

Golden Delicious

By : PurpleSky

(FINISHED) Tom is perfect for Ebby. He's smart, handsome, funny, charming, everything she could possibly want in a man. But there's only one slight problem...he's her mum's boyfriend.



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Golden Delicious : Chapter 1

I push open my front door and my bag swings around to my front. I slip it off my shoulder and it drops to the floor.

"Mum!" I shout with tense shoulders. No answer. I push open the kitchen door. Empty. Lounge. Empty. "Mum!"

I can't believe she made me walk all the way home after netball practice when she promised that she'd pick me up. I check my phone. Still no reply. Where the hell is she?!

"Mum!"

I stomp up the stairs. She's done this to me far too many times. I could have driven myself there if she had fucking let me borrow the car. I don't know what I would have found worse, to come home and find her lounging around or to come home to an empty house meaning she's probably gone out shopping or something and completely forgotten about me.

I freeze when I hit the top step. I'm not alone. The bathroom door is slightly ajar and the light sends a streak through the landing carpet. Tom is singing *Pure Imagination* and his voice makes my whole body tingle. He has such a beautiful voice. He always sings in the shower. His singing must have drowned out my shouting.

I step a little closer, now being extra careful not to draw attention to myself. A floorboard creaks under my foot and I pause. But he is still singing away so I continue. I make it to the door and peer in. The sight takes my breath away. We have a walk-in shower which takes up almost the full back wall of the bathroom and can probably fit about four people inside. Why it's so big, I have no idea. My mum likes to pamper herself but does she really need three different shower heads?

The glass is all steamed up so I can only make out his creamy silhouette as he runs shampoo through his hair. He is facing the wall and I can see his beautiful muscular back. Not too muscular. Just nice. And his bum looks perky and firm. I bite down on my lip and the thought of giving it a cheeky squeeze.

His sudsy fingers work through his hair and I watch as the suds run down his back. He has such silky hair. His golden curls protrude from his forehead and flow back in styled waves to the back of his head. He has a slight beard that frames his thin pink lips too. I don't usually like beards but his suits him so much I wish I knew what it felt like grazing my cheeks.

I do wish that my mum hadn't snatched him up but if she hadn't I would have never have met him. There is no way I am ever calling him my *stepdad*. That would just be wrong. It makes me cringe even saying that he is my mum's boyfriend. Well, most people don't call him that. My mum's friends call him her toyboy. That just makes me want to hurl.

The age gap between them is pretty big though. My mum is almost fifty. Well, she's forty-five. *Okay*, she is a very young forty five. I hate to admit. She can easily be mistaken for being in her late thirties because of her long blonde hair and slim figure. But Tom is a ripe thirty-two. I'm twenty-four. I'm closer to his age than my mum is! I do sometimes wonder if that has slipped into his mind once or twice.

I rest my head against the door frame and continue to daydream to the soothing sound of his voice.

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Tom and I have so much more in common than him and my mum. That's why whenever my mum drags me down to have a movie night, it always ends up just being me and Tom curled up on the sofa sharing a bowl of popcorn because my mum has given up on the film whereas we'd be captivated by it.

Comedies are the best films to watch with him because I get to hear his laugh. It's like a throaty cough. Absolutely adorable. His tongue sticks out a little and presses against his bottom teeth as the sound leaves his mouth. He likes it when I smile because I have really deep dimples. He actually poked his finger in one once which made my face grow bright red. So red that I had to hide it with a pillow.

So here I stand, watching him lather up his perfectly sculptured body with shower gel. It's mint. How do I know that? Because when he hugs me, the smell is intoxicating.

I chew my lip. What does a girl do in a situation like this?

Golden Delicious : Chapter 2

I suck in a deep breath and kick out of my pumps and socks. I then slip out of my cotton shorts. I pull my vest over my head pick my shorts up off the floor. I edge my way into the bathroom, making sure to not open the door too far for it to creak and catch his attention. He's still busy singing with his back to me. Next, I drop my panties and take off my bra. My clothes sit in a neat pile on the floor and I make my way across the cold tiles, releasing my hair from my messy bun. My waves of caramel curls fall down to the small of my back but I can feel that my roots are greasy from my sweat. I *had* been running around chasing a ball for the last hour. I needed a shower.

I'm even more careful as I step now because I am only a pane of glass away from him. My heart is in my throat and the heat between my thighs is just too much as I step into the extremely spacious shower. So spacious that he hasn't even realised that I'm stood a foot away from him. I stare longingly at his back. His muscles ripple and he rubs his front down with his hands. He has such a delicate body. His ass is tight and clenched. Oh my God, I want to bite it so much. It's like a juicy little apple.

Some of the water from the shower head misses Tom and is pummelling my front. I push my wet hair out of my face and make my move before he sees me. I tentatively pick up a shaky finger and run it down the crease of his back to the dimples at the bottom of his spine. I gasp at the feel of him. So smooth and delectable. Lust consumes me. His body tenses at my touch and he stops singing. He's completely frozen.

"Sharon..?"

My mum's name.

I press my pursed lips to his shoulder blade ever so gently. The need between my thighs burns. I can taste his shower gel. It doesn't taste as good as it smells.

"Guess again," I purr, spreading my fingers over his other shoulder blade.

"â Ebby?"

My name. Well, my name is Ebony but he likes to call me Ebby.

"That's right."

Suddenly, he flips round to face me. His hair is flat against his forehead and he pushes it back, staring at me in complete shock. His blue eyes flicker from my face to my wet breasts.

"Oh my God, you're naked," he panics and his eyes dart up to the ceiling.

I laugh a little. "So are you."

Quickly, he covers his manhood with his hands. He was a bit too late though. I have already eyed what has been making his pants so tight around the crotch all this time.

"Ebbyâ what are you doing?" he rushes.

"I needed a shower." I shrug and place a hand on his chest. He flinches and pushes it aside.

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"Ebbyâ get out."

"Awhh, c'mon. I won't tell my mum," I say and try to reach out to him again but he moves past me so he is at the opening of the shower. He finally looks back at me. But only at my face. Not daring to let his eyes wander anywhere else.

"Ebby, this is insane. I'm dating your mother."

"But we have so much more fun together," I whine and show him my puppy-dog eyes. "You've got to have realised that by now."

He shakes his head vigorously and steps out the shower, wrapping a towel around his slim waist.

"Put some clothes on," he orders, his eyes looking everywhere but at me. I huff and step out. I walk past him to grab a towel and he flinches when my arm brushes his.

"You've just missed out on some amazing shower sex," I say as I cover myself.

"I don't know where you got the idea that I would want to have shower sex with you, Ebby. If I've been sending you the wrong signals, I'm sorry."

"Oh, no." I push my hair back, away from my face and twist it to get the excess water out. "You've been sending me all the right signals."

"But clearly there has been some misunderstanding." He dares a glance at me and lets out a slight sigh of relief when he sees that I'm covered up. "Let's not tell your mother about this. Okay?"

I nod. Suddenly, my embarrassment of this situation hits me like a tidal wave and I can't even bare to look him in the eyes. "Okay," I mumble.

He leaves the room without saying another word.

I drop to the floor and weep like a stupid, pathetic child. What the hell was I thinking?! Did I expect that once he saw me naked he'd just take me there and then, no questions asked? God, I feel like such an idiot.

Golden Delicious : Chapter 3

In the morning, I stalk downstairs in my button-up pyjamas and slump down at the dinner table with a bowl of Coco pops. Mum and Tom are already sat eating. Tom looks up from his toast when I take my seat opposite him. He gulps down a heavy bite and looks back down.

"I'm so sorry I didn't pick you up yesterday, Eb. I totally forgot about my manicure appointment until the last minute. I had no idea it clashed with you," my mum says with sorry eyes.

"I've gotten used to it," I mumble and shove my spoon in my mouth.

Silence falls over the table and the awkwardness between me and Tom is overwhelming. I'm surprised my mum hasn't caught on.

He shoves the last bit of his toast in his mouth and brushes his hands together.

"Right, I'm off to work." He stands.

"Have a good day, honey," says my mum as he leans down and gives her a kiss. I grimace and he sees.

"Will do," he says and leaves.

Tom works as a model. Yes, my mum managed to bag herself a *model*. Unfortunately for me, he's not an underwear model. He's the type of model you see in a high-end clothing magazine wearing an incredible tailored suit and looking absolutely gorgeous. Unknown to my mum, I've been ripping his pictures out and I have a folder filled with them stuffed under my mattress. I take them out and gaze at them when I pleasure myself. That's what I have to stoop to. My mum gets to have him in the flesh and I'm stuck with a fucking A4 piece of glossy paper.

Luckily, my mum has the courtesy to fuck him when I'm not at home. Seriously, if I heard them getting it on, I'd probably put a bullet in my head.

I drop my spoon into my bowl and leave the table, catching Tom at the door.

"Wait," I say and he turns. His jaw clenches. "We need to talk."

He had avoided me completely after the shower incident.

"About what happened last night? No, we don't."

"Yes, we do." I step closer. He takes his hand off the door handle and turns fully to me.

He sighs, "Why did you do it, Ebby?"

"I don't know." I shrug, twisting my fingers into my overhanging sleeves. "I guess I didn't want you to see me as your girlfriend's daughter."

"And what do you want me to see you as?" His voice is soft and gentle, almost empathic.

I shrug.

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"Ebby." He steps closer and whispers, "do you have feelings for me?"

"We have so much fun together."

He sighs. "I know we do, Ebby. But I'm dating your mother. You understand that that means that nothing can happen between us, don't you?"

His words cut me like a knife and I wince a little. "I know."

He nods. "Okay. I'll see you later."

"Bye," I murmur and he steps out the door, closing it behind him. The sound of it slamming makes me shudder. It all seems so final.

Chapter 4: Golden Delicious

"So how is your oh-so-inappropriate crush going?" Trish asks from behind the bar. I wrap my waitress apron around my waist.

"It's more than a crush," I narrow my eyes at her. She just rolls hers and I sink my elbows onto the bar, covering my face with my hands. "And oh-so-badly." I peek at her over fingertips. "I did a stupid thing, Trish."

Her eyes widen. "You didn't...oh no, Ebony, please tell me you didn't..." She slaps her hand over her mouth when she gasps at my squeamish reactions. "You came onto him?!"

I drop my forehead to the bar and nod.

"Oh, honey, why? Why would you do that?"

I spring my head back up again making her step back a little with wide eyes. "I don't know. I saw the opportunity and I took it. God, why did I have to take it?"

Trish's eyes flit to a man with his hand in the air at a table, beckoning her over. "I'll be there in a minute!" she snaps. *And she wonders why she doesn't get any tips.* She turns back to me and furrows her eyebrows. "From your reaction, I'm guessing it didn't go as planned."

"Not at all," I reply and cover my face again with embarrassment.

"Well, what happened?" She leans down and props her elbows on the bar, looking down at me. "Did you kiss him?"

I shake my head and withdraw my hands. "I jumped into the shower with him."

Her mouth drops open. "*What?*"

"Yeah, I know. It was ridiculous. I can't believe I did it. He just does stuff to me, Trish. I couldn't help it!"

"So what did the poor man do after you violated him?"

"He ran away and didn't speak to me for the rest of the day," I sigh.

"Oh, honey." She lay a consoling hand on top of mine. "You really need to get laid."

I sigh and look into her green eyes. "I really do. By Tom."

Her hand leaves mine and she pushes herself off the bar. "No, not by your mum's boyfriend."

"But he's just so beautiful," I whine and sprawl my upper half over the bar like some sort of dazed drunk. "And now I've seen him naked so that image is never going to leave my head. And he's even more perfect without a suit on." I flip up so I'm back propped up on my elbows. Trish's eyes whirl around her sockets as she tries to keep up with my rapid movements. "I was hoping he'd be all spotty and blemishy and gross so my feelings would leave but he's smooth, Trish." I lean over the bar to her and grab both her hands. "Smooth, Trish! Completely smooth! All over! What am I supposed to do?"

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"I don't know." She pushes me back, "How about not perverting on him when he's in the shower?"

I slump onto the bar. "Why does he have to be dating my mum?"

"It's a cruel world, Ebony." She pats me on the back half-heartedly. "But seriously hun, you need some action."

I ponder over the idea and lift my head. "I guess the only way to get rid of the image of Tom's perfect naked body would be to replace it with a new one..."

"Right." She nods with a smile that soon slips away. "Although, I can't really call the guys that hang around the bars I go to perfect. But they're much better than a magazine." She raises her eyebrow at me. "Do you still collect his pictures?"

I nod shamefully.

"Okay." She nods affirmatively and grabs her notepad and pen. "It's decided. You're coming into town with me tonight."

"Tonight?" My stomach twists. "I don't know...I don't think I'm ready..."

"Of course you are." She slaps me on the shoulder with her notepad. "You've been out of the game for too long. A young sexy thing like you, pfft, all the guys will be putty in your hands, you'll see." She winks. "I'll stop by yours at ten to check up on your outfit and we'll call a taxi. Darrell's not happy with my *work ethic* so he's keeping me behind." She rolls her eyes. "But I should be ready in time."

"Okay." I nod and try to show her a convincing smile but I feel so anxious already.

"Great." She gleams. "Right, I'd better go. This guy is driving me crazy." She spins round making her red hair whip in front of my face and she struts down the restaurant to the guy that has been waiting for her for over ten minutes.

Back at home, I'm routing through my wardrobe for something decent to wear. It's been months since I've got glammed up to try and pull. My cheeks are red when I put on my make-up. I'm so flustered. Finally, I decide on a black, skin tight dress with a love heart neck line. I hope it will pass Trish's test. I straighten my hair and let it fall down my chest. Then head downstairs with my heels and purse in my hand.

My mum and Tom are sat on the sofa watching telly and must hear me in the hallway because they both turn round.

"Oh, Ebony you look gorgeous!" my mum gushes.

"Thanks, mum." I smile and my eyes flit to Tom. His beautiful blue eyes are trailing up my body with a soft smile. Mum elbows him making his eyes shoot to her.

"Doesn't she look lovely, Tom?"

He splutters out a nervous laugh which makes me squirm awkwardly in the silence that follows. Mum's eyes gleam at him expectantly so he turns back to me.

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"Yeah, you look...great...Ebby," he says with a queasy smile.

"Thanks," I send him one back. Trish had better be on her way because this is oh-so-awkward!

"Where are you off to?" mum asks.

"Just a girls night with Trish." I smile.

"Oh, sounds like fun."

"Yeah."

Thankfully, a few minutes later, the front door opens. Trish comes to my house so often she doesn't have to knock. We've been friends since high school.

"Oh my...wow!" she exclaims when she sees me.

"Do I look okay?"

Her emerald eyes are wide as she holds me by the shoulders and looks down my dress.

"You look amazing. Seriously, if I was a guy, I'd totally do you." Her eyes then shift to my mum and Tom who are both looking at us over the top of the sofa. "Oh, hi Sharon, Tom."

"Hi, Trish." Mum smiles and Tom gives a nod and a silent wave.

"So, do I look fun, single and ready to mingle?" I ask, doing a weird sort of curtsy.

"No." She shakes her head which makes me frown. "You hot, sexy and ready to do naughty things to one lucky fella."

I shrug. "Good enough for me."

"I called the taxi ahead, it should be here soon."

"Okay, we can wait outside," I reply. I slip on my heels and Trish grabs the door. "Bye mum. Bye Tom," I say before heading out.

"Have a good time girls," mum replies and Tom just gives me a smile.

Chapter 5: Golden Delicious

"Oh God, that was awkward." I sink back into the seat of the taxi.

"What was?" Trish's eyebrow rises.

"Before you came in my mum basically forced Tom to compliment me."

She sucks in a breath through her teeth. "Eeks."

I sigh and cover my face. "God, my life sucks so much."

"No it doesn't." She slaps me on my arm, making me drop my hands. "After tonight you'll be like Tom *who?*"

"I really doubt that," I huff.

"Trust me. With me as your wing woman, you'll be leaving with the hottest piece of ass we can find."

I just roll my eyes and look out the window.

We enter a club which is busy enough to keep your eyes busy but not so crowded that you're tripping over people. Trish grabs my hand and drags me to a free table near the bar.

"You sit. I'll get the drinks," she says and pushes me onto the high stool. I watch as she makes her way to the bar and leans over it to display her ample bosom, instantly grabbing the barman's attention. She knows how to work men. I guess maybe this night might not be a complete failure. She returns with two glasses slotted in the nook of her folded arm and two shots in her other hand. I help her place them on the table as it looks like they're all going to end up on the floor. I down a shot and take my vodka and red bull from her and take a swig. My face screws up at the tang but I need it to keep me alert and focused. Her emerald eyes are wide, staring at my chest as she sips at her glass.

"Your boobs look amazing. I mean seriously, I just wanna-" Next thing I know, she's got her hands on my breasts and giving them a squeeze. I can't help but laugh as I try and push her off me.

"Hey, that looks like fun. Can I have a go?"

Trish scowls at the guy stood beside us who's licking his lips greedily.

"Fuck off," Trish snaps making him lift his hands as if to surrender and then he disappears into the crowd.

I raise an eyebrow at her. "Are you sure that these guys are better than my folder? Because it doesn't seem that way to me."

"Don't let that guy put you off." She leans in close and nods to the left. "Check out the guy the grey t-shirt."

My eyes follow the tilt of her head. There's a guy stood by the wall laughing with his mate. He's tall, nice build, tattooed sleeve with short blonde hair styled into a *I can't be arsed* look which probably took half an hour to perfect. I nod with approval.

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"Not bad." I turn back to Trish. "But he's with a mate. I can't just walk up to him."

"Sure you can."

"No I can't. I'm not you. I already feel way over my head."

Her eyes shift to the guy then she slaps my arm giddily. "His mate is leaving. Time to dive in."

She hops off her stool with her glass in hand and tugs me down.

"Trish, I can't."

"Sure you can."

I reluctantly leave the table and she grabs my hand.

"Have you ever watched How I Met Your Mother?" she asks.

"Yeah..?"

"Well." She grins, "It's time to play 'Have you met Ebony?'"

My heart sinks to my feet and my eyes widen. "No, no, Trish, seriously."

She grins mischievously and next thing I know, we're in front of the hottie.

"Hi!" She leans into his ear. "Have you met Ebony?"

She gestures to me and he smiles. I smile back sheepishly. Even though the baseline of the music is thumping and there are people all around us, I feel so exposed in the silence that falls between us. Then his grey eyes light up and a smile curves on his lips. Trish exits and blends into the crowd.

"I don't believe I have. Hi, Ebony," his voice is soft and cheery. I can feel myself blushing.

"Hi..." I manage to say.

He leans close to my ear because the music is drowning us out. I can feel the warmth radiating from his body. "I'm Brad."

"Hi, Brad," I reply then feel like an idiot because I've already said hi but I'm so nervous I don't know how to proceed.

"I like your name," he smiles and takes a swig of his beer.

"Thanks," I smile back.

"You seem nervous."

"It's because I am," I laugh.

"I'm not that scary, am I?"

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"No, not at all," I laugh. "It's just been a very long time since I've done this."

"Just got out of a relationship?"

"No...it's...complicated."

"I see." He half frowns. "Can I say that you look very pretty tonight?"

"Of course." I grin. "You're not so bad yourself."

He shrugs nonchalantly. "I try."

I laugh and touch his arm so he knows that I'm interested. He takes the hint and leans in to my ear.

"What brings you here, Ebony?"

I get a rush when he says my name and I hold my lips to his ear.

"I'm trying to forget about someone."

He laughs a little. "Would you like me to help you with that?"

"Like you wouldn't believe."

He pulls back and shows me a sultry smile which makes a heat spread between my thighs.

"I'll tell my mate I'm leaving. I'll meet you outside?"

I bite my lip to suppress a grin. "Sure."

He walks into the crowd and I watch his shoulder blades ripple underneath his thin shirt. A slap on my arm pulls me out of my daze. I blink hard and see Trish gleaming at me.

"So...what happened? Where did he go?"

I grab her hands and bounce up and down giddily.

"I'm leaving with him."

"Score!" She wraps her arms around me and squeezes me. "Promise me you'll fuck him until you can't even remember what Tom looks like."

I laugh and pull away. "I'll try."

"You *will*," she corrects me.

"I *will*."

She grins and slaps me on the ass. "Go get him girl!"

And I do.

Chapter 6: Golden Delicious

We sit in the back of the taxi. I told him to take me to his place. When he places his hand on my leg, I tense up. I've never done this before. Sure, Brad was a total hottie but I have only just met the guy. I'm not a one night stand sort of person. I lost my virginity to my boyfriend after we had dated for a year. I've only ever slept with two people. Both of which I was in a serious relationship with. This is Trish's sort of thing, not mine.

"Are you okay?" Brad raises his eyebrow and takes his hand off my thigh.

"I'm fine," I assure him and lean into kiss him before I get too caught up in my own thoughts. He gladly accepts my lips and his hand cups my face to keep me there as his tongue slips into my mouth. As we kiss, I am very aware that we are not alone and the thought keeps prodding at me until I finally have to break away from Brad and rest back against the seat. The taxi driver doesn't seem to be taking any notice of what is happening behind but it still doesn't settle me.

The taxi pulls up outside a block of flats.

"We're here," Brad says with a smile and pays the man. He steps out and rushes round the boot so he can open my door for me. I send him a thank you smile as I step out.

As we head up to the building I take the time to try and get to know more about the man that I'm about to share a bed with.

"What do you do for a living?" I ask and he lets out a sigh of relief, probably because I have finally broken the awkward silence between us.

"I work at a garage," he replies, swiping a key over a sensor. He opens the door for me and we both enter. "What do you do?"

"I'm a waitress. Boring job but I need the money," I laugh and he laughs too.

We step into the lift together and are stranded in silence again.

"You've never done this before, have you?" he finally asks which makes my stomach twist.

"Haven't...done what?" I look up and his grey eyes are watching me with a glint of concern in them.

"Gone back to a guy's house you barely know."

I chew my lip. "Is it that obvious?"

The door opens and he presses lightly on my back. "Don't worry, I think it's sweet," he laughs. I feel myself blush so I bow my head.

I follow him down a short hallway and he slots his key into one of the doors.

"Are we alone?" I ask when a flood of panic washes over me.

He turns and smiles into my eyes, "Yes."

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When we enter his flat, he wanders over to the kitchen area.

"Want a drink? I only have beer..."

"Beer's fine," I smile, taking in my surroundings. It's a small flat with a grey and white colour scheme. I sat down on the black leather sofa and tried to get comfortable but still feeling a little jittery.

"Do you live alone?" I ask, eyeing up the xbox and games which sit by the telly.

"I have a roommate."

I jump at the sound of his voice so close. He hands me a cold bottle and sits beside me. His shoulder brushes against mine and leaves my skin tingling. I smile at him and take a swig of my beer. Awkward silence hangs over us as he watches me drink with a soft smile and lust-filled eyes. They then trail down to my chest. My heart flutters when I remember Trish's compliment about my breasts. My eyebrow rises when I see Brad lick his lip. Do they really look that good in this dress? Had Tom noticed? *No! Bad Ebony! Don't think about Tom!* There is a totally hot guy sat right next to you clearly ready to have his way with you. *Push Tom out of your head!*

But I can't. He's all I can think about. I bite down on my lip as I feel myself getting wet. Before I even have a chance to think about what I'm doing, I plant my bottle on the coffee table and grab Brad by the neck, kissing him hard. His body tenses at first, probably with shock, but then he succumbs, prising my lips open with his tongue and pushing it into my mouth. My thoughts of Tom still wrack my brain so when Brad places his hand on my thigh, I let out a delighted whimper into his mouth. He smiles against my lips at my response and takes it as an invitation. Soon, his hand is pushing up my dress and is feeling for my panties. I let out a moan when I feel his fingers hook around the waistband of my panties and I lift my ass a little so he can pull them down. My stomach contorts with pleasure. With my eyes closed, I am imagining that it is Tom's hand that strokes its way up to my moist heat. I spread my legs and pull his face closer so I can kiss him deeper. I know Trish wanted me to leave with a guy to forget about Tom but I'm finding this much more fun.

I pull away from his lips to let out a breathy moan as his finger starts to rotate my throbbing clit. I turn to face him with my eyes still closed, hoping that he just thinks my lids are heavy with pleasure, and tuck my knees up onto the sofa, spreading my legs so he has easier access. I'm startled a little when his mouth finds mine again but I feel around his neck and brush my fingers up the back of his head. His hair isn't curly like Tom's but I try my best to shake away that thought as his fingers slip into my hole, using his thumb to continue stimulating my clit. I moan into his mouth and start to grind my hips against his fingers. He moans back and starts to push me down. My heart fumbles with fear because in the darkness of my closed eyes, I feel like I'm being dropped into an abyss. My eyes shoot open and I break the kiss as my head hits the armrest. Brad is over me, his grey eyes searching my face hungrily. His fingers are still pumping in and out of me and the feeling is making me sick. Panic washes over me. This is wrong. This isn't me.

"I'm sorry," I stammer, pushing on his forearm so he pulls his fingers out of me. "This was a mistake."

His eyebrows furrow with confusion and he backs away when I push lightly on his strong shoulders. I get back up to my kneeling position and swing my legs over the sofa. I grab my panties which have been discarded on the floor and pull them back on.

"Did I do something wrong?" Brad asks slightly panicked and upset.

"No," I turn to him. "It's me, I'm sorry, I thought if I did this I could get over someone but I...I just can't..."

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He half frowns and looks deep into my eyes. "You've got it bad for this guy, haven't you?"

My heart swells and I nod, sucking in a sob.

I stand and grab my purse. "I'm sorry to have wasted your time," I say, sliding past him and heading for the door.

"Don't apologise. It was nice meeting you, Ebony."

I grab the door handle and turn to him. He's looking at me over the back of the sofa. My heartstrings twang when the memory of the way Tom looked this evening flashes in front of my eyes. Brad is looking at me the same way Tom had. Slightly pained but attempting to cover it with a warm smile. But why would Tom be pained? Did I mess our relationship up that badly?

I blink hard and bring myself back to the present.

"It was nice meeting you too, Brad. Take care," I smile and leave.

After I shut the door behind me, I lean back against the wall and clench my eyes shut at the burning sensation in the back of them. I'm close to tears. I'm never going to be able to move on. I'm stuck. Completely stuck. This night has just proved that it's Tom or no one.

Golden Delicious : Chapter 7

"So how was your night with the hottie? Tell me everything!" Trish's giddy voice squeals down the phone. I sit up on my bed with my back against the headboard.

"It sort of...backfired," I sigh.

"Why? What happened?"

"I couldn't do it...I just kept thinking about Tom and how Brad wasn't Tom and it just...didn't feel right..." I wince at the frustrated huff that follows. "Ebony, you're stuck in a rut and it is my job to pull you out of it. Tom is your mum's boyfriend, understand? He's off limits. I know the whole forbidden fruit things gets a lot of people hot but this has gone too far. You have to get over him," she sighs. "I worry about you, honey, you're torturing yourself."

"I can't help how I feel, Trish," I reply quietly, twisting my fingers into my duvet. "If there was a button I could press, I would."

"I know you don't have a button, but you have me. How about we go out again tonight?"

"No way, last night was enough for me. I'm just going to stay in this weekend. Anyway, how was your night after I left? Did you hook up with anyone?"

"Nah, I think your guy was the only hottie in that place. Better luck next time," she laughs. "Right, I've gotta go, honey, but no more perverting on Tom, okay?"

I wince at the memory. "Don't worry, he's at work. I'm home alone."

"Okay, good. Well, I'll see you in work on Monday."

"Bye," I chirp and hang up.

I sit on my bed twiddling my thumbs. My fingers itch to grab my folder under my mattress but I can't keep doing what I'm doing. I can't keep getting my fix by fucking myself over Tom. I need a new man in my life. But the house is empty and I've been so horny since last night with Brad. It's too much. I hastily yank up my mattress and pull out the dog-eared folder. My mouth instantly goes dry as I tip the pages out and they drop onto my duvet. There are so many. I flip them all the right way up and spread them out. My teeth dig into my bottom lip as I feel myself already getting wet just at the sight of him in those perfectly fitted suits, hugging him in all the right places. A groan escapes me when I remember what is hidden under them; when I remember his wet, naked body in the shower.

I'm over his pictures on my hands and knees, my eyes scanning each and every one of them. Surely I'm not the only person who does this to these pictures? They are out there for the world to see.

My stomach starts to contort and I quickly slip my hand under my joggers and under my panties. A sigh of relief seeps through my lips when my fingers penetrate the unbearable heat and my body flushes when I start to circle my clit. I focus on one picture where he is looking directly into the camera, directly at me. Those two shining, blue orbs see into my soul.

"Oh, God..." I breathe as I push two fingers into my slick hole. I start to grind my hips against my fingers as I push them in and out of me. I long to feel his skin against mine; his body writhing with mine; his lips on mine- "Oh...Tom."

My other hand clenches my duvet and I curl it in my fists as I rock against my fingers.

"Tom...yes...Tom...Oh..."

Oh how I wished I could take him out of those beautiful suits. Strip him nice and slowly, taking in every inch of him.

"Tom!" My inner muscles clench around my fingers as I cum on my hand.

I slump back against my headboard and grab some tissues from my bedside drawer.

"Ebby?"

I freeze and then nearly jump out of my skin at the knock on my door.

"Ebby, did you shout me?"

Before I have a chance to reply, my bedroom door opens and Tom is stood in the doorway.

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I quickly wipe my wet fingers with the tissues and plunge them into my pocket. Tom's eyebrows furrow curiously as he steps into my room and studies the photos on my bed. He looks up at me, at my slightly heaving chest and flushed cheeks. Then it dawns on him. His creamy glow turns as white as a sheet as his pale blue eyes widen at me.

"Were you..." He nods down to my jogger then looks back into my eyes, "...over *me*?"

In a panic, I sprawl across my bed and mess up the neatly aligned pictures with my heart drumming scarily fast, but my fingers fumble and I just seem to expose them even more.

"No...no...I don't know what you mean..." I rush, pushing the pictures into a messy pile.

"*Ebby*."

"What, *Tom*?" I snap, making his eyebrows shoot to his hairline. "Okay, yes, yes I was-"

"I'm your mother's boyfriend," he states.

My jaw clenches. "You think I don't know that? I'm reminded of that every single bloody day! I know things have gotten awkward between us since the whole shower incident-" He winces at the memory, "-but at least now I know how you feel about me." A lump swells in my throat. "I know you and me will never be anything so this is what I resort to and if it makes you feel uncomfortable then I'm sorry but that's just the way it's going to be."

The muscles in his jaw flex and he runs his hand through his curls, looking back at the door.

"Just-" He points down to the pile of pictures with his eyes still on the door, "put the pictures away."

I gulp and shove them back into the folder. "You're not going to tell mum are you?"

His body tenses. "No...no, I won't. Let's just...pretend this never happened. Okay?"

"Okay," I rush and he leaves, shutting the door behind him.

I listen to his footsteps as he descends the stairs and tuck my knees closer and closer to my chest with each step. Part of me just wants to crawl into a hole and die. Tears burn the backs of my eyes. Not only am I torturing myself now but I'm hurting Tom. That's why his eyes had showed pain. He is pained because he knows he's hurting me and there is nothing he can do about it. Well, there is something he could do but he wouldn't. He loves my mum, I can tell and it cuts me up inside. I've completely messed everything up.

Days have passed and Tom has barely said anything to me. He can't even look at me. But luckily, mum has failed to notice because he tries to put on an act whenever she's around. We try to act like nothing is wrong and as soon as she leaves; we're sucked into the most awkward silence ever.

At work, Trish has been lecturing me about moving on and pointing out every man that step into the restaurant who looks single and between the age of twenty and thirty. But none of them hold a candle to Tom.

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"Right, I'm off Sharon," says Tom, lingering at the door, waiting for my mum to meet him. She comes out of the kitchen and plants a kiss on his lips. I watch all this from the sofa.

"Have a nice night. I'll see you in the morning. Don't worry about waking me up," she replies. He smiles and looks over to me. He gives me a silent nod with a weak smile and leaves. He's going out with a few mates from work and will probably be home in the early hours of the morning so I'm stuck with my mum all night watching CSI.

She plonks herself down next to me and tucks her legs up, pushing me to the other end of the sofa.

"I found a folder in your room. It was poking out from under your pillow."

My heart stammers but I stay silent. She says it in a conversational, uncaring tone as she channel hops.

"Full of Tom's photo-shoots. He's a natural, isn't he?" She looks at me, her eyes shining at me.

"Yeah," I laugh a little. "They're nice pictures. Good...lighting..."

She nods affirmatively and starts peeling her tangerine. I let out a sigh of relief and relax into the back of the sofa.

My mum and I have a pretty good relationship if you don't count the fact that she hogs the car and is dating Tom, we get along just fine.

Its eleven o'clock when the 'CSI night' finally finishes and I skulk off to bed. My mum follows shortly after and I remind her to leave the alarm off so Tom doesn't accidentally set it off like last time. I thought I was going to have a heart attack that night. Poor drunk Tom was stumbling around the hallway attempting to press whatever buttons he could on the alarm in a heated panic.

I snuggle under my covers and drift off to sleep.

My eyes flutter open at the sound of footsteps. I blink hard and look at my clock by my bed. It's half two in the morning. Tom must be home. I listen for him staggering up the stairs but he doesn't. Instead, I hear the echo of his designer shoes on the laminate floor in our kitchen. I sit up and keep listening, he's probably just pouring himself a drink. Then I hear something smash followed by a soft 'shhhhh!'

I jump out of bed and head to the hallway. Tom's lean shadow looms across the hallway from the light in the kitchen. I can see him wandering around aimlessly. I roll my eyes and head down the stairs. He's probably lost. Alcohol does strange things to that beautiful head of his.

I wander into the hallway, hugging my flannel pyjamas close to my chest. Tom's stood holding the fridge door open, staring blankly inside.

"Tom..?" I whisper.

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He blinks hard and turns to me. There's glass around his feet and a broken glass on the counter.

"Oh hey, Ebby." He smiles lazily.

"What are you doing?" I ask, edging closer.

"I fancied some toast but I can't find the bread." He frowned and turned back to look in the fridge.

"We don't keep the bread in the fridge."

He tips his head back and laughs, then shakes his head and turns to me. "Of course. Who would keep bread in the fridge? That would just be silly."

He wobbles a little on his feet and he clutches the fridge door to stabilise himself. I run up to him and press my hand into his back to support him. His warmth tingles my skin.

"Okay, how about you go and sit on the sofa and I'll make you some toast?" I say as I guide him out of the kitchen. He sways and stumbles so I wrap my arm around his slim waist. His arm snakes around my shoulders as he leans into me. My heart swells at our close contact and the feeling of his breath brushing through my hair. We stumble into the living area and he drops down onto the sofa. His head lolls around before he blinks hard and looks up at me with slightly glazed eyes. He sits in silence, gazing up at me with a goofy smile like a child waiting for instructions.

I lift my palms to him. "Stay. I'll be right back."

He nods affirmatively and drops his back against the back of the sofa. I return to the kitchen, close the fridge, and slot two pieces of bread into the toaster then clean up the glass from the floor as I wait. Every few seconds, I glance back into the living area to check up on drunk Tom. He's sat patiently, playing with his fingers. The third time I look, his head turns and his pale blue eyes shine at me in the grey-dark of the room. He grins and waves which makes my stomach do crazy flips. He is even more adorable when he's intoxicated.

Finally, the toast pops up. I put it on a plate, butter it and head back to Tom. I stand in front of the sofa and present it to him then sigh and put it on the table when I see his closed eyes and the soft rise and fall of his chest. His head is dropped back and his mouth is slightly agape as he sleeps. I decide not to disturb him and head back to bed. But when I turn to leave, a hand grabs my arm. I turn back to see Tom looking up at me with pleading eyes.

"Don't go."

I show him a warm smile. "I'm going to bed. Do you want me to take you up or do you want to sleep here?"

He drops his back down the length of the sofa and pats the space in front of him. "Stay here."

My heart flutters but I sigh. "I can't," I say and move to his feet which are tucked up on the sofa. I untie his laces and slip his shoes off. Mum doesn't like shoes on the sofa.

As I'm bent down he lifts his foot to my face and wiggles his socked toes at me. I look back at him and he giggles mischievously.

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"Goodnight, Tom," I say with a smile and walk past him. He grabs my arm again but this time he yanks me down so I collapse next to him. Our faces are so close that our noses are nearly touching. My breathing becomes elevated as his blue eyes shine into mine.

"Stay with me, please." He flutters his eyelashes at me then rests his head against my chest. I stifle a moan when his arm wraps around my waist and he pulls me closer to him. I glance down and notice his closed eyes. A few seconds later he starts to lightly purr in his sleep and every now and again he nuzzles against my chest, burying his head into my cleavage like it's a pillow.

I suck in a sob as tears burn the backs of my eyes. This is how easy it could be. This is how good we would be together. I run my fingers lightly through his bouncy curls and press my lips against his forehead. A tear escapes my eye and trails down my cheek, dropping onto his forehead. I rub it away with my thumb and my heart flutter when he lets out a soft moan at my touch.

Every night could be like this. It feels so right. But in the morning, this will all be a hazy blur to him but it will be a hauntingly beautiful memory for me. His lips smack together and he hugs me tighter making butterflies swarm around my stomach. I can feel his heart beating against my chest. I rest my chin on top of his head and close my eyes. I'm going to savor this moment for as long as I can, before I have to leave him and head back to my bed alone.

Chapter 10: Golden Delicious

"Hey hun," says Trish when she sees me walk into the staff room.

"Hey Trish," I reply and grab my apron.

"How was your weekend in?"

I grimace. "It just got worse and worse."

"How so?" she asks, taking her pen out of her apron and scribbling on her notepad.

"Well...first there was the whole Brad thing," I sigh.

"Oh yeah, that could have gone better." She frowns.

"And then Tom caught me with his pictures..."

Her pen freezes and her wide, green eyes find me. "What? Are you serious?!"

"Yeah," I grimace.

"Did he...were you..." She points her pen down to my pants.

"Oh, no. Thank God!" I let out a dramatic sigh of relief. "But he was able to put the pieces together very quickly."

"Oh my God. How did he react?"

"He was just sort of...shocked. And then I went off on some big rant and then he wouldn't even look at me...well...up until he got drunk and fell asleep curled up next to me."

Trish chokes on air. "*What's that now?*"

My heart flutters at the memory of his leg coiled around mine and his soft heart beat against my chest.

"I heard him downstairs after a night out. I went down to check up on him. He was trying to make toast so I made some for him then he pulled me down onto the sofa with him and we fell asleep together."

"Ebony..." she says, warning. "You're walking on thin ice, hun. What would have happened if your mum caught you? She didn't...did she?"

"No, no," I wave her off. "I got up and left him in the early hours of the morning."

"Does he remember what happened?"

"I don't know." I frown, remembering the way he had looked at me this morning. He looked deep into my eyes curiously, as if he was trying to figure out something. Maybe he thought it was just a very vivid dream. "He hasn't spoken to me."

Golden Delicious

"Well...I think it would be best if he didn't remember."

"Why?" I ask, slightly taken back.

"Ebony, it's already awkward between you two as it is. I'm pretty sure that would just make it even worse."

"I guess you're right..." I give in.

She walks over to me and settles her hand on my shoulder. "Of course I am. Now, come on. We've got tables to serve."

I sigh and follow her out.

Back at home, I collapse onto the sofa after being on my feet all day. The kitchen door creaks open behind me but I don't turn round. I'm too exhausted to move. Soft footsteps patter across the floor and I can feel someone standing behind me.

"Oh..."

I lift my head off the armrest to see Tom stood with a cup of tea, wavering awkwardly.

"I'll have this in the kitchen," he says and turns round.

"Don't," I quickly say, making him freeze. "Tom, you can't ignore me forever."

Sighing, he turns back around, gives me a faint smile and takes a seat on the chair. He turns on the telly and flicks the channel over to some period drama. There is an awkward tension between us. It sits heavily in the air. I try my best not to look at him but I can feel his eyes on me. Finally, my eyes flicker to him. They meet his for a fraction of a second before he looks to the telly. He has his cup of tea poised tightly in his hand as he sips at it, trying to act nonchalant.

