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The Look
by loveoverpride

Summary

What happens when a blind date becomes something more? || Prompt from Tumblr: Couldn't get a babysitter and had to bring my kid on this blind date. || Song inspiration - "The Look Of Love" (Sergio Mendes & Brasil '66)
Tracing her finger on the rim of the wine glass, Olivia gazed out the window. *It will be fun,* her friends encouraged. *Go for it.*

How is being on a blind date when the guy hasn’t appeared fun? Dating when one has a career that moves non-stop did not seem enjoyable. Being alone in a restaurant was not fun either. They set her up - the last resort. Olivia Pope did not entertain the thought of dating and surprises were not her forte. Everything about her was well-calculated; plans and endgames were her way of coping and staying in control. With another year behind her, Olivia had to try something new, because her track record was laughable.

But time was running out. Especially for this particular night. This person was twenty minutes late - Olivia was sure that she was being stood up. She was not given a number or a name - her friends knew her very well, so she had no choice but to wait or pay for her wine and leave.

It was not like she didn't try. Although it had been fourteen months since she went on any kind of romantic outing, Olivia remembered how to give a stellar impression. She was wearing her favorite green dress and black pumps, and her hair was down. A clear departure from her business attire of power suits and cleanly wrapped buns.

The meeting spot was a restaurant she had been to a few times. Upscale, but not too fancy. Tonight wasn’t as crowded as usual, so the likelihood of being recognized among her peers was slim.

Now, all of this was a waste and she was looking extremely foolish. This was the final time she would allow her friends to organize a meeting like this. Because this was ridiculous. She began to text Abby, Harrison, and Stephen, collectively.

*This guy’s not here. Don’t even know his name! Why didn’t you tell me? Y’all are dead meat. I’m giving him five minutes tops and I’m out. So screw you all.*

“Olivia?”

The voice that called her name was rich, deep, and surprisingly comforting. Prying away from her phone, Olivia searched for the voice’s owner.

“Yes?”

A man had approached the table. He was tall, with brown hair that displayed hints of grey, slicked back, and a pair of striking blue eyes. It took Olivia by surprise, because he was very handsome and distinguished. She observed his wardrobe - crisp blue sports jacket, white dress shirt that left a few buttons opened, and slacks.

Not bad, she thought, but good looks can only go so far on a first date.

“I am so sorry. My friend never gave me your number. I would have called to let you know that I was on my way.”

Olivia continue to watch him as he spoke. There was a smooth quality to his mannerisms. He appeared to be contrite, but still optimistic about the situation at hand. Her brown eyes moved to his right side. Not to check him out, but seeing that a boy was clinging to his leg. They were holding hands.
Her eyebrows lifted - *it keeps getting better.*

The man interrupted her train of thought. “My babysitter bailed on me. So I had to bring my son and I got here as fast as I could. I apologize for making you wait.”

Olivia didn’t know what to think. On any other night, the list of excuses that were presented to her would have prompted her to rise and leave. But she wasn’t that much of a bitch. His child was there.

“I’m Fitz,” he introduced, extending his hand. “If you want to walk out, I am okay with that. Believe me, I am not the ideal date, so your first impression of me must be abysmal.”

Olivia returned the gesture. “No, I’ll stay. I appreciate your honesty and you did come all this way. That would be very rude on my part to leave.”

“Are you sure,” Fitz asked. “I won’t be offended.”

Nodding, Olivia offered the seat across from her. “Please, come sit. I’m glad you arrived.”

Fitz grinned, pulling back the chair. The boy followed suit and crawled onto his father’s lap. The side of the restaurant they occupied was full of couples and groups. No children. Plus, their table only had two chairs. It was a little embarrassing, but Olivia didn’t want to draw more attention to the blatant awkwardness.

Looking around, Fitz commented, “Our friends picked a good spot.”

“Mmhmm,” Olivia curtly agreed, perusing the menu. Subduing her confusion and frustration towards her crew, Olivia was thinking of ways to deflect this wreck of a blind date. Her friends were always on her case about being extra blunt.

She smiled at the boy, who appeared to be somewhat timid. “Hi there, I’m Olivia. What is your name?”

The two made eye contact; the boy must have realized that she wasn’t a threat. He proudly stated, “Theodore, but everyone calls me Teddy.” His eyes were brown but she noticed the similarities with his father. Intense and expressive, but could soften in a heartbeat.

“Nice to meet you, Teddy. How old are you?”

The boy replied, “Four and a half.”

As Olivia nodded, Teddy added to his response, “How old are you?”

“Teddy,” Fitz scolded, tapping his son on the arm. “It is not nice to ask a lady for her age.”

The boy quickly retreated into his father’s chest. “Sorry,” he mumbled.

“It’s alright. Tough hitting questions,” Olivia quipped, flipping her hair back. “Since I like you already, I’ll let it slide this once. I’m thirty-three.”

Teddy looked to his father for approval, who gave a reassuring nod. “Oh ok, that's a nice age. Cool! Daddy's older than you.”

“Is that right,” she grinned, shifting her gaze towards Fitz. He rolled his eyes and took a sip of water. The cheeky preschooler exaggerated his answer, “Yeahhh…he's thirty-eight!”
Olivia laughed as Fitz shook his head. “What a bold son, you have. And by the way, Teddy, that’s a good age too.”

Before Fitz could respond, a server greeted him.

“May I offer you another glass, Ma’am?”

The server turned to Fitz and Teddy, giving a hesitant smile. “You sir?”

“I’m more of a scotch kind of guy,” Fitz smirked, bouncing Teddy on his lap, “but wine would be great. I’ll have the same. And if it’s not much of a trouble, this guy would like a cup of your finest apple juice.”

Seeing the contagious joy on Teddy’s face made Olivia smile.

Olivia and Fitz exchanges more pleasantries, divulging in quick factoids: where they attended college, hobbies, what they did for work. He was a West Coast guy, the East was her mainstay. She worked in PR; he was a partner in a law firm. Cooking and music were his favorite pastimes, while she liked to swim. They found out that Harrison was the X factor to their meetup.

“You live in the city?”

“Yes,” Olivia answered. “My place is three minutes away from here.”

“Nice. I’m further out. Chevy Chase. Hence the traffic tonight.”

Olivia lifted her hand to stop him. “Fitz, it’s okay. I’m not mad about what happened. It wasn’t your fault. Let’s just enjoy our meal and the company.”

When she saw Fitz quickly turn towards Teddy, she winced. Olivia was hoping her statement wasn’t too harsh. But she didn't know how else to let him know that her agitation had dissipated.

“See anything you like?”

He didn’t answer.

Teddy glanced at Olivia, then tugged at his father’s hand.

“Daddy, she’s talking to you.”

Fitz was startled. “What?”

Olivia smiled, pointing to the menu. “Find anything? I’m pretty sure our server will be back at any moment.”

Fitz ordered a bowl of spaghetti bolognese for Teddy and himself, while Olivia chose grilled chicken with mashed potatoes and asparagus. While they waited for their meals, she was able to use the time to observe the two. They were adorable. He was enamored by his son. Olivia picked up on some of their secret language and quick glances. It was as if Teddy was the only thing worth living for.

After a round of cordial questions and icebreakers, Olivia chose to go deeper.

“Do you go on dates often?”

Fitz gave Olivia an incredulous stare, then scoffed. “Oh no. Fatherhood and my work takes precedence. I don’t have as much time to socialize as I used to. Not that I’m complaining. I guess the
guys took pity on my lonely ass and Harrison said he knew the right lady for me.”

“Well, I hope you’re not disappointed,” she joked, fidgeting with her napkin. “I’m very rusty in the dating game. Like you, I don’t have time. Rather, I don’t make time. A lot of men find me to be intimidating and sometimes it’s exhausting to meet new people.”

“I’m not disappointed and I think you’re doing great,” Fitz grinned.

She wasn’t expecting the look he sent her way, realizing that his gaze was of the same intensity and affection when he watched over Teddy. It threw her off completely. No one had looked at her like that.

“I’ll be right back.”

Olivia excused herself to freshen up, but he must have known that she was dodging something. The path to the restrooms seemed like an eternity. She had to pull herself together. How could one man just pay attention to her and be someone she actually wanted to spend time with? This wasn’t how her evening was supposed to go. How could her tough demeanor melt away in an hour?

Deep breaths. A promise to stay true to who she was, a pep talk to herself that it was okay to change her mind about everything, was all it took for her to get back to the table. When she returned, Olivia was greeted with a pair of toothy grins. Mischievous and downright cute, Teddy must had a juicy tidbit to share, given his excitement. Fitz mouthed to him, “Go on.”

“Miss ’Livia, do you want to share dessert with us?”

“Are you trying to win me over with dessert?”

Teddy gave a thumbs up. “Yes, I am.”

Olivia scrunched her nose in amusement. “Sure. Let’s do it.”

It was decided that a large brownie and two scoops of ice cream would be the best choice. Fitz handed Olivia a dessert spoon, not realizing that their fingers touched during the transaction. She gasped, immediately embarrassed that something so miniscule could affect her greatly.

Fitz was a great conversationalist, he knew how to work the crowd. When a couple stopped by because they recognized him, he graciously engaged them. Introducing her as “my friend, Olivia,” and gesturing towards her anytime he had a chance, she realized Fitz was someone she could “work with”.

“Looks like Mr. Teddy is down for the count.”

“Yeah,” Fitz replied, checking on the drowsy state of his child, who was being cradled in his arms. “I guess it’s past his bedtime.”

Olivia sweetly agreed, “I bet.”

When the check was delivered, Fitz grabbed the bill. Olivia groaned.

“Seriously?”

“Olivia, you waited for me, tolerated me, and was extra nice to my son. It’s the least I could do.” Fitz winked at Olivia, which simultaneously built an army of butterflies in her stomach.

“This wasn’t what I expected,” she whispered.
“What were you expecting?”

Olivia admitted, “I thought I was going to be bored and not find any connections with you.”

Fitz lowered his voice, “Well?”

“My assumptions were wrong.”

They locked eyes - her brown and his blue - and she could tell that she would not forget his for a long time.

“I should probably go.”

“You should probably head out,” Olivia blurted at the same time. The two exchanged sly grins. The way his mouth upturned to show his smile was so captivating - she couldn’t tell if this felt like more than a regular date. There was something different.

“Where are you parked?”

“Oh, I walked,” Olivia replied. “But I’ll accompany you two to ensure your safety.”

Hearing Fitz chuckle gave her the confidence she needed.

He encouraged Teddy to walk but the request was futile, so while hoisting Teddy on his back, Fitz crooned, “C’mon, buddy. We’re going home.”

It was a quiet journey. Whether it was gravity or some other force, they had become awfully close as they walked down the street. Olivia could feel their fingertips swipe as their arms swung back and forth. And she longed for their hands to touch or bump or something. Being in his presence created a safety she hadn't experienced in years. What she didn't know was that he hadn’t felt so at ease with a woman since his marriage had fallen apart three years prior.

“Here we are. Buddy, stand for me. I need to unlock the door,” Fitz instructed. Teddy yawned, almost tipping over.

“Say goodbye to Miss Olivia.”

Olivia extended her hand for Teddy to shake. “Good night, Teddy. I’m glad you joined us.”

The boy sleepily reached out towards Olivia, giving her a hug.

“G’nite ‘Livia.”

She wasn’t expecting this - she didn’t interact with children often. So, to know that Teddy was comfortable around her was a highlight. Rubbing his back, she gave him a kiss on the forehead.

Fitz secured Teddy in his booster seat and closed the door. Olivia crossed her arms, keeping herself warm against the cool breeze.

“Thank you,” Fitz began, with sincerity in his eyes. “I haven’t had this much fun in a long time.”

Olivia agreed, “I had a good time. Thanks for meeting me here.”

Fitz was rocking on his heels while she clasped her hands, searching for a distraction. The silence was killing both of them. Where to go to next? There was more to say, but the night was over.
“Ya know,” he interjected, “I’m lowkey pissed at Harrison for not introducing us before tonight. Why didn’t I meet you sooner?”

Olivia could feel her heart beat fast while her jaw dropped, stunned by Fitz’s admission. “Oh?”

“Yeah.” Fitz’s voice softened. “There is something about you that makes me want to talk to you forever. Be with you. Just, I don't know. I don't intend to scare you off but I think you're an incredible woman.”

He had left her speechless again.

Fitz leaned in to kiss Olivia on the cheek. Having his lips on her skin almost made her collapse.

“Maybe I'll get Harrison to give me your number sometime. I hope to see you soon.”

She couldn't move as he stepped back. Thinking she didn't agree, he nodded, grasping the door handle.

“Fitz?”

“Yes?”

Olivia closed her eyes for a second, willing herself to take a chance again on something could be very good for her.

“Take my number.”
Chapter 2

A car ride from downtown to Chevy Chase took about 15 minutes. Fitz drove to the house in silence, but wore a shit-eating grin the entire way back. It amazed him that a blind date could turn his world upside down and right to where it needed to be. Giddy and pumped didn’t match the emotion he was feeling when he arrived home.

Turning off the car, Fitz turned to gently shake the sleepy Teddy’s leg.

“Buddy, we’re home.”

Teddy groaned as he rubbed his eyes. Fitz quickly opened the door to release Teddy from his booster.

“You were great tonight, buddy,” he said, hugging the boy as they entered the house.

Teddy mumbled, “Thanks.”

Fitz was very proud and appreciative of Teddy’s behavior. It was a mad rush to get from the house, attempting to bypass typical after-work traffic, and then sitting for a few hours. It was amazing that he could be so awesome. Now that they were in the comfort of their home, Fitz wanted to know what his favorite guy thought. It was a change and they hadn’t been through one before. Teddy’s opinion meant the world to him.

“It was nice.”

“Yeah?”

Gradually ascending the stairs, the Grants migrated to Teddy's room.

“Mnhm,” he added. “Lots of yummy food.”

“Awesome.”

Switching out of his clothes and into comfy pajamas, Teddy climbed into the rocking chair that has been passed down from his late grandmother.

“Hey, buddy.”

Teddy slowly rocked as he answered, “Yeah, Daddy?”

Fitz ruffled his son’s hair. “What did you think about Miss Olivia?”

Teddy shot his father a confused look. “Miss ‘Livia?”

Fitz knelt down to blow raspberries on Teddy’s cheeks, which always made him burst into laughter.

“Yes, we joined her for dinner.”

Teddy’s mouth turned into a huge “O” - it was his Eureka moment. “Oh yes, I liked her. She was very nice even though we were late and she laughed at our jokes!”

Receiving a pure analysis like that, Fitz smiled from ear to ear. “That’s great, Ted.”

“How about you,” Teddy asked. “Do you like her?”
“I do,” Fitz answered calmly. “I’m hoping I can see her again. If she says yes, will that be okay with you?”

Teddy nodded, tapping his father’s arm. “Of course. Sure, Daddy.”

Kissing Teddy’s cheeks and tickling his belly, Fitz could tell everything would be okay between them. “Okay,” he started in a low and soothing tone, “It’s time for bed.”

Teddy scrambled into bed, pulling the dinosaur patterned covers up to his neck. Fitz kissed his forehead once more.

“I’ll see you in the morning. I love you, Teddy Bear.”

“Love you too, Daddy Bear.”

Fitz clicked the nightlight on and left the door ajar, before returning downstairs. As he surveyed the dimly lit kitchen and living room, Fitz got to thinking. Maybe he could text Olivia. Just to see if she made it home alright.

He wasn’t the biggest fan of texting; only using it for emergencies with Harrison or other work buddies. But it was very late and it would have been extremely creepy to call, to make sure she got to her place. Of course she would have arrived home well before he and Teddy did.

Fitz bit his lip as he thought out his plan. Something simple yet effective.

Thank you again for a great evening. - Fitz

Satisfied that he went through with his idea, Fitz placed the cell down on the kitchen counter, focusing now on his pre-bedtime routine. About twenty seconds later, the buzzing that came from the phone startled him. It had to be her because who else would be up at 10pm? Fitz checked.

You are very welcome. Let’s get together soon. :)

Shock overtook Fitz when he realized that Olivia responded. She responded! He had to think of something to keep the conversation going.

Okay, sounds like a plan!

He noticed that she also owned an iPhone - the floating dots encouraged him. Eyes glued to the screen, he waited for the text to come in.

Are you going to bed now?

Surprised by the question, but wildly enthusiastic, Fitz answered at a rapid pace.

No. You?

Fitz waited for the reply. But the floating grey dots ceased. Maybe he had crossed the line. He probably shouldn’t have answered so quickly. The ins and outs of texting etiquette after a certain time was not a familiar concept. Even with his uncertainties, Fitz knew he did the right thing. Tonight was extraordinary and he didn’t regret meeting Olivia - this confident and beautiful woman. Missing any chances to talk to her would be devastating.

“Okay,” he sighed, keeping the phone right where he needed it to be. On the counter. Downstairs. Hoping the glass of scotch and book would distract him from what was really on his mind.
Fitz crossed to the stairwell when the phone faintly began to ring. Thankfully the tones were so low, it wouldn’t scare Teddy awake. Jogging back to the phone, he glanced at the name, and pressed “answer”.

“Hello?”

“Hey.”

Fitz grinned, silently thanking his lucky stars that Olivia decided to call.

“Hi.”

There was a pause on the other end.

“Hi.”

“Is this all we’re going to do? Greet each other different ways,” Fitz asked.

“No,” Olivia sweetly laughed. “How are you?”

“Better now that I’m talking to you.”

Olivia pshawed at the incredibly corny line. “Is that so?”

Fitz affirmed, “I tell the truth, Miss Olivia—”

“Pope. My last name is Pope.”

Her name sounded so lovely in his ear. “Nice to officially meet you, Miss Olivia Pope. Mine is Grant.”

“Okay, Mister Grant.”

Fitz could feel his cheeks rise. Listening to her speak was like heaven. He must have zoned out again like earlier because Olivia asked him something and he didn’t hear her.

“I’m sorry?”

“What are you up to,” she repeated. Fitz was thankful that she had a playful vibe going on and not irritated at him. He had to cut this shit out.

“I said good night to Teddy and I was about to participate in my nightly routine.”

“And what is that?”

“A book and scotch.”

“That sounds like fun,” Olivia stated.

Fitz reached over to take a sip and nodded. “It calms me down. Nothing fun about having a busy mind before bedtime.”

Olivia agreed, “I know what you mean.”

Like earlier, a silence occurred. Fitz was waiting to see if Olivia would say something. But it felt nice to just breathe and know she was on the other line. As if she was right there in his kitchen.
Fitz leaned against the counter, with the phone glued to his ear. He sighed.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes, I’m fine,” he spoke. “You must be tired, so I’ll let you go.”

“Trying to get rid of me?”

Fitz laughed at the sassy remark. “No! I didn't want to bore you and it is late.”

Olivia replied in a softer tone, “I suppose. Alright. Thank you for texting me. Talk to you tomorrow?”

“Absolutely,” Fitz enthusiastically replied.

“Great,” he could her smile through the receiver. “I'll do that.”

“Good night, Olivia.”

“Good night.”

They grew apart.

On paper, the divorce was simple. Being a lawyer and knowing all of the jargon and time frames had its perks. But the mental and emotional strain of a marriage dissolving while taking care of a one-year-old had taken a toll on Fitz.

They met in law school. Top of their class. It was easy. Two passionate individuals drawn to each other physically and mentally. After three years of marriage, he hinted at possibly including a child. She wasn't so keen. Ambitions reigned in this union. They both had plans and goals; hers involved a rise to power. Children were not in that plan.

Teddy was a surprise. Mellie loved the baby but was not receptive to the mundane responsibilities of motherhood. It crushed Fitz to see her with their son. She was trying but in his mind, not hard enough. On top of this, they hadn't spent any time together. Every dialogue was short and temper-filled. Fitz and Mellie were going in different directions.

If there was a way to fall in love, the Grants fell out. No one cheated, but seeing one another put a wall between them. There was a time when Fitz and Mellie could only communicate via email. Hearing her voice was too much. All of the hurt and anger, rehashing every detail in his head.

He had a part to play as well. Resentment clouded his vision. Fitz used his work and the company of friends to replace the intimacy he craved with his wife. She wouldn't look his way, his touch made her cringe, and it was devastating. At the time, he wasn't seeing how the changes affected Mellie. How this new chapter was not what she wanted. Now, several years out, he understood that her dreams were not his.

When the divorce was being finalized, she suggested that Fitz take full custody of Theodore. Mellie found a job out of state and she believed the move would affect Teddy, so staying in DC would be best. He was pissed that the mother of his child would easily relinquish her rights. It was like she was giving up on the baby. On him.

Scotch and sleep helped bandage the pain of being alone. Planning weekend trips with the baby.
Taking classes to learn how to support his child and himself. Thankfully, he found a great babysitter and a daycare who were very understanding. And so his life as a single father began. The weight of a loveless marriage was gone.

But something else was missing - his own happiness.

Feeling the tug of his son’s hands on his arm, Fitz awoke and rose from bed. The clock read 8:30 and he was thankful. He had the day off, so he could hang out with Teddy. With his free time, Fitz was hoping the bad dreams of his failed marriage would wear off.

“Ready for breakfast, baby boy?”

Teddy jumped on the bed several times - going higher each time. “Yeah! Yeah!”

After brushing his teeth, Fitz started a waffle breakfast for him and Teddy. Not expecting anything, he glanced at his phone. Two text messages.

Both from Olivia.

*Good morning, hope you have a great day.*

The second message was a picture. Olivia had taken a selfie on a walking path in Georgetown. Her hair was pulled back into a ponytail, grey athletic top. With a huge smile and bright eyes.

She was absolutely stunning.

“Daddy, why are you smiling?”

“Huh,” he asked, finding the eyes of Teddy. He knew something was going with his father. For a child a few months shy of entering kindergarten, Theodore Wallace Grant sure knew how to read people.

“Nothing much. Just got a really nice message. It made my day.”

Fitz waited for his son to respond. All he did was smile back and return to his toys.

As he finished making breakfast, Fitz kept thinking about the picture. He was on her mind as well and that excited him.

His heart hadn't raced that fast in years. But he desired to learn about her, know her better. He told her the truth - he was lonely. Rarely attending social events with the guys. Since the breakup, Fitz has only been on four official dates and two “girlfriends”. Every one had failed miserably. One woman thought having a kid involved was a turn off; the other came on too strong and Fitz wasn't ready. After meeting Olivia, Fitz was now determined to be ready. He was willing to take a chance, go for what he deserved.

True happiness.

Fitz saw a glimpse of that in Olivia.
“How did the date go?”

Pausing her routine of furiously tapping on the laptop, Olivia switched mental gears from work mode to “friendly Liv”, as her right hand, Abby Whelan, stood at the door of her office.

“What?”

Abby rolled her eyes, very aware that her best friend heard and understood the question. With her blue eyes sparkling, she asked for more details, communicating with her hands as well.

“The date! How was it? Was he nice? Did he pay? Was he awkward?”

“It went surprisingly well,” Olivia commented with a polite smile. There wasn’t much to tell, so she kept it cute. With Abby’s rapid fire series of questions, it would be best to limit her response.

The tall redhead shot Olivia a side eye.

“That’s it? No details? Did he apologize when he arrived? What sucked? Oh my god, did you two kiss?”

Olivia smirked at Abby’s inquires. “Everything was fine. He’s a very nice man.”

Seeing the irritated gestures of Abby tempted Olivia to burst out laughing. The staredown was short lived and Abby groaned.

“I feel like there is more to explain, but cool. There’s no scowl on your face. You didn’t march in angrily. So I guess that’s good. You look extra happy, so I’m going to believe that it went well.”

Olivia slightly shrugged, returning to the emails that were untouched in her inbox. “Mnhmm.”

The quick pace of heels alerted Olivia that Abby had left. Some relief.

“Liv?”

“Yes,” she answered in exasperation, without looking up to see who it was. She was trying to remain calm. Sharing her personal life with her team was usually off-limits. Even though they were the ones who were responsible for this new development.

“Just wanted to see how everything went.”

Making his rounds, Harrison - the man who initiated her date with Fitz - was now in the office. A smooth-talking, suspender-wearing, and usually confident kind of fellow, Harrison seemed a bit nervous. His voice was more quiet than normal.

Olivia raised her eyebrows and gave a thumbs up.

“Cool,” he offered, turning on his heel to leave.

“Hey.”

Harrison glanced at his boss. Slowly, but surely, Olivia smiled in return.
“Thank you. Everything went very well.”

“Anytime,” he grinned. “You deserve to be happy. He does too.”

“Hello?”

“Hi there.”

“How are you?”

Olivia answered cheerfully, warming up to the deep voice that greeted her. “I’m doing alright. How about yourself?”

“I’m great,” he exclaimed.

“That’s great. How is Teddy?”

“He’s fine,” Fitz replied. “He is at his mother’s for a week and a half.”

Olivia nodded. Their familial situation hadn’t come up yet in their conversations, so she kept this information safe in the back of her mind. “I see. Is that hard?”

“Absolutely. I love my boy. Very much. I feel empty when he’s not around.”

Not knowing how to respond, Olivia quickly said, “Oh, ok.”

“His mother and I have been divorced for three years and I have custody.”

Olivia softly added, “You don’t have to tell me anything, Fitz. I understand.”

“I know. But I’m fine with being transparent,” Fitz responded. His voice was low but still friendly, given the topic at hand. “I’m happy that I have him in my life. He’s the best thing that’s happened to me.”

Again, she gave kudos to Fitz for being a doting father to his child, taking responsibility, and letting her know where he stood on the matter. Olivia laid back on the couch and replied, “Thank you for sharing with me.”

“What’s going on with you?”

“I’m supposed to be packing but I’m being lazy. I’m going out of town but I’ll be back on Saturday.”

“Nice. Where are you going?”

Olivia answered, “Atlanta. For work. I don’t want to go but I planned this months ago.”

“Well, you are more than welcomed to text or call while you’re there. Or both. When you have free time,” he hinted. She could hear the smile in his voice.

“Mmhmm. I’ll consider it, Fitz Grant.”

“Am I being too forward?”

Olivia smirked at the question. Usually guys wouldn’t admit to their flirting. “Not at all.”
Texting Fitz was becoming a hobby for Olivia. The messages weren’t heavy, just something to distract her being from home. Her team hadn’t accompanied her, which was a disappointment, but Olivia had to whatever she had to do for the client. Catching a glimpse of her screen between talking points, she usually had a friendly and flirty message waiting. Attempting to quell extra layers of feelings, Olivia declined his suggestion for phone calls. There was something about hearing his voice put her in a spell. Texting was easy and she liked that - for now.

Saturday arrived. Before her plane took off, Olivia sent a funny selfie - headphones on, blowing a raspberry, with a caption.

*The weekend, finally!*

When she was given the permission to turn her phone on when they landed, she received a text from Fitz. Baseball cap on, covering all the wavy hair she admired, with nose scrunched. His eyes were clearer and more beautiful in this picture, she noticed. Probably in the middle of errand running.

*Right back at ya. :)*

A smiley face! This was getting good. Olivia giggled but slapped her hand over her mouth. She didn’t know how a couple of 30-somethings could be that silly. But she liked it.

Olivia groaned as the five days of non-stop working were catching up to her. Sore feet and an exhausted body. Being a crisis manager was a lot of hard work, always being one step ahead of the client. Mentally and physically draining. She just wanted a large glass of red, and maybe french fries. Or better yet, her favorite, lightly salted popcorn.

*Damn,* she thought. She forgot to reserve an Uber. After punching in a request, Olivia stood by the conveyor belt, trusting that both of her bags of luggage would return to her unscathed. Olivia scanned the area. Being a Saturday, the airport was crowded with travelers. Being alone, she had to assure herself that safety was a priority.

Five minutes passed, and finally her luggage appeared. Pulling the two bags down, Olivia began to walk towards the door, so she could be ready when her ride came. But a figure came into view that made her squint. Cocking her head to the side, she had second thoughts. It couldn’t be who she thought it was. Maybe her fatigue was playing tricks on her. Taking a few steps closer, she realized that sitting on the bench was none other than Fitz.

The same cap that was in the picture was settled on his head. In a v-neck sweater and jeans, paired with a mischievous smirk, he waved.

“Hi.”

Olivia’s jaw dropped. “What are you doing here?”

“I wanted to surprise you,” he stood and marched up to her.

Still flabbergasted with having Fitz in her presence, Olivia scoffed, “You didn't have to do all of that!”

Fitz hesitated, but reached out to hug Olivia. Thankfully, she embraced him. The warmth and
strength of his arms relieved her. The cologne that jumped off his skin filled her nostrils. In that moment, she knew she had been desiring a hug from him since their date.

“Well, it didn’t hurt to already know what time your plane got in. Remember you mentioned it the other day?”

Olivia sighed. “Yeah, but I wasn’t expecting you to be here.”

“Well, here I am.”

Lowering her eyes, Olivia was realizing that already, Fitz was being more of a gentleman that she had ever experienced. “Thank you,” she softly answered.

Fitz took the suitcases away from Olivia, to her obvious disapproval.

“Where to, m’lady?”

Olivia furrowed her eyebrows, “What? I called for an Uber.”

“Cancel it,” Fitz dared, with no remorse. His eyes, appearing to be more grey than blue, were playful. “Your ride is already here.”

“Fitz!”

“I’m serious. That’s why I am here. Cancel the request.”

Olivia laughed as she followed his directions. “There. Done.”

“Perfect,” Fitz smiled, kissing her forehead. His lips pressed on her made her shiver. “Now, shall we?”

Driving from Reagan National wasn’t too bad. The George Washington Parkway - the major highway that connected Virginia and the District, had its moments when traffic was concerned. Iffy on some days - was smooth sailing, after they passed the 395 exit towards Downtown.

Fitz only asked for the address, not even thinking to take advice regarding Olivia’s route home. “I usually take this way into the city. Is that alright?”

“You’re the driver,” Olivia stated.

Fitz glanced at her, with a sly grin. “Sounds good.”

Arriving at Olivia’s complex, Fitz parked the car.

“Well, this is me.”

“Great.”

Olivia smiled, “Thank you for picking me up.”

“Anytime I get to spend time with you is worth it,” he proclaimed. The statement took her aback. Did he truly mean it?

“Would you like to come in?”

“Hmm?”
Olivia continued, “Do you want a drink?”

It was Fitz’s turn to be confused. “What?”

Olivia shifted to face him and plainly explain - “I'm going to my apartment, and once I change into some bummy clothes, I’m going to have a drink. I was wondering if you would like to join me. Since I know you wouldn’t accept any compensation for your driving services.”

“Ahh,” Fitz stated, rubbing his chin. Leaning forward, he spoke, “I would like that.”

Olivia unlocked the door, showing Fitz the apartment. As he put the bags down, he blurted out, “I imagined your place a thousand times.”

Shooting a bewildered glance at Fitz, Olivia couldn't believe what she heard. They had only been talking for a week and he was being more bold than any of the men she had talked to.

“Ok, maybe that was an exaggeration,” he chuckled, stepping forward into the space. “But I wondered how the formidable Olivia Pope lived. Including your apartment. It's chic. Very you.”

“Yeah, it's nice. Living alone has its perks. I can do whatever I want. Even though my kitchen is amazing, I’m not the best cook. But I am a foodie,” she admitted as she retrieved two glasses.

Grinning again, Fitz replied, “I’m not judging. Thank you for your candor.”

Olivia returned with a glass of scotch for him, and wine for herself.

“How did you know that I liked scotch?”

“I remember things,” she casually answered.

“That’s good to know.”

As she smiled, Fitz slightly jutted his chin towards her, emphasizing his point. Somehow he was able to convey his thoughts without saying a word and she understood. That was mind-boggling. He towered over her - he was 6’2, while she was most likely a solid 5’3, or 5’4 - without heels. Either way, he loved being able to look down to see every detail of her beautiful face. Those brown eyes that drew him in immediately. The shy but beaming smile that excited him whenever she allowed him to see it.

“Are you in a rush to leave?”

Fitz slowly shook his head, “No. Are you in a hurry to have me leave?”

“No,” she laughed, sitting down. “I just wanted to ask. Are you hungry? I can order some food. You know delivery guys and gals don’t get enough props. I tip them so well, they beg to bring my food home.”

Olivia watched Fitz cross over to the large window that overlooked Connecticut Avenue. His body intrigued her. Long strides. “What are you in the mood for? There’s that swanky burger joint…”

“Gettysburger?” He interrupted, slightly turning back. Olivia nodded excitedly.

“Yeah! Do you go there?”

Fitz smirked, clearly showing he had something juicy to tell. “Once. I was in line, about to order. Teddy had a tantrum one day and I was too mortified to return.” Fitz revealed through gritted teeth.
Shuffling to the dining room table, Olivia reached for a menu, then handed it to Fitz. “Well, that settles it. I’m treating you to Gettysburger. Pick what you want and I’ll call it in.”

“Olivia…”

“I invited you into my home and asked you if you wanted something to eat. Let me be a good host, Mr. Grant.”

Fitz understood where she was coming from. “With pleasure.”

Olivia grinned with satisfaction and left to change. She returned in an oversized sweater and leggings, and pulled her hair into a sleek bun. ”Ready to order?”

"You bet," Fitz replied.

The delivery guy brought their late lunch with two minutes to spare on their guaranteed arrival time. Olivia promptly set their boxes and sodas on the table. She moved like a bee, on a mission.

"Olivia, let me help."

"Nope," she declared. "You just relax."

When everything was in place, she asked Fitz to come to the table. As he began his meal, Olivia couldn’t help but stare. Looking at him was like watching a masterpiece. She had to notice every detail and mannerism.

“You have a beautiful smile.”

Fitz twisted his lips and his eyes widened. He wasn’t expecting Olivia to compliment him in that way. “Thank you. Yours is absolutely gorgeous.”

Olivia snapped the french fry. “I see that I can be outdone in the complement-giving department, Mr. Grant.”

“What’s your middle name?

“Carolyn.”


The words that came from Fitz surprised Olivia. Usually, when she received a line of adjectives like that, Olivia would roll her eyes. But this time, it was different.

“Thank you,” she felt a blush starting to rise. Always ready to deflect attention, she asked, “How about yours?”

“Thomas.”

“Fitz Thomas.”


“Ahh,” Olivia leaned back, crossed her arms. “I guess your parents knew you’d be someone extra important with that name.”

“Meh,” he shrugged. “Family name. I’m the third one.”
Olivia tilted her head in surprise. “Very nice. So, Fitz works?”

“Absolutely! Do you have a nickname that you like?”

His eyes were giving her a sultry vibe; not what she was expecting.

“Most people call me Liv,” she explained. Taking a beat to decide whether she felt like sharing more, Olivia smirked. “Only people close to me use ‘Livvie’.”

“Livvie.”

In that moment, her ears perked. Fitz sure knew how to pronounce that variation of her name like it was the best word ever. It sent chills down her spine.

“Yeah,” she repeated, clearing her throat and pushing some hair behind her ear. “But just my close friends.”

Fitz nodded; “Good to know, Liv.”

Olivia pointed to the counter. “How’s your burger?”

“It’s pretty good. Thanks for recommending it.”

She caught him winking and that made her squirm in her chair. This was so weird but exciting. Olivia had to think of something to calm her down. Leaving her seat, she walked to the couch.

"Olivia?"

"Come here," she offered as she plopped down. Fitz followed. They didn't speak about it, but it seemed natural to cuddle. They hadn’t done this before but it felt right. Her arms wrapping around his waist, while Fitz draped his’ over her shoulders. Like puzzle pieces fitting together.

“What are your plans for the rest of the weekend,” he asked in a hushed tone.

“Probably sleeping,” she mumbled. "I am exhausted. How about you?"

Brushing his fingers on her arms, Fitz stated that he was going to clean and relax.

“That’s good.” Olivia was becoming drowsy and being so close to him, made her extremely comfortable. It didn’t seem long but hearing Fitz call her name woke her up.

“Hey. I should go and let you sleep.”

Olivia abruptly lifted her head and searched his face, deciding whether he was saying this to be polite or trying to avoid a potentially sticky situation.

“What time is it?

“Seven.”

“What? We’ve been asleep for three hours?”

Fitz nodded, “I guess so.”

Seeing that they were literally attached at the hip, Olivia acknowledged. “I guess we were that tired.”
“Yeah,” he replied, patting her back once more.

Olivia rose, straightening her sweater. “I appreciate you staying.”

“Thank you for having me,” Fitz smiled. “This was great.”

“If you get lonely,” Olivia started, “because I know you’re missing Teddy, just call and you can stop on by.”

Fitz let out a hearty laugh. “Are you teasing me?”

“Maybe.” Olivia pulled out her extra girly voice, rocking on her toes.

“Okay,” he relented, walking behind her to the door.

“Okay.”

Olivia and Fitz could not move. Their feet set on the floor, and eyes were locked on each other. Admiration. Intrigue. Kindness. As if looking away would erase the image completely.

“Well. Good night, Olivia.”

Standing on her tiptoes, she held onto Fitz’s arms and kissed his cheek. It was her turn to initiate. Not wanting to let go, Olivia pulled away very slowly. It almost hurt to separate.

“Good night.”

Fitz squeezed her hand and left for the elevator. When she closed the door, something had changed. That excitement when you meet someone and have a good feeling about it. Having the knowledge that this someone could be a keeper.
Work kept him busy - taking on four new cases, which led to barely having enough time to text her during the day. But his thoughts wandered to her, her smile, the funny and clever lines she would share with him. She was a dream come true.

Thankfully, Teddy's arrival at the house was able to shake him out of his stupor. As the boy ran from the car to the front door, Fitz's smile was brilliant. Arms opened wide to receive his baby.

"Daddy!"

"Hiya, buddy," Fitz squeezed Teddy tightly, showering his cheeks with kisses. "I've missed you so much."

"Me too."

"Are you hungry? How was the ride? Tired?"

Teddy shook his head. "I'm okay, Daddy."

"Let's go get ice cream," he called out to Teddy, who returned from a supervised visit with his mother. He was thrilled to not be alone. The extended visits occurred once a year, and it didn't get easier for Fitz. He became incredibly attached to his son. It was an everyday challenge to be the best Dad ever. Loving and fun, but ready to guide and correct. But he wouldn't change the responsibility for anything in the world.

Teddy hopped off the couch. "Cool! Let's go."

As they drove on Wisconsin Avenue, Fitz decided to ask. "Did you have fun in North Carolina?"

"Mnhmm," the boy faintly replied. Fitz began to whistle, attempting to deflect his reasonings for asking. Swinging his legs, Teddy continued, "It was fine. Mom and I did a lot of things. She bought me toys and I met her new boyfriend. Andrew? I don't me-member."

Fitz stopped whistling, keeping his eyes on the road. That wasn't what he was expecting to hear, that his ex-wife had moved on and he was failing at this dating thing.

"But I missed you."

Regulating his breathing, Fitz smiled, knowing that his son would favor him more than his mother. Not that he pressed the issue, but he was still content with Teddy's answer. It was a confidence boost that he always needed.

There was a fun gelato shop in Georgetown that Fitz loved to take Teddy. They spent many spring and summer afternoons at Gelataria Dolce Vita. Usually they would share a large cup of vanilla and chocolate, but Fitz gave Teddy his own portion.

After they paid, The Grants strolled down M Street; there was plenty to view. Boutiques and more commercial stores, with the a light breeze cooling their faces.

"Daddy?"

"Yes," he answered, distracted by his gelato.
"Is that Livia?"

"What?" Fitz asked in a panic, nearly dropping his cup. But then relaxed his face, embarrassed at how sprung he was by this mention of this woman's name.

Teddy pointed, with his mouth semi-full of chocolate goodness. "Over there, that looks like her."

"By golly, you're right."

"Livia! Livia!" Teddy exclaimed, waving his hand, hoping to get her attention. People had glanced at the two. Teddy continued to call for "Livia", his voice getting louder.

"Teddy," Fitz hushed, crouching down to his level. "It's okay. She's probably busy. We'll see her another time."

Sure enough, Olivia spotted the Grants and waved, confidently walking towards them. In a sleeveless cream blouse and grey slacks, Olivia gave an effortless look on a Saturday afternoon. Regretfully, Fitz was in a tshirt and jeans.

"Hi, you guys!"

Teddy's eyes were so bright as he greeted Olivia. "Hi! I found you!"

"You did," Olivia knelt down to see Teddy's face. "How are you?"

Teddy gave a toothy grin, "Great! We're eating gee-ла-to!"

"Nice!"

Fitz watched his son interact with the woman he was admiring. "How are you doing?"

Olivia smiled. "I'm doing well, thanks. It's been a while."

"I know," Fitz spoke with some regret, "Work."

"I hear you. The summer does not let up."

He couldn't keep his eyes off of her. But it was getting awkward. It wasn't like they have never talked before. Standing on a busy Georgetown sidewalk with a 4-year-old bringing attention to them was not ideal. "Would you like to join us? We're probably going to walk to the Canal."

"That would be lovely," she began, rising. "But I have to finish up a project. Meeting with a client in a few minutes."

Fitz nodded, a bit disappointed. On a Saturday, no less. This woman was always on the go.

"Livia, maybe you can out to eat with us again. Or maybe a movie," Teddy exclaimed.

Olivia smiled, "That would be fun. We will have to get the final say from your father."

Teddy looked up to Fitz, with the sweetest pair of puppy eyes. "Please, Daddy?"

"Of course," he answered, winking at Olivia.

"It's a date." Olivia silenced her buzzing phone. "I gotta go. I'll see you two later."

The Grants and Olivia said their goodbyes and went their separate ways.
There hadn't been anyone who stole his heart this quickly. Even as a ladies’ man for the last 20 years, well accustomed to their sweet words and advances, and pretty bodies, no one took Fitzgerald Grant's breath away like Olivia Pope. From what she had shared with him, she was a powerful woman. Someone who wouldn't take no for an answer, and was hard to please. He got her attention now; he couldn't lose her. Not until he gave it his all. The energy from the random blind date would not go down in flames.

Scrolling down his contact list, he pressed Olivia's name. Three rings later, she picked up.

"Hey."

"Hi, Olivia. How are you?"

"I'm good, how about yourself?"

"Doing well."

"Good."

"Did you think over Teddy's idea?"

Fitz chuckled, "Actually, I did. But it's a variation."

"Oh?"

"Yes," he confirmed, stretching his legs on the coffee table, confidence building by the second. "I would like to take you out on a date. Without Teddy."

"Darn," Olivia fake whined.

Fitz scoffed. "Wait, were you only impressed with me because of Teddy? Did his charm persuade you?"

"Hell yes."

Olivia and Fitz shared a laugh. Every time they talked, the mention of their fateful blind date was sprinkled in their conversation.

"When are you available?"

"I'll set some time aside for you," she responded in her well-known slick tone.

Fitz grinned, silently cheering himself on. "How does Tuesday night sound? Gives me enough time to find a sitter."

"A reliable one?"

"Ha ha," Fitz remarked as he heard a snarky laugh over the phone. "Yes, Olivia Pope. I won't foul up this time."

Olivia was notified that her date was pulling out all the stops. So that meant an ensemble of leggings, a tank, and cardigan would not do the trick. The preparation was seamless but time-consuming. Once she entered the apartment from work, Olivia searched high and low for the perfect outfit. In the end, a blue blouse, white linen pants, and a pair of Jack Rogers was the choice.
As she predicted, at 6:30, she heard four knocks. Spraying a little bit of her favorite scent on her neck and wrists, Olivia walked to the door. Fitz was beyond handsome. Hair combed just so, sharp suit, and crisp clean shirt.

"Good evening, Mister Grant."

"Mademoiselle Pope," he crooned, taking her hand, placing a soft kiss. "Thank you for letting me take you out. Are you ready?"

Olivia grabbed her clutch and keys, "Lead the way."

Fifteen minutes later, they stopped in front of 1789, a well-known establishment in the city. Olivia waited for Fitz to open the door for her, and help out of his car.

"Wow, Fitz. You have to reserve well in advance to get in here. How were you able to do this?"

Fitz nonchalantly answered, "I know a guy. It wasn't too hard to convince him to get us a table."

"Perks of being a fancy lawyer," Olivia joked. "How did you?"

"I told him I was bringing the most beautiful woman with me and I wanted to impress her."

Olivia jabbed him with her arm, playfully. "Oh, stop, Grant. You didn't have to do this."

Fitz whispered in her ear, "Yes. I did."

The maître d' led Olivia and Fitz to their table. Beautifully lit with soft music playing. It was perfect. Dinner was glorious. Two hours of uninterrupted conversation, wine toasting, among a six course-meal. Olivia was enjoying Fitz's company - he made her feel at home, just as friendly in public as he was on the phone. It was a different vibe from a month earlier.

"Did you think I would be a dud," Fitz asked, taking a swig of his wine. "What were you thinking before I showed up?"

Olivia set her fork down. "Well, I was annoyed that our friends set me up on a blind date. Having control is a blessing and curse for me. I need to know what I'm getting into. It's hard to separate my work life from my personal."

Fitz took into consideration of what she did for a living. PR was a very calculated business and it took a lot of a person. But he wanted to stay clear of work talk. "Are you glad you stuck it out?"

Olivia batted her eyelashes. "Without a doubt. Yes."

After sharing a Gingerbread cake, Fitz called for the server.

"Let's get out of here."

The car ride home was funny. Fitz decided to turn on the top 40 station and somehow he got her to sing along to the latest hits. Olivia admired how he was able to put her mind at ease. Giggles bubbling out of her system as they took the elevator. They stood side by side, but stopped talking, but equally feeling the thick tension. She didn't know what to do next. Look to the side and profess her feelings about him? She wasn't expecting to like someone so quickly. Would she kiss him passionately? Tell him she needed more time?

The door opened before she could finalize her thoughts. Fitz waited for her to exit. They walked to the door.
"I had a lovely evening, Fitz."

"Me too," he replied lowly, sweetly, and confidently.

Olivia smirked, keeping her eye on Fitz. "Thank you again."

What else was there to do, except to say good night. Like the countless times before. On the phone. In person.

Feeling the appropriate key, Olivia was ready to turn the knob, when Fitz stopped her.

"Liv, wait."

Turning to meet his gaze, Olivia suddenly lost her breath. Different from the numerous visual connections since their first meeting. It was sudden and mesmerizing, like the impact felt when the wind gets knocked out of a person. So close, nothing could distract them. So in tune, their breathing synced, which honesty took her by surprise. Waiting for a sign. An excuse to break out of this trance.

A kiss was inevitable. But they could have. Her eyes scanned his, attempting to read his mind, ready to be a step ahead of him. Her hand still clutching the set of keys.

Fitz was the first to move. His Adam's apple bobbed. "Where do we go from here?"

Olivia shifted her weight, uncomfortable. With her voice dry from being silent, she mumbled, "I don't know."

"Go out with me."

The whisper was gritty and powerful.

"We just went out."

Fitz leaned forward. "Let me take you out whenever you want. Spoil you. Be the one you always call whenever you have a crappy day at work. Make you dinner. Be my girlfriend. Would you like to be my girlfriend?"

"Fitzgerald," she gasped.

"I'm serious, Olivia. Please consider. I know that since I met you three weeks ago, my life has been better. You make my days better. I want more. I hope you feel the same way too. But... this is important to me."

Viewing his face again, she noticed the sincerity.

"Yes," Olivia calmly answered. "I would like to be your girlfriend."

A quick grin spread across his face. Unknown to her, Fitz had a habit of swiping his tongue across his lips. There was a sensual fire in his eyes. Leaning down slightly, he kissed Olivia oh so gently. She sighed as his mouth covered hers.

He wasn't fully relaxed, but she could feel the pressure. Maybe he was thinking she was going step away and reject him. But she didn't - placing her hands on his cheeks, she returned the kiss.

It felt like they couldn't separate. Finally, Olivia pulled away so that she could breathe. Fitz inhaled, watching her react. Her cheeks were flushed. Almost like the control she desired was long gone.
"Was that okay?"

"Yeah," she quietly replied. "You've been wanting to do this for a while."

Fitz leaned against the wall, "Yes."

"Me too," she crossed her arms. "I don't want the night to end."

"Well, let's continue."

"That would be inappropriate," she added. "You have Teddy to get back to."

Fitz brushed the thick strands of hair out of Olivia's eyes, so sweetly. "I know. But I can make a call and then we can be inappropriate."

Starting him down, Olivia began to laugh. "You are incredibly corny. But no, let's wait."

"I tried, I have many strings to pull, Liv."

Olivia pursed her lips. "I'm glad you're willing to be patient. Call me when you get home. We can talk all night, if you'd like."

The look on Fitz's face delighted her greatly. "Absolutely."

"Good night," Olivia curled her finger, bringing Fitz close. She cupped his chin and pecked his lips. Hearing him sigh, made her happy.

"Night, Liv."
Chapter 5

Analyzing the situation.

That was Olivia’s modus operandi. It was expected. Whenever she was faced with a decision, great or small, she had to think. Dissect every option, pull out visuals, see what would be the best solution. She treated relationships the same way. Ever since getting hurt in her last relationship, Olivia was particularly careful as to who was allowed into her life. When she said yes to Fitz, she spent the rest of her weekend thinking. How could this affect her job, her views. Not sure about him, but her name crossed all social and business circles. Olivia wanted to keep her brand clean.

Resisting all of her urges to text her new boyfriend, during the morning, she made it to OPA - Olivia Pope & Associates. She wanted to have a clear head on the first day of the work week. No distractions. Her clients needed her to be focused. The team wanted her full attention. This was her life - for the last three years - owning a business, leading others in this fight to do the right thing. Not matter what the sacrifice.

Everything needed to be sectioned off and organized.

Unlocking her door, Olivia was pleased to know she was the first to show up. This gave her a chance to prepare in silence, without the constant questions. By nine o’clock, Abby, Harrison, and Quinn had arrived. They were without Stephen for another two weeks, so they had to double up on their workload. Four new potential clients, wanting their assistance to save their careers. Busy as they were, Olivia wouldn’t change a thing.

“Good morning,” she called out. "We have a full schedule today."

Abby stopped by first, coffee mug in hand. “Hey, Liv. How was your weekend?”

“Fine. Yours?”

“Not too shabby, went on a decent date,” Abby responded, sitting down across from Olivia. “Any updates with your guy?”

Olivia refrained from shooting a harsh side eye. Her best friend was always wondering about business that did not pertain to her. “Not that I can think of. Everything’s fine.”

Abby knowingly smirked, placing a folder on the desk. “I have some info on Stevens. Things aren’t looking great. The DA could pop up at any moment.”

“Okay,” Olivia scanned the papers. “Nothing we can’t handle. Let’s put in a few calls and we can settle this matter soon.”

The morning quickly transitioned to the afternoon hours. Olivia was emailing and calling, putting in good words, cutting down opponents, corresponding with the media outlets. Not a lot of people visited OPA, unless they were requested or they were in dire need. Outside of her marching orders, the office was very quiet.

Quinn, the newest employee, knocked on Olivia’s door.

“Yeah?”

“Liv, are we expecting someone?”
Olivia thought for a moment, then scanned her notes. “No. I think Mr. and Mrs. O’Riley are coming in tomorrow afternoon.”

Timidly, Quinn added, “I hear the elevator.”

“What?”

Quinn gave a shrug and asked if standing by would be necessary. Olivia waved her off and the brunette shuffled to the elevator, waiting for the unexpected visitor. It could have been David Rosen, or some other minion, hoping to get some juicy tidbits from Olivia’s clients.

Harrison nodded and sectioned off Olivia's quarter of the loft. Trying not to panic, she listened in on the conversation. The sudden “ping” alerted the group.

“Hello,” Quinn greeted. “May I help you?”

“Yes, I’m here for Miss Pope.”

Olivia traveled to her desk, ready to make moves. The voice, albeit muffled, was definitely not Rosen’s or anyone from his office. Before leaving, Harrison whispered for Olivia to stay back, so he could handle business, if things got out of hand.

“May I have your name?”

Before Olivia could reach for her cell to press her speed dial button, Harrison swung the door open, and exclaimed, “Fitzgerald Fucking Grant!”

“Hey, brother!”

“What are you doing here? Come on in!”

Olivia’s anxiety turned into irritation as she slowly opened her door, to see the action. Down the long hallway, she saw Harrison shake hands and hug the one person she was not expecting to see.

Fitz!

Quinn was properly introduced to the “stranger”. Noticing a bouquet of roses in Fitz’s left hand, Olivia mumbled to herself.

“Just here to see Liv.”

Immediately, Olivia’s eyes became large like saucers. She hated mixing pleasure with business. Especially in her office. Abby sauntered by, and Olivia huffed.

“Hello, I'm Abby Whelan. Are you the man who has won Olivia’s affection,” Teasing, she extending her hand.

“I would hope so. Fitz Grant.”

The office was now filled with excited conversation. Harrison had invited Fitz into the sitting area, while Abby and Quinn smiled and laughed along. Olivia was quite done with the shenanigans. Emerging from her cave, she met with the group. Very annoyed at the sight of her boyfriend mingling with her team on her time and dime.

“Everyone,” she began, “you need to get back to work.”
The response she got was a chorus of "What?". Fitz rose from his seat, beaming from ear to ear. "Hi, Liv."

Olivia was shocked to feel his lips on her cheek. Masking her embarrassment, she grinned politely. "Hello, Fitz." Abby smirked at the exchange, before straightening up. Olivia gave her the disapproving eye. The strained greeting was not lost on Fitz. His eyebrows lowered.

“What’s wrong?”

Olivia didn’t answer. Facing her group, she continued, “I need the update on the Stevens case. So, please, someone, anyone, find that for me.”

Harrison shook his head, Abby rolled her eyes and stomped away. Quinn dutifully complied. Having a confused and slightly annoyed reaction on his face, Fitz waited for the team to depart before he turned his attention back to Olivia.

“What was that all about?”

Olivia grabbed Fitz’s hand, pulling him into the lobby. After closing the main door, she curtly answered, “This is so inappropriate. You should have called before coming here.”

"Seriously?"

"Yes," Olivia stated. "So unprofessional."

Fitz rubbed his jaw, "I didn't realize this building was an undisclosed location. I'm able to Google your address, you know."

With a quick sigh, Olivia began to justify her actions.

"Wait," Fitz interjected. "Are you embarrassed of me?"

"No! That's not the point."

Noticing her defensive and firm stance, Fitz asked, "So what is the point, Olivia?"

Olivia gasped. She wasn't expecting Fitz would catch on to her wordplay. "I don’t like to bring people here if they don’t need to be. As you saw, it is a distraction.”

Fitz nodded. "I see. It's a personal thing. Not some by-law of this establishment."

When she didn't reply, Fitz continued. "I didn’t mean to upset you. I haven’t heard from you since our date and I wanted to make sure you were doing alright. I thought a surprise was in order.”

Olivia wasn’t budging. “You assumed wrong, Fitz.”

“Okay, I apologize. Will you forgive me?"

Without hesitation, she accepted. "Yes."

"Here," Fitz handed the roses to her. “These are for you. Maybe you can put these on your desk.”

Subtly biting her lip, Olivia knew her reaction was uncalled for. Fitz didn't appear to be like the other men in her life, pushing their way into her world. The possibility of not having to be on her guard 24/7 was shocking. But this surprise was outside of her realm; not having control was a foreign concept. By default, Olivia reacted in a way that she would in her work life, which did not go as
planned. Salvaging this conversation, she included, “My vase at home are dying to have fresh flowers.”

Fitz lifted his eyebrow, with a smirk. “I see. I’m sure they’ll have a great time together.”

Olivia asked him to move towards the elevator, so the others’ vision would be obscured. “I’m sorry for shutting everything down like that in front of everybody. Just call me first. Depending on the workload, I may let you come up to visit. It’s very important to me to keep things separate. For now.”

“Alright,” Fitz agreed. “I can deal with that. For now. Hey, do you want to come over for dinner? I’m thinking steak. Teddy would love to see you.”

The invitation was delightful. Olivia reached for Fitz’s hand, marveling at how soft and comforting his touch was against her skin. “Yes. I would love to come visit. But I have to go. I’ll text you when I’m on my way.”

“Sure thing.” Fitz softly brushed his fingers on her cheek. “I want to kiss you. Is that alright?”

Olivia shifted her eyes to see if the team was actually on task, or witnessing this day drama. “I’ll allow it, Mr. Grant,” she slowly answered. The butterflies were rising as Fitz got closer, pressing his lips onto hers. One kiss wasn’t enough for her. So, as a surprise to him, Olivia scooped her hand around Fitz’s neck, and kissed him with more urgency. His hums vibrating on her mouth, oh-so-delicately, almost bringing her to her knees.

"Okay," she mumbled. "I have to go. I'll do better at texting you."

Fitz snorted, kissing her forehead. "Great. See you in a bit."

As she moved away from the elevator, watching Fitz descend and out of her view, Olivia realized one thing.

*She was in love.*
Chapter 6

The rest of the work day went slowly and that bugged Olivia to no end. Attempting to play it cool, she knew the team was privy to the change in her mood. She was ready to get to Fitz, apologize profusely, and have a relaxing night. That irritated her the most - she had to make up for her behavior at the office. It was uncalled for but as a creature of habit, it was expected. With other guys, it was the thing to do. But it was not an excuse anymore. She had to do better to become better.

Wandering through her mind, was the notion that she could actually love again. Love meant something different to her. The people who “loved” her ultimately did more damage to her soul than good. But seeing firsthand, that Fitz could get her back on track in a matter of minutes, and not be turned off by her hard outer shell, had switched the light on. Observing how kind he was to her, in the last month, was endearing.

Was it love that drew her to him? A strong connection or infatuation? Who knows, but she was willing to explore this. She had to be cautious and not fall too deeply. When she finally let go, it was a done deal.

It was obvious that Fitz was interested, but what if she was another rebound? At their first meeting, he said he didn’t date often. There was a reason for it. Was she a quick fix for his loneliness? What about Teddy? From what she knew from friends and clients, dating with children from previous relationships were extremely sticky, if not treated carefully. She adored the boy, even as a woman who wasn’t naturally drawn to children. Distance was needed.

She wanted to ask Fitz about all of this. How to go on from here, as well take it one day at a time. Olivia surprised Abby, Harrison, and Quinn individually with early leave. They were able to bounce at 4, instead of 6. They would just have to deal with the piles of work in the morning. That gave her time to get home, change into something more casual - a blouse, dark washed jeans, and flats, and pick up a few things.

A teddy for Teddy. Hopefully it would not be offensive to the younger Grant since that was a play on his name. With a bottle of aged Scotch, for the master of the house. She was able to find it through some of her connections in the city.

Driving north to the house. As the traffic waned up Rts. 185 and 355, Olivia was able to clear her mind, and think happy thoughts. Looking forward to spending quality time with two of her new favorite people.

She hadn’t been to this neighborhood, that was nestled in an area behind Connecticut Avenue. Olivia decided to park on the street. Touching up on her lipstick and mascara, she gave herself a moment to brush off the crap of the day.

As she walked up the driveway, she could hear Big Band music playing. Her eyes reached the window and caught a figure moving around. Teddy was dancing in what was probably the living room. Loud giggles and then Fitz joined in the picture. He was also bouncing around, with a huge smile on his face.

“Whoa, Buddy Bear!”

The sight made her heart melt. Olivia could not resist watching them. But then she realized she looked like a creep, barging in on such an intimate moment. If she wasn’t careful, they’d catch her
staring.

Before it got too awkward, she pressed the doorbell.

“That must be her! Livia!”

Olivia smiled to herself as Teddy exclaimed. Heavy toddler steps were close to the door, followed by the twisting of the doorknob and several grunts.

“Uhh! Uhh! Daddy! I still can’t reach the lock.”

“Don’t whine, Teddy. I’ll help you.”

Olivia quickly straightened her shoulders and put on her best face, just in time for the door to open. Teddy, dressed in a long-sleeved tee and jeans, gave his adorable smile and ran into her knees, nearly pushing her back. “Livia! I am so happy you’re here. You look so pretty!”

Already a charmer at the age of four, Olivia could not help but feel appreciated. “Hiya, Teddy. Thank you for letting me come.” Looking up to his father, she shyly smiled.

“Hi.”

Fitz, leaning against the door, winked.

“Hi.”

Olivia felt that pull again - that time had stopped - when her eyes met Fitz’s. It amazed her how one exchange could turn her day around.

“Daddy, we need to let Livia in,” Teddy tugged on his father’s hand, while reaching for Olivia’s. But as soon as the three crossed the threshold, Teddy ran off.

“Your son is quite the host.” Olivia remarked.

Fitz scratched the back of his head. “Yeah, he puts me to shame every time. May I take your coat?”

Obliging, Olivia handed him the shawl, but not before pecking Fitz’s lips. “Hmm, you taste good.”

“Thank you,” he replied in his quasi-seductive voice. “I’ve been tasting my cooking that I’m preparing for you.”

Olivia sighed. Then, reality hit and her eyebrows furrowed. “Does he know? About us?”

Fitz’s nose crinkled as he answered. “No.”

“What?”

“Don’t worry,” he assured, rubbing her back. “I would love to tell him tonight. With you here.”

Olivia was taken aback by the idea. “Really?”

Fitz nodded. “Yes, I would feel more comfortable with the two of us present.”

Given his knowledge of his son and what would work best, Olivia agreed. “That’s fine with me.”

“Okay,” Fitz said, locking his fingers with hers. “Welcome to my home, Olivia Pope. I hope you enjoy your stay.”
They walked past the family room, where Teddy was sitting at the TV.

“Teddy, I need to finish up dinner, so would you be okay with keeping Olivia company?”

The four-year-old skipped to turn off the screen. “Sure.”

“If you need anything or if he gets bored, c’mon over to the kitchen,” Fitz suggested, placing a soft kiss on her temple.

Olivia chose to sit on the couch, nearby Teddy, who was now sprawled on the floor, checking out a coloring book.

“What did you do today?”

“Preschool.”

“Oh?”

Teddy gave a nod. “Yes, I go to preschool. All day. But not always. Sometimes, my babysitter comes to get me when Daddy has a lot of work to do, or has to go to court.”

Olivia wanted to know more about this boy so she kept asking questions. “What is your babysitter’s name?”

“Auntie Gracie. She’s my favorite.”

Teddy locked eyes with Olivia; they were so bright and full of life. She noticed that whenever he was passionate about a topic, his cheeks would lift. “Yeah? How long have you known Auntie Gracie?”

“Since I was born,” Teddy stated, getting off the floor and making his way to Olivia. “She took pity on Daddy and me when my Mommy moved away. She’s a lifesaver.”

Moving her arm, so Teddy could cuddle next to her, Olivia was already dealing with a mix of emotions. How children could easily connect with adults, feeling at ease, and wanting to get close. None of her friends had children, so gauging how to talk was interesting.

Teddy smiled at Olivia and continued. “She lives down the street with her husband, Sam, and they have a dog, and two boys. Brett and Patrick. They’re like my brothers.”

“ Took pity,” Olivia asked, interested in how the boy learned such a phrase.

Lowering his voice, he clarified with a smirk, “Yes. Daddy says that to elab-bal-late the story.” Using jazz hands, he said, “More drama.”

Olivia covered her mouth to stifle a hearty laugh. Teddy giggled.

“I’m just glad I don’t have to stay at preschool all day and every night. It gets lonely.”


Glancing over her shoulder, she watched Fitz, who was minding his business at the stove. Veggies being sauteed, checking on the potatoes that were baking. Reminding himself to let the steaks rest. Moving around the room with a towel swung over his shoulder. His sleeves rolled up, just hitting his biceps. And his jeans...ooh, his jeans. He was wearing a great pair of jeans. Mainly accentuating his great ass. Lifting her eyes, she observed his face. Deep in concentration - she liked that.
Olivia had to cough; she was obviously lusting over him. Not that it was bad. She was very surprised that it took this long. Why her mind was taking her to this place so late. Several weeks in, she needed to ask herself - Why was he now turning her on? Maybe seeing him in his natural habitat was comforting and extremely sexy to her. Or was it because he was far away and she could truly get a good look at him. He was damn beautiful. And he asked her out, so that meant for now, he was hers to appreciate and admire.

But oh no - not in front of his child! Teddy in her arms, and he was quite observant. She couldn't get caught ogling his father like a piece of man meat. Trying to focus, Olivia wasn’t able to keep her eyes away.

“Liv?”

“Yes? Yes!” Olivia shrieked, scaring herself out of her thoughts. Not even realizing he had moved away and was right beside her.

Fitz sweetly rubbed her shoulder. “Oh, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to startle you. Would you like some wine?”

With a nod, she accepted the offer. Teddy moved away and was playing with an action figure and truck. Good, she thought.

“I got something for you.” Olivia quickly scooped the bag out of her purse and followed Fitz to the kitchen. The space was gorgeous with lots of room to use.

Fitz lifted his eyebrows, “Liv, you shouldn’t have.”

“I couldn’t be a bad guest. Especially after the bullshit I pulled earlier,” Olivia softly stated. Closing the gap between them, she stood on her tiptoes and kissed Fitz. “I’m sorry.”

“I forgive you,” he answered against her lips. “Thank you.”

Olivia pressed her nose into Fitz’s shirt, feeling weak, catching a whiff of his signature scent, a fresh and earthy cologne. She could get used to this.

“I forgot. Teddy has a gift too. Teddy!”

Olivia returned to the family room. “I have something for you too. Here you go.”

Teddy looked surprised, but pulled the tissue paper out of the way. “Thank you. Oh, man. A Teddy bear!”

Unable to read his expresions, Olivia fumbled for words. “Is it okay? Do you have a million other bears? If you don’t like it, I can get you something else.”

Slowly grinning, Teddy scrambled to hug Olivia; his arms wrapped around his neck. “I love it! I don’t have a bear. Not like this one. And you put my name on it. My real name. See? I can spell it. T-H-E-O-D-O-R-E. Theodore! That’s me!”

A kiss on her cheek sealed it. Then wiggling himself out of her arms, Teddy ran to his father. Olivia followed his path.

“Daddy! Look at what Livia bought me. It’s a Theodore Bear!”

His excitement delighted Fitz. Checking out the new toy, he stated, “Look at that. What great details.
He even looks like you.”
Teddy clutched his new friend. “This is great!”

Dinner time had arrived. Fitz prepared a beautiful course of steak, baked potatoes, and various veggies. Olivia was very thrilled at the taste of a home cooked meal. It had been years since she got to experience.

The conversation was light; Olivia asked how work was going for Fitz. He casually replied that things were busy but manageable.

Teddy interrupted the flow.

“I think I want to be called Theo.”
Fitz stopped his cutting. “Oh yeah?”

“Mmhmm.”

“Why is that, young sir?”
Teddy shrugged as he chewed his food. “I don’t know. It will make me sound fancy. I mean… You get called different names. But no one says you’re Gerry or Gerald.”

The intelligent and logical case Teddy Grant gave made Olivia shake her head. This boy was a jewel and took after his father. Fitz smiled, patting Teddy’s hand.

“You’re right. But that’s Poppy’s name.”

“True.”

“Whatever you would like, my son. Remember, you were almost named Fitzgerald.”

Teddy made a face similar to biting a lemon. “Eww! That would have been the worst.”

“Yeah, buddy,” Fitz reminded. “You would have been Fitzgerald Thomas the Fourth.”

The three laughed at Teddy’s reactions. It was such a lovely time, eating and enjoying the company. Olivia felt her heart race as Fitz gently massaged her hand. Then, he realized the need to share information to his son.

“Teddy?”

“Yes, Daddy?”

“Remember when we met Olivia and I told you that I liked her?”

Teddy’s eyes widened and his nose scrunched, identical to a face Fitz made. “Yeah,” he chuckled.

Taken aback by this inclination, Fitz went to Olivia for confidence. She gave him a knowing look to continue.

“Well, I asked her to be my girlfriend. Is that okay?”

“Did Livia say yes?”
Olivia almost snorted at the quick remark. “Actually, I did.”

“Cool! Then yeah,” Teddy turned to smile at her. “I’m extra cool with it. This is awesome, Livia. Does this mean you’ll come over for dinner?”

Biting the inside of her cheek, Olivia thought of a reasonable answer. “Sure. Not all the time, but maybe once a week? You are also invited to come to my apartment. It’s not big like your house, but it’s cool. I don’t cook but we can order pizza or cheeseburgers and watch movies.”

Twisting his lips, the little Grant nodded. He approved.

Young Theodore Grant’s eyes were drooping as he tried to listen to his father and Olivia. Fitz swooped the bangs of his face. “Time for bed, baby. You got school.”

“Preschool, Daddy,” Teddy sleepily corrected.

“Mnhmm,” Fitz replied. “Would you like to say anything to Miss Olivia?”

Teddy rubbed his eyes, then faced Olivia. “Thank you for coming and thank you for my Theodore Bear. We never have people come over except for Auntie Gracie and her family, and Uncle Harrison. Daddy is such a lonely sonofab—”

Fitz shot his eyes to the boy, “Theodore…”

“Yikes,” Teddy covered his mouth. “I almost cursed.”

Olivia turned away so that she wouldn’t make matter worse.

“I need to do better at making sure we don’t say that in front of you.”

“Or talk loud on the phone,” Teddy retorted. Fitz lifted his finger, then pointed towards the staircase. The boy took the firm gesture to heart and skipped away.

“G’nite, Livia. I’ll see you soon.”

Blowing him a kiss, Olivia said her goodbyes. Fitz walked up the steps after Teddy. “I’ll be down in about 15. Please, make yourself at home. There’s the TV, books, whatever you need.”

Olivia waved him off, “I’ll be fine and I’ll be here when you return.” To her delight, there was much to entertain herself. On the walls were beautiful pictures. One struck her fancy. A tall man with a full head of white hair. Maybe Fitz’s father, with Fitz, and a baby. The Grant men. They all had this regal look about them. The genes ran strong and deep. Then, to her right on a coffee table were two cute-as-a-button pictures of Teddy.

Grabbing her wine glass, Olivia spotted one more photo - Fitz holding Teddy, probably for the first time. Having the chance to observe their life in pictures was extraordinary. It was simple and gorgeous; a contrast from what Fitz had shared with her.

“Okay,” she heard Fitz announce. “Teddy was so riled up. I couldn’t get him to get in the bed.”

Olivia took a sip of her wine. “No worries. I kept myself busy.”

“What did you do?”
“Look at these pictures.”

Fitz folded his hands. “Oh, yes. Good times. Would you like to join me for a nightcap?”

Olivia lifted the nearly empty glass, “Sure.”

“Come with me.”

Fitz had a sneakiness about him that Olivia was intrigued by. After pouring themselves another round, the two made their way to the living room, which was on the other side of the house.

“I’m so glad you came tonight,” he said, patting the cushion for Olivia to sit next to him. Olivia couldn’t wait. The minutes that followed seemed like a blur. Glasses were put down. Sweet nothings exchanged.

“You’re so beautiful,” Fitz whispered as he nipped on her neck.

Without words, their bodies created a dance that was easy to follow. The exchanges between breathing. Their eyes expressing what they wanted, and later on, needed.

Olivia carefully unbuttoned Fitz’s shirt, revealing a strong chest, with fine brown hair to thread her fingers through.

“I like.”

“Good.”

Giggling against his neck, Olivia had an idea. She sat up, only to straddle herself onto Fitz. Pressing her center against Fitz’s groin, she watched for his response. His breath hitched, while his hands gripped her waist.

“You like that?”

“Absolutely,” he replied, voice lower than before. “Don't stop.”

Olivia didn't want to. Staring down her boyfriend, Olivia moved faster, and then couldn't contain herself. Feeling him harden was breathtaking. Momentarily separating from Fitz, she unbuttoned her shirt, so he could see what was underneath. He lowly growled, leaning forward to kiss the tops of her breasts, that were spilling out of her cream bra.

“Fuck, Liv,” he spoke between kisses.

Olivia lifted his head, and looked into his eyes once more, before claiming his mouth again. It was the first time they were able to do more than a chaste kiss. She could feel herself being soaked.

Taking a moment to breathe, she whispered, “I want you to touch me.”

Fitz grinned, sneaking his hand to cup her sex. She could tell that he had been wanting to receive her permission to do this all night. “I want to as well.”

Olivia couldn’t control herself; grinding against his hand, her moans got louder. Before she knew it, Fitz had stopped her. But he wasn’t done. He laid her down, making quick work to remove her jeans. Just as he had gotten Olivia down to her underwear, excited to pull the fabric away to see her delicious pussy...

“Daddy!”
Olivia froze. Had Teddy migrated to the living room without her noticing?

To her surprise, Fitz ignored the distant call. Kissing her stomach, cheek, lips, and the bridge of her nose, hoping that would be the thing she needed to keep her focused. Because he didn't want this to end.

“Daddy!”

“What the hell,” he mumbled. Olivia pulled herself away, frantically adjusting her clothes back to their original positions. Fitz rubbed his hand over his face.

“Go,” she insisted. “It’s okay.”

Fitz shook his head in defeat. “I can’t believe this. Don’t leave, I’ll be right back.”

Teddy’s cries were getting louder. “Daddy! Where are you?”

Olivia watched Fitz race up the stairs. Her face was hot to the touch as she tried to cool down. Her body was on such a high. They had gotten so carried away; the primal urges were no longer dormant.

Twenty minutes passed with no sign of Fitz. She didn’t want to overstay her welcome. Feeling awkward, Olivia quietly walked to the bottom of the staircase.

“Fitz?”

“Come on up, Liv.”

Following the streak of light, Olivia stopped at the second room to the left. Stepping inside, she found Teddy was cradled in Fitz’s arms. Reddened tear-stained cheeks.

Fitz’s eyebrows raised. “I’m sorry,” he mouthed.

Olivia smiled and understood.

When Teddy finally fell back to sleep, Olivia and Fitz returned downstairs.

“Thank you for a great evening.” She saw Fitz’s face slightly fall.

“Liv…”

Placing her hand on his chest, Olivia reminded him, “It’s late and I should get going.”

Fitz sighed. “Nothing like my baby crying on cue to sabotage me.”

Olivia touched his arm and smiled. “I know, but it's a start. Maybe next time we won’t be interrupted.”

“Or,” Fitz interjected, stepping closer into Olivia's space, “we’ll just start sooner and not worry.”

“Yes.”

Keeping her eyes focused on him and not budging, Olivia won this time. No fooling around for the rest of the night.

“I’ll text you when you get home.”
Fitz tilted his head back and mumbled something. Not able to hear him, but she knew he was disappointed. He then reached for her hand. It felt like heaven.

“You amaze me, Olivia Pope.”

“Oh, Fitz.”

Fitz promised, “I’ll make it up to you.”

Olivia rubbed the space in between his thumb and index finger with her thumb, “Shhh, don’t worry. We don’t want to wake him up again.”

“Do you…”

“Do I what, Fitz?”

Swiping his lips with his tongue, which made Olivia’s heart skip a beat, Fitz asked. “Do you…get intimate with your boyfriends? I know we were doing a lot earlier, but I don’t want to assume anything. I have to ask.”

Olivia bit her lip, taking her time to respond. It was incredibly considerate of him to even think about what she wanted. “I do.”

“Perfect,” Fitz said. “Next time, I’m going to do everything I intended to do back there. And more.”

Olivia had to brace herself before she lost her will to leave. Being caressed and handled by Fitz was more than she expected. It a second, she would have pulled Fitz back to the couch and have her way with him. To break the tension, she added, “You should call Auntie Gracie to take pity on you.”

Fitz slapped his leg with a sarcastic eyeroll. “Hardy har har. Good one, Pope.”

“You should have seen that one coming, Grant.”

Olivia took her shawl from the closet. One more lingering kiss for the road. Stepping away from his embrace, she opened the door. “Bye.”

“Bye.”

Smiling to herself, Olivia walked to her car. Fitz was still at the door, waiting for her to get in. To make sure she was safe.

There was something happening and Olivia felt that it was truly love.
Chapter 7

A week had passed and Fitz Grant was lonely, frustrated, and craving to see his Liv. It wasn't fair. He needed to see her, but time was not on their side.

He locked the doors to his car, and made his way to his office. The sounds of each floor's arrival on the elevator fell deaf on his ears because he was occupied with thoughts of Olivia. Remembering how their last kiss felt. Her lips were incredibly soft on his face. When she touched him, shocks had moved through his body. Usually when he was attracted to someone, it was very shallow. Heartbreak surely changed how he connected with others.

But with Olivia, he was overwhelmed by all of her. Mentally, emotionally, and physically. He wasn't planning for it to happen, but when she kissed him, all of those feelings came to the forefront of his mind. Now that he asked her to be his girlfriend, this was a reality.

While on the elevator, he wondered if she enjoyed being with him as much he did with her. She brought this joy that he hadn't discovered in years. Before Teddy was born. But he had to consider his son. In all of this. Would he be okay with having another person in their lives? Fitz was still getting over the pain of Mellie leaving. His heart being crushed, he almost vowed to never love effortlessly again. He did not want a repeat. His heart wouldn't be able to handle it.

“Fitz?”

“Yes?”

Cyrus Beene, his senior partner and founder of the law firm, was hovering at his desk. Apparently, he had been waiting for Fitz's undivided attention, but he was no match for the daydreams. Fitz didn’t even realize how he got to his desk, because he was so involved with his thoughts.

“Did you RSVP for the gala? Liz North is on my ass about headcounts.”

“Hmm,” Fitz halfheartedly agreed.

“Fitzgerald!”

Removing his glasses - the pair he reluctantly only used for reading fine print - Fitz gave Cyrus his full attention. “Got it. I'll RSVP now.”

“You have to have a plus one.”

“What,” Fitz asked with a frown.

“You have to have a plus one.”

“Fitz?”

“Hmm,” Fitz halfheartedly agreed.

“Fitzgerald!”

Removing his glasses - the pair he reluctantly only used for reading fine print - Fitz gave Cyrus his full attention. “Got it. I'll RSVP now.”

“You have to have a plus one.”

“What,” Fitz asked with a frown.

Cyrus shot his hands in deference, in classic dramatic fashion. “I don’t care who it is. You just need to bring someone. The photo opps are important. It will be odd looking extra single, Fitz. With all the attention you receive every time you go out, you want to look good and have someone on your arm. Unless you want to give off that impression for Washingtonian and Washington Life. And you know how they can be, having ladies knock on your door every night.”

Letting out a heavy sigh of exasperation, Fitz opened his address book. The local media always had their eyes on him; his playboy tendencies were well-documented, but stopped when he got married. The moment the wedding band came off, the rumors began to swirl again. It annoyed him greatly, since he had Teddy. He wanted a quiet life and switching up his dating ways were essential because of his son. But since he was the golden boy of the firm, strikingly handsome, and efficient with his
work, Cyrus and the others relied on his charm and good looks to make moves in DC.

As he gave Cyrus the full confidence that he would follow through, Fitz picked up his receiver and called Olivia. She answered on the second ring.

“Olivia Pope.”

“Hi, Olivia Pope.”

“Hi.”

Smiling into the receiver, already feeling better that he had Olivia in his ear, Fitz asked, “Do you have a minute?”

“For you, possibly.”

Fitz couldn’t get enough of Olivia’s snark. It was the first thing he noticed about her personality when they met at the restaurant. “I have an event coming up. It’s a gala. Mostly social, but there is networking involved. Would you like to go with me?”

“When?”

“Next Saturday.”

“Can I get back to you?”

Fitz slowly answered, “Yes...but the sooner, the better. The organizer is giving us - mainly me - a hard time for not RSVP-ing in a timely fashion.”

“Dragging your feet?”

Shaking his head, knowing that Olivia would catch his misstep, he said, “Yes.”

“I see.”

Fitz leaned back in his chair, bringing his legs up to cross over on the desk. “I miss you.” Olivia didn’t respond right away, which did not go unnoticed. He was expecting a fast and sweet echo.

“Liv?”

“What?”

“I miss you,” he repeated.

Olivia answered in a rushed tone, "I'm busy."

"I'm busy too. When can I see you?"

“I have two cases to work on, so I’m not sure when I’ll be done. It gets extra busy when Congress gets back in session.”

“Oh,” Fitz replied apologetically. The quick pace of her responses discouraged him. “Ok. When are you free?”

“Friday.”

That was at the end of the week; Fitz couldn’t handle it. “Seriously?”
Olivia hummed in agreement. “Tentatively. You know the business. Anything can happen. A fixer cannot pick and choose who and when to save.”

Fitz swung his legs back down to the floor, and leaning on the desk, he smoothly commented, “Actually you can. You’re the boss. And you have a team who ca--”

“Who need me, Fitz Grant,” Olivia spoke. “But I will pencil it in right now.”

Willing to take whatever he could get, Fitz made a note of the date. “My place?”

“Sure,” Olivia plainly agreed. “Trio date?”

The phrase made him wince. He couldn’t tell if Olivia included the scenario out of spite. “Unless Gracie miraculously cancels her plans, then yes, I’m sure it will be Grant, Pope, and Grant.”

Fitz didn’t think about it before, but as he soon as he answered Olivia, he knew this was going to be a constant issue. What would they do if Teddy was around? They hadn’t talked in detail about the logistics of dating each other. Would Teddy need to be included every time. The intimacy they had yet to share - would it take a back seat?

“I’m sorry, Liv.”

“There’s nothing to be sorry about. Now you know how I feel. We still have lives outside of our relationship,” Olivia promptly stated. “We will just have to be creative and make adjustments.”

Fitz inwardly cursed. “I’ll figure it out. I want to spoil you rotten.”

“I’m sure you will.”

“And make you moan and see your wild side.”

Olivia tisked, making Fitz chuckle. He knew his comment would throw her off of her game and make her blush.

“Is this your work number,” she stammered.

Fitz could feel his cheeks rise. “Yes.”

“And you’re talking like this? What if your secretary heard you? Or a partner clicked on the wrong line?”

Fitz let his lips part, clearly amused by the sexy twist in conversation. Lowering his voice, he told her, “It’s a secure line. Confidentiality and all.”

Olivia huffed. “Hang up and text me later.”

“Bye, Liv.”

Hearing the click of the dial, Fitz smiled, knowing he was going to do her right and take her by surprise

“Hey man.”
Fitz decided to give Harrison a call after picking up Teddy from preschool. It had been a long day and he needed to talk and hopefully receive some good advice.

“Fucking Fitz Grant, how’s it going?”

Harrison always knew how to start a conversation.

“Not too shabby. How are you?”

“It’s going alright! Just working through this heat.”

“Work going well? How’s good ol’ Cyrus?”

Moving about to clean up some of Teddy’s Legos and toys, Fitz answered, “Same old, same old. He’s been on my tail about this gala. I didn’t think it was such a big deal. But you know how he gets, optics!”

Harrison agreed, “Oh yes. I’m assuming you didn’t RSVP in time. How’s my Ted Monster?”

Fitz marveled, “Boy is growing like a weed. Hey, I wanted to thank you again for bringing Liv my way. She’s a jewel.”

