

SIX

The next morning, I wake to the smell of food being cooked. Rolling over, I groan softly, stretching out my muscles from the hard sleep. I didn't expect to sleep so well after the events of last night with Greg. He was completely out of line and let his jealousy ruin whatever weird friendship we had. It's proof that being dependent on someone can only bring trouble in the end. I don't want to make that mistake again.

Sliding my hand under the pillow, my fingers touch something. When I pull it out, I see that it's the business card I found in Ethan's jacket last night. The purpose of the card still is unknown, but from the looks of the name, it's got to be something out of the norm. Maybe it's like a s*x store or something.

Ethan may be trying to spice of the bedroom with a lady friend. It could possibly be an escort service, but Ethan doesn't seem like the type to buy a woman to sleep with. I'm sure woman just fall at his feet on a whim. Sighing, I slide the card and all my outrageous theories back under the pillow before throwing the covers back. Sleep still hovers over me as I shue to the kitchen. I take note that my feet and hands are no longer sore from the broken glass. I can't help, but roll my eyes from the replay of the scene.

When the kitchen becomes visible to me, I see Ethan at the stove.

"Don't you have a home?" I yawn and his head turns to me.

"Well, good morning to you too"

Ethan raises and eyebrow and I realize after a few seconds that he expects me to x my lack of manners.

"Oh, good morning"

"Better?" He mumbles "How are you feeling?"

"Like a total f****l. I'm sorry again for keeping you from your plans last night. You really didn't have to stay, I was ne" I shrug, climbing up on a bar stool to sit.

Ethan's forehead scrunches up as he scrambles eggs.

"I didn't feel comfortable leaving you here alone. That guy could have come back. What was all that about anyways?"

Not wanting to really talk about it, I rest my chin on my hand.

"Nothing important" I look down at the counter, picking at an empty plate.

In front of me, I can feel Ethan staring at me. After a few seconds, I peek up through my eyelashes and see that he is still looking. Sometime I wish he weren't such a good listener then I would actually want to talk about it like I do right now.

"He needed me more than I needed him. I use to need him just as badly, but I don't anymore."

"Why don't you need him anymore?" He asks as he pulls the plate in front me in his direction, placing some eggs and bacon on it before sliding it back over.

I pick up a piece of bacon, but it burns my fingers causing me to drop it.

"Ouch!" I stick my finger in my mouth and when I look up at Ethan, he is smirking.

"It's hot" He smiles and it sends little electric shocks down my spine.

"No s****" I smile back, sarcastically, looking back down at the plate. This time, I blow the bacon before picking up a piece. As I'm about to take a bite, Ethan clears his throat.

"You didn't answer my question"

"What? Oh, right. Um, I just didn't need him like I used to. I was lonely and poor and despite us being broken up, he was all I had. He got comfortable with me needing him for various things. I guess he got jealous"

"So he gave you money and stuff?"

"Not money. Just his time and company. Sometimes he would cook for me and stuff and we were sort of still sleeping together" I quickly bite down on the bacon to keep me from saying anything else that could possibly make me blush. Ethan doesn't need to know all of this stuff. I'm sure he doesn't care.

"I think he was still into you."

A laugh slips from between my lips.

"What? No, way. He cheated on me. That's why we broke up. I'm sure he just wanted me for s*x which makes me pretty f****g pathetic"

"Hey, watch your mouth while we're eating breakfast." Ethan gives me an unbelievable frown as he stuffs his face with eggs, making me giggle.

"Sorry, Boss man"

"And you're not pathetic. He was your comfort blanket, but he was definitely still into you. No sane man would come here and act that way over a rejection unless he was."

"Or maybe he was just fu...maybe he was just crazy" I catch my words, earning a nod from Ethan.

He should not be the boss of me outside of the coc. This man denitely is on an all-day all night power trip. I watch as Ethan ponders over my answer and shrugs.

"Maybe, but I'll stick to my answer. It's a little more...something."

"It's a little more nothing. There isn't much of an excuse or reason for him coming here and hurting me. I didn't know how far he was going to go. He never acted like that before" The realization that Greg could have really hurt me last night washes over me and I can't help but feel a little upset about it.

Pushing my plate away, I run my fingers through my hair, inhaling deeply. Across from me, Ethan's fork is at the entrance of his mouth, frozen as he stares at me. Suddenly, he sits the fork down and sits up straight.

