



*Virgin*

HUSBAND

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

ALEXA RILEY

# **VIRGIN HUSBAND**

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ALEXA RILEY

## CONTENTS

[HEA on the go](#)  
[Virgin Husband](#)  
[Chapter 1](#)  
[Chapter 2](#)  
[Chapter 3](#)  
[Chapter 4](#)  
[Chapter 5](#)  
[Chapter 6](#)  
[Chapter 7](#)  
[Chapter 8](#)  
[Chapter 9](#)  
[Chapter 10](#)  
[Chapter 11](#)  
[Epilogue](#)  
[Epilogue](#)  
[Chapter 1](#)  
[Stalk the Author](#)

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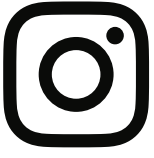
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# Virgin Husband

by **Alexa Riley**

Aiden Clark agreed to marry his best friend Savannah, but it was never anything beyond a piece of paper. He's a good man with good intentions, but one look at Caroline and he knows he can't keep living a lie. Not when he sees what love is.

Caroline Parker is finally getting back to her old self. She's moved in with her bestie, has a great job as a dog walker, and just met the man of her dreams. It seems like it's all too good to be true, and when she finds out his secret it just might be.

Warning: Come on, ladies, this is an AR book! We wouldn't do you wrong. There are virgins everywhere, which means lots of cherries to pop! We promise you won't be disappointed.

The Virgin Husband is the first book in a duet that can be read as a stand alone. Get both sides of the story on March 1st with the Virgin Wife.

*To redemption...  
sometimes it's possible.*



# 1

## Caroline

I roll over in bed and stretch. I need to get up. I can hear Gia singing to herself in the shower and it makes me smile. She loves to sing but she's terrible at it. She's worse than I am and that's saying a lot. That still didn't stop her from making us do the seventh grade talent show together, where we not only danced but sang too. It was awful, but thank god at the time we went to an all-girls school together back in Seattle or it might have been more embarrassing. She really could talk me into almost anything.

I would have done the talent show every year with her if it would've kept her from moving all the way to Chicago in the middle of our eighth grade year. We stayed close, but high school would've been better if she was by my side.

I throw the blankets back and get up to go make some coffee. I don't drink the stuff, but Gia swears by it. I put on my slippers and snag my phone off the side table before opening my bedroom door at the same time as Gia comes out of the bathroom wrapped in a towel. Her dark hair is hidden under a towel on her head.

"Hey, I wanted to give you a heads up." She lowers her voice to a whisper. "It rained last night."

The same dog that pretends he can't hear me when I call his name almost knocks me over as he comes flying out of my room where he was hiding under my blankets. He was next to me all night and tried to kick me out of the bed.

"Elvis, no!" I take off after him, but somehow the dog who moves at a snail's pace—unless you drop food—is faster than ever and leaps with his short stubby legs onto the sofa, pushing the curtains out of the way. He looks out the window to see if it rained and I groan.

"Sorry!" Gia yells from the hallway.

Elvis turns and his big ears bounce as he plops down on the sofa and gives me a look that says he will not be walking today.

"You have to go out for at least one walk," I tell my stubborn dog.

I'm pretty sure he's a mix between a basset hound and bulldog. He was a rescue Yana and I found and I love the little brat, partly because he reminds me

of her. I lost the woman who I considered my mom six months ago. People say time helps heal, but I don't feel like anything has changed yet. At least now I'm back with Gia and that helps.

"He's the stupidest, smartest dog I've ever seen." Gia comes back into the living room a few moments later in a pair of jeans and hoodie that reads "Northwestern University." "Are you sure he isn't basset hound and bulldog with a touch of cat?"

"Sometimes I wonder."

He acts like a cat most of the time. He's allergic to water unless it's to drink. He gets pissy if his long ears fall into his water bowl and if they do, he stands in front of me and paws at me until I get a towel and dry them off. It's adorably annoying.

"I was going to start the coffee," I tell her while trying to give Elvis a hard look of warning. He lets out a huff before getting up and pawing at the sofa and turning in circles. Once he's good and ready, he plops down and sighs.

"Marco is picking me up. He said he already got me one." She smiles for a moment then stops. "Makeup."

She dashes back to her bedroom to get ready before her boyfriend gets here. At least I think he's her boyfriend. I haven't heard any titles put out there yet, but he acts like she's all his.

It's adorable watching the two of them together. I don't have much to go off myself because my parents didn't have a marriage of love. Seeing something like they had growing up never made me crave a relationship. Being in an all-girls school didn't push the issue either. It wasn't until my first year of college that I tried to see what could be out there. Johnny Rule was my first boyfriend, if you could even call him that. He had me slamming the door in the face of dating rather quickly.

Then life happened and dating was so far from my mind, but seeing Marco and Gia has me wondering what I might be missing out on. Yana always said I was meant for a great love and that one day I would have it and it would be nothing like my parents'. She told me that weeks before she died when I told her I'd never fall in love. She made me promise that I wouldn't lock my heart away because it would only make me more like my parents. She was right, but then again she always was.

I walk back into my bedroom and put on a pair of skinny jeans and a pink hoodie. I glance at my other sweatshirts that are just like Gia's. I got them during the one year of college I completed. I hated every second of college, but I went where my parents wanted me to go. I lived close enough to the school that I didn't move into the dorms like most of the other freshmen, and I felt more lost

then than I do now living in a city I know nothing about. I'm a dog walker with no idea what I'm going to do with my life, but I'm happy and that's all that matters. Right?

"CC," Gia calls for me.

I walk back into the living room and I see Marco standing there. He's looking down at Gia like she hung the moon for him alone.

"Marco got you hot chocolate since you hate coffee." She holds it out for me.

"That was sweet. Thanks, Marco." He raises his chin and smiles politely but he never says much. I fight a laugh because I think he only got me a hot chocolate because he knew it would make Gia happy that he did something nice for me. That doesn't bother me at all. In fact, it makes me like him even more. Maybe he wants to make sure I'm team Marco when Gia's family finds out she's been dating someone.

"Well I'm off. I have two tests today," she groans, but I know she'll do fine. She spent all night studying. I quizzed her and helped her make flash cards.

"I'll take you to your favorite pizza place after you're all done, sweets," he tells her in his thick New York accent. I don't know much about Marco yet, but one thing I do know is he's not from here. I also know he must come from money because he's always dressed in an expensive-looking suit.

"Don't you have work?" she asks as she grabs her backpack off the hook next to the front door. He takes it from her hands to carry it for her.

The way they look at one another makes my heart ache for something like that. Or even a silly crush where I know what it's like to get butterflies in my stomach.

"Thanks again." I raise the hot cup I'm holding and Marco nods again as they leave.

I lock the door behind them before I finish getting ready and enjoy my hot chocolate. When I come back into the living room, Elvis lifts his head to look at me with those puppy dog eyes.

"Let's not fight about this," I say as take his leash off the front door hook. "You only have to do the first round of walks with me and then I'll bring you back."

I know he can't understand me, but sometimes I wonder if he does. He needs the walk because he's gained some weight since Yana died. Both of us have been eating our emotions. Maybe the weight gain wouldn't be a big deal if he wasn't sometimes a brat and I have to carry him when he decides he's done walking.

I glance at my phone, knowing I need to get a move on so I'm not late. I double-check to make sure I have all the keys to the places I'm going today. When I'm all set I look back to Elvis, who hasn't moved an inch.

“Fine, we’ll stop at the bacon truck.” At the word “bacon” he’s off the sofa and standing next to me. Once again his short stubby legs move quicker than normal. It’s not a food truck that only sells bacon, but it’s what Elvis knows them for. “Don’t you have to use the bathroom anyway?”

I click the leash onto him before grabbing my crossbody bag that has the other leashes I’ll need. We take the elevator because I don’t want to push my luck with Elvis and his already grumpy mood. I give Jake, our doorman, a wave as he opens the door of our building for me and I make my way towards my first dog pickup.

Being a dog walker was never something I thought I would do for a living, but then again I never thought I’d up and leave my life behind in the middle of the night before either. It took my parents almost two weeks to realize I left and I’m pretty sure it was only because Stacy, my father's assistant, told him. She called me to ask me why the check to my university was returned with a letter stating I didn’t enroll for my sophomore year. Who knows how long it would have taken them otherwise.

I was done with them when they hadn't even bothered to come home from their summer trip to Europe when Yana passed away. I called them in a frenzy when she got sick and I rushed her to the hospital. They told me everything would be fine but it wasn't. She died three hours later. The woman who was more of a parent to me than my own since I was a little girl left me. They didn't bother to come home for the funeral either and I couldn't forgive them.

I felt lost and alone until Gia showed up. She sat next to me while I cried and refused to leave my side. I knew she had a life to get back to and I also knew, unlike my parents, her family would be all over her about getting back to Chicago. When she told me to come with her, I didn't have to think on it. I packed my bags, and Elvis and I left with her.

Gia told me she had a spare room that I would be calling home from now on. Her mom and dad made me feel welcome, too, even though I wasn't sure how they'd feel about it at first. I knew they paid for Gia's place while her only job was to get perfect grades—which she did. When I got here they hugged me and told me they were happy to have me home and they felt better that Gia had someone to stay with her.

Gia's family offered love and caring better than my own family. I missed them almost as much as I missed Gia when she moved. I was broken up inside when they moved to Chicago. I spent so many nights at their home as a child wishing my family was more like theirs.

“See? It’s not so bad out,” I tell Elvis after our fourth dog pickup this morning. He dodges puddles as if they’re landmines. When he does get a little

water on his paws he prances until they are dry again.

It's been hard getting used to holding so many leashes at once without tangling them together, but I've started to get the hang of it and I love it.

I sigh when the dog park is in sight. The dogs start to get excited when they see it too.

I step into the fenced-in area, letting them off their leashes to run and play. I sit down on the empty bench with Elvis because he doesn't join the other dogs. Instead he makes me help him up on the bench to lie next to me. He lays his head on my lap and I know he likely felt my mood shift when I was thinking about my family. I pull out my phone to play with it while the dogs roam around. I pet Elvis so he knows I'm fine and I glance over to see his eyes close.

An email dings, and when I see it's from my father's assistant I don't click it. I simply file it away with the others and then click on my Kindle app. I go back to the book I was reading last night before I passed out.

I may not be where I thought I was going to be this time last year, but I know one thing's for sure, I might be sad and a little lost, but I know I'm where I'm supposed to be. I have no plans to ever go back and I won't let myself be sucked back into the life my parents wanted me to have. I'm happier sitting on this bench where my plans consist of petting Elvis and picking up dog crap. It's a million times better than living a life for someone else.

# 2

## Aiden

I look down at the wedding band on my finger and wonder if I'll ever get used to it. I'm sure all husbands feel that initial shock of wearing a ring if they've never worn one before. Savannah seemed nervous when she gave it to me, but I told her I'd do whatever I could to make sure she was happy.

Savannah has been my best friend since we were born. Our families have done business together for decades and created an empire from the ground up. The two of us were always close, but our bond became stronger when we lost my little sister. We all were inseparable for most of our childhood until her family sent her to a private all-girls school not long after my sister's death. We were still able to spend summers together, and when we got into the same college it was our chance to get out from under our families and finally live our lives. We were so wrong about so many things and it's how we ended up here.

I'm sure people assumed we'd end up falling in love and getting married one day, but as I look at my wife across the breakfast table, all I see is the girl who cried for three hours because I wouldn't do \*NSYNC choreography with her. Or I see the brat who pretended to break her arm at my birthday party so she could get a present too. The girl who grieved the loss of my sister as hard as I had.

"What?" she says as she narrows her eyes at me.

I shake my head and laugh. "Nothing, just thinking about my tenth birthday."

She rolls her eyes and goes back to staring at her phone. "I got my own Xbox, didn't I?"

She's an only child and the sole heiress to her father's fortune. On paper you can see why he was so careful with how he raised her and who he let her be around. But he kept her in a golden cage her entire life, and the second she thought she had a chance at a normal life, he snatched her back and made her get married. To me.

What was I supposed to do? She was like a sister to me, and our parents made this arrangement. I never once in my entire life thought of Savannah in that way. Not even as a teenager, and I was so horny I could have driven my dick through a solid wood door. She means the world to me, and I love her, but there

just wasn't that spark. I felt the same for her as I felt for my own sister.

When her father found out that she applied to college behind his back, he brought her home right away and gave her two options. She could be cut off from him entirely or she could agree to join our families and marry me.

I tried to plead with him and with my own parents, but they decided what was best for us. I was able to finish college, but I felt guilty the whole time. I had to leave Savannah behind, but she told me that if I didn't go then I would be wasting the chance for both of us. I knew that if I didn't agree to the marriage, who knew who her father might find. He always put his own interests first.

We talked a lot about our options and decided that being roommates and pretending for our families would be easier than trying to fight them. My family hadn't pushed like hers had, but they liked the idea of it. I think more than anything my mom wanted a daughter again and marriage was a way for her to get that. Mom and Savannah used to be close, but Mom's single-mindedness only pushed her and Savannah apart. I think now she's holding out for grandchildren. That will never happen.

We have separate wings of the house and live our own lives, but mostly we just hang out like friends would. She's still trying to figure out what she wants to do now that her father blocked her from developing any real marketable skills other than working for him. He owns the majority of textile manufacturers in America and even more throughout Europe. Savannah knows a ton about fashion and I've been trying to talk her into becoming a buyer for the family business, but she's still not interested. He's spent so many years trying to shove it down her throat that she's against anything to do with it even though she'd be amazing at it.

My side of the family does the import and export of the textiles and we own the rights to the entire distribution seaboard on the east coast. Basically, I manage a lot of moving parts, but I'm good at it and it's a way to keep the business in the family. It's not something I would say I'm passionate about, but there's really not much that gets me excited. Savannah would say I'm laid back or boring, but I like to think I haven't found my spark yet.

"Do you want to go to the Humane Society Benefit? They called to thank us for the donation and wanted to know how many tickets to send."

"If you want to," I say as I eat my toast and shrug. "You said last time you wouldn't go back because they didn't have real live animals there."

"It's a humane society. They really missed an opportunity for the best night ever." She scrolls through her phone again before she begins to type. "I'll tell them to send a couple. But only if I get to hold a puppy."

"I'm sure you'll get your way," I say, then take one last sip of coffee and

stand up.

“Don’t I always?” She gives me her best snotty smile and I laugh.

