







# Age Gap Bear's Enemies-to-Lovers Mate (Company 417 Shifters #48)

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**Category:** Fantasy

**Description:** I hate this man, so I especially hate that he's probably the sexiest man on Earth. And I don't know how to deal with him saving me. He's my enemy, and now all I can think about is how I owe him my life. Something's got to give.

OLIVIA

"Tall and muscular and so far beyond attractive that you really have to think of him as perfect. A fireman, too. Just my luck. The man I hate more than anything is the perfect man."

A really sexy man.

A hot fireman.

The sexiest fireman imaginable.

But he's the one responsible for my only loss.

He cost me a lot of money.

Just by being stubborn!

But then he saved my life, and I had to even the score.

I can't owe him.

The plan is pretty simple. I give him my body and then I can get back to hating him.

But what if I like it?

And what if I want more?

What if I want a whole lot more?

Without Clint's land, the whole project was useless. That man was insufferable! That was two years ago, though, and one problem along

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*Source Creation Date: August 5, 2025, 8:32 am*

## Chapter One

Olivia

Sydney Carter lifts her delicate little hand in the air. I wait to see if anyone else will. I think Sydney is fourteen years old. Maybe fifteen. She's in high school. I don't know the grade but I'm pretty sure she's an underclassman. She's part of a young entrepreneurs' club, and since my Aunt Vera is the faculty advisor for the club, I always do one presentation per semester.

Nobody else raises a hand so I nod with a smile and say, "Sydney. Whatcha got for me?"

Sydney says, "I think opportunity cost is probably more important. Money you put into one opportunity precludes putting it into another opportunity."

She's right, actually, but I want to know if she's right for the right reasons. "But why is that more important than the project's financials?"

"Because the project can be profitable but not be the best way to spend your money. If I can buy a necklace for a hundred dollars I can sell for a hundred and twenty, I made twenty dollars. Okay, I made twenty dollars. That's great. But if there's another necklace I can buy for a hundred dollars and it will sell for a hundred and fifty dollars, I made a bad decision."

"But why not just do both?" Robert asks from two chairs down. He's a cute boy a year or so older than Sydney. I'm pretty sure he has a crush on her. He looks at me

and says, “Oh, sorry for interrupting.”

“It’s not a problem. Sydney, can you answer that?”

She nods and says, “Well, if we’re talking about necklaces, maybe we can. But what if I only have one hundred dollars. I have to choose one. I can’t choose both.”

“But you can buy one and then sell it and then buy the other one, right? Oh, sorry, Miss Morey.”

“It’s okay, Robert. This is the kind of discussion we want. Everyone just be respectful and don’t talk over each other. Go ahead, Sydney. Why not buy the necklace, sell it, and then go and get the other necklace?”

“Sure. That’s a great strategy. However, you want to buy the more profitable necklace first. The reason is that you have no guarantee the first one will still be available when you’re done selling the first.”

“Couldn’t you just ask the place selling the necklace to wait until you come back?” a girl in the back named Vanessa asks.

“Sure,” Sydney says, “but that doesn’t mean they’ll do it.” She looks at me, which means she’s running out of things to say. She sees very clearly how right she is but she doesn’t know how to explain it.

“Okay, let’s stop talking about necklaces,” I say, “and instead we’ll make it apartment buildings. Now it’s not as simple as buying one, selling it, and buying the other one, right? Now, you have to look at something called tied-up capital. Does anyone know what that means?”

Sydney raises her hand but Vanessa says, “Is that money you’ve spent on an un-

liquid asset?”

“Good. Exactly, Vanessa. Except the word is illiquid . So, you can’t immediately get your money. It might be easy to get someone with a hundred-dollar necklace to wait for you to return. You’re going to have a harder time to get someone to wait with their four-hundred-thousand-dollar house, right?”

We talk a little longer about opportunity cost. I can tell which of the kids want to be entrepreneurial like me, primarily in the world of real estate, and which of the kids are more operationally driven. They’re entrepreneurial but they want to own traditional businesses. There are, of course, the kids who are in the club for social reasons and just for the yearbook picture. I feel energized like I always do when I leave.

I climb into my car and turn my music up high. I’m heading over to my latest project, a revamped apartment complex I’m aiming to make high scale. Well, as luxurious as this community can allow.

I take a left turn and then, there it is. My mood tanks almost immediately.

No, it’s not the apartment complex. It’s just a wide-open plot of land. It sits there like it’s mocking me, all the undeveloped potential just wasting away. The one failure in my long list of successes.

The Franklin Meadow project. It still seems to haunt my nightmares.

I had already had about nine projects under my belt when I came across this land. It was perfect. It could be commercial or residential or both. It was a flipping gold mine just sitting and doing nothing. So, I had my guy find the owner and make an offer.

And it was rejected.

That didn't faze me, though. A lot of projects start with an initial rejection. I just set up a meeting with the guy. We had a cozy lunch which I paid for, and then I explained the untapped potential of the plot and some ideas I had for development.

He said thank you for lunch and no thank you to the deal.

He was smug and self-righteous. He wanted it to stay pristine. He made me feel like an evil land baron just interested in the fucking money and not the importance of a spot like that to the community. He never really gave me a clear reason for not selling.

Sure, he was good looking. In fact, he was incredibly hot, but in the end, he was just an asshole with more muscle than brains. He just couldn't see the vision. I gave up and moved on, of course, but it was a bit of a blow to my ego, admittedly. And really, it was just this guy who seemed to enjoy taking me down a peg that really irked me. I mean, it's not like I'm some lazy rich bitch making good on her daddy's money. I worked hard for everything I had. It's all my blood, sweat and tears. No one did jack shit for me.

I get to the apartment complex and park. I'm even angrier because now my mood has been spoiled from the high of the morning. I get out of my car and slam the door closed. I get going on my walk-through, making notes as I move. Things are looking decent but as usual, the contractors are trying to drag some things out and I'm not a fan of wasted time or wasted money. Granted, this is quite a big project. The complex has sat empty for two years. There's a lot of work to be done. Honestly, I would have preferred to just tear the whole place down and start over, but initial projections made this route more affordable. Now, I'm beginning to have my doubts.

About two hours of walking up and down stairs and in and out of units, I head to the last two units, which are past the laundry room and the pool area. I turn out of the set of two units that face the opposite way and head across the pool area. There's no

water in it at the moment because it also needs a lot of work.

I don't know why I didn't see it earlier. Maybe I'm just too busy making my notes and checking something on my phone. I don't know. I just know I look up and see thick smoke and then, I see flames that seemed to jump to the building I just left like some kind of acrobat.

In no time at all, my world seemed engulfed in flames and I was trapped by an empty pool.

“What the fuck is happening with my life today?!”

I call 911 and wait for the panic to settle in.



## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: August 5, 2025, 8:32 am*

### Chapter Two

Clint

I see Olivia Morley from a distance.

As much as I want to pretend that I'm the kind of nobleman who will move heaven and Earth to rescue a complete stranger, I can't pretend that I'm not far more desperate for this woman's safety because I know her. I don't fully understand this because I know her but the two of us are quite hateful toward each other. Perhaps hateful is too strong a term but I don't believe that it's inaccurate even if a little strong.

This is the woman who tried to strongarm me into selling my land. This is the woman who fought with me every step of the way. I suppose she believed she was in the right, and I certainly possess information about the situation that changes the character of it. It was reasonable for her to believe she was in the right but unreasonable for her to believe she could force anyone to do anything at all with his own property.

I don't like her.

She doesn't like me.

So why in the world am I breaking with the procedure to rush toward her? I'm putting my life at risk and theoretically risking others' lives as well. That's what we say when the procedure is broken. It risks lives. Don't get me wrong, letting her die would be

evil but I'm behaving like she's related to me, and there are reasons firefighters don't fight the fires at their own homes.

This isn't my home, of course. I think this apartment complex belongs to Olivia, though. There's no other reason for her to be here. It's not a nice enough place for her to live. She's very wealthy even though she's young. She's in the fourth building, cut off from everywhere else because of the fire. I'm also unable to get to her.

