

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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STALKED

by the
Accountant

STALKED BY THE ACCOUNTANT

EMMA BRAY

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CHAPTER ONE

Jack

I STARE AT THE SPREADSHEET, my eyes glazing over the endless rows and columns of numbers. Another day in the life of Jack Montgomery, accountant extraordinaire. I let out a sigh, leaning back in my leather office chair. This is it. This is the pinnacle of my career, crunching numbers for faceless clients.

I loosen my tie, suddenly feeling it choke my neck. Glancing at my Rolex, I note it's only 10 a.m. The morning drags on as I go through the monotonous motions—analyzing financial reports, drafting memos, responding to emails. My mind wanders, hungry for stimulation beyond these sterile walls.

At noon, I head downstairs to a nearby deli for lunch. The hustle and bustle of New York streams around me, an electric current I long to join. Back in my office, I stare out the window, watching taxi cabs zoom past, envying their freedom.

Another spreadsheet awaits me, taunting me with its endless data. But today, the numbers blur together, losing meaning. I yearn for something more, something beyond the predictable routine of my life. There has to be more out there than this daily repetition.

I loosen my tie further, undoing the top button of my shirt. I crave adventure, excitement, meaning. There must be more to life than crunching numbers behind a desk. I refuse to let this be it. I'm determined to break free

from the shackles of monotony.

I drum my fingers on my desk before I finally sigh again and stand.

Fuck it.

I head down to the office kitchen to grab another cup of coffee. My coworkers are chatting and laughing, but I feel distant, detached from their casual banter.

"Hey Jack, we're all going to happy hour later if you want to join," says Tom, the office manager.

I force a smile. "Thanks, but I think I'll pass tonight. Got some things to wrap up here."

Truth is, I have no desire to spend another night making small talk over drinks. The idea exhausts me.

I pour my coffee and head back to my desk, avoiding eye contact. I feel like an outsider peering into a world that no longer interests me.

My phone buzzes. Just another business email.

This monotonous life feels like quicksand, slowly swallowing me.

I continue onward through my day, my restlessness eating at me the whole while. What I once found comfort in, I now abhor.

I finish up my work and pack up my briefcase, preparing to head home for the night. As usual, I'm the last one to leave.

I step out onto the busy New York sidewalk, immediately enveloped by the energy and chaos of the city. Commuters rush by, absorbed in their own worlds. Yellow taxis honk as they weave dangerously through traffic. The dull roar of engines and chatter fills the air.

This view never gets old. The towering skyscrapers, the diversity of people, the pulsing rhythm—it invigorates me. Makes me feel alive. There's an electricity here I find nowhere else, not even in the orderly realm of numbers and figures.

I start walking, no destination in mind. I let my feet carry me forward, swept up in the momentum of the crowd. At an intersection, I'm jostled briefly as pedestrians surge to cross the street. For a moment, I'm pressed up against a motherly old lady. Our eyes meet briefly before the signal changes and she's carried away in the tide of bodies.

The brief connection stirs something in me. When was the last time I really saw someone? Looked into their eyes and felt that spark of humanity? Lately, my world has felt so small, bounded by spreadsheets and reports. Endless data with no story behind it.

Is this why wanderlust tugs at me so strongly tonight? This city offers endless possibilities to connect. To find meaning beyond the predictable routine of each day. Out here, among the chaotic dance of strangers, I can get lost and discover new parts of myself.

The light is fading now, the streetlights flickering on. The city glitters around me, beckoning me to explore its secrets.

I keep walking, not paying attention to where I'm going. The city streets have emptied out now that it's late. It's just me and the occasional passerby hurrying along.

Up ahead, a couple embraces under a streetlamp. Even from a distance, I can feel their passion, their joy at having found each other. A pang of longing pierces my heart. I want that. I want to love and be loved with such abandon.

But I don't even know where to begin looking. Dating apps feel so impersonal, just swiping through faces. I want magic, that sense of destiny when you just know you've met "the one." Maybe that only happens in movies, but I can't let go of that romantic dream.

Somewhere out there, she must be longing for me too. My other half, my soulmate. I swear I can almost sense her wanting me to find her. Needing me as much as I need her.

My feet have carried me all the way downtown now. This neighborhood is unfamiliar, full of winding streets and small shops. And somehow, I know I'm meant to be here right now. Fate has guided me to this place for a reason.

Up ahead, a light flickers in a cozy cafe window. Compelled by forces I don't understand, I reach for the door handle. As I step inside, the bell chimes softly above me. I don't know why, but I have the strangest feeling that my life is about to change forever...

CHAPTER TWO

Jack

THE AROMA of fresh coffee wafts through the air as I push open the door of the cozy cafe, but it's not the scent that catches my attention. A brunette sits by the window, sunlight filtering through chestnut strands that cascade over her shoulders. My heart stutters at the sight of her.

She pushes a pair of glasses up the bridge of her nose and smiles at something on her laptop, deep dimples appearing in her cheeks. I'm frozen in place, transfixed by the way her full lips part to reveal pearly white teeth.

I shake my head to clear the fog that's settled over my mind. *Get a grip, Jack.*

But my traitorous eyes wander back to her as I order my coffee, following the curve of her neck and the swell of her breasts beneath a fitted blouse. I shouldn't stare, but I can't look away.

Who is this enchanting creature? I have to know more.

I take a seat at the table behind her, leaning forward under the pretense of adjusting my shoe. A faint floral scent envelops me, and I have to stifle a groan.

"Becca, we're going to be late for work!" A blonde woman rushes over, clutching several folders.

Becca. The name suits her. I commit it to memory, branding it into my mind.

Becca glances at her watch and sighs. "You're right. Duty calls." She

begins packing up her things.

I wait until she's left the cafe before following, keeping a safe distance behind. My heart leaps when I see her enter the lobby of my office building. Fate has brought us together, it seems.

Becca waves to the security guard and greets several coworkers on her way to the elevator. They're all smiling and animated in her presence, as captivated by her charm as I am.

The doors slide open, and she steps inside. Just before they close, her gaze meets mine for the briefest second. A jolt of electricity shoots through me at the sight of those emerald eyes peering at me over the rim of her glasses.

Then she's gone, whisked up to another floor. But it's enough. Now I know where to find her.

I race up the stairs, pulse pounding, and burst into the accounting department. My coworkers glance up in surprise at my sudden entrance, but I ignore them. There's only one thing on my mind right now.

I log into my computer and immediately pull up the employee directory. It only takes a moment to find her name—Rebecca Parker—along with her photo, position, and department: Marketing, 12th floor.

A wide smile spreads across my face as I stare at her picture. She's *radiant*. I have to resist the urge to kiss the screen, to feel those soft lips against my own.

But how to get close to her? I rack my brain, contemplating various strategies. If only I had an excuse to visit the marketing department. My job as an accountant doesn't provide many opportunities for interaction with other departments. If I were an executive, I could simply have her transferred to work directly under me.

An idea begins to form. It's bold and risky, but for Becca, I'd do anything. I open a new email and begin to type, my fingers flying across the keys. By the end of the week, Becca Parker will be *mine*. She just doesn't know it yet.

The next few days pass in a blur of anticipation. I can barely concentrate on my work, counting the minutes until my plan goes into effect. Several times I find myself wandering up to the 12th floor, hoping for a glimpse of Becca coming and going from her office. She never seems to notice my presence, but that will change soon enough.

Finally, the email I've been waiting for arrives in my inbox. The trap has been set. Now all that's left to do is reel her in.

That evening, I follow Becca as she leaves the office at the usual time of 5:30 p.m. She walks to the nearest subway station, and I discreetly trail behind her, keeping a safe distance. Once she boards her train, I do the same. She gets off at her usual stop and makes the ten-minute walk to her apartment building.

