# A HOLINIGHT NOVELLA

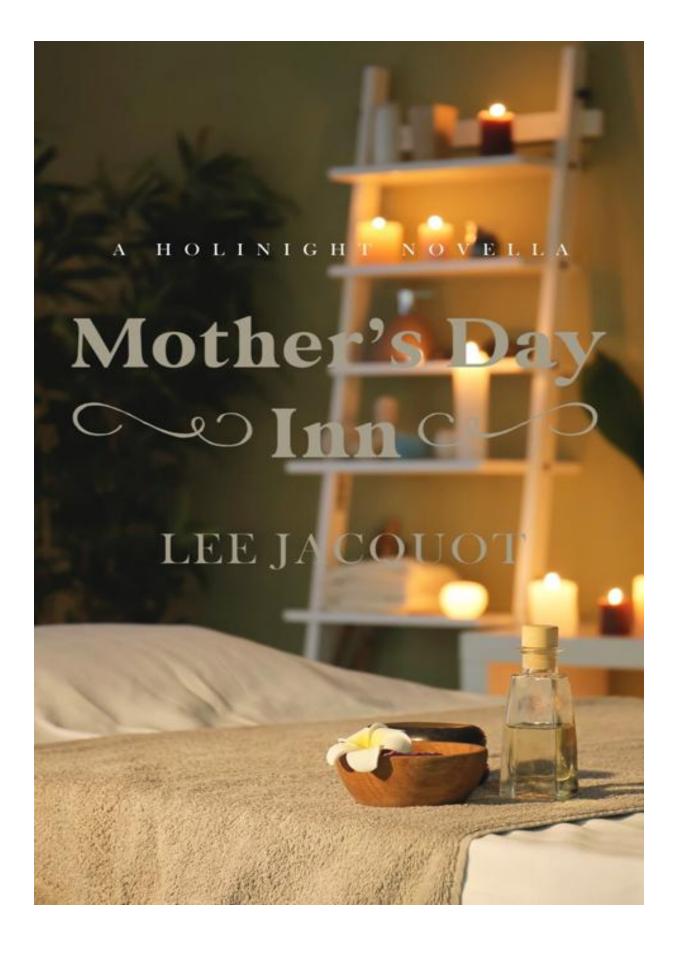
# Mother's Day

## LEE JACQUOT

### Mother's Day Inn

A Holinight Novella

## Lee Jacquot



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#### A Quick Note From the Author

Mother's Day Inn is a standalone novella in the Holinights series. None of these books need to be read in order.

It is a steamy & fun read (seriously, it's just a good time) intended for mature audiences of legal adulthood age. It should NOT be used as a guide for kinks or a BDSM relationship.

The author is not liable for any attachments formed to the MCs nor the sudden desire to have someone perform certain acts that could lead to a pregnancy announcement .

Reader discretion is advised.

To my dirty girls who don't know they're dirty yet. Here's your awakening.

CHAPTER ONE

hat I don't understand is why, when the guy is older, it's hot, but heaven fucking forbid when the woman's older, it's weird." Molly, the neighborhood's self-appointed ambassador, PTO president, and the head of the HOA and our friend group, flips her long blonde hair over a bronzed shoulder.

She pointedly stares in the direction of a few fathers nearby helping their children with their floaties, shirts off, and dad bods glistening. Only a few yards away from them, lying sprawled out over the loungers, are a group of women in their very early twenties, not-so subtly watching them.

It's opening day in the West Port private neighborhood pool, and with the number of people, it's as if the majority of everyone is here. The younger women aren't super familiar to me, though, so they're either older siblings or nannies, and I must say, they definitely aren't bashful with their admiration of the older men.

"It's the salt and pepper hair," another mom and my neighbor, Gennie, points out. "It makes them look distinguished and wise, while for us, we just look old." I huff to myself, watching my daughter as she dips a single bubblegum pink toe in the shallow end of the pool, testing the temperature.

Thirty-three is hardly old by anyone other than a six-year-old's guidelines, but I get what they're saying. It's a double standard.

It's also a flat-out lie.

My ex-husband was neither distinguished nor wise, and I blame tequila for me thinking either of those things was true.

I also blame Gennie too, actually. After getting a well-deserved and hard-fought raise at the financial advising company I work for, she *had* to take me out to celebrate.

I won't lie; working sixty-plus hours a week and having an unhealthy addiction to *Dancing with the Stars*, I didn't have that much time left over to go out. Or date. Or think of anything other than how I could climb my way up the ladder of success. So that time, when she begged with those big puppy dog eyes, I agreed. I needed the reprieve.

We met Sam about twenty minutes after we got there. He bought us every drink we ordered, took me on the dance floor, and let me talk his ear off about all the shit I had to go through to be there celebrating.

He's fifteen years my senior and had all the stereotypes associated with older men. He had the salt and pepper going, financial stability and maturity. I was completely enamored.

And utterly wasted.

When I found out I was pregnant a couple of weeks later, he was down on one knee. It was unreal, and almost everyone—both his family and mine —knew how incredibly stupid it was, but they all supported us. They wanted us to work, and with our little girl on the way, so did we.

We tried.

I tried.

Turns out, being with a forty-year-old doesn't really come with any kind of extra benefits. Like myself, Sam was a workaholic, spending more time at the office than at home, and had certain quirks about himself I didn't care for but weren't complete dealbreakers.

Of course, as time passed, though, I also learned he was arrogant, disinterested, and getting with someone younger was very purposeful on his part.

Turns out, I was simply a conquest during his midlife crisis.

His internal crusade to prove that even as an older man, he could still appeal to younger women. That he still "had it." I was nothing but a grand feat, and after the glamor of his victory wore off, so did his need to keep me around. Daughter and all.

Luckily, I'd bought our house the week after my promotion, so the split —particularly regarding affairs and custody—was way easier than I thought it'd be.

Sam's been an okay dad, just not really present, which is why I had to triple-check with him when I booked a stay at a popular bed and breakfast right outside the city.

They're running a Mother's Day special this entire weekend, and since Lyn is staying with my parents tomorrow so I can catch up on work, I decided to have a little staycation to pamper myself today.

A massage, a mani-pedi, some adult drinks with no risk of pregnancy though my IUD wouldn't allow it anyway—and some undisturbed sleep, are all calling my name.

But naturally, the mom guilt settled in, and I knew I had to do something with Lyn. Luckily, Molly stopped me in the car rider line Friday morning and told me I should meet her at the opening day of the neighborhood pool, and just like that, I felt a little less crappy.

My eyes flash over to the PTO president, who is taking an abnormally long swig of her water out of her Stanley cup, still eyeing the girls suspiciously. "I should go over there and spoil it for them." One of the funnier and older women in the group, Wanda, nods her head, her red curls bouncing wildly behind her. "Oh yeah. Tell them they only have a solid ten years before the guy's balls shrivel up, and they shoot dust when they come."

My eyes widen, and I instinctively glance around for little ears who may have heard. "*Wanda*."

Wanda shrugs, biting the plastic edge of a popsicle wrapper before tearing it off. "Tell me, where's the lie?"

"I can't find one." Gennie laughs, holding out a hand for one of Wanda's margarita-sicles. "Not to mention, their stamina plummets."

"Exactly! I need some of these hot-ass pool boys in my bed. Guarantee they can go like that little battery bunny."

"Lifeguards," I correct her, watching as Lyn finally shuffles into the shallow water. Since she's in the splash pad part of the pool, the water only goes up to her ankles, but I know she's making sure that it isn't too cold so she can go under the mushroom fountain.

"Tomato, Tomato." Wanda laughs. "I'd let them slut me out from here to Timbuktu."

My cheeks heat at her language—part of it from her crudeness in a public setting, the other from the thoughts her words evoke.

Being someone's anything is in itself inherently hot. Being someone's slut? Doing things you normally wouldn't, but for them, you'd do it all?

God, what I wouldn't give for that. What I wouldn't give to just feel *wanted*. It's been longer than I'd like to admit, and today's dating pool lacks any sort of connection I've always craved, so the very *idea* of being slutted out is more than appealing.

"You know who I'd become a complete whore for?" Gennie sighs, her eyes sliding over to me. "Theo fucking Beckham."

Oh. Okay. So it's clearly Call-Out Olivia Day.

"Oh my fuck, yes. I miss seeing him around here. Best lifeguard we ever had," Wanda adds. "And that ass? It was so tight and muscular."

"Didn't he have a thing for you, Olivia?"

"No, absolutely not." I wave them off, ignoring the erratic flutter in my stomach as I search for Lyn. She's under the bright red mushroom, sitting cross-legged, watching all the other kids run around. She's my little antisocial butterfly.

Molly shakes her head. "No, I'm one hundred percent sure he did. Any time we were here without you and Lyn, he would be up on his perch, watching the entire pool like a shark could pop out at any second. But when you came around? He always found a reason to be on the ground and over by us."

I chew on the bumpy inside of my lip, letting the lie slip freely. "That doesn't mean anything."

"It means everything." Gennie scoffs. "If I didn't have my ball and chain, half of these lifeguards could easily find me in their bed. I still can't understand what your aversions are to younger men."

My mouth pops open, hoping to push the topic onto something less... sensitive. "Because they don't know what they want, and Lord knows I can't afford to be another option. And stop. You love Bill."

Bill's the best husband out of our entire friend group, always really attentive and supportive of Gennie's seventy-five different entrepreneurial ideas. When it comes to their three kids, Bill is always ready to build a lemonade stand for the girls or volunteer for the boy scout camping trips.

If I'm being honest, I always sort of envied Gennie for having Bill. He's the father who keeps striving to be better, even when everyone around him thinks he's perfect. Not to mention, he looks at Gennie like she's the sun, the moon, and the stars in between.

Gennie sighs. "Of course I do. I just wish sometimes he'd smack me around a little."

A round of unified gasps erupts.

"Wait. What?" Wanda puts a hand on Gennie's knee. "Are you okay?"

Gennie laughs, grabbing a bottle of sunscreen. "Yes. Sometimes I just kind of feel like we've gotten stuck in this vanilla routine, and I need a little spice every once in a while."

My cheeks heat. I've always had desires I never really said out loud, and the one time I did to Sam, it ended with me never wanting to open my mouth again. I had to learn to shove those thoughts down and hope they'd wither and die.

They haven't.

Molly nods. "Oh, I know exactly what you mean. My husband did the whole breakfast in bed this morning and had the kids make me homemade cards. It's lovely and all, but sometimes I wish Mother's Day meant more than flowers and a day on the couch."

We all murmur our agreement. For me, Mother's Day has looked the same all six years. Waking up, making Lyn and I breakfast, then working from home while doing all the arts and crafts my daughter wants.

But as Molly and Gennie mentioned, I finally decided I wanted to do something different this year. Something for myself.

So when I saw the popular B&B, Carnations, was having a Mother's Day Inn special, I couldn't resist.

Later, after taking Lyn home and getting her ready to spend the rest of the day with my ex, I'll be speeding there. The only minor setback is I have to finish a report to send off by tonight, and my laptop has been acting like a total asshole.

"Hey, Wanda. Is your husband free to take a look at my computer? It's been slow the last couple of months, but lately, it *drags*."

"Oh, honey, I sent that man fishing for the weekend. Mother's Day gift to myself."

Gennie nudges my shoulder. "You can always ask him."

My brows furrow as I shift, following her line of sight. Under the mushroom, my daughter beams, waving frantically at a familiar passing face. Midnight hair glints under the bright sun as he smiles and waves back, his eyes suddenly surveying the space around Lyn.

Like a magnet, his gaze snaps to mine, and the air evaporates, leaving my mouth parched and my core tight.

CHAPTER TWC

t's been a year since I've seen Theo, but even that short time has been very, very good to him.

Dressed in a simple white shirt and red swim shorts, Theo's the billboard model for Baywatch. The muscles in his arms stretch the sleeves to their capacity while the hem pools around his waist. His shorts stop at the middle of his lean, muscular thighs, and even now, twenty feet away, he dwarfs all of us at well over six feet.

He's not massive, but he's big, a little intimidating, and unearthly gorgeous. He's also only twenty-five, which is no age for me to consider dating. Not because of our gap, but because he's got time, and I've got lingering abandonment issues and a child.

When he nears our group, my heart thuds faster, the air drying out another fraction.

"Theo, how have you been?" Wanda's smile stretches across her entire face as he approaches. "We miss seeing those buns—*you* around here."

Theo smirks, his singular right dimple making an appearance, causing my nerves to prickle in awareness. "Ladies, Happy Mother's Day. I miss being here. I hope the new guards have been keeping a close eye on things." His dark blue eyes flicker to mine, sending a jolt of electricity down my spine. It's been an entire year, but my body still reacts the same simply being in his orbit.

It's as though the entire pool is vacant, only he and I in this impermeable bubble. The sounds become muffled and the people fade to blurs. It's always hard to remind myself that this is probably how he makes everyone feel and it's not custom to me. But the wistful heart in my chest doesn't listen and thrums harder, threatening my ribcage with a nasty bruise.

Gennie clears her throat, drawing our attention. "You're doing computer repair now, right?

Theo nods, his gaze roving over my frame slowly before he glances at the rest of the women. It feels like I've suddenly been released from a tight hold, and my body slumps slightly. "Yes, ma'am. Just opened up a store over on Walsh."

"Oh, nice. Congratulations," Wanda says, taking another popsicle from the cooler. "What brings you back over to our little West Port abyss?"

His eyes flash to me briefly before he gestures to the lifeguard station at the back of the pool. "They had a problem with one of the pumps, and since it seems like I'm the only one who ever knew how to fix it, I told them I'd stop by."

Molly smiles. "That was kind of you. Maybe if you have some time later, you could take a look at Olivia's laptop. It's giving her issues."

I shake my head, a swell of heat expanding across my face. "No, that's okay. It's nothing, really."

Gennie bumps my shoulder. "It is. It's her old MacBook that she refuses to throw away."

"Because it works." I frown at Gennie, pursing my lips. "Plus, there's some sentimental value attached to it."

"That doesn't mean you can't get a new one."

I open my mouth to shoot her a rebuttal, but Theo's soft laughter stalls the air in my lungs. "I can fix it, Ms. Tran. I'll swing by later if you want and grab it."

Somehow, I manage to swallow around the cotton suddenly lodged in my throat. I hate that no other man I've encountered stumps me up like an adolescent teen, but his presence has always felt so overpowering it's hard not to. "Call me Olivia, Theo, and I'll be at Carnations today, then deep in work on Sunday. Really, it's fine."

He hikes a dark brow. "Carnations Inn? My parents own that. I go over all the time to help my mom with tech upgrades."

"What a coincidence." Wanda's lips curl into a mischievous grin. "Could you pick it up there?"

Again, I try to insert myself and tell him it's not a big deal, that I can definitely send my report without any major inconveniences, but he shuts me down before I can speak.

"Of course. It's the least I can do for you on Mother's Day."

"Theoooo." That's the only warning he's given before my daughter wraps around his waist.

In the next blink, he's got her up and over his shoulders, her wet legs dangling in front of his chest. Droplets of water fling from her skin and drip onto his white shirt, expanding into large circles that cling to his body.

"How's my little beaver?" he calls up to her, gripping her slippery ankles in his palms. She beams, sticking out her jaw to show him her two front teeth are growing in just like the nickname he coined for her.

The first time I brought Lyn to the pool, she was two, and I was a nervous wreck. She didn't take well to the local swim coaches, leaving me with a mound of anxiety when Gennie invited us to her daughter's summer birthday party.

I hovered over Lyn, who was stacked with every possible floaty device I could buy, and didn't let her go past the slope that leads into the actual

pool.

Theo was a new lifeguard, but somehow convinced me that her being in all the little contraptions was doing more harm than good. Then he asked if he could teach her.

Maybe it was the fact that she was obsessed with water and I wanted her to know the survival skill, or I, for some reason, instinctively trusted him, but I agreed. If he could touch her without her screaming bloody murder, I was all for it.

After taking the four floats off, she nearly tripped running to Theo's outstretched arms.

It took him one summer.

