CHAPTER EIGHT

*From the Theatre to the Cookie*

Michael wrapped his arms around Aurora’s waist pulling her closer towards him. The warmth from his large hands seeped through the intern’s dress making her quiver against him. The Pop star felt his friend’s jolt and immediately let go not wanting to seem forceful. Aurora took both of Michael’s hands and placed them back onto her making him smile beautifully. The two friends were just seconds away from sharing a passionate kiss when Sandra opened the theatre doors interrupting their brief moment of romance.

“Mr. Jackson!” She yelled running towards her boss as he and his guest slowly pulled away from each other.

“She has perfect timing.” Michael said under his breath making Aurora laugh to herself. “What is it, Sandra?”
“I’m sorry to interrupt but there’s a problem with Bubbles.”

“With BUBBLES?” Michael asked jumping up from his seat. “What’s wrong with him?”
“He hasn’t eaten his food all day. His trainer thinks he may be sick.”
“Oh no…” Aurora said. “Michael, you should check on him.”

“I’ll be right back ok?” He said kissing the intern’s forehead. “Stay here.”
“I will.”

The Gloved One turned and quickly ran with his maid out of the theatre and the two of them jumped into his golf cart heading towards the animal sanctuary. Aurora stayed in the theatre and watched Michael’s performance as it came to an end. She saw Lisa Marie’s face in the audience and scoffed in disgust thinking how someone like her could demand $10 million dollars from her own husband when she had enough funds to survive on for the rest of her life.

“You won’t win, Lisa Marie.” Aurora said to the screen. “I will make sure of it.”

“Mr. Sneddon?” Lisa Marie said barging into his DA office. “We need to talk.”
“Ms. Presley, how wonderful it is to see you.” Tom said while shuffling several papers around on his messy desk. “Please, have a seat.”
“This won’t take long.” She said sitting in one of his office chairs. “I need to know what I’m getting into if I assign you to my case.”
“Ms. Presley, you won’t be ‘getting into’ anything.” Tom explained. “I simply told you the truth about your case. You are entitled to receiving much more than you are asking for.”

“But this will greatly affect Michael’s career.”
“His career was greatly affected two years ago, Ms. Presley.” Tom said sharply. “There is nothing that man can say or do to re-build himself back to the way he once was.”
“I just want what I’ve lost.” Lisa said. “I don’t want to hurt Michael. He still means a lot to me and I know I still mean a lot to him.”
“Is that why he’s been seen courting another woman?”

“Michael is lonely.” Lisa explained. “He has been his entire life. He struggles with letting people get close to him because of what happened to him as a child.”

“Ms. Presley, I’d love to sit here and hear you gabber about your husband but I’m a very busy man.”

“Tom, if you take this case you have to promise me that Michael won’t be ridiculed by you or anyone else you work with.”
“I don’t make promises I can’t keep. Mr. Jackson is a very wealthy man and is entitled to pay his wife alimony on top of other monies that are owed. Now, you can either choose to take my advice and allow me to get what’s rightfully yours on your behalf or you can take the $10 million and walk out of his life with no chance of ever getting anything ever again.”

“Thank you for your time.” Lisa said standing up from her chair. “I’ll let you know my decision later today.”
“Time does not wait for anyone, Ms. Presley.” Tom said as he watched Michael’s soon to be ex-wife open his office door. “You will regret the day you married that man if you don’t take my words seriously.”

“Good day, Mr. Sneddon.” Lisa said leaving the District Attorney’s office.

Michael raced back to his friend in the theatre and noticed she was missing. Panicked, he searched everywhere thinking she may have wandered off or got lost somewhere on his 2,700 acre property. To his surprise, he saw the beautiful intern sitting in the distance under a large tree with a few of Michael’s pet bunnies. The Pop star giggled as he walked towards the grey eyed beauty and her new furry little friends. Aurora placed three bunnies on her lap and snuggled each of them kissing their noses and feeding them baby carrots.

