

It was a rare night for Sutton to be home later than Charlotte.

An even rarer night for her to be home later than both of her daughters already put to bed. If Sutton was entirely honest, she didn't particularly enjoy it, either, she thought, as she peeked in to check on both Madelyn and Elle, both sleeping soundly.

But she'd had a dinner meeting with her publisher after the success of her second novel, which had been unavoidable and ended up running a little late.

She tiptoed away from Elle's room, leaving the door open just a sliver because their four year-old liked a little more light than her nightlight provided, before making her way toward her and Charlotte's bedroom.

Pausing for a moment in their doorway, she took in the way her wife sat with her tablet in her lap and hair piled messily on the top of her head in a careless bun – Charlotte had clearly just wanted her hair away from her face.

And she took the moment to enjoy the way seeing Charlotte never failed to give her that *swooping* feeling in her stomach.

Relishing that feeling with a sigh, she quietly closed the door behind her, gathering Charlotte's attention.

Charlotte looked up, that heart-stopping smile already moving over her lips. "How was the dinner, darling?"

She took her earrings off, making eye contact with Charlotte in the mirror as she did so. "It was nice; I didn't realize quite how many people would be there."

In all honesty, Sutton wasn't really a big fan of the politicking in the publishing industry. She loved writing. She really liked her editor and the team she worked with. But... still.

She forewent changing her clothes for the time being, moving to perch on Charlotte's side of the bed, leaning in to kiss her. She relished in the soft brush of Charlotte's lips against her own, before she whispered, "Hi."

Charlotte's hand fell to her thigh, stroking lightly, before she leaned in to kiss her again. "Hello back."

Warmth settled inside of her as she pulled back just enough to really look at Charlotte. "How was your night with the girls?"

Her wife's smile notched just a bit brighter in the way it did for their daughters. And, god, Sutton could fall in love with her all over again for it. "It went very well. Elle made you a painting, it's on the fridge." Charlotte's lips pulled into a thoughtful frown. "I believe she's entitled it *Horse with Wings* – but it is *not* a unicorn. And Madelyn got an A on her spelling test."

Sutton brought her hand up to Charlotte's, toying with her fingers and looking down to watch to try to school her expression as she asked, "And how was the PTA meeting you filled in for me?"

It was such a subtle change in body language that if she didn't know Charlotte just as well as she did, she wouldn't have noticed. But that momentary pause was all Sutton needed before she completely lost it, unable to hold back her soft laughter.

"It was also... good," Charlotte answered, her voice measured. She pulled her hand back, though, and adjusted her pillows as she looked away from Sutton, clearing her throat.

"Good, huh?" She couldn't help but continue to chuckle, utterly besotted and amused, as she stared at Charlotte, waiting for her to make eye contact.

Which she pointedly avoided. Instead, Charlotte locked her tablet and made a show of putting it away in her bedside table. She sniffed. "Yes. It was just... lovely. We discussed potential fundraisers and school dances and all sorts of matters."

Sutton stroked her hand up Charlotte's thigh, gently squeezing, as she prompted, "And that's why I got texts from three different PTA moms politely asking me if I would be back at the next meeting?"

Normally, Sutton would have never asked Charlotte to go in her place; she didn't have to attend *every* meeting, even as the PTA president. But it was the first meeting of the school year, and Sutton had been nearly unanimously voted in at the end of last year; she felt a duty to attend in some way, shape, or form, even if she had other, inescapable, obligations.

Charlotte's facade completely broke, her honey brown eyes rolling *hard*, irritation slashing through her voice, "I played nice with those PTA parents for as long as I could!" She defended, holding her hands up. "But why in the world did they want to waste so much time gossiping about Beth Stokeworth's divorce or Jeremy Birch's love life? Why in the world are we devolving into arguments regarding whether or not we should have a gluten-free table, or it we have to make the fall bake sale *entirely* gluten free?"

She stared at Sutton expectantly, exasperatedly.

And Sutton just... couldn't help but feel so much affection for her wife in this moment.

Especially as Charlotte sniffed, an indignant pout pulling at her bottom lip. "Excuse me for getting the meeting to run a bit more efficiently."

She, again, couldn't help but laugh, this time entirely tinged with adoration. "Love, you can't run the PTA like you run a political staff meeting. You need to herd them like sheep toward a solution. They're all *volunteers*, also," Sutton gently reminded her.

Charlotte sighed, sitting back against the pillows with a frown. "Well, I don't know how you do it month after month. And I certainly don't know why." She dropped her hands to Sutton's, squeezing softly. Coaxingly. "If it meant you not having to interact with those parents so much, we could just donate the money they need and avoid the cookie dough fundraisers all together," she grumbled.

Sutton's mouth fell open in offense. "Not a chance!" She squeezed Charlotte's hands with her own. "I don't necessarily love everyone on the PTA but I do care about being involved and having a direct line of communication with everyone there."

Charlotte's eyes were wide and imploring, as she stared at Sutton with something akin to amazement. "Darling, I will take obstinate congress members and hours-long summit meetings over the PTA any day. You are a braver soul than I, and I appreciate your service."

A beat went by, a little frown line appearing between Charlotte's eyebrows as she asked, "You really got texts from three people about me?"

She nodded, sliding a hand out from Charlotte's and lightly toying with a soft strand of her hair, rubbing it between her fingers before she tucked it behind Charlotte's ear. "All of them believe you are a smart and decisive woman, and everyone was amazed that you made time in your senatorial schedule to be there."

That was also the truth, and Sutton gazed at Charlotte, feeling that same sentiment filter through her own veins. "I, too, am very grateful you did."

"Yes, well. We are a team," Charlotte murmured, sweetly.

"Exactly." She shifted to sit astride Charlotte's lap, bracketing her thighs with her knees. "Luckily, we're a *team*, and I will handle the crazy PTA parents."

"Very luckily for me," Charlotte murmured in agreement, her hands falling to Sutton's waist and pulling her closer.