“You do.” I grab my keys off the kitchen counter and thank Rita our housekeeper for breakfast. “Will you be home tonight?”

Savannah thinks for a second then shakes her head. “I’ll be back late. I’m seeing a double feature with Angie at the Starlight.” She smiles and then pretends to swoon. “We’re watching two Tom Hardy movies in a row.”

“I’m not going to pretend to know who that is,” I say before I throw a wave over my shoulder and walk out of the house.

We got this place because it was close to our parents and in a neighborhood they deemed worthy of our status and wealth. I don’t really care because it’s just a house and we didn’t have to pay for it. Savannah’s father had what he called a dowry in place for the man that married her, and I guess he felt better that it would be me getting the money. I just opened a personal account for Savannah and dropped the money in it for her and handed her the checkbook. It doesn’t even have my name on it. I wanted her to be able to have the freedom of choice.

I think being controlled your whole life makes you used to that kind of treatment. Freedom can be scary if all you’ve ever known are walls. I think in time she’ll figure it out, but if I know one thing about her it’s that she can’t be pushed.

I drive through the neighborhood and then it’s just a quick drive to downtown. When I get there I park my car in our building and then take the elevator up to my office. It’s always nice and quiet this early in the morning and I like the silence and calm at this time.

Living with someone has taken some getting used to. I didn’t have roommates before Savannah, and I realized that I liked being by myself way too much. It’s probably good for me that we live together now, because otherwise I might go crazy from the solitude.

When I sit down at my desk I open the drawer, then take off my wedding band and put it inside. It’s not that I have to wear it, but Savannah wears hers at home and I feel like it’s a point of solidarity for us. And we never know when our parents might pop in. Since my dad retired he hasn’t set one foot inside this place so I don’t have a fear of him coming in my office. My assistant is an older lady who worked for my father and I told her I thought it might be too tight. The truth is, I feel like this ring carries a lot of weight with it and I don’t take its meaning lightly. I’ve done all this for Savannah so that she can have the life she wants, but until she’s ready to step out and take it on her own I have to try and navigate this the best I can. And that includes not wearing the ring while I’m at work.



The sun is barely up and I look out the window to the park nearby. In a few hours it will be filled with dogs and people playing with their animals on this beautiful day. I envy their ability to lose themselves and just play. I can't remember the last time I did something because I enjoyed it, and not because I was obligated to do it.

This isn't the life I had pictured when I was in college and thinking of my future, but it's not bad. I have so much more than I ever dreamed of and I have opportunities most people never get. I just wish I could find that one thing that makes me light up inside. The kind of thing that gives me passion and makes me want to be a better man.

It's out there; I just have to find it.

# 3

## Caroline

“**A**re you ready for your snack?” I ask Elvis as I lean down and pet his silky head.

He’s happy that no more rain has come and the sun is shining. I dropped off my first round of dogs and I have some time to kill before I need to start my next round. Elvis starts leading me towards his favorite food truck. I wonder if he remembers or if it’s his bloodhound nose that leads the way.

One thing’s for sure: walking dogs has helped me learn my way around the city. I grew up in Seattle and don’t know my way around it like I do Chicago. It’s a reminder of how much I stayed inside the life my parents wanted for me. Or what they expected of me, I guess.

If there is one thing Elvis knows, it’s the way to the food truck. He found it rather quickly after we moved here and he dragged me from the park to the truck, clearly on a mission. Lucky for me they have some of the best burgers I’ve ever eaten. I didn’t know food off a truck could be so good until I moved here. Now it’s an addiction I can’t quit. We really eat here more than we should.

Elvis waits in the long line with me as I pull out my phone. When I feel it vibrate I see a text from Gia.

**Gia:** Is it too soon to give it up to Marco?

**Me:** I think you should go with the moment. Whatever happens happens. You’ll know if it’s right.

Gia can overthink things. It can be hard for her to roll with stuff and I think something like losing your virginity should feel right. Or maybe that’s my new way of trying to look at things.

It felt like these last few months have been easier now that I roll with things each day. There’s no standard I have to live up to that’s set by someone else. I do what I want, but by the guidelines I feel are right. I glance down at Elvis and think sometimes I have to do what he wants, but who can say no to a face like his?

“Extra side of bacon, I take it?” Christian asks as he writes down my order. He looks up and gives me a smile. “Is Elvis having a bad day?” he teases with a

charming smile.

“He’s in a mood, but he’s perked up since he saw your truck.” Which is true. Whenever he’s happy he gets an extra wiggle that goes right to his butt. He looks like he’s dancing with his stubby legs.

“Then I’ll make sure he’s taken care of.” He rips the paper off the slip and hands it to the guy flipping burgers behind him. I reach for my money, but Christin holds out his hand. “It’s on me today.” He scribbles something on the paper then slides it to me. I see it’s his number and he’s holding it out for me to take. I freeze for a moment unsure of what to say. No one has ever given me their number before. The only guy I ever dated got mine off our group study sheet and started texting me one day.

“There’s a line here,” says an irritated voice behind me.

I turn a little to stare into a broad chest covered in a well-tailored suit. My eyes travel up and up until they lock on deep gray eyes that aren’t looking at me but over my head to Christian. I stare at the man for a moment, taken aback by his intense eyes. I didn't know people actually had gray eyes but his are like cool steel.

“No need to be rude,” I finally mutter as I look away from him and turn back around.

I was openly staring at him and I’m lucky he wasn't looking at me. The man reaches over my shoulder and takes the paper from Christian’s hand. His arm brushes my shoulder in the process and I swear he did it on purpose.

I don’t turn to look at what he does with the paper, but just as Christian is about to say something to him his face changes and it’s like he recognizes the guy. He pauses for only a second before going back to taking orders. As rude as it was for the guy behind me to snatch the paper out of Christian’s hand, I hope he's not writing his number down again. I really don’t want it to be awkward because I have no intention of calling him. There’s no attraction or spark between us, but I enjoy our small talk. I don’t want to ruin that, mostly because Elvis wouldn’t let me stop coming here.

“Your usual, too, Aiden?” Christian asks.

He clearly knows the guy, and I let out a small sigh of relief. Maybe they’re friends and messing with each other. I step to the side, and though I move over, Elvis doesn't. He keeps his ass planted where it is and I know he’s not moving until he gets a piece of bacon. Oh, I could try and pull him, but even though he looks chunky there’s a whole lot of muscle to him. He doesn't go anywhere he doesn't want to unless you pick him up to make him.

Aiden grumbles a confirmation to Christian, followed by a comment about paying for my food. I wonder if I should say something.

I take a peek over at the guy in the suit because I'm unable to help myself. I think he might say something about Elvis, but when I glance over at him he's staring right at me.

I look away and pretend I wasn't trying to steal a glance at him, but I have a feeling I'm not subtle. I do it again, but this time I tilt my head and steal a peek through my eyelashes. His eyes lock with mine and he stands there openly staring at me. He's not shy about it at all and doesn't try to hide it like I've been doing. He's bold as he watches me and looks like he's trying to figure me out.

When my phones vibrates again, I glance down at it.

**Gia:** You're right. I'm not sure how I've lasted this long.

I laugh.

**Me:** It's been two weeks.

Gia's response is instant.

**Gia:** You've seen him!

I laugh harder this time. He is handsome, though not my type. In the short time they've been dating, I can tell they fit together nicely. Her loud chatty personality offsets his stoic one.

I'm not sure I have a type. I glance over to Gray Eyes, who's moved closer to me. I step around Elvis to let someone else order, but still he stares at me. This time the edges of his lips pull up in a smile and he lifts the paper he took from Christian. I watch as he tosses it into the trash can next to him and makes a point of wanting me to see him do it.

My mouth falls open, but I don't know if I want to laugh or call him a cocky bastard. Even with him openly staring and the remarks he made, he doesn't actually give off an asshole vibe.

"Caroline." Christian calls my name and holds up my order. I go to reach for it, but Aiden beats me to it.

"Eat with me?" he asks, staring down at me.

"You sure you have time? You seemed in a hurry a few moments ago," I remind him of his comment from before and lift an eyebrow at him.

"I have all the time you'll give me." His response is smooth but unapologetic. I lick my suddenly dry lips and his eyes flash at the movement. He's enjoying whatever this is that we're doing. It's then I feel the butterflies dancing around inside my stomach and it makes me smile.

"You have Elvis's food. He'll follow you anywhere right now," I tell him, and he lets out a deep chuckle. "I'll have to remember that," he says as he looks down at Elvis.

"I'll lead the way," he says, and I follow him as we cross the busy street back towards the park. He finds an empty table for us to sit down at and Elvis barks

impatiently.

“Better give him his bacon or you’ll have yourself a sworn enemy.”

“Wouldn't want that.” He reaches for the small plate that’s with my burger. It has five strips of bacon on it. “I’m going to need you on my side,” Aiden says to Elvis so low I almost don’t hear it. He pats his head before he sets the food down and leans back up.

I suddenly feel shy when his focus is back on me. My hunger is gone now and a million butterflies have filled the space. He pushes my food towards me and smiles. “Ketchup?” he asks, gesturing at my fries. I nod and watch as he opens the tiny packets of ketchup. He makes a pile for me and it’s weirdly kind of sweet.

“Eat, Caroline,” he tells me.

The way he says my name in his deep voice makes goose bumps break out across my skin. What is happening to me? He reaches for one of my fries and brings it to my mouth. It’s then I realize I was sitting there staring away at him. I open my mouth and let him feed me the French fry.

He smiles and I find myself reaching for my cheeseburger and taking a big bite. It’s a quick way to ensure I don’t have to talk, but he reaches for his own at the same time. We both eat, but it’s hard to focus when he’s watching my every move. When Elvis barks, Aiden pull off a piece of his burger and tosses it to him.

“He’ll never leave you alone now,” I tell him before I take another bite of my food.

“Since you go where he goes, I’m not seeing a problem with that.” I duck my chin and my cheeks burn. Is he flirting with me? I have no idea how to do this, so I try to change the subject.

“So you work around here?” I ask.

“Right there.” He nods to the building the food truck is always parked in front of. No wonder he and Christian know each other. “How is it I’ve never seen you here before?”

“I haven't lived here long, but I do eat at the truck a lot about this time. It’s Elvis’s favorite.”

“Good to know.” He says it like he’s taking making notes.

I look down and realize we’ve eaten all the food and I’m sure he needs to get back to work. It’s also time for me to take Elvis home. I know we didn’t talk much, but I feel an odd connection with him and I don’t want to walk away so soon. What if I don’t see him again? It’s too bad I don’t have the balls to ask for his number or whatever it is people do now. Gia would know.

“I should let you get back to work. And I need to take Elvis home.”

Maybe I'll run into him again.

We both stand up and Elvis pulls me closer to Aiden as we walk over to the trash cans. We both laugh as he does a circle and tangles himself up around Aiden before I'm able to get him free.

"I'll walk you home then," he says to Elvis as he leans down and pets him. It's like they hatched this plan together.

"It's okay, I can get him to come with me." But I honestly don't know if that's true. Elvis has found a new best friend who keeps giving him food. I don't blame Elvis, though. I kinda want to follow him, too. There's something mysterious about Aiden, and the more I think about how he snatched Christian's phone number so I couldn't have it, the more my opinion changes on it. Initially I thought it was rude, but now I find it...sexy.

"I want to," he tells me, and those gray eyes meet mine. "I'd like as much time with you as I can get."

# 4

## Aiden

“Are you sure those shoes are up for the walk?” she asks as she looks down at my feet.

“How far are we walking?” I say with a laugh, thinking it can’t be too far.

“About six miles.” My eyes widen and she laughs as she shakes her head. “I’m teasing. It’s only about four blocks.”

Even though it’s only four blocks, I know my feet are going to protest. I don’t normally have to walk that much when I’m dressed for work, and when I have to go long distances I have sneakers on. My feet will probably be killing me by the time we walk the four blocks, but it will be worth it.

“So what do you do, Aiden?”

I love the way she says my name. It’s like she’s been doing it her whole life. It’s easy and sounds so sweet.

“I work in the family business.”

“So the mob?” She looks over at me and her smile is infectious.

“Only part time when they need the muscle,” I joke, and I watch her turn away and bite her lip. “No, it’s a lot less glamorous than that. I run a shipping company that my father started that sends textiles all over the world.”

It’s hard to see her expression when we’re walking in the same direction, but I’m trying to look at her while not tripping over my feet.

“Yeah, stick with the mob story. It’s much better.”

I laugh, and I don’t remember the last time I smiled this much. It’s not that I’m not a happy person in general, but there’s something happening here right now and I’ve never felt it before.

“Tell me all about Caroline.” I glance down at Elvis and then back to her. “Besides the fact that you’ve got a boss that wears fur.”

She laughs and I love the sound of it. Is it my imagination that we’re having this connection like never before? God, what if this is one-sided?

“I’m a dog walker.”

“I can see that,” I joke, and she shakes her head.

“Not just with Elvis, but lots and lots of fur bosses. I have about thirty right

now that I walk during the week.”

“At one time? How is that even possible? You’re so tiny.” My eyes scan up and down her body, and I think that she’s not so tiny in certain places, but the crosswalk ahead doesn’t allow me to linger on her body too long. It’s probably for the best anyway because if my cock gets any harder I won’t be able to walk.

“Not normally. I take them in shifts.” I push the button and Elvis sits down and waits for the light to change. “He’s my old guy and doesn’t like walking as much as he used to.”

When the light changes we step off the curb, but Caroline is jerked back by the leash. We turn to see Elvis sitting there unmoving as she tugs on it.

“Oh boy, don’t do this to me.” She leans down and I can hear her talking through her teeth. “Do not embarrass me.”

She gives him another tug, but the dog has made up his mind. He’s not going anywhere. Caroline sighs and I try to fight my smile as she puts her face in her hands and then shakes her head.

“I’m sorry, he’s getting worse about this. I think he knows I’m going to carry him, so he gives up.”

“Wait, you have to carry him?” I look down at the tired dog and I swear when Caroline turns her head he winks at me.

“Yeah, it’s becoming a habit.” She leans down to pick him up and I step beside her.

“Here, let me.”

“No, don’t do that. You’ll get your suit dirty.” She looks over at me with a shocked expression as I scoop the dog up and begin to walk. “Seriously, Aiden, it’s okay. I can do it.”

“I’d say he weighs about fifty pounds.” I look over at her and she nods. “Have you ever had to carry him the entire way home?”

