

Chapter 57 - Submitting to My Best Friend's Dad by Scarlett Rossi

A few days later, I felt much better than I had when I left Miami. Neal was far wealthier than I realized, and when he brought me to his place, it all but took my breath away.

Tall vaulted ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows, exotic plants... The list continued with no end to the lavish things he had in his upscale New York penthouse apartment. It was his pride and joy though, and when he first showed it to me, his eyes lit up.

I had forgotten how much I missed New York until I was back home.

Now, I enjoyed the South. The only problem was you still had to drive everywhere for everything.

Being in New York City, I didn't have to.

I could simply walk out of the building down to the bodega to grab something if I wanted, or even grab something to eat at one of the vendors on the corner. You never really know how much you miss something until it is no longer available to you.

Slipping on my tennis shoes, I made my way from Neal's apartment, heading to the bodega to grab a drink and a bag of chips. The past few days, I was addicted to a specific food I had put down due to stress.

Flaming Hot Cheetos and green tea.

Thinking about those now, my mouth watered with anticipation. The delicious crunch and flavor of the Cheetos caused my stomach to growl in longing.

As soon as my feet hit the pavement outside, I was met with the loud sounds of New York. The familiar rush of gasoline and sweat would be gross to others, but to me, it felt like home weirdly.

Before I could reach my destination, my phone rang as it had done many times over the last few days. Glancing down at it, I hesitated as I saw the one name I wasn't ready to talk to.

James had repeatedly asked me to call him over the last few days, but I couldn't.

The pain of everything was still so fresh in my mind, and as much as I wanted to tell him I was sorry for leaving, and blame everything on myself, I couldn't.

It wasn't my fault, and in the end, I had every right to be upset. Yet, no matter how mad I was, the growing pain of missing him was very prominent.

Letting out a sigh, I slowly hit the green button on my phone and answered the call. "Hello?"

"Becca. You finally answered. I've been so worried about you," James said with a breathless response.

"Why are you worried about me? I thought you made it clear I was no longer your problem when I left. You seemed to want your life simpler, so why are you calling me?"

I hadn't meant to snap at him, but my frustration with everything finally slipped through, and anyone who heard me could tell I was more than pissed off.

"Becca, please, just let me explain," he replied.

"Yes. Please elaborate, because I am entirely confused about everything. I'm not some girl that can just be messed around with. From the beginning, I told you I didn't want to be someone's one-night stand. I wanted a relationship, but I wasn't ready."

It wasn't entirely true. Yes, I wasn't ready for a relationship, but in the beginning, I didn't know what I wanted. The only thing clear to me from day one was I wanted to have him f*ck me senseless, and I didn't want Tally to find out.

He accomplished one of those aspects, but the second one he failed on purpose.

"Look, I understand how you feel. From the very beginning, I didn't think I wanted anything either, but the thought of you leaving things unsettled between us... it's killing me," he sighed into the phone, causing my heart to clench at his words.

Hearing him explain how he was the one suffering with my absence, and how everything was left off really tore at me. He sounded like he was trying to make himself the victim, when in reality, I was the victim in all of this.

Granted, I hadn't been the easiest person to work with. I was an adult, and I was responsible for my own actions, but he knew what was going on with his ex-wife and his daughter. None of them would have ever found out had he not purposely set it up so they would find out.

"So, you only called to try to make things better between us so you could turn around and feel better about yourself and about what had happened?" I asked in confusion as I tried to understand what exactly it was he wanted to say.

"No, it's nothing like that. I just don't want there to be bad blood between us. I do care for you, Becca. More than you realize." The tone of his voice sounded more than exhausted.

"If you cared for me, you would never have let Tally find out the way she did. If you cared for me, you would never have let Allison treat me like scum. If you, honestly, cared for me at all, you would have come after me and told me you were sorry in person, and not just over the phone."

A groan of irritation escaped him on the other end of the line. "Becca—"

"No, James. I don't know what it is you're looking for, but unfortunately, I have plans today, so I'm going to have to let you go. I hope you find the closure you're seeking. It just won't be with me," I explained as I quickly hung up the phone.