Two and half months of swimming lessons every morning, and he had taken both Lyn and me over a bridge I'd never thought we'd cross. The beaver nickname is from how, at first, she never wanted to use her arms, only her legs to propel her through the water.

"I want to show you a new trick Mommy taught me. Come see?" She smiles, her round cheeks forcing her eyes closed, making her puppy dog face somehow exponentially cuter.

"Of course. Let's go." He turns back to us briefly. "Duty calls, ladies. Ms. Tran, I'll be at Carnations around noon till two. If you decide you want me to take a look, leave it in the lobby with my mom. No pressure either way."

I nod once, trying and failing to ignore the myriad of butterflies engulfing my stomach as I watch him walk to the pool with Lyn. Even all these years later, I'm still not used to the heartwarming bond they created over the water.

When they're close to the edge, Theo lightly tosses Lyn into the pool before flopping down on the side and submerging his legs. A second later, Lyn pops up, her laugh cutting through the sound around her and filling me with a foreign joy. One I've only ever felt when she's laughing at something her father does—which feels so distant and rare, it's easy to forget.

"Not interested, huh?" Molly coos, one side of her lips curling into a knowing grin. "Convincing yourself or us?"

"He's young and too handsome to want to date a mom." I brush them off, not wanting to entertain the idea. I'm not good when my hopes are dashed, so I make it a habit not to put stock in them. Especially when I can't control the outcome.

Especially when I tried my hand, and it didn't pan out.

"Little presumptuous, if you ask me," Gennie gestures toward where Lyn is showing Theo she can make water angels. "Looks like you having a kid is giving him visuals of being a dad himself, and he enjoys it."

I want to tell myself and her that there's no way that's possible. That men in their twenties know a woman with a child means settling down and not one-night stands, which leads to them avoiding us like the plague.

But as I watch him root Lyn on and applaud her, Gennie's words stick to my skin and soak in regardless of how hard I want to scrub them away.

Dragging Lyn away from the pool after playing with Theo for an hour was harder than a finance meeting with an irresponsible trust fund baby. Luckily, Theo promised to visit the pool in a couple of weeks and bring the frozen blackberries she likes—one of the things that got her using her arms in the pool because she had to reach out and grab them.

Now, it's just a matter of getting us both ready in the next thirty minutes before my ex comes to pick her up.

Thankfully, we laid out her clothes this morning before going to the pool, and already have her backpack stuffed with the essentials.

Favorite water bottle. Check.

Drawing pad and tool zipper pouch. Check.

Two sealable baggies, one with pretzels and the other with white cheddar popcorn. Double check.

I also snuck in an extra outfit because any six-year-old with an arts and crafts addiction should always have a backup, and Sam never seems to have clothes that fit her at his place.

After she showers, I brush her hair, quickly throw her black strands into two space buns, and set her up on the living room floor with lunch and her favorite show to keep her occupied. Then I nearly sprint to take my own shower.

By the time I'm out, the bathroom is covered in steam, and I've got eight minutes left before he gets here. The one thing he always got right in our brief marriage was being on time, and he was always ready to tell me when I wasn't.

I brush some of the fog away from the mirror and take in my weary features. My sleek black hair brushes against my collarbone and is the only thing I've managed to keep intact over the past three months of my busy season.

Light shadows highlight my dark eyes, and my faux lashes have long since fallen out, leaving me with my naturally straight ones. My skin is dehydrated, the result of my nightly skin routine being skipped a little too regularly in exchange for some mommy time at the end of a long day. Not to mention, my lips are perpetually chapped, thanks to Lyn always needing to borrow my lip balms for pretend makeup, then somehow losing them. I can't wait for the day I find the stash.

My eyes travel down to the scar right below my collarbone. It's from last summer, a week before the pool closed. I reach up, my finger brushing over the raised skin, the memory of its origin sweeping over me.

#### ONE YEAR AGO

"Do a couple of warm-up laps, little beaver. Then we'll practice some backstrokes." Theo points to the pool, dropping his bag on one of the nearby tables.

"Okay, dokay!" Lyn calls, double-checking her swim cap before dipping her big toe in to test the water. Once she determines it's okay, she dives in, leaving Theo and me at the end, watching her slice through the water.

"It's wild to think of how far she's come," I tell him, slipping my laptop from my bag.

He nods. "She's worked hard, Ms. Tran. I hope she'll keep swimming when she's older."

"Oh, I can guarantee it. She talked about it nonstop last week when the Olympics were on. It's more of her having to co-exist in a team I'm worried about."

Ever since Lyn was old enough to play with the other little girls in our neighborhood, I could tell very quickly she wasn't a people person. She's perfectly content being in her own little bubble and only invites in the few who won't disturb her peace.

Being on a team will mean relying on others, working together, and giving up some of that peace in exchange for growth.

"She's got it. She starts kindergarten this year, right?"

I nod slowly, the bitter-sweet truth of what this week means sinking in. In a few short days, we'll be laying out clothes for the first day of school. "Yep."

Theo smirks, drawing my attention to the lone dimple on his cheek. "It's going to be great. Just imagine all the stuff you'll be able to get done while she's learning how to share chewed-up crayons."

I laugh, though the sound is strained. "When I'm not obsessing over what she's doing, yeah, I'm sure I'll get a lot done."

His grin wavers, something passing over his ocean-blue eyes I can't quite decipher. After a beat, he drags his bottom lips through his teeth and huffs to himself. "I get that. I wish I could say it gets better or easier, but in my experience, you'll never stop wondering."

My brows furrow, the realization dawning that I have no idea if Theo has children. We talk, but it's mostly about Lyn. "Do you have—"

He shakes his head, seemingly coming back to himself. "Oh, no, just referring to that heaviness of missing someone."

A strange stinging sensation pinches me in the center of my chest. "Lovesick, Theo?"

He grunts, turning to strip from his shirt, revealing the tight lifeguard swim shirt clinging to the dips and ridges of his muscle. "Yeah, you could say that."

Before I can dwell on his words or appreciate the view, he dives in after Lyn, leaving me to the strange array of emotions twirling through my thoughts.

The feeling is so close to misplaced jealousy, I subconsciously scold myself as I find a shaded spot under an umbrella.

It takes a few minutes and a few replays of our conversation before I'm finally able to focus on my work.

Thirty minutes pass, and I'm in the middle of combing through a new clients' expenses when I hear it.

The soft, distinct buzz of a bee.

Being a single mom, I've kind of been forced to get over my mild fear of insects. Unfortunately, my body is still very allergic to the flying pollinators.

My heart rate spikes as I check my surroundings, careful not to move too fast, but the second I spot the round little bug on my knee, instincts fly out the window.

I jerk up, a screech ripping from my throat as I move, and of course, I lose my balance. Falling over the lounger, I try to both hold on to my laptop for dear life and brace for impact. Failing miserably, my shoulder hits the metal table next to me, causing it to flip, and a corner of it cuts into the skin right above my left breast.

Before I can properly process what's happened, Theo is at my side, a towel pressed to my chest as he helps me stand.

"Everything's all good, Lyn. Keep practicing while I help your mom."

Over his shoulder, I see her perched on the edge of the pool, her big eyes round with worry. I smile, waving a hand. "There was a bee."

"Did it get you, Mommy?"

I shake my head, trying my best to ignore the warmth radiating from where one of Theo's hands is pressed into my lower back to steady me. "The crash scared him."

Lyn's face visibly relaxes. "Oh, good. Be more careful next time."

When she swims away, my eyes flick back to Theo. He's so close, I can smell the hint of mint on his breath, mingling with the chlorine sticking to his skin. The pain pulsing across my chest dulls, the heat of being this near seemingly melting everything around me.

The deep blues of his irises shift, the color darkening as his gaze scans over my face. His eyes linger on my mouth briefly, and my own breath catches. If I didn't know any better, I'd assume he's about to kiss me. To devour the lingering tension, I swore until this moment, wasn't really there.

But that can't be right. He was just daydreaming about some girl he's lovesick over.

Maybe I hit my head in my tumble, and I'm imagining him inching closer. Making up the way his gaze is trained on me as if I'm the most captivating thing he's ever seen in his life. Despite every fiber of my being wanting to believe that this man has an inkling of something for me, I hear my ex-husband's words ringing in the back of my mind.

"Some men just need more options, hon. It's hard for some of us to settle when there's so many."

Without another thought, I put up the wall that's kept me alone, but safe, since my divorce. "Do you think I need a tetanus shot?"

Theo's eyebrows tick together briefly before he backs away an inch. "Um, yeah. If it's been longer than five years, I think it's recommended."

A shield similar to my own moves over his face as he peeks behind the towel and grimaces. "And stitches. You definitely need stitches."

I groan, the pain starting to expand across my breastplate with the acknowledgment of it. "Let me call Gennie."

Theo shakes his head. "I'm taking you."

I open my mouth to refuse, but he narrows his eyes in a silent command, and calls to Lyn over his shoulder. "Grab your stuff, little beaver. We're going to get your Mom fixed up."

CHAPTER THREE

T heo had stayed with Lyn in the hallway of my urgent center room while I got my tetanus shot and eight stitches. The entire time, he kept her entertained and laughing while I tried my hardest to ignore the way he'd surpassed the walls she always has up and dug his way under mine too.

When he dropped us off at our car, I contemplated what I would say. If I had enough nerve to ask him out or maybe even drop a hint that I was interested. But like before, my inner thoughts and doubts shut me up, only allowing me to give him a curt thanks.

He also didn't say anything, so I figured my doubt was right, and all the little things had simply been in my mind, wishing for something that wasn't really there.

What had totally slipped my mind was that would be the last time I'd see him at the pool. That he had graduated, and his side hobby of repairing computers would become his full-time career.

Part of me was annoyed with myself that I'd let the chance slip away, while the other reminded me he was inexperienced at life and if anything did come out of it, it wouldn't end well. Luckily, the self-berating was short-lived because the next day at the pool I overheard some younger women talking about him dating a fellow sorority sister. I'd guessed he went after the crush he had and left it at that.

Those slight feelings—the curiosity—shrunk over time, and I was able to forget about it until two hours ago.

It forced me to realize those sentiments hadn't completely dissipated, and whether I wanted to admit it or not, I still wondered if there had been anything between us. Or if the tension had simply been an effect of his natural personality.

"Mommy, I think he's here." Lyn's voice echoes through the hall.

Almost seven years old, and she still refers to her father as "him" or "he." The pediatrician said it was part of her way to dissociate from his lack of a presence in her life. Not saying she doesn't love him; she's just aware that he is not a constant

An inconsistency.

"Coming," I call out, making quick work of drying off and slipping on the clothes I'd left on my bed.

When I make it downstairs, my ex is standing in the doorframe, an annoyed scowl on his face as he makes a show of checking his watch. His hair—now more salt than pepper—is combed to the side, neat and perfect, as always. The three-piece suit and shiny loafers only add to the professional appearance. The look was once hot to me, but now it just reminds me of what an asshole he is.

"Three minutes, Livia."

I do my best not to ever let Lyn see me stoop down to his level, so I swallow my retort and grab her bag off the nearby entry table. "Apologies, Sam. We stayed at the pool a little longer than I meant to."

He accepts the bag and looks down at Lyn. After a quick inspection, he twirls a stray hair around her bun and steps back so she can pass.

"Regardless, my time needs to be taken into consideration. I'll still be bringing her back at our arranged time tomorrow. I expect you to be here."

Ignoring him, I lean down, wrapping my arms around Lyn and pressing a kiss to the top of her head, knocking the strand loose. "I love you."

"I love you, too," she says, smiling wide.

"I love you more." I finally release her, willing my squeezing heart not to give in to the mom guilt starting to creep up in my esophagus again.

When I stand back up, she gives me the best wink a six-year-old can before she spins to follow Sam. "I love you most."

I don't turn away from the door until Lyn's in the car and Sam is pulling from my driveway. It doesn't matter if I have her ninety percent of the time, it still feels weird watching her drive off with him.

It's not because I know she won't have fun—she always does in a way —but I miss her. Especially now when this little day trip is a selfish one, even if I know I need it. Even if I know I deserve it.

Before I can dwell on the thoughts, my watch sounds from the other room, the melody from my alarm signaling it's time to go.

It takes another few minutes before I'm ready, but as I do one last sweep, my eyes fall to my laptop on the nightstand.

Three times I consider what I should do, but in the end, I snag it on my way out.

When I arrive at Carnations, I realize just how much pictures can never really give true beauty justice.

The three-story building is encased in rustic brick, with dark iron at every window and door frame, and surrounded by wildflowers. The popular B&B is only a twenty-minute drive from the city, but with the surrounding fields, pebble driveway, and the fairy lights hanging from the side patio, it's almost as if I'm in a different country entirely. I pull into one of the spots marked with a white sign and grab my bag from the back seat. The small stones crunch under my feet, the warm sun beaming brightly at my back. I haven't even entered yet, and already my shoulders aren't so heavy, my steps seemingly bouncing instead of dragging.

Pushing open one of the large doors, I'm met with the welcoming scent of something freshly baked, checkerboard tiles, and stark white walls. An entry table holds a small open book and three vases teeming with spring florals.

The host stand, just to the side of the entrance, also bears large peonies in a tall vase. The woman behind it finishes up a phone call before smiling at me. "Good morning, and happy Mother's Day. Olivia Tran?"

I nod. "Thank you, and yes."

"You're right on time. We just did a double-check of your room to ensure everything is perfect. I have you listed for a mani-pedi at eleven, a facial after lunch, and a European massage at four."

My entire body relaxes as if the mere promise of all those things is enough to satiate it. "All correct."

Her smile broadens. "Great. Did you get a chance to look at the menu options for your meals?"

"I did." I slip my phone from my back pocket and open my notes app. There are so many good choices, I couldn't decide on anything when I booked my stay. "For lunch, I'll do the Greek Wedge Salad with a side of fruit, and for dinner, I'll have the Atlantic salmon over lemon garlic rice and steamed broccoli."

"Awesome. Oh..." she trails off, her blue eyes scanning over the screen. There's something familiar about her face, but before I can try to pinpoint it, she clears her throat. "I see here our lead masseuse is out today. There is another. She's amazing, but she's only free after six. You could also book our lead male masseuse. Same time slot as the one you have now." I'd planned to be taking the biggest nap of my life from five to dinner, so the answer's easy. "I'll take him."

The host nods, her smile returning. "Alright, let's get you all set up."

She comes from behind the stand and turns for me to follow. Down the hall, it opens into a cute cafe, a half dozen bistro tables filling the space, all covered in fresh flowers. Instead of walking through it, though, she makes a left toward a ducked-off flight of stairs and leads me up one flight. The long hall is similar to the downstairs in style, the the only difference being the aged wood floors. My room is the first one on the left.

Number eight.

She unlocks the door before turning to hand me the key. "If you need anything at all, please use the room phone and dial zero. There is a pamphlet on the nightstand with a map of the inn, but the salon is on the third floor."

"Thank you." I shift on my feet when a realization floats over me. "Oh, can I give you something for Mrs. Beckham?"

I dig a hand through my bag before handing her my treasured MacBook.

She accepts it, and I could be imagining it, but I swear the corner of her lips twitch. "Sure. Does she know what to do with it?"

My mouth pops open to respond, but closes when I realize I have no idea if Theo told his mom I'd be dropping it off, and now I feel slightly awkward. "Actually, I'm not sure. Her son, Theo, told me to leave it with reception and that he'd be by later to pick it up."

A shimmer moves across the host's eyes at the mention of Theo's name, and I feel the familiar sting of jealousy. I wonder vaguely if this was the girl he talked about last year, the crush he thought about when she wasn't around.

They look roughly the same age, and she's absolutely stunning. She's the type of woman someone like Theo should be with. Gorgeous, with no children, and no ex-husband trauma.

I swallow roughly, forcing the misplaced emotion back down my throat in hopes it dies in my stomach acid.

"Of course." She tucks my computer under her arm and holds out the key to my room. When I slip the keyring from her finger, she spins on her heels. "Let us know if you need anything."