“Well, not the whole way,” she says and bites her lip. “But I’m sure I can manage.”

She’s tiny. There’s no way she can get this dog to where she’s going. Elvis cuddles into me and I feel his wet nose on my cheek. “I think he’s happy right where he is.”

“I think you’re right.” Her smile could light the way home if it were the middle of the night, and I need her to keep doing it.

“You said you haven’t been here long. How do you like Chicago so far?”

“I love it.”

She’s animated as she talks about moving here and chatters about her best friend whom she lives with. She talks nonstop about finding dog clients and how she quit school but it was the best decision of her life. I learn so much about her



on the walk to her home, but when we get there it's not enough. I want her to keep talking and tell me every moment of her life ever, but how do I explain that without sounding crazy?

"This is me," she says when we get to her door.

She introduces me to the doorman and we take the elevator up. I think Elvis would be happy to get down, but I don't want our time to end. When we get to her floor she unlocks the door and I put Elvis down. He immediately runs inside and over to a nearby couch, but Caroline stands in the doorway, not inviting me in.

"Is Gia home?" I ask, and Carolina shakes her head.

"She's got class until late today. I'm just going to drop Elvis off and shower before my next round of pups."

A flash of her body, naked and soapy, enters my mind and I have to swallow the lump in my throat. She's so fucking gorgeous that it almost hurts to look at her full on like this.

"I'd invite you in, but I'm not supposed to bring strangers home," she says, and there she goes again biting that damn lip. "Gia's rules, not mine."

I hold out my hand and after a beat she slides hers into it. "Nice to meet you."

"Nice to meet you," she says as she looks up at me through her lashes.

I can't help myself as I lean down close until we're a breath apart. "Now we're not strangers," I say just before I softly touch my lips to hers.

One might not even call it a kiss it's so light and quick, but it's enough to satiate the beast inside me for now.

"I'll see you in the morning?" I say as I reluctantly let go of her hand and take a step back. Needing to see her again.

She nods slightly as she brings her fingers to her mouth and touches her lips. I stand there and wait as she shuts the door and then I walk away when I hear her lock the door.

I smile to myself when I think that just today I was hoping I'd find my passion.

# 5

## Caroline

“And then he just kissed you and left?” Gia asks with wide eyes.

“Yep,” I say. I take a bite of my cereal and fix a cup of coffee.

“And now he’s coming back this morning?” She is so over the top about this that it makes me giggle.

“He told me he wanted to see how someone my size could walk all the dogs at once.” I shrug because I thought it was kind of sweet.

“I can’t believe you showed a stranger where you live.” She begins to pace and I’m pretty sure at this point she’s talking to herself. “But he did carry Elvis four blocks and that’s not an easy feat.” She turns and paces the other way as she thinks some more. “He didn’t try to rape and murder you the second you met, so that could be a good sign. But maybe he’s coming back today to finish the job.”

“Gia?” I say, and she pauses to look up at me.

“Well, it’s settled. I have to be here when he comes this morning to make sure you don’t die. I hope you’re happy.”

I shake my head and leave to get ready. When I come out she’s on the couch with Elvis. I already took him on a quick walk this morning, so he’s going to stay home. Gia doesn’t have classes until ten, so she normally slops it up on the couch until Marco comes to get her.

“Are we going to talk about your text yesterday asking about giving it up to him?” I raise an eyebrow at her and she shrugs.

“It hasn’t happened yet. I just wanted to take a vote before I made my decision.”

“When’s the big day?”

“I guess if you don’t get murdered I’ll tell you,” she says, trying to change the subject.

I know that she’s nervous about giving it up to Marco. She’s afraid that by some insane chance he’s going to get her cherry and disappear. But that guy would crawl across the earth just to be at her side.

Before I can respond to her, there’s a knock at the door and suddenly I’m filled with birds instead of butterflies. They’re flapping their wings like mad as I

answer the door and see Aiden standing there.

“I see you dressed the part today,” I say, using the excuse of his clothes to take him all in. He’s wearing jeans and a polo shirt with sneakers.

“You look beautiful,” he says without taking his eyes off mine.

I’m wearing jeans and a tank top but I suddenly feel naked. Maybe I’m exposing too much skin because it’s like I can feel his hands on me even though we’re feet apart.

“So this is the guy,” Gia says, walking up behind me.

“This is the guy,” I repeat, and to Aiden’s credit he holds out his hands and does a turn in the hallway so that we get a full look at him.

“I’m unarmed,” he says, and I laugh and invite him in.

“I’m just going to grab the keys and leashes and then I’ll be ready to go.”

“I can’t wait to see how this is supposed to work,” he says, and Gia actually snorts.

“It looks like they’re taking her on a walk, but she likes it,” she says as she leans against the kitchen counter.

“I heard a lot of nice things about you yesterday,” Aiden says, and Gia narrows her eyes on me.

“You better have.”

She looks deadly, but I know she’s only teasing. I poke her arm when I walk by and she fakes like I’ve wounded her. “I’ll see you later,” I tell her as Aiden and I walk out.

“Be safe! Don’t die!” she shouts, and I close the door in her face.

“Sorry about that,” I tell Aiden as we get on the elevator.

“I like that she looks out for you,” he says, and suddenly I feel his fingers against mine and then my hand is in his.

I was going to say something else, but suddenly all thoughts before he touched me are out the window. Who the hell is this guy and what is he doing to me?

On the way to get the dogs we spend a lot of time talking. I ask him more about what he does and where he’s from. I don’t realize how much I’m smiling until my face begins to hurt. He asks me about all kinds of stuff like favorite movies and food and what I like to do when I’m not walking dogs.

“I didn’t think to ask, but do you live in the city?” I query when we’ve gotten the last dog and are headed to the park.

“Right now I’m just watching you in wonder as you manage all of them,” he says, staring at me.

“I’ve got strong arms,” I reply and wink at him and then immediately feel shy afterwards.

“I live just outside of downtown. Not too far.” He looks away from me as he answers and then changes the subject. “Have dinner with me tonight.”

“Okay,” I agree quickly, then I wonder if maybe that was too quick.

“Good,” he says and smiles at me. We stare at each other for a moment before I’m distracted by tangling leashes and excitable dogs.

We spend the day together, and when I ask him about work he says he took the day off. He ends up helping me walk half the dogs and after we drop them off we have lunch at a nearby cafe. We sit outside in the sunshine and I’ve never felt so light and happy before. My attraction to him is off the charts and we talk nonstop.

This is what I always thought of when people say they knew instantly that their person was the one. He’s charming and sweet and every time he touches me something sparks inside me. There’s a buzz between us and all I can think about is, when will he kiss me again?

“I need to change if we’re going to go to dinner,” I say as I look down at my clothes. They’re mostly covered in dog hair, but one of the Jack Russells got excited and I ended up with muddy paw prints all down my jeans.

“Why don’t I drop you off at your place and then meet you at the restaurant,” he says, and I agree.

We walk hand in hand to my apartment and the whole way I’m nervous. I wave to the doorman and we make our way up to my door. I’m trying my best to control myself. What I want to do is leap into his arms, but I don’t want him to think I’m a crazy person.

We’re silent as we ride the elevator up, but the rhythmic feel of his thumb going back and forth over mine is heightening every nerve in my body. I nearly jump out of my skin when the elevator chimes and we walk out.

I unlock the door and step inside to tell him goodbye. “I guess I’ll see you \_\_\_”

I’m cut off when Aiden grabs me up in his arms and presses his lips to mine. My back hits the wall and he kisses me like he’s been waiting all day to do it. I’m shocked for only a second before I catch up to him. I wrap my legs around his waist and moan when he grinds me against the wall. When I feel his tongue touch mine I whine at how good it feels. Is this what it’s like to be completely consumed?

He thrusts his lower half against mine and the hard ridge of his cock is rubbing in just the exact right spot. His hands are on my ass and he’s holding me closer to him as he dry humps me on the wall. I’ve never been so horny in my life and he’s only just kissing me.

“More,” he demands as his mouth moves down my neck and he kisses me

there. "I'm dying for you."

He yanks down the front of my tank top and I feel his lips on the swell of my breasts above my bra. I want him to pull the cups down and suck on my nipples, but I've lost the ability to speak.

He's everywhere all at once and I'm surrounded in his scent. He's so big and strong and I feel dainty and delicate in his arms. I don't know if I'm breathing on my own or if he's taken over completely.

"Tell me to stop." He looks at me with those dark gray eyes and I can tell he's on the edge, too. "You have to stop me."

I run my hands through his hair and close my eyes. "I don't want you to," I whisper before I open them again.

"I should," he says, squeezing my ass and rubbing me against him again. "Please."

He's pleading with me now and for some reason I love that he's giving me all the power. He's in control, but with one word I can stop this. I was honest when I said I don't want him to stop, but I can see that he needs me to tell him to, for whatever reason. I don't want to do something he'll regret or go too far too fast. I know in my heart that he would do the same for me, so even though I don't understand, I know we need to cool down.

"Give me one more kiss, and then go get ready for dinner," I say.

His lips are on mine before I barely get the words out and it's more passionate than before. Maybe because he's taking his time and savoring me instead of being rushed and desperate. His lips are full and soft against mine and he tastes like chocolate. I could kiss him for hours just like this, but after a few moments he parts our lips and presses his forehead to mine.

"Thank you," he says, and I let out a small laugh.

"You're not so bad yourself," I say, and then he leans back smiling at me.

When he releases me my legs wobble a little and he helps steady me before he takes a step back.

"Okay. I'll see you in an hour," he says as he walks backwards away from me like he's forcing himself to let me go.

"One hour," I confirm, touching my lips. They're probably red and swollen from his kisses, but I don't care. I love the feel of him against me and I'm already needy for more.

"Forty-five minutes," he says as he grabs the doorknob. I laugh and then he sighs and shakes his head. "Half an hour. Be quick," he says, then bolts out the door.

I laugh again and then I'm in motion because it doesn't give me much time. I might be running around like crazy, but the whole time I'm smiling like a

lunatic.

# 6

## Caroline

“Where’s Marco?” I ask Gia as I walk into the living room to see what she thinks of what I’ve got on.

It’s a little black dress that hugs tight at the top and tucks in at the waist. It’s knee length and simple, so I decided to wear it with my favorite blue shoes. There are sparkles on the short chunky heels and I love how comfortable they are.

This is the third outfit I’ve changed into and I think I’m sticking with this one. Maybe. It’s hard to choose the perfect thing to wear when I have no idea where we’re going to eat. It doesn’t help that I can’t concentrate on anything but that make out session. My lips still tingle and my heart flutters. If he hadn’t asked me to tell him to stop I wouldn’t have. I think I know how far things would have gone and I would have ended up in bed with him.

Gia is all dressed up and is sitting on the sofa next to Elvis. She’s wearing slippers and she’s pulled her hair up. She pauses when she sees me and you’d think I caught her with her hand in the cookie jar by her reaction.

“Gia?”

I thought she was going out tonight and that this might be the night for her and Marco to seal the deal. What if it’s the night for me to do the same?

“I told him we had plans,” she rushes to say, and now I understand her guilty look.

“You lied to him?” I’m shocked because that’s not like her.

“It’s not a lie. I plan to hang out with you before you leave.” I raise my eyebrow at her.

“I’m in love with him.” She falls back on the couch and lets out a sigh.

“I know you love him,” I laugh, walking over and sitting down next to her. I take her hand in mine and give it a squeeze. “Why is this so scary for you?”

“Why hasn’t he said it?” she asks.

I know some people might think it’s crazy that Gia wants him to say *I love you* when they haven’t been dating that long, but I’ve seen them together. Hell, after the past twenty-four hours if I keep feeling like I’m feeling, I’m going to be

where she is soon enough.

“Maybe saying those words isn’t so easy for him. Not all of us grow up in families where saying *I love you* comes out as easy as breathing.”

Gia’s family is affectionate, and she and Yana are the only two people to ever say those words to me. I’ve never heard my parents say it to each other, let alone to me.

Her head snaps to look at me. “Oh god, you’re right.” Understanding dawns on her. “I should have said it to him the first time I felt it. I bet no one has ever said it to him before.” I hear the sadness for him in her voice and it makes me wonder what kind of life Marco had and if it wasn’t far off from mine.

“You’ll be the first person to say it to him, but that’s really special.” I try and help her see the silver lining. I know she’ll say it enough to him to make up for years of him never hearing it. That’s how Gia is.

“I’m going to marry him,” she adds as she nods.

“God, I love you,” I laugh and squeeze her.

“Love you too.” She nudges me with her shoulder.

“Are you going out with your man now?”

She sighs and tucks her feet under her. “He told me he was going to a business dinner if I had plans, but he was going to call me after.”

“And by call, you know he means show up here, right?”

“I do.” She smiles. “He loves me. Maybe he doesn’t know that’s what this is, but he does. I’m so stupid.”

“No, you’re not. It can be hard not seeing where someone is coming from when you grow up differently. For all you know he might be holding back on saying it because he thinks it might scare you. He’s already pushing in pretty fast.” I can’t wait for him to meet her family. I want to be a fly on that wall. I’m so sure Marco can handle them that I bet he’ll be one of them in no time.

Gia picks up her phone and I know she’s texting him. My phone chimes at the same time and I grab it off the side table.

**Aiden:** I’m sorry, sweetheart, but I have to cancel. I forgot I told a friend I’d go to an event with them tonight.

“He’s cancelling.” I drop my phone in my lap, knowing I should tell him it’s fine. If I’d had plans tonight I would’ve forgotten all about them too when he asked me to dinner. I’ve been so focused on that moment that the rest of the world faded away. I can only hope that’s what happened to him too and he isn’t blowing me off.

Gia grabs my phone and reads the text. She doesn’t say anything as she studies it for a moment. I know she’s overthinking it just like everything in her life.



“I want to call him a dick, but that kiss you told me about was way too hot for him to be uninterested.”

My phone chimes again in her hand and she gets to see it before me. “He’s not lying.”

She hands me my phone back and I read what he’s sent me.

**Aiden:** Can I call you after?

“Men hate talking on the phone, so if he wants to call you after, he’s serious,” she says with a confident smile.

My phone starts to ring in my hand and Aiden’s name comes up. “He said after.” I show Gia it’s him and for a second, I hesitate.

“Answer it,” she orders, and I slide my finger across the screen.