Safely.

I'm not saying this place is a slum. It's a nice, clean, and livable place. There isn't any luxury to it but I also don't see anything about the place that suggests this fire has to do with anyone shirking his duty. No, not his. Her. If she's the owner, she didn't shirk her duty at all. On the contrary, Olivia handles her duties with precision and absolute attention to detail. I think I'd prefer an Olivia that doesn't.

A strong-headed person who's intelligent, pays attention to detail, and works hard is dangerous as an opponent. But the land she wanted was my land, not hers, and wanting it doesn't mean she's entitled to it regardless of how smart and dedicated the girl might be.

Damn it all, I can't wait. I'm going to catch a lot of hell for this. "I'm going in!" I shout.

"No!" Garret shouts in reply. I ignore him.

It's easy to be reckless as a shifter. We heal very easily. Oh, it's not like the healing that you see in movies with the superheroes but essentially, a shift will heal all minor damage immediately. If I'm looking at second and third-degree burns as I run through the fire to rescue this girl, I'll only suffer for as much time passes before I can shift into my bear. When I shift back to human whether it's a day later or just a minute

later, the burns will be just a memory.

If I get third-degree burns it will take more than one shift. If I'm substantially injured, I might not be able to keep from shifting. It becomes an almost involuntary response. The shift from human to animal is very powerful. There's less knowledge about the shift from animal to human. There are healing properties but we don't really register our injuries in the same way as animals so it's difficult to compare before and after.

So, I'm not afraid of getting hurt, not really. Honestly, if we were allowed to be more open about our natures, I could just shift before running into the fire and be much safer. But we aren't allowed to just throw that knowledge out there in view of the general public, even though shifters technically came out to the world a while ago. Humans still tend to think we're fairy tales and the higher-ups are hesitant to let us live our true natures.

Anyway, right now, I don't need to be debating the right or wrong of keeping shifters hidden. Right now, I need to rescue the girl I can't stand.

I haul ass and hit the wall of fire. I move so fast that I really don't register the heat until I get through it and see where Olivia is huddled against a bookcase. She's in a horrible spot. I can see the flames licking around a door to the right. How has she not passed out yet?

I get my answer. She drops the scarf she had bundled in front of her face and starts screaming the moment she sees me, waving and jumping. Then, she starts really coughing hard, and then, she stops and there's a pause. I know what's coming next and I race over to catch her as her eyes roll back and she collapses.

I pick her up and press her to me, trying to cover her completely with my body. I see a small break in the fire that looks like the best opportunity and run for it. We blast through and I keep on running until I get her to the waiting ambulance.

She's still unconscious as I help them get her onto the stretcher. I watch as they check her vitals and get oxygen going.

"How's she doing?"

The EMT gives me a brief thumbs up as they kick the stretcher up into the ambulance. "She seems stable enough. You got to her just in time."

"Well, I'll check in later at the hospital. You're going local?"

He nods and shuts the door.

"What the fuck, Clint? I gave you a direct order to not play the hero and you fucking ignored me!"

"I'm fine, thanks for asking."

"I'm not asking a goddamned thing! You, my friend, are going to take some time off and think about the shit you just pulled."

I turn around with a growl. "Well, that shit I just pulled saved her life. We couldn't wait for procedure to save the day, Garret!"

He throws up his hands and backs off. "Well, get back to the station and clear out. I'm going to switch your days. You need some downtime."

I walk away. I know he's right, but I know I wasn't wrong. I'll just accept it as it stands.

The next day, I call into the hospital and found out that Olivia is doing well and should be discharged in the morning. I go back to watching TV coverage and

wallowing in my angry indignation at being taken off the rotation early.

A week later, though, things are back to normal. I actually only got two days off and then, Garret called me back in after two of the guys called out with a bad flu. I finished my rotation and am back on my days off, enjoying life and thoroughly enjoying not having that reason to think about Olivia Morley.

I head to the kitchen and check the fridge. Leftover lasagna from Fredo's. Beautiful. I grab it and some beer, ready to relax.

The doorbell rings.

Who the fuck rings a person's doorbell at night?

I grumble my way from the couch to my door and swing it open, ready to yell at some dumbass kid.

"Hello, Clint."

Olivia Morley is standing there, looking beautiful, with her long mussed-up hair and big green eyes. She walks in without an invitation, though, so I'm not too swayed by her beauty.

"Um, excuse me? I didn't invite you in."

She doesn't say a word, just looks at me with those luminous eyes. Then, she shrugs her long coat off and I see she's only wearing a small little kimono robe underneath. Now, I'm silent.

She steps up to me and undoes the belt on her robe. It swings open and gives me a very tantalizing view. "I wanted to say thank you." She pauses and looks down. Her

hair falls over her face. “For saving my life.”

Where does this girl get her ideas about life? A Hallmark movie?

I look at her and then, all my anger just dies. She’s just so small and, well, I don’t bother to say no. I just reach out and retie the belt on her robe.

“You don’t need to do that, Olivia. You owe me nothing. I was just doing my job.”

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### Chapter Three

Olivia

Okay, in my thoughts about how this might go down, Clint pulling my robe closed and quickly retying it wasn't one of them. I stare at him and whisper, "We can do this."

He looks at me and says, "I'm not sure that's a good idea."

"Don't you find me attractive?"

"You're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen," he says. It's a breathtaking compliment. Even though I don't particularly want to be complimented by this man, I can't help but be affected by his words. I find myself very aroused.

I was already aroused enough. What I mean is, there's something sort of sexy about not having a choice, if that makes sense. I don't mean that I don't have the right to consent or to withdraw consent. I mean I'm in a situation where I feel indebted to Clint Bruno. I can't do that. That's an absolutely untenable situation I can't tolerate. So, I need to even the score. He saved my body and now he gets it.

And then I can go back to despising him.

The point is, I don't have a choice as far as my emotions are concerned. I need to get this sense of owing him out of my head, and the only thing that can do that is sex. It's the one thing I don't want to give him, and so it will humiliate me and will cost me

emotionally.

So, it will even the score.

And the fact that I have no choice but to do it turns me on a little. The fact that he compliments me the way he does turns me on even more than that.

“But I saved your life because it’s my job, Olivia. You don’t have to do this.”

I smile slightly because he knows that’s why I’m here. So, it’s time to lie. “Sure, there’s a little bit of that. Anybody would be grateful, Clint, but that’s not it. When I saw you, it completely transformed how I feel about you.”

“Really?” he asks. He’s not quite sarcastic in his tone but he’s close.

So, I tell a half-truth. “Before, you were just a big, suborn asshole with more muscles than brains,” I say. That’s the truth part. Here comes the lie part. “And now, you’re a hero. I saw what you do with those muscles and how they move. I saw what your stubbornness means when life and death are on the line. Before, the only thing that mattered about you was how all of your qualities got in my way. Now, I see those qualities as what saved me.”

“So, you’re saying you actually want to sleep with me?”

What I say next is the truth, sort of. “It’s all I’ve been able to think about since you saved my life,” I say. I pull the tie on the robe and just in case he wants to close it again, I shrug it off my body so it falls to the floor. I really have been obsessed about sex with him since he rescued me but it’s not because I want to do it. It’s because I have to.

I can see him warring with himself, so I step forward, lift myself up on tiptoes, and



whisper, “I want this, Clint. Please don’t stop me.” I think I’m very convincing and, at least to an extent, I guess there’s truth to it. I want it just not for the reasons he thinks. And, I guess, I’m going to enjoy it some. My body is certainly gearing up for that. Anyway, after I implore him not to stop me, I kiss him.

I’m not certain if things are going to happen. I don’t know what I’ll do if he refuses me. He doesn’t push me away from the kiss but he’s not overly responsive. I run my hands up his back and lace them around the back of his head. I kiss him harder.

That’s when I sense him changing, and in an entirely good way.

Yeah, I think I’m going to enjoy this more than just some.

