



# The OFFICE

## Party

A  
Sexy Boss  
Novella

NEW YORK TIMES & USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

WHITNEY G.

# THE OFFICE PARTY

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## SYNOPSIS

*I can't believe that I pulled my boss's name for our company's annual Secret Santa tradition ...*

As the devil incarnate, this infuriating, cocky bastard never gives us the holidays off, and he honestly expects us to be grateful for his generous alternative: The Office Party.

It's a mandatory, all-expenses-paid trip for two weeks at a surprise luxury resort—where we still have to work twelve to fifteen hours a day.

*I'm so over this ...*

So, I put zero percent effort into his gift. I tear the tag off whatever my sister gifts me, add a five-dollar Amazon gift card, and hand it off to him.

It's not until my sister sends me a text that I realize how terrible of a decision that was.

Georgia: Why haven't you sent me a 'LOL' about the brand-new vibrator I got you? I really do hope that you use your boss's face as a muse, like my note says. :-)

If that's not bad enough, this year's "luxury trip" will be in my hometown—the place I've avoided for years. At the resort that my grandmother owns...

*If the universe gets me out of this, I will never 'regift' anything ever again ...*

A NOTE FROM WHITNEY G.

Hey there!

Dear Awesome Reader,

Thank you so much for picking up *The Office Party*! This is a steamy holiday novella, and I can't wait for you to meet Savannah and Garrett!

If you want to be the first to learn of my upcoming releases, sales, and special things that I only offer to my readers, be sure to [sign up for my Exclusive F.L.Y. List](#). (F.L.Y. = Effin Love You. Because whether you love or hate this story, I still love you for giving it a chance!)

Sincerely,

Whitney G.

*For you.*  
*You were right.*

# PROLOGUE



LAST CHRISTMAS

**URGENT:**

**West Media Internal Memo**

Dear Valued Employees,

The holidays are upon us once again, and I'd like to personally remind you that my company does not allow sick or vacation days during this time of year.

Since some of you have recently submitted requests to Human Resources for off-days around Christmas, allow me to reiterate what I said when I first hired you:

There is no such thing as an "off day" in December.

My definition of Christmas is a 14-hour workday.

& The Office Party is a *mandatory* event.

**There are no exceptions to these rules, my top executives and I included.**

I look forward to seeing you at the prep-ceremony, where our travel partner will reveal this year's destination for our two-week, all-expenses-paid work retreat.

Be sure to bring whatever gift you purchased for your coworker(s) via the annual Secret Santa tradition.

*Unless you want to be unemployed.*

Sincerely,

Garrett West

C.E.O., West Media International

**P.S.** You're very welcome for the generous opportunities that I provide for you.

*~ The entertainment industry never sleeps, so neither do we. ~*

ONE

*Last Christmas*

*Punta Cana, Dominican Republic*

“**A**re you sure that your boss is okay with this?” My younger sister, Georgia, unbuckles her seatbelt once our plane lands. “I could’ve sworn you said that he never grants *anyone* the holidays off.”

“That’s the whole point,” I say. “I’ve planned this trip perfectly. By the time we spend the first two nights here, it’ll be too late for him to do anything about me missing the office party. The worst of the weather will have already approached the coast, and all flights will be cancelled. Especially since Teresa is supposed to be a category four hurricane.”

“I’m sorry, *what?*” Her eyes widen. “You assured me that hurricane season was over in November.”

“He’ll try to email me at that point, I’m sure.” I can’t stop talking. I’m too excited at the thought of getting away with this.

*Getting the hell away from Garrett West.*

I started the planning for this trip six months ago, and this surprise, off-season hurricane must be my Christmas gift from the universe. It’s my reward for making the fastest rise in the company within three years and successfully resisting the urge to strangle Garrett West to death.

As his top advisor, I know his routine like the back of my hand. I know that at this very moment, he’s on his private

plane en route to Hawaii. He's leaning back in his chair with that cocky smirk on his lips, sipping his favorite brand of Scotch. Minutes from now, he'll analyze all the reports I've sent him, and then he'll email me pages of "highly suggested changes" for no reason other than to make my life miserable.

"I'm sure he'll wonder why I'm gone sooner or later," I say aloud, smiling. "But I'm not allowing him to torture me with his ridiculous office party this year. During our flight, I set up a specialized responder for any question that he can possibly ask, so he shouldn't notice my absence for a while."

"Can you back up and elaborate on just how bad this hurricane is supposed to be?" Georgia asks. "That's what I want to hear about right now."

"I've never worked for someone who is so obsessed with his work," I say. "You'd think he's curing a disease with the way he talks to us. I've told you about his " before, right?"

"The hurricane, Savannah ... " She narrows her eyes at me. "Start talking about *the hurricane*."

"Like, who wants to share Christmas Day with the people who drive you insane during the workweek?" I shake my head. "Some of us actually enjoy going home to see our families."

"I give up." She stands to her feet, grabbing her bag from the overhead bin. "You know, in all fairness, you hardly ever come home for the holidays. And if you want me to be perfectly honest, you're a bit of a workaholic, too. I still haven't forgiven you for bringing your laptop to my graduation ceremony."

"I had an *emergency* deal to finish, and I've apologized to you a million times."

"You've apologized twice."

"That doesn't mean I'm anything like Garrett West." I pick up my bag and follow her down the jet bridge. "I'm fully capable of tuning out work and taking a break."

As if I'm trying to prove my point, I turn off my phone and place it into my back pocket. Then I set the alarm on my watch for when I'll need to turn it on again.

Following the signs, I lead the way to the customs area. We wait half an hour for the agents to check our passports, and then we grab our suitcases from baggage claim and head to the transportation zone.

A man in a short-sleeved, flowery shirt is holding up a “*Welcome to paradise, Savannah & Georgia Grey!*” sign.

“Good morning and welcome to Punta Cana, ladies!” He smiles. “I’m Emilio, and I’m looking forward to escorting you to The Excellence Resort. Is there anything you need to—” He pauses as a round of thunder roars from afar. Flashes of lightning follow.

“I’m getting back on the goddamn plane,” Georgia says. “I refuse to die today.”

“Don’t worry about that, Miss.” Emilio holds out his hand for her luggage. “We’ll return to blue skies in a matter of minutes. It’s only a late afternoon thunderstorm.”

She hesitates for a few seconds before giving him the bag.

Smiling, he opens the back door of the black SUV and carefully arranges our things.

Before pulling onto the road, he pours two champagne glasses and hands Georgia a chocolate strawberry plate.

As we ride, I shut my eyes and mentally rewind through my preparation—making sure I’ve dotted all of my i’s, crossed all of my t’s.

*Gave a fake doctor’s note. Check.*

*Made sure my team was two months ahead on their project. Check.*

*Told the neighbor to hang ‘Get Well Soon, Savannah’ balloons outside my brownstone tomorrow morning. Check.*

“Oh, not at all, Miss!” Emilio’s deep laughter pulls me out of my thoughts. “Our resort is built to withstand the strongest of hurricanes, and the worst of this storm won’t hit anywhere near us.”

I look over at Georgia, who doesn't look the slightest bit soothed. She's clutching her bag against her chest and rocking back and forth as if we're seconds away from approaching the end of the world.

"I double-checked everything," I whisper. "We're going to be fine. Trust me."

She ignores me and continues to pepper the driver with questions about the weather.

It doesn't take long for the sky to redress in blue as Emilio promised, and by the time the grey clouds have drifted away, we're approaching the end of a street.

The massive wooden gate to The Excellence Resort swings open, and my jaw drops to the floor. The lush greenery ahead is a far cry from my concrete jungle in Manhattan.

I turn on my phone to take pictures, but before I can snap one, a text message crosses my screen.

**Bastard Boss (Don't Answer):** I heard that you've contracted a "flesh eating disease" and won't be able to join us in Hawaii ... Is this true?

I know that I shouldn't answer—that I should ignore him until I return to Manhattan, but I can't help it.

**Me:** Yes. The worst pain I've ever felt.

**Bastard Boss (Don't Answer):** I'm sorry to hear that, Miss Grey. That sounds quite unfortunate, and I hope you get well soon.

**Me:** Thank you so much for your concern, Mr. West. I truly hope the "party" in Hawaii goes well without me. (So that you know, I was looking forward to attending. It seemed like a fantastic resort!)

He sends me three more messages, but I don't open them. Instead, I mute my inbox and snap as many photos of the passing scenery as I can.

"Okay, you may be forgiven for bringing me here after all," Georgia says. "This place is absolutely gorgeous."

When the driver pulls up in front of the resort, the concierge greets us with flowers.

“We’ve upgraded your room, Miss Grey,” he says to me. “Our manager was hoping to greet you in person, but he sends his regards. Please follow my lead as the bellman handles your bags.”

We follow him through a maze of tall palm trees and stone-white buildings. Sparkling blue pools and gardens greet us every two minutes until we approach a standalone villa.

“This is the best suite in the entire resort,” he says, unlocking the door and revealing a world of opulence.

I can hardly contain my excitement as he shows off the amenities.

*Private swim-up pool and ocean view. Personal butler and luxury bedding service. Unlimited dessert and alcohol.*

*No Garrett West.*

After he shows us a bonus pool on the roof, Georgia pops open a bottle of champagne, and I flop onto a flamingo float.

“How about a toast?” she says. “First one is to you.”

“No.” I wait for her to pour my glass. “First one is to escaping mandatory attendance ...”

\* \* \*

The following morning, I roll over in bed at four o’clock out of habit. My brain is wired to West Media’s holiday schedule, so I open my laptop and start checking my emails.

To my surprise, Mr. West hasn’t sent me a single message, and the only urgent thing I need to do is thank my Secret Santa sender: Jerry in Marketing. He’s given me a Starbucks gift card, an ‘I hope you enjoy reading this’ note, and a paperback copy of *How to Deal with an Overbearing Boss*.

I own three copies of this book already, and I’ve listened to the audio version countless times, but I tell him that I’m



“thrilled” to have a new book to read.

My eyes catch sight of another email—a task I know Mr. West will lose his mind over, and before I know it, I’m ordering room service coffee and handling projects as the minutes slip into hours.

“Working on your vacation already?” Georgia steps into my room around ten, donning a bright red bikini. “Is there another *emergency* business deal you have to handle?”

“No.” I shut it before tossing it onto the bed. “I’m ready to relax whenever you are.”

“*Prove it.*” She crosses her arms.

I change into a swimsuit under her watchful eyes, pull my hair up into a bun, and then I grab a few towels before following her to the beach.

As we set our chairs near the shore, the resort’s concierge walks over with a white envelope.

“Miss Grey?” he asks. “I’ve just received an urgent wire message for you.”

“Your manager is being a little over the top.” I smile. “It’s okay that he didn’t personally check us in, I promise.”

“It’s not from our manager, Miss. It’s from a Mr. Garrett West.”

“From a who?” My voice cracks. “What name did you just say?”

“Mr. Garrett West of West Media.” He reads the front of the envelope. “He says that it’s an emergency, and that it is imperative that you read it.”

My entire world comes to a stop, and I shake my head in disbelief. There’s no way in hell that he knows I’m here, so either I’m dreaming right now, or the universe is playing a ridiculously cruel joke on me.

“I don’t know anyone named Garrett West,” I say. “There must be another Savannah Grey here. Sorry.”

“You and your sister are the only guests on this side of the resort, Miss Grey.” He stretches his hand out a bit further, trying to hand it to me.

I don’t take it.

“For security purposes, we made him verify a few things,” he says. “I even asked him to describe you.”

“How did he describe her, then?” Georgia asks, moving next to me. “I mean, *I* don’t know a Mr. West either, so this man might be a stalker of some sort.”

He gives us a blank stare.

I’m tempted to plop down on my chair and enjoy the rest of my day, but he pulls a crumpled post-it note from his pocket.

Clearing his throat, he begins to read. “And I quote ... She’s a fucking vision, but since I need to be specific, she has almond-colored eyes and deep brown curls that frame her face and complement her skin. If she’s anywhere near the water when you give her my message, she’ll probably have her hair pulled up in a polka dot red and black scarf since she only buys that color for some reason.”

I pull the scarf off my head and hide it behind my back. “I’m not wearing a scarf today.”

“Her lips are always coated in a bright shade of red,” he continues. “And whenever she’s *lying*, she tends to talk very fast and—”

“Okay, enough.” I snatch the envelope from his hands. “Thank you very much for this message.”

“You’re very welcome, Miss Grey.” He nods and walks away.

When he’s out of sight, I rip the envelope to shreds and toss the pieces into the sea. Then I plop down into my chair and try to think of where he is right now.

*It’s day two of the party, so he’s in a logistical meeting with YouTube.*

“I really wanted to hear the rest of that description,” Georgia says, smiling. “He called you a ‘fucking vision’, so that must mean he’s pretty blunt at work.”

“He’s a lot of things at work.”

“Is he attractive? Worth googling?”

“Not in the slightest.” I lie, envisioning his perfectly chiseled face. “He’s a pompous, arrogant asshole whose self-esteem is so low that he thinks thousand-dollar suits make women want him. They don’t.”

“Oh, well that’s sad.”

“Heartbreaking.” I pull my shades over my eyes and relax, hoping like hell that I’ll wake up and realize today never happened.

*Please let that hurricane come early.*

ONE (B)

SAVANNAH

*Last Christmas*

*Punta Cana, Dominican Republic*

*Later that night*

**T**he lobby's palm trees twinkle as Georgia and I pose for pictures. We're donning plush white robes from the spa, courtesy of our upgrade. And thanks to the manager—and the pending storm, we have the entire building to ourselves.

Grey clouds are hovering above the island, and heavy rain is attacking the windows, but the staff doesn't seem too concerned.

"I need to grab a different reindeer headband from the gift-shop," Georgia says. "You want one?"

"Yeah, but can you get me an angel instead of the reindeer?"

"Absolutely." She grabs her purse and rushes down the steps.

When I'm sure that she's away, I pull out my phone and log into the private Boss-Snark forum I started when I first started working at West Media. I can't resist knowing what's going on at the party right now, and for some reason, I feel like something is slightly off.

## Subject: Garrett West

**Russ76:** Okay. Who the heck pissed in his Cheerios this morning? WTF is up with him today?

**LilyV8:** Right? He's being far more bullish about deadlines than usual. Anyone from the executive team know what's going on? Where's @SavannGrey?

**Heather20:** I was drinking spiked eggnog on the beach earlier this morning and saw him pacing/shouting on the phone. Whatever it is, he's PISSED. (He looks even sexier pissed, I must say.)

**Russ76:** @LilyV8 I'm sure she's around here somewhere. Does anyone know the scent of cologne he wears? I'm thinking about getting my husband some.