“Hey,” I say as I pick up. Hey? Really? Did that sound as lame in my head as it did out loud?

“You didn’t respond, I needed to hear your voice.”

His voice reminds me of the first moment I met him and he was snapping at Christian. I don’t know why, but it makes me smile and heats me up all over.

“I was about to, but you didn’t give me much time,” I laugh, and enjoy how impatient he was for my attention. It isn’t something I’m used to.

“Tell me I can stop by afterwards.” This time he isn’t asking and his need to see me makes me smile.

“Stop by for what? A booty call?” Gia asks and apparently her hearing is as good as Elvis’s. I smack her thigh and she lets out an overexaggerated shriek.

Aiden chuckles. “I won’t cross the threshold of the front door. I only want a goodnight kiss.”

What if I want him to cross the threshold? “I seem to remember that not going so well a little while ago.” My face heats and Gia’s mouth falls open in surprise at how bold I’m being.

I get up off the couch and walk away from Gia. This feels so intimate, being on the phone together, and I really do hate that he isn’t coming back sooner.

He groans. “I need to see you tonight. It’s already killing me I have to cancel.” I can actually hear the pain in his voice. I shouldn’t like it as much as I do, but I’m glad I’m not alone in this ache.

“Okay. Stop by and kiss me goodnight.” The last thirty minutes waiting for him to come back were nearly impossible, so I have no idea how I’m going to get through the next few hours.

“I’ll be there,” he tells me. He’s quiet for a moment and I’m not sure if I’m supposed to say bye. “Caroline.” He sighs my name and there’s longing in his voice. “I’ll be thinking about you all night until I see you again.”

“Good,” I tease him. “You’ll miss the dress I put on, though.” He groans

again and I feel my core clench. “I’ll see you soon.”

“That’s a promise,” he says, and I end the call. I want him to do whatever it is he needs to so he can get here soon.

“Two girls all dressed up and no place to go,” Gia says from the couch. It’s then I remember I did have plans tonight. Ones I’d been on the fence about going to because I didn’t want to go alone.

“Instead of watching the minutes tick by until we can see our men—”

“You called him your man!” Gia shouts, making me cheeks heat. I ignore her and press on.

“We could go to the event I got us tickets to a few weeks ago.” I remind her of the tickets Mrs. Badger gave me because she couldn’t make it. She’d been one of my first dog walking clients and was so good to me. I put the tickets aside thinking maybe it would be a good place to meet clients. The event is for an animal rescue charity, so people who attend likely have animals, and it’s all for a good cause.

“Let’s do it.” Gia hops up from the sofa and we get ourselves together before we grab our bags and leave. We hail a cab and soon we’re pulling up outside the hotel where they’re having the event. I see some people brought their pets with them and I smile. I think Elvis is better at home on the sofa taking his seventh nap for the day.

“I hope they have something to eat,” Gia says. “I forgot to before we left.”

“We can grab something after. I’m scared that some of this isn’t meant for us.” I motion to a tray a server is holding. It looks fancy, but I’m pretty sure it’s all meant for the dogs.

“Yeah, I’m not risking it.” Even as Gia says the words, her eyes follow another tray that passes us.

I laugh as we each take a glass of champagne and mingle for a while. I run into some people I actually work for and get introduced to more.

“I think I should volunteer,” I tell Gia. “They are doing a lot of good here.”

“I was thinking the same thing. Maybe...” Her words trail off a moment later and I follow her line of sight. She tilts her head and I’m in shock. “Is that—”

“Aiden,” I finish for her and smile when I see him. “What are the odds?” I’m deliriously happy to see him. Seeing him now in his casual suit, I find him impossibly more attractive.

He’s in a pair of slacks and button-up shirt with the top button undone. His hair is a little messy and I know he’s been running his hands through it. I can tell he’s trying to be nice to whoever he’s talking to, but somehow, I know he’s ready to go. I watch as he pulls out his phone and I wonder if he’s checking the time or seeing if I texted him. Maybe I should have, but I didn’t want to bother him

while he was at his event.

As if feeling my eyes on him he lifts his head from his phone and he stares right at me. I watch his face light up with a smile and I start to move towards him. His smile drops just a bit as he stands up a little taller. He looks a bit more rigid than when I first noticed him, but I can't figure out why.

"Hey," I say when I finally get to him. It looks like he's about to reach for me but stops himself.

"Hi," he says after a beat. "You look beautiful."

Something about the way he's looking at me feels off. He's not leaning down to kiss me or moving closer. He doesn't touch me in any way, when today he couldn't keep his hands off me. What's changed? Is it the people around us? I know he comes from money, so does my presence embarrass him?

"Thanks." I tuck my hair behind me ear, suddenly feeling shy. Maybe he thinks I stalked him. "What are the odds? I got tickets from a client," I tell him in a rush as I try to explain. "It's why I'm here."

Gia stands next to me and her eyes go back and forth between us. She can feel something is off, too. A long pause falls between us and it's so awkward that I think I might have mixed up the Aiden I know with this lookalike.

Then it's as if time stands still when a brunette woman walks over and slides up next to Aiden. They stand so close for a moment and I've convinced myself she's going to say she's his sister or something.

"Aren't you going to introduce your wife?" the beautiful brunette laughs like Aiden doesn't have any manners and she's scolding him.

It takes me a moment to realize what she said and still my brain doesn't want to process it. *His wife*. My eyes fly to his hand, but there's no ring on his finger. She glances down to my line of sight and my stomach begins to churn.

"Wife?" Gia whispers next to me as she's already caught up to what's going on. I feel her hand fly to elbow and hold me steady.

"Where's your ring, Aiden?" The brunette asks.

"What the fuck?!" Gia shouts, and I hold my arm out to block her so she can't move forward.

"Don't. It's not worth it," I say to her, my eyes flying to the brunette woman.

She has a bitchy look on her face, but guilt eats at me. I kissed her husband and had plans to do so much more with him. "He's not worth it," I tell the brunette, hoping she gets my message. I turn around and pull Gia with me before she can cause a scene. It's the last thing I want. Right now, I need to get out of here before the pain hits me.

I hear Aiden say my name, but I keep moving through the crowd with Gia next to me. "I'm sorry," she says when we burst through the doors of the

building and into the night air.

“I just want to get out of here,” I tell her, fighting the tears that are desperate to flow freely. I won't do it here, but I've got to hurry.

In a matter of seconds, she has me in a cab and her hand locked into mine. How can it hurt this badly to lose something when it was never really mine to begin with?

# 7

## Aiden

“Really, Savannah?” I say as I turn to look at her.

“Really, Aiden?” She mimics my voice and rolls her eyes. “My father was right beside us. What the hell were you doing?”

“I don’t know!” I shout as I slam the door to the limo shut and we pull away from the curb.

“Take her home and drop her off. I need to go back into the city,” I say, pulling my phone out to text Caroline.

The first one is marked delivered, then the rest don’t go through. I let out a frustrated growl as I try to call her, but it says I can’t reach the number I’m trying to call. She’s blocked me.

“Fuck,” I mutter and shove my phone in my pocket.

“Aiden, what’s going on? Who was that girl?”

“I’ll explain later,” I say, leaning forward in my seat to yell to the driver. “Can you speed it up, please?”

“Tell me what the fuck is going on. I’ve never seen you like this before,” she says. She’s looking at me with a mixture of shock and fear.

“I met her in the park. I asked her to have dinner with me tonight, but I forgot I told you I’d go with you to the animal thing.” I let out a frustrated breath and rub the heels of my hands against my eyes.

“Do you know anything about her?” Her eyebrows pull together in confusion. “You can’t just date out in the open like that. See what almost happened tonight. We agreed that if you ever wanted to do that, you’d be discreet.”

“Things got carried away. I got carried away,” I say as I look over at her. “She’s different.”

“She looked desperate,” Savannah says and rolls her eyes again.

“You sound like a bitch right now,” I spit out. I won’t have her talking bad about Caroline.

“Aiden, she looked at me like I stole her happily ever after out from underneath her. What do you really know about her? Because I guarantee you,

she knows you're rich."

"That's enough!" I shout, and I'm surprised at my tone. I'm not one to get heated about things. The joke has always been that I'd agree to let someone in the house to murder us instead of being rude and asking them to leave. But right now, the only thing I feel is angry.

I'm angry that I agreed to this fake marriage with Savannah, I'm angry that the night was ruined because of it, and I'm angry that I can't get to Caroline as fast as I want to.

Savannah lets out a humorless laugh and crosses her arms. "You can be pissed if you want, Aiden, but I've known you a very, very long time. And if you think I'm just going to let some freeloader march in and weasel her way into your life without any sort of fuss, then you really don't know me."

"I know right now you're talking out of your ass. You don't know her, and you don't know what I feel for her."

"Don't tell me you're in love." She laughs for real this time and it's like nails on a chalkboard.

I look out the window and think about what I feel when I'm with Caroline. I've never been happier than when she's near me. We talk nonstop and it's so easy. Isn't that what love is supposed to be like? I've never been in love before, so I wouldn't know, but I do know that the feelings I have with her I never want to end.

The limo comes to a stop and Savannah is all too eager to get out of the car. Before she closes the door she looks back at me and narrows her eyes.

"Go ahead and have your fun, Aiden. Just remember that you're rich and powerful and aren't the ugliest guy in the city. Women will use you and try to trap you. Make sure she isn't trying to get into your pants just to get into your bank account."

"It's not like that," I say as I grip the door handle.

Savannah gives me a smug smile. "Look me in the face and tell me you weren't going to fuck her tonight if you didn't already promise me you were going with me?"

"That's none of your fucking business," I say, grinding my teeth.

"Do what you've got to do, but leave the trash by the curb." She slams the door and before I'm able to respond the driver hits the gas and we're off.

I don't know what the hell her deal is. When I got home I had intentions of getting dressed and rushing back out to see Caroline as quickly as possible. But when I got there, Savannah was already dressed up and sitting at the bar in the kitchen waiting on me. I couldn't just leave her there alone and I felt really bad that I'd already promised her and made her get the tickets. She told me her dad

was going and I knew I couldn't let her go alone. He's awful to her with his comments about her weight and her clothing, even how she wears her hair. She can't ever win and I knew if she went without me it would be even worse.

It's the reason why we got married to begin with. Not only did our families arrange it, but I knew that it would finally be a chance for him to ease up on her. It didn't last long before he started the comments about her not getting pregnant. Never mind that the two of us are virgins and haven't even so much as kissed. We didn't even do it on our wedding day. We made the priest skip that part and we walked down the aisle as quickly as we could. This was all to make him happy and it's taken some time to realize he never would be.

Me falling in love wasn't part of the deal. I honestly believed it would never happen. I just assumed I was missing that part of my brain that found other people attractive, making me a perfect husband for Savannah. I had no attraction to her, and I wouldn't need to have my own love life. But the moment I saw Caroline everything changed.

I found myself hanging off of her every word and unable to take my eyes off her. The simplest touch, the slightest movement and I catalogued it all. There was nothing about her I didn't notice or remember and I've never been that way before. I've known Savannah my entire life and I couldn't tell you what her favorite flavor of ice cream is, or which side she parts her hair on. But in the time I've known Caroline I've memorized it all and I'm desperate for all of it. I need to know every aspect of her life and habits and then I want to make a future with her.

Savannah's words hit me in my chest because I know they're lies. Caroline isn't just trying to get to my money. She works hard for what she's got and she's proud of that. There is so much I don't know, but what I do know is that she has the kindest heart of anyone I've ever met in my life.

The car stops outside Caroline's apartment and I jump out. I rush inside and wave to the doorman before I hop on the elevator and hit her floor. Thank god she didn't tell him not to let me in. I have a feeling if she kicks me out now, I'm not going to get lucky a second time, so I pray that I can convince her to hear me out.

I get to her door and I take a breath before I knock. As soon as my knuckles connect with the wood, the door is jerked open and Gia is rushing out into the hall. I look over her shoulder and see Caroline sitting on the couch with Elvis.

"Caroline, listen to me. It's not what you think."

"You're an asshole and a liar," Gia says as she gets closer to me. She's flailing her arms as she yells. I don't want her to hit me and I'm not going to lay a hand on her. But I need to get her to stop screaming so that Caroline can hear

me. So I yell something I know will get both of their attentions.

“I’m married, but I’ve never had sex with her,” I blurt out, and Gia stops. I can’t bring myself to say “with my wife” because while we might legally be married, she isn’t my wife.

“What?” Her eyebrows pull together in confusion and Caroline stands up from the sofa to look at me.

“I’ve never had sex with anyone actually.” I should be embarrassed, but if this is what it takes to get her to listen to me, then I’ll do it. “Savannah is a family friend that I agreed to marry because of her father. I’ve never touched her. It’s a marriage in name only.” I tell her the truth. All the reasons I agreed to marry her to begin with aren’t sitting as well with me as they once had.

“She sure as hell didn’t act that way,” Gia says as she crosses her arms, not backing down.

Caroline has moved closer to the door and I try to keep talking.

“Her father was there right beside us. She has to put on a show of being the jealous wife because that’s what he expects. I’m not going to say she isn’t a little rough when you first meet her, but she means well.” She does. She has so much bottled up inside of her she is about to burst. She doesn’t know how to deal with it and, to be honest, I don’t know how to tell her to deal with it. I know we still both struggle with my sister’s death. It’s the icing on the cake of our show of a marriage.

“Rough? Is that the word we’re using?” Gia looks at me like I’m stupid.

I glance back up to Caroline and keep my eyes locked on her. “She’s my friend and I won’t talk bad about her. She’s had a tough life and she’s protective of me. But I swear to you that I’m not doing this behind her back. I’m not in love with her. I’ve never felt anything for her like what I feel with you.” I stare into her beautiful eyes, wanting her to see the truth.

I watch her wipe away a tear and I feel like a complete piece of shit for causing those tears. I need her to understand that I’m serious about her and what we could have together. I just need to figure out how to get her on my side.

“Let me prove it to you, Caroline. I can take you home and introduce you to her and we can explain. But I swear, on my honor, that what I feel for you is real.”

“Why would you do all that?” Gia asks, looking down her nose at me. “Why would you agree to marry someone you didn’t love?”

“Because he’s a good guy,” Caroline says as she steps out into the hallway. “I’ll take it from here, Gia. Just give me a second.”

Her friend looks like she doesn’t want to walk away, but after a moment she finally gives in. She steps inside, and when she doesn’t close the door, Caroline



reaches in and pulls it shut, leaving us alone out in the hallway.

