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Chapter One

GEORGIA

The problem with living in a small town is never finding what you need. There are only so many resources, and as the sheriff of this town, I need to do my job productively. Also, I should probably double-check a map because I may be responsible for some surrounding areas too.

“I’m sorry, Georgia.”

“It’s Sheriff,” I correct and point to the badge on my chest.

“Your badge is on the other side.”

“Oh shit.” When I glance down, I realize I was right, but Mr. Saunders boops my nose.

“Made you look,” he chuckles.

I do my best to keep a straight face, but a small laugh escapes.

“All right, this is serious.” I smack my hand down semi-forcefully on the counter to make sure I have his full attention. “You own the local grocery store, which means you should have all the things the citizens of Cottonwood need.”

“You tell them,” I hear Mrs. Betty say from somewhere behind me. I swear that

woman is everywhere. She moves fast for being in her late seventies.

“Bubbles aren't something people are in dire need of, Georgia.”

“Sheriff,” I huff, not really that annoyed. I'm not sure how I'm the sheriff either, so I can't be mad if half the town isn't taking me seriously.

“Sheriff Georgia.” At least Mr. Saunders is entertaining my nonsense.

“What's the problem?” Mrs. Betty comes to stand next to me at the checkout.

“We're out of bubbles,” he informs her.

“You know you can simply make bubbles,” Mrs. Betty lets me know.

“Oh, right.” Why hadn't I thought of that?

“Why do you need all these bubbles? What are you doing with them?” Mr. Saunders asks.

“I'm the one asking the questions around here,” I say a bit too defensively.

Not everyone needs to know that my gun is fake and that I stole it from the prop department at the high school. It looks real, but when you fire it, bubbles come out. Pretty freaking cool if you ask me.

When I get bored, because there isn't any real sheriffing to do around here unless you count that one dead guy, I might entertain myself with the bubble gun.

I also might have knocked a bottle of bubbles off my desk, and it spilled everywhere.

Who knew bubble batter would make such a mess?

Wait, is it bubble sauce? Nope, that's not it either. Maybe it's bubble juice, but that sounds gross.

"Bubble liquid!" I snap my fingers when I get it.

"Bubble liquid?" Mr. Saunders tilts his head, not getting it.

"Never mind." I tap the counter. "Your next order better have bubbles."

"Or what?" Mr. Saunders challenges.

"Maybe I won't investigate the next time your house gets TP'd."

"I have a doorbell camera, Georgia, and last time you helped those little bastards."

"Don't talk about the girls' tennis team like that. They almost won state."

"Fifth place isn't almost," Mrs. Betty chimes in.

"Rude," I huff at her. "Be careful, Mrs. Betty. Your house might be next."

"Bring it on." Mrs. Betty sounds too excited about the prospect of being TP'd, and I have no comeback for that.

"Wait, was that...? My radio." I go to grab my walkie-talkie off my hip, but it's not there. Shit, I left it in my cruiser.

"Even if you had it, who would be calling it?" Mrs. Betty asks.

“Fair point.” I grab my hat off the counter. “I’ll see you fine folks around.”

After I spin on my heels and head back out of the grocery store, I make my way over to my cruiser. Before I get in, I see a black sedan parked nearby, and I pause to look at it. It’s the same one that keeps popping up around town, and I swear I think it’s following me.

I watch the vehicle start up, and when it pulls out of the parking lot, I hop in my cruiser to follow.

This time I’m going to get that license plate. The vehicle makes a left and then another and the whole time I’m wondering where the heck they are going.

Again, they make another left and then a fourth, returning to where we started.

Okay, so I believe I was just played. Joke’s on them, because I got the license plate. I quickly jot it down and then try to look inside the vehicle, but the windows are too dark. That can’t be legal. I’m guessing, but I jot down to check into that too.

“Oh shit.” I duck down when the driver opens their door.

Wait, why am I ducking? I’m the police. I pop back up as the man steps out and shuts the door. Then he leans up against the vehicle, staring right at me.

The man is a giant. How freaking tall is he? He’s built broadly too, and his all-black suit makes him look intimidating. It’s summer, why is he wearing a full suit? I jot it down as suspicious. My notes are coming along, and I kind of feel professional right now. Heck, I might do a report later.

I grab my radio and clip it onto my belt before I step out. “Is there a reason you’re following me, Sheriff?” the man asks before I can close my car door.

“I wasn't following you,” I scoff and pat my gun. “I’m doing my rounds to keep this town safe.”

“Safe, you say?” He pushes off the car. “People are getting shot and killed in your town.”

“It wasn't me.” His brows lift, and I know that's the wrong response. “That issue has been handled. Case closed.”

“Is it?”

“Yeah, it is. I'm working on a new case.” I make my way toward him, and close up, he's even bigger. “Jesus, how tall are you?”

“Six four.”

“Couldn't leave any inches for the rest of us?”

“No.” He doesn't crack a smile. Tough crowd.

“Maybe we should talk about this tint job.”

“Tint job?” His brows pull together in confusion.

“Tint job,” I confirm, knocking on one of the windows. “My new case.”

“Your new case is my tint job?”

“Maybe.” I shrug. “Maybe not.”

“Well, I assure you, it’s legal.”

“Hey, I’m the cop here,” I remind him.

Dang, he’s good-looking, but that’s not going to give him a pass. Maybe I should lock him up for a few hours. I know that the cell works at the station. I learned that the hard way when I got myself locked inside it.

“You got me there. I’m not a cop.” He reaches into the front pocket of his suit and pulls out a black wallet. When he flips it open, it reveals a badge. “I’m an FBI agent.”

“Fine,” I sigh dramatically. “I’ll let the tint job slide, but you’re on thin ice.”

He doesn’t seem the least bit fazed. Maybe I’m the one on thin ice and I don’t know it. Meh, I don’t know a lot of things.

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Chapter Two

NEIL

There's a wedding happening in Cottonwood. They've got the gazebo full of people at the edge of town, and it looks like the ceremony is almost over. Beside the gazebo are a few white tents set up for what I assume is the reception.

When I checked into the one and only hotel in town a few days ago, the lady behind the desk asked me if I was a friend of the bride or groom. I made sure to keep it vague, but in a town as small as this one, I'm sure it won't take them long to figure it out.

This case landed in my lap, and I was told to come here and check into it. From what I could tell, it all seemed straightforward. I couldn't understand why I would need to reopen an investigation, but then I saw the name of the deceased. Simon Gregory.

He was the son of the wealthy investment banker Robert Gregory, the same Robert Gregory who funds most of the political campaigns in Washington. Robert is looking to place blame on anyone but his son, and my job is to find that person.

I've been with the Bureau for long enough to know how things work.

If I want to keep my job, I need to put my head down and get this done.

Do the research, talk to local law enforcement, and make sure everything is handled properly.

But after talking to the new sheriff yesterday in the grocery store parking lot, I'm not so sure my job is going to be that easy.

A streak of baby blue darts out from the front of my car, and I turn to see Sheriff Georgia Dawson.

"Care to explain what you're doing here, creeping on a perfectly legal wedding?" She puts her hands on her hips like she expects her gun to be there, but she must have forgotten she's wearing a dress.

My eyes slowly rake down her body as I take in the tight dress clinging to her curves.

It's strapless, so her full tits are pushed high, and it's nipped in at the waist. Her hips flare out so dramatically they might as well be handlebars for a man to hold on to.

I can feel my fingers twitch at my side with the need to sink them into her. My god.

I knew yesterday that she had a lush body hiding under that uniform, but my imagination wasn't creative enough. Seeing her wrapped in the snug baby blue dress makes her look innocent and slutty at the same time. What I wouldn't give to find out how well she could take my dick.

So yeah, this is why my job isn't going to be so easy.

"They have a permit?" I raise a brow in challenge, and her eyes widen.

"That's none of your business. Besides, you haven't told me what you're really doing here. You flashed me your badge and then skedaddled."

"Skedaddled?"

“Oh, they didn’t teach you fancy words at your FBI school? Can’t relate.” She flips her dark waves off her shoulder, and the golden skin showing makes my mouth water.

Jesus, did I become a vampire and not realize it? I have the overwhelming urge to bite her on that exposed skin and leave my mark.

“I’m here for work.”

“Hmm, avoiding the question. A common tactic used by law enforcement. Such as myself.” Her eyes narrow, and fuck, I want to laugh. How the hell does she make being ridiculous look cute?

“All right, since you’re law enforcement, I suppose I can tell you.” I take a few steps closer and lean against my car.

“Is this off the record?” she whispers, and I nod for dramatic effect.

“The case with Simon Gregory has been reopened,” I say, and there’s a flash of panic in her eyes before it’s gone. “It’s routine, nothing to worry about.”

I’m not sure why I say this, because it’s not routine. For some reason, I don’t want to scare her, and so the words slip out.

“So what exactly are you looking for?”

I sigh as I glance to the gazebo where the crowd is moving into the tent. “To be honest, I have no idea.”

“So let me get this straight: You’re here to look at the case, which is totally routine, but you have no idea what you’re looking for?”

I push off my car and move closer to her. What would she do if I told her I was looking for a hot body to sink into and I finally found it?

“There’s nothing to worry about, Sheriff.” She has to tilt her head back to look up at me, and I like it far more than I should. “But I’m going to be in town for a little while, so maybe we should get to know one another.”

“Why, so you can pump me for information?”

I’d love nothing more than to pump her full, but I think it’s better if I keep that to myself. “I’ll need access to your files. Might as well be friendly about it.”

Her expression is skeptical as she crosses her arms under her tits. All it does is push them up higher, and fuck, my dick is getting to the point that I won’t be able to hide my erection.

“Look,” I say, going for honesty. “I was told to come here and do this. The sooner I see your files and check over the case, the sooner I can go.”

“I’ll allow it.” She raises her chin like she’s offering me a deal. “Come by the station tomorrow. Right now I’m late to a wedding, and I need to skedaddle .”

“There’s that word again,” I say and shake my head.

“You wish you had my vocabulary.”

She throws two fingers over her shoulder as she takes off in the direction of the tent. Did she just throw up deuces at me?

Sheriff Georgia Dawson is nothing like I expected. As I watch her big round ass jiggle as she walks away, I can’t help but think that maybe this assignment isn’t so

bad after all.

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Chapter Three

GEORGIA

“Morning, Sheriff,” Jenny says as she places a donut and a glass of milk in front of me.

“This is the best perk of being a cop.” I pick up the frosted donut topped with sprinkles and take a giant bite. A few sprinkles fall onto the counter of the diner, and I sweep them into a napkin.

“You’ve been eating frosted sprinkle donuts since you were five,” Jenny points out.

“Well, this morning I want coffee,” I inform her.

“Really?” Jenny’s expression is skeptical.

“Yes.” I was up late worrying about what this agent might know and the reasons he could be investigating Simon’s death.

“If you say so.” When Jenny reaches to take my milk, I pull it closer.

“Hey, I need that too. You can’t eat donuts without milk.” That should be a law. Maybe I could make it one. How do laws even get made?

“One cup of coffee.” Jenny places it on the vinyl countertop, and I scrunch my nose. The smell of coffee isn’t even enticing. “Are you sure you want coffee? I don’t think

you need the extra energy.”

“I had a rough night.”

I was thinking about the overly handsome FBI agent and if he might be here to take down Rhodes. The owner of the hardware store is one of the nicest people in this town. Except for that one time he shot and killed someone, but things happen. I'm not judging.

“You were on that dance floor all night throwing back glasses of champagne.” Jenny raises an eyebrow at me.

“I'd never had champagne before. It was rather yummy even if it did make me burp like crazy.” All the alcohol might be why I'm exhausted too, I suppose.

“I'll get you some sugar and cream for the coffee.”

“Probably a good idea.” I stare down at the steam coming off of it and bite into my donut.

Mrs. Nelson takes the seat next to mine at the counter, and Jenny comes right over. She drops off my sugar and cream while also pouring a cup for Mrs. Nelson.

“We need to talk.” Mrs. Nelson says it low so that only I can hear.

“Why? I turn to face her more. “You got some gossip?”

“The FBI agent.”

“You know he's FBI!”

“Shh!” she hushes me.

“Ope, sorry,” I whisper.

“You know why he's here?”

“I'm not really sure,” I lie, not wanting word to spread about any of this. Mrs. Nelson tilts her head, eyeing me up. Yikes, she should do interrogations because I already want to spill everything. “I'm working on finding out.”

“Are you going to seduce him?”

“No.” I haven't developed a plan yet, but perhaps that's not a bad idea. If he falls in love with me, he can't arrest Rhodes because he'll be under my spell.

“Yeah, I didn't think you could seduce him anyway.”

“Hey, rudeness,” I say, and Mrs. Nelson shrugs.

“You know what I'd do?” She picks up her coffee and looks over the top of it at me. “I would sneak into his hotel room and have a look around.”