Standing on the sidewalk, I took a deep breath, closing my eyes as I let things sink in. I wanted to call him back and apologize for the outburst.

But I couldn't. I wasn't crazy, but he made me crazy.

Never had a man, or anybody, ever complicated things in my life to the point of a mental breakdown, until I met James Valentino.

Groaning with irritation, I grabbed what I was needing at the bodega and paid for it, quickly making my way out, ready to recluse back into Neal's apartment.

However, as soon as I returned to the apartment half an hour later, I found a suitcase sitting just inside the door.

A smile crept upon my face as I turned the corner to find Neal standing there, staring out the window.

"Oh, my gosh!" I squealed with excitement. "I knew you were coming home today!"

He laughed as I wrapped my arms around his waist, giving him a hug. I didn't mean to seem overly excited, but Neal and I had grown close over the time we spent together since I met him in Miami.

"Yes, I was trying to surprise you, but when I got here, you weren't here."

"Sorry," I said sheepishly. "I ran down to the store to get a snack, I have been craving these Hot Cheetos."

"Hot Cheetos?" he replied with a raised brow. "When did they make them hot?"

"Oh, my god. Are you being serious right now? Open your mouth," I demanded, wanting him to try my favorite chips.

"No way. I will just take your word for it," he laughed, shaking his head.

It was nice to be back on familiar ground with him. I had missed the banter we had the first two days we were together before he left for London, and now that he was back, I was curious to how long he would stay.

"So, how long do I have you for before they snatch you away again?" I tease as I move towards the kitchen to get a glass of ice.

He was quiet for a moment, and when I turned around, I saw the way his blue eyes stared at me as if he was lost deep in his thoughts. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing. I was just thinking about something."

"Oh, yeah?" I grinned. "Who has your mind all fogged over? Are they cute?"

Laughter escaped his lips as he shook his head no. "I'm not dating anyone right now, Becca. I already told you that before. Stop trying to play matchmaker for me."

"I'm not, I'm not." I giggled. "Just saying—"

"You're merely acting like my sister, Becca," he quickly added, causing me to sigh and roll my eyes dramatically with a smirk.

He was right, though. I was trying to play matchmaker, but only because I didn't want to see him alone. He was quickly becoming one of the sweetest men I knew, and I wanted him to end up with the right person.

"Why don't we do something fun tonight?" I suggested as he dragged his suitcase towards his room with me following behind him.

"Fun? I don't know. I was kind of hoping that we can sit here and order in food or something," Neal said as he pulled the items out of his suitcase, and put

them where they belonged. "I'm here for about a week. So plenty of time to hang out."

Hearing he was here for at least a week made me smile. I had to head back to school next week and being able to spend time with someone rather than be alone sounded nice.

"Movie and a pizza it is, then," I said, causing him to laugh. "No f*cking pineapple on the damn pizza, though, Becca!"

"I'm sorry... did I hear you wanted extra pineapple? Okay... yeah, extra pineapple."

Picking up my phone, I looked over my shoulder just in time to see him coming running out the door at me with a smile on his face. Screaming with laughter, I moved quickly but not fast enough before he caught me wrapping his arms around my waist.

"No, damn pineapple woman," Neal almost growled in my ear, and the sound itself did something else to me I wasn't expecting.

Freezing in his arms, my heart racing, I bit my bottom lip, refusing to look at him.

He seemed to get the gesture, and quickly he let go of me and ran his hand through his hair. "Sorry about that."

"Don't be silly, it's fine. I'll make the call, and you finish unpacking?" I asked as I peered up at him, slightly unsure.

"Sure thing." He didn't waste another moment as he turned and headed back towards his room. I found myself slightly confused by the way he was acting, but overall, I shook it off as overthinking.

Neal was a good friend to me as well as being Allegra's brother. There was no way the situation would be weird between the two of us. He knew where I stood with everything, and he saw me as nothing but a friend.

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James.

Since Becca left, all I did was fill myself with work. Over and over again, I made sure I was busy. So busy I wasn't able to think, let alone sleep. I was tired but every time I closed my eyes, I saw her face. Her voice called to me to find her, and yet I knew it wasn't possible.

