



OUR WAY

— T L S W A N —

OUR WAY

T L SWAN

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CONTENTS

[Prologue](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 17](#)

[Chapter 18](#)

[Chapter 19](#)

[Chapter 20](#)

[Chapter 21](#)

[Chapter 22](#)

[Chapter 23](#)

[Chapter 24](#)

[Chapter 25](#)

[Chapter 26](#)

[Chapter 27](#)

[Chapter 28](#)

[Chapter 29](#)

[Chapter 30](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[The Takeover](#)

[Also by T L Swan](#)

[About the Author](#)

GRATITUDE

*The quality of being thankful; readiness to show
appreciation for, and to return kindness.*

I would like to dedicate this book to the alphabet.

For those twenty-six letters have changed my life.

Within those twenty-six letters,

I found myself

and live my dream.

Next time you say the alphabet

remember its power.

I do every day.

PROLOGUE

Eliza

“HELLO, I’m Eliza Bennet. I’m starting my practical experience today,” I say nervously to the lady working on reception through the glass window.

She smiles warmly. “Hello, Eliza. Welcome.” She punches my name into the

computer, and then she stands to retrieve a lanyard before she passes it over to

me.

I read the printed name.

Eliza Bennet

Pride fills me and I bite my lip to hide my smile.

“Just wear this for a week until you find your way around so that everyone knows you are new,” she says.

“Thanks.” I take it from her and put it on.

“Go up to level three to the nurses’ station. They will take care of you from there.”

“Thank you.” My heart is hammering because of my nerves. I step into the elevator before the kind receptionist has to revive me. *This is it!*

I inhale deeply to try and calm myself down. The elevator doors open, and I head toward the nurses’ station.

Just do everything right. Don’t mess things up, I remind myself.

Three nurses are talking before I gently knock on the door and their attention

turns my way.

“Hi, I’m Eliza. I’m starting my practical today.” *Please be nice.*

They each breakout into broad smiles. “Hi, Eliza. Welcome, and come in,” the lady with the dark hair says.

“Thanks.”

“I’m Marjorie, and this is Beth and Caroline.”

“Hi.” I grip my handbag with white-knuckle force.

“Follow me. Did I read your resume right?” Marjorie continues as she walks

up the corridor with me following her closely. “You’ve moved here from out of

town?” We get to a bank of lockers where she opens one up for me. “This will

be your locker.” She passes me a key. “And this is your key, but we don’t ever

lock anything around here; we’re all completely trustworthy.”

“Thanks.” I take the key from her and put it in my pocket. “And, yes, I’m from Florida.”

“What made you want to move to San Fran?” She frowns.

“I don’t know, I wanted a change and I’ve always loved this city. The

hospital is one of the best in the country.” I shrug, it seems like a stupid decision to move across the country on my own now that I’ve done it, but anyway I’m trying to make the best of it.

“This way, dear,” she says as she begins to walk back down the corridor.

“Do you know people here in San Fran?”

I trail behind her. “Nope.”

She turns to me, clearly surprised. “Where are you living?”

“I got an apartment in town.” I shrug nervously, feeling the need to elaborate. “My parents came to help me find a place and get settled. We’ve been

here for two weeks but they went home yesterday.”

“How lovely.” She links her arm through mine. “Well, you’re going to love San Francisco, and you’re going to love this hospital. You’ve made a good decision.”

“Thanks.”

“Now...,” she hands me a pair of gloves, “let’s go play drug dealers and hand some painkillers out.”

Four hours later, I stand and look up at the specials board in the staff cafeteria.

There’s so much to choose from, hmm....

“What’s good here?” a deep male voice asks. I glance over to see a young man standing beside me, who is also staring up at the board, totally entranced by

the selection.

I shrug. "I don't know," I reply. "This is my first day here."

His eyes meet mine. "Your first day?" I nod.

"Mine, too." He seems surprised.

A smile crosses my face. "Really? Where did you move from?"

"Vermont, although I studied in New York."

"Do you know anyone here in San Fran?"

"Not a soul."

"Me neither."

He twists his lips in a semblance of a smile before he holds out his hand to shake mine. "I'm Nathan."

"Hi, Nathan. I'm Eliza." We shuffle forward in the line. "I think I'm going to

have the turkey on rye."

He nods as he peruses the choices. "I think I'm going with the ham and pickle."

A lady walks past us with a big slab of lasagne and salad, and both our eyes near pop out.

He points to her plate. "I'm getting that."