After she closes the door behind her, I take in the quaint room, hoping it will serve as a distraction to deter my thoughts.

Like the lobby, the walls are a bright white but are contrasted by the wooden beams that run along the ceiling. Thick, cream curtains hang on both windows on either side of the bed, which is covered by an overstuffed duvet. A black iron headboard and footboard encase the bed, while two vases sit on both nightstands, each with fresh-cut flowers.

I guess with so many growing outside, it's an easy choice for decorations.

Other than a dresser, which is under a mounted TV, and a lone chair near the bathroom, there isn't anything else in the room, leaving it simple yet elegant.

A giddy feeling rushes over me as it sinks in that I'm kid-free for the next eighteen hours, and besides a small report, I'm free to do whatever the hell I want.

Anything.

Including things I haven't been able to really do in fear of having a sixyear-old walk in and get traumatized for life.

With a quick flick to lock the door, I drop my bag on the chair and let myself fall backward on the bed, spreading out as the soft comforter nearly engulfs me. The cool fabric sends shivers down my limbs, but the warmth between my legs is ever-present. Like a dull ache that never goes away due to my lack of action and increased love of romance movies, my body yearns to rid itself of the pressure.

It's only eleven-thirty, so I have time before my mani-pedi, and what better way to start my day than fully relaxed?

Decision made, I quickly strip out of my leggings and tank and settle under the thick blanket.

My pulse thrums in my ears, anticipation winding through me as I let myself do something so brazen. My fingers travel down my throat, over my clavicle, and through the valley of my breasts. The barely-there touch is enough to have me squeezing my eyes shut and my skin tingling.

I imagine a pair of heavy hands replacing my own and finishing what I've started—dipping lower over my waist and settling between my thighs. The fingers work through my already-drenched slit, dipping and dragging across my nerves.

My entire body comes alight as the sensation in my core expands, unfurling through the rest of my body like wildfire.

Dipping two fingers through my entrance, I moan around the slight stretch, before curling them, searching for the spot. The one that causes the little white dots to form along the edge of my vision. The one that causes me to shake and grind against my own hand, chasing the fleeting high.

And the second I find it, blue eyes flash in front of me. The same blue eyes I pretend I never think about.

He coaxes me to continue, his soft commands skittering over my skin like little jolts of electricity. "I'm tired of waiting, Olivia. When are you going to stop acting as if this isn't real?"

A broken moan slips past my lips as I move to my clit, focusing on the budding knot of pleasure. Any time I think of him, I never last. My body already knows what I won't let my mind admit.

"Olivia. All you have to do is say the word. Say it, and I'm yours. All of this will belong to me."

As silly as it sounds, the words soak into me, fueling my movements as I let my fantasy play out. His strong arms braced on top of me, his hard features soft with pleasure. Dirty words I can't even think of without blushing.

I let myself have this moment, even if it's not real, because in the end, he's the only thing that ever gets me there. The only thing that pushes me over the edge.

Theo goddamn Beckham.



•• T he waves came, and so did I. Each lash of the water was like a shot to my core. He continued to lap at my arousal despite the chaos around us, sucking every ounce I had to offer until I was panting and screaming from the overstimulation."

I chuckle to myself as I click the X on Olivia's most frequently watched video. Her selection of adult films is very specific. They're all centered around a romance subplot, and almost every man in the videos is completely enamored with the female.

It's cute she thinks this is what an obsessed man looks like. That the only qualifications include a decent oral orgasm and pretty words, confessing years of affection.

There's no substance, nothing deep.

None of the men's acting is enough to portray exactly what it's like to be so far gone for a woman that a true visceral need for them develops. An ache embedded so deep in our bodies, it feels as if it's etched in our bones, soaking into our souls.

I've been a patient man. Waiting and watching, taking in the different obstacles and variables that have kept her just out of reach.

But that time is up, and there isn't a single thing that can stop today from happening exactly how I've planned. The plan that's been in motion for months. And her bringing her laptop is the only sign I needed that she's ready.

A quick reset of the hard drive and reinstallation of the OS after backing up her documents to the cloud makes the processor as good as a five-yearold computer can be. I pull out the travel cleaning kit and wipe everything down, lingering at the small scratches on one corner.

Last summer, I almost gave in. Almost said fuck it, and took her the way I'd been craving since the first time I laid eyes on her. But she was cut, and her daughter, my little beaver, was there, and there was no way I'd cross that line.

My mom was single for a while after my dad left, and her one rule when she started dating again was that any new guy wasn't allowed around my sister or me until she knew he was the real deal.

Even though I've been around Lyn since she was two, I'm careful around her mom, barely allowing myself to skim the surface. In front of Lyn, our conversations are brief, nothing a kid could interpret other than a friend.

But the stares, the subtle reactions in Olivia's body, the desire to breach boundaries have always been there, no matter how much she tries to deny what she feels toward me.

I slip my phone out of my pocket, pulling up a new text thread. It's grated on me for fucking years that I've had Olivia's number in my phone and have been limited to confirmation texts about when I would meet her and Lyn at the pool for lessons.

It felt like a weight sitting heavy in my pocket, and every time I got a little too drunk or a little too horny, it took every ounce of my willpower not to reach out. Now, even though it's still about business, the promise that it soon won't be, makes my cock twitch in my jeans.

#### ME 11:03 AM

Good morning, Ms. Tran. Just wanted to reach out and let you know your laptop is clean and up to date.

I run my thumb under my bottom lip, watching the little bubbles ripple across the screen.

OLIVIA 11:03 AM

That was fast. Thank you so much, Theo. Let me know what I owe you.

I roll my eyes.

ME 11:04 AM

You know your money's no good with me.

When I first started coaching Lyn, Olivia made it a huge deal that I wouldn't accept her money. She fought me on it pretty hard, saying she couldn't understand why I would do something so strenuous for free.

But it wasn't about the money, and it wasn't even about my initial interest in Olivia. When I looked at Lyn, I saw my baby sister, Mora.

Sweet, introverted, not big on talking or playing with other kids. After our dad walked out, my sister didn't really trust anyone else not to do the same, which meant she went off and did shit she didn't have any business doing—like trying to swim while I was helping our mom fix a sink.

I was holding the flashlight, handing her a tool she asked for when I heard it. It was the smallest noise, almost like a mouse caught in a trap in the attic. Despite my mother screaming after me when I bolted off, I went straight outside. Something hard in my gut was telling me my sister was there.

Sure enough, she was.

The memory of her small body thrashing in the water before I jumped in and saved her burned into my mind and eventually steered me to be a lifeguard during college. When I saw Olivia for the first time, she was wrangling a squirmy Lyn, trying her best to explain why she needed seven different floaties. It provoked something in me to step in and help.

What I didn't expect to happen was to become attached to both of them. To find an indescribable amount of joy and pride in teaching Lyn, while slowly growing fond of Olivia's company.

She's a hard worker, a good mother, and she's fucking gorgeous. She's reserved, like her daughter, yet positive. She doesn't hang her future on hopes but on the amount of work she puts in. There's something so incredibly satisfying knowing that, in the end, those same beliefs are what will finally get me what I've wanted for so long.

My phone vibrates, drawing my attention.

OLIVIA 11:08 AM

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I'm paying you whether you want me to or not. No debate this time.
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I smirk. *Here we go*.

ME 11:10 AM

I think this is where I say something cliché like, you can pay me back by letting me take you out.

There's a long pause, and even though I know I haven't read the signals wrong, a very small part of me releases a seed of doubt. It forces me to wonder. To worry.

OLIVIA 11:18 AM

Is this the part where I'm supposed to accept?

ME 11:20 AM

Only if you'd like.

OLIVIA 11:21 AM

It's not so much a question if I want to, but more so why you want to in the first place.

A flush of relief washes through me, solidifying everything I'm about to do.

ME 11:23 AM

Because I'd like to get to know you in a setting where there aren't children nearby.

OLIVIA 11:23 AM Because?

She wants a straightforward answer. Understandable considering most women who want something real—something concrete—don't have time for the back-and-forth. For the games. While I'd love to give her my complete honesty, I also don't want to immediately scare her off with what I want. With what I *really* want.

But I still need her to know how serious I am about her.

ME 11:25 AM

Because what I want to know is much more than the surface level you've been giving me. It's been sufficient, but it's time we're both honest with each other.

OLIVIA 11:26 AM

Honest about what, Theo?

ME 11:26 AM

This thing that's been subtly growing between us for the past four years. Would you like to lie and tell me you don't think it exists?

It's a little forward, but like her, I don't see the point in pretending the obvious isn't there.

OLIVIA 11:29 AM

I don't have time for anything casual.

ME 11:29 AM

Who the hell said anything about casual?

This time, the bubbles appear and fade three times over before her message comes through.

OLIVIA 11:35 AM

I have a child. Wanting something with me would mean accepting I'm not the only one involved. It would mean consistency and permanence. That's asking a lot of anyone, especially someone your age.

My teeth smash together as my jaw locks. I wondered how far we'd get without her pulling the age card. I'm only eight years younger, but I understand the hesitation. Most men in their twenties don't know what they want. They aren't ready to settle and most damn sure aren't ready for a kid —especially one who isn't theirs.

But I'm not most fucking men, and the irrational desire I have to settle down with her is enough to make any excuse she might have completely irrelevant.

Instead of saying any of that, though, I tell her the simple version of the truth.

ME 11:37 AM

Your daughter means more to me than the majority of the people in my life already, so I imagine the rest is redundant.

OLIVIA 11:40 AM Don't say things you don't mean.

Her piece of shit ex must have done a number on her, causing her walls to be a lot thicker than I initially thought. Either way, a fucking canyon couldn't keep me from her.

ME 11:42AM

There isn't a single reason I'd lie to you. But I'm also not going to pressure you into doing something you don't want to. There, it's on the table, and it's up to her as to what she wants to do with it. When she doesn't respond for a few minutes, and the bubbles don't appear, I lean back in my chair to gaze out of my mother's office window. It's positioned at the perfect angle to see the second floor where her room is.

Even though I know she isn't in there, my eyes bore into the brick wall as if I'll be able to see through it. As if I'll be able to see her. I wish I could reach out and show her just how serious I am.

How I'm nothing like her ex and have every intention of treating her how she should have been treated from day one.

Guess I'll have to wait till four.

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CHAPTER FIVE

read our text exchange a dozen times over, disbelief and excitement threading tight in my chest.

While part of me feels as if I shouldn't be considering any type of relationship right now, the other questions why not.

I've been divorced for four years, and am financially stable with a great job. I'm in an amazing space and have no valid reason as to why I shouldn't put myself out there again.

I could use the same reasoning I have since the beginning and say it's because I'm a mother. But casual dating—mindless sex—isn't even something that Lyn would know about, so it feels fruitless to use it as a continued excuse.

What I can say causes me the most hesitation is that Theo is twentyfive. If my ex is any indication, Theo's got a lot of time left before he should want to settle down with one person. Before he should want to become a father.

And no matter how much I'm attracted to him and wish it weren't the case, it's also statistically a fact. One I looked up and studied the moment Sam told me he wanted to leave. I'm a numbers person, and I needed to

ease my mind. I needed to prove that he was just an asshole I had the unfortunate pleasure of meeting.

But he was right. At least enough that I realized his words had merit.

Ninety percent of men entertain the idea of marriage when they're in their early to mid-thirties—a stage I'm already in. One Theo still has almost a decade before he reaches.

I don't have time or the energy to waste ten years waiting for Theo, all for him to decide I'm not the one he wants.

But he said he wanted me.

No, he said he wanted to have dinner with me. Get to know me. In no world is that the same thing.

Who the hell said anything about casual?

*Ugh*. I stab my fork into the delicious salad I've been neglecting. Am I making things more complicated than they are? Or are they actually this conflicting?

I wish I didn't have this protective wall so firmly in place. I wish I weren't scared of a little heartbreak. Hell, I wish I was okay with casual dating and mindless sex.

But now that Theo's outright said what we've been skating over for years, it's impossible not to want to try. But the incessant insecurity gnaws at my insides, warning me to be careful.

The wheels of my mind begin to turn, ideas of how we could both get a bit of what we both want formulating in my mind.

Maybe if it was just tonight.

A night I have without Lyn and fifteen hours to do whatever my little heart desires. I could have him come for dinner. I'm sure we could add another plate to my reservation. Then if things heat up, perhaps we can release the tension—the curiosity—once and for all.

Who knows? Maybe all we need is one incredible night of tangled limbs and multiple orgasms to get one another out of our systems. But even as I think it, it tastes bitter, like a lie.

Something terrifying tells me that one time would only open a door I'd never be able to shut.

That Theo isn't someone I'd ever forget.

A heavy knock on my door draws me from the thoughts, and for a second, I appreciate the reprieve.

"Coming," I call out, pushing my half-eaten salad away before standing and striding toward the door.

When I open it, I'm not sure who I was expecting, but the pretty hostess wasn't it. The familiar bout of jealousy racks over me, turning my stomach over. I'd forgotten about her. She lit up when I mentioned Theo earlier.

The thought this girl could be an ex makes my skin uncomfortably tight.

"Returning this." The woman beams, holding up a carefully wrapped rectangle. "Theo dropped it off a few minutes ago and said it was good as new."

"Oh, thank you." I take my laptop from her hand. My fingers tighten around the knob as I watch her smile broaden.

"Of course. How're Carnations' amenities treating you this far?"

"Amazing. It's nice being pampered," I tell her.

"I can imagine. When the idea was brought up to my mom about a Mother's Day special, she couldn't believe how she'd never thought of it."

My brows furrow together. "Your mother?"

The host nods. "Yes. She and my stepfather run it. I'm just helping out on my summer break being home from school."

An unhealthy amount of relief washes over me as I clarify my thoughts. "So you're Theo's sister?"

She nods, holding out a nimble hand. "In the flesh. Mora Beckham."

I accept her hand, shaking it lightly. Her blue eyes are lighter than his, but I can see the resemblance now. Sharp jaw, angular cheeks, dark hair, though hers is more chocolate while his is almost black.

Upon closer look, I even see the faint scar by her ear. The one she got when she almost drowned when she was three. Theo had told me the story when he was refuting payment for teaching Lyn how to swim.

He'd said she'd manage to put on his life jacket and hers, as well as floaties. So when she was walking, she could barely move and tripped, nicking the side of her face on a broken tile at the edge.

The blood in the pool is what Theo said he'd remembered the most.

"It's wonderful to meet you, Mora."

"It's good to finally meet you." She releases me. "Well, I'll be heading back. Please let me know if you need anything."

Too focused on the use of the word *finally*, I barely utter a response before she disappears back down the stairs.

I want to read into that, but I force the embers of hope to remain at a smolder.

Whatever happens tonight will stay here, and nothing either of us says in the heat of the moment is going to change that.

Powering up my MacBook, I can immediately tell the difference. The lock screen comes up within seconds, and the keyboard responds to my touch the moment I press a letter.

At home, I've been able to deal with it as long as I have because it's connected to a large monitor and Bluetooth keyboard and mouse. But it also meant I was confined to my office any time I needed to work. I missed being able to sit and work in the backyard while watching Lyn play or have it next to me so that when she fell asleep, I'd be able to get a few things done while finishing our movie.

Ever since I dropped it last year, it hasn't been the same, but I don't want to replace it. All of my original work and draft boards are on this—including Lyn's first pictures. I know I can upload everything in the cloud—

which I've halfway done—but organizing them into neat folders seems like so much work, and I already have enough to do.

I grab my phone from the bed and pull up my text thread with Theo. I start to type a thank you message, but stop short when my home screen appears. Instead of a screen full of files and screen grabs, Lyn's gorgeous smile lights up my screen. The same smile that's usually covered under all of the mess.

Panic squeezes around my heart, sending my blood whooshing in my ears.

No, no, no!

My fingers work quickly over my phone, my freshly manicured nails tapping against the glass.

ME 12:33 PM

Please tell me you didn't wipe my hard drive!

Bubbles appear quickly.

THEO 12:33 PM

Of course I did. You had so many duplicates, it was slowing everything down.

