



Arrogant

BILLIONAIRE'S

Secret Baby

OLIVIA PEARL

ARROGANT BILLIONAIRE'S SECRET BABY

AN ENEMIES TO LOVERS FORCED PROXIMITY
ROMANCE

Olivia Pearl



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About Author

ABOUT

I'm riding my brother's best friend, who's also my boss...and I'm having his baby.

I always had a crush on my brother's best friend Dylan.
He's hot, rich, and grumpy,
The essence of every one of my fantasies.

After he rejected me on my eighteenth birthday, I tried to forget all about him.

But then years later, he's picking me up from the airport as his new intern.

He's still the sexiest man alive, but with more fire in his eyes.

And those eyes are on *me*.

Our late nights at the office become intense,

And soon case files are swept off the conference table,
And I'm yelling his name.

We were supposed to keep it a secret.
But nothing ever goes as planned...

I just found out I'm pregnant.

There's gonna be hell to pay once my brother finds
out his best friend has been having his way with me.

And soon case files are swept off the conference table,
And I'm yelling his name.

We were supposed to keep it a secret.
But nothing ever goes as planned...

I just found out I'm pregnant.

There's gonna be hell to pay once my brother finds
out his best friend has been having his way with me.

CHAPTER 1

SELENA

Sometimes I legit feel like I'm haunted by the universe.

Why else would all my internship applications get rejected? I was really hoping for fell through at the last minute and that hurt, especially seeing as my colleagues had all gotten placements.

I called my brother, Cooper, and he told me he was going to take care of me. So, here I am, preparing to leave for New York in the middle of a rainy day. My ride's already waiting outside so I exit my room with my belongings.

"Selena!" someone yells as I haul my slightly heavy luggage down the stairs. I don't need to raise my head to know who it is. I can already tell from the annoying sound of the voice that it's Mae, otherwise known as the teacher's pet.

I'm not in the mood for her shenanigans, but I plaster a fake smile anyway, hiding the fact that I'd rather be anywhere else. Mae is a blonde and her blonde hair reminds me of the annoying head girl from *Wild C*

"Heading somewhere?" she inquires with a smirk.

It's not news to my classmates that I'm the only one without a place. Mae has been in an unspoken competition with me from the very start, and she must be thrilled by the news. She's here, no doubt to rub it in my face—what she does best.

“Home,” I simply state.

“Oh, that's sad. It's such a shame that you got rejected by all the places you applied to. I mean, firms these days only go for the best, but it was a try,” she taunts with a sympathetic smile as fake as her personality.

“Hmm,” I hum in response, rolling my suitcase away. I can't seem to get away from her fast enough.

“I hope you find some way to salvage this soon. I really do. My best wishes are with you,” she says, and I resist the insurmountable urge to cry. The one thing I don't like about my eyes.

Best wishes indeed.

“Thanks.”

I hurry to the cab waiting just in front of the dorm's building, and the driver puts my luggage in the trunk.

“Where to, miss?” he asks.

“The airport.”

I miss New York, and I can't wait to see my brother. I haven't been home since I gained admission into Harvard, and it's been a while considering every fact that I'm in my second year. My childhood best friends, Sydney and Diana, will be delighted to learn of my return. I want to surprise them, but I've been tight-lipped about the whole thing.

This is going to be fun, I think as I relax in the back seat of the cab. It's a cliché, but I hope Cooper doesn't disappoint.

ement.



art, and

ace. It's

My flight takes only a couple of hours, and before I know it, I'm back in New York. The moment I step out of the airport, I scan the area for Cooper, but I don't see him anywhere. He's supposed to pick me up, and I would be surprised if he decided to ditch me for some work meeting at the last minute.

w firms

s worth

I love my brother but running a multi-billion-dollar company means he barely has time for himself, talk less of anyone else. I'm aware that his

1 to get

occupied his schedule usually is so I had opted for a cab, but he had insisted on saying he wanted to do it himself because he missed me, and I'd been waiting

4y best

for a long time.

to roll

Sighing, I decide to call to let him know I'm here. I dial his number, and he answers on the second ring.

"If it isn't my favorite sister in the world," his honey-laced voice comes through the phone, and without being told, I know he isn't coming to pick me

and the

up.

"I'm your only sister," I deadpan, not the least bit amused.

"That doesn't stop you from being my favorite though."

"I'm at the airport, but I don't see you anywhere. Where are you?"

n home

"Err... about that, I won't be able to make it."

ing the

I can't believe him. "You promised!"

ey and

"I'm so sorry, Lena, it's beyond my control. Some investors decide to show up in town unannounced, and I had to set up a meeting with them at the last minute."

so I've

"Why would they do that? It's all shades of unprofessional."

r. I just

I can hear him sigh from the other end of the line. He's stressed. "I'm sorry, but believe me, I wanted to be the one to take you home."

I know he wanted to, and I also know he feels bad that he can't, so push it. "So, should I just take a cab then or are you sending one in New drivers?"

er, but I "Just hang on. Someone will be there to take you home in no time. dn't be go. Love you. Bye."

minute. He drops the call before I get the chance to say anything else. ' that he Cooper.

of how As I sit in the waiting area, I observe my surroundings. There's nsisted, couple seated not too far from me, and they look around my age. T n away whispers something to the woman which makes her laugh. Anyone w them can tell that they're genuinely in love with each other.

and he Somewhere deep down, I wish I could have something like that, only person who's managed to win my heart is the one person in the pierces world I'm not allowed to be with.

ick me I've liked Dylan since the moment I first met him when Cooper l him home for dinner. That was the summer I turned seventeen. But I c say anything to him because I didn't think he'd take me seriously. I v afraid of the potential rejection.

ided to So, I waited until my eighteenth birthday. I worked up enough cour: night and kissed him when everyone had left. Dylan was horrified, to least, and it looked like I had broken him with my confession. It had know that my feelings were unrequited, and I didn't know how supposed to face him after that.

I know, Thankfully, I left for college shortly afterwards, and I haven't se since then. I met other guys in school, of course. But I never felt a attachment to any of them. I tried to move on, but I couldn't. They weren't Dylan. Just thinking about him hurts like a stick on a butt chee

I don't My ringtone pulls me out of my depressing thoughts, and I check the screen to see that it's a strange number calling. It's probably the driver sent to get me.

I gotta "Hello," I answer. There's poor reception so I can't hear whoever is on the other end of the line properly.

Typical "Can you say that again, please? I can barely hear you."

The call ends, and I'm about to dial the number again when I receive a cute text. It's the description of a car alongside its plate number. That must be my ride. I immediately pick up my suitcase and head for the exit. Once outside, I survey the parking lot and stop dead in my tracks when my eyes grace a person I expected to see on my first day back in New York.

but the What are the fucking odds? Suddenly, my heart goes haywire, and I feel like it's going to leap out of my ribcage any moment.

Standing there in the parking lot in all his six-foot glory with gold teeth, brought on by the bright sun hitting his smooth skin, Dylan Smith looks like a taste of liquid goodness. His dark brown hair, which is styled to perfection, reminds me of chocolate, and boy, I love chocolate. I mean, who doesn't should seriously be considered a crime not to.

age that His jawline looks like it was sculpted by the Greek gods themselves. Everything about him is masculine and commanding in that delicious way that I want to remember. I want to make a beeline for the hills before he notices me. I can't bring my feet to cooperate with my brain.

Unexpectedly, his entrancing ocean-blue eyes connect with mine, and he instantly draws in a sharp breath. It takes special effort not to melt under his strong intensity. He looks caught off-guard, but it only lasts a millisecond.

simply Before I know what's happening, he's walking towards me and shaking the distance between us. The closer he gets, the more defined his features

ack mybecome, and damn, age has got nothing on this dangerously sex
CooperThere's absolutely nothing about him that suggests he's forty-one. Thi
his full pink lips look just about ripe for kissing.

s on the *Focus, Selena.*

“Hello, Selena,” he begins curtly, and the roughness of his deep l
voice sends shivers down my spine and to other remote places I'm
e a text.ashamed to admit. “It’s been a while.”

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become, and damn, age has got nothing on this dangerously sexy man. There's absolutely nothing about him that suggests he's forty-one. This close, his full pink lips look just about ripe for kissing.

Focus, Selena.

“Hello, Selena,” he begins curtly, and the roughness of his deep baritone voice sends shivers down my spine and to other remote places I'm a little ashamed to admit. “It’s been a while.”

See? Haunted.

CHAPTER 2

DYLAN

When my best friend, Cooper, asked me to help pick up his sister at the airport, I was nowhere near prepared for the shock that hit me when I set my eyes on her. I wasn't expecting to see this beautiful girl staring right back at me.

Selena Langley looks captivating and so much more mature than the girl I saw at the time I saw her. Compared to the eighteen-year-old who kissed me at my birthday party, this Selena is a sight for sore eyes. She's wearing a pink dress that hugs her curves like a glove and makes her baby-blue eyes stand out. Her strawberry blonde hair cascades down her shoulders in luscious waves, making her look more astonishing.

"Hi, yeah, it has," she says in a smooth velvety voice, and I nod. I've heard so many unexplainable things to me. Is it just me or has she always sounded this way? I can't exactly say for sure.

"You look different. You've changed a lot," I can't help but say out loud. Selena nods stiffly. She looks like she would rather be anywhere else. Well, that makes two of us. To be honest, I'm not thrilled to be here right now.

would have run any other errand for Cooper gladly, but the motherfucker
to make me pick up his sister.

Things are awkward between Selena and I because of what happened
her eighteenth birthday. But there was no way I was going to tell my
friend that, so I sucked it up and here I am when I would rather jump
cliff.

“Yeah. I gotta go. Someone's waiting to take me home,” she
attempting to roll her teal green suitcase away.

If I was aware Cooper hadn't informed her that it was going to
taking her home, I would've sent one of my drivers to do the bid instead

Fuck!

er from “I was sent by Cooper to get you. I'm the one who texted you,” I s
greeted she looks taken back but tries to conceal it.

nbshell “He never mentioned,” she says, and I sigh. I'm a moment away
losing my patience.

the last “Check out the plate number of my car yourself.”

at her I get out of her view, and she compares the plate number of my car
nk dress one in the text. She has a sour look on her face as she bites her lower
out. Her doubt contemplating whether to come with me or not. My eyes follow
waves, action, and when I realize what I'm doing, I mentally chide myself,
tearing my gaze from her salacious full lips.

it does “Why are you thinking about it so much? It's not like I'm Jack the
is way? or something. I didn't want to be here anyways,” I lash out at her, un
hide my disdain and she glares at me.

loud. How is it that she still manages to look hot even when upset?

re else. “So, why did you come then? You should've told Cooper you didn't
myself. I to do it. No one forced you to. I'm not the least bit pleased to see you e

ker had *You and me both.*

“I only did this because Cooper’s my buddy. Otherwise, I would’ve turned it down.”

She folds her hands across her chest and the action hoists her breasts up off her shoulders, making them look fuller than they already are.

“You don’t have to.”

She says, “What?”

“I’ll find my way home,” she says, walking away from me, and I don’t want to stop her, but I have to. I promised Cooper I was going to do it. I will.

“I’m afraid you don’t have much of a choice. You’re coming with me, and I’ll say so, but she keeps moving, her hips swaying in a way that should be considered illicit.

“As a matter of fact, I do have a choice. You’re an asshole, and the way in hell I’m sitting in the same car as you for twenty whole minutes.

I pinch my brows in frustration and cover the distance between us. I step into her path, and she gives me the stink eye.

“Look, just get in the car.”

She and I engage in a stare down, and it’s a little bit ridiculous since she’s about five-six. Although I must say, her eyes are the most gorgeous

I’ve ever had the pleasure of seeing. This close, they look enchanting, and it’s a little bit difficult not to get lost in them.

“No,” she declares stubbornly.

“Stop acting so immature,” I say, and her jaw drops to the floor.

She barks a humorless laugh. “I’m acting immature? I was willing to be civil with you, but you’re the one who made it clear you’d rather be a dick than the grown-ass man you are.”

I clench my jaw to stop myself from spewing something rather hurtful. I can't believe she of all people just called me a child. Instead of continuing with her and wasting more time than necessary, I do the next best thing and snatch her suitcase from her. There's a surprised expression glued to her face.

"What do you think you're doing?" she asks, obviously confused.

"Taking your luggage to the car, of course," I state like I'm talking about the weather, striding to where my car is parked.

Selena hurries after me. "What? Give that back." I don't want to give it so I say, "If you want it, come ride with me. Else I'll just drop it off somewhere." I say, putting the suitcase into the trunk of the car and shutting it. The horrified look on her face is comical, and I smirk. She looks so adorable for her own good.

"Don't you dare, Dylan," she grits out. "I have important documents here's nothere."

Ignoring how good my name sounds coming from her, I get into the driver's seat and turn on the ignition. "You coming or what?" I ask with a triumphant smirk, and if looks could kill, her scowl would've slain me in a spot and I'd be dead right now.

"I'm not going anywhere with you," she maintains.

"Fine. Be my guest."

I'm about to drive off when she yells, "Wait!"

I halt and turn to look at her with a raised brow. Selena has gone bright red and the vein in her neck looks like it's about to pop. She says nothing and gets into the car and slams the door with a loud bang.

"This isn't over," I hear her mumble just as we drive out of the airport.

"You're sitting in my car and letting me drive you home, so I'm pretty sure that implies that it is indeed over. And oh, I won."

artful. I “Oh, look at you scrambling for wins. That's cute. Did you nev
tending anything as a kid because you were too damn occupied being a
thing. I people? Must have sucked to be a serial loser,” she says in a sickly
er face. voice and the smirk rapidly slips off my face.

“I wasn't a loser,” I say through clenched teeth.

g about She tuts. “The very fact that you had to say that tells me you were in
loser, and a sore one at that.”

Now I'm regretting forcing her to ride with me. Will it count as an
here,” I if I decide to toss her out the window for being exceedingly annoying?

“I should have just let you find your own way home,” I grumble, r
oks too a corner.

“Why? Did I hurt your feelings?” Selena asks, feigning concern. Sl
ents in be enjoying this.

I don't reply, hoping she'll take the hint and let me be.

nto the “I'm so sorry, Dylie,” she says, and I almost choke on my saliva. W
with a fuck is Dylie? Sounds like the name of a fucking cat.

on the “Don't call me that.”

“Why? Don't you like it?” she enquires, a smirk slowly stretching
lips. Looks like she's out to taunt me.

“I don't like it.”

“That's a shame because I do, and I'm not going to stop. Deal
ight red Dylie.”

out gets I don't want to indulge her anymore, so I keep my mouth sh
thankfully, she doesn't say anything either. The rest of the ride is c
rt. silence. I can't wait to drop her off and be on my way.

ttly sure I have no idea why being within close proximity of Selena bothers
much. Deep down, I think it's because I haven't been able to get ric

er winmemory of our kiss from years ago.

wful to If that's the case, then I'm royally screwed.

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memory of our kiss from years ago.

If that's the case, then I'm royally screwed.

CHAPTER 3

SELENA

Dylan drops me at home and zooms off. Good riddance. V narcissistic jerk. If I had known Cooper was going to send his friend to get me, I would have been more insistent on taking a cab.

I wasn't prepared to meet Dylan at all. I knew it would eventually be inevitable, but I didn't know it was going to happen so soon. I had expected things to be awkward between us. What I hadn't predicted though was for him to act like I was an annoying piece of crap he couldn't stand around.

I don't blame him at all. I blame my stupid heart for choosing Dylan as the first person I fell for. He was sweet and caring. Once, he helped me trim my parents' lawn just so I could go out with Diana and Sydney. The probability that maybe I ruined everything with that kiss is a jab to my gut.

Shoving Dylan to the back of my mind, I take the time to observe the changes Cooper has made to the mansion since my parents

Everything looks exactly the same except for the addition of roses
array of flowers at the entrance.

Once I step into the mansion, I'm instantly hit with the scent of jasm
I close my eyes for a moment to relish in the wonderful scent that remi
that I'm back home.

When I open my eyes, I see a young lady walking towards me
dressed in a housekeeper's uniform. Cooper must have hired her to he
care of the house.

"Welcome home, Miss Langley. I've been expecting you. Mr. Langl
you were coming. How was your flight?" she asks in a warm, friendly

"My flight was good," I reply. "I'm Selena. What's your name?"

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"Nina. I'll take that," she says, taking the suitcase from me. "Your
in perfect condition, and I made sure to return everything to its place
was done cleaning," she tells me as we ascend the stairs.

"That's thoughtful of you. Thanks."

She smiles as we enter my room. "It's my job."

Nina drops my suitcase at the foot of the bed. I observe that the lila
have been repainted, but everything looks just the same. My BTS a
Direction posters are still up on the walls and my sapphire feathered
catcher still dangles from the ceiling. My best friends and I got m
dream catchers when we were in junior high. I smile at the memory.

"I made lunch, so I'll set the table. If you need anything,
downstairs," Nina says and makes to leave.

"Nina, around what time does Cooper usually get home?"

rve the
passed.
"I can't pinpoint a particular time, but it's usually very late at night."
Still overworking himself, I see. "Alright, thanks."

Nina exits my room and shuts the door behind her. I unpack my s

to the and proceed to arrange my clothes in the wardrobe. Once I'm done, I
my cell and FaceTime Diana and Sydney.

ine and “Hey, girls! Guess who's back in town?” I ask in a singsong manner
inds me “She's kidding. There's no way she would've made plans to com
home without informing us.” Sydney rolls her coffee-brown eyes. Fr
e. She's background, it looks like she's at a salon.

elp take “Wait, hold on a sec, is that your room?” Diana asks, squinting h
and holding her chestnut-colored hair in place.

ley said “Mmm-hmm. I'm back in New York, baby!”

tone. They both squeal, and I'm glad I kept my return a surprise. We use
inseparable until we parted ways to go to college. Our friendship is
room is strong as ever even though we don't get to see each other that often any

once I “Thought you said you weren't coming home until Thanksgiving?”
enquires.

“I came back because all my internship applications fell through.
said he found a good firm here for me so here I am.”

ic walls “I guess it's a good thing you got rejected then. At least we'll get
nd Oneyou. It's been a really long time,” Diana says.

l dream “Ugh! I missed you so much. How about the three of us meet up fo
atchingtomorrow?” Sydney asks.

“Is Glazers still as good as it used to be?” I enquire.

I'll be “Hell to yeah. Blake and I were there just last week,” Sydney sa
Diana and I exchange mischievous glances. Blake's the guy she's beer
for the past couple of months. They met at a mall.

’ “So, how's that going?” I ask.

“It's always *Blake this, Blake that*. I swear if I have to listen to l
suitcase about how sweet and charming he is one more time, I'm going to kill n

pick up Diana whines, and I giggle.

“Oh please, Diana, you know we didn't hear the end of it when you-know-who were still together,” Sydney deadpans.

You-know-who is code for Josh, Diana's high school sweetheart who cheated on her and broke her heart after leaving for college and Diana hasn't moved on.

“Syd, you know we don't speak of him,” I chide Sydney.

“What? I was only trying to make a point,” she defends.

“It's fine. I'm not a fragile piece of glass.” Diana forces a smile, but it's hard to see she's hurt. They were pretty tight, and she hasn't been able to get over it yet.

My stomach grumbles loudly, and I'm instantly reminded of the fact that Sydney hasn't had anything to eat since this morning. Besides, things have gotten a little uneasy so it's best we end the conversation.

“Guys, I've got to go. I have to shower, eat and get some rest.”

“Don't forget our plans for lunch tomorrow. Bye,” Sydney says.

“Sure. Bye.”

I shower and put on something light because of the heat. Then I hit the shower with the intention of getting a little rest before going down for lunch. When I wake up, it's dark outside. I scramble for my phone and see it's half past ten already.

Shit!

The lunch Nina made must have gone to waste. Slipping out of bed and putting on my flip-flops, I head downstairs where I find Cooper seated at the dining table, having dinner. He's clad in a white shirt which is rolled up to his forearms. My guess is that he's tossed aside his suit jacket.

“You're awake,” he says, his lips stretching into a full-blown smile.

gray eyes sparkle, and they remind me so much of our dad's.

You and Cooper is nineteen years older, and he's always been protective of his parents. His parents had trouble having another child after he was born but after a long wait. After two decades of waiting, they finally had me.

Ma still "Yeah. I guess all the late-night studying finally caught up with me."

Cooper gets up from his seat and engulfs me in a bone-crushing hug. I guess someone missed me way more than I speculated.

"Is it just me or have you grown an inch taller?" he asks, and I playfully smack his arm. I know he's making fun of me. Regardless, I love him. "Ouch! That hurt," he pouts.

"I'm glad."

"How are you?" he asks, going back to his seat and I take my place. I get a plate of food, dishing out a plate for myself.

"I'm good. What about you?"

"I'm okay. And school?"

"Aside getting rejected by every law firm I applied to, everything is going pretty much great," I sulk.

"Don't worry about it. I got you a placement at the best law firm in the city. But New York."

"Pray tell, what law firm is that?"

"Smith Law."

"Smith Law?"

"It belongs to Dylan."

It had totally slipped my mind that Dylan's a prominent lawyer who works at one of the best firms in the city. This has to be some sort of a joke. I can't intern at his firm. No fucking way.

"Can't I intern somewhere else?" I ask, desperately looking for a way

Cooper looks at me like I'm crazy. "Why? Dylan's firm is the best. We didn't bother going to anyone else. Plus, this is last minute. There's no time to nearly be able to secure another placement before tomorrow. It's the stipulation for you to begin your internship, isn't it?"

"It is."

Okay, "Or is there a reason you don't want to intern there?" Cooper is watching me closely.

Dylan detests me so I wonder why he would even offer me a chance. My brother is right. It's too late to start submitting applications to other places. And even if I do, what are the odds of them accepting me?

"Not at all. I just wasn't expecting it, that's all."

Cooper hums and carries on with his meal, oblivious to my plight. He nudges the food on my plate around with my fork.

The reality that I'll be interning at Dylan's firm, starting tomorrow, makes me nervous as hell. But if luck is on my side, I would only cross paths with him on a few occasions.

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CHAPTER 4

DYLAN

I love the feeling of being in control and having the upper hand. Currently, I'm in a meeting and seated across from me at the table are potential investors whom I have not a single doubt that I have won over.

Thanks to my expertise and experience in the field, going through this meeting and trying to convince them to become my clients has been a walk in the park.

"You know I can easily get a better offer elsewhere," Martin Crawford, founder and CEO of Crawford Housings, says to me when I lay my cards on the table. Beside him is his business partner.

"I'm not disputing the fact, Mr. Crawford. However, Smith is undoubtedly the best in the city. Our services are top notch, and other organizations can attest to that."

"Sure, I've heard the tales," he says, and I lean back in my seat, feeling a sense of triumph.

"What do you say?"

Martin shares a look with his partner, and they talk in hush tones for what feels like a minute. He's going to break, I know it. They always do. The same cycle with businessmen. They push, I push, they contemplate, and finally, they succumb.

“It’s a deal.”

Called it.

“You’ve made the right choice for you and your business,” I say, handing them the fundamental documents which require both of their signatures. I look forward to working with you. Welcome to Smith Law,” I announce as we shake hands to seal the deal.

I see Martin and his business partner to the elevator, and we discreetly discuss the details of the business as we wait for the elevator to arrive. It finally opens and the people in it get off.

From my peripheral view, I see strawberry blonde hair and when she turns around, it's Selena. Instantly, my heart skips a beat at how stunning she is in her gray-colored shirt and black pencil skirt which stops just shy of her knees. The interns all begin today and even though I was aware that she was coming, she still manages to throw me off balance every time I see her.

What is it about her that unsettles me so much? We only shared a kiss a few years ago, and I didn't want to see her because I was scared she might have a crush on me. That would be awkward. I was never interested in her and I've since been with other women so what in the world is wrong with me?

Her eyes connect with mine, and I detect a slight panic in them which she does a very good job at concealing. The new clients get into the elevator while I remain glued to the spot, my eyes trained on Selena. Her delicate beauty makes it impossible for me to look away.

“Good morning, Mr. Smith,” one of my employees greets me, and

or what out of my reverie, breaking our eye lock. After I answer and turn back
It's that Selena, I find her walking away with someone I presume to be her
te, and new intern.

Turning on my heels, I head back to my office where I see my
resources manager waiting for me. Gail does her job diligently, and I
she's here to talk about the new interns.

standing “Good morning, Mr. Smith,” Gail greets as I settle into my seat.
ures. “I “Good morning. What can I help you with?” I cut straight to the
ice, and typing away on my computer.

“I just wanted to find out if you would like one of the interns to wo
russ theyou as a personal assistant seeing as Iva is on leave for the month.”

chimes Iva is my assistant who had taken a sick leave from work. Things
been a notch tedious for me since she left, and I could use some I
I turn replacement for the time being won't be a bad idea.

ie looks “Sure. Find someone who is adequate among them to fill in the gap.

of her “Of course.”

she was Gail leaves my office, enabling me to pay more mind to the task at
: work for a while and suddenly, there's a knock on the door. A new a
iss four will save me the stress of having to see people I don't want to. I ho
ght still finds someone suitable for the job as soon as possible.

Selena “Come on in.”

ith me? The door creaks open and I lift my head to check who it is. It's Sele
ich she breath hitches but I try to play cool. She walks up to me in confident
levator and nothing about her countenance shows that she's nervous or anxio
erously being within close proximity to me. Am I the only one who's affected
closeness?

I snap My insecurities rear their ugly heads, and I scrutinize her under n

to lookgaze with the aim of intimidating her, but Selena squares her shoulders and fellowholds her head high. Someone's ballsy.

I'm doing her a favor by letting her intern at my firm, so she better have a human attitude in check.

I'm sure "Good morning, sir," she greets.

Good.

At least she knows to accord me some fucking respect in the workplace. "Good morning," I murmur in reply. I wonder what she wants. Maybe she has come to apologize for how she spoke to me yesterday. "If you've come to work with apologize, then be fast about it. I'm a very busy man, and I've got things to do."

Selena's face morphs into a confused expression. "Apologize? What do you need help. A "For the manner in which you spoke to me yesterday. Hurry up. I've got all day."

Selena barks a laugh. "You're unbelievable. *I* should apologize to you. You apologize to me?"

I pause. "Excuse me?"

"You heard me."

I chuckle darkly. She's hilarious. I'll give her that. "I'll do well to remember you of where you stand and to whom you're speaking."

She glares at me, and we engage in a stare-down that lasts for what feels like forever. There's no way I'm backing down. Selena is the first to stride away, and I smirk devilishly.

"I apologize for my behavior yesterday, sir. It was unacceptable and won't repeat itself," she states in a tone that suggests otherwise.

She's shooting daggers at me with her eyes but who cares? Whether she likes me or not, she apologized and that's all that matters.

ers and “Apology accepted. You can go,” I dismiss her.

“Miss Gail asked me to see you.”

get that My brows narrow. “What for?”

“She said your personal assistant took a sick leave and that I should take the role for now.”

What? Of all people. Seriously?

ace. “But if you have a problem with me being here, I can go back right now. Maybe she can be your instant and tell her to choose someone else. It's your call. You're the boss, come to after all,” she says, deliberately taunting and daring me to reveal how much power she holds over me.

I don't fucking know why this audacious side of her turns me on so much. “What for?” Her lips lift in a smirk and my eyes flicker to them for a split second. I haven't. They're so damn titillating, and I'm reminded of the kiss we shared.

I try to tell myself to imagine what they must taste like now. The thought causes a traitorous cock to stir in my pants and I mentally curse, adjusting in my seat.

“That won't be necessary. I hope Gail gave you all the details?”

“She did.”

“Good. I expect all my affairs to be kept in order. If there's anything you don't understand or are not conversant with, ask questions because I don't tolerate any form of incompetence. Have I made myself clear?”

It seems Selena nods stiffly. “Crystal.”

to look I retrieve the stocked-up files from my desk which consist of documents that should have been sorted way long before now but didn't because of her absence and dump them in her arms.

She's “I expect you to sort those out before the end of the day.”

es it or “All of it?” she asks in lucid horror.

“Do you have a problem with that, Miss Langley?”

Selena looks like she's about to argue but thinks better of it. Instead she purses her lips in a straight line.

“Not at all, Mr. Smith.”

and fill in “Good.”

I return my gaze to the computer screen, a clear indication that she's dismissed. Selena turns around and makes her way out. As I watch her go, I might think I wonder how I'm supposed to combat this eccentric attraction I feel toward the boss, her and resist the urge to have her all to myself.

So much Selena Langley is a living breathing temptation, and the most interesting part is she knows it.

So much. Damn. I need a fucking break.

moment.

I allow

myself

to sit.

and you

I don't

arguments

of Iva's

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Selena Langley is a living breathing temptation, and the most interesting part is she knows it.

Damn. I need a fucking break.

CHAPTER 5

SELENA

By lunchtime, I feel like my back is about to split in two.
Damn you, Dylan Smith.

I've been stuck in this chair since morning, sorting through the files Dylan gave to me earlier. At this point, I think I hate Iva or whatever name is. She couldn't have chosen a more awful time to fall sick. An asshole Dylan is using this to his advantage. He's purposely punishing me without even bothering to hide the fact.

As if on cue, he comes out of his office and passes in front of me, heading towards the elevator. I might as well have blended in with the furniture because he doesn't acknowledge me. I watch his muscles flex deliciously underneath his black suit with each powerful stride, and I suddenly have an inextinguishable desire to touch them and feel just how hard and defined they are.

Devilishly handsome bastard.

I swear it's so difficult to stay mad at him when he looks so fucking edible. The man is literally sex on a stick and working as his p

assistant is not something I ever imagined in my wildest dreams that I
be doing.

When Gail told me about it, I couldn't outrightly say no because
want to make a bad impression on my first day. So, I opted for
sophisticated approach. My initial agenda was to bait Dylan into
someone else, but my plan went to shit because I couldn't pass up
opportunity to provoke him.

Now who's the moron stuck in a chair and doing what she
considered one of the most difficult jobs in history? That's right, me
like an idiot.

Sneaking a peak at the table clock, I sigh in frustration. If I don't
now, I won't be able to make it in time for lunch with the girls. So, put
rest of the pile away, I snatch my bag from the table and make a bee
fucking the elevator.

over her

and that



me andIt doesn't take long for me to get to Glazers. It's not that far from my
building, so I arrive in approximately six minutes. The cafe is a little
readingwhen I get there, but I manage to spot Sydney and Diana with ease. I
urnitureby their empty table, I'm guessing they were waiting for me to sit
ciouslybefore ordering.

feel the I swiftly make my way over to them, almost running into a waiter
ed theyprocess. Sydney is the first to catch sight of me, and she squeals a little
loudly in delight. Diana rapidly turns to see what the fuss is all about
joins in the drama. Heads turn but we ignore them as I do a happy dance
reakingthe table.

personal

I would I've barely made it to my seat when they both pounce on me, swa
me in a bone-grinding hug.

I didn't "I c-can't breathe," I grapple and manage to let out before they rele
a more from their suffocating clutches.

picking "Oh my gosh, you look abso-fucking-lutely terrific," Diana complin
on the "She does, doesn't she? Massachusetts is most definitely treati
well," Sydney says.

ould be "Why, thank you. And you girls don't look bad at all. And Sydney,
e. I feel that glow? Do you have a new skincare routine or what?"

"It's this new organic product I've been trying, and it's really amazin
't leave "It sure is," I concur.

ting the "Now, enough about my skincare ritual. Tell us what you've been up
line for "Nothing really. It's just plain old law school activities."

"Are you ladies ready to order?" a young girl dressed in a waitress u
interrupts.

Diana orders a BLT sandwich while Sydney opts for a turkey club.

y work "I'll have the cheeseburger, please," I say.

packed "Coming right up," the waitress announces before leaving.

udging "What's up with your job, Diana? Is your boss still giving you
ow up time?" I ask.

Diana studied business management and landed a job in a re
r in the establishment right after graduation, but she always complained ab
ttle too boss. Sydney on the other hand is a radiographer at a hospital ju
out and around the corner. She's inarguably good at what she does.

ance to "He's a lot nicer these days. Maybe he had an epiphany or sor
because overnight, he just decided to increase my pay. Either way, I'n
don't have to worry about working late hours with nothing to show for

allowing “That’s great,” I beam.

“So, is there a man in the picture?” Sydney enquires, leaning in as if she’s about to make a conspiracy, with a sly grin on her face.

They are always curious about my love life, but my answer has always been one and the same. Nothing serious. However, it’s worse this time.

“No, I’m not.”

“Still hung up on Dylan, I see. It’s been what? Four years?” Diana asks, what’s it’s the most absurd situation she’s ever heard of.

I know my friends will be supportive no matter my answer, but in order not to seem like a pathetic loser, I do the next best thing. Lie.

“It has nothing to do with Dylan. I just haven’t met someone who ticks all the boxes yet.”

Sydney rolls her eyes. “Dream on, honey. Life isn’t a fairytale. No one’s perfect.”

Dylan is. Well, except for the fact that he’s been a total pain in my ass lately.

“Oh, remember when Selena kissed Dylan at her eighteenth birthday party?” Diana wiggles her eyebrows, and Sydney nods vigorously. They both have shit-eating grins on their faces.

“Of course I remember!” Sydney exclaims, and I groan in embarrassment, burying my head in my hands.

“Guys, that was a long time ago,” I whine as the waitress returns with our drinks. We resume our conversation after she leaves.

“But it’s evident as day that you’ve still got feelings for the man. I’d be glad to tell me you’ve had casual hookups since then.”

Diana and Sydney stare at me curiously, and I must look like a deer caught in the headlights.

“No fucking way,” Sydney mutters unbelievably. “You’re twenty-t
slightly you still haven't had sex!” she exclaims, and heads roll in our direction
of them bestow us with dirty looks and I turn a violent shade of red.

always *Great.*

“Thanks for telling that to the whole world, Syd,” I state sarcastically.

“Seriously though, why haven't you?” Diana raises the question.

“She’s obviously still hung up on Dylan,” Sydney supplies.

“Dylan’s my boss now so it's not like anything can happen between
order not They pause. Double-decker shit. That wasn't supposed to come
wasn't supposed to divulge that piece of information just yet.

checks “Boss?” Diana asks like she has suddenly developed a hearing difficulty.

“You’re interning at Smith Law?” Sydney interrogates.

body is “Remember how I said all my applications fell through? Well, Dylan
the only one willing to offer me a spot on such short notice. So, yeah,
the ass for him now.”

“Spill all the juicy details now,” Diana decrees and I roll my eyes.

birthday “There’s nothing to tell. He's been nothing if not rude to me since
they both moment I arrived,” I mope, taking a generous bite of my cheeseburger
tastes heavenly. Glazers does not disappoint.

assessment, Sydney sighs. “Look, Lena, the only way to get over a man is to get
another. You're smart and beautiful and any man would be lucky to have
with our I think I know a colleague who would be more than interested in dating you.”

I don't know how I feel about a blind date. I've never been on one
At least “Guys, I don't think I'm cut out for a blind date.”

“It won't hurt to try. Plus, you can always end things right there if
caught out that you guys have different interests. Both parties part ways amicably.
Diana shrugs.

wo and “Can I think about it?”

1. Some “What’s there to think about? I’m not asking you to marry the man. one date,” Sydney deadpans. “Cole’s a nice guy. He’s one of those who’ll help an old lady cross the street.”

y. I look from Sydney to Diana. They both have eager looks on their waiting for me to take them up on their offer. Heaven knows I’ve move on from Dylan, but the man appears to have a kind of grip on m us.” can’t even begin to fathom.

out. I Maybe agreeing to one date with this Cole of a guy won’t be such a thing. It’s the perfect distraction. So, heaving a deep sigh, I give the guilty. answer.

“Fine, I’ll go on a date with him.”

lan was Sydney grins from ear to ear in achievement. I really hope I don’t I work this later.

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rger. It

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ve you.
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icably,”

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“What’s there to think about? I'm not asking you to marry the man. It's just one date,” Sydney deadpans. “Cole’s a nice guy. He's one of those people who'll help an old lady cross the street.”

I look from Sydney to Diana. They both have eager looks on their faces, waiting for me to take them up on their offer. Heaven knows I've tried to move on from Dylan, but the man appears to have a kind of grip on me that I can't even begin to fathom.

Maybe agreeing to one date with this Cole of a guy won't be such a bad thing. It's the perfect distraction. So, heaving a deep sigh, I give them my answer.

“Fine, I'll go on a date with him.”

Sydney grins from ear to ear in achievement. I really hope I don't regret this later.

CHAPTER 6

DYLAN

I'm thoroughly drained by the end of the day. I had a problematic court and today was all shades of stressful. But in the end, we manage to win the case.

I shut down the computer and I'm about to drag my weary body out of my seat when my phone buzzes. It's a call from Fred, one of my guys from college. We're not that close, but he's a good friend and from time to time we meet up for drinks.

"Hey, man, what's good?" Fred's voice is loud and cheerful, and I pull my phone away from my ear before the sound deafens me. See, someone's in a good mood. There's soft music playing in the background, so my guess is that he's at a bar.

