

**PREQUEL**  
to  
***CAUGHT IN THE SPOTLIGHT***  
**by Jules Bennett**

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This couldn't be.

Mia Spinelli stared at the documents again.

Dear God. What had she stumbled upon? How was this forty year old secret kept so well hidden? And what in the world was her employer, hot shot movie director Anthony Price going to do now that he'd uncovered the truth?

Surely he wouldn't go public and ruin lives.

Mercy sakes, if the media got wind of this...

Mia took a seat in the buttery leather desk chair at Anthony's oversized mahogany desk. Of all the things for her to stumble upon, why did it have to be something so damning, so life altering?

"Mia?"

Heart pounding, eyes wide, Mia jerked to her feet, sending the chair rolling back until it slammed into the floor-to-ceiling window with a thud.

"Anthony, what are you doing back?" She forced her eyes to stay on his face and not down to the simple manilla folder holding the truth. "I thought you were having lunch with your attorney."

"He got called away on an emergency," he told her, stepping into the room.

"Everything okay? You seem jumpy."

Jumpy? She didn't feel jumpy. Scared, nervous, anxious, confused. Okay, so she was jumpy. Who wouldn't be after uncovering such a shocking secret?

Anthony's eyes landed on the folder, then moved back up to hers. "You know."

Mia nodded. The man knew her so well, there was no need in trying to lie. She'd worked for him for several years as a personal assistant and their working relationship had quickly turned into a friendship. She'd always considered him the brother she'd never had. And in the years she'd worked for him, Mia had learned quite a bit of personal information that she'd kept under wraps. But this...this secret was something she wished she'd never stumbled upon. Not that she couldn't keep the information to herself, but she just didn't want the weight of the lies on her shoulders. She'd only known the truth for two minutes and already she felt like she was carrying around excess baggage.

But because she considered Anthony family, not just an employer, she'd stand behind him in whatever decision he made.

"What are you going to do with this information?" she asked, coming around the desk.

With a sigh, Anthony shrugged and took a seat on the leather sofa. "Honestly, I don't know. It's all still sinking in. I mean, I knew I was adopted, but this is bigger than anything I'd ever thought possible. The birth information was certainly buried well. Took my investigators months to dig it up."

Mia leaned against the corner of the desk. "Did you tell Charlotte?" she asked of his wife.

"No. She's barely talking to me as it is." Anthony's eyes, full of grief, held hers. "I can't lose her, Mia. This truth...it could ruin us. She already hates the whole Hollywood scene."

Mia's heart constricted. Anthony loved his wife more than any man she'd ever known, but with all the Hollywood scandal, lies and media attention, Charlotte had taken just about all she could handle. With speculation of Anthony's affairs, Charlotte was threatening divorce.

"You won't lose her, Anthony. I know how hard you fight for what you want. Which is one of the reasons I'm leaving. The media has painted the three of us in some bitter love triangle and I know that's not healthy for Charlotte or you."

He ran a hand through his messed hair. "I wish you'd reconsider. Don't let all these lies drive you away. You're the best assistant I've ever had."

"I'm only leaving so you can work on your marriage," she assured him. "Besides, we'll still stay in contact. We're friends, right?"

His smile lit up his gray eyes. "We are. But I worry, Mia. Bronson Dane won't like that you're working for his mother and if he does get over that fact, he'll be all over you. The man's got a reputation."

Bronson Dane, Anthony's nemesis and one more key player whose life would be damaged by the secret.

Mia laughed. "I never know if you're my employer or older brother. I'll be fine. I can handle Mr. Dane. I'll be his mother's personal assistant, so I shouldn't have to deal with him too much. Besides, if he's such a ladies' man, he'll be busy with all the socialites and models. I'm a meager secretary."

Anthony came to his feet. "You're not a secretary, Mia. You go above and beyond and I'll never be able to replace you. But the fact you love me and Charlotte enough to step aside means a lot to me."

Mia smiled. "I'd do anything for you, Anthony."

His face sobered, the muscle ticked in his jaw. "Including keep this secret?"

With a nod, Mia crossed to him, looked up in his questioning eyes and smiled.

"Including that. I won't tell anyone what I found."

Anthony gave her a friendly kiss on the cheek. "I hope Olivia Dane knows how lucky she is that you're going to be working for her."

"Oh, please." Mia waved a hand in the air and laughed. "I'm going to work for Hollywood's most beloved icon. I'm definitely lucky one."

Anthony smiled. "Believe me, she's getting the better end of the deal."

Mia didn't know what to say, considering what she'd just discovered. How did he feel that she was leaving and going to work for Olivia of all people.

"Anthony-"

"No, I'm fine." He backed away as if he couldn't face reality just yet. "Actually, I think

"I'll hit the gym. You got it covered until I come back?"

She forced a smile. "Always."

Once he was gone, Mia moved back to the folder and looked over the contents once again, as if the outcome would've changed in the last ten minutes. The truth had been buried for nearly forty years, it certainly wasn't going to be reversed.

The hard facts stared back at her in bold black font. The secret behind Anthony's adoption thirty-eight years ago.

With a heavy heart and the truth weighing down on her, Mia turned to look out the window onto the lush grounds of the Price's lavish Hollywood Hills estate.

With a town so corrupt with lies, manipulation and deceit, Mia was fortunate enough to have never been part of a scandal until the media portrayed her as "the other woman" with Anthony - which was the main reason for her departure. But Anthony was more like the brother she'd never had who so happened to be her very well-known employer.

But the media's love of Anthony's supposed infidelity was absolutely nothing, nothing, compared to the chaos that would erupt if and when they ever got a hold of this buried secret.

And how would she be able to handle looking the Dane's in the eye day after day with this knowledge?

There was only one way to find out considering she started her new job on Monday.

For someone who never wanted to be involved in scandal, Mia had inadvertently put herself smack dab in the middle.