

Amy Cummings

LILLY'S

Little

LABOR DAY



🌀 HOLIDAYS AT RAWHIDE RANCH 🌀

LILLY'S LITTLE LABOR DAY

A Holidays at Rawhide Ranch Story

AMY CUMMINGS



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CHAPTER 1

“Is my sweet princess ready for her nap?”

Edward appraised the young woman who lay before him, an approving smile tugging at his lips.

She was as cute as cute could be! Long, silky brown hair that matched her large, innocent eyes. Her body was lush with curves. Her pajama top and shorts were pink and depicted happy, smiling animals.

She hugged her stuffie—a little dog wearing a pink, frilly dress complete with a large bow atop her head.

The faint aroma of baby powder still hung in the air. A tell-tale crinkling sound could be heard as the woman shifted in her crib. “I’m sleepy, Daddy.” Her voice sounded uber Little, a hint of whining in her cadence.

“I know, princess. That’s why Daddy asked if you’re ready for your nap. I guess I have my answer,” Edward said with a chuckle.

He drew the moment out, not wanting to take his eyes off the cutie. Finally, he said, “Okay. Naptime. I want you to close those beautiful eyes and go to sleep. Do you understand, little one? No getting out of bed on your own. Daddy will come get you when it’s time.”

“When?” she asked.

“When I think you’re ready. You’ve been playing hard all morning. You’ve got to be exhausted.”

She stuck out her bottom lip in an overt display of poutiness. She knew the rules—no fit throwing. And she wasn’t outright throwing a fit. Not yet. But Edward sensed things were moving in that direction. His suspicions were further confirmed when she kicked her legs and pounded angry fists into the mattress. Her nostrils flared as she huffed.

“I’m not sleepy! I want to play some more!”

Edward had to fight another grin. She was a firecracker, that was for sure, but she was cuter than any Little had a right to be. He couldn’t let her see that. Not right now, at least. In fact, he needed to nip this behavior in the bud. Still, he couldn’t quite bring himself to discipline her yet. Perhaps a warning would suffice.

“This can go one of two ways,” he said. “One, I can get you out of bed and—”

“Uh-huh! I want that one, Daddy!” She sat up, smiling devilishly as she rested her elbows on the oversized crib’s railing.

“Listen, babygirl. I wasn’t finished.”

He gave her a moment to process. Some of the wind left her sail, her body sagging a bit against the railing.

“Now, as I was saying,” he continued, “I can pull you from that crib, tug your shorts and diaper down, and paddle that fanny until its red. Or you can lie down, close those eyes, and go to sleep like a good girl. The choice is yours.”

She sucked in her bottom lip as she considered the two options. “I don’t want pop-pops on my bottom, Daddy.”

This time, Edward couldn’t resist a smile. Oh this cutie had his heart! How was it possible that one woman could be so adorable? And how did she have such a powerful hold on him?

To the world, Edward Ironside was known as a shrewd businessman. A financial mogul who always got his way. He never showed this much patience in the boardroom.

But when it came to adorable Littles—well, he had a major soft spot.

Especially when it came to *his* Little.

But something felt off.

A powerful force gripped him and began pulling.

No, he thought.

Don’t let her fade away. Hold on to her. Hold on to this moment! Don’t go yet—

She began to disappear, as if turning into dust and drifting away on a breeze.

“Babygirl!”

He tried reaching for her, but it was no use.

She was gone.

He heard someone call his name, and it wasn’t the sweet, adorable voice he’d been listening to moments earlier.

His eyes opened. The crib was gone. Even more disappointing, the sweet, precious Little was still gone.

Turns out, he wasn’t in a nursery at all. He was in his office, high atop the skyscraper he owned, overlooking

downtown Denver. He silently cursed himself for having nodded off. That wasn't the way a CEO should behave.

Thankfully, his large, posh office chair was spun away from his desk, facing one of the floor-to-ceiling windows that made up three of the walls in the office. With the back of the chair to the door, there was a high probability that whoever was standing before his desk did not realize their boss had been sleeping.

Edward wasn't sure if he'd actually called out for his babygirl, or if that had been part of the dream, too. He sure hoped no one had heard. It might be hard to explain. There wasn't much he could do about it one way or another, though. And in reality, there was a good chance none of the employees would call him out even if they'd heard it or simply suspected he was asleep on the job. He was the boss. The head guy. The top man. He could do whatever he wanted.

Owning the company had its perks.

The deep voice called his name again. This time, Edward recognized it.

Lance Collins.

Oh great.

Edward cleared his throat and slowly began to spin his chair around to face his guest. If there was one employee who would dare give his boss crap about falling asleep—and calling out for an imaginary babygirl—it was Lance.

Edward brought his chair to a stop and flashed Lance a smile that concealed his annoyance. There was no love lost between the two men. They weren't outright hostile in their interactions as that would be unprofessional on Edward's part and unwise on Lance's.

As the leader, Edward strived to create an equal opportunity for all employees, treating them with fairness. Even the ones he didn't like.

And Lance Collins was definitely among the few Edward didn't like.

Lance was a douche, but at least smart enough to know one should not piss off the guy who signs the paychecks. Not too bad, at least. He pushed more than most, but he never crossed the line.

Not yet.

Edward suspected that day was coming. Lance was a schemer. He'd make a move sooner or later.

"Good afternoon," Edward said. "What can I do for you?"

"I hope I'm not interrupting anything," Lance said.

There was that arrogant half-smirk.

Bastard.

Edward fought the urge to roll his eyes. "What can I help you with?"

"Did you have a chance to look over the proposal I sent over for our Pueblo branch?" Lance asked.

Edward nodded. "Some good stuff in there. Thank you for your hard work."

"Do you think we'll move forward with it?"

"Like I said, some good stuff, but a few things I'd like to tweak. I don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves. I sent it over to legal. They're reviewing it and then we'll sit down and talk. Sound good?"

It doesn't matter if it sounds good or not, Edward thought, because that's the way it is. No sense in rubbing the employee's face in that, though. So, the CEO wisely kept that comment to himself.

Lance looked annoyed. He smacked his lips and shifted on his feet, as if trying to restrain himself.

He was a tall man, a bit on the lanky side, and his suit hung loosely in a few places. He had light brown hair, matching eyes, and thin lips. Despite his rather dull appearance, the man thought extremely highly of himself. The women around the office didn't quite share his enthusiasm.

Of course, his arrogant attitude didn't help matters, either.

Someone cleared their throat and Lance turned to see Holly—Edward's assistant—standing in the doorway.

“Sir, I need your signature on those documents before we send them to Boulder.”

“Of course,” Edward said. He looked at Lance. “If you'll excuse me.”

“Sure,” Lance said.

His annoyance was evident as he huffed from the office.

Holly stepped deeper into the office and flashed a wry smile at her boss.

“You're a lifesaver,” Edward said. He knew good and well there were no documents to sign. “And since when do you call me sir?”

She laughed. “I threw that in to get under his skin. Remind him that you're the head of this company.”

“He wants this chair,” Edward noted with a nod.

“Uh-huh. And he’s willing to do some shady stuff to get it. I’d watch him if I were you,” Holly said.

She put one hip on the edge of Edward’s desk. She looked beautiful with her long, blonde hair falling past her shoulders that showed more and more silver with each passing day. She was in her mid-fifties, making her about twenty-five years Edward’s senior. She had grace, poise, and plenty of wisdom. She also tempered the young CEO and kept him grounded.

That’s why she was the best assistant in the world, Edward thought. He needed her.

Success had come early for him but not easily. He’d had to work for it. To chase it. But he’d proven from the start that he was a whiz kid. Now, he was on the Forbes Under 40 list and at the top of his game. That’s why so many people wanted to take a shot at him.

People like Lance Collins.

Edward was pulled from his thoughts when Holly spoke again. “Remember, you’re babysitting your little sister this weekend.”

Edward groaned.

“Is she that bad?” Holly asked with a knowing smile.

“Lilly isn’t bad. And she isn’t my sister.”

“Stepsister,” Holly corrected herself.

Edward nodded. “She’s sweet. But she’s twenty-one and still needs someone to look after her? I didn’t at her age.”

“Not everyone is putting together investors and launching a company when they’re not even out of college,” Holly reminded him. “Your story is unique.”

“Still,” Edward said. “Twenty-one?”

Holly smiled wider, spread her hands, and then stood. “Go spend time with your stepsister. Life is short. Family is important.”

Edward only nodded again as the assistant left his office. His mind drifted back to Lilly. And that dream he’d had before being interrupted by Lance.

It had been her. In the dream. Lilly.

He stood, gritted his teeth, and growled in frustration. He began pacing in front of the wall of glass, looking out on Denver as his mind spun a dozen different directions.

Sure, it would be annoying to look after his kid sister.

Stepsister.

She was old enough to take care of stuff on her own. It was ridiculous that he was even doing this.

But that wasn’t the only reason he was so frustrated. It wasn’t even the main one.

Edward knew the truth. He just hated to admit it.

He knew that little cutie was the sweet girl of his dreams. The one he longed for. The one who needed her Daddy.

He stopped, pressed his forehead to the cold glass, and looked down as the city bustled with life below.

His heart raced. His brain wouldn’t stop spinning scenarios. And every one had slight variations but the same core ingredients.

In each one, sweet Lilly was his precious babygirl.



CHAPTER 2

“These cookies are going to be the best, Ms. Duckworth!” Lilly said with a gleeful giggle. “Edward is going to love them!”

She looked at her stuffie and giggled some more. The yellow duck was plump, had a bow on her head, and wore a diaper. Lilly had added the diaper herself since Ms. Duckworth was known to have trouble in that department and sometimes wet the bed.

Lilly had her pink pajama shorts on, a matching shirt, and more than a little flour in her brown hair. Before her, on the kitchen island, were the cookies’ ingredients spread out in a rather disorderly fashion.

Having had a sufficient break, Lilly picked up the bowl once more and began stirring the batter with the large wooden spoon. Her mind wasn’t really on the cookies, though.

She was thinking of her date that evening.

And about Edward.

And about what the next few days would hold.

The date had potential. She’d met the guy on an app for Bigs and Littles. So, going into it, he knew what she was, and she knew how he identified. Good. No awkward conversations

and “coming out” to the other person if the date blossomed into a relationship. Of course, that was a big *if*, Lilly knew. It was her first time putting herself out there in that context.

It was the first time putting herself out there, period. She hadn’t exactly had a robust, varied dating experience. Being a Little had always held her back. She feared guys would run away as quickly as they could if they knew her secret. That’s why she decided to go for the gold and look for a Daddy right out of the gate.

If Blake doesn’t work out, I can always go to the Ranch, she thought.

She giggled as she thought of that magical place.

Rawhide Ranch.

She’d talked with some Littles online who had been there. They’d told her all about it and it sounded wonderful! That’s why she’d applied, made it through the vetting process, and had been accepted.

Could she go through with it, though? She was too afraid to even spend a few days by herself! How could she drive to Montana and just live at a place where she didn’t even know anyone?

No. That would take too much courage. Courage she didn’t have.

Not yet.

Perhaps one day.

Until then, she needed to focus on tonight’s date. She might meet her Daddy without having to visit Rawhide.

But as excited as she was for that date with Blake, she was equally as excited about seeing Edward.

She was giggling before she even realized it.

Stop it, Lilly! He's my older stepbrother. I shouldn't have feelings for him.

Her mind drifted back a few years, and she saw it flicker across her imagination as if she were really there...

* * *

"ABSOLUTELY NOT. YOU'RE TOO YOUNG," EDWARD SAID.

"I'm eighteen!" Lilly yelled.

"Nowhere near old enough to be drinking. I'm taking this." Edward reached into the backseat, took hold of the twenty-four pack of beer, and yanked it from the car. With his muscles, it didn't take much. He held it as if it weighed nothing.

"You treat me like a kid!"

"You are a kid. You aren't even legal yet. So no alcohol. Trust me, I'm saving you. If you get pulled over, the cops are going to bust you."

"I'm legal for... other things." She tried to flash her best come-hither look, but knew she'd probably failed miserably.

Standing there in the driveway of the suburban home, holding the cube of beer, Edward shook his head. "You don't know anything about that stuff. Keep it that way. You're too young."

She folded her arms and gave him smoldering. Or tried to. "I know more than you think."

"Really? How many guys you been with?"

She gasped, her cheeks instantly turning red.

“Uh-huh. That’s what I thought,” Edward said. He stepped closer, his voice a little softer when he spoke. “Trust me. None of the a-holes at this party tonight are worth losing your virginity to. You can do better.”

Lilly tried to speak but only an embarrassed whimper escaped her throat. She hung her head in shame.

“It’s no big deal. You just don’t need to give it up to any guy who tries,” Edward said. “Now come on. Let me see that smile. You just graduated yesterday. This is supposed to be a fun night of celebrating.”

She nodded and finally found the courage to look him in the eyes again. “Thanks for looking after me while Mom and Dad are away. I was nervous when they left for the cruise this morning. I know you’re busy and stuff. You have a whole company to run. But having you here makes me feel better.”

He smiled. “Don’t mention it. Just don’t do something stupid tonight.” He held up the beer. “So none of this. And leave the guys alone. You hear me?”

“Yes, Sir.”

She instantly regretted those words. Who called their older brother sir? It was weird. She just couldn’t help it. As a submissive, it came naturally. Especially when talking to a man like Edward. He elicited such a response.

She shrank under the stern gaze he gave her. She nearly lost it when he spoke again and the gravity of his words settled over her.

“I might check in on you. So be smart. And if I find you drinking or fooling around with some idiot, I might pull your pants down and give you a spanking in front of all your little friends. Do you understand me?”

“You can’t do that! I’m not a kid!”

He snorted. “Try me. Now go on. Get out of here and have fun.”

“Are you going to tell Mom and Dad?” she said, desperate pleading in her voice. “About the beer?”

He made a show of thinking it over. “Not if you drop it and do what you’re supposed to tonight.”

“I’ll be good! I promise.”

She gave him a hug before getting in her car.

It was at that moment that she knew exactly what Edward was. She understood what was simmering below the surface.

He was a Daddy.

He had to be.

* * *

“OH CRAP!”

Lilly was pulled from the memories when she accidentally dropped the bowl of cookie dough. It clattered loudly atop the granite island.

“I’ve got to get it together,” she said.

Ms. Duckworth didn’t respond, but the smile on her face told Lilly she agreed.

“You’re my best friend,” Lilly said, “but don’t get offended when I put you up in a minute. It isn’t personal. Edward may wonder why I have a stuffie who wears diapers. I don’t want him thinking I’m a Little or anything.”

Again, Ms. Duckworth didn't respond, but that smile told Lilly she understood. They were in this together, after all.

Lilly studied her for a moment and then said, "I know *I am a Little*. But Edward can't know that! He'll think I'm a total weirdo."

The duck kept staring at her.

Lilly shook her head. "I don't know that he's a Daddy. Not for sure, anyway. He just gives off Daddy vibes. It's probably because he's all cute, sexy, and kinda stern." She shrugged. "It doesn't matter even if he is a Daddy. He's my stepbrother. I can't rehash all this now. We've got to finish these cookies."

As always, Ms. Duckworth wasn't upset. She smiled at Lilly. Lilly giggled and waved.

She went about finishing the cookies, eager to have them ready by the time Edward arrived. Who doesn't want to be greeted with fresh, warm chocolate chip cookies?

But it was hard to concentrate on the task at hand. Something deep down told her she was going to meet her Daddy today. Would it be Blake? That would be exciting.

Or could it be...

"No!" she shouted to herself. "Don't go down that road. You and he can't..."

She groaned.

She knew what her brain was telling her. She knew what society would tell her.

But her heart was saying something else.

And it was talking awfully loudly.

CHAPTER 3

Edward guided his sleek 718 Spyder RS through the suburban streets, turning heads and drawing stares.

He smiled.

Go ahead and look. It isn't every day you see a \$170,000 sports car.

A group of boys in a yard stopped kicking a soccer ball and ran to the curb, dropping their jaws and following the car with their eyes. Edward gave them a little wave, but they probably couldn't see him thanks to the dark tint that shaded the windows.

You too can have this one day. If you're a near-genius, are ambitious, and can talk investors into giving you startup capital.

He rounded a curve and kept going. Mr. Jensen stood in his driveway, water hose in hand, washing his car. Only the year on the red Caddy had changed. He'd upgraded, at least. That was about it. Nothing else had changed. He used to wash his car almost every day back when Edward was a kid. He was retired and didn't have much else to do. How old was he now? He'd been retired forever it seemed and had been old twenty years ago.

He offered a half-hearted wave, but as usual, didn't even know who he was waving to. He just did it every time a car passed by, not even bothering to look up from his task.

Some things never change, Edward thought.

Edward drove deeper into the old neighborhood. So much had stayed the same. The houses were forty to sixty years old but well maintained. Most were two stories. Middle class. Nothing fancy. But not on the lower end, either. A quiet, safe neighborhood that attracted families and tended to keep them. The parents, at least. All the kids from Edward's generation had moved on to build their own lives.

He pulled into the driveway but kept the engine running as he studied his childhood home. Dad still had the yard looking lush and perfectly manicured. The hedges that lined both sides of the house, split by the front door, were trimmed to precision. The white siding was freshly painted. The new windows—a gift last Christmas from Edward—looked nice. Dad had gone on and on about how much money the energy-efficient glass would save. He was into that, like most men of his age are.

Edward's attention shifted away from the house. He began to focus on what he couldn't see yet. Or rather, *who* he couldn't see.

She was in there.

His kid stepsister.

Lilly.

She wasn't a kid anymore, he realized.

Twenty-one.

She didn't always act like it. Case in point: he was having to babysit her while his dad and stepmom went away for a week. She'd finished college, getting a teaching degree, but still lived at home. She'd never liked being on her own. He got it. Some people have anxiety. But still—it was time she started taking some “Big girl” steps.

It was inconvenient—not to mention annoying—that he had to drop everything and come babysit a grown woman.

But that's what I want. To care for, protect, and cherish someone. To find a Little cutie who relies on me to meet all her needs.

“Not her!” he said aloud, slapping a balled fist against the leather-covered steering wheel. Pain reverberated up through his hand. He gritted his teeth.

“She isn't a Little,” he said, this time calmer.

And what do I care if she is? he pondered silently. *Her mom is married to my dad. That makes her my...* he groaned, cutting off his own thoughts with a shake of his head.

He looked into the rearview mirror, staring into his own eyes. “You've got this. You've gone through a lot tougher. Get your shit together.”

He shook his head one last time before cutting off the ignition.

He'd faced down hostile boardrooms. He'd taken over entire corporations. He'd absorbed rivals' assets. In the business world, he was respected. Even feared by some. He played by the rules and didn't cheat—but he was tough. A leader who didn't hesitate to throw his weight around.

Now, though, he felt almost helpless. As if he were about to face the toughest challenge of his life. And he didn't want to

admit the stakes. Didn't want to acknowledge even to himself what he suspected.

Because it sure seemed like Lilly was the sweet Little he longed for. The one he wanted to hold, dominate, and spoil.

The Little of his dreams.

CHAPTER 4

The doorbell chimed, giving Lilly a fright.