“I told you I wouldn’t cross the threshold,” I say, trying to make her smile.

When I see the edges of her lips pull up my heart relaxes by a degree.

“Yeah, it’s all going according to plan,” she says, and I sigh.

“I’m so sorry. I should have told you from the beginning, but I didn’t know how to explain that I’m married but not in the way you think. And honestly, I thought it would scare you away.”

“It did,” she says, and it’s my turn to smile.

“I’m going to make this up to you.” I take a step towards her and take it as a good sign that she doesn’t run from me. “It’s late, and I know that tonight I shouldn’t come in. Tomorrow morning, let me walk the dogs with you again and then let’s have that dinner date. You can come to my house and meet Savannah, and then I’ll bring you home.” She doesn’t answer right away and I reach out and take both her hands with mine. “Let me fix this, Caroline. I know what we have is something that comes along once in a lifetime. I’m not going anywhere, so let me make it better.”

She bites her bottom lip and I touch my finger to her chin. After a moment of hesitation she nods and I breathe a sigh of relief.

“Thank you,” I say, pressing my forehead to hers.

“You better not hurt me again,” she says, and I look into her eyes.

“Never,” I vow, before I press my lips to hers.

We kiss for a long time, but it’s not as hot and fast as it was before. This time it’s tender and sweet as I pour my heart into it. I don’t want to do anything to ruin what we might have, and if that means going slow, then that’s what I’ll do. There’s a fire inside of me that was lit the day I saw her, and it’s impossible to put out. It grows more every time I’m with her, and the longer we’re together the less I want to be apart.

“I’ll pick you up in the morning.” I say, and she smiles at me and nods. “I’ll text you on the way home.”

“Goodnight, Aiden,” she says before I lean in to give her one last kiss.

“Goodnight, my heart.”

When I press my lips to hers it’s almost impossible for me to pull myself away. But finally I take a step back and wait for her to go inside before I breathe another sigh of relief. I thought I lost her and I won’t let that happen again. I’ll do whatever it takes to make her mine, and that includes no longer being a married man.

# 8

## Caroline

“Here.” Gia drops her phone down on the kitchen counter next to me and points at the screen.

The article she has pulled up on her phone is about Aiden and Savannah. I already read it last night when I went to bed. I was unable to stop thinking about Aiden, so I googled him like a stalker. It’s an article about his wedding day and there’s a picture showing them both dressed for the occasion. Neither of them looks like they want to be there. How could their families not see this? Maybe they didn’t care.

I got out of an interrogation by Gia after Aiden left last night because Marco showed up. He took pity on me and silenced Gia with a kiss that I’m pretty sure made her forget her own name. I made sure I was gone before she woke up this morning because I’m not sure what to say about the whole thing.

I place my finger on the phone screen and swipe to the next picture, knowing what it will be. It’s the only picture I could find of Savannah and Aiden actually touching and it’s on their wedding day. He has his arm around her and he’s kissing the top of her head. It’s not the way people would hold each other if they were lovers. I’ve seen Gia’s brothers do the same thing to her when she’s worked up and that’s all I could think when I saw it.

“Look at her, Gia.” The room is quiet as we both stare at the beautiful woman in the picture on her wedding day.

“She’s sad,” Gia finally says, sighing.

“Miserable,” I add.

He’s trying to comfort the woman he told me is like his sister, more so since he lost his own and he felt even more protective of her because of that. I saw the pain his sister’s death caused him when he told me about her.

“Misery loves company,” Gia mumbles to herself.

She picks up her phone and starts swiping and I go back to feeding Elvis, who is Team Aiden. He made that clear today when he did everything Aiden encouraged him to do without a fight. Not only that, he wanted to stay for all of the walks just to be with him.

“He lost a sister,” she mumbles as she plops down on the sofa. “She looks just like Savannah.” Gia shows me the picture, but again I’ve already seen it. It’s of the two young girls holding on to each other and smiling as they show off the same missing front teeth. Their resemblance is so stark, though they weren’t related.

“They grew up together.”

He told me their families were close for a long time and their businesses are loosely tied together. The more he talked, the more I actually felt bad for Savannah. I know what it’s like to have shit parents.

“I believe him,” I tell her, the same as I did last night. Aiden is a good man.

“I got that,” she says as she makes a point to look at what I’m wearing.

I’m going out for the night, so I’m not in my usual yoga pants and sweatshirt. I’ve got on a pair of wide-leg black pants and a soft pink sweater. It’s a little dressy but still casual. Dinner at his place will probably be a little more laid back, but I have to fight from cringing when I think of why I’m having dinner there. This has to be worse than when people meet the parents for the first time.

“When I’m away from him the doubt starts to creep back in,” I admit as I sit down next to her.

When he’s close I can feel that this is real and that I’m not making it all up in my head. The way he touches me and looks at me is so consuming and there’s no way he could fake that. Why would he? He’s handsome and rich and I’m sure it’s not difficult to find a girl as a side piece if that’s really what he wants.

“I just don’t want you getting hurt,” Gia admits. “You’ve finally turned a corner and—”

“I know.” I’ve started to settle in and to find me for the first time in my life.

“It’s not only about him,” she adds. “Okay, let’s say it’s all fake and the marriage isn’t real. Where does that leave you? Are you set to become a life-long mistress? Where can this possibly lead?”

I worry my bottom lip between my teeth. Her words hurt, but they are the truth. She’s not trying to be cruel, she just doesn’t want me to sink too deep into something that won’t go anywhere.

“I don’t mean to keep piling it on, but they will be like your family—the people you’ve been trying to get away from.”

I swallow apprehensively. That’s one of my biggest fears. I don’t want to fall back into that world. Sure, Gia’s family has money, but they’re nothing like my family. Aiden’s family clearly runs his life. I get that he’s trying to protect Savannah, and even though it’s selfish I can’t come second to another woman.

“I’ll have to talk to him and put it all out there.” My heart feels heavy. When

I was with him an hour ago, my eyes were heart-shaped and I forgot everything else.

“You deserve to be someone’s first, Caroline.”

I smile and nod in agreement. It might be a little pitiful, but I’m still scared to have this conversation with him. I should have it the second I walk in the door, but I didn’t want my night to be over so quickly. Scared that it would be the end for us.

It’s crazy because it’s too early to have this talk, but things changed and I’m pretty sure what I’m feeling isn’t normal. At least not this fast, but he seems to feel the same way, too. It’s hard to imagine him saying he wants me to be a mistress or something along those lines. How could he pick me when he’s known me for such a short time? Maybe he’s sick of living under someone else’s thumb and the thought causes hope to grow inside of me when it probably shouldn’t.

“Just be careful is all I’m saying,” she says and nudges me with her shoulder.

That’s all she’s saying right now, but I can tell she wants to say more. I think it’s clear I’m head over heels for this guy and I have to see where this can go.

“I love you, but I don’t want to have to dispose of a body. Sounds like a lot of work,” she adds, scrunching her nose.

I laugh, knowing she would cut Aiden’s balls off if he broke my heart.

There’s a knock on the door and I get up from the sofa to answer it. I level her with a look warning her not to start anything. I was scared he might cancel on me again like last night and I’m relieved he’s here. I grab my bag and say my goodbyes to Gia. When I open the door that same feeling I get when he’s close to me slips into place. I smile up at his handsome face and forget all the reasons we can’t be together.

“Hey,” he says as he reaches for me.

He pulls me to him, and before I can say anything his mouth is on mine. The kiss is possessive and like he hasn’t seen me in years. His hands dig into my hair as he brings my body into his and I moan into his mouth.

After what feels like forever he rests his forehead against mine and tries to catch his breath. “I have to stop now or we’ll never make it anywhere.” He brushes his lips against mine one more time before he reluctantly takes a step back and holds on to my hand.

As much as I want him to pick me up and carry me to bed, I know we need to do this. I know he’s not lying that he and Savannah aren’t married beyond a piece of paper, but I know I still need to meet her. I remember the look she gave me last night and there was more to it than her playing the role of a dutiful wife. I want to say that to him, but I fear he’d take her side and end any kind of

relationship we could have.

I can only hope that maybe she's a little like Gia and is protective of Aiden. For some reason I don't get the feeling she's in love with him and hoping that one day he'll see her as more than a little sister. But that could just be a lie I'm telling myself.

Maybe she isn't miserable because she's married to Aiden but miserable because she's in love with a man who doesn't love her back. Both sound horrible, but loving someone who doesn't love you has to be worse.

We walk out of the building and a town car is waiting for us. The driver avoids looking at me and it puts me on edge. I suddenly want to turn around and go back home. Aiden must feel my discomfort. He gives my hand a small squeeze as we get into the car. I try and pull my hand from his, but he doesn't let me. When he starts to say something, my eyes go to the driver who can hear everything.

He closes his mouth and I watch his jaw set into a hard line. I'm not sure what he's mad about, so I turn to look out the window. I close my eyes when I feel his lips on the back of my hand.

"Have you changed your mind?" he asks me softly.

I don't look over at him, knowing between the softness of his words and looking into his eyes I'll want nothing more than to crawl into his lap and have him tell me everything is fine. I can't do that because the driver would see and who knows what will come of that. Is this how it will be if we're together? Will everyone pretend I'm not around like the house I grew up in? I can't live like that again and I won't.

I look at the driver and I see him glance away quickly in the mirror after I've caught him staring.

"My heart," Aiden says, and my stomach flutters. There's an edge to his words, and when I finally look at him he's angry.

"Not now." I can tell from the look in his eyes he wants to push. "Please."

I don't want to have this conversation with an audience. When we stop in front of a house I'm a mixture of happy and uneasy. I want to get out of the car, but knowing I'm walking into a confined space with the wife of the man holding my hand is nerve racking.

Aiden opens the door and helps me out, and then I'm shocked when he levels the driver with a stare.

"I said don't stare at her and to not be fucking rude. You're fired."

He tugs my hand and I'm glad he does because I would still be standing there with my mouth hanging open if he hadn't. I can feel he's pissed because it radiates from him as we walk into his house.

“Is everything okay, Mr. Clark?” a man inside the front door asks.

Two security guards look to where our hands are joined and their eyebrows rise. My whole face heats knowing what everyone is thinking. I try and pull my hand from his, but he doesn't let it go.

“I can't do this,” I say as we walk into the foyer and the door closes behind us.

“I'm going to fix this,” he tells me. “Please don't try and leave.” The desperation in his voice has me questioning everything.

“Why did you tell the driver to not look at me? I can't be a dirty secret.”

“I don't know why I said that to him. When I got to your place it just came out of my mouth.”

I want to tell him it's because I'm a dirty secret, but he cuts me off.

“Because I'm jealous and I knew he'd want you.” He's so intense and I don't think he's ever looked at me with so many raw emotions.

I stare at him in confusion. He thinks the driver would want me? “That's ridiculous, Aiden.” I feel myself getting mad. “You don't have to lie.”

“He would, because they all do. I see the men at the food trucks, the guy with the black poodle on 54th Street, your doorman, and everyone else who sees you smile,” he grits out.

“David's gay.” I look up at him, unsure why he's thinks all these men want me.

“Who's David?” His eyebrows furrow in frustration and I kind of want to laugh.

His jealousy is also turning me on and my body is totally confused on how to act right now.

“The guy who owns the black poodle,” I breathe out, and try to remind myself that I'm mad and frustrated.

“I don't care what he told you, he wants you,” he throws back. “The driver was fucking rude because he wanted you, too, but knew I took you already.”

“You really think every man wants me?” I ask again to make sure I'm understanding what he's saying.

“Of course they do. Look at you, Caroline. You're fucking gorgeous and when you look at me I can't breathe.”

I bite my lip to keep from smiling but it doesn't work. “I think that's the sweetest thing anyone has ever said to me.” I lean into him so he knows I'm not trying to get away and I slide my hands up his shirt to his shoulders.

“I'm being an ass,” he admits, and I hear regret in his voice. He presses me up against a nearby wall and leans down close. “I'm sorry,” he says before he leans down and touches his lips to mine. I close my eyes and enjoy our moment

together. I wish we could just be alone and the rest of the world could disappear.

“Seriously? Could you be any trashier?”

I jerk away from Aiden and realize I’ve somehow managed to climb him like a tree. I see Savannah standing there and I refuse to refer to her as anyone other than his friend.

“Savannah,” Aiden warns and his tone clear. He doesn’t let me go and she rolls her eyes before stomping off.

“Maybe this isn’t such a good idea,” I say as he puts me on my feet.

“Did I tell you how beautiful you look tonight?” Aiden says, looking down at me and ignoring my comment. “Because you do.”

“Let’s get this over with,” I say, and I walk around him into the lion’s den. I’m about to see if the man I’m pretty sure I’m in love with will rescue me when push comes to shove.

# 9

## Aiden

“Are we really going to do this?” Savannah asks, taking her seat at the table.

“Yes,” I say, my voice on edge, and she snaps her eyes to me.

“You said you told her why we’re married. I don’t know why we have to go through with the production of dinner. This is for her, not me.”

“I’m sitting right here,” Caroline says, and Savannah turns her eyes on her. My body goes tight. I don’t like the way she’s looking at my Caroline. I don’t care who she is to me. Some shit is clearly a hard limit.

“I’m aware,” Savannah replies and she narrows her eyes. “How could I not? You’ve managed to attract attention wherever you go.”

I open my mouth to defend Caroline, but she beats me to it. It’s not Caroline’s fault she’s so fucking breathtaking. I have no idea how someone else hasn’t snatched her up already. I won’t let the opportunity pass for me. I’m all in.

“What is your problem with me? Aiden told me that you’re like a sister to him and this marriage was his way of protecting you.” Her words don’t hold any bite. In fact, I’m pretty sure she is trying to be nice. Understanding even.

“Of course that’s why we got married. I don’t love Aiden as anything beyond a friend, and even sometimes I question that.” She shrugs and looks down her nose at Caroline. I know she was trying to take a jab at me with her remark, but she misses. It only makes me sadder for her. She doesn’t see how ugly this has made her.

“Then why are you so upset that I’m here? Aiden asked me to come to dinner tonight so that we could all talk. But it’s clear that you don’t like me being with him.”

“I’ve known him my whole life and I’ve never seen him so much as glance at anyone. Then all of a sudden you pop up and he’s talking about rings.”

Caroline’s eyes widen in shock.

