
Chapter 1

Alexandra Mills was seated in the vast office building, waiting in the lounge, and everything was so dark. It was a bit uncomfortable. She played with a strand of her long, straight brown hair while her leg bounced, making her light blue stiletto heel, which matched her light blue skirt and her light blue blouse, plink against the gray tile. Her eyes darted around as she took in the gray walls, gray furniture, gray everything. It wasn't a very friendly place. How did they get to the top?

She had to seriously reconsider applying for the position of MAEP at Mackenzie and Andrews Editorial and Publishing. She had what it took for the job. It wasn't her first rodeo, but the place was cold, and she didn't seem to belong there. It was a waste of time.

There were at least thirty-five people in the lounge with her, but nobody seemed cramped. Some seemed so poised, calm, cool, and collected. Others were even more nervous than she was.

Thankfully, she had a job to fall back on if she didn't get this job. She had already been working in the small publishing

company, BAP, Brandon Adams Publishing before MAEP posted the job ad. She had been at BAP for almost three years, even did her internship there during college. She had overloaded herself with courses to obtain her diploma more quickly. She also completed some college courses while in high school, because she knew what career she wanted for a very long time. She loved reading, even dabbled in writing some of her own work, but no one knew. She didn't want to leave BAP, but she thought it was time to broaden her horizons and look at options.

"Alexandra Mills!" A woman shouted from the office behind her seat.

Alexandra rose and went towards the woman, her heels clicking against the gray tiles as she proceeded toward her. The knot in her stomach got worse when she saw the total bomb, Sandra Carpenter, coming out of the door she was walking towards. Why was Sandra there? She was really good at BAP. Why would she want to leave? She had everyone eating out of the palm of her hand there.

Alexandra began to freak out, what was she doing there? She was no match for Sandra. She was magnificent, incredible references, and had a lot more experience than she did. She nearly turned around and took off.

'No,' she thought, 'you've got this. You're just as good.' Alexandra eventually arrived at the woman who called her by name.

"Ms. Mills, I'm Carla James, HR, let's go," the tall woman said, flipping her fiery red hair over a shoulder.

As Alexandra followed her, Sandra came out of the office. The next thing she knew, Sandra grabbed her arm. "Good luck, little girl, although I have it in the bag." She snarled a little and let go.

Alexandra began to walk in to the room, while glaring at Sandra, when she was suddenly sprawled out on the floor after

her foot caught something. All her papers fell from her hands, and were strewn across the floor.

“Thanks, Sandra, real professional, next time why don’t you try to be nice and not be a total bitch.” The last word died on her lips as she looked in the office, her face paling. Well, she just shot herself in the foot. But instead of the frowns she had put on the faces of the occupants, what drew her attention the most was the bronzed, very tall man with dark hair who was slowly coming towards her.

While he approached her, he picked up the papers she had lost. He squatted and held out his big hand towards her. “You okay?” he asked in a deep voice.

She did nothing but nod. She was frozen when his hazel eyes locked with her own hazel eyes. Only his had more green with little flecks of blue in them while hers were more blue and had flecks of greens and gold.

“My name is Dominick Mackenzie; come on, why don’t you let me help you?” He smiled in a perfect row with perfectly white teeth.

Alexandra’s heart began to race. She couldn’t move. But his big hand wrapped around her hand and as he stood slowly, he pulled her up with ease. She chewed on her bottom lip a little as she stood, barely reaching his chest even with the two-inch heels she had on. She swallowed hard as she stared at the tall, sexy deliciousness.

“Dom, can we wrap this up? We still have thirty-four interviews to do before our meeting.” The male voice asked, breaking the moment between the two.

“Yes, Patrick,” Dominick answered, then turned and brought her right along with him. He held up the papers. “Are these for us?”

Alexandra nodded her head one more time. And she had thought she was nervous before.

He smiled at her again and moved to the other side of the

long, dark conference table. "Please," he glanced at the paper, "Alexandra, have a seat."

She gulped loudly. "Alexa, please, Mr. Mackenzie."

"Please, Alexa, just call me Dom. Mr. Mackenzie is my father." He smiled again.

"Yes, Mr. Mackenzie." She flinched inwardly. *'Great, you just showed him you can't do what you're told.'*

Instead of frowning, he grinned even more and laughed. "Well?" He nodded at the chair.