"Hey, Fred, I'm good. Still living the life, I see," I say, leaning back in my seat and twirling around.

"You know my philosophy. You only live once. Where are you right now, moment?"

"Still at the office."

“By this time? You work too hard, Dylan. How about you meet me at Jerry's, let's have a drink or two? Some of our pals from college are here and it should be fun.”

With Selena arriving, coupled with the stress that comes with running a firm, I could use a fucking break.

“Alright, I'll be there in a few.”

I hang up and retrieve my suitcase from the desk. As I rise from my chair, I wonder if Selena is still at her desk. It's Friday, and I know it's winding closing time so she must have left already. Still, it would be nice to catch a glimpse of her before leaving. The moment the thought crosses my mind, I chide myself.

“What the fuck is wrong with you, moron?”

I take a peek at her desk and see that there's a vase on it, holding tulips. It's been a week since the new interns got here, and I'm glad to see them settling in. I stare for a couple of seconds before heading to the elevator. I need to clear my mind and a few drinks will help me do just that.

So time,



Two drinks in, and I'm still thinking of Selena. I guess it's a good thing that Cooper was engaged and couldn't make it. I had called him on my way home but he was still at the office. It's hard to tell who works the most between both of us. I love my best friend but I'm a little relieved by the fact that he isn't here to fuel the guilt I already feel for finding his sister irresistible.

Two of our pals from college have left already, and the last of them is a lady he fancies and has gone ahead to make a move. It's just Fred :

ie up at our table now. He slaps me on the back and the action causes me
ere. It'll forward a little.

“What’s up, man? You've been a little too quiet since you got l
ing this everything okay?”

I nod. “Yeah, I'm fine. Just tired is all,” I say, but Fred looks like he
believe me.

7 seat, I “Women troubles?” Fred inquires and I ponder on whether or not i
ay past good idea to share my thoughts with him. Eventually, I cave.

catch a “It’s just this woman who's been on my mind a lot lately,” I divulge,
mind, I with the glass in my right hand.

“You like her?” he asks, taking a sip of whisky from his glass.

Good question.

lips. It's I'm not quite sure how to reply because I don't know exactly w
at she's feelings are. I don't know if they are just born out of mere physical at
r. or if they stem from something deeper and more meaningful than that.

“I believe so,” is the response I opt for in the end.

Fred leans back in his seat and regards me with inquisitive eyes.

like her, why don't you go for it? What's stopping you from making a
ing that he asks.

ly here, It's not that cut and dry. “I wish it were that simple.”

een the Fred nods. He seems to get the hunch that, sometimes, things are
that he straightforward and that this is one of such cases. Fred and I drink in
sistibly enjoying the serene music playing in the background. I take the oppo
to look around and take in the environment.

spotted Suddenly, I catch sight of someone in a red dress who looks
and I at familiar seated with a couple of friends. I can't see her face properly l

to tilt the dim light in the corner where they are seated casts a shadow on her face. She laughs and looks into the light, and I see it's Selena.

here. Is *Can't a man take a breather?*

As if haunting my thoughts isn't enough, she seems to be physically doesn't haunting me now, too. Her tight dress gives prominence to her perfect curves, accentuating the slopes and swells of her body, and God help me, I can't wait to feel them with my fingertips.

The other two ladies whom I've deciphered to be Sydney and Diana, are toying themselves, and Selena is left alone at the table. I think of walking up to her but terminate the idea instantly. What will I say to her? How will I act?

Before I can make up my mind on what to do, a man dressed in a grey suit suddenly materializes at her table. He looks younger, probably around my age. I sit up straighter to observe the scene. Selena smiles brightly at something he says, and I clench the glass in my hand.

Am I seriously being jealous right now?

The guy says something, and Selena shakes her head, scanning the room. "If you're in the vicinity. Maybe she's looking for her friends. She appears to be moving?" uncomfortable, and I don't have a good feeling about this. Suddenly, he grabs her hand in a firm grip and a startled Selena struggles to break free.

I jump out of my seat and within the twinkle of an eye, I'm at Selena's table.

In silence, "I believe the lady asked you to leave her alone," I say in a dangerous low tone, despite the anger simmering within me. Selena's face is a picture of surprise.

Awfully. The son of a bitch has the guts to smirk. "Stay out of this, pal. It's not because your fucking business."

I smile in spite of the fury uncoiling inside me. If I want to take

er face. asshole, I'd do so without breaking a sweat.

“Let. Her. Go,” I say through gritted teeth, putting emphasis on word.

ysically The guy's bravado falters this time, and I can see that he's getting curves, I'm taller and with my build, I look intimidating. He says nothing but : I want away like the coward he is.

“Thank you,” Selena says, looking relieved. Now that I have a clear excuse of her, it's difficult to look away. Selena has a way of commanding to her attention without even trying.

“Why are you here all alone? What if that asshole did something to ray suits cold, unable to keep the concern from my tone.

and her “I'm not alone. I'm here with some friends,” Selena defends but htly at overwhelmed by both lust and rage to act rational.

“Well, I don't see your friends anywhere. You could've gotten worse,” I state coldly. “How could you be so careless?”

ing the Selena looks at me like I've grown an additional head. “Are you a little listening to me?”

e seizes I know I should stop but I keep going anyway. “Maybe you stayed after they left on purpose.”

elena's “Excuse me? Are you seriously trying to imply that I'm, what, *ash it?*”

erously “Didn't you?”

nask of If looks could kill. “Wow, Dylan Smith, you really do know how to people ticked off. Even if I did instigate it, it isn't any business of yours none of not underage anymore, and I can do whatever I damn well please.”

She's sitting and I'm towering over her with my imposing height. For on this here, I get an explicit picture of her cleavage and it drives me fucking c

“If you're so grown up as you claim, act like it.”

1 every We both glare at each other, and I notice that her breathing has picked up its pace. She's so close and all I want to do is grab and kiss her so hard she's scared. She forgets her name. As if reading my thoughts, her gaze flickers to the floor and scurries which part instinctively on their own accord.

What I'd give to have her pretty lips wrapped around my cock.

er view Fuck! I'm hard. What the hell am I doing? She's Cooper's sister for my sake and I'm not supposed to feel this way about her.

I sight her friends coming from a distance and leave without another word. “The last thing I need right now is more drama.”

I'm too

hurt or

you even

pushed back

waiting for

to make

sure. I'm

not from up

going crazy.

“If you're so grown up as you claim, act like it.”

We both glare at each other, and I notice that her breathing has picked up its pace. She's so close and all I want to do is grab and kiss her so hard that she forgets her name. As if reading my thoughts, her gaze flickers to my lips which part instinctively on their own accord.

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Fuck! I'm hard. What the hell am I doing? She's Cooper's sister for fuck's sake and I'm not supposed to feel this way about her.

I sight her friends coming from a distance and leave without another word. The last thing I need right now is more drama.

CHAPTER 7

SELENA

Who the hell does Dylan Smith think he is? First, he swoops saves me, rendering help which I never asked for. Afterward, he turns around and blames me for provoking the situation. He's so frustratingly confusing, it's annoying. He seems to know the right buttons to push to mess with my nerves.

I so desperately want to stop interning at his firm but it's a little too late now. Moreover, I can't go crying to Cooper because I'd have to tell him everything from the beginning, and that encompasses telling him how I feel about my feelings for his best friend. Just envisioning how that would go gives me chills.

Sydney and Diana return after taking forever in the bathroom. When I get back at Dylan's table, I see that he's gone already.

"Sorry, we took so long. *Someone* suddenly felt the need to adjust my makeup," Diana apologizes.

"Oh please, I didn't know it was a crime to want to look great all the time," Sydney says.

“Yours is legit bordering on obsession.”

“Nevertheless, you love me.”

“The very bane of my existence,” Diana says.

“Why are you so quiet?” Sydney directs her question at me.

“Dylan was here.”

They both share a look.

“While we were just in the restroom?” Diana asks, and I nod.

“Someone was making aggressive advances towards me and he he stop him.”

“So is it safe to say that Dylan’s your knight in shining armor, Sydney teases but I'm not in the mood.

in and “Remember that colleague of yours you wanted me to go on a date
rds, he I ask out of the blue.

reaking “Cole?”

o get on “Yeah. Ask him to give me a call.”

Sydney looks confused but thankfully, she doesn't comment. Operat
late for Over Dylan is officially in motion.

explain

I have



me theGoing through my closet and sourcing the perfect outfit to wear turn:
be a lot more difficult than I expected. I have a date in fifteen minute
1 I lookdon't know what to wear.

Usually, I just pick out a dress and it's great. But today, I want to n
ust hereffort. I need to forget Dylan. Cole called me yesterday, and we ag
meet up today so he made reservations.

e time,” Just when I'm about to give up on my search, I remember a pink
purchased a while ago for a dinner party I never attended because sor

came up at the last minute. Scavenging through my belongings, I come across it. I wear the dress and apply my makeup in a rush so keep my date waiting. Being late on a first date doesn't exactly say so good about you.

Taking one last look at myself in the mirror, I hurry out of the mans the driver takes me to my destination. It's a classy restaurant which, fi look of things, is frequented by only the influential.

lped to *Cole has good taste, I note.*

“Good evening,” I greet the waiter by the entrance.

then?” “Good evening, ma’am,” he replies politely.

“I have a reservation under the name Cole Anderson.”

with?” He goes through the list. “Right this way, please.” He leads me to th smiling. “Have a lovely evening.”

“Thank you.”

Sitting down, I try not to fidget. Cole isn’t here yet. I check my wri ion Getand see that it's six minutes past the scheduled time. We're both late least I'm earlier so that counts for something.

While I wait for him, I order a glass of water. Cole comes in after minutes just when I'm about to leave. I recognize him from the pict s out to shared last night. He's about five-nine tall and has black hair and haz s, and I which gives him a typical boy-next-door look. He's clad in a blue shir with black pants which allot him a dashing look.

nake an *He's not Dylan, but he's cute.*

reed to I shove thoughts about Dylan to the back of my mind. I can't be t about him now.

dress I “I’m so sorry to have kept you waiting,” Cole apologizes with a ch nothing smile, slipping into the seat across from mine.

finally “It’s okay.” It’s not, but I wasn’t going to say that.

I don’t The waiter brings us the menus, and Cole places his order. Just with nothing about to tell the waiter what I want, he beats me to it, ordering for me a

He shows up late and now he’s ordering for me. Two red flags in a row and I’ll give him a chance to redeem himself. Coming out here can’t be from then nothing.

“You look breathtaking,” he compliments, and I catch him staring at my breasts. The worst part is that he isn’t even attempting to hide it.

What the actual fuck?

I force a smile. “You don’t look too bad yourself.”

“I know, right?” he says, and I raise a brow in incredulity. What the fuck, asshole. Maybe I should’ve just left when he hadn’t shown up a few minutes.

“Sydney tells me you’re in law school,” he says.

stwatch “Yeah, Harvard Law. I’m actually back in New York for my internship

but at “That’s great and all, but I don’t dig lawyers.”

Did he just say that or are my ears deceiving me?

fifteen “I’m sorry, what?”

ures he “No offense, but I only agreed to this date because I haven’t gotten laid in a while and wanted to have sex. What do you say we go to my place and get it paired this?”

The nerve of this imbecile. Is this really the nice guy Sydney talked about? I can’t believe this.

hinking “Do I, by any chance at all, come across as a hooker to you?”

Cole gives me what I presume is supposed to be a seductive smile. “You’ve got the looks and body for it though if you ever decide to get into that sort of thing.”

I would be sued for assault if I had to endure one more second when I'm scoundrel.

as well. "Fuck off. Asshole," I tell him off, grabbing my purse and rising from my seat.

all for As I march through the restaurant and walk away from Cole Anderson, I make up my mind never to go on blind dates ever again. My first step at officially trying to forget Dylan was an epic failure.



At work the next day, I'm saddled with more files and documents to sort through. Dylan also has about three meetings which I have to sit through after ten notes.

I'm exhausted by the time I return to my desk and my buttocks makes contact with my seat when the intercom buzzes. I just left his hip." for heaven's sake. What could he possibly want?

"Yes, sir," I answer, making sure to suppress the malice in my tone. I don't incite unwarranted trouble.

"My office, now."

laid in Dylan doesn't sound happy at all. I begrudgingly stomp to his office after angry strides.

"Why are the files on the Newman's case not included among the submitted?" he asks once I step in.

"They are included," I say in a polite manner. I saw them when I was going through all the documents so there's no way they're not among the submitted files.

smile. "I've gone through every piece of paper you handed over to me this afternoon, and the file on the Newman's case is nowhere to be found.

with this crucial document we can't afford to lose.”

I take the pile from his desk and go through the papers myself. True to my word, the file is indeed missing.

Shit!

fucking Instantly, my palms become sweaty, and I begin to panic. “But how is it possible? I'm certain that they were here.”

“If you're so sure about the fact, where are the files then?” he asks in a dangerously calm tone, one that suggests exactly how pissed he is.

I know there's nothing on my desk because I made sure to clear it. I don't want to leave any unfinished business for tomorrow.

“I don't know how this happened. I'm so sorry.”

Dylan looks mad with rage. I've never seen him this furious before. “How could you be so careless? These are people's livelihoods you're playing with.”

“It wasn't intentional, I promise. I know I put the file there. I just don't know how it got out,” I try to defend myself. Gosh, I feel so stupid.

“If you knew you couldn't do the job, all you had to do was say so. You're the one who's supposed to get those files before eight tomorrow morning. We have a meeting with them.”

This is really bad. I don't know what else to say at this moment, so I bury my head in shame, silently praying for the ground to open up and swallow me.

“Don't even think about leaving after work. We're both staying here tonight. I was going to work on a new document to salvage your misstep.”

I open my mouth to protest that I'm exhausted, but no words come out.

He's already so upset and it's all my fault. It'll be foolish of me to argue with him.

Working in the office alone at night with my boss whom I've had a longtime crush on. What could possibly go wrong?

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CHAPTER 8

DYLAN

I was supposed to close early from work today to get some well-deserved rest and come back feeling refreshed tomorrow morning. But my plans have gone to shit, thanks to Selena's incompetence.

To be frank, if she wasn't Cooper's sister, I would have let her work alone even if she has no experience. She would have gotten help elsewhere. I run my hand through my hair in frustration as I move from my desk to the couch.

Selena comes in and helps to transfer some documents I kept for reference purposes from my desk to the coffee table. She looks exhausted, and I'm tempted to ask her to go home and get some rest, but I can't get this done on my own. The workload will be too much on me and I'm spent as well.

Sitting on the couch, I watch her from underneath my eyelids. Today she's wearing a lilac dress which stops just above her knees, putting her legs on display. A piece of paper drops, and she bends to pick it up. Her round buttocks taunt my vision, and I imagine taking her from behind and fucking her senseless.

Jesus! If I didn't know better, I'd say she was purposely teasing
adjust in my seat to hide my boner. We're here to work so it's
concentrate on the mission.

“Is this everything?” My voice comes out huskier than I expected
clear my throat. She can't know of my far-from-innocent thoughts.

“Yes, sir,” she replies, and I don't know why but hearing her call
when we're alone in this building turns me on faster than someone
afraid turns on the light.

We both reach for a pen at the same time and my fingers lightly
against hers. Electric current surges through me and I instantly pull
alarm like I've just been burned. We look at each other, and I'm los
eserved
enigma that is her eyes.

They are wide like saucers, and I guess she felt the sparks too. Those
blue eyes draw me in a manner I can't explain, and I find myself gett
on this
in them. The rise and fall of her chest forces me to briefly look at her
where. I
before mustering restraint and turning to the table in front of me.

Focus.

“So, these are the documents I kept as a reference just in case. I
ference
doesn't mean you should go about making mistakes simply because v
and I'm
a backup plan.”

Selena doesn't say anything, probably out of remorse. I guess that's
lone on
for me.

We begin working, joining heads together to prepare the case fil
y, she's
xy legs
scratch and I must say, I'm impressed by how clever she is. For a stu
und ass
her second year of law school, she sure is cut out for this.

After some moments, she stretches, and I once again find myself ga
ing her
her divine tits. I should seriously get a grip on myself. I don't know w

g me. It's happening to me of all people. I'm not one to pine over a woman like
best I teenager in high school who's just discovered he has a crush on the *it g*

“So, their own employees are suing them?” Selena asks, and I snap
l, and I my thoughts.

“They haven't been paid for the past couple of months.”

me that “If that's the case, why are we even defending these people?”

who is “We're defending them because they are our clients. It's our job,”
typing away on my laptop.

y brush “There's no way we'll win if this goes to court,” she reasons, and
back in she's right.

t in the “Which is why I plan on asking Newman's corporations to settle
workers at the meeting which is scheduled to hold tomorrow morning.”

e baby- “That's a good approach,” she says, and I nod.

ing lost There's silence for a while before she speaks up again.

breasts “I know working late at the office wasn't your plan for tonight. I'm
screwed up whatever plans you had.”

“It's fine. If you say it wasn't intentional, then I believe you. My pi
But this to simply go to bed anyway. Nothing serious,” I say in an attempt to a
ve have her guilt, and it must help because she heaves a sigh of relief.

“No date?” she abruptly asks like a bolt out of the blue, and it ta
enough unawares because this is one conversation I never thought we'd be hav

“No. Haven't had one in a while.”

le from “Oh,” she says, and I suddenly feel like a loser.

ident in Should I have lied instead to make my life seem less emp
depressing?

azing at “Why?” she probes further. When I look at her, she blinks as if re
/why this she's on the verge of crossing a line. “Don't get me wrong, I mean, y

the somegood-looking man so it's a bit surprising that you don't have a date.”

girl. Okay, I wasn't expecting that. I'm stunned beyond words by Selena's out of statement. Instead of answering, I throw back the question at her.

“What about you? No date?” I say, trying my best to seem casual. Well, down, I'm dying to know if there's a man in the picture.

“No. I prefer a man who knows exactly what he wants and goes for it.” I say, answers, gazing directly into my eyes.

I have a feeling she's referring to me but I'm not quite sure. With Selena I know everything is unpredictable.

“And you haven't come across such a man yet?”

le their I know we shouldn't be having such a conversation, but God help me. I am not the least bit curious. And it doesn't help my case that she looks so fucking edible today.

“I'm not certain,” she says, staring at me with ‘fuck me’ eyes, and I'm sorry I temperature of the room increases by a hundred degrees, my heart thumping erratically in my chest.

lan was *Fucking temptress.*

llieviate Selena's eyes darken with lust and her skin flushes. I'm certain it's exactly the same.

kes me “I must say, when I first met you, I thought you were cute,” she says with a coy smile on her lips, her words, sending a dangerous signal to my brain.

Looks like I'm in for a lot of surprises today. And boy, am I loving it.

“Did you now?” I smirk when I catch her regarding me with a lusty and appreciative gaze, but she doesn't look the slightest bit embarrassed.

“Yeah. Which is why I find it shocking that you're still single after all this realizing long time.”

you're a I'm thinking about the kiss, and I know she is too, but I don't p

bringing it up if she doesn't want to.

Selena's "I guess I just haven't found the right person yet."

Selena cracks up like I've just made a really funny joke and even though I don't get why she's laughing, the sound is like music to my ears. It's so beautiful. I'll never get tired of hearing.

"I didn't know you were the type of man who believes in the right person," she says.

Her statement bruises my ego a little, but I feign lethargy. Not interested in knowing what she thinks of me.

"What kind of guy did you take me for, then?"

"Interested in my opinion?" she teases, flipping her hair behind her shoulder for effect and leaning on the couch.

Wicked images of me ripping off her dress and taking her right there on the couch flashes in my mind and my cock stirs in my pants. I shouldn't have such thoughts about her. Cooper is trusting me to take care of her, and I'm trying so fucking hard to do that and only that. Beyond that, she's still nearly two decades younger than me. Even if she's flirting with me, she's bored or because it's late, that doesn't mean she's interested in me. It doesn't mean I have the right to be interested in her.

But... I am.

"What if I am?"

Selena leans in and whispers, "I'm not quite sure."

Is this an open invitation? Is she making a move on me? Do I want to? I'm lost, uncertain what to do, so I freeze, not moving a single inch.

She's so close. All I have to do is lean forward a bit and we'd be kissing. Selena's breathing becomes labored and mine comes out in pants, not making the first move. Her lips are so full and ripe for kissing.

Inviting.

Tempting.

I'm so close to breaking my resolve. So close to tossing the sham
 hough I out the window and closing the distance between us when Selena su
 a soundpulls away.

“So, how much settlement are we talking about here?” she asks, and
 erson.” my mouth but no words come out. She must sense that I'm lost beca
 ow, I'melaborates, “For the lawsuit against Newman's corporations.”

What the hell just happened? I can't believe I was on the brink of los
 sense of reasoning and fucking everything up. The very thought that I
 er rightgave into my desires pricks my conscience and makes me sick
 stomach.

here on Shame-faced, I turn back to my laptop which has the unfinished c
 know I displayed on its screen. I clear my throat and answer her question.

care of As we work towards completing the file, I will myself to concentr
 and that,think of everything but what just happened.

because Selena Langley will be the death of me.

1 a guy

her to?

kissing.

re of us

Tempting.

I'm so close to breaking my resolve. So close to tossing the shame I feel out the window and closing the distance between us when Selena suddenly pulls away.

“So, how much settlement are we talking about here?” she asks, and I open my mouth but no words come out. She must sense that I'm lost because she elaborates, “For the lawsuit against Newman's corporations.”

What the hell just happened? I can't believe I was on the brink of losing my sense of reasoning and fucking everything up. The very thought that I almost gave into my desires pricks my conscience and makes me sick to my stomach.

Shame-faced, I turn back to my laptop which has the unfinished case file displayed on its screen. I clear my throat and answer her question.

As we work towards completing the file, I will myself to concentrate and think of everything but what just happened.

Selena Langley will be the death of me.

CHAPTER 9

SELENA

I've liked Dylan for as long as I can remember. And yesterday, I came close to kissing him again, but my insecurities kicked in and I chickened out like the spineless coward I am.

I couldn't sleep a wink after I got home during the early hours of the morning because I kept thinking of how to face Dylan after what happened in his office. I wonder if things are going to change between us.

My alarm clock blares at exactly six o'clock, and I drag myself out of bed suffering the effect of my poor decision to stay awake all night. An intense headache hits me, and I have to steady myself to prevent falling. My head feels like absolute crap, and my body feels like it weighs a ton of bricks.

I get in the bathroom and take a shower, then I proceed to my closet to decide on what to wear. I go for something mediocre. A white and black skirt. I'm not in the mood to dress up today.

When I take a look at myself in the mirror, I observe that there are dark circles under my eyes so I try my best to conceal them with layers of n

It works out just fine, but my bloodshot eyes still say a lot about the condition of my body.

The driver drops me off at work and when I get to my desk, I drop on the table and check Dylan's office. I knock but there's no answer hasn't come in yet.

I return to my desk and wait for him to arrive. The meeting with management of Newman's corporations is at eight, and it's already half seven. Why isn't Dylan here yet? I guess working all night must have kicked him out.

My phone buzzes. It's Sydney calling. Without being told, I know I'm calling to find out how my date with her colleague went. Just thinking about the manner in which that asshole spoke to me makes my skin crawl. I give her absolute disdain.

"Hey, Syd," I pick up.

"Hey, Lena. How're you?"

"I'm alright. You?"

"I'm good. And how's working with your hunk of a boss going?" she asks, and I roll my eyes, something I seem to be doing a lot this morning.

"All good."

"Anything you'd like to share?" she asks, and I sigh.

"None whatsoever."

"Fine. I'm just calling to see how your date with Cole went. You need to call to give me the details. How did you find him? He's a nice guy, right?"

Nice, my ass.

"That son of a bitch addressed me as though I was a hooker," I say. Sydney laughs.

"You're funny. Come on, I'm serious. How did it go?"

current I guess that's the thing with hiding your true nature. People never believe when they hear horrible tales about you.

my bag “I am not joking. He was only looking for someone to sleep with over the weekend. Literally, he said that to me! I don't know what kind of impression I gave him about me, but the Cole I met wasn't the same Cole you talked about.”

half past “Oh my God, Selena, I'm so sorry. I can't believe it. I really thought you were with a nice guy, else I wouldn't have even conceived the thought of setting up a date with him. What a jerk.”

when she's I open my mouth to reply when suddenly, Dylan materializes in my peripheral vision, impeding my view. His brows are narrowed in a frown, and he looks displeased in the slightest.

Am I in trouble?

I swallow the knot in my throat.

“I'll call you back,” I say to Sydney before hanging up and placing the phone back on the desk.

he asks, I'm about to speak but he beats me to it. “You're not here to do nothing but make personal phone calls all day. Your job is to run my affairs as smoothly as possible, something you appear to have zero knowledge about,” he says with obvious contempt.

Okay, what the hell is going on here? I thought we were past yesterday's mistakes.

“I was just speaking to a friend, and we hadn't even been talking for more than a minute.”

“I didn't give you a spot here so you could talk to friends at work. You're here to work so do your damn job,” he sneers.

What is wrong with this man? After our moment yesterday, I was a

believe it think he would at least act polite towards me afterwards. Turns out he is the greatest asshole to ever exist.

On a first ion you waiting for you to arrive so we can head to the meeting, a call came in, and I could resist the urge to reach out and smack some sense into his thick skull.

Why is he blowing things out of proportion? It's not like there was anything he was doing and I purposely refused to do it.

you up “You seem to be doing a lot of things you're not paid to do like taunting people also a part of your job?”

line of The moment the words leave his mouth, I know I've made a mistake. Coming onto him like a dog in heat last night was a poor judgment on my part and I'm beyond ashamed.

“I don't know what you're talking about,” I decide to feign ignorance.

Dylan's jaw hardens, and I don't know why but the action sends signals to my clit and heat pools in my core. Even while I'm upset with him, he manages to bend my body to his will. Am I a sucker for pain or what?

ing but He places his hands on the desk and leans down so his face is inches from mine. My pulse picks up instantly.

he says “Is that so?” he asks in a low tone I'm sure isn't intended to be suggestive but my body reads it wrongly.

terday's Every fiber of my being comes alive and for a second, I forget what the conversation is all about. I want him to take me on this desk. He seems to read my thoughts because his eyes become hazy with desire. I clench my thighs together.

You're *And it's a farewell to my favorite pair of panties.*

“Yes,” I reply, my voice coming out breathless like I've just been in a sex marathon.

ie's still Something flashes in his eyes, but it vanishes before I can discern
is. Dylan withdraws from me and a sense of disappointment washes o
e I wasbut I don't let it show on my face.

,” I say, “The meeting is in five,” is all he says before leaving for his off
ll. taking the warmth with him.

work to This is what it must have felt like for him yesterday when I withdre
him.

tely. Is Did Dylan Smith just have his revenge on me?

 Karma is indeed a cold-hearted bitch because as much as I try to co
terriblemyself otherwise, I still want more of that warmth he provided.

lack of I take deep breaths and will myself to calm down, gathering my th
in an attempt to snap out of what just happened.

a. I pick up all the required documents and head for where the me
gnals toscheduled to take place. When I get to the conference room, I place co
he stillthe file in front of every seat so everyone has access to a copy.

 People begin to troop in, and Dylan comes in a few seconds later
angledmy place beside him with my notepad in hand, ready to jot down r
points.

gestive, “What are you doing?” Dylan asks, and multiple pairs of eyes from
the room turn to stare at me.

hat our “I don't understand,” I say in a small voice, truthfully lost.

seems to “Why are you in this meeting?” he asks.

ach my Is this a joke? Because if it is, it's not a light one.

 I smile, trying to give out the impression to the other occupants
room that everything is fine and that I'm unbothered by his sudden que

involved “I’m here to take notes as your assistant,” I say, a little unsure.

 “‘This meeting isn't for interns but actual lawyers.’”

what it I'm aware of the fact but I thought I would be allowed in as his assi-
ver me,I could take notes. Isn't that a crucial aspect of being a P.A.?

Everyone's eyes are still trained on me and, gosh, I've never b
ice andhumiliated in my entire existence.

“I thought I was supposed to take notes.”

w from “Aside being incompetent, are you deaf now too? Stop wasting o
and leave. We're already behind time,” he says with no atom of emotio

I want to argue with him and give him a piece of my mind
onvincecorrecting me earlier when I said I was waiting so we could atte
meeting together, but I don't. People are watching and it won't look n
thoughtsmere intern talks back at the boss.

Taking my notepad with me, I exit the room feeling like an idiot
eting isprick my eyes, and I blink them back. But no matter how much I tell
opies ofthat Dylan isn't worth my tears, they come flowing like a tsunami.

. I take

relevant

around

. of the

ry.

I'm aware of the fact but I thought I would be allowed in as his assistant so I could take notes. Isn't that a crucial aspect of being a P.A.?

Everyone's eyes are still trained on me and, gosh, I've never been so humiliated in my entire existence.

“I thought I was supposed to take notes.”

“Aside being incompetent, are you deaf now too? Stop wasting our time and leave. We're already behind time,” he says with no atom of emotion.

I want to argue with him and give him a piece of my mind for not correcting me earlier when I said I was waiting so we could attend the meeting together, but I don't. People are watching and it won't look nice if a mere intern talks back at the boss.

Taking my notepad with me, I exit the room feeling like an idiot. Tears prick my eyes, and I blink them back. But no matter how much I tell myself that Dylan isn't worth my tears, they come flowing like a tsunami.

CHAPTER 10

DYLAN

I messed up, and I know it.

Selena being at the meeting didn't merit me flaring up the way I did. But she has been giving me a lot of mixed signals of recent, and I'm frustrated with myself over being drawn to her like a moth to a flame. She took it out on her.

After last night, I just wanted to put her in her place and show her I'm still in charge, but seeing her cry at her desk afterwards told me that I was overboard, and the guilt I felt feasted on me like a parasite.

"Don't you want to take me to the VIP room? There are a lot we can do behind closed doors," the fake blonde who has made it a point of victimizing me with unwarranted attention proposes in a breezy voice.

Her fingers trace their way to my inner thighs, and I catch hold of her hand before it can go any further. I'm clearly not in the mood but she has read the situation.

Or maybe she's just pretending to be oblivious.

Normally, her perseverance would have been relished but right now
seem to get a certain strawberry blonde off my mind.

“All in good time, Lydia,” I say, rather than crushing the hope she l
we might indeed proceed to the VIP room.

“It’s Linda,” she corrects, clearly upset but I have more important
on my mind to care.

Linda glares at me with apparent scorn before detaching herself fr
and leaving.

Good riddance.

From my far left, Cooper bursts out laughing, and I turn to look at h
at all amused.

“You looked like you couldn't wait to get rid of her.”

y I did. “She’s too tenacious,” I complain, sipping from my tumbler.

was so “Tenacious? Isn’t that your usual type?” he mocks, and I purse my l

e that I This isn't exactly the idea of fun I had in mind when I asked Coop

could come here tonight. We both frequent this place a lot but since S

that I'm return, I haven't been here.

I went My aim of coming is to forget about her but nothing seems to be w

ould do There are so many beautiful women present, but I've likened every sin

duty to of them to Selena and to be quite honest, they all pale in comparison to

None of them makes my body come alive or my heart race the w

does.

er hand God, I’m going straight to hell.

used to “You sure you're okay?” Cooper asks for the umpteenth time, and I

“Just stressed out.”

“That’s understandable. But I guess I can't give you advice since
just as much as you do.”

; I can't *Fair enough.*

He's just as much of a workaholic as I am. I guess birds of the same feather indeed flock together.

“What about the deal you told me of? Did you get it?” I remember the things worrying over a deal he was scared was going to fall through.

He chuckles. “You were right. I had been worried for nothing. Turns out the clients had already made up their minds about choosing my company even before the meeting.”

My lips stretch in a full-blown smile. “I’m glad. You're good at what you do, so it's only natural that they picked you.”

“Thanks, man. It's good to hear words of encouragement every now and then.”

I raise my glass to him. “Any time.”

“How’s Selena doing at your firm?” he enquires suddenly.

I keep my nerves in check, trying to play it cool like she's just another regular intern at my firm.

“Selena is smart. I'm impressed by how much she already knows at her working level. She was actually selected by my human resources manager to be my interim personal assistant since Iva’s on leave.”

Cooper beams in delight, pleased to hear the news.

“Selena had always wanted to be a gynecologist since she was a little girl and I can't remember what exactly changed her mind but I'm glad she's doing alright.”

A gynecologist, huh? She would have made a damn good doctor, I have no doubt.

We drink in silence for a while until Cooper suddenly asks, “Do you know anyone?”

I avoid eye contact with him as the guilt of wanting his sister washes over me like a hurricane.

“No.”

Cooper Cooper gives me a look that says he doesn't believe me.

“Then why have you rejected every single woman here who has tried to grab your attention? It's unlike you. There has to be a woman.”

Company *Fuck!*

His eyes bore into mine and I'm afraid he might actually be able to read my mind. What youth thoughts.

“It's nothing like that.”

Now and I don't even want to imagine what would happen to our friendship if I decide to fuck everything up by acting on the fierce attraction I feel for Selena.

She's like a fucking ray of sunshine, one which glows brilliantly and otherilluminates every nook and corner she comes in contact with. I'm physically attracted to Selena, but I don't want to risk my friendship with Cooper. It's not that I don't want to risk my friendship with Cooper, it's that I don't want to risk my friendship with Cooper especially not for a lay. I think Selena is a good person, but I also don't want to be my friend. I have actual feelings for her. And even if I did, there's no way she would have real feelings for me.

Yet, the more I try to stay away from her, the more I yearn for her. I'm a little kid, shame I'm an asshole who treats her with nothing but arrant disrespect. I'm doing Selena deserves more. More which I'm incapable of giving. I might be a bastard, but at least I'm self-aware enough to know that.

“Okay.” Cooper raises his hand in surrender. “If you say so.”

My best friend doesn't say anything in regards to the topic after that. “Seeing remain in the club for another thirty minutes until we decide it's time to go home a night.”

es over On our way out, I notice someone who resembles Selena from a c
but as we approach her, I'm disappointed to see it isn't her but one of t
at the club.

Cooper and I say our goodbyes and part ways, driving off in our s
tried to cars. All through the ride, I can't stop thinking of the little bombshel
got a hold on me.

Once I get home, I strip and hit the shower. I lean against the marbl
ead myas the warm water cascades down my body, easing my rigid muscl
very thought that Selena could be in the shower with me right now if
were different has me hard as steel.

hip if I I want to ignore my throbbing cock and focus on taking a shower,
:owards kind of hard to do when all I can think about is her on her knees :
sucking my cock with those pretty lips of hers.

tly and *This is wrong*, I tell myself. *I shouldn't*.

ysically Surely, just one stroke of my cock with her picture on my mind won
Cooper, me a horrible human being. Right?

it think But who am I kidding? I know the answer to that question.

'd have I take deep breaths and close my eyes, trying to think of som
repulsing. Anything at all. But nothing comes to mind. Unable to stop
r. It's a finally give in to the urge and stroke my cock once and the feeling
delightful shivers down my spine.

ht be a But once isn't enough. I was a fool to think it would be.

I stroke it again and again and the feeling is outer-worldly so I co
pumping my dick slowly at first as I envision Selena taking it into her
at. We and swirling her tongue around it in slow movements.

o call it Pre-cum coats the pink glistening tip of my cock and I pick up m
unable to deal with the painful pleasure. I imagine driving into Selena

distance and burying myself balls deep, and the feeling heightens and
the girls intense.

I feel my release gradually start to build so I go faster, stimulation
separate beads of sweat gather on my forehead. I still for a moment before
I who's long streams of cum on my bathroom wall.

It is only after I come down from my high that I realize the string
the walls what I've done. Guilt and shame wash over me.
es. The I'm fucking disgusting.
f things

but it's
for me,

it make

nothing
myself,
g sends

continue,
mouth

my pace,
's sleek

cunt and burying myself balls deep, and the feeling heightens and grows intense.

I feel my release gradually start to build so I go faster, stimulating it as beads of sweat gather on my forehead. I still for a moment before spilling long streams of cum on my bathroom wall.

It is only after I come down from my high that I realize the stringency of what I've done. Guilt and shame wash over me.

I'm fucking disgusting.

CHAPTER 11

SELENA

It's been a week since the conference room incident, and I've avoided Dylan like a plague, striking conversations with him only when necessary.

He has also kept his distance from me, and I couldn't be more grateful he's letting me be. We were making progress only for him to throw effort.

I guess some people never change.

Taking a peek at the clock on my desk, I see it's lunchtime. I put a stop to what I'm doing and head down to the cafeteria. I grab my food and join a group of three interns at their table. They've sort of been like my clique since we joined the firm.

All three of them are from Yale, and although I'm from Harvard, they've never treated me like an outsider.

Belinda was the first person I talked to when I got here. Her friendliness made it easy to talk to her, so I naturally migrated towards her. Dylan and Robert were like a packaged deal, so we became friends.

“Hi, guys.” I slide into the only empty seat.

“I see working for hottie is weighing you down,” Belinda comments

“Tell me about it. I’m either sorting out one case file or the other—boring after a while.”

“Oh, sorry. You’ll be fine. You can do it!” Robert says jokingly attempt to cheer me up.

