

Billionaire
BOSSHOLE

MY

Wildest

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S H A W H A R T

MY WILDEST OBSESSION

BILLIONAIRE BOSSHOLE

BOOK 3

SHAW HART

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Dear Diary,

Theo tied the score today. It's okay though. I've got big plans for tomorrow to pull into the lead once again. He's not going to know what hit him.

He probably doesn't even realize that I'm keeping track of all our verbal sparring and ranking who wins each. Every interaction is carefully scored, but he's too wrapped up in work to notice me scribbling in my notebook every day.

I don't know what it is about him, but I can't seem to help myself around him. He brings out the worst in me. Or maybe it's the best.

He confuses me and apparently my body too. I'm never sure if I want to smack him or pull him down and kiss him. I wonder what he would do if I did either of those options. Maybe one day I'll try it, but for now, the war continues.

And I'm planning on winning.

Get ready to fall in love with these billionaire bossholes! Follow along as these three childhood friends meet and fall hard for their woman! This series is full of steamy office romance scenes and laugh-out-loud moments. If you love brooding billionaires, fierce heroines, and some seriously spicy fun then one-click today!

ONE

Clara

I WRING my hands in my lap for the umpteenth time and Bossy sighs next to me.

“Did we have to fly?” I ask him, and he nods, never taking his eyes off the stack of papers in his lap.

“Yes,” he says in that no nonsense voice.

“Why couldn’t we have driven?” I ask, trying not to sound too whiny, and he sighs.

“Because it’s a fourteen-hour drive, Clara.”

“Still.”

He lets out an exasperated sigh and I cross my arms over my chest, turning to stare out the tiny plane window.

I took the window seat, hoping that if I could see, maybe it would help with my fear of flying. Sitting here now though, I know that won’t happen.

I’m terrified. It feels like my heart is about to beat right out of my chest and I clench my fingers tight until I feel the sting of my nails biting into my palms, trying to calm my anxiety.

“If I had known that flying was part of the job description, I never would have taken the job,” I mumble.

“You’ve worked for me for a year and a half now, and this is the first time that I’ve asked you to fly anywhere. In the

future, I'll only do business with people in a hundred-mile radius to better suit your needs," he says sarcastically.

I kick his shin.

He glares at me and I glare right back.

I pull out my diary and flip to the last page, adding a tally under his name. I slam the diary closed when I see Theo glancing over at me curiously.

"You're always scribbling in that thing," he grumbles, and I tuck it back in my bag and nudge my bag back under the seat in front of me.

"Am I?" I ask innocently.

He rolls his eyes and goes back to his work.

I don't know why he doesn't just fire me. I have to be the worst assistant that he's ever had, but I've managed to last the longest. I'm sure that has something to do with the fact that I can handle his mood swings and attitude better than most. I grew up with four older brothers which means that I can give as good as I get. Despite our constant bickering, we seem to make a good team.

I started working for Theo right after I graduated college. It was meant to be a stepping stone job, but it's been a year and a half and I'm still working for him. As much as we argue, I love working for him.

Most of the time anyway.

I would never admit that to him, of course.

"Ladies and gentlemen, please buckle your seatbelts and stow your belongings. We'll be taking off in just a moment."

"Shit," I whisper, and Theo shuffles the papers in his lap.

"Calm down," he tells me.

"Fuck you," I hiss.

We're in first class, of course. Bossy only ever has the best of everything. The top floor of our building, the newest fancy

car, a penthouse apartment, and the brightest lawyers working for him.

To be fair, he also works hard for everything that he has. The man is a workaholic to the highest order and he's damn good at what he does. I try to pretend otherwise though. His ego is big enough already.

The plane starts to roll back from the gate, and I start taking deep breaths as the flight attendants give their safety speech. I'm paying attention to every word but Theo has his head buried in his paperwork.

"Pay attention," I warn him.

"No."

"I'm not going to save you if there's a terrible plane crash or something."

"Good," he says, his tone flat.

I elbow his arm off the arm rest and he sighs like he's the most wronged man alive. The plane reaches the end of the runway and I close my eyes, trying to find calm. My fingers twist together and I repeat stats on plane crashes in my head. I was hoping that would help, but it's only reminding me of plane crashes and dying.

We start to accelerate and I gasp, my hands locking onto the arm rests.

Or, well, one of the arm rests.

My right hand is locked around Theo's wrist. My fingernails dig into the skin on the top of his hand and I feel him tense. When I don't let up, he tries to move his hand away, but I'm locked onto him like a cat trying to avoid the bathtub.

"Jesus, Clara," he growls.

He manages to rip his way out of my grip, but I leave claw marks on the back of his hand. To my surprise, he doesn't try to move his hand as far away from me as possible like I expected. Instead, he grabs my hand and squeezes it, almost reassuringly.

That's what fixes it for me. That's what distracts me from the plane.

Hold up.

Is Theo being... nice?

Why?

Oh my gosh, maybe we entered another universe.

I peek out the window and frown when I see the same view as before.

"The flight is only two hours," Theo tells me, and I nod.

"Right."

He sighs again, picking up his papers and leaving me to my misery. Except, he never tries to take his hand from mine.

A tickle hits my fingers and I frown, twisting our hands and gasping.

"Shit! You're bleeding," I half shout.

I let go of his hand and grab my bag from under the seat. I start digging through it to find my first aid kit.

"I have band-aids and stuff. Just give me a second."

"That's not necessary. I'm fine," he says, trying to wave me off.

I don't know what it is, maybe because he was kind to me, and just like with our sparring, I feel like I have to make things between us even, but I desperately need to make this up to him.

"Let me clean it up," I insist, grabbing his hand and dragging it closer to me.

I dab at the wounds with some Kleenex and then squirt Neosporin onto the scratch marks. I rifle through the kit and grab the band aids, stifling a laugh when I see that the only ones that I have are Hello Kitty themed.

"No!" He snaps when he sees the pink, and I pout.

“Yes. You can take them off later, but at least it will help with the bleeding now.”

I grab his hand, practically wrestling with it when he tries to tug away from me, and I hold it still while I peel off the bandages and stick them over the scratches.

“Always so fucking difficult,” I snap at him.

He just growls in response, his fingers flexing in my hold.

My skin starts to tingle and it hits me then that this is the most that I’ve ever touched him. Normally, I try to do all that I can to avoid making contact with him.

It’s bad enough that I have this stupid crush on him. I mean, sure, Theo is hot as hell, but he’s also a total asshole. He’s argumentative and grumpy. Plus, he never dates. Like, *never*. He’s always solo to any events that he goes to, and to be fair, he’s always in the office so I don’t think that he’s even looking for a relationship, and that’s all that I do.

“There,” I say as I put the last band-aid in place.

He growls again, and I bite back my smile.

“They really pop next to your black suit,” I compliment him, and he looks like he wants to rip all of the band-aids off and set them on fire.

“Great,” he says through gritted teeth.

I smile, and he glares at me. My smile is quickly wiped off when the plane starts to shake. He must be able to see the panic on my face because he reaches for me at the same time that I reach for him.

“It’s just some turbulence,” he tells me, and I nod.

“Right.”

It was always easy to keep my distance with Theo, but now that I’ve seen this side of him, this compassionate and caring side, I’m starting to kind of fall for him. He’s being sweet, well, sweet for him, and I like it.

Be careful. It would never work out between the two of you, my subconscious reminds me and I nod.

I know that dating him would be a bad idea. I shouldn't let him get close to me and should keep my distance, yet I still let him hold my hand for the rest of the flight.

Probably not a bad sign, I lie to myself.

I sigh as the flight attendant comes around to ask if we'd like something to drink, and Theo ignores me and everyone else around him for the rest of the flight.

TWO

Theo

THIS IS A MISTAKE.

I shouldn't be holding Clara's hand. I shouldn't have even brought her on this trip. I didn't *really* need my assistant on this trip, but the thought of being away from Clara for even a few days was hard to bear.

Not that I would ever admit that.

This damn girl. Only she can get me to do things.

Holding hands? I don't do that with anyone. Except for Clara on planes, I guess.

Wearing Hello Kitty band-aids? Only because Clara put them on me and seemed so relieved to be bandaging me up.

I admit, it was nice to have someone take care of me, even if it was only for a few moments. I haven't had that, well... ever in my life.

I push away thoughts of my shitty childhood and try to focus on the papers in front of me. I should be studying up for the meeting later today. Instead, all I can think about is how it feels to have Clara touching me.

Her grip tightens around my fingers as we hit a pocket of rough air and my heart takes off like a shot.

Dammit. Get it together. You can't have Clara. You can never be with her. Get your head straight!

Her fingers brush over the back of my hand and I glance down, glaring when I see the Hello Kitty band-aids.

Jesus, there's like five of them.

I want to rip them off, but then I notice Clara smiling down at them and I can't bring myself to take them off.

We're close to landing now. I can tell by the way that Clara is squirming around in her seat like an anxious, hyper squirrel.

"It's going to be fine," I whisper at her, and she rolls her eyes.

"I hate when you say that," she complains, and I roll my eyes right back.

"You'd rather I told you that we were going to die?" I ask her sarcastically, and she tries to kick me but I move before she can.

She reaches for her bag to dig that damn diary of hers. She thinks that I don't know what she's doing with that, but I know everything about her. I know that she keeps track of our verbal sparring in the back of it. I also know that after this plane ride, I'm winning.

I keep track of things with Clara too. Mine is all just mental though.

For instance, this is the fifth time this month that she's worn that tight black skirt, the first time this week that she's pulled her hair up, and the millionth time that I've thought about kissing her.

The buckle seat belt sign dings and they announce that we'll be landing soon. Clara's grip tightens painfully around my fingers and I swear that she's close to breaking a few of them. My ears pop as we get closer to the ground and I stuff my papers in to my bag and get ready to deplane.

As soon as the wheels touch the ground, Clara and I release each other like our hands are on fire. We both ignore the other as we gather our things and then stand and make our way off the plane.

“This way,” I say, taking off at a quick pace towards the exit.

I hired a car to take us to the meeting and then our hotel, and I scan the people holding boards until I spot my name.

“Keep up,” I say over my shoulder, and Clara’s bag hits the back of my legs.

I don’t glance back at her. I know that she did that on purpose.

We walk in silence behind the driver to the black sedan and I open the door. Clara elbows past me, leaving her bags at my side and I bite back a grin as she climbs in.

God, I love her sassiness and confidence.

My eyes zero in on her ass as she climbs across the seats to the other side.

“In the trunk, sir?” The driver asks, and my head snaps to the side as I glare at him.

“What?” I snarl.

“The bags. Should I put them in the trunk?” He asks again, and I blink.

“Oh, yeah. Thanks.”

I slide into the car and slam the door closed behind me. Clara is busy texting on her phone, her diary lying in her lap. I glare at it, knowing that she counted getting into the car before me as a win for her.

