

MATTHEW  
CALDWELL

*The Untouchable*



IVY SMOAK

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By Ivy Smoak



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## **Matthew Caldwell - The Untouchable**

*The Untouchables.* That's what everyone called us. The nickname had followed us around since we were kids. I wasn't sure who started it, but the premise behind it was simple. My friends and I could get away with murder. Literally. That's what happens when your parents own the two biggest companies in Manhattan.

We were untouchable. And I was...sick of it. I was sick of the lies and the secrets. I was sick of the pedestal we had to stand on. And I was sick of the girls throwing themselves at my feet like I was some sort of god. I was tired of being untouchable. Especially when all I wanted was someone who would never belong in my world.

The first time I saw Brooklyn, she was staring at me unabashedly. It was like she thought she was invisible. Like I'd see right through her. But I saw her. And every day for the first week of school, she stared.

I tried my best not to stare back. Not because I didn't want her to know I was staring. But because I didn't want her to know that I saw her. The sad eyes. The lost look on her face. The pain. I saw it all. And I was pretty sure she was trying to hide it. We all had our secrets. And I had no right to know hers when mine were swallowing me whole.

It didn't take long to figure out she was from the wrong side of the tracks. That small fact also didn't matter to me at all. What did matter? The lies and secrets that I had to keep. We couldn't be together because of me. Not the other way around.

As I walked by her locker, she ducked her head, pretending like she wasn't staring.

"Are you ever going to ask her out?" Rob asked as he elbowed me in the ribs. "Because I'm about to call dibs if..."

"Yes." I knew that as soon as I asked her, the shit would hit the fan. Because I'd done something bad. I glanced over at Isabella as we walked down the front steps of Empire High. She was sitting with her friends, laughing about something. Yeah, I'd done something really fucking stupid. And it was already causing issues for Brooklyn and we weren't even dating yet. I couldn't let my secrets ruin her like they were ruining me.

"So...when?" Rob asked.

"Soon." I needed more time. I needed to figure out a way to fix my mistakes first. "Don't even speak to her. She's mine."

He laughed. "All talk."

Mason laughed too and turned around so he was walking backward to the car. "Grow a pair and ask her out already."

James pulled his keys out of his pocket. "Anyone want to pregame before the party tonight?" It was a nice attempt at changing the subject. But honestly, it was just as upsetting.

My father was having a huge birthday celebration tonight. And like the past several years of parties, I was going solo. And like the past several years, James was going to end up shit-faced.

I didn't respond to either of them when we reached James' Benz. I couldn't fix James' drinking problems, just like I

couldn't dig my way out of the hole I was in with Isabella. Tonight was going to suck.

I looked up at the entrance of Empire High. Brooklyn was stepping out with the only person that deigned to talk to her at her new school. Another scholarship student. I was glad she had someone. Because being alone in those halls was just asking for trouble.

For just a second, our eyes locked. Her cheeks turned rosy and she looked down at her beat-up shoes. I climbed in the car and stared at her reflection in the rearview mirror. Her sad eyes. The slight frown on her face. No one that beautiful should look so sad.

Brooklyn thought she was invisible. But I was about to prove her wrong. And the people messing with her? They'd wish they'd never breathed. Afterall...I could get away with murder. And soon Brooklyn would be able to as well. Because I was going to make her untouchable. I was going to make her mine.

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I thought I had the whole weekend to figure out what my first move would be. I never expected Brooklyn to show up at my dad's party. As a server. When I first saw her holding the tray, every inch of me wanted to go over and talk to her. But not like this. Not when she was a waitress at a party I was attending. I didn't want us to start off on unequal footing. I wanted her to get to know me, not the Caldwell name.

So I avoided her. I knew it was stupid. But I'd already envisioned how I wanted our first meeting to go. I wanted to sit with her at lunch. Alone. Not in front of all these society climbing vultures. I wanted a chance to actually get to know her without anyone breathing down my neck. I wanted to know every single thing about her.

James grabbed another glass of champagne from a tray passing by and I cringed. What was that...his third or fourth? Before I could say anything, the lights dimmed, announcing dinner. I made my way over to my table with Mason. He was talking about the game tomorrow night, but I wasn't listening. Because I'd realized I'd probably made a terrible mistake. What if Brooklyn was serving my table? Our first meeting would be me thanking her for the filet. That was worse than talking to her when she was holding a tray of hors d'oeuvres. *Shit.*

"You okay?" Mason asked.

"I'm fine." *Why didn't I just talk to Brooklyn at school this week?* I'd had plenty of opportunities. No, I knew why. It was because of how Isabella was already treating her. What would Isabella do to her when she knew the truth? *She'd make her life a living hell.*

"You've barely said two words all night," Mason said.

"I'm just nervous about the game tomorrow."

