

## *One*

Ayden Stewart stared out at the Austin city skyline from the fiftieth floor of Stewart Investments. It had taken him fifteen years since graduating from Harvard to build his company, but at thirty-six, he'd finally achieved his goal. And he'd done it all on his own. Without the help of his father, Henry Stewart, a rich man who'd never bothered to acknowledge his eldest son's existence, not after his second wife had given him two heirs for his own company, Stewart Technologies. It was just as well. He'd long ago stopped looking for love and acceptance from his old man.

*Knock. Knock. Knock.*

"Come in." His office door opened and his assistant, Carolyn Foster, walked in. The statuesque blonde wore pregnancy well; barely a baby bump could be seen in the smart attire she wore.

"Do you have a minute?"

"Of course," Ayden responded, moving away from the window. "What can I do for you?"

"I have some not so pleasant news to deliver," Carolyn said.

"Oh, yeah? Whatever it is, just give it to me straight, no chaser."

"Very well..." She paused for several beats. "I won't be coming back after my maternity leave in a few months."

"Excuse me?" This couldn't be happening to him *again*.

"I'm sorry, Ayden—really, I am—but my husband and I have been trying for some time to start a family. And, well, I just want to enjoy the time with our first child because I'm not sure when we might have another."

Carolyn would make a fantastic mother because she was already putting her child first. It made Ayden think of the only person who'd ever cared one iota about him, who was gone, taken away too soon. His mother Lillian Stewart-Johnson, God rest her soul, had passed away several years ago from a heart attack. He suspected his mother's illness had been caused by years of stress and abuse at the hands of his stepfather Jack Johnson. Jack was a habitual smoker and a mean drunk.

Ayden had focused hard on his studies, so he could get the hell out of the house. And he'd been lucky. In junior high, his teachers recognized his high IQ and had helped Ayden receive a scholarship to a prestigious boarding school in the East. From there, his grades helped him get into Harvard and he'd never looked back.

Growing up, Ayden had developed a thick skin. He'd had to in order to live in the Johnson household, and not just because of the bruises, but because of the lack of love or affection. He'd learned he didn't need either. If he hadn't met his roommate, Luke Williams, in boarding school in the ninth grade, who knows how long Ayden would have gone without any real feelings. Ayden's goal had been to save his mama from working two jobs to support Jack's pack-and-bottle-a-day habit, but it had been useless. By the time he'd finally started making enough money, his mother was gone and he was all alone in the world except for Luke, his closest friend. Why had his mother let men bully her all her life? First, Henry had intimidated her into a small settlement, cutting her out of her rightful shares in Stewart Technologies. Then, Jack spent the little money she had received. Why hadn't she fought for the child support she was entitled to?

"I imagine there's nothing I could do to change your mind?" Ayden inquired. He knew it was a long shot, but he couldn't understand why anyone would throw away a good-paying job in order to stay home and change poopy diapers. Carolyn's departure was going to leave him in quite a pickle. One he hadn't been in since a certain uptight but beautiful assistant had left him five years ago.

"No, there isn't," Carolyn said, "but we can find a replacement. You always said you never thought you'd find someone as good as Maya and look what happened—you hired me."

He would never forget the day, ten years ago, when Maya Richardson had walked through his door looking for a job. She'd been a godsend, helping Ayden grow Stewart Investments into the company it was today. Thinking of her brought a smile to Ayden's face. How could it not? Not only was she the best assistant he'd ever had, Maya had fascinated him. Utterly and completely. Maya had hidden an exceptional figure beneath professional clothing and kept her hair in a tight bun. But Ayden had often wondered what it would be like to throw her over his desk and muss her up. Five years ago, he hadn't gone quite that far, but he had crossed a boundary.

Maya had been devastated over her breakup with her boyfriend. She'd come to him for comfort, and, instead, Ayden had made love to her. Years of wondering what it would be like to be with Maya had erupted into a passionate encounter. Their one night together had been so explosive the next morning Ayden had needed to take a step back to regain his perspective. He'd had to put up his guard; otherwise, he would have hurt her badly. He thought he'd been doing the right thing, but Maya hadn't thought so. In retrospect, Ayden wished he'd never given in to temptation. But he had, and he'd lost a damn good assistant. Maya had quit, and Ayden hadn't seen or heard from her since.

