

## Chapter One

The air in the flat was thick, not cool like when he was around. It had been two weeks since he had left her, and Katherine White swore she had lost her ability to breathe. All she wanted to do now was be sick. Fittingly. Her body was in withdrawal. What she needed was Lann Dréan's touch. But she had signed a contract not to contact him after thirty days. That was all he had promised to give her. A month of the most incredible sex of her life.

"Come on, Kat," Diana said, "you've been cooped up in here for two weeks. Come out for dinner with us. It'll be fun."

Kat swallowed down bile, trying not to vomit.

"Enrico won't mind."

"I'll just stay here with my head in the toilet," Kat said, not looking at her roommate.

"Kat..." Diana crouched down next to her on the bathroom floor. "You haven't been well since ... well, since you know when." She wiped Kat's hair from her wet forehead. "I'm just trying to help."

"I'm in no condition to go out, never mind eat. Besides, I've got to work. I'm behind with my research."

Diana straightened and rested her hands on her hips. "Is that maybe because you haven't been back to *his* library?"

Kat rolled her eyes at Diana's determination not to speak Lann's name, as if that was going to prevent Kat from missing him.

"There are other libraries, you know," Kat said.

"Yeah." Diana gave her a condemning look. "But not with the same material. Not with what you need. Besides, you haven't been to any of those other libraries either. You haven't been anywhere since *he* left."

"You and Enrico go and have fun. I—"

The wave of nausea Kat had been fighting broke. She emptied her tummy, the little of what she could stomach at lunch, into the toilet.

When only dry heaves remained, Diana handed her a wet wipe and patted her shoulder.

Kat supported her back against the bathtub. "I've never had a tummy bug that lasted for seven days."

"Kat?" Diana's voice was soft. "I think you should consider an alternative reason for your condition."

"Like what? Can't be food poisoning. It doesn't last this long. And I don't have a fever."

Diana sat down next to her. "I was thinking along the lines of doing a pregnancy test."

Kat looked up quickly. "Impossible. I told you he's infertile."

"You haven't had your period, Kat."

"I'm never regular. Lann wouldn't lie to me. I trust him. Utterly."

Diana shrugged. "Then it can't hurt to do one."

"That's crazy. Impossible."

"Alright." Diana got to her feet again. "Tell you what, I'll stay in with you tonight. I'll heat up some tomato soup, as that's all you seem to tolerate these days, and we'll watch a movie on TV. But before that, I'm going to the pharmacy."

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An half an hour later, Kat sat on the closed lid of the toilet. She stared at her reflection in the mirror and didn't recognize herself. Her usually tanned skin was pale now, making her eyes appear bluer than normal, and her red hair was a tangled mess that fell to her waist. This wasn't the girl who had welcomed Lann into her life just over a month ago. That person was

in charge of her life, knew what she wanted and where she was headed. What looked back at her, this washed-out version of herself, was the woman he had walked out on.

Diana touched her shoulder. "Kat?"

She trembled. "It can't be. It's wrong."

"Girlfriend," Diana took her hand, "you've done two tests. They can't both be wrong."

"But why would he have lied to me?" Kat jumped up. "He isn't like that."

"Maybe he's not like you think he is," Diana said sternly. She hugged her friend. "Come. We'll work it out. First things first. Let's go make you something to eat. You must be starving."

In the kitchen, Kat took a seat by the table, her head in her hands, while Diana heated a tin of tomato soup in a casserole on the stove.

"What will you do?" Diana said, her voice sympathetic.

"I have to do a blood test to be sure. If it's positive, I'll have to tell him."

What Kat didn't say was that she didn't need the blood test to be sure. Deep down, she already knew the truth she tried so hard to deny. She was pregnant. It didn't make sense, and yet, it did. They hadn't used protection because Lann told her he was infertile. If he only wanted a thirty-day fling, why would he lie?

"You could just say nothing if you never want to see him again," Diana offered.

Kat shook her head. "No. He has a right to know. And I have a right to answers."

She didn't go back on her word or break her contracts, but this was an exceptional condition. She picked up her phone.

"What are you doing?" Diana said.

Kat dialed Alfonso's number. Lann's butler answered with, "Miss?"

"Alfonso, I need to speak to Lann. Can you please give me his number in New York?"

This wasn't something one did over the phone, but given the circumstances, she didn't have a choice. He was probably having a good time back home. Maybe he had already offered another woman a thirty-day trial with a no-strings-attached clause.

"In fact," Alfonso said slowly, "sir will be back here on Friday, just for a couple of days, if miss wishes to see him."

Her mouth fell open. He was coming back? Without telling her? He wanted to slip in and out of Santiago without her knowledge. How could he?

"Thank you," she whispered.

"Shall I give sir a message?"

"No. No, thank you."

She ended the call.

"You're better off staying away from him," Diana said, pointing the wooden spoon at her. "He's trouble of the kind that can destroy a girl's life."

