



Lesbian Boss (Sapphic Sweethearts #5)

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Category: LGBT+

Description: What happens when your boss doesnt notice you but you cant stop seeing her?

Emily has had her heart broken by her boss. Badly. Shes so torn apart she only has one choice: find another job. The problem? She just matched with her new boss on a dating app. Here we go again.

Hillary cant keep her eyes off her new employee. Soft, sweet, beautiful, smart: Emily checks every box on Hillarys true love wish list. Shes her employee, though. Its forbidden. Its wrong.

When a freak snowstorm traps them together, sparks fly.

But will sparks be enough?

Total Pages (Source): 15

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:47 am

Hillary

“I DON’T KNOW WHAT I’M supposed to do with this.”

I stare at the hiring paperwork in front of me. It’s got “HR” written all over it, so why is it on my desk? I’m not the human resources person. To be fair, sometimes I’m not really sure what person I am.

I’m the person who wants to fall in love.

I’m the person who keeps holding herself back.

“Sorry. Eleanor is out today. Can you sign all of this?” Rebecca, the actual human resources manager, offers me a meek smile. I look at the paper once more before meeting Rebecca’s gaze.

“No,” I say. “I literally can’t.”

“Why not?” Her face doesn’t fall. If anything, she smiles a bit brighter. This is one of her strategies, I know. She keeps up appearances at all costs. This is why she’s paid so well. This is why she’s so good at her damn job.

“Because I’m not the human resources director,” I say. “Eleanor is, so this will have to wait until tomorrow.”

“But-“

“No.” I shake my head. “I’m not messing with any of that. It can wait.”

Rebecca frowns. Her short brown hair is cropped close to her head. It’s the longest I’ve ever seen it. Her fiery green eyes seem to get brighter as her eyes narrow.

Suddenly, the mood changes.

“You’re going to do this for me, Hillary.”

“I’m not.”

“You are.”

“Yes,” she says, “you are.”

And then, just like that, I realize who I am. I realize I’ve been promoted. I realize I have an assistant now. I realize that just because Rebecca is used to being in HR doesn’t mean that she gets to take control of everything.

“Rebecca, the conversation is over. Go back to your office.” I shove the papers back toward her, and I turn. My heels make click-clack sounds on the floor as I bustle down the hall to my office. Things are really turning around for me now, but I have to remember who I am.

And I have to remember what I’m about.

It’s not my job to manage Rebecca. I just have to keep telling myself that. She lets out an angry squeak as I head into my office and close the door, but I pretend like I don’t hear. Instead, I sit down, slide behind my desk, and stare at the bouquet of flowers on top. There’s a card here, too.

Congrats! We're so happy for you. Love, Tori and Jessica

I smile at the card. Tori and Jessica are on their honeymoon because they decided to randomly elope. When they get back, they're going to have a big wedding ceremony, presumably, but I'm not buying it. We have some other friends and colleagues who are also due to get married. One thing I've learned about lesbians is that they don't seem to have any trouble getting married fast. The joke about U-Hauls? It's totally true, at least around here.

There's a knock at the door.

"Come in," I say without glancing up.

Then the door opens and in walks a tall, curvy redhead wearing combat boots, a short black dress, and the most nervous expression I've ever seen on another human.

Melt.

Me.

Internally, I panic.

Externally, I stay calm and collected.

Cool.

I stay cool.

"Emily," I say. "Nice to meet you."

"I, um, hi," she says.

Does she recognize me from my dating profile?

Does she know that I'm the one who blew her off last night because I realized she was my new assistant?

I'm pissed, really. There's a part of me that wishes I'd just gone for it and met up with her last night. Now we've got all of this weird, sexual chemistry between us that I'd rather not have.

What I want is to find someone who loves me for me. I don't need complicated. I need simple.

Emily is not simple.

At least, things wouldn't be simple between the two of us because I crave her too much.

"Have a seat," I say. I gesture to the chairs in front of my desk, and she nods. Emily closes my office door behind her, turns back toward me, and heads for the seat. As she sits, I notice the way her dress slides up her thigh just a little. She's got freckles on her legs, her arms, her chest.

I like them.

What would it be like to hold her in bed and count every freckle?

What would it feel like to be able to kiss every damn inch of her body.

No, I can't.

I can't even let myself go there because if I do, I won't stop.

“I didn’t get to meet you during the hiring process,” she says. She crosses her arms. Then she drops them. Emily places her hands on her knees, then my desk, then her knees once more.

Okay, so she’s nervous.

“I know, and that’s unusual. Most of the time, when we hire here at Northington Tech, we allow the supervisors to choose their own employees,” I say. “Unfortunately, the merger has been a bit chaotic.”

“It was unplanned, too, right?”

“Something like that.” One of the things I’ve found is that when love is involved, everyone suddenly gets totally unpredictable. That’s why the merger was something of a surprise to so many people. Who could have predicted two people were going to fall in love and throw our worlds into chaos?

Not me.

Well, maybe me.

I’m happy for them, of course. We all are. Still, I don’t love how chaotic work feels now. The tension creeps over me at moments I don’t want it to. I wish I had a way to relax.

Fuck, I wish it was with her.

“Either way,” she smiles. “I’m glad to be here.”

Resist.

I have to resist.

“Tell me about yourself,” I say calmly. I’m relieved that she hasn’t said anything about the app. She either doesn’t recognize me, or she’s going to play things cool, like I am, so we can stay normal. Professional. We’re both adults, after all. I’m 31, and there’s no way she’s much younger than me. She carries herself with far too much confidence to be any younger than, say, 25. I can’t remember how old the app said she was. Maybe 27. Maybe 28. I already unmatched with her, so I can’t check.

“Myself? What do you want to know?” Emily laughs softly, and she looks back up at me. I think about how much fun I had talking to her yesterday, how I loved hearing about her dog, and how much the two of us have in common. Guilt wraps around me as I realize that no matter what comes next, our relationship is going to be choppy.

I should have just told her why I wasn’t going to text her back, why I wasn’t going to meet up.

Instead, I unmatched like a loser.

I was stupid.

Lame.

“Well, for starters, why do you want to work here?”

“I’m sorry,” she says. “Is this an interview? I actually thought I already had the role.” She looks nervous, suddenly, more nervous than she looked before.

“I’m sorry. I’m tired. I haven’t had my caffeine yet,” I admit. “I’m not trying to make you uncomfortable. Shit. I kind of feel like I’m doing this all wrong,” I say.

Again, she laughs.

Again, I wish we were drinking a bottle of wine instead of staring at a stack of papers in front of me.

“It’s totally fine,” she says. “I just wanted to be sure. You know, I already told all of my friends about this job. I’d feel pretty silly if I suddenly had to backtrack.”

“Backtrack?”

“You know, and tell them it was a big misunderstanding.”

“Right,” I nod. “Anyway, tell me about your work history. Not an interview. Just so I know where I might need to fill in any blanks today.”

“Well, I worked as a receptionist for my college dorm for four years,” she says. “That really got me interested in administrative work. After I graduated, I worked with Key and Jacobsen as their administrative assistant.”

“Key and Jacobsen...the law firm?”

“Yes,” she nods. “I worked there until about two months ago. Then I decided I was ready for something else.”

Alarm bells are going off in my head. That’s a great gig. Huge. Key and Jacobsen are known for paying twice the average salary in our area. It’s a very competitive place to be. Everyone wants to work there.

So why the hell did Emily leave?

“You just decided to make a change?”

She nods, but her bravado falters just a little.

This is my chance.

This is the moment where I decide whether to be a boss bitch or a soft bitch.

Do I want to establish that my employees can lie to me?

Or am I going to be tough?

Historically, I've been weaker than I wanted to be. There have been plenty of moments where Jessica has walked all over me, but I've made myself a promise not to do that again. Right now, I want to make sure I'm setting myself up for success in all the best ways.

That starts with honesty.

It starts with actually being tough and not just pretending to be.

"Try again," I say.

"Excuse me?"

"Nobody just takes a break from Key and Jacobsen," I say. "They offer unlimited PTO, insane salaries to entry-level workers, and they have a gym, a coffee shop, and a restaurant free on-site. Try again."

She stares at me.

"Emily, if this is going to work, I want full honesty, full transparency. I'm not going to promise that I'm the best boss, but I'll be damn fair. I'll be good. I know this

company inside and out, and I know what it takes to keep things running smoothly. I also know that if you want to do well here, you're going to want me on your side. So, let's try again. Why did you leave your last position?"

Emily takes a deep breath.

"I started dating my boss," she finally says. "And she dumped me."