“I knew you would like her. I know how both of you operate and I had a feeling it would work out.”

“We haven’t been able to get together as I’ve like. It’s frustrating to say the least. But we talk a lot on the phone. And that’s great.”

Harrison was happy for him. “That’s awesome, Fitz. It can be hard to make a relationship work, but I think y’all have what it takes.”

Nursing a fresh glass of scotch, Fitz wanted to confide in Harrison. He could tell it may not be received well. “Can I tell you something?”

“Anything,” Harrison replied.

“I don’t know how to say this but, I think I’m in love with her.”

Harrison didn’t answer for a few seconds, which scared Fitz. But then his chuckle broke the silence. “Are you sure? Have you seen the real Olivia? You only know a little bit about her.”

Leaning against the kitchen island, Fitz confirmed. “I’m positive. We talk on the phone a lot and she does share with me. She blows me away, even when she’s cautious. I still see this lovely woman beyond the tough wall. I haven’t said this before and I’m telling you now. Silly as may seem, I know that I’m in love with an incredible woman.”

Glancing over his shoulder to check on Teddy, Fitz was pleased to know that he was watching one of his favorite shows. He waited for Harrison to respond. A part of him assumed his friend would shut him down. Tell him he’s moving too fast, not thinking logically. Fitz always led with his heart, when it came to true relationships.

“You know I love you both. All I’m going to say is do what’s best for you and your son, and that will turn into caring for Liv. I know she’ll try to run and hide to protect herself, but don’t let her go and don’t give up on her.”

Fitz wasn’t expecting Harrison to give such advice. “Wow. Okay.”
“I’m not trying to scare you off. I just -- want you to know that it may not be easy. For either of you. You live busy lives and from what I have seen, you take your careers seriously. And especially you. Providing for Teddy. Both of you haven’t had the best luck when it comes to love. But talk to her. Listen to her. Be honest with her. Fall in love with her every day. You’ll make the right choice.”

Friday didn’t work out; every other date that Fitz gave, Olivia couldn’t make. More clients for OPA. It didn’t help that Fitz was booked with meetings himself. As expected, work was keeping Fitz apart from Liv. It was becoming a sad reality. Thankful for technology, the two called every day. Texting was a great resource, especially when the younger Grant was in the room. They could exchange flirty messages and intelligent banter.

It had been two weeks since Fitz and Olivia physically saw each other. Counting down the time until Saturday evening. With his neighbor’s blessing and promise to take care of Teddy for the 36 hours, Fitz drove downtown to meet his date.

His black tux was nicely pressed with his hair slicked back, Fitz knew he looked good. Tonight was going to be their first night out, sans Teddy. He had a vibe that Olivia was a little nervous about making such a big public appearance, but he promised her that he would take care of everything and protect her.

Ringing the doorbell, he stepped back so he could get a wonderful look at his girlfriend. Fitz knew Olivia was going to show out. His assumptions were correct as Olivia greeted him at the door. In a sleeveless black and white asymmetrical gown, that had cinched in all the right places, and flowed to the floor, she smiled. Her hair was the only decoration on her neck. The look of joy on her face made his heart swell.

“Hi, Fitz.”

She was taking his breath away once again, he could barely speak. “Hi. You look glorious.”

“You’re too kind. Look at my handsome date.”

Olivia stood on her toes while Fitz leaned down. Their first kiss in weeks. It felt like the one they shared in this hallway. He didn’t want to let go of her lips, but knew he had to when he felt Olivia’s hands nudging him.

“Hmm, I love your mouth,” he said, giving a crooked smile.

Pushing him away some more, Olivia sweetly reminded, “Fitz…we haven’t even gotten out the door.”

Taking her hint, he offered his arm. “Mademoiselle Pope, I hope you are ready to have a fun evening with me.”

Fitz and Olivia arrived at the Renwick Gallery. Already crowded with members from several firms and agencies, the gala was bursting with color and life. They first saw Harrison, schmoozing with other guests.

“Hey, Liv!”
“You didn't tell me you were going to be at this function. I would have gone as your plus one,” Olivia joked. Fitz rolled his eyes as Harrison laughed. The three walked around the space, meeting new people and reconnecting. Fitz noticed Cyrus giving him an interested look, so he had to bring Olivia over.

“Cyrus, may I introduce you to Olivia Pope.”

Cyrus got very excited. “THE Olivia Pope? Grant, you surprise me. Bringing in the best crisis manager in town to this event.”

Fitz nodded, rubbing his hand on her back. “She is the one who chose me.”

“Nice to meet you, Olivia.”

Olivia shook his hand and gave a cordial smile. “Likewise.”

After talking with Cyrus, Fitz introduced Olivia to a few other co-workers, and other associates. The cameras were flashing non-stop, capturing so many moments for their magazines, the Style section in the Post, and their blogs.

“Fitz! Mr. Grant!”

“Miss Pope!”

Fitz knew Olivia was over it; rolling her eyes and sighing right before posing.

“We haven’t seen you at these events before.”

Olivia cleared her throat, and gave her best professional voice. “I’m never been invited to these, until now. Just here to support my friends.”

After talking with another reporter, Olivia paced to a mini-bar. Fitz wanted to give her some space so he continued to socialize. It was over ten minutes and she still hadn’t returned. He excused himself to find her. Olivia was sitting at a table, sipping on a glass of red.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes,” she mumbled. “I’m fine. I should be used to this.”

Fitz kissed her shoulder, which made her shudder, and gave him an equal chill down his spine. “I should have warned you. We’ll get out of here soon. Thank you for humoring me.”

“Grant! Come on over, we need to take our picture.”

Fitz shook his head; maybe the atmosphere was overwhelming for her. But he wanted to get steal her away as he could.

“Give me two minutes.”

Slapping Harrison on the back, Fitz met up with the partners. Toasts to the success of the year, with more photo opps. Fitz was having a great time. But he needed to get back to Olivia. He returned to her, slow dancing with her while the band played. She was relaxing in his arms.

He rested his forehead on hers as they waltzed. “I’m so glad you’re here.”
“Me too,” she echoed his sentiment. They smiled and they knew everything would be okay.

When the song ended, Cyrus and Liz North approached the couple. They were rapping about some proposal and Fitz was not in office mode. At all.

“I have to get back to my son,” he stated to Liz and Cyrus. “Thank you so much for a wonderful evening.” He noticed Olivia’s smile fell. If only she knew what he had in store.

“C’mon, Liv.”

Olivia pursed her lips and turned on her heel. He knew she was annoyed. She must have thought this was the end of the night. As they walked outside of the hall, towards the valet, he caught up to her, whispering in her ear. “Guess what?”

“What?” Her droll response cut deep.

“I got us a room.”

Olivia stopped and asked, “A what?”

“A room.”

“For what reason?”

Fitz rocked on his heels, smirking as if he had no clue what she was talking about. “I want to spend quality time with you. To stay overnight. No interruptions,” he kissed her lips. “No distractions.” Another kiss on her soft neck. “And no baby.”

“He’s not a baby,” Olivia reminded.

Fitz nodded. “He’s my baby. And he’s not about to cockblock me. So, you can have all of my undivided attention tonight and tomorrow morning.”

“Fitzzzzz…”

He liked the sound of that. “I have to do what I need to do.”

Olivia’s grin crept back. “You plan well, Mister.”

“That’s new.”

“Fitzy sounds too cute, so Mister was my best idea. I like that,” she disclosed, locking fingers with him.

After calling for the valet to swing his car around, Fitz asked, “How much time do you need to pack a bag?”

Olivia patted his cheek. “Fifteen minutes.”

“Make it twenty-one.”

“What?”

Amused by Olivia’s quick responses, he added, “I’ll wait for you. Twenty-one minutes. Wiggle room. I love that number. Plus it’s…the day I found we were having Teddy,” he quietly finished, blushing.
Olivia caught on. “You don't have to be embarrassed. He's a part of you, a major part of your life.”

Fitz sighed, shaking his head in disbelief. “I don't know how I can talk to an adult without bringing up my son.”

“Just don't call his name while we're making love,” she purred.

Fitz rushed back to Olivia’s apartment and parked in a visitors spot.

“Twenty-one?”

“I'll time you.”

I can hardly wait to hold you
Feel my arms around you
How long I have waited
Waited just to love you
Now that I have found you

Fitz watched for Olivia. It wasn’t like she was going to not return, but his body reacted in different ways when she wasn’t there. It seemed like an eternity, but she returned with a large travel bag.

“How did I do on time?”

Checking his watch, he smiled. “You made it in twenty.”

Olivia buckled up, tapping his hand. “With a minute to spare.”

Fitz didn’t waste time to get to the Mandarin. Since it was 10:30, traffic was bearable. When they got to the hotel, he leaned in to kiss Olivia. She blushed and looked away. “Come on,” he crooned.

Giving his key and a tip to the parking attendant, he led his sweet Liv to the hotel lobby.

“Good evening. I have a reservation under Grant.”

“Very good, Sir. Right this way.”

Olivia strutted to the elevator. Fitz marveled at her curves and gorgeous silhouette. He was very ready to spoil her rotten. He smirked as Olivia began to realize where they were heading. Finally, the doors opened to the Presidential Suite. It was the best room they had and he wanted privacy.

“Are you out of your mind?!”

Olivia’s candor response made him laugh heartily. “I guess so, my lady. I meant what I said. I wanted alone time. If that means, away from everyone, so be it.”

“Okay,” she relented.
They shared another sensual kiss. Fitz couldn't help himself but stare as she floated away to freshen up. He took off his jacket and bow tie. Rolling up his sleeves, he tried to get comfortable.

“Are you hungry?”

“No,” she answered from the other room.

Fitz took the opportunity to pour some champagne. He took long strides to get to her in the bedroom. It was a like a maze from the entrance of the suite to the room they would use. But in his mind, they could use any space she desired.

Olivia was sitting at the vanity, taking off her earrings.

“Here,” he offered her a flute. She thanked him and they proposed a toast.

“To tonight.”

Olivia tilted her head slightly and winked. “Tonight.”

“Did tonight bore you?”

Slipping off her heels, Olivia commented, “No. I’m just used to being behind the scenes.”

Fitz stood behind her and draped his arms around her. “I’m sorry for making you feel uncomfortable.” Kissing her neck, he hummed as he pressed his lips on her skin.

“Ooh,” she moaned. “Hey, I’ll be right back.”

Fitz raised his eyebrow as she stood and went into the other bedroom. He hoped everything was alright.

When the door opened, he almost fell back. Olivia had taken off her dress and was standing in the hallway in only a rose-gold set of a strapless bra and panties.

“My God.”

Tucking her hair out the way, she bashfully looked at something else and beveled her foot.

“I hope…this is okay.”

“It's more than okay, Olivia. You are stunning.”

Olivia stepped forward, with a contained demeanor. “It’s time for you to take off your clothes,” she challenged with a smirk.

Fitz pulled his shirt off as Olivia unbuckled his pants. In a rush, he untangled himself, leaving him in black boxer briefs.

“Oh, Fitz,” she whispered. His name never sounded so good on a woman's lips.

“Yes?”

“Take me now. I'm so ready for you.”

“Let me see you.”

Olivia’s eyelids lowered while unclasping her bra. Fitz was salivating, watching her breasts fall out.
They were perfect and round - her chocolate buds beginning to harden.

Fitz took a step closer. “May I?”

“Please.”

Dipping his head, he latched onto one nipple, sucking, rolling his tongue. Olivia's hands automatically reached into his thick hair. While he used his hands to massage the other breast.

“Fitz…”

“I know. Sweet baby,” he proclaimed. “I'm going to make you so happy tonight.” Switching to the other breast, he said, “Thank you for waiting for me.”

Olivia’s breath hitched. Grabbing his head, she brought up back to standing so they could kiss. They were rushed, sloppy, and awesome. Fitz wanted to devour her right then and there, hoping he could just inhale her. He needed her to breathe.

“I came prepared,” he slurred against her mouth. His hands going anywhere and everywhere.

Olivia had to laugh. “Good. You look irresistible, Fitzgerald.”

“Oh, man,” he moaned as she pulled away. She looked fantastic in only her panties. Her natural curves. Her hair cascading down on her shoulders. Beautiful didn’t describe how amazing she looked.

“Liv.”

“Is this okay?”

“Hell yeah.”

“What's this?” Olivia reached to touch his covered erection; “I love it.”

Eyes dark with lust, Fitz was already content with how the evening was going.

“Go lie down, baby.”

Olivia was becoming another woman; still strong and confident, but the added layer of sensuality was hitting Fitz right in the face. Her hips swayed profoundly, doing as Fitz asked. His cock was aching and throbbing, ready to fill her up.

With a boost of energy, he discarded his boxers and got to the bed. Smiling at his Liv, so ready for the night to truly begin. Taking off her panties, he was awestruck by her natural beauty. Fitz went down on his knees and pulled Olivia's legs forward. Using so much restraint, he separated her folds. He was so rudely interrupted a few weeks prior and now he was realizing one of his dreams. She was gorgeous from top to bottom.

“Oh my God,” Olivia shouted. Fitz eyed what was before him. Having been denied of this moment for over two weeks, it worth the wait. She was glistening; the arousal was there because of him. Pressing the pad of his finger on her clit and sliding across her wet pussy, Fitz groaned. The hours spent, fantasizing over this moment.

He knew exactly what to do to send Olivia over the edge. With one taunting lick, he could feel her thighs tremble against his face.
“Ohhhh…”

Clenching his palm on her thigh in order to keep them from snapping shut, Fitz dragged his nose against her clit, adoring the scent that was seeping through his nostrils. “Fuck,” he groaned.

With the stimulation, Fitz almost lost it, but he had to control himself. He was here for her. Seeing her so vulnerable and naked. She was allowing to see her like this and that meant everything to him. Returning to his worshipful task, he lapped whatever she had to offer, and took it all in. Hearing her moan added fuel to his continual discovery of her. Olivia was right here, spread out on this hotel bed, crying out for him. Taking a moment to breathe, Fitz smiled at her, then lowered his head to kiss the insides of her thighs, and the space right above her pussy. Her skin was heavenly to the touch.

He decided to add his fingers, gently pushing them inside of Olivia. Her sighs, gradually heavier with each push, made his dick throb. As he continued to fingerfuck her, while sucking her clit, Fitz used his free hand to hold her even though she was thrashing. If she was reacting like this, who knew would could happen once he finally made love to her.

“You feel so good,” Fitz spoke, reaching up to kiss her, to let her taste herself. She moaned in his mouth, gripping his cheeks. His hips bounced. Another forceful kiss with a deeper thrust of his fingers brought her to completion. When he paused to watch her fully orgasm, he was in awe. Olivia’s mouth was open, chest heaving, and her face was flushed. A sly smile came across his face.

“You’re so beautiful.”

“Let me.”

Fitz inched back. “No. It’s all about you tonight.”

Olivia’s voice was dark. “Can I at least touch you? Don’t think I haven’t thought of you.”

*How could he resist a woman as sexy and beautiful?*

When her mouth was so close to him, he couldn’t breathe. Fitz was anticipating. As Olivia cupped his balls, she kissed the tip, then licked the underside of his cock. He spewed out profanities. “No, Liv. Livvie, I can’t let you do that,” he coughed. “But you feel amazing. You’re going to work me up. I want to cum for you. While I’m in you.”

He lifted her up and they continued to kiss. Humming and moaning, supporting each other with their weight. Just enjoying each other.

Fitz rushed to slip on a condom - he wasn’t going to take any chances - coming back to a very sexy Olivia. He leaned down to kiss her once more. His long body hovering over her small frame. Breathing in sync. They had a way of doing that whenever they were together.

Their eyes told each other many things. *I’m ready. I trust you. Please. Let’s do this.*

He almost fell apart when he heard her sigh once he slowly entered her. Once they were adjusted, Fitz began to ease out and push back in. Using his arms to support him. She felt perfect. It had been so long since he made love. Sure, there were quickies and casual fucks in years past. Something could have mattered but his heart wasn’t in it. Hoping the right woman would come along. Now, he was sure he met the one would take his breath away every time.

“Fitz,” Olivia mewed. Feeling her palms pressed on his chest. Her jaw dropped when he surprised her with a jolting thrust.
“Is it okay,” he asked, eyebrows lifted in concern. Olivia opened her eyes; biting her lip. Nodding, she lifted her head and gave him a kiss.

“Yes.”

Her hips bucked to meet his thrusts.

“Liv.”

The motion of their hips created an intriguing rhythm in this spacious room. Whispers of sweet nothings and funny tidbits echoed off the walls. Fitz’s hair was curling; not immune to the heat they were creating. Olivia liked it rough, and met his thrusts always with a powerful hip rotation. She was giving him a run for his money. His cock throbbed as her center rubbed against him. His growls were turning her on. Her nails digging and scratching his back; it felt glorious. They moved together, knowing what the other would do next, without asking. Fitz was in Heaven. Being with her. His body providing satisfaction.

Between kisses, they had a cute banter going on.

"You're doing great, Liv."

Giving him an eskimo kiss, she slyly complimented, “God, you are so thick."

Fitz bursted out laughing. “Is that alright?”

Feeling her walls tightening around his cock was electrifying. Sucking on her full lips, weaving his fingers through her hair. Her breasts pressed against him, moving together as one. They didn’t have to speak to show how they felt. With each forceful thrust, Fitz gritted his teeth, giving all he had to this amazing woman. Who was showing her affection towards him as well.

“Livvie,” he breathed.

When he spoke her nickname - the name she only reserved for those close to her - she let go, shaking as he lazily pumped into her. Fitz couldn’t believe how she melted in his arms as she came. Soon after, he reached his completion, kissing her face and neck. It snuck up on him and he grunted. Giving her one more kiss, he rolled

“That was…wow.”

Olivia moved her hair to the side; her straightening job was now futile, returning to her natural state, tight and bouncy curls.. “Oh, Fitz.”

Fitz smiled, and brought her close. They snuggled in silence, for what seemed like hours, but only ten minutes. He was very satisfied.

“I’ll be right back,” he murmured in her ear, kissing the shell, down to the spot next to her jaw.

Fitz heard Olivia hum as he walked away, probably appreciating what the Good Lord gave him. Walking to the bathroom, flicking on the light, Fitz stared at the mirror. He looked like the wind was knocked out of him. Hair completely disheveled; all of the product he slathered on was gone. Ears flushed red. Small marks on his arms, and back, when he turned slightly. He was honored to have reminders of his lady on his body.

After discarding the condom and washing his hands, he rung out two washcloths.
“Hey,” he softly greeted, alerting her of his return. Olivia was still lounging but was trying to cover herself with the sheet. Sinking on the mattress, Fitz lifted the barrier, gently wiping the essence of their lovemaking off her thighs. Because he couldn’t get enough of her, he would peck the fresh skin after he cleaned her.

“Mmm,” he could hear her purr. It was the most erotic sound that crossed his ears.

“Are you comfortable?”

Olivia finished braiding her hair. “Yes, thank you.”

He hadn’t seen her look so… peaceful.

“I, uh, sleep naked usually. Is that okay?”

“Don’t let me stop you,” Olivia laughed. “I’m going to put on a sleep shirt.”

Fitz watched Olivia tiptoe to her travel bag and change into her sleepwear. She smiled when she returned.

“Are you always like this? This wonderful when you have sex?”

His eyes widened in shock; that was the last thing he thought Olivia would ask or say to him. Immediately, he recollected what he did and hoped to God, he didn’t mess anything up. “I don’t know. If I feel connected, I’m going to give it my all.”

Olivia nodded. “I’m glad you do.”

She disappeared to the bathroom. Fitz checked the time; 1:21am. They had been busy for the last two and a half hours.

“Hey.”

“Hi,” he greeted, opening his arms to her. Olivia snuggled into his chest, peppering a few kisses on his skin.

“Do you have to get back home at a certain time?”

Fitz replied with a sigh, “No. Boy will be going to the Zoo and all.”

Olivia giggled. “Cool.”

“Why do you ask?”

“I just want to get breakfast and then make love to you again, and again,” she explained. “Maybe we can get a little frisky.”

Fitz laughed as he squeezed Olivia. “Is that so?”

With a wink, Olivia said, “Oh yeah. I know there’s a fierce lover in there. Can’t wait to find him.”

“I could get used to this,” he said, wrapping his arms around her small frame.

Fitz didn’t talk. Just basking in the moment, that he was finally here with Olivia. His Sweet Baby. Who knew that a random evening could turn into weeks of bliss and admiration, and now love. He loved her. If he could, he’d tell her right now, but glancing at her, she was deep in slumber. Her full
lips poked out as she breathed in and out. Eyelashes drooping. Her body rising and falling against his. As if she couldn't be more perfect, she was now.

This was going to be his new normal; the life he had been wanting for the longest time.
Was it a dream?

Olivia could sense warmth run through her body. The kind that makes a woman smile all day long. The giddiness similar to a schoolgirl crush, or hearing the best news ever.

That feeling woke her up. Slowly opening her eyes, Olivia was greeted with sunbeams coming through, and realized there was something she hadn’t experienced in a while.

Comfort.

The bed was more plush that her own. Usually, she would have jolted out of her sleep, anxious with the unfamiliar surrounding. But then again, she never slept well. But not this morning. It was different.

When the pair of strong arms that were enclosing her body among the sheets of white squeezed her, that’s when Olivia knew it wasn’t a dream.

The night was amazing. Meeting his peers and co-workers, being surprised with an evening getaway. Making love and falling asleep together. It was the first time she was in bed with another person in two years. Quite odd because Olivia was finally getting used to having the bed all to herself. Not having to worry about hogging covers, or sleeping patterns.

She would never tell Fitz about the dry spell, and the reasons behind it. It would probably drive him away and she didn’t want him to go.

Peering over to the clock. A quarter to nine. She couldn’t even remember the last time she slept in.

Although her mind was racing, listing all the reasons why she couldn't enjoy this, Olivia decided to relax and enjoy. The thoughts were running so fast and loudly repeated, Olivia wondered if they were manifesting physically and interrupting Fitz’s slumber.

His soft snores were an indicator that everything was fine. Olivia allowed her eyelids to droop. She couldn't fully go back to sleep, but she let her breathing sync with his. Then, she felt his lips on her cheek.

“Good morning.”

The smile appeared on her face. Olivia wiggled a little, getting reacquainted with Fitz’s body. “Good morning to you.”

“Did you sleep well,” he whispered against her neck. Olivia confirmed with a smile.

“I did.”

Fitz was great at making morning talk extra sexy. “That’s great.”

"Mnhmm.” Adjusting her frame, so she could face Fitz, she snuggled into his chest. He was incredibly warm and protective. There was something about him that made her lose herself in his eyes. She had to kiss him. But her smile changed into an alarming frown. With wide eyes, Olivia scrambled out of bed.

“Liv?!”
Olivia knew his eyes were on her. In only a sleep shirt, she felt way under dressed. The only positive was that her legs were on display for Fitz. Hoping for a repeat of the night before, Olivia found what she was looking for and locked herself in the bathroom.

It was a shame. She couldn’t kiss that man before brushing her teeth. That was a thing that was drilled in her psyché. It was their first night together. She couldn't damper his idea of her because of an inexcusable faux pas. Her mother always told her to greet a man in the morning with fresh breath. Trying to salvage her appearance, she pulled her hair into a ponytail. When she returned, Fitz was sprawled in bed, hair messy, looking extra handsome. A sly smirk on his face was icing on the cake, inviting her to come back to him. Olivia lifted the covers, catching a glimpse at his lower half, and joined him.

“You brushed your teeth,” he asked incredulously.

“Yeah.”

“Is that your thing?”

Olivia replied sheepishly, knowing he would tease her. “Yeah. Just a habit.”

“Okay…are you going to judge me that I haven’t?”

“No.”

Fitz snorted. “You know. Let me follow suit.”

The glorious sight of Fitzgerald Grant in the nude was such a wonderful treat. Olivia slowly cleared her throat as he stretched his limbs, wandering around, showing off his God-given physique. Good genes worked in his favor, she admired.

Turning to wink at Olivia, Fitz smiled. “I see what you’re doing. Don't get too comfy, Livvie. I'm coming back for you.”

Olivia didn't realize she had tensed. Clearing her throat, she added, “You called me that last night.”

“I did.” His eyebrows were knit together; concern shown on his face. “Is that okay?”

“Yes,” she affirmed.

While Fitz was in the bathroom, Olivia checked her phone for the first time since she arrived to the hotel. This rendezvous was screwing with all of her morning routines. But it was a nice departure.

“Oh right,” Fitz reappeared, interrupting her thoughts. “Now, I’m ready to kiss you.”

Cupping her chin, he brought her lips to his. Olivia draped her arms around his neck.

“Hi.” Fitz’s eyes shone as Olivia slowly breathed.

“Hi.”

“Are you hungry?”

“A little.”
Fitz reached over to the phone and dialed. “Tell me what you want. They’ll make whatever you want.”

“You.”

“Hold up now,” he interjected, placing the speaker on his chest. “Let's get some food in you first.”

Olivia bit her lip as Fitz talked with the front desk manager. She couldn't keep her eyes off of him. Everything about him looked effortless. How he smoothly talked to the call’s recipient. When he checked her out as he finished the call, and leaned back into the pillows.

Fitz pressed a soft kiss on Olivia's lips. One kiss turned into several. “Hmm,” he moaned. “You are so beautiful.”

Olivia sunk down into the sheets, bringing Fitz with her. Mouths opening, bringing themselves closer. Olivia sighed as Fitz’s hand lowered to her center. He paused.

“You aren't wearing…”

With a sneaky grin, she revealed, “I never said I was going to put my underwear back on. I just needed a shirt.”

Fitz’s eyes darkened. “If I had known,” he spoke, in that husky baritone that made Olivia weak. “I would have kept you up all night.”

The quick movements of Fitz made her squeal. His hands pressing on her skin as their mouths collided. Already, Olivia reacted to his touch, arching whenever he created a stir that bubbled within her. Even as her mind was foggy, Olivia moved her hand down to his cock.

“Fuck, woman.”

Someone was knocking on the door.

"The timing." Fitz exclaimed, slamming his hand against the mattress. Olivia giggled, wiping her forehead.

“I need to find some pants,” he mumbled, while he got out of bed again.

Olivia pulled her shirt down. “No need, you stay. I'll get it.”

Fitz's head turned so fast, it startled her. "Oh no, you don't! I'm not going to miss my first opportunity to bring you breakfast in bed.”

Rolling her eyes, she watched Fitz retrieve a pair of sweatpants. The sentiment was partially endearing. But that wasn't her style. To be a princess in waiting. But maybe she had to be a little more flexible this time.

“Room service.”

“Yes,” Olivia answered, sitting up, fluffing the pillow behind her back, gesturing for her "visitor" to approach. Fitz carted a large tray towards her. “As you ordered, Miss Pope. Fluffy whole wheat pancakes with a blueberry compote, and some whipped cream. With fresh fruit and eggs.”

Olivia puckered and let Fitz peck her lips. “Thank you.”

Fitz had scrambled eggs, toast, and thick pieces of bacon. A French press was also included.
The sun was already high as they sat in bed, drinking coffee. Fitz had retrieved the newspaper and was casually reading. While Olivia observed him, in between email scrolling.

“Is everything to your satisfaction?”

Olivia placed a dollop of cream on her pancakes. “I don't usually pig out, but this morning is important.”

“Oh yeah,” Fitz lowered the paper, meeting her gaze. “Why is that?”

“I get to spend the day with a very handsome man --- alone.”

Fitz tapped her nose with his finger. “I like that.”

Olivia had an idea. She scooped some of her pancakes and offered them to Fitz. He gladly accepted. Some of the blueberry was on his lips. So, by default, she had to kiss the remnants of the dark fruit away. Ever mischievous, his mouth opened. She was able to taste berries on his tongue, nipping at his bottom lip.

Dragging her hand down his chest, towards the waistband. Lighting squeezing him through the sweatpants, Olivia asked. “You're getting hard for me?”

“Hmm.”

“That's good,” she lowly stated, nuzzling against his jaw.

She was quite amused by Fitz - he was squirming.

“You're going to get me in trouble, Livvie.”

The air was getting thick with lust, once again.

“Wait,” Fitz tried to stop Olivia from going to town. “Let me get a condom.”

Olivia shook her head, smiling. "Handled.”

“I see you, Miss Pope.”

Olivia sheathed him, and promptly straddling herself. Fitz immediately reached for her chest, sucking on her nipple, covered by the fabric. One thing lead to another, the trays were moved to the side, and their hands found their new favorite environment - the lines and contours of the other’s body.

“Ooh, yes,” she exhaled. Fitz had adjusted himself inside of her, and their eyes remained on each other as they rocked. Still getting familiar with their bodies, they transitioned from a slow and careful pace, to a tempo that had their heads spinning.

Fitz wanted her shirt off - he was pulling and tugging - impatiently groaning. Finally, she stilled to take it off. With a throaty growl, he began to kiss and suck on her breasts.

Olivia's jaw dropped, trying to use words, but whatever could come out would have to do.

“I’m going to make you come over and over,” he growled in her ear. Then he grasped her hips to assist her speed. She bounced more, all of her body moving with purpose. Fitz grunted while steadying himself, allowing her to slam up and down. It didn't take long for her to reach her high, Olivia fell onto Fitz, using him as a balance.
Kissing her temple, Fitz breathed deeply.

“Good Lord, you wear me out,” he finally said, placing his head on Olivia’s shoulder.

“You have a four year old. You should have plenty of energy, Mister.”

Fitz laughed as Olivia brought him close. They cuddled in silence letting their arms and legs tangle. Blissfully content in the afterglow.

“Tell me a secret.”

It took a moment for Fitz to reveal. “I can play the guitar.”

“Oh, really now?”

“Mmhmm.”

Olivia requested, “I want to hear you play.” Fitz nodded, running his fingers up and down her spine.

“Okay, darling. Now, you tell me one.”

It shouldn’t have been a surprise to get asked. Olivia didn’t know what could be an easy tidbit to share. In a bored tone, she told, “I went to school in Switzerland.”

Fitz’s eyebrows lifted. “Yeah? That’s awesome!”

“It was okay.”

The afternoon lazily dragged - Olivia and Fitz used their time wisely. Two more rounds of intense, toe-curling, jaw-dropping sex, with a joint shower before heading home. Olivia and Fitz made it back to her apartment around 4. Fitz had to pick up Teddy and relieve his friend of her selfless duty.

“I’m so glad we were able to get away.”

“Let’s do it again.”

“Already going to work on a date,” Fitz proudly stated. “You make me so happy, Liv.”

Olivia’s eyes shifted. Hearing that wasn’t expected; it had been a while since she had a positive impact on anyone. With a polite grin, she rubbed his back. She hoped Fitz would move away from this subject.

“Dinner this week?”

Olivia quickly agreed. “Sure. I’m free on Thursday. Want to come here? Maybe Teddy would like to see my place.”

“Yeah! That’d be great.” Olivia was surprised to be pulled into another embrace. Fitz leaned down to kiss her again. “Thank you for including him.”

“Of course. I love Teddy.”

“I'm glad. Ok. Let me go get him. I'll be seeing you.”

Olivia wrapped her arms around Fitz’s waist. “Yes.” She didn’t want him to go. But he had to. She couldn’t be that selfish.
“Call me anytime, okay? I mean it.”

Olivia nodded. “I will.”

When she closed the door, she smiled, then gradually closed her eyes.

This was different than everything she knew. Not just physically, but on all levels. How could a blind date that she was not excited to attend, blossom into a relationship with so much potential. Olivia hated to compare, but after the many disappointments in boyfriends, Fitz was becoming her person. Even though she was still hesitant to share so much, Fitz was carefully tearing down the walls she didn't think anyone could demolish.

What he didn't know was that she has given up on love. On herself. She wasn't lovable. People got too close and she would run. Or they saw something that wasn't desirable and they left her stranded.

But Fitz. He was seeing her in ways that amazed her. He didn't push but he was willing to hear about the good and bad.

Was this love? Or a cheesy good feeling that included romance and mind-blowing sex?

When would the floor give way? Did she have to be cautious again?

Olivia kicked off her sandals, finding her way to the kitchen. Standing on toes to find the largest wine glass, Pouring a healthy serving of her favorite red. Olivia changed into her usual summer gear - a tee and leggings.

Trying to get back to her normal, pushing doubt out of her mind, Olivia took some files out of her briefcase. Reading proposals, drafting notes for her Monday meeting with the team.

And then she realized.

She missed him.

“No,” she reprimanded herself. “It’s only been 30 minutes. This can not be happening.”

Another long sip of wine, Olivia pressed forward with her work. When she recollected the ways he lavished affection on her, she could rise from her seat, and find a distraction. But the desire was there. She had to hear his voice.

Scrolling down her contact list, she pressed pressed his name, and then the phone symbol. She waited for him to pick up. Even if she had to listen to his voicemail message, it would do.

Barely one ring had transpired when she got her wish.

“Hey stranger.”

“Hi.” Olivia shut her eyes, immediately embarrassed by the change in her voice. Her succinct, clear tone moved into a frantic, shrill, and surprised response.

“Hi. You didn’t think I’d answer.”

“No and yes.”
Fitz chuckled. “What’s going on?”

“I…”

“Liv?”

Olivia focused on the rim of her wine glass - a nervous tick of hers. “I didn’t want to bother you, but --- is it weird to say that I miss you already?”

“No. I miss you too. A lot. If I could, I’d turn around and see you again. Even if it was for a minute.”

“You would?”

Fitz replied in such a hopeful tone, “Absolutely. Even though I can’t leave right now, we can act as if Connecticut Avenue didn’t separate us. We can go back to the Presidential suite, lying next to each other. Just be us.”

“Wow.”

“Can we do that? Just stay on the phone. For a minute,” Fitz suggested. “We don’t even have to talk.”

“Daddy, who are you talking to?”

Olivia smiled, but was selfishly disappointed. In a way, she wished there was an easier way to connect with Fitz, without any worry that she would leave a bad impression for Teddy. They were barely official. She still hadn’t discussed the ins and outs of this unique relationship.

“Olivia.”

“Tell her I say hi!”

Teddy’s enthusiasm made her heart leap, but still. This was their reality.

“Did you hear that?”

Olivia tried to stay chipper. “I did! Please send him my love and hugs. I should let you go.”

“Liv…”

“No, no. You and Teddy need to catch up. I’ll talk to you later.”

She disconnected the call. Taking another smooth gulp of wine, she resumed her paperwork.

It was too fast. She was falling too deep. Infatuated with a man who couldn't be 100% hers. At least, not yet.

Her screen lit up. Glancing over, she stopped.

*I’m going to call you after T’s bedtime. Don’t hang up on me. :)*

Five minutes, as expected, the phone rang.

“What?”

“I couldn’t let our minute be wasted. And I didn’t want you going to bed angry. At me or at yourself.”
“How do you know that?”

“I notice things, Olivia Pope. Sorry about Teddy.”

“No need to apologize.”

“Okay, minute starts now.”

Olivia took a breath. Per his suggestions, her mind went back to the hotel. The laughs and quiet moments. Being in his arms.

“What are you thinking about,” he quietly asked.

“How I’d like to go to bed and you be there. You?”

“Same. But also, I’m excited that my girlfriend misses me and wants me to be around.”

“You’re a trip, Mister.”

“I wouldn’t have any other way, Livvie.”

She felt her heart skip. Every time he said her nickname. It made her heart swell and break simultaneously.

“Are you sure?”

Blinking, she snapped, “About what?”

“About me calling you Livvie. You… you stop breathing when I say it. Like it hurts to hear it. I don’t want to make you uncomfortable.”

Olivia brought her knees to her chest. He was right. It was not always easy because the memories connected to the name were painful. “I’m not used to it. But I absolutely love it when you say my name. It’s comforting. I trust you.”

“Okay. Just checking.”

“Thank you for checking in with me. I should let you go for real this time.”

Fitz reminded, "You don't have to."

"We both have work in the morning and I don't want to keep you up." Olivia didn't want her emotions to lead her down a road that she wasn't ready to take just yet.

Relenting, Fitz complied. "Okay. I'll talk to you tomorrow. Good night, Livvie.”

"Good night, Fitz. Thank you for everything."

"Of course," he sweetly spoke. "I...I'll see you soon."

Olivia smiled, pulling her cell away to press the red button on her screen. Finishing her wine, she tidied her space and retired to bed. Hoping the feeling of loneliness would fade away she went to sleep. Dreaming of his arms, his smile, everything about him.
Late summers in DC were no joke. The rising temperatures - with the added humidity - were so strong, it could break a person's will on a consistent basis. Air conditioning units and fans on full-blast, but it proved no match for the heat. No wonder it was normal for federal employees and whoever lived in the area, to migrate to cooler conditions.

Work was slow in August for Olivia Pope & Associates. But always the vigilant soldier, she continued to keep the doors open, just in case a client from out of town, or just about to start a new Congressional term, needed her help. So, they were set on cleaning old files, replying to emails to tried and true clients, and preparing for a new wave of cases to handle. But the limited relief blocked the crew’s productivity.

“It is too hot for this,” Abby griped, pulling her long red hair into a ponytail. “We should be at the beach, or drinking cold ones by the Marina.”

Harrison twisted his necktie off, trying to cool off temporarily. “Is the A/C even on?”

Stepping down from the ladder, Olivia sassed, “It’s blowing frigid air. See my goosebumps? Maybe you and I should switch places and then you have some relief.”

“Ha, ha,” he sneered. “You just want me to stack those boxes.”

Olivia continued, “You got it. Hey, if we get this room cleaned up, we can go.”

Abby huffed, slapping a folder on the table. “That may take forever.”

Familiar with her verbal antics, Olivia smiled. “Well, that’s not my problem. But I do have some wine and beer in the fridge, if you want some. Let’s go to my office.” The three journeyed to her spacious room, very cool, thanks to a decent A/C unit.

“So,” Olivia started, plopping into her chair. “What’s new?”

Abby shot a dirty look and Harrison began to drink from his beer bottle. They started to divulge about future vacation plans, random dates, and some of the foolishness they've heard from others in the city.

“Hey.”

Quinn had arrived from running errands. “I brought some lunch.”

“What about you, Liv,” Harrison asked.

*Here we go, she thought, they want updates.* Taking a long sip of her wine, Olivia squinted her eyes, using the action to carefully maneuver around this. This was her thing. Spinning stories well so she could look good.

“Fine.”

With a haughty laugh, Abby corrected, “Oh no, there's no ‘fine’ between us. We literally set you up with this man ourselves! Is he treating you right? Do you have passionate love sessions whenever you're together? Do you flutter around, thinking about him? I think we deserve some kind of update.”
Olivia side eyed Abby, before breaking out her coy smirk. “Things are going well. I’m having him and his son over for dinner on Thursday.”

Harrison nodded, while Abby and Quinn squealed and clapped. The excitement almost irritated her, but Olivia knew her friends were looking out for her, wanting her to succeed in all areas of her life. They had been with her long enough to know that she wasn’t cavalier with her relationships.

“I’m looking for a recipe. Something easy but will be delicious.” Olivia expressed while clicking around on the laptop. “I’ve told him I don’t cook, but I want to impress him.”

Quinn interjected, “You can't go wrong with pasta. Heat up some sauce, sprinkle your favorite cheese, and you’re good to go.”

“There's a primavera I make,” Abby stated, “I’ll email you the recipe.”

Olivia thanked the two. “Any thoughts, Wright?”

Shaking his head with a mischievous look on his face, Harrison answered. “Just have a good time. You know Grant doesn’t need much to be pleased. Am I right, or am I right?”

Olivia rolled her eyes then searched for a hard object to throw at him. “You go too far! His child will be there. No funny business.”

As the room filled with laughter, Harrison lifted his hands. “Everything will be great.”

Thankfully showing a smile while waving him off, Olivia reminded, “Good thing I love you, I’d give you so much hell for that.”

"You do love me," Harrison replied. "I'm happy that you're happy. We're all happy."

The four sat in silence for a minute. Abby calmly observed, “You're really into him.”

It was time to reveal her true feelings to her friends. Olivia smiled - albeit bashfully - while pressing her eyes closed. It was now or never to do this.

“I am. I do like him a lot. I think... I think this could be something more.”

After she finished, Olivia took a deep breath, and gulped more wine. Being transparent and vulnerable was not her strong suit, but these were her friends, her team. They would go over a cliff for her. She noticed that they were willing to support, professionally and personally. All she had to do was allow them in.

She watched Abby smile and Harrison nod. Quinn raised her beer bottle.

"To Liv and Fitz."

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“Hi.”

“Hi.”

Opting to use FaceTime on her iPad, Olivia wanted to chat and still see Fitz. Their visiting schedules had been funky since their weekend together. So, they made a point to talk or videochat at least twice a week.

“How are you, my dear?”
Sitting back on the couch, she answered. “Doing well. How about yourself?”

“Fine.”

“That’s good.”

Olivia felt her cheeks rise; the admiration she had for Fitz was growing. He always seemed to do something that would make her calm. Even just a simple “hi” would make her day better.

“Liv? What’s up?”

Taking the hint that she was in her own little world and Fitz was pulling her back, Olivia answered, “Just thinking about Thursday.” She almost burst out laughing when Fitz immediately looked panicked.

“You’re not cancelling, are you?”

“Oh no,” she spoke, “I was thinking about my gameplan. I wanted to know. Is Teddy allergic to anything?”

Fitz poked out his lips as he thought. “Not that I know of.”

“You?”

“No. What are you planning?”

Olivia relented her secret, “I’m going to make dinner.”

“Is that so?” The bridge of Fitz’s nose crinkled and it was adorable. Olivia giggled.

“Yes.”

“I thought you don’t cook.” Fitz gave a crooked smile.

Olivia shook her head, knowing he would remember her factoids. “I can make simple things. I want it to be a surprise though. But if it doesn’t go well, I can easily call one of the restaurants to deliver.”

“I trust in your abilities, Liv. Can’t wait to eat what you make. Ted is very excited.”

The mention of Teddy reminded Olivia of something she had needed to ask. They had been avoiding this conversation and she wanted to feel better about everything. “Fitz?”

“Yes, baby?”

Olivia leaned forward. “We’ve been skirting around this topic, but, I’m having concerns about our relationship with Teddy.”

Maybe the question wasn’t properly worded because Fitz’s eyebrows lowered. His voice deepened when he asked, “What about it?”

“I don’t want to mess anything up. Is he used to any of this?”

“What do you mean?”

Olivia clasped her hands, hoping to not ruin the mood. “Having someone sharing his Dad. Like a girlfriend.”
Fitz cleared his throat. “Not as much. I was very particular about who got to meet him. But Livvie, he simply adores you. He always asks when I'll see you next.”

Shifting around, she added, “We can’t keep seeing each other in private. Sneaking away for a weekend won’t do in the long run, especially if he only has you. You know? I want to have quality time, but I don’t want to feel like I’m hiding. Around him.”

“I know,” Fitz replied in a calm voice. "You are more than welcome to come over and spend the night. We’ll make it work.”

“She’s four.”

His chuckle made Olivia believe that she was being silly. That she was being unreasonable. Olivia watched as he brought his phone closer so she could see every detail and expression. “Sweetheart, my son will be fine. We will be careful but we can’t be afraid to move forward. This is all new territory for all of us. To be honest, he didn’t seem as fazed by his mother dating now and I have no clue if her boyfriend lives with her.”

Feeling her jaw drop, Olivia quickly snapped her mouth closed “Oh. I’m sorry. I forgot about that.”

Taking a moment to let it all sink in, Fitz let out a sigh. “Yeah, it made me sad at first, but I finally believe we’ve all moved on. I’m at peace. But you know what? You help a lot, Olivia. You being here in my life. I haven't smiled as much as I do now with you. And you actually want to know my son. That means a lot. So don’t worry. When the time comes to discuss more with him, we will do so.”

His words resonated. If he wasn't worried, she shouldn't be worried. "I can't wait to see you. I miss hugging you."

"I know," Fitz smiled. His eyes were so bright. "I miss kissing you. You have the best lips. I could kiss you all day."

Olivia couldn't help but laugh. "You're too much, Mister."

"But I mean it. That's the first thing I'm going to do on Thursday. Kiss you." Fitz quickly ran his fingers through his hair. Olivia gasped. Everything he did was incredibly sexy.

"Liv..."

"I can't help it. I like looking at you." Olivia grinned at him.

They talked for another twenty minutes, shooting the breeze, finding more things to discuss. When they said their goodbyes, Olivia made Fitz promise to call her right before he went to bed. She admitted that she wanted his voice to be the last thing she heard she went to sleep. It caused him to smile extra wide. That made her happy.

Thursday night had arrived. Olivia decided to make it a half day at the office, so she could prepare. It took her twice as long to return from the grocery store. Bags full of vegetables, pasta boxes, cheese, and gourmet snacks. And drinks. Lots of drinks. Apple, orange, cran-raspberry, water, and lemonade. She didn’t know what Teddy would like, so she decided to splurge.

She and Fitz agreed that 6:30 would be a good time. Enough wiggle room to change out of her work clothes, start dinner, and prepare a kid-friendly environment. It had been weeks since Fitz had been inside the apartment; Olivia wanted to give a good impression.
Intently reviewing the primavera recipe, Olivia boiled the pasta and cut the vegetables. She bought a new apron that covered parts of her yellow dress. Her timing was going well, having all the elements in place.

Cooking was never her forte. Frozen meals and casseroles were the only things made at home, and usually her family were mainstays at the fanciest restaurants. So, being a domestic goddess was not in her future. But she wanted to try.

Olivia heard two sets of knocks. It had to be the boys. Smiling to herself, Olivia smoothed her dress as she walked to the door. Taking a breath, she unlocked and opened it.

“Hello there.”

Fitz smiled. “Hi.”

“Livia!” Teddy's joyful greeting was the best way to start the evening.

“O-livia,” Fitz gently reminded.

Teddy mouthed the phrase again to himself, then gave Olivia a warm embrace. “Hi, Livia,” he whispered.

“Good evening! You can call me Livia all you want. Come on in.”

Teddy and Fitz stepped inside. She watched the younger Grant take everything.

“Your house is very small. I like it.”

“Thank you, Mister Grant.”

Teddy’s face crumpled. “Are you talking to my Daddy? Because that’s his name.”

“My bad, Teddy,” Olivia corrected herself, "Thank you, Teddy. I want to show you something." The two made their way to the refrigerator. “What would you like to drink? This is what I have.”

“Whoa.” Teddy’s eyes were so big, they almost fell out of their sockets. Fitz snorted. “Look at this, Daddy! Which one should I choose?"

"It’s up to you, baby.”

Teddy paused. “May I have lemonade, please?”

“Sure.”

Olivia twisted the bottle open, pouring a healthy serving over to Teddy. Fitz twisted his lips. “You didn’t have to do all of this, baby.”

“I want to. Here ya go...Oh!” Olivia exclaimed, "Where's my kiss? You said that it was the first thing--" She didn't have a chance to finish because Fitz was already on the move, pressing his lips to hers. It was appropriate in the company of Teddy, but it was so sensual. It felt like the best kiss ever.

"I didn't forget," he announced. "I was waiting for the perfect moment."

“What are you making this evening?”
Olivia tried to cover the pans and hide the view from Fitz. Using her flirty moves, she playfully shooed him away, “That’s none of your business for now. How about you and Teddy make yourself at home?”

“Okay,” he replied, then bit his lip. “But you know I’ll come back to check up on you.”

Every now and then, Olivia would peek around the corner and watch Fitz and Teddy. They were adorable together. It was never lively at her place. Just her. Quiet evenings consisting of wine and popcorn, with paperwork sprawled all over her couch and coffee table. Catching news recaps and resting before another day at the office. Maybe a rare wine night with Abby, or a visiting girlfriend from Princeton. But this was something she could get used to. A life full of...life.

Taking a moment to sip her wine, she took the loaf of bread she got out the oven. Crusted beautifully to accent the pasta. Olivia congratulated herself on a foolproof success.

“How’s it going?” She heard Fitz call out. Taking her glass, she joined the Grants at the table. Teddy was sitting on Fitz’s lap. “It’s great.”

Leaning down, Olivia gave Fitz a kiss. “Couldn't be better.” They both "hmm-ed", pretty much starving for the next kiss.

Teddy slapped his hands on his cheeks. “Oohh!!! Kissing time!”

Olivia laughed, remembering that Teddy would notice anything. Not wanting to leave him out, she asked, “Would you like a kiss too?”

“Eww, no. You just kissed Daddy!”

Fitz surprised Teddy by blowing a raspberry on his cheek. The younger Grant squirmed, begging his father to stop. But Fitz kept going, placing kisses all of over Teddy’s face. They all laughed, thoroughly enjoying the company. Olivia asked how preschool was going - preparing for kindergarten.

“Daddy and I visited my new school yesterday. Or Monday. I don't know. But it's nice!” Teddy shared more about his new teacher, and the possibility of wearing an uniform every day.

“Hey, Livia?”

Finding his gaze, she lovingly asked, “Yes?”

Teddy’s nose flared. “What’s that smell?”

Olivia slightly turned to the kitchen and nearly panicked. Smoke was rising from the pan. Rushing about in the small space, finding water, towels to dispel the havoc.

“Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit!”

“Olivia, what’s wrong,” Fitz came into the kitchen. With one hand placed on hip, lip trembling, Olivia was stirring the pasta frantically.

“No! Go back, Fitz.”

“What?”

“I ruined it, Fitz!”
“Liv. Livvie.”

Mumbling more words, Olivia slapped her hand on the counter. “What the fuck is wrong with me!”

Fitz took the spatula from her and tried to reassure her. “No.”

Switching off the burners, she cursed herself, “Look at this. It’s not supposed to look like this.” Pulling her apron off in frustration, Olivia began to walk around. Fitz placed his hands on her shoulders, halting her pace. Moving down to her arms, he held her close. Hoping to comfort her. “No, it’s not. You tried and we appreciate it.”

“I should have ordered something before you arrived. And now you all have to wait longer. Oh my gosh, this is horrible.”

“Daddy, is everything okay? Livia, why are you crying?”

Standing in the doorway, Teddy’s brown eyes were doe in shape, like Olivia’s. It made her cry some more. Turning away to wipe her tears, she confessed, “I messed up the recipe for our dinner.”

“Oh,” he responded. “It’s okay! We do that sometimes, right, Daddy?”

Fitz nodded. “Yes.”

Even with their sweet efforts, Olivia was fuming. She failed. Failing was never an option. Reaching over Fitz, she took the saucer, ready to dump the pasta into the garbage. “Liv.”

“Scoot over,” she commanded, using her disappointment to start cleaning.

“Baby, it’s okay.”

Olivia did not answer, using whatever brillo pad or towel in sight to scrub off the visual disaster. Fresh tears began to form, as she continued to scrape the burnt remnants.

“Pizza?”

Olivia stopped, turning towards the voice.

Teddy stared directly at her. “We could have pizza.”

Fitz knelt to Teddy, giving him a big kiss on the cheek. “That’s a grand idea, Teddy. What do you think?”

Olivia swallowed, quietly replying, “That’s fine. I’ll call in.” She took a deep breath, as Fitz rushed to her, massaging the center of her back. “Let me take care of it.” With three quick kisses on her cheek, he called for Teddy, and they moved to the living room.

What a mess. The one moment that she conjured up in her mind that would absolutely perfect, was everything but. Then as she royally embarrassed herself, her boyfriend had to come in and “save the day”.

Olivia couldn’t stop sniffing. Placing the raw vegetables back in the refrigerator, trying to clean up this shit fest. It wasn't working. Olivia snuck away to her bedroom to try to pull herself together.

Ten minutes later, a soft knock on the door interrupted her tears.
“Livia?”

“Teddy, I’ll be there in a minute.”

“Can I come in?”

Olivia tried to compose herself, wiping her eyes, hoping they weren’t too puffy. Things couldn’t possibly get worse. “Sure,” she croaked. The door slightly opened, and the brown-haired boy, carefully walked to the foot of the bed.

“I’m sorry that our dinner got burned. You’re not a bad cook. We all make mee-stakes.”

“Thank you.”

Teddy rocked on his toes - a habit most likely picked up from his father - “If you want, we can try again another time.”

“Yes. That would be great.”

Then, he displayed the sweetest of smiles that melted Olivia's heart.

“Come here, sweetie.”

She watched in amazement as Teddy took off his flip flops, and climbed to where she was sitting. As if they knew each other for years, Teddy quietly snuggled into her arms, and she held him like it was the most normal thing in the world.

“I'm so sorry.”

“It's okay.”

“It's not okay. I just wanted to impress you and your Daddy.”

Teddy mumbled, “Why?”

“Because I want you to like me.”

“But I already do.”

Olivia wasn't expecting him to tell her this. “Well, I don’t see you often, so maybe you forgot.”

“Oh. But I remember,” Teddy explained, “I don't forget people who are kind to me and make my Daddy smile.”

Olivia pressed her lips on the top of Teddy’s head. “You’re so sweet.” They sat quietly, using the moments to mentally reset.

“Livia?”

“Yes?”

“Do you love my Daddy?”

Olivia pulled away to view Teddy’s face. Calm as can be, with sweet brown eyes that were large with curiosity. Waiting for an answer.

“Teddy, I don’t understand the question.”
“Do you love my Daddy?”

Not knowing how to correctly respond, Olivia blurted what sounded good, “I love how he takes care of you. I admire that about him. I think he’s a wonderful man and I love how he loves you and treats you like a prince. He’s a great Daddy.”

Teddy began to squirm as he whined, “But Livia... You are ‘voiding my question!’”

Olivia’s jaw dropped in amazement. “How could you tell?”

“Daddy does that sometimes. It’s because he’s a lawyer.” Teddy smiled proudly. “But guess what?”

“What?”

Teddy crawled to his knees, cupping his hands to Olivia’s ear. “I think he loves you.”

“Really?” Her eyes opened wider to try to connect with what Teddy was implying.

“Yes.”

“How do you know?”

Teddy began to shrug. Olivia could he was going to attempt to explain, so she waited.

“I don’t try to eavess-dwop,” Teddy struggled to find the perfect word, and it came out adorably.

Picking at an imaginary piece of lint on his shirt, he started, “But I was playing with my toys when he was talking to Uncle Harrison. ‘Livia, I heard Daddy tell Uncle Harrison on the phone about love and you and stuff like that. So I was wondering if you knew.”

Olivia blinked. Harrison wasn’t going to give her a heads up? That joker. “And what did you hear?”

Deepening his voice to emulate his father’s, Teddy answered, “I love her, buddy. It’s crazy to know that I can feel so passion-ly about a woman like her.”

Laughing to mask her confusion and intrigue, Olivia didn’t know what to say.

“There were other words, but I don’t remember,” he resumed his toddler ways.

“Okay, honey.”

“So, do you?”

“Do I what?”

“Love my Daddy.”

Olivia pursed her lips. How was she about to confess to this child about how she felt about his father? This man who had reminded her of how good love could be, if given properly. It didn’t seem like a good idea to tell him and not let his father know first.

Teddy snuggled more into Olivia, placing his head on her chest, “It’s okay if you don’t know. I just wanted to see if you loved him back.”

“Where did you get all of this wisdom from?”

The two laughed some more as Olivia pulled Teddy in another hug. “Thank you for checking on me.”

Another knock startled them. Fitz entered with a smile. Olivia blushed slightly, knowing that he would be very enamored by seeing his son and his girlfriend bonding.

“Hey, sorry to interrupt, but pizza should be here any minute. Teddy, want to wash up?”

“Okay!” He scooted up to kiss Olivia’s cheek.

Fitz was surprised by Teddy's actions. He waited for his departure to talk to Olivia. "How are you feeling?"

"I'm okay. You've raised a wonderful son. He's so caring."

"He has a sweet soul," Fitz wrapped his arms around Olivia. "And I'm so glad you two are getting along," Olivia sighed as Fitz kissed her again. "Let's go eat."

Two pizzas - pepperoni, and sausage with peppers - later, the trio was stuffed. Olivia helped herself to a large glass of her favorite wine, while Fitz nursed on the Scotch that was left for him. After the pasta fiasco, the chill atmosphere was needed. Olivia put on some music and they enjoyed each other's company. As the hours passed, Teddy looked like he was ready to pass out.

"What's wrong," Fitz massaged his son's back, kissing his temple.

Teddy kept mumbling. "I just wanna go to sleep."

“Okay.”

Olivia asked, “Do you…want to put him down in my room?”

Fitz glanced in surprise. When she nodded to show that she was certain in her request, he replied, “Sure. Teddy, how about you to go lie down on Livvie’s bed.”

After being set down on the floor, Teddy slowly left towards to her room.

Olivia and Fitz exchanged glances. “I'm sorry for all of this. I should have been thinking logically and taken the easy route.”

“Don't ever be sorry,” he quickly stated.

Olivia sighed, crossing her arms. "It's part of my nature. Growing up, I had to be perfect. Failing is not an option. Even the little things, I had a standard to live up to. Work twice as hard to be twice as good."

“It's going to be alright.” She watched Fitz leave his seat, making quick work of the distance, standing next to her. She reached for his hand. "Do you want to stay here? For the night?"

“What about…”

An intriguing smile rose on her face as she added, “I don’t mind. I just don’t you two to leave. I like having you here. “

Fitz rocked on his heels, with a slight grin. “Is that so? Well, I love being here with you. I might have some extra clothes in the car. Let me go check. Ok?”
“Ok.”

“Daddy?”

“Yes, buddy.”

“Where’s Livia?”

Olivia called out, “I’m right here.”

Teddy let out a yawn and quickly returned into her arms, putting his head down on Olivia's lap. She peered over to Fitz, and he just allowed it happen. She wasn’t ready for his willingness to come to her.

“Hey buddy, what do you think about staying here tonight?”

Lifting his head from her lap, Teddy's voice rose, "Are we having a sleepover?"

Fitz chuckled. “Yes, we are.”

“Yay!”

Olivia grinned, squeezing Fitz’s hand.

“Can we watch movies?”

“Let me see if I can find something on-demand.”

Fitz excused himself to change. Didn't take long for him to return in a t-shirt and gym shorts. There must have been some outfit in his closet that was ill-fitted; Olivia had not seen it yet. He looked so good, so muscular, yet very trim.

“Liv?”

“Hmm?”

She felt hot as Fitz winked at her. He caught her eyeing him.

“Teddy,” he spoke, breaking the lusty silence. “I have some swim trunks that I want you to put on. These will be your PJ’s for the night. Can you go put them on, in Olivia’s bathroom?”

The boy followed directions, scampering away.

“Hey, are you sure about this?”

Olivia nodded. “Mhmm. Of course. This will be good. For all of us.” She walked to Fitz, looking at him with pride. It didn’t matter what the conversation was, their eyes could talk for them. Even in silence, thoughts floated. She brought her hand, brushing her fingers through his hair as she kissed him.

“Hmm,” he sighed.

“Fitzgerald.”

“Olivia Carolyn.” His voice dropped to that low register that made her weak in the knees.

Three quick kisses in a row; they giggled and smirked. Standing in the middle of the room, just
enjoying each other, sharing a tender moment. Olivia

“You look great,” he whispered, admiring Olivia’s ensemble of a t-shirt and shorts. “We’re matching.”

Laughing quietly, she answered, “So do you.”

Fitz pressed his lips on her neck. “You are amazing.”

“Lies,” she admitted.

“I know what I’m talking about. You make me incredibly happy.”

“Oooh..”

“Mmmm.”

“Mmhmm,” he repeated, but in a drawn-out kind of way.

A set of high-pitched giggles filled the space. Olivia also giggled, tapping her hand on Fitz’s chest. “We’ve been caught.”

“You love to kiss, don’t you?” Teddy asked, with a mischievous grin, that mirrored his father.

Fitz rubbed his chin and turned to face his son. “I think so.”

“This is my side,” Olivia pointed to the left side of the bed. “Well, they’re all my side, but I’d rather sleep there.”

Fitz gave his acknowledgment. In her mind, Olivia replayed the last time she welcomed anyone into her room, her sanctuary. Finally, she had an opportunity to start over.

“Where do I sleep, Daddy?”

“The middle.”

“Wherever.”

Olivia and Fitz cancelled each other out with their responses. Teddy looked as confused as ever. Bowing slightly in deference, Fitz asked, “Which one, Miss Pope?”

“Find some space.”

Teddy hurried to a spot that was suitable for him which was the far side of the bed. “Come on in, you guys. Daddy! Livia’s bed feels really nice and warm. Not like yours. Livia, be next to me.”

Olivia shook her head, and plopped down on the mattress while Fitz slid in behind her. Teddy giggled. “This is perfect.”

“Okay, we need to go to bed, Teddy. So no wiggling around.”

Teddy nodded. ”Okay. Good night, Daddy Bear. Good night, Livia.”

The two watched Teddy doze off. Olivia turned so she could face Fitz. He whispered, ”Thank you.”

“No,” Olivia rubbed her hand on his cheek. ”The pleasure is all mine.”
It felt amazing to have Fitz in her bed. She was safe. Relieved. They weren't a secret anymore. The burden had lifted. "Now I can hear your voice before I go to sleep. It's very comforting you know."

"That's true," he agreed. "I feel the same way. I'm going in a little late tomorrow, so we don't have to rush out of here in the morning. Sometimes waking up is a pain for us."

Olivia shrugged, "No problem. I gave everyone off."

She exhaled deeply when Fitz dragged his index finger on the bridge of her nose. Their eyes were locked on each other, sharing an emotion they could feel immediately, without touching or speaking. Olivia knew he wanted to say something, but whether or not he would, she had no clue.

“I…”

Olivia interrupted him with a kiss. Leaning back, Fitz gave her a look that let her know that she didn't have to worry.

“Livvie, you mean a lot to me. I'm glad that we're here.”

As he gave her one last searing kiss, Olivia was able to decipher his words. She knew Teddy heard correctly.

Fitz did love her.
It had been a month since they made it official. Several sleepovers and dinners and fun phone calls later, Olivia and Fitz were finally in a groove. They were comfortable with each other. Well, Olivia was becoming more laid-back while Fitz patiently waited for her to get to this point. The longer conversations, the walks in Chevy Chase, the drives to Virginia or Annapolis, helped them become closer. Olivia enjoyed those free days from work to just be with Fitz.

On a day when Teddy was away with friends, Olivia went to visit Fitz. She beamed as soon as Fitz opened the front door. The smile offered to her was just as wide and brilliant.

"Hi."

"Hi."

Her cheeks rose when his lips captured her own, while her hands caressed his face. Fitz pulled her into his embrace, causing her to moan into their kiss. They could do this forever, if allowed. Olivia never wanted these moments to end. It felt like the one time she could lose control and not worry about relinquishing. She knew he would take care of her, not let her fall. She's always wanted that kind of security. Finally, she was receiving it.

"Hmm," he answered, softly pulling away. "Come on in."

Olivia took off her sandals before plopping on the couch. Realizing that he found her irresistible when she wasn't in work clothes, Olivia prided herself in wearing a cute halter sundress. Not too revealing, but still gave away the right amount of curves.

"You look divine this afternoon."

"Why, thank you," Olivia smirked, pressing away any wrinkles that newly formed. With a few eyelash bats, she gestured for him to join her.

She could tell Fitz was getting hints but being stubborn, because he walked towards the kitchen. "What are you doing on Labor Day?"

"Nothing."

"Cool," Fitz replied.

It was a free day to just do nothing...or everything. Olivia was in the mood for love. Usually, they would try whenever Teddy was away or knocked out asleep. But it was pushing a week of no sex, and that wasn't okay for her. Clearly not for him either, because she noticed that a tent was forming in his pants when they stopped kissing. It wasn't just the physical aspect, it was the whole experience that she craved. Being so close and vulnerable. That meant everything to her and she knew that he felt the same way.
Fitz returned into the living room, with two bottles of water in his hand. "I want you to come over. We're going to do barbeque. Some of my co-workers will be there, Harrison too."

Olivia nodded. "Sure."

Taking her hand, Fitz asked, "Hey, Liv?"

"Yes?"

"Have I told you how beautiful you are?"

Shifting closer to him, Olivia sweetly replied, "Yes."

Fitz's laugh was caught in his throat. "Good. Because I have plans for you today."

"What's that?"

"I think you know," he lowly spoke, rubbing his hand on her now-bare knee. Moving his thumb right to left, with just enough friction from the callous, was turning Olivia on. Her exhales were becoming more shallow as Fitz crept his hand higher and under the barrier of her dress. The weight of his movements were making Olivia weak. She decided to tug at the bottom of his beloved t-shirt.

"Mmhhmm," he encouraged, lifting it over his head. Olivia approved with delight, an unusual growl escaped her lips as she brushed her hand all over his chest. Fitz gently moved Olivia to his lap, kissing the shell of her right ear. Quick nibbles of skin with more kisses, they giggled and smiled.

As Olivia leaned forward to give him access to her neck, Fitz whispered, "I love you."

"What?" Olivia pulled back, very puzzled. Her eyebrows were knit, waiting to see how he would react. Maybe it was a mistake. Something to just say to fill the time, or to get her more involved. But all Fitz did was smile more, quickly swiping his tongue across his lips, and repeat himself.

"I...I love you."

"Fitz."

"I mean it. I'm in love with you."

Olivia could feel her throat drying. She was great at words - creating lines and sentences and monologues that could stop a man in his tracks. But right now, that flew out the window. He loved her. Everything she suspected was true. Since the dinner fiasco, Olivia kept track of every gesture, text message, snarky comment, or whatever, to see if he would just let her know. Or if she was wrong and just assuming things.

But he was telling her. He was making it obvious.

"I don't know what to say," she slowly informed, with eyes that was incredibly frightened. She looked like a deer in headlights. Fitz rubbed her arms, giving her the comfort she wanted.

"You don't have to say anything. Just know that's how I feel about you. I have for a while. I didn't know when or how to tell you. But I wanted you to know now."

Before she could give a rebuttal, Olivia gasped into the kiss Fitz gave her. Their movements were now fervent, majestic, and explosive. Her dress came off immediately, along with her panties and bra. Fitz's jeans were unbuttoned quickly, Olivia could have lost a nail. But it didn't matter. They had to respond to this genuine moment. He needed to show her how much she loved him.
The kisses were powerful, creating reassurance. The touches were meaningful. As they lay on the couch, preparing to take the next step, Olivia stopped Fitz so she could look him in the eye, to make sure that he meant what he said.

Looks mean everything.

This one was different.

Olivia bravely smiled, breathing deeply, and reaching for his hands. Trust was there. Fitz leaned down to kiss her once more; his tongue separating her lips, moving in deeper. The swift moment when they became one, it took Olivia's breath away. The relief was intense and it almost made her cry. They moved so well, breathing in sync even.

When they came down from their highs, they snuggled. Fitz would gingerly kiss her shoulders, trace the birthmarks and moles that were printed on her smooth skin. Olivia wrapped her hands in his wavy hair, telling him "thank you", and "you mean so much to me."

Different ways to express those three words that she wasn't able to pronounce. Words were failing her. She couldn't tell him just yet. But she would soon.
Chapter 10

Everything changed when Olivia heard those three words. When he began to tell her, she kissed him. Distractions were key. She wasn't ready to hear them yet, even though she was aware it was bound to happen. A few weeks later, when he finally confessed, Olivia was rendered speechless. It created a shift in their relationship. Even though she didn't say it back, everything was different.

It was another Saturday, curled in bed with Fitz. This weekend was at her place. Her alarm clock would sound off and even though she didn't have work, Olivia contemplated if she wanted to get moving. It was a miracle that she was tempted to sleep in. The reason was the man snuggled behind her; he was so warm and soft, and protective. He made her room happy again. Lived in, not some beautiful space that was just a resting spot between working hours.

As she shifted her weight, pressing her ass into him, Olivia smiled and knew that he was going to wake up.

“Hmm,” she heard him moan in her ear.

“Hey.”

“Hi.”

“Good morning.”

Olivia lifted her hands and ran them through his hair. Fitz peppered kisses on her shoulder and cheek. Whenever they did get to sleep together, the first five minutes would be used to cuddle and ask about their upcoming days. And of course, the alarm buzzed.

“Ohhhh,” he groaned, not even close to being ready to get out of bed. But she was scrambling out of his embrace since their legs were tangled. Olivia could feel Fitz's hand grasp her thigh.

“Why did you keep that on? You don't sleep in?”

“Fitzzz, I have to get moving.”

Olivia crawled over Fitz, but not before he tickled her sides. A muffled string of giggles bubbled out of her as she moved away. Playfully waving her fist in the air, Olivia disappeared into her closet, pulling out several shirts and pants. Two minutes passed; she reappeared with two towels - one in her hand and the other surrounding her body.

“Where are you going,” he whispered, smiling.

“I have to take a shower.”

Fitz rubbed his face and gave a sly look. “May I join you?”

Olivia’s eyebrows lowered, but she shrugged. “I don't know.”

“Okay.”

“That's not something I usually do,” she answered. “But since I like you, we can.”

Fitz sat up against the headboard. “Cool.”
His eyes were mischievous and Olivia could not resist that face. Rolling her eyes, she promptly responded. “No funny business. Teddy is in the living room. We can't be loud or silly. I'll get you a towel.”

Olivia started the water. All Fitz had to do was take off his shorts, so he leaned against the door, while Olivia prepped - brushing her teeth, washing her face, lining up her soap and hair products.

He quietly gasped when Olivia dropped her towel.

"What?"

"Nothing," he smiled. "Just observing."

Olivia shook her head, before standing under the shower head, with her eyes closed. It felt so good.

“Hi,” his blue eyes met her pair of brown.

“Hi.”

Lowering his head, he greeted her with a strong kiss. As he opened his eyes, Fitz realized something was different.

“Your hair...”

He had never seen her hair like this before. It always been straightened. Her roots would curl or frizz when they spent hours in bed, in the heat of their love-making. But now the water had activated her natural curls with lots of volume; they were soft to the touch. His hands couldn't resist. He had to touch.

“I know,” she remarked, pulling some of the tresses away from her hair. “Sometimes it can be a lot, especially in the summertime.”

Fitz kissed her forehead. “I love your hair. However you style it. It makes you you. You just look, extra relaxed right now. I love it.”

The spray was hot, rushing down on their skin. Allowing the steam to fog their space. Olivia grabbed her soap, and began to wash her skin, as well as his. He had to kiss her. Gently massaging her shoulders, lather the shampoo. Olivia tried to dodge, but she didn't mind. Then, she caught him staring.

“Why are you looking at me like that?”

Olivia began to hide herself by turning away, using her hands to cover the places that she was most insecure about.

“No,” Fitz softly replied, taking his time to kiss her skin. “My God, I've never seen anything so beautiful. You are beautiful.”

“Fitz.”

"I mean what I say," he confessed.

That was the exact kind of thing Olivia did not want to hear. Abruptly, she turned the water off and left Fitz behind. Grabbing her towel and drying her hair.

"What in the---!"
"Teddy's still sleeping," she sang teasingly. One of the ways she could irritate any man would be to halt conversation and deflect. It was too early to get extra sappy with Fitzgerald. She didn't want him to catch her slipping.

By the time he appeared, Olivia had already dried off, moisturized, and put on clothes.

"What are you doing today?"

Fitz began to style his hair while still in a towel. "I have to stop in the office to modify contracts and prepare for my case on Monday. You?"

"Grocery shopping."

"Ooh."

Olivia made her bed. It felt damn good to have Fitz here. He kissed her cheek, once again interrupting her thoughts.

"I'm going to check on the boy."

Teddy was still asleep. It was their fourth sleepover and he was opting for the couch, which wasn't Olivia's preference. Of course, Fitz would beg to differ, but she actually liked Teddy being with them. He was literally a teddy bear, not kicking or bumping her out of space. She always got a kick when his tummy rose as he breathed.

When Olivia came down the hallway into the living room, Fitz was gently waking him. "Teddy, you need to get up. We have to go soon."

"Whyyyyy..."

"Because I need to go to work."

Teddy whimpered and swatted his hand away. "But Daddy...I don't want to go...it's Saturday!"

"Theodore Grant, we do not whine," Fitz corrected in a fast and low growl.

As the fat tears started to form and wet his dark eyelashes, Teddy pouted, reluctantly leaving his spot.

Olivia overheard the convo as she started the coffee machine. Seeing Teddy look so hurt made her sad. Fitz sat down, rubbing his forehead.

"Don't give me that look," he remarked. "I hate being tough with him, but I have to be consistent, ya know?"

That was true. She knew how to be tough with clients, but disciplining a child? That was a foreign concept.

"I hear ya."

"Sometimes it sucks being a single parent," he said. "When you think you're turned the corner, you fall flat on your ass."

Olivia poured a cup for him, handing it to him. "I'm sorry."

"It's okay. I'm just bitching."
“What if we hang out,” Olivia blurted. “I'm free today.”

Fitz’s eyebrows lifted. “Are you sure?”

“Yeah, I don't see why not.”

They agreed to meet back at Fitz's place in an hour. Olivia parked in the Grant driveway, and strolled to the door. It seemed like they were always loud enough to hear when she approached.

“Daddy, where is Livia?”

“She'll be here soon.”

“Okay.”

She knocked and Teddy greeted her. The laugh in his voice made her happy.

"Livia! It's like you read my mind. I was hoping you'd come."

Fitz was dressed in a polo and jeans, stuffing folders in his briefcase.

"Hey. You're an angel."

"No sweat."

Olivia followed Fitz around, getting a review of favorite snacks, toys, and other things.

“Here are the house keys, my work number, and his booster.”

Olivia gave a thumbs up, while Teddy leaned against her leg.

“If you need anything, anything, you call me.”

How she opened her big mouth to volunteer to be with Teddy for the day, was a shock to Olivia. Her brain must have been shut off when she offered to take him. Babysitting was never one of her jobs growing up. There had to be someone whom she could contact. Olivia decided to text Harrison.

_I’m watching Teddy._

_Oh yeah?_

_Yeah._

_Everything okay?_

_Surprisingly, yes. I've never been alone with a kid before._

_You'll be fine. Teddy is the perfect kind of kid to babysit._

_Is that what I'm doing, babysitting?_

_I guess. I don't know._

Olivia locked her phone, thinking about what she could actually do with this child. Would he be
alright with going to the supermarket and just doing nothing? They would soon find out.

“Teddy, I need to go the store. Want to come?”

Seeing him grin made her heart sing. Hopping up and down, he exclaimed, “Yup! I can't be left alone.”

Olivia laughed. “Ahh, silly me. Let's go.”

Fitz had graciously put Teddy's booster in her car before he left, so she wouldn't have to deal with it. At every stoplight, Olivia would either turn around or glance through her rear view mirror to see what Teddy was doing. Just swinging his legs or looking out the window.

“You okay?”

A quiet “Mmhmm” answered.

The two found parking and walked to the market.

“Would you like to ride in the cart?”

Teddy smiled, “Oh, yeah!” Olivia lifted him into the seat. And so, they moved along the aisles, finding the items that she needed. They had a nice talk about what gluten-free meant, and the difference between zucchinis and cucumbers were.

"Are you ready for kindergarten?"

"Yeah," Teddy answered, grabbing the sides of the cart. "School will be fun. Daddy bought five pairs of everything. I wear uniforms. I'll just wear my regular clothes at home or on Sundays. My new teacher is Miss Wright. I think she's very nice and pwetty. And three of my friends are already in my class. I can actually walk to school. Instead of having to ride in traffic every day!"

With those round brown eyes and using his hands to express almost everything, Olivia was sure that he was his father's son.

At the checkout, an older woman wiggled her fingers at Teddy. “Hi there.” Teddy paused, glanced at Olivia, who in return, smiled at him.

“Hi,” he softly replied.

“He's such a cutie.”

Olivia gave a close-mouthed grin, then cordially agreed. "Isn't he?"

“He's lucky to have you in his life.”

As the woman walked away, Olivia pondered. How could she or anyone else figure out what their connection was? They weren't blood relatives. If anything, she appeared to be his nanny. Maybe she wasn't seeing it.

The rest of the afternoon was spent making ham and cheese paninis - which she did not burn, taking a nap, and coloring. Teddy was very simple.

It was around 4 when Teddy ran to the window. Jumping up and down, he exclaimed, “I see Daddy’s car!”
“Is that so?”

Sure enough, the sleek, black Lexus had turned on their street. Olivia unlocked the door, giving Teddy permission to greet Fitz.

Teddy ran outside, hopping around the front lawn, waiting for his father to pull into the driveway. Fitz waved from inside, then emerged from the car.

“Hello!”

Teddy squealed. “Daddy!”

As he lifted Teddy in his arms, Fitz gave him lots of kisses. “I've missed my boy!”

“But it's not like I was at Poppy’s! We saw each other this morning.”

“But you're extra excited to see me like you were at Poppy’s!”

Teddy and Fitz laughed at the banter. Olivia leaned against the door post, just in awe at the bond. She didn't have that growing up so to see a genuine relationship between parent and child, was wonderful.

“And hello to you, angel.” Olivia stood on her toes to receive a welcoming kiss.

Fitz obliged and pecked on her lips three times in a row. “Didn't hear from you so I guess everything went well?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you for doing this last minute. Now that I think about it, Teddy would have been bored to tears.”

“No problem.”

“I should get going.”

Fitz shook his head, “No, stay a little longer. I'll change and then I can whip up something for us.”

“No, no,” she insisted, looking for her purse. “Don't do that.”

“Well, what are we supposed to have for dinner, my girl?”

Olivia's ears perked as he smiled at her, in a teasing manner. It was still strange to be included in his plans - a month and half into this relationship and she still couldn't see herself as anything more than a casual girlfriend. As if this was going to end and end horribly. That was always her fear. Fitz had already taken this next step, but she was afraid. People trusted her and she couldn't even trust herself to move forward yet.

“I don't know.”

Feeling his arms circling her waist, Olivia looked over her shoulder to watch Fitz. There was something about him that she couldn't quite place. He looked so... content. His hands pressed on her stomach, pulling her back into his body. It was like he was centering her, bringing her to the present. No what ifs. He kissed the crook of her neck. Then, without hesitation, he pressed his mouth on her full lips - like he was capable of removing all traces of defeat from her system.
“I want to remind you, Miss Pope, that you are always welcomed in my house. Or wherever I am, at all times. I will always consider you. Never doubt that. I love you.”

Olivia closed her eyes, letting out a heavy sigh.

“Okay.”

“Okay,” he asked in a mumble against her neck, gently rocking her back and forth.

Nodding, she repeated, “Okay.”

Fitz kissed her forehead again. “God, I love you,” he sighed.

Olivia’s eyes darted to the floor.

“Liv?”

“I forgot something in the kitchen, let me go get it.”

Fitz blocked her path, causing her to frown. “Hey, Livvie. Don't run. Please.” His voice softened as he placed his hand on her shoulder, rubbing gently. “I didn't mean to scare you. It's okay. I'm not trying to pressure you. I just want to keep telling you how I feel, okay?”

“Alright.”

Olivia was quite busy the following week. Vacation was over and OPA was back in business. Five new cases were opened; very minimal time for social hours. One exception was the return of a very close friend. Stephen Finch, a former co-worker was in town and they had planned a special dinner months in advance. They had become so close over the years - as close as you can without having a physical relationship. He was her confidant and she was his moral compass. After a few hugs, they sat down. Stephen was ready to talk.

“Tell me everything.”

“Y'all set me up on a blind date,” Olivia emphasized. “You know how I feel about those things. I almost left because he was late. But he - and his son - walked in. I wasn't expecting to be interested.”

“But you were.”

“Yes. It turned into something wonderful. We talk all the time.”

Stephen grinned. “How do you feel with him around? I remember you were so emphatic about not dating when kids are involved.”

“Things change,” she answered softly, clasping her hands. “Teddy…he is beautiful and very intelligent. Such a sweet boy. He has his silly moments but he's not obnoxious. We’ve been bonding very well. It scares me that he could find good in me. I love him.”

Taking a deep breath, Olivia smiled. Stephen patted her hand. “You're growing up, Liv.”

“I guess so.”

“Now what about Fitz?”
“What about him?”

“How do you feel about him?”

Olivia’s nose scrunched - a giveaway to her best friend that she was smitten. “He’s the best thing that has happened to me in a long time. I don’t think I’ve had this much fun.”

“That’s great, Liv.”

“Yeah.”

The two began their dinner. Olivia insisted that Stephen bring her up to speed with his work and love life. When he finished, they continued to enjoy their food.

Then, Olivia interjected, “He told me he loves me. A few weeks ago.” She knew Stephen would either cough loudly or release a string of profanity. The coughing fit came.

“What? So soon?”

Olivia nodded as she cut her steak. “Yes.”

“How do you feel?”

“The same.”

“But have you told him?”

Olivia immediately answered, “He knows.”

Tisking, Stephen revealed, “That doesn't count. Men want to hear it. We move with our senses. He needs to hear you tell him. Especially since he said it first.”


“You are your own person. Do not let the sins of your parents or anyone who you’ve let get close to you, ruin you from being at your best.”

Olivia took a breath, then gulped down wine. “But that’s the thing, I am ruined.”

Fitz would call but she’d let it go straight to voicemail. A quick text, apologizing for the missed calls, was accepted. Even with that excuse to not talk, Olivia had to face him. There was much to discuss about the real her. The broken side that needed to be healed. She needed to tell him everything.

“Hey, is this my girlfriend?”

Olivia answered, “You are correct.”

“How are you?”

“Swamped, but alive. How about yourself?”

“Doing alright,” Fitz said. “Teddy is adjusting to school. I had to move my schedule around so I can be home in time every day.”

Hearing him speak was already creating a positive aura. Olivia missed that voice. “That’s good. Say, do you think you’d want to take a walk with me? I want to see you. I miss you lots.”
“Sure. I'll drop Teddy at Gracie's for a bit and I’ll come to you.”

After waiting for 10 minutes, Olivia walked outside, beginning to stretch. Running was a therapeutic outlet that she made an effort to maintain whenever she could. No matter the season, she had to run to get the toxins out, and clear her mind.

Olivia waved at Fitz and shouted, “You look cute!”

He looked adorable in a t-shirt and running shorts, while donning a baseball cap. Pursing his lips, he rejected her compliment. “Puh-lease, I dress for function not aesthetics. You, however, are very beautiful and look exquisite.”

"This getup?" - referring to a running tee and capris, she shook her head. Then she pulled Fitz into a sweet kiss.

“Wow, baby,” he joked. “I should meet you for walks more often.”

On their way to a nearby park, Olivia and Fitz caught each other up on their week apart. It was great to just shoot the breeze, cracking jokes as they walked.

“Oh,” she began with a smirk, “I might need to run.”

Fitz’s eyes grew wide. Then, with a puzzled expression, he repeated, “Run?”

The look on his face made Olivia weak with laughter. “Yeah.”

“I hate running. And doesn’t it seem too hot to do that?”

Stretching a little more, she relented, “You don't have to. I'll understand.”