His hands come up to my waist and grip me as he finally starts kissing back, finally. And that kiss becomes rougher, more demanding, hungrier. When we break apart briefly, I gulp in the air like I’ve just come up from being underwater.

He swivels my body and walks me down the hallway of his house. He kisses me hard again as he steers me to the right and into his bedroom. He pulls away and starts undressing.

I stand watching him for a moment, and then, I jump on him again, kissing him hard and digging my nails into his back. He shrugs me off and gives me a small kiss on my neck as he fights to get his shirt off and then, his jeans.

We come together again, and I feel a weird rush of desire mingled with tenderness that brings me up short. What the hell do I think I’m doing? I’m not here for a romantic rendezvous. I’m here to get some down and dirty sex out of the way. I want it, but it isn’t some love connection.

But he runs his fingers through my hair and kisses me softly along my jawline. Then,

his fingers trail down over my body. I shiver as I feel goosebumps rising on my arms.

I need to throw a few good Fuck Me! 's into the mix. I'm losing control of the situation and myself here. I try to remember that I'm here for payback, not to indulge in the sweet control of my libido.

But as he leans me back against his bed and then, helps me get on, I can only murmur his name. "Clint..." I try tapping into all my anger and loathing for this man, but he moves over my body, kissing and touching and teasing, and I just sigh again, "Clint..."

He stands back and slips his boxers down. I stare at the biggest cock I've ever seen. I mean, this is scary huge. I've watched some porn and this thing is beyond any of those guys. Now, I feel like I should be able to say something more pointed and, well, vulgar, but my mind just seems stuck on the same track. "Clint!" I least I manage more emotion with that one.

Wow. I feel stupid and horny and needy. I feel wildly out of control. It's not a feeling I'm used to.

And then, he kneels at the edge of the bed, reaches forward, and grabs me by my legs, yanking me towards him so that my ass is almost hanging off the edge of the mattress. He kisses me on the insides of my thighs and I tremble. "Clint..." I moan.

Part of me is still rational and almost angry at how I'm surrendering to this man's directions. The bigger part of me is begging for him to take me completely. To take all the control away from me and just take the temporary truce my body is giving him in return for saving me and creating this burden of rejoinder in the first place.

He seems to read my mind and he lowers his mouth onto me. His tongue runs up and down my pussy, slipping inside me and exploring. His movements are soft and slow,

though, and when I try to wriggle against him and get more, he just holds me still and pulls back.

It's maddening and invigorating. I hate that I'm loving it so much. He slides his tongue up my slit and teases my clit. Then, he puts his whole mouth over the little hooded button and sucks my very sensitive little nub until I'm on the brink of what promises to be an incredibly powerful orgasm.

I grip the bed sheets in my fists and groan. My mind screams, "Holy fuck, give me more!" But again, I can only murmur, "Clint..."

He shakes his head and plays rougher with my poor clit. It's too much. I shudder hard and then, my orgasm punches the breath from my lungs and I can't even say his name anymore. I just moan like a fucking banshee with laryngitis.

Fuck, what is happening here?

I twist beneath him and claw at the bed as I'm overwhelmed again and again with pleasure.

He breaks away and kisses my clit so very tenderly once again.

And I just break apart into a million bewildered pieces.

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*Source Creation Date: August 5, 2025, 8:32 am*

### Chapter Four

Olivia

As the pleasure rushes over my body, Clint moves up and kisses me. I feel his cock pressing against me and I cry out, “Oh! Yes!” against his lips. He tries to ease himself into me but I need it faster than that and I hook a leg over his back and pull myself up. His cock drives forward and I cry out against his mouth again.

I realize I can taste my pussy on his lips and tongue. For some reason, that makes me kiss him back passionately. Until this moment, the kissing feels to me sort of like a necessary evil. It’s not something I particularly want to do but it’s a necessary part of the process. Well, that’s not how I feel now. I kiss Clint and I’m genuinely passionate about the kiss. I don’t understand why except maybe just because of how erotic the taste of myself is.

And holy crap, this orgasm!

It explodes over me with an impossible detonation of power. I just don’t have any way to wrap my mind around it. This is not a typical orgasm for me at all. It’s a new sort of orgasm, one that’s absolutely impossible to understand.

Look, I’m no stranger to sex. I was a millionaire before I graduated from high school. Something in my brain is abnormal and I’m driven in ways others aren’t. I don’t know why but I get what I want. You don’t become rich so quickly without maturing quickly or, if not maturing, at least not without thinking your age is a bullshit reason not to do something. That’s probably more accurate. Whether or not I was mature, I

thought I was. I most certainly wouldn't let my age keep me from whatever the hell I wanted to do. So, I lose my virginity early. I don't want to shock you but I'm twelve when that happens. I'm not exactly a totally lascivious nympho but I'm in no way unfamiliar with sex.

This is different.

Damn it all, this is very different. This is... Hell, I don't understand how I feel right now except that no matter what my original plan might have been, I don't hate this. If being humiliated is part of the process of me paying for being rescued, part of making this cost something for me, my plan is backfiring. I don't feel humiliated because he's fucking me. I feel overwhelmed with pleasure because he's making love with me.

I know. I know.

Making love.

Fucking.

I know it's an irritating distinction but the whole plan is for me to offer up my body so I have a horrible time of things but Clint gets to screw a woman half his age. He gets a young conquest. That's me paying him back for saving my life. I get to feel humiliated about the sex. That lets me continue to despise him for the way he destroyed the Franklin Meadow project, the only blemish on my otherwise perfect string of projects. I get to go right back to disdain for him.

But damn it, I love everything about this moment. I love his weight pressing down on me. I love his lips against mine. I love his tongue in my mouth. I love holding the back of his head. I love lifting my body up (with both legs now) to meet his thrusts. I love the way his cock feels inside of me. I love... Damn. I love that I can tell he's enjoying this. I love giving him pleasure. There's absolutely nothing about this

moment that I don't like, and any plans I have to make this about something other than the beauty of what it actually is just fall by the wayside as I'm carried along by sensation and emotion.

Sensation and emotion I love.

This is not a good thing. I know I'll be upset about it tomorrow. Hell, I'll be upset about it shortly after we're done here. I suppose I might be upset about it now. At least intellectually I am. Maybe the strange and unexpected emotional joy of the moment is just keeping me from experiencing the upset. Hell, I don't know.

But what I do know is that this is incredible. I know I move my body beneath him not only because it intensifies the pleasure I feel but because I'm sure that it will intensify his pleasure, too. I cling to his body with both my arms and my legs, and there's tremendous comfort and joy in just holding onto him. It's a new experience for me to be so emotionally overcome during sex. The thought that this would happen with Clint Bruno is shocking to say the least.

He picks up his pace and I can tell (with the subtle hints guys don't know they give that they're getting closer) that he won't last much longer now. I feel oddly excited to think that I've made him so excited. It was the whole plan, of course, but I don't know how to feel about my own feelings of satisfaction rather than humiliation. I don't know how to feel about moaning in response out of sincerity and not out of the playacting that's supposed to humiliate me.

He drives his thrusts into me with more power and purpose. I feel my own orgasm rage to the surface again, and I start shaking but still manage to hold onto him. He groans deep in his chest, something that sounds almost like a growl, and then he thrusts forward a final time. I feel his cock swell deep inside me. I pull him down to me and we kiss as he shudders in my arms. It's intimate in a way that I've never experienced with any other guy.

And that scares the hell out of me.

He stills while I hold him. Then, finally, he rolls away. I feel so exposed suddenly. I look over at him. He has his eyes closed and one arm flung over his chest. He is stunningly handsome and my heart lurches in my chest. Oh fuck! This is not at all what I thought this would be like.

Because I feel fulfilled. Damn it! I feel happy. Content? Yes, I think so.

Shit.

Shit. Shit. Shit!

I get up and grab my robe and my coat on my way out. I fling them on and grip them around me as I hurry to the bathroom.

And there I try to pull myself together.

I manage to regain a semblance of self-control and then, I open the door and step out. Clint is sitting on the edge of the bed, his boxers on and nothing else. He looks amazing.