“He’s here!” she said giddily.

She dashed from the kitchen, unlocked the front door, and threw it open.

“Edward!”

She hooked her arms around his neck and squeezed tightly. He returned the embrace, but it wasn’t nearly as enthusiastic on his end.

“Hey, sis,” he said.

Why does he sound so aloof? she wondered. She finally decided it didn’t matter. He was always that way to an extent—except when he was bossing her around. He was pretty good at that.

She pulled away and tried hard to control her breathing. She wasn’t sure why she was so excited. It had been a few months since they’d seen each other. But it was more than that.

Was it the way his knotty, corded muscles had pressed back hard against her hand as she’d rubbed his back? Was it all the Daddy energy he exuded? Whatever the case, she made a mental note to get herself under control.

“Thanks for coming. I know you probably have a million other things you could be doing,” she said with a laugh.

“I am busy,” he noted without a smile.

“Oh.” A heavy silence settled around them as they stood in the entryway, just beside the staircase, sizing each other up. “I’m sorry, Edward. I know I’m all grown up now. I just still get nervous staying by myself and—”

“It’s okay,” he said. He at least offered a smile, but it was slight.

Better than nothing, Lilly noted silently.

She perked up. “Do you smell that? Smells good, doesn’t it?”

He nodded, still showing no excitement.

That’s okay, Lilly thought, *because I have enough excitement for the both of us*. “I made chocolate chip cookies! Just for you.” She giggled.

For a moment, she saw something change inside Edward. His eyes softened. There was an almost whimsical quality to his slight grin, as if he found her cute.

“I guess that explains the flour in your hair and the dough on your lip,” he said.

She blushed, wiping her mouth. “I, uh, snuck a little bite.”

He cleared his throat as his eyes narrowed.

“What?” she said.

“Raw cookie dough? Does it have eggs in it?”

“Yeah. Why?”

“Sis, we’ve been over this before. That can make you sick.”

She waved off the suggestion. “I haven’t gotten sick yet.”

He cleared his throat once more.

“What?” she pressed.

“Don’t do that again. I mean it.”

Lilly’s back stiffened. And just like that, he was throwing off major Daddy energy. Oh so much Daddy energy!

Gross! Stop thinking like that! My brother does not want to be my Daddy.

And I can’t believe I had to just utter that statement! Seriously, Lilly, get ahold of yourself!

Just as quickly as Edward had softened, his stance and gaze shifted back to the aloof, annoyed CEO.

Lilly wasn’t going to give up that easily. Their time together was just getting started. She was going to get her big bro to loosen up one way or another. She grabbed his hand and pulled. “Come on! Let’s go get a cookie.”

He left his suitcase in the entryway and allowed himself to be tugged straight back, toward the kitchen. They fell through the swinging door and were greeted by an even stronger aroma from the freshly baked cookies that sat cooling on a wire rack.

“Don’t they look yummy?” Lilly asked, sweeping her hands across them, obviously proud of her accomplishment.

“Yeah,” Edward said. “Great.”

That’s it? I worked hard on those. Why do you have to be such a sourpuss?

Lilly held that comment to herself. As stern as Edward had seemed about the cookie dough, she didn't feel now was the right time to push him.

He might pull my shorts and panties down and spank my bottom right here in the kitchen!

An excitement swirled in Lilly's core. She tried to fight it off, though, reminding herself once again not to mentally go down that road.

"Try one," she said, reaching for the cookies.

She grabbed one, spun around, and tried to shove it at Edward's mouth. But he was immobilized, standing there, his eyes wide and his jaw slack.

"What's wrong?" she said.

She followed his line of sight, craning her neck around to see what it was that held his gaze. It didn't take her long to realize the source of his astonishment.

Oh crap! I left Ms. Duckworth out!

"I, uh... that's my... stuffie that... I mean—"

"You've always been into stuff like that," he said. He offered her a quick, polite smile and then quickly snatched the cookie. He shoved it in his mouth. "It's good."

"T-thank you," she said demurely.

She busied herself with the dishes in the sink, eager to have her back to Edward.

This is so embarrassing! What is he thinking? Oh my gosh. This weekend is getting off to a bad start.

"I need to put my stuff away," Edward said. "I'll see you in a bit."

He exited the kitchen without another word.

Leaving poor Lilly to wonder if she'd already blown it.

CHAPTER 5

Edward's cock was rock hard.

He shut and locked the bathroom door and pulled his slacks down, freeing his swollen member from its prison.

Pre-cum seeped from the head as he thought back to what that hug had felt like.

Mmm. Holding that sweet little girl in his arms—even if it had been halfhearted and quick—was almost more than he could take.

And sweet Little girl is exactly what she is, he thought. That stuffie had confirmed it.

He chuckled, thinking about the duck in a diaper. Did that little sweetie put her dolly in a diaper because she wears diapers, too? It made sense. Poor thing might be embarrassed having to wear protection. Maybe it softens the blow having her best friend wear them, too.

Cute. Cute. Cute.

He wrapped a hand around his cock and pumped several times, gritting his teeth as a wave of pleasure crept over him. He had to come. He couldn't be in Lilly's presence unless he got some relief. Otherwise, he might not be able to control himself. He might just give into those urges that plagued him.

Those urges to take her into his arms.

Those urges to shower her with kisses.

Those urges to discipline her when needed.

Those urges that demanded he be her Daddy.

He grunted as he continued to tug on his pole. It wouldn't take long at all for him to spew his seed. Was he going to have to do this a dozen times a day? He'd only been around her for a few minutes and already he was having trouble restraining himself. How could he survive the next few days?

A knock at the door interrupted his thoughts—and the self-pleasure—causing him to freeze.

“Edward? Are you in there?”

Even her little voice is adorable. Shit!

“Hang on,” he said, sounding a bit harsher than he'd intended. That's probably for the best, he decided. He needed to be a little hard on her. Maybe that would keep her at arm's length. The last thing he needed to do was anything that drew her *toward* him. Even if he desperately wanted to.

He waited for his cock to shrink a bit before stuffing it in his pants and zipping up. He washed his hands and then opened the door. Lilly stood there, her eyes wet with mounting tears, her bottom lip trembling.

“I'm sorry to bother you. I just wanted to check... well... did I upset you?”

That quivering voice was almost more than he could take. He prayed she wouldn't lose that battle with those tears and sob. He couldn't restrain himself if she did. He'd have that babygirl in his arms quicker than she could comprehend.

“Not upset,” he said coolly. “Just had a long drive down, you know?”

“Yeah,” she said.

A heavy moment ticked off the clock before she spoke again.

“I guess I’m kinda weird for still having stuffed animals, huh?” She laughed, but it was obviously forced. “I just thought it would be kinda cute to have it in a diaper. That’s all.”

“Sure,” he said. “It’s cute. I guess.”

She sucked in her bottom lip and nodded. Her phone dinged, drawing both of their attention.

“Who is that?” Edward asked.

“Oh, it’s just Blake.” She smiled as she checked the screen.

Who the hell is this Blake? Is she seeing someone?

Edward reminded himself it was none of his business. She wasn’t his. She couldn’t be his. Why the hell should he care one way or another?

Still, he couldn’t keep from getting in her business. Maybe it was that overprotective big brother thing. That’s what he told himself, anyway.

“Who’s he?”

She smiled coyly. “None of your business.” She playfully stuck her tongue out.

Edward’s stomach muscles clinched tightly. His cock surged once more. Damn, that cutie was way too much. He needed to finish what he’d just started. Maybe then, after spraying his load, he wouldn’t be wound so tight.

“I’m taking care of you,” he countered. “So it is my business.”

Lilly backed away from the bathroom door, retreating deeper into Edward’s old bedroom. “You aren’t *taking care* of me. You’re staying with me. There’s a difference.”

He shook his head. “You aren’t capable of staying alone. So I’m here. I’m taking care of you. Now who is Blake.” His words were lined with steel.

He realized the comments had stung her a little, but he didn’t apologize. He was just being honest. She in fact could not take care of herself.

“He’s just a guy I met online. We’re going on a date tonight.”

“What?” he said, his voice rising as he stepped forward. “Have you ever met this guy in-person?”

“Not yet,” she said.

“And you’re just going to go out with him tonight?”

“That’s what I said. It’s a date.”

Oh, he wanted to sit down on the bed, drape her across his knee, and wear that little bottom out hard. Instead, he said, “Absolutely not.”

“Why?” she said.

“He could be a psychopath for all you know. It’s too dangerous.”

“I’m twenty-one! I can do whatever I want!”

“Then you can stay by yourself,” he said. “Wish I would have realized that before I drove all the way down here.”

“Edward!” she said. “I’m sorry. Please don’t go.”

He hated seeing her so upset. It took every ounce of willpower he had not to take her in his arms. He wanted to wipe those tears away. To shower her with a thousand kisses. But he couldn't. Not now. Not ever. So he stood there looking at her.

“Fine,” he said. “I’ll stay. And you can go. But you’ll give me the details of where you’re going. Understand?”

“Yes, Sir,” she said.

He loved hearing that. She had a habit of calling any man who gave her orders *Sir*. That’s the submissive in her, he thought with a wry smile.

Just one of the many reasons she drives me so crazy.

“And you won’t go anywhere alone with him. You keep it public. Lots of people. Am I clear?”

She nodded.

“Nope. Not good enough. Let’s try again,” Edward said. “Am I clear?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Good. Now, let me get my things put away and I’ll come down and have a few more of those cookies. We’ll sit down at the kitchen table and you can give me all the details about your date.”

She smiled. “Okay. I’d like that. Can Ms. Duckworth sit with us?”

He couldn’t suppress the smile that overtook his lips. *How cute is that?* he pondered silently. She’d accidentally slid into Little Space.

“Yes. Ms. Duckworth is always welcome.”

He winked.

She giggled.

Stop it, Edward! That's going too far! Rein it in before it gets out of hand. She's my damn stepsister. Remember that.

She turned to leave, now happy the tension was diffused, and was practically skipping out of the room, but she stopped before reaching the door. Turning back, she ran to Edward and threw her arms around his neck for a tight hug.

“You’re the best big brother ever!” she said.

He watched her skip away once again.

His cock—and his heart—didn’t want her to go.

CHAPTER 6

“Do you love them?” Lilly asked.

Edward finished chewing the chocolate chip cookie and nodded. “I do.”

“They’re my secret recipe,” she said. “I take the recipe from the chocolate chip bag but double up on the vanilla and add a half-cup extra of sugar.”

She watched as he smiled. Wiping his mouth with a napkin, he said, “It isn’t a secret now.”

“Oh yeah. I’m silly sometimes,” she said.

He nodded.

There was something in his eyes that told Lilly he found her cute. Maybe even adorable. Or was that just her imagination?

“Now, tell me all about this date tonight.”

She watched as Edward clicked a pen and put it to the yellow legal pad laid out before him. He wrote—in neat, perfectly spaced letters—the heading LILLY’S DATE.

Every bit the head of the boardroom table, she thought with a smile.

“Now, give me all the details regarding tonight’s date. Don’t leave anything out,” he said.

She shrugged. “I mean, I’m not sure what to say. I met this guy online. He seems super nice and we’re going out tonight.”

Edward’s gaze wasn’t hard but it was focused. “Where did you meet him.”

“Like I said, online.”

“I’m asking what website or dating app.”

“Oh.”

She couldn’t think of a quick enough response. Her mind raced a dozen different directions. She was a lousy liar. But telling the truth wasn’t an option. Giving him the actual site would out her as a Little.

He’s probably never heard of it. But he’ll research it. Just think of something. Anything. First thing that comes to mind.

“Tinder,” she said.

“No good. That’s a hookup app.”

She laughed. “It’s not just a hookup app!”

He nodded. “This guy is going to expect sex.”

Her eyes went wide as she leaned back in her chair. “And so what if he does? Maybe I’ll expect sex, too. I’m a grown woman.”

His eyes flickered to the stuffie wearing the diaper.

She gulped.

Well, I’m grown-ish, she thought.

Looking back to her, he said, “Why did it take you so long to answer?”

“What?”

“When I asked you what app you met this guy on. You had to think about it. And your eyes darted up and to the right. That’s a sign of deceit.”

“That’s not real!” she said with another laugh.

“I hired a body language expert. I need to read people in the boardroom or during meetings. It comes in very handy when I meet with politicians. It’s coming in handy now. Your body language just told me you’re lying.”

“That’s not real,” she said.

But was it real? she wondered.

He’s just trying to rattle me. Totally bluffing. Don’t give him anything.

Still, she couldn’t help but grow nervous.

Gee whiz! If he’s a Daddy, he’s a tough one! I feel sorry for his Little. She couldn’t get away with anything.

“I didn’t lie. I just don’t think this is any of your business,” she said.

Guilt stabbed at her conscience. She hated being dishonest. She had to protect her Little nature, though. Not to mention the fact that Blake was a Daddy. It wouldn’t be fair to out him.

“You asked me to keep an eye on you while Mom and Dad are gone. That makes it my business,” Edward said. “And let me say this. I still think you lied to me about what site you met this guy on. That concerns me. Obviously it’s a site you know I wouldn’t approve of. Which leads to my next question. What do you know about this guy? Is he trying to recruit you for something weird? Like a sex cult?”

This time Lilly's laugh was not quiet. She threw her head back. Her shoulders shook. When she looked at Edward once again, she saw that he did not appreciate her laughter. Nor did he see the humor in it.

"A sex cult?" she said, fighting off more laughter.

"That's not farfetched. There was a whole organization that claimed to be a leadership training seminar. In reality, it was just a sex cult. Women were basically forced into slavery. I'm serious."

"Oh."

"Yep. So what do you know about this guy?"

For a moment, Lilly really was worried. In reality, she didn't know much about Blake. Could he be creepy? Suddenly, the thought of meeting him alone didn't sound so wonderful.

"I don't know much," she admitted. "He lives in Parker. He's in the heat and air business. Seems really nice."

"Have you even talked to him? Like actually heard his voice?" Edward asked. He tapped the pen's tip against the yellow pad.

"Yeah. Twice," she said.

"What's his last name?"

Once again, her mind raced. What would it hurt giving up Blake's last name? It wasn't as if Edward could find out that he's a Daddy from having the information.

There's nearly eight million people in the Metroplex, she realized. There are probably a hundred or more guys with that same name.

So she told him. “Blake Rankin.”

He wrote it down.

“And you said he’s in heat and air?”

“Uh-huh.”

“What’s the company’s name?”

“I dunno.”

“Does he own it or work for someone else.”

“Do you always ask so many questions?” she said.

He looked up from his writing. “When I’m trying to keep sassy little girls safe, I do.”

She gulped.

Did he just call me a sassy little girl?

“Look, I don’t know if he owns the company or not. I’ll ask him tonight.”

“We’re almost done. Calm down.”

She thought of hitting back with a comment to show him just how sassy she could be but decided against it.

“Where are you going?”

She told him the name of the restaurant.

“Are you meeting him or is he picking you up.”

“Meeting him,” she said.

Edward looked relieved, but only slightly.

“And you, under no circumstances, will get into his car. Correct?” he said.

“Yes, Daddy,” she said playfully, sticking her tongue out.

She meant the comment sarcastically, but oh how it felt so good to call him that!

“And if he steps out of line in any way, you’ll call me. Right?”

“I will,” she said. “Look, I know you’re just doing what a big brother does. Thank you. But I’ll be fine.” She reached across the table and patted his hand. “It makes me feel better knowing you’re looking out for me. You’re the best!”

She stood up, hugged his neck, and kissed his cheek before skipping away to get ready for her date.

As she made her way upstairs and to her bedroom, she was all giggles and smiles.

That had sure felt good calling him that.

Daddy.

It just had a wonderful ring to it.

CHAPTER 7

Edward didn't like this one bit.

Lilly was too inexperienced and naïve to be out there on a date with some guy she met on the internet. And Edward didn't know why, but something about this Blake guy didn't sit well with him.

As to what that might be, he had no idea. He knew next to nothing about the man. But his instincts were heightened and raising alarm. He'd learned to trust those instincts, too. You don't make it as far as he had in life without a sharp intuition.

He needed something to go on, though.

Lilly hadn't been gone five minutes when he decided to do a bit of snooping. Was he being overprotective? Yep. Was it a little douchie to rifle through her things? Sure was. Was it wrong? Nope. Someone had to look out for the kid.

So he got to work.

He sat down at the desk in her bedroom and stared at the computer screen. She hadn't bothered to shut it down, but it was locked. He thought over his options. There was a good chance the computer wouldn't tell him anything. Almost everything was done on smartphones now. The chances of her

accessing the dating program on her PC were slim. But it was on, meaning she'd had it booted up for something.

He touched the keyboard, causing the password entry screen to appear.

He put his hands on the keyboard, ready to type, and tried their parents' names. He quickly saw it was a passcode instead. His fingers hovered over the 10-keypad. He typed in his birthday and smiled as the lock screen faded to reveal her desktop.

Cute. Kinda sweet. But easily hacked.

He opened her internet browser and checked her history.

What he saw shocked him.

"I know this site," he said, clicking on it.

Sure enough, it was a site he'd visited numerous times. He'd used a fake name, not wanting to reveal his true identity since he was well known. He would have had to eventually confess who he was, but things had not progressed that far. He'd never found a Little who seemed like a good fit, so he'd stopped perusing months ago. Had he stayed active on the site a little longer, he would have seen his little stepsister.

"Well, this confirms that," he said.

He spun the padded chair around and stared at Lilly's bed where the diapered Ms. Duckworth sat.

"She's a Little."

Ms. Duckworth only smiled in confirmation.

A myriad of emotions seized Edward, all competing for mental dominance. On one hand, it thrilled him to know Lilly was a Little. Why wouldn't it? He was a Daddy. Plain and

simple. Knowing that the girl who drove him wild—the one he'd had so many dreams about—was a Little confirmed everything he'd suspected.

Not to mention what the knowledge did to his imagination.

But it also saddened him. She was a Little. She was perfect. She needed a strong man to take her in hand and guide her. Cherish her. Discipline her. Hold her close all her days.

It just couldn't be him.

The irony of all ironies. They were a perfect match.

But it could never be him.

That didn't mean it had to be Blake. Edward still had a bad feeling about this guy. He needed to know more. So he found his profile through Lilly's connection and followed the trail.

Wow.

If one went back far enough, they'd see that Blake had posted some photos about a year ago of him in a local dungeon, playing with a few subs.

“Asshole,” Edward muttered.

This guy wasn't playing safely. It was obvious because there were even videos. He then read some of the comments Blake had left on other's posts.

Edward's blood boiled.

He stood up. Lilly deserved better. She deserved a real Daddy. Blake wasn't one.

He had to rescue her before she did anything she'd regret.



CHAPTER 8

The restaurant was nice.

The food was good.

Blake was handsome.

He wasn't as hot and sexy as Edward, but he was handsome in a rugged sort of way. He had talked about how much he loved camping and other outdoor activities and it fit. He looked as if he'd stepped right out of an ad for hiking boots.