**Heather20:** It's called 'I'm Fucking Soulless.' LMAO. It probably cost 2k a bottle anyway... #gethimsomecalvinklein

I scroll through the other threads—checking in on who's working on what while attempting to piece together what's upset Garrett.

*Is it me?*

The sound of heavy footsteps is suddenly behind me, and then I hear someone clearing a throat.

“You don't look like you're suffering at all ...” It's a deep voice that I know all too well. “Are you enjoying your time away from me?”

*What the fuck?*

Sucking in a breath, I turn around and find myself face to face with the bane of my existence. The sexiest man who has ever set foot in Manhattan. Instead of his usual, custom three-piece suit and five-thousand-dollar tie, he's wearing jeans and a dark grey T-shirt that hugs his muscles in all the right places.

His deep blue eyes are locked on mine, and his smile is more lethal than usual.

For a few seconds, I forget that he's Satan in the flesh—that he's flown thirteen hours to confront me in another country.

*So, that wire message actually happened ...*

“Well?” His lips curve into a smirk. “Are you enjoying it, Miss Grey?”

I swallow. “How the hell did you find me?”

“You could've gone to the spa in Hawaii,” he says, eyeing my robe. “I would've paid for it.”

“How the hell did you find me?” I repeat.

“Well, like the very generous and concerned boss that I am, I stopped by your condo,” he says. “With enough soup and gourmet boxes to get you through the week.”

“You could've used Uber Eats.”

“I thought my favorite advisor was worthy of a personal handoff.” He steps closer, narrowing his eyes at me. “So, imagine my complete shock and surprise when you weren't there, and that if you really had a flesh-eating disease, you would be in a hospital. I called every single one in the state.”

“I drove to the one in New Jersey.”

“You don't have a driver's license, let alone a car.” He pauses, turning me on against my will—preventing me from jumping over the railing and running back to my room.

“I greeted the team in Hawaii for day one and decided it would be best to let you think that you got away with this,” he says. “For what it's worth, I'm highly impressed with the level of detail that you put into this plan. That's probably why I made you one of my top advisors.”

“Is it too late to be demoted?”

He smiles, closing the gap between us. You're welcome for the upgrade, by the way. I thought you deserved to sleep in the best suite this place offered.”

“I also deserve to spend the holidays how I choose.”

“I agree.” He looks at his watch. “You have the rest of tonight through tomorrow afternoon. Since the storm is expected to worsen tomorrow night, I decided to arrange transportation to Hawaii for you. You and your sister can share my other jet.”

“My sister doesn’t want to leave here.”

“Oh my god, we’re leaving?” Georgia suddenly rounds the corner. “*Before* the storm hits? And we’re going to Hawaii?”

“Yes.” Garrett answers, keeping his eyes on mine. “You are.”

“Oh my god, thank you!” She lets out a sigh of relief. “Your boss isn’t that awful of a person at all, Savannah!” She tilts her head to the side. “And you totally lied about what he looks like. *Wow.*”

Garrett smiles at her before turning his attention back towards me.

I mouth, ‘I fucking hate you’ to him, and cross my arms. “I think it’s way past time for you to let this office party go. This tradition isn’t necessary.”

“It’s something that my late father, who I respect and love, implemented.”

“You hate your father, and he’s still alive. I saw him at a coffee shop two days ago.”

“Did he say anything to you?”

“Let me out of this office party, and I’ll let you know.”

Silence.

We stare at each other in a stubborn stalemate, the same one we face every day in the office. I refuse to make the next move.

“Miss Grey,” he says, “the jet will be ready to take you to Hawaii at three o’clock.”

“I’ll show up for it at four.”



“I figured, so I told the pilot to prepare for takeoff at five.” He steps back, looking me up and down. “If there’s nothing else we need to discuss at this moment, I’ll see you at the office party.”

I bite my tongue and let him win this round, let him walk away under his aura of cockiness. With every step he takes, I vow that I will have a new job before next year’s office party.

*I will never let this happen again.*

ONE YEAR LATER

TWO

SAVANNAH

*This Christmas*

*Manhattan, New York*

**P**lease don't talk to me right now. Please don't talk to me ...

I twist the key in the lock of my brownstone, hoping it'll give way and save me from an awkward conversation with the woman who lives next door.

She's obsessed with the holidays, and she insists on making everyone on this block sign off on her "magical wish list." She raves about how much it works, but last year, I specifically requested a new job with a better boss, a top floor office that overlooked Manhattan, and a pair of pajamas so soft that I would learn how to stay in bed. In return, I received a promotion as Chief Advisor to Satan, brand new furniture and flowers in my current office, and a rash from the set of flannel pajamas Georgia sent me.

"Savannah?" She calls. "Savannah Grey, is that you?"

*Shit.* I force a smile and turn around. "Yes, Miss Cole. It's me."

"You're getting more gorgeous by the day!" She adjusts her bright red Santa hat and walks over to me. "If your boyfriend lived in town, I'd invite you over for one of our private parties. My husband has a huge crush on you, you know."

I nod. I never know what to say when she tells me this, and I'm pretty sure that she and her husband are swingers.

"Anyway, it's one day before December, so you know what that means." She pulls a glittery red envelope from her breast pocket, followed by a huge black pen. "Time to write down your top three things that you want Santa to bring you. Make sure to seal it, so he'll know it's real."

I take the pen from her hand and write:

- 1) *For my neighbor to stop believing in Santa Claus*
- 2) *For an orgasm with my boyfriend (I mean, just one)*
- 3) *A holiday season that I finally enjoy.*

I lick the strip and seal it, and then I hand it to her. "Here you are, Miss Cole."

"Thank you. Have a good night!"

"You, too." I push the door open and walk inside, stopping dead in my tracks when I catch sight of the winter wonderland in my living room.

A line of white Christmas trees stand tall by my window, twinkling in red and white, a shiny toy train is chugging along the floorboards, and lush green garland is draped over almost every surface.

Four stockings are hanging on my fireplace, and they each bear a single word in silver glitter.

*Please Come Home Savannah*

I step closer and notice my favorite children's book splayed open on my coffee table. At the center of its pages is a note in my grandmother's signature handwriting.

Dear Savannah,

I hope you won't mind that I hired someone to decorate your condo this year.

(With your amazing job, I think you can afford a better lock on your door \*\*smiley face\*\* )

I figured that this is the closest I can get to celebrating the holidays with you.

I know your job doesn't allow off-days for Christmas, but how about coming to see me after that?

Call me whenever you can.

I love you.

Grandma Hattie

P.S.

I had them place my best biscuits in the fridge.

P.S.S.

Your mother wouldn't be pleased to know that you stopped coming home after graduating from college. Neither would your father. Family is everything, Savannah.

I walk over to the toy train and lift it off its tracks, setting it into a drawer.

My parents are long gone—casualties of a train crash, and no amount of biscuits or trips home will ever bring them back.

I turn my attention to the gingerbread cookies that are standing on my mantle. Each of the cookies features the name of the family members I've left back at home. I run my fingers across all their names, stopping when I notice the one named "Taryn."

*Ugh.* I pick it up and bite off its head.

I'll never admit to a single soul, but as much I complain, I was *somewhat* grateful for Garrett's annual office party. For the "excuse" it affords me, anyway. I always offer it as the reason I stopped going home.

In reality, I stopped because there was a past chapter of my life that I was no longer interested in reading.

Well, a certain *character* anyway.

Letting out a breath, I walk over to the fridge and pull out the tin of biscuits. Then I sit down at my kitchen table and open my laptop.

The prep-ceremony for this year's office party isn't going to plan itself.

\* \* \*

A few hours later, I place a checkmark next to "Remind travel agent to keep everyone in the dark about the upcoming destination, no exceptions" and look at the next thing on my to-do list.

The Rose Ceremony.

It's the final event of the party, and it's ripped straight from the script of *The Bachelor*. The day is dedicated to a tray of red roses that Garrett hands out to each of the executive team members to determine who is getting "a raise" for the new year. Those left empty-handed are given a lecture on the things they need to improve, and some people are asked to submit resignations.

Or, so I've *heard* that's the case.

Garrett offers me the first rose without comment, so I've always left the room without knowing what comes next.

Flipping through the invoices, I realize that none of the necessary items have been ordered. The florist has submitted a quote with estimated instead of actual numbers, the Human Resources director hasn't sent me the list of employees who are due for review, and the junior interns haven't finished the work I assigned them two weeks ago.

I sigh and log into my inbox, coming face to face with messages that must've been prescheduled for the same time.

**Subject:** Need more time to complete. (Mr. West is being unreasonable, don't you think?)

**Subject:** Extension request (Pleaseeee. He has to know this isn't possible.)

**Subject:** Can we have another week to finish?

I know better than to open any of them right now. I also know that I'm tired of them weaponizing our mutual hatred of

the boss to request special treatment here or there.

Even though give in most of the time, I can't afford to do so today.

Doing so would mean a five-week extension, on top of the original extension I gave them in October.

My blood is beginning to boil, and I'm tempted to write back "Hell no" to everyone, but I hold back.

*That's not being a good boss...*

I know that it's best to get one of my professional mentors to talk me off the ledge, but there's only one person I know who's awake at this hour. One person who always answers when I call.

Picking up my phone, I scroll down to "Satan in the Flesh" and hit call without a second thought.

"Yes, *Savannah*?" His deep voice comes over the line within seconds, and I hesitate. I'm not used to him calling me by my first name, not used to how good it sounds coming from his mouth.

I honestly hate how easy it is for him to turn me on, that he's still capable of doing it, even when I have a boyfriend.

"Do you plan on saying something?" There's a smile in his voice. "Or, are you just up thinking about me at four in the morning?"

"Ugh, no." I roll my eyes. "I called because I need to talk to you about something important."

"I'm listening."

"I'm having an issue with the things that need to be done for the prep-ceremony," I say. Well, that and a lot of other things. Everyone keeps asking me for more time on their assignments."

"Okay ... And?"

"I don't understand why it always comes down to that." I admit. "I give everyone the same deadlines that you once gave to me."



He lets out a low laugh that sends butterflies fluttering in my stomach.

“Thank you for making me waste my time on a phone call with you,” I say. “I’ll see you at the office, and—”

“I’m not laughing at you.” He interrupts. “I’m laughing at the idea that you honestly expect your coworkers to have the same work ethic as you do. If you gave them the same amount of time I gave you, then you can only expect half of the work. Give them an extension, or hire more people if you want it done to *your* standard.”

I sit still for several seconds, stunned by his compliment.

“Is there anything else, Miss Grey?”

“Yes.” I clear my throat and pull out my planner. “Mr. Warner sent me an email requesting that we push back our Rockefeller Plaza meeting by an hour. I told him that was fine, but I’ll still need to leave at eight.”

“For the date with your boyfriend, correct?”

“Yes.” I pause. “He’s meeting me for dinner right after his flight gets in.”

“Hmmm. Did you settle on a dress yet?”

“I’m still debating between a few options.”

“Which ones?”

I’m tempted to say, “None of your business,” but he has good fashion sense. That, and Georgia previously suggested wearing a ‘Distance makes us closer’ T-shirt and jeans.

“There’s three.” I stand to my feet and walk into my bedroom. Opening my closet, I hit the lights and head over to the options.

“There’s the pink and white A-line one that I wore a few weeks ago at the Donovan meeting, the black one I wore last month at the charity ball, and a brand-new navy blue one that I haven’t worn yet.”

“You look good in dark blue, so you should wear that one,” he says. “Where’d you buy it from?”

“Versace ... My boyfriend bought it for me.”

“Your boyfriend brags about buying his suits off the clearance rack,” he says. “I doubt that he would ever set foot in *that* store.”

I don’t bother denying that. I hold back a laugh and take it off the hanger. “Thank you for your help.”

“You’re very welcome.”

Silence.

In moments like this, I almost feel like we’re friends—that maybe, just maybe, we can have a conversation that doesn’t end with me hanging up in his face.

“I was about to get in the shower when you called, Miss Grey,” he says. “So, unless you plan to come over and join me—sans the boyfriend, I’d like to get off the phone now.”

*Welp, so much for that.*

I end the call and begin granting extensions for my colleagues.

THREE

GARRETT

*This Christmas*

*Manhattan, New York*

“**M**r. West! Mr. West! How serious are the rumors about your company purchasing Netflix? Does this mean you’re selling your shares of YouTube?”

I ignore questions from the press as I walk out of the Empire State Building. I’ve just given them three hours of my time and allowed them to ask whatever questions they wanted, but of course, it’s never enough.

I make a beeline through their huddle and slip into my younger brother Seth’s town car.

The moment I shut the door, his driver speeds toward West Media headquarters.

“You know, this might be the first time that you looked like a CEO who gives a damn at a press conference.” Seth smiles. “I almost believed that you had a heart while you were up there. Good job.”

“Fuck you, Seth.”

He laughs and pulls a bright green box from his briefcase. “Here. Dad wanted me to give this to you.”

I grab it, placing it between us.

“You’re not going to open it?”

“Not without calling the bomb squad first.”

“He bought you a pen.” He rolls his eyes. “It’s an engraved pen that says, ‘I miss our old holidays & I’m sorry,’ in case you want to know. He also wrote you a short letter. I’m sure it’s a bit different from the one he gave to me, but ...”

I tune out his voice and look out the window. Stop and go traffic is far more interesting than anything my father has to say after years of treating me like nothing.

A switch went off for him the moment he lost my mother, and he transformed into a coldhearted bastard who raised his children like soldiers instead of sons. As far as I was concerned, our relationship wasn’t worth the years of circuitry and labor it cost to fix.

*He’s not sorry about anything. He needs money.*

I let out a sigh and pull out my phone. I scroll down to Savannah’s name to send her a quick text.

**Me:** My father is attempting to play the sympathy card again. How much money did I send him last time? I forgot.

Her response is instant as always.

**S. Grey (She’s Not Yours...):** Fifty-thousand. I advised you to send seventy-five. Would you like me to send the remainder now? (How sure are you about the blue dress?)

**Me:** Yes. Thank you. (500%)

I tap my fingers against the screen, wanting to ask for a picture of her wearing this dress, but I know that’s crossing the line.

The two of us dance around each other every day—somehow never spinning *into* one another. The tension between us is palpable and ever-present, but we pretend like it doesn’t exist.

**S. Grey (She’s Not Yours...):** Not that I value your opinion, b/c I *don’t*, but since you’ve never seen it, do you think this will work for Joshua? [img.]

The image downloads and my cock instantly stiffens. The dress is an extremely low cut one that exposes almost the mounds of her C-cup breasts.

The fabric clings to her curves in all the right places, cinching her right at the waist.

