



His to Command (Obsessed #7)

Author: *Emma Bray*

Category: Romance

Description: She's his assistant. He wants her obedience. But what he really wants... is everything.

Robin Hastings never expected to catch the attention of her powerful, dangerously intense CEO. She's curvy, quiet, and content blending in—until Hudson Roth locks eyes with her across a crowded boardroom... and decides she belongs to him.

From that moment on, Robin's life isn't hers anymore.

Hudson doesn't ask. He takes. He moves her into his office, into his world, and straight into his bed—with no intention of letting her leave. He's possessive. Controlling. And when she tries to run? He only holds on tighter.

He'll protect her. Obsess over her. Ruin anyone who touches her.

Because Robin isn't just his assistant.

She's his to command.

Warning: This is an over-the-top, completely unfiltered instalove romance featuring a dangerously possessive CEO and the curvy, innocent woman he refuses to live without. Contains growly devotion, office desk destruction, and a whole lot of claiming.

Total Pages (Source): 11

Page 1

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 6:41 am

one

...

Robin

The marketing department buzzes with the usual Monday energy—keyboards clicking, coffee machines gurgling, hushed conversations about weekend exploits.

I tuck my bag beneath my desk and smooth down my navy pencil skirt, the one I bought a size too large so it wouldn't hug my hips.

My white blouse buttons to the neck, a fabric fortress.

"Morning, Robin," calls Melissa from accounting. I offer a practiced smile in return—warm enough to be polite, brief enough to discourage conversation.

That's how I survive here. Polite but forgettable Robin Hastings, the marketing assistant who takes excellent notes and remembers everyone's coffee order but whose name most people struggle to recall.

"The chubby girl with the good grades" from high school evolved into "the competent one who fades into the background" at Roth Enterprises.

It's safer this way. Curves like mine draw the wrong kind of attention, the kind that reduces you to parts rather than person. So I've learned to disappear. Hair pulled back in a tight bun, makeup minimal, clothes that conceal rather than reveal. The

invisibility cloak of the corporate world.

My monitor flickers to life as I log in, the calendar notification making my stomach drop.

Marketing Department Meeting - Boardroom A - 9:00 AM - MANDATORY. CEO attending.

The CEO. Hudson Roth himself. The man whose name graces the building but who rarely graces us with his presence. Marketing meetings typically involve our department head, sometimes a VP. Never the CEO.

"Did you see the email?" whispers Janet, leaning over the partition that separates our desks. Her eyes are wide, bright with the gleeful terror of someone about to witness a bloodbath from a safe distance. "Roth is coming down. Apparently, the Johnson campaign numbers were shit."

My mouth goes dry. I worked on those projections, those careful columns of numbers that suggested cautious optimism. Nothing revolutionary, nothing that would draw attention. That's how I like my work—solid, unobtrusive, competent.

"Maybe he's just doing rounds," I suggest, though nobody in the history of corporate America has ever believed that a CEO showing up unannounced was "just doing rounds."

Janet snorts. "Yeah, and maybe I'm getting a promotion today." She taps her coral nails against my desk. "Wear your thickest skin, Robin. They say he can smell fear."

I spend the next twenty minutes preparing—gathering my portfolio of work, reviewing the Johnson numbers, trying to find where I might have made an error.

My hands tremble slightly, leaving faint pencil smudges on my notepad.

It's not rational, this fear. I'm a tiny cog in this machine.

If the Johnson campaign failed, the blame will fall on people far above my pay grade.

Still, I find myself in the bathroom five minutes before the meeting, staring at my reflection.

Hazel eyes with gold flecks that my mother once called special look ordinary to me, especially behind my practical glasses.

I dab at a strand of dark hair that's escaped my bun, tucking it firmly back in place.

My lips are pale from gnawing at them, so I apply a touch of tinted balm.

Not to look pretty—to look professional, put-together, unmemorable.

Walking into Boardroom A feels like entering a gladiatorial arena.

Already, the glass table is surrounded by people clutching notebooks and tablets like shields.

I slide into a seat near the back, arranging my materials with mechanical precision—notepad perfectly aligned with the edge of the table, two pens placed just so.

"He's coming," someone whispers, and the room falls into charged silence.

The double doors swing open, and Hudson Roth walks in.

I've seen him before, of course. His face is on the company website, on business magazines, occasionally in tabloids with some willowy model or actress on his arm. But none of those prepared me for the reality of him.

He's tall—taller than I expected—his broad shoulders stretching the fabric of a suit that probably costs more than my monthly rent.

His jawline could cut glass, and his jet-black hair is styled with just enough product to look deliberate but not fussy.

But it's his eyes that freeze me in place.

Steel gray, cold as winter morning, scanning the room like a predator assessing which prey to take down first.

Everyone's back straightens. The air thins. He doesn't sit immediately but walks the perimeter of the table, a gesture so dominantly territorial it makes something primal in me want to shrink further into my chair.

"The Johnson campaign," he says, his voice deep and crisp, requiring no amplification to fill the room. "Someone explain to me why we're twenty percent below projections."

The marketing VP launches into a defense that sounds rehearsed, all technical terms and market fluctuations. I keep my eyes on my notepad, scribbling relevant points, drawing my usual neat boxes around action items. Safe in my invisibility.

Until I feel it. A weight on my skin, like a physical touch.

I glance up.

Hudson Roth is staring directly at me.

Not a passing look. Not a general sweep of the room. His steel eyes are fixed on mine with an intensity that makes my lungs forget how to draw air. I feel a heat rising from my collar, up my neck, blooming across my cheeks in what I know is a mortifying flush.

Look away , I command myself. But I can't. His gaze holds mine prisoner, and in that eternal moment, something shifts in the room—in the world. His expression changes almost imperceptibly. The corner of his mouth lifts, not quite a smile but something more dangerous.

He's still speaking, still addressing the room about market strategies and accountability, but his eyes never leave mine. It's as if he's having two conversations—one with the department and one, silent but deafening, with me.

My hands grow damp. I cross my legs beneath the table, then uncross them, acutely aware of every movement, every breath. The pencil in my grip threatens to snap. Why is he looking at me? Have I done something wrong? Is there something on my face? Does he somehow know I worked on those numbers?

When he finally breaks the stare to respond to a question, I feel like I've surfaced from underwater, gulping air.

My heart pounds so loudly I'm certain everyone can hear it.

I glance around, but no one seems to notice anything amiss.

They're all focused on Hudson, on their notes, on not becoming the target of his obvious displeasure.

The meeting continues for forty more excruciating minutes.

Twice more, his eyes find mine across the room, lingering longer than professional courtesy would dictate.

Each time, that same almost-smile plays at his lips.

Each time, my body betrays me with a flush, a quickened pulse, a tightening low in my belly that I refuse to acknowledge.

When it finally ends, people scatter like buckshot, eager to escape the tension of the room. I gather my things slowly, deliberately, waiting for the crowd to thin before I attempt to leave. My legs feel unsteady, as if I've run a marathon rather than sat in a chair for an hour.

"Ms. Hastings."

My name in his mouth is a command. I freeze, my portfolio clutched to my chest like armor.

Hudson Roth stands by the door, one hand in his pocket, the other holding it open. Waiting. For me.

"Y-yes, Mr. Roth?" My voice emerges higher than usual, a stranger's voice.

"Good work on the demographics section of the Johnson report. The only part that made sense." He says it flatly, matter-of-factly, as if he hasn't just singled me out from twenty other people in the marketing department.

"Thank you," I manage, wondering how he knows which part I worked on, wondering why he knows my name.

He nods once, sharp and definitive, then steps aside to let me pass through the door.

I have to move close to him, close enough to catch the scent of expensive cologne and something underneath it, something darkly, undeniably male.

As I squeeze past, being careful not to brush against him, I feel his eyes on me again—on my face, then lower, taking in the curves I've tried so hard to conceal.

"Have a good day, Robin," he says as I step into the hallway, my name in his mouth now a caress instead of a command.

I hurry back to my desk, heart racing, skin tingling. What just happened? Why did Hudson Roth, billionaire CEO who doesn't even know the names of his VPs, just call me by my first name? Why did he look at me that way?

And why, despite all my careful planning and professional boundaries, did I like it?

Page 2

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 6:41 am

two

...

Hudson

I'm bored. Board meetings, quarterly reports, acquisition strategies—the same tedious cycle.

I built this empire from nothing, turned it into a billion-dollar monolith, and now I'm trapped in its clockwork.

Nothing surprises me anymore. Nothing challenges me.

I make decisions that ruin or elevate lives before my morning coffee, and I feel nothing but the dull satisfaction of efficiency.

Then I walk into the marketing department meeting, and everything changes in a single glance.

The day starts like any other. My penthouse suite offers a view of New York City that most people only see in movies—a sprawl of concrete and ambition spread out beneath me.

I own a significant chunk of it. From my bedroom window, I can see three buildings with my name emblazoned on them in steel letters.

Hudson Roth. A name that opens doors, closes deals, makes lesser men quake.

My morning routine is precisely timed. Workout: 5:00 to 6:00.

Shower: 6:00 to 6:15. Breakfast and news briefing: 6:15 to 7:00.

Car arrives at 7:10. I'm in my office by 7:30, reviewing the day's agenda while my assistant—a forgettable man whose efficiency is his only memorable trait—briefs me on any overnight developments.

This morning, there's a marketing report on my desk.

The Johnson campaign. Numbers well below projections, despite a substantial investment.

I scan the pages, noting the careful analysis, the projections, the recommendations.

A waste of paper. The problem is obvious—the campaign lacks focus, tries to appeal to too broad an audience.

Basic marketing principles being ignored by people I pay too much money.

"Schedule a meeting with Marketing. Today." I don't look up as I give the order.

"Sir, your schedule is?—"

"Clear it."

He hesitates only a moment before nodding. "Yes, Mr. Roth."

By nine, I'm striding toward the elevator that will take me down to the marketing

floor.

I rarely venture from the executive levels.

My presence causes disruption—people straightening, voices lowering, the entire atmosphere shifting to accommodate my status.

It's tedious but occasionally necessary.

Sometimes fear is the most effective motivator.

The elevator doors slide open silently, and I step onto the marketing floor. Glass partitions, open workspaces, the buzz of activity that falters as heads turn, registering my presence. I don't acknowledge any of them as I head directly to the conference room where the meeting has been arranged.

I pause at the threshold, observing before entering. Twenty or so employees arranged around a glass table, clutching their devices and papers like talismans against corporate wrath. I scan their faces—some familiar, most not. It doesn't matter. They're interchangeable parts in my machine.

I enter, and the room freezes. "The Johnson campaign," I say without preamble. "Someone explain to me why we're twenty percent below projections."

The VP of Marketing—Peterson? Patterson?

—launches into an explanation that sounds like excuses wrapped in jargon.

I half-listen, circling the table slowly, a deliberate power move that reminds everyone whose room this is.

I ask pointed questions, watch people squirm.

This is when I feel most alive—in control, unchallenged, absolute.

That's when I see her.

She's sitting near the back, head bent over a notepad, a cascade of dark hair falling from a severe bun. Not looking at me like everyone else, not trying to catch my eye to seem engaged. Just writing, focused, separate from the tension in the room.

I continue speaking, redirecting a question about market segmentation, but my eyes stay fixed on her.

Something about the curve of her neck, the way her teeth worry at her full bottom lip as she concentrates.

She's dressed in clothes meant to diminish—a boxy blouse buttoned to her throat, a skirt that hints at curves she's trying to hide.

It has the opposite effect. I want to see what she's concealing.

She finally looks up, perhaps sensing my attention, and our eyes lock. Hazel with gold flecks, widening behind practical glasses. Her cheeks flush a deep pink that spreads down her neck, disappearing beneath her buttoned collar, and I find myself wondering how far down that blush extends.

Something shifts in my chest. A tightening. A recognition I've never felt before.

Mine.

The thought is so immediate, so primitive, that it startles me. I've never looked at a

woman and thought that before. I've wanted women, taken women, discarded women when I grew bored. But this—this instantaneous claim staking—is new.

I continue leading the meeting on autopilot, my mind now working on two tracks. On one, I'm dismantling the marketing team's strategy, pointing out flaws, demanding solutions. On the other, I'm studying her.

She doesn't speak during the meeting, but her body communicates volumes.

The way she shifts in her seat when I look at her too long.

The subtle crossing and uncrossing of legs beneath the table.

The nervous habit of tucking escaped strands of hair behind her ear.

Each movement tells me she feels this too, this unexpected current between us.

I need to know her name.

As the meeting concludes, I position myself near the door. People file past, eyes down, eager to escape. I scan their badges as they pass. Then she approaches, clutching a portfolio to her chest like armor.

Robin Hastings. Marketing Assistant.