He had dark hair that was showing some silver, a prominent jawline, and sharp, somewhat hawkish eyes. His forearms were thick. Every now and then, his biceps bulged under the fabric of his shirt. He didn't look like a gym rat—a fact Lilly was thankful for—but rather a man who worked with his hands and had the strength to show for it.

Still, something was off. Lilly wasn't quite enjoying herself to the level she'd hoped she would. Had Edward gotten into her head with all his warnings? Who did he think he was, having her spill all the details like that. He'd written it all down like they were at some sort of court deposition or something.

Jerk.

Yet she couldn't find the energy to be mad at her stepbrother. He cared about her. He just had a funny way of showing it sometimes.

"So what do you like as far as punishment goes?" Blake asked.

Lilly was taken aback by the question. They were in the middle of a restaurant. Had any other patrons heard? Was Blake always so open about his kink? The public discussion was definitely a red flag, Lilly noted. Consent was so important. Exposing unwilling participants was not cool, even if it was as simple as overhearing a conversation that should have been saved for a safe setting.

"I don't think we should, uh, talk about this right here," she said quietly.

Despite trying not to, she sounded apologetic. She hated it. She didn't owe Blake an explanation. He should already know the rules.

"Easy," he said. "Maybe I need to punish you. I've never met a Little who talks that way to a Daddy."

Lilly was mortified. Her eyes darted from side to side, trying to gauge the reaction of nearby diners. No one was looking over at them. The conversations had not come to a screeching halt. Best she could tell, no one had heard. But she was beyond uncomfortable.

She remembered the promise she'd made to Edward.

I'll pay attention to any warning signs. I'll leave at the first sign of trouble.

Despite the pledge, she didn't know what to do. Getting up and walking away would be rude. Should she wait until dinner was over? What was the harm in that?

She then had a thought.

I can text Edward and ask him to come up here. He can just wait in the parking lot. Blake won't even have to know he's here.

Having Edward nearby would make her feel better.

Edward always made her feel better.

But she didn't want to bother him. He'd already been inconvenienced enough just having to come down for a few days. He was probably back at the house, undressed for the evening, watching TV.

Actually, it was more likely he was working. He did that a lot.

Whatever he was doing, it was no doubt more important than sitting in the parking lot while she finished a date. Besides, Blake was probably harmless. Maybe even a nice guy. Everyone makes mistakes. Right?

As the night wore on, however, Blake continued to shift the conversation to topics that should not be discussed so openly and around people who had not consented. At one point, Lilly even caught a lady glancing over from a nearby table, her eyebrow arched in disapproval.

Lilly was in a hurry to leave once the bill had been paid. Blake did pick up the tab, which was nice, but from the leering glances he gave her—and several comments—it became apparent he expected something in return. She wasn't interested, so she walked briskly toward her car.

Ending a date is always so awkward. Especially when I didn't enjoy it. Do I go for the hug? It would be a side-hug. Definitely side. Do I shake his hand? That seems ridiculous. Or do I just say goodbye and maybe I'll give you a call?

“Whoa. Slow down,” Blake called.

She didn't.

“I told you to slow down, little girl.”

Lilly felt as if steam were about to billow from her ears. This guy was not her Daddy. They'd not negotiated. They'd not even broached the subject. Did he think every submissive Little was just automatically under his authority?

She wanted to ask him, and then explain how things really were, but she was scared. This was her first time with a Daddy. Were they all like this? Oh gosh. What if all the romance novels she'd read and fantasies she'd had were nothing like reality?

Panic began to set in. Sweat beaded her forehead. How would she get out of this mess?

She turned to face Blake. Standing in the parking lot, the lights from the restaurant mixed with the setting sun to form enough light that she saw clearly into Blake's eyes.

And she didn't like what she found there.

“So,” he said, stepping uncomfortably close, “your place or mine?”

“Neither.”

The word wasn't shouted, but it had such a sharp edge to it that Blake stepped back as if he could be cut by it.

Edward appeared from between two cars and walked into the fray. Lilly appraised him, noting how in charge he looked, as if he owned the restaurant and everything around it. For all she knew, he did.

“Who the hell are you?” Blake said.

“Her brother.”

Blake opened his mouth as if he wanted to respond, but something stopped him cold. Maybe it was that look in Edward’s eyes. Maybe it was the way his presence dominated everything and everyone, looming large and making everything else seem so small.

Lilly realized it was probably for the best that Blake keep his mouth shut.

Edward wasn’t finished, though.

“Keep your eyes on me while I’m talking to you. I want to make sure you get this. You’ll never contact my little sister again. You won’t even think about her. If you’re smart, you’ll get off that dating site. Because if I find out you hurt any Little, I’ll hunt you down. You need to learn about safe play. They should’ve never let you participate in the community if you don’t understand the basics.”

Lilly was shocked. So he’d found out what website she’d met Blake on. Oh crap! There wasn’t time to worry about the ramifications about that now, though. It looked like there might be a fight.

Blake, apparently unable to let the dressing down go unchallenged, bowed up and took a few shuffled steps toward Edward. The bravado seemed forced. Still, to his credit, his voice only trembled a little when he said, “Who do you think you are, bro?”

“I’m not your bro,” Edward said.

He did not step forward. Nor did he puff out his chest. No action was required on his part to retain control. His command was never in doubt.

“I’m the guy telling you to take the time to learn some things. Calling yourself a Daddy doesn’t make it so. You might be an okay guy, but you need to grow. You won’t be doing that with my sister.”

With that, Edward grabbed Lilly’s wrist and guided her toward their cars.

The date was officially over.

CHAPTER 9

“I was going to handle that myself.”

Lilly said the words upon completing the drive back to the house. Edward had kept his Porsche closely behind her the entire way, practically riding her tail, as if not wanting to let her out of his sight. The time alone had given her a few minutes to think things over. She wasn't going to address the whole Little issue. It was obvious Edward knew her secret. Which meant he'd been snooping on her computer. She didn't like that.

She understood why. He wanted to protect her. But she still didn't like it.

After some consideration, she decided the best course of action was to simply ignore that aspect. She couldn't help but wonder what Edward thought of her now, though.

Did it bother him?

Or did it excite him?

He sighed, rubbed the back of his neck, and finally said, “You froze up. I saw.”

“While you creepily watched from behind the cars?” she said.

He grunted but otherwise let the jab go. “I saw enough to know you needed me.”

“I’m a Big girl! I mean, uh, an adult. I can take care of things myself.”

“Again, I’m here staying with you while Mom and Dad are gone. What does that say?”

She pinched her lips tightly closed. She could feel the pressure of tears mounting in her eyes. “I need to go to bed,” she mumbled.

She knew Edward’s words were true, but they still stung. Walking into her room, she resisted the urge to slam the door. That would only make her seem more like a child, she realized. So, she closed it gently.

She looked at Ms. Duckworth on the bed. “I don’t mean to be so helpless. Gosh! What’s wrong with me?”

She fell on the bed face first. A moment later, she was sobbing into a pillow, her entire body shaking. She stayed like that for a few minutes, so lost in her emotions that she didn’t hear her door open or even notice when the mattress below her sank slightly. She remained oblivious to Edward’s presence until a hand rubbed soothing circles on her back. For a moment, she wondered if she was imagining it—nothing more than the Daddy of her dreams coming to comfort her.

Maybe that wasn’t too far from the truth.

“I was hard on you. I’m sorry,” Edward said.

She hugged the pillow tighter. More tears fell into it.

“You aren’t helpless,” he said. “I know that.”

She sobbed for another moment before rising on her elbows and awkwardly twisting until she was half-seated and

facing him. “You can go home if you want. I can stay by myself.”

There was a genuineness to his smile and she knew he wasn't making fun of her with it. There was a tenderness in his eyes that she'd only seen on a few previous occasions. It was a tenderness that she suspected was always there, he just hid it for whatever reason.

“You could stay on your own. You're capable. But you'd prefer I be here. And I want to be. So I'm staying.”

Like most things, he didn't phrase it as if there were any doubt. He stated facts. Plain and simple.

“You do?” she said, her voice still shaky.

“I do. How long has it been since we've truly hung out? Six months?”

She laughed. “A year-and-a-half.”

“Oh.”

“Yep.”

He winced slightly. “I'm sorry. I lose track of time.”

“You're busy,” she acknowledged. “It happens.”

“Well, let's make the most of this time. Starting”—he checked his Rolex—“starting tomorrow, actually. It's late. You had a big night. You need rest.”

She readjusted herself until she was sitting more comfortably, her knees pulled up to her chest. She wondered if she looked as Little and innocent as she felt.

“I'm fine. Promise. We can watch a movie!”

“Nice try. You need sleep.” He stood and walked to her chest of drawers. Reaching for the top one, he said, “You go

brush your teeth. Good, too. I'll get your pajamas and—”

“Edward, don't!”

It was too late. He had the drawer open now, with a full view of its contents.

Disposable, plastic-backed diapers and pink, plastic pants.

She rushed over there and slammed the drawer shut.

“Stay out of my stuff! You already snooped on my computer earlier!”

She felt a twinge of guilt for being so harsh, but he really needed to respect her privacy. She was a grown woman, after all. Despite what it seemed like.

“I'm sorry,” he said.

Lilly knew those were hard words for a man like Edward to say. She nodded and offered a little shrug.

“I'll give you some privacy,” he said.

He left her alone in the room.

Lilly was torn. She had no idea if she wanted him to stay or go.

Or maybe scoop her into his arms and whisk her away forever.

Part of her feared that was the option she truly longed for.

Edward stood outside Lilly's room, just beside the door, with his back to the wall.

He exhaled sharply.

I'm getting too close. Going down a road I shouldn't traverse. Lay off her now!

He balled his fists and focused on his breathing. He needed to calm down. He needed to ignore the excitement that roiled in the pit of his stomach. He needed to fight those desires. He could do it. He had to do it.

But when he heard Lilly sobbing once more, he was powerless. He hurried into her bedroom to find her still standing in front of the chest of drawers. Her shoulders shook violently, her head sagging as tears cascaded to the floor.

"Shhh," he said, taking her in his arms and reeling her in close. "I've got you. I've got you, honey."

He held her for a few minutes—maybe longer, he didn't really know—gently swaying and reassuring her that everything would be okay. She clung tightly to him. Her tears soaked through his expensive shirt.

"You know I won't judge you. I'm your big brother," he said.

He hated saying that. That wasn't the term he wanted to use at all.

I'm your Daddy.

Mmm. It seemed so right. So natural. Yet it was anything but natural. Right? True, they weren't blood. They weren't even babies when their parents had gotten together. But she was still his little sister. He was her big brother.

He wasn't Daddy.

Yet he couldn't stop himself. That sweet, precious Little needed love and comfort. He cared about her too much to leave her to her humiliation and sorrow.

"Do you need help getting a diaper on?" he asked in a low, sweet voice.

She shook her head. "I... d-don't need a d-diaper," she stammered.

He chuckled. "You do. You're going to sleep in one. After the stress of today, I want you settling into bed without a care in the world. That includes getting up to go potty. Now, you have a lot of cute, pretty options in here. Pick the one you want."

She sniffled but eventually pulled away from him and obeyed.

Her default nature, he thought. This cutie can't resist Daddy.

Dude, seriously—stop it! Get yourself together!

She turned to show him the diaper she'd selected—a pink and white one that depicted smiling fairies and unicorns.

“Aww,” he said. “A cute nappy for a cute girl. Do you need help, honey?”

Stop freaking calling her honey!

Heat radiated off Edward. There was the cutest woman in the world, looking up at him through sweet and bashful eyes, holding her diaper.

How the hell can I resist her?

“You can’t see my princess parts!” she said with a giggle.

Pre-cum seeped into his boxer-briefs.

Shit! Shit! Shit!

“It wouldn’t be any big deal,” he said, trying to act as casually as possible. “Just taking care of you.”

Dude, brothers don’t take care of their sisters like that. Stop.

“I can manage,” she said. “Thank you.”

He nodded. “Get dressed and then I’ll read you a story. How about that?”

Even that was going too far, but he had to indulge a little.

“Yes, Sir,” she said.

Edward smiled, liking the what he’d just heard.

He was almost out the door, leaving to afford her some privacy, when she called out again.

“Edward?”

“Yes?”

“May I, uh, sleep with you? I know it sounds stupid, but I keep thinking of Blake. He looked at me like he wanted to hurt me or something. I’m scared.”

Unable to help himself—and unaware of his actions until he had ahold of her—Edward rushed back and wrapped his arms around her.

“Lilly, honey, I’ll never let him or anyone else hurt you.” He kissed the top of her head. “Yes, you can sleep with me.”

His hand started to slide down her back, eager to pat her bottom, but he caught himself just before his fingers crossed her waist. He smiled at her and then went back toward the door.

“Just put on a pair of plastic panties over that diaper,” he said. “We want a leak free night.”

“Yes, Sir,” she said.

And with that, more pre-cum coated Edward’s already sticky boxer-briefs.

Babygirl had nearly worked him into a frenzy.

And it was getting harder and harder to resist her cuteness.



CHAPTER II

“That’s my favorite story of all time!” Lilly said as Edward closed the picture book.

They were sitting in the living room, with her on the couch and him in the nearby chair. He placed the book on the coffee table and then smiled at her. “What part do you like the best?”

“Hmm.” She tapped her lips as she considered his question. “I like the part where the ducks make friends with the alligator.”

She patted the head of Ms. Duckworth who sat beside her. Her diaper rustled loudly with each movement. For some reason, she wasn’t embarrassed around Edward.

“Ducks are your favorite, huh?” he asked.

“Uh-huh. I *love* them!”

“Who is your favorite duck?”

“Ms. Duckworth, of course.” She giggled, picked up the stuffie, and hugged it.

“But who is your favorite famous duck?” Edward pressed.

She laughed loudly. “Famous duck?”

“Sure. Daffy. Donald. Howard.”

“Ohhhh, I see. Hmm.” She tapped her lips again. “Daisy. She has a big purple bow and I love it.”

She blushed hard upon noticing how Edward was looking at her.

He’s looking at me just like a Daddy would look at his Little.

“Have you ever seen *Duck Tales*?” she asked.

“No.”

“Ooh. We could watch it right now! It’s so good. You’ll love it.”

“Maybe tomorrow,” he said, standing. “I know a Little girl who needs to get to bed.”

She stuck her bottom lip out in a pouty display, crossing her arms, too, ensuring Edward got the message.

He read it loud and clear. Shaking his head, he said, “There will be none of that. I suggest you come to bed without throwing a fit.”

Or what? Lilly wanted to know.

Would he spank my bottom for disobeying or throwing a fit?

His steely gaze suggested he would.

She listened to wisdom and obeyed, taking hold of his extended hand and allowing him to pull her from the couch.

“I’ll sleep on your floor,” he said as he guided her upstairs and toward the bedrooms.

“You don’t have to. I’ll be fine,” she said, though it was far from convincing.

“No. I told you I’d stay by you tonight. I keep my word.”

“Always?”

“Yep.”

“No one always keeps their word,” she countered.

“How do you think I’ve made it this far?” he asked. “I have a reputation of doing what I say I’ll do.”

“Yeah, but this isn’t some multi-million-dollar business deal. We’re just talking about sleeping arrangements,” she said.

“There’s no difference,” he said. “How you do one thing is how you do everything.”

“You sound like such a Daddy right now,” she said with a laugh. She instantly realized the words that had just left her mouth and stopped walking. She winced while silently vowing to keep better control of her tongue.

She was shocked when Edward didn’t seem to mind.

“It’s good business practice,” he said. “But I suppose it comes in handy being a Daddy, too.” He winked.

She giggled.

“Now come on, in bed you go,” he said.

“The floor is hard,” she noted. “It wouldn’t hurt for you to sleep in the bed with me. It’s big enough. No big deal.” She hoped she was sounding as casual as she was trying for.

A heavy silence hung over her bedroom as they stepped in.

“Sure. I guess that’s alright,” he said. “I just don’t want you to feel weird. I’ve invaded your space enough tonight.”

“You mean when you snooped on my computer and opened my drawer without asking?”

He chuckled. “Yes. Those times.”

“And when you showed up to my date?”

He spread his hands. “I’m sorry it upset you.”

“But not sorry you did it,” she said.

He shook his head. “Not in the least. That guy was a jerk. I’d do it again. But let’s not talk about him anymore tonight. Or ever. You need to sleep well. Come on. In bed you go.” Edward pulled the covers back and patted the pillow. “That cute head of yours needs to lay right here.”

She did as told. In the meantime, Edward began shrugging out of his shirt as he prepared to settle in for the night.

Those abs! No freaking way! How is he so ripped?

She licked her lips but immediately realized it. She focused on Ms. Duckworth. She looked at the bed’s comforter. When that didn’t work, she fumbled with plugging her phone into the charger on the nightstand. Anything to keep her eyes and mind busy!

Yet resisting completely was a losing battle.

Her eyes darted to her stepbrother as he freed himself of the dress slacks he’d worn all day.

Oh. My. Freaking. Gosh.

The bulge in his gray boxer-briefs was massive! How big was he?

Wetness pooled between Lilly’s legs. She was gripped by a desire she’d never felt before.

That desire intensified when Edward slid into the bed beside her.

She hugged Ms. Duckworth even more tightly. Would she be able to resist the call to snuggle close to him?

“Goodnight,” she said.

“Goodnight. Sleep well, Lilly.”

Oh gosh. Why does his voice have to sound so rich and deep? And do I have to feel the warmth from his body. Soooo close.

Why do I mean why do I have to feel it? I'm lying inches away from him. What did I think was going to happen?

Unable to resist herself, she lunged toward him, draping an arm around his shoulders and placing her head on his bare chest.

For just a moment.

It's only a goodnight hug. Nothing huge. No harm done.

“Goodnight, Edward. I love you. Thanks for staying with me.”

She feared how he would react. He was normally so guarded. Never had been the affectionate type.

But he put his arms around her, too.

It felt wonderful.

“Goodnight, sis. Sleep well.”

She rolled off, turned her back to him, and got situated.

That's when he said it.

“I love you, too.”

She pinched her eyes tightly shut and prayed sleep came mercifully quick. If it took too long, she wouldn't be able to resist herself.

She just knew it.

CHAPTER 12

Edward awoke at six that following morning.

He could have stayed in bed longer. Forever, it seemed. Because at some point in the night, Little cutie had rolled over onto him. He woke up to the sensation of her soft cheek pressed against his chest, her head cradled by his shoulder.

He didn't want to wake her. He didn't need to linger. Yet he couldn't fully resist. Wanting more but knowing they'd already pushed the boundaries, he settled for lightly running his hand up her arm and shoulders. He lightly brushed his lips against the top of his head. Guilt stabbed at his insides. His heart thumped hard against his chest. He had to get out of there.

He slid from bed as delicately as possible. He took a moment to stand over Lilly, watching the angel sleep.

His cock throbbed. Knowing that Little girl was lying there in her diaper, plastic pants, hugging her stuffie, and wanting a Daddy was about more than he could take.

It was more, in fact.

He had to get the hell out of that room. He couldn't stand another second.

He hurried downstairs. He thought of making some coffee but realized he needed something cold instead. Hitting the fridge for a bottle of water, he guzzled a long swallow and then wandered into the living room.

