

AN AGE GAP ROMANCE



Wicked
LITTLE
THOUGHTS

IVY ARNOLD

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Also by Ivy Arnold

“**N**ope. No way. Not going to happen.”

Hands on my hips, I glare at my brother, Luke. Of all the stupid, ridiculous ideas he’s come up with, this one takes the cake. Pretending to be one of his asshole friend’s “girlfriend” so he can get some stupid promotion? That’s low.

“Come on, Luce. Just hear me out.”

“I’ve heard enough already,” I retort. “If your friend needs to lie to get a promotion, then maybe he should find a different job—”

“Noah is the best person for this promotion, but his boss is being an asshole about it, all because he’s been in a tiny bit of trouble with the media,” Luke replies.

“A little bit of trouble?” I hoot. “The guy *lives* in the gossip pages. And now that I know it’s Noah who needs help, I’m definitely out. And why are you so concerned about his promotion?” I ask, eyeing my brother suspiciously.

Noah always has the spotlight on him. He regularly makes the gossip columns, just purely because of the revolving door of beautiful women he has leaving his apartment every night. Last month he found himself in particularly hot water after a girl he picked up claimed she was underage. It turns out the girl was actually twenty-two and just looking for a quick pay cheque, but still nothing surprises me when it comes to Noah. I’m all for having fun while you’re still young, but dude, you’re thirty-two. It’s time to rein it in and get serious with

your life. Get married. Have kids. Then again, Noah is definitely not the type of person to settle down.

“He’s my friend.” He shrugs. “He deserves a break.”

A break? I nearly laugh in my brother’s face. He’s the grandson of one of the richest men in the country. The last thing Noah ‘deserves’ is a break. He’s a cocky, arrogant playboy who always gets what he wants. Well, not this time. At least, not with my help.

“What’s the matter, Sloan? I thought pretending to be my girl would be all your dreams come true, after those sexy stories you used to write about me when you were in high school.”

Gasping, I spin around at the sound of Noah’s sexy voice. He saunters into the room, giving me one of his trademark smirks as he sinks down onto the couch. My cheeks heat and I quickly turn away, wishing he didn’t affect me like that.

It’s no secret that I had a crush on Noah when I was younger. He’s my brother’s best friend and ten years older than me. That alone meant we were never going to happen. That didn’t stop sixteen-year-old me dreaming about it, though. Or writing about us, in *very* graphic detail, in all kinds of delicate situations.

The worst day of my life was when Noah found my notebook full of stories that I had accidentally left in the basement one weekend when he was staying over. He read them, then handed me back the notebook, telling me he particularly loved the last one involving him, me, and some bondage scenes that would make *Fifty Shades* feel like a children’s book. I was so embarrassed that I did everything I could to avoid the guy from then on. I did a good job, too. In the last four years, I’ve barely exchanged a conversation with the guy.

“Well, you thought wrong,” I retort in my iciest voice. “I’ve got better things to do with my time than pretend to be your girlfriend.”

“Do you really, though?” I shoot a glare at Luke. Damn my brother and his big mouth. “And are you really in the position to turn down five hundred dollars?” my brother adds, not deterred by my death stares. “Weren’t you just crying to me about how broke you are?”

Shit. I hate it when he’s right.

That money *would* come in handy, especially since rent is due next week and they have cut down my hours at the café. God, I hate my job. One more year until I’m done with my law degree and then I can kiss that job goodbye. Until then, I need to live, though, which means I have to be nice and take what they give me. Extra money sure would take the pressure off...

“Make it a thousand and I’ll do it.”

“A thousand?” Noah lets out a low whistle. “There better be a happy ending in it for me for that price, Sloan,” he adds, calling me by my last name.

“A thousand and I will do the bare minimum,” I snap back through gritted teeth. “No hugging, no kissing, and certainly no sex. Take it or find someone else.”

Noah looks me up and down, a lazy grin playing on his lips, his warm brown eyes full of amusement. I hate how much he’s enjoying this.

“Fine,” he finally agrees. He smirks at me in a way that makes the tiny hairs at the back of my neck stand on end. “Guess you’re all mine for the weekend.”

God, I hate him so much. But I hate myself even more, because as much as I don’t want to be turned on by this guy, I know I am. In every damn possible way. I swallow and wet my lips, giving him the most hostile look I can muster.

“I think we should set some ground rules,” I say coolly.

He raises an eyebrow. “Didn’t you already do that with the no physical affection thing?”

“One,” I begin, ignoring him. “I am *not* sharing a bed with you. I want my own room. Two, don’t talk to me unless it’s

necessary. Finally, no road trips. I refuse to be stuck in a car with you for any length of time.”

He winces, a toe-curling smirk spreading across his very kissable lips. “That one is going to be a bit hard, considering we’re off to the coast.”

Shit. That meant about two hours in the car with him.

Alone.

Just think of the money.

“Whatever.” I give up and turn to my brother, wanting to communicate with Noah as little as possible. “When is this function?”

“This weekend,” Noah answers before my brother can.

“Fine. Text me the details.”

I turn on my heel and stalk to the door. Just before I reach it, Noah calls out to me.

“Oh, and Sloan?”

I stop, but don’t turn around.

“Are your books available in audio yet? You know, the ones you wrote for me.” His voice drips with amusement. “I figured that could take care of the entertainment for our road trip.”

I take a deep breath and close my eyes, forcing myself not to engage, because I need this. Without this money, I am fucked. As much as I hate to admit it, though, I might well be fucked either way.

“So let me get this straight.” My best friend, Kara, sits cross-legged on my bed, watching me as I pack, her straight, dark hair pulled back into a tight ponytail. “You’re pretending to be Noah Griffin’s girlfriend for the weekend? As in the billionaire Noah Griffin? As in the same Noah you wrote all those sexy stories about when we were younger?”

“Yep,” I nod, cringing at the reminder. “That just about sums it up.”

She giggles. “Oh please, can I come too? This is going to be a riot.”

“No, you can’t come. And this is strictly business,” I say firmly. “A means to an end. I have no interest in Noah, other than making sure I can pay rent this month.”

“Um, really?” She picks up one of the sexy lacey thongs tucked into my suitcase using her pinkie finger and wiggles her eyebrows at me. “I’m sorry but you don’t pack underwear this sexy unless you’re hoping to get some action.”

I snatch it off her and stuff it back in the case.

“I assume this means you’re open to some kind of frolicking?” My friend grins at me, a mischievous look in her eyes.

“Frolicking? What are you, eighty?” I scoff. “And no, I’m not open to anything, *especially* when it comes to Noah.”

“Come on, you used to fantasise about the guy when you were in high school. Probably fingerbanged yourself, too. Feelings like that don’t just disappear.”

“Yes. They do. And he’s way too old for me anyway, even if he does act like he’s eighteen. *And* he’s my brother’s best friend,” I remind her.

“Who cares? You’re twenty, Luce. And older guys are hot as fuck. And I bet he’s a beast in the bedroom,” Kara adds with a giggle.

“Yeah, well, I’m never going to find out.”

“What did you end up doing with those stories anyway?” she asks.

“I threw them out,” I lie. The truth is, they are sitting safely in a shoebox under the bed she’s sitting on, but there’s no way in hell I’m telling her that.

“Do you still write?” she asks.

I shake my head. “I kind of lost interest after what happened,” I say dryly.

Writing is something I have always loved doing, but after what happened, I found myself panicking every time I put pen to paper. Eventually, I just gave up trying altogether and convinced myself it was just some childhood hobby I had gotten over.

“You should do it again,” Kara decides. “All jokes aside, you were obviously passionate about it. Write some and put them out there. See what happens. You never know, you might end up doing a day job that you actually love.”

“I like law,” I argue.

“Come on, nobody becomes a lawyer because they enjoy it.” She rolls her heavily made-up eyes. “Anyway, back to sexy arrogant Noah. The more I think about it, the more I think this is exactly what you need. A good, no-strings fuck to get you out of your rut.”

“Kara,” I say, laughing. “I can promise you that there is no way in hell that is going to happen.”

“Bet you fifty bucks you cave,” she grins.

“You’re on,” I smirk.

We both jump when a horn blasts downstairs. Annoyed that he’s so early, I glance at the clock and realize he’s actually on time. I’m the one who is running late.

“Crap,” I mumble, struggling to zip up my suitcase. “You know where everything is, right? Just don’t trash my house, and look after my cat,” I say to my friend.

“I know, I’m a very capable house sitter, you know. I’ve even got references,” she yells out after me.

I bolt out of my apartment, giving my cat Penny an affectionate tickle behind her ear along the way. After fumbling my way down the single flight of stairs with my suitcase, I push through the complex door and step outside. Noah leans against his car and I stifle a groan. He looks hot dressed in distressed jeans and a leather jacket, his short curls just begging my fingers to run through them. I ball my hands into fists, keeping them firmly beside me. Ignoring him might be harder than I thought.

Keep your shit together.

“Hey, Sloan,” he drawls, his dark eyes piercing right through me. “Ready for our road trip?”

“As ready as I’m going to be,” I mumble.

“Have fun, you slutty bitch!”

I glance up to see Kara hanging out of my apartment window, waving like a maniac. I cringe and Noah raises his eyebrows at me as he reaches forward to take my luggage.

“Friend of yours?” he asks, tossing my suitcase in the back.

I roll my eyes. “Let’s just go.”

“What’s the rush?” Noah asks. “I thought we could get to know each other a little better before we go. You know, cut through some of this obvious sexual tension.”

He backs me up, trapping me between him the car, not giving me a chance to react. Then, he leans closer and kisses me square on the lips. It's so unexpected that it catches me completely off guard. As shocked as I am, even I can't deny that I felt the earth move the moment his lips met mine. My body trembles as I push him away, struggling to regain my composure—while also trying to ignore Kara cheering from above.

“What the hell was that?” I growl, refusing to acknowledge how fucking incredible that kiss really was.

“I thought I'd break the ice.” He shrugs like it was no big deal that he just had his tongue down my throat. “You need to be convincing as my girlfriend or this is not going to work.”

I need to be convincing?

We're not even at his damn work function yet.

Angry, I slide into my seat and slam the car door shut. My lips still tingle from his kiss and I find myself reaching up to touch them. Noah walks around the front of the car and slides into his seat, the soft aroma of his aftershave engulfing me, making me feel light-headed. I shake my head, annoyed at myself.

“Please don't kiss me or touch me again,” I say firmly.

“You didn't like it?”

“That's not the point—”

“Ah, so you *did* like it.” He gives me a shit-eating grin that I just want to reach over and smack off his face. “You sure kissed me back like you enjoyed it.”

“My body reacted,” I retort hotly. “When I realized what you were doing—”

“Ah, so your body wants me but your mind doesn't,” he clarifies.

“Just shut up and drive,” I growl.

We're five minutes in and I'm already losing my mind.

This is not going to be a fun trip.



WE'RE NEARLY two thirds of the way into our car trip and the tension between us is growing. Noah feels it too. I can tell by the way he keeps glancing at me with that sexy smirk on his lips. I do my best to keep the conversation professional, because the less personal we get the more chance I have of coming out of this alive.

“Where do you even work anyway?”

I always assumed he worked for his grandfather, but I have never actually asked. I don't know much about his family, but I do know they own several big companies that focus on real estate. But that doesn't make any sense, because why would he need to impress his boss if it's a family business? And why the hell would he need a fake girlfriend? As if he can see the questions ticking over in my mind, Noah starts to explain.