My breath stalls, but then another message comes through.

THEO 12:34 PM

I uploaded everything to the cloud except zipped files with your clients' info. I put that on a temporary flash drive until your computer was wiped. If you go to your Finder, you'll see everything there and organized.

I quickly slide my finger over the trackpad and open the folders, and sure enough, everything is there, neat and organized. There's also a significantly less number of files.

I push out a relieved breath, but then it gets stuck in my throat. If he went through everything, moved and labeled, that means he *saw* 

everything.

Shit.

Embarrassment turns my fingers into immovable concrete, and dries my throat out completely.

My phone dings.

THEO 12:37 PM Everything there?

Shakily, I force my hand to move, my eyes scanning over the folders until I find what I'm looking for. He labeled it "Inspiration."

A quick double click confirms what I feared. He organized my romantic porn. They're all there, ranked according to some unknown system, and a few of which I don't even recognize.

1- The Waves of Tahiti

2- Picnic on Walsh Hills

3- Only a Princess Until Midnight

My eyes flit to the unfamiliar titles, uncertainty and curiosity forcing me to see what doesn't belong. What *he* added.

7- Breeding the Queen

9- Swallow Every Drop

12- My Wasteful Little Slut

My cunt clenches around nothing as I go over the titles, each of them growing more explicit. A mix of embarrassment and arousal slips through me, tugging me in conflicting directions.

Sam was absolutely horrified when I asked him to wrap his hand around my throat. It was a baby step I decided to take after realizing I wanted more than simple missionary. Turns out, Sam has a very strong belief that sex is meant to be beautiful, not full of debauchery.

But that's what I wanted—the sweet, the sloppy, the mind bending and he wouldn't have it. He didn't even want me looking at him during oral, for crying out loud. Yet here's Theo.

Not only did he see all of my tapes, he felt the need to add more, and none of them sound like the sweet, love-making films I currently have on rotation.

These sound dirty. Completely filthy.

Sexy.

I chew on the inside of my lip, contemplating what to do with this. What I *can* do.

But the answer's made for me when my phone dings again.

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## A Thread

## CHAPTER SIX

THEO 12:47 PM

Is everything accounted for, Ms. Tran?

OLIVIA 12:48 PM

For the last time, call me Olivia. And yes. But it looks like there are a few things added that aren't mine.

THEO 12:50 PM

Hmm. Are you sure?

12:51 PM

I wrote everything down and triple-checked to make sure I put everything in a folder for you.

OLIVIA 12:53 PM

Yes, I see that. How do you know I don't prefer my computer the way it was?

THEO 12:55 PM

Pure chaos?

OLIVIA 12:58 PM

Organized chaos. And I knew where everything was.

THEO 1:00 PM

I think I'll have to call your bluff, Olivia. If that were the case, you wouldn't have so many duplicate files and downloads. You also wouldn't have had the same files in multiple locations. Seems to me, you would forget where something was and redownload it. That's what was slowing down your processor.

1:02 PM

Well, that and your movie selection.

OLIVIA 1:02 PM

A selection I see you've taken the liberty to add to.

THEO 1:03 PM

I thought I'd spice it up for you. That's the least I could do for you on Mother's Day.

OLIVIA 1:04 PM

I'm not sure if I should be offended or grateful.

THEO 1:04 PM

Haha. That means you haven't watched any yet.

OLIVIA 1:06 PM

I haven't.

THEO 1:07 PM

Can I make a suggestion?

OLIVIA 1:09 PM

I suppose. I feel as if we've already breached a line.

**THEO 1:10 PM** 

One of many, I hope.

1:12 PM

Breeding the Queen is one of my favorites.

OLIVIA 1:13 PM

I cannot believe I'm about to click on this.

1:15 PM

Oh. Starting off strong with a blow job.

1:19 PM

She's beautiful, and her eyes are so pretty.

1:27 PM

Wow. All over her face.

THEO 1:27 PM Yeah, it's the only part I don't like.

OLIVIA 1:27 PM

Why's that?

THEO 1:28 PM

She should have drunk every last drop.

OLIVIA 1:29 PM

Oh...

THEO 1:29 PM Oh?

OLIVIA 1:30 PM

Is that what you like?

THEO 1:30 PM

Yes.

OLIVIA 1:32 PM

I see. Well, maybe she was worried about catching herpes or something.

THEO 1:33 PM

I just spit my Sprite out. First off, they all have to get STD checks regularly. Second, if this was a real-life situation, I'm pretty sure it would have been discussed beforehand.

OLIVIA 1:35 PM

I guess I've been out of the dating game so long, I hadn't thought about that. Is that what you do? Tell all of your partners your status?

THEO 1:35 PM

Absolutely. I show them my latest test if they ask.

OLIVIA 1:37 PM

That's... courteous.

THEO 1:37 PM

Basic human decency. How's the movie?

OLIVIA 1:38 PM

Honestly?

THEO 1:38 PM

I'd appreciate it if you were always honest with me.

1:39 PM

Saves us the trouble of going back and forth. I don't think either one of us wants to waste time on that.

OLIVIA 1:40 PM

True.

THEO 1:45 PM

So, how is it? What's happening?

OLIVIA 1:46 PM

He just licked her face clean, and now she's on her throne. He's crouching between her thighs, with a leg over his shoulder. I think he just spit his cum in her entrance.

1:47 PM

Yeah, he definitely did. He said it belongs inside her.

THEO 1:48 PM

Hmmhmm.

OLIVIA 1:49 PM

I'm sure you've seen my list, I'm a wine 'em and dine 'em kind of woman, but this is just...I don't even know how to articulate it. Is that supposed to be hot? I mean, it's unreasonably hot.

THEO 1:50 PM

Have you ever done anything like that?

1:52 PM

Of course, if I'm crossing a line, please let me know. My intentions aren't to make you uncomfortable.

1:54 PM

Forget I asked.

OLIVIA 1:55 PM

No. It's surprisingly fine. Nice, even, to talk about this. My ex made me feel...dirty for bringing up anything outside of the ordinary. It kind of made me shrink back and not even want to talk about it with my girlfriends even when they did.

THEO 1:57 PM

That's a fucking shame.

1:59 PM

So you don't even know what you'd like in bed.

OLIVIA 1:59 PM

That wasn't a question.

THEO 2:00 PM

lt wasn't.

OLIVIA 2:02 PM

I know I want to be touched.

THEO 2:03 PM

Touched? Is there a way to fuck without being touched?

OLIVIA 2:06 PM

Maybe that's not the right word. I want what this guy is doing to the queen. He's all over her. It's like no matter how close they are, he wants to get closer. His hands are everywhere, doing everything they can to make her moan. And his mouth. His tongue. His teeth. Every part of him is connected to her. This feels like so much more than sex.

THEO 2:07 PM

Because he's obsessed with her. He wants to be everywhere all at once, and even then, it's not enough.

OLIVIA 2:08 PM

You speak as though you know from experience.

THEO 2:09 PM

I wouldn't use the term experience.

OLIVIA 2:09 PM

So you don't do everything you can to please your partner.

2:10 PM

You don't have to answer if that's too personal.

THEO

2:12 PM

In your words, I think we've breached that line.

2:13 PM

And yes, I do. But I've never felt like I couldn't get enough.

OLIVIA 2:13 PM

Oh. So you're like a one-and-done guy.

THEO 2:16 PM

I also wouldn't say that. The women I've been with were something to pass the time. They knew that up front, and they were aware there wouldn't be anything to come out of it.

OLIVIA 2:19 PM

I see. Can I ask why?

THEO 2:20 PM

Because the one I wanted wasn't quite ready yet.

2:24 PM

What's happening now?

OLIVIA 2:25 PM

Um...He just came inside her.

THEO 2:27PM

Did you find that hot?

OLIVIA 2:27 PM

Yes, actually.

2:28 PM

Are actors on birth control too?

THEO 2:28 PM

Haha. Yes, Olivia.

OLIVIA 2:29 PM

Well, that makes it hotter.

THEO 2:30 PM

Interesting. Don't want any more children?

OLIVIA 2:30 PM

One day.

2:32 PM

Maybe.

2:33 PM

If I find the right person.

THEO 2:34 PM

So you're on contraceptives now?

OLIVIA 2:34 PM

Yeah.

THEO 2:35 PM

I thought you said you haven't been dating.

OLIVIA 2:36 PM

Oh, I haven't. It was one of those ten-year IUD things, so I didn't have to worry about it.

THEO 2:37 PM

Lyn would be a good big sister.

OLIVIA 2:38 PM

She would. But she'd be an incredible only child too.

THEO 2:38 PM

Very true. I doubt your future partner won't want to have a child with you, though, if it was an option.

OLIVIA 2:39 PM

And what makes you so sure of that?

THEO 2:40 PM

It's the first thing I'd do.

2:56 PM

Did you like the movie?

OLIVIA 2:58 PM

Yes.

THEO 2:58 PM

What was your favorite part?

OLIVIA 3:00 PM

All of it.

3:14 PM

Are you free tonight?

THEO 3:15 PM

For you? Always.

OLIVIA 3:18 PM

I was thinking since I'm kid-free, maybe I'd take you up on that date. I ordered food, and they said they could add another dinner.

THEO 3:19 PM

What time?

OLIVIA 3:19 PM

Is six okay?

THEO 3:20 PM

Six is perfect.

OLIVIA 3:30 PM

I was also thinking.

3:32 PM

Maybe we could...get a few things out of our system. Just for tonight. And then maybe move on.

**THEO 3:35 PM** 

Like it never happened?

OLIVIA 3:37 PM

Exactly. I knew you'd understand what I mean.

THEO

3:38 PM

Is that what you want?

3:38 PM

To get me out of your system.

OLIVIA 3:39 PM Yes. 3:39 PM I mean. No. 3:40 PM I don't know. 3:45 PM I just think that this is a little wild and bizarre, and I'm sure after we finally act on it, it will satiate our curiosity.

THEO 3:48 PM

Curiosity.

OLIVIA 3:48 PM

Yes.

THEO 3:52 PM

Okay. If that's what you want.

OLIVIA 3:54 PM

Isn't it what you want?

THEO 3:54 PM

I want you to be happy.

3:54 PM

That's all I ever wanted when it came to you.

OLIVIA 3:55 PM

What do you want?

THEO 3:55 PM

I'd imagine you already know.

3:56 PM

I'll see you soon, Olivia.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

don't think I've ever been more grateful to be without my phone, completely alone, with nothing but dim lights and low music to keep me company.

I also don't think I've ever been more turned on in my life.

For years, the lingering looks, the thick air, and the subtle smiles between Theo and I have felt like nothing more than a bit of friendly flirting. At least, that's what I chalked it up to, so I wouldn't read into it.

Now, there's no talking myself out of anything.

He wants me. I definitely want him.

And this is happening.

Even if it's only for tonight, it's happening.

Readjusting on the massage table, I take a slow, controlled breath.

If I was thinking logically, I would talk myself out of it, text him, and demand he let me pay for the work he did on my laptop and forgo the dinner. Unfortunately—or perhaps luckily—my libido is leading the charge tonight, and I'm giving it my all.

If we only have this one night together, I'm going to do all the things I've fantasized about but have been too nervous to ever try.

Considering Theo's movie selection he added to my computer, I'm sure he'll be down to do every one of them.

My nerves tingle beneath my skin, anticipation coiling around the endings as I think of our texts while I watch the man in the movie. The power. The dominance. The obsession.

Fake or not, it solidified what I've always craved in bed. Maybe even a little of what I want outside of the bedroom too.

Something heavy moves over my heart, tugging it down.

Pressing my face closer to the cushion, I force my eyes shut, willing my mind to stop going a mile a minute in ten different directions. I'm supposed to be enjoying my day, not worrying about the possibility of a night with Theo.

Thankfully, my body has also had enough of my racing thoughts as well, and the lull of sleep as I wait for my massage appointment begins to pull me under.

Not sure if my light slumber lasts for a few seconds or five minutes, but I wake to the soothing sensation of a warm liquid being poured across my back wakes me up.

Heavy hands coast along my skin, spreading the oil up and around my shoulders and back, sending whiffs of lavender with hints of citrus into the air.

The masseuse starts at the base of my back, using his thumbs to press on either side of my spine. His pressure is absolutely perfect as he moves in circles, trailing up.

It's been a couple of years since I've gotten a massage, but even then, I don't remember it feeling this good. I'm not sure if this means I have more stress on my shoulders than I allow myself to feel or if this man is simply magic, but the more he works his way up, gliding over the tense muscles, the harder it is not to moan from how good it feels.

Sucking in a deep breath, I squeeze my eyes shut, focusing on the various tones of the piano music playing low in the background. It works for a few strokes of his hands, but then he reaches a spot just under my shoulder blade that forces me to bite into my lip to keep the groan inside.

I'm sure they hear noises all the time, and he probably wouldn't even bat an eye, but having just spent the last hour watching little snippets of all the films Theo added, it seems almost inappropriate.

Just like the ache between my thighs. It's returned, worse than it's ever been before, and I one hundred percent blame Theo.

He's opened my eyes to things I'd long forgotten, desires I'd had to shove away when I was married. It made me realize he was also right about the men. The ones I was watching were sweet and loving, and I had every idea that's what good sex looked like.

And maybe that is what it looks like for some people, but now that I've *seen* the world I fantasized about, it's all I want. I want someone so completely gone for me, I'm all they see.

Someone who could be inside me, all over me and around, but still not feel like it's enough.

I want someone so obsessed they need to spill every damn drop of their soul into me when they climax.

It's crazy to think how a week ago, I would have been on fire with embarrassment—maybe even a little ashamed—but now it's the furthest emotion from my mind.

The masseuse moves down, careful as he kneads the outer muscles of my ass. But when he gets to the top of my thigh and runs his fingers down the long muscles that are rarely touched, I cave.

A whimper slips out, my back arching a fraction as his hands reach just above the back of my knee.

There's no word I can use to articulate the relaxing sensation that spreads through me, but then he draws his fingers back up, shifting to my inner thigh.

My teeth sink into my bottom lip, and if the pain is any indicator, I'm sure I've split it. But I don't care. I can't focus on anything except how amazing it all is.

He drags his fingers down again, but this time when he comes up, they slip a little too close to my entrance. Even though I'm wearing underwear, I jolt, the sensation almost foreign.

"Oh—um." I move my head and lift a little off the table. "You're getting too—"

A heavy hand finds the middle of my back and presses me back down firmly. "Too what, Ms. Tran? Too close to the pussy that's currently dripping on my table?"

Theo.

My body ignites. His close proximity, the heat of his hands on me, his words—all of it—causes my core to wring tight. I push out a heady breath. "I—I'm not."

Keeping his hand flat on my back, he leans forward, his mouth moving so close to my ear, his breath coasts along the shell. "But you are. I'm looking at your arousal now. It's shining all over your thighs."

I shiver against him. Texting him and actually being here, under his touch are two very different things. Truth be told, I'm not even sure I'd have been bold enough to say any of those things face to face. But with him, it's coming out so naturally. Like he's been waiting for this moment.

I clear my throat, but my voice still comes out slightly high. "It's probably the massage oil."

He huffs out a bit of dry laughter. "Let's see, shall we?"

Before I can ask what he means, his weight disappears as he stands up. The free hand not holding me in place slips down, gliding between my thighs. I don't realize I have them squeezed together until he taps me once. "Open up for me, mama." Another tremor—though this one is far more visceral—racks through me as I obey his command, shifting to open my thighs.

Theo glides a finger down quickly, pressing it near the stitching. I let out a gasp, my nerves tingling, when he reappears at my ear, nipping it softly.

I'm sure my lip is bruised at this point, but I turn my head slightly and force my eyes to watch him slip the digit into his mouth.

His eyes roll back, a guttural moan vibrating his chest. It's as if it's the best thing he's ever tasted in his life, and when his eyes drift open, my thoughts are confirmed. The once ocean blue irises are close to midnight, his pupils so wide, they nearly wash out the color. The hunger playing in them is almost feral.

"Like I said, dripping."

