

A
HOLLY HILLS
CHRISTMAS

Celeste's

SECRET

C.M. STEELE

Celeste's Secret
A Holly Hills Christmas
C.M. Steele

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Life has been one cruel letdown after another, but I refuse to let it break my spirit.

This time, this little bean and I will make a life for ourselves and forget all our troubles. Despite losing my job to the jerk who knocked me up, I managed to turn my passion into a career by going independent. My grandfather's house was finally sold, giving me the padded cushion I needed to secure a great living for this little one.

Ms. Hoffman...you're not having one little boy...you're having two.

The best night of my life ended with the sun coming up and the sheets cold. She ran away, and I knew I should have bolted the doors before we even hit the mattress somehow. I wish we'd have exchanged numbers or something. Now, there was no way to find this woman in a city of millions where I wasn't even familiar with anyone or had any connections. Still, there was no way I'd give up because she was mine.

Chapter One

Celeste

This can't be happening right now. I pull the phone from my ear to check the number and then bring it back to my ear. "Ms. Hoffman. Are you there?" the voice on the line asks.

I clear my throat while I look around the office to see if anyone else is nearby. "Yes. Sorry, did you say my grandfather passed away?"

"Yes, Mr. Manchester died and left you his home in his will." In his will? Why are they bringing this up right now? Shouldn't I be in the middle of making arrangements and leaving that crap for later?

"When did he die?" I ask, suspicion clouding my mind and icing over my heart.

He pauses much longer than he should for a simple answer. "A week ago."

"And you're just contacting me now?" I screamed into the phone, letting my temper get the better of me, which I shouldn't have because I'd let my grandfather win well before I knew he was my grandfather.

"He asked that you not be contacted until the will was read." My first thought is to tell him to shove the property up his ass. It's what I should have said because there's nothing I want from the man who spent his life avoiding me, dodging all care and responsibility for me since my father died.

"Send over the documentation to my office or apartment. I don't have time to take off from work at the moment."

“Would you be able to meet this weekend?”

“Sure. Please email me the information, and I’ll get back to you on the time.”

“Yes, Ms. Hoffman. I’m sorry for your loss.”

“It wasn’t my loss. It was his.” I ended the call and fought back the tears. Right now isn’t the time for this because we have a staff meeting this morning, and it’s not looking good. There has been talk of a merger after several quarters with consecutive losses.

I set my cell phone down and set the ringer to silent before gathering my things for the meeting. My coworker, Jason, approaches with a sheepish frown. “It’s not going to be a good one today. The big bosses aren’t going to be in there, but we’re getting bad news.”

“Yeah, I have a feeling. It’s getting to that time of year. Layoff central. Any plans just in case our department gets the boot?”

“Yes, but at least you’ll still have a job. You’re one of the most valuable employees in our department.” He’s been with the company a year longer than me, but we’re in the same position for digital advertising and marketing.

“Hardly. A monkey could do my job, and soon they’ll see that,” I say, thinking he does it, and they actually think his work is quality. Frankly, I find it lacking, but that’s my personal taste.

“I wouldn’t go spreading the word,” he says, pressing his finger to his lips. Something about his smug expression makes me uneasy. Does he know something I don’t know?

“Well, let’s get this show on the road.”

“I’m right behind you.” I stand, and immediately I know why Jason’s behind me, so I peek at the glass door’s reflection to see him ogling my ass.

I pause with my elbow pointed back, sending him right into it. He grunts and says, “Shit.”

“Sorry, forgot something at my desk. Go on ahead of me.” Fucking prick. I’m so glad I never gave into the pressure to sleep with him over the years. We have worked alongside one another for three years, and he married the girl in the copy room last year, and yet he’s still a pig.

“I’ll wait.”

“No, go on. You don’t want to miss getting a good seat.”

“I’ll save you one.” I nod, but I go back and pretend to dig for something in my drawer. Stalling until I had two minutes left before it started, I hustled to the meeting room, where the thirty other employees were huddled around the large conference room table. My seat has been taken by his wife, so I stand in the corner and hide as we wait for the HR director and President of Operations to speak.

“Good morning. As you know, King Marketing and its holdings have failed to meet its quarterly earnings for the third straight quarter. This has been an issue and, unfortunately, has forced our hands. We have decided to merge the company with Nox Sawyer Investments. Currently, the owners are meeting with their team of lawyers in Chicago and will be here on Monday to go over the changes.”

He takes a deep breath, and I’m waiting for the hammer to drop. “However, at this point and time, we are not in the position to keep all of you here. As the merger has already been underway for a month, the spots for division and reallocation have been decided. I’m afraid that some of you will be let go over the next few weeks. This is hard for all of us. We will do our best to see that you’re helped into a new position at another company or a proper reference letter.”

A sinking feeling sits in the depths of my gut. They give out a few more platitudes and other useless words about how much we mean to them. Words don't put money in our pockets and food in our mouths, so I'd rather just know my fate now. When we're finally excused, I head to my desk without speaking to any of my colleagues because they're all anxious and I still have a deadline that needs to be met before the end of the day.

I sent it off. As soon as I hit send, my email gets a read receipt from the director. I got a return email. Fuck. A message to see HR. "Of course." The bastards wanted me to finish the project before they canned me.

I locked my computer and then stood, straightening my skirt. HR was a floor below, so I took the elevator, having to pass Jason's desk. Strangely, he didn't have the nerve to look at me, even my ass, as I passed by. Fuck, this doesn't look good. When I reached her office, I barely extended my arm to her open door when she said, "Ah, there you are. I was wondering how long it would take for them to send you in here."

"Well, they needed my finished work before they canned me," I teased, even though I'm sure by the look on her face there was more than a grain of truth to that story.

Her face drew inward, lips nervously sucked in. "Please have a seat, Ms. Hoffman."

"Oh, so no more, Celeste." I take a seat in front of her desk, knowing that she's going to drop the bomb on me any second, and I can feel the acid in my stomach churning already.

"Please get to the point, Ms. Basse."

"Unfortunately, we had to cut some of your team, and it was up to you and one other person and he has a family." I immediately knew she was referring to Jason, who doesn't have kids but a wife.

“Understood. So, shall I go pack my things now?”

“Actually, the full layoff won’t begin until next month. We need you here for the transition period, closing out your accounts, transferring files, and explaining projects you’re currently working on.”

“That should take a day or two, not a month.”

“Mr. Vance still needs time to work on his projects that are due in the next two weeks, so he doesn’t have time to take over every project head-on instantly.” The tone of her voice makes me want to crawl over her desk and choke her, but I remain calm and collected like the professional I am.

“Oh,” I mutter.

She clasps her hands together and sighs before opening her overly-filled lips. “You’ll be compensated for your time. However, once the project is over, your job will be terminated, and you will receive a small severance to help with the transition.”

“Thank you.” Twice today, I wanted to tell someone to shove their offer. My restraint has been a miracle and a curse at the same time because I feel like I’m either going to implode or explode. It’s hell right now.

“Well. If you will excuse me, I will head back to my desk and get to work on my plans to turn everything over.”

“We know you’re the department lead, so this is difficult.”

“Please don’t talk about difficult with me, Vanessa. I’m frankly not interested in your bland attempt at empty platitudes. I had enough of them this morning, and I have a job to do before it’s all said and done. Excuse me.” I leave her office and head back to mine, closing the door so Jason can’t enter. My door had been open to everyone before, but now it’s closed because I need a moment of peace before I lose it on someone.

Checking my schedule, I was booked a month out with a list of

projects. God, they're so screwed. Several clients asked for me specifically, saying they wouldn't work with Jason, so it will be interesting. As it is, I pack my personal belongings, which thankfully aren't a lot. Even though I'm a designer, I've never added my personal touch because I don't trust people to let me go, and I was right.

A rapt knock at my door brings the unwanted guest into my presence. "What can I help you with, Jason?"

"Look, Celeste. I'm really sorry about this."

"How long did you know? Before or after you were staring at my ass this morning?"

"I wasn't..."

"Don't lie. It really doesn't matter. I'm trying to work out how best to give you the material because I have no interest in remaining here for a month to train you. You're obviously the one they want to keep, so you don't need the training. You need the material."

"They're just trying to pay you out a little longer, so why not stay on and lead me through your projects?" The little piece of shit wants me to do the work for him. He's out of luck, and I'm out of goodwill.

"I'm going to be fine. Besides, it's time I started working for myself."

He straightens his posture and gives me a cold, disdainful look. "You know you can't poach the company's clients."

"I never said that, and you know I can't steal them because I can't offer the same level of service without the budget. Still, I will be just fine. Not that it matters to you, anyway. So please let me get my job done."

"That's not true. I'm really sorry, Cel. Let me make it up to you. I can take you to dinner." The damn audacity.

My teeth clench together as I try to control my rage and utter

disappointment. “Get out of my office now. I’ll have what you need before I go.” I work late and tuck everything into my bag.

Funny, I got a magnificent apartment because one of the companies we dealt with loved my work and had a spare place to lease. It’s coming up for renewal next month. I’m going to move back into my family home in Holly Hills, it would seem. At least that’s probably the plan.

I was about to leave when I remembered that I had to meet with my grandfather’s lawyer the next day. I sent him a time for eleven, and he agreed, which was good because I had no intention of waking up early after the day I had today.

Taking a quick walk to my apartment, I drop off my things and then I get a message from some of the girls who are heading out. They were let go and wanted to hit the clubs. As much as I want to get shitfaced and forget the loss of my favorite job, I’m not a clubbing type girl, so I shoot them a text and let them know it’s going to be a no for me.

Instead, I decided that I’d just pop into the hotel bar next to my apartment building. I changed into a cute pair of heels and refreshed my look by losing my suit jacket, letting my long hair down, and fixing my makeup.

“I feel better,” I say, checking out my reflection in the mirror. It’s amazing what happens when you add some red lipstick. Grabbing my clutch, I leave my apartment and head out next door.

The moment I step inside, I make a conscious decision to let life happen. I’ve done everything by the book and I got my ass tossed onto the street while jackasses like Jason Vance screw up and screw around and get to keep their jobs. Tonight, I’m forgetting the rules and letting loose.

Walking up to the bar, I’m greeted by a handsome bartender who winks at me. For the first time, I felt good and smiled at him. “I’ll take, um...

the special cocktail tonight.”

“It’s a good one tonight, sugar.”

“Don’t call her sugar,” a growl comes from beside me. I turned to glare at him to demand he mind his own business, but my tongue nearly fell out of my mouth. He’s so tall that I have to tilt my head upward on the bar stool. His height and build, mixed with that devilish face, make the bartender seem insignificant—if that’s possible. In a dark gray suit with a white dress shirt and matching gray tie, he stands commanding in front of me. Our eyes meet, and I’m stunned. The snarky words I just let slip are lost on my tongue, and my brain has shorted. With his bright hazel eyes focused on me so intently, I knew he meant business.

He’s strikingly handsome with a face that screams sexy, a chiseled jaw, clean-shaven with the day’s hair just peeking through, medium-sized lips on a stern mouth that is all about power, and eyes that own me.

I remember the words I said to myself when I came into the bar. *All rules forgotten.*

Chapter Two

Lennox

“Could that meeting have taken any longer? He talks a lot but says nothing of substance. Did you get anything of value from that walkthrough?”

“Not a damn thing except a fucking headache.”

“At least you have your wife to ease that ache for you.”

“You sound jealous as fuck, and if I didn’t trust her, I’d have to fuck you up.” My brother glares at me. If we didn’t look so much alike, he probably wouldn’t see me as a threat, but then again, I suppose that would be the case if I met the woman of my dreams and she saw him.

“Calm down. You know I have no interest in her. Besides, I need a cold, hard drink, and then I’m hitting the bed.”

“I’ll see you tomorrow night for dinner. Maybe you’ll meet someone here.”

“I doubt it. Besides, we’re only here for the merger, and then we’re back home.” We give a brief hug before I head into the bar, and he takes the elevator up to his hotel suite with his beautiful pregnant wife.

I step inside the nearly empty bar when I spot the lovely little five-foot-nothing in heels walking toward the bar, and I’m frozen in place, admiring everything about her, from the bounce in her pale blonde tones in her hair to the tight ass in her pencil skirt. Fuck, my dick stiffens on the spot.

She took a seat, and the bartender gave her attention immediately, flirting with her. She had the nerve to betray me and smile at him. I’m going

insane and there's no going back because I've never been a man to falter on a mission. Once I locked on my prey, I attacked and made the kill. It's how my brother and I became a success at twenty-five and now, five years later, we're billionaires.

