



BOOK
ELEVEN

IMPRESSING

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BECCA
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BOOK
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SURRENDER

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IMPRESSING BRETT

SURRENDER, BOOK ELEVEN



BECCA JAMESON



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ABOUT THE BOOK

Lacy

My childhood was not ideal.

My mom died when I was twelve.

My father didn't want me.

He forced me to grow up before I was ready.

And then he tried to coerce me to marry against my will.

I had two options; I chose to walk away and never look back.

It's been ten years; my father's sudden death means little to me.

I don't even care that he cut me out of his will.

Except maybe he didn't.

Brett

I've known Lacy for a long time.

I've always been attracted to her, but she's not Little.

She's in trouble though.

Someone tried to burn down her apartment building.

She needs a place to stay.

And...I was wrong about her.

She might not know what it means yet, but she is Little.

She needs protection too. Someone is following her.

They'll never get their hands on her because she's mine.

PROLOGUE



Twenty years ago...

Lacy

“No, Mama. No. You can’t be gone. You can’t leave me.” I rock back and forth, hugging my knees to my chest. The tears won’t stop. They’ve been falling for three days ever since my mother died. I’ve gathered all my favorite dolls to keep me company while I sit in the dark in the back of my closet.

I have my mother’s favorite cardigan wrapped around me. It still smells like her. When will it stop smelling like Mama?

I squeeze my eyes closed. If I just sit here in the closet, I can pretend none of this happened. I can pretend my mother didn’t get sick and die. I can pretend I’m not alone in the world.

I shouldn’t be alone. I still have my father. He’s somewhere in this large house. I can hear him banging around. I think he’s angry with my mama for leaving, mostly because he’s stuck with me.

I hate him. He's mean and angry all the time. He says my mother babied me. He says I have to grow up now, but I don't want to. I'm only twelve. I still want to be a child. I want Mama to rock me. The last time she held me in her arms was two weeks ago. I can still feel her touch. It's warm on my cold arms if I imagine it really hard.

Stomping in the hallway makes me hold my breath, and I flinch when my father's booming voice fills my room as the door slams open so hard it hits the wall.

"Lacy, where are you?" he shouts. "Are you in that damn closet again?"

I hold my breath. It's not like he won't find me. Of course, he will, but I don't want to come out.

"You have to stop your whining. She's gone. You're too old to behave like this. You need to take more responsibility around here. I hate that she babied you. It did you a disservice. I shouldn't have let her indulge you."

I cover my ears, but I can't block out his words. He's too loud. Angry. Always angry.

"Come out of that damn closet," he yells.

I whimper. Why can't he leave me alone and let me grieve?

A strange sound makes me flinch, and I move one hand from my ear and lean forward to try to discern what I'm hearing. It sounds like a plastic trash bag being shaken open.

When I crawl forward a few inches to peek around the edge of the closet, I find my father stuffing the bag with my things. My heart races as I stare in horror.

My toys. My stuffed animals. My games. My coloring books. He's filling the bag, hurrying around like a madman as if he needs to get everything in the black plastic bag as fast as possible.

I scamper out of the closet. "Dad, what are you doing?" I run toward him and reach for the bag.

He jerks it out of my grasp and narrows his gaze on me. "Go start dinner. Lord knows you watched your mother cook often enough. It's time for you to step up to the plate." He points at the door. "Go."

I shake my head defiantly, tears running down my cheeks. "Why are you putting my toys in the trash bag?"

"Because you're not a child anymore, Lacy. You're too old for these things." He keeps filling the bag.

I'm frozen to my spot. Horrified. "No. Please. Stop. I'll go cook. I promise. I'll help out. I'll do Mama's jobs. Let me keep my toys."

He spins around and points at the door. "No. Enough. Go. This room needs to be fitting for a young woman, not a child. Starting now."

CHAPTER 1



Twenty years later...

Lacy

“Lacy? Are you okay? What’s the matter?”

Eve’s voice sounds far away as I lower my cell phone to the table and lift my gaze to hers. “My father died,” I mutter.

Her eyes widen. “Oh, no. Oh, my God. That’s awful. I’ll have the waiter pack up our lunch to go.”

I snap out of it and shake my head. “No. We don’t need to leave.” We’re on our lunch break. We eat out together nearly every Monday. I’m certainly not going to forgo lunch with my friend and coworker over the death of my father.

She stares at me. “Surely you need to call some people. Make some arrangements. Where did he live? I can help you get plane tickets and—”

I shake my head again. “My father was a first-class asshole. I wouldn’t attend his funeral if my life depended on it.”

Her mouth falls open. After a moment, she slowly closes it. “Oh.” She reaches a hand across the table and sets it on top of mine, giving it a slight squeeze. “I’m so sorry.” Her voice is calm, not the least bit judgmental. “And your mother?”

“She died when I was twelve. I’m not sure I’ve forgiven her.” I offer a slight smile. I’m sort of kidding. It wasn’t my mother’s fault that she got cancer and left me. But it sure changed my life.

Eve swallows. “Do you have any brothers or sisters?”

“Nope. It was just me. The rest of the eggs and sperm evaded the miserable life I had. Lucky them.” I’m being harsh. It’s hard not to be. Eve has mostly only known me as bubbly and outgoing. It’s the persona I took when I left home ten years ago. I like it much better than the quiet, shy introvert I became after my mother died.

I shake off my maudlin thoughts and smile at Eve as the waiter sets our plates down. I flip my hand over under hers and give her a reassuring squeeze. “I’m fine. Really. It’s a shock, is all. I didn’t figure the old fart would ever die.”

“Was he abusive?” she asked softly.

“Not physically. Not in the traditional sense. Mostly, he didn’t like children and hated being stuck with me when my mother died. He insisted I grow up and take over my mother’s responsibilities immediately.”

“At twelve?”

“Yes.” I take a bite of my club sandwich and force myself to chew and swallow. I honestly don’t care that my father died. Good riddance. But I am starting to wonder what the fallout might be.

I point at Eve's lunch. "Aren't you going to take a picture of that and send it to your husband?" I tease. Eve has the most interesting relationship with her husband, Colton. I've never fully put my finger on it, but I've often found myself jealous of the way Eve talks about him as if he hangs the moon.

Colton is oddly bossy, but not in a way that makes me cringe. Not like my father was. It's different somehow. It's more like he loves Eve so much that he can hardly stand to let her out of his sight, and he's strange about her lunches.

She usually giggles in a playful way when she texts Colton, but today she maintains a more sober expression as if it's needed on my behalf. She pulls out her phone, snaps a picture of her Cobb salad, and sends it off to him. She doesn't even put her phone down because she knows he will respond immediately, and sure enough, a moment later, she smiles as she sets it aside.

"Let me guess," I say, tilting my head, "he wants to see another picture after you've eaten."

She nods, erasing her smile as her brow furrows. "Are you sure you're okay? Even if you weren't close to your father, it still has to be a shock."

I force another bite down my throat before admitting, "I am slightly concerned I'll have to do something about his estate."

Her eyebrows rise. "Did he have a lot of money?"

I shrug. "Probably. He was a lawyer. A bigwig in my hometown in Indiana. That was his partner who called to let me know he died." I shudder. I've never cared for Maximillian Rutherford II, either. And worse than him—his son, Max III.

Bile rises in my throat at the thought of communicating with either man.

“Will you have to deal with his estate then?”

“Doubt it. He wrote me out of his will when I left town ten years ago. Somehow, he thought if he threatened to cut me off, I would toe the line and do his bidding. He was wrong. Best choice I ever made.” I shudder at the memory of my father’s stern look as I packed up only the most necessary items to get me by and left his house for the last time.

I knew what he thought at the time. He thought I’d never last out in the world without his fucking money. He thought I’d be back in a week...or a month...or a year. But I never glanced over my shoulder even once.

Eve looks appropriately horrified and sad. She’s a good friend. “I’m so sorry,” she repeats. “That really sucks.”

I shrug and take another bite before I continue. “If he’d really wanted to make my life difficult, he should’ve cut me off at eighteen. Luckily, he paid for my college degree even though he wanted me to become a lawyer. I had no interest in law. He didn’t think accounting was nearly as worthy a profession, but he let me do it.”

“So, you left after college then,” she states, obviously doing the math. I was twenty-two at the time.

“Yes. Lucky for me, I already had this job lined up. I’d only applied for jobs as far away from Indiana as I could get and still be in the continental U.S.” I laugh. It sounds forced even to my ears.

“I feel bad that I never knew any of this about you,” Eve says.

“Not your fault. I try not to think about it. I have a good life. I love Seattle. I have amazing friends like you. I rarely think about my father. It’s as if he’s been dead for ten years. Estrangement is like that.”

She slowly nods. “I guess.”

I point at her salad. “Colton is going to lose his shit if you don’t eat that salad,” I joke.

She picks up her fork and sits straighter as if I’ve pointed out something important. Mostly, I was kidding, but Eve starts eating anyway. I wonder what Colt would say if she really didn’t eat her lunch?

We both manage to eat most of our meals, and I smirk as Eve sends Colt a picture before we leave the restaurant. We’re only two blocks from the office where we work at Earnest and Heart.

Just as we step into the lobby, my phone rings. An unknown number. I stare at it a moment, hedging. Maybe I should just let it go to voicemail.

“You should probably get that,” Eve points out.

She’s right. I sigh. I will have to face my father’s damn death, at least peripherally. I answer the phone while Eve watches me. “Hello?”

“Eve. It’s Max. Where are you?” His voice is urgent.

“I’m at work, of course,” I snap back. “It’s Monday afternoon.” I haven’t heard from Max in ten years either. I haven’t spoken to my father, his father, or Max since I left town. What a treat that I get to talk to both father and son on the same day. *Not.*

“Why aren’t you on your way here yet?” he demands.

I draw in a slow breath. He hasn't changed a bit. Go figure. "I'm not coming there, Max."

"What?" he shouts loud enough that Eve hears him and flinches. "Of course you are. Get to the airport. I'll arrange a ticket and text you the flight information."

I'm surprisingly shocked. I shouldn't be. "No, Max. I'm not coming. I have no reason to. We were estranged. I need to get back to work." I hang up.

Eve takes my arm. "Who was that?"

"My father's partner's son. He's just as bossy as his father and my father." I shudder. "He can stuff it right up his ass, though. I left ten years ago, and I'm not going back."

CHAPTER 2



Brett

“I’m worried about Lacy,” Eve tells Colt as the three of us eat dinner.

Colt frowns as he hands Eve her sippy cup, silently reminding her to take a drink.

“What’s up with Lacy?” I ask, unaware of any issues with Eve’s friend. I perk up, though. I’ve met Lacy on many occasions. She’s gorgeous, fun, and outgoing. If I were vanilla, I would have asked her out a long time ago. I’ve never seen a shred of evidence to indicate she’s Little, so I’ve kept my attraction to myself.

It’s never a good idea to get involved with a woman who isn’t into age play. I know this first hand. I’ve tried it. More than once. It always ends in disaster. I can’t hide my Daddy side from anyone forever, and both of us end up getting hurt the longer I wait to suggest what most women find outlandish.

“Her father died,” Colt tells me as he puts a scoop of mac and cheese on Eve’s plate. Luckily, he’s not subjecting himself or me to her favorite dinner indulgence. He and I are having

steaks he grilled on the BBQ. Baked potatoes. Caesar salad. French bread.

“Shit. When? How’s she taking it? Did he live nearby?”

Eve shakes her head. “No. He lived in Indiana. They were estranged. She insists she doesn’t care that he died. It’s been two weeks. She didn’t go to the funeral, but she’s been jumpy and...off ever since.”

Colt is frowning still.

So am I now. “Off how?” The hairs on the back of my neck are standing on end for some reason. Maybe because I care about Lacy. Who am I kidding? I definitely care about her. Even though I’ve never dated her or even touched her, I have feelings for her.

“She’s not her usual self,” Eve continues. “She flinches every time I step into her office as if I’ve scared her. I haven’t seen her smile. I’ve noticed her hands shaking. She’s distracted. I’m worried she’s more affected by his death than she wants to admit.”

“Makes sense. Everyone grieves differently,” I say. Now *I’m* worried. I don’t like the idea of Lacy not smiling and laughing. I wonder if there’s more to her grief than she’s told Eve.

“Why don’t you have her over for dinner this weekend?” Colt suggests.

Eve nods slowly. “I could do that.” She pushes her mac and cheese around on her plate with her fork.

I’ve known Eve long enough to know what she’s thinking. Her home is her haven. The place where she practices age play without fear of recrimination. She has plenty of friends in the

age-play community that visit on weekends—or she and Colt go to their homes.

Our network of like-minded folks is large and growing, especially since we all belong to Surrender. It's hard to have someone vanilla come to the house. It disrupts Eve's regular routine. She is an amazing woman, fully capable of being a bad-ass accountant by day. But when she comes home, she turns her care over to her husband and lets herself relax in the age range she's most comfortable in.

Colt is a very lucky man. He tips her chin back and meets her gaze. "A few hours, baby. Maybe Brett could come, too?" He glances at me.

I nod, trying not to react. Of course, I will come, but comforting a woman I'm secretly attracted to is going to be rough. What I'd like to do is wrap her up in my arms, pull her onto my lap, and rock her. That's my idea of comforting a woman. I doubt that would fly with Lacy.

"I think it's a good idea, Eve," Colt continues. "Maybe Brett and I can suss out what's bothering her. Maybe it's more than just her father's death."

Eve nods. "I think it is. I suspect her father's partner and his son are hounding her about the estate."

"Did she inherit anything?"

Eve shrugs. "She says no. She says she forfeited any inheritance when she left ten years ago. She says she doesn't care."

I furrow my brow. "Sometimes wills don't reflect what the person might have said in anger."

Eve sighs. "Yeah. Maybe. I haven't been able to get her to talk about it ever since she got the call that he'd died. Every

time I stop by her office, she pastes on a fake smile and tells me everything is fine. I think she's fibbing."

I smile at Eve's word choice. She may be sharing important adult information, but she still has one foot in her Little space. "Have her over. I'll do my best to get her to talk."

"Okay. I'll see if she's willing."

We all continue to eat, and just as we're finishing putting the dishes in the dishwasher, the doorbell rings.

Eve is still sitting at the table. She's coloring. She sits up taller, stiffening.

Colt leans over to kiss the top of her head. "You're fine. Stay here. I'll see who it is."

I stay with Eve while Colt heads out of the kitchen, but the sound of a woman's voice a moment later makes me follow in Colt's footsteps.

Lacy is at the front door. She's rubbing her hands together, and she looks distraught. She's been crying. Her face is red and splotchy. Her eyes are bloodshot. "I'm so sorry to bother you," she says.

Colt steps back. "Come in. You're not bothering us at all." He rubs her arm as he shuts the door. "Did something happen?"

"There was a fire at my apartment. I—"

"Shit." I step to her other side and wrap my hand around her elbow to guide her toward the couch. I assume Eve can hear Lacy's voice and knows her friend is here. I also assume she'll want to change her appearance before joining us. Five seconds ago, when I left her in the kitchen, she was wearing a pink T-shirt that said "Daddy's Girl" and a tutu over white

shorts. Her hair was in pigtails. There is no way she's going to rush into the living room looking like that.

I get Lacy seated and sit next to her, taking her hand. She's shaking.

Colt nods toward me. "I'll go find Eve and bring some water."

I return his nod, knowing he's going to need a few minutes to help Eve sort out her clothing and her mindset. Eve is one of the most amazingly adept women I know at switching gears, but she's accustomed to letting go of her adult the moment she climbs into Colt's car after work and not bringing that side of her back out until he drops her off outside her office building the next morning.

"How bad was the fire?" I ask Lacy.

She looks tired. Not just from an incident that happened today but bone-weary like Eve described.

She shrugs. "I don't know. They evacuated the building. It started in the basement. Most of the damage is probably from smoke. I assume we'll be able to go back in and retrieve things, but for now, the building is off-limits until the fire department can ensure it's structurally sound."

"Were you home?" I ask, wondering how scared she might have been.

She shakes her head. "No. I was at the grocery store." She taps the purse resting crosswise over her chest. "This is all I have with me." Her lips tremble. She's close to tears, which is understandable and fine. I'm not the sort of man who minds if someone cries.

I wrap an arm around her and pull her into my side. As I rub her back, she starts to cry. "It's okay. Let it out. I'm sure

you're stressed. Eve told me about your father. I'm so sorry for your loss." No matter how she might have felt about the man, I can express my condolences.

She covers her face with both hands as she leans against my chest, crying harder. I'm pretty sure my reminder was no help, but I couldn't exactly sit here and not bring up her father's death. It would have been insensitive.

"Lacy..." Eve has arrived. Her hair is in a single ponytail. She's wearing yoga pants and a tank top, which looks like it has a shelf bra. She sits on the other side of Lacy and wraps an arm around her underneath mine. "Colton said there was a fire in your building. Was it bad?"

Lacy draws a deep breath and pulls away from me to turn toward her friend. "I don't think so. I don't know yet."

I kind of hate that she's no longer leaning into me, as irrational as that is. I keep a hand on her back, rubbing gently. I hate that she's been hurting, and now her pain is compounded. No matter what the outcome of the fire ends up being, right now, she's shaken and vulnerable.

"Well, you'll stay here, of course, until they get it sorted out."

I lift my gaze to meet Eve's over the top of Lacy's slumped body and then shift my attention to Colt. It's not my place to interject. It's probably a bad idea. I should shut my fucking mouth. But that's not what happens. Instead, I clear my throat. "Your guest room is a disaster," I point out. It's true. They removed all the furniture a week ago and had it painted yesterday. "No one could sleep in there with the paint fumes if they wanted to. She can stay with me. I have plenty of room."

God, I hope I don't regret this decision. I might be out of my mind. *You don't date vanilla women.* Of course, I'm not dating Lacy either. I'm just offering her a place to stay. A logical solution to a housing problem. The friendly thing to do.

Colt's brows lift as he stares at me.

I return his stare with a hard, unblinking one.

We both know Eve will have a rough evening if she isn't able to spend more time in her Little space. And I'm right about the guest room.

Colt runs a hand through his hair. "You sure?" he mouths silently.

I nod.

Lacy glances at me. "I can't impose on you. I'll just get a hotel room."

"Not a chance," Eve interjects. "You shouldn't be alone. You've had a rough few weeks. I'll pack up some clothes for you. We're almost the same size. And I'll let Mr. Heart and Mr. Earnest know you won't be into work tomorrow. They'll understand."

One thing I know is that the owners of Eve and Lacy's accounting firm are good men. They stood by Eve when she was being stalked and never wavered in their support.

"It's settled," I declare.

"Have you eaten?" Eve asks.

Lacy shakes her head. "I don't think I can. I'm too frazzled right now."

"We have mac and cheese," she says with a smile.

Lacy manages to chuckle. "You and your mac and cheese."

“Hey, don’t diss the mac and cheese. It’s not like it comes from a box. Colt makes it from scratch. It’s delicious.”

Lacy shakes her head. “I’m sure it is, but I’ll pass for now.” She slumps back against the couch, leaving me and Eve sitting up straighter while staring at her from both sides. She’s looking at her lap and picking on imaginary lint at the hem of her shirt.

She’s wearing workout clothes, and her hair is up in a thick, brown, wavy ponytail. She sighs. “I was at the gym before the store. I need a shower, and I don’t have any fucking clothes.”

I startle slightly at her curse word. She’s certainly entitled to an entire string of cuss words after the evening and, apparently, few weeks she’s had. I shouldn’t be shocked, but the word still sounds odd coming from her. I don’t think I’ve heard her cuss before. I doubt she does so ordinarily.

Eve stands. “Let me grab you some things.” She squeezes Lacy’s hands and leans over to hug her before rushing from the room.

Colt sits on the coffee table in front of Lacy. “Is there anything else we can do, Lacy?”

“No. I’ll be fine.” She sighs deeply and tips her head back to stare at the ceiling. “It’s just been tough for a few weeks, and now this.”

I think she’s barely holding it together, and I hate that for her. I suspect she’s too embarrassed to let herself get more emotional than she already has in front of us. Hopefully, when I get her alone, I can help her relax and let go. I’ll certainly try.

Colt speaks again. “Please let us know if you need anything at all. I’m sure Brett can help you sort out whatever

is necessary. You should contact your insurance company in the morning.”

She draws in a deep breath. “I’ll add that to my list,” she mutters sarcastically.

I’m unsure what she’s referring to, but I don’t say anything.

Eve bustles back into the room. She’s carrying a small suitcase and sets it by the door.

Lacy looks at me. “Are you sure about this? I don’t want to be an imposition. I’m sure my insurance will cover a hotel for as long as necessary until I can get back into my building.”

I shake my head. “You’re not going to a hotel, Lacy. I insist.” I stand. “Let’s get you to my place so you can get settled. You’re exhausted.” I grab her hand and help her to her feet.

Eve hugs Lacy again, and both she and Colt walk with us to the door.

I take the suitcase.

We’re halfway down the walk before Lacy says, “I’ll follow you, I guess.”

I turn to look at her. “How about we leave your car here for now? We can come back and get it later. You’re shaking.”

She fiddles her fingers together. Her lips are pursed. Her eyes are watery. I suspect she’s moments from falling apart, and who could blame her? Finally, she nods. The fact that she doesn’t even argue with me speaks volumes.

I open the back passenger door first to stow the suitcase on the seat before grabbing the handle for the front passenger seat.

After Lacy is settled, I pull the seatbelt down. It's instinctive. It's in my nature.

She glances at me as she takes it from me to buckle it. "How very safety conscious of you," she jokes.

"Always." I wink at her and shut the door before rounding to the other side.

What the fuck have I gotten myself into?

CHAPTER 3



Lacy

I have no idea why I've agreed to this. It's probably a horrible idea. I'm in no mood to be social or polite. I don't think I've ever been more drained in my life. I was emotionally on my last straw *before* I pulled up outside my apartment building to find it surrounded by firetrucks.

I should have just gone to a hotel in the first place. I have no idea why I came here. The truth is, I don't have many friends. Eve is honestly my best friend, even though she probably doesn't know that. After all, we're work acquaintances.

We occasionally get together outside of work. She often invites me to group social events at restaurants or bars where I've met many of her friends, but I've only been to her home maybe a dozen times.

Eve is one of the kindest people I know. I'm confident she's not just humoring me. She likes me. It's genuine. But I've never told her about my stupid past. The most information I've ever shared was inadvertent because we were together

when I got the call from Rutherford II that my father had passed.

Also, she had accidentally been with me an hour later when Max had called, so she'd overheard my side of that conversation, too. Other than that, I've told her nothing.

I hate my past. I try to ignore it. It's not important to me. Even my father's death is hardly a blip on my radar. If it weren't for his stupid business partner and his stupider son, I would barely flinch over my father's passing.

What the fuck am I doing in Brett's car? Jesus. When I drove to Eve's house, I was on autopilot. I hadn't thought it through. I probably should have just gone straight to a hotel, bathed, and curled in a ball to sleep for ten hours.

I should've kept the stupid fire to myself. I can't go to work tomorrow because I don't have any of my clothes, but I could've called in sick or something. Now, Eve is involved in my business, and I can't take that back.

The problem is I'm so tired. Bone weary. Lonely. I put on a front every day of my life, smiling and laughing and working my ass off, but inside, I'm not that person. Inside, I'm a disaster.

Brett glances at me several times on the way to his house. I've never been there, but it's not too far, and soon, he's pulling into the garage of a nice-sized two-story home in a lovely neighborhood. Does he live here alone? I assume so.

Brett is...well...large, for one thing. He's over six feet. And he kind of fills a room. He's potent. Powerful. Dominant, I guess. I can't quite come up with the right words. His brow has been furrowed from the moment we left the house. I think he's concerned.

Hell, I'm concerned about me. But why is he?

He's consuming all of the oxygen in his SUV. He does so everywhere I've seen him. Even in a crowded restaurant, he sucks all the air out of the room, leaving not enough for anyone else. At least, that's what I've decided since I can't usually breathe properly when he's around.

Granted, he's sex on a stick.

Why the fuck have I agreed to go home with him? I ask myself this over and over. I'm not in my right mind. I'm probably going to stumble over my words and accidentally say something I shouldn't. Or cry. No man wants to deal with a sobbing woman.

I flinch when I realize he's opened my door, and I'm still sitting in my seat wearing my seatbelt. It seemed silly when he almost put it on for me before we left Eve and Colt's house, but now he's reaching across me to unbuckle it.

"Come on, Little lamb. Let's get you inside. You need food, a bath, and a bed."

Little lamb? I glance at him. Where did that come from?

He smiles and shrugs. "You're being so quiet. Like a lamb."

I can't help but return the smile. That's the goofiest thing I've ever heard, and it's coming from the mouth of this seriously masculine, overwhelmingly powerful man.

"I'm hardly a lamb," I whisper as I let him help me out of the SUV. "More like a bulldozer."

He chuckles. "Yeah? Not tonight."

Okay, he's probably right. Not tonight.

I hesitate next to his car as he grabs the suitcase. “I don’t even know you. Why are you doing this?” I murmur.

He shuts the door and strokes my cheek. “You know me.”

“Not really.”

“Well enough to know I’m not an ax murderer.” He lifts his brows.

“But not well enough that you should feel obligated to put me up in your guest room.” My heart is thumping at the feel of his fingers on my cheek. He’s never touched me like this before. I’m pretty sure he’s never touched me at all.

“You’re a good friend of Eve’s. Your home is currently condemned. Plus, I suspect you had a lot on your plate before tonight. You could use a soft place to fall and probably a shoulder.” Both brows go up as if in question.

Tears break loose. They run unbidden down my cheeks. Dammit.

Brett sets the suitcase down and hauls me into his arms. He holds me tight.

The dam is broken. I can’t stop now. This was not what I wanted. I should be alone somewhere. I could have fallen apart in a hotel room and not subjected other people to me.

It’s what I do. I smile in public and pretend my world is perfect. I fall apart when I’m alone. I haven’t had to do it as often lately as I used to, but ever since my stupid father died...

Brett threads his fingers in my messy ponytail and strokes my back. I’ve never known a man to be so kind to a stranger.

No. That’s not true. Colt would do this. Most of Colt’s friends would, too. They are good guys. All of them. Including Brett. This is above and beyond, though.

Eventually, he leans me back. “Let’s get you inside, okay, Little lamb?”

I chuckle, tears still falling. “I told you I’m not a lamb.”

“Even your tears are silent,” he points out. He keeps one arm around me, grabs the suitcase with his other hand, and leads me to the door. When he opens it, he ushers me into his kitchen and turns on the lights.

The place is shockingly pristine for a bachelor.

“Do you live alone?” I blurt out while he disarms the alarm.

“Yes. Why?” He smirks.

“It’s just so…” I don’t finish.

“So what?” he prods. “Tell me.” He shuts the door and resets the alarm.

“Well, big and tidy.”

He shrugs. “I was in the military. Tidy is ingrained in me.”

“Oh. Right. I guess I knew that. Army Ranger, right?”

“Yep.”

“I guess people don’t fuck with you,” I murmur. I dare anyone to fuck with this man. I wouldn’t.

“Not often, no.”

“And you work for Black Blade Protection, right?” I ask. I think I remember that detail. Colton works there. So does another one of their friends, Davis. I’ve met him and his wife, Britney, several times. And then the owner of Black Blade Protection as well. I’m not sure what his real name is, but they all call him Blade.

“I do.” He sets his huge hand on my shoulder. “Let me show you where the guest room is so you can take a shower or a bath and change. I’ll fix you something to eat while you do that.”

“I’m not hungry,” I remind him.

“You need to eat, Little lamb. At least some soup. How do you feel about canned chicken noodle soup?”

“It’s fine.” Maybe I could manage that.

“Okay. I’ll fix it while you bathe.” He nods toward the other side of the kitchen and starts walking, taking the suitcase.

I follow him, looking around as we go. His living room is as pristine as his kitchen, as if it’s a display home. When we get upstairs, he leads me directly to a guest room.

I’m kind of surprised when I step inside. “It’s pink,” I murmur.

He chuckles as he sets the suitcase on the queen-sized bed. “Yeah. You can thank Eve, Britney, Lucy, and a few of the other wives for this. They did it.”

I can’t help but chuckle. “And you let them?”

He shrugs. “They were formidable—and there were a lot of them. They ganged up on me. They insisted if I ever had a female guest, she would be more comfortable in a feminine room. Were they right?” He lifts a brow.

I look around. It’s so pretty. The comforter and pillows are pink. The furniture is a light wood. There’s a pink area rug, pink curtains, and pink rose print paintings on the walls. There’s even a teddy bear in the middle of the bed as if a child might stay here. It tugs at my heartstrings. I’d love to be a

child staying in this room. It's been twenty years since I was a child. "Yeah. They were right," I admit. It's inviting.

He leads me through to the attached bath. More pink. Towels and bathmats. The cabinets and counters are white. The floor is also white. It's almost too pretty to mess up. "I'm afraid to touch anything," I admit.

"Don't worry about that, Little lamb."

"Are you going to do some sort of coin-bouncing test to the bed after I make it in the morning?"

He laughs. I love the sound. Full and rich. He's different tonight. Not as serious as I've seen him in the past.

He opens the cabinet under the sink. "Everything you could possibly need is under here. The girls assured me."

Girls? Does he mean the women? Somehow, the way he says it doesn't sound offensive, though. It sounds endearing.

"Thank you," I whisper. I should be a hot mess, but my tears have dried up for the time being. I expected to feel out of sorts and awkward. Instead, I feel welcome.

He cups my face again, tipping my head back. "Take your time, but not too long. I'm worried about you. I'll fix you some dinner."

"Okay." I watch as he quietly leaves the room, shutting the door with a soft snick. My hand comes up to my cheek. It's warm where he touched me. It felt good.

I shake myself out of my trance. I don't have time to ponder odd warm feelings for a man I hardly know. I have a mountain of problems. None of them are his.

I quickly strip out of my workout clothes while staring longingly at the bathtub. It's so inviting. But right now, I need

to take a shower. Brett is expecting me to meet him downstairs. I certainly don't want him to come up here looking for me while I'm still naked in the bath.

There's even a hamper in the bathroom, and I drop my clothes inside it, grateful for a place to put them. I wonder if Mr. Tidy cringes when someone is messy. I hope not. I don't have the bandwidth for that sort of thing tonight.

After inspecting my options beneath the sink, I choose a vanilla-scented shampoo, conditioner, and body wash. I kind of wish I'd chosen the bath because the selection of bubble baths is inviting.

I turn on the faucet and adjust the temperature before I step in. Damn, this man's guest bathroom shower is nicer than any I've ever been in. I wonder what his master bath is like and groan at the visual.

Closing my eyes while the water runs down my body, I can't help but picture Brett in his undoubtedly heavenly bathroom. Naked. Standing under the spray of water.

I groan and shake the image from my head. I have no business thinking about Brett like that. He's not my boyfriend. He's just a kind man who has offered me a place to stay for the night. I'll sort my shit out and get a hotel room tomorrow if I still can't get into my apartment.

When I'm done, I dry off on the softest pink towel I've ever touched, wrap a second towel around my head, and step into the bedroom. The door is shut, so I aim for the suitcase. I have no idea what Eve might have sent for me.

I unzip the side and let it fall open. I'm grateful for several pairs of yoga pants and T-shirts. There's even an unopened

three-pack of panties. How kind of her. Who has unopened bikini panties in their home?

I pull it open, lose the towel and dress quickly. There's a sports bra, among the other things. That's the best she could do since we aren't the same bra size, but I don't need a bra now anyway. The T-shirt will do.

I hurry back into the bathroom, hang up both towels, and open a drawer, grinning when I find a comb and a brush.

In record time, I'm heading back down the stairs. Somehow, I've managed to ignore my problems for nearly half an hour.

I'm overcome with shyness as I enter the kitchen. Or maybe I just feel awkward. This is weird.

Brett is at the stove, and he glances at me as he slides a grilled-cheese sandwich onto a plate. He smiles. "There you are. Feel better?"

I nod. I didn't think it would be possible for me to eat, but now that I can smell the browned, buttery bread and the chicken noodle soup, my stomach growls.

"Come." He motions me toward the island, where he sets the sandwich plate next to a steaming bowl.

When I reach the chair, I boost myself up and sit, feeling oddly self-conscious with my bare feet and my lack of a bra. Maybe I should have put on the sports bra. My nipples are hard. I should have realized that might happen as soon as I entered a room filled with Brett Pauson. He's once again using all the oxygen.

"You could share," I mutter under my breath before realizing I've spoken out loud. I cover my mouth, my eyes going wide as I stiffen and glance at him.

His brows are furrowed. “Share what, Little lamb?”

I lower my hand and swallow. “Nothing,” I murmur.

He leans a hip against the island and cups my face for the third time tonight. “Share what, Lacy?” He’s not mad. He’s curious.

I swallow. “The oxygen,” I whisper.

His brows furrow as he smiles. “Am I using too much of it?”

“Always.”

He tips his head back and laughs. Jesus, his laugh is infectious. When he finally sobers, he meets my gaze. “I’ll try to cut down. I didn’t realize I was using more than my fair share.”

My face heats to a thousand degrees, and I reach for the sandwich to take a bite so I don’t have to look at him anymore.

He doesn’t budge. He leans both elbows on the island, not giving me an inch. In fact, his arm is rubbing against mine. He watches me intently.

I’ve revealed too much, and I feel foolish. I look at him. “Can we forget I said that? It was silly.”

“Not likely.” He smiles.

I sigh.

Finally, he shoves off the edge of the counter. He strokes a hand gently down the back of my wet hair before turning toward the refrigerator. “What would you like to drink, Little lamb? Apple juice? Milk? Water?”

I haven’t had any of those in years. What grown adult keeps things like that in their house? I’m starting to love the

way he calls me Little lamb, and that's dangerous.

I'm probably vulnerable, and it's affecting my judgment. Plus, I'm saying things I should not say.

Brett pulls out the apple juice and holds it up, giving it a little shake.

"Yes, please," I murmur.

He opens a cabinet and quickly grabs a pink tumbler before shutting it. I swear it was filled with other pink and pastel plastic dishes. Maybe he has nieces or something who come over.

