

“Lucy, get cleaned up for dinner, please,” Sutton called over her shoulder.

Her daughter was either in her bedroom or in the den, but wherever she was, she undoubtedly had to wash her hands before dinner. In general, but also... Lucy in particular seemed to always find something to dip her hands into.

“What are we eating!” Her daughter shouted back.

Sutton tilted her head, triangulating where the shout had come from... definitely bedroom area, absently swiping her finger across her phone screen to answer Regan’s incoming FaceTime call.

“A roast! And it’s almost ready!” She turned back to her friend on the phone as she pulled the plates out from the cabinet above the sink. “And how may I help you?”

“If you have leftovers, can you save me a plate for when I watch Luce tomorrow?” Regan asked, clearly laying on the couch in her apartment.

“I’m obviously going to have leftovers; the two of us will not eat a whole roast. But you have to make sure *Lucy* also eats it for dinner and you don’t order another pizza.”

Regan rolled her eyes. “The girl you raised loves pizza! What do you want from me?”

“To *not* give her everything she wants whenever she wants it,” Sutton shot back, exasperated. It was useless, though. They’d been having this same conversation since Lucy had been born.

If Sutton thought *she* was wrapped her around her daughters little finger, Regan was wrapped around her whole hand.

“I’m the cool aunt! That’s what cool aunts do!” Regan narrowed her eyes, bringing her face closer to the screen. “Are you still wearing your work clothes? After six? While you’re cooking? This goes against Sutton Spencer Chapter Fourteen, Subsection C.”

Sutton shook her head as she pulled the roast out to let it rest. “Ha-ha.”

“For real, though. You’re all about the comfy clothes when you get home. Unless...” she wiggled her eyebrows. “You’re expecting some *company*?”

“Yes, I’m expecting to sweep someone of their feet tonight with Lucy at the table singing a song about how her green beans are keen on being mean.”

“Oh, that’s a classic.” Regan cleared her throat, “Maybe I’ll be nice when I’m a teen!”

“And I can wear fancy jeans,” she finished her daughter’s nonsensical vegetable ballad, laughing as she stirred the gravy.

“All right, but then why are *you* still in your fancy jeans?”

Sutton hesitated. But she had never been a masterful liar, especially not to Regan, and, “I’m just expecting someone to drop off some papers any minute now and I don’t want to look like a slob.”

She went about getting the utensils, knowing that Regan was watching her. She would not let herself blush.

And, of course, it only took Regan about twenty seconds to suss it out. “Charlotte Thompson is coming to your apartment?! I thought you weren’t having *company*.”

“I’m *not*,” she shot back, vehemently. “And, no, Charlotte is not coming to my apartment. We have a deadline on the first draft for the first half of the manuscript to the editor due at the end of the week, and I needed some clarification on a few things, so I sent her an email yesterday. And she informed me that she would make her notes and send the physical notes to me, via courier.”

All right, Charlotte hadn’t specifically said *via courier*, but she’d said, “I’ll make sure they get to you by Monday evening.”

Either Lindsay or Autumn, her personal assistants that Sutton had met in a few times but always briefly, would likely be the culprit. Unless Charlotte would be paying a real courier? In which case, Sutton definitely did not want to face a senatorial courier in her sweats. Or her assistants.

Charlotte, back when they’d been... friends..., always looked fashionable and put together. Charlotte as a senator? Was even more put together, more chic, more everything. She was unfairly beautiful.

Devastatingly so.

Or, you know, it could be. If Sutton really paid attention to it. But she didn’t.

Obviously she *noticed* it, but she didn’t let herself linger. Or stare. Or *think* or – no. None of that.

Not even when Charlotte tried to get them to *go there*. She was never overt or pushy, but... somehow, nearly every single time the two of them were together, they wound up on the topic of Sutton. She was always able to cut it off when she realized what was going on.

But Charlotte was always able to get *something* out of her. Some fact or short story. She was just – she was so good like that.