"Don't call her sugar." I want to snap his neck. Never in my life have I ever felt possessive, jealous, or nuts over a woman, but I am now.

She turns to give me her fiery eyes, but her mouth falls open and the anger fades. "I happen to like being called sugar."

"Who else calls you that because they're going to have their tongue cut out?" She's about to find out how possessive Masterson men are with their women.

"That's none of your business," she says, wrapping her delicate fingers around my tie and tugging. Fuck, she's playing with fire.

"Play nice, little girl. I'm all for a little tit-for-tat. You put your hands on me, and I'll gladly run my hands over you."

"How about we grab a drink, and you tell me your name and why I shouldn't let the bartender flirt with me?" Because I'll break his fucking neck. I've never felt so violent in all my life.

"I thought I made my point clear, but if it keeps you here, gladly."

"We'll need a bottle of your finest wine, please. I'm seducing my future wife." I smirk before sliding my hand around hers, still cuffed around my tie, and slowly tugging it free from her grip. Even when it's free, I don't let it go. Instead, I bring it to my lips and kiss the back of her palm. "I'm Lennox Masterson, and please tell me your name."

"Celeste..."

"I'll need your room number, sir." I handed him my key card, and he gasped. It's a special one that leads to the executive suites, but that doesn't

matter to me. I'm only concerned about this beauty in front of me.

"Come and sit with me." I take my card while the bartender brings the wine and glasses to us.

"Do you need anything else, sir?"

"No, thank you." I handed him a tip to get lost, and I meant it because he was already on my bad side, but there wasn't anyone else to get me the bottle.

"So tell me what brings you into the bar, looking like a fucking goddess with sad eyes."

She hesitates and says, "My grandfather died."

"I'm terribly sorry, beautiful. Were you two close?" I ask, caressing her hand.

She shakes her head. "No, that's the problem. He intentionally had his lawyer wait a week to inform me of his death until after he'd been buried."

"What the hell?" I want to dig the fucker up and beat him up for her.

She sighs. "Yeah, an asshole until he was put into the ground. Yet, he left me his family home."

"Okay, sweetheart, I'm missing that reasoning by a mile."

"He was a prick to everyone, but I'm the only family left, so I guess I win by default."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't feel sorry for me. I want to enjoy this expensive wine with desirable company." She takes her first drink slowly, and then the second goes down faster. "What are you doing here?"

"I came to town for business, and now I'm finding pleasure and my forever. One day, you're going to be my wife, so let's get this show on the

road and say you'll marry me." She laughs, finishing her glass of wine with a shake of her head as if she thinks I'm joking, but I couldn't be more serious.

"Cut the bullshit. You want to sleep with me, Lennox, and I've never seen a more handsome man. I've had a day from hell, and you have just made my day a thousand times better. I say you take me up to your hotel room and strip me bare and make me forget my lonely, miserable life for the night."

"It won't be for the night, Celeste. I can promise you that, my midnight star." I take her hand, and she snatches up the bottle of wine. "Yes, let's not forget that. I want to drink that off your body," I growl.

Her heels click through the bar's tiled floor until we hit the rugs in the lobby. Once we reach the elevators, I pin her to the wall, put my hands over her head, and kiss her for the first time. Fuck, it feels like heaven as her mouth parts for me, tongue swipes over mine. She tastes of sweet wine and a hint of strawberries.

With a groan, I grind my stiff cock along her stomach and pussy, aching to be inside her right in the middle of the hotel lobby. I don't want anyone to see my woman, so I stop. Pulling back, I finally hit the button for the elevator.

"Please don't change your mind."

"I'm not, sugar," I answer. "I don't want anyone seeing you coming undone but me. Your cries will only be heard by my ears."

"Then you better hurry, because I'm so horny that I might just go home and fuck my little toy instead."

"Don't make me hunt it down and destroy it. You'll come for me, by me, and with me only." The elevator finally graces us with its doors open. I take a swig of the wine to calm my ardor a bit and give me a break from the lust, but I'm still ready to pounce on her the second the bottle leaves my lips.

“Hey, don’t drink it all.”

“Don’t worry, baby. I’ll order an entire case just for you to bathe in.” I need her like I need air. My mouth is on her, ravishing her lips, until I hear a cough behind us. Ignoring the couple who stepped in, I dragged my lips away and pressed the button for our floor.

Although I hold off kissing the woman of my dreams, I block her body and view of the couple in front of us. They don’t need to see the precious woman I have before me with her flush face, heaving chest, and sexy legs that brush against mine, ready to ride me.

They get off first a floor before ours, so I turn us toward the exit and then patiently wait for our floor. When we stepped off, I swept her into my arms and carried her up the four steps to the door, where I swiped my card and tugged the handle down, letting us into my suite.

I hadn’t expected to bring anyone back to my hotel, so it’s not presentable. My work is everywhere, but it doesn’t matter since I’ve no intention of making small talk. It’s time to make love to my woman and fill her with the future heirs to my company.

The second she’s in my bedroom, I keep the lights low and take off my suit jacket, tossing it on the chair. I need her naked now and wish I came downstairs with less shit on. Still, I didn’t want to run into any business associates dressed unprofessionally. Damn it,

“Naked, I need you naked,” she says against my lips.

“We’re on the same page, baby girl. Strip, or I’ll tear your clothes off myself.” My voice is thick with need, something I never expected, and I don’t even recognize myself as I drag my tie from my neck.

Kicking off my shoes, I watch as she slips off her heels, and I do my best to fight back a groan. Never did I suspect I’d be enticed by feet, but

everything about Celeste has me hard, including the tiny little birthmark on the back of her ankle.

“You’re staring and not undressing, Lennox.”

“Sorry, I’m staring at such a celestial beauty, and it’s hard to look away.” Her clothes fall away, and my dick jerks in my boxers. Silently, I tell myself not to nut like a fucking teenage boy. I bite my lip and focus on numbers while removing the rest of my clothes.

When I finally look at her again, she’s standing there with a blush on her stunning face. Her ample chest makes me salivate as they stand high above her small waist that I plan on thickening soon with our babies. As I look lower, I see that sweet pussy begging to be devoured and punished with my enormous cock until it’s full of my cum and dripping with our release.

“Damn, I think I need another drink.” She grabs the bottle and takes a long drink before setting it down, wiping her pretty, puffy lips that I want to taste again.

“Why? It’s not what you were expecting?” I ask, closing the distance that separates us.

She shakes her head, looking up with a saucy stare. “I’m not sure I can handle that monster between your legs.”

I gripped her chin between my thumb and forefinger. “You’ll handle it, baby, over and over because I will make sure of it.” Then I took her mouth. Sliding my arm around her waist, I lift her tiny body up and carry her to the bed and bring us down in the middle, kissing her deeply.

“So sexy.” Raising her arms above her head, I slide my hands up and down them and then lower to her chest, skimming them to her nipples. “So sensitive.” I run my tongue along one and then the other before sucking on the hard peak, loving her subtle movements. My hand slinks between her

slender thighs, parting them to the spot I've been aching for since we crossed the threshold.

"Fuck, baby. You're so wet." She turns pink. "Don't be embarrassed. I want that pretty little slit soaked for me." I taste her mouth again. Thrusting a finger inside, I'm surprised at how tight she is, and I wonder if she should be this way, but I don't ask. Slowly, I push in a second, working her slippery entrance and then bringing them to my mouth. The second I do, I know I fucked up because I'm never going to get inside her before I nut. My mouth wants to eat first.

"I need more," I whisper as I pepper little kisses on her flat abs, down to her mound until I lift her hips and spread her legs over my shoulders.

"Oh my," she gasps. Her shyness is adorable, but it won't stop me in the least. I'm hungry, and I'm feasting tonight and forever. She's mine. Greedily, I consider ways to make her mine.

My tongue lashes at her entrance as I push a finger inside simultaneously. The way she moans alerts me to her pleasure, so I continue until she's coming on my face. My cock is begging to get inside of her. I hope she doesn't change her mind because I'd stop, even though every bone in my body doesn't want to give up until we're both sated for the rest of our days. I crawl up the mattress, admiring her body and kissing her pale skin as I go.

With my cock in hand, I rub the tip along her soft, puffy lips, testing her wetness. "Ready?"

"Yes, Lennox."

Pushing my cock into her small entrance, I say, "You're mine."

A gasp falls from her pretty mouth as I plunge through her tight hole. I have a feeling that my little celestial beauty gave me her virginity.

Our eyes meet, pleasure and pain register in hers, and I have my answer. Celeste doesn't say a word, and neither do I. Instead, I kiss the fuck out of her. She's mine and no one else's. If she thinks this is just for one night, she's got another thing coming.

I press my hands on the mattress and slowly slide in and out until we move faster and faster. "Fuck, your pussy feels so good." My mind tells me I should take it easy because we're both new to this, but I can't hold out too long. She's weakened me from the second I laid eyes on her.

"It's so big, Lennox." And that doesn't help. I was born lucky in that way, even though I never took advantage. But fuck, it's not helping right now. My thick meat is being put through her tiny pussy like a fucking vacuum seal, and the grip is so strong that I'm trying not to come.

"That's good because it's yours, baby girl." My muscles strain as I fight off my orgasm. Every thrust of my hips short circuits my brain, and I play a dangerous game with myself. I can't disappoint her.

"Oh hell, I'm so close to coming again."

"Me too, and I'm not pulling out. I'm coming in this tight little pussy, soaking your womb with my son or daughter because you're fucking mine, Celeste." I kiss her hard, letting her know that I'm serious.

She nods and moans, gripping onto me as I pound into her. Our bodies are entangled as sweat beads off our skin. I lean back, needing to see how much damage my dick is doing to her tiny hole. There's an insane level of pride that fills me like a wild beast as I watch my cock move in and out with it covered in a pinkish mix of her virginity and our juices. My thumb presses down, and I rub her clit. She trembles several times and then lets out a sexy moan. "I'm coming."

"Good fucking girl." I spank her ass and then empty my seed inside

her, hoping it takes root because I'm bent on making her mine in every way. Celeste will be my wife soon.

After two rounds of wine and fucking while making a promise to breed and marry her, I cling to my future as sleep takes me, never expecting tomorrow to change everything.

Chapter Three

Celeste

The sun comes up, and I'm creeping out of Lennox's bed because I have to be at a meeting with the lawyer soon and definitely need to shower and wash the cottony, dry taste out of my mouth. "Oh my goodness," I whisper painfully as I tiptoe out of the bedroom with my heels in hand. The unbelievable ache between my legs matched the ecstasy I felt last night.

His living area of the suite was massive and a bit messy. I attempt to leave him a note because I don't want to wake him or create some awkwardness. *Hey Lennox, you took my virginity, so you have to keep your word about happily ever kind of thing.*

So I looked for a piece of paper, which wasn't hard since this place was strewn with documents, but there was just one problem. They all look important. It's then that I see the header. *Nox Sawyer Investments*. There is a memo printed out to my boss about a meeting on Monday. "He's the owner," I gasp.

The man who just fucking fired me. I close my eyes and forget the note. Not needed. He just stole one more thing from me. Granted, perhaps unknowingly, or at least, I'd like to believe so. Still, I can't stay here. Fleeing with the last bit of dignity I have, I rush from his hotel room and I leave *Mr. Steal your life.*

With my hair blowing in the crisp early September air, I rush back to my apartment to face another devil, even if it's from the grave. The second I enter my small New York City apartment, I close the door and slide to the

floor, letting the tears fall. The punches kept coming; one by one, they hit me like a ton of bricks.

I can still smell Lennox on me, so I push myself off the floor, run into the bathroom, and turn on the shower. My alarm goes off, reminding me to get ready, which is good because I would still have been inside his hotel room. Unfortunately, that brings on another bout of tears.

The spray washes away his scent and slowly eases the ache of my sore muscles, but the memory of the night might take a long time to fade from my mind.

An hour later, I'm in Mr. Kohn's office while he reads off my grandfather's will. I'd wished he just sent it in an email or a certified envelope as impersonal as his death was to me. The fact that I had to bother to come here was more than he deserved after all these years. "So, can we get this over with? My grandfather didn't want me in his life."

"Ms. Hoffman, your grandfather was a complicated man, but you mustn't let his behavior ruin your good personality. He said you were an incredible young lady."

"Sorry for being miserable. Please explain my inheritance."

"You are to inherit the home in Holly Hills. Along with the remainder of his assets in the sum of five hundred twenty-two thousand dollars." My mouth falls open, and I can barely breathe.

"What? That can't be real."