“I work in real estate, but not for my family. I wanted to do things on my own, you know, and not rely on my family name to get ahead in life,” he says, glancing at me. “So I went out and got a job at a rival company so I could pave my own way.”

Wow, I actually have some respect for the guy now.

“That's impressive,” I admit. “I guess I always assumed that you'd ride the coattails of your family name as far as it would take you. No offence.”

He chuckles, not looking the least bit offended. “I forgot how much I like you, Sloan. You're so direct and to the point.”

“So where is this function?” I ask, getting the subject off how much he likes me and back on to why we are here. “Is there anything I need to know?”

“It's at a resort on the coast. Once a year, the company likes to put everyone up and make everyone forget how much they hate their jobs.”

“Sounds wonderful,” I say making a face.

“So, what about you?” he asks. “Are you still at university?”

“Yes, it’s my last year,” I nod.

“And then what?” he prods.

“Then I’m a lawyer,” I say with a smile.

“Really?” He looks surprised. “I never picked you for a lawyer.”

“What would you have picked me for, then?” I can’t resist asking.

“After reading those stories you wrote me?” He gives me a look that almost melts my panties. “Maybe an author, for one. Or anything to do with writing.”

“I didn’t write them *for* you,” I snap, my face heating up. “You found them and took it upon yourself to read my personal property.”

“For me. About me. Same difference,” he dismisses. “My point is, they were damn good. I thought for sure that you were going to become a writer of some kind.”

As much as I don’t want his words to please me, they do.

“Yeah, well, writing isn’t likely to be something I can make a career out of,” I mutter, my cheeks heating. “At least I can count on law getting me to where I want in life.”

“Sure, but wouldn’t you have a lot more fun writing?”

“Why does everyone think a law career is boring?” I explode.

“Because it is,” he replies, matter of fact. “Unless you’re Harvey Specter. You know what makes that show great? The writing.”

“What’s your point?” I ask. “Why do you care so much about my career, anyhow?”

“Because I hate to see a good talent go to waste,” he shrugs. “The world needs more female smut authors, Sloan. Especially hot, talented ones.”

I glower at him, sure he's taking the piss, but he looks serious, like he means what he's saying.

"You read smut?" I ask, completely ignoring the fact that he called me hot.

"Sure, I do," he says. "I guess you could say your stories sparked something in me."

"Who's your favourite author, then?" I challenge.

He smirks. "You would be, if you got your shit together."

He gives me a panty-melting grin and I have to force myself to look away. Just when I think Noah can't get more appealing, he manages to. I'm going to have to try even harder not to fall for his charms now, because I know the moment I let my guard down, all my resolve will fly out the window. I cannot let that happen.

"Whatever. I don't have time to write anymore," I mutter, even though it's a lie.

"Your call," he says with a shrug. "All I'm saying is, you wrote some damn good stuff at sixteen. Imagine what you could do today." He gives me a sexy smile. "And hey, if you need me to be your muse, I'd be more than happy to oblige."

"Thanks, but there will be none of that," I retort. "Maybe you should just focus on driving and getting us there in one piece?" I suggest sweetly.

"What can I say? I multitask incredibly well," he murmurs.

His gaze lingers, making the double meaning behind his comment very clear.



WE FINALLY ARRIVE at the hotel and it's absolutely beautiful. Situated on the water of the NSW North Coast, the resort is secluded, complete with both hotel-style rooms and a series of more private villas that are stretched out along the beachfront. It's very romantic, which makes it exactly the kind of place I do *not* want to be stuck in with Noah Griffin.

Please let us be in the hotel and not one of the ridiculously romantic villas.

We walk inside the main reception area with our bags. While Noah checks us in, I look over my phone messages, ignoring the one from Kara telling me to hit that sexy ass or she will. My ears perk up when I hear a king bed mentioned. I glare at Noah.

“You totally ignored my rules, didn’t you?” I accuse.

“Of course, I did,” he replies without hesitation. Amusement fills his eyes. “You’re supposed to be my girlfriend, Sloan. How weird is it going to look if we’re in separate rooms?”

“It’s not that weird,” I argue. “Not every relationship has to be about sex.”

“With me it does,” he says simply. “No one is going to believe that I’m dating a woman who demands a separate room.”

“Fine, but you could have asked for twin beds,” I grumble.

“I could have. But I didn’t.” He grins at me. “We need to make it believable, remember?”

“I’m sorry, is your boss planning on coming into our room in the middle of the night to check our sleeping arrangements?” I retort, standing my ground.

“Maybe.” He smirks. “Better to be safe than sorry.”

“Then I hope you’re comfortable sleeping on the floor.”

“Hey, I’m not the one with the issue sharing a bed,” he replies. “If you don’t trust yourself to sleep next to me, then you can sleep on the floor.”

“I trust myself,” I grit out. “It’s *you* I don’t trust.”

“Sweetheart.” He leans closer to me and murmurs in a low voice only I can hear. “I never touch a woman unless she wants me to. Usually once I start, they don’t want me to stop.”

“Just get the damn key,” I growl, suddenly feeling all hot and tingly.

At least he didn't book us one of the romantic villas.

I wait impatiently as Noah hands over his credit card and ID, then accepts the key for our room. When he's done, he slips his arm around my waist and gives me a tight squeeze.

“Come on, Sloan. Let's go check out this room.”

NOAH

From someone who regularly stays in the finest hotels around the world, even I have to admit this hotel room is impressive. From the oversized king bed with its plush mattress and silky soft bedding to the amazing view of the ocean through the floor-to-ceiling windows, complete with our own private little balcony, everything is first class. Tossing our bags down on the floor, I wander over to the window and watch as the waves crash against the rocks below us.

“Not bad, hey,” I say to Lucy.

“It’s beautiful,” she begrudgingly grumbles.

She’s still annoyed.

Or at least, she’s trying to be.

She thinks I don’t notice the way she looks at me, but I see the want in her eyes and the way her gaze moves over my body. She’s clearly into me, even if she won’t admit it to herself. The feeling is mutual too. Lucy is a stunner. What makes her even hotter is she doesn’t know her own beauty. It’s like she has no idea how fucking sexy she is or the effect she has on men. All she has to do is walk into a room and every pair of male eyes is on her. Mine included. It’s kind of cute how intent she is on hating me, though. The chase makes me want her even more.

And I always get what I want.

“What time does this function start?” Her irritated voice cuts through my thoughts.

I glance at my phone to check the time. “We have about an hour.”

I haven’t been completely honest with her. We’re not at a work function and I’m not trying to get a promotion. The truth is, we’re at my grandfather’s eightieth birthday party with all my wonderful extended relatives where I need her to convincingly play my girlfriend, so my grandfather believes I have settled down.

He cut off my trust fund two months ago after I ‘embarrassed the family name for the last time’. That was fine, until I ran out of cash. Since then, I’ve been scraping by. Then Luke and I came up with this awesome new business idea, but we need financial backing to get it up and running. I’m pretty sure Lucy would frown at me for trying to screw over my own grandfather so I can access his money, so Luke and I decided to twist the truth into something she would be okay with. Sure, she will figure it out eventually, but by then with any luck, the job will be done, and my trust will be mine again.

I take a quick shower. The hot water does wonders to wake me up after the long drive. When I’m done, I step out and grab a fluffy towel. I go to wrap it around my waist, but then I get a better idea and hang it around my neck instead.

Swinging open the door, I saunter back into the room, butt-ass naked, letting it all hang out. Lucy glances up. She does a double take, her ocean blue eyes widening in shock as she takes me all in. The feel of her eyes on my cock naturally makes me stiffen, which embarrasses the poor thing even more. A strangled gasp escapes her lips as she quickly snaps her attention back down to her phone, her cheeks scarlet red.

“Something wrong?” I innocently ask.

She scowls at me, making sure to keep her eyes on my face. “Do you always wander around naked?”

“Yes, actually.” For once, it’s the truth. “Do you have a problem with that?”

“Yes. I do. Not everyone wants to see...” She gestures at my junk. “*That.*”

“That’s where you’re wrong, Sloan,” I boast, sticking my chest out. “Most people *do* want to see it. Some people even want to touch it.”

She mutters something incoherent under her breath as she stabs at her phone. I chuckle and pull on some boxers, followed with a pair of black suit pants.

“I always knew you were uptight, Sloan, but I never realised you were *this* uptight,” I tease, threading my belt through the loops.

That makes her bite. “I am not uptight.” She glares at me, anger flashing in her eyes.

“Really? So, you’d be okay if I walked over to you and kissed you right now? Since you enjoyed it so much the first time...”

Her mouth hangs open, then quickly closes, then she opens it again. I bite back on a chuckle at the sight of poor Lucy so lost for words. When I walk toward her, she stands up and stumbles back, looking like she’s not sure what to do.

“I told you already, I won’t touch a woman unless she wants me to,” I remind her. “So answer me. Can I kiss you right now?”

She bites her lip, her gaze lingering on my bare chest. “I guess...”

I take that as the confirmation I need and flatten against her, pushing her into the wall. My lips find hers and she whimpers as I kiss her slowly and deliberately, my fingers creeping beneath her shirt to touch her smooth, soft skin. She breaks away from me, avoiding eye contact.

“I better get ready, or we’ll be late,” she mumbles, clearly flustered.

As she disappears into the bathroom in a hurry, I get dressed, thinking about how good that kiss was. Even better than the first. To be honest, I’ve wanted to kiss her for years. I wanted to kiss her when I found those stories all those years ago, but I was so much older than her, it didn’t feel right. She was sixteen and I was twenty-six. While the age gap is still

there, I'm not sure I'm willing to ignore our connection a second time, especially since the chemistry is so obviously still there between us.

The truth is, I could have asked anyone to do this for me. Women would have been lining up to help me out, but then Luke suggested his sister. He thought Lucy was a safe option, someone I wouldn't screw this up over. Once he put the idea in my head, I saw Lucy as the *only* option.

I sit down in the chair and wait for Lucy to get ready. She's taking forever, but the wait is worth it the moment that bathroom door opens and she walks out. She looks fucking stunning in a strapless silver mini dress that shimmers with every step she takes. Her long blonde locks are loosely curled, framing her gorgeous face. She's giving me a hard-on and I have no idea how I'm going to keep my hands off her.

"You look incredible," I rumble.

She gives me an embarrassed half attempt at a smile. "We should go..."

I follow her out the door and over to the elevator, my eyes not leaving her ass. She presses the button impatiently, then she turns to me, catching me checking her out. Her expression darkens.

"That kiss should not have happened," she says gravely. "Let's just keep things professional, okay?"

"Sure, but you're pretending to be my girlfriend," I remind her. "That pretty much puts *everything* in the vicinity of being professional."

"Not in the privacy of our room," she protests, her cheeks staining red. "Look, just *please* try to stay focused. What do I need to know?"

I look at her blankly. "About what?"

"Your work? Your boss? The promotion?" She frowns at me. "Focus, Noah. You're the one who wants to make sure this is convincing, so help me out here and tell me what to do."

“Stop overthinking it,” I shrug and put my arm around her. “It’s not rocket science, Sloan. Just relax and follow my lead and it will be fine.”

Leaning down to her, I cup her chin and kiss her forcefully. She’s into it for a moment, but then she jerks back, looking like she wants to punch me in the face.

“Maybe be a little more convincing than that,” I suggest with a smirk.