She had been a decade ago, so it only made sense that she was even better at... talking, now.

Regan shook her head on the screen. “You *know* you can’t hide anything from me, Sutton Spencer. You always come back from your Tuesday meetings with Charlotte so tight-lipped and all *nooo, nothing happened, we are professionals, I–*”

“I’m there, thanks,” Sutton cut in, dryly. “And there has been absolutely *nothing* that’s been unprofessional.”

Truly!

Sutton made sure of it.

Even when Charlotte sat with her legs impeccably crossed and leaned to the side and her skirt might ride up just enough to truly see her thighs. Or when she slid her hand through that light brown hair, and made it cascade over her shoulders *just* so. A little messy, but not really. Or when –

Sutton thankfully was taken out of her thoughts at the knock on her door. Tossing the dishtowel she’d used to clean her hands through cooking over her shoulder after one final quick wash and dry, she took the phone and hurried to the door for the courier.

“Sorry it took me a minute, I’m just in the middle of–” She abruptly cut herself off when she noted that it wasn’t a courier at all. Surprise slammed through her as she faintly finished, “–making dinner.”

A grin slid over Charlotte’s face. That sly one, but also sincere in a way that made her look charming, knowing, and guileless all at once. “It’s not a problem.”

Sutton could only blink. But it really was Charlotte, standing on her doorstep at six o’clock at night, as the chilly night air and evening rain surrounded her. Those rain droplets were in her hair, her breath visible in light puffs as she exhaled, and Sutton’s heart skipped a beat.

Before she put a stop to it. No.

Charlotte did not look enchanting in the rain outside of her home, and the little smile on her face was not cute or sexy and –

“Is Auntie Regan here?!” Lucy’s excited squeal as she ran around the corner to see down the front hallway seemed to bring Sutton back into the moment.

Regan was speaking from her phone, asking – no, demanding – to know what was going on, her daughter’s hands were – of course – covered in what looked like paint and glitter, with some of it on her cheek, too, and she had dinner just ready to serve, as the insistent timer from the kitchen reminded her.

Sutton shook her head, first quickly looking at Regan. Who seemed about ready to fall over herself on the phone, “Oh my *god*, is that–”

“I have to go,” Sutton cut in. “I’ll call you later.”

“Don’t you d–” was all Regan got in before Sutton ended the call.

“Who are you?” Lucy asked, blue eyes crinkling up at Charlotte from the end of the hall, tilting her head as she lightly mashed her fingers together, sticking them together with... god, whatever was all over her hands.

“What were you playing with, Lucy Katherine?” Sutton arched an eyebrow.

Her daughter bit her lip, before she quickly put her hands behind her back. Classic Lucy move. Sutton fought against a smile. “Nothing, Mommy!”

“Mhmm, well only little girls who have clean hands are allowed to have a brownie for dessert...”

It was all she had to say before her daughter’s feet moved like little bolts of lightning on the floor. “I’m a little girl with clean hands!” Echoed behind her as she made a dash for the bathroom.

With a deep breath, she turned back toward... yes, Charlotte was still in her doorway. Smiling even wider now.

“What are you doing here?”

Charlotte tapped the folder she held in one hand against the opposite hand’s palm. “Well, I did tell you I would have this paperwork back to you tonight.”

Sutton blinked for a few moments, before... “You have two personal assistants?”

“Maya had requested this week off to visit her family months ago and Autumn went home early with a cold.” Charlotte easily returned.

“I can only imagine that in your profession you know a wonderful of a courier service?”

The smile on Charlotte’s face faltered. Just a little, just enough for Sutton to notice. Notice in a way that she truly didn’t think most people *would* notice. But she did. And instantly, she felt badly about causing it.

Even though she *shouldn’t*.