"It is. Your grandfather was the epitome of Scrooge. He didn't like spending his money, and he was a miser, but he had his reasons."

I can't believe the amount of money he left me and why. "He could have just given this to some charity or something."

"Ms. Hoffman, he might not have loved company, but the man did

love you. Your grandfather had many difficulties that he couldn't discuss. During his time in the service, he received a brain injury, forcing him to suffer from a perpetual ear ringing that drove him insane. He managed to control it with some meds, but it made him a different person. For him, it was better than the pain in his head. You deserved better watching him die. He didn't want you to see a man dying only with pity and resentment in your heart. He knew what he did."

I sit back in my chair, confused and saddened. A man living alone because his life was stolen from him. I guess our family wasn't meant to have a good life. Although he left me with the means to do so. My adoptive parents did the same here in Holly Hills as well. I have a small home there that I go to when I want to get out of the city. They moved to Florida about two years ago and left me everything.

"Thank you for explaining. I wish he'd done that a long time ago, so I wouldn't have been hanging onto this resentment. My heart has been living with this feeling of loss and abandonment." Even with his explanation, it doesn't completely erase the pain, but it gives me answers.

"I can't answer that, but maybe it's because he didn't want to get close to you."

"I understand."

"His belongings have already been removed from the house and destroyed, so all that you will receive is an empty house to do with as you please."

"I already have a home in Holly Hills and an apartment in NYC, so I'll probably put it on the market."

"That's a wise idea. You're young, and you can make a lot of money off it."

“Thanks.”

I go over the documents in the will and read before signing my portion to receive the title of the house, which is completely paid for with no liens, and the money will be deposited into a new account tied to my normal bank account access to a larger daily spending limit.

Without a job and a newfound project to do, I decided to travel to Holly Hills for the rest of the weekend and the next week. Packing my bag, I stuff it into my new car. I’m glad I saved up for it before I purchased it because these assholes had no consideration for letting me go. Anyway, I drive to Holly Hills and stop at my favorite shop because this girl needs some serious sugary treats to deal with the emotional heartache I’m going through right now.

“Oh my goodness, Celly, it’s been too long,” Beth screams, running around from behind the counter. I crack a smile as big as my face because she reminds me how much I’m missed somewhere.

“Thanks. I miss you girls too. Is Holiday here?”

“Yep. She’s in the back, but she’ll be upfront in a moment.”

“So, what brings you into town? Are you staying for a while? We could go boy hunting?”

“Nope. I’m staying away from men.”

She arches her brows. “Well, that sounds like there’s a story behind that.”

“There is, and that’s why I need a bunch of sweets while I hide away in my house for the next few days.”

“Girl, we got you on that. Maybe we can watch a movie or two this weekend.”

“Totally. I’m all for it.”

“Holy bells. It’s Celly,” Holly screams, coming out of the kitchen with a tray of brownies.

“It’s my favorite.”

“Hey,” Beth huffs.

“I’m talking about the brownies.”

“Of course you are. It’s like I knew you were coming today. They have maple and pecan topping.”

“It’s just what I needed.” Tears fell from my eyes.

“Oh, girl. What’s going on?”

“It’s been a long two days. Let me get some of these treats, and if you girls want to meet me at my house later, that would be awesome.”

“We will be there around six. Okay?”

“Perfect.”

“And with pizza.”

“Even better.”

“And wine.”

“Double score.” I do my best to put on a brave face, but my heart’s holding it together until I get home.

Chapter Four

Lennox

“What the fuck? I should have bolted the door shut.”

“Yeah, you two seemed pretty cozy in the elevator; I didn’t even get a look at her face. Hell, she didn’t even see us.”

“I know. That was the fucking point. There was no way in hell I was going to let her see you or let anyone see my woman flush with need. Fuck. I have to find her before I go insane.”

“Go insane. You’ve been pacing like a madman for the past month.”

“She ran from my bed without a goodbye. When she said it was a one-time thing, she wasn’t fucking kidding. I couldn’t believe it, I wouldn’t believe it. Especially since...”

“Since what?” His brow cocks up, and he gets up from around his desk.

“Since she gave me her...” I stop myself because even though we’re brothers, it’s not something I should share about my woman.

“Dude...” I’ve never asked him about his wife.

“Nothing.”

“What is it?” His face forms a look of utter shock. “She gave you her V-card, didn’t she?”

“Yes, so I expected her to stay.”

“Well, since you gave her yours, she was probably not impressed.”

“She most definitely was, but that didn’t stop her from running.” I run my fingers violently through my hair, losing my mind. Dropping myself into my chair with a pain in my chest aching so bad.

“Have you looked into the neighboring businesses to see if she worked around here?”

“There are a thousand businesses. Where do I start?”

“I don’t know. The number of Celestes in the city is huge, and what if she gave me a fake name?”

“Hell, she didn’t even give you a last name.”

I told him a few things so he’d help me while we worked on finding her. I’m back in Chicago while he’s heading to New York. I tried staying, but I need to handle some business here right away. We weren’t billionaires for nothing, which meant there were always matters to handle and fires to put out.

Sawyer recommended hiring a PI, but I wasn’t sure I wanted to hire a private investigator to look into the matter. What could I tell him? I was looking for a beautiful blonde I slept with in a hotel bar named Celeste. Yeah, that’s all I had to go on. She could have been from anywhere; hell, she could have been passing through town to get the information and leaving as soon as she got it.

Still, as soon as I could, I’d fly back to New York and take over searching for her. I’ll be able to return and walk into every damn building, knock on every damn door until I find her.

“No. She might have, but the bartender interrupted us with our wine, and I never asked again since it didn’t matter since she was going to take my name soon.”

“Well, maybe I’ll go around and put some feelers out there. We can

call in some favors and learn something, but we have a dozen companies to run and I have a family to care for.”

“I know. Trust me when I say that I understand, but I won’t stop looking until I find the love of my life.”

Chapter Five

Celeste

Two pink lines. I take a deep breath and try to calm down because this shouldn't be happening. Wait, of course, this could happen because we didn't use any protection. Like a drunken, lost fool, I never demanded it, and now we're in this mess. Knowing where I have to go, I make the trip to the city and let him know. It's not something I want to do, but something I should do.

"Oh my goodness, girl. What are you going to do?" Holiday asks, sitting on my kitchen stool after having another girls' night with me. Bethany was at a study session for school, so she couldn't join us, but it's good because she'd dig into the questions where Holiday won't push.

"I'm going to have to find him and tell him," I muttered, feeling the blood drain from my face. All the effort I've put into avoiding Lennox Masterson over the past two months was for nothing.

"Are you ever going to tell me who he is?" she asks. I can't tell her because I'm too ashamed that I slept with the man who fired me.

"Just a one-night stand." I wanted it to be more, even though I pretended otherwise.

"Is he from Holly Hills, at least?"

"God, no." That would be bad because I've known most of these men my entire life, and that means they're completely ghosting me.

"Well, then, I wish you all the luck, girl."

"Thanks."

“I have to get home because I have to hit my pillow before my alarm goes off. Take care.” She hugs me tight. “It’s going to be okay.”

“Thank you. Give Bethany my love. Tell her for me. I don’t have the strength to do it right now.” Or the will to answer her thousands of questions.

“Okay. I promise it’s going to be fine. This baby’s going to have aunties to help give it all the love he or she needs.”

“Thank you.” She leaves, and I finally go to sleep, avoiding all thoughts about Lennox.

The next day, I dressed nicely, wearing a pretty fall dress with a dark blue peacoat, and my hair done up so I didn’t look like the nervous wreck I felt like.

Getting in my car, I make my way back to the city to face my sexy demon. Parking in my apartment parking garage, I walk the two blocks to the building and take a calming breath before checking my reflection. “You can do this. You are successful, smart, and independent,” I mentally chant.

Swallowing what’s left of my dignity, I walk through the lobby and freeze to a halt. At the elevator is Lennox, and he’s not alone. He’s with a gorgeous brunette who is very, clearly pregnant. He pulls her close and kisses her, and I can’t stand it.

Gasping loudly, which echoes throughout the lobby, causing their heads to turn. They both stare at me as I look at them with a pain in my chest. I don’t know how long it takes before I process it all, but maybe a few seconds. I can’t even think, so I rush out the door before I make a bigger fool out of myself.

He has a woman, and she’s clearly pregnant. I nearly collapsed in the middle of the street. Instead, I ran down the sidewalk and slid into the nearest department store. There are a couple of looks, but then I casually walk around

and coolly regain my composure.

“Miss, are you okay?”

Startled, I looked at the man dressed in a nice suit with a nametag from the department store. “Yes. I’m fine.”

“Well, you’ve been staring off in the distance for the past twenty minutes.”

“Oh, I’m terribly sorry.”

“It’s fine, Miss. I’m just concerned for your well-being.”

“Thank you. I will be okay with time. It seems bad news never ends. Now, if you will excuse me. I believe it’s best if I just go home.”

I leave the store and then head to my apartment, grateful that I’m not far from it and then I let the tears fall again. It seems that I only ran away from Lennox in tears. This time it’s for good. The bastard has a woman and lied to me worse than anyone could possibly imagine. It’s worse than I expected.

“He played me for a fool.” I sob into my hands for the rest of the night until I fall asleep.

My stupid alarm wakes me up with a reminder that it’s my doctor’s appointment for my baby check-up. They scheduled this one sooner than normal because of my bloodwork. They said my pregnancy levels needed to be checked, but nothing abnormal just to see how large of a baby I’m going to have. Given the size of the father, I’m guessing a giant.

“Hello, Ms. Hoffman. It’s good to see you again. We’re going to begin the scan today.”

“Okay, thank you, Dr. Reid.”

“You’re welcome. Are you not feeling well today?” Damn, can he tell that my freaking heart’s been crushed and I haven’t slept?

“No, I’m fine. I had a fitful night of sleep.”

“Unfortunately, that can sometimes come with having a baby. The hormones can send mothers into a tailspin of emotions making dreams wild and vivid. So let’s get started.”

I nod, and lay back on the bed, lifting my top so my belly is exposed. I can’t tell him it’s because all I can think about these past few weeks is the utter betrayal. I feel that my child will be the bastard sibling to another. That woman doesn’t even know he cheated on her with me. God, she’s clearly so much farther along than me.

He begins the sonogram and the screen immediately lights up in front of me. I see my baby clearly and I’m in awe. Tears well up and they aren’t sad ones for a change. This little one has my heart in a way I can’t even begin to explain. Then I see something else, it looks like...is that his...

“Doctor, am I having a boy?”

“Ms. Hoffman...you’re not having one little boy...you’re having two.” The words come out in a fuzzy blur.

“Did you just say two?”

“Yes.” He moves the wand thingy, and there is the other set of legs with the other little body just barely forming like his brother. “Oh my goodness.”

“I can’t believe it.”

“Twins are a lot to handle and often require a little more caution in pregnancy as it moves along.”

“What do you mean?”

“Most twins come early. However, do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle, walk, rest, take your vitamins, and reduce stress. You will be fine.”

“Thank you, doctor.”

“Congratulations.” We don’t discuss the father because I lied and said he died before we could get married. I finished getting cleaned up and scheduled my next appointment before heading out.

As I left all I could think about was two babies. Two times the reminder of Lennox. Sighing, I get into my car and make the trip back to Holly Hills because Christmas time is almost here and I need to start preparing my home for the holidays.

Maybe soon my grandfather’s old home will be sold. It’s been on the market for the past two months. I was able to get it renovated quickly. After weeks of remodeling, the place looked almost brand new. I loved some of the old features, so I only remodeled the bathrooms, the bedrooms, and the kitchen with the modern updates and of course all the electricity and plumbing had to be up to code which my grandfather had already taken care of, so the place was pretty easy to get ready to sell. The problem was finding a buyer.

Chapter Six

Lennox

It's two weeks to fucking Christmas, and the office looks like the holiday spirit has arrived, but nothing is better at this shitty company. There's still something missing besides my aching soul. "We have a problem with the marketing department."

"No shit. The guy you kept on is garbage. Who the hell's idea was that?"

"The CEO of the company. They let their other design lead go, but I don't know the details. They should have kept the other person because this one is a fucking pervert. We have a serious complaint."

"Call in the HR manager now." I thrust my fingers through my hair.

"Ms. Basse, please have a seat."

"We called you in here to discuss, Mr. Vance."

"Yes, Jason is an asset to this company."

"Asset? Ms. Basse. There have been several complaints in the past three weeks to your office that I was just made aware of by my brother. I personally find his talents severely lacking and now I'm starting to wonder if there must be another reason why he was kept on and the other designer was let go."

