



What
If
YOU

New York Times, USA Today & Wall Street Journal Bestselling Author

SANDILYNN

WHAT IF YOU

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SANDI LYNN

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WHAT IF YOU

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What If You

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MISSION STATEMENT

Sandi Lynn Romance

Providing readers with romance novels that will whisk them away to another world and from the daily grind of life – one book at a time.

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BOOKS BY SANDI LYNN

If you haven't already done so, please check out my other books. Escape from reality and into the world of romance. I'll take you on a journey of love, pain, heartache and happily ever afters.

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Forever You (Forever, Book 2)

Forever Us (Forever, Book 3)

Being Julia (Forever, Book 4)

Collin (Forever, Book 5)

A Forever Family (Forever, Book 6)

A Forever Christmas (Holiday short story)

Wyatt Brothers

Love, Lust & A Millionaire (Wyatt Brothers, Book 1)

Love, Lust & Liam (Wyatt Brothers, Book 2)

A Millionaire's Love

Lie Next To Me (A Millionaire's Love, Book 1)

When I Lie with You (A Millionaire's Love, Book 2)

Happened Series

Then You Happened (Happened Series, Book 1)

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The Interview: New York & Los Angeles Part 1

The Interview: New York & Los Angeles Part 2

Love Series:

Love In Between (Love Series, Book 1)

The Upside of Love (Love Series, Book 2)

Wolfe Brothers

Elijah Wolfe (Wolfe Brothers, Book 1)

Nathan Wolfe (Wolfe Brothers, Book 2)

Mason Wolfe (Wolfe Brothers, Book 3)

Standalone Books

The Billionaire's Christmas Baby

His Proposed Deal

The Secret He Holds

The Seduction of Alex Parker

Something About Lorelei

One Night In London

The Exception

Corporate A\$\$ETS

A Beautiful Sight

The Negotiation

Defense

Playing The Millionaire

#Delete

Behind His Lies

One Night In Paris

Perfectly You

The Escort

The Ring

The Donor

Rewind

Remembering You

When I'm With You

LOGAN (A Hockey Romance)

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INTRODUCTION

Fear is the common response to things we can't believe in or conceive in our minds. We fear the unknown. Things we can't understand.

Everly

I was different, and I lived my life as low key as possible. My childhood wasn't easy, and relationships never worked out, so I stopped trying. I accepted the fact that I would more than likely grow old alone, and I was okay with that. The more men got to know me, the faster they ran. Then I met Asher Remington under unusual circumstances. For him, it was unusual, but for me, it was the norm. I was sent to New York to convince him not to go through with a merger that would end up destroying him and the company his father worked so hard to build. He thought I was crazy until he discovered the truth in what I had told him after he kicked me out of his hotel suite. My job was complete, and I needed to forget about him. But after spending one beautiful night together, it became impossible. The more time we spent together, the harder I fell. He was living in the shadow of a lie, only he didn't know it. If we were to have a chance together, he needed to know the truth, and he needed to put the past to rest.

Asher

Everly King was crazy. She was the craziest yet most beautiful woman I'd ever known. We met under very unusual circumstances. She saved me from

making what would have been the most destructive decision of my life. I owed her. After spending one night with her, I craved more. Even though there were things about her that frightened me, I didn't want to stop seeing her. Then I let my guard down and feelings emerged. I couldn't allow it, and I needed to stick by the decision I'd made several years ago after an incident determined the course of my life. I needed to forget about her and let her go. There was no "us," and there never would be. The problem was the fear I had inside was giving in and it tried to reason with me. It kept asking the same thing over and over: what if you...

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PROLOGUE

I stood in the center of the ballroom as my eyes diverted to the corner where he stood. He was six feet two inches tall with brown hair that was meticulously cut in a classic crew style. The expensive black tuxedo he wore hugged his muscular body. With the slight turn of his head, he glanced my way. Blue eyes, sculpted cheekbones and a strong masculine jawline with a five o'clock shadow. The corners of his mouth curved upward as he stared at me. The small smile that graced his lips was approving, irresistible and infectious. The faint scent of his cologne lingered through the air. A scent made up of Bergamot, Sweet Persimmon and Patchouli. His gaze left mine as he exited through the large double doors. Holding up the silver sparkly long gown I wore, I ran across the room and followed him into the lobby of the hotel where I saw him walk out into the dark streets of the city.

Suddenly, I found myself standing next to the mysterious and handsome man in front of a tall glass building. With his hands tucked tightly in his pants pockets, he looked up as the entire building came crashing down, floor by floor. Looking to my right, I spotted an older man. He had salt and pepper hair, black rimmed glasses and he wore a designer gray pinstripe suit. He held a drink in his hand. Scotch, I think. Two ice cubes. The look on his face was sinister as he stared at the handsome man. It started to rain. As I looked up, I lifted my hands as the particles falling from the sky fell into them. They weren't raindrops. They were fragments of dollar bills that were burned to ashes. The mysterious man turned and stared at me as despair and anguish splayed across his face.

My eyes flew open as my heart raced out of my chest. Quickly sitting up,

I took in a deep breath and grabbed the phone on my nightstand to check the time. It was three a.m. Taking in another deep breath, I laid down, pulled the covers over me and fell back asleep.

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Everly “Everly, over here!” Diana shouted and waved her hand in the air as I stepped inside the gate at LaGuardia Airport.

I let out a screech as I set down my carry-on bag and hugged her.

“I’m so happy you’re here. It’s been way too long.” She hugged me tight.

“It’s been two months since you and Daniel were in Rhode Island for a visit.” I laughed as I broke our embrace.

“Still, it seems like eternity.” A bright smile graced her face as she picked up my bag from the floor and threw it over her shoulder.

“Well, you have me for three whole months.” The corners of my mouth curved upward as I laid my head on her shoulder and we headed toward baggage claim to fetch my luggage.

Diana Lafferty and I had become close friends since she started dating my cousin, Daniel, three years ago. They both grew up and lived in Rhode Island, and when Daniel was promoted to detective and secured a spot for the NYPD, they decided it was time to move in together. They had been trying to get me to come to New York for a visit since they’d moved a year ago, but the timing always seemed off, until the dreams started happening.

“So, how is business?” Diana asked as we climbed into a cab.

“Business is good. I’ve secured some new clients here in the city I’m meeting with.”

“I can’t believe my boss called an emergency meeting, and I have to go into work. He knew I had the day off. He is such a jerk.”

I placed my hand on her shoulder and gave her a small smile.

“It’s okay. I told you before I came that I’d find my way to your

apartment and not to worry about me.”

“But I had plans to show you around the city.” A pout formed on her lips.

“We have plenty of time for that.”

Diana reached in her purse, pulled out a key and handed it to me.

“I had an extra key to the apartment made for you.”

“Thanks.” I gave her a smile as the cab pulled up to the curb of her building.

The driver climbed out and grabbed my carry-on and large suitcase from the trunk.

“I’m so happy you’re here and so is Daniel. I’ll see you later when I get home.” Diana hugged me. “I’m nervous about this meeting. With my boss you never know which way it’s going to go.”

“Don’t be nervous and don’t worry about me. I’ll see you later.” I gave her a wink before climbing out of the cab.

“It’s apartment 21C. Take the elevator up to the 21st floor and make a left. You can’t miss it.”

“Got it.” I shut the door, grabbed my bags and headed inside the building located at 10 E. & 29th street.



“Can I help you, ma’am?”

“I’m looking for Detective Langley.”

“And you are?”

“His cousin, Everly.”

“I’ll be damned. You’re finally here!” Daniel exclaimed as he walked towards me and gave me a hug. “How are you, cuz?”

“I’m fabulous. It’s good to see you, Daniel.”

“Good to see you too.”

He broke our embrace and led me over to his desk.

“Everly, I’d like you to meet my partner, James Alden. James, this is my cousin, Everly.”

“It’s nice to meet you, James.” I extended my hand to him.

“Trust me. The pleasure is all mine. I’ve heard so much about you.” He lightly shook my hand.

“All good, I hope.” I glanced at Daniel.

“Nothing but the best.” Daniel gave me a wink. “Diana called and said she dropped you off at the apartment. Did you find your room okay?”

“If it’s the one with the pink sign on the door that says ‘Everly’s Room,’ then yes, I found it just fine.” I lightly punched his shoulder. “I can’t believe you have that. Where did you find it?”

“In the basement at Grandma Tillie’s right before I moved here. I asked her if I could take it with me.”

“You’re weird.” I laughed.

“Maybe just a little. But not as weird as you. What brings you by the station?”

“I just wanted to see where my hot shot detective cousin works.” The corners of my mouth curved upward.

“Langley, Alden,” an older man stepped out of his office, “a body was found in one of the rooms at the Archer. You two need to get down there.”

“Right away, Captain,” Daniel spoke as he grabbed his cell phone from his desk. “I have to run. I’ll see you tonight.” He lightly kissed my cheek.

I took a cab back to the apartment, made a cup of coffee, grabbed my laptop and took a seat on the oversized comfy couch Diana always gushed about since the day they bought it. As I was doing some work, I could feel the heaviness in my eyes and wondered why the caffeine hadn’t kicked in. Closing my laptop, I placed it next to me and curled up on the couch for a twenty-minute power nap.



I found myself on the dark and quiet street where the gray and starless sky laid its blanket over the city. Looking ahead, I took note of the only streetlamp that was brightly lit. Why was that one working and not the others? I picked up the pace down the concrete pavement and as I approached the corner, I saw a man standing underneath the light. He turned his head and stared at me. He was an older man who stood about six feet tall with a medium build and gray hair. He was distinguished and wore a tailored black suit with a red print tie.

“What happened here?” I asked him.

His eyes left mine as he stared straight ahead and pointed his finger.

“You need to help him. My son needs your help.”

“Help with what?”

“You must help him,” he spoke as he kept pointing his finger. “Go now!”

I crossed the street and continued going straight until I found myself in front of a tall glass building. The building was pitch black except for one office on the twentieth floor. Stepping into the lobby, I heard the ding of the elevator. When I turned around, the doors opened, so I stepped inside. The button to the twentieth floor was illuminated as the doors shut and the elevator rose up. When I stepped out, I followed a dim light down the hallway until I reached a conference room. Conference Room A, my eyes diverted to the door. Placing my hand on the handle and carefully opening it, I saw the handsome man sitting down, and across from him was the other man with the salt and pepper hair and black rimmed glasses. Another man was seated at the table with them. Bald, with a round face and small eyes. The handsome man picked up a pen and signed the papers in front of them.

“There. It’s done.” He handed the papers to the bald man.

“Excellent. Your father would be proud of you, Asher.” His smile was threatening.

“Yes, my dear nephew. Your father would be so proud,” the man with the black rimmed glasses spoke.

He turned to the bald-headed man.

“Thank you for everything, Leo. This deal wouldn’t have been possible without your help. My father trusted you with his life and his company.”

The bald man smiled at him as he and the man with the black rimmed glasses walked out of the room. Suddenly, particles started falling from the ceiling as the building began to violently shake. Looking up, I held out my hand as fragments of burnt dollar bills fell into it.

“Sir, we have to get out of here!” I shouted to the handsome man who stood at the window, staring out into the dark city.

He couldn’t hear me as the entire floor collapsed, taking us down with it.

I let out a large gasp as my eyes flew open and I quickly sat up.

“Everly, are you okay?” Diana asked as she placed her hand on my arm.

“Yeah. What time is it?” I asked as I tried to catch my breath.

“It’s five o’clock,” she spoke with concern. “I just got home. It seemed like you were having some kind of nightmare.”

“Yeah. I guess I was.”

“Are you sure you’re okay?”

“I’m fine.” I placed my hand on my forehead.

She could tell there was a hint of uncertainty in my voice.
“Is there something you need to do?” Her eye narrowed at me.
“Honestly, I’m not sure.”

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Asher She screamed my name as I pounded into her from behind. My cock filled with pleasure as it exploded, relieving the stresses of the day. My hands tightly gripped her waist as I finished and slowly regained my breath. Pulling out of her, I removed the condom and threw it in the trash can next to the bed. She turned around and covered herself with the sheet. A satisfied smile crossed her lips.

Climbing off the bed, I pulled on my underwear and pants and walked over to the bar in the living area. I grabbed the bottle of bourbon and poured myself a double.

“You were an animal tonight.” The redhead grinned as she walked over to me covering herself with the sheet and ran her fingers through my hair.

I grabbed her wrist and held it.

“You know we’re finished here.” I arched my brow at her.

“I know. It’s the same story every time we fuck.” She sighed. “You really don’t have a heart, do you?” Her green eyes stared into mine.

“I have a heart.” I placed her hand over it. “See. It only beats to keep me alive. Nothing else. You can go get dressed now and leave.”

“I’m getting tired of being used for sex, Asher,” she spoke as she walked back to the bedroom. “I’m worth more than that, you know.”

“Then go find yourself a nice man who would be more than happy to let you sink your claws into him.”

“Maybe I will. And maybe next time my phone rings, and your name appears, I might just decline your call.”

“Go ahead. I’ll just move down to the next name on my list.” I finished

off my drink.

She let out a laugh.

“The sad part is, I know you will.”

After slipping into her dress and strapping on her heels, she walked over to where I stood and placed her hand on my chest.

“You are one hundred percent dead inside, Mr. Remington.” She shook her head and left the hotel room.

Rolling my eyes, I went into the bathroom and started the shower. When I was finished, I got dressed, grabbed my wallet from the dresser and took the elevator down to the lobby.

“Enjoy the rest of your evening, Mr. Remington,” Thaddeus, the concierge spoke as I headed out of the hotel.

“You too, Thaddeus.” I gave him a nod.

I kept a suite at The Remington downtown. One of the 5-star hotels my company owned. It was the only place I brought women to. We’d have a nice dinner in the hotel restaurant or a few drinks at the bar and then we’d go upstairs and have sex. I’d never brought anyone back to my penthouse. It was my sanctuary and my personal space which I didn’t share with any woman.



Mr. Remington, Mr. Baldwin called and said he’ll be stopping by around ten a.m.,” my secretary, Isabelle, spoke as I walked into my office.

“He wasn’t on the schedule, was he?”

“No. He said it’s important he speaks with you today.”

“Okay. Do me a favor and get me a coffee. I woke up a little late this morning.”

“Of course, sir.”

I set my briefcase down and took a seat behind my desk. It had been three months since my father occupied this space. I always knew one day I’d be in this office permanently, but I didn’t expect it to be so soon. After my father passed, I took over the company as CEO and my Uncle Roland took over my previous position as president of the company. He and my father fought several times over the years about his position, and Uncle Roland felt he should be the one to run the company upon my father’s death. My father was

a very smart man, as was I, and I wasn't going to let him down. I'd been my father's secondhand man since the day I graduated from Harvard. He trusted me, believed in me and made sure I was more than prepared to step into his role as CEO of Remington Property & Capital.

"Here's your coffee, Mr. Remington," Isabelle spoke as she set the cup down on my desk.

"Thanks, Isabelle. Hold all my calls. I don't want to be disturbed."

"Sure thing." She smiled at me in a flirtatious way.

"You hit that yet?" My Uncle Roland stepped inside as he stared at Isabelle's ass while she walked out of my office.

"No." My brow arched at him.

"Why not? The only reason you never did before was because your father forbid it. Now that he's gone, what's stopping you? She's a fine-looking piece of ass, boy."

"Maybe I don't want to be the cliché of the boss sleeping with his secretary."

"Please." He waved his hand in front of his face. "I slept with mine dozens of times."

"I know. Have you forgotten you're also married?"

"So what." He shrugged. "Do you honestly think your Aunt Lucy satisfies me? Do you actually think I want her to satisfy me? For god sakes, she's sixty-two years old. Her parts aren't as attractive as they used to be."

"I think Aunt Lucy looks amazing for her age. Besides, I have plenty of woman to satisfy me. I don't need to add my secretary in the mix and complicate things at work. Is there a reason you're here?"

"I want to revisit the condo project in Hell's Kitchen."

"Uncle Roland, I told a dozen times we aren't going through with it. It's not financially lucrative for us. We'd lose our ass on that project and it could be years before we'd see any return on investment."

"I know that's what you think, but you're wrong. I've done the research, I've presented the numbers to you and it all adds up. You're making a mistake."

"No, I'm not. I'm doing what's in the best interest of my company. And taking on the Hell's Kitchen project isn't in our best interest."

I could see the anger on his face as he rose from his chair.

"You'll be sorry one day, kid. Trust me. You're not seeing the big picture."

He walked out of the office and I rolled my eyes. Uncle Roland had always been difficult. Not just with me, but also with my father. He was always kind of considered the black sheep of the family.

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Everly
My eyes flew open as I quickly sat up. Shaking my head, I slipped on my robe and headed to the kitchen for a cup of coffee.

“Morning,” I said to Daniel and Diana as they sat at the table drinking coffee and eating a bagel.

“Morning.” Daniel smiled. “How did you sleep?”

“Oh. You know. The usual.”

I reached in the cabinet and pulled down a mug.

“Dreams again?” Diana asked. “By the way, there’s a bagel over there with your name on it. Asiago cheese. I know it’s your favorite.”

“Thanks. I’ll make it later.” I sighed as I poured some coffee in my mug. “To answer your question, yes. I keep having this recurring dream about this man.”

“Who is he?” Daniel asked.

“I have no idea. All I know is he’s incredibly hot.” I smiled as I sat down at the table.

“Oh-la-la. Those are the best kind of dreams.” Diana grinned and Daniel shot her a look of disapproval.

“What are you and this hot man doing?” Daniel asked with an arch in his brow.

“Standing in front of a tall glass building and watching it fall to the ground.”

“Sounds boring.” Daniel smirked.

“I’ve been having it for two weeks now. They started back in Rhode Island.”

“Do you know where this tall glass building is?” Diana asked.

“No. In my dream its dark and I can’t see anything except the building.”

“And the hot guy,” Daniel said.

“Oh shit. I have to go. I didn’t realize how late it was. I have a project meeting in twenty minutes,” Diana said as she flew out of her seat, slipped on her shoes and ran out the door.

“I love you too, honey,” Daniel shouted.

Suddenly, the door opened, and Diana popped her head inside.

“I love you too, baby,” she said as she blew him a kiss.

I couldn’t help but smile. The two of them were perfect together.

“I envy the two of you,” I said as I wrapped my hands around my warm mug.

Daniel looked at me with that sympathetic look. The same look he always gave me while growing up.

“You can have—”

“Daniel, don’t.” I interrupted him. “You know it’s not possible for me. It never has been, and it never will be. You’ve been there through all of my disastrous relationships.”

“You just haven’t found the right guy yet. The one who will understand and love you for who you are.”

“Yeah, okay,” I said as I got up from the table.

“Listen, Everly,” he said as he walked up behind me and gripped my shoulders. “It’ll happen when you least expect it. Until then, just do what you’ve been doing.”

“Sleep with guys and never see them again?” I raised my brow.

“Hey, whatever works.” He kissed my cheek. “I have to go.”



I was just ending a zoom call with one of my clients when my phone rang, and Diana was calling.

“Hello.”

“Everly, are you home?”

“Yeah. Why?”

“Can you go look on my dresser and see if my wallet is there? I just noticed it wasn’t in my purse and I’m freaking out.”

“It’s here. Do you want me to bring it to you?”

“Would you mind? If you’re busy, don’t worry about it.”

“I just ended a call with a client and I’m free for the rest of the day. Text me the address to the building and I’ll leave now. It’ll give me a good excuse to see where you work.”

“You are a godsend. Thank you. I’m sending the address as we speak.”

After slipping on my shoes, I headed down to the lobby and out the doors of the building. Thankfully, there was a cab waiting at the curb.

“Are you available?” I asked the driver.

“Sure. Climb in. Where to?”

“375 Park Avenue, please.”

When the driver pulled up to the building, I paid my fare, climbed out and stared up at the tall glass building. The same building that was always crashing down in my dreams.

“Shit,” I whispered.

When I stepped into the building, I pulled my phone from my purse to double check which floor Diana said she was on. The problem was, she only gave me the building address. Just as I was about to call her, the elevator dinged, and the doors opened. Placing my phone in my purse, I stepped inside and stared at the panel on the left-hand side.

“Well, I believe I already know which floor,” I quietly spoke to myself.

After I pushed the button to the twentieth floor and the doors began to close, a hand squeezed in between them. When they opened, I let out a gasp when I saw who the man was that stepped inside. His blue eyes stared into mine as the corners of his mouth curved upward.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t see you coming, or I would have held the doors.”

“No worries,” he spoke as he went to reach for the button to the twentieth floor. “I see we’re going to the same floor.”

I gave him a small smile as I nervously looked away.

“What business do you have there?”

“My friend works on that floor and she left her wallet at home. I’m bringing it to her.”

“You’re a good friend. May I ask who your friend is?”

“Diana Lafferty.”

“She’s one of my employees.” The corners of his mouth curved upward.

“Of course,” I spoke in a low voice.

“Excuse me?”

“What a coincidence,” I said.

The elevator stopped and when the doors opened, the handsome man from my dreams gestured for me to step out first.

“Go down the hall and make a right. Diana’s cubicle will be the fourth one on the left.”

“Thank you.” I tightly gripped the strap of my purse.

“You are very welcome.” His eyes raked over me from head to toe.

When I reached Diana’s cubicle, she wasn’t there.

“Can I help you?” A younger man in the cubicle next to hers asked.

“I’m looking for Diana.”

“She ran to the restroom. She’ll be back in a few. Have a seat.” He grinned.

I couldn’t believe this. Who was I kidding? Yes, I could.

“Hey, you’re here. Welcome to my space.” A bright smile crossed Diana’s lips.

“I need to talk to you.”

I got up from her chair and lightly grabbed hold of her arm.

“What? What is it?” she asked with concern.

“Not here,” I said as I noticed the man in the cubicle next to her was listening.

“You’re sort of freaking me out, Everly. What’s going on?” she asked as I opened the door to the stairwell.

“Your boss. I just rode up in the elevator with him.”

“Which one?”

“The tall hot one with the blue eyes.”

“Mr. Remington? What about him?”

“He’s the guy in my dreams.”

“What?” She cocked her head at me. “Are you sure?”

“One hundred percent. We’re standing in front of this building and it collapses floor by floor until it’s nothing but a pile of rubble. Then it starts to rain, but it’s not raindrops, it’s the ashes of burnt dollar bills.”

“What do you think it means?”

“I don’t know yet.”

“So is the building going to collapse with me in it?”

“No. Don’t worry about that. It has to do with him. It’s some kind of symbol.”

“Oh, okay.” She let out a sigh of relief. “Listen. I have to get to a project

meeting.”

I pulled her wallet from my purse and handed it to her.

“Are you sure the building isn’t going to collapse?”

“I’m positive.” I gave her a reassuring smile.

She placed her hand on my arm. “Thanks for bringing my wallet. I’ll see you later.”



Asher

“I’m ready to move forward with the merger,” I said as I handed my attorney, Leo, the file. “It’s time.”

“You’ve made the right decision and your father would be proud, Asher. This is a major deal. He’d been working on this merger for a year.”

“I know and he’d want me to see this through.”

“Yes, he would.”

“I would like to see it too. Roland smiled as he walked into the conference room. “Sorry I’m late. I was tied up in a meeting with a bunch of buffoons.”

“We’re finished here,” I spoke as I got up from my seat.

“I’ll get the paperwork finalized so we can close this deal of a lifetime,” Leo said as he scooped up the files in front of him. “I’ll call you when they’re ready to be signed.”

TWO DAYS LATER

Everly I shot up and placed my hand on my forehead. Sighing, I climbed out of bed and went to the kitchen for a much-needed cup of coffee.

“Morning, sunshine.” Daniel smiled as he brought a piece of toast up to his mouth.

“Coffee?” Diana asked.

“Morning and absolutely.”

I took a seat across from Daniel and laid my forehead on the table.

“More dreams?” Daniel asked.

“Always,” I said as I lifted my head and Diana set a cup of coffee in front of me. “Thanks.” I gave her a small smile. “I need to speak with your boss today. Do you know what his schedule is like?”

“It’s bad, isn’t it?” Diana asked with worry.

“Yes. As in you could lose your job.” I brought the cup up to my lips.

“Ugh! I’ll find out his schedule when I get to the office and call you. But just so you know, Mr. Remington is—”

“I know.” I took a sip of my coffee.

“Well, I have to get to the station,” Daniel said as he kissed Diana on the cheek. “Have a good day at work, sweetheart. And you,” he pointed at me, “try not to rattle Mr. Remington too much.”

“I’ll do my best.” I sighed as I finished my coffee.



I had just turned the vacuum off when I heard my phone ring.
“Hey, Diana.”

“Hey. I spoke to Isabelle and Mr. Remington gave her strict orders that he didn’t want to be disturbed for the next couple hours. After that, he’s in back-to-back meetings.”

“Then I’ll just come over there now.”

“Isabelle won’t let you see him.”

“Then maybe you’re going to have to distract Isabelle for me so I can get into his office.”

“I can do that.”

“Great. I’m leaving now. This has to be done today.”

I took the elevator up to the twentieth floor and when I reached Mr. Remington’s office, his door was shut, and Isabelle wasn’t sitting at her desk. Lightly knocking on the door, I slowly opened it.

“Isabelle, I thought I—” He looked up and narrowed his eye at me.

“I’m sorry. Your secretary wasn’t at her desk and I need to speak with you.”

“Wait a minute. You’re the woman from the elevator the other day. Diana’s friend, right?”

“Yes. That’s right, Mr. Remington. Do you have a moment?”

He got up from behind his desk, walked over to the front of it and leaned his body against it.

“Actually, I don’t. I’m a very busy man. Perhaps we can talk over dinner tonight.” The corners of his mouth curved upward.

“Umm. Sure. But I would rather do it in private.”

“That can be arranged, Miss—”

“Everly. You can just call me Everly.”

“Interesting and beautiful name.” He picked up a pen and wrote something down on a sticky note. “The Remington, Suite 3130. Say around seven o’clock? I’ll have the chef cook us up something special.” The grin on his face grew wide as he handed the note to me.

The moment I grabbed the note from his hand the flashes in my mind began.

“Everly, are you alright?” he asked.

“I’m fine.” I snapped out of my daze. “I’ll see you tonight, Mr. Remington.” A smile crossed my lips.

“I look forward to it.” A sly grin crossed his face.

OceanofPDF.com

Asher
Damn, she was beautiful. I'd already noticed the day I ran into her in the elevator. Five feet six, long blonde hair that laid in beachy waves over her shoulders, beautiful blue eyes and a bright smile. Not to mention her body, which was the first thing I'd noticed. Slender and toned with tits that were appropriately proportioned. Not too big, but not too small. They were the perfect size for her frame. And tonight, I'd see how perfect they were as she lie naked in my bed. Obviously, when she saw me, she was curious and asked Diana about me. I was more than happy to satisfy her curiosity. Picking up my phone, I called the hotel and made arrangements for dinner and a bottle of champagne.



I arrived at the hotel an hour early to shower and change my clothes. Just as I finished dabbing on some cologne, there was a knock at the door.

“Good evening, Everly,” I spoke as I opened the door.

“Hello, Mr. Remington.”

“Come in, and please call me Asher.”

She set her purse down on the table in the entryway while I pulled the bottle of champagne from the bucket.

“Dinner will be here in a few minutes. Can I pour you a glass of champagne?”

“Sure. Thank you.” A small smile crossed her lips as she walked over to the window and stared out at the city view.

“This view is amazing.”

“It is amazing.” I walked over to where she stood and handed her a glass. “I don’t believe I’ve told you how beautiful you look.”

She inhaled a sharp breath as her eyes stared into mine.

“Mr.—Asher, I came here tonight because I really need to talk to you about something.”

The tone of her voice was serious, and as much as I wanted to hear what she had to say, we were interrupted by a knock at the door. After dinner was set up, we both took a seat at the table that sat six. The sooner I let her tell me whatever it was she wanted to, the sooner I could take her into the bedroom.

“This dinner looks delicious,” she said as she placed the cloth napkin on her lap.

“So, what did you want to talk to me about?”

“You’re going to think I’m crazy, but it’s very important that you listen to me.”

“Go ahead, I’m listening.” I smirked as I cut into my filet.

“I’ve been having dreams about you.”

“Really?” I grinned. “I can’t say I’m surprised. “You’re not the only woman who has told me that.” I gave her a playful wink.

She let out a light laugh as she pointed her fork at me.

“I do believe that. But my dreams aren’t in the way you think.”

“Then by all means, tell me about these dreams of yours.”

“You can’t sign the merger agreement with M&H Properties.”

“Excuse me?” I narrowed my eye at her. “How the hell do you know about that?” I asked in shock as I set down my fork. “There are only a few people who know about that pending merger.”

“I just do. If you take over that company, you’re going to lose everything.”

“Is that a threat, Everly? Who the hell sent you here?” I shouted as I stood from my chair.

“Mr. Remington, please calm down.”

“Calm down? You come into my hotel suite, threaten me, and then have the nerve to tell me to calm down!” I shouted as I pointed at her. I walked over to where she sat, gripped the arms of the chair and placed my face mere inches from hers. “Who sent you here?” I spoke through gritted teeth.

“Your father.” She swallowed hard.

“My father is dead.”

“I know.” She bit down on her bottom lip as I narrowed my eye at her. “He passed away three months ago from a massive heart attack.”

“What the hell are you doing? Stalking me and my life? You’re fucking crazy.”

I let go of the chair, grabbed my glass of champagne, and paced around the room.

“So I’ve been told many times,” she spoke.

I stopped, turned my head and stared at her.

“So you admit you’re crazy and a stalker?”

“I’m neither of those. I need you to listen to me. Please.”

“You need to leave right now, and if you don’t, I’m calling security and having you thrown out.” I shouted.

“Listen to me, Asher. I see things. I dream things and they happen. That’s the honest to god’s truth.”

I couldn’t help but chuckle as I shook my head at her.

“You’re a whack-job lady, and you need some serious help. Does Diana know how crazy you are? Because I can’t imagine her being friends with someone like you.”

“When you were a little boy, your father used to bring you to the office. You would sit behind his desk with a pen and notepad and pretend you were drawing up contracts. When you were fifteen you got busted for smoking pot by the pool with your friends. Your father was supposed to be on a business trip, but he came back early. He grounded you for a month.”

“Stop!” I shouted as I pointed my finger at her.

There was no way she could have known all that. No possible way. I took a seat on the couch and placed my face in my hands.

“I know this is a lot of information and I know how hard it is to believe. Trust me. But you have to believe me.”

I inhaled a deep breath as I looked at her from across the room without saying a word.

“If you can’t believe me, I understand. But I’m begging you to reconsider signing that merger agreement. Your father wasn’t going to. He found out some things and by time he could tell you or anyone about it, he passed away. I know you trusted your father and always believed he made the right decisions. He wasn’t going to go through with it. Don’t let these people

destroy you and the company your family spent their life building.”

“Get out now!” I pointed towards the door.

“Asher, pl—”

“I said get out!” I spoke through gritted teeth.

She grabbed her purse from the table, threw it over her shoulder and placed her hand on the handle of the hotel door.

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Everly Fear is the common response to things we possibly can't believe in or conceive in our minds. We fear the unknown. Things we can't understand. When fear takes over us psychologically, we have the tendency to become irate, defensive and possibly destructive. Asher wasn't behaving any differently from anyone else, and I expected this type of reaction from him. I could only hope and pray that once he calmed down, he would think about what I'd told him and make the right decision.

"Wait!" he shouted as I slowly turned the door handle. "What do you mean my father found out things?"

"He found out what your uncle and lawyer were going to do if that merger went through."

"How do you expect me to believe what you're saying?" he shouted. "Do you know how crazy all of this sounds? How crazy it is that you're standing here telling me that my dead father told you and sent you to stop me from going through with that merger?"