*Right where I would start kissing her before going lower...*

It takes everything in me not to text back, “Joshua doesn’t deserve you,” but I hold back.

**Me:** Dress is perfect. You can go back to work now. Your office isn’t designed for fashion shows, and I’m not paying you a multi-six-figure salary to help pick out your dresses.

**S. Grey (She’s Not Yours...):** \*middle finger emoji\*

“So, uh... I’m not coming to the party this year.” Seth’s words jerk me out of my thoughts.

“Excuse me?”

“I meant to tell you last night but I got busy with the Yardley proposal. Aren’t you going to ask me why I won’t be there?”

“Not at all.”

“Well, I’ll tell you anyway. I’m proposing to Amelie Foster—the woman I introduced you to a few months ago.” He looks as if he’s waiting for me to tell him that this is okay. That he’s somehow above the rules because he’s the CFO and wants to run off for personal reasons.

I cross my arms and keep him waiting.

“She’s the love of my life.” He pulls a small velvet box from his pocket and opens it, showing me a massive diamond ring. “I know it’s fast, but I’ve never felt this way about anyone before, and I hope she says yes.”

“Amelie Foster used to work in Accounting,” I say. “Did you start dating her before or after she quit?”

“What does that matter?” He scoffs. “She doesn’t work for you now, so hang up whatever fantasy you have of making your younger brother an example of your iron fist rule.”

“I’m just asking a question.”

“And I’m refusing to give you an answer.” He glares at me. “Would you prefer if I handled Amelie like you handle Savannah?”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Don’t play stupid.” He shrugs. “I should walk around in denial and focus on my job, right?”

“I have no idea what the hell you’re talking about,” I say. “But I *will* make an example out of you, and if you don’t show up with everyone else, I’ll be hiring a new CFO in January. You’re supposed to be my partner.”

“Your *business* partner. Not a psycho who lives, breathes, and eats work twenty-four hours a day.” He rolls his eyes. “I have a life, Garrett.”

“So, do I.”

“Do you?” He looks me right in my eyes. “Because for the past decade and a half, the only thing you’ve talked about is West Media, and all the films and production studios you’re operating. Which is quite ironic, because I don’t think you’ve sat through a single movie in years.”

I try to refute that, but it’s true. The longest video I can remember watching is on YouTube.

“Exactly.” He opens his door as the driver puts the car in park in front of headquarters. “Get over yourself.”

I wait a few seconds before stepping out into the snow. I take my time walking inside so I won’t have to talk with Seth again until lunch.

I take the elevator up to my floor and see a delivery man looking around for the receptionist. He seems beyond lost, and he’s holding flowers that look like they have one more day of life in them at best.

“What’s this for?”

“A delivery, sir.” He extends them to me. “They’re for a Savannah Grey.”

“They can’t be.” I’m certain they’re for someone else now.  
“She’s allergic to lilies.”

“Well, you may want to take that up with the sender, sir.”  
He flips the tag over. “I’m not responsible for anything else  
past this point. Merry Christmas.”

I look down and read the note.

*Happy Holidays, babe!*

*I know you hate the long-distance, but it’s only temporary.*

*Anyway. I thought of you today and wanted to send you  
something special before dinner.*

*These flowers may look slightly old, but it’s only because I  
traveled all across town to find the right ones.*

*I can’t wait to see you tonight.*

*Joshua*

**Note for the delivery driver:**

*Can you make sure the price tag is ripped off before you hand  
them to her? Thanks!*

The driver hasn’t followed the directions, as I can still see the  
tag. 1-Week Old Flower(s) Special! 75% off \$5.99!

*Jesus Christ.*



FOUR

SAVANNAH

*This Christmas*

*Manhattan, New York*

**Boss-Snark Forum 1.0**

**Subject: Garrett West**

**JerryMkting:** Whoever draws my name in the Secret Santa game this year, can you please gift me an email to my wife? Make it say, Subject: My condolences (Jerry was such a sweet man) Maybe if she thinks I've died, she'll finally give me a divorce?

**Russ76:** LMAOOO I'll do it. Speaking of divorces, rumor has it that Mr. West threatened to fire his brother. What type of bastard would fire his flesh and blood?

**SavannGrey:** The same type of bastard who is currently making me go shopping for a new silver tray for the Rose Ceremony as if I'm some type of intern. (Who the hell ever noticed that he used a "one hundred percent unique tray" every year? Why does this detail even matter?)

**LilyV8:** While you're at the store, check and see if they have souls on sale ... Buy two.

**SavannGrey:** Already checked. No luck. And ugh. I forgot about Secret Santa. I'll draw my "lucky" person when I get back.

**ardley34:** @Russ78 He made me wash his Maserati yesterday because I cut him off in traffic. I don't put anything past this man anymore.

**JerryMkting:** Okay, here's a better suggestion. Whoever  
**Y** pulls Mr. West's name in the Secret Santa game this  
year, can you please gift him ten hours of  
psychological therapy? Then again, can we all pitch  
in for that anyway?

FOUR (B)

SAVANNAH

*This Christmas*

*Manhattan, New York*

**W**inter winds whip my face as I rush out of the custom silver store. I'm not sure why I decided to walk two city blocks instead of getting a town car, but I'm currently regretting that decision.

Then again, maybe I need the fresh air.

Now that West Media is one and half weeks to the "pre-ceremony," the office is in full holiday panic mode, and even though it unfolds in the exact same way every year, the pressure is still intense.

Executives from Disney, Netflix, and every cable company in the country fly in on their private jets to get on Mr. West's good side because they know that we work on their platforms during the office party. They attempt to woo him with exclusive trips to private golf retreats, millions of dollars under the table, and a few of them even offer up their private planes. Pilot included.

What they don't know is that *I'm* the one they need to impress, and I've already decided on my advice to Mr. West. In addition to "Grow a fucking heart," it's, "They're all full of shit. Don't make any special deals with them."

By the time I make it to headquarters, my toes are frozen, and my curls are dripping wet from a sudden onslaught of

snow.

As I wipe my boots on the entry mats, I see Garrett talking to some Disney representative at the other end of the hall. He's wearing a custom trench coat over his three-piece suit, and every woman who walks past him steals a second glance.

I'm tempted to yell out, "He's a man-whore, don't waste your time," but I'll save that for another day.

I hand the silver tray to the main receptionist and decide to get my part in the Secret Santa game done.

"Good afternoon, Miss Grey." The security guard asks for my ID. "Here to pick out your lucky person?"

"There's nothing lucky about this." I frown. "Can I pay you a few hundred dollars to *not* participate in this? You could easily make the adjustment in your private spreadsheet and he would never know."

"You think I'm willing to lose my job over a *few hundred dollars*?" He points over to the tree. "Pick up a damn box and bring it over to me."

I start walking, but then I stop and look over my shoulder. "What about losing it for a few thousand dollars? I can help you find a new one."

"Don't make me file a complaint with Human Resources, Miss Grey."

Sighing, I walk over to the tree and look over the brightly wrapped gifts. I settle on a golden one with a black ribbon that looks like the exact one I picked last year and hand it to the guard.

As is tradition, he scans the bottom of it, and then he instructs me to open it in front of him.

I take my time delicately ripping the paper, in hopes that he'll get annoyed and let me out of this, but he has the patience of a saint.

When I finally get the wrapping off, I flip the lid and pull out the green ornament that bears the recipient's name.

*Garrett West.*

I suck in a breath and drop it to the ground, shattering it to pieces.

“Savannah Grey picks Garrett West,” he says, typing it into his top-secret spreadsheet. “Okay, you can go now.”

“That’s not who I picked.” I stomp on the glass. “I picked George Shaw in Accounting.”

“No, *I* picked George Shaw in Accounting.” He points toward the door. “Goodbye, Miss Grey. Happy holidays.”

I step out of the room and notice Garrett leading a group of press members into the formal room. Even from a distance, I can’t deny that he’s sexy as hell. Bastard boss or not.

His blue eyes suddenly meet mine, and he looks me up and down in a way that makes my breath hitch. He says something to one of the associates and signals for me to wait for him.

As he walks over to me, I try not to focus on the fact that he’s incapable of ever looking anything less than perfect. That if he weren’t my boss, I would’ve mustered up the courage to ask him out years ago.

“It took you all this time to pick up a silver tray, Miss Grey?” he asks. “Even if you walked—”

“I *did* walk.” I cut him off. “But now that I think about it, I don’t appreciate being asked to do an intern’s job. I should be talking to the executives with you.”

“Why?” He raises his eyebrow. “Your mind is already made up, and you hate dealing with these types of people.”

“That’s not the point.”

“You also, according to what you’ve told me, tend to get nervous and stressed when its date-night so I thought you would appreciate doing something simple. Since I was wrong, you can go.”

“What are you saying?”

“That you’re free to leave and go frolic with your boyfriend. Make sure to ask him if he has enough money on

his credit card to pay for the entire meal this time.”

“That’s only happened once, and he honestly misunderstood the rules of Happy Hour.”

“Doesn’t matter,” he says, looking me up and down. “He’s dating *you*, so it should’ve never happened at all ...”



# FIVE

GARRETT

*This Christmas*

*Manhattan, New York*

I scroll down to Savannah's name in my phone and change her name for the umpteenth time since she started working for me. I have to use a certain line for every time she dates a guy who isn't me, or else I will find a way to call and talk to her about something random. (Why she always answers me when I do that, I have no clue)

**S. Grey (Don't Be Petty and Interrupt Her Date Tonight)**

I have a date of my own, anyway.

Unfortunately, she doesn't compare to Savannah in any way. She's a typical, pretty socialite who thinks gossiping is an art form.

As I'm picking out my suit and tie, my phone buzzes with a call from Private Executive Travel.

"Yes?" I answer.

"Sir, we ran an extensive search as you asked on all your employees, and only one person has booked travel within the next few weeks. A Miss Savannah Grey."

"How shocking." I smile. "Where is she going this year?"

"It says Colorado Springs, sir," he says. "But here's the thing. We did some further digging and realized that she actually books this ticket multiple times a year."

“Oh,” I say. “Well, maybe it’s for a friend.”

“The ticket is in her name, sir. She buys and never uses it, so I don’t think you have anything to worry about.”

“Thank you,” I say. “Thank you very much.”

I’m not sure why Savannah would bother paying for tickets she never uses, but I’m sure she has some type of reason.

Saving a note in my phone, I start to call the travel company right back, but my executive assistant’s call comes through first.

“Yes, Janet?” I answer.

“I apologize in advance if this sounds odd, but the guy who wrote me this note swears he knows you.” She lets out a breath and begins to read.

*Please ask your boss, Mr. Garrett West if he can PayPal or CashApp me twenty-one dollars by six o’clock so that I may treat the woman who advises him daily to dinner.*

*Tell him that I will wire him the money back.*

*My cash app code is \$joshh5, and my PayPal is JoshHHM*

*I appreciate his discretion in this matter.*

*What the fuck?* “Go ahead and give it to him.” I end the call and change Savannah’s name in my phone once more.

**S. Grey (Fuck This Boyfriend, She Can Do Better)**



*This Christmas*

*Manhattan, New York*

“I can’t believe you pulled your boss’s name for the Secret Santa tradition.” My boyfriend, Joshua, laughs at my misery over dinner. “Do you have any idea what you’re going to get him yet?”

“Airlines don’t sell one-way trips to Hell, so I’ll have to look for something else,” I say. “I feel like we’re up and down more than we usually are, you know?”

He nods in agreement, but he doesn’t know the half of it.

“It’s crazy,” he says. “Sometimes I feel like you two are the ones in a relationship. I’m sure I know a lot more about him than he knows about me.”

“I’m sorry,” I say, clasping his hand atop the table. “It’s just—”

“Holiday prep season and it’s stressful as hell.” He smiles and gives my hand a soft squeeze. “I know, babe. I know. Did you taste your rice yet?”

“No.” I pick up my chopsticks and try not to look disappointed.

We’re currently sitting in some hole in the wall Chinese food place in New Jersey, a far cry from the “super upscale SoHo” place he previously promised.

I can’t get too upset with him, though.

He's living the startup life as an app developer and funds are tight. I know and believe that it'll pay off someday.

Unlike Garrett West, he knows what its like to struggle, what it's like to live paycheck to paycheck, and he doesn't—

I stop thinking once I see him stuff a few salt and pepper packets into his coat pocket.

“What are you doing, Joshua?”

“I ran out of seasoning at my house.” He lowers his voice. “You wouldn't believe the cost of things in Los Angeles. That's why I asked the waitress for some extra parmesan on the side. I brought a few Ziploc bags for the occasion.”

I blink. “I can buy some seasoning online and have it shipped to you.”

“No, that's okay,” he says. “I would never ask you to buy anything for me. Anyway, back to your boss. You could always write a letter of all the things you hate about him and wrap it in some pretty paper. That might suffice as a gift.”

“I've given him that for his past two birthdays.”

“Oh.” He shrugs. “Well, just don't put any effort into it. Give him something that shows you really don't care about anything, except the paycheck.”

“Good thinking.” I place a napkin in my lap. “Let's talk about something else. How was your flight?”

“Good, no turbulence,” he says. “Did you get my flowers?”

“Yes.” I smile at the thought of them. “Everyone on my floor was super impressed with the arrangement.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.” I nod. “I mean, not that it matters, but they didn't set you back too far, did they? They look even more expensive than the ones you sent me last week. Those were amazing as well, by the way.”

He raises his eyebrow, confused. “I didn't send you flowers last week.”

“Yeah, you did.” I pull out my phone and start scrolling through my pictures. “I missed your Skype call, and you sent me red roses with the little ‘No need to apologize’ card. Hold on, I have to find it.”

“What type of flowers did you get today from me?”

“Eight bouquets of red and white roses.” I smile. “The florist said they were her bestselling blooms, and they’re sitting at the center of my desk.” My voice trails off once I see the look on his face.

“Eight bouquets of bestselling roses?” His eyes are narrowed, and his jaw is clenched. “Please tell me that you’re not this fucking dense, Savannah.”

“I really do love your flowers,” I say. “They’re gorgeous.”

“Okay, so you *are* this dense,” He shakes his head and signals for the check. “I should’ve seen this a long time ago.”

“Would you prefer me to tell you that I hate them?”

“No, I’d prefer for you to tell me that you’re fucking Garrett West, but try not to cause a scene while you say it.” He hisses. “I mean, it’s so obvious, and I’m so foolish. You probably picked his name on purpose, so you can get with him on your trip that you *supposedly* loathe.”

“I’m not sleeping with my boss.” I feel my blood beginning to boil. “And you’re making one hell of an assumption for no reason.”

