



# Her Irresistible Husband

**Author:** *Marian Tee*

**Category:** Erotic, Romance, Billionaire Romance, Adult

**Description:** She's forty-one and a late-blooming V. She's also the sunshine that broke through the billionaire's ice.

Star Moreno came to the orphanage to adopt a child.

Instead, she ends up testing out a fake marriage with Wynd Sullivan.

The brooding tycoon doesn't smile, doesn't share, and definitely doesn't do love.

But he does other things.

Like ruin her favorite dress.

And make her forget all the rules she used to live by.

The future has never looked hotter, I mean, brighter.

Until the man who told her not to fall in love...is the one walking away before he falls for her first.

**Total Pages (Source):** 34

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:34 pm*

Wynd

I'VE FOUND HIM.

A dark-haired boy, quiet and self-contained in a way that reminded Wynd of himself at that age, when the world had taught him that survival meant never needing anyone.

He closed his eyes for one moment.

Just one moment to allow himself to consider if he was making a mistake.

He was not.

This was what he wanted. And just like that, his mind was made up. He was not, had never been, and would never be the type to second-guess himself.

Wynd turned to leave and was already halfway to the door when he saw her.

And everything stopped.

She stood just a few feet away from the boy, her face turned toward the child with a sweet and wistful expression that made Wynd's chest ache for some reason. There was something about her that set him on edge. But at the same time, he found himself unable to tear his gaze away. He couldn't seem to stop staring, with how everything about her seemed to smile.

Her eyes, soft and brown, held a light that spoke of hope even when logic suggested

there wasn't much reason for it. Her lips, naturally curved upward at the corners, looked as if they had been designed for laughter.

And then there was her soul.

Wynd couldn't even remember the last time he had thought of anyone's soul before.

But this girl...

She clearly had one.

A beautiful, luminous thing that seemed to shine from within, and it was this soul of hers that had him watching her like he had never watched any woman in his life.

The pair of gold hoops dangling from her ears sparkled every time she turned her head, catching the afternoon light streaming through the windows. It was the perfect match for how her whole being seemed to radiate a sunny sense of joy, the kind that might even be enough to thaw the walls of ice from which he operated.

The dress she wore was modest, exquisitely so. Navy blue with spring flowers at the hem, it covered her from throat to knee with a propriety that should have been boring. Instead, it made him crave what he could not see. And even obsess over the innocent sway of her hips as she moved closer to the boy.

What, he actually found himself musing, would it feel like to have his fingers crush the softness of her flesh as he held her hips still?

What sound would she make if he were to slowly enter her for the first time?

And what would it feel like to have himself fully buried inside of her?

The more he looked at her, the more he wanted her.

But just as he started planning the logistics of making her his mistress, it was then he noticed how she was looking around...and Wynd realized he had gotten it all wrong.

This woman wasnotworking for the orphanage.

Nor was she one of the social workers whose names he had memorized from the facility's website.

As incredible as it seemed, she was apparently much older than she looked, because it was clear from the way she was gazing around the room while wearing her heart on her sleeve...

She was here for the same reason he was.

Star

I'M FORTY-ONE YEARSold, and I've never been kissed.

Three years ago, I was also told by my OB that I'm infertile, and it's incurable.

## Page 2

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But because I've always been the kind of girl who just can't help seeing the positive in everything, and this was way before I came to know God—

I'm just so happy, you know?

Because today is the day I'm about to meet the most important person in my life.

"Ms. Moreno?" A woman with a clipboard approaches me with a warm smile. "Feel free to interact with the children. They've all been prepared for visitors today."

"Thank you." It takes real effort to just smile warmly back and I have to clasp my hands behind my back to keep myself from throwing my arms around her like I really want to.

Gotta keep calm, I remind myself.

Hope Rises is the elite of San Antonio's childcare facilities, and it's taken me three reference letters and agreeing to a background check just to get my name on the list for one of their bi-annual invite-only open houses.

I need to do everything I can to make sure they consider me a suitable would-be parent, and that's not going to happen if I'm my usual exuberant self.

Stay calm, I urge myself yet again as I take my time looking around me and observing what everyone's doing. The large playroom buzzes with quiet activity: couples talking to each other in hushed whispers, social workers jotting down notes on one side, and last but certainly not the least, I see children clearly doing everything they

can to impress future parents, and just watching them makes my heart ache so, so bad.

Oh, if only.

They all look like little angels. It makes me wish I could adopt all of them, and I have to consciously remind myself that I am not their Messiah, and I don't have to be. It may not seem evident at times, but God has a plan for all of us...never mind if those plans are not what you expected.

It's just a matter of waiting. A matter of walking by faith, and not by sight. In my case, I had to wait for three years. Just praying and fasting and talking to all the parents I know. Three years of waiting until He's finally answered my prayer, and today is His plan coming to fruition.

I can feel it in my bones.

Something special's about to happen, with my steps seemingly drawn by some invisible force until I find myself standing just a few inches away from a young boy seated alone in one corner, legs tucked under him, his dark head bent over a book that seems too big for his tiny hands.

My precious baby.

I'm guessing he's five, maybe six years old. But it's as if he's an old soul trapped in a little boy's body, with how he seems so peaceful in his solitude. While all the other kids are running around and acting exactly their age, this boy remains focused completely on the book he's reading, and...ah.

I take a step forward to peek at what he's reading, and my heart breaks. It's an illustrated edition of select stories from the Bible, and the one he's reading is about

Moses as a baby, who was placed in a basket to escape the evil pharaoh.

Isn't he too young to see himself in Moses' story? Or do losing their parents so early in life make children inevitably mature beyond their years?

The more I look at him, the more my heart aches.

But when I take another step forward...

That's when I realize I'm not the only one drawn to this boy.

Another prospective parent is standing right next to me, and when I slowly lift my gaze, startlingly blue eyes capture mine, and I barely manage to keep myself from gasping.

It seems so embarrassingly silly to be this...thisdazzledat my age, but I can't help it.

He's the most beautiful man I've ever seen, with his tousled blond locks and chiseled features. He's almost perfect, really...if not for the coldly calculating light in his icy blue eyes.

Brrrr.

The air between us crackles with something I don't yet have the courage to label. He holds my gaze for one moremoment...before slowly turning his gaze to the boy, and that's when it hits me.

A thought so impossibly crazy...

That it can only be one or two things.

Either I've truly lost my mind...or it's one of those things that remind you how His thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and His ways, higher than our ways.

But...I just don't know, God.



## Page 3

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I cast one last look at the boy. My heart says he's the one I've been looking for, but because I also remember that the human heart can be a terribly deceitful and desperately sick thing...

Please help me understand.

My chest aches as I force myself to turn away.

Please, God.

I wander around aimlessly until my feet take me to a narrow hallway that leads to a seating area facing the garden. I sit down, my heart unsettled, my stomach cramping for reasons I still can't explain.

I'm not sure how much time has passed when a shadow falls over me, and the first thing I see is a pair of handmade Italian shoes.

Oh.

My gaze slowly moves up.

Pinstriped suit, custom-tailored, andalsohandmade, natch.

And finally...

It's the same icy blue eyes earlier, and my heart starts pounding against my chest.

I trust You, God. Really. But...really?

Mr. Almost Perfect folds his length in the seat opposite mine, his every move elegantly...precise. I didn't even know that was possible, to be honest. But that's exactly how he moves. Maybe how he even thinks. Everything about him is just so elegantly precise, and when he finally speaks—

"How do you feel about a joint adoption?"

Well, the way he makes my jaw drop is so...elegantly precise, too.

## Chapter One

I FEEL LIKE I HAVE the worst hangover in the history of hangovers as I step out of the cab and head up the front steps of one of San Antonio's fanciest skyscrapers. The morning sun beats down mercilessly, making my yellow sundress cling to my skin and my oversized sunglasses fog up the moment I hit the air conditioning.

I've never been a morning person, and it's even worse today, considering I stayed up until the wee hours researching Wynd Sullivan like my life depended on it. My laptop screen had burned my retinas as I scrolled through article after article, my lola's gold hoops catching the blue light every time I shook my head in disbelief.

And what I found out has me thinking I must indeed be mad to even consider such an impossible thing could work.

Mr. Almost Perfect—or rather, Wynd Sullivan—is a billionaire.

A billionaire!

Not just that, but he's also one of Texas' most successful and eligible bachelors.

Why in the world is a man like him looking for a child to adopt? Couldn't he just, I don't know, make one himself?

Everyone stares at me as I make it to the penthouse where his office is located. The elevator's mirrored walls reflect my image back at me: huge dark glasses covering equally dark eye bags, sunshine-bright dress standing out like a highlighter against the sea of black suits and pressed white shirts. I'm a walking contradiction in this sterile temple of steel and glass.

I enter the boardroom, and he's already there, standing by the floor-to-ceiling windows like some kind of golden god backlit by the morning sun.

Wynd turns to face me, and my breath catches. He really looks like an angel, with the sun even playing to his favor as it creates a halo-like ring around the blond locks of his hair. Honestly, I'd be completely convinced he's a celestial being...if not for the glacial hardness of his gaze.

"Good morning, Star."

His voice is elegantly precise as always. And calculating. But what shocks and shames me is how the sound actually makes my nipples tighten behind the soft cotton of my dress. I automatically cross my arms over my chest in a bid to conceal this—

Oh no.

Did his eyes just gleam? Has he actually figured out what I desperately tried to hide from his gaze?

## Page 4

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Argh!

"Please take a seat."

His secretary pulls out the chair at the opposite end of the table, and I'm already shaking my head.

Nuh-uh.

There's no way we can talk properly like that, and I look at the woman apologetically. "Would it be okay to have me seated a little closer? I'm not sure I'll be able to hear him clearly from so far away."

"Of course."

It's the billionaire who answers me instead, and I nearly jump out of my skin at suddenly finding him next to me. He places a hand on the small of my back, and I have to bite my lip really hard to keep from gasping, with the heat of his palm burning through the thin fabric of my dress as he guides me to the chair adjacent to his.

I know it's silly.

I really do.

But I can't help it.

This is the first time any man has touched me like this, and I...I like it.

More than I should.

"Would you like anything to drink?"

"Coffee would be wonderful," I manage to say.

His secretary excuses herself to make our coffee, and I barely manage to bite back another gasp when Wynd takes a seat, and our knees bump under the table.

"Apologies."

Our gazes meet, and even though there's nothing readable in the icy blue depths of his eyes, I have the strangest feeling he's apologizing for something he deliberately meant to do.