“To the hotel, sir?” The driver asks, and I shake my head.

“No, we’re running late. Take us straight to High Tower Market.”

“Please,” Clara adds, giving me a stern look that I choose to ignore.

“Right away.”

The car pulls away from the curb and I grab my briefcase to go back to reviewing the documents. My phone buzzes and

I pull it out, freezing when I see my aunt's name on the screen. I silence the call and tuck the phone back in my pocket.

"You know that she's just going to call me if you don't answer," Clara says.

"Tell her I said hi."

"You could have just told her yourself," she points out as her phone starts to ring.

"Too busy."

She sighs and answers the call. I listen to her side of the conversation as we drive down the congested streets.

The truth is that I love my aunt. She was the first positive adult that I had in my life. She just came into it way too late.

"Oh, and Theo says hi," Clara says, giving me a dirty look. "Yeah, I will."

She hangs up the call as we pull up in front of the building and I climb out before she can say anything.

I just need to make it through this meeting and then I can get away from Clara and get my attraction to her back under control once I'm alone in the hotel room.

Clara climbs out after me and we share a look before we stride into the meeting, side by side. I do my best to ignore how right it feels to have her by my side.

THREE

Clara

“YOU WERE in top form back there, Bossy.”

“Don’t call me that,” Theo says without looking up from his phone.

I snicker and he sighs. I’ve been calling him Bossy for a few months now. Ever since I found out that he didn’t know who Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs were. He doesn’t find it as funny as I do, but that’s okay.

The car pulls up in front of our hotel and I open my door, climbing out and rounding the trunk to get Theo’s door. He’s still engrossed in his email or whatever and he barely glances up as he gets out.

“You’re welcome,” I tell him, and he does a double take.

“What are you doing?” He asks, and I roll my eyes.

“Pay attention, Bossy.”

He sighs loudly, and I push past him and grab our bags. I reach into Theo’s coat pocket and grab his wallet, pulling out a hundred and tipping the driver.

“Thanks,” I tell him as I grab my bags and head inside with Theo on my heels.

“Are you going to give me my wallet back?” Theo asks, and I shake my head.

“Are you going to talk to people and check us in?” I ask him.

“No.”

“Great, then I’ll give you your wallet back after I’ve done that.”

“Sounds good.”

I head up to the reception desk and smile as the woman there greets me.

“Checking in?”

“Yes, it should be two rooms. Under Jameson.”

“Jameson,” she says as she starts to type away on her keyboard.

I grab Theo’s credit card out and set that on the counter.

“I see one room here for Jameson,” she says, and my stomach drops.

“Shit,” I whisper.

Me coming with Theo was a last minute decision and I was meant to adjust the room reservation to two rooms...except, I forgot.

“Sorry, do you have another room that I can book as well?” I ask.

“No, I’m sorry, miss, but we’re completely booked. There are several conferences happening in town this weekend.”

“Great,” I sigh. “Just the one room then.”

She takes Theo’s card and I peek at him out of the corner of my eye. He’s still busy on his phone and I debate my options.

I could tell him what happened, but I already know that he won’t take it well. I’m tired and I don’t want to deal with his grumpy temper tantrum.

I could take the key, try to get to the elevator before him and just leave him in the lobby. If he’s still distracted by his phone, then I might have a chance. I could make it up to my

room and then ignore him for the rest of the night, but I can only imagine the fallout from that.

“Here you are,” the hotel receptionist says as she passes me the room key.

“Thanks.”

I take the key and decide to go with my second plan. I grab my bags and tiptoe past Theo. I only make it a few feet before he’s falling into step beside me. I pick up my pace and he frowns, glancing up from his phone for a moment.

I start jogging and he huffs.

“What’s happening here?” He asks as I grind to a halt outside the elevators.

“Just excited to get upstairs,” I lie.

The elevator doors open and we step on. I hit the button for the twelfth floor and we ride up in silence. Theo is back to staring at his phone and when the doors open, I make a run for it. I manage to get the key card in the door and then partially open before Theo races after me.

I throw my bags into the room and am about to slam the door closed when Theo pushes it open.

“What the hell are you doing?” He snaps, looking confused and pissed off at the same time.

“Oh, didn’t see you there.”

“You just tried to slam the door in my face!” He says incredulously. “You threw your bags in here like the place was on fire.”

“Did I?”

“Clara!” He snaps.

“They only have one room,” I admit, kicking my bags out of the way and closing the door.

“You were going to just leave me in the hallway!” He steams after a moment, and I shrug.

“You’re a big strong guy. You would have been fine.”

He glares at me and stomps further into the room.

“They messed up our reservations? I’ll call and handle it.”

“No! No, they didn’t. I did. I forgot to make a reservation for another room.”

He freezes, staring between me and the one bed.

“Are you hitting on me? Are you trying to sleep with me?” He asks, and my mouth drops open.

“No! Oh my God, no! This was an honest mistake,” I insist.

He frowns, turning to look around the room.

“Where are you sleeping?” He finally asks me.

“Um, right there,” I say, pointing to the bed.

“No. I’m sleeping there.”

“Really? You seem more like a couch guy. You could curl up on this bad boy like a little cat,” I say, patting the small sofa next to me.

“I can’t fit on that, but you can. It’s tiny, just like you.”

“No, I’m too chubby for that,” I argue.

“No, you’re not,” he snaps, and I’m taken back by the forcefulness behind his words.

We’re both silent as we regroup from his reaction.

“You know, it would be the gentlemanly thing to do to let me have the bed,” I try, and he huffs out a laugh.

“When have I ever been a gentleman?” He asks, and I sigh.

“There’s a first time for everything.”

“No.”

“Fine,” I sigh. “Then we share the bed.”

Theo looks panicked for a moment before he quickly schools his features.

“I’m going to take a shower,” he says, and I sit down on the couch and kick off my shoes.

The door clicks closed behind him and I exhale long and slow. Tonight is going to suck.

The water turns on and I do my best to avoid thinking about my boss naked and dripping wet.

I fail.

Hard.

He looks like he would be ripped under his suit and I imagine water and soap running down his toned body.

Oh my god, I can't be imaging my boss like this! It's bad enough that I'm going to see him when he walks out here. This feels way too intimate. I should leave, but where would I even go?

The water turns off and before I can figure that out, Theo is walking back out, his hair still damp. He's wearing a light gray shirt and a pair of black sweatpants. He looks so damn good that it should be illegal and I force myself to not look anywhere below his waist.

"Okay, I'm going to take a shower," I blurt out, leaping off of the couch.

I grab my duffle bag and race past Theo into the bathroom.

"Fuck," I whisper.

The bathroom is still steamy and it only brings the fantasy of Theo naked in here back.

I strip and crank the water as hot as it will go. I step under the spray and let the hot water ease the ache in my tired body. I grab the tiny bottle of soap and try not to think about Theo just using it.

We're going to smell the same.

Stop it! I know that we want him, but we also hate him. Kind of. Still, we can't have him.

I need to get out of here.

I hurry through the rest of my shower and towel off. I'm just glad that I remembered to bring my bag in here with me.

I unzip my duffle bag and rifle through the clothes for my pajamas. My stomach sinks when I realize that all I brought was a silk pair that's on the skimpier side.

“Dammit.”

I don't really have a choice though so I pull them on and head out to the room. Theo is busy working at the little desk and he doesn't even glance up as I pad out. I set my duffle bag on the dresser and that's when it happens.

He glances over at me and then away. Then his head snaps back, his eyes widening when he sees what I'm wearing.

“Admit it. You did all of this on purpose,” he accuses me.

“Why do you say that?”

“Because we're in one room and you're wearing that.”

“What's wrong with my pajamas?” I ask innocently.

“They're....” he pauses, and I bite my bottom lip.

“Sexy? Is that what you were going to say? You think that I look sexy, seductive even?” I ask him, and he scoffs.

“That's not what I was going to say,” he says but we both know that it's a lie.

I grab my diary and flip it open. He looks like he wants to rip it out of my hand and I smirk as I climb onto the bed and start to write.

I flip to the back first and add a tally underneath my name. I pause, but then I make a new scorecard and make two marks. One under fantasies about him, and one under he so wants me.

I smile and flip back to where I left off last. I lean back against the pillows as I start to write about my day.

FOUR

Theo

“ARE YOU HUNGRY?” Clara asks as she picks up the remote and turns the TV on.

“Yeah.”

“Room service? I’m too tired to go out.”

“Sure.”

I stare at the same paper that I’ve been trying to read for the last half hour. All I can see though is Clara in that tiny little silk pajama set. I wonder if it’s as soft as her skin.

“Here’s the menu.”

She slides off the bed and comes over to me holding the laminated menu out so that we can both read it.

“Two steaks with a baked potato and side salad?” She asks, and I glance at the menu.

“Yep.”

“I’ll order it. I’m also getting a dessert. Do you want anything or are you still on your I hate sugar kick?”

“Nothing for me. Thanks.” I say and I see her roll her eyes before she goes over to the phone to order.

I scan the same paragraph again, still not comprehending any of the words in front of me. I need to get the hell away from Clara, but there’s nowhere for me to go.

How am I going to make it through tonight? How am I going to share a bed with her?

I'm so fucked.

“And two bottles of water,” Clara finishes. “Perfect. Thanks.”

She hangs up and I spin around in my chair, raising an eyebrow at her.

“Thirty minutes. I charged it to your card.”

“Of course.”

“Want to watch a movie or something?” She asks as she starts to flip through the channels.

“No, I have a lot of work to do.”

“Uh huh,” she says, distracted.

I go back to my work, the only sound in the room coming from the TV and Clara occasionally giggling on the bed behind me.

I don't get a single thing done.

When the food comes, I give up on trying to get anything done and tuck all of my papers back in my briefcase for the night.

“Looks good,” I comment, and Clara nods, taking a bite of her chocolate cake.

I bite back a smile as I grab my own plate and join her at the table. We eat in silence, but it's not uncomfortable, at least not for me.

No, the uncomfortableness comes once we're done eating.

It's time for bed and all I can do is stare at the king size mattress. Clara is busy brushing her teeth, and I shake out my hands, trying to calm my nerves.

The door opens behind me and I push past Clara and slam the bathroom door closed before she can see how worried I am about us sleeping together.

I stare at my reflection in the bathroom mirror, resting my hands on the vanity as I take a deep breath.

Okay, I can't deny that I want her. I always have. I've always been able to control myself though and tonight isn't going to be any different.

My phone buzzes in my pocket and I pull it out, smiling when I see Anson's name on the screen.

"Hey, what's up?" I ask as I answer it.

"It's nice to hear your voice too," he deadpans.

"You never call me."

"Yeah, because our calls go like this."

"Fair enough. What's up?"

"Your aunt called me. Wanted to know how you were doing."

