

# Prologue

Beckett King had no good reason to be in the hotel bar. If he wanted to celebrate winning the bid for his father's company, he should have gone out to be sure he wouldn't run into the competition. Instead, he stood there in the entranceway, scanning the dim room for a distinctive head of dark hair.

A low laugh drew him like a magnet to a lodestone. He might not like the woman it was attached to all that much, but she never failed to make an impression. Beckett shifted, zeroing in on the sound.

*There.*

Samara Mallick leaned against the bar, laughing at something the bartender said. She wore the same black dress she'd worn to give her presentation, and it hugged her mouthwatering curves and left miles of her medium brown skin exposed. She'd taken her hair down since he'd seen her last, and it fell around her shoulders in wild waves of black.

She looked good enough to taste.

Beckett took a step toward her before he caught himself. Samara worked for the competition. There wasn't a woman more off-limits. They'd gone head-to-head over bids for oil territory leases half a dozen times over the last few years, and while Beckett won the contracts more often than he lost them, he couldn't afford to miss a step. If he did, Samara would be there, stealing the next bid out from under him before he had a chance to blink.

He couldn't blink.

She caught sight of him and grimaced, which was enough to propel him toward her. *Just*

*need the reminder of why she's not for me.* They couldn't be in the same room without bickering, and he needed that vicious edge to regain control of himself.

Samara raised dark brows and swept her hair off one shoulder. "The heir decides to make an appearance. Come to gloat, Beckett?" She made a show of looking at the muted beige carpet beneath her heels. "I'd get down on my knees in the presence of royalty, but...Oh wait, no I wouldn't."

The pull he felt didn't dim with her words. If anything, their proximity only made it worse. This close, he could see the tempting curve of her bottom lip, a little fuller than her top, and he caught a whiff of her lavender scent. *Damn it.* Beckett ordered a whiskey and took the spot next to her. "Don't play coy, Samara. You spend plenty of time on your knees for my aunt." Samara's boss. The CEO and owner of Kingdom Corp, the single biggest competitor Beckett came up against time and time again.

He shouldn't have said it. The image of Samara on her knees in front of him was enough to make a man forget himself. Beckett had spent more time than he should have imagining the smirk she'd wear when she took his cock into her mouth...

*Fuck.*

"Why wouldn't I? She's superior to you in every way."

He smiled in thanks to the bartender as the woman slid a tumbler across to him. "We just spent four days fighting for this account. Let's not talk business."

"Business is the only thing we have to talk about." Three empty shot glasses sat in front of her, lined in a neat little row. As he watched, Samara took a fourth and turned the empty glass over.

"Bitter isn't a good look for you."

As he anticipated, she turned on him, dark eyes flaring in challenge. “You won this round. That doesn’t mean a damn thing about the next one.” She leaned forward, getting into his space, and lowered her voice. “Besides, we both know Norway’s contract is small potatoes. If you need to pat yourself on the back for winning at softball, then go right on ahead.”

“Samara, you don’t have to pretend that every time I win doesn’t needle the hell out of you.” He closed what little remained of the space between them. They were alone in the bar, and the music floating from the speakers overhead was so low there was no need to whisper. But he found himself doing it all the same. “I like your hair down. You should wear it like that more often.”

Her mouth dropped open for half a second before she recovered. “I don’t know what gave you the impression I care what you like.” She pressed her full lips together and tilted her head to the side, considering. “Though if we’re playing that game, you need a shave, Beckett. You look like you just rolled out of bed. It’s embarrassing and sloppy.”

He grinned because her body language told a different story. She leaned into him like a flower seeking the sun. They didn’t quite touch, but he could feel the heat of her body and it would take nothing more than a single deep breath to press his chest against hers. He had to fight not to take that breath, not to relish the slow drag of her breasts against him. *This* was why he’d taken great pains to ensure they were never alone.

They weren’t alone now, but they might as well have been.

She was off-limits.

He didn’t give a fuck.

They were in Norway, not Houston. No one here knew them or the roles they played in warring companies. His father didn’t have to know. Neither did his aunt.

*What's one night?*

“You know, there’s one way to test that theory out.” *Let me take you to bed.*

Her brows shot up and she shook her head. “You’re unbelievable. I know you’re a King and all, but your arrogance is out of control.”