"What's wrong?" I raise an eyebrow.

"What? Nothing," he rushes, letting out an awkward laugh and refusing to make eye contact.

"You've got something on your mind. You want to ask me something, I can tell."

He sighs and places his cup on the coffee table. "You're right."

My heart flips. He leans forward and digs his elbows into his knees, looking at me. Those beautiful blue orbs shine at me.

"What happened last night?"

My eyes widen and my heart starts beating double-time. "W-what do you mean?" I ask, silently cursing myself for stammering.

He sighs and rakes his fingers through his short, bouncy curls. "I thought it was just in my head. But when I woke up there was a plate of toast on the table." He nods down to the coffee table then looks at me. "Did you

Golden Delicious

come downstairs last night and make me toast?"

I gulp. Trish's words penetrate my thoughts. Should I lie so he thinks it was all a dream? But I can't lie to Tom and make him confused. Maybe if he found out about what really happened, it would change his opinion of me...for the good.

Finally, I nod. The muscles in his jaw flex and he shuffles in his seat awkwardly.

"Then that means...that the rest of it happened."

I should have lied. The fear alight in his eyes shows me that. But I can't turn back now.

"Yes...the rest happened. But look, you were drunk. It meant nothing, right?" I say, trying to comfort him but the words feel so wrong.

"I was drunk." He nods. "And we both know how I get when I'm drunk, right?" He looks at me and laughs awkwardly.

"Right," I laugh back.

"But even though it meant nothing, I think it's best to keep this just between me and you."

"Of course," I reply with a blasphemous wave.

"Good." He nods. I can almost feel the weight lifting off his shoulders. He sinks back into the chair and continues watching telly.

Boy, these secrets just keep building up, don't they?

Chapter 11: Golden Delicious

My heart is beating like crazy and my sweaty palms grip the steering wheel until my knuckles are white. I've never been pulled over by the police before. I didn't even know I was speeding.

I look into my rear-view mirror at the police car that is parked behind me. Wait a minute...is that an American police car? That makes no sense.

Shaking off my confusion, I look ahead and wait. Seconds later, there is a tap on my window. I turn to smile innocently but instead my jaw hangs open. A tall man dressed in full American police uniform, including the black-out shades stands before me. I press the button and the window rolls down.

"License and registration," he says in a soft voice as smooth as velvet. My eyes widen. I know that voice. I squint up at the police officer. He's tall and slim with crazily long legs and a light brown beard that frames his thin pink lips. I gasp.

"Tom?"

He brings his hand to his glasses and pulls them down his nose, his glistening, pale blue eyes peek over them at me.

"License and registration, ma'am."

Confused, I pull my paperwork out of my glove box and hand them to him. He takes them and studies them.

"Was I speeding?" I ask as I watch his eyes flicker behind his shades as he reads.

"I'm going to need you to step out of the car, ma'am," he says in his soft British accent and opens the door for me.

When I step out, it is suddenly dark and we are on the edge of an empty road surrounded by woods even though I'm sure when I looked out the window I was on the motorway.

"Turn around and place your hands on the car, ma'am."

My heart thumps but I comply, turning my back to him and placing my palms on the top of the car, which I now realise, is not my mum's car.

"I'm going to need to search you."

My eyes widen and my whole body sizzles when his hands smooth down my sides. A gasp escapes me when he steps closer, pressing his hard chest against my back. His hands sit on his hips and stay there for a while before dropping to my bare thighs. Heat consumes the lower half of me as his fingers travel past the hem of my dress. I swallow a mewl when they start to rub my already moist panties. My eyes clench shut when he pulls the fabric to the side and the cold air tingles me. His fingers push into my slick hole, making me moan and drop my head onto the car. He works his fingers in and out of my pussy with long, deep strokes. I rock back and forth against his hand. When I buck my ass, I can feel his crotch. My stomach flutters with excitement when I can feel him hard underneath his pants.

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Then, his other hand snakes round my side, grabs my breast and pulls me back so I smack myself against his hard chest. My shoulder blades dig into his chest as my back arches his pleasure. His hot breath tickles the exposed skin on my neck and he starts to run his thumb over my hand nipple.

"Oh...Tom..." I breathe.

His lips press into the curve of my neck, sending shivers up my spine and he starts to work on my pussy with more vigorous strokes. His soft lips travel up my neck and I turn my head just in time for them to plant on my lips. My whole body feels like it's on fire as our tongues dance together and his beard brushes across my chin and cheeks.

I rock my hips more and more against his hand as I feel my orgasm building. My hand runs up the back on his neck to his police hat and I grip it tightly as my whole body shudders at my release.

His lips break from mine and he grabs my hand, yanking me to the front of the car. He wraps his arms around me and sits me on the bonnet. I take off his shades and throw them aside so I can look into his beautiful blue eyes. He smiles, takes off his hat and places it on my head before claiming my mouth again. My hands wrap round his neck and I draw him closer to me, kissing him deeper. Short, sharp breathes are leaving both of us. He pulls away from me and his hands slip under my dress. His fingers hook round my panties and yank them down, exposing my pussy to the cold air.

I suck in a breath as he lowers himself. My heart feels like it's in my throat and I shudder when I feel his hot breath tantalizing the skin of my inner thighs. His big hands wrap around my waist and pull me further down the car and closer to his face. My eyes roll back when his hot tongue licks up my slit. I watch with fluttering lids as his head of golden curls bobs between my thighs. His teeth capture my throbbing clit and he starts to roll it with his tongue.

"Oh, God." I move and run my fingers through his hair, holding him close to me. His grip on my waist tightens as he works his tongue between my pussy lips, hardening it and probing my entrance with it. My thighs clench around his head as I cum into his mouth and my head drops back as I can feel him drinking up my juices.

He lifts his head up and wipes his glistening mouth before slamming his lips back onto mine. I still feel dizzy from my orgasm so I have to grip his shoulders to steady myself. But I want more. My hands trail down his sides to his pants. While still kissing him, I unbutton his and yank down his fly. I smile against his lips when I stick my hand down his boxers and wrap it around his hard shaft. He moans into my moan and pushes me up the bonnet. The car dips when he clammers up on top of me. Eagerly, and with my adrenaline pumping, I push down his pants as he settles himself between my thighs. He grabs my ass when I lock my legs around his waist and he eases himself into me, making me let out a drawn out moan as my back arches against the cold metal with pleasure. He nuzzles his face into the curve of my neck, his beard tickling my skin as he pumps himself in and out of me. My body sizzles and my stomach is twisting in all sorts of funny ways as I feel him filling me completely.

My hand reaches behind me for something to grab. My fingers clutch the windscreen wiper and I grip it hard as my body rubs up and down the bonnet with his deep, steady thrusts. He lets out breathy moans into my air and he pushes himself into me. My eyes roll back with ecstasy and my hand twists around the windscreen wiper. I hear a snap and I blink hard at the broken wiper in my hand.

Suddenly, I start to dip. The car starts to melt away from underneath me. Tom stops and looks into my eyes with terror alight in them. He pulls out of me and leans back, watching me as I'm being dragged down into a dark abyss.

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"Tom," I try to scream but it comes out as a whisper. I hold out my hand, frantically trying to grab onto him but he is suddenly too far away. The last thing I see before a black fog clouds around me is his perfect blue eyes.

My whole body shudders and my eyes dart open. I'm coated with sweat but I'm guessing that's not the reason why my panties are sodden. I blink and look around my dark bedroom, my heart still beating incredibly fast. It was a dream. It was just a dream.

I jump at the sound of creaking floorboards outside my bedroom door. A shadow penetrates the grey light underneath my door. A groaning causes fear to coil around my heart. It sounds like some sort of zombie. Curiously and a little scared, I swing my legs out of my bed and stand. Tentatively, I make my way to the door and open it slightly. There's a dark figure on the landing, swaying slightly. It's Tom. He turns to my direction and I close the door slightly so I can see him through a tiny slit. There is something different about him. His eyes have this weird glazed look in them. I think...I think he's *sleepwalking*.

Chapter 12: Golden Delicious

He's wearing a thin, teal shirt and black boxers. He walks down the landing with wide eyes and starts to head down the stairs. My stomach twists with the fear that he might slip and fall so I follow him, being careful not to wake him. I don't know what happens when you wake a sleepwalker but I've heard it's bad for some reason.

His bare feet pad along the laminate floor of the hallway and he heads into the kitchen. I follow him on my tip-toes and watch him from the doorway. He opens the fridge door so the light brightens the grey-dark of the room. His pale blue eyes squint as he surveys the shelves then he closes the door and moves onto the cupboard beside the fridge, opening the door and looking inside.

"I need to find them..." he mumbles, narrowing his eyes.

My skin prickles at the sound of his soft voice.

"Find what?" I ask, my curiosity getting the better of me.

He turns his head slowly in my direction and I swallow a breath.

"The eggs...we need to get them before they hatch."

Oh great, he's having a crazy dream.

"I know, we absolutely do," I reply sternly, playing along. He nods affirmatively and moves onto the next cupboard. "I'll help you look."

I hurry into the kitchen and start opening cupboards with him. Suddenly, he drops to the floor onto his hands and knees but with such grace that all I hear is a slight *whoosh* of his body moving then a tiny tap of his fingertips touching the ground. I watch him as he presses the side of his face against the cold tile floor as looks underneath all the appliances.

"I can't see them anywhere. I think it's too late," he says. The worry in his voice makes me want to scoop him up and give him a squeeze.

"Tom," I whisper softly, touching his shoulder. His head bounces up and his blue eyes shine up at me expectantly. I smile. "How about you go back to bed and I'll keep looking?"

He sighs and gets to his feet. "I think I scared them away."

"I'll find them," I assure him and guide him out to the hallway. With the slightest of pushes, he starts to head to the hall. "Go to bed, Tom."

"Will you come with me?"

My heart flutters. "To...*bed*?"

He nods, still looking ahead.

"Erm...no, Tom. You go back to your bed and after I find the eggs I will go back to mine."

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Suddenly, he stops and twirls around, grabbing the tops of my arms. I let out a delighted mewl when his hands lock around me. My mouth snaps shut and my eyes widen.

"I should tell her. I should tell her, shouldn't I? But I can't. It's bad. It's really bad. I can't...But I should." The words rush out of his mouth as if he has had them locked up inside him and they've all just burst out at once. His eyes are wide and frantic as he stares into mine.

"Tell who what?" I ask softly, trying to coax information out of his sleepy state. People say that sleepwalking is caused by stress...what is Tom stressed about?

"I can't tell her. But I can't help what I feel can I? Will she be mad at me? It's not my fault."

My heart starts to drum against my chest.

"What do you feel, Tom? Tell me."

His mouth snaps shut and he shakes his head rapidly.

"Tom, tell me," I press.

"It's bad. She will never forgive me. She can't know."

"Who can't know what?"

He slaps his hands over his mouth but I grab his wrists and yank them down.

His eyes widen. "I can't tell her that I have feelings for Ebby."

After ushering Tom back into his bedroom and assuring him that I would find his precious eggs, I shut my bedroom door behind me and do a silent happy dance. Tom has feelings for me! Holy crap! That must be what's been eating him up. That's what's caused his sleepwalking. Part of me feels a little sorry for him. Having feelings for your girlfriend's daughter can't be easy but forgive me for being *insanely ecstatic right now!*

Okay, calm down Ebony, you need to think about how you're going to play this. Tom admitted his feelings to me but he was asleep and he told me as if he had no idea who I was. The dream must have distorted things somewhat so maybe when he wakes up he will think it was all some very vivid dream? My heart sinks. What if it was a vivid dream? What if his declaration of feeling was just as crazy as his egg scenario? No. I can't believe that. The look on his face said it all. He was truly worried about what he was saying. He was *feeling* what he was saying. He meant it.

So, will he remember in the morning?

I guess I'll have to wait and find out.

Chapter 13: Golden Delicious

As if I slept! I was go giddy I couldn't keep my eyes shut. I was wiggling all over the place with happy butterflies swarming round my stomach. Holy crap my life has just got *good!*

Morning came a few hours later. I got dressed and bounced downstairs for breakfast. Mum and Tom were already at the table eating there's and Tom tensed up with slightly wide eyes when he saw me. It only lasted for a fraction of a second then he relaxed and looked down at his newspaper. He remembers. I can tell. But does he just think it was a dream?

He dodged me for the rest of the morning but that was nothing new. God, this uncertainty is killing me!

I quickly got ready for work and headed to the restaurant. My head is all over the place. I keep replaying last night in my head. He had looked so serious. It was real, wasn't it? *Was it?* But, I mean...I can have very vivid dreams...take the one when Tom was a sexy cop, now that was incredible vivid. Was it just a vivid dream?

My heart starts to sink when I come to face reality. Why would Tom have feelings for me? I'm a pathetic girl that tried to seduce him by jumping into the shower with him. Great, my life has gone back to sucking.

Work was boring as usual. I decided not to tell Trish about Tom's escapade because I knew she would just confirm that I am right and it was just a dream and that would have been just too hard to hear. Instead, I kept my head down, focused on my work and almost doubled my tips for the day by avoiding any conversation to do with Tom. Boy, I must really talk about him a lot. Seriously, there were moments behind the bar where me and Trish just stood there blinking at each other.

Seeing as though being at home was incredibly awkward, I did some overtime and worked an extra hour with Darrell and left at seven.

It was still light on my walk home. Lately, the sky hasn't been growing dark until half eight-ish. I pass the football field near to my house and freeze. My eyes bug at the men running around after the football. Well not all the men, just one in particular. Tom. He's running with around a dozen other men around the same age. He's wearing lilac/navy top which is so thin I can see his abs, and black shorts. Black socks are pulled up his shins and he's wearing black football boots.

I chew my lip and drape my forearms across the fence, watching him run up and down the pitch. He pauses, catching his breath and rakes his fingers through his hair. He's panting a little as he watches the other men running down the field.

One of the men scores a goal between the netless goal posts. The man cheers and pulls his top over his head. Needless to say that I'd rather be watching Tom running around like an idiot with his chest on show but hey, I'm not complaining, the guy's pretty ripped.

"Right, I think that's enough for tonight guys," says one of the other men, settling the rampant lunatic down. He stops and pulls his top back down with a grin still fixed on his face. Tom grabs a bottle from a bag on the floor as starts to guzzle it down. He caps it and squints into the sky.

"Yeah, looks like rain soon," he adds.

I furrow my eyebrows and look up. He's right. Dark clouds are starting to settle over the pale blue sky. Perfect. I have a twenty minute walk home.

Golden Delicious

"Good game, guys, good game," they all start to say, slapping each other on the backs and shaking hands. They all start heading in different directions as there are gates at each corner of the field. Tom slings one of his bag straps over his shoulder and starts to head to the end gate. I follow him down the pavement to meet him at the gate. I have no idea what I'm doing but it just feels right. Luckily, he keeps his head down, watching his feet as he heads down the grass so he doesn't see me.

I twirl round and stop when he grabs the gate, still looking down as if half in a daze.

"Hey," I chirp.

His head bounces up and his wide eyes hit me. "Ebby."

"Hi." I gleam.

He laughs awkwardly and opens the gate. "W-what are you doing here?"

"I was walking home from work and I saw you, thought we could walk home together?"

He closes the gate behind himself and looks down the street. "Erh...eh..."

"Looks like it's going to rain, we best get a move on."

He furrows his brows at me, contemplating his decision. Finally he gives in with a shrug and heads down the pavement. I keep to his speed and try my best to keep my eyes forward but when he moves, the thin material of his top slips across his abs making them look magnificent.

"I didn't know you played football," I start.

"Yeah. I've been meeting up with a few of my friends. Let off some steam, y'know?" he says, keeping his eyes to the floor

"Yeah." I smile at him. His eyes flicker to me then back to the floor. Tom and I let off steam together once a week. Not in the way I hope for of course, but we jog around the park together. We are both pretty athletic and love doing things sporty whereas my mum would rather get a manicure and watch repeats of Desperate Housewives.

It isn't long until the rain starts. And it's not even a gentle drizzle. It is a full on downpour. We both wince against the pounding rain, shrivel in on ourselves and hurry our speed. I'm wearing pants, a vest top and a cardigan and I'm shaking like a leaf, poor Tom must be bloody freezing!

He hugs his arms around his chest and starts to jog. I jog too and soon we are full on running, my bag slapping my hip and his bouncing off his back. We reach my house sooner than I had thought. I quickly plunge my shaking hand into my pocket and pull out my keys. Mum is still at work. I squint at the mortise and try to slot the key in but I'm shivering so much, I keep missing. My heart thumps against my chest when Tom's cold hand wraps around mine and guides the key into the door. With a joint effort, we unlock it and push the door open.

We're both stood, dripping wet in the hallway. My hair is plastered across my face and I try my best to push it back behind my ears. Tom's top is completely soaked through so that the material is basically see-through. I try not to stare but I can't help it. I can see every detail of his perfect torso; the slight ripple of his abs, his tan areolas and hard nipples. My eyes bulge with the realisation that the same thing has probably happened to me.

Golden Delicious

I look down and let out a sigh of relief that I decided to wear a cardigan. The white vest top underneath is completely see-through, showing Tom my lacy pink bra but my hard nipples are covered by my extra layer.

Tom drops his bag onto the floor with a thud. I jump a little and bring my attention back to him. My mouth hangs open and I am almost salivating as I watch a bead of water start at his hairline. It trickles down his temple, across his sharp cheekbone, down his neck...I lick my lip as it melts into the wet fabric of his top. What I wouldn't do to be that bead of water, to be so close to him.

My heart starts thumping when I feel his eyes on me, watching me. I blink hard and look up at him. His pale blue eyes shine into mine then flicker down to my lips. My heart flips when I notice the look in his eyes, the look of...lust.

Suddenly, he strides towards me, keeping his eyes on my lips. I suck in a breath as he grabs the side of my face and my waist, pivoting me round so my back hits the wall. His chest is heaving, pressing against mine.

Then he kisses me. His soft, wet lips press hard against mine, making every cell in my body dance. His beard grazes against my chin the way I have always thought it would and the sensation is magnificent. His body rolls and writhes with mine as he parts my lips and slips his tongue into my mouth. I emit a slight mewl of delight as our tongues brush against each others. This is actually happening! This is actually happening...isn't it?

I subtly bring my arm across my chest and pinch myself. *Ouch!* Yep, it's real. Holy crap, this is real!

When I glide my arm back across I make sure to have a cheeky feel of his abs. My fingers brush across the wet material and feel the ripples of his muscles. He feels amazing!

Butterflies swarm around my stomach as I kiss him deeper. My leg hitches up his thigh and my heart flips when I feel his hand clasping under my knee, holding me in place. I smile against his lips when I dare to lift up my other leg. His hand quickly slips from my jaw and grips under my other knee. Now, I'm sandwiched between Tom and the wall and the only things keeping me up are his grip on my knees and his chest pressed against mine.

My hands run from his jaw line up the back of his head, feeling his wet, tight curl spring between my fingers. In the current position that I am in, his crotch is pressing right against mine. I feel warmth spread between my legs when I feel his bulge getting bigger. The thin, loose material of his shorts is not restricting anything.

As our bodies roll against each others, our clothes stick together and rub against me, driving me wild with lust. His hands run up my thighs to my ass and he pulls me closer to him causing me to emit a surprised whimper. He moans slightly into my mouth when his kiss starts to become more hungry and urgent. I grip the back of his neck tightly and keep up with his rhythm, my tongue darting around his mouth.

Suddenly, he breaks the kiss and presses his hands against the wall either side of my head. We're both panting heavily, our chests heaving. He draws away from me slightly so I relax my thigh grip on him and slip down the wall back onto my feet. I unclasp my hands from his neck and look at him warily. He's looking down at the floor trying to regain his breath. I stare at him in the heat-filled silence. Finally, he sniffs up and turns to the kitchen.

"I'm going to put the kettle on," he states and leaves.

I'm left stranded in the hallway completely confused. *What the hell just happened?*

Chapter 14: Golden Delicious

After that strange turn of events, I head up to the bathroom to have a shower. I leave the door unlocked just in case Tom wants to join me but I knew that was just wishful thinking. He avoided me for the rest of the day. He couldn't even look at me and the awkwardness between us seemed to have tripled.

As I head to work I wonder whether I should tell Trish about my amazing kiss with Tom. When I reach the restaurant door I decide not to because, seeing how awkward things are now, it was clearly a one time thing. I slip through the restaurant, say hello to Darrell behind the bar and head to the staff room. Trish is securing her apron around her hips and bobs her head up when she hears the door open.

"Oh, hey Ebony," she smiles.

"Tom kissed me!" I blurt out before I even realise.

She blinks at me. Her green eyes wide with shock.

"What?"

I do a weird sort of giddy dance up to her and grip the tops of her arms, beaming at her.

"Tom kissed me!" I repeat, jumping up and down. "He kissed me, he kissed me!"

She shakes her head with wide eyes as if she is still trying to process the information.

"How the hell did that happen?!"

"I don't know but it did!" I grin. "And it was so amazing!"

"But...but...he's your mum's boyfriend!" She shakes her head and pushes me back. "Ebony, are you saying that your mum's boyfriend *kissed* you?"

My heart plummets when I see the judgement in her eyes. "Well...yeah. But it's Tom, Trish, *Tom*."

"I know it's Tom and you have a mad crush on him, Ebony, but that doesn't make this right. Are you going to tell your mum?"

"No, of course I'm not."

"Why not?"

I suddenly become very flustered. "Because it's not my place to say. And maybe it will stop. I mean, I don't know if it has already stopped. It was just one kiss. God, can't you just be happy for me?"

Her eyebrows knit together. "I would be happy for you, Eb, if he wasn't your mum's boyfriend."

I grit my teeth. "I've had enough of this. Forget I said anything."

"No, Eb-"

Golden Delicious

I spin around and head out.

We don't speak to each other for the rest of the day. I don't even make eye contact with her. Anger burns inside me at how she reacted. Since when did Trish get a moral code? *She's* the girl that sleeps with guys and never calls them back. I'm the one that finally kissed the man of her dreams. I shouldn't be the one feeling guilty...and yet...now I do. Oh, *thanks* Trish.

I go home, get dressed and slump onto the sofa. Avoiding Trish has really tired me out. No one else is home so I can relax. Then I go rigid. I hear a car parking up in my driveway. It's either my mum or Tom. Not wanting to run into any more awkwardness, I head upstairs before the door opens.

It's half six when my mum calls me down for tea. My stomach knots as I head downstairs. My mum and Tom are already sat at the dining table, tucking into their meal and mine sits in front of an empty chair, opposite Tom. My mum smiles at me. Tom doesn't register my existence. I smile weakly back and drop onto my chair. Tom's posture stiffens for a fraction of a second before relaxing again.

"Hey, I was thinking-" my mum cuts the deafening silence, making Tom and I jump a little. She points her fork at me. "I was thinking maybe we could have a movie night tonight? It feels like we haven't all been together for a while."

Tom's pale blue eyes widen. He gulps and they shift to me. I stare back at him. Panic floods them.

"So...what do you say?" asks mum, completely oblivious.

"Erm..." I clear my dry throat. "I have stuff to do..."

Mum rolls her eyes. "No you don't. We have plenty of DVD's. You can pick it if you'd like?"

"I actually have some portfolio work to get on with," Tom says. My mum pouts at him.

"Awh, c'mon. I'm sure you can just spare a few hours"

Tom gulps. "Okay, fine."

"Great." Mum grins and continues eating.

Tom gives me a wary look. I shrug in response. *We tried.*

I chose an action film and sank into the sofa. Mum sits beside me and Tom sits in his chair.

"What are you doing?"

Tom's forehead wrinkles and he turns to my mum. She pats on the sofa. "Get over here."

He reluctantly gets up and sits on the sofa beside her so she is in between us.

Throughout the film, I try my best to ignore Tom. My mum is like a wall between us. I can't see him and I'm thankful.

But about an hour into the film, my mum does her usual trick. She sighs heavily and stands.

Golden Delicious

"I've had enough. Tell me when it's over," she yawns. "Gonna have a nap."

A shiver crawls up my back when I feel Tom's eyes on me.

"There's only like...forty minutes left, Sharon," he says.

She looks at the screen, contemplating, and then shakes her head. "It's not for me. Wake me up when it's over?"

Tom sighs, "Sure."

She squeezes past me and heads upstairs. Tom's hands are on his lap. As usual, he's sitting like a whore with his legs parted and his crotch on full display. I chew my lip and pull my eyes back to the screen. I'm sat stiffly. I try to relax but I can't. The room is dark, silence falls like a blanket over us. The telly is loud but I'm not concentrating on it. My pulse thumps rapidly in my ears. The lights from the screen flicker and paint his face, accentuating his magnificent cheekbones and jaw line.

Our eyes widen and I pull mine back to the screen. *Oh great, a sex scene.* Why are there always sex scenes in every bloody film?! Oh and it's so graphic...

I feel my body cringe back. Tom digs his fingertips into his jeans. I can tell he is fighting with himself, not knowing what to do. We both sit there in the dark, silence, watching two actors getting freaky. The both moan in unison and I silently curse myself at what it is doing to my body. My stomach starts to flutter, my panties starts to dampen, and my pussy starts to throb.

He continues to pound into the woman while she's lay on her back, sprawled naked across a table. *Oh God, please stop. Stop. Now. Please. No? Seriously? How long is this bloody scene! Does it actually have anything to do with the plot?! Oh, now he's flipped her over. I'm basically watching porn with my mum's boyfriend! Oh, it's so awkward! Bloody hell...can he hurry up and finish already?!*

I gulp and turn warily to Tom. My heart flips. He's staring right back at me. The screen lights up half his beautiful face. He's looking at me yet not looking at me. There's a far away look in his eyes as if he is looking right through me. Butterflies flutter around my stomach. I recognise that look. It's the look he has right before he kissed me.

He wavers and looks back at the screen. All the tension in my shoulders drops. My eyes flicker to his crotch. The warmth between my thighs intensifies when I notice his bulge.

"Oh what the hell?" he mumbles under his breath and the next minute, his lips are on mine.

Chapter 15: Golden Delicious

My sharp, surprised mewl is muffled by his mouth. My body feels like it's on fire. Our tongues brush, soft and sensually. I wrap my arms around his slim waist and draw him closer to me. My heart flips when he moans at my touch. He presses his chest against mine. My head feels fuzzy. It's all too much. I *need* him.

I reach out and blindly find his hand. I wrap mine over his and guide him to the waistband of my jeans. His long fingers take the lead and he unbuttons and unzips me like a professional, not even having to break our kiss. My skin covers in gooseflesh when I feel his fingertips at the waistband of my panties. My heart starts to thump. His fingers continue down, over the material until he cups my aching pussy. I moan softly and bring my hands to his head, curling my fingers into his hair as our tongues dance. He begins to rub two fingers up and down the thin fabric so it brushes against me. My hips grind against him but the friction isn't sating my hunger for him. As if noticing that the pleasure wasn't enough, he starting rubbing me vigorously, curling his fingers slightly and kissing me deeper.

Our bodies writhe together. His slender shoulders roll forwards as his tongue delves into my mouth. I grab his hips and pull him closer. His crotch presses into the inside of my thigh making my eyes roll back. He's so hard. My fingers fumble as I grab his shirt buttons and I start to pop them open. His mouth leaves mine and his soft, thin lips start to trail down my neck. My back arches and content sighs leave me as he sucks lightly on my skin while he still rubs his fingers against my now sodden panties. My hands slip down to his exposed collarbone. I run my fingers along it then down his chest. God, he's smooth like silk. It's all getting too much for me. My eyes roll back when his lips find a tender spot on my neck. My stomach churns with hunger...hunger for him. As I rock my hips, his erection brushes against my thigh. I have to have him. I feel like if I don't have him inside me I'm going to die.

I hurriedly find his fly and begin tugging it down. His bulge is almost causing it to burst. My heart is drumming fast and I'm breathing like a race horse. Tom continues sucking and nuzzling my neck, allowing me to try to free him.

"Is the movie over yet?"

Tom quickly jolts back. His pale blue eyes are wide, staring into mine with fear alight in them. I hurriedly place my hands back to my sides as my mum makes her way down the stairs. But I still feel Tom's hand between my thighs. I give him a worried look. He gulps and tugs his arm but his hand is lodged in my skinny jeans and isn't budging.

Just before mum comes close enough to see us, I grab a pillow and shove it over my lap.

"Finally, it's finished."

We both turn to the screen. The credits are rolling. Tom laughs nervously.

"It only just finished. I was going to call you down," he says after clearing his throat.

"Was it any good?"

Tom and I share a look. I try to ignore his hand down my pants but it's very distracting. His fingers have frozen but they're still sending butterflies whirling around my stomach. Luckily, I was only able to unbutton the first two buttons of his shirt so it's not that noticeable.

Golden Delicious

"It was..." He stares into my eyes then blinks hard and looks up at my mum. "Interesting."

I clear my throat. "Yeah."

She shrugs. "Anyway, want a brew?"

"That sounds lovely," says Tom showing her his charming smile. She smiles back and heads towards the kitchen. When she is safely out of sight, I shuffle my body until Tom can release his hand. He lets out a huge sigh of relief and collapses back onto the sofa.

"That was close," I laugh awkwardly. He runs his hand over his forehead with closed eyes. He looks so troubled. It melts my heart.

"Too close," he finally says.

It's seven in the morning, I bounce down stairs in my joggers and vest top. I pause in the hallway. Tom's running shoes are not by the door like they usually are. The tap runs in the kitchen. I spin round and follow the noise. My heart smacks against my ribcage when I see Tom at the sink with his back to me, chugging down at glass of water. He's wearing his running gear. A v-shaped sweat stain falls between his shoulder blades. I chew my lip and clench my thighs together at the sudden burning need between them as my eyes trail down to his bum which is nestled snugly in his tight, black licra shorts.

"Tom?"

He pauses at my voice. He places his glass on the side and bows his head. My stomach drops.

"You went running without me?" I ask.

"I woke up early," he replies helplessly, not looking at me.

"You're trying to avoid me again."

His hands grip the edge of the counter. "Can you blame me?"

"Look, about what happened last night-"

"-Don't," he snaps, whipping his head to the side but still not looking at me. "Don't talk about it."

I feel a lump swell in my throat. "I always thought you didn't have a bad bone in your body but what you're doing to me now..." my voice trails off, tears swell in my eyes. "...it hurts."

His jaw sets and he glares at the wall.

"Figure out what you want, Tom." I state and turn around. I expect him to say something but he doesn't so I head off for my weekly morning run alone with the sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach.

Golden Delicious

"So, has anything else happened between you and Tom?" Trish asks, resting her forearms on the bar. I eye her cautiously, trying to figure out her emotion. She seems actually interested.

"Do you really want to know?"

"Yeah."

"...so you can tell me what a horrible person I am?"

She sighs. "No. I'm sorry about before. I was just concerned. You've gotten yourself into a very tricky situation, Eb. I was looking out for my friend."

My eyes shift to the bar. "I know you were," I say sheepishly. "And to answer your question, yes, we kissed again."

Silence follows. Worried, I look up and see Trish cringing.

"I know," I groan and put my head in my hands. "He's trying to avoid me now. I think he's confused. Hell, I'm confused!" I mumble incoherently into my palms, sinking lower and lower until my forehead hits the bar. "And my mum nearly caught us..."

"What?!"

"I know..." I squirm. "God, this sucks."

I refused to take the conversation any further because the mixture of anguish and anger was tearing me up from the inside. I couldn't take it anymore. How could finally being noticed by Tom in the way I always dreamed of be this bad? I mean...it felt good...it felt *great*...but in the end I just feel ashamed.

Back at home, Tom was still not looking at me so I decided to take matters into my own hands. When mum was upstairs in the bath, I found Tom sat in his usual chair channel hopping. I slump down onto the sofa and notice his grip tighten on the remote as he stares at the screen.

"I booked a hotel room in the travel lodge," I state.

His eyebrows furrow.

"I'm going to be there tonight. I'll text you the room number." I stand and make my way out the room but pause beside him. He tenses up at our close proximity. "I hope you will join me," I add before leaving.

Chapter 16: Golden Delicious

I'm lying on the double bed on my stomach with my ankles crossed in the air. The remote sits in my hand and I idly channel flick. Yes, I'm alone. It's been an hour since I texted Tom the room number. I really hope I didn't scare him off. But surely he wanted this as much as I did? What about the extremely passionate kissing? He must want me. I know he doesn't want to be a cheater but look at what we have already done. My mum is completely clueless. That shows how much attention she pays to Tom.

Suddenly, there's a knock at the door. My heart thumps and I quickly flick the telly off. I get up and straighten my top then cross over to the door. I suck in a breath and open it. Butterflies swarm around my stomach when I see Tom stood there in a pale navy shirt, a thin leather jacket and snug fitting jeans. He shows me a slightly melancholy smile and I step to the side to let him in. He steps in and I shut the door behind him.

"I thought you weren't going to show," I say.

"I almost didn't," he sighs, taking in the room then looking back at me. "But I couldn't stay away."

I want to cry with happiness. He looks so handsome stood there in front of the double bed. He sits down on the edge of it and runs his palm along the soft duvet, watching it crease under his touch. Unable to stay away any longer, I make my way over to him. At the sound of my footsteps, he turns back and looks up at me. Without a word, I straddle him. He lets out a soft, satisfied sigh as I lower myself onto his lap. His pale eyes scan my face, taking in every inch of it. His hand settles on the side of my face and I press myself into it, feeling the softness of his skin against mine. His thumb then trails along my jaw line to my lower lip. It runs across it and I quickly part my lips so it slips into my mouth. He gasps a little when I bite down lightly on it then start to suck it. Smiling, he withdraws his thumb and replaces it with his tongue. I wrap my arms around his neck and pull him closer to me, deepening our kiss. His hands slip up my sides, ruffling up my top. As we kiss, my body rocks against him and I can feel him getting hard underneath me.

His hands then run back down my sides to the hem of my top. He pulls it up a little and my heart flutters with excitement. But then he stops. He pulls his lips from mine and looks into my eyes, worry set in his.

"I hope I'm not going too fast."

I laugh at his cuteness. "I jumped into a shower with you, remember?"

He smiles. "How could I forget?"

Aha! I knew he liked it!

We smile into each others eyes and continue kissing as he pushes up my top. We only break lips for him to tug to over my head. I push his jacket off his shoulders and they both drop to the floor with a thud. I cup his face and claim his mouth again. My body flushes and sizzles when his hands run up my back to my bra clasp. He pops it open with one hand then slips the straps down my arms. I pull my lips from his and extend my arms to he can tug it off them. Even though I'm now sat in front of him with my breasts on full show, his eyes never break from mine. He grabs my waist and draws me closer to him so my breasts smack against his chest and he kisses me deeply on the lips then trails his lips down my neck to my shoulder. My hard nipples are pressed into his chest and the soft kisses he is planting on my shoulder is making the heat between my thighs unbearable.

"I want you inside me," I moan then freeze. *Did I just say that out loud?! Where the hell did that come from?!*

Golden Delicious

He laughs against my skin.

I let out a happy yip when he grabs my ass and pulls me close to him. He stands and I quickly lock my thighs around his waist so I don't lose contact with him. He turns us round carefully and lies me down on the bed with my head resting on the pillow. He stands at the side of the bed, leaning over me. I smile and run my finger along the side of his face. He kisses my hand then presses his hands into the pillow either side of my head. He pushes his feet from the floor and he lifts over me like some spectacular gymnast. He moves with so much elegance and grace that when he lands side on, beside me, the bed springs hardly move.

We both gaze into each other eyes in a moment of silence. I can't believe I'm here, in bed, with Tom!

He tugs his top over his head and throws it onto the floor to join the rest of our discarded clothing. He rushes in for a kiss while he unfastens his jeans. I kiss him back and help him. He tugs them down his legs along with his boxers and kicks them off along with his shoes so they fall off the end of the bed. My eyes bug at the sight of his erection. He is huge. I know I saw him in the shower but I must have somehow forgotten. No wonder he always sits with his legs spread-eagle. I bet he can't even close his thighs!

Seeing him ready in front of me drives me wild with lust and I hurriedly work on the zipper of my jeans and pull them down with my panties. We're both lay side by side, admiring each others naked bodies. I turn on my side and so does he, pushing a piece of hair behind my ear. He leans in to kiss me and I gladly accept his lips. They brush against mine ever so slightly, sending shockwaves through my body. His tongue flicks mine before I wrap my hand round his neck and push his mouth against mine hungrily. My thigh slips up his so my knee is up his back. I can feel him pressing into my inner thigh and I let out a soft moan into his mouth. He must notice my desperation to have him because he grips my ass and lifts me onto him. I break the kiss and press my forehead against his as I feel him entering me. I haven't had sex in months. I can't believe how much I have missed this feeling!

He eases into me slowly, making me emit breathy moans. My hands press into his shoulders and my head tips back, my back arches so we're chest to chest and I cum almost instantly at the feeling of being filled completely. He lets out a soft moan and starts kissing my elongated neck. Everything seems to be happening in sensuous slow motion. I'm heightened to everything. His hands squeeze my ass in a delicate way rather than with a sense of vulgarity as he pushes himself slowly in and out of me with long, deep thrusts. I rock my hip gently against his, grinding my throbbing clit against his shaft. I lower my head and he smiles when his eyes meet mine. My heart flips and I delve my tongue into his mouth. Our legs tangle together as we rock against each other in a delicious daze and I run my hand down his smooth back to his ass, feeling it clench and relax with every thrust.

I continue to ride him gently, enjoying the feeling of his warm body so close to mine. It feels like we've been doing this for hours. He's made me orgasm three times already and every time I moan he watches my face twist in pleasure with this pensive, loving look in his pale blue eyes. This feels so right. How could something feel so right be so wrong?

A light coat of sweat covers both our bodies making my breasts stick to his chest. He rolls over me so he's on top of me, his slim waist between my thighs. He has slipped out of me with his motion and now the tip of his cock is pressing at my entrance. I wrap my thighs around him and lock my arms round his neck while he buries his face into the curve of my neck. His hand grabs my ass and he pushes me up slightly then back down on him, making me stretch around his glorious length. I moan over his strong shoulders as he pushes himself in and out of me at a faster pace. I rock my hips against him and mewl his name every time he hits my sweet spot.

"Oh, *Tom*."

Golden Delicious

"*Ebby*," he moans back, setting my body on fire. "Ebby...can I..." he trails off.

I furrow my brows and look up at him. His pale blue eyes shine down at me. He stops his thrusts and tries to catch his breath.

"Can I finish inside you?"

My heart drums against my chest. I run my hands up his sides then touch his face.

"Yes, yes you can. I'm on the pill. It's fine," I rush with excited butterflies swarming around my stomach at the thought.

He lets out a sigh of relief and captures my lips with his. His tongue probes my mouth ever so slightly before he breaks the kiss and pushes himself back into me. I gasp and arch my back, holding him close to me.

His nose rubs across my jaw line and his lips find mine. I grind my hips against him faster, desperately wanting to feel him shoot his seed inside me. He grips my ass tighter and meets my hurrying pace, fucking me hard and deep. Seconds later his head tips back and he emits a shaky moan. His body tenses above me as he releases himself inside me. I reach my peak at the same time and I cling onto him as I let out a drawn out whimper, when I experience the most intense orgasm I have ever felt. It seemed to spark from every cell in my body, ripping me apart from the inside...but in a deliciously, intoxicating way that sent my eyes rolling back and my body to writhe with the waves coursing through me.

I'm left panting when it finally subsides, my head whirling. Tom is lying over me, recovering from his orgasm as well. He collapses, our sweaty bodies sticking together. He drops his head over my shoulder, panting heavily into my ear.

Chapter 17: Golden Delicious

I splay my fingers out, feeling the softness of Tom's chest beneath me. My head is against him and I rise and fall with every steady breath he takes. My eyes are closed as I nuzzle into the curve of his neck and breathe in his musky scent. His arm is around me and I can feel his thumb making lazy circular patterns just above my ass. *God, I want to stay like this forever.* I press my lips into his neck softly and roll my eyes open. My heart plummets. His head is resting against the headboard and he is staring ahead with this troubled, distant look in his eyes.