"Yeah, she called me too."

"Oh, so you've already talked to her then."

"No, I ignored her call. Clara talked to her though."

"What the heck is wrong with you, man?" he sighs, and I push away from the sink.

"How much time do you have?" I ask wryly.

Anson has been my friend for a long time. He knows all about my past since we grew up on the same block. He left for the military as soon as he could and only just moved back a few months ago.

"Anyway. She wanted to invite me, and you, to some fancy gala that she's hosting in a few weeks."

"Are you going to go?"

"Yeah. It was for some children's charity and it will be good to go support it."

"Alright."

"Alright. Call your aunt back, man."

“I will.”

“Good. I’ll talk to you later.”

“See you.”

I hang up and debate calling my aunt, but it’s getting late.

I’ll do it tomorrow.

I brush my teeth and head back out to the bedroom. Clara is already in bed and I take a deep breath as I head to the other side of the bed and pull back the covers. I’m tense and stiff, as I lie down next to her.

“I mean, did you want to make out or something?” Clara asks out of the blue and I stare at her in shock.

“What?” I choke, and she bursts out laughing.

“Kidding! You just seem so weird right now. I was just teasing you.”

“Right. I know that.”

“Clearly,” she says sarcastically. “Night.”

She rolls over on her side and I stare up at the ceiling.

And then I keep doing that for the next hour and a half. Clara is fast asleep and I wonder how she can be so fine with all of this.

Does my presence really not bother her? She’s just totally okay with lying half naked next to me?

Clara sighs in her sleep and rolls over, throwing a leg and arm over me.

Jesus Christ.

She’s freaking cuddling me.

I curse under my breath and do my best to control my now stiff cock. I’m harder than I’ve ever been and it’s all because she’s cuddling me.

Get it together, Theo!

I can’t though. All I can think about is how much I want her.

Fuck.

This is going to be a long ass night.

FIVE

Clara

BOSSY HASN'T SAID one word to me since we woke up this morning wrapped around each other. He's barely even looked at me. Even when he held my hand the entire plane ride back to Los Angeles, he was stoic and silent.

I need to do something. Break the ice and get us back on neutral ground, I think as we wait to deboard the plane.

"Are you headed home?" I ask him and he blinks.

"No, we need to go into the office."

"We?"

"You still work for me, right?" He asks sarcastically as he grabs his bag and walks off the plane.

I make a note to add a tally to his name as I do the same.

"Unfortunately, but why are we going into the office? The day is half over already. By the time we get there, it will be closer to one, maybe later if we stop for lunch."

"We won't stop."

"Oh, good," I snip and he takes off towards the exit.

"I'll text Adrien or Levi. One of them can grab us food while we drive to the office."

"What is so important that it can't wait until tomorrow?" I demand to know as we head outside into the sweltering Los

Angeles heat.

“I’ve been gone for close to two days. I need to check on things.”

“Workaholic,” I grumble.

“Your boss,” he grumbles back as he heads over to his driver.

I hand Lucas, Theo’s driver and head of security, my bags and smile at him.

“How was your day off?” I ask him, and he grins.

“Boring.”

“You’re the worst,” I tease. “A workaholic just like him.”

“That’s enough. We’re already running late,” Theo snaps, and I sigh as I climb into the car.

He’s on his phone, ignoring that I’m sitting right next to him and I turn to stare out the window. My phone buzzes, and I smile when I pull it out and see that it’s my eldest brother, Remington, texting me.

“Who is that?” Theo snaps, and my smile drops.

“My brother.”

“Which one?” He asks, sounding disinterested.

“Remington. The oldest.”

“Ah, the cowboy.”

I blink.

How the hell did he know that?

“Well, they’re all cowboys, technically.”

“The bull rider then,” he says, going back to his phone.

“Who are you?” I whisper at him but he doesn’t answer me.

I’ve told Theo about my brothers before, when I first started working for him and thought that he might still have a heart or soul, but it’s been over a year since I mentioned them.

Is his memory really that good? I didn't even think that he was paying attention to me ramble on about them back then.

We ride the rest of the way to the office in silence. I send Remy a text back, promising him that I'll take some of my hard earned vacation days soon and come home for a visit. I try to think about when the best time to go would be, but Theo is slammed for the next few weeks. It's not like that will change, so maybe I should just pick whatever dates I like.

"What are you sighing about?" Theo asks as Lucas pulls up outside of the building.

"Thinking about taking a vacation."

"No."

He climbs out of the car before I can respond and I growl as I move to climb out too. Lucas grins at me and I laugh.

"You actually *like* working for him? You're sure?" I ask, and he chuckles.

"He's a good man."

"Based off of what?"

He just gives me a knowing smile and we both climb out of the car.

"You can't tell me that I can't take vacation. I have a ton of days saved up," I remind him, and he shakes his head.

"We're too busy. Besides, we just came back from a vacation."

"You're joking."

He stares at me and I shake my head.

"That was a work trip, not a vacation."

"Still, you were out of the office."

"Yeah, and in someone else's office!"

He grabs his bag, and Lucas passes me mine.

"Thanks."

Theo is already heading into the building and I debate just walking to the parking garage, getting into my car, and driving home.

Would he chase after me and drag me back here? Probably not. It would be undignified.

I inch my way towards the parking garage next to the building and Theo stops, turning around to glare at me.

“I will make Lucas chase after you,” he threatens, and I glance at Lucas.

“Would you?” I whisper, and he shrugs.

I sigh and trudge towards the building.

“Fine, but I’m leaving early.”

“We’ll see.”

We head inside and over to the elevator. I let him hit the buttons and soon we’re being taken all of the way up to the top floor. As soon as we step off, the office grows quiet. Everyone knows now that the boss is back and they’re all terrified to have his attention on them.

“Did you text about our food?” I ask him, and he nods.

“Should be here soon.”

“Are you having lunch with your friends?”

“Yeah.”

“What do you need me to do?” I ask him.

So that I can go home already, I add in my head.

“Return phone calls, get my schedule updated, clear your inbox, check on the Williams case and make sure that Lenore’s paperwork was filed yesterday like it should have been,” he rattles off.

“That’s it? Then I can leave?”

“Yep.”

“Good.”

I push past him and take a seat at my desk. I cleaned up my inbox on the flight and I checked messages this morning when I went for breakfast. That means that I should just have to make sure that nothing came through in the last few hours, check on a few cases, and then I'll be home free.

"Hey, Clara! Welcome back," Levi says as he comes up to my desk, a few brown bags of takeout in his hands.

Adrien is right behind him and I smile at Theo's friends, pausing my work for a moment.

"Thanks. It's great to be back," I deadpan, and Adrien grins.

"Here's your lunch," Levi says, passing me a bag.

"Thank you so much! I'm starving. Bossy wouldn't let us stop," I complain.

"Sounds about right," Adrien sighs, and I nod.

"You can go in."

"Thanks," they both say, and I dig into my food as they head into Theo's office.

I eat lunch and finish up my work. I'm done before they come back out and I grin as I gather up my things and make my escape.

I can't wait to get home and shower. I need to change out of these clothes too and maybe go grocery shopping. Luckily, I live close to work. An apartment in Theo's building was one of the perks of being his assistant. I'm just glad that I don't have to have a ton of roommates or pay rent.

I head inside and toss my bags aside, heading straight for the shower. It's time for me to wash off any memories from the last thirty-six hours.

SIX

Theo

“YOU’RE FIRED!” I snarl at one of my junior lawyers.

He scampers out of my office like his ass is on fire, and I groan as I sink back in my seat. This paperwork should have been filed when I was gone and I can’t believe that it’s not done yet. It has to be filed tonight, at the latest, and I already know that I’ll be working until close to midnight.

I scrub my hands down my face and grab my phone, hitting Clara’s name.

“Please tell me that you’re calling to fire me,” she says, sounding half asleep.

“No, the exact opposite. I need you to come back to the office.”

“No.”

“Yes,” I argue, and she sighs. “We’re you asleep? It’s like eight o’clock.”

“I’m jet lagged,” she informs me and I bite back a smile.

“From what? The two hour flight?”

“Yes.”

“Come back in. We need to file paperwork.”

“Get one of your fancy lawyers to do it for you.”

“It’s one of my fancy lawyers that messed it up,” I admit.

“I’m assuming you fired him.”

“Yep.”

She sighs, and I lean back in my chair. Talking, or arguing, with Clara is the best part of my day. She’s so clever, always trying to outsmart me, and she does. Half of the time anyway.

“Am I getting a big bonus for this?”

“Sure.”

“Fine. I’ll see you in twenty.”

The line goes dead and I get everything organized, trying not to glance at the clock too much.

I know as soon as she arrives. Awareness and a growing sense of anticipation settles over me. I look up and there she is. She’s dressed down tonight in a tight pair of black yoga pants and a dark blue shirt.

I wonder if she was sleeping in that.

Her hair is tied up into a haphazard bun and she’s not wearing a speck of makeup.

I gulp.

She looks fucking beautiful. All I can think about is grabbing her, dragging her curvy body against me, and kissing the hell out of her. I want to know if she’s just as talented with her tongue when she’s using it for other things besides sparring with me.

I feel my cock start to harden and I promptly sit down in my desk chair.

“Let’s do this,” she says, and for one horrible second, I wonder if she can somehow read my thoughts and knows that I was just imagining throwing her down on my desk and having my way with her.

“Right.”

She plops down in her pink fuzzy chair. I lost a bet a few months back and promised that if she won, she could get any

chair for the office that she wanted. I should have known that she would pick something like this.

The rest of my office is done up in dark woods and midnight blues. So the pink, fuzzy chair and footstool stand out like a sore thumb. It's the one bright spot in this place.

Kind of like she's the one bright spot in your life.

"It's the Newsome case. This stuff needs to be filed by midnight."

"Got it, Bossy. Where do you want me to start?"

I pass her a stack of papers and we both dive in. We're silent as we work and I start to relax.

I grew up poor and I always knew that I would do whatever it took to be successful. I never wanted to go to bed hungry or worry about where I would be sleeping that night.

I had always been good at arguing and talking my way out of trouble so a law degree seemed like a good fit. And it is. I'm a damn good lawyer and I've worked my ass off to be the best in Los Angeles.

"I need to make copies of this," she announces, and I blink.

I'm almost done with my paperwork and thank God, because it's already after eleven.

"I'll get started on submitting this."

She nods and heads down the hall to the copier. I watch her go until she disappears and then get back to work.

We're down to the last ten minutes when I hit submit and we both breathe a sigh of relief.

"I'm coming in late tomorrow," Clara informs me as she stands to gather her things.

I just roll my eyes and stand, stretching out the cramped muscles in my back and shoulders. Clara heads out to her desk, and I grab my briefcase and duffle bag, before I send a quick text to Lucas that I'll be down in just a minute.