“Hey, Selena, have you applied for the upcoming excursion to Calif Dan asks, and I give him a confused look.

“What excursion?”

“It’s an opportunity for interns to follow the boss to California and s they operate,” he explains.

avoided
deemed
Dylan doesn't quite sit well with me after everything that has ha between us. I know it won't be just the two of us but still, it bugs me.

ful that
part my
“I don't think I want to,” I say, biting into my sandwich, and the tri at me like I'm crazy.

“This is a good opportunity, one we might never have again. Why choosing not to go?” Belinda asks.

hold on
I can't tell them what's been going on between our boss and myself
l join a
can I?

ie since
“I just don't feel like it's something I need at the moment.”

they've
“Are you kidding me? Well, this isn't even up for debate. You're g apply whether you like it or not,” Robert states, leaving no room for argument.

y smile
an and
Why am I even choosing to pass up on such a good opportunity bec a man who doesn't give two shits about me?

“And the chances of your application getting approved are about a h

percent,” Dan adds.

is. “You sound so sure.”

er. Gets “Hello? You're the boss’s assistant. There's no way he won't priorit
over the rest of us.”

r, in an I don't know about that, but I guess it won't hurt to put myself out th



ifornia?”

I'm late for work the next morning because I slept late last night, and I
dog-tired that I didn't even hear my alarm go off.

ee how Dylan is going to kill me and feed my body to the wolves. That mu
certain of. I know I should go straight to the office given the fact I'm

ip with behind time, but I don't function properly without caffeine in my syste

ppened scramble to the cafe just around the corner which is only a few block
from my work building to get a coffee.

o gawk I push open the door of the cafe and the bell chimes, signifying my

There's a long queue of people waiting to get coffees and I sigh, think

are you should maybe join them or just go back to the office.

I shortly make up my mind and just when I take the first step towa

f, now, queue, someone collides with me, spilling coffee on me and drench
new white dress.

What the fuck!

going to I look down at myself, jaws hanging wide open, unable to find the w

further “I’m so sorry,” I hear the unmistakable voice of the sexiest man aliv

I raise my head to find the Greek god that is Dylan. He has a horri

ause of on his face, and it's clear he's a little confused on what to do.

“I’m... I’m so sorry. I wasn't looking and it's all my fault,” he pr

undred apologizes.

As I stare at his stupidly gorgeous face, the thought of taking my revenge and belittling him the same way he did to me in front of everyone in the conference room the other day crosses my mind.

But I get rid of the notion because, unlike Dylan Smith, I'm not a hearted asshole.

"My dress is ruined," is all I say in frustration. How am I supposed to get around with a gigantic brown stain on my dress the whole day?

"I know where we can get you another dress," he offers.

"No, it's fine. I'd rather just go home and change," I decline.

"It's my fault your dress got ruined so allow me make it up to you by getting a new one."

He looks guilty and desperate for a chance to redeem himself, a side I've never seen Dylan react this way before to anything pertaining to me. Until he'd just put the blame on me and be on his way so it's a little surprising to see this side of him.

I cave and give him the opportunity. "Alright."

We head to the company's parking lot where Dylan holds the door for me to get in.

Why is he being so nice?

He spilled coffee on your dress, that's why.

But I don't want to think of it that way. Could it be that our time apart has changed him?

A feeling of Deja Vu hits me as I climb into the car. Sitting in here reminds me of when I had to ride home with him from the airport against my will because he forcefully took my luggage.

A little smile kisses my lips at the annoying but amusing memory.

"Something funny?" Dylan asks as he drives out.

revenge “Oh, it's nothing. Just a memory,” I say dismissively, staring out the window.

“Care to share?” he probes, and I chuckle.

a cold- “It’s just that the last time I was in your car was against my will, talking about when you picked me up from the airport.”

to walk Dylan has the courtesy to look flustered and I kid you not, it's one hell of a sight.

It's cute.

“About that, you were being difficult, and I didn't want to leave the car without you.” He takes his eyes off the road briefly to look at me, and the intensity in them causes my heartbeat to accelerate like crazy.

and I've “The only reason I refused to leave with you was that you were usually, unreasonable.”

ising to I'm expecting Dylan to argue which is why I'm shocked to my bones. He says, “I realize that now. I'm sorry.”

Okay, who is this phony? Because the Dylan I know would throw a tantrum to his “Who are you and what in the world have you done with Dylan Snider? Ask, and the edges of his lips curve up in a smile.

Abso-fucking-lutely gorgeous.

I have to tear my eyes from him before I do something crazy like jumpstart a car. It should be illegal to look this good. Poor hearts are at risk here.

Maybe he should have a caution sign that reads ‘look at your own reflection because damn!’

ny will “Come on, Selena, I’m not that bad.”

I try to focus on the conversation and ignore how satisfactory my ears are to the sounds coming from him. It's like a prayer.

“I’ll be the judge of that. Let's see, you've been nothing but unplea-

out theme since I arrived so excuse me for being in shock over this abrupt change in attitude.”

“It wasn't intentional,” is all he says, and I don't push it.

ill. I'm “Why choose law, though?” Dylan asks after a short pause.

I've always wanted to be a gynecologist but after seeing my father sell off his business as a child, my train of thought changed drastically. I want to protect others like him who had no one to fight for them.

“Seeing the injustices prevailing in our unscrupulous society prompted me to go for law so I could make a difference in the system. I want to protect people and their businesses from being taken advantage of. It used to have become the norm these days.”

On hearing my response, Dylan looks at me with sheer admiration gleaming lustroously in his blue orbs.

“That's remarkable. People mostly venture into law for the money and relief to find someone who's into it solely for the sake of humanity.”

Heat crawls up my neck.

“What about you?”

“Just like you, I care about justice and society which is why I decided to pursue it as a career.”

Swoon.

“Sometimes, our job demands that we side with the people who are at risk of default. How do you manage that?” I'm curious.

“I believe that life isn't simply black and white. There are a lot of grey areas which should also be put into consideration.”

I guess that makes sense.

“We're here,” Dylan comes to a halt in front of a fashion house, and I get out of the car.

ange of “Anything else you're interested in aside law?” he asks as we go i
building.

“Well, every once in a while, I volunteer at a shelter which
homeless mothers and children. I originally wanted to become a gynec
: nearlyso it's something I'm really passionate about.”

wanted “Wow. Impressive. I didn't know that.”

That's because you were too busy being the devil incarnate.

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to helpof the sales girls approaches us. I wonder what it was he wanted to say
t seems I follow her and try on a number of dresses, and Dylan ends up
everything because they all fit. I protest but he doesn't take no for an
nirationso I let him do as he pleases.

I'm in a good mood for the rest of the day. I really enjoyed my ch
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peek of his views.

The silliest part is that I'd love to do it again.

Maybe he isn't as bad as I initially thought.

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“Anything else you're interested in aside law?” he asks as we go into the building.

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“Wow. Impressive. I didn't know that.”

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Dylan opens his mouth to say more but our conversation is cut short as one of the sales girls approaches us. I wonder what it was he wanted to say.

I follow her and try on a number of dresses, and Dylan ends up buying everything because they all fit. I protest but he doesn't take no for an answer, so I let him do as he pleases.

I'm in a good mood for the rest of the day. I really enjoyed my chat with Dylan. It was nice to have a heart to heart with him, seeing as I got a sneak peek of his views.

The silliest part is that I'd love to do it again.

Maybe he isn't as bad as I initially thought.

CHAPTER 12

DYLAN

After my conversation with Selena a few days ago, things have been different between us. It's like there's a different energy and atmosphere and if I'm being honest with myself, I've never felt more alive than I do now.

She lulls me in a way no one ever has, and I catch myself smiling and thinking of her every now and then.

"Someone's in a good mood," someone comments, interrupting my thought which consists of none other than Selena.

I look up to find Gail walking into my office.

"Oh, didn't see you there," I say, feeling a little embarrassed to be caught daydreaming. This is so unlike me. I feel like a teenager who's got a crush for the first time.

"If you don't mind me asking, what's got you smiling to yourself?"

"Just in high spirits," I say grinning at her, and she looks behind her head if there's someone there.

Maybe I'm acting creepy?

“This is a little bit odd. You've never smiled at me like that before.”

I'm usually cold and closed off to my employees. I love my person so I don't give room for talks beyond work-related topics.

“I've never seen you in such a mood either. Anyway, I'm here to submit a list of interns we shortlisted for the California trip,” she says, handing me a piece of paper to me.

I take it from her and go through the list of names. Just towards the bottom, I see Selena's name. I know I shouldn't be surprised that she was selected as one of the best interns here, but it still takes me unaware.

“Just the ten of them, right?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Alright.”

I and Selena will be embarking on this trip together. The fact stirs up a level of excitement within me, and for some reason, I can't wait for the trip to come.

That's right.

California, here we go.



“Is everyone present?” I ask as I scan the room, checking to see if anyone is caught missing. They're all holding small suitcases and backpacks, prepared for the rush for departure.

Selena is standing beside a blond and they're talking in hushed tones. I guess they're close. Another guy on her left whispers something into her ear and she hides her smile behind her palm.

Is she with him? Is that why she hasn't been interested in me since high school back? A flash of something, hot like anger but too slow for that, goes through my mind.

me. It's jealousy, I realize, and the thought makes me look away quickly. It's good. She deserves someone her age. Someone who can talk without blowing up.

Like I kind of want to right now, even though she's not mine.

I'm used to being in control. I'm not one to get jealous. It's usually the other way around, so what kind of a man is Selena turning me into?

"Is there something you'd like to share with us?" I ask the group as she's whispered to Selena, trying to appear imperturbable.

His eyes widen a tad, and he points at himself to clarify if I'm referring to him.

"I'm talking to you on the left side of Miss Langley."

He looks like he's about to piss himself.

Good, I think a bit vindictively.

"It's nothing, sir."

"So, you just felt the need to distract your colleagues while I was talking?" He's scared shitless, and that's the exact reaction I was fishing for.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Smith," he apologizes, and I nod stiffly, only accepting the apology because I don't want Selena to think badly of me anymore.

She makes me want to be a better person, and I don't want to mess up the alliance we've managed to establish.

I lead the way and they all follow suit. A van conveys us to the location where we catch our flight.

Selena's seat is next to mine on the plane but I'm not in the mood to have a conversation after what happened earlier. Instead, I plug in my earphones.

I listen to an audiobook on criminal law. Even though it isn't my forte, I find it quite intriguing and research it in my spare time.

Two and a half hours in, I get tired of listening and pull them out.

ly. “Bored already?” Selena asks in a soft manner, careful not to dist
: to her others.

“Yeah.”

“It’s obvious you don’t enjoy long flights,” she notes.

ie other “What gave that away?” I ask and she giggles.

Selena’s smile reminds me of a freshly bloomed flower and m
ry whoswells with emotion.

“I just want to say thank you for providing us with such a wo
indeed opportunity. Not many firms would do this.”

If this makes her happy, then I’m happy.

“It’s no big deal. I believe broadening one’s horizon helps with
understanding of a subject.”

“Still, it takes someone who has the interests of others at heart to c
you’ve done,” she affirms.

king?” “Stop thanking me so much,” I say, getting a little uncomfortable v
showing me with praise.

ting the “What? Scared of being perceived as human?” she taunts, and I
eyes.

s up the “Whatever.”

“You’re cute,” she says, and I pause.

airport Is Selena flirting with me?

Since that night at the office, our talks have been precisely p
o start a Nothing suggestive or the likes of it.

nes and “I’m anything but cute. Cute is used for animals. Describe me with
I find it befitting word.”

“Nice try,” she says, and I chuckle.

The flight to California lasts for about four more hours and by the t

As we arrive at the hotel, I'm drained as fuck. I have a terrible headache and my head feels like it's a little too big for my shoulders. I almost fall when I step on my feet as we enter the reception and Selena steadies me.

"Are you okay?" she enquires with concern. The other interns also look at me with worried glances.

"I'm okay," I assure her.

"You don't look too good."

"I just need to get some sleep, and I'll be fine."

I guess the stress of working non-stop has finally caught up with me. After a few minutes of rest and I'll be up and running again.

"Good evening," I greet the red-haired receptionist with a warm and welcoming smile.

"Good evening and welcome to Kingsworth. How may I be of service to you?" she asks effortlessly, and it sounds like a line she uses frequently.

"We have reservations under Smith Law for eleven rooms."

"Let me confirm. Hold on a second please," she says, checking something out on the computer in front of her.

After a while she says, "Reservations were made for nine single rooms and one executive suite."

My brows narrow in confusion. Selena made ten reservations for the other interns and one for me, so why is it nine?

"My assistant made eleven room reservations, so I don't understand."

"I'm sorry, there must have been a mix-up somewhere," the receptionist says, looking a little uncertain herself.

She reads out our names and hands everyone who answers a key to their room. After she's done distributing the keys, Selena is the only one left standing. It's a relief to see her at the end of the day.

and mywithout a room. It's a little ironic how the person who made the reservation I tripended up without a room.

“Is there a spare room available?” I ask.

bestow “At the moment, all our single rooms are fully booked, I'm afraid. an executive suite though which is on the same floor as yours.”

“We'll take it,” I say without a second thought and pay for it with my

“Here's the key,” she says, handing it to Selena. “The single rooms are on the third floor whereas the executive suites are on the eighth floor.”

Just a “Thank you.”

“Have a wonderful evening, and I hope you enjoy your stay.”

rm and We ride the elevator and Selena stands in front of me, exposing the skin of her slender neck to me. I want to suck on it and mark her as my property. “Service?” I control myself.

Thank God I'm taller. I look above her head, concentrating on everything else but the woman before me.

nothing Suddenly, someone mistakenly steps on Selena, making her fall backwards.

ms and Wrong move.

Her ass collides with my front, grazing my already hard dick. She looks upon feeling my boner and apologizes sheepishly, refusing to meet my eyes. I could die of embarrassment right now. Literally.

” The nine interns get off on the third floor, leaving just me and Selena. From the corner of my eye, I notice her nervously playing with her hair. Her face is beetroot red, and her eyes are trained on the gray walls of the elevator. I suddenly find them interesting.

one left Being alone together in an enclosed space after what just happened is a great idea and it makes me wonder if I've made a mistake by getting

vacationsroom on the same floor as mine.

I should have just let her share a room with one of her colleagues
wouldn't have had to endure being tortured like this.

There's I believe a cold shower is in order.

It's going to be a really long night.

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Selena.

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room on the same floor as mine.

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I believe a cold shower is in order.

It's going to be a really long night.

CHAPTER 13

SELENA

I can't sleep.

I've tried every position, and stretched in every way possible can't seem to find the perfect sleeping posture.

I'm so turned on that I can barely think straight. I can't seem to g how good Dylan's boner felt against my ass. The contact lasted for second but still, it was more than enough to have me tossing and turn my king-sized bed.

I sneak my fingers in between my legs and try to give myself the ple desperately crave. I might be a virgin, but I'm not naive and cluele done other stuff, just not the actual deed so I know how to find my But tonight, nothing seems to be working and it adds to my frustration.

Abruptly, I get out of bed and pace in the luxurious suite. I stare reflection in the mirror. The silk lacy red nightie I'm wearing p cleavage on exhibit, allotting me the look of a powerful seductress.

Dylan's room is just next to mine. What if I decide to go to him? reject and tell me off just like he did four years ago?

The desire to have him transcends my skepticism and I find
wearing my slippers and heading straight for his room. Once in front
door, my fears resurface I come to a halt.

I'm torn between turning around and knocking on the fine piece of
Getting rejected once was enough. I don't think my poor heart will be
take another dosage of it from the same man.

Just do it, something inside of me urges.

What if he's already asleep? I guess there's only one way to find out.

Raising my fist, I knock on the door and my heart surges like a bat
out of hell.

This is wrong on all levels. I shouldn't be luring my boss who also happens
to be my brother's best friend into a trap like this. It's uncalled for.

“Who is it?” I hear his husky voice ask from the other side and the sound
so damn erotic that my body clenches in need.

I forget all my concerns in a flash.

“It's Selena.”

I hear shuffling on the other end before the door finally creaks open
nowhere near prepared for the sight that welcomes me. Dylan is shirtless
only a pair of sweatpants hanging low on his hips. My mouth hangs open
ogle shamelessly at his ripped muscles.

They are hard and lean, and it doesn't look like he would have any
trouble
pinning me to the wall and having his way with me if I give him the
green
light.

“What's the matter?” he asks, and I force my horny self to tear my eyes
from his chiseled abs.

I notice him gaping at my cleavage and my inner goddess pats her
the back for a job well done. Thank goodness I didn't pack my Wii

myself Pooh nightdress and opted for this instead.

t of his “I’m having trouble getting some sleep,” I tell him, and he sighs.

“Come in,” he offers, opening the door wider for me to pass through
f wood. He shuts the door behind me as I take in his suite. It's identical t
able to with only minor distinctions.

On the center table are a bottle of wine and a glass.

“Make yourself comfortable. Would you like to have a drink with m

“Sure.”

straight Dylan pours me a glass as I sink into the sofa, crossing my right l
my left. The action causes my dress to ride up, exposing my thighs
happens piercing gaze.

He gives me my drink and settles on the other end of the sofa.

ound is “What’s troubling you?” Dylan asks.

Your cock.

Get a grip, woman.

“I don't know. I guess it's just the excitement of being here
ven. I'm internship,” I lie through my teeth, and judging from the way Dylan’s
ss withat me like a meal, it's obvious he knows I'm lying, too.

pen as I “There’s nothing to worry about, it's just an excursion.”

“What about you? You weren't sleeping either.”

trouble “Just thinking.”

e green “About?”

We stare at each other for a while, and he looks like he's about
y eyessomething but thinks better of it.

“Try getting some rest. Tomorrow is going to be a long day. You c
rself on the bed. I'll take the couch,” he proposes.

ny the “No, you can have the bed. It's your room after all, and I wouldn't

inconvenience you in that manner.”

“It’s really not a problem,” he dismisses with a wave of his hand.

1. “Alright, how about we share?” I suggest with a boldness I didn’t
to minepossessed.

Dylan looks at me askance. “I’m not sure that’s a good idea.”

“What? I’ll stay on my own side, and you’ll stay on yours.”

ie?” “What is this? Preschool?”

“It’s not like we’re attracted to each other or anything, right?” I a
eg overheart in my mouth.

s to his I’m such an idiot. I shouldn’t have asked. I’m not ready to confr
answer to that question.

Thankfully, Dylan doesn’t reply but leads the way to the bedr
silence.

“Which side do you prefer?” I ask.

“The left but you can have it if you want.”

for the I lie on the right side and Dylan takes the left. We have our backs
lookingother, and neither of us says anything for a pretty long time.

I’m still turned on as fuck and lying so close to him isn’t helping my
the slightest.

“Dylan?” I call to see if he’s still awake.

He hums in response.

“Still can’t sleep,” I say, turning around.

to say His back is still turned to me. Unable to help myself, I use my fir
trace patterns on it. His muscle stiffens under my touch, but I conti
an havegesture.

Dylan turns around; the distance between us is only but a hairst
: like toWe’re easily breathing the same air and his eyes flicker to my lips.

He's holding back, and I can understand why. He seems to be having an internal battle but before I know what's happening, he growls, "Fuck it." He grabs me by the neck, clashing his lips against mine in one swift motion and turns to putty in his arms.

I part my lips for Dylan, and his kiss sends tingles dispersing across my body as I lose myself in him. Our tongues battle for dominance like we've been dying to have a taste of each other for eternity.

The kiss is breathtaking and so much better than my imagination. He kisses me softly as his lips move against mine like they're made to dance together. His hand slips down my waist and to the back of my thighs, and in one fluid movement, he's on top of me.

My legs go around his hips, tugging him closer, not letting him break the kiss. I tangle my fingers in his hair, yanking at the roots as I breathe him in breathlessly.

There's a fire blazing in my veins and I don't want him to stop.

Dylan unlatches his mouth from mine and peppers my throat with kisses. "Dylan..." I whimper, arching my back, unable to suppress the pleasure I feel when he goes lower and takes a nipple in his mouth, all the while kissing my other breast.

God. Oh, God.

He sure knows how to put his mouth to good use.

"These beauties have been taunting me since I picked you up at the airport. So fucking gorgeous," he admires in a voice calculated and tranquil, laced with a low guttural.

If this is supposed to be wrong, why does it feel so right?

Dylan lifts my nightie to my thighs and kisses a trail from my legs to my inner thighs. My breathing becomes uneven as I anticipate what is to come.

ving an He finally gets to where I need him the most and I nearly jump out
it,” and skin at the sensation it ignites.

on and I “*Fuck!*” I cry out, my hips bucking in satisfaction.

Dylan adds two fingers to the mix, finger fucking me slow at first
ross my picking up his pace shortly after.

we've *Holy fuck!*

It's all too much. It's too intense and I cling to him for dear life
I moan shouldn't be allowed to walk freely with a tongue and fingers like that.
ier. His “Come for me, baby,” he commands, and I come undone within the
ne deft of an eye, falling and falling as my muscles spasm in a delicious toe-
way.

reak the When my brain begins to function properly once again, I offer to re-
l moan favor but Dylan declines, pulling me to himself, and we cuddle.

I can't believe it. I'm still in shock over what just happened. Am I r
Dylan's arms?

isses. I don't want to worry about the consequences. Right now, it's just
asure I Dylan. No one else.

playing His warmth envelopes me like a blanket and I drift into a peaceful sl
Consequences, be damned.

airport.

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ome.

He finally gets to where I need him the most and I nearly jump out of my skin at the sensation it ignites.

“Fuck!” I cry out, my hips bucking in satisfaction.

Dylan adds two fingers to the mix, finger fucking me slow at first, and picking up his pace shortly after.

Holy fuck!

It's all too much. It's too intense and I cling to him for dear life. He shouldn't be allowed to walk freely with a tongue and fingers like that.

“Come for me, baby,” he commands, and I come undone within the blink of an eye, falling and falling as my muscles spasm in a delicious toe-curling way.

When my brain begins to function properly once again, I offer to return the favor but Dylan declines, pulling me to himself, and we cuddle.

I can't believe it. I'm still in shock over what just happened. Am I really in Dylan's arms?

I don't want to worry about the consequences. Right now, it's just me and Dylan. No one else.

His warmth envelopes me like a blanket and I drift into a peaceful sleep.

Consequences, be damned.

CHAPTER 14

DYLAN

I feel like shit.

Last night was no doubt the best I've had in a really long time wasn't supposed to happen. I wasn't supposed to give in to my carnal and devour Selena like a full-course meal.

But the sounds she made... *Fuck!*

No sane straight man with blood flowing through his veins would have been able to resist her when she looked at me like that. And her eyes... *Damn*, her eyes. They peered at me like she was totally submitting to me and asking me to do whatever I wanted with her.

The lacy nightdress wasn't helping either. She was clearly on a high when she came over last night. So, how the hell was I supposed to control myself when there was a fucking temptress within proximity?

I wanted us to have sex but at the same time, I didn't want to do something we were both going to regret later.

It's seven in the morning, and Selena is still fast asleep in my bed with her head on my chest and her blonde hair spread across her back. I should

her up, but she looks so calm and peaceful that I don't want to dis-
slumber.

She's indisputably beautiful with thick and long lashes which
cheeks and I find myself falling into a daze as I stare at her like she's
some sort of spell on me.

With my looks and prestige, I could easily get any woman I want
woman at all. So why do I only seem to want the one woman who's
bounds?

I curse, running my free hand down my face. If Cooper ever finds
about this, I'm dead meat. Literally. He won't hesitate to cut me out
completely and his actions would be justified because I'm a
backstabber. I'd even consider myself lucky if that's all he does.

Then there's also the fact that she works for me, and I'm not perm-
fool around with my employees. What I've done is wrong on all
grounds, and I can feel the guilt eating away at me from the inside
ruthless parasite.

Thinking about how utterly screwed I am, I slowly untangle myself
Selena, careful not to wake her up, and make my way to the bathroom
I shower as I think about the sorry tale that is my life.

We didn't go all the way, but I should have had more self-control. What
fuck is wrong with me? I can't let this go beyond what it is right now.
just too much at stake.

When I get back to the room, I'm prepared to tell her that this can't
again for the sake of decency but there's no sign of her. She's already left.

I exhale sharply. It's quite a relief because I honestly don't know how
around her after our last night's endeavor. I guess I'll see her at the
conference. It'll at least give me enough time to work up the nerve to find

upt her God help me.



fan her

The conference lasts for about three hours and when it's done, I'm satisfied to see the pleased smiles on the faces of the interns. The conference was enlightening, and I gained value as well.

at. Any

I hope Selena did.

is out of

I reproach myself for letting her infiltrate my thoughts but what am I kidding? She has been on my mind since this morning and even during the conference, I couldn't stop stealing glances at her. I thought she looked beautiful in her navy blue skirt and pink floral top. I've observed she wears pink a lot. It seems to be her favorite color and it fits her perfectly.

mitted to

Okay, I'm noticing things about her now, too. Seriously? The interns thank me for the opportunity to attend the conference, and they know it was my pleasure. For the first time since today, Selena makes eye contact with me, and my pulse quickens. I look away immediately, unable to deal with the emotions she stirs in me, and I lead them to a restaurant where we will be having lunch.

1 where

The interns all take tables, but I opt for a booth instead because I don't want to be left alone. Being close to Selena is doing alien things to me, and I need the space to calm the fuck down.

There's

“Mind if I join you?” a voice asks. It's Selena.

happen

Her face is morphed into an uncertain expression and the corners of her lips are raised in a small smile, but it's visible she's a tad worried.

eft.

I should say yes. That would be the right thing to do but I can't ignore my feelings.

w to act

I would come off as an asshole and that would hurt her feelings. I don't want to give her to get the wrong idea.

fter the

ace her.

“No,” I say instead, and she slips into the seat at the opposite end of the booth.

She doesn't say anything and neither do I. The tension in the atmosphere is so thick it could be cut with a knife. I pick up the menu and keep my eyes trained on the cream-colored card, suddenly developing a keen interest in the menu items.

“So, about...” Selena begins to say when the waiter arrives at our table. And believe me, I have never been more pleased to see a waiter in my life. We place our orders and when he leaves, I decide that I have put off for too long.

I can't keep ignoring the elephant in the room.

I clear my throat. “About last night,” I begin, staring at Selena. No matter how hard she tries to hide it, I can perceive her eagerness from a mile away.

“Can I just say that it was great and that I don't regret it,” she beats around the bush.

My brows shoot up. I wasn't expecting that at all. It was great, no doubt about it. I had expected her to say we can't do it again. I'm truly sorry to be the rain on her parade but this... whatever this is, it has to end.

“It can't happen again,” I say without beating about the bush, and she blinks.

“Oh. I must have misunderstood the situation,” she laughs nervously, shaking her head slightly and a pink blush tints her cheeks. “This is embarrassing.”

The other interns are not within earshot, but I still lower my voice. I don't want to take chances.

“Don't get me wrong, Selena, it was good, but your older brother is my best friend, and I feel guilty just thinking about the line I crossed with you last night.”

l of the “I understand your concerns about Cooper. I really do but I’m not
anymore. And besides, it’s not like we’re getting married or anything
where is just... having fun.”

ny eyes I don't even think she's convinced by her own words judging by t
: in it. she cringed at the last word. This connection between us could easily e
r table. into more but if Selena is willing to turn a blind eye to our real emoti
7 wholeam I.

this off I sigh in frustration, pinching the bridge of my nose. “Look, Cooper
kill me if he ever found out that I was feeling up his younger sist
friendship means so much to me and I don't want to destroy what w
o matterHe's been there for me through thick and thin. It'd be a dick move to
away. with him like that. Plus, you work for me. This is wrong in eve
s me to possible. What example will I be showing my other employees if we
with this?”

oubt but Selena forces a smile in understanding, but it still doesn't conc
e one to forlornness.

“So, you're saying last night was a mistake, then?”

and she “It was. And it can't repeat itself.”

“So we should forget about it and act like it never happened?” s
vously, staring straight at me, and heaven knows I want to say no to her. I mea
a little giving me an open invitation.

Fuck!

. I can't Being a man of principle is so damn hard. I want to throw caution
wind and ravish her just the way I want. I want to feel her warmth aro
r is myBut, sadly, none of that would be happening.

ith you I clear my throat. “Yes, that is what I mean.”

“Right.”

ot a kid The waiter returns with our meals, but I don't have the appetite
. We're anymore. From the corner of my eye, I also notice Selena pushing h
around her plate, her mouth set in a hard line.

he way It's safe to say we've both lost our appetites and it's all my fault.

escalate If this was the right thing to do, why does it feel like I've messed up
ions, so badly?

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The waiter returns with our meals, but I don't have the appetite to eat anymore. From the corner of my eye, I also notice Selena pushing her food around her plate, her mouth set in a hard line.

It's safe to say we've both lost our appetites and it's all my fault.

If this was the right thing to do, why does it feel like I've messed up really badly?

CHAPTER 15

SELENA

Dylan wants me. I'm certain of it. Like he said, he's only holding back because of my brother and the fact that he's my boss. I love him, but I also can't deny that I burn for Dylan. The man has been on my mind for four whole years and that's something.

Choosing to be with him will be a hassle but it won't hurt anyone if I keep it under wraps. I only need to get him to agree to do this with me, then we'll be good to go. I want more than just physical pleasure with him, but if lying about my true feelings is what will get him to comply, I'll do it without a second thought.

Besides, it's barely lying if I'm okay with it never becoming more than a fling. I can deal with my own feelings. He's worth a little bit of heartache at the end of the day.

I'm currently in my room getting ready for a dinner party being organized by one of Dylan's acquaintances. The interns have all been invited, and I'm seizing this opportunity to put my plan of seducing Dylan into play.

Unlike my other colleagues, I came prepared because I was aware of my schedule for the trip. My dress is an open-back chili red dress with a neckline that comes up to my thigh. The neckline is a bit low, revealing my cleavage a little. Professional, but still undeniably sexy.

I crouch in front of the dresser and do my makeup, allotting time for smokey eyes and applying red lipstick to match my dress and it gives me a bold look. Pleased with what I see when I stare at the mirror, the corners of my lips lift in a smile.

Next is my hair. Using clips and other accessories, I tie it up in a bun and it looks amazing. I smirk, mentally patting myself on the back.

Dylan won't know what hit him.

1g back

Cooper,



mind for Everything about the party is remarkable — the wine, the people, the

I'm having a good time, but I guess my satisfaction also stems from the fact that Dylan has been trying but failing to take his eyes off me all evening. I'm with my colleagues but I've also been subtly watching him all the time. I must say, the man is simply an Adonis.

I'll do it He looks incredible, to say the least. He's clad in a black suit as usual.

how he manages to pull off the same look every damn time is something I can't do. I can't look away. His hair is gelled to the back and his jawline is more defined than mine. I stare at him from my peripheral view talking to a group of men.

There's a tumbler of champagne in his hand and the way his long, slender fingers handle the piece of glass reminds me of how he once played my body like a skilled guitarist and made stars blossom in my eyes that night.

His eyes connect with mine after a while, and I smile at him seductively.

of the “I’ll be right back,” I excuse myself and go to the bar to refill my glass. I see a side slit “You look stunning,” Dylan says from behind me, and goosebumps average across my arms at the sound of his low voice.

I saw the fervor in his eyes and knew he was going to come after me. I separated myself from the others. Or I hoped he would. And he disappointed me.

I whirl around.

“You look hot as usual. Suits are your thing,” I confess breezily, lifting my wine glass to my lips, all the while not breaking eye contact with him. His eyes darken with desire as they follow the motion.

Good.

I shorten the distance between us, but I don't touch him.

Lowering my voice to a whisper, I peer at him from underneath my hair. “I’ll be in the restroom.”

Feeling like the temptress I am, I saunter away from him, swaying and looking bewitchingly. I turn around to find his gaze trained on me and I arrogantly, continuing the movement.

When I get to the restroom, I patiently wait for Dylan, hoping he'll take my invitation and come to the restroom. I wait for five minutes and sigh irritably when he still doesn't show up. I guess he doesn't like me as much as I needed as I isn't willing to take the risks.

Tears prick my eyes at the thought of being rejected twice, but I blink and brush them back. My chest hurts like a bitch and I clutch it, willing myself to expertly need to put myself together if I'm to go back out there and pretend nothing happened.

Just as I open the door to the stall, I find Dylan standing outside, breathing labored. My lips part in disbelief and I'm about to speak when

ass. shuts me up with his mouth, pushing me up against the wall. He kisses me with such longing that it elicits a moan from me.

Suddenly he pulls away and I instantly feel the loss.

me if I “I shouldn't... we shouldn't,” he says, looking torn and grief-stricken. I didn't feel the need to placate him.

“But I want to.”

“I'm taking advantage of you.”

ting the “You're not. I want this. I want you.” I trail kisses on his jawline. His eyes resolve shatters as his lips crash into mine once again.

Dylan trails his fingers along my inner thigh, leaving an outburst of sweat in their wake and my chest rises and falls with rapid breaths. I want more. I hook my left leg around him, and I gasp when I feel how hard he is. I lick his lashes. He pulls the strap of my dress and kneads my breasts, taking a nip at my neck. He kisses my earlobe and slightly grazes it with his teeth.

ny hips “Dylan...”

I smirk “Do you want more?” he asks, and I whimper in reply.

Without another word, Dylan goes on his knees and kisses my inner thigh. As he nears my core, I almost die with anticipation.

1 defeat “Try not to scream,” he says with a wicked glint in his eyes.

do and Now, there's the Dylan I know. Always so full of himself.

Asshole.

lk them Dylan's mouth covers my pussy and begins to fondle and lap at me. I relax. My tongue feeling virtually frigid against the warmth of my inner folds. I push my back against the cold wall, I place a hand on Dylan's shoulder to steady myself as he nips and sucks at my clit.

ide, his I'm already so turned on and horny from our kiss that my hips thrust against his face. He spreads my pussy and begins to thrust.

isses metongue inside me.

“Fuck!” I exclaim, feeling like I’d fall if he doesn't maintain his stro
on me.

n and I “Remember, you need to be quiet,” Dylan warns, going back
delicious attack on my clit.

Not too long after, I scream as my orgasm hits me hard, making me
in pleasure, totally forgetting his warning.

and his “We need to get out of here and return to the hotel,” Dylan says
come down from my high and I nod, understanding what he means.

flames My inner goddess does a happy dance but I don't want to show h
ore. Hehow eager I am, so I try to play cool. I'm so horny, and my clit
Dylan isswollen. This is the moment I've been waiting for.

ipple in Finally, I'm going to lose my virginity to the one man I've wanted to
to even if we never do it again.

The lift to the hotel takes roughly about five minutes but it feels
unending journey because I'm dying to have him. As we ride the e
thighs. Dylan and I exchange heated glances but do nothing as there are other
riding with us as well.

The second we get to his room, we kiss each other with reckless at
stumbling all the way to his bedroom and struggling to get rid of our

Once in the room, I push him onto the bed and smirk as I go on my kn
me, his “You don't have to,” he says with his hooded gaze watching me slo

Tilting “Lie back and allow me to return the favor, Mr. Smith.”

balance On hearing me use that name, he exhales sharply. I palm his alrea
cock through his briefs, and he sighs. When I take them off, his cock

s beginfree, standing tall and proud, and my mouth falls open in awe at the b
rust hissight.

His cock is thick and long with pre-cum glossing its tip, and I'm gripping worried about it not fitting inside me. But I shove my worries to the side of my mind.

I grip Dylan's cock in my hand, and he hisses as I run my hand down the throbbing length. When I eventually take him into my mouth, I cry out groans.

"Fuck, Selena," he heaves, and I take him in deeper, bobbing my head when he lands down, slow at first before picking up speed.

"Just like that, baby. Just like that," he rasps, holding my hair in place. It just thrills me to no end to know that I'm the one bringing this powerful man to still pleasure.

I swirl my tongue around the pink glistening tip and focus on it, but he gives it pulls me up before I can go any further. Picking me up, he gently places me on the bed and hovers above me.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" he asks, gazing at me, and I smile like an elevator. "Yes."

He kisses my lips down to my breasts, unhooking my bra and throwing it to the floor. I lift my hips and he takes off my panties, too. Now would be a perfect time to tell him I'm a virgin. What if he backs out?

"I... I've never done this before," I say, and he halts.

Shit. I should've just kept quiet, but he was going to find out anyway.

"Oh. Never?"

I blush in embarrassment. "No."

Dylan attempts to pull away from me, but I don't let him. I hold his wrists to prevent him from getting off the bed.

"It doesn't matter to me that much, trust me. I still want us to proceed."

He caresses my cheek and I lean into his hand.

a little “I don't want you to regret this later,” he voices his concern.
back of “I won't.”

He chuckles lightly, running his fingers through his hair. “We don't
up and have a condom.”

truth, he “It's fine. I'm on the pill and I'm clean, too.”

“I'm also clean,” he says, and I believe him.

read up He positions himself at my entrance, and I'm anxious even though
this is what I want, and he must sense it because he kisses my cheek
ice, and asks me to relax.

ful man I feel a weird sensation as the head of his cock enters me, stretching
walls. I whimper at the intrusion, and he stops. I look down to see that
t Dylan even halfway in yet. He's huge.

ices me “Should we stop?” he asks, and I shake my head no.