It wasn’t arrogance. If there was a sure thing, it wasn’t Samara Mallick. She was too prickly, too ambitious, too loyal to someone who hated both Beckett’s father and his company.

That didn’t stop him from wanting her.

It sure as hell didn’t stop him from leaning down and brushing his lips against her ear. “Why don’t you put me in my place?” He took her hand and slipped his hotel-room key into it. “Room 311.”

Beckett should have turned and walked out right then. It was the smart thing to do. But Samara pressed her hands against his chest, her fingers gripping his shirt in a kneading motion that rooted his feet to the spot. He felt a shudder work its way through her body as if she fought for the same control that flitted through his grip. “That’s a terrible idea.”

“All the best nights start with terrible ideas.”

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Samara had all the right words ready. *No. Fuck off, Beckett. Stop trying to add insult to injury. You got the contract—you don’t get this, too.*

The right words weren’t what came out of her mouth when she finally managed to speak. “Yes.”

It wasn’t her fault.

Beckett King was a force of nature both in and out of the conference room. The charisma she worked so hard to exhibit seemed to come as naturally as breathing to him. Men wanted to

be him—or be his best friend—and women just plain wanted him. Samara managed to keep her distance from him out of sheer spite, but she didn't stand a chance with him leaning so close, his expensive cologne teasing her senses the same way his presence seemed to wrap around her even though *she* was the one touching *him*.

*Just blame it on the tequila.*

She tightened her grip on his shirt when he started to move back. “Two conditions.”

“I'm listening.” Damn him to hell for sounding amused.

“No one can know.” She had a reputation to protect—they both did.

He splayed his hand across her lower back, guiding her to close the last little bit of distance between them. She sucked in a breath. It was so easy to forget how big Beckett was when they stood a respectable distance apart. His expensive suits toned down his broad shoulders, gave him a more civilized air.

There was nothing civilized in the possessive way the heat of his hand seared through her thin dress and his hard cock nudged her stomach. *Oh God.*

“No one will know,” Beckett growled in her ear. “It'll be our secret.”

She had no reason to trust him, but...Neither his father nor her boss would be thrilled if they found out. He might be better positioned to weather the storm of disapproval, but that didn't mean he wanted to borrow trouble.

He exerted the slightest bit of pressure on her back, urging her to arch against him. Her body throbbed everywhere she touched him, but there were too many barriers in place. Samara tilted her head back and looked up into his face, searching his expression.

Chiseled jawline, strong brows, deep brown eyes that seemed to telegraph the ability to fulfill her darkest desires. His sinful mouth curved in a slow smile that drew a shiver from her.

“What’s your second condition?”

“I’m in charge tonight.” It was her only hope of walking away with a little dignity intact. Beckett was everything she was supposed to hate: arrogant, old money, a family line leading back to the first oil struck in Texas. The only way she could look at herself in the mirror tomorrow was if *she* controlled this interaction.

If anything, his smile widened. “You’re in charge...for now.”

The trip up to his room was a blur. One moment Beckett was paying for their drinks, and the next Samara’s back hit his door and his mouth took hers. All her competition and desire was mirrored back at her in that kiss, his tongue sliding against hers as they both fought for dominance. Each move had a corresponding response as if they were dancing—or fighting. She dug her fingers into his dark hair and nipped his bottom lip. He slid her dress up enough to hook the backs of her thighs and hitched her up so she could wrap her legs around his waist. She yanked his shirt out of his slacks so she could run her hands up his chest. He ripped her panties off.

They froze, their harsh breaths the only sound in his dim hotel room. Beckett leaned his forehead against hers. “Are we moving too fast?”

She pressed two fingers to his lips. “I’m fucking you tonight, Beckett.”

He didn’t move. “You had a lot of tequila.”

She smiled before she caught herself. Who would have thought that Beckett King had an honorable streak? He wasn’t the biggest dick in their industry, but she’d always found him to be ruthless with a single-minded intensity when it came to pursuing foreign bids. She didn’t know what drove him—and she didn’t care—but honor didn’t come into the equation. Until now.

“I’m buzzed, but not enough that I can’t consent.” When he didn’t move, she kissed his

jaw and hooked her fingers into his slacks. “Touch me, Beckett. Kiss me. Fuck me.” She punctuated each word with another kiss. “Make me come enough times I forget all the reasons this is a terrible idea.” She wrapped her hand around his cock and gave him a squeeze. “Now.”

