

Chapter 1

Music filled the room as the well-dressed guests entered the ballroom. The Kilpatrick's annual charity ball is underway. Tonight's benefactor is the Children's Hospital in Charleston, South Carolina. Malcolm Kilpatrick beamed with pride. His first official event as the new manager of his family's restaurant was a success. Filling Pops shoes is not going to be an easy job. Kilpatrick's Restaurant has been a part of their family for over thirty-five years. Pops' parents, immigrants from South Africa, scraped and saved to open a restaurant. After a successful three years of operating out of big mama's kitchen, it moved to its current spot on Main Street.

Malcolm Kilpatrick, the baby of the Kilpatrick clan, shined as an entrepreneur. Malcolm was appointed manager of Kilpatrick's after Pops discovered Malcolm's older brother, Patrick, was stealing from the restaurant. The restaurant business was new to him, but he was up for the challenge. Pops raised him to be ready for every challenge that was thrown his way. He spent the last four years operating his consulting firm, M K Consulting Group. He was the person that businesses called in when they were on the brink of disaster. When Pops called, there was no way he could turn his father down.

Taking the microphone from the hostess, he made his way to the stage to welcome the guests. "Hello everyone. Welcome to Kilpatrick's Annual Charity Ball. My name is Malcolm Kilpatrick and I am the new manager of Kilpatrick's on Main Street. All the funds donated tonight will be used to purchase new equipment for the Children's Hospital in Charleston. Please don't be shy. Open your wallets and let's make tonight a success. Also, there is a need for volunteers. There is a table in the back next to the beautiful ladies dressed in pink. Please stop by and become a volunteer. Eat, drink, dance, but most of all, have a great time. Thank you and have a good night everyone!"

As he made his way from the stage, he paused when he saw her. She was more beautiful than he remembered. Taylor wore a sexy, short black dress and silver heels that showed off her toned legs and perfectly sized breasts. Taylor Montgomery returned to Folly Beach two weeks ago and opened a café across the street from the Kilpatrick's.

Malcolm was so busy transitioning his consulting firm over to his friend, Ken, he hadn't had the opportunity to stop by the café to reacquaint himself with Taylor. There she was in the building, looking gorgeous and sexy. Malcolm was amazed by her generosity towards her parents. If the rumors were true, she was awarded a full scholarship towards her PhD and was offered a teaching position at a school in England. It was one of the many places she visited during her studies abroad. Giving up something she worked so hard for to move back to a small town was impressive. Taylor's father suffered a stroke a month ago, which led to his forced retirement. According to Mary, the owner of Mary's Breakfast Joint, Taylor's mother was in desperate need of help.

"Son," Pops called, drawing his attention away from Taylor. "I appreciate all that you are doing for Kilpatrick's. The extra money you put into advertising for this event has this paid off. I have never seen this many guests at one of our charity balls. I want you to know I understand the sacrifices that you are making to help your old man. It is greatly appreciated."

"Pops, it's no problem. I am honored to carry on our family's tradition."

"Still, I know leaving your firm in the hands of another person is not an easy task. Are you sure Ken can handle the day-to-day operations?"

“Yes. Ken has worked under me for years. He is my friend; actually, he is more like a brother. I trust him to take over. I will remain the owner, but I have promoted him to manager. I am allowing him to make decisions regarding the staff and the accounts. I know he is capable of operating the day-to-day business without me. Pops, we will be okay. Let’s enjoy tonight and we can go over all the financial statements and make other business decisions Monday morning.”

“Okay son! I just cannot wrap my mind around how Patrick could steal from his family. It took your mother years to convince me to allow Patrick to take over the daily operations of Kilpatrick’s. He abused my trust and is nowhere to be found. I know your mother knows more than she is saying, but I do not expect her to give any details on her precious Patrick.”

“Pops, don’t get yourself worked up. I hate seeing you this way. I will have a talk with Patrick as soon as he shows up in town. You know it is only a matter of time before he comes back. He can’t survive without mom for an extended period of time. Settle down and take mom out for a whirl on the dance floor. Show these young people how you should move a woman around on the dance floor,” he said, patting pops on the back.

“Enough about your brother. Grab one of these ladies and let’s hit this dance floor. This band is playing the hell out of these classics. Maybe you can find me a daughter-in-law tonight. I am not getting any younger. I would like to enjoy grandkids before I become too old to run around outside.”

“Pops, you know that you won’t be running anywhere,” he laughed. “Anyway, I think I found you a possible daughter-in-law,” he said, looking in Taylor’s direction.

“Son, she is nothing like these honey pops you have been dating. She actually has a brain.”

“Beauty and brains are what I’m looking for. It is nice that she has both.”

“Malcolm don’t hurt yourself, son. Stick to what you know. Taylor Montgomery is out of your league. She is not going to fall all over you like the rest of these women. They are just waiting on me to move so they can come over here. Well, all of them excluding Taylor Montgomery. If you notice, she hasn’t looked over here once. She is a good catch, but you will have to change your ways to get her.”

“Old man, let me handle this,” Malcolm said, heading towards his target.

“Don’t hurt yourself, son,” Pops joked, heading to the dance floor.