



*My Three*  
BILLIONAIRE  
BOSSSES

MOLLY EDEN

# *My Three Billionaire Bosses*

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## **My Three Billionaire Bosses**

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Molly Eden

molly@mollyedenauthor.com

[MollyEdenAuthor.com](http://MollyEdenAuthor.com)

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# *Molly Eden Books*

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## CHAPTER 1

Mylee

**H**iss! Splat!  
I jumped back as the steam from the frothing wand sprayed over my pinstriped shirt, dousing me in dots of milk for the fourth time today. Gritting my teeth, I turned off the frothing machine, but it was too late to escape Zander's always-watching eyes.

"It's too hot. You need to make sure the milk is cold when you make foam," he intoned, stepping forward to take the metal canister out of my hand.

I resisted the urge to snatch it back or dump it on him.

*Fuck off, Zander,* I offered silently, wondering if he just waited in the shadows for an opportunity to mansplain things to me or if his timing was merely impeccable.

"Thanks, Z," I replied sweetly. "I keep forgetting."

I didn't forget. It was just the nature of working at a busy café. I couldn't keep up with the flow of drink orders and not expect to get dirty, but I didn't bother explaining that to Zander, whose shirt was inexplicably clean. That probably had something to do with the fact that he played pseudo-supervisor and didn't do any work.

I let him take the caked container, and I stepped back, brushing the back of my hand against my forehead to pull the annoying stray strands of hair from my face. Inevitably, pieces had come loose from the high ponytail during my shift to tease and irritate the skin on my cheeks and ears. Under normal circumstances, the tendrils probably wouldn't have bothered me so much, but with the fusion of current company and mounting stress on my shoulders, every little bit was getting to me.

As always, a low din settled around Teatolter's, the mid-afternoon crowd



half-filling the quirky, jungle-themed café with a mishmash of businessmen and college students. A whining pop song played through the speakers, Zander's dated playlist only wearing on my already frayed nerves.

"You really should keep another shirt here," Zander went on, setting the wiped canister back on the espresso machine for me to start again instead of doing it himself, since he was such an expert. "The way you get dirty, it only makes sense that you keep a wardrobe on hand. God forbid Sandra walk in and see you looking like you do. She's salty under the best of circumstances."

He winked teasingly, and I stifled the urge to give him the finger.

*Not all of us have the luxury of having our mommies doing laundry for us.* I choked on the words somehow, reminding myself that getting into it with Zander would serve absolutely no purpose but to create a hostile work environment.

Turning back to the order, I fixed my full attention on the latte, careful not to wear any more of the steamed milk on my uniform. I still had another four hours before quitting time, and I already reeked of sour milk. I could add that to my list of grievances with my day.

"Here you go, Elle," I chirped with as much cheer as I could muster, handing the paper cup to the blonde regular who waited in the line.

She flashed me a quick smile, still talking on her phone, and turned away without a word to me. Despite the nametag on my shirt, I had no doubt that Elle, like all the other businesspeople who flocked through the doors of this chain, had no idea what my name was, despite the fact they had been coming in as long as I'd been working there. There were way more interesting things to look at in Teatotler's than my exhausted face.

The leering fish in their wall tank were easier to feast one's eyes on while waiting on a coffee than the actual human in front of you—not that I could necessarily blame the customers. I often found myself staring at the fish, rather than the patrons, lest I make eye contact with the wrong weirdo.

As Elle used her hip to open the door while balancing her coffee, a manicured hand curled over the top of her head on the door, pulling it to allow her through. At first, she looked up in annoyance, but like me, her eyes popped to see the stunningly handsome face attached to the arm. For a split second, she froze, studying his face.

"T-thanks," Elle choked as the tawny-toned man grinned at her, flashing a perfect array of ivory teeth.

"My pleasure," he replied, stepping aside to allow Elle out before

stepping in where she had stood.

My jaw slacked to see that he wasn't alone. His two companions were just as beautiful as him, although in very different ways.

Surprisingly, the first man was the shortest of the three, though I couldn't be sure if that was accurate at second glance. They were all very close in stature, the tallest one the blond who ambled in last. As he stood, his face twisted in an uncomfortable frown, as if he would rather be anywhere else. The middleman had black hair and eyes so piercing blue, I could feel them from where I stood.

I barely knew which way to look between the trio, who exuded power with their confidence, expensive shoes, and casual but pricey button-down shirts. They exuded class and money. Or maybe that was just my hormones talking. Wave after wave of elegance radiated toward me, even from that distance, and I had to give myself a shake. All three of them were so very good looking, it was hard to believe that they were all together in a group.

The doorstop caught me gawking, his emerald iris taking me aback, the contrast to his honey complexion stopping my heart. But before I could manage a watery grin, Zander's voice was in my ear again.

"The men from Silverpiece," Zander piped in, shattering my reverie and the modicum of euphoria it had given me in the middle of my shift.

Gritting my teeth, I pivoted and looked at him, his chin bobbing up and down confidently, like I should know what he was talking about.

"What?" I barked with far more venom than I intended.

"Those guys who just walked in? They're from Silverpiece."

I stared uncomprehendingly at him. "Is that supposed to mean something to me?" I asked, regaining my composure. The moment had passed, and I had work to do that didn't entail gawping at men way out of my league.

Zander snorted arrogantly. "Really? You don't know what Silverpiece Corp is?"

I rolled my eyes and returned to an order that slid through on the machine, ignoring the fact that the men had congregated at a table near the counter. I had a good view of all three from there, but I wouldn't let myself be distracted—even if Zander was still rambling in my ear.

"They're a huge conglomerate," he went on, despite the fact that I gave him no encouragement. He had never been very good at reading the room. "They own everything from hotels to fashion lines."

"That's nice," I replied flatly. "Can you get me the almond milk?"

He grabbed the carton out of the fridge, his hazel eyes steadfast on the table as he thrust the carton toward me. His intense gaze irked me.

“Stop staring at them, Z,” I scolded him. “Don’t you have something to do?”

I knew he wasn’t scheduled on my station today.

He snorted, ignoring my work question but addressing my initial reprimand. “They don’t notice us, Mylee. We’re the gum on the bottom of their shoes. They’d probably pay more attention to gum—those loafers are worth like five grand a pop.”

*He’s probably right.*

But it had no bearing on my life.

“It’s weird to see all three of them out here together,” Zander went on, leaning over the counter to stare harder at the men. “I’ve seen one or two of them wander through, but all three?”

I turned on the espresso machine, sticking a cup underneath to catch the coffee. I wish I’d had occasion to use the frothing machine again, just to drown out Zander.

“Maybe they’re having a meeting,” I stupidly suggested, inadvertently encouraging the conversation.

Zander scoffed at my ignorance. “They have an enormous office in the financial district.”

“Maybe it’s a private meeting,” I said, glancing at the men again.

To my shock, they were all looking at me. My jaw slacked at their blatant gazes, a blend of green and blue, identical half-smiles on their faces. A hot blush tinged my cheeks, and I hastily returned to my job, swallowing the lump in my throat, wishing I hadn’t dared to glance in their direction.

“I can’t believe you haven’t heard of Silverpiece. I mean, anyone who’s anyone has heard of Silverpiece,” Zander went on.

“Well, I guess that’s how I’ve never heard of them,” I quipped. “I’m twenty-four years old and working as a barista. *Forbes* isn’t exactly knocking down my door.”

“Not with that attitude, they won’t be,” Zander scolded me, and I groaned, sensing what was coming before he started. “You need to manifest your success, Mylee. Do you think billionaires just sit around before they’re successful complaining about what they don’t have?”

*Oh, my god. Does he really want me to answer that?*

“You have to work hard and fixate on what you want, what you desire...”

Even though I had no use for it, I turned on the steamer, making as much noise as possible to shut him up.

I wished Zander would stop rambling about rich people without a hint of irony, like he wasn't working for minimum wage, right beside me. I had poor people problems to wallow in, and with Zander going on about these disgustingly attractive executives, it was hard to focus on my own issues.

My co-worker finally got the hint and wandered off to bother Catrine on cash, leaving me to finish my drink orders, alone with my thoughts.

I finished the third drink on the order and laid it on the serving counter. "Lincoln?" I called out, reading from the order. "Your order is up."

Immediately, the door-holder rose from his spot at the table, those even, perfect teeth appearing again as he reached for the drinks. Despite my determination to keep my cool, my heart fluttered as he approached, and sweat broke out over my hairline.

"Thank you," he purred, verdant eyes scanning my figure to rest on the swell of my breasts against my shirt. "Mylee."

My cheeks burned as I followed his gaze to my nametag, wracking my brain for something clever to say, but when I looked back up again, he had reclaimed his spot among his partners. All three grinned at me now, and I inadvertently stepped back from the counter, hating the sweeping embarrassment inside me.

*Cocky pricks. They're used to making women feel like this.*

"They're so fucking hot," Catrine moaned, pretending to wipe the counter beside the espresso machine.

I cast her a sidelong look.

"You think?" I answered coolly.

The cashier wasn't listening to me, her eyes glued to the executives, saliva almost dripping from her jowls. "You think I should post a pic of them? We're never going to get a chance like this again."

I frowned. Was I the only one who didn't know what a big deal these guys were? I needed to get out more.

Not that it would make a bit of difference to me if I knew about them, I reminded myself again.

Catrine slyly pulled her phone out of her back pocket, scanning the area for our manager, Drew.

"If you want to get your ass fired," I replied, turning toward the storeroom. "Go for it."

I didn't want any part of it.

"Sandra won't fire me. She'll be jelly she wasn't here to see them herself," Catrine chirped. "This is good publicity."

I didn't bother responding. The fascination with the rich and famous would always be a mystery to me. Unless that fame was somehow going to pay my never-ending influx of bills, I had no interest in what others were doing with money I would never see in my lifetime. I didn't care about Silverpiece any more than I did about any other corporation—even if their founders were much more attractive.

My phone vibrated as I entered the backroom, and I glanced over my shoulder to ensure the manager wasn't nearby. I wasn't supposed to be using my phone during my shift, and unlike some of my co-workers, I tended to respect that rule, but it was right in reach. Grabbing for it out of my locker, I glanced at the notification and paled, wishing I'd waited until after my shift. I should have known that it wasn't good news.

*Still waiting for your response to the rent increase, Mylee. If I don't have your answer by this weekend, I'll assume you're out by next month.*

The wind knocked out of my lungs, and I dropped the phone back in my purse, my heart hammering in my chest as I secured my belongings again.

How the hell was I supposed to afford an extra six hundred bucks a month? How was this even legal?

But admitting I couldn't afford it meant telling my landlord, which meant officially giving notice, which meant finding a new place, which meant getting first, last, and security together.

I was royally and totally screwed. No matter how much I worked between now and then, even if I picked up a side gig, I would never be able to scrape up enough.

I was going to end up living in O'Hare or in one of the tent cities.

My gut twisted, and my hands went slick with sweat. It wasn't a delusion. It was the next step for me. I was in real trouble without any options for salvation. I didn't have a mommy's basement like Zander or a boyfriend like Catrine. There was no rich uncle to borrow cash from.

*What the hell am I going to do?*

"Hey, it's getting busy out here!" Zander yelled from the front. "You hiding back there?"

Steeling myself against a mini-breakdown, I grabbed the stack of medium cups I'd come to replenish and headed back out toward the front to do my

job. A panic attack never solved any problem, so I needed to redirect my thoughts before I went down that path. In the end, I would still be left to pick myself up and deal with it. I just had to put my nose to the grindstone and keep working—and praying. Maybe an asteroid would hit the earth later on in the afternoon and solve all my problems. Wouldn't that be nice?

## CHAPTER 2

*Mylee*

Zander hadn't been kidding. In the few short minutes I'd been in the back, the café had exploded with patrons, but that was the nature of the business. It could get packed at the drop of a dime when we least expected it.

I jumped back on coffee orders, my view of the Silverpiece princes blocked by the throng of customers who lined the busy shop.

Order after order popped up through the machine, and I found my groove, ignoring the knot of despair that had formed in my stomach after reading the text on my phone until finally, blissfully, the numbness settled in, and I blotted out my personal troubles. Work was always good at blocking out everything else.

I'd grown good at this apathy over the years, stuffing down the stress until it became a dull throb, manageable in a fog from somewhere removed. I would have to get back to my landlord tonight, let her know I was leaving the crappy studio apartment in Washington Park that wasn't even worth six hundred dollars on its own, never mind a six hundred dollar rent increase. Again, I marveled at the legality of it, but refused to succumb to the anger bubbling inside me. It was useless. There wasn't a damn thing anyone in my position could do about it.

After forty-five minutes, the rush began to die down, and I finally took a breath, reaching for my metal water bottle for a long sip, the cold liquid filtering down my windpipe.

When I snatched another order from the machine, a loud voice caught my attention before I could start on the iced coffee on the paper order.

"...get away with this!" the man boomed.

I caught another voice, the din of the café blurring the conversation.



“...out of here, Richard,” someone growled, drawing me out of my haze.

My gaze shifted toward the table where the Silverpiece babes had been seated, and the black-haired, blue-eyed god stood, facing off with a complete stranger who must have come in when I had lost myself in the rush. The newcomer’s face was crimson, agitated.

Lincoln and his blond partner remained seated casually, but the nameless Silverpiece executive appeared very tense with this Richard’s presence.

“Screw you, Paxton! You have no right!” Richard yelled, his face flushing more, fists closed at his side. I was starting to worry about his health.

The plastic order cup in my hand found its way to the counter as I sensed a problem unfolding. I set it down, the drink order forsaken for the moment as I tried to get a handle on what was happening. Patrons stopped talking to watch the fight growing more heated, and my manager, Drew, backed toward the storeroom. I stared after him in disbelief.

*Seriously? He’s just going to let this play out?*

I shouldn’t have been surprised. Drew had never been very good with conflict.

“Don’t tell me what to do!” Richard continued. “This is a public fucking place. I can do whatever I want.”

*Uh, no, you can’t,* I thought, starting around the counter.

“Woah!” Zander grabbed my arm. “What the hell are you doing?”

I glanced at him, shaking my head.

“Stopping this shit,” I grumbled, shaking him off.

“You can’t put yourself in the middle of that!” Zander breathed nervously. “It’s probably some Fortune 500 brawl. You’ll end up all over social media.”

I rolled my eyes and stormed around the counter, shoving my way through the small crowd forming, Richard’s voice raising and getting more obnoxious. Maybe the guys were too chickenshit to stop this, but I wasn’t going to let them disrupt my workday anymore.

“Seriously, fuck all of you!” Richard went on, waving his hand theatrically. “You have no idea who you’re fucking with.”

“Sit down, Richard,” one of the Silverpiece guys muttered, but I didn’t see who as I made my way through, although I thought it might have been Lincoln’s voice.

“You sit down, you goddamn—”

“Sir!” I snapped, interrupting as I finally materialized at the table.

Startled, all eyes turned to me, their argument abruptly ending. The black-haired man in the Silverpiece group frowned to see me.

But before anyone could say a word, I went on, “You’re going to need to calm down.”

Lincoln snorted and smothered his laugh with his hand, but either my order or the man’s snicker incensed the enraged Richard more.

He turned his wrath on me. “Fuck off, lady,” he barked at me, stepping subtly closer. “This doesn’t concern you.”

Great. Another egomaniacal asshole who thought big, scary words would get me to scamper off with my tail between my legs.

Nonplussed by his tone or his words, I stepped between him and the black-haired man, jutting my chin out. He definitely judged me wrong if he thought that would scare me off.

“Sir, I really need you to take a step back now.”

Richard bared his teeth at me like he was going to bite me. “Go back to work, bitch.”

“Don’t talk to her that way, Richard,” Lincoln growled.

“Don’t tell me how to talk to anyone, Lincoln,” Richard spat, but I didn’t need Lincoln or anyone else fighting my battles for me.

I smirked, unperturbed. “I’d love to get back to work,” I replied, my heart rate not even rising. This didn’t even take the top twenty most alarming situations I’d seen in my life. “Except some obnoxious prick is screaming like a toddler who needs a diaper change in my place of work. It’s very distracting.”

Several of the patrons started to titter, and I realized that some were recording. Zander had been right about that, too. I was going to end up on social media.

*Sandra is going to freak out when she sees this. I better tone it down.*

“Sir, please,” I tried again, backpedaling my initial sass. “Can you please take your grievances outside—”

“Fuck you, you dumb bitch!”

Suddenly, all three of the Silverpiece men were on their feet, and someone threw a punch. Blood spurted over the table as Richard fell back, gasping, and Lincoln pounced, grabbing the man by the scruff of the neck, hauling him toward the door as I gawked after them, my pulse finally roaring in my ears. I hadn’t seen that coming.

“Are you okay?” the blond asked, reclaiming his seat as if nothing had

happened. He eyed me through his peripheral vision, but I caught a hint of concern in his tone.

“I... yeah...” I mumbled, unsure of what else to say.

I wasn't hurt, but this was humiliating. Zander rushed out from behind the counter, followed by Drew, but the black-haired man stopped both the workers.

“Hang on a minute,” he ordered them. “I want a minute with Mylee.”

“Uh... sure, Mr. Webb,” the manager said, keeping his distance as he looked at me. “Mylee, are you okay?”

I glared at him. “Yeah. Great. Thanks.”

*No thanks to you, jerk. Great managing, Drew.*

“I'm going to call Sandra,” Drew mumbled, backing away.

Zander remained between me and the counter, but Mr. Webb glowered at him until he, too, withdrew, leaving me standing helplessly at the table, unsure of what to do.

Mr. Webb flexed his hand, checking it for damage, and sat down finally, reaching for his coffee. The skin on his hand wasn't broken, despite the amount of blood that had poured from Richard's nose.

I wondered why Mr. Webb reacted so strongly. I didn't pretend to be flattered. It couldn't have had anything to do with me. It had just been a testosterone battle that I'd wandered into unsuspectingly.

Clearing my throat, I eyed the men, folding my arms across my chest. “I should probably—” I started to say, but the door opened, and Lincoln strode back in, appearing as nonchalant as his companions. The words died on my lips.

“I highly recommend that everyone erase any video taken of that incident,” Lincoln called out pleasantly to no one in particular. “I wouldn't want to track down anyone who posted it online.”

He winked vaguely at the patrons, and immediately, I watched as people scrambled to scroll through their phones, presumably adhering to his instructions.

Wow. Imagine having that kind of power. I wasn't sure if I was disgusted or impressed. Probably a combination of the two.

“Well,” I muttered, turning away to gesture at the mess the brawl had left behind. “I should clean that up.”

Lincoln took his seat and crossed an ankle over his knee, glancing at Mr. Webb, who met his gaze with steely blue eyes. They seemed to have an

unspoken communication as I turned around.

“Mylee, right?” Lincoln called out to me.

I stopped and looked back, nodding. “That’s right.”

“Mylee what?”

Lincoln’s sudden interest in me took me aback, but I didn’t want to be rude, even though I could see the orders piling up at the machine through my peripheral vision. It was going to be a pain in the ass to catch up if I didn’t get back soon.

“Mylee Lynn.”

He nodded, showing those beautiful teeth again.

“I’m Lincoln.” He extended a hand toward me, and I accepted it briefly, turning to his counterparts, who made no effort to introduce themselves, and Lincoln did not bother, either.

“I’m sorry about that,” he said. “Richard deserved more than a punch to the face for what he said to you.”

I shook my head. “It wasn’t your fault. And he’s gone now. That’s all that matters.”

“For now,” the blond muttered, taking another sip of his drink, but I realized he was nursing an empty cup, his hands just looking for something to do.

Again, Lincoln cast his companions a glance. “Is this your full-time gig, Mylee? Working here?”

My eyes narrowed slightly, but I hesitated, sensing a loaded question. “Why? You offering me a job?”

All three men snickered.

“She’s quick,” the blond offered lightly, and my heart jumped. I’d only been kidding.

“Wait, what?” I laughed nervously. “You’re offering me a job?”

“When’s your next day off?” Lincoln asked, pulling out his wallet from his back pocket. A card materialized in his hand, and he handed it to me.

Warily, I accepted it, glancing toward the counter, where the entire staff of Teatotler’s hung over the counter, watching me. No one seemed to care about the orders piling up.

Not the most subtle job offer.

“I’m off on Tuesdays—tomorrow,” I replied slowly, my pulse still skipping in my chest.

“Good. Can you come by our offices around ten tomorrow? The address

is on the card, but we could send a car—” Lincoln offered.

“Oh, no. No, I can get there,” I interjected, the idea of a car picking me up at my shitty apartment in Washington Park appalling. I turned the credential in my hand, relishing the block letter announcing Lincoln’s full name.

*Lincoln Ray, CEO*

*Silverpiece Corporation*

It confirmed everything that Zander had said about him, but somehow, that didn’t make it any more real.

“So, we’ll see you tomorrow, Mylee Lynn? Ten o’clock?” Lincoln asked.

My brow furrowed, and I chuckled. “Okay... but what’s the job?” I asked, cocking my head.

In unison, all three men sat forward, but Lincoln smiled reassuringly. “We’ll discuss the details tomorrow.”

With that, they rose in tandem, as if they were communicating in telepathy, and Lincoln again pulled out his wallet, withdrawing several bills. He handed them to me with a wink. “This should cover any of the damages. See you tomorrow, Mylee Lynn.”

They headed out of the café, and I glanced at the surface, realizing he had left three hundred dollars in my hand.

*Three hundred bucks to clean up a few spots of blood. It must be nice to be rich,* I thought wistfully.

“Did they just offer you a job?” Zander demanded, almost scaling the counter. “I heard them tell you to come by the office.”

I balked, wishing he hadn’t been eavesdropping.

“No,” I lied. “Of course not.”

Zander frowned. “I could have sworn—”

“You’re wrong,” I insisted, turning away. “What job could they give me? I have no skills to offer them.”

I wasn’t going to tell anyone about this. It probably wouldn’t pan out, anyway, and if Sandra caught wind of the fact that I was looking somewhere else, she would fire me. That was all I needed: to be unemployed and homeless in the same week. Then I’d really be living the dream.

## CHAPTER 3

*Mylee*

I barely remembered the rest of my shift, except that Zander stuck to my side like glue, demanding a play-by-play of my conversation with the Silverpiece princes.

“Are you sure they didn’t offer you a job? I swear I heard them inviting you to come to their office.”

“You should get your ears checked,” I replied, ignoring his nearness. “And you should stop following me around like a weird stalker.”

I glanced at Drew several times to see if he was going to make Zander get to work, but the manager was purposely avoiding me—like he was embarrassed I had stepped up to diffuse the situation when he hadn’t had the balls. I was going to be stuck with Zander for the rest of my hours at Teatotler’s.

“If you go work for them, will you quit here?” Zander pressed.

“Oh, my god, Z,” I finally exploded, throwing down the tea towel in my hands onto the counter, my side vision taking on the leaf-framed wall clock with relief. “You’re worse than a kid.”

“Sorry!” he grumbled, sounding offended by being called out about his annoying ways. “I wouldn’t want to lose you. You’re my favorite co-worker.”

That was sad. It was because I was the only one who put up with him.

I softened and removed my apron as the evening shift sauntered through to take over. “I told you, they didn’t say anything to me. You don’t need to worry. I’m not going anywhere.”

“I still think you’re lying,” he said bluntly, and I was regretful I’d let my guard down with him. He was so irritating.

“Good night, Zander,” I muttered, ambling toward the storeroom which

doubled as our breakroom and finding my belongings before nodding goodnight to my other coworkers and ducking out the back door to catch the L.

Sometimes Zander offered to have his mom drive me home, but tonight, he didn't—not that I would have accepted. I needed the extra time to get my head together and process what had happened during my shift.

Hopping up the stairs to the elevated train, I adjusted the mini backpack on my shoulders and wracked my brain for what was going to happen the following day. The card that Lincoln Ray had given me was tucked in the front pocket of my bag with my wallet, but I'd already memorized the address, the number imprinted on my brain for eternity now.

Why would they offer me a job? What did they have in mind? Security?

I smirked at the thought, but I wasn't opposed to it, my tiny, slender form easily sliding through the small thick of people waiting for the upcoming train. I made it to one of the center cars, but there was no place to sit as the vessel kept moving.

Inherently, I scanned the train, hardly noticing I was doing it. By rote, I kept an eye out for trouble, but most of the commuters were wrapped up in their phones and books, no one paying me any mind.

Would they give me some kind of administrative task? I hoped not. I couldn't type very fast, and I hated computers. Even the POS system at work gave me anxiety. But would I turn down a job that offered me more money? Probably not.

I had to switch L trains to head southwest, but I moved automatically, jumping tracks with my mind so occupied. The stops flew by until mine appeared, the night fully on me now when I stepped back onto the platform of my final stop. A man called out to me for change, and I paused to dig a five out of my pack to give him. It opened the floodgates, and other nearby unhoused people asked me for money, but I couldn't help them all, as much as I wanted to. I couldn't even afford the five bucks I'd just given, but that particular man was there every day, and looking worse than usual. I hoped he'd eat something with it.

My steps quickened, and I hurried toward the stairs, rushing down to the street, keys in hand. The dingy little studio I'd had for the past two years wasn't far from the L. It was one of the reasons I'd taken it in the first place. In retrospect, I couldn't think of any other reason for why I'd once found it appealing.



Paint chips rained down on me every time I opened the door, the frame creaking as the door itself wedged poorly in place.

And my landlord expected me to pay an *extra* six hundred dollars a month for this shithole?

No sooner had I entered the unit than my phone began to vibrate in my backpack, and I already knew it was my landlord before I looked. She must have heard my raging, silent question.

*I might as well get this out of the way*, I thought, locking the door behind me with the chain and securing the flimsy knob lock. The locks offered an illusion of security rather than any actual protection. I was sure I could kick the door down myself if I ever locked myself out. If I actually had somewhere to go, it would be a relief to be leaving.

“Hi,” I sighed, dropping my bag onto the kitchen table.

A flurry of movement caught the corner of my eye, and I shuddered to imagine what infestation of vermin the building had now. I didn’t bother to investigate.

“Have you been getting my messages?” my landlord demanded by the way of a greeting.

“Yeah, sorry,” I replied. “I’ve been at work.”

“For two weeks?” She wasn’t buying my excuses. “I need to know if you’re signing or not. If not, I need to get in there and see what work needs to be done on the unit so I can re-rent it.”

I bit on my lower lip, considering my job interview the following day. Would it give me the financial freedom to keep my apartment? Did I dare to hope?

No. I couldn’t hope. Hope was only undiscovered disappointment.

“I can’t afford a rent increase like that,” I told her honestly. “I mean, if it were maybe a hundred bucks—”

“Fine. We’ll arrange a time to do a walkthrough. You’ll be out August first, then?”

I felt like I’d been slapped in the face. I’d been the best tenant I could for the past two years, and she was acting like she couldn’t wait to get me out.

“I don’t have anywhere to go—”

“I get it, Mylee, I really do,” she answered, but there wasn’t a smidgen of compassion in her tone. “You have to understand that this isn’t personal. It’s business. The market is changing, and I have to roll with it, too.”

I swallowed the bitterness in my throat. “Yeah.”

“Sorry.”

“Can’t you give me a bit more time?”

“My mortgage isn’t going to wait, Mylee.”

There wasn’t any swaying her, and there wasn’t any point in trying.

“You understand, right?” she added, as if trying to absolve herself of any wrongdoing.

“Yeah. Sure.”

“I’ll check my calendar and get back to you with a day to do a walkthrough,” she concluded.

“Sounds great.”

“Talk to you later, Mylee.” She hung up as I blinked rapidly, tears of frustration burning in my eyes. She didn’t even bother saying goodbye. She was probably off to ruin some other low-income worker’s life.

Inhaling, I squared my shoulders and walked toward the clothing wrack next to the single mattress on the ground, staring at the pathetic display of clothes I’d acquired since aging out of foster care.

Most of them were thrift store buys, name brands, but worn down. There wasn’t a single outfit that was impressive enough to wow the CEO of a multi-billion-dollar empire.

*But I must have already impressed them, I reminded myself. They want to meet with me. Will it really matter what I’m wearing?*

I settled on a crimson blouse and black skirt, setting them aside for after my shower in the morning, but all night, I second-guessed my choice, pacing around the tiny studio, wondering what would happen if this opportunity didn’t pan out.

*Then I guess I’ll be in exactly the same position I was twenty-four hours ago, I thought grimly. Just a hell of a lot more disappointed.*

\* \* \*

At nine fifty, I stood in the huge, sparkling lobby of Silverpiece Corporation, staring at an impossibly long desk. It took up half the far wall, and three receptionists sat behind it, two of them answering an apparent influx of calls coming through, although I didn’t hear the phone ring once.

“May I help you?” a young man asked pleasantly, but his eyes raked over me reprovingly.

Biting on the insides of my cheeks, I shuffled forward, swallowing. Suddenly, my throat was incredibly dry. The urge to turn and flee from this place where I clearly didn't belong was overwhelming.

*You're here now, and you're already at rock bottom. May as well see how much lower it goes,* I mused.

"Ma'am?" he pressed. "Are you lost?"

"Uh... I have an appointment—" I sputtered.

"I've got this, Amon." The familiar voice spun me around and through the open elevator doors. A modicum of relief passed through me as Lincoln strolled toward me, a welcoming smile on his lips. "You made it, Mylee!"

My shoulders sagged, making me realize that they had been up to my ears, and I nodded slowly.

"Did you have any trouble finding the place?"

I laughed shakily, waving a hand around. "This place?"

Lincoln's smile grew, and he waved a manicured hand for me to follow him back toward the elevators. I felt Amon watching me skeptically, but I ignored him, collecting myself.

"You'll have to excuse the mess," Lincoln told me as the doors closed. "These offices are relatively new, and it's still a work in progress."

"I don't see a mess," I admitted, half-thinking of my little studio apartment and what he might think of that.

Lincoln pressed twenty-nine on the board and faced me, his emerald gaze sliding up and down my figure, heat rising to my face.

"Kai and Pax are waiting for us. We're in between meetings this morning, and we don't have a lot of time," he told me, fueling my nervousness again. "But I don't believe in wasting time."

"That's good," I offered, unsure of what else to say.

"You probably have better things to do on your day off than hang out in a stuffy office building, anyway," he added.

"Not really," I mumbled honestly.

He chuckled as the doors opened. It was the fastest elevator ride I'd ever been on in my life. The doors seemed to open almost as soon as they'd closed. The floor was bustling with bodies moving every which way, no one paying any attention to me as Lincoln led me toward the back, glass offices gliding past us as I hurried to keep up with his long stride.

"Do you see the mess now?" he teased without turning.

There was much more chaos here than there had been on the main level,

but it was still organized in my eyes. It reminded me of a busy time in the café, everyone in their respective places, but too much to be done.

“Compared to rush at Teatotler’s, this is the Pentagon,” I reassured him, and he laughed again.

We finally stopped before a set of double glass doors, and I saw his two companions from the previous day, sitting inside a massive office on leather sofas. Empty coffee cups sat in front of them both, and they looked up to see us entering. If they had been talking, they fell silent when we entered.

“Boys, you remember Ms. Lynn from the café?”

Both men nodded, rising to extend their hands. Lincoln gestured toward the shorter one, the blond with incredible, piercing azure eyes that bored into me.

“You weren’t properly introduced yesterday, but this is Kai Evans, COO and tech genius of Silverpiece. The brains of the operation, as we call him.”

I took his hand, and he squeezed it quickly, releasing it as the other one grunted. “I resent that.”

“And this ray of sunshine is Paxton Webb, Vice President and resident curmudgeon.”

Paxton snorted in amusement as I took his hand, my own grin widening.

“Curmudgeon,” he chortled. “I’m much too young for that.”

“Aspiring curmudgeon?” Lincoln joked as Paxton released my hand.

They reclaimed their seats and gestured for me to sit, too.

Awkwardly, I perched at the edge of the couch, the soft feel of leather on the back of my thighs foreign and comfortable.

“I again want to apologize for what happened yesterday,” Lincoln told me, pulling his phone out of his breast pocket. His gaze moved toward the screen, but he continued talking to me as he multi-tasked.

“It—that wasn’t your fault,” I reassured him. “We deal with all kinds in there.”

Out of nowhere, a young woman appeared in the doorway. “Yes, Mr. Ray?”

“Can you get us some coffee? And maybe some scones or donuts? Mylee, what do you like?”

I balked, wondering if this was some kind of test. “I don’t really eat breakfast,” I sputtered. “Coffee is fine.”

“Coffee then. Espresso? Cappuccino?”