“Bossy.”

“Assertive.”

He turned and carried her deeper into the room. Beckett laid her on the bed and backed up enough to draw her dress over her head. He was on her in seconds, kissing her neck, her shoulders, her collarbones. He used his mouth to inch down her bra and before his mouth closed around her nipple. She thought she heard him mutter, “Fucking perfect.”

She was too impatient to let him tease her. Samara fought her way out of her bra. She went after Beckett’s shirt next, nearly popping the buttons off as she hauled it over his head. Seconds later, she shoved off his pants and then she was in bed with a naked Beckett King.

Her control tried to reassert itself and clamor that this was the worst idea she’d ever had, but with Beckett’s big body laid out for her, there was no going back. She straddled him and traced the muscles lining his chest down to his stomach, stopping to drag her thumbs over the dips below his hips. There were so many things she could say: *You’re beautiful, too. Your body makes me crazy. I want to memorize every inch of you so I can replay this when I’m alone.*

Samara kissed him before she could make a fool of herself. She *needed*. “Condoms.”

“In a minute.” He toppled her and pushed two fingers into her. She moaned before she could stop herself. For all that she’d claimed to want control, with him half on top of her, his mouth against her skin, and his hand working her between her thighs—it was beyond words.

*Mistake.*

She clasped the back of his neck and dragged him up for another deep kiss. Pleasure

sparked as he pressed his thumb to her clit even as he stroked her. *Not yet.* She broke away.

“*Condom.* Now, Beckett. I want you inside me.”

For a second it looked like he might keep fucking her with his fingers until she came apart on his hand, but he finally cursed. “Next time we go slow.”

“Sure.” There wasn’t going to be a next time and they both knew it, but she wasn’t about to ruin tonight by saying as much. Samara propped herself on her elbows and watched as he stalked naked to his suitcase and came back with a string of condoms. She raised her eyebrows. “Ambitious.”

Beckett hooked the back of her knees and towed her to the edge of the bed. “If we only have tonight, we’re sure as fuck going to make it count.”

A sentiment she could appreciate. Samara tore off one condom and sat up to roll it down his cock. She took her time, watching the frustrated desire play across his expression. She stroked him once. Twice. A third time.

“Samara—”

She didn’t know what he intended to say, and she didn’t care. She pulled him onto the bed and climbed on top. “Not now.”

“By not now, you mean never.”

That was exactly what she meant, but she wasn’t about to say so and risk ruining what they had going. Samara reached between them to stroke him. “Do you really want to talk right now? Or do you want me to ride you until we both forget our own names?”

Beckett’s mouth went tight, but he grabbed her hips and ground her against him. “We’ll talk another time.”

“Thought so.” There was no point in talking. Trying to turn this into something more than

it would only end in pain for both of them. Beckett had his future mapped out—heir to Morningstar Enterprise, only son to the CEO and owner. A legacy that had been his from the moment he was born.

Samara's path led in a different direction.

She guided his cock into her and sank onto him until he was sheathed to the hilt. The fullness drew her breath from her lungs and she had to brace her hands on his chest for a few moments to get accustomed to the feeling. "You feel good, Beckett."

His only answer was to run his hands from her thighs up over her hips and waist to cup her breasts. He teased her nipples with his fingers the same way he'd done with his mouth earlier. "You get this orgasm, Samara." He met her gaze, his brown eyes so dark in the shadows they might as well have been as black as hers. "But as soon as you come on my cock, you're mine for the rest of the night. I'm dying for a taste of that pretty pussy."

"I'm in charge," she whispered as she started to move over him.

"You can be in charge while I fuck you with my tongue." He bent up and took her mouth, sliding his tongue against hers even as his cock slid in and out of her. She should argue on principle, but the tension of the last few days left her too tightly wound to do anything but pursue her own pleasure.

Or that was what she told herself as she came on his cock and he ate the sound.

She barely had a chance to relish the orgasm before Beckett flipped them, and then the delicious fullness of his cock was gone and he descended between her thighs. His first lick arched her back and drew a cry from her lips. By all reason, she should be sated and done with the whole experience, but as he thrust his tongue into her, Samara forgot everything but the need for *more*.

Tonight, she'd enjoy everything he had to give her.

Tomorrow, she'd go back to hating Beckett King.