"Ms. Hastings." I keep my voice neutral, professional.

She freezes, looking up at me with those remarkable eyes. "Y-yes, Mr. Roth?"

"Good work on the demographics section of the Johnson report. The only part that made sense." It's true—her analysis was clean, thorough, intelligent. But that's not

why I'm singling her out.

"Thank you," she says, her voice soft but not weak.

I step aside, forcing her to walk close to me to exit. She smells like vanilla and something uniquely feminine that makes my pulse quicken. My eyes track her body as she passes—the curves she tries to hide evident despite her efforts.

"Have a good day, Robin," I say, deliberately using her first name, watching her reaction.

She hurries away without looking back, but the flush on her neck tells me everything I need to know.

Back in my office, I call in my assistant.

"Find out everything about Robin Hastings in Marketing."

"Sir?"

"Everything. Her file, her performance reviews, her education, her current projects. I want it all within the hour."

He nods, knows better than to ask why. Within forty-five minutes, a folder appears on my desk. I open it immediately.

Robin Hastings. Twenty-five. Bachelor's in Marketing from NYU, graduated with honors.

Hired two years ago. Performance reviews consistently above average but not outstanding enough to fast-track her career.

Lives alone in a one-bedroom apartment in Brooklyn.

Unmarried. No workplace relationships noted.

Unremarkable on paper. But I saw something in that conference room—intelligence, yes, but also a hidden fire behind that professional facade. Something that connects directly to a primal part of me I didn't know existed.

I pick up my phone. "Send Robin Hastings from Marketing to my office. Now."

Twenty minutes later, there's a tentative knock at my door.

"Enter."

She steps in, clutching that same portfolio, her eyes wide and uncertain behind her glasses. Up close, in the privacy of my office, I can see her more clearly. Her lips are fuller than I realized, her face heart-shaped, her figure more generous than her conservative clothes attempt to disguise.

"You wanted to see me, Mr. Roth?"

I lean back in my chair, deliberately making her wait as I study her. Power dynamics established from the beginning.

"Sit down, Ms. Hastings."

She perches on the edge of the chair across from my desk, spine straight, knees pressed together. Proper. Controlled. I wonder what it would take to make her lose that control.

"I've been reviewing your work," I say finally. "You're wasted in the general

marketing pool."

Confusion crosses her face. "I—thank you?"

"It wasn't a compliment. It was an observation." I stand, moving around my desk to lean against the front of it, now looming over her seated form. "My assistant is taking a leave of absence. Family matter. I need a replacement."

Her eyes widen. "I don't understand."

"It's a simple proposition, Ms. Hastings. I'm reassigning you as my personal assistant, effective immediately."

"But I'm not—I don't have experience as an executive assistant. I'm a marketing analyst."

"You're what I say you are." The words come out harsher than intended, but I don't soften them. "Your analytical skills are precisely what I need. This is a promotion, Robin. Your salary will be doubled."

She blinks rapidly, processing. "Mr. Roth, I appreciate the offer, but I'm in the middle of several marketing projects that?—"

"They'll be reassigned."

"But—"

"This isn't a negotiation." I step closer, watching her shrink slightly in her chair. "I need someone with your attention to detail. Someone who sees patterns others miss."

Someone I can keep close, keep watching, keep wanting until I figure out why I want

her so badly.

She swallows, her throat working in a way that makes me want to trace it with my fingers, my mouth. "May I ask how long this assignment will last?"

"Indefinitely." I return to my chair, putting the desk between us again, giving her space to breathe. "You'll start tomorrow. My assistant will email you the details of your new responsibilities and compensation package."

She sits there, stunned, her fingers gripping the arms of the chair. "Mr. Roth, I don't think?—"

"That will be all, Ms. Hastings." I look down at the papers on my desk, dismissing her.

She doesn't move immediately, and I can feel her gathering courage. "Mr. Roth, I really must insist?—"

I look up, fixing her with the stare that has made CEOs of rival companies back down. "Are you refusing a direct order from your CEO, Ms. Hastings?"

Her flush deepens, but there's a flash of something in her eyes—not just fear, but a spark of defiance quickly suppressed. Interesting.

"No, sir," she says finally, standing. "I'll report tomorrow morning."

"Seven-thirty. Don't be late."

She nods stiffly and turns to leave.

"And Robin?" I call as she reaches the door.

She looks back, her hand on the doorknob.

"Wear your hair down tomorrow. That bun gives me a headache."

Her mouth opens slightly in shock, then closes. Without another word, she slips out the door, closing it softly behind her.

I lean back in my chair, a smile playing at my lips. For the first time in years, I feel something other than boredom or irritation. Something hot and restless and hungry.

This is just the beginning. Robin Hastings doesn't know it yet, but she's already mine. It's only a matter of time before she realizes it too.

Page 3

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 6:41 am

three

...

Robin

The executive floor is a different world. The carpet swallows sound. The lighting is soft but expensive, casting everyone in a flattering glow. Even the air feels different—filtered, rarefied, like it costs money to breathe it.

"Ms. Hastings." A tall man in an impeccable suit approaches. "I'm Gregory Reynolds, Mr. Roth's departing executive assistant. I'll be training you today."

I force a smile. "Thank you. I'm still not sure why I was selected for this position."

Gregory's expression doesn't change. "Mr. Roth's decisions aren't questioned. This way, please."

He leads me past a security checkpoint where my employee badge is replaced with a sleek black one that reads "Executive Office."

"The corridor beyond feels endless, walled in glass and chrome."

We pass conference rooms named after constellations, executive offices larger than my entire apartment, until finally arriving at double doors with no nameplate.

They don't need one. Everyone knows whose space this is.

Gregory scans his badge and the doors whisper open.

"This is the executive suite," he explains, leading me into a reception area that's bigger than the entire marketing department.

"You'll work here." He indicates a sleek desk positioned like a sentinel before another set of doors.

"Those lead to Mr. Roth's private office.

No one enters without his express permission. "

My workspace is immaculate—glass desk, ergonomic chair that probably costs more than my monthly rent, three monitors, and a tablet. It feels exposed, sitting here where everyone who visits Hudson must pass by me first.

"Your credentials have been updated in the system," Gregory continues, gesturing to the computer. "You'll handle Mr. Roth's calendar, correspondence, travel arrangements, and any personal matters he delegates to you."

I swallow hard. "Personal matters?"

Gregory's eyes flicker. "Mr. Roth values discretion above all. Whatever you see or hear in this office stays in this office."

He spends the next hour walking me through systems, protocols, security clearances. My head spins with information—Hudson's preferences, the hierarchy of who gets access to him and when, which calls to put through immediately and which to screen.

"He takes his coffee black, one sugar, at precisely 9:30 and 2:00.

Lunch is delivered from whichever restaurant he specifies that morning.

He does not like to be disturbed between 7:00 and 8:30 AM unless it's on this list of priority clients.

" Gregory hands me a leather-bound binder.

"This contains everything else you need to know. "

I flip through pages of meticulous notes. Hudson's favorite restaurants. Hudson's tailors. Hudson's exact specifications for everything from water temperature to how reports should be formatted.

"This is..." I search for a word that won't betray my panic.

"Comprehensive," Gregory supplies. "Mr. Roth expects perfection."

At 7:28, Gregory checks his watch. "He'll be here in two minutes. Remember, you don't speak unless spoken to. You don't offer opinions unless asked. You anticipate his needs before he realizes he has them." He heads for the door. "Good luck, Ms. Hastings."

And then I'm alone, perched at my new desk, waiting for the man who's turned my safe, invisible existence upside down.

At precisely 7:30, the outer doors open.

Hudson Roth strides in like he's entering a battlefield, eyes already assessing, cataloging, calculating. He wears a charcoal suit that looks painted onto his broad shoulders, a crisp white shirt, a tie the exact color of dried blood. His presence sucks the oxygen from the room.

Those steel eyes land on me, and I feel pinned like a butterfly to cork.

"Ms. Hastings." He stops before my desk, looming over me. "I see you followed instructions."

His gaze slides over my loose hair, and heat blooms across my skin. I resist the urge to gather it back, to hide behind the curtain it provides.

"Yes, sir," I manage.

"Sir." A smile plays at the corner of his mouth. "I like that."

He studies me for a long moment, gaze traveling from my face down to where my hands rest on the keyboard, then back up. Taking inventory of what he's claimed.

"Coffee," he says, then walks through the inner doors to his office without waiting for a response.

I exhale, realizing I've been holding my breath. My hands tremble as I navigate to the kitchenette Gregory showed me. Black, one sugar. Don't spill, don't spill, don't spill. The mantra repeats as I carry the steaming cup back, knocking lightly on Hudson's door.

"Enter."

His office is a minimalist cathedral to power. Floor-to-ceiling windows offer a godlike view of Manhattan. His desk is a slab of black marble on steel legs. Behind it, Hudson sits reviewing something on his tablet, jacket removed, sleeves rolled up to reveal corded forearms dusted with dark hair.

I place the coffee precisely at the corner of his desk, where Gregory instructed.

"Thank you, Robin."

My first name in his mouth still feels intimate, inappropriate. I murmur a response and turn to leave.

"Stay."

I freeze, my back to him.

"Turn around."

I do, clasping my hands to stop their trembling.

"You look different with your hair down."

I don't know how to respond to that. "Is it... acceptable, Mr. Roth?"

"Hudson." He takes a sip of coffee, eyes never leaving mine. "When we're alone, you call me Hudson."

My throat tightens. "I don't think that's appropriate, Mr. Roth."

"And yet it's what I want." He sets down the cup. "Come here."

I hesitate.

"That wasn't a request, Robin."

My legs carry me forward against my better judgment, until I stand before his desk, close enough that I can smell his cologne—something woody and expensive, with notes that remind me of whiskey and leather.

"Closer."

I round the corner of the desk, stopping an arm's length away.

"Why are you afraid of me?" he asks, leaning back in his chair, studying me through half-lidded eyes.

"I'm not afraid," I lie.

"Your pulse is racing." His gaze flicks to my throat. "I can see it here." He raises a hand, and for one wild moment I think he's going to touch me, but instead he gestures to a chair. "Sit."

I perch on the edge of a leather chair, knees pressed together, wondering how this became my life so quickly.

"Tell me about yourself, Robin."

I blink in surprise. "What do you want to know?"

"Everything." The word hangs between us, heavy with implication. "But let's start with why you hide."

"Hide?" My voice catches.

"Your intelligence. Your body. Your potential." He leans forward, elbows on the desk. "You dress to be invisible, yet you're the most noticeable woman in any room."

Heat flushes my cheeks. "I dress professionally, Mr. Roth."

"Hudson," he corrects. "And professional doesn't mean shapeless. You have curves,

Robin. Why conceal them?"

My mouth opens, closes. How do I explain that curves like mine have always attracted the wrong kind of attention? That I learned early that being noticed for my body meant not being taken seriously for my mind?

"I'm more comfortable this way," I finally say.

"Are you?" His voice drops lower. "Or are you just afraid of what happens when people see you? Really see you?"

Something in his tone makes my skin prickle with awareness. Like he already sees through every layer I've wrapped around myself.

"Mr. Roth—Hudson—I'm not sure what this has to do with my job."

"Everything." He stands abruptly, circling the desk until he's standing over me. I have to tilt my head back to maintain eye contact. "I don't waste resources, Robin. I saw your work. Your mind. But I also saw you. And now I want to know what else you've been hiding."

He reaches down, and this time he does touch me—one finger tracing the line of my jaw, tilting my face up. The contact sends electricity racing across my skin. I should pull away. I should stand up, walk out, report this to HR.

Instead, I sit frozen, my breath shallow, as his thumb brushes the corner of my mouth.

"Beautiful," he murmurs, almost to himself.

Then, as suddenly as he approached, he steps back. The professional mask slides back into place, but his eyes remain heated, intent.

"Your first assignment is on your tablet. I need it completed by noon."

Just like that, I'm dismissed. I rise on unsteady legs and retreat to my desk, heart hammering against my ribs.

The morning passes in a blur of actual work—scheduling meetings, reviewing contracts, fielding calls. Hudson remains in his office, emerging only for a scheduled meeting, barely glancing my way as he passes. I begin to wonder if I imagined the intensity of our earlier encounter.

Until I catch him watching me through the glass walls of his office. Not once, but repeatedly throughout the day. Every time I look up, his eyes are on me—assessing, calculating, possessing.

At lunch, he buzzes my desk. "Join me."

It's not a question. I enter his office to find food laid out on a conference table—not take-out containers but proper china, silverware, cloth napkins.

"Sit," he says, indicating the chair beside his, not across the table.

I comply, hyperaware of his proximity as he serves me—salmon, asparagus, some kind of grain I don't recognize. Our fingers brush when he hands me a water glass, and I nearly drop it.

