

Chapter 12

Theo POV

At the restaurant, the greeter was overzealous, trying to gain my attention, but I was not the slightest interested in her. She took us to our table and completely ignored that I had a woman with me and that she could see I might be on a date. I hated that. A greeter should greet everyone with the same enthusiasm and not single out certain customers to give extra special treatment.

We had just gotten settled in and given our order for drinks when word reached the kitchens that I was there.

My sister came rushing out, dressed in her chef outt, which I loved seeing her in. She worked hard to be where she is now, a top chef in the industry and owner of her own business. She pulled me in for a hug and let me know about a family dinner on Sunday. I had forgotten that it was this Sunday.

Would Bethany like to come with me?

Humm, maybe too soon to be bringing a girl home.

My Mother might get the wrong idea, but I feel I should be with Bethany. The need to protect her almost overwhelms me. She is lost and ighty and needs help to nd her way, and that is what I feel the need to do. Like other women in the shelter, where my mother feels the need to help, I can see in her eyes the same fear as those women. Bethany appears to be a strong woman, but underneath, she is afraid of something.

My sister went back to the kitchen, with a skip in her step, pleased she had delivered her message, and assured her that I would attend the lunch unless there were an emergency at work.

I looked at Bethany. She was looking around the restaurant and not at me, and I had a feeling something was wrong. She would not look me in the eye. Did the server say or do something when I was not looking?

'Are you okay?' I asked her, taking her hand in mine. She inched at the touch but did not pull her hand away from mine, similar to the way she had in the car.

'Huh?' She looked at me, or should I say my mouth.

'Sorry, I said, are you okay?' I tried again, removing my hand from her. She looked at my retreating hand and a confused look on her face.

'Oh, I was just thinking. I'm sorry I did not mean to ignore you,' she sputtered out, shocked that she had zoned out and ignored me.

'Care to share?' I cheekily asked her, hoping to make her smile.

'It is a little embarrassing.' She said, looking at me in the eyes at last. They glistened with guilt.

'Tell me.' I pushed, but our food arrived at that time, and I had to put the questioning behind me for a little while and try again later. Bethany's eyes widened at the plates of food that had been placed before us. My sister had placed a lot of small plates, a taste of everything that she had been experimenting with. They looked and smelt delicious.

'What is this?' Bethany asked, grabbing a dish and placing some on her plate.

'This is what is called "taster plates". Every time I visit, I get this: it is a tasting of each plate that the chef is trying out. I am the willing guinea pig. I agree with giving an honest opinion of the food as it lacks avor or needs salt.' I tried to explain to her without telling her that my sister owned the restaurant. I do not know why I did not tell her that, just as I did not mention that my sister owned the exhibition.

'Wow, I did not know places did that sort of thing. That is so cool. I like that idea.' Bethany gushed as she took a bit of one that looked like a pasta dish. Her face lit up; it was a success, whatever it was that she had tasted.

'This is so good, you have to taste it,' she said, offering me a spoonful. I don't think she thought about what she had just done. I leaned forward and opened my mouth. She put the food into my mouth, and she was right. The avors burst on my tongue, and I could eat a whole bowl.

I placed some more on my plate, and together, we devoured that sample and then moved to the next plate. It was not long before all the plates were empty, and Bethany started by saying she did not think she could eat all of this and looking at the empty plates as if she was sad the food was all gone.

The waitress came and collected the empty plates and offered us a sheet of paper with the names of the food, a picture of it, and a place to comment. I moved to sit beside Bethany, and we answered the questions together until the waitress arrived with plates of sweet food. Bethany groaned but soon dived into each plate, groaning and humming with pleasure at the sweet treats put before us.

My sister can cook, and it all tasted so very good. Bethany was rubbing her belly.

'I am stuffed, I don't think I need to eat for a week.'

We left the restaurant and headed back to our penthouse. Bethany's sadness was all gone, and the date had gone well. Part one of the distraction worked. Leaving the elevator, I did not want the day to end yet. I was enjoying her company as I did the things I had to do. I have promised to go to the exhibition and to visit my sister to taste the food, and now all I have to do is go on Sunday and complete that job. Then I am safe for another month before I have to do all that again.

'Bethany, would you like to come over for coffee? It's my treat,' I suggested as she started to take her keys out of her purse. I was surprised she had locked her door; she had been leaving it open since she had arrived.

'I would like that; you promised me a view from your window.' She irted with me, or it felt like that.

My door was not locked, and I rarely locked it. We are the only ones who have the key card that opens the penthouse elevator, so I believe it is safe to leave the door open. Am I stupid? Maybe, but it was something my sister had said when I moved in.

I left Bethany to walk around my penthouse and investigate while I made coffee. She moved to look out of the window. I had a nice view. Well, I liked it, and watching Bethany was a good sight, too.

When I took the coffee out, Bethany was no longer in the lounge room, looking out the window. I turned around and waited to see if I could hear where she had gone. A ush of the toilet told me she had been to my room to use the bathroom. I walked down the hall, leaned on the door frame, and waited for her to come out.

She walked out with her head down, typing on her mobile. I waited for her to look up, and when she did, my heart broke. Tears lled her eyes, and I felt all the work I had done today to make her forget and feel better was gone with one message on her phone.

'Hey.' I smiled sadly at her and waited to see what she would do.

She took a few steps towards me and laid her head on my shoulder. I lifted my arms and wrapped them around her, feeling her cry again.