Shaking his head, Ayden strode to his desk and picked up the phone, dialing the recruiter who'd helped him find Carolyn. He wasn't looking forward to this process. It had taken a long time to find and train Carolyn. Before her, Ayden had dealt with several candidates walking into his office thinking they could ensnare him.

No, he had someone else in mind. A hardworking, dedicated professional who could read his mind without him saying a word and who knew how to handle a situation in his absence. Someone who knew about the big client he'd always wanted to capture but never could attain. She also had a penchant for numbers and research like no one he'd ever seen, not even Carolyn.

Ayden knew exactly who he wanted. He just needed to find out where she'd escaped to.

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"Aren't you tired yet?" Callie Lewis asked Maya Richardson after they'd jogged nearly five miles in the muggy San Antonio weather. They'd met up at 6:00 a.m. after Maya had stumbled out of bed, placed her shoulder-length black hair in a ponytail, and put on her favorite sports tank with built-in bra and running shorts.

"No. Not yet." Maya hazarded a glance at Callie. Her friend was five foot two and nearly two hundred pounds, and had been following an intense exercise routine to lose weight. She'd already lost fifty pounds and Maya was trying to encourage her. They'd been best friends ever since Callie had defended Maya from bullies in the fifth grade, so Callie's well-being was important to her.

"Well, I need to stop a sec," Callie paused midstride. She limped over to a nearby bench and began a series of stretches.

"Okay, no problem." Maya jogged in place while she stretched.

"What's got you all riled up?" Callie asked. "You've been on edge for a couple of days."

Maya stopped jogging and stood still. She'd been trying outrun the past, which was impossible, but she was giving it the old college try. "I received an invitation from Raven and Thomas for Nysha's baptism."

"You received what?" Callie's brown eyes grew large with amazement.

"You heard me."

"I just can't believe your sister and that sleazy husband of hers had the nerve to send it. Not after what they did to you."

Maya shrugged. It had been five long years since she'd felt the sting of Raven's betrayal with her boyfriend, Thomas. If anyone had told her that her baby sister would steal her man and marry him, she would have called them a liar. Maya and Raven had always been so close. When their father had left their mother, it had broken up their family, leaving her mom Sophia alone to support them. It hadn't been easy especially because her mother favored Raven.

"How can you be silent about this?"

"Because...I've made my peace, Callie," Maya replied. "I had to. They got *married*, for Christ's sake. I didn't have much choice."

"You didn't go to their wedding."

"How could I? Back then it was all too fresh."

"Including what happened between you and Ayden?"

Maya rolled her eyes. "Let's not talk about him, okay?"

"Why not? If I recall what you said back then, it was the best sex you'd ever had in your life," Callie said, making air quotes. "Yet after your night with him and his failure to acknowledge what happened, you quit your dream job."

Maya sighed heavily. She wished she'd kept that secret to herself. Five years ago, for better or for worse, her life had changed. She'd accepted it and moved on.

She began running in place again. "C'mon, my muscles are starting to tense up. We have to finish our run."

"You go on ahead," Callie stated. "I'm going to sit this one out. I'll call you later."

"Sure thing." Maya jogged off in the opposite direction. As she did, she thought back to that horrible night.

She'd been working late because Ayden needed a presentation for the following day. She'd picked up takeout to bring to her boyfriend, Thomas. Using the key he'd given her, she'd opened the door to his town house and found it dark. It was surprising, given his car was sitting in the driveway. After placing the bags on the kitchen counter, she'd heard voices.

*Who was visiting Thomas?* It was well after eight o'clock, so Maya had walked upstairs to investigate. She'd never forget the sight that greeted her: her baby sister, Raven, on top of Thomas as they writhed on the bed. Maya had screamed bloody murder. Raven had rushed off the bed to the bathroom while Thomas tried to cover himself with a sheet as he'd attempted to explain. What was there to discuss? She'd caught him banging her sister. Maya had rushed out of the room, damn near falling down the stairs and losing a great shoe in the process to make it to her car. Fumbling with the key, she'd eventually started it up and was pulling off when Raven came running out the door in Thomas's shirt calling after her. The whole incident had been humiliating.

*How long had their affair been going on?*

*How long had both of them been laughing behind her back?*

Maya ran harder. Faster. But she couldn't outrun the memories. They must have really thought she was a fool for believing his lies that she was the kind of girl he wanted to marry. Her mother was right. Raven was the beauty in the family.