He moved the coffee table and then dropped to the floor in the newly created free space. He did a hundred push-ups. He found a bit of relief as he had to concentrate on maintaining proper form and keeping count. But as soon as he'd completed the set, his mind turned once again to Lilly.

“Why are you sweaty?” she asked, coming into the living room. She looked as cute as could be, hugging Ms. Duckworth. She'd changed into “Big girl” clothes, though—sleep shorts and a tank top.

Oh well. She still looks cute, he thought.

At least this way I won't feel the urge to check her diaper.

“I just did my push-ups for the morning.”

“Do you do them every day?”

“No. I like to hit the gym in my building but since I can't, I just did a quick hundred.”

Well, since I can't go to the gym and I needed to get my mind off how adorable you are.

Her eyes lingered on him a moment and he had to smile. “I should probably get dressed.”

She blushed hard and quickly spun around to head for the kitchen. “I'll start breakfast.”

Still grinning, speaking low and under his breath, Edward shook his head.

“Someone is too cute for her own good... and mine.”

* * *

TWO HOURS LATER, THEY FOUND THEMSELVES AT A LOCAL FUN center that had a vast selection of bounce houses, inflatable obstacle courses, and a few permanent climbing structures. There was also a mini-golf course, bumper boats, an arcade, and various other chances for fun.

“Aren’t we too old for this place?” she asked, looking at one of the giant, inflatable castles.

He realized they were still playing that game—the one where they danced around the Little issue, but he’d keep up the charade as long as she needed him to.

“You’re never too old to have fun,” he said.

“Fun, sure. But we could have some, I dunno, more adult fun. Right?”

You didn’t look so adult last night in your diaper and plastic panties.

Of course, he kept that comment to himself. He didn’t want her to feel as if he were making fun of her.

“You mean like bar hopping or something?” he asked.

“Ooh. That sounds nice. Sure,” Lilly said.

“Absolutely not. And you don’t do that when I’m not around, do you?”

She laughed. “Sometimes.”

“With whom?”

“Friends.”

“Safe friends?”

“Yes, safe friends.”

“Not posers who call themselves Daddies?” he asked, his voice having a slight growl.

Despite vowing to never mention Blake again, that question had slipped. As a *real Daddy*, guys like Blake infuriated him.

“That was my first time,” she said. Her voice was calm and Edward didn’t think she’d taken offense.

“Just be careful. You’re too young to hang out at bars.”

She laughed again, grabbed his arm, and led him toward the castle. “Okay, we can do this instead. But you have to jump with me.”

“Nope. Not my thing.”

She got in front of him, turning to face him, and tugging forward on both of his arms. “Please? Pretty please? Don’t be a sourpuss.”

He grunted.

“You can’t just stand around and wait on me. This day is supposed to be fun.”

“Watching you is fun,” he said.

He wasn’t lying. He could watch that cutie all day.

She let go of his hands and clasped hers together, as if praying. “Please. Please. Please. Pl—”

“Alright,” he said with a groan. “Let’s get this over with.”

Five minutes later, though, he was enjoying himself. True, most of his joy came from watching sweet Lilly, but he was even having fun bouncing up and down. They weren’t the only adults in there, so no one looked at them strangely.

“There’s a secret room back there,” Lilly said, pointing behind a wall that acted as a partition, separating the two areas of the bouncy castle.

“If it’s a secret, how do you know about it?” he asked.

She giggled. “You know what I mean. Come on.”

She grabbed his hand and held it as they awkwardly walked on the uneven surface. They almost fell three times but managed to stay upright. They finally reached their destination, both laughing.

Once behind the wall, she said, “Hey! No one is back here. We have the whole place to ourselves.”

Worry flooded Edward’s mind.

He was struggling to contain himself around Lilly, but having others around helped. Now, with no one to see, would he be able to restrain his desire?

True, it wasn’t like he would tear her clothes off in public or do something inappropriate in front of others. But stealing a kiss here and there? Yeah. He wanted to do that.

And bad.

“Let’s see how high we can jump!” she said.

He was thankful when she separated from him a bit, moving to the middle of the section, and turning her full attention to bouncing.

Well, bouncing and looking adorable, it seemed.

He briefly wondered if he should have made her wear a diaper. Littles have accidents sometimes, especially the way she was jumping around.

Just stop. Don't even think about it. I'm not her Daddy. The sooner I embrace that the easier this will be.

“What are you thinking about?” she asked.

“Nothing.”

“Uh-huh. You're not even jumping. I can tell something is on your mind. Is it work stuff?”

For a moment, he thought of lying, but then remembered his convictions. Honesty was always the best policy.

“No.”

“Then what is it?”

“Nothing you need to concern yourself with.”

“Hmm. Well, I can't make you tell me, but I can make you jump.” She hopped toward him.

He chuckled. “You can't make me do anything.”

“Wanna bet? You think you're tougher than me just because you're a Daddy and I'm a Little?”

It was evident she realized what she'd said as soon as the words left her mouth. Rather than address it, though, she seemed to select diversion tactics. “Look at how crazy I'm jumping!” she yelled.

She went high, extended her arms, and kicked her legs as she came toward Edward. She lost control and toppled into him. They both went down, tangled up and rolling across the squishy, uneven surface.

They landed with Edward on top.

They gazed into each other's eyes. Their lips hovered mere inches from each other.

That's when Edward lost all willpower.

The man who had taken on corporate raiders and hostile takeovers—and even led a few of his own—was completely powerless to resist the call of sweet Lilly.

He lightly pressed his lips to hers. She returned the kiss, wiggling her arms free from beneath him and wrapping them around his neck.

The kiss turned into a long, lusty one that left them both breathless.

And reeling.

Edward didn't know where they'd go from that moment, but he knew two things.

He'd screwed up royally.

And nothing between them would ever be the same.

CHAPTER 13

The next several days passed uneventfully, with neither Edward nor Lilly acknowledging the kiss.

Edward tried hard to rein in his Daddy instincts. Lilly did the same with her Little tendencies. They slept in separate beds and had a pleasant time but generally kept one another at arm's length.

In fact, nothing was said at all about their earlier encounters until it came time for Edward to leave.

"Mom and Dad will be home soon," he said.

Part of him felt weird even saying such a sentence. "Your mom and my dad will be home soon," would have had a better ring to it. At least it would have made him feel less conflicted.

"I'm all good. Thank you for staying with me," Lilly said.

They stood there in the entryway, looking at each other.

"It was good spending some time with you, sis," he said.

"Thanks for coming. I know you're busy. I had a blast with you," she said.

More silence. A lot more awkwardness. Time seemed to crawl.

"I better get on back to the city," he said.

He gave her a hug, but it was every bit as awkward as the attempted conversation had been.

“Drive careful,” she said.

He nodded.

A mixture of relief and sorrow settled over Edward as he wheeled his suitcase toward the car. He could feel Lilly watching him as he hurried down the walkway. He threw his luggage in, gave her one last wave, and then ducked into his car.

She waved back.

She didn't close the door until he'd driven away.

Two Months Later

“THIS IS GOING TO BE THE BEST WEEK OF MY LIFE!” LILLY said.

She was holding Ms. Duckworth as she stared at the building straight ahead. Around her in the distance, Montana rose in all its majestic, scenic glory. The mountains were jagged and ancient, demanding a sense of awe. They weren't the only thing, though.

The building Lilly stood in front of was quite impressive. In fact, the whole Rawhide Ranch was! At least, the parts she'd seen of it on her trip through the gates and to the main structure. She assumed the rest of the sprawling grounds were just as wonderful.

Lilly took a moment to study the building, trying to let the butterflies in her stomach calm down. So far, she wasn't having any luck. So, she focused on the building's details.

It was a nice place and evidently a great deal of money had been spent on its construction and upkeep. The place had a rustic look. That was clearly all by design, though. There was certainly nothing primitive about this establishment.

Lilly finally settled her nerves enough to walk into the building. Her legs felt like stone as she trudged up the front steps. She wasn't dreading this. Far from it. She'd dreamed of visiting Rawhide Ranch since she first learned of its existence online a year prior. It seemed to be the perfect place for a Little and submissive like her. She'd have plenty of friends to play with. At least, that was the plan. She would enjoy the scenic beauty. Have fun taking part in the various activities. It would be wonderful.

No, she wasn't dreading it in the least bit.

She was just so nervous. Her one encounter on the Big and Little dating app hadn't ended well.

And then there was the whole Edward incident.

They'd barely spoken since their time together. Nothing more than a few texts, in fact.

She assumed he was trying to forget about his feelings just like she was trying to forget hers.

Or maybe that was wishful thinking on her part.

Maybe he wasn't into her at all. Maybe the kiss—and the times he'd Daddied her so hard—were nothing but isolated incidents for him. Moments of weakness.

She hoped not. But it was possible.

As far as she went, Edward was almost all she could think about. But it couldn't be. So, she was at the Ranch. Perhaps here she would find a Daddy.

What better place to look? And until then, she'd enjoy herself. This place looked amazing!

Inside she found that the lobby was just as grand as the outside. Maybe even more so.

There was plenty of wood everywhere. Large beams spanned the ceiling. Huge windows gave guests terrific views of the sprawling Montana countryside and towering mountains. There was an enormous, double-sided fireplace that would provide plenty of warmth in the winter. Being as it was only early September, the fireplace wasn't in use yet. In a couple of months, though, she could just picture a fire, crackling and roaring, logs shifting and spreading their warmth to guests who huddled close, drinking hot chocolate and eating cookies.

That was nothing more than a rumbling on the horizon. Fall was just arriving. Labor Day brought with it all the potential and promises of autumn, winter, and the glorious days to come. It seemed like a lot of folks had that mindset. The Ranch's headquarters was bustling with activity.

Lilly spun a slow circle and took it all in. She giggled as excitement gripped her. This was going to be amazing!

Seeing the gift shop, she hurried to it, eager to see what treasures it held. She'd barely poked her head in when she saw a vast selection of *toys* lining one wall.

They weren't toys like stuffies or blocks and trains.

Nope.

They were toys like a Daddy might use on his Little.

Her stomach turned nervous somersaults as she stared in wide-eyed amazement at the BDSM gear. Paddles, tawses, canes, cuffs, ball gags, and other implements hung in proud display.

Yep. This was definitely not like any other guest ranch one could book a stay at!

The gift shop held other items, as well, but before she could go in deeper to survey them, someone called for her attention.

“Ah. You must be Lilly,” a rich voice said.

Lilly tore her eyes away from the forbidden fruit and turned them to the neatly dressed man who approached her. She needn't be introduced to him as she knew exactly who he was simply by the way he carried himself.

“Master Derek,” she said with a smile.

He held out his hand. She shook it as she smiled back.

“I'm glad you found your way to us safely,” he said.

“Yes, Sir. No problems at all.”

“Good. I was slightly concerned. Travel can be a headache, especially on a holiday. That's why we're so busy here. A good number of people have come in for Labor Day. Come. Let's go to my office where we can talk in private.”

He swept his hand forward, indicating the way.

Lilly was ecstatic. She couldn't believe it was finally happening. She was at *the* Rawhide Ranch. Maybe it was exactly what she needed to forget all about Edward.

They arrived at Master Derek's office. The room was just as nice as Lilly had envisioned it. It was massive, too!

A giant, mahogany desk was polished to a brilliant shine. It looked to be hand-carved and was quite ornate. One corner of the room held a couch complete with throw pillows. Another corner held a large armoire. It was closed, but Lilly had a pretty good idea as to what it held. Her mind drifted back to the gift shop and the alluring yet somewhat frightening treasures it contained.

She gulped.

She could just picture a naughty Little being called into Master Derek's office to receive their just comeuppance for naughty behavior.

She vowed not to be that Little.

Everything about Master Derek spoke of a highly capable and qualified man. She had no doubt he could dish out discipline with the best of them.

She'd rather not find out.

"Please, sit," he said, indicating one of the visitor chairs before his desk.

She eased down into it, smoothed out her shirt, and folded her hands in her lap as she waited for the meeting to begin.

Master Derek sat in his posh leather office chair and smiled across the desk at the Ranch's newest guest.

"As I said, I'm so glad you made it here safely. You know, I feel as if all unaccompanied Littles are in my care," he said.

She nodded. "Yes, Sir. Thank you."

"Don't thank me yet," he said with a slight chuckle. "It will be necessary to go over a few rules. We'll get to that. First, I have a treat for you."

He opened the middle drawer on his desk, retrieved an object, and slid it across the glossy, polished desktop.

Lilly's eyes lit up. "Peanut butter cups! My favorite! Thank you, Sir."

Master Derek smiled. "I read your application and the questionnaire you filled out. I bought them especially for you."

She eagerly reached for them but then stopped. She slowly brought her eyes up to meet his. “May I have one, Sir?”

He nodded. “Yes, Lilly. And I’m proud of you for asking. That’s a good girl.”

She squealed with delight and then tore into the package.

“But only one,” he said. “It’s close to suppertime. I’d hate to spoil it.”

“Yes, Sir,” she said, already shoving a bite of chocolate and peanut butter into her mouth.

He gave her a few moments to enjoy the sweet treat before he continued the conversation.

“We need to decide which program will best fit you. According to your answers in our question packet, you could be in our Caterpillars or with the Butterflies.”

“What’s the difference, Sir?” She popped the last morsel of candy into her mouth and ate it while listening intently to Master Derek.

“Caterpillars are in the nursery. Butterflies are Littles who identify as preschoolers.”

Lilly blushed slightly. Master Derek’s lips twitched as if he found the Little’s bashfulness quite cute. He reached back into his desk, retrieved a file, and then laid it before him. Opening it, he glanced over the information.

“It seems you need diapers sometimes.”

She blushed even harder.

He directed a reassuring smile her way. “Don’t be embarrassed, darlin’. We have plenty of Littles here who cannot handle Big kid underwear. Everyone in the Caterpillars

fits this category. There are some in the preschool room, as well. Some are fluid—Big kid underwear at times, diapers or pull-ups at other times.”

Lilly nodded but still kept her eyes cast down.

“You’ll be with Nanny J. She’ll love you. She’s always eager to welcome another Little.”

A warmth suffused inside Lilly. The thought of being cared for by a sweet Nanny put her at ease. Of course, she’d rather have a Daddy.

A forever Daddy.

But a Nanny was exciting, too.

As if reading her mind, Master Derek continued, “I know the big question on your mind is if you will meet a Daddy and when this might occur. Rest assured, I take my matchmaking duties very seriously. But sometimes it can take time. I will not pair you with anyone I do not believe to be a good fit. Your happiness—and the happiness of the prospective Daddy—is of utmost importance. So, I won’t rush anything.

“But as it turns out, I have a guest arriving later today who I believe might be a good fit. Simply based upon his casefile and a few video calls. If I still believe this to be the case upon meeting him in person, I’ll introduce you two. Maybe as soon as tomorrow or the next day.”

Lilly couldn’t hide her astonishment. Would she really meet her Daddy that quickly?

She reminded herself she was possibly meeting *a Daddy*. That was different than meeting *her Daddy*. It might be a situation where she had to “try out” a few before she found the one.

If she ever found him.

But still—the possibility thrilled her.

Perhaps this was exactly what she needed to finally move on. A week from now, she suspected, and she will have forgotten all about Edward.

Maybe.

Maybe that wasn't even possible.

“Until you have a Daddy, you'll be in our dorm. In the daytime, you'll be in the nursery or preschool, depending on where you end up. We'll start in the nursery. I know you read the rules, young lady, but let me remind you again. You are to obey. What I say goes. What Nanny J says goes. Is that understood?”

Lilly's back stiffened.

“Yes, Sir. I'll be good. I promise.”

He smiled and nodded. “I suspect you're a very obedient girl. But I know how you Littles can be. Shenanigans often seem to be the order of the day. Even among the most well intended.”

Lilly suppressed a smile. The thought of some mischief did sound fun. She didn't mention that to Master Derek, though. That armoire resting in the corner reminded her to mind her P's and Q's. Master Derek had a kind and gentle but also no-nonsense manner about him. She wouldn't be a bit surprised if he pulled her pants down and bent her over the desk for a good, long reddening of her bottom.

Only if the circumstances dictated so, of course.

She was going to do her best to see they never did.

“A few more rules and then we’ll get to the fun stuff,” Master Derek said. “You cannot leave the nursery without permission. Once you are there for the day, you are there until you’re dismissed. And no leaving the Littles’ wing at night. You’ll be allowed to do plenty of activities. Don’t worry. You’ll have more than enough outings. But for your own safety, you must not simply go gallivanting around as if you own the place. Am I clear?”

She bobbed her head. “Yes, Sir.”

“There’s one more rule that I must be rather emphatic about,” he said. His eyes narrowed.

Lilly nearly shrunk under the stern look. There was no doubt he could elicit obedience from Littles. And when they stepped out of line—well, there was no doubt he didn’t hesitate to open that armoire and select the perfect instrument for the occasion.

“Yes, Sir?”

“No Littles in the dungeon. That area is strictly forbidden.”

Lilly felt a mixture of relief and disappointment. She had caught a glimpse—during her brief foray into the gift shop—to know what kind of things went on in the dungeon. It was so exciting!

Yet also terrifying.

Maybe she was best staying out of there. Not that she had a choice.

“Yes, Sir,” she said.

Once again, it seemed as if Master Derek could read her thoughts. His face softened into a pleasant, reassuring smile. “It’s for your own good, little one. Lots of things go on in

there that aren't good for Littles. You just stay up here. There's more than enough for you to do."

She smiled back. "Yes, Sir. I don't have a Daddy to take me there, anyway."

"That might change quickly," he said. "Trust me, I've seen my share of relationships born here. I'm losing count of how many people have found their soul mate here. There are many thriving, happy couples who owe their relationship to the Ranch."

She giggled.

Would she be one of those people? Oh, she hoped so!

"When you do find a Daddy," Master Derek went on, "he will decide when you can leave your room and all of that. Until then, just remember to follow my rules. I'd hate to have you back here for correction."

She gulped. "Uh, Sir, what... kind of correction?"

She didn't know why she'd asked that. She knew good and well what kind.

"I might take my belt off. I might use my paddle or the cane. Or..." He flicked his nose toward one of the large bookshelves behind her. She looked over her shoulder, noting the heavy volumes that filled it. "You might find yourself copying a page or five from one of those books. Maybe writing lines. The bottom line, little girl, is it's best you don't find out what kind of correction goes on within these walls. Understood?"

"Yes, Sir! I'm going to be good!"

He chuckled. "We'll see. Littles often have the best intentions..." He left it at that, shrugging slightly.

Standing, he said, “Now follow me, darlin’. Let’s introduce you to Nanny J. You’re going to have a wonderful stay here, Lilly. Get ready for magic.”

Edward could get used to this place.

Stepping out of his Porsche, he smiled as he took in the scenic, rustic beauty Montana offered.

His car looked a bit out of place. Perhaps a Jeep or pickup would have been more in order. Maybe even an ATV.

He made a mental note to see if the Ranch had ATVs for use. A bit of rugged adventure sounded fun.

Maybe that would finally allow him to escape Lilly's grasp. She'd had a hold of his mind for the past several months.