"Morning..." I say warily and touch his face. He blinks hard but his gaze stays routed to the far wall.

"Morning," he replies with a sigh.

I roll off him and shuffle up so my back is against the headboard. He shuffles up too and pulls the cover with us so it covers our naked chests.

"Are you okay?" I ask.

He gulps, still not looking at me. "I just slept with my girlfriend's daughter..."

My stomach knots. "I know this situation isn't perfect."

He shakes his head, runs his fingers through his hair and lets out a frustrated sigh. "Oh God, what have I done? I shouldn't have come yesterday. I knew it was wrong but..."

I shuffle about so I'm side on from him. "But you did come. I know you have feelings for me, Tom."

His eyes shift to me. My blood runs cold and my heart flutters when his pale blue eyes look deep into mine.

"You told me in your sleep." I continue. His eyebrows furrow. "You were sleepwalking a couple of nights ago. You confessed that you had feelings for me. You've been having trouble sleeping, haven't you?"

His eyes narrow curiously. "That...was real? I remember..."

I nod. "Yeah, it was real."

"Oh..." he whispers and looks back to the wall.

"Yesterday I told you that you needed to figure out what you wanted. You came here. Does that mean that I am what you want?"

He stares at the wall. I feel like my heart's stopped as the silence consumes us. I gulp, bracing myself for his answer.

"Yes." He states. My heart crashes against my ribcage. "No. I don't know."

I furrow my brows. "What do you mean *you don't know*?"

He sighs.

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"Do you love my mum?"

He winces. "I thought I did..."

"So, what happened?"

"You." He turns back to me. "You, Ebby. You happened."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

He sighs. "Lately, Sharon and I haven't been spending much time together. We don't really do the things that couples do..."

He looks deep into my eyes. The pain in them hits me like a tonne of bricks. "...but we do."

He nods stiffly. "It's gotten to a point where Sharon isn't the person I want to see at the end of the day. It's you."

My heart flutters. I get ready to smile but the anguish in his face tells me that it's inappropriate so I stop myself.

"I tried to fight those feelings. You're Sharon's daughter for Christ's sake," he snaps at himself and runs his fingers through his curls, looking down. "I thought I could get over it. But then that day in the shower..." I cringe. "When I knew you felt the same, I knew things had gone too far. I needed to distance myself from you."

"But you kissed me."

He gulps and looks back at me. "I know. I just...I couldn't take it anymore."

"So...if you don't want to be with my mum, you've chosen me, right?" I ask again, needing a straight answer.

He nods and looks down at his lap.

"Then...you need to end it with my mum."

He hisses with pain and runs his fingers through his hair. "I know I do but it's not that simple."

My teeth grit together. "How is it not that simple?"

"Because, Ebby." His head bounces up and his eyes latch onto mine. My blood runs cold at the fiery look in his blue pools. "Because you're Sharon's *daughter*. Do you really think I can end my relationship with her and just start a new one with you? There can be no happy ending for us, Ebby."

I feel like I've just been punched in the face. I just want to unzip myself and crawl out. I gulp hard. Tears burn the backs of my eyes.

"Is that what you want? Do you want to have a happy ending with me?"

His expression softens. "Of course I do but..."

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"Shhh..." I press my finger to his lips, silencing him. "Don't say anything else."

I lower my finger and he stays quiet. I slip out from under the cover and put on my panties and top. His eyes are on me as I head down the room to the bathroom.

"I'm going to have a shower." I open the door and twirl around. "You can join me if you'd like?"

Tom just looks at me. My heart sinks. *Too soon, Ebony, too soon.* I cringe at my own words and lock myself in the bathroom.

Chapter 18: Golden Delicious

"Why are you so cheery?" Trish eyes me up when I slip into the staff room. I wrap my apron around my waist nonchalantly.

"I don't kiss and tell."

She scoffs. "Well that's a lie."

My head bounces up. A massive grin is plastered on my face. I can't help it. My heart is still fluttering.

"Tom and I did it."

She blinks. "You and Tom did...*what?*"

I lean in and whisper giddily. "We had *sex*."

She actually chokes on her breath. "*What?*" she wheezes. "You had...what about your mum? Are they finished?"

My stomach knots. "Well...no." I squirm. "But he told me that he and my mum aren't working out and that he wants to be with me." I shrug. "So, it's only a matter of time."

"...before you date your mum's recent ex-boyfriend?" She arches her eyebrow.

My shoulders sag. "Less of the judgement, Trish. Please?"

"I'm just looking out for you."

"I know," I smile, "and I thank you for that. But I'm a big girl, I can look after myself," I say and begin to head out of the room. She follows me.

"I know you can look after yourself but when it comes to Tom, you are completely dick-whipped."

I splutter a laugh as we stop behind the bar. I spin to her. "Dick-whipped? Is that a thing?"

"Of course it's a thing and you have a serious case of it."

I roll my eyes with a laugh and get on my tip-toes to look over her head at the filling tables in my section.

"Speaking of which...details please."

I look down to her. Her green eyes are glistening at me expectantly.

I shake my head. "Not going to happen. That's sleazy."

"Awh, I can tell you want to. It is *Tom* after all. I can't help but be curious."

"Okay!" I rush giddily and sink my elbows onto the bar. She leans next to me, our arms touching. "Y'know when you want something for so long and when you finally get it, you think that it's not going to live up to

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how you had envisioned it?"

She frowns a little. "...yeah."

I grin. "Well that totally didn't happen! In fact, it was the complete opposite. He was *amazing*. I mean, *seriously*. I know I have been out of action for a *very* long time and I can't compare him to many people but he is *incredible*."

She also seems to be coming down with the giddy jitters because she clasps her hands together and grins. "Is he big? I bet he's big. Oh my god, he's big isn't he?!"

"Ladies!" Darrell cuts between us, scaring the crap out of Trish.

"Hey Darrell." I smile innocently.

He scowls. "Enough of that inappropriate chatter and more working."

"But Darrell, we were just talking about Ebony's cousin. We were just saying he's getting bigger."

"Yeah," I confirm. "He's growing up so fast."

He looks unconvinced. "Yeah, and I was born yesterday."

We show him guilty smiles.

"Now get doing what I pay you to do. There are tables that need serving."

"Okay, okay." Trish rolls her eyes and heads down the restaurant. I follow her.

She leans into my ear as we walk side by side and whispers. "You still haven't answered me."

I snort. "I'll let your mind wander on that one."

"No fair!" she whines.

"Anyway," I spin round. "I'm not like you. I don't just care about what's in his pants. It's what's in his heart that counts."

She stops at a full table, pulls a face then pretends to dry heave.

"Oh, shut up," I laugh and spin round.

She laughs and turns to the family in front of her. "Hi, my name is Trish and I'll be your waitress today. Can I get you all some drinks?"

After last night with Tom, I had gotten dressed at the hotel and went straight to work. I think Tom did the same so we haven't actually been home since then and as I head back, I'm starting to get very anxious. Has Tom dumped my mum? Will I come home to her curled up on the sofa with mascara stains down her face and digging into a pot of Ben and Jerry's? My heart swells. I don't want that to happen. I want to be with Tom but

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I don't want my mum to get hurt.

Sucking in a breath, I open the front door.

"Oh, hey hun." My mum turns from the mirror in our hallway and smiles at me. She's slotting a hoop ear-ring into her ear. Her face is fully made up and she's wearing a figure hugging black dress with tights and heels. Her long blonde hair waves down her back.

"Where are you off to?" I ask.

"Me and the girls are going out for a meal. Sorry I can't make tea today but Tom's here, I'm sure he can whip you up something."

My stomach knots. He hasn't dumped her. Yeah, I was happy my mum wasn't upset but what the hell did that mean for Tom and me?

My mum checks herself in the mirror before heading into the kitchen. I follow her.

"When will you be back?" I ask, suddenly nervous about being in the house alone with Tom. She grabs her purse from the counter.

"I don't know. No later than eleven I'm guessing."

My eyes fall onto a huge bouquet of flowers sitting in the vase in the middle of our dining table. Mum smiles when she sees what I'm looking at.

"Aren't they beautiful? Tom got them for me. He's such a sweetie."

I grimace. What my mum thinks are *I'm-an-impulse-sweetheart* flowers are actually *I'm-sorry-I-slept-with-your-daughter* flowers. Men only buy women flowers if it's a special occasion or they are guilty about something. Tom feels guilty but he hasn't dumped my mum? What is his deal?

My mum glances down at her watch. "Right, I'm off. Tom's upstairs." She places a heavy kiss on my forehead and slips past me. "Bye."

"Bye..." I mumble to myself then hear the front door open and close behind her. I shudder. Tom's upstairs? How is he going to act?

I jog upstairs and shut myself in my room. I strip out of my ugly uniform and replace it with a pair of joggers and a vest top. I shove my hair into a messy bun and pause at my door. Should I stay in my bedroom all night to avoid him? No. When he was avoiding me it was driving me insane. I can't do the same to him. Plus...I have to eat. I suck in a breath and open my door just as Tom's shadow disappears from the hallway. Crap, he's downstairs.

My heart is drumming against my chest and I head down the stairs and drop myself casually on the sofa. Tom tenses in his chair but keeps his eyes on the screen, watching the episode of *Downton Abbey* he has recorded. I sigh heavily to get his attention. He gulps.

"Are we going to talk about last night?" I ask. He presses pause. My heart stammers. Silence fills the air.

"I don't like hurting people," he states, not looking at me.

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"You made your choice to be with me last night. You can't have both of us, Tom."

He squeezes his eyes shut. "I know, I know." His hands turn to fists on the arms of the chair. "I just...I'm really bad with break ups."

I scoff. "No one is good with break ups."

He sighs. "But as I said before, if I break up with Sharon, it doesn't solve anything with us."

"If?" I gasp. "If you break up with her? Tom, you slept with me last night. You have to break up with her." My jaw clenches. "Look at me!"

He blinks hard and finally turns. Tears wet his eyes and the sight makes my heart plummet. Something changes in his gaze when his eyes find mine. His eyes soften and widen. Then his jaw sets.

"What?" I ask, a little unnerved.

"What we did last night was wrong yet-" he breaks off.

I furrow my brows. "Yet..?"

He gulps. "Yet, when I look at you...I remember how wonderful it was. I remember how I felt when I had you in my arms and..." Tears form in his eyes. "...I want you."

My heart fumbles. My palms start to sweat. I clench my thighs at the heat between them. I want him too. So badly.

He blinks hard, breaking our intense, longing look. He clears his throat and nods back to the kitchen. "What do you want for tea? I guess I'm the cook tonight." He laughs a little.

I let out a content sigh. "How about we just get take out and head upstairs?"

His eyes widen at the screen and he cricks his neck. "Erh..." he says shakily then turns to me. I cock my head inquisitively and stand, extending my hand towards him. He looks down at it, gulps, then takes it. Just his touch sets my body alight. "Okay."

Chapter 19: Golden Delicious

I don't even make it to the stairs before Tom spins me round and my back smacks against the wall. I mewl with excitement as lust washes over me. He presses his chest against mine, holding me in place. His hands wrap around my neck, tilting my chin up as his lips cover mine. I hook my fingers round the belt loops of his jeans and pull him closer to me so his crotch presses against mine. I moan into his mouth as I feel his erection straining against his jeans.

Our tongues intertwine. Our hearts crash against each others. We breathe heavily through our nostrils as we deepen the hurried, primal kiss. I lift my hands and fumble with the buttons of his cardigan then push it off his shoulders. He takes his hands off me to let the sleeves slip off and it drops to the floor. He tugs up my vest top of pulls it over my head so it joins his cardigan at the foot of the stairs. I kiss him again before I take his hand and guide him up the stairs.

When we get to the landing, I head for my bedroom door and Tom heads for my mums. Our arms stretch between us, yanking us to a stop at both doors. We turn to each other.

"My room," I say, breathlessly.

"This one has a double bed," he replies. His chest is heaving.

I step closer to him so our arms drop a little. "Are you serious?" I raise an eyebrow. "You want to cheat on my mum in her *own* bed? You do understand that that is like...the ultimate betrayal, don't you?"

His eyebrow lifts up helplessly. My knees go weak. I know it sounds stupid but that eyebrow really does stuff to me, the way his right eyebrow lifts considerably higher than his left, making his perfectly smooth forehead wrinkle like two separate ladders.

"You make me do crazy things," he admits sheepishly.

A moan escapes me. I let go of his hand and run to him, clasping my hands around his neck and pulling him down to my level so I can reach his lips. He strokes my tongue with his before I pull away.

I try to regain my breath as I look deep into his pale eyes. "I know the feeling."

He spins me round and backs me up into the bedroom. I hold onto him to make sure I don't fall and my stomach flips when my legs hit the bed. He breaks our kiss. I smile up at him and crawl onto the bed, spinning round onto my back and resting my head against the pillow. I part my thighs and he kneels between them, his eyes glued to mine. My stomach contorts with anticipation as I lift my hands to the rim of his top and start to pull it up, revealing his lean torso. He lifts his arms to allow me to pull it over his head then he leans down and pops open my bra clasp. I throw my bra on the floor and work on his fly with shaking fingers. My adrenaline is making my whole body hum. He pushes his jeans off along with his boxers. I emit a mewl and squirm on the bed as my eyes hit his erection. He smiles at my response and starts to tug down my joggers and panties. I lift my ass on the bed so he can yank them down. He pushes the off my feet and flings them off the end of the bed, not caring where they land.

He stays knelt between my legs, his pale eyes filled with lust as they trace every inch of my body. My skin tingles under his gaze. My heart flips. There is something else in his eyes. Something that could draw this to a close. *Guilt*. Fearing that this will all be over before it's begun, I try to speed things along and make his desire for me cloud his morals.

Golden Delicious

I slip my hand down my body and cup my pussy. His eyes widen as he watches me push a finger into my wet entrance. My back arches and I emit a breathy moan. I push my finger in and out, watching his jaw clench as he tries to restrain himself. I pull out and run my wet finger up the centre of my body, leaving a damp trail that stops between my breasts.

He cups his hands under my tucked up knees. My skin sizzles at his touch, alighting every cell in my body. His soft palms stroke up the backs of my thighs as he lowers himself over me, licking up the trail from my mound to my breasts. I moan and lift myself up, feeling his hot, wet tongue on my inflamed skin. He pauses when he reaches the crevice between my breasts. He looks up at me. I smile and run my fingers through his curls then trail my hand down his back and squeeze his ass, pushing him closer to me, signalling him to enter me.

He recoils himself; pressing light kisses down my stomach before he kneels between my legs once more, his back straight as he looks down at me. One hand slips under my ass, pulling me closer to him and the other presses down on my shoulder, holding me in place. I lift my lower half closer to him and wrap my legs around his waist as he angles himself and pushes into me.

My back arches, my jaw hangs open, my eyes bulge as I feel his cock stretching me. His eyes stay locked to mine. His jaw also hangs open as he pushes himself into my moist depth.

"Tom," I moan, pressing my flat palms on his shoulders. The way he is slowly entering me makes me feel like I'm losing my virginity all over again. I can feel him. Every inch of him.

Once he is buried to his hilt, he pulls out slowly. I sigh as he slips out of me almost all the way before thrusting himself in again, this time, sharper and faster. I wasn't expecting it. My hands ball into fists against his shoulders.

He continues to work much faster but still as gentle, stroking himself inside me. My back brushes against the bed as I rock my hips with his pace. He hitches my ass higher, cupping under my knee and entering me deeper.

"God, *Tom*," I moan, tipping my head back.

I wrap my hands round his neck and pull myself up, kissing him hard on the lips. He pushes mine open with his tongue and leans back, pulling me up with him so I'm sat on his lap with him still buried deep inside me. I break our kiss but press my forehead against his and keep our lips aligned as I rock against him so I moan into his mouth. His hands circle my waist and he pushes me down onto him harder, moaning back into my mouth and brushing his lips against mine lazily. I cum in this position. My fingers curl into his neck and my body shudders against him. My head tips back as a moan cascades out of me. Whilst I'm still riding the waves of pleasure, Tom pushes me back down onto the bed and clambers over me, kissing my breasts and drilling into me more vigorously so my orgasm feels like it's going to rip me in two. I clutch his head, pressing his lips against the underside of my breast as my body spasms. With one final thrust, Tom finishes. I feel him shoot inside me. He groans against my skin then collapses onto me with his head nestled between my breasts.

I close my eyes and try to regain my breath, languidly brushing my fingers through his curls. He sighs contently and nuzzles his face deeper into my cleavage making me giggle.

After a few heavy breaths seemed to simmer, Tom dresses and heads downstairs to order us a pizza. I shuffle to the end of the bed a few minutes later and start to dress. I put on my bra and remember that my vest is at the foot of the stairs. I find my joggers on the floor but I can't see my panties anywhere. I look under the bed. Not there.

Golden Delicious

I look up and my stomach churns. On my mum's side of the bed, there's a picture frame. I sit on the edge of the bed and look at the picture. It's her and Tom in front of the Eiffel Tower. Tom's holding the camera at arms length so it's a little off-centre. My heart swells. They look so in love. *God, what am I doing?* Tom is a great guy and I've turned him into a cheater.

"The pizza will be here in twenty minutes!" Tom calls up the stairs.

I jump at the sound of his voice and try to push those horrible thought out of my head.

"Okay!" I shout back, shove on my joggers and head down the stairs. *I'll find my panties later.*

Chapter 20: Golden Delicious

The front door opens behind us and we both straighten up on the sofa. I gulp hard and glance at Tom. He has his eyes stuck to the telly but they are wide and full of fear. My mum sighs and laughs a little as her high heels click along the hall floor.

"What a night." She laughs. "Y'know, when Cheryl has some drink in her, she's actually a lot of fun."

Tom laughs a little and looks over the back of the sofa to her. "So she didn't spoil your night, then?"

"Not at all," mum smiles and stands behind him, lacing her fingers through his short curls and massaging his scalp, making him smile with droopy eyes. I watch this from the other end of the sofa. My legs are across the length of it so my feet are on Tom's lap. I don't move. This is normal for us. Well, it was normal before my shower trick and he started to avoid me. Mum notices the empty pizza boxes on the coffee table.

"Take out, really? And here was me thinking you'd be a gentleman and cook for my daughter," she muses. I can tell Tom is suppressing a cringe as he shrugs uneasily with a queasy smile, glancing up at her. I stay silent. "So, did you two have a nice night?"

Tom and I both clear our throats at the same time and mumble something equally incoherent. I say something along the lines of, 'yeah, it was fine' and Tom said something like, 'yeah, nothing special'. We make eye contact. My heart flips. His jaw ripples.

My mum laughs awkwardly. "Okayâwellâ!" She glances at her watch. "I'm off to bed so if you're still watching telly, keep it down will you? Oh, and throw away those boxes."

"Yeah okay," I smile up at her.

"Sure." Nods Tom.

She pulls off the bobble from her wrist and wraps her long, silky hair into a pony tail and bends down, kissing Tom on the forehead. He closes his eyes at the contact. My heart swells and my eyes burn.

She takes off her heels and I watch as she ascends the stairs. Once she's out of sight, I let out a sigh of relief and drop my head back on the armrest. Tom doesn't make a sound. I peer up at him. His eyes are clenched shut. Anguish ripples across his features, wrinkling his perfect skin.

"Tomâ!"

He shakes his head. "I'm going to be sleeping there tonight," he whispers, opening his eyes and gazing ahead. A shiver runs up my spine at the hollowness of his voice. He turns to me. "I slept with her daughterâin her bed." He groans and leans forward, so my feet slip off his lap and drop to the floor. He digs his elbows into his knees and raking his fingers through his curls. "What is wrong with me?"

"Nothing is wrong with you, Tom," I say, my voice breaking a little. "This is hard for both of us. And the longer you wait to finish things with my mum, the harder it's going to get."

His jaw clenches and he squeezes his eyes shut. "I know."

"Ebony!"

Golden Delicious

We both jump at my mum's voice. Tom turns to me, his eyes wide and frantic. My heart is in my throat.

"Yeah?!" I call back, trying to sound casual but my voice had hitched up an octave.

"Come up here a sec!"

Tom gulps. I let out a steady breath and stand. Tom watches me. I place a hand on his knee. "It's fine." At least I hope it is. He just nods a little and sinks back into the sofa.

I head up the stairs and glance back at Tom before he disappears from my view. He's watching me over the back of the sofa, his face solemn. It stings my heart.

"What do you want?" I ask, irritated like I usually would be if my mum dragged me upstairs. But then I freeze when I step into her room. She's stood in her cotton pyjamas with my black lace panties in her hand. The pair I was trying to find. My stomach knots and I can feel myself flushing. *Stop it! Keep it cool!*

"Why were these under the dresser?"

Under the dresser? How the hell *did* they get there?

"Ermâ !" I clear my throat but then I compose myself. "You must have thought they were yours. You're constantly getting our underwear mixed up."

She raises her eyebrow. I freeze. But then she laughs and shakes her head.

"I really need to stop doing that. A few days ago, I tried to get into a pair of your panties. I couldn't even get my leg through! I nearly had a panic attack! I was likeâ 'boy, I've not put that much weight on, have I?!"

I roll my eyes and grab my panties off her. "You're not fat, mum."

She shrugs. "But I could be thinner."

I sigh. My mum is a size 12 and I'm a size 8. There really is hardly any difference but she constantly tries to diet.

"Right." She plonks herself down in front of her desk and grabs her make-up wipes. She gestures to the door. "Scoot. I'm getting ready for bed."

Mentally high-fiving myself for getting out of here alive, I smile. "Night."

But I don't go back downstairs to see Tom. The joy on not being caught quickly subsided and I shut myself in my room when realisation hits me again like a tidal wave. I flopped onto my bed and wrapped my duvet around me. How could I be doing this to my mum? She doesn't deserve this. I'm a horrible, horrible person.

Chapter 21: Golden Delicious

In the morning, I get up bright and early to jog before I head to work. I slip into some tight jogger and a black sports bra. I scrunch my hair into a messy bun and head downstairs. I have my breakfast alone. Mum doesn't wake up for another hour and I'm guessing Tom's still sleeping too.

I plonk my empty cereal bowl in the sink then turn when I hear the laminate creak behind me. Spinning round, my heart flips. Tom is stood by the fridge in a grey sports vest and his sexy black lycra shorts.

"Mind if I join you on your run?" he asks, his bright eyes shining at me.

"Of course not." I smile. "But I thought you might not want to after avoiding me the last time."

He frowns a little. "I'm sorry about that."

I shrug. "It's fine."

A silence falls between us.

"You never came back downstairs last night," he says.

"I know. I just wanted to go to bed."

"I was worried. I thought something bad had happened. But then I came up and you were both fast asleep so I figured it was nothing."

"She found my underwear." I wince. His eyebrow rises. "The panties I was wearing beforeâly'know."

This time, he winces. "You weren't wearing them?"

"I couldn't find them. You flung them under the dresser."

He falls silent and looks to the floor. His jaw clenches a little. Guilt washes over his face. Sad and helpless. But then the darkness in his eyes brightens. His gaze catches my feet, then works its way up my legs, to my bare stomach, then to my face. I gulp when his eyes finally hit mine. He exhales, releasing the tension from his shoulders.

I smile a little when his lips curve ever so slightly. "What?"

His smile widens. "Talking about last night just make me thinkâ!" he trails off, admiring my physique. "You lookâwell."

I laugh a little and arch an eyebrow. "I look *well*?"

"Nice," he rephrased. "You lookânice."

I can feel myself blushing but I try to stay casual and pretend like Tom's beautifully silky voice doesn't make me go all gooey inside.

"Thanks. You don't look too bad yourself."

Golden Delicious

He walks towards me. My breath catches in my throat and I grab onto the counter behind me, bracing myself. He stops in front of me, so close that I can see myself in his dilated pupils as he gazes down at me, his blue pools filled with lust. Then he kisses me. It's gentle at first. So soft I hardly feel it. It is just a peck, as if to test the waters. His eyes flicker from my lips back to my eyes. We watch each other, desire slackening our features. His hands brush my bare sides, sending shockwaves right through my body and making my thighs clench at the heavy heat between them.

He brushes his nose against mine, searching for my lips. His are so close to mine. He breathes lightly into mouth.

"Easy tiger," I breathe, watching his lips. "Don't get yourself too worked up, those shorts of yours aren't going to hide anything."

He laughs a little, a breathy chuckle that makes my heart pound. God, this man will be the death of me. One day, his perfection will all be too much and I'll just keel over and die. So I'm going to enjoy this while I still can. He pushes up my chin with his knuckle and claims my mouth again, this time, completely. I part my lips and our tongues brush. Again, the kiss is soft and gentle just with some added tongue at first, but then our composure quickly shatters and we are left with the unruly, animalistic sides of ourselves that just wants to devour each other and sate the deep, burning desire to have the other fully and completely. Wellâthat's how I feelâI'm just guessing Tom feels the same by the way he's fucking my mouth with his tongue and pressing me up against the counter.

A high-pitched, disappointed mewl rolls out of my mouth when our lips break for a fraction of second as Tom grabs my ass and hoists me up onto the counter. But then I wrap my hands around his neck and press my lips so hard against his, I'm sure they could bruise. Our bodies roll together as his hands caress the bare skin of my stomach and mine run through his hair, down his back to his tight little ass in those delicious shorts.

Something smashes and we both jump, breaking the kiss immediately and look to the kitchen door. My heart drops to my feet. Tom freezes in front of me, his hands still settled on my waist. My heaving chest simmers and every single emotion possible rips through me, showering my body with goosepimples.

Tom gulps. "Sharon."

My mum is stood in her pyjamas, a broken glass shattered around her feet. Her long, blonde hair is slightly tousled from sleeping. Her eyes are wide as she stares, her hand still out in the shape as if she was still holding her glass. She is frozen with shock, horror andâbetrayal.

Finally, she blinks. The tiny movement makes me shudder to life. This is real. This is happening.

"Tom," she says, her voice broken like the glass. Tom drops his hands from me and turns fully towards her, his head hung slightly in shame. Mum glances at me, making my heart feel like a block of ice. But she regards me emptily and brings her attention back to her boyfriend, ignoring me. "Tom, whatâthe hell?"

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry." Already, his voice has cracked and even without seeing his face, I know he's crying. "It wasn't supposed to happen this way. I'm sorry."

My mum's jaw clenches. She has such dainty features, and the look of pure disgust and anger doesn't fit right on them. The sight chills me.

"My daughter, Tom, really?" she asks, pained. "My own daughter!"

Golden Delicious

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry." He's pleading now, edging closer to her. But she steps back and he halts, wavering in the middle of the kitchen, his hands clasped in front of him. "I didn't want to hurt you. I should have told you. I was going to butâ I just couldn't. I'm so sorry."

I hop off the counter and carefully make my way over to my mum. Her blazing eyes are still fixed on Tom.

"Mum," I say softly, standing beside her now. "Mum, let me explain." I go to touch her arm but she jerks away and spins to me as if I've burnt her. My heart leaps.

"Leave, Ebony." She scowls at her boyfriend. "I need to talk to Tom." Her eyes find me again. She looks me up and down at sneers like I'm something she just scraped off her shoe. "I'll get to you later."

It feels like the life has been sucked out of me. Seeing the look of pure distain on my mum's face was like being drop-kicked in the stomach. I gulp and turn to Tom. His pleading, watery eyes are fixed on my mum. Knowing there was nothing I could do to make this situation any better, I obey my seething mum and leave.

"Is this why you've been so distant lately?" my mum asks Tom as I head to the front door. Her voice is stronger now, accusing. "Is this why we haven't been having sex?" My stomach flips. Hold the phone, *mum and Tom haven't been having sex?* For how long? "Please don't tell me you've been fucking my daughter?"
Okayâ that's my queue to leave.

Chapter 22: Golden Delicious

I only get to the bench at the end of my road before I drop down and take my phone out of my joggers. My fingers tremble as I punch the buttons. My whole body is shaking in fact. Tears burn the backs of my eyes but I try to shake them away.

"Hey hun," Trish chirps.

"Trishâ!" I tried to stay collected but just hearing her voice released the wave of tears I had backed up. I start to splutter uncontrollably.

"Hun, are you crying, what's up?"

"C-can you cover for me today? I c-can't come into work."

"Sure. Of course. Hun, what's wrong?"

"Mum found outâ about me and Tom."

There's a pause. "Holy crap," she whispers. "What happened? What did she do?"

"She's pissed, Trish. She giving Tom a verbal beating right now and I'm next." My sobs make it hard for me to speak coherently. "She hates me, Trish."

"Shh, shh, calm down. She doesn't hate you. She's just angry at the moment but things will simmer down eventually."

I shake my head. "You didn't see the way she looked at me. I'm dead to her."

"Don't say that, Eb. She'll realise you didn't do it to hurt her. You can't help your feelings, hun. Tom will have most of the blame. You're her daughter, Eb, she won't disown you." She pauses. "Butâ if worse comes to worse, you can stay at mine, okay?"

I slap my hand over my mouth to contain my sobs. Holy crap, she's going to kick me out.

"O-okayâ!" I splutter, "th-thanks."

"Of course, hun. Are you feeling better?"

I wipe my eyes. The tears have seemed to calm down a bit.

"I-I think so."

"Okay," she says softly. "Look, I've got to get in the car. The traffic's a right bitch in the morning. But if you ever need anything, Eb, don't hesitate to call me, okay?"

I nod. "Okay."

"Okay, well, I've gotta go. You sure you're feeling better?"

Golden Delicious

"Yeah." I smile and muster a laugh. "Get to work, I don't think Darrell will be happy with us both skiving."

She laughs softly. "Bye hun."

"Bye Trish."

She hangs up.

I stay on the bench for a few more minutes before I pluck up enough courage to face my mum. With shaking steps, I head back home.

When I open the front door, I'm met by screams. Tom is at the foot of the stairs and he manages to swiftly dodge his gym bag that is hauled down the stairs, at his head. My mum is on the landing, her face red and hair wild.

"I never want to see your face again, got it! Leave! And never come back! You dirty liar!" she bawls.

He cowers and plucks the straps of his gym bag.

"I'm sorry," he whimpers.

"Your apologies mean nothing! Get out!"

He shoulders his bag and turns. His eyes hit mine and he pauses. Anguish washes over his face as he bows his head and skirts past me and out the door. I close my eyes when his elbow brushes against me, feeling the warmth of him as he escapes.

"Tom," I call after him, heading down the drive way. He opens his car door and throws his gym bag onto the passenger seat. "Where are you going?"

He sighs and clenches his eyes shut, massaging his forehead with his fingertips.

"I have a flat not far away. My agent gave it to me to bribe me to work with him. I've been using it for storage. I guess I'm living there now."

My heart swells. He sounds so deflated and grim.

"And," I gulp, feeling selfish for asking but needing an answer, "what about us?"

He drops his hand and looks at me. His eyebrows furrow. "I don't knowâ I'llâ I'll call you." He drops into the driver seat. "But first, you need to focus on your mum." He shuts the car door without another word and starts to reverse. He doesn't look at me again and I watch his car disappear round the corner.

This hollow, dragging feeling pulls on my limbs as I turn and head back to my house. Dread, fear, self-loathing all attack me as I step into the hallway.

My mum is still upstairs. As I make my way up, I can hear her sniffing and my stomach knots. I freeze at my bedroom door. She's in there, throwing my clothes and stuff from my desk haphazardly into a suitcase.

"Mumâ !" I say softly.

Golden Delicious

She shakes her head making her long blonde hair fly across her shoulders.

"I want you out of this house."

I buckle a little at the words as they give me literal pain.

"Mumâ !I'm sorry."

She shakes her head again. "I don't care. That doesn't just erase what you've done, Ebony." She snuffles, wipes her eyes then looks up at me. Her face is red and blotchy. "Why Tom, Eb? Why my boyfriend? Was it just convenient for you? Because he lives in the same house?"

I gulp. "No. Of course not. Tom and Iâ !" I sigh. "I like him, mum. I'm sorry, I wish I didn't but I do."

Her cheeks ripple as she tries to contain a sob. "That's what Tom said." My heart flutters. "Say's you two have a connection or something. He tried to ignore it but he couldn't." She balls her fists into my duvet and bows her head. "God, why didn't I see it?"

"I should have told you, I know that. But things just moved so fast. I got caught up in it. I'm sorry, mum"

She shakes her head and zips up the full suitcase. She pushes it off my bed so it thumps to the ground. Pulling up the handle, she looks up at me.

"You're my daughter, Eb, and I will always love you." She looks numb, her eyes stoic. "But that doesn't mean I like you right now."

I almost choke on a sob and have to cough it back up. She stays impassive and wheels the suitcase to me.

"I don't want to see you, Eb. Leave."

I take the handle. "Butâ !where will I go?"

Her jaw muscles flex. "I don't care. Just leave." She passes me and heads towards her room. "When I come out, I want you to be gone," she says without turning round, and shuts her door behind her.

After hefting the suitcase down my stairs, I dump it on the front step and shut my front door behind me, getting a sickening feeling that that will be the last conversation I have with my mum.

Trish had said I could stay at her place, but right now, I don't want to call her. I want to call Tom. I just want to hear his voice and tell me that everything's going to be okay, that he will be by my side through all of this. Wiping my eyes, I call him.

"Hey, Ebby, I've just got to my flat, I was about to call you."

"Mum's kicked me out," I splutter.

There's a pause. "I'm on my way."

"What?"

"I'm coming to get you. Where are you?"

Golden Delicious

A little startled, I say, "Ermâ 'I'm still at my house, I'm outside."

"Okay, I'll be there in a few minutes. You can come and stay with me."

I cough. "*What?* Really?"

"Yeah, of course. Wait there, I'm coming."

I open my mouth to speak but he hangs up.

I'mâ 'going to be living with *Tom*? Holy crap.

Chapter 23: Golden Delicious

Tom stays silent with his eyes fixed on the road. I'm sat in the passenger seat with my head bowed. Sure, I wanted to be with Tom. That's all I've ever wanted. But my mum's resentment weighs heavy on my mind. She hates me. I know she does. She practically said it. Oh God, I'm the worst person in the world.

"It'll be okay."

Tom's voice is almost a whisper. I look up. His pale eyes shine at me before he looks back to the road.

"How can you be so sure?" I reply numbly.

"Because," he sighs, "because it has to be."

"No offence, but that doesn't make me feel any better."

"We have each other. Let's just focus on that, okay?" He glances at me.

I nod. "Okay."

My heart flutters when his hand covers mine on my lap. "It *will* be okay," he says more determinedly.

I stroke the back of his hand with my thumb and smile up at him. He smiles back and focuses back on the road.

He parks up in the car park by the block of flats and takes my suitcase out of the boot. He locks the car and wheels my case to the main entrance of the flats and I follow close behind.

"It isn't much," he says, carrying my case in his arms as we head up at the stairs. "The flat, I mean. Very basic."

"I'm sure it's fine," I say.

He places my case back on the floor and slots his key into the door of flat number 4. He holds the door open. "After you."

I smile and slip passed him. I've walked straight into the living room. A sofa sits in the middle of the room, a telly in front of it and a dining table behind it. A kitchen area is at the far side and there's a door by the dining table which I'm guessing leads to the bedroom. Boxes are stacked by the front door and behind the dining table.

"It'll be a little cramped," Tom says, shuffling behind me with my case and closing the door behind him.

"Stop worrying." I turn, press my hands against his chest and step on my tiptoes to kiss his cheek. "It's great."

His arm snakes round my waist and I let out a surprised squeak when he pulls me closer to him. His pale blue eyes shine into mine. "This is the start."

I cock my head. "The start of what?"

Golden Delicious

He shows me a wry smile. "Of us."

My heart fumbles.

"No more hiding, Ebby."

My heart sinks at a memory. "You said there could be no happy ending for us." I push myself away and he drops his arm. I lower myself onto the sofa and stare blankly ahead. "Sure, you're not with my mum anymore but we can't justâ I don't knowâ be *happy*. You broke my mum's heart, Tom, and so have I." I clutch my chest. "When mum and dad broke up, it was just me and mum. We were like best friends. We stood by each other. But all that changed when you showed up." I gulp and look to Tom. His face is hollow and grave as he watches me from the door. "I secretly loathed her for being with you. I hated that feeling. It wasn't right." Tears start to pool in my eyes and my chest feels tight. "But this feels so much worse." Tom quickly sinks beside me and wraps his arms around me. I press my forehead against his shoulder and my body judders. "She has no one now, Tom. We were all she had. We have been selfish and cruel. It doesn't feel right for us to be happy when she so hurt."

He moves his head slightly and kisses my shoulder. "You're a good person, Ebby, and this situation is horrible. You don't know how much I wish things could be different for us, for Sharon. What I did was wrong. I should have told her that our relationship wasn't working out long ago but I just couldn't. I'm the one to blame for this mess, not you. Don't let this bring you down. You shouldn't feel guilty about being happy."

I lean back a little and he slackens his grip on me. I wipe a tear from my eye and look into his eyes. He half smiles.

"Are you happy?" I ask.

His smile widens, crinkling his eyes. He tucks my hair behind my ear. "I'm always happy when I'm with you."

I laugh a little as I feel myself starting to blush. "That was well cheesy."

He laughs. "I know and I don't care." He kisses me hard on the forehead. "Now, go and unpack."

As I route through what my mum had thrown into my suitcase, I realise she hadn't packed very well. Of course, I couldn't blame her. She was packing out of anger. But luckily, she did throw in a vest top and some loose fitting joggers so I quickly got dressed out of my running gear and threw them on.

Tom comes into the bedroom when I've just hung up my last piece of clothing.

"I still have a key to the house," I say, closing the cupboard. "We can go back when she's at work and pick up the rest of our stuff. She pack much for you?"

He slumps onto the end of the bed. "Not really, just what she could get her hands on." He drops his back onto the bed. "But I've not got a shoot for another few days so I can go and get your stuff too if you want me to?"

"Yeah, that'll be handy actually. I'll have to make up for missing today anyway. Darrell's gonna be pissed."

"Called in sick?"

"I asked Trish to cover for me. She's probably created an elaborate lie about me being attacked by a wild dog or something," I laugh. "She's not the best liar when she's put on the spot."

Golden Delicious

He laughs. "Well, I can drive you to work from now on, well, when I can. This place is a little further from the restaurant."

"Thanks." I smile and drop down next to him. He props himself up on his elbow. My shoulders sag and a sinking feeling pulls at my heart. "We'll be okay, won't we?"

He takes my hand in his and kisses my knuckles. "I promise."

After yet another take out, (neither of us was in the mood to cook), we decide to go to bed. As Tom brushes his teeth in the bathroom which connects to the bedroom, I undress and re-dress into my ugly flannel, button-up pyjamas, the only pyjamas that my mum had shoved into the case. My heart fumbles when I turn around, buttoning up my shirt, and see Tom in the doorway, admiring his view. I smile sheepishly and shrug. "Not the best look, I know."

He laughs. "You look good in anything." Next thing I know, he's dropping his pants and tugging his top over his head. My jaw hangs open. *I could get used to this.*

He steps out of his pants, folds down the covers and slips into bed, either not noticing my look of awe, or casually ignoring it. I gulp, clearing my sudden dry throat and slip under the covers next to him. I feel his warm body so close to mine. Holy crap, this is amazing. He wiggles a little and shuffles down the bed, nuzzling his face into the pillow and gazing up at me. I shuffle down too and face him, patting down my pillow that fluffs up and blocks my view. God, this man is beautiful.

"Our first proper night together," he says with a soft smile. I guess we're not counting the night in the travel lodge.

"Yup." I smile, my body tensing as happy butterflies swarm around my stomach.

"Goodnight." He leans forward and kisses me on the lips. I quickly grab his face and kiss him harder.

He pulls away with a gasp when I finally let go. I grin. "Goodnight."

He smiles and spins round so his back is to me. I take on the role as the big spoon and curl up against his, slipping my arms round his waist and pressing my forehead against his back. He sighs contently as I slip my hands up his abs and trace them with my fingers. A tear swells in my eye and trickles down my cheek. But it's not a sad tear like all the others today. It's a tear of happiness.

I squeeze Tom tighter. This man is all I have ever wanted. I love him so much and now I finally have him. He is finally mine and I'm never letting him go.