I park across the street, settling in for what's sure to be a long night. My eyes remain fixed on her third floor window, searching for any sign of movement behind the drapes. I wonder what she's doing in there. Is she cooking dinner? Reading a book? Undressing for a shower?

My mind begins to wander, envisioning Becca letting her hair down and slipping out of her fitted pencil skirt and blouse. I imagine her standing before me in nothing but a lacy bra and panties, a flush creeping over her porcelain skin.

A bulge forms in my pants as I palm myself through the fabric, stroking in time with my fantasy. Becca, naked and willing, arching into my caresses. Becca, crying out my name in ecstasy as I bury myself inside her tight, wet heat.

A groan escapes my lips as I climax, panting in the aftermath. When I finally glance back up at Becca's window, the light has been extinguished. She's gone to bed for the evening, leaving me alone with my thoughts in the dark.

But not for long. Soon, Becca Parker will be mine, in body as well as mind. She just doesn't realize it yet. My plan is already in motion, and there's no turning back now.

Becca will be *mine*.

CHAPTER THREE

Jack

I'M PARKED across the street from the office, tapping my fingers on the steering wheel as I watch the front doors. I purposefully rushed out so I could wait for Becca. Any minute now, she'll emerge, her brown hair bouncing lightly with each step. I know she takes this route to the parking garage every evening.

Right on time, the glass doors swing open and there she is, looking as radiant as ever. A smile lights up her face as she chats on her phone, oblivious to my gaze following her every move. I slide down in my seat, not wanting her to notice me.

My heart races as she approaches her car, mere feet away from mine. I can almost reach out and touch her, inhale her sweet floral perfume.

Focus, I remind myself. I'm not here to interact. Just observe. Learn her patterns. For now, watching her from afar is enough to satiate me. It's enough that she talks to me at work. I don't want to push my luck.

She starts her engine and backs out of the spot. I remain still, letting several cars pass before turning my own key. No need to arouse suspicion. I'll keep a safe distance.

As she heads downtown, I trail a few cars behind, close enough to track her route but far enough to avoid detection. This city is like a maze, but Becca navigates it with ease. I commit each turn to memory. Left on Elm, right on Park Ave, another right on Oak St.

Up ahead, she flicks her blinker on, pulling into the gym parking lot. *Aha*. So this is part of her routine. I drive past, not wanting to follow her in. But now I know. This gym, this time...I'll be here tomorrow. And the next day. However long it takes to become part of her world.

For now, I'll head home. But thoughts of her will consume me, as they do every night. Her smile, her laugh, the way she flips her hair over her shoulder.

Someday, Becca, you'll know me. Someday, I'll be part of your days, your nights, your life. Someday soon.

I circle the block, parking across the street from the gym. I glance at the clock. If yesterday was any indication, Becca should be here soon.

Right on schedule, she walks in. I sink down in my seat, peering over the dashboard as she hops out. Today she's wearing leggings that hug her curves and a loose tank top, hair piled on top of her head. God, she's beautiful.

She disappears inside without noticing me. I debate following her, getting a membership here. But no, too risky. This is her space. I'll let her have it.

For now.

Instead, I drive to the cafe down the street. Luck is on my side. There's a table right by the window with a perfect view of the gym entrance. I order an Americano and open my laptop, trying to appear occupied.

I glance at my watch. People begin trickling out of the gym, but no Becca. I start to get worried when I finally spot her. She's smiling, chatting with a guy I don't recognize.

I stiffen, my breathing becoming ragged before I close my eyes and remind myself he's probably just a gym buddy. I try to tamp down the jealousy. I know I have no right to feel this way, but damn it, Becca is mine.

Mine!

They part ways and Becca heads for her car.

I sip my coffee, watching as Becca's car disappears down the street. My heart is racing, even from that brief glimpse of her. I can't resist the urge to follow her home. It's only to make sure she's safe.

But when she passes in front of her window in her skimpy little nightie, my cock surges to full mast in my slacks.

With a curse, I unzip myself and pull it out, stroking it for all I'm worth as I imagine sheathing myself in her tight heat. I'm both turned on as fuck and pissed off as hell that she's walking around like that in front of her window for anyone to see.

I want her all to myself. I want her to be *mine*.

I run my hand up and down my shaft, groaning as I shoot my load into a napkin. I don't even care that I just jacked off in my car on a public street. Not when Becca's on my mind.

My obsession is spinning out of control, but I'm powerless to stop it.

I don't even want to.

The next morning, I'm back at the cafe by 7 a.m. The morning rush is in full swing, but I secure a table in the corner. I have a clear view of the front door and counter— perfect.

Right on schedule, Becca walks in. My pulse quickens at the sight of her. Today she's wearing a cute floral dress, her hair down in soft curls. She orders her usual—a vanilla latte with an extra shot. I've memorized it by now.

She doesn't notice me as she waits for her drink. I pretend to read something on my phone, sneaking glances at her. The barista calls her name, and Becca grabs her latte, flashing him a bright smile. I feel that pang of jealousy again, wishing she would smile at *me* like that.

Becca rushes out the door, off to start her day. I know her routine now— gym after work. And I'll be there, like clockwork. Just a guy working out, nothing suspicious. She'll never know I timed it exactly for her.

It's all I can do to get through my day. After work, I head straight to the gym. It's called Fitness Zone, just a few blocks from our office. I signed up for a membership this morning—all part of the plan.

I change quickly and head out to the cardio area. There are rows of treadmills, bikes, and ellipticals. I choose the elliptical with the perfect vantage point to see the studio room where Becca takes her evening yoga class.

Right on time, Becca walks in. She's wearing tight black leggings that show off her toned legs and a pink sports bra peeking out from under her loose tank top. I can't take my eyes off her as I pretend to focus on my

workout, pedaling faster.

Becca sets up her yoga mat in the front row, near the mirror. I have a perfect view of her. I watch her stretch, arching her back as she reaches her arms overhead. The way her body moves is mesmerizing.

I take a long swig from my water bottle, watching as Becca flows gracefully from one yoga pose to the next. Her face is serene and focused. A few loose strands of hair have escaped her ponytail and are curling around her cheeks.

My workout is forgotten as I study her every move. The way her limbs bend and straighten, how her chest rises and falls with each breath. I imagine reaching out and touching her, feeling her soft skin under my fingertips.

About halfway through class, she glances in my direction, and our eyes meet for a split second in the mirror. I look away quickly, my heart racing. Does she recognize me from the coffee shop? Maybe she's noticed me watching her.

No, I reassure myself. I've been careful. She doesn't suspect a thing. This is all going according to plan. Soon, I'll be ready to make my move. But for now, I'm content just being near her, breathing the same air. Already I feel closer, like I'm becoming a part of her world. She just doesn't know it yet.

My obsession is getting worse. I think about her constantly now—to the point of distraction. At work, I stare blankly at spreadsheets, unable to focus. I tap my pen, my leg jiggling with impatience for the day to end so I can see Becca again.

At night, I lie awake, imagining how her hair would feel tangled around my fingers, how her lips would taste. My pulse quickens at the thought of holding her, caressing her, hearing her gasp my name.

I have to be patient, though. Rushing this would ruin everything. Like a sculptor chiseling a statue from marble, I will slowly chip away at her reservations until the real Becca emerges—the one meant only for me.

CHAPTER FOUR

Jack

I CROUCH in the shadowy alcove outside her office, heart pounding. The minute hand ticks closer to five o'clock and freedom for Becca. I've memorized her schedule. My palms sweat in anticipation.

The click of her heels echoes down the hall before I see her. She's glued to her phone, brow furrowed. I hold my breath as she walks straight toward me, not glancing up. At the last second, I step into her path.

We collide and she stumbles, phone clattering to the floor. "Oh!" She gasps, startled.