That was the state she'd been in when she'd arrived on Ayden's doorstep. Maya hadn't known where else to go. Callie lived in San Antonio and Maya had just lost her sister to a man she thought she loved. Over the five years of their working relationship, she and Ayden had shared some personal stories, especially when he'd told her about his past; she'd hoped he could lend her an ear now when she needed someone to listen.

Ah, Ayden. He'd been her secret crush for years before she'd met Thomas. When she'd started working for him, Maya had thought the sun and moon hung on the green-eyed devil, but Ayden hadn't seen her like that, like a woman. All he saw was a smart, efficient PA who did his bidding—which included making reservations for his dates with beautiful women, and sending them expensive flowers or trinkets as a parting gift when he was done with them. And yet, she'd chosen to go to Ayden, the man who didn't believe in love and thought it was a hoax meant to sell greeting cards.

That night, he'd offered her comfort. A shoulder to cry on. Comfort in ways she'd never been able to forget. Initially, he'd been shocked by her disheveled presence on his doorstep, but as soon as he'd seen her puffy, red-rimmed eyes, Ayden had immediately taken her into his embrace and closed the door behind him. He'd sat her down on the couch and listened as she'd told him of Raven and Tom's betrayal, of her failure. No one was ever going to love her, *want* her. She was a nothing. A nobody. A plain Jane that no man would ever be compelled to marry. Ayden had refused to hear of it. Had told her she was wrong. He'd stroked her hair and told her everything was going to be all right. With tears in her eyes, she'd glanced up at him, and then she'd done something desperate. She'd kissed him.

The surprising thing was he hadn't pushed her away. Instead, he'd kissed her back. One thing had led to another and the next moment, she and Ayden were making love on his bear skin rug on the floor of his living room. To this day, Maya had never been able to fully understand what had happened. One minute, he'd been consoling her and telling her she was beautiful and worthy of love, and the next, she'd been wrapped in his arms having wild, passionate sex.

It had literally been the most exciting sexual encounter of her life. Maya had experienced true bliss and one hell of an orgasm, but as soon as it was over, Ayden had pulled away. What she'd thought was heaven on earth had soon turned into a nightmare. Ayden told her he hadn't meant for it to happen. Maya had been crushed for the second time in one night. She'd dressed as fast as she could and had left to lick her wounds in private.

She'd relived that moment many nights since, wondering how their relationship had taken such a turn. Maya had always harbored feelings for Ayden in the past, but she'd never thought for a second that they were reciprocated. She'd eventually come to the conclusion that he'd made love to her out of pity because she'd been so pathetic. Knowing how he felt, Maya couldn't face Ayden again and had tendered her resignation.

Looking back, Maya realized that she'd been more upset over Ayden's rejection than Thomas's. Sure, she'd been hurt by Thomas because she'd loved him, but it had been her sister stealing her man that hurt the most. She'd never forgiven Raven, and they hadn't spoken in five years. It was Ayden who'd really broken her heart.

Once Maya had pushed herself to the limit with ten miles, she stopped running. It was time she faced the past with her sister so she could move forward with her life. And there was no better time than the present.

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“Do you think she’ll come back?” Ayden asked his best friend on a transatlantic call later that evening. It was before 7:00 a.m. in London, but he knew Luke Williams would already be up. How did he know? Because they were alike—notorious workaholics and driven to succeed. Luke was a financial analyst making millions.

“After the way you treated her when she left?” Luke said. “I wouldn’t.”

Ayden frowned. “Was I really that bad?”

“Hmm, I don’t know, let me think,” Luke paused for dramatic effect. “You were a slave driver at the office, rarely giving the poor girl a day off. And at a moment of weakness, you shag her and then tell her to kick rocks. I dunno, I might have a problem with that.”

“Thanks a lot, Luke.”

“You did call me, you know,” Luke responded. “If you didn’t want me to keep it one hundred with you then you should have called another mate.”

“You’re my only *mate*.” Ayden replied. He didn’t have many friends. He’d never had the time to make any because he was too busy pushing himself to excel, to make something of himself despite Henry Stewart turning his back and leaving him and his mom with an abusive stepfather.

“Yeah, that’s true. No one else can tolerate you. Except maybe Maya, and you made a royal mess of that relationship.”

“I know I messed up, but I can fix it.”