Chapter 24: Golden Delicious

"My agent called me this morning, turns out, I'm up for a last minute shoot but it won't be 'til later because it has to be dark so I'll still be able to nip to your house and grab our stuff," says Tom as he drives me to work. "And obviously, I can't pick you up so you'll have to make your own way back."

"Okay, that's fine," I reply. "So, you won't be home when I get back?" My heart flips. Home? I just said home. That happened fast. I give Tom a wary look, seeing if he noticed.

He just frowns at the road. "No, I won't. I'll be leaving around six and I don't know when I'll be back so don't wait up."

I sigh, my heart sinking at the thought that I'd be going back to an empty flat. "Okay."

Thankfully, when I arrived at work, Darrell asked me if my headache had gone so there was no need to pretend to be shaken up after a rapid dog attack or still aching from being run over. I told Trish that I have moved in with Tom. She was worried as I knew she would, we were moving very fast but she understood when I told her that we were in this mess together and there was no point backing out now. We liked each other and we want to be together. I love my mum and I'm just hoping that somewhere down the line, she will forgive us.

Trish spins round before she heads out of the staff room, and grabs my arm. "Remember, I'll still be here for you if it all goes sour."

I show her an exasperated look. "It's not going to go sour, Trish."

"If." She lifts up her palms, "I said *if*."

I laugh and touch her arm as I pass her. "Thanks, it's good to know."

"I'd do anything for you, hun, you know that."

After I've collected the drinks orders for my first table, I head behind the bar where Trish is.

"Soâ!" she starts and I sigh as I pour a pint. "Are you and Tom likeâ a couple now?"

My heart fumbles and I bite inside my cheek to suppress an ear to ear grin. "Erhâ! yeahâ! I guess so."

She pauses for a second, placing a hand on her hip and she contemplates what she's going to say next. Finally, her eyebrows furrow. "I know the whole part about your mum is horrible and everythingâ! but is it bad that I am totally psyched for you?"

I laugh. "I'm totally psyched for me too," I say quietly, my heart fumbling with a mixture of excitement and guilt. *No, stop it, Ebby! Stop being guilty for getting what you want.*

Suddenly, Trish throws herself at me, wrapping her arms round my back and giving me a tight, sideways hug. "Awh, Eb! I'm so happy! Sorry for being such a drag all these months about your feelings for him. I had no idea he felt the same."

Golden Delicious

I dance internally. Does Tom feel the same way? I mean, I know he likes me butâ I love him. Does heâ love me?

My eyes bulge when Trish squeezes me even tighter.

"You got him, Eb."

I smile and rest my head against the top of hers. "Yeah, I did."

I walked back to the flat. Trish did offer me a lift but I stayed behind an extra hour to make up for missing a day and it would mean I would be spending less time alone in the flat.

It's quite a trek but luckily I am in good shape and it's pretty chilly out so I don't break out in a sweat but when I finally make it to the door, I do just want to collapse.

Slotting Tom's spare key into the door, I push it open with an effort, close it, and then slump onto the sofa. I lie there for a few moments until my head pricks up at a noise coming from the bedroom. My heart thumps double time and I grab the first thing I find, which is a mug. *Oh yeah, I'm going to beat the crap out of a burglar with a mug.* But it's better than nothing.

Being as careful and as quiet as I can, I open the bedroom door. I sigh with relief. It's empty. But I hear the noise again. I slight sloshing sound. It's coming from the bathroom. The door is slightly ajar. I suck in a breath and tip toe across the bedroom and peek around the door. I sigh with a laugh, relieving the tension from my shoulders. It's just Tom having a bath.

Chapter 25: Golden Delicious

I push the door open wider and settle the mug on the sink. Tom was lay with his eyes closed but he rouses at the noise. He opens his eyes lazily and turns to me. His eyes widen and he jolts a little, and then relaxes

"Holy crap. Care to knock?" he laughs.

"Sorry." I chew my lip, trying not to laugh at his green face. He's wearing a face mask and he's now clean shaven, no sign of a beard. "I thought you weren't going to be back anyway?"

I look around the bathroom. The lights are slightly dimmed and lit candles surround the bath.

"Well, I went to the job but they sent me home," he explains, warily touching the mask at the edge of his lips that is starting to crack.

"Why?" I ask, stepping closer. My stomach flips when I make out his creamy body underneath the slightly sudsy water.

He sighs. "Apparently I looked tired and I wasn't photographing well so they've rescheduled." He gestures to himself. "Hence the pampering."

"Isn't that what photoshop's for?"

He presses his hand to his chest and gasps in mock horror, cracking his face mask even more. "How dare you! I don't get photoshopped!"

I show him a dubious look. He laughs.

"Okay, maybe I doât a bit. But, quoting the photographer, he needs a good canvas to start with." He frowns. "And apparently-" He gestures to his face. "This isn't a good canvas."

"You have a beautiful face, Tom, don't let anyway tell you otherwise."

He grins sheepishly and sinks a little lower in the bath. "It should be me saying stuff like that to you."

Without another word, I start to unbutton my cardigan. He peers over the side of the tub at me and straightens, watching as it slips off my shoulders. Next, I pull my top over my head and my heart flutters when I pull my head out of the neck hole as see Tom's pale blue eyes glistening at me, examining my bare torso. I unzip my pants and let the drop to the floor, along with my panties. He gulps. I smile and pop open my bra, dropping it to the floor.

I step closer to the tub. He smiles, cracking his mask, as I swing my leg over him. He lies back in the bath, his head resting on the side as I lift my other leg in and lower myself onto him, straddling his waist. The water level rises significantly but there's still a good two inches before it spills over the top. I settle myself on him and my pussy clenches when I feel his length nestled snugly between my ass cheeks. He slips his hands to my waist, gently caressing my sides as he looks up at me. I want to kiss him but I don't want to get his face mask on my face.

"How long have to had that on for?" I ask, touching his chin.

Golden Delicious

He glances at the clock on the wall. "I can take it off now."

I smile and grab the sponge from behind his head. "May I?"

"You may."

I soak it in the water and start to gently rub away the mask, uncovering his perfect creamy skin underneath. I can feel his gaze on me as I do this, so soft and tender. I rub the sponge over his lips, across his cheeks, over his forehead and down his nose, watching the green flake away. It's like unveiling a masterpiece. Finally, I manage to rub away all of it, leaving his face looking radiant and mesmerizing. Without his beard, his thin pink lips look even more appetising. I waste no time and settle the sponge back on the side before cupping his face in my hands and planting my lips on his. His hands rub up the small of my back, holding me in place as he slips his tongue into my mouth. Our tongues brush and our lips slant as the kiss deepens. His face is so soft. I've never kissed him when he's not had a beard. It feels nice.

His fingers splay over my back, gripping me and pulling me closer. My eyes clench shut, savouring our passion. But something dawns on me and I pull away. His eyes flutter open as our lips break and he notices my distress.

"What's wrong?" he asks.

"You couldn't sleep."

"What?" He shuffles under me a little, making the water splash up the sides.

"Back when you were with my mum, you couldn't sleep. You were sleepwalking because you were stressed. And now people at work are saying you look tired." My stomach knots. "It's because of me, isn't it? Because of your feelings for me? That's why you've been so stressed and with everything with my mum?"

"Shhh!" he whispers softly, brushing his thumb over my cheek. "Stop being so down on yourself, Ebby. It's like you're purposely trying to sabotage your happiness. I'm perfectly fine," he laughs a little. "Nothing a little relaxation can't fix."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm positive." He smiles.

I look around at all the candles. "I'm sorry if I spoiled your 'me' time, I'll go."

"No, stay." He presses my side. "Us time is always better."

I chew my lip to suppress a grin.

"Turn around and lie against me."

I smile and do as he says. I sigh contently as I rest my back against his chest. I lower myself and tip my head back, wetting my hair before I lift myself back up and rest the back of my head on his shoulder.

"Comfy?" he asks, pressing his lips to my ear.

"Very." I close my eyes.

Golden Delicious

As I drift between sleep and awake, I feel Tom's fingers gently running through my hair.

"Why Ebony?"

I flutter my eyes open. He's gazing down at my chest, where my hair floats over my breasts.

"What?"

He strokes my scalp lightly. "Your name, Ebony. It means black, right?"

My eyes flutter closed as he massages my head. "Yeah. When I was born, I had dark hair. Mum and dad figured I'd have black hair like my dad. But when I grew up, my hair started to get lighter. Now, I guess the name doesn't quite fit." I laugh a little.

"I like the name."

I open my eyes and turn to him. His blue orbs shine at me. "Me too. I like Ebby better though."

He smiles and kisses my forehead.

I relax back against him. He rests his arms along the sides on the tub. I smooth my hands down his arms and entwine my fingers over his. I know this is supposed to be nice, peaceful and relaxing, but all I can think about is Tom's length resting between my ass. Last night, I yearned for him but I knew it was too soon after everything with my mum being blown up in our faces. And I know this is only the next night but my need for him is driving me crazy. I know Tom. Sex is not just sex to him. He's a passionate man and sex is the physical act of that passion and lust for another person. I feel the same, even more so when I am with him. So I don't want him to think I'm just a horny slut that wants him all the time, even though I actually do what him *all the time*. God, why does this man have to be so fucking *sexy*?

I can't take it anymore.

Lacing my fingers over his, I grip his hand and slowly trail it down into the water. I can feel him rouse. I look at him in the corner of my eye, he's watching our hands. I slip his hand over my stomach and my heart flutters at the contact. I ease him down further and further until his hand is over my mound. I press my fingers over his so he cups my pussy. My body judders and my jaw hangs open. His breathing starts to become ragged down my ear as he instinctively finds my clit and starts to rub it. I groan, pressing the back of my head hard against his shoulder as my back arches. He messes his face into my hair and starts to kiss my neck and he rubs harder. I release his hand, letting him take control, and run it up the back of his head, splaying my fingers through his wet curls.

He kisses, licks and nuzzles my neck until I turn my head. His lips slant across mine. I grip his curls as he pushes his tongue into my mouth. At the same time, he pushes two fingers into my starved pussy, making his gasp into his mouth and break the kiss for a fraction of a second, before gripping his jaw and kissing him hungrier.

I rock against his fingers and clench my ass cheek around his cock as I do so. I can feel him getting hard underneath me. He moans into my mouth and runs his other hand up my stomach to my breasts. He cups, caresses and pinches my nipple, making me ride his fingers faster.

The water sloshes around us, spilling over the sides and splashing onto the tiled floor.

Golden Delicious

He hooks his fingers inside me and uses his thumb to stimulate my clit. I grip his curls and break the kiss, pressing my forehead against his as I moan. His jaw is also hanging open as he emits heavy breaths. He kisses me again, slanting his lips over mine as he works on my pussy harder and faster, knowing that I am building up to my climax. I press the back of his head hard as my body quakes at my orgasm, I moan into his mouth as I cum and I keep my lips on his as the wave of pleasure crashes over me. Finally, our lips break and I gasp, trying to full my lungs with air. He gasps too and gulps, clearing his throat.

Tom is now rock hard under me and my hunger for him is nowhere near sated, so I spin round so I'm straddling him. The bath water spills from the side in a wave but neither of us care. Tom looks up at me and caresses my sides. I shift a little so his erection presses against my stomach. I lower myself so we're chest to chest and kiss him deeply, slipping my hand round his throat, down his chest and to his hip. He groans, slanting his lips over mine.

I lift up my ass and shift so the head of his cock is at my pussy. He grows impatient when I linger in that position and grabs my ass, pushing me down onto him. Our kiss breaks, my back arches and he stiffens underneath me.

"Oh God, Ebby," he groans.

My heart and stomach flips. I lower myself again, claiming his mouth and rubbing my hard nipples against his chest. He messes his fingers into my wet hair and holds me close and I rock my lower half, clenching my pussy around his shaft. Then, I break the kiss. Leaning back, I press my palms against his shoulder and keep him at arm's length as I grind against him, working on his cock. He groans, his eyes heavy with pleasure as he tips his head back. His hands circle round my ass and he squeezes it, pumping me harder and faster as he rocks his hips against me.

"God, Ebby, you feel so good," he breaths which spurs me on.

I grind against him faster and faster, pulling him out of me nearly all the way before slamming back down against him.

"Tomâ !" I moan as I feel myself getting closer and closer, "Tomâ !"

"Oh, God, Ebby." He grabs the back of my head and forces me down to him so our lips crash together. He holds me close to him, still working himself in and out of my pussy. "Ebbyâ !I'm close," he mumbles against my lips.

"Me too, baby." I cup his jaw and kiss him deeper.

He grips my ass again and slams me down onto him, making me break the kiss and arch my back with a wail. He holds me there as he spasms under me. His eyes roll back and his jaw hangs open as I feel him shoot inside me. I rock against him as much as I can when I'm still being held down by him as my orgasm hits me. I press my palms into his shoulders as it wracks my body. He holds me there until it subsides.

Sighing, I drop down and rest my head against his chest. We're both breathing heavily. His chest heaves underneath me.

"You were right," I say when I can speak again.

"About what?" he breaths, stroking my hair.

Golden Delicious

I look up at me, resting my chin on his chest. He looks down at me.

"Us time is always better."

He laughs a little. "Oh, we're not done yet."

Chapter 26: Golden Delicious

I let out a delighted mewl as he sits up, wraps his arms around my waist and starts to stand. Instinctively, I grip him with my thighs and wrap my arms around his neck. He struggles a little, but he gets to his feet and steps out the bath. The water sloshes over the side as he does so but neither of us care.

Our wet bodies stick to each other. My hair is plastered against my face as he walks over to the toilet and sits me down on the tank. He releases me and I release him. I look up at him expectantly. A smile tugs on his lips when his eyes trail over my body. I brush my hair behind my ears and my heart flutters as he starts to lower himself in front of me. His hands grip my knees and he spreads my legs, making me emit a giddy laugh.

He kisses my thighs, the soft skin of his chin brushing over me. My body feels like its on fire as I plunge my fingers into his tight curls and guide him closer to where I want him. His hands glide up my wet thighs as he mouth follows. My clutch on his curls tightens when he licks up my slit. My head drops back and I arch myself towards him as he starts to tongue my clit.

"Oh, God..." I moan, my eyelids heavy as I rock against his face. He squeezes my thighs and buries his face deeper, licking up my juices.

My stomach flutters and contorts in every way possible as he grazes my clit with his teeth then starts to suck on it.

"Tom," I breathe, rocking faster and harder, so much that the lid of the toilet tank is shaking with me. "Tom, God, Tom. Yes!"

I bring my legs over his slender shoulders and pin him to me as he continues to lick, suck and nibble my pussy. I jab my heels into his back and rotate my hips against him. I'm so hot. The bath water that coats me is now half sweat. He groans against me and that just makes me even hotter.

"It's too much. I can't take it," I shriek, hearing the desperation in my voice. His mouth breaks from me and his pale eyes shine up at me from between my thighs.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes. Don't stop." I curl my fingers deeper into his hair and press his lips back against me. I close my eyes and tilt my head back. God, Tom. Don't ever stop."

Quickly, he resumes to his agonisingly pleasurable job at driving me wild. He hardens his tongue and swirls it round my wet entrance before probing it. My back arches as I press him deeper. I feel my pussy muscles quiver with pleasure and clamp onto his tongue as he fucks me with it.

I rock against him faster, feeling the swelling heat in my stomach, building up to my climax.

"Tom. Tom. Oh, God. Tom!" My moans end with a high-pitched squeal as I cum onto his face. His big hands slip up to my ass and he presses me closer as I continue to grind against him, riding my orgasm. His nose flicks my clit, sending me sky high. He licks up my cum hungrily until my shoulders sag and I feel spent. His wet, sticky lips then trail down my inner thigh, sprinkling it with light kisses until he's backed away enough for my ankle grip on his back to slip.

Golden Delicious

He stands and my heart flips when I see his hard on pointing to the ceiling. My eyes bulge. I hear him laugh and I jump a little with his fingers cup under my chin. I tear my eyes away from his erection I find his eyes. They smile down at me before his lips press against mine. I moan a little and run my tongue over his lips, tasting my arousal that paints them. He pushes his tongue past mine and into my mouth forcefully and passionately. My surprise is mumbled by the invasion as I quickly cup his sharp jaw and deepen the kiss even more, finding myself still hungry for him.

His hands scoop my ass and he lifts me up. I lock my legs around his waist as we travel out of the bathroom. He has to break the kiss to see where he's going and I smile up at him as I see the concentration sharpening his beautiful pale blue orbs.

I yelp with surprise as he twirls us round and throws me down on the bed. I land on my back and before I know it, Tom's on top of me. I giggle up at him, feeling the sheets stick to my wet body. I open my legs so he can slip between them as his hands scope my body, running up my sides. I prop myself on my elbows and kiss him deeply. He kisses me back, forcing me to lie flat as he clambers over me. When the kiss breaks, my head is against the pillow. I wrap my hands around his neck, plunging my fingers into his curls and he lowers himself and kisses my neck. My back arches to him as his body shifts and I feel his cock press against my entrance.

"I want you, Tom. *I need you.*" I turn my face so he looks up at me. His eyes are hooded with lust. He breathes heavily and kisses me.

"You're going to have me," he breathes, sliding his hand up my face and holding my cheek. His gaze is suddenly a lot stronger as he stares into my eyes. "You can have me any way you want."

I groan as my body prickles with heat. I wrap my legs around his waist, press my ankles into his back and press his lips against mine. He inhales deeply through his nostrils as he deepens the kiss and thrusts himself into me. His entrance is deep and fast, it makes my body spasm and my head to snap back. My back arches against the bed as Tom's hand wraps around my thigh and he starts to fuck me hard and fast. I rock against him, wanting him deeper. I manage to press him so close that his groin rubs against my clit. My eyes flutter and my jaw hangs open as small, breathy moans shoot out of me. Wanting our connection to be stronger, I grab his neck as kiss him hungrily. He kisses me back, slanting his lips over mine as he continues his measured, fast strokes, brushing my clit every time. Our lips have to break every so often so we can breathe but we keep contact as much as we can.

I feel another orgasm building so I grind my hips against him faster, he notices this and meets my speed. I look down our bodies and watch as he disappears deep into me. The sweat and bathwater in his hair drops onto my face and rolls off his shoulders, down his arms. His hand that is cupping my thigh is sweat-coated and is slipping slightly.

My body convulses. I reach around his back and hold him close to me as I writhe underneath him. He presses his face into the curve of my neck as his body stiffens over me and we reach our peak together. My pussy clenches around him as he shoots his seed deep inside me. My cum erupts round his slowly shrinking shaft and he collapses against me, our slick bodies sticking together.

We're both panting heavily. With my arms still wrapped around the top of his back, I hold him against me. His nose brushes against my neck softly.

"Tom..." I mumble against his shoulder.

"Yeah?" he asks breathlessly.

Golden Delicious

I gulp, clearing my dry throat and trying to ignore the flutter of apprehension in my gut. "I love you," I spurt out before I have time to talk myself out of it. My heart thumps when he doesn't respond right away. I panic. "You don't have to say it back if you don't want to," I quickly add, now feeling trapped by his weight over me. "I mean, I'd rather you didn't say it if you didn't mean it. I know we haven't been together long. But I've been in this relationship way longer than you have. I mean, I started having feelings for you the first day we met and mmmmmmm-" my long string of ramblings is cut off by Tom's lips on mine, pressing hard enough to bruise. He breaks away, leaving me gasping and wide-eyed. He smiles down at me affectionately.

"I've been in this relationship just as long as you have, Ebby." He brushes a piece of hair that is stuck to my cheek, behind my ear. "I love you too."

"Really?" I gasp, not being able to contain my surprise and happiness. He shuffles above me a bit so he slips out of me, suddenly making me feel empty.

"Of course," he laughs and takes my face in both his hands. "God, you're so damn cute."

I feel myself blush and I push his hands away. He laughs again and rests his head on my chest, dropping his hands to his sides. I press my lips against the top of his head and sigh contently. *This is what I want.* I run my fingers through his hair and listen to his heart beating slowly against mine. *This is what I need.*

Chapter 27: Golden Delicious

"You could have picked me up from work seeing as though you were home," I say as I take the orange juice Tom offers to me. He sinks into the chair opposite to me and swirls his fork in his spaghetti.

"That was my plan. I just completely lost track of time when I was in the bath, sorry."

I laugh and sip my drink. "It's fine."

"I did get some of our stuff from your house though."

"Oh?"

"Yeah." He swallows his mouthful and looks up at me from his plate. "I just grabbed the clothes you usually wear. It felt rude of me to look through your drawers so I just left them. If I haven't got everything, you might have to take another trip."

I smile up at him, feeling my heart flutter at how sweet he is.

"I'm sure you got enough. Thank you."

He nods. "You are very welcome."

After tea, we sat and channel hop until past eleven. We are both curled up on the sofa with a blanket. Tom has his arms wrapped around me and kisses my neck every so often, making me grin to myself and try to hide my flushed cheeks. Part of me is reluctant to move, but we both have work in the morning so we scoot off to get ready for bed.

I change into a nicer pair of pyjamas that Tom had found for me. They are a grey vest top and a pair of purple shorts. Tom is in the bathroom and has been in there for a while. I wait, sat on the bed, but I really want to brush my teeth so I can get cosy so I push the door that is slightly ajar and peer in.

My jaw hangs open.

"Holy crap!" I laugh when I eye up all the different jars, tubs and bottles that line up along the counter. "Is that all yours? Back at home I thought they were mum's..."

Tom's stood in front of the sink and looks to me from his reflection in the mirror.

"Hey." He points to his face. "This pays the bills. I've gotta look after it."

I snort a laugh and grab a fancy looking bottle of moisturiser. "Whoa, this is even better than mine. Can I borrow it?"

He gasps and swipes the bottle from my hand. "No, you may not."

"Why?" I pout.

"Look. No woman can come between a man and his moisturiser."

Golden Delicious

"But-" I stretch out my hand to grab for the bottle but he holds it up out of my reach.

"I love you." He smacks his lips against mine. "But no."

I glare at him playfully and drop my arm. "Well then, hurry up and move. I wanna brush my teeth."

He places the bottle back on the counter, flashes his reflection a smile and slips passed me. "All yours."

To my disappointment, Tom's in bed when I return from the bathroom. I wanted to see him undress. I could never get tired of seeing that beautiful body of his.

Tom had changed the sheets shortly after we had redressed. The sheets had dried but they were stained with our sweat and my arousal.

He sighs contently when I slip under the covers next to him and snuggle close to his bare chest. He wraps his arms around me and kisses the top of my head. "Night."

"Night," I mumble back against his chest.

Minutes later, I hear his soft purring, signalling me that he's asleep. I stay awake a while longer, tracing patterns with my fingertips over his chest. I kiss his throat then drift off with him.

My eyes roll open at the irritating ring of my alarm on my phone and switch it off. I squint at the light that streams through the thin curtains. The bed dips and I turn. Tom is sat on the edge of the bed with his back to me. He must have heard me stirring because he looks at me over his shoulder. He smiles. "I'm gonna have a shower." He hooks his fingers under the waistband of his boxers and pulls them down as he stands. My hearts in my throat and my eyes bulge as I get a perfect view of his tight ass as he heads out the door.

"Wait!" I sit up. He pauses at the door and looks over his shoulder.

"What?" He raises an eyebrow, confused.

I smile. "Turn around."

His eyebrows furrow but he shrugs and complies, turning around fully to face me. My smile grows as my eyes flicker around his perfectly, muscle-lined body. He shifts awkwardly on the balls on his feet.

I wiggle to the end of the bed and stand, making my way over to him. He watches me in silence. I touch the side of his face and pull him down a little. "Perfection," I say before kissing his jaw line. "And..." I slip passed him. "I'm going in shower first!" I rush and run into the bathroom.

"Hey!" he calls after me as I slam the door in his face with a giggle. "Well that was rude."

I laugh as I strip off my pyjamas and hop into the shower. I turn on the water and close my eyes, brushing my wet hair from my face. Grabbing the soap, I start to rub it over my body as the hot water hits my chest. My head cocks at the sound of the door opening behind me. I grin at the wall as I hear the shower door slide open and Tom step in behind me. I chew my lip and spin around. He's smiling down at me, his chest almost touching mine.

"And what do you think you're doing?" I ask, placing a hand on my hip.

Golden Delicious

"This is my shower time," he says, trying to suppress a smile.

"No, it's mine."

He shrugs. "Well then, we're just going to have to share, aren't we?"

I try to fake annoyance but that quickly subsides as he carefully takes the soap from my hand and starts to rub it over my stomach and down my thighs, watching as the bubbles build up between his fingers.

I smile up at him as I watch him absorbed with his work. The soap then travels up my stomach and he rubs it over my breasts, using the soap to lather them up and his other hand to squeeze and bounce them. I giggle a little at the trance-like look in his eyes.

"Having fun?" I ask.

He smiles like a kid with a new toy. "Yup."

Not being able to resist, I cup his face and pull him down to my height. His mouth hangs open with a soft moan before our lips connect. The soap clatters to the shower floor as he lower his hands and his starts to slip his soapy fingers through the tresses of my mound. I moan against him and step back a little so the shower head is over him and the water hits both our heads making it seem like we're kissing in the rain. His other hand settles on my ass, squeezing it a little as his soapy fingers capture my clit. My body jolts and a quaky moan wracks against my throat, making me pull away from him with a gasp.

"Nope."

He takes his hand away and furrows his eyebrows. "What?"

Panting a little, I look up at him, squinting through the pummelling water. Every cell in my body is fighting against me but I press on. "I'll be late for work."

He frowns and pulls back the sliding door. He steps out and grabs the towel off the radiator. "You've just missed out on some amazing shower sex."

My stomach twists and my eyes bulge. Familiarity prickles the back of my neck. Those were the exact words I had said to him. I don't know if he used them on purpose to make a light-hearted joke about the most embarrassing experiences of my life, or those just happened to be the first words that popped into his head, but before I have a chance to ask him, he points his finger at me.

"To be continued," he says then wraps the towel around his waist and leaves.

Golden Delicious : Chapter 28

Tom drives me to work and kisses me before I step out, telling me that he will be waiting outside to pick me up.

Trish has a stupid grin on her face when I enter the staff room to grab my apron.

"What?" I ask.

"I'm just so happy for you."

I roll my eyes as my heart flutters and head out.

"Table two, order up!" says Kurt, the cook. I grab the plates from the counter and wobble a little. My heart sinks with surprise at how heavily they are. Well, my lack of strength to carry them. I try to keep my back straight and a smile on my face as I wander down the restaurant but my muscles feel like they've turned to mud all of a sudden and a sluggish feeling has dropping onto me like I'm wading through quicksand.

"Enjoy your meal." I smile down at the couple who thank me before I head back down the aisle. Sweat coats my hairline from my struggle with the plates. I stretch when I finally reach the bar and try and loosen my stiff joints. Thinking back, I had felt a little different this morning. Not too much. Just a little...achy. But after several tables later, pouring drinks and carrying plates has really taken a toll on me. I get behind the bar and slump across it.

"I've been watching you all morning. You're walking like a cripple." Trish elbows me in the side. I groan. "What the hell have you been doing?"

"Tom," I mumble into my forearm.

"*What?*"

I lift myself up onto my elbows with an effort. "Tom and I got...freaky last night and..."

Her red eyebrow lifts. "He did *that* to you?" She gestures to the whole of me.

I shrug and wince and the pain up my side. "Must have."

She laughs. "Holy crap. I didn't know the old Geezer had it in him."

I glower at her. "He's *thirty-two* not sixty."

She shrugs and grabs the glass of Coke she's just poured. "Still." She gives me another once over. "It's pretty impressive."

I laugh a little and roll my eyes. Then the gleam in her emerald eyes fade and worry sets in them.

"How are you and your mum? Any progress there?" she asks.

My stomach knots with dread. "No, nothing. I haven't spoken to her. I'm giving her some space."

Golden Delicious

She nods and walks to the end of the bar, ready to leave.

"I think that's best for now but you shouldn't let Tom ruin your friendship forever. You'll regret it," she says over her shoulder.

"I know." I nod. "Tom and I love each other, we'll work through this."

She freezes in her tracks and spin round, making some of the coke slosh out of the glass she's holding. Her eyes are wide and make my heart thump.

"What?" I ask, straightening.

She blinks. "You just said that you and Tom love each other. Did he...drop the L bomb?"

My heart flutters and a smile grows on my lips. She receives the message, sets the glass on the bar and throws her arms around me.

"Oh my God, Ebs! That's amazing!" she squeals, bouncing up and down a little.

I squeeze her tight. "I know! God, I'm so glad I can talk to you about this stuff. I'm just so happy right now but with my mum...I feel like I shouldn't me." I bury my head into her shoulder. "But talking like this with you...it just makes things feel just a little more...normal."

She slowly recoils and holds me at arms length. She frowns a little as she studies my face.

"Don't let your mum get to you, Eb. I know the circumstances aren't great and she may be upset right now, but don't you dare let that get in the way of yours and Tom's relationship." She takes her hands off the tops of my arms and leans against the bar. "You've talked my ears off for months about how *perfect* Tom is for you and how *perfect* you would be together. So-" She pushes herself off the bar and grabs the coke. "Your life is perfect. Don't let your mum ruin that for you." She half smiles and heads down the restaurant, finally giving the kid his drink.

I stay there for a few seconds, thinking about what she said. But it wasn't true. My life isn't perfect. If it was, my mum would still be in it. And so would my dadâ

Tom laughs when I groan as I attempt to open the car door. I flop onto the seat and yank it closed with another groan. I was going to work an extra hour to make up for my sick day but I told Darrell I couldn't, I was in too much pain.

"What's up with you?" he asks, studying me as I relax against the seat. I haven't sat down in three hours and the aches and pains have only gotten worse.

"I'm so sore after last night," I moan as I click in my seat belt.

He's silent. I look up at him. His eyes are furrowed as he watches me.

"Last night as in..?"

"As in the sex," I say, and look out the window when I feel myself blushing.

Golden Delicious

A laugh splutters out. I turn and scowl at him but I end up laughing too. I punch him in the arm but groan at the pain that shoots up my own arm.

"Shut up!" I whine.

He waves his hand, trying to contain his laughter. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry." He clears his throat. "I'll just remember to be a little gentler with you next time."

"Please don't."

He arches an eyebrow.

I smile. "It was totally worth it."

He nods and starts to reverse out of the parking space. "Noted."

When we get to the flat, Tom had to almost carry me up the stairs. I was walking like an eighty year old with two hip replacements.

"You weren't like that this morning," Tom observes me at the door.

"I know. It sort of crept up on me."

I shrug off my cardigan and head to the bedroom to put it on a hanger. Tom follows me and I hear him undressing behind me. I close the wardrobe and spin round. He's stood at the foot of the bed in his white shirt with the sleeves rolled to his elbows and boxers.

"On the bed." He points to the bed.

My heart fumbles. "*What?*"

He laughs and shakes his head. "Get on the bed. I'm going to give you a massage."

Relief uncoils my muscles. If he was asking for sex, there was no way that was going to happen. Not that I didn't want it to happen. I mean, he's an Adonis. One look at Tom and I go all gooey. But my body simply wouldn't be able to take it.

I sit on the bed, waiting for instructions. Tom slips into the bathroom and comes back with what look like some bottles of massage oil. My body starts to go all tingly.

"Shirt off," he says, inspecting the labels on the bottles.

Immediately, I do as he says.

"Lie on your front."

I flip over onto my chest and fold my arms, resting my chin on them. I suck in a mewl when the bed dips and I feel Tom's weight over me. He's straddling my hips. He pops my bra clasp open with his nifty fingers then runs his now oiled hands down my back. I groan at his touch, so firm yet tender. My body flushes in appreciation as he starts to rub the heels of his palms into the tight knots in my back. My toes curl and I bury my mouth into my forearm to muffle my moans. *Is there anything this man can't do?*

Golden Delicious

As his big, gentle hands run up my slides, his fingers brush the sides of my breasts and my ass bucks instinctively at the contact that spreads a tingling sensation to my lower half.

He works on my shoulders, oblivious. I chew my lip and try to just focus on his magical hands and freeing the tension in my back and not the burning heat between my thighs. I clench my eyes shut. *Focus on the hands. The hands!* Oh, but what those amazing hands could do if they explored the rest of my body...

I clench my fists and bury my head into my forearms. His fingers brush my breasts again and my ass bucks. My stomach flips when my ass rubs against something hard. Something hard in Tom's boxers. I grin to myself as devious thoughts bubble in my brain.

Knowing that he is just as turned on as I am, I let my moans free and buck harder. He seems to get the message and rubs along my breasts all the more. His erection is now digging into my ass even when I'm lying flat on the bed. It's too much.

"Tomâ !" "

Chapter 29: Golden Delicious

His hands pause in the centre of my back. "Yeah..?"

I clear my dry throat. "...make love to me."

He laughs a little. That throaty chuckle that always gets me wet.

"Please?" I look up at the headboard.

"No. I'm massaging you. Just relax."

I huff. "Don't pretend like you don't want to."

"I *don't*. You still haven't recovered from last night. I don't want to hurt you."

"Oh yeah? Then what's digging into my ass?" I cock an eyebrow.

He pauses and shifts his body so his weight is lifted off me. "...nothing."

With this new space of freedom, I spin round so I'm facing him. He drops down a little so he's straddling my waist. My bra, even though the clasp is undone, still covers my breasts.

I shimmy my lower half under him. "C'mon, I know you want to." I grin.

He laughs; smiling so much it crinkles his eyes. "You've certainly changed your tune."

I shrug. "What can I say?" I take his hand in mine and play with his fingers. "You're good with your hands."

He slips his hands out of mine and I frown when we break contact. "I'm glad you think so. But we can't have sex."

"Why?" I whine.

He chuckles. "Because ten minutes ago you were walking like a cripple." He clambers over me, placing his hands either side of my head. I gulp and look up into his pale blue pools. "Relax, Ebby, for me?" His eyes glisten with sorrow. "You need to recover."

I laugh a little at the soberness to his tone. I touch his face gently. "Tom, I'm *fine*. Don't worry."

He half smiles and kisses my forehead.

"And you said this morning that your little shower trick was going to continue." I arch an eyebrow when he looks down at me.

He smiles. "It will. In time."

I pout. He lets out a soft laugh before crashing his lips against mine. I moan into his mouth as he prises my lips open with his tongue and pushes it into my mouth, immediately deepening the kiss and making it passionate and primal. My body hums with pleasure and I cup his face as I work my tongue into his mouth. I

Golden Delicious

can feel his erection digging into my belly button. I'm completely soaked and my desire to have him deep inside me is unbearable but I try my best to sate my hunger for him with this incredible kiss. It lasts a good minute or so because when our lips finally break, we're left panting and gasping for breath.

"What...was that for?" I ask.

He peers at me through his brows and flashes me a cheeky grin. "For the wait."

Next minute, he's bouncing off the bed and walking out the bedroom door with a noticeable wobble due to his third leg. I chew my lip to contain a laugh when I hear him mumbling, "Grandma. Grandma. Just think of grandma," under his breath.

We sit at the table, Tom made lasagne in his boxers. I'm staring at my plate, absently poking the remainder of my meal.

"What are you thinking about?"

I blink hard and look up at Tom who has his eyebrow arched inquisitively.

I sigh. "The elephant in the room."

He gulps. "Sharon?"

I nod. "I was talking to Trish about her today."

"Oh?"

"Yeah. She told me that I shouldn't let her get in the way of us but also not let you break up my relationship with her. I was just thinking of how I could do that."

He pauses for a minute, searching my face. "Any luck?"

I shove a forkful into my mouth and shake my head.

"Well, I think we should leave it for a few more days and the maybe try to approach her separately."

I nod but my stomach knots at the thought of seeing my mum again. The look of her face when she last looked at me still haunts me.

"She deserves a proper explanation. She didn't really let me speak before she threw me out," he continues. He wipes his mouth with a tissue. "I'll talk to her first."

"Are you sure?"

He nods, scrunching up the tissue and putting it on the table. "Yeah. I'm the one who cheated. She should get all her anger out on me. I'm the one who deserves it. Then hopefully, you and her can have a more settled talk."

"You can't take all the blame, Tom."

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"Yes, I can. And I will."

I open my mouth to argue but he lifts his palm up, hushing me, so I stay silent and continue eating.

Again, we find something good to watch on telly and snuggle up on the sofa together. I grab a pot of ice-cream from the freezer and a spoon. We share it as we sit in front of the screen. My heart flutters and I sink further into Tom's chest, feeling his warmth and listening to the soothing sound of his steady heartbeat. Once, back when Tom and my mum were together, we shared a very similar night together but obviously, not as intimate.

That night I had grabbed two spoons with the ice-cream and sat on the opposite side of the sofa so there was a cushion between us on the three seat sofa. I started off the ice-cream then left my spoon in the pot. The spoon I had brought for Tom was forgotten beside me so he used mine without noticing. Well, I thought he had done it by accident but looking at us now I can't help but wonder whether he knew what he was doing.

I try to cut my wait short and have Tom tonight so when we are in bed spooning, I sneakily bring my arm round to his front and slip my hand down his boxers and start to stroke his shaft. His body jolts a little and he wraps his hand around mine, carefully guiding it back to his stomach without a word. I pout but then kiss him on his back between his shoulder-blades and go back to idly stroking his abs as I drift off to sleep.

Chapter 30: Golden Delicious

I'm hardly concentrating at work because I'm so eager to get back to the flat. I feel a hundred percent better. It's crazy how good Tom's massage was. But I still owe Darrell three hours so I reluctantly tell him that I'll stick around for another hour.

Tom picks me up and we have a pleasant chat in the car. I try to not seem so desperate to have him because I don't want to seem like I have a one-track mind. I was never like this before Tom. With my other two boyfriends, we had sex once a week, sometimes not even that, and I was fine with it. Sometimes it even felt like a chore. But with Tom it felt like he was my oxygen. If I didn't have him, I'd die. I chew my lip. Plus, the tight shirts and pants don't help my agonising lust. He must know what they do to me.

"Maybe we could go out tonight?" he asks after shutting the flat door behind me. "We haven't been out as a couple yet."

My heart flips and I splutter a little. I spin to face him. "Maybe we should leave that for a while, with everything with mum, it just doesn't feel right. We should stay in." *Yes, stay in and have wild sex.*

He nods. "You're right, I wasn't thinking."

I smile.

He collapses onto the sofa. "I made you some tea. It's in the kitchen. I've already had mine."

"Oh, okay."

We settle in front of the telly again at half ten. The lights are off except for a table lamp that lit up Tom's perfect face as he studied the screen. I was sat by his side with my legs tucked up under me. He hadn't made any advances and a ball of angst is knotting in my stomach as I shift awkwardly, making my heels dig into the crotch of my shorts. I knead myself with the heels of my feet, trying to dissipate some of my sexual hunger but it wasn't working. Finally, I sigh and flip myself over so I'm straddling Tom.

He lets out a surprised gasp at my sudden movement and lifts his palms up with wide-eyes.

"Whoa! Ebby."

"I've waited long enough," I say and grab his chin before smacks my lips against his.

He mumbles something against my lips before deepening the kiss and pushing his tongue into my mouth. Instinctively, I find myself rocking against him. The roughness of his jeans creates a great amount of friction against my thin pyjama shorts. And as I grind my hips, I feel him getting hard, creating a bulge which is even more pleasurable to rub against.

Breathlessly, I break the kiss and trail my lips down his neck. He has such a beautiful neck. It sounds weird thinking it. I would have never thought I could find a man's neck so attractive, but Tom's is an unblemished, creamy column that's as soft and smooth as silk, I can't help but lick and suck on it. He tips his head back, gaining me more access to him. I moan my appreciation against his skin as I kiss the hollow of his neck. He gurgles in response. The noise makes his throat vibrate, sending a shockwave of ecstasy straight to my

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starving pussy.

I lift my hands to the sides of his face and brush the tips of my thumbs over the curves of his ears. He purrs in response, closing his eyes and giving into me.

"I didn't think a day of no sex could get you so worked up," he chuckles lightly, his eyes still closed to the ceiling.

I smile and brush my lips over his collarbone. "I just don't want to waste any more time."

Suddenly, he jerks up and wraps his hands around my wrists. My heart spasms and I quickly look up at him, my eyes wide with fear.