Fitz pshawed. “And look like a slacker? I don't think so.”

Fifteen minutes later, they had returned to their starting point. Olivia was content with her timing. Fitz wasn't playing with his no-run declaration, only jogging every two miles, and allow her to go ahead of him.

“You know…,” Fitz started, as they crossed Connecticut Avenue, holding hands. “You're the best looking woman I've ever seen. And you're a badass.”

Olivia pointed her finger at Fitz. “Ooh, I see you. I know you check out my booty. That's why you lagged behind.”

Winking, he said, “Yes and no. Mostly yes.”

The snark was high and Olivia was enjoyed this side of Fitz thoroughly. “Thank you for your candor.”

Taking a moment to rest, Olivia created a circle around herself.

"What's up?"

"Nothing."

Hands on hips, Fitz gave her a skeptical look. "Alright."

"Let's keep walking."
Olivia squeezed his hand harder, but kept a straight face. Then, a block before they reached her apartment, she stopped.

“Fitz?”

“Mmm.”

Olivia sighed into a smile.

“I love you.”

Fitz’s eyebrows lifted and his eyes had become a tad glossy. His lip quivered slightly.

“Livvie.”

“Yes?”

“Say it again.”

It was the perfect situation. Unassuming. In a laid-back environment. No glitz or fireworks. Feeling her heart beat extra hard, she repeated herself, looking at him. “I love you. I'm in love with you too.”

As her eyes slightly watered, she watched Fitz gently nudge her to the side, out of the way of other pedestrians and kissed her.

“Oh, I've been wanting to hear you say this.”
Chapter 11

Fitz couldn't imagine life without his sweet Livvie. Three months now and the possibilities were endless. He didn’t care that it took her a while to say “I love you”. It didn't matter how it happened. He knew for sure that she did love him. It was a blessing, even though date nights and quality time was limited during the week. More importantly, Teddy was adjusting nicely and having another positive influence in his life meant the world to Fitz. Still affected by the decisions he made 10 years earlier, he believed that his world was changing for the better.

Mondays were such a drag. Getting back into the grind, moving on all cylinders. But Fitz began his morning routine - shower, making the bed, clothes laid out on his chair. People needed him and that made his career worth while.

But his new favorite part of Mondays? Receiving morning texts from Olivia. She always messaged first, which would prompt Fitz to get up so he could start his day. They always lightened his mood -

*Good morning, Fitz! I hope you have a great day.*

He responded immediately, still with hazy eyes.

*Good morning to you, my sweet baby. I think about you all the time and wish I could see you right now. Call me later if you can.*

After his shower, Fitz walked over to Teddy’s room. Knocking on the door, just loud enough so that it could be heard.

“Rise and shine, Teddy.”

The little grunts coming the bed made Fitz laugh. Grant men were not early risers.

“C’mon,” Fitz added, giving his son a few tummy tickles. “It’s going to be a great day! Art class should be lots of fun.”

Teddy leapt out of bed. Drawing and using different tools was now a highlight of his week, so Fitz knew a reminder would help him along. Giving Teddy a few minutes to get his routine started, Fitz returned to his room and got dressed.

They met downstairs; Teddy appeared in his uniform of a dark blue polo and khaki pants.

“Hi, Daddy.”

“Hey, dude.”

Teddy squeezed his eyes shut and gave a raspberry. “I'm a boy. Not a duuuddee.”

Fitz couldn’t resist being goofy with him. That was part of their bond, finding light-hearted moments. They had special words and glances that they could exchange. Not mattering to anyone else, but them.

“Ready to see everyone? Art class will be fun and don't you have a field trip?”

The sparkle in Teddy's eyes were in full force. “Yeah! It will be fun to check out the market, and see how the people bring the food there. For us to eat.”
Fitz had prepped ingredients for a crepe the night before. Sometimes the mood for a fancy breakfast was in order. Not the case for Teddy. Like most four-year-olds, he was the picky eater, especially in the mornings. But after many trials and errors, Fitz found a solution. A plate of toast and yogurt was set at Teddy's spot. The toast had the usual layers of a bear with peanut butter, bananas, and blueberries, in the decorations of a bear. Seeing his breakfast, Teddy rubbed his hands and began to eat. Fitz poured himself a cup of coffee, with some cream, and sat down at the island.

“Thank you.”

“You're welcome. Please eat most of it.”

Fitz checked his emails. There wasn't much on his to-do list when he would arrive at work, so he had plenty of time to drop Teddy off and not rush in.

“Daddy?”

Fitz peered over his coffee cup to find Teddy still munching on his favorite combo of toast and fruit. “Mmhmm?”

“One of my friends - Daniel - he told me that his mom has a new boyfriend, and Xavier is his second dad.”

The information seemed odd to share at 7:30 in the morning, but Fitz went along with it, since Teddy was very excited. “Is that so?”

“Yeah,” Teddy continued, popping another berry into his mouth. “I was thinking...is that going to happen with you and Livia?”

Fitz felt his jaw drop. Then, having enough sense to wipe the bewildered look off his face, he quickly asked, “What do you mean?”

“She’s your girlfriend, Daddy. You guys kiss a lot too. We hang out all the time now. You sleep in her room sometimes and she sleeps in your room. You only let people you love do that. So I was wondering, can she be my second Mom now?”

It took Fitz about 20 seconds to fully grasp what his son was proposing. Curiosity should have been part of Teddy’s given name. Of all the stunning questions and phrases he heard, this may have been the one that left him speechless. Teddy’s intent was never malicious, but there should have been some manual out there to prepare him for something like this. A topic that was incredibly personal and blush-worthy - his love life.

After clearing his throat, he just gave a diplomatic smile. “That's up to Olivia.”

The answer must have rang with like a melody with promise in Teddy’s ears. Jumping from his seat with the last piece of toast in his hand, he shouted, “Let’s ask her now!”

Fitz bolted from his seat, lifting his hands. “Whoa, buddy! How about we wait? She’s probably off to work right now. But you need to focus on finishing your breakfast so we can get to school.”

Twenty minutes later, Fitz and Teddy were almost ready to leave. The school was only five minutes away so they would usually walk if Fitz didn’t have to get to the office early.

“Teddy, why do you want a second Mom? You have Mommy.”

Shaking his head in disappointment, he answered, “Daddy, it’s not the same.”
Fitz tried to lighten the mood. “But you’ll get to talk to her tomorrow, I believe.”

Teddy slowly closed his eyes, sighing. “Do I have to?”

“What do you mean? You always talk to her every week.”

Fitz was puzzled by Teddy. When Teddy turned four, Fitz and Mellie created a schedule for weekly phone calls, when they could discuss any and everything. Every Tuesday and Friday around 6 o’clock. The conversations were always cordial; Fitz would do his best to be nearby, just in case Teddy needed help. He didn’t remember anything troubling occurring before.

“I just don’t want to.”

“She loves you lots. I know you two have fun talking.”

“Daddy,” Teddy’s voice retreated.

Fitz was now worried; the hesitancy in Teddy’s voice was alarming. Looking for a clear sign on his face, Fitz knelt down, rubbing his back.

“What’s wrong, baby?”

Teddy blinked rapidly, unable to will away tears. “I don’t know if she…”

“She what?”

“I just want a Mommy again.”

Closing his eyes and gutted by what he was seeing, Fitz tried to find some words of encouragement for his boy.

“But she loves you, Teddy Bear. I know she’s not here, but...”

Teddy sighed again, this time deeper and more pained. “Sometimes I wish she wasn't so far away. I don't even know if she likes being my Mom or even loves me.”

Fitz’s eyes widened. His voice was strained as he asked, “Why do you think that?”

Looking down at the floor, Teddy mumbled, “She isn't always excited to talk to me on the phone. You know how we like to hug and laugh and you get really happy when you see me? She isn't like that. I think that if she didn't leave me, she’d be happy.”

“She loves you. Just in a different way than others.” Fitz wasn't lying. He didn't know all the details.

Teddy didn’t seem too impressed by this response. “Then why do I only see her once or twice a year?”

Of course, when it was time to leave for school, he would ask all the tough questions. Always knowing Teddy would reach a point where he needed to have a conversation about this stage of life.

“Let's walk and I will tell you all about it.”

Taking a deep breath, Fitz collected his briefcase and keys, along with Teddy’s backpack. After locking the door, they headed towards the school. He whispered a prayer that he would say the right words to his son.
“Like we've told you, we love you so much. But sometimes parents don't always know if they are really ready to have families. Your mom wasn't sure if she was ready for all the jobs that Moms usually do.”

Fitz paused to see if Teddy was following. He was used to explain difficult concepts in a professional manner, giving the breakdown of clauses to parties, who needed to decide which direction to take. But Teddy didn't have a say. So, finding the right words to let him know of their reality was hard.

“That does not mean she doesn't love you. Because of how our contract worked, she chose me to take care of you all the time. Maybe now, she could be ready to see you more often, but I don't know. I am very sorry you have to deal with this.”

Fitz held Teddy's hand; feeling that precious hand curled into his, Fitz could immediately sense the tension and hurt. How do you explain to a child that his mother doesn't want him? Or would willingly separate herself? The time that he needed her the most, she was not there.

Reaching the intersection, he glanced down. Teddy was quiet.

“I'm so sorry.” He repeated, lifting Teddy, pressing kisses on his forehead, holding him tight.

“Daddy, why are you saying sorry? You didn't leave.”

“But it's my fault she left. She didn’t love me.”

Teddy frowned. “What?”

Fitz's eyebrows knit together. Letting out a sigh, he finally told Teddy what he had been avoiding to share. “When parents don't love each other, things can get very bad. Sometimes that happens after babies are born and it gets stressful, so the healthy way to stop that is to not be married anymore.”

Watching Teddy process everything in confusion and sadness, broke Fitz’s heart. He and Mellie should have realized it could have been different if they hadn't gotten married, feeling obligated to stay together before they got in too deep. But if that was the case, Fitz wouldn’t have Teddy; the joy of having a child was worth the anger and heartache that he experienced. But now, he had to think outside of his own world and consider how Teddy felt.

“I just want a mom. Who is here. Auntie Gracie has her own family and she doesn't cut it anymore.”

Fitz didn't know whether to cry or laugh at Teddy's honesty.

“Can Livia to be my second mom? Please? She's very nice to me and I know she loves me.”

“How about we ask her to visit and you can have special Olivia time?”

Teddy shrugged, marching forward to St. Lourdes'. It was about the time for everyone to start walking in with their classes. Groups of boys and girls, ranging from kindergarten to 8th grade, had congregated on the sidewalk.

“Good morning, Teddy,” Miss Richardson, the school’s principal greeted. “Good morning, Mr. Grant.”

Fitz nodded in response. “Hello, Miss Richardson. Lovely day, isn’t it?”

A few of the boys came to Teddy and said hi. It made Fitz smile. That was his main concern - that
his sweet boy would never feel love outside of him. He was a good kid, welcoming and friendly to others for the most part. It was still only a month into the school year and adjustments were still in progress.

Teddy turned to his father, giving that sweet face he had always shown since he was a baby. It was times like these that he wished he could just scoop Teddy away in his arms and return home. He only wanted to protect his child, shielding him from any unkind words or harm.

To Fitz’s surprise, Teddy had run back to him, squeezing his waist.

“Bye, Daddy. I’ll see you when I get home.”

“I love you, Teddy Bear. Have a good day.”

Watching Teddy return to his classmates and leave, Fitz sighed. Sticking his hands in his pockets, he began his walk home.

There was a reason why he didn't like Mondays.

The conversation with Teddy threw Fitz into a depressing state. He didn’t know what to do. The only times he would talk to Mellie would be to confirm phone call dates, or whenever she was allowed to see Teddy. Their dynamic was nothing. The divorce wasn't amicable; he was still harboring anger at her for leaving him alone. There was never anything to talk about, without a fighting match happening. Fear was creeping in though. What if Mellie wanted to ask for visiting privileges? Or worse, custody. That was the last thing he wanted. But first, they had to speak. They needed to move forward in regards of the well-being of their son. He knew his parental rights, but what if things changed?

Fitz needed to get out of his head. Snatching the receiver off the hook, he dialed Olivia.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Grant.”

The confident voice was just what he needed to hear.

"Hey."

“How’s it going?”

“Going well. How about yours?”

"I'm... I'm okay."

“You sound a little glum, chum. Spill it.”

Fitz rubbed his forehead and chuckled, "You have time?"

"Lay it on me."

Revealing about his life before she arrived was going to be interesting, but he trusted her. It didn't seem logical, but he was willing to task the risk.

“Teddy was going through a hard time this morning. He feels alone. On the way to school, I had to explain to him why Mellie and I broke up.”

"Oh wow," Olivia answered. "That's tough."
Fitz continued, "Yeah. The distance is putting a strain on him, which is I've never heard him talk like this before. He doesn't think Mellie loves him."

"Fitz..."

"He's four, Liv. My baby shouldn't be thinking about this. I've failed him."

"No."

Fitz swung his chair around so he could face the window.

"What are you going to do?"

Olivia's question made him think more proactively. "I guess I need to talk to her, to see what's going on."

"You're not alone."

Nodding, Fitz took comfort in his Livvie's voice. "There's more."

"What's that, baby?"

"He asked if you were going to be his second mom."

"Wait, what?" The laugh was borderline comical and nervous.

"Yes."

Olivia didn't respond, while Fitz rolled his eyes, pissed off. *Who tells their girlfriend of three months that your son is searching for a stepmother?*

"What did you say?"

"I told him that was up to you."

"I see."

Fitz took a breath. He shouldn't have mentioned it because she must have been taken aback and irritated by this statement. "I'm sorry."

"Poor Teddy. Well, he has been getting very cozy lately. I thought it was just me. I think he likes me."

"He loves you, Liv."

Again, Olivia fell silent.

"Liv?"

"Okay. I have a client coming in five minutes and I need to prepare. How about I stop by for dinner?"

Fitz cleared his throat, "Of course. I'll see you then."

The line disconnected in his ear. With a sigh, he opened his laptop, drafting an email before returning from his lunch break. To Mellie. To explain Teddy's feelings, wondering if it was true, but careful not to create a ticking time bomb. He wanted answers. Hopefully he would receive them. For
Teddy's sake.

“What's that?”

Olivia walked into the foyer, casually replying, “My bag.”

Fitz side eyed her, noting its size. “It looks rather big, don’t you think?”

“Sure.”

Raising one eyebrow, Fitz took a step. “Trying to tell me something?”

“Absolutely,” she smiled, pulling him into a kiss. Her lips felt like heaven.

“Liv-Livvie.”

“Shh,” she teased. “Let me kiss you more.”

Knowing she was close was easing the stress out of his body.

“Mmm,” he moaned.

“I would like to spend the night. Is that alright?”

Fitz smiled against her lips. “Please.”

Always being slick, Olivia pulled away. “Good. Now let’s go see my buddy.”

Teddy was surprised and elated to see his Livia. After a dinner of chicken nuggets and macaroni, sharing stories about the market, and giving a beautiful piece of artwork to Olivia, Teddy got his quality time with her. The long day wore him out though. Olivia gave her “Goodnight Teddy” kisses downstairs, and Fitz tucked him in around 8 o’clock.

After flicking on the nightlight and closing the door, Fitz was greeted by Olivia in the hallway.

“Hey.”

“Hey.”

Fitz breathed deeply as he looked at Olivia. Her eyes always drew him in. “I’m sorry about earlier.”

“Don’t be.”

“I’m sorry. I’m just… I’m very stressed.” Fitz paused to stare at the ceiling. “I want to do right by Teddy and this wasn’t what I thought. He’s still so little. He doesn't need this stress in his life.”

“I know,” Olivia remarked, placing her head on his chest; her arms draped around him. “You’re going to get through this.”

Somehow, he believed her. Ever thankful for her confidence in him, he kissed her forehead.

They stood there for a minute. No talking, just breathing. Just being.

“Come on.”
Olivia went into Fitz’s room. “I’m going to change.”

Fitz went to lie down, closing his eyes. He began to think about everything; he was so sure about his future. He spent years putting effort into where he wanted to go. The path was now shifting; others were pushing him into a certain direction, of how everything should transpire. What if he decided to do this for himself? For Teddy?

“Fitz.”

Olivia was next to him, out of her suit and now in a t-shirt and boy shorts.

“What’s wrong?”

Fitz rolled his eyes again. “Same old, same old.”

Olivia cupped his face, lowering her mouth onto his. “Hopefully that erased those negative vibes away. Let’s get you out of these.”

Fitz didn’t realize that he hadn’t changed out of his clothes yet. Before he had a chance to get up, Olivia was unbuttoning his dress shirt.

“Liv.”

“Uh-uh,” she ordered, peppering kisses on his skin. “Let me.”

Fitz watched her rub his body, massaging his shoulders.

“You deserve this,” she said, then kissed his temples.

He didn’t know what had gotten into Olivia. Each kiss lead to another bold move- nibbling on his ears, which were probably beet red by now; straddling him, moving her hips, hitting his cock in a certain way, and they still had clothes on. He was getting so hard, he needed her.

Olivia pulled the band out of her hair, releasing her loose curls. Smirking at him as her eyes darkened with lust, Fitz couldn’t help but smile.

“Oh my God. You're tempting me.”

“C’mon, Fitz.”

Fitz was done being a spectator. Sitting up, so now they were face-to-face, Fitz dug his fingers in her hair, pulling gently. He loved feeling all of her. Kissing her again, he watched in her natural state, just in awe of her beauty and her presence.

“Ahhh…”

The raw heat between them wouldn’t be denied. Their hips moving frantically, they were already entranced. Fitz stopped to pull Olivia’s shirt over her head, then reaching to take off her bra. Dipping to kiss her breasts, lapping her with his tongue, just the way she liked.

“Fuck…”

Their rhythm was impeccable, pausing to rid the rest of their clothes. Then back to where they were, moving, reaching for that special place. Fitz found a condom and got himself situated. He didn’t know where to go first. Her body looked more beautiful every day, the curves, the fullness. Her petite frame just waiting for him. Olivia told him to stay where he was, sitting. She wanted to lead,
so he was going to allow it. He’d let her do whatever she wanted.

Olivia lifted herself, only to sink down onto his cock, gasping for air as each inch filled her. Her mouth opening, eyes snapping shut, to express the gravity of their union.

“Livvie,” he moaned against her cheek.

Sometimes, they would talk and exchange beautiful nothings. Or the only phrases that fell were dirty little secrets. Other times, no words were needed.

When she rode him, he lavished on her body. Taking her from behind, was such a vulnerable and beautiful place. They had only done it before once, so knowing she trusted him, made him weak, giving her all he had. Holding her hand as they moved together, was amazing. Then when he got to hover over her, satisfying her, and witnessing how she would respond to him. How her face contorted and relaxed, giving him the kisses and love that he wanted.

Their eyes could tell all, knowing everything that was running through their minds. She was gripping his neck, hips raised to meet his thrusts. The friction their bodies created was delicious and breath-taking. His intense stare was powerful; leaning forward, meeting her in that small space between where time doesn't limit and distractions are nowhere to be found. Her mouth was his magnet, pulling him closer into a kiss that pushed him into that bliss that they both craved.

Hearing her gasps quicken, Fitz knew. With another round of kisses, his fingers found that particular spot on her clit that would send her over the edge. Olivia was thrashing as her orgasm washed over her. Hearing her say his name over and over, got him excited as well.

“Oh, shit. Livvie,” he whispered, pumping into her, burning to release everything. Getting rid of the anguish that filled his heart. Even if it was for the night and he had to start over. He wanted this so badly. Knowing that she was the reason he could forget everything else and just fall into her.

In a hoarse whimper, she told him, “Baby, please.”

Fitz squeezed his eyes shut, with his jaw dropped. Stilling to release, his stomach ached as he pulsed inside of her. It was what he needed. She was his medicine.

While they recovered, showering the other with kisses, Olivia rolled off of him. His body overcome with pleasure and still catching his breath, Fitz went to clean up. When he returned, quick to wash her legs, very ready to get back into her arms. "C'mere."

Looking into his eyes, Olivia smiled ever-so-sweetly. “I love you.”

Her voice sounded incredibly pure and genuine. Those words came at the best time, exactly when he needed to hear them.

“I love you, Livvie.”

Getting comfortable under the covers, with the bedsheet feeling extra cool to the touch, she asked, “Do you feel a little better?”

Fitz nodded. “I do. Because you’re here.”

Olivia began to mess with his sweaty curls. “Aw. I couldn’t let you go to sleep alone tonight. You sounded so miserable on the phone. I had to comfort my baby.”

Fitz laughed. “You silly girl.”
“I’m serious.”

Seeing her brown eyes glow, Fitz knew she meant what she said.

“Thank you.”

Olivia playfully jabbed Fitz in the arm. "We didn't even wake up Teddy."

Refraining from guffawing, Fitz winked at her. "See? We can do everything we want and not be that loud."

He smiled when Olivia tucked her head into his chest again, giggling. When she looked back at him, he could just feel the love. He couldn't explain it, but what they had was special and it was growing.

"You need to get to sleep," she reminded, pressing a kiss on his neck.

A lazy smile formed on his lips. "I know."

Olivia turned the lamp off. Fitz gently brought her back into his arms. He had to kiss her one more time before he fell asleep. Lifting her chin, he captured her lips again. They were swollen but just so delicious. She giggled, returning his affection. Hearing her heart beat against his, it was certain that he would be able to face whatever came his way.
Chapter 12

The look of love is saying so much more
Than just words could ever say
And what my heart has heard
Well, it takes my breath away

Her brain told her to get up. A busy Tuesday was ahead. Contracts needed to be signed. Proposals written. The companies were looking for her to manage their image.

But she was here, wrapped in a cocoon of strong arms. In a bed that wasn't hers, but might as well could.

Staying over at Fitz's felt right. He needed her and that was good. She didn't have to use her GPS to find her way to the house. More welcoming than her solitary apartment.

Reaching over to see the time, Olivia sighed. Already thirty minutes later that what she was used to. But seeing him asleep, looking more peaceful, made him more irresistible. Everything was okay.

The night before, hearing him open up about Teddy. Watching him almost break down. He was very hurt. Olivia recognized pain - she saw it with her clients. The array of emotions, helping them push through to find the best option. But he wasn't a client - he was her boyfriend. The man who had swept her off her feet, showing how a relationship could work. She had to be there for him. While observing his face as he continued to sleep, she wondered if he was feeling better, or was he appeasing her, after they had sex, to change the subject. The last 24 hours had been quite mind-opening.

Lounging around wasn't going to pay bills and get her to the Fortune 500, so Olivia rolled out of the bed. Still naked, she tiptoed around the room, finding anything to cover herself. Just in case Teddy was the kind of child to rush in after waking up. Olivia could feel her teeth chatter and goosebumps rising; it was starting to get chilly in the mornings again. She found his robe - a dark blue one - and went downstairs.

She had about 30 minutes before she had to leave. Going to the car, Olivia pulled out the spare suit that she had. Always had to bring extra clothes, just in case. For anything. The newspaper at the bottom of the driveway, so she grabbed that.

Olivia decide to pause and look around. The neighborhood was quiet and very gorgeous. Houses with space between them. Empty streets with birds chirping. Reminding her of the house she lived in, not too far away, before everything changed for her. At 12, when the family she knew fell apart, causing a spiral of chaos.

But she couldn't think about that right now.

Olivia locked the door and moved to the kitchen. The coffee machine seemed to be easy to operate. With a few steps, Olivia started the brew and set a few mugs out for Fitz.

Quietly ascending to the bedroom, Olivia stopped at Teddy's door. The sweetest face, curled up in
his bed. In three months, this child had a concrete space in her heart. She couldn't wake him; what if he needed extra sleep?

A smile formed on her lips as she closed the door.

Fitz was still knocked out, but now laying on his side. The butterflies were rumbling again; she couldn't keep her eyes off of him. Wanting to have him close was necessary. Even for a minute. Leaning down, she kissed his cheek.

"Livvie?" Fitz groaned as his eyes slowly opened. "Why are you up?"

Olivia shook her head, very amused with his question, as if this was unusual. "Getting ready for the day."

"Stay a minute," he mumbled, reaching for her hand. "It's still dark outside."

Olivia lifted her finger. "Not anymore. It's 6:45."

" Seriously? You're up this early during the week?"

"Yes, but it could be earlier if I get a call. You should be lucky there wasn't a call."

Fitz sat up. Pausing for a moment. "Is that coffee I smell? I didn't set a timer."

Olivia shrugged, taking her overnight bag, and walked to the bathroom. She knew he would be surprised. Ten minutes later while drying off, she heard a tap on the door.

"Yeah?"

"May I come in?"

"Sure."

Olivia was working on her face, with makeup and hair products laid on the counter. Probably more stuff than Fitz had seen in years. Her skin began to tingle as Fitz stepped behind her, pressing his lips on her back and humming lowly.

"I see you found my robe. You smell delicious."

Olivia sighed. "Thank you."

Fitz went to take a shower. He turned on his speaker for the radio or whatever Spotify playlist account. The random musings of Frank & Ella, soft rock, and Top 40 songs filled the bathroom. She hadn't listen to him sing before. A strong baritone. It was quite sexy.

Cleaning the space, Olivia left the bathroom and finished preparing for work. Hair being combed and styled, finally slipping out of his robe. Looking at the mirror, in her blush blouse and dark grey slacks, Olivia thought she looked okay and "badass" enough for an October morning.

Another kiss came from Fitz, only adorned in a towel, hair styled though.

"Hey."

"Hey yourself."

"You look extra nice."
Olivia stepped to the left, avoiding Fitz.

"My hands are dry, Liv."

Not fully trusting him, Olivia turned to give him another kiss. With a flick of her wrist, she checked her watch for time.

"It's 7:15. Do you need to get Teddy ready? And put on some clothes?"

Fitz placed a few more kisses on her cheek and neck. "Okay, baby." With a little tap on her ass, he kissed her head, and left.

Smirking, Olivia realized she had to keep her man on track. But as soon as he reveled in her accomplishment, her face fell. What was this intense feeling of desire that was overcoming her? She lost her breath when he walked away, but knew that as soon as he in the room, her circadian rhythm would be intact. Is that what real love was like? A power that couldn't be dissolved, no matter the distance or time? She couldn't describe it.

But the day was beginning and she had to get a move on. Olivia made her way downstairs, with her purse slung over her shoulder. Taking a few minutes to check her emails and text Harrison that she would be at work soon enough.

When she arrived at the kitchen, Fitz was prepping Teddy's breakfast and lunch. She didn't even realize he had changed into something more suitable. As Olivia sat down, Fitz handed her the mug of caffeinated gold, and leaned against the kitchen island with his million-watt smile. "Thank you for starting the coffee and getting the newspaper."

"Mmhmm."

"What do you have planned for the day?"

"Same old, same old," she answered.

"I like this."

"What's that, Fitz?"

Olivia furrowed her brow, curious by his sentiment.

"Mornings with you."

He was too sappy sometimes.

Taking a long sip, Olivia rose from her seat and washed the mug. Pivoting to give Fitz a peck. He looked very confused.

"What happened?"

"I have to go. If I don't get a move on, I'll be late."

"No breakfast? I was going to make some waffles."

Olivia patted his arm, "Raincheck?"

"Of course," Fitz said. She felt his arms squeezing her tight as he hugged her. "I love you, Liv."
Her heart beating a little faster, she echoed, "I love you too. Have a great day. Please tell Teddy the same."

Fitz cupped her jaw with his hands, offering her one more lingering kiss. She couldn't resist to nibble on his bottom lip, but almost groaned when he pulled away.

"Get going before I keep your here all day."

"Absolutely."

Olivia winked, then closed the door. If she didn't give a damn about the optics, she'd skip to her car. But she had to hold it together. Still trying to adjust how her brain operated, a smile was plastered on her face as she drove away.

As soon as her car was in park, the phone rang. It was an unfamiliar number, so it had to be a potential client.

"Olivia Pope."

"Hello, Miss Pope. Chase Reynolds. Am I catching you at a bad time?"

"Good morning, Mr. Reynolds. What can I do for you?"

Quickly getting to the elevator, she took in all the information the man had for her. When she got to the office floor, Olivia hung up. Harrison was in the lobby, getting his hot cup ready.

"Morning."

"Good morning, Liv."

"I just got off the phone with a potential client. A little different this time, since they are in California and the situation is not what we're accustomed to. Meeting when everyone arrives. This could be great. Then, we can finally be bi-coastal."

Harrison nodded, before taking a long sip. "Ahh! Itching to get back into the game!"

The fall was a great time for OPA to thrive; they were slowly, but surely growing as a public relations firm. So many opportunities to help businesses and established individuals in the Metropolitan area. Word of mouth and receipts were key in this industry. Seen and be seen. It was an endless cycle and as long as they were in the thick of it, getting shit done, Olivia was happy.

Another mug was set on the counter and Olivia poured herself an ample amount of coffee. She knew when that it was going to get busy, she had to drink another cup before noon. Today would be one of those days.

"How's Grant?"

Olivia asked in a hurry, "Which one?"

Harrison raised an eyebrow and asked incredulously, "Fitz? Teddy? Both?"

Olivia sighed. "They're fine. I'm just worried…"

"What's going on?"
It was too early to opening a can of worms, but Harrison would be the one to hear her out. Knowing each other for over 10 years, they were like siblings. He always had her back, even when they didn't agree. Telling him wouldn't mess anything up.

"I know you're going to laugh. But this may be going too fast. I think they're getting too attached to me."

Harrison listened to Olivia explain the previous day's events; the more she revealed, the more she was confused and upset. She began to pace, giving details of Teddy's behavior and what happened when she came over the night before.

"Do you even hear yourself talking? If this is an issue, you're lucky. I don't think anything is wrong. Do you even like them, Liv", Harrison teased.

"Of course, I do, asshole," Olivia scowled. "I love them. I want to be there for them. Fitz and Teddy have become two of my people. I love Teddy. But I'm not in a rush to become a stepmother! People barely know I'm dating!"

Harrison crossed his arms, giving a slick side eye. "Now whose fault is that?"

Olivia rolled her eyes. That question was uncalled for and yet the response was very obvious. "I'm getting there. But let me ask you, Sage of Relationships. When is it ever the right time to tell everyone, 'Hey! I'm a business owner, trying to make it in DC. Dating this wonderful man, who happens to be in every magazine in Washington. He has a son. It's getting serious and I think I'm in too deep.'"

"You need to talk to him about this."

Taking a sip of coffee, Olivia deflected. "Anyway, I think I may need to take a step back. Refocus."

"It's because of your parents?"

Harrison knew how to stop Olivia in her tracks. Any mention of a certain Eli and Maya "Marie" Pope was sure make her wince.

"Yes" was her cold response.

"Does he know?"

Olivia turned away, putting her things down on the desk, but of course, Harrison followed. "No. What do you tell a guy like him? That when your heart gets broken over and over by people who are supposed to love you, you get leery of being close. Including people like Fitz Grant. I'm not ready to fully commit. I couldn't say that to him."

Harrison gave a nod. Taking a step forward, he replied, "But you could, Liv. He'd understand. I know him. He's a good man. Trust me."

It wasn't going to be easy. Taking a breath, Olivia shifted gears.

"This trip may be a good thing. If anything, you and I can go. Have the girls and Huck manage here. Distance is a good thing."

"But is it the right thing?"

"I don't know."
"Don't run off."

Olivia narrowed her eyes. "I'm not running."

"You're runnin'."

"I am not."

Harrison wasn't scared of her, matching the intensity of her tone. "Then why are you jumping the gun, already transporting yourself to the opposite side of the coast when you have no clue about it?"

"Work."

"I know you. It's an excuse."

Olivia stepped forward, pointing her finger at Harrison. "Don't you start…"

The door opened. Abby and Quinn were getting in.

"Hey Liv, Harrison."

Harrison tipped his fingers in a salute. Olivia gave him one more look, turned towards her desk. After the door closed, she breathed deeply. Every time she opened up, there was always some kind of argument and she would regret speaking. It was an unhealthy mechanism - she was used to doing this all of her life. If only she could be the Olivia Pope that Washington knew…

An hour passed. Everyone had started working. Olivia felt like she had calmed down after making copies of files and checking her email again. Making her way to the lobby, she announced.

"Everyone, in the conference room."

Abby, Harrison, and Quinn followed. When they congregated, they were greeted by Olivia and someone else.

"Huck!"

Diego Muñoz, known by his nickname, Huck, strolled in without anyone noticing. He had been on a work assignment that took him away from Washington for several months. Being the incredible tech genius, Huck was contracted out for different gigs, but always found his way back "home".

"Hello," he quietly greeted.

Quinn rushed to hug him. Olivia smiled at the reunion. Everyone loved him. When all was settled, she asked the team to have a seat. Slapping a picture on the glass wall, Olivia began her introduction.

"We received a call from Chase Reynolds, the COO of Encore Unlimited Talent Agency, in Los Angeles. They have received some backlash with an artist and her team. Contract was breached and they could be in a lot of trouble. Somehow, they found out about us and we invited to meet them. To see if we can help. This is a huge step in our company. We are embarking on a new facet of OPA. Crisis management. We'll have to dig deeper, look at various angles. Be relentless in our searches. We may even have to be the bad guy. It's going to take a lot."

Olivia looked at everyone's faces. "Are up for it?"

"Hell yeah," Quinn exclaimed.
Abby and Harrison both stated, "Over a cliff." Huck agreed wordlessly.

Olivia sharply nodded. "Awesome. Let's get it done."

When the staff of OPA committed to a client, they did went all out. When Olivia Pope was in work mode, she didn't stop until she was done. Or forced to take a break. The next 36 hours were used to compile information, search every nook and cranny about Encore and the artist - Chelsea Williamson.

"Abby, what do you have?"

The leggy redhead gave a detailed breakdown on Chelsea's history as a small town singer who made it big in LA, but hung out with the wrong crowd, overstepping boundaries, and missed concert dates.

"Cool."

"Hi to you too."

"Hi." Olivia quickly smiled.

"Doing okay?"

"Yes."

"I brought home Thai. Wondering if you wanted to come and have some."

"Maybe. We have a new case and we're busting tails over here."

"Want me to drop it off?"

Olivia wasn't expecting Fitz to offer a delivery. "It's okay."

"Honey..."

"I'm fine. I'll just find something to eat when I get to my place."

"You only eat popcorn and drink wine when you're alone. No, I have no problem making a doggy bag for you. I'll get in the car now."

Abby had walked away, snickering, so Olivia closed her door, not wanting her little spat to distract the team. "Please, Fitz. Harrison or Abby will just order a pizza or Gettysburger."

"Yeah, and you won't eat any of it. I won't have you starve."

"Fine," she huffed. "I'll stop by. It'll be late though."

Fitz chuckled in approval. "Great. The door will be unlocked. Just come on in."

"I have to get back to work."

Olivia clicked the red button, growling in frustration.
"Why does he have to do this?"

Olivia pulled into the driveway; she never parked there before. It was after 10, so after her visit, she could just jump in the car without incident. She didn't think Fitz would mind.

So much was running through her head. Preparing to pack for Los Angeles, while still running her business, and gradually learning the constant ins and outs of living in the Nation's Capital. Still thinking like a woman with no strings. But there was her special someone in Chevy Chase waiting for her behind that door.

Opening the door as seamlessly as possible, Olivia walked inside. Fitz was in his typical ensemble of t-shirt and jeans. Using his long legs to glide across the floor, he greeted her with a kiss.

"Well, hello there."

"You just wanted me to come over."

"Of course," he said, taking her jacket. "Why wouldn't I want to see you before I shut my eyes for the night? Hungry?"

"That's what you convinced me to come over for. You condemned me."

Fitz rubbed her arm, "No, I convicted you. Gotta take care of yourself. I ordered soup, pad Thai, and Beef Kapow."

"Just a little bit of Pad Thai, please."

Fitz nodded, scooping the food in a bowl, and microwaving. Olivia kicked off her heels, before sitting at the table. It was the first time she had been able to breathe in over a day.

The bowl was placed in front of her. As she ate, she sank down as his hands massaged her shoulders. Fitz kissed the little spot under her chin that drove her wild. Every time.

"Thank you," she said, breathlessly.

After he was content with getting all of her knots out, Fitz sat down.

"How was your day?"

"Not too shabby. Closed a few deals. Shooting the shit with Cyrus and others. How about you?"

"It was fine."

"But you guys were hella busy. What happened?"

"We got a call from Los Angeles; this talent agency asked for our help. They even asked us to fly out to assess the situation. We've never been requested outside of DC before."

Fitz's eyes widened. "Nice!"

"What did you tell them?"

"Tell them what?"

"Did you accept?"
Olivia sipped her water. "Of course. Yes, I accepted their offer. I'm going to leave on Thursday. It may take a while - not sure when we'll be back in DC."

Fitz shrugged. "A week can't be that bad to enjoy the nice wea-"

"More like three weeks."

"Oh."

"Yes," she answered. "I don't know. But the project could be hefty. It's like an overhaul of sorts. We've officially crossed into crisis management, but we shall see what happens. I'll let you know."

Watching Fitz's jaw tighten, Olivia knew to change the subject.

"How's Teddy?"

Fitz promptly said, "He's fine."

"And how was yesterday? How the phone call?"

"Awkward. Boring. He didn't look comfortable. I don't know why."

Olivia reached for his hand, very ready to squeeze tight in comfort. "How are you feeling?"

"I'm okay."

"Really?"

"Yes," Fitz confirmed, "Really."

Olivia looked into his eyes, hoping to find some optimism, but those orbs of blue were bleak. What else was she supposed to do? This was the exact feeling she during her talk with Harrison - her conscience telling her to open up to Fitz more and be there for him, but also protecting herself and not giving up her dream.

"What can I do?"

With a faint smile, he spoke, "You're here and that's all I want."

Olivia knew he needed more, but she didn't know what else to give in that moment.

"I can't stay long, but do you want to cuddle? Just sit here for a minute?"

Fitz stood up, still holding on to her hand. "C'mon, beautiful."

Opting for the sitting room, they got comfortable on the sofa. As always, they didn't have to explain to each other anything. How they were going to make it happen, with limited time and under the circumstances of a little boy sleeping upstairs. Their bodies connecting, just creating the atmosphere that they needed.

"I'm going to go crazy while you're away. You know that right," he whispered after tugging on her lip.

Running her fingers through his curls, Olivia answered, "Three weeks isn't long. It will go by so fast, you won't even notice. You got things to do, people to see, stu-"
"Bullshit," he spoke in her ear, shutting down her diplomatic spiel. "Too long. It's already bad that I miss you during the day."

Olivia felt the giggles rise in her belly as Fitz blessed her mouth with his endless kisses. His hands softly roamed her body, from splaying his fingers across her toned stomach, moving up to her chest, to the delicate territory that was her neck.

He liked keeping his fingers there. Putting just enough pressure to cause her to shake and moan - because to his surprise, she did like it rough - but so very gentle that his hold felt like a relief.

"Fitz…"

"Mmhmm."

"Don't ever stop."

The request was all Fitz needed. Olivia grunted as he laid her down, quickly removing her slacks, pushing her legs apart.

"Damn."

Fitz used his knuckle to push away the thin fabric that covered her, humming at the sight of her body being wet and swollen. Dipping his head to get close. The quick rhythm of flicks and taps by the tip of his tongue made her wild.

"Shhh," Fitz rose to kiss her. "You taste so good, baby." His fingers were long and thick, using the right amount of pressure, to make her fall apart, and yet become whole.

His eyes always riled her up. Olivia bit her lip, allowing him to make her feel good, as she did for him the night before…

Twenty minutes later, a very content Olivia rubbed her nose against Fitz's neck. His fingers tickling her skin. Of course, he has to ask her something.

"How was that? Was it okay, baby?"

A wide grin appeared. Olivia lifted her head so she could kiss him. Her eyes was hooded, still in a haze. "Yes. That felt great. You know it was. But I do have to go," she whispered.

"I love you."

Olivia pursed her lips. "Fitz…"

"I mean it. I'm not just saying it to pull your strings. You know that, right?"

"I know, baby, but I think something's wrong. What's wrong?"

"I don't want you to leave just yet," Fitz smiled.

Olivia was confused and was getting a little defensive. "I don't know when this kind of opportunity will come around."

"Liv, you don't have to justify anything. I'm very happy for you - you deserve this. I was talking about tonight," he softly answered.

"Shoot, I'm sorry," Olivia replied, "I thought you mean about the trip. I can't. I need to sleep at my
Fitz rubbed her shoulder. "I respect that. A guy can only ask."

Olivia scooped her pants, dashing towards the bathroom. She cleaned up, getting her thoughts together. She was going to miss this. Just drive fifteen minutes and feel him. See him. Just be here. Not having to rush out, nervous to miss an early morning appointment, or receive curious questions from Teddy. But maybe that would change soon.

"I'll text you when I get home. But I'm going to do my best to see you tomorrow. Do you have time for lunch?"

Fitz smiled. "I'll be there. I'll clear out two hours if I need to."

"Cool," she replied after kissing his cheek. "I'll get Abby to take over for a bit. Your choice of food."

"No, your call, my Livvie. My sweet baby."

Shaking her head, Olivia stood on her toes. His nose needed another Eskimo kiss. "No, you're the sweetest."

"Wow. The formidable Olivia Pope, behind closed doors, is sappier than a maple in Vermont."

Fitz must have been waiting for a laugh - his eyebrows were lifted, eyes wide and steadfast on her. But instead, Olivia scrunched her nose and wagged her finger, then pointing to the second floor, taunting him for even try to get a peep out.

"You are such a cornball. Goodbye, Mister."

Olivia sashayed to the door, giving Fitz a nice view of her hips. He scooted past her, halting her once more.

"Love you, lady."

"Love you."
Sixteen hours before leaving for Los Angeles and Olivia’s mind was racing a hundred miles a minute. The nerves that she kept down in public, were rising furiously. Not stopping for anything, Olivia paced around her office. Running on all cylinders. Checking and double checking. Delegating tasks, getting the rundown from Huck, still receiving inquiries from other clients. Olivia Pope & Associates would run without a hitch while she was away.

Getting the “OK” from Harrison to step out for a bit, Olivia drove 20 minutes north to Bethesda. She insisted that Fitz choose a place to eat; more decisions to make were not on her priority list. He suggested Pizzeria Da Marco, a cozy restaurant.

Olivia arrived first, sipping on an iced tea. A rare moment of stillness. Her friend Stephen encouraged her to take very deep breaths whenever she had tough moments or new experiences coming.

Fitz walked in five minutes later. She felt his hand on her shoulder.

“Hi.”

Greeted with a beautiful smile, Fitz leaned down to kiss her.

“Hi. You look nice, honey,” she tugged on his suit jacket.

Taking a seat across from her, Fitz winked. “Thanks. Are you all packed?”

“Almost. I went to the office this morning to give Quinn the rundown. Harrison ordered me to not return. So I’ll go home after this and finish.”

“Need company?”

Olivia shook her head, with a slight grin. “No, I’m alright. I’ll get distracted and you know what that means.”

“I do,” he smirked. “Don’t want you to get sidetracked.”

Skimming the menu, Olivia asked, “Remember when we met? How different everything was?”

Fitz sighed. “I always remember. You were such a saint, dealing with us. It was an amazing first date. Don’t you think?”

Mumbling, she replied, “I hope I never have to deal with those again.”

“Deal with what?”

Olivia cocked her head to the side. “What?”

“You said you hoped you never have to deal with those again. What are those?”

Fitz’s eyes were big; looking very curious. Replaying what she told him, Olivia shot her eyes down to the menu again, avoiding his gaze. First dates. Having to start over again. She didn’t want that to happen. With Fitz, everything was better. She felt comfortable, even with the ups and downs. But was it too soon to think about a future with him? Was she being naïve?
“What are you going to eat? I am craving some pizza. The greasier, the better.”


With a shrug, Olivia "hmphed".

“Is the trip stressing you? Have you been sleeping? Wait,” Fitz paused, looking at her square in the eye, reaching for her hand. Dropping his voice, he realized.

“Aunt Flo’s coming.”

Pointing her finger at him, she replied, “Ding ding ding. All of the above. Ugh, the poorest timing. Either tomorrow or Friday. I don’t feel my best.”

Olivia’s breath hitched as Fitz rubbed his thumb against her skin. Fitz was glancing at her with such compassion, it almost made her cry.

“Are you sure you don’t want me to come over? I can bring you snacks and a blanket and massage you.”

“Fitz! No, thank you.” Breaking out into a grin, Olivia thought of his TLC regimen; it usually resulted in a breath-stealing orgasm and clothes all over the place. “That’s all I say on the matter.”

She nudged his foot with her Tory Burch flat. To let him know that she wasn’t angry, but she was keeping her options open.

A friendly server approached, informing them of the day’s specials.

Fitz requested, “Sir. We would like a large pizza with…”

Tapping on the menu, Olivia interjected, “Extra cheese, roasted peppers, and sausage, please.”

After thanking the server, Fitz returned to Olivia; she felt his watchful gaze. Knowing he was going to wait on her, hand and foot, using an opportunity to cater to her. He asked with caution. “Liv, do you want it to-go? We don’t have to stay here.”

Having the attention on her like this was alarming. But Fitz is different, she reminded herself. He isn’t going to intentionally hurt me. I need to let him do this. Taking another deep breath, she silently nodded.

Fitz lifted her hand, kissing each knuckle. “Okay.” He reached for his phone and dialed a number. “Hey, Cy, I’m heading home. I brought my work with me before I left. Yeah…”

Olivia reached for her keys, but was having a hard time because Fitz was nipping at her neck. She was giggling all the way up the elevator. Receiving his loving glances made her swoon, tempting her to kiss him during the seven-floor ascent.

“Honey…”

“I know,” he said. “I’ll wait.”

Finally, the door opened. “Please, make yourself at home.”

“Okay, baby.”
Olivia washed her hands, then found plates. “What do you want to drink?”

“You have ginger ale?”

“Yes, sir.”

Fitz loosened his tie, toed off his shoes, and sat down on the couch. Olivia returned with the plates and his cup.

“How many slices?”

“Two for now.”

The two ate their lunch, not talking much. Every time Olivia assumed she could sneak a glimpse at Fitz, he was doing the same thing.

“When do you get Teddy?”

Fitz waited to finish his food to answer. “Not anytime soon. I hired a new babysitter last week. Her name is Rachel and I told her I'd get home around 8. So I'll probably head out around 7:15.”

Olivia was surprised. “Is she nice? Does he like her? Why the change?”

“I think so,” Fitz said. “She's about 25, goes to GW, has a boyfriend - don't remember his name - but they're cool. I don’t want to burden her any more than I have to. Rachel doesn't an immediate family to take care of, so maybe Teddy would connect with her more than Gracie, and not feel neglected.”

The hope in Fitz’s voice encouraged Olivia. She was worried about him and Teddy. “Okay, I see. That’s great.”

Olivia took it upon herself to snuggle against Fitz - her back pressed on his chest, using him as a resting spot. Lounging in the stillness. More deep breaths.

“Can I ask what you're thinking about?”

Almost saying no, she took a moment to contemplate.

“The trip is exciting and there’s a lot at stake, but I need to tell you something.”

“Oh?”

“Yes.”

“Tell me.”

Olivia pursed her lips, looking straight ahead. She could feel her shoulders tense. The old habits of shutting down, running, and deflecting were ready to come out again. If Fitz wasn’t holding on to her, making her feel safe, she would have escaped to her room. Or taken a walk. Anything to halt her progress. She was trying.

“You can tell me anything, Livvie.”

Closing her eyes, she tried to drown out the negative thoughts. “It's not what you're expecting. You’re going to think differently of me.”
Fitz rubbed her arms, pressing a kiss into her hair. “Will you trust me? Or give me a chance? I deserve that much. A chance.”

Olivia let out a sigh, slowly moving her body so she could see his face. “I don’t know how to say.”

“Take your time,” Fitz encouraged. “I’m right here.”

Her throat was tight, but she swallowed and began to speak. “I understand how Teddy feels. My parents abandoned me.”

Olivia watched Fitz’s eyes darken, but he didn’t speak. His body language didn’t change either, so he could have still be opened to hear her story.

“They were always busy, but it didn’t strike me as different. Mama left when I was 12 and they divorced the day after I turned 13. Neither told me and I found out through a friend at school. My dad began to change - he turned into a drill sergeant and he didn’t want me to be around him when he was going through his shit. So, I went to different boarding schools.”

She stopped to breathe. Inhale through the nose and out the mouth.

“I have trust issues, Fitz. I automatically think anyone who tries to get close to me, will leave or use me. My parents told me they would be there for me, come back for me, and they didn’t. As you may have noticed, I built up a wall. I got tired of being hurt.”

Fitz kissed her shoulder. “Livvie…”

“I know, pathetic.” Her voice sounded small, barely escaping. ”Is it okay if I keep talking? I’ve never discuss this with anyone. I couldn’t hold it in.”

“I told you, baby,” Fitz reminded, “I’m right here.”

Olivia sat up, clasping her hands. This is when she knew, it would get uncomfortable.

“I’m not used to being loved like this.”

“What?”

“My parents. The men I’ve dated. Everything had its limits. I had to be a certain way in order to receive their affection or commitment.”

“What do you mean?”

His question resonated in her ears; his voice had never sounded that firm before. Clearing her throat, Olivia was ready to divulge.

“I’ve only been in two relationships. College and then when I moved back here. I even got engaged to a businessman. That did not turn out well.”

“Livvie…”

Olivia turned her head to Fitz quickly. “No, he didn’t lay a hand on me. Ever. It was more emotional and mental. It was the combination of not wanting to be someone I wasn’t and we were just going through the motions. All the crap I dealt with my parents, carried over to my relationships.”

A chill went down her spine. She had to stand up and walk around. Fitz didn’t follow. Olivia walked in a circle around the living room. Slowly, methodically. But her words were leaving her mouth
quickly.

“I gave up on love. But you -- you did something different. What we have is different. It’s real. You care about me and not in a way that I’m used to. Love doesn’t come naturally to me. I don’t accept love. But the way you love me... It's almost unconditional and that scares the crap out of me, Fitz! I don't think I am deserving of your love. So I want to step away. This trip --- one of the reasons it interested me because I thought we were going too fast and I needed to refocus.”

Olivia breathed deeply as she watched Fitz stand. Almost rigid with jaw slightly clenched, he nodded. “I see.”

Already drained, she knew this would happen. “I don't want to detach but that's my preset. That’s what been holding me back all this time, Fitz. I want to do better, but everything comes back to me and I get stuck. I’m so sorry.”

He crossed to her.

“Okay.”

“Fitz,” she whispered, feeling very broken and exposed.

“Liv.”

His voice was soothing, but did not completely calm her down. “You don’t understand,” she interrupted, turning her body to him. “I tend to block everything out but I know it does not help. It’s not healthy. So I need you to be patient with me. I’m not easy to deal with.”

“Olivia Pope. You think I don’t see you? I realize how you operate. How your brain works. I know this and honestly, I don’t care. I am not going to desert you because you’re human. I love you.”

“Stop.”

Fitz whispered in her ear, "Never. I. Love. You. Do you hear me?"

Olivia sniffed. Tears were beginning to fall and the emotions were overwhelming.

“I'm going to keep telling you this until you believe me. I love you,” Fitz announced. "Do you love me?"

“Yes.”

Fitz grinned. “There. Just like that. You told me confidently and I know that you do and I believe it. So you should be as quick to accept it when I tell you that I love you.”

When she heard those words, Olivia broke down, sobbing into Fitz's shirt. "I'm trying."

Lifting her chin, Fitz kissed her. "There is no shame in this. You are beautiful. Thank you for telling me. I want to be here for you. You deserve this. All of this."

Feeling his arms wrap around her petite frame, Olivia could sense the heaviness pulling away from her heart. Twenty-one years of pain, confusion, anger, and loneliness gradually dissipating. No one had allowed her to break down like this. She had never been held like this before. Without condemnation.

Even with the intense but relieving heart-to-heart with Fitz, Olivia was very eager to switch gears
and head off to California. There was much to do and she was ready to tackle this new project, with a clear head. Taking the earliest flight the next morning, she and Harrison arrived at LAX while it was still daylight. Driving straight to the office, they met with Mr. Reynolds and some of his staff. After debriefing with one of the agency’s publicists and creating an extensive agenda for the next day, Harrison and Olivia parted ways for the night. Olivia was beyond exhausted so she decided to retire early. Shucking her heels and changing into one of Fitz’s t-shirts and her favorite pair of leggings, Olivia fell into bed.

With the sun setting, Olivia picked at her dinner - a salad and turkey burger - while reviewing her notes. Soon, it got to be ridiculous to go over the piles of work. She needed to stop all together. Then she thought of her boys back in Washington.

“Let me see what they’re doing,” she said to herself. It was almost 10 o'clock, so texting seemed like the best option.

*Are you busy?*

The dots immediately appeared; Fitz must have been waiting for her. A smile formed when she got her response.

*No. :)*

*Is Teddy awake?*

*Actually, he’s sitting on my lap. I told him that you might call and I let him stay up just in case.*

That was all she needed. Quickly, she dialed Fitz.

"Hi," Fitz and Teddy shouted into the phone.

“Good evening. How are you two doing?”

"We're great, Livia!"

The cheery tones of Teddy could change a girl's disposition in a second.

“May I speak with Teddy, please? I haven't talked to him in a while.”

Olivia waited for Fitz to hand over the phone.

“Hi, sweetie.”

“Livia! Where are you?”

“I’m in California.”

Teddy exclaimed, “Wow! That’s where Daddy is from. That’s where my Poppy lives! Do you know him?”

“Yes,” Olivia replied, "I do know that they are from here. But no, I haven’t had the pleasure of meeting him.”

“Maybe Daddy can call him and you two can meet,” Teddy suggested. Olivia continued to straighten her paperwork as Teddy talked about his day.

"Guess what?"
“What?”

“We miss you.”

“I miss you, Teddy. I’ll be back before you know it.”

The voice on the other end asked, “How long will you be gone?”

“Two or three weeks. We have a very big project, and the people are counting on us to do well,” Olivia revealed, hoping it made sense and didn’t bore Teddy senseless. “I want to finish it all up before I leave, so I won’t have to fly right back out.”

Teddy released a dramatic sigh. "Okaaaayy. That seems like a long time. But we’ll manage.”

“Manage? Where did you get that word?”

“Daddy.”

Olivia had to laugh; never being surprised by his vocabulary and even as a new kindergartner, being very mature.

“Livia, it’s my bedtime now. Daddy likes to use his finger and moves it in a circle.”

“He probably means to wrap it up.”

Teddy gasped, "How did you know? That's why he does it. To tell me without being rude or if he doesn't feel like talking. I’ll talk to you later!”

“Sure.”

“I love you, Livia.”

Her heart began to swell; I love you’s meant even more than how it used to, in days prior. “I love you, Teddy. Have a good night.”

“So when I go to sleep and wake up tomorrow, it will be one day closer to seeing you. Right?”

Olivia liked this thought process. “Right on, baby.”

Teddy burst into laughter. Confused, she had to ask, “What’s so funny?”

“You call me ‘Baby’. I’m four and a half, Livia! But it’s okay. I’ll let you call me that.”

“Haha, I see.”

“Good night.”

“Good night.”

Hearing the cutest pair of feet rush up the stairs, Olivia stayed on the line for Fitz.

“Hey, pretty lady.”

“Mmhmm. Hi, handsome.”

“Teddy's right. I miss you.”
Leaning back into the four oversized pillows, Olivia echoed the sentiment. “I miss you too. I miss you so much, I’m wearing your shirt.”

Fitz let a long ooh. “Which one?”

Stretching her legs, Olivia described in a sultry tone. “Heather grey. Dark letters across the chest. It’s a little snug on you. Yes, I’ve noticed, but I sort of swim in it.”


“I hope you don’t miss it much.”

“I won’t. It’s in good hands.”

Olivia felt her eyes drooping but she sighed into the receiver.

“Are you sleepy?”

“I am.”

“Why don’t you get some rest? I bet you have to wake up early.”

Olivia pouted, “I do, but I want to talk to you.”

“Okay,” he replied, without arguing.

“You know, your voice sounds amazing on the phone. You should do voiceover work.”

Fitz scoffed, “Oh, c’mon! I don’t think so. No one would hire me.”

Olivia couldn't help but laugh at Fitz's denial. The little moments, finding the quirky tidbits to discuss, it meant the world to her. But fatigue was taking over, with two consecutive yawns as the tell-tale sign.

“Liv…”

“I know. I know. Just stay with me.”

“You got it, baby.”

Olivia dozed off as Fitz softly sang one of her favorites in her ear. A song that she would remember for a long time to come.
Chapter 14

Week one of the Los Angeles trip was going very well. She and Harrison met with both parties, laying out what was at stake, what could be salvaged, and when the plans could be executed. Even with some opposition, they were able to connect with Chelsea, but still give the Agency and Mr. Reynolds advice to stand their ground as the employer. On Monday, there was a press conference and the OPA team was well represented.

Olivia was determined to make a great impression on her clients and learn about the scene in L.A. When she and Harrison weren't inside the hotel conference room, drafting press releases and rehearsing speeches to give, they were researching the other PR firms and publicists who were mainstays. Knowing it was important to not be complacent, no matter how much success she had obtained. Olivia was reminded of what her father had told her time and time again: always having to work twice as hard to be twice as good. While googling, she discovered a workshop nearby, registering immediately.

"Do we have to attend this, Liv?"

Olivia took a sip of her coffee, before swinging the door open; Harrison was dragging his feet. "We need to stay on the top of our game. Stay current, above the fray."

"We should be relaxing when we're not working. There's so much to see!"

Giving her friend a playful jab, Olivia said, "Get outta here, Harrison. That's what Thanksgiving and Christmas are for."

Harrison sighed.

"Listen," Olivia turned around. "Just attend this one workshop with me and you'll be off the hook whenever we're not on the clock."

"Ok, Liv."

The two found seats to the right of the stage. There were about 75 individuals in attendance, listening to this hot-shot guru named Leo Bergen, about the ins and outs of current public relations tactics.

Olivia didn't skip a beat, furiously writing notes, taking into consideration the information Leo gave. Every so often, she glance over to Harrison, who yawned, or just looked very bored. When the session was over, Olivia introduced herself to the main speaker, thanking him for the speech.

It felt great to network with others. There weren't as many minorities represented, which was a little discouraging, but Olivia made efforts to meet each one.

But one in particular, Marcus Walker, looked around their age. He was passionate when he discussed his mission to help, cutting down any bullshit, and yet very affable. Someone she could make connections with in the future.

"Hi, I'm Olivia Pope."

"Nice to meet you."

After shaking Marcus' hand, she introduced him to Harrison."
"Where are you located? You don't give me a California vibe."

"D.C."

Marcus smiled, "That's great. You know, LA could use someone like you. Your work ethic is beyond amazing and you have this grit that publicists here wished they could have. I've heard about you - you're working on the Chelsea Williamson case."

"We are."

"You're doing a great job," he continued. "I'm serious. You could do great here. You have the experience of working with big names and we have our fair share of celebrities."

Quickly, Harrison interjected, "We're needed in Washington."

"I appreciate your kind words." Olivia smiled, lifting her eyebrows slightly at Harrison.

With another smile, Marcus said, "Think about it. I'll gladly fly you out, show you around, and connect you with other big players here."

Olivia accepted his business card, placing it inside her folder. Marcus had a point. With her time in the hardcore government environment she was accustomed to, she could always spread her wings. There was potential in the West Coast and ways to expand.

"Are you crazy?"

"What?"

Harrison made sure to stay in time with Olivia's fast-paced footsteps.

"You like it here that much?"

Olivia gave him a wink, shrugging one shoulder. "I don't know. I like how it's different here."

Harrison suggested to get a quick lunch at one of the small restaurants a few blocks away from the Record building. He wanted to give Olivia time to clear her head. The long hours were catching up, and she was trying very hard to mask the deprivation. Very thankful that her confidant was observant, knowing when she was on and when she could use a break.

After they ordered, Olivia noticed that her phone was chiming. After three rings, she tapped on the screen.

Hello, Sweet Baby. I just saw a link online about your client. Saw your beautiful face. Damn. You look as gorgeous on the screen as you do in person. I miss you. Call me when you get a chance. 3

Olivia locked her phone, returning to her lunch. She didn't respond to the text; the influx of emotions would overwhelm her. Because she knew she was already homesick. Being away for months at a time made her callous to her former surroundings. But this time around, it was odd. The butterflies, the heartache of being apart from him. He was a reason why she couldn't just up and leave.

Damn feelings.

"Thank God we can do this."

"Why?"
"Because I can see you."

Olivia stuck out her tongue at her computer screen. Another bedtime video chat with Fitz. While she worked on another proposal and her dinner, Fitz was sitting in bed, with a lazy smile plastered on his face.

"C'mon, you love it."

"I do," she grinned.

"Teddy asked about you."

"He did?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"That's cool."

"Does that freak you out?"

"What do you mean?"

"That my son asked about you."

"Not as much," she replied. "It's nice to know I'm missed. What have you been up to, Mr. Grant?"

Fitz cracked a smile. "Well… I found a class for Teddy. It's at the community center on Wednesday afternoons. Gives him some time to socialize without Rachel nearby."

"Awesome. What about you?"

"Just work. Missing a lady so much."

Rolling her eyes, scribbling a correction on her paper, she mumbled, "I'm sorry. I'm doing my best to get back as soon as I can."

Olivia returned to the screen; Fitz back in his comfy position, head cradled beneath his hands. He sure looked sexy like this. But because he was far away, it made her heart beat faster.

"Don't you worry. You have a job to do and I couldn't be prouder."

"Going on any dates?"

Fitz's eyes widened, while scoffing. "Olivia! I wait patiently after work, waiting for your calls. I don't have time to go on dates."

Giggling, Olivia replied, "I'm just teasin' ya."

"God," Fitz sighed with glassy eyes. "I cannot wait for you to get home."

"Me too."

Olivia checked the time. "I should let you go."

"Oh, no," he wagged his finger. "I'm not going anywhere because you will ask me to stay. You always beg."
"No, I won't."

"Yes, you will. Trust me," Fitz taunted. "Give yourself five minutes."

That sounded like a challenge so Olivia went back to her work, taking a few more sips of her wine. Acting as if Fitz was not looking back at her.

"Okay, Livvie. It's getting late."

"Don't hang up!"

Olivia squeezed her eyes shut. He was right. Of course, when she opened them to see what kind of mocking response she would receive, Fitz was chuckling.

"I won't."

"I love you, Fitz."

"I love you too, Sweet Baby."

____________________________

"Liv…Liv."

"What?"

"You're zoning out."

Leaning back with a puzzled face, Olivia narrowed her eyes at Harrison, only to receive a "told you so" look. She used the pause to re-tie her hair into a ponytail. Holed up in the room working on a deadline could create some tension.

"Sorry."

"Are you alright? We've been working since 8. It's 4 now and you haven't eaten much. We should call it a night."

Olivia brushed him off with a "fine", and continued typing.

____________________________

A 6am call startled her out of sleep. The one day she could stay in bed without an alarm and now she was awake. Was it Mr. Reynolds? A fucking beat reporter who wanted scoop? If so how did they get her number?

Aimlessly feeling for her cell phone, Olivia snatched it off of the nightstand, cleared her throat, and pressed the button. Hoping the irritation in her voice would not carry through.

"Hello?"

"Hi!"

The voice didn't sound familiar. Why would the Agency have someone call so early? Olivia specifically told Quinn to forward all inquiries to the work extension and then for it to be a Saturday? This made no sense. Her brain was still muffled.

Olivia sat up and spoke louder. "What?"
"Livia, is that you? It's me, Teddy. Do you see me?"

Rubbing her eyes as if she was still dreaming, Olivia discovered she wasn't. Sure enough, she was on a video call. The jovial tyke was waving at her, in his pajamas, with a smile so big. It almost softened the blow of being so rudely awaken.

Almost.

"Good morning, Teddy. How did you get my number?"

"Daddy's iPad was unlocked and I clicked on FaceTime and your name was at the top. Livvie. But that's his name for you. You're O-ivia. I call you Livia. So, I thought maybe you could talk because I want to talk to you."

Teddy's brain worked so well, full of reason. But still not at that point of knowing the concept of time zones.

"You're so sweet," she encouraged. "But next time, I want you to ask your Dad first before you use his things.."

"Okay!"

"How are you?"

"Fine. I'm glad you're here."

"Yeah?"

Teddy smiled. "I can see you and that makes me happy. Because I miss you so much!"

How could a child make her heart flutter like this? She was still on the fence about how she felt around kids, but Teddy constantly adjusting her thinking. Olivia caught a glimpse of herself through the little box in the corner. Strands of hair framing her face, while in a messy bun. Lips puffy. Eyes tired. Basically looking a hot mess. She quickly cleared her throat, not wanting to create a scene.

"What are you going to do today?"

"I'm going to play with my toys. I think we're going to the grocery store. Play in my room while Daddy does work at home. And then, my mom's calling me tonight."

"Oh yeah?"

"Mnhmm."

"What are you going to talk about?"

Teddy responded with the cutest, most confused face. "I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"Hmm."

"Have you talked to your mom about school?"

"Sorta."

"Okay, how about your artwork? I remember you showing me paintings you made."
"Livia."

"Yes?"

Teddy pouted. "I really don't want to talk to her."

"Why not? Did your Dad say something?"

"No. He doesn't say bad things about her in front of me. He says that all the time to his friends. 'I
don't talk poorly about her. Not in front of him.' Him is me."

Olivia nodded, "Well that's good. Some adults aren't always nice like your Daddy."

"I don't understand why she had to leave me."

"Teddy…"

Olivia watched her face crumple. She wanted to get to the bottom of this. As soon as he spoke of his mother, Teddy's demeanor would plummet.

"What's wrong, bubba?"

"My friends' mommies all hang out together and my mom doesn't come to parents' night. I'm lonely. I stick out."

"Do any of your friends like you?"

Teddy was chewing on his lip. "Yeah, most of them do."

Olivia reached over to grab her water bottle. After taking a long swig, she answered, "That's good. Do any of them only have one Mom or Dad?"

"Sometimes."

Olivia began to think like she would with a client. Just easing in with questions, figuring out what was making them tick. "Why do you think you stick out?"

"Everyone as a Mommy and I don't have one here."

"But you have Daddy."

Teddy sighed, clearly in exasperation. "I knooooow. But he can't always come. Because of his work. That's why I have babysitters. They subb-a-tute. Like teachers."

"I'm sorry. I bet your other friends have babysitters and nannies that step in when their parents can make it."

She heard Teddy click with his tongue. Olivia decided to give him some time to think things over and let him lead the conversation.

"Livia?"

"Yes?"

"She's replacing me. With Andrew. She likes him a lot."

"But what about your Dad? I'm dating him. Is he replacing you with me?"
Teddy emphatically answered, "No! Daddy would never do that to me. He loves me too much, he would never leave me. You're not trying to pretend that I'm not here, Livia. He promised."

"Oh," she commented. "Why do you feel lonely?"

Teddy abruptly lifted the iPad, and began to walk. Olivia gathered that he stopped in the family room. "I'm going to color, okay?"

"That's fine."

Olivia smiled as she watched him tilt the iPad, so she could see what he was up to. He opened a book. "I'm coloring leaves, Livia."

"Yeah?"

"Yes. It's fall time. Did you know that the leaves turn different colors? Sometimes it depends where you live."

Olivia sat up, realizing she wasn't going to back to sleep. "That's great. Teddy, you're so observant."

He colored for a few more minutes.

"How's school?"

Teddy shrugged. "Ahh, it's different here. Kindergarten is very...different. At preschool, we just played and talked about our toys and dolls. Now, all the kids talk about what they do at the home. And I don't talk. Because... I'm different."

"Who is telling you this, Teddy?"

"Zachary. Parker Elizabeth Davidson. Owen," Teddy explained. "They live in the nicer neighborhood. They think I'm weird and different because I only have a Dad."

Olivia firmly stated, "No, you are not. You're just as important as the others. Everyone has different stories to tell. There is nothing to be ashamed about. Guess what?"

"What, Livia?"

"I didn't always have my Mom around."

Teddy looked up with wide eyes and a dropped jaw. "Really?"

"Really. She and my Daddy fought a lot and they were busy. They were always out of town. So... one day she left and didn't come back for a long time."

"She left you too?"

"Yes."

Olivia was certain Teddy was going to cry - his bottom lip poked out and was quivering. "Did she stop loving you?"

"I don't think so. But sometimes, parents don't always know how to love."

"Oh. Ok. Maybe that's what happened with my Mommy," Teddy slowly replied, with a little hope in his voice. "She gets angry when I'm messy. Or when I run around. I think she likes it more if I'm
She talks extra high on the phone but when it's just the two of us, it's like she doesn't want to talk to me. I think I bore her and she doesn't know how to talk with me," he giggled. "I don't think she's around kids my age."

Olivia couldn't help but smile; Teddy has such optimism that could brighten anyone's day. She witnesses pieces of herself in him. Only hoping that he would never change and life would never jade his view.

"Well, I think you should talk to your mom, and tell her how you feel."

Teddy wiggled his eyebrows, moving closer to the screen. She could see some of the freckles on the apples of his cheeks. "But I hope you can be my new Mommy soon," he whispered. "That would be so cool!"

"Theodore! What are you doing? Why do you have my iPad? What did we discuss, buddy, about using other's people things? Wait, who are you talking to?"

Olivia refrained from laughing as she heard Fitz's heavy footsteps approaching and frantic questions.

"Liv."

"Liv?"

Fitz came into view, but only in his sleep pants, so that was a view to behold. Along with his ruffled hair and reading glasses, Olivia kept her mouth shut, not wanting to say something very inappropriate to his son. She waved, while covering her face, still very tired from the lack of sleep.

"Hi."

"Hi," he smiled, but asked, "Did he call you?"

Olivia nodded.

"I am so sorry, we will talk about time zones and being considerate."

"It's okay. We got to talk."

Fitz pursed his lips, slowly turning to his son. Teddy shrugged, giving a cheesy grin.

"But Daddy, it's Saturday and I just needed to talk to Livia. I didn't want to wake you."

"It's alright, Teddy. If you ask, you can call Olivia, if she is okay with it. We will have to ask her before you call. Okay?"

Teddy nodded, giving his father a hug. "I'm sorry. And I'm sorry, Livia."

"I forgive you."

Fitz scratched the back of his head, inadvertently revealing a toned arm, with the tight muscles and veins that popped out. Maybe a perk of this early morning call.

"Kids. They keep learning new things and sooner than we did."
"I bet."

"How are you, beautiful?"

Olivia groaned. "Ridiculously tired."

"You're not sleeping."

"What?"

Fitz lowered his face, so that his glasses would shift down against his nose. "You heard me. I don't think you've been sleeping well. Will you be able to rest today?"

"Maybe," she sighed. "Today is an 'off' day. But I need to take care of some things."

"I'm sorry that he woke you. It won't happen again."

Olivia brought her phone closer as she reclined. "It's okay. You don't wear clothes on Saturdays?"

Fitz's shoulders rose as he laughed. "No. I try not. Especially in the mornings. I gotta wear my suit every day, it's nice to let loose."

The settlement between the record label and Chelsea was resolved in 10 days, faster than was projected. Everything worked out as Olivia predicted and they were paid well. But Mr. Reynolds referred her to another friend with another case.

Peter Caldwell was a popular actor working on resurrecting his career. Coming from a large acting family, he was used to the spotlight and getting whatever he wanted. But because of late nights and distasteful events, his star was dropping. Several years after his fall, he was getting tired and needed help. Mr. Reynolds knew Olivia and Harrison could help Peter.

After three days, Olivia was able to craft a proposal no one could refuse. With the help of Peter's agent, Olivia and Harrison could get started. It didn't take long for the transition to begin. Peter's name was creating positive attention on social media and on the entertainment channels. Olivia stayed on the phone, making more connections, and persuading local news channels to have Peter on their shows.

She met with Peter's team. When the meeting was over, everyone was filing out. Except for Peter.

"Miss Pope, thank you so much. I am very appreciative."

Olivia curtly stated, "You're welcome. That's our job. To make you look good and rise above whatever issues you got yourself into."

"We both have East Coast roots, you know."

"Oh?" Collecting her papers, Olivia crossed to the door.

Peter strutted towards her. "Yes. I'm always in awe of a woman who is no-nonsense about her work. It's a great look."

"Are you flirting with me?"

"That would be affirmative. Is that wrong?"
Olivia tried to wipe the disdain off her face. Crossing her arms, she reminded, "I don't mix business and pleasure."

"Oh? Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Who is the lucky fellow?"

Smirking, Olivia replied, "That's my business and not yours."

"I see," Peter lowered his eyes to the floor as she left him in the office.

Thirty minutes later, Harrison teased about the conversation over popcorn and wine.

Olivia covered her face with her hands. "I can't believe he was flirting with me."

"You're a strong, beautiful, and an accomplished woman. Men appreciate that." Harrison consoled.
"There's nothing wrong with that."

"Oh, come now. Let's be real."

Harrison gave a strong side-eye. "You must love being this way. Do you make yourself more difficult to love as the days go by?"

"Watch it."

"Peter Caldwell had no clue you weren't single."

"I don't need to talk about him with anyone."

"Do you act like you're unavailable?"

Olivia had to recall since she went on the first date with Fitz. It was like she was hiding her relationship from everyone. Not that they needed to know, but Harrison had a point. She was still thinking like an unattached woman. Someone who could wander anywhere she pleased, without thinking of how it could affect others. Now, there was more than herself and work. L.A. may be a good second home, a new and exciting business opportunity. But maybe not. There was more to consider.

Olivia didn't dare call Fitz to tell him about the shenanigans, because she knew he would flip his shit. So she thought of the next best person.

Gabrielle Nunez, her roommate in college, always seemed to be available to chat. Olivia could tell her almost everything.

"How's L.A.?"

"It's alright. I don't know if I like it as much as I thought."

"You're a lucky lady, getting paid to walk down Rodeo. Do something new. Cross paths with gorgeous men."

"Okay, well next time, I'll send you."
Gabrielle laughed heartily. "Perfect. Are you homesick?"

"A little. I'm diggin' it here."

"Do you miss him?"

Hearing Gabrielle's mocking tone made Olivia roll her eyes. "A little."

"Girl, you know you're in deep for that man. I can tell you've never been like this. Not even with Jake and Edison."

A sharp chill cut Olivia to the bone, having the same effect as hitting an elbow against a hard surface.

"Don't you dare mention them. They did such damage to me. It's taken me so long to move past them."

"And that's why I did say their names. To remind you of the contrast," Gabrielle reminded. "Your personality has changed. For the better, Liv."

"I hope so."

"But you love him?"

Olivia scrunched her nose while crossing her legs. It felt like when she was a teenager, gushing about the boy who caught her eye.

"Yes. I do."

"Do you see a future with him?"

It would be the first time Olivia could vocalize to anyone how she truly felt about Fitz.

"I do."

Gabrielle hummed with approval. "Good. Now, I need to ask. Is he respecting you and your boundaries?"

Olivia answered with a huff, "Of course. I wouldn't waste my time if it was anything less than respect. I learned that the hard way."

"Just asking. How about the loving department?"

"Gabrielle."

Her voice was deep and serious. There was things she never discussed with her friends. She never talked about her sex life; it was incredibly embarrassing.

"Oh, come on! He's tall, gorgeous, charming. He probably looks at you like you hold the mysteries of life inside -"

"Stop it."

"Olivia. Carolyn. Pope."

Feeling a deep blush on her cheeks, Olivia sighed again. "He's wonderful. On all levels. I'm not lying. He's the best thing that has happened to me."
"That's all that matters, Liv. That you love him and he loves you. Whatever comes along, just rely on love and be honest with each other. Be honest with yourself."

Gabrielle's advice was timely, bringing more clarity to Olivia's mind. More importantly, her heart.

"Shit," she gasped. "I need to wrap this sucker up."
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

Surprise... another update. This is the chapter I've been waiting to share with you. Definitely listen to The Look of Love (by Sergio Mendes and Brasil ’66, the song that inspired the title) before, during, or after you read this chapter. It will make sense. There a few quotes that came directly from two Scandal episodes (you'll probably catch them). Also, I know you'll visualize a few parts very well. :) Thanks to all who have left comments or messages on Tumblr or Twitter. I appreciate your kind words and support. Stop on by (lovesbiggerthanpride), would love to hear from you and get to know you better. Have a great Sunday. xo

Who knew that two weeks would take forever?

Fitz was craving her. Not in an animalistic, carnal fashion, to satisfy his urges. But the intense desire one feels when his soul yearns for completion. He was empty and he knew why.

The minutes extended to hours and days. They were too far away and it was too long to be away from each other. He longed for her. The first three days, he did whatever he could to stay busy. He was content with the random calls and text messages. But when the week passed, he was getting restless. He wasn’t sleeping much and he just wasn’t himself.

He contemplated on other milestones that were worth the wait. Turning 18, moving out, the birth of his son. Teddy finally being potty trained.

Waiting for his Olivia was now part of this exclusive list. Like a lovesick puppy, he waited. Even while he was out and about in the city, his imagination ran from him, and he would watch for her.

It’s not that he wasn’t accustomed to distance. His ex-wife went on business trips. Hell, he had been away for weeks at a time, but there was never a longing like this before. It was on another level. The distance was tugging at him.

All he wanted to do was hold her hand or just look - look at her. See those exquisite pair of chocolate brown eyes, watch those lips curl into a smile that was only for him. It would brighten his world.

But he had to make due with video chats. Sweet texts and funny one-liners. Even a rendezvous when he convinced her that staying up late at 1am - his time - was worth the hassle.

“You’re quite frisky tonight.”

Fitz moved his iPad back to his face, after giving Olivia quite a show. “I am. It’s hard when I’m used to seeing you all the time and now I’m struggling.”

“Hard, Fitzgerald? Really?”

“Oh, you know what I mean. What other word would you like me to use, Miss Pope?”
Olivia poked her chest out, giving Fitz a delightful shimmy, which created a stir of laughter.
“Difficult?”

“Hmm.”

“I’m teasing you.”

Fitz nearly salivated at seeing his Liv with the most amazing cleavage, smartly placed so his eyes wouldn’t leave the screen. Every time he saw her, he was falling more in love. Long gone were the days of being extra reserved. Olivia would do things that surprised him. They could tease each other, do little things that meant so much. It was great.

“You most certainly are.”

Olivia winked, leaning back from her laptop.

“Be right back.”

Fitz nodded as she disappeared from view. It gave him time to get redressed, clean up, and return to his bed.

“There ya are.”

Olivia waved her hand around with flair, pretending to give a bow. “Yes.”

“How was your day?”

“Fine. Busy. Normal. The new case we got, is a hoot. The actor is making a comeback. You know, the usual, working to make sure he looks better than before.”

“Cool.”

“I miss you.”

Fitz created a small “O” with his mouth. “Is that so?”

“I do,” she replied. “I don’t think LA is for me.”

“Did you think it would be?”

Olivia twisted her lips. “I thought I could be okay having more clients here. Having the opportunity to go from coast to coast. Expanding the business. But I stand corrected. I’m good with being in DC for now.”

“Oh ok.”

Fitz let the idea of her leaving on a regular basis go in and out of his brain. At least she was admitting it was something that she thought about, but would put it on the back burner. It could still give them a chance.

“Mmhmm.”

“I love you.”

Olivia quickly smiled, but looked down to her phone. “I -- I love you too.”
“May I ask you something?”

“Okay.”

“Did you hear that a lot wh---”

The abrupt response jolted him.

“No. I did not.”

And that was that. Since they first telling each other the three most important words in his mind, Fitz always returned to this concept. Of why Olivia seemed to be allergic to love. Not that his family life was perfect, but Liv’s background was different and she responded as such. Aloof and usually irritated that it would get mentioned. He wanted to know - anything and everything - but he wanted to give her the leeway. He couldn't force her.

“Hey.”

Her voice was soft again, so he knew the uncomfortable moment was over.

“Yeah?”

“What do you miss about me?”

The question piqued his interest. “Do you have time?

Olivia laughed, throwing her head back. He loved hearing and watching her laugh. A burst of joy, so hearty, it filled the room. When she laughed, he'd laugh. She was contagious.

“Well, Olivia Carolyn. For starters, I miss hearing your voice in my ear or when we're right next to each other. That's amazing. And your incredible smile. I miss you standing next to me.”

“What?”

“Yes. I love how tall you are. With me.”

“You… Fuck you.”

Fitz’s nose scrunched with amusement, seeing her eyes roll. To his height, she was very petite. Almost a foot shorter. With heels, the gap was smaller. “Honestly. I love your height. Truly. Perfect. How strong you are. The funny way you giggle when I make a complete fool of myself.”

Taking a breath, he looked for her eyes. Full of wonder and still connecting with him.

“Those movies we watch. When you cuddle with me. Having that time alone to reconnect after a long day. I miss patting your booty when we lie down.”

Olivia snorted. “You goof. It’s like you can’t keep your hands off of me.”

“I don’t.”


His eyes widened as she cleared her throat.
“Ok, then.”

“Did I say too much?”

Olivia slightly turned her head, giving a smirk. “I didn’t know you missed me that much.”

Fitz brought his iPad closer. “Liv, I continue to fall for you every day. My every feeling is controlled by the look on your face. It’s become so ridiculous how much I admire you. You changed me.”

And just like that, when his proclamation finished, it was like the wind was taken right out of her. He was able to tell; she couldn’t breathe properly. Watching for her eyes. Finding the details in her. Her lips parting into a gasp. To know how he could prompt the way she spoke and reacted. It was mind-blowing.

“Honey?”

“Yes, Liv.”

Her voice wavered. “I have to go now.”

Fitz dropped his voice to a whisper. “Livvie. What did I do? Tell me.”

All she could do was force a smile. Her eyes looked so sad. Something about this look. It was alarming and he knew he fucked up. Somehow.

“I’ll text you when I head out in the morning.”

“Okay, baby. Have a good night.”

“You too. I love you.”

As he placed his iPad on his nightstand, Fitz wondered. How could he demonstrate his love for Olivia when she was used to stepping back and shutting down? They were making strides and whenever he’d take a long step, she’d sputter and turn around. He needed to get to a place where it wouldn’t be such a problem.

She needed time.

“Hello?”

“Hi.”

Fitz checked the ID. “Livvie, what are you doing up so early? It’s fucking four AM over there.”

“I couldn’t sleep.”

“Liv…”

“I know,” she stammered. “For some reason, I’m not able to fall asleep.”

Fitz breathed deeply through his nostrils, trying to subside his apparent frustration.

“Hey. Don’t.”
“I’m trying,” he snapped. “I get worried.”

“I know. But I don’t want you to. Now, this is why I’m calling. Can you do me a favor? I forgot to send Abby two large folders over to the office before I left. Would you have time to go to my apartment and pick them up?”