“Um, thank you for a, well, this.” I bow slightly. Almost a curtsey like someone meeting the King and then I hurry out of his room and to the front door. I reach frantically for my key in my jacket pocket. I find it and hold it like a lifeline.

I do not need this in my life. I do not need some stupid reconciliation of my opinion with evident fact.

This didn't help at all. This in no way repaid Clint for saving my life.

I climb into my car and crank the volume on the radio up as I swing out of his driveway and head home.

I don't want to think right now.

Hell, I damn well don't want to feel.

I can't be left alone with my thoughts because all they are saying right now is how totally screwed I am.



## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: August 5, 2025, 8:32 am*

### Chapter Five

Clint

“Thank you.”

The most astounding sex of my life. The tenderest sex of my life. The sweetest sex of my life. An absolutely perfect experience that blended together physical and emotional pleasure in ways I can't even describe.

“Thank you.”

That's it. She just tells me thank you and goodbye, I'm done and so are we.

Okay, she doesn't say the goodbye and we're done part but it feels that way to me. I do something I shouldn't. My house is back against the woods. Granted, it's only a couple thousand acres of woods. I own it all. There's a small part of it, about twenty-three acres, which goes into the property that she wanted to develop, the Franklin Meadow Project. I wouldn't give it to her.

That's not the point right now. That's not what I shouldn't do. What I shouldn't do is remain completely undressed and just walk into my backyard, head out of my back gate, and shift. Instantly the world changes around me and the cognitive dissonance fades to the background. Just the dissonance. I can still think. I can think in a somewhat detached way now.

The most intimate and beautiful experience of my life is with the one woman I can't

possibly feel intimate about. How does that happen?

I shouldn't have slept with her.

She was clearly lying about wanting it. I think I know that from the beginning but it's impossible to look at her body without feeling desperation. She needed to even the score to deal with her own cognitive dissonance. She was saved by a man she hates. She needed to screw me so she could get back to hating me.

And she felt the beauty and the intimacy just like I did.

It's wonderful being a bear because these thoughts come to me like feelings, and the emotions involved don't matter. As I lumber my way along, thrilled by the sounds of the forest and the smells and sights, I can get my head around the realities of the moment without the noise. We call this going wild . Shifters, I mean. When you shift in order to get a handle on the emotions or struggles of being human. We don't call it that when you're just shifting because the bear (or lion or wolf or dragon or whatever) is part of your nature.

And it feels pretty damned good to be a bear. The world is nothing now but the warmth of the sun, the feel of the breeze, and the smells of the woods. As always, I feel a longing to forgo humanity altogether. This is the nature of bears. There are some who believe that we are bears who become humans rather than humans who become bears. There are similar groups with every shifter type but there are actually bears who shift and spend twenty-five years or more as bears.

Most shifters believe we're humans who can shift into animals. The only exception is the dragon shifter. They're certain they're dragons who can become human. Since there aren't any natural dragons the way there are natural wolves or bears, that seems to make sense. Dragons also live for hundreds of years so who knows? In any case, when a shifter becomes a bear, there's always a powerful moment where the desire to

abandon everything human descends on us.

And the moment passes.

I suspect if you allow it to, the moment always passes. Or perhaps those who choose to remain a bear have nothing holding them to the world of men. It's hard to tell. I know that from my very first shift, this longing has come and passed. Evidently, none of the other types of shifter experience this in any real way.

I'm by a small creek, well, not even really a creek. A rivulet? A trickle? Whatever the terminology, I pause and get a drink. It always seems that everything experienced in bear form is so much more than when I'm human. I wade into the water. Well, okay, I don't wade. I step and splash because it really isn't much of anything. But it's fun.

Yes, bears can have fun. A lot of it. In fact, natural bears are very playful.

I let my mind relax and let go of the whole Olivia question completely for a while. I run back into the trees and snuffle around. I don't particularly care if I'm a bit noisy tonight. I probably should care, since I'm not really that far from civilization and I'm much bigger than any natural bear. I don't care, though. Instead, I'm just enjoying my freedom from human ties.

I actually lose myself for a while just chasing stupid things like bugs and a squirrel. I give it a shot climbing a tree. I don't do too badly and I file that fact away. We bears aren't the most agile of the shifters, but we can be surprisingly graceful.

But I'm not planning to test the theory of becoming a permanent bear tonight. So, I head for home. I pause briefly at the edge of the tree line and take in the calming effects of the sounds and smells of the woods around me. For some reason, I sense that I'll really need to have that deep within me for whatever may happen with Olivia, or whatever may not happen.

I growl low and shuffle back into my back yard and shift. It's a risky move, but I can't expend the energy to care.

I walk into my house, not even having bothered to get dressed again. I only get two steps in when I see her. "Shit."

Olivia tries to smile. "Well, that's quite a greeting, Clint."

Her eyes move over my naked body, but I'm too angry to feel embarrassed. This is my own home after all. "Olivia, we had our little moment. I don't know how you got in my house ..."

"You didn't leave the door locked; I tried calling for you. I just wanted to apologize for leaving so abruptly. I think I really didn't finish what I started."

"Well, you don't need to start anything else. I, uh, accepted your thankfulness for rescuing you last night. We're all good."

She shakes her head. "No, we're not. I can tell you think there should be more."

She moves closer. I feel aware of my nakedness now because I can't hide my arousal. She isn't just in a robe this time, but it's a skimpy little dress and I'm guessing no bra or panties. Yes, it's that skimpy.

So, against my better judgment, I let her lead me to the bedroom and the whole thing happens again. I let her seduce me even though I know it's the worst possible decision I can make.

And I let her do it again the next day.

I invite her the day after that to discuss the situation and try to figure out the best

course of action for extricating ourselves from this crazy hate-fueled lovefest. It'll be my last day before overnights at the Company 417 firehouse and I want to get things figured out before I go in. I won't let this be up in the air while I'm at the firehouse.

She comes over and we fuck again instead of figuring things out. Oh, who the fuck am I kidding about having any self-control? We just fuck again.

But the worst damn thing about it all is that I can't consider it to be just fucking.

Nope. It's more than that.

When we're together, there's real feeling involved. It's not just me using her body or her using mine. Damn it, we're making love in the sense that the word love makes a hell of a lot of sense.

I know that we can safely call it making love and I'm completely at a loss.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: August 5, 2025, 8:32 am*

### Chapter Six

Olivia

Another day.

Another orgasm.

What the hell am I doing?

In general. Motivation-wise. I sure as hell know what I'm doing right now from a superficial standpoint. Clint sits on his couch, and I'm on top of him, kissing him passionately as I move my hips, grinding myself against him.

And realizing I'm setting myself up for tragedy.

I'm becoming addicted to him.

You know, if I buy some sort of male sex doll and screw it all the time, there's likely to be some guilt. There's not any guilt if I use a vibrator or a dildo but if I find myself unable to go without it, that'll make me feel guilty. If I use a dildo or a vibrator, they're very clearly just sex toys. A doll gets sort of weird, I think. It just makes it clearer that I'm making a choice to use something artificial instead of a real person. If I have sex with an elaborate toy designed to trick me into thinking I'm with a person, it's guilt-inducing and sad.

This is worse.

This is worse because even though the sex is easily better than any sex in my life, dramatically better, that's not what matters to me. That's not what I'm becoming addicted to at all. I'm addicted to the emotions. I'm addicted to the love I feel for him. In the middle of the sex, I love him. I don't understand it and I don't know why.

But as I kiss him now and move my hips atop him, I love this man. When Clint's hands move over my back and my hips, I love his touch. I love that Clint is touching me, not just that I'm being touched. Damn it all, I'm in love with him right now.

Completely.

Googly-eyed, la-la-land, head over heels, absolutely in love.

That's what I'm addicted to when I'm with him, and that's what's so troubling. The moment we're done, I'll quietly berate myself. I'll love him still, though, for ten or fifteen minutes or so. And then, something will click and I'll get so angry.

I know this.