"James, what are you doing?" Tony, my project supervisor, asked me as I stood on the docks staring off at the shipping containers being unloaded.

"Nothing, I was just thinking about something," I replied as I looked back down at the clipboard in my hand.

Many times over, I have had moments of feeling completely out of place, but it wasn't something I could share with anyone else. I had to take the initiative to sort it all out myself.

"Yo, Valentino!" a voice yelled from behind me causing Tony and I both to turn and look at the gorgeous woman standing behind us.

"Allegra?" I said as I furrowed my brow in confusion watching as she walked towards me. "What are you doing here?"

I hadn't seen or spoken to Allegra since the night Becca left, and seeing her now at my place of work was more than confusing. The extent of our relationship as friends before usually extended to meeting at Club Velvet. However, since Becca had been in my life, I had seen her more.

"You don't answer your phone?" She cocked a brow and placed her hands upon her hips. Nothing but irritation in her posture.

"Excuse me?" I said with confusion. "I didn't hear it go off. Why are you here, Allegra?"

"I'm here because we need to talk. About Becca."

Hearing her say we needed to talk about Becca stuck a nerve with me. I was trying to let it all go, and here was Allegra reopening old wounds. Letting out a heavy sigh, I looked to Tony and nodded for him to go.

Tony had been with me for years and knew me better than most when it came to business. As his eyes lingered between Allegra and I, he nodded and turned walking off.

"What is it you want? I don't have time to do this today," I sighed when Tony was gone.

"I'm here to talk to you about Becca, and you don't have time?" she scoffed with irritation. "You really are moving on quickly, aren't you? Maybe I made a mistake in coming."

"F*ck you, Allegra," I snapped with a death grip on my clipboard. "Never assume anything when it comes to how I feel about Becca."

Crossing her arms over her chest, she stood staring at me defensively. "Then you need to shut up and listen to me."

Pinching the bridge of my nose, I sighed and gestured for her to continue. Allison was a pain in my ass, but Allegra was a whole entirely different level. She didn't annoy me, but she scared me to a degree. Something I would never tell her. "Listening."

"Becca is in love with you, James. Even with distance that isn't changing, and you have a chance to fix everything. Are you seriously going to let her go, or are you going to suck up your shit and go after her?"

For a moment, I contemplated laughing. After all, it was absurd she could love me. She had made it clear on the phone yesterday she was done, or, at least, that is how she made it seem. So why would I go after her?

Shaking my head, I stared at Allegra for a moment. "She doesn't want me."

"That's bullshit. Yes, she does."

"No, it isn't bullshit. I talked to her yesterday and she made it clear that I don't need to worry about her. She was pissed that I was even calling."

Allegra stood speechless as she stared at me. Uncrossing her arms, she pulled out her phone and sent a text message. "I'm texting you Neal's number. I was going to tell you what he told me, but I think it's better you hear it from him. So please call him."

My phone dinged with her message, and slowly, I pulled out my phone from my pocket, staring at the number. Neal was the last person I wanted to speak to.

No one had to say he liked her for me to already know. The fact she was staying with him painted a variety of pictures as to how their relationship was more or less going.

"No, I'm done with this Allegra. I have work to do."

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I wasn't sure why she was so adamant to have me call him, but it slightly intrigued me. I nodded my head, and she released me, backing up from where I was before turning and walking away. I was pleased she was gone, however, my mind kept reeling

What was it Neal would have to tell me that would cause Allegra to come all the way down to the docks? It didn't make sense, but the way she seemed so adamant to have me call him was beyond strange.

Groaning in irritation, I dialed the number she'd sent me and listened to it ring.

"James Valentino," Neal said on the other end of the phone. "I didn't expect you to call."

"Yes, well, your sister made a scene at my business and told me to call you so here I am calling you."

"I see," he replied after a moment of hesitation. "So, I take it she didn't tell you?"

"No. She didn't tell me anything," I said with frustration. "Perhaps you can enlighten me to what your sister needed to tell me. She said I had to call you."

"Well, something happened last night..."

"Did something happen to Becca? Is she okay?" I replied with concern.