"Yes!" I shouted as I turned around and faced him. "I know how crazy it all sounds. You think I want to stand here and tell you all this? You think I like hearing people tell me I'm a psycho and need to be placed in a mental hospital? I can't help that I was born with this. You think I like it? But I do the best I can with it. And if I can help someone's life not be destroyed by the evil in this world, then I'm okay with that."

He looked away from me, got up from the couch and poured himself a drink from the bar.

"There's a hidden safe behind the wall vent that's located in your father's

bedroom closet. Inside you will find a journal where he detailed everything he knew about his lawyer, your uncle and the merger.”

“I know of no such safe,” he said as he slammed back his drink.

“Nobody did but him, Mr. Remington. I’m sorry about all this. I should go now.”

“Yeah. I think you should. No offense, Everly, but I really don’t ever want to see you again.”

“I understand.” I turned back towards the door.

“Wait. My driver will see to it that you get home safely. He can be here in a few minutes. I’ll call him now.”

“Thanks, but I’m fine. I can take a cab.”

“It’s not up for discussion. Damien will take you home.”

“If you insist. Have a good evening, Mr. Remington.”

“And how the hell am I supposed to do that after everything that transpired here?”

I gave him a sympathetic look as I walked out the door. When my feet hit the pavement of the sidewalk outside the hotel, I saw a tall man with jet black hair and dressed in a black suit standing next to a black Rolls Royce.

“Damien?”

“Miss Everly, I presume?”

“You presumed right. It’s nice to meet you.”

“You as well.” He gave a slight nod as he opened the passenger door for me.

The moment I climbed inside and placed my hand on the seat, images of the night Mr. Remington died flipped through my mind.

“Oh no,” I said.

“Miss Everly? Are you alright? Miss Everly?” I could hear Damien call to me.

“I’ll be right back. It’ll just take a moment.”

I climbed out of the car, ran inside the hotel and took the elevator up to Asher’s suite. Knocking on the door, I took in a deep breath.

“I thought I made myself very clear that I never wanted to see you again?” Asher spoke with irritation when he opened the door.

“Your father was murdered,” I blurted out.

“Jesus Christ. My father died of a massive heart attack.”

“That was induced by your uncle. The vile is in the left-hand drawer of his desk. The one he keeps locked.”

“Let me guess, my father told you that?”

“I saw it when I climbed into your Rolls Royce. That’s where your father died, right?”

“Yes.” He looked down.

“I’m sorry,” I said as I walked to the elevator.



“Thank God you’re home. How did it go? I’ve been sitting here on pins and needles,” Diana said.

“You know. A lot of the word ‘crazy’ was thrown around. Not to mention all the shouting. Just the typical reaction when I have to tell someone what their deceased loved one wants them to know.”

“Shit. Really? Did he believe you at all?”

“I honestly don’t know. He did say he never wanted to see me again.”

“Ouch. Aw, come here.” She held out her arms. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine. I’m used to it.” I sighed. “I just hope he gives some thought to what I said.”

The front door opened, and Daniel walked in.

“Hey, what’s going on here?” he asked as he threw his keys down on the table.

“Mr. Remington didn’t take the news very well,” Diana spoke.

“Ah. I see.”

“He told her he never wanted to see her again.”

“I’m sorry, cuz. But you kind of expected that, right?”

“Yeah. It comes with the territory. But there’s something you should know.”

“What?” He cocked his head.

“Mr. Remington Sr. was murdered.”

“Are you sure?”

“He died of a heart attack in the back of his Rolls Royce. The moment I climbed in the car, I saw what happened. He was at the office and he had just told his attorney and his brother that he was canceling the merger. They had words and Roland went over to the mini bar in his office and poured Mr. Remington a drink. Before he gave it to him, he pulled a vile out of his pocket and poured it into his scotch.”

“I’ll take a look at the coroner’s report tomorrow at the station. Did you tell, Remington, about this?”

“I did. I don’t think he believed me.”

“Well, unless he comes down to the station and insists there’s more to his father’s death than a heart attack, there’s nothing we can do.”

“I know. Anyway, I’m heading to bed. It’s been a long night.”

“Get some rest.” Daniel kissed my forehead. “You look tired.”

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Asher I stepped inside my father's Park Avenue penthouse. The last time I was here was when I had to go through his things before I had them moved out. The walls where expensive artwork once hung, were now bare. The only thing left was the furniture. I needed to put the place up for sale, but I'd been putting it off for one reason or another. Reasons I wasn't even sure of.

I went to his bedroom and opened the closet doors. Stepping inside and walking over to the vent, I knelt down, pulled the screwdriver out of my pocket I borrowed from the hotel, and unscrewed the screws. Pulling off the vent cover, I saw a small safe sitting inside.

"I'll be damned," I said as I stared at it. "You couldn't have told me the combination." I sighed.

I tried a bunch of different combinations I thought my father would have used, including the combination only the two of us knew for the safe at the office. But there was one I had yet to try: the date of my mother's death. Punching in the numbers, the door opened. I stared at the brown leather journal sitting inside. After I grabbed it from the safe, I placed the vent cover back and climbed into my Rolls Royce.

"Find what you were looking for, Asher?" Damien asked.

"Yes. Actually, I did. Just take me home."

"So I guess Miss Everly was right."

"There's more to her and I'm going to find out what it is. I can guarantee she knew my father. He must have told her about the journal. There's no other explanation."

“Why now, Asher? Why three months after your father’s death? I worked for your father for many years and I have never seen that woman before in my life, nor have I ever heard her name.”

“My father was good at keeping secrets. Who knows, maybe she’s his daughter from an affair. I don’t think she’s much younger than I am. I don’t know, Damien.”

“You’re grasping, Asher.”

“No. I’m being fucking realistic. And for her to tell me that my father was murdered and that my uncle had something to do with it. If that was the case, the coroner would have discovered it.”

After Damien dropped me off at my penthouse, I changed into a pair of sweatpants and a t-shirt, poured myself a double bourbon and sat down on the couch to read the journal.



My eyes flew open to the ringing sound of my phone. I was sprawled out on the couch with the journal laying on my chest. I had no recollection of falling asleep. Grabbing my phone from the coffee table, I saw my Uncle Roland was calling.

“Hello.”

“Asher? Are you sleeping? It’s nine o’clock. Where are you?”

“I’m home. I’m not feeling well today. Tell Isabelle I won’t be coming into the office. I can do work from here.”

“What about our final meeting for the merger? It starts in an hour.” His voice was agitated.

“Reschedule it, Roland. I have to go.”

I ended the call before he could say another word. The truth was, I drank too much last night as I read my father’s journal. Picking up my phone, I called the main number to the office and put it on speaker.

“Remington Property & Capital. How may I direct your call?”

“Diana Lafferty, please.”

“One moment and I’ll connect you.”

“Diana Lafferty speaking.”

“Diana, it’s Asher Remington.”

“Uh, hi, Mr.—”

“Don’t say my name. I don’t want anyone in the office to know that I’m calling you. As far as everyone is concerned, I’m home sick today. I need you to give me Everly’s phone number. I have to speak with her.”

“Sure.”

As she rattled off the number, I stored it in my phone.

“Thank you. This conversation stays between the two of us. Understand?”

“Yes. Completely. Have a good day.”

“You too, Diana.”

I dialed Everly’s number and it went to voicemail. After leaving a message, I set my phone down, made a cup of coffee and took a shower.



Everly

“Thanks, Everly. I’m so happy we finally got to meet in person.”

“Me too, Regina.” I smiled. “Same time, same place, next week?”

“I already put it in my calendar. I’m going to go home and work on that list.”

“Excellent.” I grinned. “Enjoy the rest of your day.”

“You too, Everly,” Regina said as she got up from her chair and walked out of the coffee shop.

I still had some coffee left, so I picked up my phone and noticed I had a voice message. I never kept my phone ringer on during a session. My clients paid me for one-on-one attention and that was exactly what they got. Pressing the voicemail button, I brought the phone up to my ear.

“Everly, it’s Asher Remington. I need to speak with you. It’s urgent. Please call me as soon as you get this message. The number I’m calling from is my cell number and the best one to reach me at. I hope to hear from you soon.”

Dialing his number, he picked up on the second ring.

“Everly?”

“Mr. Remington.”

“I called you a half hour ago. What the hell took you so long to call me back?” he spoke in an angered tone.

“I’m working, and I was with a client. Do you answer your calls when

you're in meetings?"

"Don't get smart with me. I don't like that." His authoritative tone irritated me.

"Mr. Remington." I sighed. "Why are you calling me?"

"I need to see you as soon as possible. Are you available now?"

"You said you never wanted to see me again."

"I know what I said, but it doesn't matter right now. I need to speak to you. Give me your work address, and I can meet you at your office."

I glanced around the coffee shop.

"Everly? Are you still there?"

"Yes. Sorry. The address is 155 East 52nd Street and 3rd Avenue."

"I'm leaving now."

"Okay. See you soon."

I heard a click and let out a sigh. Grabbing my purse, I went up to the counter.

"Can I get you something else?" the barista asked.

"A large Nitro Cold Brew with coconut milk and one pump mocha, please. And I'll have one of those delicious looking raspberry nut bars."

"Coming right up."

"You know what? I need to add one more thing."

"Of course. What did you want to add?"

"A large dark roast with a splash of almond milk and one shot of espresso. And a slice of banana nut bread."

"Sure thing." She smiled.

When the coffees were ready, I took them over to the small round table I had been sitting at for the last hour and a half. Asher would be walking through that door in five minutes and he wasn't going to be very happy.

Everly The moment I saw him walk through the door, a look of bewilderment was plastered across his face. He looked around for a moment until he spotted me and my raised hand alerting him as to where I was sitting.

“A coffee shop? Really? I thought we were meeting at your office,” he scowled.

“Today, this is my office. Have a seat.” I smiled as I gestured to the chair across from me.

“What is this?” he asked as he picked up the large coffee cup.

“A large dark roast with a splash of almond milk and one shot of espresso. And in the bag is a slice of banana nut bread.”

He picked up the bag and looked inside.

“How—” he stuttered. “Never mind.” He put his hand up. “I want you to tell me how you knew my father.”

“I don’t.”

“Don’t lie to me,” he spoke in a low authoritative voice.”

“I’m not lying to you. I take it you found the journal?”

“Yes. It was exactly where you said it was.”

“And?”

“I’m not discussing that with you. I want to know what kind of relationship you and my father had. Was he paying you to find out information? When did he tell you about the journal? How long before he died?”

“He told me in my dream after he passed away.”

“And I don’t believe you! Now you tell me the fucking truth!” he voiced rather loudly which caused people to turn our way.

“Lower your voice. You’re making a scene. Take a drink of your coffee and calm down. I know you can’t or won’t accept what I’m telling you, but you don’t have a choice. Shouldn’t you be at work?” I cocked my head at him.

“Yes. I should be. But instead, I’m here trying to make sense of what role you played in all of this.”

“My role?” I pointed to myself. “I’m an innocent bystander here. The truth is your deceased father came to me and asked me to help you. He showed me what would happen if you went ahead with that merger.”

“God. This is crazy!” He leaned back in his chair. “You’re crazy!”

“How do you think I knew about the pot incident when you were fifteen or how I knew you would sit at his desk and pretend to draw up contacts when you were a little boy? How did I know your exact coffee order and that banana nut bread is your favorite?”

“Simple. You were working for him and he told you all about me.”

I got lost in his eyes as my mind went elsewhere.

“Hello?” He waved his hand in front of my face.

“Who is Brianna?” I asked.

His eyes widened as he inhaled a sharp breath.

“How do you know that name? My father would never have told you that,” he spoke through gritted teeth.

“Exactly, Mr. Remington.”

He looked out the window as the silence grew between us.

“You need to go to the police and show them the journal. In fact, my cousin is a detective with the NYPD. Why don’t you come over tonight and speak with him? He’ll help you.”

His narrowed eye studied me for a moment.

“You live with your cousin?”

“I’m staying with him and Diana while I’m in town.”

“You’re not from here?”

“No. I live in Rhode Island. I’m just visiting for a while.”

“Fine. I guess I can do that. I need to get this taken care of quickly. What time?”

“Seven o’clock. He should be home by then.”

“Alright. You can just text me the address,” he said as he rose from his

seat, grabbed his coffee and the bag with the banana nut bread in it. “I’ll see you later.”

I gave him a smile before he turned and walked out of the coffee shop. Damn, he was sexy as sin.



On my way home, I stopped at the grocery store to pick up some items for dinner.

“Hey.” Diana smiled when she walked through the door.

“Hi. How was work?”

“Stressful as always. What’s going on here? Are you cooking dinner?”

“I am.” I grinned as I stood over the sink peeling potatoes. “Meatloaf, mashed potatoes and roasted parmesan-garlic carrots.”

“Wow. Sounds delicious. I don’t think I’m ever going to let you go back to Rhode Island. Did Mr. Remington give you a call today?”

“He did, and we met at my office.”

She let out a laugh. “Your office?”

“Yeah.” I smiled. “The coffee shop where I had met one of my clients.”

I opened the drawer and took out a sharp knife to cut the potatoes.

“And how did that go?”

“A lot of ‘crazy’ tossed around again. He wanted to know how I knew his father.”

“Oh. So I take it he still doesn’t believe you.”

“We’ll find out because he’s coming for dinner.”

“What!” she exclaimed. “Here? To my apartment? My boss? Mr. Remington?”

“Yes. He’s handing his father’s journal over to Daniel. I told him he could help him.”

“Let me guess, this is his favorite meal?” Her brow raised at me as she grabbed the bottle of wine sitting on the island.

“Yep.” The corners of my mouth curved upward.

“You’re really trying to make him believe you.”

I shrugged. “It doesn’t matter if he does or doesn’t. After reading his father’s journal, he won’t go through with the merger, his lawyer and uncle will be locked up in prison, you’ll still have a job, Mr. Remington will no

longer invade my dreams, and all will be right in the world.”

“Does he know you’re cooking for him?”

“No.” I grinned.

“I have to go change. I cannot believe you invited my boss over for dinner. That is just weird, Everly. Weird!” She pointed at me. “It’s bad enough I’m intimidated by him at work. Now I have to be intimidated by him in my own home.”

“Aw, come on. He’s not that bad.”

“And you’re a liar.” She laughed as she walked out of the kitchen.

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Asher
Before I approached the door of 21C, it opened and Everly stood there smiling at me.

“Hi,” she spoke.

“How long have you been standing there waiting for me?”

“Since the second you stepped out of the elevator.”

I slowly shook my head as she invited me inside. The aroma of meatloaf and mashed potatoes filled the air.

“Hi, Mr. Remington. Welcome to our home.”

“Hi, Diana. Thank you.”

“This is my boyfriend, Detective Daniel Langley. Daniel, my boss, Mr. Remington.”

“It’s nice to meet you, Daniel.” I extended my hand.

“You too, Mr. Remington.”

“Please, call me Asher.”

“Everly told me you found your father’s journal.”

“I did.” I sighed as I pulled it from my pocket and handed it to him.

“You two can talk all about it after dinner,” Everly spoke. “It’s ready, so go sit down.”

“Thank you, but I’m good. I really can’t stay.”

“Not even for homemade meat loaf, mashed potatoes and roasted parmesan-garlic carrots?”

I stood there and as my eye steadily narrowed at her. “How did you know? Wait. Don’t answer that.”

I glanced over at Daniel and a smirk crossed his lips. I hadn’t had

homemade meatloaf in years. My mother made it all the time because she knew it was my favorite. I took a seat at the table next to Everly while Daniel and Diana sat across from us.

“My father wrote in his journal that if something were to happen to him, you’d need to look at his brother, Roland, because he would most likely be responsible for his death,” I said to Daniel.

“I looked over the coroner’s report, Asher, and it clearly states your father died of a massive heart attack. There was no indication he was murdered.”

“He was, Daniel,” Everly spoke as she cut into her meatloaf. “You’ll find the vile in the top left drawer of Roland’s desk. He keeps it locked and the key is with him at all times.”

“What’s in the vile?” Daniel asked her.

“That I don’t know. But whatever it was, it caused Mr. Remington’s heart attack. What I do know is that it’s untraceable.”

“Okay. I’ll dive into the journal tonight and we’ll open an investigation in the morning. You are requesting an investigation, right?” he asked.

“Yes. I am. I can only hold off on the merger for another day before my uncle and lawyer get suspicious, Daniel.”

“I know. We’ll get moving. I promise.”

“I appreciate it. Thank you. This is really good, Everly.” I gave her a small smile.

“Thanks. I knew you’d like it.” She grinned.

Everything had happened so fast and I hadn’t had a chance to process it all. My life at the moment felt as if it was unraveling. I said my goodbyes to Daniel and Diana, and Everly walked me to the door.

“Thanks for dinner. It was delicious.”

“You’re welcome.” She smiled. “I’m just happy everything’s going to work out. It’s all your father wanted.”

“Yeah. I’m sure he did.” I gave her a small smile as I walked out the door.

When I arrived home, I poured myself a drink and went into my office. Sitting behind my desk, I turned on my computer and googled “Psychics.” I didn’t, nor did I ever believe in such a thing. I was an intelligent man and intelligent people didn’t believe in that type of woo-woo bullshit. Google confirmed it for me. They’re all fakes, just as I suspected. I was still convinced that my father knew Everly somehow and confided in her. I wanted to investigate her. The problem was, I didn’t know her last name. If I

were to ask Diana, she'd most likely tell her, and I didn't want her to know.

Despite the fact I didn't believe in her, it didn't change my opinion on how beautiful she was and how disappointed I was that the night in my hotel suite didn't go as I'd planned.



I was at the office by six a.m. because I wanted to get in there before everyone else. I'd tossed and turned all night, unable to sleep because of everything that had happened. I always knew my father and uncle didn't see eye to eye, but I never thought he would be capable of murder. He took the only parent I had left, and I would make sure he'd pay dearly for that.

"Feeling better I see," Roland spoke as he stood in the doorway of my office.

"I am. What are you doing here so early?"

"The question is why are you here so early?"

"I wasn't in yesterday and I have a lot of work to do. Things to catch up on."

"And a merger contract to sign, right?" His brow raised.

"Yeah. Do me a favor and tell Leo to bring the contracts tonight at five o'clock. We'll get them signed and get this deal closed."

The corners of his mouth curved upward into a sinister smile.

"I was thinking around ten o'clock. Why wait until five, Asher?"

I steadily narrowed my eye at him as I leaned back in my chair. What I wouldn't give to punch him right in the face.

"This is my company, Uncle Roland. I'm the CEO and I make the decisions. If I say five o'clock, then that's when we're doing it. What does a few extra hours matter anyway?"

"I guess it doesn't. Let's go out and celebrate tonight after the merger is completed. Drinks are on me," he said.

"Definitely. Now if you'll excuse me, I have work to do."

"Yeah. Me too. I'm going to grab some coffee, can I get you one?" he asked.

"Ah, no. I already had some this morning."

"Sure. I'll talk to you later, Asher." He tapped his hand on the doorframe

before walking away.

As soon as it was nine o'clock, I called Detective Daniel Langley."

"Detective Langley," he answered.

"Daniel, it's Asher Remington. We need to talk."

"Asher, I was going to call you. I read through your father's journal last night and handed it over to my captain this morning. He's got the FBI here and we're getting a warrant to search the offices of your attorney and your uncle. We'll be making the arrests today."

"I hope it's before five o'clock. That's when I told my uncle I'd be signing the merger papers."

"Don't worry. You'll be seeing us soon."

I sighed as I ended the call and ran my hands through my hair. I was afraid of what the ramifications were going to be for the company once this was over and the news got out.



Daniel called me when they were on their way, so I arranged to have a meeting with Leo and my Uncle Roland.

"What's this about?" Roland asked.

"I want to talk to the both of you regarding the merger."

"What about it, Asher?" Roland narrowed his eye at me.

"See here's the thing," I said as I stood up from my chair. "My father had changed his mind about the merger because he found out some things the two of you had planned. Things that would financially ruin and bankrupt this company."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Leo asked.

"You know exactly what I'm talking about. The night he had his heart attack, he'd just come from a meeting with the two of you and he told you he was backing out of the deal."

"You're crazy, Asher," my Uncle Roland spoke.

"No. I don't think I am, Uncle Roland. See, I found a journal my father had hidden somewhere in his penthouse. A journal that outlined your plans to ruin him and this company. To bankrupt him and have him arrested for tax invasion, fraud, and other illegal doings. The two of you were setting him up. The question is: why?"

I could see the panic on Leo's face, but Roland remained as cool as a cucumber.

"If you back out of this deal, I promise you will live to regret it." My Uncle Roland pointed his finger at me.

"The only thing Mr. Remington is going to regret is trusting the two of you," Daniel spoke as he walked into my office."

"Excuse me? Who the hell are you?" Uncle Roland asked as he abruptly stood up from his seat.

"I'm Detective Langley and this is my partner Detective Alden. The FBI is in your office right now as we speak with a search warrant. After that, they'll be doing searches of your home."

"What the hell is going on here?" Leo asked.

"The two of you are under arrest for conspiracy and corporate fraud."

"Detective Langley, we found this in the locked drawer you told us about," one of the FBI agents spoke as he stepped into my office holding up a small vile."

"And now we're adding first degree murder to the charges."

As Daniel read them their rights, Leo was yelling at my Uncle Roland to keep his mouth shut.

"Get them out of here," Daniel spoke to the FBI agent. "It's over, Asher. You can go about your business now without worrying about those two. They will most likely spend the rest of their lives in prison."

"Thank you, Daniel."

"No problem. But you really should be thanking Everly. I know you're a skeptic, but if it wasn't for her, you'd be going down the rabbit hole." A small smile crossed his mouth as he walked out of my office.

I called an emergency board meeting first. Once I was finished, I called an employee meeting where I discussed the events of the day and how the company was going to continue moving forward. I'd already been bombarded with calls from various law firms in the city wanting me and my company as their client. I promoted Joe Kent to president of the company. He was my choice after my father passed away, but it was stated in my father's company will that Roland was to take over my position once I stepped into the role of CEO.

ONE WEEK LATER

Asher The week had been a shit show. I'd barely had time to breathe, let alone do anything else. Keeping my company under control and reassuring clients what had happened did not affect them in any way was draining. I was tired, irritated and stressed. Thank God I was seeing Tabitha in my suite tonight. I needed sex, and I needed it bad.

"I'm heading out for a while," I spoke to Isabelle as I stepped out of my office. "I should only be gone about an hour."

"Okay, Mr. Remington."

When the elevator doors opened to the lobby, Diana was standing there.

"Hey, Mr. Remington." She smiled.

"Diana." I gave her a nod as I stepped out.

As I approached the building doors, I saw Everly exiting the building.

"Everly?"

"Oh, hi." A bright smile graced her face.

"What are you doing here?" I asked as we both stepped outside.

"I met Diana for lunch. I just walked her back."

"I see. Actually, I'm glad I ran into you. Do you have a few moments?"

"Sure. I was just heading over to Starbucks for a coffee. Care to walk with me?"

"Yeah. A coffee sounds good right now," I spoke as I tucked my hands into my pants pockets. "I meant to give you a call, but the week has been crazy busy."

"A call? About what?"

"I would like to thank you for everything you've done by taking you to

dinner one night.”

“Mr. Remington, that’s not necessary.”

“Do you remember when I told you to call me Asher? Because I’d prefer it if you did.”

“Right. Asher, that’s not necessary.”

“I feel it is. Please just let me thank you properly.”

We approached Starbucks and I opened the door for her. Surprisingly, there were only two people in line.

“If you insist. I’d love to have dinner with you.”

“Okay. How about tomorrow night?”

“Can I help you?” the barista behind the counter interrupted us.

“A Venti Cold Brew with coconut milk, two stevia and one pump mocha,” Everly spoke.

“And for you, sir?”

“A Tall Flat White with almond milk and two stevia.”

When she gave me the total, I pulled out my wallet and Everly scanned her phone.

“I got it,” she said.

“I was going to pay for us.” I furrowed my brows at her.

“It’s fine. I want the stars. Now I have enough for a free drink next time.”

She grinned.

“Well, in that case, thank you.”

“You’re welcome, and tomorrow night is fine.”

“Great. How about I pick you up around seven o’clock?”

“Seven is good.”

We grabbed our coffees and walked out the door.

“I need to get back to the office,” I said.

“Okay. I’ll see you tomorrow, Asher.” The corners of her mouth curved upward.

“See you tomorrow, Everly.” I gave her a nod as I turned left and headed back to the office.

The truth was I did want to thank her, but I wasn’t finished with her just yet. I was going to get the truth one way or another of how she knew my father.

Everly “How do I look?” I asked Diana as I stared at myself in the mirror.

“Beautiful, fabulous, sexy, all of the above.” She smiled.

“Thanks. Are you sure this dress is okay?”

“Everly, it’s perfect. Did he say where he’s taking you?”

“No.”

“Do you KNOW where’s he taking you?” She let out a laugh.

“Actually, I don’t. Can I tell you something?” I grabbed hold of her hand and led her to the edge of the bed.

“Of course. You can tell me anything.”

“I’ve seen him.” I bit down on my bottom lip.

“What do you mean?”

“I had a dream where he’s in bed with—”

“OH!” Her eyes widened. “And?”

“Let’s just say he’s very skilled and sexy.”

She brought her hands up to her ears and covered them.

“He’s my boss! I can’t be getting that image in my head.”

“I know. I’m sorry.” I got up from the bed.

“Are you saying you’d sleep with him if he asked you?”

“Of course.” I smirked. “I’d be stupid not to. Besides, it’s only sex. But it won’t happen. He thinks I’m weird and crazy.”

“He’s a man and you’re a beautiful woman. Trust me, I’m sure he’s going to try.”

“I hope he does.” I grinned as I grabbed my purse and walked out of the

bedroom. “His car just pulled up so I’m going to head down there.”

“Have fun and try to keep your pheromones under control.” Diana let out a light laugh.

“I can’t make any promises.” I gave her a wink as I walked out the door.

When the elevator door opened to the lobby, Asher was standing there, and a look of shock swept across his face when he saw me.

“I was just coming up to get you.” His brows furrowed.

“I thought I’d save you the trip.” The corners of my mouth curved upward.

“You look great.”

“Thanks.” I could feel the heat rise in my cheeks.

When we stepped outside, Damien stood there holding the car door open.

“Good evening, Everly.” He smiled as he gave a slight nod.

“Good evening, Damien.”

I climbed in first and Asher slid in next to me.

“I thought we would have dinner at the restaurant inside my hotel. The food is excellent, and you didn’t really have a chance to eat it the last time you were there.”

“That’s because someone kicked me out of their suite.” I smirked.

“I know and honestly, I won’t apologize for that. You made it a very stressful night.”

“Yeah. I seem to have a habit of stressing people out. Not all, but some.” I sighed.

As soon as the car pulled up to the hotel, Asher stepped out and extended his hand to me. It was best I didn’t take it.

“Thanks, but I don’t need help.”

“Are you sure?” His brows furrowed at me.

“I’m sure. See.” I grinned as I stepped out of the car without his help.

We entered through the large revolving door of The Remington Hotel and made our way to the elegant five-star restaurant called Bliss.

“Good evening, Mr. Remington. Follow me and I’ll take you to your table.”

We followed the blonde hostess with the big brown eyes towards the back of the restaurant. I could feel the light touch of his hand on the small of my back and my body trembled, for I’d always found that sexy. We were seated in a private booth. An intimate spot where privacy wasn’t an issue.

“Here are your menus. Franco will be right over to serve you.”

“Thank you.” Asher smiled at the young hostess.

Within a few moments, Franco walked over to the table and poured us each a glass of water.

“Welcome back, Mr. Remington. What may I bring you to drink?”

“Everly?” Asher gestured.

“I’ll have a glass of Pinot Grigio, please.”

“And for you, Mr. Remington?”

“Just bring the whole bottle.”

After Franco brought our wine, we placed our order and handed him our menus. Asher picked up his glass and held it up to me.

“Thank you, Everly, for everything.”

“I was only the messenger.” I smiled as I tapped my glass against his.

“The messenger. Right.” He slowly nodded his head. “Now that everything is over with, why don’t you just tell me how you and my father knew each other.”

“Why is it so hard for you to accept the truth?” I asked as I took a sip of my wine.

“Because your truth isn’t the truth. It doesn’t exist. I’ve read articles and I know people who claim what you do are total fakes. They’re scam artists who prey on people who are desperately seeking answers in their life.”

“You’re right. There are people out there who are complete fakes.”

“So I’ll ask you again. How did you know my father?”

I wasn’t in the mood to go around and around with him. No matter what I’d tell him, he wouldn’t believe me.

“Is this why you asked me to dinner? So you could interrogate me?”

“One of the reasons,” he spoke in a serious tone.

“See that couple over there?” I pointed.

“Yeah. What about them?”

“The waiter is going to bring out their dessert which will be a cheesecake with strawberries on it. There will be an engagement ring hooked around one of the strawberries on her piece. She’ll see it, start to cry and he’ll get down on one knee and ask her to marry him.”

“Whatever you say, sweetheart.” He rolled his eyes.

“To answer your question, your father came to me in a dream. He showed me what would happen to you if you went ahead with the merger. That is the truth. Now, I’m sorry you are having such a hard time believing the truth, but I’m not wasting anymore of my time, and I certainly won’t sit here and be

called a liar. I make no apologies for who I am.” I took the napkin from my lap, set it on the table and stood up.

“What do you think you’re doing?” he asked.

“I’m leaving. Because frankly, Asher, you’re the one who’s stressing me out tonight.”

Suddenly, we heard a screech. Asher looked over at the couple I pointed out only to find the woman crying and the man down on one knee proposing to her. I began to walk away and felt his hand wrap around my wrist.

“Wait.”

I turned and looked at him.

“Stay. I’ll have Franco deliver our dinner up to my suite. We need to talk in private,” he spoke in a calm voice.

I stared at him for a moment while his hand was still wrapped around my wrist.

“Fine. But just so you know, the only reason I’m staying is because I’m hungry.”

His lips formed a small smile as he signaled for Franco.

We took the elevator up to his suite. As soon as we stepped inside, I set my purse down while Asher took off his suitcoat and threw it over one of the chairs.

Asher I couldn't wrap my head around any of this, and I wasn't sure I wanted to. Our dinner was promptly delivered to the suite and I motioned for Everly to take a seat while I sat down across from her.

"How, Everly?"

"I know you want some scientific explanation, Asher, but I'm afraid there isn't one. This is something I was born with. My grandmother has it, my mother had it and I have it."

"Your mother had it?" I narrowed my eye at her.

"She passed away when I was five. She couldn't handle it, so she drank and took pills. She discovered the more she combined the two, the more the dreams and visions stopped. One night, she took too many pills and drank way too much."

"I'm sorry."

"I appreciate that. Thank you."

"What about your cousin? Can he—"

"No." She interrupted. "And honestly, I'm happy he doesn't have it. My grandmother calls it a gift, and sometimes it is. But it can also be a curse."

"Why is that?" I asked as I picked up my drink.

"Because some of the things I dream and see aren't like the couple down at the restaurant. I also see a lot of bad things. Things nobody should ever see. That was what my mother couldn't handle. I have no control over anything I see. It just happens. Like with your father and you. Your father couldn't be at peace until he knew you were going to be okay."

"How does it work?"

“I don’t know.” A small smile crossed her lips. “It just happens.”

“Now that I know about your mother and grandmother, tell me about your father?”

“I don’t know my father. He took off when he found out my mother was pregnant.”

“Your grandmother didn’t try to find him after your mother died?”

“She doesn’t know who he is either. She never met any of the guys my mother dated.”

“Can’t you use your ‘thing’ to find him?”

“It doesn’t work like that.”

“I see. Answer me this. What does your future look like?”

She let out a light laugh and finished off the last of her wine.

“I have no idea because I can’t see my future. I just live my life day by day and hope for the best.” She held up her glass and I poured her some more wine.