He seems to be the type to calculate everything, and that's honestly exhausting just thinking about it. I mean, I love counting money as much as the next person. Probably more, actually, since my job is all about tracing how, where, and when money disappears.

But to calculate anything and everything else? Things like the value of friendship, the cost of a promotion, or the faithfulness of someone's love?

Thanks, but no thanks.

His secretary returns with my latte and his Americano, and her brief reappearance allows me a chance to regain my composure and carefully swing my legs away from contact. When she leaves, the silence stretches tautly between us, and my stomach starts cramping. I take a sip of my coffee, but it does no good.

My discomfort grows, and so does my restlessness.

Is he just biding his time before saying something important?

Something like he's made a mistake, and he intends to fight me over—

"I hope the coffee's to your satisfaction?"

Never mind.

I think I'm just overthinking, and a smile of pure relief touches my lips. "It's very good, thank you." Delicious coffee, I can talk about all day, easy.

"Are you always this...appreciative?"

"I'm afraid so." I have a feeling he thinks being one hundred percent appreciative means being one hundred percent dishonest. I should probably feel offended, but silly me just finds it rather cute.

"I see."

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Mm.

Does he really?

Or is he the one being dishonest this time?

"In any case..." He slides a tablet across the table toward me. "I have a few conditions—"

I start in my seat at his words, and he pauses and raises a brow, having noticed my surprise.

"W-We're really going through with this?"

"Why else would we be having this meeting?"

"I thought it was to tell me you'd changed your mind—"

"Ah."

His gaze drops briefly to my mouth, then lower, and my pulse shamelessly quickens when his gaze lingers on the modest neckline of my dress.

"You'll soon find out I only make offers that I'm absolutely certain of."

He leans forward then, and his sudden proximity has me catching my breath.

"And it was the same for you, wasn't it? You had a feeling about me. Didn't you?"

Wynd Sullivan talking about feelings makes me squirm on my seat for some reason.

"You don't look like the type to have such feelings—"

"And you're right to think that," he agrees, "since I prefer to think of mine as...instinct."

"While mine are just girly...feelings?"

"Yes."

A choked laugh escapes me. I really should be offended by now. Instead, everything he says is just...cute. In an arrogant, impossibly attractive way.

But even so, I still can't help asking, "Why me? How can you be so sure—"

"It was obvious that you didn't know who I was."

And that mattered because...he sees it as proof I'm not a gold-digger? Is that what he's saying?

"I also saw the way you looked at Samuel."

The mere mention of my precious little boy's name makes my heart ache. I know some people will think I'm crazy for this, but I love him already, and I know this early on—

"And lastly..."



His voice cuts into my thoughts, the sound suddenly rougher, and my heart skips a beat.

There's something almost feral in the way he's looking at me now, like he wants to devour me whole, and I'm finding it harder and harder to stay still. Why do I have a feeling this "last" thing is what clinched it for him?

"I wanted you the moment I saw you."

Oh.

"And I haven't stopped thinking about you since."

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My.

"That's how I knew, Ms. Moreno."

Goodness.

He leans back in his chair, but his gaze never leaves mine. Those ice-blue eyes seem to see straight through me, past every defense I've ever built. "Any other questions before I start kissing you?"

Chapter Two

"I'M INFERTILE," STAR suddenly blurted out, and it almost had him smiling.

"I know."

Did she really think he wouldn't, considering the resources at his disposal?

"Y-You do?"

"Yes."

"But—"

"So am I."

Her eyes widened.

"We can exchange health records later if you wish."

She hastily shook her head. "It's fine. I d-don't—"

"Good."

With that taken care of, it was time to keep his promise.

Ah.

Wynd had kissed countless women in his life.

He had fucked even more.

But nothing—absolutely nothing—had prepared him for the way Star responded to the feel of his mouth on hers.

She gasped against his lips like she was drowning, her small hands fisting in the fabric of his shirt as if she needed something to anchor herself to reality. There was no calculation in her response. No exaggerated sound or movement designed to inflate his ego.

Everything she did was entirely natural. Pure. And it was intoxicating in a way that made him forget every rule he'd ever lived by.

When he'd pulled her to her feet and backed her against the mahogany table, she'd let him without protest. When he'd lifted her onto the polished surface, her legs dangling over the edge, she'd looked at him with such trust that something twisted painfully in his chest.

He'd positioned himself between her thighs, his hands gripping her waist through the

thin cotton of that ridiculous yellow dress, and that's when she'd said it.

"This is all a first for me," she whispered unsteadily, her brown eyes wide and dazed.

"I've never... no one has ever..."

The words had Wynd sucking his breath in, his big, hard body nearly shuddering at the sheer impossibility of what she was saying.

How could someone as irresistible as Star still be completely and utterly untouched?

The knowledge obliterated the last threads of Wynd's control, his blood stirring at the realization that he would be the first to touch her, to taste her, to make her come undone.

"Look at me," he commanded roughly, and when those trusting brown eyes met his, he knew he was lost.

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He was to be her first.

In every way.

The thought was more addictive than any drug, causing Wynd to kiss her hard and deep, his mouth swallowing her soft whimpers as his hands roamed her body with a hunger he hadn't felt in years.

His mouth descended, his lips suckling one hardened peak through the lace of her bra, and she cried out like his touch was fire.

Every sound she made, every tremor that rocked her body—everything she did was exquisitely real, her every reaction driving Wynd to the edge of madness.

He lavished attention on her breasts, alternating between gentle sucking and the scrape of his teeth, until she was writhing against him and making the sweetest sounds he'd ever heard. Her hands clutched at his shoulders, his hair, anywhere she could reach.

"P-Please..."

She might not know what she was begging for, but Wynd did, and so he increased the pressure of his mouth, sucking harder through the delicate lace until she finally shattered, her back arching as she climaxed with a cry that echoed through the empty boardroom.

The sight of her falling apart from just his mouth on her breasts was the most erotic

thing he'd ever witnessed, but what shocked him more was how, even with her whole body still trembling with the force of her orgasm—

Star's eyes fluttered open, her lips forming a soundless word.

Wynd.

And then she was reaching for him, her own womanly instincts seemingly taking over, her small hand pressing against the hardness straining his trousers.

The innocent touch was Wynd's doing, a violent shudder jolting through his body as he spilled himself like some untried youth who'd never learned control.

For long moments, neither of them moved. She remained seated on the edge of his boardroom table, her chest rising and falling rapidly, her hair mussed and her lips swollen from his kisses. He stood between her legs, his hands still gripping her waist, unable to make himself step away.

This was not part of the plan.

Wynd Sullivan never lingered after sex.

He fucked, he left, and he never looked back.

But something about Star made all his carefully constructed rules seem meaningless.

He found himself stroking his thumbs along her ribcage, mesmerized by the way she leaned into his touch like a cat seeking warmth. Her skin was delicate and soft beneath the cotton of her dress, and he wanted to strip her bare and memorize every contour of her body.

He was obsessed with this woman.

And it was this that had Wynd forcing himself to step back.

He reached for the discarded tablet on the table with grim resolve, her curious gaze on him as he scrolled to the documents his lawyers had prepared.

"Wynd?" Her voice was soft, uncertain.

He kept his eyes on the screen, not trusting himself to look at her, not when she was still sitting there looking like an innocent temptress.

Wynd wanted to get this part over with.

But it was not to be, with Star once again throwing his whole world out of order at the gentle pressure of her small hand against his chest, right over his heart.

She voiced his name again, the sound reaching his ears like an invitation his entire being found impossible to deny.

His gaze met hers, and he saw the way she was looking at him searchingly.

End it now, Sullivan.

"Is it okay—"

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Just show her the damn contract.

"If I also have my own conditions—"

Make her understand this was all about sharing custody—

"Before we get married?"

And nothing about marriage.

### Chapter Three

WYND'S OFFER TO HELP me clean myself has me running to the en-suite with fiery cheeks. I know we've already crossed more than a few lines with what just happened. But I also believe there's no reason why we can't start from scratch if we want to.

Or have to, in this case.

So listen up, self!

I shoot a warning look at my reflection in the mirror.

You're attracted to Wynd Sullivan.

That's undeniable at this point.



You've already prayed for God to lead the way from here on.

I truly did.

So stop worrying, and just see where things go from here.

I feel a lot better by the time I step out of the en-suite, and a helpless smile touches my lips when I see him pulling out a chair for me...at one end of the table.

He helps me to my seat before going to the other end, but his already-icy gaze also turns icier when he sees my smile widen.

"Would you care to share the joke?"

"I'm just happy, I suppose."

"About what?"

"How I'm starting to understand how really good you are at calculating stuff."

"Is that so?"

"I'm seated here," I point out, "while you're seated over there. You couldn't be any clearer than that. It's you versus me."

"Isn't it?"

"We both want what's best for Sammy."

"Samuel."

I pretend not to hear this, continuing cheerfully, "That makes us a team in my book, and..." I pull the folded piece of paper from my purse. "That's what my conditions are all about."

I can sense his wariness increasing as I stand and walk toward him.

Yup, that's right, Mr. Sullivan.

"Please turn this way."

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I am totally...

He swivels his chair to face me.

...incalculable.

And I promptly drop myself onto his lap.

He stiffens beneath me, but I ignore this and instead wriggle to make myself comfortable on his muscular thighs—

"Stop that."

I'm about to protest when I feel his throbbing length pressing against me through his expensive trousers.

Oh.

I've awakened the beast.

Found a banana in his pocket.

Stop, Star!

"I'm sorry," I say lamely instead.

"Just stop moving," he advises, "if you don't want to lose your virginity in the next

thirty minutes."

I nod right away.

I don't want that, of course.

Absolutely not.

Right?

Oh, Star, get a grip!

I'm about to clear my throat when he suddenly snatches the paper from my hand, and I cry out in shocked protest.

"No!"

I try turning around to take it back, but a large hand clamps down on my waist as soon as I do, a wordless command issued in its warning squeeze.

"A marriage simulation trial," Wynd drawls from behind me as he reads my carefully handwritten list, "to determine the suitability of both parties as prospective parents."

"Um..."

I try facing him again, and this time he lets me.

"About that..."

"If I'm reading this correctly, are you saying you want us to live together to see how we do as parents—"

Oh, good, he gets it!

"And at the same time test our sexual compatibility while we're at it—"

Or not.

"Correct?"

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Uh...no?

Totallynotcorrect?

But I'm unable to say this, having ended up choking at his words.