I grab her arm to steady her, savoring her warmth beneath my fingers. "I'm so sorry!" I apologize, my heart beating a mile a minute as electricity zings through me from where I'm touching her. "Are you alright?"

She looks up at me and smiles tentatively. A blush colors her cheeks. "I'm fine. Just wasn't watching where I was going."

I retrieve her phone and hand it to her, letting my fingers linger on hers. "Here you go. No harm done." I swallow as I try not to stare at her, try not to let my obsession show. I want to reach out and caress her cheek, run my hands through her silky hair. But I restrain myself, clenching my fists at my sides. "I'm Jack, by the way."

"Becca," she says. "Thanks for catching me. I can be such a klutz sometimes." She laughs self-consciously.

"Happy to help. And it was me—not you." If she only knew. It was me. I

orchestrated the whole thing.

We chat for a few minutes about work. She's even more captivating up close, her green eyes sparkling behind those glasses. I commit the curve of her lips to memory, already longing for more.

I seize the moment to keep our encounter going. "So, Becca, what is it that you do here?"

She brightens, clearly happy to talk about her work. "I'm in marketing. Though I just got switched to a new department, so I'll be on the seventh floor starting next week."

"Oh really?" I ask, feigning surprise. A twinge of guilt pierces through my excitement, but I push it away. I did what I had to do to get her moved closer to me. "What a coincidence. I'm on the seventh floor too. I'm an accountant."

"No way!" Becca laughs, a musical sound that makes my heart flutter. "Well, I guess I'll be seeing you around then."

"I look forward to it," I reply with a grin. I can't believe my plan actually worked. Soon I'll get to see her beautiful face every day. I'll get to know everything about her. The thought sends a thrill through me.

We chat for a few more minutes about her marketing projects and my recent audits. Our banter comes easily, filled with witty quips and shared amusement. I find myself captivated by everything she says, from her passions to her pet peeves.

Too soon, she glances at her watch. "I should probably get going. But it was really nice meeting you, Jack."

"Let me walk you out," I offer, seizing any extra seconds with her.

She smiles. "I'd like that."

As we head for the elevators, triumph surges through me. She took my bait. My plan is in motion. Soon, she'll be *mine*.

We reach the door all too soon. She gives me one last dazzling smile before walking away, her hips swaying gently. I watch her go, desire and triumph surging through me. Everything is falling into place perfectly. Soon, my beautiful Becca will be mine.

I watch her walk away, unable to tear my eyes from her. The sway of her hips, the bounce of her ponytail, every detail etches into my mind.

My heart pounds against my ribs. I've never felt so alive as in this moment. The thrill of our encounter courses through me. Her voice, her smile, the feather-light touch of her fingers...it was everything I imagined and

more.

I take a deep breath, willing my nerves to settle. I can't mess this up. She's within my grasp now. I just need to reel her in slowly, gently, until she's caught in my web.

Patience. I've waited this long for her. I can withstand a little more anticipation. The game has only just begun.

I loosen my tie, suddenly feeling flushed. Our chemistry was undeniable. The connection instantaneous. She'll come to crave me just as I do her. I'll make certain of it.

Soon I'll know the taste of her lips, the feel of her skin. We'll become inseparable, our fates intertwined. She just doesn't realize it yet. The pieces are falling into place. My gorgeous Becca.

I take a deep breath as I watch Becca disappear around the corner, her chestnut hair bouncing behind her. My heart pounds against my ribs, exhilaration coursing through me. I did it! I finally made real contact with my obsession.

Leaning against the wall, I take a moment to gather myself, images of Becca flashing through my mind. Her melodic laugh, her warm green eyes, the way she bit her lip as she listened to me speak. I've never felt such an instant connection before. It's like we're two halves of the same soul.

I can't wait to see her again on the seventh floor. To deepen our bond through more conversations, learn all her secret desires. I'll be the perfect gentleman. I'll gain her trust. Then, when the time is right, I'll confess my true feelings.

And pray to any god out there that she'll feel the same.

I shake my head, smiling to myself. My heart flutters thinking of holding her in my arms, caressing her soft skin, kissing those full lips. We'll be so happy, just the two of us. No one else matters but my Becca.

I take a deep breath and straighten my tie, ready to head back to my desk. The seventh floor awaits, along with the woman of my dreams. My triumphant plan is in motion, and soon my lonely life will be complete. Becca will be mine forever.

CHAPTER FIVE

Becca

I STEP out of the elevator, my heels clicking against the tiled floor. The buzz of the office greets me—phones ringing, fingers tapping on keyboards, the hum of the copy machine. I wave to Janice at reception as I make my way past the cubicles, a stack of folders tucked under my arm.

"Morning Becca!" Tim calls out. "We still on for lunch?"

"You bet!" I say with a laugh. I continue on, my smile lingering. I love the energy here, the sense of collaboration. It's part of why I was so eager to transfer to this floor.

I round the corner and there he is. *Jack*. Just the sight of him makes my pulse quicken. He's leaning against the water cooler, suit jacket slung over one arm, sleeves rolled up to reveal his strong forearms. Our eyes meet and he gives me that crooked grin that makes my knees weak.

"Morning, Becca," he says. His voice is like velvet, smooth and deep.

"Hey, Jack." I tuck a strand of hair behind my ear self-consciously. We chat for a minute about the weather, but I can hardly focus. All I can think about is closing the distance between us, feeling his arms wrap around me, his lips on mine...

The trill of the phone snaps me back. I smile apologetically. "Duty calls. I'll see you around?"

He nods, eyes lingering on me. "Count on it."

I continue on to my desk, skin still tingling from our encounter. It's going

to be a good day.

I settle in at my desk, booting up my computer, but my mind keeps drifting back to Jack. Ever since I started working on this floor a few weeks ago, I find myself looking forward to our little encounters. The way he looks at me makes me feel seen, appreciated. *Desired*.

Most guys I've dated only wanted the physical stuff—not that I've ever done anything. I'm still a virgin, but still. I could tell by the way they looked at me and tried to touch me that all they cared about was scoring. They never took the time to really know me. That's why none of my "relationships" ever went very far.

But Jack...he's different. When we talk, he listens intently, like every word out of my mouth is important. And he remembers the little details—my favorite cafe and the fact that I love old jazz.

A knock at my door makes me jump. It's Jack, leaning against the frame with two cups of coffee in hand.

"Thought you could use a pick-me-up," he says with a grin.

My heart flutters as I take the cup. "You didn't have to do that."

He shrugs. "Wanted to. Besides, gives me an excuse to see that smile of yours."

Heat rushes to my cheeks. We chat for a few minutes about work and plans for the weekend, but I can barely string two words together. The way he looks at me so intently, like I'm the only woman in the world...it thrills me and terrifies me at the same time.

Too soon, he glances at his watch. "Better get back. But let's grab dinner soon, yeah?"

"I'd love that," I say breathlessly.

With another heart-stopping grin, he's gone, and I'm left dizzy.

I watch Jack walk away, my eyes lingering on his broad shoulders and confident stride. A warmth spreads through me at the thought of having dinner with him soon.

As I sit back down at my desk, I find myself daydreaming about him. What's his life like outside of work? Does he like to cook or prefer takeout? What kind of music and movies does he enjoy?

I realize how little I know about him, even though we've been casually flirting for weeks now. Our conversations always seem to revolve around work or harmless small talk. I want to dig deeper, to really get to know the man behind those piercing blue eyes.

When Jack passes by my office later, I seize the opportunity. "Working hard or hardly working?" I tease.

He laughs. "A little of both. You?"

"Same old. Hey, random question—what's your favorite book?"

Jack raises an eyebrow, looking pleasantly surprised by the personal inquiry. "Well, I'm a big sci-fi nerd," he admits. "My all-time favorite is Dune."