"Me, too." I giggle.

"Next!" the server calls. Nathan steps forward. "Could I please have two lasagnes and salads?"

“Drinks?” the woman mutters, uninterested.

“No, Nathan,” I whisper, “I’ll get mine.”

“You can buy my lunch tomorrow.” He offers me a naughty wink. “That way, I have something to look forward to.”

My stomach flutters.

“What drink do you want?” he asks.

“Oh, Diet Coke.”

His brow furrows. “That shit’s bad for you, Eliza.”

I roll my eyes. “Is it, Dad?”

He twists his lips in amusement. “We’ll have a mineral water and a Diet Coke, please.” He passes his card to her. “Find us a table,” he whispers to me.

“Okay.”

I take off in search for a table. This is the best damn cafeteria I’ve ever seen.

Lasagne *and* hot new guys! This is a dream come true.

I take a seat at a table near the window, and I stare over at Nathan as he waits

for our lunch. He’s super tall and towers over everyone around him. He’s wearing a pale blue shirt that’s rolled up at the sleeves, as well as a dark tie and navy pants. He has sandy colored hair and big blue eyes. He might just be the most handsome man I’ve ever seen.

And we’re eating lasagne together.

Nerves dance around in my stomach. A few moments later, Nathan sits down

with a tray of our lasagne and drinks.

“Thank you.” I smile as I take mine from him.

He takes a bite of his food. “So, what are you doing here?” He nods in approval at the first mouthful of lasagne. “This is good.”

“Hmm, it is, isn’t it?” I begin to chew. “Nursing... hoping to get into paediatrics.” I point to him with my fork. “And you?”

He swallows his food and wipes his mouth with a napkin. “Medicine.”

I stare at him as my brain misfires. “You’re... a doctor?”

“Resident at this point, but yes. Why?” He smiles as he sips his drink from the bottle, as if he already knows what I’m going to say.

“You’re too good-looking to be a doctor.” I scoff. “Tell me the truth. Are you a handyman or something?”

He chuckles and holds his hands in the air. “You got me; I actually clean the toilets.”

“You moved all the way from New York to clean the toilets?” I roll my eyes as I act unimpressed.

“You’re very hard to please, Eliza.”

I smile as I cut into my lasagne. “I’m simply saying that I would never have picked you out to be a doctor, that’s all.”

“What would you think I would be?”

He holds out his two hands so I can look at him and my eyes roam over his perfect physique.

Stripper.

I push my wayward thoughts to the side. “Umm... I don’t know. Like a tradesman or something?”

His mischievous eyes hold mine. “Sorry to disappoint you.”

“You should be,” I tease. “Don’t do it again.”

He smiles as he focuses back on his food. “You’re cute, I like you.”

“I’m very likeable.” I bat my eyelashes in an over-exaggerated way.

“So, you really don’t know anybody in town?”

“Nope.” I sigh.

“Me, too. We should hang out.”

I bite my lip to try and act casual. “Yeah, that’d be fun.” I take a bite of my lasagne. “Just don’t fall in love with me or anything,” I say sarcastically.

“No chance of that,” he replies casually as he takes a mouth full of food.

“You’re the wrong sex for me.”

What?

I snort in surprise. My Coke goes down the wrong pipe, and I choke in a spectacular fashion. “Are you kidding me?” I cough as I slap my chest.

“You’re

gay?”

He laughs out loud. “Why is that so shocking to you?”

This man is the epitome of masculinity. “Because...” I pause as I try to articulate myself. “You give off a very different vibe from other gay guys I’ve known.”

He smiles, clearly amused, and he rests his chin on his hand as he watches me.

I end up smiling too because this is just my crappy luck. “I had plans for us, Nathan,” I tease as I rearrange the napkin on my lap.

“I know: lunch, tomorrow.”

“No, actually, that wasn’t it.” I go back to cutting my lasagne. “It was dinner

tonight to celebrate our first day together, but you probably have a Grindr date or something and won’t be able to fit me into your schedule.”

“Eliza...”

“Yeah?” I sigh, thoroughly distracted. He waits for my attention, and I drag my eyes up to meet his, he gives me a soft smile.

“Is that your way of asking me to dinner as a friend?”

“Maybe.” I smile.

“I’d love to.”

1

Ten years later

Eliza

THE ELEVATOR DOORS OPEN, and I stride out into the grand foyer of the top floor

of Nathan's building. "Hello." I smile at the two receptionists.