Fitz deadpanned. Why on Earth would she be doing this to him? Scaring him and then casually giving a request.

“I would but I don’t have…”

“Check your key wall. The one at the bottom.”

Fitz power walked to the spot where Olivia described. A silver key with a Princeton Tigers chain was dangling from the hook.

“What? When did that happened?”

“Four weeks ago. I thought you’d need it sometime.”

“Okay,” he answered in complete shock.

Progress. That was a good thing.

“Abby has back-to-back meetings so I don’t know who else to ask. No one else has my key. Well, Huck does, but he only comes over for emergencies.”

Fitz took the key and put it in his pocket. “It’s fine, baby. I have no problem getting them.”

“You’re a doll. When you get there, it will be in my room. Nightstand or that spot by the window. I’m so silly for missing this.”

“No problem.”

“Text me when you find it.”

Fitz cradled the phone between his shoulder and ear as he grabbed items from the refrigerator for lunches. “I don’t know how I feel about you being up so early.”

“I’m fine.”

“When you get back, I hope you’ll take some time off so you can rest.”

Olivia sighed. “I know.”

“Promise?”

“Promise. What do you have planned for today?”

Fitz was stuffing turkey, cheese, and avocado into Teddy’s lunchbox. With five Oreos - rather four with one split in half - since he loved those sandwich cookies and it was cool to remind him of his age. “Meeting three clients. Prepping for a trial in a week, which reminds me I need to call Gracie and Rachel. Maybe I should sign Teddy up for another class or activity on Fridays. I hate not having the flexibility to be home when he gets back.”

“You’re doing your best.”
“I suppose. Thanks for reminding me. I don’t want him to grow up to be a latchkey kid. We both
know how that can affect a person.”

“Yes, it’s tough. You’ll figure it out. If you need an extra pair of hands, I can help.”

“No, Livvie. I can’t let you do that,” he stated.

“Fitz.”

“We’ll talk about it when you come home.”

"Won't be long now, right?"

"Right."

They said their goodbyes. Again. Which was breaking his heart, and he knew it was having the same
affect on her as well.

Fitz got to work at a decent hour. Bumping two meetings earlier and switch the other for the
following Monday, he left the office around 2. The timing was just right so he run this errand, get to
Olivia’s office, and return to Chevy Chase so he could pick up Teddy from school.

As he locked his office door, he greeted Lauren, his secretary.

“Hey, cancel everything after 3. I emailed you the files you wanted. If you could send that over to
Cyrus and Liz, that would be fantastic. I’ll be back in the morning.”

Lauren sweetly grinned. “Absolutely, Mr. Grant.”

“Thank you so much.”

Riding to her apartment was a bittersweet. Fitz had never gone to her place without accompanying
her. When he unlocked the door, memories hit him in the face. It smelled like her. Even being away
for weeks, this apartment hadn't lost its sweet aroma.

This space was so Olivia.

Fitz was able to notice the albums she kept near the piano. Classics that were probably handed down
from her parents. The soothing aesthetic that she kept throughout the various rooms. He had a good
feeling that the colors and the arrangement were calculated meticulously. That was his Liv.

He finally reached to the end of the short hallway. Her door was closed. A slight jiggle allowed him
access to her room. From there, he went directly to where Olivia instructed. Two hefty folders on
the nightstand.

He texted her.

Got it.

“Good.”

Fitz nearly jumped out of his skin, dropping the folders. As he turned, Olivia was leaning against the
bathroom door.
“Shit!”

“Hi.”

“What the fu-- Olivia?!”

“Hi, Fitz.”

The biggest smile was on her face, with mischievous eyes.

“What? How?”

“Hi.”

Fitz ran his fingers through his hair, still dumbfounded. “What are you doing here?”

“Does it matter?”

Olivia walked to him, squeezing his arms. His throat was tight, barely able to form words.

“Nope,” a huge smile formed.

He finally came to his senses and realized she would fade away if he didn't touch her enough. His hands roamed. Feeling her skin. Kissing her full lips again. Not letting go. Pulling her into his arms. Her giggles and laughs vibrated into his throat.

“Liv.”

“Hi.”

“I can't believe you're here.”

More kisses. Their fingers brushing against each other. Then, she pulled away.

“Wait.”

Olivia lifted her finger. Fitz rolled his eyes. How could she tempt him so?

It was painful to be separated from her. Fitz was in such a trance, he didn’t pay attention to her outfit. Olivia was only in a robe. His eyes followed her to her bed, as she slowly untied the robe, pushing the fabric away, revealing herself in a way that almost brought him to his knees. Then, she moved onto the bed, tucking herself in.

“Come here.”

Fitz bit his lip, hoping this wasn’t a dirty trick.

“Is this why you asked me to come over?”

Olivia shrugged. “You said that you missed me and I sure as hell miss you, my love. I would encourage you to join me, in my bed. After you take off your clothes, and get your tail over here. Right. Now.”

“I don't understand, Liv. You- you called me.”

“Fitz!”
Her stern command was all he needed. She wasn’t going to have to ask him twice. Their eyes met and all bets were off. Fitz worked on taking off sweater, t-shirt, and jeans. Too many damn layers. He slinked his way over to her. His erection had grown; it slapped against his stomach when he pulled off his boxers. Olivia let out a groan.

“This looks a lot better in person than on FaceTime.”

Snorting, Fitz licked his lips, already feeling the heat rising in him. But his breath hitched when Olivia took a hold of him. “So good,” she pressed a kiss on his head. Fitz grunted as his stomach contracted.

“Don’t do too much... I’ll come too fast...”

“That’s not my problem.”

The mischief in her tone and the sparkle in her eyes riled Fitz up.

She was here.

“I know,” she whispered.

Fitz went straight for her mouth, cupping his hands on her face. Their kisses were deep and furious, making up for lost time.

“I thought I was going to lose it,” he groaned, showering more kisses on Olivia. Her face, her neck, her arms.

“I did.”

Fitz took a breath and held on to her hips, and rolled her over so that she was top on him. She squealed.

“You like that,” he asked in a low, throaty growl.

“Mmhmm, yes,” she hissed, pulling him down for another kiss.

“Good.”

After a few minutes of exploring, teasing each other and almost falling over the edge, unforgettable laughs, and sweet nothings, they were ready.

“Lord.”

Fitz nearly collapsed just by entering her. Hearing her sigh while he pressed further, was the most beautiful sound in his ears.

How could anyone feel this good?

Olivia whispered, “You're here.”

Fitz gave a nod as they moved together.

Finding their beautiful rhythm. Stealing the other’s breath. Back arching movements. No need to remind of a favorite spot or a particular sequence. It all came back.

Weeks apart didn’t ruin their first time in a long time.
Olivia wanted faster. He gave her more. When Fitz asked silently for deeper, she opened for him.

It didn’t take long. Everything was fast, but not rushed. When the pressure became too much, they knew. Cradled in each other’s arms, reaching their highs, and blissfully coming down.

Fitz brushed Olivia’s hair out of her face, so he could see her eyes. He was grateful. So happy that they didn’t have to wait anymore. He brought her down so they could recover.

His heart was finally bursting. Overcome with emotion, knowing how incredible this was. Being able to connect with this beautiful woman. She was everything to him.

“Wow.”

He glanced over to see her again. The afternoon sunrays made her look more radiant. Olivia smiled at him, then brushing her hand on his chest, rolling over to kiss him.

“Mmm.”

Fitz gently squeezed her ass, just appreciative of having her right on him. A thought made him frown.

“Crap, I have to call Rachel.”

“No, you don’t.”

“Liv.”

“Don’t worry, I called Lauren, who gave me Rachel’s number. I talked to her right after I called you. Teddy’s good until 7.”

“You brilliant goddess.”

Olivia giggled. “I plan well.”

"You tricked me. I bet you were already here when you called me."

Fitz playfully turned away while Olivia tried her best to bring him back. He was tired of messing with her and he couldn't resist that face.

“I cut the trip short. We were on a roll - the clients were happy, and I realized that I missed you. After talking with you the other day, I know…I need you. You're making me better. I love you.”

There wasn't much else to say. Fitz brushed his finger across her nose, leaning over to kiss her again.

Olivia sighed. “I'm taking the day off tomorrow, so if it's alright with you, I would love to see Teddy after school.”

“Of course,” he said. "I'll be there. I'm game for you to come.”

“Speaking of... I want to go again,” Olivia requested, patting his chest.

Fitz's jaw dropped before he chuckled loudly, very surprised. “Really?”

“Yeah, it’s a been a while.”
“I remember.”

“Of course you did. That’s why I could several wonderful reminders of your situation on FaceTime.”

“I'm hungry through. Let’s munch on something and then we can fuck for another hour. Is that okay?”

Winking at her, Fitz knew she was aware of what he would say. Olivia kissed him, then sauntered to the bathroom. Rubbing his eyes, checking the time, all he could was sigh. What did he do to warrant such favor from the Universe?

His heart beat faster when she walked into the room. If only she recognized the beauty he saw in her. Her strength. The hope she brought to others. Her slight curves. How long and tones her legs were. The mole that was pressed on her skin. Cheekbones carved by angels. He watched her eyelashes flutter so delicately.

Olivia lazily pulled her hair into a ponytail. She stopped as their eyes met.

“What?”

Fitz shook his head, still admiring her in the little things. “Nothing.”

“It’s something.”

“You’re right,” he admitted, opening his arms to her, inviting her to come back. “It's everything.”

She shuffled over to the bed, probably very content being in her safe haven again.

He brought her close. Still in awe that his Livvie was in his arms. “I love you, little lady.”

“Stop it.”

“I mean it,” he sang, making her smile. The vibrations tickling her skin.

Fitz kissed her shoulder, giving him enough time to process what he wanted to tell her.

"I didn’t even think I wanted anything...not until I met you."
Chapter 16

Olivia didn't do anything spontaneously. The opposite was her comfort zone. Meticulous. Well-thought out. Always having a backup plan and never out of options. But cutting a work trip short to take a red eye back to Washington, only to see her boyfriend? What kind of nonsense? To be in the same room as this man who turned her world upside down, for the better.

That was a risk. A calculated one at that.

When she informed Harrison on the ride back on her intent, he laughed, but wasn't surprised. He probably was the only person who could see the changes, since he knew both well. Everything came before her personal life. But the distance couldn't stop her from seeing his face, being in his arms, and feeling loved. There was nothing like it.

An afternoon in her own bed after two weeks was luxurious. Spending it with Fitz made it better. After reconnecting in the most sensual of ways, they had more time to chill before getting Teddy.

“He's going to be shocked when he sees you,” a blissfully naked Fitz mumbled, nuzzling his nose against Olivia's cheek. She giggled, slightly turning her head so she could see his face.

“I know. We should get ready.”

Fitz stretched his arm over Olivia to stop her. “Maybe. It will only take us 20 minutes to get home. Plus, you're extremely warm and I don't feel like moving one bit.”

Olivia wiggled around, playfully resisting. “Fitz!”

“I'm not about to cut this quality one-on-one time short. You know I can't let you go.”

She only allowed ten more minutes of lounging around before she insisted on leaving. With a small bag of clothes and other essentials, Olivia was in the car with Fitz, ready to surprise Teddy.

After she dropped off her things, Olivia was surprised to find Fitz waiting for her.

“You want to,” he asked, with mischief on his face and his hands sliding down her sides.

Olivia laughed at his lousy attempts of being discreet. Tracing his jawline, moving up to tap his nose, she reminded, “Mister, you will be highly upset if you don’t get to finish what you start. I know how you get.”

Fitz interrupted her train of thought with several kisses, reminding her quickly of their afternoon so far.

“Hmm, Fitzy.”

The dull thump of her back connecting with the wall.

“Shh...I’m trying to work.”

Olivia moaned into his ear, feeling his hand cup her sex. It didn't take long for her jeans to drop to the floor; freeing her hips to move, giving Fitz access to more. She almost slid down when his thumb pressed on her clit.

“That's right, Livvie.”
Again, spur-of-the-moment events weren't her thing, but Fitz was able to change her mind. Five minutes and a strong orgasm later, they heard a car pull into the driveway. Olivia squeezed Fitz’s hand, while he sighed.

“I’ll go hide.”

Quickly cleaning up, Fitz walked outside. The door remained open so Olivia could see and hear what was going on. Fitz met Teddy outside, picking him up.

“Hiya, Dad. I stayed with Rachel longer today.”

“Did you have fun?”

“Yes! After school and the homework page, we went to the pizza parlor and I got an extra calzone for lunch tomorrow.”

Fitz stooped down to meet Teddy face-to-face. “I got a surprise for you.”

“Yeah? What is it?”

“Can’t tell you, little man, because that’s what a surprise means. Take my hand and close your eyes.”

“Okay!”

“Keep ‘em closed.”

Fitz crossed the threshold, leading Teddy into the house.

“Alright,” he whispered. “Open your eyes.”

Blinking fast, Teddy surveyed the foyer. “What is it, Daddy?”

Fitz shrugged. “Maybe it’s a treasure hunt. The surprise is in the house.”

Olivia stifled a laugh as she watched Teddy scampered around. He peeked into the sitting room, but found nothing. Then, he ran upstairs.

“No!”

Fitz crossed his arms, holding back a chuckle. “Keep searching, Teddy Bear.”

Olivia tiptoed from the kitchen into the family room. She winked.

Soon after, Teddy came downstairs, with a bewildered face.

“Daddy! Daddy!”

“I’m in the family room.”

They waited for Teddy to make his entrance.

When he arrived, they smiled, assuming he would begin to scream and jump for joy. To their surprise, Teddy’s face crumpled, immediately bursting into tears, and ran into Olivia’s open arms.

“You came back, Livia!” His cry was so pitiful. Olivia brought him close, rocking back and forth.

“I’m here. I came back for you and Daddy.”
Teddy kept sobbing. “Thank youuuu. I missed you so much!”

Fitz could feel his heart breaking. Kneeling down, he smoothed Teddy’s hair, and wiped away his tears.

“Baby.”

“I’m not a baby…”

“How can I make you feel better?”

“I’m happy!”

Olivia kissed his wet cheeks. “Oh, Teddy,” she sighed. "I'm so glad."

“When did you get back?”

“Today. I surprised you and Daddy.”

Teddy pulled away from her shoulder. “Really?”

Fitz smiled; “Really! I wasn't expecting Livvie to be here. Isn't that awesome, Teddy?”

"Yeah,” the boy exclaimed. Now, he was hopping around. Then he paused.

“Liv? Daddy?”

“Yes?”

Teddy turned into his most composed self, hands perched on his hips. In a stern tone, he announced, “I want you to promise me something.”

Fitz glanced at Olivia, returning to his son. “Okay, buddy.”

“That both of you will never leave me. As best you can. Even when you have to go to work or trips, I want you to promise me that you’ll come back to me.”

“Of course.”

“I promise,” Olivia declared.

For the rest of the evening, Teddy wouldn’t let go of Olivia. Snuggled into the crook of her arm, sitting on her lap, and nearly crying when she tried to move.

“No...No...Liv!”

“Teddy,” Fitz warned. “Please don’t scream.”

“Just don’t go.”

Olivia reassured him with a hug, ‘I’m not going to leave.’

“Okay,” he spoke, "Sorry for yelling.”

Bedtime was approaching; Olivia carried Teddy upstairs, while Fitz followed. Waiting in his room, she got a slight reprieve, while Teddy bathed. He stormed in, finding her in the rocking chair.
“I'm back!”

“Yes, you are,” she smiled.

“Daddy said I need to get into bed.”

“You do.”

Teddy, wearing a comfy set of dinosaur pajamas, plopped himself into the covers.

“Livia?”

“Yes?”

“Do you get scared when you're alone?”

“Sometimes.”

“I do.”

“Why?”

“I get bad dreams. That no one will be here when I wake up.”

“Do you tell your Dad?”

Teddy opened his mouth, as if to share, but closed it quickly. His puppy eyes were very prominent; Olivia could tell that he was nervous.

“Honey, it's okay. If you want to tell me, that's fine. If not, that's okay.”

“I don't want him to wor-wy.”

Olivia titled her head and softly asked, "Why is that?"

Teddy shrugged, giving a quiet explanation. “I know he's sad that Mommy isn't here. He feels… what's that word when you feel bad and it may be your fault.”

“Guilty.”


To have a mind so sharp and aware of other’s surroundings. Olivia’s heart was breaking all over again for this sweet child.

Fitz walked in. “Alrighty, Monsieur Theodore.”

“Oui, Daddy.”

“French?”

Teddy clapped. “Yes! You got it.”

“Sleep tight.”

Olivia felt her sweet boy's hand tug her sleeve.
“Will you be here in the morning,” he whispered.

“Yes.”

“Good.”

“You're going to have wonderful dreams,” Olivia confirmed.

Teddy's cheeks rose. "I am. Gnite, Livia, I love you.”

Olivia pressed her lips on Teddy’s head. “Good night. I love you too.”

The lights were turned off, and the door ajar. Olivia lingered to make sure Teddy had drifted off to sleep.

“That was rough.”

“I am so sorry.”

“Fitz? I think we need to discuss about what happened.”

“What can I say? Grant men love you.”

Olivia sighed, “I’m being serious.”

“So am I.”

“Has he ever been like this before? He was really upset if I walked away.”

“The first time he visited Mellie. When his sister dropped him off after a week, Teddy wouldn’t leave my side for three days.”

“So, is this about…”

“Mellie?”

“Yes.”

Fitz leaned back, groaning, “She is the last person I want to talk about with you.”

“Baby…”

“I mean it, Liv.”

Olivia knew she had hit a wall. Everything was still fresh and it hurt for Fitz. She wasn’t going to invade his space, but she wanted to find a way to help out somehow.

When they got settled for bed themselves, Olivia added, “He’s begun kindergarten. Maybe his teacher could give us insight.”

He sighed, “This is what I’ve been dreading.”

"I'm sorry.”

Olivia rubbed his back, dragging her fingers around in a circular motion. She always found it amusing when he purred like a cat. Either his back or scratching his scalp, she would hear this.
“You want to watch some TV,” he asked in a lazy voice.

“Okay.”

"Fitz?"

"Hmm."

“How do you want me to be in his life?”

“What?”

Olivia assured him, “I don’t want to overstep, nor do I want to cower. This is all new to me. I’ve never had a child like me in the way that Teddy does. He means a lot to me. But I’ll be traveling. I won't be able to avoid that. I don’t want to hurt him; I want to know how to respond.”

"Thank you. I appreciate you."

"Love you," he said.

Olivia grinned. "I love you too."

“I’m going to call out tomorrow."

“What?”

Fitz nodded; “Let’s just spend the whole day together.”

“Are you serious?”

“Yes. You said you weren’t going in. After I drop off Teddy, we’ll have 8 hours of free time.”

Olivia pulled herself up so she could lean against the headboard. “True.”

“I don’t want to hide anymore.”

“Who said we were hiding?”

Fitz gave her such a scowl, she giggled.

“Don’t you dare. You think I don’t notice? We barely go out. I want to take you out. In public. Show everyone how much I love you and want to share this world with you. I want to go out with my girlfriend. Who is smart, beautiful, giving, and so fucking sexy. Why not tomorrow?”

The pleading in his eyes was making all the difference. How could she not said yes. She knew she had the same power to knock down his stubborn resolve.

“Finnee…,” she dragged the word as her lips slowly turned upward into a smile.

He kissed the inside of her arm.

“Fitz…”

“What?”

“You’re a trip.”
“You like it,” he purred.

A few deep kisses later, Fitz asked, “Do you want to keep some of your things here?”

Olivia’s eyes widened. “What do you mean?”

Fitz paused to rephrase his question, “I was wondering if you wanted to leave some items here, so you’re not lugging all sorts of crap behind and I don’t want you to forget anything.”

“Maybe,” she answered, a little confused and mostly worried. “Would you like to do the same?”

“Yes,” he replied confidently. “I would like that very much.”

“This is exciting.”

Olivia quipped, pulling the covers over herself, “Next level shit.”

Fitz coughed out a laugh. “Exactly.”

“Livia, are you walking with us?”

Teddy skipped to Olivia, after breakfast. It was the first time she had seen him in an uniform. He was rocking a blue polo with khaki pants. Looking extra dapper. It seemed like he had grown an inch or two since she saw him last.

“Okay.”

“Yay!”

The leaves were starting to change. Fitz smirked as Teddy nudged him away so he could stay with Olivia.

“What are you going to do today?”

“Math, reading, recess, social studies, lunch, sometimes we go to Chapel.”

Olivia smiled, lightly squeezing Teddy’s hand, “Nice!”

“How about you?”

“Oh, just cleaning and doing some work.”

Fitz loudly mimicked a buzzer, startling the two. “Wrong!”

Teddy and Olivia exchanged a shocked look then laughed.

“Daddy!”

“Livvie isn’t doing any work today. We’re going to take a day off. Almost like a field trip.”

“That’s fun,” Teddy replied. He tugged on her arm, to stop her from walking. Olivia responded to his gesture of kneeling down.

“Just make sure he doesn't kiss you the whole time.”
“What?”

Teddy giggled. “You two kiss a lot. Daddy loves romance and he loves you. I'm not blind. Kissy-kissy! Blech!”

“Yes, we do. Isn't that right?”

Olivia shook her head. “Yup.”

It was nice walking to the school. Olivia opted for a lightweight sweater, chinos, and red flats. She wanted to be comfortable and give a good impression, just in case she ran into any of Teddy’s teachers.

As they approached the carpool line and the groups of children waiting for the bell to ring, Olivia could feel a heavy weight in her stomach.

They’d been together since mid-summer and it was the first time she would be with him in front of a considerable crowd. The nerves were rising and usually not physically showing signs of weakness, Olivia could feel something off.

Olivia and Fitz stopped in front of three ladies who were standing around, watching the children play. They had a very typical Chevy Chase/Somerset look. Preppy and classy, some wore athletic wear, others in casual business outfit.

“Mornin’, Fitz.”

“Good morning.”

Teddy scurried to his friends.

“This is my girlfriend, Olivia.”

She watched the ladies’ reactions - one immediately frowned, another stood taller, as if being threatened. The third smiled.

“Nice to meet you.”

“Likewise.”

“Fitz Grant, you've known us how long and never mentioned about dating?”

“Yes, I did,” he said. “I told you.”

“How long have you two been together?”

Fitz proudly confirmed, “Three months. Loving every minute of it.”

“We haven’t seen you around, Olivia. Are you from out of town?”

Olivia hoped she didn’t sound too irritated. “I live downtown.”

“What do you do?”

“Crisis management, PR.”

“In DC?”
“Yes.”

“That’s cool.”

“Which firm?”

Olivia stated, “It's mine, on K.”

The ladies marveled.

“Will you two be working with each other?”

“I don't think so.”

“Anything’s possible.”

Olivia forced a grin as Fitz counter answered. It was taking every ounce of patience and self-control to not storm off.

"Aww," Dana, the second mom smiled, "Y'all are so cute."

“We shall see.”

Jennifer suggested, “Maybe we can all get together for wine. Do you like wine, Olivia?”

“I do,” she promptly said. “Red is the way to go for me.”

Another mom walked into the circle and began to talk about an event. Olivia could feel them eyeing her. This interrogation was coming from the most random of sources and she didn't like it at all. She had no control of the situation. Everything was happening so fast. She wasn't expecting this introduction to school life. To come in, unprepared, was not pleasant either.

Fitz kissed her temple, then nodded to the gaggle. “We’re going to say goodbye to Teddy. I hope you all have a great day.”

When they were finally out of earshot, Olivia moved extra closer to Fitz, standing on her tiptoes to let him hear her.

“I'm going to kick your ass,” she harshly whispered.

Fitz asked incredulously, “Why?”

Olivia leaned back slightly, shooting back a glare. “Because you pushed me into the lion’s den. Who the fuck are those women? Did you flirt with them? Are they smitten by the Grant charm?”

“Unfortunately, they know who I am. Doesn't help that I’m a Chevy Chase anomaly,” Fitz clarified. “I am always cordial, but I haven't deliberately given them any signs of interest.”

Olivia knew Fitz was telling the truth, but she didn’t like the attention he was receiving in front of her. “What they need to consider are boundaries. Their kids are probably the ones who give Teddy a hard time for having a single Dad.”

The look of amusement vanished. “What?”
“He didn't tell you?”

“When did he tell you?”

Olivia replied, “The other day on FaceTime. That's why he wanted to talk to me. It's an issue.”

“Bye, Livia! Bye, Daddy!”

Olivia and Fitz waved to Teddy, as he walked with his classmates in the building.

“I can't believe this. I completely missed this.”

“Bye, Fitz!”

Olivia's eyes perked, immediately grabbing Fitz’s arm when they passed the trio. She wanted to clearly mention she's the only one he calls for in the middle of the night, but that would be petty and foolish. As soon as they reached the first intersection back to Fitz's, she let go.

“You're jealous.”

Rolling her eyes, she glanced over. Fitz lifted his chin, waiting for her admission. A snarl crossed Olivia’s lips.

“Say it.”

Olivia already wasn't a fan of this bunch of kindergarten moms. But there was no point to lie about the obvious. “Fine. I don't like them looking at you that way. It's disrespectful. Especially when they know you have a girlfriend.”

“I'm sorry.”

“Still doesn't feel good.”

“See? This is why I wanted you to come with us today. I don't want to keep you a secret. I needed your permission.”

“You could have reminded them you were taken.”

“Do you?”

Aghast, Olivia stammered, “This isn't about me.”

Fitz sucked his teeth and continued to walk; “But now it is. Do you tell others that you're with someone?”

“In a general sense.”

That was the wrong answer. Fitz narrowed his eyes, with an intense gaze, that only registered to Olivia that he was looking straight into her soul.

“That's not acceptable in my book. You can't accuse me of anything like that, and be guilty of the same thing.”

Olivia relented. "You are correct. Forgive me. I was jealous.”

Even though they weren't even home, Fitz got right into her space, looking down at her with love.
“I'm done hiding, baby. I'm here. I only want you. I get jealous too, so you know for sure I don't want any man looking at someone who has my heart. We have to get over this hurdle.”

With a nod, she agreed. "So am I. No more hiding. Let's go somewhere fun. Hell, let's take some pictures and put it on Facebook or something."

Fitz whistled, "Whoa, nelly! This is next level shit."
Hello there! I realized that on Tuesday, it's been a year since I posted the first chapter of The Look. Isn't that crazy? It felt like a perfect time to update. I am incredibly grateful to all of you who have reviewed, encouraged me, chatted with me on tumblr and social media. Y'all have kept me going, even during the breaks. It's a longer chapter, with different things going on, so don't be alarmed. I hope this chapter brings you a smile to your face. Have a great weekend! xo

The autumn leaves reminded Fitz of the power of change. Vibrant greens turning into blood orange, deeper reds, and goldenrod. Falling at a rapid pace, covering the ground. In Washington, there was a sweet spot - a span of six weeks - when the temperature finally dropped and if it didn't rain, he could appreciate his surroundings in all of its beauty. Fall had always marked a turning point for him. It was when the divorce was finalized. When he got promoted to partner. Now that Teddy was in school, there were new memories to capture.

But seasons only last for a little while and Fitz couldn't waste more time.

Ever since he entered the restaurant and started talking to her, Fitz was awestruck by her. Deeper than her outer beauty, he connected with Olivia in a powerful way. He knew he needed to have her in his life. That included going out, exploring the world together. But he had been waiting for almost four months.

And now, he was taking her out on a real date. In public. Not tucked away in a hotel room or behind closed doors. It would be his chance to share his world with her. They were finally taking a big step in their relationship. Fitz knew Olivia would get antsy, so he wanted to take her somewhere simple and memorable.

Old Town Alexandria was a familiar place for Olivia. She interned at a law firm during her summers, so she knew the ins and outs. They did decide to go on their off day — during school hours, when they didn't have to rush back to pick up Teddy. A walk on the waterfront, grabbing lunch, and having good conversation. Lowkey, in his mind.

It all started with Fitz arriving at the apartment after dropping off Teddy. Before ringing the bell, he double checked his outfit - a tshirt under a dark grey sweater and khakis - making sure there were no breakfast crumbs or hair gel residue from Teddy. He could have just walked in since he had his own set of keys, but he wanted to surprise her.

He was greeted by Olivia, rocking a leather jacket, grey t-shirt, and jeans - the most casual he had seen her dress for an outing.

"Good morning."

"Hello."

Fitz smirked before he kissed Olivia, so tenderly. "How are you?"
Olivia's nose scrunched, sweetly answering. "I'm doing great. You?"

"I am so happy we're doing this," he replied, looking deeply into her eyes.

"Me too," she agreed. Stepping aside, she asked, "Want to come in?"

Fitz grinned, "No. Because it's time to get out of here! Are you ready?"

With a sigh, Olivia pivoted away to get her purse and a black baseball cap.

"I've never seen you wear a hat before."

Olivia didn't answer, instead grabbing his hand and leading him towards the elevator. "You ready, baby?"

As they wandered down the GW Parkway, towards King Street, Fitz turned on Olivia's favorite Sirius XM station — a plethora of classic R&B tunes.

"Ooh, my favorite!"

He loved hearing her voice. It was always sounded lovely, probably along the lines of a first alto, if he had to place her in a chorus. The occasions were rare — only catching muffled sounds while she was in the shower, or humming when she was making a snack. It appeared to him that she was optimistic and not worried. When they stopped at a light, Fitz would peek over - her eyes closed, cheeks risen, as she crooned along to Marvin and Tammi, or another Motown great.

She looked happy and that's all he wanted.

"So many new shops and figurations," Olivia observed. "I rarely come down here."

"Neither do I," he answered. "Unless I have to meet a client at the courthouse, I keep my ass in DC."

Olivia laughed at his blunt remark. Snuggling next to him, she asked, "Coffee?"

"I want to do whatever you want, lady." Fitz leaned down to kiss the side of her neck that always make her weak. She let out a squeak, then playfully giving him a pinch on his side.

"Fitzy…"

The brightness of her voice made him fall in love all over again.

"Do you ever play the piano?"

Olivia shook her head as they waited for their meals at La Porta's. "It's a beautiful, oversized furniture piece. I took lessons when I was little, picked it up again in high school for a semester, then I stopped. Beethoven, some Gershwin, of course, Donny and Stevie. My father insisted that I learn an artform and have a piano when I got my own place. 'Every sensible person needs a piano,'" she mimicked a uppity paternal tone, circling her hand upward, authoritatively. "Alas, my lack of the performing arts, as well as an infinity to rebel, killed that dream for him. But it was a gift, and there it stays. Collecting dust until I remember to get rid of aforementioned dust every 6 months. Damn shame."

Fitz's eyebrows raised in amusement. "It is."

"If Teddy ever wants to learn or has a recital, he is more than welcomed to use mine. I'll get it tuned first."
Slowly nodding at her suggestion, Fitz complied, "Okay then."

Olivia leaned forward, "My turn to ask. Where do you see yourself in five years?"

Five years. He would be reaching 44 and Teddy would be a rising 5th grader. Most of his dreams surrounded anything that would make his son's life easier. His ideas for the future were distant. "In a better place than I am now. Teddy being the best he can be. With people I love. Having more flexibility in my workflow. Senior partner, maybe. Take not one, but two vacations a year."

"Is that so?"

"Mmhmm."

"How about this...Would you get married again?"

It was a great thing he wasn't drinking or eating, he would have choked. But Fitz's eyes grew large as he replayed her question in his mind. Olivia looked at him blankly, catching him off guard with her inquiry and its timing. As he tapped his chin and contemplated his answer, he wondered. Was she vetting him? Did she want to get married? Because as he saw, Olivia Pope was the only person he would marry.

"If all was right, then yes, I would remarry. I would do everything different. Really get to know her well, make sure I was connected on all levels. And now I have someone else to make sure she's the right one. Teddy has to love her and she has to love him back."

"Cool," Olivia sipped on her tea. He noticed the twinkle in her eye, but he didn't say anything, only smiling to himself. There was a part two, a continuation for this discussion. He would need to make sure that he was prepared.

After lunch, Fitz and Olivia walked a mile to the park. Her steps were faster then his; consistently moving. Thankfully since they were holding hands, he could slow down the pace. He wanted her to enjoy the moment, capture the details and just breathe. When they approached the water, finding a nearby bench, Olivia whipped out her cell phone.

"Selfie?"

Fitz chuckled, "Of course."

Then as Olivia snuggled into his side, receiving a whiff of her perfume, he realized. They had never taken a picture together before. She was making good on her promise.

Two smiling, a quick smooch, and three silly poses. For Teddy, they admitted.

"Send these to me," he whispered into her ear. "I want to use one as my lockscreen."

Olivia giggled, "Are you kidding?"

"Not at all," Fitz smiled. "You've seen my house. There are pictures all over. I want to include you in this collage, if that's okay."

Cocking her head to the side, Olivia winked. "You got it."

Fitz gave her a kiss, then slipped his fingers through the spaces of her hand, holding on tightly. "I want to give you a proposition."

"And what's that?"
Looking straight ahead, he asked, "Remember when you asked how you could be involved in Teddy's life?"

"Yes, and I vividly recall the dodging."

Fitz turned back to a snarky Olivia, sticking out his tongue. "Very funny. And now I'm circling back. Liv, I want you to be as involved as you want."

"You need to be specific."

"I would like to add you to his emergency contacts on his forms."

Watching her eyes narrow and the fact that she pulled her hand out of his grasp, Fitz could tell that her response wasn't starting off wonderfully.

"I don't think so. That's heavy duty."

Fitz softly clarified, "I've never been with anyone else long enough who has loved my son the way you do. Teddy adores you. I know this is new for you but you treat him with so much respect. I only trust you with him. You genuinely care about his well-being. You got me together and told me that I need to focus on things that I wasn't paying attention to."

"You're right," Olivia blankly stated, corrected him with a pointed finger. "You need to get on that."

"I will, my sweet baby." Fitz kissed her temple. "And because of that, will you consider?"

Already second guessing his approach, but he wanted her to be in Teddy's life, in a more official capacity. This was how this works, right? For couples to have certain privileges and responsibilities when it came to children? Fitz was hoping that she would understand. Teddy was his life.

"Yes."

"Hmm?" His eyebrows lifted, hoping to confirm her answer.

Olivia closed her eyes and nodded. "Yes. I would be honored. Please let me know what else I can do."

"I will," his voice cracked slightly. "Thank you. Thank you so much."

Having such gratitude, he reached to kiss Olivia again, not caring about who was nearby. The overwhelming relief in knowing she said yes. She was ready to do this with him. Fitz rested his thumbs under Olivia's jaw, caressing her, showing her that he couldn't get enough of her.

"Hmm, we should get going."

Fitz mumbled against her lips, "Why? I'm fine right here."

To his surprise, Olivia pulled away. Fitz straightened his posture, attempting to find a reason for her abrupt separation.

"Livvie," he whispered. "What's wrong?"

"I don't need anyone interrupting our date."

"And what if they do?"
Olivia fiddled with the bill of her cap, not meeting Fitz's concerned look. "I just want us time."

Fitz wanted to reassure her that everything would be okay. Gently putting his hand on her knee, he said, "We are having us time. We're right here."

"It's different. I don't feel comfortable as I want to be," Olivia admitted, standing up. Her voice was low as she began to walk in a small circle. "I'm so used to being 'on' and being approached by potential clients everywhere I go. It's hard to have a moment to myself. That and being photographed. When I don't want to be. It's such a pet peeve of mine and I don't want my private life on the blogs anymore."

That was a new development. Maybe he could ask about this some other time. There had to be a reason why she kept a lot hidden. Fitz rose and slid his arms around Olivia's waist, bringing her close. "Hey, hey. Look at me."

He waited until Olivia glanced up; frustration clouded her vision. "I'm going to keep you safe. I'm sorry you're feeling this way. I can't imagine how you feel right now. But I don't want to hide you. I will do whatever I can to make you comfortable. Let's take baby steps, okay?"

"Yes. Thank you. Sorry for all of this."

"We're learning as we go," Fitz replied, taking Olivia's hand.

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Fitz daydreamed frequently. He viewed life in a way that some couldn't understand. The life he desired, was starkly different than what he received. A single father with a growing child, still learning as he went. In a career where the job came first, then others. But he couldn't do that and neglect his Teddy. Noticing how his dynamic with Teddy and Olivia was changing. Somehow, they were becoming more of an unit, a family. Now there was someone in his life, his universe, who was putting his mind at ease. His mornings weren't cold and bitter, but warming to a degree where he could move comfortably.

Thanks to Olivia, he was able to observe more of the ins and outs of Teddy's mind and behavior. He had been working so hard to make sure Teddy could live life well, even without a mother, he did not always take into consideration the very things that Teddy was living with. Meeting with his teacher was next on his to-do list. Trying to find out if Teddy indeed had separation anxiety or difficulty connecting with people, because of the rejection he faced with Mellie.

"Daddy."

"Teddy," he echoed the monotone, staring his son down at the kitchen island.

"Did Miss Williams email you?"

"Ummm, I don't think so."

Teddy, who was already in his uniform, hopped down from his seat, and in record time, raced to his backpack and returned with a folder. Opening it, he handed his father a bright green paper, with various logos and sentences.

"Look at this," he asked.

Fitz observed, acting like he hadn't already made a decision. "Hmmm..."

Ever so careful to not get syrup, milk, or berry juices on his clothes, Teddy slowly ate, then spoke to
Fitz. "I have another field trip and I want to go and I want you to come with me, but you have work. It's on a Tuesday. I me-member that you work long hours. Can you tell them you can't come so you can be with me?"

Glancing past the paper to see his son, with his doe brown eyes, Fitz couldn't resist such a poignant request.

"I think I can pull some strings."

Teddy clapped while dancing in his seat. "Thank you!"

Twenty minutes later, the Grants were off to school. It was a driving day because Fitz needed to stay to stop by the administrative office and then go straight to work. The radio was usually on, but lately, Fitz had the pleasure of hearing Teddy's progress in Spanish. Young Grant loved to share with Fitz and all songs that he memorized. Sometimes the words were butchered, Fitz had to not laugh, but he knew Teddy was doing his best.

"Buddy, what do you want to be for Halloween?"

"Hmmm, Indiana Jones or Spiderman."

Fitz smiled, looking back through the rearview mirror. "That's great. How about we go shopping this weekend?"

The gleeful shout confirmed the plans. Teddy's legs were swinging as he returned to a new song, and then began to skip as they left the parking lot.

"So, can I tell Miss Wiliams?"

Fitz bent down to kiss his cheek. "Of course. I signed the paper while you were getting ready to go."

Teddy moved his shoulders up and down, in tandem and isolated.

Impressed, Fitz asked, "Where did you learn that from?"

"I dunno," he answered. "I just found out that my shoulders can move when the rest of my body doesn't. It's like saying 'I dunno' and touching your ear one at a time."

After saying goodbye to Teddy and chatting with one of the few Dads who also were in charge of drop off, Fitz walked into the main office. One of the secretaries greeted him.

"Good morning, Mr. Grant."

"Good morning."

"I would like to add another name to Teddy's form."

Mrs. Irish quickly retrieved the file. "Right now, it's you and Rachel Garrison."

"Cool."

"Name?"

"Olivia Pope."

"Relationship to Teddy?"
Fitz proudly smiled, "Girlfriend."

It didn't take long for him to realize what he had said; his smile vanished. Mortified, he corrected himself. "She's my girlfriend. Teddy's friend."

Mrs. Irish sweetly nodded, tapping away. "That's fine. No worries, Mr. Grant. May I get her information?"

Fitz handed her the paper with the details.

"Also, is there a way I can set up a meeting with Miss Williams."

"Sure. What would be the reason?"

"It's regarding Teddy. I was curious about how he responds to certain situations and if she had noticed anything."

Mrs. Irish set a clipboard in front of Fitz. "If you could fill it out, that would be great. Then, she will email you to set up a particular time."

"Great."

Fitz made quick work of the form, returning it to Mrs. Irish. He left at the most perfect time; avoiding all of the school mamas.

Work flew by and Fitz was on a roll, settling cases. The two meetings he had with Cyrus and Liz North were quite successful. A deep sigh of relief when Fitz checked in with Rachel. Teddy had art club and would arrive home around 5:30. Checking his schedule, he would follow behind them and arrive around 6:15. Then he noticed that he and Olivia hadn't talked on the phone in a few days. He was hoping she wasn't swapped with work.

To play it safe, Fitz sent a text.

*Are you busy?*

The dots were floating. It reminded him of the night they met. Waiting with baited breath, hoping she'd response.

*Hi to you too.*

Fitz stifled a laugh; he was only texting the way she did. So, to get backsassed as a treat.

*Hi.*

*Better. I'm not busy. You wanna talk?*

Fitz dialed her cell. She picked up on the second ring.

"Hey."

"Hey, baby."

"What's up?"

"I haven't talked to you today. I didn't like it."
"Aww, such a lovesick puppy."

"So are you."

"Yeah," she teased. "What's really up?"

Fitz stretched his legs on the desk, crossing them. "I added your name to Teddy's form and put my name down to have a meeting with Ms. Williams."

"Great."

"Yes. I'm happy that you allowed it."

Olivia reminded, "Next level shit."

"Oh, I forgot to tell you. One of my neighbors is having a get-together, or what they call a 'parents' night'. It's just dinner and drinks. Would you like to come?"

"No, thank you."

The quickest decline made Fitz snort. "May I ask why not?"

"I don't want to."

Taking it in stride, he joked, "You don't want to meet them?"

"To be honest, not really."

"It could be fun and half of the couples are St. Lourdes' parents. It would be a great opportunity to connect."

Olivia asked, "Is it impertinent to Teddy's growth as a student?"

Fitz bit the inside of his cheek, very aware of her logic. "Noooo..."

"Well, there you go."

Awkward silence settled in Fitz's ear. He didn't see the problem with a little social gathering and bringing Olivia along. It wouldn't be too intimidating and she could easily fit in. There wouldn't be a pressure to become a mover and shaker, but it would be an easy transition in the fold. Especially since she would most likely attend more school functions.

"Maybe when you're less busy, you'll come to a party with me."

"Sure."

"Liv."

"I don't get why this is important to you. Why you're making a bigger deal than it is."

Fitz explained, "They're my neighbors and the families of Teddy's classmates. I know they've seen you around. Just thought it would be good for you to meet them officially. It will look weird if you're not there. I haven't been as close with them since I became partner. The local press already gives off this narrative that I'm some elitist douche."

"You're none of those things and I have no problem with you going. I don't have to be there for you
This was so not like his Livvie. Sure, she wasn't too fond of the school mamas, but this seemed over the top.

"I don't want to go alone," he sighed. 'It's weird being the only single guy there."

Olivia asked, "Are those moms married?"

"Yup."

"I think you can hold your own. You've been doing for several years."

"It's different now," Fitz added, becoming more irritated by her disinterest. "These private school families are no joke. I just didn't want Teddy to be in public school, just yet. Community is important - especially for him right now. I need him to have friends and connect with others. The parents are a vital part of this process too. You know first hand how they can be the worst."

"I understand. I don't think I can attend this one."

There was no use in trying to convince Olivia. Fitz groaned, rubbing his now tense forehead. "Anyway, I just wanted to extend the invitation."

"Thank you, Fitzy. Maybe next time."

Friday arrived and Fitz had been incredibly grumpy, still disappointed that Olivia declined. It was going to be their chance to be introduced as a couple officially to his peers. It shouldn't have been a big deal but it was to Fitz. Growing up, his mother was a socialite and his father was a local politician, and their lives centered social activities. It became part of Fitz's nature. When he was married, it was the same routine. At least one time a week, he was on his way to someone's house. Even though he had gone through some changes in his personal life, the look of social success was important to him.

Olivia stopped by after work. She was in a sweater and leggings, and Uggs, looking very relaxed.

"Where's the party?"

"Two streets down. I'm going to walk. I don't know how many cars there will be."

"Do you have a flashlight?"

"It'll be fine. The streetlights will be on."

Olivia put her hands on her hips, "But what if they turn off too early?"

Fitz cut his eyes. "I'm not staying that late, Livvie. Rachel should be here any minute."

Adjusting his cuff-links in front of the foyer's mirror, he sucked his teeth. He never did that, but he was already fuming. Just because he was calling up on his babysitter, didn't mean he needed one as well.

"What are you going to do tonight?"

"I'm going to see Abby for a little bit and then I'll be back. I already have my bag upstairs."
Fitz didn't answer, keeping his focus on something else.

Olivia shuffled to the couch. "Are you okay?"

Immediately, Fitz crossed to the kitchen, "Couldn't be better."

Snatching the bowl of Greek salad and utensils out of the refrigerator, he channeled his annoyance into his preparation. He couldn't believe it. After sharing his thoughts, Olivia still wasn't budging. This was already going to be a disaster of an evening.

The doorbell rang, marking Rachel's arrival. Fitz coolly introduced the two - they had only talked via phone. As they got to know each other, Fitz said goodnight to Teddy.

Fitz walked Olivia to her car, with the bag over his shoulder.

"I'll text you when I leave Abby's."

Feeling sharp words reaching the tip of his tongue, Fitz only said, "Alright, cool."

Olivia paused, then let out a sarcastic laugh.

"What's so funny?"

"You know," she turned to face him. "I don't understand why you're being petty right now."

Fitz's eyebrows lifted. "Petty?"

"Yeah, petty," Olivia repeated. "Ever since you invited me and I said no, you've been in a foul mood. I'm sorry that I don't want to meet your country club friends at the moment."

"That's not what they are."

"Well, you all have some kind of a fancy organization going on. Seems pretty exclusive to me."

"It's just a little shindig, Liv," he emphasized, opening the car door. "I don't see why you can't go with me right now, and just say hi and then go to Abby's."

"I already declined and that's final. You need to be okay with me not doing everything you want."

Fitz's eyes were on fire, ready to shoot daggers at her or anyone else who would challenge him. He almost shouted, but he didn't want Rachel and Teddy to hear, being too close to the window. "That's what this is all about? You feel like you're being forced to do things?"

Olivia swung her key ring around. "Hmm, maybe."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

Fitz's jaw clenched, waiting for Olivia to answer. But she didn't. She had a fierce glare that could bring anyone down to submit. But not tonight. "Okay, I see. Have a great time."

"You're doing way too much. Hopefully your tone will do a 180 when I return, because what you won't do is disrespect me and my decisions."

Fitz let out a grunt and shook his head. Olivia tossed her bag into the car, facing him once more. "You need to get over yourself."
The fury was rising. He was over it.

"Are you fucking kidding me? Get off your self-righteous high horse, Mellie!"

The words fell so quickly, he gasped, almost wanting to vomit. Of course, his booming voice carried. He had never shown his temper towards Olivia before. To watch her flinch and abruptly shut down, as if he was an archenemy, scared him. He yelled at her and called her by the wrong name.

Olivia lifted her hands, stepping into her car. Fitz could feel his temples nearly bulging from all the fury he lashed out, as regret filled his heart and soul. This was the complete opposite of how a discussion should be.

"Liv. Livvie. I am so sorry."

"Save it," she demanded. "You have fun. Get home safe."

He waited for Olivia pull out of the driveway before he walked in the opposite direction.

Three hours later, Fitz returned, quickly thanking and paying Rachel, making sure she got to her car okay, then got settled into his pajamas. Of course, the party wasn't anything spectacular and his guilt for being so obnoxious weighed on him, he couldn't even enjoy himself. But he was too miffed to send a text.

He poured him a small glass of scotch and waited for Olivia to return. She hadn't texted him like she said.

It was their first argument. Four months in wasn't too bad. Fitz could tell it would not be fun if they ever fought again. Both were fiery, stubborn, and brutal with their comebacks. All he wanted was to apologize profusely to Olivia. To let her know that the anger he displayed was a rare thing and he would never hurt her.

On his second glass, he heard Olivia's car engine turn off. Fitz stared at the wall and remained still until she walked into the house.

"Hi."

Olivia stopped, taking off her shoes. "Hello."

"How was Abby's?"

"Fine."

Her response chilled him.

"I didn't think you'd come back."

"I said I would."

Fitz wanted to give a jab about her promise of texting him, but he was going to let that slide. He finished his scotch and met her in the hallway.

"Olivia."

"What?"
She was taking off her earrings, sticking them into her purse.

"We need to talk."

He paused, assuming she would need to interject, but she didn't.

"I need you to forgive me."

Olivia waved him off, "Leave me alone."

"I was out of line. Totally off base. I should have been more considerate. I was feeling pressure from the moms about getting involved this year, and I allowed that frustration to override all common sense."

"The moms? Those women at the school?" Olivia frowned.

"Yes," he softly answered.

Olivia crossed her arms. "They dictate how you live?"

Fitz sighed, "No. But I let the frustration get the best of me. And I apologize from the bottom of my heart for calling you the wrong name."

"You saw her when you were yelling at me?"

It stung to hear the accusation, but Olivia was correct. Mellie was an overbaser, always putting him down, and disregarding his ideas. It was wrong of him, but it was clear that he had not resolved the lingering hurt and anger from his past relationship.

"Yes. I should have just shut up."

"Okay."

Fitz was devastated, seeing her recoil into this shell of a person he knew. It was breaking him apart and he was going to do whatever he could to make it up to her.

"I don't want to fight, Olivia."

"I don't either."

"Will you forgive me?"

Olivia shifted her eyes before reaching Fitz's blues.

"Yes."

"Thank you."

Taking a breath, she asked, "Will you forgive me?"

"Yes."

"We need to do better," she said.

Fitz couldn't stand it, he had to find a way to show her that he was changing. Cautiously, he approached her, pressing his lips on her rosy apple cheeks. "We do. I love you."
Once his lips reached Olivia's mouth, he waited for her to release her anger.

"Prove it," she whispered. "Let me know that I'm different than those… women."

"I'm going to. Just give me the chance."

Olivia draped her arms over his shoulders. "Gladly."

Their kiss deepened, engulfing the anguish from the night. He needed her forgiveness, wanting to feel it. Not just in word, but in deed as well. The moment was overtaking them; their bodies moving together, leaning back. They didn't realize they had been walking until Fitz's back connected with the wall.

"Hey. Let's go to the basement, and then, the guest bedroom."

Olivia gave him a skeptical glance, "Why?"

"I don't think you want Teddy to hear you."

He smirked, watching her jaw dropped immediately.

"I'll change real quick."

Fitz winked, hurrying downstairs, and dimmed the lights. He waited for Olivia to come down, sitting on the couch. When she appeared and joined him, his eyes grew darker, focusing on her face, hair, arms, and everywhere else. He just wanted to touch her, feel her next to him. Olivia loved his hands — always reminding him of how long, nimble, and strong they were. Having the capability to do whatever she liked. He framed her face with his hand, lavishing her with kisses. Drawing invisible lines on her nose, to her neck. Sweet nothings, little grunts and giggles. Their language was full of love and excitement.

He couldn't just look and do nothing else; he had to do more. Lifting her shirt, he viewed her midsection. He dipped down to kiss every area, loving every part of her, nuzzling his nose against her chest. She was warm and soft in all the right places. His fingers massaged her supple flesh, being the right size and cocoa in color, he was salivating and needed them. Lowering his mouth to her beautifully formed nipples, he latched on. Taking fast sucks, then long ones, only to expel a puff of air to make them hard again. Rolling his tongue between tugs and quick nibbles, before giving special attention to the other breast. Moaning as her voice gave way to his expression of love.

Olivia's hand roaming through his wavy hair, sometimes pulling whenever he hit a good rhythm, motivated his mouth to continue. Then, he lifted himself, curling her into his arms.

"More," he asked, huskily. The smile he received was enough of an answer.

His hand reached into her sweats, pushing aside her panties, finding the one place where he knew he would immediately make her scream, call out his name. She was so wet, he imagined seeing her folds glisten because of his handiwork. The pad of his thumb and index finger had enough of a callous to give her clit the exact amount of friction she desired. The lovely combination of smooth and rough.

"F-F-Fitz..."

Her voice, soft yet ragged in pitch, reached his ears; giving him the cue to know what to do next.

Licking his fingers, relishing in her scent and taste. Watching her smile, he removed his shirt and
pajamas pants. To her surprise and delight, he had been commando. Now her eyes were wide; lip tucked under her teeth, stifling a low mewl. He helped her out of her clothes.

"So sexy," he announced. And she was, beautiful in every way.

Fitz had to get a whiff of her so he knelt. Still soaked, he used his long and thick tongue to lick her clean. Using his hands to hold her hip and thigh down because she always wiggled when he feasted. He didn't mind because he wanted to see every reaction of her.

Before they moved any further, he led to her to the bedroom. As she got herself situated, he pulled out a spare condom, quickly getting it on so he wouldn't lose any more time. Then he sat down, holding his now erect member. Olivia smirked, leaning forward to kiss him. He cupped his hand around the back of her neck, just enjoying her. Her mouth and full lips just drew him all the time.

Then, she straddled his waist, and lowered herself onto his cock. They both sighed and moaned once they connected, finding a starting rhythm that made sense.

Meeting each other with their eyes; the fire rose. Sometimes they talked a lot, but today they spoke few words. She was holding on to his shoulders as she rocked and swiveled. He moved his hands from lightly scratching her back, to holding on to her waist to gripping her ass. Always leaning in to meet her kisses.

He almost came when he concentrated on her open mouth — whenever he lifted himself to fill her up more — and bouncing breasts. Then he would look down at their union. It was a sight to behold. He wanted her to be satisfied so he would do whatever he needed. Reaching down to rub her clit, kiss her wherever, say anything. It didn't hurt that she was working it. Her body so perfect with his, he couldn't resist.

He couldn't help but apologize over and over. Olivia had to cut him off with her kisses, so he could get his mind off of their rough evening.

What seemed like an eternity, he whispered in her ear, speaking her name like it was the most holy of phrases, as well as repeating one of her faves — something so lovely and extremely dirty, she clapsed down. Seeing her convulse, then moan, reaching that point of exhilaration. His cock pulsed within her as she orgasmed. Hips moving, before letting go as well. The sweetest ripple effect.

She was flushed. Her eyes were bright and glowing, as she collapsed on his chest. Dragging his hands on her back, he was also spent.

Kissing her face, wiping her brow, showing her immense affection. He had to do this, to let her know that he was for real. In return, when she massaged his scalp, or kissed his chest and neck, he purred like a big kitty.

Fitz lost track of time. He was content having Olivia in his arms. He smirked when Olivia rose, because she complained that she didn't like feel extra sticky and she was uncomfortable. He followed, retrieving towels to clean themselves. But he didn't want this moment to end. Realizing that they could withstand a tense argument, being at odds, and come back together.

They quietly ascended to his bedroom. As they snuggled, waiting for sleep to take over, she kissed his face and reminded him that she loved him. His heart nearly burst. He knew she was being genuine and she spoke the truth. It was still taking some time, getting used to hearing her tell him how she felt. But it reminded him that he was forgiven. They had a lot to work on, but there was love. Her love. That meant everything to him because he loved her so much as well.
Chapter 18

Their first fight was a mess. Sure, they "made up", but Olivia knew she didn't go about it correctly. Every time she mentally checked off milestones in her relationship with Fitz, something would pull her back, dragging her to where she was when they first met. Old habits rising, threatening every aspect of this new dynamic. Leftover baggage she had carried since childhood, but never wanting to reveal to him.

Whenever she wanted to articulate her feelings, her parents would shut her down. Either by ignoring her or giving lectures about how she needed to suck it up. Over and over again. So, she had to find another tool to be seen and heard.

Overpowering the opponent with slick phrases, pages of facts, and intelligent ending statements. As she rose up the ranks, going to law school, she learned the art of arguing and winning. It was in her blood to negotiate and intimidate. It worked in her professional life, so she would deceive herself into thinking that it'd transfer over after hours.

It didn't matter who she was with, if she was on the defense and felt like she was going to lose or didn't want to express herself, she'd shut the guy up and give him what he wanted. It translated into getting what she was deserved, to satisfy her carnal needs, and call it an evening. They would deal with the aftermath later.

But later usually didn't come for Olivia until relationships were strained and ultimately ended.

With Fitz, it was different since they both were lawyers. They knew how to strum up lengthy monologues with key phrases that could dig deep, hitting a person to the core. But during their fight the night before, she only heard emotional banter. It didn't make sense and she wasn't expressing herself well at all. To cover up her insecurities and shortcomings, she used the physical to drown out the hurtful words, letting her body try to heal them, if only temporarily. It continued the pattern since the summer - every time she'd hit a rough patch, shutting down or luring him to bed, or the couch, or a hidden place with enough room to fuck the emotions away.

She was the fool. Every time, it was the same result. Broken, with her efforts futile, and the scenario unresolved.

The inner monologue was running through Olivia's mind and she couldn't stay asleep. Never one to get a full eight hours, no matter where she rested her head, but she was failing royally. How was she going to move on? Hell, how would she settle down, let alone marry anyone if she couldn't break free of the shit that weighed her down?

Olivia could feel herself awaken, but she waited to move. Slowly becoming aware that she was still in Fitz's bed, very naked.

It most likely wasn't the smartest thing to do - to cut a fight, discussion, or whatever that was, and have sex, but it felt like a good idea at the time. They didn't talk it out. She knew if they continued, it would have led to another fight, opening new wounds. She didn't have the energy to lash out at him, giving him another piece of her mind.

Olivia knew, always being reminded by her closest girlfriends and learning the hard way that sex wasn't the cure all to every argument. But, if done correctly, it could surely bring a couple closer. Resetting. Relying on each other to give and take, stretch, pull. Soft and hard, gritty. Working through the abrasive areas. Loving someone enough to apologize first. Stand down for a moment’s
Since the autumnal equinox had come and went, the sunlight was still hidden at 6am. Olivia noticed the strong pair of arms she was accustomed to, were not wrapped around her waist, or a hand softly settled on her stomach, like they usually were whenever they shared the bed. Olivia on lying the far end of the right side. Turning back slightly, she found Fitz was on his side, but still facing her.

Seeing his face brought more guilt. He didn't deserve her bullshit. No one did.

Olivia slipped out of the bed and into an oversize hoodie and yoga pants, picking up her travel bag, she left for the downstairs bedroom. A fast preparation at the coffee machine, she watched it slowly percolate, giving herself a moment to think. Her feet padded the floor, moving from the refrigerator to the counter. Catching a glimpse at fruit, she decided to wash in the case that the boys wanted to eat some for breakfast.

As she crossed to the basement door, a faint voice stopped her.

"Livia?"

In his pajamas, holding on to a small stuffed dinosaur with hair ruffled from deep sleeping, Teddy walked down the steps.

"Good morning." Olivia tenderly kiss his forehead. "Did I wake you?"

"Where are you going?" Teddy pointed to the belongings in her arms.

"Just going to take a shower before I have to go to work."

"It's Saturday."

"I know," she agreed, "but sometimes I have to finish some things that I missed during the week."

"Don't you shower in Daddy's bathroom?"

Olivia nervously grinned. "Mmhmm. Usually."

"Is he awake?"

"No."

Teddy's skepticism was keeping her on her toes. She did not want to be the one to start talking to him about the birds and the bees. Or possibly digging herself into a ditch she couldn't manage to avoid. Like why she was avoiding the upper level and sneaking out.

"Hmm. Okay."

"Why did you wake up?"

"My body told me to."

Olivia loved the way he answered her questions. He was so honest and pure. There was underlying snark, but she didn't care.

"Are you still sleepy? Do you want to lay down on the couch? When I come back, we will cuddle."

"Okay."
Olivia smiled at him, then rushed downstairs to the guest bathroom. Thankfully, wash day was earlier in the week, so forgoing her hair ritual shaved off some time. When she returned — in a sweater and jeans, the most casual of Saturday workwear, Teddy was curled up against the arm, waiting for her.

"Hiya."

Teddy's smile was priceless, widening by the second. How she could not love this boy?

"You smell like a bakery," Teddy marveled, with Olivia finding a seat next to him. "Sweet."

"Thank you. What do you smell like?"

"Soap, baby powder, and hair gel. But I also smell like a boy," he declared, warranting a snort. "That's what Dad said."

Olivia kissed Teddy's forehead again. "That's quite alright."

"What time do you have to go?"

"Eight. I told Har—"

Teddy asked with wonder, "Uncle Harrison?"

"Yes. We have two clients that need to meet."

Teddy slowly nodded. "I see. You all work so much. Don't you ever get a break?"

A moment passed.

"Sometimes," Teddy lifted her arm then placed it over his shoulder, giving her permission to hold him close. "I want you to always stay here."

"Why?"

"Because I like it. We're less lonely when you're here."

"I love you."

"You love Daddy, right?"

"Yes."

"Good."

"Livia?"

"Mmhmm?"

Teddy scrambled to rest on his knees, so he could look into Olivia's eyes. "I know I've asked you before. But maybe you changed your answer. A couple of my friends asked if you were going to be my new mom. Would you be okay with that?"

Olivia tilted her head, unsure of what to make of his question. Just like his father - very persistent but with charm like his, she couldn't ignore Teddy. With a shy grin, she replied, "Let's talk to Daddy about that when I come back and we shall see."
Not wanting to leave the house without saying goodbye, she went upstairs. To her amusement, Fitz had rolled over to her side of the bed. She didn't want to wake him; he must have been so tired. Her fingers made their way through his thick curls - she couldn't resist touching them - before leaning down to kiss his forehead and cheek. Fitz didn't stir, but she noticed his lip twitch. That was good enough for her.

"I love you, Teddy," she said, grabbing her bags. He walked over to give her one more hug. Their embrace was calming and innocent.

"Love you too."

Slightly relaxed, feeling completely different from 12 hours earlier, she wrote a text to Fitz before she put her car in reverse.

*Going to work for a few hours. I'll call you when I'm done.*

"He called me Mellie."

"What?"

Olivia shrugged, feeling a certain type of way as Harrison sat still, waiting for more details. As soon as their day began at the office, he knew something was off by her sluggish responses and distant looks. When she mentioned her spat, he was all ears.

"Damn, that's a lot. That's not like him to do that. Have you met her yet?"

"No," she responded, "And I don't think I care too at this point."

"Why not?"

"From the reaction I get out of Fitz, it seems like she's the worst person ever. He winces and never wants to discuss, even when I gingerly bring her name. And Teddy is close to tears every time her name is mentioned...Fuck!"

Olivia slammed her hands against the table. It wasn't until that moment, retelling what happened to her best friend that she realized how painful it was - being connected to someone that Fitz harbored copious amounts of anger and resentment. That was the last thing she wanted.

"I'm sorry that this happened to you."

"He's trying to put me in this box that I don't want to step in. I won't tolerate it anymore. I'm not like her. Hell, I do not want to be like her."

"Liv."

"Yes?"

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know."

Harrison asked, "Did you talk last night or before you came here? Truly have a discussion when you got back from Abby's?"

The blush was evident as she didn't care to answer. "No."
By her guilty face, Harrison knew what that meant. As he shook his head, he smirked at Olivia. "Okay. Would you be able to talk without rushing off and getting distracted? And you know I would say the exact damn thing to him."

"Yeah, yeah," she admitted. "I know. That's my plan, but you of all people know that's not how I usually do. I can't do an overhaul of my personality."

"But you two could try to talk."

"Harrison," she sat down. "This is some shit. I don't know what to say without lecturing him like one of our wayward clients."

"If you want this to work, you need to step up."

Olivia rolled her eyes; he always knew when to let her know what time it was. Being the voice of reason, understanding how her brain worked, but still giving her the truth in a manner that resonated.

"Yes. I do. I need to work on me. But usually I break up with the guy when I reach that point. I don't want to break up with him. I can't. I love him so much, I can't think straight. I can't even breathe or do anything logical sometimes. That feeling when you don't know if you can function because he's not there? It fucking hurts."

Being able to just release those words into the universe. It was good.

Olivia took a deep breath, calming herself down. It wasn't easy for her to be vulnerable and share what she was truly thinking and feeling. But it was right. Harrison was the right person to share with, putting down her guard.

"I can tell," he answered. "You love Fitz. I've never seen you love someone so much the way you do with him. But you can't let this hiccup ruin everything. You have to make changes so you can move forward."

Harrison was right once again. Olivia decided to text Fitz and touch base.

_Hey._

_Hi._

_How are you?_

_Doing alright. How about you?_

_I'm okay, almost done with work. I'll be back at the house soon._

"Tell him I'll hang out with Teddy," Harrison shouted from down the hall. Olivia had to laugh, because she knew that he knew she was avoiding the big question.

_Hey, can we get coffee and talk this afternoon? Harrison said he could watch Teddy for a bit._

Olivia set her phone down, already nervous with thinking of how Fitz could respond. But when did he ever turn down an opportunity for alone time? The thought of having to be bare and honest was scary. She couldn't stop now. Like peeking for a surprise, her finger tapped on the screen. A new message, which he answered only 20 seconds after her last text. Figured.

_Sure, Sweet baby. :)_
"Okay, he said yes."

Harrison's chesty replied followed: "I told you. I know my best friend!"

She picked a neutral place in Woodley Park. Given the bustling Saturday foot traffic on Connecticut Avenue, it would be a great opportunity to practice being in public with him. A forty-five minute span between apartment stops, Harrison leaving for Fitz's house, and taking the Metro. There was no parking and she wasn't about to waste time trying to find a spot. It gave her time to think about what she wanted to say and how to apologize to him.

Standing by the door, Olivia watched for him. It had only been five hours, but goodness, her heart was waiting. She couldn't let this emotional distance repeat itself. Sometimes she doubted why he would choose her. The negative qualities were plain to see and he still wanted to be a part of her life. She couldn't let that go, because even with the crap that she was fighting to part with, he still loved her.

The coffeehouse was busy, with the door opening and closing every thirty seconds. Her heart would skip each time, but of course, it was a different person. Looking nothing like Fitz.

Finally, he entered, sporting the leather jacket she had grown to love, a black sweater, and jeans. His hair was slightly gelled, which surprised her, because he usually wore a baseball cap on the weekends. She had to smile because he looked like he was on a date. When their eyes met, it felt like when he kissed her goodnight right outside her door when he asked her to be his girlfriend. There was an excitement. It was rare but she loved it.

"Hey."

"Hi."

Olivia usually waited to be affectionate, but craving his touch - that flew out the window. Opening her arms, she embraced Fitz. He felt so warm. Surprising him with a quick kiss.

"Ooh."

Her nose crinkling with delight, Olivia hummed as soon as Fitz returned her kiss, gently tugging on her bottom lip, before slowly pulling away.

"Whatcha tryin' to do, Miss Pope?"

Olivia sweetly replied, acting innocent, "Nothing. I just…missed you."

"Mmhmm," his response vibrated in his throat, which sounded amazing in her ears. "I missed you too."

Fitz took her hand and led her to the counter. Olivia looked around; everyone was doing their thing, sipping their hot drinks, chatting, just having a good time, and hopefully not rolling their eyes after seeing her and Fitz's romantic greeting. There was nothing to be worried about. She had to make a choice to not get worked up over the possibility of her downtime getting interrupted. She didn't live in a bubble; it was going to happen but she had to rise about the fear and just live her life.

Coming back to real life, Olivia asked, "What would you like to drink?"

Fitz's eyebrows knitted, giving her a stern eye. "Liv."
Stepping in front of him, she stated, "Uh-uh. Tell the nice barista what you would like to order. It was my invitation, my treat."

"Fine," he whispered in her ear, before pecking the side of her neck.

After paying for their drinks, Olivia and Fitz sat down at a table in the middle of the room. Her choice.

Olivia sipped on her chai latte, waiting for the right moment.

"I want to apologize for last night. My behavior was unacceptable and I shouldn't have walked out on you when I should have communicated with you. Why I was irritated."

Fitz was understanding, giving a sweet but somber smile.

"I forgive you."

"But you haven't heard all of it."

He nodded, inching closer, taking her hand again. "True, but I still forgive you. Just know that I am going to, like I did yesterday. And I hope you still forgive me because I was a complete ass. I know you were hurt and I failed to see in that moment."

"Okay. I do forgive you."

Olivia exhaled; whenever she received forgiveness, something would always feel lighter inside.

"But please, continue. You can tell me anything. I'm all ears."

Taking another slow sip, she cleared her throat, and looked at Fitz square in the eye. "I think we should talk about what's been bothering us." The nerves were getting to her; it shouldn't have though. The opposite of work, sharing proposals. This was her personal life. This man that she loved. She couldn't treat her relationship so coldly.

"That's fine with me. Would you like to start?"

"Sure."

A deep breath was needed and so she took it.

"I'm still dealing with problems when I was growing up. My parents didn't let me speak my peace during arguments, so I was used to shutting down, creating diversions, and not owning up to my faults. That's number one. Then, with these parties and social events. Fitz, I am no good with this. It's not that I don't want to talk to people. I'm guarded with my personal life. If they don't need to know, I won't let anyone know what's going on. My ex, Edison - He was a junior senator and he made it his mission to transform me into this socialite and I did not want that to happen. I resisted so much. At the time, my focus was building OPA into a reputable business. Being in the limelight was all that mattered to him. That's the opposite of what my work is about. We are behind the scenes, to the point of anonymity. I do not like the attention. His constant pressuring drew me away. Right before we broke up, we were at a park downtown and a pap came, took so many pictures of us, and then they published my name, with details. He lived for it. I was shocked because he didn't tell me. I've been scarred every since."

When she paused, she couldn't read Fitz's expression. It was blank, he was thinking. Not knowing what he would say was frightening her. It was the first time she mentioned Edison's name. She
caught his lips pursing as she retold her story. It already seemed to be too much, but he needed to know.

"You are nothing like him. Nothing. But it's a control thing. I've never been good at letting things just roll. I need to remind myself that it's not all about me. Sometimes I forget that I can still be independent while in a relationship. I'm going to do better. For you and me."

"Right," Fitz replied softly. "I will do better as well. You deserve my best. You are nothing like Mellie. My anger gets the best of me and that emotion just overrides any sense of logic. So, as I was prepping to meet you, I realized I needed to let you know this: I want to respect your wishes, not push you away. If you're not comfortable with something, let me know. If I reach that point, I would like you to remind me, so I can check myself."

She reached into her purse, revealing a manila folder. "I did some research online this morning and there's a course that we could take together, or individually if that suits you better. For couples who may need some assistance in communicating."

Her mouth felt dry; maybe she was talking too much, still leaning towards a dissertation instead of having a conversation. Without asking for his input, she was making assumptions of what they needed. Assuming never got her anywhere.

"Maybe you don't need to do this, but I know I need to--"

"May I see?"

Olivia sharply handed Fitz the information. He took his time, reading the description, figuring out the course's timing. All of the details. She bit her lip, anxious for what he could say. To calm herself down, she set her gaze on the the action by the counter. Once again, distractions from reality were her forte. He could have say no and that would be fine. She still had to make adjustments.

"I like this, Livvie."

His answer shocked her. "Really?"

Fitz's eyes brightened as he confirmed with a smile. "Really. This looks like a great program. We can do it at our place, talk with each other. Have an open and honest conversation. I want to know you better and avoid conflict. We will disagree, that's how it goes. We also have to find common ground and keep going. You let me know when you want to start."

"Great."

Olivia looked down as relief washed over her. So far, this was going well. The crowd ebbed and flowed, but she hadn't paid attention, which was awesome.

"Livvie."

"Yes?"

Fitz lifted his mug, passing along a seductive wink. "To us and a fresh start."

Olivia smiled, tapping hers. "To us."

As she finished her latte, Olivia kept her eyes on Fitz. It was a lot to release, but she knew it was time to come clean. Fitz smiled at her and she knew it wouldn't be as bad as she thought.
"I love you."

"Love you too," she replied, extending her hand for his. Their fingers linked and she nudged his shin with her boot, keeping things playful. It was all they needed.

"Thank you for letting me share with you."

"Of course. Thank you for being honest with me."

Olivia interjected, "I think we should come up with a safe word."

She watched Fitz's eyes widen and seeing him cough, nearly choking. "What?"

Realizing why he was asking in total confusion, Olivia covered her mouth, slightly embarrassed. "Oh my word, no! Not like that! But if you want to do work on that, that's cool too. I meant... when we have a fight, we could think of a step we could take, before we cross that awful line with name calling and storming out."

"I agree," he said. "That's a great idea, baby."

"So let's think about that. Any thoughts?"

Fitz poked out his lips as he contemplated. "From now on, we should probably resolve everything before we fuck."

"Yeah," she answered with a sheepish grin. "That wasn't smart."

"I know, but it felt amazing."

Olivia gave him a demanding glare, wanting to reach over and slap his arm, but that would make it more obvious of their private conversation. "Fitzy!"

"Sorry, Liv. I have to be honest with ya. It's hot when we're pissed off."

That fact, she couldn't deny. They always went full out in the bedroom, combining their love, passion, and unique chemistry. It always left them spent and yet wanting more.

Leaning in to whisper, Olivia answered, "Yes. That is true."

Not even three seconds later, they both laughed.

With a sigh, Olivia said, "When I kissed you goodbye this morning, you were sleeping on my side."

"Mmhmm," Fitz admitted, crossing his arms. "Is that okay?"

Olivia wiped her lipstick off of the mug. "It's your bed," she replied with a shrug.

"A-ha, jealous much?"

"No," she pointed out, challenging him. "It was cute. You looked adorable. You probably wanted to stay warm."

Fitz gave his classic Cheshire cat grin. "Thank ya much. I do my best. I miss you when you're gone. You know that."

"I do and the feeling is mutual."
Both phones vibrated, finally breaking the hour and a half of productive conversation.

"Harrison," they surmised. The guess was correct; Olivia and Fitz were grateful to have a friend who who was willing to let them get away, hash things out, and still be fine on the other side. Their group message included the sweetest picture of Teddy, playing in the huge autumn leaves in the backyard. Harrison captured Teddy's personality wonderfully in the photo.

"I might have to print this out and put it on my desk," Olivia squealed. "Gosh, you made a cute child."

Fitz chuckled. "I'm glad you approve of my genes."

"Ready to go? I'll let Harrison know we're on our way."

Olivia stood, waiting for Fitz to follow. As they walked towards the car, he draped his arm around her shoulder, and kissed her cheek. Giggles followed.

"Guess what?"

"What?"

"You didn't look nervous when we were inside," Fitz announced, "Yes, I noticed and I'm proud of you, lady."

Olivia leaned into him, tilting her head to meet his loving gaze. "Thank you. You're the best, my guy."

"I like that," he proclaimed. "I'm your guy."

"That's right, you are."
Chapter 19

The holidays didn't hold much sentimental value to Fitz.

Growing up, the excitement of the season faded as the pressure and trauma of living in a broken home escalated. His parents split when he was young; Fitz couldn't remember a normal time when he didn't feel alone during Thanksgiving. With his Mom and her side of the family, he seemed to be okay. But being an only child, Fitz never had anyone to bond with during the constant changes over the years. When his mother passed, the joy was completely gone. Instead of re-creating meals that she taught him, he'd drink himself to sleep. Even as a married man, it was just another day to dress up and wear fake smiles. But when Teddy arrived, he chose to make an effort to change his mindset.

It also marked the start of a new relationship with his father, Gerry. The divorce ruined the connections they had. Fitz resented everything about his namesake. Gerry was a womanizing businessman, dabbling into politics, and never viewed his son as a child. More like a little soldier, being formed into whatever image he wanted. That led to months without communicating, and when rare conversations occurred, it led to fights.

Then he realized that he had to grow up. Being alone again for the third time was devastating, so when his father called to console, he picked up the phone. It took time, but Fitz was taking baby steps; he and Gerry talked once a week, learning more about each other, pulling away the thick curtains that separated them. Progress was made when Fitz accepted the invitation to visit California. He did not want a repeat for his son. Fitz wasn't going to force anything, but at the same time, he was not going to withhold a budding connection.

The universe was working in their favor. Teddy loved spending time with his grandfather; it lit a spark in Gerry that had long been extinguished. There is something about a grandparent and grandchild who were able to connect in a way that sometimes the middle generation may not understand fully. Fitz found it beautiful to watch them play and talk.

Father and son swapped every year for the fall holiday. This year was Gerry's turn to come to the East ad he would spend five days in Washington. The Grant men always tried to do something special during their long weekend. Hiking, laser tag. It was hard to come up with a particular event to do.

Since having their heart-to-heart, Fitz was drumming up the courage to ask Olivia to join them. Whenever he hinted about Thanksgiving, she wouldn't bite at sharing information. He knew better than to bug her, but he didn't want to miss out on an opportunity. If she did say "yes", it would be the first time a lady would join them in four years.

"What do you usually do for Thanksgiving?"

Fitz and Olivia were in the car, catching up on life. It had been a busy week and work had limited their time together. Saturdays worked best for them, usually while running errands.

"Not much."

"Oh?"

Olivia plainly informed, "I just go to Wegman's or Dean and DeLuca, find some of my favorite dishes. Eat. Have leftovers. It's not a big deal, baby."

"What about your parents?"
With a forced smile, she revealed, "Fitzy, we aren't close. Once I graduated from Georgetown, we all grew apart. It was never meant to be, I suppose."

The brutally honest confession was so sad to hear.

"I'm sorry."

"I'm alright."

Fitz asked, "Friendsgiving?"

"Every other year."

"Well," he interjected, accelerating on the highway. "If you're interested, you can join us."

Olivia sweetly replied, "That's so sweet of you. I have to ask, will it be a big crowd?"

A slight nod. "Just my Dad, Teddy, and me. I cook. We watch a movie, football. Some type of fun activity during the weekend. I try to make it special."

"Does Mellie come up?"

"No," Fitz said emphatically, almost a little too sharp. He quickly apologized.

"I understand. How does that work?"

"If the schedule works in her favor, she visits here or Teddy rides with a few of her cousins down to North Carolina. But usually they visit during Christmas break, late birthday celebrations. Not looking forward to that."

"What will happen this year?"

Fitz cleared his throat; "Mellie will be visiting during his Christmas break. So I'm sure Teddy will be with her from the 27th-1st."

He felt Olivia's hand rest on his knee. "At least you have his birthday and Christmas."

"Yeah," he mumbled. "It's still hard to process."

"Do you have to go through a lawyer?"

"Of course. Cy takes cares of me. He's doggish. She usually complies. But I'm waiting for the day when she wants to try to gain custody. Or if, God forbid, we have to reassess and it becomes joint custody."

Silence took over for a minute. It still stung to talk about the current condition with Olivia.

"I would love to join you this year."

Fitz's eyebrows rose. "Really? Awesome!"

"Yes, it would be nice to do something different for a change."

Olivia's acceptance was the highlight of his day. All he had to do was ask; she could have said no. But the fear of being rejected was dwindling.

Their afternoon was quite nice, ending at Olivia's apartment. They had about 30 minutes before Fitz
had to get home. A quick cuddle fest on the couch was appropriate. In between sweet kisses, Olivia requested, "Tell me about him. Your father."

"Fitzgerald Grant Jr. aka Dad aka Poppy. He's a no-nonsense kind of guy. But he can be fun. He meant business. He traveled a lot when I was young. My parents didn't fare well. Almost like how Mellie and I fucked up. Work and other goals took precedence. I got used to being the rich latchkey kid. Then I went to boarding school. So that took away the longing I had to have a regular family. My mom passed when I was 20. It was extremely hard. Our relationship hasn't always been a great one. But when I got divorced, I leaned on him more. It was a surprise. I reached out and he didn't pull away like usual."

"That's wonderful," she said, "I'm lowkey jealous."

Rubbing his hand on Olivia's arm, Fitz was unsure. "I don't know about all that."

"Yeah," she curled into his embrace. "But let's focus on you, my love. Are you excited to see him?"

Fitz sighed before giving his answer. It was always a mixed bag when he and his father were together. All the bad memories would rush through his head and his tendencies were to sink into himself, and just let things happen.

"Sure. It will be alright."

Olivia ran her fingers through his hair, letting out a faint "shh"; "It's different now, right? I'm here. Teddy's here."

"Yes," he replied, eying her lips. "Gosh, you know how to calm me down."

Then, he kissed her, being incredibly thankful that she was in his life.

A little while later, Fitz returned home. After paying the babysitter, he went upstairs. Teddy was playing on the iPad, probably drawing or beating his old record on a favorite game.

"Hey, buddy boy."

"Hiya, Dad."

Fitz sat down next to him. "I want to tell you something."

"What's that?"

"We have a special guest coming over for Thanksgiving."

The tapping on the tablet stopped. Teddy slowly asked, "Uncle Harrison?"

"No, he's going to Florida."

Teddy gave a convincing frown, tapping his feet, still figuring out the right answer. "Oh... Guy or a
"A girl. A lady."

Fitz waited for his son to get his "a-ha" moment: eyes widening, mouth dropping, hands curling into excited fists.

"Livia," he whispered.

Leaning forward, remaining as calm as possible, Fitz replied, "Yes."

Teddy rose to his feet, clutching his iPad, hopping up and down. "Yay! Then she can see how we do Thanksgiving. Thank you, Daddy!"

Fitz hugged him tightly, kissing the top of his head. "You're welcome. I'm glad she's coming too."

The night before Thanksgiving, Fitz, Olivia, and Teddy went to Maggiano's for dinner. It was a half day at the school; Teddy and Fitz spent the afternoon cleaning and prepping for Gerry's arrival — he was going to stay at the house. Olivia stopped by around 4, with supplies for a cute snack — Creating turkeys out of Oreos, candy corn, and pretzel sticks.

It would be a casual first meeting with Gerry. Putting on a good face, Fitz wanted to make sure that Olivia would be comfortable. His father hadn't met anyone since Mellie; there was no reason to, because Fitz didn't feel any true connection. Plus, the constant badgerings of "When are you going to meet someone new" always irritated and did not encourage him to even try to include his father into his love life.

But Olivia was different. She was the one.

He was trying to gauge Olivia's body language. She appeared to be calm. Taking her hand, giving it a squeeze, he asked, "Are you good?"

"Yes," she smiled. "It's going to be fine."

As they waited in the crowded lobby, a tall man — dressed in a sports coat, turtleneck and slacks — with a glorious crown of white entered.

"Poppy!"

"Hey, Teddy man."

Fitz smiled as his son and father greeted each other.

"Hi, Dad."

Gerry extended his arms, giving his only son a warm hug. "Good to see you."

Taking a step back to gesture towards his love, Fitz introduced, "Dad, I would like you to meet Olivia."

"Hello," he shook her hand. "So happy to finally meet you."
"Likewise, Mr. Grant."

"Oh no, please," he offered, "Call me Gerry."

"Grant, party of four."

"That's us, Daddy," Teddy announced with bright eyes. "Let's follow the… mai-truhhh-DEE!"

Everyone sat down, and after giving their drink orders, Fitz started the conversation.

"How was your flight?"

Gerry shrugged, "Fine. I can't complain. How are you doing, Theodore?"

"I'm fine, Poppy. Tomorrow is Thanksgiving."