My core clenches tight, both at the low timbre of his voice and how palpably the air crackles between us. Unlike the shyness or reservations I think I'm supposed to have, I just feel...craved.

And I like that. A lot.

I grab onto the feeling and use it to push out my next words. They're breathy and full of the desire now flushing through me. "Is it a problem? Does it stop you from being able to finish my massage?"

He releases a low chuckle, probably as surprised as I am at my words, before standing again. "Not at all, Olivia."

Theo's hand on my spine slides up, stopping at the base of my neck. His other hand slinks down, hooking on the hem of my underwear. "These have to go."

In one hard jerk, the fabric snaps, the telling ripping sound of him yanking them off giving me a second warning before his hand dives between my thighs.

He doesn't bother with pleasantries or exploration. His nimble fingers slide through my entrance, stretching me slightly as they slip inside.

I moan at the sensation, arching my ass off the table to give him better access, and he takes full advantage, pushing into his knuckle.

"Who knew you'd be so needy?" Theo rumbles, curling his fingers as he drags them out. "For a while there, I was almost sure I was the only one."

Somehow I manage to shake my head, my breaths coming in short pants as I wiggle against him. I'd been so good at hiding my interest in Theo, I'd convinced myself that there wasn't anything there.

That I was imagining things.

Now, it's as though a string has come loose, unraveling the ball and proving exactly how much I've held back.

He curls his two fingers, hitting the spot that makes a white light flash in the corner of my vision.

"I knew you'd feel perfect, Olivia, but fuck." He uses a digit not twisting inside me to circle my swollen clit. "I cannot fucking wait to have this cunt wrapped around my cock."

Another heady moan escapes me as he moves, curling, twisting, circling in tandem, fucking me with one clear goal in mind—to completely obliterate mine. And I want him to. I want to be so utterly gone in the stratosphere from my orgasm that I can't see straight.

Squeezing my eyes shut, I press my head into the table, the growing expanse of heat already shrinking into a tight ball. Blood rushes through me, the quick succession of every beat of my heart faster than the last.

"Do you know how long I've waited for this?" he growls, moving back down to my ear. He runs his tongue along the shell. "How long I've wanted you?"

The part of me that can comprehend his words doesn't care to know how much time I wasted not having this. But the other part—the one on the high of delirium—needs to know.

If not for the sake of knowing, then for much more selfish reasons.

"How long?"

He nips my earlobe. "Too fucking long."

With that, he drives his fingers in harder, and my hips act of their own accord, moving back to meet his thrusts. My head swims as he continues his assault, curling them in the perfect spot while flicking my throbbing clit.

He only has his hands on me, and already I'm trying to figure out how I'll go back to the mundane after this. Back to stolen moments under the covers or thinking that making love next to the ocean is the most romantic thing there is.

Theo and whatever tonight holds is what I'll always look back on. What I'll hold as the new standard.

I am so screwed.

As though he can hear my wavering thoughts, he presses his thumb against my tight ring of muscle. I jolt forward, but his strong hand holds me down as he pushes it just enough for my nerves to fray.

"Every part of you belongs to me tonight," he groans, moving so fast now, I'm almost dizzy. "And I can't wait to show you what being my obsession looks like."

The air grows thinner from his words as I'm thrown over the edge with no warning, my core contracting and releasing from the orgasm ripping through me. He continues to fuck me with his fingers, drawing out the waves as they ride through me again and again.

I hiss out his name, my body quivering as everything coils tight. *"Theo."* 

"Yes, Ms. Tran?"

My voice is lost for a minute, my lungs burning as they expand. I'm still in partial disbelief that we've finally crossed the line while simultaneously realizing it was like the most natural thing in the world.

When I don't say anything, he releases his hold and helps me sit up.

It's when my eyes meet his that I realize nothing, and I mean nothing, will ever be the same.

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**F** ace flushed, pupils blown, lips swollen and parted, I've never seen a woman more beautiful than Olivia Tran.

She's staring up at me, a light dusting of pink covering her cheeks, her body completely bare.

Once upon a time, I would have had to fight the urge to look down, but the look of pure satisfaction etched in every inch of her delicate face is enough to hold all of my attention. The shimmer in her dark eyes, the tiniest curve of her mouth, the slow rise and fall of her shoulders with her easing breaths.

This is Olivia without a care in the world, and I'm completely enamored. Bewitched. Addicted.

Her little sounds of pleasure have already been memorized. Her soft skin's been burned into my fingertips. The places that make her writhe or arch, or tighten are now part of my subconscious.

How someone could be so fucking stupid to let her go is beyond me, but in the end, I'm grateful.

Because all of her, every last bit, now belongs to me.

Without thinking, I reach out, gripping her chin lightly between my thumb and forefinger, and tip her head up the slightest bit. My eyes slip down, finding her lips, and I realize all I want to do is close the distance and finally claim them. Show her how bad—how deeply—my affection for her runs.

But the moment I move in, she slides two hands up, pressing lightly into my chest, forcing me back.

My brows draw together, but before confusion and the slight sting of rejection cement in place, she lightly hops from the table and slowly drops down.

Her eyes remain on me as her knees hit the hardwood beneath her, and her fingers find my belt buckle.

Realization hits me heavily in the stomach, and I grasp around her small wrists, shaking my head. "Olivia. This is your day. Let me—"

She shushes me, her arched brows tipping inward as a display of how serious she is.

Instinctively, the rebel in me wants to ignore her, throw her on the table and completely fucking devour her. Prove to her no part of me is someone she can tell what to do with a look that works on her kid. But I decide that can also be achieved by making her swallow every last bit I spill into her.

I release her wrists and let her continue what she's started.

She drags her bottom lip under her teeth, trying to stem her little triumphant smile, but I catch it and clear my throat.

"Let's see how long you can keep that smile up, mama."

Olivia's lashes flutter at my words, sending a sliver of satisfaction through me. But in the next breath, she has my belt undone and my zipper pulled open. Her manicured hands slip into the waistband of my black briefs, and she tugs them down just enough to free my aching cock.

As predicted, her smile fades as it settles in everything she'll have to take.

Blood rushes down as I finally allow myself to appreciate the view of her. Her gorgeous curves are all that I can see from my angle, and I commit every one of them to memory. Noting the path my tongue will take later before I steal every last whimper, moan, and scream from her pretty throat.

My cock twitches with the thought, causing Olivia's eyes to flit back to mine. The lust coasting through them is enough to make my knees fucking buckle. That is, until her tongue slips out, and she runs it along the length of my erection, and over the three barbells.

I hiss through my teeth, my hands snapping to the tall table behind her, effectively caging her in.

She doesn't look away as she does it again. And again. And a-fuckinggain, licking the underside, pausing at the tip briefly to feel the metal piercing before sucking the head into her warm mouth.

My eyes squeeze shut, the visual of her staring up at me through her thick lashes while taking me forever searing into my hippocampus.

A groan vibrates through me as she swirls her tongue, hollowing out her cheeks as she moves up and down.

I peel my eyes open, the desire to see her combating the heat radiating from my spine. Her lids have since sealed shut, one hand now squeezing my upper thigh while the other is locked around my dick.

Her mouth and hand work in tandem, moving two completely separate ways, but perfectly in sync.

My knuckles bloom white as I clench the edge of the table harder, the whoosh of my blood nearly drowning out the sounds of her moans around me. "This mouth, Olivia. Fuck, you're doing so well."

Her hum of appreciation vibrates through me, sending jolts of electricity up my body. There's no way in hell I'll last much longer, and every part of me wants to throw her back on the table and fill her little cunt up with every bit she's pulled out of me. "I had every intention to be a gentleman today, but right now, it's getting almost impossible."

She releases me with a wet pop and grabs one of my hands before guiding it through the side of her head. "I don't want a gentleman anymore, Theo. I want someone possessed, with me as their sole focus."

"Alright." My fingers tangle in her strands, pulling taut as she slips me back in her mouth, this time swallowing me deeper. Her words sink into me one at a time, the realization that she wants the raw, unfiltered version of me, my complete undoing. "But if you spill one drop, you'll lick it off the floor."

I fuck her mouth, meeting the strokes of her tongue and the twists of her hand tenfold. Groans stream from her one after the other, her head moving faster as if she's reaching her own climax along with mine.

Fire scorches up my spine, extends through my ribs, and ripples down every nerve. My orgasm cuts through me in a blaze, spilling into Olivia. Her fingers dig into my thigh as she swallows my cum, her dark gaze burning into me as she does.

"Such a good fucking girl," I breathe, stroking the thumb of my free hand along her jaw.

When my body is drained dry, I slide my hand from her hair and grab onto the table to support my weight. I slump forward, trying to regulate my breathing as she releases me, gingerly tucking me back into my briefs and zipping me up.

The action is not something I'm used to and pulls at a foreign string in my chest. Something so simple feels like being taken care of, and the notion she's performing a bit of aftercare on me sends a strange wave of emotion in my stomach.

Olivia stands up between my arms still cinched into the table. It puts us so close together, my chest brushes against her breasts with every pull of air. I reach up between us and use my thumb to wipe the smallest bit of cum clinging to the side of her mouth.

Wordlessly, I hold the digit between us, interested to see if she'll need a command to do anything.

Her gaze bounces between me and my thumb before, finally, she clasps both her hands around mine and leans forward, sucking it into her mouth. Her warm tongue swirls around, collecting the remaining bit.

Olivia's eyes flutter shut, and the moan that slips out of her is enough to make me want to drop to my own damn knees.

I wait until she's released my thumb and opened her eyes before I reach up and tuck a hair behind her ear.

"What's your plan here?"

Her brows tic together. "What do you mean?"

I stroke the shell of her ear, tilting my head. "Are you still thinking this is a one-time thing you need to get out of your system?"

Her eyes flare. "I—Yes. I mean, maybe? I don't know, I didn't—"

"Didn't what?" One corner of my lips curls in a smirk. I was fully aware she would initially enter this with a one-and-done mindset, and I've already prepared to break down every fucking wall.

"Expect this to feel so natural." She rushes out her words, but each one acts as a balm to all my cracked parts.

I hook a finger under her chin and lift her face higher. The vulnerability is splayed across her features, softening them into something I have the innate need to cherish. She has no idea how absolutely infatuated I am with her. How the fibers of my being have untangled themselves and have reached for hers since the moment our eyes connected.

My parents have told me from a young age that our souls know our mates when they see them, and if we're ready to receive them, we'll feel the pull.

It's nothing like attraction or simple interest. It's a visceral yank you can feel throughout your entire body, and no matter how hard you think you can ignore it, it consumes you.

Olivia Tran has fucking consumed me, and it's time she knows it. "Let's get you ready for dinner, mama."

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CHAPTER NINE

A mix of emotions tangles in my chest as I finish showering.

Never in my life have I done something remotely close to that. Something so...intimate.

Giving a blow job? Yes, and it's always been the worst experience, a literal job I couldn't wait to end. But with Theo? Knowing I was the reason for those deep groans, the tight grip on my hair, the hunger in his eyes—it lit something deep within me. Every time he tensed, moved harder, breathed faster, it was like gasoline to the flame.

It made me want more. More of his sounds, more of his body's reactions to me, more of Theo.

He's coaxed out the side I covered long ago and I don't want to have to hide it again.

I had to do that my entire marriage with Sam. I had to do it on the very few useless dates that came after. I had to do it when I was watching Theo teach my daughter how to swim and all I wanted to do was jump in and finally kiss him.

It was easier then, though, because I'd never experienced what it'd be like to give in to my desires. I never knew what I was missing. Now, it will be like trying to fold a fitted sheet like the mom on the video who goes too damn fast and I never get it right. Pieces poke out, it's misshapen and obviously not done correctly.

That would be me.

I would attempt to settle for less. Something not as fulfilling. But it would show. In every kiss, every embrace, every brush of hands. The person I was with would know something's not quite right. That I'm no longer content with what they'd give me.

Theo has possibly ruined me in the best ways, yet I'm finding myself angry. Not with him, but with myself.

I don't want to hold on to the words of my ex. I don't want to believe that Theo would grow bored of me and move on to the next *option*.

I do want to believe that the way Theo looks at me, the way he's always looked at me, is because he felt the undercurrent I tried to ignore.

I want to trust that the hunger in his eyes is reserved for me and me alone.

Or maybe I don't know what I want and my mind is still high from my release, and I'm thinking absolute gibberish?

"Hey, mama." My eyes snap to the sound of Theo's voice and find him leaning against the doorframe. Just his presence alone makes my insides quiver in a delicious way, the memory of him filling my mouth, and his hand between my thighs still fresh.

"How we doing over there? You look like you're zoning out."

"Maybe a little," I admit, wiping the foggy window of the shower.

I suck in my bottom lip at the unfiltered sight of him. The slacks he's changed into are so different from what I'm used to seeing on him. They're tailored, stopping just above his shined loafers. The white button-down shirt fits perfectly around his muscles, highlighting every one while not being obscenely tight.

I've seen him in swim trunks a hundred times over, but the professional Theo in front of me makes my entire body weak, and my core clenches around nothing.

Theo lifts his chin slightly, his dark blue gaze focusing on my face. It heats under his intense stare and I'm grateful the rest of the shower is fogged up so he can't see the blush blooming all over my body.

"Penny for your thoughts?"

I huff, though it's more to distract myself than at what I'm really thinking. "I'm not sure you'll find them too interesting."

It's his turn to grunt. "I'm sure I will. Everything about you is interesting."

The laugh that pours out of me is dripping with sarcasm. "There's nothing interesting about a single mom with commitment issues, and an allergy to bees."

"Perception is a funny thing, Olivia."

Rinsing the soap from my body, I shrug. "Not really. It's pretty straightforward. What about me could possibly interest you?"

He kicks himself from the doorframe and takes a slow step in my direction. My throat tightens as he nears, the knowledge the closer he gets the more of me he'll be able to see washing over me. In the massage room, my libido didn't allow me to care. But now, I feel exposed. Completely open for him to read.

"I find your choice in adult films rather interesting."

"More like boring," I counter.

"No." He shakes his head, taking another step. "It showed me how starved you are for affection. Real, deep affection. You want a kind of love that's overwhelming. Once in a lifetime, world-altering."

An ache shoots across my chest, the truth of his words driving straight into the weak spot of my well-constructed wall.

"I also think your profession is interesting."

I barely find my voice around the cotton lodged in it. "I organize finances."

Another step, this one reverberates through my core.

"Yes. You strive on facts, for everything to be balanced and in order. Yet your computer home screen screams how little you let that seep into your real life. You've only had sex one way, but every fiber of your being wants it to be wild, unorthodox, and obsessive."

My wall cracks, the long lines sprawling up the tall sides and allowing little bits to fall off. I couldn't stop the impending crumble if I tried.

"Here's the thing, Olivia." My breath catches in my lungs as he takes his final step, stopping when the toes of his loafers hit the shower's edge. "You have piqued my interest since the moment I laid eyes on you. Since I saw you and knew you were the last woman I ever wanted to look at."

With that, he opens the shower door.

I gasp as the cold outside air wraps around me, sprouting goosebumps, but I quickly forget about the chill when Theo grips either side of my face and smashes his lips to mine.

The kiss is not tentative or shy, soft or timid. It's desperate. Hungry. Pure, unbridled need unleashed in a way that leaves me panting.

Water continues to splash across my back as he pulls me closer, deepening the kiss. His tongue simply brushes against my bottom lip, and I open immediately, letting him in to claim every part of me.

My hands grip the front of his shirt as he tilts my head to the side, drawing me against him. He nips at my lip, coaxing little whimpers of desire out of me and I press into him more, desperate to show him the fire rippling through me from his touch.

This is what a kiss is. What wanting someone so badly you can't hold back an ounce of the visceral need feels like. And it's *everything*.

The rest of my wall collapses, crashing to the ground with the next lash of his tongue.

This could go on forever, and it still wouldn't be enough. My entire body could be fused to his, and I'd still want to be closer.

That's what I'm starting to realize being with him means. It makes everything feel overwhelming while also not enough.

When he releases my face, I nearly stumble forward, only saved by my hands still on his chest.