I'm still staring at my phone when I run right into Clara.

“Oomph!” She grunts and I reach for her instinctively.

My hands grab her arms and I pull her towards me. She glares up at me and that spark between us grows.

“Watch where you're going,” I snap at her, falling back into old routines.

“Go fuck yourself,” she spits at me.

My grip on her tightens. I can feel my control slipping as I stare down into her blue eyes.

Kiss her, kiss her, kiss her! My subconscious screams at me, and to mine and apparently Clara's complete surprise, I find myself doing just that.

My arms slip around her back as my lips land on hers. She's stunned, unmoving beneath me and I start to pull away, when her lips move against mine.

Holy shit. She's kissing me back!

Her hands land on my shoulders and she tilts her head back, giving me better access to her mouth.

For one brief moment, I wonder if this is all some sleep deprived hallucination. I've been dreaming about this moment ever since I hired Clara and it seems unbelievable that it could be happening now.

She's warm and soft under me though and I hold her tighter. She tastes like coffee and sugar and I tangle my tongue with hers, needing this, needing her.

She reacts to me like she's been dreamed of kissing me too and my cock hardens further at the thought.

Does she want me as much as I want her? Is that even possible?

“Fuck,” I whisper against her mouth, and she jerks away from me, ripping out of my hold.

We're both breathing hard, our eyes wild as we stare at each other. For the first time in forever, I did something

without thinking it all the way through. It was awesome, the best moment of my life, but now that it's over, I'm not prepared for the fall out.

My phone buzzes, probably a reply from Lucas, and I blink, grab my bags, and walk away.

I can feel Clara's eyes boring into my back with every step, but I don't dare turn around or look back at her. I'm not sure that I could handle the look on her face if I did.

SEVEN

Clara

I'VE NEVER BEEN nervous to walk into work before. Even on my first day, I was calm. I think because I knew that I was about to have to spar with Theo in order to keep my job.

Today though, things are different.

As I ride up in the elevator, I'm anxious, busy replaying last night when Theo *kissed* me in his office, knocked my socks off, and then walked away like it was nothing but a mistake.

I mean, it *definitely* was a mistake, but I should have been the one to walk away from him. I should have left him staring after me in longing, not the other way around.

The scoreboard is tipped in his favor and I need to balance things out.

I straighten my shoulders as the elevator doors open on the top floor and stride out, headed for the hallway at the back of the offices that leads to my desk and Theo's office. He's already here, of course, and I drop my bag on my office chair before I stomp into his office.

"There you are. Grab your tablet. I need you to take notes for me on this call," he says without even looking up and my blood starts to boil.

He's acting like it never happened, like it didn't even affect him.

I'm instantly furious.

I could barely sleep last night I was so turned on and he looks fresh as a freaking daisy. I growl as I spin on my heel head back to my desk to grab my tablet.

I stew for the next two hours as I take notes and listen in on one phone call and then another. My eyes keep straying to Theo and my body warms as I take in the strong lines of his body and his capable hands. His dark eyes flash as he talks to a new client. They're an idiot and I know already that Theo won't be working with them so I don't really bother taking notes.

My eyes can't seem to stop straying to him, but Theo never once glances at me. He spends the meetings staring out the window or glaring at the phone. By the time he ends the call, I'm pissed and turned on. It's a strange combination of emotions and I know that I need to do something before I burst.

"We'll be in touch," Theo says before he hits end on the call.

"We won't be," I say, and he flashes a quick smirk.

"No, we won't."

There's a moment of silence where I wait to see if he'll say something, maybe bring up last night, but he doesn't. He turns to his computer, effectively dismissing me and I grind my teeth together.

"That's it?" I ask, a hard bite to my words.

"Yes. You can go to lunch now. Grab me a sandwich or something."

"Are you serious?" I snap, and he glances over at me, looking bored.

"Yes," he says slowly, like I'm an idiot, and that's when I snap.

“What the hell was last night?” I shout, and he blinks.

“What about it? The paperwork all went through,” he says with a frown, trying to play dumb, and I growl as I leap to my feet and stalk around his desk.

“Why did you kiss me?” I exclaim.

“Clara,” he starts but I’m on a roll now.

The dam is broken and no matter how badly I want to, I can’t keep the words in.

“Don’t you want me? Didn’t you stay up all night dreaming about me and jerking off?” I demand to know.

“No,” he says, his bottom lip compressing in one corner.

He’s lying.

I roll my shoulders back, turning on my heel and walking back over to my pink fuzzy chair. I plop down and he stares at me, eyeing me like I’m a wild animal. I feel a bit like one right now with heat and lust coursing through my bloodstream.

I look him right in the eye as I start to hike my skirt up. He swallows, his eyes widening but I can see him trying to pretend like he’s not interested in what I’m doing.

I prop one foot up on my footstool, spreading my thighs wide so that he can enjoy the show as I pull my panties to the side.

His cheeks heat and he hesitates for a beat, fighting it, but he can’t resist and his eyes fall to my soaking wet pussy.

“So, you didn’t think about me? You didn’t picture me naked and spread out over your desk, this chair, or your bed?” I ask as my fingers start to rub over my clit.

I’m so turned on that I’m drenched, my fingers slipping over my wet folds. Theo is frozen like a statue, his mouth open slightly as he watches me pleasure myself. He’s not even blinking as he watches me.

“I thought about you,” I admit, and his eyes shoot to mine and then back down to my core. “I barely slept last night.

There were just so many different things that we could do. So many different places that we could do them in,” I say huskily.

My core starts to tighten and I lick my lips, swallowing hard.

“Theo,” I moan, and he shifts in his chair. “Fuck, it was so hot. The first fantasy that I had,” I pant, “we were right here in this office.”

I push one finger inside of my dripping hole, my thumb rubbing over my clit in tight circles.

“I shouldn’t tell you,” I moan, and his fingers grip onto the armrests of his chair. “I’m not sure that I’ll ever be able to look at your desk without coming again.”

I add a second finger and cry out as I start to come. I’m not sure if it’s having his eyes on me or just talking dirty to him, but I come harder than I ever have in my life.

I pant, slumping slightly in my chair as I come down from my orgasm. I give him a wicked smile as I stand and straighten my clothes. His tie is crooked and I wonder if he loosened it while I was talking to him.

He looks shellshocked and stunned as I reach across the desk, giving him another smirk as I straighten his tie, wiping my juices all over the soft fabric in the process.

“There, that’s better. I’ll get you that sandwich now, Bossy,” I whisper huskily, and he blinks, his eyes locked on me as I turn and sashay out of his office.

I can’t help but smile to myself as I go. The score has definitely been tied.

In fact, I think I’m in the lead now.

EIGHT

Theo

I'M rock hard and not sure how to proceed.

Fuck, that was hot.

I don't know what's gotten into Clara, if maybe I unlocked something when I kissed her last night, or what, but I love it. She was so beautiful when she touched herself and absolutely breathtaking when she came. The image of her release coating her fingers is burned into my brain.

I close my eyes, taking a deep breath and trying to get my thoughts in order, but that's impossible when I can still smell Clara's orgasm. I grab my tie, bringing it to my nose and inhaling the sweet honey scent.

"Fucking hell."

"Are you okay?" Adrien asks, and I jump in my seat as my friends come into my office.

I can see Clara smirking at me over their shoulders and I know that she knows exactly what she's done to me.

"I'm fine," I lie.

I straighten in my seat, preparing myself to pretend like my assistant didn't just masturbate and come right in front of me a moment ago.

I wonder if the chair smells like her too.

It probably does, even more so than my tie. I'm getting lightheaded just thinking about it. Then I glance at my friends and any hint of erection fades.

What am I even doing? I can't be getting hard at work.

I've always been able to control myself around Clara. I do just like she said and save all of my fantasies about her for when I'm home and alone.

"Did you want to go out to lunch today? It's pretty nice out," Levi says, glancing out the window.

His question jerks me out of my thoughts.

"Yes," I say, shooting to my feet and grabbing my phone off my desk.

We head out and Levi and Adrien say bye to Clara, offering to bring her something back, but she's already ordered something.

"See you later," Adrien says and she waves, giving them a sweet smile.

Her eyes meet mine and the smile drops. I nod and she nods back.

"What's going on with you today?" Levi asks as we take a seat at a deli down the block.

"Nothing. I'm just busy."

They roll their eyes, used to my workaholic tendencies and packed schedule. They don't know that really, I'm obsessing over what just happened with Clara.

What am I supposed to do now? I don't think that I can just pretend that nothing happened between us. I mean, she admitted that she was up all night fantasizing about me. She came for me.

I need her.

I can't lock this attraction to her away any longer. I broke something open when I kissed her last night and she just kicked the door down in my office. Now there's no choice but to finish what we started.

I force myself to focus on Levi and Adrien as we eat. It's hard, but I manage.

"Your aunt called. Are you going to the charity event?" Levi asks, and I nod.

"I think so. I need to call her back," I admit.

"Well, we'll be there. Goldie is excited to get all dressed up," Adrien says.

Levi nods, smiling softly. "Pia is excited too. Should be a fun night."

"Yeah, should be," I say, but I'm not sure that I'll be attending.

Adrien pays the bill and we all head back to the office. Adrien gets off on his floor, then Levi. I'm all alone with my thoughts as I ride up to the top floor.

My staff is busy as I stalk back to my office. Clara is sitting at her desk, typing on her keyboard as I approach. I head past her without a word and settle behind my desk.

I spend the next few hours trying to focus on work, but I can't. All I can think about, all I can smell is Clara. By the time that five o'clock rolls around, I'm frustrated and pissed off. No one messes with my work. No one but Clara it seems.

I jerk out of my chair and stomp towards my office door. Clara is gathering her things at her desk and she doesn't spare me a glance as I walk up to her.

I grab her bag and toss it back onto her desk, taking her hand in mine, and drag her into my office, kicking the door shut behind us.

She grunts as I push her up against the office door and I crowd against her. She doesn't look surprised to be in here. It's like she was expecting it.

There's a clever twinkle in her eye, one that I love and seeing it only turns me on even more. I love Clara's mind and her sharp tongue. I love how she pushes and challenges me.

“Listen, this is how things are going to go,” I tell her, trying to take control of the situation.

She glares up at me and I can see the snarky response forming on her tongue already. I hurry on before she can take the lead.

“We’re going to fuck. Once, just once. We’ll get each other out of our systems and then we can pretend like nothing happened.”

She studies me for a moment and I’m afraid that she’s going to say no. Maybe she can see through me and knows that I won’t really be over her if we have sex once. In fact, she’s probably going to become even more of an obsession for me.

“Deal,” she says, and I almost sag in relief.

Instead, I kiss her.

Just like last night, as soon as my lips land on hers, everything else falls away. All I can think about, all I can taste and feel is Clara. She’s so soft, so responsive. I love it.

