

Chapter 3

EVERETT

"Hey, how are you doing, buddy?" I speak over the static as I pour myself a cup of coffee in the kitchen. I was up late last night talking to my boyfriend talking about things he'd like to do to me. After I fell asleep during the call, the first thing I thought about in the middle of the night when I woke up to pee was the promise I made to my brother at the beginning of this week. I texted him that I would call him. Then I kicked myself for not calling him during the entire week. "Are you feeling okay?"

"I'm fine, Evie." My brother's voice is crisp and void of emotion, as it has been since we lost our parents last year during a tragic car accident. He hasn't shown much emotion or talked about anything more than was requisite. I can't blame him. "They told me you're behind on paying my quarterly fees." There's a gruff intonation to his voice. "The counsellor suggested I talk to you and sort the payments out. Are you going to pay my fees soon?"

"Yeah, buddy, I think I will be able to pay it by mid-next week." I run a hand through my hair. "There was a change in authority these past few weeks at the office. I mean, there were some changes in management, and because of that, all of our payment information got mixed up. They've been sorting everything out this week, and I think I'll be paid by Wednesday, so yeah, I think I can pay your fees then."

He blows out a breath of relief.

"Okay, good."

"You didn't say that you were going to try out music? Your music teacher sent me some forms about your joining the school's drama and music club. I'm so happy you're getting back into something you enjoyed before--"

"I'm not-I didn't want to, but Ms Maurice wants me to play the next Romeo in the adaption of Romeo and Juliet they are putting up for next spring." He scoffs. "As if I'd get caught playing some dumb romantic hero who wants to save the girl of his dreams." He goes quiet for a minute. "There's no such thing as saving anyone. Especially from death."

These words from my fourteen-year-old brother's mouth shake me to the core. Why is he talking like this?

"Hey, don't say that, buddy. It's good to take things easy and not take yourself too seriously. Especially when you have to participate in a school production. After all, it's a light-hearted part you have to play for a small school club. There's nothing to be ashamed about."

"I'm not ashamed of it." He goes quiet again. "That's just me pointing out that you can't save people."

"Okay, Jesus, lighten up."

"Is there anything else you'd want to tell me?"

"No. There's not." I search my head for anything new I can tell my brother concerning my life, but nothing comes to mind. "It is the same old, same old shit."

"Fine, then." He ties up the conversation. "I have classes in about thirty minutes, and I need to get to them."

"Okay, take care."

My brother hangs up on me.

What's gotten into him this early in the morning?

"What the fuck is this?" Kyra throws the file I gave her before leaving for home last night on my office's table, and I catch it before it hurts me in the ribs. "The boss sent this back saying there are a bunch of endless mistakes in the document. Were you dreaming, Everett? Do you want to get fired and take me along for the ride?"

"No." I shake my head. "That's not something I'd want to do, not at all." I take the file and set it in front of me. Then I flip through the pages to parse out details and take a quick look at the potential mistakes I have made. "Is he sure? Did he take a thorough look through it? I mean, what's the point of contention in these papers?"

Kyra puts a hand on her waist and stares me down with a defiant glance.

"Would you like to ask him that?" She raises both of her eyebrows. "You know what? Why don't you go see him in his office right now and ask him about what's wrong with the papers? I'm sure he'll clear that right up. . ." she showers me with mock tenderness, "before firing you."

I bite my lower lip, thinking about all the things that could have gone wrong with the report I made yesterday. There could be many that would have potentially crept in since I was all hot and heavy from the call with my boyfriend, but as per usual, he didn't get me off. My sexual frustration is now affecting my work.

I want to hold my head in my arms and cry.

Well, that was the only thing missing from my life.

"Go on, girlie." She laughs. "I'm sure he'd like to meet you in between the innumerable things he has on his plate."

"No." I suck on my lip out of pity for myself. I can't believe I have gotten myself into this mess. "I'll look at the document and fix it for you. Maybe you can ask him to look at it again. Run your casual charm on him as you do with all these male colleagues who are after you in this office?" I offer a small, kind smile. "He would like that, won't he?"

"Ah, you're so quick to commit to your mistakes, aren't you, Everett?" She clears her throat. "But hey, wouldn't it be easier if you actually run down the hallway, ride the lift, get to the eighth floor, knock on his office's door, and put your foot down asking him what was so blatantly wrong that he gave me an ass-kicking mouthful before I have had my morning coffee?" She smiles at me cruelly. "Well, that needs some clearing up between the departments, don't you think so? And what would be better than you asking him about his concerns face-to-face since you were the one who worked on this report?" She slaps me on the back. "Now, you have to go. And I'll go get myself a cup of coffee."

"It's alright, Kyra." I smile at her again, trying to diffuse the tension with a warm smile as if it has ever worked in these sticky situations I get myself involved in frequently. But I try nonetheless. "I'll do my best. There's no point in me going and annoying him any further. Let me try to fix it for you."

Kyra slams her hand on my office desk.

"You have two hours to fix it." She laughs a mean laugh. "Then you're the only one who's taking the report to him, not me."

"But I'm not the head of this department?" I cough. "I'm a lowly assistant."

"Then you better shut up and listen to what the department head wants from you." She pats my back thrice. "You're going. It's decided."

She pivots on her feet, and I hear her heels click on the soft white marble.

"But, Kyra---"

"You're going, Everett. The sooner you finish the report, the better." She turns around to give me another menacing look. "Or I'll fire you myself."

With another glowering look in my direction, she leaves the room.