

“You’re going to do this with or without my help, aren’t you, Luce?”

Her jaw set under his fingers, and she gave him a defiant nod.

He ground out another curse and opened his mouth. “If this is what you really want, what you think you need to get past this, I will be your lover. Me. No one else. Got it?”

Her eyes grew wide, and her pretty pink lips parted as she stared up at him, her expression dumbstruck. Exactly how he felt when he heard the words trip out of him. A wry smile tugged at the corner of his mouth. He hadn’t exactly been planning to say that. But no matter that it was a spur of the moment thing; the steady beat of his heart and the sudden clearing of his head assured him it was the right thing to do. It was the only way he could guarantee her safety. Too many things could go wrong while she was so delicate, and he’d have no way of knowing until it was too late. No way was he risking that—risking her. Not when he could stop it happening altogether.

His grip on her chin loosened, and his thumb caressed her jaw. “God knows, you deserve to have the world at your feet, Lucy, and you deserve better, but if you’re determined to go down this path, know the only man I’ll be offering you is me.”