"Yeah, she is fine. She misses you, James."

"So everyone keeps telling me," I sighed. "Let me explain just as I told Allegra. I spoke with her yesterday morning, and she made it clear she wasn't interested in me."

Neal's laughter came from the other end of the line, causing me to grit my teeth wondering what he found so f*cking amusing. "Neal..."

"Sorry, I'm not laughing at you. Just at the fact she tried to make you believe that. I can tell you right now, James, it was a lie. She had the chance to be with another man. She had a chance to move on and have everything she deserves, but she refused."

Hearing that another man made a move on Becca infuriated me. As much as I knew she wasn't mine, a part of me was still very possessive over her, and I knew very well the man he was referring to was himself.

"You tried to have relations with her," I stated coldly as I gripped my phone.

"James—" he said with hesitation, "you turned her away.... You can't blame me for wanting her. She's perfect in every way."

"What did you do to her, Neal?" I all but yelled through the phone as I paced around the area. "Did you f*ck her?"

"No, but honestly, that's not of your concern anyway," he scoffed. "Look, she wants you, okay. So what happened between her and I is irrelevant."

"So, you wanted me to f*cking call you just to tell me you f*cked around with her, you piece of shit? What kind of sadistic f*ck are you?!"

"Hey!" he yelled at me. "Don't you dare f*cking speak to me like that. I'm over here trying to f*cking help you, because I'm in f*cking love with her. However, she doesn't f*cking want me, and seeing her happy is all that matters to me."

Neal's admission of love shocked me. He barely knew her, and yet he was in love with her. "I don't f*cking get you.."

"You're not meant to, James. So, just shut the f*ck up and listen," Neal snapped. "This weekend, there is a conference going on at the Paramount building. Show up to it, and win her back. I don't think you deserve her, but she loves you, and I won't stop that."

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"Fine. Send me the information," I said before hanging up the phone.

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If I was going to be going to New York, I had a lot I needed to get prepared. It was already Wednesday, and if the event was this weekend, I was going to need to prepare to travel.



Novel Square

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/chapter 54 : Regretful Actions

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Becca.

The next day was more awkward than I had anticipated it to be. After everything that had happened with Neal last night, I had expected there to be nothing but an awkward silence between us. However, instead, when I had awoken and made my way out to the living room, he seemed more cheerful than ever.

Taking precautions, I kept quiet after saying good morning to him, and made my way towards the kitchen and set the kettle to make myself a cup of tea. I wasn't quite sure what I was going to do for the day, but at the top of my list, I had to find a place to live.

After all, school was coming rather quickly, and I couldn't stay where I was before. Everything was so f*cked up, but there was nothing I could do except take care of shit as always and move forward.

"So, I was looking over everything, and I think I found the perfect place for you," Neal said, catching my attention. Turning around, I stared at him with a blank expression and my lips slightly parted.

"I told you there was no need to worry about that. I can figure it out honestly." Frowning, I hoped he would listen to me and understand I wasn't looking for free hands out from him just because he had money.

"Don't be ridiculous. I told you last night I was going to help you. I really am looking at having rental properties up there. This is a great opportunity for me to expand. Perhaps we can work something out if you feel you're getting handouts."

"What do you mean?" I asked, crossing my arms over my chest while biting the inside of my cheek.

His eyes seemed to hold some sort of mystery to them as he glanced at me with a smile. "I mean, like maybe you can help me out with property

management. Instead of me paying someone, I would just let you live in one unit for free. You take care of the others."

Nodding my head, I chose not to say anything else. After all, what was I going to say?

It was better not to bite the hand that feeds you, and honestly, the deal he was offering was great. "I think I can manage something like that."

An empty feeling in the pit of my stomach made me question everything that had happened last night. As much as I tried not to pay any attention to it, I couldn't avoid it.

Neal had kissed me last night, and if I hadn't stopped things, they would have gone further.

Did this mean he actually had an interest in me?

As I finished making my tea, I slowly made my way towards the living room. He was sitting on the sofa in a pair of gray sweatpants and a white T-shirt. His godly aroma wrapped around me in all the right ways.