“We have our own machine here,” Kai told me, leaning forward to pick

up his own phone from the table, his face crumpling slightly as if he was reading something displeasing.

“No... no, just regular coffee,” I mumbled.

“Just coffee,” Lincoln said to the assistant.

“Right away, Mr. Ray.”

Ginny disappeared, leaving the four of us, and I stared expectantly at the men.

Lincoln sat back casually and cast that same look from yesterday at his partners, the others returning his stare. It instantly made me nervous, and I sat forward.

Were they trying to make me uncomfortable, or was this just the way they operate? It was really hard to get a handle on them when I was outnumbered, and they were so damn hot!

“I don’t mean to be blunt,” I blurted out. “But can you tell me what this is all about?”

Paxton snickered, but Kai nodded approvingly.

“You see?” Lincoln told them. “She’s good. To the point.”

“Good at what, exactly?” I demanded. “You talked about a job, but you’ve seen me serve coffee. Do you need me to run your espresso machine here? Something tells me you don’t need to scout coffeeshops for girls to do that.”

They burst out laughing, but suddenly, I started to feel like I was being mocked. Anger swelled inside me, and I wished I hadn’t wasted the L fare to come here. I stood, and instantly, the trio lost their smiles.

“Woah, hang on,” Lincoln said quickly, dropping his phone on the coffee table. “Where are you going?”

“It’s like you said. I have other things to do today,” I retorted. “I don’t have time for whatever this is. And I don’t like being laughed at.”

“Laughed at?” Paxton echoed, but Lincoln quickly took control of the conversation.

“I’m sorry, Mylee. We didn’t mean to make you feel that way. We’re not laughing at you.”

“It’s starting to feel that way.”

“We’re not,” Paxton insisted. “We’re marveling at you.”

His response fluttered my gut. These guys kept throwing curveballs at me.

“What does that mean?”

“Please sit down for a minute. If you don’t like what we have to say, I’ll send for a car, and you’ll be out of here in ten. We’ll never bother you again. I promise,” Lincoln swore, extending his hand toward the sofa again. “Please, Mylee?”

His tone convinced me, and I sat warily, watching them all with equal skepticism, but curiosity did get the best of me. I had come all this way, after all. The least I could do was hear what they had to say.

“The way you handled yourself yesterday,” Lincoln began. “It was fearless, confident. You don’t often see women put themselves between two men arguing like you did.”

I shrugged nonchalantly. “It really wasn’t a big deal.”

“It is to us,” Kai piped in. “You can be a tremendous asset to us, to our company.”

My eyebrows rose, trying to make sense of their evasiveness. “You’re not telling me how, though. What do you want me to do?”

Again, they looked at each other, and I sighed. “You have to just say it,” I begged. “I thought you had meetings today.”

They snorted in unison, again amused by my frankness.

“We want you to work with us... as an assistant, a companion,” Paxton explained.

My eyebrows shot up so far, I felt them hit my hairline.

“What’s that?” I asked slowly, the blood draining out of my face as Paxton’s words sunk in.

“You’ll attend functions and meetings with us,” Lincoln began to explain, but I thought I got it, my gut flipping.

Why didn’t I anticipate this? An escort. Of course that’s what they were offering.

Stunned, I stared at him.

“Basically, you’d be joining us for parties and events when needed,” Kai elaborated, in case it hadn’t been driven home already.

My skin prickled, lips curling in disgust. “An escort, you mean.”

Kai grimaced, but again, Lincoln jumped in to smooth things over.

“You would be escorting us to different places, but it has nothing to do with sex,” Lincoln interjected, scowling at his partners like he felt they had screwed up a carefully planned spiel he’d had in place.

“Really?” I grumbled disbelievingly. “You expect me to buy that?”

“It’s true,” Kai insisted quickly, his own fair complexion paling.

My defensiveness waned as I read his touchiness. Maybe I was reading this wrong.

“Okay...?” I agreed suspiciously. “Go on...?”

Lincoln exhaled, but a tinge of relief crossed over his face as he saw I was willing to listen.

“In our business, presentation is everything. And as of right now, we don’t have any women executives on the team. We have lost business for it. Big business. It’s something we are working on, but we are still in the hiring process. In the meantime, we need someone, a woman, to attend events with us.”

“It’s ridiculous,” Kai added, reading the dubiousness on my face. “But it’s true.”

“Why don’t you have girlfriends or wives?” I asked slowly.

“We just don’t have time to date,” Paxton said. “Our focus is work and always has been. Romance just doesn’t come into play here.”

My eyes darted from each face, trying to gauge the feelings on what I’d just learned.

“Why don’t you just have someone else from your team do this? Even if she is not an executive?”

“That’s a valid question,” Paxton said. “But everybody who currently works for us is busy, and this task would take away from their daily duties. We need someone with a strong personality, someone who can hold their own in conversations with powerful businesspeople. We really think you’d be an asset.”

Was this really possible? It still seemed too good to be true.

I pursed my lips. “I don’t know...”

“It’s a limited offer,” Lincoln said. “Three months only. It’s not a long-term commitment.”

My ears perked up. “Three months? Why?”

“Because that’s when our latest development will be fully invested for development. We have five luxury condo buildings in five major cities that need to be bought out in that time frame.”

“If you can stick with us for three months until the Celestial Vistas are fully funded, we will give you a million dollars,” Kai added.

I fell forward, almost onto the floor.

“I’m sorry... what?” I sputtered. “Did you just say... how much?”

I couldn’t have heard that right.

“A million dollars for three months of your time, Mylee.”

All words escaped my mouth, and I could only gape at them.

“We’ll fully take care of you during that time, too, if you accept that offer. You’ll have your own floor in our penthouse, your own expense account, credit card, driver—”

“Are you serious?!” I choked, my voice finally coming back. “Is this a joke?”

Lincoln smiled. “No, Mylee. It’s not.”

My head swam in disbelief. “But... but why me?” I whispered. “I mean... you could have anyone. Anyone at all.”

“I told you, Mylee. You really impressed us, the way you handled yourself with Richard yesterday,” Lincoln answered softly. “I watched the way you held yourself together, and you didn’t lose your cool, not for a second.”

I shook my head. “I mean...” I bit on my lower lip. “I mean...”

I exhaled and gestured at my shoddy, second-hand clothes. “You could have your pick of models or actresses. You could literally have anyone.”

He appeared surprised by the question. “Have you looked in a mirror lately?” he laughed. “I can’t wait to see the faces of some of our competitors when we bring you out.”

I flushed crimson and looked around the room at their hopeful faces. They were waiting for me to say yes.

What the hell was I waiting for? This would solve all of my problems in three months. I wouldn’t even need to go back to Teatotler’s if I didn’t want to. Screw my landlord and her outrageous rent increase.

“When do I start?” I breathed.

“We’ll have someone take you to the condo right now,” Lincoln sighed happily.

“I’ll do it,” Paxton volunteered. “I’m free for the couple of hours.”

“Good,” Lincoln said. “Then I’ll have all the other arrangements made. Welcome to the Silverpiece team, Mylee. We’re glad to have you onboard.”



## CHAPTER 4

## *Paxton*

**A**t first, I thought Lincoln had been out of his mind to suggest it.

“You want to bring this barista into our inner circle and make her our, what, girlfriend?” I laughed, thinking he was joking.

“Don’t be an asshole,” Kai interjected before Lincoln could argue. “He’s actually making a lot of sense. Did you see the way the guys from B&W Oil looked at us when we showed up without dates again at the Met? And it’s not the first time, either. I’m sure we got locked out of that deal in Brisbane for the same reason. We’ve been given so much shit for not having women on our executive team.”

I had noticed, and Kai was right.

But now, as I led Mylee through the second floor of the penthouse, I found myself studying her with far more interest than I had before. Lincoln had a good eye. She was beautiful, undoubtedly. Her curves were distinctive in the slightly ill-fitting skirt and too-tight red blouse, the swell of her cleavage teasing against the open top button.

I’d noticed the clearness of her umber complexion in the coffeeshop, the way it made her doe-like, innocent eyes pop under thick, black lashes. She had tried to twist her hair into a complicated chignon at the base of her neck but failed, the dark strands sliding silkily around her shoulders when she turned to look at me in shock, rose-pink lips parted.

“This whole place is mine?” she gasped.

I laughed and shook my head. “No,” I corrected her. “Just the upstairs. We’re staying downstairs for now.”

Taken aback, she cocked her head, more tendrils of hair falling over her high cheekbones. “You all live here?”

I set my phone down on the coffee table of the upper living room and sat,

gesturing for her to join me. She perched nervously on the edge of a tufted barrel chair.

“We’re constantly moving around,” I explained. “It’s just easier for us to take on one of the penthouses when we’re working on a project and use it as our home base. There’s lots of room.”

I paused, unsure if I should offer it, but I wanted to give her the option. “If this arrangement makes you uncomfortable, we can get your own apartment, but it will take a bit of time.”

She stared at me, unblinking, and I rushed on to explain. “There aren’t any more units available in this building, and we will need you close. The schedule demands it, and it just makes it easier from a public perspective. If we set you up in another building, it will bring a lot of unwanted scrutiny. Do you think you can manage like this?”

Mylee laughed, the sound infectious. “Are you kidding? I could fit ten of my current places into this single floor. I bet I won’t even see you guys up here—unless I need to come down to eat.”

“Actually... there’s a bar kitchen up here, if you want to stock that up, too.” I stood to show her the small fridge and microwave behind the bar. “No stove, but it can work for basics.”

“I’m sure it will all be fine for three months,” Mylee muttered, her smile fading slightly. “And if I can come down...”

“You can definitely come down, Mylee. You’re free to come and go as you please.”

She relaxed at the revelation and smiled. “Then I think we’ll be fine.”

“Good.” I reached into my back pocket and withdrew my wallet, pulling out a credit card. “This is yours for now. There will be another one coming with your name on it shortly, but this is temporary.”

Tentatively, Mylee reached across the bar and accepted it as I looked at her rough fingernails.

“What should I use it for?” she asked slowly.

Clearing my throat, I shrugged flippantly. “Oh, you know... things you’ll need. A new wardrobe, makeup... a manicure?”

She blushed furiously and drew her hands back in embarrassment.

“I’m not trying to humiliate you,” I sighed. “But you have to remember that the people you’ll be meeting, they’ll be judging you from the second they lay eyes on you. It’s very important that you put a good image forward.”

“Got it.”

I offered her a taut smile and moved toward the stairs.

“There’s a schedule in your bedroom, covering the events for the next two weeks. The driver’s number and a new phone are also there for you. All three of our numbers are already pre-programmed in.”

“Schedule?” she asked, arching an eyebrow.

“Of the upcoming events. Of course, they are subject to change, and you’ll have to be ready to adapt accordingly.”

“Oh... right...” A small laugh fell from her lips. “You guys were sure I was going to say yes, huh?”

I shrugged. “It’s a good arrangement for the right person.”

She muttered something under her breath, but I caught what it was, even if she didn’t think I did.

*“Who says I’m the right person?”*

My brow furrowed. “Are you sure you’re up for this?”

She visibly swallowed and nodded. “Yes... yes, of course,” she said, squaring her shoulders. “There’s just a lot to be done, isn’t there?”

“Yep.” For half a second, I wanted to grab her into a hug and tell her that it was okay, that we weren’t so bad, and it wasn’t so scary. I couldn’t imagine what she was thinking, but I didn’t blame her for feeling overwhelmed.

“All right. I’ll leave you to it then.”

“Okay... thanks, Mr. Webb.”

I stopped in my tracks, paling. Slowly, I turned around and looked at her, shaking my head.

“No,” I said, causing her to frown in confusion. “No.”

“No, what?”

“Don’t do that,” I growled. “Call us all by our first names. We’ll call you Mylee, and you’ll call us by our given names.”

Understanding colored her cheeks, and she blushed. “Oh. Right. Sorry. Thanks... Paxton.”

I hesitated, wanting to say more, but not sure what else there was.

“Okay then. I’ll leave you to it.”

I headed down the spiral staircase to the main floor of the penthouse, sensing that she watched me leave. At the bottom of the stairs, I looked up at the glass wall, hoping to get a final glimpse of Mylee’s flawless legs from below, but she had wandered off toward the interior of the second floor, presumably to check out the schedule and phone. I forced the disappointment out of my gut.

*Maybe she's too hot for this*, I thought unexpectedly, moving toward the door.

I didn't have time to sit around checking out our hired companion all day. I shouldn't have even taken the time to show her the condo, but it didn't seem right, leaving her with one of the assistants. The matter was far too personal. The fewer people who knew about Mylee's position, the better.

I reached the double doors leading into the hallway, and my phone buzzed. Glancing at my smart watch, I frowned at the unfamiliar number on display and tapped the screen.

*Hi! It's Mylee! Looking forward to working with you!*

In spite of myself, I snorted and saw myself out of the condo, locking the door behind me. She must have sent one of those texts to everyone.

It was only three months, and she really was beautiful and seemed sweet. The time would fly by, and then we'd never see her pretty face again.

Ah, the things we did for Silverpiece. The company always came first.

## CHAPTER 5

## *Lincoln*

I ran into Paxton just after noon as I headed back into the office, his face glued to his phone as he strode toward his workspace. He almost didn't see me until I was upon him.

"Hey," I called, keeping my voice low. "You got the girl set up all right?"

"What?" He didn't look at me, his thumbs working wildly as he responded to whatever email was in front of him.

"Mylee."

The name caught his attention, much to my amusement, and he stopped what he was doing to look at me. "What about her?"

"Is she all set up in the penthouse?"

Paxton nodded, his wavy black hair falling slightly over his forehead, and he brushed it aside impatiently, piercing blue eyes distracted. He was only slightly taller than me, but when he was in a mood, Paxton exuded the energy of a spun tornado.

"Yeah... she's there. Or she was there as of an hour ago."

"She texted me," I chuckled, thinking of the message she'd sent.

He also grinned. "Me too." Paxton hesitated. "She looks a lot like Angela, doesn't she?"

I tensed at the mention of my ex, anger dancing through me. "No, she doesn't," I snapped. "Not at all."

Paxton shrugged. "I'm just saying—same dark hair and eyes—"

"That's not why I thought of her," I growled. Paxton returned to his phone indifferently.

"Just don't fall for her. I wouldn't want to sit by and watch you fall apart again like you did with Ang."

"That's not going to happen," I insisted. "I have no intention of falling for

this one or any other.”

Paxton darted his gaze back at me. “She seems like a good girl. But she’s going to need some work before we can take her out.”

I’d had the same thought, but I didn’t know how to bring it to her without insulting her. “I know. I think I’m going to take her for lunch today and discuss that with her.”

“I told her, but I’m not sure if I said it with as much finesse as you might.”

I smothered a groan, wishing he hadn’t. “I’ll handle Mylee, okay? You and Kai almost blew the whole thing earlier.”

“She’s a straight shooter, Linc. We shouldn’t treat her with kid gloves.”

“A modicum of decorum never hurt anyone,” I insisted, my jaw twitching.

Paxton returned to his phone and turned toward his office as I pivoted for the elevators.

“Linc.”

I glanced over my shoulder. Paxton flashed me a thumbs-up. “Good hire.”

Snickering, I punched the down button for the elevator. “That’s why I’m paid the big bucks, buddy.”

\* \* \*

Mylee shifted uncomfortably in the cushioned chair in front of me, the menu still open in front of her, but she wasn’t reading it. Her luminous dark eyes darted around the Devil’s Flambé like she was looking for an escape.

*She needs to get used to places like this,* I thought firmly, but I couldn’t help but feel slightly guilty, throwing her into such a fancy place without warning.

“Do you know what you want?” I asked, setting down my own menu.

She shook her head, the straight, satiny strands falling over the curve of her breasts as she bit her lower lip.

“I’m not sure what to order,” she admitted nervously. “When you said go for lunch, I thought you meant grab a burger or something.”

I chortled. “Well, I’m sure you can get a burger here,” I suggested, glancing back at the menu. “Do you want me to order for you?” I asked, and



she started to nod but changed her mind.

“No... maybe? I don’t know.”

I started to laugh again. “I didn’t intend to stress you out by asking you to lunch. Do you want to go somewhere else? I’m pretty sure there’s a fast-food joint around the corner.”

She grimaced and looked at the ivory linen tablecloth, her embarrassment palpable. “I’m going to humiliate you guys. Maybe all this wasn’t such a good idea, after all.”

My grin faded, and I reached across the table, shaking my head. “No, you’re not,” I told her firmly. “There’s more to what you’re doing than knowing the difference between risotto and rice. You kind of have to get into it to understand what I’m talking about.”

Her frown deepened. “Okay, I’m not that much of a philistine,” she retorted. “I know the difference between risotto and rice.”

“You’ve got quite a vocabulary,” I commented. “Do you have a degree?”

“Yep. From the school of hard knocks,” she joked, slowly withdrawing her hand and again picking up the menu. The redness lingered on her cheeks, and she avoided my stare.

“Really? You don’t have a degree? How are you so well spoken?”

A smirk quirked the edges of her mouth. “College doesn’t gauge the intelligence of a person, does it?”

“Definitely not,” I agreed. “But I don’t often meet people who carry themselves as well as you do without having cracked open a few books.”

“I have read a lot of books,” Mylee confirmed, again setting aside the menu to meet my eyes. “But not in a place of higher education.”

Intrigued, I sat forward, my head cocked with interest. “Do go on.”

Her eyes narrowed slightly. “You don’t need to make fun of me,” she said sharply. “Not everyone can afford school.”

My jaw slacked, and I shook my head vehemently, sitting back with my hands extended. “I swear. I wasn’t,” I promised. “I’m genuinely curious about you, Mylee. Even before you got in Richard Crossman’s face, I swear I saw something in you. And it wasn’t just because you’re breathtakingly beautiful.”

She weighed my words, debating whether to believe them or not, but every word I spoke was the truth.

“This may come as a shock to you, but I encounter dozens of beautiful women a week,” I teased, winking at her. “And while you are very attractive,

that's not what drew me to you and made me want to offer you this opportunity."

"I'll take your word for it."

She returned her eyes to the menu in front of her without answering my question, but I couldn't let it go so easily.

"Can I ask you one personal question?" I pressed. "And then I promise I'll leave it alone?"

"You can ask, but no promise that I'll answer," she chirped.

I snickered again, marveling at how easily she made me laugh.

"What's your ethnic background?"

Again, that little smirk formed on her lips. "Isn't that an HR violation?"

"Only if you go to HR... and they know who the hell you are," I replied slyly.

Now it was Mylee who laughed.

"My mother was from Cuba. My father...?" She trailed off and shrugged. "I've changed my mind."

My brow furrowed. "About what?"

"You can order for me, after all."

I nodded and turned my eyes to the menu as the server returned to the table with our drinks, but my mind was whirling over what she'd just said. The Cuban side of her certainly shone through in those soulful dark eyes and that gorgeous gloss of hair. I wanted to ask if she was from Chicago, but I already knew the answer to that. Kai had done a full background check on her, and her history in foster care had spoken for itself. Just like I'd known she had no formal education outside of high school. In fact, it was a miracle she had finished high school at all, given her moving around.

Ten homes in fifteen years. How does a kid ever live like that?

If I'd only been reading about Mylee on paper, I would have expected her to be a rough-around-the-edges punk who kept getting removed because of a bad attitude, but that couldn't be further from the truth.

She was warm, even if a bit guarded, and oh, so lovely. Why hadn't a family snatched her up and kept her forever?

I ordered our meals, and we made small talk until the server brought our plates.

"How do you feel about traveling?" I asked on a whim.

She raised her head and eyed me warily. "Am I required to travel?"

I shrugged. "Not yet," I replied. "But we do a fair bit of traveling. It's the

nature of our business.”

“I haven’t done any traveling,” she answered bluntly. “I’ve barely been out of Chicago.”

That didn’t surprise me in the least.

“If you could go anywhere, where would it be?” I pressed. She put her fork down and stared at me skeptically.

“Really?”

I nodded.

“I don’t know enough geography to answer that properly,” she admitted. “But I wouldn’t mind seeing a mountain once in my life.”

I made a moue of my lips. It wasn’t the answer I’d been expecting.

“What was this lunch about, Lincoln?” she asked, polishing off her steak and vegetable plate with such gusto, that I was impressed. “Are you feeling out my social skills?”

“In part,” I agreed, setting my napkin on my plate. “But I was hoping to get to know you a bit.”

It was apparently the wrong thing to say, her face shadowing. “Why?”

“Why? Well, we’re going to be living in close quarters and working together. It might look good if we don’t come across as perfect strangers when we’re out in public.”

Her shoulders relaxed. “That’s true.”

“It also gives you the opportunity to know me—if you let your guard down for a couple of minutes.”

A smile quirked on her lips, and she fixed her gaze back on the table, her leg twitching enough to make her body move. I leaned forward, placing my forearms on the edge of the table. “What do you want to do now?”

She wriggled a dark eyebrow at me suggestively, and a burst of heat rushed through my groin. “Really?”

“Your choice,” I promised, pulse quickening with the hope of a teenager, but it was immediately followed by shame.

“You’re sure?” she asked, her tone teasing.

Suddenly, I realized she wasn’t on the same wavelength as me at all and sat back, smiling. “What did you have in mind?”

She shrugged mysteriously. “I guess you’ll just have to wait and see, won’t you?”

“Sounds dangerous.”

The waiter reappeared with the check in hand, and I saw Mylee’s eyes

pop when she glimpsed the total as I opened the leather jacket.

“Holy sh—wow! That much for two meals?” she whispered, looking around.

I eyed the total. “It’s not so bad,” I remarked honestly.

“Maybe not for you,” she agreed, standing. “But I bet you could feed one of the tent cities for a week for that.”

Tent cities? Why was she thinking about the tent cities?

She was already halfway to the door by the time I stepped away from the table, and I caught up with her, wondering if she was upset. But when we stood on the bustling Chicago sidewalk, Mylee cast me a sly grin and bolted across the street, leaving me gawking after her.

“Hey!” I yelled, dumbfounded. “What are you doing?”

Zippering through traffic, she ended up under a green awning, and it took me several seconds to recognize it was a bookstore.

*The Progressive Mistrals* was scrawled in white paint over the front of the dirty bay window, the name partially chipped. I’d never noticed it before.

Once more, she was out of sight before I could catch my breath, and when I finally entered the mom-and-pop bookshop, I stood at the dusty threshold, my eyes adjusting to the shift in ambiance.

In here, the noise from downtown was obsolete, as though we’d entered an entirely new dimension, and I had to take a moment to locate Mylee with the help of the middle-aged worker who gestured vaguely toward the back of the store.

“I was right,” I commented dryly. “This was dangerous. I haven’t run across four lanes of traffic like that since I was a teenager.”

Mylee chuckled and held up the small book in her hands. “Lord Byron is terrifying,” she agreed.

“Poetry, huh?” I mused, reaching for another title off the shelf to her right. “I’m more of a Whitman fan myself.”

She flashed me a knowing grin.

“Why does that not surprise me?” Mylee teased, replacing the book back where she’d found it.

“You shouldn’t be surprised I like poetry at all!” I complained jokingly.

“That doesn’t surprise me,” she replied. “I’m sure you’ve read everything.”

Her hair fell over her cheek, hiding her expression as she read, but I could feel the emotion radiating off her as she perused the words in front of her.

*This was her escape, I realized suddenly. Reading is what grounds her.*

Quietly, I read my book, allowing her to flip through the pages, the bookshop clearly giving her a sense of peace and security. It wasn't the way I'd envisioned spending my afternoon with Mylee, and I hadn't spoken a word to her about her attire and what was expected of her in the next few months, but damn if I was going to ruin the mood with all that now.

It would be easy enough for me to set up appointments at the salon for her hair and nails and take her out shopping before her first event with Kai coming up. I didn't need to ruin this time with Mylee.

For a few minutes, I felt like I understood her, this orphaned girl with the mystical aura. And I was happy basking in her glowing light for just a little while. Dress shopping and etiquette talks could wait for an hour or two.

## CHAPTER 6

*Mylee*

“**H**ey...”

I jumped, the fuzz of my partial nightmare bouncing off me as the hand touched my shoulder, a reactive slap rising to push the man away from me. But instantly, I stopped myself, Lincoln’s face backing away to look at me as I blinked myself awake, my heart hammering as he grinned.

“Lincoln, what are you doing?” I mumbled, sitting up to pull the duvet around my pajamas, my head twisting toward my charging phone on the bedside table. It was just after seven in the morning. “What’s wrong? Am I late for something?”

Panic seized me as I thought I might have mixed up the schedule and already messed up my arrangement, but Lincoln shook his head.

“No, Mylee, everything’s fine. Sorry I startled you—and came into your personal space. But you have an appointment at eight.”

I popped fully out of bed now, fully awake.

“With who? Where? Is that on the schedule?”

Lincoln ran a hand over his dark hair, hanging his head ruefully. “It’s not a meeting,” he promised. “I made some appointments for you. You’re getting a facial and your hair and nails done—and then there’s a shopping trip afterward.”

The wind knocked out of my lungs as I gawked at him. “What? Really?”

“Spa at eight,” he explained, his green eyes twinkling. “I’ll meet you for shopping at noon. Your driver has the schedule. Pax might join, too, if he can get away.”

He padded out of my bedroom, closing the door behind him as I remained standing next to the king bed. It was only then that I realized I was trembling

slightly.

I'd never been to a spa before. This was going to be an experience, all right.

\* \* \*

My hairdresser was renowned around Chicago, apparently, and I could see why. I couldn't stop checking out my sweeping layers in the mirror as Bea put the finishing touches on my pedicure.

"You look like a new woman," Bea cawed proudly, moving the blue light away from my feet. "Your husband will be so happy."

I didn't bother correcting her as I stood, again stealing a look at my hair across the salon. I really did feel like a new woman.

"Your driver is outside, Ms. Lynn," the receptionist informed me. "And Mr. Ray phoned to say that he'll be waiting for you."

My heart fluttered as I swallowed.

"Thank you," I mumbled, reaching for the credit card that Paxton had given me on the first day I'd arrived.

"Oh, no, Ms. Lynn. It's all covered," she informed me with a giggle. "We'll see you in six weeks?"

"Right," I muttered, wondering if rich women really did come and spend this money on themselves so frequently.

Charlie wordlessly opened the back door for me, and we headed to the Mag Mile, but my heart wouldn't slow down.

Why did he call the salon? Why didn't he just text me?

The only reason I could think of was that he was trying to show everyone he knew how to treat women. But that still didn't make any sense.

A twist of emotions fought through me, and I was slightly nauseous by the time we arrived to go shopping. To my surprise, all three of the men were there. Kai seemed annoyed he'd been dragged out, but Paxton and Lincoln were pickled as they all walked me to the first store.

"She's a size four," Paxton announced to one of the saleswomen. "She needs everything. Bring me what you have."

I eyed him as he ushered me toward the dressing rooms, Lincoln and Kai a bit behind us. "How did you know my size?" I asked with amused suspicion. "Was that in my background check?"



“Who says I ran a background check on you?” he lied sweetly, and I snickered.

“You’re a terrible liar, Paxton.”

“Really?” he asked, genuinely surprised. “I’ve always gotten by so well.”

“Not with me, you won’t.”

He winked at me, but our conversation was cut short as I was suddenly encompassed in piles of clothing, from pantsuits to blouses, shoes, bags, and dresses.

If I so much as showed a hint of interest in something, it was put into a mounting pile until I finally declared enough.

“That’s good! That’s more than enough for three months!” I begged them, slightly tipsy from the glass of champagne I’d been given while being waited on hand and foot.

“She’s right,” Kai agreed crankily.

“That’s enough in here,” Lincoln agreed. “Onto the next store.”

My voice wasn’t heard as I was whisked from one store to the next, the Escalade loaded until I refused to try on another outfit.

“This is crazy!” I implored them. “I don’t need any more.”

I looked at Kai hopelessly, silently begging him to take a stand on my behalf, and he seemed to read the genuine anguish on my face.

“I’m starving,” he declared. “You guys can keep this up, but I’m going home.”

“Me too!” I agreed.

“Oh, all right,” Lincoln conceded with a laugh. “Are you sure you have enough?”

“I have enough for the rest of my life,” I assured him.

Paxton and Kai headed out toward the street, and I grabbed for Lincoln’s hand quickly, startling him.

“Thank you,” I told him earnestly. “No one’s ever done anything like this for me before.”

He smiled and winked at me. “You should get used to it, Mylee. You’re one of us now.”

## CHAPTER 7

## *Kai*

“I really don’t think this is a good idea,” I muttered for the third time. “We took a vote, and you lost,” Paxton reminded me in his smug way that made me wish I wasn’t such a pacifist. Sometimes he really got under my skin the way men like him did.

“I’m just saying that maybe Linc should be the one to start this, since it was his idea,” I insisted firmly.

“You’re going to do great, Kai,” Lincoln insisted, clapping me on the back firmly. “And remember, we all agreed to do this. Anyway, you’re up first. It’s on the schedule and has been since Mylee got here. You didn’t make any objections before. Come on, don’t make a big fuss about it. She’s already having a day because of what happened at Teatotler’s. Don’t make it worse.”

I stared at him blankly. “What happened?”

“She gave her notice, and it apparently didn’t go very well,” Paxton explained.

The sound of heels on the stairs turned us around, forcing my pulse into my throat, and kept me from asking any more questions.

Mylee stood halfway down the spiral case, peering at us uncertainly in a stunning white pantsuit that accented her smoldering beauty, even from the distance between us.

“Am I interrupting?” she asked. “I never know how to announce myself around here. There’s no door to knock on, and no one answered my texts to okay me coming down.”

“You’re fine, Mylee. You don’t need to announce yourself to come down,” Lincoln told her, stepping away from me to gesture her closer. “You look great.”

Great was an understatement. She looked ravishing, breathtaking. I wasn't an expert, but as I peered at her face, she didn't seem to be wearing much makeup, either.

She was a natural beauty.

Flashing me a smile, she extended her arm. "Are we ready to do this, Kai?" she asked sweetly. "Or are we going to blow this off and go watch a movie instead?"

She winked at me, and I laughed nervously as Lincoln scowled.

Paxton snorted.

"You better not blow off this luncheon," Lincoln told us seriously, and I rolled my eyes as Mylee's grin grew wider and more mischievous.

"No?" she asked innocently. "What if it's just one short movie? And we don't get any popcorn?"

"Mylee..."

I cast her a sidelong look, my appreciation for her growing by the second. Despite what they had said about her mood, Mylee appeared delightful, almost flirty, as she joined my side.

"We're going," I promised, and Mylee giggled.

"We'll *try* to get there," she reassured him.

"Mylee!"

"We should probably go before Lincoln blows a gasket," Mylee told me, nodding toward the door.

I rose from the dining room chair to follow her svelte hips across the penthouse floor. I wet my lips and glanced back at my partners, who shot me a thumbs-up.

"Have fun!" Paxton called out after me.

"We will!" Mylee replied for both of us.

In the hall, she glanced at me. "I was just kidding," she told me gently. "You don't need to look so terrified." She paused at the elevators. "Unless, of course, you do want to skip the lunch and do something more entertaining than head to a conference full of tech geeks."

I tensed. "You know I'm a tech geek, right?"

Her smile didn't waver. "Yeah, but you're much better looking and the head of Silverpiece. How can anyone compare to you?"

I stared at her, unsure if she was mocking me or just being silly. Either way, it made me tense.

The elevator doors opened, and I shuffled inside, Mylee following behind

me. We were both quiet as she pressed the lobby button. Through my peripheral vision, I saw her wipe her palms on her pants.

*She's much more nervous than I am.*

The revelation was surprising. I wouldn't have thought that someone who looked like Mylee Lynn could be apprehensive. It had never been my experience with attractive women.

We stepped into the elaborate lobby at Gable Place Towers, and Lyndon opened the doors for us right away.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Evans," the doorman said, ignoring Mylee entirely.

She maintained her taut smile as if she expected the treatment from the doorman, and I eyed the interaction, wondering if I should say something.

"Lydon, this is Ms. Lynn. She'll be staying with us," I announced, wondering why Lincoln hadn't already informed him.

"Yes, Mr. Evans," Lyndon said flatly.

"Come on, Kai," Mylee urged, ushering me toward the door.

Charlie waited by the tinted black SUV. This was Paxton's favorite car, and at Mylee's disposal over the next ninety days. I found the Escalade ostentatious and obnoxious, but I was more concerned with getting the event over and done with. The sooner we got through the lunch date, the sooner I'd be back home.

"The Serenity, Charlie," I informed him, but like Mylee, the driver already had the day's itinerary.