“They are so adorable.” She said seeing Michael walk over and kneel down next to her. “I wish I could take them all home with me.”
“You can visit them anytime.” Michael said as he watched his friend tend to his pets. “I thought you were lost somewhere.”

“No, of course not.” Aurora explained. “I heard noises over here and came to check it out. Then I found out it was just Louie singing or something.”

Michael laughed as he took the bunnies out of his friend’s lap.

“I wouldn’t keep them on you for very long.” He explained. “You just fed them. They need to go to their special place now.”
“Oh right!” Aurora said watching the little ones hop to their place of refuge. “I don’t want them having accidents on me.”
“Neither do I.” Michael joked. “And yes, Louie has a habit of making funny noises every now and then. He likes to let me know when he’s happy.”
“And what is he happy about?”
“Seeing his owner happy.”

“And why is his owner so happy?”
“I think you know the answer to that, Aurora.”
“Do I now?”
“You love taunting me, Miss Clark.”
“Indeed I do, Mr. Jackson. Is Bubbles ok?”
“He’s fine.” Michael explained. “He likes to play sick when I don’t pay him enough attention.”

“Smart chimp.”
“He is. Would you like to go back to the theatre?”
“Sure. Can we watch your performance and then walk around some more?”
“Of course.” Michael said standing up and taking the beautiful intern’s hand.

Michael offered to drive the intern back to the theatre but Aurora insisted they hold hands and walk there swinging their arms like children. Michael’s staff stood by and watched their boss with his new lady friend and smiled feeling happy for him. Aurora stopped at a nearby garden and bent down to smell the fresh red and white roses. Michael let go of the brunette’s hand and picked up a pink rose from a nearby bush. He placed it gently in her hair next to her barrette and giggled adorably.

“Beautiful.” He said.

“Thank you.” Aurora replied turning her head back and forth like a supermodel.

The grey eyed beauty then lifted Michael’s arm and wrapped hers underneath it. The Pop star’s heart was racing a mile a minute as he cheerfully led his guest back to his theatre. It seemed like the perfect day for the duo. Nothing could come between them – except for the unanticipated storm that was heading their way.

“That was a wonderful performance.” Aurora said clapping as she gave her new Pop star friend a standing ovation. “Your feet are truly magical.”
“You think so?” Michael asked with flushed cheeks.

“Of course.” The grey eyed beauty replied. “No one sings or dances like you.”
“I’m nothing special, Aurora.”
“Oh, Michael.” She said sitting down next to him. “Always so modest.”

“Come on.” Michael said standing up from his seat. “I’ll show you around some more.”
“Oh, goody!” Aurora replied childishly as she jumped up. “I’m excited.”
“Neverland is full of fun and adventure.”
“I can sense that. Shall we?”
“Yes, we shall.”

The two headed out of the theatre. Michael showed Aurora the rest of his wonderful home including the zoo, amusement park, train station, water park and of course, his Giving Tree. Aurora was hesitant to climb the massive stock but felt more comfortable once she saw Michael climbing with so much ease. She kicked off her shoes and followed him tracing his feet wherever they went grabbing onto the branches above her head being careful not to slip or fall.

“This is beautiful, Michael.” Aurora said making herself comfortable next to the Pop star who was seated in a small cove dug out at the very top near a large branch.

“I’ve been sitting in this tree for years.” Michael explained. “I’ve written many songs here. So much inspiration comes from just being here alone.”
“It really is peaceful and full of nature.”

“I don’t show or tell anyone about my Giving Tree.” Michael said. “Only those who are special to me know about its existence.”
“I must say I am flattered again, Mr. Jackson.”
“You deserve to be, Miss Clark.”

