



Chapter 9

Bethany POV

Theo was a gentleman; he did all the right things to make me feel a little better; though I have not said why I was crying and upset, he did not push; it was like he had a sixth sense about me. Women and their tears and knew not to ask, be a strong shoulder to cry on, and this for me was embarrassing, my new home and new hot neighbor, and I was crying like a baby on his shoulder, and we had not even been on a date yet, silly things you think about when you are upset.

The real question is, what now?

We were seated in the little café, and the order had been given. Theo tapped my hand to get my attention, comforting me and letting me know he was there if I needed to talk. I appreciated him being here for me.

Taking my hand back, I grabbed my mobile and forwarded the copy of the bill and the message Michael, the hotel concierge, sent me to my lawyer. I did not put a message on it, and I would let the lawyer to read it and have him call me and tell me what to do. I was too angry and upset to make any clear decisions. I returned my phone to the table as the waitress arrived with our food.

'How much did you hear?' I asked, as I suddenly thought he may have heard some of the phone call. If not, maybe even all.

'Enough.' He replied.

My face must have said that his answer was not good enough because he sighed and said,

'All of it.' I nodded, knowing that he had some idea of why I was crying. This did not make me feel bad, or worse, that he would not know the whole story, but enough to wonder who the people were and my comment about a cash cow.

'Do you have questions?' I opened the door for him to ask and to clear the air.

'If you need to talk, I am a good listener, but I do not need all the details unless you wish to share them. I won't pry.' He sounded sincere, and I appreciated this, not prying. Later, if we become close friends, I might share more. But we were living on the same oor, and he happened to be there for me, for now. Most men would have ed by now. Tears are a man's weakness, or so I am told. Not my ex; he was immune to my tears, and now I knew why: my sister was better at playing that game than me.

We ate the food, and Theo paid for it, promising me that I could pay next time. That told me I had not scared him away, and there would be a next time. It was nice to know I had not scared my neighbor away. It would make the meeting in the hallway a little embarrassing if he were running away from a crying woman whom he hardly knew.

'What would you like to do today? I have the day off and don't plan on leaving you like that. Would you like a tour of the city? It had a nice art show on at the moment, so new artists were trying to bring their talent to the public.' He said carefully, watching my reaction carefully.

'That is mighty neighborly of you.' I replied, hoping I sounded more enthusiastic than I felt. I must have failed as he chuckled and shrugged his shoulders, so instead of heading back to our homes, I was led to a large black SUV that pulled up beside us, and he opened the door for me to enter. Theo had not used his phone to call his driver. How the driver knew he needed to arrive there at that moment was a little confusing. Maybe he had an app on his phone that alerts the driver. He is ready to go. There are so many new gadgets around now, it would not surprise me, and living on the same oor as me, I assumed that he was not without some means, maybe a little more than I had thought, to have his own driver's service.

Then who am I to be judging him like this? Am I so tarnished by my ex that I am now judging all men by his low standards? My contract has a car service included. Although living close by, I did not think I would use it, but by touring the city and seeing the sights, I might start using it; I had yet to think of that side of having a car service. I thought of only work use, but the car was for personal use, too. It was all part of the package. As I have my own place to live, they are trying to sweeten the pot by offering other perks.

The driver took us along the city's main street. It was bumper to bumper, and Theo chuckled at my reaction to so much trac. I had thought I was going to a smaller town, but the trac was worse than at home.

'This city is an old one, and the streets were not built for so many cars. The town planners are trying to think of ways to reduce the congestion, but unless they build either overpasses or go underground, it is almost impossible to x them. The only other choice would be to remove buildings around the city and make new roads, but the historians are blocking all those ideas before they can take root.' Theo was doing a good job answering questions before I voiced them. He would have made a good tour guide. What does he do for a living? The thought brie came to mind, and I pushed it away quickly, with a 'not my business.' and concentrated on his running commentary on the city, the nightlife, and other points of interest.

We eventually made it to an older-style building. It had billboards on the outside advertising an art exhibition of local talent, and I was interested in seeing it. I had friends who liked to paint and sculpt and wondered if they pursued their art or had to give it up to earn a living and leave the area they enjoyed the most.

Theo climbed out of the car rst and opened the door for me. I was shocked. Bret would never have done that. When will I stop comparing men to that asshole?

I berated myself, saying it had only been a few days, not even a week yet, so stop being hard on myself. It is going to take a little time for all these sudden changes to sink in and the old habits to die away.

Theo held my hand as he walked me in, and I did not mind his familiarity. If I really thought about it, it was nice to have my handheld, something Bret stopped doing a while ago, almost straight after we were married. I kicked myself again for where my brain took me and tried to think about now, not then. Theo's hand was warm and had no callouses, which told me he did not have a physical job, maybe an oce worker, being in a penthouse, maybe a CEO or CFO, or something like that.

Here I go again. Judging people, will I ever stop? I was never like this before I married Brett. It's time to change. No more Bret thoughts, no more comparing others to what I had, and by the look of it, I missed out on time to live for myself, and a few one-night stands might be in order if Theo is up for it. We could give neighbors benets, but no strings are attached. I liked the thought of that. Theo was awakening a lot of feelings, and I was happy to go with the ow.