We settled into the leather, and Mylee turned to look out the window as I picked up the car tablet and checked the stock market. But even as I gauged our fluctuations, I found myself glancing at Mylee every so often, the wistful expression on her face making me curious.

"What's wrong?" I finally asked.

Startled, she turned her head and looked at me. "What? Nothing. Why are you asking?"

"You look... sad."

Her head drew back, lower lip jutting out slightly like she was stunned by my insight.

"I... I'm not sad," she replied slowly. "I was just thinking."

"It's not that big a deal," I sighed, unsure of how to comfort her for what was coming. "You just do a lot of smiling and nodding. Linc probably played it up too much, but you'll be fine."

"Oh, I'm not worried about the luncheon," she answered honestly. "I was

just thinking about work—I mean, my job at the café.”

Oh. My business partners had been right. She was upset about how she left things there.

It was my turn to be surprised. “Are you still working there? I mean... do you need to be?”

She shook her head, strands of dark hair swirling around her pretty, oval face and landing to frame it perfectly. “No... that’s just what I was thinking. I didn’t exactly give them notice. I think I left them short-staffed. My manager was disappointed, and one of my coworkers...”

She trailed off with a grimace.

“Oh...” I barely knew how to respond to that. “I’m sure they’ll be fine. Even when they’re properly staffed, they’re understaffed. Trust me. I’ve been in there enough times to say that honestly.”

Mylee appeared amused by my assessment. “I don’t remember seeing you in Teatotler’s before.”

“I’ve seen you,” I blurted out. Immediately, heat rushed up the back of my neck.

She blinked twice. “Really?”

I shrugged and returned to my tablet. “I keep to myself. I’m not surprised you never noticed.”

“I get really busy behind the machine,” she said weakly, but I turned to look out the window.

We rode the rest of the way in silence until the huge gray structure of the Serenity Hotel appeared in front of us.

“This is going to be very technical and boring,” I told her when Charlie opened the door. “I don’t expect you to contribute much.”

“Noted,” Mylee murmured. “I’ll try not to embarrass you.”

My head swiveled toward her in shock. “What?”

She met my gaze. “I said, I’ll try not to embarrass you. I don’t know anything about tech. I’ll keep my mouth shut and let you do all the talking.”

*Does she really think she can embarrass me? Is she serious?*

A fusion of emotions twisted through me, but I stuffed them down, allowing Mylee to take my arm as we entered the lobby and found the sixth floor, where the event was being held.

Almost immediately, we were accosted.

“As I live and breathe, Kai Evans!”

“They let you out of your cage, huh, Kai?”

“What? No babysitters today, Kai?”

I expected Mylee to unhook herself from me when the flock of jeering businessmen descended, but she only held on tighter, keeping close to my side.

“And *who* is this?” Paul Kaur demanded, standing far too close to us. Half a bottle of Gucci cologne permeated his pores, and I physically had to turn away.

I caught Mylee’s pained expression as I did, her own nose wrinkling.

“Mylee Lynn,” she introduced herself, extending her free hand toward him. “And you are?”

“Paul Kaur, honey. Kohler Investments. I had no idea that Kai was hiding such a pretty girlfriend!” Paul said.

I bristled, both at Paul’s shamelessness and his implication that I couldn’t land someone as beautiful as Mylee.

“Our Kai is full of incredible feats, isn’t he?” Mylee answered smoothly but icily. “I’m sure he wouldn’t reveal all his secrets to just *anyone*. Come on, Kai. Didn’t you promise to introduce me to some important people?”

With that, she steered me away from Paul as I stared at her in awe. “That was... masterful.”

“I’ve been dealing with fucking idiots my whole life,” she muttered under her breath. “Don’t sweat it.”

I found her a glass of champagne, and she accepted it, remaining close as we did our rounds. True to her word, she kept quiet for the most part, smiling and nodding, adding to the conversation only when she was a hundred percent confident. But for the most part, she played the role of our assistant, piquing the interest of the tech crowd, who all made a point to venture by and find out her name.

Whenever anyone asked what she did or where she was from, Mylee skillfully managed to shift the conversation away from her and toward the company, asking questions of her own.

She had done her research, and while she did not know much about tech, she did know about Silverpiece’s numbers and history.

She was way more than just a pretty face. I was worried about nothing.

With Mylee at my side, I grew more emboldened, and for the first time in longer than I could remember, I found myself partially enjoying the event. I was shocked when they called it to an end, and we were still there. Usually, I was the first one out.

Mylee's cheeks were flushed, adrenaline jazzing her up when we descended back toward the waiting car.

"We survived it," Mylee whispered in my ear, the warmth of her breath sending shivers through me.

I gave her a sidelong look. "You did well for your first event."

"Yeah? You gonna give me a good report to Linc?"

I grinned, helping her through the revolving door. "I think you already have a good grade with Lincoln."

She eyed me curiously. "What does that mean?"

I shrugged. "I get the sense that you get along just fine with everyone, Mylee. That's why you got this gig, isn't it?"

She studied me like she was trying to figure out if I was insulting her. "I'm just trying to make it work."

"And you're doing fine."

Charlie opened the car door for us, and I waited for Mylee to climb in, but she stared at me a minute before she entered.

"What?" I sighed. "What's wrong?"

She shook her head. "Nothing. I just want you to know that you did a great job, too. I see the way that everyone looks at you. You're obviously very respected and admired in these circles. Thank you for letting me be your date today."

Date?

Without letting me reply, she climbed into the Escalade, leaving me speechless on the sidewalk.



## CHAPTER 8

## *Paxton*

I'd never admit it aloud, but I was looking forward to my business outing with Mylee. Kai, who never had much to say about anything, couldn't stop talking about his Chicago Tech Society luncheon, a fact which intrigued me to no end.

"She blended right in," he told us over breakfast, dawn barely peeking over the horizon the following morning. "And she made Paul Kaur look like the asshole he is."

"Paul Kaur is an asshole," Lincoln agreed with a grin. "I told you Mylee would work out."

"She's good," Kai confirmed. "She's going to give all of Chicago something to talk about."

By the time breakfast was done, he had pumped her up so much, I wanted to see what the fuss was about for myself.

Lincoln pulled me aside before we headed to the office that morning, a warning in his eyes.

"Mylee might impress Kai, but he's not that hard to win over in the grand scheme of things. He just needs a bit of kindness, and the girl is nice. This meeting tonight is going to need more than a sweet talker..."

"I'll handle her," I reassured him, and Lincoln grimaced.

"I'm more concerned with you handling yourself," he warned, his eyes darting up toward the glass partition on the second floor. "She's new to this, no matter how well she conducts herself. I'm sure her nerves are shot, even if she carries it well."

I chortled and clapped him on the back, a gesture that I knew Lincoln despised.

"I'm not the VP for nothing. I've got this."

I ignored Lincoln's side-eye and headed into my bedroom to get ready for work, taking in the breaking of the sunshine over the Chicago landscape beyond the hot tub on the balcony. This city was one of my favorites in which to work, even though we tried not to get too attached from one to the next. We did so much traveling, overseas, from continent to country, it was cruel to invest too much in one place. But Chicago did have my heart.

I couldn't say what it was specifically about the city that captured me from the first time I'd seen it. Perhaps it was the rough-around-the-edges allure it held that I'd never seen growing up in Texas. My parents had done a good job of keeping me and my siblings sheltered from the grimier aspects of reality, a fact that I'd never really forgiven them for in adulthood. The truth had been a stunning blow to me.

By the time I'd showered and dressed for the day, I heard movement on the second floor, and on a whim, I started up the steps, calling out to Mylee when I was halfway up.

"Hey... you awake?"

Her ebony mane appeared, spilling over the side of the glass wall, a wide, charming smile on her face. "Hey, you."

"You ready for your big debut tonight?" I teased.

"I thought my big debut was with Kai the other day," she jabbed back lightly.

"Nah. That was a dress rehearsal," I joked. "Tonight is the real deal. It's going to be a bit more unnerving."

Her smile faded slightly, but she held it, shrugging her slender shoulders, and I found myself sneaking a glance at her cleavage through the opening of her velvet robe.

"I'll manage," she offered nonchalantly. "Are you worried about me?"

"Should I be?"

She held my gaze challengingly. "I guess you'll find out tonight."

"What are you going to wear?"

Her nose turned upward, annoyance clouding her dark eyes. "Do you want to come and handpick my outfit for me?"

Tempted, I started to move up the steps, clothes the last thing on my mind—except maybe getting Mylee's robe off of her.

"Pax!"

Lincoln's voice stopped me before I could reach the top of the steps, and I turned to grin at my partner, who stared at me reprovably. "What are you

doing?”

“Mylee needed help picking out her outfit for tonight.”

Lincoln rolled his eyes and started for the front doors. “I’m leaving for the office. Are you coming or not?”

I shrugged and shot Mylee another smile. “I guess you’re on your own.”

“I’ll have to make do,” she replied, her chocolate-colored eyes amused. “See you tonight?”

“It’s a date.”

I turned back to meet up with Lincoln and Kai, who waited by the front door, both men shaking their heads at my antics, bemused.

“Take it easy on her,” Lincoln warned me again. “She still has months to go. Don’t scare her off.”

\* \* \*

It turned out that Mylee didn’t need my help picking out an outfit at all, but that didn’t really surprise me. She had shown shockingly good taste when we’d gone out shopping. She had a natural eye for fashion, one that she had been born with, not learned. It was clear to see that we were dealing with the heart of an artist with Mylee, and she had a flair for beauty.

When I returned home from work that evening, she waited in our living room with a glass of wine in hand. She looked incredible in a long, formal gown of periwinkle that seized every slender curve of her body when she rose from the sofa.

“I was starting to think I got the time wrong,” she exhaled, the relief in her eyes palpable. I shook my head, dropping my keys on the foyer table as I drank her in, ambling closer.

“Nope. You’re right on time. Give me twenty minutes, and I’ll be back.”

“Take your time. It’s your party,” she reminded me, reclaiming her seat on the sofa and taking a sip of her drink. She was doing a great job of hiding her emotions, but the nervousness was oozing out of her. It was palpable, and it excited me.

This was going to be fun.

Humming to myself, I retreated to my bedroom at the far end of the condo, deep in the far hallway of the penthouse, and stripped off my dress shirt, before hopping in the shower again to wash the day’s events off me.

As steam filled the bathroom, I stepped into the shower, dropping my head against the tiled wall, and closed my eyes, allowing the hot water to stream over my tense muscles. It had been a day, but the thought of escorting Mylee that night had pushed me through.

In my mind's eye, I saw her creeping through the door of the bathroom, searching for me, asking me what was taking so long. I could see her curling her long fingers around the door of the steam shower, her lower lip pouting lightly, head tipped to the side.

My hand closed around my semi-hard cock as I imagined her mouth parting, the peak of her breasts etched in my mind as I stroked myself, bringing myself to a full thickness.

I could almost hear her demanding, her dark eyes raking over my dripping, naked body, as she stepped out of her dress.

"Let's fuck this event," she said in my mind's eye. "I can think of something much better to do."

Breathing heavier, I pushed myself harder, imagining Mylee beneath that dress, her smooth skin under me as she joined me in the shower, her updo falling to spill over her luscious nipples, ripe for the taking. The water poured over me to cover every part of my body, my hand working harder and faster, the sound of Mylee's imaginary moans flooding my ears and coaxing my palm faster over my rigid cock.

Slipping and sliding up against the tile of the shower, I'd jam her until neither of us could take another second.

I groaned softly, my own fantasy driving me to climax, and it was over far too soon, but I couldn't leave my date waiting.

Sated, I soaped myself quickly and turned off the faucet. I stepped out of the shower, glancing at the time. Grimacing, I realized I'd already exceeded the twenty-minute time frame I'd given Mylee, and I hurried to dress.

But when I rejoined her out in the living room, she made no comment about my delay and stood again to greet me, an appreciative expression overtaking her. She displayed no annoyance at being kept waiting.

"You look great," she said pleasantly, and I felt heat rise to my face at the unexpected compliment.

"Then I guess we'll make a good couple," I replied lightly. "Should we get out of here? Charlie's probably wondering what's keeping us."

"I'm ready when you are."

"We're leaving!" I yelled out to no one in particular, but there was no

response.

“I don’t think anyone else is home yet,” Mylee volunteered, following me toward the door.

That made sense. Kai usually stayed late at the office, and Lincoln was notorious for stopping for dinner when he had put in his hours. It made me want to hang back for a drink for a minute, but I resisted the urge. We might not make it out of the condo at all if we didn’t get a move on.

We made our way to the lobby, and Lyndon opened the doors for us, nodding at me.

“Good evening, Mr. Webb,” the doorman said, ignoring Mylee.

“Lyndon. Do you know Ms. Lynn?”

Lyndon barely looked at her. “No, sir.”

“This is Lyndon, Mylee. You can ask him for whatever you need.”

Mylee gave him a tense smile, but Lyndon barely looked at her as Charlie hurried to open the back of the Escalade for us. My eyes narrowed slightly, sensing a problem with the doorman, but the car began to move, and Charlie confirmed the location.

“The Waldorf, Mr. Webb?”

“Yes, Charlie,” I said, eyeing Mylee, who stared out the window. “Mylee?”

She glanced at me. “Hmm?”

“Is anyone giving you a problem?”

She shook her luxuriant black mane. “No. Not at all.”

“Are you sure?”

“I’m sure.”

I didn’t believe her, but it was clear that pressing her wasn’t going to get me anywhere. Lincoln’s warning still sat fresh in my mind, and I wasn’t about to scare her off on our first night out. I intended it to be an evening to be remembered—in a good way.

The beige exterior of the Waldorf was upon us in fifteen minutes, and Charlie again stood by the door, allowing us out.

Several well-dressed guests ambled toward the doors, some pausing to look at me as if they were trying to place my face but having a hard time with the goddess on my arm.

I took Mylee’s hand, curling it around the cuff of my suit jacket, and she eagerly accepted it like she had been searching for a lifeline.

“At least the food will be good,” I promised her with a wink.

“What is this for?” she whispered, falling into step with me as I led her toward the elevators that would take us to the fifth floor. “The itinerary didn’t tell me much.”

I kept my head high, nodding at the respective partygoers.

“The City Mirror,” I replied, guiding her through the lobby. “Do you know it?”

She faltered, her dark eyes widening to take in the crystal chandeliers hanging from the high ceilings above. I urged her along.

“The homeless shelter?” she asked, stopping fully as my words sunk in. She stared at me, and I nodded, pulling her along.

“It’s not just one,” I corrected her. “There are several, along with a few food banks and soup kitchens. They’re doing what they can to combat homelessness and the increase in poverty in the city.”

“Wow!” Mylee sputtered.

“Why do you sound surprised?” I asked, eyeing her.

“I... I just don’t understand,” she admitted. “What does Silverpiece have to do with the City Mirror?”

“It’s a charity event,” I told her. “We’re raising money for them.”

Again, Mylee stopped and gawked at me. “You guys give to the homeless shelter?”

I laughed lightly, once more moving her through the crowd toward the ballroom. “Of course we do. We give back to every community where we build.”

Mylee’s mouth parted, but when she spoke, it wasn’t her voice.

“Hot damn, really?!” a loud, male voice called out in her place, forcing my head to turn in annoyance as we reached the entrance of the ballroom.

Paul Kaur stood behind us, gaping with naked amusement as he shook his head. Through my peripheral vision, I watched Mylee’s expression of amazement turn sour.

“Paul,” I said flatly, turning back toward the doors. I didn’t have the mental headspace for this guy’s conversation tonight.

“How’s it going, Pax?” Paul called, falling into stride with us, not taking my physical hint at all. He openly leered at Mylee, who shifted her head away, clearly uncomfortable by his presence. “And look who you’ve brought with you! Hi, honey!”

“Paul Kaur, meet Mylee Lynn,” I sighed, wishing he would go away. His voice was already grating on me.

“Oh, we’ve met,” Paul sneered. “She was with Kai a couple of days ago, weren’t you, honey?”

My neck stiffened, but Mylee tugged on my arm.

“Yes, I was,” she answered quietly, but without shame.

“Ha! I knew it. I wouldn’t forget a... face like that.” His leer broadened. “What agency do you guys use?” Paul went on, leaning in like he was whispering a secret, but his voice was loud and clear. “I wouldn’t mind renting this one for an hour or two—”

He didn’t get a chance to finish his nasty thought, my hand curling around the collar of his shirt even before I realized I had put my hand on him. Mylee gasped beside me, and I danced Paul back toward the wall, not caring who witnessed what was happening.

“You will show some respect to our associate,” I spat in Paul’s face. “Mylee is a part of Silverpiece. Apologize to her, or I promise you’ll never work in this town or any other as long as I’m breathing.”

Paul’s tan complexion turned waxen as I pinned him to the wall, his back hitting with a thud.

“Woah! I didn’t mean—”

“APOLOGIZE TO MYLEE!” I hissed, feeling as if smoke emanated from my nostrils. I couldn’t remember the last time I’d been so mad.

“I-I’m sorry!” Paul sputtered, glancing nervously toward her. “I-I was just kidding—”

I released him, and he stumbled forward.

“You never were funny,” I spat, spinning around to take Mylee’s hand again.

She permitted me to lead her into the ballroom, her fingers shaking, but I didn’t let her say anything.

“Fuck that guy,” I whispered, finding our table and placing a glass of wine in her hand. “You don’t let anyone talk to you like that, you hear me?”

She nodded, visibly swallowing. I smiled and chucked her chin lightly.

“I mean it, Mylee. If anyone ever speaks to you like that again, you come directly to me.”

She nodded again, her full lips pursed. I inhaled, struggling to regain my composure, but it took me a beat longer than usual. I flashed her a quick smile and winked.

“Good. Now, I hope you know how to dance. I wouldn’t want to show you up out there.”



She returned my smile weakly, and I downed my own drink, trying to sate my racing pulse.

*Where the hell did that come from?* I wondered. I'd been ready to kill Paul Kaur—and I would have done it again if the chance arose. I hoped for Paul's sake he'd learned his lesson, because next time, I wasn't sure I could keep it together so easily.

## CHAPTER 9

*Kai*

Every day, I found myself checking emails for updates to the social schedule hoping it was my day to spend time with Mylee, even if it wasn't my day. I went to bed memorizing it from the night before, but there were always last-minute changes that enabled Mylee to be on the arm of someone else over the course of the day.

And I always hoped that someone would be me.

Conversely, I also prayed that she wouldn't end up being switched out to accompany Lincoln or Paxton when she was on my roster like she was this morning, and I exhaled with relief when I found her at our breakfast table, fully dressed, makeup done, and smiling expectantly in my direction.

"You're not going like that, are you?" she teased me, nodding at my boxers and t-shirt.

Her eyes lingered at my crotch, but when I looked again, she had returned to her mug of tea, sitting back on the cushioned dining chair to study my partners, who chuckled at her joke.

"The Board wouldn't know the difference," Paxton promised. "I've gone to board meetings hungover more times than I can count."

"Which is why you're not allowed to go unattended anymore," Lincoln piped in, and Mylee laughed.

"I'd like to see that," Mylee mused, shooting Paxton an entertained grin.

"No, you wouldn't," Lincoln and I chimed in simultaneously.

"Kai and I will handle everything, won't we?" she said, leaning forward to set the mug down and look at me. "Although I'm a little surprised that you're allowing me in on a board meeting. Isn't that, like, hush-hush?"

"It's not technically a board meeting," I explained. "It's a monthly luncheon that we have with some of the subsidiaries' boards. It's just a

formality to see if everyone is on the same page.”

“It’s an excuse to day drink,” Lincoln sighed. “And frankly, a waste of company resources.”

“It’s good for morale,” Paxton corrected him. “And it lets the subsidiary companies know that we’re keeping an eye on things.”

“I still wish you’d send Pax,” I grumbled, sneaking a look at Mylee, but she winked at me.

“I don’t know, Kai,” she offered lightly. “You and I handle things okay together, don’t we?”

I grinned in spite of myself and noticed how my partners exchanged a knowing look. It was clear they could tell how much I was enjoying the time I got to spend with Mylee.

“I mean, I can go if you don’t want to,” Paxton replied slyly, but I sat up straight as all eyes fixed on me.

“I mean, it is my turn,” I mumbled, realizing my mistake.

“You’re going,” Lincoln intoned, and Mylee’s smile broadened.

“Have fun, kids,” Paxton told us, rising from the table, and Lincoln followed suit, leaving us to finish breakfast. “I’ll see you later.”

“I’m flying to New York this morning,” Lincoln informed us. “I’ll be home tomorrow.”

“Safe travels,” Mylee told him.

I finished my coffee and wandered into my bedroom to shower and dress before meeting Mylee in the foyer of the condo, where she waited with her oversized Prada bag. A wide-brimmed, saffron-toned hat sat on her head like a halo, the contrast of gold against her smoldering beauty stealing my breath like always.

“Ready?” she asked brightly.

“You’re really getting into these events, huh?” I asked, letting her lead me out of the condo.

In the ten days since she’d arrived, she’d shown more confidence, taking a stand in the most basic tasks.

“There’s not much to it,” she admitted. “Especially now that I have a title of my own, so people aren’t asking as many questions about who I am. Senior business consultant has a nice ring to it.”

That had been Lincoln’s idea after the latest run-in with Paul Kaur, and a good one at that.

“I’m glad you think so,” I mumbled, stepping into the elevator. “We’ve

been at it for years, and I still can't get into it."

Pressing the lobby button, Mylee gave me a sympathetic look. "Social gatherings aren't for everyone. Maybe you should talk to Pax and Linc about not doing them so much."

I sighed, slumping back against the wall. "It's not that simple. People expect to see your face when the company is as big as ours. And I'm the COO. It kind of goes with the title."

Mylee made a commiserating sound. "I wish I had an easy solution for you," she told me gently. "But if it's any consolation, I do understand. I'm sorry it's so difficult."

As the doors to the elevator opened, I hurried out ahead of her so she couldn't see my face when I said, "It's been much easier since you arrived, Mylee. You definitely make it better."

\* \* \*

It seemed to me that this board meeting was bigger than any I'd ever seen before.

"There are at least twice as many representing subsidiaries here as usual," I muttered, more to myself than Mylee, but she answered me.

"That's good, isn't it? Shows team spirit or something?"

I snorted at her interpretation, trying to understand where everyone had come from, and soon, I figured out why we had such a turnout to the boardroom without a keynote speaker in attendance for this session. The sight of so many made me distinctly uncomfortable.

Mylee was enshrouded from the moment we entered the non-descript meeting room, this one in Evanston's offices in Aurora.

*Word is out about her*, I realized, the understanding bittersweet. I watched my companion closely, unsure how she was apt to handle this newfound attention. To my surprise, she drew me in, keeping me close to her side.

"You're a senior business consultant?" someone inevitably asked, and again, my shoulders rose to my ears.

"So what do you do at Silverpiece, Mylee?" the general manager of Twinery Homes asked, his tone mildly condescending.

My neck stiffened, but Mylee handled the question with her usual

decorum.

“I could tell you, Kevin, but then I’d have to kill you. You haven’t signed an NDA,” she teased him. The group burst out laughing, and even Kevin chuckled, glancing at me.

“You got yourself a real spitfire here, Kai,” he muttered.

“Oh, I think she’s got me,” I replied, and the group snickered again.

Mylee remained on my arm as always, like she sensed my need to be grounded to reality. In turn, I kept her hands filled with nibbles and drinks until she finally whispered in my ear, “Should we get the hell out of here or what?”

“I thought you’d never ask,” I muttered, wanting to kiss her right then and there.

All the way home, we replayed the silly conversations we’d had with the various heads of Silverpiece’s companies.

“They were all there for you,” I informed her as the Escalade pulled up to Gable Place Towers, and Charlie let us out.

“Are you out of your mind?” Mylee replied, causing Lyndon to scowl at her. She ignored him and focused on me. “Do I look like someone in command of a multi-billion-dollar corporation?”

“Do I?” I challenged, stepping through the open door.

She stopped and stared at me intently. Stunned, she nodded vehemently.

“One hundred percent, Kai. More than you know.”

Her compliment sent a rush of pleasure through me, and we exchanged a smile as the doorman approached us.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Evans,” Lyndon said.

“Hi, Lyndon,” Mylee chirped.

The doorman didn’t respond to her, and I stopped to look at him.

“Ms. Lynn said hello, Lyndon,” I informed him.

“It’s all right—” Mylee started to say, but I continued to stare at Lyndon, who flushed under my uncharacteristic gaze.

“Good afternoon, miss,” he growled coldly.

My eyes narrowed, but Mylee tugged on my arm. “Hot tub?” she suggested. “I could really go for a soak right now.”

I debated whether to press the issue with the doorman and his consistently bad attitude.

What was his problem with Mylee? She’d been nothing but gracious to him since she’d arrived.

But she was already halfway to the elevators, leaving me little choice but to follow her.

Casting a backward glance at Lyndon, I nodded. "Sure," I agreed. "May as well soak off the day."

"Perfect."

Mylee retreated to the second floor of the penthouse to put on her bikini, and I started the jets in the hot tub, popping a bottle of wine by the time she came back down.

The afternoon sun slunk low behind the high rises all around us, the rays glinting off the glass.

Pouring a glass for her, I slid inside the tub, and Mylee did the same, her flat stomach disappearing under the bubbles. I was glad the water hid my growing hard-on beneath the surface, her body in the skimpy black and white swimsuit giving me thoughts I was sure I wasn't going to be able to suppress for much longer. I'd already stuffed them into the bed with me at night when no one else was around. But Mylee wasn't making it easy this afternoon, her smoldering stare boring into me like she could read my most private thoughts.

And it didn't bother me in the least.

"What are you thinking, Mr. Evans?"

My cock stood straight up with my chin, my gaze falling on Mylee's tantalizing smile.

"Oh, is it Mr. Evans now?" I asked, sliding closer to her, the invitation clear.

"It is when you look so serious," she replied lightly. "What's on your mind?"

Bubbles burst between us, the heat rising fast, less because of the water and more because I realized how little there was between me and Mylee for the first time.

But she made no move to put space between us.

"Are you enjoying this?" I asked her bluntly. "Or is this a job to you?"

Her smile faded, and she peered at me, cocking her head. "Where did that come from? Did I do something wrong today?"

I shook my head vehemently and reached for her wine glass, placing it in her hand. "Not a thing. You never do. You're a natural with everyone. That's why I'm asking. Do you actually like it, or are you putting on a show because it's your job? It's hard to tell..."

I paused and exhaled. "I'm saying the wrong thing."

Casting me a sidelong look, she bit on that luscious lower lip, tempting me to do the same, but I held off, waiting for her response.

"At first, I was going through the motions," she admitted. "It's not easy when people are looking at me like..." She hesitated. "Like I don't belong here."

"You *do* belong here," I growled protectively, and she smiled again.

"But you and Linc and Pax have made me feel like part of the group," she went on. "It feels less like a job every day, even if sometimes I still get the side-eye from randos."

"Who? I'll set them right," I promised.

Mylee tittered. "No more of that. Paxton's run-in with Paul Kaur is still making rounds on social media."

I rolled my eyes. Paxton and his temper... not that I could blame him in this instance. I would have done the same thing for Mylee if Paul had gotten in our faces again.

She exhaled. "It's an adjustment, but I'm not complaining. I really like it here. I like you."

Raising a finger, she gently pressed it to my chest, and I captured it in my hand, drawing it up to my lips. A small gasp escaped Mylee's mouth as my tongue traced over her fingertip, her eyes enlarging as I popped it between my lips.

"Kai..."

I stared at her imploringly, waiting for her to stop me, but she didn't, her jaw slacking as I sucked softly on her, the ridges of her fingerprint trailing over my tongue.

A soft sigh fell from her lips, and time stood still, our gazes locking, each of us daring the other to proceed with the next move, the only sound the spray of water and distant city traffic.

The sliding doors opened, and I released her hand, guilt shooting through me as Paxton appeared, his face alight with interest. It made me wonder how long he'd been standing out there watching, waiting.

Mylee swiveled her head to look at him, mouth still agape.

"Well... what do we have here?" Paxton asked sweetly, kicking off his shoes. "Mind if I join?"

I glanced at Mylee, certain that she would refuse, my pulse racing, a strange headiness overtaking my mind. A slow, inviting smile curled over her



mouth, and she shook her head, the fire in her eyes still glowing.

“Not at all,” she purred, sliding closer to me.

My arm encircled her waist, more blood shooting to my head.

An arm slipped around my neck as Paxton stripped down naked, making his way into the tub to sandwich Mylee between us. His hands eagerly reached out to touch her, but all I could see was Mylee’s full, sensuous mouth making her way toward me.

She hadn’t forgotten about me, even with Paxton there.

He worked behind her, removing her bikini top as we locked in our first real kiss, her hands reaching up to touch my face.

Our lips crushed together, and she stole my breath away as she had so many nights when I had envisioned this exact moment. Tongues and lips explored, my hands roaming over her now naked chest, Paxton freeing her of the bikini top as he pressed in behind her.

This was a different kind of party altogether.

## CHAPTER 10

*Mylee*

**F**rom behind me, Paxton's fingers grew more aggressive, pinching at my nipples as Kai's lips got more heated. For a moment, I wasn't sure whose hands were whose, and the idea excited me more, the notion that I was involved in a threesome hitting me out of nowhere. This was a first for me.

Not just a threesome—a threesome with two of the three Silverpiece princes. Was this really happening?

Gushes of heat rushed through me, comingling with the water from the hot tub. My eyes half-opened to study Kai's euphoric face.

He was enjoying this as much as I was.

Paxton's hardness pressed at my ass, my hips digging back against him. He cupped my waist, pulling me upward to fully free me of the rest of my clothes, my mouth falling away from Kai's lips.

I yelped as Paxton lifted me out of the tub unexpectedly, laying me dripping on the deck to spread me wide apart before I knew what was happening.

Paxton's face popped up from between my legs, his expression more serious than I'd ever seen it before. He licked his lips, and I gaped at him. He stared at me intently, not moving as he waited.

"Why are you stopping?" I panted, propping myself up on my elbows.

A small smirk appeared on his full mouth, and he shrugged. "I just want to make sure you really want this."

"Are you fucking kidding me right now?" I choked. "Don't stop!"

Snickering lightly, Paxton dove back in, and my eyes popped as Kai stared at me from inside the tub, his hands hidden from me as Paxton buried his face between my thighs. I peered at him, looking for signs of jealousy,

worried that he might feel left out in Paxton's charismatic takeover, but my concern was lost as Paxton ran his tongue over my clit.

Gasping, I bucked up against Paxton's heavy, even tongue. My eyes rolled to the back of my head, but I willed myself to watch. I didn't want to miss a second of this.

Again, my head turned, and I locked eyes with Kai, who remained in place, like he was waiting for direction. And I was happy to give it to him.

"Come here," I urged him, sensing that he needed to be told.

Was this new for them, too?

The idea excited me more. I wasn't a woman in a long line of conquests they had brought home. This was a new concept for everyone.

I waved him closer, moaning again as Paxton pulled me against him, his low-vibration moaning setting me on fire. "Kai, let me taste you."

Paxton's face appeared again, a grin forming over his damp cheeks before he resumed his task, my clit throbbing already when Kai pulled himself out of the hot tub.

"Closer!" I urged, my voice squeaking as I reached for Kai, my fingers catching his hip.

My eyes popped to see how thick and long he was, his body inching closer, and I grabbed hold of his cock firmly, showing him how badly I wanted him.

"Closer!" I growled until his legs straddled my chest to place his tumescent erection directly on my lips. "That's better."

My hands reached for his muscled ass, neck strained to take him fully, and now it was Kai who moaned when I let him into my mouth again.

Deeper, Paxton sank into me, his tongue and then his fingers, each jab making me wetter and weaker. His thumb toyed with my swollen clit, the movements and motions sending explosions through me, each one sending me to the darkening sky above.

Back and forth, Kai sank into me, his hands splayed over my head as he rode my lips, his earlier bashfulness forsaken. He was no longer the timid techy, looking for guidance.

Several times, my breath caught, Paxton's tongue and fingers bringing me to the edge of my release, the swell of Kai's cock choking me. We were all past the point of decorum and nervousness now. My head spun in every direction, my sense of being neither here nor there, as I struggled to find the ground in my own mind.

“Come for me,” Paxton rasped, his words pushing me over the edge, and I released against him as he chuckled happily. “That’s a good girl.”

Suddenly, Kai moved away from my face, and I was on all fours, ass up on my forearms. The tears in my vision cleared, and Kai was again in front of me, his huge cock in my face. I reached ardently for him again as Paxton plunged into me from behind.