He was incredibly attractive, and any girl would be fortunate enough to have someone like him. But he wasn't James and as much as I wanted to try to get over him, I couldn't.

"I think we should talk," I said, breaking the awkward silence between us.

His eyes slowly lifted from his laptop placed in front of him to fall on me, and as they did, my breath caught in my throat.

"There's no need to have a discussion about anything that happened last night. We both had a lot to drink and, of course, we know that there is nothing that could ever happen between us." Neal's admission shocked me.

I hadn't expected him to be so nonchalant about it, but he quickly dismissed what had happened between us as if it wasn't a big deal.

"So we're just going to pretend that it never happened?" I asked, furrowing my brows as I lifted my teacup to my lips.

"If that's what you would like to do, then we can. I don't want to discuss it and make you feel uncomfortable. As I said, what happened happened. We'd both been drinking and there's nothing really to discuss."

I was pleased there would not be any awkwardness, but I felt conflicted. His response wasn't what I had expected, and I couldn't help but wonder if he regretted what happened.

"Can I ask you something?" I whispered, watching his eyes lift once again from his laptop to connect with mine.

"You don't ever have to question if you can ask me something. Of course, you can ask me anything, Becca. You can ask anything of me you want in the world, and I will grant it if it is in my power to do so." The corners of his lips turned up into a smile.

"Why did you kiss me last night, Neal? I mean, I didn't think you were into me, and I know you said we'd both been drinking, but the way you were seemed like there was more to it."

Instantly, his expression fell from one of happiness to one of guilt. Leaning back against the couch, he rubbed his hand over his face as he sighed.

"Well, it is complicated," he replied, clearing his throat. "I can't pretend I don't like you and care about you because I do, Becca. I care about you a great deal. However, I also respect and understand James is the man you love. I would never push you into doing anything you don't want."

In shock over his acceptance, my heart swelled, and tears lined my eyes. Whatever person he claimed would be the luckiest in the world. Never once had I met a man as kind as him, except for my own father.

Neal thought about everyone around him before ever thinking about himself.

"I'm so grateful for everything you've done for me, Neal. I'm sorry, though, for being so difficult and complicated. You deserve so much better."

Neal closed his laptop and smiled at me. "You are the one that deserves the world."

"No, I don't," I scoffed. "I'm in love with a man who doesn't want me. I'm f*cked up."

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Pulling me into his lap, he kissed the side of my head. "Actually, I have an event this weekend, and I hoped you could come with me."

After how things went with the last event I had gone to, I wasn't quite certain if I wanted to do another. However, this was Neal... not James.

"I don't know. The gala was a lot for me. I'm just not sure if going to another event would be a good idea," I replied with hesitation.

"I understand that you're concerned, but it would mean a great deal to me if you went. Just to have some fun, and if you're uncomfortable about going, you don't have to. I thought this would be a very good educational experience for you, considering the field that you're going into."

"Educational experience?" I questioned with a soft laugh that made him smile.

"Yes, there's going to be a ton of guest speakers there. There's actually going to be quite a few college students there taking notes on the presentations given. I thought you might find it very educational. I know how much your field of study means to you, and I believe there is one person who's going to be there that you will enjoy."

Hearing this could be educational and benefit me at school was something that intrigued me. I would have a paper I needed to do this year for one of my college classes, and if I could use this firsthand experience to improve my paper than I should do it.

Chances like these often only came around once in a blue moon, and who was I to turn down something significant like this?

Taking a moment, I rolled my eyes and nodded my head in agreement. "Fine, I'll go, but I'm not getting super dressed up."

"That's fine. It's not one of those kinds of events. I mean, of course, look nice. Now, I'm not saying leggings and a hoodie, but you also don't have to wear a ball gown and dazzling jewelry. Just something pretty you have on hand."

Slowly, I stood from his lap, as he continued to clutch at my hand before it gently drifted away until we were no longer touching. I felt the need to cry, but it wasn't because of sadness. It was one of happiness.

This was the first step towards my future, being slightly different.

And all of it was because Neal didn't just let me carry on on my own. He took me in when I needed it, gave me a place to stay, and had been nothing but kind to me. Now, once again, he was giving me another opportunity that could benefit me in the long run.