Mrs. Nelson is full of good ideas this morning. Not like the one she got when she and the rest of the Stitches decided I should be the new sheriff. Those women get things done, and it's a little scary when you think about it.

“Are you saying I should break into an FBI agent's hotel room?” I pick up my own coffee and take a sip, but as soon as it hits my lips, I have to fight not to gag. I put it back down and dump in a bunch of sugar.

“I didn't say to break anything.”

“Hmm,” I say, thinking. The second sip of coffee isn’t as bad as the first. “I’m meeting with him today.”

I check my watch, and I really should get over to the station. He wants to check my files, but I need to make sure it’s okay. I only have one, and it’s barebones.

“He’s coming in.” Mrs. Nelson elbows me in the side. I peek over my shoulder to see him walking into the diner. “I’ll distract him. You go search his room.”

“Seriously?”

“Yes, I’ll keep him here.” She nods like she’s done this before.

“Fine.” I chug down the coffee before shoving the rest of my donut into my mouth.

“Holy hell, Georgia. You don’t need coffee and sugar,” Jenny chides.

“You could have said that before I consumed it all.”

Mrs. Nelson shakes her head at me. “Like I said, don’t break anything when you’re in there.”

“I won’t.” I hop off the bar stool, but my elbow hits the coffee, and I knock it over. The cup breaks into three pieces, and my head snaps up to Mrs. Nelson. “That didn’t happen.”

I drop money on the counter and head for the exit.

“Sheriff,” Neil says, holding the door open for me. He’s wearing another one of his fancy black suits. Is that the FBI uniform?

“Morning!” I chirp. Wow, tone it down, Georgia. Why is my voice so high?

“Are you okay?”

“I’m great, better than great, really.”

He smirks. Oh no, he’s on to me. “You sure?”

“Yep, had coffee for the first time. It’s hitting me hard. Anyways, I’ve got to go.” I try to dart away, but he keeps on talking.

“Are you headed to the station?” Neil’s already trying to get information out of me. Dang, he’s good.

“After I run a few errands.”

“All right, I’ll meet you there shortly, then?”

“That’s the plan.” I give him a thumbs-up before I try to leave again.

“Georgia.” His hand comes down on my forearm, halting me. This is it. I’m going to prison for breaking into his hotel room. He already knows what I’m up to. Maybe I could arrest him first?

“What?!” It comes out way too loud and aggressive, but Neil only lets out a low chuckle.

“You’ve got something on your uniform.” He motions to my chest.

“Nope, Mr. Saunders already got me on that one. Sorry, but you’re not booping my nose, Mr. FBI Agent. Guess you’re not as cunning as you thought.”

“Maybe not.” He chuckles again, and it sounds sexy. Wait, is he seducing me now? “But you do have something right here.” Neil's hand comes to my chest, and my heart stops. He is seducing me! When he lifts his hand, I see a pink sprinkle. “This.”

“Oh.” Okay, so he’s not seducing me.

To my surprise, he brings it to his mouth and eats it. All right, so we’re back to seducing, I see.

“Well, thanks.” I bolt away from him, but he calls after me. When I spin around, he points over his shoulder.

“Your cruiser is that way.”

“Right.” I hurry in that direction, and I swear I hear him chuckle again.

I ignore him as I get in my cruiser and make my way to the new hotel. It’s the only one in town and just opened recently. When I walk in, I see Danny behind the front desk, and he stands up straighter when he sees me coming.

“Georgia.” He beams.

Danny is a few years younger than me. I was super close to his sister growing up until she left to go out of state for college.

“Hey, Danny, how’s Anna?” I’m bouncing on my heels, so I guess that means the coffee has kicked in. I'm more awake than I have ever been in my life.

“She’s great, and I’m great too. How are you?” The words all tumble out of him, and it appears that his little crush on me is still very much alive and thriving.

“I’m good,” I say and lean up against the front desk. I need to get down to it if I’m going to have time to get in Neil’s room before I have to meet him.

“Wait, are you here on business? I keep forgetting you’re sheriff.”

“Me too,” I admit before I can think better of it. “And yes, I’m here in my official sheriff capacity.”

“Oh.” Danny leans in. “Something going on?”

Everyone in this town loves a bit of gossip. “You know the suit around town, the one that’s been staying here.”

“Is he with the mob?”

That’s ridiculous. If he were a mobster, he’d wear a black fedora to go with the suit. Oh, and a flashy red tie.

“Maybe.” I shrug. “I wanted to get a key to his room. Have a poke around. It’s my job to keep this town safe. Otherwise, the next thing we know, the mob will have illegal gambling set up in the back of Dixon’s bar, and you’ll only be able to get in with a code word.”

“Oh no, you think they’ll run the Stitches out of their secret Wednesday night poker games at Dixon’s?”

Shit, I forgot that’s already happening.

“We can’t have anyone riling up the Stitches. Things would get out of control.” Danny nods adamantly in agreement, and I hold out my hand. “Key me.”

“Oh, I can’t do that.” He takes a step back.

“You don’t want to help save the town?”

“The rules are the rules.” Danny shrugs.

When did he become a rule follower? It had to have been after the carnival incident a few years ago. I’m so not bringing that up.

“Come on, Danny,” I start to plead.

“You have to make it worth it for me. I might lose my job over this.”

“Your dad isn’t going to fire you.”

“He might,” Danny huffs. “But maybe if you agree to a few dates with me, I could give you a key.”

Damn it.

“A few?” He nods. I think for a second and hold up my finger. “One.”

“No deal.”

“All right.” I shrug, calling his bluff. I turn to leave, and he immediately calls me back.

“Wait! Okay, deal.”

“No kissing, and we stay in town.”

“Fine,” he relents.

“Hit me with a key, Danny boy.”

Two seconds later, I have the key in my possession. I'm not too bad at this investigating thing. I didn't even have to go to a fancy FBI academy.

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Chapter Four

NEIL

I check my watch and give her another thirty seconds. When the time is up, I walk inside and past the front desk. The young clerk is on the phone, and when he sees me, his face pales.

“Wait, Mr. Anders, I need to talk to you,” he calls from behind me, but I ignore him. “Mr. Anders!”

The small hotel is only three floors, so I skip the elevator and opt for the stairs. Whatever shouts of protest he was making are fading away when I reach the top and take out my room key.

When Mrs. Nelson at the diner tried to chat me up, I had a feeling something was happening.

I made an excuse about leaving something in my car and went in search of Georgia.

She wasn't exactly discreet about it seeing as how her cruiser is parked directly in front of the hotel and not at the station where she said she would meet me.

I stayed outside and listened to her conversation with the guy at the counter, then gave her a little time to do her snooping. I've got nothing in my room that would be of any interest to her, so I figured I'd let her play detective. She seems to enjoy the theatrics of all this more than anything.

Part of me wishes it wasn't so damn adorable watching her pretend to be a cop. It's making my job harder than it needs to be. And I'm not going to think about what it's doing to my cock.

From everything I've seen in this town, there's a need for law enforcement about as much as they need surf instructors. Which is to say, not at all. But I guess if it gives the town peace of mind having one on hand, and it lets Georgia play dress-up, what's the harm?

My duty to my job reminds me that this isn't about letting her have a good time. It's about holding someone responsible for the death of Simon Gregory. Even if Simon was the reason Simon was killed.

Taking out my room key, I press my ear to the door before I scan it. There's a shuffle and then a loud thump, followed by a crash.

"Dang it, why would they put a lamp by the bed?" Georgia asks herself on the other side of the door.

It's an effort to hide my smile as I scan the key on the lock. It beeps, and then I hear her scrambling before I push open the door to my room.

As I glance around, I see she's not exactly been discreet in her snooping. I'm generally a neat person, so I can tell right away she's looked through a lot of stuff and not put any of it back where it goes.

The obvious place for her to hide would be the closet or under the bed, but the resident sheriff has chosen behind the curtains. I know because I can see her shoes peeking out at the bottom.

"Sheriff, if you'd come out from behind the curtains, it would save us both some

time.”

There’s some shuffling behind the curtain for a brief second before she whips it back, holding her gun in front of her.

“Put your hands where I can see them.”

I cock my head to the side in confusion. “Aren’t you the one that broke into my room?”

“I got a call about a suspicious person in here. How do I know it wasn’t you?”

“You think I’m the suspicious person? The one paying for this room?”

“One can never be too careful, and I said put your hands up.”

“Or what, you’re going to get soap on me?” I challenge, and she deflates, dropping her arms at her sides.

“Dang it, how did you know? Nobody else can tell.” She looks at her toy gun with actual disappointment.

“Well, other than the fact that I’m a trained FBI agent, the words bubble blaster are written on the handle.”

“Oh.” She turns it over and shakes her head. “Wonder if I can file that off.”

“Hey, um, back to this. Why did you break into my room?”

“Like I said, I got a call.” She tucks her fake gun into her belt and straightens her shoulders like she’s leading an investigation.

“And why were you hiding?”

“Because you could have been the bad guy. Gah, keep up, Neil.”

Damn it, my body should not react to her saying my name. “Find anything interesting?”

I walk close to her, and she takes a few steps back. “Not really.” She glances around and then back at me. “Some might say you have an alarming amount of black suits.”

This time my grin slips free before I can hide it. “It makes packing easy.”

“And also, who brings their own towels from home to a hotel?” She puts her hands on her hips, reminding me of that damn dress she was wearing yesterday and all those curves she’s hiding under her uniform.

“Someone who likes to know their towels are clean.” I move even closer, and when she backs up, she hits the table behind her.

It’s then she realizes she’s got nowhere else to go and we’re alone in my room.

“I’m curious, though. Before you knocked over the lamp, did you find anything else on the bedside table? ”

She swallows hard, and I don’t miss the way her cheeks flush pink. Oh, she definitely saw the lube. I wonder if she has any idea I was jerking myself all night to thoughts of her.

“Interesting.” We’re not touching, but I’m so close to her that I can feel the heat of her body against mine. “Well, I guess if you’re finished snooping in my room, we can go to the station?”

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Chapter Five

GEORGIA

I glare at Danny as I pass the front desk. He couldn't give a girl a heads-up? Danny could have called the room or something. Literally anything!

Sorry , he mouths to me before making a call-me motion with his hand. I roll my eyes. I bet I still have to go on that date with him.

I spin around to face Neil when we make it outside the entrance of the hotel, and he almost runs right into me. "I'll see you at my station."

Not only do my cheeks still burn from being caught, but also from the entire lube incident. Why would he draw more attention to it? Unless he's back to seducing me.

"We can ride together," he offers smoothly.

"Watch it," I warn and point my finger at him. He freaking smirks.

"Oh, I'm watching."

Crap, that might be the problem. Neil needs to stop watching. "I'll meet you there."

I don't wait for him to respond as I spin back around and get in my cruiser. I hurry back to the station, wanting to get there before him and make sure the place is on the up-and-up.

When I enter, I see that it's definitely not. I rush over to my desk and grab all the Hershey Kiss wrappers and toss them in the trash. Why is it necessary to wrap each one individually? I get the Dove chocolates. They have cute little notes on the wrapper inside, but the Kisses are ridiculous.

When I see Neil pull up, I hurry into the bathroom, checking myself over.

It should be me seducing him, not the other way around.

I pop open a few buttons on my uniform to show cleavage.

That's what they do in the movies, and I've seen Lola do it over at the diner, and it gets her really good tips.

I cup my boobs, wiggling them, and I think mine might be bigger.

Neil is sitting at my desk when I step out of the bathroom.

"That's my chair."

"Getting it nice and warm for you." He stands and holds it out for me to sit. "Sheriff." Finally someone is putting respect on my name.

"Maybe I like my seats cold." I drop down into my chair, and I notice that when I do, Neil's eyes go right to my boobs. "Nice, right?"

"What?" He blinks, lifting his head.

"The station," I say coyly. "I added some of the touches myself." I put out a rug in the entry and gave all the chairs adorable pillows. The Stitch ladies made them for me as celebratory gifts when I got elected.

“Who is this?” Neil picks up the frame on my desk.

“That's Yoda. Adorable, right?” The picture is of me with Yoda perched on my shoulder. “We grew up together.”

I love that dang bird. I'm not sure he'd return the sentiment, but siblings squabble.

“Yoda?”

“We used to watch Star Wars together.” I take the frame from him, putting it back on my desk. “He's green and wise like my own little Yoda.”

“He's cute.”

“Don't tell him that. It will go straight to his head.” My eyes glance down to Neil's crotch. “Like most males.”

“With you, a lot of things do go straight to my head.”

Although I was the one that started the joke, my face rushes with heat. I pretend to be annoyed to cover it so he doesn't know how much he's affecting me.

“Don't make your joke off my joke. That is joke leeching.”

“Sorry.” He smirks, not appearing sorry at all. “The place is cute, though.” Neil points to a desk I'd pushed up against the wall. “Can I use that?” He's asking for permission, but he's already moving it away from the wall and spinning it around. “Is there a chair for it?”