“Savannah!” I say and slap my hand on the table hard, making everything shake. I told her last night when I got home that Caroline was the one but I didn’t want to move too fast and scare her off. But I wanted to get a ring, hoping it would keep me at bay just knowing I had it.



“What? It’s not like she won’t find out. I’m just trying to be your friend and make sure you’re not making a mistake.” She purses her lips.

“I think the mistake was made well before tonight,” I say, and this time I see emotion in her eyes. She’s in pain. This marriage isn’t just hurting me. If I’d known this was simmering below the surface I would have fixed this before now.

“I know you’re his friend and you’re just trying to protect him,” Caroline says as she puts her hand on mine. “I care about Aiden, too, and this is a sticky situation.”

“You can say that again,” she mumbles and tosses her napkin onto the table.

“But…” Caroline continues like she’s not having to deal with Savannah’s shit right now. “You don’t have to like me, and we don’t have to be friends, but Aiden and I are going to be together. We can figure out how to navigate this together or we can do it on our own.” She looks at me for a moment and my chest aches to pull her into my arms. She smiles at me and then surprisingly she reaches her other hand out and opens it up for Savannah to take. “But you’re special to him for a reason and I’d really like the chance to get to know you.”

Savannah glances down at her hand and then at me. There’s a long pause and not surprisingly Savannah crosses her arms and ignores Caroline’s hand.

“I think you two can handle things without me.” She’s trying to look tough, but I know her better than anyone and I can read between the lines. I’m going to have to just rip the metaphorical Band-Aid off.

“I didn’t want to do it this way,” I say, and I grab the briefcase beside me and pull out the documents I’d had drawn up in the middle of the night. I was unable to wait for the next day and dragged my lawyer out of his bed. I pay him enough. He could get his ass up.

“What is that?” she asks when I lay the folder down on the table.

“It’s an annulment.” Her eyes widen with shock and Caroline tenses next to me. “I had our lawyer draw them up last night. You’ll get the house and keep all your assets. Our premarital agreement outlines everything else.”

“Aiden—”

I hold up my hand to stop whatever she was about to say. “All you have to do is sign and it’s over. I care about you, Savannah, but we can’t pretend anymore. It wasn’t a problem until I fell in love, but now that I’ve found Caroline, this isn’t right.” Caroline squeezes my hand and I keep going. “You have to face your father and live your life. You can’t keep hiding in this fake marriage.”

She stands up so quickly her chair falls over backwards on the floor. I can see tears form in her eyes as she looks at me and then looks at Caroline.

“Jealousy is a powerful thing,” she whispers and looks down to where our hands are linked. Her eyes come back to Caroline’s and I watch her swallow. “I

gave you a hard time because he's my friend and he deserves the best. I might never get to fall in love and have what you have, so I hope you appreciate what you've got." She swallows again and I know this is difficult for her to admit. "Be good to him, because if you're not you'll have to answer to me."

Before I can open my mouth she grabs the pen and scribbles her name. Then she tosses it onto the table and stomps out of the room.

"I'm so sorry," Caroline whispers to me, and I look over at her.

I take her chin in my hand and shake my head. "You have nothing to be sorry for. She'll be fine. This is what she does when she gets emotional. She'll come around in time, but this is something that she's been avoiding her whole life."

"Let me take you home," I say, and she nods.

This time I drive to Caroline's place and the ride over is quiet. When I park in the garage we take the elevator up and I hold her hand as we walk to the door of her apartment. When she opens it up the lights are off and Elvis is asleep on the couch.

"So I guess I'll see you tomorrow?" Caroline says it like a question and I just smile and shake my head.

"No," I say, and her eyebrows pull together in confusion.

"Oh, are you working?"

"No," I say again and step inside, closing the door behind me.

Her eyes widen as I turn the lock and then take her keys from her. I place them on the counter and stalk towards her. For every step I take in her direction, she takes one back. Her breathing is speeding up and I can see her nipples press against her sweater.

"Are you staying the night?" she asks warily.

"Yes," I say just before I pick her up in my arms and press her against the wall.

I bury my face in her neck and she wraps her legs around my waist. I grind my hard cock against her and moan at the pressure. She's so soft and I decide immediately we're both wearing too many clothes.

"I meant what I said tonight," I say while I carry her to her bedroom and then close the door behind us. I lay her down on the bed and stand up so I can look at her. "I'm in love with you."

I pull my shirt off and then climb on the bed on top of her.

"I'm in love with you too." She smiles at me and I kiss her softly. "Is this crazy? It's so fast and everything is such a mess."

I pull her sweater off and then slide down to kneel on the floor next to the bed. "I don't care how long it's been or what anyone says." I pull her pants off and rub my hands up her legs as I spread them in front of me. She's in her bra

and panties and I've never seen anything sexier in my fucking life. "I want you, and I'll have you."

"Aiden," she moans. I lean forward and kiss her panty-covered pussy.

The pale pink silk is wet, and when I pull it to the side I can see her lips are damp. I lick the seam and then wiggle my tongue between them as she spreads her legs wider to let me in.

Her taste is addictive and I can't get enough. I put both hands under her ass and grip her there as I suck on her clit. She's soft and sweet and the sounds she's making are driving me insane. I've never tasted anything so good and with every lick I want another. I slip two fingers inside her and she's almost too tight to take them.

"You're going to squeeze the life out of me," I say as I slowly move in and out of her. "I've never done this before and I'm afraid I'm going to hurt you."

"We'll make it fit," she says, moaning and raising her hips.

"Fuck." She pulses around my fingers and her back arches.

I suck on her clit and her climax hits at the same time. She shouts my name and for a second I worry her roommate might be here, but then all care goes out the window when I taste how fucking sweet she is when she cums.

I jerk at my belt and free my cock as I tug her ass to the edge of the bed. Her panties are still tugged to the side so I don't bother to take them off and I slide my cock between her pussy lips.

"I don't want anything between us," I say as I wet the tip of my cock and push in a little. "And I don't want to pull out. I don't ever want anything but you and me, bare."

She looks up at me and bites her lip as I sink slowly into her. She nods and I lean down and kiss her. I can still taste the sweetness of her pussy, and when her tongue touches mine I know she can too. I yank down the cups of her bra so that her tits are bare against my chest just as I thrust into her all the way to the root.

Her body tenses and she whines, but she doesn't ask me to stop. I hold myself still as she slowly relaxes and I kiss my way down to her breasts. I suck on her tight peaks until she's wiggling on my cock and begging me to fuck her.

She's wet and sticky as I slide out of her and then delve back inside her warmth. She's so fucking tight, but I've never felt anything so good and I'm glad that I waited for this moment. For her.

"I love you, Caroline," I say, pressing my forehead to hers. "You're mine now, in every way."

"I'm yours," she says, gasping as I thrust back in.

I'm so worked up that I know I can't last long. I can feel my own release bearing down on me and I grit my teeth to hold it back.

“Harder,” Caroline moans as she grips the sheets above her head.

“Fuck,” I grunt and bury my face in her neck. Hearing her say that is going to be my undoing.

Her legs tighten around me and I feel her teeth on my shoulder, her body tensing and she cries out. Her pussy creams on my cock as she shouts and pulses. I finally give in to my body’s demands and I almost black out from the intensity. It’s so fast it’s like a freight train as it rushes out of me. I lose all control and let instinct take over, holding myself deep inside her.

It’s the single most intense moment of my life, and as the last wave of pleasure washes over me I immediately want to do it again. I roll us over so that she’s on top and begin to thrust into her again.

“Oh my god, are we doing it again?” She looks at me with a huge smile and bright eyes.

“If you want to just lie here you can, but I’m so full. I need you again.”

She sits up and rocks her hips back and forth. “I need you too.”

I grip her hips as she takes off her bra that has somehow ended up around her waist. She leans down and kisses me and I’m lost again to sensation.

When we’re connected there’s nothing else in the world that exists. There’s no space or time. There’s only us and I can’t wait to spend forever just like this.

# 10

## Caroline

Aiden drops me onto the bed and climbs on top of me. “Where do you think you’re going?”

Before I can tell him I was going to take a shower, he’s kissing me. I wrap around him and forget about everything but him. Two weeks of never being apart and I still can’t get enough of him. We had sex not five minutes ago and he’s still all over me. Not that I’m complaining.

“You about to go take a shower?” he asks as he pulls away and kisses my neck. I told him that’s what I was doing an hour ago when I woke up, but he kept on distracting me. At this rate I’m never getting out of my bed again.

“Yes.” I playfully push at his chest, but he doesn't budge. “You think I’m going to let you wash me off of you? I like when you walk around smelling like me.” I laugh because I enjoy his smell on me, too, but this girl needs to wash her hair.

“You can put it right back on me?” I suggest, lifting my hips in invitation.

He hums against my neck before kissing me again under my ear.

The next thing I know I’m in the air and over his shoulder and he’s carrying me butt-ass naked to the bathroom. Luckily Gia is gone and I don’t have to worry about her hearing or seeing us.

“Aiden!” I squeal, but he only smacks my ass and turns on the water.

“Don’t you have a job?” I tease him while the warm water runs down my body. I don’t really want him to go anywhere, but he hasn’t gone to work in forever. I know he talks to his assistant on the phone and works on his laptop from time to time, but he hasn’t gone to his office. I enjoy having him around because it feels good when he’s constantly seeking my attention.

“We have plans today.” He reaches for the soap and starts washing me.

I thought I’d be shy about my body, but like everything with Aiden, it feels natural. As if he’s been touching me and loving me his whole life. There’s no awkwardness to any of it and it makes me realize that this is what true love is. We’re soulmates and we found each other. We knew instantly this was our other half and we’d been waiting to meet. Thank god he fought for this and chased me

down.

“What plans?” My plans for today are lying around and maybe going for food at some point.

The only dog I had to walk today was Elvis and Aiden already did that this morning while I was still sleeping.

“We need a place to live.” He says it so easily, as if he’s talking about getting groceries. My soapy hands fall from his chest and I stare up at him in shock.

“Like, together?” It hasn't come up since the blow up at his home with Savannah. Though I don't know if he calls it home anymore since he told Savannah it was hers. She might have given us her blessing in a roundabout way, but I could see in her face she was hurting.

He's spent every night since then in my bed, and we've been staying here in the apartment. Thankfully Gia went back to liking Aiden since she got to know him. Things feel normal here, but it's the outside world I'm worried about. I know how overbearing families can be and I don't know if I'm ready for all that.

We haven't talked about the living situation and I haven't brought it up. Nor have I brought up Savannah's mention of a ring. I'm living day by day and enjoying life for what it's giving me. He told me he loved me and that's enough for me right now. At least that's what I've been telling myself. I've been waiting for him to say something and he hasn't talked about his marriage or the fact that he hasn't been going back to his place.

“You think I'm going to live somewhere without you? You're my heart.” Every time he calls me that, my insides flutter. Every. Time. I smile up at him knowing I'll never get tired of hearing it.

“I don't want to sleep anywhere you're not at either.”

He leans down and kisses me as he easily lifts me up. I wrap my legs around him, and he thrust inside of me all the way to the base of his cock. I'm wet from being close to him, and some of his cum is still inside me from before. It doesn't take but a few thrusts and we're both climaxing. He growls my name and I'm breathless, my body tingling with pleasure. We're always so hot and desperate, I don't know that we'll ever get enough.

“How did I live so long without this?” he says after he's kissed me all over and put me back on my feet.

He begins to wash my hair for me, and my only response is a moan. The orgasm he gave me still tingles all over my skin as he massages me. I don't know how I lived without this either, but I could never imagine not having it now. I've been starved for love and now he's making sure I have more than I'll ever need. The thought of not having this is too scary to contemplate.

“Look at me.” My eyes flutter open and they meet his dark gray ones.

Like the first day I saw them, they hold my attention. I wonder if our children will have them? One day at a time, I remind myself, because he's still married. There is no ring on my finger and we haven't moved in together. But that hasn't stopped us from all the unprotected sex we've been having. We haven't talked about that either since the night we first made love. I wonder how freaked out he'd be if I told him I've been secretly hoping to get pregnant? I know the thought is crazy, but I'd be a liar if I didn't admit to thinking it.

"You know you're it for me, right?" His eyes are soft and I nod. "I told you I'd fix everything and I will. It's going to be you and me." He says the words as his hand drifts over my stomach, making me wonder if he's thinking the same things I am.

"We haven't really talked about what's in the future," I admit.

"That's because I don't want you worrying about it. I'm taking care of it. You have no idea how badly I want to show you what kind of family you and I are going to have. I'm going to make up for the shitty one you had."

"That's really sweet but—"

"No buts." He kisses me again before pulling me from the shower and drying me off.

I blow-dry my hair and get ready, and the whole time I'm thinking about what he said.

"My parents keep calling," I tell him while I root around for something to wear.

I'm not sure what to wear when you're looking for a place to live. Aiden's already dressed in a pair of khakis and polo shirt. He's sitting in a chair in the corner of the room watching me get ready.

"Are you going to talk to them?" he asks. He already knows all about them. In the past two weeks I've told him everything about my life.

I shrug because I'm not sure. I'm still mad at them, but maybe they've seen how little they've been in my life now. They could want to change, but for some reason I'm not buying it.

"You know you're actually the kind of man they'd want me to marry." I shake my head with a laugh. He's from a good family, has money, and did well in school. "You have all the parents out there trying to marry their daughters off to you," I tease with a laugh, but I watch his smile fall. "I'm sorry. I was joking."

I walk over to him and he instantly pulls me into his lap and nuzzles my neck. "I never should have done it." He's talking about getting married to Savannah.

"You did what you thought was right." He's a good man, so how could it bother me?

“Still, it feels like I cheated on you.”

“What?” I turn in his lap so I’m straddling him. His hands go to my hips and he holds me tightly. “That’s silly.” We were each other’s first. He in no way cheated on me.

“You are the only woman who should ever be my wife.” He rests his forehead to mine and I can feel the tension in his body. “I’m fixing that today.”

“What do you mean?” He hasn’t spoken about the annulment since I saw the papers he pulled out. Savannah signed them, but I knew it wasn’t that easy. It doesn’t all go away when you sign on the dotted line. At least I don’t think that’s how it works.

“The judge is signing off on it today. We’ll be annulled.” As if on cue his phone goes off and he picks it up. He turns the screen so I can see the text.

“It’s from my lawyer, Wyatt.”