He pours some juice and sets it in front of me before climbing onto the stool next to me and pointing at my food. "Eat, Little lamb."

"So bossy," I grumble as I lift the spoon and blow on the hot soup.

He chuckles. "I'm bossy, *and* I use all the oxygen, huh?"

"Yep." I might as well own those statements. They are out there.

It turns out I'm starving, and even my embarrassment doesn't stop me from eating every bite and downing the juice.

"Would you like some water, too?" he asks next.

"No. I'm good. Thank you. That was perfect. I probably would've just dropped into bed and skipped eating," I admit.

He's staring at me contemplatively. I wonder what he's thinking. I have no idea. "Seems like you need a keeper," he finally states. "There are bags under your eyes. You haven't been sleeping. You're not eating enough. You've lost weight."

He can tell that? I glance down at myself. Do I look skinnier? I hadn't thought about it, but he's probably right.

"I've been dealing with a lot."

He takes my dishes to the sink, rinses them, and tucks them all in the dishwasher while I watch. I should offer to help, but it seems like I wouldn't be able to do it to his standards anyway.

When he returns, he surprises me by lifting me off the stool with his hands at my waist and setting me on the floor.

I gasp.

He makes it seem like no big deal. Isn't it, though? Who does that?

When he takes my hand and leads me from the kitchen, turning off the lights on our way, I readily follow. It's like I'm in a trance. A Brett trance. He's probably made me lightheaded from using up the oxygen.

I giggle at the thought and then realize once again I shouldn't have.

Shit.

He glances at me. "What's funny now, Little lamb?"

"Nothing," I repeat.

He chuckles and keeps walking. "I'll give you this one pass, but that's it. Just the one."

"Or what?" I ask before I can stop myself. Who am I?

This time he groans. "Little lamb..."

I feel like a little lamb. I feel cherished. It's been a long time since I've felt cherished. Twenty years. Not since my mother was alive. I don't care that it's weird and I hardly know

Brett. I'm going to soak up this time with him and remember it because it feels good.

Brett leads me back upstairs, through the guest bedroom, and into the bathroom again. He opens a drawer, pulls out a new toothbrush, and extracts it from the packaging. After putting toothpaste on it, he hands it to me. "Brush."

Why do I feel compelled to obey his bossy self? It's probably the lack of oxygen again. Or I'm just so damn tired. But I brush my teeth while he opens another drawer and pulls out a hairdryer.

After I rinse, put the toothbrush in the pink holder, and wipe my lips on the towel, he points at the closed toilet seat. "Sit. Let me dry your hair."

I stare at him. "It's okay wet."

He frowns. "You shouldn't go to bed with wet hair, Little lamb. Sit."

His orders are so compelling. I can't keep from doing as I'm told. I hurry to the toilet and sit, tucking my fingers under my thighs to keep from squirming. I swear my damn nipples are hard again, and my dormant sex drive is making an appearance. Wetness is leaking out of me. I think I'm swollen and tingly down there.

I'm kind of surprised I'm even capable of feeling arousal, considering how long it's been since I've had sex. How long has it been? Three? Four years? I lost track of time. None of the men I've slept with have left a memorable impression, anyway.

It's usually just me and my vibrator, and even that hasn't happened for a while. Months?

I close my eyes as Brett carefully finger-combs my thick wavy hair while carefully aiming the dryer with his other hand. My God. I'm definitely in a trance. It feels so good. I never want it to end.

Suddenly, the dryer shuts off. When I open my eyes, I find Brett kneeling in front of me. He looks concerned, cups my face with both hands, and brushes his thumbs across my cheeks.

Oh shit. I was crying. I hadn't even realized it. He's brushing away my tears. "Tell me what you're thinking, Little lamb," he encourages. "What made you cry?"

I shake my head. I really need to stop talking. I keep sticking my foot in my mouth. I'm tired.

He sets the hairdryer aside and then shocks me by scooping me into his arms and carrying me to the bedroom. He hesitates next to the bed before lowering me to my feet. "I bet you need to go potty first." He pats my butt and points toward the bathroom we just exited.

My head is spinning. Potty? He's right, though. I do. It seems the best course of action is to bolt from him and do exactly that. I hurry back into the bathroom, shut the door, and lean against it, breathing heavily.

CHAPTER 4



Lacy

This entire evening is surreal. It's like I'm a child. It's weird and unusual, and it fucking feels good to let someone else take charge for a minute. I've been alone so long that I can't even remember what it might be like to let someone else take the reins.

Alone means sometimes I don't eat because who the fuck is there to fix the food or remind me? Alone means I sometimes crawl into bed, pull the covers over my head, and read all evening on my phone. Alone means I drop my clothes on the floor, leave dishes in the sink, and intentionally traipse through my apartment with wet or muddy shoes.

Even after ten years, I do these things out of spite for a man whom I haven't seen or spoken to in all that time. A man who died two weeks ago and is now haunting me from the grave. Damn him.

I shove off the door and rush over to use the toilet, fearful that Mr. Bossy might actually open the door to check on me in a minute. After I wash my hands, I take a deep breath and open the door.

He's sitting on the edge of the bed. The covers are pulled back. He smiles at me.

"You don't have to tuck me in, Brett. I'm a grown woman." I don't know why I say that. I want nothing more than for him to tuck me in. It may be strange and unconventional, but I don't care.

"I know I don't have to, but I want to." He pats the bed. "Come on."

I don't ordinarily sleep in quite so many clothes, but I'm certainly not going to take anything off. However, when I reach the side of the bed, Brett addresses exactly that. "Do you want to take those pants off, Little lamb?"

I bite my lip. Is he a mind reader now? I glance down. The T-shirt is sort of long enough to cover me. I quickly tug the yoga pants over my hips and let them fall to the floor before scrambling into the bed and pulling the covers over my bare legs.

I'm sure he got a glimpse of my panties, but I don't care. Not really. Not even a little bit, actually. Might as well add a bit of flesh to my weird evening.

When I'm settled, I glance down at the floor. "Oops."

He chuckles. "Do I really seem like a drill sergeant?"

"Yes." I'm just speaking the truth.

He kicks the pants out of the way as if it's no big deal they're on the floor. I know it's an act. There might even be a vein throbbing on the side of his temple.

Finally, he tucks the covers around me and sets a hand on the other side of my body. He meets my gaze. "What were the tears in the bathroom for, Little lamb?"

Jeez. Nothing gets by this man. “My mother used to dry my hair for me,” I whisper.

He reaches with his other hand to stroke a lock of hair from my temple. “Where is she now?”

“Dead.”

He freezes for a moment.

“Sorry. That was harsh. She left me when I was twelve.”

“Left you?”

“That’s what it felt like.” Why am I telling him all this?

“I’m so sorry. That must have been hard. I take it you had a strained relationship with your father?”

“Yes. He didn’t want children. He let my mother have just one. Me. But he wasn’t very good at being a father, and then he was left with a twelve-year-old girl to raise on his own.”

“Oh, Lacy. That’s awful. You must have been so lonely.”

I swallow and look away as tears form and slide down my cheeks.

“I’m sorry. I keep making you cry.” He strokes my cheeks again. “Seems like you’ve been holding yourself together by a thread, probably for a few weeks. You need a good cry.”

I shake my head. “He doesn’t deserve my tears.”

Brett’s brow furrows. “It’s hard losing a parent, no matter how estranged you were. It still hurts.”

I shrug. My father’s death is only a fraction of my problems.

Brett leans forward and kisses my forehead, his lips lingering for a long time before he pulls away. He holds my

gaze for a while. “Sleep, Little lamb. We can talk more in the morning.”

I watch as he slowly rises. He picks up my pants and sets them on the open suitcase now sitting on the bench at the foot of the bed. He smiles at me as he does so. At the door, he turns off the light. Immediately, a nightlight comes on. It’s pink, and I think the figure is a princess.

He turns toward me again from the doorway. “I’ll leave the door ajar. My room is at the end of the hall if you need me.”

“Thank you,” I whisper.

He hesitates before finally leaving. Indeed, he leaves the door open a few inches. The lights in the hallway go off a few seconds later.

I suddenly draw in a deep breath. I don’t know when I last took a breath. It makes me smile. He really does suck all the oxygen out of a room.

What’s happening? It’s like I’ve left my body and become someone else. I haven’t even thought about my pile of problems in a few hours.

They certainly haven’t disappeared. And shit. Where did I leave my purse? I think I set it in the kitchen when we came in. My phone is down there. I haven’t checked it in hours, either.

Not that I want to. Any messages on it are probably ones I don’t want to see. I’m glad it’s downstairs. It’s going to stay there all night. I wonder if I turned the ringer off, though?

Hopefully, Brett won’t hear it in my purse if he gets up early in the morning. Maybe if I’m lucky, it will die and lie there silently.

Pink lights are dancing around on the ceiling. I glance at the nightlight and notice it's not a princess. It's a ballerina, and she's spinning. I almost understand why Eve and her friends would have made this room feminine for guests. They might have even been teasing him when they did it. But the nightlight?

There are other interesting touches in the room. One of them is the teddy bear that is somewhere next to me. I sit up and scan the bed until I find him, grab him, and pull him under the covers with me.

No one needs to know that I usually sleep with a stuffed animal, especially not Brett. My favorites are trapped in my apartment. I hope they aren't damaged. I'll be sad if I've lost any of my most sentimental things.

Lucky for me, I have this bear to keep me company tonight. Hopefully, the feel of him in my arms will trick me into thinking he's Banana, my worn stuffed monkey.

I pull him into my arms and roll to my side. I can't seem to shut my mind down yet. The events of the evening keep running through my head. The firetrucks. The terror I felt until I found out the entire building hadn't caught on fire—just the basement.

My mind skips to the drive to Eve's house. I'm still not sure why I went to her instead of a hotel. Part of me really needed to talk to someone. It's pitiful that I don't have more friends.

I've lived here for ten years. I've worked at Earnest and Heart for most of that time. I've lived in my current apartment building for eight years. I make good money. I have a pretty nice savings account for someone my age. I've basically made it, and I did it by myself.

But fuck, I'm lonely.

I snuggle in closer to the bear. Does he smell like Brett? Maybe I'm imagining that. After all, Brett probably hasn't ever touched the bear. Most likely, Eve or one of her friends put him on the bed as a joke.

He's soft and snuggly, though. Not one of those cheap stuffed animals people pick up at a carnival. He's got excellent fluff and nice fur.

And you're overanalyzing a stuffed teddy bear, Lacy.

I close my eyes and take deep breaths. Sometimes, that helps me relax enough to drift off. Hopefully, it will work...

CHAPTER 5



Brett

It's a wonder I got any sleep at all last night. After tucking Lacy in, I headed for my room, took a quick cold shower, and pulled on a pair of grey sweatpants.

What I really wanted to do was wrap my hand around my cock, close my eyes, and find my release to visions of Lacy curled up in that bed, hugging that teddy bear.

I know this because I checked on her ten times before finally forcing myself to lie down. Have I been wrong about her all this time? I've never seen anyone slide into such a solid age play with no discussion.

It's like she's starving for the kind of attention only a Daddy can give. I don't think she was aware of the need because she hesitated, seemingly shocked by herself, several times throughout the evening.

Either she's as stunned as me, or she's secretly Little and worried about me noticing.

I noticed. Fuck did I ever notice. Made my cock harder than a rock. Did *she* notice *that*?

What the hell happens now?

I'm in the kitchen, cooking breakfast. I hope she doesn't have any allergies I'm unaware of. I don't think so. If she doesn't like eggs or bacon or some other part of this meal, I'll find out soon enough, and I'll fix the sweet Little lamb something else.

Because I'm fucking wrapped all the way around her pinky.

When I peeked into her room before I came downstairs, I found her still on her side, still hugging the teddy bear. Her thumb was near her mouth. Was she sucking on it? Because fuck me if she was.

I've known Lacy for a long time. I've followed her around a room with my gaze, never allowing myself to approach her. Why? Jesus. I know why. Because I never once suspected she was Little, and I'll be damned if I permit myself to get into another relationship with a vanilla woman.

So, I watched and thought about her and ignored my inclination to ask her out.

And here we are.

She has issues that go far beyond last night's fire. I intend to drag information out of her this morning. Maybe her lack of sleep and nervousness stem from losing her parent. I wasn't kidding when I told her that even though she was estranged from her father, it still hurts to lose a parent.

Still, I suspect there is more.

Her phone has buzzed a few times in her purse this morning. The ringer isn't on, but it keeps vibrating. I considered taking it out and bringing it to her but decided against it.

I don't want to wake her. Nothing can possibly be that important. I'm certain Eve informed their bosses about the fire and told them Lacy wouldn't be in this morning. Perhaps the incoming calls are from people at work wanting to check on her...?

Suddenly, I sense her behind me and spin around. The air leaves my lungs.

She's standing at the entrance to the kitchen looking as Little as I've ever seen anyone. Does she have a clue how fucking cute she is and what she's doing to my libido?

I smile. "Good morning, Little lamb. Did you sleep well?"

She nods. She looks shy and hesitant. It's her Little. Her adult is extroverted. This Little girl is the one I brought home last night, and she's still in the same headspace. I wasn't sure which side of her would show up this morning.

Her hair is messy and tucked behind her ears. Her T-shirt is rumpled. It's just a thin white cotton shirt. It has done nothing to conceal her breasts or the tight points of her nipples.

She has put the black yoga pants back on, but her feet are still bare. She's not moving.

I reach for her. "Come. I wasn't sure what you'd like for breakfast, so I made a little of everything."

"You cook," she murmurs as she inches toward me. She brings her hands together and fidgets her fingers together. I bet she'd be more comfortable if she were still clutching the teddy bear, but she probably thought that would be crossing a line. Hopefully, I can convince her otherwise sooner rather than later.

I just need to find a way to introduce her to my world, a world she may or may not be aware exists. Then I'll pray she

doesn't laugh me out the door and run for her life.

"Of course, I cook," I inform her. "Is there anything you don't like?"

She finally gets close enough for me to wrap an arm around her and pull her gently into my side. She tips her head back. "I can't remember when I last ate a real breakfast. I usually make coffee when I get to work and then grab a granola bar from my desk drawer a few hours later."

I frown. "That's a terrible diet, Little lamb." I'm glad she's not balking at the nickname I've given her because it's growing on me. I'm glad her lamb has shown up this morning, too. So fucking glad.

She shrugs. "I'm not that great of a cook, and I don't like to take the time. Besides, how do you eat all this so early in the morning?"

"With my fork," I tease.

She giggles. The fucking best sound in the world.

I grab her shoulders, spin her around, and walk her over to the island. When we reach the stool she sat on last night, I lift her by the hips and settle her on the seat.

Last night, I had to force myself to let her do it. It would have been too forward, but we're dangling in gray territory this morning. She might not know it, but she's so fucking Little.

"Milk or juice?" I ask.

She turns up her nose. "I don't really like milk. If you want me to be alive, I'll need coffee."

"Coffee is not good for you, Little lamb. How about juice and real food? Let's see how you feel, yeah?" I propose. If she

were mine, I would insist, but we aren't there yet.

She stares at me for several seconds and then shrugs. "I don't think you're going to like me without caffeine, but it's your experiment."

I chuckle at her feisty answer. "We'll see then. Challenge accepted." I pour her some apple juice in a tumbler like last night and set it on the table in front of her.

This morning, I had the foresight to pull some dishes out of the cabinet before she arrived. I'm not sure if she noticed the sippy cups or any of the other girly plates and bowls I have in that cabinet when I opened it for dinner, but I don't want to answer questions about all of that just yet.

When she picks up the cup to take a drink, I barely stop myself from my instinct to tell her to use both hands. It's natural for me. Like breathing. Which I apparently do a bit too well since she thinks I use all the oxygen.

I grin to myself as I face the stove again. I dish up eggs, bacon, and pancakes onto a pink plate for her. It's just pink. It doesn't have princesses or any other design on it. Baby steps.

I made a few important calls last night before I went to sleep and this morning. First, I let my boss, Blade, know I won't be in today. Luckily, I'm not in the middle of a specific assignment this week. That would have sucked.

Earlier this morning, I called Colt and told him about my suspicions. It was before he took Eve to work, so he put her on the phone, too. I wanted to make sure she would trust my judgment when it comes to telling Lacy about my lifestyle. *Our* lifestyle.

I would never in a million years break Eve's confidence or any other Little girl's or even anyone in any type of preferred

lifestyle kink. But I suspect as we work through this morning, there's a chance I'm going to need to explain some things, and undoubtedly Eve's name is going to come up.

Eve was hesitant at first, but she spoke to Colt while I waited and then came back on the line and told me she trusted me to decide. I know that was hard for her, and she's probably stressing out with worry, but I'll do my best to make sure this doesn't blow up in her face. That would be the worst thing that could possibly happen.

I do not want to ruin Eve's friendship with Lacy. I'd kick myself for the rest of my life.

When I set the plate in front of Lacy, her eyes go wide. "That's a lot of food, Brett."

I try not to wince. I'd give my right nut for her to call me Daddy about now, but she's not ready for that, and also, I might need my right nut.

"Just eat what you can, Little lamb." I run a hand down her hair from the top of her head, and I'm certain she squirms as soon as I turn around to fill another plate. *Winning*.

"Is everything intended for guests in your house pink?" she asks as I take a seat next to her with a ceramic plate.

"Yep. Mostly."

"What if you have a male guest?" she asks.

I shrug. "I guess they'd have to sleep in a pink room and use a pink toothbrush." I reach over and tap her nose playfully. "Remember, I didn't choose this stuff."

"Right. Eve did. And who else? Britney?"

"Yep. Among others." I'm not sure who all she knows.

“Mmm.” She takes a bite, chews, and swallows. “That’s so good.” She picks up a piece of bacon next. “I guess ordinary scrambled eggs taste better if someone else cooks them.”

I gasp dramatically and put my hand over my chest. “Ordinary?”

She giggles and rolls her eyes.

I take the opportunity to tuck a finger under her chin and meet her gaze at close range. “Did you just roll your eyes at me, naughty girl.”

Those deep green pools of liquid emerald go wide, and her mouth drops open before she slowly smiles. “Yep. Whatcha gonna do about it?”

Fuck. Me.

Her response is so unexpected that I’m speechless. It takes me a few seconds to recover and come up with a response. “Do it again and find out.”

Another giggle escapes as she bats my hand away from her chin and takes another bite of eggs. She stares at me while she chews. Is she thinking? Wondering? I’m giving her so much to ponder.

We’re in this vast gray area again this morning. A place we can only teeter for so long before I lay down my cards. A place I never expected to be with Lacy—let alone at the speed of light.

I reach for the syrup. “Can I pour you some syrup?”

She glances at me and then at her pancakes. She’s deliberating. I know it. She’s not used to being Daddied. It’s probably confusing the fuck out of her. I know her reactions are. “Yes, please,” she whispers.

My cock is far too fucking hard as I tip the bottle up and drizzle syrup onto her pancakes. “Tell me when.”

She lets me go far too long before she giggles again and holds up a hand. “Would you have poured the entire bottle if I’d let you?”

“Maybe.” I point at her plate. “You don’t have to eat that just because you called my bluff. Would you like a fresh plate, Little lamb?”

She shakes her head. “No way. I’m going to eat it just like this.” She digs in, cuts off a bite, swirls it through the swimming syrup, and pops it in her mouth. “Mmmm.”

I chuckle. “Stubborn Little girl.” As soon as the words come out of my mouth, I wince inwardly. *Shit.*

But Lacy either doesn’t notice or doesn’t care. She keeps eating. She eats everything on her plate except the leftover river of syrup before drinking the rest of her juice. “I can’t believe I ate all that.”

I lift a brow. I finished before her. I’ve been sipping my coffee and watching her with my heart hammering. “Do you feel better?”

She shrugs. “I’ll probably fall asleep by ten o’clock. No way could I eat like that and go to work.” She winces. “Speaking of which, I should probably call my bosses.”

“Eve already spoke to them. They’ll understand. No hurry.”

At that moment, her phone buzzes in her purse again.

I glance in that direction. “Oh, you’ve gotten quite a few messages this morning. I didn’t want to wake you, so I just ignored them.”

When I look back at her, her face is pale. She's gripping the edge of the island. Her knuckles are white. *Jesus.*

"Lacy?" I reach over and set my hand over one of hers. "What's wrong?"

She closes her eyes. "They won't fucking leave me alone," she grits out.

"Who?" I sit up straighter. Is someone fucking with her?

"My father's partner and his son."

"Why are they calling you?" The hairs on the back of my neck stand on end.

She's still staring at her purse. "I don't know exactly. They want me to come to Indiana. And I'm not fucking doing it. Not ever."

She is viciously angry. Her entire body is stiff.

I rise to my feet, grab her around the waist, and lift her into my arms. I need to know more, and we're not doing it on the stools at the kitchen island. I carry her to the living room and lower myself onto my favorite recliner, settling her on my lap sideways.

I don't fucking care if it's inappropriate or not right now. I need answers. "Tell me about them."

"My father's partner? His son?" She lets out a sardonic laugh that makes my spine crawl.

"They're lawyers, right?"

She gives another deep laugh laced with not one ounce of humor. "You know those billboards you see on the side of the highway that advertise a law office that will help you win

compensation for an accident or some shit you know you don't really deserve because you weren't actually injured?"

I swallow hard and nod.

"That's what my father and his partner do. Did. Whatever. And his son joined them, too."

I furrow my brow. "Do you think they pursue cases illegally?"

She shrugs. "Not exactly. I suspect they operate barely above the law. My father wanted me to become a lawyer and join them like his partner's son." She shudders as she draws her knees up and wraps her arms around her shins. Her feet nestle between my thighs.

I rub her back. "Have they been harassing you, Little lamb?" I want to help her relax. She seems to like it when I Daddy her whether or not she understands it.

"That's an understatement."

"Why do they want you to go back there? Do you know?"

"Something about the reading of the will. I know that's just a ploy though. I don't need to be there for the reading of my father's fucking will. He cut me out of it ten years ago. I'm sure he left everything to his partner. I don't give a single fuck. I don't want his money. I have my own." She shivers.

She is so very bitter and angry. It's palpable in the room.

I process everything she's said before I speak. "Is it possible he didn't cut you out of the will?"

She looks at me. "Unlikely. Besides, I don't care."

"You might not care, but if you're the named beneficiary of your father's estate, you might not have a choice but to face

it and deal with it.”

Her jaw drops open. “Are you serious? Could they force me to come to fucking Indiana?”

“I’m not sure force is the right word, Lacy. But it might be tidier if you dealt with it in person. How about if I make some calls and look into it, okay?”

She slowly nods.

Now I understand why she hasn’t been sleeping and why she’s so distraught. I suspect there’s more, but I don’t want to make her face it any longer this morning. She needs more sleep. She was doing so well while I was Daddying her.

“How about we ignore the phone for a while? It’s not going anywhere. Let’s do something fun this morning. After lunch, if you want, we can listen to some of the messages together, and I’ll help you figure out what’s going on. How does that sound?”

“I don’t want to get you messed up in my problems, Brett.”

“You’re not getting me messed up in anything, Little lamb. I’m volunteering. Because I care about you.” I urge her closer with my palm on her back until her forehead is close to mine. “You’ve been shouldering all this alone for two weeks, haven’t you?”

She nods.

“Well, that’s over. You need someone in your court to help you deal with it. That’s going to be me.” I’m not asking.

She chews on her bottom lip. “Why?” A tear slides down next.

I swipe it away. “Because I want to.” I draw in a breath. What is she ready to hear? Not what I’m ready to say. *Because*

you're mine. I need to tone it down. Besides, I can't know for sure she's actually Little just because she's submitted to me for a few hours. I'm getting ahead of myself.

"I've managed on my own for ten years, Brett." Her spine stiffens, and she sits taller, drawing back several inches.

"And I'm certain you are capable, but that's a lonely way to live, Little lamb. No one is an island. We all need help from time to time. You need someone you can trust to lean on. Someone who will help you figure this out and hold you when you cry. I'd like to be that someone if you'll let me."

"You hardly know me," she murmurs.

"I know you plenty well, and I suspect since you've always thought I used up all the oxygen in a room, you must be attracted to me." I offer a smile.

She groans. "I'll never live that down."

"Nope. My head will forever be a size larger because of it. I might not fit through doorways any longer."

She rolls her eyes.

"Oh, Little lamb, did you roll your eyes again?"

Her breath hitches, and she stares at me with those wide green eyes. "You say that like you intend to spank me like the hero in some sappy romance novel."

I lift both brows.

She fucking squirms.

My heart is pounding. "Does the idea sound tempting, Little lamb?"

She looks down at her lap, threads her fingers together, and shrugs. "I don't know."

“You know, plenty of people like to be spanked. It’s not uncommon. It relieves them of anxiety and stress.” I rub her back and lean closer. “It can also cause a strong sexual response.”

Her breath hitches again. It’s so fucking sexy. I feel like I’m running when I should be walking. This is happening so fast, but her reactions to every single thing are so damn perfect.

“Tell me what you’re thinking, Little lamb.”

She licks her pretty lips. “No one has ever spanked me or even mentioned such an idea before.”

“Have you ever dated a Dom, Lacy?”

She shudders and meets my gaze. “No. I don’t think so.”

I chuckle. “I’m pretty sure you would know. Unless the guy was just pretending to be a Dominant.”

“Are you saying you’re a Dom?” she asks, her voice crackling.

“Yes.” I don’t need to tell her I’m specifically a Daddy Dom yet. Baby steps in this race.

She chews her lip again for a moment and releases it. “Do you want to spank me?”

“Very much so. How does that make you feel?”

She swallows. “I don’t know. Why do you want to spank me?”

“Because I know it will help you let go of the stress you’ve been carrying.”

“Not because I rolled my eyes?”

I chuckle. “Well, that too, but you only rolled your eyes to test me and see if I would follow through and give you what you really need.”

Her jaw drops. “That’s not true.”

“Isn’t it?” I challenge.

She bites that bottom lip. “I don’t know,” she says again.

“Well, there’s only one way to find out. Want to try it?”

She wiggles on my lap, gripping her knees together tight. “Will it hurt?” she asks in the littlest voice I’ve heard from her.

“If you want it to.” I keep rubbing her back. “Some people like to be spanked hard enough to make them cry because they enjoy the release. Some Little girls prefer a playful spanking that leaves nothing more than a slight sting.”

She frowns. “Little girls? I’m not a little girl. You called me a little girl earlier. Why?”

I need to choose my words carefully. “Have you ever heard of age play, Lacy?”

She slowly shakes her head.

“When you’ve read books where the heroine got spanked, was she at a BDSM club?”

She nods. “Like on a St. Andrews cross or a spanking bench.” Her cheeks pinken.

Maybe she hasn’t read any age play. “Some adults like to practice another form of kink called age play. They might also do that in a club, but sometimes, they do it at home. Not just for an hour on a Friday night but more frequently.”

She stares at me.

I never imagined myself in this position, explaining age play to an unknowing submissive. And the only reason I'm even remotely willing to do so is because I firmly believe Lacy already dabbles in age play without knowing the vocabulary. Her tendencies lean that way.

“Age play is for submissive adults who like to spend time enjoying some of the aspects of a younger stage of life. They might do that alone, but they often prefer having someone take care of them while they're role-playing in a regressed state.” My God, it's difficult to explain, and I don't want her to leap off my lap and run from the room. I'm trying to be diplomatic.

She takes shallow breaths while I wait for her to react or ask a question. “You mean like adults who want to pretend to be young again?”

“Yes. Exactly.”

She looks down at her lap, fidgeting her fingers again. “And you think I'm like that?” she whispers.

“Yes, Little lamb.”

She purses her lips, still staring at her lap.

I let her process.

“Sometimes, I pretend I'm a Little girl,” she finally admits in the softest voice.

I slide my hand up her back and cup her neck. “That's age play, Lacy. That's why I called you Little girl. It helps center you in the mindset when you need it.”

She lifts her head. “That doesn't seem weird to you?”

“Not at all. I'm the sort of person who likes to be the caregiver to a Little girl.” I haven't used the *D* word yet. It's coming.

Her brow furrows. “Why would you want to do that?”

“I’m a Dominant, Lacy. It’s in my blood. Just like you’re submissive and enjoy turning over your care to someone else, I’m a Dom and enjoy taking care of Little girls like you.” I tap her nose.

She flushes and gives me a slight smile. “Is that why you keep doing things for me?”

“Yes. And I bet you’d enjoy letting me do even more things for you. I know *I* would. It feels nice, doesn’t it? Takes some of the weight off your shoulders.”

“Maybe I’m just tired and stressed,” she says slowly.

“I’m sure that’s exacerbating things. It’s probably pushing you to want to spend more time escaping. But I bet you already incorporated some aspects into your life long before the past few weeks.”

She dips her head again.

CHAPTER 6



Lacy

My head is spinning. He's hitting far too close to home. I can't tell him about my private thoughts and things I do that probably make his words true. I'd be mortified. That's why my thoughts and behaviors are private. I've never told anyone.

"It's okay, Little lamb," he soothes. "You're Little. It's not something to be ashamed of. I know you didn't realize age play was a real thing that lots of people practice, but you're not alone."

"It can't be. That would be weird."

"Who says?"

"Everyone," I murmur. What if anyone found out? What if Eve found out? God, what if he tells her or Colt? I'd die.

In fact, that thought is so overwhelming that I scramble off his lap, nearly falling on my ass as I stumble backward. I turn and run from the room. I head for the stairs, racing for the bedroom I slept in last night.

I leap onto the bed when I get there and bury myself under the covers. I'm relieved that the bear is under here with me. I

hold him close and curl up in a ball.

He's going to tell his friends, and Eve will think I'm batshit crazy.

I'm not surprised when the bed dips next to me. At least I can't see his face. He sets a hand on my hip. "I know you're confused, Little lamb, but I'd really like it if you'd talk to me. I want to help. I bet we can get over this weird, awkward hump, and then you'll feel much better."

"Are you going to tell people about me?" I blurt out. It's muffled by the covers, but I think he can hear me.

"Not if you don't want me to, Lacy. Never. Rule number one of BDSM: never speak of other people's kinks outside the club."

"We're not at a club," I point out.

"True, but I would still never share your kinks with a soul, Little lamb."

"You barely know me. Colt is one of your best friends. You'll tell him," I argue.

He rubs my hip. "I would never speak of this with Colt or any other person without your permission. You have my word. Likewise, I would not speak of anyone else's kink without their permission, and I'm incredibly grateful right now that I got Colt's and Eve's permission to talk to you about them this morning."

I suck in a breath and hold it. What is he talking about?

"I'm what is called a Daddy Dom, Lacy. And so is Colt."

I don't breathe. My head is reeling. What? Is he saying that Eve also likes age play? "Does Eve know that?"

“Yes, Little lamb.”

I blow out my breath and draw in another. Eve? “Is she... Is Eve...?”

“Eve is Little, too, Lacy. And I’m sure she’ll be happy to talk to you about what that means to her any time you want.”

I yank the covers off and sit up, facing him. “She can’t be. I’ve never seen her do anything Little.”

He smiles. “She compartmentalizes, Little lamb. Most participants in this lifestyle do. A few are lucky enough to spend the majority of their time in Little space, but most people don’t have the luxury or don’t need quite that much time regressed. Eve has an adult hat she wears at work and a Little hat she wears at home.”

I’m dumbfounded. I stare at him in shock. I wrack my brain and come up with nothing. I’ve never ever noticed a single hint that Eve enjoys age play. Is she that good at separating?

Brett reaches up and strokes the top of the teddy bear’s head, making me realize I’m clutching it against my chest. “You met Bear. Did he keep you company last night?”

I hold him tighter. After all, who the fuck cares now? “Yes,” I whisper. “What kind of name is Bear?”

He chuckles. “You’ll have to ask Eve. She named him. Do you have a special stuffed animal at home who normally sleeps with you?”

I nod. My God, he’s talking to me as if I’m four or five years old, and it feels so fucking good and so scary at the same time. “I have Banana.” My face heats at my admission.

“Is Banana a banana or a monkey?”

He gets it. I smile. “He’s a monkey.”

“I’d like to meet him someday.”

“I hope he’s safe. I hope all of them are safe,” I admit.

“Who are the others?” he asks gently.

“They’re dolls. Jasmine, Molly, and Priscilla.” If this man is bullshitting me, he’s going to ruin my life.

“I can’t wait to meet them.” He smiles, crawls onto the bed, and sits against the headboard. He pats his lap. “Come here, Little lamb. I think you need a hug.”

I keep Bear in my arms but climb onto his lap and lean against his chest.

He wraps his arms around me, and it feels so good. He kisses the top of my head. “I know you’re overwhelmed, and I’m sorry for that. It will take some time to wrap your head around this, but I’ll be right here for you if you’ll let me.”

I’m breathing heavily. What does that mean? I have a burning question that needs to be answered right now. I tip my head back. “Do you just see me as a needy Little girl who needs a Daddy to coddle her?”

He shakes his head. “No, Little lamb. I see your grown adult woman, too. I see her, and I’m crazy attracted to her. She’s a package deal with your Little, and your Little isn’t needy. She’s submissive. She craves a caregiver.”

I search his gaze, making sure he’s not lying to me. “You’re attracted to me?” I ask hesitantly.

“Very. Have been since I met you.”

“Then why didn’t you ever say something?”

“Because, in my heart, I’m also a Daddy, Lacy. I had no idea until last night you had a Little side. It would’ve been unfair of me to ask you out and pretend to be vanilla. I’ve tried it before. It’s not satisfying. I need a woman who likes to submit to me as my Little as well.”

Wow. Holy shit.

“I would love for that to be you.”

“Oh.”

He smiles.

My heart is racing. This is all happening so fast.

“Are you also attracted to me that way, Lacy?”

My eyes bug out. “Duh.”

He chuckles.

I clamp my lips shut. That sounded ridiculous.

He pats my hip. “You’re adorable, Lacy.”

“Is that a good thing?”

“It’s a great thing. And it’s okay if the line blurs between your Little and your adult. We’ll have to adjust and figure out what works best for you. Everyone is different.”

I squeeze my thighs closed. It’s surely weird that my inner Little self gets aroused in front of him.