"Oh, Celeste wasn't as good."

"Celeste?"

"Yes, Celeste Hoffman. She was in love with Jason, but we had to let

her go because she was letting it get in the way of her work and he's a married man. She was so trying to sleep with him and stealing his work."

"Enough. I know it's a fucking lie. You're a woman out on a mission to save this man's job for some reason and I can't figure out why but he's a disgrace and is being arrested right now. IT has started examining his computer and now that we know your association with him seems to be more than inappropriate we will be looking into the matter. You will also be relieved of your duties, Ms. Basse."

"You can't do that."

"The hell I can't."

"It's our company and we can do it. This company has been bleeding from the inside out and now we know why. We have lawsuits coming from every angle and now we need to find out many you've covered up."

"Sir, I can help fix this," she pleads, standing up from her chair with her arms out.

"No you can't."

"Please. I'll do anything," she says, dropping to her knees in front of my brother who comically jumps back to giant steps.

"Don't even try to flirt with me because that's disgusting," he barks out, wiping his leg as if she managed to touch him.

I called security from my desk before she stepped into the room, keeping them on hold. They were waiting outside my door, so I finally gave them the command, "Security, please have Ms. Basse gather her personal effects and be escorted from the building."

They entered the room and took a kicking and screaming Ms. Carolyn Basse from my office. "We need to find what this Celeste Hoffman looks like."

“Don’t tell me she fucking worked here the whole time.”

“Well you weren’t here for almost the entire exchange except for the first week.”

“Yes, but the layoffs didn’t happen for a week.”

“They never said who they were letting go.”

I call IT. “Can you give me the information on a former employee, like the photo for Celeste Hoffman?”

“Yes, sir. Do you want to hire her back? She’s going to be costly now.”

“Why is that?”

“She started her own private marketing firm and once clients learned she was fired, they ran with her. They hated Jason’s work. They rushed to her. She’s the only reason we had the deals we had. Her schedule was always busy, so it was a shock she was let go. She even had her own office, but she walked out without taking the month they offered her. She said if Jason was the expert they believed he was he could have her clients without needing her assistance.”

The picture comes through and it’s her. My Celeste. She was fired the day she ended up in my bed.

That’s my girl. I know it’s her. She was fucking demolished that day. Heart fucking broken, and I was the enemy. My work papers were all around the living area of the suite. If she saw even one of the headings she would have put two and two together and hightailed it out of there so fast.

“Thanks.”

My brother looks over my shoulder and slaps his hand on my desk. “Fuck. I saw her here.”

I spin my chair around and glare at him. She's been right under my nose. "What? When? Before she was let go?"

He shakes his head. "No, about two months ago." He frowned and rubbed the back of his neck. "I was in the lobby with Jill. We were kissing in the lobby. We heard a loud gasp, and then we turned to see her run out."

I slam my fist down on the desk, sending some of the things to scatter. "Fuck me. She doesn't know I have a twin and..."

"She saw me with my wife. I'm sorry."

"Damn it. It's not your fault." Shaking my head, I stand up and pace. "I keep fucking breaking my future wife's heart for no damn reason."

"Well, now that you have her name and her address. What are you going to do about it?"

"I have to find her and make her understand she's mine. I don't have a wife, well until she signs the marriage certificate." I grab her address and plug it into my maps and find she lives two fucking blocks from here. "You have to be fucking kidding me. She lives so damn close I can walk there." I show him my phone and he starts laughing.

"Wow, you better get going."

"What am I going to say?"

"That you didn't fire her and that you'll give her the world."

"She's already making the world happen for herself."

I searched up her name and her company. She's a private company not taking on new clients at the moment. She has twenty-five clients at the present moment. Holy fuck.

"I need to find her and talk her into letting me into her life. God, I miss her."

“Good. I’ll handle everything from here.”

I rush out of my office and to the elevators before my brother comes shouting. “Nox, you forgot something.” He’s holding my coat in his arms.

“Shit.” It’s fucking frigid outside in the middle of December. I walked the short distance to the New York high-rise. When I enter the lobby, there’s a standard security guard and I remember how accomplished my girl is.

Damn, I’m so proud of her. It makes me wonder if she’s already found someone else to appreciate her magnificence. It can’t go fucking unnoticed or unappreciated. I know I didn’t want to let her go.

“Sir, may I help you?”

“I’m looking for Ms. Celeste Hoffman.”

“Sorry, but Ms. Hoffman no longer lives here.”

“Don’t fucking lie to me. I’m not in the mood to play games. Her new company is a success and I’m sure she could afford it.”

“Yes, but she has a home in another town and decided it was best to stay there since she can work without having to come into the city. Her lease ended at the beginning of the month, so she decided not to renew it.”

“Oh.”

“Damn it. I need to find her. Sir, I’ve seen you with another beautiful woman around here. Why would you be looking for Ms. Hoffman like a man who has a broken heart?”

“No, you haven’t. I’ve been working in our Chicago office for the past three-plus months. You saw my twin brother and his wife, and so did Celeste. She thinks I’m freaking married or at the very least, has a pregnant woman on the side. Damn it.”

“All I’ll tell you is she lives in Holly Hills. Merry Christmas. Don’t

let anything happen to her or you're a dead man."

"Understood." I opened my wallet and handed him a thousand dollars that I had in there. "Merry Christmas to you. I can't even explain how much time you saved me. I've been hoping to find her for months."

The drive to Holly Hills feels like an eternity when it's truly not that far from the city, but none of that matters because winning back Celeste is all I can think about.

My first stop in town was very busy, but then I saw a bright blonde inside through the window. When she turned, it was not her. Still, I'm going to buy my woman some treats. Besides, small-town people talk, and maybe I can get the information I need.

The crowd slowly dies down and I make my way to the front when an older gentleman asks me, "How can I help you, sir?"

"First, I'd like to know where I can find Celeste Hoffman?"

"Do I look like the Google or information?"

"Glen, don't be like that. You must be the baby daddy."

My mouth falls open. "Baby daddy," I choke out.

"Way to go, Bethany." The guy shakes his head at her like she fucked up, but that's the best news I could have gotten. My guys did their job and I made my little family even if I didn't manage to keep her from running away that day.

"Where the hell is she?" I ask when I finally can get the words out.

"She lives down the road on 223 Holly Lane, and the Maple pecan brownies are her favorite," she adds, becoming my new favorite person. If this helps me get my woman back, I'll give this woman a job anywhere in my company if she wants.

“You wouldn’t lie to me, would you? I need all the brownie points I can get.”

“Why would you need them?” she asks, glaring at me.

“Because it’s between us. I only want the best for her.” I tap my card and leave a thousand-dollar tip. “Time to go find my bride.”

Chapter Seven

Celeste

“Hey little guys, mommy loves you and I’ll always look after you.”

My doorbell rings which takes me by surprise because most of my neighbors don’t bother me since I’m not that social lately. Carrying a married man’s babies isn’t something I feel like sharing. I haven’t ordered anything since my last set of Christmas things, so it wouldn’t be Colter.

I open the door and immediately attempt to slam it shut, but Lennox is too fast and he’s inside my home, closing the door behind him. He’s just as handsome as I remember. Although, his hair is a little longer and his face looks like he hasn’t shaved in weeks. None of it takes away from how gorgeous he is and it only makes the pain in my heart worse.

“Get out. I don’t want you anywhere near me. You two-timing piece of shit.” I tug down my white sweater, hoping that it hides my belly. It just looks like I’m a little chunky. Maybe I’ve been hitting the ice cream a little too hard after the job loss. Hopefully, he can’t tell before I get him out of my house.

He shakes his head and stalks closer. “I’m not going anywhere.”

“I’ll call the cops,” I say, although I have no idea where my phone is at.

“And tell them what? That you ran off with my baby in your belly.” Fuck, I guess my stomach isn’t small enough to pass off as a little weight gain.

Angry and hurt, I remind him of his betrayal. “Don’t you already have

another baby at home?”

“Actually, my sweet Celeste, that will be my niece.”

“So you’re two-timing with your brother’s wife, that’s fucked up even worse than I thought.”

“Fuck, babe. That cut deep. I didn’t get to explain that night partially because I’d be jealous, but I’m a twin and the guy at the building was my brother, Sawyer, and his wife Jill.”

He pulls out his phone and shows me a picture of the three of them at their wedding. “She’s about to have the baby any day. I happen to have been in Chicago holding down the company while he was dealing with the New York project.”

“Oh.” I press my hand to my mouth, feeling lightheaded.

“Yes. I didn’t cheat on anyone. I meant everything I said that night. Fuck, I wish you didn’t run out on me.” He drags me to him. “I missed you so much.”

I try to push away, but he refuses to let me go. “Then why did it take since September to find me.”

“Because you only gave me your first name and I was working in Chicago. My brother and I own a multi-billion-dollar firm with a bunch of projects and one that required my attention full-time.”

“You fired me,” I hissed.

He brushes the hair out of my face, cupping my cheeks to bring my gaze up to his. “Sweetheart, I had no part in any of the job layoffs and I sure as fuck wouldn’t have let you go.”

My brow raises up, but his thumb is quick and he rubs it over my eyebrow, pushing it down. “Before you go off the handle, it wouldn’t have anything to do with me wanting to fuck you every single day, but because

you're the best at the job."

"How would you know that?"

"It's the reason we found you. I learned you had a thing for your coworker Jason."

"What?" I shoved his chest, pushing him away.

He chuckles. "I'm kidding. That's the lie the HR manager and he were spinning, but baby I know that story was bullshit. After all, you and I shared something very special that night."

"Yes, we did." He kisses my temple.

"When it came to the Marketing firm, my team has so many project companies, King Marketing was a small one. My brother and I weren't really invested in it until this past month. That's why you had time to clear up projects before you were fully let go even though you didn't choose to stay. They weren't transitioning for over a month. Our team didn't come in and do an assessment until October. They had to make a plan of action and write a report before the holidays. That's when we learned of Jason's harassment complaints that went unanswered."

"Oh."

"So please tell me, how is our baby?"

"Our babies are fine." I put his hand to my belly that has grown in the past few months. The doctor says it's a little larger probably because of the twins or it's just the way I carry, but I still have a long way to go.

He looks down at my belly and then back up at me with tears in his eyes and a smile on his handsome face. It's the first time that I notice how haggard he appears. His eyes look like he hasn't slept well in a long time.

"Our babies? We're having twins?"

"Yes, I suppose it runs in your family."

“I need to kiss you, Celeste.”

“Please.” He cups my face and his lips are on me. Lennox tastes of fresh cold air and chocolate. I moan in his mouth, so he deepens our kiss, lifting me off my feet. “No, stop.”

“Fuck, sorry. I got carried away.” He sets me down.

“It’s not that, but I have a meeting with my realtor,” I explain. The last thing I want to do is spend any time away from Lennox.

“Why?”

“I sold my grandfather’s home.”

“This home?”

“No this is mine, but it’s on the other side of the town.”

“I’ll drive you there.”

“Okay. He’s not far from here. I have to collect the check and everything. The guy who bought it is a bit eccentric and may sell it again, but I think he’ll fall in love with it. He’s grumpy like my grandfather so it will suit.” I smile and Lennox frowns.

His nostril flair and his mouth clamps shut as he controls his breathing. “Do you know this guy? Is he handsome? Do you like him?”

“Are you jealous?” A little giggle falls from my lips.

“Hell fucking yes I am. Have you been dating?” I can see how upset he is, but he has nothing to worry about. He was my only, and after him, I couldn’t imagine being with anyone else.

“No, Lennox. Have you?” I don’t want to know. After learning he isn’t married or having a baby with anyone else. My heart can’t take that there’s been anyone else these past few months apart.

“Of course not. I wasn’t dating before you, and I sure the fuck wasn’t

after. You're my only one. All I could think about was finding you. I couldn't wait to finish my work in Chicago so I could get back to New York. My brother wanted to strangle me, but he understood my situation."

"Why? Did he have to chase his woman?"

"No, but he loves her beyond life itself and they had a long, complicated relationship."

A gasp falls from my mouth. "What?" Does he realize he said love?

He smiles. "Yes. I love you, Celeste and that might sound crazy to you because we don't know each other, but I haven't stopped thinking about you for nearly four months. Actually it's been three months and eleven days if I'm being accurate, but it feels like so much longer."

"I've tried to forget you for so many reasons, Lennox. I'm tired of trying."

"Then don't. Please don't."