"Olivia. I want everything from you. All of you. Every fear, hope, and dream." He reaches behind me, turning off the water before taking the towel from the hook next to the door and wrapping it around me. "Every smile, kiss, and orgasm."

He presses his lips to mine briefly, then steps back, gripping one of my wrists to lead me out of the shower. When I step out onto the soft rug, he leans in, his nose barely an inch away from mine.

The blues of his eyes shift like dark ice in the middle of the blackest ocean as he scans me.

My heart squeezes, my breath stuttering as I melt under him. I want nothing more than to fall in love with his pretty words and believe them with every part of me. So why don't I? What is the singular thing holding me back?

I don't get to consider what the possibility could be because Theo spears through the rubble he's left of my wall.

"Instead of having it set in your mind that tonight is about getting me out of your system, let it serve as proof of how bad I want to keep you."

Everything in my body wrings tight.

"Keep me?" My voice is barely a whisper.

Theo nods once. "Keep you."

My lips part and close twice and still I can't find a response. To tell him how those two simple words cause the most heart wrenching reaction from me. To ask him why the hell me? But I don't have to. He sees it as plain as day, etched in every feature on my face. A smile curves his lips, and he deftly flicks the part of my towel holding it in place, forcing it to fall to the floor.

Standing completely naked and still slightly damp from my shower, I let him take in all of me. Every soft curve, every silver line of skin bearing witness to when my stomach was round with a child, every freckle and dip.

He examines each minute detail, and somehow, *somehow*, I've never felt sexier.

When Theo's eyes find their way back to my face, I'm drenched, my pussy throbbing with need.

He reads that too, and the lust that flashes over his eyes is almost primal.

In the next blink, I'm being picked up, walked to the room and tossed on the bed. I squeak, giggling at being handled as if I'm nothing more than a pile of laundry. But then Theo's on top of me, his hands landing on either side of my head, and the laughter dries in my throat.

"When I make you come this time, I want you to watch me. I want your eyes to witness me drink every last drop of your cum, and see how good you look dripping down my chin."

CHAPTER TEN

M y eyes don't leave Theo's face.

I watch with keen intent as he presses a row of delicate kisses along my jaw before dipping down, stopping below my ear.

An onslaught of shivers ripples through me as he keeps his body from touching mine, the only contact between us the slow and tortuous slide of his tongue along the shell of my ear.

"Did I tell you how beautiful you looked with my cock down your throat?" His words act as an aphrodisiac, simulating a string of tingles to radiate across my core. "I can't wait to see what you look like with it buried in this wet cunt."

He nips at my earlobe, the small spark of pain quickly ebbing when he soothes over it with a tender kiss.

"Can't wait to see it overflowing with everything I pump into it."

I push out a heady sigh, the idea of him filling me with his orgasm doing horribly explicit things to my libido. Like the clips he had me watch, the act felt so incredibly intimate and beyond the normal realm of casual sex. It means wanting the other person so badly, you want to fill them with your very essence. I'm sure it's just talk, dirty words to excite me and elicit a response. But the way the image imprints on me and makes me crave it has me needing to confirm.

"You wouldn't—"

Theo's teeth graze along the column of my neck as he works over my pulse point. "I meant every word I ever said to you, Olivia. You belong to me."

He kisses the scar that runs along the edge of my collarbone. His mouth pauses as his gaze take in the raised flesh. Something crosses over his eyes I can't quite place—something like regret or maybe sadness. I want to ask him what's wrong, what thoughts have begun swirling around his head, but stop when he continues kissing the spot seven more times.

One for every stitch.

My heart thrums harder as he moves down, trailing his lips between the valley of my breasts before continuing his spiel. "I plan to fill you until you're dripping days later, the reminder of me an ever constant anytime you move. Any time you reach down here and touch what I'm about to claim."

"Why?" The question escapes me in a rush, my breath starting to come faster as he trails off to one hardened nipple.

He licks the tight bud, coaxing a whimper to tumble out of me.

"That sound." He glances up briefly before moving his hand that's still caging me in. One lowers to continue to support his weight above me, while the other grips the back of my neck. His thumb caresses the side of my jaw, and I move into him, enjoying the tenderness of the act. "It's my favorite sound."

I admire his attempted deflection, but flash him with a narrowed gaze. "Why, Theo?"

He smirks, focusing back on the hard nipple in front of him. He bends slowly—incredibly slowly—before taking it between his teeth.

The pressure he inflicts on it is maddening, my body jerking as tendrils of pleasure sprawl across my entire core.

I arch into him, a silent plea for more, but he simply chuckles before sucking it into his mouth once and releasing it with a wet pop.

"Because I want every part of you. The good, the bad, the tired, the hungry."

He continues his path to my other perked nipple, blowing on it softly. Again, I squirm, the need to have some part of him touching me compelling me to move.

"I want you when you first wake up and to be your last kiss before going to bed."

His mouth continues on his way down my stomach, removing his hand from my throat to knead my breast.

"I want to consume every part of your day with thoughts of me. Each barren, mundane, boring part. All of them with shadows of my presence."

I suck in a sharp breath before holding it, his words sinking into a place I know I'll never be able to scrub away. He wants so much of me. All of me. How can I trust he won't leave me ruined? A pile of heartbreak when he's done and on to something else?

"Sounds like you want me obsessed with you," I breathe, buckling under the sensations wreaking havoc on my body.

He plucks at my nipple as he glides his tongue beneath my belly button, tracing the stray stretch marks beneath it.

"I merely want you to be just a fraction as infatuated with me as I am with you."

Though I can't begin to explain how I know, I believe everything he's saying. Maybe it's because of the looks, and the way he moves around my body as if he's been there a thousand times. Perhaps it's the hunger and how when he touches me, it's like he's been waiting a thousand years.

Or it could be simply because I want to believe someone is so far gone for me that they can't even think straight.

Either way, I want this. "Show me what you mean."

His hands disappear briefly before they find my hips and yank me to the edge of the bed. He lassos both my legs over each of his shoulders and lifts me enough that I can witness his mouth hovering over my entrance.

"With fucking pleasure."

In the next breath, he runs the flat of his tongue down my entire slit.

I bite down on my lip, my fingers latching onto the soft comforter next to me in an attempt to ground me to the bed. But it doesn't help. His next few languid licks are long and hard, stopping right before he reaches my pulsing clit.

"Theo," I moan, wriggling against his tight hold on my hips. "Please."

"Please what, mama?" He nips at the tender flesh on my thigh. "Use your words."

My head swims as he returns to his assault, the long strokes turning into harsh flicks, then back again before he dives inside my cunt.

He groans when he goes in, the sound pushing me further into delirium. His hands curl around my thighs, his fingers digging into the flesh as he starts fucking me with his tongue.

My hands fly above my head, searching for something—anything—to grab onto. But when I come up empty, I turn my face, biting down on my wrist.

"Uh-uh. Olivia. My instructions were very clear." Theo pauses momentarily. "Your eyes need to be on me."

He grants me another lick as he slowly lowers my bottom half on the bed.

"I need you to witness who you come apart for."

He unhooks his arms and repositions one at the hood of my entrance and the other on my waist. "I need you to see who owns every bit of your pleasure."

Another languid lick, but this time, his eyes drop down to his hand, where he draws the skin up, pulling it taut.

"And I need to see you when you scream for me."

With that, he sucks my clit into his mouth, and my vision almost goes white. The intense sensations scorch a path up my nerves before slinking back down, curling tight in my core.

The hand on my waist becomes tighter, a controlled grip so I can't run from the overwhelming pleasure flushing through me. I'm close, so close I almost miss the pure, unfiltered desire hardening his irises.

It's then I realize this is becoming a tit-for-tat. My orgasm for his. I want his arousal. I want to watch what he does when he thinks of me. I want him to finish with me.

Before I stop myself, the words rush out. "Come with me."

He falters slightly, his brows narrowing as his tongue swirls around my clit.

My lashes flutter, but I force them to stay open. "Please."

"You want me to fuck my fist?"

I nod once, the visual almost too much already. "Yes."

He hums, considering my words for a moment before finally deciding. He backs away, but the hand at my hips finds my entrance and dips inside, slipping in and out as he removes his pants with the free one.

When he's free of the constraints, he stands, erection in hand. My mouth waters at the sight, the memory of him thrusting down my throat, the sting of cold from his piercing, sending my blood rushing all over again.

Theo curls his fingers before dragging them out and inspecting the arousal coating them. He seems to think for a beat before shaking his head. "This won't do."

Without explaining what he means, he drags the head through my spitladen slit and covers it in our collective wetness. I jerk at the sudden sensation, hoping with every part of me he slips inside, ending the throbbing ache in my core.

But when he returns his stance, cock glistening, he smirks. "Better."

I chew into my lips, not caring about the bitter taste of copper as my eyes widen, watching as he begins to stroke himself in time with the fingers he thrusts into my pussy.

Three fingers stretch me as he fucks himself, the tip of his cock rubbing along my clit. The cold ball bearings of his piercing create a friction that has me almost writhing, tears of intense pleasure burning the brim of my eyes.

My moans fall freely as my hips jerk up, furthering the pressure of his touch with every stroke of his hand. I'm almost there, I can feel the budding heat winding through me so strongly, I can barely breathe. There's only him, me, and the thick ecstasy twirling around us, tying us together as if trying to fuse us into one.

Theo groans deeply, the sound vibrating through me, pushing me that much higher. "Tell me where you want me."

Even knowing what he's asking, I'm so lost I say the first thing that comes to mind. "Inside of me."

He chuckles, somehow moving faster, curling his digits harder while slapping his cock over my clit with every stroke of his fist. "Already so eager for me to fill you with my cum?"

"I—I—" I try to think of words, of anything to say to try to backpedal how completely hot the entire thing makes me, but a lie won't formulate. "Yes."

"How fucking perfect are you." A statement, not a question, and it's the little praise I need to catapult me over the edge.

My orgasm whips through me, ripping my insides to shreds as he purrs his approval. "That's it, mama. Give it all to me. Every last drop." His name leaves me in a hiss, the never-ending rolls of pleasure washing over me with such intensity I almost don't feel him stutter. But then his hand disappears, and warmth splashes across my open pussy. He continues to fuck his hand, painting my entire cunt with his orgasm, and I have never in my life found anything hotter.

We both come down together, our chests rising and falling in tandem. His eyes find mine, and in them is the same hunger that was there before. Even satiated, the want is still present.

His gaze slips lower, a smirk playing at the edge of his lips when he sees the mess.

Instead of immediately moving away so I can get up or commenting on my sudden request, he licks his lips.

"This..." Theo trails off, slipping his fingers down, burning a path over my flesh until they're at my entrance again. He slides them back in, forcing some of his cum inside me. "Belongs in here."

My mouth parts, a needy whimper escaping as he continues to push more and more of his orgasm where he wants it.

It's the most erotic thing I've ever done and I realize I only want more. I want everything. The passion, the euphoria, the feel of him coming so deep in my cunt, not even my IUD could prevent his cum from slipping past.

Luckily, my post-orgasmic high isn't able to say any of those words because a heavy knock sounds from the front door.

"Room service."



ust when I think I can't get more addicted to Olivia, I do.

Whether it's the words that flow from her pretty lips, the way her body reciprocates everything I do, or the taste of her orgasm still fresh in the air.

I'm lost in her, and in no way do I ever want to find my way out.

After delaying my sister's untimely entrance with a quick, "One moment," I help Olivia up and back into the bathroom. I run hot water over a hand towel and thoroughly but gingerly clean between her thighs, kissing her shoulders softly any time she winces from the warm temperature over her still-sensitive slit.

"I'll be right back." After righting my pants and partly wet shirt, I disappear into the room and unlock the door.

My baby sister beams at me from the other side of her serving cart, a knowing look written over her face. She gestures to my less-than-obvious appearance. "Didn't interrupt anything, did I?"

"Only everything," I half-heartedly joke, gripping the edge of the cart and pulling it inside the room. She shrugs, pushing it the rest of the way in. "Guess I wouldn't be a good little sister if I didn't. But on a serious note, she's freaking gorgeous. And polite too."

I nod, checking the cart to make sure everything is there. "Unimaginably so."

"Was it worth it?"

My brows tic together. "The wait?"

"And all this planning."

I answer with no hesitation. "Without a doubt."

I knew I wanted Olivia the first time I saw her, but I'm also not a selfish prick. She was a freshly divorced mom, and from the conversations I overheard between her and her friends, she needed time. So, I waited.

Last year, during Lyn's final lesson, I knew it'd pretty much be the last chance I got. My plan then was to ask her out for dinner. Use the day as an excuse for celebrating Lyn completing all her lessons.

But then I saw the bee. The one fucking insect Olivia is allergic to.

It felt like an omen, like a warning that if I made the move right then, it wouldn't work in my favor. Still, I chalked it up to a coincidence.

That lasted about all of two seconds because the damn thing flew right on her knee and ended us up in urgent care.

Three or four times in the car ride back, I thought of going through with it, but the timing just never seemed right, and with how objective I knew Olivia was with younger men, I couldn't force it.

So when my mom mentioned needing to do something special to combat the spring downtime from people traveling over spring break, the idea bloomed. A Mother's Day special.

One I could advertise all over town. One I could mail out pamphlets for. One I could tell her neighbors and friends about to make sure she heard about it.

And she did. Not a week after it was announced, she booked.

It was as though our stars were finally aligning.

Wanda was the one who told her about Carnations.

Molly made sure to tell Olivia to bring Lyn to the opening of the pool.

Gennie reminded her about the laptop needing work and knew to ask me to do it once I showed up.

The rest is history. Not a moment has gone by that hasn't been perfect.

Scanning over the food on the cart, I return my sister's smile. "Thanks, sis."

"Not a problem. Just remember what you said."

I nod, already closing the door. "A favor owed, no questions asked."

Her responding laugh is muffled as the door clicks shut. I lock it before turning around, and find Olivia peeking her head out of the bathroom door.

"All clear?"

"It is."

"What was—oh, yes. I am *starving*." Swinging the door wide open, Olivia reappears in the room and my entire body tenses.

She's thrown on a pair of cotton shorts that hug the delicious curves of her hips and a tank that does little to hide her hard nipples.

My mouth fucking waters to have them between my teeth again.

"We can eat later."

The hesitation in her voice makes my eyes snap up to hers, and I quickly realize I must have been looking at her with the thoughts clear on my face.

"No, you need to replenish your energy, and we need to have a little chat."

She tilts her head an inch, a light pink dusting her cheeks. "About what just happened?"

"Yes."

Her eyes flit the side, embarrassment quickly coloring her whole body in splotches of red. There's something in her gaze that almost seems as if she's been waiting for a conversation to happen. But not a good one.

The realization she's never done anything like that does something odd in my chest. I love that it was me who showed her sex isn't supposed to be tame when you're overly tormented by someone else. But I also understand it might make someone who's never done it before incredibly shy, even ashamed. I refuse to let her think anything we did wasn't fucking beautiful.

I move forward, erasing the space between us in three broad steps before grabbing her hand. "No. Don't misunderstand me. I very much enjoyed everything we did."

Her gaze slowly moves to where I have my fingers threading through hers. "You don't think I'm filthy?"

The corners of my lips twitch. "You were. I cleaned you up."

She can't stop the smile from spreading across her mouth, her eyes returning to me. "You know what I mean."

Shaking my head, I pull her toward the bed, gesturing with my chin so she sits down. Her hands automatically go between her thighs, and her head falls forward, her gaze pointed at the ground.

I hook my finger under her chin and lift, forcing her to look at me. "Who told you sex was supposed to be clean?"

"People, I guess." She shrugs, and I fill in the word *Sam* for her.

"Those people have shitty sex lives."

"You came on me."

"I did." The memory of my orgasm painting her open cunt makes my cock swell. "The most gorgeous sight I've ever seen. Only second best to you coming undone."

"It was so..." she trails off, the words eluding her, prompting me to finish for her.

"Hot. Erotic. Intimate."