“Well, stop kissing me like that,” she retorts testily. “*Fuck*. I wasn’t expecting this to be so...” She sighs, her voice trailing off, then she takes in a deep breath, before stepping into the empty elevator that has finally decided to appear. “I’m nervous, okay? I don’t want to mess this up and you being so calm about all of this is freaking me out. If your boss figures out we’re lying, won’t he fire you?”

“Relax, okay?” I soothe her. “You really need to loosen up. Want me to help you?” I can’t resist adding.

I back her against the wall, eyeing her in that incredible dress. As stunning as it is, I think she will look even nicer out of it. She presses her lips together, looking both mortified and intrigued.

“And how exactly would you do that?”

I run my hand along the curve of her hips and tug her against me. I can think of more than a few things I would love to do with this body, starting with those luscious red lips that would look incredible wrapped around my dick.

“The best way I know how is for you to let me fuck you senseless.”

“Here?” She laughs, her expression uneasy. “Are you kidding?”

Interesting. She didn’t say no.

I take that as an invitation and kiss her again, this time pinning her to the wall so she can’t wiggle out. My erection grows and presses into her as she rocks herself against me. Her back against the mirrored wall of the elevator, I lift her onto

my hips, and she wraps her legs around me, her arms around my neck.

“What if there are cameras,” she pants, looking up.

“I do love an audience,” I grin, running my tongue along her neck.

When no further protest comes, just a little shiver and deliciously inviting arch of her body against mine, I reach to the side console and slam my fist against the emergency stop button. She gasps, eyes wide and looking up when the elevator alarm blares. A sharp, short ring pierces the air and the elevator judders to a halt.

“Noah,” she hisses, a ghost of a smile on her plump, red lips.

“Now, where were we?” I grin back, resting our foreheads together. She’s light as a feather in my arms, so it’s an easy feat to pin her against the elevator wall and hold her up with one hand on her ass. Her thighs tighten around me and I feel her nails dig into the back of my shirt.

“I think you were about to...unwind me,” she says breathlessly.

“Ah. Right.”

It’s as though there was no time between our last kiss and this one. She opens up to me so readily, breath hitching and eyes falling closed as I tilt my head and deepen the kiss easily. My hips jerk of their own accord, rutting my erection harder against her.

But she moans so prettily when I do it, so the second time, I’m more deliberate with it. I move slower, and let my other hand push the bunching fabric of her dress up over her hip. Her skin is soft and warm, the heat of her barely contained by the sheer fabric of her panties. They’re already damp by the time I touch her, just a graze between her legs that has her tensing like she’s been shocked.

“You can’t be serious,” she rasps. Thank God whatever she’s got on her lips doesn’t smear. She already looks

ravished, her lips swollen and shiny, her hair mussed, her cheeks the prettiest pink I've ever seen.

Though, I suspect I'm about to see an even prettier shade very soon.

"I never start something I have no intention of finishing," I tell her, pushing my fingers between our bodies and easily slipping the wet fabric to one side. Between her legs, shoved as close as we are, the air is hot and slick. It's easy to find and graze her entrance and all too satisfying to watch her squirm. "Might as well make the most of being trapped in an elevator, don't you agree?"

She stares up at me with wide, dark eyes, before she bites her lower lip and nods. She yanks me close for another kiss and that's all the invitation I need to adjust my grip and hold on to her while giving myself enough room to use my fingers. With a small grunt, I shove two inside her, curling them immediately as my thumb ruts up and down between her folds in search of her clit.

She lets me know when I find it, immediately jerking her hips up and clenching her thighs around me. Her heels hook at my back, and she makes the cutest, high-pitched little mewling sound I've ever heard. I'm suddenly desperate to see what other sounds I can pull out of her.

"You like that, baby?" I tease because I can't help myself.

I like it when she rolls her eyes and gets that little crease between her brows when she's irritated. Any retort she has is lost when I curl my fingers and start circling her clit with my thumb. She's so responsive and so damn easy to read. Her nails dig into my shoulders and her chest heaves with shaky breaths, lashes going low, mouth hanging open as I touch her.

Kissing down her jaw to her neck, I am pleased to note the goose bumps rising on her arms when I kiss or touch a particularly sensitive spot. The mirrored wall behind her is fogging up from our body heat and, while part of me wants to hold her up forever, another part of me is desperate to see if I can make her knees buckle completely.

“Noah!” she whisper-cries again, clutching at my hair as I kiss over her racing pulse. I groan, closing my eyes as I feel a fresh gush of slick coat my fingers as I find a particularly good spot for her.

My mouth waters. I need a taste, more than I’ve needed anything in my life.

I pull my fingers out and pull back so I can bring them to my mouth, sucking them clean. She gasps, her cheeks darkening further as I set her down and she squirms again.

“That’s so dirty,” she complains meekly.

I grin. “You taste too good to call it dirty, Sloan,” I grumble, which makes her laugh.

I don’t stay away long, still obsessed with the idea of getting more of her on my tongue. I want, more than anything, to devour her whole. I sink to my knees and grab her hands, threading them through my hair.

“Let’s mess each other up, hey?”

I don’t wait for her answer before I’m shoving her dress up and leaning in for my well-earned meal. She’s soft and slick and pink, so wet and warm when I push a finger back inside her and keep curling into that spot she seemed to like so much before.

My tongue seeks out her clit and wraps around it when I find it, and I close my eyes with another low groan when she immediately whines and yanks on my hair. Her hips buck against me helplessly.

After a moment, she shakily puts her weight on one leg and braces her other thigh on my shoulder for balance. I moan wordlessly and wrap my hands around her hips to hold her steady, lost in the taste and feeling of her shivering and trembling with pleasure just because of what my tongue is doing to her.

I could die a happy man, right now, hearing her moan and whimper and cry out my name. She’s so fucking sexy like this, helpless and demanding and needy, I can’t get enough. I never want the elevator to move again.

“Oh God, oh *fuck*, *Noah*, I’m...”

God, yes, you are...

I don’t bother pulling back to encourage her more, there’s no way I’m moving from this spot. Fumbling, I reach down to unbutton my belt and unzip my slacks to pull my cock out, stroking myself as quickly as I can because at this rate the noises she’s making are going to make me come in my pants like a fucking teenager.

She shudders, her foot digging hard into my spine and one hand flying out for balance. Her knuckles go white in my hair as she clings onto me, and her other knee buckles so she’s only held up by my hand on her. She comes with a harsh moan, a juddery thing that seems to last forever, enough for me to pull back with a curse and bury my face in her stomach as I come as well, aiming as best as I can so I don’t get any mess on her shoes.

Fuck...

It takes a little too long, with the room spinning and too hot and feeling her trembling against me, to realize she’s not the only thing shaking.

The elevator is moving again.

Still on my knees, I throw a look at Lucy and she shrugs apologetically.

“I must have knocked one of the buttons when I was...” Her cheeks flush scarlet.

“When you were coming on my tongue?” I supply with a grin, tucking myself back into my pants and glad that the floor of the elevator isn’t made of carpet.

A ding sounds, indicating the doors are about to open. Lucy nearly falls over herself to get away from me, straightening her dress and quickly trying to fix her hair and makeup. There isn’t a lot to fix, she didn’t make nearly as much a mess as she left me. I can still feel her coating the lower half of my face, and that’s nothing to speak of the literal mess I left on the floor for some poor soul to clean up.

Grinning, I get up and make myself as presentable as possible by the time the door opens. I put an arm around her waist and pull her close so we can walk off together. The door opens, revealing a group of tourists chattering far too loudly and animatedly to notice us. We walk off first and they pile on quickly after.

It doesn't escape me that Lucy is walking a little slower than normal, like she's dazed and sore.

"You okay, baby?" I murmur in her ear. "You seem a little unsteady on your feet there."

I chuckle and slide my arm around her waist. She glares up at me, that cute little furrow in her brow again.

"What?" I protest. "You seriously look like you're about to topple over. I know I'm good, but this is taking it to a whole new level."

"Good, sure, but I've had better." She winks at me and flounces off, leaving me standing there, stunned.

Better?

I seriously doubt that.

LUCY

What the hell was that?

I'm feeling confused as fuck as we walk through the foyer. I just let Noah Griffin eat me out in an elevator and I fucking liked it. No, like is too much of an understatement.

I loved it.

Every damn second of it.

I knew this was a bad idea. There's a reason I kept my distance from Noah for so long and that's because I can't trust myself around him. He makes me do things that I would never normally do, like what just happened. I take a deep breath and expel it quickly.

I need to pull myself together before I make a complete fool of myself.



I HAVE TO SAY, I'm surprised when we walk into the ballroom where the function is being held. I'm not really familiar with the industry in which Noah works, but the mix of people here really don't strike me as the type of people to be sitting in an office all day. Take the three little old ladies over in the corner, for example, laughing to themselves. I can hardly picture them buying and selling million-dollar properties. One of the ladies looks up and spots Noah and her face breaks into a smile.

“Get over here, cheeky boy,” she calls out, motioning for Noah to come over.

I glance at Noah, my eyebrows raised. Now I am *sure* something is off.

“What can I say?” he shrugs. “The ladies love me.”

He walks over and hugs the woman. “Aunt Kathy, it’s great to see you.”

“You too, my boy. It’s been too long.” She turns to me, a twinkle in her eyes. “And who’s this lovely young lady with you?”

His arm slides effortlessly around my waist. I stiffen, ignoring the tingles in my stomach as he tugs me closer. “This is my girlfriend, Lucy.”

“Wonderful,” the old woman beams. “Your grandfather told me you had met someone and I was hoping that you’d be bringing her tonight. I’m so happy for you, Noah. You’re such a good boy. It’s not your fault you get into a little bit of trouble here and there.”

“What the heck is going on?” I hiss under my breath into Noah’s ear.

“Just play along, okay?” he mutters back, tightening his grip around my waist.

“Noah!” a booming voice calls out.

We both turn around to see a man with grey hair and thin-framed glasses walking towards us. He’s dressed in a dark blue suit, and he holds a glass of what I think is scotch in one hand and a cigar in the other. He places them both on the passing tray of a waiter, then he clasps his arms around Noah in a strong embrace.

“Is this the Lucy I’ve been hearing so much about? It’s wonderful to meet you, young lady.” He reaches for my hand. “From what I hear, my grandson is quite taken with you.”

“Your grandson?” I fix a smile on my lips and glare at Noah.

It's all starting to make sense. This isn't some work function we've stumbled into. It's a fucking family reunion. What I can't figure out is what *I* am doing here. And why lie to me about it? Why the hell does Noah need me to pretend to be his girlfriend in front of his family?

"Don't scare her off, Grandfather." Noah grins.

"I wouldn't dream of it." His grandfather laughs and then motions for Noah to follow him. "Can I steal you for a moment? There's something I want to talk to you about."

"Do you mind?" Noah asks me.

"Go right ahead," I say sweetly.

"Thanks, sugar."

He flashes me a charming smile and then pecks me on the cheek, before following his grandfather over to the other side of the room. I stand there, alone, feeling like a fool. I'm not sure why I even care so much. It's not like this actually means anything. He's paying me to be here, after all. Why do the details matter so much?

Because he lied to you.

And where Noah is concerned, that's usually a pretty good indication that something shifty is going on. I just need to figure out what that is.