"Hi," replies Maria.

"Oh, Eliza, hi. You must have a sixth sense, I was just thinking about you,"

the blonde receptionist says, looking me up and down. "Wow, you look lovely today."

I dust my skirt as I look down at myself. I'm wearing a fitted black pencil skirt and a cream silk blouse, along with high heels and sheer black stockings.

My long, dark hair is in a ponytail. "Thanks. I have a job interview this afternoon with Dr. Morgan, the cosmetic surgeon. I'm making Nathan come with me."

She frowns. "I thought you were happy nursing at the hospital."

"I am, and I will always go back to that at some stage, but I just feel like I need a change at the moment. Besides, I'm not leaving the industry completely.

It's still in the medical field, just in a swanky office instead of the hospital."

"Civilian." Maria smiles as she looks me up and down. "Well, you look fabulous, and maybe you can get me a discounted facelift."

I giggle. "I have to get the job first."

"Have you got time to quickly go through Nathan's schedule with me?"

“Yes, of course.”

I walk around to behind her desk so I can see the calendar on her computer.

She begins to click through the days, “So you have a charity dinner on Wednesday night. Do you want me to book a car ride home?”

“Where is it?”

“Here in town, at the Fine Arts Museum.”

“Hmm, yes, a car would be great, please.”

“Okay.” She ticks the first thing off on her list. “You have Nathan’s father’s sixtieth birthday in two weeks. I’ve booked the flights and transfers. You leave

that Friday night and get back on Sunday at 9:00 p.m.”

“Okay.” I sigh.

She smiles, adding in a naughty wink as if she’s reading my mind.

Nathan’s parents live in Vermont; it’s a trek. “I knew it was coming up, I just

didn’t realize how quickly. Okay, great.” I fake a smile.

“Now, I haven’t got his father a birthday present,” she continues, “because I know you like to do all those kind of personal things, but let me know if you want me to get something. I can pick it up tomorrow.”

“I’ll get it, but thank you.” I smile as I rub her shoulders. “What would we do without you?”

Maria smirks as she ticks the second thing off her list. “Let’s be honest, you

have to approve everything anyway, so I really work for you. I'm actually your

PA, not Nathan's."

I chuckle. "This is true."

She goes back to her list. "Ahh, now on the 27th, which is a Monday, in six

weeks, Nathan has a breakfast meeting in New York at 8:00 a.m. Shall I book him on a Sunday flight, or would you prefer to have you both on the Friday night

flight? He isn't in surgery until the Wednesday the following week so you could

make a weekend of it."

"Umm." I screw my face up as I think. "I'll have to try and get the Monday off work but if I get this new job, I'm not sure I can."

"Well, you know he won't go for the entire weekend without you."

"That's fine. I'll take the day off, and if I can't, he'll have to go alone."

Maria ticks her list. "Okay, so I'll book your usual hotel for Friday, Saturday

and Sunday night, which will be the twenty-fourth, twenty-fifth, and twenty-sixth?"

"Great. Don't book the flights yet, though. I'll have to get back to you on whether I can go or not."

The intercom comes to life on Haley's desk. She's the other receptionist.

"Haley?" Nathan's strong voice snaps through the speaker.

“Yes, Doctor?” She replies timidly.

“Where is the report from Dominique? I asked you to email me it on Monday.

I’m looking for it and it’s not here.”

Haley cringes before she pushes the talk button down. “I’m sorry, I haven’t sent it through yet. I’ll do that now.”

He exhales heavily, and Maria and I wince, knowing what’s coming.

“Haley…” he barks.

“Yes, sir?”

“I cannot do *my* job unless you do yours. When I ask you to do something, I want it done immediately. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Doctor.”

“Have you sent it yet?”

“Doing it now.”

The line goes dead as he hangs up.

Maria smirks and goes back to her list. “Charming, isn’t he?”

I smile with a roll of my eyes.

Nathan Mercer is unapologetically the most impatient man on Earth, and understandably so. He expects excellence from everyone because that’s what he gives.

He's a cardiovascular surgeon... but not just any cardiovascular surgeon.

He's the man who prototyped and patented a new kind of bionic heart: The Viso

220. Five years ago, he had a patient who didn't fit the regular requirements, and

Nathan knew how he could fix it. After much deliberation, he used his entire life

savings and developed a heart for her.

It saved her life, and it made him a medical rock star.