Leaning back in my chair, I studied her. She was so beautiful. Even though I thought she was way out there in left field, she was still a very sexy woman.

“We’ve had a few conversations over the past couple weeks, you bought me a coffee and a slice of banana nut bread, I’ve been to your home for dinner, and I still don’t know your last name.” I arched my brow at her.

“It’s King. Everly King.” A captivating smile fell upon her lips.

“And what does Miss King do for a living? Does she do readings with a crystal ball?” I smirked.

“Absolutely not.” She got up from her chair, kicked off her heels, picked up her wine glass and took it over to the couch. “I’m a life coach.”

“A life coach? Seriously?” I asked as I sat down next to her and extended my arm across the back of the couch.

“Seriously.” She grinned as she turned her body so she was facing me. “Some people need guidance to help them achieve their goals, and I can give that to them.”

“Interesting,” I spoke as I lightly ran my finger across her bare shoulder. “Has anyone ever told you how beautiful you are?”

“Maybe once or twice.” She smirked. “Let me ask you something. Do you have any goals you want to achieve?”

“Yes. Actually, I have one goal in mind.” I continued running my finger across her shoulder.

“Maybe I can help you achieve that goal,” she spoke in a seductive voice and my cock started to rise.

“I was just thinking the same thing.” I leaned closer to her and softly brushed my lips against hers.



Especially

The look in his blue eyes made my heart race and my lips trembled as he brushed his against them. They were soft, with the taste of wine that engulfed my senses. There was no denying I wanted him, to feel him inside me. The softness of his kiss turned passionate once he knew this was what I wanted. Our tongues introduced themselves as they tangled in the night.

“Shall we take this to the bedroom?” he asked as he broke our kiss and brought his hand up to my cheek.

“I think that’s a good idea.” I smiled.

He took hold of my hand, helped me up from the couch and led me to the bedroom. As we stood in front of the bed, our lips tangled while his fingers unzipped my dress. Sweeping his hands across my shoulders, he took down the straps as my dress fell to the ground, leaving me in nothing but the black lace thong I was wearing.

“Damn. You are amazing,” he spoke. “Turn around.”

I did as he asked. He wrapped one arm around my waist and held me in place while his tongue slid across my neck. His grip was strong, tight and secure. He reached down the front of my thong until his fingers slid into my opening. I gasped at his tender touch.

“You are so wet. Do you have any idea how much that turns me on?” his voice whispered in my ear.

I let out a pleasurable moan as his finger moved inside me.

“We’re going to stay like this until you come. Understand me?”

“Yes.” I spoke with bated breath.

“Good girl.” His lips pressed against the side of my neck. “Not only do I want to feel you come, I also want to hear you.”

It didn’t take long for my body to surrender to him as a loud moan escaped me while my body trembled and his grip around me tightened from

behind. I'd never felt anything like what I had just felt. Of course, I've had many orgasms in my life, but this—this was different, and it sent my body to a whole new level of pleasure.

“That was perfect,” he whispered as I could feel the warmth of his breath on my neck. He pulled his finger out and took down my panties as I stepped out of them. “Turn around and sit down on the edge of the bed.”

I did as he asked and watched him as he undressed. Walking over to me, his rock-hard cock was mere inches from my mouth. For the love of God, it was big. Not overly large, but nowhere near small. His fingers stroked my hair as I took his cock in my hand and stroked it up and down. He threw his head back as soft moans escaped his lips. Bringing him closer, I wrapped my lips around him and took him all the way in. His moans intensified, turning me on more than I already was.

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Asher

It felt like she was pulling the life force out of me and I needed to stop her for I was about to come, and I didn't want to. Not yet and not this way.

"As much as I love the way you're making me feel, you need to stop," I spoke.

She pulled her mouth from my cock and looked up at me with her beautiful and innocent blue eyes. I brought my finger up and placed it under her chin for I felt like I needed to offer her an explanation.

"I was about to come, and I don't want to this way."

Reaching in the nightstand, I grabbed a condom and rolled it over my cock. She laid down on the bed as I hovered over her and traced her hardened nipple with my fingers before taking it in my mouth. After pleasuring her breasts, I slid my tongue down her torso until I reached her sweet spot. After all, it was my duty to return the favor. After she reached another orgasm, I pulled her on top of me so I could stare at her beautiful and sexy body while we fucked each other. In a matter of seconds, I was inside her. The warmth of her enveloped my cock, causing an overload of excitement. Her hips moved back and forth as she sat up nice and tall, making sure every inch of my cock was buried deep inside. My hands gripped her perky breasts as my thumbs stimulated her hardened nipples. I could feel she was about to have another orgasm as I was getting ready to explode. She let out a satisfying moan as did I while I gripped her hips and held her down while my cock erupted inside her.

She fell onto me and I could feel the rapid beating of her heart and the

warmth of her breath against my skin as her breathing rate began to slow. She lifted her head and stared into my eyes before rolling off me.

“Thanks.” She smiled.

“You’re welcome.” I couldn’t help but smile back at her.

Removing the condom, I threw it over the side of the bed and into the trash can. Now came the awkward part where I had to tell her she had to leave. Before I had the chance to speak, she climbed out of bed and slipped into her dress.

“What are you doing?” I asked in confusion.

“We’re done here, right?” She smiled.

I furrowed my brows at her for no woman had ever willingly left without some sort of argument or tears.

“Yeah. I guess we are.”

“That’s what I thought.” She walked out of the room.

I quickly pulled on my pants and walked into the living room where she was putting on her heels.

“Well, wait,” I said.

“For what?” She looked up at me.

“I’ll take you home. Just give me a second to get dressed.”

“You don’t have to. I can take a cab.”

“Everly, I’m taking you home. I picked you up, didn’t I?”

“Yeah.”

“Then why wouldn’t I take you home?”

“Okay. I’ll wait.”

“Good. Don’t move. I’ll be right back.”

I went into the bedroom and gathered the rest of my clothes from the floor. What the hell was going on? Why was she in such a hurry to leave? Pulling out my phone, I called Damien to let him know we were on our way down.

“Are you ready?” I asked her as I walked into the living room.

“Yes.” She grabbed her purse.

We climbed into my car and Damien shot me a confused look. As soon as we pulled up to her building, I climbed out, held my hand out to her, and she willingly took it.

“Thanks again for tonight. I had a good time,” she spoke as we stood on the sidewalk.

“Me too.” I stood there with my hands tucked into my pockets. “I guess

I'll see you around sometime."

"Yeah. See ya around." She smiled as she leaned over and softly kissed my cheek. Good night, Asher."

"Good night, Everly."

When I climbed back in the car, I told Damien to wait until I made sure she was safely inside the building.

"This is a first," Damien spoke as he pulled away from the curb.

"What is?"

"You personally taking a woman home."

"Let's not make a big deal about it."



Everly

When I stepped inside the apartment, Daniel was sitting on the couch with a beer in his hand watching TV.

"Hey." He turned his head. "How was your night with Asher Remington?"

"It was fun." I grinned as I sat down next to him. "Is Diana in bed already?"

"Yeah. She said she was exhausted. 'Fun,' eh?" He gave me a smirk.

"Fun." The corners of my mouth curved upward as I laid my head on his shoulder.

"Are you seeing him again?"

"Probably not." I sighed.

"Do you think he believes you now?"

"I think he's confused. Let's leave it at that. I'm heading to bed. I'll see you in the morning." I got up from the couch and headed to my room.

After changing into my pajamas, I climbed in bed and laid my head on the pillow. When I closed my eyes, all I saw was him and the events that took place in his suite. The sex was incredible, and it was one one-night stand I wouldn't be forgetting any time soon. I couldn't get out of my head the way my body reacted to him, and the way I could still feel him inside me. It felt as if a connection was formed and our souls were tied together. I didn't want to think about it anymore for it freaked me out.

Asher

When my alarm went off, I angrily shut it off and threw my phone on the floor. I'd tossed and turned all night and barely slept at all. Everly King was in my head all night and on my mind. Her body, the way she moved, and the way she wanted to leave right after we'd had sex. I couldn't stop thinking about that couple in the restaurant, and the things she'd told me. The logical part of me still didn't believe her, but another part of me couldn't help but to.

I had just finished getting dressed when I heard my elevator ding. I was confused because I wasn't expecting anyone and there was only one person who had access to my penthouse.

"There he is." My friend, Noah, grinned as he stepped into my foyer and set his suitcases down.

"Noah? What the hell are you doing here?" I asked as I gave him a hug. "You're supposed to be in Paris."

"We need to talk if you have time."

"I always have time for my best friend." I hooked my arm around him. "Coffee?"

"Please. My flight just got in a little bit ago and I'm so jet-lagged."

"What's with the suitcases?" I asked as I brewed him a cup of coffee.

"I've decided to move back to New York."

"What? What about your job and Eloise?" I asked in total shock.

"Things weren't really working out there with my job or her."

"Man, I'm sorry to hear that."

"Yeah. Well, shit happens. Right? I was hoping I could crash here for a

few nights until I get my own place. I have some appointments today to look at apartments.”

“Yes. Of course. You know you’re always welcome here. What about a job?”

“I have a couple prospects.”

“Why didn’t you tell me any of this?” I asked.

“I wanted to surprise you. Plus, you were going through your own shit. I didn’t want to burden you with my problems.”

“Listen, I have to go.” I looked at my watch. “I have a board meeting to attend. Make yourself at home and get set up in one of the guestrooms. When I get home tonight, we’re going to order a pizza, drink some liquor and talk.”

“Sounds like a plan, bro. I’ll see you later.”

Noah Reynolds and I had been friends since we attended Harvard together. After we graduated, I worked for my father and he went to work for a marketing company in Manhattan. After a few years, the company shut down. So he decided to move to Paris and work for a small marketing firm there. It had been a year since he left, and now he was back, and I couldn’t be happier.

I was in back-to-back meetings all day long. One of which was a board meeting to discuss the hiring of Richard Winters, our soon-to-be new Chief of Marketing. He was a man in his mid-fifties, and I was thrilled when he agreed to come in for an interview. My father and I had our eye on him for the past couple of years because we knew our previous COM, Lawrence, was retiring. I made him an offer he couldn’t refuse, and he accepted.



Everly

“Morning,” I spoke to Diana as she stumbled into the kitchen.

“Shouldn’t you be dressed for work?”

“I called in. I have the flu.” She took a seat at the island and placed her hand on her head.

“Oh no. Can I make you some tea?”

“That would be great. How did your night go with Asher?”

“It was fun,” I spoke as I reached up in the cabinet and pulled down a mug.

“Fun? Please elaborate on that.”

“We did the dirty deed.” I grinned.

Her jaw dropped as she stared at me.

“Shut up! How was he? Wait. Don’t answer that. He’s one of my bosses.”
She laid her head down on the island. “I can’t have that image in my head.”

I let out a laugh as I waited for the water in the tea kettle to heat up.

“Let’s just say I’ll never be the same again.”

She slowly lifted her head and arched her left brow at me.

“He was everything you knew he would be?”

“And more.” I bit down on my bottom lip.

“So, now what?”

“Nothing. He said he’ll see me around sometime, and I said okay.”

“I’m not surprised.” She rolled her eyes.

The tea kettle went off, so I poured some water into the cup with the tea bag in it and handed it to her. When she took the mug from me, our fingers touched. The corners of my mouth curved upward as I stared at her.

“What?”

“Nothing. I just had a really good time last night.”

“You’re not like falling for him, are you?”

“No way. You know me better than that.”

“Just making sure. I’m going to take this in my room and lay down. Ugh. I feel so sick.”

“Get some rest, I have a couple clients to meet today.”

Little did Diana know she didn’t have the flu. She was pregnant, and I was so happy.

Asher

“What’s this?” I asked as I set my brief case down and walked into the kitchen. “I thought we were ordering a pizza.”

“I know,” Noah spoke. “But I thought making you a nice home-cooked meal after you worked so hard all day would be better.” A smirk crossed his face.

“Stop being a douchebag.” I took off my suitcoat.

He let out a laugh as he turned to the stove.

“What is that? It smells delicious.” I asked as I walked over to the stove.

“Coq au Vin, my friend. It was one of my favorite dishes over in Paris. I loved it so much that I learned how to make it.”

I walked over to the bar and poured myself a bourbon.

“How did the apartment hunting go today?”

“Not so great.”

“What about your old building?”

“I already checked. They don’t have anything available.”

“You know, I got to thinking. Maybe I can stay at one of your hotels until I find something. That way we both have our privacy if you know what I mean.”

“I don’t mind you staying here at the penthouse. But if you would rather stay at the hotel, I’ll call and get you a suite. You can stay as long as you like.”

“Thanks, bro. I’d appreciate it. Dinner’s ready. Wait until you try this.”

It was good to have my friend back in New York. I missed him and the fun we’d have when we went out.

“I’m sorry to hear about you and Eloise. I know you really liked her.”

“Thanks, Asher. But it’s all good. It was a mutual decision. I wasn’t happy with my job and after we broke up, I figured it was time to come back here and start over. How about you? Anyone special?”

“No. And you know better than to ask that.” I pointed my finger at him.

He let out a chuckle.

“Anyway, how did you figure out what your uncle and lawyer were doing?”

“Everything was in my father’s journal.”

“I still don’t get how you knew to look in the vent in his bedroom closet.”

“It was by pure accident.”

I wasn’t about to tell him about Everly because he’d think I was crazy. It was best I left her out of our conversations.

Later that evening, I was lying in bed and thoughts of her went through my head. Why the hell was I thinking about her so much? She’d definitely left her mark on me. Picking up my phone, I started to send her a text message.

“Hi. I was just thinking about last—”

I stopped, deleted it and set my phone down.



One Week Later

Everly

“Hey, got a minute?” I asked Diana as I stood in the doorway of her bathroom while she tried to get ready for work.

“I guess. But I can’t make any guarantees I won’t throw up during our conversation. I have no idea why I can’t shake this flu. I guess I’m going to have to call the doctor today.”

“Yeah. You better or I will,” Daniel spoke as he walked into the room.

I felt bad for her. She’d been sick as a dog all week. She only called in sick the one day because they were on a deadline for a project and she had to be at work. Every night when she’d come home, she’d take a bath and go right to bed. Daniel was getting worried and I couldn’t keep what I knew to myself anymore.

“You two ladies have a good day,” Daniel spoke as he kissed my cheek and then kissed his girlfriend goodbye. “You better call the doctor.”

“I will. I love you.”

“I love you too, baby. I’ll see you later.”

As soon as he left, I took hold of Diana’s hand and led her over to the bed.

“There’s something I need to tell you.”

“Okay. What is it?” she asked with concern.

I couldn’t help but smile at her.

“You don’t have the flu, Diana. You’re pregnant.”

“What?” She cocked her head at me. “No I’m not. I just had my—oh my God.” She jumped up, grabbed her phone and pulled up her period app. “According to this, I’m a month late.”

“That’s because you’re going to have a baby.” I grinned.

She slowly made her way to the bed and sat down, gripping the edge as tightly as she could.

“You’re sure?” she asked.

I gave her a look as I got up from the bed, went into my bedroom and grabbed the pregnancy test I picked up at the store.

“If you don’t believe me, take this.” I handed her the test. “I’ll be sitting at the table on my laptop.” I smiled as I patted her hand.

Ten minutes later, she emerged from her bedroom holding the stick in her hand.

“It says I’m pregnant.”

I could see the tears forming in her eyes. But they weren’t tears of sadness, they were tears of joy.

I got up from the table, walked over to her and gave her a big hug.

“Congratulations. Now you can go to work knowing you don’t have the flu.”

“I’m in such shock, Everly. I can’t believe I didn’t even think that I could be pregnant. I can’t wait to tell Daniel.”

“He’s going to be very happy.” I smiled as I gripped her shoulders. “Now go finish getting ready. You don’t want to be late. Your new boss is starting today.”

“Thank you.” She hugged me. “But how did you know? I thought you can’t see things with the people you’re close to.”

“I usually can’t, and I can’t explain it. But when I handed you your tea, I

just saw it.”

After my client call and having not left the apartment all day, I decided to go out and take a walk down fifth avenue and do some window shopping. It was a beautiful warm sunny day and I wanted to spend some time outside. After browsing for a while and buying a new casual sundress from Anthropologie, I stopped in Starbucks to grab an iced coffee and a Chicken Caprese Panini. When my order was ready, I took it over to a small table by the window. Suddenly, the song “At Last” by Etta James started playing. While I was eating my panini and sipping my iced coffee, my phone rang, and my grandmother was calling.

“Hi, Grandma,” I answered.

“Hello, darling. How is New York treating you?”

“It’s great. How have you been?”

“I’ve been good, darling. I miss you.”

“I miss you too.”

“How’s Daniel doing?”

“He’s good.”

“And Diana? How is she feeling these days?”

“You know?” I smiled as I stared out the window.

“Of course I do, and I’m very excited for them. Now all Daniel needs to do is put a ring on her finger.”

“That’s exactly what I was thinking.”

I could sense someone standing at my table and when I turned my head, I saw Asher standing there holding a cup of coffee.

“Grandma, I need to call you back.”

“Alright, darling. I’ll talk to you soon.”

“Hi.” I smiled as he stood there staring down at me.

“Hi yourself. May I?”

“Of course.”

He took the seat across from me.

“Is this your office setting today?” He smirked.

“No.” I laughed. “I was just doing some shopping.”

“Ah. I see.”

“What brings you by? Shouldn’t you be at the office, Mr. CEO?”

“I just came from a meeting and was passing by here and thought I’d grab a coffee before heading back to work. I certainly didn’t expect to see you here.”

“I guess this is one of those ‘I’ll see you around sometime’ moments.”

“Yeah. I guess it is. The corners of his mouth curved upward into a full-blown sexy smile. “I’m happy I ran into you, though. Would you like to go to dinner again, sometime?”

“I would.” I bit down on my lip.

“Are you free tonight?”

“I am.”

“My suite at seven o’clock?”

“Seven o’clock it is.” I smiled.

I looked up and all around the coffee shop when that song came on again.

“Is something wrong?”

“No. It’s just the second time I’ve heard this song since I’ve been sitting here.”

“Well, I better get to the office. I look forward to dinner tonight,” he spoke as he stood up from his seat.

“Me too. I’ll see you later.”

Everly I slipped on my new black floral spaghetti strap sundress and looked at myself in the mirror. It was perfect for tonight's dinner with Asher. While I was in the bathroom redoing my hair and makeup, I heard Diana walk in.

"There you are. Is that a new dress?"

"Yes." I smiled at her through the mirror. I just bought it today."

"I love it. Are you going out or something?"

"Asher asked me to dinner."

"Say what?" She took a seat on the toilet. "Seriously?"

"Yes. We're having dinner in his suite again."

"Oh. I see. So it's a sex date."

"Yeah." I grinned as I turned and looked at her. "I believe it is."

She sat there and laughed as she shook her head. "You know I don't approve, right? He's my boss."

"I know and I'm sorry. But his body makes my body really happy."

"You're bad." She reached over and slapped me on the ass.

"How is your new boss?" I asked as I leaned over the sink and put on some mascara.

"He seems really nice. His name is Richard and that's what he wants to be called. He isn't into formalities. He has a wife and two daughters. Emily just turned twenty and Laurel is eighteen."

"He sounds like a nice family man," I said as I dabbed some blush on my cheeks.

"He is and he's really cool. Seems like a fun and open guy. He's pretty

cute for his age.”

I glanced over at her with an arch in my brow.

“Knock it off. And stay away from him. You’re already sleeping with one of my bosses and that’s bad enough.”

My jaw dropped when she said that as she laughed and walked out of the bathroom.



*A*s I knocked on the door of Asher’s suite, the butterflies in my belly were at their peak.

“Hi.” A smile graced his face when he opened the door.

“Hi.” I swallowed hard for he looked so damn sexy.

“Come on in.” He gestured with his hand.

When I walked inside the suite, I heard that song playing. The same one I heard in Starbucks.

“Very funny!” I pointed at him.

“What?” His brow arched.

“This song.”

“What song?” His eye steadily narrowed at me.

“The one you have playing. At Last by Etta James.” I set my purse down.

“Everly, I don’t know what you’re talking about. I’m not playing any music at all. What is going on?” he asked as he poured me a glass of champagne.

“I don’t know. I heard the same song twice when I was in Starbucks earlier and now when I walked into your suite. It means something. Trust me.” I rolled my eyes.

Suddenly, the music stopped.

“It stopped now.”

He stood there and stared at me with furrowed brows as he held his drink in his hand.

“Just forget I mentioned it,” I said as I sipped on my champagne.

Thank God for the knock on the door at that very moment. Once the food was brought in and set on the table, Asher and I took our seats.

“So, Diana tells me she really likes her new boss, Richard.”

“Good. I’m happy to hear that. He seems to be a really nice guy and he’s

a marketing genius. We've had our eye on him for the past couple of years."

I gave him a small smile as I cut into my chicken.

"What was it like growing up with the thing you can do?" he asked.

"It wasn't easy. I never had many friends. Eventually, I'd freak them out by saying something I shouldn't have. But I was a kid. I did have one best friend in High School. Her name was Gemma, and she knew about me and the things I saw." I suddenly became quiet as I looked down at my plate.

"And?"

"She was killed in a car accident our senior year. I woke up one night to her standing by my bed, telling me she was sorry. When I looked at the clock it was 2:45 am. The accident happened at 2:40 am."

"I'm sorry. That must have been hard on you."

"It was. Her and her boyfriend were at a party and they were drinking. He got behind the wheel anyway."

"Was he killed?"

"No. He is currently serving a prison term. They charged him with first degree murder because he knew he was too intoxicated to drive. She was the only one besides Daniel who got me."

"I take it you and Daniel are close."

"We are." I smiled. "He's more like a brother to me instead of my cousin. When he was twelve, his parents were killed in a car crash and he came and lived with us."

"What about boyfriends?" A smirk crossed his face.

"Well." I picked up my glass of champagne. "Relationships were always disastrous and never lasted very long. Guys would freak out when they found out. I'd try to hide it from them the best I could, but sometimes, it was too hard. Things come to me out of the blue. I never know when or where it's going to happen. For instance, when I walked in here and heard the music you weren't playing."

"I won't lie and say I wasn't a little freaked out."

"Comes with the territory. So, I just use guys for sex. It's easier that way."

Asher *Did I just hear her right? That she uses guys for sex?* I stared at her in disbelief from across the table. I'd never heard those words come out of a woman's mouth before.

"You use men for sex?"

"I have needs, Asher. Just like you and every other human being on the face of this Earth. The truth is a relationship with a man isn't in the cards for me."

"I thought you couldn't see your future," I spoke as I stared at her.

"I can't. You don't need to be able to see the future when you know there are some things that will never work out."

The more I stared at her, the more I wanted her. I got up from my seat, walked over to where she sat and extended my hand. A fragile smile crossed her lips as she placed her hand in mine and I helped her from her chair. Leading her to the bedroom, I slowly took her out of her dress while her fingers unbuckled my belt and took down my pants. Our eyes stared into each other's as her hand wrapped around my hard cock and my fingers took her hardened peaks between them. The subtle moans we let out were in sync as the pleasure we gave each other was undeniable. As she stroked my cock with a grip I'd never forget, my hand moved down her torso as my fingers did a little dance over her sensitive area before making their way inside her. Our lips met with force as we gasped for air. I was about to come, and I wasn't having it. Grabbing her hand that was firmly wrapped around my cock, I stopped her.

"Not this way," I spoke as I brought my hand up to her face.

I hooked my arm around her waist and laid her down on the bed. My mouth explored her breasts before making my way down her body. She was soaked as I took in every sweet tasting moment. The moans that escaped her heightened as her body trembled with pleasure. When I was done, I stood up and went to get a condom from the nightstand.

“You don’t have to,” she softly spoke as she stared at me. “I’m on birth control and I know you’re clean. We both are.”

“Are you sure, Everly?”

She climbed under the covers and held them up with one hand as she held her other hand out to me. The corners of my mouth slowly curved upward as I climbed in and hovered over her.

When we were finished, I rolled off her and placed my hand on my rapidly beating heart. She did the same and then brought her hand up to my cheek and softly stroked it.

“You were amazing.” She smiled.

“So were you.” I brought my thumb up to her chin and lightly stroked it. “I want to talk to you about something.”

“Sure.” She rolled on her side and propped herself up.

“You’re only here for three months, right?”

“More like two and a half now.”

“You said earlier you have needs. I have needs too and I was thinking that maybe while you’re in New York, we could fulfill each other’s needs from time to time.”

“How often are you thinking?” she asked.

“I don’t know. A few times a week. No strings though. Just friendship and sex.”

“Ah.” She grinned. “Like a friends with benefits thing.”

“Sure. Something like that.”

“Just the two of us, right? Nobody else for as long as I’m here?”

“What do you mean? Do you think I’d want a threesome or something?”

“No.” She laughed as she lightly slapped my chest. “I mean you don’t sleep with any other women and I don’t sleep with any other men. We’d be exclusive in the sex department.”

“Ah. Well, as long as I know I’m getting it from you, I won’t have to look elsewhere.”

“And neither will I. Shall we shake on it to seal the deal?” She held out her hand.

“I can think of much better ways to seal the deal.” I pulled her on top of me.



Everly

I was in the hallway of the hotel when I heard the faint sound of that song playing. I slowly began to walk, following the music to see where it was coming from. The closer I got, the louder the music became. Looking to my right, I saw a door that was partially open. Room number 322. Swallowing hard, I carefully pushed open the door. The gruesome sight was enough to jolt me out of a sound sleep. I quickly sat up and grabbed my throat as I gasped for air.

“What the hell? Are you okay?” Asher asked as he grabbed hold of my arm.

I looked over at him in confusion for I didn’t remember falling asleep.

“Just peachy,” I said as I climbed out of bed and grabbed the robe that was lying across the chair.

“Where are you going?” Asher asked as I left the room.

Grabbing my phone from my purse, I called Daniel.

“What’s up, Everly?”

“I saw something, Daniel. A woman in the hotel I’m at. Room 322. She was murdered.”

“Yeah. I know. We’re here now. Where are you?”

“Suite 2210. I’m with Asher.”

“I’ll be up in a few minutes.” He sighed.

“What is going on?” Asher asked as he walked into the living room.

“For one, a woman was just found murdered in your hotel.”

“What!” he exclaimed.

“I saw it. Daniel is on his way up.”

“Now? For what? It’s midnight.”

“To talk to me.”

“I think we both better get dressed.” He sighed.

“How did I fall asleep?” I asked.

“We were talking and then you were out. You looked peaceful and I didn’t want to wake you.”

“Well you should have.” I shook my head as I slipped on my dress and heard a knock on the door.

I opened the door to the hotel room and Daniel stepped inside.

“Do you know who she is?” I asked.

“Her name is Amy Reynolds and she’s the third victim in the last two weeks. The other two women were high end call girls, and I can guarantee Amy Reynolds is one as well. What exactly did you see, Everly?”

“He plays a song while he’s murdering them.”

“What song?”

“At Last by Etta James. I’ve been hearing that damn song all day. He drugs them first by offering a glass of wine.”

“We never found any wine bottle or glasses in the rooms.”

“That’s because he brings the bottle of wine and the glass with him. Once they’re out, he puts on that song and then undresses them, but he doesn’t rape them. He just stares at their bodies. Then he goes into his bag and gets out the shaver he uses to shave one side of their head. Then he strangles them.”

“Each of the victims did have one side of their head shaved. We’re trying to figure out why he does that,” Daniel spoke.

“I don’t know why.”

“Did you see the man who’s doing this?”

“No. Not yet anyway.”

“Who rented the room?” Asher asked.

“The rooms are always in the victim’s names because they work for themselves. Obviously, this guy searches for them on the internet,” Daniel said.

“I’m sorry. That’s all I saw.”

“It’s okay. I’ll let you two get back to what you were doing.” A cocky smirk crossed his face. “By the way, Diana told me tonight.”

“And?” I grinned.

“I’m in shock, but I’m really happy. I’ll see you at home.”

As soon as the door shut, I turned and looked at Asher who stood there cocking his head at me.

Asher I couldn't believe when I looked over and Everly had fallen asleep. I knew I had worn her out, so I was going to let her sleep for a while before waking her up to take her home. While she slept, I browsed on my phone. She wasn't out thirty minutes before she scared the living shit out of me. She later told me that was the reason she didn't stay with anyone after sex. Now it made sense to me why she was in such a hurry to leave the first night we'd slept together.

It made me very uneasy knowing a murder took place in my hotel. That wasn't going to be good for business unless the police hurry and find the murderer. I'd have to do damage control in the morning because I knew the press was going to be outside my building.

I climbed into bed and decided to do some research on Miss Everly King. When I googled her name, the first thing that popped up was her life coaching business. I couldn't help but smile at her business picture. To look at her, you'd never know she possessed something so unnatural. I wasn't surprised when she agreed to my proposal regarding the two of us while she was in New York. I only offered because fucking her was amazing and she'd be easily available. I could have her anytime the need arose, and the best part was, she'd be heading back to Rhode Island in a couple of months and she'd be nothing but a distant memory. The only thing I was unsure of was if I could handle this thing of hers if it happened again while we were together.

After checking out her business page, I scrolled further down and ran across an article with her picture as a child and the headline: *Local Six-Year-Old Psychic Girl Finds Missing Sixteen-Year-Old Girl.*

Clicking on the article, I began to read it. The one thing I noticed was it took place in Connecticut, not Rhode Island.



“Mr. Remington, any comment on the woman who was murdered in your hotel last night?” a reporter asked as I tried to get into the building.

“It was a tragedy, and our thoughts go out to the woman’s family. The NYPD have assured me that they are doing everything in their power to track down the murderer. Now if you’ll excuse me,” I said as I made my way inside the building.

The rest of the day was a shit show at best. Everything that could go wrong, did, and I was highly frustrated.



“Everly
“So how did the two of you leave it last night?” Diana asked me.
“He really didn’t say much. In fact, after Daniel left the hotel room, Asher became freakishly quiet. We climbed in his car and he drove me home. There’s something else I need to tell you.” I bit down on my bottom lip as I stared at her.

“Oh God. What?”

“We’re kind of using each other for sex.”

“What do you mean?”

“He asked me last night since I’m in town for a couple of months if I would be interested in —okay, I’m not going to beat around the bush about it. Since I’m in town, we are going to be having a friends with benefits relationship. Just sex, only the two of us, for as long I’m here.”

Immediately, she covered her ears. It was just the reaction I expected.

“Everly, do you understand what you’re doing?”

“Of course.” I gave her the ‘duh’ look. “I get to have sex whenever I want with an incredibly sexy man. You should be happy it’s with him and not some random guy I pick up in a bar. Aren’t you happy knowing that I’ll be safe with him?”

She rolled her eyes and let out a sigh. “Yes and no. He’s Asher Remington. He has a bad reputation with women.”

“So. It’s not like I’m marrying the guy. We’re only satisfying each other’s needs. Nothing else.”

“Who are you trying to convince, Everly? Me or you? I love you and I don’t want to see you get hurt.”

“I appreciate that, Diana, and I love you too. I won’t let myself get hurt. Besides, I’m leaving in a couple of months. I can’t stay here.” I gave her a small smile as I patted her arm and went to my bedroom. My phone that was sitting on the bed rang and when I grabbed it, I saw Asher was calling.

“Hello.”

“Everly, it’s Asher. Listen, are you busy right now?”

“No. Why?”

“I thought maybe we could grab some dinner and hang out for a while.”

A smile crossed my lips.

“I’d love too, but a bad storm is on the way.”

“What are you talking about? The sun is shining brighter than it ever does. Hold on a second. I just checked my weather app and there is not a rain drop or storm in sight. I just got home, and I need to change so I’ll have Damien pick you up, swing back by and get me, and then we’ll head to my suite. Sound good?”

“Sounds good. I’ll be ready.”

“Were you talking to someone?” Diana asked as she stepped into my room.

“Yeah. Asher just called.”