TEN MINUTES PASS and Noah still hasn't returned, which means I'm still standing by the wall, looking like I have no friends. I don't know anyone here. Out of the corner of my eye, I spot someone familiar. I narrow my eyes. What the heck is my *brother* doing here? Luke's widened eyes lock with mine, then he makes a beeline for the exit.

Oh no, you don't.

Hot on his tail, I weave through the crowd and follow him outside. I spot him trying to hide behind a bush and march over to him.

He straightens up and tries his best to look innocent. “Hey, Lucy. I didn’t see you there.”

“Start talking,” I growl.

“You wouldn’t believe what a coincidence this is—”

“Oh, cut the bullshit.” I glare at my brother. “Tell me what’s going on, or I march back in there and tell Noah’s grandfather who I really am.”

“No, don’t do that,” he says hastily. He takes my hand and pulls me down in the direction of the beach, to a bench seat that is out of earshot for anyone at the party. “Just calm down, okay?”

“I’m sure I will once you explain,” I say impatiently as we both sit down. “You can start with why the hell you’re here and why I feel like I’ve stumbled into a family reunion.”

“S he seems like a keeper.”

My grandfather pretty much raised me after my parents were killed in an accident when I was five years old. He is a difficult, hard man with unrealistically high expectations and although he doesn't always show it, I know he loves me more than anything. Truth be told, I don't like to disappoint him, it just so happens to be something I am very good at.

“She is.” I smile, taking a sip of the beer I hold in my hand. “Lucy is a good girl.”

“It's nice to see you finally getting your shit together, Noah. To be honest, I didn't think I was going to live to see the day where you settled down. How serious is it between you two?” he asks in his usual blunt way. My grandfather is nothing if not direct.

“Serious enough for me to introduce her to the family,” I counter.

He gives me a long look, the lines around his tired eyes crinkling as he frowns. “I would be lying if I said it hasn't crossed my mind that you might only be doing this for my benefit.”

I pretend to be confused. “I'm sorry, your benefit?”

“Don't play dumb with me, boy. You know exactly what I mean. I wouldn't put it past you to invent some girlfriend, so I'll back down and let you access your trust fund again.”

“I would never,” I protest innocently.

“You’ve done plenty of worse things before,” he reminds me. It always comes back to what I have done in the past. “I hope for your sake this is real. She seems like a nice girl and I think being with someone like her would do you the world of good.”

“This is real,” I insist. A small part of me is angry that he is doubting me so much. Sure, he has every reason to, but if this were a real relationship, I know for sure he wouldn’t doubt it any less. “In fact, I wasn’t going to mention it because it’s so early in our relationship, but I actually proposed to her last night and she said yes.”

“You’re getting married?” he asks, still looking sceptical.

“We’re getting married,” I confirm.

“Where is her ring?”

“It was a spur-of-the-moment thing,” I answer smoothly. “We went to the jeweller today and it will be ready in two weeks.”

My grandfather studies me for a moment, then he offers me his hand, shaking mine firmly while looking me dead in the eye. “Then I guess congratulations are in order.”

“Thank you.” I flash him a smile.

“I’m looking forward to seeing you settle down and stop wasting your life away with the partying and the drinking every night,” he continues. “Now, I better let you go so that you can spend some time with that beautiful fiancée of yours. I’ll see you tomorrow for breakfast?” he asks.

“Of course, we’ll be there,” I say confidently.

“Great. We’ll talk more then.” He pauses and looks me in the eye. “I’m looking forward to hearing more about how you two fell in love.”

He finally walks away, leaving me alone. I curse, annoyed at myself. Why the hell did I go and say that? I have gone from having a girlfriend to being engaged and if anything, I

have made his suspicions worse. Not to mention how Lucy is going to react when she finds out.

Speaking of Lucy...

I turn around just in time to see her walking back in from outside with Luke hot on her heels. Oh fuck. Her eyes flash as they meet mine and I know she knows. I'm not sure what I expected. It didn't take a brain surgeon to figure out this isn't a work function and if she cornered Luke and demanded answers, he would have given them to her in a second.

The anger in her eyes shifts to determination as she stalks over to me. When she reaches me, she slips her hand into mine and kisses me slowly on the mouth, throwing me completely off guard.

What the hell?

I was not expecting this reaction.

"What's going on?" I murmur to her.

"What's going on is my price just went up." She whispers the words in my ear, her tongue curling around my earlobe as she sucks it hard. I stifle a groan, turned on and nervous at the same time.

"What are you talking about," I mutter, distracted.

"As well as the thousand we already agreed on, I want ten percent of the new company you are forming with my brother."

"Are you serious?" I laugh. "No way."

"Fine." She gives me a satisfied smile. "Then I'll leave right now and on my way out, I will tell *Granddaddy* who I really am."

Fuck. She has me by the balls and she damn well knows it.

"Fine. But this better be the performance of your life."



SHE PUTS on a performance all right. After tonight, no one in their right mind will question whether our relationship is real, the way Lucy is hanging off me. She gazes up at me, hanging off my every word when I speak, her hand in mine, her body pressing up against me. She's teasing me in ways that just isn't fair. Fuck, she's making *me* believe we're a thing. She's all over me and it's making me hot.

"Is this convincing enough for you?" she purrs in my ear.

Before I can answer her, lips, so soft and plump, are against mine. I groan into her mouth and kiss her roughly, almost forgetting where we are. I want to rip her clothes right off and have my way with her right here on the floor, but I don't think my extended family would appreciate the show.

"The second we leave here," she whispers each word, while gently rocking herself against me. "You don't touch me. You don't even *look* at me. Got it?"

I swallow, the penny dropping. This is my punishment. She's riling me up to the point where I can't take it anymore, and then she's leaving me high and dry.

If I weren't so damn sexually frustrated, I'd be impressed.

LUCY

Finally, the night is over and we're on our way back to the hotel room. I insist on taking the stairs to avoid a repeat performance of last time. True to my word, the second we left the ballroom, I stop all physical contact with Noah, refusing to even hold his hand. If I'm honest, watching Noah squirm for most of the night was actually kind of fun. I would also be lying if I said a small part of me didn't enjoy kissing and touching him.

Okay fine, a big part of me.

"You're angry with me," he comments as he follows me into our room.

"No shit, Sherlock."

He sits down on the couch and watches me. I glare at him, resisting the urge to slap that damn smirk off his stupid face. He's right, I *am* angry. If he had just told me the truth from the beginning, then it wouldn't be a problem. I just hate the fact that he lied to me.

"That was a pretty impressive show you put on," he adds.

"I was just doing what you asked me to," I shrug. "Playing a role."

"You went far and beyond and you know it," he accuses, looking at me through narrowed eyes. "You were trying to wind me up. At least admit that."

"So what if I was?" I challenge, not afraid to admit that yes, I was teasing him.

It was my way of getting a little bit of revenge.

“I don’t take too well to being teased.”

I purse my lips and make a show of thinking that comment through. “Then it’s about time you learnt to deal with it,” I say, and hold up a blanket and pillow to him, before tossing both on the couch. “Make yourself comfortable.”

He looks at the couch, then back at me, brows raised and arms crossed over his chest. “No way. I’m sleeping in the bed.”

“No, you’re fucking not,” I reply with a too-wide smile and fake positive voice, like an infomercial Barbie. He can’t keep getting away with pushing me around, and there’s no way I’m going to continue playing along with him in this little charade that he didn’t even deign to tell me the truth about. He watches me for a moment, in that way I’m starting to recognize means trouble. Slowly, a smile spreads over his face.

“How about we play for it?”

“Play for it,” I repeat, trying to work out his angle here.

“Poker,” he suggests.

I open my mouth to reply.

“Strip poker,” he amends. “Makes it more interesting.”

The nerve of this guy, honestly.

I lift my chin, refusing to be a coward. “Fine,” I say, mimicking his pose and squaring my shoulders for good measure.

He grins, as though he’s won the war, and fetches a deck of cards from the other room. When he comes back, he brings the pillow and blanket from the couch with him. I frown at him, but hold my tongue, and watch him climb into the bed and sit down on it.

He looks at me, and gestures to the other side. “Well?”

“How slumber party of you,” I mutter, but climb onto the bed on the other side and make myself comfortable by

propping up a few pillows. There's enough room in the middle of the bed for him to deal. I know the rules of poker, enough to know what beats what, but not enough to say I'm any kind of expert in strategy. Still, it's playing the odds, right? Even a complete newbie can get lucky, and I just want to knock him down a few pegs.

He eyes me, as though sizing me up. I meet his gaze steadily.

“Well?” I repeat when he doesn't move.

He grins, that sly and—damn it—rather charming grin, and deals the first hand.

It takes me about five hands to realize I'm in over my head. Not only is he much better at poker than I am, but he's also wearing way more clothes by default than I am.

“You cold?” he teases, looking me up and down as I shiver and curl up on myself. My shoes went first, one then the other. Then my necklace. Then my dress, so now I'm only in my bra and underwear and the only thing he's lost is a single stupid shoe.

“You said I wasn't allowed to put a blanket on,” I reply, still very cold but too proud to admit it. He's trying to get me to admit defeat, and I won't do that.

He hums. His eyes are like a trail of fire as they look me up and down, shamelessly. I'm not doing much to dissuade him, though, so maybe that's on me. He's being shameless because I'm letting him be.

“I do hate to see a beautiful woman suffering,” he murmurs, and meets my eyes with another sly grin. “I could warm you up.”

I arch a brow. “And how would you do that?”

In answer, he slowly licks his lips, and suddenly it's like we're back in the elevator and his mouth is on me, hot and eager and very, very talented and...

I shiver, pressing my legs together, which I realize a second too late. I can't hide or pass off the way I am feeling,

since I'm basically completely naked in front of him and there's nowhere to hide. It's not like I have a high ground there anyway, the smug dick knows I'm attracted to him and knows he's capable of getting me off, so of course he's going to latch onto that. He's like a dog with a freaking bone.

"You could just go sleep on the couch like a gentleman and let me get under the covers," I say without much heat.

"Mm, but covers won't keep you as warm as I can," he replies, setting his hand down and rising from his sitting position to a kneeling one. He slowly starts crawling over to me, and I...don't move. I don't want to move. "I can make you feel like you're burning, Sloan."

His fingers graze my ankle, running up for a split second before lifting away. He's so close now, close enough to lean forward and kiss. He's on his hands and knees, prowling towards me like a predator. I bite my lower lip, hard, and slowly push the knee closest to him out, and shiver when he immediately puts his hand on my inner thigh.

"Go on, then," I challenge. "Warm me up."

With a victorious, eager smile, he lunges the final distance and kisses me. I spread my legs with another shiver, already much warmer when he settles between my thighs with a happy sigh, like this is where he's meant to be. He tugs me down off my mountain of pillows and presses me flat on the bed, shoving cards out of the way so they clatter to the floor with a hollow fluttering sound.

His hands are restless and greedy, tugging my underwear down off my hips and to my knees in one sure motion, then he reaches under my body to unhook and remove my bra, so I'm completely naked.

"You know, if you're going to pretend this is all about warming me up, skin on skin contact is better," I say with a laugh.

He laughs as well, kissing his way down my chest.

"You're right," he says, quickly turning his attention to his shirt and tie, his belt, his slacks, that stupid remaining shoe

and both of his socks. He keeps kissing his way down my body, not pausing anywhere, his focus is completely on his destination. “But we both know what this is really about.”