I mean...no such thing was ever written on my list, so where did that even come from?

I take a deep breath, intending to remind him that Hope Rises would only allow us contact with Samuel if we pass the preliminary round. That's all the simulation is for. To improve our chances of having our application approved.

But when I look up and find myself drowning in the icy depths of his gaze, what I hear myself say instead is—

"Yes, that's absolutely correct."

I think I've just lost my mind.

"But on one condition—"

Yup, I've definitely gone mad.

"And that's for you to promise you'll only take my virginity on our wedding night."

TEN HOURS LATER, AND my mind is still reeling at how quickly everything

moves when money is thrown around to smooth things out.

In the blink of an eye, my entire apartment has been packed and moved into his massive ranch just outside San Antonio. Emphasis on massive, with all of my belongings fitting only two of the twelve guest suites he has available.

I mean, really.

Twelve?

Does he know that's enough to operate a B&B?

My heart is torn between uncertainty and wonder as I look around the converted barnhouse that serves as his home. Industrial steel beams stretch across soaring ceilings while Persian rugs laid over polished concrete floors swallow the sound of my footsteps. Everything about this place is beyond luxurious, and when I think about how this could indeed be my home and Sammy's for the rest of our lives...

I feel like I'm where I belong, God.

But what I don't know is if things are happening according to Your timing.

Is it possible that we're moving too fast?

His estate manager, a kind woman named Penny, gives me a tour of the main areas. The kitchen alone is bigger than my old apartment, with restaurant-grade appliances and a marble island that can seat ten. The living areas flow seamlessly together, all dark wood and rich leather, masculine but somehow inviting.

I push aside my worries for now, focusing on Penny's earnest chatter about meal times and household routines.

After she leaves, I'm finally alone in what is apparently now my suite. The bathroom is a masterpiece of white marble and brushed steel, with a rainfall shower that's practically the size of a small room.

I'm standing under the hot spray, trying to process everything that's happened today, when I hear the door to the en suite open.

Wynd.

He walks inside like it's entirely natural to do so, and he just keeps walking even though I'm completely naked.

Wynd doesn't even try to look away, and even worse is how I can't seem to find the will to cover myself as he devours me with his icy blue eyes. There's something almost reverent in the way he looks at me, like I'm a work of art he's been waiting his whole life to see.

He joins me in the shower still fully dressed, and it's the sexiest thing I've ever witnessed, watching his white dress shirt become wet and transparent until it's clinging to his golden, muscled chest.

Water drips from his wheat-colored hair as he reaches for me, spinning me around before pushing me gently against the cool glass tiles. I gasp at the contrast of temperatures, with the cold wall against my heated skin while warm water cascades over the both of us.

He slowly reaches between my legs, and I completely lose the ability to think as he starts pleasuring me with his fingers.



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H-How...oh my goodness, how?

How is it that even the strokes of his fingers as he brings me toward climax are also elegantly prec—

"Aaaah!"

Wynd's found that hidden nub of flesh, and I can only cry out, caught completely unaware by the overwhelming strength of my release. My legs nearly give out, with only his strong arm around my waist keeping me upright.

Afterward, he carefully turns me around to face him, and all I can do is shake my head, saying unsteadily, "No."

His gaze narrows. "No what?"

I look at him solemnly. "No, I will not let you seduce me into canceling tonight's arrangement."

For a moment or two, there's just silence.

Complete, terrifying silence.

But just when I'm about to seriously consider that we're already over before we've even begun...

Oh, wow, God.

Is this Your doing?

Has my future husband just learned how to...smile?

## Chapter Four

WYND HAD DONE HIS DUEdiligence before making up his mind about adopting.

He had done his research. Calculated the odds. And eventually considered himself ready to handle children.

But he was wrong.

And tonight was proof of that, with five children between the ages of five and seven racing through his once-orderly ranch house like tiny laughing tornadoes, leaving a mess wherever they went.

Liam Hardwall and Jamie Montgomery, both seven and clearly the ringleaders, had immediately claimed the main living area as their kingdom. Six-year-old Izzy followed them everywhere with the determination of someone half her size, while five-year-old twins Kane and Myka seemed to communicate in a language that consisted entirely of giggles and whispered conspiracies.

"Uncle Wynd," Liam called out, sliding across the floor in his socks. "Catch me!"

Wynd managed to do so but not before nearly having a heart attack.

"Me next!"

Wynd heard Star choke back a laugh as he dashed just in time to catch Jamie in his arms.

"This is the most fun night ever!"

He privately disagreed, but the children's approval was satisfying all the same, and an even bigger treat was the unexpected pleasure he derived from watching Star interact with the children. It was as if she had been a mother for years, with the way she was able to say and do the right thing at the right time, effortlessly switching between leniency and discipline, depending on what the situation called for.

"Alright, troops," she announced, clapping her hands together. "Who wants to help me turn this living room into a movie theater?"

The response was immediate and deafening, and within minutes, she had managed to transform his living area into something magical. Heavy blankets were draped over furniture to create cozy nooks while pillows from every room in the house had been gathered to form a giant seating area on the floor.

Star started out handing buckets of popcorn and lemonades when everyone was settled, and she was also quick to assure Wynd that she had obtained permission to do so from their respective parents.

"What are we watching?" Izzy asked, bouncing on her knees.

"Something with superheroes," Star replied as she sat cross-legged on the floor between the twins, "and then it's bedtime for everyone."

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Star and the kids were completely swept away as soon as the movie began while Wynd only had eyes for her, with how she was gasping at all the right moments and even enthusiastically cheering for the caped underdogs, much to the children's delight.

She was completely lacking in self-awareness, her unreserved joy contagious, and all of it just made Wynd desire her even more.

By the time the credits rolled, Kane was asleep against her shoulder while Myka had curled up in her lap. The older kids were sprawled across the sea of pillows, their eyelids heavy despite their protests that they weren't tired.

"Come on, sleepyheads," Star whispered, carefully extracting herself from the twins. "Let's get everyone settled."

Wynd watched as she tucked each child into the makeshift beds she'd created, pulling blankets up to their chins and making sure everyone had their favorite stuffed animal within reach. She moved with such gentle efficiency, pressing soft kisses to foreheads and murmuring quiet goodnights.

Liam grabbed her hand as she started to move away. "Thanks, Aunt Star. Good night."

"Good night, Liam."

Wynd's chest tightened as he watched her kiss the boy's forehead. It was like catching a glimpse of the future, with how easy it was for him to envision Star doing the same thing for Samuel.

As Star smoothed Liam's hair back from his forehead, the tenderness of the gesture made everything clear. While he knew tonight was all about evaluating each other's parenting "skills", there was something else that the past two hours had revealed, and it was something completely unintended.

All Wynd had wanted was to make Samuel a part of his life.

But now?

There was no point denying the truth.

He wanted Star.

Not just for a custody arrangement or a convenient marriage.

He wanted her in his life, in his home, in his bed.

He wanted her to be Samuel's mother and any other child they might choose to adopt in the future.

But for that to happen...

Star caught him staring, and her expression turned questioning. "What is it?"

"Will you consider adopting Samuel with me if we're not married?"

She shook her head immediately, and a part of him had already expected this, considering how she kept herself untouched all these years.

"But if we do get married, I also have a condition on my own."

Her brows furrowed, and his gaze turned hooded.

He knew what he was about to say could completely end things.

But even so.

"What do you want?" Star asked shakily.

"A promise, just like yours."

His voice was cold and hard. He wanted to ensure that she completely understood his next words were all or nothing for him, just like it had been for her.

"If you're to become my wife...then `you must promise not to fall in love with me."

## Chapter Five

WE WAVE GOODBYE TO Wynd's friends from the wraparound porch of his converted barnhouse, both of us doing an admirable job of acting like everything is absolutely okay...despite the tension quietly brewing between us like a storm about to break.

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The parents loading sleepy children into luxury SUVs are like a who's who of the city's poshest residents. They were once known as San Antonio's Finest Eligibles when they were still unmarried, the four of them gracing magazine covers and dominating gossip columns in society pages with every party they attended.

But one by one, each billionaire had married, and I can still remember how the entire nation went crazy upon learning that their wives were all, once upon a time, "mail-order" brides that a certain agency had arranged for them.

That four impossibly wealthy, devastatingly handsome men would have any need for arranged marriages was absolutely wild.

That they had ended up falling desperately in love with their brides? Even wilder.

And the more I think about it, the more I realize...

Couldn't it happen to me, too?

Even if my husband-to-be is dead set against it?

My spirits perk up, and I'm feeling more than a little giddy as I watch the last car disappear down the tree-lined drive.

Thank You, God!

I've prayed about this while gently waking the children earlier, and it's just so like Him to answer me in a way I didn't see coming. A part of me was secretly convinced

that God would ask me to leave Wynd. But instead He's given me another reason to stay.

"You look like you're in a good mood," a voice coolly observes from behind me.

Oh, you absolutely have no idea, Mr. Sullivan.

I turn to face him, a smile still playing on my lips. "Yes, I believe I am."

"Even after what I've asked?"

"Uh-huh."

His gaze narrows, those ice-blue eyes becoming arctic. "I don't like playing games."

"But I do," I counter cheerfully, bouncing slightly on my toes, "so please just play along, pretty, pretty please?"

For one moment, he looks as if he's prepared to walk out on me entirely.

But then another moment passes, and the expression on his gorgeous face changes.

Oh.

Wynd now looks at me like how an older brother would have looked when indulging the whim of a spoiled little sibling. It's not what I'm hoping for, but since beggars can't be choosers, I decide to take this as a win, thank you very much.

My billionaire crooks his finger at me in a gesture that's both commanding and seductive, and yes, in a way that's also elegantly precise.



Honestly, I don't think he's even capable of being anything but.

That's just the kind of man my future husband is, andoh,just the thought of it...

I happily skip toward him, and his lips actually...twitch?!

Oh wow, will you look at that?

My husband-to-be is about to smile again.

Will wonders ever cease?

I stop when I'm just inches away from him, hands clasped behind my back as I look up at him with all the innocence I can muster.

"That would've worked ten hours ago," he says dryly, "but not anymore."

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"Whatever do you mean?" I look at him with feigned hurt, but this only has him responding in such a way that has my eyes widening in genuine astonishment.

Oh my.

I guess I stand corrected, with my gorgeous billionaire of ice having just proven his capacity for occasional inelegance.

"Why are you looking at me like that?"

"I'm just shocked," I admit.

"About what?"