Adventure won't do it, bud. I need to find a precious Little of my own. Someone to hold. To protect. To cherish.

Even then, though, Edward wasn't so sure he could outrun Lilly.

That wouldn't keep him from giving it his best shot. And what better place to try than Rawhide Ranch?

"Edward," a voice called.

Edward spun around to see Derek Hawkins headed his way. They had spoken multiple times via video conferences. They'd emailed and texted a dozen more. Derek was eager to help him find a Little of his own. Edward didn't think it was

solely about the money he'd donated, either. He suspected Derek took pride in making Littles' and Bigs' dreams come true.

The men shook hands. "Welcome to Rawhide Ranch. I'm glad you're finally here. Please, follow me. Let's chat in my office."

A few minutes later, the men were seated in the spacious office, but not at the desk. They occupied the couch and a chair that made up the sitting area.

"You want anything to drink? I have some bourbon I think you'd like."

"I'd love some," Edward said. "Thank you."

Derek got up but returned a moment later with two tumblers. He handed one to his guest and then took his seat once again.

"You came at just the right time," Derek said.

"The place seems packed," Edward noted. "Lot going on?"

"Holidays are a big deal around here. Labor Day is no exception. It's our kickoff to fall. We have so much this time of year. Before you know it, pumpkins—and pumpkin spice—will be everywhere. The Littles will be excited for Halloween and then Thanksgiving and Christmas. Time goes by so fast."

"Tell me about it," Edward said before taking a sip of bourbon. He looked at it and nodded his approval.

"I thought you'd like that," Derek said. He took a drink of his and then continued, "But before we get to all those other holidays, this weekend is going to be great. We have activities going on that culminate with our big community cookout on

Monday. We'll have sack races and other games. Plenty of food and fun. It's all the Littles can talk about."

Edward chuckled. He liked being in a place where Littles were so openly discussed. He'd like it even more when he was among them, seeing all the cuties as they had fun.

"But that's not why you came at the perfect time," Derek said.

"Oh?"

"No."

Both men tossed back the rest of their drinks. Finally, Derek leaned forward, locking eyes with Edward.

"I found her. The perfect one for you."

Excitement coursed through Edward's veins. He knew nothing was set in stone. But he trusted Derek and his abilities. If Derek felt he'd found the perfect Little for Edward, then there was at least potential. It was certainly worth exploring.

"Who is she?" Edward said.

He felt foolish. He was nearly speechless. His heart was racing.

What if she's the one? What if I'm about to meet my precious girl?

"She just arrived yesterday," Derek said. "She's with our Caterpillars, though she might move up to the Butterflies. She's just as you described. Who you're looking for. Sweet, innocent, and with the biggest, sweetest brown eyes you've ever seen. She's uber Little, too. She'd be completely dependent upon you. Just like you prefer."

Edward's heart wasn't the only place his blood was pumping furiously to. His cock roared with life. He hoped the bulge wasn't evident.

“When can I meet her?” he said.

“No time like the present. Right? Let me make some calls and see where she's currently at. Then, I'll take you to meet the little princess.”

CHAPTER 16

“Did you have a good nap, Lilly?”

The words came from Miss Phoebe, a woman, along with Miss Samantha, who took care of the Littles in the nursery.

In the oversized crib, Lilly looked up, rubbed her eyes, and then nodded.

“Let me check that diaper,” Miss Phoebe said. She lowered the crib’s bars and lifted the bottom hem of Lilly’s short, pink dress.

The plastic-backed, disposable diaper crinkled loudly as she reached through the elastic of one of the leg holes.

“My goodness. You soaked it,” Miss Phoebe announced. “Come with me, little girl. Into a fresh nappy you go.”

A moment later, Lilly was lying atop one of the adult-sized changing tables while the Caregiver tended to her needs.

“I like those diapees,” Lilly said. “They’re thick! And they have mountains on them. Is that because we’re in Montana?”

“No, little one. These are Mountainville Supreme diapers. We buy them from time to time.”

“I’ve heard of Mountainville,” Lilly said. “It’s in Texas.”

“Yes. They aren’t quite as disciplined as we are,” Miss Phoebe said, a hint of disapproval in her tone. “They’re great people, though. From what I’ve heard.”

Lilly closed her eyes and smiled as the loving sensations settled over her. Miss Phoebe was so gentle as she used a wet wipe to clean away all the yuckies from her skin. The baby powder smelled comforting as a poof blasted between her legs. Soon, a new diaper was taped around her waist. Miss Phoebe helped Lilly down just as the door to the nursery opened. All eyes turned to see Nanny J entering the room.

Nanny J looked a bit intimidating. Her brilliant, unadorned white shirt was crisply pressed. It stood in stark contrast to the black skirt that went all the way down to her black boots. The black was represented again on the thick-rimmed glasses she wore. Her graying hair was in a tight bun. It fit because Nanny J ran a tight ship.

She was not mean, though. Nor harsh. But she demanded obedience. Her demeanor ensured Lilly gave it to her.

That could not be said of all the Littles, though.

“Good afternoon, Miss Phoebe. I’ve come to take our Littles all to the park,” Nanny J announced as she walked to where Lilly stood beside Miss Phoebe.

“Yay!” Lilly said. “Thank you!”

She threw her arms around the older woman for a tight hug.

“I don’t want to go to the park!”

The words came from Little Betty who was playing on the center rug. The tower she’d constructed with blocks was so tall it was leaning. One more addition and it would probably topple down.

“I want to have art time!” she said.

“Now, now, Betty. We already had art time. It’s park time,” Miss Phoebe said.

Betty crossed her arms, stuck out her bottom lip, and glared up at her Caregiver.

“Young lady, you’re on your way to a spanking,” Nanny J said in a very matter-of-fact tone. “I suggest you reverse course before it’s too late.”

Lilly and the other Little present, Mina, watched with bated breath. Baby Betty—Lilly suspected that was not her real name but simply a moniker she’d adopted—had a history of being bratty. A short history, Lilly thought. But she’d witnessed no less than three spankings and time-outs in the short time she’d been at the Ranch. To say she was a handful was an understatement. The young woman seemed to court trouble. She could be sweet, too. Thankfully, this was one of those times.

“Yes, Ma’am. I’m sorry, Miss Phoebe, Nanny J,” she said looking between the two women who ruled this part of the Ranch.

Nanny J smiled. “That’s better. Now clean up those blocks. We have a new playground that was just installed last week on Rawhide Ridge and I think you all will love it.”

“Yay!” Lilly cheered, along with Betty and Mina.

The park’s location was a little ways off, so Nanny J carted the cuties in a golf cart. Lilly looked around as they drove up the mountain a bit and entered a huge grove of trees. The sound of water had her puzzled until the sun’s rays caught the water of a stream meandering through the meadow where a

giant, adult-sized playground was waiting. She'd swear the entire scene originated in heaven.

There was a giant red and white, rocket-shaped climbing structure that had multiple slides jutting off the side. Around it, in the bed of soft mulch, was a merry-go-round, two oversized swing sets, and a row of four teeter-totters.

It was everything a Little could want.

"Go play. Have fun," Nanny J said. "But don't leave the playground. I'll be sitting here watching."

She parked herself on a bench, ready to keep an eye on her charges.

It didn't take the Littles long before they were hard at play. They'd had a bigger group earlier, but the Daddies and Mommies had checked out their respective Littles for various activities. Part of Lilly was jealous. She was happy for the others, though. Plus, she remembered Master Derek's exciting news—he had someone in mind for her. A Daddy he thought would be perfect!

"Want to have slide races?" Mina asked.

She was a cute Little who wasn't very tall. She had short dark hair, matching eyes, and a warm smile. It seemed like she was always smiling. Lilly liked that about her.

"That will be fun!" Lilly said.

"This is the right playground to do it on," Betty said. "The slides are the tallest and best! Did you know some super rich guy donated this?"

"Really?" Lilly said. "That was nice of him."

She thought of Edward. He was a super-rich guy. Dang it! She'd been trying hard not to dwell on him. She'd almost gone

a full hour without thinking of him.

Thanks a lot, Betty.

She knew it wasn't the other woman's fault. Everything reminded her of Edward. If it hadn't been Betty's comment, it would have been something else.

The trio ascended the rocket. It seemed so high! They finally arrived at the top and settled near the twin slides.

"You two go on," Betty said. "I'll race the winner."

Lilly sat down and readied herself. Something in the distance caught her eye. She squinted until she realized it was another golf cart coming toward them. For a moment, she thought maybe it was other Littles ready to play. But upon closer inspection, she realized it was just two guys.

"On your mark, get set... go!" Betty yelled.

Lilly pushed off. On the other slide, Mina did the same. They zipped quickly down, the world passing by in a dizzying blur. They both laughed the entire way.

Lilly's feet hit the soft mulch a half second before Mina's did.

"You won!" Mina said. "Congratulations!" She was still smiling.

Lilly smiled back. They hugged and then started to go up the rocket again, but Nanny J's voice cut them off.

"Hold on, Lilly. There's someone here who wants to meet you."

"Someone very special," Master Derek said.

He was out of the golf cart now, standing in front of the other man. Lilly turned to Mina and said, "I'll catch up to

you.”

She then walked toward Master Derek and his friend.

“Remember when I told you there was someone—a Daddy—I wanted you to meet?”

Lilly’s heart began to race. She was so giddy she felt as if she might explode.

“Uh-huh! I mean, yes, Sir.”

Master Derek chuckled. “Well, here he is. He’s actually the one who donated this playground. Perhaps that’s a sign.”

He stepped away and swept his hand, like a performer revealing a show-stopping surprise. “Meet Edward.”

He was revealing a surprise, all right, Lilly thought.

A huge one!

She nearly fainted.

“Lilly!”

“Edward!”

“You two know each other?” Master Derek said, a puzzled look shading his handsome face.

“We do,” Edward confirmed.

Lilly realized the immediate response was part of that “I never lie thing” Edward had.

“Is that... okay?” Master Derek asked with an arched eyebrow.

Lilly was surprised. The head of Rawhide Ranch struck her as unflappable. Perhaps the shock on her face—not to mention Edward’s—was that obvious.

“Yes, of course,” Edward said.

Lilly opened her mouth to speak but still couldn’t manage to get any words out. So she just stood still as a statue.

“Could we have a word in private?” Edward asked.

“Of course,” Master Derek said. “Excuse us.”

Lilly nodded.

This is so awkward! Okay, do something. Anything. Just get out of here.

She finally willed her body to comply, spun around, and darted toward the rocket. Mina and Betty were coming off the slide when she approached.

“Who’s in the mood for mischief?”

Mina gasped. Her eyes darted to Nanny J who’d once again taken her seat on the bench. She looked back to Lilly and shook her head. “I’m sorry. I don’t want a spanking.”

“No need to apologize,” Lilly said.

I don’t want a spanking, either, but desperate times call for desperate measures.

“I’m always in the mood for mischief,” Betty said proudly.

Lilly cast a hurried glance over her shoulder. Thankfully, it didn’t seem as if Nanny J had heard. It was a wonder, though, as Betty hadn’t exactly bothered to be quiet.

“Well, I need some mischief and quick,” Lilly said in a whisper.

“Does this have to do with that guy?” Mina said, jerking her head toward Master Derek and Edward.

“Sure does. I need out of here!”

“Count me in,” Betty said. “And I have the perfect getaway plan. Mina, go up the rocket. We’ll give you a minute. This way you’ll have... uh, what do they call it? Plausible deniability?”

Mina nodded and hurried away.

A few seconds later, Lilly and Betty stole a glance at Nanny J.

“She’s not paying too much attention,” Betty said. “Now. Follow me.”

They crept along and to anyone watching, probably looked just like Littles scurrying along a playground, eager to move on to the next toy. Master Derek and Edward were still deep in conversation. So, no one stopped them they climbed aboard the golf cart Master Derek had just pulled up in.

“Uh, shouldn’t we at least go for Nanny J’s?” Lilly said.

“Doesn’t matter. The outcome will be the same,” Betty said from behind the wheel. She swiveled her head to look at her frightened passenger, smiling devilishly as she said, “They have to catch us first.”

And with that, they were off.

“Hey! Where are you two going?” Master Derek asked loudly as he jogged toward the fleeing cart.

Nanny J was on her feet, too, hurrying toward the runaway vehicle.

It was no use. Betty had the pedal to the floor and the vehicle was surprisingly fast. They zoomed away from the playground and straight toward a grove of nearby trees.

“Are you gonna turn the wheel?” Lilly asked frantically, jabbing a finger at the upcoming obstacles.

“Relax,” Betty said with a dismissive wave. “I know what I’m doing.”

“I’d prefer you keep *both* hands on the wheel!” Lilly shouted.

Lilly shifted on the bench seat until she could see behind them. She winced. Even Edward had joined in the chase. Despite her grim situation—as she would surely have her

bottom reddened—she couldn't help but smile. Seeing the rich, suave CEO chasing a runaway golf cart was quite funny.

It would be funnier if it wasn't her in said golf cart, but there wasn't anything she could do about that now. She'd made her bed and she'd have to lie in it. No matter how badly it stung her bottom.

She turned back around just as they zipped down a small hill.

“Whoa!” She grabbed one of the metal bars that ran from the body to the vehicle's roof and held on tightly.

“Don't worry. There's a path here. I've run through these trees a bunch,” Betty said.

Lilly wondered just how many times her new friend had done something like this.

Betty turned the wheel slightly and soon they were on a narrow path that split the grove in half. The gravel beneath them crunched loudly as the tires continued to roll. Dips had the Littles bouncing and flying up several times. Tree branches and leaves slapped the cart's roof loudly. There were several twists and turns but Betty handled them all with precision.

That is, until they rocketed out of the grove. She took one last turn but didn't realize just how close the river was.

Turns out, it was extremely close.

Too close.

“I can't stop in time! Bail out!” Betty yelled.

The women dove from their respective sides. They hit the ground rolling.

“Oof!” Lilly said as some of the air left her body.

She came to a stop two feet from the river's banks. Betty did, too.

The golf cart, though, was not so lucky. It hit the water with a splash, sat there a moment like a boat waiting to take off, but then began to sink with a loud gurgle.

"My goodness!" Master Derek said as he skidded to a stop before the water. He forgot about the golf cart and quickly scanned the Littles as they staggered a bit getting up. He ran to Betty and assisted her since Edward was already helping Lilly. "Are you hurt?" he asked, looking her over.

"I'm all good," Betty said with a laugh. "Better than the cart."

Master Derek cleared his throat. Betty winced.

"What were you thinking?" Edward asked Lilly. "You could have been seriously hurt. Or worse."

"I'm sorry. I just..." She didn't even bothering finishing whatever weak defense she had considered mounting. Instead, she hung her head in shame.

"Leave it to a naughty Little to find the deepest spot," Master Derek said, shaking his head in frustration as he watched the top of the cart slowly disappear. The gurgling continued as bubbles rose to pop on the surface. "Let's hope that cart doesn't go downstream before the Ranch's maintenance department can fish it out of the water. As for you two naughty young ladies, well... let's return to my office. We can *talk* there."

Lilly looked from Master Derek to Edward. Both men had that same hard, stern look in their eyes. The look that told her exactly what was going to happen.

And she didn't like it one bit.

Lilly's baby doll dress was hiked up, her diaper down.

Her bottom was up.

She drew a deep breath, held it a moment, and then exhaled slowly. She tried to redirect her thoughts away from the dreadful anticipation she felt. She tried focusing on how nice Master Derek's office was. It smelled of polished wood, books, and leather furniture. She tried focusing on how scary—and fun—that quick jaunt in the golf cart had been. True, it hadn't ended it well, but it had been a blast while it lasted.

She even tried focusing on the fact that the man she'd been dreaming about for the past two months—and really even for years—was now here. As if their encounters before hadn't been enough to seal the deal, his presence at the Rawhide Ranch confirmed that he was a Daddy.

Yet Edward's appearance didn't calm her. Not at this moment.

Nor did the office or the memory of the runaway golf cart.

No. Right now she could only concentrate on one thing.

The spanking she was about to take.

"I hope you understand the gravity of your situation," Master Derek said.

She was bent over his desk while he stood behind her, tapping the end of the glossy wooden paddle against his open palm. The quiet sound of the instrument rapping against his skin made her wince. It reminded her of what was to come, but she knew it would be a lot louder than that when it collided with her bare bottom.

“I do, Sir,” she said.

There was part of her that wanted to get out of there and never return. She was a grown woman. She could come and go from the Rawhide Ranch as she pleased. Well, maybe not come and go. She could leave. She might not be able to return, but that was okay. It would save her from the humiliating fate of having her rear end reddened.

But she didn't want to leave.

She'd dreamed of staying at the Ranch for too long to throw it away now. She knew the rules—and the consequences for breaking them—before arriving. This is what she'd signed up for. She only had herself to blame.

Her mind flashed to Betty and the spanking she'd just endured.

Lilly had sat silently, watching and awaiting her own fate. Betty had held up okay at first. After swat number five, though, she'd been reduced to a sniffling, crying mess. Master Derek seemed as adept with the paddle as Lilly had feared. By the time he was finished, poor Betty's bottom was a molten, red and purple mess. She was still sobbing, albeit a bit quieter, as she stood in the corner. If Lilly could see her, she'd see that Betty's bottom was still on display. But Lilly couldn't, as she had assumed the position and was waiting on her own discipline.

Just start the spanking! Let's get this show on the road. The quicker you bust my butt the quicker it will heal and I can move on!

She knew waiting was all part of it, though. Gee whiz! Why did Master Derek have to be so good at all this.

And why the heck did Edward and Nanny J have to be present for it all? Couldn't Master Derek handle this privately?

She knew the answer. The audience was part of it, just as the waiting was.

It irked her that Edward of all people was sitting on that couch behind her, looking on as her bare bottom was high in the air, just waiting on the paddle!

Irked and thrilled her.

She didn't have the wherewithal to break down and dissect all her conflicting emotions. Right now, it was all she could do to keep position like a good girl.

The paddle tapped her trembling cheeks slightly as Master Derek lined up his first shot.

"Do you remember the rules I gave Baby Betty?"

"Yes, Sir," she said, her voice shaking.

"Good. Repeat them to me."

Her mind spun, frantically trying to pull them from memory. It had only been a few minutes since she'd heard them, but given the circumstances, they were difficult to recall. She finally managed. "I will keep position, Sir. I will count my swats. I will think about my actions and how I can make better choices next time, Sir."

“Good girl,” he said. He tapped the paddle against her bottom once more. “Too bad you weren’t a good girl back at the playground, isn’t it. You wouldn’t be in the position.”

“Yes, Sir,” she said.

A warm tear slid from her right eye.

Oh gosh! The spanking hasn’t even started yet and I’m already crying. Edward is going to see me break down into a blubbing mess!

She could just picture Edward’s face as he watched the disciplinary proceedings. He probably had that arrogant, devil-may-care grin on his face. The one he wore when he’d just devoured some smaller company and absorbed their assets.

She hated that he was watching the most.

The paddle would be dreadful, sure, but she could take it.

Edward glaring on in satisfaction, well, that was almost more than she could take.

It was what it was. Lamenting the fact wouldn’t make a bit of difference.