“Yeah, in the cell.” I point over to the single jail cell that has to be from the 1920s.

“Are those Christmas lights?” He walks over and inspects the bars.

“They were from Valentine's Day but I'm keeping them up.” I hit the button to illuminate the bright pink lights I wrapped around all the bars. “Gives the place a little pizzazz.”

“Nice touch.”

“Thanks.” I smile, sitting up straighter. If you ask me, I think I’ve really turned this place around.

“Are you going to lock me in?” Neil lifts a brow. I hadn't planned on it, but it’s an idea I could save for later.

“Not today. It sucks in there.” I realize what I’ve said and rush to cover it. “Not that I would know.”

“Of course not.” He steps inside, grabbing the chair and rolling it back over to the desk that’s now really close to mine.

“Make yourself at home,” I say and stare at what he’s done.

“Was planning on it.” He sits down in the chair behind the desk, getting comfortable.

“Fine, but so we're both clear, I'm the boss,” I remind him.

“Got it.” He winks at me, and I don’t like the way it makes something in my stomach flutter to life. “Now about the files.”

“Why don't you have the files from the state?”

“I do.”

“Then why do you need mine?”

“You were the first on the scene.”

“And it was gross.” I shiver. It was disgusting, and I think I might have seen brain matter too. I had to start eating my burgers well done. “I hate the sight of blood. Real blood.”

“As opposed to fake blood.”

“Obviously. I love horror movies, and those have lots of blood.”

“So the files?”

“Classified.”

He barks a laugh but quickly muffles it. “They’re not classified.”

“They are.” I reach into my desk, grab the file, and hold it up. “See?”

“You wrote that on there with a red marker.”

Yeah, because we live in a country town and Amazon couldn’t overnight the classified stamp. That’s not my fault.

“You have no proof of that.” I bang it down on my desk, making it shake. The red marker rolls off my desk and hits Neil’s shoe. “That’s a coincidence.”

“A cop knows there’s no such thing as a coincidence.”

“You’re not a cop,” I remind him. I totally thought an FBI agent would fall into the category, but Google told me I was wrong.

“You’re right,” he admits.

“I know,” I chirp, not hiding my smugness. He shakes his head, and I swear he might be fighting a smile.

“I’m an FBI agent. We have a different set of skills.”

“Like what?” I lean forward, wanting to hear this because I could pick up some tricks.

“We’re taught a lot about body language. How to know when someone is lying.” I sit up straighter. “Breathe, Georgia.”

I hadn’t realized I’d stopped, so I take a breath. Maybe if I don’t move, he won’t see my lies. Neil comes over to my desk and picks up the file. He opens it, and I watch his eyes do a quick scan before they come to me.

“I can explain,” I blurt out. “Just stop grilling me!” I jump up from my desk so quickly my chair goes flying back. “And stop reading my body.”

He doesn’t bother hiding his smirk as he looks me up and down. “Yeah, that’s not going to happen.”

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Chapter Six

NEIL

I pull out the single sheet of paper inside the folder and hold it up. “Your entire report is Shit got real .”

“I didn’t exaggerate.” She crosses her arms over her chest, and my eyes go straight to her cleavage.

Goddamn it, I know she unbuttoned her uniform on purpose to distract me. The problem is it’s working a little too well. All I can think about is running my tongue between them and then my dick. I have to distract myself with the square root of pi to stay on task.

“Look, this might work for your everyday crimes in Cottonwood, but this is a serious case.” I sigh and shove the pink paper back inside the folder and toss it on her desk.

“You can scribble down whatever you want onto colorful scented paper on your own time, but I have to answer to some very powerful people. If I go back with shit got real , what do you think is going to happen?”

Her arms fall to her sides, and her shoulders slump. I hate that I’ve taken some of the spark out of her, but this could get a whole lot worse.

“It was my second day on the job,” she snuffles, and her head falls forward.

“Georgia,” I say softly. I don’t know if it’s seeing her so sad and broken or knowing that she’s out of her depth, but I pull her against my chest and wrap my arms around her gently. “It’s okay, I’ll help you.”

“You will?” She sniffs again as she looks up at me. “I thought you were here to get me in trouble.”

“No.” I shake my head and wipe a tear off her cheek. “I’m here to make a report on what happened, nothing more.”

I don’t add exactly what else I’d like to happen between us because it’s not a good idea.

Getting involved with her could cause so many problems for her and this investigation.

If someone found out, they could have me pulled and send in someone who is looking to make a name for themselves.

They could change Simon Gregory’s death to a murder and have someone completely innocent splashed all over the news.

I was sent here to perform a quiet investigation while finding out the facts.

Yes, there’s pressure from his family to find fault with someone in particular, but I can drag this out and stall for more time.

As much as I hate it, I release Georgia and take a step back. Then another. She seems better after the hug and wipes away the last of the tears.

“All right, so now what?” She looks ready to do something, and I know the feeling.

When my emotions get too heavy, I like to throw them into work.

“You’re going to let me interview you and take the report.

We can go step by step and then I’ll help you fill out all the correct paperwork.

” I take out my phone so I can record the conversation, and she looks at it skeptically.

“Don’t worry, this is just so I can transcribe it later.

I like to do my interviews like a conversation. ”

“Okay.” She takes a deep breath, then sits down, and she’s starting to look more like herself. “But I’m going to need fuel for this.”

She reaches into her desk and pulls out the biggest bag of Hershey Kisses I’ve ever seen. “My god, where did you find a bag that size?”

“I’ve got my sources.” She opens the bag and takes one out, holding it up. “I might be willing to share if you can keep a secret.”

“Your secrets are safe with me,” I say, and as much as I shouldn’t be saying it, I mean it.

I don’t know why I feel such a strong connection to this woman, but the longer I’m with her, the more I feel certain I can trust her.

Hell, she might end up telling me she killed Simon Gregory and I’m not sure I’d tell anyone.

She tosses me the Kiss, and I unwrap it before popping it in my mouth. “It would

save time if they didn't wrap each individual one in a bag that size."

"That's what I'm saying!" She shakes her head. "It's like they don't have smart people in charge."

The grin tugs at my lips, but I have to focus. "All right, so let's start with the day of the accident. What did you do before you got the call?"

I check my phone to make sure it's recording then sit back in my chair with my notepad. Georgia leans back too, trying to mimic my casual seating, but she goes too far and almost falls.

"Whoa." Her chair snaps back into place and then she starts again. "Okay, it was my second day on the job, so I woke up and put on the same uniform from the day before because I didn't think about having to wash it every time and needed to order more than one."

Again, I have to hide my smile as I clear my throat. "Okay, got it. Then what?"

"Then I remembered I wanted a gun but I'd never shot one before, so it didn't seem wise to just get a real one." She huffs like that was obvious. "So I broke into the high school and took it from the drama department."

"Um, I didn't say this before, but if you've got some side crimes you've committed, maybe leave those out of the official report. Okay?"

"Oh." She thinks it over and then nods. "Well then I guess I borrowed the bubble gun to complete my outfit."

"I'll make a note that you used air quotes around the word borrowed."

“This is exciting stuff.” She puts her feet up on her desk and pops another Kiss into her mouth.

“After the fit check, what happened?” I watch as she thinks it over for a second and then snaps her fingers.

“I went by Sofa King Cozy to talk to Lane. She’s building a table for the nook in my parents' kitchen.”

“That’s the furniture store downtown?”

She nods. “Yeah, her and her twin sister Liv run it.”

“That’s right next to Clean Kitty where Quinn was taken. Did you see anything suspicious that morning?”

“Just the sounds of them fucking.” She slaps a hand over her mouth, and her eyes go wide. “I want that stricken from the record.”

I sit up from my chair and lean closer. “This could be important, Sheriff. You should probably give me all the details.”

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Chapter Seven

GEORGIA

How does this man keep making me blush? I do my best to attempt to downplay it, acting as though discussing sex is not a big deal and it doesn't affect me in any way. Normally it doesn't, but with Neil it's different.

"It's not against the law to have sex in your own building, right?"

I don't want to admit to any crimes, for myself or against any other residents of Cottonwood. Quinn might be new in town, but she's one of us. She's sweet, and I knew right away she was special with how hard Rhodes fell for her. He's always been a good guy.

"Maybe," Neil hedges.

"It was in the back, and I don't think any of the cats witnessed it."

"It might violate a few health codes." He gives me a teasing smile.

"When they finally got together, things went hot and fast, so they might have been getting frisky in the back. But most of what they were doing was covered. I mean he bent her over and her skirt hid..." I trail off when Neil's eyebrows rise. "Too much information?"

"I was teasing about the details, but how do you know all that?" He shakes his head,

smirking.

My stomach sinks. The reason I know is because I saw the sneaky photos Simon took of Quinn and Rhodes together. Rhodes didn't want the more sexual ones shown around, so I'd taken them and hid them in my cruiser. I knew the state police wouldn't search my vehicle and they'd be safe.

What happened to them was appalling enough, but people looking at the photos was an invasion of privacy on top of it. Rhodes didn't want anyone to see them, but we knew we needed some to show Simon was stalking her. So we went through them and left out the ones that weren't as graphic.

"Sheriff?" Neil pushes, and I realize I haven't responded to his question.

"Girl talk," I blurt out.

"You guys give that level of detail?"

"Okay, Mr. FBI Agent. I don't know what you learned in that fancy academy of yours, but here in Cottonwood"—I tap my finger on the desk—"girl talk is highly classified."

"All right." He puts his hands up, conceding. Internally I sigh in relief. "But I get the sense something is off. There's more to the story."

Well, crap. That relief was short-lived. I should google how much time do you get in the slammer for messing with evidence. I still have those pictures, but I should probably burn them. I'm escalating my crimes rather quickly, I suppose, so why stop now?

"Okay, you want the truth?" I stand up from my desk.

“I would prefer that.”

“Fine, I have a confession.” Neil reaches out, hitting the button to pause the recording.

The action surprises me, and I’m not sure what to make of it. He could be trying to make me trust him. Ha! That’s not happening.

“Hit me with it.”

“The reason I’m being weird about the whole sex thing and the details is, well...” I lick my lips, hesitating.

“Tell me, Georgia, and we will figure it out together.”

“Sheriff Georgia.”

“Right. Sheriff Georgia.”

“Thank you,” I respond, and the silence grows. I know I’m stalling before I fall on this sword, but I’m trying to find the best way to say it.

“Sheriff?”

“Oh, yes. Um, if I’m being honest, I’m not sure if it’s something you can handle.”

“I can,” he says, urging me to go on.

“Well, maybe I don’t want you to. I might have plans for someone else to handle it.”

“I’ll handle it.” His voice has an authority to it, and I can’t say I hate it.

“Okay.” I shrug, deciding I have to rip the Band-Aid off. “I got weird talking about the sex stuff because I’m a virgin.”

Quinn and Rhodes owe me big time. I totally didn’t want to admit that to Neil since my plan was to seduce him. This isn’t going to do anything to help.

The seconds tick by, and Neil just stares at me while my face heats.

“Don’t be all judgy, lube man!” I blurt out defensively.

Damn it, I wasn’t going to mention the lube. He blinks as if coming back to life and shakes his head.

“I promise I’m not judging.” Neil stands from his seat and comes over to me.

“Sure feels like it.” I fold my arms over my chest protectively, but he moves closer. “Maybe we should be done for the day.”

“Hey, look at me.” When my eyes lock with his, he reaches out and tucks a piece of hair behind my ear. Then his finger trails down my neck where it lingers. “There’s no judgment.”

It takes me a second to break the spell as I blink and step out of his reach. I grab the keys off my desk as a new plan forms in my mind.

“Let’s get out of here. Instead of telling you how my day went, I’ll show you.”

I don’t have to be the only one to seduce Neil. It’s hard to come to Cottonwood and not love the people here. We’re a bit strange, but it has a certain charm.

“Come on.” I motion for him to follow me, and he does.

“Am I driving, or are you?” he asks when we get outside.

“No need.” I lock the door behind me and put the keys in my pocket. “I don't want anyone stealing my throw pillows or Valentine's Day lights.”

“We can't have that.” He smirks.

“Don't tease. Valentine's Day is the best holiday.”

“We'll have to disagree on that one.”

“Why don't you like it? Everything is pink and red and there's so much chocolate. What more could you ask for?”

“As an FBI agent that has to travel, relationships aren't on the top of my list.”

Right, he's only here for a short time. It's a good reminder that he'll be moving on soon.

“I'm a virgin, and I love Valentine's Day. It doesn't have to be about couples. I make small gifts for my girlfriends. All of them get chocolate. Obviously.” Though it might not be terrible to have a date for once. Especially if they were tall and handsome with a side of sexy mystery.

“You think I should make the other agents chocolate gift bags?”

“I bet they'd appreciate it. I saw you eyeing my Kisses.”

“I can't deny that.”

