"Yeah, I can't say that I blame you either," Ledger says to him, I've been quiet, lost in my own thoughts, worrying about everything that's going to happen from here on out.

"Ledger, you've been given guardianship to Tulsa Rose where Montgomery wants her to go to school in Alabama, there's been money set aside as well as on campus living. Ledger and Tulsa will be responsible on what happens to the only home I know," I gasp, appalled, how could Montgomery send me away, it's bad enough everyone else in our family has left me and now this.

"I'm not going to Alabama, I don't care what Montgomery says. I'll stay here go to college," I stand up, feeling dizzy as I

do so, cussing myself black and blue because my appetite has been gone.

“You’re going to Alabama, you’ve been dreaming and working your whole damn life to get into that college. If this is what Mont wants, it’s what you’ll do,” Ledger’s voice is unlike I’ve ever heard before, deeper, darker, angrier. That’s good because the feeling is entirely mutual.

“It’s a good thing you’re not the boss of me Ledger Sinclair,” I mouth off, hands going to my hips, stomping my foot. I hate today, I hate all days, I hate Monday’s, Wednesday’s, and I especially hate Saturday’s. But today, it might just be the icing on the cake.

“I’ve got a piece of paper that says I am, so get over your little snit. Why would you want to stay in this small town, you’re seven freaking teen. I’ll keep the house the way it’s been until you’ve graduated college, spread your wings. Montgomery didn’t get that chance, he ever once begrudged anyone for that but he damn sure wanted to give you everything he could,” Ledger says, I can’t take it anymore, the world as I know it is no longer my own, I spin on my heels, running for the door, not ready to lose what little dignity I have left. I push the doors open with energy I thought was long gone, my head stays down, the reception area is empty minus Leslie, Mr. Flay’s secretary, even she doesn’t say a word. I’m pretty sure this isn’t her first time seeing people run away from their problems because that’s exactly what I’m doing, the next door gives just as easily. The fresh air, the hot sun, the slight breeze it’s what I need and it’s all about to be taken away from me. Yes, I’m aware Alabama still has the same air, sun, and weather as Florida, it’s not home though at this point I’m unsure if I even have a home at this point if that wasn’t left to Ledger as well.

My ass hits the curb, the concrete hot and feeling good beneath my funeral dress, arms wrapping around my knees, head tipping to the side, the tears I thought were coming are suddenly bone dry, “You didn’t have to run away Tulsa, we could have talked.”

“Go away Ledger,” I mutter, opening my eyes to look at him, soft wavy brown hair, chiseled jaw, angular nose, green eyes, a full beard that’s short and trim, and the same dark circles I have beneath my eyes mirror his.

“Not happening, Come on, we’ve got some talking to do, butterfly,” he calls me by a name I haven’t heard him use in years, hand out and requesting me to take it in a quiet manner.

“I think it’d be better if talking wasn’t necessary,” his calloused hand slips in mine, engulfing me in more ways than one. Ledger helps me off the ground, pulling me into his body, allowing me to rest my head on his chest, arms going around his waist, I should hate him. He’s so readily willing to push me away, and what do I do, I burrow into him further, breathing in his presence, a mix of leather, pine, and bergamot, a scent I’ve known for as long as I can remember. Any chance I could get to be near him, I took full advantage of it, a hug hello, a wave here and there, I soon figured out he wasn’t as immune to me as I once thought he was either.

“Spread your wings, Tulsa Rose, be the butterfly you were always meant to be, come home for the summer if you want or stay up there, it’s entirely up to you. But you’ve got to do this, even if you hate me for driving you up there,” Ledger may be breaking my heart bit by bit, word by word, and know one thing for certain, he’s not as unaffected as he plays off to be. My body is flush against his, a presence against my stomach. There’s no way it could be anything else than Ledger’s length, hard, clearly thick, girthy, and long judging by the way it’s jutting upwards, and one day I’m going to make Ledger Sinclair regret the day he pushed me away.

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About the Author

Tory Baker is a mom and dog mom, living on the coast of sunny Florida where she enjoys the sun, sand, and water anytime she can. Most of the time you can find her outside with her laptop, soaking up the rays while writing about Alpha men, sassy heroines, and always with a guaranteed happily ever after.

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Julia: How do you deal with me and my extra sprinkling of commas? The real MVP, the one who deals with my scatterbrained self, missing deadlines, rescheduling like crazy, and the person I live vicariously through social media.

All this to say, I am and will always be forever grateful, love you all!