He now has a factory in Germany that manufactures them and ships all over

the world. I'm so proud of him. At the time, when he poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into making the prototype, everyone tried to talk him out of

it. They thought he was insane to use his own money on developing a product that had no guarantees. But Nathan had a clear vision of what he could develop,

and he did it—he's saved thousands of lives, and in the process he made himself

a very wealthy man.

He's handsome, strong, silent, deep... and I won the best friend lottery when

we met ten years ago.

We're partners, him and me. Not sexually, of course, but we practically live together, rely on each other and are trusted friends.

“Maria!” his voice blares through the intercom again.

“Yes, Doctor?”

“When Eliza arrives, send her straight in.”

Marias eyes flicker to me. “Go away,” I mouth to the intercom.

“Yes, Doctor.”

Haley and Maria giggle. “Are we done?” I ask.

“He’s all yours.”

“Thanks... I guess.”

I walk down the corridor to his office to find him swinging on his chair as he

looks at scans on an x-ray box.

“Hi.” I drop my bag onto his couch.

He turns and gives me a broad smile. “There she is.”

“Do you always have to be such a grouch with your receptionists? It’s embarrassing to listen to.”

“Then don’t listen.” He looks me up and down, and then raises an eyebrow.

“What?” I ask.

“You look a bit sexy for an interview, don’t you think? Are you trying to get the job or trying to get laid?”

I roll my eyes. “I’ll take that as a compliment.”

He stands and comes toward me. Grabbing my shoulders, he turns me away

from him and inspects me up and down.

“You like?” I smirk and give a little wiggle of my hips, knowing he’s about to lecture me.

He exhales heavily, turns me toward him, and he fastens my top button.
“I’m

not sure about this job.” He mutters, distracted, as he does another of my buttons

up. “Why would you want to work for Dr. Morgan when you could manage my

office?”

Here we go again.

“You could manage Berlin from here. I could get you a nice office in San Fran.”

“Nathan.” I sigh. “Will you stop? I am not working for my best friend.

We’ve had this conversation before; it would be weird.”

He goes back to his desk and sits down with a huff. “What’s weird is that you don’t want to work for me.” He yanks an x-ray out of the light box.

“Do you

know how many people would snap up an opportunity like this?”

I place my hands on my hips. “If I worked for you, we would fight every day.”

“Why?” He snaps incredulously.

“Because you’re a grumpy ass, and I wouldn’t put up with it.” I undo my top

button.

He glares at me. “Do that button back up or I’m not fucking taking you anywhere.”

I giggle and do as he says. I’ll undo it in the elevator at the interview, it isn’t worth the argument with Nathan right now. “You ready to go?” I ask.

“Yes.” He closes down his computer. “What am I supposed to do while you are in this interview?”

“Have a drink in a bar and google somewhere new to take me for dinner.”

He rolls his eyes as he stands and walks toward me. “I’m not your personal assistant, Eliza.”

I smile up at my handsome friend. His hair hangs over his forehead, and his big blue eyes hold mine. He’s too good-looking to be this intelligent. He should

be a model on the cover of a magazine. I rearrange his tie, and I smile because I

know I’m the only person who gets to boss him around. To the rest of the world

he’s a bastard, but to me he’s a big pussy cat.

“Yes, you are.” I rise onto my tippy toes and kiss his cheek. “And you know it.”

He smirks and holds out his arm and I link it with mine.

“Let’s go.”

An hour later, I look up at the tall glass building across town. “Here it is.”

Nathan’s eyes scan the tall building before they come back to me.

I straighten my skirt and smooth it out. “Do I look okay?”

“Yes.” He presses his lips together.

“Are you going to wish me luck?”

“Good luck.”

“Do you mean that?” I smirk.

“Not at all,” he mutters dryly.

I giggle and kiss his cheek. “Where are you going to be?”

“I’ll wait in the bar over on the corner.”

“All right.” I bounce on the spot as I shake my hands in front of me. “Oh, I’m nervous.”

He pulls me in for a hug. “Don’t be.” He kisses my cheek. “If you don’t get this position, it’s the universe telling you to work for me.”

I giggle and step back. “Okay, I’m going.”

He smirks and puts his hands in his pockets as he watches me. “Try not to trip over as you walk in. Not a good look.”

My face falls. “Why did you say that? Now I *will* trip over. You just jinxed me.”

He chuckles. “Goodbye, Eliza.”

I hunch my shoulders in excitement. “Bye.”

I walk into the swanky building. The foyer has been designed in black marble and beautiful timbers.