**Wyatt: Done.**

“That’s it? You’re not married anymore?” I knew this was coming, but I didn’t know how much it meant to me for it to all be over with. No one else has a claim to him, fake or otherwise, and I get him all to myself.

“I was never was married, my heart.”

I smile so big I think my face might hurt tomorrow. I think of Savannah and I hope she’s okay. She was rude and mean, but I could see the hurt in her eyes. She ached to be loved by someone and I know exactly how that feels. We just have different ways of dealing with it.

The phone chimes again and we both look down.

**Wyatt: She doesn't belong to you anymore. Never did to begin with.**

The text sounds possessive and I stare at it for a moment thinking I read it wrong. Aiden doesn’t look at it more than a second before he puts it in his pocket and it’s clear he doesn’t care about it any longer. He got the information he needed and anything else is of no concern to him. I begin to wonder what that could mean.

“You’re going to marry me,” he tells me, and all thoughts of anything else dissolve.

I nod because I know I am. I think I knew from the moment I turned around and looked at him. It wasn’t only his eyes that held me captive that day. It was his possession.

“When you ask me, we will.” I fight a smirk.

I was happy before this moment, but now something feels different. He’s really all mine. He moves his hands from my hips and begins to tickle me. I laugh and try to get away, but of course I can’t go anywhere.

“Get dressed so we can find a place to call our home,” he says after I agree



I'll marry him. He already knew I would. "We're going to make the life we didn't know we could have," he adds with a smile.

"Are your parents going to be okay with all this?" I ask.

I've been wondering about his parents since he talked about them some. They didn't sound cold like Savannah's, and if anything they want him to be happy so they can try to heal the pain of losing their daughter. Marrying Aiden off was not the way to make that happen, especially since there wasn't any love involved. It only pushed them away from him. I may not know a lot about being a family, but from watching Gia's I know love is the center of it all. They can fight but they love harder and that's clear in everything they do for each other.

"They don't have a choice. I'm done living for everyone else. Now it's you and me." His hand goes to the back of my neck and he pulls me to him. Our mouths are a breath apart and I can feel his warm lips almost touching mine. "And whatever family we make inside of you for us."

I can't stop myself from pushing my panty-covered clit into his hard cock and thinking about him putting a baby inside me. For all I know he already has.

He groans, standing with me in his arms.

"Get dressed or we'll never leave. I have to get us a place where I can have you anytime and anywhere without thinking about someone seeing or hearing you cum."

My cheeks heat but I hurriedly dash for the closet. I grab some jeans and pull on a sweater.

"I'm ready."

"Good." He takes my hand and we tell Elvis goodbye before we leave. I lean into him as we take the elevator down and then walk out of the building. I'm full of love and happiness as we step outside and suddenly a flash goes off in my face. Then several more all at once.

"Mr. Clark, is it true you were never married?"

"Medical reports claim Savannah Caldwell is still a virgin!"

"Is she the other woman? Is she the reason you never slept with your wife?"

"Was Savannah Caldwell's family trying to con you?"

Questions rain down on us and flashes blind me. Aiden pulls me back into my building. We race back to the elevator and the doors close, leaving us alone. I glance over to him, unsure of what to say. I'm not even sure what the hell happened.

I don't know how they found out where I live or that Aiden got an annulment, but the whole world now knows that we're together.

# 11

## Aiden

We rush back inside her apartment and I pull out my phone.

“Do you think it was the driver you fired?” Caroline asks, her eyebrows pulling together in worry.

“I don’t know. Possibly. If he did, he’s a fucking fool. I have all my employees sign non-disclosure agreements and if he talked I’ll own his life.”

“Maybe someone offered him a lot of money?” She shakes her head. “Should we call Savannah?” I can see concern in my girl’s face.

“I’m calling Wyatt,” I say. I enter his number and hold the phone to my ear. When the line connects I start talking. “I need you to handle a situation for me. I’m at Caroline’s apartment and there are paparazzi outside asking questions about my annulment. How can they possibly know that’s happened already? Did you talk to anyone?”

“Is this not what you wanted, Aiden?” There’s a bite to his question

“What the hell is that supposed to mean?” I ask. “I think it might have been a driver I fired a couple of weeks ago. I can email you his credentials.”

“That won’t be necessary.” He says coolly, and I’m starting to get pissed.

“What is your problem? You’re my lawyer! Aren’t you getting paid to figure this shit out?”

Caroline comes over and stands next to me and I feel calmer when she puts her head on my chest.

“For a smart man, you really don’t get it,” Wyatt says and lets out a humorless laugh. “I’ve only been working for you this whole time because of Savannah. Now that your marriage is finished, so are we.”

“What the fuck are you talking about?” My jaw clenches and the hair on the back of my neck stands up. “You’ve known us since high school, Wyatt.”

“Exactly. I was the scholarship student that had to work for every single thing I had and I watched you get handed everything. Even the woman I wanted. I waited and bided my time and now that you’re out of Savannah’s life we’ve got nothing left to talk about.”

“I thought you were my friend. And you were supposed to be Savannah’s,

too.” My mind catches up and I grip the phone tighter. “You leaked this to the press, didn’t you?”

“Looks like you finally opened your eyes. Congratulations.” I can almost picture his arrogant face and I wish I could punch it right now.

“Did you release her medical records, too, saying she was a virgin?”

“You bet your fucking ass I did.” He’s so smug I want to reach into the phone and rip his throat out. “I wanted the world to know she never belonged to you, not even when the law said she did. She’s kept that sweet cherry for me, and it’s time I fucking take it.”

“You think she’ll want you after this betrayal, Wyatt? You think she’s going to go running into your arms when I tell her what you’ve done?”

“Oh, she’ll want me. Her daddy might not have wanted her to marry me when I came from nothing and didn’t have a penny to offer her. But I’ve got something he wants, something that will have her eager to agree.”

“Wyatt,” I warn. “I might not be married to her, but she’s family. If you hurt her, I’ll kill you.”

“I don’t plan on harming a hair on her head.” I can hear him smile. “Come on, Aiden, you know I’m an asshole, but I’m not a monster. It’s the reason you hired me. I’ll get what I want, even if I have to play dirty to get it.”

“The second I hang up, I’m going to tell her what you did.”

“Don’t bother,” he says, and I hear the chime of his office door opening. “You’re already too late.”

The calls ends and I stare down at my phone.

“What happened?” Caroline asks, looking up at me.

“Wyatt was the one to leak it to the press.” I shake my head in disbelief. “He wants Savannah.”

“Oh.” She bites her lip for a second and then cocks her head to the side. “You said you knew him since you were kids.”

“Yeah, we grew up together.”

“Is he a bad guy?”

I think for a second and really search my heart. He’s definitely an arrogant asshole, but he’s not bad. He may be sneaky about getting what he wants, but he wouldn’t hurt Savannah. I believe that deep down in my soul. I shake my head as I try to think back to a sign or something that would make me think he wanted Savannah.

“Would it be so bad that he wants to be with her? I know that you had your reasons for getting married, but would her being with Wyatt be so bad?”

He never said a word to me about wanting her or anything about it when he did the paperwork for us to get married. But she always asked about him and

made a point to talk to him if we were together. Could she have secretly had feelings for him?

I decide to take a chance and send Savannah a text message telling her to call me when she gets a chance. I know that she's not in danger and that she's not going to do anything crazy before I get a chance to speak to her. I want to see what Wyatt has to say to her, and then I'm going to tell her what he did. But until then, I've got to get out of here and get Caroline somewhere safe.

"Grab a bag," I order, and we both go to the closet and get our things.

We take enough for a few nights, which should be long enough to let things blow over. Once she's got what she needs she sends a text to Gia and lets her know to stay at her parents' place for a few days. I scoop up Elvis, and Caroline gets his bag of food and treats.

We take the elevator down to the parking garage since I've got my car here. A security code is required to enter this part of the building, so there won't be any reporters down there. I get everything loaded in and put Elvis in the back seat. He lies on it just like the sofa and goes to sleep instantly. I drive out into the back alley and into traffic. When I pull onto the highway I finally breathe a sigh of relief.

"Where are we going?" Caroline asks as I twine our fingers together.

"It was going to be a surprise, but I guess now it's a necessity."

"That sounds ominous," she says, and I bring her hand to my mouth so I can kiss it.

"What about fortuitous?" I suggest, and she nods in agreement.

We don't have to drive too far to get to the other end of the city and where we're headed. The trees become thicker and in the distance I can see the destination.

"Is that where we're going?" she asks as she moves to the edge of her seat.

The large iron gates open and I turn down the long tree-lined driveway. At the end is a big white house with a lake behind it, and as soon as I stop, Elvis perks up. I get out and open the back door and immediately he takes off towards the water and barks at the ducks.

"Where are we?" Caroline asks when I take her hand in mine and we follow after him.

We walk onto the small dock so she can get a good look at the place.

"We're home," I say, and she looks at me and gasps.

"I thought we were looking for a place!" she says as she puts her hand over her mouth. "Are you serious?"

"I am if you want it. I found this place right after I met you and knew it would be perfect. But if you don't like it, we can live somewhere else. I just

want to be by your side. I don't care about where that is."

"Oh Aiden, I can't believe this." She throws herself at me and I catch her and spin her around. "I love it so much. And I love you."

"I love you too," I say as I put her on her feet and kneel down in front of her. "I've told you from the beginning that you're my heart." I reach into my pocket and pull out the box.

"Holy shit," she whispers when I show her the five-carat heart-shaped diamond.

"I've loved you from the second I saw you and I can't imagine a life without you in it." I kiss her finger before I slip the ring on. "Marry me, Caroline. Marry me and be my everything."

"Yes!" she answers instantly and nearly knocks me over as she jumps in my arms.

Elvis comes running over at the same time and barks at us as we embrace on the dock. He jumps around us, making us laugh, and I can't imagine a life more perfect.

"I think he's happy for us," I say, and Caroline laughs.

"He's excited he's got ducks to chase."

"Wait until he sees the inside. There's a couch right by a window so he can keep an eye on them full time."

"Is there a bed?" she asks, leaning in close.

"You bet your sweet ass there is," I answer and scoop her up in my arms and carry her into our house.

Elvis follows us inside and sure enough goes straight to the couch and lies on the back of it. He looks out at the water and then lays his head down to go to sleep.

"We can change anything you like, just say the word," I tell her as I carry her through the place. "These will be the kids' rooms."

"How many are there?" she asks, her eyes widening excitedly.

"As many as you want."

I glance down at the ring on her finger and my cock gets hard. I never proposed to Savannah and she wore whatever ring she wanted to. Proposing to Caroline was something I dreamed of since the day I met her.

I don't even make it to our bedroom before I push her up against the wall and tug off her jeans. They're around her ankles and I turn her around and pull her ass out. I kneel down behind her and lick the seam of her pussy to taste her tight little bud. She's already wet and ready, but I just need her pussy on my mouth when I fuck her. She pushes against my face and I moan as I fumble with my belt.

When my cock is free I stand up and slide it between her folds. Her warmth surrounds me and I thrust home. It's hot and fast and I can't hold back as I grab her hips and pound into her.

"Fuck, you're probably already pregnant but I'm going to make sure." I hold myself deep inside her and reach around to play with her clit. "I need you to cum so you open up for me."

I kiss her neck and she moans as I strum her just the way she likes it. Her body responds in kind, squeezing me, and I feel her sweet juices coat my cock. Her legs tense and she cries out, climaxing all over me.

"That's it," I whisper while she milks my cum from me.

It's messy and I can feel our release coat the insides of her thighs. I smile to myself, thinking about her walking around all day with that on her and I can't wait to taste it later. It might seem dirty and like something I shouldn't want, but when it comes to my heart, I want it all.

"I love you," I say, trying to catch my breath.

"I love you too," she says and leans back in my arms.

I plan on making love to her in every room in the house today. And then starting all over again tomorrow. We've got lots of time, but it feels like we're trying to catch up. Maybe that's what it's like when you have to wait for the one? All I know is that I'm going to spend the rest of my days worshiping my wife and making her mine. I may have been a virgin husband when she met me, but now I belong to her. For life.

# Epilogue

## Caroline

*Two weeks later...*

Aiden's finger brushes against my skin as he zips up the back of my dress. He kisses my bare shoulder and I gaze at him in the mirror. I'm not paying any attention to the wedding dress I'm in, merely staring at the man who is going to be my husband in a few short minutes. I don't know how I was lucky enough to find him, but I did. Well, with a little nudge from Elvis.

This isn't the first time I've put on the dress. I've seen it before. Aiden's mom Joyce and Gia helped me pick it out. They're both as excited for this wedding as we are. Then pouted when we informed them it would only be Aiden and me there at the wedding. It was what we both wanted. Him and me alone, making the choice to do something because it was what we chose to do. No outside influence anywhere. Two people starting a life together. We weren't leaving everyone behind—it was just more symbolic to the two of us.

It helped that it gave me a reason to not invite my own family who was trying to work their way into my life. I'm not sure how I feel about it, but I'm not in a rush to try and figure that out. It was like they put me to the side when they were busy, so I'm simply choosing to do the same. Maybe it's petty of me, but right now I don't care.

"I hope you're not in love with this dress." Aiden gives my shoulder a nip before kissing the same spot. I turn in his arms and wrap my arms around his neck, pulling him down to kiss. I'm not in love with it. As much as it cost, though, I should care about his destroying it. But I don't.

"I'm in love with you." I smile against his mouth. "You can rip the thing from me after we say 'I do' for all I care." It's the truth. Aiden's mom and Gia made me try on dozens of dresses. To be honest they all felt the same. All I cared about was getting married to this man and living up to the promise he'd made to me about us making a family of our own. Picking the dress was more to get close to his mom.

She's sweet and I could see, like Savannah, she still has hurt riding her from

the loss of her daughter. She'd actually been upset when she found out that Aiden and Savannah never shared true love. Once Aiden told his mom and dad, it was like the scales fell from their eyes and they now saw things they should have seen long before Aiden told them they didn't love each other.

Now both his parents are making an effort to make sure they're involved more in Aiden's and my life. It's sweet and I can see they love him. They had only done what they thought was best.

"Come." He locks his hand with mine and pulls me from our bedroom. Elvis jumps up from where he was lying on the floor in the hallway. For some odd reason he enjoys plopping himself down right in the center of the hallway so that we almost trip over him in the mornings. He's either there or in his window watching the ducks. His bittersweet love of chasing the ducks is one of the most adorable things I've ever seen. More so because the ducks are onto his hatred of water. Now they toy with him and know he won't get too close to the water. It really is a love hate-relationship. Still, I got scared of what would happen if he finally caught one. That fear passed when I saw him sleeping on the dock, a duck resting its head on him, fast asleep too. Elvis is all bark and no bite.