I peek over at him, and he winks at me. When I snap my head straight forward, Neil

lets out a chuckle. I'm starting to think his goal is to make me blush.

"As you can see, I have the ability to walk most places," I say, trying to steer the conversation back to professional. We make our way down the sidewalk, and then I warn him, "Brace yourself."

"Why, is—" Neil's question is cut off by the Moore triplets. They've drawn a hopscotch game with chalk in front of their parents' salon and barber shop.

It's actually pretty cool inside. Half of the shop is styled in pinks and golds for the salon, and the other side has browns and golds but with barbershop-style chairs. It's split right down the center, even at the front desk.

"Who are you?"

"Why do you have a suit on?"

"Why are you so tall?"

Each one asks a question at the same time.

"I asked about the tall thing too," I tell them as I do the hopscotch. When I get through, I turn to Neil and point down. "You can't pass until you do it."

"Those are the rules," one of the girls tells him.

Neil grins at her before he does as he's told.

"Who are you?" The girls return to their adorable interrogation, but I'm realizing I didn't think this through. Damn it.

“This is Neil. We're dating. Met on the Internet,” I say before Neil can tell anyone he's an FBI agent.

It would be great if we didn't freak anyone else out. Rhodes and Quinn should enjoy being newly married and not fret over a man who stalked Quinn and made her life hell. She's been through enough.

“The Internet?” One of the girls' eyes go wide, and another scrunches her nose, while the third appears intrigued.

“Yeah, but don't meet any boys on there,” I tell them and then motion to Neil. “He told me he's short, and look at him.”

“She's not wrong,” Neil agrees. “I did some trickery, but I got the girl.” He throws his arm over me, pulling me close.

“He's too tall for you,” one of the girls says, and the other two nod.

“I think we fit.” Neil somehow manages to tug me in even closer while really playing this up.

“You girls have fun,” I tell them before guiding Neil farther down the sidewalk.

We get stopped four more times before we make it to Sofa King Cozy. I should have probably tried to stop people, but I was letting everyone charm him.

“You're really selling it that we're dating,” I laugh, but he gives me a cocky grin.

“Selling? More like I'm enjoying the perks.” He puts his arm over my shoulder, and I roll my eyes.

“I didn't know FBI agents had jokes.”

“We don't.”

He's serious, and I'm starting to think maybe he hasn't been joking this whole time.

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Chapter Eight

NEIL

My phone buzzes again, and I can't ignore it this time. "Excuse me a second."

Georgia looks at me funny but doesn't stop me as I get up from the counter at the diner and go outside.

"Anders," I say in greeting before I hear my boss sigh heavily on the other end.

"We've got a problem," he says. I knew that the moment I saw his name pop up, because if he's calling me, it's not good news.

"Which is?" I'm bracing for the blow that I'm being pulled from the case or there's an emergency that I need to come back to Washington to deal with.

"The Gregorys are sending their own private investigator to make sure you're doing your job."

"What?" I snap, then remember that I'm on the sidewalk and I need to keep my cool.

"Why the fuck are they sending in someone else? I've got this under control."

What I don't say is that I've got this handled the way I want it to be handled. Sending in someone else to look this over might expose some things that Georgia doesn't want me to know.

She took me to Sofa King Cozy, and I talked to the twins.

Their stories matched well enough, but there's something off.

There's no police report in the file, and I have a feeling Georgia is keeping something from me.

The next guy that comes along may not be so nice.

The thought of anyone not being nice to Georgia pisses me off.

"Robert Greogry said he wants to make sure that you're not missing anything. I tried to assure him you're the best agent I've got, but it was no use."

"Thanks for the vote of confidence." My tone is sarcastic, but I doubt my boss cares.

"I only found out about this an hour ago, and from what it sounds like, the guy might already be there. He's someone with power that called in a favor with the feds. We can't exactly stop a grieving father from hiring a private detective to look into his son's death."

"So what the fuck is my job now? Does he want me to look into it or does he want this other guy to do it?" I pinch the bridge of my nose and try not to grind my teeth.

"Look, Anders. Between you and me, I think he's asked us to look into it so it can be on paper. If you know what I'm saying."

"Hmm" is all I respond because that could be the case. If he's made a somewhat public inquiry into the investigation, then he's free to hire someone in a backdoor deal which can be covered up with my legitimate investigation.

“I don’t trust him or whatever he’s got planned. But your services are no longer needed in Cottonwood.”

I press the phone to my ear while I turn around and glance back into the diner.

Georgia is at the bar and laughing at something the ladies behind the counter said.

This is her home, and as chaotic as she acts, I know that she just wants to keep the people here safe.

I trust my instincts, and I know if she’s covering something up, it’s to protect someone.

She wouldn’t do anything to the people here without a damn good reason.

“Did you hear me? I’m pulling you and the case. Let this guy deal with his own mess.”

“I’m taking a few weeks off,” I find myself saying.

“What?”

“I’ve got the time, don’t I?” It’s a rhetorical question because of course I do. I never take time off work, which is probably why my boss sounds so stunned.

“Anders, I can’t have you getting stuck in this. It’s best you get out while you can.”

Georgia turns around on her stool, and we lock eyes through the glass. She cocks her head to the side and then makes a funny face before turning back to the ladies at the counter.

“It’s a great little town.” I look up and down Main Street at the people talking and going into the shops. “Nice spot for a much-needed vacation.”

My boss sighs like he’s so done with my shit. “I hope you know what you’re doing.”

Looking at Georgia, I know I can’t leave. Not until this is over and she’s safe. Maybe not until a while after that. I’ve only just met her, and the thought of packing up and heading out makes my chest tight.

“You and me both,” I say and end the call.

I take a moment before I go back inside the diner and think about my next steps.

I have to convince Georgia that I’m on her side and that I’m willing to bend the rules with her if she’ll trust me.

I’ve also got to make sure that the person coming here to look into this isn’t going to hurt her to get what they want.

I can’t let her unknowingly walk into danger, and if I tell her what may come, I don’t trust that she can protect herself.

She’s got a bubble blower for a gun, for Christ's sake.

Protecting her just became my new mission, and I’ve never failed one yet.

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Chapter Nine

GEORGIA

When Neil comes back into the diner, he's different. He sits down next to me, taking a sip of his coffee. We'd been having a good time until he had to go take a call.

Neil appeared to enjoy talking with different people around town. He's been smiling and teasing me a little, which was fun. I like the banter I have with him. It's different from what I have with everyone else.

A lot of people, more so ones not from Cottonwood, aren't my biggest fans.

I know I can be rambunctious and, as many would say, "too much," but my parents instilled in me that if someone says I'm too much, then they're just not enough to handle me. My parents were great about telling me that if that's what people think, then it's on them.

"Everything okay?" I ask, taking a sip of my chocolate shake. It's way better than coffee, and I won't make that mistake again.

"Everything is fine." Neil leans back, putting his arm across the back of my chair.

Something's changed in his mood, and I wonder what it is. It occurs to me that I'm the sheriff. I should be able to find out if I poke him a bit.

"My dad tells me that when my mom says things are fine, they are not in fact fine."

“I’ll get it worked out. I always do.” He gives me a smile, but it’s not like his others. Yeah, there’s most certainly something off.

“But we’re partners now, right? I might be able to help.” I don’t mention that I’m also nosy. That’s what happens when you hang out with the Stitches for too long. You get a thirst for the tea.

“Partners?” This time his smile appears more genuine, making me relax back into my seat.

“I was considering getting a deputy.” I shrug like I’m still thinking about it.

“Are you doing interviews?”

“Why? You want the spot?”

“I think this town might only need one cop.”

“Well, I haven’t really been thinking about a human deputy.”

“Wait, what?” His smile slips a little, and I almost laugh.

“I was thinking in the four-legged department.”

“You think you can handle that kind of responsibility?” He’s back to teasing me.

“I mean, in the short time you’ve known me, isn’t it clear that I can handle just about anything?”

“Except real blood.”

“Bro, it was gross. Have you seen real blood and, like...” I lean in closer to whisper.
“Brain matter?”

“Bro?”

“Don't age yourself, Neil.”

“All right, bro.”

“See, I'm good at training. I can handle a pet.”

A bark of laughter leaves him. “I suppose you're right.”

A few people stop and talk to us, and I have a feeling they are more curious about Neil because they think we're dating. It takes half a second for anything new to make it through this whole town.

“Where would you like to go next?” I ask after sucking down the rest of my milkshake.

“I thought you were taking me along for that day.” Oh, right.

“This is kind of it, really. I mean, after Rhodes realized Quinn wasn't in her shop and Boss was still there?—”

“Boss?”

“Her cat. Did the state police not put that in the report?”

“They did not. I bet if you got a four-legged deputy, they would have put it in there.”

I snap my fingers. “You’re right. You’re totally talking me into this deputy thing.”

“Glad I could help, but keep going. After Rhodes realized Quinn was gone, then what?”

“The town rallied, obviously. All of us were searching for her. It was scary, you know? We don’t get a lot of crime, as you can see.” I motion with my hand around us. “I got one call last week, and it was from Ms. York needing help taking in her groceries and then setting up her new alarm clock.”

“You set up her alarm clock?”

“Can you believe I had to google it? Who still uses a traditional clock on their nightstand to set an alarm?” I say and then huff a laugh. “Well, not you obviously. We know what you’ve got on your nightstand.”

“That wasn’t my fault.” He shrugs.

“How is that not your fault?” What, did someone break into his room and leave a bottle of lube next to the bed?

“I don't know, babe, you tell me.” I scrunch my nose thinking about it, but he chuckles. “I didn't have much of a choice. Not after the state you put me in. I couldn't have let myself stay that way.”

My mouth falls open in silent shock.

“You'll catch flies that way,” Jenny says as she passes by.

I quickly snap it shut, making Neil grin.

“You're trying to seduce me, aren't you?”

“I'm not trying to do anything.”

“Oh.” Well, that's a bit embarrassing since I assumed he was.

“I'm not trying, babe. I'm doing it.” His expression is no longer teasing, and there's heat behind his eyes.

“Can I get the new lovebirds anything?” Jenny asks.

“You want anything else, babe?” Neil's attention is still on me.

“Nope, I'm all good, honey.” I do it right back, but it slips off my tongue way too easily.

“I think we're good,” Neil tells Jenny. She brings the check, and he reaches for it.

“Allow me.” He pulls out some cash, dropping it onto the counter. “Are you ready?”

“Yeah.” I hop down from the high-top chair, and Neil's hand goes to my lower back as he guides me outside.

“So the whole town is searching for Quinn?” Neil circles us back around to our conversation. It's probably better to have it out here anyways.

“All of us.” I let out a breath because it was scary and I was freaking out. “He stalked her here. Do you know that?”

“I do.” He gives me an apologetic smile.

“Did you know her mom was murdered? Her mom's boyfriend killed her. Then she

had to live through a man stalking her across the country.”

“Shit, I didn't know that.” There’s a sadness in his eyes as he looks at me.

I stop walking to turn and face him. “She's been through enough.”

“I agree.” His words are empathetic, but does that mean that’s it?

“Then your investigation is all done?”

“Georgia, the thing is?—”

“Sheriff,” I correct him, and it's becoming a habit. Plus, what happened to babe? It was nice.

“Sheriff Babe Georgia.” Oh, snaps. Does the FBI teach people to read minds too?

“The thing is?—”

Neil is cut off by someone shouting my name.

“Georgia!”

“Sheriff Georgia!” Neil shouts, beating me to it. Now that’s how to seduce someone.

I spot Danny heading toward us, and he appears not to be too happy. “You lied to me,” he accuses.

“Watch it.” Neil takes a step toward Danny, who stops mid-step.

“It’s okay.” I place my hand on Neil’s chest. “I got this.”

“All right,” he agrees, stepping back but shifting closer to my side.

“It’s not a lie, Danny. What I say are small fibs. There’s a difference.” Clearly I’m still lying, but I’m sure there’s some difference. Whatever, it doesn’t matter.

“You said he was with the mob, but you’re dating him?”

“The mob?” Neil laughs.

“Danny, please don’t tell everyone he’s in the mob.” I shoot him a look. “That’s a secret.”

“You’re dating him? You agreed to go on a date with me.”

“Hold on, you what?” Neil appears pissed. A+ for his boyfriend skills. He’s really getting into character. I almost believe it.

“What about our date?” Danny snaps.

“Watch it.” Neil goes to step forward again, but I maneuver in front of him. I can’t have him flattening out Danny right in the center of town. That’s not very sheriff of me.

“Danny, I’m dating a mobster. I like bad boys.”

“But you’re the sheriff.” He glances up at Neil but snaps his eyes right back to me.

“I know.” I shake my head like I’m disappointed in myself.

“Then why did you have me help break into his room?”

“I didn’t break anything.” What’s with these accusations? “You know me. I was only checking on him. I mean, he’s a mobster, after all. I have to keep him in line.”