Holding my gaze, he eases one hand around my back so his fingers graze the edge of my breast.

My breath hitches, and I sit up taller. My cheeks heat all over again.

He doesn’t look away as he moves his hand farther until he’s cupping my breast, his thumb flicking over my nipple.

I gasp, and a shudder makes my entire body tremble. My nipple is rock hard.

He continues to stroke it. “This is okay, too, Lacy. Do not worry about what arouses you. There’s nothing wrong with craving or enjoying my touch, no matter what your headspace is.”

I can’t move. I can’t breathe. I kind of want him to take my shirt off, but I’m too embarrassed to ask or do it myself. My usual bold, outspoken self is not here. She stays at the office. Like Eve?

Hell, she’s not even real. She’s a fake persona I use in public.

He eases his hand away from my breast. “You have too much on your plate right now to add sex to the equation, Little lamb. We’re going to table that for now. I just wanted you to know your feelings are valid.”

He’s left me with an ache in my tummy I haven’t felt in forever. Or never. Not like this. Sometimes, when reading a sexy novel, I’ve felt aroused enough to care to touch myself, but a man hasn’t done this to me.

Among the million thoughts and questions running through my head, one stands out. “That’s why you wanted to spank me.”

He smiles. “Yes. We’ll experiment with spanking. Most Little girls like it. Some do not. Some prefer other types of discipline.”

“Discipline? Like when I rolled my eyes at you?”

“Yep. Daddies have rules. When Little girls break them, they get punished.”

I shudder. Part of me is horrified, though my sex is throbbing at the thought.

“Don’t panic. You’ll learn that most of the time Little girls get into trouble on purpose because they enjoy being punished.”

My eyes pop wide. “Why would I enjoy being punished?”

“It’s a common aspect of age play. Some Little girls are even brats. They intentionally misbehave often so they can get spanked or flogged or put in timeout.”

“Timeout?” My voice is incredulous. “You can’t put me in timeout, Brett. I’m not *really* a child.”

He chuckles. “I can, and I suspect I will.” His voice deepens. “When you’re naughty.”

My face heats again. My panties are soaked even without me having a clear idea of what he intends to do to me.

“Can I show you something?” he asks.

I glance up at him. “What is it?”

“Something fun. I promise.” He grins at me and scoots toward the edge of the bed. After setting me on my feet, he stands and takes my hand.

I’m apprehensive, to say the least, but I let him lead me out of the room and down the hall. I haven’t seen inside any of the other rooms, and he stops outside the last door on the right. It’s closed.

He turns to me. “Ready?”

I draw in a breath. “I don’t know. I’m kind of freaked out. Is this your spanking room?”

He chuckles. “No, Little lamb. I can spank you in any room.” He opens the door.

I stare in disbelief, unable to move, until he sets a hand on the small of my back and gives me a nudge.

“Go on. Check it out.”

I step inside and let my gaze scan the entire room. “What is this?”

“It’s a playroom. Not the kind in your BDSM books for torture and pain. This kind is for Little girls to actually play in.”

I seriously can’t believe this. This room is a Little girl’s heaven. Shelves and shelves of toys, games, coloring books, art supplies, dolls, puzzles, and my God, I don’t even know what else yet.

There’s a table and chairs, a rocking chair, bean bag chairs, a huge doll house, and a day bed. “Why do you have this?”

He sets his hands on my shoulders from behind. “For you, Little lamb,” he murmurs near my ear.

I gasp and twist my head around to look up at him. “For me? That’s not possible. You said yourself you never even asked me out because you didn’t think I was Little before today.”

He wraps his arms around me from behind and holds me close to his front. “Eve and several other Little girls have played in here whenever they visit while it waited for my own perfect Little to come along and join my life.”

“And you think that’s me?” I nearly choke. It’s too much. Too fast. Too scary. Too everything.

“I know it is.”

I twist out of his arms so I'm facing him. "Brett, that's craziness." I cross my arms over my chest, feeling a chill.

He squats down in front of me, putting himself lower than me, which is oddly calming. His hands come to my hips. "Sometimes, something just feels right, and you just know. Haven't you ever had the feeling that something was exactly right and you didn't need more evidence?"

I don't need to think hard. "Yes."

He gives me a slow smile. "Then you'll give me the benefit of the doubt?"

I shake my head, and a giggle bubbles up and out. "You can't be serious."

"Deadly serious, Little lamb."

I set my hands on his forearms and give him a little shove.

He tumbles backward dramatically and lands on his butt, still smiling as he sits cross-legged.

"I've been here like twelve hours, and most of that time, we were sleeping," I point out.

"You're mine."

I step back, but his tone and expression make me giggle again. "You don't know me very well."

He shrugs. "You're mine."

"*Brett*," I exclaim. "Be serious."

He leans forward, planting his hands on the floor in front of him. "You're mine."

I stare at him. Damn. He *is* serious. I don't think I can process this right now, so I turn and head for the shelves to peruse the contents. "Does Eve really play in here?"

“Yep.”

I twist and look at him again. “Does she have a room like this at her house?”

“Yep.”

Wow. Just wow. I lean against the shelves and fiddle with the hem of my T-shirt. “So, she spends all her time at home playing?”

“I suspect she spends part of her time standing in a corner with her red bottom on display.”

I gasp. It’s impossible for me to picture Eve playing with toys and even more ridiculous to imagine her getting spanked. Granted, I can’t picture myself getting spanked, either.

Suddenly, I really need to know what it’s like. What if I hate it? Brett said it’s not a deal breaker. If I don’t like it, he won’t do it. And what the hell am I even thinking? He’s got me so flustered that I’m actually believing we’re an item of some sort. We’ve never even been on a date. How could I possibly be *his*?

But man-oh-man, the way he insists I’m his is so hot the temperature in the room is elevated.

I step closer. “Show me.”

“Show you what, Little lamb?”

“Spank me. I want to know what it feels like.”

“Okay.” He pushes to standing and heads for the rocking chair. He holds out a hand. “Come here, Little girl.”

I shuffle forward. I’ve never been more nervous in my life. What if I hate this?

He takes my hips when I reach him and pulls me closer. “You are far more worried about this than necessary. I need you to know it’s not a deal breaker. Do you understand that?”

I shrug. “Seems pretty important to you.”

“Well, it’s not. Not nearly as important to me as your welfare and happiness.”

“Okay,” I murmur.

He guides me to one side of him. “When and if I spank you, I will usually take you over my knees. The closeness and intimacy of being in such a vulnerable position will help you feel very Little.”

I nod, twisting my fingers together. I do that a lot when I’m nervous. And Little. I don’t do it when I’m at work. I’m a totally different person at work. A fake person.

A thought suddenly comes to mind. I’ve known for a long time that I force myself to be a fun, friendly, happy extrovert at work. Confident. Knowledgeable. Professional. But that’s not me. That’s a fake version of me. This is me.

I didn’t realize the real me was Little. I didn’t have the vocabulary for it. Nor could I have imagined this was a thing anyone did. I would have been too mortified to even marginally practice some sort of age play out of fear of getting caught.

That’s because you have gotten caught. It was ugly. Horrible. Messy. Embarrassing.

I realize now that I’ve tamped down my inner Little for more than a decade because I thought I was a freak. This morning, even faced with mounting incoming messages from two men I abhor and God-only-knows what damage to my apartment, I’m in my proper skin. I feel more capable of

facing the world, or I realize I would if I had a chance to spend some time carefree and worry-free every day.

“And one more thing,” Brett continues. His hand comes to my butt. “When I spank you, it will always be on your bare bottom.”

I flinch.

He nods. “I need to be able to see your skin to know I’m striking you just the right amount and not too hard. I never want to injure you. Your skin should feel warm and tingly and possibly even sting or make you wince to sit down, but I don’t want to see bruises the next day, and I would never break the skin.”

I purse my lips as I listen to him. It’s surreal. All of this is surreal.

Can I do this?

Can I *not*?

His hand slides to the backs of my thighs. “I will see you naked, Little lamb. Often. It’s part of being your Daddy. I will bathe you and dress you and spank your bare bottom. That doesn’t mean I will rush you to have sex. We’ll take our time getting to that stage. As I said earlier, you need to fully understand your Little and her needs before we add sex to the equation.”

I shiver. My sex is throbbing. His words do that to me. And yet he’s telling me nothing sexual is going to happen between us? He’s planning to pull my pants down, touch my bottom, and he doesn’t think I’ll start moaning?

Shit. What if I really do? I’m sex deprived. It’s been so long that I fear I will literally moan out loud if he touches me.

When I bite a bit too hard into my bottom lip, Brett chuckles. “Let me amend my statement. My clothes will stay on. My cock will stay in my pants. He can be patient. If you need a release after I spank you, I will give it to you.”

My mouth drops open. My eyes go wide again. I keep thinking he’s surely not serious, but he is. He really is.

“Ready?” His hands come to the elastic of my leggings at my hips.

I grab his shoulders as he twists his body toward mine and tugs my pants and panties down to my knees. I’m panting already. I feel so exposed. I’m also glad I keep myself shaved bare and well-groomed. How the hell could I have predicted fifteen hours ago that this morning I would wake up in Brett Pauson’s house and let him pull my pants down to spank my bare bottom before noon?

It’s ludicrous, and it’s happening.

He guides me over his thighs. “Fold your hands under you so they don’t get in the way, Little lamb. If you can’t do that, I’ll hold your wrists at the small of your back. I don’t want to accidentally swat your fingers.”

I cross my arms above my chest and lean my cheek on my forearms. It’s hard to concentrate. I’m so very aware of my bare ass and the way he’s palming it. It’s so...intimate.

“Good girl.”

When he praises me, I melt a little. No. A lot. I’m like a stick of butter out in the sun. His words do that to me. As part of my melting, wetness is leaking from between my legs.

He palms my bottom. “I’m going to take my time warming you up, Lacy. Soft swats at first before I increase the pressure when I’m certain you can take it.”

I nod. I'm too tongue-tied to do anything else.

The first swat startles me. I jump, but it doesn't hurt. It's just different. Weird. No one even spanked me when I was a child. My mother didn't believe in any kind of corporal punishment, and my father had very little to do with my early years.

Brett spanks my other cheek next and then paddles back and forth. It's oddly soothing, somehow. Now that the shock is over, I'm relaxing. He keeps going. The swats become more random. I can't predict which side or where on my butt he might strike next.

After about a dozen spanks, he pauses and rubs my cheeks. "How does that feel, Little lamb?"

"Good," I whisper. It's a weird answer. I don't know what else to say.

He chuckles. "Good? You want more?"

I nod.

"Can I increase the pressure, Lacy?"

"I think so," I respond softly. It's so awkward to be discussing this. Hell, it's hard to fathom that I'm lying over Brett's lap with my bare ass on display, letting him spank me. *Encouraging* him to do it harder.

"Good girl."

Oh, God. Those words again. My sex throbs. I squeeze my legs together.

He hasn't resumed yet and slides his hand down to my thighs. "I think my Little girl likes to be praised."

I purse my lips. I'm embarrassed. How could I not be?

He pats my legs. "Spread your knees, Little lamb," he says. His voice is so gentle. I find that interesting. I wonder if he will always be this calm and collected when he spansks me.

Good grief. What am I thinking? Is this really going to happen again? Are we suddenly some kind of kinky couple, and he's going to spank me when I'm naughty every day?

Brett seems to think we are. My head is still spinning. I can't grasp this abrupt change in my life. It's so fast.

He taps my thighs again. "Lacy..." This time, his voice holds a hint of warning, and I realize I haven't obeyed him.

I quickly part my knees a few inches. That's all I can do with my yoga pants and my panties bunched up around them.

"Good girl," he repeats.

I whimper. It sounds really loud in the silence of the room, which makes my face heat.

"You're doing so well, Little lamb. I'm so proud of you." He rubs my thighs and bottom again before lifting his hand and continuing. The strikes are harder this time and more frequent.

I close my eyes and go into my head to a strange place I've never been. It's warm and safe. I'm loved and cherished. It's oddly euphoric.

I focus on nothing but the feel of his palm against my heating skin. It's mesmerizing. When he starts to swat even harder, I moan, the sound louder than my earlier whimper. Wetness is dripping from my sex. I kind of don't care anymore. Why should I be embarrassed? He said it might happen.

Brett's hand splays on my lower back, holding me steady. Was I squirming? Probably.

I'm panting by the time he stops again. Desperate. Holy shit, I'm so aroused. It's irrational. Even though he said this might happen, I'm stunned.

Brett rubs my burning skin gently. "I'm so, so proud of you, Little lamb. You look so pretty with your bottom all red and hot."

I can't respond, but a weird whimper escapes my lips. My clit is pulsing. It feels like one touch would send me over the edge. I've never been the sort of person who could come easily. It usually takes effort, batteries, and time. But more importantly, I've never come in front of someone else.

"Do you want Daddy to touch your pussy, Little lamb?" His fingers are stroking my inner thighs now, inches from where I need them.

I nod.

"Words, Lacy. Tell Daddy what you need."

I purse my lips and squeeze my eyes shut tighter. I can't do that. Is he crazy?

His fingers continue to tease, stroking between my thighs. He must be a hair's breadth from my lower lips.

God, I need to come with a desperation I've never felt in my life. "Please..."

"Please what, Little lamb?" he encourages.

"Please touch me," I whisper.

"I am touching you, Little one." He trails his fingers lower and applies pressure to my pelvis above my clit.

I arch my ass up into his hand and groan. “Please touch my pussy, Daddy.” I nearly scream those foreign words. Pussy? Daddy?

He immediately drags his fingers through my soaked folds, and before I can process that amazing feeling, he thrusts one long finger into me while pressing his thumb against my clit.

I scream. My orgasm is fast and furious, consuming me, making my body quake from the waves of pleasure. My vision swims behind my eyelids. I feel faint and dizzy.

Brett...Daddy eases his finger out of me and circles my clit while I float back to Earth. “So precious, Little lamb. So unbelievably gorgeous. I could watch you come over and over for the rest of my life and be a happy man.”

CHAPTER 7



Lacy

Now that I'm coming back into my head, I'm embarrassed. I just came like a wild woman across Brett's lap with my ass exposed and sticking up into the air.

When I hear him sucking, I nearly die. He's licking his fingers? *Oh. My. God.*

"Mmm. You taste like heaven. So sweet." He gently rolls me over and cradles me in his arms.

My butt is still naked between his parted legs. My hair is hanging around my head in a wild mess of curls. I don't push it off my cheeks because it provides me with a curtain, and I bury my face in his chest.

Daddy sets a hand on my head and holds me tight, rubbing my scalp. "Such a good girl. You took your first spanking so well. I'm so very proud of you." He's told me that several times, but I'm not complaining. I love it when he praises me.

When I finally catch my breath and find a few brain cells, I become overly aware of my nudity below the waist and squirm as I reach for the bunched-up material at my knees.

“Let Daddy help.” He stands me on my feet and gently pulls my panties and then my pants up over my sore bottom before lifting me once more onto his lap, being careful not to put pressure on my butt.

He brushes my hair off my forehead and tips me back in his arms. “Feel better?”

I nod. My voice refuses to cooperate just yet.

His smile warms me from head to toe, and I’m grateful when he tucks me against him again and just rocks for a while. It’s peaceful and relaxing. I’m nearly lulled asleep.

Finally, he kisses the top of my head. “How about we get you dressed, brush your teeth, and then Daddy can fix your hair? Then you can play in here for a while. What do you think?”

I meet his gaze. “I probably need to face the real world.”

“The real world can wait another hour. Play, then lunch, then we’ll deal with your messages and your apartment. How about that?” He points toward the closet. “I even have some clothes in there that will probably fit you.”

I sit up straighter. “Why?” It seems strange to me that he has so many things. “Did you have a Little girl living here before?”

“Nope. You’re the first Little girl to spend the night in this house. I’ve been waiting and searching. But just like the rest of this room and the guest room, Eve and her friends were busybodies. They thought I should be prepared. Trust me. There are clothes in there. No one has worn them yet.”

“What if I’d been four hundred pounds?” I ask.

He shrugs. “Then we would’ve exchanged them, or Eve would’ve taken them, and we would’ve gotten more.”

I draw in a breath. He’s serious. He doesn’t even flinch at the idea that I might have been large. He doesn’t care about that kind of thing. This endears me to him even more.

I chew on my bottom lip for a moment and then release it. “You really think I can hide for another hour?”

“I know you can. If you’d like, I’ll make some calls and find out the status of the apartment building. How’s that sound?”

“That would be good.”

His brows furrow before he speaks again. “If you really hate facing the messages on your phone, I could listen to those, too, Little lamb.”

I blink and stare at him. He would do that? “I don’t know...” I try to think what kinds of things my father’s partner and his son might have said or texted. They might be mortifying. I just don’t know. “They’re pushy men. You might not like what you hear.”

“I probably won’t, but my obligation is to you, and if it takes some of the burden off you for me to go through the messages, I’m happy to do it.”

“There are things I haven’t told you.”

He nods. “I assumed so. Would you like to tell me some of them now?”

“I left ten years ago because my father wanted me to marry Max.”

Brett doesn’t flinch. “I kind of assumed that.”

“You did?”

He nods. “You’re estranged. You left town and never looked back. Those men are harassing you. It didn’t take rocket science to put that together.”

Well, that’s a relief. I lick my lips. “My father said his partner and he were like brothers. They had always intended for us to marry. Besides being barbaric, I didn’t even like Max. He was a smarmy pig. So was his father. I didn’t want him anywhere near me.”

“I’m sorry, Lacy. That must have been really hard.”

I shake my head. “Nope. Not hard at all. You asked me earlier if I was ever in a situation where I knew something in an instant. It was that moment my father told me I could either marry Max and join the family business like a good daughter, or he would cut me out of the will.”

Brett cringes. “Jesus.”

“It took me less than point-five seconds to make that decision. I think he was actually shocked. I marched into my room, gathered my few childhood possessions that meant something to me, and walked out the door. I didn’t even take my car. He’d paid for it. I had a few thousand dollars, a college degree in accounting, and a job offer in Seattle. I was scared, but I knew I could make it.”

“You were so brave.”

“I didn’t have a choice.”

“And he never contacted you again?”

I shrug. “He tried to stop me at the door. I do think I shocked him, but I didn’t even care if he took it all back by that point. It didn’t matter. He was a shitty father for most of

my life. He might not have beaten me, but he didn't love me either."

Brett rubs my back. His expression is drawn and sorrowful. "I'm so sorry, Little lamb."

I look around the room, feeling raw and open, so I tell him more. "Three days after my mother died, my father marched into my bedroom, gathered all my childhood possessions, tossed them into a black trash bag, and donated everything to charity."

Brett stiffens. His teeth are gritted. He's as angry as I've ever seen him.

I keep going, sticking to the facts. "I was sitting in the back of my closet with my favorite dolls. I missed my mother so much. I had no one to hug me or tell me everything would be all right. I wasn't going to be all right. Ever."

"Oh, baby..."

"My father never found those dolls. I kept them hidden. I took them with me to college. I left my house with them that day when I was twenty-two. They are all I have from my mother." I suck back a sob, but I'm not successful. Tears fall. "I hope they're safe in my apartment. I'll be devastated if anything happened to them." I wring my hands together as I let this worry penetrate for the hundredth time since I drove to my apartment building.

"I'll make some calls, Little lamb. I promise I'll do what I can to get them. I bet you were sad without them last night."

I nod, tears running silently down my cheeks. I reach to swipe them away, not wanting to cry on him yet again.

Daddy... My God, is he really my Daddy? He pulls me closer and holds me so tight. He kisses my head over and over.

“Let it go, sweet Little lamb. You’ve held so much inside you all alone for so long. Let it go.”

So, I cry for the millionth time, and when I finally suck back the last sniffles, he grabs a few tissues and wipes my tears away. He sets me on my feet and leads me to the closet next. After shuffling through the hangers, he picks up a pale pink, long-sleeved dress and holds it up. It has matching leggings folded under it on the hanger. “How about this one?”

I can’t help my smile. My face is swollen, and my eyes are still teary, but somehow, Daddy knows just how to make me feel better.

I reach out and touch the soft cotton fabric. It’s perfect. The kind of dress I would have worn when I was a young girl but in my adult size.

He taps my nose. “Why don’t you go use the potty? I’ll join you in a minute.”

Join me?

I reach for the hanger, but Daddy holds it out of reach. “Daddy will dress you. Go potty first.”

My heart races as I stare at him. He’s going to dress me? At least he’s not going to watch me pee. As this realization dawns, I turn and run from the room. I certainly want to be done peeing before he comes into the bathroom.

“No running in the house, Little lamb,” he calls after me.

I swear my nipples get hard at his words. His rules make me horny. Why?

I hurry to use the toilet and wash my hands before he enters the bathroom. He doesn’t even knock. I’m not

surprised. “I can dress myself,” I tell him as I dry my hands on the pretty pink towel.

He tips my chin back with a finger and meets my gaze. “When you’re Little, I want you to let Daddy do most things for you. Try it. I bet you’ll find it refreshing.”

He’s going to see me naked. I guess he’s already seen most of me. He’s also had his finger inside me. Why should I feel bashful about him seeing the rest of me? I certainly hope he intends to “show me his” too sometime soon. “Okay.”

He tucks my new clothes under his arm and reaches for my toothbrush first, putting paste on it before holding it out. “Do you want Daddy to do it?”

I shake my head. “I can do it.” I take it from him and lean over the sink to brush my teeth. When I’m done, I face him again.

He grabs the hem of my T-shirt. “Arms up, Little lamb.”

Goosebumps rise all over my body as I do as I’m told. This is it. We’re doing this. I’m letting a man Daddy me in a way I never knew existed except in my head. Not just any man. A man I’ve been attracted to for a long time. A man I never expected to be in a relationship with.

When my shirt is gone, I cover my breasts with my hands.

Daddy sits on the toilet seat and turns me to face him. He meets my gaze levelly. “Don’t hide your body from Daddy, Little lamb.”

I flush.

He smiles. “You are so lovely, Lacy. Stunning. I’m going to see all of you.” He pulls me closer. “I’m going to taste all of

you eventually, too. Can you lower your arms for me and be brave?"

I draw in a slow breath and drop my shaking hands to my sides. My breasts feel heavy, and my nipples are hard points. Maybe he'll think I'm cold since I also have goosebumps.

"That's my good girl." He sets his palms on my shoulders and smooths them down to my elbows. His gaze roams to my chest. "So beautiful." His voice is breathy.

When he slides his thumbs to my nipples and flicks them, I gasp.

"So responsive," he whispers.

I'm panting when he lowers his hands to my yoga pants and draws them and my panties down my legs. "Step out, Little lamb."

I grab his shoulders and do as I'm told. His face is near my sex. He had his fingers there not too long ago, also. I'm still wet. Or wet again. Does it matter?

"Thank you for trusting me, Little one." He sets my clean clothes on his thigh and picks up a pair of pink cotton panties first. "Step in."

I grab his shoulders again. I'm in a dream. I'm naked in front of the only man I've ever been this attracted to. He's dressing me. In clothes fit for a child. And I like it.

He puts my leggings on next. "Arms up." He settles the dress over my head. When it falls into place, I finally feel less awkward. Marginally. My unease resumes when he holds up a pair of extremely frilly socks.

Daddy lifts me onto his lap so I'm settled on one knee between his. He pulls first one sock and then the other on,

folding them down so the ruffles are visible at my ankles.

“I had socks like that when I was young,” I tell him. I feel so pretty with them on. Maybe I would look ridiculous to most people, but no one is here but me and Brett. And he’s assumed a Daddy role with me. He’s certainly not laughing. In fact, his erection is pressing against my thigh.

I’m too shy to say something about it or ask him to take it out and use it on me. That’s obviously not on his agenda for this morning. But I’m aware of it and glad he’s aroused. It eases my fears because I’m still aroused, and I’m the one who just had an amazing orgasm.

He stands, holding me, before spinning around to sit me in his spot on the toilet seat. Next, he grabs a pretty pink princess brush from the drawer and starts working on my tangled hair.

I close my eyes. He takes his time, never once tugging too hard. No one has brushed my hair since before my mother died. It feels so nice.

“How about braids?” he asks.

“Can you do braids?”

“Of course. What self-respecting Daddy can’t do braids?”

I giggle and watch him as he carefully parts my hair before dividing one side into three equal sections and braiding it behind my ear. It’s perfect. I love it. And I’m grinning as he finishes both sides.

“There. Yeah?” he asks.

I jump up and throw my arms around him. “Thank you.”

He holds me close and rubs my back, kissing the top of my head. “You’re welcome, Little lamb. Now, how about you go play, and I’ll make a few calls and check on your phone?”

I tip my head back and set my chin on his chest. “You’re sure you don’t mind? I can do those things.”

“I more than don’t mind. I want you to shut out the world and spend time in your Little headspace. Let her come fully out. Let her have fun. I’ll come to get you when lunch is ready, and then you can bring your adult back out for a bit, okay?”

I hug him again. “Thank you.”

CHAPTER 8



Brett

Sometimes, it pays to know the right people, and working for Black Blade Protection means I often know the right people.

Officials aren't letting residents back into Lacy's building yet because they aren't sure about the structural integrity of the building, but I know someone who works at the fire precinct, and he has agreed to take me into her apartment to grab a few things. I need to meet him in a few hours.

I'm glad I took care of that first because my blood starts boiling when I switch to her second pressing problem. Lacy gave me her password before I left her in the playroom. I do not like the tone of voice or the words from either Max II or Max III. I look them up online, too. They have the look, sound, and feel of sleazy lawyers operating barely above the law. I looked up her father too. Jonathan Harlow. He was no better than his partner.

The phone messages are just shy of threatening. The texts are not much better. I'm glad she hasn't read this recent bunch. I will encourage her not to. There's no need. I've seen and

heard it all. The question is, what are those two up to, and why?

When I head upstairs and step into the playroom, all the breath leaves my lungs, and my frustration evaporates. My God, she is precious. She's on her knees with her back to me, playing with the dollhouse. She has even brought a pillow over from the bed to protect her knees.

I can't resist leaning on the doorframe to watch her for a few minutes, not wanting to interrupt her. She's speaking softly, using multiple voices for the various members of the family.

I can't believe this time yesterday I had no idea Lacy was Little or that she could ever be mine. She didn't either.

There is no doubt now, though. She is mine.

"Hey, Little lamb," I say softly as I step farther into the room.

She turns her head to look over her shoulder at me. She's smiling from ear to ear. She has two of the small people in her hands and shows them to me. "I named them," she declares.

I squat next to her. "Oh, good. They would be super strange without names." I rub her back. "What did you name them?"

"The mom is Virginia. The dad is Julio. They have two kids, but they're also in an age-play relationship. Julio is Virginia's Daddy, but they don't play in front of the kids. They only do it in their bedroom after the kids are in bed."

My chest is tight listening to her. I want to yank her off her knees, flatten her to the floor, and kiss the sense out of her. But I don't. "That sounds perfect. I'm sure there are lots of adults who have kids and keep their age play private."

She turns back to face the house, standing the Daddy next to the bed and laying the mom/Little girl on her stomach on the mattress as if she's about to get a spanking. "That's what I would do," Lacy murmurs. "If I had kids."

Does she want kids? It's way too soon to broach that subject, but the thought of Lacy round with my child nearly knocks me on my ass. This is happening so fast. And that doesn't bother me at all because I know it's right.

She's mine.

She's mine.

She's mine.

"Can you leave the two of them for a while to come eat lunch?"

She turns toward me. "Yes, Daddy."

"Good girl," I say as I rise to my feet and take her hand. "You can play again later if there's time."

"Okay." She takes my hand without argument.

When we reach the kitchen, she doesn't flinch as I lift her onto the bar stool. Nor does she balk when I give her a sippy cup of water. Nor does she hesitate when I hand her a sandwich cut into triangles with the crusts removed.

In fact, she smiles at me for a long time before digging into her food.

I wait until she's finished before I turn my stool to face her more fully. I take her hand in mine. "So, I made some calls while you were playing."

She nods, her expression serious. I can almost see the gears turning as she shifts out of her Little space, which I hate.

But it can't be helped.

“I know a guy at the fire department. He won't let you into your building, but he will take me in so I can get some of your things.”

She lights up, her eyes going wide. “Really?”

“Yep. Make me a list of what you want, and I'll fill a bag. Not more than I can carry, mind you.”

“I'll be happy if you at least are able to verify that everything is okay. Plus, retrieve my special things, of course.”

“I promise to find all your special things.”

She tugs her hand free of mine so she can clap. Then she sticks out her bottom lip. “Did you listen to the messages on my phone?”

“Yes. You're right. Those men are not good people. I don't want you to respond to them at all. Ignore them. Got it?”

She nods. “Yes, Sir.”

“Good girl. If messages come in, you show them to me. I've contacted some people to help with your father's will. I'd like to see if we can get a copy. Apparently, he named his partner as the executor of the will. He may or may not be willing to share it with us. If he wants to be difficult, he can drag it out for a long time, trying to get you to return to Indiana.”

“Will I have to? I don't want to.” She sounds almost petulant, and I can't blame her. “I don't even care about the stupid will, and it pisses me off that my father can mess with my life from the grave.”

I set my hand on her shoulder. “I know, Little one. I'm going to see what I can do. I already spoke with a lawyer

friend of mine. He said, technically, you shouldn't have to be present unless the will specifically states you must. There are so many possibilities, though, and it's hard to know what to believe without seeing the will firsthand."

She sighs. "Knowing my father, he probably stipulated that I had to be present. Hell, he probably stipulated that I had to marry Max and have three kids in order to inherit. But I already told him I wouldn't marry that smarmy, gross guy. That's why I left. I hope he changed his stupid will to leave me out."

"Since the two of them are hounding you, I suspect we're looking at one of two scenarios. Either you're still the beneficiary of the will and your father never changed it, or they're trying to trick you into believing that to be the case in order to get you to come home."

She crosses her arms and huffs defiantly. "I won't go."

I stroke her shoulder and run my hand up to cup her neck. "I'll do my best to keep that from happening."

"Can they make me?" She looks worried, eyes wide.

"If the will identifies you as the beneficiary, *and* it states that you must be present, it's possible. But if that ends up being the case, I will go with you. I would never let you out of my sight. Got it?"

Her bottom lip trembles. "You would do that for me?"

I grip her neck tighter and pull her closer so our faces are inches apart. "Lacy, you're mine. Where you go, I go. There isn't a single snowball's chance in hell I would let you go to Indiana alone for any reason, especially not to deal with something this stressful and important, and doubly especially not to face either of these Rutherford assholes. At no point are

you going anywhere near either of them without me glued to your side.” *Probably armed.* But I don’t tell her that.

She takes a deep breath. “Thank you.” Her voice wobbles.

“No need to thank me, Little lamb. I’m your Daddy. It’s what Daddies do.”

“I’m struggling to grasp that.”

“I know you are, but you’ll learn to believe me.” I rise from the stool, take our plates to the sink, and then return to lift her down.

She wraps her arms around me and hugs me tightly. “I can’t believe I’m here. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, Little lamb. Always. No more navigating the world alone.” I tip her head back. “Now, I need to go to your apartment building. I want you to stay here, okay?”

She nods.

I lead her to the counter near the refrigerator and open a drawer to pull out a pad of paper. “Can you write down what you want me to find?”

She takes the pen from me and taps her lips. “It’s hard to think of what I want.”

“Tell me where your dolls are. I’ll be sure to find them first.”

“They’re on my bed. And Banana. Please don’t forget Banana.”

“I won’t, Little lamb. How about any jewelry?”

“I don’t really have anything of worth. Could you grab my computer and some clothes for work? Skirts, blouses, shoes,

bras...” Her voice trails off. “Are you sure you don’t mind?”

“Of course not. I’ll make sure to get your chargers, too.”

She writes a short list on the paper, though I won’t forget any of it. When she rips it off and hands it to me, she shrugs. “Mostly, I’m just stressed, worrying about the state of things. If you find out there’s no damage and everything’s in good shape, I’ll feel much better.”

“I hope I can return with that report. We’ll see.”

Her phone buzzes on the counter near us, where I plugged it in earlier.

She nearly jumps out of her skin. I can’t blame her. Based on the number of messages and texts she had from the Rutherfords, I suspect she’s reached the point where most of her incoming communication is from them. She’s probably grown reluctant to even check.

“May I?” I ask her before I pick up her phone.

“Yeah.” She crosses her arms and rubs her biceps. “I kind of hate that stupid thing now.”

I lift it, type in her passcode, and try not to react when I see the incoming text from Max, the younger one. She has him entered as Max. His father is entered as Maximillian.

I heard there was a fire in your building, and it’s been condemned. Good timing. You need to be here anyway. Get a flight. Text me your flight information.

This fucker is so cocky. If he were standing next to me, I would punch him in the fucking nose and watch him bleed. Ordering Lacy around. Fuck him. If he didn’t live so far away,

I would think he was the one who started the damn fire to chase her out of her home. I'm not fucking ruling it out, either.

I set her phone on the counter again, face down. "Don't touch this unless you need to get hold of me, okay?"

"I don't even have your number," she tells me.

I smile. "Sure, you do. I put it in there."

"Oh."

"I also ordered you a new phone. It will be here later today."

Her eyes widen. "Why?"

"New number. You can let your bosses, Eve, and whoever you need know about the new number. That way, you won't have to deal with the Rutherfords."

"That's a good idea. But how did you get it set up without my credit card information and stuff?"

I pull her into my arms and kiss her forehead. "You're on my plan now, Little lamb."

She gasps. "Brett, you can't do that. You hardly know me."

I knew this would be a battle. I can't blame her. I know this relationship is fast, and she's going to have doubts for a while. I just need to be patient with her. "I can. I did. I know we'll be learning about each other for months, but the important parts I already know."

She blinks several times.

"It's just a phone, Lacy," I soothe. "Don't worry about a phone, Little lamb." I bend down, lift her up, and toss her over my shoulder.

She squeals as I carry her to the living room. I deposit her on the couch, snag a soft throw blanket to tuck around her, and turn on the television. “How about an animated movie? I bet you can’t watch the entire thing before I get back.”

She’s staring at me in shock. Finally, she whispers. “Promise?”