"What?" I ask, fright peeking my voice.

He sighs and the alert look in his eyes dims. "Don't think I haven't noticed." He releases his grip on my wrists and drops his hands slowly to his sides. His shoulders are hung heavily and his whole body is sagged a little.

"Noticed *what*?"

His pale eyes search my face, wet with worry. "The way you hold me in the night. As if I'm going to slip through your fingers." He brushes the hair from my face and shows me a sad smile. "I'm not going anywhere, Ebby."

My stomach knots and something yanks at my heart, making me squirm and cringe.

"I'm sorry," I mumble, looking down. "I guess part of me thinks that I'm going to wake up one morning and this is all going to be a heart wrenchingly wonderful dream."

I jump a little at the softness of his fingers on my chin. He carefully angles my head up. Shame bites into me when our eyes meet.

He half smiles. "Don't talk about wasting time. We have all the time in the world, okay?"

I suck in a breath and nod. His smile becomes more prominent.

I chew my lip for a while, unsure of how to continue as my eyes scope his flat chest underneath me.

"Tom?" I ask unsteadily, clearing my throat.

"Yeah?"

"Erh." I shift awkwardly. "I get what you said and everything butâ I'm still really horny. I mean, I'm so wet its uncomfortable." I wince as if I'm expecting him to slap me across the face for being insensitive. But he doesn't. Instead, he laughs and lifts himself up enough to press his lips against mine. My heart thumps and butterflies flap around my stomach, making my pussy clench.

I grab his face and turn the soft kiss into one much more fiery and fierce, causing our bodies to roll against each other. A moan catches in my throat as I feel Tom's fingers pull back the elastic waistband of my shorts. I shift my lower half upwards so he cups my pussy. His fingertips brush my wet lips then swirl around my aching entrance.

Golden Delicious

"Bloody hell," he laughs against my lips, "You weren't lying."

I hold his face and look down into his eyes. "I'd never lie to you."

I gasp when he pushes two of his long fingers inside me. My pussy clutches them gratefully and starts to pulsate as he thrusts them in and out. I press my forehead to his as I rock against his hand. My elbows rest on his shoulders and my forearms frame the sides of his face as I grind harder with my eyes clenched shut, focussing on myself being filled by his fingers.

My breath comes out short and sharp and I can feel Tom's breath on my chin, slow and measured. My heart flips and I start when his lips press against mine. But then I push my fingers through his curls and kiss him back, hungry and primal. We moan together as my body flushes, making the top of my head burn. I manage to unbutton the first three buttons of his shirt before I have to fist the material and break the kiss as my orgasm wracks through my body, shooting up me like a bolt of lightning. My head snaps back, my body tenses but Tom's fingers continue to stroke me, harder and faster as the waves of absolute pleasure crash over me and threaten to rip me apart.

I'm left panting. Tom's fingers stop and slowly pull out of me. I wrap my shaking hand around his wrist and tug his hand out of my shorts. I see him watching me as I bring his hand to my lips. My cum covers his fingers and his palm, making his hand shimmer in the orange glow of the room.

I lick his palm clean and watch as his eyelids grow heavy and his jaw hangs open slightly, captivated by me. Lust swirls in his pale blue pools which makes my stomach flutter with devious glee.

I inspect his hand then glue my eyes to his as I lick up the side of his index finger. A soft gasp leaves his parted lips. I smile and push his finger into my mouth. I swirl my tongue around it and flick it against the tip. He shifts underneath me and I can feel that his bulge is larger and tighter against the restrictions of his jeans.

I pull out his index finger and suck his middle digit hungrily. He groans and his jaw hangs heavier. I smile and repeat the same thing with the rest of his fingers until all my cum is wiped clean. The musky, sweet taste of my arousal lingers on my tongue and pungent smell washes over me when I breathe.

I gaze at his hand with admiration.

"I love your fingers," I murmur, playing with them.

He gulps, clearing his throat. "I can see that."

I laugh a little. "So long and slender andâskilful." I look up at him with wicked eyes. He gulps again.

"Now." I drop his hand and it slaps against his lap. I shimmy down him and tug down his fly. It resists a little due to his huge bulge but it finally gives it, almost making to topple to the floor. I pull down his jeans and his boxers, enough for his erection to jump out. He lets out a sigh of relief when it's freed which makes me giggle a little. I slip off him and yank off my short before jumping back onto him just as fast. I grab his neck and brush my lips across his. "I want you to fuck me."

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He clears his throat, panting a little with his jaw hanging open. His eyes are locked onto my lips.

"Did you hear me, Tom?" I ask after a short silence. "I want you to fuck me. Not make love to me. I want you to use me for your pleasure, okay?"

He shifts awkwardly. "I-I don't think I can."

My heart swells at the helplessness in his saddened tone. I brush my thumbs over his cheekbones which makes him look up at me. We are so close I can see my reflection in his pupils.

"You did the other night."

"And I hurt you."

"Tom," I breathe a soft laugh, cupping his face. "You didn't hurt me. I just ached because my body wasn't used to it. I'm fine now and that night was amazing."

"Okay." He nods but doesn't look completely convinced. "But we need a safe word, just in case."

I laugh a little. I've never needed a safe word before. But then again, my ex's were nothing compared to Tom.

"Okayâ how aboutâ !." I search the flat then my eyes lock onto the fruit bowl. "Apples?"

"Apples?"

"Yeah." I smile and lean into him. His erection digs into my belly button as I can feel the wetness of his pre-cum. "They remind me of another part of your body that I love."

He cocks his eyebrow.

I smile and peck his lips. "Your bum."

He tips his head back with a laugh. "Okay, apples it is." His head bounces back up. "Although, I don't really see the point of safe words. Surely STOP! Says it all?"

I laugh. "Well yeah, but some really kinky couples like to say 'stop' even when they don't want their partner to stop because it makes them feel like they're being violated or something and they find that sexy." I shrug. "I dunno."

"Hmmmâ !" He ponders over this for a moment, then a light sparks in his eyes and he arches an eyebrow at me. "Are you kinky?"

I splutter out an embarrassed laugh. "I don't know. I guess with you anything is possible."

He laughs, that perfect breathy chuckle which makes his tongue stick out between his teeth. It makes my pussy ache and suddenly remember that I'm naked from the waist down.

Golden Delicious

"Let's find out the, shall we?" His eyebrows dance and he shifts his lower body, making the tip of his cock rub against my stomach. "Now, come and fuck me. My balls feel like they're going to explode," he stains. A laugh bursts out of me. I really didn't expect that. Tom is such a well-spoken gentlemen and hearing something like that leave his mouth is comical and an unbelievable turn on at the same time.

"What happened to *we have all the time in the world?*" I arch an eyebrow and start to stroke his shaft which twitches at my touch. He groans then scowls at me playfully. I grin back and lift up over him. He holds my waist and guides himself into me. Our eyes are stuck to one another's as I sink down onto him. His teeth grit together. My jaw hangs open as he stretches me, fuelling the burning desire inside me. Once he's buried in me balls deep, he starts to fuck me. And I mean *fuck me*. Hard. Fast. Relentless. His hips jerk up as he slams me down against him, his fingertips digging into my hips. I meet his speed and bounce against him, clenching my pussy muscles as I do which makes him groan and tip his head back. While his throat is exposed to me, I lean down and start to suck on the hollow of his neck. He gurgles again and the vibration travels like a wave through my body, intensifying the pleasure between my thighs.

I press my palm into the back of the sofa to stabilise myself as I bring my other hand to his shoulder and start to trail my lips up to his ear, along his cheekbone, down his jaw then to his lips. He parts his lips with heavy lids, accepting my tongue as I probe his mouth.

My lower half is still rocking against him fiercely so that deep he has to break every few seconds so we can regain our breath. Sweat coats his forehead and his upper lip and his hands feel clammy against the bare skin of my hips. My vest top is slick and sticking to my back and I can feel sweat also brimming my forehead as I pant and moan against his lips.

I tip my head back and rock against him harder when I feel the familiar tingling sensation in my clit and the tightness in my stomach, signalling an upcoming orgasm. Tom's lips latch onto my neck and he kisses and licks my exposed skin. His hands then slip up my sides to my breasts and he cups them in his big hands. I'm not wearing a bra and my pyjama top is thin so my body jerks forward as a bolt of pleasure rushes through me when he brushes his thumbs across my nipples. He rubs them a little and the feeling is soft and soothing, so tender that it slows down my grinding and I get a sinking feeling that I wouldn't react my climax.

But then he simultaneously bits down on my neck and squeezes my nipples. My body writhes at the intense mixture of pleasure and pain and a strangle moan rips out of me. His hands then latch onto my hips again and he bucks his hips and throws me down onto him harder and I feel him grow bigger and start to pulsate inside me.

My orgasm attacks my body, sending my eyes rolling back and my jaw to hang open. Tom still pounds into me as he reaches his orgasm too and spills his seed inside me as I cum over his cock. Still, I rock against him as his body tightens and clenches at his orgasm, until he is completely spent and he starts to grow soft inside me.

My hands are shaking when I press them against his chest to steady myself. He's panting a little and he drops his forehead against mine, trying to collect himself.

In bed, I have the urge to sink into my usual position, with my arms wrapped around him and my chest to his back, but I remember what he said and I get this sinking feeling in my gut. He was right. A part of me did think that I was going to wake up alone. It was stupid, I know. But when you want something for so long and it was everything you imagined it would be, there is going to be this ominous dark cloud over you that reminds you that nothing is perfect.

Golden Delicious

So I twist my body so my back is to his. A cold breeze tickles my back at the space between our bodies. I want to feel his warmth so bad but I don't move. Instead, I curl my fingers into the duvet until they almost lose blood flow, and clench my eyes shut.

But then my heart flips when the bed shifts and I feel Tom moving around behind me. His arms slip round my stomach and he pulls me back into him and his warm chest presses against my back. My knees are tucked up and his are tucked up under them. I press my face into the pillow with a smile as butterflies swarm in my stomach.

A soft, content moan seeps out of me when I feel him press his lips against my shoulder blade.

"I'm not going anywhere," he murmurs against my skin.

Chapter 32: Golden Delicious

"Ebony, I want you to stay behind the bar today. Trish and Linda will serve the tables," says Darrell, popping his head round the door of the Staff room.

"Oh, is Linda back?" I ask.

"Yeah. And it's about time. She had that baby six months ago!"

I laugh and roll my eyes. I pat his shoulder as I pass him. "I'm sure she's very sorry that she wanted to spend some quality time with her new-born baby."

"And so she should," he replies, trying to sound serious but humour sparkles in his dark eyes.

As soon as I step behind the bar, Trish is at my side.

"Have you heard?" she asks, wide-eyed.

I furrow an eyebrow at the urgency in her voice. "Heard what?"

"Darrell's split us up."

I laugh. "I know. Linda's back."

"That's not the reason." She glares in the general direction of the Staff room. "He just wants to break us up."

"Can you blame him?" I arch an eyebrow and start to clean the dirty glasses left from last night. "All we do is talk. Maybe we'll actually be a little productive if we split."

She presses her hand to her heart overdramatically and gasps. "I can't believe you just said that." A family walk through the front door. Trish quickly grabs four menus and slots them under her arm. "Now I'm going to serve these lovely people with my new best friend Linda," she says before strutting off with a huff. I watch her as she leaves and laugh when she gives in a turns back to me with a cheeky grin and a playful wink.

Time seems to drag, standing alone behind the bar. And it's not as if we're a busy place. Even though we are supposed to have been separated, Trish comes behind the bar now and again to pretend to use the pitcher while she chats.

A man strolls in and sinks himself down onto one of the stools in front of the bar. I flash him a smile but he doesn't return in. Instead, his eyes narrow, studying my face.

"Are you Ebony?"

My heart thumps and my blood runs cold. The man is about in his early forties with grey running through his black short hair. He doesn't look familiar.

"Erhâ lyeah," I reply with an awkward smile.

At this, his face scrunches up into a look of disgust. "How do you live with yourself?"

Golden Delicious

I cough, choking on a gasp of surprise. "Excuse me?"

"You heard me. Running off with your mother's boyfriend. You should be ashamed of yourself."

My chest feels tight and the back of my eyes burn. I open my mouth to speak but no words come out. I'm trembling. His eyes bore into me, filled with hatred.

"My wife's a friend of your mothers. She's told me everything. It's sick. *You're* sick. After what you two have been through with her ex-husband- *your father*- and you go and do this to her." He scoffs with disdain.

I drop my shaking hands to my sides, hoping he doesn't see my terror. I clear my throat. "Y-you don't understand."

I feel a warmth at my side. I turn and see Trish stood beside me. Her emerald eyes are trained on the man in front of me, as harsh as his. They are narrowed to slits but the man doesn't acknowledge her.

"No," he seethes, keeping his eyes on me. "No, I don't understand. I don't understand how someone could be so selfish and cruel."

"Right." Trish snaps, loud and demanding. The man's eyes finally pull from mine and latch onto her. Her jaw sets in anger. "You need to go."

He huffs a laugh, studying her. "And what's going to happen if I don't?"

She smiles wickedly and place a glass of beer on the bar. "If you don't, the contents of this glass is going to meet your face."

He narrows his eyes a little, searching hers. She stays strong, her glare not wavering. He sneers a little and turns back to me. "Don't worry." He stands. "I was just leaving. I can't stand the sight of her any longer."

I gasp under my breath, feeling my heartstrings being painfully yanked at.

He gives me a once over and curls his lip. "You disgust me."

"Leave." Trish demands. He looks at her. "NOW!"

Finally, he does. My bones seem to quake when I hear the door shut behind him and he disappears out of sight. I let out the breath I had been holding in and drop back against the back of the bar, trying to control my rapid breaths. My body is still shaking and I can feel tears pooling in my eyes.

"Eb, are you okay?"

I flinch when Trish touches my arm. I look up. Everyone in the restaurant has stopped what they are doing and are looking at me. A sob jumps out of my thought. I slap my hand over my mouth as tears begin to pour down my cheeks.

"I can'tâ I can'tâ !" I mumble into my hand and run out of the bar and into the Staff room.

Luckily, it's empty.

Golden Delicious

I drop down onto one of the chairs and hold my head in my hands as I sob. A shadow casts over me. I look up to see Trish in the doorway, looking helpless.

"I just need a minuteâ I'm fineâ !" I suck in a sob and brush the tears from my eyes.

"Are you sure?"

I nod. "Please, give me a minute?"

She studies me then gives me a slight nod before shutting the door.

Why am I letting this man get to me? I don't even know him. Why should I care about what he thinks of me? My stomach cramps. I care because he's right. I'm sick. Sick and twisted.

The door opens. Light floods in. I had been sitting in the dark. I clench my jaw with my eyes to the floor. "Trish, I saidâ !" but my voice trails off when I look up. It's not Trish this time. It's Darrell. "Ohâ !" I clear my throat. "Sorry."

He sighs and turns the light on before closing the door. He drops down on the seat beside me.

"No, I'm sorry. I should be protecting you girls from guys like that," he says.

"It's okay." I wipe a falling tear. "I deserved it."

"No you didn't."

"Believe me, Darrell, I do."

He sighs and wraps his arm around me. "I'm not as dumb as you girls think I am. I know what goes on under this roof. And I know what is going on with you."

I arch an eyebrow. "You do?"

He nods. The light bounces off his balding head.

"You wanna know what I think?" he asks.

I laugh a little. "Why not?"

He smiles. "I think you've got what you've always wanted and the world is trying to punish you for it." His lips form a thin line. "But if you're happy, Ebony, *be* happy. Don't let the world get to you."

I shake my head. "You don't get it, Darrell. Nobody does." I look into his dark eyes. I can see my reflection in them. "I am happy but at the same time, I have this nagging feeling that it doesn't belong to me." I sigh and shake my head, looking to the floor. "Tom was my mum's happiness and I took him from her." My throat starts to swell up. "I stole her happiness."

He laughs a little and squeezes me close to him. "It's a known fact that you can't take someone who doesn't want to be taken."

Golden Delicious

I look up at him. He smiles. He brings his arm back round, slaps his lap and stands. "Now. If anything like that happens again, you come straight to me. Got it?"

I nod with a smile.

"Good. Trish is fuming out there. Part of me thinks she's going to track that guy down and beat him to death." His eyes widen.

I laugh. "Thanks Darrell."

He shows me a warm smile, understanding what I'm referring to. "No problem. I hate seeing you girls upset. You're like my daughters."

I smile up at him and stand. "And you're like our work dad."

He laughs. "C'mon, I'll switch you round. Linda can man the bar for the rest of the day."

Chapter 33: Golden Delicious

I open the car door and slump into the passenger seat beside Tom. Trish had walked out with me to make sure that the horrible man wasn't still lingering outside. She's now making her way to her car. She smiles and waves. I wave back. So does Tom when her eyes meet him.

"I'm guessing you've told Trish about us?" he asks.

"Yeah." I smile out the window but my heart feels like it's at my feet. I haven't been right all day since that verbal beat down. It hangs in the air, taunting me.

"And what does she think about our situation?" he continues, pulling out of the parking space.

"She's happy for us," I reply, still not looking at him, then add, "unlike some people," under my breath. He doesn't catch it and stays blissfully unaware of my trepidation for the rest of the car ride back to the flat.

It's not until I sink down onto the sofa and drop my head into my hands when he finally picks up on my distress. I hear the door close behind him and feel his presence in the room as he watches me.

"Did something happen today?" he asks.

I nod and swallow a sob. He drops down onto the sofa and peers at me, signalling me to look at him. I do. For the first time since this morning. My heart feels like it's being twisted and pulled at as I look deep into his soulful blue eyes.

"Someone came into the restaurant today?" I begin. He drops his elbows onto his knees and listens. I wipe a tear from my eyes. *Crap, I'm crying again.* "He said his wife knew my mum." At this, I hear him gulp. He probably knows what I'm going to say next. "He said I disgust him. That what we've done is sick." My chest feels tight. I'm panting to try and fill my lungs. "I can't take this, Tom. I can't take all this judgement."

"Fuck 'em," he seethes.

My heart pounds and my eyes widen. "What?"

His jaw clenches. "I said, fuck 'em, Ebby. We have each other, you shouldn't care about what other people think."

My eyebrows furrow at the dark determination in his eyes. My teeth grit together at the sudden realisation. I stand quickly, towering over him. His eyebrows shoot to his hairline as he looks up at me.

"Don't *you* care?" Anger burns inside me as he looks up at me dumbly. "Tom, do you even care about what you've done to my mum? Because since we've been here, it seems like I'm the only one who is tormented with guilt. You seem completely fine."

"Seem."

"*What?*"

He stands, now towering over me. "Seem. I seem fine. I've been trying to act fine for you, Ebby. Truthfully? I've been trying to get in contact with Sharon."

Golden Delicious

My heart flips. "Since when?"

"Since a few days ago."

"And?"

He lifts his hands in a helpless gesture. "She's been blocking my calls. I went to your house and she slammed the door in my face. That's why I told you that we should wait a while. I didn't want the same thing to happen to you. I knew what it would do to you."

I feel deflated, like someone has pulled a cork out of me and all the energy is seeping away. I slowly sink back onto the sofa, my eyes staring ahead into nothing.

"She's disowned me!" I breathe, the words stinging my heart. Tears burn my eyes, blurring my vision. "I'm dead to her."

Suddenly, Tom drops down beside me and cradles my shaking body, pressing me hard against his chest to still me as I cry aloud.

"Shhh!" he whispers softly in my ear. The soft graze of his stubble brushes against my jaw. "Just give her time!"

"So." I wipe my eyes and curl my fingers into his shirt. "You do feel bad?"

"Of course I feel bad. Your mum is a great person. No one deserves what we did to her."

"Especially after everything with my dad!" I blubber.

"We can get through this. Once we clear things up with her, people will leave us alone."

I look up blearily. "People have been harassing you too?"

He sighs. "I get looks. No one has confronted me but I can feel their stares."

"You're a model, people are supposed to stare at you."

He laughs lightly at my attempt at humour. "They're not the type stares I am used to."

We stay like this for a while, holding each other until my body stops shuddering.

"Y'know, this couldn't have happened at a worse time," I say.

He looks down at me curiously. "Why?"

I brush my eyes and lean out of him. "I was actually thinking that tonight we could go out for a meal or something, y'know, as a couple?"

He smiles as his features soften. "I'd love to take you on a belated date."

"But what about the stares?"

Golden Delicious

He wraps his arm around my shoulder and gives me a sideways squeeze. "Fuck 'em."

I laugh and drop my head on his chest. He kisses my temple. "Fuck 'em."

"You actually managed to grab me something decent that I can wear," I say, being half smothered as I lean into the back of the wardrobe. I clutch the blouse and pull it out. I put it against my chest and spin round. Tom is at the other wardrobe, plucking out a navy blue suit. My heart pounds. "You're wearing a suit?" I ask, my throat already feeling like sand.

His lips curl up into a devilishly handsome grin. "Yeah." He lays the blazer and trousers over the bed and grabs a white shirt to go with it. "Y'know, I was looking through that folder you have of me when I went to get your stuff-" he explains, studying the suit. My cheeks flush with embarrassment. He runs a hand down the blazer sleeve. "I was wearing this suit in one of the pictures." He looks at me over his shoulder. I let out a weird sort of mewl and then clamp my mouth shut. *Where the hell did that come from?*

He laughs a little and starts to unbutton the shirt he's wearing, revealing his perfectly sculptured chest.

I clear my dry throat. "I like you in a suit."

He smiles, crinkling his eyes. "I figured as much."

I chew my lip with a grin and spin round, unable to suppress my red cheeks and busy myself with finding a nice pair of jeans.

"The top is lovely by the way," he adds. "I think this date will be worth the wait."

I smile at the thought of sitting across the table from Tom in his sexy navy suit, the one from the picture that I remember quite vividly. This date *is* going to be worth the wait.

Chapter 34: Golden Delicious

We decided to have our meal in a place a little out of the way, hoping that we could be properly alone.

Tom holds the door open for me and slips his arm around my waist as he asks for a table. My heart flutters at the contact. This is the first time we have been properly out together as a couple. It would have felt a lot better if I knew what the people were thinking who turned to look at us. *Where they just looking at Tom because of how handsome he is and how amazing he looks in his suit or are they judging him? Judging us?*

The man behind the front desk guides us to a booth in the middle of the restaurant.

"Have you got a table a little moreâ private?" asks Tom. The man looks at him in silence for a while. I nudge Tom so he looks at me.

"This table is fine. Let's just sit here," I say.

He scans the restaurant cautiously. "I just thought ifâ know?"

My heart sinks. I did know. He meant that we should hide away just in case someone else wants to harass me. *Hiding again? I thought we were over this.*

I smile at the waiter. "A more private table would suit us better, actually."

He nods. "Sure."

He guides us to another table at the back of the restaurant against the wall.

"Is this table more to your liking?" he asks.

"It's perfect." Tom smiles. "Thank you."

The man nods and places two menus on the table as we sit. "Would you like something to drink?"

"Vodka tonic with a squeeze of lime, please." Tom smiles, his brilliant white teeth are shimmering as his well-polished shoes. The smooth elegance of his voice makes my insides quiver and flutter.

The waiter writes it down on his pad and turns to me. I blink up at him, returning to Earth.

"Disaronno and cranberry juice for me," I say.

He nods. "I'll be right back," he says before leaving.

I scan the people around us, no one is looking. Something warm touches my hand and I start a little, spinning my head round. Tom's eyebrows are slightly furrowed as he holds my hand, tracing circles with his thumb on my skin.

"Are you okay?" he asks softly.

I half smile. "I'll be fine. I'm just a littleâ on edge."

Golden Delicious

"I can see that. But everything will be fine. Let's just enjoy tonight, okay? It's just me and you."

I smile wider and squeeze his hand. "Okay."

Minutes later, our waiter returns with our drinks and writes down our meal choices before leaving us again.

A silence falls between us but it is serene and peaceful. I study the gorgeous man sat before me, feeling like I'm in a dream. He decided not to wear a tie so his top button of his shirt is open. I almost start to salivate just looking at his long, slender neck and the pronounced V between his collar bones.

He takes his glass and sips his drink, making his Adam's apple roll up and down. Suddenly, I realise my mouth has been hanging open for the last few minutes. I quickly shut it and gulp, clearing the dryness in my throat.

"You look beautiful tonight," says Tom, placing his glass back on the table. The light directly above him casts his cheeks in shadow so his cheekbones look even more spectacular. It also darkens his beard that is starting to grow back. I feel myself blushing. I had done the best I could with what I had at the flat. All my dresses were still at home but the blouse I found manages to display my breasts in an obvious yet classy way. My small breasts need all the help they can get. And when I catch Tom's shining blue orbs glance down from my eyes every so often, I know my blouse is doing its job well. I had also let my hair down from its usual messy bun so it falls down my back in waves.

"Thanks." I smile. "And you look as handsome as always." I study him and shrug. "Okay, maybe even more handsome than usual."

He lets out a soft, modest laugh and looks to the table, slightly embarrassed. You would think a model would be used to being called good looking but it still manages to bring pink to his creamy complexion.

Our waiter swoops by and places our plates in front of us. "Enjoy your meals." He bows his head a little and leaves.

"Sure is nice being the one waited on for a change," I muse, studying my food.

Tom laughs a little and digs in.

We share a few laughs and talk about our day, skilfully sidestepping anything that could lead us into unwanted territory. And by that, I mean topics that involve my mum. I felt bad about pretending she didn't exist but she seems to be doing the exact same thing to me so what the hell? I'm going to enjoy my night with the man of my dreams.

But moments later, we were given a reality check when Tom reaches over and holds my hand, only for the woman on the opposite table to look and curl her lip with revulsion. She turns to, who I'm guessing is her husband and whispers, "I can't believe they have the gall to go out in public," but loud enough for us to know that she wanted to be heard.

My gut knots and I feel Tom's hand slipping from mine but I clutch it tighter. He looks at me warily.

"Don't listen to her," I say, trying to sound strong but I feel like I'm dying inside. His jaw sets with determination and I release his hand so we can keep eating.

Golden Delicious

A silence falls over us like a blanket, still and cold. I open my mouth to speak but my words turn to dust. I notice Tom glancing at the woman every so often and my neck prickles whenever she looks back to us.

"How could someone do that to their own mother?" she continues, leaning into her husband. He looks directly at me and seethes before looking to Tom. They lock eyes. I can tell that Tom wants to look away, not wanting to make a scene, but he doesn't.

"I know," says the man, his voice thick with venom. "And as for *him*." He scoffs and turns back to his wife. "I guess he just fancied trading in for a younger model."

What feels like a block of ice sets in my chest when I hear Tom growl his irritation under his breath. His eyes narrow to the couple and his knuckles turn white as his grip on his fork tightens. His body seems to have coiled up, his muscles have tensed as if he's ready to pounce. My heart is in my throat at the image of Tom launching himself across the table and grabbing the man by the scruff of the neck.

But that doesn't happen. Instead, he let out a steadying breath, cricks his neck and shifts his gaze to the table, relaxing his shoulders. I let out a sigh of relief. Thank God Tom is a gentleman and not a brute that likes to start fights with strangers to prove his masculinity.

"I didn't know Sharon knew this many people," he murmurs, mopping the gravy up from his plate with a potato.

"News travels fast, I guess," I reply hollowly, wishing this night would hurry up and end.

Chapter 35: Golden Delicious

"I'm sorry about tonight." I hear Tom say. "You couldn't get out of there quick enough.

I'm sat on the stool in front of the desk, wiping my make-up off. I've changed into my pyjamas, ready for bed. I look from my reflection in the small round mirror, to Tom's. He's leaning in the bedroom doorway. He has discarded his blazer and now stands in just his white shirt and pants. His eyebrow is lifted in that thigh-clenching, incredible way they do when he knows he has inflicted hurt on someone else.

I half smile into the mirror. "It wasn't your fault. It was-" my lip curls up into a snarl, "*-theirs.*"

"Soâ you don't blame me?" His voice hitches at the end, hopefully.

I furrow my brows. "Of course not. Why would you think that?"

"Well." He shifts awkwardly, folding his arms across his lean chest. "They were judging you for being with me."

"They were judging us," I correct and then pull a face, shaking my head. "I don't see how that's any better," I laugh awkwardly.

A short silence follows. Tom drops his eyes to the floor and I continue wiping away my mascara.

"So, if you don't blame meâ !" Tom's voice cuts through the air, but now it's not fragile and worried, it's husky and spine-tingly sexy. I gulp and shift my eyes to his reflection. My heart flips. He's looking right at me, his head slightly bowed so he's looking through his brows. "does that mean you don't want me to make it up to you?"

I let out an excited pant. The look in his eyes tells me that I need to change my mind. The lust that swirls in those pale blue pools makes my whole body flush and tingle.

"Y-you-" I clear my sudden dry throat and slip into my flirty tone, "can make it up to me if you really want to."

He grins, dark and devious. "Oh, I really do."

He crosses the room. I turn to look at the real him and not his reflection but by the time I do, he has squeezed round my stool and is already dropped to his knees under the desk.

My controlled, sultry demeanour quickly falls away when excited giggles jump past my lips.

"What are you doing?"

He peers up at me, his head ducked slightly so he can fit in the small cubby-like space under the desk. The shadow casts grey over his face and seems to make his eyes shine.

I suck in a breath at the warm sensation that runs up my legs when he places both his hands on the sides of my calves, still holding eye contact. His expression is soft. His lips form a thin, delicate line but a smile dances in his eyes as his hands start to slowly caress me, moving upwards.

Golden Delicious

My teeth catch my lower lip to suppress a smile when they slip past my knees and to my thighs. Instinctively, I shift my body closer to him and he dips his fingers past the hem of my pyjama shorts before recoiling them and bringing them to the waistband. I lift my ass up a little as he tugs them down past my knees and lets them fall to the floor. His eyes stray away from mine and drop to my chest. I'm not wearing a bra and the material of my pyjama top is thin so my guess is that he's staring at my hard nipples.

I gasp and my hips buck a little when he starts to caress me again, his big hands stroking my thighs. His eyes latch onto mine once more as he dips his head and kisses my knee. My pussy clenches and the hunger for him stirs in the pit of my stomach, feeling like a gnawing knot, twisting and pulling.

His eyelids flutter closed, looking entranced by the sensuality of the moment as he continues to sprinkle kisses up my inner thigh while he strokes the other with feather-light touches.

When his lips get to the apex of my thigh, he roughly pushing my knees apart, making my body jolt forwards and a gasp to escape me. I'm so wet now that I can feel my juices running down my slit and onto the stool. From this angle, I can't see his whole face but I catch a twitch in his cheek, telling me that he is smiling.

I bring my hands to his slender shoulders, brush them up the pristine column of his neck then run my fingers through his short curls. His head lowers. My back arches as I crave the contact.

His hot breath hits my naked pussy and I moan before he has even touched me. I run my thumb along the curve of his ear and close my eyes, wanting to bathe in this moment.

My back arches. My head tips back. I mewl in delight as his hot, wet tongue runs up my slit to my clit. He curls the tip of his tongue round my sensitive bud, popping it out of its protective hood. My grip on his hair tightens as I press his face close to me. He rolls my clit with the hard tip of his tongue, making my breath hitch and my arms to shake.

I start to push my foot along the floor, my toes curling with pleasure, until I find his thigh. I run my foot up his inner thigh and cradle his crotch which feels tight and hard in the confines of his pants. As he starts to lick me out, running his flat tongue up and down my slit, catching my clit and my soaking entrance with every long swipe, I meet his rhythm with my foot, rubbing his crotch with the curve of my ankle and my toes. He groans against me which sends ripples of pleasure through my body. But then his hand leaves my knee and clamps around my ankle, making me jerk forwards at the rough suddenness of his touch. He presses his hand firmly against me, forcing me to place it back on the ground. My stomach drops with disappointment. I had enjoyed the feeling of his cock straining to be released, but his action made it very clear that he is doing this to please *me* and I should sit back and enjoy it.

Relaxing a little, I look to the ceiling, close my eyes and curl my fingers into his hair as his skilful tongue and the sensual brush of his stubble against my lower lips sends me closer and closer to my peak.

"The first time you went down on me you were an American police officer," I whisper dreamily.

His tongue pauses. My heart flips and I look down. His pale blue eyes peer up at me from between my thighs, his eyebrow cocked curiously.

"What?"

My arousal is painted on his thin lips, making them glisten like he's wearing lip gloss. I chew my lip and look down, suddenly feeling embarrassed. *Why did I say that?*

Golden Delicious

"Ebbbyâ !" he presses with laughter to his tone, making my cheeks burn. I yelp surprise when he grips the backs of my calves to get my attention.

I laugh and look to him. A smile dances in his eyes.

"Fine." I huff, shifting awkwardly on the stool. Tom rests his elbows on my parted knees with this endearingly beautiful look of innocence as he waits. "Before we got together, I sort of had a veryâ vivid dream about you."

His eyebrow lifts, intrigued. Part of me wants to stop there but at the same time, I want Tom to know my naughty fantasy.

"I was driving and I was pulled over. You were an American police officer and you gave me a rather thorough body search." As I explain, I lose eye contact with him out of pure embarrassment. When I look back up, he's got a self-satisfied grin on his face.

"Reaaaally?"

I have to look away again. I gasp and my body jolts forward at the rushing sensation up my spine when he presses his lips to the apex of my thigh. My hands, which had fallen to his shoulders, grip his curls once more.

"I'll have to keep that in mind," he murmurs against my skin. His hot breath tingles my pussy and he wastes no time in letting his tongue join in with giving me magical fluttering sensation deep in my gut.

Despite the break, Tom's perfect combination of tongue, teeth and lips brings me to a surprisingly quick orgasm. My head snaps back, my jaw hangs open and my thighs lock around his head as I shudder with a gasping moan and cum into him mouth.

I hold him there for a while longer as he seems to be enjoying the taste of me and I feel like I need to keep my thigh grip on him so I don't topple off the stool. A few moments later, I feel him slightly straining against my hold on his curls so I release him. He wipes his mouth, regaining his breath and looks up at me.

"Feel better?" he asks, his eyes shining hopefully.

I smile, still slightly dazed by the orgasm that seemed to shoot straight to my brain, making me feel like there was an explosion inside my skull. "I feel amazing."

As he wiggles out from under the desk and stands, he pauses at my height and gives me a heavy kiss. I slip my tongue into his mouth and taste myself on his tongue.

I press my forehead against his and look down to his giant bulge.

"Now it's time to make you feel better." I lick my lip and reach for his fly. My heart jumps when his big hands gently wrap around mine.

He brings his lips to my ear. "You don't need to do that. Just seeing you smile is enough for me." He kisses my temple and turns, heading towards the bathroom.

My body slumps with disappointment. I still haven't been able to relish with the feeling of having Tom's glorious length in my mouth.

Golden Delicious

"That was another cheesy line!" I point out when he disappears behind the bathroom door.

"I know and I don't care!" he calls back.

Chapter 36: Golden Delicious

I feel myself drifting awake, my dream receding into nothingness. Yawning, I roll my eyes open and stretch my arms out but then quickly recoil them, remembering that I no longer sleep alone and I could end up accidentally whacking Tom in the face. The bedroom is still fogged over with the grey-darkness of the night. It must be the early hours of the morning.

I shuffle over onto my side to peep at sleeping Tom, who always looks so pensive as he dreams. My heart jumps a little when I realise I *am* sleeping alone. Pushing myself up onto my forearms, I squint at the thin stream of light coming from the living area. The bedroom door is slightly ajar. I sigh and drop my head back onto the pillow. Tom's just probably getting a snack or something so I close my eyes and let sleep take me under.

When I open my eyes a dream later and find myself still alone, I start to grow worried. I slip out of bed and pad my way over to the living area. The door creaks a little but Tom doesn't move. He's sat with his back to me on the sofa, his head in his hands. The lamp on the coffee table illuminates him.

"Tom?" I say, making my presence known. He doesn't answer. Furrowing my brows, I walk up to him and touch his shoulder gently. He doesn't flinch. He doesn't do anything. His breathing is slow and steady as if he's trying to control himself. "Tom, are you okay?" I ask, running my thumb along the curve of his ear. He's wearing a thin white top and his boxers.

"We were being stupid," he finally says, hopelessness making his voice wobble a little.

I gulp. "What do you mean?"

"We were being stupid to think that this was all going to work out okay." He shifts his body and looks up at me. His eyes are bloodshot from recent tears and the sight makes my chest tighten.

"Don't say that." I grip his shoulders, mainly using them for stability. His words are like being kicked in the ribs.

"But it's true." His voice wobbles even more as fresh tears build up in his eyes. He blinks and looks ahead. "I've been trying to focus on the good. On the silver lining that borders the huge, ominous cloud lurking over us." He balls his fists and presses them against his mouth, shaking a little. "You are that silver lining, Ebby. I love you so much but our relationship was built on very unsteady ground." I squeeze his shoulders tighter, my lips wavering as tears pool in my eyes.

"I tried to make light of it though. I chose to see our relationship like a phoenix, rising from the ashes of mine and Sharon's relationship. Butâthat ash is still there. *Sharon* is still there." He clenches his fists so tight that his knuckles look like they're going to tear through his skin. "Don't get me wrong Ebby, mine and your mum's relationship was good. I wasn't leading her on. If it wasn't for you, I'm pretty sure it could have been perfect." He exhales deeply, dipping his head so his chin rests against his chest. "But once I saw you I knewâ I had entered Sharon's life so that you could enter mine."

I release one of his shoulders and cover my mouth with my hand as ugly sobs begin to escape me.

"What we've done was wrong, Ebby. We're not going to be accepted."

"Butâif mum forgave usâ!"

Golden Delicious

He turns and looks at me. His face is as red and blotchy as mine feels. Tears trickle down his cheeks. "Would you? Would you forgive us if the tables were turned?"

My heart falls to my feet, making my chest feel empty and cold. I shake my head. His clenches his eyes shut. "Then how we expect Sharon to forgive us? She's only human." He turns back to the wall. "We keep saying that we're going to get through thisâ but it just seems like we are just going to be fighting forever and not actually getting anywhere."

"What are you saying, Tom?" My teeth grit together as I try to gather some sort of composure but I feel like I'm crumbling inside. "Do you want to break up?"

He shakes his head vigorously. I let out a tiny sigh of relief.

"What would that solve?" he asks, bitterness hardening his tone. "I would have still cheated on Sharon. You still would have betrayed your mum. The only thing that would be different would be that there will be no silver lining to our cloud." He looks up at me. "And if I lost that Iâ I don't think I could take it."

"So, what are you getting at?" I ask reluctantly, not feeling ready for whatever answer he's going to give me.

He shakes his head and bows it, running his fingers through his hair. "Just thatâ I know you want me to be your rock and stay optimistic but I cant. I justâ I can't." He rubs his eyes and looks up at me. His eyelashes are wet and stuck together in clumps. "I'm sorry. That's all I've got."

I gulp hard and try to steady my erratic breathing. "Okay," I exhale deeply. "How about we go back to bed and take every day as it comes?"

The muscles in his jaw flex but he nods numbly. "It seems like that's all we can do."

He stands, still shaking a little. Once he comes round the side of the sofa, I wrap my arm around the small of his back. He does the same to me and squeezes me a little.

As we lie in bed, side by side, I bunch up the duvet in my fists and press it against my nose and mouth to muffle my sobs. Tom is sleeping with his back to me, almost curled up in the foetus position. It had taken him a while to settle down. He had been holding me close to him, the way I always did with him. With his head on my chest and his hands round my hips, his breathing kept hitching as he shook but he finally calmed down and rolled over into the position he is in now.

But still I lie, chewing my lips and pressing the duvet to my mouth, wondering if this is all worth the mess. Tom is the love of my life. That much is clear. But is there supposed to be this much collateral damage when two people finally find each other? It's supposed to be fun and exhilarating and beautiful. And when I'm with Tom, forgetting everything else beside him, it is like that. I couldn't be happier. It's only when the outside world comes creeping back when I feel like a pile of human crap. And now I know that Tom feels the same? Well, that's just made things a million times worse.

I'm just clinging onto the hope that we actually are soul mates and we haven't just ruined my mum's life for nothing.