“No reason?” He laughs maniacally, and the conversations around us fall into whispers. “No reason? Oh, okay.”

“Maybe I should go now,” I say, now realizing he never even complimented my dress. “You can call me whenever you come to your senses.”

“I’m never calling you again!” He glares at me. “And you know what? For your Secret Santa gift, why don’t you just put a bow on your pussy and sit on your boss’s face? I’m sure he’ll love that—if you haven’t already done it with him before, that is.”

My jaw drops to the floor, and the entire restaurant falls silent.

A fork hits the floor several seconds later, shattering the silence with a reverberating clang.

I throw my napkin onto my plate and stand to my feet. “So much for not causing a scene, right?”

“You brought this on yourself,” he says, signing the receipt. “Fuck you, you cheating bitch.”

I’m not sure what comes over me, but the next thing I know, I’m grabbing a glass of juice (He can’t afford to buy the wine) and throwing it in his face.

I pick up my coat and leave the dining room without another word, ignoring the whispers that follow my every step.

I fight back tears of frustration as I take the elevator downstairs. I take my time buttoning my coat—shielding my heart from the cold, and then I step into Manhattan’s latest snowfall.

Moving close to the curb, I hold up my hand and hail a cab.

“Where to, Miss?” The driver’s eyes meet mine through the rearview mirror. “You’re looking at a minimum of thirty minutes, no matter what, in this traffic.”

*Perfect.* “2314 Seventh—” I stop myself. The last thing I need to do is head home. “West Media, please.”

“Sure thing.” He pulls onto the street, and I lose the war with my tears for the rest of the ride.

\* \* \*

An hour later, I hand the driver a handful of twenties and rush inside headquarters. All of the employees are long gone, but Garrett’s office lights are still burning bright.

*As usual...*



Without thinking, I head up to his floor and walk into the boardroom. I take off my coat, and pull my laptop from my bag to begin working on my next project.

Then my next project, and the next.

Before I know it, I'm ahead in my work by an entire week.

At around two in the morning, Garrett sets a mug that's topped with whipped cream in front of me.

"*Miss Grey?*" He clears his throat, waiting for me to look up at him. "I could've sworn that you had a date earlier."

"I did."

"Did he like your dress?"

"He didn't get a chance to really see it."

He looks me up and down. "How unfortunate. How long did the date last?"

"Twenty minutes, maybe." I tap my fingers against the table; I have no idea why I feel the aching need to open up to him sometimes. "He dumped me because he thinks I'm cheating on him with someone else."

Raising his eyebrow, he takes a long sip of his coffee. "I've never heard you talking to any other guys except him. Who does he think you're cheating with?"

"He didn't say." I shrug. "He just got really upset after I thanked him for the roses he sent me today."

"Maybe he's stressed. I'm sure he'll change his mind later."

"Maybe." I stand up from my chair. "Didn't you have a date with Helen the hotel heiress?"

"It only lasted half an hour."

"Is that how long it took her to finally realize that you're the devil incarnate?"

His lips curve into a smile, but he doesn't answer that. Instead he moves closer to me, lowering his voice. "If your

boyfriend didn't immediately take you home, after seeing you in *this* dress, something's wrong with him."

"Or maybe you picked the wrong one," I say, feeling that familiar tension filling the room. "Maybe your *taste* isn't as good as you think it is."

He looks me up and down again, his gaze settling between my thighs. "In that case, you should let me taste it for myself..."

"*What?*" I'm certain that I didn't hear that right.

"You heard me," he says, leaning closer. "Let me taste you."

My eyes widen, and I want to take a step back and draw the line, but he presses his mouth against mine, every nerve in my body comes to life.

I wrap my arms around his neck as he kisses me deeper, as he grips my waist and pulls me into him.

"Fuck..." he whispers harshly against my mouth, sliding his hand against my exposed thigh. He slips a hand under my dress and sucks in a breath once he realizes I'm not wearing any panties.

His kiss hits my lips in a different flavor now; it's ten times more passionate and raw, and before I can say, "Please just fuck me," the ping of the elevator interrupts us.

"Mr. West, are you up here?" A deep voice calls out, and we tear away from one another. "Mr. West?"

Garrett doesn't answer the call, he just stares at me.

I catch my breath and try to look away from him, but I can't. We've had moments before—small brushes against each other in the office, but nothing like *that*. Ever.

*And we need to keep it that way.*

"Well, I'm sure that you already have your next date lined up." I look at my watch, still stunned by that kiss. "You've bragged about believing that any woman in this city will go out with you, so I'm sure it's just a matter of time. Just make

sure that you're not picking up socialites or Wall Street girls. Those aren't a good fit for you."

"I didn't know you cared so much."

"I don't." I clear my throat. "I need to get back to work now, Mr. West. So, if you don't mind. I prefer to not talk to you during the hours when I'm not getting paid the nine to five rate."

"You're *salaried*, Miss Grey."

"Right, well." I turn away and bury my head into a book, ignoring the sexy scent of his cologne. "If you're really sorry, you'll let me have a few days off before the office party. I need them right about now."

"You already know that I can't do that," he says. "There are no exceptions to the rules."

"I think you can make me the first one." I pause. "That, or I'm quitting to work for your competition."

He narrows his eyes at me, saying nothing for several seconds. "I'll give you two days."

"Four."

"I'll meet you at three, but you still owe me work on the Benson account."

"The whole purpose of having off-days is *not* doing any work."

"Then do the work before you take off, Miss Grey." He hisses, turning back into the Satan I know. "Take it or leave it."

"I'll take it."

"Good." He steps to the side. "Take the kiss with you, too. It never happened."

I walk away and lock myself in my office—vowing to sit at my desk for the entire day. I only get up to use the restroom and take a power nap in the break room.

I make sure I'm four weeks ahead, and then I stumble into a town car and head home to freedom.

# SEVEN

SAVANNAH

*This Christmas*  
*Manhattan, New York*  
*Two days later*

**M**e: I sent you the Davis reports. Did you get those?  
**Mr. (I Don't Know What Off Day Means)**  
**West:** You did a good job. What about the Harrison ones?

**Me:** I'll have them to you at five.

**Mr. (I Don't Know What Off Day Means) West:** Are you having a good off day today?

**Me:** If I was, I wouldn't be texting you.

**Mr. (I Don't Know What Off Day Means) West:** Good to know. Tomorrow, on your other off day, send me the Turner files.

I wait until midnight to send his requested files, and even though I try to make myself get out of the apartment and traipse around the city like a local, I eventually wind up at a coffee shop where I complete assignments on my phone and fail to forget about that kiss.

It's not until the third off day that I manage to spend an entire two hours without thinking about work at all. I spend

most of it in the newbie's aisle at Whole Foods, figuring out why the food I make always turns out horrible.

When I finally make it home from the grocery store, Georgia is jumping on my living room couch like a three-year-old.

I blink a few times to make sure I'm not imagining this. She should be on a plane heading home to Colorado, sending me guilt texts about my refusal to join her.

She should be watching me toss our cousin Taryn's annual gift to me into the trash via FaceTime, and telling me that it's okay for me to continue hating her.

"Why is your furniture so soft?" She jumps a bit higher. "I mean, this stiff is on par with hotel quality, and your bathroom suite is stunning! The pictures you sent me did not do it justice, so I'll need an invite to come crash here at least six times a year."

I smile. "What are you doing here?"

"Surprising you." She jumps off and hugs me. "I'm sorry that Joshua dumped you like that. You know I hated his cheap ass anyway, and you can do better. Much better."

"Thanks. How'd you get here?"

"Your boss," she says. "He sent me a first-class plane ticket and said you *desperately* needed someone to talk to. He said you're not being as mean to him as you usually are around this time of year, and he was getting concerned."

"He did *not* say that."

"He did." She pulls out her phone. "He also was generous enough to give me a credit card for dinner tonight. I bought a few Birkin bags on it, to make sure it was real, so you'll need to pretend like those are yours. Where would you like to go?"

"Nowhere. I have to finish a project," I say. "We'll need to get something to go."

"Of course." She rolls her eyes. "You know, I'm starting to think that maybe your boss isn't so bad after all."

“Excuse me?” I cross my arms. “You do remember that he’s the same man who flew to Punta Cana to make us leave, right?”

“I remember we left for Hawaii to escape the storm.”

“This is the same man I call and complain to you about every day.” I glare at her. “Every. Day.”

“Yes and no.” She smiles. “You two could probably date each other if you wanted to. You have a lot in common, and you do spend a lot of time together.”

I give her a blank stare. “Garrett has a girlfriend.”

“Does she know about you?”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“That if I met a guy like Garrett, but he was talking on the phone to some other woman in the middle of the night—even if it was all “work,” I would *not* have a boyfriend.” She shakes her head. “And yes, he can be quite the ass, but he pays you really well...”

“Whose side are you on, Georgia?”

“Yours, of course.” She laughs, walking over to her suitcase. “By the way, since I finished my shopping early, I brought along your gift. You’re going to be very proud of me, because I was super thoughtful and creative this year.”

I know better than to believe her. She says that every year and the gift is always the same: A “rescued” sweater (different color) that she knitted herself and a “Be grateful I got you anything at all” card.

She tosses me the red box, and I place it on the counter.

“You know what?” I say. “Screw takeout. Let’s go run up a huge tab at a five-star restaurant...”

“Don’t you think we should also get him your Secret Santa gift?”

“Would you get your boss a gift if he made you work on your off days?”



“Point taken.”

EIGHT

GARRETT

**URGENT:**

**West Media Internal Memo**

Dear Valued Employees,

We're two weeks away from our prep-ceremony for this year's office party. As such, I'd like to publicly thank the anonymous group of executive employees who decided to give me an early present: A month's worth of "psychological therapy" and a full collection of *Horrible Boss* films with the "This is how you make us feel" note.

I find this revelation quite shocking and unfortunate.

No other boss in this city offers the full range of benefits & high salaries that I do. No other CEO is willing to spend millions of his profit to give his employees a very generous holiday vacation. That said, I've decided to make a few changes to our *mandatory* event this year, so we can perhaps, get on the same page about what your "feelings" mean to me.

**This year's Office Party will span three weeks. No excused absences.**

As always, I look forward to seeing you at the prep-ceremony, where our travel partner will reveal this year's destination for our two-week, all-expenses-paid work retreat.

Be sure to bring along whatever gift you purchased for your coworker(s) via our company's Secret Santa tradition.

Sincerely,

Garrett West

C.E.O., West Media International

P.S.—*You did this to yourselves...*

*~The entertainment industry never sleeps, so neither do we ~*

NINE

SAVANNAH

*This Christmas*

*Manhattan, New York*

*Day of the Pre-Ceremony*

**R** *ingggg! Ringggg! Ringggg!*

I roll over and hit snooze on my alarm clock for the umpteenth time this morning. I start to pull the covers over my head, but I catch sight of the time.

*How the hell is it five forty-five already?*

I stumble out of bed and take a quick shower. I pull my hair into a curly bun and put on one of my favorite beige pantsuits. I make sure I have my briefcase and my purse, but then I suddenly feel like I'm forgetting something.

My Secret Santa gift for Garrett.

*Ha!* The last thing he needs right now is a gift.

He's worked us ten times harder than ever after that 'anonymous gift,' and our kiss in the office is long forgotten. So much so that I've left work early every day this week.

He's made every intern break down in tears, brought every senior executive into his office for a brutal evaluation, and told me, "This year may be the first year that I don't give you a rose at the final ceremony, Miss Grey."

*Fuck that rose.*

Rummaging through my closet, I search for a three-wick candle I can spare, but I don't want to give him one of those. Even though he's been nice to me lately, he still has a track record that doesn't make him worthy of one of my favorite things.

I spot my box of 'Last Minute Gift cards' and flip through them. The fifty and twenty dollar ones are far too much, so I settle on a ten-dollar Amazon one.

Even that's too high, though.

I log into Amazon and spend half of it on some new hair conditioner. Then I pick up the gift Georgia brought me and toss it in my bag.

*He'll probably give it back once he opens it, anyway.*

I ignore the fact that my neighbors are standing on their stoop in black and red leather Santa costumes and rush to the town car.

Thankfully, the driver already has a bagel and coffee ready for me, and he manages to get me to headquarters with five minutes to spare.

The moment I step inside, one of the other top executives from the message board—Lily, loops her arm in mine.

“You know, I'm kind of excited about this year's reveal. I heard it's going to be someplace super luxurious.”

“It's *always* someplace super luxurious.”

“Bridget in Accounting said she overheard the travel agent on the phone yesterday morning.” She lowers her voice. “She asked the resort to make sure that all the hot tubs had private access. Oh, and she mentioned some type of carriage ride.”

I tune out her words, smiling and nodding as we step onto the elevator.

When we arrive on the top floor, we find ourselves walking right into a real-life Christmas card. As usual, the professional decorators have gone out of their way to make us forget that we work in the seventh circle of hell.

Every window is dressed in a massive custom wreath with red ribbon. Sixty foot Christmas trees stand guard against the walls, showing off complementing red and gold ornaments with flashing white lights.

There's a snow machine pumping flakes across the air, and waiters are donning elves' ears as they carry around trays of beverages.

"I heard that this place is going to have a spa that rivals any of the other ones we've been to." Lily is still babbling. "That means better than Aspen, Miami, Vegas. What do you think about that?"

"I think that I need to hand off my gift," I say, unable to deal with any more holiday cheer. "I'll talk to you later."

I make my way through the crowd in search of Garrett.

Thankfully, he's standing by the window alone, tapping his phone's screen.

He looks up at me as I approach. "I was just about to text you, Miss Grey. I thought you were attempting to avoid the party again."

"I overslept."

"That's a first."

"And a last. Here," I say, handing him the gift box. "I pulled your name this year."

"Will I die if I open this?" He raises his eyebrow. "The tech team says someone on my staff has a recent obsession with *True Crime: The Boss Gets Murdered* stories."

"I'm sure that person would only kill you if she thought she would get away with it." I smile. "I got you something that conveys *exactly* how I feel about you, so I don't want you to doubt what's inside."

Before he can respond to that, Nate from Accounting steps between us.

He holds out a shiny blue box and smiles at me.



“This is for you, Savannah,” he says. “I feel like right now is the best time for me to shoot my shot.”

“In front of *the boss*?” Garrett asks.

Nate ignores him, clearing his throat. “I feel like you’re the sexiest woman I’ve ever met in my life, the total package.”

Garrett clenches his jaw and gives Nate an “Are you being serious?” look, but Nate remains oblivious.

“I wouldn’t open that until the first night of the trip, if I were you,” he says. “Wherever we’re headed, I’ll be sure to stay up and wait for your answer.”

He winks at me a few times, and then he licks his lips before walking away.