“Promise.” I turn on the TV, find a few options, and hand her the remote. “No opening the door while I’m gone, okay?”

She nods. “Yes, Sir.”

I bend over and kiss her temple. I want to kiss her lips. I want to flatten her to the couch and kiss her for an hour. We haven’t crossed that line yet, but we will before this day is over.

I leave her snuggling on the couch, grab my keys and jacket, and head to the garage. I hate leaving her, partly because she’s in a precarious vulnerable state and partly because I can’t stand being away from her. I’m whipped.

But this needs to be done. She needs clothes and a few other items. More importantly, she needs peace of mind, knowing that her belongings are intact.

It takes me ten minutes to get to her apartment building. I text Sanders Dakota as soon as I park, the firefighter I’ve been in touch with. He meets me at the front door and lets me in.

“Spike,” he says as he extends a hand. He’s one of the few people outside of Black Blade Protection who knows my former military nickname and uses it.

“Good to see you. It’s been a while.”

“It has. We should meet for beers one night. Catch up.”

“Let’s do that soon.”

“So... Whose apartment do you need access to? Is it a woman?”

I grin as I follow him. I’ve already given him the apartment number and floor. “It is.”

He glances at me with a brow raised. “Is it serious?”

“It is,” I repeat.

He grins. “Happy for you, man. I hope her apartment isn’t in too bad of shape. She’s on a high enough floor that it might be unscathed. The lower floors have more smoke damage.”

I follow him to the stairwell.

“We’ll have to climb. No electricity, and even if there were, I wouldn’t run that elevator today.”

“Good point.”

We take the stairs at a fast clip and step out onto the sixth floor in no time. I have Lacy’s keys, but Sanders has a master key for the building. He opens the door and steps inside.

I exhale, relieved to see no obvious damage.

“Looks like this is one of the lucky ones. Grab what you need.”

I hurry to Lacy’s closet, quickly find a suitcase, and start filling it. I’ve never been here before, so it takes me a few tries to locate her bras and panties in her dresser before grabbing skirts, blouses, and pumps from her closet.

Luckily, Sanders stays in the living room while I work, so he doesn’t notice me tucking the three dolls and a stuffed monkey in. I hit her bathroom next. There’s a makeup bag under the sink, and I fill it with most of the items on the vanity

and a few things from the drawers. It's hard to know if I got what she needs, but it will have to do.

After I zip up her suitcase, I find her computer bag and chargers in the kitchen. "Thank you for doing this for me, Sanders. Lacy really appreciates it. She'll be glad to know her belongings aren't damaged."

"Yeah, waiting is the hardest part. We're being overly cautious with this building. It seems to be structurally sound. We'll start letting residents in a few at a time tomorrow, but there's no electricity, so it's not inhabitable."

"Do you know what started the fire yet?"

"Arson."

I wince. "Shit. That stinks. Any leads?"

"Not yet. Whoever did it knew what they were doing. They didn't mean to burn the building down. They simply wanted to chase the residents out. That usually means they were planning a robbery. We haven't definitively determined that yet, though. It's a suspicion."

I settle the computer bag on my shoulder, grab the suitcase, and follow Sanders back to the hallway. "I hope you get a lead soon. That's unnerving."

"Yeah. When we start escorting residents in, I expect we'll eventually find an apartment that got hit hard. Someone with jewelry, drugs, or cash."

"I don't envy that job," I respond as we descend the steps.

He glances at me, smirking. "You did several tours in some rather frightening war zones. All I have to do is put out fires and determine their causes."

"Well, that's behind me now."

He chuckles. “From what I’ve heard, Black Blade Protection gets some pretty dangerous assignments from time to time.”

I shrug. He’s right. “I’ll stick to protection and finding bad guys if you put out the fires.”

“Deal.”

We reach the exit, and Sanders holds the door open. “I’m glad you’ve found a woman who will put up with you,” he jokes. “I’m looking forward to meeting her.”

“Thanks so much for doing this for us. And let me know if you hear any more about the cause of the fire or the motive.” It doesn’t sit well with me. I don’t mention Lacy’s problems in Indiana because that seems so far past farfetched. Sanders would think I had a screw loose if I proposed the possibility that two smarmy lawyers in Indiana might have started a fire to chase Lacy out of her building. It’s too ludicrous to ponder, so I keep my mouth shut. For now.

I jog toward my SUV, toss Lacy’s things in the back seat, and glance at the time. I’ll easily make it back before her movie ends. Win.

CHAPTER 9



Lacy

It's hard to focus on the movie while Daddy is gone.

Daddy.

It's even harder to wrap my head around that concept. Without him in the house, I begin to doubt that any of the last twenty hours happened.

I'm fidgeting the entire time, and I jump up and run to the kitchen as soon as the garage door goes up. I'm nearly bouncing on my feet in the kitchen as he enters.

I'm relieved to see he has a suitcase and my computer bag. That's a good sign, right?

As soon as he sets them down and removes his jacket, he takes me in his arms. "Did I make it before the movie ended?"

I grin. "Yes. How was my apartment?"

"Unscathed. Sanders said the upper floors had little or no smoke damage. Most of the fire was confined to the first few floors."

“Oh, that’s good for me. I feel bad for the people who live closer to the bottom. Do they know what caused it?”

He hesitates before cupping my face. “Yes. Arson.”

I gasp. “Really? Why would someone start a fire in an apartment building?”

“They were professionals. They probably wanted to chase the residents out so they could rob a specific apartment.”

“Wow. That’s brazen. I guess it wouldn’t be mine. I don’t own anything.”

“Nope. It wasn’t yours. Nothing looked out of place.”

I gasp.

He frowns. “What’s wrong?”

“If nothing looked out of place, then someone must have come in after I left,” I tell him, trying hard to look stunned.

He frowns. “What do you mean?”

“I’m not that tidy. They must have cleaned up,” I tease.

He tips his head back and laughs. “What a funny Little girl you are.” He tickles me.

“Daddy,” I shout, trying to get out of his grasp.

He doesn’t stop though. He holds me against him with one hand and tickles me with the other until I’m panting and tears run down my cheeks.

“Meanie,” I say as soon as he’s finally done.

“Naughty girl. You deserved that.” He releases me, grabs my suitcase, and nods toward the stairs. “Let’s go hang your clothes up.”

I skip along behind him, feeling lighter now that he’s back.

“I grabbed all the plaid skirts and the striped blouses. That’s what you wanted, right?”

I giggle as I follow him up the stairs. I don’t have plaid skirts or striped blouses, so I know he’s kidding.

Daddy passes up the guest room I slept in last night and heads for the master bedroom. He opens the suitcase on the bed. On top are my three dolls and Banana, which he hands me.

I’m so relieved to have them that I hug them all tight against my chest. “I’m sorry you had to ride in that dark suitcase,” I tell them, kissing each of them.

Daddy smiles at me. “It seemed better than explaining to the fireman why I was holding three dolls and a stuffed monkey in my arms.”

“Definitely,” I agree.

“Although, I don’t think Sanders would have said a word. He’s also a Daddy.”

“Really? How many of you are there?”

He chuckles. “Daddies?”

“Yes. I mean, I didn’t even know age play and Daddies were a thing until last night, and now, it seems like everyone in the world is a Daddy.”

He pulls out my blouses and heads for the closet, returning a moment later with a pile of hangers. “Not everyone, of course, but more people than you would think. Now that you understand the dynamic better, you’ll start noticing other people’s subtle behaviors out in public.”

“Hmmm. How will I notice?”

“Little things, like Daddies who cut up their Little’s food or Littles who have a stuffed animal peeking out of their bags.”

“Oh.” I step closer to help him with my things.

He grabs me around the waist as I reach out a hand, swings me up, and sits me on the bed near the suitcase. “Let Daddy unpack.” Next, he scoops up a pile of my panties and carries them to the dresser.

He’s putting my things in his room in his dresser, which means he also cleared out a space for me at some point today. I’m both nervous and excited by this development. I wonder if I’m going to sleep in here with him, too.

He hasn’t mentioned moving me from the pink guest room into his room. He hasn’t even kissed me, though he has stared at my lips several times as though pondering the possibility.

When my suitcase is empty, he closes it and tucks it in the closet before returning to me.

“I have a drawer in your room,” I point out.

He smiles as he approaches. “Yep.”

“Am I going to sleep in here?”

“For the rest of your life,” he states.

My breath hitches. He’s so sure of everything. How can he be so certain? “But you haven’t even kissed me. Are you going to kiss me, or are we just roommates who share a bed now?”

He suddenly grabs me around the waist, hauls me to the middle of the bed, pushes me to my back, and straddles me with his hands on either side of my head.

I'm panting already as I look up at him. "Well?" I taunt.

He growls before he lowers his mouth to mine. It's not just a kiss. It's a claiming. He isn't hesitant. He's all in. His kiss knocks my frilly socks off.

At first, all I can do is angle my head to one side and open so he can sweep his tongue inside to dance with mine. But then I need to touch him. I grab his waist and tug. I want him on me. I want to feel the pressure of his body over mine.

When he finally obliges and lowers himself over me, he groans. Or maybe that's me. Or both of us. It feels so good lined up with him, his hands cupping my face, his mouth devouring me. My nipples are hard against my cotton dress, and his chest is pressing against mine.

I wish he were between my legs, his erection grinding against my sex, but my thighs are pushed together.

By the time he eases back, we're both gasping for air. He sets his forehead against mine and licks my lips. "Is that what you wanted, Little lamb?"

"Among other things," I agree, flushing.

He groans. "Best kiss ever, hands down."

"Maybe we could take some clothes off?" I suggest. I'm never this bold. I never ask for what I want in a relationship. It's entirely incongruent with my Little. This is adult Lacy wanting and asking. I'm pretty sure the only reason why I'm bold enough is because I'm confident he won't turn me down.

He rubs his nose against mine. "Are you sure about that, Lacy?" His thumbs stroke my cheeks. "I don't want to rush you."

I can't help but laugh. Not a giggle from my Little, but an adult laugh. "Rush me? Brett, this relationship is at warp speed. I can't even see the trees whizzing by us on both sides. This time yesterday, I didn't know you even found me attractive. I didn't know what it meant to be Little. I'd never heard of a Daddy Dom. In less than twenty-four hours, I have a drawer in your bedroom and space in your closet. I haven't even slept in your bed—and I have a *drawer*. I have a playroom, too. I have a closet full of clothes for an adult Little. And you don't want to rush me?"

He smiles broadly. "Well, when you put it that way..."

I grab his waist tighter. "What other way is there to put it? Are you planning to let me move back into my apartment when they get the electricity back on?"

"Fuck no."

I laugh again. My heart is racing. "And you're willing to make all these decisions before you're sure we're compatible in bed?"

"Oh, Little lamb, there is no doubt in my mind we'll be compatible in bed. It's not possible for us not to be. My cock has been hard for you from the moment I buckled you into my car last night. It's grown harder every hour since then. Every single thing you do makes me want you more."

I can't breathe. He's serious. I squirm beneath him. I'm so hot for him it's not funny. I'm equally certain we'll light this bed on fire. But I'd like to do so now. "You made me come earlier, and I haven't even seen your bare chest. I want you inside me. Please."

If he turns me down after begging, I'll probably scream from frustration.

He reaches over his head with one hand and hauls his shirt off. “There. Naked chest,” he teases.

“Maybe I could take my dress off, and we could both have naked chests?” This banter is silly, and I kind of like it. I’ve never had playful sex. I’ve never had any sex that was good. The best sex I’ve ever had was from Brett’s fingers earlier today.

“Mmm...” He rubs his nose against mine. “It’s a slippery slope. First shirts, then you’re going to want us to take our pants off, and before you know it, we’ll be naked. Do you know what might happen if we get naked, Little lamb?”

I giggle. When he calls me Little lamb, my Little comes closer to the surface. “Your cock might accidentally slip into my pussy,” I state, using two words that have never been uttered from my lips.

Another laugh makes his body shake above me. “See? It’s risky.”

“I’m willing to take that risk.” I arch up, grab his bottom lip with my lips, and bite down playfully. “It might feel good. Only one way to find out.”

“If we’re going to take those kinds of risks, I should probably get some condoms out.”

I shrug. “I’m on birth control, and I haven’t had sex with anyone in a very long time, and never without a condom. Have you ever had sex without a condom?”

He draws in a breath, and I love how his pupils dilate and his nostrils flare. “No. Never. It’s also been a while since I’ve had sex and I’ve been tested. But Lacy...”

“But what?” I run my hands up his back. “I want to be close to you.”

He swallows, searching my gaze. “If I put my bare cock in you, Lacy, I will never leave. Never.”

“You mean you’ll stay inside me for the rest of our lives?” I tease. “I don’t think we’d live very long like that. We’d need water soon and then food.”

He gives me a slow smile. “I like this side of you. Playful. Silly. Adorable. Witty.” He sobers, his brows drawing together. “I’m concerned that you’re not taking me seriously. I’m worried you’re incapable of it because so much is happening so fast.”

“It’s impossible for me to take you more seriously than I am. Do you not realize how ludicrous it sounds for you to suggest we’re meant for each other forever and ever after one day? It scares me to death. It’s like I’m falling and falling and falling, deeper and deeper. I’ll never get back out. If you change your mind, I’ll be broken.”

He lowers his forehead to mine. “I’m in that hole with you, Lacy, falling. Let me hold your hand so we can fall together.”

I wiggle my hands free from behind him and reach up to set them on top of his at my cheeks, threading our fingers together. I hold on.

“I’ve got you, Little lamb,” he tells me.

“I may not have the same faith as you that this can be forever, but I know one thing for certain. No matter what happens tomorrow or any other day after, I would regret nothing just because I had sex with you. I would be very disappointed if I never got to experience the feeling of having you inside me. One of us could get hit by a bus in the morning. Life has no guarantees. It may be difficult for me to trust in

forever, but I know you well enough to have sex with you. We didn't meet yesterday for the first time," I remind him.

Brett rises onto his knees. For a moment, I fear he's going to turn me down, but then he grabs the hem of my dress and pulls it over my head. He stares down at me, letting his heated gaze roam my chest until I shiver. "More," I whisper.

He crawls backward several inches and grabs the waistband of my leggings. Taking my panties and socks with them, he draws both down my legs, leaving me naked.

I'm panting. I'm so wet and swollen and needy.

His gaze is all over me as he shoves off the bed to stand and unbutton his jeans. "Spread your legs for me, Lacy," he demands in a deep sexy growl.

I bend my knees and let them fall open wide. Any modesty I usually had in the past evaporates under his heated gaze. It's impossible to feel anything but cherished while he looks at me.

The rest of his clothes disappear in seconds, and then he sets a knee on the bed and climbs back over me. His cock is thick and hard and bobbing between us as he kneels in front of me.

I rise onto my elbows so I can see him better.

"You're so fucking gorgeous, Lacy," he murmurs. "Better than I ever imagined."

I give him a slow smile. "I could say the same about you. That should be illegal." I nod toward his cock.

He laughs. "I have a special permit for it," he jokes before wrapping one hand around the length and stroking up to the tip and back down. The move is so sensual.

I push up to sit, licking my lips before I scoot forward and bring my mouth to the mushroom-shaped head. I flick my tongue over it, gathering the wetness, tasting him.

He groans. “Lacy...” He grips his shaft.

“Salty,” I inform him. “Let me taste again?” I tip my head back, imploring him with my gaze.

A deep unintelligible sound escapes his mouth. “Lacy...”

It’s as if he’s been reduced to the one word. I’m not sorry. It’s powerful knowing I’m affecting him so strongly that all he can do is mutter my name. I scoot even closer and look up at him as I open my mouth and wrap my lips around the tip of his erection.

I’ve never done this before. I’ve never been with anyone I wanted to suck off. The inclination has never come over me. Until now. Until Brett. Until this Daddy Dom swept into my life like a whirlwind and took over.

He makes me feel so special and cherished, and I want to give some of that back to him.

“Lacy...” he says again, this time with lust instead of warning. His hand comes to the back of my neck and grips me. I’m not sure if he wants to pull me back or encourage me to continue.

I reach for his shaft with one hand, shoving his out of the way so I can take over. I ease him into my mouth as far as I can, sucking, hollowing my cheeks.

He suddenly grips my braids in one hand and draws me back. “You can’t keep doing that, Little lamb. I’ll come.” He eases me onto my back.

“Isn’t that the basic idea?” I tease.

He smiles. “Such a naughty girl when you’re in bed. I didn’t see this coming.” He drops down onto his hands at my sides. “I like it.”

My cheeks heat. “It’s you. I’ve never acted like this before.”

“Good. Such abandon. It’s sexy.”

“It’s for you.”

“Always, Lacy. Always for me. Forever.”

I nod. I can’t deny him, and at this moment, I believe him. He’s so intense, it’s impossible not to.

“I’m going to suck your pussy now until you come so hard you can’t think straight.”

My breath hitches. “Why do you get to make me come, and I don’t get to make you come?”

He lowers his face, takes one of my nipples in his mouth, and bites down playfully. “Sassy girl.”

“Seems like a double standard,” I continue to argue, sticking out my bottom lip in a fake pout.

He groans. “Yep. Always. You know why?”

I shake my head.

“Because I can make you come over and over without much time for recuperation, Little lamb. The same is not true for me. If you suck my balls dry, I’ll need some recovery time before I can fill your pussy with my cock.”

“Oh.” Right. Duh. Of course. I sound naïve. I kind of am.

He narrows his gaze. “How many men have you slept with, Lacy?”

I swallow. “Three.”

“When?”

“Two in college and one boyfriend I had about four years ago,” I tell him, feeling pitiful.

His mouth falls open.

I narrow my gaze at him. “Don’t judge me.”

“Oh, sweet Little girl, I am not judging you. I’m humbled.”

“At the risk of making your head get any bigger, the sex I’ve had with you today has already been better than all my previous experiences combined. I’ve never had an orgasm with a man.” He might as well know my secrets. All the cards need to be on the table if we’re doing this together. No sense in holding back information or lying.

A low, guttural, possessive, *dominant* sound comes out of his mouth. “Oh, baby...” Without hesitation, he slides off the edge of the bed, drags me so my ass is right on the edge, and pushes my knees wide.

I’m reeling from the sudden movements when his mouth lowers to my pussy. The first stroke of his tongue through my folds makes me scream. I grab his shoulders. “*Brett.*”

“Has anyone had their mouth on this sweet pussy before, Little lamb?”

I shake my head, panting and desperate for him to do it again. “Stop talking,” I demand.

He chuckles against my sex before sucking my clit.

Oh. God. Oh. God. The room starts to spin. I stare at the ceiling, but it’s blurry.

He does it again, flicking my clit over and over with his tongue.

I've never dated a man who could even find my clit with a road map, and Brett knows exactly where to suck, lick, and flick. He's a god among men.

My eyes roll back when he thrusts his tongue into my channel.

I dig my fingertips into his shoulders, so close to orgasm that I can't form words. Not even to beg. But I don't need to. He's not teasing me anymore. He's working my pussy hard.

My mind is mush. My knees are limp and wide. Heaven is hovering over me. And then it crashes down, crushing me with the weight of the previously unknown.

This isn't like the orgasm he gave me earlier with his fingers. It's more intimate. Intense. It's deeper. I'm going to detonate in a second, and the neighbors might hear me when I do.

Suddenly, he flattens his tongue against my clit and laves slowly across it. At the same time, he thrusts two fingers into my tight channel.

I come. With my eyes unfocused, my body shaking, and my mouth unable to form words, my orgasm swallows me whole. My entire body participates as if not wanting to be left out.

"Fuck, you're perfect, Lacy." He has lifted his head, and I know he's watching my unraveling. I don't care. I'm so naked, bare, and exposed, and all I can do is pray this never ends.

Brett eases up my body, nestles his erection between my legs, and rubs his thick girth along my swollen slit.

“Yesss...” I want this. I want him inside me more than ever.

He lines his cock up with my entrance. “You sure, Little one?”

I squirm closer to him. “Make love to me, Brett.”

He thrusts forward, burying himself to the hilt.

It’s too tight, and I cry out and hold my breath, squeezing my eyes closed as I wait for my body to adjust. I feel like a virgin. Between the size of his cock and the length of time I’ve gone without sex, I *am* like a virgin.

He fills me so completely.

He’s not moving.

When I blink to focus on him, I find him regarding me closely. “You okay, Lacy?”

I nod. “So good. Do it again.”

He eases out and thrusts back home, deeper this time.

I angle my hips so he can get as deep as possible. I arch my chest and tip my head back. I’m so exposed. Vulnerable. Desperate.

“That’s it, Little lamb. Let it feel good. Take what you need. Don’t hold back. I want to watch you unravel.”

I’m so unraveled there’s nothing left. I’m not sure my skin is still on. I can’t even command my tongue to lick my lips.

When he slides almost out and thrusts again, I cry out. My legs are shaking, and I grip his shoulders hard. I can’t...

I come a second time. It takes me by surprise. My channel flutters and pulses around his cock.

Brett's breath hitches, and he grunts as he holds himself deep inside me. When his body jerks, I know he has followed me over the edge.

CHAPTER 10



Brett

This has been the best day of my life and one I definitely didn't see coming. We've moved at warp speed, but it feels right. Not just right. Perfect.

Lacy fits me. It's not just that our kinks align, but now I know for sure we are beyond compatible in bed. Not that there was any doubt. There had never been any doubt in that arena. Not for me, at least.

Lacy had been more skeptical. I hope I blew those concerns out of the water. Based on the smile that's been spread across her face for the past twenty minutes, I'm going to assume she's pleased.

I've moved us to the bathtub, where we're now reclining in warm water with some fruity-scented bubbles. I'm not sure it was wise for me to let Eve, Britney, Lucy, and several other Littles outfit the guest bath with soaps, shampoos, conditioners, and bubble bath. When I went to retrieve some to use in the master bathroom, the strawberry scent was all I found.

Lacy lifts a pile of bubbles and brings it to her nose. She inhales and giggles. “I think you should definitely go to work tomorrow with this smell on your skin.”

I trail my fingers up her arm. “You think so, huh?” It’s hard to keep from grinning. I totally would go to work smelling like strawberries if it made her happy. I wouldn’t even give a fuck if the guys harassed me. Hell, half of them wouldn’t dare say a word. I’ve seen them show up with all sorts of evidence that their Littles got hold of them before they left the house.

Stickers stuck to their shirts, drawings in their lunch bags, and crazy socks. I’ve seen it all. They might laugh at me, but they know better than to go overboard.

I unraveled Lacy’s braids before we got in and piled her hair up in a messy bun on top of her head. A few tendrils are hanging down her cheeks, curling in the humidity. Everything about her is beyond sexy.

I let my gaze trail down to her pert nipples, where they occasionally peek out of the water. I can’t keep my hands off them. I keep cupping them and flicking the tips, mostly because I love the way she repeatedly chastises me with a “Daddy...”

When she leans her back against my chest and lets out a long sigh, I know she’s more relaxed than earlier today. I’m glad, but I also know the bubble will burst when we have to face reality again.

As if she’s reading my mind, she murmurs, “I need to go back to work tomorrow.”

I figured this might happen. After all, she has clothes now. There’s no real reason for her to stay home just because she

can't get into her apartment. Granted, she has other, far more pressing, problems on her mind, but it's impossible to know how long the Rutherfords intend to harass her. She can't stay home indefinitely, pacing around while waiting for them to bother her.

I kind of wish she could, though. I'd be willing to take time off work to spend it with her, but I'm not going to pressure her on this issue. I'm concerned she might be better off saving her vacation and sick days for the possibility that we will have to travel to Indiana.

"I'm sure your bosses will understand if you take more time off," I point out.

"Yeah, but I don't want to waste vacation days pacing around for no reason."

"I get that." I don't have to like it, but I have to support her the same way Colt supports Eve. I just wonder how Lacy is going to do transitioning back and forth out of her Little space.

"I need to get my car from Eve's," she says.

"How about if you let me drive you to work tomorrow? I can pick you up after, too."

She drags her fingertips through the bubbles. "I don't think that's a good idea."

I wrap an arm around her middle under her breasts and set my chin on her shoulder. "Tell me what's worrying you, Little lamb."

"I don't think I can do what Eve does. I'm afraid I'll slip up if I let you Daddy me on the way to work."

"Okay." I kiss her neck and nibble a path to her ear. "Let's go get your car tonight, then."

She turns to look at me. “Just like that? You’ll let me?”

I furrow my brow. “Of course. If that’s what you want. I’m not a dictator, Lacy. I’m a Daddy. When it comes to your safety and health, I’ll probably lay down some rules I’m not willing to budge on, but I won’t interfere with your job.”

She twists halfway around and throws her arms around my neck. “Thank you.” Still moving, she lifts partway out of the water and rearranges herself so she’s straddling my lap.

When she grabs my shoulders and rocks her pussy against my cock, I moan. “Naughty girl.”

She smiles. Her cheeks are red. “I’ve never had sex in a bathtub before.”

I grab her hips and pull her closer. “Little lamb, you’ve never had sex in a lot of places. On top of that, you’ve never had *good* sex. No matter where we fuck, it will be better and better.”

I love her flush. It’s deeper now. And I love the way she holds my gaze while she uses her feet to lift her body slowly, letting my cock drag along her slit until it’s nestled against her entrance.

She smiles broadly just before she plows down onto me.

Fuck, she feels good. I can’t believe how bold she is for someone with little experience. It’s so fucking hot.

She tips her head back and moans. “You feel so good,” she whispers.

“You do, too, Little lamb.” I slide my hands up to cup her breasts before pinching her nipples just hard enough to make her arch.

“How did I never know...?” she asks absently.

“You weren’t with the right person. You weren’t with me.”

“You fit so well inside me.” She rocks against me, pushing me deeper but not lifting off.

I don’t care if she stays right here and keeps my cock inside her for the rest of my life. We can be prunes. We can die of starvation. She’s like the other half of a puzzle piece I’ve been waiting for.

“Do that again,” she murmurs.

“Do what, Little lamb?”

“Pinch my nipples.”

I oblige, giving them a little twist too.

She arches even farther, a long moan escaping her lips. Finally, she lifts a few inches and eases back down. “Are you going to let me control this?” she asks shyly.

“If that’s what you want, Little lamb. I’m not saying I’ll always let you be in charge, but it’s sexy as hell watching you take what you need from me, Lacy. You won’t get any protest from me when you want to ride me.”

Her grin is infectious. My cock grows harder because I know how pleased she is by this simple act. Did no other man let her explore and take for herself? Apparently not.

She’s panting now as she rides me faster. Her breasts are bouncing, tormenting me. Every time she tips her head back, I nearly come. I want to wait for her to take what she needs first, but it’s fucking difficult.

I focus on her face, watching every nuance. I nearly come on the spot when she slides one hand between us to rub her clit.

“That’s my girl. Come on Daddy’s cock, Little lamb.”

She detonates like the Fourth of July, and it’s the fucking best thing in the world. I’ll never tire of watching her come. I hold my breath for a few more seconds before I let myself come on the heels of her release.

As the pulses of my orgasm finally subside, I smooth my hands up her back and draw her closer so her chest presses against mine. I want to hold on to this moment for as long as possible.

I suspect our perfect little bubble will pop the moment we step out the front door to get her car, and I’m not ready. Maybe I can hold on to her Little side while we’re at Colt and Eve’s house. Maybe not. I’ll have to leave that up to Lacy. Opening up in front of her friend might take some time. Until today, she had no idea Eve was Little. It’s a lot to absorb.

“Ready to get out, Little lamb?” I ask her a few minutes later.

She sighs. “I guess.”

If the water weren’t growing quite so cold, I would stay here longer, but she’s starting to shiver, so I help her rise to her feet before I stand and step out. I lift her out of the tub and make sure she’s not too wobbly before I grab a huge bath towel and dry her off.

She giggles. “I can do that.”

I tap her nose. “Now, you don’t have to.”

She’s smiling as I wrap the towel around her and tuck it in so it won’t fall. “I like it when you do things for me.”

“Good. I like to do things for you.” I grab a second towel and dry myself before hanging it back up and taking her hand.

“Let’s get dressed.”

“Can I wear regular clothes to Eve’s?” she asks.

I lead her into the bedroom and release her to pull on underwear and jeans. When I turn back to answer her, she looks nervous, chewing on her bottom lip while she stares at me.

I take her shoulders. “I will never ask you to do anything that makes you uncomfortable, understand?”

She inhales deeply and nods. “Okay.”

“I suspect in the future, you won’t mind being Little in front of Eve and even several of her other friends when you get to know them in this new light, but it’s new to you right now, and you don’t need any added stresses in your life. So, wear whatever you’d like.”

“Okay,” she repeats. Her shoulders relax at the same time.

“Hey.” I tip her chin back. “I never want you to feel like you can’t tell me something. Never do something that makes you uncomfortable. I will have rules in the house for when you’re Little, Lacy, but they are part of age play. They help you center in that headspace. We’ll negotiate how much you want to submit to me when we’re not at home. I will always, *always* take your feelings into account.”

She smiles. “Thank you.”

“Now, what would you like to wear?”

CHAPTER 11



Lacy

I'm beyond nervous as we stand at Eve's front door. I keep wringing my hands together. I can't stop. This is the first time I've left Brett's house since I went there with him last night.

Facing my friend of many years is going to be so weird. I had no idea she was Little. I had no idea *I* was Little.

Colt opens the front door. Eve is standing behind him, holding on to his arm, as he steps back to let us in.

I'm pretty sure she's at least as nervous as me. "Hey," she says.

I try not to stare at her. It's hard to keep my eyes on hers, but I do it anyway. She's wearing a thin white T-shirt that says *Daddy's Girl* in gold letters and a pink frilly skirt. Her feet are bare. Her hair is up in pigtails.

"Come on in," Colt says.

My attention is still on Eve and the palpable nerves between us. "Hey," I say in response to her greeting.

"Eve, why don't you show Lacy your playroom? Brett and I have some things to discuss."

I finally glance at Colt and then Brett. I know they're going to discuss my problem with the Rutherfords. Colt works for the same company as Brett. I'm not sure I like the idea of them talking about me behind my back, but I'm also not sure I want to hear what they have to say.

Eve steps tentatively away from Colt and holds out a hand. "Wanna see it?"

I take her hand. It's awkward. We've never held hands before. But it isn't as weird as I thought it might be. I look back at Brett as she leads me toward the hallway.

He gives me an encouraging nod.

Eve doesn't say anything as she leads me to an open door down the hall. When we step inside, I smile. It's very much like the playroom in Brett's house, the one I now know Eve was instrumental in arranging. It's not surprising that she has one that's almost identical.

"I love it," I tell her to help break the ice.

"Thanks," she murmurs. "I'm sorry this is so awkward." She tips her head to the side and rubs her hands together. "I'm not used to letting my two lives cross each other."

"I'm not used to any of this," I tell her.

She nods up at me. "Wanna sit?"

"Sure." That seems like a good plan. My legs are wobbly. I follow her, and we sit cross-legged on a big fluffy rug near her toybox.

"I guess you know by now that I have two distinct personalities." She grins. Her cheeks are pink.

I'm sure my face is also red. "Yeah. I had no idea."

“That’s good. It means I hide it well.”

“How do you transition so flawlessly? That part scares me. I told Brett I couldn’t possibly let him drive me to work and pick me up. I know he wants to.”

“We have an agreement. I’m used to it. It was weird at first, but now it’s just something I do. When I get out of his car, I shed my Little, lift my chin, and take on my working daytime professional persona.”

I shudder and run a hand down my face. “I can’t believe I’m even having this conversation. Not with you or with him. We’ve been together for less than a full day. Together? Me and Brett? I can’t wrap my head around it. Sometimes, I close my eyes, wondering if when I open them, I’ll find out all this has been a dream.”

“I know it’s a lot. Don’t rush yourself.”

“It almost feels like I have no choice. It happened. It’s done. I stepped through some sort of invisible wall into another dimension, and now, I can’t go back. I think I went through a portal.”

Eve giggles. “It is kind of like that, especially if you never realized you could be Little. It can slam into you and knock you on your butt.”

“Are there a lot of people like us? I get the feeling you have a community of friends.”

“Yes. I belong to a fetish club called Surrender. Lots of Littles and Daddies belong. It’s owned by an amazing man and his Little girl, Roman and Lucy. You’ve met them a few times. You can go with me some time and meet everyone else. When you’re ready.”

“Maybe if I met more people, I would feel less skeptical.”

“Probably. We plan to go Friday night if you want to go with us. But I don’t want to pressure you. If that feels too overwhelming, it’s okay.”

“Is Brett a member?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll talk to him about it, I guess.”

“Are you planning to come to work tomorrow?” Eve asks me.

“Yeah. I can’t justify staying home. I’m fine. My apartment is even fine. We can’t go back in it yet, but it will be fine.”

“That’s good news. What about your father? You’ve been so stressed about his death.”

I nod and draw in a breath. “His partner and son are hounding me about the will. I refuse to listen to their messages. Brett is going to look into it. I’m so grateful. Oh, he got me a new phone, too. I’ll text you the number.”

“Oh, that’s a good idea. Is it so you don’t have to keep dealing with the incoming calls?”

“Exactly.”

Eve smiles broadly. “Brett is a great man and an amazing Daddy. I’ve been hoping for a long time he would meet the perfect Little. You may be a bit blindsided, but I’m so happy for both of you. I’m sure he’ll deal with your father’s partner and eliminate that stress from your life.”

I glance around her playroom. Time for a lighter subject of conversation. “Show me your favorite toys.”



“Time to go, Little lamb.”

I turn my head at the sound of Brett’s voice. He’s standing in the doorway with Colt. Both men are staring at us indulgently.

“He’s right, baby,” Colt says to Eve. “It’s bath time and bedtime.”

Eve groans. “But, Daddy...”

I giggle. It should be surreal listening to her interact with Colt this way, but after the last hour of playing games with her, I’ve slipped into the same Little space she occupies. We’ve had more fun than I can remember having in years.

Being Little is freeing. It’s liberating in a way. I tuned out the real world and all of its trials and spent time just...playing. As an added bonus, I’ve realized when I’m in my Little headspace, I don’t have to worry about a single thing, not even the time, because Brett will let me know when it’s time to step back into my other shoes.