But it doesn't stop me from kissing him now, from holding him so tightly and yearning for him so absolutely. It doesn't stop me from feeling like I'm on the verge of happy tears every time he's inside of me.

He works a shift of three days and nights at his fire station and then four days and nights off. Then, they reverse so four days and nights at the station. I think those nights at the station are all that keep me from being with him every night.

And I miss him when he's gone.

And I hate myself for missing him and I hate him because I miss him. Everything is a jumbled, crazy mess, and I just don't really understand what the hell is going on in

my head. I feel dumb. I feel typical. Do you have any idea what it's like for me to feel dumb and typical?

My entire life I've been exceptional. My entire life I've looked at a situation and found ways to add value. Other people see a useless lot that can't be improved. I see a parking lot that can help businesses that wouldn't otherwise be able to build. Other people see a strangely shaped piece of land and I see a destination mini-mall.

I'm exceptional, I'm not typical. Damn it, my whole life I'm driven to accomplish more, do more, and achieve more. And now, I'm a damned slave to my enemy's dick!

Damn it all to hell. I'm not a slave to his dick even though I'm moving my body like I am. It would be so much happier to handle if that's what went on here.

I'm a slave to his voice, his mind, his words... Damn it!

I try to keep up with the analysis of this situation. I try to focus on why I shouldn't be feeling what I'm feeling for Clint, but he grabs me and rolls us so that he's on top. He ups the intensity, moving faster and deeper, and then, we groan together. Our bodies seem to react in sync, our orgasms building and subsiding together.

Clint sits back and offers a hand to help me up. I smile before I can catch myself. It's just such a goofy thing to do, pull me up after sex like he just tripped me and fell into me. What is wrong with my head?

"Hey, you want to go get some dinner?"

The question makes me freeze. This is new. Normally, we just sit quietly for a moment and then, I leave. I can't add any other time obligation to this. It might make everything even more complicated.



I have all these thoughts, and then I say, “Sure.” What the fuck? It’s like I can’t hear my own thoughts.

He stands and offers his hand again. “Let’s go get cleaned up.”

I should run for the door and stop all of this now. Instead, I slip my hand into his and stand up. “Okay.”

We take a very nice shower together, and the entire time I can’t stop panicking. The problem is that all of the panicking is inside of my head instead of out in the open where it can do some good. This is wrong! This is not the plan. What plan did I have, though? I mean, really, I didn’t think this out at all. He saved my life, which caused conflict, and I...

Wow, and I fucked him.

Yeah, it seems pretty fucking stupid now.

We finish and get dressed and then, we get into his car and head out to a little Mexican place he knows, Hector’s. Clint promises me they have the best tacos he’s ever eaten. Just a few words indicate just how... damn it, how ludicrous things are. I flirt with him about his restaurant choice!

“Best tacos ever. Absolutely.”

“Really? The absolute best ever? You haven’t traveled very far.”

“No, I guess I haven’t. I’m a homebody. But I know my tacos, Baby.”

“I’ll be the judge of that, Baby.”

The conversation continues, and the whole time I can't stop from pointing out to myself how cozy this all is becoming. I'm relaxing with him. No, I'm enjoying his company for Pete's sake.

Well, Clint is right.

I have traveled as far south as Mexico City and I've eaten a lot of tacos but Hector's really does have the best I've ever eaten. We share companionable silences like a professional couple. My heart starts jogging, and not just because of the hot sauce.

How do I make sense of this? This guy who is making me laugh and sharing very funny personal stories is also the same guy that handed me one of my most humiliating moments. I just don't know how to reconcile those two facts.

We finish dinner and Clint insists on paying, which gives me a small something to gnaw on angrily. But then he let me to contribute the tip, and I feel things balanced.

I don't know what to do! Clint is being everything I'd find attractive in a guy. He's just the wrong guy!

We walk out to his car and he opens the car door for me. Now, I try to remember how I felt about such chivalry but he just waits there for me to get in and I feel strange just standing there looking indecisive. I smile and slide in.

I watch him walk around the front of his little sports car, something I've never seen him drive until tonight for our... well, damn it, it's a date. I watch him walk around, and I see flashes of that perfect fireman's body naked, muscles glistening. I feel a bit hot and can't wait for him to start the car so I can roll the window down.

The breeze as we drive home does very little to relieve my discomfort. What am I uncomfortable with, anyway? So, he took me out to dinner. I paid for the tip! So, he's

in my thoughts all day and night now. I think about food just as much, and about what shoes to wear with what skirt. It all means nothing!

We get to my house, and he hurries to open my door again. I smile awkwardly as I get out. The night is cool, but I feel so suffocated. I hurry up to my door, and Clint is right by my side.

“Well, goodnight, Olivia.”

I fish for my key. “Goodnight, Clint.”

I find my key and at that exact moment, Clint leans in and kisses me.

This is not a hungry, lust-filled kiss. This isn’t demanding or greedy or aggressive. It’s soft and sensual and loving.

I melt into it and return it with all the mixed signals thrown right back at him. We break apart and I can barely manage a “Goodnight!” before I get my door open and jump inside.

I return his wave with a small one and then, I close my door and moan at my idiocy.

“What the fuck do you think you’re doing? That man is not what you want. What are you doing?”

I feel a wave of fear hit me and I run to my bathroom. I don’t get sick even though I feel hot and disoriented.

Fuck. I can’t be in love.

I am in love.

Like some big dopey teenager with braces and pimple cream, I'm falling for a sensitive jock, so to speak.

No. No, I can't be. I just can't.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: August 5, 2025, 8:32 am*

### Chapter Seven

Clint

It's another last day before I go away for four days and four nights at the firehouse. I open the door in the early evening and, of course, it's Olivia. She's lovely like she's always lovely. She wears on her face the look I've become accustomed to seeing, the look of resignation. This is more of an addiction for the two of us than anything else. We're not here to enjoy ourselves but instead, we're here because neither of us is willing to risk the pain of withdrawal.

But there's something about this whole thing that just seems really sad to me. Even after something like four months of this, it seems sad. There is no number of orgasms that make it okay. This can't be good for us. So, even though I'm not happy about saying it, I say, "I think maybe we should just stop all this."

"Don't be stupid," she says quickly. I can hear the near panic in her voice though.

I don't want to be so close to her so I back up several steps. "This just isn't a good idea, Olivia," I say. "We're just going to be hurt."

"Stop being such a childish idiot!" she shouts. She has such a snarl on her face, and I don't know what the hell I should say to her.

I'm pretty sure what I should say to her is most definitely not, "You know, Olivia, you've already shown me you've got much better things to do with your mouth than to scream at me."

Wow.

Not only was that a total asshole thing for me to say (so that I sure as hell don't feel good about saying it) but it hit her like a smack on the face. She screams and launches herself at me. Then, she does something extraordinarily impressive. She controls herself.

See, there's no way in hell that I'm going to try to protect myself. She either knows that or realizes that attacking me isn't the right course of action. She stops herself before she reaches me. She looks like she wants to kill me but she stops herself. She says with more restraint than it even seems possible for a human being to possess, "I deserved that."

"No," I whisper softly, "no, you didn't deserve that."

And then she just crumples to the floor, weeping loudly. I swear it's one of those moments that you can't believe without witnessing it. This whole last half hour is tragic and devastating but it's also hilarious and comical. I guess it all depends on the soundtrack and the camera angles. Hell, I don't know.

I rush to her and put my arms around her but she cries out, "No! No! No!" as she sobs and weakly tries to push me away. I just don't know what the hell to do. I mean, I think she needs me to hold her. I'm also not going to ignore a woman crying out, "No!"

So, I just kind of lightly rested my hand on her back and let her cry. It's almost impossible for me to do nothing else to comfort her. Hell, I guess it would be almost impossible for any guy to watch a woman cry and do nothing but she's given me no choice in the matter. I can't just ignore No! on repeat.