He laughed. "Why? No one ever even comes close to beating us." He clapped me on the back. "Oh good, I'm fucking starving."

I breathed a sigh of relief when some random guy started serving our table. I'd still be able to have my perfect first meeting with Brooklyn. After I took care of Isabella. I knew it wouldn't be easy to shake Isabella's threats. Normal blackmail? Sure, simple. But blackmail from a Pruitt? She could have me fucking killed. And I probably deserved it.

Now I was the one downing too much champagne.

The sound of glass shattering filled the ballroom. For a second I thought I'd made the noise. But my glass was still intact. I took another huge gulp of champagne. I hated it when someone dropped a tray of food. It always made me feel terrible and I'd leave a generous tip to make their day better. But when I heard the noise this time? I didn't just feel bad. Panic gripped my chest. *Please God don't let it be Brooklyn.*

"Clean it up," Isabella said from somewhere behind me.

No matter who had dropped something, they didn't need that comment. Isabella could be such a bitch. Mistakes happened. Why did she have to act like she never made them? I was holding the stem of my glass so tightly I thought it might snap.

"She doesn't need assistance, Rob," said Isabella. "She's smart enough to figure it out. Right, darling? Isn't that the only reason you're at our school? Because you were smart enough to earn yourself a scholarship? You're not one of us."

*Fuck.*

I heard a few snickers.

Who else would Isabella be talking to if it wasn't Brooklyn? I let go of the champagne flute before it had a



chance to break.

“Yo, isn’t that the new girl you’re into?” Mason asked.

I already knew it. But I was really hoping I was wrong. I slowly turned around to look at the scene unfolding behind me.

Brooklyn was kneeling by a broken plate. Shards of glass were everywhere and so were the remains of a plate full of food. Isabella was standing over her with a smile on her face, looking every bit the monster that she was. Brooklyn sat there for a second, completely frozen. And for a moment I was frozen too.

Everyone’s eyes were on her. The whole ballroom shushed. All I wanted to do was go help her pick everything up. But Isabella was standing there. And Isabella had the power to ruin my life. All I could do was clench my jaw and watch.

Brooklyn shoved some of the glass onto the cart and then grabbed her hand.

*Shit, did she cut herself?*

“Brooklyn, are you okay?” Her friend Kennedy knelt down beside her, ignoring the stares. She grabbed her hand. “Jesus. Go take care of the cut. I’ll clean this up.”

Brooklyn just looked at her, blinking back tears.

“Seriously, go. I got this.”

“Thank you.” Brooklyn stood up.

“Looks like you’ll definitely have to replace your shoes now,” sneered Isabella.

Brooklyn looked down at her shoes and then rushed past Isabella without looking back.

Isabella's vicious laughter cut through the party.

I was already standing up. I only had so much restraint.

"Where are you going?" Isabella asked, her fake fingernails digging into my forearm before I had a chance to get passed her. "You better not be running after the new girl."

"I gotta take a shit. You got a problem with that?"

"Ew. Don't be so crass, Matthew."

"If you don't let go of me, this won't be the only mess on the floor."

"Yuck." Her hand fell from my arm and I practically ran after Brooklyn.

No, this wasn't the way I'd planned our first meeting to go. And no, I doubted Isabella even believed my lie. But I couldn't let Brooklyn be alone right now. I'd deal with the consequences tomorrow. I pushed into the women's restroom without giving it another thought.

Brooklyn was standing at the sink with one of her shoes in her hand. She was scrubbing at a stain to no avail. Tears streamed down her rosy cheeks. The blood from the cut on her hand mixed with the water, creating what looked like a crime scene in the sink.

"You're bleeding," I said. It was the first thing I could think of to say. The first thing I'd ever said to her at all. And it was stupid. It was really fucking stupid. But it was out there, and I couldn't take it back. They'd always be my first words to her. *I*

*should have said she was beautiful.* Because she was. Even with tears falling down her face. All I wanted to do was wipe them away.

Her hand stopped scrubbing the fabric of her shoe. She looked up into the mirror in front of her and stared at the reflection of us.

“Am I in the men’s room?” she asked.

I pressed my lips together. Her first words to me were almost as bad as my first words to her. And I wanted to smile, even though everything about this moment wasn’t going according to plan.

She lifted up her shoe like she was about to put the soaking wet bloody mess back onto her foot and run away.

I didn’t want her to ever run away from me.

“You can buy new shoes,” I said, ignoring her question about which restroom she was in. I’d buy her as many pairs as she wanted. “You can’t buy a new hand.” I walked up next to her, waved my hand under the automatic soap dispenser, and then stared at her reflection as I slowly took her hand in mine. Touching her was better than downing a thousand glasses of champagne. It was like she was buzzing through my veins. She stayed completely still and I hoped she felt it too.

I dipped her hand back under the running faucet and started gently washing the cut. I’d never forgive myself for watching that scene unfold. But I’d make it up to her. I wouldn’t freeze again. I wanted her to be able to count on me.