Olivia pushes out a shallow breath, this one stained with arousal still flowing through her. "All of those things. I've never felt so wanted."

"Because no one has ever wanted you as badly as me." My finger leaves her chin, tucking a stray hair behind her ear. It's still damp and reminds me of the times she sat next to the pool, watching me play with Lyn. The look in Olivia's eyes was enough to melt me to my core, and for the millionth time, I wondered how I could garner that look from her forever. "*I* have never wanted someone as badly as I want you."

Her body visibly relaxes. "You don't think you'll get bored with me?"

"Not a fucking chance, mama. You let me keep you and you're it for me."

"But how can you say that? You've never been in a relationship with me. You don't know if I turn into a cannibal on the weekend or keep my ketchup in the pantry instead of the fridge."

It's almost cute the way she thinks she can change my mind. "Because I'm a grown-ass man, Olivia. Relationships are about work, communication, and trust. You give me those three things, and we're good. We can put you on the *Santa Clarita Diet* or we can keep two bottles of ketchup."

Her perfect lips part twice, and on the third, I capture them. This time, I'm soft, tentative. Showing her that I'm capable of being a gentle lover.

But it only lasts a second, because her hands lift, threading through the sides of my hair and drawing me over her. I let her, maneuvering back on top of her and claiming her mouth how I want to.

This time, I kiss her with every missed moment.

Every time I looked across the pool and saw her eyes flash away from me.

After every one of her daughter's swim lessons when she lingered but couldn't bring herself to say anything.

For the times she told her friends that she couldn't date a younger man and made me wait.

I kiss her with every breath and every heartbeat keeping my body alive.

In between our kiss, and my nipping at her bottom lip, I strip her of her thin tank. But then, almost like ice water rushing over me, I realize I've misstepped, and I need to show her something.

It takes more self-restraint than I've ever had to muster to draw back.

Olivia's grip becomes harder, more desperate as she tries to pull me toward her. Our heavy breaths mingle as both of our composures slip.

"Wait, I need to show you something first."

She shakes her head, leaning up and kissing me three consecutive times. "It can wait, I promise."

"*Woman*." The word comes out as stern as it can, but with my cock screaming the same thing she is, it doesn't have much command in it. "It will take one second."

She whines her disapproval and only eases her fight a fraction. Knowing time is limited, I slip my phone from my pocket and login into an app with my latest lab results.

"I meant to show you this before, but you kind of took me by surprise in the massage parlor."

Olivia glimpses at my clean bill of health with just a flash of her eyes. "Great. I can—"

I kiss her, swallowing her words. She laughs into my mouth, wrapping her legs around my waist, and it isn't until I work my way down her jaw and to the column of her neck before she speaks again.

"Do you—" A moan stops her as I reach the crest of her breast.

"Want me to—" Another, this time when I suck the hard nub into my mouth.

"Show you—" She bucks her hips against me when my tongue twirls around before I bite down lightly.

"Mine?" She finishes as I shift back, unwrapping her legs so I can strip her of her shorts. "Will it look the same as mine?" I ask as I watch the cotton slip down the thighs I want back around me.

She nods, her eyes locked on me while I discard her shorts and finally begin the tedious task of rolling up my sleeves.

One at a time, I flip the fabric, my hooded gaze taking in the faint blush curling up her neck. The color is from pure arousal, and it's fucking delicious.

"That's all I need."

Grabbing hold of her thighs, I yank her to the end of the bed and drop my slacks enough to free my throbbing erection.

Her bottom lip disappears as I run a thumb over the head, wiping the precum over it. When I line it up with her entrance, I'm almost sure she stops breathing.

A soft smirk pulls at the corner of my lips as I tilt my head to the side, a silent question lingering between us.

It only takes her a second to answer with a nod and heady sigh.

"Yes."

CHAPTER TWELVE

say the single word and only hope he knows I'm agreeing to so much more than sex.

I'm saying yes to him. To trying to navigate these feelings, and allow whatever the hell this is to flourish.

I wasn't with Sam for any longer than a pair of half-dedicated high school sweethearts, but never have I felt so comfortable. So understood.

It goes well beyond the desire or the need to feel wanted. What Theo is suggesting is something real. Something that could not only last but could be amazing, and I want that.

I deserve it.

I can't keep recycling my ex's rhetoric about women being options even after you're in a committed relationship. I was burned, yes, but that doesn't mean I can't cook again, and something tells me being in a kitchen with Theo is a much different experience.

"You're doing it again." Theo's voice cuts through my thoughts, pulling me back to him. "Zoning out. Only this time, I'm not sure I should be offended because I have my cock an inch away from your cunt." A fire burns across my cheek. "No, no. I was just thinking about this. About us."

He quirks a brow, his dimple popping as he smirks. His heated gaze rakes over me for a moment before he leans forward and runs the head of his dick through my slit.

My eyes squeeze shut, and I arch my back, the resounding tingles radiating from the spot, making my entire body tense with need.

"Tell me, mama. What about us were you thinking about?"

I try to peel my lids open, but then he does it again, over and over, dragging the head across my sensitive clit, the metal balls of his piercing making me jolt closer to him. I can barely find my damn breath, let alone string together a coherent sentence.

"Come on, Olivia, focus. Use those pretty words." He continues his torture for a few more passes, pausing on the last stroke to probe my entrance.

*"Theo."* I manage a breathy hiss. My skin is scorching, beads of sweat already sprouting at the edges of my temples. Every nerve is on high alert, each sense heightened.

"Yes?" he teases, pushing in until my eyes flash open and I gasp. But as quickly as he does it, he pulls back, and my entire muscular system erupts, my vision going slightly blurry. "Tell me what you were thinking about."

"About what will happen after this," I force out, my voice somewhere between desperate and angry. I've already come twice tonight, but never in my life have I been more turned on. More overwhelmed with the need to have him inside me. It's a horrible ache, growing rapidly the longer he's not filling me with every inch.

He quirks a brow again. "So there's an *us* after this?"

I saw my bottom lip between my teeth, slowly nodding. I'd thought I'd feel more vulnerable, nervous even, but instead, I'm excited, ready to see what we make out of it.

Theo's dark eyes glimmer as he pauses all movement. "I get to keep you?"

Doing my best to hide the smile playing at my lips, I nod again. "*I* get to keep you."

Instead of saying anything, he gives me a grin I've never seen before. It's lopsided and boyish, like he didn't think the decision was ever a real possibility, and now he couldn't be happier.

He leans forward, brushing his lips against mine briefly before examining my face. Dozens of unspoken things flashes through them but instead of saying any of them, the smile drops, and in its place is the hungry man who's been waiting for his meal as he grabs either side of my hips. His fingers dig into the flesh as he lines himself up.

Then, with one final search over my face with his dark eyes, he slams inside me in a single hard thrust.

I cry out, my hands clawing at the blanket above my head as his cock stretches me just past comfortable. He doesn't give me time to adjust to his size as he pulls out and drives back in.

Theo does this again and again, his pace long, and thrusts hard enough that I gasp every time his hips meet mine.

It's an addicting sort of torture, an intoxicating mix of pain and pleasure, and it takes a few solid breaths before I get used to the feeling of his fullness. But even then, there's a delicious bite of pain in every stroke. Like our first kiss, the pleasantries are gone, overridden by a desperation to feel everything, and my body responds, lightning sprawling up my limbs, begging for more.

His name is a whimper on my lips, the clear indication of what I want staining the singular syllable.

Theo's hands slide across my waist, over my breasts, and up my forearms as he leans forward. The position causes him to fill me to the hilt, and I suck in a sharp breath, attempting to adjust my hips to the new angle.

He threads his fingers through mine, squeezing tight, another wicked smile curling his lips. The faint scent of my arousal still mingles with the mint of his breath as he stares down at me, his pupils washing out every ounce of color.

"That's it, mama." He straightens, drawing out as he goes before pushing back in slower, morphing my erratic breaths into wild moans. "Take it for me."

My cunt clenches around his words while he continues his long strokes, his piercing dragging against places that make my entire body shudder.

Until now, sex has been sex, an orgasm an occasional bonus. At least, that's what I think complacent people like me tell ourselves when it lacks luster. But after this, I know better.

Theo's overwhelming presence as he looms over me is more than just sex. It's what I always saw in my movies and wanted for myself. Only with him, it's so much better—so much more.

"You're fucking perfect," he grits out, letting one of his hands drift down to my breast. Keeping his strokes steady, he plays with each hard bud, rolling them under the pad of his rough thumb before pinching them. "And your responses only prove your body was designed for me."

My eyes connect with his as he continues to pluck at my sensitive nipples. Each one sends jolts of pleasure that settle low into my core, adding to the growing ache budding there.

"You're mine, Olivia." Theo's voice is low now, almost as if the declaration is him showing me his insecurity. The notion he thinks after this I'd be anything but, squeezes my heart painfully. So when his eyes finally flit back to mine, and he says, "I need to hear you say it," I don't hesitate to oblige.

My hands grip his face, and I draw him down to me, our gazes locked together. "I'm yours, Theo. All yours."

It only takes a beat for the five words to sink into his skin before he smashes his lips to mine.

This kiss is somehow more intense than any other we've shared. Each lash of his tongue like words he can't seem to articulate, every nip of his teeth a feeling he's always had to hold back. And I meet every one with emotions of my own.

An apology for making him wait, for not realizing what I was missing out on. Happiness that he was so patient. Joy he still wants me. Appreciation for how much he does. And a growing fondness that stems so much further than just having him drive me into delirium.

Before I realize what's happening, he slides out of me, leaving me empty and my body mourns the loss.

But then he strips from his button-down, each one taking painstakingly long despite the quick movement of his fingers. Then goes his undershirt, exposing a broad chest and muscular stomach that was toned over years of carrying people from the pool.

Finally, he slips from his pants and briefs, giving me a full show of all that makes up Theo Beckham.

He's all muscle, tan skin, and veiny forearms, and I thank whoever it was that decided I was made for him.

Despite my lips being dry, my mouth waters as my gaze flashes down to his stiff erection, slightly gleaming from my arousal. I felt around his cock when it was down my throat, but with how high I was off my own orgasm, I didn't really get to study it. "Can I see the piercing?"

One side of his mouth quirks up, his dimple making an appearance. "Of course."

He wraps a hand around his cock and lifts, showing me the underside, and I quickly realize where all the extra simulation is coming from.

There are two barbells at the tip, one horizontal and one vertical just beneath the lip of the head, and another bar going across underneath. "Oh." My eyes continue to take it in, my libido somehow going into overdrive from simply looking at it.

"Do you like it?"

"I love it."

"Good." He chuckles, releasing his hold and jutting his chin toward the headboard. "I want you up there now."

Without hesitation, I scoot backward, but stop when he shakes his head. "I'm going to sit there. I want you on top. I'm interested in something."

My brows furrow as I sit up. "Interested in what?"

He winks before positioning himself at the head of the bed, his back against the metal rails. "It wouldn't be any fun if I told you."

Biting into my lip, I don't argue. I just want him back inside me.

Once he's settled, I maneuver across the bed and straddle his lap. Wrapping my fingers around the cold rails behind him, I use them to pull myself up and position over his cock.

My eyes trail down, over the impressive expanse of his body, and focus on lining myself up, but then he hooks a finger under my jaw and brings my gaze back to him.

The expression etched in the lines of his face is new. It's soft but wanting. Compassionate but hungry. It makes my entire body warm with something I don't put a name on and instead simply bask in, enjoying how a mere look from him can make me feel so much.

Without thinking, I release the bar and grab either side of his face, pulling him in for a kiss as I sit.

A small gasp leaves me as his dick slides inside, stretching me all over again, but he swallows it, wrapping his arms around my waist to take control of my mouth.

I'm not sure how long we stay like this, but when he finally releases me, I'm panting, barely able to breathe as I rock my hips. "We can do sweet and soft next time." Theo uncurls his arms, and tucks a stay hair behind my ear, a different kind of smirk curling his lips. "Right now, I just want to fuck you."

He grips my waist and lifts slightly, then slams me down.

My hands fly to the rails behind him to steady myself, the overwhelming fullness from this position almost too much for me to accommodate.

"No, don't give up now, mama," he purrs, slamming me down again before moving my hips in a way that creates a dangerous friction over my clit. "I know you can do it. Fuck me. Let me feel what it's like to have this cunt squeeze out every drop of my cum."

His words spur my movements, encouraging me to do exactly that. It only takes a few more powerful strokes before I match his rhythm, and soon we're locked in an exhilarating dance.

At first, I'm able to keep up with him, my body moving in perfect tune with his as our heavy pants intertwine. But soon enough, my nerves draw tight, my impending orgasm spreading out like tendrils of pleasure all the way to my toes.

"I feel it. You're close." Theo uses one hand to guide my hips while using the other to play with my breasts that are suddenly heavier than usual. "Let me have it."

It only takes a few more strokes before my release slams into me, tearing through my nerves until the edges are frayed. "*Oh my God*."

"No, Olivia." He doesn't slow his movements, fucking me brutally as I come, intensifying each pulse. "God isn't the one who's about to fill this perfect pussy."

My breath catches as I realize what he's saying. The act feeling so much more erotic when it's said out loud.

Something must pass over my face because Theo leans forward, nipping at my lip. "Unless you want my cum painted across this smooth skin."

I shake my head too quickly, and my voice comes out too high, but I can't find it in me to care. "I want you all of you."

"Good."

In one fluid motion, Theo lifts and has me on my back. My hands reach for the footboard above me as he drives back inside me, each thrust becoming more ravenous.

"I want you so full, you drip with me." He smirks, ramming into me so hard, my breath is knocked from my lungs. I just came, but I swear it feels like my body wants to give him more, and he knows it too. Trailing a hand between us, he rubs my sensitive clit in sharp circles.

"Then, Olivia, I'm going to shove every wasted drop back inside your cunt where it belongs."

His words, the friction, the incredible feeling of him stretching me does me in. Somehow, my body sparks another orgasm, and Theo sets the match.

We come together, his guttural groans drowned out by me crying out his name until I can't feel anything but the residual tingles radiating through my entire body.

Theo collapses on top of me, holding himself up by his forearms on either side of my head. Beads of sweat coat his hairline, which my fingers itch to push back.

Instead of talking myself out of it, I do it, threading my fingers through his dark hair and brushing it out of his face.

He's so damn handsome, and I hate I never allowed myself to get lost in him. Now, all I want to do is stare at him. Examine all his features, and memorize every sun mark.

I'm so ready to explore us, I'm almost giddy.

"You're in your head again, mama." Theo presses a soft kiss to my nose. "Good things?"

"Great things," I sigh.

"Hmm, give me ten minutes, and I'll give you a few more great things to daydream about."

My eyes widen. "There's more?"

Theo smirks. "With you? Always."

Rather than resting for the ten minutes, he waits for only two. Then he makes us eat so he can fuck me again. This time, it's slower and more drawn out. Like now that he knows I'm not going to run away, he can take his time.

Slower also means I get to appreciate that piercing more. At different angles, it hits different spots, and the noises that it coaxes out of me are more animal than human.

It isn't until after all that, and a quick shared shower where we kiss more than bathe, that we finally fall asleep.



for the interval of the spread-open cunt.
for the spread-open cunt.

My eyes peel open slowly, my body still exhausted from the night. She comes into view, slightly unfocused at first, but I can make out her beautiful silhouette running back and forth through the room, grabbing all her clothes and shoving them in her bag.

"What are you going to be late for?" My voice is hoarse and two octaves lower than normal. It makes Olivia pause momentarily and glance at me, a telling look of lust passing over her.

When I smirk and wink, she bats me away, sighing dramatically. "Sam is dropping off Lyn in half an hour, and there's no way I'll make it."

I move to sit up, the tendons in my back stretching as I do. "Okay, text him and tell him you're running late."

I don't know Sam that well, and never cared to, but I'm sure he won't mind spending a few extra minutes with his daughter.

Olivia shakes her head, in part to tell me no, while also searching for something on the ground. "You don't understand, he's…"

She trails off, and I quickly put two and two together that she's made it a point not to talk poorly about her daughter's father.