“You think he had a girl in there?” I’d hope not if he needed that lube.

“No, he knows I’d kill him,” I say, and Danny nods.

“I think it’s time you move it along, Danny boy,” Neil tells him. Danny ignores him. Or tries to.

“We should talk about this later,” Danny tries again.

“Not happening.” I elbow Neil to shut up. I don’t need Danny going around asking questions about Neil.

“It’s fine. I’ve got to get back to work anyway,” Danny says. “We’ve got someone new checking into the hotel this afternoon.”

“All right, I’ll see you later,” I say, and Danny nods before heading back toward the hotel. When he’s out of earshot, I spin around to face Neil. “I wonder who’s in town now.” Neil is staring over my head, the way Danny left. “Hey.” I tug on the front of his shirt. “You okay?”

Neil nods, but I’m not buying it. Not one bit.

Chapter Ten

NEIL

S hit, this is all happening faster than I thought possible.

As much as I'd like to keep this to myself, I think I need to tell Georgia.

I have no idea what her living situation is like, and what if this guy gets a wild hair and goes after her?

Robert Gregory has a reputation for getting what he wants, and I've heard rumors about the lengths he's gone to to make that happen.

Would a silly sheriff in a nowhere town matter to him at all?

If they got rid of Georgia, then they could make up whatever investigation they wanted.

For that matter, he could already know I've been called home, so who would be standing in their way?

"Where do you live?" I ask Georgia, and she pulls a face.

"Looks like someone isn't a very good FBI agent."

"I'm serious. I want to know what kind of security you've got."

“Security?” She huffs a laugh. “There’s a possum that walks around my rental house at night. Does that count?”

“No.” I clench my fists at my side and try not to get angry. It’s not her fault there’s no crime here for her to be worried about. “Look, I need to tell you something.”

“You are in the mob!” She brings a hand to her mouth dramatically. “I knew it.”

“If this were any other time, I’d find your theatrics charming, but right now I’m worried about you.

” I reach out and take her hand, and she doesn’t flinch or back away from my touch.

“Can you take me to your house? I think we should talk somewhere private, and I don’t know if it’s safe for me to go back to the hotel right now. ”

Her fingers clench around my hand, and her expression changes to concern. “Neil, is something wrong?”

I glance around, not trusting being outside where anyone can hear us. “Not here, okay?”

“Okay, come with me.”

Turns out Georgia lives around the corner in a little house behind Main Street. It’s a cute cottage that’s got a white picket fence and flowers growing everywhere.

“My mom loves to garden. This is one of their rental houses I’m staying in right now.”

“It’s like you,” I say when I step inside and look around.

“Really?” She seems happy with the comparison.

The space is soft and bright, and it smells like her. It’s sweet with a hint of spice, and I can’t help but think that’s exactly like Georgia.

“Come here,” I say, and without waiting for her to respond, I pull her close to me.

Her lips part as she tilts her head back and I reach for the front of her shirt.

With her eyes on me, I unclip her badge and lay it on the table beside her.

Then I take my badge out and toss it on the table next to hers.

“There, now it’s just Neil and Georgia. No agent, no sheriff. ”

“Oh.” She seems disappointed, and for a second, I can’t figure out why. Then she licks her lips, and I wonder if she thought I was going to kiss her.

She’s lucky I didn’t, because I’m afraid if I start I won’t be able to stop.

“Georgia, I think the person checking into the hotel might try to hurt you.”

“What?” She takes a step back, and I follow her, not letting her put space between us.

“Come here.” Without thinking, I take her hand and walk over to the small couch. I sit down and then pull her onto my lap with me. “I don’t want to scare you, but I need to tell you some things.”

So I do. I spill all of it. She listens intently as I stroke a hand up and down her back and tell her the reason I was sent here and the conversation I had with my boss.

I tell her about Simon's father and what he's after and that she's not safe.

To Georgia's credit, she doesn't interject or tell me I'm worried for nothing.

She listens intently, and when I'm finished, she sighs heavily.

"You know I always thought the only one bed trope was an impossibility, but here we are."

"What?" Now I'm the one confused.

"Clearly you can't go back to your room. I can call Danny and have him pack it up and drop it off at the station. But there's no other places for you to stay in town. My parents do all of the rental properties, and this was the only vacancy. And guess what, big guy, it's a one-bedroom."

"So you've only got one bed?" Having her on my lap has already made my cock swell, but the thought of sleeping next to her has me going impossibly hard. Can she feel it against her ass?

"Only one bed," she repeats, and then she squirms in my lap, confirming she can feel the steel rod poking her.

The flush in her cheeks is another indicator, but she's not hopping off and running away. If anything, she's leaning closer.

"You'll let me stay?" I ask and wrap my hands around her waist.

"The town already thinks you're my boyfriend. Staying with me would be the next natural step."

“I have to warn you that I take up a lot of room in bed. I tend to sprawl.” I grin at the way she shivers when I trace a finger down her neck. “Plus, as soft as you are, I might end up being a cuddler.”

“Spooning leads to forking,” she says, but it’s not her usual sassy way. It’s like she’s in a trance as she watches my every movement.

“I promise to be on my best behavior when we go to bed.” My finger traces lower until I reach the top button of her shirt. “But I make no promises until then.”

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Chapter Eleven

GEORGIA

Neil pops two more buttons on my uniform top, revealing my sports bra.

Damn, why didn't I think to wear a cuter bra today?

It's not a cute sports bra either. It's plain white with a zipper in the front. It's the only kind I'll wear if I'm not wearing a real bra.

My girls need to be contained. What if I have to climb a tree to save a cat?

"Holy hell," Neil mutters, licking his bottom lip. My mind flashes to him licking me as his eyes take in my chest.

"What?" I start to lift my arms to cover my basic bra, suddenly insecure. I didn't think I would be getting naked in front of anyone today, or maybe ever.

"Oh no, you're not hiding them now." Neil pushes my arms back down to my sides. "I'll cuff you if I have to."

I suck in a breath. "You wouldn't dare."

"You want to test me?"

I bite my bottom lip, thinking it over. I've read about it in a few dirty books, but I

didn't think it would be hot. At the time, the idea freaked me out, but I don't have that fear when Neil mentions doing it to me. In fact, my body is having the opposite response.

"You think my bra is ugly."

"What?" He chuckles and then shakes his head, like I've lost my mind. "I never said that."

"You said 'holy hell' when you saw it." I try to shift away, but he doesn't let me go anywhere. His hold is so firm, and I doubt he would need cuffs. He's doing a fine job of keeping me where he wants me. Again, it should freak me out, but it doesn't. In fact, I wiggle, needing friction.

"I said that because your tits were already driving me insane, and now I know you're wearing a sports bra. That means you're hiding a lot more, and I want to see." Neil tugs on the zipper of my bra, slowly bringing it down. When my breasts spill free, he moans in pleasure. "Like I said, holy hell."

Any doubt I had about my boobs or bra is washed away. The expression on Neil's face is heated and hungry.

"You're supposed to kiss me before you get me naked," I point out. I was sure he was going to kiss me earlier, but when he didn't, I realized how badly I wanted him to.

"Have you ever been kissed?" His eyes soften as he searches my face.

My cheeks burn, and I know I should blush over being partially naked, but my lack of experience is what actually bothers me.

At least, at this moment. I can wing a lot of things and pretend to know what I'm

doing.

Or make a joke out of it and stall for time.

It's different being in his arms. I feel vulnerable in a way I've never been before.

"No," I admit.

The single word is barely out before Neil's lips are on mine. Every part of me melts into him as need rushes through me. It's all new sensations, and each one is exciting.

Neil sinks his fingers into my hair, tugging my head to tilt back. "Open for me, babe." I part my lips, and when his tongue slips into my mouth, I stroke mine against his. "That's it," he says, encouraging me before taking control again.

The kiss quickly grows from timid and testing to wild and passionate.

Then I feel Neil's hand cup one of my breasts before his callused thumb gently caresses my nipple.

The rough texture only adds to the sensation, and I moan into his mouth.

Without thinking, I lean closer to his touch as my desire takes charge.

When he gives my nipple a small tug, I gasp, breaking the kiss. The sensation shoots straight between my thighs and directly to my clit. It's like they are connected and he's unlocked the cheat code.

"You're so damn responsive."

"Yeah, my whole life," I admit, earning a sexy smirk from him. His hair is messy

from my fingers, making him more attractive than he already was.

“I meant your body, but yes, all of you.” Neil takes my mouth again while shifting us at the same time.

The next thing I know, my back is hitting the couch and he’s undoing the rest of the buttons on my shirt. “Let’s see how you respond to my mouth.” My top and bra are gone in the next breath, and then his mouth is there, covering my nipple.

“Neil,” I moan when he latches on. My back bows off the couch while his fingers pinch the other nipple.

He alternates between swiping back and forth with his tongue then sucking, and each pull sends heat to my clit. What the hell is happening? His mouth moves to my other nipple to give it the same attention, and I think I’m going to die from the pleasure.

“You’ll come this way for me, won’t you?” Neil asks, his tongue circling my nipple.

Right now, I think I would do anything he asked.

“Please,” I beg. I’m so close. I didn’t think it was possible to orgasm from only having my nipples played with, but my body didn’t experience a lot of things until Neil came along.

“I’ve got you, babe.”

He pushes my breasts together, his mouth going back to its sweet torture.

He moves easily from one nipple to the other, and my breaths grow short and sharp.

I’m right at the edge, and my hips are rocking up and down.

When his teeth rake across one nipple and he gives the other a firm tug, I come undone.

I cry out his name as the orgasm hits and floods through my body.

I grip his shoulders as the pleasure cascades over me, and it feels like I'm going to pass out.

When it's finally over, I collapse onto the couch in a puddle of pleasure.

I'm out of breath, but I don't know why since I didn't do any work.

"That was—" I start to say but then stop talking when I'm lifted off the couch. "What are you doing?" I'm still dazed, because how the hell did I orgasm from him only playing with my nipples?

"The bed." His voice is gruffer, like it's filled with need as he heads straight down the small hallway and into my bedroom. He tosses me on the bed and immediately pulls at his shirt. "Naked," he orders, tossing his shirt to the floor. "Make it quick."

I know I only came seconds ago, but it felt so damn good I want another one. Since it appears he's down for more too, I wiggle out of my pants. I ignore the plushies that fall off at the same time. I'll kick them under the bed later.

Even though I've got my pants down my hips, I must not be moving fast enough. Neil's impatient hands join mine, yanking them down my legs and then tossing them over his shoulder. If this wasn't so dang hot, I would laugh.

Clearly, Neil has won the seduction game. Although I don't think I really ever stood a chance against him.

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Chapter Twelve

NEIL

Georgia is stripped bare in front of me, and I stand from the bed to look down at her. Every inch of her is on display, and I'm shaking with the need to touch her.

"Why did you stop?" Her hands go to cover her body, but I shake my head. When they relax on the bed beside her, she must sense that I'm close to the edge. "You want to touch me?"

"More than anything," I breathe. My entire world is centered right before my eyes.

"Are you afraid you'll hurt me?"

"No," I say quickly. "I won't ever hurt you, Georgia." The thought of anyone, including myself, causing her pain is horrific. No, right now I only want to give her pleasure. "I'm trying to control myself."

Her seductive grin makes my cock throb. It's so hard it's nearly reaching my belly button. I clench my fists at my side because I'm afraid if I touch it, I'll cum everywhere.

"Well, what if you don't control yourself?" Slowly, she spreads her legs and bends her knees to give me a full view of her pussy.

"Fuck," I moan as my mouth waters. "You're so pink." My knees nearly give out as I

land on the mattress between her legs. “Is all this for me?” When she nods, I use my thumbs to spread the soft lips of her pussy so I can see her clit. “And this little sweetheart is begging for a lick.”

“Neil.” My name sounds pained as Georgia grips the sheets tighter.

“Goddamn, you smell so good. I’m going to follow you around like a bloodhound trying to get at it.”

I kiss the inside of her thigh, and her legs tremble. Then I kiss above her clit and inhale against the soft curls. I’m teasing her by taking my time, and it’s making my cock leak onto her bed.

“I’m going to make a mess of you,” I tell her as I bend down and bury my face in her cunt.

“Holy shit!” Georgia shouts as she sits up and then immediately falls back down.

“This little virgin pussy is so sensitive.” I moan against her, and the vibrations make her back arch. My tongue glides back and forth over her clit, feeling how eager she is to cum. “You’re going to love being on my dick, aren’t you, Georgia?”

“Oh god,” she gasps as I push a finger inside her.

“Pussy this wet needs to be filled. You can’t walk around all day with it dripping and not get fucked.” I grin against her clit as she pants. “Now that I know, I’ll have to keep you full.”

Her breaths come faster, and her eyes squeeze shut.

Enough teasing. I need her to cum on my face.