“Phew.” She placed her hand on her chest. “I thought maybe you were talking to—you know.”

“No. We’re having dinner. He’s sending his driver over right now to get me.”

“Again?”

“I’m a little surprised myself. But who am I to say no to a tantalizing night?” I grinned as I grabbed my purse.

I slipped on my sandals and headed for the door.

“By the way, a bad storm is coming so make sure you have the candles ready in case you lose power.”

“Really? I haven’t heard anything about a storm,” she spoke.

I cocked my head at her.

“Right. I’ll go get them now. Have fun.”

“I intend to.” A sly smile crossed my lips as I walked out the door and headed to the lobby.

OceanofPDF.com

Everly

As we were on our way to pick up Asher, the clouds rolled in and it became very dark and gray. The winds picked up and suddenly buckets of water fell from the sky.

“What the heck is going on? I didn’t hear anything about a storm,” Damien said as he pulled into the parking garage of the building. Suddenly his phone rang, and he put it on speaker.

“Hello, Asher.”

“Are you here yet? I’m looking out the window and it’s a monsoon out there.”

“I just pulled into the parking garage.”

I heard Asher let out a long sigh.

“Just send Everly up. We won’t be going to the hotel.”

“I’ll send her up now.”

I climbed out of the car and stepped into the elevator with Damien. He pushed the button to the fourth floor and inserted the key to the top floor where Asher’s penthouse was. I glanced over at him in confusion.

“I live on the fourth floor,” he spoke.

“Oh. I didn’t realize you lived in the same building.”

“You’re all set. The elevator will open directly to his penthouse.” He smiled.

“Thanks, Damien. Stay safe.”

“You too, Everly,” he said as he stepped off the elevator.

When the elevator reached Asher’s penthouse, the doors opened, and I stepped out onto the beautiful oak flooring.

“Hi there,” Asher spoke as he stepped from around the corner. “Looks like you were right.”

“Sorry. I wish I wasn’t.”

“Well, we’ll just have to make the best of it here. I don’t really cook so I’m not sure what to do about dinner.”

“Show me to your kitchen and I’ll see what I can whip up for us. That is if you don’t mind me taking over your kitchen.”

“No. Not at all.” He smiled. “Follow me.”

I was in awe of the beauty of his home. Just about every wall was encased with floor to ceiling windows. Oak cabinets, gray marble countertops and state of art appliances filled the kitchen space. The large island made of marble was the focal point of the kitchen as were the gray bar stools that sat around it.

“Can I make you a drink or pour you a glass of wine?” Asher asked.

I opened the refrigerator to see what he had and saw a few bottles of beer sitting on the shelf. Grabbing one, I turned and looked at him.

“I’ll have a beer.” I grinned. “I didn’t take you for a beer guy.”

“I’m really not,” he spoke as he walked over to his bar. “A friend of mine just moved back from Paris and he stayed here a couple of nights.”

“Oh. Why did he move back?”

“He and his girlfriend broke up and he wasn’t happy at his job, so he packed up and moved back to New York. We’ve been good friends since college.”

“Sorry to hear about his relationship, but I’m sure you’re happy he’s back.”

“Yeah. It’s good to have him back.”

I opened the freezer, took out a bag of frozen shrimp and set it on the counter. Opening the refrigerator, I grabbed an onion, green pepper, red pepper and some really sad looking mushrooms.

“Do you have rice?” I asked.

“Let me check. Yep. Right here.” He took out the box of white rice from the cabinet.

“Then we have everything we need for a shrimp stir fry.”

“Sounds good.” The corners of his mouth curved upward.

Taking a knife from the knife block, I handed it to Asher.

“You can start cutting up the veggies while I start the rice. The faster we can get this made, the faster we can eat.” I smiled.

He set the knife down and rolled up the sleeves of his light blue dress shirt.

“Why don’t you bring women here?” I asked as I filled the pot with water.

He glanced over at me. “How did you—forget it.” He let out a sigh. “This is my home and my personal space, and I don’t allow women in it. That’s what my suite is for.”

“Then I’m honored you let me into your palace.”

“Only because you were already here, and we couldn’t leave due to the storm. Don’t get too used to it, because after tonight, you won’t be coming back here,” he said as he continued to cut up the peppers.

My back was turned, and I rolled my eyes. “Be careful, you’re going to ___”

“Fuck!” he shouted as he threw down the knife and grabbed a towel. “If you were going to tell me I was going to cut myself, you couldn’t have done it thirty seconds earlier?” he spoke in anger.

“I’m sorry but it doesn’t work that way. Next time, I won’t say anything. Let me see how bad it is.”

“Shouldn’t you already know that?” He made the irritation in his voice known as he held the towel around his finger.

“Stop being a smartass. Let me see?” I grabbed hold of his hand.

“Ouch! Be careful.”

I slowly unwrapped the towel and examined his finger.

“You need to run it under cold water. It’ll slow down the bleeding,” I said as I led him over to the sink. “I don’t think you’ll need stitches which is a good thing, because I’m not sure we’d make it to the hospital in this storm. Do you have any butterfly bandages?”

“I don’t know. There’s a first aid kit in the bathroom down the hall.”

“I’ll go check. Keep that finger under the water.”

“Easy for you to say. You’re not the one feeling the pain.”

I pulled the first aid kit from the cabinet and dug through it. Luckily, there were a couple butterfly bandages in there.

“I found some,” I said as I took his finger and carefully dried it off.

“Ouch. For fuck sakes, Everly. Be careful.”

“Sorry.” I gave him a sympathetic smile.

After I put the bandage over the wound, I told him to go sit down.

“I’ll finish the stir fry. You go relax. And you might want to take some

Motrin for the pain.”

“Good idea,” he spoke as he walked over to one of the cabinets in the kitchen.

I finished chopping the veggies for the stir fry and tossed everything into the wok that was heating on the stove. Grabbing my beer from the counter, I took a drink and saw Asher sitting at the island staring at me.

“Is something wrong?” I asked him.

“No. Not at all.” He picked up his bourbon. “I googled you last night.”

“You did?” I cocked my head at him. “You didn’t have to. You can just ask me anything you want to know.”

“It was late, and I was bored. You’re originally from Connecticut?”

I held my finger up as a small smile crossed my lips.

“You saw the article about that sixteen-year-old girl.”

“I did. I thought you grew up in Rhode Island.”

“I did.” I turned to finish making the stir fry. “I was six years old when we moved there, but I was born in Connecticut. Like I told you before, my mom passed away when I was five. My grandmother lived in Connecticut also. After they found that girl, the media had a field day with me. They wouldn’t leave me or my grandma alone. They wanted to know about me, what I could see, what I could do. You can imagine how scary that is for a six-year-old. I still didn’t understand it myself. The phone would ring off the hook with random people asking my grandmother to put me on the phone so they can ask me about their personal things. We couldn’t even go to the store without being recognized. School was tough as well because all the kids called me a freak. So, my grandmother knew it was best for us to move away from it all.”

“Why Rhode Island?”

“It’s where Daniel and his family lived. So we packed up and lived with them for a while until my grandmother found our house. Then she rented a space in downtown Providence and opened up her shop.”

“What kind of shop does she own?”

“A Metaphysical shop.”

“What’s that?” He cocked his head.

“You know. Crystals, tarot cards, sages, oils, candles, books.”

“I see. I guess I’m not surprised, considering.”

“I help her with the shop in between running my business. After we moved, my grandmother had a long talk with me about not letting people

know what I can do or see. She said it was very important we kept it to ourselves and within our small family. As I grew older, the more frequent the dreams became. Boy.” I smiled. “I bet I’m the weirdest person you ever met in your entire life.”

“That is true.” A smirk crossed his lips.

I gave him a small smile as I found the plates and served the stir fry.

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*A*sher I couldn't help but stare at her as she prepared the stir fry. As much as I never wanted her here or intended to never bring her here, I found myself liking it. I supposed it wouldn't hurt bringing her here more often since she wouldn't be in New York for too much longer.

"Tell me about you, Mr. Remington," she spoke as we took our plates to the table.

"I'm sure you already know everything there is to know about me." I smirked.

"Actually, I don't."

"I find that hard to believe, Everly." I arched my brow at her.

"Your father was always your protector. The two of you were very close, weren't you?"

"He was, and yes we were. Sometimes I felt he protected me too much."

We were in the middle of eating and having our conversation when suddenly, the penthouse went dark as well as the buildings around the area.

"You have got to be kidding me."

"Do you have any candles?" Everly asked.

"I might have a couple upstairs in the closet. My former housekeeper liked to burn them as she was cleaning." I got up from my chair and extended my hand to her. "I can think of some really fun activities to do when the power goes out."

She placed her hand in mine and I led her up the stairs and to my bedroom.



“*I* like your virgin bed. It’s so comfy.” I could see her smile by the light of the candle flickering.

“It’s not a virgin bed anymore.” I sighed.

“We can pretend we didn’t do anything,” she said as she placed her hand on my chest.

“I don’t think that’s possible.” I smiled as I pushed a strand of her hair away from her face. “Can I ask you something?”

“Of course.”

“Have you seen my father recently?” I reluctantly asked.

“No. I’m sorry. I’m sure he moved on once you didn’t go through with the merger.”

“What do you mean?”

“People usually stick around because they either have unfinished business or messages for their loved ones before they can move on. Your father needed to make sure you were safe from your uncle before he could rest.”

“You know I’m still a little bit skeptical.”

“I don’t believe that. I think you’re just afraid to believe.” Her finger lightly stroked my chest as she let out a yawn.

“You’re tired and it’s late. We should get some sleep.”

“I can sleep in one your guestrooms. Just point the way and I’ll be on my way.”

I stared at her as my finger ran across her bare shoulder.

“If you do that then how am I supposed to fuck you in the middle of the night if I want to?”

The corners of her mouth curved upward. “Mhm. I think I’ll stay then.”

I leaned in and brushed my lips against hers before rolling over and away from her.

“Good night, Everly.”

“Good night, Asher.”



verly

As I closed my eyes, I prayed the dreams stayed dormant. At least for

tonight while I slept next to him. Unfortunately, my prayers weren't answered as I found myself in the hallway of a hotel where that same song played again. Following the sound of the music, I looked at each room number as I walked down the hallway until I discovered the door of room 502 was slightly opened. Stepping inside the room, I saw the backside of a man. Buzz cut, blond, gray dress shirt and black dress pants. He was strangling the life out of a woman. Red hair, tall, red dress, tattoo on her shoulder. She fought like hell until her body went limp. Looking at the clock on the nightstand, it read: 8:15 pm.

I sat up as I held my throat and gasped for air. Asher quickly sat up and grabbed my arm.

"What's going on? Are you okay?"

I sat there for a moment as my breathing rate returned to normal.

"I have to call Daniel."

"Everly, it's two a.m."

Climbing out of bed, I went downstairs, and all the lights had come back on. Grabbing my phone from the island, I dialed Daniel.

"This better be important, Everly," he sleepily answered.

"Did you find another woman in a hotel room tonight around eight fifteen?"

"No. Why?"

"Okay. I'm sorry for waking you. I'm coming down to the station in the morning. I'll see you then."

"Alright."

"What the hell is going on?" Asher asked as he stood behind me.

"There's going to be another murder. Another woman in a hotel room. But he did it different this time. Instead of strangling her on the bed, he did it while standing behind her. When I looked at the clock it was eight fifteen p.m."

"Jesus, Everly. Please tell me it's not going to happen at The Remington again."

"No. It's a different hotel. The only thing I know is it's room 502."

"Come back to bed," he spoke as he grabbed my hand.

We both climbed in bed and he held out his arm.

"What?" I looked at him.

"What do you mean 'what?' Come over here." He gestured.

His arm securely wrapped around me as I snuggled into him and laid my

head on his chest. I was confused and a little shocked, because—well, he was Asher Remington, and he didn't do things like this. After a dream like that, I always felt rattled for a while. But now, at this moment, I felt calm and safe in his arms.

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Everly

I awoke when I heard his alarm go off at six a.m. Wrapping my arm around him, I told him good morning. He reached over and shut the alarm off, climbed out of bed and went into the bathroom, shutting the door behind him. It was awkward to say the least. Not a word came from him. He probably regretted last night and thought it was best if he didn't say anything. I heard the shower turn on, so I climbed out of the comfy bed, dressed myself in last night's clothes and left. I needed to get home anyway. With any luck, Daniel would still be there.

Stepping inside the apartment, I saw Diana in the kitchen.

"Good morning." Her brows furrowed at me. "I'm surprised you're back this early."

"Asher was in the shower, so I left. Is Daniel still here?" I asked as I took a seat at the island.

"He just left five minutes ago. Hey, are you okay?" she asked as she handed me a cup of coffee.

"Yeah. I'm fine." I gave her a small smile.

"Okay. I need to finish getting ready for work," she said as she grabbed her coffee and went to her bedroom.

It bothered me that Asher didn't say a word to me this morning. Even if he did regret last night, a simple good morning would have been enough. It hurt and I was pissed off at myself for letting it. After I showered and got dressed, I headed to the precinct where I found Daniel and his partner sitting at their desks.

"There you are," Daniel spoke as he got up from his seat. "What's going

on?”

I looked at James and then back at Daniel.

“It’s okay. I may have told him a thing or two about you.”

I gave James a small smile while the unsure look on his face told me he thought either Daniel was crazy, or I was.

“I had a dream last night. I was in a hotel. Room 502. The time was eight fifteen p.m. So, I’m assuming it’s going to happen tonight.”

“Do you know which hotel?” Daniel asked.

“No.”

“Did you perhaps see the guy?” James asked.

“Only the back of him. He was about six feet tall, blond hair, buzz cut.”

“And the woman?” Daniel asked.

“Five foot eight with her heels on, long red hair and she had a tattoo on her shoulder. It was of a half-moon with stars around it. It was different this time, Daniel. He didn’t drug her first. He came up from behind her and strangled her, while she was fully conscious. Maybe she refused the wine. I don’t know.”

“Thanks for coming down and telling us.”

“I’m sorry I couldn’t give you more information.”

“It’s okay.” Daniel placed his hand on my shoulder. “If you think of anything else, call me.”



*A*sher

When I got out of the shower, she was gone. Probably because of the way I got out of bed without saying a word to her. I couldn’t. I didn’t want the good mornings and the smiles. I was an asshole. I knew it. But I had my reasons and somehow, I knew Everly knew what those reasons were.

I was in the middle of work when there was knock on my office door.

“Come in.”

When the door opened, I looked up and saw Noah standing there.

“Hey.” I smiled. “I was going to call you later and see if you wanted to grab some dinner tonight.”

“Hey, bro. I was just down the street at a job interview and thought I’d

stop by and see what you were up to.”

“I’m busy right now. How about we meet at Bill’s Burger and Bar at six-thirty? It’s always been our favorite spot.”

“Sounds excellent. I’ll meet you there, and I’ll let you get back to work.” He smiled as he left my office.

After one of my many meetings of the day, I decided to step out of the office and head to Bonobos on Fifth Avenue to get fitted for a couple new suits. I didn’t have a lot of time since I had another meeting scheduled in an hour. But it was just enough to get some fresh air and clear my head for my next meeting. When I was finished and approached my office building, I saw Everly step outside the doors.

“Everly?”

“Oh, hey.” She smiled.

“What are you doing here?”

“Just walking Diana back. We had a quick lunch.”

“I see.”

“I better get going.” The smile never left her lips. “I have some errands to run.”

She started to walk away so I reached out and lightly grabbed hold of her arm.

“Wait,” I said as she turned and looked at me. “About this morning—”

“No big deal, Asher. Just forget about it. I really need to get going.”

“Yeah. Sure. I’ll call you.”

“Yeah.” She gave me a nod and turned around.

Placing my hands in my pants pockets, I watched her walk away. She said it was no big deal, but the look in her eyes told me something different.



“Sorry I’m late,” I spoke to Noah as I sat down across from him.

“No worries, bro. I just got here myself. Traffic is terrible.”

“It’s always terrible.” I chuckled.

We ordered our drinks and then placed our dinner order for a couple of burgers and some fries.

“How is the job hunting going?” I asked.

“It’s not. The company I interviewed with today already called and

offered the job to someone else.”

“I told you, you can come work for me.”

“Thanks, Asher. I appreciate it, but—”

“I know. I know.” I put my hand up.

“I don’t know what I’m going to do. I had to wire a bunch of cash to Eloise today for my half of the bills we shared. I’m running out of funds quickly without having a job.”

“What about your savings?”

“Right.” He rolled his eyes. “Eloise was high maintenance, and we didn’t exactly live the subtle life in Paris. That’s one of the reasons why I broke up with her. She was costing me too much money and it became a constant fight. I’m in some serious debt.”

“Women can do that.” I sighed as I bit into my burger. “How much do you need?”

“Nah, man. You’re already letting me stay in your hotel for free. I couldn’t—”

“Yes, you can. You’d do the same for me, and you know it.”

“True.” He smiled.

“Just let me help you until you find a job. Can you wait a couple of days? I’m in meetings all day tomorrow.”

“Of course. God, Asher. You are one hell of a friend. Thanks, bro.”

“You’re welcome.”

“So, what’s new on the lady front? You’re not going to sit there and tell me you haven’t been having sex with some hot chicks.”

I sighed as I threw back my bourbon.

“Actually, there is someone I met. We both agreed to keep it strictly casual.”

“Casual is good. You’re thirty-two years old, and way too young to settle down. Do tell me about this casual woman.” A sly smile crossed Noah’s face.

“Her name is Everly King, and she’s a life coach.”

“A life coach. Okay. What else? How old is she? Younger, older?”

“She’s twenty-eight, and she’s—” I paused. Even though he was my best friend, it was best to keep my mouth shut about her gift.

“She’s?” He cocked his head.

“She’s beautiful.” I smiled.

“No duh. You wouldn’t date anyone less than beautiful. Do you have a picture of her?”

I pulled out my phone, brought up her website and showed him her photo.
“Damn, Asher. She’s hot as fuck. Way to go!” A wide grin crossed his face.

“It’s a temporary thing. She’s only in New York for a couple of months and then she’s heading back to Rhode Island.”

“Better yet. I’d like to meet Miss Everly King before she leaves. Let’s all do dinner one night.”

“Sure.” I gave him an unsure smile.

When I arrived home after my dinner with Noah, I went upstairs to my room, turned on the TV and started to get undressed. The news was on and my attention was quickly caught when I walked by the TV and saw they had captured the man who murdered those call girls. I sat on the edge of the bed and watched as a photo of him appeared on the screen while the newscaster reported the news of his arrest.

Everly “Any chance you’d want to help us out at the police station?” Daniel asked.

“You know I keep a low profile. But if something comes to me. I will always let you know.”

“I know, Everly.” He gave me a hug. “Thanks for your help in catching that guy. You saved that woman’s life.”

“I’m happy she’s okay.”

Daniel kissed Diana goodbye and left for the station. I grabbed my coffee cup from the table and took a seat next to Diana at the island.

“What are your plans for today?” she asked.

“I’m meeting up with a client for lunch and then I have to get back for a zoom call with another client. Don’t you have your first doctor’s appointment today?”

“Yeah.” She grinned. It’s at three o’clock. Daniel is going to meet me there.”

“I’m so excited for you two.” I placed my head on her shoulder.

“Have you considered moving to New York?” she asked.

“I can’t. I need to stay with Grandma and help her with the shop and things.”

“I know.” I detected a sadness in her voice. “It would just be great to have you here permanently. I know Daniel feels the same way.”

“Don’t worry. I’ll be here a lot. Especially when the baby comes.” I smiled.

Diana left for work and I did some computer work before I had to leave

for my lunch meeting with a client. I couldn't stop thinking about Asher and our conversation yesterday outside his office building. If he didn't want to see me anymore, he just needed to tell me. I was used to this. It happened all the time. But somehow, I felt this time, it would hurt a lot more than it ever did before. As much as I tried not to let feelings get in the way, it was too late. I liked him a lot and I was possibly falling for him.

Getting out of my own head, I called for a cab and met my client for lunch at the Burger Bar in Greenwich Village. As we were sitting at the table eating lunch and having a conversation, I noticed a man sitting at the bar kept staring at me. As much as I tried not to notice, he made it difficult. My client had to cut our lunch short by fifteen minutes because her son's school called, and she needed to go pick him up. I hugged her goodbye and stayed back to finish my salad. Just as the waiter re-filled my glass of water and walked away, the man from the bar approached my table.

"Excuse me. I apologize for staring at you, but I wasn't sure. Are you Everly King?"

"Yes." I cocked my head at him, not knowing who the hell this guy was.

A smile crossed his face as he sat down across from me.

"My name is Noah, and we have a mutual friend in common: Asher Remington."

"Oh. You must be the best friend who just moved back from Paris." I smiled.

"Yes. I'm the one." He chuckled as he extended his hand.

Placing my hand in his, I froze as images and scenes infiltrated my mind."

"Are you okay?" he asked.

Taking in a deep breath, I let go of his hand.

"I'm fine. It's nice to meet you."

"And you as well. I just had dinner last night with Asher and he told me about you."

"Really? What did he say? All good I hope." I nervously smiled.

"Of course. He showed me your picture on your business website. So when I saw you walk in, I thought it was you, but I wasn't one hundred percent sure. My apologies for staring the way I did."

"That's okay." I could feel the heat engulf my body. Looking at my watch, I took my wallet from my purse. "I'm so sorry to have to cut this short, but I have another client I need to meet," I said as I threw some cash on

top of the bill and stood up.

“No problem. I understand. Hopefully, we’ll have another opportunity to talk. I told Asher last night that the three of us should have dinner together.”

“That sounds great. Looking forward to it. It was nice to meet you, Noah.” I lied as I walked out of the restaurant.

The moment I stepped out of the restaurant, I let out a deep breath and placed my hand on my chest as I walked down the street at a fast pace and turned the corner. I hailed a cab, went home and poured myself a glass of wine. Picking up my phone, I dialed Asher’s number. After a few rings, it went to voicemail.

“Asher, it’s Everly. I need to see you tonight. There’s something I have to tell you and it’s very important. Call me back as soon as you get this.”

After my Zoom call ended, I picked up my phone and still no call or text message from Asher. Maybe he was in a meeting. He wouldn’t purposely ignore me. Or would he? Suddenly, my phone rang, and it was him.

“Hello?”

“Everly, what’s going on? What do you have to tell me?”

“Not over the phone, Asher. I’ll meet you at your penthouse tonight. And don’t worry, I’m not staying. But it is important that we talk.”

“Is seven-thirty okay?”

“Yeah. I’ll see you then.”

“I’ll let the doorman know you’re coming, and he’ll let you up.”

Asher I didn't like the sound of her voice. There was an urgency in her tone. A pleading to see me. I stopped on the way home and picked up a pizza and salad. I wasn't sure if she'd eaten, but I was hungry, and pizza sounded good. As I was walking down the stairs after changing out of my suit, I heard the elevator ding.

"Hi," I spoke as I walked over and kissed her cheek.

"Hi." She smiled.

"I don't know if you already ate, but I got us a pizza and a salad."

"That sounds great."

"Then go sit down and I'll get the plates." I gave her a smile.

She looked beautiful and seeing her tonight took a lot of the stress of the day away. But I was worried about what she had to talk to me about. I set the pizza and salad on the table and took the seat across from her.

"I'm sorry. Can I get you a glass of wine?" I asked.

"It's okay," she said as she got up, went over to the refrigerator and pulled out a bottle of beer. "I've had enough wine today."

I arched my brow at her as a smirk crossed my lips.

"I didn't realize you were a day drinker."

"I'm usually not."

"What did you want to talk to me about?"

She sat there for a moment moving her fork around in her salad.

"Everly? What's wrong?"

"I met your friend, Noah, today."

"Really?" I asked with surprise. "Where at?"

“The Burger Bar in Greenwich Village. I was meeting with a client and he was there. He kept staring at me.”

“He probably recognized you. I just showed him your picture last night.”

“Yeah. That’s what he said when my client left, and he walked over to my table and sat down. How well do you know him?”

“I know him very well. We’ve been good friends since Harvard. We used to do everything together. Why? Why are you asking me this?” I narrowed my eye at her.

“Don’t give him the money, Asher.”

“How do—Oh that’s right, you fucking know everything.” I slammed my hand on the table and rose from my seat. “You don’t get to do this to me again.” I pointed my finger at her. I went over to the island and gripped the edge of the marble countertop. “I think you should leave, Everly, and I think it’s best if we don’t see each other anymore. But I’m sure you already knew I was going to say that.”

“No. Actually I didn’t.” She got up from the table and threw her napkin on her plate. “Your friend is a murderer, Asher. He murdered his girlfriend, and he’s using you to leave the country. Have a good night.” She grabbed her purse and headed towards the elevator.

A sickness formed inside me as I ran toward her, grabbed her arm and spun her around so her face was mere inches from mine.

“What the hell are you talking about?” I spoke through gritted teeth.

“Let go of me.” She yanked herself out of my grip. “I’m not talking to you when you’re like this. Just don’t give him the damn money.”

“I’m sorry,” I spoke in a calmer voice as I rubbed the back of my neck. “I’m sorry, Everly. Please, let’s go into the living room. I want you to tell me what you know.”

She stood there as she narrowed her eye at me for a moment. After letting out a sigh, she set her purse down and took a seat on the sofa in the living room. Walking over to my bar, I poured myself a double bourbon.

“You know what? I need some fresh air. Let’s go out on the terrace and sit down,” I said.

She got up from the couch, grabbed her beer from the table and we both took a seat outside. The sky was dark, and the moon was just starting to appear.

“I’m sorry, Asher. Do you think I like knowing what I do? I hate it.”

“Just tell me everything.” I brought my glass up to my lips.

“I saw it when I shook his hand at lunch.”

“You saw him kill her? You actually saw him do it?”

“Yes. They had gotten into a fight and were screaming at each other. She went to hit him, and he grabbed her wrists and held them tight. She was telling him that he was hurting her, and he said really awful things. Then he calmed down and said he was sorry. While she was in the bathtub, he walked in and handed her a glass of wine. He asked if she needed help washing her hair and that he’d be happy to do it. He held her down under the water until she stopped breathing.”

I sat there in silence for I had no words for what she had just told me.

“He took her body, wrapped her in plastic, drove out to the countryside and buried her. He packed up and left Paris the next day before anyone knew she was missing. You said he’s staying at one of your hotels, right?”

“Yeah. He is.”

“Is the room under your name?”

“Yes. Why?”

“He doesn’t want to leave a trail. He didn’t fly to New York.”

“What do you mean?”

“He flew to Georgia, rented a car and drove here. So as far as anyone is concerned, he’s in Georgia.”

“He had to give the rental car place a driver’s license to rent the car.”

“He had a fake I.D. and he paid cash. He can’t get an apartment here or a job because the police in Paris will track him down. He knows exactly what he’s doing and he’s using the money you’re giving him to disappear and create a new identity for himself. You’re never going to see him again, Asher. I’m sorry.”

“I’ll be right back,” I said as I got up, went inside and poured myself another drink.

I was riddled with sickness over this and I just couldn’t believe Noah would do that. I didn’t even think he was capable of murdering someone. Going back out to the terrace, I sat down next to Everly and took a few strands of her hair between my fingers. As much as I hated what she told me, I knew she didn’t have a choice. She was protecting me, again.

“I know you’re having a difficult time dealing with me and my issues,” she spoke.

“Is that something you see?” I asked.

“No. It’s something I sense, Asher.”

“It’s a bit unnerving at times. I won’t lie. I honestly don’t know how you handle it. You told me your mom numbed herself to it with alcohol and drugs. I can see why, and I do worry about you, Everly.”

She lightly placed her hand on my thigh as her lips gave way to a fragile smile.

“Don’t worry about me. I’m at peace with it. Sure, at times it can be exhausting and overwhelming, but I’ve learned how to manage it.”

“I’m sorry for the way I behaved earlier.” I softly stroked her cheek.

“I’m not going to tell you it’s okay, because you really need to get a handle on that.”

I couldn’t help but smile when she said that.

“I’ll try. Now what are we going to do about Noah? I can’t let him get away with what he did.”

“I already called the authorities in Paris. Eloise was reported missing and I told them what I know and where to find the body. They said they’ll be in touch as soon as possible.”

“And how are they going to prove he had anything to do with it?” I asked.

“His DNA is under her fingernails. While he was drowning her, she grabbed his arm and scratched him.”

“I still can’t believe he would do something like that.” I shook my head in disgust. “We’re meeting tomorrow. I’m supposed to be handing him a check. What do I do?”

“He told me today that he suggested the three of us have dinner together. Set that up for tomorrow night. I’ll get him to confess and Daniel will be there to arrest him.”

“He’s my friend, Everly.” I looked away from her.

“He’s a murderer, Asher. He purposely killed his girlfriend, buried her body and fled the country.”

I finished off my bourbon and we both got up and went back inside. After setting my glass down on the island, I turned to Everly who grabbed the salad and the pizza from the table.

“Stay with me tonight.”

“I’m not sure—”

“I want you to. If I didn’t, I wouldn’t be asking.” I took the pizza box and salad from her and set them down.

“I guess I can.” The corners of her mouth curved upward.

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Everly

I was in the middle of picking up a few things at Target when my phone dinged. Pulling it from my purse, I saw I had a text message from Asher.

“I spoke to Daniel and we’re all set for tonight. I’ll pick you up at six-thirty.”

“I’ll be ready.”

Last night was incredible. Not the part of having to tell Asher about his friend, but afterwards when he took me up to his bedroom. I stayed the night wrapped in his arms and slept like a baby. When the alarm went off, I didn’t want to get up. I felt safe and secure right where I was. Tonight was going to be hard on him, and I wouldn’t blame him if he wanted to be alone.

“Are you okay?” I asked as we sat in the back of his Rolls Royce.

“Not really.” He stared out the window.

I reached over and placed my hand on his. He glanced at me with a small smile and turned his hand over, interlacing our fingers together. He was hurting inside. I could feel it, and there was nothing I could do to take his pain away. He lost his father, his uncle betrayed him and now his best friend was a murderer. That was too much for anyone to handle.

Damien pulled up to Eleven Madison Park and Asher opened the door and helped me out.

“Good evening, Mr. Remington. Your private room is ready. Follow me,” an older woman spoke.

Asher had rented the private dining room that was located in the back of the restaurant. Within moments, Noah had arrived.

“The private dining room?” he asked as he shook Asher’s hand.

“I figured we could use the privacy. You remember, Everly?”

“I do. It’s a pleasure to see you again.” He smiled as he took my hand and brought it up to his lips.

“You as well.” I gave him a slight nod of my head.

We sat at the round table that was dressed in a white tablecloth and a beautiful centerpiece of fresh cut flowers with a large candle that sat in the middle. After our champagne was poured, we talked for a while. I could tell Asher was already starting to sweat by the small beads that formed on his forehead.

“So, Everly, you must be one special lady to keep the attention of this guy.” Noah chuckled.

“She certainly is special,” Asher spoke.

“Noah, who is Eloise?” I asked.

I couldn’t help but notice how quickly the color from his face drained.

“She’s my ex-girlfriend. We broke up. That’s why I moved back here from Paris. I know Asher must have told you that.”

“No. He didn’t. She’s here with us.”

What?” He quickly turned and looked around the room. The panic that overtook him was quite amusing.

“Didn’t I mention that Everly sees dead people?” Asher asked.

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“Eloise is telling me that you drowned her while she was in the bathtub. She’s crying Noah. She wants to know why you killed her,” I said.

“Why, Noah? Why did you do it?” He pleaded for an answer.

“I didn’t do anything, Asher. This is ridiculous. And you’re fucking crazy, lady.” Noah looked at his watch. “You know what, I really need to get going,” he spoke in a panicked voice as beads of sweat poured down his face. “Just give me the money and I’ll go.” He stood from his chair.

“Sit down!” Asher shouted.

“Asher, come on. We’ve been friends for years. You know me better than that. Are you really going to listen to this crazy broad? She’s playing you, bro.”