The two friends sat up in the tree for what seemed like hours. Michael held his friend close to him as they both cuddled and watched the sun dip its way into the horizon. Michael adored his beautiful guest and hoped that she was enjoying his company just as much as he was enjoying hers. Aurora placed her right hand on top of Michael’s. He then turned his hand over and pressed it into hers. The grey eyed beauty closed her eyes and rested her head against the Pop star’s chest inhaling his intoxicating scent of Black Orchid cologne. Michael kissed the top of Aurora’s head and used his free hand to run his fingers through her long, chestnut brown hair. The beautiful intern eased into the Pop star’s touch and lifted her head as she planted a baby kiss on the side of his neck. Michael giggled adorably as Aurora made her way towards his cheek.

“Am I getting too personal?” She whispered while nibbling on his ear.

“Let’s take this inside.” Michael replied helping his friend stand up from the tree stump.

“I didn’t know you could cook so well!” Dennis said watching his partner create a tantalizing three course meal from scratch in his kitchen. “Where and how did you learn?”
“My parents.” David explained. “They both had an incredible passion for food. I used to lean over the counter when I was a kid and watch my mom knead her own dough and see my dad make his own sauces and dressings from scratch.”
“That’s amazing.” Dennis said sampling one of David’s meatball appetizers. “Did you grow up in a big family?”
“You could say that.” David said as he stirred his spaghetti sauce on Dennis’s gas stove. “I’m the middle child of four. My parents also raised my two first cousins after their parents died in a car crash when they were toddlers.”
“Wow, that’s incredible.”

“Yeah, it was quite the experience.”

“Where are they now?”

“They moved out of state.” David said while sampling his sauce with a spoon. “That’s how it is I guess. You can’t stay a kid forever.”
“So true. I’m sorry about what they did to you when they found out.”
“I forgave my dad.” David explained. “Based on his last words to me, I knew he would have accepted it had I told him sooner. As for my mom – maybe one day she’ll come to her senses and snap out of her shell.”

“I hope she does.” Dennis said trying to sound supportive.

The two men were getting closer by the minute. Dennis adored David and his skills in the kitchen as well as in the bedroom. David felt as if Dennis could be the one for him but didn’t want to rush into thinking long term. They both still had a lot of ‘exploring’ to do before any kind of commitment could be discussed. Dennis grabbed a few vegetables out of his fridge and rinsed them off in his sink wanting to prepare a salad. David continued stirring inside his pot when suddenly the two gazed at each other with lust in their eyes.

“What?” Dennis asked.
“Are you thinking what I’m thinking?”
“Uhh…maybe?”

Dennis quickly turned off the faucet and ran towards his partner. David switched off the stove just in time before his tall, handsome partner started kissing him all over. The two men began groping each other in the middle of the kitchen and before they could blink, they were lying on top of each other on the hardwood floor stripping their clothes off about to make crazy, passionate love for the third time that day.

Tom Sneddon detested Michael Jackson. Due to the unfair, unruly allegations that arose in the summer of 1993, Tom made it his top priority to see that the King of Pop would pay for his actions, even though Michael was NOT guilty. With his upcoming divorce making headline news, the DA of Santa Barbara knew the best way to get Michael again would be to sway his future ex-wife into allowing him to take over their case so that he could finally see justice served by his own hands.

“You won’t win this time, you freak.” Tom said sitting at his office desk. “You may have won the battle, but you are far from winning the war.”

He then laughed devilishly as he continued preparing the settlement papers in hopes that Elvis Presley’s only child would come to her senses and agree to have him represent her in court.

“Mrs. Clark?” Barbara said entering her boss’s office. “You have a phone call.”
“Who is it?” Jill asked angrily. “Can’t you see I’m in the middle of something!”
“It’s Mr. Sneddon.”

Jill dropped her papers and grabbed the phone from her maid. She asked her to leave the room and watched as she closed the door making sure her conversation wouldn’t be heard by her domestic staff. The chief committee member took her seat at her office desk and sighed deeply hoping that whatever Tom was about to tell her would be something she wanted to hear.