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Emily

This isn't the kind of thing I want to admit out loud, mostly because it's totally embarrassing and completely humiliating. Why the hell would I want to tell anyone about this situation?

Abigail and I were supposed to be something special. Yes, she's the queen bee at her firm, but neither one of us was going to let that get in our way. At least, that was the deal.

Only, I was the other woman in her life, and I was too stupid to know. She didn't tell me she had someone else. She didn't tell me I was her side piece.

I fell hard.

Fast.

Stupid.

Fuck, I fell so damn stupid.

I wish I could take it all back, but I can't.

Right now, I wish I could take the words I just spoke back.

Again, I can't.

“You dated your boss?” Hillary asks. She’s looking at me like she’s trying to decide what to do. I get that. Really, I do. She can either throw me out and choose to hire someone whose morals more closely align with her own, or she can ask me for more details.

Honestly, I’m still kind of surprised I decided to play the honesty card.

I’m proud of me, but I’m not sure that I’m making the right call.

Like, am I fired?

“Yeah,” I say.

“As in, you...”

“Slept together,” I say. “Went on dates. Fell in love. Well, I fell in love. I don’t know if I can say the same thing about her.”

“Which of the bosses did you date?” Hillary asks. She leans forward, elbows on her desk, and I realize that she’s not judging me or mad.

She’s curious.

No, shit, she’s nosy.

She’s into this business gossip, and I may have unintentionally found myself an ally in her. Um, okay. I can work with this.

“Oh,” I say. “Abigail.”

“Abigail Key?”

“Yes.”

“You dated Abigail Key?”

“Yeah.”

“You dated and slept with the legendary attorney Abigail Key?”

I look around, as though I’m not sure whether Hillary is actually talking to me, and I finally nod.

“Yes, I dated Abigail Key.”

“Holy shit,” she says.

“I, um, well, it wasn’t planned.”

Not that having a surprise romance makes it any better.

“Tell me everything,” she says.

“What? Why?” I blurt out. Surely, this is some sort of HR violation. I don’t think I’m supposed to be telling my boss about my love life, but honestly, it feels almost freeing to think that I can.

I rarely talk about my relationship with Abigail or how much she hurt me. My best friend, Margaret, thinks I made a huge mistake in dating Abigail. Margaret was against the relationship from the very first kiss. Still, I ignored her, and I just sort of went for it.

“Because I want to know.”

“But you’re my boss,” I say.

“You dated your last boss,” Hillary says. “Surely, talking about your dating life with your new one isn’t as bad as all that.”

My jaw drops.

She really went there.

“Um...”

I have to make a choice, I realize. Before I can say anything, though, Hillary waves her hand.

“You know what? Forget it. I’m sorry. Totally none of my business. It’s just that Abigail Key and I go way back.”

“What? You do?”

“We went to college together,” she says. “She was the first girl I ever kissed.” Hillary lowers her voice conspiratorially, as though she’s sharing a secret with me that she knows she’s not supposed to. “Does she still do that thing with her tongue?”

“Yes,” I whisper before I can stop myself.

How the hell have we kissed the same girl?

How the hell do I know exactly what she means?

“Nice,” she says. Then Hillary sits back up, straightens her shoulders, and turns to her laptop. “Moving on,” she says, “let’s go over what you can expect for this week.

Since it's your first week, your schedule might be a little weird."

"How weird?" I ask.

"As weird as we want it to be."

"I don't really know what that means."

"It just means you're going to have a lot of meetings with a lot of different people," she says. Then her eyes lock on mine. "And you're going to have a lot of meetings with me."

Somehow, when Hillary says this, it doesn't sound like a bad thing at all.

Instead, it sounds like a promise.

One I'm ready for.

"Okay," I say.

"Okay," she says.

Fuck.

I'm in over my head.

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Hillary

“Y ou did what?” Amber drops her glass so fast that beer sloshes over the sides onto the tiled table. She places her hands on either side, getting them wet. Amber doesn’t seem to even notice or care. Her eyes are wide, her brows furrowed.

“Careful,” I say, reaching for a non-existent napkin. Wait. Why doesn’t this table have any napkins? I glance around the bar, trying to find one, but Amber doesn’t notice or care.

“No, you be careful,” she says.

“Why do I need to be careful?”

“Because you’re playing with fire,” she says. “Hiring your Tinder date? Really?”

“It wasn’t a Tinder date,” I say.

“Fine. Hinge. Bubble. I don’t care.”

“Bumble,” I correct. I should be embarrassed. I’m not. Dating in the modern age isn’t easy. No one said it was.

“I still don’t care.”

“Look, it’s not what you think.”

“Actually, it’s exactly what I think,” Amber says. She crosses her arms under her chest. A frown covers her face. “I think you’re trying to sabotage yourself before you can even get started.”

“Trust me. That’s not the situation here.”

“Really? Because it certainly seems like it,” she says.

“It’s not.”

“Then explain yourself.”

“Look, you’re not my mom,” I say. “Not my boss. Not my lover. Not my anything.”

“I was,” she reminds me.

“I don’t need a reminder.”

The two of us had something special once, but it was a very long time ago. We’ve both moved on. We’re both happier now. We’re both okay.

“Harsh,” she says, but her tone is gentle.

“We’ve been over for a long time, Amber. I don’t think you’re too hurt.”

“I’ll give you that,” she says. “I’m pretty happy with Kelly.”

“Good.”

“Thanks.”

“Whatever.”

I reach for my own drink and bring it to my mouth.

“Appetizers!” A waitress appears beside us and claps her hands. She’s got bright red hair pulled back into two matching pigtails. “What appetizers can I get you tonight?”

“We’re good,” Amber says. At the same time, I say, “cheese sticks.”

The server looks from me to Amber and back again.

“Cheese sticks?”

“Yes, please.”

The server gives Amber a quick glance. Amber’s scowling at me once again. She’s a no-appetizer, only-water kind of restaurant guest. Not me. I want a drink, I want apps, I want it all. I had to really twist her arm to get her to order a beer tonight, and she only did it because I said I’d pay for the first round.

“It’s fine,” I say.

“You just got promoted,” she says.

“Yep.”

“So, are we celebrating?”

“Maybe. Maybe a little.”

It’s hard to feel too excited about the job when I feel anxious about Emily. No, when

I feel drawn toward Emily. I'm not supposed to like her or want her.

Am I?

But I do.

"You got a raise, huh?"

"Something like that." I shouldn't talk about money with Amber. The two of us used to fight about it all the time. Back when we were dating, we were always feeling strapped. She wanted to have dates at home, but I wanted to go out. Now, I'm finally in a position where I can go out, and I want to. I want to go out and have experiences and just live a little.

There's nothing wrong with Amber wanting to stay at home. There's nothing wrong with wanting to save money. The two of us just have really different ideas about life and love and joy, though.

This is why we're great as friends.

As lovers?

Not so much.

"Congrats," she says.

"Thanks."

"And now you have an assistant."

"Yep."

“And you want to fuck her.”

“Yep.”

“What are you going to do?”

Amber stares at me. I just shrug.

“It’s so messy,” I say.

“Messy isn’t always a bad thing.”

“It is when it comes to work,” I say. “I don’t know how the two of us are going to, you know, make anything happen. She’s going to be a great assistant. I can’t exactly fire her because I suddenly want to jump her bones, too.”

“First of all, don’t say that.”

“What?”

“Nobody says ‘jump her bones’ anymore,” Amber says.

“I know.”

“Do you?” Amber raises an eyebrow.

“I know.”

“Good,” she says. “Then, let’s think about this rationally.”

“I’m ready,” I say.

“You have a new job.”

“Yes.”

“It’s similar to your old job.”

“Right.”

“You’re good at that.”

“Yes.”

“So, you don’t really need an assistant.”

I see where this is going, suddenly, and I shake my head.

“I need her, Amber.”

“Why?”

“Because my job is hard and complicated and messy,” I say.

“There you go with the messes again. You were never this tidy when we were together,” she says.

“When we were together, I was just out of college. My whole life was a mess.”

“And now?”

“Now I’m starting to figure some things out,” I say. I’m not pretending that I’m going to be the best girlfriend or the most valuable life partner. I can’t promise any of that.

What I can promise is that I'll be here for Emily if she does want to date me, and I'll be here if she doesn't.

Shit.

Maybe I won't.

Confusion wraps around me. Amber reaches for my hand.

"Hey," she says.

"Don't."

"You'll be okay."

"You can't know that."

"You've always been okay," she reminds me.

"Have I?"

"You have."