I get a whiff of the air and suddenly I smell syrup and chocolate. "Do I smell brownies? Maple pecan brownies?"

He pulls a bag from the table next to the door. "Just for you, baby."

My mouth falls open at the idea that he thought of me like that. "Oh my goodness."

"They said they were your favorite." It's silly because it's not like they didn't tell him, but it's just the little things that make me cry.

"Oh no. I'm going to cry."

"Are they happy tears?"

"Yes," I sob, taking a bite out of the treat.

"Then I can accept that." He carries me over to the sofa and holds me in his arms as I rest on his lap with my goodies. "So damn happy." He

brushes kisses over my cheek and my hair.

“So good. Do you want a bite?”

“No, they are all for you and our little ones. I need to make sure you’re well fed.”

“I think I’m well fed. In fact, I should get off you. I’m sure I’m crushing you.”

“Sweetheart, I assure you, you’re not crushing anything.” He rolls my hips over his body and moans fall from both of us. “You see. I assure you I want you on my lap. Naked and sliding up and down my cock would be much better but holding you in my arms is definitely wonderful too.”

“That’s not nice.”

“What’s not nice?”

“I’ve been so horny and you’re not going to like me naked.”

“The fuck I ain’t. The second the girl at the bakery slipped up about my baby inside you all I my caveman brain could think about is how you belong to me and everyone will know it.” He slides up my top, dropping it onto the coffee table.

“Don’t say I didn’t tell you so.”

“I’m going to prove you wrong, my Celestial beauty.” A groan comes from him as he gets a full view of my small belly. Yes, it’s round, but it’s got a long way to go. He licks his lips, feeling his dick jerk under my ass. I think I might be wrong. “This skirt has to go. Daddy wants to taste something sweeter than some chocolate. Something I haven’t had in so many months.”

Did he just call himself daddy? That was sexy as hell.

He slides me onto the sofa and drags the skirt to the floor, tossing it like a kid ripping away wrapping paper. “Fuck, I can’t get you naked fast

enough,” he growls. I hear the fabric tear away before my panties are torn from my body. “There. That’s much better.” His face drops between my thighs. He lifts my legs up and his tongue dives into my hole without preamble.

“Holy shit. Oh my God.” I forgot how unmerciful the man was with his tongue. His teeth graze my clit as he tastes me.

“Mine, you’re not leaving me again.” His hand squeezes my ass as he tongues my pussy, lapping up and down my seam as if he’s never going to get enough. I grab the top of the sofa, holding on while he rocks my hips up. I cry out as most of me is floating in the air, supported by him and my head on the armrest.

“Fuck, Nox. I’m going to come.”

“Good, you come for your man, now. You owe me lots of orgasms.” He slides a finger into my hole, pumping it in and out until I’m shouting, but he doesn’t stop until my orgasm subsides. Then he licks his way up, lifting my bra up and sucking my sensitive nipple into his mouth. A moan falls from my lips while a deep groan comes from him.

“I need to be inside you,” he says the second his mouth comes off my chest.

“Take me.”

“Bedroom?”

“Upstairs.” He carries me to my room with a little guidance and then sets me on the bed. “Get in the middle of the bed because I’m about to fuck that pretty little cunt. I missed being inside of you. There are only so many times I can jerk off to thoughts of being inside of you.”

“There’s been no one else?” I ask as he strips down naked, revealing that gorgeously sculpted body with a large, engorged length between his legs.

“Of course not,” he answers, climbing onto the bed while never taking his eyes off me.

“Thank you. That would have broken my heart,” I confess.

Cupping my face with one hand, and the other leading his cock at my entrance, he says, “You are my heart and soul, Celeste.”

“Make us one again,” I say.

“With pleasure.” He pushed his way in and the ecstasy of that night was back. Slowly he kisses in time with deep long thrusts, each commanding and forceful. I close my eyes and slide my legs around his, my fingers clawing at his back as he owns my body. His weight is there, but he’s careful to keep it off my belly.

“Nox,” I moan, sliding my heels up and down his calves, pleasure building with every pump of his hips.

He flips us over. “Baby, ride me.”

“Yes,” I moan. As soon as I sit up on him with my rounded belly, I feel self-conscious, but he growls, “Fuck, I’m about to come. Do you know how sexy you look carrying my babies? I put them there and every bastard will know that I fucked that tight cunt.” He grunts, lifting me and working me on his pole. I press my hands on his chest, leaning forward and his eyes widen.

“You’re so deep.”

“Is it too much?”

“I love it.”

“Good, now come for me.” He sits up and sucks on one tender breast while taking the other between two fingers and twirling the hardened nipple. I cry out, coming hard around him.

“Nox,” I scream, shaking and clawing his chest.

“Good girl.” He flips me back onto the mattress and fucks me fast, emptying himself into me before kissing me rough. “God, I love you so much, Celeste.”

Chapter Eight

Lennox

Holding Celeste in my arms felt so damn good. I hated that we had to go somewhere else. Like the fucking check couldn't just wait. Whatever the house was worth, I could easily pay that and then some. Still, it was important and it's her life. As much as I want to railroad everything she built I fucking can't.

“So when do you return to New York or Chicago?”

“What part of we're in this together?”

“Um...you don't actually have your clothes or anything, right?”

“Damn, you have a point. Look, I can't just leave you again. You walked away or rather ran away from me once. I can't let that happen again.”

“Oh Lennox, I'm not going anywhere. Besides, I believe we solved the two problems that sent me running.” She bundles up with a cute pale blue coat and white scarf and matching hat, a winter beauty.

“Have we?” I ask, opening the front door. “You ran because I bought the company you worked for. You were fired. Do you resent me?”

She stops on the steps. “No. I was embarrassed and a little pissed, but I wasn't going to wait to find out if you knew or not.”

I close the door, checking the locks. “I swear I hadn't known. When I found out, I looked up your stuff and was floored why they would pick him over you. It's no wonder why the company was tanking.”

She shrugs with a pretty smile that hides the pain. “Yeah, but it was

the best thing for me because I can do whatever I want with my own company.”

Small businesses are hard to run by themselves. I wonder if she’s doing it all alone or if she has a bunch of virtual staff helping. Fuck, I hope so because she’s going to burn out soon especially with the babies and her belly growing bigger. “Yes, but do you have all the right people to handle all the business aspects like the accounting and paperwork along with the actual digital marketing that you’re working on?”

“No, that’s why I have a limited number of clients.” I hit the remote start on my SUV and lead her to the vehicle before I tapped the unlock button.

“And what happens when the babies come?” I questioned as I held open the door for her.

“I don’t know. Are you trying to freak me out?” She huffs, stomping her feet just outside my car.

I brush my hand over her soft cheek, noticing they’re a little fuller and looking adorable. “No, I’m offering support. I can get you a team of your own to add to your company.”

“What? Why would you do that?” Why wouldn’t I?

Smiling, I press a kiss to her cold nose. “One because I love you and I don’t want you to struggle. Two you’re the mother of my children and you need to take care of yourself and them. Also I want to spend the rest of my life with you and want you to be my wife, so what’s mine is yours.” I drop down to one knee and pull out the ring I’ve had since my first week in Chicago.

She gasps and presses her hand to her mouth. “But you only found out about the babies...”

“When I told you I loved you, I meant it. From the moment that bastard called you sugar, I knew I’d stop any other man from claiming you for his own. You were mine. Will you marry me, Celeste?”

“Yes. I love you, too.” I slide the ring on her finger and kiss her hand.

“Thank goodness because this snow is cold. Please get inside my beloved snow queen.” She giggles and takes her seat before I close the door.

My phone rings in my car and I forget that I had my phone on silent the entire time. “Fuck. I missed six calls.”

“Maybe you should answer it.”

“Hey, asshole. Please tell me you didn’t drive off a cliff or something. You didn’t answer or let me know you were safe.”

“I’m good, bro. I’m really good. Celeste, I’d like to introduce you to my brother, Sawyer. Sawyer, be polite and say hello to your future sister-in-law.”

“Hello, Celeste. I’m so damn glad he finally found you. The man has been driving me crazy, and I’m sorry I didn’t know you were the woman in the lobby or I would have had security stop you before you got away. My wife has been upset all afternoon when I told her.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry, little sister. We’ll meet soon because we have a lot to discuss like who the hell we’re going to get to replace this fucking shithead that worked here. I’m sure you’re never coming back, but maybe you know someone who is just as talented. Never mind that issue. I’m just glad my brother isn’t about to fucking off himself. He’s been losing his mind over you.”

“Thanks, bro.”

“I missed him too.”

“Well, I need you to handle some work. If you need me to send my assistant down with your things, I can. Also we’re going to need to get together for Christmas, so we can head to Holly Hills or you can come back here.”

“I have two extra bedrooms here, but I’m sure your hotels are better than my home here.”

“Celeste, I assure you my wife would prefer Christmas at home than at our temporary residence. The condo we rented isn’t as inviting as she hoped.”

“Oh that’s so wonderful.”

“That’s great Sawyer. Well, we have some business to handle here. Have your assistant come drop everything off and we’ll see you in about a week and a half.”

“Awe, we planned to take a vacation in less than a week, bro. Don’t be so mean and hog up the wifey. Jill’s going to be so excited.”

“I’m looking forward to it too,” Celeste answers, but I’m all grumbly.

“Talk to you later.” I ended the call with a little more force on the button than I should have.

“What’s wrong? You don’t want me to meet your family, do you?”

“Oh I want you to meet them, but I don’t want to give up my time with you. Do you remember that there was a couple who got in the elevator that night?”

“Yes.”

“That was them.”

“Oh really?”

“Yes, I’ve been possessive of your time and I’ve already missed out

on so much.”

“I wish I stayed too.”

“Baby, don’t look at me with those pretty doe eyes or we’ll never make it to your meeting.”

“You started it.”

“I did, and later I’m going to finish it with you on my face, feasting on your pussy if you’re a good girl.”

“Damn it, Lennox. You don’t play fair.”

“No I don’t. Not when I want something and especially when it’s the most important thing in the world to me.”

“We’re here.” I pull over to the small office building. I like the small-town feel of the place and I could see my life with Celeste here. New York isn’t too far away. I could travel when needed and still manage to work from home or we can have two homes.

I helped her out of the car and walked her to the door, holding it open because my princess shouldn’t have to hold doors. My hand skims over her back down to her ass and earns me a small sassy smirk. “Good afternoon, Mr. Sanders,” Celeste says as we enter the small real estate office.

“Celeste, my dear girl. You’re looking lovely.” I growl with his remarks. He finally notices me and stiffens up straight and takes a step back.

“Oh, who do we have here? Your accountant.”

“Her fiancé.”

“Funny, she comes into money and suddenly she has a fiancé.”

I let out a laugh. “Listen, Mr. Sanders. I’m assuming that’s an indirect way of putting feelers out on behalf of Celeste’s wellbeing, but I assure you we met well before I knew she had any assets. Besides...”

“He’s the one who fired me.”

“Wow, and you’re willing to get engaged to an idiot?”

“To be fair, he had nothing to do with it, but his corporation bought out the company I worked for.”

“Oh the transitional let go. Well, you still lucked out because she’s been handling the marketing for the town since she was a teen, and we’ve loved her for it.”

I stare at her in wonderment since I can’t imagine how Celeste finds the time, and she shrugs. “This is where I got my start.”

“I’m proud of you, love.” I kiss her temple and pull out a chair for her to sit. Turning my attention to the rat in the suit, I say, “Now, can we please get this show on the road so we can go home and feed our babies?” Having dealt with men like him all my life, he gives off shady vibes. I’m letting this fucker, in no uncertain terms, know I’m the babies’ father and to back off because I’m being polite in front of my woman, but I’m tempted to drop him fast.

“Yes, here are the documents. You need to sign for the check. Although I’m sure Mr. Snow’s assistant will have the house up for sale soon, anyway. They can put it back on the market in ten days.”

“What? Does that mean?”

“Nothing to you, dear. We will handle that matter. When you have a lot of money to throw around, you can buy and sell money at a whim, especially if you’re paying outright for it.”

“Oh, well. It’s none of my business, anyway. It’s out of my hands. Now if you’ll excuse us.”

“If you ever want to get rid of your home, I’m always here.”

“Thank you, but we’re keeping it,” I informed him. Whether we live

here or in New York, it doesn't matter because we're keeping her family home. She obviously wanted to sell her grandfather's home instead of her current house on Holly Lane. The massive check she just received means her grandfather's home must have been large and extremely nice. She could have kept that one and sold the current home, so I assume she preferred her home.

“Are you ready?”