"Tell me about the Johnson campaign," he says, cutting into his food with precise movements. "What would you have done differently?"

It's such a normal, professional question that I relax slightly, launching into my analysis of where the marketing strategy went wrong.

He listens intently, asking pointed questions that push me to elaborate, to defend my positions.

It's exhilarating, being taken seriously, having my ideas engaged with rather than dismissed.

"You're smarter than you let people know," he observes when I finish. "Why?"

I shrug, uncomfortable with the direction. "Being underestimated has its advantages."

"Not with me." His voice hardens. "I expect you to show me everything you are. No holding back."

The words carry a double meaning that makes my stomach flip.

After lunch, I return to my desk. Minutes later, my phone pings with a calendar notification—a dinner meeting at 7:00 PM. With Hudson. At his penthouse.

My head snaps up to find him watching me through the glass. He raises an eyebrow, challenging me to object.

I should say no. I should maintain boundaries. But the word "mandatory" glares from my screen, and beneath it, a note: "Car will pick you up from the office. Bring the Westfield proposal."

The afternoon crawls by. I tell myself this is normal—executives often work from home, have late meetings in private residences.

But nothing about this feels normal. Every time Hudson passes my desk, he finds a reason to touch me—a hand at the small of my back guiding me aside, fingers brushing mine as he takes a document, standing close enough that our shoulders

touch as we review something on my screen.

Each contact is brief, professional on the surface, but deliberate. Testing. Pushing boundaries one millimeter at a time.

By the end of the day, my nerves are frayed, my body humming with unwanted awareness. As I gather my things to leave, Hudson emerges from his office, jacket back on, expression unreadable.

"The car will be here at 6:30," he says, stopping at my desk. "Don't be late."

"Mr. Roth," I begin, summoning courage, "I'm not comfortable with?—"

"Not comfortable with doing your job?" His voice is silk over steel. "With reviewing a crucial proposal? With earning your considerable new salary?"

Put that way, my objection sounds ridiculous, unprofessional.

"Of course not," I backpedal. "I'll be there."

Something like satisfaction flickers in his eyes. "Good girl."

The praise shouldn't affect me. It's condescending, possessive. But heat pools low in my belly, and I hate my body's betrayal.

As Hudson walks away, I realize with crystal clarity what's happening. He's watching me. Every move. Every breath. Every curve. Like a predator stalking prey.

And God help me, some dark, hidden part of me is enjoying the chase.

Page 4

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 6:41 am

four

. . .

Hudson

My phone buzzes. "She's on her way up, sir," my doorman informs me.

"Thank you, Edward." I end the call, adjusting my cuffs one final time.

The elevator to my penthouse requires a special key.

Only I have it—and now Robin, for tonight.

I've arranged everything so she has no excuse to leave early.

The Westfield proposal is complex, will take hours to review.

I've ensured the driver won't return until I call.

I've had her assistant's credentials revoked, so she can't access the documents remotely from home.

Watching her today was exquisite torture.

The way she jumped slightly whenever I entered the room.

How her cheeks flushed when I stood too close.

The subtle catch in her breath when my fingers brushed hers.

Each reaction cataloged, filed away for future use.

Each boundary noted so I can systematically dismantle it.

The elevator chimes. I stand in the foyer, hands in pockets, the picture of casual authority. The doors slide open.

Robin steps out, clutching her portfolio to her chest like armor.

She's still in her work clothes—a gray pencil skirt that does nothing to hide the generous curve of her hips, a blue blouse buttoned to her throat.

Her hair falls in dark waves around her shoulders, and I see her fingers twitch as if longing to tie it back, to hide behind that severe bun.

"Mr. Roth," she says, her voice carefully professional.

"Hudson," I correct, stepping closer. "We've been through this." I take her portfolio from her hands, our fingers connecting in a touch that lasts two seconds longer than necessary. "You look tired. Have you eaten?"

She blinks, thrown by the question. "I—no. I thought we were reviewing the Westfield proposal?"

"After dinner." I place my hand on the small of her back, guiding her deeper into the penthouse. I feel her stiffen beneath my touch, but she doesn't pull away. Progress.

Her eyes widen as she takes in my home. Sixty floors up, floor-to-ceiling windows offering a panoramic view of Manhattan at dusk, the city transforming into a grid of lights beneath us.

Minimalist furniture in black and gray, original artwork on the walls, no personal photographs or mementos.

Nothing that reveals anything about me—except now, the fact that I want her here.

"This is..." She struggles for words.

"Home," I supply, watching her face. "For now."

I lead her to the dining room where dinner waits. Her step falters when she sees the elaborate spread, the bottle of wine already open and breathing, the candles.

"This isn't a business dinner," she says, a slight tremor in her voice.

"Everything I do is business." I hold out her chair. "Sit."

She hesitates, and I see the calculation in her eyes—weighing professionalism against self-preservation. Professionalism wins. She sits, allowing me to push in her chair, trapping her at my table.

I pour wine into her glass, then mine, taking the seat adjacent to her rather than opposite. Close enough that our knees could touch if I shifted slightly.

"To new arrangements," I say, raising my glass.

She lifts hers reluctantly, takes the barest sip. "Mr. Roth?"

"Hudson."

"Hudson." She places her glass down carefully. "I appreciate the dinner, but I'm confused about my role here. If you wanted an executive assistant, there are people with far more experience?—"

"I didn't want an executive assistant," I cut her off. "I have those. What I wanted was you."

The bluntness of my statement silences her. A flush crawls up her neck, disappearing beneath her buttoned collar. I imagine following it with my fingers, my mouth.

"Try the sea bass," I say instead, nodding to her plate. "It's excellent."

Dinner proceeds with surface-level conversation. I ask strategic questions about her background, her education at NYU, her career aspirations. Each answer reveals another piece of the puzzle that is Robin Hastings. Each revelation makes me want more.

"Why marketing?" I ask as we finish the main course.

She twirls her wine glass, looking thoughtful. "I like understanding what makes people want things. What convinces them to make choices."

"And what do you want, Robin?"

Her eyes dart to mine, then away. "Professional success. Security."

"Lies," I say softly. "You're too intelligent for such generic answers."

The flush deepens on her cheeks. "I'm not sure what you're looking for, Mr. Roth."

"Honesty." I lean closer. "And I told you to call me Hudson."

I stand, collecting our plates in a domestic gesture that visibly confuses her. "We'll have coffee in my office while we review the proposal."

She follows me to the kitchen, stopping in the doorway as I rinse dishes—a task my housekeeper would normally handle, but I've ensured we're completely alone tonight.

"I can help," she offers.

"No." I don't turn around. "Watch."

I feel her eyes on me as I move efficiently around the kitchen, preparing coffee, placing cookies from a local bakery on a small plate. Every movement calculated to seem casual while reminding her that she's in my domain, subject to my rules.

We move to my home office—another meticulously designed space with a desk big enough for two to work side by side. The Westfield documents are arranged precisely as I want them, requiring us to sit close, to lean in together, to occasionally touch.

"These projections don't match the market research," she notes, frowning at a spreadsheet. She's kicked off her heels, tucked one leg beneath her on the chair. Getting comfortable despite herself.

"Show me," I say, rolling my chair closer until our shoulders touch.

She tenses but doesn't move away, pointing to specific numbers, explaining the discrepancy. I lean in, not to see the document but to breathe in the scent of her hair—vanilla and something uniquely her.

"What would you recommend?" I ask, my voice low near her ear.

"A complete recalculation based on the actual demographic data." She turns her head to emphasize her point and finds our faces inches apart. Her pupils dilate, her lips parting slightly.

"Do it," I instruct, holding her gaze.

She swallows and turns back to the laptop, fingers moving swiftly across the keyboard.

I don't move away, remaining close enough that she must feel my breath on her neck.

She makes small, involuntary movements—tucking hair behind her ear, shifting in her seat, crossing and uncrossing her legs.

Each betrays her awareness of me, her body responding even as her mind resists.

We work for hours, the pretense of business providing cover for my real purpose—keeping her here, watching her, testing her reactions.

When she reaches for her coffee cup, I do the same, our fingers brushing.

When she points to something on screen, I lean in closer than necessary.

I create a thousand small moments of contact, building a current between us that will eventually, inevitably short-circuit her resistance.

At 10:30, she glances at her watch. "It's getting late. I should probably go."

"We're not finished." I nod to the documents still spread before us.

"We could continue tomorrow at the office."

"This is sensitive material. It doesn't leave this room." I stand, rolling my shoulders as if stiff from sitting too long. "More coffee?"

She hesitates, then nods. "Just a little. Then I really should call a car."

"My driver is at your disposal whenever you're ready," I lie smoothly, knowing I've instructed him not to return until called. I take her cup, letting my fingers brush against hers.

In the kitchen, I grip the counter, momentarily closing my eyes.

I've built empires, demolished competitors, made and broken millionaires without my pulse rising above its resting rate.

Yet this woman—this soft, curvy, infuriatingly reserved woman—has me counting seconds until I can return to her presence.

When I return with fresh coffee, she's standing at the window, staring out at the city below.

The lights play across her face, illuminating features that have been haunting me since I first saw her.

Without her noticing, I take a photo with my phone, needing to capture this moment—Robin in my space, where she belongs.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" I say, approaching with her coffee.

She starts slightly. "Yes. It's like seeing the city as you must see it—from above, everything laid out before you."

"Is that how you think I see the world?"

She accepts the cup, careful not to touch my hand this time. "Don't you? From up here, everyone else must seem very small."

The insight surprises me. "Not everyone," I murmur.

Our eyes meet, and for a moment, the pretense falls away. She sees me looking at her—not as a CEO at an employee, but as a man at a woman he desperately wants. Fear and something darker flash in her eyes.

"I should go," she whispers, setting down her untouched coffee.

"One more document," I counter, guiding her back to the desk with a hand at the small of her back. "The pricing structure needs your input."

She allows herself to be led, but I feel resistance building in her posture, her movements. She's realizing this isn't normal, that no business meeting requires this level of isolation, this much proximity.

We return to work, but the easy rhythm is broken. She sits straighter, maintains distance, answers in monosyllables. When I deliberately brush her hand reaching for a document, she pulls back as if burned.

"Robin." My voice cuts through the tension. "Look at me."

She raises her eyes—those remarkable hazel eyes with flecks of gold that seem to ignite when she's agitated.

"Are you afraid of me?" I ask for the second time today.

"Should I be?" Her voice is steady despite the pulse visibly racing in her throat.

"No." I lean back, giving her space. "Never."

"Then why am I here, Hudson? Really?"

The sound of my name in her mouth sends satisfaction coursing through me.
"Because I want you here."

"Why?" She presses, bolder now. "There are dozens of women in the company better qualified for this position. Women who would be thrilled to work directly for you."

"I don't want dozens of women." I lean forward, holding her gaze. "I want you."

The bluntness silences her. Her lips part, then close. She looks down at her hands, then back at me.

"I'd like to go home now," she says quietly.

Something dangerous stirs in me at her rejection, but I master it. This is a chess game, and I'm playing for the long win. I've made enough progress tonight. Pushed enough boundaries. Tomorrow, I'll push more.

"Of course." I stand, offering a hand she doesn't take. "I'll call the car."

While we wait for the elevator, she stands with careful distance between us, her body language closed, defensive. But she can't hide the flush on her cheeks, the slight tremor in her hands, the way her breathing quickens when I move closer.

"Thank you for your work tonight," I say formally as the elevator arrives. "We'll continue tomorrow."

She steps inside, turning to face me. "Goodnight, Mr. Roth."

"Hudson," I correct one final time as the doors begin to close.

Just before they shut completely, I see her lips form the word. "Hudson."

Alone in my penthouse, I pour a whiskey and return to the chair where she sat. It still holds her warmth, her scent. I close my eyes, replaying every reaction, every unguarded moment.

She's fighting her attraction, holding onto her boundaries. But I saw the cracks forming. Tomorrow I'll widen them. The day after, break through completely.

I pull out my phone, looking at the photo I took of her silhouetted against the city lights. My city. Soon, my woman.

I change her schedule for tomorrow—early meeting in my office, lunch with me, afternoon conference that will run late. I book a hotel suite in the building in case we "work too late to go home." I schedule a car to pick her up from her apartment, ensuring she has no transportation independence.

Small, strategic moves. Cutting off exits. Creating dependency. Building inevitability.

Robin Hastings thinks she's maintaining professional boundaries. She doesn't realize yet that I've already decided: she's mine. The only choice she has is how long she fights it before surrendering to the inevitable.

Page 5

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 6:41 am

five

...

Robin

The executive floor is ghostly quiet this early.

My heels click against marble, each sound amplified in the silence.

I settle at my desk, breathing in the lingering scent of Hudson's cologne that somehow permeates even this outer office space.