"That you could do this." I do my best to imitate his snort, and...and...and...oh my goodness. Am I hallucinating or did I truly see his lips twitch for the second time?

"You're a lot more trouble than I expected, Ms. Moreno."

I flutter my eyelashes, saying demurely, "I'll take that as a compli—aah!"

I end up crying out when Wynd suddenly sweeps me up in his arms like I weigh nothing at all. The world tilts, and my hands automatically clutch at his broad shoulders for balance.

"W-Wynd?"

But he keeps walking instead of answering, his arms only tightening when I try to free myself, and being imprisoned like this makes my entire body tingle.

In anticipation, not fear.

I can only gulp as he takes me to his bedroom—all dark wood and masculine elegance—and tosses me straight onto his incredibly massive bed.

This is bad.

So, so bad.

The mattress is ridiculously soft, like being caught by a cloud, and it feels like I'm almost being swallowed alive as my weight sinks into expensive linens. I try to get up, scrambling toward the edge on my hands and knees, but of course it's too late.

I'm only just about to rise when he's suddenly on the bed with me, moving with that predatory grace that makes my pulse race and my breath catch.

Uh...oh.

The next thing I know, he has me pinned down under the muscular weight of his body, and every rational thought I've ever had simply...disappears.

He's so much bigger than me.

So much stronger.

And so, so virile.

His chest presses against mine with every breath he takes while powerful, muscular

thighs bracket my hips, trapping me completely. His enormous length throbs against the most sensitive part of me through our clothes, and I start feeling more than a little dizzy, more than a little delirious and overwhelmed as he pins my arms over my head, his fingers effortlessly circling both my wrists. The position arches my back, pressing my breasts up against his chest in a way that makes me hyperaware of every place our bodies touch.

The heat of him burns through my inhibitions, fear continuing to evade me as my heart pounds, my body aching in shameless yearning.

"Are we still playing games?"

His cool voice should intimidate me, but all it does is make all my secret places swell in need.

"Y-Yes."

"And you want me to ask you again."

"Y-Yes."

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"So be it."

His dangerously soft tone makes my heart feel like it's racing and breaking at the same time. The weight of his body pressing me into the mattress, the way his breath fans across my face, the intensity in those ice-blue eyes—it's almost too much to bear.

"If we get married...can you promise not to fall in love with me?"

I look into his eyes and see nothing but unyielding coldness, his soul hidden behind walls built so high they seem impossible to scale.

Doesn't matter.

"If we get married," I hear myself echo his words in a whisper.

He's fighting a losing battle.

"I can only promise—"

Since God is on our side, not his.

"—to do my best not to fall in love with you."

## Chapter Six

DID SHE JUST SAY SHE would do her best not to fall in love with him?

Wynd had every intention of questioning this deliberate evasion.

Of demanding her unequivocal surrender to his terms.

But when she suddenly raised her head from the charcoal-gray pillows to start nibbling on his lips—

What the—

Wynd glowered down at her even as he fought to maintain his control. "Are you trying to distract me?"

His growl only caused her eyes to sparkle with mischief, and he could only grit his teeth against the urge to start doing a little nibbling himself.

"Is it working?"

The answer to that should be no.

Absolutely, categorically no.

But if he were to say that, he would be lying—

Her lips started to curve. "I guess it is—mmph."

Wynd shut her up with a kiss, claiming her mouth with a fierce possession that should have intimidated her. Instead, her body shook with delighted laughter beneath him, the sound vibrating against his chest even as her breasts started to swell, theirpouting peaks scraping delectably against the fine cotton of his shirt.

The contrast was maddening, her innocent joy mixed with the unmistakable evidence

of her arousal.

It was temptation at its finest. Innocence at its most seductive. And it was devastatingly effective in destroying what remained of his legendary control.

Damn her.

What was once his sanctuary now seemed like a cage that forced him to abandon his every rule in life. Passion had taken over all his senses, and the very air around them was thick with desire, crackling in intensity as he felt more of her softness molding against the rigid set of his body.

Star's moan was like a siren's call to his already burning flesh as his mouth moved down to the elegant column of her neck, sucking the tender skin until it bloomed with his mark.

The taste of her—sweet and warm and utterly addictive—flooded his senses, and this early on, Wynd already knew he would be possessive toward her like he had never been possessive toward any other woman in his life.

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Star was his.

And he wanted the whole world to know it.

He released his hold on her wrists to reach for her breasts, and he had her writhing and clawing at the sheets as he began kneading her swollen globes through the thin fabric of her yellow dress. The material was soft beneath his palms, but not nearly as soft and supple as the ample flesh it covered.

Wynd waited until her restlessness reached its peak, her every movement dictated by desire, and her hips lifting instinctively toward him. He waited until she was moaning anew, lost in the sensations he was creating...and only then did he rip her dress with one decisive yank.

The sound of tearing fabric echoed through the quiet room, and her eyes flew open in shock, her body jerking beneath him.

"W-Wynd—"

She was unable to say anything else as his lips closed over one straining pink tip, the contrast of her pale skin against the dark bedding making her look like a goddess laid out for worship. He suckled hungrily, and her fingers drove through his hair, her grip tightening as she pushed the sensitive bud deeper into his mouth.

It was as if his mischievous angel of sunshine wanted to be devoured completely.

Ah, my troublesome little Star.



You don't know what you're asking for.

But since that was what she desired, then who was he to deny her?

Wynd moved to her other breast, and her body arched tautly as he lavished it with the same hungry attention. The way she responded to his every touch further eroded his control, his own rough pants filling the room as he clasped her narrow waist in his hands.

His lips moved further down, her shaken gasps heightening his arousal as he left a trail of soft, teasing kisses on her ribs. Her stomach. Her belly. He felt her body shudder as his mouth neared the juncture between her legs, and it almost made him smile.

Good.

His Star would soon learn she had to be careful with what her body wished for...lest someone indeed granted her very desire.

The scent of her arousal—sweet and musky and utterly feminine—made his mouth water as he positioned himself between her thighs. As soon as her body tensed upon feeling his warm breath against her most sensitive skin—

"Wynd!"

Once again, his Star was reduced to gasping his name, caught completely off guard as he ripped away the scrap of white lace covering her most intimate flesh.

This time, he didn't give her any chance to recover. His hands gripped her trembling thighs, prying them open, wider and wider until she was completely exposed to his hungry gaze, and his tongue had full access in stroking the creamy folds of her core.

His Star began to sob and writhe against the dark sheets, her hands fisting in the fabric as if she needed something to anchor herself to reality. But this time, he would not let the torment end until her need for him had driven her completely out of her mind.

He claimed her with his mouth, his tongue thrusting past the slick folds, and her body arched up off the mattress as if she'd been struck by lightning.

His tongue thrust in and out repeatedly, and she began to cry his name again and again even as she gripped his head so tightly it was as if she was begging for mercy and more torture in the same breath.

Though her lips pleaded for mercy, the rest of her body demanded for more, with the way she pressed herself against his mouth and how her thighs trembled around his head. Her body knew what her mind might not yet accept: she wanted him to ruin her, wanted more of the sensual torment that he alone could inflict.

His Star was exactly where he wanted her to be, and only when he saw that she was completely undone by her desire for him did Wynd give her the release she was begging him for.

His tongue thrust deep as he caught her swollen nub between his lips, sucking hard until she came with a soft, broken cry that echoed off the exposed beams of his ceiling.

"W-Wynd."

Just the sound of his name on her lips had his entire length throbbing violently against his trousers, and every shudder of her body made him grit his teeth against the urge to bury himself inside her right here, right now.

Patience, Sullivan.

He had given her his word.

He would only take her virginity on their wedding night.

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But what he had not promised...was doing everything he could to make Star surrender her innocence to him of her own accord.

Just because he didn't like playing games...

Didn't mean he didn't know how to win.

### Chapter Seven

I WAKE ALONE IN WYND'S massive bed, cotton sheets tangled around my bare legs, and I'm just a little dazed, just a little overwhelmed, and just a little more obsessed with a man who's claimed so many firsts in my life...despite remaining a stranger to me in so many ways.

His bedroom feels different without the shadows of night. It isn't just brighter. It's somehow more imposing, with daylight harshly emphasizing that everything around me is his domain...while I'm nothing but a temporary visitor.

I'm scared, God.

He makes me so, so happy.

But I also know he'll only end up breaking my heart if being with him isn't aligned with Your will.

I used to be so, so sure that God chose Wynd for me.

But after surrendering myself to his touch, everything suddenly feels messy and confusing.

I don't believe in coincidence, and I still believe there's a reason Wynd and I were at the orphanage at the same time, a special reason that both our souls seemed drawn to Samuel.

But what if...

What if those reasons aren't what I want them to be?

My mind drifts back to everything that happened in the past twenty-four hours, and my cheeks warm as I find myself remembering just how many times I shattered in his arms...andwhere.

The boardroom.

The en-suite.

And then there's last night in this very room...

It was almost perfect.

Almost.

Until the moment I felt him slowly withdraw, and while I was still floating in that hazy post-climax bliss, Wynd simply pulled my torn dress over my nakedness, pressed a chaste kiss to my forehead, and left me alone in his bed.

No cuddling or sweet words.

He was just...gone.

That's the kind of man Wynd Sullivan is, and I just...I just don't know anymore.

Is spending the rest of my life with him truly what God wants?

Is it possible that all we have between us is sexual attraction?

That he has me so completely enthralled, I'm mistaking chemistry for love?

My stomach twists with unease, and doubts and worries continue to linger in my mind as I force myself to sit up, the expensive sheets pooling around my waist. The torn remnants of my yellow dress lie crumpled on the hardwood floor like abandoned petals, a stark reminder of how thoroughly he'd claimed me.

That's when I notice the folded piece of paper waiting for me on the mahogany nightstand. The texture alone feels expensive under my fingertips, and the ink on paper is bold and rich, like something only the most finely crafted fountain pen could ever wield.

Call me.

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WS

I stare at the message card in my hands.

That's it?

Really?

I'm not even sure what to think, and so I end up asking myself yet again.

Is Wynd Sullivan truly the man God wants me to spend the rest of my life with?

My fingers curl into fists around the note, but even as my heart aches with confusion, I start to remember how he was with the children last night.

There was not a single trace of the intimidating billionaire in Wynd while he was spending time with the kids.

I remember him never losing his patience even when they badgered him with questions.

The genuine amusement that flashed in his eyes when a mishap with the ketchup bottle caused Izzy to squirt red sauce directly onto his face, staining his expensive white shirt.