"Sometimes it doesn't seem like it."

Amber pulls her hand back. She stares at me for a long minute.

"Kelly and I almost broke up last week," she says.

"What? What happened?"

“Jealousy. Miscommunication. You know how it goes.”

“I thought you two were fine. You just said it a minute ago. You said you were happy.”

“I lied,” she says. “I wasn’t ready to tell you.”

“And you’re ready now?”

“Yes,” she says.

“I’m sorry.” Breakups are hard.

“I’m not sorry,” Amber says. She stares at me. “We had this huge, nasty fight. It made me really reevaluate a few things.”

“Such as?”

“Whether this is working for me. Whether it’s working for her.”

“And what did you decide?”

“I decided that she’s worth fighting for,” Amber says.

“That’s nice.”

“It is. She decided the same thing about me.”

“But you’re still broken up.”

“Just for now. We’re evaluating. Well, we’re reevaluating.”

“And?”

“And our relationship is going to change now, Hillary. It has to. When you get to a breaking point like this, you have to shift something. Otherwise, you get stagnant, and when everything stays the same, it hurts.”

I sip my drink, think about her words. Maybe she’s right. Lots of people break up and get back together. I’m not worried about my friend or her relationship. She’s tough, and she’s cool, and she’s strong. She can handle all of this.

But I want to ask her more.

“What kind of changes are you going to make?”

“Oh, we’re getting personal, huh?” Amber chugs the rest of her beer before setting the glass back down on the table.

“Yep.”

“Well, for starters, if we do decide to push forward with this thing, we’re going to start scheduling date nights.” Amber chokes out the words. She’s never been much of a calendar girl.

“Scheduling?” I raise an eyebrow. “Amber, you’ve never scheduled a date in your entire life.”

“Until now,” she says, nodding. “Now, things are changing. I’m changing. You can, too.”

“I don’t really want to change.”

She shrugs. “You don’t have to. You do have to decide what you’re going to do, though. Are you going to take a chance on a girl you literally just met? Or are you going to take a chance on your career and keep trying to push yourself forward?”

“When you phrase it like that, the answer seems obvious.”

“Sometimes, the right answers are.”

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:48 am

Emily

I 'm early to work. My entire body aches as I haul myself from my car to the elevator. When I reach the top floor, I feel like I'm going to faint. Wilson, one of the admins who works on this floor, notices me looking queasy. He rushes over, places his hand on my arm.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," I say. A lie. We both know it's a lie. I lie anyway.

"You don't look okay. Do you need to sit?"

"I'm really okay," I say. I wave him away. He takes a step back. "I just have a little bit of a headache. Didn't want to call in," I add, offering a small smile.

"Ah," he says. "I feel that. My wife gets crazy headaches. Sometimes she's knocked out for days at a time."

"Luckily, mine aren't that bad." But it is unusual for me to feel quite so sick on such a random day. I don't know if my headache and queasiness are related to stress or anxiety. Maybe I'm just coming down with a cold. Either way, I know that today isn't the time. Work isn't the place.

"Let me know if you need anything," he says. "And you know about the break room, right?"

“No.”

“There’s a room at the end of that hall.” Wilson points to a hallway that’s opposite to the one I work in. “We always have snacks and drinks there. Plus, there’s a couch.”

“Sounds cozy,” I say.

“It is. Well, let me know if you need anything. Happy you’re here.”

He turns and leaves, and the elevator doors open again behind me. I didn’t even notice the elevator left to go pick up the next group of worker bees.

“Good morning.” It’s a familiar voice.

Hers.

Hillary’s.

Fuck.

Does she know we totally matched on a dating app the night before I started here? Surely, she knows. I don’t think there’s any chance she thinks I’m not me . We texted. We talked. We...

We didn’t do everything I wanted to do.

You aren’t supposed to get attached to people you match with on apps. You especially aren’t supposed to get excited before you meet in person, but I did. I totally did.

Fuck.

Me.

Silly.

Only, Hillary didn't say anything yesterday. In fact, she played things totally cool.

Too cool.

There's a part of me that's bothered by this. It's not like I need some grand gesture or anything.

It's just...it would be nice to be acknowledged.

Didn't she feel any of the things I felt?

"Hi," I say. I spin around. My boss has her long, blonde hair piled on top of her head in a messy bun. She's wearing a white blouse, a black pencil skirt, and red fuck-me heels.

Why is she dressed like that?

Doesn't she know this is a normal work day?

It's not a fucking sort of day.

Oh, I wish it was, though.

Hillary and I could have a lot of fun. I think about bending her over her own desk, sliding my hand up her skirt. Maybe she'd be the one to bend me over. Maybe she'd tug on my pants, pooling them around my ankles. Maybe she'd scrape her nails up the back of my thighs.

Maybe she'd slide her hand around, find my clit, bring me to the edge.

I close my eyes for just a moment.

Please.

I need to get it together.

"Ready for a big day?" Hillary asks. She walks by me, pausing long enough for me to realize she wants me to walk with her. Headache be damned. I join her, and the two of us head down the hall toward our offices.

"I'm always ready." This is a lie. I want to go sprawl on my bed, slide under a blanket, and pretend that the world isn't so unfair.

She's the first girl I've liked since things went south with Abigail, but I'm aware that I can't make the same mistake twice.

I can't fall for my boss.

Not again.

At some point, a girl's got to eat. I've got to buy groceries and pay rent and do all of those important big-girl things.

I can't be falling apart over my boss.

I can't be daydreaming about sliding my hands up her blouse, or wondering what color the bra is that she chose today.

Do her panties match?

Does she even wear panties?

“Today’s going to be a killer,” she says. “We’ve got two meetings about the merger. Then we’re meeting with Portia from marketing.”

“Marketing? I thought I’d mostly be working to support you.”

“You will be,” she says. “Part of my role includes working with our marketing team, though. They’re the ones who do everything from ad spreads to digital advertising to making TikTok videos to get people to choose our brand.”

“Oh. I guess I never really thought about all of that.”

“They don’t need us much,” she says. “We do need to talk with them about branding and messaging semi-regularly, though. Mostly, we want to make sure our messaging is the same. It needs to be streamlined for strategic impact. Make sense?”

“Yes.”

Another lie.

This time, Hillary smiles.

“Don’t worry. Soon this will all be just second nature to you.” She places her hand on my shoulder, and she smiles at me. It seriously takes all of my self-control not to lean into her.

I can’t try to kiss my boss.

Really, I can’t.

“Thanks,” I say. “I appreciate your trust.”

“Head on into your office. Get settled. I’ll come talk with you in a bit about our schedule for the day. You’ll be shadowing me, but I think you’ve got a couple of meetings on your own, too.”

“Meetings?” I didn’t know I was ready for meetings on my own, but Hillary just nods.

“You’ll get used to it,” she says. “Here at Northington Tech, every day is different.”

“Got it,” I say.

She heads into her office, and I head into mine. I close the door behind me. I’m still not really sure if that’s considered standard or rude, but my mom told me a long time ago that the great thing about offices is that if you make a mistake, lots of people will let you know. That means you never have to worry about knowing if you messed up.

You will definitely know.

People won’t hesitate to tell you.

I settle at my desk, and only five minutes later, Hillary comes back in.

“Ready for our nine o’clock?”

I glance down.

“How has it already been an hour?”

She laughs.

“You got in the zone, Em.”

Em.

Only lovers call me Em.

I look up at her quickly, but Hillary doesn't seem to notice the shock that's definitely playing on my face.

“You ready?”

“I'm ready.”

Again with the lies.

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:48 am

Hillary

“ I can’t fucking take it.”

I’m leaning against the bar, elbows on the counter, staring at Max, my favorite bartender. The bar is almost completely empty tonight. It’s just me, Max, and a group of girls who come here every night. They’re barflies who drink while their boyfriends work across the street at Motley’s, a restaurant nobody really likes that much.

“You need to chill,” he says. “You’ll give yourself a heart attack.” Max shakes his head. He knows me almost as well as I know myself. We’ve been friends for a very, very long time.

“She’s so pretty.”

“I get it.”

“You’re gay, Max. You don’t get it at all.”

“Not pretty girls,” he says. “Pretty boys, though. I like lots of pretty boys.”

“It’s different with girls,” I say.

“Sure.” Max chuckles. Then he turns and starts serving one of the other patrons at the bar. As much as I want to monopolize his time, I can’t. The girl he’s helping has been sent to the bar as representative for the group. She’s tall, thin, and has black hair that falls just past her shoulders. She catches my eye and waves.

I wave back.