I make my way to the lift and read the gold sign there:

Dr. MORGAN, Level 7.

I exhale heavily. *Okay, let's do this.*

I take the elevator up to level seven. Once there, I follow the signs to Dr.

Morgan's offices. The glass door is heavy, and his name is etched into the glass.

Plush dark carpet covers the floor. This place is... wow! It looks more like a fancy bar or something.

Cosmetic surgeon... of course. It's all about the aesthetics and creating the perfect illusion.

Well played.

I walk over to the desk. "Hello, I'm Eliza Bennet. I'm here for an interview."

The girls behind the desk smile. "Hello, welcome," they say.

The pretty blonde stands. "I'll take you straight through. This way, please."

I follow her down a corridor and into a consultation room. There is a round table in the middle, and a wall-mounted television screen.

"Just take a seat, the doctor will be with you soon." She fills me a glass of water. "Can I get you anything else?"

“No, thank you.” She leaves me alone in the room, and I clasp my hands together in my lap. God, I hate fucking interviews. I haven’t been to one in ten

years. I can almost hear my heart as it tries to escape from my chest.

The door opens, and a young man walks in. “Hello.”

I stand to shake his hand, and I’m shocked. He’s young... and very handsome with dark wavy hair and brown eyes, not at all what I expected.

“Henry Morgan.”

“Eliza Bennet.” I smile.

His eyes glow as he takes a seat. “Please, take a seat.”

He opens a folder that holds my resumé, and his eyes scan through it. “Your resumé is very impressive.”

“Thanks.”

He closes the folder and his eyes come to mine. “Why do you want this job, Eliza?”

Oh shit.

“Well, I’m looking to move to another field outside of the hospital.”

“I see. And what made you want to work for me?”

I smile awkwardly. “To be honest, I don’t care who I work for. I liked the position that you are offering.”

He smiles broadly and I know he liked that answer. “The position is for a surgery manager. I see you’ve managed before having worked in intensive

care,

recovery, and paediatrics.”

“Yes.”

“Very impressive.” His eyes hold mine, and there seems to be a buzz in the air between us.

Is he attracted to me?

“Let me tell you about the position. You will be my right hand. I need you to

manage the seven members of staff that I have, while also seeing to the recovery

care for my post-op patients. You would need to be on call overnight on the days

that I’m in surgery in case the patient is in distress and needs advice or pain management. I operate on Tuesdays and Thursdays. ”

I listen intently.

“You would be working out of this office. However, there will be times

when you would need to travel with me to conferences, both interstate and overseas. ”

Excitement fills me, this sounds fantastic.

“How does that sound?”

“Great.”

“I would need you to start as soon as possible. My manager has become

unwell and is currently unable to return.”

“I could possibly start as soon as next week,” I offer. “I have some paid time

off that I could take to allow me to finish earlier.”

He sits back in his seat and crosses his leg. “You have an amazing resumé.”

“Thank you.” I smile.

“However, there is one small problem.”

“There is?”

“I’m not sure I would be able to work with you.”

My face falls. “Why not?”

“At the risk of being unprofessional, I have to tell you that I’m physically attracted to you.”

“Oh.” *What the fuck?* “I don’t know what to say to that.”

“I’ve never worked with someone I was attracted to before, have you?”

“Umm.” Jeez, this guy doesn’t mince his words.

“I’m very professional, and I’m in a relationship,” I lie. “You wouldn’t need to worry about that.”

He smiles to himself as if liking that. “Well, that makes things easier. I’m a professional, too.”

I clasp my hands in front of me.

He stares at me for a moment, as if assessing the situation. “I have one more person to interview this afternoon. I will let you know tonight, by email, if you

have been successful.”

“Okay.” I smile.

He stands and holds out his hand to shake mine. “Goodbye, Dr. Morgan.”

“Call me Henry.”

I force a smile. Oh hell, this interview is weird. “Okay, Henry, I look forward to your email. Have a lovely weekend.”

“You, too.”

I turn and walk out of the room, not entirely sure what position it is that I’ve just applied for.

Who the fuck tells a person they are interviewing that they are attracted to them? What was that about?

I smile to the girls as I walk through reception. Does he tell them that he’s attracted to them, too? “Goodbye.”

“Bye.” They call.

I get into the elevator and shake my head. “Wow,” I whisper to myself.

Maybe he was just being honest. I mean, if he is a serial player or sleazeball,

he wouldn’t say that to me in an interview, he would just perv on me while I worked.

