

Chapter 4

By the time I made it to my apartment door and opened it, Bradley was stepping out of the elevator. Since this was the only suite on this floor, I didn't have to worry about nosy neighbors. That meant I could take my time and admire the physical perfection of the man striding towards me.

It took me a moment to realize Bradley knew I was staring at him. The small smirk let me know that not only was he aware of my stare, but he was enjoying the attention. Well, that's a bit embarrassing. The first thing he did was wrap me in his arms and hug me in comfort. I won't lie. It felt damn good to have someone comfort me. Not only that, he smelled delicious. I didn't want him to let me go, but eventually he did.

"Bradley, please come in." The manners my grandparents had drilled into me from a young age got us through the initial greeting stage, where I made sure he was comfortably seated and with a drink of Crown Royal in his hand. Then reality set in. Bradley Gray, who I had left in Toronto this morning, was now sitting in my penthouse apartment in Halifax, barely six hours later.

"Not to be rude or anything, but what are you doing here in Halifax? How did you get here so quickly? And why are you here at my apartment?" I am sure I sound like a complete idiot, but I am confused.

Bradley took a long time before answering. "I came here for you. I called your hotel, and they told me you had checked out and headed to the airport. I found out you boarded the 9:25 am flight, and I was able to get the 10:30 am flight."

"Okay. But why?" Something didn't make sense. Why would he cancel our meeting, then immediately get on a flight to Halifax?

"Because I knew that you would need someone to talk to. Someone to help you, I wanted to be that someone" was his cryptic response.

His statement didn't make sense. I tilted my head to the right and held his gaze. "At the risk of sounding stupid and repeating myself, why?"

"Why what specifically?" he responded.

I sighed in frustration. "Why did you think I would need someone to talk to? Why did you think I would need you to help me?"

"That fact you called me to talk and asked for my help, makes it self-evident, doesn't it?" His evasive answer was really beginning to get under my skin.

"Enough of the games, Bradley. Much as I like you, I am not in the mood for word play. You got on a plane to Halifax an hour after I did, so the fact I called you forty-five minutes ago is a moot point, and has no bearing on why you hopped a plane just after I did. Now please, answer my questions. Why did you think I would need someone to talk to? And why did you think I would need you to help me?"

He picked up his glass, and swirled the liquid around before raising the glass to his mouth and throwing the drink back. I watched his throat move as he swallowed the drink, and found myself swallowing too.

God, I wanted to run my tongue over his throat, kiss my way up and along his jawline, then take possession of his lips in a blistering kiss. I found myself biting my lower lip, imagining what his lips would taste like. Maybe a mixture of the Crown Royal and his own delicious taste. I could feel my nipples harden into peaks that ached for his touch.

I heard him clear his throat, which made me realize I had been staring at him while lost in a haze of desire. I shook my head in an effort to clear my thoughts. 'Focus, Anna. Focus.' I thought to myself.

As if he had read my thoughts, Bradley aimed his slow, seductive smile right at me and murmured, "Oh, we will get to that eventually, Red. And it will be worth every second of the wait. Give it time."

"What?" I choked out, not sure that I had heard him correctly. His eyes held a smoldering heat as they locked on mine. I was melting inside.

Rather than addressing my one word question, he decided to bring the conversation back to my earlier questions. The reason he was here in my apartment, in Halifax.

"Red, you are not the only one that has a bedtime story to tell. All I ask is that you let me speak, and please don't get mad at me." He held up his now empty glass. "Before I get started, do you think I could have a refill? It's been a long day, and I have a feeling we are both going to need a few more refills by the time I'm done with my story."

I walked over to the bar, grabbed the bottle of Crown Royal, and went back to make myself comfortable on the love seat. I placed the bottle of liquor on the coffee table within his reach. "Help yourself," I instructed. I was still sipping the contents of my glass.

He raised an eyebrow at me, but took the bottle and poured a generous amount of the amber liquor into his glass. After screwing the top back on the bottle, he put it back on the table. He picked up his glass, staring at the liquid as if it could give him clarity. He took a sip, and then began to speak.

"Anna, correct me if I'm wrong, but you were on a business trip to Calgary two weeks ago, am I right?" He paused briefly, waiting for my reply.

Shocked that he knew this, I simply nodded.

"That's what I thought. That same week, your business associate, who I understand is your uncle, attended an initial meeting with me in Toronto. He brought a co-worker named Fiona to the meeting."

"He what, now? That's the first I knew of this." What the hell? Fiona was not an employee authorized to travel on behalf of the company. That privilege had been revoked six months ago when she created utter chaos at a business consultation and lost an important client due to her behavior.

"Mmmm, that's what I thought." Bradley took another sip before continuing. "They may have introduced themselves as business associates, but their behavior told an entirely different story. If I hadn't known better, I would have thought she was the owner of the company. That was the impression she was giving everyone. Introduced herself as 'the Ms. Fredericks of Fredericks Design Co.'"

"That part I'm not surprised about. For some strange reason, she, her mother, and my father, seem to think the company should have been left to them. Which is obvious bullshit, considering my mother and father have been divorced since I was eight, and the company didn't fall under marital property."

Bradley continued his story after considering that bit of information. "After the initial meet and greet, I arranged to meet them for a meal at the upscale restaurant my company owns. But by the time I got there, Adam and Fiona were already seated. They didn't see me come in, so I was able to hear everything they were saying. And may I say, I was completely appalled by their conversation. I took out my phone and recorded them, and later on, was able to retrieve the security camera footage, which also picked up their conversation."

"This ought to be interesting," I thought. After hearing and seeing what I did today, I can only imagine what those two vipers had to say about me. I returned Bradley's gaze, keeping my expression blank, giving nothing away regarding what I was feeling.

He took another sip of his drink, obviously needing some Dutch courage to continue his story. "I know this is off-topic," he said. "But what in the name of heaven do you see in Adam Rivers. The man is scum! You deserve so much better."

I snorted as I asked myself the same question many times lately. "He approached me at a vulnerable time. My grandparents had been quite ill, and I was traveling a lot between Halifax and Toronto, trying to run the business, and look after them. He offered a shoulder to cry on. He was kind, caring, understanding. Or so I thought. And when they passed away within days of each other, my world was turned completely upside down."

I sighed, remembering how low I had felt at that point in time. "Fiona was right about one thing she said today. I was so desperate to be loved, to have a connection with someone. I let my guard down, and that's on me. I'm just thankful my eyes were opened before I married the man. Your call to me this morning to cancel our meetings was truly a blessing. It allowed me to find out the real character of Adam and Fiona. Thank you."

"Anna, I canceled on purpose, knowing you would head home early. Knowing what you would find." The look he gave me was full of compassion.

"What do you mean, you knew?" I whispered.

Instead of answering me with his words, he pulled out his phone, cued up a video, and before handing me his phone he moved closer to me to offer comfort.

I looked from him to the phone, took a deep breath, and hit play.