“Keep moving,” I say, not recognizing my own voice due to how thick
allow. sounds.

He pushes in and I whine, clinging onto his shoulders. Before I know
it he's fully in and moving at a sluggish pace. The feeling of having him
I be there is strange in a good kind of way. New. I've never felt this way before.

The pleasure gradually heightens, and I feel like I'm in clouds.
Dylan drives in and out of me slowly. I begin to moan, getting a kick
y. the feeling it ignites.

“Faster,” I urge, and he complies, picking up his pace and pounding
me.

arm to “Oh, shit,” I cry out, my body trembling in pleasure with every thrust.

“Do you like me fucking you?” Dylan asks as I dig my fingernails into
d.” back.

“Yes. Oh, fuck yes.”

I've never been with anyone before, so I have no one to compare him to, but this man sure knows how to put his dick to good use because I swear I'm not even in another realm right now.

He fucks me like a man on a mission and before I can fathom what's happening, I feel my orgasm building. My legs start to tremble and my body tingles as I give myself over to the tidal wave of pure euphoria, screaming. I know Dylan deliberately fucks me to prolong my release.

My orgasm prompts his, and he stills before filling me with his cum. The sight of Dylan finding his release is one I'll never forget. His brows furrow as if he's in pain and his jaw sets in a hard line as he struggles to maintain his composure.

It's hot.

"Are you okay?" he asks with concern.

When I confirm that I'm fine, he leaves for the bathroom and returns with a wet cloth to clean my thighs. The action tugs at my heartstrings and I know it, I got to do this with him.

As we snuggle, a fulfilled smile graces my lips as my eyes flutter shut in exhaustion.

I finally had sex with Dylan, and it was far better than I ever imagined. I had unearthed a greater joy in me than any I'd ever known. I have no idea what I'm doing.

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into his

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It's hot.

“Are you okay?” he asks with concern.

When I confirm that I'm fine, he leaves for the bathroom and returns with a wet cloth to clean my thighs. The action tugs at my heartstrings and I'm glad I got to do this with him.

As we snuggle, a fulfilled smile graces my lips as my eyes flutter shut from exhaustion.

I finally had sex with Dylan, and it was far better than I ever imagined. He had unearthed a greater joy in me than any I'd ever known. I have no regrets whatsoever.

CHAPTER 16

DYLAN

Morning light seeps through the curtain-framed window, and I open my eyes to adapt to its luster. Looking down, I find Selena's arms, our naked bodies intertwined, and everything that ensued yesterday comes back to me in a flash.

We finally did it. We finally succumbed and had sex. I'm fucking embarrassed to be honest. I honestly thought she had been with other men since I was about the way she taunted me suggested otherwise. But I guess I was wrong.

I'm scared that she might wake up and regret this. I don't think I'll be able to take getting into trouble with my best friend and having Selena despise me for the rest of her life.

She stirs in my arms and stretches on top of me, making little sounds from her throat and I smile at the cuteness of it. When she turns around to face me, I carefully gauge her reaction. There's no sign that she's upset or fearful about being in bed with me and the realization calms me.

I thread my fingers in her hair, brushing it gently. "Good morning."

She draws her lower lip between her teeth, enticing me. "Good morning."

“Sleep well?” I ask, and she hums in reply. “Hope I wasn't too rough on you last night?”

I couldn't control myself when I was inside her, and I'm a little worried I might have gone overboard in the heat of the moment.

On hearing my question, a flush creeps up her face and I chuckle in disbelief. After everything we've done, this woman is fucking blushing.

“You gave it to me just the way I wanted,” she says, a complete contrast to the blushing Selena I saw a second ago, and I can't stop the smile that appears on my lips.

“Did I now?” I tease, and she lightly slaps my chest, grinning from ear to ear.

I squint “You're impossible.”

I grin in my “And you were amazing. I enjoyed every bit of being with you,” I chuckle yesterday placing a kiss on her forehead.

“You were amazing, too. It's safe to call it the best sex of my life,” she says, though I had no experience before yesterday.

nothing “Weren't you ever with any man?” I ask.

wrong. “I just didn't feel like it then.”

be able Right.

piss me “Well, I'm glad you felt like it last night,” I say soothingly, and her eyebrows shoot up to the middle of her forehead.

she grins in her “Someone definitely feels like it this morning,” she quips on feeling me, I hard dick pressed against her thigh.

she grins els bad I woke up with a hard-on and having her spread on top of me did nothing to improve my condition.

“Have you seen you? Can't help it when you look like that,” she grins unashamedly, and she tuts.

gh with “Is the big bad Dylan Smith resolving to flattery? I must say it will get you everywhere,” she reveals, fisting my hard length and causing worried Ito run down my spine.

I lean back on the pillow and close my eyes for a second. It's all tickle in “Fuck,” I groan.

}. “Tell me what you want, Mr. Smith,” she prompts, but I'm a little contrast to with lust to reply. She repeats the question.

o makes “I want to be inside of you and fuck you hard and fast as I feel your walls clench around my cock. Fuck, I want you so much, Selena. You can hear some fucking nuts,” I manage, and she swallows, her lips parting and breathes heavily.

Good to know she's as affected by me as I am by her.

o confess, Selena gets off the bed, and I follow like a man hypnotized. She gets on her knees and takes my cock in her warm mouth, and I lose my fucking nerve even completely at the mind-numbing sensation.

Fuck! Her mouth is divine.

She bobs her head on my dick in slow motion, and it takes every effort to keep me not to cum right there and then. Seeing Selena on her knees for me with my protruding cock in her mouth is a sight so erotic and pleasing that my dream and her dream come true.

I push her hair to the back and clasp it in my grip. Unable to stop myself, my hips buck on their own accord, and I begin thrusting into her mouth, fucking it like there's no tomorrow. The sound of me driving into it is not helpful as she peers up at me with wide baby-blue eyes and *fuck!* I've never felt so good in my entire life.

' I say I thrust into her mouth a few more times before I withdraw. If I don't pull out soon, I'll blow up in her mouth, but I want to cum inside her and make this

indeed long as possible.

shivers “Get on all fours, baby,” I say in a dangerously calm tone, struggling to contain my feral appetite, and she scrambles to do as I say without a moment’s reticence.

I stroke her round ass and she whimpers, pushing it up against my hand for more contact. I love how brazen she is despite only having sex for the first time yesterday.

her pussy “So fucking gorgeous. I’ve been thinking of bending you over and fucking you from behind since that night at the office,” I groan.

as she “Do it,” she urges, and I oblige.

I position myself at her entrance and tease her for a moment before slamming into her in one swift move. The action induces her to go on forward, and her breasts bounce at the action.

my mind “Dylan...”

Holy shit.

I’m home.

thing in “Should I fuck you slowly, baby?” I ask, leaning forward to kiss her neck with and pinch her nipples and she cries out.

It’s a “Just fuck me already,” she says in a no-nonsense tone.

“Yes, ma’am.”

myself, And fuck her, I do. I ram into her, and her body jolts with my every thrust. Her moans are so illicit it fuels my urge to satisfy her in every way possible. “Dylan,” she moans and something in me snaps, compelling me to fuck her faster, and pump into her with no mercy just the way she wants it.

“Your pussy fits me like a fucking glove, baby. I love fucking you. Don’t stop, like me fucking you like this from behind?”

at last as “Yes, Dylan. Holy fuck yes,” she moans wantonly, her ass meeting

halfway at every thrust.

I spank her ass cheeks lightly and her body convulses, her orgasm word of her without warning, and she screams as she shatters around me, clenching her pussy walls. I continue to drive into her relentlessly until the wave of orgasm subsides.

"Fuck, that was mind-blowing," she huffs, and I smirk.

"That was just the first orgasm. I'm far from done with you, baby."

Picking her up, I place her on her side and lie behind her, hitching around me for easy access to her core.

As I ease into her, her mouth drops open and I kiss her, swallowing before moans. Selena is so damn addictive, and I don't think I'd ever be able to move enough of her.

This position is heavenly because I can feel every inch of her sweat against mine as I bury myself balls-deep in her sleek cunt. She's so wet it makes my job easy.

Selena's eyes flutter shut as she takes pleasure in me pumping her back this angle.

"Don't stop," she pleads.

"Wasn't planning on it."

I'm close but I want her to cum again first, so I swirl my fingers around her pussy, stimulating her clit.

It works like magic and her muscles spasm as her orgasm takes control of her body. She quivers and I maintain my hold on her, increasing my pressure until I find my own release.

We both nuzzle as we struggle to catch our breaths. I kiss her hair, and she giggles.

"Well, that's a pretty delightful way to start the day if you ask me."

says, and I breathe a laugh.

hitting “We need to hit the shower. Join me, let's save water,” I extend an enticing invitation, and she smirks knowingly, aware of my intention to ravish her again in the bathroom.

“It’s about the water, huh?”

“I mean, I'm open to other offers, too.”

Her smile is so dazzling and contagious that I feel a solemn sincerity in her leg happiness. I can't stop the corners of my lips from copying hers.

We continue our sexual endeavors in the bathroom while we show her satisfaction settles in my soul. I feel lighter than I have in a really long time to get I don't want to stop feeling this ray of happiness. I don't ever want it to end.

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says, and I breathe a laugh.

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I don't want to stop feeling this ray of happiness. I don't ever want this to end.

CHAPTER 17

SELENA

These past two days have been abso-fucking-lutely *ah-mazing*.

Dylan had finally had enough of me taunting him and given in to the temptation of having sex with me, and damn, the man is insatiable. He's christened every corner of our suites and yet, we can't seem to get enough of each other.

Fine, I'm insatiable, too.

Sue me.

Dylan is a fucking sex god, and I get hot and bothered just by looking at him. I don't know if he will want to continue this after we return to New York, so I plan to make the most of our time here seeing as we'll be in California soon. For now, he's all mine.

We depart tomorrow, and I'm currently in my room packing my belongings. The teal green suitcase reminds me of when Dylan hauled it out of the trunk of his car when he picked me up at the airport and his happiness over me at the memory. We've come a really long way since then.

He's a lot nicer these days, but that doesn't change the fact that he's
bit of a cocky asshole. My asshole.

He's not yours, Selena, I chide myself, folding my dinner dress and
it in the suitcase. At least he is for now.

There's a knock on the door, and I dump the skirt I'm holding on
my way to the door to check who it is. Checking the peephole, I find
on the other side and immediately panic. My hair is the replica of
nest, and I'm wearing a very unattractive, faded cashmere top. I thought
was meeting up with some friends. Why the hell is he back so early?

Yes, we've had sex and he has bent me in every way possible, but
ready for him to see me like this.

"Selena?" he calls but I don't answer. "I can hear you pacing. Come
into the open up."

We've Cringing, I turn the doorknob and open it slowly.

ough of "Hey!" I exclaim, my voice unusually high pitched, my lips stretch
what I'm sure is a creepy smile. A clear indication that I've been caught
something wrong.

Dylan looks at me funny, but I take the time to observe his appearance
He's dressed in casual clothes today which is an explicit discrepancy
to New Dylan I know. I've never seen him wear anything other than suits since
leaving back. But I must say he has the whole casual look working for him.

Is there anything he can't pull off?

up my "Hey. You look and sound weird," he notes, inching forward and
l it into away from the doorway to grant him smooth passage into the suite.

s creeps He kisses me lightly on the cheek, taking me in his arms, and content
warms me from within at the intimate gesture.

It's been confirmed. Dylan isn't good for my heart. If he's going to come

s still aonce we get to New York, I might as well be prepared.

His face contorts in worry. “Why didn't you want me to come in? I placingsomething wrong?”

“Not at all, I was just trying to get all my stuff together for tom d maketrip,” I reply, freeing myself from his hold and pivoting to the bedroom l DylanI still have a few clothes on the bed.

a bird's Dylan follows me and plops on the bed, leaning against the headb ught hehis blue eyes observe my every move like some sort of detective look clues about a case.

I'm not “How did the meeting with your friends go?” I ask to distract him.

“Cool. I enjoyed myself. It was good to see them again after such me on,time.”

“Well, I'm glad you had fun.”

There's a comfortable silence as I close my bag and place it just out: ched inwardrobe. Going over to the bed, I sit on the right side, resting my l it doingthe headboard as well.

“We've never really talked about the kiss that happened at your eig arance.birthday party,” he says out of the blue, and I avert my gaze, preten / to thepick a lint from my sleeve.

ce I got I know we've ignored it for far too long, but it doesn't change the f

I'm still too embarrassed to talk about it. But I can't shy away from it f

I keep my facial expression tepid despite the hysteria uncoiling ins l I step“What about it?”

Dylan doesn't immediately provide an answer and I have a feeli entmentlooking for the best way to approach this, so it doesn't rub off the wror

“Well, I never apologized for turning you down the way I did bac and thisand now we're...” He doesn't complete the sentence, but I have a prett

picture of what he's talking about.

Did I do “It’s all good. It was just a silly crush.” I chuckle awkwardly, attempting to make myself look less of a loser.

Tomorrow’s “Still, I feel the need to give you an explanation. You were simply where you are now.”

“I had just turned eighteen. I was an adult,” I argue.

He boards as “And I was thirty-seven. Even though you had just turned eighteen, you were still way younger. Plus, I didn't like you that way. To me, you were just Cooper’s sister whom he adored.”

Even though I know he never liked me that way, hearing him say that is a long salt to my injury.

“I was even seeing someone else at the time.”

“What’s different?” I regret asking as soon as I say it. I don’t want to stop this because I remind him of why he thought it was a bad idea.

He cracks on He laughs, though. “What do you mean?”

“Well, I’m still just as much younger than you. I’m still Cooper’s sister.”
“True,” he says slowly, looking at me, and I regret this conversation for the future. “I guess... you’re still younger, but you’re not *young* anymore like you were. I mean, it’s different. It’s still a lot of years, but... how do you feel if someone who was eighteen was interested in you right now forever. I think about it and wince. Someone that young... someone who was just a teenager... I guess I had never thought about it that way. I can’t imagine how I’d feel about it when I get to be even older. “You’re still young, so we’re both actually adults now. It’s just... different.”

“I think I get that.”

Still, I need to get him to stop talking to put myself out of this misery. There’s also something important we need to discuss — what we’re doing.

I think I get that.

Still, I need to get him to stop talking to put myself out of this misery. There’s also something important we need to discuss — what we’re doing.

where it's headed.

pting to “I’m sorry for coming onto you like that. I guess I just liked you a l
then. I didn’t really think about your perspective. Guess that’s pro
ply tooimmature I still was.”

Dylan’s gaze sweeps over my face before nodding. “I just wanted
understand, in case you still thought of that.”

en, you I nod. I appreciate it, I think. But still... I have to ask. “Where
ere justgoing with this though? Now? We return to New York tomorrow, an
little lost on where we stand.”

it adds My heart rate picks up, and I hold my breath, gauging his reacti
anxiously awaiting his response. Dylan hangs his head for a mill
before boring his eyes into mine. I'm nowhere prepared for the inter
him tothe emotion in them, and it disarms me completely. Angling his body t
mine, he reaches out for my hands and as if in a trance, I let him tak
He intertwines them together and I can't help but notice how norm
ster.” feels.

on even Natural.

re. Not Real.

7 would “I know that initially, this was just an itch we needed to scratch, bu
?” amazing, Selena, and I'd like for us to go with the flow and see where i
is still aI don't want to discontinue this after we get to New York.”

ne how This is something I wasn't expecting to hear from Dylan. I thought
ire, butjust the Californian breeze urging him to be willful these past couple c

but I guess it's more than that. My hopes soar and my heart throl
ecstasy but in a feat not to come off as too eager, I stifle my excitement

ery but “Don’t you want this?” he enquires when I don't say anything, wor
ing andmaterializing on his forehead.

If only he knew.

not back “I do. I guess we could do that,” I let out in a small voice and a flicker of howtwitch in a half smile.

Dylan rises to his feet. “Get dressed, I'm taking you out.”

you to We can't be that reckless.

“What if someone sees us?” I ask, slightly disturbed by the thought of weinterns seeing us together and news somehow getting to Cooper.

and I'm a “It's California. Not many people know us here. Besides, it's so far away from the hotel so there's no need to be so concerned about our colleagues finding out.”

second I'm still wary. “I don't know...”

nsity of “It's our last night out here. Let's make the most of it. Carpe diem.”

owards Going back to New York would mean we won't be able to be free of them, as we like in public. The only time we have to enjoy ourselves outdoors is now, so I give in.

I get ready and throw on a casual dress and judging by the way Dylan gazes at me when he sees me in it, I'm certain I look nothing short of beautiful.

He takes me to a desolate romantic spot with a benign ambience, and it's yours in every moment of it.

it leads. Caught up in our own world, I think about how Dylan might have broken my heart back then but still holds me like I'm the most valuable thing in his world whenever we're together.

of days, The gentle breeze kisses my skin and I feel sated as I gaze into the distance with sky elucidated by the glowing stars. Goosebumps surface on my arms as his hand grazes my cheek. I smile, inhaling the scent of his mesmerizing cologne which raids and caresses my senses.

No words are exchanged between us. We stay quiet, enjoying the silence.

of it all.

his lips Here, it's just us — away from the judging eyes of the world — and
we could stay like this forever.

But sadly, most times, wishes do not come true.

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Here, it's just us — away from the judging eyes of the world — and I wish we could stay like this forever.

But sadly, most times, wishes do not come true.

CHAPTER 18

DYLAN

Tonight was magical.

Spending time with Selena outside the four walls of our hotel turned out to be the best decision. I couldn't stop craving to touch her, every chance I got and felt a sense of gratification.

It's around eleven when Selena complains of feeling sleepy, and a cab which takes us back to the hotel. Selena dozes off in my arms through the ride, I dare to imagine what it would be like if we could go through with our affair. I know we both agreed to go with the flow, but something about her that makes me yearn for more. Our fire has so much that just can't be ignored.

We arrive at the hotel, and I tap her gently to let her know we're here. "Already?" she asks, rubbing her heavy eyes.

We get out of the cab, and Selena distances herself from me and I immediately feel the loss of her warmth. Even in her drowsy state, she still remembers to be cautious, but I don't. That's how inundated with her I am. I've simply lost track of the world around us.

We stroll to the entrance, making sure there's no reason for anyone suspicious of us. Once in the elevator, Selena turns to me, toying with the neck of my t-shirt.

“I really enjoyed tonight. Thank you.”

“And thank you for coming with me. It was amazing. *You* are amazing.” She chuckles, peppering my jawline with kisses and my whole body with fervor.

“Selena... we have to stop if you want to rest tonight. You said you're sleepy,” I warn, and she pulls back to peer at me with a fervent gaze.

“Who said anything about going to sleep?” she whispers, her lips against my ear, rubbing me through my jeans and I almost cum in my pants. *Fucking tease.*

The elevator dings when we arrive at our floor, and we step out. She stands in front of me and walks backwards, a mocking smile on her lips, reminding me of strawberries.

“I have something special for you underneath this dress,” she says, and fuck, my curiosity spikes to a hundred percent.

I blow out my cheeks, striving to maintain my restraint. “What color is it?” “Wouldn't you like to know?”

Her finger traces a path from my chest down to my waistline, but I stop her before it goes any further, and she snickers. It's clear as fucking glass she's out to torment me. And fuck, if I'm not enjoying it.

“You can come in if you want. I promise it would be worth your while. I could let you do that thing you like to do when you're fucking me from behind.”

I let out a harsh breath, but it only fuels Selena's desire to taunt me more.

ie to be She leans closer, her nose trailing along my jaw. “Oh, Dylan, how I
with thewhen you make me yours. Would it help if I told you how badly I w
to say yes?”

She's breathing hard, and so am I, our chests rising and falling at the
ng.” rhythm. My cock is pulsing and desperate for attention which sh
y burnswilling to furnish.

“Get your ass in the room and take off that dress,” I command,
ou wereboth go into her room. I shut the door and watch her give me a strip sh

Selena sexily discards her dress, exposing the curves of her body
ips hotShe's wearing a red thong with a matching bra and it's hot, but I wan
pants. them come off.

“Take those off, too,” I say in a low husky voice, gesturing
ie stepsunderwear and she unhooks her bra, a lazy smile spreading on her r
, whichlips.

I lick my lips, watching her tits spring free.
nasally, “Why don't you take off my panties yourself?” she asks breat
closing the distance between us.

r is it?” Still in my own clothes, I bend Selena over the edge of the king-siz
revealing her panty-covered pink clit. I rub my finger along her vagi
catch itshe moans, nudging it up.

ass that Caressing the firm swell of her ass, I hook my finger on the band of
fabric and take it off her. She takes in a sharp breath when my finger
while. Iin contact with her core.

ie from I kneel behind her and spread her ass cheeks so her pussy is gor
exposed to me. Her glistening folds are a sight for sore eyes, and I
ie somehave a taste of the dripping nectar.

“You're so wet, baby. So fucking wet,” I exhale.

I love it “This is what you do to me,” she whimpers. “I want you, Dylan.”
I want you I move closer, drawing a line along her sensitive clit with my tongue
she cries out, “Oh...”

erratic Just like I expected, she tastes divine. I dive into her like a man
I am desperate for more. I lap her juices, feasting on her like the greedy man
fucking her with my tongue at a speed so fast that she screams from pain
and weand struggles to get out from under my grip, but I hold her firmly in place.
ow. “Oh, fuck! Oh, Dylan... fuck, fuck! *God!*” she moans alongside a bunch
to me. other gibberish I can't make sense of.

It to see Selena shamelessly grinds into my face, and I slide one of my fingers
into her glistening hole. She clenches around my finger and her legs tremble
to hershe cums, her cry the most beautiful sound I've ever heard, and I need
ruby-redthe same in my pants. My dick is so hard it hurts, and I might pass out
not inside her in the next minute.

“That felt good,” she whispers, recovering from her orgasm.
Senseless, I hastily take off my clothes and Selena watches me with a hungry
untamed. Just when I'm about to get into bed, she stops me.
I get into bed, “Not so fast, mister. I've been dying to have a taste of your cum
and evening,” she says, tugging my hips closer and grabbing my thigh
length.

the red I whizz at the contact. My swollen tip is gleaming with pre-cum and
she comeskisses it, sucking off the liquid. I gather her hair in my right hand, get
out of the way as she begins to bob her head up and down, sucking
geouslylicking with precision.

want to Dazed with lust and unable to stop my hips from bucking, I begin thrusting
into her mouth, the feel of her tongue like velvet against my sensitive

shudder when I hit the back of her throat and that's when I know I need to go and inside her.

Tugging her up from her crouching position, I get into bed, and she stands on top of me, above me.

And I am, "Take the lead, love. Ride me like the fucking goddess you are," I pleasure digging my fingers into her slender waist and she does just that.

She takes the lead. Selena guides my cock into her pussy, and we both moan at the sensation of watching her mouth fall open as she adjusts to my size and a second later she begins to move her hips, riding me like a horse and making those forbidden sounds I love to hear.

Her breasts jiggle as she bounces on my dick, her still-stiff nipples teasing me, and I grab one of them. Selena curses. I love surrendering to her because this woman holds so much fucking power over me. Right now, I feel the insurmountable desire to pump. I need to move.

Strengthening my grip on her, I take control, driving into her slowly as she places her hands on my shoulders for support. Her eyes are laced with lust and something else I can't quite pinpoint but I don't look away.

I can't. I'm glued to them. Soon, I begin to thrust faster, and I can barely breathe as we both climax together. Selena doesn't look away either and warmth settles between us.

Will I be able to let go of her when she decides it's time? Fuck.

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CHAPTER 19

SELENA

We're back in New York and as soon as I landed, I called the let them know I was back in the city. We agreed to have tomorrow, and I can't wait to give them all the juicy details of my no active sex life with Dylan.

Thinking about it brings me back to last night when I was on top o had felt an emotion so raw, so authentic that it scared me shitless. Bu shoved it to the back of my mind immediately as I didn't want to dwell

I guess at this point, it's better to just live in the moment and let the take care of itself. I know it's a reckless move, but it's better than hav expectations crushed like a bug in the ground.

I was relieved to find that Cooper wasn't home when I arrived. Fr don't know how to face him after having the best time away with l friend. I know this will hurt him if he finds out, but I just hope he unde when that time comes.

Later that night, as I drift off to la-la land, Dylan's angelic face is image on my mind.



The next day at the office, Dylan doesn't come in until it's time for when I'm already on my way out. Miss Gail is in the reception so exactly pounce on him. Our eyes meet and heat pools in my core which gives me a once over, butterflies taking flight in my stomach.

Not now, Selena.

This man is gradually turning me into a sex-obsessed freak and I love it.

As I approach him, the grip on my purse tightens when his heat drops to my lips. He looks so freaking sexy in a suit, and I've been different fantasies of him taking me in the office all day.

girls to
brunch
now very

Dylan seems to read my mind because his lips curve in a barely-there smile. The same lips which had me screaming my lungs out from pleasure.

Jerk.

f him. I
it I had
on it.

"Miss Langley," he acknowledges with a nod, and I release a shak almost cumming on the spot.

e future
ing my

This man isn't good for my panties. They are drenched beyond salvation. "Mr. Smith."

ankly, I
his best
stands

I intend for my voice to come out stronger than that, but it ends sounding throaty. I hastily press the elevator button and get in, a rache between my legs.

the last

I need to get away from him and meet up with the girls if I don't lose my sanity. Maybe some time with them will burst the little bubble Dylan built around ourselves in California.

When I arrive at Glazers, Sydney, and Diana aren't there yet, so I sit at the usual spot to wait for them. The waiter comes to ask what I want, but

just a glass of water because I want to wait for them to get here first.

Eventually, they prance in, conversing animatedly with huge smiles on their faces, and I scrunch my brows in curiosity.

“What’s up with you two? A few days away from New York and already leaving me out of your conspiracies,” I pout jokingly as they take their places at the table.

“Oh, please don’t be silly,” Diana rolls her eyes.

“Diana met a guy,” Sydney blurts out.

“Sydney,” Diana chides with wide eyes at the revelation.

“Oh, my God, that is so great.” I gush and Diana flushes, tucking a chestnut hair behind her ear. I observe that she’s jumpy. It’s almost as if she didn’t want me to find out, or maybe I’m just being silly. Diana is one of my best friends, and we tell each other everything so it’s ridiculous of me to be that way.

“Guys, it’s nothing serious. We only just started seeing each other and I’ve been crying out loud.”

“Is that why you’re blushing?” Sydney teases and we both snicker.

“Selena, why don’t you tell us about your trip?” Diana asks in an attempt to change the subject, and Sydney and I decide it’s time to put her out of our misery.

“It was the absolute best,” I sigh in sheer glee.

Sydney and Diana exchange puckish glances as the waiter comes to take our orders. We ask for our usual and he leaves.

“By any chance, did anything happen between you and Dylan?” I enquire slowly, raising an inquisitive brow.

“We finally did it. I finally had sex with Dylan,” I reveal, and my squeal so loudly that the people on the other tables give us disapproving

looks, but we ignore them.

“I swear, we really need to learn to keep it down whenever we're here. I don't want to be banned from Glazers forever. Their food is really great. You're not going to hate to miss out on all the good treats.”

“Oh my God! How did this happen?”

“When did it happen?”

“How is Dylan in bed?”

I'm so overwhelmed with their questions it's hard to say who's asking what.

“Ladies, calm your tits. I'm going to tell you guys everything.”

“I'm dying to hear the details,” Diana says eagerly, grinning at me like I'm the Cheshire cat.

“Well, I wanted Dylan, and I also knew he wanted me. So, I teased him out of the man until he decided he had had enough and finally succumbed to her for his desires, and we had sex. As for when it happened, that was three weeks ago. And as for the last question, Dylan is good in bed.”

Sydney gasps. “You sly thing! I knew you had it in you, vixen.”

“I'm so happy for you, Lena. After all these years, you deserve to be happy,” Diana says, and I get emotional.

I seriously have the best friends in the world.

“But I would also like to know what this means for the both of you. Do you want to get our Cooper aware?” she probes, and I lift my shoulder in a half-shrug.

“He isn't,” I say, and they both look at me with concern.

“When do you plan on telling him?” Sydney is the one who raises the question this time.

I play with my fingers under the table. I don't really have any plans on telling my brother about my affair with Dylan for the time being. At least

until I'm sure of what I and Dylan are.

re if we “I don't know.”

eat, and Sydney sighs. “You should tell him. Imagine what would happen if he learns about this from another source or even worse, caught you guys in the act. You're both screwed.”

Even though I know she's right, I say, “Dylan and I are just having fun. Nothing serious.”

asking “So he's okay with hiding this from his best friend?” she asks in disbelief.

“It was a decision we made together,” I defend quickly.

Dylan is not a bad guy. Cooper is my brother and I'm also choosing to keep this from him.

“Well, I think that if Selena says she's okay with not telling Cooper, then we should let her be. It's okay if she isn't ready and wants to wait, but I'll be here to come to my rescue, and I offer her a grateful smile.

Sydney reaches for my hand. “I love you, hun, and I want nothing more than to see you happy. God knows you've been miserable for a long time. I don't want that to happen again. I like the new glow in your skin, and I don't want it to fade. But in order for you to keep doing this, you have to be careful. You've liked Dylan since you met him, and now you're trying to keep off having sex with him as fun? That can't be good.”

you. Is The very thought that I'm emotionally invested in this scares the hell out of me, but I want Dylan, even if it means camouflaging my true feelings just to maintain our connection.

ises the “It's a mutual agreement between the both of us. I know what I'm doing, but I'll assure my friends with a forced smile, but they aren't convinced. They can't see through me like water.

ast, not “Well, I really hope for your sake that's true because things could

messy if this goes south.”

“I’ve got this,” I say convincingly, and the waiter returns with our
n if he putting an end to our conversation.

ays red- I guess Sydney hit my Dylan bubble a little too hard because th
truth leaves a bitter taste in my mouth, and I lose my appetite.

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“I’ve got this,” I say convincingly, and the waiter returns with our orders, putting an end to our conversation.

I guess Sydney hit my Dylan bubble a little too hard because the harsh truth leaves a bitter taste in my mouth, and I lose my appetite.

CHAPTER 20

DYLAN

I'm at the office when Cooper calls to ask if we can meet up for coffee after work. I want to refuse under the guise of being busy with work, but that won't be fair to him. I'm the one who's decided to disrespect the bond of our friendship by going behind his back to sleep with his sister.

I can't help it. I can't control how I feel even though it will come back to bite me in the ass when this all blows up in the open. What I have with Selena is something I haven't felt with any of my other casual hookups. This relationship is different.

Unique.

I wind up what I'm working on and leave for the bar we agreed to meet at. I plan to avoid any conversation involving Selena or that could lead to us talking about Selena like a plague in an attempt to reduce the impact of the scandal on the already feel.

As I strut into the bar, my mind conjures dreadful images of Cooper luring me to come out here because he found out about Selena and I,

wants to beat the shit out of me. I envision his fist connecting with my
and cringe at the thought.

What if he knows? What if Selena somehow managed to spill the
and this is just an ambush to get me to show up? My palms turn sweat
my heart begins to pound in my ribcage. I know it's all in my head, but
if it turns out to be true?

There's low music playing in the bar, and the dim blue light does
job of illuminating the few people in it. I see Cooper perched on a stool
counter, throwing his head back and taking a generous sip of his whiskey.

Although his back is turned to me, I take the time to observe
countenance. I want to know if there's anything off about him so
prepare myself for what's coming. His body language gives nothing away
I amble towards him, my heart in my mouth.

Thank fuck I'm a lawyer. Maintaining a poker face even when the odds
not in my favor is what I do for a living.

“Hey, man,” I say, drawing his attention to me and his gray eyes light
“Dylan!” He rises from the stool to clasp my right hand in a shaking
pulls me towards himself until we're almost touching. Our left hands slap
pat each other on the back in a pound hug.

I slowly release a sigh of relief. I had been scared for nothing. I guess
was just my guilty conscience at work.

“How fun was your trip, man?” Cooper asks as I settle on the stool
his.

“It was great,” I reply, calling out to the bartender to pour me a glass
whiskey. “Is there ever a time work isn't?”

My sarcasm isn't lost on him.

“Didn't you take the time to visit the sites while you were there?”

my noseshakes his head with a mocking smile on his lips, already knowing the answer.

he beans “I was only there for work. There was simply no time for pleasure or party, and out, tilting my glass and taking a sip.

but what *You had enough time to receive pleasure from his sister,* a voice from the back of my mind jeers and I duck my head to hide my sour expression.

it's a poor “I know our work can be demanding but it'll be nice to take out time for ourselves every once in a while. And speaking of enjoying ourselves, I started seeing someone while you were gone,” he confides with a soft smile and I'm intrigued.

so I can Cooper hasn't been in a serious relationship since college. We've only had casual hookups since then, most times at the exclusive club we frequented. So him saying he's met someone is huge.

it adds are “Wow, that's great. Are things serious between you two?”

“We only just started going out but I'm really into her, man. I've never had anything like this before. She's different from the others, and she keeps me on my feet as if she's fucking my toes,” he chuckles, a faraway look on his face.

it's wing to *Sounds like someone I know.*

“That's really amazing, Cooper. I'm happy for you. What's her name?” I guess it He hesitates and I find it odd. “It's Diana.”

I've heard that name before. I run through the list of our acquaintances in my head, coming up empty. I frown, unsure who he's talking about, then I see the guilty look on his face that I've been wearing on mine, to my glass of “Selena's friend?” I ask just to be clear.

“Yeah. I ran into her a while ago and things just kind of picked up between us there. I haven't told Selena yet, so I'd appreciate it if you kept it between us.”

ing the Wow, I didn't see that coming. What a fucking twist of fate.

 In that moment, I'm tempted to tell him all about Selena and I —
e,” I let everything off my chest so I can feel lighter but like the coward I am,
 my glass instead. “Well, here's to your newfound love life.”

e at the We clink our glasses and drink to it.

. “But seriously, we need some time away from work to let off some
he time I scoff. “Try doing that when you have several clients with issues
elves, I than fucking Mississippi on your neck. Some even call at night, and I
t smile, not getting a wink of sleep. No damn sense of decency.”

Yeah, talk about decency all you want, Judas.

ily ever I've never felt so much guilt before in my entire life. It's like every
requent. say reminds me of what I'm doing to Cooper behind his back.

 He holds up his palms in surrender. “Alright, how about we strike a
“What deal?”

ver felt “Use this month to do whatever you have to and clear your schedul
s me on defend fucking grim ripper if you want. But next month, we're goin
one-week vacation to cool the fuck off.”

 “Sounds like a good idea but one week? That's a pretty long time.
e?” know, man.”

 “Just think about it. Selena's your assistant, right? She could help
nces in your appointments forward and clear your schedule before then,” he c
t – and suggests, scratching his beard.

o. At the mention of her name, I pause, my eyes widening a fracti
 heart begins to drum loudly in my ears. I decide to agree with him so
up from move past anything that has to do with Selena, but the universe dec
his just twist the knife deeper into my gut when I hear Cooper's next question.

 “How did she do on the trip?”

*Tell him how you made his sister suck your dick and how you knelt
- to gether, praying to her cunt. And don't forget to add that you fucked her o
, I raisesurface possible.*

This is so difficult. It's unadulterated agony. I try to breathe through
focus on something other than my sin but it's like an imprint on my s
steam." can't be gotten rid of no matter how hard I try.

greater "She did well. Just like I told you the other time, she's one of t
end up interns we have at the firm," I say carefully, cautious not to let any er
show and reveal what a renegade I am.

Cooper nods, unsuspecting of my crisis.
ything I I deserve to rot in hell.

My gut churns in dismay as Cooper returns to talking about Diana
deal?" on about how incredible she is. Tuning him out and letting his vo
carried away by the music, one word resonates in my mind.

e. Hell, Hypocrite.

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Tell him how you made his sister suck your dick and how you knelt behind her, praying to her cunt. And don't forget to add that you fucked her on every surface possible.

This is so difficult. It's unadulterated agony. I try to breathe through it and focus on something other than my sin but it's like an imprint on my soul that can't be gotten rid of no matter how hard I try.

“She did well. Just like I told you the other time, she's one of the best interns we have at the firm,” I say carefully, cautious not to let any emotions show and reveal what a renegade I am.

Cooper nods, unsuspecting of my crisis.

I deserve to rot in hell.

My gut churns in dismay as Cooper returns to talking about Diana, going on about how incredible she is. Tuning him out and letting his voice get carried away by the music, one word resonates in my mind.

Hypocrite.

CHAPTER 21

SELENA

My palms are sweaty, and my heart is beating a little faster than as I stare at the tall glass building. I can't tell if it's anxiety excitement of seeing Dylan for the second time since we returned to California.

Sure, I saw him the previous day but it was just for a fleeting moment he didn't for once step out of the office after I got back from my lunch. There's not exactly a handbook for how to behave around your boss on a weekend of sexual adventures so how the hell do I do this?