I shrug. It takes all types, I suppose. I walk out of the building, across the street, and into the bar to find Nathan.

He's sitting at a table in the back, scrolling through his phone with a glass of

scotch in front of him.

"Hey." I smile as I sit down.

He puts his phone down. "How did it go?"

I shrug. "I don't know. Fine, I guess. I find out tonight but the job sounds great." I can't elaborate on what Dr. Morgan said to me or Nathan will march into his office like a psycho. He's a tad overprotective.

"What do you want to drink?" he asks.

I glance over the selection. "A glass of red, please."

"Okay." He gets up and disappears to the bar. I take out my phone and text my two best friends. These ones are my girls—the ones I tell everything.

Just got out of my interview.

The job sounds great.

Doctor was cute, and he told me

that he was attracted to me

I smirk and hit send. That's something I never thought I'd write.

A message bounces straight back from Brooke.

What the fuck?

I giggle and another message from Jo comes in.

Are you for real?

Serial sleazeball or what?

I smile as I type.

100% Call you later.

Nathan comes back to the table with my drink, and I stuff my phone into my

bag. “Thank you.” I smile. “What have you been doing?”

He slides into his seat. “I think I finally found an apartment. I look at it tomorrow.”

I roll my eyes into my glass of wine. “You don’t need another apartment.”

“Your apartment is too small for us.”

“You have your own gigantic apartment across town. If my apartment is too small, you can always go home, you know.”

“Stop it.” He gives a subtle shake of his head. “I like to stay with you in your

apartment with your things around us.”

“But I’m happy where I am.”

“What’s the problem? Your rent will be the same. Nothing will change for you except you’ll get to live in a bigger place.”

“Yes, but that means you will lose out financially. Plus, we won’t always stay together. What happens when we meet someone? What happens then?”

“Then it’s your apartment and I will stay at my place.”

“I don’t need a bigger apartment.”

“I do. I need an office and I need to be able to keep some clothes at your place. I need a treadmill so I can run if I get caught up at work late. Your apartment has one bedroom, Eliza; it’s way too small.”

“You have all those things at your place.” I scoff, how many times do we have to have this conversation? “You can stay there if you want those things.”

“Stop pissing me off, Eliza,” he snaps. “I’m not having this conversation with you. I’m finding an apartment, and I’m getting it, and you will fucking love it when I do.”

I smirk against my glass. Controlling prick. If the truth be known, I really do

want a bigger apartment but I don’t like the idea of him having to pay for it.

“Oh.” As if remembering something, he reaches into the inside chest pocket of his suit and pulls out an envelope. “I got you something.”

“What is it?”

“Open it.”

“I love surprises.”

“Really?” He replies dryly. “I would never have guessed.”

I take it from him and tear open the envelope. My eyes widen. Two tickets to... “Spain?” I gasp as my eyes rise to meet his. “What?”

“Happy birthday, baby.”

My mouth falls open in shock as my eyes skim the rest of the booking

confirmation. “We’re going to Spain?”

“Uh-huh, for two weeks.” He gives me a sexy smile. “Next month. I know it

isn’t your birthday for a few months, but I can only take leave then.”

“Nathan.” I smile. “Where in Spain?” My eyes speed read the document.

“Oh my God, Majorca?” I gasp.

“Pronounced Ma Yorker.”

I hold the paper to my chest. “Last year you took me to Italy... now

Majorca? You spoil me rotten.”

“We can only go if you agree to move into a bigger apartment.” His eyes dance with mischief, expecting me to explode.

“You would actually stoop so low to get your own way that you would bribe

me with a trip?”

He takes a sip of his scotch. “Undoubtedly.”

“Fine, get the damn apartment.” I jiggle in my seat in excitement. “We’re going to Majorca.” My eyes widen. “Oh, but what if I get this job?”

“You tell them before you start that you have a pre-planned vacation that can’t be refunded.”

I smile broadly as I take his hand over the table. “I have to get it first.”

He squeezes my hand in his. “You will.”

Half an hour later, we are trolling the aisles of Nathan’s favorite bookstore.

“It should be here...” He searches the shelves.

“Are you sure it’s out yet?”

“Yes, it should be, it released three days ago.”

I smile as I watch him search the shelves, Nathan is an avid reader, and his favorite author’s new book has just come out. God help us all if they don’t have

it in stock yet.

“Just ask the shop assistant,” I say.

His brow furrows. “If they did their job correctly, it would be here with his other books.”