Chapter 37: Golden Delicious

Tom had left in the morning. He popped his head around the bedroom door to tell me he had some errands to run and he didn't know when he's be back. He's been gone for over two hours now.

It's a Saturday so I spend the morning in my pyjama's watching daytime TV with this uncomfortable knot in my stomach. Tom had looked just as spritely as he usually is this morning, as if he had totally forgotten about what had happened last night. Was he just trying to ignore the problem and expect it to go away? His guilt is clearly eating away at him and burying his head in the sand isn't going to do any good. The only thing that could possibly be of use is to face things head-on.

My stomach flips. Is that what Tom's errand is? Is he going to talk to my mum? He tried it before behind my backâ I gulp. If he isâ please God, let it go well. I can't handle this anymore. In my head, being with Tom was supposed to be a breath of fresh air. But I guess I should have known that fantasies are nothing like the real thing.

I take my bowl and spoon to the sink and start the washing up, gazing out the window as I daydream. When am I going to take that step? When am I finally going to see my mum? I've been thinking about it ever since she chucked me out but shivers crawl up my back every time I do. What if I'm met with the same reaction Tom had and get a door slammed in my face? I don't think I could take it. I saw how much of a mess it had turned Tom into. I don't want to share the same fate.

But what if mum thinks I'm ignoring her? What if she thinking I've just abandoned her? That I don't care? That I have Tom now and that's it?

The knot in my stomach tightens, making my eyes clench shut and the horrific sensation. What if she thinks that *she's* dead to *me*?

I need to see her.

But not right now just in case I am right and Tom is attempting to mend fences. Part of me feels like that's just another excuse not to go butâ it is a good one.

I jump into the shower, slip into my sweats and dry my hair. It's now almost half three and Tom's still not back. He left at ten. Should I be worried? *No, don't be silly.* Tom's his own person, he can do whatever he wants.

Sitting back on the sofa with a packet of crisps, I think about going shopping. I need to go shopping. I need more clothes. And it's either I buy some more or I get my old ones from home. A shudder runs up my back. *Home.* The house I'm not welcome at.

Finally, I decide to go to town and treat myself to a new wardrobe. I get a sinking feeling as I dress though, remembering the man at the bar and the couple at the restaurant. It's like they've made me agoraphobic. Every time I think about going outside, I am overcome with dread. But I can't spend my life locked up in this tiny flat. I should be enjoying my life. Enjoying my life with the man that I love. When you buy a new flashy car, you don't keep it in the garage, do you? No. You take it out for a spin and paint the town red.

Just as I reach up to grab my jacket off the hanger, there's a knock at the door. I pause. Who could *that* be? Curiosity and apprehension flutters me heart as I head towards the door. Maybe it's someone Tom knows. My heart thumps. Maybe it's my mum. But how have they got through the front door? I didn't buzz anyone in.

Golden Delicious

Letting out a steady breath, I open the door.

My heart bangs against my ribs and my eyebrows almost hit my hairline.

He looks exactly how he had in my dream. The black shoes, the navy attire, blacked out shades and the police hat. A pair of silver handcuffs hang from his belt, bouncing light onto the wall. He purses his lips and pulls his shades down his nose. His mesmerizing pale blue eyes shine at me.

"Tom?" I say, laughing a little with complete shock.

His tall, lean body towers over me. He inspects my body with a blank mask, before his gaze sweeps back to my eyes, making my heart skip a beat.

"My name is Officer Frisky, ma'am," he says. I hold back a laugh, attempting to be serious. He has clearly put a lot of thought into this and I'd hate to ruin it. "Are you Ebony Farris?"

"Yes, sir."

"I've been told that you have been a very bad girl, Miss Farris. May I come in?"

My thighs clench at the sudden rush of heat between them. I gulp and step to the side, allowing him access. "Certainly."

He nods cordially and enters. I close the door behind him and turn. He's studying the flat with his back to me. God, he looks incredible. Even more delicious in real life. Holy crap, this is going to be amazing.

Chapter 38: Golden Delicious

I stay silent by the door, watching as he slowly turns with his thumbs hooked under the belt loops of his pants, all serious and professional. A smile keeps threatening to curve my lips as giddy butterflies swarm around my stomach but I shake it off.

"How exactly have I been a bad girl, officer?" I ask innocently.

His eyes, over his shades, trail from my toes to my face, setting my body alight with tingles.

"We got an anonymous tip explaining that you have been smuggling some illegal substances. I'm going to need to search your place." He looks to the door to his left. "Bedroom?"

"Be my guest," I say with a welcoming hand gesture.

He nods firmly and proceeds into the room.

I watch in the door frame as he opens all the cupboards and pretends to be routing for something. It takes him less than a minute to grow tired and close all the doors again.

"Find anything?" I ask with a smile.

He straightens and turns. He sighs, takes off his shades and slips them into his breast pocket. I suck in a delighted mewl when I finally see his face fully.

"No," he states. "I'm going to have to check your person."

I arch an eyebrow. "Really?"

"Yes ma'am. Please, remove your shirt."

I gasp as if I'm appalled. "Surely that's a violation of my human rights?"

"I'll be the judge of that. Shirt. Remove it." His eyes narrow slightly. Oh my God, bossy Tom is hot!

With slightly shaky hands, I pull my top over my head and drop it to the floor. A smile twitches on his lips when his eyes latch onto my dainty baby pink bra that has an innocent white bow between the cups. As he leisurely strolls over to me, his lips part a little and he runs his tongue under his top row of teeth. I don't know it he's doing it on purpose but damn, it just makes me want to kiss him even more.

When he lifts his big hands and cups my breasts, I gasp and almost topple over as my knees turn to jelly. He studies my face with an impassive mask then squeezes firmly, shocking a moan out of me. He removes his hands and drops them by his sides.

"Remove your bra, miss."

I obey and unhook my bra. I slip my arms out of it and drop it next to my top. Suddenly, his warm hands are back palming my breasts. I arch my back and stick my chest further out, towards him. A playfully smile threatens to shatter his icy composure. I can see the laughter in the creases of his eyes as he clearly bites down on his tongue.

He rubs my hard nipples with his thumbs before squeezing them one last time. He drops his hands and nods down to my jeans.

"Jeans next," he orders.

"Is this really necessary?" I tease.

"Of course. I need to make sure I have thoroughly checked your person. People are finding new and inventive ways to smuggle illegal substances on their body every day."

I unzip my jeans and give him a dubious look. "I don't know, Officer. This all seems a little excessive," I say as I pull my jeans down to my ankles. I kick off my pumps and yank my jeans off the rest of the way.

"Trust me, ma'am. This is very necessary. I take my job very seriously," he says, peering through his brows before eyeing up my mismatched yellow panties.

My breath catches in my throat when he takes a step forward. We're chest to chest. He's so close I can feel his breath on my cheek. His fingertips brush the apex of my thigh. I flinch with a breathy moan but then gulp and keep my eyes stuck to his. Amusement bounces in his blue pools. He's clearly enjoying my reaction to this surprise role-play.

I suck in a breath feverishly when he slips two fingers between my legs and rubs them against my panties. I'm so wet I'm sure the material is damp. But when I start to rock my hips, attempting to harden the pressure on my clit, he withdraws his hand and steps back.

Golden Delicious

"I'm going to need you to remove those too, ma'am."

I arch an eyebrow and slip my thumbs under the hem of my panties. "It's a good job you're handsome, Officer Frisky. You are asking a lot from me," I say as I bend down, pulling down my panties. I drop them to my ankles and flick them off my toes.

When I straighten and look back up to his face, my heart flips. The tip of his tongue runs across his lower lips as he studies my now completely naked body. Part of me wants to throw my hands over myself to cover up. I feel so vulnerable stood here while he is fully clothed in the most sexiest uniform I've ever laid eyes on.

"Oh, Miss Farris," he muses, his eyes finally finding mine. "I'm only just getting started."

"Oh my," I can't help but gasp.

He gives me a playfully wicked smile, wide enough to crease his eyes. I can see the real Tom threatening to break his hard exterior. My heart grows warm and fuzzy as I watch him struggling to stay in character. He shakes his head and drops his smile.

"On the bed, ma'am."

I gasp again and press my hand to my naked chest. "Now, is that really necessary?" I tease.

His eyes smile at me. "Oh yes, I need as much access to you as possible."

I shrug, resigned. "Well then, if it's necessary."

I clamber onto the bed. My body grows even hotter at the sensation of Tom's eying me up from behind. I spin round so I'm lay on my back, propping myself up on my forearms. Tom stands at the foot of the bed all business-like with his thumbs hooked in his belt loops, studying me with an appreciative smile. I suck in a delighted mewl when he lowers himself and starts to climb over me. I open my legs and he kneels between them. He reaches to his belt and grabs the silver handcuffs.

"Hands above your head, ma'am. Wrist to wrist," he says.

I gulp and do as he says. The cold metal tingles my inflamed skin as he locks the handcuffs round my wrists, securing them round a pole of the headboard. I yank them to see how much they give. It's enough to allow my forearms to rest of the pillow comfortably but there is no way I'm getting myself free. The feeling arouses me yet makes a ball of anxiety knot in my stomach.

"There," Tom says, his face inches from mine. He looks down at my naked body sandwiched under him. His voice comes out hoarse and breathy as he whispers, "God, you look so sexy tied up."

I watch in silence as he takes off his hat, places it upside down on the bedside table and drops the key to the handcuffs inside. My body is tense. I can feel all my muscles coiled tightly. I try to relax but I can't. The anticipation is killing me! I have no idea what's going to happen next and with my hands in cuffs, he's free to do whatever he wants to me.

My skin tingles as he pulls the band from my hair and runs his fingers through my blonde waves so they are spread over the pillow and down my chest.

Tom leans back, kneeling between my thighs as he admires my body. My back arches when his hands start to scope my body with feather-light traces. He starts at my forearms, down my sides then to my thighs, making me flush with desire but not satiating my hunger in any way.

"It appears I may have been misled," he says, his eyes still trailing over my exposed skin. "You're completely clean." His eyes finally find mine. The strength of his gaze makes my heart thump and my throat to dry. "I'm sorry for wasting your time. Please, allow me to make it up to you."

Oh my, even when he's playing a sexy cop, he still acts like a gentleman. Just because he's roleplaying, doesn't mean he can throw his manner out of the window.

"Would you like me to make it up to you?" he asks, cocking his eyebrow in that heart-melting way.

I nod, clearing my throat. "Yes."

His smooth mask cracks with a grin. "Perfect."

Chapter 39: Golden Delicious

He lowers his body so he's lying over me but there is a space between our chests. His weight is on his forearms that are by either side of me, also not touching me. I watch patiently. He smiles down at me, his eyes flickering over my face before he closes them and lowers his lips to my neck.

A soft moan seeps through my parted lips when we finally make contact. It's a gentle kiss on my collarbone. I arch my back for more and he kisses me again, just as soft as the first. I grit my teeth and yank my arms, trying to pull free of the restraints. I so desperately want to run my fingers through those bouncy curls that are brushing against my chin. He senses my need for more and runs his nose up my neck to my jaw, leaving a sprinkling of kisses behind it. I moan and so does he. Right down my ear. Breathily with desire. God, he sounds so hot. This is unbearable. I tug at the handcuffs fitfully, kicking out my legs. His kisses on my neck become hungrier and primal. He parts his lips and licks and sucks at my tender skin. My ass bucks into the bed and my back arches. When my breasts hit his chest, my hard nipples graze against the fabric of his shirt.

"Oh, Tom!" I moan, clenching my eyes shut.

He doesn't move. He just keeps kissing my neck. Even when I twist my head in an attempt to guide his lips to mine, he moves along with me and keeps contact with the curve of my neck. I growl under my breath. Tom moans in response. The heat between my thighs swells. My clit is aching for friction. This is killing me! Unable to take it anymore, I twist my lower half so one of his thighs is directly between mine. The handcuffs give me just enough room so that I can shimmy down a little and rub my myself against his muscular thigh. I hiss with satisfaction as my clit presses against his pants. Smiling to myself unabashedly, I continue to grind against his thigh until my moans become too loud and Tom puts a stop to my pleasure by moving lower down the bed.

I'm just about to throw a hissy fit when his head lowers too and his hard tongue flicks my nipple.

"Oh!" I moan, surprised.

He drops his upper body so he is now actually lying on me but he's kept most of his weight on his tucked up knees so I'm not being squashed. His big hand palms my other breast. His skin is so warm, the contact makes my eyes roll back contently. I relax the tension that has ceased up my arms and give in to the slow pleasure Tom is giving me. I shouldn't want to rush to the end. I should enjoy the ride.

My toes curl up as I watch him doing his thing. With Tom's big hands, my breasts look tiny but he seems to be having fun with them nonetheless. I giggle when he moans against my skin, the vibration shoots straight to my pussy making my hips jolt up and smack against his firm stomach.

He sucks one nipple into his mouth and rolls the other with his thumb. I sigh contently and arch my back to him. His tongue sweeps the underside of my breast then he starts to lower himself further, leaving a trail of kisses down my stomach and stopping at my navel. Tom, don't stop there! Keep going! Okay, my relaxing plan is failing. He's getting me all riled up again. The sexual angst knotting in my stomach is almost painful. I gasp and groan when he kisses round my navel then dips his tongue inside as his hands gently stroke up and down my sides.

"Tom, fuck me. Please. Tom," I pant, thrashing against the restraints. The handcuffs smash against the metal pole of the headboard, making a metallic clang shatter off the walls.

"It's Officer Frisky, ma'am," he replies simply.

I grit my teeth. My nostrils flair. I buck my hips up and I wrap my thighs around his waist. Before I even have a chance to grind against him, his hands grip the backs of my knees and he pushes apart my thighs so I lose contact.

I growl my frustration but then fall silent when his magical blue pools set on me. He peers up at me through his brows. His eyes twinkle with amusement and a smile threatens to break on his lips as he says, "Patience." My heart thumps and my muscles relax. He lets his smile show when I drop my arms back onto the pillow. He continues kissing my stomach, gradually getting lower and closer to the place I really want him. A quick, sharp gasp breaks out of me when he reaches my mound and starts to lick up my trail of honey blonde hair.

"Lower, Tom. Please." I can't help it. I beg and wriggle against the handcuffs again when the settled butterflies in my stomach start flapping like crazy. Every part of me wants to break free of these bloody

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restraints, grab onto his golden curls and force him down.

But to my surprise, that is not needed. He gives in and my hips jerk upwards when the tip of his tongue flicks my aching clit. I hear him laugh, the noise a little muffled. The metallic clinking of my handcuffs on the bar wracks down my ears as Tom starts to flutter his tongue over my sensitive nub, making me thrash on the mattress. Instinctively, I cup his ass with my feet in an attempt to push him closer to me but I fail. Instead, it makes him stop all together.

He lifts his head, grabs my feet and presses them back down onto the mattress. There's that bright twinkle still in his eyes as he attempts to look serious.

"Don't make me have to tie your ankles down too. Because I will."

I can't help but grin deviously but I want to play along. A smile twitches on his glossy lips when I part my thighs until they are almost lay flat on the bed, invitingly. His eyelids droop with lust as he lowers himself once again and starts to probe my entrance with his hard tongue. My toes curl but I fight the urge to cling onto him. I grip the bars of the headboard as my back arches. My eyes squeeze shut at the twisting, heavenly sensation that clenches my stomach.

"Oh, God. Tom," I breath, opening my eyes to see his curly mane bobbing between my legs. Then his tongue returns to my clit, he rolls and sucks it as his fingertips swirl around my wet entrance teasingly. "Yes. Ohâ !" I roll my eyes shut and press the back of my head into the bed until it aches my neck. "Oh!" He pushes two fingers into me while still stimulating my clit. My inner muscles clamp around him gratefully. As he starts to finger fuck me, slowly and deeply, I rock against his motions. My heart flips when he peers up at me through his brows. Our eyes latch onto one another's. This moment is so intense, so intimate, soâ unbelievably erotic. My teeth dig into my lower lips as I keep hold of his eyes. Moans keep threatening to burst out of me but I hold them back. My breathing is elevated though. I can't help that. But the sound of my gasping pants of pleasure seem to be turning me on even more.

I wish I could touch him. I wish I could make him feel the way I am feeling right now.

His fingers start to work faster, curling inside me. He sucks and licks my clit a few more times before removing his mouth and focusing on the pace of his fingers. The ball inside me is knotting up. I'm going to cum. I can feel my muscles tensing. Oh, God, Tom, please let me cum.

I try to keep eye contact but I can't. My eyes start to water, making everything go blurry. I roll them shut and look up to the ceiling as my thighs spasm, my back arches and my inner muscles clamp around Tom's fingers. My orgasm releases all the moans I had held back all at once. I'm almost shrieking as Tom continues to thrust his fingers into me, lengthening my climax up until I feel I'm actually going to self-combust.

He pulls out. I collapse back onto the bed, panting with relief. My eyes flicker open and I look down to catch Tom sucking on his fingers with a playful grin. Holy crap. How does this man even exist?

He drops his hands to his lap. "Have I made it up to you yet, Miss Farris?"

I chew my lip with a cheeky grin and shake my head. "You're going to have to do a lot more than that, Officer."

A smile dances in his blue pools. "Well then, no time like the present."

Indeed, there isn't.

Chapter 40: Golden Delicious

He lowers himself over me, whatever was left of his 'Officer Frisky' mask has fallen completely off and I'm left looking up at Tom and his playful grin. It's nice to have him back. He cups my jaw and tilts my head up so our lips meet. He expels a breathy moan into my mouth as I part my lips and run my tongue across his. The kiss deepens. Our faces slant and he bares down on me more as the kiss becomes passionate and primal. My grip on the bars tightens as I fight off the urge to plunge my fingers through his hair and touch his baby smooth skin. Instead, I just lie underneath him, attempting to push myself up enough to kiss him with as much force as I can. There's a fake police badge on his shirt and the cold plastic tingles the inflamed skin on my chest. I break the kiss with a gasp.

"Take off your shirt," I pant against his lips.

He laughs a little and kisses me again while he unbuttons his shirt. He tugs it off his shoulders and throws it to the ground. I can't help but break the kiss so I can get a good look at his now naked chest. He's on all fours over me like a cage. His forehead is pressed against mine and I can feel his eyes on me as I look down between our bodies. The light and shadows work wonderfully on his abs. They look so pronounced and hard andâ!God, I want to touch him so much!

I whimper and fight against the handcuffs, smacking them against the metal.

"Shhhâ!" Tom hushes softly and presses his lips to my forehead. I gulp as he leans back and starts to work on his belt. He unbuckles it and unzips his fly with an effort as his erection seems to be in the way. I can't help but laugh a little when he finally yanks the zip down with a sigh of relief.

My thighs clench at the sudden burning between them as my eyes latch onto his length, but they are permitted to close due to Tom's knees between them. He pushes his pants and boxers down his thighs and leans a little over me, locking his elbows under my knees and parting my thighs. I gulp as he nears my entrance. The anticipation curls my toes. He brushes the head of his cock against my clit. I gasp and arch my back. He seems impressed with the response. He smiles wickedly and clambers over me, dropping one of my knees so he can stabilise himself by pressing his hand into the mattress by my side as he angles his lower half and pushes into me.

My gasp gets stuck in my throat as he enters me slowly. His eyes are locked onto mine. I try to keep eye contact but my vision is becoming blurry and I have to blink a few times to get it back into focus. My heart flips when I see that he is still gazing at me. He lowers himself and kisses me softly. I press the tops of my arms hard into the pillow to try and push myself up and kiss him deeper but he pulls away and rests his head against the side of mine, his breath heavy down my ear as he starts to work in and out of me.

His pace quickens. He grips the back of my knee tightly as he ploughs into me, hard, fast and frantic, rolling his hips against mine. The muscles in my arms are agonisingly tight and I bare myself down on him, rocking as hard as I can against him. My hands wrap around the bars so hard my knuckles are probably white. I try to hold back my moans but I can't. I cry, pant, hiss and mewl as Tom manages to hit my sweet spot with every thrust. I repeat his name softly, murmuring it faster and faster as I near my orgasm. His breath is warm against my earlobe as he rocks against me. I gasp and clench my eyes shut when he grips it with his teeth, not so hard that it hurts, but with just enough force to make an shoot of pleasure run straight through me. He withdraws his teeth but keeps his lips at my ear and whispers in that deliciously eloquent manner of his, "Cum for me." That does it. My body convulses on the mattress. My back arches. My ass bucks. My breasts hit his chest. My orgasm runs straight through me, tightening all my muscles as my pussy pulsates around his shaft which he is still drilling into me, spiralling me further and further over the edge. I can feel my juices running down the crack of my ass and spilling over Tom as I shudder beneath him. Finally, his pace slows and he pulls out of me, loosening my muscles and slowing my heart rate.

My eyes flutter closed and I relax my head back onto the pillow. But the mattress shifts underneath me. Tom's moving. I flinch at the shadow that crosses over my closed lids. Opening my eyes, I gasp as Tom settles his thighs on either side of my waist.

"Sit up a little," he says with a delicate curve of his lips. He's hovering over my body with his upright cock in his hand, giving me space to shimmy my body up. I manage to get myself into a position where my shoulders

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are against the headboard but that's about as much as I can sit up without my arms feeling like they're going to pop out of their sockets.

He edges closer and I open my mouth instinctively. My heart does excited yet fearful flips when the tip of his cock touches my lips. I want to taste him and feel him finish in my mouth but he's so much bigger than my previous boyfriends and I wasn't able to satisfy them very much orally because of my overly sensitive gag reflex. And I want to satisfy Tom. I really do. After everything that he has done for me, I owe him that. Hesitantly, I take him past my lips. He expels a sigh when I close my mouth around him. Luckily, in my current position, I am only able to take about two inches of him without craning my neck so I can blame it on that and not that fact that I'd probably heave if he pushed any further. He doesn't, of course. He just stays straddled over me, his head slightly angled back, looking down at me with heavy lids and a slacked jaw. I swirl my tongue around his tip and the underside of his cock and he seems to be happy with my motions. So much in fact, that when I do begin to bob my head slightly back and forth it's only a couple of seconds before he clenches his eyes shut and I feel his hot seed down the back of my throat. I keep my lips closed tightly around him until he is completely spent and he rolls off me. He's lying next to me, panting a little with a light sheen of sweat over his brows.

"Well, I guess that answers that question," he laughs breathlessly.

"What question?" I ask, dropping back into a comfortable position.

He twists his head and smiles. "You are kinky."

I gasp with embarrassment and giggle. When I blink, a tear rolls down my cheek. This alarms Tom. His eyes grow wide and I can see the panic alight in them.

"Oh my God, you're crying. Was I too rough? You should have used our safe word."

I shake my head with a laugh. "I'm fine. That was great."

"Butâ—" He wipes the tear from my cheek with his thumb.

"Happy tears." I smile.

He laughs a little then looks up at the handcuffs. "Oh, right. You'll probably want to get out of those." He turns and grabs the key from the hat and unlocks me. I swallow the sigh of relief, knowing it would only make Tom think the worst and drop my arms to my sides. *God, that feels good.*

He's tucked himself back into his pants and I bend over the bed and grab his shirt to throw over myself before I snuggle up next to him. He wraps his arm around my back and I rest my head against his chest.

"Thank you for doing that. It was completely unexpected. And so amazing." I kiss his collarbone. He squeezes me tight and presses his lips to my forehead.

"I'd do anything for you. I thought you might like it."

I grin and look up at him, resting my chin on his chest. "Next, it's your turn. Have any fantasies you want me to play out? I'm not as good an actor as you but I can try."

He shows me a warm smile and runs his fingers through my hair. "This was all I've ever wanted. You. Me. Us. This is enough for me."

I pull a face. "Well, now I feel badâ—"

His eyes widen. "No. No. I didn't mean it like that," he rushes. "You have your fantasies. I have nothing against that. And if you want me to act out another I will," he adds. "It's justâ—" He sinks lower into the bed as if he's trying to hide. "Sex, to me, is two people being as intimate as they possibly can. I mean, that's the base of it and that's what I think is important. That's the real thing." He looks down at me warily. "Do you think I'm really lame now?"

I can feel a gooey smile creeping on my lips as my heart melts. "If it's possible, I think I've just fallen in love with you even more."

Chapter 41: Golden Delicious

A bright light hits my closed eyelids, turning them red. My duvet is yanked off me from below.

"Urgghhâ !" I groan, curling into a ball on the bed to try and hold onto the warmth but my skimpy pyjamas are doing nothing.

"C'mon, get up."

I groan again and bury my face into the pillow. "I don't want to go to school today."

Tom laughs. "C'mon."

I roll onto my back and rub the sleep out of my eyes. He's stood at the end of the bed in a baby blue vest top and his lycra shorts.

"It's a Sunday. What time is it?" I ask, my voice groggy and disgusting.

"Seven."

"What?!" I cover my face with my hands and groan. "Why have you woke me up at seven on a Sunday?"

"We're going jogging. We've been slacking lately. C'mon, get dressed." He throws my joggers and my sports bra at me and leaves the room.

I push myself up and swing my legs out the bed. There's a crunch under my foot. I look down. Whoops.

"Erhhâ !Tom?"

"Yeah?" he calls back.

"Where did you get that police uniform from?"

"I bought it from the fancy dress shop in town. I thought about hiring one but then when I thought about what we'd be doing with itâ and who else had worn it before meâ it creeped me out a little. Why do you ask?"

I bend down and pick up the glasses. One of the lens has popped out. "I broke the glasses."

He laughs. "No problem."

It feels good to be out running with Tom again. It has been a while. I chew my lip with a grin when I have to move behind Tom to let some people pass by as I get a lovely few of his behind in those sexy shorts.

"You okay?"

I look up to see Tom glancing back at me.

"Oh, yeah." I smile and return to my place beside him.

"Thought I'd lost you for a minute."

We jog round the park. There are not many people out seeing as though it's eight in the morning on a Sunday. I've still not forgiven him for waking me up. I used to get really cautious about sweating in front of Tom when we used to jog together but now that he's seen me in the morning, I don't think I can look any worse than that. We've been running none stop for a good forty minutes when Tom slows to a stop.

"Break?" he asks, dropping down onto a bench.

"Sure," I reply and sit down next to him.

He stretches his arms out along the back of the bench and angles his head back with closed eyes to the morning sun. I can't help but gaze at him. God, this man is beautiful.

He has a damp V around the neck of his shirt and a sheen over his brows. I push the hair that has fallen out of my bun, out of my face. Some of it has stuck to my forehead and I'm trying to wipe it back when I notice two women on the bench opposite us, glancing and muttering to each other. One looks me up and down with a sneer. The other looks at Tom and shakes her head pitifully.

"Urh, not again," I mumble.

Tom's head pricks up and he turns to me. "What?"

I nod over to the women. He looks. They scowl at him.

"Ohâ !"

I notice his jaw set. His eyelids flutter and he looks to the trees, trying to ignore them. My heart swells as his eyes start to redden a little.

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My jaw clenches and my hands ball into fists by my sides. I've had enough of this. A hot, ball of anger burns deep inside me.

"Hey!" I call, making Tom start beside me and turn with wide eyes. The women on the bench jump too and stare. "Got a problem?!"

"Ebby," Tom cautions in a hushed tone at my ear.

The women get all uppity, straightening and pursing their lips at me.

"What's up? Your life so boring that you have to sniff around ours?" I ask, venom lacing my tone.

One woman nudges the other and they stand. They turn their noses up at me and start walking away.

"Yeah, that's what I thought!"

I keep scowling at them as they walk, until they are out of sight.

"Ebby."

"What? It needed to be said. I'm sick of it. They have no right to judge us."

"Come on, let's get back." He stands and grabs my hand, helping me up. I show him a sheepish smile before we jog back to the flat.

I lean over the table and study the fruit bowl as Tom fills a glass of water at the sink. My fingers waver over the apples. Pink lady or golden delicious? Golden delicious.

The crunch of the apple breaks the silence in the kitchen. I tear the chunk free and chew.

"You shouldn't have to act defensive," Tom states, looking out the window with the glass to his lips. He looks so far away. "That wasn't right at the park today. You taunted those women."

I almost choke on my apple. "We've been being taunted. Remember the restaurant?"

"Of course, I do." He sighs and takes a swig. "But we can't stoop down to their level. We need to be bigger than that."

"Yeah, well, sometimes it's just easier to tell them to back off," I mumble.

"The easy option isn't always the right option."

I shrug and carry on eating. My mind wanders in the silence. I stare absently at Tom's back but my eyes soon trail downwards to his firm, tight bum. I bite into my apple. I wonder what it'd feel like to bite his bum. The thought makes me grin.

"What are you looking at?"

I cough out chunks of apple and splutter. "Noffin."

I see his eyebrow arch in the reflection of the window.

"You were staring."

I smile and stand. I wander over to him and wrap my arms around his chest from behind.

"I was wondering what it'd feel like to bite your ass."

He lets out a surprised laugh. I grin and press my forehead into the hollow part of his back between his shoulder blades. "I need a shower." I mumble into his vest and breathe in the musky smell of his perspiration.

"I'll join you."

Chapter 42: Golden Delicious

It doesn't take long for us to start exploring each other's bodies. Tom's stood with his back to the shower head so the jet of water splashes against his shoulders and I'm left in the cold. I soap up my hands and rub them all over his chest, back, arms, thigh, everywhere I can get my hands on. I smile at my handiwork as the bubbles slowly start to run down his perfect physique. He takes the soap from my hand and rubs the block over my chest, kissing me as he does. Now that he's bent down a little, the water is able to reach me. He presses me up against the wall. It's a pretty tight squeeze. I wish we were in the shower back at home. My heart sinks. Is that even my home anymore or is this it?

He clutches the back of my neck, kissing me deeply as his other hand with the soap travels south, down my stomach. I part my thighs and wrap my arms around his neck as our bodies roll together. He keeps breaking the kiss every so often to let out a soft, breathy moan. God, it sounds so hot.

He rubs the soap over my mound and then between my thighs. My hips buck. I mess my hands in his wet curls and pull his face closer to mine, craving more contact. He rubs the block back and forth between my lower lips before dropping it and replacing it with his hand. The block clatters to the shower floor and I laugh against his lips as he starts massaging the suds into my pussy.

I lower my hands, running them down his chest to his impressive manhood. He's only semi-hard, but it only takes a few seconds of stroking to get him pointing to the sky. Tom grins, his teeth against my lips. I giggle and kiss him as I wrap my hand around his cock and start to tease it.

I let out a breathy moan when he applies pressure to my clit so he continues to rub it, getting me all hot and bothered. I work my hand faster up and down his cock, kissing him frivolously. I lower my other hand and grip his tight ass, pulling him closer to me. The shower rains over his back. I'm getting none of it but the treatment Tom's hands are giving my body is enough to get my pulse racing. His fingertips rub faster against my sensitive nub, matching my rhythm and when he gets all caught up in the heat, he pushes two fingers inside me and hooks them, anchoring me to him.

"Oh, God. Tom," I moan breathlessly against his lips.

He uses his thumb to stimulate my clit while his fingers work fast and hard in and out of me. It's clear he's trying to bring me to my peak. I see it as a challenge and grin against his lips as I bring my hand from his ass as start to play with his balls. He body lurches forwards a little and he breaks our kiss to gasp. His grip on the back of my neck tightens. He kisses me forcefully and picks up his speed with his fingers. The delicious knot in my stomach is tightening more and more and I know I'm going to climax soon. I can feel my muscles getting ready to tense. Even though I want Tom to finish first, I can't help but lose my body in the wonderful sensation and rock my hips against his skilful hand.

I keep squeezing and rolling his balls with my fingers and rub his shaft faster and faster. Soon we have to break the kiss because our actions are tiring us out and we keep gasping for breath. We lock eyes. His features are slacked with pleasure and the sheer intensity of his gaze makes my body convulse with a strangled moan. While my orgasm crashes over me, my grip on Tom's balls tightens accidently, making him shudder and shoot his seed over my stomach. Slowly, I stroke his shaft with a satisfied smile as he shrinks. Tom's fingers also slow their pace as my body starts to uncoil before he pulls them out of me.

He looks down at the white liquid painted across my body with an embarrassed half smile before he steps back and allows the jet of water to hit me. He helps wash away his arousal by soaping his hands again and running them over my front.

While he's busy at work, I lean over and grab the shampoo and start to actually do what I had come in here to do.

I'm blow drying my hair in front of the mirror when Tom strolls into the bedroom with his phone in his hand looking conflicted. I switch of my hairdryer and show him a quizzical look through the mirror.

"What's up?"

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He stares at the screen, looking like he's in another world.

"My agent just called!"

My heart thumps. Good news? Bad news? I really can't tell.

"I've been asked to do the Milan fashion week." He blinks, as if awaking from a dream.

I throw my hands over my mouth and try and catch my scream of excitement. I jump to my feet and run up to him all giddy. "Oh my God. That's amazing!" I throw my arms over him. He stumbles back a little but then grabs me.

"It's incredible. They asked for me personally! I can't believe it."

"I can. You're an amazing model, Tom. You deserve it." I twist my head and look up at him, my chin on his chest. "When do you go?"

"Tuesday."

I grin. "I'll ask Darrell tomorrow if I can get some days off. How long you there for?"

At this, he shakes his head and pushes me back. "As much as I'd love you to come with me, I'm afraid you can't."

My stomach drops. I release him and step back. "What? Why?"

He sighs and rubs his forehead with the pads of his fingers, looking to the floor. "I'm going to be crazy busy. I'll barely have time to breathe." He looks back up at me and drops his hand. "I'd hate you to come all that way just to sit alone in a hotel room." He frowns. "Please don't take it the wrong way."

I just look at him, the helplessness in his eyes, the worry that he's hurt me, and roll my eyes with a laugh before throwing my arms around him again. "Don't be silly. I understand. It's your work. I'll be in the way. It's fine." I look up at him. "I'll miss you though."

He smiles and tucks a wet tendril of hair behind my ear. "You'd better."

My smile slips to the side. "So, how long will you be gone for?"

He sighs and arches his eyebrow helplessly. "I've got some campaigns to do too so—two weeks."

I bite down on my lip as my stomach twists. "Oh!"

"We'll skype!" he pauses, furrowing his brows, "when I get the chance."

I squeeze him. "You'd better get the chance. I can't be expected to stay here all alone without a fix of that beautiful face of yours. Especially seeing as though I don't have my folder anymore." My eyebrows dance suggestively. He giggles awkwardly and looks away.

We hold each other for a few silent moments before drops his arms and pushes me back lightly.

"Finish drying your hair. I'll put some dinner on," he says before leaving.

I sink onto the stool in front of the mirror and frown at my reflection. How am I expected to be away from Tom for two weeks and not go completely insane? Not to sound like a needy whiner—but Tom's really all I've got right now.

On the other hand, with him gone they'll be no distractions and I can finally face my fears and get down to the nitty gritty. The deep, dark, nagging, gnawing part of my life that I'll never be able to sort out until I brave the thing I fear most. Facing my mum.

Chapter 43: Golden Delicious

~~ "Monday went by too quickly," I sigh as I wipe down the bar. Tom had left at two this morning. I had clung onto him at the door, not wanting to let go. But he left.

He texted me on my walk to work, saying that he had landed safely and he was just booking into his hotel.

"Awh." Trish puckers her bottom lip. "Missing him already?"

"Yeahâ!" I mumble, looking down. I had gone back to sleep after he had gone but the bed didn't feel right without him lying next to me. It felt cold and empty.

"Well, at least you have someone to miss."

I roll my eyes to her. "Don't play the lonely single card. We both know you would have a boyfriend if you wanted one."

"True." She grins. "But that's only because there aren't that many Tom's out there."

"Slim pickings, huh?"

She lets out an exasperated sigh. "Yup. You've got a good one there, Eb. Hold onto him."

I smile as happy butterflies fill my stomach. "I will."

"But hey." She bounds over to me and drops her forearms onto my clean bar. "Seeing as though you're alone for a while, how about we have a girly night sometime? I can see your flat, we could get some ice-cream and cookie dough and watch some movies. Y'know, like we used to." Her emerald eyes gleam at me and she wiggles giddily.

"Sounds like a plan," I agree.

"Okay, great. Well, I've got a few bits on this week but I'll let you know when I'm free?"

"Sure." I smile.

I decide to do some overtime because I didn't want to be in the flat alone. Plus, I still owed Darrell an hour. It's just me and him in the restaurant. He's at the till counting the money while I'm wiping down tables and upturning the chairs.

"How's things with you anyway?" he calls over, his head still down as he jots down notes.

"Not bad, I guess. Tom's in Italy for the Milan fashion week so it's going to be a pretty lonely two weeks but it'll be alright," I reply cheerily.

"Ooh Milan fashion week? I better set up my box to record it."

I give him a dubious look. His eyes shift to me.

"You watch the runways?" I arch an eyebrow.

"Of course!" He turns fully to me and gestures to his outfit which is made up of a faded flannel shirt and a pair of ill-fitting jeans. "Can't you tell I'm all about style?"

I laugh and shake my head pityingly, getting back to my work.

"No one else has bothered you here, have they? About your personal life?"

I shake my head. "No. Just the one," I say, trying to ignore the knot in my stomach at the memory.

"That man was completely out of line." His eyes narrow at his money bags. "People need to learn to not stick their noses where they don't belong."

"Yup," I reply simply with a firm nod.

I'm sat on the bed on my front with Tom's home laptop open in front of me. He took his work one with him. The familiar tune of an awaiting Skype call rings around the room and I answer it giddily. Tom's face appears on the screen. He's on his phone and it shakes a little. He must be lying down, there's a pillow behind his head. He smiles broadly, creasing the edges of his eyes. "Hey."

"Hi!" I grin, kicking my feet up and crossing them in the air. I see the little image of me in the corner. *Oh wow, my cleavage looks great from this angle.*

"How are you?"

"Not too bad. Just had my tea on my own." I pout.

"Oooh, attempted some cooking?" he laughs.

Golden Delicious

"Not really. I had a frozen pizza."

"Ahh, the things you have to stoop to now I'm not around."

I laugh. "Exactly. It's your fault."

He grins mischievously.

"How are things with you anyway?" I ask. "Been busy?"

His eyebrows raise and he rubs his hand over his forehead with a yawn. "Very busy. I had to do a Burberry campaign today. It took a lot out of me. Managed to get back here a few minutes ago. Can't wait to catch some Z's," he laughs tiredly.

"But you're having fun, right?"

"Oh yeah." He nods. "I love it. No pain, no gain." He chuckles.

"So what's on tomorrow?"

"Another campaign and then some rehearsals for the catwalks," he replies, pinching his eyes shut and rubbing his eyelids. "Oh, they'll be giving me the schedule tomorrow so I'll let you know when I'll be on telly so you can watch me work." He grins excitedly.

"Oh brilliant! I can't wait!" I gleam.

He laughs then lifts up and looks to the side. "Anyway," he strains as he stretches. "It's almost eleven and I've gotta be up and out for six so, as much as I'd love to sit and talk to you all night, I'm going to have to bid you farewell." He looks back into the camera.

I pout. "Awh, okay. I love you." I lean in and kiss the camera. When I pull back, he's showing me a toothy grin.

"I love you too. Goodnight."

"Night. And don't run off with any sexy Italian models."

He laughs. "That would never happen. Bye babe."

"Bye!"

The screen goes blank.

I stare at it for a few seconds before I shut off the laptop and put it away. I get changed into my pyjamas, brush my teeth and get under the covers.

My first night in the flat without Tom.

I don't like it.

I wiggle down until my head hits the pillow. There's a part of me that desperately wants to reach out for Tom's chest, to wrap my arms around him and spoon him. But he's however many miles away and I'm stuck here on my own. It sucks. It really sucks. But it's something I've got to get used to, I guess.

Chapter 44: Golden Delicious

"Is it really sad that I'm really excited?" Trish gleams giddily when I open the door. She has a plastic bag of what I'm guessing is sweets and chocolates in her hand.

I laugh and step aside so she can come in. "It's been so long since we last did this."

"Too long!" she agrees, pointing her finger at me as she steps in. She drops the bag on the sofa and takes in the room. "Ooooh, it's so cute!"

"You mean small." I close the door.