"Very good," he responded, giving Teddy a quick kiss on his temple. "Miss Olivia, I would love to know more about you."

Fitz kept an eye on the two, listening carefully to the whole conversation. The elder Grant seemed to be pleased to learn that Olivia was independent, driven, and cared a lot for his family.

"That's wonderful, Olivia. I believe that my son is treating you well."

"Yes," she answered, turning her gaze towards Fitz. "He has been the best to me. It's been a great few months."

Working through his fettuccine, Teddy interrupted, "Poppy?"

"Yes, son."

With a darling glance, that no one could refuse even with slurping and lips being covered with creamy alfredo, Teddy told his grandfather, "Daddy loves Livia."

Fitz almost choked on his glass of water. He had only discussed about how special Olivia was to him, not wanting to get ahead of himself. The excitement of the upcoming weekend, Fitz forgot to remind Teddy what to and what not to talk about.

"Is that so?"

Gerry looked up to Fitz, giving him a quick nod.

"Yes! And I love her too," Teddy exclaimed, looking sweetly at Olivia. "She's the best."

"Very good."

There was more chit-chat, planning a day trip to Philadelphia, Gerry's new endeavors into home renovating. Normal bullshit that Fitz didn't feel like talking about, but didn't want to rock the boat. Olivia left for the restroom, giving Gerry the perfect opportunity to share.

"Son."

"Yeah?" Fitz waited for his father to drop a bomb.

"I'm proud of you. Olivia is a great young lady. You two seem to be very happy."

Eyebrows lifting slightly, while wiping Teddy's messy hands, he replied, "Thanks."
"I know you're going to ask me at some point, so I'll save you time," Gerry said. His voice was softer than usual, so that was a red flag in Fitz's mind. "You have my full blessing. I haven't seen my boys this happy in a long time."

"Thank you."

"I hope you're happy too. You deserve that to be happy, you know that, right?"

Fitz wasn't expecting such positive feedback. It was blowing his mind. And they weren't even drinking, so he knew that this was very genuine. "I am."

"Good."

The rest of the evening was quiet. Teddy rode with Gerry to get ice cream, giving Fitz time to think and prepare himself for the next day.

"Dinner appeared to go well," Olivia remarked.

As much as he appreciated her enthusiasm, Fitz kept a stern face.

"There haven't been any fights so I'll take it. I just never know with him. Hell, I question myself. Same temper, stubborn. I don't want to be like him. I didn't have the best examples of a father. But I'm trying."

Olivia interrupted, “You are. You are doing your best. You are a great father. Teddy is blessed to have you.”

"Thanks. I always feel so inadequate around him. I just want to show him that I'm making it."

Fitz pulled into the driveway. Before he unlocked the front door, he asked, “Are you spending the night?”

Olivia looked unsure, crossing her arms. “Should I? I don’t know. Would your father be opposed to this?”

Incredulous, Fitz brought her closer to his chest. Narrowing his eyes, he pretended to scold her. “He shouldn’t care because it’s my house. My rules. He takes the guest room. Which is downstairs and far away from our room. If you want to stay, I will gladly have you.”

"Oh no," a horrified Olivia gasped, "Have you changed the sheets?"

Fitz quickly spat, “Of course! I have couth, Miss Pope. I’ve been in that room since our little angry tryst. I didn’t want anyone realizing we use that bed for midnight getaways.”

“You’re incorrigible.”

“Don’t I know it,” he grinned, before kissing her deeply.

Fitz woke up first, padding to the kitchen to start his day-long feast. Usually, Gerry would call ahead to the quaint supermarket a mile up the road to order the full menu. Their first dinner in DC, Teddy was only 2 and a half, and still clingy. It was a wise decision since Fitz couldn't dedicate much time to cooking. This time, he wanted to kick it up a notch and impress his father and Olivia. He had been shopping all week, selecting ingredients would do the job. He only told Gerry not to worry — he would take care of it.
In no time, he whipped up a stack of whole wheat and pumpkin pancakes, bacon, and a fresh pot of coffee. The smell would surely bring his guests downstairs. He had come a long way since Teddy was a baby. Preparing meals were not a stumbling block anymore.

"Happy Thanksgiving, Daddy!"

Teddy skipped into the kitchen, donning his dinosaur pajamas.

"Good morning! Are you ready for the parade?"

As he nodded enthusiastically, Teddy wiggled in his seat. "It's my favorite part. Outside of eating and playing in the leaves."

Fitz smiled, serving a large plate. "Eat up!"

"Thank you, Dad. I love you."

"I love you too."

A sleepy Olivia joined them.

"Hi, guys."

Teddy waved.

Receiving a quick kiss, Fitz beamed. Olivia casually poured herself a cup and sat down at the island. He took a moment to blissfully observe the scenery. His son and his love, giggling over the parade on TV. This was a dream come true - he hadn't felt so at ease since he was a child.

Olivia interrupted his thoughts; pointing at the stove, she asked, "Are you cooking?"

"Yes, I am."

"Fancy. You didn't tell me this."

It was music to his ears to know that she was surprised. "I prepped the turkey. Already in the oven. I have an hour before I start up again, with the smaller dishes."

Olivia wiggled her eyebrows. "Is that so? Can I assist you?"

"I guess," he replied slyly. "As long as you don't distract me, I'm cooking for four. I can't foul up."

"That's cool."

Teddy had just left the area. Olivia's eyes had a smokiness to them, a little darker. "Can I steal you away for a quick shower," she whispered.

Fitz immediately could feel himself being aroused. "Shit, Livvie."

"I thought it'd be selfish of me to not ask." Olivia nursed on her coffee.

Getting a rise out of him was her power. Fitz knew what she was up to. Taking a step closer, he commented, in a low growl. "I know you're not teasing me. Because you what happens when you tease."

The smirk Olivia gave as she sauntered off, was the kicker. He couldn't resist that woman. Double
checking the area, confirming that nothing would be knocked over, burned, or eaten prematurely. Then, he ran upstairs to have some quality time with Liv.

Locking the door to ensure privacy, he raced to find new clothes.

"You better hurry, Grant. It's a quick shower."

Fitz took his sweet time to enter. Olivia grinned, as she lathered the shampoo in her hair. Every part of her looked more beautiful every day.

"Hi."

"You're lucky I love you. Stepping away from my agenda." Fitz loved how he towered over Olivia — especially when she wasn't in heels — he could protect her and capture every facial expression.

"This will probably be the only time we will be alone all day," Olivia remarked, kissing his shoulder blade, then the middle of his chest. "I didn't want to lose that opportunity."

He tilted his head back as she slowly ran her hand down his cock. She knew how to tempt him, dragging her soft fingers across his velvety member. Trying not to explode, he clenched his jaw, doing his best to enjoy. But he wouldn't let her finish without using some of his superpowers.

"Soap up," he ordered.

As he delicately washed Olivia, he got harder, captivated by her sensual traits.

"Oh, Fitz," she sighed. Her legs squeezing shut as he kissed her all over.

The water was still warm, so he wanted to capitalize on their perfect situation.

"I need you to open up, baby," he crooned, cupping her sex, getting a peak. He bit his lip, so turned on by watching how she responded to his touch. Quick grunts, eyes snapping shut, her stomach tightening.

Fitz brought his cock towards her center. Asking for her permission, she nodded. "Please."

Entering her swiftly, muffling his groans into the crook of her neck as he filled her. She felt so good. Exquisite. Just perfect. He would never get tired of that moment when their bodies became one. He knew he didn't have much time before Teddy or his father would ask about their whereabouts.

As their hips rocked in tune with his fast thrusts, Olivia pulled on his lower lip, like sucking the juices out of a ripe piece of fruit. Fitz knew he wouldn't be able to hold himself together, so he went faster, to make sure she would orgasm first.

Sure enough, his wish came true. Olivia fell apart, nearly falling down in the stall, but Fitz wrapped her arm around her waist, holding her tight, as he finished. Feeling her tighten and pulse around him never failed to push him over the edge.

Cold water sprayed on them. With a chuckle, he whispered, "So much for a quick shower."

"Hush," she kissed him. "You came running when I called."

They returned downstairs in 20 minutes, acting like nothing happened. Fitz's hair was still wet, but he felt relaxed.

"Well, I see the lovebirds are up and at 'em."
The two stood frozen as a bushy-tailed Gerry chuckled, raising his mug to them. "Don't mind me. I'm just getting more coffee and going back to the living room. I'm staying with Teddy. Have fun."

It was like getting caught behind the bleachers. Where they that loud?

"C'mon," she tugged on his hand. "You have work to do."

Opening a small book that came from his mother, Fitz went down the list of food to make.

"Shoot," he reprimanded himself.

"What is it?"

"I haven't decided on a dessert. Teddy will have my neck if I don't have one."

Olivia moved to the cupboard, pulling out the flour. Then, retrieving cold butter, she asked. "Want to make a crust with me? I actually know how to do this."

"Sure. What kind of pie do you want to make?"

"I don't know," she shrugged, then scooted by him to look for available options.

"Apple?"

"Mehh."

"Peach cobbler?"

"How about Blueberry?"

They looked at each other, as if their combined mental prowess would decide. Then, their voices exclaimed, "Boysenberry!" Which in turn, sparked a roll of laughter. It was the most random of fruit but to know that they thought of the exact suggestion, was amusing.

"Cherry works," he replied, "I have two cans of cherries."

Quickly, Fitz turned on the iPad, picking the exact recipe he wanted. Simple and yet enjoyable. They had never cooked together before. He was thrilled to do this. It felt so natural, moving around in the kitchen with this woman. Watching her look at ease, a far cry from the summer. Her eyes twinkled when she would ask for his help. Feeling extra corny, he suggested that they take turns kneading the dough. Fitz stood behind her as his hands overlapped hers. It was just as romantic as the deep kisses they shared.

Her hips swayed whenever she hummed. Maybe it was a way to distract herself while cooking. He didn't mind. He was still enamored by her. The time spent making dinner was perfect.

"Oh, Livvie."

"What," she asked, with a piece of dough in her hand, turning around to find him.

Fitz could feel his lips lift into a crooked smile. Feeling a little goofy for being so sentimental, he answered, "This is nice. I'm glad you're here."

Olivia wiped the flour on her apron. Giving him a tight hug, she said, "I love you, Mr. Grant."

"I love you more, Miss Pope."
For a party of four, the spread was impressive. Turkey, ham, deviled eggs, green beans, macaroni and cheese, sweet potatoes, stuffing, rolls, a salad, cranberries. With Olivia's help, Fitz successfully made a complete dinner. Two pies were staying warm in the kitchen - apple and cherry. As well as Teddy and Olivia's joint creation - oreo cookies dressed up as turkeys.

Olivia changed into a dark blue dress, with her hair pulled into a high ponytail. Fitz opted for a plaid shirt and dark jeans. It wasn't too fancy, but traditions ran deep. He couldn't look like a slob after working nonstop in the kitchen.

When he was helping Teddy get dressed, he noticed that they were going to be twins.

"I look a lot like you, Daddy."

"Yeah?"

"Mmhmm," the younger Grant confirmed, straightening his collar in the mirror. "We look good."

"I want you to do your best and eat as much food as you can."

Teddy twisted his lips, staring Fitz down. "You and Poppy won't fight, right?"

"Not tonight, buddy," he assured, thinking about the fight of the century. They had their spats, but when they argued over parenting styles and looking for a new someone in Fitz's life, that's when things got messy. "It's going to be a great Thanksgiving."

So far, Gerry's visit had been uneventful. Twenty hours in and no attacks or shady comments.

Fitz followed Teddy downstairs. Olivia and Gerry were talking about something, but he wasn't going to find out what that was.

Gerry stood to greet his family; "This looks glorious! Thank you for making all of this."

Maneuvering Olivia's seat closer to the table, Fitz replied, "You're welcome. Thanks for keeping Teddy busy."

"Now," Gerry asked, "I think we should go around the table and give thanks. What are you thankful for?"

Teddy sat up proudly in his chair. His huge smile was bursting at the seams. "I've been thinking about this all day. I'm thankful for Daddy and Poppy and Livia. My friends. The beach. My markers."

"And I am thankful for family. Good health. To another year of luck, joy, and love."

Fitz and Olivia raised their wine glasses. Teddy lifted his cup of apple cider.

"How about you?"

Olivia glanced at Fitz, then announced, "Second chances."

"Daddyyyy," Teddy whined. "You haven't gone yet!"

The prompt glare silenced the complaint, but a smile followed. "I know, I wanted you all to go first. Let's see. I'm thankful for a wonderful son who keeps me on my toes and loves me even when I don't deserve it. A job that I enjoy. For you, Dad. And to you, Olivia. Meeting you was the best
moment of my year. I love you."

Seeing her eyes mist, Fitz knew he had said the right words.

"Daddy, may I share?"

"Of course."

"I learned this in school. Everyone, close your hands and fold your hands!" Teddy shut his eyes, clasped his hands together, pushing his lips forward, looking incredibly serious. Fitz almost cackled, but he had to be respectful. He lowered his head, reaching for Olivia's hand.

"Dear God, thank You for our many blessings. Take care of people who don't have as much as we do. I know You love them and will help them. I ask You to bless our food. Amen."

The three adults echoed, "Amen."

After dinner and dessert, accompanied by lots of laughter, Teddy was stuffed, very ready to get to bed. He knew the family would have a busy day in the morning.

"We get to go to Philly! Going to Phil-a-del-pheee-ahh tomorrow! Good night, Livia, I gotta get to sleep. Poppy, will you tuck me in?"

"Not me," Fitz mock whined. His blue eyes matching the same intensity as Teddy's chocolate orbs.

"Maybe tomorrow, Daddy. I see you every night. You can hang out with Livia, or tuck her in when she's ready to go to bed."

Gerry shook his head, while Olivia stared at Fitz in disbelief. A crazy ripple effect, all because of a kindergartner's smart mouth.

"To bed, you go."

As the Grant charm flowed through little Theodore, waving as he marched away, Fitz let out a sigh. Quite embarrassed, feeling awkward, and but knowing the quip was downright funny, he couldn't deny the quick wit off his offspring.

"Sorry," he told Olivia. "What am I going to do with him?"

She shrugged with a knowing smile, "I think you should enjoy these moments, Fitzgerald. He's going to grow up faster than you think and he won't be as sweet and innocent with his answers."

Dimming the lights, Fitz piled up the dishes that hadn't been cleaned yet. He sorted them into the dishwasher, not even realizing that Olivia had wiped down the countertops.

"Damn, lady," he smirked. "You're like a ninja."

"I do what I can."

In the middle of the room, they embraced, not even caring if anyone saw them. Fitz looked down at Olivia - her features glowed. Capturing her lips, slowly prying her mouth open so he could gain access. Sighs of contentment filled the space. Their elaborate kisses renewing the love and passion they had for each other.

"Good night, lovebirds."
Fitz didn’t even open his eyes, just lifting his hand to shoo his father away. Olivia slipped her hands into his back pockets, squeezing his ass to pull him back in the moment. If this was a preview of things to come, he was all in. Another new memory to erase the old.
Chapter 20

December was going to be a busy and eventful month for Olivia. Projects that had to be finished before New Year's. She gave the team two weeks off because they barely took any time away during the year, so everything had to be completed before vacation. Olivia also had a few upcoming celebrations: Fitz's birthday and Christmas. It would be a miracle if she accomplished everything on her list.

The Grants had stopped by Olivia's for an early dinner after Fitz picked up Teddy from gymnastics. While Teddy was tinkering on the piano, Olivia asked Fitz a specific question.

"Your birthday is coming up. Do you want a party?"

"Nope."

His answer was so quick and a bit alarming, so Olivia tried again. "What? Did you hear me?"

"Yes, I did, and I said no."

Olivia crossed her arms, staring him down. With his reading glasses so far down his nose, making his appearance very comical, like a fed up grandfather, Fitz did not find the inquiry amusing.

"Why not?"

With a slight grunt, Fitz returned to his book. "No, thank you."

"Hmm."

"I want to get dinner and that's it."

"Okay."

"No surprises. Liv," he pointed, lowly. "I mean it."

Refusing to look at him, because her face would give everything away, Olivia hummed in agreement. She had been planning for a while. On their fourth date, Fitz revealed that he was a winter baby, born in the middle of December, while Teddy arrived ten weeks later. With Harrison's assistance, Olivia called friends from law school, neighborhood pals — the group she was slowly getting to know — and anyone else who was close to Fitz. He deserved a good evening out on the town. Working late for three weeks straight, including Saturdays. She was noticing that he needed a break.

"Do you want to have dinner on the actual day or wait until the weekend?"

"It's up to you, Livvie."

"Fitzy…"

Olivia crossed over to find out what was going on. He didn't sound like himself. His eyes were tired, the usual charm he had wasn't there.

"It's alright. I'm just tired. Work has been kicking my ass. Whatever you decide will be fine. As long as I'm with you, I'll be great."
Taking matters into her own hands, Olivia leaned forward to kiss Fitz. It caught him by surprise, the book dropped to the floor. His lips were cold, but her mouth was warming him up. Dragging her fingers through his hair, she kept him close.

"Okay. Glad we had this talk," she replied, pulling away with a smirk, leaving a stunned Fitz in his seat with cheeks extra red. Teddy had his hands over his mouth, stifling a round of loud giggles.

"I still can't believe it's been six months since we started dating."

Olivia and Harrison were separating paperwork in the conference room. It was a rare quiet moment in the day, and she had to talk to someone about this.


Taking a file from Quinn, Olivia added, "I honestly didn't think this would be such a big deal. But after Edison, I wasn't too hopeful about anything. I'm amazed we haven't broken up yet."

"Proud of you, Sis. You overcame a lot since Ed, and and now you can enjoy what you have with Fitz. It's a different relationship. And you're different, so you can't keep comparing the old Liv to the person you are right now."

"True," she said, looking ahead of Harrison. "I know he didn't want anything outrageous, but I hope he likes it."

His birthday fell on a Tuesday, but it was going to be easier to celebrate on a Friday night. To her disappointment, they didn't see each other all week because of their schedules. Olivia was instructed to not go overboard with gifts but she had to do something memorable. She used the time apart wisely. Working on the details, confirming the venue, buying presents for the Grants and friends, and making sure the guest of honor didn't have a clue about the party.

One added twist to her plans, wearing something so different and sexy, Fitz would fall out as soon as he laid eyes on her. After searching stores and calling to New York for help, she found the perfect outfit. Retrieving a short, bone straight wig with sharp bangs, she picked the right gown. Silver and black, that reached to the floor. The details were fascinating — sequins and various patterns that resembled a modern mosaic, with strategic cut outs. Olivia knew the non-existent neckline would drive Fitz wild. Strappy heels and an unique choker completed her ensemble. This was a far cry from the dresses she wore. It would be a sight to behold.

They agreed to meet at Fitz's house at 7. She told him to wear a nice black suit. Tie not needed, but something sharp, because she needed him to look his best. At around 6:50, Olivia pulled into the driveway. Covered in a dark trench, she snuck inside with a large bag, and moving straight to the guest room, where she could put on her wig.

"Liv?"

"Hi, Baby," she shouted. "Had to rush to the restroom. Be up in a sec."

Locking the door shut, so he couldn't enter by "mistake", Olivia worked quickly. Transforming into a sleek flapper girl, she snapped a few pictures for Fitz to admire later, including a boudoir shot. She had gone to the salon get her nails done — dark was a good move.

The footsteps above her, reminded Olivia of the time. Their reservation was at 8 and she didn't want to make them late. When she finally came upstairs, Fitz was sitting in the family room, tapping on his cell. Olivia was pleased to see that he followed instructions — black suit with a crisp white dress.
shirt. He was always handsome but he was looking like a million dollars.

"Hey."

Fitz lifted his eyes, but his mouth opened, and he looked completely stunned.

"Holy shit."

Showing off the high slit of the dress, she asked, "You like?"

Turning around at a glacial pace, so he could see and admire what she prepared. Olivia lifted her shoulder coyly, batting her eyelashes.

"Wow. Liv, you look fantastic," Fitz rose. His eyes taking in all of her. She loved it. "You're trying to get me in trouble."

Olivia draped her arms around him, "You look delicious, Mister."

"What is the occasion? Where are we going?"

"It's your birthday, honey. The first time I get to celebrate with you. I want to make it special."

Fitz smoothly admitted, "You're my something special."

Her throat tightened; before she could even try to burst into tears and ruin her makeup, Olivia blinked fast, patting Fitz's chest.

"Don't get sappy on me, Grant. By the way, we're getting picked up."

"What?"

Olivia walked to the mirror, applying her lipstick, checking for any missed spots. "I thought you would appreciate the night off."

Fitz sighed with appreciation. "I'm a lucky man."

"You look sexy!"

The two turned to find Teddy dancing around in his footy pajamas, emphasizing the last word with confidence, as if he had received new powers.

"Who does?"

"Both of you! Livia, you look like a model. And Daddy, you're handsome."

Fitz knelt down, opening his arms. "Teddy Bear, you be good for Rachel?"

Teddy smiled, rushing over to hug both of them. "Hope you have a great dinner."

Olivia always loved her hugs with Teddy. Any time he ran to her, embracing her, it felt like a sigh of relief.

The ride was lowkey, just catching up on the day. It was their first night out in a while. When the car stopped in front of the W and Fitz realized of their location, his eyebrow cocked. "You're up to something."

She waited for the valet to open their door before she answered. "Not my fault I have connections in
"That's true," Fitz lowered his head, capturing Olivia's lips. If there were no time restrictions, she would have gotten back into the limo and allow him to kiss her all night.

Their kisses had different levels; the sweet, dainty, proper pecks, aka "we're in front of Teddy". Then, the romantic and heart stopping smooches, later on known as "I'm-turned-on-and-I-want-you-to-be-too", and "we're fucking in two seconds". Olivia kept it at Level One. Tucking some hair behind her ear, she strutted to the greeters' table.

"Good evening. Table for Pope."

The hostess smiled brightly, recognizing the two guests. "With pleasure, Miss Pope. Right this way."

Keeping her smirk to a minimum, Olivia took Fitz's hand, as they walked towards the back of the restaurant.

"A private room?"

"Yeah," she confirmed, turning around. Fitz was biting his lip haphazardly, anticipating to see what she had in mind. "I pulled a few strings so we can get some privacy. I hope you don't mind."

Rolling his eyes, he agreed. "I guess it's fine."

As the door opened, from the inside, the lights turned on. Fitz found himself in a room full of friends as they all shouted "Surprise!" Olivia clasped her hands in excitement, watching his face. A few camera flashes documented the moment brillantly.

"What in the entire fuck!"

Everyone cheered as they walked in. Locking arms, he leaned over to whisper, "You are a trip."

"I know."

Olivia wasn't expecting a bold kiss from him in front of the crowd, but as his hands cupped her face, pulling in, she was more than okay with it. Thunderous applause followed, starting the party off right.

Dinner was a success. Lots of selfies, drinks flowing, and plates passed around. The room looked like a swanky loft in the movies. All of the guests were dressed elegantly, quite an attractive group. Fitz was tickled by all the love he received. Of course, he had to introduce his Livvie to all of his friends. He wasn't ashamed of her. He wanted them all to know who she was. It warmed her heart.

Jana, the wife of Fitz's good friend, Andrew, asked, "Olivia, how did you meet Fitz?"

"We were set up on a blind date. Teddy came too."

"Are you serious?"

She smirked, keeping her eye on Fitz, who was laughing with his buddies. "He couldn't find a babysitter."

"That's a fun way to meet the family."

"It wasn't at the time. I didn't know what to think. But they both convinced me to get this a shot. I'm happier because of it."
Throughout the evening, they were inseparable. Olivia sat on Fitz's lap, sprinkling his cheeks with kisses, being very affectionate. Constant hand holding, leaning into him whenever she could, giggling as soon as their eyes met. It couldn't have been the alcohol because she didn't have much. Her guard was down, not feeling any kind of pressure to distance herself from Fitz. They were among friends, and she didn't have to be someone she wasn't.

"Y'all are too cute." She heard someone remark.

Harrison pulled at his suspenders, "I set them up so I get all of the credit."

"I haven't see you this happy in years," Samantha, a long-time friend, raised her glass.

As the party was winding down, Olivia handed Fitz a small card. "Open it," she mumbled, before pressing her lips against his forehead.

Fitz did as he was told, skimming over the contents. His breath hitched when he reached a certain part of the note.

"Olivia."

Her eyes brightened, "Happy birthday, baby." She reserved a weekend-long stay in the Marvelous Suite.

"What about Teddy?"

"I handled it. Rachel is spending the night and then he's staying with Gracie and the boys," she played with his lifted collar, sweetly kissing him. "I took care of it."

"But what—?"

Olivia smoothed a few stray hairs on Fitz's temples. "I took the day off and packed everything. I know what you like to wear on the weekends. Not that you'll be going out much, but I'm pretty sure I'm accurate."

The smile that crossed Fitz's face, confirmed all her planning. He was happy. Olivia rubbed noses with him.

Another hour passed and they were finally getting to the suite. All of their luggage had been settled, thanks to Harrison. So all they had to do was relax and participate in all of the festivities Olivia planned.

She locked the door, swaying towards a pleasantly tipsy Fitz, who was sprawled on the couch. Jacket off, shirt was unbuttoned, revealing the full thatches of hair she loved.

"This reminds me of our first night together."

"Yeah?"

"Oh, yeah."

Fitz replied with a flirty "Mmhmm."

"That was so good. Good times. I thought I was going to explode."

Tugging on his ear, she told him, "I thought we could use tonight to top those memories."
"I like that."

With a coy smile, she asked, "Where do you want me?"

"Everywhere."

Olivia could tell it was a challenge. How many places could they experience uninterrupted bliss? Against the wall, in the shower, on the floor by the fireplace, several ways in bed. Due to her quick-thinking ways, the rooms on the left, right, and across, were all vacant. They could be as loud as they wanted.

"Check your phone," she suggested before standing. Fitz slapped her ass.

"Ooh, Fitzgerald!"

"Your booty is right here. I can't get enough. Had to touch it."

She pointed to the phone, "Focus, Mister."

Fitz noticed a new message. When he clicked on the bubble, his eyes widened, immediately shifting in his seat. Olivia closed her eyes in satisfaction. A few choice photos had been sent during the party. Olivia was in her wig, but only wearing a lacy strapless bra and panties set.

She was giving him a show, untying her heels. Leaning forward so he could see her cleavage. "I thought that could help tonight."

Fitz was becoming more excited; his cock was straining against his pants.

"You better get back over here, Olivia Carolyn Pope."

Lifting her dress, she straddled him, taking her time to make him feel good. Her hands roaming up and down his chest.

"Liv," Fitz's throaty plea interrupting her seducing ways. "I want you."

"I'm yours, you know that."

Teasing him, Olivia slipped out of her dress, but dragging the process along. Being the impatient one, Fitz scooped her into his arms, leading her to the bedroom.

"Are these new, beautiful?"

Glancing at her lingerie, she purred, "Mmhmm, just for you."

Fitz set her back on her feet, kissing her again. Starting with gentle touches, slowly inhaling each other. It was a wonder that they were receiving any oxygen. Soon after, their actions escalated. Falling back on the bed, quickly removing whatever layers were still on. Eyes squeezing shut, taking in the other's natural scents, sighing sensually, using their hands to feel every part that they missed.

His incoherent groans, encouraged her to move her hips just the way he likes it. Then, he growled playfully, flipping her over. Squealing, Olivia gripped the headboard as he nudged her open. As he eased in, her eyes rolled. He felt so good. Maybe being in a different room, on his birthday, made fucking more delectable.

She looked over her shoulder, immediately getting turned on when one hand reached down to play with her swollen clit, while the other moved between her neck, collarbone, and jaw.
"Kiss me, damnit."

They rolled over again, thrusts moving from fast to excruciatingly slow. They were having fun, enjoying each other. Always moving in sync, not even having to tell each other what to do. But the laughs, with a repeating chorus of "I love you", "Fuck", "yes", and "keep going".

"Hurry, Baby," she moaned. "Come for me."

Feeling him lean against her, as he shuddered, Olivia allowed herself to fall. Her jaw dropping, being overcome. Once she was able to breathe, she glanced over at him, still recovering.

"How was that?"

She didn't have to ask; his mischievous grin matched her lopsided smile.

"That was...wow."

Fitz kissed her forehead, as they rested in complete bliss. She felt like jello. It was like she hadn't been handled in such a long time. The weekend was just getting started and Olivia was ready to have a great time with her birthday boy.

More events occurred between Fitz's birthday and Christmas; Teddy had a recital with fifteen other classmates. Olivia chose to attend, being "that girl", taking pictures and ready to post videos online for all the world to see. She loved that boy so much.

To celebrate six months together and their progress in their online communications class, Fitz and Olivia went to dinner. A simple outing, nothing fancy. Just good food and wine, flirting, and good convo. After Fitz proposed a toast, and they took their first sips of champagne, they were interrupted.

"Olivia? Is that you?"

Back stiff as cardboard, she met the gaze of a familiar face. One she had not seen in over two years. A balding man, around 70 years old, was grinning from ear to ear.

"Good evening, Dad."

"Am I catching you at a bad time?"

Placing her glass down, Olivia pulled out her sweet but incredibly fake smile. "Fitz, this is my father, Eli. Dad, Fitz Grant."

Exchanging a quizzical glance, Fitz stood, extending his hand. "A pleasure to meet you, sir."

"Eli Pope. Likewise. Grant? Of Beene, North, and Grant?"

"Yes, sir."

Eli replied, "I've heard great things about your firm. Much success to you. I take that you will be in town for the Holidays?"

"Yes."

Being the sweetheart and polite man that he was, Fitz offered Mr. Pope a seat. Olivia did not agree with the invitation. Knitted eyebrows, with an intense scowl and laser-
sharp eyes, were enough to cut Fitz in half. The response did not go unnoticed.

"No. I should be heading out soon. But since you are here, I would love to catch up with both of you before the New Year. Shall we get together? Say, Friday night? If you don't have any plans. You can visit at our house."

Olivia stammered, interrupting her father, "My place is fine."

"We miss having you at the house. Your mother insisted that I renovate the whole place. Would love for you to see."

"My place," she firmly stated. Eli lifted his hands in deference, sharing a curt exchange with Fitz.

"Okay then, I will text your mother. Friday night around 7. Have a good evening. A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Grant."

"Thank you. Have a good night."

Olivia tilted her head so her father could kiss her goodbye.

"Love you, dear."

Refusing to look at Fitz, who was perplexed by the whole event, she kept a trained stare at Eli, waiting for his exit. When she was satisfied that he was out of sight, Olivia reached for her wine glass, and the large bottle they ordered.

"What the fuck was that?"

Her only priority was the wine. It was her saving grace, drinking it fast, dulling the fury that was rising.

"Livvie."

She felt his hand massaging hers — a go-to trick to calm her down, but his olive branch was not helping anything.

"You wanna talk?"

"Where is the server?"

"Liv…" His voice trailing off.

Olivia ignored him, very aware of the other guests, and kindly asked for another bottle. How could he not see that she was uncomfortable? The stiff reactions, the glares. The short answers. Everything was so obvious and Fitz had to override.

"You can't shut me out."

Slamming her napkin on the table, she glared, "I'm furious right now. But I'm trying to stay cordial in public, so I need you to drop this. Not a word."

"Olivia. We don't have to talk about it at the moment, but whatever that was, we have to discuss later. We will enjoy our night out."

It was truly embarrassing, being surprised by her estranged father in front of her boyfriend. But Fitz was right; she couldn't let this ruin her night. There was plenty to discuss - the reasons why she didn't
communicate with her parents, how it all went down, and what she would do now that Fitz was aware.

Dinner went by quickly. Awkward in nature, even the staff was on edge when they presented the entrees and dessert. Olivia kept her arms by her side as she and Fitz were walking to the car.

"Is it alright if I stay at your place?"

"Of course," he answered sympathetically. "You know you can come over whenever you want."

Over the course of a month and a half, several pieces of Olivia's wardrobe had transferred to the house. There were hints about moving in, but she still wasn't ready. She was thankful for his patience.

It was taking her longer to start talking. Olivia went straight upstairs to kiss Teddy goodnight and changed for bed. Fitz came in with a cup of water.

"Wanna watch TV?"

She just wanted to cuddle and feel some comfort, before she unleashed all her feelings.

"A hug will suffice, if that's okay."

Fitz left to get into his pajamas. When he returned, Olivia curled into his arms, staying still, breathing deeply. She could feel his kisses on her forehead and cheeks, his knuckle softly brushing her nose, and his breathing.

"I'm all ears."

"I had no clue that he was in town. He usually travels and we never see each other. This is so much like him to do this to me. When he knows I don't care for surprises!"

Fitz asked, "Where does your dad live?"

"Alexandria."

"Louisiana?"

Olivia paused, slowly admitting, "No."

Fitz sat up, attempting to decipher her response. "Don't tell me the city 20 minutes west of here."

Immediately, Olivia looked away. His sigh was full of disappointment.

"I know."

"Baby, I'm very confused. Just talk to me."

It didn't take long for them to look at each other - her eyes pleading, while his longing for some kind of answer. The small gasp that escaped his lips, gave Olivia the confirmation that he connected some dots.

"Is that why you were uncomfortable that time we went?"

"Yes" was her hesitant response. Incredibly guilty because she was hiding this secret for a while. She met his father, but she never revealed much about her family.
Fitz took a long sip of water.

"Okay, keep talking."

"You don't have to come. It's not a make or break. I won't hold it against you," she quickly explained. "I'll just deal with it."

"Do they know anything about me?"

She paused again, knowing that he wouldn't take the response well. "We don't talk. About anything. I don't share with them. They tend to get into my business and ruin my life. There's a reason why. So, to answer your question, no."

The devastation was evident on his face. They were making strides about being honest, but this wasn't good at all. Olivia allowed Fitz to pull away, so he could have a moment.

"I'm sorry."

"How about you tell me what's really going on, Liv? What do you need to tell me?"

Olivia covered her eyes, preparing herself to tell him the truth. "I'm their pride and joy, but they have a weird way of showing it. Stretching me to the max, wanting me to be this new strain of Black Hope. When they split up, I rarely saw them together at all. I was house- and country-hopping all through my childhood. It made me angry that I didn't have a regular life. I didn't feel like their child. I was just a little adult. Then after I started dating Edison, everything about him seemed right, but it didn't work out. In a way, they wanted me to be with him, but they were happy that it failed. They were such a pain to be around. Nitpicking everything I did, the career choices I made. I felt like I was disappointing them all the time. I couldn't come to them like a normal parent-child relationship. I don't want you to go through this. This constant scrutiny. Because I really love you and getting shit from them would be the last straw. I can't let that happen. That's why I don't want you to meet them."

Leaning against the wall, Fitz sighed. "Thank you for protecting me, but I want to support you. You know that, Livvie. You've been great about being a part of my world, let me do the same for you. I can't do that if you hide me from everything."

The next two days were quiet. Olivia needed to prepare for Eli and Maya's arrival. It was always a challenge to get a living space just right to gain approval from parents, but with Olivia, it went overboard.

Fitz called Rachel to stay with Teddy for a few hours. Olivia ordered a meal from The Palm, most certain that her parents still enjoyed the cuisine. They used to visit the restaurant when she was little.

The knock startled her, but it was too early for their arrival, so she was relieved to find Fitz behind the door.

"Hi."

"Hi."

Putting the dessert into the refrigerator, then rushing to the mirror to double check his appearance, he asked, "Is there anything I should know before they arrive?"

"They will size you up and down. But don't get scared."
Giving her a warm hug, he suggested, "We should chill out before they get here."

Sure enough, as they were getting comfortable, someone knocked on the door. Olivia peeped through the hole, shook her head and closed her eyes. Her parents were ready to cross the threshold.

"Livvie!"

Exquisitely dressed in a black dress, with hair flowing down past her shoulders, Maya Wallace Pope embraced her only child. "It's so good to see you, Baby."

"Hello, Mom." The greeting was cool and disingenuous.

"Dad."

"Olivia."

"Hello, Mr. Pope."

Eli grinned, shaking hands. "Good evening, Fitz. I want you to meet Olivia's mother, Maya."

"May I take your coats?"

Olivia invited her parents to the living room; she decided to let Fitz schmooze, while she served drinks and plated dinner.

"Tell me about yourself, Fitz."

"I'm a Dad and a lawyer. I'm originally from California, moved here after law school. I just keep to myself these days. Sometimes making the circuits for fundraisers and social events."

Maya smiled and asked, "How long have you two been together? I never see any pictures online of you two."

Stepping in, Olivia interjected, "Six months. You know that I don't post a lot, but I did share a few pics from Fitz's birthday. We had a great time."

"That's so sweet."

Fitz continued to entertain Eli and Maya, sharing with them some of his accomplishments. He even let them see pictures of Teddy.

"He's adorable," Maya gushed. "What a sweet boy. Is his mother still in the picture?"

Olivia was horrified by her mother's ignorant question. Before Fitz could explain, she called everyone to the dinner table.

"Sorry."

Fitz shrugged, pulling her chair out so she could sit down. "Not a problem. You got this."

"So, do you both live in Virginia?"

Maya took on the question. "Eli does. I am a serial traveler. I love going from country to country. Fitz, just to be honest, we are still separated. But we're working on communicating better. Never say never."
Olivia knew that was a straight up lie, so she snorted before taking a swig of her wine.

"I'm sorry everyone, but I need to take this call."

Fitz placed a kiss on Olivia's cheek, before walking out into the hallway. The smile didn't fade as quickly as she hoped; Olivia couldn't deny how much he made her happy. It was hard for her to show off her feelings to Eli and Maya, because she didn't want to get interrogated. Taking it upon herself to start cleaning, she moved plates to the kitchen.

"I must say, you're doing well, Liv. I'm proud of you."

Eli was surveying the layout of the living room. It had been some time since they visited. Every other year, she liked to readjust furniture or buy something new to bring new life into her apartment.

"Thanks," Olivia refilled their glasses. There had to be a catch to the positive comment. "Should I ask now? What do you think about Fitz?"

"He looks pleasant."

Maya added, "He seems to be nice, baby. Where did you meet?"

"I don't know if that's a compliment or not. Our friends set us on a date."

"I knew you were dating him."

"Oh?"

"Not so close to the chest as you suspected," Eli smirked, before having another drink. "He works with socialites. Pretty boy lawyer. By default, I see his face in the Style section. I think you two look like a fine couple, but what is going to happen now?"

"What do you mean, Dad?"

"That cocky Playboy is not good enough for you."

Olivia tilted her head slightly, not impressed by her father's assumption. "But he's not…"

"You don't know that."

"He's divorced, honey," Maya added.

"And?"

"Are you a rebound?"

It was just like them to automatically count out the credibility of whoever she was dating. On top of that, acting like that she had no common sense on the matter. Being a gold digger, which she was not.

"No. Fitz is nothing like that."

"Baby, what you need is someone who is wealthy and not going to use as a rebound. That would be the worst thing for you right now."

She was getting an attitude. Raising her voice, she inquired, "So you're implying I don't know what's best for me?"
Eli lowly stated, "You know this won't work, right? Have you moved in yet? If you haven't, watch out. He's going to have you move in with him and you'll be his maid. Nanny for the boy."

Olivia was not going to let her father include Teddy into the conversation.

"Take that back. You're wrong. You don't even know him."

"What if he's like every other man you've had a relationship with?"

"Including you?"

Eli snapped his mouth shut, not expecting the quick comeback. "I am only looking out for your best interest, Olivia. You are a strong woman, you can't have anyone come in, and knock you off your feet."

This phone call was taking so long, Olivia was ready to blow a gasket. "Until you decide to view me as a woman, who does not live and die by the imaginary sword you wield, staying out of my life would be best. I won't tolerate this!"

"Eli," Maya sternly interjected, shutting him up. "Leave her be. Olivia, we are not trying to make you upset. We come in peace. You know that it's our responsibility to look out for you. We don't want anyone to come along and crush you."

Olivia gritted her teeth, trying so hard to not let the stubborn tears fall. It was her fear that they would make her feel so small, even in her own place.

"I'm sorry. What else can I say? You don't inform us about much, we only receive news through social media and acquaintances."

"There's a lot we need to work through and I don't know if I can be sure that you are willing to listen to me. I won't talk if you're not going to have open ears and listen to me. Is there anything else you want to talk about that does not include you verbally tearing me down? Because if not, we should call it an evening."

The door opened unexpectedly. Fitz was all smiles, but when he saw the current atmosphere, he rushed to Olivia's side.

"So sorry. I couldn't get off the phone sooner."

"I'm going to get the cheesecake."

Olivia disappeared, to give herself a minute to decompress. There was one thing she learned from her parents - breaking down was not admirable. Don't let them see you cry. With Fitz, she was working on changing that attitude. There was nothing wrong with expressing her feelings, good or bad. But the night was turning out to be a disaster.

The four sat quietly as they ate dessert.

"Did you make this, Livvie?"

"No," she responded,stabbing at her cheesecake slice, "Just from the store."

Maya took a bite. "Mmm, very good, honey."

"Fitz," Eli began, "I need to know what are your intentions with my daughter."
Olivia narrowed her eyes, pursing her lips. "You don't have to answer that."

Fitz gave her a reassuring look, patting her knee. *I got this.*

"Mr. Pope, I love Olivia. It's only been six months but I do love her. She has become my best friend. She accepts me at my best and worst, and I love her at her best and worst. She loves my son. Treats him as if he was her own child. If she allows, I will ask her to marry me. Whenever she's ready."

Olivia stared at him, amazed by his words.

Eli nodded, approvingly, then smiled at Maya.

"Very good. Stay on the right track and she'll say yes."

The meeting with her parents wasn't a total bust, but it did shake Olivia. Suppressing her anger towards them and having to publicly work through those issues with Fitz, was not pleasant. But it would be a journey that she was willing to take. After she hosted a lavish work dinner at her place, she was more than excited to wind down and join Fitz and Teddy at the house for the holidays. She hadn't celebrated outside of her apartment in years.

Christmas was Teddy's favorite time of year. On the schedule, he was staying in Washington, but would be leaving on the 28th to see his mother and her relatives. A revised section in their custody papers would allow him to travel to North Carolina. Olivia could tell by body language, that neither Grant wanted this to happen. As Teddy as getting older, there would be more wounds to cut open, emotionally draining. They seemed to be dreading the time apart, but that wouldn't happen for another few days.

Fitz suggested for new traditions to be made; it had only been him and Teddy for over three years, but now that Olivia was around, they thought about a few options to include her. A drive through several neighborhoods to check out light displays. Taking pictures on Christmas Eve that looked amazing on their electronic cards. Along with two places to party.

The trio attended an early evening Christmas Eve service, then ordered pizza, watching some of their favorite holiday movies. Teddy was good about getting everything clean before bedtime. He didn't want to miss out on any of the toys Daddy and Santa got for him. Olivia and Fitz finished all their prep work around 2am, drifting off to sleep an hour later.

"Daddy. Dad. Daddy!"

The persistent calling woke Olivia. Snuggled into Fitz's chest, she groaned. "Hmm...what's wrong, Bubba?"

"Umm, it's Christmas. Don't we go downstairs?"

Fitz had not moved, so she mumbled, "What time is it?"

"7:53."

"That's not too bad, but how about we wait until 9."

Olivia opened one eye, to watch for Teddy's response. He was pouting, but willing to compromise. Those brown eyes could make her change her mind but she needed a few more minutes of sleep.

"Okay," he answered, walking to the door. "Nine o'clock. I'll be watching."
Fitz pulled Olivia in, while he grunted at Teddy's demands. "Would this make you reconsider?"

"Funny that you talk now, after he's left, but okay. What?"

"Having kids, I know when you want sleep, no one is going to get into your way," Fitz explained, rubbing her arm.

Olivia softly laughed, "I'm convinced that every family has their ups and down. But this doesn't deter me. At all."

"I see."

"Give me 30 minutes," she fluffed the pillow under her head, turning away from Fitz. "Then I'll go downstairs."

They found Teddy asleep on the floor, surrounded by gifts. Olivia pulled out the phone and snapped a picture.

"I guess you need to wake up your son," she squeezed his hand. Fitz gave a playful side-eye, pushing air out of his lips, in defiance.

"You're the one extra excited about this and you are the one who told him what time we would do this. So I'll make you a cup and you will be the lucky one to shake Theodore. He's a wild thing when he gets awoken."

Olivia huffed while Fitz sauntered away. Kneeling down, she used her thumb to stroke Teddy's cheek. "Good morning and Merry Christmas," she sang.

Teddy jumped up, immediately shaking the sleep off. "Ahh! You're finally here! Where's Daddy! Oh my gosh, it's Christmas morning again!"

"I'm over here, buddy boy," Fitz called.

"Let's open presents!"

While Fitz returned with the caffeinated gold, Olivia turned on the sound system. It would be cute to have music playing. It didn't look like a winter wonderland outside, but with the fun decorations throughout the house and up the stairs, along with a festive basement aesthetic, the Grant household was most certainly in the Christmas spirit.

"Alright, Teddy. You may start."

The four-year-old rubbed his hands together, carefully deciding what to open first. There were about four boxes with his name on it, as well as a few opened presents from Auntie Gracie and Poppy, from the night before. After each opening, Teddy would sing something nonsensical or cheer about a new addition to his toy room.

"What did you get, lovey?"

Teddy screamed, "A rocket ship from Uncle Cy! And clothes from Mimi and Andrew! This is such a great day!"

She had never seen such joy in child. Teddy was loving everything that he received.

"Your turn, Daddy!"
Fitz rubbed the bits of scruff on his face, which Olivia adored. It was still too early after a late night of wrapping, given the thick-rimmed glasses that adorned his morning look. Reaching to find a large box from Olivia, he unwrapped his gift.

"Nice, Livvie!"

A new briefcase that could hold more files and anything Fitz needed during his long work days.

"Look inside."

Fitz blinked in wonder, finding a gift certificate to one of his favorite ski resorts.

"Liv, how did you know?"

"Andrew told me you love to ski, so if you have time, we can all go up for the day."

It thrilled her to see Fitz so excited about a simple gift. Practicality was key; she wouldn't forget.

"Here ya go, lovely."

Olivia reached over to receive her package, but not before she kissed Fitz.

"Ewww! Christmas kisses! It's like the movies," Teddy complained, covering his eyes. With an annoyed face, he wondered, "And why are you kissing Daddy before you open your present! That fe-feats the purpose of a thank you kiss."

The words that came out of young Theodore never ceased to amaze Olivia. As she laughed along with Fitz, unraveled the package: an Audible subscription and a food service package.

Fitz scrunched his nose in delight, "It seems boring, but I know you're always busy but I want you to get your culture in, and eat well, if I'm not here."

"You're far too kind," she joked, winking.

When it was time, Olivia handed Teddy a bag, "Here you go. Merry Christmas." It didn't take long for him to pull out all the loot. Art supplies, a cool snow globe, and a new teddy bear.

"Thank you!"

Along with several gift cards from Harrison, the neighborhoods, and Poppy.

Fitz snapped for Teddy to come over. Olivia watched them bond - it was beautiful to see father and son connect in a way that words couldn't describe. After a long hushed dialogue, Teddy scampered into his father's office then returned with a long, wrapped object. It resembled a poster.

"This is for you, Olivia."

She had never heard him say her name so clearly before. With his teacher's help and extra time during homework, Teddy was still working on his enunciation. She was so touched and impressed by his efforts.

Taking apart the tape, Olivia found a framed portrait of herself. The interpretation was adorable; dark hair, big brown eyes, her skin draw so nicely, with a polite smile. Her hair was in a side ponytail. Pink lips. Dressed in a suit. Above her head was her name, in big letters. The bottom right was signed by Teddy W. Grant.
"I drew it in my art class. I wanted you to have it."

Olivia looked up to Fitz, with tears in her eyes. He nodded.

"Teddy, you didn't have to do this for me."

"Don't worry," the little Grant reassured, with a toothy grin. "I made one for Daddy for his birthday."

"Let me hug you!"

Teddy ran into her arms. As she continued to cry, she thanked him for making something so precious. More kisses and giggles followed.

"You are the sweetest," Olivia rocked Teddy back and forth. "Don't you ever change."

"I won't."

"Okay, Buddy. I would like you clean up the old paper and take some of these new gifts into the toy room."

Fitz waited for Teddy to run off, before he sat down next to Olivia.

"I wasn't expecting that at all. How did he keep that a secret?"

"He's good about things like this," he replied. "Including this."

In his palm was a small velvet box. Olivia was surprised, but blurted out in disapproval, "But we only said one gift."

He shrugged. "I know, but I needed you to have it."

Her heart stopped for a split second, but she calmed down. He wouldn't have pull a stunt like this just yet. As she opened it, there was a small gold ring, crafted in a way that the band split into thinner pieces and intersected. Diamond cuts embellished the infinity design.

"What is this, Fitz?"

"It's my gift. From my great-grandmother. It was given to her, then to my mother. I was told to give it to the woman I love. That's you."

Olivia paused while inspecting the gold. Was this a hand-me-down? From one lover to the next? Was she about to wear his ex-wife's ring? She couldn't accept this. At all. That would be a slap in the face for all three of them to constantly be reminded of his failed relationship. She couldn't be a sloppy second and definitely not a rebound.

Reading the faint words inside the box, Olivia raised her eyebrows. "Doux Bébé?"

"Mmhmm, sweet baby."

The sentiment was nice, but Olivia was not convinced.

"Did you give this to Mellie?"

Fitz scooted over, to get closer. "No. I could have, but...it didn't feel right. Never did. But since I met you, I've been thinking of the right moment. Why not now?"
His tone was honest and pure. She believed him. Taking a few deep breaths, slipping the ring on her index finger, she sighed out his name.

"I love you, Livvie. It doesn't have to be much of anything, but it would be a lot to me if you wore it," he wrapped his arms around her waist, holding her tight.

"I love you so much."

"I'm not going anywhere. Please believe that."

She did.
Chapter 21

On paper, the schedule had always been in his favor. Nothing had changed since the custody and divorce forms were signed. Consistency was what they needed - what Teddy needed. That's what the books told him and the buddies who had gone through of all this. But when the court-ordered dates came around, he always felt crushed. There was guilt, frustration, and anger. Most of all, sadness. When Teddy was away, the guard he put up around heart would fall away and break all over again.

Sometimes he thought it was a punishment for being so self-centered growing up or even during his marriage, when all he wanted was to live a life that looked good in others' eyes. Now, all he wanted was peace and quiet, not being bothered by whatever crap that lingered between the two of them. It didn't shake him when Teddy went to school or was invited to a sleepover; the kids wanted him to be around and there was no baggage involved. But when he had to say goodbye, for a few days, or a week or two, Fitz could never accept the truth that the woman who bore his child could truly changed or be good enough.

Christmas was quiet but wonderful at the house. He enjoyed having Olivia there, spending time with Teddy, starting new traditions. But life moved on and on the 26th, he was back in the office, reviewing cases. Thinking about how the new year would start, which responsibilities he would need to take on as a partner, and finding a balance to make that happen with home life.

As soon as he got situated in his office, the line buzzed. Without thinking, his finger pressed the button.

"Yup?"

"Your ex is on line two."

Fitz cleared his throat, sitting straight in his chair. "Thanks for the heads up, Lauren. I'll actually take this one for once. The holiday spirit is still upon me." Trying to stay upbeat, he scooped the retriever and answered the call.

"Hello?"

"Good morning. Are you busy?"

"I picked up."

"Hmm, very clever, Fitz."

Shaking his head, knowing he shouldn't have started the conversation with his smartass quip. "How was Christmas?"

"Everything went well. Yours?"

"Just lovely." The pitch of her voice was calm, but with the right amount of irritating that Fitz could not stand.

"Alright, enough of the pleasantries. I just want to confirm everything for this week."

When travel plans were in the mix, it was best that Fitz and Mellie talk on the phone, so nothing could be misconstrued. But they sure hated having to do it.
"Mmhmm."

"Okay. Tomorrow morning, around 8, Teddy is getting picked up by Jonathan. You remember my cousin? He and his family lives in Loudoun County. They will fly down to Durham. Then, Teddy will stay at my house all week. On Sunday, they will get him, fly into Dulles."

Fitz pulled away, and did a double take at his calendar. "Wait. I thought you were coming here," he stammered incredulously. "You sent the email about him staying at Jonathan's the whole week. You said you were going to be nearby. I never heard about a plane."

"My schedule changed. I'm telling you now. That's why I called."

Loudly, he sucked his teeth. He wanted to lecture her for being difficult yet again, switching things up at the last minute. He had less than 24 hours to repack and also inform Teddy. It was just like her to pull the wool over his eyes and only do things that were convenient or comfortable. But it was about Teddy, not them.

"National?"

"I said Dulles."

"Really? You couldn't schedule a flight into National? There's toll roads, remember?"

"Shorter time on the plane," she interrupted. "Teddy told me he wasn't too fond of being in the air too long. You will need to pick Teddy at the airport. Jonathan and Belinda live fifteen minutes from Dulles. It's not fair for them to drive all the way back into the city just turn around."

Fitz refrained from sucking his teeth again. That was probably a bold-faced lie. Dodging responsibility, yet again.

"Anything else?"

Pressing his chin against his knuckles that were in a fist, he pondered. Was he being a hardass? Unwilling to allow her to at least try? He wanted so desperately to find an excuse to botch her plans. Fighting was becoming harder to do.

"Okay."

"That's it? No arguing?"

"I said okay, Mellie. Just want to get this all over with."

She scoffed loudly, "Get this over with? He is my son, Fitzgerald. As much as you want, you will not block this. I deserve to see him. I've done my time. You won't stop me."

"Is that so? Last time I checked, you were the one who left. You have abdicated your role as mother. I've been here for my son since you decided that this wasn't the life you were expecting. I know it was hard and we didn't work, but you abandoned him. And now that you've had a change of heart, I'm supposed to be incredibly pleased, and let you take him away without a peep from me? You have lost your mind, Melody Margaret."

"Would you like me to send you your roses? Create a medal for the world's best father and all-knowing Fitzgerald Grant? For fuck's sake, get off your cross."

"You know what I mean and I won't have it any other way. This is your fault. Don't make Teddy or
me suffer."

"Why not, Fitz? We're both in different places. I'm ready to be in his life more. I'm ready. I'm doing better.

I have what it takes."

"How? When do we hear from you? Outside of the court-ordered twice-a-week phone calls. Hmm? Did you adopt a puppy? So you can know the true commitment of parenting? Let me know."

"Where is all this animosity coming from? Your girlfriend?"

Fitz almost choked; "Excuse me?"

"You heard me. We haven't had this kind of heated discussion in months. So I suspect that this is because of her. Is she lying to you about a subject that she has no business getting involved?"

"At least she's around for him."

Mellie slowly spat, "Fuck. You."

"Does Andrew get parenting privileges? Is that why you keep him around?"

Her voice deepened to a frightening level, "Watch your tone."

Fury was rising; Fitz had been working on his temper, but he was still struggling when Mellie spoke to him. Standing up, clenching his fist, he questioned, "But you're able to spew whatever you want about who I am dating. Bullshit, Mellie. Bullshit. The double standard you hold is quite atrocious and I won't tolerate it. You don't know Olivia from Adam, so it'd be in your best interest to leave her out of it."

A knock on the door. It was Cyrus. He looked a bit frazzled, but nothing serious.

"Fitz, I tried to page you. We need you in fifteen. Don't be late."

Giving the thumbs up, Fitz turned to face the window.

"When she gets the privilege to see my child more than me, and he sings her praises, and doesn't even want to talk to me? How is that supposed to make me feel?"

"Well, maybe if you had thought ahead and reconsidered how you treat your child, you wouldn't have this situation," he commented in a hurry.

Once again, the catty argument had run its course, making Fitz feel like he didn't want to deal with her shenanigans. If Mellie were to pull any stunts where custody was concerned, it was going to take a miracle or a kickass judge to find the best solution for Teddy. Fitz was convinced that being in Washington was the right option. No need to be bothered with her flakiness.

"There you go. Every damn time, Fitzgerald. I'm sorry I ruined your life! But I'm trying to tell you, I am making up for lost time."

Fitz had enough; raising his voice, but just enough to allow it sound like a growl, he commanded, "Save it. I have to get back to work. Is there anything else you need?"

"Just have Teddy ready tomorrow at 8."
The click was abrupt, sounding extremely harsh in his ear, before he slammed the phone down. Muttering several profanities, he knew that he failed with his emotions. He was never going to have a civil conversation with Mellie. It was always a fight. No resolution.

His first reaction was to reach into the small wet bar in the corner, and pour a healthy serving of Scotch. But he wasn't at home, he was at work. Not that he hadn't done it. It happened plenty of times, sneaking a drink between clients and paperwork. Not enough to impair his work but strong enough to dull the pain he was feeling.

Reminding himself of a few breathing exercises he learned in the communications class he was taking with Olivia, Fitz decided on the next option. He took his notepad, cell phone, and walked to the conference room.

"Are you alright?"

"What?"

Cyrus had managed to catch up with him. "Sounded pretty heated back there."

Fitz rolled his eyes, before continuing. "Mellie."

Cyrus winced. "It's her week?"

"How did you know?"

"A lucky guess." The two stared at each other before Cyrus burst into a cackle. "Grant! You genius, I helped organize this schedule! Your ears turn red and you're itching to have some Scotch between meetings. It happens every time. I can tell it in your eyes."

Fitz shook his head. Apparently his body language was not subtle. "Why couldn't have she done her part from the get-go? We wouldn't be in this mess."

"You have preferred to be married to her?"

He almost wanted to vomit. "No! But if we had been level-headed, the transition would be better."

Cyrus waited. "Well, that's not how it worked. As long as Teddy lives under your roof and until he turns 18, you two will never get rid of each other. Just face the facts."

"I don't regret having him. You know that, right?" Acting on the defense now, he wanted to convince whoever would listen.

"You better not. He's a godsend to your pretty boy ass. He brings credibility."

Cyrus huffed away, while Fitz slowly followed.

The meeting was fine, per usual. Fitz was incredibly distracted, zoning out during the important times. So unprofessional, he should have called out. Thankfully, Cyrus and Liz weren't chewing him out for not staying focused. As soon as it was over, he went outside to call Olivia. She had become a rock for him, speaking sense into his head. He hoped she was available to talk him through something.

"Olivia Pope."

"Hi."
"Hi. How are you?"

"How are you?"

"I'm fine," Olivia said, with skepticism coating her response. "What's up?"

Fitz began to rub his eyes, before softly requesting, "One minute?"

She paused. "What's wrong, baby?"

"Just one?"

He heard her sigh and knew they were on the same page. He closed his eyes, allowing the busy doubts and thoughts leave.

"Fitz..."

He leaned against the railing, assuming he was ready to share what happened. "Mellie called this morning to discuss Teddy's trip and honestly, Liv... I'm just about done with her."

"Okay."

"You know, I don't understand why she has be so fucking difficult. First, I find out that Teddy is going to North Carolina, not staying here, like she said a month ago. She gives orders about how Teddy is going to be transported like a secondhand package on 95, and then when I want to give a say, she rips my head off. And it turns into a fight between us and not about him. It's not my fault."

"Oh, Fitz. I'm sorry."

"It hurts every time. I never want him to leave. You know I do my best to not show her in a poor light, but I keep thinking she doesn't do the same. And now she wants to revisit custody. Knowing her, she is going to weasel her way into changing shit. I cannot lose him."

"Honey, breathe."

The request seemed ridiculous. Why would breathing help? He needed to get his words out. Release the venom that was stirring inside. None of this was making sense.

"When was the last time you saw her?"

"In person?"

"Yes."

It was embarrassing, but he replied. "Two years."

"Even with Teddy around?"

Fitz ran his fingers through his hair and plainly answered, "Liv, we are the worst. After those papers were signed, all hell broke loose. Couples who don't split amicably, usually don't kiss and make up. Cyrus and her lawyer have been pros about locations. Plus, her family has been gracious to be the go-between. I am a plague in her eyes. If my genes could be erased, they'd be gone!"

Hearing her stifling her laughter made him smile. There were tendencies to overreact, but she could help him come back down to earth.
"How long is he going to be gone?"

"A whole week."

"Do you have any events coming up?"

"No. Just the office."

Olivia asked, "What if we get away for a few days."

The idea was noble, but Fitz didn't find it realistic. "Livvie," he sighed, walking to the guard, showing off his badge. "I probably shouldn't."

"If you're not home, the reminders won't be as strong. Then we will just relax and get distracted."

"I don't know."

"C'mon," she emphasized, "I know you have vacation time and we're off for another week here."

"Where should we go?"

"That's up to you."

Fitz twisted his lips. What was the point of suffering. Usually parents were ecstatic when their kids were out of town.

"Okay. You've convinced me."

"Want to come over tonight? I have perfected that lasagna you like. We can talk about everything."

"What time?"

Olivia suggested, "I'll be home by 4, so you two can stop by whenever. There's no rush."

"Sure."

"Okay. I bet you have some work to take care of."

Groaning as he returned to his office, "I shouldn't have come to work."

"And she would have called you at the house."

Caught by surprise, he chuckled, "That is true, woman."

Olivia continued to laugh, "You're a trip. But I love you, Fitz."

His ears perked. "I love you too."

Fitz had to use an app on his phone to help him go to sleep. It was horrible. He and Teddy came home around 10, and he got Teddy to bed thirty minutes later. He may have gotten 3 hours. But when the sunlight finally peeked through his window, he was ready to go. Instead of staying up late to repack, he chose to do it while Teddy was waking up. Not that he was a complete sap, but he played loud music and let his boy watch a favorite cartoon before breakfast. That was not the norm, but it was Christmas break and Fitz had a feeling it was going to be an interesting kind of day.

After a hearty breakfast and two trips to the bathroom, they waited in the living room. Teddy had a
coloring book in his lap, entertaining himself while swaying his feet back and forth. Fitz kept checking the window.

"Do you have everything in your backpack?"

"Yes."

"There's two green apple lollipops for you to have on the flight to North Carolina and back home."

Teddy glanced at his father quizzically. "I'm really getting on an airplane without you?"

Disappointed, Fitz replied. "Yes, there was a change of plans, but you're going to do great. You be good for Uncle Jonathan and Aunt Belinda, okay?"

Teddy nodded.

"And mind your manners if you see your grandparents and all your cousins. If you go out, wear your nice shirt and bowtie."

"Daddy?"

Sleep deprived and distracted, he quickly acknowledged Teddy. "Yeah?"

"Why haven't you mentioned Mommy?"

"Hmm," he turned around to see Teddy. His head was cocked, two crayons in his hand. The sweetest pair of brown eyes judging.

"You didn't say what I should do. Like… be good for her?"

Fitz knew he got caught; his son was definitely becoming more aware of others' feelings and the situation at hand, which meant ignoring Mellie. "You're right. I apologize. I want you to be on your best behavior at your mother's house. Be kind. Make lots of memories."

"I will. I'm going to miss you, Daddy."

"Me too."

They hugged and Fitz didn't want to let go. But he had to be strong and brave for Teddy; to let him know that change is okay, and going to his mother's isn't a bad thing. He would be safe. There would be other people who cared about him and wanted to see him. He couldn't be selfish. He was doing Teddy a disservice. He had to trust. Even if it was only a little bit.

Pulling away so Teddy could see his face, Fitz added, "You FaceTime me whenever you want to. I will pick up."

"There's Jonathan," he pointed to the window.

Fitz stood, deeply breathing, then walked over to the mini suitcase. "Okay, buddy. It's time to go."

"Okay. I love you!"

He kissed Teddy's forehead and cheek. 'I love you too."

The two walked to the car. Jonathan and Fitz shook hands as Teddy got situated in the backseat. After a quick goodbye, the car left. He stood in the driveway, watching the car disappear.
Olivia arrived thirty minutes later, wearing her hair down, in a sweater and jeans.

"Ready for our vacation?"

Firs shrugged. "Still don't know where we're heading."

"Maybe we can just take a nap first and then decide," she smiled, taking his hand, and kissing his palm.

"I want to read over the documents."

"Fitz..."

As she followed him into the study, Fitz opened a huge folder.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm just looking over the terms."

"Fitz Grant, I'm surprised you don't have this thing memorized."

"Oh, but I do," he reminded, looking for something. "I just need to stay sharp. Just in case."

Olivia rolled her eyes. "You can't keep worrying. He just left, honey. Teddy is going to have a great time. She won't be stupid and then nullify the parameters. She'd lose rights completely. We're all lawyers."

It didn't matter. Fear was overtaking him. When Teddy went to Mellie in the summer, Fitz didn't sleep well and it didn't seem to fare well when Teddy returned. Fitz didn't want a repeat of the abandonment issues. It was slow, but Teddy was beginning to turn the corner. In a frenzy, he turned the pages quickly -- almost too fast -- the crisp corners would mark his fingertips for sure. As if he had laser vision and could skim through the legal verbiage.

"Hey. Hey. Hey!" Olivia rushed around the desk, pressing her hand into his chest, halting his movement, bringing him back. "You have to stop. Right now!"

His face crumpled as he pushed the folder off the desk. Pages covering the floor, while heeding Olivia's advice, and relying on her for comfort.

"You have to stop punishing yourself for this. I can't make you forget that he's not here. But I want to be here for you when you want a shoulder to cry on, or if you want to vent, or just sleep, while he's away. This is hurting you more than helping."

"I don't trust her."

"You need to trust the system."

Fitz gritted his teeth, "But Liv."

"What is it that's holding you back? You have the upper hand. Of the two of you, you have no reason to be scared of having him taken away from you."

"I need him. I miss my boy. I can't sleep when he's not here. When he's with her. She rejected me. Fine. I don't fucking care about but I can't have her reject him. I know how that feels. I won't have that happen to him."
Fitz couldn't deny how sweet Olivia was being. She knew the sensitivity of this ordeal. This was always going to be part of his life and to know that she was willing to stick it out with them, was remarkable. Her kisses, ever so tender, helped him relax.

"I'm sorry."

"There's no need to apologize right now. You're being honest. But holding on won't be beneficial. One day at a time."

They held hands.

"C'mon. Let's run you a bath," she rose on her toes to kiss him. "I bought some epsom salts and one of those fun bath bombs."

Olivia began to walk upstairs.

"Up you go."

"Thank you," he whispered against her cheek. "I couldn't do this without you."

Every night, Teddy and Fitz talked on FaceTime. He was determined to notice something new about his son that may had been overlooked since they always were together. When the call connected, Teddy was wearing a baseball cap and a toothy smile. Fitz immediately felt lighter.

"Hey!"

"Hi, Daddy."

"How's it going?"

Teddy replied cheerfully. "It's cool! We to Rahh-leigh today and we took family pictures. Then we were making cookies earlier with this flour called almond."

"Oh, really?"

"Yeah. Mommy wanted me to try some new things when I'm down here."

Fitz nodded, just so happy to see Teddy on the screen. "That's great."

"Daddy?"

"Mmhmm."

Being as innocent as could be, he asked, "Do you still love me even when I'm at Mommy's house in North Carolina?"

Knitting his eyebrows, Fitz replied, "Absolutely. Positively."

"That means yes?"

"Yes! I want you to remember that. I will always love you. If you're at Poppy's house. Your mom's house. My house. Olivia's place. Anywhere. I love you this much." To make a point, Fitz stretched his arms wide. "This much!"

Teddy clapped. "That makes me happy."
"Me too." Fitz smiled.

"Guess what?"

"What?"

"My cousin Annabella. I don't know if you've met her, but she said that her parents might divorce too. So it's not just us."

Fitz paused, waiting for Teddy to continue his train of thought.

"It is bad that some days I'm happy that you two are not married and then some days I cry?"

What was about Teddy's poignant statements -- rare in fashion -- that just made Fitz want to curl into a ball and drink into oblivion?

"Teddy. I am so sorry."

Shrugging, the boy inched closer to the screen; Fitz could count the tawny clusters of freckles. Then he whispered, "Don't be mad, Daddy. It's not all the time. Well. One kid at school said they don't even see their Dad. So, I guess it's not that bad. I see you most of the time. And then I see Mommy sometimes. So that's okay, right?"

His boy was growing up some more. Always putting things back into perspective. "You're so wise, Theodore Grant. You're a great kid."

"Mommy says I need to say bye. I have to go brush my teeth and get ready for bed."

Fitz's eyes softened, while letting out a quick sigh. "Thanks for obeying your mother. Goodnight, buddy. I'll talk to you tomorrow night but I will see you in three days."

The two exchanged a fun goodbye and then hung up. Instead of turning on the TV, Fitz opted for a book. Reluctantly donning his reading glasses, he returned to a mystery novel a fellow lawyer recommended.

He didn't notice Olivia cuddling next to him.

'Hey, good lookin'."

He grunted. "Not with these dark circles, but hello."

"How is he?"

"Great."

Olivia massaged his scalp and he closed his eyes. It's a long moment, trying to regulate his breathing.

"What are you thinking about?"

Fitz didn't answer, just remaining still. Olivia gave him some time before asking how she can help.

His voice cracked as he formed words.

"I miss him. I miss my guy."

"He's coming back to you. You haven't lost him."
They agreed to visit Annapolis; only 35 minutes away and they could do a lot of walking around, since it hadn't snowed much in the area. Fitz brought his camera that had been collecting dust. Taking pictures of Olivia. The architecture and colorful buildings.

The scenery change excited Fitz. He was smiling more, blatantly flirting with Liv whenever he could.

"I can't believe you convinced me to get out of DC."

"I did," Olivia nudged him, as they snuck kisses whenever anyone left the elevator, en route to their room. "It's going to be good for you."

Their clothes started to peel away once they arrived to their room. On the bed, Fitz pulled Olivia on top of him, so he could feel her.

"Damn, you're so beautiful," his voice was husky.

"But you say that all the time."

Tucking some of her curls away from her face, he grinned, "Maybe since we're not home, it's a different kind of beautiful."

Their kisses deepened, hands roamed with urgency, before their love took over.

A few hours later, while Olivia was blissfully sleeping, Harrison called. Fitz reached of the robe on the chair, covering his naked body lazily, and answered the phone. He briefed Harrison, who was very empathetic. But as his best friend, still gave him some hard-hitting advice.

"You have to give her some space to grow."

"I'm done giving her second chances."

"If you were the one being distant and an asshole, would you want to receive some mercy."

"She doesn't deserve it."

"That's not what I asked, Fitz. Think about it from her point of view. We know she did wrong. We know she hasn't stepped up. But maybe, just maybe, she's going to try. See what she does this week. If you hear that she messed up, then you can firmly make a decision. But you're going to be on the offense before he steps into her house, you've already lost."

Olivia and Fitz celebrated the New Year in New York City. Their spontaneous week was coming to an end; Fitz bought train tickets and thanks to a connection, they were able to get a room at the Marquis. They had been to the city so many times separately, they were quite content staying in their room the whole 24 hours. Making love before and after watching the ball drop from their window.

The last two days, they ran errands, went to a movie, and cleaned. A sensible staycation.

On their way to Dulles to meet Teddy, Olivia reminded Fitz, "Oh my gosh, you surprised me that day I came back from Atlanta!"

Bopping along to the song on the radio, he showed off his crooked smile. "Yes. That was a great day."

Thankfully, the commute wasn't too bad, and they reached the airport parking lot with 20 minutes to
spare. A little self conscious, he chose to wear a black leather jacket, so he could look "cool" in front of Mellie's family. Olivia had to encourage him, which she didn't seem to mind.

"You look fine. You look hot," Olivia squeezed his hand. "All we're doing is picking up Teddy."

"Jonathan texted me and said their gate is 2C."

Fitz and Olivia walked to the baggage claim, waiting for the spunky four-and-a-half year old to appear. "They should be getting off the plane now," he said, glancing at the ticker every two minutes. His leg bounced, trying to downplay his nerves. But Olivia's nails were running through his curls.

"Daddy!"

Fitz shot up, seeing Teddy skip towards him. Not caring anymore about how he looked, he knelt down, with arms opened wide, welcoming his boy back home. It was like Teddy's little legs weren't going fast enough but they finally reunited.

"Oh my God, I've missed you."

The two bear hugged. Teddy was giggling as Fitz squeezed him tightly, kissing the top of his head.

"Hi Livia!"

"Hi, sweetheart," she exclaimed. When Fitz let go, they embraced. "You've gotten big since we saw you last."

Teddy laughed so hard, he was snorting. "No! I've only been gone for days." Looking back at Jonathan, his wife Belinda, and their son Austen, he asked, "How many?"

"Six."

"Yeah, six!"

Jonathan shook hands with Fitz. "Hey."


The four exchanged greetings. Jonathan nodded, "Anytime. We're so glad he was able to come down for New Year's. We hope to see you soon."

"It was nice to meet you, Olivia," Belinda grinned. "We've heard so much about you. Teddy just adores you. You know that no matter what happens, we're family. If you need anything, you let us know. I would love for Austen to get to know Teddy better."

Fitz glanced at Olivia, who gave him an encouraging nod. "That'd be great. Maybe for President's Day weekend, we could get together."

"Perfect. You call me."

Everyone said their goodbyes.

"Let's get home."

Teddy hopped up and down, reaching for Olivia's hand. "Livia, are you coming with us?"
"You bet!"

"Can I pick you up, Bear?"

The boy agreed and Fitz held him in his arms.

Olivia hooked their arms together; "See, that wasn't so bad. You just don't like her, not her family."

His nose flared, before fixing his face. "Jonathan and Belinda are good people. The jury's out on the others. I don't want to be a homewrecker. He has roots in the south and here, so I don't want to mess that up. I'm going to work harder."

"Well, you're doing good, Fitzy."

The week was rough, but he passed another test.
Chapter 22

Olivia was noticing how her relationship with Fitz was blossoming. It was approaching eight months. With the ups and downs, she had observed how normal they had become. This phase of their lives was becoming more domesticated and easy to manage. Tag-teaming for dinner making. Picking up Teddy from school. Sunday brunches. Being lazy on the couch. Having healthy conversations and when they were at odds, knowing how to find a balance to communicate. Random phone calls about what to wear at an important meeting. Wine nights with friends downtown.

Saying "I love you" more.

That was the best part. She was fine with expressing herself with him. They could open up and be vulnerable. It wasn't perfect, but Olivia knew she was in a better place than she had been in years. It took a while, but she knew how this connection was Heaven-sent.

Still with all the progress she had made, it didn't become easier to share her personal business with strangers or Fitz's neighbors, who were still on the nosy side. Especially when her car was parked in the driveway more often than not. More people were noticing them while they were out and about. The handsome lawyer and striking fixer of Washington were now a power couple? Thinking that season would die down, Olivia caught a few emails in her work inbox, requesting invitations, and she knew it would be a glorified photo op.

It was hard to focus sometimes. This was still a new thing and she didn't want to fall under the pressure. The perfect relationship was nonexistent, but they were working hard to make this thing thrive. Olivia didn't want to create a scene and blow up in their faces; she needed something familiar to get by.

With the temperature staying mild due to unusual weather in Washington, Olivia invited her best friend Gabrielle to visit. They had become best friends during their first semester in boarding school. Meeting Gabi was the exact thing Olivia needed as a lonely girl in a new country. Spending nine months together created a bond that could not be broken. As they got older, and pursued various careers, the ladies would always touch base whenever they could. Gabi was Olivia's lifeline, and vice versa, through family issues, intense breakups, and now, new loves.

It all worked out — Gabrielle was visiting in New York for a month, but had three days off, so Olivia invited her to stay with her. She was thrilled to meet Liv's new family.

The ladies met at Union Station. Olivia beamed with pride when her best friend ran up to her. Hugging like something serious. They squealed and rejoiced to be in each other's company.

"You look fantastic."

Gabrielle played it off, beveling her foot, as she struck a pose. "I try."

Olivia waved for a taxi, being able to catch up with her best girl.

"I can't wait to meet him."

"I'm excited for you to meet him."

"Office or apartment?"

"Apartment," the two replied together and laughed.
Olivia was eager to hear all about Gabrielle's new project with businesses in the fashion district.

"You should visit me for NYFW."

"No."

"Why not? I can get passes for you like that," she snapped, rejecting Olivia's rejection. "When was the last time you came up for Fashion Week?"

Olivia smirked; if there was one thing she still loved after all these years, was clothes. As she moved up the ranks in Washington leadership, her sophisticated tastes didn't budge, but her price point did. Givenchy, Louboutin, and the others she desired. But the fashion week was literally a few days away. "Let me think about it. And if I don't, will September suffice?"

"You got it."

Once they settled at Olivia's apartment, the conversation moved from work to their current relationships and self-discovery. Gabrielle took it upon herself to oversee the discussion.

"Where do you see yourself in a year?"

Olivia scooped her hair, haphazardly twirling the ends around her fingertips, before placing it over her shoulder. "More successful than I have been. I want my business to grow. I want to get more clients nationally, not just here in D.C. I think we're at a point where we can manage accounts and work through crises all over. My team is ready. Although I'm grateful that I'm here and we have a solid base."

"Excellent. Now, what about life with Fitz?"

"Hmm?"

Gabrielle gave that side eye that wasn't malicious, but cutting through the bullshit. "Your future? Do you two have a future together?"

Olivia tied an apron around her waist. "Haven't you asked this before?"

"Yes, and? Any updates, anything to add?"

"I want him in my life. But I'm not rushing things."

"What about him?"

"What about him?"

"Have you noticed anything?"

"He gets me," Olivia replied. "I don't know how, but he understands me. I've never been connected to a anyone like this in my life."

"Has he talked about moving in together?"

"Look," she dug into her purse, then dangled the key to Fitz's house. "Is this a sign? I have a toothbrush in his bathroom; my favorite teas are in the kitchen, with some articles of clothing and extra lingerie in my drawer."
Gabrielle screeched.

"That's a start. But has he hinted at a more permanent solution?"

In a rush, Olivia asked, "Why does it have to be his place? He could always move to my apartment. My place is closer to both of our offices. He's in Chevy Chase. It's all paid for. It's easy."

"But you only have one room? Teddy?"

Olivia twisted her lips. Sometimes she would forget about sweet Teddy. Not in a way to remove him from their situation, but it sometimes became an afterthought. Teddy would grow, get taller, and sleeping in the master or the couch, just wouldn't work anymore. "I don't know. I'm fine with what we're doing. He is welcomed to stay at my place whenever he can, and vice versa. It does feel weird when we're not together at night. I think it may get a little harder when Teddy's schedule. He's becoming more sociable."

"Wait a minute, sister girl. You didn't tell me that when you were itching to get back into his loving, strong, and sexy as fuck arms!"

"Shut up." Olivia chuckled, but then turned around. "Wait. When did you see his arms?"

Gabrielle scoffed, nearly shoving her cell phone into Olivia's face. "Have you googled him? All they have are model-esque pictures. Your boyfriend is a local celebrity, just in case you didn't notice or realize."

Olivia rolled her eyes, ignoring her best friend's teasing. "I try to ignore that. I just want to love Fitz. Not Mr. D.C."

"But seriously. Until Christmas, his whereabouts were featured in these local magazines. People want to know what he's up to. Out of the lawyers in D.C., Fitz happens to be the one."

"Alright, just get ready. The guys are coming soon and I need to have dinner on the table."

"Are you making anything?"

"Quiche florentine. I set up the ingredients before I met you."

"Shut up! You're cooking now," Gabrielle questioned, leaning back dramatically. "This is a revelation! Chef Carolyn in the hi-zouse!"

Olivia almost lifted her middle finger, but couldn't be mad because the truth was obvious. It wasn't a priority to make homemade dishes, even when she moved on her own, with the fast pace of her career, taking time to create a meal wasn't always the easy option. "I want to do better with the food, especially when Teddy visits. He's a growing boy and I don't want to feed him takeout all the time. He does enjoys it when he comes over. It's a treat for him. I just want to do something different for all three of you."

An hour later, the Grants arrived.

"Hey."

Fitz kissed Olivia quickly, "Good evening."

"Hi, Livia!"

A lovely hug followed, before Teddy walked into the living room with confidence, ready to plop on
the couch, when he noticed Gabrielle. He paused, looking back at his father to receive permission to approach, then took one step closer.

“Hi. I’m Teddy. Who are you?”

With a smile, she answered, “My name is Gabrielle. I’m Olivia’s best friend.”

Teddy slowly nodded, and grinned cautiously. “Hi. Nice to meet you, Gabrielle. I’m working on being brave when I meet people. I get shy. But I talk when my Daddy says it’s okay to talk to people I don’t know.”

Gabrielle marveled at the boy’s candor. “That’s wise, Teddy. Your dad is smart. Good job for being brave.”

“Hi, I’m Fitz.”

“It is wonderful to finally meet you.”

Olivia returned to the kitchen to mix a salad and stir the noodles she thought would a nice combination to the quiche. It was baking wonderfully, the heat creating a darker crust that she wanted. As she continued working, she heard Gabrielle and Fitz discussing random things, life in D.C., and adding more tidbits about the beloved Teddy. Her favorite people had finally met and they appeared to gel nicely.

“Did you make quiche?”

Olivia glanced over her shoulder to find Fitz leaning against the doorway, rocking his signature dress shirt and slacks. “Yes,” she began to cut the pieces. “I decided to make a one-piece dish. Simple ingredients. Along with pasta and salad.”

“My Livvie.”

Olivia smirked as Fitz wrapped his arms around her waist. Swaying to the inner tune in their heads, they synced once again. She took a deep breath, leaning her head back so she could mold into his embrace. His lips touching her temple, squeezing her tighter, sneaking his hand underneath her sweater.

“Oh, no. We can’t be fooling around before dinner. Not with guests.”

“Nothing is happening,” he said.

That did not convince her. As she pulled away, giving him a wink, Fitz whined, “Finnneee…”

The notion of going overboard for Valentine’s Day usually made Olivia annoyed. It was an event she chose to ignore, because of previous lackluster efforts from her ex-boyfriends. But she knew it could be a tad different with the Grant boys. Searching online and saving links from her favorite lifestyle bloggers, Olivia organized a few ideas that would be memorable for her boys. A cute basket full of chocolate, new markers and a notebook, as well as a red plush bear, for Teddy. For Fitz, she ordered a basket with toiletries, and a gift card to his favorite clothing store, Brooks Brothers. She also bought a négligée from La Perla, as a gift for herself and him.

Abby peeked inside, “I know you don’t celebrate, Liv, but there’s a special delivery out here for you
for you.”

Olivia rose from her seat, walking towards the main hallway. Her jaw dropped as she viewed eight dozen roses covering the elongated coffee table and parts of the floor.

Rushing back to her office, she dialed the offending party.

“Fitzgerald Grant…”

“Well, happy Valentine’s Day to you, my sweet. I thought I’d help you erase those bad memories. And you know it’s been eight months.”

Snapping a picture, Olivia shared with Gabrielle.