And he’s doing so now. He’s grinning, but Colt is not. Colt has a brow lifted. “Watch your tone, Evelyn. Do you need me to discipline you in front of Lacy?”

I gasp when he calls her Evelyn. No one calls her that. I bet it’s what he calls her when she’s naughty.

“No, Sir.” She quickly starts putting our game pieces back in the box.

I help her, but I keep glancing at Colt and Brett.

When we're done, Colt gives one of Eve's pigtails a playful tug. "Good girl. Let's walk Lacy to the front door."

At the door, we hug each other. It's going to be so weird seeing her tomorrow at work. I'm already nervous about it.

Brett hands me my car keys. "Drive safely. I'll be right behind you."

As soon as I'm behind the wheel, I draw in a deep breath. I'm alone again for the first time in hours. I'm in my car. I need to switch gears so I can drive. I've got this. I can do it.

I drive on autopilot and take the spot on the other side of Brett's garage. As soon as he shuts the garage door, I feel myself sliding back into my Little space. It's like an outside force is controlling me.

It's powerful.

I let Brett help me into the house. I don't complain or say a word as he guides me to the master bathroom, where he undresses me and helps me into the tub. He doesn't get in with me this time. Instead, he sits on the outside and washes me.

When he's done, he dries me off, pulls a soft cotton nightgown over my head, and hands me my toothbrush. "Brush your teeth, use the potty, and meet me in the bedroom, okay?" He lifts my chin.

"Yes, Sir." At least he doesn't squat down next to me while I pee. Small blessings.

I make quick work and meet him back in the bedroom, where he pats the mattress. "Let's get you tucked in. You've had a long day, and work comes early."

I'm not even sure what time it is, but I'm exhausted. I don't care. His bed looks inviting. I'm glad he meant it when

he said I would be sleeping with him from now on. I'd much rather be in his bed than alone in the guest room.

Was that just last night? It's so hard to fathom.

Daddy tucks me in with all three of my dolls and Banana.

"Where's Bear?" I ask.

"You want me to get him? I wasn't sure if he was welcome," he teases.

"Of course. He needs to meet Jasmine, Molly, Pricilla, and Banana. They're not mean. They will accept him."

Daddy kisses my forehead. "Be right back."

By the time he returns thirty seconds later to tuck Bear in with the rest of us, I'm almost asleep. I'm kind of surprised I can rest with everything happening in my life, but I feel safe here. Protected. That peace lulls me into slumber.

CHAPTER 12



Brett

“Fuck,” I mutter under my breath as I lean back in my desk chair and fold my hands behind my head.

“That bad?” Blade asks from the door to my office at Black Blade Protection.

“Just frustrating.” I sit up and lower my head. “Come on in. What’s up?”

He takes a seat on the chair in front of my desk. “Just checking in. How’s Lacy?”

“She’s adjusting. She’s pretty quick to slide into Little space in the evenings when she gets home from work, but it’s hard for her to transition in the mornings. She insists on driving herself, which makes me nervous, but I can’t argue her point. She needs that time to get in her adult headspace before she arrives at her office.”

“It’s understandable. Lots of Littles need an adjustment period, especially in the mornings. And it’s only been four days.” He lifted his eyebrows. “I saw on the news that they

opened the apartment building back up to most of the residents. Has she agreed to stay with you and not go back?"

"Sort of. She's in my house for now but doesn't want to give up her lease yet."

Blade nods. "Be patient. Don't rush her."

"I know. Sometimes, I want to speed up time a few weeks or months to get past this trust-building stage of our relationship."

Blade chuckles. "I know what you mean. Any progress on the will?"

"Nope. It's maddening. I don't know what the Rutherfords are up to. They surely have an ulterior motive, but damned if I know what it is." I'm fucking lucky to have a boss who doesn't mind a bit that most of every day this week has been eaten up by me helping my own Little with her problems.

"Are they still refusing to share the will?"

I nod. "They don't realize I have her old phone, and I'm the one monitoring and reading their incoming messages and texts. I'm glad she isn't seeing that shit. It's enough to make me want to vomit."

"Do you think they might come here?" Blade asks.

"Oh, I feel confident they already have. Not directly but indirectly. I can't prove anything, so I haven't said a word of my suspicions to anyone else, but I'd bet my last dollar they hired someone to start that fire in her building to chase her out."

Blade grits his teeth. "I've considered that, too. I think it's time to hire someone in Indiana to snoop around."

I sigh. “That thought has crossed my mind, but I’m so close to the case I feel I might be overreacting. I hate to ask you for the resources to get eyes on the Rutherfords.”

“You’re not overreacting. Your gut is telling you something smells bad, and I tend to agree with your gut. I’ll make a few calls and get someone on this.”

“Thanks. Appreciate the support.”

“Did I hear you telling Colt you’re going to take Lacy to Surrender tonight?”

“Yes. That’s the plan. She says she wants to see firsthand what a club is like and meet other Littles. I wonder if she’s doing this to please me. I hope I’m not pushing her too soon.”

Blade chuckles. “Pushing her? I think that ship sailed. You picked her up from Colt’s four nights ago and moved her into your home. Fast doesn’t even begin to describe the speed of your relationship. But I don’t blame you. When you know, you know. Why fuck around?”

I’m glad the guys get it, and none of them are judging me because Blade hit the nail on the head. We’re moving at warp speed because she’s mine. She might be unwilling to fully concede that’s the case, but deep inside, she knows. When she’s ready, we’ll break her lease. When she’s ready, I’ll be dropping those three little words always hovering on the tip of my tongue.

Because I’m head over heels in love with this woman. Both her feisty adult and her Little. She’s mine. I’m a lucky bastard.

I glance at my phone and see that it’s already time to get out of here. I didn’t realize how long I’ve been scanning

through information. By this point, I'm pretty sure I know more about the Rutherfords than they know about themselves.

Blade stands. "You better get home before Lacy does. I'll see you both tonight at Surrender."

I quickly shut down my computer and hurry out the door.



"I can't believe places like this really exist," Lacy whispers in my ear.

We've paused next to a Shibari station to watch a ropes master work his magic. His submissive for the evening is trussed up into the air. "It's like a work of art," I murmur into Lacy's ear.

"Yeah. It really is," she breathes. She meets my gaze. "Are you planning to do that to me?"

I shake my head, wrap my arms around her, and draw her away from the scene. "No, Little lamb. I'm not trained in Shibari. If you ever find yourself interested, I can either line someone else up to do it for you or take some lessons."

She gasps. "I wouldn't want anyone besides you to tie me up, Daddy."

Good. I'm not fond of the idea either, but I wouldn't deny Lacy anything. Ever. "Ready to go check out the daycare area? I bet there are a lot of Littles there by now."

"Are you going to stay with me?" She clutches my arm.

I love that she clings to me. It will never get old. "I'm going to stay with you for as long as you'd like. I can even sit at the table and color with you if you want. When you're ready

for me to disappear, just say the word, and I'll leave you to play with your friends. I won't go far, though. I'll watch from the other side of the half wall."

I've been coming to Surrender for years. I've participated in many different scenes in every corner of this club. Being a Daddy, I've always been drawn to the daycare more often than any other station, but suddenly, I can't imagine ever caring to participate in any aspect of the kink world without Lacy. I have no interest in touching another submissive. My hands belong on Lacy. No one else.

She's trembling as I lead her to the daycare. As soon as we step into view, Eve comes rushing forward. She has several of her entourage with her. Even Lucy is here tonight. She and her husband, Roman, are the owners of the club. Cindy and Britney are also right behind her.

As soon as we step into the daycare, Eve gives Lacy a big hug from the side even though Lacy still has her arm around mine. "You're here. I'm so glad you came." She turns around, holding Lacy's hand while using the other to point out her friends. "This is Lucy, Cindy, and Britney."

Lacy gives each of the girls a wave, still clinging to me. It's hard to keep my chest from pumping out. I will never tire of her clinging to me. Trusting me. Turning her care over to me. It's a precious gift.

Lacy turns toward me, rises up onto her tiptoes, and pulls my head down so she can whisper in my ear. "You were right. Thank you, Daddy."

I kiss her temple. "You're welcome, Little lamb."

I know what she's talking about. Her outfit. It was difficult for her to decide whether she wanted to come to the club in

Little attire or not. I know it was hard to leap in the way she has. I'm not sure the average person could have done so. But my sweet girl is wearing a baby-blue dress with smocking across the chest. It's the exact sort of dress a three-year-old would wear. It's barely long enough to cover her bottom, and I put frilly white panties on her underneath. Completing the outfit are frilly white socks folded at her ankles and white tennis shoes.

"I love your dress," Lucy says. She's dressed similarly. I knew she would be. She always is. Roman is one of the strictest Daddies I've ever met. Very controlling. I know it was a challenge for Lucy to get him to let her go to work when she finished college. She eventually won the battle, and Roman lets her go to work in a fully adult headspace like Eve and Lacy, but I also know that when she steps in the door after work, she is one very Little girl with strict rules.

"Yours is super pretty, too," Lacy whispers. "All of you have pretty dresses," she says as she shifts her attention from one girl to the next.

"We were just coloring. Do you want to join us?" Eve asks.

She glances at me.

I point toward the table where the girls were sitting before we arrived. "I can come sit with you, or I can wait here. It's up to you."

She chews on her lower lip for a moment, pondering her options carefully. "I think I can go without you, Daddy. You'll watch me, though?"

"Won't take my eyes off you, Little lamb." I pat her bottom and give her a nudge. How the hell could I ever take

my gaze off her?

I'm mesmerized as she skips across the room with the other girls. She glances back at me every few seconds, but she's smiling. She looks carefree and happy.

Colton joins me at the half wall, resting his elbows on the top. "She's adjusting well."

"I keep waiting for the bottom to fall out," I tell him. "It's too good to be true."

"Maybe not. The bottom doesn't always have to fall out."

Davis, Britney's Daddy, and Hudson, Cindy's Daddy, join us.

Hudson chuckles. "What bottom is falling out? Is there a naughty Little girl without panties playing in the daycare tonight?"

I laugh. "Nope. Not mine, at least. I don't think she's ready for a public spanking."

Davis gives me a manly pat on the shoulder. "Lacy looks happy," he murmurs. He works with me, so he's fully aware of our new relationship and Lacy's problems.

"I think she is. I think this is going well."

"I'm happy for you," Hudson says. "I'm sure Britney is excited to have a new friend."

Lacy is glancing at me less frequently as she gets comfortable. They've all settled in at the table with coloring books and crayons. She is swinging her legs under the table. My chest is tight. I'm so fucking in love with her. I don't have a clue when I'll tell her, but my God, the thought keeps creeping up on me.

“You’re so whipped,” Colt jokes.

“Yep.” No sense denying it. I’ll wear a sign on my forehead if necessary.

CHAPTER 13



Lacy

The work week drags. After a full weekend with Brett, I wasn't ready to return to the office every day. It's like I have to flip a switch, and frankly, I don't *wanna*. I chuckle every time I think that word.

I manage to get through each day, but I'm starting to worry about myself as I drive home on Friday. Home? To Brett's house. Already I'm thinking of it as home. I'm Little when I'm there. It's still hard to wrap my head around.

I've always been so proud of securing my job and all I've accomplished entirely on my own. I can thank my father for at least paying for my college tuition, but that's about the only thing he ever gave me.

Okay, he did provide me with food, clothing, and shelter for the six long years between when my mother died and when I left for college, but he didn't provide me with love, attention, or praise.

I've gotten more of those three things from Brett in the past week than from my father in the twenty-two years he was in my life before I walked away.

Eve and some of the other Littles at Surrender explained how common my background is among them. I'm not the only person in the world whose childhood was essentially cut short, which helps propel them toward wanting to live out those fantasies later in life.

I've jammed so much childhood into the past week that I should be exhausted. Besides playing in my playroom last weekend and every evening this week for hours at a time, I've also spent time playing all the childhood boardgames my father donated to charity when I was twelve.

Brett is so patient with me. He listens. He holds me when I'm stressed. He rocks me when I need comfort. He makes love to me when I get horny—which is every night after my bath.

I've fallen into a pattern in which I stay in a fairly deep Little space until my bath is over. But while Daddy dries me off, I let myself shift into a sexy zone. It happens when I'm already naked before he puts my Little girl's nightie on. It's what I've come to think of as our special time. It's certainly special.

I giggle as I pull into the driveway and wait for the garage door to open. I get excited when I see Daddy's car come into view, which means he has beaten me home. He usually does, but not every night.

As soon as I park, I yank off my seatbelt and open the car door.

Daddy is there to hold it open and reach for my hand.

When I lift my gaze to meet his, I stiffen. He's smiling, but it doesn't reach his ears, and his brows are furrowed.

“What’s wrong?” I ask as I let him help me from the car. I’m barely able to grab my purse.

He pulls me into his arms and holds me close, rocking me against him as he hugs me. “Let’s go inside.” His voice is deep. I don’t like it.

“You’re scaring me,” I tell him as we enter the kitchen. “Did I do something wrong?” We haven’t faced an actual glitch in our relationship yet. He’s never shown any signs of being angry, frustrated, or disappointed with me.

I’m shaking by the time he sets my purse on the counter. He lifts me off the floor and sits me on the island, his hands coming to my sides. His face is level with mine. “You didn’t do anything wrong, Little lamb. Never. I don’t like you thinking that way.”

“Okay, then why are you frowning like the bottom fell out of the Earth?” My eyes widen. “Is it my apartment? Did they change their minds and condemn it?”

“No, Lacy. Your apartment is fine. We can go over there and get your things whenever you’re ready.”

Get my things... To move in with him. Because he keeps telling me he’s serious about us living together. He’s serious that he never wants to spend a single night without me in his arms again.

My breath hitches. “You heard something about the will, didn’t you?” Now, I’m in a new panic. I was kind of hoping the Rutherfords would stop hounding me and move on, even though Daddy has told me multiple times he doubts that’s going to happen.

“Unfortunately, no, but something did happen, and you’re not going to like it. I need you to be brave for me. I need you

to know that no matter what happens, you're mine. We're a solid unit. Nothing will ever change that."

"Now, you're really, really scaring me, Brett." My voice is firm. I'm not the least bit Little right now. I'm still in my pencil skirt, blouse, silk bra and panty set, and heels. I'm adult Lacy until I change, which hasn't happened yet.

Brett lifts me off the island, takes my hand, and leads me to the living room. He settles in the huge recliner he often sits in when I'm on his lap. After lifting me sideways onto his thighs, he draws in a deep breath. "Someone put something very disturbing in the mailbox today."

"What is it?" Goosebumps rise on my neck.

He reaches for a large manilla envelope on the end table, brings it in front of me, and pulls out a thick pile of paper. No, not paper, photos. Large photos. Eight by tens.

As soon as I see the one on top, my jaw drops, and the blood drains from my head. I'm going to faint. I start shaking as I cringe away, not wanting to touch that photo. Not wanting to know how many like it are in his hand.

"Apparently, someone very sharp has been following us," Brett tells me. "I'm so fucking sorry, Lacy. I'm usually the one who does the following. I've never been on the receiving end of a stalker with a long-range camera."

"How?" I try to swallow, but my mouth is too dry. This top picture is emblazoned on my brain. It's one of me on my knees in the playroom. I'm wearing only babyish panties and a thin tank top. I'm surrounded by dolls having a tea party. It's from this past Saturday.

"I don't know yet, Little lamb," he says softly, "but every available body at Black Blade Protection is working on it. I

only got here fifteen minutes ago. All I've been able to do so far is call my boss and arrange for protection."

I scramble off his lap because, suddenly, I can't sit still any longer. I snatch the pictures from his hands and start flipping through them. My heart is going to beat out of my chest. I'm dying a slow death as I stare at the pictures one by one before throwing them on the floor.

Me in pigtails coloring in the kitchen. Me entering Surrender Friday night in my blue dress with the frilly socks. Me on Brett's bed, naked, my legs spread open, Brett's head between them. Me in every imaginable compromising position known to man.

I drop to my knees when my legs won't hold me up any longer. I set my palms on the floor, close to hyperventilating.

Brett lowers next to me and sets a hand on my back.

"Don't," I tell him. I don't want him touching me right now. I need to think.

He removes his hand. "Lacy, I know this is devastating, but I need you to listen to me."

I jerk my head his way. "Devastating?" I shout. "This is so far past devastating it's not even funny. Someone is blackmailing me." I'm not stupid. "Is there a letter?"

"Yes," he admits.

"I'm right, aren't I?"

He draws in a breath. "Yes. The Rutherfords."

I laugh sardonically, the sound so foreign I don't even recognize it. I shove off the floor to stand and stumble toward the stairs.

“Lacy...” Brett follows me.

I hold out a hand, turning partly toward him. “Stop.”

His face is pale. I’m hurting him. I don’t care. I have to get out of here. I need to be alone. Thank God I still have my apartment. I’ll go there. It’s at least on the fucking sixth floor. I’ll shut all the fucking blinds, turn off all the lights, and hide in my bathroom for a while. Like ten years.

“Lacy, talk to me. Don’t shut me out.”

I keep moving. When I reach the bedroom, I pull off my heels and toss them toward the closet. I look at the window and then enter the closet completely, turning on the light and slamming the door. At least there’s no window in here, but I do take a moment to look in the corners to see if there are cameras.

I’m not thinking clearly at all. My rational self has fled the planet. I don’t even care. I need space. I need to change.

I remove my blouse and skirt, drop them on the floor, and pull out a pair of jeans and a long-sleeved shirt. I sit on the fucking floor to put on tennis shoes before I open the door and step back into the bedroom.

I’m kind of surprised Brett didn’t follow me into the closet. He is in the bedroom, though. He’s pacing. “Lacy, please slow down. We need to talk.”

“There’s nothing to say. I don’t even need to see the fucking letter.” My voice is high and cracking as I stomp past him, heading for the bathroom. “I know what it says. It says if I don’t come to fucking Indiana and do God only knows what, they’ll send those pictures to my bosses at Earnest and Heart. I’m only an accountant, not a rocket scientist, but I’m smart enough to know what they’re threatening.”

I find my toiletry bag under the sink and start filling it with random things that make no sense. I'm not sure why I'm even bothering. Who cares? I don't need anything. I'll just leave.

I turn and launch the bag against the far wall. Something breaks. I don't even care. I turn to leave the bathroom. "Get out of my way, Brett."

He steps back, his jaw tightening. "Please. Lacy, I can't let you leave here if that's what you're thinking."

I spin around. "You don't have a choice, Brett. This was the biggest mistake of my entire life. I worked so hard to climb the ladder at my amazing job, and now, it's all going to blow up in my face no matter what I do. All because I thought I could sit around playing with dolls and having tea parties instead of facing my fucking problems. I'm a fool and an idiot. I should've known my father would haunt me from his fucking grave. He was an asshole when he was alive, and he's still an asshole."

I stomp out of the room and run down the stairs. My purse is still on the island. I snatch it up and open it, fiddling around, looking for my keys.

Brett catches up with me. He blocks the door to the garage. "I can't let you leave, Lacy. You'll get in an accident."

"Not your choice, Brett. Move." I finally find the keys and palm them. I have to get out of here. I can't breathe.

"If you want to go somewhere, I'll take you myself."

I shake my head. "No. You're missing the point." I jerk my finger toward the windows. "Someone is fucking watching me. They're watching you, too."

"They're not out there anymore, Lacy, I promise."

“How can you know that?”

“Because Blade, Colt, Davis, and two other men arrived in minutes and scoured the entire area. Whoever it is got what they wanted, left the pics, and took off. I’m sure the Rutherfords paid them. They did their job. They’re long gone.”

“You can’t know that,” I shout. I even stomp my foot. “It doesn’t matter anyway. My fucking life is ruined.” My voice keeps rising. “*Ruined*,” I scream.

“Please, Lacy, let me help. I know you’re angry. I’m fucking furious, too. But let me help you.”

“Help me how? You want to come to my office with me and meet with my bosses to tell them about our perverted, kinky behavior?”

“It’s not perverted, Lacy. It’s a lifestyle preference. We’re not hurting a soul. It’s no one’s business but our own how we like to live our lives behind closed doors.”

“Ha.” I lean into him. “Apparently, it wasn’t so secret, and it’s not the least bit private anymore, is it?”

He rubs a hand over his head, probably because he knows I’m right.

I draw in a deep breath, trying to calm down. “Let me go, Brett,” I say in a much less crazy tone. “I want to go back to my apartment. I need some space to think and figure out what the fuck to do next.”

“I want to help, Lacy.”

“Help? You’ve already helped. You helped me find a side of myself I didn’t know existed, and you helped me learn that

no matter what I do, my past is going to chase me down until I fucking give in.”

“Don’t let them win, Little lamb. Please.” He takes a step closer.

I dodge him and race for the door, pulling it open and running for my car before he can catch me.

However, he doesn’t try to catch me. He lets me go. He follows me into the garage, but he doesn’t touch me.

I jump into my car, shut and lock the door, and try to get the keys into the ignition with shaky fingers. It’s impossible. I end up dropping them on the floor.

A strange popping noise makes me look out the window. Brett is standing next to my car. The garage door is down. I push the button on my visor to open it, but nothing happens.

Brett sets his hands on his hips. “I disconnected it, Lacy. You’ll either have to crash through it or get out and talk to me.”

I stare at him for several seconds before lowering my forehead to my steering wheel. I’m gasping for breath. I can’t get enough oxygen. The tears start to fall, and then I’m sobbing.

“Please open the door, Lacy.”

I ignore him. If he’s not going to let me go to my apartment, at least he can let me sit in my car for a while and cry on my own. I don’t want him to interfere. I don’t want him to touch me. I know what happens when he touches me. He makes everything go away.

Well, he can’t this time. He can’t make this problem disappear. Not even with soothing words and a back rub.

Rocking me won't fix it. A bath won't fix it. Sex won't fix it.

I cover my face and cry harder than I have since my mother died. Flashes of sitting in the back of my closet with my dolls come to mind. I wish I were there now, huddling in my closet with Jasmine, Molly, and Priscilla. They comforted me then, and they've gotten me through a lot of sticky situations since then.

The tears won't stop. I'm going to lose my job. If I don't go back to Indiana and face these two fuckers, they will probably torch what's left of my apartment building. They'll stop at nothing to get what they want.

I gasp and sit up straighter, looking out the windshield, seeing nothing as I consider other things they could do. What if they kill my friends? What if they saw me with Eve or any of the other girls? What if they kill Brett?

They could. They obviously mean business. If they'll start a fire in my building and send compromising photos to my workplace to get me fired, they have no intention of stopping until I comply.

Finally, I glance out the window and see Brett still standing in the same spot. His face is tight with worry and hurt. Worry and hurt that I caused.

He leans his forearms against the roof of my car and stares down at me. "I'm sorry, Lacy. So fucking sorry. Sorry that I didn't shut the blinds all around the house. Sorry that I left you vulnerable. You're right. This is largely my fault. I should've paid closer attention to our surroundings. I should've noticed someone in the area watching us. I caused this problem, and I'm so sorry."

My chest hurts. I hate him taking the blame. It's not his fault. I should have paid attention, too. I should have realized that every time we played, I was visible to the outside world.

I let my guard down, and I shouldn't have.

A noise behind me makes me jump and twist around. I gasp as the garage door rises. Who's out there? I half expect to see Maximillian or his son striding into the garage, smirking.

That's not who comes into view, though. It's Blade.

Brett keeps his palms on the frame of my car but leans back to look at his boss.

Blade glances at me with a worried expression before looking back at Brett. "Sorry. You weren't answering your phone, and I could hear you talking in here. I decided to try the door. Why is the automatic opener disconnected?"

I groan and drop my head back to the steering wheel. Their voices are muffled, but I can still hear every word in the silence of the garage. Everyone knows. *Everyone*.

Brett doesn't answer Blade, but I assume he glanced at me and conveyed his meaning without words.

"Ah," Blade says. "Cannon, Dagger, and Mace are combing this area. They'll find out where the pictures were taken."

Great. I've never even heard of those three men. They must be other employees of Black Blade Protection. Fucking fantastic. Why don't we just show my humiliation to every fucking person on the block? Oh, wait. Maybe they've all seen it anyway.

"Colt and Davis are patrolling."

What does that mean? That's six men. Six men have arrived in less than half an hour to deal with my problem. As if they could. Who the fuck even cares where the pics were taken from? Who cares what the distance was? It doesn't matter now. What matters is that they exist, and that can't be undone.

Have they already been sent to my bosses? I don't think I can even show my face at work again. Not now. I might as well resign by email and save what shred of dignity I have left.

Tears fall again. Fuck my father. Fuck his partner. Fuck Max. Fuck all of them. For ten years, I lived in relative peace, and now these assholes show up to ruin my life. For what?

The best part of all. One of them is dead. *Dead*. Ruining my life from the fucking grave. Is he watching and laughing like he got the last fucking word?

"You thought you could just flee the state and reinvent yourself, and I wouldn't hunt you down and make you pay?" I can hear my father saying this in my ear as if he's in the fucking car with me.

"Lacy?"

I jerk my head up at the sound of Eve's voice and find her standing at the passenger door.

"Will you let me in?"

I narrow my gaze. Is this a trick? When I turn to look at Brett, he sighs and backs away several feet from my car. I glare at him, forcing him to back up farther until he's in the driveway.

Finally, I pop the locks.

Eve jumps in as fast as she can, and I relock the car. I'm not fucking facing Brett yet. Mostly because if he touches me,

I'll cave, and I'm not ready to cave.

Eve twists her body sideways to face me. "I'm so sorry, hon."

"Is there anyone alive who doesn't know?" I spit out.

She draws in a breath. "I'm sure it feels like a lot of people know, but keep in mind none of them care. All of the men at Black Blade Protection are Daddies. I haven't seen the pictures firsthand. I doubt any of them have, except maybe Blade. Brett won't even show them to Colt."

That makes me feel marginally better, except she's right. None of those people, including her, would find anything very interesting about the pictures of me playing or dressed in Little attire. I could do without the pictures of Brett eating me out, but they don't show my vagina. That's something, right?

Eve reaches for my hand and squeezes it. "I know Brett feels awful about this. He's kicking himself. I could hear him screaming through the phone when he called Colt before you got home from work."

"It's not his fault," I murmur as I tug my hand free of hers and wring mine together in my lap.

"Not directly, but he did leave the blinds open while you were Little in the house."

I shift my gaze to her. "He couldn't have known someone would be sitting somewhere with a long-range camera, shooting pictures through the fucking windows." I frown. "It doesn't even matter. What matters is that I shouldn't have let myself get lured into a kinky lifestyle. It was too risky. And now, I'm going to pay the price big time."

"I don't think it will be as bad as you think," she murmurs.

I shake my head. “Those assholes are going to send the pics to Earnest and Heart if they haven’t already. I don’t even want to face my bosses again in my life. I’ll have to resign and never go back. How the fuck would I explain away my fucking kink?” I’m shouting. I’m sure Brett and Blade can hear me. Colt is probably out there, too. And Davis. Let’s not forget Davis.

Fuck.

“First of all, you’re entitled to your kink. Everyone is. It’s a harmless fetish that millions of people practice to some degree or another. If someone held a lens to the windows of every house in America, they would catch photos of far more damaging practices than age play. I bet two times more houses have crosses and spanking benches and all manner of restraints and leather and bondage and whips and canes. I’d rather have pics of me flashed on a Megatron wearing a cute dress and using a sippy cup than naked with welts all over my boobs.”

I draw in a breath. “I’m not sure. At least most people are aware of BDSM practices that are more mainstream. Half the fucking country has seen that graphic movie with the red room. They’d probably be less likely to judge their neighbor for getting spanked over a bench with leather cuff restraints than playing with dolls.” I groan.

“Maybe, but they aren’t going to find out.”

“Devon and Rick are,” I shout, referring to Mr. Earnest and Mr. Heart, our bosses.

“Talk to them. Send them a text right now. Ask them to meet you in the morning. I’m sure they go into the office most Saturdays anyway.”

I shake my head. “I can’t do that. I can’t face them.”

“I bet it won’t be a big deal, and you’ll feel better having alerted them before they get the pictures.”

“How do we know they haven’t gotten them already? Maybe they’re crafting my letter of resignation as we speak.”

“I don’t think that’s likely, Lacy. I don’t think they’ll judge you as harshly as you’re judging yourself.”

I rub my temples and shout, “In one of the pictures, I’m splayed out fucking naked, clearly in the throes of an orgasm with Brett’s face between my legs.” I don’t even care that my voice rises with every word. I shudder at the memory of seeing that photo.

Eve shrugs. “Anyone who sees that would be jealous. It’s just sex, Lacy. People have sex. Some people are lucky enough to have great sex. You’re not going to get fired for having consensual sex with your boyfriend and enjoying it in the privacy of your home.”

She’s right. But the age play...

I shudder again. I don’t need my bosses seeing me on my knees playing with dolls. I can’t think of anything more humiliating.

“I bet the Rutherfords sent you the pictures as a threat. They haven’t released them to anyone else yet. So, get on top of it. Intercept them. Go meet with Devon and Rick first thing in the morning. Explain what’s coming. Ask them not to open the envelope. I bet they’ll comply with your wishes.”

I stare at her face. It might work. They are good men. Kind and fair and decent. The best bosses I could ever imagine having. I could do that. Try to intercept. And explain myself somehow.

“Send a text now,” Eve urges. She grabs my purse from the floorboard under her feet and pulls my phone out.

There are no messages when she hands it to me. That’s a good sign. No one has fired me yet.

Eve sets her hand on my arm and meets my gaze. Her grip is firm. “I need you to trust me. Send them a text.”

I stare at her. There’s something she’s not telling me. It’s confusing. I don’t understand, but I need to trust her. Who the hell else can I trust? My fingers shake as I open a group text to both of them. I hand Eve the phone. “You do it. I can’t think.”

She takes it from me and types before handing it back. “I didn’t hit send yet.”

I read her words.

Hi. This is Lacy. I’m dealing with a personal problem that needs attention. Is there any chance you could meet with me tomorrow morning so I can explain?

It’s a good text. I hit send.

CHAPTER 14



Brett

I've never been more freaked out in my entire life. To be fair, my entire life is currently sitting in her car in my garage while her best friend tries to talk her off the wall because Lord knows I was unsuccessful.

The garage is open now. If she wanted to start the car, put it in reverse, and back out, all I would be able to do at this point is get out of the way. I'm praying it doesn't come to that.

She seems calmer—if by calmer, I mean she hasn't screamed in over a minute. I don't know what Eve is saying to her, but I hope to God it's working.

"I fucked up," I mumbled.

Blade is standing closest. "No, you didn't. Shit happened because there are bad people in the world. It's not your fault. None of us sit in our homes with all the blinds closed in the middle of the day out of fear that someone might be spying on us, taking photos."

I clasp my hands behind my head, pacing behind Lacy's car. I can't bring myself to step out of the path for fear she will

leave me. Maybe she *should* leave me. I failed her. I'll never forgive myself for this.

"She's afraid she'll get fired," I mutter.

"That's not going to happen, Spike." Blade states without hesitation.

I jerk my gaze to him. "How the fuck can you know that?"

He draws in a deep breath and holds my gaze. "I just do."

I stare at him. He's making no sense.

"Trust me."

"Jesus, Blade. That's the vaguest thing you've ever said to me."

"And I have my reasons," Blade responds.

I hesitate, my mind running in ten directions before an idea occurs to me. "Do they know about Eve?"

Blade stares at me, saying nothing.

I finally sigh. If her bosses are aware Eve is Little for some reason, maybe Blade is right. Perhaps they won't care if they find out Lacy is Little. That does not mean Lacy would want them to see photographic evidence. Knowing someone has a kink preference and seeing pictures of it are two different things. I'm certain Lacy would be mortified if her bosses saw those pictures. Too mortified to ever return to work no matter what they said or even if they didn't care. Shit, we are literally fucking in one of them.

My stomach is in knots. Part of me wants to get on the first plane to Indiana and kill those motherfuckers with my bare hands. I'm shaking from the urge. I may do so no matter what

happens next. Lacy isn't going to rest easy until both of those men can no longer threaten her.

Blade clears his throat. "The Rutherfords have money. This wasn't a fly-by-night job. Whoever they hired to surveil Lacy was good. Good enough to have expensive long-range equipment and remain undetected."

I draw in a deep breath. He's right, and I hate it. "I feel emasculated."

Blade nods. "I understand, but you have no reason to. You couldn't have known someone was watching you, and even if you had known, I suspect they would've evaded detection."

"It's my job to protect her," I murmur.

"She knows that."

I flinch. "She might not speak to me again."

"She will. Give her time."

"I don't know if my heart can take it. What if she wants to leave? I don't think I can let her. It's not safe."

"I'll have Rachelle get you a hotel room for tonight." Blade pulls out his phone and sends a text.

I turn to glance at the car again. At least she hasn't hit me with it. I have no idea if she'll agree to go to a hotel with me.

"If she won't go with you, I'll put two men on her. She'll be safe."

The thought of Lacy sleeping alone somewhere makes my chest tighten. The thought of anyone besides me protecting her makes me want to punch the side of the house.

Blade speaks again. "I'll have more men tracking the Rutherfords, starting first thing in the morning. I think we

need a deeper dive into their lives. If they're willing to hire an arsonist and a private detective to terrorize Lacy, they've probably committed a long list of crimes."

"I want to see that fucking will," I sputter.

"You and me both." Blade stares off into the distance. "I like to stay aboveboard when possible, but I think it's time to get a copy of that will through alternative methods."

I run a hand over my head and nod. I have to agree. At least we'd know what we were dealing with if we could see the fucking will.

A car door opens behind me, and I spin around, deflated, when I see it's Eve exiting the passenger side. But then, a moment later, Lacy opens her door, too.

I take a step in her direction and then stop. I need to give her space if it kills me. She doesn't meet my gaze. She just stands there in the open doorway, rubbing her palms together. She's so deflated.

I want to roar.

Eve comes toward us as Colt walks up the driveway from where he and Davis were standing several yards away. Colt wraps his arms around Eve and kisses the top of her head.

Eve tips her face back. "I think she needs a hotel."

"Already arranged," Blade responds.

Eve nods.