"No way, I love that book!" I gush. "Didn't peg you for a sci-fi guy."

"There's a lot you don't know about me yet," he says with a playful glint in his eyes.

I lean against the door frame, intrigued. "I'd love to learn more over dinner soon."

Jack's eyes register surprise at my directness, and I flush. Oh my god, did I really just do that? I can't believe I just asked him out so flippantly.

Just as I'm ready to have the earth swallow me whole, Jack puts me at ease.

"It's a date," he says, his voice deeper than ever before and a look in his eyes that makes my breath catch.

With a wink, he heads back to his desk, leaving me buzzing with curiosity.

I can't wait to peel back the layers and get to know the real Jack. Our flirtation is fun, but it's time to make a real connection. I have a feeling he's worth discovering.

I spend the rest of the afternoon in a giddy daze, distracted by thoughts of Jack. I can't stop picturing his handsome face, his muscular arms, his endearing smile. My mind wanders, imagining what it would feel like to be wrapped up in those strong arms, to feel his lips against mine...

I feel my cheeks flush and remind myself to slow down. Our flirtation is innocent so far. No need to get carried away.

But when Jack comes by later to confirm dinner plans, I feel a spark of electricity shoot through me as we lock eyes.

"How's tomorrow night sound?" he asks.

"Perfect," I reply, my voice coming out slightly breathless.

Jack grins. "Great. I can't wait."

After he leaves, my heart races. I smooth down my hair and take a few deep breaths to collect myself.

What is happening to me? I've never felt this strongly about someone so quickly. There's just something magnetic about Jack that draws me in, like a moth to a flame. I know I should protect my heart and take things slow. But when I'm around Jack, caution melts away, replaced only by desire and possibility.

And I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing.

CHAPTER SIX

Becca

THE SCENT of garlic and roses envelops me as Jack holds the door to the restaurant open. Candles flicker on each table, casting a warm glow over the intimate space.

"After you," Jack says with a heart-stoppingly handsome grin.

I smile back, brushing against his arm as I pass. A tingle races up my spine.

Once seated across from each other, we fall into easy conversation. Jack makes me laugh with an outrageous story about our coworkers' antics. His eyes sparkle in the candlelight when he meets my gaze.

"You have such an infectious laugh," he says. "It's one of the things I love about you."

Jack's eyes follow my every move as I take a sip of wine. I feel his gaze on me like a physical touch, subtly tracking my gestures and facial expressions.

When I glance up, his eyes flicker away, focusing intently on the bread basket. But a moment later, his attention is back on me.

I shift in my seat, suddenly self-conscious. Jack's unwavering focus is so intense.

Heat rushes to my cheeks. I tuck a strand of hair behind my ear and glance down shyly. Compliments still catch me off guard, even from Jack. Old habits die hard.

"What else do you...love about me?" I ask quietly, testing the waters.

Jack leans forward, his expression earnest. "I love how passionate you are about your work. How you light up when you talk about your dreams."

My heart flutters hearing him speak this way. I thought I had walls up, but Jack is slowly dismantling them brick by brick. Still, a part of me hesitates, afraid of being hurt again.

"Just promise me one thing?" I say.

Jack takes my hand from across the table. His touch is warm, comforting. "Anything."

I take a deep breath. "Promise you'll never break my trust."

Jack squeezes my hand gently. "I promise."

Jack's thumb gently caresses my hand as he holds it. His touch makes my skin tingle, but his promise means even more to me.

"Thank you," I say softly. "My last relationship really shook my ability to trust. But I'm trying to keep my heart open."

Jack's jaw flexes as he asks, "Was it serious?"

I shrug. "Not really. I've never really let anyone get too close to me. I just never really felt that connection with someone before. You know what I mean?"

Jack nods, his expression serious as he relaxes marginally. "I understand. And I'm honored you're willing to give me that chance."

He pauses, glancing down as if carefully considering his next words. When he meets my eyes again, I'm struck by the vulnerability there.

"I've never been close to anyone—not the way I'd like to be close to you. Becca," he stops and swallows, "you're amazing."

My eyes prickle with tears at his confession.

We share a smile—a silent promise to keep letting each other in, little by little. The chatter of the restaurant fades away. In this moment, it's just me and Jack and the potential beginning to something real.

Jack's eyes are tender as he gazes at me across the table. For a moment, neither of us speaks, letting the significance of our shared confessions settle between us.

And then, I don't know what comes over me, but I slide my hand on top of his.

Jack looks down at where I'm voluntarily touching him like he can't believe I'm doing it.

My cheeks flame in embarrassment, and I go to pull my hand back, but

Jack covers it with his own, his eyes boring into mine as he grabs the back of my head and pulls me to him, kissing me over the table.

And I suddenly forget all about where we are. The restaurant fades away as our tongues tangle.

Passion ignites between us as Jack's hand travels up my thigh. I moan into his mouth, the heat between us threatening to consume us both.

But then a waiter clears his throat, reminding us of our surroundings. We break apart, breathless and flushed.

Jack's hand remains on my thigh, his thumb making slow circles that make me ache for more.

"Let's go back to my place," he suggests, his voice low and husky.

I nod, unable to form words.

We pay the bill and quickly leave the restaurant, practically running to Jack's car. As soon as we're inside, Jack presses me against the door and kisses me deeply, his hands roaming over my body.

I moan again, my desire for him growing with each passing second.

He kisses me four, five times before he finally pulls back with a groan. "As much as I want you, beautiful, I don't want it to be like this. In a car. I need you stretched out on my bed so I can worship you like the goddess you are." He takes in a shaky breath before he pins me in his gaze, "So, if you can hold on for just a few minutes, I promise I'll give you exactly what you need once I get you home.

My soul soars at his words, and I can't do anything but give him the slightest nod.

And that's all it takes. My breath catches as he pulls back and slams the car into drive.

Neither of us speaks as he races to his place. I'm throbbing all over and pressing my legs together to try to ease the ache. When I glance over, I see the huge bulge in Jack's pants.

That bulge is for *me*.

Finally, we reach his apartment and Jack practically drags me inside. Once the door is closed, he pushes me against the wall and resumes kissing me with a ferocity that takes my breath away.

I can feel his hardness pressing against me, and I know that I want him more than anything I've ever wanted before.

"Bedroom," I manage to gasp out, and Jack nods, picking me up and carrying me down the hall.

Once we're in the bedroom, he lays me down gently on the bed and begins to undress me with a reverence that astounds me.

As he removes each article of clothing, he kisses every inch of my skin, making me shiver with pleasure.

Finally, I'm completely naked before him, and he takes a moment to look at me, his eyes tracing every curve and line.

Jack removes his clothes slowly, and then he joins me on the bed, kissing me again.

I have to push him back to take a breath. "Jack," I plead.

Jack's eyes blaze with desire, and he nods. "I know, baby. I got you."

He cups my face in his hands, his eyes seeking out mine as he lines himself up with me. "I want you to know that this means something. This means *everything*," he corrects himself. "You mean everything."

My breath catches as a lump forms in my throat. "Jack," I whisper his name like it's a prayer, and he crashes his lips down onto me as he pushes against my virgin barrier.

I cry out as he enters me. The feeling of him filling me like nothing else ever could is nothing short of spiritual.

"Fuck, baby. You're mine now. All mine."

My heart thrills at the possession in Jack's voice and the way he runs his hands over my body in wonder. "All mine," he whispers over and over again, making me feel like the most cherished woman in the world.

He begins to thrust, his movements slow and deliberate, and I bite my lip. He leans down to kiss me, his tongue meeting mine.

"I love you," he says, his words sending a shiver of desire through me. "I will always love you."