My body remembers it from last night—that proximity, the heat of him beside me, the deliberate touches disguised as accidents.

I barely slept. Every time I closed my eyes, I saw his face—that predatory focus, the slight curl of his lips when he caught me reacting to him.

Worse, when I finally did sleep, my dreams were filled with those hands on me, that mouth against my skin, those eyes watching me come undone.

I woke tangled in sheets, breathless, aching for something I shouldn't want.

The outer door opens precisely at 7:30. Hudson strides in, suit immaculate, expression unreadable. He stops at my desk, and I feel the weight of his gaze like a physical touch.

"You're early," he observes.

"Yes, I—I wanted to organize for the day."

His eyes narrow slightly. He knows I'm lying. "My office. Now."

I follow him through the inner doors, notepad clutched in white-knuckled fingers. He doesn't sit behind his desk but stands at the window, city spread before him like a kingdom.

"Did you sleep well?" he asks without turning.

The question feels invasive, as if he knows about my dreams. "Fine, thank you."

Now he turns, eyes scanning me from head to toe. "Liar."

Heat floods my face. "Mr. Roth?—"

"Hudson."

"—I don't think this is appropriate workplace conversation."

He steps closer. "You didn't sleep. Neither did I."

My heart stutters. "We have a 9 AM meeting with legal," I say, desperate to return to professional ground.

A slight smile curves his mouth, knowing, triumphant. He lets me redirect, but his eyes promise this conversation isn't over.

The day unfolds in a series of charged moments.

During the legal meeting, Hudson sits beside me rather than at the head of the table, his thigh occasionally pressing against mine beneath the polished surface.

In the elevator between meetings, he stands too close, his breath stirring the hair near my ear.

At lunch in his private dining room, he watches me eat with an intensity that makes swallowing difficult.

Each moment builds on the last, creating a current of tension that hums beneath my skin. I try to focus on work, on the actual responsibilities of my job, but his constant proximity makes it impossible. My body betrays me, hypersensitive to his every movement.

By evening, I'm exhausted from the effort of maintaining composure.

The office empties gradually, until it's just us on the executive floor.

Hudson has been in back-to-back meetings all afternoon, and I've used the reprieve to catch up on actual work, to remember that I'm more than this bundle of nerves and inappropriate desires.

At 8:45 PM, his office door opens. "Robin."

I look up from my computer. He's removed his jacket and tie, rolled up his sleeves. The formal armor stripped away, revealing the dangerous man beneath.

"I need you to take notes while I prepare for tomorrow's board meeting."

I should say no. I should cite labor laws, reasonable work hours. Instead, I gather my tablet and follow him into his office like a moth drawn to destroying flame.

He's arranged documents across the conference table in his office rather than working from his desk. Another strategy—sitting side by side instead of across from each other, eliminating the barrier between us. I take the seat he indicates, careful to maintain space between us.

"The Anderson merger," he begins, sliding a folder toward me. "I need all the weaknesses identified and countered before I present to the board."

We work together in a rhythm that would be comfortable if not for the undercurrent of awareness that makes my skin prickle.

He's professional, focused, brilliant in his analysis.

I match him point for point, finding flaws in the proposal that even he missed.

For brief moments, I forget the tension as we engage intellectually, challenging each other's thinking.

Then he reaches across me for a document, his arm brushing my chest, and electricity jolts through me.

"Sorry," he murmurs, not sounding sorry at all.

Hours pass. The city lights blur outside the windows.

We order dinner, eating as we work. I grow increasingly aware of small details—the way his jawline tightens when he's thinking, the precise movements of his hands as he arranges papers, the slight indentation between his brows when he concentrates.

"You're staring," he says without looking up.

I flush, caught. "I wasn't."

Now he does look up, eyes locking with mine. "More lies, Robin? I thought we were past that."

"I don't know what we are past," I say, frustration finally breaking through. "I don't know what this is, what you want from me. One minute you're my boss, the next you're...something else. I can't work like this."

His expression darkens. "Can't? Or won't?"

"Does it matter? This is inappropriate. I'm your employee."

"Is that all you are?"

The question hangs between us, dangerous and laden with possibility.

"Yes," I say firmly, though my racing pulse betrays my uncertainty. "That's all I can be."

Hudson stands abruptly, pacing to the window and back. The controlled exterior cracks, revealing something volatile beneath. "You don't believe that."

"It doesn't matter what I believe. There are rules?—"

"I make the rules," he growls, stopping directly in front of me.

I stand too, refusing to let him loom over me. "Not for me. Not for this."

We're inches apart, both breathing hard, the pretense of professional distance finally shattered. His eyes drop to my mouth, and something molten pools in my belly.

"Tell me you don't want this," he challenges, voice low. "Tell me you don't think about it. About me. Tell me you don't feel this...thing between us."

I open my mouth to deny it, to recite HR policies and professional boundaries, but the lie sticks in my throat.

Because he's right. I do think about it.

About him. About his hands on me, his mouth claiming mine.

I've thought of little else since that first moment in the boardroom when his eyes found mine.

My silence is answer enough.

"Robin," he says, my name both question and demand.

And then his mouth is on mine, hard and hungry and claiming. His hands cup my face, holding me still for the onslaught of his kiss. For one second, I'm frozen in shock. Then something inside me breaks loose—all the desire I've been suppressing, all the need I've been denying.

I kiss him back. My hands fist in his shirt, pulling him closer. He growls against my mouth, the sound primal and possessive. His tongue demands entrance, and I grant it, letting him taste me, devour me. We're both beyond restraint, beyond reason.

He backs me against the conference table, lifting me onto it with embarrassing ease. Documents scatter, flutter to the floor. I don't care. His hands move to my waist, my hips, spanning them with possessive heat.

"Do you know," he says against my mouth, "how long I've wanted to do this? Since

that first moment in the marketing meeting. You looked up, and something in me just...recognized you."

His words unlock something in me—permission to admit my own obsession. "I couldn't stop thinking about you," I confess, breathless. "Even when I tried."

He groans, capturing my mouth again. His hands find the buttons of my blouse, impatient, tearing one in his haste. The sound of it popping free, skittering across the table, should alarm me. Instead, it inflames me further.

"I'll buy you a hundred more," he promises, pushing the fabric from my shoulders.

I should be embarrassed—my practical cotton bra is nothing like the lingerie women probably wear for men like him. But the sound he makes when he sees me, the naked hunger in his eyes as he takes in the curves I've kept hidden, erases any self-consciousness.

"Beautiful," he breathes, hands cupping my breasts through the fabric. "So fucking beautiful."

His mouth moves to my neck, my collarbone, the swell of my chest above my bra. Each kiss brands me, marks me as his. I arch into him, shameless in my need. My fingers fumble with his shirt buttons, desperate to feel his skin against mine.

"Hudson," I gasp as his teeth graze a sensitive spot on my neck.

"Say it again," he demands, hands sliding beneath my skirt, finding the bare skin of my thighs.

"Hudson," I repeat, the name a plea on my lips.

His hands tighten on my thighs, spreading them wider so he can stand between them. The position is wanton, exposed, thrilling. I feel the hard length of him pressing against me through layers of clothing, and primitive need courses through me.

"I've imagined this," he confesses roughly, fingers tracing the edge of my underwear. "You, spread out for me. Wanting me."

"I do," I admit, past the point of pride or pretense. "I want you."

Something dangerous flashes in his eyes—triumph, possession. He captures my mouth again as his fingers push aside the fabric barrier and find the wet heat of me. I cry out at the contact, hips bucking involuntarily.

"So responsive," he murmurs against my throat. "So perfect."

His fingers stroke, explore, learn what makes me gasp and tremble. I cling to his shoulders, nails digging in through his shirt as pleasure builds, tightens. It's too much, too fast, too intense.

"Hudson, please?—"

"Please what?" His voice is dark with need. "Tell me what you want, Robin."

"You," I manage, beyond shame. "Inside me. Now."

He groans, forehead pressing against mine. "Protection?—"

"I'm on the pill," I gasp. "Clean. You?"

"Clean," he confirms, hands already working at his belt.

Page 6

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 6:41 am

I should ask for more confirmation, should insist on a condom anyway, but rational thought has abandoned me. I need him with an urgency that overrides caution, propriety, common sense.

He pushes my skirt up around my waist, hooks his fingers in my underwear and drags them down my legs. The cool air on my exposed skin makes me shiver—or maybe it's the heat in his eyes as he looks at me, flushed and wanting on his conference table.

His pants and boxer briefs drop just enough to free him. He's huge, intimidating, perfect. His hand wraps around himself, pumping once, twice, his eyes never leaving mine.

"Last chance to stop this," he says, voice strained with the effort of restraint.

In answer, I reach for him, guiding him to where I'm wet and aching. "Don't stop," I whisper.

With one powerful thrust, he's inside me, stretching, filling, claiming. We both cry out at the sensation. For a moment neither of us moves, overwhelmed by the intensity of the connection.

"Robin," he breathes, reverent, strained. "You feel?—"

"I know," I gasp, because I do. It's unlike anything I've ever experienced—this fullness, this rightness, this sense of completion.

Then he begins to move, and coherent thought dissolves.

There's only sensation—his hands gripping my hips, his mouth devouring mine, the delicious friction as he drives into me.

The table creaks beneath us, pens and papers scattering with each thrust. I wrap my legs around his waist, urging him deeper.

"Mine," he growls against my throat, the word a vow, a brand. "Say it. Say you're mine."

I should resist this possessiveness, this claim-staking. Instead, it ignites something primal in me, something that wants to be claimed, possessed, cherished.

"Yours," I gasp as his rhythm intensifies. "I'm yours, Hudson."

His response is a snarl of satisfaction. One hand slides between us, finding the sensitive bundle of nerves where our bodies join. His fingers circle, press, driving me toward an edge I can feel approaching with startling speed.

"Come for me," he commands, eyes locked on mine. "Let me see you come apart."

The intensity in his gaze, the command in his voice, the skilled movement of his fingers, the relentless rhythm of his body driving into mine—it's too much. Pleasure coils tight, then explodes in waves that tear a cry from my throat. My body clamps around him, pulsing, grasping.

"That's it," he groans, watching me with possessive awe. "So beautiful. My beautiful Robin."

His thrusts grow erratic, forceful. His hands tighten on my hips, hard enough to leave

marks. With a final, deep thrust, he stiffens, a guttural sound tearing from his throat as he finds his own release.

For long moments, we stay joined, breathing hard, his forehead pressed to mine. Reality returns in increments—the hard surface beneath me, the scattered papers, the city lights beyond the window. The magnitude of what we've done.

I've just had sex with my boss. On his conference table. In his office. Rules shattered beyond repair.

Hudson must sense my thoughts shifting. He lifts his head, cupping my face with surprising gentleness. "Don't," he says softly. "Don't go into your head and start overthinking this."

"Hudson, we?—"

"We gave in to something inevitable." His eyes hold mine, intense and certain. "Something that's been building since the moment we saw each other."

He's right, but that doesn't erase the complications, the power imbalance, the professional boundaries crossed. "This changes everything."

"Yes," he agrees, pressing a kiss to my forehead. "Everything." He eases away from me, tucking himself back into his pants before helping me down from the table. My legs wobble, uncertain.

I look at the evidence of our passion—my torn blouse, papers strewn across the floor, the edge of the table where I'll never be able to sit for a meeting again without blushing. Shame and excitement war within me.

"I should go," I whisper, fumbling to close my blouse despite the missing button.

Hudson catches my hands. "Stay."

"I can't."

"Can't? Or won't?" he echoes our earlier exchange.

I look up at him, at this man who's turned my carefully constructed life upside down in the span of days. "Both," I admit. "I need...time. To think. To process."

Something flickers in his eyes—frustration, possessiveness, determination. But he nods. "I'll have a car take you home."

"Thank you." I step back, creating physical distance I desperately need. "For understanding."

His smile holds no humor. "I don't understand. I don't want you walking away. But I'll let you. For tonight."

The implicit promise in his words—that this is temporary, that he's not done with me—sends a shiver down my spine. Fear? Anticipation? Both?

I gather my things in silence, hyperaware of his eyes tracking my every movement. At the door, I pause, turning back to find him exactly where I left him, powerful and disheveled and watching me with that singular focus.

"Hudson, I—" What can I say? That I regret this? I don't. That it can't happen again? I'm not sure I believe that.

"Go home, Robin," he says softly. "Rest. Tomorrow we'll talk."

I nod, grateful for the reprieve, and slip out the door. In the empty elevator

descending to the lobby, I catch my reflection in the mirrored wall—flushed cheeks, swollen lips, hair tousled by his hands. I look like a woman who's been thoroughly claimed.

