

Chapter 61

To: Charlotte Withers

From: Ember Cunningham

Date: November 21st, 2016 10:41

Subject: HOLY SHIT!

Hello,

I don't know where you've been all last week but you need to get to the office like now. The FEDS are here and they are seizing everything. Rebecca and Evan are being guarded in the conference room.

I'm losing my shit. Where are you and those seven frat brothers? I can't even find Xavier either. If he jumped ship without me, he is a dead man.

Did you know Jasper has a daughter? Oh, and he is sleeping with the chick from payroll, Skipper.

They just came waltzing in like some big happy family. Charlotte, they are heading my way, probably to take the computer. I got to go. Just get here ASAP!

Ember

PR Assistant, Paperlove

I look down at a sleepy Charlotte and thank God for bringing her back into my life. We aren't perfect, nowhere near it, but I like it that way.

She pushes my buttons every chance she gets, and as crazy as it sounds, I live for moments like that. I don't know what I would do without her.

Everything seems to click with her. I brush the strands of hair that cascade in front of her face. She wiggles her nose, snuggling her head deeper in my lap. The sparkle of her ring catches my eye.

If you had told me four months ago that I would marry my kindergarten crush one day, I would've called you a liar. This relationship hasn't been a walk in the park for us.

My phone buzzes and Miguel's name flashes open the screen. "Hey," I whisper. "What's up?"

"FEDS arrived thirty minutes ago. How far are you two?"

"About ten minutes away. Tell Xavier to meet me downstairs."

"Will do," he says ending the call.

Charlotte worked all day and night for the last couple of days trying to find a way to save everyone's job. We couldn't send them to other companies without raising any red flags.

So, we did something irrational, and we hope it works. Jasper wasn't so thrilled when I let him in on Dad's a air and how he has been sabotaging the company for years.

I know he wanted to take over before Autumn was born, so this hurt him more than me. I couldn't care less about my father's company. I never wanted to be a part of it.

I guess Xavier and I could agree on one thing.

I see the building coming into sight, and I gently wake her up. "Cupcake, it's time to get up...we are almost there."

She groans slowly, picking her head up. I give her a second to come to before pulling her into my side. She stretches perfectly. This feeling will never get old.

"Are you ready?" She yawns.

"I should be asking you that question, sleepyhead."

"You kept me up all night. I blame you for this." She sticks out her bottom lip, closing her eyes.

"Oh no, you don't, wake up." I tap her nose.

"Chase," she whines, and the images of last night flash before me.

Her naked body, writhing underneath me and her nails clawing at my back as she calls out my name over and over. Charlotte has become something of a master in the bedroom.

"Sir, Ma'am, we have arrived." The driver comes to a slow stop. I look out the window, and as expected, there is a shit ton of media waiting outside.

"Charlotte, you have to wake up," I say a bit more sternly, and she sucks her teeth getting up. I open the door climbing out, extending my hand for her to take.

She does and gracefully exits the car. I quickly look down at our hands intertwined. She is squeezing as hard as she can. I thought I was grumpy when I didn't get a full eight hours of sleep. Charlotte takes the cake.

The reporter spots us, and I jump into protective mode. I place my arm behind Charlotte's back escorting her quickly into the building.

I told Darren to call a few media outlets; there has to be a dozen if not more out there. Charlotte lets go of my hand, pulling her phone out of her pocket.

"The feds are here." She looks up from her phone.

"Yeah, I know." I look towards the elevator, where the hell is Xavier? I dig into my pocket to retrieve my phone when I hear him laughing. He is coming off the elevator with Jasper and Tristan.

I am the only one who is not relaxed right now? I never thought in a million years that Jasper and I would have such a close bond again.

"Why are you not in a suit?" I question Jasper once they are all within earshot.

"I thought long and hard about this decision, and I'm not going to go through with it. I don't want to be the CEO of this company. I want to spend my mornings waking up to Skyla and Autumn, not stressing over the next merger."

I can't fault him for his decision, but the day of, now he has a change of heart. "Mom went to great lengths to help us out. You know how long it took for her to even speak to the feds?"

"I know, and I thought you should take over. We all think it's a great idea. You and Charles figured this whole thing out in a month. I've been working for the company for years and didn't see this coming."

He scratches the back of his neck.

My mother was far from surprised when I told her of Dad's a air. However, she was shell-shocked to find out he had been embezzling money and her name was all over the account.

She said Dad had her sign papers now and then, but thought they were for board meetings because she never liked to attend them, not realizing Dad had been setting her up all this time.

She doesn't want to see him go to jail. He is her husband after all, so convincing her to talk to the feds took a lot out of Jasper and me.

We got all the accounts closed and the money right back where it belongs.

Rebecca's Manhattan Project was nothing but a way to set the guys and me up for embezzling money from the company. It was all bullshit. We were helping her with a malicious project.

We designed things and signed off on bogus reports, giving the go-ahead to spend money on materials that weren't even there. I have to give it to her: Rebecca was good at scheming.

She is ruthless and conniving and was going to throw all of us under the bus. All the guys are still upstairs getting questioned about their involvement.

I look at Charlotte, and her eyes are pleading with me.

"Xavier, what about you?" I ask.