I'm on the verge of an orgasm already, but hearing Jack tell me he loves me sends me hurtling over the edge. "I love you, too," I breathe.

And that's when it crashes over me. I cling to Jack as the waves crash over me. It's like nothing I've ever felt before, and I can't help but wonder if sex is like this every time or if it's just special between Jack and me.

I tend to think it's the latter.

"Yes, that's it, you beautiful, perfect girl. Give me all of you, sweetheart." Jack murmurs sweet words in my ear as I fall apart on him, his own movements picking up speed as he rides me through my orgasm.

We continue to make love, and when Jack finally cries out, I let myself go again, my orgasm taking over me.

Jack roars, and I feel his seed flooding into me.

I feel claimed. I feel loved.

I am *his*.

Jack rolls to his side, pulling me along with him. He's breathing heavily, and I can't help but stare at the man next to me.

I'm a lucky woman. I really am.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Jack

I GENTLY LAY Becca down on the bed, her body still warm from our passionate lovemaking.

Her chest rises and falls with each breath, beads of sweat glistening on her skin. I sit on the edge of the bed, unable to tear my eyes away from her peaceful face.

How did I get so lucky? To have her here, in my arms, is a dream I never thought would come true. My heart swells with affection for this woman who has captured me so completely. I love her with a passion that borders on madness, a love that transcends all reason and logic. For Becca, I would do anything.

Becca stirs, her eyelashes fluttering. I hold my breath, waiting. She settles again, a soft sigh escaping her lips.

I reach out and brush a strand of hair away from her face. Her skin is so soft, velvet under my fingertips. I can't resist. I lean down and press my lips to her forehead, breathing in her scent.

She mumbles something unintelligible, her words heavy with sleep. I smile and kiss her again.

"Jack," she whispers, her eyes flickering open. I freeze as she gazes up at me, suddenly wide awake. Has she realized the truth—that she's made a mistake by giving herself to me?

"I love you," I blurt out in a panic. I don't know what I'd do if she

regretted anything.

There's a beat of silence. Then a slow, sleepy smile spreads across Becca's face. She reaches for me, her fingers curling into my hair as she pulls me down into a searing kiss.

I breathe again, the tension leaving my body. She doesn't regret anything, and now that I have her, I'll never let her go.

"I love you too," Becca murmurs against my lips.

Our kisses deepen, hungry and urgent. Becca's hands roam over my body, setting my skin aflame. I groan into her mouth, pressing myself against her. She's insatiable, and so am I. We can't get enough of each other.

"Jack," she gasps as I trail kisses down her neck. I nip at her pulse point, relishing the startled cry that escapes her. "Please..."

I know what she's asking for, and I'm more than happy to oblige.

We move together, our bodies in perfect sync. The pleasure builds between us, intensifying with each thrust. Becca clutches at me, her fingernails digging into my back. I bury my face in her neck, breathing in her scent.

She shudders against me, crying out my name. I follow soon after, burying myself deep inside her.

We lie tangled together, sweat cooling on our skin. My heart swells with love for this woman—and a fierce possessiveness blooms inside me. Becca is mine now, in body and soul, and I won't let anyone take her from me.

I kiss her softly, a promise and a claim all at once. Becca smiles up at me, her eyes shining with love and satisfaction.

"I'm yours," she whispers, echoing my thoughts. "Always."

"And I'm yours," I reply, sealing my words with another kiss.

I nuzzle into Becca's neck, breathing in her scent. Her warmth seeps into my skin, lulling me into a peaceful slumber.

As I hover in that place between wakefulness and dreams, I feel Becca's fingers stroking through my hair. Her touch is soothing, grounding me in the present moment.

Becca places a soft kiss on my brow before settling against me with a contented sigh.

My arms tighten around her, holding her close as sleep claims us both.

In my dreams, it's just the two of us in a world of our own making. There are no barriers here, no forces trying to tear us apart.

We are free to love each other without restraint, and when I wake, that

love will still remain.

Endless and eternal, like the tides.

My last thought before sleep completely overtakes me is of Becca's smile and the promise of forever in her eyes.

Mine.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Becca

I PUSH through the heavy glass doors, my muscles pleasantly sore from the workout. Ben walks beside me, mid-story about his weekend camping trip. I nod along, only half listening as I take deep breaths of the cool night air.

That's when I see him. *Jack*. My heart skips a beat at the sight of him. He's leaning against the brick wall of the gym, arms crossed over his chest. His piercing blue eyes fix on me and narrow ever so slightly as he notices Ben.

My steps falter for just a moment before I regain my composure. I smile, but then unease coils in my gut when Jack doesn't return my smile. Instead, his hard gaze is on Ben.

"Hey, Jack. What are you doing here?" I curse myself for the catch in my voice.

Jack pushes off from the wall, closing the distance between us in a few long strides.

"Yeah, thought I'd pick you up after your workout. Who's your friend?" His voice has an edge to it that raises the hairs on the back of my neck.

Ben extends his hand, oblivious. "Ben. And you are?"

Jack doesn't take it. His jaw tightens as he keeps his gaze locked on me.

"I'm her boyfriend, and I don't like how often I see you walking out of the gym with her. She's taken. Got it?"

The word "boyfriend" sends a thrill through me, but then the rest of what Jack said finally settles.

Wait...this is the first time Jack has picked me up after my workout. How could have seen me with Ben before?

Unease blooms into panic, cold and paralyzing. No. It can't be. But somehow I know.

He's been watching me.

I try to keep my voice steady, even as my hands tremble.

"Ben is just a friend, Jack, but I'm starting to begin to wonder what you are."

Jack's eyes flash before they settle into guilt as he realizes his fuck-up. "Becca, he begins as he takes a step toward me.

I take a step back instinctively. Ben looks between us, confusion creasing his brow.

"Hey man, I think you should back off a bit," he says, but Jack ignores him. His focus is entirely on me.

"I just wanted to make sure you were okay, Becca. I love you. You know that. I can't help myself."

My mind is still spinning with this latest revelation. How long has Jack been stalking me? I want to run, but my feet are frozen in place.

"I have to go," I finally manage to croak out.

"No, Becca, please..." Jack reaches for me, but I pull away. The damage is already done. Maybe my trust issues have been right all along.

I turn and walk away, my heart shattered but my will resolute. I don't look back, even as the tears blur my vision. I leave Jack—and poor, confused Ben—just standing there.

I keep walking, putting one foot in front of the other even as my legs shake. I don't stop until I'm in the safety of my apartment, the door locked behind me.

Only then do I let the panic take over. My breaths come in short, ragged gasps as I slide down against the door, wrapping my arms around myself.

He's been watching me. Following me. Learning my habits and schedule without my knowledge or consent. Bile rises in my throat at the thought of him lurking in the shadows, observing my every move.

I should have noticed the signs earlier. The way he always seemed to know where I was going or what I was doing. How he'd show up unexpectedly when I was out with friends. The "coincidences" that now seem sinister in hindsight.

Shame floods through me. How could I not have realized? I'm supposed

to be smarter than this. More cautious. But Jack seemed so sweet at first. So genuinely interested in me as a person. Or was that just part of the act, a way for him to get close enough to feed his twisted obsession?

The tears come then, hot and furious. I cry for the relationship I thought we had. I cry for my own naïveté. But most of all I cry for finding out the truth and the fact that I wish I didn't know.

I want things to go back to the way they were when I felt safe and cherished in Jack's arms.

I'm pathetic.

CHAPTER NINE

Jack

I SIT IN THE DARK, the only light coming from the streetlamps outside my window. Everything in this room reminds me of her. The pillows strewn about, the blanket tangled at the foot of the bed—all echoes of Becca's presence.

Our last night together plays on a loop in my mind. Her soft laugh as we watched some silly romantic comedy. The way she curled into me, her head resting on my chest. How she traced circles along my arm with her finger, igniting sparks with her feather-light touch.