Relax, Selena. There's no need to panic. Act casual, I give myself talk, passing through the revolving glass doors. I freaking caught myself dancing in the mirror and singing in the shower this morning. I'm not supposed to do such things so who in the world is Dylan turning me into? So please get me on a leash before I lose my mind.

Smoothing out the creases on my black dress, I make my way toward the elevator and see Belinda and a group of people waiting there.

“... really insightful. That talk at the conference the second day v
icing on the freaking cake,” I hear her say to the others as I approach th

“Oh, hi, Selena. I was just telling them about the trip. How're you?”

“I'm good. You?”

She beams and I can't stop the corners of my lips from lifting. Beli
this contagious smile. It's a little hard not to smile when she does.

“I'm good. At the risk of sounding like a totally slothful intern, I n
break from the office. My friends in L.A. don't work as much as I do h

“I guess we just have to suck it up.”

“Yeah. But out of all of us, you had the most fun in California,” sh
nudging me in the side and wiggling her eyebrows.

I feel my blood turn to ice. It's not possible. There's no way she
about Dylan and me. I can't be certain that no one saw us together,
were extra careful in public. Even when Dylan forgot to be cautious
always alert.

“I don't know what you mean,” I manage to let out despite feeling
the air in my lungs has been consumed by an unknown force. If I th
was anxious before, I'm most definitely terrified now. I need to mai
cool head. If anyone so much as gets a whim of this, it's going to be
short of nasty.

“The suite! You were the only intern who got to enjoy such lu
treatment from the boss.”

Wait, that's it? Oh, sweet baby Jesus, I might just die from relief rig
Ecstatic to know my secret is still safe.

The elevator dings, and we get on it. Just when the doors are about
someone's hand appears in between and stops it. I look up to find Dy
draw in a long breath when his eyes settle on me.

was the How is it even possible for this man to look any more attractive? I
nem. to be one of his superpowers.

We all greet him as he steps inside, coming to stand in the only av
space which just so happens to be beside me. My heart is beating so f
nda hasI'm scared he might actually hear it. This time, it's thumping fr
excitement of being so close to him.

eeded a He brushes my arm with his, and it sends a jolt of electricity do
ere.” spine and straight to my core. I clench my thighs together to wane the

When I look at him from the corner of my eye, I see his lips cont
ie says,smirk and mentally curse.

Arrogant asshole.

knows The rest of the occupants get off the elevator and it's just me and n
but weboss riding to the twenty-fifth floor now.

, I was *Yeah, he rode you to bliss alright.*

Goosebumps surface on my arms at the memory. Suddenly, I feel
like allbetween us thicken with a tension that wasn't there before and my che
ought Iand falls as I struggle to maintain a composed demeanor.

intain a “How are you? Did you sleep well last night?” he asks, staring
nothingahead at the gray walls.

I clear my throat. “Yeah, I did. What about you?”

xurious Dylan looks at me and my heart does a cartwheel. I would never g
to that look he gets in his eyes whenever he stares at me. It's lik
ht now.priceless jewel — something he's in awe of.

Still maintaining eye contact, his hand settles on my lower
to shut,meandering down and cupping my ass. He caresses it and my lips p
lan andeyes fluttering shut.

“I simply missed you. I can't seem to get enough of you,” he says

It seems gently tucking a piece of my hair behind my ear. Angling his body toward me and lowering his head to my neck, he bites and sucks on my available skin.

Just that His raw confession tugs at my heartstrings and my grip on the door handle tightens. My body comes alive anytime he touches me. He doesn't even seem to make any effort.

When my “Tell me, Selena, did you miss me as much as I did?” he asks in a low, guttural voice of his, and fuck, the way my name rolls off his tongue is so intoxicating.

“What if I said I didn't?” I decide to toy with him even though I know the truth. He chuckles.

My sexy “That would be you lying, darling, and liars deserve to be punished. You a bad girl, Selena?”

Why the hell does hearing him say that sound so hot? I want him to keep touching me. I want to feel his presence everywhere, but we can't go any further because the elevator dings open. We spring apart so fast it's Oscar-worthy.

And thank goodness we did because Miss Gail is in the reception.

She disappears into the office with Dylan, and even though he's out of sight, my body just won't calm the fuck down. Throughout that morning, Dylan doesn't come out of his office, but I can't focus. I want to get used so much it's hard to do anything else.

Even though I'm a mess, there's a document I'm supposed to hand in today after work, but I decide to just as well deliver it now if it'll give me a chance to see him. It's barely been an hour back, hours, and I already miss him. Deciding not to think of how screwed up I am, I snatch the file from my desk and pivot to his office.

He asks me to come in when I knock and the sight I'm greeted with is so soft, so beautiful, be the hottest thing ever. His brows are drawn together in concentration.

He looks towards me intently at something on his screen. He has ditched his jacket and the sleeves of his white shirt are rolled up to his arms. Seems to be a hard jaw is set in a hard line, and there's this sense of dominance I get from my bag turns me on so much.

"I have the files on the Richmond's case," I tell him, bringing his attention to myself.

"Let me have a look."

He skims through the document and seems to be satisfied with what he finds. I'm happy to have pleased him. I'm good at what I do, but I took extra care in preparing this because I want to get the clear message across that we won't interfere with my job.

"Thank you," he says, dropping the file on top of the pile on his desk.

That's my cue to leave but I don't want to. I want Dylan to continue what we started earlier in the elevator, but he doesn't seem to be in the mood for further. "Anything else you'd like?" he asks, and I realize I've been staring at him without saying a word.

"Uhm... no. That's all," I say, turning on my heels.

I've lost my freaking mind. When I decided to come in here, what did I envision was going to happen? This is an official setting, and I don't want him to boss me. I should act like it.

"Shut the door," Dylan says just when I'm about to step out.

I barely get the chance to comply when he pins me to the fine panel of wood and kisses me with a passion so fierce it takes me unawares.

It's barely been two days, but I missed this. I missed the taste of his scent. I missed feeling his skin against mine, so I tug at the buttons of his shirt and within a few seconds, both our clothes come off.

"I've been wanting to fuck you on this desk. Fuck! I've had so many

and the fantasies about you, Selena,” he says, fondling my breasts, and as if a bit. His spell, I walk to his desk and lean against it, my nudity on exhibit.

and it that “I’ve had nasty fantasies about you, too,” I reveal.

He seems to like my comment and sweeps his hooded gaze over me. His attention strokes his hard thick length. “Touch yourself for me.”

I obey his command and spread my legs for him to see my dripping finger disappearing inside my slippery pussy. I throw my head back at what he pleases. Knowing that Dylan is touching his dick and watching it light a special flame in me. One finger isn't enough, so I add a second one, going at it at what pace and chasing my orgasm. I bite my lip to stop my moans from slipping past my lips.

“You can moan as loud as you want. These walls are soundproof, let me hear what urges me on.

Just as I'm about to cum, he withdraws my fingers and replaces them with his cock, filling and stretching me beyond my capacity. He yanks me up against the desk easily and my legs clasp around his waist as he begins to slide me. I dig my nails into his back at the sensation.

“Dylan...” I cry, my whole body quivering at this insanely satisfying moment. “You like that, baby?” he rasps through pants, driving into me with reckless abandon. At this rate, it won't take long for me to reach climax.

“Mmm...yes. Oh, fuck...”

I cling to him for dear life as he continues to fuck me deeper and

My orgasm is within my reach. When it comes crashing over me, I let him, his out, my whole body trembling violently as I hold onto Dylan. I clench my fists around his, and he releases an untamed growl, glazing my walls with his cum.

He slows down his movements but remains inside me and we cackle hysterically. We gaze into each other's eyes. Nothing's hilarious. It's just the senti-

under a being sated eliciting this sense of warmth.

I love the feeling.

“I missed you,” I say, and he kisses me.

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being sated eliciting this sense of warmth.

I love the feeling.

“I missed you,” I say, and he kisses me.

“I missed you, too.”

CHAPTER 22

DYLAN

So much time has passed since Ashley and I last saw or even spoke each other that I'm surprised when Selena rings the intercom to say she's waiting in the reception. I was dating her when Selena kissed me those years ago, and I told her nothing about it because the kiss was nothing to me, and I didn't want to embarrass Selena if anyone found out about her crush on me.

Last I checked, Ashley was in Paris with the guy she met on the show. Yes, Ashley's an actress and no, I am not bitter. We had an amicable breakup but still, I get mixed feelings about her sudden arrival.

I ask Selena to send her in and the Ashley who walks into my office is a little different from the one I remember. Her blonde hair bounces over her shoulders as she saunters towards me in that manner that always seemed so superfluous, and the color of her dress matches her brown eyes. It's been years since we parted ways and I must say she looks amazing.

"Hello, Dylan," she beams lightly, and I get up from my seat, round the desk and giving her a hug.

“Hi... it’s been a while.”

“Yeah, three years is a long time. You look great by the way. Compliments, and I choose the path of modesty.

“Thanks, but you're the one who looks amazing,” I compliment, get to the seat and she crouches on it, flipping her hair behind.

“I’m flattered,” she says, and I laugh.

“What can I get you? Tea? Coffee? Wine?”

“Oh, I'm okay. Thanks for offering. Just stopped by to say hi.”

“I didn't know you were back in town. Last I knew, you were in Paris.”

“Well, I only just got back last week. I'm starring in a movie, and we're shooting in New York for the next two months. Perfect opportunity to poke to two birds with one stone.”

She smiles at me coyly, and I get the feeling that I have a direct connection to one of those birds. We broke up because we had different intentions. I meant to want forever, but she wasn't ready to walk that path with me. It wasn't until after we spent months apart that I realized that I had been more into the idea of settling down than I had of wanting her.

“It’s good to have you back.”

“I’m glad you're pleased to see me. I missed you, Dylan. Sometime I wish we had kept going.”

If Ashley's here to start something up with me again, it's best she knows that won't be happening. I'm with Selena now, and even if our relationship isn't defined, I don't want to jeopardize what we have.

There's a knock on the door, and it's Selena holding a blue file in her hand. She looks from Ashley to me as she strides in, and I'm a bit worried that she might read this whole situation wrongly.

“Sorry to disturb you, Mr. Smith, but I have to remind you of your appointment.”

o'clock appointment with the CEO of Gorham's Institute," she states st
y," she She could have just rang the intercom to remind me of it so why
come in? Something's off. Is she... jealous?

sturing I'm going to set things straight with Selena when Ashley leaves, bu
deny that I find her jealousy a tad cute.

"Thank you, Miss Langley."

"Here's the file on the case," she says, handing it to me. She ex
office afterwards, but not before giving an unsuspecting Ashley the sti
is." It's so hilarious, I have to bite my lips to stop myself from smiling.

ve'll be Thank goodness Ashley wasn't looking.

to kill "She looks familiar — your assistant. Do I know her?" Ashley prob
she leaves.

nection "She's Cooper's sister."

rests. I "Wow, she's so grown now that I couldn't even tell it was her,"
as onlyremarks, and I smile tightly.

he idea In that moment, I'm glad I mentioned nothing to her in the past at
kiss. She would've discerned that something was going on between us
mile away.

s, I just We can't afford to take any chances.



knows
ionship After work today, I noticed that Selena was still acting cold towards r
I invited her over to my penthouse so I could make her dinner. S
hesitant at first but after I put my art of persuasion to good u
er hand.
hat she reluctantly gave in and agreed to come over.

I'm almost done preparing the meal when the elevator chimes. I w
hands with a towel and go to the living room. It's Selena and her lip
our two

tiffly. into a small smile when she sees me. Her smile lights up every corner of the room. I did shebody and I savor the abrupt feeling of contentment it arouses in me.

“This dress does you perfect justice,” I admire.

t I can't She ducks her head shyly and I invite her into the kitchen. I watch her move in my living room as she follows me.

“You have a nice apartment. Emits the whole bachelor vibe.”

xits my I scratch my neck in embarrassment. “I have a house in Cobble Hill. I prefer to live here. Gets a little lonely if you occupy a big house yourself,” I chuckle, attempting to make myself seem less pathetic. “Do you like some wine?”

es once “Yes, please.”

Selena sits on the kitchen island, and I pour us both a glass.

“To be honest, when you asked if you could make me dinner, Ashley startled. I didn't know you could cook,” she remarks, sipping from her glass.

“I learned from my mom. She was a great cook, and as an only child, I grew up practically joined to her hip,” I explain, and Selena giggles. “I would have been there from here everywhere when I was a kid until my dad would have to claw me away from her.”

Selena laughs loudly this time. “You were such a momma’s boy.”

I nod, laughing too. “Yeah, I was. Sadly, they both passed away after I went into college.”

ne, and Selena takes my hand in a supportive grip. “I know what it's like to lose both parents, having lost mine, and it's difficult, but I guess we'll be okay.”
he was
se, she “Yeah, it hurts less after a while.”

I set the table and draw out a seat for Selena before taking my place. I take a bite from her. I made pasta with meatballs and tomato sauce. I know it's a curve

r of my grand dinner, but I went with this option because it was a long day
office and I'm drained as fuck. I'll most definitely do better next time.

She takes a spoonful and moans in delight. "You're good."

er take "Thank you. I'm glad you like it."

We eat in silence and it's only when we're halfway through our meal
bring up Ashley.

ll, but I "I know that we haven't exactly set ground rules for... this thing b
all by us...but I want you to know that there's nothing between Ashley and
'Would just you I'm seeing. I just thought I should get that out there and clear
of any misunderstandings."

"Why would there be misunderstandings?" she asks in a soft voice I
didn't shoot daggers at Ashley with her eyes in my very presence.

I was "You glared at her," I deadpan.

glass. "I don't know what you mean."

d, I was I snicker. "You're cute when you're jealous, and I found it hot, too."

I follow "I wasn't jealous. Just curious," Selena maintains, and I raise my h
e off of surrender.

"Fine."

I take her hand in mine and interlock our fingers together on the t
er I got guess, what I'm trying to say is that I'm not seeing anyone else beside
I confess, leaving my emotions completely at her mercy.

to lose I don't know if I'll be able to take it if Selena decides that I'm con
ay." too strong. I know we've only been doing this for a few days, and
want to scare her away, but I just felt she should know how I feel about

e across "I'm not seeing anyone else either," she says and an instant fee
s not a relief washes over me.

"I'm glad," I tell her, raising her hand to my lips and kissing the l

7 at theher palm.

“Eat up before your food gets cold,” she says.

As I subtly watch her eat, I can't shake off the impression that I do
anyone else. Selena is more than enough for me.

Is that I And that scares the fuck out of me.

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her palm.

“Eat up before your food gets cold,” she says.

As I subtly watch her eat, I can't shake off the impression that I don't need anyone else. Selena is more than enough for me.

And that scares the fuck out of me.

CHAPTER 23

SELENA

“**D**eeep breaths, Selena,” I tell myself, breathing in and out. At this rate, I'm going to have to enroll in anger management classes.

I have tried so hard to remain calm, but Ashley is seriously getting my nerves. I know I shouldn't be this upset by the fact that she has managed to steal every second of Dylan's time since the instant she got here. I know Dylan and I are just having *fun*. But he was the one who told me that she was nothing between them. And I believed him.

I know deep in my heart that he was telling the truth because Dylan is always home for games. What I don't get though is why he's letting Barbie's love come between us. She clings to him all the damn time like an annoying dog pining for its owner's attention. I can't count the number of times she's visited in the past week she's been in town.

The last straw for me was when she came into the office earlier today and managed to drag Dylan out with her. We were supposed to stay in at

lunch together, but Ashley showed up just in time to thwart our plan
some stupid excuse about how she needed a friend to talk to.

I get it if she's in need of a friend but is her ex of all people the only
she has in the whole of New York City?

I want to talk to Dylan about it, but I don't know how to bring up the
without sounding like a whiney toddler. In fact, the last time we even
some alone time was when he invited me to his place for dinner. Since
it's been bits and pieces, and stolen glances from across the room.

I know he's only being a friend out of the goodness of his heart but
exploiting the situation. Deciding that I've had enough, I change into a
jeans and a yellow top.

It's only when I arrive at Dylan's apartment building that I realize
gement call him before taking the decision to visit. Would I come off as desperate
carry on with this? I like him a lot and if there is even the slightest
; on my that we could be something more, here's the opportunity to try and
aged to the strings that connect us.

I know his code, so I input it and the elevator takes me up to his pen
ere was When it opens, I get off and walk straight in. Dylan is seated on the
shirtless and in just a pair of sweatpants. He looks happy to see me
an isn't know he's surprised and probably wondering why I'm here.

“Selena,” he says, coming up to me and engulfing me in a hug. I've
okalike his warmth, so I let the hug last for a little while. “This is a pleasant sur
ng little
es she's

I'm nervous so I shove my hands into the pocket of my jeans. There
the fact that I'm thrown off by the very well-defined muscles of his
lay and “Yeah, I just felt like we needed to talk.”

Dylan stiffens. “Is everything okay? Did Cooper find out?”

“No! God, no,” I say in one breath.

ns with “Come sit.”

There are files on the coffee table alongside his laptop and I can see my friend he's been working. The man never gets some bloody rest.

I sit beside him on the couch, and he keeps a respectable distance between us. Good for me. I can't have his abs distracting me from what I can't even had for.

He then, “Would you like some coffee? I have wine, too,” he offers.

Maybe the wine will help calm my nerves but instead, I say, “We can't drink the wine later. This is important.”

His brows furrow. “What is it?”

Here goes nothing. “I know you said we're exclusive — well, you know I didn't exactly use that word but when you said you weren't seeing anyone else, I thought if I said I wasn't too, I took it to mean that we were exclusive. But these days, chances something has been on my mind — not like a lot but it's been there.”

Holy fuck, I'm a blabbing mess. I should just go straight to the point and hit the bullseye. My garden, my damn weeds.

“Is there anything I should know?” I ask, and Dylan looks as lost as I feel. A needle in a haystack.

“I'm a little confused.”

“About you and Ashley. Are you seeing her?” I ask, and the nervous disappointment which settles on Dylan's face tells me I've messed up. “Surprise.” “Ashley and I aren't together anymore. We ended things a long time ago. Why would you think that?”

“You two have been spending an awful lot of time together so I could assume that maybe you both decided to give each other a second chance.”

“You really do have a wild imagination.”

He drifts closer and takes both my hands in his. Gazing directly at me.

eyes, he says, "I'm sorry that I've been focusing more on Ashley these days. She always seems to want one thing or the other, and she's my friend to help in whatever way I can."

I don't want him to feel he shouldn't have friends or anything like that. "Don't get me wrong. I completely understand that you have a life of your own with your friends. I do too, so I get it. I just wanted to be sure of where we stand and see if we're still on the same page."

"We're still very much on the same page, Selena. Don't ever doubt me," he says with so much candor that I believe him. I had been worried about nothing. Dylan would never toy with my emotions like that.

I know I had initially been very bitter but now that I think about it, I realize I shouldn't know we're a thing so I can't blame her for coming on to him. In a few days, we could come out and have a normal relationship.

Don't think about it.

"I'm sorry for coming unannounced. I should've called first."

"It's a good thing you came actually. I'm glad we had this conversation." He mutters, running his fingers through my golden locks and I lean into his touch.

"Yeah, me, too," I whisper, my eyes, fleeting to his succulent lips. I had tasted them in a week and that's a pretty long time considering that he's so addictive.

I can't help myself so I'm the one who initiates the kiss this time. Gently, I hold him softly by the neck, I let my lips caress his slowly. It's almost as if we're dancing against each other but in a sensual manner.

"His enthusiasm shows me just how much he missed this. I let my hands roam his chest, feeling his hard muscles underneath my fingertips.

"Selena..." he releases a harsh breath.

se days. It gratifies me to know he's taking satisfaction in what I'm doing, so I try kissing him, I let my fingers travel lower to where I know he needs them most. As they disappear under the fabric and stroke his cock, he curses at me. "Baby..." he murmurs, and I'm a goner.

Of all the pet names, this one has got to be my favorite. His dilated pupils and the look of wherehold adulation in them as he watches me, his breaths coming out in pants.

I free his cock from the clutches of his sweatpants, and it happily obeys. "That's tall and proud. I continue to stroke him with my hand, and he leans back, pleased for me to keep his eyes open. I'm about to take him in my mouth when he stops me.

Ashley "I need to be inside you."

If only Hearing him say that boosts my longing for him. I'm so turned on, I can't help but notice how he can smell my arousal.

Lifting me from the couch, Dylan carries me bridal style to the bedroom where he gently places me on the bed. He takes his precious time undressing me, leaving sparks dissipating across every nook and cranny of my body. I know how his love responds to him. No one has ever made me feel the things a beautiful man does.

haven't "So fucking beautiful," Dylan says, kissing my skin and I feel myself's very tighten with an emotion so fierce that it catches me off-guard. I can't pinpoint what it is though.

grabbing Dylan rids himself of the sweatpants and hovers above me, supporting himself with his elbows. He stares at me with an emotion so raw, so authentic — that it disarms me completely.

fingers "I love it when we're together," he tells me, suckling on my breast. I release a shaky moan. He continues this for a while before positioning himself at my entrance.

g. Still We maintain eye contact as he sinks into me and my mouth part
nem the feeling of having him inside me.

is. “Baby...” I'm not myself right now and I don't even know h
somehow, I call Dylan that name.

l pupils “Yes, baby. You're so gorgeous. I love being inside you... Feels lil
nts. body was made just for me,” he rasps, going at an unhurried tempo.

r stands I whimper upon hearing his words. This feels too good to be true.
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/hen he like I'm so fragile that he's afraid he'd break me if he goes any fast
this.

I groan softly as Dylan picks up his pace a little. I'm so close a
'm sure moment now, I'll plummet over the edge. With the way he's looking
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ags this strikingly handsome features. His gray eyes keep me spellbound. Our

bodies work in sync, and we chase our orgasms together. Dylan hold
y chest himself as we cum, letting the aftershocks of our climax wash over us.

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It's right here in this moment that I realize I'm in trouble.

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We maintain eye contact as he sinks into me and my mouth parts at the feeling of having him inside me.

“Baby...” I'm not myself right now and I don't even know how but somehow, I call Dylan that name.

“Yes, baby. You're so gorgeous. I love being inside you... Feels like your body was made just for me,” he rasps, going at an unhurried tempo.

I whimper upon hearing his words. This feels too good to be true. I never knew I could experience such ecstasy in one lifetime. He's handling my body like I'm so fragile that he's afraid he'd break me if he goes any faster than this.

I groan softly as Dylan picks up his pace a little. I'm so close and any moment now, I'll plummet over the edge. With the way he's looking at me, I feel like the rarest of gems.

Unique.

Extraordinary.

This is all too powerful. Too intense, but I can't look away from his strikingly handsome features. His gray eyes keep me spellbound. Our sweaty bodies work in sync, and we chase our orgasms together. Dylan holds me to himself as we cum, letting the aftershocks of our climax wash over us.

I won't be able to let Dylan go when the time comes.

It's right here in this moment that I realize I'm in trouble.

CHAPTER 24

DYLAN

Something had shifted between Selena and I last night. I could feel her held in my arms. It had felt different. Like this could be something real — something a hell lot more than what we have now. And I can't say that I quite liked this new emotion.

After Selena shared her concerns about Ashley, I have been spending more time with her to clear whatever doubts she might have about us. It was not my intention to make her feel like she didn't matter to me and I was surprised by how upset she was. But then, it also upset me to know that I made her feel that way — and the emotion surprised me.

I hadn't expected to feel that way. I've been trying to make up for it and it's safe to say I've made progress, and I must confess that spending time with her has been the highlight of my entire week.

Selena is simply phenomenal. She's too good for me, and I don't deserve her. So the fact that she's willing to take the risk of being with someone like me baffles me sometimes.

I clear my desk as I round up for the day. It's Ashley's birthday, and I've been invited to her birthday party she's throwing at her place tonight. First, I had been reluctant to attend but I thought about it and decided to make an appearance. A few minutes at the party won't hurt anyone.

I informed Selena about it when I received the invitation and even though she hadn't countered my decision to attend, I knew it still bothered her.

I was hoping to speak to her before leaving but it's late and she isn't at my desk anymore. My shoulders sag in defeat as I proceed to the elevator.

It's going to be a long night.



It's not like I don't know what I pictured in my mind when I thought of Ashley's birthday party but there are no loudspeakers anywhere. It's just an orchestra playing in the corner.

There are several actors here, most of them I recognize from ads and a handful of movies I've seen. I see a few familiar faces and we exchange pleasantries. The waiter walks past the group I'm standing with, and I take a stunned glass of champagne from the tray.

Her face lights up. "Hi!" Ashley squeals on sighting me.

She's wearing a turquoise dress which leaves very little to the imagination but unlike before when that would have provoked desire in me, I feel nothing now. Ashley heads towards me and engulfs me in a hug, pressing her head against mine.

I deserve it. *Okay.*

It's not like I don't let the hug last for more than a second as I immediately pull away from her. "Happy birthday, Ashley."

and she's "Thank you. It's slightly crowded in here. Do you think we should
right. Atto the terrace?" she asks.

l to just For a moment, I think of Selena's concerns, but shake them off c

It's not like that, and I don't have any reason to doubt Ashley. I'm
thoughhave her friendship again, and it's nice that there is nothing roma
a little.sexual underlying my feelings for her. I'm over her, but it still feels
't at herhave a person in my life that I care for.

Besides Selena.

"Sure."

We steer through the mass of people drinking and chatting away, v
out of the living room, and onto the balcony. There are seats there,
irthday choose to stand and just lean against the rail, relishing the cool e
ying in breeze. It's soothing. I wish Selena was here with me.

"I'm glad you were able to make it," Ashley tells me in that delicat
and the of hers, inclining her body towards mine, but I don't turn so she
:change interpret this wrongly.

I take a I don't want to indulge her or make her feel like there's a chance w
get back together because that chapter of my life is closed. Permanentl

"I got you a present," I say, retrieving the wrapped box from my sui
;ination and her smile broadens even more.

nothing "You didn't have to."

chest a "Open it," is all I say.

Ashley rapidly unwraps the gift and draws in a sharp breath wh
opens the tiny box. I passed by a jewelry shop earlier and I didn't know
ll away tastes had changed since it's been a while since we last saw each othe
decided to get her a bracelet. It's gold colored with three-star set diam
it.

go out Judging from her reaction, she seems to like the gift.

“Oh my God, this is so beautiful,” she raves.

quickly. “I’m thrilled to know you like it. I honestly didn't know what to get glad to first.”

antic or “Are you kidding? I love it. It's perfect.”

nice to She stares at me, and I instantly recognize the look in her eyes. It's very much accustomed to.

Longing.

“At the expense of sounding a tad too honest, you were the only walking really wanted to see here tonight,” she declares, brushing her fingers but we mine on the rail where they're settled. “I haven't entirely been forthright evening you. I came back to the city for work, yes, but the reason I took up the first place was that I wanted to see you again. To be close to you.”

the voice This is her making a move, and that's my cue to set things in order.

doesn't “Ashley, it's been years since our breakup, and I've moved on.”

“I know it's been years, but I never stopped imagining what it would be like if we didn't want different things. I really loved you, Dylan. I want nothing more than for us to continue what we had. It was rare. I met anyone who makes me feel the way you did back then.”

Guilt courses through me. Even when I was ready to marry her, I never felt that way about her. Selena makes me feel an even stronger emotion, a feeling I never knew I was capable of before I met her.

then she I want to let Ashley down easy, but I guess there's nothing milk and honey if her rejection. “Ashley, I respect your feelings. I truly do, but I don't feel that way about you.”

depends on Ashley's face falls on hearing my words, but she tries to conceal it with a forced smile which ends up looking eerie. Ashley is beautiful inside and

and under different circumstances, maybe I would have considered taking back, but now that I've gotten a taste of what being with Selena is like, everything else pales in comparison.

"It's okay. I mean, I didn't expect you to jump right into my arms, but anything but... I don't even know what the hell I was thinking," she confesses one I'm melancholically.

We don't say anything for a while, and the silence begins to become uncomfortable when she asks me a question that makes my blood run cold. "Are you rejecting me because of Cooper's sister?" My face turns as white as a sheet, and I can hear the drumming sound of my own heartbeat. I wasn't in any way prepared for a question of that nature. Selena and I have been exceedingly prudent in keeping our secret under a blanket so Ashley bringing it up throws me totally off balance.

I tell myself not to panic. It could just be a speculation.

"Why would you ask that?"

"I kind of just get the feeling that something is up with you two. I don't know, and I'm something I should know?"

I swallow the knot that has somehow managed to form in my throat. "There's nothing between us. She's just my assistant."

"Well, she looks at me like I'm stealing her man, and if she was Melissa, I have not a single doubt that I'd be petrified right now."

Holy fucking shit!

"I feel like there is something between you two. Look, Dylan, you know that way you're seeing her, you've got to stop, right? She's just so young. Too young for you."

I know Ashley is only showing concern, but the age gap between her and me doesn't bother me as much as it did four years ago. She's a

ing her woman now capable of making her own choices. I know the age dif
is like, looks bad, but what we have is different. Stronger. Intense. And I
were that easy to explain to Ashley how I feel, but I can't because that
arms or me getting us both into trouble.

huckles “Maybe it's just the case of a bad day at work. You're overthin
There's nothing going on. Plus, she's Cooper's sister and an empl
rder on mine. Why would I get involved with her?”

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Ashley doesn't look too convinced with my answer, and I'm hoping
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nature. If she decides to run to Cooper and sing like a fucking bird, all h
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woman now capable of making her own choices. I know the age difference looks bad, but what we have is different. Stronger. Intense. And I wish it were that easy to explain to Ashley how I feel, but I can't because that will be me getting us both into trouble.

“Maybe it's just the case of a bad day at work. You're overthinking it. There's nothing going on. Plus, she's Cooper's sister and an employee of mine. Why would I get involved with her?”

The lie leaves me feeling like shit. But that doesn't matter right now. Ashley doesn't look too convinced with my answer, and I'm hoping for my sake and Selena's, she's willing to let this go and mind her own business.

If she decides to run to Cooper and sing like a fucking bird, all hell will break loose.

CHAPTER 25

SELENA

“**N**o, you didn't, Dylan. Take that back!” I yell and throw my hand into the air in frustration. There's a smirk on Dylan's stupidly goofy face but I tell myself that I won't let him distract me. Not now, at least.

“I was only telling the truth.” His smirk broadens.

I roll my eyes so hard that they might actually get stuck in the back of my head. “You're being insensitive, and that's just plain rude.”

“Fine,” Dylan holds up his palms in surrender. I arch a brow and expect him to apologize but he doesn't. “What?”

“Apologize,” I say with a pout, and he cracks up.

“You seriously want me to apologize for not liking cartoons?”

Okay, hearing him say that out loud makes me realize how ridiculous I'm being. Instead of going home at closing time, I decided to chill out in my apartment. It's not like I have something important to do at home anyway. Besides, Cooper would probably be back in the morning, and I could have some company.

“You suck,” I say, and realize that I just gave him an opening to
dirty joke. “Don’t even think about it,” I warn just as he opens his mou
he chuckles.

I lay chest down on the bed, my limbs entangled with the sheets
little to cover my exposed body. We messed around a little after we ar
his apartment, and it helped to calm my nerves after a really stressful
work.

“You’re something, Selena. I like being with you like this,” he m
drawing circles on my back with his fingertips, and I smile lazily i
sheets, liking the feeling of his gentle touch.

“I’m a little curious, though. What’s next for you after law school?
you like to come back to New York?”

This is new territory. We’ve never really talked about each other’s p
anything of the sort. I remember when we went shopping after he
coffee on me, and I told him my reason for wanting to become a law
shared his reasons too, and it made me realize that underneath his
exterior was a man with a big heart.

“Well, New York is a great city, and I’m a bit torn between coming
practice here and staying back in Cambridge. But that trip to Los A
made me see things differently, though, and I don’t know. I really
give it some thought.”

“Well, if you decide to practice here, you should know that I wo
more than glad to give you a job at the firm.”

I’m impressed that he would do that for me. Smith Law is a great fi
anyone fresh out of law school would be lucky to even stand the ch
working there. But I’m also confused as to why he would want to k

make a around when this is just us messing around. His motive for wanting
with, and stay isn't defined.

“That’s pretty long-term, don't you think?” I ask instead of
that demanding what his intentions are.

“You have so much potential, and I would like to keep you in my c
l day at So this is just about my expertise as a prospective practitioner?

“But also, you're an amazing person, one that I would want nothin
murmurs, than to have in my life. I would be dumb to let you slip away from me.
nto the Did Dylan just confess to liking me and wanting me to stick around?

Holy shit!

My heart flutters in my chest and butterflies take flight in my st

Hearing him say those words cheer my soul and satisfaction streaks t
plans or me like a comet. I instantly turn around and his palm strokes my left c
spilled he looks at me with radiant deification. It's sacred.

“Have I grown on you, Mr. Smith?” I tease to divert his attention fr
s tough slight blush on my cheeks.

“Nah... I just don't want you to beg for a job the same way Cooper
back to beg for an internship on your behalf. You're absolutely terrible, and I
Angeles save you the trouble,” he says jokingly, and I smack him lightly ac
need to chest.

We both laugh, and I like the way the corners of his eyes crinkle.

“Thanks for the offer. I’ll keep that in mind. What about you? A
else you’d like to try out aside from being CEO at Smith Law?”

I've always wanted to know more about him but the fear of appe
ance of little too invested in this frightened me. I'm glad he brought it up.

“To be honest, I haven't really thought about it. The firm is my lif
only stable thing in my life and I’d like to keep it that way.”

g me to “Does change scare you?” I ask, gazing directly at him.

“It’s just the fear of losing things that I care about.”

plainly The way Dylan looks at me as he says this gives me mixed feelings: like he's talking about his firm but at the same time, about me, maybe? “I know.”

Maybe it's just me, but Dylan seems like he's lonely despite having a lot more and he did mention buying that house in Cobble Hill. I know that for him, real estate properties is of utmost importance and all, but I get the feeling that he cares a lot more than him just acquiring an asset.

“Can I ask you something?”

“You already are,” he gives me a lopsided grin, and I smile.

through “You mentioned having a house in Cobble Hill. Why buy it when you know you couldn't stay there all alone?”

There's a bittersweet smile on his lips as he says, “I bought it when I was young and I were still together.”

Oh.

“I didn't know you guys were that serious. So, you had wanted to move there with her?”

“You could say that. I mean, I don't know, but I wanted it to be a place where I could just be with someone who understands me and cares for me genuinely. I know I sound cheesy but, yeah. That's it. Living there is only a constant reminder that I'm not at that place yet. My parents have that intense connection. It's just so difficult for me to establish a connection with someone, and I don't know why.”

It's rejuvenating to see Dylan unveiling his deepest desires. He might have been closed off in the beginning, but it makes me happy that he's choosing to share these thoughts with me of all people.

“Come on, let's go to sleep. We need to be up early tomorrow morning,” Dylan says.

I feel My brows shoot up. “I can stay overnight?”

I don't “Why does that surprise you? You're welcome to stay anytime.”

This is him letting me into his personal space and that says a lot. His hands on my shoulders and I deepen it, our moans rolling into each other's mouths.

having “We should go to sleep,” I say breathlessly, breaking the kiss and his hands on my shoulders. He looks like a man child. The sight is cute.

“Don't I get a good night kiss?”

With a naughty grin on my face, I slither into his lap and kiss him.

“Good night,” I whisper against his lips. He protests when I try to get up, but I do anyway.

Dylan is sweet and fun and despite what everyone else might think, he's my Ashley darling at heart. But I also want someone who cares about me too. I

And I don't think Dylan recognizes that yet.

One step at a time.

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“We should go to sleep,” I say breathlessly, breaking the kiss and he pouts like a man child. The sight is cute.

“Don't I get a good night kiss?”

With a naughty grin on my face, I slither into his lap and kiss him lightly. “Good night,” I whisper against his lips. He protests when I try to get off but I do anyway.

Dylan is sweet and fun and despite what everyone else might think, he's a darling at heart. But I also want someone who cares about me too. Deeply. And I don't think Dylan recognizes that yet.

One step at a time.

CHAPTER 26

SELENA

Things with Dylan have been great so far.

We've been inseparable ever since I complained about *A* stunts, and somehow, we've managed to christen every part of his pen. Just the other day, he had me pinned against the wall of a cafe's conve

I never thought he was one for such spontaneity but then I didn't eve I was the type to do something like that in a bathroom stall. I guess w each other do things we never thought we'd do.

Although that was precarious of us, it had felt exhilarating and the that we might get caught made it all the more thrilling. We hav amazing chemistry and whenever we're together, I feel whole.

The gentle smile on my lips remains in place until I get home fr office. I guess that's what being really and truly happy does to yo situation might not be an ideal one, but this is the happiest I've been ir while.

I text Dylan to let him know I'm home, and his reply is instant.

‘Good to know you got home safe. Miss you already.’

My mouth twitches and happiness dances through my thoughts. I'm
to text him something cheesy when another text pops up on my screen.

'You should have let me take you home.'

He offered, and I declined because I didn't want anyone to s
dropping me off.

'I'll be all yours tomorrow morning, Mr. Smith,' I text him back.