“Just ask. I’m not waiting here all night for you to try and find it.”

He turns and looks for an assistant. “Excuse me,” he calls.

The woman turns and her eyes light up like it’s Christmas when she sees him. “Oh, hello.” She rushes to stand beside him. “Can I help you?”

He gives her a charming smile. “Yes, I’m looking for Garaldi’s new book.

Into the Woods. Do you have it?”

“Oh.” She smiles sweetly, completely flustered by his good looks. “I’m sure I can find one for you.”

I try not to roll my eyes. Honestly, it’s embarrassing the way women fawn all

over him.

“I’ll need two,” he tells her.

“Buying one for a gift?” she asks to elaborate the conversation.

“No.” He cuts the conversation short and turns back to the bookshelf to continue his perusing.

I bite my lip to hide my smile, Nathan doesn’t engage in polite conversation.

When he’s finished saying what he wants to say, the conversation is effectively

over.

“I’ll go look in the back,” she replies in a fluster.

“Thank you.” He replies, distracted by the books in front of him.

“You know it’s pretty pointless buying two,” I lean in and whisper.

“I need one for your house and one for mine.”

“But you hardly ever sleep at your house.” I widen my eyes.

“Yes, well... one of these days I’m going to get sick of you hogging the bed and snoring, and I’ll return to the peace and sanity of mine.”

“Promises, promises.” I reply flatly as I roam up the aisle.

Two years ago, I broke up with my boyfriend. Nathan stayed with me for the

night because he was worried about me. One night turned to two, two nights turned to five, and here we are two years later. He’s still buying two of every book he reads as if he’s going back to his house anytime soon.

“Here you are.” The sales assistant smiles as she approaches us with two books in hand. “They hadn’t been unpacked yet, they just came in.”

Nathan smiles as he takes them from her. “Thank you, much appreciated.”

He marches to the front counter to pay like the cat that got the cream.
Thank

fuck they had it. He would have made me search the city for it tomorrow if they

hadn’t.

He pays the cashier, and we walk out into the street and toward the road.

Nathan takes my hand in his.

“I can cross the street on my own. You don’t have to hold my hand, you know. I’m not five.”

“That’s debateable.” He mutters as he watches the oncoming traffic. He finally sees a break and drags me across the road.

“What do you think I do when you aren’t with me?” I ask as I half run to keep up with him.

“I hate to think.”

We get to the other side of the street. He lets me go, and I link my arm through his. Truth be told, I like the way Nathan makes me hold his hand on the

roads. He’s done it since our very first dinner date, all those years ago.

“When do we go?” I ask as we walk along.

“Four weeks from tomorrow.”

“Maria didn’t mention it.”

“Because it’s a surprise.” He widens his eyes, as if I’m stupid.

“Oh right.” I beam. “I’m going to need new vacation clothes, and oh…” I clap in excitement. “I’m going to get one of those hats I wanted. You know, the

ones that match your bikini?”

He smiles, clearly delighted by my excitement. “Okay.”

“You’re going to need new swim shorts, too.”

“I’m good.” He smirks.

“Nathan…” I smile up at him. “Thank you, I really needed this vacation.

You’re too good to me.” I kiss his shoulder as we walk.

He leans his head down to rest on mine. “Only the best for my girl. Happy Birthday, baby.”

It’s 10:35 p.m., and after going out for dinner, I watched Netflix, and called my

sister April before I googled Majorca all night. I’m now ready for bed. I brush

my teeth and tie my long, dark hair in a braid, and then I walk into my bedroom.

Nathan is lying on his side, reading his book. The room is dark, the only light from his bedside lamp.

“Is the book good?” I ask.

He turns the page, distracted. “Very.”

I turn my blankets down and smile as I watch him. “I can’t believe I got the job.” The email came in a few hours ago, and I’m still processing it.

“I told you that you would.”

“It’s so exciting, you know? Something new to learn, and they approved our vacation, so it’s all good.”

“It is.” He replies distracted.

I climb into bed. “Can we go shopping tomorrow for bikinis?” I could ask for anything when he’s reading and he will gladly agree, just to shut me up.

“If you want.” He turns another page.

I get into bed and turn my back to him. “Let’s get up early and go out for breakfast. Then it’s shopping all day.”

“Hmm,” he mutters, distracted. He grabs my hipbone and pulls me back so I’m snug up against his body. This is how I fall asleep the fastest.

“Did I say thank you?”