“What’s your name?” The woman yells even though the bar is pretty quiet. There’s music playing, but it’s some 80s album I’ve heard a million times before. The songs are so familiar they fade into the background of the bar, blending with the atmosphere.

“Hillary,” I say.

“You drinking alone?”

“Something like that.”

“Want to join us?”

“No,” I say.

“Yes,” Max says, turning back around. “She does.”

“Max, fuck off.”

The girl gasps.

“Don’t worry, Katrina,” he says. “She’s always like this.”

“I’m not.”

“It’s okay,” Katrina says.

And for just the briefest moment, I believe her. For one very small, very limited moment, I allow myself to think that maybe everything is going to be okay, that

perhaps my world is going to be just fine.

“You know what? I’m just going to go home.” I pull out some cash to pay Max, but he shakes his head. I haven’t paid for drinks here in a long time, but I still always try. It’s the polite thing to do.

“You sure?” Katrina asks. “We could talk for a little while.”

“I’m not sure we have much in common.”

“Why? Because we like boys?”

I nod.

“You having love problems?”

“She is,” Max says helpfully. “She wants to fuck her new employee.”

“Max!”

“Well, you do.”

“It’s not like that with her. It’s complicated.”

“It’s messy,” he says. “But we like messy.”

“Just come hang,” Katrina says. “Who knows? You might learn something new.”

She turns and heads back to her table.

“Just go,” Max says.

“Fine.”

I don't know why I'm finally doing this, but I am. I make my way to the table where introductions are quickly made. Katrina, Amy, and Lucy are all here for their nightly drinks. The girls are friendly, and before I know it, I'm laughing along with them. I'm feeling safe, comfortable, and happy.

I shouldn't feel like this with people I don't know, yet here I am.

Feeling things.

“So, tell us about her,” Amy says.

“The girl,” Katrina says.

“I know. Well, it's complicated. We met online.”

“Of course,” Lucy says. She smiles dreamily.

“I mean, everyone meets online, so that's not really saying much,” I say.

“Not everyone. Amy met her boyfriend in person,” Katrina says.

“It's true,” Amy nods. “A rarity, I know.”

“Oh?”

“It's not about me, though,” she says quickly. “The girl. Tell us.”

“We met online, and we really hit it off. I wanted...well, I wanted to spend more time with her.”

I wanted to take her out, wine and dine her, and make love to her.

That was what I wanted.

It's what I still want.

"So, what stopped you?" Lucy asks.

"She told me she had a new job, and that she was starting the next day," I say.

"So?" Katrina asks.

"I'm her boss."

"Again, so?" Katrina rolls her eyes, as though she doesn't care at all about this information, and for just a brief second, I wonder why I do care so much.

Should I be caring?

Should I be caring this deeply?

"She's my new employee," I repeat.

"We get that. Is there a HR policy that states you can't date an employee?" Katrina asks.

"Not really," I admit, "but it is frowned up."

"So, you're top dog," Lucy says.

"I'm not."

“You could do whatever you want.”

“I can’t, honestly.”

“What’s holding you back? Do you think you’ll get fired?” Lucy asks.

“I mostly think that falling in love with someone I work with will complicate things,” I say.

“Have you been hurt before?” Amy asks quietly.

“Yes.” I don’t bother lying to these women. “I think everyone has been hurt, but yes, I have, too.”

“Do you think that maybe this is the real reason you’re nervous?”

“Maybe,” I say.

Definitely.

“You know, I was hurt once,” Amy says. “It was by a woman,” she adds.

“What?” Katrina asks.

“You never told us this.” Lucy sounds offended.

“I didn’t think it was going to be something I needed to share,” Amy says. “I’m not keeping her a secret, and I’m with Henry now, but...well, she was something special.”

“What happened?” I ask.

“We drifted apart.”

“That’s a lie,” Katrina says. She lifts up her glass before taking a long time. “Spill the tea.”

A part of me feels nervous about pushing Amy, but there’s another part of me, a twisted part, that wants to know what she has to say.

What’s she holding back?

Has she really been hurt, too?

“She was everything to me,” Amy says. “We were engaged. Hell, I’d picked out a wedding dress.”

“Seriously, what the hell?” Lucy asks. “We’ve been coming here for months. You never thought to tell us you were engaged?”

“Like I said, it didn’t come up. Anyway, she cheated.” Amy rolls her eyes. “Of course, she was cheating. Isn’t that what always happens? You think everything’s great, but it’s not.”

“I’m sorry,” I say. It’s the only thing I can say.

“It happens.”

“No,” Katrina says. “It doesn’t. She was a total bitch.”

“I agree,” Amy says sadly. “But it is what it is, you know? It took me a long time to get over her. It took a whole year before I even thought about dating again. Then I met Henry, and suddenly, I felt like I could fly again.” She smiles at me. “You could

feel like that again, too, Hillary. You deserve to.”

“I don’t know.”

“I do,” she says. “I think you should just go for it.”

I nod, and I sip my drink, but I don’t know if she’s right.

And I don’t know where I go from here.

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Emily

My first week at Northington Tech flies by.

Then the second.

Before I know it, I've been working with Hillary for an entire month, and she hasn't so much as glanced at me in a romantic way. It's driving me absolutely crazy. We had something great. I know we had something great. The potential there was just absolutely unbeatable.

So, why the cold shoulder?

There's a part of me that knows she's probably just anxious about keeping her job, but another part of me thinks that maybe she's just scared.

I know there's something between us.

I just know it.

We work together daily, but she doesn't linger. Her eyes don't lock on mine. She doesn't stare at me longingly.

I sure as fuck stare at her.

Do people notice?

I don't think people notice.

I think I'm being fine, discreet.

Maybe I'm not.

For the most part, I try to keep my mind off of things when I'm not at work. I write. I journal. I try my hand at poetry. I spend time with friends, I volunteer at the animal shelter, and of course, I take a lot of long, hot baths. I try to stay busy. I try to stay out of my own head.

None of it works.

At the end of the month, I'm still just as crazy obsessed with her.

It's so many different things, too. I love her laugh. I like her smile. I like the way she tells me about the books she reads over the weekend. I like how kind she is to everyone who works here. Although she avoids talking to me one-on-one as much as possible, I still get to know her in groups. We still spend a lot of time together.

This can't be another Abigail situation, though.

This can't be like the last time.

I can't let myself get hurt again.

Finally, we have a meeting with some of the higher ups. This is my moment to shine, I know. I prepare everything we need for the meeting, including Hillary's talking points, Power Point slides, and her introduction.

Then, halfway through the meeting, Jessica asks her a question she doesn't know the

answer to.

A pause.

Shit.

This is one I didn't prepare her for.

She turns to me, raises an eyebrow, and I know this is the moment I step in. I've trained for this. I've prepared.

I'm ready to make Hillary and the company look great.

Only, I catch her gaze, and all I can think about is kissing her.

Only, I seem to forget every word I've ever learned.

Only, I freeze instead of answering.

Hillary hesitates for only half of a second before she turns back to the board. She squares her shoulders, juts her chin forward. She's done this a thousand times before. She makes this look easy.

"I'll get those stats to you, folks. Expect an email from me in about half an hour."

The meeting ends, everyone leaves, and Hillary stays where she is.

So do I.

Without her even saying a damn thing, I know she's pissed. I can practically see the steam coming out of her ears, and I know I've failed.

Shit.

Jessica leaves, Montgomery leaves, William leaves.

Everyone goes.

As they pass by me, a few people give me looks that say, “Glad it’s not me.”

Fuck.

So, everyone knows I totally botched that question.

Everyone knows I made my boss look silly.

Once the last person is gone, once the door to the conference room is closed, she turns to me. I stare straight ahead, unwilling to meet Hillary’s gaze.

“What the hell was that?”

“What do you mean?”

She’s across the room in two seconds, and she’s standing next to me.

“Up.”

I don’t move.

“Get up, Emily.”

Again, I stay where I am.

I'm quiet, still. Every part of my body is at war. I want to get to my feet. I want to touch her, hold her. I want to grab her, kiss her. I want to say, "It's our turn. It's our time. It's going to be fine."

But I don't.

"Em."

This time, I push back from the table, and I stand. I look at Hillary, and I wait.

"What was that?" Hillary asks again.

I don't feel intimidated, but I should. Instead, I'm looking at her long hair. It's pulled back in a bun. It's a dark shade of brown now. No more blonde. She dyed it recently. Nobody else seems surprised, so I guess this is just something she does.

I don't want her hair back like this, though.

I want it down.

I want it in my hands.