I remember so many...just so, so many good things that the truth is an absolute no-brainer.

Wynd Sullivan can and will be a good father to Samuel or any other child he wishes to adopt.

But as to whether he'd make a good husband or whether I'd make a good wife to him...

Why can't I hear You all of a sudden, God?

I just don't know anymore.

Is Wynd truly the man I've been waiting over forty years to spend the rest of my life with?

## Chapter Eight

WYND SULLIVAN WAS NOT the type to be distracted at work. He had always possessed an almost supernatural ability to compartmentalize, and in the early years of his career, using work to keep his mind from dwelling on his parents' deaths was the reason he had been able to build his billion-dollar empire from scratch.

He was not a slacker.

Had never been one either.

He had also believed he would never be so.

Until today.

He had been at the office for over four hours now.

But he still hadn't gotten a single damn thing done.



If there was one thing he had accomplished, it was to experience self-disgust for the first time in his life, with how he had found himself repeatedly checking his phone for any call or message...from her.

What the hell was wrong with him?

He had never let a woman affect him this way.

And certainly never this much.

But from the moment he had left her side, he had not been able to stop thinking of her.

His body seethed with impatience, and at a quarter to twelve, Wynd was done pretending. He was done playing cool.

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He jabbed the button for his head of security with more force than necessary.  
"Charleston."

"Yes, sir?"

"Where is she?"

There was no need to clarify who "she" was. Wynd had assigned bodyguards to tail Star the moment she'd moved into his ranch, though he'd been careful to keep them incognito and hadn't bothered asking for her approval.

What she didn't know wouldn't hurt her.

"Ms. Moreno is at her workplace, sir."

Wynd's jaw tightened.

Damn her.

He had explicitly asked her to call him.

But instead she had gone to work without a single text to let him know she was alive.

Or that she intended to come back.

Was this another one of her games?

Wynd's limo was already waiting for him when his private elevator descended to his building's basement parking, and his mood only grew darker with every passing minute.

Luntian Financial Forensics International.

Star's company building eventually rose into view, his limo cruising smoothly to a stop in front of its glass doors. Heads swung in his direction as soon as he entered, his arrival triggering a flurry of excitement among the women.

They stole glances at him repeatedly, their excitement reducing them into giggling teenagers as they watched Wynd walk up to the reception counter.

"I'd like to know where I can find Star Moreno."

"G-Good afternoon, Mr. Sullivan." Janet could feel blood rushing to her face when she realized one of Texas' most eligible billionaires was speaking directly to her. This man was so impossibly handsome, she just couldn't believe he was asking for who again?

Janet cleared her throat. "I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch—"

"Star Moreno, please."

"She's...it's her lunch break," Janet finally said even as she struggled to contain her jealousy and resentment. Why was this beautiful man looking for someone like Star?

"If there's anything I can do to help—"

"Are you saying she's left the premises?"

Janet considered lying...but chickened out the moment she saw the way the

billionaire's icy blue gaze narrowed at her.

"No, Mr. Sullivan. She's likely at the third floor cafeteria," she added sulkily.

"Thank you."

Her fists clenched under the counter as she watched the billionaire walk away. Star Moreno was, like, ancient. Why would someone like Wynd Sullivan want anything to do with someone like Star when Janet was right here? She was young! And fresh! And...and more flexible in bed! Didn't he care about those things at all?

Janet's resentment only grew as she watched the billionaire disappear behind the elevator doors.

Damn her!

Star wasn't just old. She was also ridiculously cheerful and nice all the time, with how she smiled at everyone and kept saying 'please' and 'thank you'. Women like Star didn't realize how doing such things only made them look weak and desperate.

A man like Wynd Sullivan couldn't possibly be interested in someone like Star Moreno. It was just impossible, and that was why...

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It had to be about work, Janet decided with relief. That had to be the only reason the billionaire even knew Star existed.

Right?

### Chapter Nine

THE CAFETERIA IS FULLY packed when Jilly and I join the queue at the salad station, with the regular lunch crowd filling the place with a comfortable hum of chatter and the soft clink of silverware against plates. Industrial pendant lights hang over simple wooden tables, and the smell of today's special—something involving garlic and herbs—wafts from the serving area.

"I need your help," I tell my friend as we slide into our favorite window-side booth, which is tucked far back in the corner. You can never be too careful when talking in the cafeteria. So the farther you are from the crowd, the safer.

Jilly adjusts her grandmother-style glasses at my words. At thirty nine, she could easily pass for someone in her twenties, especially with how her short blonde hair always had these perfectly tousled all-natural waves.

"About what?" my friend asks while twirling a small amount of pasta around her fork with the same meticulous care she's known to exercise at work, and most especially when it comes to money laundering schemes she so loves to unravel.

I look around before leaning forward, making sure no one's close enough to eavesdrop as I whisper, "I just want to talk to you about your crush—"

Jilly glares at me, and I roll my eyes.

"No, I'm not saying I have a crush on him, too."

"Then why mention him?" she asks suspiciously.

"Because I know how much time you've invested in researching everything about him." And this is putting it mildly, considering the little-known fact about Jilly being the founder and president of the Secret International Alliance of Supporters of Guy de la Rocq.

"You make me sound obsessed," Jilly grumbles.

"Uh, news flash: you are."

Jilly looks at me in surprise. "Obsessed fans cease to see reality. And you know I'm nothing if not pragmatic."

Well, she does have a point with that, and since it's also exactly what I need to hear...

"That's actually what I need help with. Let's just say, hypothetically speaking...do you think a man like your crush—"

Jilly's already shaking her head. "No one's like him."

Oh, for goodness' sake!

"What I mean is someone rich and sought after."

Jilly's expression clears. "Go on."

"Do you think it's possible for men in that, um, category, to enter into a serious relationship with someone ordinary?"

"Like a fan?"

"Just someone ordinary, but not necessarily a fan."

Jilly sets her fork down, her analytical mind visibly shifting into gear. "Statistically speaking, yes, there's always a possibility."

"And if someone wishes to improve the odds?"

Jilly pauses, and I have to bite back a smile because I can practically see her going through her mental database of all things Guy de la Rocq and making actual computations. Who would've thought that Jilly's method of choice when tracing dirty money through shell companies...may now be employed in determining the surest possible route to a man's heart?

"Forty percent has to do with access and proximity," she says finally, her voice taking on the same tone she uses when explaining complex financial schemes. "The woman has to be around him long enough for him to know she exists."

I have to seriously fight off the urge to jump up on the table and start dancing. That's forty percent already in my favor, yippee!

"What else?" I ask eagerly, leaning forward over my untouched pasta.

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"If the first one is a check, then I'd say an additional twenty-five percent would be about the woman's USF."

A unique selling factor, hmm.

I'm not sure I have that, but oh well, moving on.

"Anything else?"

"Ten percent on physical attraction."

I'm absolutely certain Wynd and I have that, which now gives me a 50/50 chance of winning a certain billionaire's heart, hooray!

Jilly looks at me suspiciously, her jade eyes narrowing behind her glasses. "Are you sure this hasn't to do anything with you-know-who?"

I can't help laughing. "You know you're acting a little too jealous for someone who's supposedly not obsessed, right?"

"I'm not jealous," she denies huffily while crossing her arms over her oversized sweater. "I just don't like sharing, that's all."

Jilly is so cute when she's denying her infatuation for her Hollywood crush that I just have to—

"Shwop that!"



Jilly's words come out garbled when I quickly reach across the table to pinch her pink cheeks.

"Shwerwushly! Or I shwon't shwell you the shwrest—"

Oh, right.

I totally forgot there's more to the equation, and so I immediately let go and sit on my hands like a chastened child. "I'm so sorry, please go on."

"Don't do that again," my friend grouches.

"Cross my heart," I solemnly swear. "Now, will you please tell me what's next?"

"Fifteen percent," my friend says grumpily, "is all about having a shared or common interest, passion, or goal."

Only one name pops into my mind the moment I realize what she's talking about.

Samuel.

We definitely have that darling boy in common, and my heart suddenly feels like it's about to burst with hope. Having Samuel as our mutual goal means my chances of making Wynd fall in love with me are now at, what, sixty-five percent?

"The last ten percent," Jilly relays, "is being there or doing something at the right time and place."

"That's so vague," I say helplessly.

"Think of it as destiny or luck."

Oh.

When she puts it that way, then in my book...doesn't that mean the last ten percent is about whether you have divine approval or not?

I reach for a celery stick from my sad desk salad and start munching on it while my brain chews over this newest food for thought. Fresh Fridays are that one day of the week I stick to a healthy diet, and I feel rather proud of myself for still choosing vegetables over the mac and cheese that was calling my name.

Jilly nudges my foot under the table. "Look..."

I glance over my shoulder and belatedly notice the way a crowd seems to have gathered around the cafeteria doors.

"Maybe we've gotten another billionaire client," I say with a shrug.

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"I wonder who it is..."

I grab another piece of celery to munch on as my mind goes back to the last 10% I need to figure out about Wynd and me. How would I know if—

"May I have a moment of your time, Ms. Moreno?"

—the billionaire in my mind has suddenly materialized right next to our table?

What in the world?

All I can do is stare, celery stick suspended halfway to my mouth, while my gorgeous billionaire of ice looms over me like some avenging angel in a custom-tailored suit.

### Chapter Ten

THE BOARDROOM ATLuntianwas exactly what Wynd expected from a mid-tier company trying to project success on a limited budget. Medium-sized space, leather furniture that was well-maintained but showed signs of age, and floor-to-ceiling windows covered by cream-colored blinds.

His gaze swept over the room, taking inventory of every detail. Security cameras mounted in the corners, a projector system for presentations, and a small sidebar with coffee service and water glasses.

It wasn't the most luxurious boardroom, but it would do for what he had in mind.

And as for Star...

She remained standing by the entrance, her coral blouse a bright splash of color against the neutral tones of the room. Her face was pale and her posture stiff; she looked as if she was ready to bolt at the first sign of trouble.

He could feel her gaze following his every move, and he sensed her mood turning curious when he walked past the chair at the head of the table—the power position she obviously expected him to claim—and instead selected a pair of seats opposite the floor-to-ceiling windows.

Wynd pulled out a chair for her. "Sit down, Ms. Moreno."

She did as asked, and he sensed her jerking in her seat in surprise when he sat beside her rather than across from her.

Good.

"Do you know why I came here?" Wynd drawled.

She shook her head, those expressive brown eyes wide and uncertain.