I cried out, but Kai’s thick, giant member muffled my yell, lunging into my throat, a dizziness overtaking me as another orgasm welled inside me.

“Oh, your pussy is so sweet, Mylee,” Paxton groaned. “Oh, this is exactly what I thought it would be.”

Had he thought about me? Had they both?

He sighed, slapping my ass once, and I yelped as Kai wrapped my hair in his fist, guiding my neck to take him down again. Thicker he grew in my mouth, his own release evident. Down my throat he lunged, low, uneven rasps escaping his lips.

“I’m going to come,” he informed me. “Right down your throat.”

He tried to look at me, his thrusts becoming more intense, tears blurring my eyes, but I did manage a nod, allowing him permission to do exactly what he wanted.

“Fuck me, Mylee,” Kai muttered, while Paxton’s thrusts became harder and deeper.

I closed my eyes, gasping, hands curling against the wood of the hot tub deck, but my legs were jelly. I was going to come again, but there was no one to warn any more than they warned me.

Hot spurts filled me as I released, Kai and Paxton rushing me as I spilled outward. Every part of my body quivered relentlessly, my skin on fire as I rocked one way and then another.

Paxton caught me as I teetered to the side, Kai withdrawing from my mouth. I swallowed him, licking the saltiness from my lips and sighing heavily as I moved to fall forward.

“Easy there!” Paxton laughed, catching me before I could topple back into the water. “I’ve got you.”

Kai flanked my other side, and I reached up to grab him for support, my mouth moving but no sound coming out.

“Are you okay?” Kai asked worriedly, shooting Paxton a nervous look, like they’d broken me. It certainly felt that way at the moment.

“Grab her drink, man,” Paxton ordered, and I nodded in agreement,

accepting the glass of wine as Kai scrambled to get it for me.

I gulped it down, panting when the alcohol hit me, making me heady and lightheaded. I flopped back and began to chuckle.

Relief crossed over Kai's face, but Paxton had never really lost his grin.

"That was fun," Paxton commented. "Right?"

I realized that he was waiting for confirmation, that despite all his confidence, he was nervous that I was regretting what we'd just done.

"Fuck yes, that was fun," I agreed, nodding vehemently.

Both men laughed, and Paxton reached forward to pull me back into the water. I shrieked and allowed myself into the pool of water with a splash as he swatted a wave at me.

"Too bad Linc was stuck in New York," he joked, but my eyebrow rose with interest.

*Too bad indeed*, I agreed silently, settling back against the side as Kai climbed back in, and the three of us quietly collected our composes.

What was going to happen when he came back? Was this going to happen again? Would I be able to handle all three of them together? The two of them almost broke me in half.

The notion sent shivers of exhilaration through me.

I decided not to overthink it and just enjoy the aftermath of the moment. Even if my first threesome turned out to be my last, it was something I was always going to remember for the rest of my life.

## CHAPTER 11

## Lincoln

I couldn't put my finger on it, but there was a noticeable shift in the household when I got back from New York. Every time I was there, the atmosphere seemed lighter somehow, happier.

Mylee spent most of her time on the main floor with us now, eating her meals in the dining room after cooking breakfast and dinner for us. I told her that she didn't need to bother with that. We spent half our lives on the go, but she insisted.

"Most of this stuff will keep in the fridge," she replied. "And I've seen all of you guys get home more than once, searching through for something to snack on. If you're not home for dinner, you can eat it at three a.m."

I asked Kai about this new task, and he shrugged.

"She's probably looking for something to do when she's home all day. She has to be bored."

I considered this as I left the office one Thursday evening, the night before the annual charity auction that Silverpiece funded. It would be our first event that all four of us would attend together in a public space, and there were issues with everything, from catering to the prizes. It was business as usual.

I'd been on the phone all afternoon dealing with problems I didn't have time for, and I tried to pawn most of it off on the coordinators, but it kept ending back on my desk somehow.

*I wonder if Mylee would be any good at this,* I mused, ordering my driver, Harrison, to take me home. Of course we had event planners for all our functions, but that didn't stop callers from hounding me or Paxton when they couldn't figure things out. My assistants were all afraid of saying the wrong thing, even when I told them to take care of it.



If Mylee was bored at the condo, maybe she could pick up some of the slack at Silverpiece. But only if she wanted to.

“Stop the car!” I barked abruptly, and Harrison pulled over to the side of the road, fueling a series of honks behind us. “Stay here,” I told the driver, hopping out of the backseat. “I’ll be right back.”

Twilight melted to the fairy-blue of evening, a splash of white glowing from the interior of the tiny shop as I let myself in the door. A tinkling overhead announced my entry, and a young woman with startling green eyes looked up from the counter where she pored over a thick, hardcover book.

“Oh. Hello,” she said, straightening her back. “Can I help you?”

She seemed genuinely surprised to see anyone in the store, as if there hadn’t been a soul there for hours.

“The poetry section is right back there, right?” I asked, remembering from the last time I’d been in the Progressive Mistrals bookstore.

“That’s right.” She rose from the stool and slipped around the counter to guide me through the short aisles of books. A small but crowded spot spilled with titles, just as I recalled.

“Perfect. I’ll take them.”

The young woman looked at me, a slightly exasperated expression forming on her face. “They’re all poetry, sir. Which one would you like?”

“All of them.”

She blinked. “W-what?”

“I’ll take them all.”

“There has to be at least a hundred books there!”

“There’s about two and a half months’ worth of reading?” I guessed. “I mean, if you’re a fast enough reader?”

She continued to gape at me.

“How long will it take to ring them up?” I asked impatiently, glancing at my watch.

“I... I’ll do it now,” she mumbled, reaching for the first stack.

“I’ll be back in a minute. I’m just making a call outside.”

I retreated to the street and knocked on the driver’s window. Harrison rolled down the window. “Go wait in the bookstore. I have some packages coming.”

“Right away, sir.”

He got out of the car, and I ambled to the side to call out. Mylee answered on the second ring.

“Oh, good!” she sighed into the phone. “I can’t get a hold of anyone else. Are you coming home for dinner?”

“Maybe,” I teased. “What did you make?”

“Is my cooking that bad that you gauge your dinner plans on what I’m making?” she replied dryly.

“No. I’m coming home regardless, and I happen to enjoy your cooking. I’m just trying to mentally prepare.”

“It’s taco night.”

“I really wish you’d stop fussing over us.”

“It gives me something to do,” she replied. “But are you really coming back for dinner? I’m starting to get a complex.”

“I am. I just had to make a stop on the way. I’ll be there in about half an hour.”

“Great!” She sounded relieved. “And you don’t know where Kai and Pax are?”

“I don’t,” I replied. “But I can call them.”

“No, don’t,” she said quickly. “We’re all still going to that gala tomorrow, right?”

“The charity auction, yes.” I considered telling her my thoughts about having her take over, but I changed my mind at the last minute. “I’ll see you soon. Need anything?”

“No. Just someone to come and eat all this food.”

“Keep it hot for me.”

“It’s hot for you.”

I smiled, warmth rushing down my spine.

*And I’m hot for you,* I thought, hanging up, a wave of guilt rushing through me.

I shouldn’t be hot for her. I couldn’t afford to get attached to her or anyone else. I’d already learned my lesson with Angela.

\* \* \*

No one was home when I arrived, but the smell of taco seasoning reached my nostrils, and my stomach growled.

“There you are! That was way longer than—” Mylee turned the corner into the foyer and stopped mid-sentence as Harrison unloaded the pile of

books onto the sitting bench. “—half an hour.”

“Sorry,” I apologized. “It took longer than I expected.” I flashed her a smile and nodded toward the load as Harrison silently retreated toward the hall to get the rest.

“What is all this, Linc?” she asked, slowly approaching like she was addressing a wild animal.

“Poetry books,” I announced, waving my hand dismissively. “So you have something to do during the day instead of cooking.”

A series of emotions flashed over Mylee’s face, none of them identifiable, her dark eyes darting from me to the massive pile and back again.

“What did you do?” she gasped.

“I got you some reading material.”

Tentatively, she neared the bags, recognizing the name. “Is this the same place we went to when we had lunch that day?”

I nodded. “You seemed to like that store.”

Dropping my keys on the foyer table, I joined her side, watching as she removed one of the titles from inside the paper bags. “How many did you buy?” she mumbled, more to herself than to me.

“All of them.”

She turned and faced me, shaking her head in disbelief. “You didn’t have to do that, Linc.”

Nonchalantly, I shrugged, enjoying the way her eyes glistened. “No, Linc, you have done enough for me—”

“Stop saying that,” I interjected sharply. “It’s only stuff, Mylee.”

Her face twisted. “It might not mean anything to you, but it’s something to me. I... I don’t know what to say.”

She stared at me imploringly, and I wanted to grab her and kiss her, the urge overwhelming. I resisted it, turning away.

“Say you’ll read them,” I said lightly as Harrison returned with the next load of books. “And that you’ll feed me those tacos.”

“Yes... of course,” she mumbled. “It’s literally the least I can do.”

“No,” I corrected her. “You could do much less, but you’ve proven yourself time and again with us. This is just a gesture of our appreciation.”

Mylee slid across the floor as I moved toward the hall, leading toward the kitchen and dining room, her hand stopping me.

“Your appreciation,” she corrected me. “This is all you.”

I stared at her manicured hand on my arm, her vanilla and rose body wash

wafting into my nose and making me hard.

“It’s from all of us,” I said gruffly, pulling myself back, fighting the incredible desire to succumb and kiss her.

“Linc...”

“Is dinner ready?” I called, sailing into the kitchen. “I really am starving.”

\* \* \*

Several times throughout the night, I caught Mylee sneaking me looks across the hired Hummer limo. She sat sandwiched between Kai and Paxton, their hands not-so-subtly placed on each of her knees, peeking out from the daring slit on each side of her ivory dress. Suddenly, I understood the feeling that I had been trying to identify since I’d returned from New York.

Their relationship had turned physical when I’d been gone.

But Mylee couldn’t stop stealing glances at me, the library of poetry that I’d had delivered to her the previous night still very fresh in her heart.

And mine, too.

*I should have kissed her when I had the chance. She’s not Angela. She’s nothing like Angela. She’s proven that time and again.*

“I still can’t believe you did that,” she said for the tenth time, shaking her head. “Did you buy out their entire selection?”

“They can order more,” I reassured her. “They’re in the business of selling books. That’s what they do.”

“Mr. Romance over here,” Paxton taunted, squeezing Mylee’s knee.

She scowled at him lightly. “It was sweet. All those books—it inspired me to start writing again, actually.”

“You write?” Kai asked, echoing my own question. It wasn’t a stretch for a voracious reader.

She nodded, a smile forming on her lips, the interior lighting of the limo casting an angelic glow around her face. “Reading and writing were always an escape for me,” she said. “I guess I got so busy with living, I kind of put all that aside—”

*Screech! Pop!*

The vehicle swung to the side and collided with the car beside it, smoke flooding the interior of the cabin. The limo struggled to find its path back on the road as our bodies flung forward and sideways, but the effort was futile.

“Oh, my god!” Mylee screamed as the limo lost control, crashing into a second and then a third vehicle. She fell forward, crashing into me with my partners, the four of us piling onto the ground as the limo started to spin and then flip...

And Mylee’s howls of terror flooded the night air.

## CHAPTER 12

*Mylee*

**L**incoln brushed a strand of hair out of my face, his eyes raking worriedly over me.

“Stop fussing over me, Linc,” I begged, sitting up against the pillows of my oversized bed. “I’m not hurt. I swear. The doctors at the hospital already checked me out. Nothing more than bruising. We’re all really lucky.”

“You really should rest and let me get another doctor in here.”

“You were in the same accident,” I reminded him dryly, the aftershock wearing off now as I looked him over, too.

He had made me get dressed in pajamas, insisting I needed to get into bed. He was still in his tux. His clothes were scruffy and ruined, the bowtie askew from the accident.

“Are you sure the others aren’t hurt?” I asked for what seemed like the hundredth time.

“I’m sure. They’re downstairs right now. Do you want me to get them?” He moved to stand, but I stopped him, grabbing his arm before he could leave my bedside.

“How did the accident happen?” I demanded. “Was anyone hurt in the other cars? The driver?”

“No one was injured. I promise.” He sat back down and readjusted the covers around me, but I pushed them away and rose onto my knees, relief overtaking me.

He had carried me, half-kicking, all the way up to my room once we had arrived back at Gable Place Towers, but now that we were alone, I appreciated the effort he’d gone through to ensure I was safe. The shock had worn off now, and with his reassurances, I was feeling peace.

“Thank you,” I rasped, putting my hand on his cheek.

He appeared surprised by my declaration and turned to look at me.

“For what?”

“For everything. I was acting hysterically earlier.”

He shrugged and grinned mirthlessly. “It was understandable. I probably shouldn’t have slung you over my shoulder like that, but I wanted to get you out of the front of the building before the paparazzi and police showed up. It can be a shitshow when that happens.”

I let my hand linger on his cheek, a burst of heat rushing through me suddenly, the adrenaline from the accident coursing through me in a rush. Lincoln’s verdant pupils dilated as he looked at me, an understanding illuminating his face as he read the desire on my face.

“Do you like it here, Mylee?” he asked, turning his face fully toward me.

“Uh huh.”

His hand found the edge of my pajama shorts, his palm resting on my naked thigh. “Are we treating you nicely?”

“Could be better,” I teased, drawing closer, my breath hot on him.

“Oh yeah?”

“Hm.”

“How so?”

My mouth moved to brush against his chin, and his grin widened. “I have some suggestions.”

“So do I.”

He caught me off guard, grabbing my wrists and pinning them over my head. I gasped and laughed at the unexpected gesture, but my titter was cut off by his lips. The kiss shouldn’t have surprised me, but it did, despite the fact that I knew it was coming for weeks.

Strong and sweet, his mouth crushed to mine, completing the trifecta in my mind. This was what had been missing, the link I’d been craving all along but hadn’t realized I’d been yearning for with bated breath.

He had been holding off, making me beg silently for him, and now that I had it, I couldn’t stop, wouldn’t.

My eyes closed, and I let him explore my neck, his lips growing hotter and more intense as he released a small noise. A cross between a grunt and a sigh fell into my ear as goosebumps exploded all over me, hardening my nipples, his roaming hands locating my swelling breasts.

Lincoln’s fingers trailed over the front of my tank top, pulling away the



fabric until it ripped, and I gasped again, startled by his roughness. I didn't expect it from this composed, even-tempered man. But I was learning that none of the three were entirely what I'd thought.

Oh, but I loved it, and the gushing between my thighs confirmed it.

"Fuck, I've wanted to do this since I first laid eyes on you," he rasped in my ear. "I wanted you. I just didn't know how to get you."

More wetness washed through me at his confession, my head falling back as he revealed my breasts for his lips to take.

"Then why didn't you take me?" I murmured, my question interrupted by his kisses.

He didn't respond, but I suspected I already knew, a deep-seated pain he had been clinging to that kept him from reacting.

He pressed himself to me, the outline of his cock pressing to my thigh, and I bucked up against him, ready and eager for him already, but he had me pinned, his weight too much for me.

Slowly, his hand moved to massage my throat, his mouth moving lower against my nipples, fingers squeezing erotically as he latched on. I moaned loudly, soaked now as I arched.

Nipping at me, he released my throat, pulling away the remnants of my pajamas, mouth locating my belly, fingers finding the drenched secret of my middle. My clit throbbed, and I jumped as he teased at me.

"Oh, yes," he sighed, inhaling deeply, tongue jutting out to sample me.

Another moan fell out of my mouth, but it caught as he lapped at me once, twice, a third time, and then slid back up my body, his pants coming off as he moved. A rip filled the room, but it didn't matter, either, as long as we were both naked, our flesh blending against one another.

We rolled against the sheets, limb to limb.

"I can't take it anymore, Mylee," he growled. "I need to fuck you."

I smiled, arching upward, his fingers tightening around me, his hardness poking at my core.

"Yes, please," I begged, wrapping my calves around his now-naked ass to draw him toward me. "Fuck me."

Lincoln paused and looked at me, his eyes wild and unfamiliar. "Say it again," he ordered me.

I licked my lips and cocked my head. "Fuck me, Lincoln."

"Good girl," he murmured, setting himself back, my ankles falling over his hips as he spread me wide.

A cry echoed through the bedroom when he entered me, his huge, throbbing cock filling me with a slick jab.

“Is this how you want it?” he rasped, falling forward, but he didn’t wait for me to respond, his thrusts growing hard and fast, stealing my voice and breaths in unison.

I accepted every inch of him as he drove into me, his desire overriding anything I could have done, anyway, but I wouldn’t have stopped him if I could.

My eyes closed, and I floated away with the euphoria of his thrusts, relishing every jab as my climax built against him.

Harder and faster, he drove himself into me until he felt like a machine, his pubic bone rubbing against my clit with delicious force. I closed myself around him, seizing around him as I came, over and over, spilling against him as he, too, built to a release.

“Keep coming on me, baby,” Lincoln hissed, his words chopping as I floated higher, my legs stiff around him, eyes rolled fully back now. “I’m coming, too.”

I yanked upward to meet him, yelping as I clung to him and felt him flood me with his own release. Sweat poured from his face, the pair of us clinging to one another as we fought to find our senses in the aftermath of what had happened.

Lincoln remained inside me for a long while afterward, and I could have kept him there for a long while more.

“You’re really something, Mylee,” he finally laughed, falling to the side to look at me. “You know that?”

“Am I?” I replied slyly. “That’s a big compliment coming from you.”

He shook his head and stared at the ceiling, grinning. “I’m really glad we walked into your café that day.”

I said nothing, but his words filled me with pleasure.

## CHAPTER 13

*Kai*

Paxton handed me another beer, and I accepted it, my eyes trailing up toward the half-formed moon above our heads. The city made it hard to take on the full effects of the stars, but I knew they were hiding out there somewhere.

I hadn't changed out of my tuxedo shirt, the white stained in dirt and blood, ripped at the breast, but I didn't care. My only concern was for Mylee.

"She's okay," Paxton reassured me, like he could hear my thoughts.

"I know that's what the doctors said," I growled.

"She's fine," Paxton reminded me. "And if she was really hurt, they would have kept her there."

My eyes trailed back toward the interior of the penthouse, and I straightened to see Lincoln coming toward us purposefully. I hurried to let him through the glass doors.

"How is she?"

Instantly, I got a whiff of sex on him. I sniffed harder, certain that I was smelling what I was, and I stared at him as Lincoln shrugged as if to confirm it.

"What?" he asked, and my shoulders relaxed as Paxton snorted at my side.

"Told you," Paxton laughed, returning to his beer. "She's fine."

I exhaled and stepped back to let Lincoln outside, the doors closing to permit us a moment of privacy, lest Mylee be listening in from the second floor.

"What is she doing?" I asked nervously. "Should I go see her?"

"She asked to have a few minutes to herself. I think she's going to shower and calm down a bit."

“With your cock inside her?” Paxton asked innocently.

Lincoln smirked at him. “That did seem to help with her anxiety.”

“Stop it, you two,” I growled. “This isn’t funny. What the hell was that with the limo?”

“It was an accident, Kai. What else?” Lincoln told me calmly. “Shit happens. Accidents happen.”

“What accident? There was a pop and a bang and smoke—”

“There will be an investigation,” Paxton reminded me gently, casting Lincoln a look that I understood too well.

They thought I was becoming unraveled, but that wasn’t fair. Things like this just didn’t happen out of nowhere.

“We’re lucky no one was hurt—or worse,” I grumbled, flopping down on one of the wooden Adirondack chairs and taking a swig of my beer, extending my legs out in front of me.

“But no one was hurt,” Lincoln insisted. “Everyone is okay—including Mylee. Mylee is okay. Take a breath, man. We’re not going to let anything happen to her. I promise.”

Swallowing, I met Lincoln’s eyes and saw the sincerity there. He did care for her as much as I did, even if he had been determined to keep her at arm’s length after what he had endured with his ex, Angela. But that had all changed, apparently.

“Damn straight we won’t,” Paxton agreed, taking a seat at my side. “But she’s a survivor too, Kai. Don’t discount how tough she is. She’s been through all kinds of shit.”

“I’m not,” I said quickly. “I just...”

I pursed my lips and spun the bottle in my hands. “I didn’t think I’d get so close to her. But she’s really something.”

Lincoln also sat, but no one spoke for a moment, each of us lost in our own thoughts.

“Is she really leaving in seven weeks?” I muttered, asking the question that I knew they were asking themselves silently.

“I’ve been thinking about that,” Lincoln admitted. “I can think of a place or two for her in Silverpiece if she wants to stay past her contract.”

“You mean make her business consultant title a real thing?” Paxton asked dubiously.

“Maybe,” Lincoln said. “But there are already existing positions that I think she’d be really proficient at filling.”

My eyebrows shot up. “Have you talked to her about this?”

“No... I wouldn’t without discussing it with you first.”

I hesitated. “Would that work?” I asked haltingly. “I mean... you know. After...”

I gestured vaguely between the three of us. “Long term?”

“Why wouldn’t it?” Paxton asked, sounding confused. “It’s working now, isn’t it?”

He glanced at Lincoln as if waiting for an argument, but there was no protest.

“But is it working because it’s new and we know it’s going to end, or because—”

Paxton’s groan cut me off. “Why are you always such a pessimist?” he demanded. “Why can’t you just accept sometimes that good things happen?”

How could I explain to him that the Nerd from Nantucket didn’t necessarily believe that a beautiful, witty, intelligent woman like Mylee Lynn could stand him for longer than a million-dollar contract dictated? Maybe she would still find Paxton and Lincoln appealing and entertaining after the three months were over. But me?

I didn’t say any of this aloud. Paxton would just laugh at me.

“We’ve worked so closely together for years, Kai. It only makes sense that we would find ourselves in an arrangement like this. Mylee is too special to let go, and we’d be fools to believe we’d ever find anyone else like her, let alone another two women like her,” Lincoln added gently.

Paxton snickered. “Trust me. There aren’t any others like her.”

“You would know. You’ve fucked half the Northern Hemisphere.”

“And most of the southern, too,” I quipped.

“Oh, fuck both of you,” Paxton laughed, swatting at me with his open hand. “Like you two are virginal angels.”

We all chortled and sat back, my head tipping to look up at the stars overhead. I’d been here before, second-guessing my own success, wondering what I’d done to deserve something so good.

But I was still successful—the most successful man from my hometown, despite all the taunting and bullying I’d endured in childhood.

Would the same be true of Mylee? Would she stick around after the contract ran out, and she was paid?

“Let’s see what Mylee has to say about all this,” I offered, lowering my gaze back toward them. “For all you know, she’s just playing her role really,

really well.”

Paxton frowned at me. “Do you really believe that?” he asked, sounding upset.

I shrugged.

“Sex was never part of the deal,” Lincoln reminded me sharply, but he also sounded angry that I had suggested it.

“Let’s just bring it to her and see what she says,” I insisted, downing the rest of my beer. “No sense in getting our hopes up if she’s just going to take her million and run in a few weeks, is there?”

## CHAPTER 14



*Mylee*

The car accident sat with me over the weekend, and even though the guys told me to stay home and relax, I found that even more unnerving, especially when they weren't there with me.

"You could come to the office with us," Paxton suggested on Monday as I paced through the main floor, watching them drink coffee and get ready to go to work.

"And do what?" I asked, the idea bittersweet. On one hand, it would spare me the alone time. On the other, I would end up having to deal with the questions of their employees.

"We could find something for you to do," Lincoln agreed, shooting the others a look that I didn't understand.

I looked down at my scraped-up hands and thought about the bruises on my face.

"Are you sure that's a good idea?" I asked worriedly. "I mean, won't people talk or—"

"Fuck people," Paxton said in his pleasant way, ambling through the swinging door of the dining room toward the kitchen for more coffee. "It's our company."

"What Pax means," Kai sighed, shooting his partner a dirty look through the wall that he couldn't see, "is that no one is going to talk about you."

I wished I shared his faith. I had no illusions about what was being said about me behind my back, even if the guys were pretending it wasn't happening. They could only threaten the Paul Kauris of the world so much, but that wouldn't shut them up. People were still going to gossip about me.

"No," I decided. "I'm going to head into my old neighborhood today."

Paxton zoomed back out of the kitchen, his eyes widening. "What?"

“I think I’m going to swing by Teatotler’s and see how everyone’s doing,” I explained. I winked at Lincoln. “Maybe I’ll do some reading and writing while I’m there.”

“I don’t think that’s a good idea, Mylee,” Lincoln said quickly. “If you don’t want to come to the office, that’s fine, but don’t go out, either.”

My stomach twisted, his words confirming my worst thoughts. “Why not?”

“Because...”

“We still don’t know what happened with that accident!” Kai blurted out.

Paxton and Lincoln gave him murderous looks.

“Nothing fucking happened with the accident except it was an accident, you idiot!” Paxton growled. “Stop scaring her!”

I balked and stared at them, my eyes locking on Kai, but he turned away, busying himself with the table. “Is there something you’re not telling me?”

“Of course not, Mylee,” Lincoln replied shortly. “But you’re basically a public figure now. You can’t just run around Chicago on your own.”

“I have Charlie.”

“Charlie is a driver, not a bodyguard,” Lincoln insisted.

“We should get her a bodyguard,” Kai quipped and was again met with scathing stares.

“She doesn’t need a bodyguard,” Paxton growled.

Deep suspicion twined up my spine as I looked from one man to the next, but none of them would meet my eye.

“You sure you don’t want to come to the office with us?” Lincoln offered again. “I really can find something for you to do there.”

“I’m sure,” I said shortly, folding my arms over my chest.

Lincoln kissed my cheek, the gesture surprising me. “Okay. Have a great day. I’ll text you later.”

“We’ll be home for dinner,” Kai added, following Lincoln’s lead and kissing my other cheek.

Stunned, I gaped at both of them.

Paxton leered and hovered over me. “I’m not going to do that,” he informed me, leaning down to plant a proper kiss on my mouth. “That’s how it’s done.”

Chuckling, Paxton punched Kai and Lincoln on the arm, and the three of them wandered out, leaving me to gape at the closed door.

*What was that?*

I didn't know what to make of this display of affection or of the orders to remain in the penthouse.

*That's not part of the contract. No one ever told me I had to remain here. In fact, I have a credit card to do what I want with.*

I pursed my lips and thought about calling Charlie to drive me, but I thought better of it. If Lincoln had forbidden me from going, he had likely told Charlie not to take me. I would take the L to Teatotler's and be back before anyone knew I was gone.

\* \* \*

The cafe was rammed when I walked through the doors. The usual early morning crowd was lined up on the sidewalk, but I wasn't really there for a coffee. I slid inside past the irritable businessmen and college students, ambling up to the counter to look for a familiar face. But as I entered, I suddenly wondered if I'd made a bad choice after all.

Catrine saw me first and gasped from behind the espresso machine.

"Mylee!"

The sound of my name caused Zander and Drew to turn, the guys gawking openly before leers appeared on both their faces.

"How's it going?" I asked casually, leaning on the counter.

Catrine shook her head and gestured at the drink orders, and I nodded understandingly. I'd been on that side, swamped with coffee placements. I didn't come to distract her.

"Nice purse." Zander appeared on my left, abandoning his post as always. I smothered a sigh. I hadn't come to see him.

"Thanks."

"Prada?"

"I had no idea you were such a fashion connoisseur, Z," I remarked dryly.

"Well, when someone walks in here carrying a fifteen-hundred-dollar handbag, I notice," he replied, licking his lips. "Those boys at Silverpiece are really treating you nice, huh?"

I bristled. "Who said anything about Silverpiece?"

Zander whooped so loudly, everyone in line stopped to look at him. "Are you kidding me?"

I stared at him blankly. "What?"

“Have you been living under a rock? You’re the talk of social media; the Silverpiece Piece. Everyone and their dog have been tweeting about you.”

Blood drained out of my face. “What?”

“You’re serious? You haven’t heard what people are saying about you?” Zander held up a finger and disappeared back behind the counter. Suddenly, I felt like everyone in the café was staring at me, and I wished the floor would open up and swallow me whole.

“Here,” Zander said, thrusting his phone at me.

“Zander!” Drew barked. “Are you working...?”

*Wow. Drew does have management skills sometimes.*

Zander ignored the manager and nodded at me as I scrolled through the threads, my face flaming as I read the disgusting comments attached to the Silverpiece hashtag.

“Oh, my...” I breathed.

“Is it true? Are you like their escort now?” Zander asked, genuinely curious, as I dropped his phone with a clatter on the tile. “Oh, come on, Mylee! That’s a new phone!”

Backing out of the café, I kept my eyes on the ground, my mind whirling. They had to have known about this, all three of them. But they hadn’t breathed a word to me.

Is that why they didn’t want me to leave the house? Were they just hoping to keep it a secret until my contract was up? They didn’t want me to know that the whole world was talking about me?

And then what? I’d be thrown back into the world with a scarlet letter pinned to my chest?

*It’s the twenty-first century, Mylee. No one cares about this shit anymore,* I tried to tell myself, but my cheeks flamed as I rushed back toward the L, my breathing still erratic.

I hadn’t thought this through, any of it. Who had started this social media shitstorm?

Paul Kaur came to mind, his naked accusation about me being an escort from the start. But we hadn’t been discreet, and it wasn’t a lie. I couldn’t even go after anyone for slander—not that I would, anyway.

I was going to be a pariah in my own city, and the Silverpiece princes had tried to hide it from me.

I was so stupid to trust them. I shouldn’t have gotten involved with them—or this.

Miserably, I climbed aboard the train and forced myself to think about the end of the road. In less than two months, I'd be a million dollars richer, and I could leave Chicago. I could even change my name if I wanted.

But none of that took away the dull pain that lingered, as I understood that I had been betrayed by these men. They knew about this and kept it from me.

*I'm halfway done, I told myself firmly, squaring my shoulders to pick myself up again. I'll get through this the same way I've gotten through everything else in my life. They can't take my pride from me. I won't let them.*

## CHAPTER 15

## *Paxton*

**T**he penthouse was pitch black when I got home, not a waft of spice in the air. It was bizarre when I was so accustomed to Mylee cooking every night.

Immediately, my heart lurched to assume the worst.

“Mylee?” I yelled, stalking across the marble floor of the foyer, flipping on every light in my pathway. “Mylee, are you here?”

There was no response, but when I entered the common area on the main floor, I looked up toward the second story and saw a light on in the far bedroom where Mylee slept.

“Mylee?”

I moved toward the spiral steps, and her voice rang out. “Please respect my personal space and don’t come up here unless you’re invited.”

Her tone was ice cold, and I froze on the second step, unsure if she was playing or not. “Is that supposed to be funny?” I asked, confused.

“I tell much better jokes than that,” she fired back. “Please don’t bother me, Paxton. I’m not on the clock right now.”

“W-what?” I sputtered.

“There’s no event tonight. I’m not on the clock. Please leave me alone.”

My eyebrows knit into a vee. “What the hell is wrong with you?”

She didn’t answer, and I considered heading upstairs anyway, but retreated to the main floor and stood at the bottom of the glass wall. “I guess this means you didn’t make dinner?”

Her bedroom door closed, slamming slightly, and my perplexity mounted, but as I reached for my phone to call Lincoln, he arrived home.

I strode out to meet him in the foyer. “I think Mylee’s still mad at us for not letting her leave the house today,” I informed him.

He set his keys and wallet down on the stone entrance table. “Really?” he asked worriedly. “I was wondering why she didn’t respond to my texts today.”

“Well, she basically told me to fuck off, and she’s holed up on the second floor right now.”

Lincoln sighed and made his way toward the stairs. “Mylee?”

She didn’t answer, and he hesitated as I had at the base of the stairs. “Should we go up there?”

“I don’t know. I don’t want her to throw something at me,” I replied caustically. “You go.”

“What did she say to you?” Lincoln pressed.

“She told me to respect her personal space.”

He groaned.

“Maybe she’s having her time of the month?” I suggested.

Lincoln gave me a disgusted look. “What the fuck kind of chauvinistic shit is that?” he growled. “You know what year it is, don’t you?”

“Well, I’m spitballing,” I retorted. “Because I don’t know any other reason for her to be acting like this.”

“What did you say to her?”

I jumped and whirled, exhaling. “Fuck, Kai. Don’t sneak up on people like that.”

“I live here, too,” Kai reminded me dryly. “Why is Mylee upset?”

“I don’t know!” I exploded. “I’m telling you, she was like this when I got home.”

“One of us should go up there,” Lincoln said.