And truthfully, it was so... *confusing*. Because she did notice these things – little slips in Charlotte’s nearly unreadable mask, that she was certain other people might not see. And Sutton shouldn’t see them, either, because it had been so long without them seeing one another, and they weren’t even really engaged in any sort of personal relationship now, and back when they had been, she’d been so, so incorrect about how much she thought she knew about Charlotte, anyway.

She did what she always did when this cropped up in her mind in the last few weeks, and pushed it all away. No, nope, not going there.

It was just too confusing, with things the way they were. Strictly professional, and when this arrangement was done, so too would they be.

“I do know of a few wonderful delivery services, yes,” Charlotte conceded. “But I thought we could benefit by going over a few of the anecdotes and notes I added in.” Charlotte paused, looking into Sutton’s eyes with a solemnity that wanted to steal Sutton’s breath. “And, I would really... enjoy if things like this, seeing one another when unplanned, could be simple. Easy. Friendly, even.”

The correction back to *keeping things professional* stuck right in Sutton’s throat.

Just as it had come out repeatedly. Just as she’d repeated it in her mind since the first day they’d reconnected.

But... what was the harm in being friendly?

Especially because for Sutton, it was very difficult to not be friendly. And... she bit her lip, looking at the smile on Charlotte’s perfect lips. It was, admittedly, even harder to hold back friendliness from Charlotte Thompson.

“I think that’s a – a decent idea. Do you...” she hesitated for only a moment, before mentally kicking herself. They were adults. She was nearly forty. She could do this. “Do you want to come in for dinner? It’s just a roast and vegetable–”

“Yes. Thank you,” Charlotte easily cut in, and the way she tilted her head made the few rain drops clinging to the ends of her hair drip down onto her collarbone... and then further... down her chest.

Sutton watched one for long moments, mesmerized, before – *no*.

She snapped her eyes back to Charlotte’s, who had an eyebrow raised expectantly. “May I come in?”

“Of course!”

She moved to the side and let Charlotte in. Charlotte brushed by her, the movement seeming somehow both slower than normal and casual. Her scent, the clean, fresh floral, seemed to surround Sutton. God. That was why she stayed further away from Charlotte during every meeting. Deliberately, she sat away from her, because it was so easy to remember things she did not want to remember when she smelled that scent.

Charlotte walked slowly down her entrance hallway, sliding her rain jacket down her arms as she looked over her shoulder at Sutton. “Coming?”

Sutton swallowed hard and tried to convince herself that she wasn’t getting in over her head.

It was so surreal.

Seeing Charlotte in her home at all – looking at the photos on the walls, some that were the same as the ones she'd had back in the day that Charlotte had already seen, many that were new. Having Charlotte sit, in her Versace suit, at Sutton's kitchen table that had a small chip in the side from Lucy's last birthday, when she'd gotten a skateboard from Regan and had ran around the house waving it around in excitement until she'd smacked right into the edge of the table with it.

And mostly, watching Charlotte interact with Lucy. They were two parts of Sutton's life that had never, ever collided. And she'd never once expected them to.

“You're the lady on the boring TV that Mommy watches,” Lucy commented easily after giving Charlotte a long look, sticking her fork into her mashed potatoes.

Charlotte arched her eyebrows at Lucy, shuffling just enough in her seat to tell Sutton that she may be able to face down anyone in Congress, but that she was uncomfortable with a six year old. “The boring TV?”

She looked between Sutton and Lucy.

Sutton pushed down a laugh. “The news. CNN. You know.”

Then Charlotte's face transformed into a laugh with Lucy that was unexpectedly soft. It stole the smile from Sutton's face. “The boring TV seems very apt.”

Lucy nodded in confirmation, dropping her fork and using both hands to grab her plastic cup of water. “You're on there sometimes.” She took a big sip of water before grabbing her fork again and holding it up like a fake microphone. “And earlier today in the world, there was a big problem with all the old poops who run the gover-gover-ment.”

Charlotte's snort shocked Sutton, but it sounded very genuine. “That also seems very apt.”