He looks up at me for a single moment, long enough for me to give him one more nod of permission, before he closes his eyes and dives down between my legs like he’s ravenous for it. Never in my wildest dreams did I think he—or anyone—would be so eager to do this, or that it would feel so good. It’s like he has a map to every sensitive part of me and absolutely no sense of mercy.

I can’t control the noises I’m making as he curls his tongue around my clit and starts sucking, embarrassingly loudly in my opinion, not that he seems to care. And not like I can keep quiet for long when he’s using his mouth like that, so we’re both being noisy. Hopefully our neighbours forgive me.

I moan loudly, spreading my legs further when he nudges my knees apart with his shoulders to get closer, two of his fingers sliding over my entrance to get them wet—and, God, I’m so wet already, my face flushes just thinking about it.

He pushes his fingers inside me and curls them, tugging lightly against that sensitive spot buried just inside me as he scrapes his teeth *so* gently over my clit and then licks over it, back and forth, heavy and slow. The combined petting motions send waves of pleasure up my spine, like I’m being slowly dragged down, down, down, farther and deeper by the heavy, hot weight pooling low in my stomach.

Frantically reaching for purchase, one of my hands slides into his hair and I fist my fingers in his hair, biting my lower lip when he merely moans in encouragement and runs his tongue over my clit more quickly. Clearly, he likes having his hair pulled. My other hand is holding on to the sheets for dear life.

One thing is for certain: I’m not cold anymore.

Sweat breaks out behind my knees and at the small of my back, and I only notice because he hooks an arm beneath my back and makes me arch up, tugging me closer to his mouth

and fingers. That heat is building up inside me, coiling tighter and tighter like a snake. I can't catch my breath.

"Noah," I try to warn, even as my thighs start to tighten, my legs clenching around his head. I pull on his hair, but it does nothing except make him move his fingers faster. The waves feel ground-breaking now, like a tide I don't have the strength to fight. My stomach keeps tensing and there isn't enough air in the room. "Noah, I—"

He moans against my sensitive, aching pussy, and pulls back, suddenly enough to make me gasp. He rises to his knees and I lift my head to look at him, finding him fisting his cock, which is so thick and hard, it looks painful.

I need it inside me.

"Noah," I gasp again, drawing his gaze. I reach for him, my fingers touching his wrist attached to the hand still partially buried inside me. I wrap my fingers around his wrist and slowly pull them out.

Then, I force my shaky legs around his hips and pull as hard as I can.

"Fuck me now. Please."

He clearly doesn't need to ask if I'm sure. I've never been more sure of anything in my life. He lunges for me like a starving animal on a fresh meal, kissing me ravenously. I don't even mind the taste of myself on his tongue because he clearly likes it so much.

"I'm gonna last, like, two fucking seconds," he warns me with a small laugh, lining himself up.

"Me too," I reply, grinning and wrapping my arms around his shoulders as he meets my eyes. "I want to come on your cock."

"*Fuck,*" he hisses, and then he's kissing me again, and I can feel the pressure of his cock against my entrance. I'm so wet and ready that he pushes in easily, though I feel like I have to hold my breath when he does.

He rests our foreheads together, like he needs to take a second as well. A shiver runs through him, all the way down his back, powerful enough I can follow its progression with my hands. I clench around him, wanting to get used to the feeling of him inside me, and immediately grin when he groans *loudly* and his eyes roll back.

He mutters another curse, leaning down to mouth and kiss his way down my neck. His hands slide down my sides to my hips to hold me still as he pulls back and rocks his hips, less an actual thrust and more trying to push deeper. The pressure against my sensitive clit and the rocking motion feels so much better than his fingers, fuller, and it's enough to throw me right back to the edge of the orgasm I'd been on before he stopped.

"Just like that," I whisper, or maybe I beg, I can't tell anymore. I dig my nails into his back and wrap my legs around him as tightly as I can. "Please, please, that feels so good, *please.*"

"Fuck, yeah. Whatever you want, darlin'," he replies, just as softly, like he doesn't have the strength or breath to speak louder. He keeps rocking his hips, that perfect amount of motion and fullness, his body hot and heavy on top of mine, his breath warm on my neck as he kisses the sensitive spot above my pulse.

My orgasm creeps up on me slowly, but not like a secret. It feels like being slowly pulled down into quicksand or dragged under by a tide. The muscles in my legs keep tightening around him, my nails dig in hard enough I'm sure I leave marks. My jaw clenches and I can't catch my breath, my stomach bearing down as that coil tightens, tightens, and then releases.

Or, rather, explodes.

Over the ringing in my ears and the powerful waves of pleasure that sweep over me in the aftermath, I'm aware of him muttering another series of curses against my neck and thrusting a few more times, before he abruptly goes still with another shudder. Warmth of a different kind, heavy and liquid, fills me low in my belly as I feel him coming inside me.

I would be annoyed, but it's not like my locked legs and nails drawing blood from his back would have given him much of a choice. I knew how close he was and still begged him for more.

“Shit,” he sighs, nuzzling my neck. “Sorry.”

“You're paying for the room, you can pay for the cleaning too,” I say.

He chuckles and pulls me into his big, strong arms. “Whatever you say, Sloan.”



I WAKE up alone the next morning. The bed next to me is still warm, suggesting Noah hasn't been up long. Yawning, I stretch out and roll over onto my stomach, then reach for my phone. Biting back a smile, I open a text from Kara.

Kara: So...how's it going?

Me: I owe you fifty bucks.

Immediately, my phone rings. I bite my lip and press Answer, bracing myself for my friend's reaction. She doesn't disappoint.

“Haha, yes, bitch! How was it?”

“Pretty amazing,” I admit with a lazy smile. I sit up in the bed, wrapping the sheet around me as I cross my legs. “I hate to admit it, but there might still be some feelings there.”

“So just run with it,” she urges. “See where this goes.”

“That's the thing, I'm not sure it can go anywhere. He's so obviously a player. I'm worried I'm setting myself up to get hurt.”

“It doesn't have to be anything serious, you know,” she points out. “You haven't been in a relationship since Jeremy.”

I groan at the mention of my ex-boyfriend. Jeremy and I split up a year ago after I caught him cheating on me with one

of his co-workers. Sure, it took me a while to move on, but just because I'm not out there jumping on every man that moves, doesn't mean I'm not over him.

"I know, but the thing is, I'm not sure I can do casual with Noah."

"Because you really like him," Kara murmurs, the penny finally dropping.

I don't answer, instead, I stretch out my legs and stand up, then wander over to my suitcase to pick out an outfit.

"I better go," I say. "Apparently, we're having breakfast with Noah's grandfather."

"Okay, have fun. Call me if you need to talk."

I end the call, then I get dressed and make myself a coffee. I take it out onto the cute little balcony to drink it. It's so pretty up here, overlooking the ocean. I could sit here for hours and not get sick of it. I listen as the balcony door of the room next door slides open and then two very familiar voices start talking. It's Noah and my brother.

Shit. Luke is in the room next door? Memories of last night filter through my mind and my cheeks heat. God, I hope he didn't hear us having sex.

"Is everything's going along to plan?"

"It sure is," Noah assures my brother. "After breakfast, I'll talk to my grandfather about our business idea, and then hopefully I can convince him to release enough of my inheritance to fund the first step."

"Sweet. So, you think he's buying it the whole relationship thing?"

"Sure. Why wouldn't he? I'm pretty convincing when I want to be," Noah boasts. I can hear the gloating in his voice, and it makes me sick. Is he talking about fooling his grandfather right now, or is he talking about me?

"So, you and my sister...this is all just for show, right?" Luke prompts in a low voice. "I can trust you not to get involved with her?"

“Of course, you can trust me, man. What do you take me for?” Noah actually sounds hurt.

“Because if you hurt her, I’d have to kill you,” Luke continues. “You know that, right?”

Noah laughs. “Dude, I promise this is all business. I’m not even into her like that. She’s a nice kid and all but she’s totally not my type. Besides, she’s way too young for me. She’s like the little sister I never had.”

“Okay, good,” my brother mutters, sounding relieved.

Tears prick my eyes and I quickly dab them away. I shouldn’t be surprised, because this is exactly what Noah is like. It’s what he’s known for. He treats women like toys and when he gets sick of one, he moves on to the next. For some reason, I thought I was different. Last night he made me believe that we actually had a connection. I thought he felt something for me, but it was obviously all just for show.

I feel like such a fool.

Sneaking back inside the room, I close the balcony door and look around. My head is a mess and I am in danger of losing my shit. The only thing I can think about is getting out of here. I can’t face Noah, not like this. Not until I get my thoughts together. The last thing I want is for him to see how much he’s hurt me, because then he would pity me, and that I *definitely* can’t handle.

I throw my things into my bags and then I check the bus timetable on my phone, relieved to see there is one leaving shortly. If I hurry, I can make it. Quickly, I pick up my suitcase and my handbag and walk out of the room.

I never should have agreed to do this in the first place.

I have never lied to my best friend.
Never had to.

Until now.

The truth is, I do like his sister, more than I want to admit to myself, but I know Luke thinks I am not good enough for her. So I said what I had to in order to get him off my back. I was damn convincing too, so I am pretty sure he bought it.

I leave Luke in his room and head back next door to my own room to get ready for breakfast. I am tired, thanks to a lack of sleep, but I am feeling good about everything working out. Once I have my trust fund back and our business is on the go, I can work on making Lucy mine for good.

God, she's all I can think about. Even more after having her—many times—last night. She's such a beautiful, sassy, intelligent girl and when I am with her, I lose sight of everything else.

Swiping the room key against the lock, I push open the door, expecting to be welcomed by Lucy, but the room is empty. I'm not worried, until I notice her bags are gone too.

Shit. Where did she go?

I don't have time to look for her now because I'm late for breakfast, so I send her a text, telling her to meet me downstairs. I quickly change my shirt, grab my keys and my phone, and head down to the restaurant. My grandfather is waiting for me when I get down there.

“Where is your fiancée?” he asks as I sit down.

“She had an emergency,” I explain. I have no idea if she is going to show up or not, but my gut says no. “She sends her apologies, but she had to get back home,” I add, hoping my lie doesn’t come back to bite me in the ass.

“That’s no good.” Grandfather takes a sip of his black coffee. “But we’ll see her next week at your engagement party.”

I blink at him. “Excuse me?”

“You didn’t think I would let my only grandson get engaged and not throw him an engagement party, did you? It will be a great way for everyone to get to know each other better, don’t you think?” His eyes twinkle as he soaks up my reaction. “I can’t wait to meet her parents,” he adds.

Fuck. “Sounds fantastic,” I bite out.

“Oh, and Noah?” All traces of humour disappear from the old man’s face. “If this is all just some elaborate scheme, I’ll donate your entire trust fund *and* your inheritance to charity.”

Shit.

This is not good.

Things just took a sharp turn for the worst.

LUCY

I've been sitting in my apartment for the last day, feeling sorry for myself. I even called in sick for work today, something I really can't afford to do. Not even Kara's persistent texting has been able to drag me out of my funk.

Noah has been calling non-stop, but I have ignored him too. This was all just about getting his hands on his grandfather's money, which means he's just worried about how he looks in front of his family. He probably just wants to yell at me for ditching breakfast.

It's late Wednesday night when I finally drag myself out of bed and into the shower. No sooner than I step out from the under the piping hot stream of water, the doorbell rings. Assuming it's Kara coming to knock some sense into me, I buzz her up. When she knocks on the door, I quickly throw some clothes on and walk over and unlock it. My eyes widen in shock when I see Noah standing there.