“A hundred times, now go to sleep.” He taps my hip in a silent *shut up now* signal.

I smile into the darkness. “Are you going to read all night?”

“Probably.”

“Night, Nathe.”

He taps my behind. “Night, babe.”

Nathan

“Then I want to go into that new place that opened in the mall,” Eliza says

as she drags me down the street.

Why the hell did I agree to come shopping all day? What was I thinking? “Yeah, okay.” I sigh. “I need more coffee.”

“You’ve had two already.”

I look at her, deadpan. “I need more.”

She rolls her eyes, unimpressed, and drags me into a lingerie store. “Sit there.” She directs me to sit in a large velvet chair outside the changing rooms.

Thank fuck... a chair.

I slump into the seat and wait as she looks around. I take out my phone and scroll aimlessly through it. Eliza eventually picks up a few things before

she walks into the changing room. “Won’t be a minute.”

I exhale heavily. This is the last place I want to be on a Saturday.

I stuff my phone back into my pocket, link my fingers together, and put my hands behind my head.

After a few minutes, she says, “I like this one.”

“Show me.”

She opens the curtain. I stare at her for a moment and then frown. She’s

wearing a gold, skimpy bikini. Her hips are curved and her skin has a beautiful honey tone to it. Her breasts are full and voluptuous.

She holds her long, dark hair up on top of her head in a ponytail. “Is this

all right?”

My brow furrows as I stare at her. The blood begins to rush around my body, and my throbbing heartbeat echoes in my ears.

“Erm...” I pause as I think of the right thing to say. She looks more than

all right . *Fucking hell!*

Eliza flicks her bikini bottom and wiggles her hips. “I think I’ll get it.”

My cock instantly hardens.

What the actual fuck is going on here?

She puts her hands up and rearranges her breasts in the bikini top, and my dick clenches in appreciation.

Jesus Christ.

I’ve never reacted to Eliza this way before, and I’ve seen her in every possible way.

I break into a cold sweat. The room begins to spin, and I stand up in a rush. “I’ll meet you outside.”

2

Eliza

I FROWN as I watch Nathan practically running from the shop. What in the hell's

wrong with him?

I turn back to my reflection in the mirror and smile as I look at myself. I actually look good in this. All those mornings in the gym are finally paying off. I turn to look at my behind and readjust the top over my breasts. Yep, I'm getting

it. I try on the second one but it doesn't look anywhere near as good. Gold it is.

I get dressed and take the bikini to the cashier. "I'll take this one, please."

"It's lovey, isn't it?" She folds it and wraps it in white tissue. "It just came in on Thursday. It comes in red, too. Did you see that one?"

"Yes, I did. "My eyes roam over to the others on the rack. "Thanks, but I prefer this color." I glance out through the window to see Nathan pacing back and forth on the sidewalk. His hands are raking through his hair, and he looks like he's just seen a ghost. What is he doing?

"Have a nice day." The cashier hands over the bag, and I bounce outside.

Nathan's eyes meet mine, and he swallows a lump in his throat.

"What happened?" I ask. "Did the hospital call?"

His face falls. "Yes." He looks around nervously. "That's it, the hospital called."

I link my arm through his. "Everything okay?"

"Yes." He glances down at my hand on his bicep.

"Do you need to go straight away or are we grabbing you more coffee?"

"Umm." His eyes hold mine.

“It’s fine.” I sigh. “You’re off the hook. Come have a quick breakfast with me and then you can go to work. I don’t mind shopping alone.”

He raises a brow. “If you don’t mind shopping alone, why do you always make me come?”

“To torture you, of course.” I smile.

“Hmm.” He grunts. “It’s working.”

“Don’t forget we’re going out tonight.”

“Yes, I know.” He frowns as he stares out at the people around us, totally distracted. “What time are we leaving?”

“I’ve got Monica’s baby shower this afternoon, and you’re meeting us at the bar, remember?”

He rolls his eyes.

I frown up at him. “What’s wrong with you?”

“Nothing.” He grabs my hand as we cross the road.

“If you don’t want to come out tonight then don’t come.”

“I’m fucking coming, all right.” He glances down at me. “Did you get the gold one?”

I smile broadly. “Uh-huh. I’m going to be loving myself sick in that bikini.”

“Hmm.” He replies flatly. “It was a bit skimpy, wasn’t it?”

“Nope, I might even go topless over there. Maybe even nude.” I widen my eyes. “The possibilities are endless really.”

“That won’t be happening.”