“I think someone's been listening to her grandfather a little too much,” Sutton commented, suppressing her own smile because, “I also think we have a rule against bathroom talk when we eat, no?”

“But I wasn't doing bathroom talk! I only had to say poops because it was about *people* not actual–”

“Fresh baked brownies are on the line, honey. Let’s think about that.” Especially after the time a year ago when Sutton had gotten an earful from Lucy’s teacher about her daughter regaling her classmates with a lively story about the hole pee comes from at snack time.

Since then, they’d had a hard and fast rule about no talk about anything regarding the bathroom at meal times.

Lucy nodded seriously, stabbing her fork through a part of her roast as she dramatically sighed. “Oookay.” She was quiet for a few moments, but Sutton knew it wouldn’t last. “Did you know that Jonah Newton in my class brought his lizard in at show and tell?”

She wasn’t informing Sutton of this – Sutton had already learned the whole story earlier. No, blue eyes were focused on Charlotte.

Who finished chewing her food slowly, seeming alarmed that she was the point of contact yet again. “I hadn’t heard, no.”

“My teacher said that she was going to *lose her mind* if Jonah brought in an animal again, after he brought in a snake from the playground last month. And Auntie Regan says that most of the people who are on the boring TV are people who have lost their minds. So I didn’t know if you knew.” Lucy shrugged like it was the most obvious thing in the world, still staring expectantly at Charlotte.

Who lifted her eyebrows and nodded slowly. “Auntie Regan certainly has a lot of opinions.”

Lucy smiled and nodded quickly. “Yep! And so do I!”

“She really does,” Sutton affirmed, affectionately, before she reached out and swiped Lucy’s chin with her napkin before a line of gravy could fall onto her shirt. She’d long become an expert at spotting those moments with her messy eater.

“I’ll let you know something – I do, too,” Charlotte murmured conspiratorially, keeping her voice low as she leaned in a bit.

Lucy leaned in, too, seeming enthralled. “What do you do on the TV?”

“Talk about my opinions.”

“Is it boring?”

“Maybe to some people,” Charlotte allowed with a shrug and Sutton felt that both she and her daughter were mesmerized by the way Charlotte’s hair fell over her shoulder in what seemed like a perfect moment. “But not to me.”

“To me?”

“Well,” Charlotte flicked her gaze to Sutton, and she wanted to say she couldn’t read it. She wanted to say that she had no idea what those honey brown eyes were saying to her. But she did – or, she thought she did. She thought Charlotte was advertising some uncertainty. But Sutton was admittedly very curious as to where this was going. She arched her eyebrows and shrugged, gesturing for Charlotte to address Lucy.

She did. “I’m not exactly sure what you’re interested in.”

Lucy lit up.

As her daughter launched into a conversation around her interests and hobbies, Sutton shook her head and leaned back in her chair. So... unprecedented.

And maybe, perhaps, a little nice.

Sutton hummed under her breath as she slowly made her way back into the living room after tucking Lucy in and reading a section from *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, one of her bedtime favorites. Then she moved a little more slowly.

Then she stopped and looked at herself in the ornate mirror hanging in the connecting hallway.

Her hair was half up in the bun she’d pulled it up in to cook earlier and hadn’t taken down, because... she hadn’t thought of it at all. On a normal night, she would leave it up like this until she showered before climbing into bed.

She’d long since wiped off the light makeup she’d worn to work.

On display were the little lines next to her eyes, at the corners of her lips, the little signs of aging that had happened here and there. Unnoticeable in the day to day of her life, but she wondered... how did Charlotte see them? When Sutton had last truly seen Charlotte without makeup, without any extra boosts to her appearance, she’d been twenty-five.

She’d been so shocked by Charlotte’s appearance and subsequent entrance into her home – with Lucy appearing to take their attention by storm, as well – that she hadn’t even registered it.

Charlotte was sitting out there in a designer suit, looking immaculate and Sutton –

She glared at herself in the mirror.