"I'm sorry, Thea. I didn't mean to imply that there was an excuse or logical reason for him doing what he did. I don't condone abuse in any way."

"I know"

"How?"

Tilting my head to the side, I force a small smile.

"Because you looked like you wanted to go and kick his ass when you walked in last night. I'm glad you showed up though. Really glad" I nod and look at him, taking notice of the way he's gazing at me as if he has a million thoughts running through his mind.

After a few seconds of silence, he breaks the stare and gets up from the counter, taking my half empty plate.

"Go sit on the couch so I can check your feet" He orders as he straightens the kitchen a bit. I slowly slide off the stool, before moving to the couch,opping down.

Ethan comes and takes a seat on the edge of the coffee table like he did last night, pulling my foot up. I observe as he holds my foot still while he peels off the large band aid he placed there. When his large hand squeezes my ankle only, my attention diverts. The warmth of his palm radiates into my skin and I scowl at my own feelings. How can a simple touch turn me on this much?

"Does it hurt?" Ethan's voice pulls me back to reality.

"What? Oh, um no. I'm ne"

"Then why do you look angry?" He chuckles as he lets my foot down and suddenly I'm pouting.

"I'm not angry" Yea, now I'm just sad that you're not touching me anymore.

As if he read my mind, Ethan reaches out and takes both of my wrists, turning them palm up.

"Your hands look ne" He nods, rubbing his thumb over my skin.

I stop breathing as he runs his fingers over the few tiny cuts, thankful that he isn't looking at me. If he were, I'd be totally busted for having hungry eyes over him. God, what's wrong with me? Ethan is my boss for crying out loud. None of my employee benets include hot crazy s*x with my hot boss who is oblivious to how horny I'm becoming right now. Just imagining his fingers over the rest of my body makes me want to clench my knees together, but that would be a dead give away. Maybe I want to give it away.

When Ethan looks up from my hands, his gaze is soft and caring "I think you're going to live"

"Well, thank God I have you around. Who knows how I would have turned out without such a handy man who doubles as my boss. Such a renaissance man." I smile as Ethan squints his eyes at me.

"Are you mocking me, Thea?"

Placing a finger over my lips, I pretend to be in a deep thought.

"Me, mocking you? Never. Every man should possess the complementary skills of bandage application. It's an underrated trade these days" I nod and suddenly, Ethan is reaching forward at me.

His hands nd my sides and he starts to tickle me. Squealing loudly, I try to squirm away, but he is standing over me now. I fall sideways on the couch and Ethan climbs on top of me, his deep infectious laugh filling the room.

"Ethan, stop!" I yell, tears coming to my eyes as I laugh hard. When my shirt rides up, Ethan takes advantage of the opportunity and his fingers nd my bare skin. I jerk hard, his playful assault pushing me to tap out, but I also want more. Less tickling, more ripping my close off.

"Mercy!"

"What? I can't hear you!" Ethan laughs as I try to move away from him only to be caught in the corner of the couch with his body over me. My hands push against his hard chest to push him away, but he has much larger than me. Gasping for air, I hit his chest three times.

"I give! I give!"

"Say sorry" Ethan orders, nally stopping, but still hovering over me, his cologne from last night still strong and addictive.

"For what? I didn't do anything" I bite my lip and Ethan smiles as he starts tickling me again.

"Okay! I'm sorry" I yelp and his fingers still. "For?"

"For mocking you."

"Now you have to say that Ethan is the most amazing boss I've ever had in the whole world" His grin transfers to my lips as I squint at him. I fake a frown and roll my eyes.

"Ethan is the most amazing boss I've ever had in the whole world"

"And he's the most handsome boss I've ever had"

His words make me blink a few times as he stares down at me. Suddenly, a cloud of tension rolls in and silence falls between us. Ethan's hands stay on my sides as he waits for me to speak.

"And he's the most handsome boss I've ever had" I smirk, kicking my lips as I look away from him, slightly embarrassed.

"Good girl!" Ethan smiles and his hands leave my bare skin, causing me to pout. No! Put them back! I want your man hands on me!

Ethan stands over me and reaches out to pull me up. I take his hand and when he pulls me up to my feet, his other hand lands on my lower back. I sway a bit from stand quickly and giggle.

"Whoa"

"I think it's from all the laughing." Ethan comments as he pulls my shirt down over slightly red skin. "So what are your plans for the day?"

I put my hands on my hips and pull my lips in as I think. "Uh, I don't think I have anything planned." I shrug.