Oh. Right. A seat. Alexa took the chair across from Dominick Mackenzie, *the* Dominick Mackenzie, the man who made this publishing house bloom.

After what seemed like an eternity of him going over her resume, accomplishments, education credits, and everything else, he finally looked at her.

He jumped in, and she responded as sincerely as she could. She'd probably tell him everything if he asked for it.

The interview seemed like an everlasting one. How long until this is over?

The minute the little woman literally fell into the conference room and burst out at the stupid blonde, he was immediately intrigued by her. Short and a spitfire. He just had to smile at her.

Her paperwork was well organized, just like her clothes had been before the fall. Something had drawn him to help her up, and he wasn't usually nice to people. Most were afraid of him, and he didn't mind it until her beautiful hazel eyes rounded in fear at him. He wasn't trying to frighten the poor woman.

She seemed capable of managing herself, but that did not stop the immediate need he had for her. He wanted to protect

her, help her flourish even more in the publishing industry. Hell, he just plain wanted her. That wasn't making any sense. She was far from his usual type. His type roamed more toward the stupid blonde who just left. But this woman, sitting across from him, was definitely gaining his interest.

His gaze stayed glued to those full pouty lips of hers, and the only way he knew she was done talking was by seeing those pink lips stop moving. He'd rattle off another question, and he'd wait for those lips to finish moving.

He was biting the inside of his cheek while attempting to control his libido. He felt Carla and Patrick getting tense, but he asked the last question anyway. "How soon would you like to begin?"

Alexa froze when he asked when she wanted to start. She had never had an interview and had never had a job offered by a business owner. She had always done business with the human resources manager of BAP. She turned her eyes to the woman, Carla, who had a deep frown on her face and then to the man sitting next to Dominick, who seemed equally distraught.

Then she heard the gentleman by Mr. Mackenzie's side. "She's too inexperienced, Dom, we don't want a person like her."

"That's not your choice at this point, is it? She's fresh, young, we could have some very new, good ideas from her, couldn't we, Alexa?"

Her skin covered in goosebumps at the sound of her name from his sexy mouth. "Yes, Mr. Mackenzie, if that's your wish," she answered innocently.

Carla interrupted. "We will let you know, Ms. Mills, good-bye," she said dismissively.

Dominick's eyes went straight to Carla. "We should not be

rude to employees, Carla, as Alexa pointed out to the woman who preceded her.” Those sexy eyes turned toward her. “Tomorrow, I want you tomorrow.”

She widened her eyes in shock. “Yes, Mr. Mackenzie, um, what time?”

“At six, I can go over more things with you tomorrow.”

“But, Nicky, I usually do that.” Carla whined a little.

“Not this time.” Dominick smiled at Alexa. “Tomorrow at 6 a.m. in this room.”

“Yes, sir, thank you,” she responded as she stood. Was that a gleam in his eyes? It felt strange. And too good to be true. But she’d take it. She slowly left the room in case he changed his mind, but it didn’t happen. All she heard was, “Send the others away. I found who I want.” And there was definitely an emphasis on the *I* part.

She swallowed hard again as she left the building, now she had to talk to Brandon. She owed the man so much, but it was time to grow. He would understand, she hoped.

Dom glanced at the few people who surrounded him. Patrick and Carla were seething.

“Nicky, why’d you pick her?” Carla whined out the nickname not very many people used, but she did, and he hated it.

Patrick chimed in, “She wasn’t that impressive.”

Dom leaned back in his chair steepling his fingers. “Well, that’s where you’re wrong, Patrick, she has a backbone. I feel she won’t let our clients walk all over her and will tell us what she really thinks of any work that comes our way. She is young, we can shape and mold her into our perfect editor.”

Patrick and Carla shot a glance at each other. “I believe Mr. Mackenzie is thinking with a different part of his anatomy, rather than his brain.” Patrick sneered a little.

Dom stood, and went around the conference table. “Nope, not my type.” He left the room and retreated to his office, carrying Alexa’s papers in his hands. What had he been thinking? Trying to blend business and fun?

He couldn’t help thinking with that other part of his anatomy Patrick had mentioned. He could not even stand and shake her hand, or he would have had an embarrassing situation on his hands.

He had to get his body under control. She wasn’t for him. She was soft, a spitfire, but needed gentle handling and probably love. He didn’t do love, it was not on his priority list, but they would see. He hoped she didn’t prove him wrong with his feelings about her work.