“Make this quick.”
“You’ll be happy to know that little Miss Rock and Roll is now on our side.”
“She signed with you?”
“Not only that but she’s also asked me to disclose all of the details of the 1993 trial to her.”
“Tom, are you allowed to do that?”
“Who’s going to stop me, Jillian?” The DA asked cleverly. “I was the man’s prosecutor. I have access to files that the judge didn’t know existed.”

“I don’t want Aurora getting dragged into their messy divorce, Tom.”
“Don’t worry.” Tom replied. “I know what I’m doing.”
“When can I expect to hear from you again?”
“Within a few days.”
“The clock is ticking.” Jill said reminding the DA before hanging up the phone.

“This is my dance studio.” Michael said as he opened a wide steel door leading into a large empty room with a wooden cedar colored floor and mirrored walls.

“Wow!” Aurora said stepping inside. “So, this is where your genius craft is brought to life?”
“Some of it.”

“I am very impressed. Is that your recording booth?”

“Yes.” Michael said as he noticed his friend pointing to a small room in the distance. “I create sounds and record my lyrics in there sometimes.”
“Is it ok if I look around?”
“Of course.” Michael said smiling at his new friend.

Aurora browsed the entire dance studio peering through the doors and gazing at every wall. Dozens of pictures of the Pop star with so many iconic celebrities were hung everywhere. A few of his record breaking achievements were also on display including his Guinness Record for ‘Thriller’, the biggest selling album in music history. The grey eyed beauty admired her talented new friend and felt grateful that she of all people was fortunate enough to be inside his wonderful home and see his long list of accomplishments in person.

“The more I discover about you, the more I am amazed, Mr. Jackson.”

“Stop it.”
“It’s true!”
“I’m just me.”
“You are brilliant, Michael.”
“I don’t think so.”

“Always so modest.”
“Always so beautiful.”
“That would also be you.”
“I concur.”

“Come here.”

Aurora hugged her new friendly lovingly. Unknown to her, Michael’s feelings were slowly starting to grow deeper for the beautiful intern. Being the gentlemen he was, the Pop star welcomed the grey eyed beauty’s affection but took it in stride not wanting her to think he was being desperate or too impulsive.

“I love when you hold me.”
“I love it more.”

“Thank you for letting me into your home.”
“You don’t have to thank me.” The Pop star said. “You have no idea how happy I am that you’re here with me.”
“I don’t ever want to leave.”
“I don’t want you to either, Aurora.” Michael whispered to himself.

“Shall we go inside the house?” The intern asked pulling away from her friend.

“Sure.” He replied. “I think you’ve seen all that Neverland has to offer for now.”
“For NOW?” Aurora asked. “There will be more?”
“A LOT more.” Michael explained. “I have big plans for Neverland’s expansion.”
“Will you share them with me?”
“It’s confidential.”

“Even for me?”

Michael giggled.

“I might let you in on a few secrets.”
“I’m looking forward to it.”

The two scurried out of the dance studio and jumped into Michael’s golf cart as he drove back towards the main house. Sandra had tea and cookies waiting for the duo as they entered the living room and sat down on the couch. Michael thanked his beloved staff member and told her she could retire for the evening once dinner had been served. Sandra knew love was still brewing in the air and smiled to herself as she noticed the priceless look of happiness on her employer’s charming face.

“I hope I am not distracting you from your work, Michael.” Aurora said as she sat on her friend’s black leather couch and poured the tea into two porcelain cups.

“Not at all.” Michael replied sitting next to his lady friend. “I told you I would make time for you when you arrived.”
“I appreciate that, but starting tomorrow I’d like you to get back to your usual routine.”
“Are you giving me orders, Miss Clark?”
“Are you wanting me to stay here, Mr. Jackson?”
“You know I can’t argue with that.”
“I concur.”