"Oh no, I start Walsh University next year, and I can't run a company. I don't even want this company."

"Can you guys excuse us real quick?" I usher Charlotte off to the side and sigh. "I have to do it."

"But what about us? I don't want to live in New York, and I don't want to lose you to work either." She looks down at her ring, and this is the toughest conversation to have.

We are now in such a stable place, our foundation is now starting to build, and she is more open to me, as I am to her.

"It will just be for a little while." I lift her chin, getting a good look at her face. "Go to RCA, and when you finish, we will be together under one roof and whatever state, city, or country you want to live in."

She turns her head out of my grasp. "Fine. I don't agree with it, but this company needs a leader to steer them in the right direction."

"Don't cry." I wipe the tears from her face. "You're going to ruin your mascara."

She chuckles looking at me, and I know my face matches hers.

"I should tell you not to cry," she smiles. "We need to pull ourselves together. They are watching us." She takes a deep breath.

"I love you so much. You know that."

"I love you too. That's why this is hard, Chase. I thought once this was all done, we would be back at Croakington."

"I still have to deal with my parents, the divorce, and Thanksgiving is a few days away, and I don't feel in the thankful mood." She kisses my cheek and walks over to the guys.

I compose myself before heading over. I forgot everything is okay. She's strong and stubborn.

Always wanting to help others but never wanting help in return. I have to figure something out for her, whether she wants it or not—now I'm starting to think like her too. I will ask her first then proceed.

"Charles tells us you are going to take over. Are you sure about this?" Tristan is genuinely concerned, and this is the first time in a while I saw him serious.

"We can find another way. You still have to finish college...we're so close to graduating."

"I know, but the people here need me. I can always take online courses to get my degree."

"Brother you don't have to do this. I'll stay on." Jasper starts to walk to the entrance, and I stop him.

"I got this, Jasper. Autumn needs you, and so does Mom. You will still be able to run Paperlove remotely at times, but not the entire company." I look over at Charles, who is talking to Xavier.

"We have a plan, and this is what's best." I look back at him.

"Don't do this if you aren't a thousand percent invested. You might regret this and lose her."

"I won't lose her. She's my wife," I finally say it out loud, and my heart feels overwhelmed with joy.

"Wife!" Jasper shouts, and I look at Charles, and she glares at me. "You two got married? When? What the hell, why didn't you tell me?"

"Wait a minute? Is that why you two were MIA over the weekend?" Tristan questions, pulling out his phone. "Seriously? Did you not think we wanted to be a part of this? I am telling the guys."

"You said you wouldn't say anything until after." Charles hushes and turns to Tristan trying to calm him down, letting him know we are still going to have the whole ceremony with all of them, and it was a spur of the moment kind of thing.

Tristan, being Tristan, wasn't having it.

"You guys need to hurry up and make that announcement before word gets out the feds are here." Xavier gives me a look of urgency, and I extend my hand, Charlotte places hers into mine.

"Ready?" I wink.

"Not really, but it's now or never." She smiles. "Ready?" she looks at Xavier, who is walking forward fixing his tie.

"Born ready."

We exit the building to a podium out front, and the journalists all simmer down, and the only sounds heard are the cameras shuttering and the sounds of NYC in the background.

Charlotte squeezes my hand three times and I smile, squeezing back.

Xavier clears his throat. "Good morning, and thank you all for being here on such short notice. It means a lot to Tucker and Michaels, Inc.

"As you all know, the company has been in the red for quite some time. We have been working very hard to overcome such difficult and trying times." He pauses and looks at me, and I nod for him to continue.

"Recently it has been discovered that Evan Tucker and Rebecca Michaels have been embezzling money from the company and selling vital information to our competitors, sabotaging their own company."

I see his hand shaking on the podium, and I step forward, placing my hand on his shoulder, letting him know I can take it from here.

The crowd of journalists' murmurs is picking up, and I can sense they are ready to hurl question after question at us.

"As Xavier was saying, yes, this came as a shock to all of us, but the situation is being dealt with. In times like this, our company has come together and shown that this little hiccup isn't going to bring us down.

"As the new CEO of Tucker & Michaels, I assure you and everyone that this company will be in the green within the quarter and every one after that.

"The people of Tucker and Michaels work so hard to see the company thrive, and I will fight alongside to see it blossom into something more. Thank you for your time. That is all."

I turn around, grabbing Charlotte's hand walking back into the building.

"Did I do well? I lost my train of thought. I don't think I said the right things. I didn't think I would be that nervous. I don't think I'll make a great CEO, I should—" Charlotte grabs my collar, shutting me up with a kiss.

"You did great." She smiles at me. "Both of you," Charlotte looks at Xavier smiling. "This is just the beginning, now it's time for you two to confront your parents. Whatever happens, don't let them see you sweat."

"I wish you could come with us," I say.

"I know, and I want to as well, but by law, I can't. You will do fine. I'll be in Jasper's office with Skyla and Autumn when you come out. I love you."

"I love you more."

We all head to the elevator, and you can feel the heaviness of everything in the air. Jasper and I are about to confront our father about this heinous crime. He should have never committed it in the first place.

I always knew he was the devil's spawn, but this makes him Hades himself.