"I left you a note."

"I...I saw it."

"And?"

She swallowed hard and started wringing her hands in her lap like a schoolgirl called to the principal's office. "I...I didn't realize—"

"That I was waiting for your call?"

"I honestly didn't think you were. It just felt so impersonal—"

"I would never care to ask for something that didn't matter to me."

"I'm sorry—"

"No, Star," he cut her off gently, his voice softer than his expression. "I'm the one who's sorry."

Her eyes widened in surprise.

"Because what you've done means I'll have to punish you."

"O-Oh."

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That she actually said this out loud—breathless and wondering rather than frightened—almost made him smile.

Almost.

"Are you scared?" he asked, studying the way her breathing had already changed.

She nodded so quickly in answer that he was finding it more difficult to keep his face expressionless.

"But it's not only that, is it?"

A blush stole over her cheeks as his gaze slowly traveled over her body.

"You're already wet, aren't you?"

"W-Wynd!"

He clucked his tongue. "When I ask a question, I expect an answer. Are we clear on this?"

She slowly nodded, a deep flush now staining her cheeks.

"Are you wet for me?"

Star looked at him in dismay, her lips parting as if she wanted to protest again. But when his expression remained unyielding, patient and implacable, she eventually

choked out, "Y-Yes."

"And what do you think I should do about it?"

"Nothing!" The word burst out of her, desperate and breathless.

"Wrong answer."

She started pushing her chair back, the wheels scraping against the polished floor.

"Stop."

She froze mid-motion, her hands still gripping the armrests.

"I need you to be really close—" Wynd purred the words out in a dangerously silkened tone that had all the women in his past forgetting their own names. "—if I'm going to punish you properly."

"P-Punish?"

She croaked the word out, but her voice was tinged with both horror and helpless desire.

"Yes."

His confirmation had Star looking around as if everything was new to her. And indeed it was, since she now knew that this boardroom was about to turn into her torture chamber.

Perfect.

Anticipation was always worse than the actual punishment itself, and half the pleasure came from watching how she was now tormenting herself. Star was now squirming restlessly in her seat, hands tightly gripping the armrests as she pressed her thighs together in an obvious bid to relieve the aching need he could practically feel radiating from her.

"Turn your chair to face me, Ms. Moreno."

She swallowed hard, the sound audible in the quiet room. "W-Wynd—"

"Mr. Sullivan would be more appropriate," he corrected in that same dangerously silkened purr, "considering we're at your workplace."

The words had her biting down hard on her lower lip, and the sight of those perfect white teeth against soft pink flesh sent heat straight to his groin.

"Need I remind you again?" he asked quietly, his gaze fixed on her mouth. "If you keep doing that, you're tempting me to break my word."



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"I'm s-sorry, M-Mr. Sullivan." She released her lip immediately, but the damage was done. It was swollen now, glistening, and the sight had him wanting to punish her even more.

"Now come closer."

Her chair swiveled in his direction as she wheeled it toward him, the movement hesitant and jerky.

"Closer."

Another inch.

"More."

Another inch.

"More."

And another, until he heard her sharp intake of breath as their knees finally bumped against each other.

The contact was electric, even through layers of clothing, and it caused her to gasp, the sound underscored by helpless yearning.

"And now..."

Wynd adopted a tone to make it seem as if they were simply discussing quarterly reports instead of her complete surrender, and he waited until her dazed gaze was lifted to his before issuing his next command.

"I need you naked under your skirt."

The shock on her face was a delicious sight...but it was not enough.

"You don't have to worry about the security cameras," he continued in that same reasonable tone, gesturing casually toward the corners of the room. "All they'll see from that angle are our faces. They won't know what's happening...unless, of course, your expression gives everything away."

She shook her head. "Wy—Mr. S-Sullivan, p-please."

"This punishment can get a lot worse if you don't do what I ask in the next five seconds."

"I..."She started to speak, then stopped, her mouth opening and closing like she couldn't find the words.

"Please..."

"It's..."

The five seconds were up, and being a man of his word, Wynd reached for the remote control on the conference table and pressed a button with deliberate slowness.

"Mr. Sullivan!"

But it was too late. The automated blinds began rolling up with a quiet mechanical

hum, and in mere moments, the two of them were completely exposed to anyone who happened to walk past the boardroom. The view was crystal clear: two figures seated close together at the conference table, apparently engaged in an intimate business discussion.

He turned to her, leaning forward until his breath fanned across her face. "Will you now do as I say?"

Star looked at him, lip trembling hard, and her voice even more tremulous as words of surrender came tumbling out. "Y-Yes, Mr. Sullivan."

She rose shakily to her feet, and she almost had him smiling again, with how she bent down as if accidentally dropping something near her chair...when what she was really doing was stepping out of the delicate scrap of silk that had been hidden beneath her modest skirt.

"Give it to me, please."

Her fingers trembled as she placed the ivory silk in his outstretched palm. The fabric was warm from her body and damp with her arousal, and his jaw clenched at the evidence of her desire.

He could feel her wide-eyed gaze following his every move as he tucked the silk into his inner jacket pocket, right over his heart.

"This is mine now."

"B-But—"

Wynd raised a brow. "Are you complaining, Ms. Moreno?"

She quickly shook her head, sending her dark hair swaying around her shoulders.

"You're learning. Good."

Wynd reached for one of the folders that had been waiting on the conference table. "Now, let's see..." He glanced at her over the folder, his expression all business despite the intimate game they were playing. "We need to make this look realistic, Star."

"S-Sorry..." She hastily grabbed the other folder from the desk, her movements jerky with nerves.

"Are you nervous?"

"What do you think?"

She was finally past her shock, with the stormy expression on her face promising that things would only get more interesting from here.

"You sound angry," he taunted.

"I think I am."

"How surprising, for someone who had originally struck me as unfailingly optimistic. Can't you think of anything positive about this situation?"

Star smiled sweetly at him, and her tone ever so pious as she did something that not even his fiercest rivals had the courage to do.

"I'm positive I'm going to pay you back for this—"

It had been so long since someone had threatened him, and for it to come from Star of all people—

Wynd found himself doing something he hadn't done in years.

He laughed.

There was just something about this woman...

Something about her that made him do and feel things that were completely out of character. And while a part of him hated that loss of control...

Another part of him hungered for her even more because of it.

The longer he knew her, the more uncontrollable his desire became.

And that was why...

He leaned forward abruptly, taking her by surprise.

"Start reading the contract out loud," he commanded.

Star looked at him as if gauging how far he would go if she were to refuse.

"Now, Star."

It was now his turn to issue a threat, and even though the retribution he promised was only implied—

Star cleared her throat.

It was more than enough to have her back down, followed by the first few words of the contract spilling past her lips in a shaken and slightly breathless tone.

"This p-private financial audita-aaaah..."

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His Star ended up gasping the moment she felt his fingers move under her skirt...before slowly settling over her knee, his touch feather-soft but unmistakably possessive.

"Keep reading," Wynd instructed coolly even as his hand continued its forbidden ascent over the smooth bare flesh of her thigh.

"A-Agreement is e-entered into on t-thisdaaaaaay..." Star's voice wavered anew as his fingers inched closer to the juncture between her trembling legs.

"Don't stop," Wynd ordered, his own voice rougher now as he felt the heat of her body beneath his palm.

"B-By and between W-Wynd S-Sullivaaaaan..." She whimpered this time, her entire body shuddering as his fingers finally reached her core.

"H-Hereinafter referred to as 'C-Client'..."

Wynd began stroking the swollen folds made slick by her need.

"A-and..."She jerked in her seat, her agonized gaze flying to his the moment he slowly pushed one finger inside her welcoming heat.

"Eyes back on the contract," Wynd growled even as the tight, wet warmth surrounding his finger threatened his own sanity.

Her breasts were rapidly rising and falling under her blouse, but he was nothing if not

patient, with Wynd waiting until her gaze finally returned to the contract she held in her trembling hands—

Finally.

He pushed his finger deeper inside her, and his Star cried out, her body jerking in the chair.

"Stay still, Ms. Moreno," he warned quietly, "because I see someone about to walk down the hallway."

Another whimper escaped her as she fought to remain motionless while his finger remained buried inside her. "Mr. S-Sullivan—"

"Continue reading."

"S-Star M-Moreno, h-hereinafter..." She was close to gasping each word out as his finger began to move, slowly and steadily thrusting in and out of her with deliberate precision.

"R-Referred to as 'A-Auditor'..."

Her knuckles had turned white with how hard she was gripping the folder as he increased both the pace and force of his movements, his finger driving deeper with each thrust.

"W-Whereas, C-Client s-seeks aaaaaah..."

Wynd moved his chair closer, the action allowing him to thrust his finger deeper into her, just deep enough to brush against the barrier of her innocence—



"Mr. S-Sullivan!" She looked at him in sweet distress, her eyes glazed with need.

"Come for me. Now."

His Star shattered before him, her body convulsing around his finger as she tried desperately to muffle her cries of pleasure. Her head fell back, the elegant line of her throat left exposed as her entire body trembled with the force of her release.

Watching her fall apart from just his touch filled Wynd with a satisfaction so terrifyingly profound...that his own world started to fall apart as the truth of his feelings became devastatingly clear.

I love her.

He loved how her smiles reached his soul even as it tore down the walls he had built around his heart. He loved her innocent and fearless ways. Loved her enough to know that she was the only one in this world to make him feel that way.

And that was why...

I can't let this continue.

## Chapter Eleven

I'M STILL COMING BACKto myself, my body humming with aftershocks and my mind struggling to piece together what just happened, when the sound of pen against paper cuts through the quiet boardroom like a blade.

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Scratch. Scratch. Scratch.

The mechanical sound is so at odds with the intimacy we just shared that it makes my stomach clench with unease.

I turn my head slowly, my neck still feeling boneless, and see Wynd signing contracts with the same elegant precision he brings to everything else. His wheat-gold hair is perfectly in place, his charcoal suit unwrinkled, his expression coolly professional as if he hadn't just made me fall apart with his fingers.

It's as if the Wynd in the past half hour was a mere fantasy.

And I'm just imagining the fact that he still has my panties in his jacket pocket.

Hehasto know I'm looking at him now, but he's acting like I don't exist at all.

I don't understand.

The automated blinds are still up, the floor-to-ceiling windows offering a clear view of our corner of the boardroom to anyone walking past. But now, instead of the dangerous thrillof potential exposure, the transparency just makes me feel exposed.