“Nah. She’s not playing me. She told me what you did. She told me how you and Eloise got into a fight that night and when she was in the bathtub, you drowned her.” Asher grabbed Noah’s arm and pushed up his sleeve, seeing the large scratch that was still visible. “Then you wrapped her body

up, threw her in the car and drove her out to the countryside where you buried her. My God, Noah. Who the hell are you?"

"You don't understand!" He pointed his shaky finger at him. "I'd had enough of her. Her constant badgering and nagging. Nothing was ever good enough for her. No matter how hard I tried, that bitch was never satisfied."

"Then you do what any other man would have done. You leave!" Asher shouted. "You should have left."

"I snapped. Please, Asher. I'm begging you. Just give me the money and you'll never see me again. I promise. Nobody has to know."

Asher pulled a large envelope from under the table that looked like it was stuffed with money and handed it to him.

"I never want to see you again," he spoke.

Noah grabbed the envelope from him and when he went to open the door to leave the private room, Daniel and three other police officers were waiting for him with their guns drawn.

"You set me up?" Noah turned and looked at Asher.

"No. Eloise did when she showed me what you had done to her," I spoke.

"Get him out of here," Asher said to Daniel.

"Are you okay?" I asked as I placed my hand on his back.

"I just handed my best friend over to the cops, and he'll probably spend the rest of his life in jail. So to answer your question, no, I'm not okay at the moment."

He was angry and I couldn't blame him. All I wanted to do was hold him in my arms and give him the comfort he needed. But with the mood he was in, I didn't dare suggest it.

TWO WEEKS LATER

Asher I hadn't seen or talked to Everly since the night Noah was arrested. I needed some time to myself. Now that my father was gone, my uncle was in prison, and my best friend was extradited back to Paris to face his crime, I felt as if my life was unraveling and I needed an escape. A place to go to for a while where I could think and forget about everything that had happened.

As I was lying in bed, I picked up my phone and looked at the text messages Everly had sent me two weeks ago. Messages I never replied to.

"Hey. I'm going to grab dinner and was wondering if you'd like to join me?"

"Are you okay? You know you can always talk to me."

"Okay. Well, I won't bother you anymore, Asher. Take care of yourself."

She didn't deserve to be ignored, and she didn't deserve to be with someone like me. The last night we shared my bed together, was the night before Noah got arrested. I never once stopped thinking about that night and the way I watched her while she slept in my arms. I hadn't just fallen for her beauty, I'd fallen for her soul. The fear inside kept me locked up, grounded, and it held onto me so tight, it was hard to breathe at times. I'd once given my heart and soul to someone very special a long time ago and she betrayed me. She ripped out my heart and tore it to shreds. That night, I vowed never to let another woman do that to me again. My love for her made me weak, and it clouded my judgement and my mind. Never again. But the fear inside me when I was with Everly kept playing with me. As if it was trying to give me a way out. To open the door I'd sealed shut for so many years. It tried to

reason with me.

“What if you let it all go? What if you walked through that door and found it wasn’t so bad after all? What if you trusted her? What if you decided to give it a chance? What if you don’t do anything at all and it’s too late?”

I knew it was late, but I needed to hear her voice. Her phone rang and rang until it went to voicemail.

“Hello, Everly. It’s me. I’m sorry I haven’t been in touch. Things were a little crazy and I just—any way, give me a call. I don’t care what time it is. I promise to pick up.”

I laid there for a while with my phone in my hand hoping she’d call back.



A Few Days Later

*S*till hadn’t heard from Everly and after my second voice message, I decided that would be the last one. It was obvious she was angry and didn’t want to talk to me. Who could blame her? It was a busy day at work because it was my last day for about a week. I had rented a cabin at Lake George and was leaving first thing in the morning.

“Excuse me, Mr. Remington?” Diana poked her head in my office.

“Hi, Diana. Come on in.”

“Richard needs these signed right away.” She handed me a couple of folders.

“Have a seat and I’ll sign them now.”

She took the seat across from my desk as I opened the first folder and looked over the paperwork.

“I called Everly a couple times and left a couple voice messages but she hasn’t returned my calls,” I said as I signed the document.

“She’s gone. She went back home to Rhode Island.”

“What?” I furrowed my brows at her.

“Her grandmother took ill and she needed to go home.”

“I’m sorry to hear that. I had no idea. When did she leave?”

“A couple weeks ago. Not too long after—” She looked down.

“I see.”

“She said she sent you a few text messages and you ignored them. I’m

sorry, Mr. Remington, but you just can't expect her to be waiting for you whenever you feel like talking. Everly knows when it's time to move on. She's been doing it her whole life."

"You're right, Diana. I owe her an apology." I signed the last document and handed her the folders. "Tell Richard I said thanks."

"I will." She gave me a nod as she started to walk out of my office.

"By the way, Diana?"

"Yes, Mr. Remington?"

"From now on just call me Asher."

"Okay." Her lips formed a small smile as she walked out of my office.

I pushed the intercom button on my desk phone.

"Yes, Mr. Remington?" Isabelle spoke.

"I need you to book me a private jet for tomorrow morning to Providence, Rhode Island, and cancel the reservation for my cabin at Lake George. But pay the entire rental fee for the inconvenience with the card they have on file."

"Of course. I'll get right on that."

"Thank you, Isabelle."

I leaned back in my chair and sighed. I couldn't believe she left New York and didn't tell me.

"Excuse me, Mr. Remington?" Isabelle stuck her head through the door.

"What is it, Isabelle?"

"I assume you're going to need a hotel in Providence?"

"Yes. Book me a suite somewhere nice and in the downtown area."

"I'll get right on it."

"And one more thing. I need the address of a metaphysical shop in the downtown Providence area."

"A metaphysical shop, sir?" Her brows furrowed at me.

"Yes, Isabelle. Do you know what that is?"

"Yes. I didn't think you did?"

"Well, I do. So get me the address."

As I thought about what I'd say to her when I saw her, it hit me that I'd be facing another problem. She'd most likely know I was coming, and she'd probably do everything she could not to see me. It was a chance I was willing to take. She was going to talk to me one way or the other.

Everly “Here, Grandma. Take a sip of water.” I held the cup with straw in it up to her.

“Thank you, sweetheart. You didn’t have to stop here on your way to the shop.”

“Yes, I did.” I placed my hand on hers. “If it were me, you’d do the same.”

“True.” She managed a small smile. “You better get going if you plan on opening the shop on time. We don’t want to keep our customers waiting.”

“Alright. I’ll go.” I leaned over and kissed her forehead. “I’ll be back later. Make sure you get plenty of rest. Daniel and Diana are coming this weekend.”

“I know. I’ll see you later.” She slowly closed her eyes.

I left the hospital and climbed into my white Jeep Cherokee. Gripping the steering wheel, I let a few tears fall down my face. She didn’t have much time left and we both knew it. The cancer was found too late and it progressed very quickly.

I parked the car, unlocked the door and turned the sign to open that hung in the window. Since I came home, I’d been really busy between my grandmother being in the hospital and running the shop. I’d barely had time to do or think about anything else.

It was noon when Samantha walked into the shop carrying a cup holder with two smoothies sitting inside.

“Hey.” She smiled as she set the cup holder down on the back counter. “I brought us smoothies.”

“You’re the best, Sam. Thank you.”

Samantha Reed was an eighteen-year-old girl who had been working for us part-time since she was sixteen years old. She was a sweet girl, an excellent student and the best worker for someone her age. She was dependable, reliable and went above and beyond her duties. She knew about me and my grandmother but kept it to herself.

“I’m going to go ahead and price these crystals. There’s one last box that needs to be unpacked and put out,” I said to her.

“On it.” She grinned.

I had my back turned as I was pricing the crystals and setting them out on display when I heard the bell above the door ring. I knew Sam would take care of the customer, so I didn’t bother turning around.

“Hello, Everly.” I heard Asher’s voice from behind.

Instantly, a nervousness formed inside me.

“What are you doing here, Asher?” I asked without turning around.

“How is your grandmother doing?”

“Not good.”

I felt his hand lightly grab hold of my arm and I started to tremble. Turning around, I looked into the eyes that were staring back at me.

“Why are you here?” I asked.

“I came to see you.” He let go of me. “I left you a couple voice messages.”

“And I left you several text messages,” I huffed as I walked away and headed towards the counter.

“I know and I’m sorry. I should have answered you. I just—”

“I know. You were going through some shit.” My voice was irritated as I stepped behind the counter.

I could see Sam staring at us from across the store.

“Is there any way you can break for lunch?” he asked.

“No, I—”

“Yes. She can.” Sam smiled as she walked over to us. “I’ve got the store covered.” She stepped behind the counter, bent down and grabbed my purse from underneath. “Go on. Go have a nice lunch.” She grinned.

“Fine.” I let out a sigh.

We walked out of the shop and started walking down the street.

“There’s this great Mexican restaurant a block down,” I said.

“Mexican sounds good,” he said as he tucked his hands in his pants

pockets.

He looked so handsome in his khaki pants and white cotton, short sleeve button down shirt. The aviators he wore to shield his eyes from the sun made him sexier than he already was. I wasn't the only one who noticed either. Women were staring at him as they walked past.

"Did you know I was coming?" he asked.

"Actually, I didn't."

"I'm surprised." He smirked as he glanced over at me.

"Me too."

We approached the Mexican restaurant and were seated outside on the patio at a small table for two. It was a beautiful warm day without a cloud in the sky.

"Hey, Everly." Hayden, our waiter smiled as he approached the table.

"Hi, Hayden."

"I know you want the watermelon margarita, salted rim. What can I get for you, sir?"

"I'll have the same."

"Great. I'll be right back."

"He knows your drink order well," Asher spoke with an arch in his brow.

"I come here all the time. Plus, we went to high school together. I've known him for years. His parents actually own the place."

"Ah. I see."

"Why did you come here, Asher?"

"I already told you. To see you."

"Why? I don't hear from you since that night, you ignore my text messages, and then you just randomly show up in my hometown?"

"I wanted to apologize to you, and since you wouldn't return my phone calls, this was the only option I had. I had no idea you left New York."

"My grandmother doesn't have much time left. She was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer a month ago and didn't tell anyone. It progressed very quickly and now she's in the hospital. They're keeping her as comfortable as possible. But it's only a matter of time. The cancer spread to her liver and to her stomach."

"I'm sorry, Everly. I have to ask. How did you not know? With your—"

"I told you it doesn't work with people I'm very close to. I can only see what it lets me."

"I'm sorry." He reached across the table and placed his hand on mine.

Hayden walked over and set our drinks down in front of us and proceeded to take our order.

“I’m surprised you took time off work,” I said as I sipped my drink.

“I needed to. Actually, I had rented a cabin at Lake George for a week. Then I asked Diana about you and she told me how you left New York because your grandmother was ill. I changed my plans at the last minute to come here.”

“Why?”

“Because I owe you an apology, and believe me, I rarely give out apologies.”

“I know.” The corners of my mouth curved up into a light smile.

“You do, do you?” He smirked.

“Yeah. I do.” I looked down in embarrassment.

We finished lunch and started walking back to the shop. Asher held his arm out to me and I happily wrapped my hand around it.

“This is nice. I’ve never been to Rhode Island before.”

“Where are you staying?” I asked.

“Hotel Providence.”

“Hmm. I see. I hate to tell you this, but that hotel is haunted. Maybe it’s best you stay at my house.”

“Haunted? Are you playing with me?” he asked.

“No. I’m serious.” I grinned.

“Okay. I’ll take your word for it.”

We reached the shop, and I pulled my keys out of my purse and handed them to him.

“What are these for?”

“See that White Jeep Cherokee parked over there?”

“Yeah?”

“That’s my car. Take it to the hotel, grab your bag and pick me up in a couple hours. Sam will close the shop for me.”

He reached up and swept the back of his hand along my cheek.

“I’ll see you in a couple hours.”

Asher Her car smelled like her. A combination of the light fragrance of roses with just a hint of sandalwood. A sensual smell. Light and not overpowering. It was the first thing I noticed about her besides her beauty that day we met in the elevator. A scent that still lingered around my penthouse.

A couple hours had passed, so I parked the car and went into the shop. Everly had just finished helping a customer when she saw me.

“You didn’t hurt my baby in any way, did you?”

“If you’re referring to your car, no.” I smiled.

She grabbed her purse, said goodbye to Samantha, and we walked out of the shop.

“Would you like to meet my grandma?” she asked. “I told her I’d come by tonight.”

“I’d love to meet her.”

I handed Everly the keys and she drove to the hospital. As we entered through the doors, I noticed she kept her head down as we walked to the elevator.

“Are you okay?” I asked.

“I’m fine. As long as I keep my head down and don’t make eye contact, they won’t bother me.”

“Who won’t bother you?” I furrowed my brows.

“The spirits. The people who have passed but don’t know they’ve passed.”

“Are you kidding me?” I asked as I pushed the button to the elevator.

“No. If I make eye contact, they know I can see them.”

I sighed as we stepped into the elevator. I shouldn't have been surprised, but I was, and I sort of wished she didn't tell me. We approached room 3309 and when we stepped inside, the frail woman lying in the bed slowly opened her eyes.

“Hi Grandma,” Everly said as she walked over to her and kissed her forehead. “Grandma I'd like you to—”

“I know who Mr. Remington is, dear. Don't be shy, young man.” She slowly lifted her arm.

Walking over to her, I took hold of her hand.

“It's nice to meet you, Tillie.”

“Is there anything I can get you, Grandma?” Everly asked her.

“No. I'm fine.”

We stayed for a while and talked until Tillie could no longer stay awake.

“I'll see you tomorrow, Grandma,” Everly said as she gave her a kiss.

“It was nice to meet you, Tillie.” I placed my hand on hers.

“You as well.” She closed her eyes.



“*H*ere we are,” Everly said as we pulled into the driveway. Climbing out of the car, I stood back and stared at the turn of the century style colonial home with the dark blue vinyl siding and white porch and trim.

“Wow, Everly.”

“Wow, what?” She smiled as we stood on the lawn.

“This house.”

“You like it?”

“I do. I can't wait to see the inside.”

“Follow me, Mr. Remington.” She grinned as we walked up the steps to the porch.

When she opened the door and we stepped inside, I was in awe of the winding staircase that led upstairs.

“We can start the tour upstairs and you can set your bag in my room.”

“This house is every realtor's dream,” I spoke as we toured the upstairs. “It had to be built in the early 1900's.”

“It was built in the year 1900. A wealthy family lived here. A husband and wife with their four children. He owned one of the largest manufacturing plants in the city. She stayed at home with the children and they had a maid who occupied the sixth bedroom.”

“Really? You must have done a lot of research on the house,” I said as we walked down the stairs.

“No. I didn’t have to.”

I stopped at the bottom step and turned and looked at her.

“What?” she asked.

“Nothing.” I shook my head.

“All was good until the husband started having an affair with the maid. He’d go to her room in the middle of the night when his wife was sound asleep and—well, you know what they did.”

“How old were you when you found all this out?”

“Six.” She smirked. “I saw it the moment me and my grandmother stepped through the door.”

“Did the wife find out?” I couldn’t believe I had just asked her that.

“She knew, but she never let on that she did. She wasn’t about to give up all the wealth.”

“Smart woman.” I smirked and she playfully slapped my arm.

Grabbing her, I pulled her into me as we stood in the kitchen and pressed my lips against hers. Picking her up and setting her on the counter, she wrapped her legs around me as our kiss grew more passionate. My cock was solid, and I was desperate to be inside her.

“I missed this,” I breathlessly spoke.

“Me too.”

I pulled her shirt over her head and tossed it on the floor while her fingers undid my belt and pants. Unhooking her bra, I released her breasts and fondled them as my tongue traveled across her neck. She gasped as did I when her hand reached down the front of my pants and her fingers wrapped themselves around my cock. Quickly pulling my shirt over my head, I leaned down and took her hardened nipples between my teeth while her hands pulled my pants down from my hips. The short skirt she wore allowed me easy access as my hand ran up her thigh and grabbed the waistband of her panties. Quickly pulling them down, I swept my fingers over her sensitive area, making sure she was wet enough before thrusting inside her. The last thing I wanted to do was hurt her.

I pulled her forward until she was at the very edge of the counter and I pushed inside her as we both let out satisfying moans. Her nails dug into the flesh of my back as I moved in and out of her. The warmth inside her enveloped my cock as it prepared to erupt. Her moans intensified as her legs tightened around my waist and she came. As much as I wanted to hold back, I couldn't. She had me so hard and turned on.

"Oh my God." I let out a groan as I exploded inside her.

The corners of her mouth curved upward as I dropped my hand to the counter and stared into her eyes as I tried to regain my breath. Pulling out of her, I reached down and picked up her panties and shirt from the floor. Handing them to her with a smile, I spoke, "I really missed that."

"So did I." She grinned as she hopped off the counter.



Everly We snuggled together in my bed. Falling asleep in his arms was easy and I was happy he came to Providence. I loved him. For the first time in my life, I was in love. Being away from him hurt my heart every day. A hurt I hadn't experienced before. The kind of hurt that lingered and no matter what I did, I always felt it. Now what? What happens when he goes back to New York? Did he feel the same about me? I didn't know because I'd grown too close to him.

I woke up and looked at the clock which read three a.m. I was thirsty so I decided to go down to the kitchen for a bottle of water. When I flipped the light switch, I saw my grandmother standing there. A great sadness tore through me.

"Grandma, no." Tears started to fall down my face.

"It's okay, Everly. We knew it was a matter of time. Tell Daniel and Diana that I love them very much, and I will always be watching over them and that sweet baby of theirs."

"I will." I swallowed hard.

"Dry your eyes, my sweet girl. You know this isn't the end."

"I know." I nodded my head as I wiped my tears. "But I needed more time."

"You're going to be okay, and life will go on. You have a long life ahead

of you, Everly.” She smiled at me. “There’s something you need to do. You must tell Asher the truth. He has the right to know, Everly. No matter what the cost.”

“It’s going to hurt him, and he’s already been through enough.”

“It doesn’t matter. In order for him to be free of the pain, he needs to know the truth.”

“Everly?” I heard Asher’s voice from behind. “Were you just talking to someone?”

Turning around, I looked at him with teary eyes.

“What’s wrong?” He gripped my shoulders.

“My grandmother passed away.”

“What? How do—” He pulled me into a tight embrace.

“She was just here.” I interrupted him. “I need to call Daniel.”

“Your phone is on the nightstand.”

He hooked his arm around me, and I laid my head on his shoulder as we walked up the stairs.

THREE DAYS LATER

Everly “That was a lovely service,” Mrs. Riley spoke as she took hold of my hands. “Your grandmother was so proud of you, Everly.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Riley.”

She was the last guest to leave the house after the luncheon had ended. While Diana and Daniel were in the kitchen cleaning up, I took a seat on the couch for a moment.

“I was looking for you,” Asher spoke as he sat down next to me.

“I was saying goodbye to Mrs. Riley.”

“Everly, I’m sorry but I need to get back to New York. There are some major issues going on with one our properties, and I need to get back.”

“I understand. I have a lot to do around here, anyway.”

He hooked his arm around me and pulled me into him.

“It was a beautiful service.” He kissed the side of my head. “The jet is coming to pick me up in a couple of hours. Are you going to be okay? I know how it feels after losing a loved one.”

“I’m fine.” I gave him a small smile. “I appreciate you worrying about me, but don’t. I’ll be okay. Thank you for coming here.”

“Of course. Thank you for letting me stay with you in this beautiful home.”

“I wouldn’t have had it any other way.” I gave him a light smile.

“I’ve called a car service to come pick me up, so I better get upstairs and get my things together.”

“Okay. I’m going to help Diana and Daniel clean up.”

He pressed his lips against my forehead and went upstairs. I didn’t want

him to leave, but he was a busy man running a multi-billion-dollar company and he needed to be there. I understood to some extent, and I felt selfish for wanting him to stay longer. I had officially fallen in love with Asher Remington. Was it a good idea? Absolutely not. I knew how he felt about relationships and I knew he was incapable of giving love back.



One Week Later

Daniel and Diana left for New York shortly after the reading of our grandmother's will. The shop had been closed since the night my grandmother passed away and I wasn't sure what I was going to do. The only time I'd heard from Asher was the day he went back to New York. He'd sent me a text message that night asking how I was doing. I was grateful for that, but I hadn't heard anything from him since. Not only was I dealing with the sadness of my grandmother's passing, I was also dealing with the sadness I felt since Asher left. I hated myself for letting these feelings come full circle, but I couldn't help it. Like my gift, I had no control over them for I felt a connection to his soul. Something I had never felt with any man before. I could no longer see anything with Asher. Anything relevant, that is. I'd grown too close to him and that's how it worked.

Later that evening, as I was sitting on the couch watching *The Bachelorette*, my phone rang, and it was Daniel.

"Hello?"

"Hey. How are you?"

"I'm okay. How are you?"

"I'm okay. Listen, Everly. Diana and I want you to move to New York. You shouldn't be in Rhode Island by yourself when you have family here. Now that Tillie is gone, you have no reason to stay there."

"It's too soon for me to think about that, Daniel. I have the shop, the house."

"Sell the shop. Or better yet, move the shop to New York. Put the house up for sale and just leave. You'll stay with us until you find an apartment here."

"I appreciate it, and I promise to give it some serious thought."

“Well, think about it quickly. We want you here. I love you, cuz.”

“I love you too, Daniel. We’ll talk soon.”

I sighed as I set my phone down on the couch. Picking it back up, I decided to call Asher.

“Hey, you. Everything okay?” he asked when he answered the phone.

“Everything’s fine. I just got off the phone with Daniel and he said he and Diana want me to move to New York.”

There was a moment of silence on the other end and the nervousness inside me grew.

“And what did you decide?” he asked.

“I haven’t decided anything yet. I was hoping you could help me make a decision.”

“Honestly, Everly, it’s up to you. Do you want to live here?”

“I like New York and I think I would love living there. Plus, we could see each other all the time,” I cautiously spoke.

“Listen. You know I work a lot and I wouldn’t want you to move here thinking there would be something between us. What I’m trying to say is, don’t move here just for me.”

“Wow.” I swallowed hard. “You have a big ego there, Mr. Remington.” Tears formed in my eyes. “Do you not know me by now?”

He let out a light laugh.

“Does anyone ever truly know anyone, Everly?”

“Sometimes, I know more about a person than I care to. Hey. I have to go. My grandmother’s lawyer is calling.” I lied. “I’ll talk to you soon.”

I ended the call, took in a deep breath and let the tears stream down my face.

“He’s a dumb ass you know.” I heard a voice behind me.

Turning around, I saw Asher’s father standing there.

“What are you doing here, Mr. Remington?” I let out a sigh as I went into the kitchen.

“I guess my business here isn’t finished.”

“You’re the reason he’s like he is.” I poured myself a glass of wine.

“I know. I’m fully aware. I suppose you’re going to tell him what I’d done.”

“He’ll hate you.” I brought the glass up to my lips.

“I know he will. But in time, he’ll forgive me.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure about that,” I said.

“I did what I had to at the time for his future. Just like I had to step in and stop that merger. You think I want to stick around here? I know he has feelings for you. Feelings I haven’t seen in a very long time. You always do what’s best for everyone else, but never for yourself. You love my son. Tell him. Fight for his love.” Suddenly, he vanished.

I was torn on what to do because I loved him, and we don’t want to hurt the people we love. We wanted to protect them, and me telling him, would be for my own selfish reasons.

“God! I wish I could see the right thing to do!” I screamed.

I was exhausted and I couldn’t think anymore, so I went upstairs and climbed into bed.

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Asher

The moment I stepped off the elevator, I walked over to my bar and poured myself a bourbon. I couldn't stop thinking about Everly's call. As hard as I tried not to think about her when I left Rhode Island, my mind wouldn't stop. All the "what if's" kept circling around in my head and the harder I fought to stop them, the louder they became. A part of me wanted to love her, but the other part of me stopped such a notion. I asked her if anyone ever truly knew anyone, and I meant it. I thought I knew someone inside and out once, only to discover I was completely wrong and was made a fool of. Then there was my Uncle Roland and Noah. Everyone in my life had betrayed me in some way. Everyone except my father. What Everly and I had was good. It was really good. But it was only temporary, and I needed to keep reminding myself of that. I ran a multi-billion-dollar company with great success, I lived in a multi-million-dollar penthouse, and I had all the money I would ever need. I was set in life, and I didn't need anything else.

A couple days had passed, and I had just gotten out of a meeting. Taking my phone from my pocket, I saw I had a text message from Everly.

"Hi, Asher. I'm in New York for a couple days, and I would like to see you if possible. Maybe tonight after you get off work at your penthouse?"

A nervousness fell over me as I read her message. Why was she in New York? Did she decide to move here after all? I felt an instant relief knowing she was here, but I also felt the fear inside me rise up as it felt like it was choking the life out of me.

"Hi. We could meet there if you want and maybe go out for a nice dinner.

How is six-thirty?"

"I'll see you then," she replied.

It was six-fifteen when I arrived home. Everly would be here in about fifteen minutes and I needed to quickly change before she came. Just as I finished changing, I heard the elevator ding. When the doors opened, Everly stepped out looking as beautiful as ever.

"Hi." I smiled as I kissed her cheek.

"Hi."

"It's good to see you," I spoke.

"It's good to see you too."

"Come on in. Can I get you a drink?"

"Sure. You know what, I'll have what you're having."

"Bourbon?" I arched my brow at her.

"Yes."

She seemed extremely nervous, which was something she never seemed to be before.

"Are you okay?" I asked as I walked over to the bar.



Everly

Seeing him again was surreal. I'd missed him, even though I didn't want to. Maybe coming here was a mistake, but after seeing him, I knew I didn't have a choice.

"Here you go." He smiled as he handed me my drink. "What brings you back to New York?"

I hesitated, but it was now or never. The nervousness inside me intensified as my heart rapidly beat out of my chest. Maybe I wouldn't have to tell him. Maybe he'd tell me he loved me, and I could put what I knew behind me and never speak of it. There was only one way to find out.

"I came back because I love you, Asher. I'm in love with you and I needed to tell you."

He stood there in shock as he stared into my eyes and inhaled a sharp breath.

"Everly, I don't know what to say except I wish you never would have told me."

“Why?”

“Because you just shouldn’t have. The last thing I want to do is hurt you and now you’ve put me in that position.”

“So you’re saying you don’t love me?” I could feel the tears spring to my eyes.

“No. I don’t. I’m sorry. I wish I could tell you otherwise, but I can’t.” He turned away from me.

“So after everything we’ve been through, you can stand there and say you feel nothing for me at all?”

“Yes.” He lowered his head as I watched him clench his fist.

“It’s all because of Brianna, right?”

He spun around and the angry look on his face startled me.

“You know nothing about her, and if you do, you stop!” he shouted.

A single tear fell down my cheek.

“No. I won’t stop. I know how much you loved her and how betrayed you felt by her, Asher. But you can’t let that one moment define the man you are today.”

He stood there as he shook his finger at me.

“The fuck I can’t. You have no idea. That girl was my life. Ever since the first day I laid eyes on her when I was fifteen years old. I would have given my life for her. She couldn’t stand the thought of me going off to Harvard without her. So I decided to forget about it and stay in New York and go to NYU with her. We were going to be married and live in an apartment on campus together. We were happy. Happier than two people could ever be. Then one night, the summer before college, she said she needed to talk to me. We went to Central Park and she told me she didn’t love me anymore and she handed me back the ring I had given her. She said we were too young, and she couldn’t see a future with me. She then proceeded to tell me that she didn’t think she ever really loved me. I begged her to stop, because I knew it wasn’t true. I knew her and I knew what we meant to each other, but she wouldn’t. She just kept going on and on about how sorry she was and how we weren’t meant to be. Then she walked away and left me standing there with my heart shredded into a million tiny pieces. I made a vow that night never to let anything ever happen like that again,” he shouted.

“I know. I felt your pain the moment our hands first touched. I felt everything, Asher. But there’s something you need to know. You need to know the truth of what really happened that night.”

I looked over and saw his father standing over by the bar.

“Damn you!” I spoke.

“What? Damn me? Really?” Asher shouted.

“I wasn’t talking to you.”

“Tell him, Everly. Tell him what I did. Tell him the truth!”

“Your father was the one who was responsible for Brianna breaking up with you,” I finally spoke.

“What?” He let out a frightening laugh. “Who the hell do you think you are? But go ahead and humor me and tell me exactly how my father did that.”

“He took her to lunch one day and offered her a lot of money to break up with you and to never see or talk to you again. When she refused, he offered her an ultimatum. She either did what he asked, or he would financially ruin her father’s company, shut it down and make sure he lost everything.”

“How dare you,” he shouted. “My father would never do such a thing.”

“Your father would do anything he had to in order to protect you, Asher!” I shouted back. “He didn’t want you to ruin your future and he saw it was a possibility if you married her. Your lifelong dream had always been to attend Harvard and he saw you giving all that up for Brianna. He knew you weren’t thinking right at the time. You were young and in love. It happens. I get it.”

“You don’t get anything! I want you to leave now.” He forcefully grabbed hold of my arm.

The moment he did that, his father’s favorite book flew off the bookcase in the living room and onto the floor. Asher stopped, let go of my arm and bent down to pick up the book.

“Is he here?” he asked with anger.

“Yep. He sure is. I’m sorry, Asher. He wanted me to tell you. I knew how deeply it would hurt you, and I didn’t want to. But he said his business wasn’t finished here yet.”

“Get out, Everly. Just go.” His voice was calm as he held the book in his hand.

“I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.” I grabbed my purse, and the moment I pressed the button to the elevator, the doors opened, and I stepped inside.

The crushing feeling in my chest was unbearable as I gripped it. The struggle to breath was real and had me in its grip for what felt like forever. I went back to the apartment, told Diana and Daniel everything and grabbed the last flight out of New York.

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ONE WEEK LATER

Asher Burying myself in my work had always been the way to cope when things weren't going right in my life. This time, I stayed at home. Alone. Isolated from the outside world so I could think and wallow in my own self-pity. I hadn't shaved in over a week and I barely showered. Bottles of bourbon laid around the penthouse as well as boxes of pizza, Chinese food, Italian and Mexican from all the takeout I ordered. The place was filthy, and I didn't care. I'd told everyone at the office that I was taking a trip. I couldn't let anyone see me this way. If this was what hitting rock bottom was, I sure as hell had hit it. If my father had done as Everly said, everything about him was a lie. Or she was lying. Why not? Everyone else in my life lied to me. Why would she be any different? I knew women. They would say anything to get a man's attention. But Everly was Everly. She wasn't like any other woman I knew. She was selfless, caring, kind and had a beautiful soul. What could she have possibly expected to gain by telling me? She said my father made her, and in some way, I believed it because he had a way of always making people do things they didn't want to.

"Oh my God," I spoke out loud.

I went into my office and sat down behind my desk. Turning on my computer, I searched for Brianna Nicholson. I'd remembered the day after she broke up with me, she deleted all of her social media and changed her phone number. I googled her name, and it took a while, but I'd found her. She was married and had two children. She wasn't Brianna Nicholson anymore. She was now Brianna Copeland. I was lucky enough to come across one picture she posted publicly of her and her coworkers celebrating a

birthday at the office. Directly behind the women was the company name: Dynamic Advertising Group. Putting the name of the company in the Google search bar, I wrote down the address and booked the first flight out to Los Angeles tomorrow morning.



I cleaned myself up. I shaved, showered and cleaned up the wreckage I'd done to the penthouse. Grabbing my bag, I headed to the airport and got on the plane to California. After checking into the Hotel Bel-Air, I hired a car service to drive me to her place of employment.

"May I help you?" A young brunette behind the glass desk asked.

"I'm here to see Brianna Copeland."

"Her office is down the hall and the first door on the right."

"Thank you."

