

Chapter Three



Lennox pinched the bridge of her nose, but the tension remained behind her eyes. The pain had settled in around the time she met Brian’s cousin—Ty. The strain worsened the longer she went without hearing any progress. It had only been a week and a half, but still ... shouldn’t he at least have scheduled someone to look at the roof?

The music from Presley’s class thrummed through the walls into Lennox’s office. Sounded like aerobics tonight, too fast-paced to be yoga. The bassline pulsed in synch with the twitch of Lennox’s eye.

Why couldn’t Sara Beth want to get married in a normal place like any other bride? She had to pick a place that needed tons of work and an overseer who couldn’t even bother to be punctual.

“Mama Said” interrupted Presley’s upbeat song. Mom’s ringtone. Lennox’s fingers hovered over the screen a moment before answering. After all, she’d already avoided three earlier calls from her mom by using her classes as an excuse.

“Lennox? I was beginning to wonder if your phone was working.” Mom’s gravelly voice reverberated in Lennox’s already tender head.

“No. Just a busy day. I taught three classes.”

“Well, I’m glad you’re free now. You’re still free on Thursday evenings, right?” Rustling sounds came through the phone. What was her mother doing?

“I am, but I’m already busy this Thursday.”

“But I want you to meet George.” Mom’s whine made Lennox grimace.

“George?”

“My boyfriend. You’re going to like this one, Len. He’s an accountant.”

“I thought you were dating someone named Roy.” Lennox gave up on the bridge of her nose and moved to pressing her temples. “Last week.”

“Well, he never showed up for our last date, but ... George was across the bar, so I struck up a conversation, because, you know, I thought maybe he’d pay for my drink.” Her mom giggled. “And he did.”

Now the important facts were coming out. George must be well-off. Lennox rolled her eyes. “And you never tried to call Roy again, did you?”

“Why should I? He stood me up.” Her mother snorted, and a loud bang caused Lennox to hold the phone at a distance. “Besides, George is different from the others.”

“All, what? Twenty of them?” Lennox flopped on her couch and leaned her head back, banging it softly against the leather.

“Lennox, don’t use that tone of voice with me. It’s not easy to find a soul mate.”

“Soul mate. I don’t even think that’s a real thing.”

“Well, if you come to dinner on Thursday, I’ll show you. I really think George is it, Len.”

“Sorry. I said, I already have plans.” For the first time since Sara Beth informed her of the cake-testing, envelope-addressing party, Lennox was glad to be part of it.

“Like a date?”

“Hardly.” Why did an image of that slob Ty run through her head? “I’m helping Sara Beth with wedding plans.”

“Don’t you waste all your time planning *her* wedding so you won’t have time to find someone and plan your own now.” Her mom tutted. Another clang rang out.

“What are you doing?” Lennox finally gave in to her curiosity.

“I’m looking for the wok.”

“Wok?” Lennox frowned. “Do we have a wok?”

“I thought we did. I seem to remember your dad getting me one when we were on a stir-fry kick once.” More bangs and thumps. “But I can’t remember where it might have gone.”

“Maybe he took it twelve years ago.” Lennox didn’t even try to keep the scorn out of her voice.

“Why would he take a wok? He didn’t take anything else. Not even his wedding ring.”

There was no hope for this headache. No massaging or pressure points would take care of it at this point. Lennox refused to answer.

“Are you sure you can’t get out of that thing with Sara Beth? I mean, her wedding isn’t for a while yet, is it? Your sister’s coming.” Lennox’s mom’s voice held that whiny tone once more. “It’s not every day you get to meet your mom’s boyfriend, you know.”

Now it was Lennox’s turn to snort. “Just every few months, huh?”

“Lennox Paige! You show some respect. I’m doing the best I can, okay?” Now came the pouty voice. Their conversations followed the same pattern. “When your dad walked out and left me to raise you two girls by myself, I had to give up everything. My health, my time, my youth. Now that you’re both grown up and moved out, I can try to claim a bit of happiness for myself. Are you so unfeeling that you’d deny your mama a chance at love?”

“I don’t believe in love, Mama.” Lennox kept her voice even, her tone cool. “But I won’t stop you from chasing the pipe dream. Just leave me out of it. I’ll stop by next week, okay?”

“Great. I’ll check with George and see what his schedule’s like.

He's really busy with tax season, but maybe he can squeeze something in." Her mom sounded more reasonable. "Maybe Sara Beth will rub off on you and remind you that love is real."

"She'll try." Lennox smirked. The old adage about people in love was true—they thought everyone else should be too. "You have fun and tell Macy I said hi."

"Sure." Her mom sighed. "Sometime you two are going to have to sit down and find a way to get along."

"I love my sister." Lennox stood and paced again. "I just can't stand to see her throw her potential away."

"You mean because she's turning out like me?"

Lennox chewed her lower lip. She couldn't deny some truth to the statement. Instead, she needed to end the conversation before it took an even worse turn. "Take care, Mama. We'll see each other soon. Have fun on Thursday."

"Love you." Her mom's closing words echoed through her head.

Love.

It was a beautiful concept, if misconstrued. Lennox flopped back on the couch, her legs aching from the two PiYO sessions earlier in the afternoon. She was surrounded by people who believed in the fantasy of happily ever after, but she didn't see much of it coming true in real life. No. When life got rough, somebody usually ended up leaving.

No need to become attached to someone and learn to lean on him only to have to relearn to live by herself later on. Or worse yet, to have to raise children by herself, like her mother had done. Lennox refused to end up bitter and whiny down the road.

"You still here?" Presley stuck her head through the door, wiping her brow with a towel.

Lennox hadn't noticed the silence. "Yeah. I was finishing up a bit of paperwork and got interrupted by a mom call."

"Oh, man." Presley made a face. "New boyfriend?"

"She's rather predictable, isn't she?"

“It’s usually either that or wanting something.” Presley tilted her head. “You okay?”

“Just tired. A little stressed about this wedding. Didn’t need mama drama too.” Lennox waved her hand. “I’ll be okay.”

“Maybe this will cheer you up. Someone came by earlier asking about your kickboxing class.” Presley tapped her fingers against her chin. “Taller than me. Wavy hair. Chocolate eyes.”

It couldn’t be. “What did you tell him?”

“I told him to come by on Saturday. He was a little scrawny to be wanting to work out, but who am I to judge? I mean, every new member helps pay the bills, right?”

“Right.” Lennox sat up and scooped up her bag. “You good to lock up?”

“Consider it done.” Presley play-punched her arm on the way out. “And quit stressing about your friend’s wedding. That’s her job. Exercise is supposed to increase endorphins. You’re walking around like you haven’t coached three classes today.”

“A good night’s sleep will have me back to myself in the morning.” Lennox waved over her shoulder as she slipped out the back door.

Would she be able to sleep? Not knowing she’d have to see Ty at least once this week, if not twice. He couldn’t really be interested in her kickboxing class. Most of the classes offered at Twisted Barre were women only. How had he found out about one of the two that allowed men?

Sara Beth or Brian. The traitors. If they tried to set her up, so help her ...