“She doesn’t want us to,” I insisted. “Now who’s being patriarchal? She said no.”

Lincoln glowered at me. “Are you honestly going to tell me that I’m worse than you?” he demanded.

“Okay,” Kai interjected, stepping between us. “Fighting isn’t going to solve anything. I’m going to text her and tell her that we want to work this out.”

He pulled out his phone and fired out a text, waiting as we stood around with bated breath. There was no response.

“Is she really going to just ignore us?” I grumbled. “This is immature.”

“I’m immature?” Mylee hissed from above us. “I have the balls to confront issues when they’re in front of me. I don’t try to sweep shit under



the rug.”

Taken aback, I stepped away to take her in fully at the glass partition, shocked to see just how upset she was. Her face was drawn and pale, her eyes red-rimmed as if she had been crying. Seeing her like that tightened my chest.

“What are you talking about, Mylee?” Kai asked slowly. “Come down here so we can talk about this.”

“No,” she snapped. “You know what you did. I’m still going to honor my contract, but that’s all I’m doing. Please don’t bother me on my off time.”

She spun back toward her bedroom as we all called out to her in unison, but the door closed again, leaving us all to stare helplessly at one another.

“You still think it’s PMS?” Lincoln asked me sarcastically, and I gave him the finger.

“What did you two do?” Kai barked, but I honestly had no answer for him.

\* \* \*

For the next two days, I didn’t see Mylee at all. She purposely avoided us, ensuring she only came downstairs when we were out of the condo or in our rooms. She didn’t use the driver, either, and I had no idea where she spent her days when I was at the office. I missed her silly banter and hot body and wanted her to just talk to me.

I tried texting her, but she didn’t respond. I was starting to have mixed feelings about her presence there under contract. I had no idea how she was going to act once we were in public, and it worried me.

And lucky me, I was just the one to find out because she was on the schedule next with me.

At eight o’clock on Thursday night, she waited for me in the foyer, wearing a gorgeous black gown with a ruffled hem. The pearls around her neck made her cleavage look so inviting. I resisted the urge to kiss the curve of her neck when she offered me a stony look.

“Are you sure you’re going to be able to do this?” I asked her warily. “Because if you’re not up for it—”

Like a switch had been flipped, her face shifted, and a warm, brilliant smile formed on her lips. “Of course I can do this,” she said sweetly. “It’s my job, isn’t it? Haven’t you seen?”

I frowned, unsure about what she meant, but I didn't want to pick a fight with her just before attending the dinner. She lost the charismatic smile and took my arm, allowing me to lead her down the hallway to the elevator.

Lyndon scowled openly at her now, and I frowned at him. "Bad night, Lyndon?" I asked pointedly.

"No, sir, Mr. Webb."

"Then why do you look like you swallowed a lemon?"

Through my peripheral vision, I saw Mylee smirk, but it was gone by the time I looked at her directly.

Charlie ushered us into the car, but Mylee hesitated at the door, taking a deep, shuddering breath.

"You okay?" I asked again, concern creeping through me. I realized this was the first time she had been back in a car since the accident. "Hey, do you want to forget about this tonight?"

"I'm fine," she grumbled, sliding inside without looking at me.

I stared after her, my jaw twitching, but she had already turned her head to look out the window.

"The Sandington, Charlie," I informed him.

As we took off, Mylee's hands curled into fists around her clutch, and she kept her eyes down in her lap. Instinctively, I reached for her hand, half expecting her to wrench it away. But she allowed me to take it, her palms clammy.

"Babe, we can go home," I told her quietly. "I really don't mind."

"It's fine, Paxton."

I chewed on the insides of my cheeks, unsure of what else to say.

"It's not far," I told her softly. "But we don't have to do this."

She didn't answer but closed her eyes, her breath evening.

"Charlie, slow down. We're not in a rush," I told the driver.

He wasn't driving that fast, but it wouldn't kill him to go slower. Mylee gave me a veiled, grateful look.

Slowly, we wove through the evening traffic and took longer than necessary to get to the hotel. When we arrived, Mylee had regained her composure.

"Mr. Webb, Ms. Lynn," the host greeted us. Mildly surprised, I glanced at Mylee, who appeared equally stunned that her name had been on the guest list. "Right this way, please. The senator has you at a very special table tonight."

I resisted the urge to roll my eyes. It was the same stupid spiel every time to every guest.

We were seated near the center of the room, an orchestra playing on the stage next to a flock of gold and black balloons.

“This is more like a retirement party than a fundraiser,” I sighed, hating these things.

But the politicians had to be sated like everyone else.

“That’s because most politicians are half-dead already,” Mylee piped in.

I snorted appreciatively, and we shared a smile before she again frowned at me. A moment later, our table was encased in various bodies, and charming Mylee was back in play again.

“I don’t know what you’ve been doing to these men, Ms. Lynn, but over the past few weeks, Silverpiece’s stock has jumped like no other time in history,” Jason Milner cooed at Mylee.

I saw how she tensed, but Mylee kept her professionalism and placed a hand on the stockbroker’s arm conspiratorially.

“Is that your way of telling me I should ask for a raise, Mr. Milner?” she joked.

The table whooped.

“And stock options, at the very least!” Jason howled, his cheeks aglow with the attention.

“Pardon me, Ms. Lynn?”

One of the bellhops stood next to the table, holding a small box wrapped in gold paper and a black bow. “This arrived for you.”

Mylee glanced at me, and I shrugged, noting that the paper matched the colors of the party theme.

“Oh, my,” Mylee joked. “Do I have a secret admirer?”

“Open it!” the dinner guests chanted eagerly.

Again, Mylee looked at me suspiciously, but I could only smile nonchalantly. I suspected that the senator had sent it to her and every other plus one, but there was no sense in ruining the mystery.

“Well, as much as I hate to divert attention from the guest of honor,” Mylee drawled, setting the box in front of her on the white linen. “I don’t think my curiosity will hold out until I get home.”

She cocked her head to the side as she unwrapped the bow. “What do you think it is? An elephant, perhaps?”

“A dildo!” Dave MacKay yelled out.

His wife slapped him on the back of the head, but Mylee only laughed graciously, pulling the paper neatly away to reveal a jewelry box.

“Mr. Webb, are you going to need to get down on one knee, sir?” someone cooed.

Mylee paled but maintained her smile as she removed the lid—

*POUFF!*

White powder wafted up to hit her in the face. Mylee stared at me, and I returned her shocked expression for half a second.

Then the screams began as Mylee crumpled to the ground, and utter chaos ensued around us.

## CHAPTER 16

## *Mylee*

**S**o much fog. I couldn't see anything in front of me as I stumbled through, my hands extended, looking for an exit.

"Mama? Mama, where are you?"

My hands reached out to grab for my mother, but she was gone, disappearing into the thick, my eyes blurring.

"Mylee! Mylee!"

She called out to me, but it wasn't my mother. The voice was deeper, scared, and male. "Mylee, stay with me, baby!"

The fog swam around me, threatening to take me under, weird, strobing lights popping in the denseness.

"MYLEE!"

I stopped and sat in the swamp, pulling my knees to my chest. My filthy nightgown littered in holes, soaked in grime and grease.

"Mama?" I whispered, a sleepiness taking over me, darkness replacing the fog.

I was so tired now, ready to rest. Mama wasn't there. She had succumbed to the fog.

Maybe it was time for me to do the same.

A blow to my chest popped my eyes wide open, and I choked, sputtering.

"Mylee!" Paxton's face hovered over me, and I blinked, wheezing, my vision coming and going.

"Step back, sir," someone said, and I again fell into darkness.

In and out the voices came and went, some familiar, some not so much. The fog returned, calling out to me, but it diminished as time passed, although I didn't know how much or how long I floated through my own subconscious, listening, trying to grasp onto something that wasn't there

anymore.

“Mylee, stay with us.”

“What the hell happened?”

“Why weren’t you watching her?”

I tried to tell Lincoln that it wasn’t Paxton’s fault, that he hadn’t hurt me, but words were impossible, and again, I fell away and let myself drown in the blackness that encompassed me.

Then there was only night and silence, the haze gone entirely, and I slept.

When my eyes opened again, a steady beep filled my ears, and my vision blurred some as I took in the outline of three familiar shapes hovered around my hospital bed.

“Mylee!”

I barely had my lids parted when Kai’s face fell level with mine, the concern etched deeply in his blue eyes. I grimaced lightly, but before I could speak, Lincoln and Paxton appeared at his side.

“Oh, thank god!” Lincoln choked, his face rugged and drawn.

He ran a hand over his five o’clock shadow. Paxton’s mouth parted, but no sound came out.

I’d never seen any of them look so rough, but I thought it was the haze of my vision that made them seem that way.

“How are you feeling?” Paxton asked, reaching for my hand.

My palm was ghastly white, and I tried to swallow, but my throat felt like cotton.

“W-what...?” I started to speak, but the words were interrupted by a hacking cough.

“Get her some water, Kai,” Paxton ordered.

Kai moved out of my line of sight, and my eyes grew heavy again. A minute later, a straw pressed to my lips, and Lincoln urged me to drink. The liquid spilled down my throat, and I lifted my lips away.

“What happened?” I finally managed to say, my throat whetted now.

Speaking still hurt, but it was much easier now that I was hydrated.

“Never mind that,” Kai started to say, but Paxton interrupted.

“You were poisoned.”

I gasped as Kai scowled, and Lincoln sat back, shaking his head.

“You could have used a bit more segue,” Lincoln grumbled as I struggled to sit up, choking.

“P-poisoned. What?!”

“It’s all right—” Kai mumbled, but I wasn’t having any of that.

“This is not all right!” I sputtered. “Who would do something like that? And in the middle of a political fundraiser? I mean... was I the only one?”

The men looked at one another, and I had my answer. The memory of the gold and black gift box flooded back to me in a torrent.

“Was it from the senator?” I mewled, aghast by the idea.

“NO!” All three were adamant about that.

“No, of course not,” Lincoln added, reaching for my hand. “He is appalled that something like this happened on his watch. His teams are combing through the surveillance right now. We’ll get to the bottom of it.”

“They asked for me by name. That bellhop—”

“He wasn’t part of the hotel staff,” Lincoln sighed, squeezing my hand. “He’s disappeared. But we’ll find him. Don’t worry.”

Tears burned in my eyes. “Why would anyone do that?”

My mind turned to the horrible posts on social media, and I whimpered. Would someone hurt me because of that? People were sick, but were they that sick?

“You need a security team, Mylee,” Paxton sighed, again glancing at his partners. “You’re as public a figure as we are now.”

“Yeah,” I scoffed, my earlier anger resurfacing. “I saw the social media posts.”

Understanding colored their faces in unison, and they drew back, inhaling.

“Oh...” Lincoln mumbled.

“Yeah, oh.”

“Is that why you’ve been so upset with us?” Kai asked.

“Isn’t that a good enough reason to be upset with you?” I demanded, waiting for them to tell me that I was overreacting.

“It is,” Paxton agreed, surprising me. “But we don’t pay attention to that nonsense. Especially over trash like that.”

He sat forward and took my other hand, the one that Lincoln wasn’t holding. “You’re new to this, but we’ve been dealing with rumors and innuendo for years, Mylee. If we got upset over every stupid gossip threat pertaining to Silverpiece, we’d go crazy.”

“We have people who monitor our socials,” Lincoln added. “And if there’s a real problem, we hear about it, but when it comes to our personal lives...”



He shrugged. “It doesn’t affect our shareholders—no offense.”

I wasn’t sure how to take what he was saying.

“Those who have met you are really impressed with you,” Kai explained, reading the confusion on my face. “So the public can say whatever they want about you—they were going to, no matter who you were.”

“Particularly as a woman,” Paxton added flatly.

“Who came out of nowhere,” Kai provided.

“Who is stunningly beautiful,” Lincoln concluded. “They needed to talk shit. It has no bearing on us.”

My lips parted. “They’re saying—”

“It doesn’t matter what they’re saying,” Lincoln cut me off. “That’s what I’m trying to tell you. They don’t know that you’re intelligent and savvy and worthy of any executive position in Silverpiece. I’m sorry you feel we were keeping it from you. We learned long ago to tune that shit out, but we should have thought about how it would affect you.”

“Those who have met you laugh at those postings because they know there’s no possible way you’re what they say you are,” Kai added.

“We should have warned you of the downfalls of this,” Paxton added. “But this is one of the things we’ve learned to ignore over the years.”

“And you should, too...” Kai added, eyeing his partners. “If you stick around.”

“Kai...” Paxton growled. “This isn’t the time.”

I did manage to sit up now, the men hurrying to set my pillows behind me, so I was comfortable and upright. A wave of comfort washed over me as I watched them, fussing over me, but I waited for them to explain themselves.

“Stick around?” I echoed. “You mean, stay in Chicago?”

They settled back against the bed and fell silent for a moment.

“We can talk about this when you’re back home—” Lincoln started to say, but I shook my head.

“No. I don’t want any more secrets,” I insisted.

“We never kept secrets from you,” Paxton sighed. “We just want you to focus on recovering.”

“You know what I mean,” I grumbled. “Just say what you mean. I don’t want you to keep things from me anymore.”

“We don’t want you to leave when your contract is up,” Kai blurted out as he always did. “We want you to stay on at Silverpiece.”

My eyes widened. “What?”

“You can have the penthouse all to yourself if you want,” Lincoln offered as my heart rate increased. “But we hope that won’t change the way you see us.”

“Wait, what?” I said, leaning forward. “You’re leaving me alone in the penthouse?”

“If that’s what you want,” Kai told me. “We want you to be comfortable. We just don’t want you to leave.”

“I am comfortable,” I said slowly, churning their offer over in my mind. “I’m very comfortable with all of you right where you are...”

I paused and chewed on the insides of my cheeks. “What do you mean, stay on at Silverpiece? What would that entail?”

“I’ve given it a lot of thought,” Lincoln told me, and the others nodded. “I think you would be incredible at client relations. You would oversee events and meetings. The board loves you. The subsidiaries love you. And those are only the ones who have met you.”

“They think I’m an escort,” I muttered.

“More the reason to give you a more formal title and show them that they’re wrong about you,” Lincoln suggested.

I gnawed harder on the insides of my cheeks. “And this poisoning?”

“This might have been a one-off,” Paxton suggested. “It wouldn’t be the first time we’ve been targeted.”

I arched my brow, unsure if it could be so easily dismissed.

“There needs to be a better investigation, but we’ll ensure you’re protected,” Lincoln said quickly. “You have nothing to worry about.”

I looked from face to face, pondering their offer. “And us?”

“I don’t see any reason for things to change between us if that’s not what you want,” Lincoln told me as the other two nodded in agreement.

“But... what is it that won’t change?” I pressed, determined to put it in words. “What do we have?”

The men looked at one another, sinking back to consider the question.

“I suppose we have each other, don’t we?” Lincoln offered slowly. “We’re together?”

“Are you asking me?” I laughed nervously. “Or telling me?”

I glanced at Paxton and Kai. Kai nodded eagerly, on board with the announcement as Paxton pensively thought it over.

“We will continue to have each other’s backs,” Paxton agreed, leaning forward to stroke my face. “We’re all together. Permanently.”

My heart fluttered, and I gulped down the lump in my throat.

“So you’re offering me a real position in the company?” I confirmed.

“Yes. With a salary, benefits—” Kai started.

“Stock options,” Paxton concluded.

My chest tightened, and I nodded, happiness swelling inside me.

“Then I accept,” I mumbled as they encompassed me, each depositing a kiss on my head. “As long as I get to continue my life with all of you.”

“You can’t get rid of us that easily,” Paxton replied. “You’re one-of-a-kind, Mylee, and we’ve never been happier.”

My chest warmed with his sentiment.

“Good,” Lincoln said. “That settles it. Rest now. We’ll draw up the contracts and deal with changing the penthouse into your name.”

I could hardly believe this was real.

*Am I dead? Did I just die, and this is heaven?*

If it was, I must have done something really good in life. But each of their touches felt more real than anything that I had ever experienced before. I finally had something of my own—a whole harem of somethings. How did I get so lucky?

## CHAPTER 17

## *Lincoln*

**M**ylee stayed in the hospital for another full day while we returned to the condo to prepare for her arrival. Kai took the first shift, staying with her while Paxton and I returned to the Gable Place to get affairs in order.

“Can you deal with things here?” I asked Paxton, an idea forming in my head as I grabbed my keys from the foyer table. “I’m going to the office.”

Paxton eyed me suspiciously, but he didn’t argue as I sent for Harrison and headed out. I spent the ride emailing and texting, arranging for Mylee’s formal employment contract to be drafted as I had Harrison stop in a familiar spot.

“Wait here,” I ordered the driver, my eyes still fixed on the screen of my phone.

There was so much to do before Mylee came home, to ensure that she was safe and secure, and that she never was threatened again.

“Hey!” The redhead looked up from her book, a wide smile on her face as I entered the Progressive Mistrals that morning. “What section are you going to buy out today?”

I paused in front of the desk and set my iPhone down, offering her a winning smile. “All of them,” I replied.

\* \* \*

When I returned to the condo, I was surprised to find that Paxton had gone above and beyond what I’d expected from him. A huge “Welcome Home” banner hung from the entranceway pillars, and when I ambled into the

kitchen, I found a charcuterie board loaded with meat, cheese, and veggies, like he was planning a party.

But Paxton was nowhere to be found. I found a note from him in the kitchen.

*I went to relieve Kai at the hospital. Text me if you need me.*

- P

A pang of jealousy hit me, not because I didn't want him with Mylee, but because I had hoped to take the second shift with her. My surprise was going to have to wait until she returned.

At five, a FedEx courier hand-delivered her contract from the office, and I signed off on the offer after scanning the salary and benefits package, hoping that it would suffice.

Were we still going to give her the million that we promised her?

I put the question to Kai when he got back.

"I think she was anticipating it," Kai replied slowly. "And it will give her a good nest egg."

"Does she need a nest egg now that she has the job?" I asked.

Kai pursed his lips. "It gives her a cushion if she ever wants to leave."

The idea gave me a pang of unhappiness, but it was a fair point. "I bought her a bookstore."

Kai eyed me in surprise. "A bookstore?"

"She loves to read and write," I explained. "It will be an escape for her, and honestly, it's good for our portfolio."

"Do we have any bookstores in our portfolio?"

"Hell if I know," I snickered, popping a beer. "But it's not for our portfolio. It's Mylee's."

I offered him one, and he accepted it, sliding onto a kitchen stool. We drank silently for a moment, each of us lost in our own thoughts.

"Are we making a mistake with this?" Kai finally asked, as always, voicing the big queries when no one else would.

"I don't know," I admitted. "But it doesn't feel wrong, does it?"

Kai shook his head. "Not at all. That's what's so unnerving about it, I guess. I keep waiting for doubt to surface about her."

I took a long sip and settled across from him, pondering the same thoughts I was sure he was having. "If this was all an act on her end, she wouldn't have agreed to stay on."

"I don't think she's acting," Kai said quickly, his dark blond eyebrows

knitting into a vee. “I think she cares about all of us.”

“Me too.”

“But what if it doesn’t work out—”

“We can’t think like that,” I told him flatly. “That’s not how we’ve ever done things. If we sat around overthinking, we’d never have Silverpiece in the first place.”

“True.”

Although he didn’t continue to list his litany of concerns, I had no doubt that Kai stewed on them. He couldn’t help it. It was just the way he was built. There wasn’t much I could say or do to ease his mind, not when Mylee had spun our carefully scheduled world so haywire with her charm and charisma. We would just have to wait and see.

But unlike Kai, I was one hundred percent certain that she was exactly where she wanted to be.

Still, I would offer her the nest egg, penthouse, and the bookstore without the Silverpiece attachment. If she ever decided to leave, it would all be hers to do with what she wanted, no strings attached.

“I want her home,” Kai said, shattering me out of my reverie.

“Me too,” I sighed, rising from the marble kitchen island. “I’m going to the hospital.”

“Visiting hours are probably over by now.”

I smirked at him. “Oh, Kai,” I laughed. “When are you going to learn that regular rules don’t apply to us?”

\* \* \*

The prognosis was that Mylee had been incredibly lucky. The ricin had not been ingested, despite the closeness to her face. She had managed to get the box away just in the nick of time.

I had exchanged several phone calls with Senator Davies over the past two days, but we were no closer to finding the culprit than we’d been at the beginning. Even after poring over security footage, there was no telling who had come for her or why.

“There are so many crazies, Lincoln,” the senator reminded me, like I could have forgotten. “We just have to keep our loved ones as close as possible.”

“What is all this?” Mylee demanded, staring at the armed guards escorting us from the private room. “I feel like we’re in a third-world country.”

“You’re to be protected at all costs now,” Paxton told her firmly, flanking her other side. “Until we find out who’s targeting you.”

“Okay, but this is a little much, isn’t it?” Mylee complained.

“Considering the alternative? It’s not enough,” I replied firmly. “They’re staying.”

She didn’t fight me, even though I could tell she wanted to. Between the car accident and poisoning, her nerves were frayed.

On the way home, I handed her the contract from Silverpiece, which she gawked at.

“A-are you kidding?” she sputtered, looking from me to Kai to Paxton and back again. “This is...”

She took a deep breath and shuddered. The car rides were still giving her anxiety. “This is way more than I expected to earn.”

“You’re worth it,” I told her quietly. “You’ve proven yourself.”

“And I don’t think this is the ceiling for you,” Paxton added. “There’s always room to move up.”

“Definitely not,” I agreed. “You’re a very quick study, Mylee.”

Kai reached for her hand, and she bit on her lower lip like she was about to cry. “The million is in a secured account for you as well. You are fully protected, no matter what you choose to do.”

She stared at him. “What I choose to do?” she echoed. “I told you what I’m doing. I’m staying on—with you. I don’t want that money.”

“It’s there. You don’t have to touch it if you don’t want it,” I said.

Tears brimmed in her bright brown eyes. “You guys are too good to me. I don’t know why you picked me—”

“Stop that,” I growled, grabbing for her other hand. “You deserve everything you’ve gotten and more.”

She shook her head and met my eyes, the disbelief evident. “Thank you.”

“Don’t thank me,” I told her. “Just keep doing what you’re doing.”

Harrison pulled up in front of the Gable Place, and Lyndon moved to open the front door, his scowl deepening when he saw Mylee.

I’d had enough of the doorman’s attitude.

“Lyndon, are you aware that Ms. Lynn is now a registered resident of the Gable Place? In fact, she owns the penthouse,” I told him coldly.



The doorman appeared taken aback by the information as we piled through.

“I didn’t know that, Mr. Ray.”

“She is also an employee of Silverpiece,” I went on. “It would be nice if you could muster a smile for her once in a while.”

“Yes, Mr. Ray,” he growled unhappily.

“Lincoln—” Mylee murmured.

“I don’t appreciate you treating any of our guests the way you have Ms. Lynn the past few weeks,” I went on, staring daggers at the doorman.

“I haven’t treated her any way, sir,” Lyndon said stiffly.

“Exactly,” I barked. “You haven’t shown her any care whatsoever. I hope that changes today.”

“Yes, sir.”

Paxton rolled his eyes as we piled into the elevator. “You think that did anything to change the old goat’s mind?” he demanded as the doors closed, but I was sure Lyndon heard the question. “He’s too old-fashioned to understand what’s going on here.”

“Too bad his outdated views don’t sign his paycheck,” I muttered as Mylee sighed.

“Some people are never going to accept our arrangement,” she told me. “You can’t force them.”

“Maybe not,” I agreed. “But I can put them on notice that I see them.”

The elevator doors opened again, and Kai sprinted forward like a kid to unlock the penthouse doors.

“WELCOME HOME, MYLEE!” he yelled, stepping back to show her the banner and spread that we had worked so hard to lay out for her.

Mylee stopped at the threshold, her lips parted in shock.

“You guys...” she breathed, emotion catching her words. “You didn’t have to do all this...”

“We wanted to,” I assured her. “This is your home, Mylee. Here. With us.”

## CHAPTER 18

## *Paxton*

When I was sure Mylee wasn't in earshot, I headed outside to ensure the security team was in place, my eyes darting around to look for anything out of place.

"Are you sure you've got everyone in the right spot?" I asked again, scanning the tablet that the head of the team placed in front of me.

"Yes, Mr. Webb. We've doubled down for tonight."

"Doubled down isn't good enough," I growled, remembering what had happened the last time the four of us had gone out together. "I want triple the security for tonight. Leave no entrance unmanned, no person unvetted."

"Yes, Mr. Webb."

I turned and headed back into the venue, running directly into Lincoln.

He smirked at me. "I assume you're double-checking with security again," he mused.

"You too?" I sighed, wondering if we were being paranoid.

He shrugged. "Considering what happened last time, it's hard not to be sure."

"At least we made it here in one piece."

We both turned toward the open doors of the ballroom, where Kai stood with Mylee in our direct line of sight. Instantly, they pivoted toward us like they could feel us watching and smiled. My chest tightened at the sight of her, the clinging, satiny gown crisscrossed over the front of her perfect figure. The forest green accented her glowing, bronze complexion in the dim light of the room.

Together, we began walking toward one another, a light, classical rock song playing through the speakers as we regrouped.

"Whose wedding is this again?" Mylee whispered, looking behind her.

I snorted as the other two snickered.

“Your guess is as good as mine,” I replied.

“It’s Damon Hillier’s daughter,” Lincoln scolded us, and I shrugged.

“I have no idea who the hell that is,” I admitted.

“He’s our head of IT,” Kai scolded me with a frown.

I shrugged again. “Was it really necessary for us to attend?”

Kai grimaced. “I mean, we did put in an appearance at the ceremony,” he conceded slowly, eyeing Mylee for confirmation. “Do we have to stay for the reception?”

Lincoln sighed deeply, and Mylee leaned in conspiratorially. “I think I have a better idea.”

“Of course you do,” I laughed, drawing closer. “What is it?”

“There are swan boats out by the dock,” she said in a low voice. “Let’s go for a ride.”

Lincoln appeared appalled by the idea, but I was in.

“Where?” I challenged, and Mylee waved a hand, gesturing toward the massive ballroom.

“You guys...” Lincoln grumbled, but he and Kai followed us through the overflowing hall, where no one would notice us missing anyway and out through the terrace doors.

The lake behind the country club shimmered in the moonlight as we snuck down toward the docks, and I quickly saw that Mylee had been right about the swan boats.

“Really?” Kai demanded. “You want to go out on these?”

“Why not?” Mylee replied, kicking off her heels and padding toward the watercrafts. “When was the last time you did anything spontaneous, Kai?”

“Yeah, Kai,” I taunted on Mylee’s heels.

“What if we get caught?” Kai complained.

I whooped as Mylee dragged one of the vessels into the water.

“What are they going to do? Arrest us for taking swan boats for a joyride?” I demanded. “Stop being such a killjoy, Kai.”

He looked at Lincoln, who shrugged, and the four of us piled into the swan boat as Mylee grinned happily.

My heart stopped for a second as the moonbeams bounced off her face, and I caught the sheen of her black mane against the star-spangled night on the backdrop.

“See?” Mylee teased, catching my eye. “This is much more fun than a

stuffy, twenty-course wedding.”

“Seriously,” I conceded. “Why surf, turf, and chicken?”

“New money,” Lincoln explained. “They have to overdo everything.”

“We’re new money,” Kai reminded him dryly.

“Speak for yourselves,” I countered. They snickered as Mylee pedaled the boat slowly, listening. “My family’s money is old and very, very crusty.”

Mylee glanced at me. “What’s that like?”

“Crusty,” I repeated with a pained smirk, helping her push the boat the rest of the way into the water. “Did you enjoy the ceremony?” I asked, trying to read her expression.

“It was lovely,” she answered in her usual diplomatic way.

“That’s not what he asked,” Lincoln pointed out, and Mylee laughed.

“It was fine,” she insisted. “I mean... would I do that for my wedding? Probably not.”

The swan made its way toward the center of the lake, and I sat back to inhale the fresh breeze. “Oh, no? What would you do?”

Intrigued, I turned toward her, interested in her answer.

“Well, first, I wouldn’t waste hundreds of thousands of dollars on people I don’t even know,” Mylee replied. “Think of what that money could do for the people at the City Mirror.”

“Such a waste of money,” Kai conceded.

“But that’s the entire point of a wedding,” I argued. “To show off to your friends and family.”

“Wow, that is cynical, Pax,” Lincoln snorted. “That’s not the point of a wedding.”

“No? Then why else would you stress out for months, agonize over trivial details like plates and flowers, only to pray for it all to be over the day of?”

Mylee’s dark eyes bored into me. “You sound like you’re speaking from experience,” she said softly.

“Not at all,” I countered. “I’ve never been married. But I’ve been to my fair share of weddings. They’re only for showing off. Especially for people who have money.”

Mylee frowned, and I leaned forward.

“What do you think they’re for if not for showing off?”

She shook her head, the silky strands falling out of her intricate chignon like always. “Oh, no. You’re not going to drag me into an argument,” she insisted. “I’d only ever been to one wedding before I met you guys.”

“No argument! I honestly want to know what you think,” I said, holding up a hand. “Scout’s honor.”

She shrugged and looked at Kai and Lincoln, who seemed to be hanging off her every word now.

“I don’t know...” she muttered, staring down at her hands. “I mean... yes, there is an element of ‘showing off,’ but not in the way you mean, Pax... at least that’s not the way I see it.”

“Enlighten me,” I insisted.

Her eyes narrowed, and Kai scowled at me. “Don’t be an asshole, Pax,” he warned me.

I balked. “I’m not trying to be. I genuinely want to know what she thinks.”

“I just mean... I don’t know. It’s a time to share in the love you’ve found with your family and friends. So yeah, there’s a gloating aspect of it, I guess, but it’s mostly about sharing your happiness.”

I scoffed so loudly, a duck squawked on the lake.

“Yeah, we’ve definitely been to different weddings,” I informed her.

Mylee turned away, embarrassed, and I suddenly felt like an ass. I hadn’t meant to downplay her take, but she didn’t know *my* family.

“I’m sorry,” I said quickly. “I’m jaded.”

“Clearly,” Kai and Lincoln intoned sharply.

Mylee cast me a sad look, but I flashed her a smile.

“Let’s head back,” Kai suggested. “Before someone sees us out here.”

“Oh, all right,” Mylee agreed, reaching out to pat Kai’s leg. “It was meant to be fun, not stress you out.”

“I’m not stressed,” Kai protested, but Lincoln and I taunted him.

“You’re stressed.”

“It’s fine. I’m tired, anyway. The champagne earlier made me kind of floppy,” Mylee admitted.

“And the security team is going to lose their shit when they can’t find any of us,” I commented with amusement.

Lincoln chortled, but Mylee didn’t appear entertained by that notion.

We returned to shore without incident, and I helped Mylee out of the boat as the security team flocked in around us, flustered and confused.

“Mr. Webb, Mr. Evans, Mr. Ray, Ms. Lynn,” the head of security panted, relief painted all over his face. “We thought there had been a breach!”

I straightened my shoulders and eyed them sternly. “You’re not very

good at your job if all four of us managed to evade you,” I informed them flatly.

“Oh, Pax,” Mylee sighed, heading up the shoreline. “It’s fine, Jamie. We snuck off. No harm done.”

“Don’t let them off the hook that easily,” I called out after her, casting Jamie a scathing look.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Webb,” the head of security muttered.

“You should be,” I growled. “You’re lucky Ms. Lynn is so forgiving.”

I headed after the others, my eyes fixed on Mylee’s undulating hips as she moved over the uneven terrain, my pulse quickening.

*She’s incredible. Look at the way she takes the lead here, like she was born into this life. I think I love her.*

The thought stopped me dead in my tracks, but I didn’t let it keep me in one place, not when the rest of my little family was moving on without me.

“Hurry up, slowpoke,” Lincoln yelled out. “Or we’re leaving you here to finish the rest of the fifty courses.”

I quickened my pace and hurried to join them, eager to see where the rest of the night would take us, my energy already charged and ready to go.

But it wasn’t just the night I was looking forward to, but the future—with Mylee. Having her here had changed everything.

## CHAPTER 19



*Mylee*

**I**t started in the back of the car, Paxton's fingers trailing over the skin of my arm, Kai's fingers on my legs. The atomic charge had started much earlier in the night, even before the wedding had begun, but the guys had been very good at holding off, despite their naked desire.

"Patience," Lincoln warned in a low voice, nodding toward the driver who not-so-subtly watched us in the rearview mirror.