And despite all my reservations, all my professional boundaries, all my carefully constructed rules—I don't hate it.

God help me, I want more.

Page 7

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 6:41 am

six

...

Hudson

I haven't slept. How could I, with the scent of her still on my skin, the taste of her still on my tongue?

I've had countless women—beautiful, willing, skilled.

None of them lingered in my mind past sunrise.

But Robin Hastings has colonized my thoughts, taken over territories I never allowed anyone to touch.

I pace my penthouse as dawn breaks, remembering the sounds she made when I was inside her, the way she gasped my name, the flutter of her body around mine when she came.

Mine. The word beats in time with my pulse.

Mine. It's no longer a desire but a fact—as immutable as gravity, as essential as breathing.

I shower, dress, arrive at the office before 6 AM. There's work to do before she arrives. Changes to implement. Robin thinks last night was a mistake, a moment of

weakness. She's wrong. It was inevitable—the first step on a path I've already mapped out for us.

Gregory is at his desk, preparing my day. The sight irritates me. He's not Robin.

"Cancel my morning appointments," I instruct. "And call HR. I need paperwork prepared."

His eyebrows lift slightly but he knows better than to question me. "Yes, sir. What kind of paperwork?"

"A promotion. Robin Hastings is being moved to Special Projects Director, reporting directly to me."

"Sir, that position doesn't?—"

"It does now." I enter my office, leaving no room for discussion.

By 9 AM, everything is arranged. The office adjacent to mine—previously a small conference room—has been transformed. A new desk, new computer, new nameplate: Robin Hastings, Special Projects Director. The connecting door between our offices has a lock. On my side.

Her salary has been tripled. Her employee access upgraded to executive level. The personnel changes have been announced company-wide in a memo emphasizing her "exceptional contributions" that caught my attention.

All that remains is to tell Robin herself.

She arrives at 9:08, perfectly on time for her usual schedule.

I watch through the glass as she approaches her desk, hesitating when she sees Gregory still there.

They exchange words I can't hear. She glances toward my office, and even through the glass, I feel the impact of those hazel eyes.

Her cheeks flush. She remembers everything about last night. Good.

I press the intercom. "Robin. My office."

She enters cautiously, stopping just inside the door. She's dressed differently today—a dark blue dress that still conceals her curves but hints at them more than her usual shapeless clothing. Her hair is down, falling in waves around her shoulders. For me? The thought pleases me immensely.

"Close the door," I instruct.

She does, but remains standing near it. A safe distance. Pointless.

"About last night," she begins, voice steady despite the blush deepening on her cheeks.

"You've been promoted," I interrupt, standing and moving around my desk. "Special Projects Director. Reporting directly to me."

She blinks, thrown off-balance. "What?"

"Your new office is through there." I gesture to the door in the wall that previously led to the small conference room. "Your salary has been adjusted accordingly. The position comes with additional stock options and benefits that HR will explain."

She stares at me, those expressive eyes cycling through confusion, suspicion, and something darker. "Hudson, you can't just?—"

"I can. I have." I step closer, into her space. "This isn't because of last night, if that's what you're thinking. This is because you're brilliant and underutilized. The sex is...a separate benefit."

Her eyes narrow. "The sex was a mistake."

"No." The word emerges as a growl. "It wasn't."

"Hudson, I'm your employee. There are rules?—"

"You report directly to me now. No intermediate managers. No HR oversight." I reach out, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear, gratified when she shivers at the contact. "No one to tell us no."

She steps back. "That's not how this works. You can't just rearrange the entire company because we...because last night happened."

"I can." I close the distance between us again. "And if last night was just 'something that happened,' why are you wearing your hair down today? Why the new dress?"

Her flush deepens, confirming my suspicion. She thought about me this morning while getting dressed. Wanted to look good for me.

"This isn't appropriate," she says, but her breathing has quickened.

"I don't care." I reach for her, hand sliding around the nape of her neck. "Last night wasn't a mistake or an accident. It was the beginning."

Before she can argue further, I capture her mouth with mine. For a moment she remains stiff, resistant. Then, with a small sound of surrender, she melts against me, lips parting, body softening. I deepen the kiss, walking her backward until she's pressed against the door.

"Hudson," she gasps when I release her mouth to trail kisses down her neck. "Someone could see?—"

"Let them." I nip at her pulse point, feeling it race beneath my lips. "Let them all see who you belong to."

Her hands push against my chest, creating space between us. "I don't belong to anyone."

I allow her the illusion of control, stepping back. "Your new office awaits, Director Hastings."

She straightens her dress, visibly collecting herself. "This conversation isn't over."

"I hope not." I smile, watching her eyes darken in response. "We have a budget meeting in twenty minutes. Don't be late."

She turns and leaves through the connecting door, closing it firmly behind her. I give her exactly thirty seconds before following. She's standing in the middle of the spacious office, taking in the changes—the executive desk, the plush seating area, the view rivaling my own.

"This is insane," she says without turning around. "I'm not qualified for this position."

"You're exactly what I need." I step closer, and she turns to face me. "Someone who sees patterns others miss. Someone who challenges me. Someone unafraid to tell the

truth."

"Is that what you think I am?"

"I know it is." I brush my knuckles along her jawline. "Last night proved it."

Her eyes flash. "Last night proved I have terrible judgment when it comes to you."

"Or perfect judgment." I smile as her pulse visibly jumps at my touch. "Get settled. I'll see you in the budget meeting."

The morning passes in a haze of routine business, but my awareness of Robin never fades.

In the budget meeting, she sits three seats away, taking notes, occasionally offering insights that impress even the hardened CFO.

I watch her interaction with others—professional, competent, but still with that hint of reservation, that instinct to deflect attention.

Except with me. With me, her eyes hold challenge, heat, awareness.

Each time our gazes connect across the table, electricity crackles between us.

Each time she speaks, I imagine those lips forming my name in ecstasy.

Each time she shifts in her seat, I remember the feel of her beneath me, around me.

The meeting breaks for lunch. I'm pulled into a conversation with the CFO about quarterly projections while Robin gathers her materials. From the corner of my eye, I see Cameron Davis, VP of Sales, approach her. Young, conventionally handsome,

with the easy charm of a salesman.

"That was impressive analysis on the European market expansion," he says, standing too close to her. "I'd love to hear more about your projections over lunch."

Something dark and primitive surges through me—a territorial rage I've never experienced before. Mine. The word pounds in my head as I watch Robin smile politely at Davis.

"Thank you, but I have plans," she demurs.

"Another time then." Davis grins, touching her arm casually. "I've been meaning to introduce myself since you joined the executive team. Maybe drinks after work?"

Before she can respond, I'm there, sliding a possessive hand to the small of her back. "Robin has a dinner meeting with me tonight," I say, voice deceptively calm. "Davis, I need those Q3 projections on my desk by 3."

Davis's smile falters as he registers my hand on Robin's back, my tone. "Of course, Mr. Roth. I'll get right on that."

Robin stiffens beneath my touch but doesn't pull away. Not until Davis retreats down the hallway.

"What was that?" she hisses, stepping away from me.

"He was asking you out." The words taste bitter on my tongue.

"So? I was handling it."

"You're mine." The possessiveness in my voice surprises even me.

Her eyes flash. "I'm not property, Hudson."

"No." I grip her elbow, steering her toward a private alcove. "You're essential."

The word silences her momentarily. We stand in the secluded corner, tension vibrating between us.

"You can't do this," she says finally. "You can't promote me to keep me close, intimidate men who talk to me, treat me like I'm yours to control."

"I can," I counter. "I will. Unless you look me in the eye and tell me you don't want this. Want me."

She opens her mouth, closes it. The truth hangs between us—she can't deny it any more than I can.

"This isn't healthy," she whispers.

"I don't care about healthy." I step closer, backing her against the wall. "I care about having you."

Her eyes darken, pupils dilating. Desire wars with resistance on her expressive face. "Hudson, we're at work?—"

"Your office. Now." I release her, stepping back. "Or tell me no, Robin. Tell me to stop, and I will."

She stares at me, conflict raging behind those remarkable eyes. Then, without a word, she turns and walks toward her new office. I follow, close enough to catch the scent of her perfume, far enough to maintain the illusion of professionalism to anyone watching.

Inside her office, she turns to face me. "This has to stop," she says, but her voice lacks conviction.

I lock the door behind me. "You don't want it to stop."

"What I want doesn't matter! There are rules, boundaries?—"

"Rules are for people who need them." I move closer, watching her breath catch. "Do we need them, Robin? Do we need artificial constraints when what's between us is stronger than any regulation?"

"Yes," she insists, even as she backs up until her legs hit the desk. "Because without them, this gets out of control."

"It's already out of control." I cage her against the desk, hands planted on either side of her hips. "It was out of control the moment I saw you in that boardroom."

Her eyes search mine, looking for something—reassurance? Understanding? "What is this, Hudson? What are we doing?"

"Everything," I murmur, closing the final distance between us. "We're doing everything."

This time when I kiss her, there's no resistance. Her arms wind around my neck, pulling me closer. I lift her onto the desk, hands already pushing her dress up her thighs. Her fingers fumble with my belt, urgent, needy.

"Need you," she gasps against my mouth. "Now."

I tear her underwear away, too impatient for finesse. She's already wet, ready for me. The sight of her spread across her executive desk, flushed and wanting, nearly undoes

me.

"Mine," I growl, freeing myself from my pants. "Say it."

Her eyes lock with mine, defiant even in surrender. "Make me believe it."

The challenge ignites something primal in me. I thrust into her without preamble, claiming her with a force that makes us both cry out. Her legs wrap around my waist, heels digging into my back, urging me deeper.

"Hudson," she moans, head falling back as I establish a punishing rhythm. "Oh God?—"

"Look at me," I demand, one hand tangling in her hair to bring her gaze back to mine. "See who's inside you. Who you belong to."

Her eyes, heavy-lidded with pleasure, lock with mine. "You," she gasps. "You, Hudson."

Satisfaction roars through me, as powerful as the physical pleasure. I drive into her harder, deeper, one hand sliding between us to where we're joined. Her body tightens around me as I stroke her, bringing her closer to the edge.

"That's it," I encourage, watching the pleasure build on her face. "Let go. Come for me, Robin. Only for me."

She shatters with a cry, back arching, inner muscles clenching around me. The sight of her coming undone, the knowledge that I've done this to her, pushes me over the edge. I follow her into oblivion, my release tearing a guttural sound from my throat.

For long moments, we remain tangled together, breathing hard, her forehead pressed

to my shoulder. Gradually, reality reasserts itself—we're in her office, in the middle of a workday, half-clothed and completely unprofessional.

But I can't bring myself to care.

I ease away from her reluctantly, helping her down from the desk. Her dress is wrinkled, her hair a tousled mess, her lips swollen from my kisses. She's never looked more beautiful.

"This is madness," she whispers, smoothing her dress with shaking hands.

"No." I capture her hands in mine. "This is clarity."

Her eyes meet mine, searching. "Why me, Hudson? You could have anyone."

The question catches me off guard. Why her? What is it about this woman that's broken through defenses that have stood impenetrable for decades?

"Because you see me," I admit, the truth emerging unbidden. "Not the CEO, not the billionaire. Me."

Something shifts in her expression—surprise, wonder, a softening. "And what about me? What do you see?"

"Everything," I tell her, cupping her face between my palms. "Everything you try to hide. Everything you could be, if you'd let yourself."

A vulnerability I've never shown anyone before, but with Robin, it feels necessary. Right.

She leans into my touch, eyes closing briefly. "This can't last," she says, but there's

less conviction in her voice now.

"It will." I press a kiss to her forehead, gentler than any touch I've given her before. "I've never wanted anything—anyone—the way I want you. And I always get what I want, Robin."

"Hudson—"

"Get cleaned up," I interrupt, not ready for whatever objection she's about to raise. "We have the executive committee in thirty minutes."

I leave her standing there, returning to my office through the connecting door. Alone, I allow myself a moment of unfamiliar introspection. This obsession with Robin isn't just sexual, though God knows I want her body with an intensity that staggers me. It's deeper, more complex.

I've spent my life building walls, keeping people at precisely calculated distances. Robin somehow slipped through. Saw past the power and wealth to the man beneath. And rather than running from what she saw, she challenged it. Matched it with her own strength.

She's not mine yet—not completely. She's still fighting it, still clinging to conventional boundaries and expectations. But I can be patient when the prize is worth it.

And Robin Hastings is worth everything.

Page 8

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 6:41 am

seven

. . .

Robin

I avoid Hudson all day, ducking into bathroom stalls when I hear his footsteps, rescheduling meetings that would put us in the same room.

My body still aches from yesterday—pleasant soreness between my thighs, fingertip bruises on my hips—physical evidence of what happened in my new office.