I push in another finger just as I cover her clit with my mouth and suck, and that's all it takes.

I watch Georgia cry out as a deep blush moves up her chest to her cheeks and a glow of sweat covers her skin.

Her hips surge up as I curl my fingers inside her, and it pulls another orgasm from her. One turns into two, and two turns to five.

She cums over and over and over as I lap at her clit and rub her G-spot at the same time. I keep her pinned to the bed so the only thing she can do is take the pleasure until her body goes limp.

By the time I take my mouth off her, she's boneless and can't open her eyes. I grin down at her as I move up her body and between her legs.

"Neil," she mumbles, her eyes still shut.

"It's okay, babe, just lie there and let me do it."

She nods her head slightly as I dip my fingers back inside her and then use them to lube my cock. Once it's wet, I grab the base and guide it to her opening. I push in a little, just enough so the fat, swollen head is inside her, and then I jack my length with her juices.

She breathes softly, and I think she might have passed out, but I can't stop. "That's it, go to sleep. I'm gonna nut in you real quick."

"Mm-hmm," is the only sound she makes as my cock starts to throb.

I look down between us, and another inch has slipped in.

I know this is reckless because she's fertile right now.

I saw her calendar on the wall in the kitchen, and she marked the dates of her period.

She's ovulating right now, and the thought of breeding her makes cum pour out of me in thick waves.

Another inch slips in, and I realize I popped her cherry nice and easy when I was finger-fucking her.

She came so many times while I thrust them into her, she's ready for my cock.

Her wet cunt is making me slick, and my balls draw up tight against me.

They want to get as much as they can in her, and I hold still, letting them pump.

Cumming in her feels so fucking good. It's something I've never experienced before. Being inside her bare, filling her with my seed, it makes me possessive in a way that could scare her off.

The thought of her running from me makes me push in a little more, as I pin her to the bed. Her eyes flutter slightly, but I use my weight to hold her down and kiss her lips softly.

"It's okay, babe. Go back to sleep." I pump in and out in slow, shallow strokes as she smiles sleepily and nods.

"Night."

"Good night," I whisper softly and cum in her again.

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Chapter Thirteen

GEORGIA

Neil sleeps peacefully next to me as I lie there watching him.

I'm totally being creepy, but no one will ever know.

It's strange to wake up with a man in my bed.

My home doesn't feel as quiet or empty. It's nice having him here, and it's really going to suck when it's time for him to go or I'm tossed in the slammer.

I moved out of my parents' home a year ago, knowing I needed to grow up. It's been great because I love it here and I've been able to put my own touches everywhere.

But if I'm honest, I hate living alone. Even now, there isn't a sound, but it's not quiet.

I don't have the usual restless feeling I get that makes me get up and blast music. Neil brings a sense of calm with him, and it's kind of amazing.

Slowly I get up from the bed, doing my best not to wake him. I don't want him to get up yet, plus, I need to go to the bathroom and check myself over. I have to be a hot mess.

When I see my reflection in the mirror, I cringe.

Then I pause when I see the insides of my thighs.

“Holy shit,” I whisper to myself. How many times did we have sex?

It must have been a whole freaking lot! There’s a rush of cum leaking down the insides of my thighs, and I realize I let Neil do it inside of me over and over.

My nipples harden at the thought, and my sex clenches.

Everything we did last night blurs together, but I remember how easy it was for him to get me off.

A few touches from Neil was all it took, and the intensity was unparalleled.

How do people have partners and ever manage to get anything done?

I want to hop back into bed with him right now, but there are things I need to take care of.

Neil told me everything yesterday, but I hadn't done the same. I still have stolen evidence in my cruiser I need to get rid of. I should have done it back when everything happened, but honestly, I'd forgotten about them. Now that this new investigation is taking place, it's too risky to keep them.

I peek out of the bathroom and smile when I see Neil has grabbed my pillow and is cuddling it like it's me. The big bad FBI agent is actually really sweet. As amazing as he is, I can't help but wonder why he's helping me.

Last night I'd gotten so lost in Neil that I wasn't fully taking in what he told me. He said the man Simon's family sent might hurt me. No one but Rhodes and Quinn know about the pictures, and I don't think either of them told a soul. The other thing is that

when Rhodes shot Simon, it wasn't purely in self-defense. Not in the true sense of the word.

Simon had taken Quinn to Rhodes's home, with the plan of Rhodes coming home to find them there.

When Rhodes arrived, things came to a head.

In the end, Rhodes managed to get the gun from Simon, but he could have waited for the police.

He didn't have to shoot Simon, but Rhodes wanted to make sure that Simon could never hurt Quinn again.

He did what needed to be done, and I know I would have done the same.

What happened that night wasn't done by the letter of the law, but I've never done anything to others' standards.

My mom has always said that I follow my own path, but as long as my intentions are good, that's all that matters.

I don't have any guilt over anything that went down with Rhodes and Simon, or my involvement in helping to cover for him.

The only thing I regret is not getting rid of those pictures sooner, but I'm going to fix that right now.

As quiet as a church mouse, I get myself dressed. With every move and shift of my body, I can feel Neil's touch lingering. I ache in the sweetest way, which I didn't know was possible.

Before I leave the house, I make sure my gun is loaded. I never know when I might need to bust out the bubbles. I slip out the front door, heading toward the station where I left my cruiser yesterday. I'm sure that's spreading around town.

I debate what I should do about this new guy in town and if I should tell Neil the whole truth. The thing is, I'm kind of freaking out, but not my normal freak-out way. This one is more jarring and puts me on edge.

Neil is new, and although I've only known him for a short time, it doesn't feel that way.

When he's close to me, I'm connected to him in a way I can't explain.

It's been that way from the very start. Maybe he's too good at his seduction game.

What if that's all this is to him? Maybe this trip here was a game to trick me and I fell for it.

Can I trust him with these secrets? They aren't mine alone and could destroy so many others. I know I can be naive and silly about something this serious. This isn't the time for that, and I need to grow up. Even if I don't really want to.

Thankfully there aren't a lot of people out and about yet. I'll grab the pictures, get rid of them, and then hit up the diner. I can grab breakfast to go with coffee for Neil. That's what I plan on using as my excuse for sneaking out if he wakes up before I'm back.

When I get to my cruiser, I pop the trunk and pull up the covering for the spare tire. "What the hell?" I lift the tire but don't see the pictures. Oh no, this is not happening. I dig around everywhere in the trunk but can't find them.

Okay, maybe I moved them or put them elsewhere and forgot about it.

I check in the glove box and under the seats, but I can't find anything.

My anxiety starts to rise the more I look, and then I double and triple check the same places again.

There's nothing but a few Cheeto puffs and about seventy-five cents.

Think, Georgia! Where could I have put them? This is when I want to call my mom and ask her. She always knows where everything is. It's a mom superpower that I don't possess.

What the hell am I going to do now?

Chapter Fourteen

NEIL

The feel of Georgia slipping back into bed wakes me. There's a pillow in my arms that I was apparently using to replace her, and I toss it away.

"Where have you been?" I ask, reaching for her and sliding her under me. She's naked, and her legs spread as I nestle between them. My cock is hard and eager for her wet heat, so I slide the tip against her opening.

"Got breakfast." She hums in pleasure as the head of my cock rubs her clit. "From the diner."

"You were gone a long time." I remember hearing her leave, but I was so dead after last night.

"They were busy."

I press my lips to hers, and she tastes like donuts. "Your pussy sucked the life out of me last night, and I didn't even get all the way inside. You were up at the crack of dawn up eating donuts. I must not be doing my job right."

"Guess you need to step your game up." She shrugs playfully, and I growl.

"You're going to regret saying that." She squeals as I flip her on her stomach and smack my hand across her ass. It turns the prettiest shade of pink before I bend down

and bite it.

Her cries of mischief are replaced with moans as I lick one ass cheek and then the other. After that, I push her legs apart and then yank her ass in the air. She gasps in surprise until my mouth is there, covering her wet cunt.

The more I lick, the more she rocks against my face, and when I suck her clit, she cums. She's so easy to get off that the second time she's close, I stop and drag it out. She curses me a few times and threatens to call the cops but then realizes she'd have to call herself.

I work her up and up and then stop every time she's right at the edge. When she's sweaty with need and begging to cum, I position myself behind her with my cock at her dripping pussy.

"You'll let me fuck you bare, won't you, babe?"

"Yes, please, anything. Just stop torturing me!"

"Fuck," I hiss as I slowly sink into her from behind.

When I go all the way and feel my balls snug against her pussy lips, I hold still. She's whimpering at the stretch, and even though I did my best to get her ready last night, nothing can prepare her for the thick intrusion.

"Neil, it's too big." She grips the pillow in her hands and tries to get off my cock.

My hold on her hips is lethal, and I'm not letting her move an inch. "You want me to cum in you, don't you?" Her pussy clenches around my cock in answer. "Good girl."

"Don't listen to her, she's not thinking clearly!"

“Oh, I think your pussy knows exactly what she wants.” I reach around between her legs and spread the lips of her pussy. “Right now, she’s begging for me to fill her up.”

As soon as I pet her clit, Georgia’s entire body relaxes. She spreads her knees wider to let me get deep, and I rub her clit as I start to fuck her. Every time I pull out, the wet drag of her cunt is heaven. And every time I thrust back in, she squeezes me like she’s welcoming me home.

“That’s it!” she cries, her hips rocking with me. “Right there!”

Her orgasm hits when I’m balls deep, and I stay still, needing to feel it. Waves of her pleasure keep coming, and one orgasm turns into another. I pet her clit to drag it out until she pushes my hand away and begs me to stop.

That’s when I finally give myself permission to stop holding back. My cock throbs as I empty into her hot little cunt, and I fall on top of her. She’s pinned to the bed as I keep cumming, to the point that it spills out between us.

I kiss her cheek, her shoulder, everywhere I can reach as I try and catch my breath. It’s the single most intense orgasm of my life, and I might have blacked out at one point.

“I think you broke me,” Georgia mumbles, and I grin against her neck.

“Still feel like eating donuts?”

“Always.”

I laugh as I pull out, and Georgia groans at the loss, but as soon as I’ve flipped her over onto her back, I thrust my hard cock inside her.

“I’m going to take it as a compliment that you never get soft,” she says as I kiss my way down to her breasts.

“I’m afraid as long as you’re near me it’s going to stay that way.”

“I guess having you glued to my side won’t be so bad after all.”

I take her wrists in my hands and lift them over her head. I’m gentle at first, but when I’ve got them pinned above her, I tighten my grip so she can’t move.

“So tell me something, Sheriff.”

She stiffens at the change in my voice. “I assumed when we were in bed together, I was just Georgia.”

“Well, then explain to me why you ran out on me this morning and then went and tore your cruiser apart before you went to the diner.” Her eyes widen, and her mouth pops open, but no words come out. “And this time, don’t lie to me.”

“I wasn’t lying, well not exactly. I might have left off a stop or two, but you distracted me with your mouth and tongue and...you know.”

“Cock?”

“Yes, and right now, it’s inside me, so I’m having a hard time gathering my thoughts.”

“You mean gathering your lies.”

She huffs and tries to wiggle out of my hold, but it only makes my cock go deeper.

“Neil.”

My name comes out like a whine, but I’m not letting her go until I’ve got some answers.

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Chapter Fifteen

GEORGIA

He plans to make me reveal all of my secrets.

How did he even know where I'd gone and what I did?

These FBI agents are too crafty. No one ever taught me these investigative skills during my training as a sheriff.

Not that there was any actual training. The last sheriff just told me not to shoot anyone, which I haven't.

Yet. If Neil doesn't make me cum, though, I might end that streak.

Maybe these tactics are in one of the many handbooks at the station, but I'm so not reading them.

They're thick and heavy, but not in a good way like Neil. If the handbooks were available in audio format, then I might consider listening to them. They'd have to give it to me because I'm not wasting my valuable audio credits.

"Georgia," Neil warns, making my focus come back on him.

I attempt to wiggle my body, seeking friction, but it proves to be useless. "This is kidnapping."

“Okay.” Neil's face gives nothing away.

“Okay? You're just okay with kidnapping me?”

“Yes,” he responds without any hesitation.

“And then doing naughty things to me?” My words come out all sultry, but I hadn't meant for them to. I'm honestly not sure where it came from.

“Most definitely.” Neil pulls out a little before thrusting back in, making me gasp. I swear his cock is getting bigger.

“What's happening?” I whimper. I'm so close, but it feels like my orgasm is so far away. I have no clue how he gets my body to go off so quickly. He must understand it better than I do because he's making sure that with each thrust it's not hitting where I need it.

“I'm doing naughty things to you.” He leans down, his mouth coming to my ear. “Whether you like it or not.” My pussy clenches around his cock in response. “Feels like my girl loves the idea.”

“My vagina is a traitor,” I say because I can't deny it.

“No, she just belongs to me now.” He nips my neck, and it sends a hot wave of pleasure down my body.