I take another step toward Lacy, and she finally lifts her face but not her gaze. Her eyes are red and puffy. Her cheeks are streaked with tears. She's trembling. "I can't process all of this tonight. I need you to give me time."

“Okay.” My heart drops to my feet.

“I’d like you to go with me, though. Is that okay?”

Thank. God.

“Of course, baby.”

She winces. That’s not what I call her. But I’m afraid to risk alienating her with *Little lamb*.

“I’ll go pack us a few things, okay?”

She shakes her head. “I’ll do it.” She turns around and heads toward the kitchen door as though she’s walking through quicksand.

I follow her.

When we reach the master bedroom, I pull out two bags, one for each of us. I’d rather grab a small suitcase and share it, but that would be too presumptuous.

While I stuff mine with jeans, shirts, and underwear, she packs only adult clothes. It hurts my heart. She would do better this evening if she could spend it in Little space, but how can she possibly trust me to protect her?

It’s my fucking job. When she’s in Little space, she needs to be able to count on me to ward off monsters so she can exist without a care in the world. I failed her. Miserably. The damage could be severe.

When she enters the bathroom to gather some toiletries, I tuck Bear, Banana, and Jasmine into my bag. I can’t fit all of them, but hopefully, three of them will come in handy later.

We say nothing to each other while we pack. I’m letting her have her silence, but I won’t be able to maintain this

forever. I need her to talk to me, look at me, let me hold her. I won't settle until I have my arms around her.

Do I deserve her?

I know Blade would have my head if he heard the doubts going through my mind. Intellectually, I know he's right. I probably couldn't have stopped this from happening. However, that doesn't change the fact that it *did* happen, and Lacy knows I failed her. Any ground we've covered together has been shattered.

Back downstairs, I speak to Davis about their plans to keep an eye on the house while Lacy heads out to get in Blade's SUV. We're not taking my car or hers. Even though Davis searched both vehicles for tracking devices, we won't risk the possibility we might be followed.

Lacy is sitting in the back seat of Blade's SUV when I step outside. She's distant and despondent, staring unseeing out the window. She doesn't meet my gaze.

I hesitate, trying to decide if I should join her in the back or sit up front with Blade. I store her bags in the rear and opt for the front.

"I'll have a rental sent to the hotel for you early in the morning," Blade informs us as he pulls out of the driveway. "They'll leave the keys at the front desk. You're checked in as Mr. and Mrs. Barkley. All you need to do is pick up the keys."

"Thank you," I resist the urge to glance over my shoulder at Lacy. God, I loathe this situation.

Fifteen minutes later, after taking a circuitous route, Blade pulls up to the hotel entrance. "I'll be in touch." He doesn't elaborate. No sense freaking Lacy out any further.

Lacy gets out of the car while I grab our bags. She has her purse in her hand and eases the strap over her shoulder before following me as if I'm leading her to the guillotine.

I quietly retrieve our room keys from the front desk and lead her to the elevator. At least she's letting me go with her. I'm not sure what I would have done if she'd cut me off entirely.

Except that's not true. I would have stayed on her like white on rice. Right outside the door. Guarding her day and night even if she didn't know or want it.

We ride the elevator in silence, the tension between us palpable, so thick that I flinch when the elevator pings its arrival on our floor. I stick my hand out to ensure the doors stay open while she exits, and then I follow her down the hallway toward our room.

She's like a zombie next to me, and I hate it.

I open the door and hold it to let her pass first.

She ducks under my arm, rubbing hers as if she's cold.

While I drop our bags on the foot of the king-sized bed, Lacy aims for the corner of the room, turns, and slides down the wall until she's sitting with her knees pulled up to her chest, her head on her knees.

I can't breathe. She's hurting so badly, and I don't know how to fix this. I'm not sure I can. I'm sure as fuck going to try, though.

I join her, sitting against the wall a few inches from her, not touching her. She's not moving, not even crying.

"I'm sorry," I finally say. I might say it ten thousand times if that's what it takes. "I'm supposed to protect you, and I

failed. I can understand why you're angry with me. I'm angry with me, too."

She jerks her head up and looks at me, eyes wide and wild. She shakes her head. "What? What are you talking about? This isn't your fault."

I frown. "It is. I'm the Daddy. I'm the Dom in this relationship. I should've been more careful."

"No. Stop it. I'm not angry with you. I'm angry with *me*. I'm angry with the world. I'm angry with my father and his fucking partner and *his* fucking son. I should've known they would hunt me down. I *did* know. That's why I've been in a panic for weeks. I knew. Deep down, I knew. And I used age play to hide from my problems. I made poor choices, and it bit me in the ass. You're not to blame."

I wince. "Lacy, you did not make poor choices. All you did was honor your instincts. You learned something about yourself you hadn't known and acted on it in good faith. You're Little. Deep inside, you know that. I'm so damn proud of you for tapping into it and letting yourself be true to yourself. You can't let those assholes steal your power. We're going to fight them, and we're going to win."

She shakes her head. "No. We're not. We'll never win against them. They will fucking chase me to the ends of the earth to get what they want. I should've just gone home and faced them in the first place, and none of this would've happened."

I frown. "That would have been detrimental to you, Lacy. You did the right thing. You ignored them and held your ground."

“And look what that got me,” she yells. At least she’s talking to me.

“It brought you to me,” I point out softly. “And I’m so damn glad. You’re my world.”

She stares at me in disbelief as if I’ve grown two heads. “You need to move on.”

My heart stops. “I’m not moving on, Lacy. Never.” *Please don’t push me away.*

She shakes her head. “You have to. You’re a Daddy Dom. I’m never going to be what you need or want in a partner.”

“What are you talking about, baby? You’re exactly what I need and want in a partner.”

She shakes her head more violently. “Not anymore. I can’t do it anymore. It was a bad idea in the first place. I shouldn’t have let myself believe I could be Little. It’s not practical. It’s a fantasy. It’s time for me to return to reality. The real world doesn’t support that fetish. It’s foolish to pretend I can be one thing by day and another by night.”

I can’t even lick my lips because my mouth is so dry. “Lacy, millions of people have a kink they practice in private. You’re not the only one. They do their best to be discreet, but sometimes, someone finds out about them. I hate that someone is trying to take away your power, but you can’t let them.”

“I don’t have a choice,” she shouts.

“You do, Little lamb.”

She flinches. “Don’t call me that.”

I draw in a breath. Fuck, this is a mess. “Lacy, we’re going to put a band-aid on this.”

“A band-aid? We need a tourniquet. The blood is flowing out of my life so fast we’ll never be able to stop it.”

“We will. I promise. I don’t know why, but Blade seems to think your bosses won’t even flinch.”

She stares at me for several seconds. “Eve said that, too.”

“Maybe they know something we don’t,” I point out, hopeful.

“Why wouldn’t they just tell us?”

I shrug. “Because it’s not their place to share someone else’s kink.”

She sets her forehead against her knees again. “Doesn’t even matter. Even if the best-case scenario were to pan out and they never got the pictures, and they tell me they totally understand, it still doesn’t matter. It will happen again some other way, some other day. I can’t do it. I won’t.”

God, I hurt for her. So deep it cuts to my heart. I want to hold her. I want to tell her it’s going to be okay. I want to make promises I don’t know if I can keep.

“It’s over, Brett. I can’t be that person anymore.” She shoves from the corner and heads for the bathroom, grabbing her bag to take it with her on the way.

I push up to my feet and pace over to the window. The world outside looks so peaceful. People are walking along the streets below us, going on about their lives, while Lacy feels like hers is crumbling.

When she comes out of the bathroom, I turn around. She’s wearing leggings and a T-shirt. She has washed her makeup off, and she climbs into one side of the bed and curls up, facing away from me.

I grab my bag from the bed and enter the bathroom next. As soon as I pull the door closed, I nearly crumple to the floor. I'm exhausted. I don't think I've cried since I was three years old, but I feel like I could right now.

Lacy is my everything. She's my world. I've known that from the moment she stepped into Colt and Eve's house last week. Losing her would destroy me. Fuck, I don't even care if she never wants to practice age play again, but I know she will crave it. It's in her DNA. It will surface no matter how hard she fights it.

I stare at myself in the mirror and take deep breaths, trying desperately to hold back my emotions. My eyes are swollen, but the tears don't fall. I brush my teeth, use the toilet, wash my hands and face, and pat my cheeks dry.

After changing into sweatpants and a T-shirt, I reenter the room.

Lacy is as still as a statue. She hasn't moved. I know she's not sleeping. She probably won't sleep.

Instead of circling to the other side of the bed, I perch on the edge of the mattress next to her. "Are you hungry? We didn't eat dinner. I could order something from room service."

She shakes her head, not looking at me. I'm not sure I could chew or swallow either, but I hate her missing a meal.

Sighing, I rise and circle to the other side of the bed. I turn out the lights, close the blinds, and climb under the covers. A faint light from the hallway is enough for me to adjust my vision.

I'm staring at the ceiling, lying very still like a corpse. My mind is racing through everything I could have done differently. Why did I fuck my woman with the blinds open?

Because the window in my bedroom faces the fucking backyard, that's why. No one should be able to see in.

I can ask questions all night. *What if myself to death. It won't change anything. I'm so fucking sorry, Lacy.*

I hate the two feet and ten thousand miles between us, but I'm grateful she's letting me share a room and a bed with her. It could have been worse. I couldn't have stopped her from leaving if she'd really wanted to.

I don't own her. She owns *me*.

I turn my head toward her back, unable to stop the fact that I'm breathing heavily.

Just when I think I might explode from emotional frustration, she rolls over, crawls to my side, and wraps herself around me.

Thank. Fuck.

I wrap my arms around her and hold her tightly against my chest. I kiss the top of her head. A minuscule amount of the tightness in my chest loosens.

CHAPTER 15



Lacy

I couldn't stand the distance for another second. I need him. I need his strength. I need his arms. His touch. His breath on me. I need his words in my ears. I need his lips, even if they're on my hair. I need his hand rubbing up and down my back and the other one on my forearm.

I need the feel of his heartbeat under my cheek. I need the rise and fall of his chest. I need his comfort. The human contact. The understanding. I need to know someone cares. I know he does.

"I'm sorry," I finally murmur. "I don't mean to hurt you."

"Baby, I'm so fucking sorry, too. I hurt for you more than anything."

"It's not your fault, you know," I whisper against his chest.

"I know. I just want to be able to protect you from any and all demons, and I didn't."

"But you can't blame yourself."

He holds me tighter.

“Mr. Earnest texted me back. They can meet with me tomorrow morning at nine.”

“Okay. I’ll get you there.”

“Thank you. Eve thinks I should tell them the truth. She believes they’ll be understanding. I’m hoping they haven’t received the pictures yet. Do you think they have?”

“Unlikely. Blackmail isn’t very useful if the blackmailer doesn’t wait for the victim to have a chance to fulfill the request. In this case, they want you to respond that you’re coming to Indiana. It’s only been a few hours since you got the pictures. They can’t expect you to have taken action yet.”

I draw in a slow breath, hoping he’s right. “Then what? What do I do next?”

“Blade is working on it. He’s got a lot more people dedicated to this job now. We’ll wait for him to advise us.”

“They’re going to bill me, right? I mean, I owe your company for everything they’re doing.”

His body stiffens. “Fuck, no. You aren’t paying anyone, Lacy.”

I sigh. “Brett...”

“You’re my fucking girlfriend, Lacy. No. Stop it. End of discussion.”

Girlfriend...

Am I?

After tonight, I doubt he’ll still want to be in a relationship with me. I meant what I said earlier. I’m not going to indulge my kink again. It’s too stressful. I’d always be looking over my shoulder. I’ll never trust my surroundings again.

I shudder at the thought of playing like I did the other night at Surrender. So many people saw me. Any one of them could do something to ruin my life. People are not kind creatures.

I need to walk a vanilla path in life. It's safer. If there's nothing to blackmail me with, no one can do so.

I'm being greedy, snuggling up to Brett like this tonight. I'm giving him false hope. I told him I wouldn't let my Little out again, but I know he doesn't believe me.

Brett is a Daddy. He needs that in his life. I can't ask him to give it up because of my insecurities. That would be cruel. I will have to let him go, but right now, I just can't. It's selfish of me, I know.

However, part of me is so lonely. Even the thought of going backward to the way things were before I stepped into Brett's home for the first time makes me cringe. I hate this world. Fucking judgmental people everywhere. Why can't people just mind their own fucking business and let others live their lives?

My body is slowly relaxing now that I'm pressed against Brett. It would be even better if we didn't have so many clothes on, but that's out of the question. Isn't it? I'm still so stiff. My entire body is going to hurt tomorrow.

Suddenly, I know what I need. I know what would help me unwind and relax. It's not sex. I sit upright and stare down at Brett's confused face in the dim light.

His brow is furrowed. "What's wrong, baby?"

I kind of hate him calling me baby. It's sweet and caring, and he means well, but I like the way he calls me Little lamb more. It's an endearment meant totally for me. He's not using

it because he thinks it will upset me. He might be right. I don't want him pressuring me to be Little. That would infuriate me. It's my fault. I told him earlier not to call me that.

"I'm a selfish bitch, but will you spank me?"

His brows draw even closer together. "If you ever call yourself a selfish bitch again, I'll do more than spank you. I'll paddle your ass and stand you naked in a corner for half the fucking day," he growls.

I don't want to get into that with him. I just want him to spank me. It will chase away my nervous twitching so I can sleep. Spanking isn't something only Littles enjoy. Most of the BDSM community practices some form of impact play. Age-play participants don't own spanking. I can let him spank me and not slide into Little space.

"Please, Brett. It will help me relax."

He smooths his hand on my back. "Are you sure? You've been through a lot tonight. I'm not sure you're in the right frame of mind to make such a request."

"You said yourself that a lot of people enjoy spankings as a way to relieve stress. That's what I need."

He rises onto an elbow and cups my face, stroking my cheek. "Lacy..."

"Brett, I know what I'm asking for," I insist.

"I'd never forgive myself if I hurt you."

"Then don't use a belt buckle," I half tease.

He rolls his eyes. "I'm not talking about physically. I would never injure you physically. I'm talking about, emotionally. Sometimes, people aren't in the right frame of mind to consent."

“This isn’t a rape trial, Brett. It’s a spanking scene between consenting adults.”

He groans again. “Lacy…”

“Please. I know what I’m asking for. I promise.”

He rises to sit and cups my face with both hands. “I’ll do it on one condition.”

“What’s that?”

“You promise to use a safeword the moment it’s not working for you.”

We haven’t spoken of safewords before. “Okay,” I whisper. “Red?”

“Red works. If it’s too much for you, or you aren’t getting the benefit you’re hoping for, or you’re unable to focus on the spanking, you will stop me. Just say *red*. I will never be able to ensure your safety if I don’t think you will safe out if needed.”

“Okay. I will.” I bring my palm to his cheek, set my forehead against his, and inhale deeply. I love his scent. I’m going to miss it the most when this thing ends between us. It’s like his pheromones or something. They call to me on a primal level, as if we’re destined to be attracted to each other on some strange cosmic level.

I shake the thoughts from my mind. None of that is true. I’m just grasping at straws. I’m not the kind of person to believe in any of that woo-woo stuff.

Brett slides off the bed, grabs a few pillows, and piles them on the edge of the mattress. He pats the spot. “Lie on your tummy over these pillows, Lacy.”

I crawl over and lie down, trying to breathe easily. This isn’t going to be like the last time he spanked me over his lap.

It feels different.

He pulls my leggings and panties over my butt and drags them to my knees. When he palms my bottom, I take a deep breath.

“I’m going to spank you harder than last time, Lacy. It’s meant to help relieve your stress. But you must communicate with me if it’s not working. You can use *yellow* if you want me to slow down or take a break. *Red* if you hate it.”

“Okay,” I murmur. I just want him to get on with it and stop talking.

Finally, he lifts his hand, and the first swat lands on my right cheek. The next follows quickly behind it on my left cheek. After palming my butt for a moment, he continues.

It only takes me half a minute to slide into a strange space in my head. It’s like I separate from my body, from my problems, from the world, from reality. I’m floating. There is nothing except the spanking. Everything else disappears.

It’s so refreshing. With every swat, I slide farther out of my body. The tension I’ve been carrying around for hours eases. My shoulders relax. My fists unclench. My body melts into the bed.

God, it feels good. His touch is just right. Soothing, rhythmic, exonerating.

He picks up the pace and the pressure, spanking me harder.

I moan as my body absorbs every touch, enjoying the contact. It’s life-affirming in an odd way. I love it. I want more.

When he stops, I turn my head toward him and meet his gaze. “Don’t stop.”

“Okay, baby. I’m just checking on you. You sure?”

I nod. “Yes. Please.”

As soon as he starts again, I sink back into the special place. It’s in another dimension. Like I’m here in this room, but not. It’s the same place, but not this day or something. It’s a parallel universe. Brett is here with me, but we’re not the same people. It’s like I’m watching a different path we might have taken together in a different continuum.

My butt is burning, and Brett doesn’t stop until right before I’m about to wince. It’s as if he senses I’ve had all I can take and knows precisely when to stop.

Both of his hands are on me, one on the small of my back and one on the backs of my knees.

My butt is on fire, the burn so delicious.

“Do you want to feel the burn, Lacy? Or do you want me to rub it?”

“Leave it,” I murmur, surprising myself. It’s dragging out the effect. If he touches my heated skin, it will ease the pain. I like the pain.

“You did so well, baby. I know that has to hurt.”

I start to cry. It shocks me. I was fine one second, and the next, my tears are falling. Hard, heavy tears with giant gasping sobs against the mattress.

Brett gently rolls me over while he lifts me. Careful to keep my heated bottom exposed between his arms, he carries me to the loveseat and sits, holding me in his lap. He pulls his T-shirt over his head with one hand and uses it to wipe the tears that keep falling down my face. “That’s a good girl. Let it all out. You’ll feel so much better after a good cry.”

I've cried a river tonight. I'm not sure why I have more tears or why they need an outlet. But I do, and he's right. The pressure is lifting from my chest—along with the fear and regret and sadness and embarrassment. All of that is easing incrementally.

With a few final hiccups, I become a liquid in Brett's arms. He's such a good Dom and an even better Daddy Dom. What we just did will not purge him from my system. If anything, I'm clinging to him more, physically and emotionally.

It's a dangerous slippery slope. There's no way I can go back to the way things were between us. I'll never be able to let myself get lost in Little space again. It was fun for a few weeks. It bit me in the ass hard. I'm stronger than this. I can and will follow acceptable social norms.

I don't know what the future will look like for me. No matter what my bosses say tomorrow, I need to find a new job. I will always be looking over my shoulder at Earnest and Heart and worrying what they're thinking of me.

When I get this godforsaken issue with my father's will resolved, I will get a new job and behave like a grown woman. If I don't give anyone anything interesting to blackmail me with, no one can do so.

Brett holds me for a long time before cupping my face and tipping my chin up. "Feel better?"

I nod. "Thank you."

"Any time—" His mouth is still open as if he meant to say more but stopped himself.

I know what he was going to add. Little lamb. My chest hurts from missing those words from his lips, but I told him not to call me that, and he's honoring my wishes.

It's for the best. When he addresses me as Little lamb, it draws me into my Little space. I can't deal with that temptation right now. I can't deal with it ever again.

Eventually, he eases me onto my feet and carefully pulls my panties and leggings over my sore bottom. "I can put an ointment on it to ease the sting if you want."

I shake my head. "No. I want to feel it."

"Okay." His voice is so soft. "You might want to sleep on your side or your tummy." He stands and leads me to the bed before lifting me off the floor with his hands on my hips and settling me on my side.

"I can do it," I argue lamely.

He leans over and kisses my temple. "I know you can, baby."

I wince inside. I want him to call me Little lamb. I want to hear it from his mouth one more time. I'm a masochist. I keep my mouth shut.

"Be right back," he says before heading for the bathroom. A moment later, he's back and holding Bear, Banana, and Jasmine.

My heart seizes, and I say nothing as he tucks them in with me. There's a tight lump in my throat, but I ignore it. I slept with Jasmine before I knew what it meant to be Little. It doesn't have to mean anything that I have a few stuffed toys I enjoy.

I snuggle them in under the covers with me and hold them.

Brett climbs back onto the other side but comes up behind me, spoons me, and settles a hand protectively on my hip. "Sleep, baby."

One more tear falls, and I suck it back. I can't cry anymore tonight. I'm spent.

CHAPTER 16



Lacy

At nine in the morning, we enter my office building. No one else is here. I've had two cups of coffee and nothing to eat. My stomach won't tolerate food yet. It's clenched tight the way it has been since I woke up fitfully at about five in the morning.

Brett was careful with me all morning, letting me be with my thoughts. He kept his voice low, said nothing when I spent an hour locked in the bathroom where I soaked in the tub, and he didn't utter a word about my unwillingness to eat.

Now, we're at the elevator. "You could wait here," I tell him futilely. We've had this discussion three times. I know I'm wasting my breath asking him to let me handle this on my own.

He has assured me he won't interfere, but he's not leaving me unattended for a moment. It's frustrating but admittedly sweet. It would be easier if he weren't so kind.

This thing between us can't last. I feel it slipping between my fingers like sand on a windy day. The clock is ticking faster and faster. As soon as we resolve a few things, I will need to go back to my apartment, regroup, find a new job, and

start my life over. Maybe I should move to another city. Perhaps I should change my name to make it harder for the Rutherfords to track me.

Brett ignores my suggestion and sets a hand on my lower back as the elevator doors open.

I glance down at myself while we ride up. I have on jeans and a long-sleeved black shirt. Tennis shoes. My hair is in a ponytail at the base of my neck. My makeup is minimal. I look like death.

Devon and Rick are standing in the reception area when the elevator doors open. This is it. I won't be waiting around to talk to them.

Brett's breath hitches as he eyes my bosses. I don't know why.

I glance around, quickly assessing. No one else seems to be in the office. At least not visibly.

Devon's brows are drawn. "Good morning, Lacy." He holds out a hand to Brett. "Devon Earnest."

Brett returns the firm handshake. "Brett Pauson, Lacy's boyfriend. I'm just here for moral support."

I'm trembling. *My boyfriend.* For how long? He had to introduce himself as someone, though. And the look on his face is odd.

Rick shakes Brett's hand next, introducing himself. "Richard Heart. Call me Rick." He nods over his shoulder. "Let's sit in the conference room."

Both men are stoic as they usher us into the big room with the giant oval table.

I'm shaking as I take a seat.

“What’s going on, Lacy?” Devon asks. “Your text was vague. You look distressed.”

I’m glad for the confused looks on their faces that indicate to me they most likely have not seen naked photos of me recently. I sit up straight, set my elbows on the table, and wring my hands together. After taking a deep breath, I let it out slowly. “As you know, my father passed a few weeks ago.”

They both nod. “You didn’t go home at the time,” Rick points out. “Is there a problem with his estate or something?”

I nod. “Sort of. He was a lawyer, and his partner is the executor of the will. I haven’t seen the will, but presumably, I’m the named beneficiary, and his partner and son have been pressuring me to come to Indiana to deal with it.”

“So, you need some time off?” Devon asks.

I shake my head. “Not exactly. Not for that. Or, I don’t know, really.” I’m rambling. “They’re blackmailing me.”

Both my bosses lift their brows high and glance at Brett.

Brett sets his hand on my back in support.

I look down at my lap, suddenly unable to continue. I’m humiliated beyond belief. My voice is stuck. I can’t do this.

“Would you like me to tell them, Lacy?” Brett asks gently.

I give a slight nod. I don’t know what he’ll say, but I trust him to be as discreet as possible.

“The Rutherfords apparently put a PI on Lacy, who has been following her for days taking pictures of her. Of us together, too. The pictures are extremely personal and embarrassing.”

“Jesus,” Devon says.

Rick looks fit to kill when I glance up. His hands are fisted on the table. “And you think they’re going to send them to us.”

I nod. I can’t breathe.

Brett slides his hand down my arm to my hands at the table and covers them both in his one. “Lacy has done nothing wrong. Most of the photos were taken through the windows of my home. Private moments she would not wish other people to see.”

Both men nod, brows furrowed. They look furious.

Devon speaks next. “As a precaution, I’ll have all mail sent to my office for the time being to avoid the possibility of anyone else intercepting it and inadvertently opening the photos.”

Brett responds. “They were left in my mailbox yesterday in a manilla envelope. About a dozen eight-by-tens. I can’t guarantee that’s how they might come to you, but perhaps similarly.”

Rick nods. “We’ll be on the lookout.” He shifts his attention to me. “We will not look at them. You have my word.”

A slow relieved breath finally eases out of me. “Thank you,” I murmur.

Rick looks at Brett and then his partner and back at Brett. It feels like they are communicating something silently between them.

Brett nods.

I’m confused.

Brett gives my hands a squeeze. “I’ve met your bosses before, Lacy,” he informs me.

I gasp and look between all of them again. “Why? Where?”

“We belong to the same fetish club,” Devon says.

My heart starts pounding as I try to process this detail. “Surrender?”

“Yes.” Rick nods.

So many thoughts go through my head, starting with my conversation last night with Eve. She had been so certain my bosses would understand my plight. She knows they’re members of Surrender, but she couldn’t tell me that. It starts to sink in.

I shift my gaze back to Brett. He’s a member, too. That’s why he flinched when we stepped off the elevator. He knows my bosses.

I can’t decide if this is helpful or a disaster.

Devon taps the table. “We actually saw you at Surrender last Friday night, Lacy. We made ourselves scarce and left soon after you arrived. We didn’t want you to panic if you saw us on your first visit.”

Brett squeezes my hands again. “I’ve known Devon and Rick for a long time, but I didn’t know they were your bosses. We don’t share that kind of information at the club.”

“Oh.” And then I flinch as I realize what they would have seen. My face flushes as I look away. “So, you saw me with Eve and the others in the, uh...” I can’t bring myself to say daycare. I’d like to fall through a crack in the floor.

“Yes,” Rick says gently. “And we do not judge you. Your kink is your business. We would never tell a soul. We’ve never

breathed a word about Eve, either. Your private life is none of our business.”

“Most of those pictures won’t even shock you then,” I murmur. “Some of them were taken as I entered the club that night.” I still don’t need my bosses to see me having sex. I shudder.

“We won’t look at them, Lacy. You have my word.” Devon leans back in his chair. “We’ll do nothing more than open the envelope to verify the contents and let you know if and when it comes.”

“Thank you.” How the hell am I supposed to face these men again? I can’t believe they saw me in full Little mode, playing with Eve and the others at Surrender. I can’t even believe I did such a thing. I can’t do it again. I’m too mortified at having been caught not only by a private investigator but my own bosses. What was I thinking?

“I know it’s overwhelming right now,” Rick continues. “The first time I ran into someone I knew from the real world at Surrender, I thought my world would end. But it won’t. I promise. Ask Eve to tell you about the first time she saw us there. She was a member before us. We were visiting one night and ran into her. She was mortified. It took a while to calm her down and reassure her we would never tell anyone and that it would never affect her job.”

I pull my hands free of Brett’s and lower my face into my palms. I really can’t believe this is happening.

Devon clears his throat. He looks slightly nervous. “You will see us there, Lacy. We don’t hide who we are from the fetish community anymore. The easiest way to handle it is to simply nod as we pass each other. Our kink is not related to yours. You won’t see us in the daycare.”

I stare at him and then look toward Rick. Suddenly, I wonder what sort of kink they're interested in and why they seem to go there together. Everything they've said was *we, we, we*.

"We're a couple, Lacy," Devon says softly. "We've chosen not to share that at work. It's easier. But we live together, and we play together at Surrender."

Rick reaches over and rubs Devon's neck.

I'm so stunned I can't even blink. I had no idea. Not a single inkling. I thought they were just business partners.

Devon covers Rick's hand with his. However, his gaze is on me. "Are you going to tell anyone about our private life?"

I gasp. "Of course not. Never."

"Then you can understand that we wouldn't do that to you either. You have our word."

I nod slowly.

"I know you're scared, Lacy," Rick says gently. "I would be too if someone was blackmailing me with pictures of Devon and me together. Not everyone would understand our relationship." He waves a dismissive hand through the air. "Not the fact that we're a gay couple. We don't care much about that. But our D/s relationship isn't something we care to share. That's why we've chosen to keep our private lives to ourselves."

Devon lets out a sardonic chuckle. "In this case, your blackmailers have barked up the wrong tree. The joke is on them. We don't care who you choose to love or how you choose to express that love as long as it's consensual."

I flinch when he says *love*. That word scares me. Brett and I haven't said that to each other, and it's probably for the best. He's not going to be understanding when I tell him I just can't be who he needs me to be anymore.

Devon threads his fingers with Rick. "Don't misunderstand. Neither of us is ashamed of being gay. But we've dealt with enough prejudice in this life that we made a choice not to openly flaunt it at work. I'm sure some employees have seen us arriving or leaving together. They can think what they want."

I nod. "Thank you." For so many things. It was huge of them to share their story with me.

Brett speaks again. "You know I work for Black Blade Protection. My boss has a lot of men working on Lacy's case. It's possible we'll have to travel to Indiana. She'll keep you posted."

Devon nods his understanding. "Take the time you need, Lacy. We understand. I'm so sorry you're going through this. If you need to take some time off, do so. Your job will be here when you get back."

I don't want to cry in front of them, so I don't even attempt to speak. All I can do is nod as Brett stands and guides me to do the same.

Devon and Rick stand, too. The three men shake hands, and we leave.

Brett threads our fingers together and holds me close all the way to the elevator and inside it, too.

I don't take a full breath until we step outside. It's like I couldn't get enough oxygen. I feel lightheaded and exhausted.

He guides me to his SUV. “You need food, Lacy. You’re about to pass out.”

I nod as he helps me into the car. I know he’s right. I just don’t see how I’m going to swallow.

“How about if I go through the drive-thru of a deli? We can pick up sandwiches and soups.”

“Okay.” I ride to the deli and back to the hotel staring out the window. Numb. I have so many questions. I can’t even begin to know where to start. My brain is on overload.

“Sit, baby,” Brett orders when we’re back in the room. He points at the loveseat. After setting the bags of food on the coffee table, he pulls it closer to us and sits next to me. He unzips my jacket and takes it off.

I finally snap out of it as he’s tugging the sleeves down my arms. I swat at him. “I can do it.” I shouldn’t be letting him Daddy me. He’s getting the wrong idea.

He doesn’t say a word as I shrug out of my jacket and toss it over the arm of the loveseat.

His phone rings, and he stands as he takes the call. “Spike here.”

I watch him as he wanders to the window. He says nothing else. He listens for a long time. Eventually, he says, “Okay. Yes. Thank you.” He ends the call and stares out the window for a few moments before turning around.

The bag of food is sitting unopened on the coffee table, and I suspect it’s going to remain there. I stand. “Tell me,” I insist.

CHAPTER 17



Brett

“Spike here,” I say as I take the incoming call from Blade. I’m not surprised he’s calling, but I doubt Lacy needs to hear whatever he has to say right this moment. She’s practically catatonic.

She’s in shock. It’s understandable. I can almost see her mind spinning. She’s going to insist she doesn’t want to be Little anymore because she’s afraid of getting caught and ridiculed.

I had no idea her bosses were Rick and Devon from Surrender. Obviously, Eve knew, but it wasn’t her place to share their secret. I couldn’t hold back my gasp as we exited the elevator. I’m sure Lacy noticed. Luckily, I didn’t have to continue to keep that secret.

Even hearing Rick and Devon reassure Lacy that they would not look at any pictures if they were to show up, that they don’t care what her kinks are, and that they would never let her preferences reflect on her job performance, she still has her heels dug in.

Blade jumps right in. “I assume you’re with Lacy, and I’ll let you decide when and how to share this with her. I spoke with a private investigator last night, Kane Scott. Luckily, he had a connection in that area in Indiana. I’ve seen the will.”

I don’t even ask how the fuck this is possible. I’m sure I don’t want to know. That’s immaterial. I wait for him to continue. I don’t want to react.

“It’s as we suspected. The will was never updated. Even though Lacy’s father threatened to cut her out, he did not. He never changed it. It’s possible his partner is just as stunned as Lacy. He needs that money. Turns out, he’s in debt up to his eyeballs. So is his son. They’ve been pretending everything was okay for a long time when, really, they spend weekends gambling away their money. Horse races put them over the edge a few years ago. They’re desperate.”

What did you really die of, Jonathan Harlow?

Blade continues. “I know your mind.” He chuckles. “I’m asking the same questions. Did her father really have a heart attack like the coroner’s report indicates? I’ve seen it. I have my doubts. And who paid the coroner to lie if that wasn’t the cause of death?”

Yep. Those are my exact questions.

“More fun facts,” Blade says. “The will does not indicate she has to be present in Indiana for any reason. The Rutherfords are simply trying to convince her this is the case. I have no doubt they’d love for her to show up. It would make it much easier for them to somehow get their grubby hands on her father’s money.”

I agree.

“I smell a fish,” Blade growls. “I’d rather we hang tight a bit longer. I’m still digging into the Rutherfords’ undoubtedly long list of crimes. If we can nail them on something big, they can spend their lives in prison without Lacy needing to be involved.”

He’s taking the words right out of my mouth. I haven’t said a single word during this entire one-way conversation. When it seems he’s done sharing, I say, “Okay. Yes. Thank you.” And then I hang up.

For a few moments, I simply stare out the window before I turn to face Lacy.

Her arms are crossed. Her brow is furrowed. She rises to her feet to face off with me. “Tell me.”

I can’t leave her in the dark. “Your instincts were correct. You don’t want to get messed up with the Rutherfords for any reason. They aren’t good men. For now, we need to hang tight and lie low while Blade and the others do their jobs.”

“Here?” she asks, brows raised incredulously as if I’ve suggested we catch and skin our own food to survive in these horrifying conditions.

“Yes, baby, here.”

She glances at the bed. “Can’t I go back to my apartment?”

My fucking chest tightens. “You’re safer here. I have no way of knowing if any men Maximillian hired are still looking for you. If they are, you don’t want to be in your apartment.” I’m trying to reason with her, but all she can see is my fury.

Her shoulders drop. “Fine.” She lowers back onto the love seat as though she weighs a thousand pounds and can’t hold her body up for another moment.