It was show time.

“Now, hold still, young lady. I’m afraid this is going to hurt,” Master Derek said.

Lilly braced herself.

Master Derek’s words were proven true the moment the paddle made impact. It crackled loudly against her naked skin. It flattened her cheeks in dreadful agony. The holes drilled into the implement’s base only made it worse, too. It left a horrendous sting in its wake.

It hurt so badly, in fact, that Lilly forgot the rules.

“I did not hear you.” Master Derek gave her another quick swat to arrest her attention and jar her memory.

“One, Sir!”

“Good girl. Don’t forget again, young lady, or I’ll add an additional five to your already staggering count. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“See that you do.”

He focused the swats on the spot where her thighs met the curve of her bottom, delivering punishing blow after punishing blow. Lilly’s rear was set ablaze. Every square inch of it was on fire. She gritted her teeth, whimpered, and eventually sobbed. By the time they reached the final swat, the audience could hardly make out her words as she said, “Twenty-five, Sir.”

She managed to get the words out, but just barely.

Master Derek left her in position for what seemed like an eternity. Her head sagged between her shoulders. Tear drops splashed onto the desk below. Saliva hung from her bottom lip.

She could tell from the noises behind her that Master Derek was returning the paddle to the armoire and closing the door.

Whew. That’s a relief at least. There’s still this little issue of being bent over the desk while freaking Edward looks on—probably in smug approval—so this isn’t over yet. But at least the spanking is finished.

“Come here, young lady.”

She stood upright and turned to see Master Derek waiting with open arms. She rushed into the hug.

“I know spankings are not fun but they are for your own good. That was a very dangerous stunt you and Betty pulled. That sort of behavior is not tolerated here at Rawhide Ranch. For your own protection and the safety of others. Do you understand, Lilly?”

She sniffled and nodded.

“I didn’t hear you. Let’s try again. Do you understand?”

“Y-yes, Sir,” she said before sobbing again. She buried her head in his chest for a moment.

“Good girl. Now, there are two other people you need to apologize to.”

Oh crap! I have to apologize to Edward? This is so freaking embarrassing!

Nanny J and Edward approached.

“I’m sorry, Nanny J,” Lilly managed to say, though her shaky voice revealed she was on the verge of another full-on crying fit.

“Apology accepted. Just don’t let something like this happen again,” the stern woman said.

“Yes, Ma’am. I’ll be a good girl from now on.”

Lilly then looked at Edward. She fought the urge to shrink into a puddle on the floor. As bad as disappointing Master Derek and Nanny J was, she felt absolutely awful for how she’d acted in front of Edward.

“I’m sorry, Edward. I... s-shouldn’t have... done that.”

“No, little girl. You should not have. But I forgive you. You’re lucky I don’t give you a spanking of my own, though. You could have drowned!”

A second later, she was in his arms. A fresh round of sobs racked her. She shuddered against him but he held her tightly.

Oh, his embrace felt so wonderful! For a moment, she forgot all about the inferno that still raged on her bottom.

Master Derek and Nanny J tended to Baby Betty, calling her from the corner. Lilly was shocked she didn’t have to stand there, too, but figured perhaps it was because she wasn’t the driver of the golf cart, only the passenger.

It might have been because Master Derek wanted to talk to her, too.

That hunch was proven correct when he said, “Nanny J will take Betty to the nursery for a diaper change. Lilly, you stay here. We’ll take care of you. We need to talk.”

As Nanny J led Betty away, the Little gave a small wave of solidarity. Lilly returned the gesture. She silently mouthed, “Thank you.” It was the least she could do. Betty had taken one for the team. That whole harebrained stunt had been Lilly’s idea.

Once Lilly was alone with Master Derek and Edward, her stepbrother said, “I need to get a diaper on her. She’s holding up well, but don’t let that fool you. As a Little, she’s very... well, Little.”

“Of course. We prepared for this.” Master Derek motioned at the diaper and powder that rested on the bookshelf.

A humiliating heat rose inside Lilly, causing her to blush, but she knew Edward was right.

“I’m surprised she hasn’t tinkled yet,” he said with a chuckle.

Master Derek nodded with a smile.

Lilly fought the urge to cover her face in shame as she lay flat on her back, on the floor before Master Derek’s desk, with Edward sinking to his knees between her legs.

“I’m going to lift that cute but red bottom up to slide this diaper beneath you,” he said in a patient, caring tone.

Now she couldn’t resist. She slapped her palms against her face and hid from the embarrassment of having her stepbrother diaper her.

The disposable garment rustled loudly as he unfolded it, smoothed it out, and slid it beneath her still stinging cheeks.

He then spread her legs open wide to bring the front through.

Holy cow! He can see my pussy! Just like full-on, nothing hidden, everything exposed see my pussy!

Part of her wished the floor would open and swallow her whole.

The other part wanted him to linger. To explore. To make her forget all about that nasty spanking with a little bit of pleasure.

Mmm. She suspected Edward knew just what to do.

She prayed her growing wetness was not evident. But as his hands continued to glide smoothly across her most sensitive region, an aching arousal seized her with unrelenting pressure.

She was thankful when the diaper was finally fastened.

It was already dampening, though. It sure didn't have anything to do with tinkles.

"Please, sit," Master Derek said.

Edward moved the visitors' chairs back in front of the desk, as they'd been slid away during the spanking. Once she and Edward were situated, and Master Derek was behind his desk, the conversation began.

And what it contained nearly drove Lilly crazy with worry.

And desire.

CHAPTER 19

“Edward, I still think you’re the right match for Lilly.”

Master Derek leaned back in his chair and gave his words a few minutes to sink in.

“I want you to care for her during this time,” he eventually added.

“You want who to do what now?” Lilly said, cocking her head to one side.

For a moment, she wasn’t the Little and submissive who’d found her way to Rawhide Ranch. She was the woman who was shocked by the fact that someone seriously just suggested her stepbrother was the right fit for her.

Granted, her mind had suggested the same thing a million times before, but she spent much of her life trying to deny the facts. Hearing someone else admit it gave her an uneasy feeling. She squirmed in her chair and tried hard not to overreact.

Master Derek smiled. “It’s obvious you two are made for one another.”

“Hey, now,” Edward said.

Master Derek didn’t look offended that someone dare challenge him. He no doubt realized that Edward was used to

being the guy at the top, the one in charge who called the shots. Edward was not a submissive and it was evident that he thought of Master Derek as an equal. Perhaps even a friend.

“I have a company to think about,” Edward said. His voice was calm and cool, but the gravity of what had been proposed was still evident in his tone. “Imagine if word got out that I was dallying with my sister.”

“Stepsister,” Master Derek corrected. “We here at Rawhide Ranch have seen dozens of relationship variations. We don’t judge so long as we are talking about consenting adults engaged in safe and healthy play and relationships. Quite frankly, it’s none of our business. It’s no one else’s, either.”

“But the public might see it differently,” Edward protested.

“Oh, so the company is more important than me?” Lilly said.

Why did I even ask that? I know the two of us cannot, under any circumstances, be together.

“I didn’t say that,” Edward countered. “But I do need to be mindful of public perception.”

Lilly wondered if that was really an issue or if Edward was just looking for an excuse as to why they couldn’t be together. She certainly understood. She spent a lot of time listing reasons in her mind why she and Edward couldn’t get their Happy Ever After.

“I know this might seem unorthodox,” Master Derek said. “But hear me out. Please. I’ve lost track of how many happy couples are out there thanks to my keen eye for this sort of thing. And it isn’t as odd as you might think. I’ve heard stepbrother romances are very popular with readers.”

“This isn’t a romance novel,” Edward said.

“Sure feels like one,” Lilly murmured.

Master Derek smiled. “I just bring it up to illustrate there are plenty of folks who are clearly okay with such an arrangement, else there wouldn’t be such a market for those sort of stories.”

“I can’t argue that,” Edward said.

Lilly remained silent. She felt she should put up a token defense, but it would be half-hearted at best.

“Are you willing to give it a shot? Just through Labor Day?” Master Derek asked. “If it isn’t working out, then we can reevaluate where you both are and make changes accordingly. But right now, I cannot think of another Daddy for Lilly. And Edward, I can’t think of another Little who matches so perfectly with you. On paper—and in my gut—this is going to work.”

Lilly and Edward looked at each other with narrowed eyes. Finally, she relented with a nod. He did the same. They swiveled their heads back to Master Derek.

“I believe you’re making the right choice,” he said. “And of course, no one is forcing this on you. Yes, I’m confident in my selection here, but you two are in control. That goes even for you, Lilly. Remember what we talked about when you arrived? If anything makes you uncomfortable, tell me. We create a safe and caring environment for all our guests. Always.”

“Noted,” Edward said.

Lilly nodded. “Yes, Sir. I understand. I’ll, uh, stay with Edward.” She blushed just thinking about the possibilities, praying neither of the men noticed.

“Perfect,” Master Derek said. “Lilly, you’ll move out of the dorms and in with your new Daddy.”

Her eyes went wide. She gulped.

There was no denying her reaction, especially for someone as astute as Master Derek. He smiled. “You can call him Uncle Edward. Or whatever you two agree on. This is just a trial period. There’s no need to move any quicker than either of you are comfortable with.”

He stood. His guests did as well. He began walking to the office door, his hands around both of their shoulders as he guided them.

“Trust me,” he said. “I believe this is the start—or rather a continuation—of something beautiful.”

Lilly wasn’t so sure. It seemed more as if they were pushing boundaries.

The boundaries of something forbidden.

Edward's room was one of the luxury suites and differed wildly from the Littles' dorm Lilly had slept in the night prior.

The dorm was far from a dump. It had been a fun experience, too. But Edward's room was in a whole other league.

It had a hardwood floor, beamed ceilings, and an enormous bed with sheets and a comforter that probably cost more money than Lilly had in her entire account. Sliding glass doors opened to a private patio where a hot tub awaited. A wooden fence afforded a bit of privacy while a gate led one off that patio and into the common pool area. To say it was nice was an understatement.

Of course, it wasn't all sunshine and roses. There was an armoire and Lilly had no doubt as to what it held. In fact, she had the fear that Edward might spank her again for that golf cart incident, but he seemed calm and collected as they got settled into the suite. Still, she made a mental note to be on her best behavior.

Or should she go a different route?

She tucked the question away in her brain to ponder later. An idea was forming and she needed to flesh it out a bit more before fully committing to it.

“This place is nice,” she said. “Ms. Duckworth is going to love it.”

“Where is Ms. Duckworth?”

“She’s back in the dorm. Laying on my bed. Or the bed I was using.”

“Well, Master Derek said your stuff should be sent down soon. Then you and Ms. Duckworth can be reunited. Until then, let’s talk.” He sat on the bed and wagged his crooked finger, beckoning her to stand before him. Once she was in place, he said, “What was that golf cart thing about? Getting into trouble isn’t like you. At least, I don’t think it is. I’ve always pegged you for a good girl.”

She put her tongue between her teeth and giggled.

“What?” he said.

“You’ve known I’m a Little for a long time, huh?”

“Well, you have to admit those few days we spent together sort of confirmed it,” he said.

“Yeah, I kinda went all-out Little on you. I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. I suspected as much before then, of course, but that just sort of sealed the deal. You know, just because we can’t *be together* doesn’t mean I can’t care for you. A lot of Littles aren’t romantically involved with their Bigs. Same for subs. Some just play with Tops. Doesn’t mean they’re in a committed relationship.”

She thought about his words and then said, “But Master Derek is playing matchmaker. You heard him. He thinks we’re perfect for each other! But—”

“It doesn’t matter,” Edward said. “We have to live our lives. Not the life he wants us to. You can still live out your

Little fantasies and I can enjoy caring for you. We know each other—and love each other—so we’ll be comfortable. Right?”

She nodded slowly. “Is that why you went along with this?”

“Yep,” he said.

Pain jabbed at Lilly’s heart. She’d been hoping he’d gone along with it because he was in love with her. This way was easier, though. After all, being in love with your stepsister would sure complicate things.

Especially when she is in love with you, too. So this way was better, she reminded herself. Way better.

“I think it’s a great idea, Sir,” she said.

He smiled. “Good girl.”

“Edward?”

“Yes, Lilly?”

“What do I call you? Daddy is sorta a term I want to save. You know, for the person I’m going to—”

“I understand,” he said. “How about Uncle Edward.”

Her nose crinkled as she laughed. “But you’re my brother.”

“Stepbrother,” he said. “And calling me *brother* might weird some folks out.”

Sort of like us being together. Forever.

She gave her head a little shake, trying to clear such thoughts.

Doesn’t do any good to dwell on what I can’t have. Concentrate on what I get. I’ll have Edward all to myself.

Caring for me like the helpless little baby I am. It's a dream come true.

She smiled at the idea of making the most of their time. There was a downside of course, but she didn't want to think about that right now.

The downside, she knew, deep down, was that after Labor Day, it would hurt even more when they had to pull apart and go back to their normal lives.

Because she was already in love with him. She had been for years.

Edward couldn't fight the grin that was plastered across his face, so he quit trying.

Instead, he looked down upon Lilly, not bothering to hide the affection in his eyes, either.

He finally had his Little. The one he'd dreamed about. It couldn't last, of course, but Master Derek had thrown him a life preserver by proposing this weekend. At least Edward would get to live out his dream even if it was only until Labor Day.

He suspected Lilly was living out her dream, too.

Tuesday might bring heartache. Until then, though, they could be in paradise.

"I'm not tired!" Lilly said. She stifled a yawn as the words left her mouth.

"Sure," he said. "You don't seem it."

She clutched Ms. Duckworth tighter. Her eyes were heavy with impending sleep. She looked adorable in a pink onesie Nanny J had given her. The diaper she wore poufed beneath it.

"I'm not sleepy, Uncle Edward."

“You had a big day,” he said. “The golf cart incident had to take its toll on you.”

She grumbled, closing her eyes in embarrassment.

“No need to rehash it, though,” he said, much to her obvious relief. “I’m just curious where you thought you were going to go. You knew you couldn’t ride in that thing forever.”

He doubted she’d even thought that far. He suspected the reason she’d even pulled the stunt in the first place was to desperately escape an incredibly awkward situation. He was probably the last person she’d expected to see there at the Rawhide Ranch.

“Take a nap, baby, and when you wake up I’ll take you to the playroom.”

“Is it the nursery?” she asked.

“No, honey. It’s a different one. I’ve reserved it for you. Another Daddy is coming with his Little, too. I thought it would be good for you to make friends.”

“Who is this Daddy?” She rubbed her eyes and yawned.

“Just a guy I met in the gift shop earlier. His name is Roman. He has a Little named Halle. She seems sweet.”

Edward thought of saying more but realized there was no use. Little cutie’s blinks had been getting progressively longer. Now, her eyes weren’t opening at all. He watched her for a moment. Her chest rose and fell in a rhythmic motion. She was clutching Ms. Duckworth tightly.

Oh sweetie. You have my heart.

And therein lies the problem, he realized. Perhaps taking Derek up on his suggestion wasn’t so wise after all.

He tore his eyes away from the sleeping angel and fished out his phone. Stepping onto the patio where he wouldn't disturb Lilly, he called his assistant. Holly answered on the second ring.

“Good morning, *sir*.”

He laughed. “You only call me that when Lance is around. Remember?”

“That's right,” she said.

Now he understood.

“Hold on one moment,” she said. She didn't bother covering the phone's receiver as she said, “Mr. Ironside is calling. I need to speak with him in private about some important business.”

Edward grinned. He knew exactly what Holly was doing. Getting under Lance's skin.

This is important company business that you're not privy to. You're not high enough up the food chain to hear this.

Lance Collins said something that Edward couldn't quite make out. A moment later, Holly was back on the line.

“I was surprised when I got your email a few minutes ago,” Edward said. “Shouldn't you be gone? Don't work so much. Labor Day weekend has started. Whatever you think is pressing can wait.”

“I'm afraid it can't,” Holly said. “The issue is Lance.”

Edward clutched his cell tighter and leaned against the hot tub. The water jumped and gurgled as the jets—turned on low—swirled it enough just to prevent stagnation. While it was only early September, come nightfall, the air would have enough chill in it to enjoy the amenity. Thanks, Montana.

He'd get some swim diapers for his babygirl.

Or the babygirl who was under his care for the weekend.

They'd have fun.

"You there?" Holly said.

"Sorry. Got distracted for a minute. What's up with Lance?"

"He was snooping around your office. I had left for the weekend but ran up here because I'd forgotten some things. Anyway, he was at your desk."

"My desk?"

"Yes. And on your computer."

"It's password protected."

"Is there any way he could hack it?"

"Not a chance," Edward said. "Lance's arrogance doesn't match his skill."

"You sure?" Holly probed.

"I know people. Lance isn't half as good as he thinks he is. I won't underestimate him. He's diabolical, sure, but he couldn't get past my encryption."

"Well, he said you had asked him to go in there. Something about that Boulder proposal. I'm guessing that was a lie," Holly said.

"Nothing gets by you," Edward said.

"You've got that right. This is grounds to fire that little twerp. I'm tired of his crap."

Edward laughed silently. Holly was feisty. She had a point, too. Snooping around anyone's office was wrong. Snooping

around your boss' was just plain stupid.

Still, Edward hated to fire anyone. Lance deserved it. Sure. But he was still talking about taking someone's livelihood away. Yes, Edward could be shrewd. He had that reputation. But he didn't trample on people. When a decision affected someone's life, he didn't take it lightly.

Yet something told him the problems with Lance would only get worse. He needed to act to head this situation off before it escalated into a full-blown crisis.

"Do you want me to do anything?" the assistant asked.

"No," he said. "I've got a plan. All I need from you right now, though, is to go home and enjoy your weekend. Take the holiday, Holly. Do something fun."

"Yes, sir."

"Ha! It's weird when you call me that," Edward said.

Indeed it was. While she worked for him, he almost looked at her as a counselor and advisor more than an assistant. She knew it, too, and was already ready with sage advice.

"Over and out. Have fun, wherever you're at, boss."

The call ended and Edward instantly followed it up with another one. Greg Snow, the company's general counsel, answered on the fourth ring.

"What's up?"

"We have a developing situation." Edward went on to tell the attorney what was going on.

"He was snooping in your office?" Snow asked.

"Comes from Holly herself," Edward confirmed.

“Then it’s solid. You want me to get HR in and start drawing up the termination paperwork?”

“Not yet. Let’s launch an internal investigation. But keep it quiet. I’m worried this could be something more than ambition.”

“What are we talking?” Snow said.

“Not sure yet. Maybe corporate espionage. Collin is the type.”

“I’m on it.”

“It can wait until after Labor Day,” Edward said. “Whatever he’s up to can wait that long. We’ll pick this up Tuesday. I won’t be back quite yet, but we can convene over the phone. I just wanted to get the ball rolling.”

“We’ll get to the bottom of it. Enjoy your trip,” Snow said.

Once the call was over, Edward lingered on the private patio for a moment, thinking over everything. He dipped his hand in the hot tub’s water and absentmindedly splashed the water. He wasn’t sure what was going on, but his gut told him it wasn’t good.