She moans against my lips and my grip tightens on her hips. Her fingers are tangling in my hair, pulling me towards her. Just like everything we do, there’s this natural push and pull.

“I’m going to bend you over that damn chair and fuck you until you scream,” I whisper as I trail kisses down her neck.

“You wish,” she taunts, and I bite back my smile.

“I know.”

I pull her away from the wall and lead her over to her pink chair. I’d never admit it to her, or anyone, but I love seeing her touch on my office.

She sits down in the chair and I pull the footstool over, sitting in front of her. At this point, we’re almost eye to eye and we both lean forward at the same time, our lips locking as we start to tug at each other’s clothes.

She stands, letting me tug her dress over her head. My eyes lock on her tits, nearly spilling out over the silk cups of her bra. Her panties are still damp and I wonder if that's from earlier or if she's just as turned on right now.

Guess I should find out...

I tug her panties down her legs and she squirms as she falls back into the chair. I grab her legs, lifting them so that her feet are resting on my thighs. I'm still wearing most of my clothes and I wish that I weren't. I want to feel her skin on mine.

"What are you waiting for?" She asks, her voice low and husky.

I shake my head, sliding off the stool and kneeling before her. Clara's eyes flash at me and my cock hardens in response.

Fuck, I need her.

I press her thighs open wider before I bury my face in her puffy pink folds. She tastes like milk and honey, and I bury my face further into her core. I'm in heaven. This is how I want to die, buried in Clara's sweet pussy.

She gasps, squirming against my face and I grab her thighs, pinning her in place. She's panting, her fingers gripping the edge of her seat as I lick a path over her clit again, and again, and again.

An image of her touching herself in this chair earlier flashes behind my eyes and I push one thick finger into her, curving until I find her g-spot. A fresh wave of her juices coat my hand and I suck her clit into my mouth, rolling my tongue over the bundle of nerves until she explodes around me.

"Oh!" She gasps and I take note that she didn't say my name.

She's going to make me work for it.

We lock eyes as I lick her release from my mouth and her eyes darken as she sits up in the chair, leaning closer to me.

"My turn," she says, pushing me onto my back.

I tumble backwards, landing on the floor. Clara straddles me, unbuttoning my shirt. She fumbles with the buttons, growling in frustration and trying to rip my shirt open. I reach for the shirt and help her. We both ignore as the buttons go flying.

I push my shirt and tug my tie off as Clara goes to work on my pants. She gets the belt undone and I unbutton them, pushing them down my hips as Clara shuffles lower on my legs.

Her lips land on my stomach and a shiver runs through me. She licks a path down to my hips as her hand wraps around my length.

“Fuck,” I hiss as her grip on me tightens.

She grins up at me and I fall for her a little more.

“Suck it,” I order, and she rolls her eyes.

She reaches up, tweaking my nipple and I growl. She grins, bowing her head and her mouth sucks me in.

Her name is on the tip of my tongue and I have to bite my lip to stop myself from saying it. I won't be the first one to cross that line.

Clara's mouth is magic. She sinks lower on my cock, taking even more of me into her warm, wet, mouth. Her tongue traces up the underside of my dick and my hands tighten into fists. I'm close to coming already and she's barely touched me.

“Fuck,” I grunt, and she sucks me harder.

I can feel my balls starting to tighten, that familiar tingle at the base of my spine. I want to come in her mouth, but I want to fuck her more right now.

I reach for her, dragging her up my body until we're eye to eye. She quirks an eyebrow at me and I tug her down until her mouth is on mine. I wonder if she can taste her orgasm on my lips. I wonder if she likes it.

Her pussy drags up and down my length, teasing us both. Her juices are coating me and she lets out this sexy little gasp

every time her clit brushes against my cock.

She's driving me crazy.

I grab her hips, grinding up against her and she arches, my cock slipping, pushing into her slightly. I look at her as I sink in another inch. Her eyes are closed, her cheeks flushed as she sinks lower and lower.

Her hands land on my chest and her blue eyes meet mine as she starts to ride me. Staring into her eyes feels to intimate, but I can't look away. She's beautiful, the most gorgeous thing I've ever seen.

She pants as she rides me faster and harder. My hands grip her hips and I help her raise and then lower, over and over. I can feel my orgasm starting to grow bigger inside of me and I know that it's only a matter of minutes before I come.

I grab her, rolling us until she's under me. Her gasp turns into a moan as I grip her thigh and start to pound into her, hitting her clit with each pass.

"Oh! Fuck!" She screams, and I grind my teeth, my eyes locked on her face as we both reach out peaks.

"Shit!" She cries out as she comes and I growl as I come with her.

I roll onto my side before I can collapse and crush her. My office looks like a war zone with clothes strewn all over the place. Her pink footstool is tipped onto its side and the chairs have all been pushed to one side, crammed together.

Clara winces and I look over. She has rug burns on her knees and back. My back doesn't feel much better. She laughs as she sees me looking and I turn to face her.

"I'd say that you needed to get a softer rug or some more furniture in here, but this was just a one time thing," she says as she stands and starts to pull on her clothes.

I feel cold all of a sudden and I grab my boxers and pants, hurrying to get dressed. I pick up my now ruined shirt and Clara giggles.

“You’re going to have to do the walk of shame out of here,” she teases as she straightens her hair.

I reach into my desk drawer and pull out a brand new shirt. She rolls her eyes and I bite back a grin as I finish getting dressed.

“See you tomorrow, Bossy,” she says as she heads out to her desk.

I watch her go, wondering how I’m ever going to handle never doing that again.

Maybe one time won’t be enough for her either. I can only hope.

NINE

Clara

I'M EVEN MORE confused when I walk into work the next day.

Last night was the hottest sex I've ever had. Not that I've had a lot. I lost my virginity in college in a one-night stand. He wasn't very good so I never tried again. I could always get myself off better than anyone anyways. Or that's what I thought. Until last night.

I don't want our fling to be over, but I'm never going to beg him or any man to fuck me. How do things go back to normal now though? I'm not sure that I can be in his office, sitting in that chair, without reacting.

I tug at my dress as I step off of the elevator. It seems to have shrunk a bit, or maybe I've just gained some weight. The hem is a few inches above my knees, the skirt tight, molding to my hips and ass, and the neckline seems to be lower than I remember.

Maybe I should try dieting again, I think as I set my things down on my desk.

"Clara," Theo calls and I roll my shoulders back before I head into his office.

My eyes stray to the chair and I can feel my cheeks heat with a blush as I remember what we did last night.

I glance at Theo, trying to school my features, and find him staring at me hungrily. His eyes snag on my cleavage and then down to my legs.

“Fuck,” he whispers and I take a seat in the pink fuzzy chair.

“You called?” I ask sarcastically.

His eyes dip to my curves once again and I smile. *Maybe I don't need to diet after all. Theo seems to like what he sees just fine.*

“We need to check on the Miller-Smith paperwork and set up a meeting with that new client from yesterday. Wilson,” he says, and I nod, starting to take notes.

I guess that we're going back to pretending like nothing happened.

I try not to be too disappointed. I know that I agreed to his terms last night, but I guess I was wishing that he would change his mind this morning.

“That's all,” he says, and I head back to my desk.

I can feel his eyes on me as we go and I pull out my diary as I sit down at my desk. I flip to the last page and make a new scorecard. This time, I start to mark off every time that he stares at me, when he checks me out, when he looks at my lips, or looks at me like he wants to bend me over the nearest surface.

By one o'clock, the page is littered with tallies and I'm a horny ball of need.

“Clara!” He calls and I tug at the hem of my dress as I head into his office. “Close the door.”

I shut it and head over to my chair.

“Spread your legs,” he orders and my heart leaps into my throat.

He's not even looking at me yet, but I can see the need in him. It's etched into every line of his body. He's rigid in his seat, his muscles bunched and tense under his dress shirt.

I don't move and he looks up at me, his dark blue eyes filled with so much heat and longing.

"I thought that it was just a one time thing," I say, and his lips flatten into a thin line.

"You're not out of my system yet," he admits, and my heart starts to race out of control. "Just one more night."

He says it like he doesn't believe that it will be just once more either and I'm almost giddy. He wants me. He needs me.

"One more time, Clara," he says and there's a desperate edge to his words.

"Alright," I say quietly.

"Good. Now, pull up that too tight, too short, fucking dress and spread your thighs," he orders.

I love when he bosses me around like this and I hurry to do as he demands. I hike my skirt up and then pull my panties down my legs and kick them aside. He leans forward in his chair, his hot gaze locked on that space at the juncture of my thighs.

"Look at you, already so wet for me," he murmurs with a sexy smirk.

"This is for Dave, the mailroom guy," I lie, and he snarls.

"He's fired," he says, and I roll my eyes.

"I'm joking."

"He's still fired. You shouldn't be thinking about anyone but me when you're soaked like this, those pretty little fingers playing with that pussy. My name is the only one on your lips."

My cunt clenches at his words and the possessive tone to his words.

"Bossy," I pant, and he stands, tugging at his tie.

He unbuttons his shirt and the belt of his pants as he makes his way over to me. My body heats and I spread my legs wider in invitation.

I expect him to fuck me in the chair or bend me over his desk, but instead, he grabs me and lifts me onto his desk. Papers and pens go flying onto the ground, but neither of us pay them any attention.

His mouth is on mine and his fingers are in my hair as he nudges my legs wider and steps between them. My fingers go to his pants and I unzip him, reaching in and pulling out his hard, heavy length. I tighten my grip and he hisses out a breath against my lips.

“Take your tits out. I want to see them while I’m fucking you,” he orders.

I pull my arms out of the sleeves of my dress and push the top of my dress down to my waist. My lacy bra is see through and he groans when he sees the hard peaks of my nipples against the silky fabric.

His hands grip my thighs and he thrusts into me in one smooth move. I’m already so turned on and I know that I’m minutes, maybe seconds, away from coming. It’s a good thing too, since anyone could walk back here and see us.

“Oh god,” I gasp as he grinds against me and he bares his teeth at me in a twisted smirk.

“There’s no god here. Just me. You say my name when you’re on my cock,” he orders.

I’d never admit it, but him bossing me around right now only has me burning hotter.

He starts a slow pace and I dig my nails into his biceps.

“I need more” I growl at him, glaring up at him and he only smirks back at me.

Even when we’re having sex, it feels more like a battle sometimes. A really sexy one.

“You need exactly what I’m giving you. It’s going to build inside of you until you can’t stand it, until the orgasm is everywhere. Then you’re going to come harder than you ever have before. And you’re going to scream my name while you do.”

He's so confident and I want to snap at him. I want to tell him that I know how to get myself off, that I know what he needs better than he does, but before I can, I feel it. That familiar tightening in my core, the tingles in my fingers as my orgasm starts to build. Just like he said it would.