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chapter 54 : Regretful Actions

Chapter 60 - Submitting to My Best Friend's Dad by Scarlett Rossi

Becca.

The next day was more awkward than I had anticipated it to be. After everything that had happened with Neal last night, I had expected there to be nothing but an awkward silence between us. However, instead, when I had awoken and made my way out to the living room, he seemed more cheerful than ever.

Taking precautions, I kept quiet after saying good morning to him, and made my way towards the kitchen and set the kettle to make myself a cup of tea. I wasn't quite sure what I was going to do for the day, but at the top of my list, I had to find a place to live.

After all, school was coming rather quickly, and I couldn't stay where I was before. Everything was so f*cked up, but there was nothing I could do except take care of shit as always and move forward.

"So, I was looking over everything, and I think I found the perfect place for you," Neal said, catching my attention. Turning around, I stared at him with a blank expression and my lips slightly parted.

"I told you there was no need to worry about that. I can figure it out honestly." Frowning, I hoped he would listen to me and understand I wasn't looking for free hands out from him just because he had money.

"Don't be ridiculous. I told you last night I was going to help you. I really am looking at having rental properties up there. This is a great opportunity for me to expand. Perhaps we can work something out if you feel you're getting handouts."

"What do you mean?" I asked, crossing my arms over my chest while biting the inside of my cheek.

His eyes seemed to hold some sort of mystery to them as he glanced at me with a smile. "I mean, like maybe you can help me out with property management. Instead of me paying someone, I would just let you live in one unit for free. You take care of the others."

Nodding my head, I chose not to say anything else. After all, what was I going to say?

It was better not to bite the hand that feeds you, and honestly, the deal he was offering was great. "I think I can manage something like that."

An empty feeling in the pit of my stomach made me question everything that had happened last night. As much as I tried not to pay any attention to it, I couldn't avoid it.

Neal had kissed me last night, and if I hadn't stopped things, they would have gone further.

Did this mean he actually had an interest in me?

As I finished making my tea, I slowly made my way towards the living room. He was sitting on the sofa in a pair of gray sweatpants and a white T-shirt. His godly aroma wrapped around me in all the right ways.

He was incredibly attractive, and any girl would be fortunate enough to have someone like him. But he wasn't James and as much as I wanted to try to get over him, I couldn't.

"I think we should talk," I said, breaking the awkward silence between us.

His eyes slowly lifted from his laptop placed in front of him to fall on me, and as they did, my breath caught in my throat.

"There's no need to have a discussion about anything that happened last night. We both had a lot to drink and, of course, we know that there is nothing that could ever happen between us." Neal's admission shocked me.

I hadn't expected him to be so nonchalant about it, but he quickly dismissed what had happened between us as if it wasn't a big deal.

"So we're just going to pretend that it never happened?" I asked, furrowing my brows as I lifted my teacup to my lips.

"If that's what you would like to do, then we can. I don't want to discuss it and make you feel uncomfortable. As I said, what happened happened. We'd both been drinking and there's nothing really to discuss."

I was pleased there would not be any awkwardness, but I felt conflicted. His response wasn't what I had expected, and I couldn't help but wonder if he regretted what happened.

"Can I ask you something?" I whispered, watching his eyes lift once again from his laptop to connect with mine.

"You don't ever have to question if you can ask me something. Of course, you can ask me anything, Becca. You can ask anything of me you want in the

world, and I will grant it if it is in my power to do so." The corners of his lips turned up into a smile.

"Why did you kiss me last night, Neal? I mean, I didn't think you were into me, and I know you said we'd both been drinking, but the way you were seemed like there was more to it."

Instantly, his expression fell from one of happiness to one of guilt. Leaning back against the couch, he rubbed his hand over his face as he sighed.

"Well, it is complicated," he replied, clearing his throat. "I can't pretend I don't like you and care about you because I do, Becca. I care about you a great deal. However, I also respect and understand James is the man you love. I would never push you into doing anything you don't want."

In shock over his acceptance, my heart swelled, and tears lined my eyes. Whatever person he claimed would be the luckiest in the world. Never once had I met a man as kind as him, except for my own father.