He couldn’t get too wrapped up in it now. The time would come. Quick enough, too. On Tuesday he’d set out for the pleasant drive back to Colorado.

The only question was, would Lilly be by his side in the Porsche?

“No. She can’t be,” he said aloud. “She can never be. She mustn’t.”

But the prospect of leaving her again sure hurt his heart.

He shook his head, cleared the cobwebs, and then decided to go back inside. Whatever was going to happen would occur regardless of his actions right now. He might as well enjoy the next few days with that precious Little.

Before going in, his mind raced once more as he thought of anything Collin could have seen in his office.

He couldn't think of a single thing. He was all good.

Or so he thought.

What Edward didn't remember was that he'd written something on the blotter that lay atop his desk.

There, on that large calendar, were two simple words that might sink him.

Rawhide Ranch.

Lilly was excited yet nervous as she went into the playroom located on the second floor.

She'd already met Halle before going in, but they hadn't had time to talk and get to know one another. She seemed sweet.

She was tall, athletically built, and of Native American descent. Her long black hair was shiny. So was the frilly pink dress she wore.

Her Daddy, Roman, was a strong, powerfully built Black man. His eyes were filled with humor and his easygoing nature put Lilly at ease a bit. Which was good, she realized, because she was quite nervous.

"You two are going to have more fun than any Littles ever have," Roman said. "Go get to it."

"You sound like you need some adult time," Edward said.

"You could say that again. I've been having fun with my baby, but she's wearing me out. And if I watch one more cartoon before I have a conversation with a Daddy or Mommy, I might keel over."

The two men made themselves comfortable in two of the provided chairs and watched as the Littles hesitantly made

their way toward the toys.

“I like your pretty dress,” Lilly offered meekly.

“Thank you,” Halle said. “My Daddy bought it for me here at the Ranch. I like your onesie.”

“Thank you,” Lilly said. She blushed slightly, feeling a tad exposed. While being a Little was nothing new—it had been part of her nature as far back as she could remember—being Little in front of others was *very* new! She wasn’t used to parading around in public. Until that trip, Little Space had been a place she’d only visited in private. It had been a secret she hid. Of course, she fit right in at the Rawhide Ranch, so she wasn’t showing anyone. But it was still a lot for her to grow comfortable with.

In a way, it helped having Edward around for the experience. He’d always had such a calming effect on her.

She just wished it could last.

That uneasy feeling spread in the pit of her stomach once again.

Don’t think about what can’t be. Think about what is. Right now. Even if it’s temporary, it’s still amazing.

“Want to play dress up?” Halle asked.

Among the other amazing things for Littles to do in the playroom, there was an area set up with costumes, dresses, and other accessories along with a vanity.

“That would be so fun!” Lilly said, forgetting about those thoughts that had troubled her only moments earlier.

Those thoughts came back, though, as soon as Halle asked, “So how did you meet your Daddy?”

Oh crap! Is she really asking that? What do I say?

“Well, it’s kind of a funny story,” she said.

Did she hear the uneasiness in my voice? Don’t act all weird over this. If I act weird, she’ll think it’s weird.

It kinda is weird.

See? This is why the two of us can’t ever be together.

“He’s actually not my Daddy,” she said. “He’s just my Caregiver while I’m here at the Ranch. I mean, we knew each other before we came here, but we aren’t... *together* together. Know what I mean?”

“I gotcha,” Halle said. “That’s cool!”

It seemed as if she was genuine.

Whew, Lilly thought. Crisis averted. For now.

A few minutes later, the Littles were lost in play. Lilly tried on a light blue dress, put a tiara in her hair, and twirled around the playroom while holding a star-topped wand.

“You look like Cinderella,” Halle said while clapping.

“Thank you,” Lilly said.

She continued to spin all the way to where Edward sat. She had noticed him eyeing her several times. She stopped before him and offered a curtsy.

Edward’s eyes twinkled.

“I see you’re having fun.”

“Uh-huh. I’m a princess.”

“Yes, you are,” he said.

She giggled before spinning away to rejoin Halle.

“Look at this dress,” she said, picking one up from the collection. “It looks like Snow White! You could wear it and we could be princesses together.”

“Then we could pretend we have a magic castle,” Halle suggested.

That’s exactly what the women did. Fifteen minutes later, they were still giggling as they shook free of the costumes.

“Looks and sounds like you two are having a lot of fun,” Roman said, approaching with Edward.

“Are we being too loud, Daddy?” Halle asked.

“Not at all. The playroom is for cuties like you two to laugh and let loose in. But I think you also let loose in your diaper. I need to check it, baby.” Roman reeled the woman in, spun her around, and pulled the back of her nappy away from her skin. Peering down, he smiled and said, “You’re clean. Are you dry?” He patted her bottom before turning her around again and grabbing the swath of cotton and plastic between her legs. “You’re soaked! I figured as much.”

“Can’t I play a little longer?” Halle asked. “You can change me later.”

“Little girls don’t tell their Daddies what they can and can’t do. Daddies are the ones who call the shots. And I’ll change you right now. I don’t want you to get a diaper rash.”

The Little hung her head and pouted.

“Now, now,” Roman said. “You’ll be tidied up in no time and playing with Lilly. Or you can throw a fit, get your bottom spanked, and be sent to timeout. You pick.”

“I’m sorry, Daddy. I won’t throw a fit.”

“Good girl. Come on.”

Roman took Halle by the hand and led her to the collection of diapers the playroom had stocked.

Edward looked to Lilly. “Your turn.”

She was mortified as he did the same to her—spinning around and checking the back of her diaper. He found it was fine, but like Halle, she was more than a little wet.

“When they’re done on the changing table, I’ll get you taken care of,” he said.

Lilly’s stomach flipped over. She had been so Little—so vulnerable—in front of Edward. But there was something about the act of having her diaper changed that seemed so intimate. It was as if it created a unique bond.

Was that going to make it even harder to break away when the time came?

Of course it will. But be honest, Lilly. None of this is making it easy.

She melted a moment later when Edward had her in his arms, hoisting her onto the changing table. Once again, she was carried away by his loving, tender care. By the time he finished cleaning her and getting a new diaper on her, she was completely lost in a blissful euphoria. She would have followed that man to the ends of the earth and back.

Fight it, Lilly, fight it!

It was when Edward carried her back to the play area to rejoin Halle that Lilly remembered the plan that had partly taken shape earlier.

It hurt her heart, but she knew she had to enact.

If she didn’t, she’d fall so hard for Edward that there’d be no going back. It was imperative that she do something before

passing that point of no return.

But she was going to need help.

Could she trust Halle?

Bringing Halle in on the scheme would require feeding her more information—information that Lilly was too embarrassed to share—but it might be necessary. Desperate times call for desperate measures, she realized.

And this was definitely a desperate time.

* * *

THIRTY MINUTES LATER, THE LITTLES WERE SINGING KARAOKE. They'd gone through "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" as well as several theme songs to their favorite cartoons.

The Daddies had watched the show with approving smiles, plenty of applause, and a lot of encouragement.

"Thank you, thank you!" Halle said, taking a bow.

"We'll be here all weekend," Lilly said.

They put the microphones down and happily skipped toward the play-kitchen. "Let's make something for our Daddies!" Halle said. She grabbed a toy pot and stirring spoon.

"We can bake cookies!" Lilly said. "Sometimes me and Ms. Duckworth make real ones."

The Littles busied themselves with the toys as they continued to talk, clinking and clacking as they fake-stirred the dough.

"Who is Ms. Duckworth?" Halle asked.

“My stuffie. I wanted to bring her to play, but Daddy was worried I’d lose her.” She paused and hung her head. “I guess he’s not really my Daddy.”

“Your Caregiver,” Halle said.

“Yeah. But I want him to be more. That’s the problem.”

“Ah. I sensed there was a story there. Do you want to share, friend?” Halle said.

Lilly thought it over. Despite having just met Halle an hour or so prior, the two had already formed a tight bond. It takes vulnerability, openness, and trust to be Little with another person. Because of that, it can cause attachments to develop quickly. Lilly knew she could trust her new friend.

“It’s complicated,” she said, keeping her voice low. She cast a quick glance to the men. They were deep in conversation, no doubt talking about Daddy things. Or sports. Or whatever guys like to talk about. Finally, Lilly decided it was safe to share. She spent the next five minutes explaining the history she shared with Edward.

“Ah. A stepbrother romance,” Halle said after listening carefully.

“It’s okay if you think I’m weird and disgusting. You don’t have to play with me,” Lilly said.

“Are you kidding? I’d never think that about you.” Halle hugged her. The embrace felt wonderful. “Stepsibling romances are very popular in books.”

“That’s what I keep hearing,” Lilly said.

Halle nodded. “I don’t think people find it that weird. At least not a lot of people.”

“But it is weird. Isn’t it?” Lilly asked. “Oh gosh. I’m so confused. But it doesn’t matter. We can’t be together. Edward would never go for it. It would make his company look bad. And what would our parents think? No, it’s too strange.”

“You have to follow your heart,” Halle said, gripping Lilly’s hand. “Life is short. Be with the one you love.”

Lilly wanted to cry. Her heart screamed that Halle was right. But she knew what common sense said. What society dictated. She and Edward would be thought of as freaks.

“I wish it were that simple,” she said. She sighed, hesitated, then looked her new friend in the eyes. “We can’t ever be together. That’s why I have to end this before it goes any further. I have to drive Edward away.”

“How do you plan on doing that?” Halle asked.

“I hatched a plan. I don’t have all the details hammered out yet, but basically, I’m going to be naughty. Like super naughty. He won’t want a bratty Little. He’ll think I’m more trouble than I’m worth. Then we can finally put these silly notions of forever away for good.”

Halle’s face contorted.

“What?” Lilly said.

“I don’t think that’s such a good idea. I really vote for following your heart.”

“But I can’t,” Lilly protested.

Halle nodded, but it was still obvious she didn’t like the option.

“Well, I don’t like it, but I won’t abandon you,” Halle said. “Let me know how I can help.”

“Thank you, but I don’t want you to get in trouble,” Lilly said.

“Oh, trust me, my Daddy is a big softie. I know he talked a big game earlier.” She smiled as she made her voice deep, trying to mimic him. “Let me change your diaper or I’ll spank your bottom.”

Both Littles howled with laughter.

Halle offered a dismissive wave. “He’s all bark and no bite. He’ll spank me every now and then, sure, but it isn’t bad. He’d much rather cuddle.”

The same could not be said about Edward, Lilly suspected. While she hadn’t actually gone over his knee, she had no doubt he could be strict.

“Thank you. I might need all the help I can get with this plan. I need to recruit some others. I have a friend named Baby Betty. She got in trouble the other day.”

“The golf cart incident?” Halle said.

“Yeah,” Lilly said while blushing. “You heard about that?”

“Everyone heard about that! It’s all the Littles around here talked about last night.”

Lilly winced.

“Hey, I know someone else who can help. Can you meet at the playground tomorrow morning at nine?” Halle said.

“I’ll ask my Daddy—I mean Edward—but I’m sure I can,” Lilly said. “Thank you.”

The two hugged again. Lilly grinned from ear-to-ear.

Operation Brat was underway.

The following morning, Lilly awoke with mixed emotions.

She'd slept in the bed with Edward. Nothing had happened, but they'd been close. Just like that night several months back, at her house.

And it had been just as wonderful yet also as maddening. It was hard to be so near him yet unable to act on all the desire that swirled in her core. It had been like sleeping in a bed of electricity. And the sleep hadn't come that easy. It was well past one that morning when she'd finally fallen asleep. Even then, her dreams had been of him.

That frustrating experience wasn't the only thing causing her mixed emotions.

Edward had agreed to take her to the playground that day. She was all set to meet Halle and the friend she'd mentioned. Plus, Betty was going to tag along. That meant the potential for trouble. If all went according to plan, Edward would wash his hands of her.

That was the goal.

Right? she silently pondered.

She wasn't so sure.

"You look lost in thought," Edward said.

Lilly nearly gasped upon looking at him as he strolled out of the bathroom.

Oh. My. Gosh. What are you trying to do to me?

His member was long and thick, hidden from view only by the thin cotton of his boxer-briefs. The way it hung, she was pretty for sure she might see the tip poke out through the leg holes. She eagerly awaited.

Try not to stare. Try not to stare!

She clutched Ms. Duckworth tightly.

“Just... thinking about the fun I’m going to have at the park.”

Edward finished toweling off. Steam still billowed from the door, making the room slightly humid, the remnants of the hot shower he’d just enjoyed. The faint aroma of his bodywash and aftershave reached her nostrils.

She lost that battle not to stare. How could she have won? He was working the fluffy, blue towel over his abs, getting water from the hard crevices. She wanted him. She *needed* him something fierce.

Her pussy ached with desire.

Just once. It wouldn't hurt, right? If we can't be together, at least we could have the memory of one encounter.

One hot, sexy encounter.

She was nearly panting. She was hugging Ms. Duckworth so tightly that she feared the stuffing might pop out.

“You sure you’re okay?” he asked.

No. I am most definitely not okay.

“All good,” she lied. “I’m hungry!” She sprung from the bed, eager to focus on anything other than the hot, nearly naked man who stood before her.

“We’ll go get something to eat in a minute. But first I need to change that diaper of yours and get you ready. Just settle down. I’ll be ready soon.”

He grabbed the remote control from the nightstand drawer and turned on the TV. The Ranch provided a channel dedicated to Littles like Lilly that played nothing but bright, colorful cartoons, shows with puppets, and sing-along videos. Lilly sat in her wet diaper, still hugging Ms. Duckworth, and watched. But she barely saw the images that flickered across the screen.

Her mind was too preoccupied with Edward to catch much else.

* * *

THE LITTLES MET UP AT THE PARK, EAGER TO PLAY AND scheme.

Upon arriving, Lilly first noticed Master Derek. Apparently, her apprehension was noted by Edward.

“Don’t worry,” he said, patting her hand. “The golf cart incident is in the past. He’s not here to spank you again.”

She laughed uneasily.

He was talking to two security guards. They listened intently, nodded, then said, “Yes, sir.” They trotted away as men on a mission.

“Wonder what’s going on?” she said.

“I’ll find out. But don’t you worry about it. The Ranch is safe,” Edward said. “Everything is okay.”

She looked at the playground and saw Betty, Halle, and a Little she’d never met before waving her over. She held up one finger, letting them know she’d be right there.

“Everything okay around here?” Edward said.

Master Derek smiled. “Yes, everything is fine. We did have a little incident with a drone this morning.”

“A drone?” Edward said.

Master Derek nodded. “From time to time we get curious folks—and sometimes even the media—trying to spy on what goes on at the Ranch. Of course, this might have just been a hobbyist flying their expensive toy or someone trying to capture scenic shots of the Montana countryside and mountains.” He shrugged. “Either way, security is just taking a little extra care today. We have drones, too. Our chief of security, Lawson Berringer, will send a few up to monitor the airspace.”

“Ooh. This sounds top secret!” Lilly said. “Like government spy stuff!”

Both men chuckled.

“Nothing that exciting, I’m afraid,” Master Derek said. “We take everyone’s privacy very seriously.”

“I read the camera policy before coming,” Edward said. “That’s one of the reasons I felt so comfortable here.”

“I’m glad you do.” Master Derek looked at Lilly. “And how are you doing, little one?”

“I’m fine, Master Derek.”

“Is your bottom still sore?”

She blushed, gulped, and then bobbed her head. “A little bit, Sir.”

“Good,” he said. “I suppose that will make you think before getting into trouble again.”

“Yes, Sir. I’ll be a good girl today.”

That wasn’t exactly a lie, she realized. She planned on being a good girl *today*. It was Labor Day when things would get a bit out of hand. Master Derek didn’t need to know that, though.

“I believe you,” he said, beaming a proud smile. “That’s why I brought my Little to play with you. She’s right over there. That’s Sadie.”

“Oh! I was wondering who the new girl was,” Lilly said with excitement.

“She’s only new to you,” Master Derek said. “She’s been here on the Ranch since she was eighteen. That’s been quite a few years ago. Her friend Halle invited her and I thought it was a wonderful idea. Why don’t you go run along and play. That is, if your Daddy is fine with that.”

He’s not my Daddy, Lilly thought. But she sure wasn’t about to correct Master Derek.

“That’s a great idea,” Edward said. “Go on, baby. Have fun. But stay out of trouble!”

“Yes, Sir.”

She skipped away to meet the others near the swing set.

“Hi, Sadie. I’m Lilly.”

Sadie was a gorgeous brunette in her early to mid-twenties. She was clearly a Little, but not a Caterpillar like Lilly, Betty, and Halle.

“Hi, Lilly. I’ve heard all about you. Way to go on the golf cart thing! That’s already a classic!”

Lilly winced. “Everyone does know about that, huh?”

“Sure do!” Sadie said. “Hey, don’t sweat it. You’re not the first Little to pull a prank around here.”

“Yeah, but that might go beyond a prank,” Lilly said.

“But you’re ready to pull some more shenanigans. Or that’s what I hear,” Sadie said quietly.

“She’s cool,” Halle said.

“But—”

“I’m Master Derek’s Little,” Sadie said with a slight laugh. “Don’t worry. I’m not going to rat you all out. Now, I can’t exactly get my hands dirty. But I can help a bit. What do you have in mind?”

Lilly still wasn’t convinced. The others read as much on her face.

“Hey, I’ve pulled some doozies in my day,” Sadie said.

“Tell her about the soda!” Halle encouraged.

“Oh, I’m proud of that one. You see, one time I put salt in the cafeteria’s soda fountain. I needed to help a friend out so she could pretend to be sick and get out of school.”

“Nice!” Lilly said with a giggle.

“That’s just the beginning. Another time, I started an epic food fight. I could go on, but I think you get the point,” Sadie said proudly.

“She has bona fide prank skills,” Halle pointed out.

“True,” Lilly said. “Thanks for helping, Sadie.”

“No worries. But for the record, Halle told me the story, and I recommend you let things play out. Kinda seems like you and Edward were made for each other,” Sadie said.

That sickening feeling churned once more in Lilly’s stomach. She would love nothing more than to call Edward Daddy and be held by him forever.

But it just couldn’t be.

She had to drive him away.

“I’ve got to break free of him. It’s for our own good. There’s no choice but to pull this prank,” she muttered. No one looked convinced. Not even Lilly herself. “Can you give me anything to work with? Just a solid lead? I want something to go down during the big Labor Day festivities. Something major.”

“Hmm,” Sadie said. “I think I know just the thing. I can tell you where they’re storing the leftover fireworks from Independence Day. I can even tell you how to access them.”

“You can?”

“Uh-huh. I overhear my Daddy say lots of stuff. It never hurts to file things away for times like this.”

“And until your big move, if you want to pull something smaller scale, I got a little somethin’ for ya,” Betty said. She reached into the pocket of her dress and pulled out a small packet. Handing it to Lilly, she said, “Add these to the hot tub. Trust me, that will get your Daddy’s—or whoever he is—attention.”

All of the Littles smiled devilishly.

This was going to be epic indeed.

Edward and Lilly had a full day.

There was plenty of playtime, games, and even horseback riding. They enjoyed good food, too, having dinner with Roman and Halle.