"I'm so happy with you, Jack." Her words haunt me now.

We made love for hours, the world fading away until it was just the two of us. My name on her lips as she came undone in my arms. Her body warm and pliant against mine.

Afterward, we laid in silence, Becca drifting off to sleep. I watched her, drinking in every detail of her face. The flutter of her eyelashes. The curve of her lips. The steady rise and fall of her chest.

If only I knew that would be the last night I'd hold her. That she'd be gone before I woke, leaving behind nothing but the lingering scent of her perfume on my sheets.

Becca hasn't returned my calls or texts since she left. Each unanswered message chips away at what's left of my heart. I cling to the memories we made in this room, refusing to believe she's truly gone.

Hoping against hope she'll come back to me.

The ache in my chest intensifies, an emptiness that threatens to consume me whole. What did I do to push her away? How can I fix this? I'd do anything to turn back the clock.

I close my eyes, recalling her smile, her laugh, the warmth of her embrace. If love alone were enough to make her stay, she never would have left. Now there's nothing left but the ghost of what we once had—and the sinking realization that I may never get her back.

My fingers tighten around the phone as I stare at her name in my contacts. All it would take is one call. A few words to tell her how much she means to me. That I'm ready to change.

But she's made it clear she doesn't want to hear it. That she can't trust me anymore. I drove her away with my selfishness and obsession, too blinded by my own feelings to see how much pain it caused her.

The phone slips from my grasp, tumbling to the floor. How did I become this person? When did wanting someone so badly turn into needing them at the expense of everything else?

Becca saw through me in a way no one else could.

I bury my face in my hands as a sob rises in my chest. It's too late now. The damage is done. No amount of change or pleading will undo what I've already destroyed.

All that's left is the hollow ache of loss and the hard-won truth that if I can't learn to let go, I'll be alone forever. The life I dreamed of—the one with Becca by my side—is gone.

Slipping through my fingers like sand. A future lost before it ever had the chance to begin.



That night, sleep eludes me. The hours pass in a haze of tears and restless tossing, my mind filled with memories of happier times. Of Becca's smile, her laugh, the warmth of her embrace. They haunt me, a reminder of all I can never have again.

When exhaustion finally claims me, I dream of Becca. We're together the way we used to be, curled up on the couch watching our favorite movies. She looks at me with love and trust in her eyes, the walls between us crumbled to

dust. I cling to the dream, not wanting to wake and face the harsh light of reality.

But morning comes, and I'm alone.

The next day drags on, seconds ticking into minutes that feel like hours. Work provides little distraction. At every turn, I'm reminded of Becca and the life we were building. Each memory cuts like a knife, carving deeper into the rawness of my broken heart.

By the time I leave the office, I have only one thought in my mind. To see Becca, if only for a moment. To hear her voice and look into her eyes, hoping for any sign that she still cares.

I know it's selfish. That I should give her space and time, but the need to be near her consumes me. It's an ache I'm powerless to resist. Before I realize what I'm doing, I'm outside her apartment, wondering if she's alone or if there's someone else there to comfort her.

The thought makes me sick. I lean against the wall, struggling to breathe through the constriction in my chest. She's gone, slipped through my fingers because I couldn't love her the way she deserved.

I stare at her window all night before I finally drag myself into work with no sleep. What's the point anyway? Nothing matters anymore without her.

I bury myself in work, staying late into the evenings and volunteering for every project that comes my way. It's the only thing that dulls the ache in my chest, the only distraction powerful enough to quiet my thoughts.

But in the silence of the night, Becca comes to me. Her smile, her laugh, the warmth in her eyes when she looks at me. The memories haunt my dreams until I wake trembling and alone, reaching for a ghost that will never again be at my side.

The pain is a penance I deserve for the way I treated her.

No matter what I do, my thoughts keep drifting to Becca. I wonder if she's thinking of me too, if she regrets leaving me behind. The thought of her with another man makes my blood boil.

I have to accept that she's gone. That the life we could have built together will remain nothing more than a fantasy. Letting go is the only way to save us both, but forgetting Becca feels like an impossibility.

My coworkers notice the dark circles under my eyes and the fatigue in my movements. They ask if everything is alright, but I brush off their concern with practiced indifference. What would they say if they knew the truth? That the man they trusted, the one with numbers always at his fingertips, is little

more than a wolf in sheep's clothing.

The urge to call Becca rises and falls like the tides, an ebb and flow of compulsion I'm powerless to escape. I wonder if she's changed her number yet or if she'd even answer if I tried. Apologies and promises spill through my mind, a jumble of words that could never undo the damage I've done.

When the phone on my desk rings, for a fleeting moment I mistake the sound for her laughter. The sharp sting of disappointment is yet another reminder that she is lost to me forever. I steel my nerves and answer the call, burying my anguish beneath the mask I wear for the outside world. The beast within snarls in discontent, raging against its cage and the loss of its mate.

I know then what I must do, the steps that could lead me out of darkness and into the light.

I drive to Becca's apartment, my heart pounding with each turn of the wheel. So much is at stake in this moment, our future hanging in the balance. Will she see the changes I've made and give me another chance? Or have I lost her forever to the memory of the man I once was?

When I arrive, the door to her apartment is ajar. Panic rises in my chest as I rush inside, scanning the room. And there, pinning Becca against the wall with a knife to her throat, is a stranger.

Rage erupts within me, hot and primal, banishing all thoughts but one.

Protect her.

I lunge at the attacker, knocking the knife from his grasp. He wheels on me with a snarl, fists swinging. I deflect the blows and land one of my own, satisfaction flooding my senses at the crunch of bone.

The man stumbles back, eyes wide with fear. Becca collapses to the floor behind me, sobbing. I step toward the intruder, teeth bared, ready to rip him limb from limb.

"Please," he gasps. "I didn't—I'm sorry..."

My hands curl into fists, trembling with the effort to restrain myself. The monster rages, screaming for blood, but I force it back into the darkness where it belongs.

I take a deep, steadying breath and nod at the door. "Get out. Now. Before I change my mind."

He scrambles to obey, disappearing into the night. I turn to Becca, guilt and regret warring within me. Have I saved her only to become the villain once more?

She looks up at me with tears in her eyes, but no fear. Only trust. And

maybe, just maybe...forgiveness.

"Jack," she whispers.

My heart swells with hope, the beast retreating into the shadows. I've been given a gift beyond measure, a chance at redemption I never dreamed possible.

Becca holds out her hand, and I take it.

CHAPTER TEN

Becca

RELIEF FLOODS my veins as Jack's hand takes mine, chasing away the terror that gripped me only moments before.

I stumble forward on shaky legs, collapsing into the warmth of his embrace. Strong arms wrap around me, pulling me close against a broad chest as I breathe in the familiar scent of his cologne.

"It's okay, I've got you now," he whispers, his breath hot against my ear.

My fingers curl into the soft leather of his jacket, clinging to him as tremors wrack my body. I can't find the words to express my gratitude at his timely rescue, so I simply hold him tighter, hoping he understands.

After a long moment, I pull back to meet his gaze, struck by the intensity of emotion swirling in those fathomless blue eyes. My heart skips a beat at the barely restrained passion burning beneath the surface, fueled by his primal need to protect what belongs to him.

I know I should feel afraid, but instead, a different heat begins to build low in my belly.

"You're mine," he growls, cupping my face in his hands as his eyes darken with desire. "No one will ever hurt you again."

His lips crash down on mine, devouring me in a kiss that steals my breath away. I melt into him, surrendering to the delicious sensations flooding my senses.