I want to see what happens when her hair is spread out on pillows and tangled with my own red locks.

These are the things that I want.

These are the things that I need.

"I mean, you were supposed to have that information for me, Em."

Nobody calls me Em.

“Em?”

“Emily,” she says, correcting herself.

“No, it’s okay. I liked it.”

It’s a bold thing to say to my boss, especially to one I don’t know very well.

“You liked it.”

“I liked it.”

“Em.” Hillary says the word again. Somehow, everything else seems to fade away, and right now, it’s just the two of us locked together in this moment.

I want to touch her.

I need to touch her.

My entire body feels like it’s on fire and burning up and falling apart just for her.

“What is it?” My words come out choked, a whisper.

“You let me down,” she says.

Shame washes over me, wrapping itself around me. I feel like I’m choking, but then she steps closer.

“I’m sorry,” I say.

“I know.”

“It won’t happen again,” she says.

“Because I’m fired?”

“No.”

“Then how do you know?”

“Because you always make the right choices,” she says.

“I don’t,” I say.

“You do.”

“No,” I whisper. “I’m bad.”

“You’re not.”

“I could be.”

“Prove it,” she says, and I kiss her.

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Hillary

She kisses me, and I kiss her back.

It's like magic.

It's like heaven.

It's like everything I've ever wanted.

My hands are in her long, red hair, and then I cup her face as I kiss her over and over and over.

And over.

And over.

And more.

"You're perfect," I say, whispering the words that have been trapped within me.

"No," she says, but she kisses me again.

"You are."

"I'm not."

“Shut up,” I say, and then I kiss her again.

Desire fills me, welling up inside. I need her more than I’ve needed anything in a very, very long time. I know that I shouldn’t be doing this, that it’s wrong, but somehow, I can’t bring myself to stop, so I don’t.

For once, I just want to be with her. I don’t want to worry about what’s right, or what’s okay, or what’s wrong.

I just want her.

When I finally pull back, I’ve lost all semblance of time. I’m not sure whether it’s been ten minutes or ten hours, and I don’t really care.

Emily looks messy, used.

Adored.

Yearned for.

“Wow,” she says.

“Wow,” I say.

And then I kiss her again. My hands are on her waist, but I slide them up and cup her breasts. She moves her hands everywhere: my hair, my ass, my hips. I spin us, pushing her against the wall, pinning her in place.

She groans.

I almost come right then.

Emily is everything I've ever wanted. Right now, I can't explain why the two of us actually aren't together. Is there really a reason? Is there something keeping us apart? I can't think of anything.

She nips me, biting my lower lip, and it's my turn to groan.

"Feisty," I say.

"Kiss me more," she says, so I do.

I kiss her lips, I kiss her forehead, I kiss her cheeks. I kiss her neck, sucking on it.

I shouldn't leave a mark.

I don't leave a mark.

Soon my mouth is back on hers, dominating her, and every part of my body feels like it's burning up.

I need her so fucking much.

"Please," she says, and I kiss her again. Now my hand is on the outside of her thigh. She steps, opening her legs, and I accept the invitation. My hand dances over the front of her leg, sliding to the inside. Slowly, I move my palm up, cupping her between her legs, rubbing her soft pussy over her pants.

"Fucking perfect," I say.

She's everything, and I can't handle it.

Soon Emily is grinding against my hand, and her breath hitches. She's close. Am I

going to make her come right here in the damn conference room? I might be able to make her come right here in the conference room.

“I...”

I kiss her again. I don't stop moving my hand. She's still moving in time with me. Her breathing deepens. She's hot and bothered and wild for me, and I feel the same damn way about her.

“Come for me,” I say.

“Hillary, I...”

“Fall apart for me, baby. Let me see you.”

I want her to come. I want to see what her face looks like when she's having an orgasm. I want all of it and more. I need her.

“Be a good girl for me,” I say. “Come.”

That does it.

She melts, sinking down against me as her climax washes over her. Her eyes flutter closed, and I kiss her through the orgasm, kiss her as she groans against my mouth. I don't take my hand away. I don't move until the last bit of pleasure has been wrung from her body.

Then I take a step back, and I smile at her.

Fuck.

She's so perfect.

Emily smiles up at me.

"That was so fucking hot," I say.

"I know," she says, and then a look of horror comes over her face. She doesn't even need to speak for me to know what she's about to say.

It was wrong.

We shouldn't have.

We lost control.

All of these things are true, but it doesn't matter. Why are we really fighting this thing? I'm into her, she's into me, and we could be so, so great together.

We could be wild.

"I didn't...I don't..." She shakes her head and holds her hands up. "What do we do now?"

"Nothing," I say. My head starts to clear. We shouldn't have done that, obviously, and probably, we can't do it again.

"Nothing can happen between us again," she says.

She's right. I don't want her to be. I want to say fuck the rules. I want to say forget the policies, the procedures.

I'm her boss, of course, and she's...

Fuck.

She's everything.

I've started to fall for her laughs and giggles, her jokes and puns. Emily makes me smile in ways I haven't smiled in so very long.

"Nothing can happen," I finally say.

Shit.

I don't want to say this.

Emily nods.

"Right. Of course."

"It's not you," I say.

"Oh, boss," Emily pastes on a smile. "It's always me."

She stares at me for a long moment. It takes every bit of self-control I still have not to reach for her, not to tug her into my arms.

I don't reach for her, though.

I don't say anything.

Finally, she leaves the conference room, but I stay behind. I find myself staring at the

door long after she's gone.

What the hell am I supposed to do now?

Just what the hell am I supposed to do?

Luckily, I don't have to worry for long because a moment later, Jessica walks in. She looks me up and down, raises an eyebrow, and says, "You look like you could use a drink."

"Try five," I say.

"Let's go."

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Emily

I don't cry until I get to my office.

Then I close the door, collapse on the floor, and let it all out.

I cry for what could have been.

I cry for what can never be.

I cry for her, and for me, and for us, and then I stop.

No one hears me. No one comes to the door. No one knocks. No one needs me. Right now, it's just me and the solitude of my space, and that's important. I need this time to grieve. I need this time to let things go because if I don't grieve right now, I'm going to lose myself, my mind, everything.

So I stay where I am, and I cry just a little bit more.

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Hillary

Jessica takes me to a bar on the other side of town. We're nowhere close to work, which is good. I need the space for what's about to happen. The conversation we're going to have isn't my favorite. She orders us a couple of martinis, and then we sit in a corner booth.

"Spill."

"You first," I say.

"My wife is wonderful," she says. She smiles. "We've decided to adopt a cat."

"That's it?" I ask. Somehow, I thought there would be more news, bigger news.

"That's it," she says.

"Are you feeling excited?"

"I am," she says. "And my sister is coming in town, too. She'll stay with me for a little while."

"Your sister?"

"She's a professor," Jessica explains. "She just accepted a new position here."

"What does she teach?"

“Literature,” Jessica says. She waves her hand. “Don’t ask me anything more about that. I can’t tell you the difference between Shakespeare and Chaucer.”

I laugh. “English was never my best subject, Jess, but even I can tell you that.”

“Then can you tell me why you’re upset?”

“No.”

“Want to try?”

The martinis arrive. Jessica thanks our server, but I stay quiet and stare at my drink. This is a rare opportunity to completely spill my guts to someone who will completely understand, but I can’t.

“Hillary, your problem is that you’re a people pleaser.”

“I’m not.”

She shrugs.

I stare at Jessica. She’s wearing a black blazer with a red top, black pants, red heels. She looks perfect in every way, and honestly, she sort of is. She’s a hardass, and it was always challenging to work with her, but we made it happen somehow.

The two of us were like fire and ice in so many ways, but in others, we were an uneatable team.

We were a dynamic duo.

“You kind of are,” she says. “I don’t mean that you feel this obligation to suck up to

people or to have them like you,” Jessica clarifies. “What I mean is that you’re kind.”

“I don’t really see how that’s a bad thing.”

“It’s not. Not always, anyway. You have to get over it, though. You have to start figuring out how you’re going to connect with people on a deeper level. I’m not saying you should sacrifice who you are, but I am saying that you need to somehow decide what it is that you want, and then you need to go for that thing.”

“What I want is to be good at my job,” I say.

She stares at me, waiting.

“You can’t outwait me,” I say. “I taught you that trick.”

“Oh, no, you didn’t.” Jessica smiles. She brings her glass to her lips. “I’m pretty much the unstoppable expert when it comes to this.”

The waiting game, she means. If you wait long enough, people get uncomfortable with the silence, and they start talking. That’s how it works.