Despite all that, as they made it back to their suite, Lilly didn't seem very tired.

"I couldn't get you down now if I tried, huh?" Edward said.

"Nope."

"But it's after nine," he noted.

"Still not tired, Da—uh, Uncle Edward."

He hated that she was holding back. He understood why, though. Being called Daddy was not something he took lightly. That was a term of honor and affection. It carried with it a commitment. He wouldn't cheapen it by only wearing the title for a mere weekend.

But how he longed to hear her call him Daddy.

If only...

He knew he shouldn't allow his mind to go down that rabbit hole. It wouldn't lead anywhere good and would only

make him sad. It was getting hard to fight it, though. Even as they stood in their suite—with Lilly looking all kinds of cute—Edward was having a difficult time not scooping her into his arms and showering her with kisses.

“You want to get into the hot tub?” he asked.

“Yay! But Uncle Edward, I don’t have a swimsuit.”

“You don’t need one, baby doll. I picked up some swim diapers from the Ranch’s store earlier.”

She blushed hard and giggled, displaying more cuteness than he could stand. “But you’ll see my... you know... these.” She continued to giggle as she moved her hand between her boobs.

He laughed, but made it clear through his affectionate gaze that it wasn’t *at her*, rather a result of her cuteness.

“Honey, I’ve already seen your princess parts. A lot. Every time I change your diaper.”

She blushed again. “Oh, yeah. Well, I guess it’s okay...”

He realized it was more than okay as soon as he freed her from the frilly dress she’d worn all day. Her nipples were pert and it had nothing to do with the temperature.

He tried to ignore them as he laid her flat and tended to her diaper. But as he did that, he couldn’t ignore certain other parts of her body.

Parts that had his cock throbbing.

Just focus on the task at hand. You’ve got this.

He wasn’t so sure. There was nothing he wanted more than to ram his cock deep inside that little pussy. He wanted it so badly, in fact, that pre-cum was seeping from his tip.

Has she ever been with anyone before?

After giving it some thought, he doubted it.

*Shit! Stop thinking about taking your stepsister's virginity.
Get yourself under control.*

He moved as quickly as possible, just needing to redirect his attention anywhere but her naked body. He breathed a sigh of relief upon finishing. But it was rather short lived.

“I’ll go put on my bathing trunks,” he said. “Be right back.”

“Hey,” she said, hopping off the bed and waddling toward him. “How come you get to see me naked and I don’t get to see you.”

He knew she’d been fighting the same desires he’d been. Both had been for months. Longer, if they were being honest. Years. Apparently, she could no longer resist. Not at that moment, at least.

*Then I have to be extra strong. I can't give in. For both our
sakes.*

“I’m the Daddy,” he said. “You’re the Little.” He winced. “The Uncle. Whatever the hell I am.”

She giggled and pointed. “You said a bad word!”

His defenses crumbled. Plus, shocking her would fun.

He shucked out of his shirt, worked his belt, and dropped his pants and boxer-briefs.

She gasped.

“Edward!”

He grinned. “You asked.”

She giggled some more.

Her eyes were glued to it.

He began to swell.

Oh shit. What does it matter anyway? We've freaking crossed the line a long time ago. Who are we kidding with this charade?

“Do you want to touch it, honey?” he said, stepping closer.

He knew it was wrong. Oh so wrong. But there was no stopping. Not now.

“It's so big, Daddy,” she whispered.

He wrapped his arms around her.

“Will it hurt me?” she asked.

“You're just touching it, baby.” He took her hand and guided it down, dropping it on his now throbbing member. She whimpered as she wrapped her small hand around it. “Good girl. Just like, honey,” he said into her ear.

She cooed softly, laying her head against his chest. She pumped his shaft several times. “Daddy, I've never...”

“It's okay, princess. Daddy will teach you everything you need to know.”

“Edward, we shouldn't.”

“You hush, honey. Daddy will make you feel good. Here, we'll start slow.”

He picked her up. She wrapped her legs around him. He pressed his lips to hers. The kiss grew and soon their tongues found one another, dancing as lust enveloped Edward and Lilly.

She laid his head on his shoulder. He carried her onto the patio where he put her feet on the ground long enough to remove her diaper. He then gently placed her in the hot tub.

“Doesn’t that water feel good, princess?”

“Mmm-hmm, Daddy.”

He eased in beside her. “Come sit on Daddy’s lap.”

She happily obeyed.

Edward clinched his stomach muscles tightly as he staved off an impending climax. Just having that sweet girl’s body atop his, though, was nearly enough to send him over the brink.

He felt the head of his cock bump her pussy lips.

She moaned.

He grunted.

There was no going back. Not in this moment. He didn’t know what would happen afterwards—what the future held.

But he sure knew what was going to happen right now.

And he was going to enjoy it.

You must stop this, Lilly!

How could she? She was facing Edward, straddling him, feeling his thick, long cock push against her, demanding entry.

The warm water bubbled all around them. His strong arms kept her in a tight embrace. It was absolutely heaven on earth.

Her mind raced. She could say no, sure. Edward would respect that. She was powerless, though, and could not bring herself to utter that simple word.

That's when she remembered the bubbles.

Oh crap! She'd forgotten to snatch them before coming outside. If she only had them now she could...

A powerful kiss cut off her thoughts.

She managed to break away long enough to stare into his eyes. She could see the passion smoldering in them. She opened her mouth to protest, to say no, but no sound came out.

Every molecule of her being wanted this. She knew the same was true for him.

One night.

That's all.

They deserved that much.

She moved her lips back to his. It seemed as if the kiss electrified the water around them. They were both hungry. Neither would be denied. Their lust was so strong that it felt as if it were a physical presence there in the hot tub, forcing them together.

“I want to ride you, Daddy!”

“Go slow, honey. Daddy doesn’t want to hurt you.”

For a moment, she thought he was lining up to pierce her, but realized his hand was merely exploring.

It didn’t bother her one bit.

He kneaded her inner thigh and then moved up.

She whimpered as he pushed through her folds and found her clit. He smiled, wagging a finger over it, brushing it with just the right amount of pressure.

“Mmm.”

Her breathing grew deeper. She ground against his hand. He continued to masterfully stroke her feminine pearl. The pressure in her core grew, spreading outward and seizing her body.

“Do you need it, baby?”

“Yes, Daddy.”

“Tell me. Tell Daddy what you need?”

“You, Daddy. I need you! I need to come. Please.”

“Good girl,” he said.

He increased the speed and intensity, now gliding furiously over her clit. She wiggled as ecstasy took hold of her, but he kept her in place with his free arm wrapped around her waist.

Still massaging her clit, he pushed a finger inside her.

She cried loudly.

Her body shuddered hard. Her moans grew louder. She squeezed her eyes shut, opened her mouth, and released a fierce shriek that probably reverberated throughout the entire Ranch.

Her knees fluttered like butterfly wings as she arrived. The climax left her weak and for a moment she feared she'd slide under the water, but Daddy kept her upright. He kissed her, held her, and told her what a good girl she was.

“Daddy, I need you,” she pleaded.

She used a finger to trace a long, thick vein on his cock. She giggled as she felt it pulsate.

“Come here, baby,” he said in a patient, caring tone. “Daddy will try not to hurt his sweet girl.”

He pried open her legs further. She wailed as his cockhead poked her slit.

“It's okay, baby. Daddy will go slow,” he reassured her once more.

She bit her bottom lip and clutched Edward tightly as he finally poked through.

“You're doing so good,” he said. “You're making Daddy so proud.”

She barely nodded. White hot pain exploded inside her. A tear streamed down her cheek.

She sank an inch lower. She was seeing stars now. Her neck muscles bulged as she gritted her teeth.

Every new inch claimed brought a fresh wave of pain. It was slow going, with Edward keeping his promise of taking it slow, but soon she was fully impaled.

And then the pain subsided, gradually giving way to an intense pleasure unlike anything she'd ever known.

“Ohh, Daddy!” she cried as she began bouncing on him, causing the water to splash loudly around them and steam to rise.

“Mmm... good... girl,” he said through clinched teeth.

It was evident he was trying hard not to come. She imagined it was tough. Her virgin pussy had to be so tight, hugging him like a vise grip and wringing every ounce of pleasure she could extract.

He threw his head back, released a guttural moan, and dug his fingers deep into her hips.

That commitment to going slow and steady was forgotten, but neither cared. She wanted it just as badly as he did.

His body bucked hard into her. She torqued and fought hard to stay atop him as her body gyrated uncontrollably. Water splashed out of the hot tub, landing loudly on the patio.

They hammered into each other with breathtaking power.

The pressure in Lilly's core continued to grow until her eyes rolled to the back of her head. Her scream was ear-piercing. She climaxed forcefully with the first orgasm rolling into a second.

Edward groaned and released his seed deep inside his stepsister's womb.

People might not understand.

Some would judge.

The ramifications of their actions weren't even fully known to each other in that moment.

One thing was for certain, though. For both of them.

It was the most magical experience in their lives.

The best night ever.

The following morning, Lilly knew she had to call off the pranks.

The Ranch's grounds were swarming with activity. It seemed everyone was excited about the Labor Day festivities. Some Littles and their Bigs were already practicing for the sack races. Ranch employees were busy preparing the food. Picnic tables had been erected with tablecloths laid out and drink stations nearby.

It was clear everyone was in holiday mode.

Lilly should have been happy. She was, to an extent. Elated, in fact.

She'd spent the night in Edward's arms. That morning they'd talked and neither had all the answers, but they knew everything had changed last night. There was no way they could deny their destiny.

They didn't know the specifics as to how life would work, but they knew one thing.

They loved each other. They had for so long.

They'd figure all that out later. Right now, Lilly had to find Betty.

“Why are you so antsy?” Edward asked as they walked toward the main outdoor area of the Ranch.

“Just excited,” she said. “We get to say goodbye to summer and hello to fall. It’s the best time of the year!”

She hoped he bought the excuse.

He seemed to. “Speaking of fall starting, some other Daddies and I are going to get together and watch the college football game tonight. It will be a chance for you to play with their Littles. How does that sound?”

“Yay!” she said.

She truly was excited. Fall was actually her favorite time of year.

Some of the picnic tables had been decorated in a football theme. Others in red and golden leaves. A sandwich board sign proudly displayed the number of days until pumpkin spice arrived: zero.

As awesome as all of this was, she needed to find Betty and fast. Otherwise, the picnic would be ruined.

Which had sort of been the plan.

She’d needed a prank so grand, so awful, that it scared Edward away.

Now, of course, such a thought appalled her.

Edward’s phone dinged. He checked the screen and shook his head.

“Everything okay?” Lilly asked.

“Yeah. Just my assistant Holly calling. I told her to take the holiday off.”

“Do you need to answer it?”

“Nope. She needs to forget about work and enjoy her day. So do we.” He appraised Lilly for a moment. “You can’t stand still! You that eager to find your friends?”

She spread her hands. “What can I say? I’m ready for some fun.”

“Go on, honey. But be careful. I’ll be right over at that table, talking to Roman. Come back in an hour so we can eat.”

“Yes, Sir.”

She craned her neck up, kissed her new Daddy on the cheek, and then hurried off to find Betty and Halle.

She just prayed she wasn’t too late.

* * *

“I HAVEN’T SEEN HER ANYWHERE,” HALLE SAID.

“Oh crap! We have to find Betty!”

“She’s probably rigging up the fireworks,” Halle noted.

“Crap! I should have planned to do it myself,” Lilly said.

“But this was all part of the plan: she does it, because she doesn’t have a Daddy looking over her shoulder every second, but you take credit for it so Edward would think you’re too much trouble to keep around,” Halle said.

Now that Lilly heard the plan aloud, it sounded foolish. Of course, she’d made it before she and Edward had given into their desires. Before they’d confessed their love to each other.

She couldn’t go back in time and never hatch the harebrained scheme, but she could stop it from occurring now.

If they could find Betty.

“There’s Sadie,” she said, pointing to Master Derek’s Little. “Let’s ask her to help us find Betty. If we all split up, we should be able to find her.”

The Littles did just that, each going their own way, desperately trying to find Betty.

It was all for naught, though. It seemed as if the mischievous Little was nowhere to be found.

“I’ve got to go to the sack races,” Sadie said after nearly an hour of searching. “We’re going to do the first round now, before lunch.”

“Thank you for helping search,” Lilly said. “Maybe she’ll turn up.” She didn’t sound very hopeful, though.

She and Halle went to the table where their Daddies awaited.

“Did you girls have fun?” Roman asked.

“Sure did,” Halle said.

She flashed Lilly a brief look that let her know she regretted the lie.

Lilly hated dragging her friends into this. Why had she done it in the first place?

“Everyone, if I may have your attention!” a booming voice called out.

Everyone looked to see Master Derek standing on a small stage that had been erected. To the side of it were multiple smokers, no doubt filled with delicious meats and grilled corn. Other tables had been set up a few feet away, filled with sides and desserts.

“Thank you all for coming and happy Labor Day from me and the Rawhide Ranch!”

Everyone applauded and cheered.

Well, everyone except Lilly. She was nervously scanning the assembled crowd for any sign of Betty.

Still nothing.

“In honor of this holiday, I thought it would be nice for my Little, Sadie, to present some things she’s learned at school. She and her classmates recently ended their summer break and the first thing their teachers had them do was learn about this very important holiday. Sadie,” he looked to his wife, sweeping his hand at the microphone, and then stepping aside as she took her place.

Her brown pigtails swayed as she reached up to lower the mic. She cleared her throat and then began.

“Labor Day is celebrated each year to honor the contributions of the women and men who have worked hard to build this nation. It was declared a federal holiday all the way back in 1894. It is always celebrated on the first Monday of September. Our neighbors to the north in Canada celebrate their version of the holiday then, too. And while the meteorological beginning of autumn doesn’t come for several more weeks, most people consider Labor Day to be the start of fall.”

She went on to present more of the report. Lilly only half listened. She was proud of Sadie for all the work she’d done, but it was more important to find Betty. The only problem was Betty didn’t seem to be anywhere around.

“Thank you, angel. Daddy is very proud of you,” Master Derek said, kissing her before taking his place back at the mic.

“We are almost ready to eat, folks, but first, we have a qualifying round for the sack races. And it looks like our racers are already ready to—”

“What about us, Daddy?” Sadie asked.

He chuckled along with the rest of the crowd.

“Yes, sweetie, we’ll get in our sack in just a second. If all racers could make their way to the starting line, we’ll kick off in a few...”

“There she is!” Lilly said aloud.

Edward looked puzzled. “Who?” he asked quietly.

“Uh, no one,” Lilly said.

Behind a thick, nearby tree, Betty smiled and waved devilishly before flashing Lilly a thumbs-up. Lilly waved her hands, mouthing “No” but when Betty only tilted her head and looked puzzled, Lilly knew her friend didn’t understand.

Master Derek had left the stage and was now in position—his feet in a large potato sack—with his Little in there, too. Someone else had taken his place and said, “On your mark! Get set! Take off in five, four, three, two...”

The first explosion came just as he said, “One.”

All hell broke loose.

The roar was deafening.

Red, white, and blue sparks rained down, showering the grounds.

People were in a panic, trying to help each other as they all moved away.

The racers had a hard time since their feet were in the sacks. One couple went down, hitting the racers next to them, and then they all fell like dominos, one right after the other. People hollered. Littles screamed. Some cried. Others laughed.

It was sheer pandemonium.

Finally, the fireworks ended. The acrid tang of smoke hung heavy in the air. When it cleared enough for folks to see, a banner hung from a tree that read COMPLIMENTS OF LITTLE LILLY.

“Lilly!” Edward said.

“Oh boy,” she said. “So, uh, I bet that’s another Lilly. Isn’t that crazy?”

He shook his head.

Master Derek was now up and had assessed the damage. The fireworks had been close but set up with enough skill to

where they were far enough away—and controlled enough—not to hurt anyone.

“My goodness!” he said.

Lilly wanted the ground to open up and swallow her. She burst out crying.

“What is going on with you?” Edward said, cocking his head to one side.

“You’re... going... to leave me now,” she said. “It’s what I wanted. Or what I thought we needed. And—” She began sobbing harder.

Just then, Edward’s phone rang for the fifth time in an hour. He looked to see it was Holly—as it had been all the other times.

“Hang on,” he said.

He held the phone up to his ear.

“We need to talk,” Holly said.

“Now’s not really a good time,” he said. “Besides, aren’t you supposed to be enjoying the holiday?”

“Oh, I took off work. Someone else did not. It’s Collin.”

“I’ve already requested an investigation be opened up and —”

“Edward,” Holly said, steel lining her words. “He knows where you are. He knows who you’re with. He sent a drone onto the property, got some footage of you, and then went through social media and your online presence to realize you were with your stepsister. He’s threatening to go before the board. Release the information to the media. He wants to force you out.”

Edward sighed.

He clutched the phone and shook his head.

He looked around him. The chaos was over. Folks were putting things back to normal. Lilly was still crying. Master Derek looked as if steam were about to come from his ears.

Despite all the craziness, Edward couldn't help but smile and chuckled.

“You're laughing?” Holly asked.

He continued chuckling, taking a minute before he could regain his composure. Finally, he said, “Let him. He probably thinks I'll act shocked. That I'll try to hide this or make an excuse. But I'm not going to run.

“I love Lilly. More than anything. I'm never leaving her. Public be damned. Board be damned. Anyone and everyone who tries to separate us! She's my little sweetie. Always has been. Always will be.”

Lilly, having heard, stopped crying. She looked at Edward through hopeful eyes. “You... m-mean that?”

“I love you, baby doll. More than anything,” he said.

He forgot about the phone call as she rushed into his arms.

Everyone around them broke into applause, cheering wildly as Edward spun his sweet Little in a circle, showering her with kisses.

“I'm going to get a spanking, aren't I?” she whispered in his ear.

“So, so bad,” he said with a smile. “But after the picnic.”

He put the phone back to his ear and said, “Holly, have a happy Labor Day. I know we will. We'll deal with this later.”

He could hear the happiness in her voice when she said, “Go get ‘em, boss.”

The crowd cheered as he kissed Lilly once more.

“Well, there’s no damage done,” Master Derek said loudly. “Let’s get back to it, folks. What do you say?”

The crowd clapped and hollered.

Master Derek looked at Edward. “You’re going to take care of that bottom of hers, right?”

“She won’t sit down for a day,” Edward said.

Lilly gulped.

“But first,” Edward said, “Let’s have some fun. Happy Labor Day, Lilly.”

She took his hand and walked with him toward the food.

“Happy Labor Day, Daddy.”

THE END

Thank you so much for reading! I hope you enjoyed this visit
to The Rawhide Ranch.

Be sure and check out all the other great titles in this series.

Until next time, remember—you are valuable. You belong in
this world!

Have fun, Cuties.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amy Cummings enjoys writing sweet DDLG and Age Play fiction that has a little bit of steam and a whole lot of whimsy. She's authored over forty books and doesn't plan on stopping anytime soon.

In addition to her bestselling Mountainville series and assorted tales filled with Daddies, Mommies, and mischievous Littles, she authors clean, sweet romances under the name Amie Hollis.

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