"Nooo, I mean cute and cosy." Her eyebrows wiggle. "You been getting cosy with Tom, aye?"

I feel myself blush and I roll my eyes.

"How've you been anyway since he's been gone?" she asks, flopping onto the sofa and making some of the contents of the bag spill onto the floor.

I frown and sink down next to her. "I've been trying to keep myself busy. Went shopping the other day for more clothes." Yep. New clothes. I still haven't found the courage to go to my house and face my mum to get my *old* clothes.

I grab a family sized bar of Galaxy and inspect the wrapper. "We Skype as much as he can but it's not very often."

"Ahhâ !" Trish winks. "So you've been doing the ol' cyber nasty?"

I give her a quizzical look. "The what what?"

"The cyber nasty." She squints at me, confused. "Y'knowâ 'cam to cam." She looks me up and down, purrs and winks.

To this, my jaw drops with astonishment. "No. No we haven't!"

She laughs. "Don't be all coy with me, Ebs. I already know about your folder. This is nothing new. Trust me."

"But we haven't."

Her face falls. "Youâ 'haven't?"

"No."

"Oh, wellâ 'you should. Surely you're not satisfied with the folder now you've had the real thing."

"Actuallyâ 'I don't even have the folder anymore. It's at home."

"Well then you have to do it!" she exclaims, getting all giddy at the concept which seems pretty weird to me considering the topic of conversation.

"I don't knowâ !" I say warily at the thought.

"C'mon it's fun."

I cough on air. "You've done it?"

She gives me a look as if to say 'who, me?' then says, "Of course I have!"

"Really?" I think a little more, warming up to the idea but then I shake my head. "I don't think it's really Tom's thing."

"Well then make it his thing."

"He's more of a romanticâ !" I think back to our discussion after he played out my policeman fantasy. But he did say he was open to more suggestionsâ !

Trish sighs and looks to the telly which is currently off. "Well, he's gone for another week so it's either cam sex or watching his catwalk over and over again until it gets you off." She peers at me, raising her eyebrow. I start to blush. My stomach flutters at the thought of teasing Tom through a screen and seeing what I'm missing, but I don't know if they're excited or nervous butterflies. "Anyway." Trish slaps her thighs, snapping me out of my thought bubble. "Got some ice cream? Set up the recording and I'll scoop us some bowls." She gets up and heads to the kitchen. I grab the remote and find Tom's runway recorded, paused just before he comes on. I had it ready for when Trish came by. I haven't seen him yet. I'm so excited!

"Right." Trish drops down beside me and hands me the bowl, her emerald eyes bright and searching the frozen screen. "Press play!"

"Why are you so eager?" I laugh.

Golden Delicious

"Because I wanna see Tom doing his thing." She shoves a spoon of ice cream in her mouth and turns to me. "He's hot."

I giggle. He is hot. And mine.

We snuggle up under a blanket I found shoved in the wardrobe as we watch the models strutting their stuff. Tom turns the corner and starts to sashay up the catwalk in a black suit tailored to perfection.

"Ohâ ¸myâ ¸!Godâ ¸!" we both breath out, mesmerised. The camera flashes bounce off his face making his features even more sharp and pronounced.

"Holy crap. Ebâ ¸!" Trish mumbles to her spoon of ice cream poised at her lips. Her eyes are wide and stuck to the screen.

"What?" I flicker my eyes to her only for a second before they jump straight back to Tom.

"I think I'm in love with your boyfriendâ ¸!"

I laugh. "Back off missus."

"When you're on Skype, how do you not tell him to strip for you? I mean, the opportunities right there."

"I don't know. I guess I'm more focussed on how his career is going," I reply with a laugh.

She finally dips the spoon into her mouth. "He can talk while he stripsâ ¸!"

I narrow my eyes at the ice cream in front of me when my head starts to feel a little light. "Did you put alcohol in the ice cream?"

She shifts her eyes to me with a shy grin. "Maybeâ ¸!"

I laugh. "I've missed this."

Her grin widens. "Me too!"

Trish leaves at ten and I'm sat alone on my bed with my mobile in my hand. I'm pretty sure I can blame the alcohol but I'm actually contemplating calling my mum. Her number is up on the screen. All I have to do is press callâ ¸

I press it.

Oh crap.

I hold the phone to my ear.

My heart is pounding.

My palms are sweating.

Holy shit. Holy shit. Holy shit!

Blocked.

My heart sinks and I throw the phone onto the pillow.

Well, that was an anti-climax.

I guess I should have seen that coming.

Chapter 45: Golden Delicious

I've got the laptop set up on the bed ready. I wrap my dressing gown round me and wait. Giddy butterflies flutter around my stomach when the tone starts ringing. I quickly answer the call and Tom's face pops up on the screen. I notice that because I'm sat up, the camera has cut off my head so I tilt the screen.

"Hey." I grin.

"Hey babe." He smiles.

There's a rack of clothes behind him.

"Where are you?" I ask.

"In my dressing room. I'm getting ready for another shoot."

"But it's the weekend."

He shrugs. "No rest for the wicked."

"You're hardly wicked."

He sticks the tip of his tongue out with a cheeky smile.

"Anyway, are you alone?" I ask.

"At the moment, yes."

"Great, because I want to show you something."

His eyebrow arches, intrigued. "Oh?"

"Yeah." I grin. "I went shopping and I bought something I thought you'd like."

His eyebrow raises higher.

I push down one of the sleeves of my dressing gown, exposing the strap of my new black lace lingerie.

"Oh Godâ€"!" he mumbles, his voice growing husky with lust.

"You ain't seen nothing yet." I drop the whole sleeve and open the front so the left cup is showing. It's a push up bra so it makes my cleavage look fantastic. I surprised myself when I looked in the mirror.

"Oh Ebâ€"! don't do this to me."

I grin. "There's more." I drop my dressing gown completely and angle the camera down a little so he can see my matching skimpy panties.

His breathing is becoming a little ragged.

"Ebbyâ€"! why?"

"Just because you are all the way in Italy, doesn't mean we can't have a little fun." I tilt my chest down and give him a little shimmy.

"Ebby. Stop." He looks to the side.

"Why?" I pout. "I'm lonely and a girl has needs."

His eyes show worry as he looks back at me but his lips are curving into a slight smile. "Because hair and make-up will be here in like ten minutes and I don't want to be caught with an awkward boner."

I laugh. "Ooooh. Lemme see. Lemme see what I do to you."

He shakes his head. "I can't. Not here. If anyone sawâ€"!"

"Pleaaase," I whine but he holds a playful stubborn expression.

But I'm feeling devious.

I want to play.

I lift myself up a little so the camera is focused on my lower half and I run my fingers gingerly along the hem on my panties and then start to stroke myself between my thighs.

Tom's jaw sets. I can see the muscles in his cheeks rippling as his eyes widen, captivated.

But then he shakes his head and blinks hard. "No. Ebby. Stop."

I angle the camera back up so he can see all of me, knelt on the bed. I keep my hand between my thighs and start to rub my panties and throw my head back. "Oh Tom. Tom. Tomâ€"!" I moan softly, grinding lightly against my hand.

"Ebby. I'm serious!"

I look back to him and grin when I see him all flustered. His cheeks have blushed.

"Don't be shy," I coo and lift my hand to my breast. "Play with me."

Golden Delicious

He shakes his head. "I'm sorry. I can't." He looks to the side. "They'll be here any minute."

"But Tom," I whine and start to moan again, rubbing my breast.

"If you keep making that noise, I'll have to hang up," he warns hopelessly.

"Tom. Tom. Tom."

"Ebby. I'm not joking."

"Oooh. Tom. Yeah. There." I wiggle my eyebrows at him with a smile.

"Ebby!"

"Oooh, yeah, say my name baby."

"Right, I'm hanging up."

The call clicks off and Tom disappears.

I giggle and drop back on the bed so my head hits the pillow. Well, that was fun.

I almost jump out of my skin when my mobile starts to vibrate next to me. I grab it. It's a text from Tom.

'So sorry I had to hang up on you but you were getting me in a state I am not in the right place to be in. I miss you so much, baby and it sucks that I'm here for another week. Hold on just a little longer and I'll be there before you know it. Being without you is driving me crazy. I can't wait to be back inside the sweet heaven between your thighs again. Love you xxx'

I chew my lip with a grin as I curl up into a ball, staring at the message.

He is just too adorable.

I get dressed into my sweats after changing my underwear to my usual boring stuff because the way the lace brushed against my skin was getting me all hot and bothered and was just reminding me that I'm not getting any for a while.

While my dinners in the microwave- Yes, I'm having a microwave meal. Thank you, Tom, for leaving me here to fend for myself!- I go back into the bedroom and grab my phone, just remembering that I need to text Tom back.

'I'm sorry I got you all flustered, I'm just missing you so much! Even more after I checked out your catwalk. I know I've already told you how great you looked but damn, you owned that thing! Haha. Anyway, get back to work and I'll see you soon. Love you too, baby xxx'

I send it and my heart sinks when I scroll past my mum's number.

I sink onto my bed and call it. Blocked as I had expected.

She can't ignore me forever.

Something has to be done.

Chapter 46: Golden Delicious

~~ It's rather brisk out and I can help thinking that it's foreshadowing the frosty encounter I'm about to face. I have no idea how I have convinced myself to do this but it is long overdue. And seeing as though she is blocking my calls, I guess she has left me no other choice.

My heart starts to pound when I head up my driveway. Something feels off. I have walked up this driveway countless times but now it just feels wrong. Like I'm walking up to a stranger's front door.

I'm so nervous I'm shaking. It's half six, my mum should be back from work. Holy crap, this is the most terrifying thing I have ever done in my life. The concept freaks me out. It's my mum not a bloody serial killer. But I still feel sick to my stomach as I hover my fist over the door. I suck in a breath and knock before I change my mind and bolt.

I can hear her coming down the steps. Her blurry silhouette passes the frosted glass of the window beside the door. My heart is in my throat. It's too late now. She opens the door.

We both freeze.

She's stood in the hallway, her long blonde hair in waves. She's wearing a pair of khaki linen pants and a black top.

"Hey mum," I say, putting on a brave smile.

The muscles in her cheeks quiver and her eyes start to redden. She gulps hard and shuts the door in my face. The bang almost knocks me back like a kick in the heart.

I'm not going to lie, I was hoping for a different reaction. I would have rather she had screamed at me until she was blue in the face than just completely ignore me, because at least then we could actually get somewhere. We could move forward and not stay in the sickening limbo.

"Mumâ !" I say tentatively, hoping she is still on the other side of the door.

"Leave, Ebony."

My heart crashes against my chest at the sound of her voice. She doesn't sound angry, she soundsâ ¡pained.

"Mum, please just listen to me. I hate us being like this. I'm still your daughter."

"Leave. You're not welcome here. Did you not understand that when I blocked your calls?"

Tears are welling in my eyes. I press my palm against the cold wood of the door.

"Just hear me out, mum."

"I'm not interested in anything you have to say. Go, Ebony. I'm leaving."

"Mum!" I bang on the door. "Please!" My voice has broken as the tears begin to fall. My sobbing starts to make my chest heave forward. It hurts to stand, I can feel my knees giving up under me so I sink onto the step and rest my back against the door. She doesn't answer but she could be lying so I talk anyway, hoping that she is there to listen.

"I love you, mum. You were like my best friend. I know what happened with you and dad crushed you and when you found Tom you were starting to become yourself again. You don't know how much I wished I could have been happy for you. I wanted you to move on so badly butâ !" I sniff and wipe my nose on the back of my sleeve. "Tom is a good man, mum. I know you don't think it now after what he has done to you but you have to know he didn't want any of this to happen. I broke him down, mum, and he gave in. I'm sorry. I wished I was stronger. I wish I could have stopped myself but it hurt too much. I love him, mum. And he loves me. We never wanted to hurt you. I wish things could be different but this is how it is." My voice is starting to wobble and it's getting very hard to speak. "Please don't be mad at me forever. I don't want to lose you. I can't lose youâ ¡mum?" I close my eyes and drop the back of my head against the door. "Mum?" I whisper. "I'm so sorryâ ¡please forgive meâ !" "

The door doesn't open again. After another ten minutes of sitting there like a tramp begging for change, I dry my eyes and decide to head back to the flat with a heavy heart.

I go the long way back and window shop to waste time. Then I catch someone looking at me in a cafÃ© as I pass. My eyes bulge and my heart pounds.

His eyebrows shoot to his hairline and he starts to wave manically as if to get my attention when it is very

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clear that I have spotted him. He gets out of his chair with his steaming paper cup and comes outside.

"Ebony! Oh my God," he exclaims and wraps his arm around me.

Part of me wants to cry and curl into him yet another part of me wants to push him away. I lean into the hug anyway.

"Dad."

He recoils and looks down at me, his brown eyes smiling at me. "Wow, how are you? It's been a while."

My gut twists. "I'm okay, I guess. Yeah, I haven't seen you since my twenty-first." I arch an eyebrow judgmentally. I got a birthday card from him every year since but it wasn't the same as seeing him face-to-face.

He hisses as if in pain and runs his hand through his dark hair that is now streaked with silver.

"Works been hectic as usual but I'm doing good. How's your mum?"

The knot tightens. "Erhâ 'fine."

"I heard she broke up with her boyfriend." He sips at his cup as if to try and look nonchalant when I can tell he wants the juicy details.

"Yeah, she did. How do you know about that? It's not like you've been around." For the past three years.

"Just because things didn't work out between us, doesn't mean I don't want the best for her. I've got a few friends who are keeping an eye on her."

"Creepy."

The side of his lips curl into a smile. "I see it more as caring. So anyway, what happened? Why did they break up. I wish I'd gotten a glimpse of that guy, according to my friends, he was quite something."

"Erhâ !." I look down the street, wishing I was anywhere but here. This is so awkward. "Y'know, I've got somewhere to be. I'd better get going." I start to walk off but he grabs my hand.

"It's been really nice seeing you, Eb." He looks deep into my eyes desperately.

"Yeah, you too," I reply, the honesty makes my heart ache.

"How about we get together sometime. Do you still have my number?"

"Not if you've changed it in the past three years."

He laughs awkwardly. "It's still the same. I'll call you, okay?"

"Yeah, sure. Sounds good." I show him a genuine smile. "Bye dad."

He lets go of my hand and pats my shoulder cherishingly. "Bye sweetheart."

Chapter 47: Golden Delicious

"So, have you planned on when you are going to see your dad yet?" Trish asks. I lean back on the bed, holding the phone to my ear.

"No, not yet. We've thrown some dates around but nothing solid yet," I reply.

"It's nice of him to make the effort though."

"Yeah, I guess." I half frown. "It's sort of weird though, I don't really know how to act around him. I mean, he's not a bad guy but he still left. I know it was the right choice for him and I guess that's what confuses me. I should be mad at him for leaving but I'm not."

"Well, isn't that a good thing? He's still your dad, you shouldn't want to be mad at him. Your mum isn't, right?"

"No." I shrug. "It's just been so long. It was pretty weird seeing him again. But it will be nice to have a proper chat to him, see what's happened with him since he left."

She pauses for a while. "Speaking of people leaving, how long is it until Tom gets back?"

"Three days," I sigh. "He should be back Sunday morning."

"If you get lonely this weekend, you're always welcome round mine."

"Thanks, Trish." I smile.

"No problem. Oh crap, it's nearly seven already?! I was supposed to clean the house before mum got back. I've gotta go. Love you."

"Love you too," I laugh and she hangs up.

Speaking of cleaning upâ this flat is a bit of a state. Wouldn't want Tom coming back to a dump! I strip out of my work gear and change into a faded, bleach stained t-shirt and a pair of joggers then get to work.

The kitchen is already pretty clean seeing as though I've done hardly any cooking so I go straight to the living area where there's chocolate wrappers stuffed down the sofa from when Trish was over. I have to grab the Hoover and do a quick once over around the place because there are bits of popcorn sprinkled over the carpet too.

Once I'm satisfied, I move onto the bathroom where I basically just have to tidy everything back into the cabinet and then I'm in the bedroom. All my scruffy clothes are scattered everywhere. I have a habit of just stepping out of my clothes and leaving them there. It used to drive my mum crazy. My heart sinks. *Mum*. I collect all my dirty clothes and shove them in the laundry basket then start to hang up the clothes that I can still wear. My half of the wardrobe is starting to fill up nicely after my several shopping trips. So full in fact that I have had to resort to putting my shoes up on the top shelf. As I'm rummaging up there, trying to push my trainers further back from more room, my hand slaps against something cold and flat. It feels like paper or a notebook or something. My eyebrow arches, intrigued.

Pushing myself up onto my tiptoes, I grab it. It's pretty chunky. I slip it to the front and grab it when it nearly drops onto my face.

It's a black folder. My heart flutters because I know exactly what it is.

I grin and move to the bed. I drop down and open it.

Whoop! It's one of Tom's old portfolios. He didn't bring them all!

Gosh, he looks young. Probably only in his early twenties but he was still drop dead gorgeous back then with his almost afro-like blonde frizz.

There's a picture of him wearing a camel coloured trench coat. The wind is whipping through his hair and he looks so innocent with it huddled around him. Absolutely perfect.

I'm starting to feel hot. The familiar fluttering attacks my lower half. I can feel my cheeks flushing. To cool myself down, I walk over to the window and pull it open a little. A cold draft hits me. I try to focus on the empty car park below me but my hands curl into fists on the windowsill. God, I miss Tom so much. I haven't even skyped him four days. I know it's not that long but after looking at his pictures, it's suddenly dawned on me how much I am actually missing him.

Golden Delicious

I close my eyes and press my forehead against the cold glass of the window. A knot has swelled in my stomach and the throbbing between my thighs is getting unbearable. I grit my teeth and push my joggers down and let them drop to my ankles. The window stops above my hips so I'm not flashing anyone when my panties are next.

The cold draft hits my pussy which is hot and pulsing.

I press my forehead harder against the glass and pinch my eyes tighter as I slip my hand between my legs and cup my pussy. A soft moan escapes me as I brush my finger over my wet slit. My lips part with a gasp when I apply pressure to my clit. My hips jerk forwards as my body craves more. Craves *Tom*.

I push two fingers inside me easily with a weak cry of satisfaction. My eyes flicker open. The window has fogged over with my elevated breathing.

"Tomâ" I whisper to myself, closing my eyes and working my fingers in and out. My teeth latch onto my lower lip as the ball in my stomach tightens. My lips part with muted moans as my hips start to roll with my motions.

Suddenly, I straighten and my heart crashes against my chest as I feel a warmth at my back. My hand is frozen between my legs. I'm too scared to move.

I'm not alone.

A shiver passes through me.

As I stand fear-stricken, facing the window, the glass starts to clear and I can see my reflection and the reflection of the person behind me.

Tom.

I smile and tears start to water in my eyes as he wraps his arms delicately around my waist. His nose brushes the side of my face and I close my eyes at the contact, melting into him.

"I see you've been missing me," he whispers into my ear with an air of humour.

I smile at his reflection. "Like you wouldn't believe." I turn and look up at him. My heart pounds when our eyes connect. Oh, how I have missed those beautiful blues. "You're back early."

He smiles softly and kisses my forehead. "I got an earlier flight. Couldn't stay away any longer. That little trick you pulled on skype, I've not been able to get it out of my head since."

I laugh and chew my lip.

He kisses the side of my face and his hands slip to my ass. He caresses me softly, making me let out a content moan and my eyes to flutter closed.

His fingertips slip down the crack of my ass to my burning pussy. I gasp and pull my own hand back when our fingers touch.

"Now that I am here," he whispers in my ear. "How about I make myself useful?"

I grin and look up at him. "Well, it's the least you could do for leaving me."

Chapter 48: Golden Delicious

I've fallen forwards a little, my hands clutching the windowsill as Tom's fingers gently stroke my pussy. I'm looking up at his reflection in the window that is starting to fog over with my heavy breaths. His jaw is hung open slightly as his eyes lick up every inch of me. My skin burns under his gaze. His tongue is pressed under his top teeth as he concentrates on the soft movements of his fingers.

On any other day, Tom's delicate movements and his extra-long foreplay would drive me crazy with desire but todayâ after not being with him for *ten days*â it's a bloody nightmare! I know he does it to be a gentleman but *damn*, I just want him to pin me up against the wall and ravish me, not treat me like a fucking china doll.

To hurry him along and to signal how desperate I actually am for him, I flick my hips, bucking my ass to him fast as his fingertips are at my clit so they slip with my movements and sink into my aching entrance. I let out a loud, gratified moan. He receives the message loud and clear and starts to thrust his fingers in and out of me, but still a little too slow for my liking.

I push myself off the windowsill and lie my back flat against his chest. He wraps his other arm around my waist, brushing his hand under my threadbare t-shirt so it trails across my abs. I look up and cup his face, angling it to me. He lets out a soft moan when he looks into my eyes. His expression is heavy and slack with pleasure. I study his face before pushing myself up on my tiptoes and crashing my lips against his. He breathes in heavily through his nose and instantly deepens the kiss, pushing his tongue into my mouth. *Oh, how I've missed this tongue.*

He pulls me closer to him with the arm wrapped around my waist and we moan into each other's mouth as the kiss becomes hurried and primal. Tom's fingers also quicken in the heat of this magical moment and he starts to thrust them into me hard and fast. The pleasure knotting in my stomach is so intense, I have to break the kiss to regain my breath but I keep hold of his head and keep my forehead resting against his cheek as I moan. His breath is hot and heavy on my face as he begins to drill me even harder when I rock my lower body against him.

"Oh, baby, I've missed you so much," I moan in a hushed tone.

His lips press heavily against my forehead. "I've missed you too."

I circle my hips and grind against his fingers. As I do, my ass rubs across his hard crotch making me bite down on my lip at the thought of what's hidden under those pants. I gasp and roll my eyes back when he starts kissing me neck.

"Oh Tom." I lift my hand from his face to his hair and grip those sexy curls to pull him down to my level. His lips crash onto mine instinctively. We let out satisfied moans as our tongues slip past each other's and I bring my other hand down at start to rub my clit as I feel my orgasm building. We break the kiss every so often to whisper each other's names and soon my inner muscles clench around his thrusting fingers. My legs seize up and the pleasure that shoots through my body makes me brace myself against Tom's chest.

"Oh God!" I cry, whipping my head back against Tom's shoulder as I reach my peak.

His fingers continue stroking the quivering walls of my pussy as I start to slowly climb down.

I drop forward and clutch the windowsill, panting as I feel my juice dripping down my thighs. My face is burning so I lean forwards and press my forehead against the glass. I stay there for a moment, concentrating on calming my breathing up until I hear the sound of Tom's fly being unzipped.

My eyes widen. I push myself up and look at Tom's reflection. His eyes scope my back then latch onto my eyes. He gives me a knowing grin, to which I return one and buck my ass when his hands lie flat against the small of my back. His hands outline my heart-shaped and I moan softly at the contact. Then my teeth grit together at the feeling of something at my soaking entrance. I'm so wet that it only takes a quick flick of my hips for Tom's cock to sink deep inside me.

My jaw hangs open at the sensation and I'm so surprised and thankful by being filled that my moan is completely soundless.

"Should we close the blinds?" he asks.

I look out over the empty car park.

Golden Delicious

"It's fine, no one can see."

"Are you sure?" He sounds uncertain.

I straighten a little and turn. I cup his face and give him a peck on the lips. "Don't worry, baby. Don't keep me waiting."

He laughs a little and kisses me back.

I turn back around and brace myself on the windowsill.

His hands latch onto my hips and he starts to thrust, pulling me back against him. He lets out a moan that makes my heart flutter. I push myself back as far as I can and start to rock against him. He brings his hand round to my front and leans forward a little so his chest is pressed against my back. In his position, his thrusting has slowed and he has stayed buried deep inside me so I circle and grind my hips so he strokes my inner walls. He kisses my shoulder, breathing heavily down my ear, then one of his arms lifts from me. He grabs the string of the blinds and pulls at it so the blinds drop down, plummeting the room in an orange glow as the sun seeps through the beige material.

I run my hand up his back to his hair and grip his curls as I grind my lower half against him. He drops his hands back to the front of my hips and stays deep inside me, grinding against me for a while before leaning back, almost pulling right out and changing rhythm completely.

I grip the windowsill tighter and chant his name under my breath as he slams into me hard and fast the way I so desperately needed.

"Fuck. Yes. Tom."

My hair is yanked back and the force makes me squeal with pleasure before Tom twists my head and crashes his lips against mine. *Bloody hell, what's gotten into him?* He must be as desperate as I am.

As one of his hands is in my hair, his other travels down my abs to my pussy and his fingertips start rolling my clit.

"Oh. Fuck," I gasp, breaking the kiss before Tom quickly seeks my lips again.

My need to cum causes me to let out little strangled mewls in the back of my throat as Tom's tongue probes my mouth. I grind harder against him. His thrusts become deep and quick.

I'm close. So close.

He's close. I can tell.

His grip in my hair tightens and the hand rubbing my clit goes faster and faster until it stops and grabs my hip. He hardens inside me and releases at the same time I reach my peak. We moan in unison, our lips inches apart.

I drop my hand to the one he has on my hip and clutch it. He laces his fingers into mine and squeezes it tightly as we brace ourselves against one another.

I feel him shrinking inside me. His heart is thumping against my back. A thin coat of sweat covers his forehead. I can feel that my face is clammy with moisture too.

He angles back his lower half so he slips out of me but stays close. I don't like the feeling of us losing contact. It feels right when he's inside me.

Our eyes search one another's in the serene silence. Our breathing is the only sound. I turn but stay close to him, my side brushing against him. When I turn completely, he grabs my sides and pushes me against the window. I gasp and grip his shoulders. He keeps his eyes on mine, his chest pressed hard against mine.

Keep the contact.

Don't let me go.

Don't ever let me go.

"Tomâ !" I whisper, my throat is slightly dry. I clear it.

"Yeah?" he breathes softly, watching my lips which are so close to his.

My heart fumbles with nerves. I open my mouth to speak but there is no way I can make this question sound any less vulgar than the sentence in my head. And I don't want to say that out loud. Especially not to Tom, not to sweet, delicate Tom.

I chew my lip, thinking.

This is as good a time as any.

You saw how he was with you just then. He wants you. He wants you so bad.

Golden Delicious

I gulp and slip my hand down to his. He clutches it without taking his eyes off mine. I guide his hand across my hips to my ass cheeks. He spreads his palm a little to cup my ass.

"I want youâ!" I push my fingertips into his so his press into the crack of my ass. "Here."

His eyebrows furrow a little as if trying to calculate what I had just said.

There's a pause.

My heart is bounding.

Oh, God, he thinks I'm a freak!

He's going to break up with me.

My heart is beating scarily fast.

Oh my God. I think I'm dying.

Then his lips curve into a slight smile even though his eyes still show an edge of concern. "Really?"

Chapter 49: Golden Delicious

~~ "Are you sure you want to do this?" Tom looks back to me from the bedside drawer. Apprehension flutters in my stomach but I nod. I sit on the windowsill with my legs crossed over, covering myself.

"I'm sure."

"Have you done this before?" he asks over his shoulder as he rummages through the drawer.

"No, I have you?"

"A few times."

I think about who his last girlfriend was. He turns and catches my look of disgust. He shows me a faint smile and crosses back to me with something in his hand.

"No, not with her," he says as if reading my mind.

He stops in front of me and I look down at the bottle of lube in his hand. My guts twist and I gulp.

"Does it hurt?" I ask timidly.

His fingertip touches my chin and he angles my face upwards so I'm looking into his eyes.

"Not the way I do it." He leans down and gives me a soft kiss on the lips. "Turn around for me."

I close my eyes at his silky tone and do as he says, pressing my hands against the windowsill. When I buck my ass and brush it against the crotch of his pants, where his length is neatly tucked away, he giggles a little and jumps back.

I sense his body shifting so I glance over my shoulder. He's on his knees behind me. He places the lube on the floor and runs his hands up my bare thighs to my ass. I suck in a whimper when he runs his thumbs down the crack of my ass and parts my ass cheeks. Immediately, I want to cover myself up. I attempt to cross my legs but what the hell is that going to do? This was my idea! I can't look.

I squeeze my eyes shut and turn back to the blinds.

He licks up my wet slit and a sigh with pleasure. But then his tongue keeps travelling up, past my entrance and up to my ass. I clench my cheeks to prevent his access but he has a firm grip of me and his tongue reaches my forbidden hole which I'm guessing isn't so forbidden anymore.

He starts to tongue it lightly and I can feel the tension inside me loosening. Soon, I'm arching my back for more, to which he gives and pushes his tongue inside. That's when I panic and tense up again. He notices and strokes my ass cheeks softly to calm me down. It works to a certain extent.

He pulls away from me. "It's going to hurt if you don't relax."

"I'm sorry."

He laughs lightly. "Don't apologise, just let me relax you."

I suck in a breath and expel it slowly to calm myself down. He goes back to using his tongue for a while to loosen me up and once it starts to work, he moves and I hear the click of the bottle cap opening. I keep my eyes ahead and wait.

Something slimy touches me and I cringe. Once I realise that it's Tom's lubricated finger, I relax again and let him push it inside my tight, virgin hole. I hiss with slight pain but I think it's more to do with the pain I was expecting rather than what I was experiencing because in actual fact it didn't hurt. It felt nice. Is that weird? Is it supposed to feel nice right from the start? Well, Tom did sound like he knew what he was doing. I'd better just leave him to it.

I buck my ass out more when he starts to move his finger slowly in and out of me, stretching me.

"Are you okay?" he asks.

I smile at the blinds. "Yeah. It feels good. Keep going."

I gasp and grin when he inserts another finger. "Still good?"

"Yes," I sigh with pleasure.

I start to grind, rolling my hips as he picks up the momentum with his fingers.

"I think I'm ready."

He laughs a little. "Easy tiger."

I buck my ass more determinedly and grind harder. "Tom," I moan, "I'm ready."

"Okay. Hang on."

Golden Delicious

He slips his fingers out of me and my shoulders sag with disappointment.

I wait patiently, tapping my fingers against the windowsill but soon get bored and glance over my shoulder to see what's taking so long. Tom's busy behind me with his pants wrapped around his ankles and his oiled up cock in his hands.

My eyes widen and my stomach does somersaults. I'd forgotten how big he is!

I look back to the blind and buck my ass, signalling him to hurry up. He does. He grabs my ass and separates my cheeks. My shame has gone out the window. I don't care anymore. I just want him inside me.

He pushes his wet finger back in my ass and wiggles it around a bit before withdrawing it and pressing his head against the now wet entrance. I groan internally and flick my hips. He takes the invitation and eases himself in.

"Remember our safe word?" he asks cautiously as he pushes further and further inside. My eyes clench shut at the slight painful sensation and I nod.

Once he's buried completely inside me, he stays there and caresses my ass and thighs, smoothing his hands across my skin. I flick my hips and ease forwards so he starts to slip out of me. Then I back up, fucking myself until Tom gets the idea and starts moving too. His hands latch firmly onto my hips and I arch my back so he angles differently inside me. I had gotten too used to the other position. Now it hurts. I grip the windowsill harder and grind against him until my eyes burn and tears start to form.

"Yes. Harder. Tom. Harder," I moan softly under my breath.

Hurt me.

Punish me.

Hurt me.

He hesitates for a moment but then complies, smacking against me with more vigour. Tears stream down my face and I fear that they might make my voice quaky when I moan.

I grit my teeth and press back against him harder. He lowers his upper body to kiss my shoulder. My heart pounds when one of his hands leaves my hip and he pulls the hair from my face. He gasps and stops thrusting.

"Ebby. Am I hurting you?" The worry in his voice is ruining it.

I shake my head and rock against him. "Keep going. Harder. Please." My voice has well and truly broken. The tears pour from eyes, down my neck and onto the windowsill. I'm crying so much it's making my head pound as I'm stretched beyond my limits.

"Ebby!" He pulls himself out of me. I growl my irritation and spin round but he grabs the tops of my arms and pins me up against the window. His eyes are wide and searching, fear alight in them.

"I'm sorry!" I cry. "I can't do it!" My nose is dripping, my temples are pulsing and my cheeks are soaking.

"Can't do *what*?"

"I can't leave you!"

His grip on my arms loosens. "What?"

"I'm a horrible person. I've lost my mum because of you but I can't leave. I can't let you go, Tom. I just can't."

I cover my face with my hands.

"Ebby!" he says softly, wrapping his hands around mine. I let him pull them down. His eyes search mine.

"What has brought this on?"

I sniff. "I went to see her. Mum. She slammed the door in my face."

The muscles in his jaw flex but he says nothing.

"She hates me, Tom. She wouldn't even listen to what I have to say. But I can't leave you. I couldn't even stand being away from you for two weeks." I pull my hands from his hand cover my face again as fresh tears start to blur my vision. "I'm such a bitch."

"Shhhh!" He wraps his arms around the small of my back. "Don't say that. We just fell in love at the wrong time, that's all. We can work this out, Eb. Together."

I shake my head. "I don't think we can."

I feel him press his forehead against mine. I lower my hands and look up to him.

"We can. And we will," he says softly.

Then why is it taking so long?

I stay silent, not wanting to argue. I don't want to burst his optimistic bubble.

Chapter 50: Golden Delicious

~~ I'm lay on my front on the bed and Tom is sat next to me.

"Ow! Apples!" I cry and twist my lower half away from him while swatting his hand. "It's cold."

His shoulders sag and he shows me a playful exhausted look. He lifts up the melting ice cube pinched between his fingers. "Of course it's cold. It's an ice cube."

I narrow my eyes at him. "Don't get sassy with me, Tom, I'm in pain."

"Oh, regretting trying to cover your emotional pain with physical pain?" He arches an eyebrow.

I flop my face back into the pillow and muffle, "A little."

"Okay, now shush. I'm trying to help you."

I growl into the pillow but stay still as he brings the now tiny ice cube to my ass and pushes it into my sore, inflamed hole. My hands turn to fists in the pillow as I hiss with pain. The ice cube instantly dissolves and the freezing water runs down onto the bed.

"How many more?" I muffle.

"Three," Tom replies nonchalantly as if this situation is completely normal. He runs another cube over my cheeks and down my crack until the sharp edges have been worn down, then pushes it inside me. My body clenches at the sensation. He does the same with the other two then I relax and twist my face to him. His brows are knitted together with worry as he stares at my naked lower half.

"I'm sorry I made you do that," I say.

He looks at me.

"I shouldn't have used you like that," I add.

"It's okay," he mumbles, looking down. "Feeling any better?"

I wasn't actually sure. My ass was just numb now. Was that any better? Well, the throbbing had stopped so I guess soâ

"Yeah, I feel fine."

He looks up and smiles. I smile back but then it fades when I remember the news I thought I had another three days to prepare Tom for.

"What's up?" he asks.

I clear my throat, spin off the bed and slot my legs into a pair of pyjama bottoms before returning to Tom. I cross my legs in front of him.

"I have something to tell you."

"I can see that."

I half laugh but I can tell by the look in his eyes that he knows this is going to be serious.

"I bumped into my dad."

His eyebrows raise. "Oh."

"Yeah." I shift awkwardly. "I've said I'd go for a meal with him and erhhâhe wants you to come too."

To this, he just seems freeze.

Finally, he clears his throat. "Does heâknowâaboutây'know?"

I shake my head. "He knows mum had a boyfriend and they broke up. He doesn't know it was you. We've been texting over the week and I accidentally let slip that I have a boyfriend now and he got all excited and said he wanted you to join us at the meal." I wince at the unease in his eyes. "I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to." His eyes slowly trail down to the bed in thought. The silence prickles me.

"If you don't want to go, I completely understand. I'll tell my dad you're at work or something. I mean, you probably don't want to meet him after everything my mum has told you about him." I get up and head towards the bathroom. "I bet she didn't paint him in the best light," I say when I reach the bathroom door. I don't look around so he doesn't have to disappoint me right to my face.

"Actually no, she didn't," he replies, sounding a little confused.

I turn back to him. He's looking up at me from the bed.

"She didn't? What did she say?"

He furrows his brows and his eyes shift to the side in thought.

Golden Delicious

"Ermâ that he was prioritising his work over you and her so they both agreed that it wasn't working out." He looks back to me. "She said it was a healthy break-up."

I sigh with relief. "Oh good. I thought she was just pretending to be fine with me but was secretly bitter. Well, that's a relief." I rest my side against the bathroom doorway. "But you still don't need to go if you don't want to."

"Do you want me to?"

I shrug. "I guess it would be nice but considering what's been happening every time we go out together, I can see why you'd feel differently."

"I'd like to meet your father."

My eyebrows raise at how bold the statement had come out. "Oh, okayâ are you sure?"

He nods. "Sure. But, whenever Sharon comes up in conversation, I'll just stay quiet. I'm coming as your boyfriend, not as his ex-wife's exâ !" His voice trails off and he pulls a face at how weird that sounded.

I laugh it off. "Sounds like a plan." I smile.

I spin around and head into the bathroom. I can't remember why I came in hereâ ;

"Is it okay if I have a quick nap? I'm exhausted."

"Yeah, that's fine!" I call back to him as I stare at my reflection in the mirror. My eyes are not red anymore from my outburst. My bum still hurts a little but I guess I can't really complain about thatâ lit was my fault. It was my idea.

I go back into the bedroom and curl up next to Tom on the bed. He half opens his eyes and smiles at me lazily.

"So you found my old portfolio?" he mumbles with a smile.

I bite down a cheeky grin. "Maybe."

He laughs. "And here was me thinking I'd hidden it well."

"Why would you want to hide it? It's amazing."

"They're the shoots when I first started out. I don't know, I just find them embarrassing."

"You've got nothing to be embarrassed about." I kiss him lightly on the nose. "You've always been a sexy beast."

Chapter 51: Golden Delicious

"Well," Tom swigs round and shut the front door behind him. "I had a weird and wonderful day," he exhales as he slips his bag off his shoulder and plonks it down onto the sofa beside me. I arch my eyebrow with intrigue and switch the telly off.

"Oh? Good day in the office?"

He pushes his bag aside and drops down next to me. "Oh no-" He waves me off. "Not that. My agent just wanted to go through all the campaigns I did in Milan. Why she had to grab me on a weekend, I don't know."

"So what was weird and wonderful?"

"What happened next." He shifts to the side and brings his leg up onto the sofa, getting comfortable. "Sharon called me."

My heart thumps. His eyes widen at the fear alight in mine.

"Oh no. It was good!"

"Oh," I exhale a sigh of relief. "Really?"

"Yes." His eyebrows pinch together with disbelief. "She called and asked if I would drop by so I did." He pauses for effect which is not well received because I am dying right here. A smile starts to crack on his lips.

"She forgave me."

"What?" I choke on my breath.

"Yeah," he laughs with disbelief, his blue eyes big and shining. "I know. She's forgiven you too. She actually told me to tell you that she's going to call sometime to meet up with you."

Wow, first my dad and now my mum? Things are reallyâcoming together.

I shake my head, trying to get my mind right. "So, what did she say exactly?"

At this, his hands that had been flying around everywhere with excitement, suddenly drop onto his lap and his smiles fades a little, becoming more serious.

"She said she doesn't think she overreacted about what had happened, which I don't blame her. But she said she's had time to think things over, to move past it and that time really is the best healer." He wraps his hand around mine and looks deep into my eyes. "She's not happy with what we've done, Ebby, but she's also not unhappy with us anymore."

My vision starts to become blurry with tears. I smile and they fall. "I have my mum back?"

His smile broadens. "You have your mum back."

I laugh with relief and throw my arms around him. He laughs too and buries his head into my neck as I squeeze him as tight as I can. I have my mum back. I can actually be happy now without that gnawing pit of guilt in my stomach.

"I love you so much," I blubber over his shoulder, feeling overwhelmed with happiness.

"I love you too." He nuzzles my neck.

It was around five o'clock when my mum called me to come over. Tom had just put a plate in front of me after slaving in the kitchen. I felt bad about ditching him but he said it was fine, I could warm it up in the microwave later, I needed to focus on my mum. I gave him a heavy kiss and he wished me luck before I left.

Now I'm stood at my front door, my heart pounding and my palms sweating, despite the chill in the air.

I have nothing to worry about. She sounded perfectly fine on the phone.