Admirable, but I have no such compunction. Especially because we're alone, and I've overheard her and her friends on more than one occasion about how he used to treat her. "He's an asshole."

She flashes a smile but quickly schools her expression. "Timely."

"I see." Throwing the blankets off my lap, I stand, moving to find the clothes I discarded. "Well, I'm coming with you."

Olivia stops in her tracks, a pair of her lace underwear dangling on her fingertips. Her eyes widen when she realizes I'm serious, and she lets out a strained sort of laughter. "You can't."

My brows draw together. "Why not?"

"What would that look like with you being there?"

"For him, like I just fucked you. For Lyn, like her favorite lifeguard in the world is fixing her mom's computer."

"Person in the world," she counters, a smile playing at the edge of her lips. "I don't know what it is about you, but she thinks the stars and moon of you."

I shrug, my chest warming as I recall the thousands of conversations Lyn and I have had in the water. She's fairly introverted around other kids, but with me, she has a new story every time I see her. It's like listening to someone narrate a collection of a kids' imaginary universe.

She's also brave as hell, never backing down when I give her a new challenge, and smart as a whip. She makes comments sometimes I have to do a double take on.

Lyn's a great kid, and I couldn't imagine being her father and not wanting every second I couldn't get with her.

"She's my favorite little human, too."

Olivia chews on the bottom of her lip, her eyes on me, but her mind somewhere else. After a beat, she blinks twice and walks around the bed, grabbing my face on either side.

"You sure about this?"

"About what? Coming over?"

"About us?"

I grunt, grabbing her hips and sitting, forcing her to straddle my lap. My heart vibrates in my chest as I pull her flush against me, my cock already hardening beneath her. Before I can wonder how mad she'll be if I ask for another round, I press a soft kiss to her nose and answer.

"Yes." I've never been asked an easier question in my life, and I'll assure her as many times as I need to before she realizes I want this. I want her. "Now, and every day."

Her dark eyes scan over my face as if she's soaking in what the words mean. How true they are.

"Alright," she finally says, giving me the briefest of pecks before trying to stand up.

Maybe just a quickie.

I wrap an arm around her waist, forcing her down to the bed. Flipping her on her back, I hover over her, caging her body in. I lower myself so she can't move and capture her lips in a brutal kiss.

She opens for me immediately, sliding her tongue against mine and wrapping her legs around my waist. The kiss is wild and frantic, her fingers gripping my hair to pull me in closer while I take control of her mouth.

It isn't until we're both breathless and I've moved to nipping and licking along the flesh of her neck that she presses the flat of her palms against my chest. "Wait, wait."

"What?" I mumble in the crook of her neck.

"I'm going to be late."

My internal mind sulks as I move down, lifting her shirt so I can taste the swell of her breasts. Her chest rises and falls faster, her arousal letting me win the fight I shouldn't be fighting.

I never said I was a complete gentleman.

"Is it super important we're there on time?"

It takes me stopping my tongue's perusal of her tight nipple for her to nod. "Yes."

"So can I come with you then?"

"Please," she breathes. "Lyn's going to see my parents today."

"So the house will be empty?" I release her completely, raising up to examine her again.

A blush burns across her face as her head moves slowly up and down. "Yep."

"Lead with that next time, mama."

Within five minutes, we have her stuff together, I've changed into fresh clothes, and we're on the road to her house.

Even though the ride is short, it bothers me not being with her. Like the small amount of time we're not together is enough for her to talk herself out of us. To let her past insecurities break down everything I've worked so hard to build.

But when we pull up—her in the garage and me at the curb—her bright smile says otherwise, and my insides fucking melt.

"My mom will be here in an hour, so we won't have to wait too long," she informs me as she unlocks her front door. "I'm sure you can make up a reason why the computer repair is taking so long."

"Oh, there are a thousand things I can think of to make my work take longer. Adult flicks do come with lots of viruses when found on shady sites."

Her eyes widen, and she slaps a playful hand across my chest. "I only use ethical sites, thank you very much." "Hmmhmm." I wait until she passes me, crossing over the threshold, before I slap her ass.

She yelps, giggling as she spins around. "I'm going to make breakfast. Any requests?"

I shut the door. "Anything."

Olivia bites into her smile before turning back around, her colorful sundress flaring out.

I stay in the foyer for a minute, still partially dazed by the fact I'm even standing here in the first place.

It's bright, all clean lines and modern shapes. There are large black frames on one side, each with a different photo of Lyn and Olivia.

There's a baby picture of Lyn, one of her walking, missing a tooth, her first day of school. One of her and Olivia when they had something glittery all over their faces, and another of them in the pool.

It isn't until the ache spans across my jaw that I realize how hard I'm smiling at the photos, a heartwarming fullness expanding in my chest.

I know Olivia and I have only just started, and it will be a while until her walls are down enough to let me in completely, but I make it a personal goal of mine to see myself in one of these pictures one day.

Whether it's carving some Halloween pumpkins with Lyn or holding on to a pregnant Olivia, I'm going to make it into one of these frames.

"Coming?" Olivia's voice calls from somewhere deeper into the house.

"Without you? I don—"

"There's that twenty-five-year-old mouth. I was getting worried you were too serious."

I laugh to myself, quieting my steps as I walk through the hall. It opens to a kitchen on the left with a bright living area attached. I don't get to focus on the other side because Olivia has her back to me, and it's too good of an opportunity to waste. Waiting until she cracks an egg in the mixing bowl in front of her, I sneak up and surprise grab her, wrapping both arms around her middle. One hand goes to her throat while the other slides down, dipping inside her dress and into her panties.

She yelps, jolting forward and knocking the bowl of eggs backward. "Damn, you move fast."

"Shit. I'm so sorry." I immediately release her and back away, searching the pristine kitchen for a towel. "That was supposed to be a good 'how do you like this for serious,' but now I feel like an asshole."

Olivia's laugh draws me back to her, her shoulders shaking as she grabs a hand towel from the handle of the oven. "I live with a six-year-old, Theo. I'm used to messes. Besides, any time your hands are on me, I'm not going to complain."

She makes quick work of wiping the egg away as if it were never there before turning around and pressing a quick kiss to my lips. "I am going to change real quick, though."

My gaze flits down to the dark spot on her dress, and despite her words, I feel even worse. That is, until she reaches down and strips the fabric from her body.

She sidesteps when I go to reach for her, laughing when I scowl after her. "Start some scrambled eggs, I'll be right back."

I don't catch what she says right away, my eyes too transfixed on watching her round hips rocking back and forth as she walks to a staircase on the opposite side of the kitchen. I wonder if she'll walk the same way if she allows me to put a baby in her belly, or if I'll be the type to carry her everywhere. It isn't until I hear a knock on the door that I snap out of it.

This isn't my house, and I've definitely been instructed to make eggs, but the idea of opening the door to both Lyn's toothy smile and Olivia's shit ex is too enticing to ignore. I reach the edge of the kitchen when another knock comes, this one heavy and more impatient. Already starting to get annoyed, I quicken my steps, not wanting Olivia to hear and come rushing down to intervene. Luckily, when the third knock hits, I'm there, opening it to a visibly pissedoff Sam.

"Theooooooooo!" Lyn nearly jumps on me, wrapping her arms around my middle and squeezing the air out.

I rub the top of her head, messing up her hair. "Hey, little beaver. How are you?"

"Good! What—"

"What are you doing here?" Sam's voice is low, meant to be intimidating. And I'm sure to someone who hasn't just fucked his ex six ways to Sunday, it might be. I, however, am not.

My eyes flash to his, the corner of my lips curling with a smirk. "Just working on Ms. Tran's laptop."

"Mommy hates her computer. Did you fix it all up, Theo?" Lyn releases me, and I nod, not bothering to participate in the staring contest I can feel her father gearing up for, and smile at her.

"Almost. Just a few more things, and I'll be done."

"Can you stay for breakfast, then? I'll ask Mommy to make us waffles." Sam clears his throat, but I ignore him. "Will there be berries?"

Lyn beams, her large front teeth making an adorable appearance. "Yes, but only blackberries. Mommy ate all the strawberries."

"Oh, perfect. Blackberries are my favorite."

"Really? Me too!" Her dark eyes light up like little stars as she runs past me. "I'll get started right now!"

I chuckle after her, gripping the doorknob, but stop short when Sam puts his hand up against the door. "I'm confused as to who you are and how my daughter knows you." Understanding I am a man around his daughter, I give him the respect of answering him. "I've trained her how to swim since she was two."

"And your relationship with Olivia?"

As if on cue, Olivia appears at the bottom of the stairs, her eyes glued to us as her daughter wraps around her middle, immediately begging to make waffles.

I shoot her a wink before turning back to her ex-husband. "It's eight-ohone, and I understand you have better places to be. Until next time, friend."

Without waiting for a retort, I push against his weak hold and shut the door, turning to my girls. Olivia is biting into her lip, a smile hidden under her teeth, while Lyn is bouncing on her heels, waiting for me.

It only takes a second for me to know I could do this every day and not want to go a single one without them.

I take a step toward them, toward my future, and pull up the sleeves of my sweater. "Twenty bucks I can eat more waffles than Mommy."

CHAPTER EPILOGUE

# ${f T}$ hree years later

"When are you going to take this fucking thing out?" Theo lightly yanks on the small strings, careful not to displace the device keeping me from getting pregnant.

I debate telling him the truth and confess I have an appointment next Monday, but I can't help screwing with him just a bit. "Hmm, I'm thinking a year or two?"

Theo growls his disapproval as he leans forward, withdrawing his fingers and lining up the head of his cock with my entrance. The cold ball bearings of his piercing send a ripple of shivers up my spine and coax a needy whimper out of me. He doesn't move, though, and instead studies me. After a beat he must see something and narrows his gaze, waiting for me to tell him the truth.

We've talked about kids since a month after we started dating, and the topic came up more frequently after we got married last summer. It took a little time, me standing up to Sam when he said I was being idiotic to think of marriage again, and a bit of therapy. But after all that I was able to let go

of the negative connotations I had with a long-term commitment, and as he promised, Theo has been an unwavering constant.

Anytime I try to put up my wall, he becomes a calm voice of reason. He reassures me time and time again that everything he'd said to me that Mother's Day was real, and he is as obsessed with me today as he was three years ago.

Then, there's seeing him be a bonus father to Lyn. I'd already had tiny glimpses when he was training her in the water, but doing it full-time has been something else entirely.

They are the most visual representation I've ever seen of being two peas in a pod.

If I'm swamped with work, he immediately takes my place to help with her crafts. He always assists with her homework while they keep me company in the kitchen as I'm cooking. He's the king of the popcorn-buttersalt ratio and picks out the best movies for our weekly movie night. And he never misses an event, no matter how many computers he's got piled up at work to fix.

Twenty-eight years old and Theo couldn't be further than the stereotype I once gave him.

He smiles softly, trying his best to hide the disappointment on his face. "If that's what you want, you know I support—"

"In three days," I finally admit, arching my hips.

He tsks, gliding his hands up and down my sides. "That was cruel."

I bite into my cheek, resisting the urge to tell him how the real cruelty here is that he's been edging me for almost twenty minutes. He says it's foreplay, but I think he just enjoys hearing me beg. He likes making me delirious with need because I say outlandish things.

"Can you fuck me now?"

A glimmer passes over his eyes, and one side of his lips curls into a sly smirk. "Can you be quiet this time?" "Yes," I hiss, ignoring his jab. There have been at least a half dozen times Gennie's asked me if we got an animal recently.

"Are you sure?"

"Theo."

His smile expands, but before I can say anything, he slams inside of me with one hard thrust.

My eyes snap shut, and I roll my lips together to keep in the harsh gasp. He chuckles as he draws out the tip and does it again. My entire body shudders beneath him, pleasure stretching down my limbs with every hard piston of his hips.

*"Fuck,"* He groans, tipping his head back before rolling it to the side. "You're so wet."

"Because you've been teasing me forever." I hope he hears the exasperation in my voice, but then he rubs against the right spot, and it breaks in a moan.

"It's because you're so fucking responsive." He plucks at one of my nipples, and I shudder, proving his point. "I love watching you react to me. It's beautiful."

He lifts my legs, putting my ankles by his shoulders before yanking me to the end of the bed. I suck in a sharp breath at the new position, the slight bite of pain making my nerves tingle.

Theo drops his hands, one going to my side while the other slides over my belly button. A softness takes over his features as he examines my stomach, and then his eyes flash to mine.

"I cannot wait to put a baby in you. You know that?"

I try to bite into my smile, but it doesn't help hide it. "I know. Me too."

He smirks, his dimple making a brief appearance before he glides his hand over and grips my hip. Then, he fucks me.

His strokes become wild, desperate, and hungry. Every time his hips meet mine, heat sparks from the spot we connect. It doesn't take long before the telling signs of my orgasm build low in my core.

Sweat slides from his temple as he pushes into me again and again. "Where do you want me?"

I love that even after three years, he always asks. "I want you to fill me, Theo."

He groans. "Is that greedy little cunt of yours going to squeeze me dry?"

I nod, words more difficult to form as the tight ball in my core begins to expand.

"You better not spill a fucking drop, mama."

"I won—" My voice morphs into a muffled scream as I come apart, my orgasm spreading through me like fire.

Theo quickly follows behind, his pace faltering as his own release shoots through him.

My pussy continues to clench as his cock pulses, taking every last bit that he pumps into me.

"Fuck," he groans again as he comes down, his panting breaths matching the pace of my racing heart.

"My sentiments exactly."

He chuckles as he gingerly drops my legs, then leans forward to capture my lips. The kiss is sweet and tender, so opposite of how he just fucked me. When he finally releases my lips, his blue eyes scan over my face, a soft expression etched in his features.

Even after three years, he still looks at me every day as if it's the first time he's ever laid eyes on me, and I'll never get tired of it. "Let's get you cleaned up, mama."

I nod but wince when he pulls out, the emptiness stinging more than his brutal drive. We haven't even stood up completely when a knock at our bedroom door makes both of us jolt.

"Hey," Lyn's voice seeps through the cracks. "It's okay if I meet Tracy in the Treehouse?"

"You're up early," I yell, my face blooming red.

Theo and I have had sex a million times with Lyn at home, but we're always extremely careful, and usually aim for hours when she isn't awake. Like right now, it's only seven in the morning, and she's notorious for sleeping in until ten on the weekends.

"Because she threw water balloons at my window until I woke up."

Tracy is Gennie's daughter and it just so happens her room faces Lyn's.

"Okay. I'll get you when it's time for breakfast."

"Thanks, Mom. Can we have Theo's favorite?"

Theo laughs, probably thinking the same thing as me. It's the most sugar-filled breakfast I make and she uses Theo as an excuse to have me cook it.

"Sure, little beaver," he calls when I narrow my eyes at him.

"Thank you. Love you, guys."

"Love you too," Theo and I reply in unison.

"Love you more." Her voice is fading now.

"Love you most!" Theo bellows, determined for her to hear.

When he turns back to me, I grip his face and fall back, pulling him on top of me as we collapse on the bed. "How about this? Let's clean each other up with our mouths?"

Theo smirks, already pushing me up higher on the bed. "My dirty, dirty girl."

Yes. Yes, I am.

### The End.

Ready for your next kinky holiday read? Pre-Order here.

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### Acknowledgments

Thank you, my reader, for filling your time with the stories in my head.

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Kenzie. Where do I start? You pull me out the funk and bring my rambles to life. Thank you thank you thank you!!!

Again, thank you to everyone! I can't wait for the next holiday! I left the smallest hint in the epilogue about the next kink.

### About the Author



Lee Jacquot is a wild-haired bibliophile who writes romances with strong heroines that deserve a happy ever after. When Lee isn't writing or drowning herself in a good book, she laughs or yells at one of her husband's practical jokes.

Lee is addicted to cozy pajamas, family games nights, and making tents with her kids. She currently lives in Texas with her husband, and three littles. She lives off coffee and Dean Winchester.

Visit her on Instagram or TikTok to find out about upcoming releases and other fun things! @authorleejacquot



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