Luke snorted. “By offering Maya her job back? Why on earth would she ever agree? What does she get out of it?”

“I’m prepared to offer her a generous salary.”

“And if she wants more?”

“What do you mean?”

“C’mon, man, don’t be an idiot. Maya left because you two slept together. If you offer her a job, she might be thinking there’s more on the table.”

Ayden had never thought Maya might want more. “I’m not prepared to give her anything else. You know how I feel about love, marriage, the whole white-picket-fence thing.”

“Yeah, yeah, sing to the choir. I’ve already heard this bit before,” Luke stated. “Poor you, your dad left your mom to marry a hot tart, leaving you and your mom with nothing.”

“That’s right. Love is for other poor dumb schmucks.”

“Like me, you mean,” Luke countered.

Darn. He’d stuck his foot in his mouth. Luke had just married a beautiful redhead named Helena and they were head over heels in love. But if anyone could make a go of marriage, it was Luke. “Present company excluded,” Ayden stated.

Luke chuckled. “You’ve never minced words before, Ayden, so don’t start now.”

“Helena is lovely,” Ayden replied. “And she’s madly in love with you. She can’t wait to have a mess of babies with you.”

“That’s right, my friend. I’ll have Helena knocked up before the year is out,” Luke said, laughing. “That way she can’t leave me for another man when she realizes she married a dumb schmuck like me.”

Ayden laughed. That’s what he loved about Luke. He could be self-deprecating and still be the life of the party. “So let’s return to my original point for this call.”

“What was that again?”

“Maya. And what it would take for her to agree to come back to me, I mean, the position of executive assistant at Stewart Investments.”

“You would have to find the right incentive that doesn’t include becoming a notch on your bedpost.”

“That’s not going to happen again,” Ayden said. “Bedding Maya was a one-time thing. Plus, I doubt she’s been carrying a torch for me. For Christ’s sake, it was only one night!”

“If you say so, my friend. I’ve given my advice, for what it’s worth. Good luck, and let me know how it turns out.”

“Will do.” Ayden ended the call and stared down at the folder in his lap. It held the address of where Maya was staying in Austin. He’d hired a private investigator to research her whereabouts. His timing was perfect because she was back in town for her niece’s baptism and staying at a downtown hotel.

Ayden had to admit he was shocked by what he’d read in the file. He recalled how devastated Maya had been the night she’d come to him after discovering her sister in bed with her boyfriend. If she was returning, it had to mean she’d forgiven them. Surely that meant good news for him? He could ask her to come back to Stewart

Investments, and things would be different between them now. After all, it had been years since Ayden had seen her. Although he might have had the odd fantasy about her, on his part, any residual feelings from their night together five years ago were long gone. Ayden had been with many women since Maya. More beautiful. More stunning.

He and Maya had always enjoyed an excellent working relationship. He was certain they could get past this if she was willing to forgive him for his lack of sensitivity and give them another chance. He knew it was a long shot, but there was only one way to find out. He had to go to her, and he wasn't leaving until her answer was yes.

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From the bathroom of the Baptist church, Maya fretted as she smoothed down the dress she'd chosen to wear to Nysha's baptism. Should she have come?

Throughout the years, Raven had tried to extend an olive branch, but Maya had rebuffed each and every effort. Why? Because Maya was jealous. Raven was living the life that should have been hers. If she was honest, Maya would have loved that life with Ayden, but he hadn't wanted her five years ago. Or not in the way she'd hoped.

So why come back?

Because she couldn't go on living this way, holding on to past hurts and hiding away from the world. It was time to move on with her life. She'd come to make peace with her sister.

She glanced at herself in the mirror. The sleeveless plum dress had a deep V showing a swell of cleavage, thanks to the push-up bra she'd spent a fortune on in the hopes it would give her a bosom. Her long black hair, her best feature, was coiffed and hung in big curls down her back. She'd even allowed her hair stylist, who doubled as a makeup artist, to do her face. After all these years, she had to look her best because, Lord knows, her mother would be in full diva mode. Raven, of course, wouldn't have to try hard because she was naturally beautiful.

And now it was time to face the music. She couldn't very well hang out in the church bathroom forever. Grabbing her clutch purse, she made for the door. Sophia Richardson was greeting guests at the church entrance. From where Maya stood, she noted her mother's stylish salt-and-pepper updo and what looked like her Sunday-best suit, complete with pumps. But rather than looking the picture of a radiant grandma, her mother had lost weight and appeared a bit gaunt with sunken cheeks. Her normal caramel skin looked sallow.

