

"Tina? Are you awake?" Blake whispered. He stroked a finger down his girlfriend's back, grinning when she wriggled at this touch. "Tina..."

"Mmm-uhn-uhh." She snuggled back into her pillow, pulling the blanket up to her neck.

He took that as a yes.

"I need to tell you something."

"Mmm..."

"Yeah, you remember the other day when you asked me what Ava was doing at my office and I told you she wasn't there to see me?"

"Hmm..." Her answer seemed a bit more aware.

"Well, she was. I mean, she was there to see me." He watched her for any reaction, her shoulders stiffening with his last words. Yeah, she was definitely awake now.

"And so, you lied to me. Is that what you're saying?" She didn't turn over, just continued to lie there, her monotone reply not a good sign.

"I wouldn't call it a lie...per se."

She finally turned over, the hard set of her face visible in the moonlight steaming through the window. "I would. And, *very* per se." She narrowed her gaze at him. "Why?"

"Why?" He was stalling, and he could tell she knew it.

"Yeah. Why." She didn't raise her voice, but her tone held some disappointment. "Why was she there? Why did you lie? Why did you think now would be a good time to tell me?" She raised a brow at him. "Feel free to answer any one of those questions at any time."

"Well..." And then nothing. He wasn't quite sure what to say.

"*Well* doesn't cut it, Blake."

"Okay." He leaned up on one elbow, moving to touch her, but her sharp look at his hand prompted him to pull it back. "Ava was there because she wanted to talk to me about getting back together."

Tina didn't say anything, but her slight gasp was telling.

"She tried... Well, she thought she could seduce me by... Well, let's just say she thought a look at her tits would do the trick."

"That bitch," she muttered.

"Yeah, well, there's that. Anyhow, I lied about it because I didn't want you thinking just because she did that, that I would act on her offer."

"Wait!" Tina sat up in bed and switched on the bedside lamp, turning her gaze full force on him. "She made you an offer! What? She was just ready to screw you right there? Or meet you someplace? Well, Blake?" She didn't give him a chance to answer between her rapid-fire questions.

"No." He sat up in the bed too, hating the pinched look of anger on her face--knowing he'd put it there. "She offered to blow me. Okay?"

She looked off into the distance and frowned. "I'm gonna snatch her bald next time I see her." She turned her narrowed gaze back at him. "And the rest?"

"What? Why did I choose now to tell you?"

She only nodded.

"My sleep hasn't been the best since I, well, per se'd you." She tilted her head, shaking it back and forth at his attempt to lighten the conversation. "I haven't been able to sleep at all tonight. I've just lain here watching you sleep, listening to that little snore you do every now and then." She frowned at that.

"I don't snore."

"Yeah, you do... But not bad and definitely not too loud," he told her when she opened her mouth to argue. "I think it's kinda cute, actually." He gave her a little grin.

"Well, you snore too." She crossed her arms under her breasts. "And loud. You even do some kind of little wheezing sound at the end of each one."

"I'm sure I do." He smiled at her, seeing the telltale signs of her anger fading.

She looked down, and then peeked up at him through her lashes, the first signs of a smile pulling at her lips. "Okay, so you've been watching me sleep. And the experience gave you some kind of revelation?"

"It did," he said, moving closer to her, cautiously moving his arm to wrap around her body and pull her towards him.

"My revelation was, I couldn't sleep because I never want to lie to you, and it hasn't set well with me since I did." He nuzzled into her hair. "You deserve better from me."

Tina's body softened against his, her arms going around his middle. "I certainly do." She laid her head against his chest, her deep sigh brushing across his skin.

"And do you know why I realized all of this?"

She shook her head, her strands of hair soft against him.

"Because I love you."

She stiffened against him, but he didn't think this time it was in anger.

"You do?" she whispered.

"I do. And once I realized that, I knew I had to tell you--but not with a lie between us." He pulled his head back to look in her eyes. "Can you forgive me?"

Her gaze roamed over his face, her features softening. "Yes, I can." She reached up and pulled his face down for a kiss, whispering across his lips, "I love you too."