

Briar POV

I don't know why I'm so nervous. It's just dinner. Why am I lying to myself? I'm nervous because Derek is an amazingly hot man who has made it clear he wants me. How can I do this? I'm not even divorced yet. Besides that, he is my boss and eight years younger than me. I shouldn't even be entertaining going out with him. I know what Lola said, but I'm not the type that can just f**k a man for fun or revenge. I take my phone out of my clutch to text Derek to cancel when there is a knock on the door to my room. I notice the time, and I'm certain it's him. I stand up and run my hands down the front of my dress. I don't think I have ever been this nervous in my life. When I pull open the door, I swear my mouth goes dry. He is wearing a gray suit that fits him like a glove. I don't even realize that I've looked him up and down until he clears his throat. The smug smile on his face lets me know he caught me checking him out. I'm truly grateful when he doesn't call me out.

"Are you ready to go, Briar?" I go to open my mouth to tell him I've changed my mind, and he raises his hand to stop me. "I can already tell what you're going to say Briar. There is no way that you are backing out of our dinner. You look amazing and, despite the fact that I would love to see what you look like out of that sexy dress, we are going to dinner and taking this slow. Now get out of your head and let's go enjoy each other's company" he says. I won't lie and say his words and sexy voice don't send a shiver of excitement through my body. I take his offered hand, and he pulls it to his lips. He lays a soft kiss on the back of my hand. He doesn't let my hand go as he leads me to the elevator.

We ride down to the lobby in comfortable silence. When the slide doors open, he places his hand on the small of my back and leads me through the lobby. I notice women checking him out as we pass them by. I'm not sure why I find that so irritating, but I do. He takes my hand again as we step through the doors that lead to the sidewalk in front of the hotel. Derek speaks to the valet but never lets go of my hand. "Briar" I hear my name being called by the last voice I want to hear and I freeze. I turn to see Calob walking toward us. How the hell did he find me? The room is in Derek's name. I didn't even tell my mother where I was staying and Lola would never tell him. "Briar, please just talk to me. I know you're angry and hurt. You have every right to be, but we need to talk" he says as he steps closer to me. Derek pulls me to his side. "Calob, did you actually follow me here from the hospital," Derek asks. I can tell by his tone that he is pissed.

"Of course, I did. You are trying to f**k my wife. I will not allow you to hurt her," Calob shouts at him. His words snap me out of the shock of him being here. "What the f**k did you just say? Did you just say you won't let him hurt me?" "Briar, you are not a stupid woman. Do you really believe that this twenty-seven-year-old man wants you for anything other than a good f**k? You can't be this blinded by what I have done. Can't you see that he is just trying to use you and throw you away? He knows that you are vulnerable and weak right now" Calob says. My blood starts to boil and, for the first time since I walked in on him and Lucy, I lose complete control. I pull away from Derek and take the three steps, so I am in his face.

I reach up and slap him as hard as I can across his face. I have never in my life struck another human being, but damn, that felt good. When our eyes meet again, I can see how shocked he is that I hit him. His hand touches the red mark that I left on his cheek. "Don't you ever call me weak or stupid again. You are the one who was too weak to control your s*xual urges. You are the stupid one who threw away everything for a f**k. If I f**k Derek, it will be because it's what I want to do. You no longer have a say in what or who I do. Go find your f**k buddy and don't come near me again. You will be hearing from my lawyer. This is over," I say motioning between us. I go to step away from him and he grabs my arm. "I made a mistake and I will fix it. You will not let him touch you. You are my wife and I will never agree to a divorce." Before I know what's happening, my arm is free of Calob's grip, and he is pinned to Derek's car.

Derek POV

I'm desperately trying to let Briar handle this a**hat, but it is taking all of my control. The minute he grips her arm, I see red. I grab him and spin him away from her. I slam him down on my car with his arm pinned behind his back. "Do not put your hands on her again. She has made it clear that the two of you are over." I drop my voice, so only he can hear me. "The next time you put your hands on my woman I will make sure that your hand no longer works. It would be a pity for the hospital to lose such a great surgeon, but make no mistake, I will do it for Briar." I release him and step back. "Now leave before I have my head of security come and teach you a lesson in listening when a woman says to leave her alone." He looks at me with pure hate in his eyes. He turns to Briar. "This isn't over. I don't accept it, Briar. I love you and I know you still love me despite everything that has happened," he says as he starts to cross the street.

I take a step toward Briar, and I'm grateful when she doesn't step away. I take the chance and pull her into my arms. "I'm sorry Briar. I never expected him to follow me here. I will be having words with my security detail." She pulls back, and I can see confusion in her eyes. "When you have as much money as I have you have to have extra protection. I hate it, so I won't allow them to drive me around or hover, but they are always close. They just watched what happened, but they won't interfere unless it escalates, or I'm in danger. I am very capable of handling most situations." She nods and lays her head back against my chest. I swear I could stay like this forever. She fits so perfectly in my arms. "Briar, I will understand if you don't want to" I start to say, and she cuts me off. "No, we are going to dinner. He is not going to ruin our night."

She pulls back and I smile. I open the door to my car and she slides inside. I round the car and once I'm in the driver's seat I pull out into traffic. "How does Italian food sound?" "It's actually one of my favorite foods" she says with a smile. It takes us twenty minutes to reach my favorite Italian restaurant. The owner is a friend of mine and I asked him for a private booth tonight. He gave me sh*t for twenty minutes about how special Briar must be for me to bring her to his restaurant. I hope he doesn't embarrass me. I open her door and she takes my offered hand. I love how comfortable she seems with me. Once we are inside, the hostess smiles. "Mr. Coleman, your table is ready. Mr. Nino will be out to greet you properly once I've seated you and your guest" she says. We follow her to the private booth. Once we are both seated, I look over at this beautiful woman.

"Briar, I know I said it earlier, but you look amazing tonight. I am so happy that you still wanted to have dinner with me." "Thank you, you look very handsome." Despite her smile I can see sadness in her eyes. She drops her gaze. "I'm sorry for the things that Calob said outside the hotel, Derek. I know that you aren't trying to take advantage of me." "Briar, look at me. I don't give a damn what Calob thinks. The only thing that matters to me is you. I told you my intentions and I meant them. I would never do anything to hurt you and I don't expect you to blindly trust me after all you have been through. I'm perfectly fine with showing you the man I am." Before she can respond, Tony steps up to our table. "So this is the beautiful Briar I've heard so much about" he says, reaching for her hand.

She blushes and gives him her hand. He bends kissing it and I rumble at him about being an Italian Casanova. He throws his head back and laughs. "Don't worry Derek, I won't steal your girl." I expect Briar to protest being called my girl, but she just chuckles. "Well, I have a special menu planned for the two of you if that's alright with you Briar," Tony asks. "Of course, I'm not picky, and I'm sure the food will be amazing." They bring us both a glass of wine and water. As we start to talk, I notice Briar isn't drinking the wine. "Is everything alright, Briar? Do you prefer a white wine?" "Actually, I got sick drinking wine yesterday, so I figure I should just stick to water tonight" she says. I nod and pick up my water. She smiles and when the food finally comes, the conversation flows naturally. Her smile is genuine when she talks about Lola and her excitement about finding a house. God, I hope I can see that smile on her face for the rest of my life.