"You're not Kara."

"Thanks for noticing."

His dark eyes burn with desire as they roam over me. My hands ball into fists as I scowl at him.

"What do you want?"

"An explanation would be nice. You kind of left me hanging back there. I had to go to breakfast with my grandfather alone and make up some excuse as to why you weren't there."

“Poor thing,” I mutter under my breath. “It must be so hard being Noah Griffin.”

“Is something wrong?” His brow furrows as he studies me. “I kind of thought we had a connection going there and then you were gone.”

I glare at him, loving how he has made this all about him. The last thing I feel like doing is admitting to him that I overheard him tell my brother that he has no interest in me. It’s bad enough that he said it, but for him to know that *I* know?

That’s too much.

“Why do I need to give you a reason? I did what I was obligated to do, then I left. It’s that simple.”

“Seriously? Why are you being such a bitch?”

“I’m being a bitch?” I retort with a laugh. “Are you kidding me right now?”

“Lucy—”

“Just go,” I cut him off when he tries to take my hand. “Don’t touch me. Since you clearly have no interest in me and all.”

The confusion in his eyes clear. “You heard me talking with Luke,” he murmurs, almost to himself. “That’s why you left.”

I don’t reply. He reaches for my hand again, this time not taking no for an answer.

“Come on, Sloan. I told your brother what he wanted to hear. He made it pretty clear he didn’t want us hooking up. Of course, I like you,” he adds, pulling me against him. “I like you a lot. Way more than I fucking should.”

“I’m sure he’s not the only one you tell things they want to hear,” I snap weakly. “Why should I believe you?”

“If I didn’t like you, would I be here?” he asks. “If I didn’t like you, and you left, that’s my problem solved, right? But I *do* like you and I’m here to tell you that. Because I don’t want this—us—to be over.”

I sigh through my nose, staring at his chest as he reaches out and runs his hand down my arm. I shiver. Despite my best intentions, his touch feels nice. I like how our bodies fit together, how I can still smell myself on him. I like how he looks when he's staring at me.

"I don't like being jerked around, Noah," I finally say, meeting his eyes. "Or being lied to."

"I'm not lying," he swears earnestly, shaking his head.

Before I can react, he cups my face and kisses me. It's a damn good kiss, slow and passionate and sweet. It's the kind of kiss that movies build up towards, that could linger forever and never go bad.

"Does that feel like I'm lying?" he whispers when we part, our foreheads pressed together, his hands still cupping my face.

I swallow and shake my head. Then, I lean in to kiss him again. He answers, pressing our bodies together suddenly enough that I stumble and he has to catch me, and turns me to brace me up against the hallway wall. I wrap my arms around his shoulders and let him hoist me up into his arms, just like the first time he touched me like this, in the hotel elevator.

I smile at the memory and he answers it in kind, grinning ear to ear. He looks like the happiest man alive.

I made him look like that. It suits him.

"This feels familiar," I tease, wondering if he'll make the same connection.

His eyes darken and he gives me that sly smile I've grown to recognize so well. "Want me to get back on my knees for you, baby?" he teases, kissing my cheek and jaw and down my neck for emphasis.

I shiver, biting my lower lip and closing my eyes. I shake my head before he can put me down or touch anywhere else. I can feel that heat pooling low in my stomach again and it's only a matter of time before I ruin yet *another* pair of underwear.

“Take me to the bedroom,” I order, tugging on his hair to get his attention. I point down the hallway towards my room. “That way.”

He smiles and hoists me off the wall, carrying me like I weigh nothing, until we reach my room, and he kicks the door closed. I push at his shoulders until he sets me down.

“Sit,” I say, pointing to the bed. He does. I smile and step between his legs, bending down to toy with the buttons on his shirt, and let my fingers walk down to the bulge in his pants. “Someone’s eager.”

He shrugs.

I put my hands on his chest and shove him backwards without warning, then climb onto his lap and settle over his erection. I grind my hips down, loving how he groans, and his hands fly to my hips to steady me and help me move.

I take his chin and make him look at me, then lean down to kiss him. It makes me lift off his erection, which causes him to make a pathetic but adorable needy noise, so I reach between our bodies and free his cock, stroking slowly.

Then, I reach under my skirt and push my underwear to one side, so that I can sink down onto him right away. He gasps, wide-eyed and disbelieving. I take my time, working my hips in little circles until I’m wet enough to take him comfortably, and can settle fully in his lap.

“Now who’s eager?” he teases, sliding his hands up from my hips, taking my shirt with it. I lift my arms so he can take my shirt off and toss it to the floor.

“I’m just taking the edge off,” I say, pulling him up by his shirt until he’s sitting upright and can kiss me properly. “I want you to make me come hard, *then* maybe I’ll let you take the rest of my clothes off and fuck me properly, Mister ‘Never Back Down From a Challenge’.”

He narrows his eyes playfully at me, then gives me a positively *evil* grin.

“All right, you’re on.”

Without warning, he pulls me close and stands, then turns us around and presses me down onto the bed, crawling on top of me without having to pull out at all. He takes both my wrists in one hand and pins them above my head, using that as a point of leverage for his other hand to reach between our bodies and prove that he's just as good with his fingers as he is with his tongue.

Which he does.

Twice.



AFTER, we lay on my bed, a tangled, sweaty mess of satisfaction, I roll onto my side so I am facing him, my hand resting casually on his chest. I have to admit, I love being with the guy. He makes me feel things I have never felt. He draws me out of my shell and makes me feel confident in myself.

“So, did your granddad cough up your inheritance?” I ask.

He winces. “Slight hurdle with that...”

“What?”

“He thinks we’re engaged.”

I sit up in shock. “Engaged? How the hell did he get that idea?”

“I may have told him we got engaged last week at his party. I didn’t have much of a choice, he was onto us—”

“Onto *you*,” I interrupt. “This is all you, Noah. Not me.”

“You kind of made it your problem too when you blackmailed me into giving you a percentage of the company,” he reminds me. “A company that is not going to exist if I don’t get my grandfather to agree to release my trust fund.”

“So, what now?” I ask.

“Now my grandfather is expecting all of your family and friends to be at our engagement party next weekend.” He

pauses, before looking at me. “I think we might need to get married.”

“Married?” I yell.

He shrugs, like it’s no big deal. “Maybe. It might be the only way to convince him we are genuine.”

“But we’re not.” I shake my head and climb out of my bed, snatching up a change of clothes from my closet. “Nope. I didn’t sign up for this.”

“Come one, please, Lucy. I can make it worth your while...” The inside of me melts. He can sense I am caving, so he takes my hand and pulls me back down onto the bed. “Let me show you all the ways I can make you want me.”

Dammit, I already do.

But I can’t let him know how much I like him.

“I’m only doing this because I need the money,” I lie to him. “If you don’t get your trust fund back, then I end up with nothing.”

“I’ll take that,” he nods. “But I promise you, I am going to make you see this isn’t just about the business anymore. It’s about how much I want to be with you.”

“What am I supposed to tell my family?” I wonder. “They’ll never believe I got engaged to someone I barely know.”

“But you do know me,” he reminds me. “We’ve known each other forever, remember? I’ve wanted you forever...”

“What?” I study him, not sure if he’s telling me the truth this time, or not. “You have not.”

“I have.” He nods, his firm hands cupping my ass. “Since I found those stories,” he murmurs, kissing me along my neck. “All I could think about for months was you. Do you have any idea how dirty I felt, jerking off while thinking about my best friend’s kid sister?”

“Really?” My heart races. He nods and rolls me over onto my stomach, easing my legs apart. I bite my lip, groaning as

his erection presses against me.

“There was one story in particular,” he begins, breathing the words to the back of my neck as he ruts slowly against my ass. One of his hands remains by my head, holding most of his weight, the other holds my hip, fingers spread out and grazing the sensitive tendon that connects my thigh to my pelvis. His voice drops an octave, growing raspy and dark. “About how I’d find you at home, after school one night. No one else was around. I’d have some bullshit excuse, but you’d see right through me. You’d know I came there to see if you were really the good little girl you pretended to be.”

I know the story he’s talking about. It’s one of the...more graphic and mortifying ones for him to have read. My fantasies had run a little wild in that one.

Even hearing him talk about it, I can feel my cheeks flushing scarlet, and I can remember how absolutely gut-wrenchingly embarrassed I’d been to know he’d read it. To think he’d been thinking about that story too, that it might have turned him on...

“You remember that one, Sloan?” he purrs, his lips brushing the warm shell of my ear.

I don’t trust myself to speak, so I nod, and lift my hips a little in silent encouragement.

He smiles, his fingers tightening on my hip. His nails don’t dig in, but the strength in his grip is undeniable. His cock twitches a little where it’s trapped between our bodies.

“It was one of my favourites,” he confesses. He slowly lowers his body weight on top of me, every inch of my back pressed to his chest, and his other hand wraps around the front of my throat in a loose but promising hold. “Poor little Lucy, left all alone...anyone could happen upon her and do terrible, twisted things to her. It’s a good thing I showed up to protect you.”

I bite my lower lip to stifle a whimper, my knees spreading farther apart without my permission.

“And of course, I have to show you why I’m the only one who can take care of you...”

“Noah,” I rasp weakly, clutching at his wrist.

He’s not hurting me, not squeezing or anything, but my entire body feels like it’s on fire, tingling with twisted feelings of lust from that old fantasy, feeling how hard he is, having him touching me and growling the words into my ear. I can’t help how I squirm and arch under him, desperate for more.

“Please.”

“Oh, does little Lucy want a demonstration?” he teases.

It’s not like his usual teasing. His voice is dark, heavy, he sounds so much older than he is, so much stronger and more powerful than he’s already shown himself to be. He pushes the hand on my hip inwards, below my stomach even though I’m crushed to the bed. He spreads his fingers and pinches my clit between his knuckles tightly, his fingers long enough for the tips to tease my folds and spread them apart. His other hand flexes on my throat in the barest warning.

“Little baby,” he whispers, in a laughing tone that makes humiliation and thrill rush through me at once. “Look how wet you are already.” I am, I know I am, I can feel it even before he spread me apart and started touching me. Not only with my own slick, but what he’s already left inside, leaking out. “Is little Lucy a bit of a slut?”

“N-no,” I whimper, making my voice higher, smaller than it is. Like it might have been, back then. I shake my head. “No, I’m not a s-slut.”

“Mm, I don’t know...” His fingers push inside me, just barely before pulling out again, rubbing harshly over my clit. It’s so unlike his tongue but feels good in its own perverse way, the dirtybadwrong of it all like electricity in my bones. “Maybe you are. Maybe you want to be a slut. Or *my* slut, at least. What do you think, baby?”

I turn my head, hoping to catch his gaze. His eyes are dark, almost black from his wide pupils, he looks just as turned on as I am. I know how the story went when I wrote it—he’s

playing along with it with amazing detail. Maybe he memorized it. Maybe he played it on repeat after reading it. The thought is enough to make desire swoop low in my stomach, my legs spreading just a little wider.

“I want to be your slut, Noah,” I whisper, lashes fluttering when he gently squeezes my throat and rewards me with another shallow penetration of his fingers before pulling them out again. “*Please. I’m so...empty.*”

“Poor little Lucy.” He kisses the words to my throat over his own fingers, then forces my head down as he shifts his weight. His cock stops rutting against my ass, sinking down between my thighs now as he settles over me again. “Lift your hips up for me, baby. Good girl, just like that.”