I wouldn't lie and say I wasn't nervous, because I was. It had been a long time since I'd last seen her. When I reached her office, the door was shut and there wasn't a secretary or desk sitting outside it. I gently knocked on the door and she told me to come in. The moment I stepped inside, our eyes locked and the color from her face quickly drained.

"Asher?" Her brows furrowed.

"Hello, Brianna."

She stared at me as she slowly rose from her chair. She was shocked to say the least.

"Wh—What are you doing here?"

"I need to talk to you about my father."

She looked down as she held onto the edge of her desk.

"I heard he passed and I'm very sorry," she softly spoke.

"Thank you. I appreciate that."

"I knew this day would eventually come. This isn't the place to talk though." She looked at her watch. "Let's go to the Santa Monica Pier and talk."

"Okay. I have a car waiting downstairs."

"Just let me tell my boss that I'll be taking the rest of the day off. I'll meet you down there."

I gave her a nod as I took the elevator down to the lobby and waited for her. A few moments later she joined me, and we climbed into the back of the limo.

“Santa Monica Pier, please,” I spoke to the driver.

She was still a beautiful woman, and I thought seeing her again would ignite everything I’d ever felt for her, but it didn’t. I felt nothing at all.

“You’re here to find out about that night, aren’t you?” she asked as we walked along the pier.

“I am. I need the truth, Brianna. Did my father have anything to do with our breakup?”

“Yes. He did. But you have to understand that I was a frightened eighteen-year-old girl.”

“Did he threaten to harm your father’s company if you didn’t break up with me?”

“Yes.” She nodded. “You know my father’s company was already in trouble at the time and he was struggling to keep it afloat. After we broke up, he got a call that an anonymous investor decided to invest in the company and suddenly, all of our financial troubles were over. I’m not proud of what I did, but you need to understand that I couldn’t let anything happen to my family.”

“I understand, Brianna. We’d do anything in our power to protect our family. I just wish you would have told me.”

“I couldn’t, Asher. You need to understand that. I’m so sorry, and all those things I said, I never meant. I had no choice. I had to convince you that it was over for good. God, I hated your father for that, and I hated him because I’ve had to live with this guilt for all these years.”

“I know, and I don’t blame you for hating him. I hate him right now myself.”

We stopped at the railing and looked out at the blue pacific ocean as the waves made their way across the shore.

“Why now, Asher? Why after all these years are you seeking the truth? Did your father tell you before he died?”

“No. He decided to be a coward and wait until after he died to let me know.”

“What? I’m not sure I understand?” Her brows furrowed at me.

“It’s a long story and I’m sure you wouldn’t even believe me.”

“Try me.” She smiled. “I think you’d be amazed at what I’d believe.”

“There’s this woman, and her name is Everly. We’d been seeing each other on and off recently and she’s different.”

“Different how?”

God, I felt so stupid for even saying it.

“She can see things, and she dreams about things that have or are going to happen.”

“Is she a psychic?”

“I guess you could say that. Anyway, she told me my father wanted me to know the truth, and that he can’t go to wherever it is you go, until I knew the truth.”

“Wow. Okay.”

“I know. It’s crazy, right?”

“No. Not at all. I truly believe in that sort of thing. In fact, not too long after we broke up, my dad took us on a trip to Rhode Island for a vacation. It was kind of a celebratory vacation because the company had turned around. While we there, we went into this shop that sold crystals, spiritual books, cards, and all that other spiritual stuff. My mom was done looking around and decided to go to the shop next door. I told her I would meet her there because I was still looking around. I was still very upset over us, and the woman that worked there walked over to me and told me to hold out my hand. So I did, and she placed this beautiful small pink crystal in my hand, then closed my hand around it. She told me that my sadness wouldn’t last forever and that I’d done the right thing even though I went about it all wrong. She said that when two souls are meant to be together forever, there is nothing, no one, or no circumstance that could ever break them apart. Then she said she saw my future and I was going to marry my soulmate and have two beautiful children. I’ll never forget her because she had an unusual name. Her name was Tillie.”

I swallowed hard as I stared straight at the calm and peaceful water.

“And you did marry your soulmate and have two beautiful children.” I gave her a small smile as I glanced at her.

“I did. How did you know?”

“I saw your profile picture on your Facebook page. Your children are beautiful, Brianna.”

“Thank you, Asher. How about you? What’s going on with you?”

“I work a lot.” I smirked. “There really isn’t much time for anything else.”

“Are you still seeing Everly?”

“Not really. But I’m hoping to change all that.”

“Why don’t you come to the house for dinner tonight. I’d love for you to meet my husband. I know the two of you would get along great.”

“Thanks for the offer and I’m sure he’s a really great guy, but I need to get back to New York.”

“You know I only go for the great guys.” She smiled as she nudged my shoulder with hers.

The limo drove us back to her office and into the parking garage where her car was parked.

“It was really good to see you, Asher. I mean that.” She placed her hand on mine.

“It was good to see you too, Brianna.”

“Next time you’re in Los Angeles, give me a call. That dinner invitation is always open. Here’s my number.” She handed me her business card.

“I will.”

“Have a safe flight home.” She smiled as she climbed out of the limo.

Everly

It was nine o'clock by the time I got home. Samantha's mother had stopped in the shop and insisted I joined them for dinner. She had always been such a good cook and a home cooked meal was exactly what I needed. I hadn't cooked at all in the past few weeks. Unless you consider making a sandwich, cooking. It was always that I didn't have time, was too tired, or too sad to cook anything. So I took the easy way out and ordered take out. As I was approaching my house, I could see the shadow of a person sitting on my porch.

"What the hell?" I said as a nervousness crept up inside me. I wasn't sure if the person was deceased or alive.

The closer I got, the more the person came into focus. I couldn't believe it when I saw it was Asher. Pulling in the driveway, I parked the car and climbed out.

"Do you always just sit on random people's porches when they're not home?"

The corners of his mouth curved upward.

"You're not a random person, Miss King."

"What are you doing here, Asher?" I asked with a hint of irritation as I walked past him and unlocked the front door.

"I need to talk to you."

I sighed as I stepped inside and flipped on the light switch.

"I'm not playing this game anymore. You kick me out, then you need to talk, kick me out, need to talk."

I set my purse down on the bench in the foyer and went into the kitchen.

“I know and I’m sorry.” He followed behind. “I’m here to apologize to you.”

“A simple text would have sufficed,” I said as I opened the refrigerator and took out a bottle of wine.

“I suppose I could have sent you a text, but I figured an in-person apology would be much more sincere.”

“Wine?” I held up the bottle.

“No, thank you. How are you, Everly?”

“I’m good, Asher. I’m really fucking good,” I spoke sarcastically.

“You’re being a smart ass again.” He smiled. “I was beginning to think you weren’t ever coming home. May I ask where you were?”

“With my boyfriend. On a date.”

“You’re lying.” A smirk crossed his lips. “No man besides me would put up with you.”

“Well, that may be true, but you don’t put up with me either.” I held up my glass before bringing it to my lips.

“Have I told you how beautiful you are? Oh shit. Hold on a second,” he said as he walked out the front door. Within seconds, he walked back into the kitchen holding a beautiful bouquet of red roses. “For you, madame.”

“Thank you. What are these for?” I took them and brought them up to my nose.

“I believe I read somewhere that red roses symbolize affection, love and admiration.”

“And?” I arched my brow at him.

“All three of those words apply to you. I missed you, Everly. God, I’ve missed you so much.”

“Really? Because I do believe the last words you said to me were, ‘Get out, Everly. Just go.’”

I turned to the cabinet and took down a vase.

“I know what I said and I’m sorry.”

“You know what?” I turned and looked at him as I set the vase on the counter. “I don’t think I’ve ever met a man who is sorry as much as you are.”

“See there. What does that tell you?” He grinned.

“It tells me that you speak before you think, and you react before you think.”

He stood there and narrowed his eye at me.

“You’re right. You are one hundred percent right. And again, I’m sorry.”

Listen, Everly, I'm an asshole. I admit it. I've said things to you that I'm not proud of, but I'm not that person. At least not anymore."

"Since when?"

"Since the moment I realized that I need you in my life. I went and talked to Brianna. It's not that I didn't believe you. I just needed to hear it from her mouth. I needed to hear her say my father was responsible."

"And how did that go?"

"It went really well. We talked and then I left. She's happily married with two beautiful children."

"That's great, Asher. I'm happy for you. Now maybe your father will find some peace and leave me the hell alone."

"Have you seen him again?"

"Not since that night."

"Good. I probably scared him straight to Hell."

I couldn't help but let out a laugh.

"I'm serious. I had a talk with him. I told him exactly how I felt and what I thought about him."

"Did it make you feel better?" I asked as I arranged the roses in the vase.

"It did. It made me feel a lot better." A smirk crossed his lips. He walked over to where I stood and took hold of both my hands and held them in his. "I never meant to hurt you, Everly. I know that's probably hard for you to believe, but it's the truth."

The problem with Asher was he always apologized, expected sex, and thought everything was good. But this time, I wasn't going to give into him. I'd been yelled at, kicked out of his place and been told he never wanted to see me again one too many times.

"Thank you, Asher. I appreciate it." My lips gave way to a tender smile.

He brought his hand up to my cheek and softly stroked it as his sexy eyes stared into mine.

"I'll never hurt you again. I promise," he spoke with sincerity.

"So, are you flying back to New York tonight?" I asked.

"No. It's late. I figured I'd stay for a while."

"What about the company?"

"It's in good hands and it won't fall apart while I'm gone." His thumb swept over my lips.

"Are you staying at a hotel?" I arched my brow at him.

"I wasn't planning on it." His eye narrowed at me. "I was hoping to stay

here with you.”

“Of course.” I nodded my head. “You can stay here. Follow me upstairs and I’ll show you the guestroom.” I turned and walked out of the kitchen.

“What?” He followed behind. “The guestroom?”

“Yes.” I turned my head and smiled at him.

I showed him to the room with the double bed, a window seat, a dresser with a TV sitting on it and two nightstands.

“Is there a reason why you’re not letting me in your bed?” he asked.

“Well.” I paced around the room. “I don’t think it’s a good idea.”

“Why? I think it’s a wonderful idea.”

“Of course you do. But sex with us is a band-aid, Asher.”

“What are you talking about?” He stood there shaking his head.

“You yell, kick me out, tell me you never want to see me again. Then you apologize and we have sex.”

“And?” He lifted his arms up.

“The sex we have after you do all those things to me is great and it feels good at the moment. But it covers up the real issues at hand. Like a band-aid covers a wound. You eventually take the band-aid off and let the wound heal on its own. Make sense?”

*A*sher

I knew exactly what she was saying, and I didn't like it.

"Yeah, Everly. It does."

"Good." She grinned as she placed her hand on my chest. "I'm just going to change into my pajamas, make a bowl of popcorn and watch *The Bachelorette*. You can join me if you'd like."

Was she serious?

"Sounds like fun." I managed a fake smile.

"Great. I'll see you downstairs."

The moment she walked out of the room, I sighed and sat on the edge of the bed. I couldn't believe she was making me stay in the guestroom. All that talk about sex being like a band-aid. I had no choice, and I knew it. I screwed up and now I had to suffer the consequences. The consequences of no sex with the woman I loved. Could I do it? I had no choice. I just prayed that it wouldn't last too long. I took off my shoes and socks and changed into a t-shirt and a pair of sweatpants. When I walked out of the bedroom, she came from hers dressed in a two-piece short pajama set and her hair up in a messy bun. Damn her.

We sat on the couch with a bowl of popcorn between us and she turned on some show called *The Bachelorette*. I'd never heard of it and when I started watching it, I couldn't believe what the hell I was seeing.

"Are you kidding me? Why did she give him a rose? Can't she see the guy is a total douchebag?" I threw my hands up. "He's totally playing her."

"Right?" Everly said as she popped a piece of popcorn in her mouth. "But don't worry. He won't be around too much longer."

I glanced over at her and cocked my head.

“You know the outcome, don’t you?”

She shrugged as a beautiful smile graced her lips.

“How can you watch this stuff if you already know what’s going to happen?”

“For the drama.” She grinned.

I chuckled as I threw a piece of popcorn at her and she threw one back at me. When the show was over, I helped her clean up and then we went upstairs.

“Thanks for tonight,” I said as I pushed a strand of her hair behind her ear. “I had fun.”

“You’re welcome. Good night, Asher.”

“Good night, Everly.” I sighed.



Everly

After I brushed my teeth, I walked to my bedroom and saw Asher’s father sitting in the chair by the window.

“You’re making him suffer, you know. But I understand why, and I admire you for that.”

“What are you doing here? I thought you were gone.”

“I will be soon. I just need to make sure my son is okay.”

“He’s fine, and I really need you to stay out of my bedroom.”

“Okay. Okay. I’m going. Be good to him, Everly. He’s been waiting a long time for someone like you.”

I gave him a small smile and he was gone.

The next morning, I awoke to the smell of something burning. Climbing out of bed, I slipped my feet into my slippers and went downstairs.

“What is that smell?” I asked Asher when I walked into the kitchen.

“That would be eggs and burnt toast. I opened the windows to air the place out. I was attempting to cook you breakfast, and I failed.” He held up his cup of coffee.

“It was a nice gesture.” I smiled. “You better get your stuff together.”

“Why?” He frowned at me.

“You need to go to Key West,” I spoke as I brewed a cup of coffee.

“Why do I need to do that?”

Suddenly, his phone rang, and as I stood there waiting for my coffee, I listened to the irritation in his voice.

“No. It’s okay, Levi. I’ll go. Looks like I’m going to Key West.” He sighed.

“I know.” I gave him a smile as I turned around with the coffee cup in my hand as his muscular chest and chiseled abs stared me in the face.

“I want you to come with me.” The corners of his mouth curved upward.

“Asher, I —”

“Yes. You can. I just got here, and I don’t want to leave you. Come with me, Everly. It’ll be fun. After I settle everything with the property, we can tour Key West, go to the beach, eat amazing food and have some fun.” He winked. “Separate hotel rooms, of course. I promise. I did a lot of thinking last night when I went to bed, and I knew what you were talking about when you said that sex is a band-aid. The truth is, we really don’t know each other very well. Like, I don’t know your favorite color, your favorite food, what kind of music you like to listen to, what hobbies you like to do. I want to know all those things about you. What I do know is that you’re kind, caring, selfless and incredibly beautiful. That’s why I’m falling in love with you.” He reached up and softly stroked my cheek.”

“Asher.” I slowly closed my eyes for a moment.

“I know I told you that I didn’t feel anything for you when you told me you loved me. I lied, Everly. I lied because I was scared. I couldn’t allow myself to feel anything for anyone. But after talking to Brianna, I realized how pathetic and stupid I was being.”

“You’re not saying all this just to get me to have sex with you, are you?”

He let out a chuckle.

“No. I’m telling you because you deserve to know how I really feel, and I want you to know. Please say you’ll come to Key West with me. The private jet will be here in about an hour.”

“Then I guess I better start packing.” I grinned as I reached up and kissed his cheek.

“Thank you. I’ll call my secretary and have her book us two rooms at a 5-star hotel.”

I took my coffee and went up to my room. It made me happy he asked me to go with him. But the fears inside me were still there. Could we ever have a normal relationship? I was far from normal, so I had my doubts.

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Everly We took a limo to the airport and boarded the Boeing 747-8 private jet that was waiting in the hanger. I'd never been on one and was blown away at the luxury of it all. The entire plane was done in beige and wood with two couches, a desk, a couple of chairs, an elongated table that sat ten people, a large screen TV that hung on the wall, a fancy bathroom and a bedroom with a king size bed, a couple of nightstands, a dresser and a TV.

"Wow. This is fancy, Mr. Remington."

"It's nice, isn't it?" He smiled.

"Nice is too mild of a word," I spoke as I took a seat in one of the comfy oversized chairs next to the window. Asher took the seat across from me.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Remington. Can I get the two of you something to drink? A mimosa perhaps?" The flight attendant asked.

"I'll have a bourbon," he spoke. "Everly?"

"A mimosa sounds great. Thank you."

"I'm happy you decided to join me," Asher spoke.

"How long are we staying? Because honestly, I didn't bring that much."

"Then we'll have to go shopping." The corners of his mouth curved upward.

"You know I have clients I still have to take care of."

"I know. And that's the beauty of your job. You can work from anywhere," he said.

The flight attendant brought our drinks as the pilot came on and told us to fasten our seatbelts. In a matter of a few moments, we were up in the air and

it was the smoothest take off I'd ever experienced.

"You never talk about your mom," I said as I sipped my drink.

"It's hard sometimes. She was an amazing woman and God took her from us way too soon. She had uterine cancer and it wasn't caught in time. Even though we had servants and chefs, she always made me my favorite meatloaf dinner. As far as I was concerned it was better than what any chef could make."

"That's because it was made with love." I smiled.

"After Brianna and I broke up, I was in a dark place for a while. She helped me through it the best she could. She was always there for me, no matter how busy she was with her charities. Every year I put on a company fundraiser for uterine cancer in her honor. In fact, there's one coming up in a couple of months. I would love for you to be my date."

"I'd like that." The corners of my mouth curved upward, and I could feel the heat rise in my cheeks.

"Did she know what my father had done?" he asked.

"No. She didn't know."

"Good. I'm happy to hear that. Forgive me for asking this, but do you see your mother at all?"

I looked down as I ran my finger around the rim of the glass.

"No. Not even at her funeral."

"You can see the deceased at their funerals?" His brow arched.

"Yeah. They like to hang around to see what kind of turnout they got." I smirked. "One time when I was dating this guy, his grandmother passed away and I went to the funeral home. When I was on my way to the room, I passed the one next to his grandmother's and when I peeked inside, I saw this very pristine woman ranting and raving. She saw me looking at her and she ran over to me and asked if I could see her. When I told her yes, she went on and on about her funeral. How the casket was hideous and how dare her husband wear the suit he did. And how she couldn't believe that this person showed up and how dare she after the words they exchanged. Then she went on and on about the jewelry she was being buried in and how her hair was all wrong."

"Damn. If she's like that in death, she was probably worse while she was living."

I let out a laugh. "Right? She was killed by a drunk driver on a rainy night. I told her she just needed to be at peace and move on. She wouldn't,

until I gave her husband a message. A message that made me very uncomfortable.”

“What was the message?” he asked.

“She wanted me to tell him that she knew all about his wretched affair with his slutty twenty-five-year-old secretary and she’ll see to it he rots in Hell when it’s his time.”

“Oh boy.” He chuckled. “Did you tell him?”

“I had no choice. She wouldn’t leave me alone and followed me into the other viewing room.”

“What did her husband say?”

“You really want to know what he said?”

“Yes.” He laughed.

“I told him about her being there and the things she said, and he said since I had the pleasure of talking to her, did I now understand why he was having the affair.”

“Oh my God.” He continued to laugh.

“Needless to say, the guy I was seeing told me he never wanted to see me again after that.”

“How long were you two dating?”

“Two weeks.” I laughed. “I told you, Mr. Remington. Things just don’t work out for me in the relationship department.”

“There’s one thing you can be certain of,” he said.

“What’s that?”

“I’m nothing like the douchebags you’ve dated.” He gave me a wink as he finished his bourbon.

“Is that what we’re doing now? Dating?”

“I would like to think we are.” A smirk crossed his lips.

“And what about when you go back to New York and I go back to Rhode Island?”

“We’ll discuss that when the times comes.”



*T*he limo pulled into the Pier House Resort & Spa and I was in awe of the beauty of it. Climbing out of the car, we headed into the lobby as our bags were being collected.

“Welcome to the Pier House Resort & Spa. How can I help you?” the nice man behind the counter asked.

“We’re checking in. The name is Remington.”

“Yes. Of course, Mr. Remington. Welcome. I’ll just need to see your I.D. and I’ll get you all checked in,” he spoke as he typed away on his keyboard. “You’re all set. Here are two keys to the Presidential Suite. If you need anything at all, just give us a call.”

“Thank you.”

“The Presidential Suite?” I arched my brow at him. “I thought we were getting separate rooms.”

“Don’t worry. It has two bedrooms.” He sighed.

When we reached the room, the first thing I did was run over to the large sliding door and stare out at the beautiful ocean view.

“Look at this view, Asher.”

After tipping the gentleman who brought up our bags, he walked over and stood next to me with his hands tucked into his pants pockets.

“It’s beautiful. Just like you.” He glanced over at me and gave me a wink.

“Stop it.” I blushed. “Which bedroom is mine?”

“Whichever one you want. Take your pick.”

The suite was stunning with its palette of muted grays and earthy browns. The first thing Asher did was check out the bar that sat against the wall. Sitting in the center of the large dining table was a plate of chocolate covered strawberries and a bottle of chilled champagne with a welcome note.

“Wow. They really do it up here,” I said as I read the card.

“They should for what this room costs. I have to take this call,” he said as he walked into the bedroom with his ringing phone.

I looked around the place and then stepped outside the sliding door to our own private balcony that housed two lounge chairs and a small round table with matching chairs.

“That was Jack Klein. He wants us to meet him and his wife for dinner tonight.”

“And who is Jack Klein?”

“The man who owns the property where I want to build a large outdoor shopping mall. He’s been fighting us for a couple years. So I’m not really sure why all of a sudden, he changed his mind. Did you bring a fancy dress?”

“No. I didn’t know I needed one.”

He walked over to where I stood and placed his hands on my hips.

“There’s a shop downstairs. I saw it when we walked in. Go down and buy yourself something. Just charge it the room.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. I’m very sure.” He smiled as he gently kissed my forehead. “I’m going to do some work while you’re gone and then we’ll have to get ready for dinner.”

I went down to the shop and in the window, I spotted a black sleeveless midi dress with an asymmetrical side slit. It was perfect and I prayed they had my size.

“Can I help you?” A nice woman asked.

“Do you have this dress in a size four?”

“Let me check in the back.” She smiled.

A few moments later, she walked out with the dress in her hand.

“Here you go. Would you like to try it on?”

“Yes. Please.”

It was a perfect fit. The problem was I didn’t bring any heels with me.

“What do you think of the dress?” she asked.

“It’s perfect. You don’t by any chance sell shoes, do you?”

“No. I’m sorry.”

“That’s okay. I’ll figure something out.”

“Is this going to be charged to your room?” she asked.

“Yes. I’m in the Presidential Suite.”

“Oh. Mrs. Remington, I presume?”

“Ah, yeah. Sure.” I smiled.

“Wait just a moment.” She picked up the phone and I overheard her conversation. “Mrs. Remington needs some black heeled shoes. Just get a few styles and bring them up to the Presidential Suite. Mrs. Remington, what size are you?”

“Seven and a half.”

“She’s a seven and a half. Thank you.”

“You’re all set. Someone will be bringing some shoes for you to try on in about forty-five minutes.”

“Really?” I smiled.

“Really.” She grinned as she handed me the dress.

When I walked into the suite, I saw Asher sitting at the table on his laptop.

“Did you find something?”

“I did and guess what?”

“What?”

“They’re bringing me shoes to try on.”

“From downstairs?”

“I don’t think so. The saleswoman said they didn’t sell shoes. But when she found out I was staying in the Presidential Suite, she made a call.”

“Welcome to one of the perks of having loads money, Miss King.” He smirked.

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Asher I had just showered and changed into one of my suits when I heard talking from the living area. Walking out, I saw Everly in her new dress trying on different pairs of black heels.

“What do you think of these?”

I nearly lost my breath when she turned around and I saw her in her black dress with the black heels on.

“They’re perfect.” I smiled.

“I’ll take them.” She told the woman who brought up the shoes.

“Excellent, Mrs. Remington. We’ll just charge them to your room.”

The moment she left, I walked over to Everly and gripped her hips.

“Mrs. Remington?” I arched my brow at her.

“They just assumed, so I played along.”

“If you’re going to pretend to be Mrs. Remington, then we should be having sex.”

“No.” She grinned as she tapped the end on my nose and walked away.

I sighed as I stood there trying to tame my rising cock.

“You look stunning, Everly,” I said as I walked into her bedroom.

“Thanks, Asher. You look very handsome yourself.”

“Are you ready to go? The car is waiting for us downstairs.”

As she hooked her arm around mine, I fell more in love with her. We were in this tropical paradise and I couldn’t wait to put my business behind me and focus solely on her for the duration of the time we were here. When we arrived at the restaurant, the hostess took us over to our table where Jack and Margot were already seated.

“Asher, good to see you.” Jack smiled as he stood from his seat and shook my hand.

“Good to see you too, Jack. Margot, you’re looking lovely as ever.” I smiled as I kissed her cheek.

“You’re too sweet, Asher.” She blushed.

“Jack, Margot, I would like you to meet Everly King—my girlfriend.”

“It’s lovely to meet you, sweetheart.” Jack smiled as he brought Everly’s hand up to his lips.

Everly smiled but she also had a look on her face. A look as if something was wrong.

“Are you okay?” I whispered in her ear as we sat down.

“Yep. Totally fine,” she whispered back.

“I must say, Asher, you have excellent taste in women.”

“Thank you, Jack. She is very beautiful.” I smiled as I placed my hand on hers that was resting on the table.

“So Everly, what is it that you do?” Margot asked in a snide way.

“I’m a life coach.”

“Really? And you’re how old, dear?”

“Twenty-eight.”

Margot let out a light laugh. “And what could you possibly know about life at your age.” She picked up her wine glass.

“You’d be surprised what she knows, Margot,” I spoke.

“Retract your claws, darling,” Jack spoke to his wife as he placed his hand on hers.



Everly

I was uncomfortable all during dinner with Jack and Margot, and I couldn’t wait to leave. I excused myself to the ladies’ room and as I was washing my hands, Jack walked in the bathroom.

“Is anyone else in here?” he asked as he looked under the stalls.

“No. And you can’t be in here, Mr. Klein. I need to get back to Asher.”

“Hold up there, little lady,” he said as he tightly wrapped his arm around my waist from behind. His grip was tight, and it paralyzed me. “I think you’re a very beautiful woman and I’d love nothing more than to fuck you.”

His hot breath traveled down my neck. “So I’ll make you a little deal. Spend one night with me, and I’ll sell Asher my property. In fact, I might even sell it to him at a fair price.”

“Aren’t I a little too old for your taste,” I said.

“I can overlook that for someone as gorgeous and sexy as you. I bet you got some real hot stuff underneath that dress.” His hand started to roam up my thigh. “So what do you say? Do we have a deal? Or do I tell Asher tomorrow the deal is off, and he won’t get to build his precious little outdoor shopping center?”

I gulped as I freed one arm from his grip and elbowed him in the stomach as hard as I could. He released me as he doubled over. Taking my knee, I slammed it up into his balls and watched him drop to the floor.

“You better think twice the next time you lay your hands on a woman who doesn’t belong to you.” I spit on him before walking out of the bathroom.

I raced back to the table and grabbed my purse.

“We need to leave, now, Asher.”

“What? Why?”

“I’m not feeling well, and I need to go lie down.”

“Sure. Okay. Jack just went to the bathroom. Can you wait a minute?”

“No. I cannot wait. It was nice to meet you, Margot.”

“Give my apologies to Jack,” Asher said.

I high tailed it out of the restaurant while Asher followed behind me.

“What the hell is going on?” he asked as we climbed into the limo. “I’m sorry, Everly, but that was rude.”

“RUDE?” I shot him a look. “I’ll explain everything once we get back to the hotel.”

“What did you see?”

“Asher, please. I’ll explain in private.”

He sighed as he turned his head and looked out the window. When the limo pulled up to the resort, I climbed out and took off my heels. Asher didn’t say a word to me until we stepped inside the hotel room.

“Do you know that this just probably cost me the property?” he said as he walked over to the bar and poured himself a drink.

“Oh I know it cost you the property. When I was in the bathroom, Jack came in. He grabbed me from behind and told me that he wanted to have sex with me and if I turned him down, you would lose the deal.”

“WHAT!” he shouted. “Are you okay?” He walked over to me and pulled me into an embrace. “I’m going to fucking kill him.”

“I’m fine. I elbowed him, kicked him in the balls and then spit on him.”

“My God, Everly. I’m sorry.”

I broke our embrace and stared into his eyes. “Listen, Asher. That man is a sick fuck. When he took my hand, I saw things. He’s into child pornography. His computer is loaded with it. He has a room at a place called the Roadside Motel. It’s about ten miles from here. He lures these young girls there he meets on the internet and has sex with them. Then he pays them to keep their mouth shut. He has a hidden camera in the room, and he videotapes them.”

“Jesus Christ, Everly.” He turned away and rubbed the back of his neck.

“I need to call Daniel. I swear one time he said he worked with a detective from here on a drug ring case.” I pulled my phone from my purse, told Daniel everything and got the name and number of Detective Ron Lowry.

“Are you going to call Detective Lowry now?” Asher asked.

“No. I’ll call him in the morning. I’m sorry, Asher.”

“You have nothing to be sorry for. None of this is your fault. I’m the one who’s sorry. I wasn’t there to protect you.” He wrapped his arms around my waist.

“Don’t you dare apologize.” I hugged him tight. “You couldn’t have known. I’m going to take a hot bath if that’s okay.”

“Of course it is.” He kissed my forehead.

This. This was exactly what I meant when I asked myself if we could ever have a normal relationship. I was shaken. I wouldn’t lie and say I was fine. But I knew how to take care of myself. I’d taken more than my fair share of defense classes over the years. After my bath, I slipped on my robe and found Asher sitting out on the balcony at the table.

“Hey.” I opened the sliding door. “What are you doing out here?”

“Enjoying the night air and the sound of the ocean. Since I will no longer be meeting with Jack tomorrow, we can do anything you want. Just name it and I’ll make it happen.”

“I want to take walks on the beach, go swimming in that amazing pool, maybe try some scuba diving and do some shopping.”

“Do you scuba dive?” he asked.

“No. But I’ve always wanted to.” I smiled.

“Okay. We’ll go scuba diving while we’re here.”

“I’m going to head to bed,” I said.

“Okay. Go get some rest.” He softly kissed my lips. “Good night, Everly.”

“Good night, Asher.”

I awoke at two a.m. as my heart raced out of my chest. I wasn’t sure why it was doing that, but I really didn’t want to be alone. Especially when I knew Asher was in the next room. Climbing out of bed, I walked into his room, pulled back the covers and climbed in. Instantly, I felt his arms around me.

“Are you okay?” he asked in a sleepy voice.

“I just don’t want to be alone.”

“You don’t ever have to be. I’m here.” I felt his lips press against the back of my head.

Everly “Miss King, I’m Detective Lowry. Thanks for coming in. Now you said over the phone you were attacked last night?”

“Yes.”

“Where at?”

“The ladies’ room at Prime Steakhouse.”

“Do you know the name of your attacker?”

“His name is Jack Klein,” Asher interrupted.

“*The* Jack Klein?”

“Yes, detective. *The* Jack Klein. But that’s not why I’m here. He didn’t hurt me. Actually, I hurt him, but that’s beside the point. Mr. Jack Klein is a pedophile. He has a bunch of child pornography on his computer and he has sex with underage girls at the Roadside Motel where he videotapes them. He keeps the videotapes locked in his safe in his home office.”

“Do you have proof of this, Miss King.”

“If you go talk to the manager at the Roadside Motel, he knows all about it because Mr. Klein pays him well to overlook it. He uses the same room. Room 12. In that room you’ll find a hidden video camera in the smoke detector on the ceiling.”

“I’m sorry, but how do you know all this?”

“I see things, Mr. Lowry. And I saw it last night when I met him for the first time.”

“So you’re a psychic?”

“Yes.”

“Miss King. I’m sorry, but—”

“You listen to me, detective. Jack Klein assaulted her in the bathroom last night. He told her if she didn’t agree to have sex with him, he would cut off our deal,” Asher angrily spoke. “He is a sick man, and he needs to be stopped.”

“Fine. I’ll go to the motel and talk to the manager and have a look in the room.”

“Thank you,” I said.

“I’ll be in touch, Miss King.”