I suck in a breath and knock.

And wait.

Then the door swings open and my heart almost jumps out of my throat. My mum's stood there in a comfy looking oversized jumper, black leggings and slippers. Her blonde hair tumbles down her chest and she's smiling. I almost burst into tears right here in front of her. She looks like my mum again. Not a hostile stranger.

"Come in, Ebs." She steps aside and lets me in.

She guides me into the dining room and asks me if I want a cup of tea. I say I do and she wanders into the kitchen while I slip myself into one of the chairs, the chair I usually sat on when I ate my tea. The wood feels

Golden Delicious

colder than I remember. Probably from lack of use.

She comes back in and settles a steaming mug in front of me. She takes the opposite chair and blows on her mug to cool it.

"I take it Tom told you why I asked you round," she starts conversationally.

"Yes." I suddenly feel like I've been asked to stay behind after class.

She notices my stiff posture and laughs lightly. "Then stop looking so petrified."

I let out a steady breath and grab my mug. "I'm sorry. It's justâafter the last time we spoke."

She shakes her head. "I'm so sorry about that, Ebs, I really am. And I think you ought to know that I heard every word you said. It was the kick start I needed to get my act together and let the past be the past."

"Really?" My heart swells.

"Really." She nods. "I mean, I'm not saying that I am okay with what you did. It was an awful thing to do. I really awful thing." I gulp and shift awkwardly on my chair. "I never thought I'd come into my kitchen and seeâthat." Her eyes widen as she looks down at the table vacantly. She shakes her head and looks back to me. "But what's done is done, and I know now that you didn't do it to spite me."

I gasp. "That's what you thought?"

She frowns. "I knew things were difficult after your dad left. I thought you blamed me for it so you acted out by trying to ruin my new relationship with Tom."

God, I feel numb.

"But I know that's not the case now," she adds more cheerily. "Tom told me how much you mean to him." She places her hand over mine on the table. It's so warm from the mug. I flicker my eyes from our hands to her eyes. She stares right back at me with a soft smile. "He loves you, Ebs, he really does. I thought he loved me butâthe way he talks about you-" She laughs lightly and drops her back against the back of the chair, returning her hand to the mug. "-the way he looks when he does. Now that-that is real love."

I want to cry again. I think I am crying. My vision is going all blurry so I wipe my eye as discreetly as I can with my sleeve.

"I should have known really," she continues, looking off into the distance. "The signs were all there. He would always want to spend time with you and when you weren't there, he'd ask about you." She laughs and shakes her head. "You two make a lot more sense than we did. I mean, he even used to go to netball practice with you and watch you play. I couldn't even remember to pick you up!"

I chew my lip to suppress a smile when I think back to the days he watched me behind the chain-link fence, clapping and whooping.

"How is your netball going by the way?" mum asks, pulling me out of my reverie.

"Erhhâ!" I clear my sudden dry throat. "I've actually missed the last couple of lessons."

"Oh? Why?"

My eyes widen. Because I've been too busy shacking up with Tom. "No reason." I smile. "Justâhaven't had the time."

She nods in understanding and sips at her tea.

"Mum?" I say after a short silence.

She arches her eyebrow, acknowledging me.

"Do you forgive me?" I ask with my hands clutched tightly around my mug.

She smiles wistfully. "Yes. I forgive you."

I exhale a sigh of relief.

"Love can make you do things others might find crazy, but to you it couldn't make more sense," she adds dreamily.

I study her face. "Are you talking about dad?"

She chews her lip with a smile and looks down at the table. "Not many people were too happy to hear about our engagement. It felt like we had the world against us but we didn't let that stop us."

"Do you regret it?"

She whips her head back to me, her brows knitted together. "No. Of course not. If we had never married, we would have never had you." She smiles and squeezes my hand. "And nineteen happy years together."

I squeeze her hand back and bite down another rush of tears. "People aren't so fond about me and Tom either."

Golden Delicious

I blink up at her.

She sighs. "I know, I've heard about that. You should know that I didn't want any of that to happen. I told my close friends about what happened at that was it. I mean, it's not really something I want to shout from the rooftops."

"Well." I gulp through the lump in my throat. "Is there any chance you can put a stop to it? It's starting to become a real burden."

She nods. "Of course, I'll let my friends know I'm doing fine and that we've made amends. That should do it."

"Thank you."

I stay for another hour before heading back to the flat. Dad kept coming back up into conversation but I didn't mention that I am meeting him tomorrow with Tom. It felt like I would have been throwing too much at her at once. She's only just gotten used to us dating. But that is enough for me. Finally, there seems to be no dark cloud to my silver lining.

Chapter 52: Golden Delicious

~Tom looks as nervous as I feel as we sit in his car in the car park. He's wearing a black shirt with his sleeves rolled up to his elbows, black dress pants and shining dress shoes. He looks absolutely perfect as usual. I'm wearing one of my new floral dresses which stops just below the knee and has a high neckline, hopefully innocent enough.

"So, we're sticking to the plan?" he asks, turning to me with his eyebrow raised in that hopeless, sexy way. I nod. "Whenever my mum comes up in conversation, you stay quiet and I'll divert it to something else." He looks unsure. "Is this really going to work?"

"It has to."

"But how long are we supposed to keep this lie going for? Surely we can't keep my past hidden from your father forever?"

"Well, knowing him, he'll disappear on me after tonight anyway. So, we just have to get through this meal."

"I fear I'm going to ruin the plan. I'm not a great liar." He frowns a little as if it's something he should be ashamed of.

"We're not telling my dad that you used to date his ex-wife and now you're dating his only daughter. One, because he has every right to hate you for it and two, because funnily enough, you dating my mum before me is a topic that I would much like to not know about myself." I clutch his hand on his lap. "I want him to like you, Tom. So can we just pretend to be a normal couple for tonight?"

He nods and squeezes my hand. "Of course."

I show him my bravest smile and push my door open. "Okay. Let's go."

My dad spots us as we make our way through the restaurant and stands when we approach him.

"Ebony!" He smiles and wraps his arms around me, drawing me closer. An awkward laugh comes out of me unexpectedly and I hug him back.

"Hey dad."

He holds me at arm's length for a moment, studying me with bright eyes as if he's still trying to figure out if I'm real, before he lets me go and turns to Tom who is stood beside me.

"And you must be the boyfriend." He smiles and offers his hand.

Tom chuckles lightly. "Yes, I'm Tom. Nice to meet you, Mr. Farris," he says with a dazzling smile as he takes my dad's hand.

"Oh please, call me Joe." He looks to me. "Firm handshake and dresses like a gentleman, I like him already." I feel myself blushing and Tom gives a modest, slightly embarrassed laugh, releasing my dad's hand.

"Please." My dad gestures to the table and we all take our seats.

Moments later, a waitress takes our drinks orders and leaves us in silence as we study the menu. On the outside, Tom looks surprisingly relaxed but when my dad starts to talk again, his grip on his menu noticeably tightens.

"So, how long have two been together?"

"Just over a month," I reply casually.

"Ah." He nods then flickers his eyes over Tom who seems to be pretending to be reading the menu so he can avoid eye contact.

"If you don't mind me asking, Tom, how old are you?"

Tom's shining eyes bounce up.

"Dad," I mutter harshly under my breath.

"What?" He lifts his palms up to me. "I'm just asking."

Tom laughs good naturedly. "It's okay." He smiles at me then looks to my dad. "I'm thirty two."

"Bit of an age gap." My dad raises an eyebrow then looks down at his menu. "Taking after your motherâ" "Dad," I hiss.

His head bounces back up and his wide, brown eyes hit Tom. "Oh, not me. I know I'm going a little grey and Ebony's mother still looks like she's still reaching forty but I was referring to the man she's just split up with."

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I hear Tom gulp and the colour seems to run from his face. My dad laughs, oblivious to how uncomfortable he is making both of us. "Apparently he was a hell of a looker. Never saw him myself but I guess I can't be too surprised, Sharon always had a good eye." He winks at Tom.

"Dad, you're embarrassing yourself," I say through gritted teeth. And Tom. *I'm more concerned about embarrassing him. You can look like a tool any time you want but please not now!*

"What?" He laughs, his eyes sparkling with mirth. "I'm just having a laugh."

"Well stop."

"Have you met Ebony's mum, Tom?"

Tom opens his mouth to reply but all that comes out is an odd sort of gurgle. Luckily, the waitress swoops in and places down our drinks. Tom quickly clears his throat and thanks the lady.

"Are you ready to order?" she asks brightly.

"I am," says Tom a little too quickly.

She smiles and starts with him, taking all our orders. Unfortunately, she leaves and we're plunged back into silence but I manage to quickly change the subject before my dad remembers what he had been saying.

"So, how's the job, dad? Still going strong?"

I never really understood what my dad did for a living, seeing as though it was that that destroyed my parent's marriage, you'd think I would have been a little more informed but whenever he spoke about it I just zoned out. He wore a suit to work, carried a briefcase and worked awkward hours, that's about as much as I learnt.

"Not too bad, not too bad." He nods, placing his drink on the table. "But I've gotta tell you, Eb, I miss your mum." The swelling pain in his voice makes my stomach drop. I flicker my eyes to Tom, he looks about as stunned as me. After everything that he's heard about him, I bet he wasn't expecting that confession either.

"Really?" is all I can say.

His lips tighten as if he's trying to hold back tears. "Yeah, when I found out she was seeing someone else I thought that was the end, no turning back. But now she's single again? I can't help but think about the possibility of trying to pick up where we left off. I love her, Eb. Always have. Always will."

I suddenly feel myself tensing up and becoming defensive, remembering how he had treated my mum, like she was nothing. "You have a funny way of showing it."

He sighs and drops his head into his hands. "I know. I know. I was horrible back then but things are different now. I thought my job was everything but now I know I have nothing without her and you." He looks up at me, his big brown eyes like the eyes of a sad puppy. "Seeing you the other day, it really put everything into perspective. In those few minutes, I was happier than I have been for years."

"Then why haven't you reached out to her?" I ask.

"I figured she'd still be sore from the break up. Plus, she probably hates my guts."

"She doesn't hate you."

It's Tom who speaks. We both look to him bewildered. Suddenly, it's as if he's just realised he has spoken, he becomes flustered and jittery. "I mean, erh, I've, erh, I've met Sharon. She was warm and friendly and it just didn't seem like she was the type of person who is holding a grudge."

"That's because she's not," I say, tearing the spotlight from Tom who seems thankful for it. "She doesn't hate you, dad. She just felt abandoned."

"As she has every right to be," my dad agrees. He then lets out a sigh and furrows his brows, making his eyes go all big and helpless again. "I know this is probably too much to ask butâ is there any way you could help meâ ermâ just, show her how much she means to me?"

"You have a phone. Call her and tell her yourself."

He shakes his head. "No, I can't do that. Not after all this time." Then his eyes brighten with an idea. "How about we all go out for another meal together, aye? You, me, your mum and Tom. Like a real family."

Tom coughs into his glass and places it back onto the table, wheezing a little. "Maybe it's best if I give that one a miss. I'm not family after all. I'd hate to intrude."

"Who's saying you're intruding?" says my dad. "You are family, Tom. I mean, I know when I'm in the presence of love. Eb is practically glowing." He gestures to me with a wide smile. *Oh, my god. I just want to curl up into a ball and hide.*

"Dad, please don't."

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"It will be perfect." He turns back to Tom, ignoring me. "It will be like your proper introduction into the family."

I think Tom has been pretty well introduced into the family already.

Tom laughs good naturedly through a tight smile and then he looks to me, I can see the fear sparkling in his bright blue eyes.

"So, how about it, Eb?" My dad looks at me expectantly.

"It seems like you haven't given me a choice," I mumble.

"That's settled then." He grins. "Work out a day when you guys are all free and we'll sort it out from there."

"That's if mum even wants to go along with this."

"Eb," my dad lets out an exasperated sigh. "Do this for me?"

He's trying to guilt trip me, isn't he? And damn it, it's working!

"Fine." I huff.

"Great." He grins and looks over Tom's shoulder. "Oh, looks like our meals are arriving."

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"Well, I think your dad likes me."

I narrow my eyes at Tom as he focuses his on the road. I shake my head and cover my face with my hands.

"What are we going to do? This family meal *cannot* happen."

"We could just tell Sharon to not mention me-"

"Even if she doesn't. It will still be awkward. Too awkward. Even more awkward than this was. No. It's not happening."

He furrows his brows with concern. "But what about your father? He misses Sharon. Maybe we could play cupid and it'll sort everything out?" He glances at me.

Same old Tom, always thinking about others. *How about thinking about himself for once and run away from all this as quickly as he can?*

But he can't. Because he loves me.

I shrug awkwardly and gaze out of the window. It's only seven and it's already almost pitch black.

"Sure, I'd like mum and dad to get back together but it didn't work out last time, there's no point tearing open an old wound." I pull a face at the image in my head. *Never say that again.*

Tom sighs. "You'll never know unless you try. And from what Sharon told me when we were together, it was pretty clear she still had feelings for your father. Part of me felt like she was trying to move on too fast. It put a strain on our relationship." And brought you to me. *Thanks dad, you've done something right for a change.*

"I don't knowâ " I chew my lip, hating myself for warming up to the idea. Then I shake my head. "But there is no way you can come. I'll say you're sick or something."

"No you're not." He looks at me in absolute horror. "They will know I'm avoiding them. It would be rude."

I roll my eyes. "Oh for God sake, Tom. Can you just stop being so polite for two seconds?"

He smiles innocently and looks back to the road. "I'll be fine, Ebby. We'll just have a word with Sharon beforehand so we're all on the same page."

I stare out the window, mulling it over. "I'll think about it."

Tom slips his key into the door and shoulders it open. As I go to step in the flat, Tom's arms smacks me across the chest. "Watch out! My pictures."

I jump back and notice the A3 size white envelop on the floor just where I was about to stand. I carefully make my way around it and Tom picks it up after shutting the door.

"Why isn't that in the box with the rest of our mail?" I ask.

Tom's busy eying up the envelop like a kid ready to unwrap a new toy. "It's too big. My agent must have been buzzed up by someone." He tears open the top and strides into the bedroom.

I follow him, slightly dazed. "Are they the pictures from the Milan campaigns? Haven't you seen them already?"

He's sat on the edge of the bed with the envelope beside him and his newest portfolio on the floor between his feet. He slides a page out of the envelope with great care. "Yeah. I just need to add them to my portfolio."

I kneel behind him on the bed and watch him work over his shoulder. I've never really understood the joy Tom got when he was able to add more pages to his portfolio. He is obviously very proud of his work so I guess it's like an artist that's adding a new painting to their gallery, right? It's a foreign concept to me because, well, my job isn't really anything to get excited about. *Oh, yay! New napkin holders!... doesn't really work.*

He bends down and slides the page into the plastic cover then leans back as if to inspect it from a distance before picking it up and lying it across his lap. The new page has two photos on it. One of his in a Burberry suit with his hands in his pockets and stood with a wide stance, the other is him and a woman sat on a step of what looks like a building on a side street. He's wearing the same suit but with a tweed coat over the top, matching the one that the blonde woman beside him is wearing. He's sat with his elbows on his knees, looking deep into the camera. She has her hand on his lap, also looking with a sultry quirkiness into the lens.

"She's pretty," I observe. She was stunning. She was the typical model, with big eyes, gaunt cheeks and a small mouth.

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Tom's eyes cross over to the photo and he lets out a soft laugh with a nod. "Yeah, she is."

I wrap my arms around his neck and kiss his neck. "Is she prettier than me?"

He turns his head so his lips are at my ear and whispers. "Not in my eyes."

I giggle at the butterflies that swarm my stomach. I squeeze him tighter and pull away so I can look into his eyes which are bright and on me. "Right answer."

I watch quietly as he sorts the rest of the pages. He seems to be in his own little world so I leave him to it until one specific picture catches my eye. I jump up from my horizontal position across the bed, up to my knees behind him. My heart is pounding and I can feel that my cheeks have flushed. Just before he turns the page to inspect his earlier pictures, I slam my hand over his. "Wait."

He jumps a little. "What?" He peers at me.

"That picture-" I point to the one of him on a lounge chair. The photo is a close up of his top half. Light streams through a window and is hitting him in the face so he has lifted his hand to shield his eyes and the shadows that it has created paint him beautifully. They highlight his cheekbones and jawline in a way that I've never seen before. The khaki short sleeve t-shirt he's wearing stretches tight across his chest and his biceps look huge because of the angle of his arm. "Holy crap, Tom!"

He laughs awkwardly and turns so he can see me better. "What?"

I look from him back to the photo. He is clean shaven now but on the photo he has a slight five o'clock shadow. "Please tell me you have a copy of this picture." I stretch my arm over his shoulder and point to it.

He looks down and laughs. "Why?"

"Because it's going to be the first one in my new folder."

He arches his eyebrow at me and I grin down at him from over his shoulder. "You don't need a folder. You have me."

The butterflies in my stomach go crazy at the thought. "Yes. Yes, I do."

I grin and kiss his neck. He moans a little and the vibration shoots straight to my lower half, lighting it on fire. I lick up to his ear and trace the curve of it with the tip of my tongue, breathing heavily as my lust consumes me.

His eyes flutter closed and his jaw slackens. "Ebby, I'm supposed to be working. You're not helping."

I giggle and bite his earlobe. "I'm not trying to help."

He twists his head and I pull back so he can see me. He must notice the devilish glint in my eyes because his eyes widen and his lips seal shut as if he's just said the wrong thing. I giggle and climb down off the bed and stand before him. When I grab the portfolio across his lap, his grip on it tightens instinctively before letting it go. I can sense him watching me as I place it on the dressing table.

I cross back over to him and kneel before him.

"Ebby, what-" his words catch in his throat when I place my hands onto his knees and stroke up his thighs. I grin up at him and pop open the button of his dress pants. He gasps and pants as I unzip him and start to tug down his pants and boxers. "Ebby, erh-" He starts to panic.

I lift myself up a little to touch my finger to his lips, silencing him. "Shhâ !"

"But-"

"Let me."

His shoulders sag as the tension leaves his body and he gives in to me. I smile and drop back down so I'm sitting on my heels. He lifts himself off the bed enough for me to pull down his pants to just above his knees. His cock jolts at the freedom but he's only semi-hard so I wrap my hand around him and carefully tease him. He starts to pant a little and scrunches his fists into the duvet.

It's not until he's fully erect and pointing to the ceiling when the nerves kick in. Tom is a shower and a growler. I want to say "I do but what if I gag? That's one way to kill the mood."

I glance up at Tom to see if he's noticed my apprehension. He hasn't. His eyes are hooded lazily and his head is tilted slightly upwards.

I could back out and just give him a hand job. I'm pretty sure he'll be happy with that. He would never push me to do something I didn't want to. But I do. That's the thing. I *do* want to. After everything he's done for me? I owe him this.

Pushing my worries aside, I lower myself and take him in my mouth. When my lips clamp around his head,

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his hips jerk a little and he shifts further into my mouth. Not enough to make me gag, but enough to shit me up a little. I keep my hand wrapped around his base and I work my mouth and hand back and forth in unison, twisting my wrist a little.

Tom groans and hisses with please, flicking his hips every so often. In a matter of seconds, I seem to be getting the hang of it, making sure not to get ahead of myself and try to force him deeper. I swirl my tongue around him and speed up my rhythm. He starts to pant and his fists clench tighter into the duvet. My heart flutters when I taste his pre-cum in the back of my throat.

Tom starts to panic. "Ebby. Ebby. Ebby." He looks down, his eyes wide and frantic. He lifts one of his hands and it wavers in the air above my head as if he is battling with himself to not grab my hair. I watch him with a smile in my eyes as I keep up the speed until his ass bucks off the bed and he shoots down my throat. Finally. Finally, I am tasting him. He's warm and salty and divine.

I open my mouth and let his slowly shrinking member slip out. Wiping my mouth, I look up at him expectantly, awaiting a verdict. He's still panting a little, his eyebrows at his hairline. "Well," he expels a laugh and gulps to clear his throat. "That was unexpected."

"But good?"

He nods affirmatively. "Yes. Yep. Ver-very good."

I grin and get to my feet. I push him down onto the bed and jump over him. He manoeuvres himself on the mattress so his head is at the pillow and he tucks himself back into his boxers, leaving his pants at his knees.

"No, no, no." I shake my head and straddle his waist backwards so I'm facing his feet. "We're not done yet."

I start to pull down his pants the rest of the way when he grabs my waist from behind.

"Ebby, not tonight."

I furrow my brows at look at him over my shoulder. "Why not?"

He looks back at me helplessly, his eyes twinkling like two pools. "Let me rest. I'm an old man."

I laugh, turn back around and continue to undress him. "You're not an old man yet, Tom. You still have a few good years left before you get all saggy and you can't get it up."

The mattress shifts and his arms wrap around my stomach, making me squeal before he pulls me back and flips me over so I land on my side with him curled up behind me, spooning me. He presses his face into the curve of my neck and blows raspberries. I giggle and wrap my arms over his.

"Can we just cuddle?" he asks, resting his chin on my shoulder.

I turn my head a little so we're face to face. I give him a soft kiss on the tip of his nose. "We can just cuddle."

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I'm shaking a little and I'm pretty sure it's only partly because of the chill in the air. My breathing is coming out short and sharp, making me feel light headed but I can't seem to stop. I jump a little when Tom wraps his hand around mine. I blink up at him. He can sense my distress, I can see it in his eyes.

"Ready?" he asks. I nod. He takes a steadying breath and knocks on my mum's front door. Before she answers, I drop Tom's hand.

The door swings open and my mum looks surprised to see us. Surprised. That's an emotion I can work with. After the initial shock of seeing us both on her doorstep, she smiles.

"To what do I owe the pleasure?" she says, leaning against the doorframe and folding her arms across her chest.

"Hey mum." I smile.

She smiles back and turns to Tom. He gives her a pleasant nod. "Sharon."

"Just here to say hello? Because it looks to me like you both have something on your mind."

Tom looks at me as if to say, '*do you want me to tell her?*' I shake my head and turn back to my mum who is looking back at me expectantly.

"I bumped into dad," I start.

Her light eyebrow arches. "Oh?"

"Yeah. We went out for a meal."

"We as in, the both of you?" She gestures to Tom.

"Yeah, Tom came too."

Her eyebrows lift. "Oh wow."

"Yeah," I laugh awkwardly. "It was okay. We just didn't mentionây'know?"

"That Tom and I dated before he snatched you up?"

There was nothing unpleasant in her tone but it still made me shudder.

"Yeahâ"

"And I see why. That would be an awkward conversation."

"He wants to see you too, mum. He wants us all to go out for a meal together." I glance at Tom. He's just stood with a casual smile.

She looks at me curiously. "Why the hell would he want to do that?"

"Because he misses you, Sharon."

We both turn to Tom. He shows a wry smile. "Like I always knew he did."

My mum's eyes soften as she inspects Tom's face. I don't like it. It looks too familiar. Like the way she always looked at him when they were together. "What?" she asks.

"There is unfinished business between you two. I always knew it. He misses you, Sharon, just like you miss him."

I feel awkward. Part of me wants to leave. *Why do I feel like the third wheel here?*

My mum sighs a laugh. "And you think if we have a meal together it'll sort everything out? Like I would just forgive him for choosing to leave me and my daughter alone while he went off to build up his business?"

My skin tingles when Tom slots his fingers between mine. I squeeze his hand a little but his eyes are still on my mum. "We're saying it could be a start."

My mum looks to both of us, clearly unconvinced.

"And what about you?" She looks back to Tom. "How am I supposed to try and rebuild my train wreck of a marriage if my ex has a ringside seat?"

"We were hoping you wouldn't mention that bit," says Tom politely.

"But it's bound to come up. I know Joe's had people spying on me. They are not all that subtle. If things all work out, he's going to find out eventually. I think he even knows your name."

"Tom is a common name," I rush.

My mum glances at me.

"We can cross that bridge when we come to it." Tom shows an optimistic smile.

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My mum sighs and rolls her eyes. "So, when is this meal then?"
"Tomorrow night," I say. "Does that mean you're coming?"
"Why not? It'll be good to know why Joe felt the need to go through all this trouble to see me when he could have just picked up a phone and called."
"Great." I grin. "I'll text you the time and place."
"Great." She smiles. "I'll see you two tomorrow then."
Tom nods with a smile. "It was nice to see you, Sharon."
"You too." My mum almost blushes. "Bye."
"Bye mum," I say before she closes the door.
Tom and I head down the driveway. "See, that wasn't so bad," he says.
"Let's hope tomorrow runs as smoothly," I reply with a growing knot in my stomach.

"I have a question," says Trish after I explain what's going to happen tonight. I assort the glasses behind the bar while she pretends to wipe down the laminated menus.

"What?"

"Are you out of your mind?"

I laugh and turn so I'm facing her. Her emerald eyes are wide and on me. "It's a serious question. That is an *awful* idea. You know that, right?"

I shrug helplessly. She huffs and throws her cloth dramatically onto the bar.

"You, Tom, your mum and your dad sat round a table making small talk? How could that possibly work?"

I cringe at the thought. "I just want to help my dad."

"Screw him. He left you and your mum. Let him wallow in self-pity."

"Trish."

"What?" She places her hand on her hip and starts waggling her finger at me. She's on a roll. "I was there by your side when he left. I was there to pick up the pieces. I know what him leaving did to you, Eb. I know you try to convince yourself that it was for the best but he is your dad and he put you and your mum second. That's not right. I know I said that you shouldn't be mad at him but that doesn't mean that I can't be. The guy's a dick."

Everything she said was true. My dad really hurt me. Hurt us both. But what person doesn't want their mum and dad get back together? Sure, if he was abusive I'd tell her to run a mile but my dad is a decent guy. He just made the wrong choice.

Forgive and forget. That's my new motto.

"I just want my mum to be happy," I say in a small voice and turn back to the glasses.

"With your dad?"

"Yeah."

"So that you can stop feeling guilty about stealing Tom from her?"

My heart plummets. I spin round to her. "*What?*"

She lifts her palms up to me, surrendering. "I'm just saying. It's true, isn't it? I've known you long enough to know what you're thinking."

The back of my eyes start to burn. I gulp and look down when I can tell that my eyes are reddening. "I just want us to be a family again."

"I know you do, hun. And I honestly hope it all goes well for you. You're my best friend and I love you."

I laugh lightly. "I love you too."

Chapter 55: Golden Delicious

"It seems like your mum hasn't changed," says my dad from across the table. He's wearing a blazer over a grey jumper. He looks pretty smart.

"What do you mean?" I ask.

He laughs lightly. "Always fashionably late."

Tom and I laugh knowingly but then Tom catches himself and tries to cover his laughter with a cough. This makes my gut twist. *He is my mum's ex-boyfriend. He dated my mum. My mum dated him before me. They have memories together.* No matter how much I love him and how much I try to not let it get to me, it does. I think Tom notices my inner turmoil because he clutches my hand under the table. I give him a weak smile and squeeze it.

"She did say she was coming, didn't she?" my dad asks, now looking slightly concerned.

I nod. "Yeah."

"Maybe she changed her mindâ!" he mumbles but then his eyes brighten when he looks up behind me. The hairs on the back of my neck stand on end and Tom and I both turn round. My mum is heading through the restaurant looking as amazing as always with her long blonde hair waving down her chest. She's wearing a black body-con dress with a high neck line, the type of dress you would wear to a business meeting rather than a family meal but she still looks fantastic. Tom's eyes follow her as she walks over to the table, taking her in. *He's not checking her out, it's fine. She looks incredible, it would be weirder if he didn't look.*

Why does my mum have to be so hot? It really bums me out sometimes.

My dad stands when she reaches us and pulls out her seat. "Sharon, you look as beautiful as ever."

She smiles but I can tell by the tightness of her glossed lips that it is forced. "You don't look too bad yourself," she says as she sits down. "It's nice to not see you in a suit for once."

She's referring to the fact that whenever he was around, he would always be in a suit because he's always be heading out to work, not because she doesn't like suits. In fact, I think I got my fetish of men in suits from my mum.

I bet she liked Tom in suits.

Stop it. No. Don't think stuff like that.

My heart actually stops for a moment, everything seems to be happening in slow motion when my mum flips a tendril of hair behind her ear and her heavily lashed eyes flicker up and hit Tom. His grip on my hand tighten. Silence falls over the table. My breath is stuck in my throat. They both just stare at each other for a moment then my mum's lips crack into a smile and she says, with convincing politeness. "Tom, nice to see you again."

"The pleasure's all mine," Tom replies through a expelled breath, in his beautifully silky smooth voice.

She smiles and her eyes flutter down to the menu in front of her.

"We've already ordered drinks," says my dad. "I got you a white wine. I hope that's okay?" He looks nervous. Like he's on a first date.

"That's fine," my mum replies, not taking her eyes off the menu.

The drinks come and the waiter takes our orders. Another silence falls when he leaves us but then my mum clears her throat and looks to my dad. "So, Eb told me this was your idea."

My dad gulps and nods. "Yes. I wanted to see you again and I wanted it to be civilised."

"Civilised?" My mum arches her eyebrow.

"Yes. You, me, our daughter, her boyfriend, all getting along. I thought it'd be nice."

My mum glances at Tom and I see the muscles in his cheek ripple.

"Apparently you miss me. So, is this meal, you trying to get me back?"

The bluntness of her questions is making me uncomfortable. Tom lets go of my hand and laces his hands together on his lap, shifting on the chair awkwardly. He's clearly uncomfortable too. I feel like we should have our own little side conversation to not seem like we're eavesdropping but I have no idea what to talk to him about in the company of both my parents.

My dad clears his throat, clearly flustered. "Well, there's no point going all around the houses. Yes, Sharon. I

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was hoping this meal could lead to something more. The divorce was a mistake, I know that now. I knew that months ago but I heard you had a boyfriend and I didn't want to intrude." At the mention of her boyfriend, Tom stiffens noticeably by my side. "From what I heard about him, he seemed like a nice fella."

My mum laughs lightly. "And you heard a lot, didn't you?"

"What do you mean?"

"I know who your friends are Joe and I saw them sniffing around after you left. You didn't think I'd notice?"

My dad's starting to blush. "I was just trying to look out for you. Make sure you were okay."

"I appreciate that. And yes, my ex was a nice fella. Part of me wished it could have worked out."

Now it's my turn to blush. And Tom's. God, I feel like I'm on the surface of the sun. My hand shakes when I grab my glass of coke and take a swig to cool myself down.

"If you don't mind me asking, why did you two break up? Despite my feelings for you, I was sort of rooting for you two. He seemed to make you happy and that's what I want most in the world."

My mum sighs. Tom and I gulp, watching her as she pauses to think about her reply. Please be thinking up and elaborate lie.

"Oh, erh," she starts. *Holy crap. I seriously think I'm sweating I'm so nervous.* "He cheated on me with our daughter."

She said it.

She actually said it.

Can I die now. Please?

We all sit there in silence. My mum looks proud of herself, grinning down at her lap. My dad is completely stupefied, staring at her wide-eyed. I go to reach for Tom's hand on his lap but he moves it away, staring at my parents as if he's looking down the barrel of a gun.

Finally, my dad's lips start to move. "What?"

"Yeah," my mum laughs softly. "And now they're dating."

My dad just blinks at her for a moment at then he turns to me and Tom. My face is well and truly red whereas Tom, on the other hand, seems to be drained of colour. He's completely frozen like a statue.

I grit my teeth as a white hot ball of fury burns in my stomach. "Mum, what the hell?" I snap. "I thought we said-"

"Ebs," she says calmly, cutting me off. "If me and your dad are going to try again, he needs to know what he's getting himself into. It was about to come out eventually."

I want to cry. How could she do this? Here? *Why?!*

"Tom's your ex?" my dad asks hollowly, staring at Tom.

"Yes," my mum replies simply.

His eyes narrow. "And now you're dating my daughter?" Tom's mouth opens and closes but nothing comes out. A spark of terror is alight in his pale blue eyes. I want to save him but I have no idea how. "What kind of sick bastard are you?"

"Hey!" I snap. "Don't talk to him like that."

"It's okay." Tom pats thigh gently. "I deserve that."

"You're damn right, you do. What do you have to say for yourself?"

Tom holds his hands up, regaining his composure. "I know this looks bad but it's all in the past now. We're over it." His eyes flicker to my mum. "Well, I thought we were."

"Oh, don't worry, we are. I just thought it needed to be brought up," says my mum, clearly enjoying every moment of this.

"Well I'm not," says my dad. "You dated my wife-"

"ex-wife," my mum corrects.

"and now my daughter. Hey, I have a sister, fancy a go on her next?"

"Dad!" I snap. Tom's lips begin to quiver and his eyes redden. "Stop it. You have no idea what you are talking about. You have no right to talk to him like that."

"She's right, you don't."

Tom and I both turn to my mum. She's relaxed back casually in the chair. My dad also looks to her. "Sharon, how can you be okay with this?"

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"Because they love each other, Joe. Tom's a good guy, he wouldn't have done what he did if he had a choice in the matter. He loves our daughter. Our relationship wasn't working because of it. And because of you." My dad furrows his brows at her. She laughs softly. "I never got over you, Joe. Why else would I have got with a younger man? I was kidding myself. I wanted to feel young again, like anything was possible. But it didn't work because the only thing I wanted to be possible was to get things right with you." She looks to me and Tom. "Eb is right, you can't have a say in what has gone on between the three of us because you were not there. You left. You can't play the protective dad card. Eb is a grown woman now, she can make her own decisions."

My dad bows his head a little and looks at me through his brows, almost guiltily.

"So, now you know everything, do you still want to try again?" asks my mum. She sounds soft and calm but the heavily gulp afterwards and the slight furrow in her brows tells me she is honestly worried about the answer.

My dad expels a breath and shakes his head. "Of course I do, Sharon. I can never stop loving you. Trust me, I've tried."

She laughs and wraps her arms around him. "Oh, Joeâ" she murmurs softly over her shoulder.

He smiles and buries his face into her hair.

Now I want to cry again but for a completely different reason.

Tom grabs my hand. I look to him. He's smiling down at me. I smile back.

We did it.

Chapter 56: Golden Delicious

"I think your father has gone off me a little," says Tom, pushing the front door of the flat open. I laugh lightly. "I don't know. After the initial shock of everything, he composed himself pretty well."

Tom shrugs. "True."

My mum and dad's hug hadn't broken until the waiter returned with our meals. After that, sure, there were a few awkward silences but everything ran smoothly. There was even a point where my dad lay his hand over my mum's on the table as she didn't seem to mind one bit. There was a spark in both their eyes. The spark that was lost when they split up.

"I think the meal was pretty successful actually," I say as I make my way to the bedroom to slip out of my dress and get snuggly in my pyjamas.

"Me too. Although I did want the ground to swallow me whole in parts," he laughs, unbuttoning his shirt as he follows me.

"Yeah. I thought my mum pulled a pretty bitchy move when she brought up what had happened."

I bring my hair over my shoulder and Tom comes up behind me, unzipping the back of my dress.

"It was a shocker, I'll tell you that. But it all sort of worked out. She was right, it was going to come out eventually and it would have just been worse if we had left it and attempted to tip toe around the topic."

I peel myself out of my dress and grab a fresh set of pyjamas from the drawer. "My dad will warm up to you. If my mum can forgive you, I'm pretty sure he can too."

"I hope so."

I squeal and drop my pyjamas when he wraps his arms around me while I'm still in my underwear, and presses his chest into my back. He nuzzles my neck and brings his lips to my ear. "Because I plan to be around for a very long time."

I giggle and turn so we're chest to chest. He brushes a strand of hair out of my face and studies my eyes with a warm smile. I wrap my arms around his neck while he still holds me round the waist and lift myself up on my tip toes so I can kiss him. Our lips connect. I part his lips with my tongue and deepen the kiss until our bodies roll together and we're moaning softly into each other's mouths. I break the kiss and laugh lightly at his wide eyes and heavy breathing. "I want to be with you forever."

He presses his forehead against mine and we both close our eyes at the contact. "You are my forever," he whispers.

"Is that a proposal?" I peer up at him.

He cups my face and angles it so he's looking straight into my eyes. "It's a promise."

I kiss him again and push against him slightly so he backs up and lands on the bed with me on top of him. He gasps at the impact but then continues kissing me. I roll us over so he's on top of me and I finish the buttons he hasn't undone before yanking his shirt off his shoulders. He wiggles and pulls it off, throwing it onto the floor. He cups my face and kisses me hungrily as my hands run over his sculptured chest and back, raking my nails into his creamy skin. He grinds against me. The stiff fabric of his jeans brushes against the crotch of my panties, making me whimper softly into his mouth. I hook my legs around his thighs and roll my hips against his, increasing the pressure. My hands run down his back and I squeeze his ass, pushing him down against me harder.

"One of these days, I will bite this sexy ass of yours," I say against his lips.

He laughs. "I'll never allow that."

I brush my lips across his. "I can be very persuasive when I want to be."

"Oh, I know. Your last little trick made me fly all the way back from Milan."

I laugh. "So it's not a case of *if*, it's a case of *when*."

"I'd better watch my back."

I flip us back over so I'm straddling his waist. I pop open my bra clasp and throw my bra aside before leaning down and kiss him then arch my back and flip my head back. He grabs my sides and starts to kiss my breasts. He cups them in his big hands, sucking and kissing them. I moan softly and flutter my eyes closed as I feel myself getting wetter and wetter. When I start to grind against him again, I can feel the tightness of his jeans

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as he erection threatens to burst out.

He groans when I rub myself against him. The vibration sends tremors through my breasts and straight to my pussy. Gasping for breath, I lean back, shimmy down his body and pull down his jeans and boxers enough for him to spring free.

Just seeing him there, ready for me, sends me wild with lust. I flip my leg over so I can slip my panties off then climb back onto him just as fast. I angle myself over him and lock eyes with him as I lower myself. Our jaws slacken together as we connect. He grips my hips as I bear down on him until he fills me completely.

"Oh God, Ebby," he breathes softly.

I lean down so we're almost chest to chest and kiss him. He kisses me back until I break away and press my forehead against him, keeping eye contact as I start to grind my lower half against him. He grits his teeth and hisses with pleasure. His hands slip to my ass and he starts to guide me up and down, squeezing my ass as he does.

My orgasm hits me sooner than I had expected and I moan out his name as he continues to slam me against him. I manage to catch my breath and push my upper body from him with my hands on either side of his shoulders. He tucks his knees up a little and shifts his body as I grind against him.

Suddenly, he grabs my jaw and pulls my face down, slamming his lips against mine. He clenches his eyes shut and I groan into his mouth as his I feel him spill his seed inside me. I also reach another orgasm which makes me seize up on top of him.

When the pleasure subsides, we're break the kiss and gasp for breath. A thin coat of sweat covers both of us and I collapse by his side.

Both our chest are rising and falling heavily. We seem to be panting in unison which makes us giggle a little. I can feel him looking at me so I turn. My stomach flips at the intensity of his gaze. What magical things those beautiful blue eyes do to me. I reach out and touch his face, brushing my thumb over his cheekbone. He smiles and kisses my wrist, keeping his eyes on mine.

I can never get enough of this man.

I never want to get enough of this man.

I never have to have enough of this man.

Because he's mine.

And I'm his.

One day he's going to be looking at me this way as I'm walking down the aisle hoping that, for once, I look as sensational as he does, waiting in a perfectly tailored suit ready for us to be united as one.

Forever.

And who knows, maybe my mum and dad will be there. *Together.*

THE END

That's it! It's over! :(

I'm pretty sad to see that it's finished because I loved writing Ebby's and Tom's relationship

Thank you so much to everyone who has read and commented! All your lovely comments mean so much and keep me going! This novel has even made it to the homepage! I can't believe it!

And, I have to be honest, this novel wouldn't have happened without this adorable little dork...

You may have realised already that I tend to base the male characters on either celebrities or characters from films/series because it helps me build them when I have something to start with. And this guy was my inspiration for Tom's character

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Anyway.... If you want to read more of my stuff, I've started uploading my new novel called 'HOOKED' which I'd love it if you could check out and comment on :)

Please let me know what you thought about this novel as a whole and I hope to see your comments on my other stuff!

The only thing left to say to you guys is...

Toodles!

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