In this moment, wrapped in Jack's embrace, I feel utterly possessed—and

I don't want to be free. All that matters is him, and the way he makes me feel. *Safe. Wanted. Loved.*

I break the kiss, panting for breath, my heart pounding in my chest.

Jack rests his forehead against mine, his ragged breaths mingling with my own. I trace the lines of his face with trembling fingers, overwhelmed by the depth of emotion in his eyes.

"I thought I'd lost you," he whispers, his voice thick with passion and regret. "When I saw him, I..." He swallows hard, squeezing his eyes shut as if to block out the memory. "Who was he?"

Guilt twists in my gut at the anguish in his voice. I shake my head, my body beginning to tremble again. "I don't know. I've never seen him before." I never meant to hurt Jack. I just couldn't condone what he did, but now I realize that if he hadn't been watching me, there's no telling what might have happened.

And over the past few weeks, I've realized that it doesn't matter to me anyway. The only reason I ever cared that Jack was "stalking" me was because I thought I was supposed to. In all actuality, I'm glad my man is that obsessed with me. I'm glad that he wants me so much he can't bear to be apart from me.

So, what's the problem?

There isn't one.

I've been so blind this whole time.

"I'm sorry," I breathe, brushing my lips over his in a feather-light kiss. "I was wrong."

A slow smile spreads across Jack's face, erasing the shadows that lingered there. He gazes down at me with renewed heat and possession, tightening his grip on my waist.

"You're mine, Becca, now and forever. Never forget that again."

His mouth claims mine once more, rough and demanding, as his hands roam over my body. I melt into his embrace, losing myself in the delicious sensations only Jack can evoke.

Right or wrong, for better or worse, we belong to each other.

He breaks our kiss and speaks, his voice trembling as he professes his love for me, his words filled with sincerity and remorse for his past actions.

"Becca, I'm so sorry for hurting you. My love for you drove me to madness, but it's only because I've never wanted anything like I want you. You're the reason I breathe, the light that brightens my day, the missing piece

of my soul. I was lost without you."

His eyes glisten with tears as he speaks, filled with a vulnerability I've never seen before. My heart aches at the anguish in his voice, torn between the love I feel for this broken man and the pain his obsession has caused.

I stare up at Jack, searching his face for any sign of deception. But there is only truth in his piercing blue eyes—and love. The same love that consumes me, that lingered even after everything fell apart, refusing to let go.

A single tear trails down my cheek as my walls crumble.

And then Jack pulls me into his arms, holding me close, and it feels like coming home.

I cling to Jack, breathing in his familiar scent, and whisper the words he's longed to hear.

"I love you too."

Jack cups my face in his hands, his touch gentle yet fervent. "Losing you was the wake-up call I needed. When you walked away, it nearly destroyed me. I never want to feel that alone again. You are my light, my redemption—the best part of me. And I will spend the rest of my life proving that I can be the man you deserve."

His vow ignites a spark of hope in my chest, tentative yet blinding in its intensity. I search Jack's eyes again, looking for any deception, but there is only love—battered yet undimmed, a flame rekindled from ashes.

I take a deep, shuddering breath and nod. "You're already everything I want."

Jack pulls me into his arms, holding me so tightly I can barely breathe. But I don't care. All I can feel is the pounding of his heart against my chest—a rhythm that matches my own.

"Thank you," he whispers, his voice thick with emotion. "Thank you for forgiving me. For giving me another chance. I won't let you down again, Becca. I swear."

I close my eyes, relishing the warmth and safety of his embrace. The familiarity. The way being with Jack just feels right.

He leans down slowly, giving me time to pull away if I want to. But I don't. I close my eyes and lift my face to his, anticipation humming through my veins.

When Jack's lips meet mine, the world falls away. There is only this moment—this kiss—and the promise of a future brighter than either of us could have imagined.

Our kiss deepens, hands roaming and breaths quickening. The familiar spark of desire ignites between us, fueled by weeks of separation and longing.

Jack slides his hands down to cup my ass, grinding his hips against mine. I moan into his mouth, heat pooling low in my belly.

"I need you," he rasps, trailing kisses along my jaw and down my neck. "Right now. Please, Becca."

The desperation in his voice makes my decision for me. We've wasted too much time already. I nod, looping my arms around his neck.

Jack scoops me up easily, carrying me to the bedroom in hurried strides. By the time he lowers me to the mattress, we're both panting with need.

He strips off his shirt and reaches for the hem of my dress, his gaze dark with lust. "You're so beautiful. I'm the luckiest man in the world to have you."

I flush under the intensity of his stare, my heart overflowing with love and desire. "I'm yours," I whisper. "Always have been. Always will be."

Jack growls, devouring my mouth in a searing kiss as his hands roam freely over my bare skin. Every touch ignites sparks, rekindling a fire between us that was never truly extinguished.

When he enters me, we moan in unison—a single sound of pleasure and completion. We move together seamlessly, bodies remembering a rhythm they never truly forgot.

Release comes swiftly, triggered by the love and passion in Jack's eyes. In this moment, I know that we're meant to be. That we always have been and always will be.

Two souls joined, now and forever. No matter what obstacles we may face, our love will endure. Of that, I have no doubt.

And after we come together, we begin again.

Our lips meet in a slow, sensual kiss that ignites a blaze of passion inside me. Jack's hands slide down to cup my ass, pulling me tighter against him so I can feel the hardness of his arousal again.

A moan escapes me as desire pools between my legs. I've missed this—missed *him*. No one has ever made me feel the way Jack does.

"Fuck, Becca, I can't get enough of you. I'll always need you," he rasps against my mouth.

"Same," I agree in a breathy sigh. "Take me again, Jack."

Jack leans down to capture one of my nipples in his mouth, teasing the

sensitive bud until I cry out.

My back arches, pressing my breast deeper into his mouth. Jack reaches down to slide his hand between my thighs.

"You're fucking beautiful," he growls, stroking his fingers through my slick folds. "Is this all for me?"

"Yes," I gasp. "Only for you."

Jack adds a finger, then another, pumping them in and out of my core until I'm trembling on the edge of release. But I don't want to come this way. I want to feel him inside me.

"Jack, please," I beg. "I need you now."

He removes his fingers and sits up, revealing his impressive length. The sight of him makes me ache with desire.

I open my legs in invitation, a silent plea for him to fill me.

In one swift move, he buries himself to the hilt inside me. We both groan at the sensation, pausing for a moment to appreciate the feeling of being joined again.

Then Jack begins to move, slow and deep at first, but quickly building to a primal rhythm. The pleasure is almost too intense, spiraling through my body like wildfire.

Our moans and cries of ecstasy fill the room as we race toward climax together. When it hits, it's all-consuming and powerful, leaving me shattered in its wake.

Jack collapses on top of me, his heart pounding against my chest. I wrap my arms around him, savoring the warmth and intimacy of the moment.

This is where we belong—together, always.

EPILOGUE

Six Months Later

Jack

I FOLD another shirt and place it in the open cardboard box on the bed. Becca hums along to the pop song playing from her phone as she neatly stacks books into an identical box.

"I can't believe we're finally doing this," she says, brushing a strand of chestnut hair behind her ear. Her smile is radiant.

"I know. It feels like a dream." I wrap my arms around her waist from behind, breathing in the floral scent of her shampoo. "Soon this will be our reality every day."

She turns and kisses me, her lips soft and warm. "I'm so excited. Just think—we can decorate however we want. No more clashing furniture styles."

I chuckle. "No more fighting over what to watch on TV."

"Mmm, yes. I can't wait to snuggle with you on our new couch and binge-watch awful reality shows."

"As long as I'm with you, I'm happy." I kiss the top of her head and return to packing.

We work in comfortable silence, occasionally catching each other's eye and exchanging giddy grins. The future stretches before us, bright and full of promise.

