

## Chapter 2

EVERETT

When I get home from work, it's already too late, and I find Caiti snuggling with our cat on the sofa, a bowl of chips next to them as they watch some new crime thriller series without me. I bang the door a little more loudly than I need to on my way in to capture their attention, and it works. The cat mewls noisily, jumping from the couch cushion to follow me as I stroll to the kitchen, where I pour myself a glass of water and throw her some cat treats on the kitchen floor.

Walking back to the living room, I take my place next to Caiti, resting my head on her shoulder. She doesn't move or say anything but puts her hand on the side of my face as her other free hand continues to feed her mouth with chips.

"You work too much. You know that, right?"

"They are always on my back with new targets that I have to fulfil, and you know how badly I need this job."

Caiti tilts her face to gaze at me.

"What if you found a new position in a different company where they aren't working you to the bone?" She runs her fingers through my hair. "You might have already filled your resume with all the skills you need since you have been working so hard every day. That's to count for something."

"Yeah, that's right." I blow out a harsh breath. "As if finding the thing you want is easy since there are always too many people vying for the same position. I'm lucky to even have a job in this economic downturn."

She scoffs.

"You have to start trying somewhere. If this company is making your life hell, then there's no sense in you clinging to it. Am I right?"

I nod.

"You're right." I rub the tender spot on the back of my shoulder. "Whenever I find the time between working at my two jobs, I'd start looking for a new opportunity somewhere else."

She bites onto more chips.

"You sure would, honey."

At that exact moment, my phone rings and buzzes in my pants pocket. I reach for the phone, and as soon as my eyes fall on the screen, I inadvertently sigh. Caiti proceeds to give me a look.

"So, that horndog is calling you the second you get home?" She rubs her fingers under her chin. "Why are you even with him, Evie?"

"I love him."

"You love him too much." She shakes her head. "He still won't fuck you?"

"He keeps saying that we have to wait till we get married. Well, according to him, doing it before getting engaged is a sin."

She laughs at that.

"Oh, sure. Sign me right up for some of that." Her green eyes are gleaming under the light coming from the television. "But hold up, him calling you three times a day for phone sex isn't a sin?"

I shake my head.

"No."

"Oh, sweetie." She exhales. "Well then, go on, help your boyfriend get off."

"Hey!" I protest. "I get off sometimes too, you know?"

"Yeah, now, we are lying to ourselves, aren't we, sweetie?"

I throw a cushion over her face before exiting the living room to lock myself in my bedroom.

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## WAYLON

My dad's business is a mess. I didn't realise how bad it was when I joined the company, but now I can see all the chips falling together into their places. They held back so much of that information within themselves, so I didn't get an even playing ground when I started managing the different departments. All the expenses reports were held up, the accounting people were obnoxious and ill-equipped, the public relations team was basically one woman answering all the emails, and there was no actual legal team to run

things down here. I had to go through so much trouble fixing the necessary cogs to ramp up our supply chains.

Nonetheless, it made me wary of why my dad wanted me to manage the largest media company he owns when he could have easily hired anyone much more capable for his bidding? He could have had literally anyone else participate in this mundane business work, but he chose me.

Even a media company that sometimes dabbles itself in manufacturing paper needs to know how to work things around here. The instant I came to work, I fired the presiding CEO because his mouth was full of shit and lies. He didn't know what was happening under the parent company's roof, let alone figure out how things work for the small and medium-sized businesses we have functioning under us.

And he was not the only one I fired. I fired employees one after another after I did the monthly and annual appraisals.

There was so much lack of vigor, spirit, and professionalism that sometimes I just sent them an email saying, 'you are fired.'

Most of them didn't know the first thing about their jobs which further pissed me off. I wonder how my dad kept such a giant multinational corporation working all these years when it was run by none other than incompetent idiots.

Every little thing about this company was a piece of an overwhelming puzzle that needed sorting out.

All these sister companies looped around one parent company, and all the different offices synonymous from one department to another buried under the same building can drive anyone insane. Not just me.

Someone knocks on my door.

"Come in."

"Hey Wayne, these were the reports you asked for." She hands me the files. "Let me know if you need anything." Then she heads for the door and halfway towards it, pivots on her feet. "Why are you still here? Don't you want to go home? It's after nine, almost."

"I can't, Kyra." I mince my words. "I have some things to take care of. Do you have something else you want to tell me?"

She shakes her head.

"No, I'll be on my way, then."

"Sure, good night."

"You, too." She smiles at me with a longing look weighing heavily in her eyes. "Have a nice night."

She struts out of the room, her skirt tight around her ass. Without really wanting to, my eyes latch on to the way her butt wobbles as she moves from the front corridor to the back.

I can't fuck her.

I remind myself.

To pursue and fuck her is not why I am here.

Leafing through the files she left for my perusal, I catch some errors that the marketing team has made, and I wonder if they need firing too. I put my head in my hands, massaging the prominent nerve that throbs under pressure.

My mind accidentally goes back to the thought of the meeting fixed with my doctor a week from now. I wonder why I need to make such a desperate move to secure the financial stability that is my birthright. Losing my sense of humility, I cuss under my breath.

I won't let him win.

I will find a way to work around my dad's new will.

He won't have the last laugh because I will be dishing out the best joke of his life that he has ever heard.

I will give him the heir he so desperately wants out of marriage.

The doctor wants to meet me so they can check the feasibility of me freezing my sperm for the right woman that I'd have to find by myself to use as a surrogate. I have a plan brewing in my head. Since my dad didn't leave me another choice, I'd have to find a loophole to beat him at his own game.