'Can't wait.'

I'm lost in my own world when I enter the living room and to my s
I find Cooper slouched on the couch. He's home early.

"Has hell frozen over because the Cooper Langley I know is *neve*
early," I taunt him.

Even though we live in the same house, we never really get to s
Ashley's other except at breakfast in the morning and he's always in a haste.
house.

Usually, my brother would retort with some snide comment but to
nience. doesn't. He doesn't even raise his head to look at me. The impressi
n think something might be wrong has my stomach churning in discomfort.
e make

"Cooper, are you okay?" I ask in concern, dumping my bag on th
and going closer to him.

thought "I'm going to ask you a question, Selena, and I want you to be
re such honest with me," he eventually lets out in an unusually low tone.

I wonder what this is about. "Okay."

om the "Is anything going on between you and Dylan?"
ou. Our

I recoil like I've been burned. My whole body stiffens and when
a long finally looks at me, the rage in his bloodshot eyes makes my blood f
can't move. I open my mouth, but no words come out.

I couldn't have seen this coming from a thousand miles away.
careful. Dylan was. What went wrong? How did he find out?

n about “Cooper...”

“Don’t try to deny it. I know all about yours and Dylan’s affair.”

“There’s nothing going on between us,” I assert, but he looks at me in disbelief.

“I can't believe you're looking me straight in the eyes and lying to me now. You can't even own up to your own fucking actions because you know it's wrong.”

Surprise, Tears blur my vision, but I blink them back. The typical human reaction when we're caught doing something bad is subconsciously resolve the emotional blackmail, but with the way Cooper is looking at me right now, I'm not going to work on him. He's utterly pissed.

“I’m so sorry,” I say, and against my will, the tears break free, dripping down my cheeks.

“Why didn't you tell me? You're my sister, and it's always been the way on that.”

Just like me, his voice is choked with emotions, and I feel horrible about the messed up things.

“I didn't think you'd understand.”

“What I don't understand is why you're letting Dylan take advantage of you,” he says, his voice rising in fury. “I put you under his wing and he had one fucking job, but he saw an opportunity to have his way with you and you let him.”

Cooper I shake my head, attempting to touch him but he shrugs me off. Rejection stings like a bitch. He's getting this all wrong.

“You’re mistaken. Dylan and I aren't like that.”

I was Cooper laughs humorlessly. “Come on, Selena, Dylan is my friend and it's a little bit crude as it might sound, we fuck around a lot, so forgive me for finding

little hard to believe. I've known him for a longer time than you have. I can't believe me when I tell you he's messing with you."

He looks at me in "Cooper..."

He sighs desperately, running his hand down his face in frustration. "I know you're right, he's scared for me. It's evident he's worried about me, and I wonder what the reason might be. From all indications, Dylan is a good man."

"I know you think this is something, but Dylan isn't like that. He might not even know he's playing you, but you gotta trust me. I know him, I'm not going to lie, but believe me when I tell you this won't end well. He's not good for you, it'll eventually hurt you."

Cooper has this tortured look on his face that I can't quite place and I don't know why. Why would he say that about his own friend? So far, Dylan has been nothing but caring so I don't understand what he means.

He looks at me and says "I think it's best if you don't intern at his firm anymore."

I can't have heard him right.

He looks at me and says "What?"

"Listen to me, Selena, and stay away from Dylan. I don't want you anywhere around him or his firm."

My heart beats wildly in my ribcage. I'm too emotionally invested in him to stop now.

"No, Cooper, you can't do that. I'm an adult capable of making my own decisions..."

Cooper interrupts me. "Well, forgive me for not trusting your judgment. I know you're an adult, but I can't stand by and watch you deliver yourself to the slaughterhouse on a silver platter. Not on my watch."

Is that what I've done? Maybe it is, maybe it's not. But the only thing that makes sense of right now is that I still want Dylan despite Cooper finding

ve, and about us like this.

“What about my internship?” I grasp at straws.

“We’ll find a more suitable firm for you. I have connections and I’ll pull on like every damn string if it means you get away from Dylan,” he says. I know what the conviction is, and I know his mind is made up.

I want to contend with him, but I lost the right to do so when I decided to go behind his back and get involved with his best friend.

10 older, Cooper marches out of the mansion and I run after him. “Where are you going?” I ask amidst sobs, watching him get into the car through my haze of grief.

it bugs “To pay that asshole a visit.”

as been *Dylan*.

“Cooper, can you please just stop for one second and listen to me? Don’t make any rash decisions. You’re not thinking straight,” I plead but my words fall on deaf ears as he turns on the ignition and zooms off.

I feel like pulling my hair out by its roots in frustration as I watch his blue Aston disappear into the night. Dylan and Cooper have been friends since college and without a doubt, I’ve ruined their friendship and now I have to live with this. I’m shaking like a leaf because of the damage I’ve caused.

I’m scared for Dylan. Scared of what Cooper might do to him in my current irrational state, but I don’t even have the guts to pick up my phone to forewarn him. What am I supposed to say to him? I started this in the moment or place.

Each time Dylan had warned me that this would happen, but I was too irresponsible and impulsive to listen. I only cared about living in the moment and now I’ve eventually given up his morals for my sake.

ling out “It’s all my fault.” I let out a gut-wrenching sob, wrapping my arms

myself and dropping to the floor in a weeping mess.

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What have I done?

CHAPTER 27

DYLAN

I know I should have told Selena about what happened at Ashley's birthday party, but I didn't. I couldn't. I don't trust Ashley to keep her mouth shut but I at least hope she has the decency to understand that we're over friends and that she needs to keep her nose out of what doesn't concern her.

After I text Selena to know if she got home safely, I take off my clothes and step into the shower with the thought of her on my mind. We're playing a dangerous game, one that will leave everyone scarred. She's so young and what else can I offer her besides good sex, which she can find elsewhere, and tons of money, which her family already has?

I don't think I have anything else to give, and it fucking terrifies me to my core. The sheer idea that she might someday find someone her age who is more deserving of her and decide she's done with me is scary.

But not as scary as Cooper finding out.

I plan to inform Cooper when the time is right but for now, I'm willing to do what she wants. I'm willing to walk that extra mile with her to give her the guarantee that this consuming and intense feeling never fades away.

I hear a chime come from the elevator just as I step out of the show
only two people who have my code are Cooper and Selena, so it could
be one of them. But Selena just got home so I guess it's Cooper.

I quickly throw on some clothes and head to the living room. There
Cooper pacing.

“Cooper?”

The glowing rage in his eyes takes me unawares. One look into them
know he knows. He's found out about my illicit affair with Selena,
anything, the fury radiating off him is enough to tell me he's mad.

Fuck!

“You think the whole world fucking revolves around you, don't you?”
grows, and my heart sinks.

“Despite everything I've heard today, I don't want to believe it's true
need to hear you say it. Is it true about you and Selena?”

The question puts a hole right through my heart.

I'm dumbfounded. I might as well have turned to stone because
move an inch. The air conditioner is on, but beads of sweat materialize
forehead. There's no best strategy for handling a situation like this so
as well just rip the Band-Aid off.

“It is.”

I see his nostrils flare, his whole body shaking with anger, and his
tightening into fists as he advances towards me.

“You bastard,” is all I'm able to make out before his fist collides with
jaw.

Son of a fucking bitch.

The impact of the punch causes me to move backwards, the pain blazing
across my assaulted muscle like lightning. I can't even defend myself

er. The emotional and physical pain hurts too much for me to speak.

ld only “You’re a fucking asshole,” Cooper seethes and I hang my head in trying to soothe my aching jaw. “You fucking sat there and watched e, I find on and on about Diana and yet, you were fucking my own sister beh back.”

I know I deserve the worst punishment possible, so I say nothing, and I when Cooper gives me the opportunity to do so. What am I supposed, and if anyway?

“How could you do this to my sister of all people? I fucking truste he mumbles in a broken and tortured voice, and I sigh in shame, avoid ou?” he gaze.

I don't want to see the disappointment in them. I feel bad enough already, so I it is.

“I’m sorry,” I let out, and it seems to fuel his resentment even more.

“If you think saying sorry will change what you've done then y I don't better think again. You had one fucking job. Just one. To offer Sel e on my internship she couldn't get at other firms. And what did you do? You I might advantage of her.”

I want to tell him that everything which happened was with her c but it's best I don't, so I clamp my mouth shut. I'm nineteen years old s hands she is, and I should have acted like the grown-up I am and reject advances. But I was too fucking weak to resist.

with my “How long has this been going on?”

“Cooper...”

“Man the fuck up and tell me, Dylan. How long have you been fuck anching sister and continuously stabbing me in the back?”

elf. The I wince at his choice of words.

Cooper makes it sound like there were no emotions attached, and shame, just us trying to satisfy our carnal desires. I admit it might have been the lame goat first, but the more time I spent with her, the more I understood and cared for her.

“It started in California,” I tell him, and he exhales sharply. “I should even want to tell you when you told me about you and Diana.”

I try to say “So, why didn't you? Maybe if you hadn't been a coward and told yourself, I wouldn't have been this upset. Besides, what Diana and I had was a lot more different. I have feelings for her.”

Now would be the perfect time to clear up this misunderstanding.

“I genuinely care about Selena, too. I'm not messing around with anyone easily as a promise.”

Cooper scoffs, “So you're saying this isn't one of your casual flings? You know you, Dylan. You haven't been in a serious relationship since you had Selena. We both frequent the exclusive club, remember?”

“This is more than just a fling.”

He laughs malevolently. “Like you and Ashley were more than a fling? No matter what you tell yourself, you fucking let her go because she didn't consent, didn't care enough to fight for her.”

“What's that supposed to mean?”

“You're incapable of love, Dylan, and I don't want Selena to wake up in the morning and realize she's made a mistake when it's too late.”

His words pierce through me like a blade straight to the chest. I loved Ashley the way I claimed. I thought I did but it was only months later that I realized what I felt wasn't exactly love. I only willed myself to believe I was in love with her because I felt like it was the right emotion to feel at the

l it was in our relationship. We had been together for months for fuck's sake y
nat way no genuine connection with her.

craved There's an agonizing feeling in my chest. "That's not true. I
incapable of love." I shake my head even though there's a possibility
wear, I might be right. The reality terrifies the hell out of me.

"Is that what you're choosing to tell yourself? I know you, Dylan."
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"Whatever floats your boat, man, but stay the fuck away from
She's my only sister, and I will protect her with every fiber of my being
1 her, I from my own best friend. Don't go within a five-mile radius of her."

"She still has three months of her internship."
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Ashley. to find a different firm where the bosses don't feel like they have the
harass their employees. If you weren't my friend, you bet your ass I
have sued you for sexual harassment."

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"I need to get the hell out of here. Don't bother calling or text
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in our relationship. We had been together for months for fuck's sake yet I felt no genuine connection with her.

There's an agonizing feeling in my chest. "That's not true. I'm not incapable of love." I shake my head even though there's a possibility that he might be right. The reality terrifies the hell out of me.

"Is that what you're choosing to tell yourself? I know you, Dylan."

I feel the need to defend myself. "Selena isn't Ashley. It's different with her and I feel things I've never felt before."

"Whatever floats your boat, man, but stay the fuck away from Selena. She's my only sister, and I will protect her with every fiber of my being even from my own best friend. Don't go within a five-mile radius of her."

"She still has three months of her internship."

"Of course, you're so concerned." His sarcasm isn't lost on me. "I'm going to find a different firm where the bosses don't feel like they have the right to harass their employees. If you weren't my friend, you bet your ass I would have sued you for sexual harassment."

"It's not like that. You don't understand..." I try to explain but he isn't listening.

"I need to get the hell out of here. Don't bother calling or texting me because we're done, Dylan." He drops the last bomb before leaving.

Just like that, I lose a friendship of twenty-three years.

CHAPTER 28

SELENA

Curled up in my room and lying supinely on the bed, I stare at the ceiling. I haven't left these four walls since yesterday. Nina called me down for breakfast this morning, but I told her I wasn't hungry. A while ago, she had it delivered to my room, and I eventually ate.

My friends are still in the dark about what went down, and I don't have to tell them because I would rather not listen to Sydney say she told them so. I'll tell them eventually but right now, I just need to be alone with my thoughts.

Cooper knocked on my door this morning to check on me, but I didn't open up. I know what I did was unforgivable, but he should've at least tried to understand why I did it instead of making assumptions and accusations. Unreasonably. For now, I'd rather not speak to him.

I've been too scared to reach out to Dylan since last night and neither he nor I. I wonder what happened after Cooper went to see him. I'm curious about him at the same time terrified to know the level of damage I've inflicted with my recklessness.

Turning on my side, tears shimmer in my eyes but I fight them. Clinging to the one thing I've been doing consistently since yesterday and looking at the mirror, I know my eyes are red and puffy.

My phone rings, and I pick it up from the nightstand. It's Diana calling. I send it straight to voicemail and listen to her record a message after the

“Hi, Selena, it's just me calling to see how you're faring. It's been a while since we last saw each other so what do you say we catch up this weekend? Ring me up when you get this. Love you. Bye.”

I sigh. Right now, I need all the support I can get, and I know it's unwise to lock myself away from the rest of the world, but it's really soul-crushing to have what you desire within your reach only to have it cruelly yanked away from your grasp.

Barely two minutes after Diana's call, my phone rings again and I answer with my lips in frustration. Snatching it from where it's resting on my bed, I'm ready to give whoever it is a piece of my mind but my resolve shatters when I see Dylan's name flash across my screen.

I immediately sit upright, contemplating whether to take it or not. My phone continues to vibrate in my hands. If I want to know what happened after Cooper left last night, I'd have to take it. Deciding to face him head-on, I answer.

The line is quiet for a moment, and I can hear him breathing on the other end. I'm apprehensive so I don't utter a word.

“Selena?” he finally says, and I close my eyes.

I never thought I'd hear his comforting voice again or the sound of his name on his lips.

“Yes?” My voice comes out weak and low.

“Can we meet up? I need to see you.”

rying is I don't even think about it for another second before I say, "Where without want us to meet?"

He mentions the name of a cafe downtown.

alling. I "And I'd appreciate it if you come without your driver and the beep. anyone," he adds and I have a pretty good idea why.

a while I nod, and then realize that he can't see me. "Sure."

ekend? The line goes dead, and I instantly get off the bed with a zeal I possess a few seconds ago. I hit the shower and get ready before leaving the room. On my way out, I run into Nina who gives me a curious stare. She's asking Cooper asked her to keep an eye on me. I'm not dumb. He always looks away from me even when we're not on good terms with each other.

Nina, however, doesn't say anything to me, but I know she's expecting me to tell her where I'm headed. I don't. I walk a few blocks away from the house, I'm before calling a cab.

when I Crouching on the street seat on the sidewalk and waiting for my car to arrive, I tap my feet on the ground and fold my hands in my lap. I'm nervous as the thought of meeting with Dylan. That much is obvious.

ppened When I get to the cafe, it's quiet and only a couple of people are present. I can see why Dylan chose this location. It doesn't look like a place that gets a lot of customers. I walk in and sight him in the far left corner of the room, slightly hidden from the entrance, hence making it perfect for our meeting.

"Hi..." I say, plopping on the seat across from him.

I take the time to observe him. His hair is slightly disheveled, and his eyes are tired. It looks like he didn't get any sleep last night. Well, that makes two of us. The most noticeable thing stands out the most is the bruise on his discolored cheek.

Did Cooper do that to him? Instinctively, I reach out to touch him, but he flinches, leaving my hand hanging midway and my heart crushes to pieces.

do you retrieve it and clench my purse tightly.

“Thank you for coming. I didn't think you were going to show up,” he says. He has a stoic expression on his face and it's difficult to tell what's going through his mind.

Barely twenty-four hours ago, we were texting each other sweetly, now, he's shutting me out completely.

I didn't “Why would you think that?”

“Cooper paid me a visit last night,” he says, ignoring my question. “I know he wasn't very happy.” He laughs but there's nothing humorous about it. “Did he do that to you?” I gesture to his cheek.

Our eyes meet but Dylan looks away. “I deserved it and more after what happened.”

Words can't begin to explain how sorry I am that things turned out this way.

“Does it hurt?” I ask and chide myself after the words leave my mouth. “A little, it does.”

“A little,” he replies but I'm pretty sure it's more than he's letting on. “I'm truly sorry that he hit you.”

“His actions are justified. I messed up big time.”

“It's not just your fault. I played a crucial role in it but I don't regret it. It's with you. We can work through this. Cooper is just angry right now but I'll give him some time to cool off. I'm sure he'll come around.”

Dylan shakes his head. “You weren't there to see the look in his eyes. What doesn't want us seeing each other anymore. Hell, he'll be furious if he finds out about this meeting. He explicitly stated that he was going to find a different firm so you could compete for your internship.”

I know what he wants to say even before he does.

“We can't see each other anymore.”

up,” he says. “Something inside me breaks. “Aren't you willing to fight for us?”

what's “I'm already top on Cooper's list of the most shitty humans alive. He threatened me with a lawsuit on the grounds of sexual harassment but I didn't want to go through with it. I don't want to push my luck.”

Why do I get the feeling that something's amiss?

“This isn't just about Cooper, is it? I'm simply not worth it to you.”

1. “And Dylan runs his hand down his face. “That's not the case. I'm... I'm not capable of giving you more than I already have. I can't continue doing this with you.”

what I What is he going on about? The Dylan I've been with these past few years is a man who is capable of a lot more than he lets on. Why is he leaving me out this out in the cold?

“I'm not asking for more. I'm okay with where we are,” I try to convince myself. Of him even though I'm not.

“Selena...” he sighs, “Everything has fallen apart, and I'm trying to figure out how we can salvage the situation.”

“Then let's do it together. I know this initially started as an itch you needed to scratch, but you've got to admit there's something here. We can be a good team.”

but let's I've resorted to begging, but I don't care. I can't lose him. I'm in too deep to turn back now.

yes. He “I should never have given into the temptation of wanting you,” he says. I knew and I exhale shakily. “I should have had more self-control. What the hell do you all even think was going to happen when I got involved with you? I'm nineteen years younger for fuck's sake.”

At this point, I've run out of things to say. I've tried to convince him

we can be together, but nothing seems to be working. I thought he
same way I felt about him, but I guess I was wrong.

ive. He It was all in my head. As much as it pains me to think about this,
said deny the fact that Cooper was right about Dylan eventually hurting me

Rising from his seat, he says, "I hope he finds a firm for you soon
so you can meet up with your academic calendar."

I don't care about the stupid calendar. I want you, I want to yell but
I'm not I just learned the hard way that no matter what you do, you can't force
ing this to reciprocate your feelings.

I don't look at Dylan as he walks out. I can't.

7 weeks The waiter comes to ask me what I want but I'm too busy trying to
ring my raging heart to pay him any attention. Everything is a blur, and
know how but I somehow manage to get home.

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I don't care about the stupid calendar. I want you, I want to yell but I don't. I just learned the hard way that no matter what you do, you can't force people to reciprocate your feelings.

I don't look at Dylan as he walks out. I can't.

The waiter comes to ask me what I want but I'm too busy trying to steady my raging heart to pay him any attention. Everything is a blur, and I don't know how but I somehow manage to get home.

It's only when I'm in the safe confines of my room that I break down and cry my heart out.

CHAPTER 29

DYLAN

Leaving Selena all alone like that at that shitty cafe downtown was the last thing I wanted to do, but I didn't want to hurt her any more than I already had.

It's clear from all indications that Selena has started to develop feelings for me, but after what Cooper said about me being incapable of love, I should stay away from her than cause her more emotional damage. If I can't get what she wants, then what's the point of fighting for her?

Selena and I were careful. Hell, we hadn't even stepped out together in public since California, so it doesn't take a genius to figure out how Ashley found out about us. It was Ashley.

I shouldn't have taken her question for granted at the party. Maybe if I had told Selena, it would've prepared her for what was coming and none of them would've taken her unawares. Or if I had just admitted to Ashley that I rejected her because of Selena and asked for her discretion, she wouldn't have said anything to Cooper.

Fuck!

Maybe Cooper was right about me. I hurt people even when I don't
to and that's messed up. After I leave the cafe, I get into my car and
straight to Ashley's house to give her a piece of my mind.

It's only after I get there that it dawns on me that she would be worried
this time. I should've called, but I was too upset to think clearly.

It's a relief when the housekeeper says Ashley is home. She lets me
I wait patiently in the living room for her to come down.

I hear the click of her heels and raise my head to see her look
beautiful as ever. It's unfair she looks this way after the heartache
caused.

"Dylan, this is a pleasant surprise. I didn't know you were coming
was the attempts to make light conversation but I'm not in the mood for any
e than I bullshit. "What happened to your face?" she asks in concern.

"Cut the crap, Ashley. I know you told Cooper about Selena and I."

ings for She has the nerve to look apologetic. "Someone had to call you
should order, and I knew you weren't going to listen to me, so I had to tell him
give her

"Well, Cooper cut me off and doesn't want to see me ever again though
you."

either in Her right hand flies to her chest in disbelief. "You have to believe
Cooper had no bad intention when I decided to tell him. I didn't know things
going to go that far. Selena is way younger, and someone had to look
if I had her."

of this Maybe on a normal day, I would've understood her point of view but
r that I now, I'm pissed beyond measure.

n't have I chuckle darkly. "And that's your job? Who the hell are you trying to
what's best for Selena and what's not? You left me to go chase your
remember? And now that I finally found someone who actually cares

to intend me, you swoop in and ruin things for me. What right do you have to
and drive my life for me?"

Ashley opens her mouth to speak but no words come out. She tries
saying by "I didn't know you two were that serious, Dylan. I'm sorry..."

"You're sorry? Don't pretend like you didn't do it out of jealousy. You
in, and damn good actress, Ashley, and you might have fooled Cooper with
righteous act of yours, but you don't fool me."

saying as Ashley's eyes water but she blinks and tries to keep her emotions in
check she's Even when we were still together, we never had misunderstandings
spurred me to raise my voice at her this way. They were just
g," she disagreements, and we always found a way to walk through them.

in front of her I know I shouldn't be talking to her in this manner, but I'm furious that
she didn't have even the slightest bit of faith in me to know that I would
take advantage of Selena like some asshole with no brains.

both to "I admit that I was upset about you turning me down and that might
have pushed me to tell Cooper, but I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, Dylan," she sobs
and thanks to hold of my hand but I turn my face away. I can't even bear to look at her
now.

and she that I As much as it breaks my heart, this has to be done. "I'm sorry too, but
things were but I can't keep being friends with you if you don't trust me enough
to put out for so little confidence in me. You of all people should know me by now."

"I swear, I meant well. I never meant to ruin our friendship or anything
like that. Please, you're my friend—" She stops when I hold up a hand
to stop her. The damage has already been done.

and I know "Goodbye, Ashley."

in my dreams, I hear Ashley call my name repeatedly as I walk out of the house
and there's no turning back now. A lot has been said and bonds have been broken.

dictate I would only resent her more if I continue to allow her to linger in my
knew that one way or another, this was coming but I still feel it's tim
s again. Ashley go.

Lost in my thoughts, I drive around aimlessly with no destination
You're a mind is a mess, and I'm pretty sure this is the most miserable I've ever
with this my entire life. Everything seems nebulous and I need to take a
frustration somehow. In situations like this, I'd go to Cooper, but I
check. dumbass I am, I've fucked that up.

After driving for a while, I hit the brakes at the bar Cooper and I fr
st mild Drinking in my condition is not a good idea but maybe having some
in my system will help numb the excruciating pain I feel in my chest.
that she I sluggishly stroll inside like a man who's lost the will to live. The
n't take busy, but I manage to secure a stool at the counter.

“The usual, sir?” the bartender asks, and I nod curtly.

Whenever Cooper and I came here, I always thought the people d
, taking alone were pathetic. I chuckle at the irony. I guess tonight's my
er right initiation ceremony. I swing my head back and gulp down everything
glass at a go, wincing at the sharp taste.

Ashley, I'm five shots in when someone passes by and crashes into me
or have process, causing my drink to spill all over the front of my white sh
' asshole doesn't even apologize and I get up from my seat to call him b
nything a little difficult to stand my ground because I'm wasted and I wobble
. feet.

“Hey, man, are you fucking blind or something?” I slur.

Fuck! I can't remember the last time I was this drunk. Probably
use but attended that frat party with Cooper back in college.

broken. “What the hell is your problem?” he asks. It's a man who looks aro

y life. I age.

ie to let “You fucking made me spill my drink on myself when you hit n
moron.”

on. My “Watch your mouth, dude,” he uses the ‘you-better-not-fuck-w
r felt intone, but I have my claws sharpened and ready for a fight. I need to
out my some steam, and I wouldn't mind some fist action.

like the “Or what? You're going to run to the management and tell on me?”

Like Ashley did.

requent. I'm aware I'm being a dick, but I can't seem to stop. There's no one
alcohol life right now who cares whether or not I get pummeled.

His nostrils flare. “I'm politely going to ask you to fuck off as y
e bar is drunk mess,” he says but there's nothing polite about his tone.

“What? Too much of a pussy to stand up to me?”

He comes closer until we're standing shoulder to shoulder. Eye
brinking “The fuck did you just say to me?”

fucking I chuckle manically at his question. “You heard me, *pussy.*”

g in the Even though I anticipate the blow that comes next, it still hurt like
hit him back and before I know it, we are throwing blows at each oth
in the clenched fist connects with my left eye, but I can barely feel the pain
irt. The the adrenaline pumping in my veins.

ack. It's People around us cheer, but it's difficult to tell who is winning and
on my between us. Suddenly, we are yanked away from each other by the bou

“I'm not fucking done with you, motherfucker,” the guy who just l
shit out of my drunk self seethes, his eyes flashing with hot fury, and
when I in his face. It only fuels his rage, and he attempts to advance towards
the bouncer holds him in place.

und my “I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you both to leave,” one

bouncers says, and I saunter out unapologetically without a word, feeling
ne, youshit.

I clean my mouth with my sleeve only to find blood on it and when
with-me'a glance at myself in the rearview mirror of my car, I'm horrified by
let offsee.

Only one word best describes me.

Broken.

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bouncers says, and I saunter out unapologetically without a word, feeling like shit.

I clean my mouth with my sleeve only to find blood on it and when I sneak a glance at myself in the rearview mirror of my car, I'm horrified by what I see.

Only one word best describes me.

Broken.

CHAPTER 30

SELENA

I'm gasping for air as I clutch my chest. I can't breathe.

I feel like I'm going to pass out in this bathroom stall as I stare at two pink colored lines which signify how screwed I am. I had been carried away with Dylan to notice that I was late for the month. It was after I threw up my breakfast this morning that it dawned on me that I might be pregnant.

How the fuck did this happen? I'm on birth control and it sure as hell isn't the worst of times to fail. Bile rises in my throat again, and I begin clutching my stomach.

Leaving the bathroom stall of the convenience store with my heart thumping erratically, I board a cab to the cafe my friends and I frequent. I've been shutting them out but seeing the test trip brought me back to realize I need their support now more than ever, and I might just go crazy if someone doesn't calm me the fuck down.

They're both seated when I arrive and on seeing me, they rise to give me a hug with sympathetic looks on their faces. I told them about what tra

with Cooper, and this is them trying to be there for me.

“Are you okay?” Diana asks as we all settle in our seats.

I don't exactly know how to answer her question so rather than tr
dissect my feelings, I say, “I’m pregnant.”

Sydney chokes on her saliva. She continues to cough, and since I
too petrified to do anything, I offer the poor girl some water and she
down after a while.

“What the fuck, Selena? Tell me this is some shitty joke you just c
with on your way here,” Sydney says, wiping her mouth with the back
hand.

Diana's jaw is still slacked, and she looks drained of color. I feel l
whole world has come crashing down. I'm pregnant by a man who
want anything to do with me anymore. I don't even realize that I'm
until Diana reaches out to dab my cheeks with her kerchief. I retrieve
as only her to help myself.

I might “That’s messed up,” she whispers.

“Don’t I know it?” I ask rhetorically and snicker amidst tears.

If anyone had told me life was going to bite me in the ass this way, I
never have believed them. What the fuck am I supposed to do now? I

Dylan or not? What will Cooper say when he finds out? What abo
school? What about my career and future? I'm not ready to be a moth
wasn't part of my plan for now. It would've at least helped a little if
was still in the picture, but the jerk isn't. He fucking left me in the lur
now I’m fucked six ways to Sunday.

I'm such a grade-A idiot. I should've listened to Sydney and Dian
they warned me to stay clear of him. I was swayed by his good lo
charm, and now I'm reaping the bad fruits of what I sowed.

“I know you're both going to say you told me so, but I'd rather not do that right now,” I sniff.

Sydney sighs. “Honey, why would we? This could've happened to any of us. It's not like you planned it.”

Diana is “Just to be absolutely certain that you're pregnant, how many times do you want to carry out the test? That stuff isn't a hundred percent accurate, you know.”

It's sweet to see Diana grasping at straws but I'm certain.

“More than enough to know I'm screwed.”

After the two colored lines surfaced on the first strip, I panicked and ran to the store to buy seven more, and they all turned out to be positive.

“What am I supposed to do about this? Dylan was clear when he said he didn't want things with me.”

“Are you seriously considering keeping this from him?” Sydney asks incredulously. “There's no question about that. You've got to tell him.”

It's been a week since he walked out and left me all alone in that car. True to his word, he hadn't reached out to me after that. More than a couple of times, I found myself wanting to call him or go to his office to see him, but I would decide against it. If someone doesn't want you, you should let them go. It's safe to say that I'm anxious about seeing him. I don't know how I'm going to react.

“What if he decides he doesn't want the baby?”

I know Dylan is a responsible man but then, I didn't think he was capable of breaking my heart in such a ruthless manner, and he did. I can't say how this will all pan out.

“It's his responsibility, and I'm certain he won't shy away from it. From all you've told us, he seems pretty decent. Except for the part about breaking your heart, of course.”

listen to I hold my head in my hands. To think that by this time last month I was enjoying myself in California.

any one "I'm going to tell him," I resolve.

"Good," Diana says. "Do you need us to come with you?"

did you It would be nice to have some moral support, especially seeing a man who harbors feelings for the man. But this is something I need to do on my own.

"I appreciate you guys offering to come, but I brought this on myself. I'll see it to the end."

and got "You sound like a sad old lady with a cat and no friends. No offense, ladies with cats but that's by the way. My point is, we're here for you."

ended I smile at them. "I'm glad."

I stay back with Sydney and Diana for a few minutes and even though they ask me to cheer me up, nothing works. In order not to keep putting a damper on the mood, I leave for Dylan's office. I need to talk to him so we can figure out what we're going to do about this.

couple of When I arrive at the building, even though no one is paying any attention to me, I feel like all eyes are on me. Maybe it's just my guilty conscience. So tormenting me for sleeping with the boss. As I make my way to the elevator, it feels like a walk of shame.

I get off on the twenty-fifth floor, and I feel like my heart is going out of my ribcage. A sense of déjà vu hits me as I approach my desk. I haven't been a week but it feels like a long time ago. The plant on my desk has withered because it hasn't been watered in days. I hadn't exactly expected

Dylan or Miss Gail to look after it during the one week I stayed away from work. I was moved to another position but that's just until Cooper finds out about my different firm.

Exhaling shakily, I raise my fist to knock on Dylan's door, but I freeze.

ly, I was and drop it. The fear of rejection consumes me like a flame, and I begin to question my impulsive decision to come here. I didn't give it enough thought before deciding to read him in on the situation. I should've taken more time to consider this.

As I still wonder, Do I even want to be a mother at twenty-two? There's so much I haven't done yet. So much I want that I haven't accomplished. I could abort myself, and terminate the pregnancy, and no one would find out that I was ever pregnant.

Gulping loudly, I thrust my fist against the door before I can come to a decision to leave myself to leave.

"Who is it?" I hear the sound of his voice, and an indecipherable emotion courses through me.

Though they say I've missed it. I've missed *him*. I push open the door instead of replying to his question and meet with the sight of the man I've been dying to see for several days. Dylan looks the equivalent of crap. He has a purple eye, and there are several bruises scattered across his face. It seems as though he was in a fight, which astounds me because Dylan isn't one to stir up trouble. He looks out and out startled to see me which is understandable because I never thought I'd be meeting with him like this in his office.

His surprised expression quickly morphs into relief and then an emotion to leap one which reminds me of a dark storm.

It's only then that "Why the hell are you in my office?" he asks in a voice so full of emotion that it catches me off balance.

Unexpectedly, The Dylan drilling holes into my head right now is completely different from the one who whispered sweet nothings to me back in California. If I didn't know better, I would've concluded he had an evil twin.

My vision is hazy and I have a terrible migraine but I manage to get my voice out "If you could just calm down and let me speak..."

begin to My voice comes out frail and vulnerable but Dylan cuts me short. I thought I made myself clear when I stated that we couldn't see each other anymore?"

"You're getting it all wrong. I'm not here to try and get back to you. There's something important I have to tell you."

Dylan doesn't even blink and his voice is bereft of feelings when he speaks. "Everything that has happened is all your fucking fault. Cooper won't take my calls or return my texts because I allowed you to get into my house. You should have listened to my gut."

Why the hell is he being such an asshole?

"Are you seriously heaping all the blame on me? I didn't make any decisions you didn't already want to."

We both know I'm right.

"I think it's best you leave."

I grit my teeth. "I need to talk to you. Could you just—"

"No! I don't want to hear it. I want *nothing* to do with you, got it?"

The words die in my throat. Shock keeps me rooted there, staring at him with my mouth open.

Dylan has changed overnight, and I can barely recognize him. My anger has lost confidence in me, so this affects me as much as it does him. That kind of energy isn't what I need for my baby. If he has resolved to be insensitive and act like the whole fucking world revolves around him, it's only fitting that I protect my unborn child from such toxicity.

How could I have been so wrong about him?

"Do you need me to call security? Leave," he snaps.

He's being callous and it's apparent I'm bothering him by just breathing the same air as him. My eyes water but I do my best to keep the tears at bay.

hort, “Inot going to let him see how broken I am, and neither am I going to be
h other Taking one last look at his godlike features that will forever make n
flutter, I burn them into my memory because this is the last time I w
gether. make an attempt to reach out.

Spinning on my heels, I walk away from him, half expecting him
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head. I With tears streaming down my cheeks, I make a decision. I'm g
raise this baby to the best of my ability with or without its father.

To hell with Dylan fucking Smith.

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not going to let him see how broken I am, and neither am I going to beg.

Taking one last look at his godlike features that will forever make my heart flutter, I burn them into my memory because this is the last time I will ever make an attempt to reach out.

Spinning on my heels, I walk away from him, half expecting him to call me back. In my heart, I'm wishing he'll realize that letting me go this way is a mistake. But he doesn't call me back. An indication that he's done with me.

With tears streaming down my cheeks, I make a decision. I'm going to raise this baby to the best of my ability with or without its father.

To hell with Dylan fucking Smith.

CHAPTER 31

DYLAN

Seeing Selena's haunted expression felt like taking a knife to me and being stabbed by it relentlessly. Compared to Cooper's punishment was far more agonizing.

The look of pain on her face was all I needed to see that I had fucked pretty badly and that it was unredeemable. I wanted to hold her close and make her understand that I was only reacting that way because I was hurting.

Selena's hurting, too, and I'm being an asshole by thinking only of myself. This affected her as much as it did me. Besides, it was foolish of a grown man to blame her for everything that transpired when she coerced me into doing what I didn't already want.

If I have another chance to redeem myself, I don't care whatever punishment she offers to me, I'll take it all. I'll ravish all the crumbs she tosses my way. But before I can even think of being with Selena, I have to at least try to and make things right with Cooper, and that's like mission impossible.

For the past week, I've been calling and texting him nonstop, but he doesn't return my texts and the calls usually go straight to voicemail. Explicitly,

that he's still mad. I get the message that he doesn't want to talk to me
there is even the slightest chance that Selena and I can be together again
the shitstorm that's occurred, it would happen only with his approval.

I glance at my wristwatch and see that I still have about an hour to go to
meeting. Cooper would be at his office by this time, so I make up my mind to
visit him. If he won't take my calls, I might as well go see him.

Iva, my assistant, still hasn't come around to pick up from where she left
off, so I ask Gail to fill in her position until I'm back from Cooper's.

I'm on the edge as I navigate through the busy streets. I steal a glance at
myself in the mirror and notice that my purple eye is still very
noticeable, and I look like a train wreck.

My heart
aches, it
At least I look how I feel.

I barely get any sleep these days as whenever I close my eyes, all I
think of is how I hurt the two people who matter a whole lot to me. I
wonder if Cooper might not have been voluntary but Selena? That was me just
being a jerk.

Cooper's secretary refuses to let me in when I get to the reception, but I
go anyway. She runs after me in fright and as I barge into Cooper's office
I see him and Diana standing in close proximity to each other. Diana
isn't
horrified to see me and quickly springs away from him faster than the
speed of sound.

Cooper's lips tighten into a narrow line but isn't he being
hypocritical by acting all conscientious when he's also seeing Selena's
face behind her back?