*This is incredible. When did I hit the jackpot?*

The little things that excited her. It was never like this. She wondered how she was going through life and a relationship without this kind of heartfelt affection.

A few hours later, she was at her desk, reviewing an update from Quinn and Harrison. Their newest client - a local politician - needed a moral boost to win over constituents. Since everyone else was in a lovey-dovey mood, they were able to leave early.

A message popped on her screen.

*Are you still at work?*

*Yes*, she answered.

Fitz didn’t respond in that lighting fast speed she was used to getting.

*Is everything alright?*

She heard the door open. Furrowing her brow, but still not sure who was still at the office, she yelled, “Abby, please tell whoever that is to come back later! We’re done for the day.”

“You want me to go?”

“Fitz!”

Olivia always felt that shock of electricity go through her whenever he was around. Popping out of her seat, she greeted Fitz with a luscious kiss and hug.

“Hello there.”

Olivia scooted back, admiring her handsome boyfriend.

“It is four o’clock. I thought you were going to be done by now.”

“Just finishing a report.”

“Well, you should hurry that up or finish it tomorrow,” he replied, taking her hand.

Olivia's eyebrows lifted, “A little excited, are we?”

Fitz hummed, grinning. “How about you sit down, over there.”
He was pointing towards the conference room.

“The table?”

"Yeah." Fitz loosened his tie, and slowly rolling up his sleeves. Olivia halted him, wagging her finger.

"Absolutely not. My people work there. I’m not jeopardizing anything."

Fitz rocked on his heels. “Alright,” he answered, surveying more of the space. "What about that chair? Mmhmm. I think we can be over there and not get in trouble.”

Olivia checked all the rooms in the office. Everyone had left, even Huck, who never left early.

Nodding slowly, giving Fitz the look, she decided to play along. “I’ll talk to my boss and maybe she will give me a break. Since it is Valentine’s Day. and we can't disappoint anyone.”

"That's more like it," Fitz replied, his voice extra husky.

Olivia did not regret the decision she made, as Fitz worked his way from the bottom up, pleasuring her thoroughly, reminding her that he was all about taking good care of her.

“Happy birthday to MEEEEEEE!”

Olivia and Fitz were tucked under the blankets, using their bodies to stay warm, slowly waking up, as they heard the man of the hour shouting, getting closer to the bedroom door.

“Is he going to come in,” she mumbled against his shoulder, still in a daze from their late night of passion, and early morning romp.

“I don’t know. Maybe. We’ve talked many times about not interrupting when the door is closed.”

Fitz kissed Olivia’s temple, while bringing her close. The quiet moments at the start of the day were definitely a highlight.

The tiny fist of power banged against the door.

“Daddy! Are you awake?”

Then the knob jiggled. Olivia gasped, clutching the blanket.

“Did you lock the door?”

Fitz thought for a second, then whispered, “No. Was I supposed to?”

“We are naked,” Olivia sunk further in the covers, already embarrassed, “I don’t want Teddy seeing us like this!”

Trying to make light of the potential awkwardness come, Fitz joked, “It’s not my fault my girlfriend is fucking sexy and I want her to know that again.”

“Fitzgerald!!”

Olivia playfully smacked his shoulder, figuring out a solution. She reached down for his dress shirt, wrapping it around herself and scrambling the buttons together, before Teddy would barge in.
Knowing how he was, he wouldn’t care about boundaries, and just make his presence known. Fitz scrambled to find something as well. A pair of boxers to slip on. Their reflexes were fast enough right as the door jiggled more.

“Daddy!”

“Yes, son?”

“May I come in?”

Fitz received the positive nod from Olivia.

“Okay,”

“I’m finally five! It’s my birthday, it’s my birthday!”

Hair matching his father’s, a little wavy and every which-a-way, a jovial Teddy marched towards the bed. Fitz sat up, all smiles.

“Why yes it is, Teddy Boy. Come over here so we can get our birthday hugs!”

Cheering, the birthday boy climbed on Fitz’s side, squeezing him very tightly. Fitz kissed his cheeks and forehead.

“Happy birthday, my sweet Theodore.”

“Hi, Daddy. I love you.”

“I love you more.”

“Happy birthday, baby,” Olivia sweetly greeted, arms open for her favorite guy. Teddy wiggled out of Fitz’s embrace and hugged her.

“Thank you, Livia! I’m so glad you’re here this morning.”

Olivia raised her eyebrow at Fitz, at the choice words.

“Five years old, huh? What are you going to do today?”

Teddy sang, “I have school today! We’re bringing cupcakes for snacktime. Then, Daddy’s going to take me out to dinner. Are you coming?”

Hesitating, she answered, “Mayyybbeee.”

“Daddy! Didn’t you invite Livia,” Teddy asked, eyes wide with alarm.

Fitz said, “Of course I did! I don’t know if she gave me a response.”

The Grant boys gave Olivia the same pleading look. Olivia tickled Teddy, “You know I will be there! Where are we going?”

Carmine's -- a new favorite -- was Teddy's choice, but knew he could only go during special occasions, since it was extremely hard to get a reservation.

“Okay, Mister Grant, I think it’s time to get ready for school.”

“Alrighty!” Teddy jumped off the bed, running off to his room.
“That was a close one.”

Olivia snuggled into Fitz again, allowing his hands to lift the shirt he owned and touch her skin.

“You’re warm.”

“I like this.”

“I should take a shower.”

“Want to share?”

Attempting to resist, she said, “Oh, no. Then I will be late.”

Olivia kissed him, sucking on his bottom lip. Then sashayed to the bathroom. When she returned, Fitz was still lying down, arms behind his head. Just chilling.

“What are you up to?”

“Just thinking about the day I met Teddy. How much of shitshow I was. I couldn’t believe that we made that baby. He’s my flesh and blood. When he looked at me for the first time. I cried, Liv. I can’t even describe that kind of joy. We went through so much. I don’t even know how we survived. Then you came along, Livvie. Do you know how life has changed since you two came into my life?”

Fitz tugged on her arm, pulling her back down.

“Thank you. For being willing to be with me. You didn’t have to.”

Olivia shook her head; “Stop that. I think you’re amazing. I’m so happy. I love you, Fitz.”

“I guess I should get up and ready.”

Fitz tenderly kissed Olivia, who in turn, squeezed his biceps. “I love you.”

She couldn’t help but appreciate the view of Fitz lowering his boxers and strutting to the bathroom.

“Will you be able to stop by the school?”

“Mmhmm.”

Fitz came back into view. “Okay, I ordered cupcakes from the bakery up the street, and I’ll bring them in from work. I think it would be cool if both of us were there. That’s if you have time.”

Olivia leaned back against the backboard, staring in delight, as he continued to explain his game plan for the day. Finalizing the menu for Saturday’s party, making sure the RSVP list was settled. It amazed her how much of a good father he was to Teddy. Just so enthusiastic and organized. Wanting to do the best for his boy. Doing all of this while standing in the doorway, showing off his goods.

“And another thing…”

“Mmm, baby?”

Fitz’s ass was just… delectable.
“Livvie.”

“Yeah?”

“Did you catch that?”

“When did you get this sexy?”

Olivia bit her lip; already thinking about how they would spend their evening, because she was going to stay over at the house again.

Fitz glanced over. “I don’t know what you’re talking about. My ass has looked the same for years.”

Removing the scarf off her head, allowing her loose curls to breathe, she commented, “Recently, you’ve been looking extra yummy. I’m liking what I see.”

“And you didn’t before?”

Olivia shook her head. “I wouldn’t be sitting on your bed if I wasn’t attracted to you and your handsome self. You just look extra sexy.”

Fitz laughed; “Maybe because we’ve been hanging out more often. Our schedules are meshing better.”

“That could be it.”

Once again, he disappeared. Olivia tried to control herself from wanting to pounce on him.

“Liv?”

“Yeah?”

Fitz smirked; “If you’re going to keep staring at me, you might want to join me in this shower next time.”

“Teddy, your Mom is on the line.”

“Hi, Mom. Thank you!”

Olivia sat quietly, watching Teddy talk to his mother. Their phone calls had been more pleasant since his trip.

“Yeah, Daddy and Livia are going to take me out to dinner. And yeah, I did open my gift from you. I’m going to have it on my bed every night. Thank you! Love you too. Okay. Bye.”

Fitz took the phone, waited for Mellie to respond, but no answer.

“She hung up.”

Teddy loved going out at night. He felt like a big kid.

Fitz found an adorable outfit - dress shirt with jeans and new sneakers, underneath his J. Crew peacoat.

As they sat down, ready to celebrate, Olivia remembered that fateful day in the summer. She was
nervous, uneasy, ready to cuss out her friends for pulling such a stunt. But thankfully, fate worked on her mind and heart.

They shared pizza, pasta, and hearty meatballs.

Olivia, wearing a bold red lip that evening, to go along with her black dress, motioned to Fitz and Teddy, “Let me take a picture of you two, for this wonderful occasion.”

As if they were twins, the Grants leaned in towards each other, giving Olivia their crooked smiles.

The server approached and kindly asked, “Would you like me to take a picture for all of you.”

“Okay! Please?”

Olivia couldn’t recall when a group shot was taken, but she knew it would be memorable. After they thanked the server, Olivia reviewed the picture and let Teddy see.

“Are you going to put this on your facebook, Daddy?”

Fitz smirked, “Yeah, buddy.”

An hour later, when they were all stuffed, the three walked to the car.

“Best birthday ever and I still have a party on Saturday! Hashtag blessed!”

Fitz and Olivia looked at each other, then at Teddy. “Where did you get that from?”

“The older kids at school. I think it was a fun day and everyone said it at sa-sembly.” Teddy stood up and exclaimed, while tapping his fingers together, then opening up his arms, like in praise.

“Hashtag blessed!”

Saturday arrived and the trio was ready to celebrate Teddy’s fifth birthday!

In true fun fashion, he asked for an ice skating party. It all started when Mellie took him to a rink during his trip in North Carolina, and the experience was so memorable, Teddy constantly reminded Fitz how he wanted to go back. Pretending to glide in the house, using his good school socks.

It only took a few times for Fitz to catch his son’s drift. There was the rink in Cabin John, only twenty minutes away from the house. He was able to reserve the space easily; it worked out since they wouldn’t have to do any extra clean up once they returned home.

Teddy invited six classmates and eight neighbors to the party. A whole crew of 5-8 years old would be an event. Olivia was more than willing to chaperone and take pictures.

Inside the rink was frigid. Thankfully, she donned her trusty insulated coat, a skull cap, and sensible scarf, over her long-sleeved shirt and jeans. Fitz looked the like cool dad, wearing a sweater and jeans, with his puffer jacket nearby.

"Hi Moira and Justin! Brennan! John Paul! Kendrick! Hi, Libby! Taylor, over here! Daddy, Livia, they all came!"

Teddy waved to his friends, as they entered the facility. Some, he even gave hugs to, just so ecstatic to have everyone he loved there.
“Thanks for having them, Olivia and Fitz,” one mom, Julia, greeted. “They’re going to have so much fun!”

The next two hours were full of vibrant giggles, stuffing faces with pizza and cupcakes, and numerous pairs of feet chugging towards the ice.

Fitz hired one of the instructors to share some tips on basic skating, as well as learning to spin and move quickly. The kids had a great time.

“Who’s that?”

Teddy smiled at one friend, and pointed, "This is my Livia!"

"Livia?"

"Well," he commented, dragging out his reply, "Her real name is Olivia, but I call her Livia, because I didn't know how to say her name, and now it's stuck, and she doesn't get upset. Sooo...yeah!"

A few of the parents stayed to watch on the bench, waving back to their kids as they slowly or quickly skated around.

There were limited falls. Teddy was going a little too fast and bumped into someone else. He fell back on his bottom, and Olivia was dropping everything to get to him. Whimpering a little, he shook it off, and got up.

“I’m okay, Livia. My booty is sore but I’m going to keep skating!”

She kissed his wet cheeks. “That’s my boy!”

Fitz and Olivia enjoyed watching Teddy have fun and enjoy himself with his friends. After a fifteen minute break, everyone had a fresh wind and was ready to skate.

"Want to join me, Miss Pope?"

Olivia winked at her man, who had a sparkle in his eye. “Absolutely.”

Hand in hand, they strolled around. Fitz tried to show off but Olivia suggested to not do too much because she wouldn’t able to carry him off the ice.

One of the parents was able to get a picture of the three of them holding hands — Teddy in the middle. They all looked so happy.

“Alright, everybody, say cheese!”

“Cheeseeeee!”

The group took a few more shots - happy and extra silly. Parents were start to arrive for pick up. Olivia was able to meet some of the adults, having a good conversation. To her surprise, no drama occurred or wandering eyes towards Fitz.

Teddy skipped towards the car, shouting, "Best birthday ever! Best birthday ever! Thank you, Livia! Thank you, Daddy! You two are awwwweesssome!"

His energy was short lived. After Fitz brought in the last set of presents in the house, Teddy was on the couch, leg hanging off the cushion, fast asleep.
Olivia was sitting at the kitchen bar. "That was fun."

"Absolutely."

"My calves are incredibly sore," she massaged her legs, "I need to take a bath when I get home."

"Or you could always take a bath here."

Fitz had that mischief Olivia couldn't resist.

"You sneaky man. You're making an offer I cannot refuse, Mr. Grant."

Olivia watched Fitz strut over. "Let me get this party animal ready for bed and I'll draw your bath, my lady," he replied, leaning down to kiss her full lips. "Thank you for helping out. It meant the world to me."

Olivia squeezed his scruffy cheek before returning a smooch. "This was the best. Being with you and Teddy. I wouldn't have missed this. I can't imagine not having you two in my life."

As she slowly walked up the steps, with a glass of wine in her hand, she heard Fitz call out for her.

"Yeah, honey?"

"Do you want to move here?"

It could have been the stress on her legs, standing on them all day, wobbly, and unstable, but Olivia almost fainted when the question was asked. Miraculously the wine didn't spill and her hand gripped the bannister, hoping the shock wouldn't take her down.

"Livvie?"
Chapter 23

Fitz's smile dropped as he watched Olivia's knees buckle. Rushing to her side, he knew.

He blew it. A royal fuck up. Everything was going so well. Too well. It was too good to be true. They had turned a corner, talking openly when things were going right, or badly. Being more comfortable with each other with this new way of life.

All he wanted was to be with her, as much as possible. Living in the same house, not dealing with going back and forth. Seeing each other every night, and waking up next to her in the mornings.

"Baby. Are you alright?"

Olivia laughed nervously, shaking her head. "I'm fine. My legs just gave out. Look at how much of a mess I am."

"Liv," Fitz kneeled down, ready to scoop her into his arms, but she rejected the gesture, stepping back, keeping her shins steady against the bottom step.

"I shouldn't have rushed up these steps. After all the skating around we did. That can take a girl out! Goodness. You know what, I'll take the bath at my place. I didn't fall and I'm already down the stairs and I haven't drank any wine, so I'm good to drive."

"Livvie."

She firmly placed her hand on his chest. "I need to go."

Abruptly, Fitz jerked away from her touch, as if it burned, instead of being a reassuring gesture — he was hurt. It wasn't making sense why she was doing all of this. "Are you mad at me? Because of what I just said? I'm sorry."

Olivia forced another smile. "No, I'm sorry. For making this awkward. Let's talk about this tomorrow, okay?"

"Tomorrow?"

"Yes."

Why wait? Usually they would just sleep it off, and go from there. After their online sessions that confused on communication properly, they had promised to each other that they would talk about their issues in a timely fashion. To wait a whole day? Fitz was utterly confused and needed to know why she was pushing this off. His eyebrows lowered, as he tried to convey to Olivia that they could discuss whatever she was feeling. They could work through this.

"I'm sorry," she whispered. "I can't talk about this right now."

Olivia went upstairs to say good night to Teddy. Fitz chose to wait by the steps, just in case she changed her mind. Two minutes later, she came back into view.

"I tried to wake him up, but he's out cold," she explained, try to keep a brave face, as she carefully descended. "But I gave him extra kisses and a back rub, FYI. So if he interrogates, you have my word that I went to see him."

Fitz crossed his arms, looking at his lady with concern. In his mind, he was more focused on what
happened a few minutes earlier. "Are you sure you don't want to stay here and rest? I don't want you
to feel uncomfortable on the drive back."

Her hand finding purchase on his cheek, gently massaging his skin, Olivia looked deeply into his
eyes, then softly kissed him on the lips. "I'll be fine. It's best if we just…get our rest by ourselves."

That was a blow; mustering up some boldness, Fitz argued, "But I don't agree with-"

"Trust me," she insisted. "Good night."

Olivia walked past him — out of his reach — with her purse tucked under her arm. Waiting at the
door, Fitz made sure she got into her car safely. As each second passed, the sting of rejection felt
stronger as he followed her car until it disappeared from view. There was no use in arguing with
Olivia; if she was set on something, it was going to happen. Her way.

It was true. She needed her space. She had the right to decide when to share. But it was so damn
inconvenient. Fitz knew that being confined — in any situation — wasn't her strong suit. All he
could could do was worry; he was incredibly sprung. From the moment he met her, he knew she was
going to affect his life in some manner.

Perhaps, the surge in the pace of their relationship was scaring her. Obviously, he thought of all the
times ignored his ex-wife, missing signs that he could have caught that would have avoided the pain
both experienced. Was he repeating the cycle? Or trying too hard? Just trucking along to make his
dream come true, and not truly considering what his girlfriend wanted?

Why did it appear to be that he was always the one chasing, pleading for some kind of resolution?
He thought they had gotten past these rough patches. Anytime things got weird, she was always
leaving, either physically or emotionally. He was tired. Was this even worth it anymore?

"Daddy? Daddy!"

Fitz cursed at himself for losing track of time. Three hours had passed. He shouldn't have allowed
Teddy to nap that long; at this point, he would never get to sleep.

"What is it?"

Trudging down the hall, the boy came into Fitz's peripheral vision, lifting his hands to rub his sleepy
eyes, and mumbled, "Where's Livia? I can't find her."

Taking off his glasses, Fitz gave the less-than-happy news. "She went home."

Teddy squinted his eyes, quizzically, "Why?"

"Because she wanted to go rest at home."

"Why? She can take a nap in your room. Livia does that a lot when she stays with us. It's Saturday.
She always stays with us on Saturdays."

Fitz reminded, hoping to "It's not that simple. She just had a busy day like the rest of us and she
wanted to go to her place."

The tantrum was rising. With a foot tapping against the floor, ready to escalate into full-blown
stomping, and gritted teeth, Teddy ran to pull at his father's arm. "Daddy! Call her. I'll call her. She
always picks up when I call her. Daddy, tell her I need her!"
"No."

"Why not? Daddyyyyy…. do it now! I want Livia! I want her now!"

"Theodore Grant."

Fitz worked on never raising his voice, but he had enough of the complaining. His command was firm. Little Grant halted his whining.

"Yes?"

A deep breath in and out. Fitz softened his tone. "I need you to listen to me. Olivia made this decision, buddy, and that's okay. We all can make our own choices. We can't force people to do things that we want. It was the right thing for her to do. She'll return soon."

He watched for the signs. Eyebrows began to knit, with a frown. Then, like clockwork, Teddy's bottom lip quivered. Fitz sighed because he knew what was to come. Crumbling into tears, he clenched his fists. "It's not fair," he wailed, running away. The boy had a strong set of lungs; his cries bounced against the walls.

Eventually, Fitz followed to the family room, where Teddy was — standing at the wall, sobbing. Of course, without fail, he walked to Teddy's side, getting down to his level. He asked softly, "What's wrong?"

"Why did Livia leave me?"

"She didn't leave you. She just needed to go home, honey."

Teddy couldn't fathom the idea of being separated. It felt like a punishment. Trying to get the words out, Teddy's chest heaved as he spoke, "But it's not fair. Everyone else has mommies and daddies at their house, and I don't!"

Fitz pursed his lips, allowing his son to cry it out. He wanted to assure that it was okay to be angry, hurt, and frustrated. Just to channel it correctly and not hurt someone else in the process.

"What's going on, Ted?"

Once again rubbing his eyes, he replied, "Why can't we all be together?"

"What about us? You don't like it when it's just you and me anymore?"

Fitz wanted to get Teddy's genuine reaction. Was it a dig?

But he cried more, collapsing against his father's solid frame. "I love you, Daddy. I just…want Olivia."

"Me too."

He couldn't handle his baby boy crying like this. He rarely broke down because he was such a happy baby, into a toddler, and now at five years old, this alarmed him. Crying wasn't the issue - it was why. Taking his boy into his arms, Fitz held him close, cradling him. His heart breaking more as he consoled Teddy, somewhat like how Olivia would rock him to sleep.

"It's going to be okay, Teddy."

As he comforted his son, Fitz began to think. Was there a timeline for these things? With Mellie, they
didn't move in together until after they got married. He just wasn't feeling it. She didn't care either. But with Olivia, he couldn't wait to be under the same roof all the time. All of his dreams were about her. It all made sense. He was hoping that he didn't place too many hints to her. This was a touchy subject and on the surface, there was no rush, but when was the perfect time to ask?

Eight months seemed like a good time. Maybe at a year, he could ask again, and everything would be fine. Now, he was doubting himself. Was he risking two relationships — Olivia and Teddy — to have his picture perfect home again?

"Can you hug me some more?"

Fitz kissed Teddy's forehead, which was so warm. His face was beet red, cheeks and chin stained with tears. "Of course."

"Do you think—" Teddy mumbled, while his father hushed him.

"All we can do is ask and be patient. She'll be back soon."

"I hope so."

It took about ten minutes to calm Teddy down. A few songs later, he was sitting on the couch, stoically. Fitz noticed his eyes were distant.

"Are you thirsty? Hungry? We didn't get to eat dinner yet." It was pushing 8:30, a little late, but with all the activities from the party, as well as Teddy's extended nap, everything shifted.

Teddy chose not to answer.

Fitz didn't remember getting advice about situations like this. Rather than interrogate, he left for the kitchen. There was some bread and meat in the refrigerator. He made two sandwiches, one with the fixings and one without, but some on the side, just in case Teddy wanted to try. An easy dinner.

Back at the couch, he approached his son, placing the food on the coffee table. Putting a napkin on Teddy's lap, he instructed, "Take a few bites, please. If that's all you can eat right now, that's fine. But I need you to have some dinner."

He nodded silently, and began to partake. "I'm going to try the mustard and lettuce today."

"Good," Fitz smiled, "I think you'll like it."

Teddy snuggled next to him, pretty much an extension of Fitz's arm. There they were, without any television on, or music, just bonding by themselves.

"Did you have fun today?"

"Mnhmm," a whimpering response.

"Wasn't it great that all your friends came?"

Teddy agreed, while taking a huge bite of his meal. "I would like to sleep in your bed, please."

"Okay."

The boys cleaned up, then retired upstairs.

"You get in bed while I put on my pajamas."
Fitz shut the door, looking himself in the mirror. There was more to work through. He couldn't rush her. At the same time, she had to tell him when lines were being approached. He also had to prepare his son about boundaries and patience. 

By the time he walked out, Teddy was fast asleep, sprawled out on her side, obviously.

Sunday was a doozy; Fitz and Teddy were struggling. Both were in a sour mood. If he wasn't giving the silent treatment, little Teddy was crying. The back and forth was draining; Fitz knew that if he didn't get backup, he would be in big trouble; it would result in shouting matches, premature timeouts, and mutual meltdowns. He was at his wits' end. As he drank his coffee, he scrolled down the contact list on his phone. Some of his friends had never seen Teddy like this, and he wasn't about to explain all the ins and outs. This damn separation anxiety that his son had been dealing with since he was 2, but only recently he sought help for Teddy.

Thankfully, he was able to get a hold of Harrison, who was also chilling at home.

"Harri, can you come over? I'm dealing with something."

"What's going on?"

"It's Teddy. And Liv."

"I'll be there soon."

Twenty minutes and a soothing bath later, the Grants awaited Harrison. When the door rang, Fitz gave Teddy the go-ahead to answer the door, after checking the window.

"Hi, Uncle Harri," Teddy greeted, with a hoarse voice.

Glancing at his best friend, while lifting the little man into his arms, he asked, "What's up, my guy? What's wrong?"

Automatically turning on the waterworks, Teddy blubbered while explaining, "I had my party yesterday and Livia left before bedtime. And I-miss Livia-And she left and I'm a little upset- Not a lot because I love her-But she's always here and if I'm not at school, then we are together-She's like my second Mommy and since my real Mom left me, I don't want it to happen again. Re-re-re,"

"Repeating."

Teddy put his head on Harrison's shoulder, bringing his voice down to a whisper. "Yeah. And Daddy feels sad too, but he told me we can't call Livia yet, and I'm just sad!"

Once again, Fitz felt validated. He wasn't overthinking this. He was thinking it had to do with Mellie, and the environment Teddy was in. Was it his fault? Should he have met someone new sooner? But if he had, Olivia wouldn't have been in their lives. She was worth waiting for.

The trio congregated in the kitchen; Teddy was holding the bear she got him, while Fitz and Harrison talked a few feet away, while preparing a brunch.

"Man, I wasn't expecting all of this. I was so hyped from yesterday that I foolishly asked if she wanted to move in."

"You're not being foolish. Just very enthusiastic."

Fitz added, "I thought we were on the same page."
"Maybe she's a few sentences behind. In the middle of turning that page."

"What am I supposed to do?"

Harrison shook his head, very empathetic to their situation. "Just have to wait. She's going to come around. Whatever answer she gives, know that you did your best."

When she said she needed space, Fitz wondered if that meant absolutely no communication. The day had been moving along, and still nothing from Liv. If he sent a text, would she distance herself further? The nervous energy was similar to their first date and the hours after. Typing and erasing lines of words, only to redo, and come up with a message that was more important.

He decided to just send something.

_Hi._

Sliding his phone over, so he wouldn't be tempted, Fitz walked over to his office by the den. Harrison had left two hours ago. He had to stay busy. There must be something he could work on. Preparing a fun dinner for Teddy, while keeping him calm helped his mind.

Fitz was able to get several smiles out of Teddy the rest of the evening. Obviously when he wanted cuddles, he got them. The boys were stuck like glue. Like old times.

But he couldn't resist. While Teddy was laying on him, gradually letting sleep take over, Fitz turned on his MacBook, checking his messages. Olivia still hadn't respond. It was crushing. Yes, he was willing to understand. But all of this still sucked and it was painful.

It was a miracle that he was able to keep Teddy in his room. After reading a story and finding a fresh uniform for school, Fitz kissed him goodnight and left.

Closing the door to the master bedroom, Fitz stripped down. Although his day was wrecked, his body was on autopilot. The routine had to continue. Brush teeth, take a shower, tidy up. Every task was marked by her. She was usually in the room when he did of all these things.

Wondering if she was experiencing the same. The kind of loneliness that keeps you awake, makes you cry your eyes out, stare into oblivion and wait. Not want to move until the other moves.

The thought of her wanting to break up crossed his mind. He felt pitiful, for these emotions. But he couldn't deny how important she was.

It hurt to breathe without her.

Something was different and Fitz didn't know why. He found himself on the right side of bed — her side — which never happened because even when she was out of town or back at her place, his body kept him still where the mattress had contoured to his frame.

Yawning and stretching, he was ready for another Monday. Schlepping to the room down the fall, he cracked the door open.

"Teddy, time to get up."

Usually, he would hear some rumbles. But there was silence.

Fitz turned on the light. The bed was empty. Since North Carolina, Teddy's sleeping habits had been funky.
As far as he knew, he didn't go downstairs in the middle of the night.

"Hey, Teddy? Where are you?"

He rushed to the kitchen. But beyond the room's borders, the TV was playing softly.

When he turned the corner, he gasped.

Teddy was asleep on the sofa, in the arms of Olivia. She looked so beautiful. Her eyelashes sporadically fluttering as she kept her hold on him.

Kissing her on the forehead, he called her name.

"Liv?"

"Yeah?"

"What are you doing here?"

"I felt like I should come. I needed to come back."

"Did Harrison talk to you?"

Olivia made a face. So that must have been a negative.

"My gut was bothering me. I couldn't sleep."

"Lивvie."

"I tried to stay quiet. I couldn't wait any longer. Thought about going upstairs, but Teddy was down here and I wanted to make sure he was okay. I told him I was very sorry for leaving him. We talked for a few minutes and he fell back asleep."

Fitz sighed.

"How about I take him and then we can talk? Would you like some coffee?"

"Sure."

Taking Teddy back to bed, gave Fitz some time to work out his anger towards Olivia. He was pissed. He wanted to curse at her, letting her know how much her absence affected the two of them. But it wouldn't be any use. His love for her was willing to hear her out. There was a reason. When he returned, Olivia was sitting at the island. After pouring her a cup, he asked, "Why?"

"Why what?"

"Why did you go?"

Olivia crossed her arms. "It was only two days, Fitz. We don't have to talk everyday, if we don't have to."

"Okay."

"I needed to get my shit together again. You know how overwhelmed I get."

"That's not the best excuse."

"
"I needed space," she replied sharply, with fierce eyes. "Don't you need space sometimes?"

Hearing her question him was a pain in the ass. It wasn't why he wanted to talk. He wanted to know about her thought and action process, not for the questioning to turn on him.

"Yes, but I didn't abandon you."

"How did I abandon you?"

Fitz moved his coffee mug aside, getting more irritated. "We needed to talk and you conveniently walked away."

"We are talking right now."

"No, we are arguing," he brooded.

"Fitz. You have to trust me. I wasn't going to leave you. We weren't going to break up. I needed to be prepared and being asked these kind of questions - I don't respond well. I thought you knew that. When was the last huge decision you had to make?"

Taking a breath, he replied, "Dating, and before that, pursuing custody."

Olivia pursed her lips. "Okay, did that process take a hot second?"

"Okay, Olivia," he brushed her off, already knowing where she was going with this.

"So, why can't I have that luxury to decide if this is right for me? For us. You can't dictate what happens in my life. I'm going to take all the time I need."

The accusation she was making, was hurting like hell. Was she truly viewing him this way? Like her father? Or any other man who had done her wrong? Fitz wasn't taking it well, but he couldn't downplay her feelings. He didn't speak.

Olivia added, "You do know that I don't have to live with you, or be with you 24/7, to express my love, right? That doesn't change the fact. Just because you can't see that, doesn't mean-"

"I don't want to lose you, Liv! I cannot think straight if we aren't talking," he boldly interjected, red in the face. "I love you so much. I'm in love with you. Do you know that? I cannot see myself with anyone else, but you. You know why? You're the love of my life. I thought that asking you to move in, would show you that. How much I love you. That I'm taking this seriously."

Olivia's eyes widened.

"I didn't think I would be able to fall in love again after my divorce. But you...you changed me."

Fitz breathed deeply, rubbing his hand over his face, trying to pull himself together. Speaking in anger wouldn't solve anything, but he was exasperated. "I don't want to cage you in. You are free to go wherever. I'm sorry if I'm scared you but I'm not embarrassed to tell you. I'm done keeping how I feel about you a secret."

Olivia studied his face. Probably seeing the fear and sadness. Calmly, she began, "Do you know... how terrifying this is? How much I want to do this moving in thing but scared that I will fail you? Disappoint Teddy? I don't want to fail you. What if we don't work out?"

"But what if we do? I believe in us. There's hope. I'm going to wait for you."
She didn't answer, which discouraged him. Maybe she didn't agree. Checking the time, they had been discussing, arguing, or whatever the fuck they were doing, for ten minutes. It felt like nothing had been resolved. He waited, and saw her place her fists on her hips.

"Come here."

"Why?"

"Just come here, okay?"

He followed her directions, stepping into her space. They began a staredown. Olivia made the next move, embracing him and holding him tight. It didn't take much for him to reciprocate, having her so close. In the grand scheme of things, not talking for a day and a half wasn't a big deal. But this was important to Fitz. He couldn't let her go.

"I love you," she whispered. "I won't stop loving you."

Standing in the middle of the kitchen, with the fan whirring above them. Settling back into what they knew. Fitz tipped her chin upwards, so he could admire her face again. Leaning forward, he had to kiss her. Olivia accepted his romantic gesture, deepening the kiss, allowing him to explore.

His heart fluttered as he felt her hands run through his hair. Talking helped, but he wasn't against expressing himself with action. Neither did she.

"I did some thinking," she murmured against his chest.

"Mmhmm?"

"I'm going to keep my apartment."

Fitz rubbed her back, rocking back and forth. "Okay."

"But, effective March 1st, I will be living here. I want to move here."

Fitz pulled away to make sure her eyes were telling the truth. Olivia had a way of talking sometimes just so he could get off her case. "Livvie…"

"I mean it. If I have late nights, I'm staying at my place. Because it's closer to the office. I don't want to ruin y'all's nights," she explained, "But yes. That's my decision."

"Oh my God, are you serious?"

Smiling, she confirmed. "Yes."

Lifting her up and twirling around, Fitz celebrated by laughing, hearing her giggle, before kissing her again, but deeper this time. It didn't matter how it started, their kisses were luxurious and healing. Always finding a way to come back together.

Afterwards, he said,"I couldn't be any happier, my sweet baby! Do you want us to move things there?"

Olivia smirked, amused by his enthusiasm. "For now, it's fine. Still want to keep my space, my space."

Fitz rolled his eyes. "Damn. Already doing too much. I'm sorry if I was pressuring you. Will you forgive me?"
"Yes," she replied, still holding his hand, "I forgive you."

"I think… I'm going to call the school and tell them he's coming in later. I doubt he slept either."

"I still have to work."

Fitz asked, softly, "Do you have to go in right away?"

"No."

"Cool. Would you like to take a nap or just chill...with me?"

Olivia nodded and they moved upstairs. When she entered the bedroom, she noticed how messy her side was.

"You slept on my side?"

Fitz shrugged, not even embarrassed. "Teddy was there first then me. I admit it, we are a complete fucking mess without you."

With a chuckle, she removed her shoes. He kept his eye on her, as she joined him in bed. As he stared at the ceiling, Fitz waited for Olivia to initiate, because he didn't want to force anything.

"Hey."

"Hmm?"

Olivia turned to her side, facing him; her eyes searching, like she was reaching his soul.

"Are we okay?"

"Yes," he immediately answered. "Without a doubt."

"Good."

Olivia gave Fitz another reassuring look, taking his hand again. "I love you."

Taking in her declaration to heart, he slowly grinned while hugging Olivia. "I love you too."
Chapter 24

Watching the sun rise was different this time around.

As she silently laid in bed with Fitz, contemplating all that had happened, Olivia needed one hour to regroup. There was no room for error; she had to make this right. Being away from him was excruciating. Each minute that turned into an hour crushed her. But being the stubborn person, Olivia continued to keep her distance, assuming her time alone was the answer.

She was dead wrong. It wasn't the best decision. Everything was moving so fast, it was overwhelming. As much as she wanted to blame him for forcing the issue, she could have responded differently. She had the right to pull away, but it didn't make her choices accurate. The damage had been done.

At thirty-three, Olivia Carolyn Pope had to grow the fuck up.

They could have jumped into being intimate, but Olivia didn't feel like going there. Not yet.

In a small voice, she asked, "What can I do?"

"Huh?"

Olivia studied his face, watching his eyebrows knit in confusion. After a quick moment to pause, she clarified the request, hoping Fitz could find words to answer.

"What can I do to be better? For you. Teddy. Us. So I won't hurt you."

Fitz sat up, adjusting his pillow so he could lean against it. Turning to Olivia, he said, "Just talk to me. You had to do what needed to be done. That's fine. You wouldn't have been able to decide with us nearby. Thinking clearly is what you want to do best. But a text back to tell me, that we're okay, would have helped tremendously. Teddy was having a meltdown. He loves you. He needs you. He thought you were deserting him. Yes, it seems over-the-top. But he just turned 5. You have become his world, Livvie."

His response was gutting and ripping her heart out. To know that her presence or lack thereof, could change a person, was devastating.

"What about you? This can't be all about Teddy," she rushed, "There's us. You and me."

"I have no problem giving you space. I just need to know if you're there. We don't have to talk every minute of every day, but you have to give me a sign. We have to fight. Actively move forward, to keep this going."

"Right."

Where was the balance? She had to look out for her well-being, but also consider others. When it came to her work, she had no issue with doing so. But why during a personal moment, a relationship with people outside of that building on K Street, did Olivia struggle royally like this? She was willing to own her faults; but not stepping away was not an option. It wasn't easy, it wasn't the best way to go, but how else would she have gone about this?

Compromise.
"Alright. I'll think of something."

"Okay."

A minute passed. Fitz slowly pressed his lips onto her cheek, moving his head, hoping she'd give him access. She knew he longed for her. There was no use in denying the love and passion they shared for each other. It was part of their reconciliation. Through counseling, they recalled the power of words, and once they were able to communicate, they could easily parlay into touch and anything physical.

Their lips carefully touching, molding.

Olivia could feel her body tense, but at the same time, relaxing because she missed him.

She couldn't do this anymore. Play games and try to live life without him. But needing one more part of closure, she leaned back, softly placing her hand on his bicep, keeping her eyes trained on him. "He told me he cried a lot. And you cried."

Fitz blinked several times, looking very offended that she would mention this.

"Did you?"

He didn't answer at first, slowly inching away from her grasp.

"I had to ask. It was bugging me. You can tell me, baby. Don't hold back."

Letting out a heavy sigh, he finally spoke. "Yeah. I thought I fucked up, and I seriously thought was going to lose you and that… that was unbearable. I need you."

"I'm so sorry. I don't want to hurt you anymore."

"Then come back to me," Fitz demanded, "Don't shut me out. I'm right here, Livvie."

That sealed it.

Olivia climbed on top of Fitz, wrapping her arms around him, and boldly kissing him.

"I love you."

Fitz's lips ticked the shell of her ear. His hand ghosting under her shirt, reaching her stomach.

"Can I… can we?"

Olivia looked up to the clock, to see how much time they had before Teddy might call for his father or if a client would ask for help. With a raised eyebrow and subtle nod, she rose to discard her clothes.

Rushing wouldn't do any good; she relaxed, breathed deeply, and let the moment take over. Once Fitz got situated, they embraced. His abs tightened while she moved. As always, their bodies started a dance that they never forget. Their eyes hinting and sharing what they wanted. Getting rid of the toxins. Sweat beading her forehead. Her hair shielding her face, contorting with pleasure.

Each soft grunt that she heard, made her want him more.

The remaining pent up emotions went away as they continued to make love. Fucking the anger, fear, and confusion away. Coming back to each other.
When they finished, she got lost in his eyes. Lingering kisses, then placing her head on his chest. The raised nails of her manicure drawing light circles through the hair and on his skin.

"Fitz."

"Yeah."

"What time is it?"

"Exactly 8:05. We've been mighty productive, Miss Pope," he smirked, incorporating some humor in their "quiet" time.

"Stop it, you."

"Never, my sweet baby."

Resting her head under his chin, knowing she was very safe, Olivia mused, "We can do this every day, if we want."

Fitz immediately countered, "Fight? Hell no. I don't need that stress."


"I know."

Another minute to enjoy their bliss. She began to move, but he wasn't having it — sneaking in luscious kisses.

"Where are you going?"

Olivia wiggled away from his warm but greedy arms. "I need to take a shower and make Teddy breakfast."

"I'll take care of that."

"No. This will help me talk to him."

Fitz sat up against the headboard, giving her a silly smile.

"What?"

"Nothing," he answered.

"You want me to stay in bed?"

"Sure."

"Tonight," she stated, leaning over him, kissing him once more.

Fifteen minutes later, Olivia was downstairs, pacing back and forth, finding ingredients, along with fun additions. This gave her more time to allow the right words to come.

The padding of small feet alerted her.

Teddy skipped into the kitchen, already wearing his school uniform. "Good morning, Livia."
"Hiya."

His eyes grew as he noticed the adjustment in the regular morning scenario.

"Are you making breakfast?"

"Yes."

Teddy smiled wide. "That's so cool! Daddy usually makes me food. Or if I stay at Aunt Gracie's, she'll do it. But never you. Well, for breakfast. What are you making?"

"Waffles."

"Eek! That's amazing, Livia. Can we do it together?"

She couldn't help but smile. It was a simplistic gesture and he found it to be amazing. She helped Teddy put on an apron to cover his uniform, then got to work. Mixing the ingredients together, scooping the batter on the iron. During a break of waiting for the food to cook, Olivia asked, "Can I ask you something?"

Teddy nodded. "Mhm. What's up?"

Olivia knelt down, making sure they were at the same level. "What do I need to know that will help me to be a better Livia?"

"Hmm?"

"Can you tell me how I can be a better Livia to you? So I don't make you sad anymore."

Teddy poked out his lips while thinking. "I don't like it when you and Daddy leave. It reminds me of my Mom or when I have to go away. Will you give me hugs when I ask? I like being hugged, a lot. When I didn't see you after my party, I thought something bad happened. Like I did something wrong. That you didn't like me anymore."

Hearing him reveal his true thoughts was breaking her heart even more. She was being extremely selfish. As much as it hurt, she needed to see how painful this was for him.

"What if I have to go away for work? What should we do?"

"Maybe a phone call or FaceTime. We did that when you were in California, remember? I'm like this with Daddy."

After checking the waffles, Olivia explained, "Teddy, I want you to know that even though I had to go the apartment, that doesn't mean I didn't love you. You didn't do anything wrong. I had to work on something."

"Okay," Teddy answered, fiddling with his shirt. Looking up to her, he asked, "Will it happen again?"

Well, that was a wake up call.

"I don't want it to. But if anything comes close, I'm going to talk to you and Daddy first. Okay? But we talked about it while you were sleeping, and I'm going to work very hard to fight from leaving."

Teddy didn't budge.
"Will you forgive me?"

Not waiting too long, he wrapped his arms around Olivia's shoulders. "Yes."

"Thank you. From now on, I'm going to do better. If I have to sit down and have 'me time', I'll explain it better. I love you so much."

"I love you! I'm glad you're home."

*Home.* It was like he already knew where she needed to be.

Fitz came downstairs - perfect timing in her mind - seeing Teddy and Olivia work on another set of fluffy waffles.

"Hello, favorite people."

Teddy cheerfully greeted his father. "Good morning, Daddy. Livia is back and I'm happy. She said sorry, and she said she loves me a lot! Isn't that awesome?"

Still with much to work through, Olivia felt relieved that she was able to talk with both Grants, and make progress. This could be something good.

"Honey, I have something to tell you."

Still all smiles, he sat in the chair, waiting to hear.

Olivia shared, "I talked to Daddy and I want to live here now."

"Daddy asked you to live here?"

Her eyes widened, sharply turning towards Fitz for backup. "Yes..."

Teddy tapped his fingers on his chin. "No more apartment? You're staying here?!"

Olivia clarified, "I'm keeping my apartment, but I'm going to be here, a lot more."

The most exuberant scream filled the kitchen. Teddy began to jump around, waving his arms above his head. "Best news ever! We're all going to live together and be a family! One step closer to you being my real Mommy!" The little boy danced, shaking his behind, singing some made up tune, joyful as all get out.

Fitz glanced at Olivia, mouthing, "I can't believe this."

"He's already planning our future."

The next month went by quickly. While moving half of her belongings to the house, Olivia's workload tripled. Everyday, more people were calling, needing her assistance. The team was busy, taking matters into own hands, solving cases. Her clients were ranging between up-and-coming brands to a few politicians that required her to visit Capitol Hill. It was the confidence boost she needed after taking such personal risks.

Rising early, Olivia would cuddle with Teddy before she had to rush off to the office. Their relationship was becoming stronger, and that meant so much.

Fitz was also on the go. Winning two important cases in a three-week span.
But almost every night, Olivia was in Chevy Chase, at the house. Dinner with the boys. Chores around the house were fun. Hearing about Teddy's day, tucking him to bed. She was choosing to be there, not stall at OPA. There were people who wanted to see her.

It was a good change.

Olivia and Fitz's communication skills were growing; their bond was healthy and strong. She had to admit their progress was making their private time a hell of a lot entertaining. The sex was extraordinary. Olivia had become more free.

Springtime was always so beautiful in the District. Bordered by the cherry blossoms, the city was shaking off the cold and grey, and coming alive. Olivia preferred this time of year. Reminding her of better days and fun memories of visiting when she was on breaks from school.

Another gala was on the horizon. It was hosted by the Post, and both Olivia and Fitz were invited. After she received her letter, she suggested that they be each other's plus one. Fitz enthusiastically agreed.

Being closely ingrained with the PR world, Olivia found out about stirring in their circles about an upcoming blurb being posted about their relationship. There were sightings downtown. A family trip to Georgetown and National Harbor. The goal wasn't to be seen, but there was no point in hiding. It wasn't ideal — being under this proverbial microscope — but she had an idea of how to work this situation in her favor.

During their lunch breaks, Olivia and Abby would look for gowns, hoping to find the perfect one for the occasion.

"Do you think this is a good idea?"

Puzzled, Abby asked, "What do you mean? This is a great company to get dresses."

Olivia tisked, "Nooo... I meant going to the gala together? With all the cameras there. It will be our first official event as a couple. There's no going back."

Abby made the most incredulous look of disapproval, before bursting into laughter. "Are you serious? Liv! This is huge for you two. The sexiest power couple in D.C., officially stepping out in public? Do you know much press you two will get? The upgrade in your careers? I'd be excited to see you guys."

Searching on the websites of the smaller boutiques in town and the well-known brands, Olivia sighed. "I guess. It's now or never. I can't hide in the shadows forever. I don't want Fitz to keep thinking I'm going to flake out on him. He's been patient but I know he's been waiting. Mellie surely wasn't the best arm candy. Besides, if I'm there, someone may need some spinning or fixing. Promo, right?"

"Atta girl! But more importantly, a wonderful night with your man. By the way, are you two in a good place? After the move?"

A huge smile appeared. "It's been great," Olivia replied. "The adjustment was nothing short of a miracle. I enjoy getting up in the morning and he's right there. Dinner is the best part of my day. With him and Teddy. For the most part, we're always together. We get to talk about our day. I feel more invested. Like I'm supposed to be there. I'm connecting with them better. He has become everything to me. I can't let this go. We haven't had any major fights lately. Nothing that's causing me to run. I scheduled a meeting with a therapist. Maybe that will help too. Because once my parents catch wind,
"I need to be extremely strong."

"This is your life. You have to do what's best for you. Your parents don't fit that category anymore."

"You're right."

Abby smiled, pointing to a dress that Olivia could look fabulous in.

"Damn, Liv. This has everything you want."

Olivia scooped the phone receiver. "That's the one, I'm going to call and see if we can pick it up tonight."

The gala had arrived. The two had been busy all day, they weren't able to really connect until the early evening. Olivia visited Drybar after work to secure a fancy and wavy blowout. Knowing it would be a long night of photo calls and networking, she wanted to look her best.

With Rachel and Teddy playing downstairs, she and Fitz could focus on their final wardrobe decisions.

Olivia found a navy blue mermaid gown that showed off her curves, giving the right touch of elegance, and showing off enough skin, look good in person and on camera, that would also drive Fitz wild. Still looking for ways to get him excited before the night ended, especially since she hid the dress at her place.

"You ready?" She heard Fitz call from across the hall.

"Yessss…" Olivia responded, singing, smoothing out any wrinkles. "Same status as two minutes ago."

Fitz strutted into the room, in his white dress shirt and slacks. Hair coiffed perfectly, cleanly shaven. He smiled as he approached Olivia, who was standing in front of the long mirror she brought over from the apartment.

"How in the hell are you on my case when you don't have your jacket on?"

"My apologies. Wow."

Well pleased, Olivia pivoted towards him, adjusting her bracelet. "Yes, my dear?"

"I wasn't expecting all of this. You are a vision. I'm in awe of you."

Olivia giggled as Fitz kissed her shoulder. "Thank you. Oh, no, you don't!"

"What?"

"Please, we cannot ruin this gown. I paid a pretty penny for this. I would like to wear it again someday."

"Okay," he smirked, "Maybe we should stall while you take it off for a little bit. The gala doesn't start until 8."

Stepping out of his reach, she squealed, "Fitz!"

"I'm kidding," he lowkey fibbed, wiggling his eyebrows. "But we should probably…ya know…"
Teddy hurried upstairs. "Daddy! Livia! The limo got here! Don't wanna be late."

Olivia covered her mouth, trying to hide her laughter, because Fitz was thinking they could be a little frisky before leaving.

Grabbing his jacket, he playfully rolled his eyes, then met Teddy at the bedroom door. "Thank you, little man. You be good for Rachel, okay?"

Nodding, Teddy cheered — in a sweatshirt and shorts — "Of course! We're going to have fun. I hope you do too. See ya, Livia."

"Good night, Sweet boy."

Teddy puckered for a kiss. Olivia complied, then squeezed him tightly.

While they drove to the Meridian, Olivia reached for his hand, their fingers linking ever-so-nicely, like a glove. Fitz was looking for signs of anxiety, or hesitation.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes."

"We can do something different if you want," he lowly suggested, making sure they were connecting. "There's no pressure."

Olivia scooted a tad closer; pressed up against him, she made sure that he could get a whiff of her sweet perfume. "It will be fine. This is important for both of us. This has been a good month for us. A great month. Social events come with the territory. I'm in a better place. Trust me."

The limo stopped in a line of other cars. Taking Fitz's hand as she stepped out of the car, Olivia was reminded of the past. She was so used to walking the red carpet alone, or with a casual date. Never even thinking of bringing any serious along.

"Miss Pope! Miss Pope! Fitz! Mr. Grant!"

Olivia politely smiled, tightening her grasp on the clutch she rented, stepping on the mark that one of the planners pointed to. It was no problem to give her best angles as she posed for the cameras. Then, she locked eyes with Fitz, waving for him.

A photographer shouted, "Can we get a few shots of you two?"

"Absolutely," she replied with confidence.

"Thank you."

Fitz approached, looking at her, a bit confused. "Really?"

"Mnhmm," she whispered. "C'mere."

The two smiled as the row of photographers captured them for a few minutes.

Entering the building together, hand in hand, walking confidently into the space. This is what she hoped would happen, without any mishaps. Olivia could already feel all eyes on them. It was a different kind of glance. Not of judgment, but of fascination. They were rising power players in Washington. They needed to be seen as a team, not competitors.
The two met with politicians, some of Olivia's neighbors, as well as personalities who ran in their circles. It was good to interact with people who were on their side, not wanting to throw them under the bus, or judge them for the delayed public appearance. Folks knew; but they were respectful of her wishes.

"Liv!"

"Good evening."

Olivia beamed as her former college classmates, Sylvie, Robert, and Brandon approached. It had been years since they all were in the same room together.

"I want you to meet Fitz."

"So this is the wonderful man on your instagram!"

Feeling her cheeks warming, she admitted, while taking his hand, "Yes. This is him."

"Wonderful to finally meet you!"

Fitz couldn't help but share, "She's the best," quickly kissing her temple.

The call for everyone to find their seats was announced; Olivia and Fitz followed the crowd. To her delight, their table was off to the side, not too close to the stage. But not extremely far back. Throughout the evening, Olivia kept her imaginary receptors up - always in fixer mode. She wanted to know how they were being perceived. If this was the best move.

"Look at the beautiful duo."

"Aren't they gorgeous?"

"Is that Grant with Olivia Pope?"

After the program, everyone mingled and danced a little. A reporter found them, introducing herself.

"Mr. Grant. Miss Pope."

"Good evening."

"I wanted to let you know that the paper is planning to run a section C story about you two. You know how it goes. Pictures, various sources giving us tips. Is that okay?"

Olivia assumed Fitz would jump in to deny the rumor, but to her surprise, he deferred. Calmly, she stated, "Ask the question."

"What?"

She smirked, facing the reporter squarely in the eye. Fitz appeared to be a little nervous. "Ask me. About our connection and I will give you the answer."

The reporter checked her notes, and asked, "Olivia, it is unusual for you to bring a date to a Post Gala. Are you and Fitz Grant dating?"

It was her time to shine. Standing tall with a knowing smile, Olivia responded.

"Yes. Yes, I am. Fitz and I are dating. Print it."
Chapter 25

"Fitz and I are dating. Print it."

The universe wanted him to be patient; he wasn't always cooperative, but holy shit, was he rewarded…

As the words reached his ears, Fitz stood attention and was incredibly amazed. It was a given Olivia had some creative plan up her sleeve, because of her willingness to attend the gala. There could only be a purpose - this was her world, setting up a situation so she could have the advantage. He knew she was going to do something. But this?

Olivia Pope purposefully admitting to someone outside of her inner circle that they were together?

Returning to the present, Fitz almost let out a nervous laugh, but that would have ruin the moment completely. Instead, he placed his hand on Olivia's lower back, ready to be in sync.

"Anything you’d like to add, Mr. Grant?"

The reporter waited, lifting her recorder to catch whatever he would say.

"Please, call me Fitz," he interjected, giving his signature crooked smile. "I am the luckiest man in the city and I am so proud to be Olivia's boyfriend and plus one tonight."

She glanced up to him and his heart melted.

"Are you excited for a fun evening?"

"The gala is a special place for DC's finest to reconnect and have a great time. Fitz and I plan to do that."

Olivia was glowing, looking confident, being flirty, and exact in her statements. Fitz beamed as she spoke.

"Perfect," the reporter said, turning off the app. Giving the two a smile, she shook their hands. "Thank you for your time. Be on the lookout in the paper."

After the reporter walked away, Olivia squeezed Fitz's hand, and led him towards the dance floor. One of the perks of the evening was hearing the band play or getting a chance to move and let go.

"I love this song," Olivia smiled as the horn section resonated through the room.

Fitz carefully listened to the words of the song.

In my world, only you make me do for love what I would not do...

"Hmm, this sounds like us," he noted, swaying with Olivia.

"It does."

Olivia pressed her cheek against Fitz's lapel. "Are you mad," she whispered.

Stopping their movement, Fitz lifted her chin so they could make intentional eye contact. "Fuck no.
You made my night."

The blush appeared on Olivia's cheeks. "I thought maybe I overstepped."

"Sweet baby…"

"Oh, Fitz."

Continuing their slow dance, he imagined how perfect all of this was. As they socialized for the rest of the evening, Fitz has a constant grin. Being out in the open with her, among their peers. What a night. What a moment. What a miracle.

The ride back to the house was quiet. Surprisingly, they got home at a decent time - 11:30, which was unheard of for a Washingtonian. Early commutes almost always resulted in late night taxi rides.

Rachel greeted them, quickly giving a rundown of the evening; Teddy was usually a ball of energy the first hour, and then sleepwalking after dessert. Fitz walked her to the car, locked all the doors, turned off the lights, stopping by Teddy's room to make sure he was settled in, before retiring.

As he started to unbutton his shirt, Fitz's eyes shifted to the corner. Olivia was sitting at the new vanity she purchased. It looked great, having a feminine touch to the master bedroom. He almost couldn't remember how that corner was so bare before. But most importantly, it reminded him that one of his dreams had come true. His Livvie was here.

Strong, and yet so delicate. Watching Olivia complete her nighttime routine, taking time to slow down. It was so simple, but it all looked incredible beautiful.

He couldn't resist; standing behind her, Fitz leaned down to kiss her neck, placing his lips on her bare shoulder. Feigning annoyance, Olivia play-swatted him away. But with the coy smile on her face, Fitz knew she was enjoying his touch. When he had his fill, they looked in the mirror.

"Hi."

"Hi."

The sigh in her voice made him smile bigger.

"You keep on surprising me."

"Mmhmm?"

Fitz, very amused by her responses, probably wanted him to expound, asked, "When did you plan this?"

"The other day. I knew…we were going to get asked. I thought it would be cool to mention it there."

"But Olivia," he asked, "You have been so private before, why now?"

She turned around, taking off an earring. "I had to show you. That I'm for real. I knew this was important to you. To be public. Not keep sneaking around and keeping our love a secret. What is the easiest way to do that? In front of everyone. With the cameras. I can't go back on my word now."

Olivia kissed him, right on the mouth.

"Yes, but this time is different. We are out in the open. No turning back. You are mine and I am
"I think," he offered. Voice dropping a half octave.

"You think what I did was sexy, didn't you?"

Pulling the shirt off his back, Fitz growled, "Yes."

Olivia's eyebrow lifted. "C'mon, Mister. I told you I'd make good on my promise from earlier. Remember the mirror."

"Stop teasing me, Pope."

The transition from verbal to physical was seamless. It was never difficult to get into their happy place. Kissing and touching, before and after their pillow talk.

"Shh, Bubba, you're going to wake up Teddy."

Fitz pshawed, holding onto her thigh, "That's a risk I'm willing to take."

"No you don't," she laughed, nipping at his ear, which turned red as soon as they began.

"I want you."

After a few minutes of pleasuring each other, Fitz's breath was heavy. "Fuck, you just...make me go wild."

His hands had a life of their own; touching, caressing, grasping. Since they started dating, whenever their kissing turned into something more of a heated situation, his thick fingers would move towards her neck, her supple flesh, wherever he could touch and she'd allow. The wonderful combination of softly kissing Olivia while easing himself in, was the sexiest. He wanted her everywhere - against the wall, on the floor, in their bed, and in any position. Her hand cupping his chin, trying to sneak kisses. As often as he wanted to be gentle, couldn't stop his body from responding to hers in a powerful way.

Dreaming of how they'd be, in this moment, in ten years, maybe twenty. Still in a fit, after long and intense lovemaking.

He wanted every part of their love. The good, the unpleasant. Everything would be worth it.

My friends wonder what is wrong with me. Well, I'm in a daze from your love, you see...

The following week had become a whirlwind. Between work, school and Teddy's activities, and everything was involved with being an adult, Fitz was near the point of exhaustion. But he would look at the picture on his desk - an adorable selfie of him and Olivia from their winter getaway and those fears would shrink. As long as he could talk to her. See her. Experience her.

When the blurb was released online, then in print, with a beautiful red carpet photo, Fitz was getting calls left and right. Former neighbors. A friend from the old church he and Mellie used to attend. Of course, his father got wind and congratulated him.

Rocco and Tim, his law buddies, were quick to set up a lunch date in Adams Morgan.

"FTG, something has really changed. You've grown up!"
"You're in deep. You've never been this in love," Tim realized, pointed at Fitz. "It's Liv."

Crossing his arms, Fitz admitted, "What can I say? I'm a man in love."

"So what's your plan…"

"Is it crazy to say that… I might want to leave my job?"

Tim nearly choked on his drink, while Rocco stared at Fitz and yelled, "What the fuck?"

"I've been there ten years, guys. I think there's more."

Hands raised, Rocco interjected, "Than be a partner in an established law firm in the Nation's Capital?"

"Yup."

Fitz observed his best friends; they looked alarmed and confused.

"Would you leave law all together?"

He reached for his short glass of vodka, "No. But I want to use my knowledge for good."

"But you are."

"In a different way, smartass," he retorted, finally drinking.

Rocco asked, "Do you mind sharing?"

With a shrug, Fitz answered, "I want to work in education. Helping children and young adults. I want to create change. Give them some type of hope because this world is turning into a shithole."

"I can see you doing that. You've always been a visionary. If I didn't know better, I'd say you'd run for office."

To which Fitz emphatically denied, "Fuck. That. That's the last thing I want to do."

"To Fitz."

"No, to us," Fitz corrected. "You guys are doing great work."

The men saluted and enjoyed their rest of their meal.

Olivia had to work late so she opted to sleep at her apartment, instead of arriving and possibly interrupting Teddy's sleeping. Fitz didn't think anything of it, but he did want to talk before turning in. The screen lit up when the call connected.

"Good evening."

Olivia waved, "Hiii."

"How's my girl?"

"Tired. You?"

"We're good."
"Good," Olivia answered. Her cheeks rose as she said, "I love you."

Fitz adjusted his glasses, leaning forward, always being excited to hear those three precious words. "I love you too."

"Do you know I've received twenty emails inquiries today?"

"Get out."

A dainty middle finger appeared into view as Fitz chuckled. She knew he was teasing him.

"Mnhmm. It's been a week and I don't think I've ever been much in demand. We're not that fascinating, right? Other than be rising power players in our industries, we can't be segment worthy?"

Fitz snorted, "I can't say. I'm biased. You know I think you're extraordinary."

Her smile crept and he thoroughly enjoyed it. The little details. How her nose crinkled during an amusing moment or as the light enhanced her eyes or facial features. Curling into his side when they sat on the couch. He was able to notice more since they have been living together.

"I got a call from Washington Life. I'm getting interviewed. The day in the life of a DC Dad."

Olivia cocked her head to the side, "Is that so?"

"Yeah. Cyrus thinks it'll be a good thing. Show me off in a great light. It's been a while since I did any press."

"I guess that means my boyfriend is a celebrity, huh?"

Fitz toed off his sneakers. "Yup yup. When the town still views you as an attractive playboy, up and coming lawyer, who happens to randomly settle down and have a kid, then abruptly divorce, it's an anomaly."

"Well, that's nice."

Olivia's plain response made Fitz nervous. "You're not impressed?"

He watched her shuffle the paperwork off of her couch. "No, I think it's great for you. You deserve to be recognized for everything you do."

"Do you… Would you?"

"You're going to ask me."

Fitz knew she would catch his drift. "Yes?"

"No."

"Okay."

Olivia squeezed her eyes shut, changing her mind. "I don't know."

"Okay."

"You're making it hard to say no!"

Fitz smirked, happy to see her flustered, but lifting his hands in deference. "I haven't done anything,
"I know you want me to be involved."

The two laughed, being quite comfortable with their playful banter.

Scooping her hair into a messy bun, Olivia considered, "What if I sleep on it. And give you an answer?"

"That works. So, how much longer as you staying up?"

Olivia gave a shrug. "I don't know. Have something in mind?"

"Not really. Just want to spend as much time with you. Busy day tomorrow?"

"Not as busy," she replied.

"I miss you."

"I saw you this morning."

"I know, but that doesn't mean I can't miss you."

"Touché."

"Hold on a sec."

Fitz took his laptop, upstairs.

"What are you doing?"

"Shhh…I don't want T to hear you. He'll wake up in a flash!"

They laughed and chatted some more while he got ready for bed.

"Fitzy! Have you talked to Harrison?"

"No."

"He has a new girlfriend. Did you know that?"

Fitz's eyebrows rose as he got comfortable on the bed. "What? No! What's her name?"

"Whitney."

"That's awesome! The matchmaker finally finds a match."

Olivia added, "He wants to go on a double date. Told me to set the date and the wheres. You know what that means."

"It's like meeting the parents. But instead, meet the best friends."

"He has a glow about him, Fitz. It's endearing."

"Like how we were. When everyone realized we actually found someone."

"Yes."
He watched for her cheeks to rise. That's when he knew. The fire was still there. His Livvie was still in love with him.

*Got a thing for you and I can't let go.*

Saturdays were made for sleeping in, a trip to Union Market, or the library. Fitz and Teddy didn't give up their weekly routine when Olivia moved in. She didn't want to ruin things so she made sure to limit her weekends at the office. That gave them a chance to do more things together.

Fitz was peering over the kitchen table with a fresh cup of coffee. The front door opened; Olivia returned from a morning run.

"Good morning."

"Mornin'."

After a quick kiss, Olivia looked at the paper trail. "What's all this?"

"Research."

"A client?"

Shaking his head, Fitz answered, "No. I have to decide in two weeks if Teddy should continue at the school."

"What's going on? Is he doing alright?"

Fitz moved a few papers around. "It seems like he's adjusting well. Making friends. Good teachers. I just...didn't think this all the way through. Private school is all I know, so I thought it would be logical to start Teddy there. But Livvie, tuition is fucking ridiculous for an elementary schooler. Not even in the first grade and my bill is outlandish. Since it's a Catholic school and we don't practice, it's $11,000. I didn't realize much of a dent it'd be for me. My advisor has been on my ass lately. Mellie's amount isn't a lot to help with tuition payments. I just need to be wise."

"Wise for what," Olivia interjected, leaning on the island. "Is something else going on? Are you buying something big? Are y'all moving?"

Immediately, Fitz twisted his lips, sticking one hand in the front pocket of his jeans, and left for the couch to deflect from her question. "Just in general, baby. I just need to be smarter. Work is still work, you never know with DC life. Teddy's getting older and he'll need more from me, and I have you to think about."

Olivia slowly nodded. "Me?"

"Yes, you."

"Honey."

"You know how I feel. You're part of my family now," Fitz replied.

Scooting over, allowing Olivia to sit with him, he let her see another chart he created.

"There are two schools he could attend. Lafayette, is a few blocks in the other direction. Pros and cons. Somerset is in Maryland, but very well rated. But what I've noticed, Liv, is the diversity at these schools."
"Oh?"

"Yeah. I want Teddy to be part of the real world. Everyone he comes in contact with, isn't going to always look like him. I pray I've been raising him correctly. He's cool with everyone, but I feel better knowing the atmosphere is inclusive. I grew up sheltered. I went to an exclusive private school in California. It was okay, but I think in today's world, I don't want my kid to act better than anyone else. When he goes to high school, we'll revisit."

"I see."

"Also, there's an in-house aftercare program, which is actually affordable. I've been doing my research. It looks great and there is flexibility, in case I need to work late."

Olivia touched his arm, gently interrupting; "I could always pick him up. I can adjust my schedule too, you know."

Narrowing his eyes, Fitz countered, "But you'll have to work late as well. I don't want that burden on you. I would hope to have Rachel around but I don't want to stretch her too thin. What if she decides to do more in school or finds a better job. Except for Thursdays - that's gymnastics, and he loves that."

"Is this all because of the fluff piece they're doing on you?"

Fitz shot her icy glare. "What?"

"The magazine. Are you trying to look more...accessible?"

"No."

Olivia leaned back into the cushion, "Then why?"

Fitz took a breath; it was obvious he was becoming agitated with her questions. They were reasonable, but he didn't feel like explaining everything. "Because — I'm making plans. I'm thinking about our future."

"Okay."

"You really think I'm doing this to win approval?"

"I can't tell," Olivia pondered, looking down. "You have this urgency that I've never seen before."

Fitz sighed. "It's a little complicated, but I don't want to repeat what my parents did. I want to do right by you and Teddy."

"You are." Olivia's hand ruffled his curls, that were still a bit wet from his shower. Fitz closed his eyes while she kissed his cheek, placing her hand on his chin. "Don't doubt yourself. Trust your gut, baby."

"Thanks, Liv."

A kiss eased the weighty discussion. Fitz sighed when Olivia's fingers massaged his scalp.

"Okay, shower time."

Fitz groaned, "What? We were just getting started."
"If we got started, we wouldn't finish, I'd still be a sweaty mess." Olivia gestured to her athletic wear. "No, thank you. You have all day to love on me."

"Finnnee…"

A few minutes later, Teddy came downstairs.

"Daaaddyy…"

"Hi, baby boy. Did you sleep well?"

"Yeah! It's Saturday. What are we going to do today?"

"I don't know. I think it may be your day to choose."

Teddy tapped his index finger on his chin; quite comical to Fitz. "What if we go out for brunch?"

"Alrighty, and then what?"

"Umm…can we see the cherry blossoms?"

"They're not here yet."

"Darn! What about a baseball game?"

"We got tickets for opening day. In a few weeks."

Teddy made a disgusted face, then rolled his eyes. "How come my ideas are all wrong?!"

"No, no. They're good suggestions. The timing is off. Have some fruit, buddy."

"Yum, this piece of apple smells like banana. Want some," Teddy offered. Fitz pretended to gag. "No, thank you."

Teddy stuck out his tongue. "I know! Just teasin' ya!"

Olivia sauntered towards the guys. "Good morning, Teddy."

"Hi, Livia. I think we're going to brunch."

"Wonderful!"

Teddy changed into a light sweater and shorts, the new sneakers he received for his birthday, and continually reminded Fitz and Liv of the time to leave for the day. Midway through their drive, at a stoplight, he began to sing, "Daddy and Livia sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G… first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes baby in the baby carriage."

Fitz and Olivia glanced at each other, then he decided to ask.

"What's that, T?"

"A song."

"Yes," Fitz sighed, "But where did you hear this rhyme from?"

"At school."
"Why our names?"

"Because you like to kiss! Duhhh... I think when grownups kiss a lot, a baby comes. And you guys kiss a LOTTTT... so be careful! I need to be ready!"

Olivia burst into laughter, while Teddy giggled as well. All Fitz could do was purse his lips and press his foot on the accelerator as the light turned. His own son trying to rush this process. It had only been five weeks since they made the move official!

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Things were good and they were comfortable. Fitz had a lot to be grateful for. Maybe the only blessing of being the lone child of two wealthy individuals was that he had a healthy savings account he could fall back on, if the constants in his life shifted. If he wanted to, he could not work until everything was in place. But how would that make him look?

He had been at the firm for ten years. It was never easy; as much as his friends assume. As much as his father promise, the road was not a smooth one. He worked too damn hard to get to this position. But was this all he wanted? To be an attorney, working long hours downtown, focusing on big clients. He appreciated the little guy too. He wanted to make sure everyone was represented, selecting cases that Cyrus and Liz didn't even sniff at.

This place had become his home. When he accepted the offer from Cyrus after graduation at Harvard, he was on a special trajectory. Cy could smell success on a person, and he was ready to groom Fitz into becoming the best. While that happened, Fitz was able to become his own person. Far enough from his Dad's watchful eye, away from the security blanket of college.

He knew he was born to do something great, different than the norm. His mother, Katherine -Katie, to most - would constantly affirm him of his worth, even during the darkest moments when he felt so alone. As time moved on, after her passing, Fitz could do his best to remember her beautiful voice, reminding him, of what he could do for himself and the community around him.

Moves had to be made. But after his faltering with Liv in the kitchen, he didn't know when he could share this dream of his.

After sending off completed briefs, he received an email from Liz, asking to make time available for a chat at 11 o'clock.

"What's up?"

"Hey Fitz, we need to talk."

"About?"

Liz asked him to sit, and he did. It didn't appear to be a positive meeting; it was never just them. So Fitz braced himself.

"Cyrus has to quit."

"Excuse me?"

Liz clasped her hands together, keeping her face void of emotion. "Yes. He's been having health issues and his doctor is telling him he needs to lessen his load."

"Oh, no. Why hasn't anyone told me?"
"He told me not to tell you and didn't want to worry you."

The urge to express the hurt was present, but Fitz decided to not lash out at Liz; she was only doing what she told. "That's why he's been away?"

"Yes."

Taking a moment to breathe, he softly asked, "So where does that lead us?"

"Well. We have a few options. We can either dissolve."

Fitz could sense his blood running cold. This was the last thing he wanted. "Hell no."

"Or we hand the firm to you, Fitz."

Shocked, he stammered, "What about you, Liz?"

"I don't think anyone else is ready to become partner and I honestly don't have the energy to start over."

"But..."

"You're ready. You've been a partner for a while now. These cases have been fucking hellish for you, and still, you've been able to rise to the top. It's time for you to take the lead. You're qualified, Fitz."

"I don't know what to say."

Liz handed him a large folder. "You have time, think it over. Talk to Liv if you need to."

"What are your thoughts?"

Fitz cleared his throat. "Yes."

"Yes?"

"I'll do it."

Liz smiled, "Okay. We will start the process. Did you want to go in a different direction?"

With confidence rising, Fitz declared, "I would like to start an initiative for high schoolers, college students, and post-grad, to intern here, learn about the many facets of law. How to make it work for them, as well as start a career, if they would like."

Liz's mouth opened. "Wow. That...sounds great, Fitz. It's a big undertaking, but I know you are capable. Would you like to start this in the near future?"

"Hopefully."

"Is this something we can do?"

"Yes. It's all paperwork and you have so many connections to hire more lawyers. Send us a proposal and we will have a meeting."

Fitz felt like he was in a daze. This dream of his was actually coming to fruition. A secret he had only shared with his mother, was now going to be revealed.
"Thank you." They stood to shake hands, then hugged.

After settling his work for the remainder of the day, knowing he would have no brainpower to focus or be productive after the eventful meeting, Fitz made his way through lunchtime traffic - it was a mess but it was worth the trouble. He had to tell her in person.

"Livvie?"

Abby was the first person he saw when the elevator reached OPA’s floor.

"Hi, Fitz."

"Hey. Is Olivia here?"

"She's in her office. Is everything okay?"

Fitz walked on, waving. "Thanks."

The door was ajar; Olivia was in the middle of typing when he knocked. Her eyes widened when she saw him.

"What brings you here?"

Fitz closed the door, biting his lip. Just as Olivia was about to argue, he placed a firm kiss on her lips.

"What- what?"

"I got called in."

"For…"

Wrapping his arms around Olivia's waist, Fitz explained, "Cyrus is stepping down and Liz for some reason, doesn't want to continu, so…"

Olivia's eyes began to fill with tears, "No…"

Chuckling, he shook his head. "Livvie. They're giving it to me. I am going to have my own law firm and I— I want to start a branch for education."

"Oh my god! Baby! What a surprise!"

Fitz beamed, "This has been a dream of mine since I decided to go into law school."

"What?"

"Yeah. I never told you because I was too scared to talk about it. Plus, you work for yourself. I want that kind of independence. Shit load of work but it's different. I want this."

Olivia squealed, hugging him tightly as he lifted her off the ground.

"I'm so proud of you, honey. Congratulations! I'm so happy."

"Thank you."

After a lengthy celebratory kiss, Olivia was back on her feet. "What do you want to do?"

"Huh?" Fitz was still floating. Olivia scoffed, returning to her desk.
"To celebrate."

Fitz stretched out his arms. "I don't even care. I'm done for the day. Go out to eat. No, let's just order in. Watch a movie with Teddy. I don't know! I just want to be with you and drink wine. Or scotch, or whatever. And..."

Olivia's laugh filled the office. "You are just so giddy, my love. I love it." Then her voice became sultry. "Let's do all of that. Plus, quality time with me. In our room. With more wine and no clothes?"

Nodding, he agreed. "That sounds perfect."

"How about you let me finish my work, and I'll be at the house by 4:30. Does that sound doable?"

"You sound doable."

Fitz laughed as Olivia sucked her teeth, shooing him.

"Get outta here. I have work to do."

After chatting with Harrison, Fitz took the elevator back down to the garage. Whistling the tune he heard while dancing with Olivia a week earlier, Fitz couldn't believe that love for life, his son, and his beautiful girlfriend, could lead him to a new level in life.

_Some people go around the world for love but they may be never find what they dream of..._

_Song - "What You Won't Do For Love" - Bobby Caldwell (Check it out - it's one of my favorite songs!)_

Good Lord, it's a few days away from year 2 for this story. Thanks for sticking around - there's still a lot to share with my Liv, Fitz, and Teddy!

_xo_
Saturday mornings in a spacious laundry room, basket under arm, tasked with separating three pairs of darks and whites. This was Olivia's new normal. If someone had knocked on her door, gave an envelope with a detailed synopsis of how her year would transpire, she would thrown the stranger out, along with the papers.

The transformation was crucial and Olivia actually was liking this new season of her life. She knew things would be different after agreeing to move in with Fitz. It wasn't like she hadn't lived with a significant other before. There would be a shift in dynamics. It had taken eight months to realize how being in love with someone who truly loved her, could bring amazing results.

Just living in her boyfriend's house wasn't enough. She felt that in order to be part of this household, she needed to chip in with work. Fitz said he didn't care but she wanted things to be in order, not wanting to take advantage of their relationship.

They sat down to discuss a few weeks back; she'd do laundry on Tuesdays, while he would have his turn on Fridays. Easy dinners on Thursdays were on Olivia's to-do lists. Saturdays had become team clean day. Vacuuming, folding clothes, the bathrooms. Cleaning out the fridge. Maybe even trekking to Cleveland Park or Friendship Heights for a fun grocery store trip. It was just like her to make some lists.

With the acquisition of the law firm, Fitz's schedule adjusted, but he wanted to use Saturdays as a chill day. Get the shit done, so they could do whatever they wanted for the rest of the weekend.

Olivia came upstairs with a fresh load of sheets, walking by the bathroom, but stopped when she noticed the view in front of her.

"Damn," she commented, smirking at Fitz, currently scrubbing the shower. He was wearing a pair of tight jeans, with a worn grey shirt that made his muscles look bigger. Olivia appreciated this outfit very much.

He turned towards Olivia, and asked, "What?"

"Hello. I think you're a stud muffin."

Fitz coughed/laughed; "Hello. Thanks, baby. We make a good visual for spring cleaning. You think your T-shirt and shorts are not a distraction."

"I want to be comfy."

"So do I."

Olivia winked, then left to finish her load of laundry.

"Hey, do you want to go out tonight or tomorrow?"

The question didn't phase her. "Doesn't matter to me," she called.

"There's a new restaurant in Southwest we could visit. I've heard great things."

Olivia returned to the bathroom, catching Fitz's flirtatious wink, already feeling the heat on the cheeks. "Fine with me."
"Great, I'll make a reservation."

After a quick breakfast with coffee, they found themselves on the couch, with two piles of clothes in between them. Talking and so focused on doing that, they weren't paying hands touched, grabbing the towel. A spark literally

"Oh, sorry."

"We're on the same page," Olivia grinned, with her thumb pad circling each of his knuckles.

"Livvie."

"Shh. Don't ruin this moment, Mister."

Without a hitch, their chores were completed by 11. Olivia and Fitz were back in bed, fast asleep, enjoying the thirty minutes of silence before their favorite little guy would finish his cartoons for the day..

"Daddy! Livia?"

"Hmm, already?"

Fitz reaches for his phone, confirming the time. "He's going to."

Olivia playfully tugged on Fitz's earlobe. His husky moan was delightful. "Come in," he welcomed. Flopping his arms around, and singing to a popular tune, Teddy entered the master bedroom. "Hi! Why are you so sleepy? Didn't you go to sleep?"

"We were doing chores."

Olivia snuggled into Fitz's embrace; their legs tangling. It had been a while since they just rested in bed, if they weren't making love. It just felt nice.

Teddy sighed. "Hmm, okay. Are we going out today?"

"Maybe," Fitz answered in a comical voice, "Did you clean your room, Theodore?"

Giggling, Teddy said, "I put my pillow on my bed and my toys are in the box."

Fitz lifted his hand, giving a thumbs up. "Great job, buddy."

"Thank you, Daddy. Can I call John from school?"

"Yup yup yup."

Right after Teddy left, Olivia and Fitz giggled, resuming their downtown activity of snuggling, whispering silly words.

"Is this okay for you?"

"Yeah, I'm comfortable."


Olivia lifted her head, to make eye contact. "Look, Saturdays were either going to be a 'do everything under the sun' or a 'do absolutely nothing' day. I prefer doing nothing with you, Fitz."
The apartment was still a part of Olivia’s life, being her safe haven for the last six years. Through a career change, various hairstyles, and a major relationship, she considered this cozy space, home. But now she didn’t know what to do with it. She was the owner of the property and it would seem foolish to let it go. Would she rent it out? Keep it as is?

In the meantime, she visited once a week to use the space as her "home office", pick up mail, and have some alone time to recharge. For the most part, she got all of her projects done. No distractions.

But the landline rang and usually no one called that number. Olivia checked the caller ID. She groaned. It was her mother, Marie. Dread began to rise in her system. Why was she calling? Three rings later, she picked up.

"Hi, Mom."

"Hi, honey! How are you today?"

"I'm fine."

"That's great! I just thought I'd catch you before things got extra busy."

Quickly, Olivia went to the kitchen to pour herself a small glass of wine. If things got heated, she would call Harrison or Fitz to drive her home. Already backtracking why Marie would be calling her on a random afternoon. "Well, that's good. Where are you?"

"London."

"Cool."

"Remember when I used to bring you here?"

Olivia pursed her lips before answering. "That was a long time ago."

"So, what's new with you?"

"Same old, work."

"That's great," Marie replied. "Soooo...How are things with Fitz?"

Olivia took a swig of her red and answered, "They're actually going quite well. Great."

"I saw the beautiful picture of you two in Washington Life and the Post. What a big announcement!" Marie's enthusiastic comment surprised Olivia.

"Mmhmm."

That's why...

"A few of my girlfriends notified me of it. I can't believe it. You made it public. Your father and I are proud of you."

Olivia stayed cordial. "Thank you."

Her mother didn't add on a snarky comment, which was shocking. "I'm sure the city will prop you up as the couple of the year."
"Why? We are just as normal as everyone else."

Marie laughed, "It's different. The makings of a powerful duo is all right there. Beautiful and smart woman, entrepreneur, a mover and shaker, with an equally motivated man. And you two are gorgeous. What a perfect recipe."

"We're not doing this for publicity. You know that, right?"

"But of course, Livvie," Marie knowingly answered.

Olivia was trying very hard to not vocally question her mother. With traveling and strategic dodging, their calls had been brief.

"How is Teddy?"

"He's fine."

"Is he handling this well?"

"I believe so."

"I'm very impressed. You never had little ones in your life and now you're a role model to this child."

Olivia kept noticing the backhanded compliments — maybe her mother was trying to stay positive. "Thanks?"

"I would like to meet him one day."

"I'll have to talk to Fitz."

"Do you see yourself having children with him?"

Olivia wasn't sure why her mother was interested, asking all of these questions. "To be honest, yes."

What she didn't reveal to Marie — she had been dreaming about a baby for three months. Two babies. Playing with Teddy. Having children wasn't the ultimate goal for her, but it could be a reality now. But she wouldn't share this would anyone for a while.

"Oh my goodness," Marie gasped.

"What?"

"You have changed. By the way, did you receive the package?"

"What package?"

"I sent it last week. For your birthday."

"I'll ask the concierge."

"You moved?"

Olivia groaned. Of course, she would slip out information that would lead to an array of questions. "Mama, please."

"But did you move? I should probably get an updated address."
"I'm keeping my apartment."

"You live with Fitz?"

"Yes," she placed her hand on her forehead, desperate to prevent a migraine.

"That's wonderful, baby. I know that must have been hard to decide. With your relationship with Edison, you hated living with him!"

Olivia interjected, "Got it."

"I'm sorry. That was out of line. What are you going to do for your birthday?"

"Nothing."

Marie let out a laugh, "I'm sure Fitz will do something special for you, honey."

Olivia didn't want to think that far ahead. "I don't know about all of that."

"You deserve happiness. We failed you. But you're making it happen. Fitz is part of that happy. Let him spoil you."

"Thanks, Mama."

"Oh, honey, I have to run. My flight to Dubai is getting ready to board. But I love you. Have a great birthday. Maybe we can get together soon?"

Olivia couldn't say no; all of her work on forgiveness and communication in therapy couldn't fail her.

"No problem. Thanks. Love you."

"Alright, bye bye."

Hanging up, Olivia finally took a breath. It was always touch-and-go with her mother. As she was approaching her thirty-fourth birthday, she knew she had to let hurt go so she could be healed. That didn't mean she had to bend over backwards to have a wonderful relationship but with boundaries, she could have a pleasant conversation.