Evidence I need to forget if I'm going to survive this job, this life, with my sanity intact.

This morning, I arrived early and left a note on his desk:

Need time to think. Professional boundaries must be maintained.

Such clinical words for what's happening between us. Like putting a Band-Aid on a gunshot wound. But I need distance. Space to breathe. To remember who I was before Hudson Roth decided I was his.

He's responded with a barrage of emails—meeting requests, document reviews, budget questions.

All perfectly professional on the surface.

All requiring my presence. I answer each one remotely, citing other commitments, sending work through assistants.

It's cowardly, but necessary. If I see him again, if he touches me, I'll shatter.

By three o'clock, my nerves are frayed to breaking. Every ping of my computer makes me jump. Every shadow passing my frosted glass door sends my heart racing. I pack my laptop, tell my assistant I'm working from home, and slip out through the service elevator, feeling like a fugitive.

The subway ride to Brooklyn is a blur. Only when I unlock my apartment door do I finally exhale, shoulders dropping as the lock clicks behind me.

My apartment is small but mine—the first place that's ever felt like a true sanctuary.

Soft gray walls, overstuffed couch, bookshelves crammed with paperbacks.

Nothing like the chrome and glass sterility of the Roth Enterprises executive floor.

I kick off my heels, peel away the professional mask I've worn all day.

In the bathroom mirror, I study my reflection—the woman Hudson wants so desperately.

My hair falls in messy waves around my face.

I've stopped confining it in that severe bun, his preference apparently overriding years of habit.

My cheeks hold a persistent flush these days, like my body's constantly aware of him even when he's not present.

I strip, step under the shower's hot spray, hoping to wash away the memory of Hudson's hands on me, his mouth claiming mine, the way he growled "mine" against my throat.

But the water only makes me more aware of my body—the curves he praised instead of shamed, the softness he grasped so hungrily.

I close my eyes and his face appears behind my eyelids, those steel-gray eyes watching me with predatory focus.

Clean but not cleansed, I pull on leggings and an oversized NYU sweatshirt—clothes that feel like me, not the corporate armor I wear at work. I pour a glass of wine, curl on my couch, and stare at the wall, trying to make sense of the tornado that's become my life.

One week ago, I was invisible. Forgettable Robin Hastings, the competent but unremarkable marketing assistant. Now I'm... what? Hudson Roth's latest obsession? His employee-with-benefits? The woman he's reorganized an entire corporation to keep close?

It's too much, too fast. The intensity of his focus terrifies me. Not because I'm afraid of him—though perhaps I should be—but because of how desperately I want it. How right it feels when he claims me. How completely I've surrendered each time, despite my protests and boundaries.

I've never been wanted like this. Never been seen like this. It's addictive. Dangerous. If I give in completely, what will be left of me?

The knock startles me so badly I spill wine on my sweatshirt. Three sharp raps, authoritative, demanding. My stomach drops. I know who it is before I even check the peephole.

Hudson stands in my hallway, still in his work suit, holding a brown paper bag that smells heavenly. His jaw is clenched, body tense with barely restrained energy.

I consider pretending I'm not home. But that's pointless. He probably has the building security footage on his phone, tracking my arrival.

When I open the door, he doesn't wait for an invitation. He steps inside, filling my small apartment with his presence, making it shrink around him.

"You're avoiding me." Not a question. An accusation.

"I left a note." My voice comes out smaller than I intend.

His eyes rake over me—the wine-stained sweatshirt, leggings, bare feet, damp hair. Something in his expression softens minutely. "You look different here."

"This is who I really am." I gesture to the apartment, to myself. "Not the executive you created overnight. Not the woman you bent over a desk yesterday."

He flinches almost imperceptibly at my crudeness, then holds up the paper bag. "You didn't eat lunch. I brought dinner."

Of course he knows I skipped lunch. Of course he's tracked my eating habits. I should be horrified. Instead, my traitorous stomach growls.

"Hudson, why are you here?" I cross my arms, trying to establish some boundary, however flimsy.

"Because you ran." He sets the bag on my kitchen counter, starts opening cabinets like he belongs here. "Nobody runs from me."

"I'm not running. I'm... processing."

He finds plates, sets them on my tiny dining table. "Process while you eat."

The domestic normalcy of Hudson Roth unpacking takeout containers in my kitchen is so surreal I almost laugh.

He's wearing a suit that probably costs more than three months of my rent, standing in my IKEA-furnished apartment, plating what appears to be perfectly seared salmon and roasted vegetables.

I sit because standing feels too confrontational, too charged. He sits opposite me, loosens his tie slightly. It's the most casual I've seen him outside of... intimate moments.

"Eat," he commands softly.

I take a bite. It's delicious, of course. Everything in Hudson's orbit is the best, the most exclusive, the most perfect.

"Why did you leave that note?" he asks after I've taken several bites. His own food remains untouched.

I put down my fork, steadying myself. "Because this is insane, Hudson. A week ago I was a marketing assistant. Now I'm some made-up executive having sex with the CEO in office hours."

"Special Projects Director isn't made up. Your work yesterday on the Anderson merger saved us millions."

"That's not the point! You can't just... rearrange your entire company because you

want to sleep with me."

His eyes darken. "Is that what you think this is? Sex?"

The raw emotion in his voice catches me off guard. "What else could it be? You don't even know me."

"I know everything about you." His voice drops, intimate, certain.

"I know you hide your intelligence because you're afraid of standing out.

I know you wear clothes two sizes too big because you think your curves invite the wrong attention.

I know you bite your lip when you're thinking hard, touch your left collarbone when you're nervous, and make a small sound in the back of your throat when you come. "

Heat floods my face, my neck, spreads down my chest. How can he see so much?

"That's... observation. Physical details. Not knowing me."

"What else should I know, Robin?" He leans forward, elbows on my small table.

"Tell me. I want all of it."

The intensity in his eyes makes me look away. "Why? Why me? I'm nobody special."

"That's the first lie you've told me." His hand shoots out, captures mine before I can pull away. "You're extraordinary. And you'd know that if you ever stopped hiding."

Something breaks loose in my chest—anger, frustration, fear. "I'm hiding? You're the one who built a billion-dollar fortress around yourself! Who keeps everyone at a

calculated distance! Who doesn't have a single personal photograph in that sterile penthouse!"

Instead of bristling at my outburst, he looks... pleased. Like he's finally getting what he wants. "Yes. Now we're talking truth."

I pull my hand away, standing abruptly. "Truth? You want truth? The truth is I'm terrified, Hudson. Not of you—of this. Of whatever is happening between us. It's too fast, too intense. You've taken over my life in a week. My job, my career, my body. What will be left of me if I keep giving in?"

He stands too, coming around the table, backing me against my kitchen counter. Not touching, but close enough that I feel the heat radiating from his body.

"Everything," he says, voice rough with emotion. "Everything will be left, Robin. I don't want to erase you. I want to see you. All of you. The parts you show the world and the parts you hide."

"And then what?" My voice catches. "When you've seen everything? When you get bored?"

Understanding dawns in his eyes. "You think this is temporary. A conquest."

I look down, unable to bear the intensity of his gaze. "Why wouldn't it be? Men like you don't stay with women like me."

"Men like me don't exist," he says with such certainty I have to look up. "And neither do women like you. This—" he gestures between us, "—has never happened to me before. Never."

"Hudson—"

"No. Listen to me." His hands come up to frame my face, gentle despite the fierceness in his eyes.

"I've never wanted anyone the way I want you.

Never reorganized my life around someone else's presence.

Never missed someone's voice when they've been gone for only hours.

Whatever this is, it's not temporary. It's not a game. "

The sincerity in his voice, in his touch, makes my eyes sting with unshed tears. "I'm scared," I whisper, finally admitting the truth.

"Good," he murmurs, thumbs brushing my cheekbones. "So am I."

The confession of vulnerability from this titan of industry, this man who seems to bend reality to his will, undoes me completely. I lean into his touch, letting my forehead rest against his chest. His arms come around me, strong and sure.

"Stay," I whisper, not even sure what I'm asking for.

"I'm not going anywhere," he promises against my hair. "Not tonight. Not ever."

We stand there in my tiny kitchen, food forgotten, the world outside fading away. And I realize what terrifies me most isn't Hudson's intensity or his possessiveness or even the speed of whatever is happening between us.

It's that for the first time in my life, I want to be possessed. Want to be seen. Want to belong to someone else so completely that the boundaries between us blur into nothingness.

And that—that surrender of self—is the most frightening thing of all.

Page 9

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 6:41 am

eight

. . .

Hudson

I watch Robin sleep beside me in her small bed, her body curled toward mine like she's seeking warmth even in unconsciousness.

Her dark hair spills across the pillow we share, one strand caught in the corner of her parted lips.

I want to touch her—to trace the soft curve of her cheek, to brush that strand away, to wake her with my mouth on hers—but for once in my life, I restrain myself.

Let her rest. Tomorrow, everything changes.

Tomorrow, I lay waste to the last of her defenses.

Sleep eludes me. Has since the moment I saw her in that boardroom, looking up at me with those gold-flecked eyes.

I've built empires on less sleep than I've had this week, but this exhaustion feels different—bone-deep, exhilarating, necessary.

The price of revelation. The cost of finding something I never knew I was searching for.

Robin makes a small sound in her sleep, shifts closer to me. Her apartment is cold—the heating unreliable, the windows drafty. Tomorrow she moves in with me. She doesn't know it yet, but this will be her last night in this shoebox. I've already instructed my staff to prepare for her arrival.

But first, I need her to understand. To believe. To surrender not just her body but her doubts.

The gray light of dawn filters through her cheap blinds, painting stripes across her sleeping form.

She wears an oversized t-shirt, cotton panties—nothing like the lingerie women usually don for me.

The sight of her natural, unadorned beauty tightens something in my chest that has nothing to do with lust and everything to do with possession.

Mine. The word pulses with my heartbeat. Not just a desire anymore. A fact. A law of nature as immutable as gravity.

Her eyes flutter open, unfocused at first, then widening as she registers my presence. "You stayed," she whispers, voice rough with sleep.

"I told you I would." I finally give in to the urge to touch her, brushing that wayward strand from her lips. "I keep my promises, Robin."

She sits up, drawing the blanket around her like armor. Even now, even after everything, she tries to hide from me. That ends today.

"Do you want coffee?" she asks, a transparent attempt at normalcy.

"No." I sit up beside her, my back against her headboard. "I want to talk."

Wariness enters her eyes. "About?"

"Everything. No more games. No more corporate pretense." I take her hand, feeling the slight tremor in her fingers. "Just truth."

She nods, uncertain but willing. This courage of hers—this willingness to face what terrifies her—is part of what makes her mine.

"I've never wanted anyone before you," I begin, the words tasting strange on my tongue. I don't explain myself to people. Don't justify my desires. But Robin needs this, and so I give it to her. "I've had women. Used them. Discarded them when I grew bored. Sex was a physical release, nothing more."

Her cheeks flush, but she doesn't look away. Progress.

"The moment I saw you in that meeting, something... changed." I struggle to articulate what I've never had to put into words before. "Like recognition. Like finding something I didn't know was lost."

"That's just attraction," she argues softly. "Chemistry."

"No." The word comes out sharper than intended. I moderate my tone. "I know attraction. This is different. This is..." I search for the word, find only inadequate approximations. "Necessary."

Her lips part slightly, eyes widening at the raw honesty in my voice.

"You hide," I continue, reaching to touch her face. "Behind shapeless clothes and tight buns and professional distance. You make yourself small, invisible. And yet I

saw you immediately. Only you."

"Why?" The question is barely audible.

"Because you're extraordinary." My thumb traces her lower lip. "Because you challenge me. Because you see me—not the CEO, not the billionaire. Me."

Her eyes search mine, looking for deception, for manipulation. She won't find any. For perhaps the first time in my adult life, I'm being completely honest.

"Hudson, this is?—"

"Let me finish." I cup her face between my palms. "I want you to understand what's happening here. What I'm offering."

She nods within my grasp, pulse visibly racing in her throat.

"I will tear down the world if it means keeping you." The vow emerges from some primal place I didn't know existed within me. "My company, my reputation, my empire—none of it matters compared to having you."

Tears gather in her eyes, but don't fall. "That's insane."

"Yes." I lean closer, our foreheads nearly touching. "Completely insane. Unprecedented. Terrifying."

"You don't even know me." It's her last defense, weak and crumbling.

"Then let me." I release her face, hands moving to the hem of her t-shirt. "Show me all of you, Robin. Not just your body. Everything you hide."

A shiver runs through her. Fear? Anticipation? Both? It doesn't matter. She raises her arms, letting me pull the shirt over her head.