Garrett stares at the blue box, looking as if he expects me to open it in front of him.

“There’s a no-fraternization policy at this company, Miss Grey,” he says. “I hope you know that.”

“I do know that. Then again, maybe there shouldn’t be, since you make us all spend so much time together. I’m bound to hook up with one of my advisor colleagues at some point.”

He narrows his eyes at me, and I narrow mine right back.

“Mr. West, may I have your assistance, please?” The travel agent calls from the front of the room. “It’s almost time to announce this year’s destination.”

He stares at me for a few more seconds before walking away.

Letting out a breath, I grab a cup of eggnog from a waiter’s tray. I shake Nate’s box and decide to open it later since he’s still winking at me from across the room.

“Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention, please?” The travel agent calls over the microphone, and the room falls silent. “It’s my honor to be of service to you for another year and it’s time for me to reveal where you’re going!”

A fake drumroll sounds from somewhere, and she counts backward from ten—looking a little too excited about this.

“Three, two, one!” She yells, and the words “Colorado Springs, Colorado: The Grace Estate & Resort” pop onto the screen.

I choke on my eggnog.

*What the hell?*

“This is the one and only *six-star* resort in the United States!” She yells.

The room erupts into a chorus of “Ooohhs” and “Ahhhs,” but I keep choking.

I’m struggling to breathe while beating my chest, and no one seems to notice.

“You alright, Miss Grey?” An intern finally rushes over to help. “Did you get a little too excited about going to a six-star resort?”

I shake my head. There’s nothing exciting about going back home after being away for too long, and I know the resort all too well.

It’s my grandmother’s.

“The festive carriage rides are going to blow you away!” The agent is now clapping along to holiday music as images from the resort appear onscreen. “I can also guarantee that this is the best luxury resort you’ll ever stay in, and for the first time since you’ve used my services, you’ll have the estate grounds to yourselves!”

More fake cheers.

I step away from the crowd, letting my back hit the wall. I wasn’t planning to go home for another five years at best, and I definitely wasn’t planning to make the trip with all of my coworkers in tow.

Hell, every year I buy plane tickets to go back, but I can never bring myself to go through with it.

Now, I don’t have a choice.

Grabbing a stiffer drink from one of the passing waiter trays, I look across the room and notice Garrett unwrapping my gift. I consider taking my phone out and snapping a picture of the look on his face, but I know I won't need a picture to remember this moment.

He flips the lid box and blinks a few times.

*Yes, that's all you deserve, asshole. No effort whatsoever.*

His lips slowly part, and then he returns the lid to the box before looking up.

His eyes meet mine, and I raise my drink to him. Then I mouth, "Merry Christmas."

He mouths the words in return, keeping his eyes on me as someone asks him to sign off on something. Then he walks over to me.

I'm not sure if it's the alcohol or the sudden shock I'm feeling about going home, but the intense way that Garrett is looking at me right now is making my nipples harden.

*He does look sexier when he's pissed...*

"We need to talk," he says, his voice low. "When are you available?"

"You have my schedule connected to your phone."

"This is going to be a different type of conversation." He steps closer. "Unless you didn't really intend to give that gift to me."

"It's five hundred percent intentional. If I could've given it to you sooner, I would've."

"In that case, you could've just told me what you really think of me, instead of resorting to a re-gift."

"I figured it was far less subtle this way."

"Hmmm." His gaze lingers on my lips. "Would you mind meeting me in my condo this evening?"

*You own more than one. "Which one?"*

"Fifth Avenue," he says. "Can you meet me there?"

“Sure.” I remember that I need his help with a press release, and that I’ll probably need his couch for power naps. “I may need to stay the night.”

“I would hope so,” he says. “I was planning to have you over for hours.”

*Of course, you were.* “You’re not planning to fire me over this gift, are you?”

“Quite the contrary. Does six o’clock work for you?”

“Nine thirty is better.” I admit. “I need to pack for the trip first.”

“Fair enough.” He smiles at me in a way that makes my panties wet. “I’ll see you in my condo at nine thirty.”

TEN

SAVANNAH

*This Christmas*

*Manhattan, New York*

**L**ater that night, I toss the twentieth pair of socks into my suitcase and wonder if that will be enough to stay warm in Colorado's snow.

*Not even close.* I pick up five more and stuff them into the side pockets.

"So, what did you think about my gift this year?" Georgia smiles at me via FaceTime.

"It was warm and soft as always," I say. "Thank you for another one. What's the origin story behind it?"

"Warm and soft?" She raises her eyebrow. "Why the hell would you think that?"

"Yeah." I nod. "You know I always appreciate your scarves. I don't typically wear them until after the holiday but —"

"I didn't get you a freakin' scarf, Savannah." She cuts me off. "I got you something *so* much better this year. Go grab it and open it."

I swallow, not wanting to admit that her sweater is re-gifted material now. "I'll have to open it when I get home," I say. "It's in a bag I took to the office."

"Well, make sure to pour a glass of wine and run a hot bath to prepare for it."

“You made me bath salts?” I shudder at the thought; the last time she sent me some, I had a rash for weeks.

The mischievous look on her face makes me tilt my head to the side. “What exactly did you get me?”

“Something that you can use to get out all the frustration you feel about your boss. I mean, technically, I wanted to get it for you months ago for the lonely nights courtesy of all the exes who shall not be named, but the newest one is on my shit list now.”

“My boss should still be on there, too.”

“Oh, he is. He’ll always be there.” She laughs. “I got you a vibrator!”

“A *what?*”

“The Womanizer Pro,” she says. “It’s a top of the line one that *everyone* talks about. Press that against your clit, turn it on, and it will make you orgasm in seconds. Trust me.”

*OH. MY. GOD.* My stomach drops to the floor, and I grip the edge of my bed—certain that this isn’t happening.

“I packed it with the best lube—” She’s still talking. “And I got you a card that I penned all by myself. It’s nothing like the impersonal cards I always pick up at the last minute. I was thoughtful this time.”

“Please tell me you’re joking right now...”

“Of course, I’m not.” She smiles. “You’re as thrilled as I am! I can see it in your eyes. I’ve heard good things about the updated settings.” She continues babbling, waxing poetic about the numerous orgasmic features.

“What did your note say?” I can barely hear my own voice.

“You can’t possibly think that I remember every word verbatim.” She shrugs. “Why are you looking so devastated about this? I did exactly what you wanted me to do this year. I was *creative!*”

“I know, I just—I thought I could rely on the predictability of your gift this time.”

“I’m not following.” She scratches her head. “Why did you want a sweater again?”

“Because I just re-gifted your present to my boss.” I mentally rewind the way he looked at me at the party. The way he strolled over to me with raw want and need in his eyes.

Our conversation about meeting in his condo has a whole new meaning now.

*“I was planning to have you for hours.”*

Georgia’s mouth is hanging wide open, and neither of us speaks for a while.

“Maybe he didn’t open it yet,” she says. “I’m sure you still have time to switch it out with something else tomorrow, right?”

I shake my head. “I *saw* him open it.”

“Are you sure he unwrapped it all the way? And I mean, hey, who’s to say that he knows what a Womanizer is?”

“He knows exactly what it is,” I say, then I narrow my eyes at her. “What the hell did you write on that note?”

Her eyes widen, and she picks up a sheet of paper, crumpling it between her fingers. “You’re breaking up now, Savannah,” she says. “I can’t hear you as well.”

“I can fucking *see you*, Georgia!”

“Oh, right.” She smiles sheepishly, and then she ends the call—disappearing from my screen.

I call her again, refusing to let her get away without telling me what she wrote.

There’s no way in hell that I’m meeting Garrett at his condo tonight. There’s no way I’m answering his phone calls or his texts, and I’m not flying with him to the office party either.

I have to find a way out of this. For real, this time.



# ELEVEN

GARRETT

*This Christmas*

*Manhattan, New York*

I let out a breath as I step out of my seventh cold shower of the afternoon. From the moment that I left the prep-ceremony, thoughts of fucking Savannah all over my condo have run through my mind.

I had to take the rest of the day off—a first in my career, to make sure we had everything we needed.

I'm more than ready to kill the tension that's lingered between us for years, and I want us to stop playing games and just agree to date each other.

It's the only thing that makes sense at this point, and I can kill the fraternization clause with the swipe of a pen.

Pulling on a pair of sweatpants, I walk down the hall and into my great room. I hit a button on the remote, and the shades on the panoramic windows slowly inch up and give me a perfect view of the city.

It's the perfect surface to press Savannah against in a matter of minutes.

*Where the hell is she?*

I look over at the clock and notice it's a little after ten.

This woman is never late, even when she oversleeps.

Confused, I pick up my phone and call my secretary.

“Oh my god, I thought you’d never call me back!” she answers. “I swear to God if I didn’t need the money, I would’ve quit this asshole’s office months ago.”

“Hello, Veronica,” I say.

She sucks in a breath, and the line goes silent.

“Have you seen Miss Grey in the building tonight?” I ask, completely unfazed by the way she answered the phone. “Is she in her office?”

“No, sir,” she says. “She went home after the prep thing and didn’t return. She did call half an hour ago complaining about a headache, though.”

“Did she leave a formal message?”

“Please don’t fire me.” The words rush out of her mouth. “I do hate working for you, but I really need this job.”

“Give me Miss Grey’s message. Now.”

“Right.” Papers rustle in the background. “She said that she’s finished all of her work, delegated tasks to the executives, and she’ll see you at the airport when it’s time to head to the office party in two days since she’s nursing a sudden migraine.”

“I see.”

“Okay, so back to me,” she says. “It’s a total pleasure working for West Media, and I must say that I’m so honored by the generous opportunities that you—”

I hang up the phone when she’s mid-sentence. I have more important things to do.

Sighing, I walk over to the coffee table and pick up the card from Savannah’s re-gift to reread it.

*Happy Holidays!*

Since you’ve always wondered what it’s like to ride your boss’s face, I decided to be a bit more proactive and help you out!

THIS will take care of all that tension that radiates off the two of you. I even had his name engraved on the side of it since you talk about him so much.

This is also more than perfect for all those times when you wished he would just “shut the hell up and just fuck [me] against the wall.”

(You said that in Punta Cana when we were drunk last year, BTW. I remember!)

Love, Georgia

(*& your Boss! Bahahahaha!*)

(I still got you a sweater, FYI. I’m sending it after New Year’s, though.)

I know there’s no way she initially realized what she gave me, but something tells me that she knows at this point. And she has to see that I’m more than onboard for this.

I always have been.

Beyond aroused and impatient, I send her a text message.

**Me:** It’s 10:20, Savannah. Are you on your way? I’d still like to discuss some things with you.

**S. Grey (Mine):** No. Something came up.

*I know. Come here so you can see it.* Those are the words I’m about to send, but a series of text messages from an unknown number cross my screen first.

**555-8709:** These text messages never happened. I do not know you, Mr. West, and you do not know me.

**555-8709:** **\*\*But\*\*** someone we have in common accidentally re-gifted something that you were never meant to see.

**Me:** I’m aware of that, *Georgia*. Hello. Hope you’re well.

**555-8709:** No comment on the name you assume belongs to me.

**555-8709:** I just want you to know that I totally made up whatever I wrote for Savannah in that card. (If it’s not too

much to ask, can you kindly send me a picture of it? I really don't remember, and she's panicking, and I promised her that it's not that bad. Actually, can you try to rewrite a different message in my handwriting if it is bad so I can use that instead?)

I laugh and snap a picture of the card, honoring her request.

She responds within seconds.

**555-8709:** Um, yeah. So, I'm never going to show her/own up to writing this.

*Even better.*

## TWELVE

SAVANNAH

*This Christmas*

*Manhattan, New York*

“**H**ave a great trip, Miss!”

“You too, sir.” I step out of a cab at LaGuardia International, brushing snowflakes off my coat. The fact that I was in this exact spot a year ago en route to Punta Cana isn’t lost on me, but I can’t focus on that right now.

My mind is still spinning in a million directions, and I can’t focus on a single thought to save my life.

*Hometown for the office party. Grandma Hattie. Parents won’t be there. Georgia’s vibrator. Garrett.*

*GARRETT.*

I walk through security and find a seat at the gate. I decide to get a pretzel before takeoff, and stop walking when I see Garrett coming toward me.

“Do you have some type of tracking device on me?” I ask.

“No, I just *know* you.” He smiles. “The only thing I don’t know is why you’re not at the private airport with the rest of the team. Can you explain that to me?”

“Yes, I uh—” I try to look away from him, but it’s no use. He looks more devilish and tempting than usual, and the sinful scent of his cologne is making me want to lean in closer.

“You uh, *what?* Where’s the rest of your sentence?”

“I decided that it would be best if I flew commercial for this trip. I figured I could save you three hundred dollars.”

“Three hundred dollars?” His lips curve into a smirk. “On a five-million-dollar budget?”

“Well, it’s actually three hundred and *twenty-four* dollars, but I’m rounding down for effect. Every dollar counts, you know. Companies can easily go broke by losing a few cents over time.”

He stares at me for several seconds, looking amused.

“*Savannah.*”

“*Mr. West.*”

“Okay, *Miss Grey.*” He pauses. “Although I truly appreciate your concern for my multi-million-dollar budget, but I can assure you that you don’t need to fly commercial for this trip. I’d prefer that you didn’t so we can have the conversation we were supposed to have in my condo two days ago.”

“I’ve already purchased the ticket on the company card.”

“I’ll call and get a refund.”

Silence.

“Did you book this place on purpose?” I ask. “You know that I hate going home, and you know how I feel about my family. I’m pretty sure I’ve told you that they hate me for not coming around for eight years...They hate me.”

“You have told me that,” he says, looking at me as if I’m the insane one. “But when have I ever used my time to look into locations for the office party? I verify the budget and sign the check.”

I stare at him, unsure of what to say next.

“Can you ride me with me to the other airport now, so we can discuss a few things?” He motions for me to hand over my duffle bag, but I don’t give it to him.

“Attention, ladies and gentlemen who are scheduled for Flight 2519 with service to Colorado.” A voice suddenly



comes over the speakers. “We are now beginning the boarding process.”

“Well,” I say, taking a step back. “They’re calling my flight. I need to get in line.”

“Did you not hear what I said about getting a refund?”

“Loud and clear,” I say, taking another step back. “But they’re boarding, and I’ve emailed you everything that we need to talk about so—*Bye!*” I turn around and rush down the hall to my gate.

I don’t dare to look over my shoulder.

I pull out my boarding pass and hand it to the gate agent.

“Happy Holidays, Miss Grey.” She returns it to me. “Have a safe flight!”

“Thank you.” I rush onto the jet bridge and take my place in line.