"I should go," I hear Diana murmur as she scrambles to pick up a book
from his desk. She walks past me without a word, and I do not attempt to
strike up a conversation with her either. Whatever she has going on with

the best friend's brother, it's up to her to decide whether or not she's going in after Selena. Unlike Ashley, I don't make it a habit to stir up trouble because I'm upset about not getting what I want.

My next "I'm so sorry, sir, I tried to tell him you were busy and stop his mind from coming in, but he wouldn't listen," his secretary says, the fear apparent in her profile.

She left Cooper's hard stare doesn't stray from me as he says, "It's okay, Judy. You can return to your desk."

I don't say anything until I hear the sound of the door shutting behind me. The tension in the room is so thick that it could easily be cut with a knife. Cooper is not exactly delighted to see me, that much is obvious, but I have the intention of fleeing for the hills.

"Wasn't I clear enough the last time we spoke?"

He's talking about when he punched me square in the jaw. His words are laced with venom and his standing behind his desk, with me on the other end, reminds me of Selena's visit earlier today. Is this how she felt about me when I gashed out at her?

God, I'm such a moron.

Rubbing my face, I sigh. "I know what you said, and I know that you're the last person you want to be talking to right now, but I understand that I made a mistake. Believe me, I'm paying dearly for it. I've lost my best friend, a little person I've ever felt a deep and sincere connection with. I'm sorry, Cooper. I truly am. Come on, man, we all mess up and my only mistake is not coming out plain about how I felt about Selena to you before even she blew over. I know the age difference between us makes this hard to admit, but I really care about her."

Cooper doesn't say anything for a while and just as I begin to give

g to tellspeaks. “It’s my responsibility to look out for Selena and you’re not w
simplyneeds. She has her whole life ahead of her.”

Is he kidding me right now? We are the same age and he's with Dia
m fromsituations aren't that different.

it in her “No offense, but isn’t it a little hypocritical of you to see Diana
Selena’s back and still be this mad? It’s the exact same age gap.”

ly. You I hit a nerve with my words, and he locks his jaw. “I already to
Cooper, Diana and I aren't you and Selena. At least I'm not the o
ind me.inflicts pain on the people I claim to care about.”

a knife. *Ouch.*

ave no He's still hurt. I get it. But are we going to flush a friendship of over
years down the drain over this? The type of friendship Cooper and I
rare. He's had my back since college, and he's stood by me even at my
ords are “I know you're still upset. Hell, if I were you, I’d still be, too. I l
is otherwould take some time for you to forgive me, but I can't live with you
when I me,” I plead desperately.

Cooper scoffs and smiles sadly. “Is that really what you think — tha
you? I don't hate you, Dylan, and it's that fact that hurts me the most.”

I'm the We stare at each other and, for a brief moment, I see my best frie
made aguy who binge-watched *How I Met Your Mother* with me no matt
and theridiculous he found it to be whenever I fell sick and couldn't attend cla
I sorry, “You know your way out.”

ike was His voice comes out strong, but I know he's hurting.

rything Cooper doesn't offer me another glance as he retreats to his sea
believe,surges through my veins like blood, and I feel an immense sense of sh

I leave his office. I want to yell or hit something to release the traum
: up, hebut I know it won't change anything.

that she I need to forget Selena, and that's what prompts my decision to drive to an exclusive club. It's midday, and this isn't the ideal time to visit such a place. Especially when I have a meeting scheduled to hold only a few minutes now. I check my cell and find several missed calls from Gail, but I can't return them.

I need to get Selena out of my system, and I'll only torture myself further. I keep waiting for Cooper to come around.

Just like the last time I was at the club, no woman catches my fancy. In my disoriented state, I see a young lady with features identical to Selena's: baby-blue eyes and strawberry-blond hair. Her lips are full and plump, but where Selena's eyes are full of warmth, hers look hollow and empty. They have no void of any emotions. Her touch is icy, and I'm repulsed.

Worst. "Why don't we take this to the other room?" she asks, playing with the buttons on my shirt.

I'm drunk and I'm not thinking straight. But even in my intoxicated state, I know I shouldn't.

I hate *I can't.*

It feels like I'm cheating on Selena even though I know I'm not. When she prying her hands off me, I get up from the couch and stumble to the other room, how rummaging for my keys in my pocket with fumbling fingers.

I'm not entirely certain but I'll be fine.

Time heals all wounds, after all. I'm hoping for my sake that's true.

t. Guilt

same as

as I feel

I need to forget Selena, and that's what prompts my decision to drive to the exclusive club. It's midday, and this isn't the ideal time to visit such a place especially when I have a meeting scheduled to hold only a few minutes from now. I check my cell and find several missed calls from Gail, but I don't return them.

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CHAPTER 32

SELENA

ONE YEAR LATER

Watching *Friends* keeps me sane. No jokes.

The show has this ability to make even the most depressed of souls alive again. I crack up like silly when it gets to the part where Joey hangs Chandler's clothes on. But my laughter is short-lived as the piercing cry of my baby fills the apartment.

Sighing, I drag myself up from the couch and make my way to the room. I barely got a wink of sleep last night because she kept crying all night and I was only able to take a nap this morning when Sydney came over and she had left after an hour. I was still grateful that I at least got some rest.

Cooper called to say he was coming this afternoon, and I've been anticipating his arrival. It's been a year since I moved out of our parents' house, and Cooper has been nothing but supportive. After he found out I was pregnant, he was upset, and I thought he'd lash out at me but he was understanding and asked if I was okay. I had cried in his arms like

and he held me till I was content. After I was done, Cooper had calmed me about him and Diana.

I was shocked to put it lightly. To think that he had given Dylan time for getting with me behind his back. I was hurt, disappointed and by his and Diana's betrayal. Suddenly, it made sense why she asked to let me be when I hadn't wanted to come clean to Cooper about Dylan.

Feeling cheated and betrayed, I didn't speak to both of them for weeks. I blamed Cooper for my predicament, but later came to terms with the fact that he only meant well, seeing as thanks to him, I was able to discern their true colors.

It took me some time to make peace with Diana and Cooper together, but I got over it when I saw how happy they made each other.

Overwhelmed and needing a fresh start, I moved out of the house and into the apartment Cooper secured for me. He has been a godsend especially after he found out that Dylan didn't want anything to do with the baby. Although I never told Dylan about the baby, I know he wouldn't be there for her the way he should have been. Chloe and I didn't need his money, our own. We didn't need his support. We needed him to be the man I thought he was when we started. And he wasn't that man.

Cooper had never actually asked if Dylan knew, but I know he thought Dylan knows and abandoned us. Most of the time, that's exactly what I think happened.

When I began to show in my fourth month, I took a break from law to take care of myself with the intention of going back once my baby was enough. The doctors kept complaining about me being stressed when I went for checkups. It might have been school, no doubt, but it had a lot to do with the fears of raising my baby all alone.

ly told “Aren’t you the cutest little angel...” I coo, picking Chloe up from the floor and patting her gently. She stops crying and makes cute baby noises.

hard Chloe is only three months old, and she looks so much like her father. They have the same hair and eyes. And whenever she smiles, it reminds me of Dylan. My heart clenches at the thought of him. At first, I was miserable, and it was difficult to navigate through the different stages of pregnancy as a single parent, but I did okay.

fact that *I think.*

Dylan’s My friends have been lovely and supportive, and I don’t know what I would have done without them. Even though my hands are full with the responsibilities of being a single parent, I still manage to meet up with them every once in a while and sometimes they even come over.

and into The doorbell rings and I head back to the living room with Chloe in my arms. Checking the peephole, I see it’s Cooper. He looks relieved and happy to see me when I open the door.

here for “Hello, sunshine,” he begins, and I deadpan because I am anything but happy. Looking from me to the baby, he touches her tiny little fingers. “This is my favorite niece,” he coos.

My brother’s gaze softens as he takes in Chloe. He asks if he can carry her, and I let him.

it feels “Aren’t you a gorgeous little thing,” he marvels, still staring at her. I smile at the sight of them together.

school *I wish her father could hold her like that.*

was old I hadn’t bothered to reach out to him after that day at his office. Dylan never had a lot of shit he needs to sort out, and I can’t take the chance of risking my heart being hurt by his callousness like I was.

I understand Cooper much more, now that I’m the one looking

her crib someone else.

“Sorry, it's a bit of a mess in here. Haven't exactly had time to clean
father.as we walk into the living room.

nds me I hear him sigh from behind me. “Seriously, what’s your beef with
serable,I offered to hire one for you, but you refused. Taking care of Chloe is t
icy as a and I don't want you stressing so much. You look tired.”

I know I do. “I’m just not comfortable with letting a stranger an
near Chloe,” I share my fears.

what I “I get it. Just let me know if you ever change your mind, okay?”
e baby, I nod.

ies they Cooper spends the whole afternoon with me, and we catch up. He t
he’s going to propose to Diana and my eyes water in excitement.
e in my thought I’d see the day Cooper would get married because he’s neve
l happy serious relationship.

I'm genuinely happy for them, although I can't help but feel slight j
ng but.over the fact that I lost the only person who ever made me feel special.
re’s my After he leaves, I try to put Chloe to sleep so I can make dinner, a
avail. She cries nonstop despite my attempts to comfort her, and I nc
rry her,abrupt rise in her temperature. Fear grips me. She hasn't been eating m
the past few days and she rarely sleeps at night, making me restless as
r and I Concluding to take her to the hospital, I quickly grab the keys to
and take the car seat with me. I put her in the car seat and place it in tl
seat of the car, making sure the seat belt is locked firmly before driving
lan has the parking lot.

g Chloe At the hospital, the nurse asks me to wait in the reception as the d
attending to another baby. When it gets to my turn, the doctor ex
out for Chloe and I'm a little nervous about what the problem might be. I v

stop conjuring terrible scenarios in my head, but I can't help it, especially," I say when she won't quit screaming.

I grow more worried when he takes a sample of her blood. maids? "Is everything okay?" I ask once he's done. asking, "I hope so," he replies, asking me to wait in the reception for the rest of the test.

anywhere The next hour has got to be the longest hour of my life. In between to soothe Chloe and willing myself to relax, I constantly check the clock hanging on the white hospital wall. I know I said I was perfectly capable of doing this on my own, but I don't know what I would do if this turns out to be something serious.

I never When I'm finally called upon, I go to the doctor's office, and he offers me a seat.

"The results of the test finally came back," he begins slowly and nervously as the heart rate monitor beats loudly like a drum.

"Is everything okay?" Despite my attempt to put myself together, my voice still comes out shaky.

"I'm afraid, Miss, your baby has leukemia."

I lean back like I've been hit by a bullet, my chest constricting to the point of pain. "Leu...leukemia?" I whisper.

He nods. "It's an aggressive disease, but we're going to be even more aggressive. I promise you, we're going to do everything we can to help your baby get through this."

Easy for him to say when it isn't his three-month-old with a progressive disease.

"We'll be needing a donor so we can do a bone marrow transplant."

I offer myself without a second thought, but the results show I'm

pecially match for Chloe. The doctor asks about her father, and I tell him he
the picture. He urges me to find a donor soon and as hard as it might
know exactly what I have to do.

If I want Chloe to survive this, I have no choice but to see Dylan
sults of inform him of his daughter.

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match for Chloe. The doctor asks about her father, and I tell him he isn't in the picture. He urges me to find a donor soon and as hard as it might be, I know exactly what I have to do.

If I want Chloe to survive this, I have no choice but to see Dylan and inform him of his daughter.

CHAPTER 33

DYLAN

“**G**ood morning, sir,” Iva greets the instant she sees me walk through the revolving doors.

It's a Monday morning, and the building is busier than usual. The receptionists have their hands full with either directing guests to the floor or answering calls.

“Good morning, Iva,” I answer, walking briskly to the elevator and trots beside me, striving to keep up with my pace. It's a wonder she's able to do that in her black pencil heels. I've always wondered how they are able to walk in such high shoes.

I guess it's one of the many mysteries the world is yet to unravel.

“Hope you had a good night?”

Iva makes it a habit to ask about my well-being every day. Maybe because she observed how glum I was after she resumed. Whatever it is, it's good to have someone check on you on a daily basis.

“Surprisingly, I slept like a baby,” I reply, stepping into the elevator

“As expected. It's not every day your firm wins the best law firm in
twice in a row,” she says, and I can hear the smirk in her tone.

Last night was the award ceremony and my firm won the best law
the US. Winning for the second time in a row is invigorating. It shows
constantly breaking boundaries and setting the pace for other firms to follow.

“I'm proud to be working with you, Mr. Smith.”

As someone who doesn't make any effort to interact with his employees,
this comes off as odd.

“Thank you,” I say, regardless.

As we get off, Iva proceeds to read me in on my schedule for the coming
while she goes on and on about the meetings I have to attend, my thoughts
drift to Selena. There's not a day that goes by that I don't think about

often wonder where she is, what she's doing, and if she's okay. The
question which often plagues my mind is whether or not she's moved
country.

It has been twelve months, and I won't be surprised if she has
forgotten about me. She'd be back in Cambridge now, finishing up her
year.

I hurt her in the most unpleasant of ways. Selena deserves all the happiness
in the world, and I would be relieved if she found someone who makes her
happy.

Jealous as fuck but ameliorated to see her happy.

“Sir? Mr. Smith?” Iva calls and I snap out of my thoughts, completely
That's the thing with Selena. Whenever she infiltrates my mind, I lose
of everything else.

“Sorry, what was that?”

“Would you like me to get your coffee?”

“That would be great, thank you.”

what I look into their company and learn about their business. My assistant e
om theme the file on them weeks ago, but I just haven't had the chance to go t
is time.it.

in my “Drop it on the desk,” I murmur, gaze still trained on the screen,
doesn't do as I ask, and I'm forced to raise my head.

toiling My heart skips a beat. I feel like I'm looking at a ghost or a figmen
the best imagination. Have I thought about her so much that she's now haunting
real life too?

issues, *It's not real. She's not real*, I tell myself.

. In the “Hello, Dylan,” Selena says.

I wasn't *Fuck!*

er first *She is real. How is this even possible?*

I gape at her like she's some rare species until she begins t
nymoreuncomfortably on her feet. I can't help it. I never thought I'd see her
e — inAfter Cooper completely shut me out, I had given up on the tho
o find agetting back together with her. She looks different. More beautiful
even possible.

l it and “Selena...” Her name rolls off my tongue like honey. I can't remem
last time I said it out loud. It was too painful to. Every pore in my l
s to flybursting with happiness. Words can't describe how elated I am, but I tr
r, and Ilike I'm not that affected.

several “Wow. I'm so happy to see you. I can't believe it. It's really you.” S
o queuefor trying to act cool and collected.

I offer her a seat and even though it's obvious that she's uncomfortal
settles in it anyway.

ontential “How have you been?” I can't resist the urge to question.

proper She gives me a tight-lipped smile. “I've been doing alright. Wha

emailed you?" she asks but it feels forced.

through I can't help but think that something must have brought her here. Whatever way we ended things, it's highly unlikely that she would just pay me but Iva for the sake of it.

"I'm alive so I guess that counts for something," I say and instantly I sound bummed out.

g me in "How's law school?" I ask in a pathetic attempt to steer the conversation in a different direction.

Selena looks down and plasters a fake smile on her face as she says, "I've just dropped out."

I'm shocked, to say the least. I can't think of any reason why Selena would drop out of law school. She was one of the brightest and most successful people I know to shiftpeers.

r again. "Why?"

ught of She tucks a lock of her blonde hair behind her ear. "There's something I should tell you, Dylan. It's the reason why I'm here actually."

"Uhm... okay."

ber the She sighs. "I guess there's no perfect way to say this, so I'll just hit you over the head. I had a baby three months ago."

y to act I blink. My brain goes into overdrive. Selena's a mom? And not just any mom, importantly, she found someone to share her life with. I should be happy for her, but I can't bring myself to do so.

"She has leukemia and needs a bone marrow transplant, but I'm not sure there's a match."

Where is this going?

"She's yours, Dylan."

t about *What the fuck?*

My first reaction is laughter. If Selena decides to become a cop with these'd do wonders in the field. Are there hidden cameras in my office? a visit has to be. This is insane. Bat shit crazy.

The laugh dies on my lips when I see the serious expression on her face. I regret “Wait, are you serious?” I ask, alarmed.

“I am. She's yours, and I need your help, Dylan, or else we're going to lose her,” she says, on the brink of bursting into tears.

I've never seen Selena this devastated before, and it terrifies me. She says, “I And, like usual, that terror turns to something ugly fast.

Furious suddenly, I fight the urge to run out of the office. “I don't believe a word of what you're saying.”

Selena looks up at that, frowning as if she's confused. “I'm so sorry I didn't tell you about her earlier but please, she needs you. Just—just that's all I need. Then you can go back to pretending we don't exist. Dylan, please. She's just an innocent child. Please help us.”

This can't be happening. It's been a year since we last saw each other. I'm not sure of the type of person Selena has become so I can't be certain she's telling the truth or not.

Cooper would have reached out to me if it were true which is why it's so strange. But just so I don't do something I'll later wish undone, I agree to a DNA test to be conducted.

Selena is perplexed and her eyes shine with hurt. “Do you think I'm not making all of this up? You really think I would lie to you?”

But I don't.

And that's what scares me the most.

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CHAPTER 34

SELENA

Dylan hasn't changed.

Physically, he's still the same and during the brief encounter with him before talking about Chloe, he looked genuinely happy to see

I'm still in shock over our conversation. I'm in denial over the fact he thinks of me as a liar. A part of me doesn't want to believe it. Why would I stoop so low as to lie about having a child with him? / what? The off chance that he is a donor for a baby that isn't his?

He's not that big of a deal so he better get over himself.

I agree that seeing him stirred up old memories and awoke the feelings I worked so hard to consign to the grave. But that doesn't mean I want him back. As much as I've had a teenage crush on Dylan, I'm not keen on him back into my life. I've changed. Motherhood has changed me.

Your heart says otherwise.

Dark clouds roll over in the sky as I drive to the hospital where Diana and Chloe are. After speaking to the doctor, I called Diana because

suggested starting treatment immediately. Plus, I didn't want to take C
see Dylan lest he panicked. And I was right not to.

Dylan follows closely behind me in his black Tesla. I pull over
hospital's parking lot and he follows suit. He's red in the face, a tell
that he's annoyed even though he's trying to hide it. I don't blame
literally just turned his world upside down by revealing he has a ch
never met.

It was selfish of me to keep Chloe hidden, but I did it to protect h
myself, if I'm being honest. I had already been rejected by him twice
just couldn't face the third.

"It's this way." I gesture towards the wing where Chloe and Diana a
he falls into step with me.

r I had I let my gaze travel to him when he isn't looking. He appears to be
e me. thought and his eyes are fixed in front of him. The lights in the l
that he hallway illuminate his face, making his ocean-blue eyes look
7 in the enchanting as I remember. His lips look inviting, and his jaw is ang
And for the right amount of perfection. I catch myself wondering what it w
like to feel them against mine again.

Our arms brush against each other, and the sparks that ripple thro
elings I take my breath away.

ant him I had prepped for this moment but it's a shame my body still rea
t letting way to him despite being away from each other for a year.

I reprimand myself for feeling that way. I don't want to be sucked ba
that hole. Neither do I want to go back to feeling dejected.

ana and "All of this is a lot to take in, and I need you to do me a favor," Dyl
he had as we walk side by side.

"What's that?"

Chloe to He looks just about ready to bolt but also like he knows this is so
he has to do so he's sticking around.

at the “Can we not do the introduction until I get the results?”

ale hint He's talking about Chloe. He doesn't want to meet her until he's su
him. His words go through me like a spear, but I try my best to keep m
ild he's expression impassive.

Nodding curtly, I say, “Fine.”

er. And I know this must suck for him, so I don't dwell on it. Even if I wa
e, and my thoughts can only drift from Chloe for about two seconds, so there
ton of time to get too annoyed with him.

are, and I watch as Dylan uses a mouth swab to rub the inside of his cheek
nurse does the same for my baby. We're asked to wait for another hour
deep in for the results and Dylan mounts himself at the far left corner
hospital reception, away from Diana and I.

just as “Is he really serious about not meeting her?” Diana asks.

led just I sniff and use my kerchief to wipe my nose. I've been a crying mess
ould be I learned of Chloe's condition. “As a heart attack.”

“What a dick. I didn't expect this from him.”

ugh me I feel the need to defend Dylan, suddenly convinced his reac
justified. Most men in his shoes would do worse. I never planned on
cts this him. I only did it because circumstances forced me to.

“I didn't exactly expect him to jump into my arms and accept
ack into without question. I just want my baby to be okay,” I cry, and Diana hu

“Let's just hope he's a match. Otherwise, all this would have b
an says nothing.”

I haven't thought about it this way before. I just assumed that
automatically going to be a match because she's his daughter. Surely

nothingus has to be. What if he isn't? What then?

If I thought waiting for Chloe's test results to come back was torture, this must be perdition. I'm anxious as hell. Chloe is so young, and it's terrible that she has to suffer this way. It breaks my heart.

My facial expression "I really hope so. I don't know what I would do if he isn't."

Diana pats my cheek lovingly. "She'll be okay."

"Yeah."

When the nurse informs us that the results are ready, and we're asked to go to the doctor's not a doctor in his office. Dylan looks terrified upon hearing the news but jumps anyway.

When the truth is finally out in the open, the doctor gives us some papers. Dylan won't look at me even when the doctor leaves, and when he eventually does, his eyes are bloodshot and filled with a mixture of rage and disappointment. I can't hold his stare, so I look away in shame and guilt.

The forlorn look on his face is heart-wrenching.

"Why the fuck would you do something like this?" he asks but I do not give him a response.

I can't.

"Cat got your tongue? This is the part where you speak up, Selena, and tell me why the fuck you felt the need to keep my daughter from me," he says and I flinch.

Chloe His tone is hard and filled with so much fury that it scares the hell out of me. daylight out of me. I'm visibly shaking. A lot has happened today, and I've only taken so much before I break down completely.

"I tried to tell you..." I begin but my voice is choked with tears.

Dylan scoffs, and I look up to find traces of tears on his cheeks. He looks at me angrily. I can't believe I made a grown man cry. This must have

upset him.

re, then “You tried? How the fuck did you try?”

s unfair “That day I went to see you at your office... the last time we spoke was what I had wanted to say, but you wouldn't give me the chance.”

He's quiet for a second, and I think he's trying to recall our conversation from that day.

“That's not an excuse for what you did. Something along the lines of 'see the pregnant' would have done the trick, don't you think?”

oins me “I tried! You were cruel to me, and you know it.” I won't listen

blame me for this as if he's innocent. I did my part, but he did his, too.

privacy. Quietly, he looks down. “I would have listened to you if you had been eventually straight with me.”

ge and As much as I hate to admit it, he's right. Maybe no matter what, I

lt. have told him. I panicked when I found out I was having a baby. Maybe

was just looking for an excuse to shut him out and when I got one, I

n't give into it and made myself believe I was doing the right thing.

Maybe I *did* do the right thing.

It doesn't matter. We're here now.

and tell “You know what, I can't deal with this shit right now,” Dylan says and yells, storms out of the doctor's office.

I run after him like a crazed woman. People in the reception watch me with a living concern, but I don't care. Dylan can't leave. Our baby needs him, and I don't know if I can do anything to get him to stay.

“Please just listen to me,” I plead.

“Do you seriously expect me to be happy with what you've done?”

He wipes sweat through gritted teeth and it's scary.

It's really a miracle I don't cower this time. My maternal instinct to save C

a lot stronger.

“I don't care about us!” I exclaim. He looks surprised, but I don't — that about that either. “Be pissed, hate me, we can fight for the rest of our lives if you want. But right now, our daughter is *dying*, and you are the only person who can help! She needs you,” I cry.

Dylan snuffles and runs his hand down his face. “I need some air, but that's the last thing he says before turning his back on me.

I bend over and cry like I've never done before. Diana tries to come to him but I'm inconsolable.

What the hell am I going to do now?

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CHAPTER 35

DYLAN

Up until a few hours ago, I was okay. I wasn't joyous about th was living but at least, I was content to some extent. I was getting Selena has officially brought chaos to my world in the most discour way. Bringing up a baby and wanting me to up and be a donor in the s three hours is too fucking much. Where the fuck is that done? I can't b fathered a child. Hell, I can't believe Selena kept this from me. I've out on a lot, and it's all her fault.

I'm suffocating, and my chest tightens to the point where it feels like breathe so I leave the hospital premises. I need to be away from all From Selena. From *our* baby.

For a moment, I let myself wonder what she's like — if she has S kind eyes and beautiful hair. Even though I'm pissed, knowi responsible for a tiny human causes a flicker of warmth within me. I've thought of myself as father material. I'm nowhere prepared for this drastic change which is why it scares me shitless.

In all of this, one question plagues my mind. Why didn't Cooper tell me I doubt he was kept in the dark as well. There's no way she wouldn't have told him about the baby. God, I feel so stupid. Did I mess up so badly that I didn't think me worthy of being in my daughter's life?

With an aching heart, and in search of answers, I drive to his office. The last time I set foot here or even saw him was a year ago. It was difficult to hang out with the same friends' circle after we fell out, so I just sort of went to the gym and the plug on outings with our buddies. They gave up on asking me to hang out with them after a while of me standing them up.

The secretary asks me to wait in the reception which I do patiently, though I'm anything but. When I'm eventually allowed in, Cooper looks at me like I'm an illusion. I see he's gotten a new haircut and it suits him, but there's no time for compliments. We're way past that.

Cooper's gaze burns into me with an ineffable resentment. "Bold of you to show up after ruining my sister's life, you asshole."

He and Selena are the ones who didn't tell me she was pregnant so I missed that my fault?

"I know I messed up, Cooper, but telling me would have been the best thing to do, don't you think?" I'm pained and my voice breaks with the intention of this. "Do you really think that lowly of me?"

Cooper's forehead puckers in confusion. "What the hell are you going to do about Selena's?"

I scoff. Is he seriously going to play dumb over such a crucial issue? "I'm talking about the baby. Not telling me is fucked up, man. Selena's sort of a child, too! Didn't you think I deserved to be in her life?"

Cooper huffs an incredulous laugh and stares at me with disbelief. "You've got to be fucking kidding me. The fact that you even have the audacity to say that is unbelievable."

ll me? I come to my office and talk shit after a whole year is what is fucked up.
I've told I don't understand what's happening.

That they “That’s an unfair thing to say. I didn't know...”

“You know something, Dylan? Selena is happy the way she is, she's away from all of us. Haven't you done enough already? I know for a fact it's difficult to see her told you about Chloe and that the only reason you're not in her life now is because you chose not to be, so cut the crap.”

Is that what this is? Does he think she told me? Wow. Just when I thought things couldn't get any worse. Now, he thinks of me as the bastard he even impregnated his sister and hung her out to dry.

Fucking great.

Well, news flash. She never did tell me about the baby.”

Something about my delivery must get through to him, because your expression cracks. He furrows his brow, taking a step backwards.

“Wait, what?”

All of a sudden, the fight goes out of me. “I never knew she was pregnant with our baby, and I only just found out hours ago. Apparently, she was decently planning on doing so either until circumstances forced her hand.”

Cooper visibly swallows, his face as white as a plain sheet. “She... she did. How is that even possible?”

Selena played him, too, and why she did it isn't rocket science. It's just cut and dry. She didn't want me in her life anymore. I wasn't good enough to raise a child with.

The bitter reality hurts like a bitch.

“I thought you were aware.”

“I wasn't,” he says, sounding resigned. “She went to see you?”

“She did. Something about Chloe needing a donor for a bone marrow

.” transplant.”

“Yeah, she called to tell me earlier.”

“It's sad what an innocent baby has to go through.”

so stay I want to say ‘my baby’ but it sounds weird. I'm still getting used to the fact that I have a kid.

fe right “How are... you holding up? After finding out about the baby, I

Cooper asks, and I'm surprised that he's worried about me.

thought It's not a giant leap into me saving our friendship — that is if there's any hope for us — but it's something. One step at a time.

“I’m fine, I guess. It’s jarring in the least, to find out about a child like this. I just need some time to put myself together.”

He nods stiffly. “Good to know.”

use his This is awkward. I know he's only showing concern because of my predicament, but I wish we could put our differences behind us and get back to the way we were.

having Testing the waters, I ask, “What about you? Everything alright?”

s never I'm pushing my luck and I know it, but a friendship like ours doesn't fade like a shadow. I care about him, and old habits die hard. I've spent the last day for the past year being sorry for what I did. If I could turn the hands of time, I'd do things differently. I would tell him that night he told me I was pretty Diana.

ough to “Yeah,” he replies, looking as uncomfortable as I feel about this development.

“Good to know.”

It's quiet for a moment, and I'm glad Cooper isn't yelling at me again because I don't think I want to go back to the hospital just yet.

narrow “I’m going to propose to Diana,” he announces like a bolt out of the

Wow. I didn't know they were that serious. The fact that they've lasted so long and he's even proposing means Selena knows everything. I wish Selena and I would have gotten to that stage had we continued what we were doing. I still feel so much for her. Seeing her today brought back all the memories and feelings I had tried to rid myself of.

mean,” “That’s amazing. Congratulations. I hope she says yes.”

Even though my love life is pretty much damaged beyond repair, I'm still happy for him.

“Yeah, me too. Thanks. Seeing anyone?” he asks, and I nod like this melancholically.

I couldn't even bring myself to have casual hookups in the past year or so once and felt like shit afterwards so I kind of just gave up on relationships and buried myself in work.

“No,” I answer, rubbing my hands together and looking at the ground. “I couldn't.”

Cooper nods in understanding. “I’m sorry.”

“What for?”

“That she didn't tell you. I guess I'm partly to blame for it,” is all he says, but it's enough to raise my expectations for our lost friendship, and suddenly I feel like a flower blooming in me.

I jam my hands in my front pockets and lift my right shoulder in a shrug. “I messed up so it's all good.”

I want to say more but I don't. We sit in silence until I feel I'm ready to go back to the hospital and face Selena and our daughter.

Only when I get there, there's no trace of them.

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CHAPTER 36

SELENA

I know I have to be strong for Chloe, if not for anything else, it's difficult to be when I'm angry and frustrated at no one in particular. Chloe's future is bleak. Without a donor, there's no hope of her getting a heart. If Dylan doesn't want to do it, it'll be tough to find someone else who is a good match and willing.

After he left the hospital, I took her home. It had been a long day and I was exhausted. I skipped dinner last night and breakfast this morning because I didn't have the appetite. Chloe won't stop crying either. I didn't sleep last night because her condition plagued my mind. It was more pain than I could endure so I stayed awake thinking of possible ways out of this situation.

The sound of the doorbell disrupts my train of thought, and I wash my hands in the kitchen sink before going to see who it is. I'm surprised to see Dylan. Did Diana by any chance give him my address?

"Can I come in?" he asks in a small voice, and I don't know what to say. After our fight yesterday, I didn't think he was going to seek me out. My heart surges with hope that he might be here because he's decided

Chloe. But at the same time, I'm nervous. What if he's here to ask me
bother him anymore?

Bobbing my head in response, I shift for him to pass through, wiping
wet hands on my faded denim.

Him, standing in the middle of my apartment is a sight I never thought
see. Hell, I never envisioned that he would be back after yesterday.

“Nice place,” he acknowledges, looking around, and I watch him close

Is it just me or does this man age like fine wine? He's a walking wet
and the fact that he's in my apartment gives me ideas I'm ashamed to admit
seriously shouldn't be thinking of how deliciously his back flexes when he
walks or how good his butt looks in a suit when there's a major crisis
but it's hands.

As much as I try to fight it and focus, the arousal starts like a slow
my belly and spread to my extremities. I haven't been with anyone
Dylan and being alone in a room with him isn't helping matters.

My heart aches for him even though I know I can't have him. Not
yesterday.

I clear my throat, so my voice doesn't come out raspy. “Thanks.”

“I spoke with Cooper yesterday,” he begins.

That explains how he got my address. And if they talked to each other
then Cooper must know that I lied to him about informing Dylan of Chloe's
“It was an interesting conversation because he thought I knew.” It's
accusation but I feel guilty.

There's no fight left in me anymore so wrapping my arms around him
apologize, “I'm sorry. It's just that he kept asking and I didn't want
with the questions anymore, so I had to get him to stop.”

His chest rises and falls in a sigh. “I'm sorry about yesterday. Find

It was not about the baby was too much for me to deal with so I needed some space to clear my head. It came as a shock that you would keep that from me. How long have you known about this? How long have you known about this?"

"I know I shouldn't have, and I regret it deeply. When you didn't tell me about anything to do with me, I thought it wise not to bother you with the baby. I can see now that it was a huge mistake on my part."

He looms closer, and my breath hitches. I should move back but I can't. I dream, in fact that he's so close to me. My heart likes the warmth he emanates. I admit. It's too much.

"I'm deeply sorry that I didn't give you the chance to talk to me when you reached out. I'm such a moron. I could have been there for you, supporting you. I can't imagine what you went through all these months by yourself."

With him standing this close, the height difference between us is evident. So, I crane my neck to have a better look at him.

"I had Cooper, Sydney, and Diana. I wasn't alone."

"Yeah, but I wasn't here with you."

Hearing him say those words causes me to melt like butter on a skillet. This can't happen again. I have to keep myself from falling into the mirror. I'm getting together with Dylan.

"Where's Chloe?" he asks.

"She's in the nursery."

He's nervous about meeting her for the first time, and I want to help him and tell him that it's okay, but I hold myself back. He's only here for the baby, and not me. This is him stepping up to take responsibility as a father.

I lead him into the hallway and when we get to the door of the nursery, I halt and turn to him. "Ready?"

"Yeah."

pace to We go in, careful not to make too much of a noise as Chloe is peacefully sleeping in her crib. I observe Dylan keenly as she graces his vision for the first time since she was born. He blinks rapidly and stares at her with a mixture of surprise and awe and something else I can't place.

by, but “She looks like...” he starts but breaks, his gaze not wavering for a second.

like the “You?” I complete it for him. “Yeah, she does.”

a little Dylan snuffles, and it's only when I look at him that I see his eyes glistening with tears.

then you “Wow,” he breathes. “But she has your hair, and it's so adorable.”
t you. I Chloe stirs and opens her eyes. The sound of our voices must have disturbed her. She begins to cry and it's loud enough to make anyone in the room evident. I instantly pick her up to try and calm her.

“Can I hold her?” Dylan asks, but I'm a little skeptical.

“Do you even know how to hold a baby?”

“I don't, but I'm a bit of a fast learner. This could be like a trial run.”

let. But “We're not using my baby as a trial run for you, Dylan,” I say in a hushed set of incredulously.

He rubs the back of his neck. “Right. That came out wrong. Just show me what to do.”

I give him instructions on how to position his hands before placing the baby snug in his arms and the sight of them together warms my heart.

the baby “Hey, Chloe,” he says and I breathe a laugh at how cute it sounds. “You look like your dad.” She stops crying and looks at him with wide curious eyes. “You're my nursery, I doubt wondering who he is. “I'm sorry I wasn't there when you were born. I'm here now and I'm not going anywhere.”

I'm getting emotional and I try so hard to restrain the tears threatening to fall.

carefully stream down my cheeks. It makes me sad that I wasted all of this time the first should've simply been straight with him because Dylan is here and with the structure of step up to the task of being a father. My heart shatters just thinking about the time we've lost.

even a “See? You’re good at this,” I chuckle, praising his efforts.

He offers me a smile capable of charming the most sadistic of souls. “I think?”

are wet “Yeah. You got her to stop crying.”

“Maybe I should start rendering babysitting services then.”

“Okay, big guy. Don't get ahead of yourself,” I deadpan, leading him to the living room where we sit.

deaf, so Chloe grabs the button of his shirt and since her grip isn't strong enough yet to get it off, I let her play with it.

“How bad is her condition?”

He's talking about the diagnosis.

“The doctor said it's still in the initial phase, so we have to act fast to get her under control. There's a chance she'll be fine if we do.”

“Let’s go to the hospital tomorrow to see if I'm a match.”

now me “You’ll do it?”

“Chloe’s mine, too, and I have a responsibility to protect her. If anything goes wrong, I should be able to step up and help in whatever way I can. I've already missed out on a lot, and I’ll feel better if I do this for her.”

It’s me, It's a relief to hear him say that. It feels like a glass of cold water on a really long day. “I’m glad.”

born but “Look, Selena, I’m sorry for how I treated you in the past. The excuse for how poorly I handled what went down between us. I regret it. I'm sincerely sorry. I want to be involved in yours and Chloe’s lives

when I also want to support you in catering to her needs. It's only ethical that I'm offering to help you out. I want her to have the best of everything."

Hearing him utter an apology placates me in an unimaginable way. I think it's great that he's taking responsibility. Taking care of Chloe alone has been both emotionally and physically draining. I love my baby and I don't want to complain. But sometimes, I wish I had someone to lean on. Someone who comprehends what being a parent really entails.

My friends have been helpful but none of them truly understands what I'm going through. I'm deeply relieved that he's offering to do this with me.

"Co-parenting is totally fine by me."

Having Dylan as a support system when it comes to Chloe will make things a lot less difficult for me. But there's only one downside.