I can't tell if I love him or hate him in that moment. I stare up at him, my teeth grinding together to hold back my moans and he only grins. He can see it in my eyes. He knows that he has me, that I'm about to splinter apart all around him.

His pace stays the same, that maddeningly slow rhythm. He grinds down against my clit with each pass, thrusting into me and rubbing over my g-spot every time.

My nails dig into his skin, leaving angry crescent shapes behind and I smile.

Good. I want to mark him the same way that's he's marking me. I want him to remember this tomorrow, even if I'm sure that both of us will pretend that it never happened.

I look up, meeting his dark gaze as I reach my peak. My teeth sink into my bottom lip until I taste blood and his brow furrows at the sight. It's the first sign of his armor cracking and for some reason, that makes my release so much sweeter.

"Theo," I breathe and we both seem surprised that I said it.

Maybe it's me saying it that causes him to reach his own peak, but he groans as he finds his orgasm.

His name hangs between us as we both come together and I'm not sure if I wish I could take it back or not.

His gaze stays locked with mine for a moment and I can see it so clearly. He wants me. He likes me, maybe even loves me.

Then he blinks and in the next instant, that cold mask is back in place and I'm left feeling cold and alone.

The sun is shining bright as he pulls out of me and starts to right his clothes. He doesn't look at me and I slide off his desk as I pull my dress back into place. I'd have to bend over to

grab my panties and I'm already feeling too exposed so I leave them on his office floor and walk back to my desk without a word or backward glance.

It hits me then.

I'm playing a dangerous game here. It's not just a scorecard, not when I have feelings for him.

Not when I'm already in love with him.

What am I supposed to do now?

TEN

Theo

I'M ABOUT to order Clara to come into my office when the door opens and my Aunt Cheryl walks in instead.

“Theo,” she says with a warm smile and I force myself to smile back as she comes around my desk to hug me.

I sneak a peek at Clara's desk and frown when I see that it's empty. *Where could she have gone off too?*

“What are you doing here, Cheryl?” I ask, and she brushes some imaginary dirt off of my suit.

“Well, you've been avoiding my calls. I wanted to check on you and invite you to the Children's House Gala this weekend.”

“I've been busy,” I say, and she smiles softly.

“Of course. You're always so busy, but there's more to life than work, Theo.”

I swallow hard.

Cheryl found me right after I had turned eighteen. She was the one who paid for my college and law school.

She had no idea I existed. My mom had been cut off from her family for years before I was born and they never thought to look for any kids that she might have. She helped me when I needed it, but not when I needed it most. That makes my feelings for her a little confusing and hard to manage.

I wish that she had found me earlier, before my mom got really into drugs and selling herself. Before she had a never-ending stream of men coming in and out of the house. Before I spent nights on the street, hungry and scared.

“So? The Children’s House Gala?” She asks as she straightens some papers on my desk.

“Of course I’ll come.”

“Good! Bring Clara too, will you?” She asks, and my mouth dries out.

Speaking of complicated feelings...

“I’ll see if she can come.”

Do I want Clara to come? It doesn’t have to be as my date, it will just be to support the charity.

I shouldn’t. I’m getting too attached to her already. I love being with her, but it can’t be more than this. Friends with benefits or whatever we are.

“By the way, I love the new chair,” my aunt says, and I shush her, looking around wildly as I pray that Clara didn’t hear that.

“Don’t ever say that again. I can’t have Clara hearing. She’ll never let it go,” I explain.

“You seem like a great boss,” Aunt Cheryl jokes. “Now I wish that I had taken you up on the assistant job when you first started.”

“Do you want it? I think there’s going to be an opening soon,” I say as I see Clara step back over to her desk with my friends right behind her.

She gives me a dry look and I bite back my grin.

“Nah, I’m too busy with my charity work.”

“I could make it worth your while,” I tell her.

“Oh, so there is room in the budget for a pay raise,” Clara says and I shake my head at her.

“Sorry, not for you,”

She makes a sound that reminds me of a bear before she heads around to her desk. I watch her go, unable to tear my eyes away from her.

“Well, maybe Clara should give your office a makeover. Really brighten the place up in here,” Cheryl says, and I groan as Clara pokes her head back into my office, an excited grin on her face.

“I’m on it, Bossy!” She says, and I just sigh.

Adrien and Levi laugh as they move to greet Cheryl.

“It’s nice to see you again,” Levi says.

“Can’t wait for this weekend,” Adrien adds.

“Yes, it should be quite the event. Alright, I’ve got to get back to things, but I’ll see you all on Saturday night!”

“See you,” I say and I sit back in my chair as my friends sit across from me.

“Are you really going to let Clara decorate?” Adrien asks, and I snort.

“No.”

“Yes,” Clara says at the same time. “And I have so many ideas already!”

“No,” I repeat, but she’s not listening to me.

She heads back out to her desk and I try to pay attention to what Levi and Adrien are saying as we eat lunch. Instead, all I can focus on is my assistant.

I’m in way too deep. I should break things off now, but I just don’t have it in me.

Man, I’m fucked.

ELEVEN

Clara

“YOU DIDN’T HAVE to get me a dress. I could have found something in my closet,” I tell Theo as we walk into the gala Saturday night.

“It’s not a big deal,” he says, brushing me off as we head over to greet his aunt.

I don’t bother to ask him how he knew my size. I’m starting to see that Theo watches me the same way that I watch him. He knows things about me that I didn’t realize.

The thought has butterflies taking flight in my stomach.

“Cheryl,” Theo says and I elbow him out of the way so that I can hug her.

“Thanks for the invite! I brought Theo’s checkbook from work,” I tell her and she laughs.

Theo eyes me and I grin.

“Did you really? I’ve been looking for that,” he whispers, and I laugh.

“Yeah. For charity.”

He holds out his hand and I grab the checkbook out of my purse and hand it to him.

“Thanks for coming. Both of you,” Cheryl says, and I nod.

“Of course.”

“I’ll let you two look around. I need to go check on a few things, but I’ll find you later in the night.”

She waves as she heads off and I loop my arm through Theo’s.

“Where should we start?” I ask as we turn to take in the large ballroom that’s been decorated for tonight. There’s tables up front by the stage and a small dance floor and bar on the other half. Little tables dot the perimeter with items for you to bid on and I tug on his arm.

“Let’s get a drink and then do some bidding.”

He grunts, letting me lead the way over to the bar.

“A martini and a whiskey, neat, please,” I order.

Theo doesn’t seem surprised that I know his order and I smile, leaning against him slightly.

“My shoes are starting to hurt already. I should have worn them a little more, broken them in a bit.”

“Do you want to sit down?” He asks, and I shake my head.

“Not yet.”

Our drinks are placed in front of us and I nod for Theo to tip the bartender as I grab my drink and wander over to the first table.

Theo is silent, my shadow, as we walk from one table to the next.

“See anything that you want to bid on?” I ask as I eye a weekend trip to a villa in Aspen.

“No,” Theo says grumpily, and I laugh.

“You’re not even looking.”

“Are you ready to leave?” He asks me and I glare at him.

“We just got here. We’re staying. Now, bid on this for me.”

He sighs but grabs the pen and scribbles down his name and a bid. We finish looking at the tables but don’t bid on anything else. I finish my drink and Theo grabs the glass from my fingers.

“Let’s find Cheryl. We can talk to her for a minute and then slip out.”

I turn to him and notice how uncomfortable he looks.

“A few more minutes, okay? I’m looking good, not that you said anything, and I want to hang out for a little bit longer. If you really want to leave, then go ahead. I can get a ride home.”

“No, I’ll stay,” he sighs. “And you always look good.”

I smile, turning back to take in the room.

“There’s Adrien and Goldie!” I say, taking off in their direction.

They’re with Levi and Pia and a few more couples and I smile as we join the group.

“Hey, you all look beautiful,” I say as I hug Goldie and then Pia.

“You too! I love that dress. The green really brings out your eyes,” Goldie gushes.

“Thanks. Where are you guys sitting?” I ask her and she points to a table nearby.

“Perfect. I need to get out of these shoes for a minute,” I whisper and she nods knowingly. “I’ll see you guys later.”

I head off to the far wall where there’s a hallway and a few doors. I peek into one to find the bathrooms and I try the next door. Two more doors down, I find what I’m looking for. It’s a little sitting room and I sigh as I head inside. I kick the door closed behind me.

“Omph!” Theo grunts and I spin.

“Jeez! I didn’t know you were there,” I apologize and he frowns as he closes and locks the door behind him.

“Are you trying to ditch me?” He asks and I laugh.

“I was just going to sit down for a little bit.”

I head over to the loveseat along the far wall and sigh as I sit down.

“Why don’t we just head home now?” He asks and I sigh.

“We just got here. We should stay a little bit longer.”

“I could be working,” he argues and I roll my eyes.

“We could be fucking,” I say, tugging on the green material so that the slit shows more of my legs.

“We could,” he agrees, stalking closer to me.

I smile, laying back on the loveseat as he comes down over me.

“You’ll have to be quiet,” I warn him and he smirks.

“You’re the one who is always screaming my name,” he says, and I just laugh.

“Prove it.”

He kisses me, his hands tangling in my hair and I know that I’ll have to take it out of the updo that it was in after this.

Worth it.

He kisses me and I know that my lips are going to be swollen and red. I hope that he has lipstick all over his face and body by the time that we’re done here too.

My hands tug at his tux and he growls as he helps me push the jacket from his shoulders and down his arms.

“Can you get out of that thing?” He asks, and I shake my head.

“Standing. Bend me over the couch,” I order and he nods, pulling me to my feet.

He spins me around, pushing my shoulders down and I brace myself on the cushions as he wrestles with the fabric of my dress.

He finds me and wastes no time in ripping my panties down to my knees and entering me.

“Thank god you’re ready for me,” he grits out and I can only moan as I push back against him.

“It has to be quick,” I remind him and his fingers tighten on my hips.

His pace picks up and he pounds into me. The loveseat starts to scrap across the floor and I bite my lip as my clit pushes against the armrest.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck,” he chants, and hearing his husky whisper has me barreling towards an orgasm.

“Theo,” I groan and his hands spasm on my hips. “I’m so close.”

“I know. I can feel your tight ass pussy trying to strangle my cock.”

I gasp at his words and I don’t need to look to know that he’s grinning.

“Shit, Clara. You really love my cock. You should see the way that your gripping it. You want to come all over my cock, don’t you? Then walk back out into that room with your just fucked hair. They’re all going to know that I just rocked your world in here. Might as well let them hear you scream my name too.”

“Not a chance,” I say from between gritted teeth.

“So stubborn. Don’t worry, I’ll be making you do that when I take you home,” he whispers against the shell of my ear.

Just like that, I come.

“Fuck!” I shout into the cushions and I hear him groan as he finds his own release.