After the last box is taped shut, I call the movers to confirm the time. Soon a team of burly men haul our possessions into a truck bound for our new home. Our new beginning.

Becca slips her hand in mine as we watch the truck disappear down the street. "Let's go home," she says.

I smile, my heart swelling. Home. A place made of more than walls and a roof. A sanctuary built of trust, compassion, and love.

With her by my side, I'm already there.

Becca and I step through the front door of our new home, the smell of fresh paint greeting us. Our footsteps echo on the hardwood floors as we do a quick tour, envisioning where our furniture will go.

"The living room gets great light," Becca says, walking to the large bay window overlooking the street. "Perfect spot for reading."

I come up behind her, wrapping my arms around her waist. "And cuddling," I add with a grin.

She turns and kisses me softly. "Yes, definitely that."

We get to work unpacking, bantering playfully as we organize boxes. Becca squeals as I chase her around with a bubble wrap roll, popping it loudly. Laughter fills the empty space, the sound of our new life beginning.

After stocking the kitchen with dishes and cookware, we step outside to explore the neighborhood, hand in hand. The sun is shining, the sky a brilliant blue.

"Oh, look!" Becca exclaims, pointing to a quaint coffee shop on the corner. The smell of roasted beans wafts out the propped-open door.

I guide her inside where we order iced coffees. Sipping our drinks, we walk further, discovering a used bookstore, bakery, and small market to stock up on groceries later.

Turning down a tree-lined street, we find a grassy park dotted with benches and a playground. Children squeal as they chase each other across the jungle gym.

Becca squeezes my hand, her eyes bright. "We'll bring our kids here someday."

My heart swells at the thought. "I can't wait," I reply, pulling her close.

"And I can't wait to get you home and start making our little family."

Becca blushes prettily, and my chest swells with pride.

My wife.

We circle back as the sun starts to set, walking beneath hanging flower boxes overflowing with bursts of color outside the shops.

"I'm so happy we're doing this together," Becca says softly.

"Me too, beautiful." I stop and caress her cheek. "This is just the beginning for us."

She kisses me tenderly, a promise of many more to come.

EPILOGUE II

One Year Later

Jack

I OPEN the front door and the savory aroma of garlic and herbs fills the air. Candles flicker on the dining table, illuminating Becca's radiant smile.

"Surprise," I say, unveiling a platter of chicken piccata, her favorite.

"You didn't have to do all this," Becca says, wrapping her arms around my neck.

"I always want my wife to feel special."

I pull out her chair and she sits. We toast with glasses of white wine, the tang bursting on my tongue.

Becca takes a bite, closing her eyes blissfully. "Delicious. Thank you, husband."

We continue eating, chatting casually about our day. I relish making her laugh, her nose crinkling adorably. My heart skips a beat when she gazes at me with those striking green eyes.

After cleaning up, we cuddle on the couch with a soft blanket, Becca's head nestled on my chest. Gently stroking her hair, I breathe in the sweet floral scent. On screen, a romantic comedy plays but I can hardly focus, intoxicated by her proximity.

Becca traces delicate circles on my arm, sending shivers down my spine. I tilt her chin up, finding her lips in a passionate kiss. She melts against me with a contented sigh that echoes in my racing heart.

We stay wrapped in each other's arms, exchanging lazy kisses as the

movie ends. In this moment, with Becca, I'm home.

"What are you thinking about?" Becca asks, her eyes searching mine.

I brush a strand of hair from her face. "Just how lucky I am. To be here with you, building a life together."

She smiles softly. "Me too. I can't wait to see what our future holds."

Becca rests her head on my shoulder and sighs contentedly. We sit together, dreaming of the future, as the pale moonlight filters in through the window.

The shrill cries pierce the still night air, jolting me awake. I blink groggily and nudge Becca.

"Your turn or mine?" she mumbles into her pillow.

"I'll go," I say, stifling a yawn as I slide out from under the covers.

I shuffle down the hall to the nursery where our twin girls wail for attention. Scooping up baby Sophie, I gently rock her while heating a bottle one-handed.

"Shhh, it's okay sweetheart. Daddy's got you," I soothe. Her tiny body relaxes against my chest as she gulps down the milk.

Laying her back in the crib, I lift a still fussing Olivia. I breathe in the sweet baby smell of her peach fuzz hair.

"Let's get you changed, my little love bug."

I expertly undo her diaper and wipe her clean, sprinkling on powder before securing a fresh diaper. Olivia's cries soften to whimpers as I sway and pat her back.

I glance at the clock—3:17 am. Becca will be up for the 5 o'clock feeding. I marvel at how we've adjusted to this delicate dance of caretaking.

Returning Olivia to her crib, I watch the twins sleep, their tiny chests rising and falling in unison. My heart swells with more love than I thought possible.

I tiptoe back to bed and slide under the covers. Becca stirs slightly.

"All good?" she asks groggily.

"All good," I whisper, kissing her forehead. "Get some rest, supermom. I'll take the next one."

She gives my hand a sleepy squeeze before drifting off again. I close my

eyes, basking in this profound contentment. The cries, the chaos, the sleepless nights—it's all worth it for this amazing life we've built together.

I wake before the sunrise, eager to surprise my love. In the quiet kitchen, I arrange a vase of roses and baby's breath, Becca's favorite. On a notecard, I write:

*My Dearest Becca,
These 12 roses represent the 12 reasons I
love you:*

- 1. Your courage*
- 2. Your kindness*
- 3. Your resilience*
- 4. Your beauty*
- 5. Your laughter*
- 6. Your compassion*
- 7. Your selflessness*
- 8. Your intelligence*
- 9. Your grace*
- 10. Your strength*
- 11. Your spirit*
- 12. Your love*

*Thank you for blessing me with your heart.
I am the luckiest man alive.*

*Love,
Jack*

I place the note atop the flowers and head upstairs. Becca is still sleeping soundly. I resist the urge to wake her with kisses and instead start a pot of coffee, her favorite French roast.

The smell of coffee rouses Becca. She shuffles into the kitchen, her hair adorably mussed.

"Good morning, beautiful." I greet her with a kiss.

"Mmm, morning," she smiles sleepily. Her eyes light up when she notices the flowers.

"Jack, you shouldn't have!" She reads the note, her smile growing.

"I meant every word," I say, pulling her close.

"You're too good to me," she whispers against my lips.

We kiss slowly, sweetly. No matter how many times I've held her, kissed her, made love to her, it never gets old.

"I was thinking," I say, "maybe your mom could babysit tonight and we could have a proper date night?"

Becca's face lights up. "I'd love that."

We continue chatting over coffee, the sunlight streaming in, illuminating her beauty. My heart is full. Even in the mundane moments, our connection deepens. Every day, we choose each other. And I will never stop choosing her.

I caress her cheek, admiring her beauty in the morning light. Though we have been together for some time now, my desire for her has not waned. If anything, it has only grown stronger.

"What are you thinking about?" Becca asks, her voice still husky from sleep.

"Just how lucky I am to have you in my life," I reply.

She smiles and leans in to kiss me again, deeper this time. I pull her close, my hands tangling in her messy locks. Our kisses become urgent and heated. I lift her onto the kitchen counter, eliciting a surprised gasp.

"Jack!" She giggles as I trail kisses down her neck.

My hands roam her body eagerly. I have memorized every curve, every sensitive spot. She responds beautifully to my touch, arching into me. Our clothes are shed hastily between frenzied kisses.

I enter her slowly, relishing her warmth. We move together passionately, our moans mingling in ecstasy. With her, I am whole. She is everything I never knew I needed.

After, we hold each other close, hearts still racing.

"I don't know what I did to deserve you," I murmur into her hair. She kisses me sweetly in response.

No matter what mistakes I've made in the past, this is right where I'm meant to be. With her by my side, the future is bright.

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