"Good. Get dressed"

"Why?" I'd much rather get undressed right now.

"We're going to hang out, today. Go to the park and stuff and I called to order you a new phone. I could have gotten it earlier, but I didn't want to leave yet. We'll pick it up later." Ethan rolls back on his heels and I tilt my head to the side.

"That sounds good to me. Thanks for getting me a new phone. I could have gotten it myself since I do get a paycheck now, but I won't argue. Meet you in the lobby in 20?"

"I'll be there" He gives me a wink as he turns, grabbing his jacket off the coffee table and leaving. I stand there for a moment, inhaling deeply, taking in his lingering scent before retreating to my room.

Opening the closet, I scan over my options before choosing a pair of slightly too tight black jeans with a are at the bottoms which I'm happy about. Classic jeans have been forgotten and replaced with skinny jeans or as I like to call them, death traps. I bruisd my tailbone trying to squeeze my ass into a pair once only to lose my footing from jumping up and down and falling hard.

Stripping from my pajamas and put on a lacy panty and bra set before pulling on the jeans and a Wonder Woman graphic tee with a pair of black Vans. When I'm dressed, I let my hair out of the bun and at iron it, pulling half of it back, securing it with the elastic Ethan gave me the day of my interview. Yes, I still have it. Pathetic, I know.

After grabbing my things, I ride the elevator down to the lobby and when the doors open, I catch sight of Ethan's back. I ease up behind him, ready to attack. When I'm right behind him, I gently dig my fingers into his sides, tickling him.

"What the f****k when he turns around, my face runs red realize that the man isn't Ethan. "What the f****k are you doing?"

"Oh my God, I'm so sorry. I thought you were someone else. I'm so so sorry" My hands over my mouth, I step back quickly only to bump into something hard. Turning around, Ethan is looking down at me.

"Thea, what's wrong?"

"I tickled a stranger" I close my eyes, tightly just wanting to crawl under a rock and die of embarrassment. The angry man walks off quickly, looking back at me and saying something into his phone. After a few seconds, Ethan begins to laugh..hard. Okay, it's more like a roar of laughter. Frowning and pouting, I stand in front of him as he doubles over laughing at me.

"It's not that funny" I cross my arms.

"Yes, it is!"

"Oh, just shut up and lets go you big ooph" I slap his arm before turning around to leave the building whether Ethan is following or not.

By the sound of chuckling still close behind me, I assume he is following. Outside, the fresh air fills my lungs. I take a deep breath and let my hands fall to my sides. Catching me off guard, an arm snakes around the shoulders, a hand resting just above my left breast and when I look up, Ethan is smiling down at me. Leaning in, his mouth just inches from my ear, he mumbles

"Sorry for laughing" An obvious lie since he can barely keep himself from chuckling as he talks.

Shaking off his arm, I pout "Yeah, yeah. So where are we going?"

"Wherever the wind takes us after we get your phone." He shrugs and takes me hand, pulling me along as he starts to walk until I'm next to him.

I can't help but realize that this playful Ethan is the complete opposite of how he was acting all week. I wish I knew what friends in him that made him relax around me. Either way, I like it. Not having many changes here is quite lonely so the fact that I'm hanging out with Ethan is a nice change. I was prepared to spend the whole day with Ethan's Netix account and a jar of Jiffy.

Pleasuring the Boss / for coffee and my phone, we make our way to a park where I take in my surroundings. I've been to this park once since living in New York, but it wasn't for just a casual stroll. I had just lost my job and missed the bus to get home so while waiting for the next one, I sat on a bench, weighing my options. When we pass by the exact bench where my broke ass was plastered, I can't help but frown.

"Something wrong?" Ethan says, nudging my shoulder.

"No, not really. I came to this park once after I lost my nanny job. It looks different though. I don't remember it being so nice and pretty" I force a laugh as I eye the trees and owers.

"That's because you weren't thinking about the scenery. Don't let your past bring you down anymore. You're in a new place with new people. Be happy"

I look up at Ethan, rolling my eyes. "I'm very happy right now"

"I'm glad."

Suddenly, a woman jogging rushes past me, almost sending me and my empty coffee cup to the ground. Yelping, the woman turns around.

"Oh God, I'm so sorry. I wasn't paying...Ethan?" She turns away from me to face him and my eyes follow.