It didn't *matter* what she looked like, right? There was no reason to fixate. Charlotte hadn't intimated that she was looking for... something beyond friendship.

And not even a full friendship.

She wanted to be friendly and review their notes so that Sutton could finish the write up she had to do for their editor. That was all.

Sutton took a deep breath and turned to enter the living room.

Then hastily reached up and pulled the rest of her hair down, smoothing it quickly with her fingertips.

She entered the living room and then faltered when she saw Charlotte standing, looking at her photos. Specifically, the photo she still had up of herself, Layla, and Lucy from four years ago, from their first family vacation to Disneyworld. She didn't keep many photos up from her marriage, admittedly.

She'd thrown many of them out, actually, in a fit of anger she had never felt before, six months after that picture had been snapped. When Layla had confessed to her affair and stated that she wanted a divorce.

But that picture remained, for Lucy's sake.

She cleared her throat. And still, even though Charlotte definitely hadn't known she'd been there, she didn't jump or move in any way that portrayed surprise. She merely straightened from looking at the mantle and turned just enough to gesture at the picture. "Is this your ex-wife?"

Sutton swore there was an emphasis on *ex*. But she could also be reading into things.

"Uh, yes. Layla."

Charlotte's lips pursed ever so slightly, the right side ticking down in a barely perceptible motion. "Hmm. I thought... I had assumed she'd be in more photos." She used her hand to gesture to the entire wall full.

Sutton scoffed a laugh. "Well, when your wife cheats on you, you don't really want to keep many photos." She nearly slapped her hand over her mouth. She could joke about this now, it had been four years. But this was Charlotte she was talking to, not Regan and Emma. Who had both been ready to kill Layla at that time – Regan very much still was.

Sutton still wasn't convinced that it hadn't been Regan who had somehow slipped away from Manhattan and been responsible for Layla's two flat tires the following week...

Charlotte's face, though, made the joking smile fall off of her lips.

Maybe it had been Charlotte who had figured out how to go back in time and slash Layla's tires? That's what her expression was saying, anyway.

"You're kidding." Her tone left no room for confusion – she sounded... angry? Angrier than Sutton thought she'd ever heard, even back then.

Unease skittered through her stomach and she wrapped her arms around herself. "I don't really think that's a great joke."

"It's a terrible joke, but I would *have* to assume you're kidding for your wife to have cheated on you."

"Well... my comedy chops aren't that bad, I suppose. So that's a good thing."

"Your comedy chops are safe," Charlotte assured, her eyes softening as she continued to look at Sutton from across the room. "Did you two live here together?"

She gestured around them, and Sutton for a moment wrestled with whether or not she should answer.

Because... this wasn't professional.

But Charlotte was in her home and seemed so genuinely interested, and she'd had dinner with her daughter, and not talking to Charlotte about all of the things she asked about in the last few weeks took *effort*. Because there was something so effortless about Charlotte that begged for Sutton to just talk to her. Share with her. Speak to her so freely.

And fighting that tonight, when she had no armor – no makeup or nice clothes – on, in her living room, with her daughter sleeping down the hall, after they'd shared a meal together... was too hard.

"No. We had a house in Bethesda, that she still lives in. I decided to move here to be closer to my work, so it just – worked out."

Charlotte stared at her, a stormy expression behind those eyes. "I just cannot believe she had this life with you and then cheated. Chose to have a life with someone else. How long were you together?"

Sutton blinked widely, surprised at the vehemence in Charlotte's tone. At the utter emotion in a voice she'd come so used to hearing in the last decade on television – always composed. And in the last month – different tones, but always in control.

"I – we got married in 2024, after being together for three years. And it happened quickly after that. We had Lucy, and two years later..." she trailed off, shrugging, as she tangled her fingers together. "Sometimes I think – it should sting less, knowing that she didn't leave me for just anyone, but for her high school-slash-college sweetheart."

That's what she'd said to Regan and Emma and her mother, anyway.