It's like I'm sitting here in the aftermath of something life-altering...while the billionaire seated next to me is acting like this is all just business as usual.

The air between us continues crackling like a live wire, but Wynd still refuses to acknowledge my existence.

Why?

More painful cramps seize my stomach as I remember a conversation we had once. About my girly feelings and his instincts zeroing in on the same thing. About how we both wanted Samuel. About how this could work between us.

But looking at him now—at the rigid set of his shoulders and the deliberate way he's avoiding my gaze—I'm starting to think I was wrong about everything.

"W-Wynd?"

His pen never stops moving across the paper.

"I'm going to pay the full fee of this contract—" Wynd doesn't look at me as he delivers the words, and his voice is cold and impersonal. It's as if we're total strangers, and he's not the same man who demanded my surrender just minutes ago.

Why won't he look at me?

"But you don't have to do anything." He sets down one document and picks up another, his movements efficient and final. "Consider it...a termination fee."

The room around me actually spins, and I find myself struggling to breathe.

Breathe, Star, Breathe!

I feel like throwing up. And slapping his face. But because I also remember that hurt people hurt people...

"C-Can you tell me why at least? W-Why are you doing this?"

The question hangs in the air between us, fragile and desperate. The scratch of his pen stops abruptly, and my heart slowly breaks at the taut silence that follows.

Why is this happening?

He slowly places his pen down on the polished oak table, but the soft click of metal against wood still rattles me, the tension gripping my body is so great that I feel like I'm about to fall into pieces any moment.

"My parents always said they loved each other." Wynd speaks tonelessly, but it's impossible not to hear the jagged edges of childhood trauma underscoring every word.

"And maybe they did. Only the two of them would really have known. But what I'm certain of is what happened afterward. When my father lost his business, my mother realized she loved money more. So she left him.Us."

His fingers flex against the table, his face hardening as if he still needs to protect himself from the past, even with all the years that have already gone by.

"My father...couldn't take it."

Oh God, no.

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"He killed himself even though it meant leaving me orphaned. Five months later, my mother was murdered. By the same man she had left us for."

I'm crying even before he's finished speaking, tears falling endlessly down my cheeks as the full weight of his confession settles over me like a lead blanket.

Everything...everything makes terribly painful sense now.

And it only makes me cry harder as I watch him rise to his feet with an uncharacteristic lack of grace.

Oh, Wynd.

Those ice-blue eyes that have haunted my dreams are shuttered now, and the walls around his heart feel so much taller and thicker, every brick fortified by all of the pain he had experienced as a child.

Just looking at him answers all my questions.

And it hurts so much more because I get why he's doing this.

I get how complicated and twisted love can get, especially in the eyes of a child.

I get how terrifying it can be, to know that a "good" thing like love can lead to death and murder.

I really do get it, and that's why—

"You're leaving me," I whisper brokenly, my voice cracking on every word, "not just because you realize I'm starting to fall for you. Aren't you?"

The question hangs between us like a bridge I'm not sure either of us is brave enough to cross.

And Wynd...

Oh, my love.

He only looks at me one last moment before turning towards the door, and I can't make myself hate him even as he walks away without a word.

I wasn't lying when I said I get it.

He isn't leaving just because he knows I've fallen for him.

He's leaving because he's in love with me, too.

He's leaving because he's doing what he thinks is best for Samuel.

## Chapter Twelve

IT HAD ONLY BEEN AN hour since he'd walked away from Star in that boardroom, and Wynd already felt sick to his stomach.

Why did he feel like he'd just made the biggest mistake of his life?

The ride back to Sullivan Tower passed in a blur of downtown traffic and the low hum of his driver's radio. As soon as he was back in his office, he tried throwing himself back into work with the kind of desperate focus he hadn't needed since his

early days building his empire.

But it was no use.

Just looking at his damn desk reminded him of the first time he made her come, and every document he tried to read only reminded him of Star's breathless voice as she read the terms of her company's proposal. With every signature he scrawled on a piece of paper, all he could remember was the pain that had emanated from her whole being...upon realizing her existence was deliberately being shunned.

By the time office hours ended, everyone working on his floor was jostling to reach the elevator and escape his wrath. Wynd had snapped at his assistant twice, glared at his CFO into stammering submission, and generally made himself the kind of boss people warned each other about in hushed whispers by the coffee machine.

Prior commitments obliged him to attend another fundraiser gala that evening, and it was only when he arrived at the opulent ballroom that Wynd remembered too late that Hope Rises was one of the evening's beneficiaries.

The ballroom glittered under crystal chandeliers, filled with San Antonio's elite in their finest evening wear. Round tables draped in crisp white linens dotted the space, each centerpiece a tasteful arrangement of white roses, orchids, and baby's breath. A small orchestra played softly from one corner while servers in black uniforms moved between guests with silver trays of champagne and hors d'oeuvres.

It was the same old scene, but what caught Wynd off guard and had him inhaling sharply was the exhibit along the far wall.

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Enlarged photographs of Hope Rises lined the space between the ballroom's tall windows, and his chest tightened as his gaze zeroed in on one of the photos in the center of the display.

It was the playroom where he had first seen Samuel with his dark head bent over his children's Bible.

The same playroom where he had first noticed Star.

This was where everything started...but it was all fucking gone now.

When he'd first seen Samuel, he'd recognized himself in the boy. Quiet and self-contained, creating walls of independence because depending on others only led to disappointment. But deep inside, Samuel was likely yearning to have someone to rely on, just like Wynd had when his parents died one after another in the span of five brutal months.

He didn't know whether it was right or wrong, but in Samuel, he'd seen a chance to rewrite the past. Make sure that at least one boy in this world wouldn't end up like him.

But when Star came along...

One look at her, and Wynd had known she was different from everyone else. Not just because of her sunshine-bright dress or those gold hoops that caught the light when she moved.



There were just so many other things.

Things that no other woman had or could do, such as the way she had looked at Samuel...and him.

For almost his entire life, the idea of love had filled Wynd with bitterness and contempt. He'd seen it as nothing but pretense used by weak people like his parents, a pretty lie that fell apart the moment money dried up and circumstances drastically changed.

Love, even if it was real, wasn't what he wanted.

Love only killed.

And that was why, when he'd realized it was what was making his heart pound every time he looked at Star...

"Mr. Sullivan, good evening."

The familiar voice pulled him from his thoughts, and Wynd turned to find Brenda Chopin approaching with her trademark warm smile.

The director of Hope Rises looked elegant in a navy dress that probably came from her own modest salary rather than a designer boutique, but she carried herself with the quiet dignity of someone who'd devoted her life to caring for children who had nowhere else to go.

Wynd schooled his features into a courteous smile as he inclined his head in greeting. "Mrs. Chopin, good evening."

"It's good to see you again. I wish I could stay and chat longer, but I'm needed back at

the orphanage."

"I hope nothing's wrong?"

"I'm hoping it's the opposite, actually," Brenda confided. "We have a prospective parent coming in tonight. She's right at the top of our approved list, same as you. But I'm really hoping she'll tell me she's found herself a relationship since we last spoke." She sighed, adjusting the simple gold cross at her throat. "We rarely approve applications from single-parent households, no matter how qualified they are. Children need stability, and that's so much easier to provide with two parents."

The evening continued around him in a haze of polite conversation and orchestrated generosity. Dinner was served, but he couldn't remember what he ate or how it tasted. People started giving speeches, but he heard not a single word. Checks were signed and submitted, and although Wynd donated a large sum himself—

All he could think about was the woman Brenda had mentioned, and the thought had Wynd feeling increasingly desperate.

What if it was Star?

What if his actions had made her desperate herself—perhaps even desperate enough to jump into a relationship with another man, and all to improve her chances of adopting Samuel?

He of all people knew how damn easy it would be for any man to fall for someone like Star.

And it would be just as easy for her to find a man who was better than him. Kinder. And with a lot less baggage.

He closed his eyes for a moment, and the first thing he found himself imagining was Star seated in Brenda's office, and next to him was another man...

Another man who would soon earn the right to claim her as his wife—and Samuel, their son.

No, dammit. No.

## Page 30

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:34 pm*

If only he could turn back time and make himself forget all the things he knew about the poisonous side of love.

If only.

But because the past had him chained, there was nothing else to do but let go.

A single parent—even if it were to be a billionaire like Wynd—was still no match for a complete family with two people who could love Samuel the way he deserved to be loved.

And as much as it killed him to admit this—

If he wanted what was best for Samuel and Star—

He had to stay away.

For good.

### Chapter Thirteen

A WEEK HAS PASSED SINCE Wynd walked away from me in that boardroom, and I'm a heartbroken bundle of nerves as I approach the entrance of one of San Antonio's most exclusive restaurants.

He texted me out of the blue this morning, asking to meet.

Can we meet tonight?

A man of few words, he still is, as always.

The restaurant's interior is warm and luxurious. It's the kind of place where conversations are conducted in hushed tones, and so I immediately stand out in my dandelion-yellow dress.

Wynd rises to his feet the moment he sees me, and my heart aches just looking at him.

He's still devastatingly beautiful, still the kind of man who commands attention without trying. He's dazzling, to put it simply, and wherever he goes, everyone is appropriately...dazzled, myself included, unfortunately.

"Thank you for agreeing to meet with me," he says quietly as I take my seat across from him.

I can only manage a nod. I thought I could handle seeing him again. But I was wrong. Just being this near to him has memories flooding my mind, and all of them make me want to either cry...or beg for him to give us another chance.

But since I can't do either if I want what's best for Samuel—

"Why do you want to meet?" I ask jerkily.

His jaw clenches at the question. "Isn't it proper etiquette to indulge in small talk before getting down to business?"

"Not between us."

"And why is that?" he demands in a rough undertone. "Is simply being apart enough to turn me into an enemy in your eyes?"

No, I think painfully. Never.

Because he's so much worse, being the man who's stolen my heart without any intention to keep it, and I am still far from over him.

"Could you...could you just tell me what you want?"

One of his fists clenches over the table. "I'd like to talk about Samuel."

My eyes start stinging as soon as I hear his name, and I have to bite my lip hard to keep it from trembling. "W-What about him?"

"May I...may I speak with him?"

His words have me jerking in shock. "Why would you—" I look at him in a mixture of shock and confusion. "I thought you adopted him."

## Page 31

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:34 pm*

It's Wynd's turn to jerk in his seat, an expression of disbelief on his handsome face. "I had a chance to speak with Brenda last week..."

Is he talking about the orphanage's manager?