“Clara,” he whispers as he falls over me and I suck in a deep breath.

His body is so heavy and warm on top of mine. It’s comforting and I want to roll over. I want to cuddle him, have him wrap his arms around me and hold me.

Theo stands and I hear him zip up his pants and grab his suit coat. I’m left feeling cold and I hurry to pull up my panties and right my dress.

I glance over at him and he glaring at the far wall.

“What?” I ask and he shakes his head.

“We should get back out there.”

Before I can respond, he turns and heads out of the room.

“Okay, then...”

I follow him back to the table where our friends are and we take a seat. I don't need to look at him to know that something is wrong. I'm not sure what happened back there in that room that upset or spooked him, but that's what he is.

We're both silent as Cheryl takes the stage to talk about the charity and announce that there's five more minutes to bid before the winners will be announced.

I clap along with everyone else, but my mind is a million miles away. Or rather, it's back in that room.

What could have happened? Did I say or do something wrong?

“And the winner of the weekend stay at the Montclair Villa in Aspen is... Theo Jameson and Clara Winters!” Cheryl announces.

The crowd cheers and our friends congratulate us. I force a smile to my lips, but Theo doesn't even bother with that.

Cheryl moves onto the next winner and I look over at Theo.

“I'm ready to leave now,” I whisper and he nods, standing and nodding goodbye to his friends.

“See you on Monday,” he says and they wave.

I know that we should stay until the end. We should visit with Cheryl and stay to mingle with everyone, but I just can't. I can't handle Theo's mood and I need to talk to him, to get to the bottom of things.

He hands the valet his ticket and we wait for his car in silence. He tips the valet and I climb into the passenger seat.

“What’s going on?” I demand to know and he doesn’t even spare me a glance.

“Nothing.”

“Why did you freak out then?”

“I didn’t. We had sex and then we were done,” he says.

His words are like a dagger straight to my heart and I shift in my seat.

“What is this, Theo?” I ask him quietly. “It hasn’t been a one time thing, so what is it?”

“We’re just blowing off some steam,” he says easily.

I can feel my heart breaking in my chest and I swallow hard.

Shit. I’m in love with him. I think that maybe I always was, even when I hated him. Sleeping together was a terrible idea. It only made me love him more. It only made me want him more, but obviously he doesn’t feel the same way.

“I want more,” I whisper and he glances at me.

“What?” He asks, and I swallow.

“I said, I want more. I don’t want it to be just blowing off steam,” I admit.

We’re silent as we pull up to a stop light and I chance a glance at him. He looks almost panicked and I know that he’s about to break my heart even more before he even opens his mouth.

“I can’t do more, Clara.”

“Then I can’t do this,” I say softly.

I can feel the tears stinging the back of my eyes and I blink rapidly, trying to stop them from spilling over.

He pulls up to our apartment building a minute later and I’m out of the car before he can shift into park.

“I quit,” I tell him without making eye contact.

“Clara,” he starts but I slam the door closed.

I speed walk into the building and then right into the elevator. I don't hear his shoes behind me, but I wait until the elevator doors have closed before I let the tears spill onto my cheeks.

My apartment is quiet as I step inside and lock the door behind me. I guess it won't be my apartment any longer. I'll have to find another job and a place to move to. I'm tired just thinking about it.

I kick off my shoes and twist to unzip the dress. It pools at my feet by the door, but I keep walking. I fall onto my bed and wrap the blanket around me.

The tears won't stop falling now and I don't bother to try.

What am I supposed to do now? I can't stay here in this apartment that reminds me so much of him.

My phone buzzes in my purse and I drag myself out of bed. I'm hoping that it's Theo, that he's realized that he made a mistake and he loves me too.

Instead, it's my brother, Kai.

KAI: When are you coming home for a visit?

I CHEW on my bottom lip for a moment before I decide, fuck it. It's not like I have anything holding me here. I can go home to Sequoia and job and apartment hunt from there. Maybe some fresh air and small town life will help ease my broken heart too.

CLARA: Tomorrow.

I FALL BACK INTO BED, trying to drum up some excitement as I close my eyes and pray for sleep to take me.

TWELVE

Theo

I STARE GLUMLY out my office windows. The sun is shining bright and it's another beautiful day here in Los Angeles. It feels wrong. It feels like the sky should be overcast or something.

I'm miserable, I admit to myself.

I miss Clara and I wish that I could be what she wants me to be. I wish that I could be hers, but I can't. I know that I would have just messed things up between us eventually. It's better to just let her go now before I'm even more in love with her.

Is that even possible? I was already head over heels for her.

I ignore my subconscious and take a seat behind my desk. My eyes stray to her pink fuzzy chair and that damn feather light in the corner that she had delivered just two days ago. Then to the dark green shag rug in the corner that she convinced me to keep by letting me fuck her on it.

The place really is brighter in here now. More inviting.

"Pining over Clara?" Adrien asks as he pushes open my office door.

"No," I lie, and he pins me with a hard look.

"Dude, you totally are. It's obvious."

“He’s right. It is obvious,” Levi adds, and I sigh.

“It’s for the best,” I tell them.

They share a look and it’s silent in my office. My whole floor seems to have picked up on my mood and I know that they’ve all noticed Clara’s absence. They’ve been avoiding the hallway that leads to my office like the plague.

“You’re being an idiot,” Adrien says, and I glare at him.

“You are. You love Clara. Anyone can see that, and she loves you. You two could be together and happy right now. Instead, you’re alone and miserable,” Levi adds.

“It wouldn’t have worked out between us,” I tell them.

“Why not?” Adrien demands to know.

“It just...wouldn’t,” I finish lamely.

“Because of your childhood? Because you’re a grumpy jerk? Because Clara already knows about that and she still loves you.”

They have a point there...

“I don’t even know how to do relationships. I don’t want to... I can’t hurt her,” I finish quietly.

“You already did by pushing her away,” Levi tells me gently.

“You were handling a relationship just fine. You and Clara were happy together. Besides, she’s a strong, capable woman. If you do something that she doesn’t like, I’m sure that she’s not going to have any problem letting you know and demanding that you fix it,” Adrien says, and I smile.

He’s right. Clara is more than capable of taking care of herself. She stands up to me and doesn’t take any of my crap. She’s my perfect match.

“Will she take me back?” I muse out loud, and Adrien and Levi cheer.

“Of course! She loves you too,” Levi assures me.

“You’ll just probably have to grovel for forgiveness first,” Adrien adds.

I pause, but for the first time in forever, I don’t have a problem with doing that. I vowed to never ask anyone for anything when I was young. I was determined to make it on my own. I would do anything for Clara though. Even grovel on my knees.

“I can do that,” I say, and they both grin.

“Good. Then get out of here and go get your girl!” Adrien orders.

I stand, grabbing my keys and jogging out the door. I text Lucas on my way down in the elevator and he promises to be out front.

“Where to, sir?” He asks me as I climb into the back.

“Home.”

“Ah,” he says and I see him smile.

He must know that I’m going to try to win Clara back too. I wonder if I really have been wandering around like some lovesick fool.

We pull up out front a few minutes later and I hurry out and over to the elevator. She’s on the tenth floor, the one right under me and I hit that button, watching impatiently as the other floors tick by.

I find her apartment and take a deep breath. It’s quiet on the other side of the door and I frown as I raise my hand and knock.

I wait a moment, but there’s no answer, so I try again.

Still nothing.

My stomach starts to cramp and I wonder where she could have gone. Does she know that it’s me out here? She could have checked the peephole, I guess.

I pull out my phone, bringing up her number and dialing. I listen closely for any sound on the other side of the door, but it’s quiet as a church.

“Shit,” I curse when she sends me to voicemail.

Where could she be?

Her brothers.

That’s it! She was just talking about seeing them. She must have gone back to their ranch. What was that place called? Stud Ranch? Stud something.

Stud Farm.

I spin on my heel, striding back to the elevator. I head back downstairs and then into the parking garage. I like to have Lucas drive me around, but I think for this trip, I’m going to have to go by myself.

I just hope that on the return drive, I’m not alone.

THIRTEEN

Clara

BEING BACK HOME WAS JUST what I needed. If I was still in my apartment, then I know that I would be thinking about Theo nonstop. I might have even run into him in the building. Here in Sequoia though, I have my brothers and their families to distract me anytime I start to think about Theo and my broken heart.

“We’re going to go check on the horses. Are you sure you don’t want to come?” Griz, one of my brothers, asks.

“Yeah, I should start submitting my resume to a few places.”

He nods, giving me an easy smile, one that I’ve missed.

“It’s good to have you home, Clara. I hope that you know that you’re welcome to stay for as long as you like.”

“I know. It’s good to be here too,” I say, giving him a side hug.

He heads out the back door and I head over to the couch, grabbing my diary as curl up on the couch. I open to a new page and click my pen open as I start to write.

DEAR DIARY,

I MISS HIM. *I'm trying to pretend like it doesn't hurt, but it does. It's easy to distract myself around here during the day, but at night, Theo is all that I can think or dream about.*

I just don't know what to do. How long will this pain last? How long will he be the first thing that I think about when I wake up and the last thing before I fall asleep?

I should be focusing on finding a new apartment and job, but it's been hard. I'm going to miss working for him.

A KNOCK SOUNDS at the door and I frown. It's probably one of my brothers and I wait for them to just walk in, but the door remains shut. I frown, tucking my diary away as I go to see who it could be.

My brothers live on the farm that I grew up on. It's in the middle of nowhere and if they made it all of the way down the driveway, then they probably aren't lost. People don't really come to visit though.

I peek out the window and my stomach drops when I see Theo standing there, scowling at the door. His eyes lock with mine and he looks relieved to see me.

"Clara!" He calls, and I hurry to back away from the door.

"Go away!" I call back.

"No. I need to talk to you. Just hear me out."

I stare at the door.

What should I do? Hear him out? I guess he can't hurt me anymore than he already has. What do I have to lose?

"Clara, please," he pleads, and I sigh, turning the knob and opening the door.

I try to school my features so that I give nothing away. His eyes scan over me and I do the same to him. He looks tired, like he's been driving all night.

"You've got two minutes. What are you doing here?" I ask.

"I came to see you. I wanted to apologize."

“For what?”

“For hurting you. For lying.”

“Lying about what?” I ask, and he sighs, looking away from me.

“Can I come inside?” He asks, and I step back, letting him come inside.

He seems to take up all of the air in this place. He stands out like a sore thumb here in his suit that costs thousands of dollars. Everyone in Sequoia is either a rancher or a college student and most wear jeans and t-shirts.

“Nice place,” he says, and I cross my arms over my chest.

“You only have another minute,” I warn him and he rolls his shoulders back.

“I’m sorry,” he says.

“Right. You’ve said that.”

“Shit, Clara. I’m not good at any of this.”

“At what? What are you trying to do here?”