The dampness between my legs made it difficult to wait, the drive home from Aurora excruciating as Paxton's touches grew more daring, his fingers between my legs. I had never been with all three of them at the same time, and it seemed like tonight, this fantasy would finally come to fruition.

Despite his earlier warning, Lincoln watched, my face twisting when Paxton slid my panties aside, the skirt of my dress hiked up around my hips. Lincoln's hand slipped beneath his waistband, his strokes arousing me more by the minute.

"You guys aren't making this easy," I rasped in a low voice, Paxton inserting one of his fingers inside me. I should have known it would be Paxton to start.

I moaned, but Kai's lips caught the sound, and the waiting until we got home was now just a pipe dream.

"Shh," Kai warned me in a low voice, his face barely rising off mine before returning his mouth to mine. His kiss deepened, the heat in my body increasing until all self-control was out the window.

It was happening here and now. All three of us together.

"Take off her dress," Lincoln ordered.

"You read my mind," Paxton purred as Kai's tongue teased my teeth.

The privacy barrier rose between the front seat and back, separating

Charlie's curiosity from my mounting arousal.

Hands slipped the halter of my gown away from my neck, pulling it lower to reveal my breasts, exposing my nipples for whoever wanted to take the first taste.

Kai's mouth fell away, his hands cupping one breast, his breathing quickening as his lips found my earlobe. Paxton's finger dipped harder inside me, causing my head to roll back, my body sprawling over the seat of the SUV to fully take off the garment.

Short, excited breaths fell out of my lips as Lincoln continued to stroke himself, a small smile playing on his lips when Paxton spread my legs wider. Fully exposed to him, he added another finger to my core, emitting another moan from me.

"Fuck," I sighed, reaching for Kai.

His mouth made its way toward my breast, the tease of his tongue working around the hardness of my nipple, back arching.

Lincoln raised himself up to slide out of his pants, slipping closer across the SUV to bring his fully ready cock to my mouth. Eagerly, I reached for it, the salty taste of him driving my desire higher.

Between my thighs, Paxton's tongue located the swollen throb of my clit, my body bucking upward again.

"So sweet, my girl," Paxton purred. "So fuckable."

His simple words made me hotter, like always, as if he could coax me into an orgasm just by speaking.

In and out of my mouth, Lincoln rocked, delving deeper and harder, reaching the back of me until I choked. My hand curled around the base of his massive shaft, tears welling in my eyes, my first orgasm swelling inside me against Paxton's mouth and fingers.

Without quite realizing it, I moved. Kai was now beneath me, lying down on the seat, my breasts in his face. Lincoln straddled Kai's shoulders, so I could take his cock in my mouth.

"Can I take you in your ass?" Paxton asked, moving behind me and drawing the tip of his cock over my opening. Kai aimed his thick, ready head over the slippery entrance to my pussy.

Moaning loudly, I agreed to let them both in, Paxton lifting my ass cheeks from behind.

Spit dribbled along the crack of my ass as Kai pushed into me, Lincoln gathering my hair tightly in his palm, thrusting his cock into the base of my

throat. Paxton toyed with my most sensitive spot.

Paxton's hot breath took to my ear. "Are you ready for me, Mylee?" he whispered.

Kai plunged harder, deeper, thicker, and I could only groan with pleasure when Paxton cautiously entered my final opening.

Shock and pleasure shot me to the roof of the SUV, my body tingling in every crevice, these men savagely taking me in ways I'd only ever seen in movies.

But this was my life now, and I loved it—every second of their grunts and groans, our pleasures comingling as we fell into a rocking, barbaric rhythm.

Lincoln's hand massaged my throat, my eyes boring into his as I came over and over, unable to stop myself. The slip and slide of our passion drove me to places I never knew I could go.

Kai released first, his hot seed filling me seconds before I tasted Lincoln. Paxton held out the longest, his forearm embracing my waist as he moaned, leaning forward to press my breasts against Kai's wanting face.

Kai licked and sucked at my breasts, sending shivers through me. My skin was prickled and on fire, until I again spilled in unison with Paxton, losing count of the number of times I'd climaxed with these men inside me.

Lincoln pulled himself out of my mouth, my tongue lapping the last of him as Kai picked me up easily, placing me on the seat beside him. The windows steamed, and the air reeked of sex and debauchery.

I realized we were parked outside the Gable Place, and I blushed as I looked at the others, who didn't seem fazed by the reality in the least.

"I don't know about you guys, but I could use a beer and the hot tub," Paxton suggested, finding his discarded pants.

"Sounds like a plan to me," Lincoln agreed.

And at that moment, I absolutely loved them.

Nothing shameful about what we were doing. We belonged together, and I wanted this to last forever.

## CHAPTER 20

## *Lincoln*

I prided myself on my sleek professionalism, but I was having a hard time keeping my head on straight with Mylee at my side the following day in the offices.

“Are you sure you don’t want to take another day to rest up?” I whispered, my hand inadvertently falling toward her ass as we climbed out of the SUV and headed into the Silverpiece offices.

She blushed and swatted me away, shaking her head, her perfect ponytail slapping her in the mouth as she moved.

“No,” she insisted, placing my hand at my side. “And you need to stop that before someone sees. I’m trying to shake the reputation on social media.”

“I know,” I sighed, sticking my hand in the pockets of my pants to keep from touching her inappropriately again. “I wouldn’t want you to file an HR complaint against me.”

Mylee rolled her eyes and swatted at me again, leading the way toward the glass doors as the security team followed behind. She glanced over her shoulder at them and exhaled again.

“This is going to be a problem, Linc,” she murmured. “I’m never going to blend in here with those guys on my ass.”

“It’ll be fine,” I promised her. “You’ll look extra important.”

She parted her rosebud mouth to argue, but I stopped, holding up a hand. “If you want to work here and not be locked up in the penthouse, you need the security team. I’ll see what I can do about making them a little less obvious, but they stay. It’s non-negotiable. Your safety is not up for debate.”

Her face softened, and she nodded. “I kind of want to kiss you right now,” she admitted, and I grinned.

“That would definitely make you stand out,” I teased, holding the door

open for her. “And then I’ll have to complain to HR about you.”

She ducked in under my arm, accenting the difference in our heights, and I was again overwhelmed with the urge to touch her.

It was going to be difficult working next to her. I was already hard, and we hadn’t even started working.

In the lobby, I nodded at Amon and Carolyn before showing Mylee toward the bank of elevators.

“You understand, of course, that these are only some of several offices that we hold nationwide. There are also offices in London, New York, Tokyo, Hong Kong...” I paused and thought. “And a bunch of other locations that I can’t think of at the moment, but you’ll learn them as you settle in.”

Mylee’s eyes widened, the elevator shooting straight up to the twenty-ninth floor. “But you spend most of your time in Chicago?” she guessed.

“Oh, no,” I laughed, shaking my head. “There’s no ‘most of the time.’ We go where we’re needed. Sometimes, like now, we spend months in one place. The Celestial Vista Towers project is slacking the most here, which is why we’re most focused in Chicago at the moment, but I have been back and forth to LA and New York just as much on the assignment.”

Mylee tensed and looked at me. “I wasn’t aware of that.”

“Paxton said he informed you of our situation when you first arrived.”

“Well... yes... but I thought...” she trailed off and shook her head.

“What is it?”

“I’m just wondering what you’re going to do when the Celestial Vista project is concluded.”

“If it’s ever concluded,” I groaned, rolling my eyes.

Mylee pursed her lips. “What’s the problem, exactly?”

“Capacity. We need to fill them. They’re only two hundred and forty-three luxury units, and most were sold before we got started, but the real estate company we used went defunct after absconding with a huge chunk of the money. It’s a big legal fiasco. So we had to go back to the drawing board and find another way to sell these units. Chicago is proving to be the worst to unload.”

“What happens if you don’t sell them?”

I grimaced as the doors opened. “I don’t want to think about that,” I replied grimly. “Let’s just say that the shareholders won’t appreciate the losses, and we’ll have vacant condos being taxed at a higher rate because of their vacancies. This way.”

The elevator door opened. I waved her across the executive floor, and Mylee followed, her astute dark eyes taking in the surroundings with a different approach than she had the first time she had come through.

“Are those Kai’s and Paxton’s offices?” she asked, pointing at the adjacent rooms to mine. I remembered she had only ever been in the offices once, the day she’d come in for her “interview.”

I guffawed. “If you can call them that. Kai is never up here. He spends all of his time in this building tinkering in IT. Honestly, you could take his office if you wanted, and he wouldn’t care.”

“Oh, no! I don’t want his office,” Mylee breathed.

“You have your own. It’s just down the hall, but feel free to use Pax’s or Kai’s any time. Pax is usually on the road dealing with subs.”

“The subsidiary companies,” Mylee remembered.

“Right...” I smiled at her. “He likes to keep his hands in everything, even though we have perfectly capable people for all that.”

“He’s a good boss—you all are.”

I shrugged. “We try to keep our employees and shareholders happy.”

I gestured for her to sit down. “So your job is part of that now, too. You’ll be in charge of overseeing the meetings and functions, but it’s a little more involved than just picking out the right linens.”

Mylee sat and listened. I could see the wheels of her sharp mind turning as I spoke.

“To be honest, I partially created the position for you, but I’m not really sure why we didn’t have it before,” I went on. “It’s part event planning, part... investigative work. It’s more than just taking care of the events.”

“You want me to learn about our investors and employees,” she guessed, and my smile broadened.

“Yes. More than half of any business is anticipating customer needs. To do that, you need to know your employees. Does that make sense?”

“Happy wife, happy life,” Mylee joked.

“You really do know what I’m saying,” I told her admiringly. “I feel like I don’t have to explain myself to you at all.”

“It makes a lot of sense when you break it down,” Mylee agreed. “I can make dossiers and learn about every independent employee and board member. Partners’ birthdays, children’s graduations—”

“Exactly. That doesn’t mean we have to have a party for every occasion, but the more we learn about everyone, the better we can know their needs.”

Mylee sat back and grinned at me. “And I thought all rich guys were assholes.”

“Paxton still is,” I replied amiably, and she laughed.

“He’s all right. All of you are.”

I stood from my leather-backed swivel chair and nodded for her to follow me. “I’ll show you to your office.”

“Yes, Mr. Ray,” she teased, releasing another burst of heat through my groin.

“Watch it, Ms. Lynn,” I warned in a low voice.

“Or what?” she purred back.

I shot her a look over my shoulder. “Or you just might be on the wrong end of a spanking.”



## CHAPTER 21

Mylee

The work was absolutely insane. I thought I was up for the task, but when it was in front of me, I realized just how much I had to do. There were two hundred and ten employees in the Chicago office alone, not including board members and subsidiaries. I was starting from employee files and building a reservoir of information on very little.

And I loved every second of the challenge.

*When I'm done with this, I'll move onto the New York offices and then LA...*

The work was genuinely endless, and I would never run out, the dossiers growing bigger by the minute as I did internet searches and dug through old files, keeping me late in the office most nights until Lincoln, Paxton, or Kai came and forced me to come home with them.

"Rome wasn't built in a day," Paxton reminded me one night, two weeks after I'd started. "You have to take baby steps, or you'll burn out."

"I know," I agreed, kissing his cheek in the elevator and relishing his blush. "But I don't want to lose my momentum."

"You're doing a great job," he reassured me. "Oh! Dammit."

Abruptly, he leaned forward in the elevator and punched the button for the third floor.

"What happened?"

"Will you wait for me in the car? I forgot my laptop in the boardroom during a meeting," he sighed.

"I can come with you."

"No, just go to the car. I already told Jamie we were headed out. If we take too long, he'll rush the place."

I laughed at the idea of security storming the Silverpiece offices. "I'd like

to see that movie.”

“I wouldn’t,” Paxton grunted as the elevator stopped on the third floor. “Two minutes.”

“I’ll be there.”

The doors closed again, and the elevator started back down, but as it hit the lobby, it didn’t stop.

“Aw, shit,” I grumbled, realizing that I had likely forgotten to push the button for the lobby after letting off Paxton on the third floor.

The elevator continued down toward the parking level, and I sighed, punching the lobby button as I reached for my phone to text Jamie. Suddenly, the image of the guard rushing into the closed offices wasn’t amusing at all.

*No reception. Great.*

The door opened, and I lifted my phone up toward the ceiling, hoping to catch a bar. Footsteps raced toward me, and my heart inexplicably leaped into my throat.

“H-hello?” I squeaked.

The door started to close, and a man’s hand shot out to hold the door. My blood pressure spiked, and without thinking, I hit his fingers and the button in unison.

The man outside the door grunted but said nothing else as the elevator closed, and my pulse raced violently.

Why did I do that? I had just assaulted an employee!

The elevator made its way back to the lobby, and at the floor, I rushed out toward the security desk, sweat forming on my brow.

“Good evening, Ms. Lynn,” David said pleasantly. His smile faded when he saw my face. “Is something wrong?”

Swallowing, I extended a finger toward the cameras in front of him. “I...” I inhaled and fought to collect myself. “Was there just someone in the garage?”

The kindly older man pursed his lips and stood. “Are you having trouble, Ms. Lynn? Did something happen?”

“N-no,” I stuttered, as the elevators dinged behind me. I pointed again, unable to make the words as David stepped away from the counter, his eyes trailing toward the elevator bank.

“What happened?” David insisted, reaching for his gun.

“What’s going on?” Paxton demanded, hurrying toward us. “Mylee, are you okay?”

I held up my hands. “I’m just jumpy,” I insisted, shaking my head wildly. “David, put your gun away, please. I’m sure it’s nothing.”

“What happened?” Paxton asked again. “Mylee!”

He put his hands on my shoulders and forced me around to look into his eyes. I realized how much I was shaking.

“I thought there was someone downstairs. I just overreacted. It’s nothing. I swear!”

“Come on,” he urged, drawing me back toward the elevators. “David, go out and tell Jamie and Charlie that we’re going to be a few minutes.”

“Right away, Mr. Webb. Should I do a sweep of the building?”

“Yes, right away,” Paxton agreed, leading me onto the elevator. “And let me know what you find. Go over the footage, too. We’ll be right back to see what you found.”

He ushered me back into the elevator. Once inside, he hit the emergency stop and took me in his arms.

“Take deep breaths,” he said. “Monitor your breathing. Are you having a panic attack?”

“I don’t know!” I mewled, hating myself at that moment. “I’m sorry!”

He drew back and stared at me, his brilliant eyes clouded with worry. “What the hell are you sorry about? You’ve been through enough these past few weeks. You’re entitled to a few jitters, especially when you’re alone. I shouldn’t have left you by yourself.”

“I just thought that guy was a threat. He didn’t even do anything! Oh, man, I think I hit an employee.”

“What guy? What employee?”

“I don’t know,” I moaned miserably, falling back against the wall and slumping my head back.

“Whoever it was, we’ll make it right, okay?”

I nodded, wishing that I had the same confidence that he was displaying.

“Mylee, look at me,” he insisted, tilting my head toward him. “I’ve got you, okay. We all have your back. Nothing is going to happen to you.”

“I know. But I’m scared,” I confessed in a breathless whisper, ashamed to admit such a childish thing aloud.

There was no disgust on Paxton’s face as he leaned forward, his lips touching mine softly.

“I know you are,” he rasped, his warm breath heating my face and slowly, evenly, dissipating my worries. “And that’s okay. Just know that we’re doing

everything to ensure your safety, baby.”

I melted under his words, his kisses punctuating his sentiment, softly raining over my neck and cheeks and chin.

My head dipped back as he nuzzled closer, inhaling me like he was trying to commit my scent to memory.

“I’ve got you, Mylee. We’ve got you.”

Eyes closing, I let the warmth of his reassurances wash over me, his hand sliding my A-line skirt higher until his huge, manicured hands cupped my ass. His weight pushed me firmly against the wall behind me, tongue snaking into my mouth.

Eagerly, I accepted the warmth of his contact, sighing with pleasure as familiar waves of comforting heat rose through me.

Never mind the cameras blinking at us from both corners of the elevator or the fact that Paxton hiked me up higher to place my ass against the railing, holding me in place as he pulled my panties aside.

One hand cupped my ass solidly, his face lifting to earnestly look at me, his eyes blazing with sincerity.

“I’ve got you,” he told me again, his words turning me to jelly. “I won’t let anything happen to you.”

I believed him, my response in the form of a passionate kiss, but his lips found the curve of my neck, his waist spreading me wider.

The rip of my panties filled the elevator, and I gasped, his skillful fingers playing teasingly with my opening until he abruptly dropped to his knees, his face buried fully in the center of my thighs.

I closed my eyes, cheek pressed to the mirror, his palm lifting me like I was on a serving platter, and his tongue lapped deeply into my core.

“Oh god!” I choked, loving the long, even probes of his tongue, each one exploring a new part of me.

“I could eat you all day,” Paxton murmured, long, sweet licks floating me out of the elevator.

My hands curled into his thick, ebony mane, clinging for leverage as his movements grew faster and harder.

One leg rose up to lay over his shoulder, his hand falling over the curve of my thigh, and I moaned loudly, my brink reached.

“Mm,” Paxton mumbled. “Mm, good.”

The vibration, the urgency of his tongue, all of it spiraled me out of control, and I released against him—but didn’t stop.

“Again,” he breathed into my soaked pussy, and I mewled, fingers tightening around his hair.

My clit throbbed, and he added a finger, my walls seizing around him as he easily drew me up to the next level, my second orgasm spilling almost on top of my first.

“Good girl, Mylee.” His tongue teased around the sensitive spots, nose nuzzling to inhale me fully before he rose and released my raised thigh gently to the ground. Placing a soft kiss on my panting lips, he cocked his head.

“Feel better?” he asked lightly when he withdrew his lips from mine.

I shook my head, biting on my lower lip, and spun him around, forcing his back to the mirror. “Not yet,” I rasped, reaching to undo his belt buckle. “But I know what will make me feel much, much better.”

## CHAPTER 22

“O h, baby—” I started to say, reaching down to pull her up, but Mylee already had my cock out of my pants and in her hand.

She stared up at me with her huge, haunting dark eyes, daring me to stop her before dropping to her knees.

“Are you going to say no?” she murmured, her hot breath bringing me to a full erection even before her tongue trailed along the hard shaft.

A low, feral groan fell from my slacked jaw, and I shook my head, hair falling against the glass of the mirror behind me. I was rock-hard and ready for her, even before she sucked the tip of my head down her rosebud lips.

“Fuck!” I moaned, my cry reverberating in the elevator bank.

Slowly, skillfully, she took me deep. My hands collected her thick, dark hair, my eyes watching her high cheekbones inhale the long thickness of my erection, and I groaned again. The walls of her mouth suctioned me like a gentle vacuum, my release already prepared as wafts of her scent tingled through my nostrils.

Soft hands massaged my sack, and I dropped my head back again, allowing her to take me fully down her throat, my hips jutting deeper as her breaths quickened. My hands tightened around her hair, pulling her forward, hips arching forward.

“Fuck, Mylee!”

My excited utterances only fueled her movements, making her work faster, and I sighed, trying to hold back, but it was futile. She had me exactly where she wanted me, and I didn’t want to hold out a minute longer.

“I’m going to come right down that pretty little throat if you don’t stop,” I growled.

Again, her dark eyes turned upward, shielded by those thick lashes, and



she nodded, sucking me all the way down. She wanted me to finish exactly where I promised.

She didn't stop, and in seconds, I exploded in hot streams in her mouth as Mylee took all of me, her fingers tightening around my hardness.

My body quivered, spasming, and her tongue lolled against the head of my cock, lapping it all up.

Ensuring every last drop, she finally took her mouth away. She slowly ambled to her heels, straightening out her skirt, and cast me a sly look. "You owe me a new pair of underwear," she teased.

"Baby, I'll buy you a new wardrobe. You know that."

Her smile faltered. "Please don't buy me anything else. I was just kidding."

"I wasn't." I turned to her, zipping up my pants and fastening my belt. "It's only stuff, Mylee. There's no shame in taking it."

"It is only stuff," she agreed tartly, and I raised an eyebrow.

"You say that like it's evil," I offered. "It's nice to have stuff. It's better than not having stuff."

A half-smile formed on Mylee's face. "Why do I get the feeling that you don't know the first thing about not having stuff?"

The dig felt personal, and I arched my shoulders. "Am I supposed to feel bad for being born into money?" I growled. "You can keep it. I get enough guilt from everyone else."

"I'm not guiltig you for anything, Paxton. I'm not your conscience."

I grimaced and turned toward the mirror to adjust my attire. "You're not my family, either."

Mylee leaned against the railing and peered at me. "Are they hard on you?"

I smirked at her through the glass. "Crying to someone in your position about my family is... tone deaf," I offered. "But yes, they were hard on me. Money and reputation always came first."

She stared at me blankly, and I shrugged.

"Rich people problems," I offered flippantly.

"Don't do that," she said quietly.

"What?"

"Don't downplay your own pain because you think it's a competition. We all have our burdens, our traumas. Yours isn't any less significant because you didn't go to foster care."

“I guess you know about the background check,” I sighed.

Mylee shrugged. “You guys had to do your due diligence about me. Lincoln told me pretty early on what you knew about me.”

“You must think I’m a real asshole, complaining about my charmed life.”

“That’s what I’m trying to tell you, Paxton. We each have our crosses to bear. Would I have traded my life of no parents for parents who were constantly on my ass and making demands of me?” Mylee shrugged. “I don’t know if I would.”

My chest tightened as I stared at her, realizing that she meant every word she was saying. “You believe that?”

“That people suffer differently? Yes, of course. It’s not a contest.”

*Where did she come from?*

The intercom speaker crackled. “Uh... Mr. Webb?”

Mylee blushed, her eyes darting toward the cameras.

“At least he waited until we were done,” I commented before hitting the ‘speak’ button on the wall. “Yes, David?”

“I went through the security tapes and did a sweep of the building as you requested.”

“We’re coming out, David, hang on.”

I removed the stop from the elevator, and we exited the lift, my hand reaching for Mylee’s. Stunned, she accepted it, glancing at me like I was drunk.

“What did you find, David?” I asked, strolling toward the security desk.

The older guard shook his graying head and pointed at the screen. “Well, nothing, really, sir. I didn’t find anyone in the garage, nor has anyone used their pass to access the garage in the last hour.”

Mylee tensed. “Does that mean they’re still in the building?”

“Could be,” David agreed warily, but he turned the screen toward us. “However, when I went back to look at the time you were down there, I found this footage by the elevators, and...”

He showed the clip. Mylee and I leaned forward to look, frowning as we took in the wiry-looking figure in a pair of jeans and a hoodie, hiding his face.

“Who is that, David?” I demanded. “Rewind that.”

“I couldn’t tell you, sir. The attire isn’t very businesslike, and we don’t have any tradespeople in the building today.”

David did as he was asked, rewinding the clip.

“Can you zoom in?” I asked.

“I’ll work on it,” David sighed.

“Never mind. Email that to Kai,” I told him. “If anyone can get a face off that, it’s him.”

“Right away, Mr. Webb.”

“He’s probably just some new tech kid who doesn’t know the dress code,” Mylee suggested. “Let’s not make a big deal out of this.”

“Well, you did assault him,” I remarked dryly. “Don’t you want to apologize, at least?”

She balked and nodded, shooting a sidelong look back at the screen.

“Whoever he is, he shouldn’t have been lurking in the garage without a pass at this hour,” I reminded her. “Forget about it now. Let’s get out of here.”

Gratefully, Mylee bid David goodnight and followed me out of the offices, but I couldn’t resist a backward glance at the screen, my well-honed sixth sense telling me that something was very wrong with this guy, whoever he was.

*We’ll get to the bottom of it*, I vowed, draping my arm protectively around Mylee’s shoulders. Nothing would happen to her on my watch.

## CHAPTER 23

Mylee

I was so nervous, I could barely think.

“Are you sure you’re up for this?” Lincoln murmured in my ear.

“You need to stop asking me that,” I begged him, carefully adjusting a vase of flowers in front of me as more guests arrived at the penthouse for the party. “It’s not like we could do anything about it if I changed my mind, anyway. It’s too damn late.”

“Not true,” Paxton countered, overhearing the last of our conversation. “I’ll haul all their asses out of here right now. Just say the word.”

I gave him a weak smile and shook my head. “No. I want to do this. It’s my... christening into this world.”

“You’re going to do great,” Kai reassured me, popping up at the far end of the banquet table. “Thanks for hosting this.”

“Me?” I laughed. “It’s your penthouse.”

“It’s *your* penthouse,” Lincoln corrected me. “Your name is on it now, remember?”

I flushed at the reminder. I was still getting used to all of it. I didn’t respond, but I flashed him a quick smile, turning to greet the new flock of incoming guests. The party had been my idea, inviting the upper crust of Silverpiece Chicago to Gable Place Towers, getting a better feel of the who’s who working under us.

But I also had something else in mind, something I didn’t share with the guys, at least not until I could confirm what I had up my sleeve. The people I invited all had a high net worth. Lots of millionaires worked within Silverpiece Corp—especially the former owners of the subsidiary companies that my guys had acquired.

I hurried toward the foyer to greet the incoming guests, and not a minute

too soon.

“This is some place, Mylee,” Sarah-Leigh gushed as she walked through the doors. “Do you stay here, too?”

I noted her phone in hand and grimaced slightly, but maintained my smile.

*She’s already posting on social media. Great.*

“There’s food in the dining room, and the hot tub’s up and bubbling if you’re feeling adventurous,” I told the analyst, avoiding her question. “Did you invite your father like I asked?”

She gawked at me. “Oh... you were serious about that?”

I returned her stare evenly. “Dead serious,” I replied, standing in her way to prevent her from wandering any further into the penthouse.

She peered over my shoulder uncomfortably.

“I... well, no...”

“Oh. Why not?” I held my place firmly until she shifted her weight uncomfortably.

“I mean, I could call him now,” she hemmed. “But Saturday nights are poker night at the Yacht Club.”

I had been well aware of that fact when I’d invited Sarah-Leigh.

“Perfect. Have the entire club come down if he wants to. We had Chez Doris cater tonight.” I winked meaningfully, but I stood right in front of her until she dialed out.

Through my peripheral vision, I saw Sam Steward and Micah Crawley enter. Sarah-Leigh cleared her throat nervously.

“Hi, Daddy? Yeah, I’m just at Gable Place Towers, and my boss’ assistant—”

“Your bosses,” I corrected her flatly as Sarah-Leigh paled.

“My bosses,” she rushed on, “were hoping to meet you... right, the CEOs of Silverpiece... You met Mr. Ray once, I think... at that gallery opening? Right. They’re all here now. It’s their penthouse.”

Her voice rose an octave along with her eyebrow, and I nodded approvingly as I let her pass, hurrying off to greet Sam and Micah.

“Hello, friends,” I cooed pleasantly as the couple wandered forward, their eyes trailing up toward the skylights overhead. “A little birdie told me that you shipped the kids off to grandma’s for the week.”

Micah and Sam lowered their heads and stared at me like I’d sprouted another head, the awe in their faces tangible.

“We did...” Micah said slowly, licking his lips. “Is that a problem?”

I laughed. “It’s the opposite of a problem unless you’re against letting loose.” I pointed toward the bar. “It’s fully stocked back there. And we hired a bartender who was rated best in Chicago, according to London Spirits.”

Their eyebrows rose collectively. I leaned in confidentially. “Also, I’d like to talk to you both when you have a minute—and before you get too far into the beer pong.”

Sam hooted. “Someone’s been reading your MIT transcripts!” he taunted his husband as Micah flushed.

“Thanks, Mylee.”

I continued to show in the hand-picked guests, and it wasn’t until halfway through the party that Kai clued into the list.

“Why do I get the sense that there’s a rhyme and reason to who you invited tonight?” he asked, pulling me into the study.

I sipped innocently on my drink and stared at him over the rim of my glass.

“You all saw the guest list and okayed it,” I reminded him. “You know these people.”

“We know them, but half of the executive floor is missing,” he insisted.

“Are they?”

“And they weren’t on the guest list, either,” Kai added slowly. “Why not?”

I shrugged mysteriously. “They’ll be invited to the next one.”

“Mylee, what are you up to?”

“Nothing bad,” I promised. “I’m just trying to help you guys. The ones who weren’t invited couldn’t help.”

Kai cocked his head to the side and studied me. “Why not?”

I grinned. “Because they’re terrible with money. Everyone here tonight is loaded.”

I raised my glass as the door opened, and Sarah-Leigh’s father entered, looking sheepish. “Sorry. I was looking for the little boy’s room in this monstrosity.”

“Oh, no, sir,” I cooed, reaching for his arm to show him out of the study. “This is far from a monstrosity. Let me show you around. In fact, this penthouse was the inspiration for Silverpiece’s latest masterpiece, the Celestial Vista. Have you heard of it?”

I steered him toward the second floor and turned my head, catching Kai’s

wide, daunted stare. Understanding flooded his face, and a laugh escaped his lips.

“No, I don’t believe I have,” Logan Fergus muttered. “What is this? Another condo?”

I tittered. “Far from it,” I assured him, leading him up the spiral staircase toward the second floor. “In fact, your good friend, George, just bought one of the last units, so maybe he’ll let you visit sometime.”

Logan stopped and stared at me, the blood draining from his face. “George Weinburg?”

“The one you came with, yes,” I answered innocently.

“He bought one of the Silverpiece condos? When?”

“Earlier. I showed him some of the specs and photos—”

“Why didn’t anyone show me first?” Logan boomed. “Are there any more available?”

I frowned pensively. “Oh... I’d have to check. They’re very exclusive, sir —”

“Go check! Right now!”

“If there are, I imagine the price is steep—”

“Do I look like the kind of man who has trouble paying? Go on and check on availability. Throw Weinburg out if necessary.”

“Oh, dear,” I mused, hurrying back down the steps. “I’ll see what I can do. Please, wait upstairs for me, and I’ll have one of the partners speak with you.”

I found Kai in the study where I’d left him, and he shook his head in disbelief. “Is that what this has been about? Selling the rest of the Celestial units?”

“You got me,” I told him. “And I’ve got Logan Fergus upstairs champing at the bit right now, but one of you better hurry and close him, and another close George Weinburg in the living room.”

Kai stared at me in disbelief. “You really are incredible, Mylee. I don’t know how we ever got by without you before.”

I shrugged and giggled. “I have no idea, either, but I’m not kidding. Get over there and close those two. They are not patient men.”

“I’ll get Linc and Pax. And you...” He sighed. “You are getting a raise.”

I beamed happily and watched him go, my heart bursting with a sense of purpose. I was proving my worth, not only to the guys, but to myself.

*I really am enough.*



## CHAPTER 24

## *Lincoln*

**M**ylee couldn't stop fidgeting in her seat, her fingers twirling, shoulders shifting, dark eyes darting out the half-shaded window and back toward the three of us. But the one thing that remained consistent was the grin on her face that hadn't diminished since we'd left Chicago in the private jet.

She didn't seem to know where to set her gaze, from the gadgets in the interior to the passing clouds outside.

The flight attendant moved forward to refill her champagne glass, but she covered the top, shaking her head.

"Oh, no thanks, Nichole. If I drink another sip, they're going to have to carry me off the flight," she laughed, and Nichole retreated to look at me, silently offering the bottle.

"We're landing in Turin soon," I told her, glancing at my Rolex. "We'll save ourselves for the Italian wine."

"I'll take a bit more," Kai mumbled, his dislike of flying evident even after all those hours in the air.

Mylee cast him a sympathetic look.

"Why don't you take a sleeping pill when you travel?" she asked, and I grunted.

"Don't even start with him and big pharma," I insisted as Paxton nodded in agreement.

"Yes, please don't."

"What? Really?" Mylee settled back against the partially reclined sleeper seat and crossed her slender ankles. "You're against modern medicine, Kai?"

"No, of course not," Kai grumbled, shooting his partners a nasty gaze. "I just don't believe in taking a pill for every little thing."

“That’s fair,” Mylee said honestly. “Things are overprescribed all the time. Look at the opioid crisis.”

“We will not,” I interjected, sensing that the conversation was about to take a heavy turn, and I looked at Kai warningly. “Not today, anyway.”

Mylee’s lower lip jutted out, and I leaned forward to take her hand. “This weekend is about you and thanking you for everything you did on the Celestial Vista project. We’re not going to talk about work or world issues. We’re going to drink wine and bathe in the hot springs at my villa. This weekend, we’re going to live like gods and goddesses and forget the harsh realities of life, if only for a little while.”

Her eyes grew with interest.

“You have a hot spring?” she asked.

“He has everything there,” Paxton said. “Movie theater, bowling alley—you won’t need to leave the place for entertainment if you don’t want to.”