“Make me cum and I'll tell you everything.” At this point I'm not above begging. I'll just say whatever I need to and get out of it later.

“Why should I believe you? You enjoy your lies.”

“I don't enjoy them!” Where did he get that idea? I say what I need to. Okay, maybe I say what I want to, but he doesn't have to call me out. “And they're fibs.”

“Babe,” he says, and dammit, why is it so hot when he calls me that?

Yesterday, I thought it was all an act, but there's no one else here but me. He's saying it because he wants to, and not for show.

“I only lie because people ask me questions. That's not my fault.”

Neil chuckles, dropping his forehead to mine. “All right.” He lifts his head. “Stop being cute and answer my question. I can draw this out all day.”

“I'll never stop being cute. It's natural, and I can't help it. Obviously.”

“All right.” Neil starts to pull out, but I quickly wrap my legs around him, trying to stop his retreat. I don't think I actually could, but he gives me the illusion of being in control by not overpowering me.

“No!” I gasp. “You're not going anywhere.”

” I try to tighten my legs as much as possible, but he's so freaking big and I'm so damn short.

“I have stolen evidence,” I blurt out. “Well, not stolen. Scratch that, pretend you didn't hear ‘stolen.’” I quickly correct myself when the words that escaped my mouth finally register in my brain. “It's more of a borrowed situation.”

I assumed that when Neil heard the truth, he would want to run out of here and get as far away from a criminal as possible. But he doesn't do what I thought he would. Instead, he claims my mouth in a deep kiss and thrusts hard. Each stroke is more

powerful than the last and done with intent.

His hand slides between us, his fingers going to my clit, and I go off with one quick touch.

I'm screaming his name as the orgasm I've been desperate for finally floods my body.

The pleasure of it all has full control, and I let myself melt into the bed.

Somewhere in the back of my mind, I hear Neil groan my name.

It's followed by his warm release deep inside of me before he collapses partly on top of my body.

"You did so well." He kisses my neck, praising me, and it makes my chest tighten. It's not often I do well at things. Mostly, I tend to make them worse even when I'm trying not to.

"I did?" When I open my eyes, he's looking down at me with an expression close to pride.

"The best."

"Not shocking." I pretend to be smug, and Neil chuckles. "I am kind of the best."

"Now." He kisses the shell of my ear and then my jaw. "Tell me about this stolen evidence."

"Borrowed," I huff.

“Right.” Neil shifts, and I feel his cock slide out of me.

I let out a whimper at the loss, and then his release floods out, coating my thighs. I don't think all that dirty talk about cumming inside of me was just talk.

“Okay, so what evidence do you have?” he asks.

“Can I put some clothes on first? I don't want to talk about Simon while I'm naked.”

“Fair enough,” Neil says and then leans down, snagging his shirt off the floor. He puts it on me, and my eyes drop to his cock that is still impressively hard. Neil pulls on his boxer briefs when he sees me checking him out. “You're easily distracted. Let's go to the kitchen.”

He's not wrong, so I let him take my hand and lead me into the kitchen where I left the breakfast I picked up from the diner.

“So there were pictures that Simon left at the crime scene,” I say as Neil grabs his coffee and takes a drink.

“Yes, I've seen them in the file.”

“Well, as it turns out, there were a lot more photos.

Simon took photos of Rhodes and Quinn having sex, and some of them showed more than the others.

The ones that were the most graphic Rhodes didn't want people to see. By that point, I knew what Quinn had been through, and I understood his reasoning. So I took the worst of the photos out of evidence before the state police got there. The problem is I put them in my cruiser.”

“And now they're gone?” he guesses, and I cringe.

“Maybe.” My shoulders sag. “Or I might have moved them and don't remember.” I bury my face in my hands. Why do I constantly mess things up?

“Hey, now.” Neil pulls my hands away from my face. “We'll figure this out. It's only pictures. Worst case, you can say you forgot to hand them over.” I bite my bottom lip nervously, and he raises a brow. “There's more, isn't there?” I nod. “Okay, babe. I'm going to need to know all of it.”

“Promise me that I can trust you,” I say and step closer. My hands go to his chest, and I peer up at him.

“Babe, you mean something to me.”

“Really?” I shouldn't be surprised. He means more than something to me. I think I'm in love.

“How many times have I cum inside of you? You think I would do that if I wasn't all in?”

“I don't know.” I shrug. “I'm new to sex and relationships.”

“I am too. That should tell you what you need to know.” His response settles me, making me trust in him even more.

“Okay,” I agree before telling him the rest.

Chapter Sixteen

NEIL

“What happened to Simon, it wasn’t exactly self-defense.” Georgia brings her thumb to her mouth and nervously bites the nail.

“Explain it to me,” I say, taking her hand and gently tugging on it before I hold it with both of mine. “I can’t help you in the best way possible unless I know all the details. And once I know, we’ll figure it out. Together.”

“Together.” She nods and swallows hard.

I hold her hands as she recounts the entire event.

From everything she saw to what Rhodes and Quinn told her afterwards.

She doesn’t spare any details, and she never hesitates like she’s trying to hide anything from me.

I’ve gotten good at spotting her little fibs, but I’m not about to tell her what gives it away.

I have a feeling she’d try to use it against me in the future.

When she’s finished, she takes the last of the sprinkle donut next to her and crams the whole thing in her mouth at once. Her cheeks puff out, and I laugh at the sight.

“Are you trying to make yourself stop talking?” She nods, and I lean forward and give her a peck on the lips.

“I get it. That was a lot to unload, but my grandmother used to tell me that many hands make light work. So let me hold this with you, make your burden less.” I reach forward and trace my thumb over her cheek.

“That’s my job, Georgia. I’m here to take care of you. ”

Once she’s finished her donut, I pull her in my lap, and she cuddles against my chest. “But what do we do about this guy here in town now?”

“We’ve got a few options, but I think it’s best we take him head-on.”

Georgia pulls back and looks at me before nodding thoughtfully. “We kill him before he kills us. Good plan.”

“No!” I shake my head, and she sags like she’s disappointed.

“No, I think we should go talk to him. But we need to give him something he can take back to Simon’s dad.

Robert Gregory needs closure on this that points away from his son.

Even though Simon was clearly a piece of shit, we have to shift blame from Rhodes.
”

“Agreed.” Georgia nods thoughtfully.

“The problem is, we’re going to need a big dramatic story that’s almost too ridiculous to believe. Know anybody that can come up with something like that?” I raise an

eyebrow at her, and she gives me a smug smile.

“You’re talking to the reigning champ of ridiculous, and I think I’ve got just the story for him.”

“Oh really?” I run my hands down her back, and I can see her gears are already spinning. “Yeah, I just need to gather the Stitches.”

“Wait, what?” I hesitate, but she hops out of my lap and waves me off.

“Let me do my thing.” She grabs her phone and dials a number. “Mrs. Betty, activate the phone tree. Operation Swamp Monster is a go.”

“Georgia, what are you doing?” I ask.

“What does it look like?” She turns to me and winks. “I’m saving the day.”

Several hours later, I’m pulling up to a run-down park on the edge of town, trying not to second-guess everything.

“Are you sure about this?” I ask Georgia one more time, just to be sure.

“Relax, big guy. I got this.” She holds up her bubble gun and pulls the trigger. The effect of bubbles blowing out of the end does nothing to soothe my anxiety. Although it does make her look adorable. “Follow my lead.”

“You’re the boss.” I cup her cheek before pulling her in for a quick kiss, and she surprises me by trying to climb onto my lap. “Don’t start something you can’t finish.”

“Dang it.” She pulls back like she forgot where we are. “Stop seducing me. I’m trying to run a sting operation.”

“That’s not what this is,” I say, but she waves me off.

“Potato, tomato.”

“That’s not exactly how the saying goes.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just look pretty and let me do my thing.” She hops out of the car before I can say anything else, and although I wish this wasn’t the plan, I don’t have a better one.

The park was probably nice back in the day, but now all the playground equipment is rusted out and the weeds are overgrown.

There’s a retention pond behind it that looks like a breeding ground for mosquitoes and algae and nothing more.

The scattered beer cans and condom wrappers aren’t making it any more inviting.

“Thanks for meeting us out here,” Georgia says to Mrs. Betty and the other older ladies with her.

“We’re happy to do anything to assist, Sheriff Georgia.” She eyes me up and down and then grins at Georgia. “And this new hunk you’ve got with you.”

“Hands to yourself, Mrs. Betty. I’ve already claimed him.”

“All the good ones are taken,” Mrs. Betty sighs.

“Okay, you know what to do, so get into position.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Mrs. Betty does a little salute, and they all start moving.

A few moments later, a dark sedan pulls up next to the cruiser, and I take a step toward him. The guy that gets out is short and stocky with a shaved head, and he's wearing a suit. When I approach him, he holds out his hand, and we shake.

"I'm Agent Neil Anders, this is Sheriff Georgia Dawson. Thanks for meeting us out here."

"I'm Peter Engold. I got your message at the hotel." He shakes Georgia's hand and then glances around. "Why did you want to meet out here?"

"We've got a proposition for you," Georgia says, taking over. "You've got something of mine, and I've got something you want. I think trading would make everyone happy."

"I'm not admitting to having anything of yours, but what information could you possibly have for me? This town hasn't been much of a challenge to uncover secrets. Including unlocked trunks."

I see Georgia flinch, but it's the confirmation we needed about him being the one that took the photos. When I inspected her cruiser earlier, I could see scratches along the lock. It had been tampered with, and it was a calculated risk to assume Peter was the one that did it.

"You're here to find someone to blame for Simon's death. Correct?" Georgia asks, and Peter shrugs, once again not confirming anything. "What if I told you there's a way to close this case up nice and tight, all while making your boss look good?"

"I'd say I'd be willing to hear you out," Peter agrees.

"Have you heard of the Cottonwood Swamp Monster?" Georgia's expression is dead serious.

“Is this a joke?” Peter looks at me, and I shake my head.

“The legend goes that back in the eighties, a kid was eaten by the Swamp Monster, and ever since then, this park has been abandoned.” There’s a sound of water splashing in the distance, but Georgia keeps her eyes on Peter.

“Okay, if this is all you’ve got, I’m out of here.” Peter goes to turn around, but I step in his path.

“You’re going to listen to what the sheriff has to say.” I’m a good foot taller than him, and as he leans back to look up at me, he realizes he’s alone out here and could be easily overpowered.

“Fine,” Peter says and turns back to face Georgia. “So what, you want me to say some local legend killed Simon Gregory?”

Georgia grabs a folder out of the passenger seat of her cruiser and holds it out to Peter. When he flips it open, she tells him what’s inside. “Simon was a journalist. He was here writing a piece on the Cottonwood Swamp Monster and was accidentally shot by a local hunter in the process.”

Peter flips through the case file that I helped Georgia create. It’s airtight, and all the extra evidence that was discovered since I’ve been here corroborates this new story.

“And you think the family is going to buy this?” Peter looks up at Georgia, and although he’s not completely convinced, I can see he’s thinking it over.

There’s another splash in the water behind us, and Georgia points with her thumb over her shoulder. “The truth is, there is no Swamp Monster. Some dummy dropped off a gator in the pond back in the day, and it bit off a kid's toe. Since then, they made up the legend to keep kids away from it.”

As if on cue, the biggest gator I've ever seen surfaces in the pond. We stare at it for a long second before it submerges again, and Georgia shrugs like it's no big deal.

"I could call Robert Gregory right now and tell him everything," Peter says.

"Or you could take this story, collect your fat check from the Gregorys, and be on your way." Georgia steps closer to Peter and puts her hand on her gun.

"Or we can do this the hard way. I've got video of you stealing the photos out of my cruiser, which is a felony.

" She points to me, and I nod. "See, the fed guy knows."

"You're bluffing." Peter looks between us, and I shrug.

"Robert Gregory gets the stain off his son's name, and in return he's going to donate the money to clean this park up and get the gator out." Georgia leans a little closer to Peter, and I tense, ready for a fight.

"I think it's bullshit Simon's name is clean because clearly he was a monster, but he's dead, so I guess we can call it even. "

"It's a good deal," I say to Peter, and his eyes move to mine. "You either go to jail, or you sell this story to your boss. What's it going to be?"

"Let me make a call," Peter sighs as he steps away and pulls out his cell phone.

Although we try to listen, he's too far away to catch most of what he's saying.

"Think he'll take it?" Georgia asks.

“The dad wants a resolution that leaves him looking good. This is the best he’s going to get.”

A few moments later, Peter hangs up the phone and walks back to us.

“You’ve got a deal,” he says, reaching into his suit and taking out a manila envelope.

“This all of them?” Georgia asks before checking inside.

“It is,” Peter says and then taps the folder. “And this is everything?”

“As soon as the donation is made to Cottonwood, I’ll sign off on the file,” I tell Peter.

“It’s already done,” Peter says.