I hate that she's being so distant with me. I know it's not personal. She's suffering. Her head is in a dark place. She thinks if she denies her Little, she can stuff her into a closet and leave her there where no one will find out she exists and ridicule her.

It's no way to live one's life. In denial or hiding. Now that she's spent some quality time in her Little space, she's going to struggle to tamp it down indefinitely. I've seen people try it before. It eats away at them until they snap.

I wander back to the loveseat, open the bag of food, and pull out the contents. "You want the tomato soup or the chicken noodle, Lacy?"

"I don't care."

I'm not sure she's even listening to me. I open them both and set them in front of her, handing her the spoon. Next, I open the two sandwiches—chicken salad and roast beef. I set those in front of her as well. I'll wait to see what she wants to eat.

I open a bottle of water and set it behind the sandwiches. "You have to eat, Lacy," I order as carefully as possible.

She jerks her gaze to me. "Stop ordering me around. I'll eat when I fucking want to eat." She stands and paces away from me.

I draw in breath. We're treading on thin ice here. As her Daddy, I should not let her get away with this. But I don't want to alienate her either. As her boyfriend, her man, I want to be supportive and helpful. Both sides of me need to hold her and tell her it's going to be okay.

We have a microwave. The food can be reheated. First, we need to clear some of the thick air between us.

I rise to my feet and step toward her. “Come here, Little lamb.” I’m done not using that endearment. I’m done pretending it’s okay for her to ignore her Little. She needs it. She will feel so much better when she lets her Little come back out.

She flinches and takes a step back. “No.” Her voice is comically petulant. She even crosses her arms. “You can’t Daddy me. I don’t want to be Little anymore. It’s too much. I need you to stop trying to lure me into a fetish I’m not interested in.”

It’s hard not to react to her defiance. She’s slipping into Little space without even trying. It’s effortless now that she’s spent enough time there to know how good and natural it feels.

“I’m sorry for everything that’s happening to you. It breaks my heart to see you hurting. I’m going to do everything in my power to fix things so you don’t have to spend your life looking over your shoulder, but you need to cut yourself some slack here, Little lamb.”

“I’m not your Little lamb,” she retorts, leaning forward, arms crossed tight, chin jutting out.

“You’re always going to be my Little lamb,” I tell her gently. She needs me to be calm. A rock. Steady. She needs someone to love her unconditionally through this storm. I am that man.

She shakes her head. Her hair is down, and it sways around her shoulders. She would like the effect more if it were in pigtails. It’s hard to whip it around when it’s down.

I keep advancing, and she keeps backing up until she’s in the corner near the window, her back to the wall. It’s the same place she slid down into a ball last night.

“Lacy...” I set my hands on either side of her head and hold her gaze.

“Don’t touch me,” she murmurs.

“Why not, Little lamb? Tell me.”

“Because I said so,” she retorts, arms crossed again in a huff.

“I’m going to need a better reason than that, Little lamb.” I slide one hand closer so I can finger a lock of her hair.

She jerks her head to the side to dislodge me. “Stop it.”

“Tell me, Lacy. Tell Daddy why you don’t want me to touch you.” I have a strong suspicion. I want to hear her say it. I lean in closer so our breath mingles. That’s almost like touching. I let my nose brush against hers.

She gasps and swats at my chest. “Stop it, Daddy.” She gasps, eyes wide, before twisting her head to one side and squeezing her eyes closed.

Bingo. “What happens when Daddy touches you, Little lamb?” I stroke her cheek with my thumb.

She leans into my touch and lets me cup her face with my palm. “I can’t deny you when you’re touching me,” she admits.

“I think it’s that you can’t deny your Little when I touch you.”

“Same thing,” she whispers.

“You can’t stuff her in a closet and not let her out, Little lamb. She’s already been out. She can’t go back in.”

“Yes, she can. She has to. It’s not safe to come out,” Lacy argues in a very little voice as she swipes at her teary eyes.

“I’m going to do everything in my power to ensure it’s as safe as possible for the rest of your life, Little lamb. I’m not perfect. Sometimes, bad things happen. Occasionally, someone is going to find out you’re Little. Those times will be stressful for a while. You might have to explain yourself or defend your preferred kink. But you’re strong. You can do it. And I will always be there to help you through the rough times.”

“Don’t want to,” she argues. “It’s too hard.”

“Not as hard as adulting all the time when what you really need and want is to turn your care over to me and let me handle the tough stuff.”

She sniffles. After a moment, she throws herself at me, wrapping her arms around my middle and clinging to me for dear life.

I grab her, lift her off the floor into my arms and carry her away from the damn corner. I hate that corner. I’m not using it for any fucking timeouts while we’re here. I don’t think she’s in any state of mind for timeouts, anyway. She needs physical contact, not time alone.

She’s shaking in my arms as she clings to me, her feet dangling.

I carry her to the armchair, settle in it, and lift her onto my lap to hold her close, sideways. I love how she draws her knees up and curls into a tight ball on my thighs, her small arms around my neck as if she might fall off the edge of the earth if she lets go.

I rub her back and whisper in her ear. “It’s okay, Little lamb. Daddy’s got you.”

She doesn’t cry, but she sniffles. She’s probably out of tears. “Are you sure?” she asks.

“Definitely. I will always have you. Every time you need to be Little, I will have you. If you fall, I will pick you back up. If you stumble, I will catch you. If you need to cry, I will hold you. If you need to laugh, I will...tickle you.” I give her tummy a quick tickle to emphasize my point.

She scrunches to that side. “Stop it, Daddy.”

I cup her bottom with one hand. “How about you let Daddy change you out of these jeans and into something more comfortable? You’ll feel much better if we spend the afternoon snuggled together on the loveseat watching cartoons. You can hold Bear, Banana, and Jasmine. What do you say?”

She tips her head back finally. “I didn’t bring anything Little.”

“I did,” I tell her.

Her eyes widen. “You did?”

“Of course. A Daddy is always prepared.”

She cups my face with both hands. “I’m sorry I’ve been naughty.”

“It’s okay, Little lamb. I understand. You’re under a lot of pressure. It’s a lot to handle. But I think you’ll feel better if you spend some time not handling anything at all. Let Daddy hold the burden for a while. Yeah?”

“Okay,” she whispers.

I stand, still holding her, and carry her to the bed, where I sit her on the edge before pulling her shirt over her head. Next, I remove her bra and lean her back to unbutton and unzip her jeans before pulling them down her legs.

I’m pleased to see that, even though she spent the morning in her adult space, she has on plain cotton panties with little

hearts on them.

I reach for my duffle bag, open it, and pull out a lavender cotton dress. It will be comfortable and easy. Perfect for a day in front of the television. If her legs get cold, I'll cover them with a blanket.

After I pull the dress over her head, I lift her to her feet and guide her to the bathroom. "How about pigtails?"

She nods, smiling.

I carefully brush through her thick hair, part it, and arrange it in two nearly perfect pigtails, if I do say so myself.

She looks pleased.

"Now, it's time to eat. If I let you watch cartoons while we eat, will you let Daddy feed you?"

She nods agreeably.

Back on the loveseat, I turn on the television and start flipping through channels until she yells, "This one."

I stop, chuckling at her selection. It's at least forty years old. But it will make both of us laugh. The silly antics of older cartoons are funnier than some of the more recent ones.

When I take the lids off the soups, I decide they are both still plenty warm. I lift the tomato soup first, bring it closer to her chin, and spoon a bite into her mouth.

She moans around the flavor. "That's so good."

I set it down and switch it for the chicken noodle. "What about this one?" I give her a bite of option number two.

She thinks hard while she chews and swallows. "Mmm. That's a difficult decision. I better try them both again."

I laugh. Thank God she's eating. I don't care if she eats both bowls of soup as long as she gets something in her. She'll feel much better.

My chest is starting to loosen up. I've been a ball of nerves myself for almost twenty-four hours. Feeding Lacy feeds my soul at the same time.

Lacy ends up eating most of the two soups and some of the chicken salad sandwich. I eat the rest, clean up the mess, and settle in the corner of the loveseat, pulling her onto my lap.

She snuggles up with her head on my shoulder, Banana, Bear, and Jasmine in her arms. She giggles at the television for a while until she goes silent when she falls asleep.

I mute the TV and watch her for a while. Nothing is more satisfying and peaceful than holding my Little in my arms while she's at rest. She's got to be exhausted. I know she needs sleep. She hasn't gotten enough lately.

I hope to God Blade can dig something up on the Rutherfords soon that will put an end to this madness. We're still going to have to deal with the fact that she's the beneficiary of her father's will, but that's not what's important here.

What matters in the short run is the fact that it would seem the Rutherfords need that money. Maximillian undoubtedly thought he was the beneficiary of the will and was shocked to find out that was not the case. I feel more confident by the hour that he had his partner killed. Now, he's scrambling to figure out how to get the money.

The scariest part is that he needs one of two things to happen. The first is for Lacy to marry his son so he can get

control of her money. That's going to happen over my dead body.

The second possibility is that Rutherford intends to take Lacy out of the picture. *That* is also going to happen over my dead body. The man may be a ruthless, underhanded lawyer, but he has nothing on me and my team. He's a fool if he hasn't figured out who I am and who he's dealing with.

He's getting careless. If he had that fire started and hired a PI to take pictures of Lacy, he's desperate. We just need to hold on for a few days. Hopefully, Blade will dig something up on him that will nip this fucking situation in the bud.

Lacy squirms on my lap. "Daddy..." She's asleep. She must be having a good dream based on the tone of her voice.

My cock goes hard in an instant.

God, I love her. The thought keeps coming back. Consuming me. I haven't said it out loud yet because I don't want her to panic, but I love her.

As she snuggles deeper against me, I brush a lock of hair from her forehead. In my head, I start planning our future. I never want her to go back to that apartment. We should go in, retrieve her things, and break the lease. Period.

Lacy belongs in my home. I never want to spend a single night without her by my side. I'm not sure I could even sleep. I would have moved to the loveseat last night if she'd insisted, but it would have nearly broken me. I almost couldn't breathe until she finally rolled in my direction and wrapped her body around mine.

I suspect we will have to go to Indiana and deal with the Rutherfords. It's the last thing I want Lacy to do, but it's the

best way to put an end to this situation. Those two are liable to continue terrorizing Lacy until she gives in.

She won't be meeting those assholes alone. That's for damn sure. I will never let her out of my sight. Out of arm's reach is too far.

I want everything. I want a happily ever after for us. I want to be able to drop her off at work and pick her up in the evening without worrying that something might happen to her in the meantime. Right now, I can't do that. Not with arsonists and at least one PI following her everywhere she goes.

"Daddy?" Her sweet voice floats up to me, and I meet her gaze, smiling.

"What, Little lamb?"

"I'm sorry I was naughty." Her voice is so small.

"You weren't naughty, Little lamb. No reason to be sorry. You're dealing with more than most people face in a lifetime. It's overwhelming and stressful. I know you're not used to having anyone help you, but I'm here now. I want to help. I want to be your soft place. It will break my heart if you don't let me."

Her eyes are wide. "Okay, Daddy."

I lean down and kiss her lips. There is hope. It's blooming.

CHAPTER 18



Lacy

On the third day in the hotel room, I'm stir-crazy. Daddy won't let me leave the room at all, not even to go to the ice machine. He doesn't leave me, either. He gets one of the other men from Black Blade Protection to get ice and bring it to us. He has them pick up food for us, too. I'm pretty sure there's always at least one man guarding us outside of this room at all times.

"How long are we going to stay here?" I whine. I've been Little for most of the past two days. I'm so deep in the space that my voice is babyish, and I tend to whimper often.

Daddy snags me from behind, wrapping his arms around me and hauling me away from the window. He doesn't like me standing near the window. He kisses my neck. "Not much longer."

I haven't been to work or out of this room since I met with my bosses on Saturday. I'm still reeling from finding out they are both members of Surrender. The fact that they're a couple isn't as shocking. My curiosity about where their kink lies is piqued.

“Daddy,” I complain. “That’s not specific at all. Days? Weeks?”

“Not weeks, Little lamb. I promise. How about if we do a puzzle?”

Eve and Colt went to Daddy’s house and packed up clothes and toys for me. One of Daddy’s coworkers brought it all to the hotel a few days ago. I shouldn’t be bored, but I’m restless.

I groan. “Another puzzle?”

“We could color,” he suggests.

“My pencils are dull, and I don’t have a sharpener.” I have a list of complaints. I’m being petty.

“Want me to read you a story?”

“You’ve read all the books we have,” I argue.

He slides one hand up to my breast and the other down to my pussy, cupping both. “We could have sex,” he whispers in my ear.

Now this I can’t whine about. I’m always on board for sex. I slowly smile but give him a fake groan. “Fine. If you can’t think of anything else. I guess we can do that.”

He bends slightly, spins me around, picks me up off the floor, and tosses me over his shoulder. His palm makes contact with my bottom immediately.

I squeal with laughter and fake protest. “Daddy!”

He tosses me on the bed so that I bounce, and then he climbs over me. His mouth is on my shoulder, neck, ear, and cheek. He kisses me everywhere, making a path to my other ear. “If it’s a hardship...” he growls.

I wrap my legs around his waist and hold him to me. “I can make this sacrifice for you,” I tease.

He chuckles and dislodges me with very little effort before flipping me over and straddling me so he’s sitting on my thighs, holding me face down to the bed. He palms my panty-covered bottom. The only other thing I’m wearing is a short cotton dress. It has ridden up my waist.

His hands slide up under my dress higher and higher until he drags his fingers along the sides of my breasts.

I whimper and arch. “Daddy...”

“Sacrifice, huh?”

I’m kind of sorry I made that joke. It’s probably going to bite me in the butt. I shake my head. “I was kidding, Daddy.”

“Mmm. Were you? I think I should see how much you’re willing to sacrifice.” He tucks a hand in my panties and slides it down until he’s cupping my pussy, stroking through my wet folds. “Such a wet little sacrificial lamb.”

I moan as he eases a finger into me.

“A tight Little lamb, too.” He removes his finger and thrusts it in deeper. “I appreciate you sacrificing this tight hole for Daddy’s pleasure.”

My eyes roll back in my head when he adds a second finger and presses against my clit at the same time. I can’t move. He has me pinned. When I arch my chest off the bed, he slides his other hand down to cup my breast. He pinches my nipple. The pleasure/pain races to my pussy. I’m going to come wantonly and fast.

He adds another finger, and I come. Hard. So fast that I can’t catch my breath. I’m panting and wiggling in his hold

while he continues to fuck me with his fingers and stroke my clit. He doesn't release my nipple, either.

"You are so sexy, Lacy." His voice is deep with arousal. "So damn gorgeous when you come. Thank you for your sacrifice."

I giggle.

When he finally removes his hand from my panties, he lifts his weight off my thighs, allowing me to flip over just in time to watch him licking his fingers clean.

I'm breathing hard still. I reach for him. "Please. Need you."

"More sacrifice?" he teases.

"Always."

He scrambles off the bed and removes his clothes while I yank my dress over my head and shrug out of my panties. I spread my legs, grateful that he climbs between them. His hands slide under my shoulder blades as his lips come to mine.

His kiss is deep and consuming. I become one with him when he kisses me. I can't get enough of him. My hands roam up his back. I dig my fingertips into his shoulders. I need him inside me.

My breath hitches when he thrusts into me, filling me, making me whole. "Yes..." I mutter.

He grinds the base of his cock against my clit before pulling out and doing it again. The rhythm he sets up is perfect because he knows my body so well. He knows exactly how to make me come and how to make me wait.

Luckily, he doesn't make me wait. He grabs my shoulders, releases my lips, and meets my gaze, "Come for me, Lacy."

I do as he commands, pulsing around his erection while he follows behind me.

How could I ever think of leaving this man? He calls to both my Little and my adult in perfect proportions. I want this. I want it forever.

As I come down from my high, listening to the two of us breathe, I wonder if we will ever escape my problems and live happily ever after.

CHAPTER 19



Brett

“Is this one okay, Lacy?” I hold up a skirt to show her. We’re at my house, packing clean clothes before we head for the airport.

“I don’t care.” She doesn’t even glance at what I’m holding. I can’t blame her. She’s done nothing but pace since we got here. She was stir-crazy in the hotel room. We both were. But now that we’re at my place, she’s more nervous.

She keeps glancing at the windows. I know she won’t rest easy until we catch the PI who took the pics.

The good news is, we know where the pics were taken from—two locations, one through the windows at the front of the house and one through windows at the back of the house. Blade managed to tap into surveillance cameras at several surrounding properties, so he has images of the PI. He’s even used facial recognition to identify him. The only thing left is to find the guy. He’s in the wind.

I stop asking for Lacy’s opinions about her clothes and do the best I can to pack for both of us. Our flight to Indiana is in three hours. We have plenty of time.

Lacy steps toward a corner of the room, wringing her hands in that nervous way she does. She's out of sight of the windows.

I like this house. I've lived in it for several years, but if I have to sell it to make Lacy more comfortable, I will. I'm hoping she will agree to shutters and window tinting. Something that allows us to see out without people seeing in.

Most people go their entire lives without worrying about Peeping Toms, but once a person has pictures taken of them in their own home, it changes their perspective. It's freaking me out, too.

I don't think we're going to need the skirt, blouse, and pumps I pack for Lacy. They're just in case. I'm not planning on us staying for more than a day or two, and I'm confident she will be more comfortable in jeans and a T-shirt. But I'm packing for other possible eventualities.

I finally zip up the suitcase and take quick strides toward her. I wrap my arms around her and press her into the corner. I set my forehead against hers. "You don't have to do this," I remind her for the tenth time.

"Yes, I do. It's the only way to make it stop. I can't spend my life looking over my shoulder, waiting for the other shoe to drop. They won't stop hounding me until I show my face."

She's basically bait, and I hate it. Blade has repeatedly assured me that she will never be in any danger. She certainly won't be separated from me. Not for one second. I'll go in fucking public bathrooms with her if she has to pee. I've told her this. She thinks I'm kidding.

"If you panic or change your mind, just say the word. I won't have you upset or overly stressed by this. We'll figure

something else out.”

“I know,” she says softly. “Blade has gone over it with me ten times, Brett. I can do this. I’ll be fine.”

“Okay. Let’s go.” I grab the suitcase and my backpack and hand Lacy her purse.

Colt is waiting for us out front. He’s driving us to the airport. Dagger, Mace, and Cannon are also going with us. They’re on the same flight but will arrive separately, and we will act like we don’t know them. They will be on us at all times as soon as we reach Indiana.

The ride to the airport is quiet, and Lacy says very little during the flight. It’s almost ten o’clock before we get to our hotel, get checked in, and into a room.

The Rutherfords don’t know we’re coming. The plan is to show up unannounced tomorrow morning. They won’t be able to prepare for our arrival. We will have backup and a plan.

I drop our bags on the bed and turn toward Lacy. “Bath or shower?”

“Shower,” she mumbles.

“Do you need some Little space?”

She shakes her head. “No. I just need sleep.”

I take her hand and lead her to the bathroom, where I turn on the water before I strip both of us and guide her into the shower with me. “Let me wash you, Little lamb,” I whisper.

“Okay.” She remains quiet while I wash both of us, switching back and forth between shampoo, conditioner, and soap. After I get us rinsed off, I turn off the water, help her out, and wrap her in a towel.

I hate how quiet she is. I want this over with. I want Lacy to get to the other side of this problem and be free of worry, stress, and fear. I hope to God that when this is over, she can be the carefree Little girl I know she has inside her. Laughing and playing in her Little space when she's home. Crunching numbers and ruling the universe when she's in business mode at work.

I already know she's an amazing woman who can juggle both with mastery. I've seen glimpses of her ability to toggle between her two selves. She doesn't believe it's possible as strongly as I do, but she will. In time.

After I dry her hair, I hang up her towel, and we head back to the bedroom, where I pull back the covers and usher her to climb in. "Do you want a T-shirt?"

She shakes her head. We usually sleep naked together. She says she feels closer to me when we're both naked. Even when we aren't amorous or about to have sex, we still snuggle up naked.

I hand Lacy the one stuffie we brought—Banana—and she smiles at me as she pulls him under the covers. "Thank you," she murmurs after I turn out the lights and climb in, pulling her into my arms.

I kiss the top of her head. I don't know what she's thanking me for, but it doesn't matter. I'd do anything for her.

Other than Banana, we didn't bring anything specifically Little, but Lacy tends to defer to me the moment we're alone, no matter where we are or what the circumstances are. She might be inside her head dealing with a million different things. She might not call me Daddy for a while when she's hovering in that space. But she lets me do things for her anyway, like bathe, dress, and hold her.

Her Little is powerful and beautiful. She brings me to my knees.

She's mine.



I'm shocked when I awake with a start and glance at the clock. It's seven in the morning. We slept hard. Lacy is still against my side, but she stirs. I'm sure I startled her when I jerked awake.

"Is it morning?" she murmurs.

"Yeah, but it's early." I kiss her temple. "We can snuggle a bit longer."

"I can't believe I slept."

"I did, too."

"In an odd way, I felt safe here. Like we're hiding in plain sight. Now that we're only a few miles from the law office, no one can find us because they have no idea where to look."

I smile. "Good point. You still okay with today's plan?"

"Yes." She doesn't hesitate. "I can do this, Brett. I promise."

"I know you can. You can do anything in the world you set your mind to. You're so fucking amazing. But that doesn't mean you have to. If it doesn't feel right, we'll abort the plan."

She shakes her head. "We're not going to abort. We've come this far, and we have a plan. We're sticking to it." She's determined. She lifts a few inches, cups my face, and kisses me. "Thank you."

"For what?"

“For doing this for me. For involving your entire company in protecting me. For making sure I don’t have to live my life in fear. I’ll never be able to express how much I appreciate your help.”

I reach over and turn the light on, causing us both to squint until we adjust to the brightness. I push up to lean against the headboard before pulling Lacy onto my lap.

She straddles me, her pussy pressing against my cock even though we’re having a serious moment.

I cup her face. “I love you.” It just slides out.

Her eyes widen. Her mouth falls open. Tears well up. “How can you know that? We’ve only been together a few weeks, and I’ve been nothing but a pain in the ass the entire time.”

“You’re not a pain in the ass, Lacy. None of this is your fault. We’re going to fix it. We’re going to walk through these waters together because that’s what couples do.”

I’m not worried that she didn’t return my words. I didn’t expect her to. But I wanted her to know before we leave this room that she is not some burden I’ve taken on out of some altruistic need to save her. She’s mine.

She swallows hard. “What if we fail? What if the Rutherfords never stop hounding me?” Suddenly, she sits taller. “Can’t I just give them the money? That’s what they want anyway. They want my father’s fucking money. Can’t I just sign the papers and write them a check? Maybe that would appease them.”

“If I thought that would work, I would suggest it, but they’re criminals, Lacy. Greedy, money-grubbing criminals. They would blackmail you for more money and then more.”

She rubs her face. “I know you’re right. I’m just trying to come up with some way to end this that’s tidy.”

“I don’t think tidy is in our repertoire today, Little lamb. We’re going to have to trust that Blade’s plan is solid. Our job today is to walk into the office and demand to see the will. Take them by surprise.”

She nods. “Okay.”

I pat her naked bottom. If we had time, I’d lift her and slide into her warmth, but we need to get in the shower instead. And the only runner-up to sex with Lacy is showering with Lacy. It’s so intimate. It’s an emotional experience.

I lift her off me and set her on the floor before patting her bottom. “Shower, naughty girl. Then breakfast.”

“I don’t think I can eat.”

“You need to eat something. I’ll place an order for room service.”

“Will you feed me?” she asks, tipping her head back. She’s so very Little when she asks me that.

I slide to the edge of the bed and tip her chin back. “I’d happily feed you every morsel for the rest of your life.”

“It tastes better when you feed me,” she murmurs.

I stand and pull her into my arms, my hand threading in her hair while I kiss the top of her head. My chest is tight. Full. I’ve never been in love before. It’s an amazing and scary, vulnerable feeling.

CHAPTER 20



Lacy

Inside, I'm a disaster. Outside, I'm hell on wheels. I'm glad Brett brought me a professional outfit because, after we showered, I felt like I wanted to walk into this office in heels, fit to do business.

“Ready?” he whispers.

We're outside the door of my father's law office. It still says *Harlow and Rutherford* on it. I know both the Rutherfords are inside because three men have been surveilling this building all morning. I also know no one else is inside.

But more importantly, I know the police are in the stairwell. Four of them. They looked like a SWAT team when I saw them as we passed them.

I'm wired. Brett is wired. It's showtime.

I nod, reach for the handle, and open the door. No one is in the reception area when we step inside, but I hear a small chime that indicates someone in the office is being notified of our arrival.

A voice from somewhere in the offices shouts, “Be right out.” It’s the older Maximillian.

I shudder at the sound of his voice. Never did like it. He even sounds like the kind of lawyer who does shady business. I wonder if his beer gut will be larger than the last time I saw him ten years ago.

I keep my gaze on the entrance to the hallway, well aware of Brett by my side. He isn’t directly touching me, but his elbow brushes against mine. Even through my blouse and his dress shirt, I can feel the warmth. It’s a connection. It grounds me.

“What can I do for you?” comes the voice right before Maximillian II steps around the corner.

I stare at him, waiting for recognition. It doesn’t take long. His eyes widen in shock for a moment before he smiles. “Lacy. How are you? I wasn’t expecting you today. Why didn’t you call? I could’ve sent Max to pick you up from the airport.” He glances at Brett with a poorly contained snarl.

“It wasn’t necessary. I have a car,” I tell him.

“Come on in.” He swings a hand out, motioning toward the hallway before narrowing his gaze at Brett. “You can wait out here.”

“Not gonna happen,” Brett informs him.

I stand tall. “I’m only here to see the will. I assume the will stipulates that I must be present to read it. You can bring it out front.”

Maximillian swallows. “Now, I never said that.” He glances at Brett, probably wondering what Brett does for a living. Surely his PI told him. But maybe Max only paid for the photos and no information. He’s a cheap bastard up to his

eyeballs in debt. He might not have asked his PI to do more than obtain blackmail pics.

Suddenly, Max III steps into view. “Oh, Lacy. About time you showed up. It’s been weeks. What kind of daughter doesn’t even come to her father’s funeral?”

His father elbows him and shoots him a look before addressing me again. “We can go over the specifics in my office. You won’t need a bodyguard.”

“Mr. Rutherford,” I say in a formal voice. “I’m not coming any farther into this office. Either bring the will out here, or I will have my lawyer meet us here.”

“That won’t be necessary, Lacy. Good grief. Your father was my closest friend. I don’t know why you’re getting so defensive.”

I’m pretty sure it started when I was about fourteen, and my father’s “friend” and partner grabbed my boobs one day. He chuckled and said, “Your titties are finally coming in.”

I shudder at the memory. I wanted to slap him across the face right then. I would have run to my father, but he was in the room at the time. He simply snickered and told Maximillian to “leave the girl alone.”

At this point, Blade is confident Maximillian had my father murdered, so what kind of friend was he really?

“Do I need to call my lawyer?” I ask.

Maximillian narrows his gaze. “No. I’ll grab it.”

While he’s gone, his son saunters closer. “Did you think you needed a fucking bodyguard to visit us?” he snarls, glancing at Brett.

“He’s my boyfriend, not a bodyguard.” I come a second shy of adding *asshole*. I’m beyond grateful Brett is letting me handle this for the most part. I can feel him stiffen beside me, but he’s letting me speak for myself.

Max narrows his eyes.

“But you don’t need me to tell you that, do you?” I continue. “After all, you have dozens of pictures of us fucking. How much did those cost you? Must have been a bundle since you only paid for the pictures and no other information.” I’m hedging, but I know I’m correct.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Max says. He even manages to look shocked.

I roll my eyes. “Sure...”

His father returns. He’s holding a manilla folder. “It would be easier for you to come back to my office. There’s not enough room up here to sit and no table.”

I hold out my hand. “We don’t need to sit at a table. Give me the will.”

He doesn’t release it. “There are things we need to go over, Lacy. It takes time and space.”

“What things? Like how I’m the beneficiary instead of you? That must’ve been a shock. You really needed that money, didn’t you?”

His eyes widen. “How could you know what’s in the will?”

I glare at him. “Doesn’t take a rocket scientist. You wouldn’t have harassed me, stalked me, blackmailed me, and hired an arsonist to smoke me out of my apartment building if my father had left the money to you instead of me. You probably wouldn’t have even called to let me know he’d died.

It must've been a shock when you opened that will, huh? I bet you shit yourself. You really should've forked out the money to dig a little deeper into my boyfriend's background before you hired an arsonist and a PI."

Brett steps closer to me. I know he's prepared to step in front of me or even take me down to the floor if either of these motherfuckers pulls a weapon.

Though I'm not very concerned since Brett is a trained former Army Ranger. If needed, he will have his gun out before either of them can even reach for a weapon. He could shoot both of them in the forehead without flinching.

"Now, you listen to me, Lacy. I don't know what the hell you're talking about. You should watch yourself before you go around accusing people of things." Maximillian hitches up his pants, but he can't get them over his gut, so it's a wasted effort.

Brett growls. "And *you* should consider not using your personal bank account to pay your PI or your hitman. It's common knowledge. They teach it in Assassins for Hire 101."

Even though Brett and Blade explained all of this to me before we left Seattle, it's still hard for me to wrap my head around. I never liked my father's partner, but I didn't figure he would try to have me killed. Greedy fucker.

Maximillian gasps. His face goes completely white. He knows he's caught. A slow smirk grows on his face a moment later. It's time to go in for the kill. I hope this fucking works.

"You've got just one choice here," Brett informs him. It's his turn to handle this situation, just like we planned. "Give Lacy the will and let her walk out of here or spend the rest of your lives in prison."

“You can’t prove any of that. It will be your word against mine. Now, I know you’re guessing. I never used my personal account for anything. I used offshore accounts. No one will ever be able to trace a dime.”

I count to three slowly while Brett wraps an arm around me and eases me to one side of the room.

The door behind us flies open, and the four cops storm in, guns drawn. “Hands in the air,” the one in front shouts.

The Rutherfords look stunned, and they don’t comply.

“*Now*,” the officer shouts. “I want to see hands in the air.”

One of the other officers reaches out to snatch the manilla folder from Maximillian’s hand. He passes it to Brett as he circles behind Maximillian and wrestles his arms to the small of his back to cuff them.

I’m doing everything I can to keep from shaking. My knees are close to buckling, but I manage to remain standing. I do not want to appear weak in any way.

When the younger Max starts to argue, his father tells him to shut up. “I’ll be calling my lawyer,” he informs us.

“You do that,” Brett says.

Max smirks on his way by as he’s escorted out of the office. It makes my skin crawl. “This isn’t over,” he grumbles.

Two cops leave, and two stay behind. They ask a million questions. At least I’m finally able to sit on one of the hard plastic, uncomfortable reception chairs. They’ve been here for so long, I remember them.

It takes over an hour, and when they’re done questioning me, I’m exhausted.

Brett has flipped through the will, but I know he's already seen it. He doesn't comment until the police are done. "As suspected, your father left everything to you. We can't know how much money that is, of course."

"I don't want it," I retort quickly, shuddering. "He was an asshole. It's not very clean."

"He may have been a shady lawyer, Lacy, but I don't think his money is dirty."

"I don't want it," I state again. I stand. "Can we get out of here?"

"Yes."

We follow the police out of the office. They lock it behind us. "We're parked in back." One of the officers extends a hand to me. "Sorry for all the trouble, ma'am. I hope everything will get straightened out. You did a great job."

"Was it enough?" I ask him.

"Should be. You got him to admit he paid the PI and the arsonist. That will be difficult to deny in court. But more importantly, the Rutherfords have a long string of crimes they'll be facing."

He shakes Brett's hand next. "Thank your boss and the rest of your team for us. Sometimes, private agencies provide us with information we can't get on our own."

The two men turn and head toward the back of the building while Brett leads me toward the elevators and the front. He sets a hand on the small of my back as we walk.

With his other hand, he lifts his phone and records an oral text to the three men stationed outside this building, letting them know it's over, and we're coming out.

The moment we step out into the sunshine, Brett's phone vibrates.

I glance around. Unexplained unease climbs up my spine. Something feels off. I can't put my finger on it. Maybe it's just the adrenaline rush crashing.

Brett pulls his phone out less than a second before gunfire fills my ears.

He throws his body at me, taking me to the sidewalk. His hand comes to the back of my head, keeping me from slamming my skull into the concrete.

The breath is knocked out of me as more shots ring out. The glass behind us shatters, raining down around us.

I squeeze my eyes shut to avoid the glass. Brett is crushing me. I can't breathe. Has he been shot?

The shots keep coming, but they seem to be above us. Some of them aren't as loud. They must be return shots, coming from either the police or Brett's co-workers. And then there's the sound of tires screeching a moment before a loud crash.

I can't move, mostly because of Brett. The world seems eerily silent for a few moments before shouting is heard all around us.

I shove at Brett. "Are you hit?"

He lifts his head. "No, Little lamb. Are *you* okay?" He rises off me a few inches, scanning up and down my body.

"I'm fine."

"Are you sure? I took you down hard."

“My ass is going to hurt,” I tell him, “but other than that, I’m fine.”

He rises to his knees, keeping a hand on my chest. “Stay down.”

“Brett...”

He shoots me a look and leans over me so his face is inches from mine. “Stay down until Daddy makes sure it’s safe. Understood?”

I nod. I certainly can’t argue with Daddy.

He looks around. Someone races over to us, gun in his hand. He looms. “You okay, Lacy?” It’s Dagger.

“Yes.” I know I’m going to be sore tomorrow, but right now, my adrenaline is once again pumping so hard I can’t feel anything.

Brett helps me slowly to my feet.

When I look around, I see that a car crashed hard into a light pole. The person I assume is the driver is leaning against the side of the car, holding his head. Blood is running down his face.

The two officers we just left upstairs are with him. They suddenly spin him around so he’s facing the wrecked car, wrestle his arms behind him, and cuff him.

Two more officers pull up. The intersection is at a standstill. Pedestrians are gathering in every direction. People are coming out of buildings.