But what the fuck am I supposed to do now? How in the world am I supposed to

figure out what the hell to do in the first place? So, I kneel there with my hand resting on her back as she cries and she finally leans against my chest so I can hold her. “I’ve hated you for so long,” she whispers, “and I can’t...” She’s just crying softly now, and I don’t know if she’s telling me she can’t hate me any longer or if she can’t stop hating me.

I don’t have any words for her. No, that’s not true. I have a lot of words, but they’re just a jumble in my mind right now and I don’t think this is the time to try to get them sorted out. So, instead, I just pick her up like I might pick up a child and carry her to the couch.

I sit down with her and she leans into me. She’s not crying anymore, but I can feel that something has changed for her. Her entire body is relaxing against me, the tension and aggression, and intensity have evaporated. She feels soft now, delicate.

A deep sigh runs through her. “Clint, I ...” She starts and then, goes quiet again. I feel her shaking and I know that she’s crying again.

“Olivia, it’s okay.”

She starts to shake harder.

I don’t completely understand what is happening with her, but I know what I’m feeling. The bear in me wants to protect her. The bear in me is seeing her as his to protect.

It isn’t something I ever thought I would think in connection to Olivia Morley. What we were doing was like excising demons every time we met, but there always seemed to be new ones to take their place. Everything was angry and demanding.

Now, I’m holding her and yeah, I feel protective. I want to make it better. I feel a

softness towards her.

And I am very fucking confused.

I slowly become aware that she's not shaking and crying anymore. Her breathing is regular and she's relaxed completely. I gently slide out from beside her and see that, like I guessed, she has fallen asleep. I lie her back down and go to get a blanket from my room.

I cover her with it. Then, I stand there and brush her hair back from her face. I can't stop staring at her. What am I thinking? What am I doing with this girl? Are we just playing with each other? Some part of me knows that nothing about that thought is possible. This isn't a game. We both wish it was or wished it was before but it isn't a game.

I decide to pick up something to eat. I figure Chinese food is a safe bet. It was the one choice she was actually enthusiastic about before. I walk around and collect my jacket, wallet, and keys as quietly as possible, like she's a baby I don't want to disturb.

The drive definitely does me some good. About forty-five minutes later, I walk back in the door feeling a little less upended. I'm carrying a big bag of Chinese food from Wu's Panda Garden.

"Hey."

I almost jump out of my skin. "Oh hey."

I look at her and it's like I'm seeing a new person, and I smile like a fool.

Look, I know that I sound like some dippy romance novel guy right now. Lookie



here! The girl has a breakdown and the hero has a major breakthrough and sees that she isn't just some bitchy privileged brat or something, but that she's really a gentle soul with too much on her shoulders and now he feels ready to help her carry whatever burden is causing her so much distress, and soooo...

So much bullshit. Utter bullshit.

“Um, I brought dinner back from Wu's.”

She smiles. “Sounds awesome, thanks.”

I nod. I head to the kitchen and get us some plates and her a fork because she's no good with chopsticks. I feel like the fact I know that means this isn't playing a game, right?

I go back to the couch and set things out on the coffee table. It's really just a giant wood slab that's been varnished. I made it myself back in the days when I thought of pursuing a more creative life.

“So, I really have to apologize for going looney tunes just then. I've just been so in my head and, well, you know.”

I think I do. “It's nothing to worry about. How's the beef and broccoli?”

“It's really good. You definitely know how to pick these places.”

“Why thank you. It's good to know I have a career to fall back on. Food connoisseur.”

She laughs and it's the first real laugh from her I think I've ever heard. Her whole face lights up and I can't believe how beautiful she is.

We chat about things in a very lighthearted way. She brings up pets in her childhood and I talk about the worm I made my first pet when I was just three. “I saved it from my dad’s bait bucket when we went fishing. He didn’t know what to do with a kid that didn’t want to put it on the hook and get fishing, but it came back home with us and had a container garden all to itself.”

“So, what did you name it?”

“The one logical name. Wiggler.”

She nods and laughs again. “I see. Well, that beats my story. My first pet was a spider I hid in my room in a cup.”

“A freaking spider? What’s wrong with you, lady?”

“Nothing, nothing, I swear. I have a healthy adult fear of them now, but as a kid, well, yeah. My mom wasn’t too happy when I went running through the house looking for Mr. Spinny after the cup tipped over.”

We both laugh and it’s so natural and sweet, I almost don’t see it for what it is.

But Olivia’s smile shakes a bit. “Well, I better get going.” She looks at me and I feel the need to protect her like a hammer in my chest. She leans in and kisses me softly. Her lips are just a sweet breeze against mine. “Thank you, Clint.”

She heads out before I can even pull myself together enough to walk her to the door.

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*Source Creation Date: August 5, 2025, 8:32 am*

### Chapter Eight

Olivia

And here I am again.

What the hell is wrong with me?

I can almost taste his cock, can almost feel the weight of it in my mouth. I'm waiting for him. He returns just seconds ago from his three days at the fire station. I'm waiting for him at his place. I see him pull up his truck and then just get on my knees to wait for him to step through the door. I'm naked. This whole thing is from the internet. A lot of girls calling their boyfriend's Daddy or Master and stuff and then being required to wait for them on their knees like some twisted idea of a "good girl."

Well, I figure the inherent humiliation of that kind of thing and the stupidity of submitting myself to Clint is going to do what everything else hasn't. I'm finally going to feel so disgusted with myself that my addiction is going to be broken.

The door opens, and he says, "...but that doesn't mean we shouldn't inventory it along with the disposable..." He sees me and says, "Tommy, we'll need to get back to this conversation when I'm back at the station," and hangs up.

"I don't understand," he says as he looks at me.

"You have a twenty-four-year-old girl naked and waiting for you on her knees," I reply.

“But why?” he asks.

“Hmmm. Let me think... Oh yeah, my mouth is really empty and you need to fill it, dummy!” I’m really starting to panic that he’s not going to let me do this, that I won’t be able to just jump past yesterday and get back to how things were. So, I say softly, “I’m really sorry about yesterday. I was overwhelmed and I took it out on you. Please don’t cut me off.”

No, there’s sincerity to the part about not wanting him to cut me off. There’s honesty to the part about me being overwhelmed and taking it out on him. It’s just that I’m overwhelmed because of him and he’s the right person for me to take it out on. I’m sorry, too. It’s just that I’m apologizing to myself with that, not him.

“What if what we’re doing is bad for us?” he asks.

It’s a fair question. It’s a question I no longer ask because I’m pretty sure I know the answer and pretty sure I want to stop telling myself the answer. “What if it not doing it is worse?” I ask. “What if it’s bad for us but going without it is worse than bad.”

He steps forward, closing the door behind himself as he does. He looks at me and I can tell already that the argument is won. He surprises me, though. He puts his keys on the console table and says, “I’ll do this but you need to promise me we can talk afterward.”

“In the morning,” I counter.

“All right,” he says, “in the morning but if you leave my home before we talk, this will be the last time. I’m not kidding, Olivia.”

“Livvy,” I whisper. “Call me Livvy.” Holy crap. I haven’t ever let anyone call me that. It’s just from fantasies. You know, silly schoolgirl romantic fantasies. The hero

of those fantasies always called me Livvy. I think I'm going to start crying. I quickly add, "Tomorrow morning we'll have breakfast and we'll talk for as long as you like." I want to scream at him. I want to tell him to be a man and drop his damned pants. Instead, I say, "So since I'm committing to that, why don't you come over here and enjoy yourself."

I don't think I could ever have foreseen a time in my life when having a dick in my mouth would be the most comforting thing imaginable. That's how it feels for me a few seconds later, though, as I move my lips along his shaft.

I find that I'm almost greedy about the experience. That may seem weird to say, but I can't think of any other way to describe how I work my mouth up and down on him and moan like I'm slurping on the most fantastic popsicle ever. I moan like my mouth on him is some kind of direct link to my own pussy.

I cup his balls in one hand while I balance myself with my other hand on his leg. I pull my mouth off to dip lower and suck his balls. This is something completely new for me but again, I've watched some videos.