"She had to leave the fundraiser to meet with a woman. A prospective parent who was at the top of her list, and someone she was hoping would no longer be single..."

Oh, Wynd.

I slowly shake my head. "It wasn't me. And I won't...I've decided not to fight you over the right to adopt Samuel."

"Why? Don't you want him anymore?"

My nails dig into my palms as I force myself to say the truth. "I love him, Wynd. I'll always love him. But it's because I love him that I...I want him to be with you. He'll have a better future with you."

"Are you sure of that?" he asks tonelessly. "I can only provide for him. But if you...if you fall in love with someone else—"

"I'm sorry. I have to go." I'm already on my feet while speaking, and I'm walking away without any intention to hear the rest of what he has to say.

For him to talk about me with another man so, so easily...doesn't that mean he's already moved on?

So why can't it be the same for me, too?

Please help me, God.

Why am I still in love with him?

"Star—"

I walk faster as soon as I hear his voice behind me.

No, no, no.

I need to be as far away from him as possible. I need to get out of here before I completely break down in front of half of San Antonio's elite. I just—noooo!

I've only made it halfway across the dining room before long fingers cup my elbow from behind, and then he's spinning me around in the middle of the restaurant's main corridor.

Tears are already streaming down my cheeks before our gazes even meet, and they only spill faster when I hear him groan.

"Star, God, no..."

Wynd hauls me to his chest, and his arms only tighten around me when I struggle to free myself.

A part of me is reeling in shock, unable to comprehend how my billionaire of ice seems completely indifferent to the fact that everyone in the restaurant is staring...at us.



But the other part of me is just...hurting. It's the part of me that loves him still, the part of me that is trying so, so hard not to break into pieces.

"Wynd, p-please—"

"You know I love you, don't you?"

A sob escapes me at the hoarsely spoken words.

Why is he doing this?

Why?

"And I know you love me back."

Why tell me this when he's still determined to leave?

## Page 32

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:34 pm*

"But I also thought love made people selfish...until you."

W-What is he saying?

Wynd's hands are shaking as he cups my face, and God, oh God...

What I see in his icy blue eyes scares me to death...because it makes me want to hope.

It makes me want to believe again.

Please, God, please.

In all the days since Wynd walked out, all I've done is pray.

But not once did I hear God ask me to let him go.

"I know you're scared, Star. So am I."

And now, it's as if God's speaking through my Wynd, with his heart completely exposed and made vulnerable by his words.

The walls he used to hide behind are completely gone, and that scares me even more.

"But walking away from you was the biggest mistake of my life, and...that's when I realized—"

Oh God, please.

All I can do is look at him...because I'm still too scared to hope.

"There's nothing more terrifying than to envision a future without you and Samuel."

Wynd, oh Wynd.

The moment I start smiling through my tears, Wynd hauls me back into his arms, a violent shudder rocking his powerful frame as my body melts against his.

His mouth covers mine, hungrily and desperately, and all I can do is kiss him back even as my tears won't stop falling.

When he pulls away, all the love I never thought I could find is shining in his eyes—

Oh dear God, how?

"Will you give me another chance, Star?"

My billionaire of ice goes down on bended knee, and it's only when the entire restaurant bursts in applause that I even remember it's not just the two of us, and we're still in a public place.

"Will you do me the honor of being my wife?"

Six Months Later

I STUDY MY SHOES THROUGH the delicate layers of my wedding dress, and even they look like something from a fairytale. Crystal-clear glass slippers with tiny white silk flowers painted along the edges, each petal so intricately detailed they look real.

They're completely impractical and utterly perfect, just like everything else about this day.

The past six months have been nothing short of magical.

My billionaire may be the one who's made of ice, but oh, the things he's been doing—it has my heart melting day after day. It's not just how he loves me and Samuel; it's how he finds no shame in loving God, too, with Wynd telling me the same night he proposed that he had learned to pray after losing me.

Wynd was also the one to insist that we attend marriage counseling seminars at my local church, and he's had every woman in San Antonio swooning ever since the media somehow found out about his promise not to even kiss me until we're married.

The headlines have been relentless (Billionaire Blue Balls as one gossip site calls him), and the press has gone crazy since then, having realized how easy it was for them to rack up views and reads just by reporting every little thing about our relationship.

But the one thing Wynd has effectively kept private is our intention to adopt Samuel, with the help of Mrs. Chopin herself and an experienced social worker. We didn't rush anything, choosing instead to visit Samuel every day so he can take his time getting to know Wynd and me. Four months after that, our application to adopt him was approved, and our darling boy has officially become our son.

## Page 33

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:34 pm*

The wooden doors before me finally open, and the lilting notes of Canon in D come streaming out, played by the small orchestra Wynd insisted we hire even though I would have been perfectly happy with Mrs. Garcia on the church piano.

This is it.

My wedding day.

I take my first step down the aisle of the little church where I've worshipped for years, past the faces of friends and neighbors and colleagues who've become like family. Jillian sits in the front row wearing a soft pink dress that makes her jade eyes sparkle behind her grandmother glasses, and she's crying nonstop even as she takes photos of me like the professional fangirl that she is.

Oh, Jilly.

Is it okay if I pray that she's the one to catch my bouquet later?

But in the meantime...

The two most precious men in my life are waiting for me at the end of the aisle. There's my beautiful boy Samuel, who looks absolutely dashing in his tiny black tuxedo. He also looks rather proud at being entrusted to be our ring bearer.

And finally, my Wynd.

How is it possible that he seems to get more and more gorgeous each day?

And oh, look.

He's even had his wheat-gold hair styled and combed back, and he's just so, so beautiful, my knees go weak just by looking at him, and no, oh no.

I do my best not to ruin my makeup as I make my way toward my boys, but by the time I reach the altar, I know it's a lost cause.

My shoulders start to shake as Wynd and I each take one of Samuel's small hands in ours, forming our little family circle before God and everyone we love. My tears run faster down my cheeks as Wynd lifts my veil with his free hand, and my darling boy lets out a delighted gasp as soon as he sees me.

"Mama, you turned into a panda!"

As the entire congregation erupts into laughter, my billionaire of ice pulls me close, and my heart skips a beat when I see his lips start to curve. I love that he's smiling so much more often now—

Thank You, God!

And when I look into Wynd's icy blue eyes and see that they're no longer haunted by the shadows of his past—

Thank You so, so much.

The rest of the ceremony is a blur. The next thing I know, Wynd is once again pulling me close, and as he slowly bends his head, that's when I hear him say—

"I love you, Mrs. Panda."

WYND CLOSED THE LEATHER-bound book of children's stories and looked down at Samuel, who had finally succumbed to sleep after three different tales of battle from the Old Testament. He pressed a kiss to his son's forehead before carefully pulling away. He looked down at his little boy, and his heart was...full.

Thank You.

Clare, Samuel's nanny, was already waiting outside when he stepped out of the room, and the older woman bid him good night with a warm smile.

The evening was quiet, the turquoise waters only gently rocking against the hull of his yacht. The master suite he shared with his bride was at the opposite end, and his heart began to pound at the thought of finally claiming Star as his own.

A tap of his card key had the heavy wooden door silently sliding open, and the first thing he saw as soon as he stepped inside was the siren that awaited him, her damp hair falling in waves around her shoulders, and her body clad in a sheer ivory nightgown that left nothing to the imagination.

An impish smile curved over her lips as she came to her feet. "Welcome back, master."

He raised a brow. "Are we roleplaying?"

"You know how much I love to play games," his bride teased.

He did indeed, and so he simply followed her lead, knowing that it gave Star pleasure to do so.

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:34 pm*

She guided him to sit on the edge of the bed, her fingers working at his belt with almost reverent care. But as soon as his shaft sprang free, she leaned forward, her breasts brushing tantalizingly against his mouth as she whispered into his ear, "May I pleasure you, Mr. Sullivan?"

A shudder rocked his body, and she pulled away with a soft laugh.

"I'll take that as a yes, master."

His breath came out in a sharp hiss as she knelt between his legs before slowly taking him into the warm haven of her mouth, and his hands fisted in the silk coverlet as she worked him with eager innocence, her soft moans vibrating against his heated flesh.

His Star was everything. Sunshine and seduction. Innocence and heat. She was hope and love and faith, the key that heaven used to free him from the shackles of his past.

When pleasure finally claimed him, it was with a force that had him growling out her name—

"Star..."

Another shudder rocked his body as she finally released him from her mouth. He looked down at his bride, and she smiled up at him again. She was obviously enjoying playing the role of a vixen...but as he would soon teach her, all good things must come to an end.

“MY TURN.”



Wynd's voice is a low growl in the dark, thick with promise and possession, and the moment the words leave his lips, he's already lifting me up into his arms...before tossing me onto his massive bed.

His mouth crashes onto mine with a hunger that steals my breath. It's a kiss that tells me exactly what he's feeling—how undone I made him, how he's been waiting to make me his in every possible way.

“Do you know,” he rasps against my lips, “what you just did to me?”

I'm too breathless to answer. My fingers find his shoulders, and I cling to him as his hands slide under my thighs, spreading me wide.

"Should I tell you...or show you?"

He doesn't wait for my answer.

I don't think he ever planned to...since my master and husband isn't the type to ask for permission, and—

"Wynd!"

All I can do is cry his name out as he takes me in a manner that's anything but soft, his length thrusting inside of me with such deliciously overwhelming force that it feels like I'm being torn apart...in the most excruciatingly sweet way.

Why has no one ever told me I'd feel so, so...full?

My husband begins to move, and all I can do is hold on to him, my legs locking around his waist, and my fingers digging into the muscular planes of his back as he thrusts harder and harder, faster and faster, deeper and deeper and deeper until...aaaah.

The pleasure is so intense, I feel like I've blacked out, but then I feel his body jerk, and when I realize he's filling me with his seed—

"W-Wynd..."

All I can do is sob his name out as it starts all over again.

And this time, there seems to be no end.

Just wave after wave of pleasure pounding through my body until I'm a breathless and boneless mess beneath his weight.

A...ma...zing.

My eyes flutter open when I feel him slowly pulling out. I'm not sure how much time has passed, but I'm still trying to catch my breath when his fingers clasp my waist—

Huh?

Wynd flips me onto my stomach without warning.

W-What in the world—

The next thing I know, he's pulling my hips up, and I'm suddenly on my knees as he positions himself behind me.

"Yourmasteris ready for Round 2..."

Wynd enters me from behind, and I think...I think I'm about to lose my mind again.

The End