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chapter 56 : Love is a Beautiful Thing

Chapter 62 - Submitting to My Best Friend's Dad by Scarlett Rossi

Sitting down in the restaurant, I took in the general splendor for dim lighting and warm colors. The entire air of the place was rather romantic, and the way James looked at me made me feel as if I was the only woman in the room he had eyes for, and perhaps that was true, but I had to keep my head straight.

"This place is really nice," I said as I continued to admire the room before letting my eyes fall upon him. The lust filled gaze he was giving me made my stomach knot with anticipation.

"I figured you would like it," he replied, lifting his wineglass to his lips with a smirk upon his face.

To think, just days ago, I was considering letting go of everything I had with James, and now I was sitting here across from him trying to decide if the situation was real or just an elaborate dream I had come up with.

"I suppose we should discuss some things..."

Hesitation filled my words, but my thoughts kept swirling over the possibility he had been pining for me day and night since we had parted. Biting my bottom lip, I contemplated the idea, but I felt more foolish than before.

"What would you like to talk about, Becca?" James asked, as if he didn't realize the complications of our current situation.

"Well, for starters, what made you decide to come here? I mean, you said it was for me, but I'm slightly confused—"

"Isn't it obvious, though?" James replied, as his gaze fell deeply into mine.

"Perhaps, but I want to know why you suddenly want this to work."

Taking a moment, he adjusted himself in his seat. "After you left, I figured out a few things, Becca. One was that Allison and Tally had purposely set the entire thing up to complicate situations and force you to leave."

Sneering, I folded my arms across my chest. "Well, that makes sense. The second thing?"

"I realized I didn't want another moment to go by where I didn't have you in it."

There was a genuine expression across his face as he stared at me. It was the second time he had expressed wanting me, and his view hadn't changed.

"I'm not going back to Miami anytime soon, James." The waitress brought the food we had ordered to our table. "I plan on finishing school."

"I know," he said with a bemused smile on his face. "I have accepted that."

Over the course of time I had spent with James when I was in Miami, he had continuously tried to convince me to go to school in south Florida. Not once had he expressed the idea of being okay with me finishing school up here.

That would mean whatever we had would be long distance, and trying to imagine how that would work given the circumstances, was impossible.

Could a man like James stay faithful to me while being so far away?

Men had urges that sometimes needed to be filled.

"What about Allison? She threatened to ruin my education multiple times."

The thought of having my last year at school destroyed because James wanted to keep me was spine chilling. I had worked so hard to get where I was, and as much as I cared about James, I wasn't willing to let anyone destroy my future.

"I will deal with Allison. You don't need to worry about her in regards to your education, Becca." His set his jaw into a firm hold as his eyes contacted mine. He was being serious, and the determination was obvious.

Nodding, I looked down at the pasta in front of me and tried to preoccupy myself with eating. As happy as I was to see James, I couldn't shake the twittering feeling in my stomach of fear.

Why couldn't things with James just be as easy as they were with Neal?

Instead, he came with so many complications, and those complications were flying red flags waving high in the sky, trying to warn me to stay away.

"This food is amazing," I said, as my eyes met his again. "I need to know how they make this."

"Well, that's easy enough to find out," James replied as a smile grew across his face.

As dinner finished, I fell into old ways, and eventually, I was walking down the long hallway of James' apartment building in New York. We passed door after door until we finally came to one at the end of the hall that read 1972.

Pulling the key from his pocket, he opened the door wide and stepped back for me to enter. I wasn't sure what I was expecting of the apartment, but it was definitely way more lavish than the one Neal had.

Tall vaulted ceilings, white walls, and modern decor lined the home. As beautiful as it was, it felt so impersonal and cookie cutter, in my opinion. However, stepping forth, I took in the spectacular views of the New York skyline.

Breathtaking was the only way to describe such a view. "This is beautiful."

"I'm glad you like it," he chuckled behind me before arms wrapped around my waist, pulling me close. "I have honestly only been here a few times, but I'm glad I get to be here with you now."