“But we’re going to show you Turin,” I jumped in. “Because it’s one of my favorite places in the world.”

“Really?” Her inky eyes grew larger. “That must be some feat, considering how much you’ve traveled.”

“It is beautiful,” Paxton agreed, a contented grin on his face. “Even I like this villa.”

“I can’t wait,” Mylee breathed, her smile returning.

“Me neither,” Kai groaned. “When is this damn plane going to land?”

\* \* \*

A sleek limo waited for us on the platform as soon as we descended, and when our bags were piled into the back of the car, we immediately headed out as Mylee gawked at the informality.

“I haven’t been out of Chicago much,” she admitted. “And when I say I’ve been out of Chicago, I mean, I went to Milwaukee once.” She tittered embarrassedly. “But I imagined traveling on a plane to be way more complicated than this.”

“It can be,” I promised her, nodding out the window for her to look. “But it won’t ever be for you, not while you’re with us.”

Mylee’s stare popped as the majestic backdrop of Mount Musine appeared on the horizon.

“Oh my,” she breathed, her hands splayed over the window. “Is that... is that a mountain, Linc?”

“It’s Mount Musine. You’ll see it from the villa.”

She whipped her head back around. “You remembered!”

I shrugged and grinned at her.

“Remembered what?” Paxton asked.

“I’ve always wanted to see a mountain,” Mylee explained, emotion choking her voice. “I-I think I told him that once... like when we first met.”

“That’s one of the many reasons I thought you might like the villa,” I informed her.

She looked back at me, her eyes welling with affection.

“I wanted to take you to Mexico,” Kai added, his color returning since we’d disembarked. “My place is much closer for next time.”

Mylee’s face flushed like she was realizing that there would be many more trips like this one, but she couldn’t tear her eyes away from the ancient structures of the beautiful city.

My villa was a gated palace, close to the city, but removed enough on the outskirts of Stupinigi that I was not concerned about looters or break-ins when I wasn’t there. The groundskeeper, Sergio, met the car at the iron barrier and let us in. He smiled warmly at Mylee, his broken English welcoming when we introduced her.

“Is everything in order, Sergio?” I asked, as he helped to unpack the car.

“*Si, si, signore,*” he agreed. “It’s all clean for you.”

I was less concerned about cleanliness than I was about security, but the trip had been so last minute that we had collectively decided to leave Jamie’s team behind. For a four-day vacation, we had a bit of protection at the site, and if the danger still existed, and the threat to Mylee hadn’t been a one-off, they would have to travel half a world away to get her. I felt confident about this.

Mylee stood outside the white stone house, shaking her head in admiration.

“It’s so beautiful, Linc,” she told me. “Thank you for bringing me here.”

“Thank you for everything you’ve done,” I countered. “You went above and beyond—again. Celestial Vista Chicago is almost a hundred percent sold now because of your genius.”

She shrugged. “It’s just upselling,” she replied nonchalantly. “Are you going to show me around this place or what?”

I held out my arm for her to take, and together, we made our way through the hand-carved front doors, into the marble foyer.

Twin staircases led to the second floor, and Mylee again froze in place, taking it all in. “It’s like a fairy tale! I can’t even believe this place is real.”

“Come and see the turret,” I offered, closing my hand against hers.

Kai and Paxton had disappeared toward the bedrooms on the main floor, leaving me to show off my favorite private house to Mylee.

“I can’t believe you don’t spend all your spare time here,” she sighed, trailing her free hand over the elegant wood banister. “I don’t know how you ever leave.”

“It’s lonely out here all alone, and you’ve seen how much Kai likes to fly,” I chuckled, eyeing her warmly. “Maybe I will spend more time out here now that I have someone to appreciate it with.”

She cast me a sidelong look, her eyes flooded with hope, and I nodded. “I’m serious. We can fly out here any time you like.”

Pausing by the double doors of the east wing, I unhooked my fingers from hers to open the area, and Mylee sputtered again as full windows flooded light toward us. Again, a view of the mountains appeared behind Turin.

“This way,” I urged, wanting to show her every part of the house.

“I’m trying to drink it all in,” she laughed, but she continued to walk with me, following me toward a small door that led up a narrow staircase to the tower.

“You’ll get the best view from up here,” I promised.

The spot wasn’t big enough for both of us to squeeze through, so I went first and ended up in the cupola, throwing open the small door to air out the dusty room.

It wasn’t as bad as I expected. Sergio must have allowed the cleaning team inside, but the musky smell of the mostly untouched room was impenetrable.

“Go look,” I urged Mylee, who grinned.

“I feel like I just stepped into a gothic novel,” she admitted. “This would be an amazing spot to sit and write.”

Ambling forward to the small Juliette balcony, I watched with pleasure as her shoulders relaxed. “Oh, Linc, this really is breathtaking,” she declared.

“Isn’t it?” I agreed. “It was one of the selling points for the property, the balcony.”

“I’m not kidding,” she said, dropping her hands onto the railing. “I could spend hours—”

*Crack!*

My head jerked up as Mylee’s body disappeared from view, her shocked, terrified face the last thing I saw as she plummeted from the third-story balcony and through the broken railing.

## CHAPTER 25

## Mylee

**F** *alling.*  
*I'm falling.*

My hands instinctively reached out to grab for leverage, panic threatening to consume me, but from the depth of my soul, I found my composure, a primal instinct taking hold. Losing it wasn't going to help me now. I had to save myself.

My left hand curled onto something, stopping my fall as my body crashed against the side of the villa, my body scraping against the stucco. Loud yells overhead echoed through the air.

“MYLEE!”

I didn't dare look up or down, my breathing erratic as I forced myself to think, to be calm, to maintain rationality.

*Think. Breathe. Don't move.*

My manicured fingernails broke against the aged stone of the house, my boots slipping as Lincoln's horrified voice cried down to me. “MYLEE!”

I couldn't look up, and as much as I didn't want to look down, a movement caught my eye on the ground. Through the thick of bushes, a tall, dark-haired man ducked through, his face triggering something in my memory.

*Sergio? Why is he running off?*

Panic threatened to seep in, to overtake me, particularly when more anguish enveloped me from below. There was nothing to break my fall but solid Italian ground.

“Hold on, Mylee!” Paxton ordered me, his voice strong and commanding. “Stay where you are! Don't let go!”

“I-I'm trying not to,” I choked, but I didn't know if he could hear me.



“What the fuck happened?!” Kai screamed, but no one responded to him.

I closed my eyes, praying silently. My fingers began to slip, and suddenly, I heard Paxton call up to me again.

*Please, don't let me go out like this. I'll be good. I'll be really good...*

“Mylee! Let go.”

Opening my eyes, I looked down at him and gawked in disbelief. He and Kai had found a trampoline from somewhere, situating it directly below me. At first, I wasn't sure if I was reading the situation properly or if I'd already plunged to my death.

“Let go! We'll catch you!” Paxton promised.

“Are you kidding me?” I rasped, my hold faltering. “I'm not a Looney Tunes character!”

“You'll be okay,” Paxton vowed, his blue eyes reassuring. “We'll catch you. I promise.”

Shaking violently, I realized I had no choice and released my grasp, closing my eyes again. I bounced once as two sets of arms embraced me on the way up, Lincoln panting as he met up with us, his eyes wild and confused.

I lay in Kai and Paxton's embrace, shaking violently as they rubbed my back and arms.

“You're okay. You're okay,” Kai repeated over and over.

“Oh, thank god,” Paxton gasped. “Are you hurt? I'll send for a doctor!”

I shook my head, trying to stand, but Paxton picked me up to carry me as I kicked lightly.

“I'm okay,” I insisted, but Paxton refused to put me down.

“Just let us look you over,” he growled, shooting Lincoln a scathing look. “You promised that everything would be fine here without security.”

My blood ran cold as we re-entered the villa through the front doors, Paxton laying me on the pristine, white sofa. In my hazy head, I was worried about dirtying it and tried to roll off it.

“It was obviously rotted,” Lincoln muttered. “This was an accident, nothing more.”

*There are too many accidents around me. The car, the poisoning, now this?*

The man in the bushes popped back into my head. It hadn't been Sergio, but I *had* recognized him. But from where? Why did I know him, and why had he been hiding?

Why did I know some random guy in Italy?

The questions only toyed with my already jumbled mind, and I didn't put them to my lovers. They were stressed enough without me adding to it.

"Look at me, Mylee," Kai begged, kneeling in front of me.

"Kai, go get her some water," Paxton ordered.

"*You* go get her some water," he growled, and I had to smile at him being assertive.

"I'm okay," I promised them. "I'm not hurt, I swear. Linc's right. It's an old balcony. When was the last time you had it serviced?"

"Sergio is responsible for all that," Lincoln muttered, anger returning to his face. "I should have double checked everything."

"This isn't your fault," I reassured him. "Accidents happen, and I'm fine. Honestly."

Lincoln began to pace around the elegant living room, his distress evident.

"We should have brought the security team with us," he mumbled, more to himself than to us.

"That wouldn't have saved me from going over the balcony," I said, sitting up.

Kai moved to help me, and I waved him off.

"I'm okay," I said again. "Honestly. Come on, guys. You know I can take care of myself. I've been showing you that since the first day I met you."

They eyed me, an identical smirk forming on their lips.

"And while I appreciate the added security..."

I trailed off, my heart suddenly leaping into my throat.

"Mylee?" Lincoln crouched at Kai's side as Paxton moved off to find me a glass of water. "What's wrong?"

I shook my head and forced a smile I wasn't feeling, my heart in my stomach as I realized where I recognized the man in the bushes from now.

Richard. He was the man from the first day I'd met the Silverpiece princes. The one Paxton had punched out in the café when I had tried to throw him out.

What the hell was Richard doing out here?

"Mylee, what is it?" Lincoln pressed. "You look like you've seen a ghost."

"I could use a lie-down for a bit," I murmured, trying to piece together what was happening.

“That’s a great idea,” Kai conceded, as Paxton returned from the kitchen with her water. “I’ll lie down with you.”

“No!”

Kai looked like I’d slapped him in the face. “No?”

“I want to be alone for a bit.”

Hurt but accepting, both Lincoln and Kai straightened.

“I didn’t really arrange for you to have your own room,” Lincoln explained coolly. “I put your things in my suite.”

“That’s fine,” I agreed, tentatively rising from the chaise sofa and taking the glass from Paxton.

“What did I miss?” he asked, casting his partners a dirty look.

“Nothing,” I promised him. “I just need to... rest.”

“She’s probably jetlagged on top of everything else,” Kai suggested defensively.

I nodded at him gratefully.

“I probably am,” I agreed, ambling to my feet. “Where am I going?”

Lincoln guided me toward his suite but lingered in the doorway as I crawled into the canopied bed, between the sheer curtains.

“Are you mad at me for letting that happen, Mylee?”

I blinked in confusion. “It was an accident,” I offered with as much honesty as I could. “You had no control over it.”

“I promised to protect you, and all of this shit keeps happening.”

“We’ll figure it out,” I reassured him. “If it’s any consolation, the view really was beautiful before it wasn’t.”

Lincoln didn’t smile as he turned away and closed the door, leaving me to my own thoughts alone in the massive main suite.

*Did Richard follow me all the way to Italy to get back at me for embarrassing him all those months ago?*

Men had killed for less.

I had to do something to stop all these attacks on me and the men I was growing to love. Next time, someone was really going to get hurt, and if it was one of them, I would never forgive myself.

## CHAPTER 26

## Mylee

The rest of the weekend in Turin went by in a blur to me. I couldn't focus on anything but the idea that Richard from the café might pop up at any time in this magical getaway and cause me more harm.

"We should just go home," Kai grumbled on the second day. "Mylee's not having any fun."

"That's not true," I insisted. "It's beautiful here. And I get my mountain."

"Maybe we should go into the city," Lincoln suggested. "I can show you the local haunts."

But I was afraid to go out in public. I was afraid to stay home. I was just afraid in general, and I didn't know how to deal with any of it. I wanted to tell them, but I also wanted to keep it to myself. I'd never been so conflicted in my life.

Paxton took me aside on Saturday afternoon when I sat on high alert in the garden, sipping nervously on espresso, eyes darting around the thick shrubbery.

"You're really on edge," he informed me bluntly. "I know you feel like you have a black cloud following you, but maybe it is just a string of bad coincidences."

"Is it?" I quipped before I could stop myself.

Paxton took a seat on one of the intricate, wrought-iron chairs and reached for my hand and studied my face worriedly. "I'm worried, Mylee. What do you think?"

I managed a weak smile, not wanting to worry him. "I'm sure you're right. But it's hard not to feel cursed, I guess."

"I know we keep telling you this, but we really won't let anything happen to you. Lincoln is right, though. We should have brought the team with us."

“To protect against a faulty railing?” I mumbled, casting him a sidelong look.

“I just think that having Jamie here would have made you feel better. You don’t want to do anything. You pace around the villa like you’re waiting for the other shoe to drop all the time.”

“Maybe because every time I get too comfortable, the other shoe *does* drop,” I reminded him.

Paxton frowned. “Do you really think that?”

I pulled my hand back and encircled it around the tiny espresso cup, turning my eyes toward the gate surrounding the villa. Every small movement in the trees, every gust of wind, made me think Richard was going to come out of the shadows with a new horror. A small shudder made its way through my body, and Paxton noticed.

“Mylee, what’s wrong?”

*I can’t keep doing this. It’s not fair to anyone.*

Abruptly, I stood up, avoiding his eyes. “I think Kai’s right,” I muttered, picking up my cup and turning for the sliding glass doors.

“About what?” Paxton asked in surprise.

“I think we should probably go home.”

\* \* \*

When we got back to Chicago, I threw myself into work, more so than before. I made cold calls for the Celestial Vista and spent evenings at the Silverpiece offices, sending the guys home when they came to collect me.

“Please come home,” Kai begged me one night, a week after we got back from Italy. “You’re putting too many hours in here. It’s not healthy, Mylee.”

The night before, Paxton had attempted to camp out in front of my office until I had snapped at him, complaining that he was acting like a possessive boyfriend. The insult had hit him hard, and he hadn’t texted me all day, adding to my guilt. But it was better like this.

“Mylee, please come home,” Kai said again when I didn’t reply.

“Fewer distractions here,” I answered primly, without raising my head from my computer.

“Are we distracting you?” he asked, sounding hurt, but I didn’t answer him, my heart panging as I realized I was hurting him as much as my distance

was hurting me.

“Lincoln doesn’t like leaving you alone here at night,” Kai insisted. “What’s going on, Mylee?”

“I’m not alone, though,” I reminded him flatly. “Jamie’s just outside. I’ve got the security team.”

“It’s safer for you at the condo.”

“Kai, I have work to do,” I mumbled.

His face fell, and I wanted to apologize, but I reminded myself that this was for his own good. The more distance I put between us, the safer they would be.

“What time are you coming home?”

“I’m not sure,” I answered evasively.

“Fine.” Kai finally turned away from the doorway and left, but the hole in my gut only grew.

This wasn’t the way I wanted things, not after everything they had done for me. It wasn’t fair to treat them this way, but dragging them into my problems also wasn’t fair.

But how much longer could I keep this up? I couldn’t keep them at bay forever.

Maybe the threat of Richard would disappear, eventually. Maybe he’d get tired of chasing me...

Was he really that humiliated that he would hunt me down after Teatotler’s and try to kill me? Multiple times?

What if I went to the police and told them what I suspected? Would they help, or would they laugh at my theory? It wasn’t much to go off, after all, and I still wasn’t a hundred percent sure if I’d seen that guy lurking in the bushes in Turin. There was no evidence, and we all knew how “he said, she said” went.

In the meantime, I had to put some space between me and the guys.

Good old Mylee Lynn. Bringing shit on sunshine everywhere she goes. No wonder I couldn’t keep a foster family for more than a year.

It shouldn’t surprise me that this situation hadn’t worked out, either. But now what? I hadn’t really thought the outcome through, but for now, I had to keep Richard away from the men I loved.

But this wasn’t going to work if I kept going home to them every night. Eventually, Richard would weasel his way into the Gable Place Towers, just like he had everywhere else.

I sat back in my chair, rubbing the bridge of my nose between my thumb and forefinger roughly.

There was that million dollars sitting in the account for me to take anytime. I had sworn I wouldn't touch it, but the guys had foreseen this. I could take the money and buy another place, away from them where I wouldn't be a constant shitshow.

There was a little apartment over the bookstore that Lincoln had bought for me.

Tears of frustration welled up in my eyes.

A man had bought me a bookstore. These wealthy men had plucked me out of oblivion and given me a future, and all I had brought them was strife.

*They should have known better,* I told myself coldly, returning to the computer. *They're supposed to have better sense than that.*



## CHAPTER 27

## *Paxton*

I cut my trip to San Francisco short by two days, Kai's voicemail bringing me home on a red-eye flight. Lincoln had the private jet in Hong Kong.

"I don't understand what's going on, Pax, but she's gone! She's moved out!" Kai moaned into my message center.

I called my partner back several times, but every time I tried him, my attempts went right to voicemail.

"Kai, you can't leave a message like that and then not answer your phone," I growled, unsure of what to do. It wasn't like him to leave a dramatic message, but Kai also wasn't very good at handling conflict.

I tried Lincoln, who answered in Hong Kong, but he had no idea what I was talking about.

"Mylee? Mylee is moving out?" he asked, dumbfounded. "Are you sure that's what he meant?"

"I can't think of who else he might be talking about," I retorted.

"Why? What the hell happened now?" Lincoln demanded.

"I don't know!" I exploded. "What did that shithead do?"

"I'm sure Kai has nothing to do with this," Lincoln sighed, and I knew he was right, too. Ever since Italy, Mylee had been pulling back more and more from us, although I had no idea why or what to do about it.

"I'm going home," I told him flatly. "To see what's going on."

Lincoln chuckled lightly.

"Did I say something funny?"

"You called Chicago 'home.' I've never heard you call anywhere home before. Not even Texas."

I was glad he wasn't there to see the heat rise into my face, but he was right—I hadn't considered anywhere else home before Mylee. Because

Mylee was home. Not Chicago.

“I’ll keep you posted,” I grumbled.

“I’m coming, too. I’ll head out tonight, but it’s going to take longer to get there.”

“Obviously,” I sighed.

“Obviously.”

We disconnected, and I arranged for a first-class ticket from SFO to O’Hare, but I was still grounded for hours before I could get back to the Gable Place. I also attempted to call Mylee’s phone, but every time I did, it went through to voicemail as well. A gnawing sense of dread formed in my gut.

I got Jamie on the line, and the security guard answered on the first ring.

“Are you still with Ms. Lynn?” I demanded.

“Of course, sir.”

“Where are you?”

“At the Silverpiece offices.”

I frowned. “Are you sure she’s there?” I asked suspiciously.

“I’m sure. I’m sitting outside her office right now.”

“And you can see her?”

“As clear as the hand in front of me.”

“Put her on the phone,” I ordered.

Jamie hesitated. “She’s on a call, sir.”

I grimaced again. “Tell her to call me the second she gets off.”

“Of course, Mr. Webb.”

But that call never came, and when I called Jamie before I caught my flight, he didn’t answer.

*What the fuck are we paying these assholes for?* I thought furiously.

Kai paced the main floor when I arrived at the Gable Place penthouse, and I glowered at him. “Why didn’t you answer your fucking phone?”

“What?” he asked dully.

“Your phone!”

He looked around, and I realized he was in shock. “Where’s your phone?”

He shrugged helplessly, and I steeled my temper.

“What happened, Kai?” I muttered, ushering him into a chair.

He plopped unceremoniously onto one of the cushioned dining room seats and stared up at the second floor of the penthouse listlessly, as if

expecting Mylee to materialize.

“I really don’t know,” he mewled. “I had to come home mid-day unexpectedly, and I took her by surprise. I think she intended to be out of here before anyone knew she was gone.”

The wind knocked out of my chest.

He saw her go. This isn’t something he dreamed up.

“That doesn’t make any sense. She must have said something. Where did she go? Why did she leave?”

“I really don’t know. She just said it’s better this way. She gave me a kiss on the cheek and asked me to understand.”

“Why?” I pressed. “Kai, think!”

He drew in a shaky breath. “I think she’s mad at us, Pax.”

I also sank onto one of the chairs, my pulse racing. “Why? Why now? Did you say something to her?”

“No! But she’s been different since Turin. We should never have gone there. I told you we shouldn’t have taken her there!”

“It’s not Turin,” I growled angrily. “She hasn’t felt safe since the car accident.”

I drummed my fingers against the shiny surface of the table and stood abruptly, picking up the pacing where Kai had left off. “Have you checked the account? Where she had the million?”

Kai’s mouth gaped, and he shook his head. “You think she took it?”

“I don’t know. I mean... she has some money, but she might have used some of the million—” My eyes dilated. “The bookstore! There’s an apartment up there!”

Kai nodded and also stood, relief coloring his face. “She loves that place.”

“Let’s go see if she’s there.” I started toward the door, but Kai called out to stop me.

“You didn’t see her, Pax. She really just wanted me to leave her alone. I begged her to talk to me...”

“You’re not me,” I told him grimly. “Come on. Let’s go find our woman.”

\* \* \*

Jamie's security detail sat outside the bookshop on Monroe, confirming what I'd already suspected, but now that we were parked by the location, I was having the same second thoughts that Kai had shared.

She didn't just up and come here without any thought. She was there for a reason.

I tried her phone again, but it was still off.

"Maybe we should give her some space?" Kai offered nervously, glancing through the darkness toward the dimly lit apartment overhead.

I didn't respond as I stepped out of my Porsche and headed toward the security van. The guard rolled down the window when he recognized me. "How long has she been up there?" I demanded.

The kid, Winslow, eyed me sheepishly.

"A few hours, Mr. Webb. I wasn't sure if we were supposed to call you if she didn't come home."

"You weren't," I told him coldly. "Your job is to make sure she's safe, not give me updates on her movements."

Winslow looked relieved but curious. "Then why are you here?"

I scowled at him. "Do I pay you to question me?"

"N-no, sir."

"Is she alone?"

"Yes, sir."

I nodded and retreated back to the car where Kai waited. Dawn began to peek over the Chicago skyline, street-sweepers grumbling down the roadways as we debated what to do next.

This was new territory for me, chasing a woman.

"Should we wait until Linc gets back?" Kai suggested.

That wasn't a bad idea.

Mylee was safe, guarded, and there of her own volition. Busting in and demanding answers at four o'clock in the morning wasn't going to win us any points with her. But I hated this feeling of not knowing.

"Let's wait until Linc gets back," I agreed, starting the car again.

But as we drove away, I couldn't help but look in the rearview and silently will Mylee to appear in the window, summoning us back.

Unfortunately, it never happened.

\* \* \*

Lincoln showed up at two the following afternoon. Neither Kai nor I had slept a wink as we again tried to reach out independently to Mylee. Today, she answered her phone, but her tone was clipped and professional.

“I really think it’s better if we live apart, Paxton,” she said quietly. “I can still do my job.”

“Fuck your job!” I growled, slamming my fist on the table. “What is this all about?”

“It’s for the best. I really have to get back to it.”

She disconnected the call as I stared at the phone in dismay.

“It obviously didn’t mean as much to her as it did to us,” Kai mumbled bitterly, but I didn’t believe that for a second.

Something else was going on with Mylee, whether she wanted to admit it or not.

“We can’t corner her at the office,” Lincoln said sensibly, reminding me why we’d waited for him in the first place. “And she clearly isn’t going to talk to us on the phone. The only option is to go to her apartment and force her to have a discussion.”

“Even if she doesn’t want to?” Kai groaned.

He didn’t want the confrontation, but that was too bad. If he wanted our woman back, he was going to have to step out of his comfort zone.

“Even if she doesn’t want to,” I snapped. “She owes us an explanation. She can’t just walk out without saying a word.”

“I agree,” Lincoln said firmly. “But you have to keep your cool, Pax.”

“Me?” I was offended by being singled out.

“Yeah, you,” Kai conceded. “You’ve got a temper.”

I flushed furiously. “Are you suggesting she left because of me?”

“No, of course not,” Lincoln replied firmly. “You’re also really sensitive. The idea is to make her feel as if she can tell us what’s going on, not make her feel shamed for leaving. If she wants to live over the bookstore, fine.”

“No, it’s not fine!” I barked. “She belongs with us! She promised that we’d be together!”

“See, that’s what I’m talking about,” Lincoln scolded me. “It is fine. She’s a grown-ass woman. If she wants to live on her own, let her live by herself. We’re not going to stand in the way of her decisions, no matter how painful they might be to us. We gave her the ability to make her own choices because we care about her. She doesn’t belong to us.”

He looked at me meaningfully, and I hung my head, my heart pounding. I

hated it when Lincoln was right.

“But I don’t think that’s what’s going on here,” he continued, forcing me to cast him a sidelong look. “I don’t think she left because she wanted to go. I think something caused her to leave.”

“I don’t want her to go,” Kai rasped. “I wish she’d just told us what’s going on.”

“It’s not that easy with Mylee,” Lincoln reminded us. “We have to be patient—and calm.”

Again, he gave me a meaningful look, and I swallowed my protests.

“All right,” I agreed. “I just want her back, too.”

\* \* \*

Jamie informed me that Mylee had been at the office all day. I told him to send me a text when she was leaving, and he did, propelling us out the door of the Gable Place and toward the bookstore on Monroe.

We waited for her on the stoop when she arrived with Charlie, and her face paled.

“We just want to talk to you for a minute, Mylee,” Lincoln told her, rising as she slowly emerged from the car. “You had to know we weren’t going to just let it go.”

“I kind of hoped you would, actually,” she confessed.

“Then you don’t know us very well,” he sighed.

“And you’ve seriously underestimated how we feel about you,” I added.

Mylee’s head jerked toward me, her face softening. She dug her keys out of her purse and opened the door to the bookshop, allowing us inside, and I was instantly consumed with the smell of old book pages. It reminded me of my grandfather’s library in Texas, but the memory was not as pleasant as this store.

“Will you lock the door behind you, Kai?” Mylee asked nervously, glancing back out the window.

My eyes trailed back toward the huge, unprotected window, my pulse quickening.

I frowned. “Is someone following you?” I asked.

She continued through the shop toward the back, and we trailed after her. I noted how she glanced back several times, her gaze stretched toward the

bay window overlooking the street.

“Mylee, is someone bothering you?” Lincoln echoed my question.

Pausing at the base of the stairs, she turned to face us. “Guys, there’s no reason for you to put yourselves or your business in any more danger. I’ve already caused you enough problems.”

My partners and I exchanged a look amongst ourselves. “You have?”

“I know this seems... abrupt,” she went on. “But I did think it through, and this is the best thing for everyone. I need to keep my distance, and he won’t cause you any more damage than he already has.”

Flabbergasted, I stared at my friends, but they were equally perplexed by her confession.

“I don’t understand, Mylee. What damage?” Lincoln asked slowly. “Is this about the poisoning? Do you know who did that?”

She nodded, biting hard on her lower lip before she answered.

“I didn’t realize he had such a hard-on for me until I saw him in Italy, but now it makes sense. He was obviously the guy in the garage at Silverpiece, too...”

She was rambling now, not making any sense.

“Who? What are you talking about, Mylee?” Kai pressed. “Who was in Italy?”

“Richard—you don’t even know who I mean,” she laughed, embarrassed, hanging her head. “I can’t believe he would go through so much trouble because I humiliated him, but an incel’s gonna incel.”

“Richard?!” the three of us echoed in unison.

“Crossman?” I added, leaning closer to her. My heart rate rushed in my ears now. “That guy Paxton punched out on the day we met you?”

“I saw him in Italy,” she admitted. “I mean, I thought it was him... and then I thought about the elevator...” She glanced at me, and I remembered the night she had been scared by the guy in the parking garage. “I think that was him, too.”

“That makes sense,” I offered slowly. “He would know how to circumvent security.”

Mylee’s jaw slacked. “Why? How?” she demanded.

“Once upon a time, Richard worked on the executive floor,” I explained, my own jaw hardening as I realized just how dangerous the former employee had become. “Of course his clearance was revoked, but he would know the tricks of the trade.”



“Wait, he’s a former employee?” she mumbled.

“A very disgruntled former employee who tried to sue us and lost so miserably, he was forced to pay us for wasting our time,” Kai added. “He’s got several bones to pick with us. That’s what the scrap was about in Teatotler’s that day.”

“Oh...”

“You thought he was coming after you because of what happened at the café?” Lincoln questioned gently.

“Well... yes. I couldn’t understand why else he wanted to kill me so badly.”

I stepped forward and took her hands in mine, bringing them to my lips. “Because he knows we love you, Mylee. He’s trying to destroy something close to us.”

Lincoln and Kai nodded in agreement.

“That social media blitz that upset you so much showed the world that we didn’t give a rat’s ass who knew about you. Richard had to have picked up on that and used it to his advantage.”

“You l-love me?” she whispered, awe coloring her face.

“Of course,” I laughed. “Can’t you tell?”

Tears misted Mylee’s brilliant, dark eyes, and she shook her head. “No,” she breathed shakily. “I haven’t had very much of it in my life.”

“Well, you have it now,” Kai promised, reaching for her other hand. “In spades.”

Lincoln kissed her cheek, and we embraced, relishing the feeling of her body relaxing against us.

“We will take care of that asshole,” I promised her. “Now that we know who he is for sure. It’s like I’ve always promised you, Mylee, you’re safe with us.”

“But you need to stay with us if you want us to keep you safe,” Kai added hopefully. “Will you please come home now?”

Mylee straightened herself and looked at our faces, nodding, a smile forming on her lips. “Yes,” she agreed. “But Charlie is not going to be pleased when I tell him he’s going to need to move me again.”

“Don’t worry. We’ll give him a bonus,” I intoned with a chortle.

## CHAPTER 28

*Kai*

“If you can’t beat them, join them,” Mylee said over our video call when I staunchly opposed the idea. “Everyone else is doing it, and frankly, it looks like we’ve got something to hide if we don’t.”

“Have you run this by Paxton?” I asked worriedly, staring at her proposal nervously. “I don’t think he’s going to like it.”

“I’ve asked Lincoln and Paxton. They both think it’s time we’re launched into this century with a proper social media campaign—as long as you and I head it.”

I was shocked to hear that Paxton, with all his uppity family ties, was willing to go public with our unconventional arrangement.

“It’s not about airing our personal life to the world, Kai,” Mylee explained gently. “It’s about embracing what we have and showing everyone that we’re not afraid of growing with the new wave of American families out there. Our entire company paradigm is about suiting the changing lifestyles of Americans. We lead by example at Silverpiece.”

“Aren’t you worried about alienating some of our customer base?” I asked nervously.

“You want to know my favorite Aesop fable, Kai?” she asked sweetly, and I saw her big smile through the phone. “It’s the one about the boy, his father, and the donkey. Go look it up for me.”

I found myself doing just that after we got off the phone as I wrestled with our new social media campaign, still unsure if it was the best business move.

She was right, of course. We didn’t pander to any particular base, but Silverpiece had always maintained a more neutral approach to our business. Coming clean with our lifestyle was bound to sit uneasily with some of our

investors as well.

I found the tale on Google with very little effort, and I read it aloud to myself. The story was simple enough, but the moral was that if you try to please everyone, you will please no one.

Mylee's point was taken.

It was the nature of business, after all. We wouldn't be able to appease all the masses, but ours was a progressive company, and so far, Mylee had shown great aptitude for knowing what was good for the conglomerate.

"Did you need something, Mr. Evans?"

Sylvia popped her head around the computer, and I smothered my grin, shaking my head. "No. I was just reading something."

"I really like the social media feedback so far, Mr. Evans. Ms. Lynn is really entertaining," the young programmer told me. "She really engages with the followers."

My smile faded slightly. "Does she?"

"Uh huh. It's like she's your friend."

A spark of alarm twinged through me, but I dismissed it as I nodded. "She's got a good sense for these things."

*She knows what she's doing. She's smart and savvy. Always has been.*

"She's a lot of fun," I agreed.

"That she is. I hope she enjoys the conference in Reno."

My shoulders stiffened again as Sylvia's head disappeared back behind the divider. "Sylvia..."

She reappeared. "Yes, Mr. Evans?"

"How did you know Ms. Lynn is at a conference in Reno?"

Sylvia held up her phone and gestured at her Instagram feed. "Her schedule's posted. I guess it's supposed to act as a meet and greet opportunity."

"What?"

"Her schedule is posted. Not just today, but her entire week."

Cold dread washed through my gut now. "Let me see that, please?"