“Yes.” She smiles at me before turning to the realtor. “Thank you for handling the matter for me.”

“It's what I'm here to do. Thank you for going with me instead of one of your New York clients.”

“Holly Hills is my home, Mr. Sanders. Tell Elle I said hi.” I helped her out of her seat.

“I will.”

“Don't forget your paperwork.”

“Sorry,” she says. “I'm not always this forgetful.”

“Is something wrong?” I ask as we step out onto the sidewalk.

“No, it's just when you look at me...” She hasn't finished her sentence, so I wait.

“What, love?” She blushes and ducks her head.

I tip her chin and stare. “Well, I get all girly and forget myself.”

“That's fucking good, babe. That's really good because I'm sure I cost Nox Sawyer Investments a lot of money over the past few months just thinking about you.” I bring her closer and taste her soft lips just lightly. “Let's get you fed and then naked because I'm not done with you—not in the least.”

“I'm hungry for some tacos. Do you like tacos?”

“Who doesn’t? If that’s what you want, I’ll take you wherever you want to go.”

“We have a place here that makes pretty good ones.”

“Then lead the way.”

“Ooh I’m so hungry.” She rubs her tummy and licks her lips.

I press my hand to the small of her back as I direct her back to my SUV and say, “Give me the address and I’ll drive us there.”

“It’s right across the street.”

“Okay, can we leave my vehicle here?”

“Yep.” I take her arm and wrap it under mine and we cross the street to stop in the restaurant. We have several onlookers as we take our seats.

“Sorry, I’m sure everyone’s curious about you.”

“It’s okay, Celeste. I should have been by your side and they wouldn’t be so damn curious.”

“That’s my fault not yours. If I’d given you a chance to explain or anything.”

“Let’s put it behind us. I’m here where I belong. God, you’re so beautiful and I’m the luckiest man around.” I nearly choke up on the thought that she’s actually mine. The past few months have been pure torture, but we’re finally here.

We ordered some tacos and some guacamole.

“So you no longer live in the city?”

“No, I couldn’t risk running into you again.” I nod while she blushes. It’s something that I understand, but I wish never had happened. If I caught her before she

The server comes back with our food pretty quickly.

We dig in and I'm surprised that they're not bad. "Have you ever been to Chicago?" I ask.

"No, I haven't."

"I'll have to take you some day. We have some great spots where the Mexican food is to die for."

"I'd love that. Do you have a home there too?"

"That's where we grew up and yes, my brother and I both have homes there. I only came for the week when we met. Unfortunately, I had to leave that Monday because I had a board meeting in Chicago. My brother was finishing up the work and he and his wife were looking at places while we were trying to get that sinking ship back afloat."

"Do you manage to save all the companies you invest in?"

"Not all of them. Unfortunately, it looks like we might fail with your former employer, but I wouldn't call it a wasted investment. I frankly call it the best investment of my life."

"You're something else, Lennox." I reach across the table and take her hand in mine, lacing our fingers.

"I have to ask you something. Why didn't you just look me up after you realized who I was? You would have seen that I wasn't married and that I had a twin brother because it's not a secret or anything."

"Honestly, I was scared of what I'd find. So many times I wanted to type in your name. In fact I did and then I'd stop myself because my fears would get the best of me. When I walked into the lobby and saw your brother with his wife, it was like all my fears had come to fruition."

I shake my head.

"I know it seems silly to you, but you don't understand. My past is complicated and lonely, you were one more thing I didn't want to break my

heart. It was one thing when I believed you were a coincidence that was magical that I could just try to forget. It was another to let you break my heart to pieces.”

“Will you tell me about your past?”

She explains the situation with her grandfather and how he literally waited until he was already buried before she was notified of his death, but there was a lot more that she’s holding back. We finish up our meal and head back to her home where we cuddle on her sofa for the rest of the evening, chatting about her work.

Chapter Nine

Celeste

Lennox's brother Sawyer and sister-in-law Jill are coming today and I'm panicking. I haven't stopped fiddling with the bedding in the guest bedroom and the cleaning around the house.

"Calm down, love." I hear him, but I can't stop moving.

"Celeste, enough," he commands, voice deep.

I freeze and stare at him in shock. I'm not scared, no. Instead, I'm extremely turned on by the man. There was something sexy about the tone of his voice. My mouth hangs open and my pussy throbs with need. His brother should be here in the next hour, but all I want to do is pounce on Lennox.

"Celeste."

"I'm sorry, Nox," I say, biting down on my bottom lip stepping toward him. My hands press on his chest. "I'll try to behave." My voice is breathy, filled with unexplainable need.

"That's good because little girl I won't tolerate you making yourself sick for my brother or any other man. You're fucking mine." He roughly cups my chin. "I ought to spank that pretty little ass of yours for making me raise my voice." Instant gush. What is going on? I've been an independent woman, but that's all out the window.

"I just wanted to show them how good I am for you."

"I only need to know how good you are for me. Do you want to show me how good you are?"

“Yes.” My voice is but a choked whisper.

“That’s not very convincing, my beauty.”

“Let me prove it.”

“Go on, love.” He releases my chin and then I drop to my knees in front of my man. He frees himself with a smirk. “That’s right. Show me how sorry you are.” I grip his length in my hands, stroking it until I feel it completely stiffen under my manipulations. “Put it in your mouth.”

“Nox,” I moan, running my tongue over the bulbous tip and swirling around it like it’s a popsicle. Slowly guiding his engorged cock past my lips, I relax my throat until I gag around it.

“Fuck, you look so pretty with your lips wrapped around my cock, but I don’t want that mouth. I need to be in that tight pussy.” He pulls out and lifts me onto the sofa. “Lean over the sofa. Take care of my babies and get comfortable and spread those legs. I want that ass up for me.”

His hand slides up and down my backside, rubbing his palm over my mound before slipping a finger into my pussy. “You’re so fucking wet.” Lennox drops his head and spreads my cheeks, licking my hole, lapping up my juices. “Fuck, you taste so damn good too.”

“Hurry, I need you.”

His hand comes down on my ass. I yelp. He fists my hair and pulls my hair and leans over my back to whisper in my ear. “Love, remember who you’re talking to or I won’t let you come. You’re being a bad girl again.” He pushes two fingers in my pussy and pumps hard and fast. I nearly come when he stops and pulls his digits out. “Nope. You come on my cock, bad girl.”

I push my ass out and he groans. “Fuck, so needy. Okay. I’ll give you what you want because I love you and need to hear your cries. I need to feel that tight, pink walls pulsing around me.” The tip slips in and then with a

quick pump, his length fills me. I gasp and grip the edge of the sofa, holding onto it as I beg for more.

“So deep, Nox.”

“Yes it is, sweetheart. Take it like a good girl.” His hands wrap firmly around my waist, holding me in place while he pummels my little hole.

“Fuck, bounce that ass back on me, take your fucking like you deserve.”

I whimper as my orgasm builds, my juices leaking out of me as he pumps faster. He grips my hair, tugging my head back and growls in my ear.

“I said fucking take that dick, my sweet runaway.”

“Yes, Sir.” I bounce harder and faster, using his cock like my own personal toy until I’m screaming his name with my thighs shaking. I nearly lose my balance, but Lennox holds me steady, slamming my thighs together as he follows me over and grunting my name.

“You’re mine. Remember that, Celeste.” He tilts my head and kisses me. It’s lazy and soft, but there’s something different in it. “I love you so much.”

“I love you too, Lennox.” We kiss for a few minutes, and then his brother sends a text that says. ***We’re on our way.***

“Okay, up and in the shower. I’ll finish straightening up. Relax and let the heat hit your back. I’m sure I made you a little sore.”

“Yes, sir.”

My shower is quick, but when I get out, I take a look at myself and I see the marks from this afternoon and I’m so freaking turned on again. They’re just minor handprints that will fade and a little love bite on my throat that will be gone by tomorrow. Still, I think they’re sexy because I love the fact that Lennox lost control. It reminds me of the first night. Since our first reunion he’s taken me very gently so he doesn’t hurt the babies, but today

was different and I loved it.

“Babe, is everything okay?” Lennox freezes by the bedroom door.
“Did I do that to you?”

I spin around and stare at him with my hair in a towel. “Sorry. I’m almost done. I was just staring at myself.”

“I didn’t mean to leave marks on you.”

“I like them,” I confess, turning back in the mirror and smiling in my reflection.

He slides his arms around my waist, kissing down my throat column.

“I’m sorry if I was a little too mean to you. I don’t want you stressing yourself out for nothing.” He’s right. We went to the doctor the other day after I had a dizzy spell and it was normal, but I had to be cautious to avoid overworking myself.

“You weren’t mean. I like the sexy, growly Lennox. I need more of that.” I rub up on him. He holds me still, grunting and grumbling.

With a pat on my ass, he says, “Yes, but it’s going to have to wait because they’re not far away.”

“I know.” I spin out of his hold and go to my closet to find my outfit for today. I’m so glad I hadn’t changed yet before we started fucking on the sofa.

“How are you feeling?” He asks.

“Good, a little sore, but I’ll be fine after a bit. Your gigantic cock just does some major damage to my girly parts that I need some recovery time.” I giggle, stepping out in a pale thin blue sweater that drapes over my belly and a pair of white leggings.

“Damn, you look sexy as hell.”

“Thank you. Now if you’ll excuse me I need to redo my hair, so give me a minute.” I bounced into the bathroom, tossing him a wink and booty bumping the door closed. By the time I’m done with my hair and makeup the doorbell rings. I’m so excited that they’re here and totally nervous at the same time, but I’m not going to let Lennox know it.

“We’re here,” Jill shouts. She’s just as beautiful as I remember except this time I don’t feel an ounce of jealousy or envy. She comes up to me and gives me her best attempt at a hug. “We’re going to be sisters. I’m so freaking happy.”

“You must be Celeste.” Lennox’s twin, Sawyer says, pulling me in for a big hug. “Thank you for taking him in. I was about to have him put down.” Jill and I slap him on opposite shoulders at the exact same time.

“Hey, great. Now they’re teaming up against me.”

“That’s because you’re picking on your brother.”

“It’s what an older brother is for.”

“You’re five minutes older.”

“Still, I’m older. So where is the food? I’m starving.”

“Sorry, he was too busy humping my leg to let me make dinner. We’ll order some takeout tonight,” I say, patting his chest.

“Hey, you only touch my chest.” Lennox takes my hand and rubs it on his chest.

“And he’s territorial too.”

“Damn right. I growl as well,” Lennox adds.

“Don’t forget you bite, babe.”

“Damn right.” He pulls me into his arms and kisses my throat before biting it.

“It’s so cute, sweetheart. Isn’t it?” Sawyer says.

“Yep.”

“You forget my wife was waddling before we knew she was pregnant. Where’s our room so I can put our things in there?”

“Oh I’ll show you. Let me help you while the ladies talk...shit.”

“Lennox knows me too well,” Jill says.

“How long have you known them?”

“I grew up next door to them since I was ten. I’ve always had a crush on Sawyer.”

“How could you tell them apart at the time?”

“Now, I can see the difference in them because they’re slightly different in height and build, but was it always like that?”

“No, but their eye color. Sawyer’s eyes are brown and Lennox’s are hazel. Sawyer has a little scar in his hairline from a fall he had while playing football outside his house.” I’m not jealous that she knows my future husband’s eye color so well or so I tell myself. It’s because she has to tell them apart.

“Did you ever like Lennox?”

“No. I did almost kiss him when I was eighteen.” I feel sick. “Oh, no. It’s not like that or anything. Lennox and I never liked each other. Never.” She goes on to explain and I laugh. Now I want to rub it in Sawyer’s face because he kept picking on Lennox over me, but he was so much worse when it came to Jill.

“Beautiful. How are you doing?”

“I’m wonderful.”

“I heard there’s a town dance coming up. Do you ladies want to go?”

“It’s really charming and very old-fashioned. Think classic dance hall holiday party,” I say.

“Oh it sounds like fun,” Jill says. “I made sure to pack a couple of dresses just in case.

“Yay. I can’t wait.”

The doorbell rings. “That’s the food,” Lennox says. He goes and gets the food order and then we all sit around my parents’ old sturdy dining room table.

Chapter Ten

Lennox

My brother and I are having a cup of coffee while working on reports in the dining room and discussing business while Celeste works in her office down the hall. The snow is falling heavily this morning and the Christmas eve party is tonight.

“So what are your plans, Nox? We have a major company to run and frankly sitting in a dining room isn’t going to cut it. It’s the holiday, so we have been able to pull it off but come the second week of January it will be business as usual.

