

Chapter 9: Bridget

Chapter 9: Bridget realized something had shifted the night of her graduation. Whether it was the bond forged through shared vulnerability or the moment Rhys trusted her enough to reveal part of his painful past, the animosity that once defined their relationship had morphed into something more complicated. It wasn't a simple crush; it felt deeper, tangled with curiosity and a kind of fascination that gnawed at the edges of her resolve. Busy days and endless social events filled her time in New York, giving her little space to dwell on the confusing feelings building inside her. Yet no matter how busy she stayed, every encounter, every stolen glance with Rhys left a lingering warmth she couldn't explain. She knew getting emotionally attached to her bodyguard ranked at the top of disastrous ideas, but knowing didn't stop the emotions from blooming anyway.

Chapter 9: Bridget continued navigating the hectic whirlwind of Manhattan life, attending charity galas and committee meetings, all with Rhys silently anchoring her side. His brooding presence was both a comfort and a curse—steady and dependable, yet an ever-present reminder of the boundary she shouldn't cross. A rare quiet evening between them, filled with simple conversation and the glow of autumn decorations, cracked open a door she had tried hard to keep closed. In those small, unguarded moments, Bridget saw glimpses of a man beyond the stern protector—the man who noticed her slipping smiles and cherished her unfiltered laughter. It made resisting her feelings even harder, forcing her to confront how much space Rhys had taken up in her mind and heart without her permission. The attraction was no longer something she could ignore; it pulsed between them, strong and unspoken.

Chapter 9: Bridget's attempt to move on led her to accept a date with Louis, the polished son of a French diplomat. Unfortunately, what was meant to be a step forward turned into a disaster, thanks to Rhys's intimidating presence looming nearby. Though

Louis arrived with a bouquet and a genuine smile, he stood no chance against Rhys's protective glare, which quickly drained the fun from the evening. While Bridget struggled to engage in conversation about luxury yachts and summer escapades, it became painfully clear that Louis lacked the spark she sought. More troubling was her awareness of Rhys at every moment—the man who wasn't her date, yet whose opinion mattered far too much. Even when Bridget tried to distance herself emotionally, Rhys's disapproval still found a way under her skin, leaving her both frustrated and bewildered.



Chapter 9: After the disastrous date, tension simmered between Bridget and Rhys as they clashed over his heavy-handed behavior. Their sharp exchange unearthed buried truths: neither had truly moved on from the complicated emotions simmering beneath their professional relationship. Rhys's admission that he didn't date—and his pointed questions about Bridget's own experiences—only stirred the pot further, exposing vulnerabilities both had tried to keep hidden. Bridget, remembering the palace training drilled into her, attempted to reclaim control of the conversation but found herself emotionally rattled. The way Rhys looked at her, the way he called out the walls she tried to erect, left her feeling raw and seen in a way that few ever managed. Despite the anger flaring between them, the magnetic pull refused to weaken; if anything, it grew stronger, feeding the tension that thickened the air around them.

Chapter 9: Just as emotions reached a boiling point, an urgent call from Nikolai shattered the fragile truce between them. Hearing that her grandfather, the king, had fallen seriously ill tore Bridget out of her spiraling frustration and thrust her into a well of fear and helplessness. In that moment, all the noise of petty arguments and forbidden feelings faded away, replaced by a primal need for family and stability. Rhys, sensing her distress, stood ready to offer his support, though Bridget still tried to carry the burden alone. The reality that she might lose the only parental figure she had left felt unbearable, and even the strength she'd honed over years of royal life wavered under the weight of the news. Panic, grief, and uncertainty consumed her, but somewhere in the corner of her mind, she knew Rhys would not let her face it alone.

Chapter 9: In the aftermath of the call, Bridget struggled to pull herself together, knowing that panic wouldn't change reality. The ache in her chest deepened as she replayed Nikolai's words over and over, each one carving fresh fear into her heart. Everything she had depended on—her carefully balanced life, her hopes for a future slightly removed from royal expectations—suddenly felt fragile. She hated feeling helpless, yet beneath the surface anger at fate and fear for her grandfather, there was a stubborn ember of resolve. No matter how overwhelming the pressure became, Bridget vowed she would step up if needed, even if it cost her the life she had quietly built for herself. She just hadn't expected that the biggest battles she would face would not be fought against the public or politicians—but against her own heart, her own desires, and the impossible choices waiting ahead.