It seems to really do the trick though, since Clint starts to groan and growl like an animal. It's so realistic I almost think I'm going to look up and see some wild creature instead of him. That image is with me when he looks down at me as I lick up and down his shaft. I pause at the pure intensity of his stare.

He swoops me up at that moment. It's like I'm nothing more than a doll to him, a weightless doll. He brings me to the couch and drops me down and without preamble, spreads my legs, kneels, and puts his mouth on my pussy.

I'm already aroused. This drives me right to the edge. His tongue toys with my clit and I can't stop myself from yelling, "Oh holy... Oh! Clint! Yes, oh... Yes! Yes!" At least, it feels like I can't stop myself from yelling. All of that comes out in a hoarse

whisper. Not a single cell in my body feels in my control. He thrusts his tongue into me and I howl and it's silent.

I'm about to be hit by the most explosive orgasm when he pulls back. He picks me up from the couch. I'm trembling so hard my teeth chatter. I feel chills race over my skin.

He holds me with what seems no effort at all. He guides my legs around him and then he slides his hard cock into my very wet and waiting pussy. The first thrust makes me cry out with some actual volume. The next one makes me lose all control. The third one brings my orgasm to the tipping point.

I lose anything resembling a complete sense of reality, of anything beyond pleasure (that is almost pain, actually) as my orgasm grips me. He holds me tightly and thrusts far more rapidly until I feel his body tense as he holds me tightly enough it's almost scary while he cums.

The whole thing is surreal.

And it isn't over.

He doesn't let me go. He just carries me to the bedroom and drops me onto the bed. He climbs on, and things start all over again.

A bit later, my exhaustion draws me to sleep. I'm not really aware of much except how very tired I am. I'm not even really aware of Clint at the moment. He's just a vague presence by my side as we drift to sleep together.

Around midnight, I woke up to the shower running in the bathroom. I slip out of bed and walk over. I don't know if I'm actively deciding to keep the adventure going or if I'm afraid the conversation tomorrow will end things so I just want more now. I just

don't know. Whatever the reason, I slip into the shower with him.

But he doesn't do anything more than wrap his arms around me and kiss me lightly on the head. He gets bodywash in his hand, lathers up a washcloth, and bathes me.

It is the most intimate thing I've ever experienced in my life, and I feel like I want to cry again.

We finish our shower and head to the front room. He gets some leftovers and pops them in the microwave. We settle down to watch some TV while eating. I curl my legs up on the couch and lean into him.

I don't understand how I've gone from having a panic attack at the thought of being unable to suck this guy off to cuddle with him while watching a late-night infomercial about kitchen gadgets and cracking jokes about the announcer.

"Well, I think we should maybe get some more sleep, huh?" He stretches and stands. I get to my feet beside him.

And then he takes my hand and leads me back to the bedroom.

It's a scene straight out of a family sitcom. The young couple heading to the marital bed after indulging in late-night makeup sex.

What the hell is running through my head?

We get to the room and I have no answer, but I know that I want to be here not just for the sex anymore. Even after we make love again and I realize everything about sex has changed for me... Even after I realize it's like my circuits have been rewired so I can handle far more pleasure than I could have imagined before... Even after all that, I know that this is more than some weird physical addiction to a man I loathe.

I know I want to fall asleep at his side and dream of more nights like this one, and I mean watching the infomercial and eating leftovers, not just the orgasms.



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*Source Creation Date: August 5, 2025, 8:32 am*

### Chapter Nine

Clint

She looks beautiful.

Fresh out of the shower, wearing her shorts and my shirt.

So beautiful.

I don't want to have this conversation even though I know we need to have it. I realize I don't want to have the conversation because the conversation may be the end of this relationship, such as it is. Damn it, though. I can't keep feeling like we're damaging each other or, more accurately, that she might experience damage.

"Why do you hate me, Livvy?" I ask.

She stares at me for a second and then a slight smile appears on her face. "Wow. Get right to it, huh? Well, let's start from the other direction. Why do you hate me?"

"I don't hate you."

"Okay, why do I frustrate the hell out of you?"

It's my turn to smile. "You got angry about my land. You wanted it and you couldn't accept that I wasn't interested in selling at all. You called me unreasonable. You called me stupid. You called me a number of names."

Her eyes narrowed for a moment. Then they change. They're not friendly but they're not angry. When she speaks, I can hear something almost like desolation in her voice. She says, "I was a millionaire at seventeen. I... People look at me and they see a pair of tits and an ass. Not everybody but most people. Even enlightened people."

"Enlightened people?"

She smiles. "I mean even people who are gung ho for women's rights or whatever. Even women. Women CEOs and entrepreneurs. I'm too successful and so they think I must be sucking dicks to get the deals I get or batting my eyes or wiggling my ass. They think that now. That probably started when I was fifteen. Before that, people assumed my parents were rich or that I was just a big talker. Or cute."

"Cute?"

"Just a cute kid who thought she was a real estate investor." She gets that same faraway look on her face. "My whole life nobody just sees me. They see this... well, they either resent me or they see my accomplishments, you know. And so, nobody knows me and all I can do is make sure the accomplishments are still happening. All I can do is keep winning."

I feel like I should say something but I don't know what. I take a sip of my coffee mostly because it's something to do that precludes speaking. She says, "I have to keep winning because that's what people value. Nothing else. They don't know anything else about me."

"I know that you bought a piece of land when you were fourteen or fifteen and you turned it into an RV park. You sold it for a million dollars. I don't know what kind of pressure that puts on someone."

"How did you know that?"

“It was in the newspaper. I found the article online.”

“That was my first deal. It made me seven-hundred thousand.”

“And everyone looking at you differently.”

She nods. “Yeah, exactly.”

“They see a version of you but not the real you. So, you think you can’t let them in to see the real you and even if you did, there’s no guarantee they’ll accept the real you.”

She nods. “Yeah. That’s it. You think I’m stupid but that’s it.”

“I don’t think you’re stupid,” I say.

“Sure, you do.”

“No, I don’t.”

“You don’t have to bullshit me, Clint. You already get to stick your dick in me whenever you want to. You don’t have to act like you understand me. It’d be easier to deal with things if you were just an asshole to me, actually.” She sighs and says, “a lot less complicated, actually.”

“I’m not bullshitting. It’s not pretend. I don’t think you’re stupid and I know exactly how it feels to hide the real me.”

She scoffs. “Now I know you’re full of shit. You’re a he-man fireman. The real you isn’t fucking complicated. You’re as predictable and normal as a man can be. You don’t know a fucking thing about how I feel.”

That makes me angry but I fight down the emotion. “Get dressed. I’m going to show you why I didn’t sell you my land.”

## Page 10

*Source Creation Date: August 5, 2025, 8:32 am*

Olivia

“I don’t know why the hell you’re doing this,” I say.

He replies, “You said I can’t understand what it means to be different, for people not to understand a huge part of my life. I think I’ll change your mind.”

Yeah right.

I’m so angry! I’ve spent months now trying so hard to keep this place and this aspect of things out of my head. I’ve done everything I can to keep this out of my head so that I can... I don’t know. So, I can...

Wow.

So, I can keep screwing Clint.

What a damned crazy thing. I want to keep this land out of my head so I can keep screwing Clint with as little cognitive dissonance as possible. Of course, there’s cognitive dissonance involved even when this situation isn’t in the front of my mind. I sigh and say finally, “Let’s get this over with, then.”

We walk deeper into the project. No. Not the project. It would have been the project if this very particular strip of land hadn’t been taken out of consideration regardless of the premium I was willing to pay. The worst part about it is that the land has no value to him outside of the other part. It only worked to create open space for the whole development. It’s not developable on its own.

I'm getting angrier and angrier as we walk, which isn't what I want at all. At some point, I'm not going to be able to hold back. When that happens, the fight might be too intense for us to back away from.

And then come back together.

And I don't want to stop screwing Clint!

Damn it all, I'm so full of shit. This isn't just about screwing him. Like it or not, I love Clint. Damn it, I love him. I do, and being here is risking the relationship. I don't want to lose him even if the relationship will never be free of the shadow of the Franklin Meadow project. I just... "Clint, what the fuck is this?" I ask. "I don't think we're even still on your property!" I'm sure of it, in fact. We're on a different lot now. Something beyond the scope of the project.