“I did teach you,” I say, muttering.

“Well, we’re talking now, so just tell me.”

“Fine,” I say. I slam down the martini. I’m going to need it. Before I start speaking, Jessica gestures to the server that we’d like another round.

“Go,” she says.

“I want to fuck Emily.”

“Your new assistant?”

“Yes.”

“So?”

“What do you mean, so?”

“I mean, what’s the problem? Can you be professional? Respectful?”

I stare at her.

“It’s against company policy.”

She laughs.

“Is it?”

“I...yes?” Only now, I’m not so certain.

“Look,” Jessica says. She places her hands on the table, and then on top of my hands.

“You’re going to figure this out, Hill. You always do.”

“How can you be so sure?”

“I’m sure because I’m sure of you. I trust you. You’ve got this totally under control.”

“Again, how can you be certain?” I shake my head.

“You worked for me for a long time.”

“I’m aware.”

“Want to know why?”

“I’m good at my job.”

“No,” she says.

“No?”

“Well, you are good at your job, but that’s not the only reason you worked for me for so long.”

“Then what is it?”

“You worked for me for so long because you don’t fuck things up. You’re organized. You’re professional. You keep things carefully in line, and in order.”

“Sounds like you miss me,” I say.

“I do,” she says, “but I don’t have any interest in holding you back.”

“Nothing’s holding me back,” I say.

She stares at me.

“Except myself,” I say, sighing. “I guess.”

“Look,” Jessica says, “I believe in you so much.”

“Thank you.”

“And what I really believe in is the idea that you’re going to be able to handle all of this without anyone telling you what to do.”

“Untrue, but I appreciate the support.”

“Are we late?” I look up to see a group of smiling women approaching us. Jessica waves, but doesn’t stand. Everyone gathers around the table.

“What’s going on?” I ask.

“We came as soon as we got her message.”

“Her message?” I turn to Jessica. “Did you text all of your friends and ask them to come give me relationship advice?”

She shrugs. “Couldn’t hurt.”

“Shit.”

Everyone sits, and introductions are made quickly. Her girlfriend, Toni, is here, along with Melanie, Brianna, Sarah, Ashley, Jordan, and Clara. It’s quite the crowd, but everyone is both paired off and wildly comfortable with the situation.

“Tell us everything,” Clara says kindly. She reaches for my hands and holds them in hers. I look to Jordan, who smiles.

“She knows what she’s talking about,” Jordan says.

“It’s true.” Clara grins. “I give the best advice.”

“If only you’d take some of your own from time to time,” Ashley says, chuckling.

“That’s not fair,” Clara says, pouting.

“It kind of us,” Brianna smirks.

“Look,” Jordan says, turning back to me, “we want to help.”

“I get that. It’s just that...well, this is kind of messy.”

“Lots of people fall in love with their employees,” Melanie says helpfully. She smiles at Brianna, and I wonder, just for a moment, whether their experiences were easier than mine. I’m not exactly feeling super positive about what’s going to happen between me and Emily right now.

“Look, I was literally looking for love,” I say. “She’d already been hired. I didn’t know Emily was my new assistant until she accidentally told me.”

“You met on an app?” Ashley asks.

“Yes,” I say. “And we talked for hours upon hours. I know so much about her that I really shouldn’t know.”

“Like what?” Melanie asks. Her eyes twinkle.

Like how she’s had her heart broken.

Like how she doesn’t believe in love anymore.

Like how she wants to be touched.

I shouldn’t have asked her the things that I asked her, but I did, and now I see her every day, and it’s driving me apart.

“Just stuff,” I say lamely.

“You talked about sex, didn’t you?” Jordan asks, smiling.

“Of course, they did,” Ashley rolls her eyes.

“It is Hillary,” Jessica adds.

“Excuse you!” I say quickly. “Are you really throwing me under the bus right now? In my moment of need?”

Jessica laughs.

“The only thing you need is a push to get you going, my dear, and that’s what we’re doing.”

“I don’t need a push. I already kissed her!” The words leave my mouth before I can stop myself. I clap a hand over my lips.

“You sly fox,” Jessica says. “You didn’t tell me that.”

“Well, it’s personal,” I say.

“It’s not that personal,” she says.

“It’s kind of personal.”

“How was it?” Jordan asks.

“Did you use tongue?” Clara says.

“Of course they used tongue. This isn’t middle school.” Ashley grins at me. “Tell us everything,” she says.

“No! This is really personal.”

“And yet here we are, drinking to you and this woman. What’s her name?”

“Emily,” I say. There’s no point in trying to hide her name. They’ll get it out of me soon, anyway. “Her name is Emily.”

“Well, Emily doesn’t know what she’s missing.”

“Yeah,” a familiar voice says from behind me. “I think I do.”

Fuck.

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Emily

“ W hy are you here?” Hillary says. She’s on her feet instantly. She stares at me before swiveling to Jessica. “Did you invite her?”

“Nope.” Jessica smiles. I only know who she is because we met super briefly during one of my initial interviews at Northington Tech. The two of us haven’t interacted at work. In fact, I’m honestly not completely sure if she even still works there.

“I work here,” I say.

“At the bar?”

“Yeah.”

“No, you work for me,” Hillary says.

“I have two jobs,” I say. “That’s why I thought we could get a drink here. You know, when we first started talking.”

“Because it would be after your shift,” she says.

“Yeah.”

“And that’s why you’re here.”

“Yes.” I nod, glancing down at my uniform, which mostly consists of jeans and t-

shirts, but I have an apron I have to wear. “So, did anyone need any drinks?”

They all stare at me for a long minute.

“Happy hour starts soon,” I say quietly. “Half-off the whole menu, plus appetizers.”

“We’ll take one of every appetizer,” a kind lady with long, blonde hair in braids says.

“And we’ll need a few minutes to decide on drinks.”

“Okay,” I say. “Um, is this all together?”

A few people say yes, and a couple say no, but they start arguing among themselves, so I slip away from the group and make my way behind the bar counter.

“What the hell?” Polly asks. “What was that?”

“I don’t know,” I say. “It’s like, my boss, and her boss, and their friends, or something.” Out of all of the bars in the world, why would they choose this one?

“Why are they all so good-looking?” Polly asks.

“What? You don’t have enough options on campus?”

“Not really,” she says. “They don’t make them like this at university.”

Polly is twenty-two, but she likes older women. She’s always singing that song about liking girls who are just a little bit older, but what she means is a lot older. I’ve tried to set her up with friends before. Somehow, it never works out.

“I’m sure that after you graduate, you’ll find someone.”

“Maybe,” she says. “Too bad my professors aren’t any fun.”

“You mean, too bad they don’t want to get fired?” I ask.

“Something like that,” she shrugs.

“What are you two talking about?” Hope appears beside Polly. She’s also in college, and she’s also trying to find a nice woman to settle down with.

“The perils of dating,” I say. I slide Hope a piece of paper. “Can you ring this up for me?”

“One of everything?” Hope glances at me. “Is this for real?”

“Pretty sure.”

“They all have money, huh?” Polly says, staring at them. She doesn’t want anyone’s money, doesn’t want to be a sugar baby. She wants to be like them, though. Polly always says that when she sees women in their forties and fifties, they seem so damn happy and satisfied that it’s wild to her.

“Something like that,” I say.

“They’re pretty,” she says.

“And nosy as hell.” Polly draws her attention from the group of women. Instead, she focuses on me.

“What am I missing?”

“My boss is there,” I say.

“What?”

“And we made out after a board meeting today.”

“Seriously, what?” Hope comes back. She starts laughing. “Are you for real?”

“Yes.” I don’t want to be for real, but I am. “She made me come, too.”

“What?”

“Yeah.”

“And now they’re here?”

“Yes.”

“So can I ask you something?”

“Sure.”

“Why aren’t you over there with them?” Polly asks. “Don’t you want to be with your boss?”

More than anything.

“It’s wrong,” I say.

“Says who?”

“Society,” I say. “Everyone.”

“Girl, fuck society,” Polly laughs. “Do what you want, honey. Just do what you want.”

“You are so much younger than me,” I say. “It’s ridiculous that you’re calling me honey.”

She shrugs.

“The heart wants what it wants,” she says.

“Are you saying you want me?”

“No. I’m saying that I know exactly who your boss is because the lady with the dark hair hasn’t stopped looking at you since you walked over.”

I turn around, and sure enough, Hillary’s eyes are on me.

“I don’t know what to do,” I say.

“Then stop thinking about it,” Hope says.

“What will that do?”