Maya braced herself as she walked toward her. "Mother."

"Maya?" On cue, Sophia looked her over from head to toe—from the designer sandals to the simple Marc Jacobs sheath to the designer handbag. Apparently she passed muster, because her mother said, "I'm happy you've finally chosen to put the past behind you and return to the fold."

She held open her arms and Maya reluctantly walked into them. As expected, the embrace was brief. Maya suspected she'd received it because several guests had walked in and her mother wouldn't dare make a scene.

"Raven and Thomas will be so happy to see you," Sophia whispered in her ear. "Please go in." She motioned Maya toward the pews.

Would they be happy to see her? Or would her presence be a reminder of their past transgressions? Maya forced herself to put one foot in front of the other and enter the hall. Raven and Thomas were at the end of the aisle talking with the pastor. Her sister looked as stunning as ever even though she'd just had the baby two months ago. She was wearing a cream suit and had her hair in a French roll. Raven was already back to her svelte size-six figure. Thomas wore a suit and striped tie and beamed by her side, holding the baby.

Maya walked toward them. When Raven turned around and saw Maya, Maya felt her heart constrict. It had hurt being estranged from her baby sister.

"Maya?" Raven said as she drew near.

Maya glanced at Thomas and gave him a nod, stepping toward Raven. "Yes, I'm here."

Tears welled in her sister's eyes. "Oh, thank God, our prayers were answered. I've asked God for forgiveness every day for what we—" she glanced at her husband "—did to you. And now, I'm blessed to have you back in my life, in our daughter's life."

"Don't get carried away, Raven," Maya responded. "All is not swept under the rug."

"Of course not," Raven said. "I owe you a long overdue apology." She reached for Maya's hands and grasped them in her own. "I'm so sorry for hurting you, Maya. Can you please find it in your heart to forgive me?"

Maya stared at her in stunned disbelief. She had never expected an apology. Least of all, from Raven, who'd always been self-centered. But then again she'd never given her the chance.

“We’re both sorry,” Thomas said from Raven’s side. “You deserved better than how we treated you. You deserved the truth. We should never have sneaked behind your back. It was wrong and I’m sorry.”

Maya swallowed and nodded. She was too overcome to speak. She didn’t know what she’d thought would happen during the visit, but clearly Raven and Thomas had matured enough to admit their mistakes.

“Would you like to meet your niece?” Raven asked, tears brimming in her eyes.

“Y-yes, I’d like that very much.”

Raven walked over to Thomas, took their daughter out of his arms and placed the sleeping baby in Maya’s. Her niece was the most beautiful little girl Maya had ever seen, with her smooth brown skin and shock of hair surrounded by a white headband with a bow. She was outfitted in the cutest white lace baptism dress. “She’s beautiful.” Maya grasped her niece’s little finger in her hand.

“Can you believe I’m a mom?” Raven asked in wonder.

“Actually, I can’t,” Maya said, glancing her way, “but you are.”

Raven gave a halfhearted smile. “You were always supposed to be the stay-at-home wife while I was supposed to be the career girl. It’s funny how the tide changes.”

“Yes, it’s funny.” Maya leaned over and returned Nysha into her sister’s arms. “She’s really beautiful. Congratulations to you both.”

Maya stepped away as fast as humanly possible. It didn’t hurt that guests were already headed toward them to greet the happy family. She needed some air. She couldn’t breathe; it felt like she was suffocating. Maya sidestepped several guests entering the church and rushed outside.

Leaning against the building, she took in large gulps of air and forced the rising tide of emotions overwhelming her to calm. Had she honestly thought it would be easy seeing Raven and Thomas with their daughter? Maya glanced at the door. It should have been her. She should be the one who was a wife and mother; it’s what she’d always wanted. Maya had always known she would make a good mom because she’d cared for Raven her entire life. Sophia Richardson had been too busy working two or, sometimes, three jobs to be there for them. Maya had been left to care for Raven, make her dinner, help with her homework and pick out her school clothes. So much so that Raven once had called her Mommy. Sophia had been livid and had yelled at Raven that *she* was her mommy.