When I make it to my seat, I stuff my bag into the overhead bin and put on my headphones—making it perfectly clear that I don’t want to engage in any small talk with whoever happens to sit next to me. I need to use every single second of this flight to contemplate my next move.

I wait anxiously, hoping Garrett hasn’t bought a ticket at the last minute. That I can put off our inevitable confrontation just a little bit longer.

Several minutes pass, and only a few other passengers join me on the plane. The flight attendant serves me a shot of vodka and looks disturbed when I down it within seconds and ask for another.

“Ladies and gentlemen of Flight 2519, this is your pilot speaking,” a deep voice sounds over the speakers. “Thank you for flying with us this holiday season. Flight attendants, please prepare the cabin for takeoff...” Those words give me the assurance I need.

As the plane rolls down the tarmac, my phone buzzes with a text message.

**Garrett—He KNOWS:** Do you honestly think you're going to avoid talking to me for this entire trip?

**Me:** I'm willing to bet you on it.

**Garrett—He KNOWS:** How can you say that, when you know I always win...

THIRTEEN

THIS CHRISTMAS

*This Christmas*

*Colorado Springs, Colorado*

*Savannah*

I take my time getting off the airplane when it lands, much to the chagrin of the flight attendants. They sigh loudly every time I double-check my seat, and I've heard one of them ask if they should try picking me up and carrying me away together.

"Miss Grey." The brunette taps her foot. "You have checked that overhead bin twenty times now. There's nothing—*absolutely nothing*, up there for you. The three of us have another flight to catch, and I'd hate to call airport authorities on you during the holiday season."

"How long will they keep me in jail if they take me? Are we talking hours or weeks?"

She gives me a look that says, "You don't want to know," and points to the exit.

Defeated, I roll my bag off the jet bridge. I stop in every store on the way to baggage claim, giving the universe all the time in the world to open a sinkhole that I can dive into.

By the time I make it to the transportation zone, the last sunlight is fading from the sky, so I scroll through my apps and order an Uber.

When I look up, I squint upon seeing a familiar face by the curb: my long-lost cousin, Taryn.

*Ugh. She looks better as a gingerbread cookie with its head bitten off.*

Dressed in her sorority's signature pink and green, she tosses her hair over her shoulder and waves down a valet.

My heart aches at the sight of her, and I know I should turn away and act like she doesn't exist, but I can't help but stare. She has that effect on people.

Besides my grandmother, a local legend in her own right, Taryn is the most successful person in our family. She goes out of her way to make sure that we all know it, too.

It's never enough for her to send a simple "Happy Birthday" or "Happy Holidays" card. She has to send a new Cartier watch with custom diamonds to match. She can't resist saying little things like, "Four hundred dollars? Oh, I spend that on my lunch," and, "You like this bag? Well, it's not too bad for the ten-thousand-dollar price tag."

She's also a master manipulator.

When I didn't get into Alpha Kappa Alpha, she made it her mission to get in and throw it in my face whenever she could. She invited me to parties that exclusively required sorority membership, and when I asked her to stop, she said, "Why? Doesn't this inspire you to be better?"

Ever since becoming one of the first YouTubers to make it big by earning six figures from her media channel, she's become ten times more egotistical and unbearable.

Especially for *me*.

Tapping her red-bottomed Christian Louboutin heels against the pavement, she motions for valet once more.

Her eyes suddenly meet mine, and she smiles. "Well, hello there, little cousin! You're growing up so fast!"

"You're *two days* older than me."

"I didn't know you were coming home!" She pulls me into a hard hug that I don't want, squeezing me a little too tight. "What made you come home this year?"

“My company rented out grandma’s resort for an entire week,” I say. “I’m still at West Media.”

“Well, that’s nice,” she says. “I heard you were a top advisor, but that’s... still working for someone else, and in this day and age, it’s not good enough at all.”

*Please, Universe. Bring on the sinkhole so that I can drag her down with me.*

“You know, I remember when I was still working a regular job,” she continues, “when I had no idea how much further I could go if I worked for myself. I do hope that one day you’ll get to my level, Savannah. And maybe perhaps, you can join a graduate chapter of Delta Sigma Theta instead of Alpha Kappa Alpha. I’ve heard the former takes pity on people like you.”

I roll my eyes. “I have an Uber to get,” I say, stepping back. “I’ll see you around later, I’m sure.”

“You don’t want to ride in my new Benz?” She smiles as the silver car pulls up next to her. “I mean, the ride is nothing like my Lamborghini, but I let one of my old classmates borrow it for the weekend. It’s Monica, the girl I roomed with at Spelman Grad...I still can’t believe I got in there on a full academic scholarship and they didn’t even accept you for undergrad! But somehow you got into Harvard undergrad?”

“Oh, wait.” She taps her bottom lip. “I *can* believe it, because that’s exactly what happened.”

I silently debate whether I can afford to lose my job because I’m tempted to commit an assault right now.

“I don’t need a ride,” I say, forcing a smile. “I’ll see you at the resort.” I walk away before she can object, muttering, “*Strike one*,” and hoping she gets struck by lightning while we’re here.

\* \* \*

The Uber driver makes two wrong turns on his way to The Grace Estate, and I pretend like I don’t know that the right lane is three miles down. I shut my eyes and let him figure it

out, bracing myself for my grandmother's reaction to my first homecoming in eight years.

I know better than to go through the regular entrance like all my coworkers did; that'll only delay the inevitable heckling and stares, and I want to get this over with once and for all.

I brace myself for all of my aunts and cousins to regard me as some type of lost stranger who's better off finding love from another family for the holidays. Them treating me like the broken ornament that no one wants to touch.

*You can do this, Savannah. You can do this.*

"I finally figured it out, Miss." The driver's voice makes me open my eyes. He gets out and opens the backdoor for me, launching me into a newly expanded wonderland.

According to the sign that the giant nutcracker is holding, the newest additions to the resort are an expanded ski lodge, a Michelin-awarded restaurant, and a state-of-the-art golf course.

Taking a deep breath, I knock on the front door five times.

No answer, but I hear laughing and music inside.

I take another deep breath and knock even harder.

Within seconds, Grandma Hattie opens the door, her recipe book in hand.

"Now, here I was thinking that not even your job could bring you home!" She smiles and pulls me into a hug that I've missed far too much, a hug that immediately brings tears to my eyes.

"Please don't go another eight years, you hear?" she whispers. "Your mother was my daughter, and still need to see you. I can only look after you so much from here..."

"Yes, ma'am." Fresh tears sting my eyes as she slowly pulls away from me.

Before I can say another word, my aunts and cousins surround me, giving me hug after hug.

“Heard you’re doing so well in New York.” “Welcome back home, Savvy.” “We’ve missed you!”

They pull out their phones and take pictures as they kiss me. They challenge me to the annual family game of Spades that I’ll definitely lose, and they act as if my absence of eight years was something as short as eight seconds.

Georgia winks at me from the far side of the room.

“Told you so.” She mouths. “Everyone still loves you.”

“Cousin Savvy, pick me to give you the tour!” My cousin, Phoenix, walks up to me.

“No, me!” My other cousin, Austin, blocks him.

“Everyone, hold on!” My grandmother clears her throat. “Savannah is home, but remember she also has job-obligations while she’s here. Let her get settled into her suite first, get some work done, and then you can worry the hell out of her, right?” She looks at me.

“Right.”

They cheer about that last fact, and then she walks over to me with a keycard packet.

“Good news, you have the best suite here in Building G.” She pats my back. “But bad news, you’re the granddaughter of the owner, and you have to promise me that you’ll take a break from your conference and join me and the rest of the family for the taste-testing dinner at nine on Friday night.”

“I promise.” I give her one more hug before walking away.

I roll my luggage to the elevator and take it to the top floor. When I make it to my room, I smile at the bright green “Welcome Home, Savannah” ribbon that’s draped above the door.

Pulling my suitcase inside, I hit the lights and let out a breath. Before I can move to the bathroom, I hear the door locking behind me.

“*Let’s talk.*” Garrett is suddenly standing behind me, his mouth close to my ear. “*Now.*”



The hairs on the back of my neck stand up as I slowly turn around to face him. I open my mouth to speak, but no words come out.

They fly away from the tip of my tongue at the sexy sight of him.

His white dress shirt is unbuttoned, revealing his chiseled chest and abs. Locking his eyes on mine, he slowly looks me up and down, making it more than clear that he's not letting me leave this room.

I suck in a breath, and he steps closer.

*What exactly do you want to talk about?* I still can't get the words to fall from my lips, but he looks at me as if he can read my mind.

*Me fucking you.* I read his mind in return—following his gaze as it moves over to my “gift” on the nightstand.

He closes the gap between us, cupping his hand around the base of my neck. “Tell me that you want me...”

“I don't,” I say. “You're my boss.”

“How so?” He smirks. “We both know that's technically not true.”

“If it wasn't, I can guarantee you that I wouldn't be at an office party. I'd never show up to any of them.”

“You'd still attend every single one.” His lips brush against mine. “Because *I'd* be there, and according to your sister's note, you like to fantasize about riding my face and being fucked from behind ...”

“She's lying.”

“*Prove it.*” He looks me up and down. “Tell me to leave right now if that's not true.”

I don't utter a word.

He suddenly stamps his mouth over mine, and I grip onto the window ledge as he teasingly bites down on my bottom lip.

“Let me...” He darts his tongue against the crease of my lips, demanding entry. “Savannah, let me.”

I grip the ledge harder and oblige, moaning as he tames my mouth with his. His kiss is reckless but controlling at the same time, and with each whisper of my name, the unbearable tension that’s long-existed between us slowly falls away.

“Fuck...” He breathes, sliding a hand under my dress.

My nipples harden against my blouse as he hooks his thumb under my panties and yanks them off. They fall to the floor with ease, and he presses his thumb against my soaking wet clit.

“Ahhh...” I cry out as he slips two fingers deep inside of my pussy and slowly pushes them in and out.

“You know I’m going to fuck you much deeper than this, right?” His whispered question is rhetorical.

I know better than to answer it right now.

He smiles as I rock against his fingers, and I moan that he’s found my spot and I want more. I press my palm against the front of his pants, feeling his cock harden.

Using his free hand to pull a condom from his pocket, he whispers, “Take it out.”

I oblige, and he presses his mouth against my collarbone, pressing long, deep kisses against my skin.

My eyes widen as I run my hand up and down his length, slowly freeing it from his boxers. I can feel my cheeks heating as he follows my gaze.

Pulling his fingers from inside of me, he lets out a low laugh and picks up the condom. He holds the edge of the packet close to my mouth, silently demanding me to open it with my teeth.

When I do, he slowly rolls it over his length, and without warning, he spins me around to face the window.

“Grab the frame,” he commands, squeezing my ass.

I can't move fast enough. My pussy is throbbing at the intense pleasure that his fingers took away from me.

"*Savannah*," he repeats, his voice deep. "Grab the frame."

My nails dig into the crown molding, and he presses a kiss at the center of my neck before sliding into me inch by inch.

"*Ahhhh...Oh my god...*" I moan as he takes his time filling me. Cry out each time he slaps my ass.

When he's buried deep, he blows against my neck. "You feel so fucking good..."

He repeats himself a few more times, and then he pulls out of me—thrusting in and out, again and again.

"Garrett..." I damn near scream his name

"Fuck, Savannah..." He grabs a fistful of my hair as I match him stroke for stroke, biting the skin on my neck whenever I say his name.

I bite my bottom lip as my pussy throbs against his cock, as my hardened nipples hit the cold glass. I can feel myself getting closer to the edge with every stroke, every hasty kiss against my neck.

All of a sudden, I hear a low buzzing sound, and I feel him pressing the vibrator against my clit.

My eyes flutter open, and his eyes meet mine in the window's glass.

"Is this what you used to use whenever you thought of me?" He changes the setting, not slowing his strokes inside of me. "Tell me..."

I can't answer, I can barely speak. The contrasting pleasure of his cock and the vibrations against my swollen clit are too much; all I can do is moan.

"I've wanted you so long, Savannah," he whispers. "So fucking long..."

I feel tremors building inside of me, feel my stomach coiling and uncoiling in anticipation. Heat rushes through my veins, and I let go of the ledge—unable to hold on anymore.

As if Garrett can feel me getting close, he grips my hips as I shake against him, holding me taut as I scream at the top of my lungs.

He slowly thrusts into me a few more times, finding his own release. Then he stiffens and kisses my neck until I've stopped shaking.

Slowly pulling out of me, he takes off the condom and tosses it into the trash. Then he spins me around to face him, dominating my mouth with his again.

When I'm breathless, he tears away from me and begins kissing his way down my neck and across my breasts. He takes his time sucking each of my nipples into his mouth.

"I need to fuck you again," he says, looking up at me. "This time I want to look into your eyes..."

FOURTEEN

SAVANNAH

*This Christmas*

*Colorado Springs, Colorado*

*A few hours later*

**G**arrett trails his finger against my lips as I sit in his lap. Streams of hot water are pouring over us, and I'm pretty sure that if he weren't holding me right now, I'd collapse onto the floor.

I've never come once during sex before, let alone three times back to back.

And for the first time in my career, I honestly don't want to do any work for the rest of the week; I just want to stay in my room and let him have his way with me again and again.

Tilting my chin up with his fingertips, he looks into my eyes. "Can we skip tomorrow's meeting?"

My eyes widen. "*What?*"

"You heard me," he says. "Can we skip it? Along with tomorrow and the next day?"

"Depends on what you plan to do with all your free time."

"*You.*"

I blush. "Does everyone else still have to attend the office party?"

"Hell yes, they do." He smiles. "It's mandatory. No exceptions."

“Top executives and yourself included.” I rattle off his infamous memo line. “An off day would make you one hell of a hypocrite.”

“Not necessarily,” he says, pressing his lips against mine. “You’ve been my only exception from day one.”

## FIFTEEN

### **Boss-Snark Forum 1.0**

#### **Subject: Garrett West**

**Y**ardley34: Does anyone know why the stuff for the rose ceremony isn't set up yet? Isn't that what our cruel savior usually does first when we get to these things?

**LilyV8:** Hmmm. That's weird. Maybe there's not going to be one this year. If there isn't, does this mean we're not getting raises? I've worked my ass off this year.

**Russ76:** Mr. West didn't show up to the logistics meeting this afternoon, so we all got drunk and checked out the new ski lodge. Now that I think about it, @SavannGrey wasn't there either. You here, @SavannGrey?

**PollyPositiveVibes83:** Shouldn't someone on this forum go to his room and check on him? I mean, he could've contracted severe food poisoning. Maybe he's super sick. Sometimes I feel like you all just want to waste your time snarking on him for no reason. Sure, he's hard on us most of the time, but he pays really well, and this office party is a great way to bond!