Shrugging, Sylvia handed me her phone, and I scrolled through Mylee's profile. Her entire schedule was posted in public for the world to see.

"What the hell...?" I muttered, wondering how Mylee could be so careless.

Richard Crossman was still on the loose, and there were certain protocols to be observed. Why would Mylee just post her schedule for the entire world

to see?

I handed Sylvia back her phone and reached for mine, jumping up from my chair to stalk out of IT as fast as my legs would carry me. My hands reached for my phone, dialing out to Mylee's as I moved.

"You've reached Mylee Lynn at Silverpiece Corporation," her voicemail cooed in my ear. "Please be a normal human being and send a text or an email. Thank you!"

"Mylee, call me as soon as you get this," I growled, heading toward the elevators. "It's important."

My palms turned sweaty as I called Lincoln, but I lost him as soon as I stepped onto the elevator.

"I'm coming up. Stay where you are," I ordered, punching the button for the twenty-ninth floor.

To my surprise, Paxton was in Lincoln's office when I arrived, his face drawn and worried.

"Have you seen Mylee's Instagram?" I demanded.

"Have you heard from Mylee?" they barked back at me in unison.

I froze in the doorway, staring at them. "No... why?"

Without speaking, Lincoln turned in his swivel chair and aimed the remote toward the mounted television behind him.

A primed redheaded journalist sat in a newsroom, reading from the teleprompter, a clip playing in the background. "...brazen kidnapping in the middle of the day. Authorities are unsure if this is a publicity stunt instigated by the Silverpiece Corporation, who has recently involved themselves in some questionable social media stunts—"

"What the hell is this?" I demanded, striding forward to peer more closely at the clip.

My breath caught as I saw the replay, blood draining from my face.

Mylee strolled unassumingly across a hotel lobby in a white pantsuit, her hair swept into a formal bun. As she walked, laptop bag in hand, a figure in black jumped into the shot, throwing a potato sack over her head and dragging her off-screen.

Over and over, the clip played, and my jaw hit the ground.

"Where was this? Why didn't anyone do anything?!" I choked, my knees wobbling as I stared at the unbelievable posting.

"They think it's a prank!" Paxton panted. "That's fucking Richard Crossman! I'm sure of it!"

I stared at the assailant, trying to gauge his height and weight, but it all happened so quickly on screen, it was impossible to be sure.

“Which way did they go? There has to be cameras! Security!”

“You have to track her phone,” Lincoln told me tersely. “Her laptop was in her hand. What can you do, Kai?”

“Get on the phone with your contacts at the police and FBI!” I barked, spinning around toward the elevators again. “Make sure they know this isn’t a fucking publicity stunt!”

\* \* \*

I retreated to the IT floor to work. It shouldn’t have surprised me that Mylee’s phone was off. Richard would know enough about tech to know to either get rid of the phone or discard it entirely.

What he might not have known was that every Silverpiece issued laptop had an encrypted tracker that was not so easily discarded. That was information that only a selected few Silverpiece employees had access to.

“I found it!” I yelled, rushing back into Lincoln’s office.

Special Agent Mike Sloan sat next to his latest partner, a petite brunette who already looked like she’d had enough of his personality. Lincoln had already managed to round up his contacts in the hour since I’d been working.

“What have I told you about letting us do our job, Kai?” Mike asked, wagging a finger at me condescendingly. “You know how much I hate it when you big corps get involved with police work.”

“I don’t see you doing any police work,” Paxton barked, joining my side to peer at my findings. “Where is she?”

“Fire up the jet. I’ve got a location on the laptop.”

“Hey, hey!” the agent growled. “You can’t just—”

The three of us ignored him and hurried out of the office, leaving the FBI alone in Lincoln’s space, but Mike Sloan was behind us.

“You’re going to need someone to make an arrest if you find your kidnapper!” he yelled out after us. “You might want to let us tag along.”

“I hate this fucking guy,” Paxton hissed at Lincoln as we slowed down to let them catch up. “Why do you always use him?”

“He was the first one available... and this is Chicago,” Lincoln sighed. “Better options in New York.”

“I heard that,” Mike grumbled. “You hear how they talk about us, Lee?”

“I wasn’t taking about Special Agent Lee,” Lincoln reassured him, regaining his pace. He turned to me. “Reno, I assume?”

“Just outside, in the desert.” I stared balefully at Sloan. “You might want to call in backup for this. He’s tried to kill her before.”

Sloan appeared startled by this revelation. “Why didn’t anyone tell us before?”

“Maybe because they’re advertising this as a publicity stunt, and no one is taking it seriously?” Special Agent Lee offered tartly.

If I wasn’t so stressed out, I would have smiled at her.

“The plane will be ready in fifteen,” Lincoln informed us.

\* \* \*

For the entire four-and-a-half-hour flight, I willed the beacon to remain exactly where it was on the screen.

“Has she moved?” Lincoln demanded.

I shook my head miserably.

I wasn’t sure which was worse. If she didn’t move, did that mean she was gone already? Richard had already tried to kill her. Why would he hold on to her now?

Lincoln put a solid hand on my shoulder. “She’s a fighter, a survivor. She’s going to make it through this. We’ll get her back.”

“That fucking coward,” I hissed. “He just blindsided her. She was just walking...”

“It’s going to be okay,” Paxton insisted. “It’s just what Lincoln said. She’s a fighter. She’s not going to let that bastard hurt her.”

“Why did she post her schedule on Instagram like that?” I moaned.

“What?” Lincoln stared at me. “What do you mean?”

“Her entire itinerary is posted online for the world to see. That’s just not like her.”

“When was this?” Lee asked, leaning forward in her seat, her intelligent eyes narrowing.

“I don’t know... a few hours ago?”

The special agent reached into her pocket and dialed out. “Hey, this is Lee. I need you to do a run on an IP address for an Instagram posting for

Mylee Lynn—right, the kidnap victim. Her last post...” Lee looked at me for confirmation, and I nodded, not understanding. “Yeah, get back to me right away.”

A slow smile formed on her lips.

“Why are you grinning?” Lincoln demanded. “Nothing about this is good.”

“It might be,” she said slowly. “Because I don’t think Ms. Lynn did post her schedule. I think your man, Crossman, did.”

“Why? Why would he do that?” I demanded, my head swimming with worry.

“He’s not our man,” Paxton spat. “In fact, when I get my hands on him, he’s going to be a dead man—”

“You know I’m a federal agent, right?” Lee asked dryly. “Please contain yourself.”

Paxton exhaled and sat. “Go on.”

“I believe he was putting a call out there—” Her phone rang, and she held up a finger to answer it as Sloan sneered at her.

“She’s such a showoff,” her partner muttered.

“Why? Because she’s useful?” Lincoln countered.

Sloan rolled his eyes.

“Thank you. I need you to send units to that house immediately. Richard Crossman is a suspect in a kidnapping, a poisoning, and is considered extremely unstable and dangerous. Proceed with caution.”

I leaned forward, my heart hammering. “Did you find him? Is he in the desert?”

She shook her head. “No. He posted that schedule from a house in Tinley Park. I doubt he’s still there.”

More confusion washed over me. “But Mylee was taken from Reno,” I sputtered. “How...?”

Again, my mind started to whirl as I tried to understand. Agent Lee smiled patiently at me as she explained.

“I believe that Crossman put a call out to get your girl, and someone reacted to it. There are a lot of unstable people out there, and when you put them together...” She shrugged. “My guess is that he managed to find a like-minded individual to take her and that he’s on his way to her now. There’s a chance that she’s still alive. If Crossman had taken her himself, the odds wouldn’t be so good.”



The news was so bittersweet, I almost gagged.

“When did the kidnapping happen?” I choked, the blood draining from my face.

“At noon, Nevada time. Two o’clock in Chicago.”

I glanced at my fitness phone and sweat broke out over my brow. It was almost seven o’clock now, and we still had to drive out to the desert and find the exact location. Would Richard beat us since he already knew where he was going? Would he get to Mylee first?

“We’ll get to her,” Lincoln insisted with even more optimism than last time. “She’s safe. I can feel it in my bones.”

I wished I had the same connection in my bones that Lincoln had to Mylee in his. All I could feel was cold, horrifying dread.

*Come on, plane. Move your ass.*

## CHAPTER 29

Mylee

**T**hrough the obnoxious potato sack on my head, the sweet scent of earth and flowers penetrated lightly.

I swiveled my head toward the scent, trying to take in more, but with the uncomfortable fabric on my face, it was difficult. I struggled to see through the grainy fabric, the outline of a sinewy figure pacing before me suddenly making me very uneasy. My mind flashed back to all those free self-defense courses I'd taken at the YWCA over the years.

*Humanize them. Humanize yourself. Most of these attackers try to diminish you. Make them see you.*

Those words had amused me then. How did one make someone see someone else who was invisible? But now, my entire survival depended upon it.

“You’re one of them, aren’t you?” he mumbled over and over.

I realized that this wasn’t Richard Crossman at all. This kid, whoever he was, was a different kind of threat to me.

“One of who?” I asked sweetly. “My name is Mylee. What’s yours?”

“You’re one of them aliens. I know all about you. I saw it on the television.”

*Where the fuck is Jamie? How did this happen?*

I wasn’t hurt. He hadn’t knocked me unconscious or struck me in any way. Aside from being tied to a chair and having my head covered, I wasn’t any worse off.

“I’m not an... alien, my friend. If you take this thing off my head, I can show you my identification.”

“Nuh uh! I’m not falling for that again! I know what happens with your kind and your pills! I seen it!”

*Excellent. I've become a target for every tin-foil hat wearer in America.*

“What’s your name?”

“I ain’t tellin’ you squat! I ain’t gonna deal with you. They’re comin’ for you. He’ll be here soon. I just gotta make sure you don’t get away.”

Gooseflesh exploded all over my body.

“Who’s coming for me?” I whispered, suddenly understanding that perhaps this wasn’t a random event after all.

“The Sergeant. He’ll send you right back to your spaceship, where you belong. You’ll see!”

“What’s this sergeant’s name?” I sighed miserably, already knowing the answer.

“Why, his name is Sergeant Richard Crossman.”

\* \* \*

Thirst kicked in next, and the succulent aroma began to give me a headache.

“Hey, could I get a bit of water?” I asked stupidly.

“Aliens don’t require water to survive,” he intoned before starting on a four-minute diatribe on something that only made my headache worse because it made absolutely no sense.

A small buzzing sound cut him off, and my heart leaped into my throat.

*That’s a cell phone.*

“Oh... the Sergeant will be here soon,” he squeaked. “I can go now.”

“Please don’t,” I begged. “He’s going to kill me when he gets here. Is that what you want? For me to die?”

Sweat began to drip down my face, the fusion of anxiety and heat meshing together. I was losing it as I strained against the zip ties holding my wrists and ankles in place, tears welling in my eyes.

“Your kind doesn’t die. They only repopulate and regenerate and become other aliens or comets,” he explained.

“I’m not a fucking alien!” I howled, rocking my body. “I’m a person! My name is Mylee Lynn, and my family is worried about me!”

He scoffed, unfazed by my declarations. The tears began to fall, and his footsteps plodded against the hollow floor. I gleaned that I was in some kind of cabin or cottage, but I couldn’t see much through the sack.

“Before you go, please take the sack off my face,” I mewled. “I’ll

suffocate... and the Sergeant won't like it if you kill me before he gets here!"

The footsteps stopped. I held my breath, and then he came back toward me. With a whoosh, the potato bag came off my face, and I stared at a startlingly innocent face. I remembered him now. I'd seen him in the lobby of the hotel, his guileless blue eyes staring at me as I strode through on my way to the conference.

I'd been right about the location, a single-room shack, outfitted with nothing more than a rickety table and the chair on which I sat, a naked bulb hanging from the center of the beamed roof.

Where the hell was I?

The saccharine, earthy smell was overwhelming now, and I tried to look out of the windows, but they were filthy, and night seemed to be upon us.

"Aliens don't cry," he mumbled, perplexed by my tears. "They don't have no tears."

"I'm not a Venetian," I whispered. "I'm a person, and you're going to get me murdered if you don't let me go."

He continued to stare at me like he was considering my words seriously.

"What's your name?" I asked again. "I'm Mylee."

"Billy."

"Billy, please, can I use your phone?" I rasped.

He shook his head. "The Sergeant wouldn't like that."

"He wouldn't have to know. No one would have to know. I wouldn't tell."

Billy shook his head again, and I dropped my chin in resignation. "Please, Billy. Just let me go. I won't get you in any trouble. I know this isn't your fault—"

Headlights flashed over the wall, and Billy squeaked for joy, bouncing from one foot to the other, the hem of his faded blue jeans catching beneath his filthy, red sneakers.

"He's here! He's really here!"

*It's okay. I've had a good life. I've had more than most people can ever hope to achieve. Please don't cry for me, guys. I'm okay. I loved you in a way I never believed I could love anyone, and you loved me better than someone has ever loved before me.*

The door flew open, and Richard Crossman grinned at me, his eyes cold and mirthless.

"Well, would you look who it is," he sneered, striding toward me. "The

little bitch from the café.”

I refused to let this man see me broken and sobbing. He didn't deserve it.

“And you're the big bitch who can't handle rejection, right?” I retorted.

He raised his hand to slap me, but as it came down, Billy squealed again, excitement filling his voice.

“Sergeant, the rest of the army's here!”

Dizziness washed over me, and my eyes closed at the terrifying revelation.

*There's more of them? What hellscape is this?*

“What?!” The surprise in Richard's voice popped my eyes back open, and hope flooded me as he whipped around to stare at the doors as loud sirens filled the air and a speaker yelled out.

“This is the FBI. Anyone inside, come out with your hands up if you are able. Any resistance will be met with deadly force.”

“You bitch!” Richard roared, but as he turned to lunge for me, Lincoln, Kai, and Paxton burst through the door, the loudspeaker cursing them out.

“STOP! YOU THREE! GET BACK OUT HERE!”

They tackled Crossman as I watched in shock, Billy gaping at them with those wide, unsophisticated eyes. He toyed with his hands, looking helplessly at me.

“You ain't the army,” he grumbled, kicking the floor of the cabin as the FBI descended.

I began to sob as Richard was pulled to his feet, handcuffs slapped on his hands, and box cutters set my hands and feet free.

Billy, too, was led from the scene, but I was too busy being enveloped in hugs and kisses to notice as my men whisked me away to a waiting car.

“Are you hurt?” Kai demanded as the heat of the desert assaulted me.

“Where's the paramedic?” Paxton yelled at the FBI agents. “Get your shit together!”

“Shh, shh!” I urged, putting my hand on his muscled arm. “I'm thirsty and hot. I'm not injured. Apparently, aliens don't get hurt.”

“What?” They looked at me, but I waved my hand dismissively.

“It doesn't matter. Can we just go home?” I begged. “I've had enough of Nevada.”

“I'm starting to think that maybe traveling isn't for you,” Lincoln remarked dryly.

“As long as that animal stays away, I don't think traveling is going to be a

problem again.”

We watched as Richard, glowering furiously at us, was led into the back of the agent’s non-descript town cars. One of the agents saluted Paxton and Lincoln, but my lovers only rolled their eyes.

“Come on, babe,” Paxton urged. “Let’s get out of here.”

“Yes please,” I agreed.

## CHAPTER 30



*Mylee*

**T**he only thing I remembered about the ride back to the plane was guzzling two bottles of water and the guys fussing over me incessantly.

Once we were on the private jet, Nichole, the flight attendant, tucked herself away and left us alone in the cabin.

“Come on,” Lincoln said, gently leading me into the sleeping quarters where the full bathroom sat. “We don’t have a change of clothes for you, but you can have a shower, and we’ll figure something out.”

Wobbly but grateful to strip off the stained, streaked pantsuit and reminder of my ordeal, I took to the glass shower and turned the water on as hot as I could stand it, washing away the desert grime.

After half an hour, Lincoln knocked on the door. “Are you all right?” he asked quietly. “Do you need anything?”

I turned off the faucet and opened the door, dripping and naked in front of him. He exhaled slowly, relief coloring his face to see me.

“Take me to the bed,” I instructed him. Without hesitation, he picked me up in his arms and carried me back into the main cabin where Kai and Paxton sat speaking softly.

On the sleeper seat, Lincoln laid me gently, pausing to kiss my lips.

“We were so worried about you,” he rasped, but I shook my head.

“I was always going to be okay,” I promised, as he spread me wide to nuzzle his face against the softness of my thighs.

Paxton and Kai rose from their spots to venture closer as I shivered, folding my arms over my chest. They kneeled beside me, their lips finding the folds of my body.

Paxton stood and pulled my arms away, exposing my nipples for his mouth to taste, hands cupping at my skin to warm me until my chills subsided

and warmth overtook my goosebumps.

Bit by bit, their clothes came off, making them as naked as me, tongues, fingers, and hands exploring my body.

Their bodies became a blur as Lincoln's lips worked tirelessly against the folds of my thighs, driving me higher into ecstasy, bringing me out of my terrified state and into the secure pleasure of their arms.

Kai's thick cock fell against my lips as he straddled me over my shoulders. I took Paxton in my hands, stroking him, as Lincoln delved deeper into my center, making my pussy as wet as the rest of me.

More shivers ran through me now, these ones heated, Lincoln withdrawing his fingertips from my yearning core to enter me with something much more filling. I moaned aloud, Kai's thickness lodging deeper inside my mouth to block my cries, his hips finding movement akin to Lincoln's thrusts. They moved in tandem, until Lincoln stopped to allow patiently waiting Paxton his own fun.

I moved onto all fours, and Kai positioned himself in front of me, while Paxton lay under me. Kai pumped in and out of my lips as I lowered onto Paxton and rode him like a cowgirl. His hands slapped my ass and then spread me wide, inviting Lincoln inside me, too.

Again, fingers found my nipples, squeezing and sending fissions of electricity through my body until I couldn't tell who was giving me which orgasm anymore.

Paxton grew harder as Lincoln's tip found my back entrance, and together, my three princes took me hard, deep, and raw.

I clung to Kai's buttocks, Paxton and Lincoln pounding at me until I could barely see or think. One after the other, my orgasms spilled. Kai's hot seed shot through my mouth and coaxed yet another climax from me.

He withdrew, and I let loose my feral howls, not caring if the pilot and Nichole all heard.

"That's our pussy, our ass, our mouth," Paxton rasped, giving himself the permission to flood me with his seed.

Over and over, my climaxes spilled, my body quivering with a joy unsurpassed by any other I'd ever known.

Lincoln grunted once, before succumbing to his own pleasure.

My men were as done as me, and I whimpered, falling into a pile of jelly. I was spent.

Lincoln instantly scooped me up, laying me back on the chair as Kai

found me a blanket. Paxton got me water, and they sat around me, stroking my hair, skin, and back until I fell asleep, sated and safe where I belonged.

\* \* \*

None of us went into the office for the next two days. We stayed home and regrouped, discussing the security protocols and steps we needed to take going forward, punctuating the talks of business with lovemaking and popcorn.

Curled up on the sofa in the living room, we had long discussions.

“I don’t know what happened with security in Reno,” I added. “But that team has got to go. They’ve failed too many times.”

“Agreed,” Lincoln said. “I wouldn’t be surprised if Crossman got to them somehow, too.”

“Hopefully, we won’t have to deal with this level of crazy again,” I sighed. “But at least we know what’s out there now.”

“And you know that we’ll go to the ends of the earth to protect you, don’t you?” Kai asked worriedly.

“I do know that,” I told him. “But I’d rather not be in that situation again if we can avoid it. And there is so much instability in the world right now...”

“We will avoid it,” Lincoln assured me. “And I’m sorry any of that happened to you. You’re far too precious to us.”

“You really are, Mylee. Before you came along...” Paxton sighed, and I reached out to touch his face.

“I feel the same way about you guys. I never knew what it was like to have a family, not really. I mean, my mom was gone when I was so young, and foster care...”

I shuddered.

“You will always have a family with us,” Kai promised.

“You’ve proven that time and again,” I agreed.

“I have an idea...” Lincoln said slowly, sitting up to look around. “But I think we’ll need to vote on it.”

I waited, but he wasn’t looking at me. His eyes were set on his friends.

“We’ve never had a home, guys. Not since we started Silverpiece. We’ve always been on the go, committed to nothing. We’re always traveling and moving around.”

“You have houses,” Kai argued.

“But not a home,” Lincoln repeated. “How would you feel about setting up our home base in Chicago? Permanently.”

“Here?” Paxton asked dubiously, gesturing vaguely around the penthouse.

“No, not here,” Lincoln replied slowly. “I’m talking about buying a plot of land and building our own home. Something all of us agree on—with Mylee as the mastermind.”

Excitement ignited inside me, and I looked from one to the next for their take on the notion.

Kai began to nod, and I could see the idea was growing on Paxton.

“Chicago’s all right,” Paxton agreed slowly. “After all, that is where we met Mylee.”

I beamed happily and collapsed against the couch.

“Sounds like it’s settled then,” Lincoln chuckled. “Mylee has turned us into Chicagnites.”

Everyone laughed.

“I don’t think they’re called that, Linc,” Kai sighed.

“Chicagogians?” he tried, and we all burst out laughing again.

Whatever they were called, that was what they were now. Just like me. My princes were home with me, just like destiny had intended all along.

# *Epilogue*

### *One Year Later*

I stopped at the reception desk, dropping an envelope on the counter with my right hand, the left balancing an oversized bag filled with odds and ends.

“Let me get that for you, Ms. Lynn,” Lyndon called, rushing forward to help me, his hands extended.

“Oh, there you are,” I laughed, turning to address the doorman. “No, no, I’ve got it, thank you.” I nodded toward the envelope on the counter. “That’s for you, though. I wanted to leave it before we went.”

“Are you sure, Ms. Lynn? I can help.”

“It’s all done, Lyndon. I’m sure. This is the last of it. Just take that.”

I nodded again at the envelope. The doorman frowned slightly as he reached uncertainly for the paper, and I turned for the street. “Thank you for everything, Lyndon.”

“Ms. Lynn!”

I paused and looked back toward him, cocking my head curiously. He ambled closer, his aging cheeks flushed slightly. “I... I just wanted to say...”

My eyebrows rose. “What is it, Lyndon?”

“I’m sorry.”

My brow knit into a vee of confusion, the apology unexpected. “For what?” I asked, glancing toward the street where Charlie was double parked and waiting impatiently for me. I had sworn to be a minute, and I was already taking ten times longer than I’d expected. The driver scowled at me and tapped his watch meaningfully, but I ignored him.

“I wasn’t very kind to you when you first came to the Gable Place,” he

blurted out. “And that was my fault, not yours. You’re lovely and deserved better. I should have given you a chance.”

My heart swelled at the sincerity, and I shook my head, a smile forming on my lips.

“Oh, Lyndon. That’s all water under the bridge. You and I are pals now, aren’t we?” I told him honestly.

I hadn’t thought about any of his poor attitude in months, and I would miss him.

“I hope so, Ms. Lynn. And I hope you’ll stop by whenever you’re in the neighborhood. It won’t be the same around here without you.”

I grinned at him. “I hope you and the missus enjoy the tickets,” I winked, nodding toward the envelope.

“And I hope you and the misters enjoy your new house. You’ve earned it.”

I giggled, and on a whim, I hugged the crotchety old curmudgeon, relishing the blush on his face.

“I won’t be a stranger, Lyndon. See you later.”

I hurried out the front doors, Lyndon holding it for me now as Charlie grimaced.

“It’s about time!” he complained. “Were you just waiting for me to get a ticket?”

“You say that like Silverpiece won’t cover it,” I mused.

“That’s not the point.”

“Don’t start your shit now,” I instructed him. “Moving is a bitch.”

“You hired movers,” the driver reminded me.

“Watch it, or next time, I’ll make you move me again.”

“It wouldn’t be the first time,” he retorted lightly, and we both laughed as I climbed into the backseat with my bag. It was the last of everything I could find at the penthouse, our lives fully wrapped up and brought to the suburbs to our brand-new build, where I had overseen every detail.

But as we drove away from the Gable Place, my heart twinged, this start of a new chapter nostalgic and vaguely sad.

“How do you feel about this drive now?” I asked the long-time driver. “Or do you care?”

“Honestly? I’m glad I don’t have to fight as much traffic. You guys picked a beautiful spot... especially if you’re ever going to have kids.”

It had been one of the topics of conversation we’d had when investing in

the lot, the location, the school zone. I was still on birth control, but one day, maybe...

We drove through the city to the suburbs, the pretty greenery already affecting my mood as the business of downtown faded away.

Charlie steered the Escalade up the gated driveway, parking next to the movers.

Kai was at my door before Charlie could park.

“You made it!” he exhaled in relief. “I was starting to think you got lost.”

“I was chatting with Lyndon, and frankly, you guys left a bit of a mess behind,” I chided him.

“We have cleaners going through,” Kai said defensively. “We wouldn’t leave it like that for the new owners.”

I kissed his cheeks gently. “I know. Honestly, I couldn’t bring myself to leave, knowing it was the last time I was going to be in there.”

Kai paused at the pillared stoop and eyed me in his usual worried way. “Do you regret it?”

“What? No! We needed a house. The penthouse’s function was outlived. This is much better for all of us.”

“And maybe more of us one day?” Kai asked shyly.

I rubbed my nose against his. “Oh, I don’t know. You three pretty much wear me out. I’m not sure how many more of you I can handle.”

Kai balked, but Paxton whooped from the doorway. “You’re such a brat,” he told me.

“I learned from the best,” I replied, sashaying up the stone steps to kiss him on the lips. His hands encircled my ass, and he pulled me against him. “Hey, what are the chances that the kitchen is going to be unpacked tonight? I’m starving.”

“Nah, no cooking on moving day,” Lincoln declared, joining us in the foyer. “We’re going out.”

“Works for me,” I agreed, stepping aside as the mover shuffled down one side of the twin staircases.

“I just realized how much this place looks like my villa in Italy,” Lincoln declared, standing back to take in the front. “Did you do that on purpose?”

“Huh,” I commented. “Maybe. For all our sakes, I hope the railings are sturdier.”

“Oh, come on...” Paxton groaned.

“What? Too soon?” I asked innocently. “Actually, speaking of faulty



railings...”

“Yeah, I heard,” Lincoln interjected quickly, shooting the others a look. “We weren’t sure if you wanted to know about it.”

“Are you talking about Richard Crossman?” Kai asked in his usual oblivious way.

“Yeah,” Paxton sighed. “I didn’t want to bring that up today.”

“Of course I want to know about it. That monster is going to be in prison for the rest of his natural life. Good to know that poisoning through the mail carries a life sentence.”

“Don’t mess with the feds,” Lincoln offered lightly.

“Don’t mess with Silverpiece, either,” Paxton growled protectively. “Or our girl.”

I flashed them a sad smile.

“I’m glad that Billy is getting the psychological help he needs,” I added, thinking of the poor kid who had been dragged into doing Richard’s bidding. “He didn’t deserve jail time.”

“Your heart is too big sometimes,” Paxton chided me. “I wouldn’t mind seeing him rot in prison.”

“Not everyone belongs in prison,” I insisted. “But we can definitely celebrate Crossman being in there tonight.”

“Why don’t you go get dressed? We have reservations for six,” Lincoln said, briskly changing the subject.

“We do?” I replied, confused. “When did this happen?”

“We don’t need you to do everything for us, you know?” Paxton teased, slapping my bottom. “We can handle dinner reservations.”

“Good to know!” I replied with faux cheer.

“Most of your stuff should be in your suite already. You remember which one is yours, don’t you?”

I rolled my eyes. “Yes. I did design this house.”

“How could we forget?” Paxton teased.

I started up the east side stairs, hand trailing over the hand-carved railing, eyes moving toward the skylights. A bird flew overhead as I glanced up, and I took it as a good sign.

I turned toward the east wing, where my and Lincoln’s bedrooms were, with the adjoining doors for visits. There were another two empty bedrooms in this wing, one of which held a double king bed for nights for us all to share. In the west wing, there were two more empty bedrooms.

I hadn't allotted the men's sleeping arrangements, and from what I gleaned, they would take turns sleeping in the east wing with me. All four of us could have stayed in that wing, but I suspected the arrangement had something to do with the idea that we wouldn't be alone for much longer.

I pushed through the double doors of my suite and headed into the bathroom, stripping off the sweaty shorts and t-shirt I'd been wearing all day for the move.

The steam shower and coconut soaps washed away the day's grime, and by the time I dressed in a black dress for dinner, I felt like a new person.

Descending the east stairs, I was surprised to find all three of my princes at the door, donned in tuxedos. They watched me like I was a princess, the awe and adoration in their faces palpable, even after all this time.

"Why are you so dressed up?" I asked teasingly. "Should I go put on my tiara?"

"With or without a tiara, you're always a queen," Paxton informed me, taking my hand and leading me into the evening air.

The movers had gone, and Charlie grinned at us, opening the door to the Escalade.

I looked around the backseat of the SUV, another memory resurfacing. Heat gushed between my thighs.

"What are you thinking about that's making your cheeks so pink, Ms. Lynn?" Paxton taunted me.

"That's none of your business, Mr. Webb," I replied, turning to look out the window. All their hands were on me, fueling the vibrations in my body. Paxton squeezed my knee, Lincoln holding my hand, Kai on my arm.

My men, my lovers.

When we arrived at the restaurant, Lincoln's hand extended to show me inside, and we were immediately shown to a remote booth overlooking the stage. A musky opium incense floated through the air.

"This place is from another era," I mused, looking around the speakeasy-style restaurant.

"Sometimes I feel the same way about you," Lincoln commented.

"I don't know where you came from," Paxton agreed. "I find myself looking at you and wondering."

"But your ideas are so modern and innovative. Even when I think they're not going to work, you prove me so wrong," Kai went on.

I laughed, but my eyebrows knit as I looked around the table. "Why do I

feel like you guys have planned an intervention of sorts?”

“It’s the opposite of an intervention,” Lincoln promised, producing a set of papers that now caused my eyebrows to shoot up. “It’s a show of appreciation.”

“You have taken your job and spun it on its head,” Kai told me. “Our employees have never felt more appreciated.”

“You managed to sell the Celestial Vista single-handedly when no one else could,” Paxton reminded me.

“You have a social media presence that puts most influencers to shame,” Lincoln said. “And you still make us dinner every night.”

“When you let me cook for you,” I chuckled nervously, not understanding what this was about.

“You’re as much a part of Silverpiece as we are,” Lincoln told me. “Which is why we’re making you a quarter partner. You’ll have a spot on the board—”

“*What?!*”

The entire restaurant turned to look at me, but I didn’t care, and neither did the men, who continued to explain the terms they had drawn up.

“Nothing will change about your position, except we would like to give you a new block of luxury condos to design and sell,” Lincoln went on.

He opened the file folder for me to see the contract, and I stared at it in disbelief.

“It would be similar to the Celestial, exclusive units, small buildings—”

“On one condition,” I blurted out.

“There’s always a condition,” Paxton intoned in a singsong voice.

“What’s the condition?” Lincoln asked, ignoring him.

I inhaled, sure that they would refuse, but I had to give it a shot. “Allot ten percent of the units to the unhoused or low-income families. There’s a real homelessness problem, and we’re in a position to do something about it.”

I held my breath in anticipation, waiting to be shot down immediately, but not one of them refused off the bat.

Lincoln rolled his tongue around inside his mouth, eyeing Paxton.

“Five percent,” Lincoln countered.

“Seven.”

“Deal.”

I exhaled and laughed again, shaking his hand as Kai beamed at me from his side of the table.

“You see? That’s why we need you on our side,” Paxton snickered. “Killer negotiations.”

I settled back, reaching for my water.

“There’s one more thing, Mylee,” Lincoln said, and I glanced at him, not sure I liked his tone.

“Dare I ask?”

“It’s big, and I don’t know how you’ll feel about it.”

“Well, you don’t know unless you ask,” I laughed, setting my water back down. “Go for—”

“Will you marry us?”

Baffled and caught off guard, I merely gawked at him, my eyes flittering toward the others, who grinned, waiting for a response.

“I... yes!” I sputtered. “I will! But...” I trailed off, not wanting to ruin the beautiful ask, happiness overwhelming my heart as my cheeks flushed with pleasure.

“Never mind the legalities,” Lincoln interjected. “It’s not for the government. It’s for us. Our commitment to you and vice versa. We love you, and we know that you love us. Let’s make this official.”

Squealing, I threw my arms around Lincoln, then Paxton, and then Kai, tears of joy welling inside my eyes. “Yes! I love you all so much!”

“We love you too, Mylee,” Paxton breathed. “Always and forever.”

\* \* \*

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