The sight of her bare breasts in the morning light steals my breath. Full, lush, perfect—everything about her body is an ode to femininity, to softness. I've been with models, actresses, women society deems flawless. None of them affect me like the sight of Robin's generous curves.

"Beautiful," I murmur, hands hovering but not touching yet. "So fucking beautiful."

She crosses her arms instinctively, trying to hide. I gently pull them away.

"No more hiding." I guide her to lie back against her pillows. "Not from me."

Her breathing quickens as I look my fill, memorizing every dip and curve, every freckle, every place where her skin flushes under my gaze. I strip away her panties, removing the last barrier between us.

"Hudson," she whispers, uncertainty in her voice.

"Shhh." I press a kiss to her sternum, feeling her heart race beneath my lips. "Let me worship you."

I take my time, using mouth and hands to map every inch of her body. I trace the curve of her hip with reverent fingers, kiss the soft swell of her belly, nuzzle the underside of her breast. Places she's been taught to be ashamed of, I adore with deliberate attention.

"You're perfect," I tell her between kisses. "Every inch of you. Made for my hands. My mouth. My cock."

She moans as I take one nipple between my lips, suckling gently then with increasing pressure as she arches into my touch. My hand slides down her stomach, finding the wet heat between her thighs. She's already slick, ready for me.

"Look at you," I murmur against her skin. "So responsive. So eager."

"Please," she gasps as my fingers circle her clit, building a rhythm that has her hips lifting off the mattress.

"Please what?" I nip at her throat, leaving a mark that will show tomorrow. Let everyone see she's claimed. "Tell me what you need, Robin."

"You," she breathes, reaching for me. "Just you."

I shed my clothes quickly, efficiently, need overriding any desire for a show. When I cover her body with mine, skin to skin with nothing between us, we both groan at the contact. Perfect. Like two pieces of a puzzle finally aligned.

But I don't enter her yet. Instead, I work my way down her body, kissing, tasting, savoring. When I reach the junction of her thighs, I look up to find her watching me, lips parted, eyes heavy with desire.

"Mine," I growl against her inner thigh before licking a slow stripe through her center.

Her cry of pleasure is the sweetest sound I've ever heard. I devour her like a starving man, using tongue and lips and fingers to drive her higher, to prove with every touch that I worship her completely.

"Hudson!" she cries, hands fisting in my hair as she comes against my mouth. I don't let up, working her through the orgasm and immediately building toward another.

"That's it," I encourage as she writhes beneath me. "Let go. Show me."

Her second release is even more powerful than the first, her entire body arching off the bed, my name a broken chant on her lips. Only then do I move back up her body, positioning myself at her entrance.

"Look at me," I command softly.

Those remarkable eyes meet mine, hazy with pleasure but clear with certainty.

"If you walk away after this," I tell her, voice rough with emotion, "it will break me. Do you understand? You have that power."

Vulnerability has never come easily to me. Has never come at all, if I'm honest. But Robin needs to know. Needs to understand what she's doing to me.

Her hands come up to frame my face, mirroring how I held her earlier. "I'm not walking away," she whispers.

The sincerity in her eyes undoes me. I push into her in one long, deep thrust, both of us gasping at the sensation. She's tight, hot, perfect around me. Made for me. I establish a steady rhythm, deep and controlled, watching her face for every flicker of pleasure.

"You feel what this is," I say against her lips, punctuating each word with a thrust. "How right. How necessary."

"Yes," she agrees, legs wrapping around my waist, taking me deeper. "Yes, Hudson."

My name in her mouth is a benediction. I increase my pace, driven by a need that transcends the physical. Her fingernails dig into my back, marking me as I've marked

her. Good. Let us both carry evidence of this claiming.

"Mine," I growl, the word a vow, a prayer, a declaration of war against anything that tries to separate us.

"Yours," she gasps, and something primitive in me roars in satisfaction.

I reach between us, finding the spot that makes her cry out, rubbing in time with my thrusts. Her inner muscles clench around me as her third orgasm builds. I'm close too, control fraying with each meeting of our bodies.

"Together," I demand, holding back my release through sheer willpower. "Come with me."

Her eyes lock with mine as pleasure overtakes her. The sight of her coming undone shatters my last restraint. I thrust once, twice more, then empty myself inside her with a guttural sound that barely sounds human.

For long moments, we remain joined, breathing hard, sweat-slick skin pressed together. I should move, should worry about crushing her beneath my weight. Instead, I bury my face in her neck, inhaling her scent, imprinting this moment in my memory.

"Hudson?" Her voice is soft, questioning.

I lift my head to find her watching me with something like wonder. "Yes?"

"You meant what you said? About...breaking you?"

The vulnerability in her question makes something in my chest constrict painfully. I consider lying—falling back on the impenetrable facade I've cultivated for decades.

But Robin deserves truth. Only truth.

"Yes." I brush damp hair from her forehead. "You're the first person who's ever had that power over me. The only one."

She studies my face, searching for deception, finding none. "That's a lot of responsibility."

"It's not a burden I give you lightly." I ease off her, pulling her against my side. "But it's yours nonetheless."

She rests her head on my chest, finger tracing idle patterns through the light dusting of hair there. "What happens now?"

"Now?" I press a kiss to the top of her head. "Now we begin."

Robin tilts her face up to mine, and I see in her eyes that she understands the magnitude of what I'm offering. Not just my body. Not just my wealth or power or protection. But myself. The core that no one has ever reached. The vulnerability I've never shown.

When she kisses me, soft and certain, I know I've won. Know she's finally mine in all the ways that matter.

For the first time in my life, surrender feels like victory.

nine

...

Robin

I wake in Hudson's bed, morning light spilling across sheets that cost more than my monthly rent.

His arm lies heavy across my waist, his breathing deep and even against my neck.

It's been a week since that night in my apartment—a week of living in this penthouse, sleeping in this bed, surrendering to the inevitable gravity between us.

I should feel trapped. Should feel consumed by his overwhelming presence.

Instead, I feel... found. Like I've spent my whole life scattered in pieces, and Hudson is finally putting me back together.

His grip tightens reflexively as I shift, even in sleep unwilling to let me go. The possessiveness that once terrified me now feels like safety. Like certainty in a world of maybes.

"You're thinking too loudly," he murmurs against my hair, voice rough with sleep.

I smile, pressing back against the solid warmth of him. "Just processing."

"Regrets?" The question holds a vulnerability that still surprises me coming from him.

"No." I turn in his arms to face him, tracing the sharp line of his jaw with my fingertip. "The opposite."

His eyes, heavy-lidded and intent, search mine. Whatever he finds there satisfies him. He captures my wandering finger, brings it to his mouth, bites gently. The small pain shoots straight to my core, igniting the constant simmer of desire that exists between us.

"I want to try something," he says, releasing my finger.

"Okay." My agreement comes without hesitation. This, too, is new—this immediate trust, this certainty that whatever he wants will be what I need.

He sits up, sheet pooling at his waist, revealing the sculpted planes of his chest and abdomen. I follow the trail of dark hair that disappears beneath the fabric, remembering how it feels against my skin.

"I want to tie you up," he says, eyes never leaving mine. "Spread you out on my bed. Make you completely mine."

My breath catches. We've been wild together—bent over desks, pressed against windows, taken hard against walls—but this is different. This is deliberate surrender.

"You're afraid," he observes, reading my expression with unnerving accuracy.

"Not afraid." I sit up too, letting the sheet fall away, baring my breasts to his gaze. His eyes darken appreciatively. "Just... it's a lot of trust."

"Yes." He cups my cheek. "It is."

That he acknowledges it, understands it, makes the decision easy. "Yes," I say simply.

His smile is wolfish, triumphant. "Now?"

I nod, pulse quickening with anticipation rather than fear.

He kisses me once, hard and possessive, then rises from the bed in all his naked glory. I watch hungrily as he moves to a dresser, retrieves something from a drawer. When he turns back, he holds four long strips of black silk.

"Lie back," he instructs. "Arms above your head."

I comply, arranging myself in the center of his massive bed. The position makes me feel exposed, vulnerable. My generous hips, soft belly, full breasts—all on display with nowhere to hide.

"Beautiful," he breathes, returning to the bed. "My beautiful Robin."

The first touch of silk against my wrist makes me shiver. Hudson binds me with careful precision—firm enough to hold, gentle enough not to mark. First my right wrist, tied to the bedpost. Then my left. He tests each bond, ensuring I can't pull free.

"Okay?" he asks, hands moving to my ankles.

"Yes." My voice emerges husky, affected.

He spreads my legs wide, tying each ankle to opposite bedposts. When he's done, I'm completely open to him—arms stretched above my head, legs spread in an obscene

V, every intimate part of me accessible to his gaze, his touch.

Hudson sits back on his heels, surveying his work. The look on his face—raw hunger tinged with something almost reverent—makes me squirm against my bonds.

"Don't move," he commands softly.

I go still, watching as he leaves the bed again, returning with a small bottle. Massage oil. The scent of sandalwood fills the air as he warms it between his palms.

"I'm going to touch every inch of you," he tells me, voice dropping to that register that makes heat pool between my legs. "And you're going to lie there and take it. No hiding. No control. Just surrender."

The first touch of his oil-slicked hands on my shoulders makes me gasp. He works methodically, massaging my arms, my hands, my collarbone. His touch is expert—firm where I need pressure, gentle over sensitive spots.

But this isn't just a massage. This is worship. This is Hudson Roth claiming my body one nerve ending at a time.

He moves to my breasts, cupping their weight, thumbs circling nipples until they peak hard against his touch. I arch into his hands as much as my bonds allow.

"So responsive," he murmurs appreciatively. "So perfect for me."

His hands continue their journey, sliding down my ribs, mapping the dip of my waist, the flare of my hips. Places I've spent a lifetime trying to minimize, he pays special attention to—the softness of my belly, the fullness of my thighs.

"Do you know how long I've wanted to do this?" he asks, positioning himself

between my spread legs. "How many nights I've dreamed of you tied to my bed, completely at my mercy?"

The raw need in his voice makes me whimper. I pull against the silk restraints, not to escape but to reach for him. The bonds hold firm.

"Hudson, please..." The plea escapes unbidden.

"Please what?" His hands slide up my inner thighs, thumbs pressing into sensitive flesh, stopping just short of where I need him most. "Tell me what you want, Robin."

"Touch me." I'm beyond shame, beyond reservation. "Inside me. Please."

His smile is predatory, satisfied. "Not yet. First, I want to taste you."

He lowers his head, maintaining eye contact as his mouth descends. The first swipe of his tongue makes my entire body jerk against the restraints. He groans against my flesh, the vibration intensifying the sensation.

"So sweet," he murmurs, before devoting himself completely to my pleasure.

With my legs spread wide and secured, I can't close them, can't control the pace or pressure. Can only lie there and receive what he gives—the expert flicks of his tongue, the careful suction of his lips, the occasional graze of teeth that sends shockwaves through my system.

"Hudson!" I cry as he slides one finger inside me, then another, curling them against that spot that makes sparks explode behind my eyelids.

"Look at me," he demands, pausing his ministrations. "Watch me taste you."

I force my eyes open, looking down my body to where he kneels between my spread thighs. The sight of him there, those steel eyes locked on mine as he lowers his mouth again, is almost unbearably erotic.

His fingers thrust in counterpoint to his tongue, building a tension in my core that borders on painful. I strain against the silk bonds, seeking a release that seems just out of reach.

"Please," I beg. "Please, Hudson. I need?—"

"I know what you need." He pulls away abruptly, leaving me trembling on the edge. "And I'll give it to you. When I decide you're ready."

The loss of his mouth is a physical pain. I watch as he positions himself over me, his cock hard and ready, the tip glistening with evidence of his own arousal. He nudges against my entrance but doesn't push forward.

"Say it," he commands, voice taut with restraint. "Tell me who you belong to."

"You," I gasp, beyond pride or hesitation. "I'm yours, Hudson. Only yours."

He rewards me with a single deep thrust that seats him fully inside me. We both cry out at the sensation—the perfect fullness, the intimate connection.

"Mine," he growls, beginning a rhythm that's deep and measured. "Say it again."

"Yours." The word falls from my lips like a prayer. "Completely yours."

With each thrust, each possessive declaration, something shifts inside me—a final surrender of self-protection, of boundaries. I've spent my life making myself smaller, less noticeable, less demanding. Now I arch into Hudson's possession, greedy for

more, shameless in my need.

"That's it," he encourages, pace increasing as he reads my surrender in my eyes.
"Give me everything, Robin. Everything."

His hands grip my hips, lifting them for deeper penetration. The new angle hits something inside me that makes lights burst behind my eyes. I pull hard against the restraints, not to escape but to ground myself in the rising tide of sensation.

"Hudson, I'm?—"

"Not yet," he commands. "Wait for me."