**Heather20:** Um... Can one of the administrators step in and moderate this thread right quick?

**LilyV8:** I'm ten steps ahead of you, @Heather20. I blocked Polly and all 83 of her "Positivevibes" Who TF let her in here anyway? And no, really, where the hell is @SavannGrey?

SIXTEEN

GARRETT

*This Christmas*

*Colorado Springs, Colorado*

“Try to get some sleep.” I adjust the pillow behind Savannah’s head after a full day of marathon sex.

“It’s pretty hard to sleep, when your entire body is sore.” Her voice is hoarse. “But just so you know, all the sex we’re having here is a one-time thing.”

“It’s a *twenty*-time thing at this point, Miss Grey,” I say, “And I don’t plan on stopping anytime soon.”

She blushes, and I adjust the pillow one more time.

“I’ll be right back,” I say, grabbing my phone and stepping onto the balcony. I scroll down to Seth’s name, wanting to make sure he knows that he’s fired, but I see that he’s texted me first.

**Seth:** Amelie said YES. I thought you would want to know.

**Me:** I did want to know. Congratulations. How does she feel now, knowing that her husband-to-be no longer has a job?

**Seth:** Pretty damn good since he no longer has to work under a soul-sucking CEO.

**Seth:** By the way, did you really need to charter a jet for someone to deliver my termination papers?

**Me:** No, but I wanted you to know that I’m a man of my word.

**Seth:** Fuck you. LOL. When are you proposing to Savannah? (Did you finally confront her?)

**Me:** I think it's a little too soon to discuss that. We're not in love. (Yes.)

**Seth:** LMFAO. Ok.

**Me:** I don't see what's funny. We're *not*.

**Seth:** Please tell me you're not this dense, Garrett. Like, please say that you're fucking with me right now.

I roll my eyes and mute the thread.

“Garrett?” Savannah's soft voice makes me turn around.

She's sitting up in my bed now, holding up one of my laptops—still naked.

“I'm still too sore to sleep, so do you mind if we look over a few files?” she asks. “I mean, nothing too crazy since this is still an off day for us.”

“Sure.” I smile, unsure of why I'm aroused by her bringing up work. “Are you thinking like, five?”

“More like ten.”

*So, she means fifty.*

SEVENTEEN

SAVANNAH

*This Christmas*

*Colorado Springs, Colorado*

*A few days later*

**T**he mouthwatering scent of Grandma's Hattie's dinner greets me and Garrett the moment we step off the elevator. As if we've forgotten our professional etiquette. Garrett slips an arm around my waist and presses a kiss against my cheek. I lean into him as we walk through the empty lobby.

When we arrive to her custom taste-testing table, I realize that we're over an hour late. Not that anyone seems to notice, though. Our assigned chairs are at the end of the table, and everyone is too enamored with the huge plates of rolls and biscuits.

"Can we go ahead and skip the rest of the week?" Garrett whispers into my ear, handing me a napkin.

"That's an entire third of the office party." I'm not opposed to this idea at all, as long as we do *some* work. "Don't you think everyone will notice we're missing?"

"Yes, and they'll be thrilled about it." He smiles, his voice still low. "Yes or no?"

I nod. "Yes."

"Good." He caresses my thigh under the table.

“Um, Earth to Savannah?” Georgia’s voice snaps me out of my trance. “Earth to Savannah?”

“Yes?” I answer.

“Can you join the rest of us in reality and pass the biscuits, please?”

“Oh, right. Sorry.” I pick up a basket and pass it down.

“What do you think of the new golf course we’re building, Savannah?” one of my aunts asks. “The designer I met in New Orleans flew in to build it.”

“I’ve seen the lights,” I say, “but I haven’t seen the entire thing yet. I was planning to walk the path tomorrow.”

“Please don’t do that.” She smiles. “Book a carriage ride to do it.”

“Did you notice the heated floors in the bathroom?” My cousin, Joy, smiles. “That was my idea and grandma updated every single suite with them. Sometimes I sit on them while I’m reading a book.”

“I didn’t, but I’m going to turn them on in my suite tonight,” I say.

“*Of course, you are.*” Taryn glances my way, giving me one of her signature fake smiles.

I almost offer a fake smile in return until I notice the shirt she’s wearing. Peeking underneath her grey and white Versace blazer are the words, “Spelman College. Many Apply. Few Are Accepted. *I Was Accepted...*”

Even for her, this is low.

*Strike two.*

“Well, I’ve decided that I get to be the one who gets to show her the brand new Merry Christmas Lane,” Georgia says. “Unless you’ve already seen it. Have you?”

I don’t get a chance to answer that.

“I highly doubt that she’s noticed much of anything.” Taryn purses her lips. “Everything except her bedroom and the

lobby are probably all new to her. I mean, she never comes home, you guys. I have *ex-boyfriends* who know more about this resort than she does.”

Light laughter fills the room, and I still.

My blood is beginning to boil.

“She had her reasons.” Grandma Hattie offers. “All that matters, is that she’s back now.”

“Is she, though?” Taryn rolls her eyes. “She’s only here because her *job* requires her to be.”

“That counts.” Georgia stabs her dessert with a fork. “Instead of nitpicking why someone doesn’t come home that often, why don’t you suggest something she should check out while she is here?”

“You are so right, Georgia.” She clears her throat, giving me that fake smile again. “Dearest Cousin, I highly suggest that you check out the early morning light show on the lake. You can see it from your balcony.”

“Then again...” she continues, “since you’re spending your nights locked up in a room with your boss, you may want to know that the lake show is on the other side of the main lodge. So, whenever you two get done discussing your next promotion between the sheets, maybe you can walk outside and enjoy something other than each other’s bodies. I mean, who knows when you’re coming home just for your family again...”

*Strike fucking three.*

“You want to know why I stopped coming home, Taryn?” I slam my fork onto the plate. “Do you really want to fucking know?”

“*Savannah Marie Grey.*” My grandmother chides me. “Your language.”

“I stopped coming home because of *you.*” I’m done with Taryn’s bullshit. “It wasn’t because of the grief over losing my parents in an accident. It was because of you.”



“Because I couldn’t enjoy the holidays without you going out of your way to make me feel like I was nothing. And even then, you still sent me gifts that cost half my salary, for no other reason than to show me how much a braggadocious bitch you are.”

The room falls silent, and I feel tears welling in my eyes. I don’t dare let them fall, though.

“You knew exactly what you were doing each time, too,” I say. “The subtle jabs that you tried to play off as jokes, the *endless* comparisons, the belittling of how my life was so much less than yours because I decided to work for a corporation instead of for myself.”

“I get it, okay?” I stand to my feet, keeping my eyes locked on hers. “You’re a *self-made* multi-millionaire, top thirty under thirty, and a ‘young mogul in the making.’ Congratulations. You’re also number one on my shit list, so feel free to brag about *that* the next time you try to speak to me.”

“Oh, and one last thing.” I narrow my eyes at her as I step away from the table. “I’ve *never* slept my way to the top, and I’ve never stepped on anybody else to get to where I am. The latter is *your* area of expertise, and I’m in love with my boss, and I have been for a very long time, so fuck you.”

I storm out of the room without another word.

EIGHTEEN

SAVANNAH

*This Christmas*

*Colorado Springs, Colorado*

*Savannah*

**C**alm down, Savannah. Calm down.

The only thing I regret is not snapping a picture of Taryn's face when I gave her exactly what she deserves. Well, I also regret telling my entire family that I'm in love with Garrett, because I didn't see that coming, and I know that he'll hit me with a "Hey...Let's not rush this too soon."

Needing a breather, I walk into one of the late-night presentations and grab a glass of wine from the back table. As I'm stuffing a cookie into my mouth, Garrett grabs me from behind and pulls me into the hallway.

He presses me back against the wall, staring at me.

"About what I said at dinner..." I clear my throat. "I wasn't trying to rush or—"

"I love you, too." He looks into my eyes, cupping my face in his hands. "But since we're going to randomly make confessional outbursts, do you mind if I make a few to you?"

I shake my head, and he kisses me long and hard, until I'm breathless.

"One," he whispers, slowly pulling away. "I *did* ask the travel agent to book this resort on purpose."

He presses a finger against my lips before I can react.

“Two, I also helped your grandmother hire the designers who did your apartment a few weeks ago.” His voice trails off for several seconds. “You talked about missing your family too much to avoid going home any longer, and as someone who would kill to make some different decisions with his family, I didn’t want you to make the same mistake.”

“They didn’t hate me like I thought they would ... ”

“They never have,” he says. “It’s all in your head.”

“Is there a third confession where you finally tell me why you keep this office party going? Is it a reminder of when things were better between you and your dad?”

“Not quite.” He smiles, pressing his thumb against my cheek. “It’s for my mother. She was obsessed with all things December, and she loved *The Bachelor* show. She had a special theme and dinner for every day of the month, and my participation—along with Seth’s, was *non-negotiable*.”

I’m stunned. He’s never said much about his mother to me before, only the words, ‘*I wish she was still here*’ and ‘*I can’t talk about that.*’

“She loved *The Bachelor* show so much that she watched every episode and started chat forums with other fans. She also found a way to guilt me and Seth into watching, too. For the record, I personally think the show is fucking terrible, but I still watch the rose ceremony. Just that part, of course.”

“Of course.” I smile.

“Anyway, one December, she left to get new wreaths for the windows, but she never made it home.” He looks into my eyes. “My father, Seth, and I went out looking for her, for hours. We must’ve checked every Hobby Lobby, Target, and Wal-Mart in the city.”

“We made it to an overpass just in time to see her being carried away in a helicopter, and we never got a chance to say goodbye.”

He sighs. “My father started drinking that day and he honestly hasn’t stopped. He became a shell of himself with a mean streak to cope, and I don’t try to pretend otherwise.”

What I *can* do, though, is keep honoring my mother's memory in a way that gets attention. Whether people like it or not..."

"I'm sorry, Garrett," is all I can say.

"Don't be." He presses his forehead against mine. "I've never told you that before. I've also never told you that I want you, and whatever this is with you, to work. I want you to give me a 'needs' list whenever you're ready. Can you do that for me?"

I nod.

"Good." He steps back and grabs my hand, leading me around the corner. "That gives us the rest of the night for me to handle a need I should've taken care of yesterday."

"What are you talking about?"

"This," he says, pulling me into an empty room. He gets down on the floor, pressing his back against the wall, and then he extends his hands toward me.

"I want you to sit on my face..."

\* \* \*

*Two hours later*

"I think I should just cancel the rest of the office party plans, and let people do whatever they want to do," Garrett says, gently pushing the curls off my forehead as I finally recover from another orgasm via his mouth. "It's for a completely selfish reason, of course."

"I'm just happy that your memo might finally reflect what the word 'generous' means. They're all going to assume that you're close to death or falling hard for someone."

"Probably." He laughs. "But for the record, I've been in love with you since last year," he says. "When you spent six months creating a plan to get out of my office party."

"You never told me exactly how you found out about my plans."

“I didn’t have to do anything special to figure them out,” he says. “I just thought about what *I* would do if the roles were reversed. We think a lot alike.”

He helps me stand to me feet and holds me against his side, leading me into the main hall. As we’re walking, we come face to face with a teary-eyed Taryn.

*NOPE. Fake tears.*

I start to let go of Garrett, so I can walk around her, but he holds me still.

“I’m sorry,” she says, stopping right in front of me. “I had no idea you felt that way.”

“Well, now you know.”

“Shhhh!” The sound comes from somewhere down the hall, but I don’t see anyone.

“I want to make this up to you over a dinner or something before you leave, and I want to tell you the truth.” She looks up at Garrett. “If your boyfriend says it’s okay, that is.”

As if she can sense that I’m still uneasy about her presence, that a couple of hours and a weak “I’m sorry,” are not enough to get off my shit list, she grabs my hand.

“I never got into Spelman Grad, because there’s no such thing as Spelman Grad; it’s just Spelman...and it took me six years to finish.” She lets out a breath. “My Maserati and my Benz are leased, and I barely got into Alpha Kappa Alpha. I had to beg half of my teachers to change my grades.”

Garrett presses a kiss atop my head once she pauses, whispering, “Spend some time with your family,” before nodding at Taryn and walking away.

I wait for him to disappear around the corner and squeeze her hand. “Dinner would be nice. Can you show me the best late-night restaurant on the property?”

“Yes.” She swallows. “It’s still Grandma Hattie’s. That hasn’t changed at all in eight years.”

I smile and pull her in for a hug, one that I actually want this time.

“You should’ve made her grovel more!” Georgia calls out from down the hall, laughing. “I made her work for a full hour to get the okay from me. And leased cars or not, she’s still paying for our dinner tonight!”

# NINETEEN

## **URGENT:**

### **West Media Internal Memo**

Dear Valued Employees,

We're only a few days into this year's annual Office Party.

Although this is a tradition, in light of recent circumstances, I have decided to change a few things. If you'd like to go home for the rest of the holidays to spend time with your family and friends, please meet with logistics in the lobby so that they can work on the takeoff schedule with my plane(s).

If you'd like to stay, you are no longer obligated to attend any scheduled meetings.

### **This year's Office Party is officially canceled**

Still, I look forward to seeing you around the estate, if you choose to stay.

The Rose Ceremony will be held at a later time, in our office in New York.

Sincerely,

Garrett West

C.E.O., West Media International

**P.S.** Next year's event will proceed as planned.

*~ The entertainment industry never sleeps, but we can make an exception this time ~*



TWENTY

SAVANNAH

*This Christmas*

*Colorado Springs, Colorado*

**G**arrett and I are sitting on the enclosed balcony of his Presidential Suite. I'm resting my head on his shoulder, and he's caressing my back as the company employees lose their shit below.

They're running across the snowbanks with sparklers, laughing and drinking around bonfires, and I can see a few of them dancing in the carriages before take-off.

"I think I need to rescind my memo," Garrett says. "There's too much employee happiness going around, and as 'Satan in the flesh,' I'm not sure how it makes me feel."

I laugh. "How many people took you up on the chartered plane offer?"

"Not a single one." He smiles. "I think that deep down everyone loves my office party."

"No, I'm pretty sure they hate it," I say. "But it is all-expenses-paid, and without time constraints, it's more than worth it to stay."

"Good point."

"I've thought of some 'needs' that can make this work better for me." I sit up a bit, watching one of the employees launch fireworks into the sky. "I made a short list."

“I’m listening.”

“I need you to be done dating other women.”

“That’s a given.” Garrett smiles. “I expect the same for you.”

“I need to be an exception to the “no off days” in December rule.”