He barks as he follows us, as if knowing today is special. I smile when we step outside. The sun feels good on my skin. Aiden and I haven't spent much time anywhere but locked in our room. He's trying to fill the spare rooms of the house already.

We only left for a few visits to the city to see his family and for me to finish up with my dress. It was bittersweet having to let my clients go. Not because I'd wanted to, but the paparazzi didn't make walking a herd of dogs the easiest task to do. Luckily Aiden made sure someone could take over for me. I hated leaving clients hanging. I knew dog walking wasn't my long-term career choice, but I still took my responsibility seriously. I followed through on my work and I was thankful that I had Aiden to help me do that.

"Judge Prescott and his wife are here." Aiden tells me. I'm ready to be his wife. He told me Prescott was a friend and had a hand in getting the annulment taken care of quickly. He knew all too well what it was like to fall madly in love with a woman and do anything to make her yours. Even if that meant bending the rules to make it happen. He'd done it himself to claim his wife, who is now standing by his side to bear witness to our marriage.

We walk hand in hand down to the pond where the judge and his wife are waiting. The vows are short but sweet. Aiden is kissing me before the judge finishes his instructions. Somehow when I open my eyes I find myself in our bedroom, in the center of our bed.

I remember hating the house I grew up in. It was so far from the rest of the



world—a giant mansion filled with pretty things but somehow still always felt empty. I felt alone in it even when Yana was there. She tried her best and gave me all she could, but there was always an ache for something else. At one time I thought maybe it was not having my parents' love. Now I know it was an ache from not having the other half of my soul with me. Here, I know it will never be that way. I enjoy being away from the rest of the world because this home was filled with love. So much it could burst.

“You can stop trying so hard to knock me up. One of the rooms will be filled soon.” I tell him the thing I've been dying to tell him since Gia snuck me over a pregnancy test yesterday.

He closes his eyes for a moment, taking in what I'm telling him. I smile up at him and know he's going to be a wonderful husband and dad to our baby.

“Love you so much, my heart,” he tells me, opening his eyes to stare down at me, eyes I know our baby is going to have somehow. I just know. Like I know I will always be his heart and he will always have mine.

# Epilogue

## Aiden

*Five Years Later...*

I click through my emails, making sure I have everything taken care so the rest of my day is free. My parents are over coming over tonight to watch the boys so I can take my wife out to dinner. I have a few surprises planned for our anniversary.

Most days after breakfast I take that small part of my day to work, double checking to make sure everything is running as it should be. I made sure I hired the best so I don't have to worry about the company every day as I once had. I'd been using it to get lost and avoid thinking about how lifeless of a life I'd been living before Caroline came into my world. It's easy to make yourself busy so you don't see what's staring you right in the face. I'd let myself get lost in other problems so I didn't have to face the others. It was something I'd never let myself do again.

The only reason I keep the company going at this point is because maybe one day my children will want it. It isn't about the money. We're set, but it could be a true family business if our children want that. Or they can choose to follow their own dreams. Either way, that door is open to them. I'll make sure all doors are open to them and I'll never stand in the path of one they want to walk through.

My own parents made their mistakes, but they have learned from them and we have all grown together. Time healed some of the wounds that lingered for years. In fact, while they might regret some of the choices they made, those choices not only set me on the path to my wife but they also taught me life lessons that will make me a better father.

I stand and stretch, wondering what my wife is up too. I know both of our boys are down for naps. Normally by now she's in here lying on the sofa in my office and reading a book until I'm done doing whatever it is I have to wrap up.

We always eat lunch together. Then I eat her until she passes out for her own small nap. Her first trimester of pregnancy always makes her a mixture of sleepy and horny. I'd add hungry, but she's always hungry, I think with a smile. Thank

god I can cook, because that's one of the few things my perfect wife doesn't excel at. Still I eat her burnt bacon and rubbery eggs anytime she makes them. I'd do anything for that woman to make her smile. God knows she makes me smile by simply being.

I still, dropping my arms from a stretch when I hear her laughter ring out in the house. I glance towards the window but don't see a car. Maybe she's on the phone. I head out of my office, following the sound of her laughter, and freeze when I see Nick, the man who makes sure our pond is taken care of, standing in our kitchen eating the burnt cookies my wife made for me last night. I only hired him a few months ago after the last guy retired and moved down to Florida with his wife.

My jaw hardens when I see his eyes on her tits as they bounce with laughter. She has one hand on the counter, the other on her baby bump. She's holding onto our little baby girl as she laughs. Maybe the fucker doesn't see it. Not that he needs to. She has a giant rock on her hand and I'm the one who hired him. His ass knows she's married. Still, here he stands in my kitchen, staring at my wife, ready to pounce on her. He's even creeping towards her slowly.

"Lake is outside," I say, entering the kitchen. Caroline looks shocked at my hard tone. I almost swear it's fake because there's no way she can be surprised right now. Or maybe she didn't notice the fuck staring at her tits. Either way, I'm pissed. My whole life everyone has always said I'm the good guy, always doing the right thing.

That was until Caroline. Apparently I saved all my assholiness for the moments someone got too close to my woman. I come to stand behind my wife leveling the guy with a hard stare. There is no missing that I'm begging for a reason to lay him out.

"I was just letting Caroline know I was done." He motions towards the lake.

"Mrs. Clark," I correct him. I don't have to see my wife's face right now to know she rolled her eyes.

"Mrs. Clack," he parrots my words. I would think it's a good thing he learns fast, but he doesn't need to learn shit because he won't be coming back here ever again.

"I'll walk you out." I turn my wife in my arms and kiss her so hard and deep she forgets fuckface is standing there. When I pull away she's breathless and her mouth is swollen. That heavy, lustful look in her eyes almost has me forgetting he's standing there too for a moment.

"I'll be back in a minute, my heart." I soften my voice for her. "I'll make you some lunch and then we'll have our nap." It's clear what "nap" means from my tone. The man chokes on the burnt cookie. At least he's trying to eat it. I'd really

have to deck him if he let on to my wife her cooking wasn't the best. I watch as Caroline's cheeks warm to a nice pink. She smacks my chest, whispering my name loudly in a scolding tone. I have to fight a smirk. I kiss the end of her nose before stepping away from her.

I don't care how petty it makes me, but I take the cookie right out of the man's hand and put it down on the kitchen counter. "Let's go." I motion to him to start moving his ass. He turns and does as he's told. I let my hand fall to his shoulder, giving it a hard squeeze as we head to the side door where I know he has to be parked. That's why I didn't see his truck when I glanced out the front window.

"Maybe you aren't used to husbands being home when you do your stops." I squeeze him hard and he whimpers in pain. "But I'm always fucking home with my wife." I stop walking but don't release his shoulder. I want him to look me in the eyes. Finally he does.

"You hear what I'm saying?"

"Loud and clear," he rushes to say, dropping his eyes from mine. I let him go. I think he gets the point.

"Don't come back here," I add as he practically runs to get out of here. I have to fight a laugh when he almost trips over his own supplies he still has lying out. He quickly gathers them and puts them into the back of his truck. I shut the door and flip the lock before I head back to find my wife.

I make it back to the kitchen and freeze when I see her sitting there in nothing but a pair of panties. Her dress is lying on the floor next to her. No wonder her tits were bouncing like they had been when she laughed. She didn't have a bra on.

"I like that dress." She points to the dress on the floor. I smirk. She knew I was coming for her and the dress would have been a cleaning rag. She knows me all too well. That turns me on even more.

"Not going to give me a smart mouth?" I close in on her, waiting for a bit of her anger. I know with a few kisses and touches I can quickly cool it.

"Nope." She swings her legs back and forth without a care in a world. She still doesn't say anything about what I'd done. So I push on.

"What was so funny?" I ask her, placing my hands on the arms of her chair to cage her in.

"Nothing." She shrugs but keeps on smiling.

"Heard you laughing up a storm," I throw back. I know my smart wife is up to something.

She laughs and wraps her legs around me. The high kitchen stool she's sitting in brings my cock right where it wants to be. She slides her hands up my

chest and wraps her arms around my neck. Instincts kick in and I'm lifting her into my arms.

"I was laughing 'cause I knew you'd come and save me. He wouldn't stop talking." I don't have time to make it up the stairs and into our bedroom. I head back to my office and kick the door closed behind us. I move her over to the giant sofa that I've made love to her on many times before. I'm not sure there is anywhere in this house that I haven't. "That jealousy you have can work in my favor, too," she giggles.

I want to laugh with her, but I'm too fucking turned on. Five years and I still think I grow more addicted to her each day. I didn't think it was possible, but here I am, beyond obsessed with her. I slip my hand into her panties and that laugh turns right into a moan. "Aiden." She lifts her hips as I push two fingers deep inside of her, using my thumb to rub small circles on her clit.

My perfect wife is always so needy for my touch and attention. I groan. I never get enough of how much she needs me. My cock leaks cum inside my slacks. I can't stop myself from leaning down and let my tongue replace my thumb. I want her taste. I know her body and what she likes, so it doesn't take long before she's cumming for me. I drink her down, getting every drop from her sweet pussy. I slide my finger out of her and pull her panties all the way off, tossing them to the floor.

I don't take the time to undress. I only flick my belt open and free my cock to push inside of her. She wraps her legs around me again as I slide in and out of her. It's like coming home to my wife. The only woman to have ever held the title. The only one who ever will.

THE END

# Chapter 1

## Savannah

When I wake up I see I've got over a hundred messages on my phone. I know instantly something has happened. I scroll through them and see most of them are from my father and a few are from friends. A chill runs down my back when I see one of the articles someone sent me. It's there right in front of my face and I can't ignore it.

*Billionaire Aiden Clark annuls marriage to heiress Savannah Matthews*

"Shit." I toss my phone on the bed and cringe. This is why my father is calling and texting me nonstop.

I was hoping I had a few more days to prepare for what was coming but I guess I don't get that luxury. Not now that Aiden is in love. I roll my eyes and get out of bed. It's not that Caroline isn't great or that I don't want Aiden to be happy. We just agreed that this was the deal and then he went back on it. I can't blame him, but I need to blame someone and I'm not taking any responsibility for it. I've kept my end of the deal. It's everyone around me who's always breaking their word.

My phone vibrates again and I assume it's my father, but when I look down I see Wyatt's name. The first time we met we were fourteen and in high school. Wyatt was mine and Aiden's lawyer since we got married. Aiden and I used him for everything, including our prenuptial agreement and now annulment. He's probably seen the news, but I don't know why he would be calling me since Aiden is the one he usually deals with.

Wyatt Carmichael is the cockiest asshole I've ever met and it's part of what makes him a great lawyer. Even when we were kids and he didn't have much, he still walked in every room like he owned it. Like we were all there for him. I hated him the first time I saw him and nothing has changed since then. It's just too bad my body never got the message.

He's loud and doesn't care that people are annoyed by him. He's inconsiderate of people's feelings and never apologizes for anything. Yet when I think about that dark beard and what it would feel like on the insides of my thighs I can hardly think straight.

I sigh as I go to my bathroom and get in the shower. I hate Wyatt, but my lady business wants him more than anyone else. Ever. It's just too bad I can't have him. The whole reason I married Aiden was because my father wouldn't allow me to be with anyone else. Even if I didn't love him. I was forced into every path I've ever taken and I knew with one look at Wyatt that he was a path I could never take.

The message from Wyatt said I need to come by his office today and finish signing the paperwork. I thought I signed all I needed to, but I don't really remember that clearly. I was upset when I scribbled my name on the form Aiden gave me and I probably did it in the wrong place.

When I'm finished in the bathroom I grab a cream-colored dress and a pair of heels. I tie my hair back in a low ponytail and then put on some lipstick. I don't really want to get dressed up, but it's been ingrained in me for so long that appearances matter and I have to go through the motions.

I grab my bag on the way out and then drive towards downtown. Aiden was the one who wanted to live in the suburbs, but I miss the city. He said I got the house, but I wonder if that means I can sell it? I don't need all that space, but I doubt my father would approve the sale. He's still guardian of my trust and he uses it against me every chance he gets.

Before I go to Wyatt's office I decide to stop for a coffee. I park the car and get out, and when I get inside I see there's a couple of people in line. I pull out my phone while I wait and scroll my Instagram.

I'm looking through pictures of my cousin's new little baby and smiling when I hear someone whisper behind me.

"Can you believe it? How awful must she have been for her husband to never fuck her?" I feel my neck get hot as I turn around and see two girls behind me trying to hide their laughter.

Maybe they were talking about someone else? I'm famous because of my family, but it's not like I'm a celebrity or anything.

The person in front of me is called forward and I go back to my phone. I'm just about to put it away and order my coffee when I see someone has tagged me in a post. I click on it and my blood runs cold when I see the gossip site has posted my medical records and has the word VIRGIN splashed across the screen.

I can't stop myself from scanning the page and reading about how Aiden left me for another woman and we never consummated the marriage. I hear more giggles behind me and I look up to see the barista staring at me and then down at my phone.

I hold my phone against my chest as I back out of the coffee shop and run to

my car. Hot tears sting my eyes as I fumble with my keys. I shouldn't care what people think, but that comment stung. Yes, I'm a virgin, but so was Aiden. He just doesn't have a medical record to prove it.

I drive out the parking lot too fast and my tires screech as I make the turn towards Wyatt's office. I don't know where else to go or what to do, but I don't want to talk to Aiden. He's just going to feel sorry for me and I don't need that right now. I want to make sure I'm split from him and there's nothing else tying us together. The last thing I want right now is sympathy for the life I had to choose.

Nothing about what I've wanted has ever come into play. I didn't get to go to the schools I wanted, or choose the major I wanted, or even marry the person I wanted. I was forced into this and people think they know the whole story, but they don't know anything about me.

When I get to Wyatt's office I park my car and take a deep breath before I wipe away any remaining tears and square my shoulders. I'm ready to face whatever is in front of me, and that includes an asshole with the ability to make me weak in every part of my soul.

I just need to make it through this meeting and Wyatt Carmichael will be out of my life forever.

*It's too bad he has other plans.*

[The Virgin Wife... Coming March 1st](#)



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