I don't trust myself to keep my feelings separate from all of this.

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CHAPTER 37

DYLAN

“**T**here you go,” I say, handing Chloe a toy, and she giggles as her tiny fingers struggling to hold it in her grip.

I love her so much. It's funny because I never really thought about kids. But here I am, a father to the cutest pumpkin, and it gives me the get up every morning because I have something to look forward to.

It's been three weeks since the transplant, and Chloe seems to be well. She has gotten a lot better, and the doctors always have something positive to say after every examination.

“Aren't you Daddy's pretty princess? Yes, you are,” I say quietly, and she makes little noises.

I'm at Selena's apartment, and she stepped out a little while ago to get groceries. This is the first time she has left me alone with Chloe, which is both frightening and exhilarating at the same time. Initially, I was skeptical, but she convinced me that I was going to do wonderful. So, here I am, having a little father-daughter time with my four-month-old, and there's this amazing feeling it brings.

When I touch Chloe's cheeks, she gives me a toothless smile, and I
overwhelming sense of love and affection bloom from within me,
strong desire to protect her nearly chokes me.

Selena and I have been spending a whole lot of time together the
weeks, and I would be lying if I said that doesn't make me happy. I
the moon because it feels like we were never separated. The way we
up from where we left off is astounding, and it delights me to know t
missed me, too.

Nothing has happened between us, though. Sure, we've been
moments but it's just that. I can see the want in Selena's eyes no mat
hard she tries to hide it. But still, she doesn't seem keen on wanting to
lorably, further than that, but it's okay. I'm not in a rush. I'm willing to wait for
as it takes for her to become comfortable with me again.

I know this is just us co-parenting and that I'm a selfish bastard for v
having more, but when it comes to her, I lose all sense of reasoning. These er
will to are so powerful that I can't get them under control.

It's safe to say she's my very own fucking kryptonite.

Just like that, the clouds rumble, and it begins to rain. I'm worried b
nothing Selena isn't back yet, and I'm not sure whether or not she can drive w
and she raining.

Picking up my cell, I dial her line, but it's switched off, and I gro
to get more uneasy. About thirty minutes later, she comes tramping thro
and it's door all drenched to the skin.

"It wasn't supposed to rain this afternoon," she lets out angrily, ar
cal, but the grocery bags from her, taking them to the kitchen and coming back
aving a mazing towel.

"I tried to reach you, but it wasn't going through. I'm sorry you got v

feel an “Thanks.” She smiles a little at me before going towards Chloe, and a “God, I hate it when it rains. I get sick,” she whines. “Don’t you like rain?”

use past “On the contrary, I like the rain,” I say, looking out the window and m overat the pitter and patter against the glass frame.

picked “You do?” Selena arcs a brow, clearly amused with my revelation.

hat she “Yeah. Literature may use it to signify sadness and melancholy, but differently. To me, it's a symbol of rebirth and renewal. Cleansing and havingmaking the earth pristine by ridding it of filth.”

ter how “Wow... That’s deep. I only ever thought of rain as just rain. Are go anyany chance into poetry?” she asks with a mischievous grin, and I as as longeyes.

“Ha ha, very funny.”

wanting “Seriously though, you have a way with words. It's beautiful. I th notionsjust found your passion aside law.”

I laugh. “Come on, I'll draw you a bath and make you some soup wlt shower. Can't have you getting sick on me.”

because “I won't bother you if I get sick.”

hen it's “That’s impossible.”

“What do you mean?”

w even “I'll be worried every second I spend away from you.”

igh the The smile slips off Selena’s face faster than a bolt of lightning.

Shit.

id I get I wasn't supposed to outrightly say that. I'm supposed to repr c with afeelings until she’s ready to confront hers and I've failed terribly. S facial expression is hard to read. I can't tell what she's thinking.

vet.” “Why would you be worried?”

's crib. Here's my chance to come clean. "Because I care about you."
ate the Selena's quiet and we just stare at each other. I can see the tension
jaw as she tries to give me a small smile. Quickly, she picks up the toy
gazing exits the living room, leaving me behind like some idiot.

I know I shouldn't have said that, but I don't regret it.



I see it
clarity, Looking out the cafe's window, I see the white, fluffy clouds drift across
clear blue sky. A stark contrast to the previous day when it was
you by Selena and I have plans to sit out today with the baby and even though
roll my was a little hesitant about coming, I was able to convince her.

Lately, I've been paying more attention to both of them than to my
It's been a bit of a hassle especially as my schedule at the office is super busy
link we but Iva does her best to help maintain the equilibrium. I have already
out on a lot of moments in Chloe's life, and I want to be here for precious
mile you ones.

A red-haired waiter approaches my table and asks if I would like to order
anything, but I let him know I'm waiting for someone. I order a glass of water
though before calling Selena, but she doesn't pick up. I wonder if she's
running late or decided to have a change of heart at the last minute. The
at the possibility of being stood up weighs heavy on my heart. But
what if she's running late because something bad happened? I force myself
not to think of anything cynical.

Just as I'm about to call again, I look towards the entrance and see
ess my scanning the area, a stroller in front of her. Her eyes finally settle on me
Selena's recognition marks her features as she prances in my direction.

It's black jeans and a blue bodycon top today, and I must say that I'm in herher faultlessly.

She smiles cheekily as she approaches me and seeing her and Chloe this makes me realize that this is my family — my life. Of course, I care for them. Of course, I will do everything in my power to keep them safe and happy.

I never want to lose them again.

"Hope I didn't keep you waiting too long?" she asks, falling into the chair across from me. "Everything takes so much longer now with the little girl." She did keep me waiting, but I'm not about to tell her that. She's doing a fantastic job with the baby and for her, I'll wait as long as it takes, so I'm firm.

she shows up in the end.

"No, I only just got here myself," I tell her before whirling to Chloe who's missed sucking on her pacifier. "Hey, baby girl." She grabs my index finger and I expect her to hold it.

Turning back to Selena, I say, "You look splendid," and her cheeks are warm at the compliment.

"You look great, too."

"Thanks."

"I swear I was on my way here when I realized I didn't take the diaper bag with me. I know it was silly of me to forget such an important thing myself," she complains, but she stops when I reach out and hold her hand across the table. It goes rigid in mine, but she relaxes after a few seconds.

Selena "You're already stressing so much and doing a lot. There's absolutely no need to beat yourself up over something so trivial."

"But shouldn't I have all of this at the back of my mind already? I'm a good mother should."

blue fits *Oh, hell no.*

I'm not letting her doubt herself for even a second. Selena sacrificed likecomfort and future for Chloe's sake. Had numerous sleepless nights to an loveshe was hospitalized. Not many women would have been able to do wafe andhas done.

"You're a great mom, Selena. Don't let anything or anyone make y otherwise. You forgot a diaper bag, so what? The Selena I saw at the l the seatthat day was ready to do anything just to keep her child safe. Tell m pea." bad mother would do that?"

doing a Selena has tears in her eyes, but she wipes them before they get the o far asto descend her cheeks. "Thank you. I really needed to hear that l sometimes it feels like I'm not doing enough."

who is "Well, I think you're doing just fine, okay?"

and I let She nods and as if on cue, the waiter returns and takes our orders. V about random things. My job, her schooling, what we've both been up cs growpast year.

As she talks, I can't stop the enthusiastic repose that dissipates acr chest because of this woman. Being here with her is everything I've dreaming of for months and it's finally happening. Whenever she gig per baggrin automatically appears on my lips.

but..." After the cafe, we go to a public garden and Chloe snoozes as we cross thein the tranquility of the place.

"This is beautiful," Selena lets out in a breathless whisper, breathin; itely noscent of the roses and gazing at the patterns and colors of different flow

"It is," I say, but I'm not talking about the flowers. I'm talking ab mean, awoman who is the most beautiful thing that has ever graced my vision.

She catches on and her lips part at my comment. I take my char

taking a step closer to her, reducing the gap between us, and lifting my hand to her face. When the faint touch of my fingers grazing her cheeks, her eyes blink shut for a moment before they open once again and connect with mine. As she nuzzles into my touch, there's a calm between us which makes me set me alight at the same time. The tension builds and we edge closer, you feel desperately hoping she doesn't pull away, I lower my face to hers until we are only a hair's breadth apart. My lips brush against hers, sending a jolt across the surface of my skin. I hear Selena gasp, but I don't give her the time to react as I press my lips against hers, kissing her with urgency.

The sensation that wafts through me is exotic.
Phenomenal.
Surreal.

God, how much I've missed her unique taste, her warmth, and the way she talks of her mouth against mine. The kiss starts slow, but we pick up the pace as her arms go around my neck the instant we do. A burning desire and passion swirl in my chest, one I've never felt towards anyone but her. It makes me realize that whether I admit it or not, things have always been like this between us. And instead of that notion scaring me this time, I smile at the realization that I'm in love with Selena.

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CHAPTER 38

SELENA

Leaving my baby to step out for leisure is something I haven't done before since she was born. So when Dylan suggested that I do, I'm not at all comfortable with the idea. Diana and Sydney offered to watch her but she's just five months old and I don't know if I want to be away from her.

Or maybe I'm just using Chloe as an excuse to shy away from my feelings for Dylan. He's been nothing but sweet since we began co-parenting. I know we were only supposed to jointly raise Chloe but along the way my feelings got in the way and those very well-defined boundaries blurred. I took a bad photograph.

At first, I tried to fight it, but Dylan's wiser and more mature now than he was all those months ago. It is impossible to resist the charm of a man who knows what he's doing. He knows the right things to say, and when to say them. Plus, the fact that he has stepped up to fill in his role as a father is the sexiest thing ever. To think that I was worried he might not be the material.

Sydney and Diana help pick out something for me to wear. I don't have new dresses. Most of the outfits in my closet are maternity which makes sourcing what to wear a little complicated.

We eventually find a gorgeous sequined dress, and I throw it on. My friend calls to let me know he's outside my apartment, and I kiss Chloe on the cheek, giving my friends stringent instructions to call me if the need arises. It's only after they swear on their lives that I go out the door.

I'm excited to be out of the house like this. Sure, I'm anxious about meeting Chloe but it honestly feels fantastic to finally be able to go on a date with a man and just enjoy myself.

Dylan's car is parked outside my apartment building with his back to it. The look on his face, when he sees me, is priceless. His lips are set in a look of astonishment as I amble through the gentle breeze of the night.

I can't help but notice how mouth-watering he looks though. He has a slight falter in that department. From his hair to his shoes, everything is on point. I'm scared to admit that this gorgeous man holds my heart, but it is a moment when he's gazing at me under the starry skies like I'm all that matters in the universe that I realize I have nothing to be scared of.

Dylan will be here to catch me if I fall.

"Wow, Selena... I feel like I just walked into another dimension. You're too good to be true."

His eyes roam my face, heating me from inside out and I duck my head to hide the blush that creeps up my neck. "Oh, don't flatter me."

"This isn't flattery. You're an angel, and I feel very lucky to have you in my life. Thank you for agreeing to do this with me."

The intensity in Dylan's eyes is too powerful for me to hold back. I run anyway. I can't keep running away from these feelings forever. It's c

exactly wants me, and I know I want him, too.

clothes “Are you nervous?” he asks.

“Just worried that I’m leaving without Chloe.”

. Dylan “Diana and Sydney are with her, so she’ll be fine. They gave me the word.”

l arises. I’m surprised. How is it that Dylan is in communication with my father and I know nothing about it?

leaving “You spoke to them?”

with a He gives me a half smile. “Yeah. I got Diana’s contact when Chloe was still at the hospital.”

. leaned I guess that makes sense.

part in “Shall we?” he asks, opening the door to the passenger seat for me and slid in.

s never I ask Dylan where we're going, but he refuses to tell me and says nothing. I'm surprised. What I had in mind was the classic expensive restaurant downtown. Dylan takes me to Cobble Hill and I remember when he told me he had a house there. My guess is we're going there. If we indeed are, I'll be pleased to know he's sharing that part of himself with me.

Every thought in my mind fades when we drive through the massive gates. When Dylan said he owned a house, I never imagined he was referring to such a magnificent mansion.

head to It's grand and looks like something straight out of a movie.

“Is all of this really yours?” I ask as we step out of the car, just to be sure.

you in “Yeah,” he answers, leading me to the entrance.

“Wow, it's spectacular. You've outdone yourself, Smith. I love it.”

ut I do “I’m glad you do because you're actually the first person I've ever let me see here.”

I smile at him lovingly. "I'm glad you decided to share this with me." The corners of his lips tilt up just the tiniest bit. It's nerve-wracking to know this man has crawled under my skin and remained there. But all the more they love it.

Inside, there's soft music playing in the background, and he draws a chair for me at the dining table.

"My lady."

"How very charming of you, kind sir."

"I've been told I'm quite the gentleman."

"By your many conquests?"

I feel a tinge of jealousy at my own statement. The fact that I've gone for Dylan doesn't mean that other ladies are immune to his charm.

They constantly make advances at him. When we were together in the past, it's always assured me that he was only into me. But months have gone by, but I don't know if he still feels that way.

"By people. But it's just the comment from you that matters."

It's cheesy but clever, and I grin stupidly. The maid helps set the table as we dig in.

"I'm flattered. This is really good, but I loved it when you cooked for me." I say reminiscing about the past.

"And I promised a grander meal which I never got to do."

I remember it like it was yesterday. We were in his apartment, and I was upset about him spending a lot of time with Ashley.

"Is that offer still on the table?"

"If you're down for it."

"I'd like that very much."

Midway through my meal, I look up and notice Dylan staring at me.

.” been a long while since I had something like this. Taking care of
ng how doesn't give me enough time to cook. But I hope in my rush to dev
same, I meal, I haven't been eating like a starved horse. That would be do
embarrassing.

s out a “What? Do I have something on my face?” I ask, horrified.

He chuckles lightly. “No, it's nothing. I'm just happy we've been sp
a lot of time together. After you left, I never thought I was going to
again. I know it was all my fault because I pushed you away wh
reached out to me and I'm sorry.”

If I had a penny for every time Dylan has told me how ashamed h
got eyes what happened in the past, I'm pretty sure I'd be able to get myself th
I know on Vogue I've been eyeing for a while now. I always tell him that it
past, he the past, but he never misses an opportunity to apologize over and over
ie by. I “It was scary having to live without you,” he says.

“I was scared, too.”

“Dance with me,” Dylan says when we're done eating, walking up
le, and side of the table and taking my hand. He leads me to the open space
living room and I place my head on his chest as we fall in sync wi
or me,” other.

I've never felt so relaxed. Listening to his heartbeat, I smile as I inl
masculine scent. I look up at him and the look in his eyes causes m
d I was rate to pick up beneath my chest. We're standing so close to each othe
want nothing more than to claim his lips with mine.

“You're all I've wished for, for the past fourteen months.”

“Dylan...” My poor heart won't be able to put up much of a fight
him go on.

me. It's “It's true. There's something about you that I can't let go of. Ma

Chloe how you make me feel like I matter. Like I'm something special even though I'm not."

Wright "You are special."

"That's only because you make me special."

He grabs me by the waist and kisses me with an urgency that takes my breath away. His lips are soft and demanding, and as he deepens the kiss, I see you pull me closer, as if he can't stand being apart from me for a second.

The electric spark between us doesn't surprise me because he's even

I've constantly yearned for. What I don't know though is if I'm ready to go the way with him.

"We can stop if you want," he whispers, breathing heavily. "Just say the word, Selena, and I'll stop."

But I don't want him to stop. I've been away from him for far too long.

"I don't want you to stop. I want this."

That's all the confirmation Dylan needs because seconds later, our bodies are tossed on the floor in a messy trail as we stumble towards the couch. He takes his sweet time worshipping my breasts and caressing them with each large hand to his heart's content. I arch my back at the delightful sensations.

When he takes a nipple into his mouth, I shiver, releasing a shaky moan. "I love your tits. God, I've missed you so fucking much," he rasps, his heartfingers disappearing where I need him the most.

I spread my legs wider, giving him undeniable access and his long fingers pump into me. I'm so turned on it's almost embarrassing, but this is what I need and there's nothing to be ashamed of. I bite my lower lip when I feel another finger to the mix. I don't want the staff to hear us.

"You can scream as much as you want, love. We have the whole house to ourselves."

though I'm breathing so hard it's almost difficult for him to comprehend the question. "What about the maids?"

"I gave them the night off after we got here. It's just me and your supplies with a wicked grin.

My eyes widen. "How very generous of you."

"Want to see how far my generosity extends, Miss Langley?"

"Oh, please, show me." I smirk.

"With pleasure."

Dylan's head disappears in between my legs, and he feasts on me like a full-course meal, all the while maintaining the pace with his fingers. My head rolls back, and I cry out from pleasure.

Not too long after, tension begins to build in my belly. My first orgasm after a year hits me like a tornado, and my hands fly to his hair, I'm helpless as my muscles spasm in the most delicious of ways.

I swear it almost feels like I died and went to heaven. Dylan carries me in a Hebridal style to his bedroom and places me on the large bed. He retrieves his condom from the nightstand, but I stop him.

"I'm on birth control."

"It's not like I don't want to make more beautiful babies with you, but birth control failed last time. And I don't think you're ready to take care of a baby if it fails again this time," he says with concern.

I get his point. After this, we can use condoms. But for now, I want to feel Dylan's bare against me, so I convince him to take me without one.

My eyes lock with his as he lines his hips with mine and pushes forward until he's fully inside me. My mouth falls open, and a throaty moan escapes from my lips. His head falls to my shoulder as he kisses my neck, grazing my delicate skin with his teeth.

ny next “Oh, fuck, Selena...”

The way he says my name has me shuddering like a leaf. He thru
ou,” heme repeatedly, and I meet him halfway, my breaths getting faster and
and my moans getting louder by the second.

“Look at me, gorgeous,” Dylan urges in a strained voice and I
comply.

Our foreheads touch as we move together, gazing into each other.
We cum at the same time, and it's ethereal. Still trembling, Dylan spo
e like aand holds me like a delicate flower.

My eyes From behind me, I hear him mumble, “Selena, you own me. All
You always have and will always do. I love you.”

orgasm My head spins and my heart stops.

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“Oh, fuck, Selena...”

The way he says my name has me shuddering like a leaf. He thrusts into me repeatedly, and I meet him halfway, my breaths getting faster and harder, and my moans getting louder by the second.

“Look at me, gorgeous,” Dylan urges in a strained voice and I quickly comply.

Our foreheads touch as we move together, gazing into each other’s eyes. We cum at the same time, and it's ethereal. Still trembling, Dylan spoons me and holds me like a delicate flower.

From behind me, I hear him mumble, “Selena, you own me. All of me. You always have and will always do. I love you.”

My head spins and my heart stops.

Holy shit!

CHAPTER 39

DYLAN

Sixty seconds have passed, and Selena hasn't said anything regarding love confession.

I didn't plan on saying it. I was only caught up in the moment. After that intense connection with her, I couldn't stop myself and I had to know how I feel.

Even though I'm afraid I've scared her with my declaration, I don't regret saying it. Selena might not feel the same way I feel about her, but I'm willing to wait around until she does because what we have is so fucking rare. I don't think I'll be able to have that connection with anyone else.

"You love me?" she whispers and spins around to look at me.

"Yeah, I do. I've loved you for a fucking long time now, but I was afraid to tell you for fear that you might not reciprocate my feelings for the hills. But I don't care anymore, Selena. Regardless of how you feel, I'll be here."

I'm nervous. Scared as hell that she might never return my feelings. I don't say it. I put on a fake bravado, hoping Selena doesn't see right through me.

it.

“Are you doing this because of the baby?” she asks, and my heart beats faster because of the fact that she's thinking that way.

“Chloe has got nothing to do with how I feel about you. It's always been you, Selena. Right from when I picked you up at that airport, I knew you were going to grow on me. And that's probably why I acted out. I couldn't stop the feelings from growing, still. Even when I knew you were against us and that I wasn't supposed to feel that way about your friend's sister, I couldn't stop myself from wanting you. That want has turned into something deeper. Something more fierce, and I don't want to lose what else this connection has in store for us. I want you, Selena.”

Selena opens her mouth, but no words come out. She tries to say “Dylan...I...”

Scared of what she might say, I cut her halfway. “You don't have to give me a response now. As much as it would give me immense happiness to know you feel the same, I don't want to rush you into making decisions you don't want to.”

“Shut up and listen to me, Dylan.” She places her hand on my cheek, and I love that it gives me tingles. “I love you, too, Dylan.”

I'm over the fucking moon, and I get so emotional that I take her hand in mine and kiss it.

“You do?” I ask before she takes it back.

She chuckles. “Yes, you moron. If you had let me speak then you would have realized that I do.”

“Oh, thank fuck. I was scared that you might reject me but at the same time, I didn't want you to feel pressured.”

“You've been very supportive, and you might think I don't notice

you do, but I'm grateful for how you take care of me. I couldn't have asked for a better baby daddy," she says with a sly grin.

"Just a baby daddy, huh?"

She pretends to think for a while. "Erm... well, your cock drives a new bargain, too," she giggles.

I smirk. "I'm hurt that you only want me for my body."

"What? You're going to sue me?"

"I might do just that. But first, you deserve a little punishment in prison."

I tickle Selena, and she rolls on the sheets, her laughter echoing in the four walls of my room.

Hearing her laugh like that for the first time in months reminds me again of the luckiest man in the whole fucking world.



"This is by far the best. It's better than the rest you've seen so far," the attendant says, and I turn to look at Iva for confirmation. Her expression is contorted in an uncertain expression.

"Nope," she says, and we move on to the next.

Ten rings later, and it's the same story.

"Sir, I was told this was the best place in the whole of New York City. But I'm starting to think we were misinformed," Iva says in a barely angry tone, and his face pales. I'm getting worked up, too, and if I could've look at one more ring that isn't what I want, I'm leaving.

"Could you please describe for me what exactly it is you're after?"

I'm here to get a ring for Selena. I'm going to propose. Since I want it to be perfect, I asked Iva for her assistance in picking the perfect ring, and

she was more than happy to help. I love Selena, and I know in my heart that

e asked the one I want to spend the rest of my life with. Life is too fucking
play games. I've lost her once, and it would be stupid of me to let
again so I'm taking the plunge.

a hard I describe to the man what I want as carefully as I can, and the
brings this time is something I'm certain Selena would love. Even Iva
with me. So I take it and head to Cooper's office. If I'm going to pro
might as well do it right. I need to make sure he's good with this b
vate." proceed. I already messed up in the past and I want to be certain that
he four no longer bad blood between us.

Cooper is stunned to hear I'm proposing to Selena.

that I'm "Are you serious?"

"I've never been more sure of anything in my entire life."

He knows me better than anyone, and he knows I don't take decisio
whim, especially important ones like this.

re shop "Dylan, Selena means a lot to me. If this is you still trying to me
face is her..."

"I promise I'm not. She means a lot to me, too."

"Even though Selena thinks as an adult she can deal with her own
still my duty to look out for her. I hope you understand that?"

to get "I do."

it of an "Good. So you understand why I would kill you if you even hurt a
have to hair on her head?"

Even though Cooper was my best friend, his threats scare the shit
me. He's glaring at me hard to make sure he gets his point across.

t this to "I do."

and she He nods and scrutinizes me under his gaze for a moment before
at she's "You really love her?"

short to “I love Selena. She's it for me.”

her go “And she feels the same?”

I smile, remembering last night. “I think so. I hope so.”

ring he “If you're what Selena wants, then I guess I can't stop you two from
t agrees a life together. You're a good guy, Dylan, and I know that firsthand. I'
o pose, I that I tried to keep you two apart before but that was only because
o before I terrified of you hurting her. I didn't know you cared so deeply fo
: there's other.”

I tried to tell him though, but I guess with my history of
relationships, it was a bit hard to take me seriously. “I understand. It'
What matters is that we're here now.”

He nods stiffly. “All I ask is that you protect and treat her right. C
ns on a promise me that?”

I love Selena and she's a part of me now. I will die before letting a
ss with happen to her and I will never do anything to jeopardize her happiness

“I promise with all my heart.”

Cooper's eyes gleam with something in between appreciation and
shit, it's “You have my blessing.”

a single

t out of

asking,

“I love Selena. She's it for me.”

“And she feels the same?”

I smile, remembering last night. “I think so. I hope so.”

“If you're what Selena wants, then I guess I can't stop you two from having a life together. You're a good guy, Dylan, and I know that firsthand. I'm sorry that I tried to keep you two apart before but that was only because I was terrified of you hurting her. I didn't know you cared so deeply for each other.”

I tried to tell him though, but I guess with my history of failed relationships, it was a bit hard to take me seriously. “I understand. It's okay. What matters is that we're here now.”

He nods stiffly. “All I ask is that you protect and treat her right. Can you promise me that?”

I love Selena and she's a part of me now. I will die before letting anything happen to her and I will never do anything to jeopardize her happiness.

“I promise with all my heart.”

Cooper's eyes gleam with something in between appreciation and relief. “You have my blessing.”

CHAPTER 40

SELENA

“**H**ow was it?” Sydney is the first to attack me with questions the instant I arrive at Glazers with Chloe in her stroller.

“Did he do something romantic? I bet it was a candlelight dinner somewhere exotic,” Diana joins in the mix.

My friends have a habit of bombarding me with questions when it comes to dating. But I do the same to them, so I think it's safe to say we're the Birds of the same feathers and all.

“Well, don't just sit there smiling to yourself like some looney. You need to give us something, Lena,” an impatient Diana whines, and I decide to toss my gossip-hungry girlfriends out of their misery.

“Calm your tits, ladies. He took me to his house in Cobble Hill, and it was beautiful. We had dinner and danced in his living room afterwards.”

Diana swoons. “Aww. That's so cute.”

“Stop interrupting, Diana. Allow her to give us the full story.”

“It's just so adorable that he took her to his house where he plans on raising a family and not just his penthouse this time.”

I laugh nervously. "Let's not get ahead of ourselves now, Diana. _____ didn't bring that up, but he told me he loved me though."

The silence that follows lasts for only a few seconds before the _____ squeal in excitement.

"Oh my gosh! That's huge. I'm so happy for you. He really said _____"
Diana gushes.

"Yeah. After we made love."

They both share a look. I know they didn't expect me to give in to D _____ soon but even I didn't expect it to happen. It just felt right so I follow heart.

"And what did you say to him?" Sydney asks.

ons the "I told him I love him, too. This is more than just a silly crush I had
dinner when I was a teenager. When I'm with him, I feel like nothing can go
There's this assurance that everything will be fine so long as w
together. Plus, he's been an amazing father to Chloe. What more ca
comes for?"

e same. "Oh, honey, I'm so happy for you," Sydney says, and I beam at then

I've got But I have some doubts that just won't go away. I'm scared. \n
e to put something goes wrong again and we end up splitting like we did before

Diana must notice my crestfallen expression because she holds m

"What exactly is troubling that little head of yours?"

l it was My friends' proficiency to see right through me is lovely but ir
sometimes. Because then, I can't withhold the truth from them.

"Don't you think everything is happening a little bit too fast?"

"With you and Dylan?"

lans on "Mmm-hmm."

"I don't think so. Why do you ask?"

. Dylan “I just... He's hurt me twice already, and I don't want it to happen again the third time. I don't think I'll be able to take it.”

ey both Diana sighs. “If Dylan is half the man I think he is, then that would be a problem. What I know is that you've always had feelings for this man. Is that what I mean?” “These past few weeks that he's come back into your life is the happiest I've ever seen you. Not even when you guys used to hook up were you this happy?” “That ought to count for something right?”

Dylan so “Yeah well, but that's not enough to cut it this time because we were never involved my fooling around then. Love is involved now. And Chloe.”

Sydney smiles at me, encouraging. “Don't write the man off completely just yet. I understand that you're scared but give him a chance and if it doesn't work out on his some time, you feel you both can only be co-parents and nothing more. It's not wrong, totally fine. Your happiness and peace of mind should come first before anything else stick to other things.”

When I ask “I don't know what I would do without my friends. They are my support system, and I'm appreciative of the bond of sisterhood we share. I don't want to lose any of them in any way take it for granted.”

What if “Thanks, Sydney.”

She? “You're welcome.”

My hand. “Look, Selena, you've been through a lot this past year. You deserve to be happy and happiness in the world. So, seize whatever chance you have to find happiness. If it's with Dylan, I say go for it.”

“And in case it wasn't clear before, I'm in support of what Diana just said.” Sydney adds, and I laugh.

I find that I've been doing a lot of that lately. I guess it comes with being fulfilled and complete.

“Enough about Selena. Why don't you tell us about you and Chloe?”

gain for Sydney asks Diana, and I cringe.

“Cooper’s my brother so let's keep it PG, yeah?”

n't be a Ever since I became okay with my brother and my best friend going to the beach and I've been subjected to listening to tales of their escapades. If care isn't the best I've might actually throw up one day.

thrilled. “He’s taking me on a vacation this weekend.”

Diana is a romantic, and I'm glad Cooper is meeting all of her expectations. He hasn't proposed yet, but I reckon he plans to do it on the vacation.

then, my lips are sealed. I gave Cooper my word that I won't so much as mention it during our ‘chitchats’ as he so pleasantly put it.

if after Speaking of Cooper, I was surprised when he came over to my apartment yesterday to apologize for separating Dylan and I. He said he only intervened because he felt it was the right thing to do and I told him it was all in the past and that Dylan and I were okay now.

support “I’m so glad you finally moved on from Josh. It was about fucking time.” Sydney says.

“Language!” I yell, closing Chloe’s tiny ears even though I know she can’t pick that up this early. “And yes, Diana, it was about *freaking* time.”

I'm learning to use zero profanities around Chloe and so are my friends. Diana has adjusted but as for Sydney, let's just say she's getting there.

feel that “Whatever. Let’s not spoil such a wonderful moment when all of us are content with our love lives by bringing up Josh. Cheers to us ladies!” she said, raising her glass and we clink ours together with hers.

I don't fail to notice how Diana can confidently say her ex’s name without turning blue, and I'm happy for how far we've come as a group of strong women despite the many bumps on the road.

Cooper?” Hopefully, this calm will last. And even when the storm eventually

we'll be here to support each other.

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CHAPTER 41

DYLAN

Oftentimes, there's joy in giving into what your heart most desires.

Six weeks later, I'm still with Selena, and I'm happier than I've ever been. It's her birthday today, and I only called to wish her a happy birthday at midnight. Aside from that, I didn't make any plans with her or send her presents. Diana has been keeping me updated on how frustrated she is because she hasn't called back since then.

It was funny at first, but as the hours flew by, Selena began to get grumpy and angry. It doesn't make me happy to keep her on edge like this, building up the tension, leading up to the final moment when I propose tonight.

I've been planning this for weeks because I want everything to be perfect. I plan on proposing in my house at Cobble Hill, the house we're going to live in as a family if she accepts to be my wife. I've asked for advice from my friends and Cooper about the things she likes.

Iva is in charge of getting everything in order. She hired a decorator
had a three-story cake made. I gave specific instructions for the color
the shade of her eyes and for the inscription to read, 'World Strongest'

She will be teary-eyed when she sees the results of my scheming. I
have simply asked her to marry me on a regular day, but I wanted
special. Besides, her birthday was around the corner, so I patiently waited
here we are.

It's six in the evening, and I'm about to step out of the office when I
to tell me Cooper is here to see me. It takes me by surprise. Although
cool, we're no longer best friends, and we only talk if I reach out to him.
If he's here, then it must be something important.

"I know you weren't expecting me, and I apologize for showing
this."

"It's no problem."

"May I?" He gestures to the seat before him, and I nod in approval.

I watch as his eyes do an abrupt sweep of my office. I redecorate
while ago.

"You still kept the alarm clock," Cooper observes, and I fix my gaze
black piece of furniture that's almost three decades old.

The story behind it is a funny one. Back in college, I was always
morning classes, so Cooper bought it for me even though I already
one. Long story short, I never cared to fix the batteries when they died
kept it as a constant reminder that he's always been there for me.

"It reminded me of you, so I had to."

"I still have that blanket I took from your bedroom at my first summer
to your parents' home," he chuckles, and I join in.

I remember the incident like it was yesterday. He said it was comfy,

tor and him have it. We've been each other's pillar for as long as I can remember to be. Friends have come and gone, but we've stuck by each other's sides.

Mom'. "I know a lot has been said that can't be unsaid but I'm hoping I would move past it."

it to be Cooper is here to make peace. Something I've been wanting for more than a decade. "I would very much like that."

"My wedding is in three months, and I was hoping that you'd be my best man."

h we're He proposed to Diana about a week ago, and she accepted to be his first. I'm flattered that he's asking me to be his best man, but I don't think I can

to stand beside him on the most important day of his life after betraying me the way I did.

"I don't think that it's a good idea."

Cooper looks lost. "What? I thought you'd be happy to do this?"

"Don't get me wrong. I'm more than willing to do this for you, but I can't do it if you still harbor a tint of resentment for me in your heart. You don't

call, Cooper. I'm always the first one to reach out. I know we're okay now, but something is missing."

Cooper looks at the curtain behind me like it's the most interesting thing he's ever seen for a solid minute.

owned "I feel guilty about keeping you and Selena apart for a year. You know I know, but I know about Chloe was all my fault, and I won't be able to live with myself if I hang out with you knowing the pain I caused you."

It was his fault, but I thought all of that was in the past now. We've both wronged each other, but we've also owned up to our mistakes and apologized to each other.

so I let "You have to let go of the guilt you feel because it's okay. I'm not

remember. upset. Everything is fine now,” I tell him.

“I’ll try. Regardless of the strain in our relationship right now, I still want you as my best man, Dylan. Would you do that for me?”

“I would be honored.”

After Cooper leaves my office, I quickly rush home to freshen up before driving to Cobble Hill. Sydney and Diana agreed to put a blindfold on Selena’s eyes to take her there, so she doesn’t suspect a thing.

I’m pleased with what I see as I arrive at my house. The decor is so straight out of a Disney cartoon and I feel as though I’ve walked into a different dimension. There are roses decorating the walls from bottom to top, balloons on the floor, and lit candles in strategic positions. I make a note to give Iva a raise after this.

I check my pocket for the umpteenth time to make sure I didn’t leave my ring behind. I guess it’s because I’m nervous. I don’t know what I will do if she says no to me. It would shatter my heart into a million tiny pieces that might never recover.

I hear the door creak open, and I know she’s here. My heart is thumping wildly in my ribcage in anticipation. But everything fades when I lay my eyes on Selena. It has nothing to do with the way she’s dressed, or her makeup.

It’s her.

She has this ability to steal my breath away without so much as a word. All she has to do is look in my direction, and I’m a goner. I watch as surprise and shock register on her face as she makes her way to me.

“What is all of this, Dylan? Oh my God,” she whispers happily, grinning like a Cheshire cat.

“Happy birthday, love,” I say, handing her a rose and she thanks me

It's now or never.

I drop to one knee and Selena takes a step back, hand flying to her mouth in panic. “Dylan, what are you doing?”

When I retrieve the ring from my pocket, the rose drops from her upper beforefingers and my trepidation goes through the roof.

Here goes nothing. “Selena, you came into my life at a time when I had forgotten what true happiness meant. Like a star, you filled my life with light and gave me hope that I too could love and be loved. You created a home inside me and ignite a fire I didn't even know existed until I met you. You almost killed me when I thought I had lost you, but now that I have you back, I don't ever want to let you go because my life has no meaning without you. I want to share the remaining part of my life with you. I love you and I give you the promise to keep you and our baby safe to the best of my ability if you will do the same for me.”

Selena looks down at me in astonishment, tears swimming in her blue irises.

“Would you marry me, Selena Langley?”

“Yes. Yes, I will marry you.”

A torrent of relief gushes through me and although my hands are shaking, I manage to get the ring on her finger without dropping it.

I pull her to myself and kiss her with so much passion, pouring all my emotions into it.

“I love you,” she says, leaning her forehead against mine and I smile as my cheeks begin to hurt.

“I love you, too.”

It's a brand new beginning for our next adventure, and I can't wait to start it with her.

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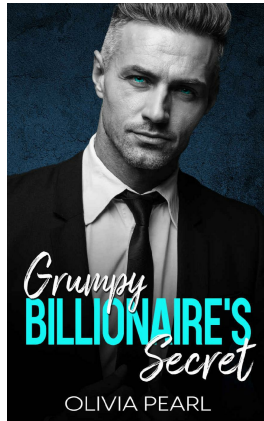
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The End.

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A game of truth or dare. No real names. No numbers exchanged. No strings attached.

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He left me with two things that night:

His masquerade mask. And his baby in my belly.

Never thought I'd see him again.

Until I started a new job and met the CEO.

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It was Him.

He had no idea who I was.

He recognizes his own blue eyes the first time he sees

my son.

He knows something isn't right.

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ABOUT AUTHOR

Olivia Pearl writes contemporary romance that begs to read from beginning to end. Billionaire bad boys filled with steam, angst, and swoon that lead to happy endings are her specialty.

Olivia lives in California. When she's not writing or reading, she enjoys spending time outdoors. Whether it's hiking, skydiving, going to the beach or giving back to her community.

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