Alexa made her way back to BAP. Her heart was racing, she couldn’t believe the man was giving her a chance. And he had looked at her like no other man had before. Was that part of the reason she got the job? Or had he actually been impressed by her?

Well, he had another thing coming if he thought something could possibly happen between them. She had sworn off men years ago. And she wouldn’t change her mind just because Mr. Mackenzie looked at her like she was something to devour.

It just wasn’t in her. She walked through the doors of BAP and headed for her mentor, boss, and friend, Brandon Adams. She knocked on his door and heard him say, “Come in.”

His voice washed over her in a settling wave, he would understand. He just had to. “Brandon?” she called uncertainly.

Brandon looked up from his desk, pushing his glasses up his long, thick nose. “Lex, my dear, how are you?” His some-

what wrinkled face broke into a huge smile. "I thought you were on vacation."

"I am, I just need to run something by you," she answered as she walked into the room.

He pushed his glasses up into his salt and pepper hair. "You look awfully dressed up to be on vacation."

"I know, Brandon. I've really got to talk to you." She paused, biting her lip, unsure.

"Go ahead, darling."

"Well, I'm sure you've heard MAEP is looking for a new editor."

"Yes, quite a few gossipers have mentioned it." He leaned back in his desk chair.

"I love you, Brandon, like the father I've never had. You've given me so many opportunities, and I will never forget I wouldn't be where I am today without you." She paused again, twisting her fingers in her lap.

"Come on, Lex, spit it out, sweetheart."

"I applied for the job, and I just came back from the interview. I just thought it would help me with my interview skills since I am terrible at those, I never expected the outcome, they hired me." Her eyes darted up to his soft brown eyes.

"Really? Are you taking it?" he asked, leaning forward, placing his arms on top of his desk.

"Will you be mad if I do?"

"No, of course not, when do they want you to start?"

"Tomorrow, I just didn't have the ability to speak except to answer the questions."

"Yeah, that woman can be such a hard ass." Brandon chuckled a little.

"Woman?"

"Yes, the HR, Carla James, she does all the interviewing over at MAEP." He gave her a strange look.

"Oh, yeah, her. She didn't really do the interview."

"Really, who did then?" His eyes narrowed a little bit.

Alexa swallowed hard. "Mr. Mackenzie."

"That old goat?" Brandon let out a laugh as he seemed to think about the older Mackenzie.

"No, his son," she whispered slightly.

Silence fell across the room. You could have heard a pin drop. Alexa's heart rate picked up instantly. She listened to the pounding in her ears grow louder.

"Dominick Mackenzie, huh?" Brandon began, as he leaned back in his seat and placed his forefinger over his lips. "He must have seen something exceptional in you, which I saw three years ago. If you feel you are ready for this challenge, then go for it, love." He leaned forward becoming more serious. "But I will warn you, that boy is a player, so just be careful."

She reached forward to clasp his hand in hers. "You don't have to worry about that. I am never letting a man close besides you, Brandon. He won't get to me. I'm going to do my job, and that's all."

He stood up and leaned forward, pressing his lips to her forehead. "You'll always have a job here, Lex. But if this is what you want, then spread your little wings and fly, but stay very sharp around that young man."

"I will, sir, thank you." She stood up from the desk. "I'm so sorry for the short notice, Brandon."

"It's okay, this is a great opportunity for you, and I'm not letting you miss out on it."

She bobbed her head a little then headed out to her desk. She sat in her chair. She was leaving this place behind, not for good, she would visit Brandon as much as she could. But this was good, a new adventure and chapter in her life.

As she finished cleaning her desk, she caught Sandra out of the corner of her eye. Her gaze darted over, and Sandra

was heading right over to her. *'Oh no, not now.'* She bit the inside of her cheek.

Sandra sat on top of the desk like it was no big deal. "Aww, did Brandon find out about the interview and decide to finally get rid of our weakest link?"

Alexa glared at Sandra. This woman really got under her skin. "No, I have his blessing for a new job I got."

"Well, then good luck, can't believe this place will lose both of us at the same time, such a shame we never found out which one of us was truly better."

Alexa let out a breath and pasted on a smile. "Oh, I'm sure we'll find out soon. Well goodbye, Sandra, and please don't try to trip me this time." She stood up from the chair and walked away from Sandra and BAP. This was what she wanted, and it would flatten Sandra when she never got the phone call she was expecting.

Too bad, she was going to miss it.