“I know and I’ve considered my options. Celeste loves it here and so do I. Fuck, I don’t know what to do. She’s running her own company and I can’t make her stop and demand she follow my lead and give up her life to follow me.”

“But I will.”

“Celeste,” I gasp, turning around to see her come into the dining room with her laptop and a folder. She takes a seat between the two of us at the head of the table and opens up her computer. “I can’t ask you to do that.”

“You didn’t. Besides, I believe you’re right about my company and the need for a team. As much as I want to maintain my independence, frankly, I can’t.”

“I’m proud of your success, but needing a team only means that you’re too successful. A one-man show can only go on so long as the company remains small and not as productive. I’ve added a special

production line, forcing you to need employees.”

She cocks her brow up at me, pointing her finger at me. “So this is all your fault.”

I take her hand and bring it to my mouth and kiss it. “You can put it all on me, love,” he says with a proud smile. “I’ve never been happier about a plan well-executed.”

Her pretty eyes widened like saucers in surprise. “Wait, you planned on getting me pregnant that night?”

“Sweetheart, I fucked you twice without any protection. All I could think about was making sure you couldn’t get away without my baby in your belly. In fact, I wondered if we’d have twins like my brother and I.”

She bites her bottom lip and shakes her head. “And you’re just telling me now.”

I lift her up from that chair and drag her around to mine, sitting her on my lap. “For a smart woman, I thought you would have figured that one out.”

“I just thought you were caught up in the moment.”

“I said I was breeding you, baby because I fucking meant it. It wasn’t possessive dirty talk. I was marking my damn territory. Celeste, the moment I saw you, I wanted you and only you. Nothing was going to stop me and I wanted to grab the fucking nearest bottle and bust it over the bartender’s head that night. Hell, if I had any idea that you’d run out the door, I would have had it bolted shut, or some shit.”

“Yeah, he did mention something about wishing he’d bolted the door shut. So as for the business. Do you plan to move to Chicago or can you run the company from New York?”

“So I say we dissolve King Marketing completely, take the losses and write it off because there’s no way to recover from the lawsuits and the

tarnished brand.”

“How much was the company purchased for?”

“Two million dollars. After liquidation and everything we’ll lose almost all of that, but it’s for the best. We only have twenty remaining employees of which five actually have work to do at present. The company is bleeding money and it’s unacceptable.”

“You’re renting the building space too?”

“Yes.”

“And the lease ends?”

“Twenty-twenty-five.”

“Why don’t we remodel it? That way my business will have the floor space and I can run my company from the New York office and you can run part of Nox Sawyer Investments from there as well.”

“We can maintain branches in both locations,” Sawyer says. “Jill loves both cities, so she’d like having a reason to come into town.”

“I suppose sharing four floors is plenty. We don’t need more than two floors for the firm.”

“You mentioned I needed a team, but I’d like the offices remodeled. I have a decent budget.”

“You’re so cute. Like Lennox would let you pay for any of that.”

“Of course not. Isn’t she adorable?” Jill says, entering the conversation.

We talk about our plans for a little more and Celeste takes a bunch of notes. She works so quickly it’s no wonder she can handle a massive client list.

“So who is hungry because this baby says we need some Christmas

Eve pancakes and then us girlies need to do some shopping.”

“Yes, I love that idea.”

“If you think that either of you are waddling outside without us, you are nuts.”

“Aren’t they adorable?” I say.

“So cute.” She pinches Sawyer’s cheek and then he slaps her butt.

“Keep it up and you’ll be waddling for a different reason.”

“Like he needs an excuse to screw you.” I roll my eyes. Since they got here, all they do is screw. I thought we were bad. Okay, we are bad, but apparently, my brother and I are insatiable when it comes to our women.

After breakfast, the girls get dressed and meet us for their shopping excursion. There are four or five little shops around the town and one large shopping center, and the plan is to hit up all of them before we get ready to dance tonight. I’m guessing these little chicks forgot that they’re pregnant. One of them is extremely pregnant. Between the snow and cold, by store number three, Jill’s waddle turned into a limp and their pretty little noses were bright red.

“Girls, it’s time to call it a day.”

“Ah. We weren’t...done,” Jill answers as her voice loses its power.

He closes the gap between them so it’s just the four of us near the vehicle. “Listen to me, little girl. We’re going back to the house and you’re going to take a nap or I’m going to spank your pretty ass,” Sawyer warns her. “My baby girl needs to rest before I take her dancing.” My brother kissed Jill’s temple before he grips her face and roughly slams his mouth onto her lips. Celeste sighs as she watches them.

I look at my woman with a hint of jealousy. Does she find my brother fucking sexy too?

“Why are you sighing?”

“I’m not sighing.” She looks up at me with feigned innocence, eyes round, lips in a partial frown.

“You’re a bad girl. You’re mine. Do you need a reminder?”

“Nope.” She looks away as if I don’t see the look of sadness in her eyes.

“I see what you’re about. I didn’t scold you for wearing yourself down.” She nods, so I continue. “Well that’s because I’m going to punish you later.” I wink at her and help her inside the back seat before loading the bags.

Finally we arrived home and the girls both lay down for a nap and my brother and I hung out for a bit. “Are all the gifts in your car?”

“Yes. My assistant loaded them in when he arrived earlier.”

“He’s really worth his salt, but I don’t want him anywhere near my Celeste. The bastard is good looking as fuck.”

“Tell me about it. Lucky, I keep Jill far away from the asshole because he’s not gay and younger than us. If he steals my woman, I’ll rip his balls off.”

“Like your wife would ever leave you. She’s loved you for so damn long it’s not like she’d leave you. I haven’t secured Celeste to me yet. She still has time to change her mind. I don’t think I’ll ever be sure I won’t lose her.”

“Yeah, well you’re a jackass so it will be hard, so I’d watch out.” I shove my asshole brother and he just laughs before pushing me back. We tussle around before I remind his ass to keep it down.

“Hey, we don’t want to wake them.” We relax, but then my dickhead brother gets one last tag in my arm before rushing off to check on his wife.

I hit our bedroom door, but it's pointless to think our women are still in bed because they're both in our bedroom looking in the mirror twirling with no shoes on, but in their pretty dresses. "Gorgeous, but aren't you ladies still supposed to be just waking up?"

"We were too excited. It's Christmas Eve and we feel like dancing," Celeste says, smiling up at me.

"There you are," Sawyer says walking into the room, eyes glued to his wife. "I thought you were in the bathroom. You left the water running."

She gasps and looks straight at Celeste. "Oh no. I'm sorry."

"Don't worry."

"I turned it off and it didn't flood or anything. Are you ladies almost ready?"

"Yes. We are just about finished up."

It doesn't take long before we're leading our women to my SUV and to the town center where the party is underway. "Wow, everyone is here."

"Oh my goodness. Even Holiday is here, and she's with the guy who bought my grandfather's house."

"That's James Snow. He has investments with us," Sawyer points out.

"I had no idea that's who bought your house." The bastard is good looking too, but it's clear where his attention is.

Chapter Eleven

Celeste

“This place is perfect,” Jill says, staring at the decorations. I love these events even if I didn’t always spend a lot of time here.

“Hi, Cel, it’s good to see you tonight.”

“Hi, Bethany. I believe you’ve already met my fiancé, but this is his brother Sawyer and his wife Jill.”

“Jill, Sawyer, this is Bethany, one of my friends who works at the bakery.”

“I’m the one who totally let the baby thing slip.”

“Yeah, like she could keep it a secret for long.”

“Hey, Beth,” Colter says, coming up to us. He’s the delivery guy stopped by a couple of times over the past few weeks with presents. I recall him from high school, but Colter’s a little older than me. His big brother Grant teases him and calls him a kid so we all do, but it’s clear he’s not a kid and older than all of us girls.

“Hey, kid,” she replies, a slight blush spreads across her cheeks. He frowns and walks away taking a glass of punch over to someone across the dance floor. I want to kick both of them in the shins. There’s no freaking reason for him to have come this way with the punch only to head back the other way, so he came with a purpose, but I’m not sure what for.

“Bethany Faith Jones, are you interested in Colter?” I challenged

myself, smiling at my friend. Colter has certainly grown into a man over the past couple of years, but it's not like I was ever interested in him. Even though it's clear to everyone around that Beth has changed her tune.

She shakes her head, but the lie is in her eyes that refuse to meet mine. "No, of course not. We're just friendly enemies."

"Well, he's a fool if he can't see that you're smoking hot, and he's missing out," Jill says.

"Damn straight," I add. "And maybe it wouldn't hurt if you'd stop calling Colter a kid since it's clear that guy is a man now."

"A man that brings another woman around you is still a little boy," Sawyer says. "Excuse me, but I want to twirl my bride around the dance floor before she grows tired."

"Sure. You two should as well. I'm going to check on the desserts." We leave her alone, and I hope that Holiday checks on her, but I can't see Holiday anymore. I wonder where they went off to.

Lennox leads me onto the dance floor and slides his arm around my waist, pulling me in close. "So my snow princess, how are you feeling?"

"Wonderful. You have made my holiday so perfect."

"Now if my brother would go back home, it would be better."

"Stop being so mean. It's Christmas."

"I'm only teasing, my love. The past week has only been better by adding the family together. I wish our parents could see this."

"I'm sorry they're not."

"Me too, but we're going to give our babies a fantastic life, my beautiful love." Lennox is tapped on the shoulder, and the man points upward. "Oh my love, it seems we've landed under the mistletoe. I must

never miss an opportunity to taste those treasured lips.” With a swiftly placed hand at the base of my skull, he tips my head back and kisses my lips, sliding his tongue into my mouth. Our passion takes over until several people clap around us.

“Sorry, I couldn’t help myself.”

“I think you just wanted to show everyone who I belonged to, Nox.”

“You’ve got me there.”

We speak with a couple of guests when the party kicks into full swing, but within two hours, I’m exhausted, and my feet hurt. “Tomorrow’s Christmas. Can we go back home now?”

“Yes, my brother’s about to carry Jill out.” Lennox scoops me in his arms and leads me out of the hall. The snow is falling, and the moon is so bright that it feels like the holiday is in full swing. My heart has never felt fuller. A little flutter in my belly surprises me, reminding me that we’re not alone. The babies are coming soon to join us. Of course, we have many more months for that, but it’s just Lennox and me for now.

“Hey, hold up, I can’t waddle that fast,” Jill says. I giggle.

“We were just going to warm up the car.”

“Yeah with body heat.”

“Well, if you got there first, you’d do it too.”

“Touche.”

“I don’t want this night to end,” I answer with a yawn.

“Okay, my Celestial beauty,” he says, kissing my cheek as he tucks me into the backseat and buckles my seatbelt.

Suddenly I open my eyes to bright sunlight. I look around and see the top of Lennox’s head as he whispers to my belly. Sensing me awake,

straightens up and leans on his elbow. “Merry Christmas, my love.”

“Oh my goodness. Did I sleep through the whole night?” I ask.

“Yes, you did. Drool and all,” he says, wiping at my cheek.

“Oh no.” I grab at his hand, stopping him, and then check my face with my own hand.

“I’m teasing. Well only a little, but it’s absolutely adorable.” I shove him slightly and try to get out of the bed, but he pulls me backward and into his arms, pinning me down. His hazel eyes stare deeply into mine and my heart beats erratically. “I love you, Celeste and I love waking up next to you every single day.”

“I love you so much. I’m so glad you didn’t give up on me.”

“Never.”

“Merry Christmas, Lennox.”

A rapid knock on the door. “Are you decent?”

“Yes.”

“Merry Christmas,” Jill shouts, coming into the room with Sawyer on her heels.

“Merry Christmas,” Lennox and I cheer together.

Jill’s face changes and light pop sounds through the air. “Uh oh.” Suddenly my bedroom floor is getting soaked. “The bathroom is right there.”

“I’ll get the SUV warmed up and her bags ready.”

“I’m not due for another two weeks,” she groans.

“It happens when it happens, babe,” Sawyer says as he carries her to the bathroom. “Celeste, can you bring her a change of clothes that aren’t drenched?”

“Sure.” Lennox lifts me over the puddle so I can go get her clothes. I

head to their bedroom and grab a set and bring them in. She's crying because she's ruining Christmas.

"Jill, you got to be kidding me. This isn't ruining Christmas. We're having a niece on Christmas. She's a pretty little gem on this holiday." I gave her a hug. I don't know if she's going to go into labor fast or if she's going to last all day, but we need to get her to the hospital down the road.