“Also a given,” he says. “I gave you three off days this year.”

“*Real* off days, Garrett.” I shake my head. “Ones where I have a choice in what work I do, if I do any at all.”

“Okay. What else?”

“I need a bigger office, but not just any office. I need it to be significantly bigger than yours, because as your advisor, you need me more than I need you.”

He raises his eyebrow, looking as if he’s about to strike that down and argue with me, but laughs instead. “I’ll have a designer start drafting ideas in the morning. Anything else?”

“Sex in the office.”

“That’s happening the moment we get back.” He smirks. “Good to know your list of needs is rather simple, though. Can I give you mine?”

“I’m listening.”

“I need you to wear more dresses to the office,” he says. “It turns me on.”

“I just bought forty new pantsuits.”

“I’m sure the Salvation Army will love them.” He laughs. “If your office is going to be bigger than mine, I’ll expect an invitation at least seven times a week.”

“For coffee?”

“For fucking.”

I blush. “Is that it?”

“I also need you to take down all of your mean posts about me on that Boss-Snark message board.”

“I have no idea what message board you’re talking about.”  
*No idea you knew it existed.*

“I’ll give you seven days.”

“I’ll take them down in six.”

“Thank you.” He tilts his head to the side. “You do know that there’s a private employee board where they talk shit about you too, right?”

“*What?*” I sit up a bit more. “No, there’s not.”

“Oh, there definitely is.” He smiles. “Your coworkers have been playing both sides for quite some time.”

“You’re making that up.”

I wait for him to laugh and tell me that he’s joking, but he doesn’t. Instead, he presses a kiss on my cheek and pulls his phone from his pocket.

“Here,” he says, tapping the screen. “See for yourself.”

### **Boss-Snark Forum 2.0**

Subject: Savannah Grey

**Russ76:** Gah! She’s just as bad as he is.

**LilyV8:** I know, right? But “just as bad” sounds like a compliment. She’s *worse*. I feel like they both attended the same *How to be a Fucking Psycho Boss* class and she managed to get an A-plus.

**JerryMkting:** I honestly don’t think she truly comprehended why I gifted her that *How to Deal with a Controlling Boss* book last year. O\_o

**Heather20:** @JerryMkting Ba ha ha ha ha! She probably thought you were giving it to her out of solidarity for how she feels about Mr. West!

**JerryMkting:** *I knew I should’ve gifted her ‘How to Be a Better Boss’ instead. Damn it.*

**Russ76:** @ LilyV8, you've made me think of something. Do you think they're sleeping together? Like, have they ever?

**Dale741:** OMG, yes! I'm right on time for the new boss snark! And hell yeah, they've fucked. There's no way they haven't.

**LilyV8:** IDK. Doubt it. They would be far more relaxed and laid back if that were the case. Don't we have an old thread somewhere about this?

**Heather20:** Yep. The link is right here. Plenty of pictures of the two of them staying late in the office at night. (Whenever he orders from that expensive takeout place, that's a night when they're working late together, FYI. The delivery driver told me that they do that at least three times a week!)

**Dale741:** They're so obsessed with their jobs that they probably discuss projects while they fuck. I bet she spouts off emails whenever she's in the middle of an orgasm.

**Heather20:** @Dale741 I can see it now: "Ohhh goddd Mr West, I'm about to—let's work on the James filesss!" LMFAO!

My jaw drops to the floor as I read pages of comments. Almost every person who's joined me in talking crap about Garrett, is talking shit about me.

"How fast can you get me a meeting with Human Resources to report coworker harassment?" I ask. "This is *bullying*."

"Take it in stride." He laughs, taking the phone away. "That's what I do."

"It's fine for us to talk about *you* behind your back." I'm still stunned by their betrayal. "You're the boss."

"And you're the boss's best friend." He kisses me in a way that makes me temporarily forget. "Let it go."

"Fine..." I sigh. "You mentioned that you bought me a Christmas gift the other day. You wanted me to remind you."

“Yes.” He gets up and walks over to his suitcase, pulling out a beautiful blue box. He smooths the wrapping paper on the side before handing it to me. “Merry Christmas, Savannah.”

“Thank you.” I tug at the ribbon. “Should I open it now, or do you want me to wait?”

“It’s up to you.”

I hesitate for all of three seconds before tearing the paper away.

Inside is a small black box with a tag that reads, *What I should’ve given you at the office party in Hawaii.*

“I don’t know if I want to open this now,” I say. “I vividly remember telling you that I hated you at that party.”

“You did.” He smiles. “You’re halfway there now, though. Might as well open it.”

I lift the top and see a bracelet with the “C” charm on it. There are three small diamonds aligned in its bend.

“So, let me guess,” I say. “The C stands for Chief Advisor, which means you’re happy with the job I’m doing, and I’m getting this instead of a rose this year?” I smile, running my fingers against it.

“No,” he says. “It stands for *C.F.O.*, Chief Financial Officer and it means you deserve it. However, upon further reflection, I’ll have to give you the rest of the letters for your bracelet when we get back to Manhattan.”

“Why can’t I have them right now?”

“Because right now,” he says, pulling me into his arms. “You and I are going to spend the rest of this trip in the bedroom, and I’m going to enjoy making you regret ever saying the words, ‘You need me more than I need you.’”

“I don’t see why.” I smirk. “It’s true.”

He covers his lips with mine and pushes me against the wall. “*Prove it.*”

**The End**

## EPILOGUE



SAVANNAH

*Next Christmas*

*Manhattan, New York*

**Boss-Snark Forum 3.0**

**Garrett West AND Savannah Effin Grey-West**

**H**eather20: So, what do you get when your psychopathic CEO and his batshit crazy CFO decide to get married? Asking for a frustrated friend.

**JerryMkting:** I can't believe we have to deal with BOTH of them at this level. So much for thinking that if they fucked they would chill out.

**Heather20:** @JerryMkting Do they fuck? Or do they get orgasms from the work? I'm really starting to believe it's the latter...

**Russ76:** The soon to be "Mrs. West" just came into my office and gave me a compliment on my work. Should I tell her that her panties are tucked into her skirt/there are red marks all over her neck? Like, maybe for old times' sake when she was one of us?

**Dale741:** Nah.

**Heather20:** Hell no.

**JerryMkting:** Let Lady Satan get exactly what she deserves...

“So, you’re telling me that we’re never supposed to respond to these?” My blood boils as I read over the newest boss-snark thread, one year later. “They’re being ridiculously mean today.”

“So?” Garrett laughs and takes the tablet from my hands. “How do you think I felt when I saw you talking shit about me?”

“Back when I thought you were Satan, I imagine that you were thrilled about it.”

“No,” he says, pulling me into his lap. “I was quite hurt, actually. I thought, how could this woman hate me so much when she’s literally the same when it comes to work?”

“I’ve never been anything like you.”

“So why do they hate you more than me now?” He smiles. “Have you decided to give them a break on this year’s office party since you’re in charge of it now?”

“Hell no,” I say. “It’s one hundred percent *mandatory*, and we’re doing everything on the list.”

**THE END, again**

Thank you so much for reading my random, short holiday novella! (If you loved it and want a copy in print, please [tap here](#). If you hated it, thank you for giving it a chance anyway!)

If you want a little more holiday cheer, sign up for my newsletter ([The F.L.Y. List](#)), and I'll send you a free audiobook of another holiday novella of mine, Late Night Kisses!

Warning: The heroine is a baker, so listening to this book might make you hungry.

AUTHOR'S NOTE + SNEAK PEEK OF  
REASONABLE DOUBT

Dear Awesome Reader,

In 2018, my sister and I took our mom to the Excellence Resort that's mentioned in this book.

Of course, no sexy boss in a suit showed up to take us to Hawaii (I wish!), but the memories from that trip are some of my favorites.

I came up with this book's idea then, but I was busy writing a separate office romance—*Two Weeks Notice*, which demanded all my attention.

I vowed to return to this story someday, but the months slipped by, and I could never find the time.

Until now.

I sat down in October of 2020 and willed myself to the finish line, making sure it was everything I wanted it to be.

For the heroine, I drew inspiration from Whitney Houston (my favorite singer of all time), and for the hero, I drew from Chris Hemsworth. (Because he's hot. No other reason.) I also did something entirely different for the cover, and I'm now convinced that my cover designer knows how to do magic.

Every aspect of the project was FUN from beginning to end, and the experience behind it will always mean a lot to me.

I hope you enjoyed this steamy office romance, and I hope you're ready for a full-length release!

Happy Holidays & F.L.Y.

(Effin Love You)

Whitney G.

## UNTITLED

### ANDREW

New York City is nothing more than a shit-filled wasteland, a dump where failures are forced to drop all their broken dreams and leave them far behind. The flashing lights that shined brightly years ago have lost their luster, and that fresh feeling that once permeated the air—that *hopefulness*, is long gone.

Every person I once considered a friend is now an enemy, and the word “trust” has been ripped from my vocabulary. My name and reputation are tarnished thanks to the press, and after reading the headline that *The New York Times* ran this morning, I’ve decided that tonight will be the last night I ever spend here.

I can’t deal with the cold sweats and nightmares that jerk me out of my sleep anymore, and as hard as I try to pretend like my heart hasn’t been obliterated, I doubt that the agonizing ache in my chest will ever go away.

To properly say goodbye, I’ve ordered the best entrées from all my favorite restaurants, watched *Death of a Salesman* on Broadway, and smoked a Cuban cigar on the Brooklyn Bridge. I’ve also booked the penthouse suite at the Waldorf Astoria, where I’m now leaning back on the bed and threading my fingers through a woman’s hair—groaning as she slides her mouth over my cock.

Teasingly darting her tongue around my tip, she whispers, “Do you like this?” as she looks up at me.

I don't answer. I push her head down and exhale as she presses her lips against my balls, as she covers my cock with her hands and moves them up and down.

Over the past two hours, I've fucked her against the wall, forced her to bend over a chair, and pinned her legs to the mattress while I devoured her pussy.

It's been quite fulfilling—*fun*, but I know this feeling will only last for so long; it never stays. In less than a week, I'll have to find someone else.

As she takes me deeper and deeper into her mouth, I tightly tug her hair—tensing as she bobs her head up and down. Pleasure begins to course its way through me, and the muscles in my legs stiffen—forcing me to let go and warn her to pull away.

She ignores me.

She grips my knees and sucks faster, letting my cock touch the back of her throat. I give her one last chance to move away, but since her lips remain wrapped around me, she leaves me no choice but to cum in her mouth.

And then she swallows.

Every. Last. Drop.

*Impressive...*

Finally pulling away, she licks her lips and leans back against the floor.

“That was my first time swallowing,” she says. “I did that just for you.”

“You shouldn't have.” I stand and zip my pants. “You should've saved it for someone else.”

“Right. Well, um...Do you want to order some dinner? Maybe we could eat it over HBO and go at it again afterwards?”

I raise my eyebrow, confused.

This is always the most annoying part, the part when the woman who previously agreed to “One dinner. One night. No

repeats.” wants to establish some type of imaginary connection. For whatever reason, she feels like there needs to be some type of closure conversation, some bland reassurance that’ll confirm that what just happened was ‘more than sex,’ and we’ll become friends.

But it *was* just sex, and I’m not in need of any friends. Not now, not ever.

“No, thank you.” I walk over to the mirror on the other side of the room. “I have someplace to be.”

“At three in the morning? I mean, if you just want to skip the HBO and go for another round instead, I can...”

I tune out her irritating voice and begin to button my shirt. I’ve never spent the night with a woman I met online, and she isn’t going to be the first.

As I adjust my tie, I look down and spot a tattered pink wallet on the dresser. Picking it up, I flip it open and run my fingers across the name that’s printed onto her license: Sarah Tate.

Even though I’ve only known this woman for a week, she’s always answered to “Samantha.” She’s also told me—*repeatedly*, that she works as a nurse at Grace Hospital. Judging by the Wal-Mart employee card that’s hiding behind her license, I’m assuming that part isn’t true either.

I look over my shoulder, where she’s now sprawled across the bed’s silk sheets. Her creamy colored skin is unmarred and smooth; her bow shaped lips are slightly swollen and puffy.

Her green eyes meet mine and she slowly sits up, spreading her legs further apart, whispering, “You know you want to stay. *Stay...*”

My cock starts to harden—it’s definitely up for another round, but seeing her real name has ruined any chance of that for me. I can’t stand to be around anyone who’s lied to me, even if she does have double D tits and a mouth from heaven.

I toss the wallet into her lap. “You told me your name was Samantha.”



“Okay. *And?*”

“Your name is Sarah.”

“So, what?” She shrugs, beckoning me with her hand. “I never give my *real name* to men I meet on the internet.”

“You just fuck them in five-star hotel suites?”

“Why do you suddenly care about my real name?”

“*I don't.*” I glance at my watch. “Are you spending the night in this room or do I need to give you cab money to get home?”

“What?”

“Was my question unclear?”

“Wow...Just, wow...” She shakes her head. “How much longer do you think you’ll be able to keep doing this?”

“Keep doing *what?*”

“Chatting someone up for a week, fucking her, and moving on to the next. How much longer?”

“Until my dick stops working.” I put on my jacket. “Do you need cab fare or are you staying? Check out is at noon.”

“Do you know that men like you—*relationship avoiders*, are the type that typically fall the hardest?”

“Did they teach you that at Wal-Mart?”

“Just because someone from your past hurt you doesn’t mean that every woman after her will.” She purses her lips. “That’s probably why you are the way you are. Maybe if you tried to actually *date* someone you’d be a lot happier. You should take her out for dinner and actually listen, see her to her door without expecting an invitation inside, and maybe bypass the whole ‘let’s go fuck’ in the hotel suite thing at the end.”

*Where are my keys? I need to go. Now.*

“I can see it now...” She can’t seem to shut up. “You’re going to want more than sex one day, and the person you want it from is going to be someone you least expect. Someone who will force you to give in.”

I pull my keys from underneath her crumpled dress and sigh. “Do you need cab money?”

“I have my own car, dick-face.” She rolls her eyes. “Are you really this incapable of having a regular conversation? Would it kill you to talk to me for a few minutes after sex?”

“We have nothing more to discuss.” I put my room key on the nightstand and walk toward the door. “It was very nice meeting you, Samantha, *Sarah*. Whatever the hell your name is. Have a great night.”

“*Screw you!*”

“Three times was more than enough. No, thank you.”

“Things are going to catch up to you one day, asshole!” She yells as I step into the hallway. “Karma is one hell of a bitch!”

“I know.” I toss back. “I fucked her two weeks ago...”

Want to read the rest? [Tap here to download the entire trilogy!](#)

**Now available in Kindle Unlimited!**

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