

## Chapter 4

Maya

I woke in the middle of the night with an urgent need to pee.

I padded to my bathroom door, twisted the handle, and felt the lock catch.

How I managed to lock myself out of my own bathroom? I had no idea.

I tried again because hope is stubborn at one a.m., then tried the classic shoulder nudge that only worked in movies.

The door held.

Of course it did.

Huffing, I decided that I'd just have to find another bathroom somewhere in this humongous house.

I'd learn in the few hours I was here, that my room was on the third story of the house, along with the men's offices. They all had an office for themselves, which was weird but oddly convenient, and another sunroom. No bathrooms.

So, I ventured onto the second floor.

The second floor was quiet, so I tried to be too. I tried one door and found a linen closet that smelled like lemon; another door that was locked, and a third that seemed like an empty bedroom.

I huffed, losing patience and my ability to hold the pee, and then I pushed a door that wasn't latched and stepped into a room that was not a bathroom.

It was Tylon's room.

How I knew? Because he was there, but not asleep.

A woman was braced on the edge of a neatly tidied desk like the rest of the room, and she was butt naked.

So was Tylon.

It didn't take me long to register what was happening, because it was happening right in front of me. I retreated a step and hid myself behind the cracked door, but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't tear my eyes away.

Her palms were flat against the desk, and Tylon had her ponytail wrapped around his knuckle, which caused her head to tilt and her back to arch.

Her moans filled the room as Tylon gripped her hips, driving himself inside of her with a force and precision that made me gasp and wince at the same time.

His body was a work of art, as I would have noticed today when I arrived. But seeing him like this was... different. His muscles were tight, his back was straight and sight of him this way made me almost quiver. His face was drawn taught, eyes squeezed shut with his bottom lip between his teeth.

It made something in my stomach twist hard enough to make me mad at myself. My brain tried to file the scene under 'privacy violation and leave,' while some treacherous corner of me recognized the way skill looks when it doesn't apologize. I was not jealous of her, I told myself. I didn't even like him. I was a student who needed a restroom and a normal life. It didn't matter that my mouth went dry. It didn't matter that I was a virgin who never knew what that felt like. But seeing the skilled way he moved, and judging by the sounds she made made me want to feel it too. And gosh, I hated myself for it.

I actually wished that the sudden warmth pooling at my thighs was pee, but I knew better. I wanted it. Or him. Or whatever the hell this was, but maybe it was the pee and fatigue talking. So I finally had the decency to do what I should have done from the beginning—leave.

I began to back out, careful and quiet.

But then he made a low, unguarded, sound, and my name fell out of it like a match.

"Maya."

The woman's head snapped up. And I stopped dead in my tracks as my entire stomach plummeted, and I think I actually peed a little bit. Yet, hearing him call my name in such a way—hearing him call my name at all, made something else inside of me melt.

"What did you just call me?" The woman demanded, her voice was sharp enough to cut glass.

He stopped as his eyes widened and his spine rigid. He pinched the

bridge of his nose like pain and annoyance had just invaded his life.

"It's not—" He exhaled. "There's a new tenant. She a human. Housing shoved her into the house today. It's been... a distraction. I've been thinking of her, but not like that. Goddess, never like that." I pretended it didn't hurt. "But I've been thinking about how I fast we can get rid of her."

The word landed like a slap, and my lungs forgot their job. I was a distraction. An administrative error with a pulse.

I stood there half in shadow, a stupid thief caught with nothing but my own embarrassment.

The woman pulled herself upright with a practiced sort of grace, hair falling over one shoulder as she twisted to look at him. "I heard about that arrangement," she said, cool again. "If she bothers you, I can deal with her."

Something changed in him so fast I felt it in the doorway. "You will not touch her." The words were quiet, as if he'd swallowed the shout. But it was deadly.

She blinked, taken aback, then lifted her chin and started dressing, each movement efficient, and irritated.

Tylon turned away and reached for his trousers with the same grace he uses on everything.

She fastened a button, and turned to him again. "Fine. Same time tomorrow?"

"No." He didn't even look at her. "We're done."

"That's what you always say, Ty, but then you come calling again. It's been three weeks and you called me tonight, didn't you?"

"It was a lapse in judgment. I needed a distraction from the distraction."

She was evidently pissed, but smirked anyway. "The human has really gotten under your skin, hasn't she?"

I didn't mean to make a sound. But it slipped out anyway. It was a soft, shocked breath that gave me away.

Two heads turned in the same instant.

Tylon's eyes found mine through the thin strip of open door, and the flash of fury there sent me stumbling backward into the hall.

He shouted my name again, but this time, it was different from what I heard moments ago.

"Maya!"



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