"I called the hospital and they said they're preparing for her arrival now."

"We need to get moving." Sawyer carries her down the stairs. Lennox had towels spread out, cleaning up the mess while I was in the bathroom with Jill and Sawyer, so the fluid is off my floor, but it's going to need a good cleaning.

"I'll have that taken care of," Sawyer says.

"Don't worry about that, bro," Lennox says. "I can't wait to meet my niece."

Sawyer holds his wife in the backseat while Lennox drives and I sit in the passenger seat.

"We're not far from the hospital. Just breathe, Jilly bean," Sawyer says, kissing her forehead. It's so cute. I worry and Lennox can see the panic on my face, so he takes my hand and kisses it, mouthing, *it's going to be okay*.

I nod. I'm not worried about me. Her contractions are extremely close. Yesterday, I knew she was hiding something and it wasn't just fatigue. She was starting to feel the labor pains.

We were pulling up to the doors at Holly Hills Hospital when two nurses came out with a wheelchair. Sawyer carries Jill to it and sets her down. "Her contractions are about two minutes apart."

“Oh, we’re going to be having a Christmas baby.”

“How far along are you?”

“Thirty-eight weeks.”

“Good, so we should have some healthy lungs. Okay.”

“We’ll be in with you two in just a minute.”

“Sir, we have valet,” the nurse says. I see the young man out there. It sucks that they all are working on Christmas, so I pulled out my purse which I grabbed on the way out and snagged a hundred-dollar bill and handed it to him. Lennox smiles.

“Oh, okay.” Lennox grabs the two bags from the car, drops off the keys, and then takes my hand. “Thank you.” We headed inside, following them into the room.

“Excuse me, but you’re going to have to step out. Mrs. Masterson is ready to push.”

“What?”

Jill screams the next second and Sawyer pales but is by his wife’s side. “You got this, my sweet Jilly bean.

We make for the exit and head toward the waiting room. “Wow, that was fast as hell.”

“Not as fast as you think.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, I don’t think Jill wanted to ruin Christmas.”

“You mean she’s been in labor and has been hiding it?” I nod. “For how long?”

“Since we were shopping. It’s why I pretended to be tired when we were shopping. I wasn’t exhausted, but I could tell she wasn’t doing so well.”

“Why didn’t you say anything?”

“She wanted to have fun and lying in a hospital bed waiting for the baby to come isn’t fun. Besides, the doctor’s might have just sent her home to tell her to wait out until the contractions got closer. She wasn’t due yet, so those could have just been fake labor pains, you know...or really bad gas pains.” I twist my face, hoping he understands.

“Oh...”

“Yeah. Unfortunately, it means no pain meds now.”

“You’re going to tell me though, no fucking waiting. Fake pains, gas pains. I don’t give a shit if it’s just bad shits. I want to know, understood?” He cups my face. “I don’t want to worry that I can’t get you to the hospital in time. We’re having twins and that shit’s already risky.”

“How did you know that?”

“I’ve been reading up at night.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. I wanted to know about my babies and how they affect you.” He brushes the hair off of my face and then kisses me.

“Celly, Sir, they’re asking for you,” Dr. Stein says.

“Okay.” We go inside and see Sawyer holding the little bundle in his arms while Jill smiles at us.

“Meet our little Christina.”

“Oh my goodness, she’s a doll.”

“No wonder why she wanted to get out. She’s a chubby little cherub.”

“Yes, she’s nine and a half pounds.”

“Wow, imagine if she cooked until her due date.”

“She’d be massive.”

“Oh my. I’m worried now. I’m having two of those.” I press my hand to my stomach, and the nurse laughs.

“Did you forget to tell her we were both eight pounds when we were born?” Sawyer says.

“Oh no. I forgot to mention that little bit.”

Epilogue

Lennox

“My lovely wife, you did such a wonderful job.” I stare at my sons in their bassinets. Two heavy, round, and long boys each weighing over eight pounds, delivered naturally two weeks early. Luckily, I’d been prepared and we had them at Holly Hills Hospital because she’d been feeling lousy and her back was aching.

My assistant said that’s how his sister went into labor, and I believed him. Less than twenty-four hours later, Celeste’s water broke while she was in the shower. Although there were no major theatrics because the sun was out and I had the bags already in the car. The labor was a lot slower than Jills who was already pregnant again with babies number two and three. Apparently this round was twins and they were boys.

“Thank you my sweet, large headed husband.”

“Hey, only one of my heads is large.”

“Hmm. I think they’re both enormous right now.”

“Well, seeing you in bed always gets me excited.”

“The wind gets you excited.”

“No, it’s always you.” I bend down and taste her lips. “How are you feeling? You look tired.” I brush her hair off her face.

“I am a little sleepy.”

“You should try to rest for a little while before they wake up. I’ll be right here.” She nods and slides down, resting her pretty head onto the pillow.

I could stare at her for hours. It's almost like a fevered dream. Nearly a year ago I didn't even know she existed and then I stepped into that hotel bar and there she was, stealing my heart and soul without even knowing it. I was branded hers before she even turned my way.

For a short time I lost her. Then it felt like forever to find her, forever to get her to marry me. Okay, not forever, but it seemed like it. When the clock hit twelve on New Year's Day, Celeste and I said our vows, marrying in front of a small crowd because I couldn't wait. It didn't matter to me who was around as long as she was mine and there was no chance of her running again.

I rest beside their bassinets until I hear the light cooing of our little ones. Opening my eyes, I find Celeste watching us. She's taking a few pictures. "Hey, baby, you need to be in bed."

I'm up on my feet, taking her hand, trying to lead her back to the bed. "Actually, the doctor wanted me to get up and move around."

"Oh. Do you need something?"

"A kiss."

A chuckle turns to a growl as I slide my hands around her waist, pulling her in. My mouth falls onto hers. A light tap on the hospital room door breaks our embrace.

"Can't keep your hands off her for five freaking minutes. Damn, bro," Sawyer comes in with roses and a basket of treats with Jill holding their baby girl.

"Congratulations," she squeals.

I take my niece so she can properly greet my wife while my brother sets the things down on the side table. As soon as he's done, he gives Celeste a big hug. "Let me meet my nephews," Sawyer says.

“Oh goodness, poor Cels, these boys are big. Have you finally decided on a name for them?”

“Finn and Ethan.”

“Oh I love it. I want to squish them so much. You two made such handsome little boys.”

“We have made a wonderful family.”

“To the Mastersons,” I say.

“To the Mastersons,” we all cheer.

Celeste

The office is open until two days before Christmas because we're working non-stop. My team now consists of fifteen employees and a daycare so both Lennox and I can have time with our babies when we can.

"Mrs. Masterson, I'm sorry to disturb you, but there's a call on line two from your lawyer's office."

"Yes, I'll take it."

"Mrs. Masterson, It's Fred."

"Hello, how can I help you?"

"I wanted to inform you that Mr. Vance has decided to take the plea deal and will be serving three years in prison for sexual misconduct, harassment, and invasion of privacy."

"That's wonderful to know. Thank you."

"Have a Merry Christmas."

"To you as well," I say, ending the call.

There's a knock on my open office door and I see a sexy man at the door. Lifting my gaze from his handsome build to his gorgeous face. "Why Mr. Masterson is there a reason you've come down to see me?"

"Yes, my dear. I have a business meeting so I'll miss our daily lunch today."

"I know. You told me about this meeting all week."

"So that's why I'm here early. I don't want to miss seeing you during my workday." He steps into my office and closes the door.

"Now, Mr. Masterson. There's no fornication allowed in these offices. I made that a rule after what occurred between Basse and Vance." They were

carrying on an affair right under his wife's nose. Basse attacked Vance's wife after Basse was fired and is also doing time. Luckily, Vance's wife is out of the marriage without any kids. She found her happiness with the lawyer on her case.

"Which is silly since we're married," he complains, pulling me out of my chair and into his arms.

"Yes, but we're on the clock," I reminded him. This is my company after all and I built it to be successful, something he knows all about.

He tips my chin and brushes his lips against mine. "We're always on the clock. We're the owners and work from home too." That is the absolute truth. After I but the babies down, I worked for another hour and then fell asleep in Lennox's arms without eating dinner. He had to wake me up and make sure I ate a little because I needed my energy and then he helped me to bed before working for another hour himself.

"Very good point. I suppose some rules don't apply to us. Lock the door."

"Already done, wife." He lifts me onto the desk and then there's a heavy knock on my door.

"Hey, jackass I know you're in there right now. We have a meeting and they're waiting for us."

"Shit. I guess this will have to be saved for later, Mrs. Masterson."

"Yes, sir." He roughly takes my mouth one more time before forcing himself to pull back. "I'll see you later, handsome."

"Damn right you will."

He opens the door and punches his brother in the arm. "Cockblocker."

"Hey, I left my wife back in Chicago, so fuck off." Sawyer looks past Lennox and says, "Hey Celeste. Sorry about the interruption. It's good to see

you again.”

“So good to see you too,” I say, rushing over to give my brother-in-law a hug. Lennox grumbles and pulls us apart. “I’m sorry that Jill’s not here. I can’t wait to see her.”

“I feel the same. It’s only been a few hours.”

“That’s how I feel. Now let’s get this meeting over so I can get back to my wife,” Lennox grumbles.

“Relax Mr. Scrooge. Your wife has holiday bonuses to hand out anyway, don’t you?”

“Yes I do, thank you for reminding me.” I smiled and sent out an email for the entire staff to meet me in the conference room in five minutes. This has been a busy year for me. Yes, it hasn’t quite been a full year since I officially opened CH Masterson Marketing, but it’s been well over a year since I branched out on my own.

Snagging the stack of envelopes from my desk, I triple check them to make sure everyone’s bonus is in the pile. With my cute Santa hat on, I walk out into the bull pen area and see it’s empty except for all the cubicles and the wonderful holiday decor. “Good,” I mutter to myself before heading into the conference room.

Opening the door, I can smell all the treats I had brought in from Holiday’s bakery this morning. “Good afternoon, everyone.”

“It’s almost Christmas and as you know today is the last day in the office before we’re officially off on break for the next two weeks. I wanted to thank you all for working so hard to give the last giant push for our clients. Every win for them is a win for us, and I wanted to show my appreciation. There are treats from my hometown and here are your Christmas bonuses. Since it’s my first year, it’s not that big, but I hope we continue to grow.”

They all erupt into cheers before I can finish.

“Celeste, you didn’t have to do that,” Kinzie says, giving me a hug. She just finished her web design degree and has a lot of loans.

“Wow, these brownies are amazing,” Amir groans.

“They’re my favorite.”

“Seriously, after they fired you. You came back, bought their space, made a company, and kept us from being without a job,” he adds. Amir has a family and works as my head of IT.

“A lot of that was my husband.” He added the extra start-up capital I needed without taking a loan.

He shakes his head. “No, it was still you. It’s your company and that meant hiring who you wanted. He made it clear that we could have been on the unemployment line and you’re the reason we’re here.” Damn Lennox for telling them the truth.

“I do love that man.”

“He’s pretty cool, but you’re a savage all on your own. This firm is all your baby. He may have given you the push in the right direction and even a little capital, but we’re here because you know how to market.”

“Thank you. I still can’t do it without all of you. So I hope you have a wonderful break because we’re all back in January.” I stay with them a few more minutes, but I have to get back to work. There are a couple of projects I need to touch up on personally before I can officially close up the office and enjoy the holiday with my family.

It took longer than I expected, so I called the daycare and informed them that I’ll be another ten minutes and they assured me that everything is wonderful and the boys are still napping, which is their norm for this time of day. Smiling, I finish up and as I get ready to close up, I see a dark shadow

framing my office door. Looking up, I see my sexy husband.

“You’re not supposed to be here, Mrs. Masterson.”

“Then what are you doing creeping in my office, Sir. Come to spy on company secrets?”

“No, I had a feeling you didn’t leave yet and I was right. Come on. You’re always the last to leave. We have a long day tomorrow and I don’t want you exhausted.”

“You are my hero.”

“I’m nothing of the sort. I’m just a man obsessed with his beautiful wife.”

“You’re my obsessed hero. Today went perfect thanks to you.”

“Today went perfect because you’re an amazing owner who loves her job and cares about her employees.”

“You’re an amazing husband and I’m so excited to share this life with you and our boys.” I brush my lips against his before whispering, “And soon to be our little one here.”

His eyes open wide, giving me a super sexy smile. “You’re pregnant.”

“Surprise.” I grin and then jump into his arms. “Merry Christmas.”

“Merry Christmas, baby.”

THE END

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