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After considering all his options, Fitz decided to host the magazine interview on the Sunday before Easter break. James Novak, one of the city's premiere journalists was chosen to be with Fitz all afternoon. Olivia helped find a cute outfit for Teddy, sort of matching with his father's light blue dress shirt and jeans. Her goal was to stay in the background.

"Why now?"

"I'm in a better place."

"How so, Fitz?"

"I'm happy."

Teddy was jovial, ready to entertain. Marching to James, he extended his hand, "Good afternoon, Mr. James. My name is Theodore Wallace Grant, but you can call me Teddy. This is my Daddy's guitar. He plays it sometimes."
"Is that so?"

"Mmhmm."

The plan wasn't to have Teddy interrupt with possibly awkward questions, so Olivia rushed into the living room.

"Well, hello, James. So nice to see you again."

"Olivia!"

The two greeted each other with a hug.

Fitz inquired, "I didn't know you two knew each other. That's awesome!"

Smiling, Olivia sat down, rubbing Fitz's hand. "Washington is a small town."

"Liv, I've known you for years, and your personal life has been a topic that you do not offer for public consumption," James commented, "Why are you willing to sit next to Fitz, being interviewed for a magazine that will be seen by thousands of readers?"

"I support Fitz. He is truly a man of his word, has courage, and doesn't give up."

"Is this something you would have imagined a year ago?"

"No."

James asked more about Fitz's background, being a California boy, shouldn't have been able to bounce back so quickly after a failed marriage.

"Was it hard?"

"Absolutely. But I have friends who chose to stay by my side and help when I had to work extra hours to support my son."

"Where do you see yourself in five years?"

"More grey," he quipped, pointing to his hair. Olivia laughed. "With the woman I love."

His answer caught her off guard, slightly. Lovingly nudging him with her shoulder.

When she first heard about the feature, Olivia didn't want any part of it. Fitz was the star and the notion of upstaging him or ruining his shine, discouraged her from participating.

James suggested a few shots with the whole family. Teddy sat in the middle. All three smiling, having the best time.

She watched Fitz pose in the kitchen. James asked a few more questions during the picture taken.

"Do you have extra help around the house?"

"No."

James gasped. "Really?"

"I just clean. I learned quickly what a messy house can do for your psyche."
Olivia smirked as Fitz crossed his ankle over the other. Her man was incredibly sexy. What a lucky woman she had become.

An hour later, the interview was done. Teddy was exhausted so Olivia carried him to his room, letting him nap.

They met in the bedroom. Fitz had started changing clothes. She couldn't resist flirting with him, very impressed by how everything went.

"How is it possible for you to look sexier when I'm not there?"

"That's the appeal of me, baby."

Olivia wouldn't let this opportunity go to waste. Her index finger pressed against Fitz's chest as she reminded him, in a sultry voice, "But just remember who you get to see at night."

"Wow," he announced, with a raised eyebrow, "I'll be damned."

Olivia's nose wrinkled, while Fitz lifted her in his arms, spinning her around.

"You know it, sweet baby. I won't ever forget."

"I think we need some quality time."

"Oh?"

Olivia nuzzled her nose against his jaw, "Mmhmm. As soon as possible."

Their hands rushing to find a surface to hold on to — neck, ass, chest. Hips moving and grinding. Fitz placed Olivia on the dresser, so he could have full access to her.

"Hey..."

The electric urgency in Olivia's hands, reaching down to unzip his pants. "I wanna see."

Attempting to interrupt her, Fitz stroked her hair, "You see all the time."

"I wanna see again."

Fitz slowly licked his lips — a green light for any kind of flirting and subsequent actions.

"How about you meet me in the shower."

Olivia scooted off the dresser, making quick work of her disrobing, leaving her clothes at the door, waiting for Fitz.

A minute later, he was standing in front of her, at attention, ready to do whatever she wanted. Olivia wrapped her arms around his neck. "You did great, Fitzy. I'm proud of you."

"All because of you."

Their lips connected into a passionate kiss.

"Now, Fitz. Fuck me."

Olivia looked at him with fiery eyes. The light in the bathroom were making her chocolate irises glow.
Fitz grunted, being so powerful, effortlessly lifting her up and against the wall, and inserting his cock.

"How much you want this?"

"Yesss…"

They got into a furious rhythm, incorporating their tongues and hands. Olivia told Fitz to look at her while he fucked.

"You'll make me come faster, baby. Make it happen."

Fitz gritted his teeth, pumping into her, while he kept his focus.

"Shit! Baby!"

It didn't take long for her, which was what she wanted. Olivia slapped the side wall, not able to speak.

"Mmm, did that work for you?"

"Oh, yes."

After she settled, leaning against the wall. Her legs felt like jello, so content with the intense wet fuck she received. Fitz chuckled, then rubbed his thumbs on her full cheeks.

"Hi."

"Hi."

"You wanted the shower on so he couldn't hear us?"

Olivia kissed Fitz's jaw, dragging her hand down his chest - wet curls and muscle. "Absolutely."

Gift giving was her bread and butter. It was easy to lavish presents on Fitz, Teddy, and her friends for special occasions, but Olivia was not a fan of her own birthday. Reminded her too much of years when neither parent was around, only sending a simple gift or cash to Switzerland or wherever they placed her for the school year. The day didn't resonate of love or belonging. Just another day to get shit done, and hopefully an extra hour of sleep. For most of her adult friendships, it would take months for her to reveal when the day was. That was her plan. To make April 13th as forgettable for them, as it was for her.

But Fitz Grant had a different agenda.

"What time is it," she sleepily asked as Fitz kissed her bare shoulder.

"Doesn't matter."

"Huh?"

"Good morning," Fitz sweetly answered, kissing her forehead.

Olivia rubbed the sleep from her eyes. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm playing hookie."
Trying to roll over, swatting him away, Olivia groaned, "But why? It's just a normal day."

"I'm celebrating you."

"No."

Fitz hurried to the other side of the bed, facing Olivia, gently brushing his hand on her cheek, "Yes," his rich baritone sent a chill down her spine. "Happy birthday, my beautiful Livvie."

Inhaling deeply, she slowly smiled. "Thank you." Before she could fully appreciate the kind gesture, she asked, "Where's Teddy?"

"At school. I let you sleep in."

Olivia shook her head. "How could you…"

"I know you took the day off, Liv," he quipped, putting his hand on her stomach. "So I thought we could have breakfast, cuddle, and then some… Would you like your first gift?"

Emphatically, she gave a sharp "No."

Laughing, Fitz moved to the foot of the bed, puzzling Olivia. "I think you will."

Her eyes widened, observing him crawl under the comforter, gently tugging at her sleep shorts.

"Fitz…"

"What?"

Olivia closed her legs shut. "I haven't... shaved."

Fitz shot a skeptical glare. "So? When has that stopped me? I don't care how manicured you are."

"I might."

"Okay, I'll wait then."

Fitz gave her that boyishly charming closed-mouthed grin that she fell for, every single time. Why was she making excuses - now of all days? Her man was ready to pleasure her and she was threatening to stop everything so she could trim? Who really had time for that?

Relaxing her frame, she rolled her eyes, whispering, "Fine."

She bit her lip and stared at the ceiling, while Fitz chuckled, preparing himself. She laughed at his particular motion of setting her shorts and panties to the side. What a gentleman. His hand placed on her thigh, possessively. Adoringly rubbing his nose on her lower lips. Slowly, her eyes fluttered shut. All the little touches would eventually bring out the grandeur.

"Fitz…"

He kissed her knee, then the inside of her thigh. Then a sweet kiss there. Olivia let out a sound that could have been a sigh and moan.

"Livvie."

"Yes?"
"Don't worry. This is only the beginning of your day. I'll be thorough and you will love every minute of it. It's my specialty...my superpower."

Olivia lifted herself, putting her weight on her arms. Questioning with a raised eyebrow, "Superpower? What a proclamation of confidence, Fitzgerald Grant. What is your superpower? Making me come?"

Abruptly, Fitz scooted towards her, his body parallel to hers, nose-to-nose, making her gasp. "Just like that. Making you breathless while I make you come. The perfect orgasm. Now...will you stop arguing and give me twenty minutes, birthday girl?"

Birthday girl.

Olivia couldn't have been more happy to hear those two words as her incredibly handsome boyfriend, ravished her with his mouth.

This birthday had become a love fest. Thirty minutes after Olivia got out of bed, after Fitz's feast, she was in the middle of the living room, riding Fitz. She didn't know what came over her. Was the coffee he made for her, full of some aphrodisiac?

Fitz took care of everything. A beautiful lunch on the waterfront. Some light shopping. A long nap after another round of toe-curving sex. It was perfect, because if she had her way, she'd make love to her boyfriend everyday. It was part of their love language — touch. And she loved to touch him.

Teddy came running inside, looking for his Olivia.

"Happy birthday, Livia! It's your day! Did you have fun?"

Stifling a gut-busting laugh, Olivia smiled at Teddy. "I did! It was nice to sleep in and do nothing."

Dinner was at home, Olivia's wish. Fitz prepared a Waldorf salad with a homemade vinaigrette, along with flank steak.

"Thank you, Chef Grant. Will this be your career, post-law?"

Fitz set Olivia's plate in front of her. "Probably not. But if you enjoy what I cook, then I'm happy."

Teddy presented a cupcake with a candle on top. The boys beautifully sang Happy Birthday, with Olivia beaming the whole time.

"Make a wish."

Glancing at Fitz, then Teddy, Olivia closed her eyes, holding her breath, then blowing out the candle.

"Did you?"

"Yes, lovely," Olivia said. "I made a wish."

Teddy handed her a lavender bag. "Here."

Olivia pulled out a coloring book with a fresh set of crayons.

"I have the same one so maybe we can color together on the days Daddy works late."
"Teddy, this is great! Thank you, baby."

Olivia and Teddy hugged, before he looked at his father, then ran off somewhere.

"Hey, I have something for you," Fitz sat next to her, taking her hands. Olivia frowned.

"What? I told you…"

Fitz gave her a reassuring glance. "Just close your eyes. Trust me."

She heard him call for Teddy.

"Come on here, baby boy."

"Ok, Livvie."

Olivia opened her eyes. Teddy was standing in front of her, holding a sleeping puppy.

"Oh my Lord!"

Tears immediately formed as she sharply turned her head. Fitz was rocking on his toes, with a huge smile.

"I couldn’t resist."

Teddy softly added, "We got you a newborn puppy, Livia."

Her face crumpled as she held the puppy for the first time. "How did you know I wanted a dog?"

Fitz rubbed her back, "I see how you look at every dog in the neighborhood. With this longing in your eyes. I thought, you could use some light on your birthday."

"Where did you find—"

"She's a girl and she's potty-trained. Eleven weeks old. Gracie and I were on the search since the beginning of the year. Remember that day I had Rachel watch Teddy?"

"Yeah…"

"We took a trip up to Pennsylvania and we got her. Gracie has been sitting since Thursday."

It was pointless to contain any emotion. Olivia began to cry, bringing the puppy close to her chest.

"Hello, beautiful… you are so precious. Oh, boy. This is too much."

Overwhelmed, Olivia kissed Fitz. "Thank you. Thank you."

"What do you want to name her?"

Olivia lifted the puppy, staring into her eyes, as if to reach into the canine soul and find a connection.

"Josephine. Gigi for short."

"That's quite specific."

"Yes. My grandmother's name. She had a dog almost like this one. Smaller with dark markings. I never had pets growing up. So I would pretend the dog was mine. I loved being with them in the
summer.” Her voice was small, rocking back and forth. "She passed when I was 10. I called her Gigi.”

Olivia noticed the sentimental look in Fitz's eyes. Smiling while he gave her another kiss, he replied, "That's beautiful, Livvie. Right, Teddy?"

Teddy opened his arms, hoping he would receive the new member of the family. He got his wish, not squeezing Gigi too tightly. "Hi, Gigi. I'm your big human brother, Teddy," he kissed her head. "We're going to best friends."

They spent the following hour, letting Gigi take her first steps in the house. Fitz had a bowl, and some food for her as well. After Teddy went to bed, Olivia and Fitz were in the family room, quietly recalling the day's events, full of life and fun.

"Thank you for everything." A kiss to finish the evening as little Josephine snuggled deeply into Olivia's arms.
Chapter 27

Chapter Notes

A song that inspired this chapter: I Fall In Love Too Easily (Chet Baker version).
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmhAEe73IGU

Let me know what you think. xo

He was thinking about so many things. Which school to enroll Teddy. Where to invest time and money in his new company. And also, when to propose to the lady in his life. Since the day he told her, “I love you,” Fitz knew he was going to ask Olivia to be his eternal beloved.

But the sneaky bastard known as failure, harassed him constantly. How could he be sure this relationship would last? After the divorce, Fitz received less than pleasant feedback from others, requested and unwanted. Theories of why it didn't work out. Being so in love with the idea of love, that he couldn't wait to find a better spouse. Rushing into marriage. Didn't fight to keep it going. Made the mistake of having a child too soon. There was more finger pointing than listening. Being the recipient of such negativity damaged his soul and it took him longer than he wanted to somewhat heal.

But Liv. His Livvie. The girl who stole his heart over and over. Who else could reign him in when he was in the middle of a storm? Who allowed him to see what others could not? And most importantly, who else loves him when he thought he could never be loved again.

It was a new world.

Everywhere he looked, there were memories. The frame on his desk with their Christmas picture. All of the funny texts. Making sure her favorite foods, detergent, and tea flavors were in stock. Her sleepy self curled in his arms at night. Playing with Gigi in the backyard. Someone who was by his side. She was always on his mind. That’s when he realized the pain he experienced and sometimes caused, was nothing compared to all the love he felt when he was with Olivia.

Maybe a trip to the beach? She loved to swim. TThat would be a perfect time to propose, in a relaxing environment. But who knows...

Fitz invited the guys over for some dinner and tasty beverages. Teddy was spending the night at Gracie’s and conveniently, Olivia had been called away to New York City for a few days with new clients. Probably the only time he was glad she was out of town. He could talk freely about this dream of his.

Entertaining was his guilty pleasure; long nights watching the food channels while staying up with an one-year-old brought an interest to learn how to cook well, beyond frozen meals and delivery. It was a perfect creative outlet from the normal grind of briefs and meetings. It did him proud that Teddy had a great appetite.

As the sun began to set, Fitz prepared worked his magic on the grill. On the menu: grilled chicken skewers, asparagus, zucchini, roasted tomatoes, and fresh rolls. Plenty of IPAs.
“Okay, other than wanting to hang out, I need to share something with you,” Fitz announced, plopping himself on the patio bench. “I want to propose to Liv.”

Harrison and Mike, one of Fitz’ closest friends and street neighbor, looked at each other.

“Well, hot damn!”

“Well, hot damn!”

“Well, hot damn!”

Well, hot damn!”

“You think so?”

Both guests replied, “Yeah.”

“I knew I wanted to ask her since last year.”

Mike scooped vegetables on his plate. “Not surprised. You fall in love quickly.”

Befuddled, Fitz sucked his teeth, lifting his middle finger. “Very funny.”

Harrison tried to deflect. “Even though you do, this is great for you. Having known you both for a long time—“

“Which I’m still pissed at you for not hooking us up sooner,” Fitz interrupted.

Harrison chuckled, rolling his eyes, “As I was saying, I have it on good authority that you two will be perfect together as husband and wife.”

“I need to call her father.”

“Good luck to you. When is the last time you talked?”

Fitz took a swig of the beer, shaking his head, “Never. We sort of talked before Christmas, but since then, not really. I should find a way.”

A few days later, he asked Abby to join him for lunch and a visit to a nearby jeweler. She had a feeling what his agenda was, but she played it cool.

“Do you like this,” he pointed to a beautifully crafted ring, with five carats.

"Not for me. But for Liv, maybe a 2- or 3-carat diamond will work."

His ears perked; turning towards her, he asked, "How did you know?"

Abby jabbed Fitz with her elbow. "Why else would you ask your girlfriend's friend to come here?"

"Okay, okay. Didn't want you to mention it to her."

"I'm a blabbermouth but I know when to keep a secret, Fitzgerald."

Carefully, he leaned on the counter, eying each selection. “Yeah. I need to know… do you think I would be a good husband to Olivia?”

Abby calmly answered, “Yes.”

“No hesitation?”
“Nope.”

Fitz crossed his arms, smiling. “Why?”

“You just click. Even when you’re pissed off at each other, you bond so well,” Abby said. "I’ve never seen Liv so much in love with anyone else. You’re the one. You’re the guy for her. And she’s the woman for you."

It was comforting to hear this from one of her dearest confidants. Fitz gave Abby a hug. "Thanks."

Abby mentioned, “Don’t doubt yourself, Fitz. You love her. Now, pick a few rings, and sleep on it.”

In addition to organizing a smaller firm — F.T. Grant, Attorney at Law — paperwork was finalized to start the Fitzgerald Grant Institute. The process would take about three months, but the vision was coming to life.

A place where children in the area could learn about law and politics, further their education, and work the system to their benefit. Fitz met with local advocates who could teach after-school classes. Ultimately, the Institute would be an organization that would enrich lives, also making a dent into the flawed justice system. It always broke his heart whenever he heard how young people were disenfranchised. He wanted change to occur. He wanted to use his resources and his voice to make it happen.

It would be a long twelve weeks, but Fitz was ready.

Hiring staff for both the firm and the Institute was meticulous. After creating several ads online, the email notifications for applicants were overwhelming. His instincts were to ask Olivia for help, but he didn’t want to burden her, especially with her full plate. So, he asked Liz North, his former partner, to assist.

Every night, Fitz would bring extra work home. A strong espresso in one hand, folders in the other. He was trying to have 8 o’clock deadlines, but the load seemed to pile up. Thankfully, Olivia was understand. If he arrived home by 5:30 or 6, two hours of quality time with Teddy and Gigi would suffice, then he could complete 45 minutes worth of paperwork, before retiring.

In between interviews and confirming plans by the design team, who came to renovate the whole floor, Fitz snuck away to call Olivia’s father. Thankfully, his number was still in the phonebook.

This was worse than calling Mellie, because the result of this call would determine his future.

“Hello?”

The deep voice asked, resonating in Fitz's ears.

“Hi, Mr. Pope?”

“Yes?”

“This is Fitz Grant, Olivia’s boyfriend.”

“Hello, son. How are you doing?”
Taking a seat, he answered, “I’m doing alright. Do you have time to talk?”

“Is Liv okay?”

“She’s fine. Everything’s fine,” Fitz immediately confirmed, after hearing the alarm in Eli’s voice. “I wanted to ask you a question.”

“Sure. What’s on your mind?”

“I want to ask you for your permission to marry your daughter.”

“Wow,” Eli replied, “Wasn’t expecting this.”

Fitz’s heart dropped. The response didn’t sound positive or negative. How could a flat-toned answer shake him in his shoes?

“Is that alright, Mr. Pope?”

“Number one, yes. Number two, you can call me Eli.”

“Oh! Oh, okay.”

“Don’t be alarmed, Fitz. Is it alright if I call you by your nickname?”

“Yes.”

“See how easy that was?”

The two chuckled. Fitz realized how quickly Eli could switch gears, and become somewhat comical. After the dramatic introduction at Christmastime, it was nice to share a laugh without Olivia present.

“So, when are you going to ask Olivia?”

“I honestly don’t know.”

Fitz shared with Eli about the new developments in his life.

“I see. Don’t rush it. The time will come.”

“Thank you.”

Eli said, “Thank you for asking, Fitz. It means a lot. How about we meet for lunch soon? We should get to know each other better.”

Fitz sighed, relieved, so thankful, that the first step was completed.

“Sounds great.”

Fitz walked into the bedroom, after getting Teddy up and ready for school, and stopped in his tracks. He found Olivia in a matching light pink bra and panties set. What a perfect way to see her for the first time in three days. She was wearing a beautiful shade that complemented her skin, with sun rays shining down on her. Looking like a dream, he smiled when he saw the frustrated expression on her face.
“Hey, lady.”

“Hi,” she replied, very distracted. “Good morning.”

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.”

“Oh?”

“Just looking.”

Fitz slowly approached, very pleased by the visuals of Olivia.

“You look… extra…”

Narrowing her eyes, Olivia gestured to her frame, looking at the mirror, huffing, “I’m petite. There’s nothing extra here, which I don’t think I’m enjoying right now.”

“Yes, but your legs, and arms, and your beautiful face. And yes, your boobs. They look delicious.”

“Fitzgerald.” Olivia pretended to be annoyed by saying his name so sternly.

“I’m sorry,” he sweetly placed his hands on her hips, turning her around to face him, so he could peck her lips. “But I’m not sorry. It’s been several days and I’ve missed you.”

“This is why I keep you around. You always say the right things.”

Olivia stood on her toes, kissing Fitz back. He hummed in satisfaction, hands comfortably settled on her ass. As his eyes opened, they began to roam.

“May I?”

Olivia gave Fitz a wonderful view. “You may.”

Fitz dropped his head towards her chest, inhaling the sweet scent of her. His tongue swiping over the flesh that spilled over, giving special attention to the fabric covering her nipples. His hands spread over the tender skin.

“Hmm.”

“You’re liking this? You’re glad to have me back home?”

Fitz replied deeply, “You are delicious. Fuck yeah. I could eat you up all day.”

Olivia lifted her hand, reaching up to give his hair a quick tug, pulling him back from what he was currently doing — she didn’t want him to get carried away because of the time. “I believe it. Remember on my birthday, you ate me out for the longest time.”

“How could I forget,” Fitz lowly agreed, kissing her neck, with a little bite.

Squeals filled the room as she slipped out of his embrace. Walking into the closet to find something to wear, she mumbled, “I’m shocked I’m not pregnant.”

“What?”

Fitz rushed to the closet. With one hand on her hip, Olivia mirrored his surprised expression.
“What?”

“Did you hear what you just said?”

“Yeah.”

“So…”

Olivia shrugged, unaffected by Fitz’s concern. “It’s apparent that we have sex… a lot.”

“Is that bad?”

“Nope.”

“I wear condoms sometimes.”

“Mmhmm, and I have my pills all the time, which aren’t foolproof. I’m just surprised that given our routine… it hasn’t happened. Not going to lie. That will be a fun day. Finding out we’re having a baby.”

Fitz’s eyebrows lifted. Blinking fast, he fumbled for words. “Wait… you want to have a baby with me?”

Olivia slowly smiled, clothes in her hands, sauntering by, giving him one more look of her pink ensemble, before turning on her heel to the bathroom. “Ahh. I see.”

She called from the other room, “When the time is right, I’m sure it will happen.”

Fitz raced over, stopping the door from closing with his foot; he needed to see her eyes, making sure she wasn’t pulling his leg.

“Livvie.”

“Hi.”

"Are you serious?"

Her lips turned upward, grinning like a fool. "Yes."

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“Can you help me decide on Teddy?”

“Fitz.”

The trio had ventured to the ballpark to watch their beloved Nationals play a fun day game. Sort of matching, Fitz and Teddy wore jerseys of their favorite players, while Olivia wore a red cap, white v-neck shirt, and jeans, with holes in them. It was the most casual she allowed herself to be in public.

“C’mon…” He whined, hiding his face into Olivia’s shoulder, knowing he was being incredibly annoying. “This is huge and I’ve never had anyone with me to make these decisions.”

“Okay.”

Along with the thousands of fans in attendance, Olivia, Fitz, and Teddy, were enjoying the beautiful spring weather. It appeared to be the worse time to talk about an important decision, but Fitz couldn’t
stop thinking about it.

“Let’s take a selfie.”

“Really?”

Olivia pressed on her camera app, “Yeah!”

After several tries and lots of laughing, she got the perfect shot, then posted on her Instagram account.

_Hanging out with my boys. Go Nats!_

Fitz smiled to himself. This was the life.

As they cheered and watched on the 3rd base line, Fitz’s mind wandered back to Teddy and school.

“What is your gut telling you?” It was what she would tell her clients at every introductory meeting.

He replied, “I want him to go to public school.”

“Oh okay then. That's your answer.”

He was still doubting himself, even though it was fairly easy to give Olivia an answer. “What do you think?”

Olivia took Fitz by the hand, pressing her lips on the skin. “I support you in whatever you do. He’s your child, honey.”

“But you’re a part of his world now.”

“Moot point.”

Fitz twisted his lips, then muttered, “Damn.”

“Fitzy, at the end of the day, your heart is going to tell you how to proceed with Teddy. Case closed.”

Olivia kissed him, squeezing him as best as she could while sitting in those less-than-comfortable seats, helping him to forget all of this worry that was understandable, but also needed to be dropped.

“Thanks,” he said, making sweet eyes at Olivia.

Teddy began to jump up and down in his chair, making silly faces. “You guys! You’re missing the game! Let’s go, Nats!”

That evening, Fitz decided it was time to ask. He had been procrastinating for weeks, and he was kicking himself for letting this slip through the cracks. But he needed to talk to his son, so no one would be surprised.

“Teddy?”

“Mmhmm?”
“I need to ask you something.”

His gorgeous brown-eyed boy, was occupied with his coloring book.

“What’s up, Daddy?”

“Do you like school?”

“Yeah. Sure.”

“Can you tell me why?”

Teddy set his crayon down. “I like my teacher. I like it when we walk to school. It’s great to see you out or Livia or Rachel outside when I’m done.”

“Is there anything you don’t like?”

“I don’t like the uniforms. They’re not comfy. My regular clothes are lonely. I feel a little funny since I don’t have a, a---.” Teddy was drawing a blank, wrinkling his nose in frustration. Usually when he couldn’t express himself, he would start to cry. Very bad tantrums. It was a habit he formed back when he was two. At the time, Fitz didn’t know how to help, so he’d let him cry, which led to more frustration for both Grants. But over time, they were able to find ways to solve the problem.

Fitz immediately knelt, rubbing Teddy’s back, and kindly asked, “What word are you looking for? Describe it for me.”

Teddy met his father’s eyes, inhaling deeply. Then, he gestured to his hands, cupping them. “The beautiful beads with Jesus and His Cross.”

“The Rosary. Good boy.”

“Mmhmm.”

“Does anyone tease you?”

Fitz was looking into a mirror, seeing Teddy’s eyebrows knit in confusion. “No… other than the kids who think it’s weird to only have a Dad at home. But I tell them to be quiet and now Livia lives with us now. They should mind their business. But I wasn’t rude about it. I promise, Daddy!”

“I believe you, son.” Fitz kissed his cheek. “Thank you for being honest with me.”

“Why are you asking? Is something wrong?”

“I was thinking if maybe you wanted to switch schools.”

Crouching over the table, Teddy immediately sat up. “Ooh, like the school John and Braden go to?”

“Yeah. Is that something you want to do?”

Nodding, looking very hopeful, he said, “That would be fun.”

Olivia gave him a “told you so” look. He rolled his eyes. Of course, she was accurate. She kept reminding him how easy it would be to make a decision. Fitz overthought and the time worrying, only wasted more time.

The house phone rang, interrupting their moment. When the machine announced the number, Fitz
mumbled, “Shit.” After he told Olivia whose number it was, she called out, “Teddy! Your mom is calling.”

It was easier to not be the middleman, and allow Teddy to pick up the receiver himself. Avoiding any kind of conflict with Mellie was best. Teddy answered and Fitz walked out of the family room. It seemed cowardly, but he wasn’t in the right frame of mind to hear anything about the conversation.

Ten minutes later, Olivia knocked on his office door to inform that Teddy had said goodbye to Mellie.

"Come out, baby. Everything's okay."

Teddy was sitting on the couch, swinging his feet back and forth, since they didn't touch the floor.

"How is she?"

"Mom wants me to visit her for the summer. But I don’t want to go there without you, Daddy. I told her and she didn’t sound happy about it."

Fitz could feel Olivia's eyes on him, watching his every move.

"Is that so?"

"Yup," he replying, lifting his shoulders innocently. "I don’t think my mom doesn’t like you."

"What? Doesn’t like who," Fitz asked; his voice became gruff.

"Livia. I don’t think she does."

"Teddy."

Olivia asked Fitz to wait, and then she added, "Teddy, love, what did your Mom that led you to believe that she doesn't like me?"

"Yeah, I told her that you were here and I heard her do that thing you do when you’re disappointed."

"Hmm."

Fitz wasn't approving of this at all; "What?" He squinted, barking out his question. But once again, Olivia raised her hand, to stop him from getting agitated.

"I told her Livia was here and Mom made that sound like this.” Teddy sighed deeply. Olivia shook her head while Fitz remained tense.

But then, he realized, how he must have looked. Dropping his shoulders, he took a deep breath; he couldn't be so angry in front of Teddy. Quickly responding negatively to something he couldn't control wasn't always wise. But he needed to be a good example to his son.
Hey, sport. Listen to me. I'm sorry for being angry just now. I don't know why she did that but that's on her, not on us. Your mom and I will figure out how you can see her this summer. But we want you to be safe and to enjoy yourself on your first summer out of school!

Teddy grinned at his father; "Thanks, Daddy. You're the best."

They hugged, and then the little Grant returned to his coloring. Olivia gestured for Fitz to follow her into the kitchen.

"I'm sorry," he apologized, rubbing his neck. "I keep on failing."

"Stop. It's still a learning process."

"She shouldn't have said those things to Teddy. That's not fair to you."

Olivia folded some of the dish towels, to counterbalance Fitz's intensity. "Don't be. It's not like you're talking to her behind my back."

Fitz continued, "Uncalled for."

"I'm not worried. If I'm supposed to meet her, then so be it. I'm not afraid. She's not able to judge me accordingly because she doesn't know me."

Fitz stood there speechless, just amazed by the wisdom that came out of Olivia’s mouth.

He reached over to kiss her. Hands pressed on her cheeks, not wanting to let her go. When he did release, he kissed her nose.

"That's why you're my Livvie. God, where would I be without you?"

With all of the obligations with work, Fitz was trying his best to make himself available for his family in the evening. That included one weeknight of no electronics, or a social event outside of the city. Lately, his bedtime routine consisted of watching television or some kind of fun, quiet bonding activity with her. Teddy and Gigi were doing so well, being with each other; he loved watching the newest member become a vivacious personality in the house.

It was a Thursday night; Teddy had fallen fast asleep after gymnastics and dinner. Miss Gigi was also down for the count, in the guest room. After a quick shower, Fitz was settled in bed, and began watching a favorite sitcom on his iPad — headphones on, so he wouldn’t interrupt Olivia with her reading. By the look of the cover, it appeared to be some a juicy romance novel. She looked so beautiful turning the pages, her lips slightly parted, in her own world.

He was finishing up a second episode, when he felt her hand squeeze his thigh — one of his ticklish spots — and even dangerously getting close to his dick.

"Hey. You got my attention, lady."

"You sleepy?"

Fitz shook his head, “Not yet.” He was thinking she was going to suggest another nighttime venture, beneath the sheets.

"Rest your eyes,” he heard Olivia mumble, “You must be tired. It's been a long week for you.”

“You first.”
He could feel her judging stare.

“Really? I’m decompressing. You’re watching something on Netflix or whatever.”

“I am.”

They looked at each other, their tired eyes communicating so much.

Fitz kept his eye on Olivia; she placed the book on her new nightstand, then got on her knees to carefully remove his glasses. He watched her reach over him to set the pair down. Kneeling once again at his side, Olivia began to gingerly kiss his forehead, the bridge of his nose. His cheeks.

“What’s all this?”

“You’ve been working hard,” she replied, in between the lush kisses.

“And?”

Olivia pulled back to give him a surprised look, replying with sass, “I can’t kiss you, honey? Trying to help your exhaustion go away?”

Fitz couldn’t help but laugh softly. “Now you’re playing games. If I wasn’t so tired, I’d pounce and let you have it. Oh, petite one.” His ears rose while Olivia pressed her lips on his neck.

She nuzzled his jaw with her nose, eventually straddling him. “Mmhmm, that’s fine. We tend to get revitalized when that comes up. My strong, agile Fitzy cat.”

“Don’t tempt me. You and your words.” Fitz palmed her ass.

Olivia wiggled, keeping her balance. “We can take it slow, if you’d like, hard working man. Stretch those long limbs and feast on me.”

Fitz thought his eyes would fall out because of how Olivia was blatantly encouraging him. Her coy smile, with dancing eyes. Playing with the ends of her curls. Dragging her toe against his leg.

“Just kidding.”

“Which book got these ideas in your head? It is steamy? Did the author craft the story so well, it makes you want to try something? A new position? Time to seduce your boyfriend?”

Olivia pinched him. “What a smartass! And that’s none of your concern. Fine, we’ll play another day. Just lie down. We’ve been all over the place. It’s nice to just enjoy each other.”

He knew she was spot on with her observation, and it was rare that she would be the one to initiate this. So that was a good sign of progress with their communication. They were becoming more mindful of each other. For him, it had been years since someone (who was not Teddy) was lying next to him, and he would be concerned for her well-being. As well as the opposite. Unless he was sick, or vocal about his needs, there was no one looking out for him — until now. Which was awesome.

Fitz moved the iPad and headphones, adding to his nightstand collection. Giving Olivia a tired smile, he said, “You are correct.”

Slowly leaning back, he rested on her. She began to play with his soft crown of hair. He closed his eyes, letting himself relax while her fingers massaged his scalp, and kissing wherever she felt needed to receive that touch.
Fitz's voice became heavy, attempting to stop himself from yawning. "You do know when you do that..."

"I know," Olivia smirked, digging her nails a little harder. "I know you. What makes you tense and what helps you pass out. I remember these things. Just enjoy it, baby."

It felt like a few seconds, but when his eyes fluttered open, Fitz realized that he went to sleep, and had been out for several hours. But he wasn't in her arms.

His eyes scanned in the darkness that Olivia was lying on her side, but he wanted to be as close to her as possible. Dragging his fingers from her shoulder, down to her arm. He sighed once her body was nestled in front of his. Nothing like a warm spooning.

Her sleepy voice made him smile, reaching back, putting her hand on his stomach. “Hmm? You okay?”

“Yeah,” he said, kissing her neck. “Thank you.”

It was only a matter of time before he'd ask, and the next phase of their lives together would begin.
"I have this feeling he's going to propose."

In the midst of a typical August heatwave in the District, Olivia was tapping her favorite pen on a fresh notepad, as if inspiration would drop at any second, while having little Gigi rest on her lap. Summer mornings at the office were boring; she had the staff come in three days a week, just in case a new client would arrive. Since it was a slow day, it only felt right call the bestie, and spill all of the ideas that were running in her head.

Gabrielle — staying in Miami for the week — exclaimed, "What?! What makes you think this? So what are your reasons, Liv?"

"He's been making so many changes. Work. He's moving Teddy to a new school. He asks me about different things. For example, 'Are there any rooms you want to redecorate? Do you like it here? Do you want to move somewhere else in the city?' For Father's Day, while we were at the beach, he was so calm. I'm shocked because this new job is so chaotic, but he felt content. Oh my gosh, Gab, he got all excited when there was a commercial about Vermont. He actually booked a long weekend in Vermont! Who seriously goes to Vermont? It's not like he's having a midlife crisis! Wait, is he? He's too young."

"Olivia…"

"It's going to be a year in two weeks. A full year in a relationship and not feeling utterly trapped. I want to be with him. There's no grey area for me. This is unheard of in my book."

"But Liv."


"Pope!"

The stern halted Olivia's rambling. She had been talking nonstop to her best friend for fifteen minutes, discussing everything under the sun. But she needed to relax. That was her M.O. — planning, analyzing and overthinking, and deciding what to do next — all on her own. That had to change a bit.

"You have every right to think about what your boyfriend is doing and saying. That's the fun part of having one. You can always be aware, but don't let your fear of the unknown hold you back from being pleasantly surprised."

"Has he talked to you," Olivia jokingly interrogated.

A laughing Gabrielle answered, "No, ma'am. Should I be talking to him?"

"Get outta here."

After their laughing fit ended, Gabrielle added, "You've come a long way."

"I have a long way to go."
"Don't underestimate yourself. You are kickass when you represent others. Don't switch gears when it comes to your personal goals. What makes this different?"

"I love him," Olivia sighed. "Not a casual 'oh man, you're great and I appreciate you'. I love him. So much. I don't know where this all came from. This is still so new. It wasn't like this with E. I wasted time. But this was only a silly blind date, that I almost left. What a surprise."

Everyone had seen a difference in her, and her work had not suffered because of this long-term dynamic. Life had definitely made some shocking turn, giving her inspiration and motivation, for her experiences outside of her career. After all the heartaches and fear of having a relationship broken beyond repair, Olivia believed she was ready to do this. A year had passed and she believed she was ready to take the next step with Fitz.

If he wanted to marry her, she'd allow it, because she knew he loved her. No one had demonstrated this kind of love that encourages, devastates, and overcomes anything like Fitz. He had seen the best — her dedication to the people she loved, confidence, and the worst — her ferocious stubbornness; the desire to run away emotionally when situations weren't ideal. And he was still eager to love on her. She tolerated his downfalls as well, and yet, there was no one else in the world she would do life with.

Olivia Pope truly loved Fitzgerald Grant III.

He was the one, and she was the one for him.

"I know," Gabrielle agreed. "You do love him. I'm glad. You're so happy, Liv, and that's all I want for you. Y'all have my blessing."

"Thanks, girl. If he proposes, will you help me plan the wedding?"

"As long as you don't go bridezilla on me."

Olivia loudly scoffed, making Gigi jump. "What?! I would never."

"Honey, I know you. This is a big deal. You're a leader, and you would want this important time in your life to be perfect."

"And?"

"So?"

There was silence for five seconds, before the ladies burst into another round of giggles. The banter was hilarious; they were known to call each other out playfully, not getting offended by the tactic.

"Is that a yes or no, Gabrielle?"

"Of course."

"Thank you," Olivia replied. She bit her lip as she pushed her chair around, twirling around. The excitement was rising and she couldn't contain it. "Girl, I'm having all these weird feelings. I shouldn't be so pumped about this, but my gosh, I'm flipping out."

Gabrielle chuckled with approval, "Just take it one day at a time."

As soon as her eyes opened, Olivia's arm habitually reached over to touch Fitz. But to her dismay, all her fingers felt were lukewarm sheets. Since she moved in the house, it was the norm for them to be
next to each other, with some part of their bodies connected. She racked her brain as to why Fitz wasn't snuggled behind her. It was a given that either she would rise before him, or they'd start their day, in each other's arms for a minute or two. Then, she remembered he had planned a fun day for the two of them.

After taking a shower, Olivia descended to the kitchen, in a T-shirt and leggings, freshly moisturized, and with a messy bun on the top of her head. Fitz was at the island, fully dressed in a crisp polo and jeans, sipping on his strong cup of coffee. As she entered, he turned back. Their eyes met, and immediately they both smiled.

"Good morning."

"Well, hello, beautiful. Good morning."

Olivia sauntered over to him, pretending to be offended, "I got a little concerned that you weren't behind me when I woke up. You know spooning is my fave."

Fitz "hmphed," taking her arm, and bringing to his lap. He kissed her nose, snaking his arms around her waist. "Me sorry. I wanted to get a head start for the day."

"What are you up to, Mister," Olivia asked, with a skeptical, but playful eye. His eyes were dancing and she waited for him to spill the beans. "Fitzgerald..."

"We're getting picked up in an hour and we'll jet off to Rutland."


"Mnhmm."

"Seriously?"

"Yeah..." Fitz shrugged, acting like he didn't notice Olivia's surprise and intrigue.

"This is how you impress your lady?"

Olivia tried not to squirm as her neck was receiving soft kisses, but his lips felt so soft and comforting, there was no point to act like she wasn't enjoying this.

"I do whatever I can to show you that I love you. Nothing wrong with a little getaway. I told you I want to take you and it's the perfect time."

"You spoil me."

Fitz squeezed Olivia's waist. "I do."

It would just be the two of them. Teddy left the day before — his cousins had taken him to Virginia for a long weekend. Abby volunteered to watch Gigi, just in case she wasn't too thrilled with totally new surroundings. Plenty of time to explore this new location and reconnect on different levels.

The flight was only two hours long, but Olivia decided to catch up on sleep, resting her head on Fitz. She felt incredibly safe, having him right there.

A sweet kiss on the temple, gently woke her.

"Hi."
"Hi."

Fitz lazily drew circles on her knee, as he looked into her eyes, lovingly. "We're here. Are you ready to go, beautiful?"

When she walked down the steps, a black SUV was parked right outside the gate, ready to be driven to their next location, which was only twenty minutes away. As they approached the property, Olivia was in awe of the beautiful landscape. The leaves seemed to be more vibrant, with gorgeous blue skies above their heads. The air smelled different. It was a wonderful departure from the busy atmosphere they were used to.

Fitz pulled up on the gravel driveway, facing a massive rancher, with tall windows.

"Wow."

Olivia could already sense peace when she stepped outside.

"Absolutely gorgeous."

"You like?"

"I do. We are 500 miles away from home, and I don't have a care in the world. This will be kickass."

Holding hands, they walked inside in the house. High ceilings, wood everywhere, beautifully furnished. Olivia couldn't believe what she was seeing. There was a piano, off to the corner.

"Oh my goodness. That looks like the piano I have."

Fitz didn't respond, only watching while Olivia sat on the bench. She spent the next minute, playing scales and basic chords.

"What do you think?"

"This is so nice. We're going to have a great time, Fitzy."

He left to grab their luggage. Olivia visited the other rooms; it would be a lovely weekend together.

"Hey, you get comfortable and I'll make some lunch, if you'd like."

Olivia returned to the living room, asking, "That's cool. Where is the nearest market? I'll go with you."

"Don't worry, I handled it."

The confidence in Fitz's voice made Olivia straighten her back. Placing her hand on her hip, she called, "Fitz."

Strutting to the refrigerator, he opened the door, revealing the appliance to be fully stocked with meats, drinks, fruits and vegetables, even specialty treats she enjoyed.

Olivia leaned forward, reaching for the strawberries. "Well, well, well. Excuse the fuck out of me, Mister!"

Fitz palmed her ass, pressing a kiss on her back. "I told you, I handled it."

Immediately, she froze. His aura was incredibly sexy and she was very impressed. How badass was
this kind of move? She always wanted a man who would take care of business without being asked consistently. Even as simple as confirming dinner reservations. Taking initiative — that was a turn on for her.

When he stepped back, she pivoted, shooting her eyes at him, watching him stand tall, pushing his shoulders back, very pleased at his work.

"Mmhmm."

As they dined on burgers, veggies, and a guilty pleasure of seasoned French fries, Olivia and Fitz exchanged flirty expressions. Dragging her toe against his denim-covered leg. Placing her hand over his. They talked about what they'd do for the day, as well as listening to each other's plans for their jobs.

Fitz left the table to wash dishes. As she admired him, she thought of a fun idea. Olivia approached quietly, and slyly placed her hand over his crotch. She heard him audibly gasp.

"Meet me in the bedroom in ten — no, five minutes," she instructed, acting as if she was giving orders to a client.

Fitz slightly turned towards her, with his irises growing large.

"Livvie?"

"I hope you are aware of my urgency."

"Yeah. Uh-huh," he answered, fumbling on his words, sounding like an inexperienced lover.

Olivia lifted her heels, rising to bite his sensitive earlobe, then kissed it, to soothe the stinging red flesh.

"Good."

Leaving him quite shook, got a kick out of Olivia as she disappeared to their bedroom. Stripping down to her black lace bra and panties, she moved to the bed, waiting for him to arrive.

When Fitz walked in, she blew a kiss.

"Olivia?"

"Yes?"

"What are you doing, woman," Fitz toed off his shoes, placing his hands on his hips. " Barely in the house for an hour and you're out of your clothes? I thought we were going to be out and about, then relax today."

Olivia sighed coyly. Moving her hair into a ponytail, she answered, "You know I love it when I have a man who is willing to do things without being asked."

"Oh, yes," Fitz noted, lowering his voice, pulling off his T-shirt.

Olivia stretched her legs, slowly curling her finger, giving Fitz the permission to meet her.

"Yes, ma'am. Where do you want me to go?"

Eyebrow raised, Olivia opened her legs. "Right here, Fitzgerald."
"I'm glad we're on the same page."

Olivia exhaled as Fitz lunged towards her lower half, closed her eyes, relishing in this exquisite action. Fitz's tongue felt amazing on her body, finding all the sweet spots. His thick fingers entering, while he sucked on her clit, lapping her up, she got off in no time. When he lifted his head — hair tousled from Olivia's tugs — after giving her an orgasm, she noticed how wet his mouth was with her essence.

She gave him a lazy smile. His smile was crooked, looking satisfied.

"Do you want to taste yourself?"

Fitz had this unique way of speaking dirty that wasn't offensive or degrading. Olivia found it to be sexy and didn't mind, because when she wanted to play rough, he was a good sport and played along. He got turned on when she was fiery.

"Sure," she smiled. Her eyes followed his tall self reach up to where she was laying, hovering over, breathing deeply. Their tongues connected, sharing a very private moment.

Olivia reached back to slip off her bra.

"Mmm," he approved, reaching for her breasts.

Olivia loved the feeling the calloused pads of his fingers on her skin, which was started to pebble.

"Baby," she sighed, breaking the kiss arching her back. A shock went down her spine as he felt Fitz dip to worship her neck, then lightly bite her nipple. She noticed his attention to her chest. He was doing everything right. Whenever he looked up, her heart would melt. It was more than physical.

Her hands roamed — his chest, his back, feeling the pronounced muscles, holding on to the band of his black boxer briefs.

All of a sudden, Fitz pulled back.

Slamming the mattress, ready to complain, she offered, "Oh no, you can't do that. Where are you going? I'm already turned on, Grant."

He laughed, removing his jeans and underwear, then kissed her, before sitting on the bed, crossing his legs, patting his thighs. "Come sit."

Olivia tilted her head to the side, tentatively. "Oh?"

"Now you want to be shy? Baby, come over here, I want to hold you."

Olivia maneuvered herself, keeping an eye on Fitz's growing erection; it was looking extra thick and long and she wanted everything it had to offer. There was a sneaky hypothesis that ran through her mind that whenever they were away from home, they performed better. More like a fun game in their minds. More room to experiment and play. Once they were situated, and Fitz eased his way into her, their eyes met. Olivia blew out a deep breath, already enjoying how well he filled her.

"Okay?"

"Yeah," she softly answered, touching his semi-scruffy cheek, adjusting herself to his girth. "You're so beautiful. I love you."

Fitz breathed, "I love you."
It was different than usual; this position made them slow down. The summer had a way to lead activities into a frenzied pace to balance their primal urges. But it was cooler here in Vermont, so there was an opportunity to take it easy. She would never cease to admit of how much she loved having sex with Fitz. They were perfect for each other. Their focus was intentional, connecting their breath, with the constant ebb and flow. Olivia dug her heels into his lower back to maintain her rhythm, so she wouldn't go out of sync. Their hips rolled, as their bodies collided, allowing the mutual energy to fill them.

One of the mighty thrusts nearly threw Olivia off balance.

"Oh, shit."

"I got you, Livvie," he encouraged, moving his hands to her lower back, supporting. "You're doing great."

Olivia draped her arms around Fitz's neck, with laughing eyes. "Yes, baby."

His mouth covering hers, taking her to another place. Her breathing wasn't labored. She smiled as another wave went through her core. The friction was everything she wanted. Leaning forward, letting their chests touch, she rested her forehead on his shoulder.

"Damn, you must be turned on," Fitz guessed, lowering his hand to stimulate her clit, and looking down quickly, he added — "you're swollen and pink, I love it."

Olivia chuckled, "You did that, buddy."

"I know."

Watching him stay focused, while receiving pleasure himself, was very intriguing. The hue of his blue dark eyes had darkened. Olivia saw the clues of his arousal; his chest would rise and fall rapidly, seeing how red his ears turned, his grip on her collarbone and neck — his signature moves, was a bit more possessive, which brought her to the edge.

"You're close, aren't you," he gruffly whispered against the shell of her ear.

Biting her lip, she nodded in reply as she continued to ride him.

"Tell me what you need."

It was hard to speak. Olivia's tight jaw loosened, and she closed her eyes.

"Livvie..."

She opened her eyes and found that classic Grant smirk — as he bucked his hips; pressing forward, his cock reaching her tender g-spot.

"Go faster, baby."

"You sure?"

Gripping his chin, she looked him square in the eye and said, "Do me. Now."

Fitz didn't have to be told twice; with a new surge of energy, and of course being safe, he fell back into the bed, with Olivia in his arms, then rolled themselves over, so that he was on top. His thrusts accelerated, lifting Olivia's leg over his right shoulder.
"Fuck, fuck, fuck," she chanted.

His soft grunts, matching Olivia's, didn't stop. She noticed the steady beat of his new necklace hitting his sweaty skin.

They didn't look away from each other until the moment occurred, with Olivia closing her eyes, opening her mouth, letting out a deep moan. Arching her back and holding on to her lover, she rode out her second wave of the day. Fitz finished soon after, letting out a satisfied groan, emptying himself into her, and collapsing. Their breathing leveled, their longing stares transitioned into laughter and appreciation. Being so close physically, never felt better.

A few minutes later, Olivia tapped Fitz's chest, giggling in satisfaction. He reached to the drawer, for a towelette, carefully wiping her skin.

"Aw, thank you. That was good."

When he was finished, Fitz kissed her stomach. "How did I get so lucky?"

Olivia glanced down at him, and couldn't help but play with his loose curls. Just so precious, in this lull of time after making love. It was perfect, in this beautiful house.

They shared another slow and deliberate kiss, before he walked away to clean up.

Her mind wandered off to somewhere else, just being so blissful, thinking of how they were able to get away.

The bathroom door slightly opened, and she came back to the present. Quickly, she rummaged through her suitcase, taking out her robe.

She heard Fitz say, "Take a look outside."

Olivia gasped when she peeked out the window. The extent of land was more than she expected.

"It's thirty acres, baby. Lots of space."

"Fitz," she responded, "Where did you find this place? Airbnb? A broker you know in D.C.?"

His answer was full of mystery. "No."

"Then, where?"

"Would you want to live here? Or visit here again?"

The lightbulb in Olivia's mind turned on; sitting on the foot of the bed, she asked, "Fitzgerald, how about you come to me, and talk. Is there something you need to tell me?"

Fitz reappeared, still naked, dragging his hand through his hair, looking somewhat mischievous.

"Mister..."

"So, you caught me."

"What?"

Fitz turned away, slipping on a pair of black gym shorts. "I have been putting money aside. Since I was a teenager. California is where I grew up, but it's not my home. I enjoy the East. The seasons in
the Northeast are so beautiful. I knew I loved it here. And after hearing about what you liked, I began to make plans."

Shocked, Olivia exclaimed, "What?!"

"Crazy, huh?"

"But Fitz..."

Extending his arms, Fitz admitted, "I thought I knew what I wanted in life. Even with Teddy, I had goals just for us. I didn't think anyone else would enter the picture. But now, every time I want to make a decision, I stop. Because I think of you. Would you approve? Would you like it? Is she going to give me a hard time? Where do I want to spend the rest of my life with you? So I had to finally show you this house.'"

It seemed unreal to hear him talk like this. A house? Was he thinking about their future too?

Olivia softly asked, "Is this your vacation house?"

"Sure."

"How often will you come up here?"

"Whenever you want."

"Whenever I want? What do I have to do with this," she questioned, with furrowed eyebrows.

Fitz sat down next to her, "You're my girl. My lady. You're the love of my life, Livvie. I would love for you to be with me when I come here. You're the reason I bought it. I had it built for you. For us."

Olivia stared at him, hoping to find a tell through his words or body language. But her bottom lip started to quiver; she hated feeling so emotional, so she crossed her arms, as if to guard her heart, but the tears forming gave her stoic disposition away.

"Fitz. Are you going to propose?"

"Yes."

The wind knocked out of her. Olivia let out a nervous breath, alarmed by the calming tone in his voice, unsure of what would happen next.

Fitz's eyes widened with anxiety as he rushed to her. "Oh my god, Livvie. Take a breath, baby. I didn't mean it like that. I'm going to propose you. But when you're not expecting it."

Olivia squinted, baffled, with her voice cracking. "Seriously?"

"You're a planner, Livvie, and that's great. You're the best at it. But this is kind of out of your control. But when the time is right, I'll know, and you'll know." Fitz softly rubbed his thumbs on her cheeks.

"But that's not what I said."

"But I would like you to stand down. I'm going to take care of it. This will be a surprise you will enjoy. I promise. It will be like this, but even better."

Exhaling, she leaned forward, so their foreheads and their noses could touch. It was becoming their
"What do you think?"

Delaying her response, she gave him a smirk. "Okay."

"Okay," Fitz smiled, pressing his lips onto hers.

One year.

The night before, Olivia reminisced on their first meeting, at the restaurant. How reserved she was, but when she got to know Fitz and Teddy, all of the hesitation melted away. So much had happened since that fateful evening. Even with the uncomfortable emotional growing, Olivia didn't regret this. This is where she needed to be.

Waking up a few minutes before her alarm, Olivia quietly left the house to take a quick run. On her way back, she picked up a favorite pastry for the boys, then took a shower. Fitz must have been on his sneaky tip as well, because he wasn't in bed either when she came upstairs.

Olivia darted to her closet, finding a lightweight blouse and slacks - it would be a humid day in the city. When she emerged, there was a bouquet of roses on her vanity. With a smile, she sat down, and began to do her makeup.

Being very observant and keen with her surroundings, she heard footsteps, Her eyes shifted to the doorway; Fitz was leaning against the door.

With a flirty smile, she greeted him, "Happy anniversary, handsome."

"Same to you. Happy anniversary."

Fitz walked over to the vanity; rubbing her shoulders.

"These are so gorgeous. Thank you, honey. Your gift should be arriving in a few hours."

"I don't need anything, but thank you for breakfast."

Olivia laughed, tilting her head back so they could kiss. "You silly man. Just accept what I have for you."

"What are you going to do today?"

Side eyeing her boyfriend, she replied, "I got work. Things regular people do. Even when on their anniversary."

"Oh," he responded.

Olivia pursed her lips, as she used her setting spray. "I won't be gone that long. Maybe I'll take the day off tomorrow."

"That sounds good," Fitz said. "What time will you be back?"

"Five? I have a couple of meetings, then Abbs and I are hanging out."

"Alrighty! When you return, we'll celebrate."
With a nod, she stood to face Fitz. Olivia wrapped her arms around his waist, snuggling into his warm body. "You got it, baby."

Three proposals and contracts later, Abby invited Olivia to join her for manis and pedis. The tall redhead opted for a vibrant blue, while Liv chose white for her toes and a soft nude for the mani. Getting pampered, drinking bubbly, was a lovely way to finish the short work day. It was nice to talk about everything except work.

Like she promised, Olivia pulled into the driveway at around dusk, a little baffled. As the summer carried on, the normal scene when she arrived from work — front door open, with a bike, or toys on the front lawn. Teddy and the neighborhood kids were usually running down the street, but they were nowhere to be found.

Unlocking the door, she called, "Fitz? Teddy? Honey?"

Nobody answered.

After loving on Gigi, Olivia went upstairs, ready to change into a tank and shorts. But on her side of the bed, there was a note on top of a shimmery, light gold sleeveless dress. She was delighted at how pretty and form-fitting it was. Her man knew what she liked.

"Liv — found this for you. Try this on and I'll meet you out back."

Olivia snorted at the adorably sloppy heart Fitz drew on the slip of paper.

They hadn't made plans the day; maybe a night out, with a healthy serving of champagne. But knowing Fitz, there must have been an agenda tagged along with all of his surprises.

She spent a few extra minutes to spruce up her makeup, so that her look was more evening appropriate. Finishing in record speed, Olivia was able to loosen her hair to create tresses that emulated beachy waves. Heading downstairs with her heels in tow, Olivia made her way to the back door.

Her face brightened being greeted with roses — her favorite flower — several lit candles placed all over, warming the patio.

Fitz met her in a dark grey suit, crisp white dress shirt, with the top buttons open, revealing tufts of hair.

"Hi."

"Hi."

"I was looking for you."

"Well, I was waiting for you. Welcome home."

Viewing the changed ambiance, Olivia walked up to Fitz, giving each other a kiss. "What's all this?"

"I wanted to celebrate our anniversary in a simple way."

Olivia blushed, "How nice. Thank you for my dress."

Fitz rubbed her arm. "It looks amazing on you. I knew it would. You're glowing. Everything go well with Abby?"
"Yes, we tried out the new French bistro for lunch. You'd love it. Did you like your gift?"

"I did," Fitz replied, showing off his new watch.

Olivia winked. "I'm glad."

"Let me see your nails."

He studied Olivia's manicure, cracking a smile, before kissing her hand. "So pretty, almost as pretty as you. Let's take a selfie."

"You're so hip," she teased.

Some pictures were goofy, with lips poked out, and a couple were extra sweet, including kisses. In the last shot, Fitz stood behind Olivia, as she used his phone to take the picture. He kissed her cheek while her jaw dropped, in total shock.

Olivia laughed, giving back his phone, "You're so corny," but her giggles cut short as she watched Fitz kneel in front of her.

"Fitz," she called, voice cracking.

He took a deep breath and grinned. "Livvie, I love you so much. Your happiness means everything to me. I realize how amazing this year has been. If this is how life is with you, I don't want to miss any more time apart from you. I want you. I need you. I love you. I want to love you forever, with no hesitation. No boundaries. Full force. Just how you deserve. Olivia Pope, will you marry me?"

The weight of his words impacted Olivia greatly. Dropping the shoes. Her throat tightened as Fitz pulled out a velvet box, opening it to show her the beautiful diamond ring he got for her. Suddenly, her eyes began to water. An overwhelming feeling of warmth flooded her being, and it wasn't from the weather or the heat of the candle flames. She covered her face, shaking her head.

"Honey?"

Olivia finally allowed him to see her tear-stained face. He was still kneeling, eyes big with anticipation, waiting for a response.

"Y-y-yes."

Her knees gave way and she felt into Fitz's embrace. Their kisses were lush, hands roaming and reaching for anything they could hold on to. Naturally, she went for his hair and his cheeks, almost bumping into one of the displays Fitz set up.

"Wait," Fitz yelled, scooping Olivia into his arms, "Don't knock the candles over, baby!"

They burst into laughter, moving away.

"Oh my gosh, yes, yes, yes! Is this why you asked when I'd be back?"

Fitz slowly nodded. "I know it's just the backyard, but I wanted you to feel like you were in another place, Livvie."

"This is perfect! You outdid yourself."

She couldn't stop kissing and hugging her fiancé. "Oh, don't go anywhere, don't make dinner."
Fitz winked, "I wasn't going to. It's being delivered, if that's alright."

"You know me too well," she agreed, scrunching her nose at him, "I'm too tired to go out."

They swayed back and forth, enjoying the moment, with roses bordering their space. She didn't even realize that he turned on music, but it was the perfect addition to their special evening.

Several kisses and hugs later, they ventured to the patio couch. Olivia sat on Fitz's lap, tilted her head on him. "Who knew about this?"


Olivia gasped, turning to wag her finger at him, "You sneaky S.O.B. That's why everyone was treating me extra nice lately."

Fitz leaned back, returning with a sassy comeback. "I had to make sure everyone was on board with this! Their opinions mattered to me."

"The manicure!"

"Hmm?"

"That's why Abby wanted me to join her, so my nails looked good."

Fitz offered a smirk.

"You did that!"

"Mmhmm. I know you wouldn't want it any other way, beautiful. Can I take your picture?"

Showing off her new piece of jewelry, Olivia posed.

"Thank you. I love you," she puckered her lips for him to taste.

It was interesting; she knew this was going to happen, but she promised Fitz she'd let herself be surprised. Everytime she glanced down to her hand, the diamond on her finger sparkled brightly.

The view was glorious. Perfect summer weather, with the love of her life, glowing with confidence.

Looking up at the sky, she whispered, holding his hand, "I don't know what to say. Thank you."

"No, thank you, for saying yes. For not making me look foolish!"

Their eyes met, so overwhelmed with emotion and love. It finally occurred, the moment they both had waited for.

Olivia thought aloud, "How are we going to top this?"

"I don't know, but I think we should go inside. Are you going to call anyone?"

"They can wait. Oh, by the way. All of this," she gestured to Fitz's ensemble, suggestively moving her hand across his chest, fiddling with the buttons, "needs to come off. So I can thank you properly." Her sultry response brought Fitz to attention. Ears raised.

"Yes, Captain."
The next morning, Olivia touched her face — her cheeks were full and hurting from all the smiling, laughing, and crying. Feeling the cool metal on her skin, she remembered, there was a new ring was settled on her finger; she didn't have the courage to take it off before falling asleep. She didn't want the evening to end.

The first thing she did was lift her hand towards the ceiling and admire the beautiful addition.

"Wow."

Turning to the left, Fitz was sleeping soundly, hand behind his head, showing off his arm muscles. Olivia scooted over to put her head on his chest. Sprinkling kisses on his skin, hoping he'd wake up soon.

"Hmmm," he mumbled.

"Hi."

"Hi."

She smiled, "Good morning, fiancé."

"Damn," he said, "That sounds so good. Good morning, Future Mrs. Grant."

Fitz squeezed her tightly.

"You drive me wild, Fitz Grant. We're going to get married," she answered. It was probably the first time in a long time she felt so vulnerable and still safe with anyone. "I've been keeping this a secret, but I've been dreaming about this."

"Really?"

"Yes," she replied, cupping his face with her hand. "As much as I imagined, this was different than I thought of. This is real."

"It is," he nodded.

Once again, her cheeks rose, revealing a wide smile. "I'm so happy."

"Me too," Fitz agreed, stroking her face.

Olivia lifted her head, capturing his lips again. Once they started, they couldn't stop. Physically tired from the nighttime activities they engaged in — two intense love-making sessions, that involved the bathtub, a small crack in the wall due to the headboard moving too much, and numerous love bites — but it wasn't too hard to just touch and cuddle.

"Are you sore? I am."

"Heh," Fitz proudly grunted, probably already thinking of when the next time they would fool around. "A little bit. My back probably has so much scratches. Not my fault that's how your body responds to my body."

Olivia hit his shoulder. "Quiet, you. If you want any later, you shouldn't be cocky, Mr. Hot Shot."

"Great word choice."
"Fuck you."

"Gladly."

Fitz's phone buzzed, which prompted them to separate. Looking at the text message, he informed Olivia of Teddy's arrival in twenty minutes.

"Did he know you were going to propose?"

"Yes and no. I asked him at the beach how he felt if I asked you. He screamed, cried, and begged me to do it that day. But I did not tell him when I was going to propose. He would have proudly announced to everyone and that wouldn't have worked out."

A little while later, Teddy ran into the house, calling for Gigi. The littlest member of the house, pranced towards him, barking.

"Hiya, Gigi. Did you miss me?"

Fitz greeted Teddy, by kissing his forehead.

"Hi, Daddy."

"Hey! Did you have a good time?"

Teddy dropped his dinosaur backpack, enthusiastically sharing, waving his arms, "Oh, yeah! We went to City Center, with all the pretty lights. Ate dinner. Grannie bought me new clothes! You see?"

Amused, Fitz observed his son model his outfit, a light blue t-shirt and black shorts.

"You're spoiled."

"I know," the young Grant admitted. "It's always when you have to go somewhere else. Someone has to be a good Grammie! And then, Daddy, we watched a movie downstairs on the big projector. It was so cool. And Auntie Gracie let me sleep in Jonah's old room. His bed is soooo nice!"

"Did you eat breakfast?"

Teddy sighed, "Yes… I remember what you said about not being picky when I'm a houseguest."

Fitz opened his arms; Teddy ran to him so he could be lifted off the ground. "Good boy. Thank you. Wow, man, the summer is making you big and strong. Where did my baby boy go?"

"I'll always be your baby boy, Daddy," Teddy squeezed his father's neck.

"You've been eating your fruits and veggies."

Without hesitation, Teddy interjected, "Yeah, like bananas."

"Ha ha," Fitz sarcastically answered.

Olivia snorted, hearing the boy's comeback. It was a known fact that her new fiancé did not approve of the particular fruit. That was an easy way to make sure he wouldn't eat her fruit salad or drink the smoothies she concocted. If he tried, she blurt out, "Banana!" The speed in which he'd place the cup down or pivot away was comical.
Fitz carried his son into the family room, where Olivia was typing on her laptop.

"Good morning, sweetie."

"Hi!"

Olivia grinned, as Teddy's face lit up. He leaned down to give her a kiss on the cheek.

Fitz patted his bottom, before lowering him back down.

"Not trying to be rude," Teddy started, inquisitively lifting his hands and shoulders, looking like a TV actor. "But why are you here, Livia? You don't have work?"

Olivia laughed and answered, "I don't know about your father, but I took the day off."

Giving her a playfully judgy look, Fitz said, "I also am not working today. We have something to tell you."

Gigi had stopped at Teddy's feet, waiting for some attention, so he knelt down to stroke her head. "What did you two do? Something weird?"

"No," Fitz replied, "Who are you, the adult now?"

The infectious laugh of Teddy filled the room. "No! I have to prepare myself."

Fitz sat down next to Olivia; they glanced at each other, confidence rising. He calmly spoke.

"Teddy, remember that thing we talked about at the beach?"

"Umm," he started, tapping his chin. "Maybe? Give me a hint!"

"I asked you if you were okay with Olivia being a part of our family?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well," Fitz continued, "I asked Olivia to marry me."

Teddy's eyes widened, looking at Olivia, then his father, then squeezed shut as he cried, running to them.

"Teddy bear!"

"I'm so happy. This is amazing," he sobbed.

"We are too."

Teddy wiped his eyes and exclaimed, "This is like a dream come true! I've been waiting for the longest time. I knew you'd be my new Mommy, Livia. Now I can tell everyone and they won't look at me funny. I wasn't making that up! Now I can call you Mommy Liv, or I don't know. What do you want to be called?"

Olivia's heart was so full with joy, literally exploding beautifully as she rubbed the boy's back.

"Mommy Liv sounds wonderful."
Fitz knew Olivia would say yes. In his heart, that was the only answer. She even asked while they were in Vermont. But all the nervous energy that had escalated in the preceding weeks made him question himself. The memories of his first proposal and everything that followed kept him up at night. It was painful to even admit that he still hurt from his relationship and marriage. He was scared; he didn't want to fuck up again.

But time was finally healing his wounds; talking with his father, his best friends, and even Olivia's parents, helped him settle into the new emotional territory, so he could be confident. But how sweet it was during that fateful moment on the patio when her eyes lit up and became misty as she answered his question.

That was what he wanted. The look of happiness and love. It was in her eyes. His too.

The days and weeks to follow were incredibly blissful. Fitz didn't even care that there was lots to do at the Foundation, and there was a lot — but he knew every night, he'd come home to Livvie and Teddy. His new idea of family was coming true.

Her hand was already beautiful; with the diamond ring on her finger, the sight constantly reminded Fitz of the right choice he made. It felt so damn good to be engaged to the love of his life. Seeing her happy made him happy.

Saturdays had continued to be their lazy day. Sleeping in, cuddling, planning different activities for the new week. Whenever he woke up before Olivia, he'd start the coffee, and then return to their cozy bed. Observing her peaceful expressions, Fitz lovingly and softly kissed her temple. That usually got her to stir, gradually opening her eyes, meeting his.

"Hi, beautiful girl."

Her cheeks lifted, bringing forth a smile. "Hi. It's so early. It's Saturday, Mister."

"I know," he confirmed, eager to hold her.

"Whatchu doin'?"

Fitz dipped his chin on Olivia's shoulder, whispering, "I wanted to get a head start for the day, before the youngin' finds us."

Olivia giggled, extending her arms. "Sugar, please."

A quick soft kiss between them. He heard her high pitched "Ooh!", similar to an abrupt reaction when someone tasted tart fruit.

"What?"

"You're scruffy."

Fitz let out a chuckle, "Long hours, baby. Didn't even think to shave."

"Not sure why I didn't notice," she slowly rubbed her palm on his face, taking her time exploring her man's face."I kind of like it."

"Yeah?"
"Mmhmm."

"Enough for me to keep?"

Olivia shrugged, "It's your face. I don't have a say."

"But if aforementioned scruff comes in contact with your face, or your skin...Sensitive skin..."

Fitz smirked, with his lips ghosting Olivia's face, descending to come in contact with her arm, towards her leg, making sure to prove his theory. Olivia halted him with a playfully firm hand, reminding him to not even try going there or there. There was no time to investigate.

"Aht! Fitzgerald!"

"What?" His crooked smile appeared, making her swoon. "This doesn't work for you?"

"Just keep it. Keep the scruff."

There were four weeks left of summer vacation for Teddy. After being booked at gymnastics and outdoor adventure camps, hanging out at Auntie Gracie's house, and a week at his cousin's house in Virginia, Fitz wanted his boy to do more outside of D.C. He planned a trip to visit their friends along the East Coast, inviting his own father to the new home in Vermont, and having plenty of beach time. Teddy adored being in the water, playing in the sand. They were blessed with great genes that allowed their skin to tan, so they were golden. Sun kissed and all.

Shopping at Target was on the agenda now that Teddy wouldn't be limited to polos and khakis every weekday. One downer to the switch in Fitz's mind. The year of not dealing with wardrobe choices in the mornings spoiled him rotten.

"I don't know why I said yes to this," he mumbled, with knitted eyebrows, pushing hangers to the side. Everything would look good on a five year old, right? He wanted Olivia to join them, but she insisted this would be a fun, casual boys' morning trip. That also spoiled him — having a companion to be the voice of reason or someone to humor his thoughts. It reminded him how much Liv had changed their world.

As he contemplated various styles and colors, he called, "Teddy, what do you think about this?"

When he didn't hear the familiar cheerful voice, Fitz's head shot up, as a pang of fear filled his lungs. The boy was only a foot away, eyeing the more exciting toys and electronics departments.

"Theodore," his voice lowered.

"Yes?"

Seeing his little one's brown eyes calmed Fitz down. He knew Teddy would never leave without asking. It just made him nervous for a moment. He grinned and lifted two shirts.

"Blue or green?"

Teddy returned to his side, pointing at his choice. "Blue, please."

"Thanks, buddy. Don't go too far, okay? I'm sorry this is taking too long. I would like you to try on a few things and then when we finish, we will go over there. To the fun stuff."

Teddy spun around, mindful of the other people and racks of clothes. "Awesome! Hey, Daddy?"
"Yeah?"

"I think you should get something too. To try on."

Fitz couldn't resist kissing Teddy's forehead. "Of course, Bear. How about you pick something for me?"

A few minutes later, the two walked into the dressing room, finding a stall big enough for the both of them. Teddy changed into his first outfit, while Fitz pulled on a simple grey t-shirt and jeans.

"Daddy, we look the same. We are twins."

Fitz ruffled Teddy's hair. "You think so?"

They took a moment to look into the mirror.

"Yeah," he explained, "We both have brown hair, the same smile. New jeans. We look good!"

Fitz whipped out his phone, taking a few shots. Making silly faces. Teddy crossed his arms, while Fitz poked out his chest.

"Are you gonna send that to Livia?"

"Yeah!"

"She will be happy that we did our job. Finding clothes without her!"

Fitz's mouth opened, feigning offense. "What?"

Teddy grinned, nodding his head slowly. "She told me I had to be a good helper because she knew you would get frrru-straa-ted."

"One, good word. And two, wow, two against one."

With his son's laughter bouncing off the walls. Fitz pretended to be upset and pouted.

"I'm always on your side, Daddy! But sometimes I gotta side with Livia. To help her confidence."

"Oh?"

Teddy wrapped his arms around Fitz's waist. "Yeah."

After a ten minute period of figuring out which shirts, jeans, shorts, and hoodies to keep, Fitz piled the loot into his cart, and he followed Teddy towards the highlight of the day — picking out a new toy or game.

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Teddy spent five days in North Carolina — a trip that was organized by his maternal grandparents. Fitz never wanted to sever this particular relationship, but it always crushed him when the time came to drop him off. Of course, Mellie would get to see her son, and they needed to bond, but still...he was hoping to have the whole summer to themsleves. It stung, passing by the bedroom or almost stepping on toys, and not hearing his voice all the time.

The only perk of not having a five-year-old in the house? Uninterrupted time with Liv.

Fitz arrived home, after a long day at the office. Very thankful to bypass a Metro commute, he was
ready to strip down and cool off. The house was eerily quiet. He walked around, looking for Olivia. Gigi was yapping at the patio door, sort of greeting him, but also pointing him into the right direction. He saw Olivia wading in the new jacuzzi they purchased. He smiled watching his fiancée, beautifully dressed in a neon green bikini, with her curls pulled into a high ponytail. The backdrop of the ombré sunset made the view picturesque.

He waited for her to see him.

"Hi, baby," Olivia waved.

"Good evening, my love. How was your day?"

"Not too bad. Yours?"

"Busy," Fitz replied. He walked downstairs to meet her, leaning over to greet her with a kiss. She sighed — he knew it was needed. It felt like the only downtime they had was in the evenings.

"Wanna get in," she purred against his lips. He hummed in response.

"I need to get some shorts."

"Look over there," Olivia hinted.

A pair of swimming trunks were neatly folded on a lawn chair.

"You wise woman."

Olivia rested her arms on the ledge. "Go on, change, then come back to me."

Fitz grabbed the shorts before pivoting towards the steps.

"Where do you think you're going?"

The tone was very clear, he knew exactly what she was doing and saying.

"Olivia."

"If you're fast, no one will see. I'll be on the lookout."

Fitz began to disrobe, keeping an eye on his surroundings, but also watching Olivia. Her smirk was priceless.

"Keep your shirt on."

"You just want to see me naked," he stalled.

"I mean… Baby… I enjoy seeing all of you."

She wasn't slick. Fitz laughed to himself, shook his head while flinging his trunks over his shoulder. Olivia slammed her hand down, water splashing. "Really, Grant? Taking away all my fun."

"I'll be back. Don't go anywhere."

With his luck, one of the neighbors would take a stroll outside, and get a cameo of something that was off limits. He didn't want any trouble, so he hastily changed in the powder room, and returned in only the shorts Olivia picked out for him.
"Hi, handsome. Look at you, all tan and cute."

Fitz winked, "Thank you."

Once he got situated in the water, Fitz was able to get a closer look at Olivia's bikini, which accentuated her natural curves. "When did you get this?"

"This old thing," she questioned, rolling her eyes playfully.

"We've been to the beach a few times since we started dating and I've never seen this."

Giving him a coy shrug, Olivia answered, "I found the other day when I was cleaning out the apartment. Thought it'd be a good day to bring it out. I guess you approve?"

Fitz reached for her hand, "It looks amazing on you, babe."

"Thanks."

"Damn," he tisked, "I should have poured you a glass of wine."

Olivia rotated to face him, deftly moving so she could sit on his lap. "No worries. We'll have plenty of time to do that after we get done here."

They laughed, before Olivia leaned in, capturing his lips. Something about kissing while floating in the water, that sparked a fire in Fitz.

"I love you."

He pressed his lips on her jaw.

"Love you too."

Thirty minutes later, they found themselves back inside, making out on the stairs, after a healthy glass of red. Olivia's heel digging into Fitz's lower back, while he pushed her bikini bottom to the side, working his magic, paying close attention to her throbbing and wet core.

"Fitz...Fuck. Fuck!"

After he finished in record time, he kissed Olivia's inner thigh. "You are too fucking sexy, you know that? That's why you wore that bikini."

Olivia closed her eyes, grinning sheepishly. "Mmhmm. You know, we need to make the most of our time being in an empty house."

"Downstairs?"

"Yeah, the neighbors won't hear us."

Fitz rose, wet curls plastered on his forehead, breathing heavier than usual. "Perfect."

He helped Olivia up, then surprised her by lifting her. She wrapped her legs around his waist.

The basement was spacious, with the guest room that was rarely used these days. Fitz and Olivia took more sips of their alcohol, working each other's last nerves with a painfully slow round of striptease. As if they had never seen each other naked before, they explored, touching, kissing, biting, complementing. Intentional foreplay was becoming their favorite.
Finally, Olivia pulled Fitz down, wanting him to start.

"Miss Pope, are you ready," he whispered in her ear, before nudging her legs open.

"Yes, I want you, everywhere. Now. Literally right now," she smiled. "And I want to go all night, if possible."

Fitz took that as a challenge and successfully accomplished the feat. Four rounds between 9pm and sunrise...

The first day of school had arrived. Fitz had planned a hearty and fun breakfast for Teddy: blueberry waffles with whipped cream, bacon, and juice. Once the prepping was complete, he went upstairs to see how Teddy was doing.

Still asleep, Fitz gingerly sat on the bed, kissing his son's head.

"Teddy… Bear…"

"Hmm?"

"Time to get up."

"What time is it?"

"7:45. First day of school...," Fitz sang. "I have your clothes laid out on your chair."

Teddy groaned, flopping over. Laughing softly, Fitz rubbed his back, warming him up.

"Come on, Buddy Bear. We gotta get moving."

Another round of complaints.

Olivia walked into the bedroom once Teddy was up and moving.

"Good morning, Teddy."

"Hi, Livia," he replied with a heavy sleepy voice, pulling his t-shirt over his head. "Good morning. Will you be coming with me today?"

"Yes! I wouldn't miss for the world!"

Breakfast eaten, teeth brushed, and several photos later, Teddy Grant was ready.

Fitz scooped his coffee tumbler, then asked, "Should we walk or drive?"

Teddy rocked on his heels, just like him. "Can we walk? It will give me time to get the jitters out."

"Oh?"

"Mmhmm. If I'm sitting, I can't move and I'm nervous."

Olivia knelt down to Teddy, "You're nervous? How come?"

His eyes became watery. "Everything is new and you guys won't be there. I don't know how I will be. I don't want to cry but I might."
"Oh, my Teddy Bear," Fitz opened his arms, hoping his boy would still want to be picked up.

Teddy ran to him, squeezing him tightly.

"I love you so much. We will be in your heart. You want to think of your favorite song when you get scared?"

"Mmhmm," he replied.

Fitz gently tugged on Teddy's earlobe. "That's my baby. You also have your friends; they will be in your class."

Teddy sniffled. "Yeah, you're right."

"I'm sure we'll see them as we walk there."

Olivia gave Teddy his backpack, "If you get more nervous, you can tell your teacher, and she can call us."

"Okay," he let out a big breath, and walked towards the front door. "Thanks, you guys."

Fitz lived for school activities; once he found out about the annual fall festival, he marked his calendar. Neighbors used to sing the praises of this event. He wanted to jump into the scene. Wherever he visited the school to pick up Teddy, he asked around, wanting to help whenever he could. He volunteered to make several desserts and appetizers.

The auditorium was fully decorated with autumnal props, games, and a DJ on the stage, so the kids could play and dance. Teddy was elated to see his friends and also see the transformation.

"May I go play?"

"Absolutely. We will be nearby."

Olivia took his hand. "This will be fun. I'm going to be as friendly as possible."

"But of course. If we need to leave early, give me a sign."

Fitz cordially initiated conversation with the other couples, including a few mothers who made their presence known. Adjacent to the ladies at the private school, these women were trendy and loved to talk to anyone who would listen. He was definitely a listening ear. But then, he immediately remembered one of the first times Olivia joined him at drop off… that was not fun.

Some of the discussion topics were easygoing, asking about Fitz and Olivia's upcoming nuptials, the Foundation, how Teddy was doing as a new student. But when one mom began to laugh hard, sighing, and touch his bicep, that's when things turned around. Fitz casually stepped back, out of the woman's reach, but did not turn to see how Olivia reacted. In his mind, he was a bit confused why the woman's husband didn't try to show off his machismo and bring her back into reality. But that didn't really happen.

At first, his fiancée was by his side. Then she disappeared. After using the excuse to find Teddy to get away, Fitz searched the auditorium. It didn't take long to find Olivia. She was on the opposite side of the room, standing near the concessions table, with popcorn, candied apples, and cider, haphazardly nibbling on a cookie Fitz baked.

"Hey. I was looking for ya."
His pleasantries were cut when he saw the stone cold stare from the petite love of his life.

"Get over here."

Her tone was nothing to be played with, behind gritted teeth. Fitz switched his usual gait to promptly arrive by her side.

"What?"

Olivia grabbed his hand, pulling him closer. "You can't look like this."

"What? What's this? Why not?"

"You're my man."

"I know! Wait, what?" Fitz looked down at her, with eyebrows lifted, very confused.

"Oh? Cool, Then stop acting and looking super sexy!"

"But I'm not." Fitz looked at his outfit; it wasn't anything special or revealing.

Olivia huffed, waving her arms around. "Look. You and your tight jeans and that light sweater I like, along with your hair styled perfectly and this scruff...ugh, honestly, I'm ready to jump your bones, and I'm sure all the other ladies in this gym are eager to do so as well. That will not work. So, I need you to look less handsome."

He kept a straight face while Olivia gave her bold explanation. As he listened, he noticed how adorable she was being, legitimately upset that he was receiving attention from other women. She knew when he was being ogled, even when he didn't pay attention. It was as if no one else could look at him. Not even appreciate his features, personality, or his wardrobe. None of it. That made him happy.

"Livvie…"

Pointing her finger at him, Olivia lowly stated, "Until the Lord says otherwise, you are mine. Got it?"

The intensity in her voice made his ears perk, hair raise on his arms, everything. What a turn on. When Olivia Pope spoke, a man had to listen.

"Okay."

"Do you?"

"Yes. Ma'am."

Olivia pursed her lips, seeing how Fitz wasn't appearing to look contrite. "What do you mean by that?"

"I personally like it when you're feisty. Now you know how I feel when you look like super hot when we go out. I'm proud but extra protective of you."

"Really now?"

"Mmhmm," he confirmed, unconsciously licking his lips. He took one step to tower over Olivia, tapping her nose with his finger, then placing his hands on her hips, rubbing his fingers on her sweater.
"Stop that. This isn't supposed to be a flirty moment, Grant. It took me a while to want to claim your fine ass, but now those days are long gone," Olivia said, trying to swat him away. "Just do better."

Kissing her cheek, he obliged. "I will, my love."

A few minutes later, they were back with the group, at a table. The time was going by, watching the kids, exchanging numbers for carpool and other meetups.

Fitz felt Olivia's hand in the middle of his back, and she leaned in.

"Let's go. I want to fuck you."

He shot an alarmed glance at her; already, she was talking to the woman across the table, acting like nothing had happened.

Fitz took a sip of water, hoping no one saw or heard. Then, he almost choked because Olivia's hand grazed over his crotch. She wasn't jealous anymore, only reminding him again of what was hers, and being very cruel since he couldn't pull her from their surrounding. Not wanting to embarrass himself, he was looking for a closet somewhere to handle this business.

Leaning over once more, while entertaining the people, she whispered, "Get my drift?"

"Mmhmm."

Composing himself, Fitz apologized to the group of their need to leave early. "Thanks, guys. Hopefully we will all get together before the holidays."