My face flames with heat and I can’t help the little moan I let out when he calls me that. It’s even better than I imagined when I wrote it. He uses his grip on me to angle my hips properly, still meanly pinching my clit and spreading me apart with his fingers. With a low growl, he forces his cock inside me—a sudden, brutal thrust that I feel all the way in my throat. I cry out at the force of it, fisting my bedsheets as he pulls back and thrusts in again, jolting my entire body even though I have nowhere to go.

He has me pinned, completely helpless, and I couldn’t be happier.

“That’s a good girl,” he snarls against my hair. “You take me so well, fit me like a fucking glove.”

The praise makes my entire body flush hot, combined with the sudden and intense sensation of him inside me and rubbing my clit. He pulls his fingers back to circle my clit quickly, and I’m so sensitive and sore after the previous rounds that it doesn’t take long at all to get me close again. The bed keeps creaking beneath the force of his thrusts and my headboard keeps knocking against the wall, but I couldn’t care less about the noise.

“Noah,” I moan, grasping for anything to hold on to and finding a pillow and his wrist against my collarbone.

“You like it when I’m rough with you?” he asks, though I’m sure he can feel how my body is tightening and clenching around him already. “Like being pinned down and stuffed full of my cock? Like being my good little girl?”

“Yes, *yes!*” I cry, shuddering as my eyes fall closed and I cross the point of being able to fight off my orgasm. Noah grunts behind me and releases my throat so he can kiss my neck instead, wrapping both arms around my shoulders as his thrusts grow harder and faster and he rides out my orgasm with me. The aftershocks leave me dazed and trembling like I’ve just sprinted a marathon, barely able to catch my breath.

I’m still trying to get my bearings when he abruptly pulls out with another muffled curse. I frown when he rolls me over and crawls up to my side, stroking himself quickly. He meets my eyes, and without even questioning it I open my mouth and let him feed me his cock. I haven’t done this a lot but he doesn’t force me to take all of him, just the first couple inches as he strokes the rest.

He fists a hand in my hair, clenching his jaw as his hand slows, and the first thick spurt of cum hits my tongue. The taste isn’t the worst thing in the world, but it’s not the best. Still, the only recourse is to hold it in my mouth until he’s finished, or swallow it, so I swallow.

“Holy shit,” he breathes.

His chest heaves as he finally stops coming, softens, and slips out of my mouth. My lips tingle from the friction and the taste lingers, but it’s not overwhelmingly unpleasant. And it ceases to matter when he immediately leans down and kisses me, so deeply and thoroughly, that I immediately lose any air I’d managed to recover.

When he finally lets me free, I smile, and then start laughing because it all seems so absurd. To think, he wanted me all this time, he thought about these stories all this time...

“Got any other favourites I should know about?” I rasp as he lays down beside me and pulls a cover over our bodies.

“A whole fucking playlist, baby,” he teases back, winking at me. “Just you wait.”



IT'S LATE.

I should be asleep like Noah is but I can't turn my brain off. Every time I close my eyes, I hear Noah telling my brother that this is all for show. What if he's only here to make sure I keep playing along with his stupid little game? The more time I spend with Noah, the more I like him and that scares me. I'm so terrified of getting hurt at the end of this, but I can't seem to keep my distance from him.

The question I need to ask myself is, do I trust him? Can I listen to what he's telling me and believe that it's the truth or is that seed of doubt in the back of my mind there for a reason, warning me from getting too close?

God, I wish I knew the answer.

Do I trust Noah? Do I believe what he's telling me?

I'm not sure I do.

Something isn't right.

I've had a great week with Lucy and the more time I spend with her, the more certain I am that I want this. The only thing is, I'm not sure she feels the same way. She smiles at me, she kisses me, she tells me all the right things, but there's a distance in her eyes that makes me wonder where her head is at. It's like she doesn't trust me.

Not that I blame her. I have a reputation, after all, and the way she heard me speaking about her to her brother...if I were her, I probably wouldn't trust me either. Which just means I need to work harder to make her believe that this is real. She's the first girl in a long time who I've had any real feelings for. In fact, if I'm honest with myself, I don't think I've ever felt this way about anyone. The thought of losing her...

Nope, I can't let that happen.

A few weeks ago, my new business was all I cared about and I would have done anything to make it happen. Now, I couldn't care less about work. Sure, I want it to succeed, but not at the expense of my relationship.

It's complicated, though, because not only am I so much older than her, my business partner is her brother. If I pursue Lucy, then I screw him over by messing up our plans. And then I screw him all over again by doing the one thing I said I wouldn't do.

Date his sister.

So, what's more important to me, my best friend, or Lucy?

A lump forms in my throat and I try to flush it away with more whisky. It doesn't work. The way she has crawled under my skin, forcing her way into my heart, makes me want to hate her, only I can't, because I love everything about her. It doesn't matter the cost, I need her in my life, which means I need to make her believe that I'm serious about us.

And there's only one way I can think to do that.



“ARE YOU READY FOR TOMORROW?”

Lucy makes a face at me. “Yep. Our big engagement party. Can't wait.”

“You can at least pretend to be a little bit excited,” I tease her, pulling her into my lap. She rolls her eyes as I slowly unbutton her shirt.

“I'm just nervous. The only way for this to work is for me to pretend this engagement is actually real. So I've basically just lied to all my family and friends about this amazing guy I'm going to marry.”

“You don't think I'm amazing?” I pretend to be hurt.

She swats my arm playfully. “You know what I mean.”

“Pretty sure I can make those nerves disappear,” I tell her, reaching behind her back to unclasp her bra.

“I'm sure you can,” she agrees, leaning down to kiss me.

“I never back down from a challenge, remember?”

She smiles, lifting her arms to let me remove her shirt and let it fall to the floor behind her. Her bra follows quickly after, allowing me to cup her breasts. I rub my thumb over one of her nipples, smiling when her eyes darken and she bites her lower lip.

“Still nervous?” I tease.

She nods, smirking. “*So nervous.*”

“Mm, some more intense methods are needed then,” I say with mock seriousness.

I cup her ass and drag her closer to me on my lap, so she can feel where I’m starting to get hard. Her lashes lower and her lips part, her nails dragging through my hair in a way that makes me shiver. Fuck, I love it when she grabs my hair.

I lean in and plant an open-mouthed kiss over her heart, then kiss and lick my way to the nipple I teased many times before. She gasps when I take it into my mouth, abusing it like I would her clit, circling my tongue around it until it hardens in my mouth. I use my hand to torment her other nipple.

We have all the time in the world and I have to remind myself of that when she makes that cute little mewling noise again, her forehead dropping to my shoulder as I continue to tease her. I want to throw her down and ravish her until she can barely walk, but I also want to take my time.

A compromise, then.

I put both my hands on her ass and release her breast before I stand up, laughing when she gasps and wraps her arms and legs around me in a panic. Her wide eyes narrow on me when I grin.

“Dick move,” she mutters.

“I’ll show you a dick move,” I reply with another grin, before I turn and lay her down on the bed. I crawl into place between her legs and push her knees apart while I work on taking off my own shirt. “But first, dinner.”

“Noah!” she yelps, her cheeks turning a dark red when I pounce on her and wrestle her out of the rest of her clothing until she’s completely naked, just as pink and pretty as she’s always been. “Don’t say it like that.”

I laugh. If there’s one thing I’m going to spend the rest of my life striving for, it’s to help her stop feeling so embarrassed about her desires, or about sex in general. Sex is supposed to be fun, and dirty, and satisfying. I’ve been hitting two out of three consistently, but I’ll get her there one day if I have my

way. Still, for the sake of her nerves, I resist the urge to tease her about it and instead crawl over her so that I can kiss her and get her relaxed again.

“Just messing with you, baby,” I promise, planting one last kiss before moving back into place. “Now, let’s get you nice and relaxed.”

“Please,” she whispers, reaching for me.

I let her get a good handful of my hair before I get to work. I want to tease her, and take my time, even though I love how sensitive she is as well. First, I just use my tongue, licking over her clit in tiny, barely-there touches, and then down to her entrance, and back up again at a slow, lazy pace. She groans, spreading her legs wider as though to entice me to go faster, then pulling on my hair when that doesn’t work.

When I can feel her getting more frustrated, I seal my lips around her clit and circle it with my tongue, hard, and so suddenly, that she whimpers and cries out, her back arching in a severe curve as she scrambles for purchase and tries to catch her breath.

Then, just as she gets used to the sensations, I stop, and go back to my slow licking.

“Noah,” she cries, drawing out my name, and God, doesn’t that sound like a symphony all on its own. “Don’t tease me, *please...*”

“I’m relaxing you, baby,” I remind her. “Trust me.”

She sighs but doesn’t protest again. Idly, her fingers run through my hair, making me shiver as my dick reminds me that it’s still very much trapped and I’m so hard it aches, but I ignore it for now. All in good time.

When she’s relaxed and her fingers slow in my hair, I go back to the intense sucking and movement of my tongue, making her shriek with pleasure as her legs clamp around my ears. I grin to myself and force her shaking legs apart with my shoulders, but don’t release her clit until she’s moaning and her stomach tenses up and I feel her hips start to shudder.

Then, I release her entirely.

Her eyes fly open, dark and wild with outrage. “Don’t fucking *stop*,” she hisses.

“I want you to come on my cock,” I tell her, freeing my erection and shoving my pants down to my knees as I crawl closer. “Like the first time.”

She nods, breathing hard and pulling me closer. As revved up as she is, her eagerness doesn’t surprise me, but it’s a damn big ego boost. She’s soaking wet and it’s easy to push in, bottoming out in one thrust when she wraps her legs around me and forces me deeper.

“Make me come, then,” she demands breathlessly.

I remember how she likes it, the rocking motion, and though it’s physically painful to resist the urge to just start fucking her as hard and rough as I can, I manage to control myself. I kiss her as deeply as I can, in love with how her breath hitches and gets shaky, how her thighs tremble and tighten, how her body clamps down on me like the best vice in the world.

She’s perfect, she feels so fucking good, I know I want to do this every day for the rest of my life. Multiple times a day, if she’ll let me.

She’ll let me. She’s perfect like that.

She yanks on my hair and kisses me when she comes, rocking her hips up to meet mine even as I lose the battle with my self-control and my thrusts start getting rougher and faster, and lose their rhythm entirely. Her nails dig into my back, sharp lines of pain that only urge me on.

I press our foreheads together and meet her eyes, her body still clenching around me with aftershocks, expression dazed and happy. She’s perfect. I love how she looks when she looks at me.

I manage to last a few more thrusts before I’m coming, burying my groan of release into another kiss as I fill her to bursting. She sighs, smiling, content to hold me through it until I have enough strength in my muscles and brain cells in my skull to move.

“So,” I manage once I’ve caught my breath. “Relaxed?”

She giggles, and grins at me widely. “Yeah. That did the trick.”



LAYING IN MY BED, I shift onto my side. Lucy is asleep in my arms, she rolls with me, nestling her body against mine. I kiss her neck, breathing in her sweet scent. She’s so fucking beautiful. If I wasn’t so damn tired, I would lay here all night just watching her sleep.

LUCY

I 'm absolutely dreading today.

Having to stand up and lie about my relationship with Noah in front of my family and my friends is really getting to me. Maybe it upsets me so much because I really like him. These last couple of weeks have been some of the best of my life but I'm scared about what happens once Noah gets what he really wants. His hands on his trust fund. I want so much to be able to say fuck it and take a risk, but what if I can't handle the aftermath?