Maternal instinct ran through Maya’s veins, while Raven had never cared for another human being beside herself until now. But it was clear to Maya that Raven loved her daughter and was happy. Maya didn’t begrudge her sister happiness, but did it have to come at her expense? Perhaps she’d made a mistake in attending? She could sneak off with no one being the wiser. She’d made an appearance. Surely that had to count for something?

Maya was just about to head down the church steps when her mother’s voice rang out. “Maya, dear, we’re about to begin.”

Darn. She’d missed her chance to use her get-out-of-jail-free card.

Inhaling, Maya spun around to face her mother and walked inside the church.

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Hours later, Maya was looking for her handbag in one of the many bedrooms of Nysha’s godparents’ home. She was ready to leave. After the baptism ceremony, the entire group had adjourned here for a light meal. True to form, Sophia had gushed over their home, how beautiful it was and what great godparents they would make. It made Maya ill to see that nothing had changed; her mother was just as superficial as she’d been before.

Maya had done her part by showing up and making polite pleasantries. It was time for her to leave.

“Ah, there it is,” she said aloud when she discovered her purse.

“Do you have a minute?” a male voice said from behind her.

Maya didn’t need to turn around to know who it belonged to. They’d once been lovers. She whirled on her heel to face Thomas. If looks could kill, he would have been struck down on the spot. “What do you want?”

Thomas held up his hands in a defensive posture. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to scare you.”

“You didn’t.”

“I was hoping I could speak to you for a few minutes.”

“I don’t wish to discuss the past,” Maya responded. Just being with her family had conjured enough of her old insecurities.

Thomas lowered his eyes. “Quite frankly, neither do I. It wasn’t my finest moment.”

“Then what is it that you want? I don’t have all day.”

Thomas glanced up and Maya hated to see the regret in his eyes. But she wasn’t prepared for his next words. “It’s about Sophia.”

Maya's ears perked up. "What about my mother?"

"You may have noticed she's lost some weight?"

"Yes, I did, but I figured maybe she was dieting for the big event," Maya offered. It wasn't completely out of the realm of possibility. Her mother believed in looking her best, especially when the spotlight was on her.

"She's not dieting, Maya. Your mother is sick."

"Sick?" Maya clutched her purse to her chest. "How sick?"

"She has pancreatic cancer."

"Cancer?" The words felt like an anchor around her heart, but she managed to ask, "What stage?"

"Stage three. Sophia has been undergoing treatments the last month and, needless to say, it's taken its toll."

"Months? How long have you known about her condition?"

"Maya..."

"How long?" How long had her family had been keeping her in the dark? Why they hadn't told her Sophia was dying?

"Two months."

"And you didn't think to inform me sooner? She's my mother."

"Whom you've been estranged from for five years," Thomas retorted with a huff, "along with the rest of this family."

"You're *not* my family."

"I may not be a blood relation, but I care about Sophia. Raven and I have been carrying the load because her treatments are expensive even with insurance, not to mention the laboratory visits, PET scans and medications. And besides, it's been tearing Raven up seeing Sophia like this and not having anyone to talk to beside me. She needs you."

"She's always *needed* me," Maya responded tightly, "and I've always been there, but what do I get out of it? The short end of the stick."

"I—I thought you were going to let go of the past, Maya. You came today."

Guilt surged through her. Her mother was sick and this wasn't the time or place to take score on who'd harmed who. "Thank you for telling me." She started toward the door.

"What are you going to do?" Thomas inquired.

Maya had no idea. Today had been hard enough as it was. She needed a few minutes to digest everything he'd told her and come up with a plan. "I don't know, but I'll be in touch."

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When Maya finally made it back to her hotel room, she was mentally and emotionally exhausted. Confronting the members of her family who'd hurt her and feigning to be the happy aunt had been hard enough. But finding out her mother had cancer was the straw that broke the camel's back. Not only did she have a splitting headache, but her feet were aching from the new designer sandals she'd bought to ensure she measured up to her mother's scrutiny. All she wanted to do was run a hot bath, take some ibuprofen and go to bed. In that exact order.

Maya had kicked off her shoes and was unzipping her dress when there was a knock on her door. She glanced down at her watch. It was seven o'clock. She was in no mood for company after the bomb Thomas dropped on her. And who knew she was in town anyway?

Padding to the door in her bare feet, Maya swung it open in frustration. The person on the other side was someone she never thought she'd see again, not after the one night they'd shared.

"Ayden?"

"Hello, Maya."