She didn’t flinch from the pain of the water entering her wound. She just stared at my hands like she was in a trance. I

traced the pad of my thumb along her cut, hoping to get some kind of reaction from her. But she just kept staring at my hands. I couldn't tell if she was in shock or awe. I was really hoping it was the latter.

The silence stretched between us and all I could think about was filling it. "Isabella's a disease," I said. "Don't let her crawl under your skin or she'll stay there." *Just tell her she's beautiful, you idiot.* How many times was I going to screw this up?

She finally removed her eyes from my reflection in the mirror and looked up at me. For just a moment we locked eyes. A few seconds that stretched for eternity. Her eyes swirled with sadness. It killed me how sad she was. I wanted to know why. It was like I could feel her pain, even if I didn't know the cause. I wanted to fix it.

She turned away, as if she was worried I'd truly see her. But it was too late. I already knew too much. And I didn't know how to walk away.

I turned off the water, grabbed a paper towel, and wrapped it around her hand.

"Thank you," she said, keeping her eyes on the paper towel.

I shoved my hands into my pockets so I wouldn't try to touch her again. For the first time in my life, I needed to show restraint. Brooklyn was worth that. She was worth everything. "I'll see you around school, Brooklyn," I said and made my way to the door, even though it killed me to walk away. But I knew she needed space. If she didn't, she'd look up at me. I'd give her that space. I'd give her whatever time she needed. Maybe it would be enough time to buy my freedom back.

I looked back at her once more before the door closed behind me with a thud. I pressed my back against it. Yes, I'd give her time. But as far as I was concerned, Brooklyn was already an Untouchable. And Isabella was going to pay. Because she'd just messed with what was mine.

## A Note From Ivy

I hope you enjoyed getting a glimpse of Matt behind the scenes. When I write from the heroine's perspective I always feel a little guilty that you don't see the hero's motivations. Because really, it's not just Brooklyn's story. Everyone in Empire High has their own side of the story. I don't know if you're #TeamMatt. Maybe you're #TeamFelix. Maybe you love someone else for her. But if you've been along with me from the beginning of my writing journey, starting with The Hunted series, I know you were hoping to get in Matt's head. He's been one of my most elusive characters so finally seeing how he ticks has been so much fun.

And if you haven't read The Hunted series yet...what are you waiting for?! All of my books are related in one way or another with The Hunted series. Half the fun is seeing your favorite characters show up unexpectedly in a new book. So make sure to check out the chronological reading order on my website to truly jump in. Don't worry, there are no spoilers about Matt's future with Brooklyn!

And speaking of Matt – do you think he'll successfully make Brooklyn an Untouchable too? Or will their love story go up in flames?



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Did you know that all of Ivy's books are connected?

[See the whole family tree here!](#)

*What to read next...*

*All books available in Kindle Unlimited!*

## **Empire High**

[Empire High Elite \(Book 2\)](#) - Welcome to the world of the elite. Will Matt be able to accept the truth about Brooklyn's new family? Or will their family rivalry tear them apart? Find out in Empire High Elite!

[\*\*Empire High Betrayal \(Book 3\)\*\*](#) - Brooklyn's new family is dangerous. Can she prove that she belongs? Or will Isabella destroy everything she loves? Find out in Empire High Betrayal!

[\*\*Empire High Matchmaker \(Book 4\)\*\*](#) - It's been sixteen years since the events of Betrayal. Can Matt get his happily ever after?

[\*\*EHH \(Book 5\)\*\*](#) - Coming May 12, 2022. Pre-order your copy today!

### **The Hunted Series (James Hunter's story)**

[\*\*Temptation \(Book 1\)\*\*](#) - Matthew Caldwell isn't the only Untouchable with his own story! When James Hunter grows up, he gives up his billionaire lifestyle in NYC to become a professor. But he never expected to be teaching such a beautiful student. He has to resist her. He needs to walk away. Penny deserves better than a man with his demons. But she's daring him to cross the line. And he's never been one to resist temptation.

\*Temptation does NOT contain any spoilers about Matt & Brooklyn!\*

### **Men of Manhattan Series (The other Untouchables' stories)**



[City of Sin \(Mason Caldwell's story\)](#) – Matthew's brother Mason has always been a playboy. And when he's older? He's just more notorious. That is until he meets Bee, a small-town girl who's moved to the city to follow her dreams. Will she be able to change his playboy ways?

\*Don't worry, there are no spoilers about Matt & Brooklyn in this story either!\*

### **The Society (Tanner's Story)**

[The Society #StalkerProblems](#) – I haven't revealed much about this story yet. But I can tell you this: It's Tanner story. You'll get an inside look at Club Onyx. And you absolutely do NOT want to miss it! Pre-order your copy today!