“If you stop thinking, you can just follow your heart,” she says. She pushes through the door to the kitchen, leaving.

“I need to start making drinks for Table 7,” Polly says, “but seriously, you should go to her. I think that lady wants to talk to you.”

I think that lady wants to do a lot more than talk.

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Hillary

Long after the group disperses, I sit in the bar, and I watch her.

The lights dim, and she comes to me. Emily sits next to me on one of the barstools.

“You stayed,” she says.

“I stayed.”

“Why?”

“To talk.”

“Just to talk?”

“Yes,” I say.

“That feels like a lie.”

“It might be.”

“You kissed me today,” she says.

“Yeah, Em, I kissed you.”

“I liked it.”

“Me too.”

“It’s complicated, though,” she says. “Huh?”

“Yeah. Complicated.”

“Why?” Emily asks. “Why does it have to be complicated? Why can’t we just be adults doing adult things? Why does it have to be anything more than that?”

“That’s just not the way the world works, babe,” I say.

“It’s unfair,” she says.

“Yeah, Emily. I know.”

We sit there together, staring at the bottles, staring at our hands. We look anywhere but at each other.

“Hey.” Another bartender walks over. “I’m about to lock up.”

“You got it, Polly.” Emily hops down from her stool and offers me her hand. I take it, albeit hesitantly, and I follow her out into the night.

We stand there under a streetlight for a long time, and together, we stare up at the stars.

“I like you a lot,” I say.

“What did your friends think of me?”

“They like you, too.”

“Did you plan to come out tonight?”

“No. I asked Jessica to talk to me. We came here.”

“You trust her,” Emily says. This isn’t a question.

“I do.”

“Like, completely? Or is this one of those 70/30 things where you trust her with most stuff, but not everything?”

“Ah, corporate America,” I say, laughing. “No, it’s not split. It’s 100 percent. I trust her completely.”

“Then I trust her, too. You look good, by the way.” Emily steps closer to me.

“You look good, too.”

“I can’t stop thinking about the kiss,” she says.

She’s closer.

If I reach out, my hands will be on her shoulders, on her breasts, around her waist.

“I know.”

“I want to taste you again,” Emily says.

“You tasted so fucking sweet,” I say.

And then I can’t stop.

I don't want to hold back, so I don't, and I kiss her again.

And again.

And again.

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:48 am

Emily

When you work at an office, you aren't supposed to know what your boss tastes like. You aren't supposed to know how she melts under your hand when you run your fingers across her skin. There's a certain level of secret-keeping that goes on when you work with someone, and that includes not knowing how she groans when you touch her ass in just the right spot.

Somehow, we end up back at my apartment. It's small. It's too small for a woman like her, but we get there, and we end up on the couch, and we end up with her on my lap.

"I've been thinking about you a lot," she says.

"Me too."

"I like the way you make me smile," she says.

"I like your smile."

"I like everything about you."

She kisses me again and again and again.

My hands are up her shirt, on her breasts, and then back at her hips. She dominates my mouth, kissing me over and over.

“I want more,” I say.

“Tell me.”

“You’ve already felt me come,” I say.

“It was so fucking hot.”

“I want you to come, too.”

“How?”

I realize suddenly that she’s not in charge here.

No one is.

There’s no top, no bottom, just two women.

Just us.

Here I can be anyone I want to be. I can be soft or sexy or sweet. I can be everything in-between. I can be wild and passionate and gentle.

I can be hers.

Oh, I can just be hers.

“Please,” she says. “I want to come.”

“How do you like to come?” I ask again. “You want me to use my mouth on you, baby?”

She nods. I'm glad. I want that, too. I want to taste her soft, sweet pussy. I want to feel her wetness on my face. I want to lose myself in her for a little while.

We stand, and I kiss her as I undress her. Layer by layer, she loses the shirt, the skirt, the heels. She loses the bra, the panties. She loses everything except for the heat of the moment. We both feel that so damn much that it's wild.

I kiss her, tugging her even closer. Now her breasts are pressed against me.

"You still have all your clothes on," she says.

"This is about you."

Slowly, I kiss my way down her neck, making my way over her nipples. I kiss each one, sucking and nipping, and then I press my mouth to her belly.

"You're so fucking perfect," I say.

"Stop," she says.

"You are."

"I don't think I'm perfect."

"I do," I say.

"Why?"

"Look at you."

I'm kneeling now, and I'm looking up at Hillary. I'm staring at the woman who

makes my heart beat faster. I'm looking at the goddess who makes me think that my entire world is going to come crashing down all around me.

I'm falling for the woman I adore.

"You're gorgeous," I say. "Look at these beautiful nipples."

These aren't the types of things I would normally say. Generally, I'm shy. Nervous. Uncomfortable.

All of the tension is gone with Hillary, though.

With her, I think I'm going to be okay.

With her, I feel fine.

Fierce.

Wild.

With her, I feel alive.

"Spread your legs, baby."

She steps, opening her legs, and I kneel before her.

"You don't have to," she says.

"Who hurt you?" I ask, looking up at her. Suddenly, I realize that I'm not the only person who has a past. Abigail destroyed me. Killed me. Losing her was one of the worst things I've ever been through.

I'm okay, though.

I'm strong.

I know a lot about Hillary. I know she likes to laugh. I know she likes vinyl records and rock music. I know she likes to dance when she thinks nobody is looking.

And now, I know she wants to come apart on my lips.

And oh, I want to make her quake.

"A lot of people," she says.

"And they didn't like kissing you here?" I trace my finger over her pussy lips, stroking through the wetness. She's so ready for me.

"No."

"And now you're nervous."

"Yes."

"Baby, you don't have to be scared. I promise I'll be gentle."

"I..."

But I kiss her on the pussy, and she stops talking.

Instead, she groans.

And that's when I make her stop worrying.

And that's when I make her stop feeling uncomfortable.

And that's the moment where I help her realize that everything's going to be okay.

I kiss her, licking and sucking and teasing until she comes for me. I can feel her body quaking. I can feel her falling apart for me. A shiver comes, followed by her aching need, and then she throws her head back.

She cries out my name, but I don't stop licking her until she drops to the floor beside me, and then I kiss her.

"You taste like me," she says.

"You taste like heaven."

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:48 am

Hillary

We sleep in her bed, in the small twin-size that's covered with a faded purple quilt. I make a mental note to buy her a new one.

She deserves a new one.

When I wake, I stand, stretching, and shuffle over to the window.

"Snow," I say.

"What?"

I turn. Emily is stretching out in her bed. She's gloriously naked, pretty as hell, and looks deliciously used.

"Snow," I say. "It's snowing."

"What?"

She jumps up, hurries over. Emily presses her hands to the glass, too.

"What the hell?"

"I know. I didn't expect it, either."

"What are we going to do?"

“There’s nothing to do,” I say. “My laptop is at my place.”

“I left mine at the office,” she says.

“Sounds like a snow day to me,” I say.

“Can you do that?”

“I’ll make some calls,” I say. “But neither one of us can work from our phones. We aren’t going to have much of a choice.”

Emily sighs. “Um, I’ll make tea,” she says. She leaves the bedroom still naked. I watch as her ass wiggles and disappears out the door.

Fuck.

Me.

Silly.

I don’t even think she knows how damn pretty she is, how wonderful.

I don’t think she knows, even now, how much I really do want her.

I make a few phone calls, and once I’m sure everything is as settled as it can be, I pull up the local news on my phone. We’d been warned about the possibility of snow, but I haven’t been paying much attention to anything.

Honestly, I’ve been a bit distracted.

“Everything go okay?” Emily asks, reappearing.

“Yes.”

“I made tea.”

“I’d love some,” I say.

She jerks her head back toward the kitchen, but I hold my arms out toward her.

“Come,” I say.

And just like that, she’s in my arms again.

Just like that, I’m holding her.

Just like that, I know that no matter what comes next, Emily and I are going to have something really, really fucking cool between us.

Perhaps I shouldn’t like her as much as I do. Maybe I shouldn’t care, shouldn’t desire.

I do, though.

“You were so great last night,” I say.

“You were great,” she says.

“I want to do it again.”

“Same.”

“With you,” I say.

“I got that bit.” Emily laughs, and I pull her closer.

“I shouldn’t have held back,” I admit.

“What?”

“With you. I shouldn’t have held back.”

“You don’t have to keep clarifying who,” she says. “I know we’re talking about us.”

“I’m just making sure. You know, communication.” Because I’ve failed at that in the past. I’ve screwed up. I’ve made mistakes.

We all have, haven’t we?

“I shouldn’t have waited so long,” I say.