She is beautiful even with a slight sheen of sweat over her skin. Her blonde hair is pulled up into a ponytail and her wide doe eyes are quite captivating. She is tall and slim, standing at the same height as Ethan, putting my shortness to shame.

Ethan clears his throat "Kate, Hi. How are you?"

"I'm great. Missed you last night at the club"

My attention spikes up when she mentions a club. Sinful Desires rings in my head. It has to be what she is talking about. I have to know what type of place this is. Looking up at Ethan, I wait for him to respond.

"Uh, yeah. Something important came up last night. I'm sure I didn't miss anything"

The woman smiles. "Oh, don't be coy. I know it's probably eating you up that you couldn't come. It was busier than usual. Lots of new guests"

She gives Ethan a seductive wink before looking at me, brie. "You're very pretty"

I try to keep my facial expressions at bay from her comment, but a small frown peeks through.

"Oh, thank you" I think.

"Ethan, you should bring her. You never bring anyone and I know a few people who would just love to..." Before she can nish her sentence, Ethan coughs.

"Um, Kate, we really have to get going."

What the hell was that all about? I've never seen Ethan this ushered before. I've never seen him ushered at all. He's always so intense and now, well now he just seems embarrassed. Maybe he doesn't want to be seen anywhere with me, but I doubt that since we are out in a public park. Maybe he just doesn't want me to meet any of his rich friends. I wouldn't know how to act around them anyway.

The woman, Kate, just smiles and nods.

"Okay, well it was nice seeing you." Then she turns to me "And it was nice meeting you..." She pauses, waiting to get my name.

"Thea"

"It was nice meeting you, Thea. Ethan, try not to keep this one all to yourself"

After a few seconds of silence, Ethan forces a tight smile. "I'll try"

"See you next weekend?" Kate asks.

"Yup. I'll be there"

"And Thea?" Seriously, what is this woman's deal?

If Ethan wants me at some upcity club, he'll ask me himself instead of having some random woman push him to do it. I don't know what it is about the way he is acting, but it makes me curious. Dangerously curious to nd out what goes on there. With a name like Sinful Desires, it has to be something desirable about it, right?

"I don't think Thea would t in much" Ethan's words send a blow to my gut.

Even he thinks, I'm not good enough for his upper class social club. Asshole. I look away when he turns to check for a reaction, not wanting to make it so obvious that I'm slightly irritated. Kate gives him a nod, still looking at me.

"Fair enough. Well, I'll see you around, Ethan." She gives a small wave before jogging off, leaving us with a tension cloud looming over our heads.

"So, where were we?" Ethan tries to brush off the awkward moment.

"I'm ready to go home." I spurt out causing a crease to form in his forehead. "Why? What's wrong?"

"Nothing. I'm just ready to go" I shrug and when I go to turn around and walk off, Ethan catches my upper arm, pulling me in front of him. "Tell me"

Rolling my eyes, I let my weight fall onto my right foot "You didn't give me a choice"

"A choice?"

"Yes. You didn't give me a choice of whether I wanted to go to a stupid private club or not. You just spoke for me like what I had to say didn't matter. Maybe I wouldn't t in, but it's for me to nd out" Ethan glares at me with a half amused, half serious look on his face. I want to tell him about the business card I found, but I don't want to get that secret away.

"It's really not that serious, Thea. It's just a private members only club."

"Well, Kate makes it sound like it's just bursting with fun. I like fun, Ethan" Scowling at him with all my might, Ethan only smirks at my little meadow outburst. Squinting my eyes, I want to ask what's so funny, but I already know. Me. I'm funny to him.

"I'm glad you nd me so humorous." I pull away and start walking fast, hearing Ethan jog lightly to catch up "Wait, Thea. I wasn't laughing at you"

"Right. Just leave me alone. Ethan. Apparently, you don't think I'm good enough to hang around your rich friends and I'm okay with that. It's totally ne. At least Kate liked me. She damn near could keep her eyes off me" As I'm speed walking, I starting breathing a little harder. I had no intentions of getting a workout today.

Finally catching up to me, Ethan steps into my path, causing me to jump back to avoid colliding with his chest. Crossing my arms, I stare at the middle of his chest avoiding his eyes.

"Thea" He mumbles and when I don't answer, he grips my chin gently, pulling my face up to look at him.

"What?" I try to pull my chin from his grip, but he tightens his hold.

"Stop it, now" A deep voice replaces his calm tone and it sends a chill through me. His deep eyes pull me in and he sighs.