With a clenching heart, I turned around in his arms and looked up into his eyes. I wanted more than anything to be free in the moment, but there was

still something I had to know for sure. I had to be honest with him about how I felt, and that terrified me.

"I have to tell you something." As he brushed his thumb over my cheek, I whispered softly, "I'm afraid..."

"Why are you afraid, Rebecca?" he whispered as he gently pressed his lips to my forehead. Fuck, here goes nothing, I guess.

"I'm afraid I'm falling in love with you, James, and I'm terrified that you will hurt me." Casting my eyes down, I waited in hesitation for the rejection I was so sure that he would give me, but he lifted my eyes to meet his again and crashed his lips to mine in a soft and sultry way.

There wasn't a response to what I said in a way that I was expecting. However, there was more to this man I could ever explain. Reaching down, he picked me up bridal style and carried me towards his bedroom.

A soft giggle escaped my lips at his action, but as he laid me down on the soft sheets, I quickly realized this would not be like other times.

Piece by piece, we stripped our clothing from our bodies, and as it was, I felt nothing but love and care seeping off his body onto mine. With the gentle caress of the sheets against my back, I felt the thick head of his massive erection press against my folds.

Slow and tantalizing was the mood for the moment, and with every whimper leaving my lips begging him to fill me, his smile widened. "I love you, Rebecca," he whispered, making me breathless as he shoved his entire length inside me.

I didn't miss the opportunity to capture his lips with my own as our bodies became one. As I clung to him, he thrust deep inside of me, forcing the small cries of pleasure from my lips that I was expecting.

"Oh, f*ck..." I moaned.

"Tell me you're mine," he grunted as he bit lightly upon my neck, causing me to gasp, closing in on the intense release of pleasure that I was expecting.

"I'm yours, James. Forever and Always."

The moment wasn't like the others, and with his sweet love making, I finally felt the way I always had wanted to feel. I felt desired, wanted, and loved.

Harder and faster he drove into me, and when I didn't think I could take anymore, my walls tightened around him, and I came undone as he stilled inside of me.

He leaned down, kissing me softly once more. "You're so beautiful."

The blush that crept across my cheeks was unexpected, but when he pulled out and laid next to me, he pulled me close to him, letting my head rest against his chest.

"I know things are going to be hard while you finish school, Becca. I want you to know, though, that we will make it work if that's what you want."

Taking a moment to consider what he was saying, I glanced up at him under darkened lashes and smiled. "Yes, I want to try."

I wouldn't give in and believe in it completely. There was still a possibility things could go wrong, and if they did, I didn't want to get my hopes up. I had to go in with this with a different outlook, so that way, if things fell apart, I would be prepared.

"I'm glad you do, because I was so lost without you."

He kissed the top of my head, and I smiled and ran my fingers over the front of his chest. "When are you leaving to go back to Miami?"

"The day after tomorrow," he replied, letting out a heavy breath. "I wish I could stay longer, but I can't."

It was a bummer he was leaving, but I knew in the back of my mind that this was going to have to be what I expected.

Long distance wasn't something most people could handle, and while other relationships fell through, I was determined to see it work.

"Well, then, tomorrow you can help me check out my new apartment by the school if you want."

"New apartment?" he said with a questioning glance.

"Yeah," I smirked. "I can't stay in the old apartment with Tally."

Nodding his head with realization, he sighed. "I wish she wasn't so difficult."

"She wouldn't be Tally if she wasn't. The new apartment is amazing, though, so I'm okay with it. Honestly."

"Knowing you, I'm sure it is. Where is this new apartment?" This was something I wasn't sure he was going to like, but trust was something that we were going to have to rely on being so far apart.

Opening and closing my mouth, I smiled at him before saying, "Very close to campus."

"So it will be easier for you to get to class then?" he asked as if he didn't realize the campus apartments were anywhere between four and seven thousand dollars a month. However, Neal had bought multiple units there, and the one he got for me was free.

"Oh, very much so. Tomorrow we will swing by Neal's so I can pack my things, and then we can drive up there. It will only take a few hours, and it will be fun."

James' face fell slightly hearing that I had to go by Neal's, but he pushed the emotion back and smiled at me. "Sounds like fun."