"Not the lot you wanted to buy," he says, "but still my property."

"Okay, fine," I snap, "but answer the question. What the fuck is this?"

"This is my forest," he says, turning around.

"What the... Clint, you're just... Aargh! Are you into some silly new age shamanism crap or something? What the hell?"

"No," he says. "Don't freak out."

"Why the fuck would I..." I stop talking as he pulls his tee shirt over his head and then drops it onto the forest floor. It's shocking enough that I don't think to respond until he has his jeans down to his knees. "Really? I mean, seriously?" If he wanted to screw me outdoors, he could have just asked.

He steps out of his jeans and I see he's kicked off his shoes, too. "What the hell,

Clint?”

He sighs and says, “Can I finish getting undressed, please?”

“What the fuck are you talking about?” I ask. “This is some bizarre place you like to fuck women? Seriously? You destroyed my deal so you could save your sex den, no, your sex... sex place... I don’t even know what to call it.”

“See, I couldn’t sell you this land because this is the only place I can do this without driving an hour and a half.” He gets one sock off while I grow angrier. He gets the other one off and stands there in just his boxers.

“Clint I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about but if you think this is helping me to...” I stop talking again. This time it has nothing to do with trying to figure out why he’s getting undressed.

This time it’s because I know exactly why he’s undressed.

I want to blink a thousand times or rub my eyes until I see straight again because what I’m seeing just can’t be possible. I’d think it was some kind of magic trick or optical illusion but the animal before me is just too big to be a normal bear.

That’s right. I mean it. I mean bear . Where Clint stood there’s now a very large (maybe even twice the size of a normal one) bear.

I can’t explain it. Granted, my mind is set in panic mode the moment Clint disappears and this bear appears. I want to scream, I think, and start running, but my mouth just gapes open and I just stand there shaking.

“Wha...what the fuck is going on?” I feel tears forming and get a bit angry. This is not what I think of when I think of the end of my life.

But the bear just keeps still and waits.

Okay. Clint was standing there and then, things seemed to get distorted and hazy, kind of like how on a hot day there seemed to be atmospheric waves coming off the asphalt. Then, where Clint stood was this bear.

My mind starts running again and I stare at the bear. It looks at me patiently.

“Clint?”

I breathe the name, no real voice, but the bear lowers its head and takes a step toward me.

I remember. Something about ....

My heart is pounding so loud I can't really hear over the blood rushing in my ears, but the bear kind of snuffles and then, just lies down. Now, its head is right at the level of mine, which tells you something about its size because lying down flat on its belly with its head on the ground puts it at about my height.

But this isn't a bear, is it? I mean, not a normal bear. It's a ... “Shifter.”

The bear snuffs again, but keeps still, like its waiting for me to solve the puzzle.

“You're a shifter? Shifters are real?”

My mind races. I had grown up with the vague knowledge that these things actually did exist, but they always seemed like stories. I mean, how crazy to think that anything like that could be real. Most people just talked about them like they were a joke.

But I look at this bear and I know it's true. Simple as that.



I step closer. The bear doesn't move. I feel like some cartoon character and the music is swelling right now, but I stretch my hand out and then, I touch its nose.

I wish I could say that this part was romantic and life-altering and beautiful, but only one of those things is truly descriptive of this moment. I touch the nose and I see its eyes and I know its Clint in there, and that part is beautiful, yes, all the relief and joy and understanding flooding me at once.

I heard about them, of course. "I didn't think they were real." They officially announced themselves and every now and then, there's something on television but with CGI before and AI now, it's just... "It's not all fake."

In an instant, I'm not touching a huge mind-bending example of a bear. The air shifts again and then, Clint is there, my hand pressed against his face. I pull it back, red-faced faced but he smiles. "I like it on my skin as much as I like it on my fur."

The wave of relief floods me and I start laughing and crying all at once. "You're a shifter! You're a ...a bear! And you... Oh, Clint. You had to keep this land because if we built the development there would be kids all over these woods."

He nods and wraps me up in his arms, pulling me tightly to his still naked body.

I jabber as all my pent-up fear and worry and anger and, well every kind of emotion I guess, rushes the floodgates. "I never, I mean, I knew, I know that shifters have officially been declared real and all but, my... I ... I'm sorry."

Clint just holds me as I babble. "It's okay. You didn't know. As far as you knew, I was a stubborn, backwards asshole who just didn't want to sell."

I shake my head. "No, it's not okay. You were keeping this land as your safe place and I was such a horrible bitch about it and ..."

And then, he just kisses me.

It's long and sweet and when we finally come up for air, my thoughts have settled.

"I love you."

I say it like I'm declaring a very obvious fact, like saying the sky is blue.

Clint just smiles and kisses me again. "I love you, too, Livvy."

"And you're still naked."

He laughs harder. "I am."

I smile and kiss him back, and finally, I feel no restraint to it, no worry, no strings. This is the man I love.

I wrap my arms around him and press closer. "So, ever do it with a girl in these woods?"

He doesn't really answer. Who knows if he ever does it with a girl in the woods before now, but I can promise you that he does it with a girl now.

And from now on!

Did you enjoy reading Age Gap Bear's Enemies-to-Lovers Mate ? I hope so. I really enjoy writing about the Company 417 firemen shifters. You already know that if you've read any of the other books I've written. I'm definitely a shifter-loving girl. I don't just have book boyfriends. I have a menagerie full of them! Bears, wolves, lions, tigers, and those giant majestic dragons!

I loved writing about Clint, and I hope you found him as sexy as I did. I think any girl

can go for a sexy fireman, of course. When you're also looking at a brooding, introspective bear, you've got even more reasons to love him, right?

Naturally, I fell in love with Clint while I wrote the book. That isn't going to surprise any of you out there who've read my other Company 417 books. At the end of all of them, I whine and moan about how much I love the men I wrote. Well, maybe I fall in love with every sexy shifter leading man I write. I can't help myself! I always imagine I'm the lucky girl involved, and I did it this time, too, even though I'm not as young as Olivia and not nearly as brilliant when it comes to real estate.

Olivia got herself a sexy man, an incredible firefighter, and a strong and powerful shifter. She got the real deal, I think! I have a feeling that she's going to spend the rest of her life head over heels in love with Clint but without any confusion and guilt like before. I love that she's still going to have the same fire and power that she's had from the beginning, too. Aren't you?

Do you love these two together like I do? What do you like about the characters?

Let's face it. When it comes to shifters, I'm a hopeless romantic!

Anyway, I really hope you enjoyed reading about Olivia and her bear shifter lover. These two have a really tender and sexy life together ahead of them, don't they?

If you enjoyed this story, then I think you'll love the next tale of paranormal romance in the Company 417 Fireman Shifters series.

Samantha Bradley's life hasn't gone the way she expected. She thought she'd be going to a nice four-year university but, of all things, it was hit hard by a tornado. Her particular school of study was the school that got destroyed. So, instead of heading to the Midwest, she goes to a local community college. There, she realizes she wants to go into business for herself instead of getting a bachelor's degree. The problem is by then, her parents' home is already in escrow.

She ends up finding a room to rent, and since the homeowner is an incredibly sexy single dad, she can actually have the room for free by being a nanny for his kids while he's doing his overnight shifts at the firehouse. It's a perfect situation because she only has to work for seven days out of every fourteen. That takes care of all her living expenses and she can spend the other days working on her business.

Of course, she has no idea that Daniel is more than just a man. In fact, he's a tiger shifter, part of a firefighting company of shifters. One night, Daniel's sister has the kids, and the two of them are left alone in the house. Before she knows it, she and Daniel are right in the middle of powerful passion. Now what will happen?

Find out all about it in *Deadly Tiger's Single Dad Crush* , the next exciting tale in the sexy, steamy age gap shifter firefighter romance series *Company 417 Fireman Shifters* !