“Do you think anyone was shot?” Fear races up my spine. Somehow, I know this is because of me. If anyone was killed...

“Don’t know yet, baby,” Brett says as he wraps an arm around me and holds me upright. He looks into my eyes. “Did you hit your head?”

I find his hand and lift it between us. His knuckles are bloody. “No. You cushioned my skull with your hand.”

He glances at the bloody fingers as if he had no idea until this moment.

Dagger rips off the bottom of his shirt and wraps it around Brett’s hand.

When I look up again, the man from the car is being shoved into a patrol car. The two officers I met earlier are coming toward us.

“You folks okay?” one of them asks.

“Yes,” Brett replies.

“What happened?” I ask. I can’t make sense of this.

“Guy says he was hired to shoot you as you left the building. That’s all he knows. He didn’t even try to lie about it,” the officer informs us. “He knew exactly what you looked like and what you were wearing.”

“How?” I glance at Brett. “The Rutherfords didn’t know we were even in town until we stepped into the office.”

The officer nods. “Says he got the call a little over an hour ago. Did Rutherford leave you alone at any point before we arrived?”

I nod.

So does Brett. “Yes. He went to his office to get the will.”

“That must have been when he placed the hit.” He looks apologetic. “I’m so sorry, ma’am.”

“I’m okay.” I glance around, wondering how many more obstacles I’m going to face. Obviously, Rutherford needs me dead. I look up at Brett. “Why?”

“Because the inheritance is his if you’re no longer living.”

The officer rubs his head. “It was meant to look like a random drive-by shooting.”

“Rutherford never would have gotten away with it. This is at least the third person he hired to terrorize Lacy,” Brett says.

“He’s not the sharpest tack in the box. He’ll never see the light of day, but you might want to keep protection on Ms. Harlow for a while until we’re certain no one else is after her.” He points at the will. “I’m going to assume her father left her a lot of money.”

I shudder and cross my arms. It’s hard for me to fathom. It wouldn’t matter to me if it were ten hundred billion dollars. I wouldn’t want it. It’s blood money now.

Cannon and Mace join us. They keep their backs to us, scanning the area.

The officer glances at them. “They with you?”

Brett nods. “I planned for problems.”

“Thank God. One of your men took out the tires on that car. It wasn’t us. By the time we came around to this side of the building, the car was already crashed into the pole.”

I’m relieved and so very grateful. And damn tired.

“Thank you once again,” Brett tells the officers.

The two of them hurry back to the scene.

Is it over? I don’t feel the finality I’d like to feel. How many other people has Rutherford hired to kill me?

CHAPTER 21



Three weeks later...

Brett

I can't stop smiling as I sit on Hudson's fantastic new deck out back. The weather is unusually fantastic today. Sunny and warm. It hasn't rained in three days, so the girls are all playing in the backyard while we Daddies sit on the deck and watch them.

Lacy is relaxed and carefree. Finally.

"She looks happy," Roman says before popping a handful of nuts into his mouth.

"I agree," Colton states. I've never seen her smile and laugh this much.

Davis nods. "Britney says she's been asking about the animal rescue. Be prepared to adopt a dog or cat soon." He chuckles.

Hudson laughs. "Oh, yes. Cindy has been picking out pets for you."

I groan, but I'm grinning. If my Little girl wants a pet, we'll get a pet. I'd get her five if she wanted them.

"Make sure you get a good trainer," Roman suggests. "It makes all the difference."

"How did I suddenly become a pet owner?" I ask, laughing.

"Comes with the territory," Colton informs me. "As soon as one Little has something, they all want it."

"Couldn't you guys have gotten them a giant stuffie or something?" I joke. "Maybe something not living?"

The men all laugh.

After they sober, Roman asks, "Have you heard any more about the Rutherfords?"

I nod. "They're facing multiple charges for a giant list of crimes. A PI and two hits on Lacy's life don't even rank high enough for them to get to. She didn't die."

Roman cringes. "Yikes."

"Have they caught the arsonist and the PI yet?" Hudson asks.

"Both. It wasn't hard. The idiots conveniently left a paper trail, and no one has found any evidence that there are outstanding hits on her life. All the money has been traced." I'm so relieved about this that there are no words.

"Did you get any more details about her father's death?" Hudson asks next.

"Yes." I wince. "He was murdered. The Rutherfords paid the coroner off to say it was a heart attack. The coroner was

arrested and the body exhumed to verify the cause of death, which was poison.”

“How’s Lacy taking all this?” Davis asks.

“Better than you would think. She was so angry with her father and had been estranged for so long that she’s glad to have closure. I think she’s finally starting to breathe easier now that it appears no one is following her with ill intent.”

“I bet you’re not quite as quick to let go of the reins, though,” Colton says.

“Fucking right. It’s tough. She lets me drive her to work and pick her up, but even watching her walk into the building without me gives me heart palpitations.”

Colton nods. “I was that way with Eve for a long time.”

“When does it loosen?” I’m wondering when I’ll be able to breathe without worrying all the time.

All four men laugh.

Roman slaps a hand on his thigh. “Never. It’s a Daddy thing. It takes all my self-control to let Lucy walk out the door for work every day. She fucking insists on driving herself. I have to let her. She’s a grown woman.”

“But she balances her Little and her adult like a pro,” I note.

Roman chuckles. “Most of the time. She knows the rules. As soon as she steps into the house, she’s my Little girl. Some days she likes to fight me on that. I’ve come to realize she comes home argumentative on the days she’s had a rough time at work for whatever reason. Those days, she knows she needs a firm spanking to let it go. When she comes into the house immediately disobeying my rules, I know she had a bad day. I

have no problem swatting her bottom and standing her in a corner with her panties around her knees and her dress pulled up.” He grins.

“I’m still getting used to all this. Thanks for the advice.” Thank God, I have a strong group of friends to lean on when I need to know how to handle Lacy. Sometimes, she conspires with the other Littles, and then we all have to bump heads and come up with a united group punishment.

God, I love her. I glance at where she’s playing in the sandbox with Lucy, Cindy, Eve, and Britney. The girls are getting sand everywhere. They are going to need to be hosed down before they can go inside.

Roman leans his elbows on his knees. “I assume there was a substantial inheritance since the Rutherfords went to so much trouble to try and secure it for themselves. Have you spoken to Hudson about investing it?”

I glance at Hudson and then back at Roman. “Yes. In fact, we’re meeting with his boss, Spence Wakefield, Monday afternoon.”

“That’s good. Spence is a great guy. I’ve met with him several times. He’s brilliant. He’s grown Golden Alliances into an amazing business. The guy’s only in his mid-thirties,” Roman points out.

“Spence is fantastic to work for,” Hudson agrees. “He’ll get her set up.”

Hudson declined to manage Lacy’s account himself, insisting it wouldn’t be ethical to manage a friend’s money. I’m grateful his boss agreed to take her under his wing.

The guys are right. It’s a lot of money. Her dad apparently lived frugally, always saving for a rainy day or retirement. Or

hell, maybe he wanted her to get a sizable inheritance because he felt bad about how he'd treated her for ten years after her mother's death.

I like to think it's the latter. I'd like Lacy to think that, too. It's easier to spend life believing he intentionally left something for Lacy than that he simply never got around to changing his will. It's better for the soul.

Roman sits up and glances around at the men. "I need to get Lucy home, fed, and in bed early tonight. These girls surely have sand inside their panties and in their hair. Anyone opposed to a bit of embarrassment play?"

We all chuckle and shake our heads.

Roman looks at each of us in turn. "You sure? I know some Littles have issues with public nudity. I'm pretty sure Lucy, Cindy, Eve, and Britney are close enough and have known each other long enough to have gotten over any concerns with exposure. It took Lucy a long time before she could tolerate me exposing her to other people. Will Lacy be okay?"

"Sounds like the perfect end to a gorgeous afternoon," I say. The truth is, we've spoken many times about exposure, and we've been working on it lately, especially after finding out someone had been photographing her through our windows.

A high wall surrounds Hudson's backyard. No neighboring homes can see into the yard. I'm confident Lacy doesn't mind being naked in front of other women, especially her friends. Her Little will probably be horrified, but that's half the fun.

Hudson rises. "I'll pull the hose around."

Davis whistles, making all the girls look in our direction. “Time to go home,” he shouts.

A collective group of groans makes me feel even more confident that a bit of humiliation play is warranted.

“But, Daddy...” Eve says.

Colton stands, hands on his hips. “One...” That’s all it takes. All five girls scramble out of the sandbox, brush themselves off as best they can, and race toward us.

They indeed have sand everywhere. It looks as if they threw it up in the air, and it landed on their heads. I suspect they might have done so on purpose to see what kind of trouble they could get into. They need not fear. Trouble is coming.

“Clothes off,” Roman declares as he pulls Lucy’s shirt over her head.

She gasps and covers her breasts.

Roman lifts a brow. “What’s the rule?”

Lucy lowers her face and her hands. “No playing with my titties.”

I turn toward Lacy and pull her between my legs where I’m still sitting. I hold her tight against me, cup her face, and bring my lips to her ear. “This is called humiliation play or embarrassment play. The Daddies are going to strip their Littles naked and hose them down to get the sand off. If you’re not ready for something like this, I’ll make an excuse, and we’ll leave.”

She’s breathing heavily as she leans into me before meeting my gaze. Her cheeks are flushed. “My pussy is wet,” she whispers.

I smile and kiss her forehead. “Then I guess you’re okay with it.” I sweep her shirt over her head and set it on the table before pulling her pants and panties off next.

It only takes a few seconds before all the girls are naked. They hadn’t been wearing shoes and socks, and none were permitted a bra for a playdate in Little space.

They look equally chagrined, but I return my focus strictly to Lacy. Her nipples are hard points, and her hands are fisted at her sides. I kiss behind her ear. “Should I check to see how wet your pussy is, Little lamb?”

She shakes her head. “No, Daddy. You can take my word for it.” She presses her thighs together.

“Let’s get you girls hosed off,” Hudson declares as he steps into the yard and lifts the hose. “Who’s first?”

Cindy shuffles forward. As soon as she’s under the spray, she squeals. “It’s cold, Daddy.”

He chuckles. “I bet it is. Arms up.” He makes her spin around in a circle while he rinses her off. When he’s done, he hands the hose to Colton.

Lacy is last, and she’s already shivering as I hold up the hose. Probably from watching the other girls. She kept her hands at her sides, though. I’m proud of her as she lets me hose her off. The water is chilly.

I grab a towel and dry her off quickly before sitting on one of the deck chairs and lifting her burrito-wrapped body onto my lap. I hold her tightly and whisper in her ear, ignoring everyone else. “You’re so gorgeous, Little lamb. My cock is hard. Let’s go home,”

She smiles at me and nods before shaking the towel free of her upper body and throwing her arms around my neck. “I

think I'll get sand in my panties more often.”

CHAPTER 22



Lacy

Spence Wakefield is not what I expected. For one thing, he's young to own a business this size. Golden Alliances is a very large, well-known investment firm. In addition, he's six-four and built. He has thick brown hair. He's formidable.

After rising from his desk and shaking both our hands, he waves at the chairs across from him. "Please, sit."

Someone clears their throat behind us, and I turn around to see a young woman standing nervously in the doorway. She's so small that, at first, I think she's a child, but then I realize she's at least twenty. She's just petite. Her brown curls are adorable, and she has big brown eyes. I wonder if she's Little before reminding myself that not everyone I meet is Little.

"Can I get you anything, Sir?" she asks.

I'm not sure who she's talking to, but Mr. Wakefield responds by addressing us. "Would either of you like coffee or perhaps water?"

"No, thank you," I respond.

Brett shakes his head. "We're fine."

“I’m good too, Cassandra. Maybe check at the reception desk and see if anyone needs help with anything, yeah?”

“Oh, right. Yes. Okay.” The woman turns around.

“Cassandra,” Mr. Wakefield barks.

She spins back around. “Yes, Sir.”

“Please close the door.”

“Oh, right,” she repeats before pulling the door closed.

It’s the oddest exchange. I wonder if she’s an intern. It’s peculiar that the owner of Golden Alliance has to give directions to an intern or new hire.

When I look back at Mr. Wakefield, his expression is equally interesting. I’m betting he’s ordinarily rather serious, but he’s almost smiling. He winks at me. “Good thing you didn’t ask for coffee. That girl can’t make coffee to save her soul. I’m not sure she could’ve gotten a water bottle correctly, either.”

I giggle before I can stop myself and then cover my mouth.

He likes her. I’m sure of it. I also bet she’s Little. I wonder if Mr. Wakefield is a Daddy. He’d make a great Daddy. Gruff and large with a bit of teddy bear thrown in.

He clears his throat as *my* Daddy puts his hand on my thigh. “I’ve read through your file. This is a sizable inheritance. I’m glad you’ve come to us to help you invest it. Let’s go through some of your options.”

“I don’t want the money,” I blurt out. “I want you to put it in the name of Black Blade Protection and invest it for them.”

Brett gasps. “Lacy…”

I stare at him. “I told you ten times I don’t want that money. You should use it to help rescue people who can’t afford it. That’s what I want.”

Mr. Wakefield leans forward on his elbows. “I can certainly arrange it. Wouldn’t you at least like it to be an endowment in your name? Something you can control and monitor?”

I shake my head. “No. I don’t ever want to hear about it again. Just do good things with it.”

“It seems like you’ve thought this through,” Mr. Wakefield says.

“Yes.”

Brett is taking deep breaths.

“Why are you acting so surprised?” I ask him. “I hated my father. He wasn’t a good man. I know you’d like me to think he left this money as a way of saying he’s sorry for how he treated me, and that’s fine. Maybe he did. Maybe he didn’t. But it doesn’t change the fact that it makes me cringe. I’d rather make my own money. And I do. And don’t act like I’m making a hasty decision. I’m not. It’s been weeks.”

Brett surprises me by moving his hand to the back of my neck, pulling me close, and kissing me soundly on the lips. “You never cease to amaze me, Little lamb.”

I don’t even care that he called me Little lamb in front of Mr. Wakefield. It’s just a term of endearment.

Mr. Wakefield smiles at me indulgently. “Okay, then. If that’s what you want to do, I’ll set it up. I’ll let you know when it’s ready, and you can come in with Andres Phillips and sign the papers together.”

I glance at Daddy. “Who’s Andres Phillips?”

Both he and Mr. Wakefield chuckle. “Sorry. That’s Blade. Blade is a nickname.”

“Oh, right. I never heard you mention his real name.”

“He goes by Master Andres if you ever see him at Surrender,” Daddy informs me.

My breath hitches, and I glance at Mr. Wakefield, wondering why Daddy would mention something so confidential in front of this stranger. Then it hits me. “Are you a member, too?”

“Yes. Lately, I haven’t been there often, but you might see me there someday.”

“Oh.” It seems like every person I’ve met in the last month is a member of a club named Surrender that I never heard of before a month ago.

Brett reaches across the desk to shake Mr. Wakefield’s hand again. “Thank you for your time.”

“My pleasure.” He shakes my hand next. “And thank you, Little one, for being so kind and giving. I’m sure many, many people will benefit from your generous donation.”

I smile at him. He called me Little one. I bet he’s a Daddy for sure now. I bet Cassandra is either his Little girl or he wants her to be.

As we leave the office and head for the elevator, Cassandra waves at us from the reception area. “Have a nice day. Thanks for stopping by.”

She makes me chuckle inside. She’s awkward and funny and cute, and I’d bet anything she’s Little.

“I can practically see your mind spinning,” Daddy says as the elevator doors close.

“You cannot, Daddy,” I protest, threading our fingers together. “That’s silly.” I’m already sliding into my Little. All I want to do for the rest of the day is be Little. And have sex. I want to have sex, too.

He grunts.

I can’t resist saying something, though. “Do you think Mr. Wakefield is a Daddy?”

He smirks. “I knew you were plotting a match.”

I shrug. “I’m not plotting anything. It’s just an observation.”

He lifts our combined hands to his lips and kisses my knuckles. “And what was your observation, Little lamb?”

“That Mr. Wakefield needs a Little, specifically the woman working for him. Did you see how he looked at her? And why would the owner of the company be dealing with a new hire or an intern if he didn’t have to? They have people to train new employees. He acted like he was her immediate boss. Maybe he’s sleeping with her.” I gasp and look up at Daddy. “Do you think he’s sleeping with her?”

Daddy laughs and puts a hand over my mouth to stop my chatter. “I think your imagination is overactive, and we need to find something else to occupy your mind.”

“Like what?” I ask as the elevator doors open. “How about ice cream? Could we stop for ice cream?” I almost skip along beside him as we leave the building. I want to. I have to stop myself so people don’t stare. Sometimes when I’m Little, I get so caught up I don’t care who sees me. I’ve changed a lot in the past month.

“Hmmm.” Daddy ponders my idea. “I guess you have been a pretty good girl. After all, you just donated a large sum of money to fund helping other people. I can’t exactly spank you for that.”

I giggle now that we’re outside. “I bet you can spank me for something else. But can we get ice cream first?”

He chuckles. “Yes, Little lamb. We can get ice cream first.”

I know why I’m suddenly so very Little so fast. It’s because that stupid money was weighing on me for weeks. I feel lighter now that the decision has been made. I’m giving it to Black Blade Protection. It feels right. It feels like the best decision I’ve ever made.

Daddy opens the car door where he parked at a meter on the street, turns, and lifts me into his SUV before buckling me. He kisses me soundly on the lips. “You’re in a good mood,” he murmurs.

I shrug. “I’m happy.”

He kisses me again and backs out of the SUV to shut the door.

I should have told him I love him. Right then. Right when I said I was happy. Why didn’t I? He told me he loves me once. Just the one time, though. I think he’s waiting for me to say it before he says it again.

I will. I promise myself I will today. I’ll find just the right moment and tell him. Hell, I’m living with him. I’ve even given up my apartment and moved in, officially. He does everything for me when we’re at home. He cooks for me, bathes me, tucks me into bed, reads me stories. Sometimes, he even feeds me because he knows I like it.

Daddy drives toward his house and stops at an ice cream parlor a few minutes before we reach home. “Drive-thru, okay?” he asks.

“Yes.” I nod. The drive-thru is better because I’m in full Little mode, and I’d rather not back out of it to adult in an ice cream parlor.

“What would you like, Little lamb?”

“A strawberry cone,” I declare.

“One strawberry cone, coming right up.”

After he orders my cone and two scoops in a cup for himself, he drives us home.

I’m eating the cone as fast as I can, but it still drips down my fingers.

Daddy parks in the garage, turns off the engine, and comes around to help me to my feet. “You’re all sticky, Little lamb.” He kisses my fingers where they’re wrapped around the dripping cone and licks his lips.

When we get inside, he puts his ice cream in the fridge before lifting me onto the island. He’s grinning. “How can one Little girl make such a mess from an ice cream cone?”

I shrug as I try to eat it faster, but it gives me a brain freeze.

The ice cream is running down my forearm before I manage to eat the last bite.

“Such a messy girl,” Daddy says as he unbuttons the front of my blouse. “You even dripped it down the front of you. I think I’m going to have to start putting a bib on you when you eat.”

I flush. I'm not opposed to the idea, especially when he feeds me. It makes me feel younger and needier, and I like it. Not all the time, but some of the time. Especially when I really need to turn over my care and submit to him.

Today is definitely one of those days.

Daddy pulls my blouse out of my slacks and tugs it down my arms. "This is going to have to go to the dry cleaner." He sets it next to me on the island. His hands go to the button on my slacks next. After popping it and lowering the zipper, he bends to remove my flats.

I expect him to lift me to the floor so he can take off my pants, and I'm already panting with anticipation. I never know exactly what he might have in mind. He has a tendency to surprise me. He might clean me off, put pigtails and a toddler's outfit on me, and sit me down in my playroom. But he also might strip me naked and fuck me on the island. It's a toss-up. I'm kind of hoping he goes for door number two, but I won't tell him that. When Daddy is in charge, Daddy is in charge. I know better than to try to tell him what he should do.

"Lie back, Little lamb," he says in a deep sexy voice as he lowers me carefully onto my back so I'm splayed out on the island.

"Good girl. Let's get these pants off before you drip ice cream on them, too."

I lift my hips for him to help him pull my slacks off. I'm slightly disappointed when he doesn't take my panties, too, but when I glance down and see myself naked, except for the pink princess panties he put on me this morning, I'm glad he left them. I hope it's temporary, but they're helping me adjust my mindset.

“Don’t move,” he commands. “You won’t fall off while I grab a wet washcloth, right?”

I shake my head. “No, Daddy.”

He turns to the sink but glances at me every few seconds as if I might actually fall. He waits for the water to heat just right before wetting the cloth and returning to me.

“Give me your arm, Little lamb.”

I hold out my stickiest arm. The one I’d been using to hold my ice cream.

Daddy cleans me off, even rinsing and scrubbing me two times. When he’s satisfied that I’m not sticky anymore, he comes to my knees, spreads them, and leans forward to kiss my panty-clad pussy. “Mmm. You smell so good, Little lamb.”

I whimper. I want him to take the panties off and his pants, too. I want him inside me more than I ever have before. Desperation takes over.

“Reach your arms above your head, Lacy,” he murmurs, again in a sexy deep voice.

I lift my arms and grab the edge of the counter behind my head. The effect makes me feel exposed and vulnerable.

“That’s it, Little lamb. Arch that chest for me.”

I moan. I’m already so aroused my mind is running out of control, and he hasn’t touched me yet. The act of caring for me so intimately makes me horny every time.

I lick my lips. “Lucy calls her breasts titties.” I shiver and giggle.

“I noticed.” He smiles. “How did that make you feel.” He’s running his fingers up and down my inner thighs, making it

hard to stay still.

“It made me wet. It’s so babyish, but I was aroused. Is that weird? That I got aroused when she said titties?”

“No. I suspect it makes her aroused too, or she wouldn’t say it. And let me remind you that nothing you do or feel is weird. How many times have I told you that?”

I shrug. “I dunno. Maybe you need to spank me.”

He lifts a brow. “Is that so?” He spreads my thighs wider, forcing my knees to bend farther. He grips my inner thighs and runs his thumbs along the edge of my panties.

I groan.

“Maybe I need to spank your delicate little pussy, huh?”

I gasp, my eyes going wide. I shake my head. “No, Daddy. That would hurt.”

“Maybe it would be a good kind of hurt. The kind that makes you scream as you orgasm.”

I lick my lips. Spank my pussy? Now, I’m intrigued. I involuntarily arch my titties again and whimper.

“Yeah, my Little lamb is curious.” He turns toward the counter near the sink again, grabs something, and returns holding it up. A plastic spatula?

I stop breathing. He’s serious.

“What’s your safeword, Little lamb?”

“Red,” I manage to murmur as I draw my legs together.

Daddy shoots me a firm look. “Keep your legs open and your hands behind your head.”

I press my knees toward the island again. “Yes, Sir.” My nipples are hard points. I’m staring at the plastic spatula in both fear and intrigue.

When he suddenly lifts it and swats the flat end over one of my titties before I can process his intent, I cry out.

Holy shit. The burn is fast and intense. And it feels so good.

He swats my other titty before I’ve recovered from the first. “I think my girl likes a bit of pain.”

He knows I do. I let him spank me pretty hard. I like the way spanking me chases the bad things out of the house and leaves me feeling renewed. But this is different. I feel alive and needy. Swatting my titties is not going to lull me into subspace. It’s making me nearly crawl out of my skin, and I suspect if he uses that on my pussy, I will detonate.

Daddy sets the spatula on my belly so his hands are free to cup my breasts. He avoids my nipples as he molds his hands to my soft globes. He leans over me, hovering, but not close enough. Nothing is touching my nipples, and I need it so badly.

“Daddy...” I whimper, squirming.

“Did you like that, Little lamb? Did you like Daddy swatting your nipples?”

I nod. My cheeks flush. It’s a bit embarrassing. I shouldn’t still be embarrassed every time something turns me on, but I still am sometimes when we try something new, and I realize how kinky I am all over again.

Finally, he dips his face and sucks one of my nipples into his mouth while he pinches the other one.

I cry out. It's so hard to leave my hands where they are, but I don't want him to stop. If I move out of position, he might stop.

"Ready for more?" he asks after releasing my titty with a pop.

"Yes, Sir."

Daddy releases my breasts and grabs his spatula from my tummy. He sets one flat corner between my breasts and drags it down to my belly button, making me squirm.

The edge is so thin. It's maddening how aroused I get when he drags it along the edge of my panties.

"Keep those knees wide, Little lamb. That's the rule. If you move them, I will stop. If you move your hands, I will stop. If you squirm too much, I will stop. Do you know why?"

"Because you might swat me in the wrong place and injure me," I tell him. He's told me this dozens of times.

"Good girl. If you can't stay still, I'll assume you don't really want Daddy to swat your pussy."

Just saying that out loud makes me moan. My clit is pulsing beneath the cotton of my panties. They are soaked.

Daddy flattens the spatula over my pussy and presses against my folds.

I tremble. The need is growing. It's powerful and consuming. God, I want him to swat me there. I've never even considered something like this before, and now, I need it like a drug.

Daddy lifts the spatula, but instead of swatting my pussy, he gives a light tap to my inner thigh and then the other.

I flinch, my breath hitching. It doesn't hurt. It's just a tease. Just a small taste of what he can do. And I want it.

He taps one of my nipples again, unexpectedly, not as hard as the first time, but enough to reawaken the sting. My other titty is jealous and throbbing with need. When I arch it into the air, Daddy gives it a matching tap.

He drags the flat part down my tummy again and taps my cotton-covered pussy so lightly I almost can't feel it, but I'm soaked. Drenched.

"You want this, Little lamb? You want Daddy to swat your pussy with this spatula and make you scream?"

"Yes, Daddy." My voice is breathy and shaking.

Daddy lifts the spatula and brings it back down so fast I don't have any warning.

I scream. Not because it hurt very badly. He didn't hit me very hard this first time, and my panties are on, but the shock is tremendous. There was no way to prepare emotionally for how it would feel.

My clit is pulsing. It feels swollen. Can he see it through my panties? Probably not, but it feels like he should be able to.

Daddy drops the spatula, grabs the side of my panties, and tugs the material away from my pussy, exposing my clit. A second later, his mouth is on me there, sucking. His tongue flicks over my clit, and my vision blurs. I'm going to come, and he hasn't entered me. Not even with his fingers.

At the thought, he pulls my labia wide open and thrusts his tongue into me. That's all it takes. I come around his tongue while he flicks it around my opening. The pulses are intense. We have sex often, but we haven't had sex yet today, so I'm primed and needy.

“God, you taste like heaven,” Daddy says when he lifts his face after wiping his lips on my panties. “I love eating your pussy, Little lamb.”

I flush. My body is trembling from the aftershock of such a powerful orgasm.

“Did you like that, Little lamb? Did you like Daddy swatting your pussy?”

I nod. “Yes, Sir,” I manage to murmur.

“Maybe, next time, I’ll use a wooden spoon.”

I shudder. That sounds much more painful. I bet it is. I’m not going to ask, though.

Daddy takes a step back, removes all his clothes, and then pulls my panties down my legs. He smooths his hands up my thighs and presses them wide once more. “So pretty.” His voice is reverent.

He reaches for my shoulders. “Sit up, Little lamb. I need you touching me. All of me.”

I let him pull me to sit upright, then I wrap my legs around his waist.

He lifts me off the island and carries me to the living room, where he sits on the couch with me on his lap. “Ride me, Lacy. Ride me hard.”

I love how he’s able to let me be on top without allowing me to think for one moment that I’m in any way in control. I lift, let his cock align with my throbbing entrance, and thrust down over him.

Daddy moans. “Oh yeah, baby girl. That’s so good.” He grabs my hips and lifts me only to yank me back down again.

He's totally in control. I'm just a puppet who happens to be on top.

I don't even exert my muscles while Daddy holds my thighs to lift and lower me. He arches his hips up into me to deepen the contact.

I toss back my head, my mouth hanging open. I'm so fucking happy that I can't keep from smiling as Daddy slides one hand between us to rub my clit. "Come on my cock, Lacy. Show me how much you like it."

I do as I'm told because I can't help myself. He's that powerful and controlling. He can even command my orgasms.

Daddy comes inside me a few moments after me, groaning through his release. When he's fully spent, he pulls me closer until our chests touch. He kisses my face everywhere.

I slowly open my eyes fully and meet his gaze. I grab his face with both hands. *Now*, I tell myself. *Tell him.* "I love you, Daddy. I love you, Brett."

He gives me a slow smile that's so huge it lights up the room. "Oh, sweet Little lamb, I love you, too."

A weight lifts off me. It was a heavy burden carrying those words around and not using them. "I love you," I repeat to help lessen more of the heaviness. "I love you."

He kisses all over my face again before fully meeting my gaze. His smile is as big as mine. "You're mine forever and always."

"I hope so. I can't exactly replace you after you've spanked my pussy." I shrug nonchalantly. "You're stuck with me."

“I’d never want to be stuck with anyone else ever, Lacy Harlow. I’m happier than I ever knew was possible.”

I hug him tightly.

“Now that we’ve gotten that out of our system, what do you want to do for the rest of the evening?”

“Hmm. I think play with my dollhouse, eat mac and cheese, color, do a puzzle, play a board game, read a book, watch cartoons, and make love again.”

He chuckles. “That’s a lot. Do you really think we can do all of that in one evening?”

I shrug. “We can try.”

His expression sobers. “I’m so proud of you, Lacy. What you did today was so very selfless and kind.”

“I don’t ever want someone in need to be unable to get help because they can’t afford to pay for it.”

“Well, that’s never going to happen. It wouldn’t have happened anyway. Black Blade Protection doesn’t turn people away if they have a need but can’t afford help. We have other clients who pay us plenty of money to cover those in between. But your donation will go a long way toward helping people for years to come. We should be able to seek them out without them coming to us.”

I grin. “Good.” I kiss him. “Great.” I kiss him again. “I love you.” It feels so good I want to keep saying it.

He kisses me back, his hands braced on my back, holding me exactly where he wants me. “Good. Great. I love you, too, Little lamb.”

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Thank you for enjoying this eleventh book in my *Surrender* series. I hope you're enjoying *Surrender*! More books are coming soon. The twelfth book in the series, *Guiding Cassandra*, will release February 6, 2024.

Are you reading the spinoff?! The *Blossom Ridge* series currently has six books! *Blossom Ridge* features Craig and Leah, their staff, and all the Littles and their Daddies who come to visit the resort!

Blossom Ridge:

[Starting Over](#)

[Finding Peace](#)

[Building Trust](#)

[Feeling Brave](#)

[Embracing Joy](#)

[Accepting Love](#)

[Blossom Ridge Box Set One](#)

[Blossom Ridge Box Set Two](#)

Please enjoy the following excerpt from *Starting Over*.

He's standing in the doorway, same as last time, hands on his hips again. He takes in a deep breath and closes his eyes. "Much better."

I smile, deciding to brush off our odd interaction from this morning. I'm going to have to work with this man. We need to get along. "The smell? Yes. The oven is officially clean. Would you mind trying my muffins? I'm going to need a few opinions before I settle on a recipe."

"Not a chance." He shakes his head firmly.

My stomach drops. What the hell?

He steps closer, but now I'm trembling. He's so damn huge. His frame seems to eat up the entire room, and it's a gigantic room. His shadow looms over my workspace.

"I'll take a muffin, Amelia, but there's not a chance I'm going to critique them."

"Amy," I inform him, surprised he even knows my name.

He lifts a brow. "People call you Amy?"

"Yes." Why is this shocking? It's a nickname.

He stares at me, his gaze roaming up and down my frame several times until I'm no longer trembling but shaking and a bit unnerved. "Nope." He shakes his head. "I don't see it."

"You don't see what?" I'm confused. My brain is scattered.

"You're an Amelia. That's your name. It's pretty. It suits you. I'll be calling you Amelia."

My brows shoot up. I don't think I'm breathing. There's something so very...dominant about this man. That's it. He's overbearing and I can feel my instinct to submit to him pulling hard.

I can be submissive. I know this. But I usually keep that side of me to the hours at the club. I don't submit to anyone outside of Surrender. I've never even felt the urge before.

This man has me tongue tied and close to kneeling at his feet. Which is also aggravating because he's so...surly. That really is the best word for him.

"Umm..." That's all I manage to murmur.

Foster glances at the various batches of muffins. "Cinnamon is my favorite. Which one would you like me to sample?"

"Uh..."

He meets my gaze. "Amelia?"

When he says my name this time my nipples stiffen and my panties grow wet. No one has called me Amelia besides my mother when I was very young. I insisted on being called Amy after my first day of kindergarten when the cute boy next to me misunderstood and called me that by accident.

I clear my throat and jerk my gaze from his as if I might get sucked into another vortex if I don't. I glance at the muffins. "You're supposed to try all three," I murmur. Why is this concept so difficult? I only have three people to use as a test group: Foster, Leah, and Craig. There isn't anyone else staying at Blossom Ridge yet. We don't open for another week.

When Foster makes no move closer nor speaks, I finally glance up at him again.

He searched my face and runs a hand through his hair. "Look, I owe you an apology for earlier. I was snippy for no reason. You caught me off guard. I..." He shakes his head. "Never mind. The point is that I've already insulted you one

too many times. It won't happen again. So, no. I won't critique your muffins. I will eat any or all of them, but I will tell you they are fabulous no matter what."

I flinch. "Oh."

He gives me a slow smile, the first one he's graced me with. He looks even sexier when he smiles. It's much better than the brow-furrowed, brooding look.

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Caesar

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Where Alphas Dominate

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Becca Jameson is a USA Today best-selling author of over 140 books. She is well-known for her Wolf Masters series, her Fight Club series, and her Surrender series.

She currently lives in Houston, Texas, with her husband. Two grown kids pop in every once in a while too! She is loving this journey and has dabbled in a variety of genres, including paranormal, sports romance, military, reverse harem, dark romance, suspense, dystopian, and BDSM.

A total night owl, Becca writes late at night, sequestering herself in her office with a glass of red wine and a bar of dark chocolate, her fingers flying across the keyboard as her characters weave their own stories.

During the day—which never starts before ten in the morning!—she can be found walking, running errands, or reading in her favorite hammock chair!

...where Alphas dominate...

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