After Asher and I left the station, we grabbed a bite to eat and spent the rest of the day shopping and relaxing by the pool. When we went up to our suite to change for dinner, my phone rang.

“Hello?”

“Miss King, it’s Detective Lowry. Are you near a TV?”

“Yes.”

“Turn on the news.”

I grabbed the remote and turned on the TV. The news of Jack Klein’s arrest was everywhere.

“I take it you found everything I told you about?”

“We did, and he’s going away for a very long time.”

“Thank you, Detective Lowry.”

As soon as I ended the call, I felt Asher’s arms wrap around me from behind.

“That sick bastard,” he said. “Now that he’s going to prison, I’m going to swoop in, take his property from him and build my mall.” I felt his lips press against the side of my neck.



The next day, Asher rented a boat which took us to a remote and secluded beach. It was our own private oasis for the day. When we arrived, there was a small round table and two chairs set up in the sand inside a small white canopy tent.

“What’s this for?” I grinned.

“I’ve arranged for a private lunch for us.” He smiled as his lips brushed against mine.

“You think of everything, don’t you?” I wrapped my arms around his

neck.

“I’m trying.” He leaned his forehead against mine.

There was a large blanket spread out in the sand with a bottle of champagne chilling in a bucket and two glasses. It was the most perfect day as the sand glistened under the summer sun, and a light wind swept over our faces, providing some relief from the heat.

“Let’s go swimming,” I said as I grabbed Asher’s hand and pulled him up.

Our hands stayed locked together as we ran out into the water and the waves splashed all around us. Asher grabbed me and pulled me into him as we stood in the water. The smiles never left our face.

“I love you, Everly.”

“I love you too, Asher.”

We made our way back, dried off and ate lunch. We stayed and watched the sunset. It was magnificent and the most beautiful sight I’d ever seen. We lay on the blanket, holding each other and Asher took hold of my hand and interlaced his fingers around mine.

“Move to New York, Everly. Move in with me.”

“What?” I smiled at him. “Are you serious?”

“I’ve never been more serious about anything in my life.”

A frightening sensation overwhelmed me as I got up from the blanket and walked towards the shore, letting the salty water sweep over my feet.

“What’s wrong?” Asher asked as he hooked his arm around my waist.

“I’m scared.”

“Scared of what?” he asked as he turned me towards him and swept the back of his hand across my cheek.

“I’m not normal and—”

“Shh.” His finger touched my lips. “Don’t say that. You are normal. You just have a special gift that’s beyond the average person, and that’s what makes you so extraordinary.”

“I have doubts we’ll ever have a normal relationship.”

“What is a normal relationship anyway?” The corners of his mouth curved upward. “We’re two people who love each other and want to spend time together. I know exactly what I’m doing when it comes to you. I know what I’m getting myself into and it’s a beautiful thing.” His lips brushed against mine. “I want you in New York with me permanently. I want to be able to kiss you whenever I feel like it, hold you, and comfort you when

you've had a bad dream. I want to wake up to your smile every morning and share my life with you, Everly."

"You left out one very important part, Mr. Remington?"

"What?"

"The part about having sex whenever you want."

"Ah." He grinned. "I left that one out on purpose because I don't want to rush you. I don't want there to be anymore band-aids for us."

"You know what I think?" The corners of my mouth curved upward as my arms tightened around his neck. "I think the wounds are healed."

The smile on his face widened as he pulled me down with him. His back lay against the sand as I hovered over him and the water swept up over us. Our lips tangled as I could feel the hardness of his cock against my belly.

"Is that the boat I hear?" He sighed.

Looking up, it had just docked against the shore.

"Yep." I smiled.

"Of course."

"Don't worry. I promise we'll continue this the second we get back to the room." I kissed his lips one last time before climbing off him.

Grabbing his hand, I helped him up and we gathered our things and headed to the boat.

*A*sher Her body was as soft as silk, and I could feel the trembling of her skin from my touch. Sweet and satisfying moans escaped her the moment I thrust inside her. She welcomed me with a warmth that made my heart beat out of control. I grabbed her hands and interlaced our fingers as I brought her arms over her head. Thrusting in and out at a slow pace, I stared into her eyes. She was my angel, and I was never letting her go. The connection between us was strong. The lifeforce of two people whose souls were tied together. Her body shook as she orgasmed for the third time, making it impossible for me to hold back as I exploded inside her. Looking down at her beautiful face, I smiled as my lips softly brushed against hers.

“I don’t want to leave you in Rhode Island tomorrow,” I said as I held her in my arms.

“I know. I don’t want you to leave, but we don’t have a choice. I can’t come to New York until everything is settled.”

I let out a sigh. “And I need to get back to the office. But I will be flying out on Friday’s so we can spend the weekend together.”

“I’d love that.” She smiled as she lifted her head from my chest and kissed me.



W e flew back to Rhode Island and I had arranged for a limo to take her home. Saying goodbye to her was the hardest part and my heart ached like it had never ached before.

“I love you.” I held her tight against me.

“I love you too.”

Our lips met and tangled for the last time until I saw her again.

“You better call me the second you land,” she said.

“I will. Don’t worry.”

I gave her one last hug and kiss and it was too hard to let her go.

“Behave yourself.” I smiled as I ran my thumb across her lips.

“Me? You better behave yourself, Mr. Remington.” She grinned as she fought to hold back the tears.

I gave her one last wave as I stood on the steps of the plane. Taking my seat, I looked out the window as I watched the limo with her in it drive away.



Two Weeks Later

E verly I had looked forward to the weekends because that’s when I got to see Asher. He’d fly in around four p.m. on Friday and leave for the airport around seven a.m. Monday morning. I had called a realtor right when I got back from Key West and the house went up for sale within a week. It sold in one day to a nice couple who had just had a baby. The best part was, they bought the house fully furnished, at least that’s what the realtor told me. But when she came over in person to tell me the news, I saw who really bought the house. Was I mad? Absolutely not. He did it because he wanted me in New York as quickly as possible. Plus, he could afford it and it was money in my bank account, so who was I to complain.

“Now that the house sold, when are you coming here?” he asked over Facetime.”

“Probably another two weeks or so. I still have some things to pack up here and at the shop.”

“I thought you had a huge closing sale?”

“There are still a lot of things left that need to be packed up or sold. I’m running the sale until the end of next week.”

“I need you here, Everly.”

“And I want to be there. But these things take time. You should be happy my house sold in one day.”

“I am. Trust me. Now get that damn shop packed up and get to New York. I love you.”

“I love you too, Asher. I’ll talk to you tomorrow.”

I ended the call and climbed into bed with a smile on my face. I may have told him a little white lie. The store was already closed down. A couple who owned their own metaphysical shop in Massachusetts drove to my shop when they heard it was closing and bought out all my stock. Since I wasn’t going to be needing my jeep anymore, I sold it to Sam for a very good price. The only things I needed to bring with me were my personal items, which was more than I could fit in two large suitcases, so I hired a moving truck to transport the rest of my things to New York. They would be here tomorrow morning at seven a.m. and my flight out of Rhode Island left at ten a.m.

The next morning, I answered Asher’s Facetime call promptly at six a.m.

“Good morning, beautiful.” A wide grin crossed his face.

“Good morning, handsome.”

“How did you sleep last night?” he asked.

“Pretty good. I would have slept better in your arms.”

“I know, baby. But it’s already Wednesday, and I’ll be there Friday evening.”

“I can’t wait to see you.” I smiled.

“And I can’t wait to see you. Listen, I have very important back-to-back meetings all day today, so I won’t be able to Facetime you again until tonight. I hope you understand.”

“Pish.” I waved my hand in front of the phone. “Of course I understand. You’re a very busy man running that multi-billion-dollar company, and I’m a very busy woman trying to get everything in place so I can get to New York.”

“I love you, and I’ll be thinking about you all day,” he said.

“I love you, Asher. I’ll talk to you tonight.” I kissed the phone and he kissed me back.

Climbing out of bed, I threw on some clothes, put on some light makeup and put my hair in a high ponytail. I had everything that needed to be moved in the middle of the living room and my two large suitcases by the front door.

As I walked around the house, my eyes began to fill with tears. This house was filled with so many memories and it was hard to let go.

“You hold the memories here in your heart, my sweet girl. It’s time to move on,” I heard my grandmother’s voice.

“Grandma.” I smiled as I turned around and saw her sitting in her favorite chair. “I wondered if I’d see you again.”

“Only in times you need me, Everly, and this is one of those times.”

“I’m so happy to be moving to New York to be with Asher, but yet I’m so sad to leave this house.”

“It’s time to close the chapter of this life and go start a new one.” She smiled. “Life is full of new seasons, and yours has just begun.”

There was a knock at the door and my grandmother disappeared. Sighing, I opened the door and let the movers inside. They loaded up my things and just as they pulled away, the car I reserved pulled into the driveway. Grabbing my two large suitcases, I set them on the porch as the driver took them and put them in the trunk of his car. I stood in front of the house and looked up.

“Goodbye, old friend. Thanks for the wonderful memories,” I spoke as I climbed in the back of the car.

Everly I stepped off the plane and immediately turned on my phone. Thank God Asher kept his promise and didn't try to contact me. After grabbing my bags from baggage claim, I took a cab to the penthouse and had, Lester, the doorman let me up.

"Asher doesn't know I'm here. It's a surprise."

"No worries, Miss King. I won't say a word." He gave me a wink. "It's good to have you joining us."

"Thanks, Lester. It's good to be here."

I stepped into the foyer and then dragged my heavy bags up the stairs and into the bedroom. I smiled as I threw myself down on the bed and looked around. The room smelled like him and it made me miss him even more. Asher had two walk-in closets directly across from each other. Opening the one door, I saw it was empty, so I started unpacking my suitcases. Opening the drawers to the tall chest, I knew he had cleared those out for me. Once I got all my clothes hung and put away, I put the rest of my stuff away in the bathroom, after I had to rearrange a few things. I set my razor and bottles of shampoo and conditioner on the shelf in the oversized steam shower. Standing back, I smiled as they sat next to his.

It was six-thirty when Asher sent me a text message.

"Hey, baby. I just left the office and I'm on my way home. I'll Facetime you when I get there. You better be ready."

"Hey there, handsome. I'm ready. I can't wait to talk to you."

"Me either, gorgeous. It's been a very long and stressful day."

I quickly changed into a sexy black nighty I had purchased from Victoria

Secret the other day. After making sure my hair and makeup were perfect, I climbed on the bed in a sexy position and waited for him. I heard the ding of the elevator and my heart started to race. After a few moments, I could hear his footsteps coming up the stairs.



Asher

The second I got home, I headed upstairs to change. I wanted to do that first before I called Everly. Today was exhausting and I would give anything to have her here with me this very moment. To hold her, make love to her, and just be with her. As I approached my room, I noticed the door was half closed, which I found odd because I didn't remember doing that this morning. Slowly opening the door, I stood there in shock when I saw Everly lying on my bed in sexy lingerie.

"Come here, lover boy!" She grinned.

I couldn't speak for a moment because I was in total shock.

"What are you doing here?!" I grinned as I climbed on the bed and hovered over her.

She placed her hand on the back of my head and pulled me down for a passionate kiss.

"I've moved in. I hope you don't mind." A wide smile graced her face.

"You're here? As in here? Right now and forever?"

"I'm here, Asher, and I'm not going anywhere as long I have this comfy bed and your sexy body to keep me warm."

"I thought—"

"Shh." She placed her finger on my lips. "Shut up and fuck me."

I couldn't believe she was finally here and there would be no more going back to Rhode Island. No more goodbyes and no more tears. I quickly stood up and stripped out of my clothes. She had made me the happiest man on Earth, and we spent the next two hours in bed together making magic happen.

"Wow. That was amazing," she said as she climbed off me.

"Damn right it was. Are you going to tell me how you planned all this without me knowing?"

"Are you going to tell me that you were the one who bought my house?" She smirked.

“That was confidential information and if that realtor said—” She just sat there and smirked at me. “Ah. Right. She didn’t tell you, did she?”

“Nope.” She shook her head.

“I thought you couldn’t see things regarding me anymore?”

“I usually can’t, but then I saw it the moment she came over to the house.”

“I can explain, Everly.”

“There’s no need. I know you bought it because you wanted me here sooner and how could I be mad at you for that.” She leaned over and kissed my lips.

“Have I told you how much I love you?”

“Yes. But never stop telling me.”

I brought my hand up to her cheek. “I never will stop saying it. I can promise you that.”

She laid her head on my chest as her hand softly stroked my skin. Having her here with me was the best way to end a stressful day.

“I’m starving. How about you?” I asked her.

“I am too. Can we order something?”

“Of course. We can order anything you want. I have menus in the kitchen drawer downstairs. Go take a look, and I’ll be down in a minute. I need to use the bathroom.”

“Don’t take too long.” She smiled as her lips met mine.

I walked into the bathroom and flipped on the lights. I couldn’t help but smile when I saw some of her products sitting on the counter. Glancing over at the shower, I saw her shampoo and conditioner sitting next to mine. A feeling of euphoria took over me because even though she was just in my bed, seeing her things in my bathroom, validated she was here to stay.

Walking down to the kitchen, she was looking over the menu for Chinese food.

“Chinese?” she asked.

“Perfect. Tell me what you want, and I’ll order it.”

After placing the order for delivery, I wrapped my arms around her and pulled her into me.

“Have you told Daniel and Diana you’re here?”

“No. Not yet. I was hoping we could have them over tomorrow for dinner and I could surprise them. Maybe you could ask Diana at work.”

“Don’t you think she’ll think it’s a little strange that I’m inviting them

over for dinner without you being here?”

“You’ll think of something.” She grinned.

I grabbed a bottle of wine and poured some into two glasses. The doorman called to let me know our food was here, and I told him to send the delivery guy up.

“The food is on its way up and I need to take this call. Can you grab it?”

“Yeah. Of course,” she said.

After I took the call from Steven, I went back into the kitchen where Everly had set dinner on the table.

“I had to tell the delivery kid to go a different way back to the restaurant.”

“Why?”

“Because when I took the bag from him, I saw him on his bike getting hit by a cab.”

“Oh shit. Is he going a different way?”

“He said he would, but who knows. He might just think I’m crazy.”

“Well, for his sake, I hope he listened.”

TWO MONTHS LATER

Everly Two months had passed since I'd moved in with Asher and life couldn't have been more amazing. My business was growing, Asher was thriving at work, Daniel proposed to Diana, and she was getting bigger every day.

"Don't forget I'm going shopping today for a dress for the charity ball." I smiled at Asher as I handed him a cup of coffee.

"I haven't forgotten. You're going with Diana, right?"

"Yes." I smirked.

"Ah. So you're the reason she told Richard she was taking the day off."

"That's right. Do you have a problem with it, Mr. Remington?" I asked as I grabbed hold of his tie.

"If I did, can we fight about it and have make up sex?" A smirk crossed his lips before he pressed them on mine.

"We can fight about it, but I can promise you there will be no make-up sex."

"Guess what?" He grinned. "I don't have a problem with it at all. You two go have fun today. You both deserve it." He kissed my forehead.

"That's what I thought, and guess what?" I shouted as he walked towards the elevator. "You're getting sex tonight!"

"I already planned on it, sweetheart."

I laughed as I sipped my coffee. I loved that man more than life itself. Suddenly, I heard the elevator door open and Asher walked back into the kitchen.

"Did you forget something?"

“I did.” He reached in his wallet and pulled out his credit card. “I forgot to give you this. Buy whatever you want. Spend thousands for all I care and buy Diana’s dress.”

“Wow. Thanks, baby.” I reached up and kissed his lips.

“You’re welcome.” He grinned as he turned around and headed towards the elevator.

“Just so you know, you’re getting extra tonight.” I shouted.

“Stop it, Everly! I’m late for work.”



We went to Serendipity’s to grab some lunch before we headed to Bloomingdale’s to do some shopping.

“I’m so happy you took the day off.” I smiled.

“Me too and Richard was really cool about it even though we have this major project due in a couple days. He said a day off rejuvenates the mind and he knows I’ll come back tomorrow even better.”

“Wow. He sounds like a really good boss.”

“He is. You’ve haven’t met him yet, have you?”

“No. Remember last week when I came to the office, he was in a meeting.”

“That’s right. No worries. You’ll get to meet him at the fundraiser. His wife, Christina, is so sweet. She came to the office yesterday with a container filled with chocolate chip cookies she had just made. They were to die for. I think you’ll really like her too.”

“I can’t wait to meet them.”

After we finished our lunch, we headed to Bloomingdale’s to shop. When we finally made it to the department where the formal dresses were, I stood there and stared at the mannequin before me. It was dressed in a long silver sparkly gown. The same exact gown I was wearing in my dream when I first dreamt about Asher.

“Earth to Everly.” Diana waved her hand in front of me. “Hey, are you okay?”

Snapping back into reality, I looked at her.

“Yeah. I think this is the dress.” I stared at it.

“Wow. That is gorgeous. Try it on. I saw one over here I liked.”

The sales associate got me the dress in a size 4 and placed it into the fitting room. Diana was in the room right next to me. Slipping on the dress, I couldn't reach the zipper to zip it up all the way.

"Diana, did you try your dress on?" I asked over the wall.

"I just got into it."

"I need help with my zipper."

She walked over and zipped it up as I stood on the platform in front of the three-way mirror.

"Oh my God, Everly. That dress looks gorgeous on you."

I stared at myself as flashes of my dream standing in the middle of the ballroom flashed through my head.

"Hey. What's going on?" Diana asked.

"It's this dress. It's the same one I was wearing when the dreams about Asher started."

"The same exact one?"

"Yeah."

"Then it's meant for you. Right?"

"I guess. I do love it and I loved it in my dream."

"Then don't worry about it and just buy it. I don't like this dress. I need something a little more flowy."

I gave the sales associate the dress and told her I'd take it. Diana had finally found something she felt comfortable in, but she hesitated.

"I love this but it's so expensive."

"Please. Asher is buying it for you."

"Oh my God, no!"

"Yes. He gave me his card this morning and told me to buy your dress."

"Why would he do that?"

"Because you're his employee." I smiled at her.

"So? He doesn't buy the other employees their outfits."

"You're the best friend of the woman he loves. He'd be very offended if you didn't let him."

"Fine. I'll thank him tomorrow when I see him."

After purchasing the dresses, we headed to the shoe department so I could buy some matching shoes. I tried to get Diana to buy a pair, but she refused and said she already had a pair at home.



I stood in the center of the ballroom in my silver sparkly gown. Asher looked at me from across the room and the corners of his mouth curved upward into a sexy smile. I gave him a warm smile back and looked around as couples slow danced around me. The room started to spin, and I could feel myself losing my balance. I felt a hand wrap around my arm, so I looked down and took note of the watch that sat on his wrist. When I turned around, a man stood there dressed in a black tuxedo with a white mask covering his face.

“I didn’t know. I’m sorry.”

My eyes flew open as I gasped and quickly sat up. My heart raced and I couldn’t catch my breath.

“What’s wrong?” Asher asked in a panic as he placed his hand on my arm.

“Go back to sleep, baby. I’m sorry I woke you.”

“No, Everly. Talk to me,” he said as he sat up and hooked his arm around me. “Did you have a dream?”

“Yeah.” I rubbed my forehead.

“What was it about?”

“We were at your fundraiser, and I was wearing the dress I bought. You were standing across the room smiling at me and people were slow dancing all around. Suddenly, the room began to spin, and I felt someone grab my arm. When I turned around to see who it was, it was a man in a black tuxedo wearing a white face mask, and he spoke to me.”

“What did he say?”

“I didn’t know. I’m sorry. And that’s when I woke up.”

“What do you think that was about?”

“I have no idea.”

“Come here.” He pulled me into him, and I laid my head on his chest. “Maybe you’re nervous about the fundraiser.”

“Why would I be?”

“I don’t know, baby. Go back to sleep. Maybe you’ll dream again and this time it’ll make more sense.”

“I don’t want to dream that again.”

“Shh.” He kissed the top of my head. “I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

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Everly I was standing in the bathroom in nothing but my silk robe, applying my makeup for the fundraiser when Asher walked up behind me and pressed his lips against my shoulder.

“Damn, boy. You smell delicious.” I smiled as I applied my eye shadow.

“So do you.” His hands roamed up my robe as he gripped my bare ass.

“Can a girl get ready for a very important evening without getting groped?”

“No.” He shook his head. “When women are as sexy as you, we men can’t help ourselves. It’s in our genes.”

I let out a laugh.

“I love you, but I need you to back away so I can put on my eyeliner. It’s a process trying get that perfect wing.”

“Okay. That means we’ll just have to fuck longer later.”

“Fine with me.” I gave him a smirk.

“I still love you,” he said as he walked out of the bathroom.

I couldn’t help but smile. I was so blessed to find someone like him. As I was trying to perfect my wing, my eyeliner pen slid across my face when I was startled by a voice.

“He’s happy.”

“UGH!” I shouted. “Look what you made me do. I thought you went to go find peace. What are you doing here?”

“Checking in.”

“Checking in? Mr. Remington, please.”

“Darling, we know each other well. Call me Curtis.”

“Okay, Curtis. You cannot keep coming around. You need to go to your place.”

“Everly? Who needs to go to what place?” Asher asked as he stepped into the bathroom.

“Your father. That’s who. He made me screw up my wing.”

“My father? He’s here?”

“Not anymore.”

“Why the hell was he?”

“He’s happy you’re happy, and he refuses to leave and go find peace.”

“When was the last time you saw him?” His eye narrowed at me.

“At my house in Rhode Island. The night you came to apologize, and we watched *The Bachelorette*.”

“And you didn’t tell me?”

“Did you really want me to, Asher?”

“Yeah. It would have been nice. It kind of pisses me off that my girlfriend talks to my dead father,” he spoke in an aggravated tone.

“Well, I’m sorry. But I have no control over that.”

“Yeah, right.” He walked out of the bathroom. “I need to go finished getting dressed. I suggest you hurry it up, so we aren’t late.”

I was enraged and the moment he walked out of the bathroom, I slammed the door shut. How dare he.

“UGH!” I screamed.

After I was done applying my makeup and putting my hair up in an elegant style with a few soft curls hanging down, I slowly opened the bathroom door and looked around the room to make sure he was gone. Pulling my dress from the hook in the closet, I removed it from the garment bag and slipped into it. I twisted every which way to try and get the zipper zipped all the way, but it wasn’t working.

“UGH!” I shouted.

Whatever. I didn’t care.

As I was digging through my jewelry box to find my diamond earrings my grandmother had bought me when I turned twenty-one, Asher walked into the bedroom.

“Wow. You look absolutely stunning.”

“Go away,” I said.

“Do you need help with your zipper? It’s only zipped halfway.”

“That’s the new look. Didn’t you hear?”

He walked over to me and zipped me up as I put in my earrings.

“I’m sorry, Everly. It just makes me angry that he won’t leave. I shouldn’t have yelled at you or said what I did. I didn’t mean it, baby.” He turned me around, so I was facing him.

“Fine. I accept your apology.” I looked down.

“Are you sure?” He placed his finger under my chin and lifted it, so I was looking at him.

“I love you, Everly.”

“I love you too, you big dummy.”

The corners of his mouth curved upward as he walked over to his dresser drawer, pulled out a long velvet blue box and handed it to me.

“I bought you something.”

“You did.” I grinned. “What is it?”

“Open it and find out.”

I slowly lifted the lid and gasped when I saw the beautiful white gold diamond bracelet sitting inside.

“Asher.” I brought my hand up to my mouth. “Oh my God. It’s gorgeous.”

“Here. Let me put it on you.”

He removed the bracelet from the box and put it around my wrist.

“It looks perfect with that dress,” he spoke.

“It’ll look perfect with anything.”

“It’s not too heavy is it?”

“No. Why?”

“It’s 7 carats total weight.”

“I love you so much. Thank you.” I kissed his lips.

“You’re welcome, and I love you. I’m going to have to keep a close eye on you tonight.”

“Why?”

“Because you’ll be the most beautiful woman there and people are going to be staring. Especially men.”

“Stop it.” I grinned as I could feel the heat rise in my cheeks.

“I’m not kidding. Are you almost ready to go?”

“I’m ready now. I just have to grab my evening bag.”

Damn, did he look sexy in that tuxedo. He looked exactly like he did in my dreams.

The fundraiser was being held at The Remington in the grand ballroom. When we arrived, some of the guests were already there. Waiters and waitresses walked around with champagne on their trays with some o'dourves. Over in the corner sat a long table with platters of meat, different cheeses, caviar and a variety of crackers. There had to be at least ten different types of olives, as well as fruit trays and vegetable trays.

"I'll be right back. I have to go check on something," Asher said as he kissed my cheek.

Pulling my phone from my purse, I sent Daniel a text message.

"Where are you?"

"We just pulled up."

As I walked out to the lobby, they had just walked in.

"Damn, Everly. You look beautiful." Daniel smiled as he kissed my cheek.

"You're looking pretty dapper yourself in that suit." I grinned. "Look at you!" I gave Diana a hug. "You look gorgeous."

"Not as gorgeous as—Oh my God! Where did you get this?!" she exclaimed as she grabbed my wrist.

"Asher gave it to me today."

"It's beautiful and expensive."

"It's 7 carats," I whispered.

"Man, he has good taste," Diana said as she slapped Daniel on the arm.

"Hey. We have a baby on the way. I can't afford to buy you one of those."

The three of us walked into the ballroom and Asher came walking over.

"There you are. I was looking for you."

"Sorry. I met Daniel and Diana in the lobby."

Asher said hello to everyone, and I grabbed another glass of champagne. I was feeling a bit nervous as I looked around. I'd had another dream last night about the man in the white face mask.

"You seem nervous," Asher spoke as he placed his hand on the small of my back. "Sweetheart, trust me, nobody is getting in this place wearing a white face mask."

"I know. It's just it doesn't make sense."

“Try to forget about it and have a good time.”

Diana, Daniel, and I walked over to the table where the food was.

“Thank God. I’m starving,” Diana said as she grabbed a cracker.

We stood by the table and talked for a bit until Diana had to use the ladies’ room and Daniel went up to the bar to get a drink. I was standing there alone until I heard Asher’s voice from behind.

“Everly, sweetheart.”

Turning around, I saw Asher, another man, and a woman standing there.

“I’d like you to meet Richard Winters and his wife Christina. Richard, Christina, this is my girlfriend, Everly.”

“It’s so nice to meet you.” Christina smiled as she extended her hand. “It’s nice to meet you as well.”

“I feel like I already know you from the way both Diana and Asher talk about you.” Richard grinned as he extended his hand.

Placing my hand in his, I looked down at his watch and scenes from the past started to flip through my head. My breathing became restricted and I needed to calm the fuck down for Asher’s sake. Not tonight. Not tonight. I could barely breathe as my dream was becoming reality.

“It’s nice to meet you, Richard.” I gave him an unsure smile. “If you’ll excuse me for a moment, I need to use the ladies’ room.”

Asher stared at me because he knew something wasn’t right, and I could see the fear in his eyes. Casually walking out of the ballroom, I felt like I could breathe again once I hit the lobby.

“What the hell is going on?” Asher asked as he followed me.

“Nothing. I’m on my way to the ladies’ room.”

“Don’t fucking lie to me, Everly. Come on.” He grabbed my hand and led me to the elevator.

“Where are we going?”

“Up to my suite so you can tell me whatever it is you saw and then we can get back to the goddamn fundraiser!” he spoke in a loud voice.

He swiped the keycard, opened the door and flipped on the lights. The shutting of the door behind me startled me.

“Okay. Lay it on me.” He held out his arms. “What did you see about Richard? What the fuck do I need to know about him?”

“Stop yelling at me!” I shouted.

“One night, Everly. One damn night. My night.” He pointed to himself. “What did he do? Cheat on his wife? Is he out to screw me? Did he murder

someone? WHAT!” he shouted.

“I think he’s my FATHER!” I shouted back.

Asher’s jaw dropped as he stared at me from across the room.

“What?” His brow furrowed.

“I saw him with my mother. She was going to tell him that night she was pregnant, but then they got into an argument and she told him she never wanted to see him again.”

“My God, Everly.” He walked over to where I stood and pulled me into an embrace. “I’ll have Damien take you home if you want.”

“No. I’m fine. This is your night and I’m staying. I can deal with this tomorrow. I didn’t want to tell you tonight. But you’re so damn stubborn, Mr. Remington.”

“I’m sorry, baby. I’m so sorry. I really need to fucking think before I speak.”

“I’m fine.” I took in a deep breath. “But, yeah, you do.”

“They’re sitting at our table. I can arrange for them to sit elsewhere.”

“No. Don’t go changing anything. I’ll be fine. I promise. He’s the guy from my dream, Asher. I recognized his watch.”

“We’re going to get through this.” He held my face in his hands. “I promise.”

“I hope so.”

Asher

I couldn't believe it. Guilt rose up inside me for the way I treated her. We walked back down to the ballroom and the moment we stepped inside, Diana came running over.

"Where were you?"

"We just couldn't help ourselves, so we had a quickie in the suite." Everly smiled as she gave me a wink.

"Oh. Okay then." Diana grinned.

I was worried. Not about tonight, but what was yet to come. Richard was an amazing guy, and we were becoming friends. I trusted him and now my girlfriend just may be his daughter. Did he know about her and abandon her? Or maybe he never knew her mother was pregnant. Everly did say her mother was going to tell him that night.

We took our seat at the table across from Richard and Christina. I kept a close eye on Everly to make sure she was okay.

"So, Everly. I hear you're a life coach?" Richard spoke.

"I am."

"I should hire you for my oldest daughter, Emily. She could use some life coaching right now."

"How old is she?" Everly asked.

"She just turned twenty and has no idea what she wants to do with her life. It's a constant battle with her."

"She has time to figure it out."

"Now my eighteen-year-old, Laurel, is all set to attend NYU to get her MBA. She has her life all planned out, and we couldn't be prouder of her."

He smiled.

The last thing Everly wanted to hear was about her two sisters, so I changed the conversation quickly to business, and I could tell she was grateful. When it was time, I got up on the stage, welcomed and thanked everyone for coming and gave my speech. When I was finished, I sat down next to Everly and we enjoyed a nice dinner. Once dinner was over, I needed to go mix and mingle with the guests. Everly stayed by my side and I was proud to introduce her to everyone as my girlfriend.

“I’m going to head over to the dessert table,” she spoke. “Do you want anything?”

“I’m good for now. But go ahead. Are you doing okay?”

“I’m doing fine. Stop worrying about me.” She kissed my lips.

“I’m afraid I can’t do that.” I smiled at her.

The band started to play Unchained Melody, so I walked over to the dessert table, grabbed Everly’s hand and led her to the dance floor.

“What are you doing?” she asked with a smile on her face.

“I’m dancing with my beautiful girlfriend.” I stared into her eyes. “Tell me what going on in that pretty little head of yours?”

“I don’t know, Asher. I’m just so confused.”

“I know, baby. But I’m here for you, and I promise I always will be.” I brushed my lips against hers. “We’ll figure this out.”

When we arrived home, we immediately went upstairs to get ready for bed. After I was done using the bathroom, I came out and saw Everly sitting on the edge of the bed holding a picture in her hand.

“What are you doing?” I asked as I sat down next to her.

She handed me the picture without saying a word.

“Is this you and your mom?”

“Yeah.” She nodded and I saw a tear stream down her face.

“Baby, what’s wrong?” I hooked my arm around her.

“I’m just so mad at her.”

“Why? Because of your father?”

“That and because she was so weak!” she spoke in an angry tone as she stood up from the bed. “She ran from everything. She drank herself to death, abused pills, and she was an unfit mother! She didn’t even say goodbye.” She placed her face in her hands and began to cry.”

I got up from the bed and wrapped my arms around her. I hated seeing her like this and I felt helpless.

“She never said goodbye, Asher.”

“I know, sweetheart.” I held her tightly against me.