After they said their goodbyes, Fitz retrieved his son, and the three walked to the car.

Every time they made eye contact on their short drive home, Olivia would either stifle a laugh or pretend she did nothing wrong. Fitz sucked his teeth, baffled by her clever handiwork.

"Really, Liv? Some nerve, my dear."

She reached over the console, tapping his arm, "No one saw. You're the one showing emotion. How else was I going to get your attention? You told me to give you a sign when I was ready to leave." Lowering her voice, she added, "I know how quickly you get excited when I touch you!"

Fitz clutched his heart, "My body is a weakness!"

Clasping hands, she giggled, "Yes, I know, buddy boy. It sure is mine."
Chapter 30

Olivia had no plans to drag out the engagement period. What was the point? They were in a good place — damn happy. She knew they loved each other; living together for nine months and spending time in close quarters for longer than that, confirmed many things. If Fitz had his way, they’d be married the week after he proposed. But still wanting to have some traditions in place, Olivia insisted they take enough time to plan a ceremony and have the people they loved present as witnesses.

After one long meeting with the man known as her fiancé, cross referencing their calendars, with magazines and papers all over the living room floor, a date was set. February 20th. Olivia wanted a Valentine’s Day theme, with white and roses. The only request from Fitz — a venue in the District. They met in DC, their lives together were centered around the city, might as well make it full circle.

Everyone appeared to be supportive and happy for the newly engaged couple. The neighbors threw a fun party after Halloween. When the parents were informed of Olivia and Fitz's decision to finance the wedding on their own, there were mixed reactions. Marie huffed while on the phone, complaining she was being punished for her shortcomings. Eli said he was okay with it, but offered to chip in if anything extra was included. When Gerry found out over a Skype call, all he did was shrug, say "Okay", and began to talk about something else.

Fitz made a promise to Olivia that she could have whatever she wanted. This was her day. With that in mind, she began to research venues. Like wildfire, news spread throughout the city about their engagement. Since their public announcement in the Post, they had become a couple to look out for. Several vendors reached out to work with them. Olivia almost declined some of the discounted and free services, but Fitz set her straight on that. "Just pick the right ones," he encouraged.

One day, she woke up to the sound of Fitz tapping on his iPad, occasionally humming. It was unusual to see him with his glasses on, sitting up in bed so early. He did his best to keep electronics away in the morning until he absolutely had to. It must have been something important.

"What are you doing?"

"Good morning to you. I'm checking on flights to possible locations for the honeymoon. Where do you want to go?"

"Fitz…"

"You've been stalling, baby. Give me some ideas."

"Vermont," she mumbled into her pillow, slowly introducing herself to the new day.

Fitz grunted, sending her a confused glance, "What? Really?"

"Yes."

"That doesn't make any sense."

"How come, Fitzgerald?"

Olivia rolled back over, training her eye on him, waiting for a response.

He scratched the middle of his chest, then answered. "I would assume you'd want to go somewhere you haven't been before, or more elaborate."
"The house is already there. It will be beautiful with all the snow. We can drive up and down if we want. A road trip. It will be simple, lovey."

Olivia thought her argument was valid, but Fitz wasn't on board.

"Why are you so pressed about this?"

Fitz said, "This will be special for you, Livvie. I want your dreams to come true. It's your honeymoon. A woman's dream destination. What is that for you? Paris? St. Lucia? Zanzibar?"

Knowing her fiancé was questioning her decisions, did not make Olivia feel good at all. It was pissing her off that much, staying in bed didn't make sense anymore. Rolling her eyes, she pulled the covers off her legs, trudging over to the vanity to remove her headscarf, and unpin the loose mini buns.

"What?"

Olivia waved him off.

"No, what was it?"

Still taking out bobby-pins, she reminded him, "I've had my fair share of time in Paris, so that'd be boring to me. I'd rather vacation stateside."

Focused on the screen, he muttered something under his breath.

Momentarily disappearing to the bathroom, Olivia heard him give more reasons why they should go full out. With the revamping of their businesses, there might not be a perfect time to get away beyond the window they decided; planning around Teddy's activities, the weather, and other items that would require time and money.

Instead of responding, she zoned him out, focusing on her morning skin care rituals. That was more important than hearing the lawyer state his case.

When Olivia returned, she was prepped to shower, in her terry cloth towel, Fitz was waiting. His mannerisms still expressed he was not pleased. The glasses were no longer on.

"Well?"

"Well what?"

"What do you think? The reasons I gave."

"I don't want to talk about it anymore," she replied, pulling from the drawer a black bra and a light blue thong.

Fitz set his iPad on the nightstand. "We can go anywhere in the world and you pick Vermont. Are you sure, honey? Our budget will work for anything you want. Europe. Africa. Australia? Seriously, baby, think of a special place."

"Weren't you the one who chose Vermont to build me a house? Why can't I enjoy the fucking place?"

"Hey, I didn't mean it like that. We can go there whenever you want."

It was too early to argue or try to convince Fitz of where she did or didn't want to go. The
conversation was going nowhere. "You know what. You decide then. Just not here," she spoke curtly. "A week or two away from Washington, that's all I want."

"Olivia…"

Not giving Fitz time to explain, Olivia left for the bathroom again, closing the door. She wasn't mad, just irritated. He asked her a question and she gave an answer, only for him to turn around and clap back with a fortified opinion. She was so used to having the last word. It wasn't wrong, but there was no point in giving it, if he wasn't going to listen. Their discussions rarely escalated these days, but when they did, Olivia was never in the mood to stand down. Besides, time was ticking, and she needed to be at the office by 9.

Since it was wash day, Olivia lathered up the shampoo, massaging her scalp, putting ample attention to her curly strands, slowly getting distracted from the outside frustration.

As her hair reverted back to their tighter curls under the water, the door opened.

Fitz's silhouette was seen through the shower stall. He didn't say anything, so there was a possibility he was using the facilities.

When she didn't hear anything, she rolled her eyes and asked, "Yes?"

"I'm sorry. For being pushy," he said in a gentle tone. "I just want this to be special for you. But I took it too far. That was unkind. Will you forgive me?"

Olivia finished washing out the shampoo, grabbing the conditioner bottle, mulling over her next move. It would be pointless to keep the silent treatment and clipped answers going. One of the main focuses of their therapy sessions were to apologize as soon as they recognized a problem.

"I understand what you were trying to do. But yes, I forgive you."

"Thank you."

A few seconds later, Fitz tapped his fingers on the shower door. Pushing it open slightly, and only showing her head, Olivia extended an olive branch.

"You can come in, if you want..."

Of course, Fitz accepted the offer. Olivia smirked as she watched him pull off his sweatpants and boxer briefs, before taking his large step into the shower, with a grin. Already, there was a shift in their interaction.

"Hi, Livvie Love."

"Hi, Mister."

Their eyes met, which always told the truth. The blips of disagreement faded. Love was there, allowing forgiveness.

"Kiss?"

"Mmhmm," she replied, tilting her head back, to meet Fitz's inviting mouth.

It was soft, as the water touched their skin. Olivia closed her eyes, thankful this was happening.

Fitz touched her lower back, whispering, "We can go wherever you want."
"No," she corrected, patting his chest, "We need to find a happy medium."

"You're right, beautiful. You're absolutely right."

Their glances continued to soften as the reconnection occurred. Kisses that reached their destination, along with blatant teasing. Rubbing their noses. Passing the soap.

Olivia hummed, pulling away momentarily. "How about we list five places and go from there?"

Fitz smirked, inching closer, making her pause, feeling the heat rising between them — beyond the hot liquid pouring down on their skin.

"Or we can just stay here, get clean, and not talk. I don't want to interrupt your quiet time."

His hand cupped her sex, rubbing her clit with his slightly calloused thumb. Olivia's bottom lip trembled, responding to his attentiveness. So aware of what made her moan, sigh, lean back, everything. Fitz chuckled in approval, seeing how he was able to get her off in the best way. A few seconds later, his middle finger pushed through her slick folds.

"I got you," he whispered, as her knees buckled slightly. She leaned on him, holding to the towel rack, until she finally came.

"Whew!"

Her eyes opened, seeing Fitz's smirk.

"Yeah?"

Biting her lip, she nodded.

Olivia returned the favor, methodically sliding her hand up and down Fitz's dick, letting the water and soap assist her efforts. Looking up briefly to watch him react — his ears getting red, his abs contracting, hearing him grunt with pleasure, made her happy.

"Baby, I'm—ungh—shit—almost..."

"I know," she noted, touching his hip, while kissing his shoulder, then his neck, and finally his earlobe, which caused him to shudder.

"Let me...." 

Fitz brought her to standing, raising her right leg, so he could slide in. He felt so good, pumping into her. His dick feeling extra snug in her wet pussy.

"I love you."

Olivia's nose scrunched, "I love you."

The best part of this shower quickie? Getting clean right after. A few minutes later, Olivia was back at her vanity, robe on, and combing her hair.

Fitz stood behind her, with his towel sitting low on his waist, revealing the sexy lines that created a visible path towards his manhood.

She felt her neck getting kissed. He crooned in her ear, "My sweet baby."
"Hi...you're distracting me."

"I know."

Olivia rolled her eyes, carefully detangling her long curls. "Ha ha, very funny, silly man. It seems as though you want me to be hazy brained before I go to work."

Fitz pressed his thumbs down on her shoulder blades, "You got it, baby."

"Shouldn't you be getting Teddy ready?"

He glanced at the clock on his nightstand, "I have ten minutes, thank you very much. Don't try to discourage me from admiring and loving on the beautiful woman in front of me. My fiancée."

Turning her head to the side, Olivia swooned, being smitten by his smooth approach, talking to her in the low, husky tone she adored.

"You're cute."

"Thank you and so are you," he kissed her cheek once more, before he pivoted to the closet to put on his boxers, and prepare for the day. "I hope I did okay, making you feel good. Inside and out. As well as apologize."

"I accept. All of it."

Marie Pope insisted to host a celebration for her daughter. Instead of holding it in a swanky restaurant in the District, or even in Virginia, she rented out a house in St. Michaels, two hours south of Washington. It was a nautical town, near the Chesapeake Bay, beyond the massive bridge that connected the metropolitan area to the Eastern Shore. Olivia was not a fan of the party, but she chose to take the gesture as something done out of love.

The party fell on the weekend before Thanksgiving, which worked best for everyone. Olivia, Fitz, and Teddy drove to the house early Saturday morning, to beat the Bridge traffic. Teddy kept himself occupied, playing a game on his tablet, and his favorite, coloring. He asked, "Have you been here before? I haven't."

"Sometimes on the way back from Ocean City, we'd visit to see some of my mother's friends. I never liked it," Olivia peered out the window, "but I think you'll enjoy it. We're making new memories."

Fitz rubbed her knee. "This might be fun."

"It will."

Finally, after a couple of bathroom breaks, they arrived at the house. Eli was outside, doing some cleaning.

"Hello!"

Eli helped with luggage. Olivia entered the foyer, hugging her mom. The men shook hands, and Fitz gave Marie a warm hug. Teddy was right behind Olivia, his hand on her leg, getting a view of her parents, a little nervous.

"Hi!"

Eli knelt down to meet with Teddy. "It's nice to finally meet you. I've heard so many good things
about you."

"Hi, Mr. Pope."

"You can call me Eli, if you'd like."

Teddy's nostrils flared. He turned around to get approval. Fitz shrugged, then both Grants looked at Olivia, for the final say.

"You two can talk about it, honey."

Teddy reached out for Eli's hand. "You're going to be my new grandpa soon. I call my Daddy's Dad 'Poppy' and my Mom's Dad, 'Grandad', so that's not going to work. I don't want us to be confused. What would you like to be called?"

"Let's see...Poppa?"

"Okay, Poppa Eli. How about that?"

Teddy's eyes widened and cheeks rose. "I love it."

"And I'm Marie, Olivia's Mom."

Teddy waved at her, "Hi, Olivia's Mommy. Mamee? Sorry, Miss Marie. Sometimes my words get mumbled and I say them wrong." He grinned sheepishly.

"You don't have to apologize. That happens to all of us. But I must say, I like that. Mamee. What do you think?"

"Yes!"

After getting situated, Olivia was in the kitchen, stirring up leftover homemade bisque when she heard Teddy's voice.

"Hi."

"Hi," she smiled. "What's up?"

Teddy stood next to her, with inquisitive eyes. "Can I ask you something? Livia, how come I've never met them before? You and Daddy have been dating forever! Do they live far away?"

With a nod, Olivia turned off the heat. "Let's sit over here, so we're safe. Okay, so, you know how you have an awesome friendship with your Dad and you guys love each other so much?"

"Yeah," Teddy replied.

"Well, I didn't have that with my parents. And even though we're getting better, I wasn't ready for them to meet you. You're very special to me and I don't want you feeling bad, like I was. Or feeling like anyone is going to leave you. I want to make sure you were ready too. Does that make sense?"

Teddy slowly nodded, then slid off his chair, to get to Olivia, giving her a big hug. "Yes. I get that. You're protecting me. That's important. Love you lots."

The festivities would begin promptly at 6pm. Olivia opted to wear a burgundy bell sleeved dress with nude pumps. She had no clue what Fitz chose to put in his garment bag. After changing, she met Fitz in their room. He was in a dark grey suit with a pink gingham shirt, and his classic brown
wing-tipped shoes.

"Wowwie, I love it when you wear this shirt."

"Oh," Fitz's eyebrows rose, wrapping his arms around Olivia's waist, bringing her close.

"Yessir. Looking hot, as always, Mr. Grant. By the way, if my mother does anything to embarrass us, I'm going upstairs."

Fitz kissed her jaw. "We are going to have a great time. And if your mother does anything that makes you upset, we will figure something out. I'll handle it. Deal?"

Olivia rolled her eyes, knowing he was thinking clearly, and wanted to keep the peace. "Fine. Deal."

Wanting to get a peek of her mother's handiwork, she walked downstairs. The rooms being used were decorated well, with a fancy banner and oversized floral arrangements. The wait staff were setting the hors d'oeuvres. Then, she saw two photographers. Usually, for Marie's shindigs, she only needed one.

"What are they doing here?"

"Who, dear?"

Olivia pointed to the men wearing "Press" vests.

Marie, wearing a beautiful black dress and matching heels, smiled, with a sense of pride, "Oh, I just hired a couple of photographers. Nothing fancy."

"From the local news station?" Olivia crossed her arms, irritated, at her mother's defiance.

"Liv, everything is okay. Someone needs to take pictures while we celebrate. This will be good for you and Fitz."

"No, it's good for you."

Slightly flipping her bang, Marie pressed her lips together, then gently touched her daughter's arm, "Olivia, tonight is about you. Your father and I want to give our blessing. This is the best way we can do that. You know how I do, I don't water down my tastes. I don't play small. We will not make a scene. Understand?"

Olivia agreed silently.

"Now, guests are about to arrive, and I need to greet them. So, please, relax, and let us spoil you, Fitz, and Teddy."

Just as Olivia was about to clench her jaw and fists, Fitz and Teddy met her in the living room. They would appear in the nick of time to help her loosen up. There was no need to get upset.

Teddy looked a little different, older even; his hair was slicked down, and he was wearing a navy blue blazer, striped t-shirt, jeans, and boat shoes.

"Oh my goodness! Who is this extra handsome young man?"

"I look sexy, don't I?" Teddy puffed out his chest, slipping his hands into his pockets.

Olivia made a face, impressed by his confidence.
"Where did you get that from," she asked.

Teddy pointed to Fitz. "Daddy!"

There were about fifty guests, mostly friends of the Popes, along with work and regular friends of Olivia and Fitz's. It was a blessing to see familiar faces, making Olivia feel more comfortable, so she wouldn't have to nitpick every move of her mother's, who was definitely living it up, being the perfect host. There were things she couldn't stand, but she did know Marie was trying. She needed to let those grudges go. Life wouldn't get any better if she kept holding on.

Photos were consistently taken. Olivia and Fitz were floating around, making a point to say "hi" to everyone. A deejay was spinning tunes in the corner. The Popes had truly done it up. Almost like a pre-wedding reception.

"Attention, everyone," Marie clanked her glass. "I would like to propose a toast. Eli and I have been waiting for this day. We've always wanted our Olivia to find someone who would love her the way she deserves. We know she found that in Fitz and his handsome son, Teddy.

"To our beautiful daughter and future son-in-law, we wish you success and many wonderful years of love, laughter, and fun."

When it came time for engagement photos, Olivia thought of the perfect spot: their new home. Teddy had a day off on Friday, so a four day trip to Vermont would do the trick. She was able to book a photographer who lived nearby.

Teddy was super excited about the journey because it was his first time visiting. He had heard so many nice things about the place and how his Daddy built it for his "Livia".

The drive from the airport was uneventful. Teddy kept signing and "ooh"-ing whenever they passed by a new landmark. When Fitz parked, the little one was scrambling out of his seat.

"Wait a sec, Bear," Olivia instructed. "Let me help you."

She and Fitz followed Teddy, who ran to the door.

"I already love it here. Can we move here," he asked, with bright brown eyes.

Olivia laughed, taking his hand, "Not right now. But maybe on vacations, we can."

The inside looked so beautiful, with the high ceilings. The foliage and warmth of the outside made everything cozier.

"Which one is my room, Daddy?"

Fitz pointed to the hallway, "That one!"

He ran to the second room on the left. Jumping and cheering at the sight of his new spacand cheered. "Wowwie! It has my name on the wall."

Olivia set his duffel bag on the floor. "Okay, baby, let's make some lunch because Miss Bethany will be here soon."

An hour later, the three were all dressed and made up, chilling. Then, Gigi began to yap at the door.

"Honey, can you get her?"
Teddy assumed Olivia was talking to him, so he called for Gigi. "C'mon, Gigi Girl!"

"Hi and welcome," Olivia greeted Bethany, shaking hands. "Please, come on in."

Fitz strutted into the living room, and said "hi" to the photographer, offering her water and tea.

Bethany opened her notebook, "I remember on the phone, Olivia, that you wanted a simple and charming session. Is that still correct?"

"Yes. Nothing too fancy, but still capturing us and our son, Teddy."

Fitz turned his head, realizing what she did. Olivia winked.

The conversation was light and humorous, Bethany was able to witness their personalities, figuring out what would be the best options to pose them.

"How did you meet?"

Fitz replied, "A blind date."

"That almost didn't happen," Olivia added, smiling, "I was about a minute away from leaving. Thought I got stood up but these two guys walked in, and that was that."

"I fell in love with her that night," he gently stated, keeping his eyes on her. "Fell more in love since then."

Olivia rubbed his arm, leaning forward to peck his cheek.

The three discussed their game plan. While they talked, Olivia could sense how giddy she was around Fitz. Being free to express herself in front of others was freeing.

The first set of photos were taken on the couch, with Teddy. Some by themselves.

"Don't worry about me, just be yourselves."

Their poses were very natural, their eyes always met.

"Olivia, look at me, Fitz, look at her. Perfect!"

Teddy clapped. "You guys are so handsome. And pretty."

"Thank you."

"Bedroom," Bethany asked, switching lenses.

Fitz's jaw dropped and a laugh from Olivia followed. "I'm not letting people see me on our bed!"

Meanwhile, Olivia's ears perked when she heard him talk possessively. She gave a little smirk and winked at him. "I suggested it."

"Oh, really, now?"

The photographer shook her head, grinning. "I came up with an idea. How about you two stand up and I'll only capture your legs? Hold hands. Sweet stuff."

Olivia left to fluff the pillow, smooth out the blanket, and make everything look perfect. "Alright, come on back! Take off your shoes, Fitz and Teddy."
Teddy led Bethany and Fitz to the bedroom. The sunlight came in beautifully, making Bethany's job easy. The photos were amusing to take. Fitz turned on a favorite of song of theirs, on his phone, so they could get into a fun-loving mood. Olivia enjoyed every moment of it. Fitz cracked jokes, while she swayed her hips. Bethany staged a few shots with Teddy sitting at the foot of the bed, while Fitz and Olivia stood, kissing, holding

Of course, the best part for Teddy was being allowed to jump on the bed.

"1, 2, 3, jump!"

Bethany excused herself, allowing them to change outfits quickly.

"How are you feelin'?"

"Fine," Fitz pulled off his dress shirt. "It's like any other kind of shoot I've taken for work. But of course, this is way more important."

Olivia stood behind him, kissing his bare shoulder blade. "You're so cute. I love you."

"I love you."

Next section, being outside. Some pictures of the guys, then several shots of Olivia and Teddy. Everything was going so well. A beautiful family perfectly captured with the autumn foliage.

The four walked to the neighbor's house. There was a green tractor; Bethany suggested they use it as a prop.

"This is great," the photographer encouraged.

Olivia felt so good wearing her oversized grey cardigan, while Fitz was looking super relaxed in a black long-sleeved ribbed tee, jeans, and a flannel.

"You're looking good."

"Thank ya."

Bethany snapped away as Olivia and Fitz posed at the tree, or her sitting on his lap. Presenting her ring in a closeup. Finding those subtle moments, so others could see the essence of their relationship.

Planning a wedding for 350 people wouldn't be easy, but Olivia was grateful for Gabrielle and Abby. They helped whenever they could. They spent a few weekends to mail out invitations and RSVPs, determine colors and accents, and sifting through inquiries from local media, to gain access to the ceremony.

"I don't understand why they want to know. We're normal," Olivia reasoned, going over her massive to-do list.

Abby stated, "You're hot, Fitz is hot. Accomplished. Business owners. Making the 'Top Washingtonians under 50' list two weeks ago? You have a special something that people are drawn to. They need something to fawn over, outside of politicians."

"I am going to allow Washington Life to post pictures from the wedding in their summer issue. James Novak wanted first dibs. He and Fitz are cool. I'm not good at all that social media crap."

Gabrielle laughed, turning a magazine page. "You're a mess, Liv."
"What?"

"It will be good to see an influential Black woman, happy, in these magazines. We need that."

Olivia stretched her legs, "That's the only reason my mother is thrilled at the possibility. I'm telling you, she was totally pissed because she couldn't pay, but when she saw that feature, all of those bad vibes went away. She's a socialite at heart, so any chance her offspring is in the news or being shown off like a pageant girl, makes her happy."

"What?"

"Mmhmm," she shrugged. "But here's my motto — if they don't pay, they have no say."

"Brilliant."

"You deserve it though. Think of all the girls who will look up to you. Liv Pope, an icon."

Abby broke the temporary silence by asking, "Is the sex still good?"

"Ma'am!"

Olivia slammed her book down, with her mouth open in shock.

Never one to turn off her filter and known for very blunt questions, Abby wiggled her eyebrows, while Gabrielle covered her mouth.

"Let me rephrase. It's my hope and desire that my best friend is receiving outstanding sex as much as she wants, with the man she is betrothed to be married."

Refusing to humor Abby, Olivia continued to write ideas down for the current project. "No comment," she replied plainly.

The two friends looked at each other.

"That means yes!"

Blushing, Olivia stated, "I don't stay in relationships when I'm not being taken care of, in all areas."

The doorbell rang. Olivia was expecting a few packages, linens and some florals. Thanks to the modern era, the packages could be left in the front or some place she'd request, without having to sign. But the bell rang once more. Olivia walked to the door, looking through the peephole. It wasn't the delivery guy. It could have been someone from the magazine. Things were getting so crazy, sometimes it wasn't easy to keep track.

Swinging the door open, she was greeted by a woman, with bouncy brown curls.

"Hello?"

"Hi. Are you Olivia?"

"Yes. Are you from Washington Life? I wasn't expecting anyone today."

"No. I'm Melody Grant, or Mellie, if you'd like."

Olivia's throat tightened. In the year and some change in which she dated Fitz, she had never seen a
picture of her. Not even featured in Teddy's room on his nightstand. As she observed the woman's face, she did pinpoint how Teddy and his mother favored each other.

"How may I help you?"

"I need to speak to your boyfriend."

"Excuse me?"

Mellie laughed, with a hint of disbelief. "Fitz? The man you're dating. Living with, apparently. My former husband."

"He's not here."

"He's not? That's odd."

Olivia waited for Mellie to cordially apologize, and leave the porch. "Yes," she confirmed again, with more determination. "He's not here."

"Okay, that's fine. I'll just wait," she declared, attempting to scoot into the foyer.

The territorial side of Olivia rose; extended her right leg, placing her hand on the doorframe, she blocked the entry. "He will not be home for a while."

"Oh, I didn't know. Is Teddy home?"

"No."

"Do you know when they'll be back?"

The line of questioning did not sit well with Olivia; thinking quickly, she stated, "You will need to stop by some other time. Or call him to inform him of your arrival. But I will let him know that you visited."

The smile Mellie produced was obviously disingenuous. "You know what, I intend to do that. Have a nice day."

"You too."

Gigi, who had been attached to Olivia's leg, came to life and barked at Mellie, as she sauntered back to her car. It was quite noble of her to defend her owner's honor. Olivia hushed her pup. "Gigi, thank you, but you need to stop this right now. Scoot over, baby." Closing the door rapidly, she rushed towards the kitchen.

"What the fuck," she asked herself. "I need a glass of wine."

The whole scene was like a prank, and she was the fool who fell for the trick. Olivia didn't know what to do. How dare this woman step to her and act like she was entitled to her home. Too confused and heated to call Fitz. She took her time, sipping her wine, allowing her breath to even out.

When Fitz and Teddy returned, two hours later, Olivia didn't look like herself; a permanent scowl, wrapped in her oversized cream cardigan.

"Hi…"
"Hi."

Fitz grinned, but a little confused. "What are you doing over there? You never sit there."

Olivia squeezed a pillow, and slid down to curl into a different position, facing away from him.

Fitz asked Teddy to change his clothes and play for a little bit. After washing up, he walked to the couch, gingerly touching Olivia's forehead, assuming she had a fever, or something.

"Do you feel okay?"

"Guess who stopped by?"

"Who?"

Olivia slowly replied, "Your ex-wife."

Fitz was taken aback. "What?"

"Mellie. She was here."

Repeating his question, but louder, "What?"

"She rang the bell, I opened the door, and there she was. Asking for my boyfriend. Tried to walk in like she has a right."

"Fucking... I can't believe this. She had no right. Did you call me? I would have come home ASAP."

"Did you know she was coming?"

It was rare but when Fitz Grant frowned, and his eyes narrowed, with fury, that meant trouble.

"Absolutely not. I don't talk to her," he stated with the utmost disgust. "You know that, Liv."

"Okay. How did she know about this house? Have you always lived here?"

"Since Teddy was five months old, so yes, this used to be her residence."

Olivia covered her eyes, remembering how uncomfortable she felt. "This is so weird. I didn't like being alone. She had this aura that shook me. I thought she'd eat me alive."

Fitz sat on the couch. Olivia understood his desire to be near, wanting to comfort her with his touch, but she scooted over.

"Livvie. What do you want me to do?"

Ignoring the disappointment in his voice, she countered firmly, "You'll need to handle this and figure out why she came here. I'm the one who lives here and I felt so uncomfortable. She looked at me as if I was the maid, or some random bitch who doesn't belong here."

Fitz moved to the floor, sitting on his knees, stroking her hair and face, comforting her. "But you do. You are the future Mrs. Grant. The lady of this residence. What you say, goes. That's final. I chose you. I will always choose you, baby."

Olivia slowly turned to Fitz, and finally cuddled with him.

"Thank goodness Teddy wasn't here."
"Yes," he agreed. "I don't think he would have wanted to see her without a heads up."

"Does she know about his therapy?"

"Very little. Since I have custody, I'm not required to tell her, but out of courtesy, I share some information. She thinks I spoil him, but I fucking don't care what her opinion is."

"I've never known what she looks like, Fitz. If I had, I wouldn't have answered that door."

Fitz sighed, rubbing his forehead. "I'm sorry. I hate her so much, Liv."

"You don't have to justify anything."

"No, I mean it. As I've gotten older, I've realized how unfit we were to be with each other. She ruined a lot of shit in me. But that era is over. And you're here."

Olivia finally sat up. "One thing is clear. She will not ruin our wedding and consequently, our marriage."

"She won't."

The two kissed, thankful for the storm to blow over. But for some reason, as the minutes passed, Olivia's stomach was churning and nothing felt good. The afternoon fucked her up. Napping it off wasn't helping. Then, it clicked.

She grabbed her keys and wallet, heading towards the door.

"Livvie?"

"Going out."

Fitz was worried. "May I ask where? Do you want some company?"

"I need some fresh air, I'll be back in a few. I promise."

"Okay."

Olivia blew a kiss and left. Twenty minutes later, she was reclining in her old bed, her trusted haven of solitude. Her mind was racing, unable to separate what was the truth, and thoughts which were clearly lies, but subjected her to doubt and shame.

She was worthy of Fitz's love. She knew that. They wouldn't be in this place unless they loved each other equally. Mellie was not out to get her, at least she didn't think so. She wasn't the other woman.

Pacing in a circle, Olivia found workout clothes. A thought-clearing run would be good for her.

It was still light outside, so using the path near the apartment would work well. Usually, she would listen to a very calming song, but she needed silence. As she got ready to turn a corner, her phone rang.

_Eli Pope._

"Shit fuckin' hell," she groaned. "Hi, Dad."

"Olivia," he greeted, "Good evening."
The Popes had an unusual relationship. Phone calls didn't happen unless someone needed something.

"Good evening. What's up?"

"Fitz called me."

"Why?"

"He wanted to make sure you were safe."

"I am. I told him I needed to step out."

"Apartment?"

"Yes," she said. Her father knew her well. "But I'm out running."

"One earbud in?"

"I'm not listening to music, Dad."

"Good and good. I will say, I think you should probably sell your apartment once February comes around."

"But it's my place."

Eli's paternal tone resonated, "Olivia…"

"Dad… I'm an independent woman. There are more couples who have their own spaces and only get together when—."

"Nope!"

Olivia snickered, hearing her father's adamant shutdown of any references to matters that were sexual.

"But I'm serious. I need this."

"Those costs that you don't capitalize on…"

"He bought me a house."

"Congratulations, even more reason to get that property off your hands."

"No. The apartment is under my name, so I'm going to decide its fate. I know I'll need a place to clear my head. But I will consider the possibility of renting it out. Then I'll have some extra money coming in."

Eli hummed in agreement, "That could work. If you need any help, call me. Now what is going on? Wanna talk about it?"

Olivia got back to the apartment in record time. Since she couldn't drink alcohol, knowing Fitz wouldn't sleep well if she didn't plan to come home without a discussion, Olivia found a sparkling water in the refrigerator. Pouring it into a glass, she started, "His ex-wife arrived at my doorstep, asking to see him, and I was blindsided."

"Wow."
"Had no clue she was in town. I don't want to be in the middle of anything."

"You shouldn't. You didn't break them up."

Olivia lifted her hands, "I know. But in a way, it eels like I am the problem. You should have seen her face when I told her no."

"You're part of his new and current life. Don't let whatever this woman is trying to do, ruin what you have with Fitz. He loves you. He's told me. You're perfect together. I've never seen you happier. Now, when you're ready, go to him, listen to each other. Just be in each other's presence. You will work this out."

"Thank you."

"I love you."

Olivia closed her eyes; it was a rare occasion to hear those three words from her father. She knew he was capable of loving her, but with the various roadblocks, it was difficult to show. But she appreciated his wisdom.

"Love you too."

A quick tidying around the space, and after a shower, Olivia texted Fitz, before starting the car's engine.

On my way, had a talk with my Dad.

An hour later, she pulled into the driveway. The front door was open.

"Hi."

"Hi."

Fitz's eyes were red. He looked so heartbroken.

Olivia walked to him, slipping her arms around his neck. "I'm fine. For now. I was scared, Fitz."

"Honey…"

They stood in the foyer. A minute. That's all they needed.

"Thanks for letting me figure out my emotions."

"Absolutely," he replied, kissing her temple. "Do you want some wine?"

Olivia loved how Fitz knew. "Yes."

"I called Cyrus… I know what she wants."

"What?"

"She wants me to reconsider custody and possibly moving up here."

Olivia felt her heart drop to her stomach. "No. We're done talking about this."

"What's wrong, honey?"
"I'm jealous."

"Why?"

"I don't want her to take him away. I'm anxious about co-parenting with her."

Fitz placed his hands on her shoulders, "I know. We will figure it out. I promise. If we need to meet with Cy, and her lawyer, or whatever, to make adjustments, we will."

Olivia planned a romantic weekend for Fitz's 40th birthday. Instead of surprising him, like the year before, she opted for a simple happy hour dinner at Fogo de Chao in the city, and a night out at a bar. If they played their cards right, they'd be home by 10.

The bar scene was always fun, but a bit different for them since they were homebodies. Music blaring, the best solution to shake off the alcohol was dancing. Fitz took off his jacket and led his girl to the dance floor. Some of the music was seductive, and their bodies moved well, as if they were in private.

"I love this," he stated. A few buttons undone, sleeves rolled up, Fitz was in the zone, twirling Olivia around, not leaving her side. "We should do this more often."

Olivia nodded, standing in front of him, swiveling her hips. Fitz's hand was firm on her midsection, while her arm was lifted.

"Fuck. I think I should take you home."

"I got it, baby," she grinned, taking his hand.

"Miss Pope?"

"Yes?"

"Hi, wanted to congratulate you."

"Thank you."

"Can we take a picture?"

Dewy to the touch, Olivia reached into her clutch, successful with retrieving a blotting wipe, and then dabbed her face. Then one for Fitz.

"Thanks."

"Okay," she told the photographer, returning to her original position, in front of Fitz. "Now, you can."

They looked like complete lovebirds. But it was time to get back home and celebrate more. Standing outside, appreciating the cold air, touching their hot skin, Olivia asked, "You wanna sleep in the basement?"

Fitz pushed out his lips. "Not really, but what did you have in mind?"

"I wanna be loud."

"Oh?"
Olivia nodded, "Mmhmm. As loud as we can, without waking up Teddy or the dog."

"Okay, that sounds like a plan."

The Uber dropped them off at around 11 o'clock. Olivia sent Rachel money via Venmo, made sure she got to her car, then locked the door. Grabbing two bottles of water, she slipped off her shoes, unzipped her dress, and met Fitz in the bedroom. He was already naked.

"Hold on to the board."

Olivia knew what that meant. It was time to ride. It never failed; Fitz's long, talented tongue driving her to madness, pulling the nonsense out of her. Making her crave more. She couldn't help but giggle and squeal over the face that was making her this way. Then she realized — he was writing her name. His nose rubbed at the point where her lower lips gave way to reveal her clit, which made her jolt.

Fitz palmed her ass, steadying her.

"Don't go nowhere."

Olivia followed his stern command, not giving a damn about the double negative.

Her arms were sore and her legs were shaking. Thank goodness she didn't let go of the headboard.

"Fitz…"

He massaged her lower back.

Olivia flung her head back as she coaxed herself into the powerful orgasm. She was breathing heavily as she gave Fitz more to lap up. When she finally calmed down, she rolled over. Fitz made some space for her, very content with his work.

"You want more?"

"Do you?"

Fitz mischievously bit his lip.

Olivia got on her stomach, lifting her ass, looking over her shoulder.

"Shit…"

He rubbed his now wet head against her clit and lower lips, creating friction and a sensation they both loved.

"Honey, fuck me…"

After teasing her, Fitz eased himself in. Olivia made sure her stance was wide enough for him to move in and out.

"Faster?"

"Uh huh."

Fitz pumped, snapping his hips. Olivia muffled her loud groans into the mattress.
"Turn around, Livvie, I want to see you."

There was something about it when she looked at him, while he fucked her, hearing and seeing everything. It was like an answered prayer.

He groaned loudly as he finished.

"Livvie...fuck!"

She laughed and exhaled, as her wave approached. Her toes curling.

"You should just put a baby in me already."

Watching Fitz freeze was the best thing ever. Every now and then, she was the one who teased and said something off the wall.

"Woman, I swear, you play too much. Stop that."

Olivia sighed, "But you're so good at making me come, Fitz. It's mind blowing."

Rubbing the tips of their noses, they relaxed, enjoying in the aftermath of their union.

The sun rose, and they were back at it. Just taking it slow this time.

"What do you want for breakfast?"

"I don't know," she ran her fingers through his hair. "Whatever you want."

"Daddy. Livia. Do you have clothes on?"

Olivia's awkward yelp, covering her mouth. Fitz lifted his head, did a double take, and screamed, "Teddy!"

The door was ajar, and the boy's head could be seen.

"What?"

"What are you doing in here?"

Teddy skeptically asked, "Do you have clothes on?"

Olivia wanted to melt into the covers and beyond that point.

"Sometimes when you kiss too much, your clothes come off."

"How do you know this?"

Teddy nervously answered, "My friend told me and I know you guys kiss a lot! So... I thought that what happens when your door is locked."

Fitz cleared his throat, "Teddy, remember how we always knock before coming into our rooms?"

Teddy agreed with a nod. "But you didn't hear me! I knocked several times and I knew you were awake because I heard you. And I know you don't watch TV in the morning."

They had to hand it to him, the boy sure knew how to deduce.
Olivia cleared her throat, and asked, "Honey, can you go into the hallway for 90 seconds?"

"Yes."

"I fucking told you to lock the door," she scolded, rushing out of the bed to find a washcloth, and search for clothes, so she could look decent.

Fitz sucked his teeth, "Why is it always my responsibility?"

"You didn't want to do it in the basement, where he never goes, Fitzgerald."

The two cleaned up. Olivia found sweatpants and Fitz's grad school hoodie, which she swam in, but it smelled glorious.

When she got to the door, Fitz sat on the side of the bed, in his sweats.

"Hi, baby. I'm sorry to upset you. Thank you for you waiting, would you like to come in?"

Teddy, highly frustrated, explained, tugging on her sleeve. "I wanted to tell you that Gigi had to go potty. You didn't hear me so I let her out. Then I wanted to tell you how responsible I am, but you didn't hear me. So I opened the door. I'm sorry for peeking. I didn't see anything. I just saw you kissing and your shoulders."

Olivia stated at the ceiling. Her cheeks were feeling hot.

"I'm so sorry. Do you want to talk to Daddy."

Teddy winced,"No, because he looked like he was mad and yelled at me."

She turned to the bedroom, glared at a guilty Fitz, prompting him to join them.

"Buddy, I'm sorry. You really surprised us."

"You surprised me too."

Fitz and Olivia had to laugh.

"Okay, let's see what Gigi is up to."

They spent Christmas break in Vermont — Olivia wanted to start decorating. Things were getting better with her parents, but she wanted to continue to set new traditions with Fitz and Teddy. After the photoshoot, Fitz bought plane tickets for the family. It was the last holiday before the wedding. She was excited for all the fun activities.

As soon as they got to the rancher, they were right at home. Relaxing on the couch. Baking cookies. Finding a tree to put in the corner.

Little Grant was in a cuddly mood, sprawled on his father. Wanting hugs.

"Daddy, more…"

Fitz drew circles on his son's back, patting his bottom occasionally. Sometimes, Teddy preferred to be treated like a baby while they were cuddling. So, Fitz played along, singing little ditties he used back when he would need to comfort. Teddy's face resting on his chest. Olivia smiled, knowing how close they were. Little hand massaging his cheek.
"I love you, Daddy."

It got Olivia to start thinking again about their future. Would a new little being interrupt what the boys had? Teddy was still working through his attachment difficulties — the family had begun to attend play therapy and discussions to help him adjust and find coping mechanisms. He was doing a great job, communicating better with the therapist, and with them.

Olivia was grateful for the addition of Gigi. Teddy wanted to take one some responsibilities — filling the water bowl, opening the back door when she needed to go out. She wanted to make sure he still felt important even when the focus was on someone else.

But if a baby came into the picture, would all that hard work go by the wayside?

Clutching her stomach, as if she was holding on to a deep secret, Olivia let out a soft sigh.

"Honey, are you okay?"

Coming back from her thoughts, she grinned at Fitz. "Yes."

Teddy blew a kiss her way. "Hi, Livia."

"Hi, handsome."

Looking shocked, he asked, "Handsome? Not cutie?"

"What would you like me to call you?"

Teddy smirked, wagging his eyebrows. "Both."

"Cutie handsome. Handsome cutie."

Teddy slid off of Fitz's lap, hurrying over to Olivia.

"Kisses?"

He nodded, puckering his lips. They kissed four times in a row.

Gigi started to yap.

"What's wrong?"

Teddy replied, "I think she's jealous! She wants Livia kisses too."

Olivia shook her head, before scooping the dog into her arm. She kissed the top of Gigi's head. "You know you're a spoiled, precious girl. I'll get you your snack."

Without being asked, Teddy raced to the oversized floral bag Olivia brought. Digging into one plastic container, he retrieved a small bone.

"Gigi! Gigi! Here you go."

The pup scurried to her little friend, wagging her tail.

"Aren't they so cute together?"

Olivia snapped a few photos for the album she was going to create for the family.
Teddy's laughter filling the space, reaching to the high ceilings.

Fitz patted the cushion; Olivia got the hint and joined him.

"This is the life."

Olivia reached for Fitz's hand, threading her fingers through the spaces of his. "Mmhmm. When he goes to bed, can we talk?"

With a nod, Fitz tried to gauge what she was feeling. "Baby, What is it?"

"I feel nervous…"

"Okay," he pressed a sweet kiss on her temple.

Dinner, dessert, and bedtime were successful. While Fitz and Olivia were changing into their pajamas, he inquired, "What's going on?"

"If I get pregnant, I have a feeling Teddy will regress."

Fitz was in the middle of putting on his t-shirt, when he paused, very concerned. "Oh no, sweet baby."

Olivia pulled back the comforter on her side of the bed, the right side, so she could sit down. "He's been working so hard, being able to vocalize how he feels and not getting overwhelmed at school. I can't imagine him going through this all over again."

"Are you changing your mind," Fitz walked to her.

"No… I don't want to cause pain. I don't want to do that anymore," Olivia began to sob into Fitz's chest. "Crap, I'm sorry. I'm getting your shirt wet."

"My God. Your heart for him…I'm so grateful you came into our lives."

"I didn't think I'd be this way."

"You have a caring heart. You love him."

"I do. But I really want…to have a baby, with you."

Fitz drew circles on her back, one of the ways he was able to comfort her, "And we will, if we're supposed to."

"Yeah?"

"Absolutely. I want to. It'd be a great honor."

"Okay," she rested his head on his shoulder.

"Have you…"

"Have I stopped the birth control? Not yet. I think I'm going to stop next month."

"Okay…So that means you want to start trying right away?"

Olivia took a second to think before responding. "I'd rather wait. I know we're far from conventional, but I want the focus to be on us for a little bit. But if something changes, I wouldn't be opposed."
"That settles it, Livvie Love."

"Does that work for you?"

"Of course. It's your body. You get to decide," he murmured, in between kisses on her cheeks, nose, and lips. The softness of his character melted Olivia's heart. He was incredibly understanding. "Thank you for including me in your decision, so we can plan accordingly. We have space, obviously, and we are financially stable to support however many babies you want."

"Fitz!"

"I'm keeping it open."

"Hmm…"

"Five?"

Olivia laughed, shaking her head. "No!"

With a smirk, he kissed her nose again, looking deeply into her eyes. "Two babies, I think."

"Sir!"

"What would you want?"

"I'm not saying." Olivia gave him a playful side eye, not wanting to reveal anything.

Fitz got lazy, and just crawled over Olivia to get to his side of the bed. "I think you know."

"It's crossed my mind, but let's not jinx it."

The fresh Northern air filing their room. Olivia rummaging through Fitz's soft curls, as his head rested on her, still pondering over what was to come. In six weeks, things would officially change.

After New Year's, Olivia and Gabrielle visited the bridal store. She was cutting it close, but it was so difficult to find the perfect dress.

"Thank you for coming with me."

"I wouldn't miss for the world, Liv."

Olivia reached for her best friend's hand, squeezing it.

Susan, the stylist walked in, asking for Olivia to follow her, to try on two dresses, that she fancied online.

"I want to look like a princess. Nothing too overwhelming, I'm a little on the small side."

"The second dress you told me about, it came in, and I want you to check it out."

Ten minutes later, Olivia was in the gown. "This is gorgeous," she slowly turned, finding her reflection in the mirror.

"Ready to show?"

Olivia inhaled deeply, stepping out into the room.
Gabrielle immediately started to cry.
"Stop it!"
"Beautiful woman."

While making adjustments and taking notes, Susan asked. "Are you two sisters?"
"Best friends."

"It's always good to have family and friends present for this special moment."

Olivia sweetly nodded; she didn't invited Marie. Their relationship was still on the mend, but she didn't want anyone there who would sabotage or make her feel less than her worth, when deciding this dress. If she was paying for it, then she should have the final word. Since Marie had no financial stake, it wouldn't have worked out.

"Once I get it home, I'll show my mother. I want to enjoy this process."

"I'm sure she'll do better, but I can't take any risks, you know?"

"I'm going to call Fitz."

Olivia clicked the FaceTime logo under his name. Two rings later, he picked up.

"Hey."
"Hi, honey."
"I found the dress."

Fitz's eyes widened, "You did?"
"Mmhmm," she sniffled.

"Aw, baby. I wish I could be there. I know it sucks."

Olivia laughed, trying not to burst into tears. "I wouldn't let you. I want you to be surprised."

"But of course," Fitz agreed. "I'm going to be the happiest man on February 20th when you walk down the aisle, coming to me. Then, I can tell everyone, again, that I am in love with an incredible woman."

"Damn right."

"I love you, girl."

Olivia bought the phone closer, "Boy, you drive me wild. I love you too."

"When are you getting home? I'm whipping up grilling veggies and chicken, just for you."

"You're a gem," she stuffed her feet into her Uggs, "Five o'clock."

"Alrighty. Does Gabby want to come?"

"Nope," Olivia promptly stated. "I just want to be with you tonight."
Fitz couldn’t help but laugh. "What a trip. See you in a bit."

Surprise! Hope you enjoyed all these little snippets... lots of stuff going on.

The wedding is next! xo
A fresh coat of snow had covered the ground, reminding Olivia of her time in Switzerland, which cultivated the plans of her ideal wedding. The sun hitting everything, creating a bright ambiance. Beautifully frozen outside, warm and cozy on the inside. She wanted a winter wonderland, and Fitz loved every part about it.

Six months of planning that went into overdrive once she got her ring resized, making the countdown very real. The finish line was in sight.

She was going to be Mrs. Fitzgerald Grant III. Whenever she had lulls of time during work, she'd discreetly practice writing her new last name for her signature. It looked pretty.

Olivia Grant had a nice ring to it.

So much had to be completed in the week leading up to the wedding. Deliveries coming to the house, confirming with Stefania, their event planner. The last dress fitting. The drawn-out process of legally changing her name. Maybe that could stall...she had some time.

Most importantly, she needed to finish writing her vows. She wanted something unique, with genuine words from her heart. To her, letting Fitz know, in front of others, how she felt was going to be the best part of the ceremony.

But in the midst of preparing, real life was still happening. Like Teddy's birthday. The actual date was a few days after the wedding and Olivia was concerned. Would he resent them for scaling back on a party because of the couple's special day? But after a lot of discussing, Fitz, Olivia, and Teddy made a compromise to celebrate with friends early, then a trio dinner later on.

After school, Olivia was in the kitchen, working on a chicken lasagna soup, hoping to have dinner mostly completed before Fitz arrived home, so they could have a relaxing evening. Teddy was playing on his Nintendo Switch, enjoying the quiet after finishing a small homework assignment.

Looking over to him, with a smile, Olivia asked, "T, what are your birthday plans? Did you come up with any ideas?"

Sitting on the edge of the island, swinging his legs back and forth, the boy contemplated. "I was thinking...since we already have a puppy, and we went to Vermont for Christmas, can I have a sleepover with some of my friends and my cousin? Maybe we can eat pizza and chicken nuggets and raspberry ginger ale and we can watch movies and oh! Daddy could make brunch? Teddy bear pancakes!"

Olivia had crossed to Teddy, tapping his nose with her index finger. "That sounds like a great idea. Let's talk to Daddy when he gets here."

"Thanks, Livia," he grinned, "You're so much fun."

Surprised, she raised her eyebrows. "I am?"

Teddy nodded his head excitedly, "Yup! Can you help me down?"
"Of course, baby."

Olivia lifted him off the island, and returned to her cooking. Following her to the stove, Teddy sweetly added, "You're like the cool Mom now. My friends think you're cool. Remember after Christmas break, when we got back to school, and you took us to get hot chocolate?"

"I do."

"Everyone thought that was so much fun."  

While stirring the meal in the crockpot, Olivia sighed, "I hope to maintain my cool status at school."

Since January, she had taken one day off during the week to help at the elementary school, usually being in Teddy's class. She would stop by to assist, bring healthy, school-approved snacks, and stay abreast on the happenings at Lafayette. The other moms were very appreciated of her addition to the class rotations and were courting her to join the PTA.

Teddy responded with his classic Grant crooked smile, and touched her arm. "I think you will. They say, 'Teddy's new mom is coming!' It's fun when you visit our class."

It made her heart swell to hear that. She wanted her relationship with Teddy to continue to grow after she got married. Nothing forced. And by the looks of it, everything was going to work out just fine.

The constant battle of desiring an intimate wedding and making sure everyone was included was fucking hard, in Olivia's mind. Fitz almost deferred every decision to her, since he had already gone through this before, and wanted her to have everything she wanted.

She did not want a shower, but the new power duo of Gabrielle and Abby were not in favor of that. Keeping it simple, the ladies invited some of Olivia's inner circle to one of their favorite restaurants to celebrate the new chapter in her life. It was a small gathering and Olivia was grateful for all the love given to her. The staff at the Institute threw Fitz a bachelor lunch on Wednesday. Lots of balloons, hot toddies, and a catered buffet by Clyde's, a local chain, brought a casual and fun vibe to the office.

After all the running around, Olivia and Fitz barely had time to chill and focus on anything that was not connected to February 20th. If they could work the combination of eating, cuddling, and sleeping together, their evenings would be a success. Valentine's Day was a wash; just chocolate, a homemade dinner, a movie in the family room, and uninterrupted sex.

Fitz loosened his tie, falling on the bed, relieved to be resting and in good company. It was another late night at the office, and he was exhausted. "No wedding talk, please," he huffed.

"How about five minutes and then we'll be done?"

Olivia patted his leg, while batting her eyelashes; Fitz laughed, rubbing his tired eyes. "Sure, baby."

For three minutes and fifty-six seconds, she shared with him about the last minute details their week would hold.

"Stefania wants to know if you can visit the Omni Shoreham for one more walkthrough. Oh man, Abby told me Channels 4 and 9 mentioned us. And did you know we received three more packages, with bridal stuff? Like gifts and shit."

"Really?"
Olivia fluffed the four pillows before placing them against the headboard. "I kid you not. A thirty-second segment about local lawyer couple getting married this weekend in the City. Mentioning bits from your interview with James, how we met, a little bit about Teddy. Is that odd to you?"

"I don't know...I don't pay attention."

Taking Fitz's jacket, hanging it up on his side of the closet, she interjected, "Thank God they didn't mention where we're having our wedding. The wedding announcement. Shit! That was the one thing I gave my mother power to do. I didn't even think about reading it over."

"I don't think she would try to sabotage our wedding."

"Not if I can help it," Olivia strutted from the closet, pointing her finger at Fitz. "I should make a few calls. Ask Huck to get someone behind the scenes."

With wide eyes, Fitz implored, "Livvie, baby. We don't need Huck or any security. That's not necessary."

"I'm serious. I don't want this to become a thorn in our side, after we get married. There is whole row of engagement pictures on the Instagram page of Washington Life. When did we become of the City's couple? We're not millionaires or anything."

"Honey."

"James wasn't playing with promoting this. I'm in shock. How did we really say yes to this? I should have said no. I'd rather not have our marriage on display. I feel like we're under a microscope. The ladies at school? All they want to do is talk about my dress, and which important D.C. people are coming?"

The last month of their engagement was full of meetings, triple and quadruple checking the venues, food tastings, paperwork signing, along with receiving some publicity that was not needed. But with their deal with James Novak and other vendors, it had to be. They had to keep their word and that wasn't what Olivia anticipated.

"Olivia Carolyn. You can't play crisis manager on your own damn wedding!"

Stopping in her tracks, she rolled her eyes, stuck out her tongue, and took a sip of her wine.

"You went over your five minutes," Fitz informed, taking his time to put his hands behind his head, playfully biting his lip, soaking in the moment. "So now, the floor is mine. Did you have a good day?"

"Yes."

"Did you take the day off for tomorrow?"

Olivia hurried to her vanity, avoiding his question. "I'm going in to sign a few contracts. And then that's it. I'll be out by 11."

"Livia..."

"Mister, I'm being good. We made an agreement to not bring any work for two weeks. I'm keeping my promises. I am leaving it all at the office. I'll lock the door if need be. Well, Harrison and Abby will need to get in there. But still!"
Olivia thought for a moment; it would be such a challenge to follow through with this. The first time in several years, she was going to shut everything down. She rarely took vacations, and the recollection of not working at all was faint. "Damn, this is going to be a bitch. I just want to make sure everything is just right."

Fitz gently reminded, "It will be worth it."

"I can't believe in a few days, we'll be married."

"I can't wait."

Smiling to herself, Olivia thought about how everything in her life would reset. Everything would be new. It'd be the same, because they had been together for eighteen months, but still a new page would turn, and she could officially reap the benefits of being with Fitz.

She wiped off her makeup, taking off her earrings. "Oh, no. When was the last time we slept in different beds?"

"A long time."

"You know we don't sleep well if we're not with each other," she said, matter-of-factly. "How about I sneak into your room tomorrow night?"

Fitz offered, "As much as I would love that, having you sleeping on me, making sure I stay on my side, this is all on you. You wanted a traditionally modern ceremony. And I'm not going back on what you said."

Letting out a loud groan, Olivia had to complain, "Ugh, this is not fun. I don't know why I agreed to all of this."

"All of what?"

She popped up from her chair, and walked to the door, only to pivot sharply back to her starting point. "The planning, the extra-ness! Everytime people see me, they want to talk about the wedding. I need to pick up the license tomorrow. Ugh, and my Mom is still not respecting my wishes to stay out of my business. She texts me things and I had to mute her ass. Isn't that awful? She should be the one person I want to have in my corner at all times. Maybe it's not too late to hire an assistant. Would it be selfish of me to just go to the courthouse and just have a party afterwards?"

Fitz didn't answer. He could sense her anxiety. Whenever she felt out of control, there were rushed sentences, the running shoes appeared, or she'd pace in circles. And that's what she was doing, creating a path on the carpet floor.

"Livvie," he called softly, getting off the mattress, and walking to the middle of the room.

Her shoulders dropped when he pulled her into him; her ass pressing into his groin. The breathy sigh. That's when he knew she felt safe.

Fitz put his right hand over her chest, one of his favorite places, while his left covered her stomach, confident a new someone would be growing inside one day. Almost thinking she wouldn't approve, he smiled when her petite hands tickled his own. Olivia softened under his touch.

"You're not alone. You are going to be great," he mumbled in between intentional kisses on her neck, one of her tender spots. "Breathe, honey. Can you do that for me? I know this isn't easy. But you're doing a great job. A few more days and everything will be back to normal. Trust me."
Olivia inhaled and exhaled three times, leaning back slightly, hoping Fitz would continue to kiss her. "I know. I just need this. One minute."

"You do," he continued to press his lips on her skin.

He sang a few lines of a tune they'd be using in the wedding, and he could feel her whole body smile. "I can hardly wait to hold you, feel my arms around you, how long I have waited," he softly crooned, pausing to kiss her shoulder. "Waited just to love you now that I have found you..."

Olivia blushed, "Oh, boy."

"I know," he answered. "Won't that be fun?"

As Fitz swayed with his favorite girl, taking all the time she needed, he had an idea.

"Hey, can you start Teddy duty? I have to finish something in the office."

"Sure."

Twenty-five minutes later, Olivia walked into their bedroom. She knew Fitz had come upstairs, because she heard him whistle, while she read Teddy's favorite bedtime story. But she could not find him.

"What are you up to?"

Fitz appeared, with a big smirk.

"Come."

She followed him into the bathroom. When she saw the new appearance of the room, she sighed. A candle was lit. The tub was filled with bubbles. She smiled after dipping her hand in the water. The temperature was just how she liked it.

"Fitz…"

He kissed her forehead, rubbing her arms. "Give yourself all the time you need. I'm going to say goodnight to Teddy and I'll stop by in a few."

After tucking Teddy in, Fitz changed into a simple grey T-shirt and flannel pants. When he returned to Olivia, her eyes were closed, soaking up all the therapeutic goodness.

"Hi.

Bubbles covering her everywhere, she turned to Fitz, grinning blissfully. "Hi. You didn't want to come in with me? It's still hot."

"This is all you, baby." Fitz pulled up a chair and sat beside her.

"Hey," she offered her hand. "Thank you. You're an angel."

"No, you are."

They talked for a little while, random things, just shooting the breeze.

"Whenever you're ready, use this."
Olivia was surprised to see her robe hanging on the door, "Aww, you warmed it up for me?"

"No one likes to come out of a bath shivering."

Olivia met him on the bed, all wrapped up in her cozy white terry cloth robe. Fitz admired her refreshed look. She needed this badly.

"Feel good?"

"Yes. Thank you."

Fitz massaged her hand, when something caught his eye.

"I love your curls."

"Why, thank you, for loving my curls."

Fitz asked hesitantly, "May I?"

Already back at the vanity, Olivia retrieved a few items. "Sure. You know I give your permission to touch my hair. Take this."

Fitz received the wide tooth comb and bottle that held Olivia's favorite styling cream. It was becoming his new hobby — combing her hair. After watching her for months, he remembered the process of how she maintained her glorious crown. Part in sections, rub the fluffy mousse in his hands, softly run his coated fingers through her hair, then gently use the comb, from the bottom up, to detangle and lightly straighten her curls. It wasn't much but she loved when he did it. Not that she didn't like doing her own hair, but she always took pleasure in someone else taking care of the maintenance. She hummed while he massaged her scalp. It was great to watch her relax, and mentally zone out while he took care of her.

He kissed the back of her neck. "I love you."

"Love you."

Once her hair was fully moisturized to the level of how she preferred, Fitz asked, "May I have your Bobby pins—?"

Olivia patted his knee, finally rising from the comforting seat between his legs. "I got it, it will be quick."

He watched as she part her hair again into four sections, twirling the ends, making eight mini-buns — she called them Bantu knots. Livvie was particular about anything related to her hair. Whether she kept it curly, short, long, used extensions or a wig, she didn't play!

"Yeah," he smirked, relaxing, "I would have failed. Not there yet."

Hearing her laugh was worth every minute.

"Maybe I'll buy you a doll and you can practice on her first."

"That would be cool."

"You wanna use my lotion?"

Fitz scooted off the bed again, "I may not be able to finish after what I see."
"Fine," she teased, waving the bottle, "I'll take care of it."

He playfully snatched it away. "Lie down, baby."

Olivia followed directions, taking a deep breath. She waited for Fitz to gentle pull away the robe. When he did, he found her only in a pair of black panties. The exact pair that always made him lose his shit.

Giving him a "come hither" glance, she asked, "Whatcha waiting for?"

Fitz rubbed his hands together for warmth, then squeezed a good amount of lotion into his palm. On purpose, he went slow, allowing the creamy lotion to seep into Olivia's skin. As well as giving her a semi-deep tissue massage. Hearing her moan, while her eyes were closed, was just what he wanted.

"How's that feel?"

"Mhmm."

Olivia hazily opened her eyes. Fitz winked, then kissed her stomach.

"Love you."

"I love you. Thank you for all of this. I see you're excited," she pointed towards Fitz's bulge, which was straining against his pajama pants.

Fitz inched away, while still working on her arm. "Focus."

"How about I help you with that?"

"This is about you."

"Fitzy Baby…"

He rolled his eyes, feeling Olivia's big toe nudging at the waistband of his pajama pants.

"No, thank you. All done."

With a mischievious smirk, Olivia stated, "Fitzy. I have no clothes and you're fully dressed. Just take it off. This too."

"I just put it on."

Fitz received a sassy glare from his wife-to-be.

"Bossy Pope."

As he lowkey grunted, he removed his shirt and pajama pants. Olivia bit her lip, trying to contain her excitement. As she observed him walk around naked, her hand found its way to her breast, tenderly massaging her nipple. "Damn. You're hot."

"Liv…"

"I mean it. I'm telling you again."

She watched him shake his head, being a little bashful, but still accepting her kind, meaningful words.
"You sure have a way of making feel good about myself."

"Good," she replied, patting her hand on the bed.

Their eyes met, full of smoky lust. No point in denying each other now, when they were in their sanctuary, safe, vulnerable, and in a particular mood.

"Come to me."

"Why?"

"I promise, it won't take long. You need to relax too. You work so hard, baby. Just come here. Let's..."

Fitz moved like a big cat, pouncing on top of Olivia, a chuckle caught in his throat, as she hooked her arm around his neck, while rubbing her hand on his hairy chest.

"I knew you'd get my drift, my strong and gentle man."

Olivia lifted her head to kiss Fitz. Their kisses were so lush, melting into each other.

"Shall I slip your panties off so I don't destroy them? Anytime you wear them, they fuck me up."

"You may," she agreed. Gently pressing her two fingers on his lips, stopping him. "Wait."

Fitz ran his hand through his hair, "What?"

"Wait. Did you lock the door?"

She could never let that one go. Ever since Christmas time. It was their running joke. Without pausing, he gave her a playful bite on her neck, "Yes, dear..."

The decision to have the wedding on a Friday night was becoming a trend in the area. A little cheaper than on the true weekend, and then it gave those visiting an extra day to enjoy the area.

On Thursday, everything went well without a hitch. At the church, the pastor gave Olivia and Fitz encouragement, helping them along through the order of service, and gave them a blessing before they left for their wedding rehearsal dinner. With only ten friends attending, it was the break they needed. Through the magic of Airbnb, they rented a small house in Virginia, overlooking the Potomac River.

Olivia wanted the theme to be casual, so after setting up the table, she changed into a different outfit. When the guests arrived, she came downstairs in a grey t-shirt, black jeans with holes, black booties, and a white leather jacket. Wanting to spice things up, she chose vampy red lipstick, and style her hair in loose beachy waves.

Fitz met her at the foot of the stairs, rocking a grey suit and light blue dress shirt. They looked so cute together.

The food was excellent, the drinks flowing, with music blasting. On a cold February night, the party was carefree. Just what they wanted. If anyone wanted to step outside on the deck, to see the view of Georgetown, everything lit up, they could.

"We would like to thank you all for celebrating with us. It means so much," Fitz stated, lifting his flute, with his free arm, wrapped around Olivia's waist.
"To Fitz and Liv!"

After two hours of laughs, story telling, dancing, and cleaning, it was time to say goodnight. Fitz's best man, Ashton, was the DD and had the SUV ready to take Fitz and the other guys back to the house in Chevy Chase, while the rental was being used for the ladies.

Olivia and Fitz stepped outside, to have a little bit of privacy. They hugged, along with one long parting kiss.

"I'll see you tomorrow."

With a quick nod, Olivia said, "Okay."

Looking into her eyes and holding her tight, Fitz replied, "Call me if you need anything."

"No," she kissed his cheek. "You call me if something comes up. If you can't sleep. Just text me."

He laughed, "You've been turning your phone off lately. I notice."

"I'll keep it on. Just for you."

Olivia tugged on his peacoat. "Go, they guys are waiting and it's getting cold. I don't want you to get sick."

"Fine," he feigned offense, before kissing her once more, but with more intensity, leaving her breathless. "See ya."

Somewhat regretting her decision to shoo him off so quickly, she waved, whispering, "Bye."

"Rise and shine!"

Abby Whelan's high pitched voice rang strong in Olivia's ears as she floated into the room, singing. Opening one eye, she saw her friend, grinning from ear to ear, hair up in big curlers, slapping her hand on the bed.

"What?"

"Come on, girl. It's your special day!"

Olivia grabbed her phone, checking the time. Loudly clicking her tongue, she said, "Nope!"

"Liv!"

"How did Gabrielle give you access to my room? I'm going to get her. It's ten o'clock. My wedding is not until six in the evening. Leave me the fuck alone," she rolled on her stomach, covering her pillow over her head.

"Why?"

"Abigail. I have the power to remove you from my inner circle, and you'll watch the ceremony from the back pew seat, instead of to the right of me, woman."

Olivia wasn't playing games; she needed her beauty sleep. Abby was treading on thin ice. There was no way in hell she was going to not enjoy her morning off.
Abby reclined in the oversized chair in the corner.

"I'm so happy for you. You deserve all of this."

"Thank you," Olivia mumbled.

Abby checked her phone, for the several text messages. "Harrison said—"

"Aht! No work talk."

"I'm not," she teased. "Harrison said Fitz is like a nervous puppy. Excited and wants to know if you're okay."

Olivia sat up, thankful that her silk bonnet stayed on. She kept twisting and turning all night. It was true; she didn't sleep well if she didn't have Fitz next to her. "He could always call me."

Abby shook her head. "He's a proud man. He doesn't want to admit these things to you. He doesn't want to worry."

"If he's really concerned, he'll contact me."

And with that, Olivia fell back onto all the big pillows, and tried to get more sleep.

Meanwhile back in Chevy Chase, it was a different story.

Sleepyhead Fitz wanted to relax, but he couldn't. So many butterflies rumbling in his stomach, it was hard to sit still. It had been so long long since they didn't spend the night in the same bed, or brewing the other's morning coffee or tea, it caused a ruckus in their systems. Especially Fitz. He had returned to bed, after breakfast, back to the place where he slept, on the right side — her side, obviously — and wondering how she did. He didn't want to start the conversation, but he wanted to know. It was ridiculous how smitten he was of her.

Almost like that first night, when they met, and he was anxious to text her, wanting to talk as soon as possible.

To his excitement, Olivia texted him first.

*Hi.*

Smiling wide, he replied.

*Hi.*

*Can you talk?*

*Sure thing.*

Five seconds later, her name lit up his screen.

"Good morning."

"Good morning."

"What's up," he asked, still with a little frog in his throat.

"I'm nervous."
"Me too."

"But you've done this before," she chuckled.

"You weren't the bride."

"Touché."

Fitz decided to switch gears. "Did you have breakfast?"

"Not yet. Just coffee. You?"

"I did. The guys whipped up a spread."

"Abby is setting up some brunch situation. I don't really care. I just want to see you."

Fitz's heart skipped a beat. "Me too. I love you."

"I love you too."

Later that day, they had the same kind of discussion, but they were in different section upstairs in the church. An energetic surge was filling the halls. Stefania and her team were moving back and forth, making sure all stations were coordinated and on time. The photographer and her second shooter, were taking detailed shots and behind the scenes.

"You look amazing," Gabrielle stated, giving her best friend a hug.

Olivia kissed her cheek, thanking her. "I couldn't have done this without you."

The ladies posed for a few pictures, before returning to get ready.

Her phone rang. It was Fitz this time.

"Hi, baby. You okay?"

"Yes. How about you?"

"Sort of. I'm glad you called," her voice trembled a little bit. "I just wanted to hear your voice."

Fitz became concerned, "What's going on?"

"This is really happening. It's fucking overwhelming."

"I know," he agreed, leaning against the wall. "I hope you're taking in everything. I don't want you to forget."

Olivia took a tissue to dab at the corner of her eyes. "Tell me something funny."

Fitz paused, then asked, "What are you wearing?"

"My dress," she answered, unsure of his line of questioning.

"May I see?"

Olivia burst into nervous giggles, "Stop it! You knew damn well I was going to say no."

"But you wanted me to say something funny."
"You right, you right."

Fitz moved to the corner of the room, where it was less busy. "I can't wait to see you."

He heard her breathe deeply.

"Livvie?"

"My makeup looks great. My hair is set perfectly. If you make me cry before I see you, making sure I don't look as good as I want, I will kick your ass, Grant."

Looking up, he cleverly responded, "My ass is always ready to be kicked by you, Pope."

"Haha, threatening me by my maiden name, for the last time."

"I know. I didn't think you'd want to change your name."

Olivia turned to the long mirror, noticing the detailing in her gown, to somewhat distract herself from getting too emotional. "I'm okay with it. I have no problem with it."

"Liv?"

"Yes?"

"I love you."

"Love you so much."

Fitz nodded at the planner, who was giving him the cue to move along. "Ugh, I need to go. The photographer is coming back."

"See you in a few."

"Alrighty."

In one hour, he'd be waiting at the end of the aisle, to see her in all her beauty. To proclaim, again, that he loved her with all his heart. The doubt and heartache from his past subsided. It didn't matter anymore. He knew she was the one. That was the truth.

The sanctuary was filled with their loved ones and friends. Roses framing the pulpit and the stage, along with a request from Olivia's: a few artificial trees that had red flowers. She wanted a romantic, winter wonderland theme. Modern connecting with tradition.

Fitz and his men strutted down the aisle, to meet the pastor. Looking extremely handsome in a black tuxedo. He caught the eye of his father, who beamed back, so very proud of him.

Then, his best boy turned the corner. Of course, as the ring bearer. When they asked him on New Year's, Teddy thought it was the greatest honor ever. With enthusiasm, he would tell anyone who would listen, "I'm going to be in the wedding party for my parents! I'm the ring bearer. I'm going to hold a silk pillow and make sure their rings are safe!"

Sporting a new haircut, he marched down the aisle in his adorable tuxedo, matching his father's, with a fancy silk bowtie. Everyone cheered.

When he arrived at the front, Fitz greeted his son, "Hi, baby."
Teddy winked at his father, smiling with cheeks so full. "Hi, Daddy! Time to get married… Finally!"

Meanwhile, at the back of the sanctuary, around the corner, Olivia was taking deep breaths, while her parents were at her side.

"This is your day, Livvie. Don't let anyone take that away from you," Eli said, kissing her forehead. Marie took Olivia's hand, squeezing it tight.

"You are so beautiful."

"Thank you, Mama."

"Enjoy every minute. We are very proud of you."

Stefania asked if they were ready. The Popes watched Olivia nod.

After receiving the cue, the organist changed her music, and the wedding march began.

The guests rose.

Fitz kept his eyes trained on the door.

Then, he saw her. His breath hitched, and was thanking God, the universe, and his lucky stars, of his dream coming to him.

With her father by her side, Olivia gracefully approached the front of the room. Her dress was so becoming, so her; it was an off-the-shoulder gown, very ballerina-esque. The bodice accentuated her slim frame, and then the flowy, voluminous skirt, added drama. When Olivia saw the dress, she loved how elegant it was, but also gave so much, no one could look away. Opting to continue the dancer look, she asked for a sleek top bun. The stylist added a few jeweled barrettes on the side, adding some sparkle.

She felt like a princess.

Fitz was so proud, so in love, so happy, she was on her way to him.

Her eyes began to well with tears when her eyes found him. Her handsome prince, standing so tall, with a rose tucked in his left lapel.

"Hi," they said to each other, when they met each other in the front.

Turning to his future father-in law, Fitz promised, "I will take good care of her, Mr. Pope."

"It's Eli," he joked, and shaking Fitz's hand, he added, "I know you will."

"Please be seated," the pastor greeted. "We are gathered today to witness the union of two souls... Love. That is the main virtue that has brought these two people together."

The ceremony wasn't too long. Fitz asked the pastor to include a few quotes and Scriptures that he found to be appropriate.

Then, it was time for their vows.

Receiving the note from Gabrielle, Olivia went first.
My sweet Fitz,

You complete me.

It took me a while to understand how this could be a wonderful thing, but you helped me figure it out. You're so patient and full of love. You challenge me to be myself and be a better person. You're everything I've ever wanted. You are my dream come true. I can't imagine life without you. I love you and Teddy so much. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for choosing me. I am thrilled to continue the rest of our days together.

I love you,

Your Livvie

With tears streaming down her face, she looked at Fitz, who was more than ready to share with he had on his heart.

Livvie,

When I met you, I knew you'd be a part of my life. I knew I fell in love. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for allowing me to realize that I can love again. Thank you for being a wonderful mother to our son. Your strength and patience keeps me going. You own me and my heart. I will love you forever. You are my love, my soulmate, my everything.

I love you,

Fitz

The whole room applauded. The pastor smiled at them, approving of the intimate, meaningful statements of love they created for each other.

"I don't think there is more to say. It is now time to exchange the rings. Teddy, please come forward."

Olivia's cheeks rose as he walked to them. He gave them the respective rings.

"Thank you, baby," she replied, blowing a kiss to Teddy, whose cheeks turned extra red, so quickly.

"With this ring…"

"I thee wed."

The exchange was simple, and so powerful. Their eyes met, communicating in ways no one could recognize. Their souls were joining as one.

"By the powers vested in me, I pronounce you husband and wife. Fitzgerald, You may kiss your bride."

The witnesses cheered as Fitz dipped Olivia, engaging in the most precious, sacred kiss.

"May I present to you, Mr. and Mrs. Fitzgerald Grant III!"

Facing the people they wanted to be present for this, the Grants walked to the end of the aisle, smiling, and saying "hello".

They rushed to a side hall. Olivia began to laugh. Fitz joined her, just elated, that they made it.
"I can't believe it. We're married!"

Fitz cupped her face with his hands, "Yes, we are, baby. You look… so beautiful."

Catching her breath, overwhelmed, she requested, "Kiss me, for real this time."

Olivia rubbed Fitz's jaw as they kissed, giggling as they came up for air, just ignoring everything around them.

"Oh, I'm sorry!"

Stefania had entered the room. Olivia didn't care who was watching, she was kissing her husband. Seeing that lipstick was on his cheeks and lips, she used her thumb to rub some of it away.

"Hi, Stefania! Is everything okay?"

"We need to take pictures."

Fitz took Olivia's hand so they could follow their leader. "Absolutely!"

Bethany, their photographer for Vermont, had wonderfully made the trip down to the District. Her style was breathtaking and ideal for what Olivia wanted in their photos. First, the set with their family: The Popes, Gerry, and Teddy. Then, with their wedding party. Finally, a few of them in the front of the altar.

Thirty minutes later, they were at the reception venue: The Omni Shoreham Hotel. When they walked into the ballroom, Olivia began to cry. Fitz rubbed her back, hoping everything was okay.

"It's so beautiful. This is exactly what I wanted!" She rushed to hug Stefania.

Another round of pictures with just the two of them, looking so elegant. A number of playful shots were included, and then of course, all of the pictures with Teddy. He was such a photogenic child, there weren't any duds.

Olivia went to change her dress; a gown that was more form-fitting but still breathable, and could move while she danced and socialized.

Standing outside the doors, the Grants took everything in. Fitz kissed the back of her neck, while Olivia pressed her hand on his face.

"You ready, Grant?"

"Always," she looked up to his smiling face.

The deejay began his introductions, announcing everyone in the wedding party, and then, exclaiming, "And now for the first time. Presenting Mr. and Mrs. Grant!"

As their favorite new upbeat song played, Olivia and Fitz two stepped in the room.

Dinner was served, and all the choices they made, were a hit with their guests. Throughout the evening, the Grants were able to see everyone, and receive their well-wishes.

"The groom would like to say a few words."

Fitz took the microphone and stood in the middle of the room. "Good evening, everyone! We want to thank you all for attending our special day. It means so much to us. I want to thank a special
someone who has been a blessing to us. To my baby boy, Theodore, you all know him as Teddy, I want to thank you especially for being extra patient with us. You didn't complain, you tolerated all our busy evenings. And you kept us going when we got stressed. I love you!

Teddy ran from his seat to greet Fitz. After they hugged, he asked for the mic.

"Hi, guys. I don't know everyone, but I want you to know that I love my Daddy and my new Mommy Liv!"

Everyone in the room collectively "aww"-ed. Olivia met with the boys, giving both of them kisses.

"The first dance..."

Fitz extended his hand, and Olivia smoothly moved into his arms. The slow piano melody started, and the vocals entered, the words were all the more powerful. So relevant to who they were as a couple.

You've got the look of love  
It's on your face  
A look that time can't erase  
Be mine tonight  
Let this be just the start  
Of so many nights like this  
Let's take a lover's vow  
And then seal it with a kiss

"Oh my God," she whispered as they swayed. "This is so us."

Fitz kissed her forehead, "It's perfect. I knew you'd be mine. You have my heart, sweet baby."

As the song faded, he dipped Olivia into a perfect layout. When he eased her back to standing, she placed a bold kiss on his lips. Lots of "ooh's" and "ahhs".

Olivia did not want to get cake in her face, so she opted for cupcakes as the dessert. Fitz knew he'd get his ass kicked if he even tried to get any of the sweet treat near her face.

It was time for the party to begin. When the call to the dance floor happened, almost everyone migrated. Including the newlyweds. Olivia wanted a true DC party, so several gogo songs were played, along with classic R&B, some top 40, and fun requests.

Wisely, Olivia switched her fancy heels for sparkly Toms. Fitz removed his tie and rolled up his sleeves. Whenever an upbeat song came on, he didn't hesitate to join in the fun. He was moving back and forth, having a grand time dancing. For someone who didn't seem like a pro, he was able to keep up.

At certain points, he was in the middle of the dance circles, moving with Teddy, and others. Off to the side, Olivia smirked, taking sips of his wine.

"I didn't know your husband could move like that!"

Highkey amused, she answered, "He always surprises me."

The mode shifted, and the bride was plenty ready to go. Batting her eyelashes, she gave her new husband the sign.
And soon after, it was time to send the couple off. Most of the group followed the Grants as they walked outside, briskly moving towards the car. After kissing Teddy goodnight, and thanking more guests, and their parents, Olivia and Fitz finally got in the car.

Abby waved and exclaimed, "Have fun fucking your man!"

Everyone roared in laughter. As Olivia shook her head, lovingly lifting her middle finger, she mouthed, "I'm going to get you back."

The car ride to the house was quiet; Olivia resting her head on Fitz, just taking in everything that happened. The night was perfect and there was still more involved. Knowing Teddy was safe and sound at his best friend's house, while Gigi was cozy at Olivia's parents' house, the Grants could re-christen their home, in all the delicious ways.

Fitz took Olivia's fur coat, while she left to change. A few minutes later, she greeted him in the kitchen, in her robe, with a silk camisole underneath, with lace bordering her cleavage.

"Fuck. You really know how to make me go wild."

Beveling her foot, Olivia reminded him, "I've been learning from the best. Shall we get started?"

Fitz clasped his hands together, "Fuck yeah!"

Starting in the kitchen. Olivia poured a glass of champagne.

"To us."

"To us, my sweet baby."

They both took a long sip of the tart beverage, relishing this moment. Ts she tapped her newly adorned finger on the flute, Olivia stepped even closer to Fitz, bringing her mouth to his. Wordlessly following her lead, their tongues passing the barriers of lips. The prim and proper kisses they exchanged in front of everyone, went out the window.

She smirked, "Ooh. I love how you taste, husband."

"Ditto, wife."

"You still hungry?"

"Yeah."

Olivia moved out of Fitz's reach, sauntering in the kitchen, opening the refrigerator door. "What do you want? I can warm something up."

Moving swiftly so that he was behind her already, he palmed her ass, lowly growling, "You. We got all weekend to feast."

Olivia, immensely enjoying Fitz's wordplay, removed the glass from his hand, now joining her flute on the counter, and pulled him into her. There was no space for anyone, not even the Holy Ghost, to interrupt what they were going to do. Their heads slightly angled, for their lips to meet, noses to touch. Greedy hands ready to hold on to whatever they could find.

"Couch or bedroom?"

Olivia pulled out the bobby pins, allowing her hair to fall. "Take me upstairs, honey."
After scooping her into his arms, the newlyweds ascended to their room. Gently laying Olivia down on the bed, Fitz quickly disrobed.

"I made a playlist."

"Turn it on, baby," he encouraged, joining her in bed.

Laying on their sides, they moved close, so happy they were reunited; skin touching, exchanging warmth. After their playful kisses moved into passionate ones, with their breaths catching, hips arching, moans becoming louder. Olivia's nails slightly digging into his freckled back, then she squealed, as he pulled back to align himself with her core. Teasing her clit and opening with his thick tip, he enjoyed seeing her get more excited and wet. She was becoming impatient and he loved it.

"Ready, Livvie?"

"Uh huh."

Olivia held her breath until he finally made his way inside of her, filling her up deliciously.

"Yes," she exhaled, getting situated.

They started slow, eyes trained on each other, which was a quick path to getting there. Her hips rolled, in time with the music playing in the background. Olivia selected songs they had heard on dates, or reminded her of them. Slow and tantalizing, extra sexy, encouraging them to do what their bodies desired.

Fitz couldn't resist having his lips on Olivia's body. After spending his time on her lips, he gave her bosom quality time, lightly pulling and biting, and sucking, doing whatever she loved. Reaching down to make slow circles on her swollen clit, while pumping into her, causing her to shake. On the flip side, Mrs. Grant made it her mission to give Fitz the best sex of his life. Pulling his hair, sucking on his ears, so they would turn beet red; letting him know how she loved everything about him, including the reminders of how how big and wonderful he was. Touching him in all the right places, and matching his powerful thrusts. His loud moans in her ear, feeling him holding her tight, prompting him to lift her hands over her head. Their pace quickened; as he eased out of her to realign, Fitz pressed her stubborn thigh down, gripping the beautiful flesh.

"Ooh, that's cold!"

He began to lift his hand, finding where he offended her. Then, he realized it was his ring. "Sorry. Should I take it off?"

Olivia smiled, keeping his hand on her leg; "No, keep it on. I love it. You look extra sexy, with only your ring. It's going to let everyone know that you're taken. By me."

Lightly pressing his nose on her jawline, he answered, "Absolutely, Mrs. Grant."

Three intense orgasms later, they were finally spent, sweat drenching their brows, in each other's arms, they revealed their favorite moments of the evening.

Fitz whispered, "Seeing you for the first time."

"Telling you 'I love you'."

Sheepishly, he added, "This."
"Fucking me?"

Olivia gave him a raspberry, before he tickled her, flipping her over.

"Woman! Consummating our marriage."

They laughed for a full minute, feeling so relieved.

"You're my husband," she whispered, voice cracking slightly, as she held on to Fitz, keeping her head on his chest.

Fitz tucked away some of the hair that got in her face, sticking to her skin, then brushing her fingers on her back. "I am, beautiful one. Always. I love you."

"I love you."

Their first night as husband and wife was a success and one to remember. They were looking forward to this new adventure and promised to keep all their memories safe in their hearts.

"I found the one in whom my soul loves." - Song of Solomon 3:4

Chapter End Notes

We made it! Olivia and Fitz married. I hope it was worth the wait. I wanted it to be perfect.

You know I had to include the theme song of this story - "The Look of Love" by Sergio Mendes and Brasil '66.

Thank you for reading and supporting this fic.

xo

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