“To apologize. To get you to come back and work for me. We can go back to normal. You’ll be my assistant and we can be fuck buddies or whatever you want to call it.”

“Not good enough,” I snap, stalking towards him.

I open the door and shove him out, catching him by surprise. Then I slam the door in his startled face.

“Clara!” He yells, and I roll my eyes, grabbing my diary and heading back to the guest room that I’m staying in.

I can hear him banging on the front door, but I ignore him. I lay down on my bed and enjoy the cool breeze blowing through the open windows. I can hear Theo yelling out front and I do my best to tune him out.

I open my diary, getting ready to write some more when the sound of my screen being popped out has me jerking up in bed. A second later, Theo is hoisting himself over the windowsill.

I gape at him and he glares at me.

“I still had a minute,” he says, and I glare back at him.

“You forfeited that minute by being an asshole,” I inform him.

“I can’t,” he shouts and then freezes, scrubbing his hands down his face. “I can’t lose you, but I’m not good at this. I never have been. I’ve never even wanted to try before,” he tells me, and I study him.

“Try what?” I ask him, and he starts to pace.

He stops pacing, takes a deep breath and his dark eyes lock with mine.

“I love you, Clara. I have since you started working for me. I think I knew when I hired you how important you were going to be. It’s why I bought that apartment and said that it came with the job. I wanted you to be close. I wanted to watch over you and take care of you.”

“What?” I ask in shock, and he keeps going.

“I love you. When I kissed you that first night, it was because I just couldn’t hold myself or my feelings back anymore. When I said we would sleep together just once, I knew that it would never be enough.”

“Okay, but then that night at the gala, you were a total dick. You shut me out when I said that I wanted more,” I remind him.

“Because I know that I’m going to mess all of this up!” He shouts, and I blink.

“Why do you think that?” I ask him.

“Listen, I’ve never wanted to date before. Growing up, I didn’t exactly have the best role models for relationships. I never thought that this would happen to me, but it did and I don’t know how to navigate things.”

“You never talk about your past,” I say tentatively, and he shrugs.

“I don’t like thinking about it. It wasn’t exactly a Disney childhood,” he says sarcastically. and I frown.

“Tell me about it now,” I say, and his hands clench into fists.

“My mom was a drug addict and alcoholic. I never knew who my dad was. I don’t think that she did either. She had a never ending stream of men that came through the house and none of them lasted long.”

“I’m sorry, Theo,” I say softly and he nods, his jaw tight.

“I promised myself from a young age that I would never rely on anyone for anything. I was going to be successful; I was going to be the best. All by myself. I was happy with work, with my friends. Then I met you and I started to want... more.”

“Your Aunt Cheryl?” I ask, and he fidgets.

“My mom was estranged from her family. They didn’t even know about me until just after I turned eighteen. My mom had overdosed and they were contacted about her son. To be fair, they stepped up once they learned about me. Cheryl paid for college and my grandparents invited me around. They passed a few years later though and we never really had much of a relationship.”

“So, it’s just you and Cheryl?” I ask, and he nods.

“And her family. I’m not close to them either though.”

“Yeah, because you keep everyone at arms length!” I point out.

“I know,” he admits. “It’s hard for me to open up to people.”

“Yeah, I know. I’ve worked for you for eighteen months and it feels like I barely know you.”

“You know me, Clara. Better than anyone,” he says, staring at me intently.

I know that he’s right. There’s something about him that clicks for me. It’s like we’re matching halves and when we’re

together, we just fit. I understand him, because he's so much like me.

We're both driven, both want to be successful and make something of ourselves away from our families. We're both workaholics who love to argue and win.

"What's with you and tacos?" I blurt out, and he blinks.

"It was all that I ate when I was a kid. They were cheap, a dollar from Taco Bell. We lived a block away from there and I used to scrounge up change and go buy myself a taco whenever I could. There wasn't a lot of food in the house," he says.

I can tell that talking about all of this is making him uncomfortable, but he's doing it.

For me.

"I'll tell you whatever you want to know, Clara. I'll do anything that you want. Just please, come back to Los Angeles with me. Come back to work. Come back home. We can work it out. Please, I need you. I love you. Please," he begs, and I swallow hard.

"You love me?" I ask, and he nods.

"More than anything."

"What if I say no or that I need more time?" I ask him, and he looks panicked.

"Then I'll stay here. I'll find somewhere to stay nearby and we can talk every day."

My heart soars when he says that. He's willing to put work to the side... for me. He's choosing me.

"I love you," I whisper, and he blinks.

He looks like he's afraid to believe me so I smile and say it again.

"I love you, Theo. I have since the beginning too."

"Thank fuck," he breathes, reaching for me.

His lips find mine and I smile as he kisses me.

“Every second without you was torture,” he whispers against my mouth, and I nod.

“I know. I hated it.”

He kisses me again, his fingers tangling in my hair and I start to lose myself in him. There’s just one thing that I need to hear first.

“Say it,” I whisper against his mouth and he pulls back.

“I love you,” he says right away and I shake my head, smiling,

“Say what I am to you now,” I clarify, and he grumbles but he’s smiling.

“You’re my girlfriend,” he says, and I laugh.

“Say it again,”

“I love you, girlfriend.”

“I love you too, boyfriend.”

“Can we go home now?” He asks, and I shake my head.

“No. I want to visit with my family and it will be good for you to take a break and meet them too.”

“We’re moving pretty fast here,” he says, and I laugh.

“It’s only fair. I already know your family.”

“Alright. We’ll stay.”

“Just until tomorrow night. Then we can head home.”

“Good, because I have big plans once we’re back home,” he whispers against my ear.

“Hmm, maybe I can get a sneak peek now,” I whisper back, and I feel him grin as his hands slip beneath my shirt.

“Whatever you want...girlfriend.”

I smile as he claims me once again.

FOURTEEN

Theo

FIVE YEARS LATER...

AT EXACTLY FIVE O’CLOCK, I log off of my computer and head for the door. Clara is going to be waiting for me tonight and I can’t wait to get home to my wife.

That’s right, I said wife.

We got married in a small, intimate ceremony two months after I went to apologize at the Stud Farm. I knew that she was the one for me. I had known since the beginning and I didn’t want to wait any longer to make her mine.

I head downstairs and climb into the back of my waiting car. I don’t need to text Lucas when I’ll be leaving anymore. He knows that as soon as it’s five, I’m out the door.

“Home, sir?” He asks, and I nod.

We take off and I smile as I lean back in my seat. It doesn’t take long to get to our building and I thank Lucas before I head inside and up to the top floor.

I step off of the elevator and Clara is nowhere in sight. I toss my things down on the couch, smiling when I see the neon green blanket draped over the back. Clara decorated this place and her touch is everywhere. She still left some dark

colors in every room, but now they're mixed in with her splashes of bright colors and fabrics.

I head upstairs to our room and smile when I see her sitting in bed, writing in her diary. I used to hate that thing, but then she showed me some of the things that she was writing in there. When we got to the parts about all of the sexual things that she wanted to do with me, I went out and bought her five more. She had laughed, and then we'd done a few of the things that she was fantasizing about.

Best night ever.

"More ideas for tonight?" I ask her huskily, and she laughs.

"How did you know?"

"I know you," I say as I bend to drop a kiss on her lips.

"How was the trial?" She asks, and I grin at her. "Ah, that good, huh?"

"I destroyed them."

"That's my man."

My heart starts to race at her words. I still love to hear her call me that.

"How was your doctor's appointment?" I ask as I slip out of my suit jacket.

"It was good."

There's something in her tone and I stick my head back out of the closet to stare at her.

"Was it? What did they say?"

She's been so tired and nauseous lately. I insisted that she take the week off and go see a doctor. I was hoping that it would be on a different day so that I could take her, but she was only able to get in today and I had to be in court.

"I've been writing all about it," she says, and I leap over to her and pluck the diary out of her hands.

She just laughs at me and I smile as I start to read.

DEAR DIARY,

THEO IS GOING *to be so surprised. I mean, he's not going to believe it!*

I hope that he's happy too, because I am.

I wonder what his reaction will be when I tell him...

Hmm...

I LOOK up from the pages, giving her a dry stare and she giggles. We both know that she was messing with me.

“I had to have some fun with it!” She insists and I grin and go back to reading.

HOW SHOULD *I even tell him? Just blurt it out? Draw it out? Maybe I should wait a little bit...*

I GRUMBLE as I flip to the next page and Clara laughs.

I'M PREGNANT, *Theo.*

MY STOMACH DROPS and my heart lodges in my throat as I read those three words over and over.

“Pregnant?” I ask hoarsely. “We’re going to have a baby?”

I look up and see tears swimming in her eyes.

“Yeah. We’re going to have a baby,” she whispers.

“Fuck, Clara!” I say, wrapping her up in my arms.

“You’re going to have to work on your swearing,” she tells me with a laugh.

“I will. I’ll be better,” I swear, and she squeezes me tighter.

“We’re going to have a baby,” I say reverently, and she smiles.

“Are you happy?”

“I’m ecstatic. I love you, Clara.”

She smiles and I lean forward, kissing her softly.

“I wonder what my boss is going to say about me needing to take so much leave coming up,” she says when we break apart.

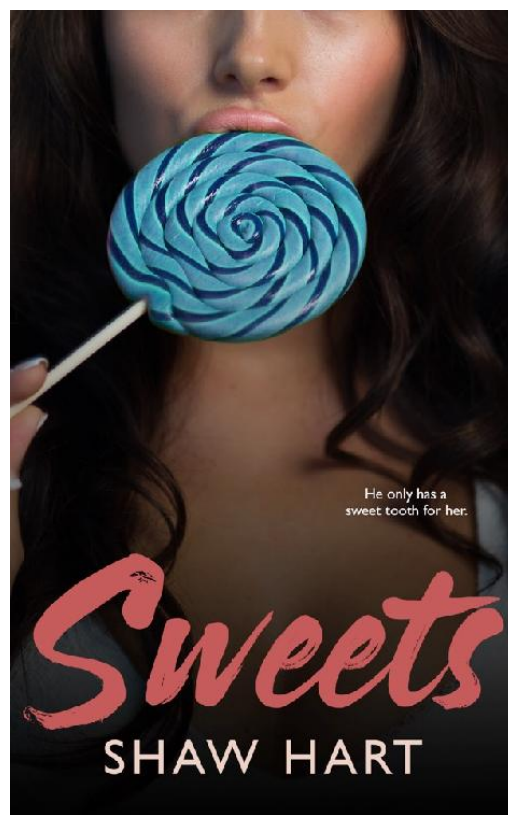
I grin as I spoon her and nuzzle my face in her neck.

“I’m sure that he’ll be gracious as always,” I tell her, and she giggles.

“I’m sure too.”

Curious about Clara’s brothers? Be sure to check out their books [here!](#)

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