“The one person in the world I wanted to see, and she couldn’t even bother.”

“Did your grandmother ever see her?”

“No.” She shook her head as she broke our embrace. “At least that’s what she always told me.”

I walked over to the nightstand, grabbed a couple tissues and handed them to her.

“Now you know I have mommy issues,” she said as she blew her nose.

“Maybe she was ashamed for how she lived her life and just couldn’t face you.”

“I don’t care. She was still my mom and I loved her.”

I grabbed hold of her hand and led her to the bed. After we both climbed in, I pulled her into me. All I wanted to do was heal her and protect her.

“I love you so much, baby. I don’t ever want you to doubt that. Even when I act like an asshole sometimes.”

“I know, and I love you too, Asher.”



Everly

I sat on the terrace and watched the sunrise as I held a cup of coffee between my hands. Asher was still asleep because he’d been up with me most of the night. I didn’t know what to do. Should I tell Richard? If I did, it would disrupt his life. From the little bit I talked to him and his wife, I could see they were wonderful people. Richard already had a family, and he didn’t need me complicating things.

“Life can be very complicated at times.”

“Not now, Curtis.” I brought the cup up to my lips.

“He has a right to know he has another daughter, Everly. And you have the right to get to know your father. He was kept from you for twenty-eight years, and now he’s right here working for my son and the man you love.”

“I don’t want to cause problems.”

“No, darling. The truth is you’re scared of rejection. You’re afraid of being rejected like you’ve been your whole life.”

“No, I’m not.” I glanced over at him.

“Yes, you are.”

“Please tell me you’re talking to yourself,” Asher spoke as he stepped out on the terrace and kissed the top of my head.

“Unfortunately, no. Curtis was just here.”

“Again? What did he want this time?”

“He was just telling me things I know but didn’t want to hear.”

“He was always good at that,” Asher said.

I looked over at him and gave him a small smile as I reached my over and grabbed his hand.

“What?” He smiled back.

“Why are you being so calm about Curtis being here?”

“Because my father is a pain in the ass and he’s not going anywhere until he’s ready. That’s how it’s always been with him. If he was still alive, he’d still be doing what he’s doing.”

I gave him a smile as I gently squeezed his hand.

“You need to tell Richard who you are, Everly. If you want my honest opinion, I think he’ll take it well. He’s a good man. And you really have no choice.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Because it’ll be awkward for me working with him knowing he’s your father and he doesn’t have a clue.”

“You know this will affect you, and that’s the last thing I want. I don’t want to cause any issues for you at all.”

“Stop worrying about me. You need to do what’s right for you. You deserve to get to know your father and he has the right to know he has another daughter.”

“You sound like your father.” I smirked and he let out a sigh.

ONE WEEK LATER

Everly

“I’m so nervous, Asher.”

“I know you are, baby, but don’t be. I’m right here with you.”

He squeezed my hand as we took the elevator up to the tenth floor.

Asher knocked on the door of apartment 10D, and Christina opened it with a bright smile.

“Come in. Welcome to our home. It’s good to see you again, Everly.”

Christina gave me a light hug.

“Thank you, Christina.”

“There you two are.” Richard grinned as he stepped into the foyer.

He shook Asher’s hand and gave me a light hug. “It’s good to see you again, Everly. Shall we?” He gestured to the living room. “Asher, can I get you a bourbon?”

“That sounds wonderful, Richard.”

“Everly?”

“No thank you. I’m good for now.”

Asher and I took a seat on the couch. Sitting on the coffee table was a delicious looking charcuterie board.

“Are your daughter’s home?”

“No. They went out with some friends,” Christina spoke. “Are you sure I can’t get you something to drink? We just got this new bottle of wine from Italy and I’ve been saving it for a special occasion.”

“You know what? That sounds good.” I smiled.

I noticed Richard kept staring at me. He tried to be discreet about it, but he wasn’t very good at it. Somehow, I had a feeling he saw my mother in me.

Asher noticed it to and decided to say something.

“Are you alright, Richard. I notice you keep staring at Everly.”

“Forgive me. It’s just you look like someone I knew a long time ago. The resemblance is uncanny.”

Christina walked over and handed me a glass of wine and then took her seat next to Richard.

“This person I resemble. Was her name Laura King?”

He swallowed hard before sipping his drink.

“Yes, as a matter of fact.” His eye narrowed at me.

Asher reached over and grabbed my hand.

“She was my mother.”

“Was?”

“She passed away twenty-three years ago.”

“I’m very sorry for your loss. I had no idea.”

He got up from his seat and when he went to pour himself another drink, I noticed his hands were shaking.

“Richard, are you okay?” Christina asked.

“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have come here,” I spoke as I got up from the couch.

“What is going on?” Christina asked as she looked at Asher.

“Everly, sit down,” he said. “Everly has something she needs to discuss with you, Richard.”

“You’re here because you think I’m your father. Am I right?”

“What?!” Christina exclaimed.

Asher got up from the couch and held his hand out to Christina.

“Let’s go into the kitchen and give these two some privacy. I’ll explain everything to you.”

She slowly placed her hand in his and they walked out of the living room.

“You and my mother were in a relationship twenty-eight years ago. The night she was going to tell you she was pregnant, the two of you got into a fight and she told you she never wanted to see you again.”

“If she passed away twenty-three years ago, you would have only been five years old. How could you possibly know that?” He stared at me.

“I saw it the night we shook hands at the fundraiser.”

“You ‘saw’ it? I don’t understand.”

“I was born with an ability. A gift. I can see things that have or are going to happen.”

“Like a psychic?”

God, I hated that word.

“Yes.” I looked down.

“Tell me something. Do you have a lot of dreams? Ones that wake you up in the middle of the night leaving you gasping for air?”

“Yes. I do.” I cocked my head at him.

“Your mother always had those. But she would never tell me about them. She’d just say they were bad dreams and she wanted to forget them.”

“She couldn’t handle it, so she used pills and alcohol to try and suppress them.”

“That night you’re referring to. The night we broke up. She called me that morning and said she had something to tell me and that she’d be waiting at my apartment when I got home from work. That same day, I got a call from a company here in New York offering me the job of a lifetime. When I got home that night, I told her about it. She became so angry and gave me an ultimatum. It was either her or the job. I told her we had only been dating six months and I couldn’t turn it down. So, she told me she never wanted to see me again and stormed out of my apartment. That was the last time I saw her, and I left for New York a week later. If you are in fact my daughter, I am so sorry. I didn’t know.”

“I know you didn’t. And I’m sorry that I sprung this on you.”

He walked over to the couch and sat down next to me.

“She never told you who your father was?”

“No. But then again, I was only five when she died. As I got older, I asked my grandmother, but she said she had no idea and that my mother said she didn’t know who my father was.”

“I never met your grandmother. It’s not that I didn’t want to, it was Laura who kept me from meeting her.”

“I think it was because she was afraid of what my grandmother would see. For people like us, with this gift, it’s hard to have relationships because people can’t understand. I’m sure that’s why she never told you. Believe me, it’s hard.”

A small smile crossed his lips. “You and Asher seem to be doing just fine. That man adores you. He talks about you all the time.”

“We had a rocky start.” I smiled. “But now he’s accepted it.”

“Listen, Everly. If you are truly my daughter, I will fully accept it and you. But I need to make sure. Maybe through a DNA test.”

“I totally understand, and I would be happy to do that.”

He reached over and placed his hand on mine as Asher and Christina walked into the room.

“Asher explained everything to me. Are you alright, Richard?”

“I’m fine, darling.” He got up and kissed her cheek.

“Is she—”

“We’re going to do a DNA test, but I’m pretty sure she is.” He smiled at me.



Asher

I was sitting in my office when Everly and Richard walked in. They had gone together for the DNA test and then went and grabbed some lunch.

“How did it go?” I asked as I got up and gave Everly a kiss.

“It went good. We should have the results back in about three days,” she spoke. “I need to go. I have a meeting with a client in about thirty minutes. I love you.” She kissed my lips.

“I love you too, baby.”

“I’ll see you, Richard. Thanks for lunch.”

“You’re welcome, Everly.” He smiled.

“She’s a great woman, Asher,” Richard spoke as he sat down across from my desk.

“She certainly is.” I gave him a smile as I took a seat behind my desk.

“How do you deal with it. You know—”

“It was hard at first, but now I’m used to it. Sort of.” I smirked.

“I remember when I was with Laura. I didn’t even have a clue what was going on, but those dreams she had frightened her to her core.”

“Everly is stronger than her mother ever was, and she learned to deal with it and accept it. Thanks to her grandmother. Hell, she even puts up with my father.”

“Your father?” He cocked his head.

“He likes to visit her. He can’t seem to move on for some reason.”

“But you don’t see him, right?”

“No. Only she can.” I sighed. “I know you know she is your daughter,

Richard. And I think you knew it the night of the fundraiser. I saw the way you looked at her. It was almost as if you were seeing a ghost.”

“I just had this weird overwhelming feeling when I met her. I can’t explain it, Asher. I’d never felt anything like it. So, when you asked if the two of you could come over, I knew something wasn’t right.”

“I just hope this doesn’t complicate things for you and your family.”

“Christina and I already spoke to the girls. We sat down with them and told them everything. I didn’t tell them what Everly can do. I didn’t want to add that to the mix.”

“How did the girls take it?”

“They took it well and they want to meet her. So, after we get the test results back that prove I’m her father, we’re going to have you two over for a family barbeque.”

“Looking forward to it.” I smiled.

“You’re a good man, Asher. And I’m not just saying that because you’re my boss. I see the way you love Everly, and it makes me happy that she’s being taken care of by someone like you.”

“Thanks, Richard.” I chuckled. “But trust me, Everly takes care of herself and the more you get to know her, the more you’ll understand what I mean.”

He let out a laugh.

ONE WEEK LATER

Everly I was sitting on the edge of the bed thinking when Asher walked into the room.

“My father isn’t here, is he?”

“No. Why?”

“I don’t know. It’s just the way you’re staring into space. I thought maybe you were talking to him.”

“I was just thinking,” I softly spoke.

“About?” He hooked his arm around me as he sat down.

“My life and how it’s changed so drastically in the last few months. I mean, I go from having no family besides Daniel, to having a father, stepmother and two sisters. All of a sudden, I have this new family, and it’s a lot to take in. I’m nervous to meet Richard’s girls.”

“You mean your sisters?” I smiled at her.

“What if they don’t like me?”

“They’ll love you. Richard told me that they’re excited to meet you.”

“We’ll see.”

“Aw, baby.” He pulled me into him and kissed the side of my head. “Stop being ridiculous. Now we have to go, or we’ll be late. And you don’t want to be late the first time meeting your sisters.”

“You’re right. I’ll meet you downstairs. I’m just going to check my hair one last time.” I kissed his lips.

When I walked into the bathroom, I saw Curtis sitting on the edge of the bathtub.

“Curtis. To what do I owe the pleasure?”

“I’m just here to wish you luck, darling. I’m happy things worked out for you.”

“Thanks. I appreciate it. And you know what? I would be so happy for you if you crossed over to where you’re supposed to be.” I smiled at him.

“Yeah. I’ve been thinking about that, and I think I’m going to stick around for a while.”

“Why?” I shot him a look.

“Because I like seeing my son happy, you’re like the daughter I never had.” He smirked before he disappeared.

“Everly? Are you coming?” Asher asked.

“Sorry.” I turned the light off in the bathroom and grabbed my purse. “Apparently, your father plans on sticking around.”

“What?” Why?” he asked as he followed me out of the bedroom.

“Because he likes seeing his son so happy, and I’m like the daughter he never had.” I sighed.

“You have got to be kidding me.”



The moment we arrived at Richard’s and Christine’s apartment, nerves flooded my body. What if the girls didn’t like me?

“Stop fidgeting,” Asher spoke as he knocked on the door.

“I can’t help it.”

“They’re going to love you,” he said.

I had expected Richard or Christine to answer. But when the door opened, a beautiful young girl with long brown hair and big brown eyes stood there.

“Hello, there.” Asher smiled at her.

“Hi. You must be my sister, Everly,” she said as she stared at me. “I’m Emily.”

“It’s nice to meet you, Emily.” I smiled at her.

When we stepped inside, we were greeted by Richard and Christina. Over on the couch was they’re youngest daughter, Laurel.

“Laurel, come here, sweetheart,” Richard spoke as he held out his hand to her. “I’d like you to meet Everly, your sister.”

She looked like Emily with the same brown eyes, except her hair was blonde.

“It’s nice to meet you.” She gave a shy and unsure smile.

“It’s nice to meet you, too.”

“Come on, Asher. Let’s go get these burgers on the grill and leave the girls to talk.”

I gave Asher a nod to let him know that I was okay, and I went and helped Christina in the kitchen. When the burgers were ready, we all gathered around the table to eat.

“Laurel just found out she got a full-ride scholarship to NYU.” Richard smiled at her.

“Wow. Congratulations, Laurel,” I said. “Your parents must be very proud.”

“Thank you, and they are. I’m excited that I’m going to make something of my life, unlike some people.” She looked at Emily.

“Shut up, Laurel.”

“Emily, that’s enough!” Christina spoke in an authoritative tone.

“God. I can’t wait to get the hell out of here!” Emily shouted as she threw her napkin down and ran to her room, slamming the door behind her.

I swallowed hard as I looked at Asher. He was feeling just as uncomfortable as I was.

“Kids,” he spoke.

“I apologize,” Richard spoke. “She’s been giving us a lot of grief lately.”

“Lately? Try her whole life,” Laurel said.

“That’s enough, Laurel,” Christina scolded her. “I’ll go see—”

“Let me go talk to her,” I said. “Sometimes it’s easier to talk to someone you don’t know.”

Christina gave me a nod, so I went down the hall and lightly knocked on Emily’s door.

“Go away,” she shouted.

I slowly opened the door and stepped inside.

“Hey.” I smiled at her. “Can I come in?”

She just sat on her bed shaking her head with tears in her eyes.

“You’re already in, aren’t you?” she spoke with an attitude and I couldn’t help but smile. She reminded me of myself at that age.

“Why are you so upset?” I asked as I sat down on the edge of the bed.

“What? You think because now that you’re my sister, you just get to butt into my business?”

“No. But I know that sometimes it’s easier to talk to someone you barely

know.”

“I just can’t stand them. Everything is Laurel this, Laurel that. They always loved her more because she’s the smart one and I’m the dumb one.”

“That is not true.”

“How do you know? You’ve known us for like five minutes.”

“You don’t go to college?”

“No. I tried community college for a while and it just isn’t for me. I always hated school.”

“Me too.” I smiled. “High school was really tough for me.”

“What do you do?” she asked.

“I’m a life coach.”

“Did you go to college for that?”

“No. I completed a training program online and became certified. Now I own my business and have plenty of clients.”

“Wow. Good thing you didn’t know our father when you were doing that. He would have disapproved. Life is all about college, girls. You’ll never get anywhere in life without a good solid college education.”

“You love photography, don’t you?”

“Yeah. How did you know?”

“Can I see some of your pictures?”

“Sure.”

She reached under her bed, pulled out a large photo album and handed it to me.

“I taught myself everything I know about photography.”

“Wow, Emily. These are amazing. You have a really good eye.”

“Tell that to my parents. They tell me it’s just a hobby and not a career.”

As I held her book in my hand, images flowed through my mind.

“It is your career. This is what you’re meant to do. You need to follow your passion, Emily. Not what your parents want you to do. Don’t tell them I said that.” I smiled.

“I won’t.” She laughed.

“How badly do you want this as a career?”

“Bad. It’s the only thing I’m interested in. Except guys, of course.” She grinned.

“Stay away from them. You’re young and they’ll only complicate your life. You need to do you first, before you get involved with anyone else. Deal?”

“Deal.” She smiled.

“I can help you. I am a life coach, and I know I can get you on the right track.”

“Are you serious? You’d help me?”

“Of course. Isn’t that what sisters are for.” I placed my hand on hers. “I’ll talk to your parents.”

“Thanks, Everly.” She gave me a hug.

“You’re welcome. Now, pull your big girl panties up and go out there and apologize to them. I know it’s hard. But you can do it.”

“Fine.” She huffed.

We went back out to the dining room and sat down at the table. Asher placed his hand on my knee and gave me a smile as Emily apologized to her parents.

After we were done with dinner, the girls decided to go out for ice cream while we stayed back and visited for a while longer.

“I have no idea what you said to her, but she has never apologized to us before,” Richard said.

“Listen, there’s something I need to discuss with you. It’s about Emily and her photography.”

“Uh.” Christina rolled her eyes. “She thinks that she can make a decent living off that. We told her she couldn’t, and she needs to decide what else she wants to do.”

“Have you seen her photos?” I asked.

“Of course. They’re very good, but it’s just a hobby,” Richard said.

“Actually, it’s not. When I touched her photos, I saw her future. She’s going to become a very well-known photographer. Her photographs are going to be displayed in many art galleries, and she’s going to work for a prestigious fashion magazine taking photos. She just needs the support from you two and a little push in the right direction. I can push her in that direction, but only if she has your support.”

“And you saw all that?” Richard asked.

“I did. But things could change if she doesn’t have your support. You will lose her.”

ONE YEAR LATER

Asher I was frantic as I searched the entire penthouse. My heart was racing, and I began to profusely sweat. Where the hell was it? I searched everywhere and I couldn't find it. Panic engulfed me and I felt like I was losing my mind. I heard the elevator ding which meant Everly was home. Shit. She wasn't supposed to be home for another hour. I quickly went into my office and pretended like I had been working.

"Hey, handsome." She grinned as she walked in, sat on my lap and gave me a kiss.

"Hello, gorgeous. Why are you home so early?"

She looked at me as her eye steadily narrowed.

"What have you been doing?"

"Working. Why?"

"Uh-huh. You're sweating."

"It's really hot in here. Is the air working?"

"It's actually quite cool in here, Asher."

She got off my lap and looked around my office, then she hit a one of the keys on my keyboard, so my computer turned on.

"Oh my God, Everly. What do you think I was doing?"

"I don't know, but your father said to look in the corner of the floor in your closet. What is he talking about?"

"He said that. Just this second?"

"Yes."

"Thanks a hell of a lot, Dad!" I shouted.

I walked out of the office and headed up the stairs. Everly started

following me, so I stopped and turned to her with a pointed finger.

“You stay down here!”

She frowned at me as she turned around. Opening my closet door, I walked inside, and sure as shit, there was the box lying in the corner on the floor. How the hell did it even get there? Now my plan was ruined because I knew Everly was suspicious. I shoved the box in my pocket, went downstairs, grabbed Everly’s hand and took her into the living room.

“What is going on, Asher?” She demanded an answer.

I placed my hands on her shoulders and took in a deep breath.

“I love you, Everly King, and you have made me the happiest man alive. This past year with you has been incredible, and you’ve given me something I thought I would never have or experience. I want many, and I mean many more years like this. You are my soulmate and the air I breathe. I can’t imagine living life without you.” I pulled the ring box from my pocket, got down on one knee and took hold of her hand. “Will you marry me, Everly? Will you do me the honor of becoming my wife for the rest our lives?”

She gasped as she brought her hand up to her lips. Tears filled her beautiful eyes and for once in her life, she was speechless.

“Oh, Asher. Oh my God. Oh my God! Yes! Yes, I will marry you!”

A wide grin crossed my face as I slipped the custom-made diamond ring on her finger, stood up and hugged her tight.

“I’m so happy you said yes. I love you so much.” I broke our embrace and kissed her lips.

“I love you so much.” Tears fell down her cheeks. “You lost the ring, didn’t you?”

“Yep. I had been searching for it for two hours before you got home. This wasn’t how I planned to propose. I wanted to do it differently, but since my father told you to tell me where to look for it, I figured you became suspicious.”

“This was perfect, Asher. Absolutely perfect.” Our lips met for another kiss.



Six Months Later

verly

E Asher and I were married six months later in a beautiful church with an elegant reception that included four hundred people in the ballroom at The Remington. The day after our wedding, we boarded a private jet and spent two weeks in the Maldives, where we had our own private residence that sat over the ocean water with a private pool. The first week we were there, we didn't leave our bungalow once. Every meal brought to us, was enough to feed a family of six. We mostly stayed in bed. But when we did venture out of bed, we swam in the pool and the ocean, and we did some scuba diving. The second week we spent shopping and sightseeing.

After Diana had their son, Harry, she swore she was never having children again due to the difficult birth. But when we were on our honeymoon, her and Daniel Facetimed us to tell us she was once again expecting. The relationship between Richard, Christina, and my sisters grew stronger every day. We did things together as a family. Emily was well on her way to becoming a professional photographer. She already had a few photographs in some art galleries across New York and Vogue hired her as a freelancer to do a small fashion shoot which would lead to her working for them full-time.

As for Curtis, he was still around. Not as much, but every now and again he'd pop in to make his presence known. I did warn him that he was to stay away from us on our honeymoon. He agreed and said he'd see us when we got back.



It was two months after we got back from our honeymoon as I stood in the bathroom and stared at the word "Pregnant" that displayed in the window of the white stick.

"Oh boy," I said out loud.

I couldn't comprehend how this had happened since I was on the pill. Then I remembered screwing up my pills on our honeymoon because I was so caught up in the beauty of everything, I had completely forgot to take it one day. Okay, maybe two days. But I'd doubled up the next day like I was supposed to. Shit.

"Congratulations, darling. I can't believe I'm going to be a grandfather."

“You can’t be a grandfather, Curtis. You’re dead. Have you forgotten that?”

“No. What do you think Asher is going to say?”

“I don’t know. We never really discussed kids. Honestly, I never wanted any because of—well, you know.”

“You can’t let that stop you from having a family. What’s meant to be is meant to be. Maybe you’ll get lucky and she won’t take after you.”

“She?” I looked at him and he smiled.

I heard the elevator ding and Curtis disappeared. Shoving the stick in the pocket of my pants, I went down to greet my handsome husband.

“There you are, gorgeous.” He smiled as he kissed my lips.

“How was your day?” I asked.

“Stressful. But better now that I’m home with you. It’s so nice to come home to peace and quiet.”

I swallowed hard when he said that.

“Go pour yourself a drink. In fact, make it a double.” I patted his chest and turned around.

“Okay.” He chuckled. “Are you going to tell me you’re pregnant or something.”

I froze in place as my back was turned to him.

“Everly? Sweetheart? I was kidding.”

I stood there and took in a deep breath as he walked over and stood in front of me.

“Are you pregnant?”

I reached in my pocket and showed him the stick.

“The stick says I am.” I bit down on my bottom lip.

“Wow. Okay. Okay. Okay.” He kept nodding his head.

“Okay what, Asher?!” I loudly voiced.

He gripped my shoulders and stared directly in my eyes.

“We’re having a baby, Everly.”

“Yes. I know. Are you like in total shock or something?”

“Yes. Actually, I am.”

I dropped my shoulders and fell into his arms.

“So am I. It’s all your fault.”

“My fault? You’re the one on the birth control.”

“If we didn’t fuck like rabbits on our honeymoon, this wouldn’t have happened.”

“Baby.” He broke our embrace. “If you would have remembered to take your pills, this wouldn’t have happened. But it did and you have a tiny human growing inside you. Our baby.” He smiled. “A baby created out of pure love. One we’ll be responsible for at least until the kid is in its twenties. I need that drink now. I’d offer you one, but you can’t drink because you’re pregnant. Sucks to be you, Everly.” He grinned.

“You just wait, Mr. Remington. I’m going to make your life a living hell during this pregnancy.”

“I have no doubt you will, sweetheart.” He smirked and I walked over and smacked his chest.

“I hate you.” I pouted.

“No you don’t. You love me just as much as I love you. And just as much as we’re going to love our child.” His lips pressed against mine. “Now, come on. Let’s go upstairs and celebrate.” He took hold of my hand and led me towards the stairs.

“I’m going to get fat.”

“I’ll still love you, baby.”

“I’m going to be bitchy and uncomfortable.”

“I’ll still love you, baby.”

“I’m going to have all kinds of cravings and send you out in the middle of the night to get what I want.”

“I’ll still love you, baby.”

We reached the top of the stairs.

“I’m probably not going to want sex as much.”

He turned and looked at me.

“That’s not even funny.” His brow raised at me and I smiled.

FIVE YEARS LATER

Asher “Hello, my gorgeous wife.” I smiled as I kissed Everly on the cheek and handed her a bouquet of red roses.

“Hello there, my sexy husband. What are these for?” she asked as she brought them up to her nose.

“No reason. Just because I love you and I haven’t given you flowers in a while.”

“You gave me roses last month.” She grinned.

“Like I said, it’s been a while. Where’s Sophia?”

“Up in her room playing. Can you tell her that dinner is almost ready?”

“Of course. It smells delicious and I’m starving.” I kissed her lips.

Walking up the stairs, I unbuttoned my suit coat. As I stood in the doorway of my daughter’s bedroom, I watched as she sat at her little table with her stuffed animals in each chair except for the one across from her.

“Hello, sweetheart,” I said as I walked in and kissed the top of her head.

“Hi, Daddy! How was work?”

“Work was good. What are you doing?” I asked as I knelt down beside her.

“Having a tea party with Grandpa and my friends.”

I swallowed hard.

“Grandpa Richard?” I nervously asked.

“No, silly. He isn’t here. It’s Grandpa Curtis.”

“Everly!” I shouted. Everly!”

“What? I’m sure the entire building just heard you.”

“Sophia, tell mommy who you’re having a tea party with.”

“My two dolls, Millie and Daisy, and Grandpa Curtis. But he left when he saw Daddy walk in.”

“Oh boy.” She gulped as she looked at me.

“Sweetheart,” Everly spoke as she knelt down beside her. “Do you see Grandpa Curtis a lot?”

“Yeah.” A big smile crossed her small face. “He’s funny.”

“Okay. Now I know she’s not talking about my father,” I said.

“Yes, I am, Daddy.”

“Sweetheart, you know Grandpa Curtis is dead, right?”

“Yeah. I know. He told me that he will always watch over me.”

“Great.” I rolled my eyes as I let out a sigh.

“Okay. Dinner will be ready in a few minutes. Clean up your toys,” Everly spoke.

I followed her out of the bedroom and down to the kitchen.

“Now what?” I asked.

“Now nothing. We were afraid this was going to happen, Asher. We’ve had many discussions about it.”

“I know, Everly. But I prayed it wouldn’t.”

“She’ll be fine. And now that I know she has my gift, I can help her with it. Are you mad? You seem mad?”

“No, baby. I’m not mad.” I wrapped my arms around her. “We’ll both help her with it. Since when had my father been coming around again?”

“I haven’t seen him, Asher. I swear. You know I always tell you when he’s here.”

“I know.” I sighed.

“Is it really so bad that he plays with her? He is her grandfather.”

“Her dead grandfather. All we need is for her to go around telling people that and they’ll think she’s a lunatic.”

“I know. I’ll have a talk with her.”

“We’ll both have a talk with her.” I kissed her forehead.

That was the day Everly and I learned that our five-year-old daughter, Sophia, was special. I wasn’t too worried because having Everly for a mother, I knew my daughter would be just fine.

Two months after we found out about Sophia’s gift, I took Everly back to the Maldives to celebrate our wedding anniversary while Richard and Christina watched Sophia. Two months later, Everly discovered she was pregnant. Needless to say after we found out, I went and had a vasectomy.

We weren't taking any more chances. Seven months later, our second daughter, Sarah Nicole Remington was born. Now I had three beautiful girls in my life, and I couldn't have been happier.



Five Years Later

Asher

I couldn't believe Sophia was almost eleven and Sarah was five. When I'd look at them together, I'd smile at the fact that Everly and I had made such beautiful children. They were the love of my life and I couldn't imagine life without them.

It was seven a.m. when I went downstairs for breakfast before leaving for the office. Everly was making banana pancakes and they smelled amazing. Walking over to her, I slapped her on the ass and kissed the side of her neck.

"Didn't you get enough last night." She grinned.

"It's never enough with you, baby." I gave her a wink as I poured a cup of coffee.

Sophia and Sarah came running in and took their seats at the table. I sat down across from them and grabbed a couple of pancakes.

"You girls better hurry up and get eating or you're going to be late for school," I said.

"Daddy?" Sara said.

"Yes, princess?"

"Who's Noah?"

I looked at Everly and I could see the same panic on her face that I had.

"How do you know that name, sweetheart?"

"He came to visit me last night."

"Sweetheart, that's impossible." My heart started racing. "He's in a faraway country."

"I know. He died. He wanted me to tell you that he was sorry for everything. He made me promise to tell you, and I told him I would."

Everly sat down in the chair next to me, placed her hand on my arm and gave it a gentle squeeze. Looking at her, I slowly shook my head.

"Ah shit. Here we go again."

I hope you enjoyed What If You. Please enjoy a sample chapter of my Sweet Contemporary Romance Novel called Harbor Falls. A clean and wholesome romance set in a small coastal town.



Chapter 1

Adalyn stood in the master bathroom of her and her husband’s multi-million-dollar penthouse holding a white stick in her hand as she had done every month for the last year and a half. The same disappointment shrouded her as tears filled her eyes when she saw only one pink line appear. Anxiously waiting, and with hope, she stared at it waiting for the second line

to appear. Just like all the other months, it never did. Throwing the stick in the trash can, she quietly walked down the stairs and entered her husband's office where he was finishing up work for the night.

"Well?" He glanced up at her behind his black rim glasses.

She slowly shook her head in disappointment as she stood there with her arms folded, trying to hide the overwhelming pain that coursed through her.

"I'm sorry, sweetheart," he spoke as he got up from behind his desk and wrapped his arms around her. "We can try again next month."

"It's been a year and a half, Darren. I don't understand. The doctor said after my miscarriage I would have no trouble getting pregnant again."

"I know." He kissed her head. "Maybe the timing isn't right. Why don't you go up to bed and I'll make you a cup of tea?"

Adalyn nodded her head and headed up the stairs. She'd suffered a miscarriage two years ago when she was sixteen weeks pregnant. It took her a long time to accept the fact that it wasn't meant to be. She had doubted if she was ever meant to be a mother, because now at the age of thirty-four, her biological clock was ticking away.

Her previous pregnancy was a surprise and one that wasn't planned. They had been married for a little over a year and wanted to wait at least two years before starting a family. But it had happened, and Adalyn was more than happy.

She climbed into bed, pulled the covers over her and waited for Darren to come up. It was a rare night he was home and not working late at the office, like he did most nights. Picking up her phone, she sent a text message to her sister, Hannah, a fashion designer who lived in SoHo. Being only two years apart, they had always been the best of friends.

"I took another test and it was negative again."

Within seconds, her sister replied.

"Aw, Addy, I'm sorry. Let's meet tomorrow morning for breakfast and we can talk about it."

"I wish I could, but I have to be at the museum early. A new collection is coming in."

"Then how about lunch?"

"That might work. I'll let you know tomorrow."

"Okay. Chin up. It will happen. Love you, sis."

"Love you too."

Darren walked in the room and handed Adalyn a cup of piping hot

chamomile tea.

“Here you go, sweetheart.”

“Thank you. Are you coming to bed?” she asked with the hopes he would say yes.

“I still have some work to finish up, but I’ll be up in a while.”

“It’s already eleven o’clock.”

“I know what time it is.” A small smile crossed his lips as he leaned over and kissed her forehead.

When he left the room, Adalyn sighed as she brought the cup up to her lips and sipped her tea. She needed her husband right now. She needed to feel his arms securely around her as she tried to get over the fact she wasn’t pregnant. As much as she wanted to believe she came first to him, as he always stated, she didn’t. His number one priority was his work.

Darren Richards worked for his father’s company. A hedge fund firm that was started by his grandfather with only one hundred dollars to his name. Once his father retired, Darren would be appointed CEO and take over the billion-dollar company. When they first met, Adalyn knew his work was important, as was hers at the museum. They were both career driven and that was one of the reasons why she fell in love with him. But she knew there were times when her and their relationship had to come first.

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