Georgia takes out her phone and taps on the screen. When she nods, I hold out the thumb drive with all the legal documents confirming this story.

“We’re done here?” I ask.

Peter smacks at a mosquito on his neck. “Completely, and I hope to never see you people again.”

Georgia and I watch as Peter gets in his car and speeds away from the park and Cottonwood. As soon as the dust settles, Georgia turns around.

“Come on out, ladies!”

The Stitches appear, and I see Mrs. Betty, Mrs. Nelson, and two others carrying a fake alligator. I run over and grab it from them and lay it across the old picnic table.

“How did you ladies manage to get that in the water? It’s so heavy.”

“Nothing we can’t handle,” Mrs. Betty says.

“They work out,” Georgia whispers to me like that’s the obvious answer.

“Getting it in the water was the easy part. Getting the remote to work was something else,” Mrs. Betty says.

“I can’t believe you guys had a plan like this ready to go.”

When Georgia first told me about the park, she said some kid got tetanus from the old jungle gym, and the city didn’t have the money to fix it up, so they just let it go. The gator was an old prop they used at the high school, and I’m pretty sure it’s the same place she “borrowed” her gun from.

“I’ve been trying to tell you, I’m always prepared.” Her sneaky smile drops. “Well, unless I’m not, but you know what I mean.”

I pull her into my arms and lift her off the ground. “I love you, Sheriff Georgia.”

“You do?” Her eyes get a little misty as I nod.

“From the moment we met, but seeing you today, I knew I couldn’t go another second without saying it. You’re incredible.”

“I know, right?” She places a kiss on my lips and then smiles against them. “But I love you too.”

“So fucking adorable,” Mrs. Betty says from behind us.

The two of us are laughing as we kiss again.

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 7:41 am

GEORGIA

“O uch!” Mr. Warner mutters when I smack a sticker onto the front of his shirt.

“There are problems with my sticker?” I give the sticker a tap to ensure it is securely attached to him.

“You don’t have to assault me to put it on.” Mr. Warner rubs over the sticker, being dramatic.

“Let’s not throw words like ‘assault’ around.”

“You already got my vote.”

“Good answer.” I shoot an air gun at him before making my way farther down the street, putting stickers on anyone that passes. I’m up for reelection, and I’m going to make sure I get to keep my badge.

“What are you doing?” My husband comes out of nowhere, stepping right in front of me to block my path. Him and his sneaky FBI training.

“What are you doing?” I accuse right back.

“Getting you your donut and milk with a side of fries. You’re supposed to be resting your feet.”

“I’m only giving out stickers.” I hold them up.

“Move it,” he orders, nodding back toward the station.

“Fine,” I huff. “You’re always bossing me around.”

“You love it.”

“When did I say I didn’t?” Neil leans the open bag toward me so I can reach in and snag a French fry. I shove it in my mouth, then grab another. “These are so good.” I let out a small moan. “But there is no salt.”

“Your feet keep swelling.”

“All of me is swelling.” I motion down my body. I’m five months pregnant with our second.

“I know the feeling.” Neil smirks.

“Watch it.” I point a fry at him. “You’re swelling.” I point my fry at his crotch. “That is why I’m swelling,” I remind him.

“I can’t keep you off of it.” I snort a laugh, shoving the fry into my mouth.

He’s not wrong. I’m actually shocked this isn’t our fourth baby. I got pregnant rather quickly with our first, Corby. How that ten-pound baby came out of me, I have no clue.

Neil opens the door to the sheriff’s office for me. My deputy, Meowficer, jumps down from off my desk.

“Were there any problems while I was gone?” I ask, scooping her off the ground. She nudges her head under my chin, letting me know she held down the fort while I was

gone. I put her down on one of the chairs, giving her a treat.

“What the hell?” Neil mutters. I follow his line of sight to see what he's talking about.

“Oh! It's here.” I clap my hands, running over to the jail cell. “I knew the Stitch ladies would come through.”

“Why is that alligator in the nursery?”

We might have converted the cell into a room for Corby.

It was convenient. It's not like we closed the door, and he could still slip through the bars if we did.

I mean, it's right freaking there. I did take down the pink Valentine's Day lights, not because they're pink and Corby is a boy.

That's silly. I did it for safety. Can't have him getting hurt inside his cell... I mean nursery.

“This alligator is going to win me this election.” I have come up with a plan. It's going to be a grand slam.

“I can't wait to hear this.” Neil puts my food down on my desk before taking a seat in my chair, ignoring his own desk. He pats his lap. I walk over to him, and he pulls me down, positioning me so that I am straddling him. Neil's hand comes to rest on the small bump that is our baby girl.

Neil has been a hands-on dad from the start.

He was kind of better at the baby thing than I was.

I was an only child. It also helped that he now did freelance work on investigations, so he got to be home a lot except for random trials he might have to testify in.

Normally, Corby is with us, but my mom scooped him up this morning.

“So tonight?—”

“The movie in the park?” Neil questions.

“Yes.”

We had the park overhauled, cleaning it up and setting up this outside movie area. We completed the overhaul a few days ago, and tonight marks the town's first movie night there. It's going to be an every-other-Friday-night event.

“Don't tell me you're going to set that gator up in the park tonight?”

“Of course I am!” Neil shakes his head, his fingers going to the buttons of my uniform shirt to start to undo them.

“You'll scare everyone, and no more movie night.”

“Oh, I'm going to scare them.” I let out an evil laugh. “That alligator will come out, and everyone will scream. I'll rush over and pounce on it, ending its life and saving the day.” Neil lets out a chuckle. “Think about it. They have to reelect me then. I'm a hero.”

“They're going to reelect you.” Neil opens my shirt, exposing my bra. My body starts to heat. I think I might be addicted to my husband and sex.

“They better,” I huff. “I can't give this power up.”

“Babe.” He tugs my bra down so my boobs spill free. “No one is running against you.”

“I know, but still. I’ll be the hero.”

“All right.” He brushes his thumb across my nipple, making me gasp. I thought my nipples were sensitive before I was pregnant. Now it’s freaking out of control. Warmth pools between my thighs.

“All right?” I wiggle closer to press my sex against his cock.

“I’ll even help you.”

“Really?”

“Pretty hard for Deputy Meowficer to operate the controller with no thumbs.”

“Shit, I hadn’t thought of that.” I shake my head. “This is why you were in the FBI. Always thinking.”

“But there will be a price.”

“What?” I lick my lips, knowing where this discussion is going.

“I want to eat your pussy and then fuck you on your desk.”

“That’s not very professional. I’m on the clock.”

Neil stands, sitting me on the desk. I watch him walk to the door and click the lock before pulling down the window covering and coming back to me.

“I guess it's a good thing my wife is a rule breaker.” His hand cups the back of my neck, pulling me forward.

“A really good thing,” I whisper against his mouth.

“The best and all mine,” Neil says, claiming my lips in a deep, hard kiss, keeping a firm hold on me. He always does. My husband keeps me steady and grounded.

It's safe to say I will win the election. It's just not safe to say that the town is safe from me. Neil never will be, and he wouldn't have it any other way.

THE END!

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 7:41 am

HONEY

I watch as the young girl pulls on her oversized shirt, trying to hide the fact that she has a small baby bump. She looks young, with freckles across her nose and cheeks, but I saw on her job application she's about the same age as my son.

"Can I ask you something personal?" Her bright green eyes go wide for a moment.

"Not about the baby, Piper." Her face turns a few shades pinker when she realizes that I know.

I'm guessing she thought it might hurt her chances at getting the job.

"There's no need to hide that from me. I was about your age when Ford knocked me up.

" I end it with a small laugh, trying to put her at ease.

I want her to relax and feel welcome because stress can be hard on a pregnant woman.

"You can ask." She finally smiles and this time it's not forced like the others. She's been extra nice, but this is a job interview and I can tell she's trying to put her best foot forward.

"I know everyone in town. That's just how it is around here.

” She nods and her long dark ponytail bounces with the action.

The only people I don’t know are the ones passing through.

“You’re not from around here so I’m wondering where you’re staying.

” I knew that the moment I laid eyes on the girl I was hiring her.

She’s lost and it pulled at everything inside of me to help her.

My husband always says the strongest and weakest thing about me is my heart and that he’s been put on this earth to protect it.

Young Piper here is tugging at all my strings and I know my husband is already digging into her background the best he can. It’s not just for my protection either.

We always do a full rundown on new hires since they work with kids. I know hers will come back clean. She just needs a place to lay some roots and I’m going to help her with that. I can spot a girl in need and I would never turn my back on that.

“I’m staying at the motel in town.” She shrugs while keeping her hands in her lap and fidgets with them. “Sometimes in my car.” That part is whispered and I hate that she’s feeling embarrassed as she drops her gaze to her hands.

“Then it should be easy for you to move right into one of the cabins.”

Her head jerks up in surprise. “You’re hiring me?” Hope lights up in her eyes. “Even knowing about—” Her hand goes to her stomach.

“Yeah, sweetheart, I’m hiring you.” I stand up from my desk and she does the same, getting to her feet quickly. “Welcome to Camp Hardwood.”

I pull her into a hug and she's stiff for a moment before she relents and hugs me back hard. Piper holds on for a moment in a silent thank you and I give her all the time she needs.

"Van." I call out to my son as we pull back from the hug and he opens my office door.

"Mom?" He looks at Piper and I swear each day he looks more and more like his father. We were only blessed with one child, although running a camp makes it feel like we have hundreds at times.

"Will you show Piper to her cabin?" I toss him the keys and he snatches them in midair.

"Sure thing."

I watch them go, feeling better now that I know the girl is safe.

No one in her situation should be alone.

I was all by myself until Ford came along.

I met him at this very camp when I fell off the dock and into the lake and he swam out to save me.

I've been his ever since. We came from two different worlds but that didn't stop us.

It also didn't stop my now husband from punching Jimmy Mason right in the face and breaking his nose for pushing me off the dock that day.

Back then I didn't know how to swim, but by the time camp was over that year Ford made sure I could swim like a fish. It's always been his life mission to make sure I'm

safe.

I step out of my office, unsurprised to see Moose leaning up against the counter.

I'm sure he's who my husband called to run a deeper check on Piper.

Ford might have more money than God, but Moose knows people that don't even exist to the rest of the world. I never pushed but I'm pretty sure he was some kind of government secret agent before he settled into an early retirement back here.

The man is a giant, with dark hair and eyes.

He has to duck to get into most of the buildings, but he doesn't seem to mind. Everyone calls him Moose but he looks more like a bear to me. I don't know how he did anything super secret for anyone because the man is unmissable. If he's in the room, you know it.

"Not much to tell." He pushes off the front counter answering my unspoken question.

"Coffee." I point to the pot sitting next to him and he shakes his head. I know he doesn't drink it but it feels weird not offering it.

"Couldn't find anything which is unusual. Normally there's some kind of trail, but it's like hers was purposely hidden."

That's so strange. My mind tries to conjure up what her past could be and if it truly is empty that makes me so sad for her.

The one thing that was always consistent for me was Camp Hardwood.

It's where I met my husband as a young girl.

Even though we came from two different worlds, here we were the same.

He had a family and a name for himself. His mom Betty sent him to Camp Hardwood because in her words, he was being a little prick and needed to be humbled. He claimed after he found me I took care of bringing him down a few pegs.

He was my first everything and I was his up until they pulled me out of the system.

I still went to camp every year because it became a part of Ford and me, and then about ten years ago Ford went and bought it.

He heard it was going to be closed and he called it our retirement plan.

But we had no idea how much work went into running a camp.

Sure, we could hire people to handle some of the things we do around here, but we are hands-on and we do this together.

We work side by side every day and my heart always hopes we are helping others find their soulmates like we did.

“I’ll keep digging, but as of right now, she’s all alone.” Moose shakes his head.

I can’t imagine what it’s like for that poor girl. She’s doesn’t have any family, and now she has a baby on the way.

“She seems sweet.” I let out a sigh and Moose nods in agreement. He’s not a man of many words. “Have you seen my husband?”

He points out back and I know without seeing him he’s drinking his coffee sitting on the porch.

He hung a swing on it just for us and he always sits there when he's waiting for me to come out of my office.

I'm sure he and Moose already had a talk about the new girl.

I told Ford I was going to hire her since I had a feeling.

I know it's silly but when I get a feeling it's always right.

I tell Moose goodbye before I walk on the porch and find Ford. He opens his arms for me to come and sit next to him and I go.

"Hey, Mrs. Honey," one of the new kids yells from across the way.

Ford tenses and I roll my eyes, knowing what's coming. Some things never change.

"Mrs. Cyprus!" he yells back at the boy, who takes off, muttering a half-assed apology behind him.

I don't know if they do it to poke at my husband or because they truly forget. My name is Honey after all, but my caveman of a husband doesn't like hearing anyone else call me that. I'm only his Honey, and he makes sure they know it.

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