"But, honestly, I think sometimes it's even harder to know that while I thought she and I were the main love story, that I was really just a footnote in hers. Theirs."

Charlotte rolled her lips. "I'm not quite a fan of... Layla."

Sutton shook her head, walking to where Charlotte stood, staring at the picture that had started this. "She's not a terrible person." Sutton did have several grievances with Layla to this day regarding Lucy, but she'd moved on from *them*. "Besides, she gave me the best thing in my life, so I can't hate her. Honestly, maybe it's just me."

Charlotte arched a perfect eyebrow, incredulous, as she stared up at Sutton. "What in the world do you mean by that?"

"I think maybe I just have a radar to fall for people who never quite fall the same way, back."

This *was* a conversation she would have with a friend; it was a conversation she'd had many times with her actual friends.

But... Charlotte wasn't quite that, she thought in the silence that followed her words.

God, *idiot*, Sutton internally cursed herself. Really? Saying this *to* someone who she'd fallen for so completely who had broken up with her. Yeah, even though it had been so long, it still wasn't a topic she wanted to invite them to open up.

And she was positive Charlotte wouldn't appreciate it either.

Swallowing hard, she diverted her gaze to the folder Charlotte had brought over with Sutton's requested hard copy of her notes, sitting on her coffee table. She cleared her throat, "You know, we should really dig into these notes!"

Yeah, she cringed at her own subject change.

Before Charlotte could comment, before she could allow herself to look into Charlotte's gaze and get lost in any way, she instead reached for the papers. "Did you expand a bit on the Governor race? I think that's the bit of the outline I'd like to start touching on for part two of the outline. You'd been in the House of Representatives for four years by then."

Professional. Moving on from that foot-in-mouth comment. Good.

"Yes," Charlotte confirmed, even though it hadn't been phrased as a question.

Charlotte had been elected in her initial run, in 2020. When they'd broken up. Her smiling, victorious face was an image Sutton had never been able to forget, while she'd still been nursing

her wounds from their kind of breakup. Or whatever they could call it. And then Charlotte had been re-elected twice after that.

“And that was your plan the whole time, right? To make the run for Governor in 2024?” Sutton asked. These had been clarifying questions she’d given Charlotte to start their next info session, but she couldn’t quite bring herself to sit down and dig into her papers when she had Charlotte standing right here next to her. Close enough to feel her warmth but still not right *there*.

“Yes,” Charlotte confirmed again. She shifted on her feet.

And their arms brushed.

Sutton’s stomach swooped and she didn’t move away even though her brain told her she should. But it also told her that would be *silly*.

“Close race,” she said, and... her voice sounded a little hoarser to her ears than it should.

“Did you vote for me?” Charlotte asked, and *her* voice was a little quieter than it should be, Sutton thought.

There was a playful tone there, but also an underlying serious one.

Sutton’s heart beat a little faster at the truth of her answer, and despite the voice in the back of her head telling her to move away, she instead turned to look at Charlotte. Who was already staring intently at her, waiting for her words. Looking, honestly, like Sutton’s answer meant *a lot*.

“Of course I did,” she whispered, and those words shouldn’t have been a whisper.

They shouldn’t be an admittance or a secret or anything of the sort. But they felt sacred, still.

“I believe in what you stand for. In what you do. I... I’ve always believed in you and your career, Charlotte. I wanted you to be the governor for the best of the state.” She bit her lip and dug her fingers into the file she still held, feeling her heart pound in her chest. “And, I wanted it for you, too.”

And that was the truth.

The truth that she’d kept up on Charlotte’s career – every step – for the last thirteen years. That she was proud of Charlotte and Charlotte deserved it. She’d dedicated, truly, her life to that career.

And still, Charlotte was staring at her with that intense look. Still not saying much of anything, but standing so close.