“Hillary, I know,” she says. “It’s okay.”

“I need you,” I say. I stroke her cheek, kiss her lips, and then pull back. “I like the way I feel when I’m with you.”

“I like it, too,” she says.

And then she kisses me again.

And again.

And again.

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:48 am

Emily

By the time we're done kissing, the tea is cold. That's okay. I heat it again. This time, we drink it together on my small red futon, and we prop our feet up on the wooden coffee table I found on a curb one time.

"Do you ever miss her?" Hillary asks.

"Who?"

"Abigail."

"No."

"Never?"

"Sometimes," I say. "Well, I miss the idea of her."

"What do you mean?"

"I miss feeling like I belonged to someone," I say honestly. "Do you ever miss that?"

"I do like belonging," she says.

"You've been in long-term relationships." Not a question.

"A few."

“What happened?”

“Well, seeing as how I’m not dating those women anymore, I’d say they ended,” she says.

“Funny.”

“Sorry.”

“It’s okay,” I say. I set my tea down on the table, turn back to her. I reach for her hands, give them a squeeze. “I’m glad, you know.”

“Glad?”

“That you’re not with them anymore.”

“Me too.”

“Hillary,” I say, and when she looks at me, I suddenly have this vision of us being together for a very, very long time. I suddenly think that this woman is someone I could see knowing for the rest of my life. She’s the type of person I could see myself growing old with, growing up with.

And I want that.

I want the hugs and the kisses and the forever.

“Kiss me,” she says, and I do.

And this time, I know it means something.

This time, I know it means everything.

Noelle

“I don’t want things to end,” I say, staring at Judy.

“Well, they’re ending.” She shrugs like I mean nothing, like two years together meant nothing.

“I just don’t understand.” I fumble over the words. I’m a professor. A doctor. I’m better than this. I have multiple degrees in words, in literary studies, so why can’t I figure out the words I need right now?

“What’s the understand?” Judy asks. She puts her hands on her hips. Her red nails dig into her hips, and she glares at me.

How many times has she slid those fingernails across my skin?

How many times have the two of us been totally entranced with each other?

And now it’s over.

There will be no more moments.

“I think there’s a lot to understand,” I say, “and I’m willing to. If you’ll just let me, Judy, then maybe we can sort all of this out.”

“I don’t want to sort it out,” she says. “I want to break up. I’m done.”

“Is it about the job?” I say. It’s on the tip of my tongue to say I won’t move, that I won’t take the position, but I need it. I’ve been fighting for a position teaching in my genre, and this is my big chance. I’ll get to teach speculative fiction, British lit, and even a video game literature class.

I can’t turn this down.

“Yes, Noelle, it’s about the job.” Judy sighs. She rakes a hand through her short blonde hair. “But it’s about more than the job.”

She’s talking.

Good.

I don’t say anything.

I fear that if I interrupt her, she’s going to stop, and I don’t want that. I need to know what I’ve done wrong, and I need to know why I feel like I’m being put in this position of weakness.

Judy and I are supposed to be forever.

That’s what we promised each other.

We said we would love each other forever. Hell, we keep talking about getting engaged. Last week, we went and looked at rings.

So what changed?

“Look, you think about yourself,” Judy says. “A lot.”

I bite my tongue.

Everyone thinks about themselves. That's normal. In fact, it comes with the territory of being human, doesn't it?

"And when you think about yourself, you probably view yourself as being normal about it, Noelle, but you aren't."

Again, I bite my tongue.

I want to point out that she's just as selfish as me, that she spends more time in her lab than she does on our relationship, but again, I don't.

I'm mature like that.

"Every night, I come home, and I try to connect with you. I can't. All you want to talk about is what new book has come out, or what your students are doing, or what their projects are. You spend all of this time completely focused on you and what's happening in your world that you forget to look up and see what's passing you by," she says.

Judy stares.

"Aren't you going to say anything?"

"I'm listening to you."

"That's a fucking first."

And that's it.

I snap.

"Judy, are you serious right now?"

“Here we go,” she says. She smiles. “Good. I wondered when you were going to let the bitch out. What do you have to say, Noelle? That I’m right about everything? That you’re a selfish brat who always has to get her way? What? Tell me, please.”

“You’re wrong.” I’m sure about this. “You’re wrong. I’m not selfish, and I don’t always have to be right.”

It’s Judy’s turn to stare. I realize that there’s no saving this. There will be no apology, no coming back from this relationship. If she wants to connect with me later, we might be able to have an awkward coffee date, but our connection as we know it has been severed.

Right now, my big decision is whether I want to be right, or whether I want to let her walk.

Fuck it.

I want to be right.

“In fact, I asked you before I even applied for the role if you were okay with moving. You assured me that you were. It’s only now, a week before I’m supposed to go, and a week before our lease ends, and three days before the movers arrive, that you don’t want to be with me anymore. What the fuck, Judy? You couldn’t have told me this before?”

Yeah, I’m going over the deep end, but I can’t stop myself.

“This is it,” she says. “This is who I knew you were. A brat.”

“I’m not a brat,” I say. “I am, however, a professional, and I expect to be treated with respect. You and I were supposed to be forever,” I say, reminding her. “We looked at rings last week, Judy. Were you already having doubts?”

I let the words hang in the air because I really do want to know this part.

Has she always felt uncomfortable with me?

Has she always thought that there was something wrong with us?

Has been thinking about leaving for a while?

And what am I supposed to do with that information?

“I’ve been having doubts for a long time,” she says.

“You could have talked to me.”

“When? You’re never here.”

“Neither are you,” I say.

She comes closer, and she places her red fingernails on my arms. Judy stares up at me. “How can two people who are never around each other build a relationship, Noelle? How can we build a future? I’m sorry, baby. It just wasn’t meant to be.”

She turns, and she leaves the apartment, and she closes the door.

And I stare at the door, and I wonder where it all went wrong, and I wonder if I’m going to be okay, and I wonder what the hell I’m supposed to do next.

I stumble over to the kitchen, and I pour myself a glass of wine.

I drink it.

Then another.

And another.

Soon the bottle is gone, and I sit on the couch.

I stare at the door a little bit more, and then the phone rings. This is strange because typically, my phone is on “silent.” I can’t remember the last time I had the ringer on. I remember suddenly that it’s on because Jessica was going to call me tonight to confirm the details of my move. I’m staying with her when I first arrive.

We were both supposed to stay with her.

“Hey,” I say, answering the call. “What’s going on?” I try to sound normal. I try to sound like I haven’t been crying.

“What time are you getting in?” Jessica asks. “And do you want to go to dinner when you get in?”

“That’s in a week,” I say. “I’m not sure yet.”

“Oh, I know, but I was thinking of getting us reservations. There’s this really cute Italian place close to where we live. We were thinking we’d take you.”

“I’d love that,” I say honestly. “Why don’t I plan to get there before dinnertime?”

“You dinnertime or me dinnertime?”

“What?”

“You eat dinner at like, 4:30. I eat dinner at a normal time.”

“Midnight?”

“More like 9:30,” Jessica says.

“Yeah, I’m not eating dinner that late. I’ll be in bed. Plus, I’ll have classes to prepare for. Some of those are early in the morning.”

“Having early classes is stupid,” Jessica says.

“Stupid?” My CEO sister never uses words like stupid. Maybe she’s the one who’s been drinking.

“Yes, you heard me correctly. I’m trying to lighten up,” she says by way of explanation.

“Well, good for you, I guess.”

“What about Judy?”

“Judy?”

“Does she like Italian food?”

“Um, yes.”

“Perfect. I’ll make a reservation for four.”

“Oh,” I say.

“What?”

“Um, make it a reservation for three.” I pinch the bridge of my nose. I close my eyes. I don’t really want to share this information. I don’t really want her to know anything about me. Not when it comes to this. Not where I’m vulnerable.

Only, she's going to find out sooner or later, so I might as well tell my younger sister the truth.

"Judy and I broke up."

"When?"

"Um, I don't know. Maybe an hour ago."

"You broke up an hour ago and you didn't call me?"

"I needed time."

"You've got it," she says. "You want me to fly out there tonight?"

"No. I'll just drive out Saturday," I say. "It'll be okay."

"You deserve better," Jessica offers. "I have single friends. We'll find you someone new."

"I'm okay," I say, but I'm not.

We chat for another minute, I end the call, and then I sit back down on the couch.

I don't want any of this.

And then the phone rings again.

This time, when I look at the number, I just stare at the phone.

There's no way this is real life.

The story continues in **Lesbian Professor**.