Aurora handed the Pop star his cup and he politely declined adding milk or sugar. Aurora also did not add anything to her cup and the two of them sipped the hot liquid in sync enjoying every second of each other’s company. Michael eyed the plate of cookies in front of him and picked one up placing it halfway into his mouth.

“Michael, NO!”

Not being able to speak, the King of Pop simply winked his eye and leaned in towards the beautiful intern’s lips gesturing her to bite into it. Not being able to resist, Aurora moved forward and placed her mouth over the savory treat biting into its warm, freshly baked goodness. Michael folded his lips over hers and the two chewed quickly before pressing their lips firmly against each other. Of course, their moment of romance had to be interrupted again when Aurora’s cell phone rang which was sitting on the edge of the coffee table.

“You should answer that.” Michael whispered as he backed away from the grey eyed goddess. “It might be important.”
“It’s not.” Aurora replied seeing the number flashing across the screen. “It’s my mother.”
“She might need to talk to you about something important.”
“Jillian Miranda Clark’s idea of ‘important’ is telling me what to do, where to go and how to live my life. I don’t want to deal with her right now.”
“Aurora…”
“Michael, please.” She said holding his hand. “You won’t understand.”

The Pop star then told his friend that he knew what it felt like to have a difficult parent. Aurora didn’t mean to sound disrespectful and compare her mother to Joseph, but Michael assured her that her mother was only saying and doing what she thought was best for her only child. The beautiful intern didn’t want to dismiss her new friend’s opinions and simply told him that she’d prefer not discussing the topic of her mother. Michael understood and they both changed the subject by discussing one of the Gloved One’s upcoming projects.

“Mr. Jackson you have a phone call.” Sandra said coming into the living room.
“I’ll take it in my office.” He replied standing up from the couch.

Feeling the need to be charming, Aurora quickly grabbed Michael’s arm as he fell back onto the couch next to her.

“Don’t go.”
“I have to. I’ve been expecting this call all day. It’s really important.”
“But I’ll be lonely here without you.”
“I promise I’ll be right back.”
“Can we please share another cookie?”

Michael gasped as he laughed cutely and looked down with rosy cheeks.

“We’ll share much more than a cookie when I come back, Aurora.”
“Promise?”
“Yes.”
“In that case, hurry back.”
“How demanding can you be, Miss Clark?”
“How important is that phone call, Mr. Jackson?”

Michael tickled his friend and kissed her forehead before excusing himself to answer his call. While he was gone, Aurora looked at her cell phone and noticed her mother had left her a voice message. She dialed her inbox and heard Jill’s harsh, disobedient tone almost immediately. The grey eyed beauty rolled her eyes as her mother did absolutely nothing but badmouth her new friend and insult their budding relationship. Aurora didn’t even make it halfway through the message before pressing the delete button. She then finished her tea and waited for her new friend to return so that they could finish what they had started a few minutes ago.

Michael quickly went into his office and closed the door locking it behind him. He sat in his plush leather chair situated at his large oak desk and pressed a button on his telephone intercom.

“Yes?”
“Hello, Mr. Jackson.”

Michael’s entire body shivered. He knew that voice too well.

“Why are you calling me?”
“You’ll soon find out.”
“What do you want?”
“To see you rot in hell.”
“Don’t ever call me again.”

As he was about to hang up, the DA on the other end chuckled deviously.

“You can run but you can never escape from me. Once again, your fate is in my hands.”
“What the hell are you talking about?”
“Soon, Michael.” Tom snared into the phone. “Very soon.”

“You need help, Tom.”
“No, Michael.” He replied. “What I need is justice. You got away from me once. I’ll be damned if I let you get away twice.”

Michael hung up the phone and unplugged it. He rested his head against his desk and took a few long, deep breaths. What was Tom talking about? His case from two years ago was closed and dismissed. The two of them had no unfinished business. What could Tom possibly want with Michael now? Just then, the Pop star gasped loudly as he held his heart hoping that the conclusion he came to wasn’t true.

“Lisa Marie…..”