He slides one hand between our bodies, fingers finding my clit, circling with devastating precision. The dual stimulation is almost too much—his cock stretching me, his fingers working me, his eyes devouring me.

"Now," he finally says, voice breaking with his own approaching climax. "Come now, Robin. Let me feel you."

The permission unlocks something primal within me. My orgasm crashes over me in waves so intense I scream his name, inner muscles clamping around him, drawing him deeper. Hudson follows immediately, his rhythm faltering as he empties himself inside me with a guttural moan that might be my name.

For long moments, there's only the sound of our ragged breathing, the aftershocks of pleasure rippling through my bound body. Hudson collapses beside me, not withdrawing, keeping us connected as he fumbles with the restraint on my right wrist.

"Let me," he murmurs, freeing first one arm, then the other.

I immediately wrap my arms around him, needing the contact, the closeness. He reaches down to untie my ankles, then gathers me against his chest.

"Okay?" he asks, pressing kisses to my hair, my temple, the corner of my mouth.

"Perfect," I whisper, boneless and sated in his embrace.

His arms tighten around me possessively. "Mine," he says again, but this time the word holds something beyond ownership—a tenderness, a wonder.

"Yours," I agree, pressing a kiss over his heart. "And you're mine."

He stiffens slightly at the reciprocal claim, then relaxes with a small laugh. "Yes," he admits. "Completely."

We lie tangled together as morning light fills the room, neither willing to break the spell with movement. His hand traces idle patterns on my back, my hip, my thigh—not to arouse but to maintain connection.

"Robin." The way he says my name—reverent, certain—makes me look up. His expression is more open than I've ever seen it, the usual mask of control completely absent. "This is real. What's happening between us. It's not just sex or obsession or temporary insanity."

"I know." And I do. Whatever this is—this consuming need, this recognition, this inevitable gravitational pull—it transcends normal categories. It's not just love, though that word hovers unspoken between us. It's deeper. More primal. More necessary.

"I've never felt this before," he confesses, voice rough with emotion. "Never wanted to."

I reach up to trace the sharp line of his jaw, the fullness of his lower lip. "Me neither."

His hand captures mine, brings it to his mouth for a kiss. "I was dead before you. Just going through motions. Building. Acquiring. Existing."

The vulnerable admission makes my heart clench. "And now?"

His eyes—those steel eyes that first captured mine across a conference table—hold an emotion I never expected to see there. "Now I'm alive. Because of you."

I kiss him then, pouring everything I can't yet say into the press of my lips against his. He responds with equal fervor, equal emotion.

When we finally part, I rest my forehead against his, breathing him in. "I thought obsession was something to fear," I tell him. "Something unhealthy. Dangerous."

"And now?" His fingers tangle in my hair, tilting my face to meet his gaze.

"Now I think maybe it's just how some people love." I smile, watching his pupils dilate at the implied confession. "Completely. Eternally. Obsessively."

His answering smile is like the sun breaking through clouds—rare, brilliant, transformative. "Yes," he agrees, pulling me closer. "That's exactly what it is."

And in the circle of his arms, bound not by silk but by something far more permanent, I finally understand what I've been running from all along.

Not Hudson's intensity. Not his possession.

But the terrifying, exhilarating certainty that I'm exactly where I belong—claimed, seen, cherished in a way I never thought possible.

Not just his. But his forever.

Page 11

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 6:41 am

Three weeks later

Hudson

I watch Robin move through my penthouse—our penthouse—with the easy familiarity of belonging.

She's left her mark everywhere: books stacked on my previously pristine coffee table, a fuzzy throw blanket on the leather couch, her favorite tea in the kitchen cupboard.

Three weeks of her living here, and the sterile space I once occupied has transformed into something warm, alive, inhabited.

Just like me. But it's not enough. Not nearly enough.

I need more. Need all of her. Not just sharing my home, but sharing my name, my life, my future.

Until there's no separation between us at all.

She's working at the dining table, brow furrowed in concentration as she reviews acquisition documents.

I've promoted her again—Special Projects Director to Chief Strategy Officer.

Not because she's warming my bed, but because she's brilliant.

Because the board was stunned by her analysis of the European market expansion.

Because even my most cutthroat executives defer to her insights now.

It should bother me, watching her carve out her own empire within mine. Instead, it fills me with a pride I've never felt before—not for my own accomplishments, but for hers. For us. For this strange, perfect unit we've become.

"You're staring," she says without looking up, a smile playing at the corner of her mouth.

"I'm admiring," I correct, moving behind her chair, hands settling on her shoulders. "My view. My right."

She laughs, tilting her head back to look at me. Upside down, those remarkable eyes still captivate me completely. "Your obsession, you mean."

"Yes." I don't deny it. Never will. "My everything."

I massage her shoulders, feeling the tension of a long workday beneath my fingers. She sighs, leaning into my touch, trusting me implicitly now where once she'd have pulled away. Progress. Victory.

"Dinner?" I suggest, pressing a kiss to the top of her head.

"I thought we were reviewing the Stevens portfolio tonight." She gestures to the stack of documents before her.

"Later." I close her laptop, ignoring her sound of protest. "I have plans for you first."

Her pupils dilate slightly, a flush creeping up her neck—the now-familiar signs of her arousal that I've cataloged like the collector of rare artifacts I've become. "What kind

of plans?"

I take her hand, leading her away from the table, toward the terrace doors. The sun is setting over Manhattan, painting the sky in colors that can't compete with the gold flecks in Robin's eyes.

"Hudson?" Curiosity tinges her voice as I guide her onto the terrace, where I've had my staff prepare without her knowledge.

White roses in crystal vases. Champagne chilling in a silver bucket. The small black box placed precisely in the center of the glass table.

She stops short when she sees it, one hand flying to her throat in that unconscious gesture she makes when overwhelmed. "What is this?"

"What does it look like?" I turn her to face me, needing to see every flicker of emotion cross her expressive face.

"It looks like..." She swallows hard. "Hudson, we've only been together a month."

"Twenty-nine days," I correct. "And your point?"

"That's not long enough to?—"

"It's been long enough for you to completely reorder my existence," I interrupt. "Long enough for me to know with absolute certainty that I want you in my life. Permanently."

Her eyes widen, darting between my face and the box on the table. "This is... fast."

"Everything about us has been fast," I remind her, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. "From the moment I saw you in that boardroom, nothing has proceeded at a

normal pace."

A small smile touches her lips. "True."

I retrieve the box, hold it between us but don't open it yet. "You're not just my lover, Robin. Not just my Chief Strategy Officer. You're the center of my world now. I want to make that official."

"How official?" she asks, voice barely above a whisper.

I open the box, revealing the ring inside—a flawless emerald-cut diamond set in platinum, flanked by smaller stones that catch the fading sunlight, throwing prisms across her face.

"Completely official," I tell her. "My house. My ring. My name."

She stares at the ring, then at me, emotions chasing across her face too quickly to read. "Hudson, I?—"

"Before you answer," I interject, needing her to understand the full weight of what I'm offering, "know that this isn't a normal proposal.

I'm not asking you to be my wife in the conventional sense.

I'm asking you to be my partner. My equal.

The person who stands beside me, challenges me, shares everything with me. "

Her eyes soften at this, understanding what I'm really saying. That I'm offering her not just financial security or social status, but true partnership. Something I've never offered anyone before.

"Equal partners?" she asks carefully. "Not just your beautiful possession?"

I smile, recognizing the gentle challenge in her question. "Both," I admit. "I won't pretend I don't want to possess you completely. But I also want you beside me, not behind me. Making decisions. Building our empire together."

She takes the box from my hand, studies the ring. "It's beautiful."

"It's nothing compared to you." I lift her chin, making her meet my gaze. "Say yes, Robin. Be mine in every way that matters."

Something shifts in her expression—the last hesitation giving way to certainty. "Yes," she says simply. "Yes, Hudson."

Satisfaction roars through me, primal and complete. I take the ring from the box, slide it onto her finger. The perfect fit—I made sure of it, had her ring size taken while she slept. The sight of my mark on her hand ignites something possessive and ancient within me.

"Mine," I growl, pulling her against me. "Finally. Completely."

"Yours," she agrees, arms winding around my neck. "And you're mine."

I claim her mouth in a kiss that's equal parts triumph and hunger. My hands span her waist, lifting her easily, setting her on the terrace table. Champagne and ceremony can wait. This—this physical claiming—cannot.

"Here?" she gasps as my mouth moves to her neck, her collarbone, the swell of her breast above her blouse. "Someone could see?—"

"Let them." My hands are already pushing up her skirt, finding the warm skin of her thighs. "Let the whole city see who you belong to. Who owns your pleasure."

She moans as my fingers find her center, already wet for me through delicate lace.
"Hudson, please?—"

"Please what?" I circle her clit through the fabric, watching her pupils dilate, her lips part. "Tell me what my fiancée needs."

The word makes her gasp, hips bucking against my hand. "You," she breathes.
"Inside me. Now."

I tear her underwear away with impatient fingers, too hungry for finesse. She's working at my belt, equally desperate, freeing me with practiced efficiency. When I thrust into her, seated deep in one smooth movement, we both cry out at the perfection of our joining.

"Look at me," I demand, holding still within her. "See who's inside you. Who you've agreed to belong to. Forever."

Her eyes—those remarkable eyes that saw past all my defenses from the first moment—lock with mine. "I see you," she whispers, hands cupping my face. "I've always seen you, Hudson."

The simple truth of her words breaks something open inside me. I begin to move, claiming her with each thrust, each possessive touch. She meets me movement for movement, taking everything I give and demanding more.

"Mine," I growl against her throat, leaving marks that will show tomorrow. "Say it. Tell me."

"Yours," she gasps, inner muscles clenching around me as pleasure builds. "Always yours, Hudson."

The sunset paints her skin golden, her hair a dark flame against the white roses I've

surrounded her with. Beautiful. Perfect. Mine. The words pulse with my heartbeat as I drive us both toward completion.

"The ring stays on," I tell her, voice rough with approaching climax. "Always. So everyone knows."

"Yes," she agrees, fingers digging into my shoulders. "Yes, Hudson, please?—"

I reach between us, finding her clit, circling in time with my thrusts. "Come for me," I command. "Come for your fiancé."

The words trigger her release—her body arching, inner muscles clamping around me in rhythmic pulses that drag me over the edge with her. I empty myself inside her with a guttural sound that might be her name, might be a prayer, might be both.

For long moments, we remain joined, breathing hard, foreheads pressed together. The diamonds on her finger catch the last rays of sunset, sending rainbows dancing across my face. A sign. A promise. A future.

"Was that a yes?" she asks finally, humor dancing in her voice.

I laugh—a sound so rare before her that it used to startle my employees. Now it comes easily, naturally, in her presence. "That was a hell yes."

She smiles, that sweet, genuine smile that first caught my attention across a conference table. "Good. Because I'm not giving this ring back." She wiggles her fingers, making the diamond flash. "It matches my eyes."

"That's why I chose it." I help her down from the table, keeping her pressed against me. "Everything I give you will be perfect. Worthy of you."

She reaches up, traces the line of my jaw with gentle fingertips. "I don't need perfect,

Hudson. I just need you."

The simple declaration hits me with unexpected force. For all my wealth, all my power, no one has ever wanted just me before. The man beneath the empire. The heart beneath the ruthless exterior.

"You have me," I promise, covering her hand with mine, feeling the hard press of the ring between our palms. "All of me. Forever."

She rises on tiptoes, presses a kiss to the corner of my mouth. "So what's next, Mr. Roth?"

"Everything," I tell her, meaning it completely. "Everything with you, Mrs. Roth."

Her breath catches at the name—my name, soon to be hers. "I like the sound of that."

"So do I." I lead her toward the champagne, finally ready for celebration. "It's how I'll introduce you at the board meeting tomorrow. Robin Roth, my fiancée and Chief Strategy Officer."

She laughs, a sound I'll never tire of. "The board will have collective heart failure."

"Let them," I dismiss, pouring golden liquid into crystal flutes. "They work for us now."

Us. The word feels right. Necessary. Like the final piece of a puzzle sliding into place.

I hand her a glass, raise my own. "To us," I propose. "To forever."

"To us," she echoes, eyes shining with emotion as our glasses clink together. "To forever."

As the last light fades from the sky, painting Manhattan in shadow and electric brilliance, I look at the woman before me—the woman wearing my ring, soon to bear my name, already carrying my heart.

She's not just my assistant. Not just my lover. She's the center of my world. The one person who's ever truly seen me. And now, finally, officially, irrevocably mine.

I've never believed in fate before Robin. Never believed in anything I couldn't control, couldn't acquire through determination and strategic planning. But this—this connection that sparked the moment our eyes met—feels like something beyond my making. Something inevitable. Cosmic.

Perfect.