"Look, I'm sorry for not letting you speak for yourself. But in my defense, our club isn't for everyone. It's different with different types of people. No no way shape or form do I think you aren't good enough and I never want to hear you say it again, understand?"

Giving no answer, Ethan steps closer, closing off the space between us. I can only imagine how we look standing in the middle of a park side walk. I'm sure people are staring and I don't like it. Turning my face to see who observing, I realize I can't. Ethan as a firm grip on my chin.

"Ethan, please. People are staring." My blood begins to thud in my veins, imagining everyone's eyes on us. On me.

"I will let you go if you say that you're good enough"

Letting out a deep breath, I try to step back, but he quickly snakes an arm around my waist, holding me. "Say it"

"Please, let me go" I whisper, wanting so desperately to shut my eyes, lightly. Out of the corner of my sight, I see a man and woman pass by and they both turn their heads to look at us. The woman leans over and whispers something to the guy, making him chuckle. I quickly come to the conclusion that they are laughing at me. Biting my lip, my eyes nd, Ethan's again.

"Thea, say that you're good enough."

With his hand on my back, his fingers dig into my skin, slightly. Although his hand is over my shirt, it still warms me deeply.

Sighing, I part my lips "I'm good enough" I whisper.

"That's my girl!" Ethan taps my back with his hand before setting me free. Frantically, I look around and see that no one is looking at us. I breathe a sigh of relief, wrapping my arms around myself. When I look up at Ethan, his eyes are scanning over me, with a worried look.

"Can we go somewhere else, now?" I ask and he nods

"Yeah, come on." Throwing his arm around me, we begin to walk again. This time, I feel okay in his arms. Better. Calmer.

By the time I get home, my feet hurt and my stomach is full. Ethan took me to a few amazing art galleries and museums. I was in awe of everything, barely listening to Ethan as he talked about the artists. When we got hungry, Ethan took me to a small quiet restaurant and when I tried to pay for my own food, he nearly slapped my hand away from the bill.

The whole time he never brought up the scene in the park again. I know he probably thinks that I need therapy for something to correct my freakish anxieties associated with people, but he never comes out and says it. I'd like to walk into a room full of people and be able to say that I'm not afraid of them judging and staring, but I'm not there yet.

Flopping down on the couch with my laptop, I check some social media. While surfing the web, the thought of that stupid club enters my mind for the millionth time. Damn it. Why am I so interested in a club that I can't even go to? I sit my laptop down and go to my room, retrieving the card from under my pillow. Back on the couch, I try to google it, but nothing comes up. Not even a f*****g post or tweet. Nothing.

"f****" I huff out after 30 minutes of searching.

Leaning my head back against the couch, I give up. I'm about to close my laptop when I hear a notification come in. Opening my email, I scan an automatic work itinerary for the week that Ethan puts together every Friday. I get over it and stop on the fourth item on the list.

May 12, 2014 2:45pm Lunch with Kate Ashford. Clear all meetings at this time.

Holy s****. Under the email is a list on contact information for the place they will have lunch and Kate's number. When the idea comes to mind, I realize quickly that I could so get red for what I'm about to do. Picking up my phone, I dial Kate's number. After two rings she answers.

"Hello"

"Hi, Kate. It's Thea, Ethan's friend."

Her voice immediately picks up "Thea, hi. You are the last person I thought I'd be getting a call from"

"Um, yeah. Ethan doesn't know I'm calling so can we keep this between us?" s****, I'm denitely getting red.

"Of course. Ethan doesn't need to know anything. It'll be our little secret." Is she iring with me?

"Thanks. Um, about this club."

"I knew you were interested. I think Ethan just wants to keep you to himself." Kate giggles and I force one out just to make it seem like I care about what she thinks.

"Yeah, can you tell me about it?"

"Oh, no. I can't. It's really private and the only way you can get in is if you are formally invited and put on a list."

"Oh, well I understand. I just wanted to know a bit about it because I want to attend, but since it's private and all..." I leave the sentence hanging, hoping to reel her in and surprisingly it works.

"Since Ethan won't extend an invite, I can totally put you under my name. I'd love to have you there. Some of the people there are so stuffy. I have a feeling that you are super fun. Since I have your number, I can text you the details once I get you in. After three visits on a probationary period, you become a member. So you won't need my name anymore after that."

"Cool. So what's the name of this club anyway?"

"Sinful Desires. Trust me, you're going to love it. All you need is a black dress and a mask, but I