“In a way, it was the year we both got what we wanted,” Sutton added, because she had to say something to take away from this moment between them. A moment she wasn’t even sure where

it had come from or how it had happened, but her heart was beating faster and she felt warm and Charlotte had spent all night in her house with her and her daughter... She shook her head softly to push out those thoughts. "I mean. I got married. You furthered your career. It was a big year."

"Yeah," Charlotte murmured. "It was a very big year."

But instead of a victorious smile that matched all of those victorious photos from back in the day, the words felt empty.

Sutton squeezed her eyes closed, trying to not think about the question that she'd thought so many times back then. Questions she'd long since stopped asking, but – would Charlotte have won her seat in the House if they'd stayed together? If they'd become a true couple? Would she have been elected Governor?

Would –

"Sutton," Charlotte whispered.

She was so close. Her breath slid over Sutton's lips and Sutton's skin erupted in goosebumps at the feeling.

She took as deep a breath as she could and opened her eyes.

As soon as she did, Charlotte's hand came up to cup her jaw, thumb stroking right over her cheek, and her eyes wanted to close again.

They shouldn't do this. They shouldn't touch like this. They shouldn't stand so close.

But then Charlotte rocked forward, up onto her tiptoes, and her lips touched Sutton's.

So soft and so demanding, both at once. Just like they'd always been. Charlotte kissed the same way she existed in life – coaxing but unyielding in what she wanted and how she wanted it.

And, damn it, was it enticing.

Sutton sighed into the kiss, into Charlotte's mouth, as her free hand came up to dig into Charlotte's shoulder, tilting her head to deepen the kiss.

Charlotte groaned softly, right in the back of her throat, one of her arms snaking around Sutton's waist to pull her in closer, as the other continued to stroke Sutton's face in light, seductive touches. Her jaw, her cheek, down her neck and back up.

God, it had been forever since she'd had this. Since she'd been kissed like someone *meant it*. Like someone was kissing her because they wanted her and only her, like she was all that was on their mind. Like all they wanted was her kiss, her touch, *her*.

Heat pooled between Sutton's legs as she leaned easily into the touch. Charlotte's touch.

It wasn't just anyone's touch, and that was important. Because Charlotte Thompson – to this very day – touched Sutton like no one else ever had. Like she knew exactly what Sutton wanted when Sutton herself might not know.

And she did.

Even now.

Charlotte used her thumb under Sutton's chin to tilt her head up, before she moved her warm mouth to Sutton's neck, and she could feel her own pulse hammering as warm lips touched the sensitive spots there.

The folder with Charlotte's notes fell to the floor, and Sutton whimpered as she slid her hand into brown hair.

"You don't," Charlotte murmured against her neck, somehow without stopping those sensations that made Sutton's hands absolutely shake with need.

"What?" She blinked her eyes open, starting to clear the clouds there over her rational thoughts.

"You don't have a radar to fall for the wrong people," Charlotte said against her neck, before she nipped, and Sutton's knees went weak for a few seconds.

But – no.

The words broke through the lustful haze.

No. No, they were not going down *that* route.

This was *Charlotte*. Whose touch made Sutton yearn, made her burn, made her ache and want and need, more than anyone in her life. Even her wife, even the few people she'd tried to be with in the last few years.

But it was Charlotte who had a touch that convinced Sutton that Charlotte was feeling things she wasn't. It was such a confusing touch.

Because Sutton had learned long ago that while Charlotte's touch told her that Sutton was all Charlotte wanted, Charlotte's words and actions and ambitions told her that Charlotte wanted much, much more.

It was a dangerous game.

One she'd been determined not to play.

Shaking her head, she used her hold on Charlotte to push her back.

And even though she didn't want to look, she did. She looked at how Charlotte's hair looked ever so slightly disheveled, how her eyes looked heavy and dark with utter desire, how her lips were bruised from Sutton's kiss...

Sutton shivered and wrapped her arms around herself.

"I... I think you should go."

"Sutton," Charlotte started, clearly ready with her pretty words.

But Sutton was no longer someone who fell for pretty words so easily.