Too late. If Diana only knew... Kat was already in way over her head.

## Chapter Two

From the expression on Lann's face, Kat knew he hadn't expected her. Alfonso hadn't warned him of her visit. Lann sat behind his desk, very similar to the first time they had met, but this time he was in the library, and not in his office. He had probably been working on the restoration of his ancient books, because he wore his glasses. Removing them, he immediately got to his feet. The air felt lighter, as it always did in his presence. Wisps of her hair lifted as if to an invisible caress, but Lann didn't acknowledge the subtle dance of molecules this time.

As always, he looked impeccable in tailored pants and a white dress shirt. He stood immobile, exerting calm, waiting for her to make the first move. Kat had never been fooled about the latent danger that lurked under his quiet sophistication and intellectual air. There was a raw energy about Lann that hinted at his wildness, even as his exterior was polished civility.

"Alfonso showed me in," she said.

"Katherine." His lips lifted in the corner, exposing his dimple.

Her heart broke at his smile. It was the one he reserved for other people. Never for her. It was automatic, a practiced social stance, and she hated it.

Hers was faint in return. She glanced at the students who were handling his books with protective gloves. "May we speak in private, please?"

He frowned. "Let's go to my office."

He led the way. At least he hadn't thrown her out on sight. She was walking the familiar path she believed she'd never walk again. The air gathered around his ankles as he moved, lapping at her feet as she followed in his wake. She had never felt it stronger, and yet, it should have been the reverse. She was supposed to be cutting the tie, not strengthening it, dammit.

Inside his office he almost took a military stance, his shoulders straight, his arms behind his back, as if keeping them there would prevent him from touching her. But his eyes were filled with warmth and concern.

"Katherine, I didn't tell you I was back because I didn't want to make it harder on you."

He didn't owe her an explanation. She agreed to his terms. With her eyes wide open.

"I came back to take care of the money," he continued. "When Alfonso told me you returned everything—"

"I don't want your money."

"You can live in comfort. Why struggle, if I have enough to share?"

"Because it wasn't part of our agreement," she snapped. She took a calming breath. "Because it'll make me feel like a prostitute."

His expression was incredulous as he considered the statement, but after a moment, he inclined his head. "Of course. I respect your decision."

"Lann..." She chewed her lip, thinking of the best way to tell him. Hadn't she practiced her line a million times? "I wouldn't have broken our agreement if it wasn't necessary."

He stared at her expectantly. There was no easy way to break the news.

“I’m pregnant.”

He froze. The heat evaporated from his gaze. His upper arms flexed as he clasped his hands behind his back. She couldn’t tell if he was mad or disappointed. Either way, neither was the reaction she was hoping for.

The silence stretched between them. For a while, he seemed incapable of speaking or moving. Only his eyes lowered and rested on her abdomen.

“It’s impossible,” he finally said.

She opened her handbag, retrieved the blood test results and offered it to him shakily. Lann lifted one hand from behind his back and took the piece of paper. Kat watched him closely as he read it. His eyes widened and narrowed again. She presumed he was looking at the age of the child growing in her belly, doing the calculation in his mind. Emotions she couldn’t place played across his face. Was it sadness, envy, anger that made him press his lips so tightly together? Finally, he lifted his head. She didn’t like the way he looked at her.

He handed her back the report. “Congratulations.” His voice was impersonal. “Who’s the father?”

The words punched the air from Kat’s lungs with the same ferocity as when he had cut her airflow during lovemaking. Then it had given her an earth-shattering orgasm. Now it caused her pain, with the same intensity. She couldn’t believe he said that. Hurt and anger blurred her vision. She drew back her hand, and before she could stop herself, she slapped him. She took a step away from him, biting back the tears. The trace of her fingers lay red across his pale cheek. Lann accepted her abuse with a stoic expression, without uttering a word.

“You bastard,” she whispered. “You needn’t feign your innocence by insulting me. Are you afraid I’ll ask you for child support? Do you think I expect you to play an unwilling role in this baby’s life? Maybe you think I’ll try to emotionally blackmail you into marrying me.” She clutched her bag to her chest like a shield. “I didn’t come here expecting anything from you. I want nothing. I only came because you had a right to know.” She took a ragged breath. “And to ask why you lied to me.”

When he still didn’t speak, she nodded slowly, the unwelcome tears threatening to find their way to her cheeks. He wasn’t going to offer any explanation, any solace, any excuse.

“I see,” she said. “Then we have nothing more to say to each other.”

She turned for the door, but Lann’s voice halted her. “Please stay. You’re upset. I’ll take you home when you feel calmer.”

To her dismay, a small gasp escaped her. Did he honestly think she’d stay after what he just said? Not looking back, she ran downstairs, not caring that Lann was calling after her loud enough for the building to hear, or that the students were staring at her from the library window.