I pull the special dress I bought for tonight out of my closet and lay it on my bed. I spent a fortune on it. Much more than I could afford, because in my heart I want today to be perfect. It sounds ridiculous now that I think about it, that I would spend so much to look pretty for a guy I'm not even sure is serious about me. This whole thing is a bad idea. Maybe I shouldn't go. I am obviously just going to end up getting hurt.

Kara pounds on my front door, interrupting my mini breakdown.

"You have to go," she says when I share my doubts with her. "Regardless of how you feel about him, you made a commitment to help him. You can't back out on that last minute. That would be really uncool."

"You're right," I say. "But I'm damn confused. He says he really likes me, but how do I know he's being genuine?"

“Trust your gut. Now, go get ready or you’re going to be late,” she says, ushering me back into my bedroom.

I spend the next half an hour getting dressed and putting the final touches on my outfit. I stare at the result in the mirror, surprised at how good I look. I know I’m attractive, but the girl staring back at me is unbelievable, she looks nothing like me.

The dress is long, fitted, and hugs my curves in all the right places, the deep purple shimmery material making my eyes look even bluer than normal. My hair is piled back into a loose bun and fixed with some cute diamante clips. Kara walks into my room and stops in her tracks.

“Wow, girl. If he’s not into you, then he’s out of his freaking mind.” She pauses. “Or gay.”

“Trust me, he’s not gay,” I say with a chuckle.

I smile at my friend, noting how beautiful she looks too.

“I love that dress,” I tell her.

She strikes a pose. “I’ve got to look hot for my best friend’s engagement party, right? Just wait till you see what I brought to wear to your bachelorette party.”

“This is just for show, remember? There won’t be a bachelorette party.”

“Why have you gotta go and spoil my fun?” she whines.

“You’ll get your fun one day, but I promise you it won’t be anytime soon,” I say, rolling my eyes at my friend. “You want a bachelorette party earlier, go get married yourself.”

She makes a face. “No fucking chance.”



NOAH’S GRANDFATHER’S house is incredible. From the outside it doesn’t look inviting at all, but once you get through security, it’s like a different world. Set on an acreage, the huge mansion sprawls across the lush green grounds, surrounded by

perfectly manicured gardens. High fences border the property, complete with very intimidating-looking security gates.

“This is incredible,” I mumble to Kara.

“You could do a lot worse than marry this guy,” Kara jokes. “Who else did you invite besides me?”

“My brother,” I say. “A few friends from college. That’s it. I invited Mum and my stepfather, but they’re in the middle of a cruise around the Greek islands, so I knew it was going to be a no.”

“Aren’t you upset that she didn’t come back for this?”

“It’s not a real engagement party,” I remind her for the umpteenth time.

“I know but your mum doesn’t know that,” Kara points out.

That’s a good point.

I guess I should be annoyed, but I’m not. Maybe it’s because I’m used to it. I have always been much closer to my brother than my mum. My father left when we were little and it was just the three of us, only Mum spent so much time working that my brother pretty much raised me. I appreciate all Mum has done for me, but because of how hard she had to work, we’ve never been all that close. I mean, she didn’t even question why this was the first that she had heard of Noah and I being a couple. She is too wrapped up in her new husband to spend any time worrying about Luke and me.

The cab driver lets us out at the front door. I spot Noah and immediately feel shy. His eyes darken with desire as they lock with mine. He gazes over me appreciatively as he makes his way towards us.

“You look incredible,” he murmurs, his eyes only on me.

“So do you,” I admit, eyeing his expensive-looking suit and dishevelled hair.

“Let’s go inside.”

He takes my hand and I follow him through the grand entrance and into his grandfather's house. Everything I pass looks so lush and expensive. You could fit my whole apartment in this foyer alone.

"Everyone is out back," he explains, his voice low. "It's mostly the same crowd you met last week at his birthday."

He glances at Kara, like he's just noticed she is with me, then he turns his attention back to me. "He's probably going to ask you why not many of your family or friends are here."

"I have friends coming," I fire back, offended. "It was a week's notice. Not many people could make it and if I'm honest, the people I really care about are here. I would love for my mum to have come, but it wasn't practical."

"I get it, I just know how the old man thinks."

Noah gives me a reassuring pat on the back and I force myself to relax. Until I notice Noah's grandfather is headed in our direction.

"Lucy, lovely to see you again." I smile as Noah's grandfather embraces me in a hug. "You look stunning. My grandson better watch out or I might try and steal you for myself." He winks at me and I laugh politely as Noah tugs me just a little bit closer. "Are your parents here? I can't wait to meet them," he adds.

"It's just my mum, but no, she isn't. She's on a cruise overseas, so she couldn't make it," I explain. "She will definitely be at the wedding, though," I add with a smile.

"I should hope so," his grandfather laughs. "I wouldn't dream of missing anything as important as this, no matter where I was in the world. How did you two meet again?"

"Oh, we've known each other forever." I gaze up at Noah with the most lovey-dovey smile I can muster. "I guess we just reconnected again recently. It's amazing how love works in such mysterious ways sometimes," I babble on, unable to stop the garbage pouring out of my mouth. "I actually had a big crush on Noah when I was younger, but back then our age gap

felt too much. I never thought for a second he could be interested in me but then when we crossed paths again...”

“You had a crush on me?” Noah grins at me.

“I think I made that quite obvious,” I say, my cheeks heating.

“Well, you two certainly make a sweet couple. So, it’s just your friend here who came to your engagement party?” Something in his grandfather’s tone makes me wonder how much he is buying into our story.

“Other friends of mine are already here,” I inform him. “And my brother, Luke, is on his way too.”

“Oh, yes. Luke. Lovely young man,” he mumbles, looking a little less sure of himself. He adjusts his glasses and glances around the room. “Well, if you’ll excuse me, I better go and mingle—”

Noah clears his throat. “Actually, there’s something I need to say.”

His grandfather raises his eyebrows at Noah and so do I.

“I haven’t been completely honest with you,” Noah begins, addressing his grandfather. “I sought Lucy out and asked her to pretend to be my girlfriend so that you’d give me access to my trust fund for the new business I’m setting up with her brother.”

I stare at Noah in shock. “What the heck are you doing?” I hiss.

“I don’t know,” he shrugs with a laugh. “I guess I’m unproposing to you? I’m sorry to blindsides you, Lucy, but I need to get this out.” He turns his attention back to his grandfather. “So yeah, in the beginning this was all just a ploy for me to get my hands on that money, but then something happened. Something I never expected. I fell in love.”

I stare at him in shock. I must be losing my mind because I thought I just heard Noah say he’s in love with me. My heart flutters in my chest as Noah reaches for my hand. He gives it a reassuring squeeze, sending shivers racing down my spine.

“You expect me to believe this?” his grandfather sputters. “How do I know this isn’t just another scheme? Really, Noah, you never cease to amaze me—”

“With all due respect, Grandfather, I don’t care if you believe me or not.” Noah speaks quietly, looking the most serious I have ever seen him. “The only person I need to believe me is Lucy.” He turns to me and takes both my hands in his, staring me straight in the eye. “You wonder if I’m telling the truth about how I feel about you. I can see it every time you look at me and it’s killing me.” He takes a deep breath and expels it slowly. “So here I am, putting everything on the line for you, Sloan. I need you to know that this *is* real for me. That I’m falling in love with you, and that I *do* want to be with you. I’m risking everything. All for you. For us.”

I can’t believe he just did that.

“Noah,” I breathe out. Tears prick my eyes, my heart swelling with so many emotions that I can’t contain them. “But what about Luke and your business—”

My brother steps forward from the crowd.

“Noah told me he wanted to do this, and I gave him my blessing. He said he needed to come clean because he was worried about losing you. For him to put all of this on the line for you...” Luke smiles at me. “It’s pretty damn clear he likes you, sis. Honestly, I’ve never seen *any* woman have the effect on Noah that you seem to.”

“I always thought you didn’t want me dating your friend because you thought I was too young or too immature,” I say to Luke, shocked at how supportive he is being. This was the last reaction I expected from my overprotective big brother.

“The opposite, actually,” Luke chuckles. “I always thought you were too good for Noah. You’re my kid sister, Luce. I will do everything in my power to protect you. Even though you’re all grown up, you’re still my baby sister.”

I smile at my brother and then turn my attention back to Noah, not sure what to say. I’m lost for words, so I simply lean

up and kiss him softly on the lips, hoping that tells him everything he needs to hear.

“Thank you for this,” I whisper. “I’m sorry it cost you your dream.”

“Don’t be sorry, Sloan,” he whispers to me, tilting my lips up to his so he can steal another kiss. “You’re my real dream.”

Holy shit.

Blinking, I stare in shock at the two pink lines on the little stick in my hands.

I'm pregnant.

I knew it was a possibility, especially since we have been trying for the last six months, but a small part of me was starting to wonder if it was ever going to happen. Month after month of disappointment had begun to take its toll on me. I even suggested to Noah just last night that we go see a specialist, just to check everything is okay. He told me to go ahead and make the appointment.

I bite my lip, tears welling in my eyes as I try to process the emotions surging through me. It's been a year since our fake engagement party, and we're married and now expecting our first child together. Everything feels like it's finally coming together and I'm just so damn happy right now.

My first thought is to call Noah, but I hold off. Not only do I want to tell him in person, but he and Luke are in the middle of a big meeting with a team of investors as they try and take their property development company to the next level.

After his big un-proposal, Noah and Luke sat down with Noah's grandfather and went through their business proposal. Noah's grandfather was so impressed with the amount of thought and work they had put into their idea that he not only reinstated Noah's trust, he also put forward a hundred thousand dollars of his own money as an investment. That

gesture meant so much to Noah, because he felt like he finally had his grandfather's approval.

After a slow but steady start, their business has been going great. So great in fact, they were ready to level up and start hiring more staff. I am so proud of both my brother and Noah for taking a leap of faith and believing in themselves.

It's something Noah has also been encouraging *me* to do.

For the last two months, I have found myself writing again every chance I get. Maybe it's having Noah back in my life as inspiration, but for some reason, the words have just been flowing. I'm not ready to quit my law degree just yet but it's been great to feel a connection to something I used to be so passionate about. Who knows, maybe one day I can live my childhood dream of becoming a full-time author.

My phone buzzes. I scoop it up and read the new message from Noah.

Noah: Meeting went great. I'll be home soon.

True to his word, less than twenty minutes later I hear the garage door go up, then the jiggle of Noah's keys as he opens the side door. He walks in, his face lighting up when he sees me standing there, impatiently waiting for him.

"Hey you," he grins. "I'm not used to having a welcoming party when I get home."

He drops his keys on the hallway table and puts his arms around my waist, pulling me close for a kiss. My heart races like it does every time he touches me.

"Yes, well, today is a big day," I hint, unable to hide my happiness. "How did your meeting go?"

"Better than I could have imagined," he murmurs, kissing my neck. I giggle as he nuzzles into me. "So, how was your day? Did you find a specialist for us to see?"

"About that..." I reach into my pocket and pull out the test. "I think we might need to see a different kind of specialist."

He stares at it for a moment before it registers, then his eyes widen.

“We’re pregnant?”

I smile. “We sure are.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ivy Arnold writes spicy age gap romance that you can devour in one sitting. Follow her below to stay in the loop for news and new releases!



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