

# TOFU COWBOY: EPILOGUE

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## EPILOGUE

MADDIE

"I don't want a wedding," I said quietly. It was dawn and we were cuddled together in what used to be my bed, but was now happily our bed. Luke, who had given up his apartment a few months ago, turned so his lips were just inches from mine. His eyes searched my face. I held steady. We were six months into our engagement and still hadn't set a wedding date.

Bustle and hubub about our wedding details chased me everywhere I went. Every day at work women asked me where and when. I had to have conversations about dresses and flowers and colors. If one more client spent the entirety of her hair cut talking to me about A-line versus mermaid dress silhouettes, I was going to start shaving heads.

The truth was, I hated the idea of a wedding. I hated being the center of attention. I hated the pressure of the process. I even hated the thought of me in a white dress. I wasn't some virgin saint. I was an adult human. I'd known my fair share of penises and that was exactly how I knew I was choosing to spend my life with the right one. I knew that weddings were lifelong dreams for some women but for

me the whole process felt disingenuous, daunting and downright miserable.

I kept trying to be invested in the wedding stuff because Luke had so many people in his life, and I loved his people. How could Luke possibly get married without the whole town of Conway? He grew up here. He smiled and said hello to everyone as he walked down main street. The whole town was part of his life. And yet here we were six months after that incredible night in the gallery, no closer to a wedding than we'd been the moment he slipped that ring on my finger. Luke lifted his head a little bit, his eyes still scanning my face, hunting for my truth in my expression. He did this often, tried to discern my feelings by studying my features. Instinctually, I used to tried to conceal them. Before Luke, I wasn't used to being truly open, but now I just let it all hang out. He propped his head up on his elbow before matching my tone as he questioned, "Really?"

I slowly nodded my head in the affirmative, and I was about to say that obviously we could still have one, but I might need him to really step up and organize it. I thought maybe he could ask sister to help him because I was just so overwhelmed by the task and it felt grueling for me. I was certain that wedding planning would delight Sarah. But before I could say any of that, Luke flipped me over on my back, pinning me to the bed and kissed me so hard I forgot what we were even talking about.

He went full sexy beast, pawing at my nightgown, pulling it up over my hips. He trailed kisses down my neck, towards my chest and I began to ache with need. Still, I was shaken from the lusty haze of my desire to be ravished by my man, when he grumbled, "I fucking hate big weddings. I don't want a wedding. I only want the girl."

I couldn't help myself. I laughed, a whole fit of giggles before I incredulously said, "You don't want a wedding?"

He pulled the neckline of my nightgown down, revealing my breast and then dragged his tongue in a small circle around the hard little peak of my nipple before he said, "When we seal the deal, I want my family there because they love us, and I'm the first one to get married so I think it would hurt them if we didn't let them celebrate with us. But I don't give a rat's ass about a suit or tie or white dress or flowers or anything like that. And I certainly don't give a shit about being the talk of the town."

I wanted to say more things, to talk about whether or not he had a plan or if there was something else he did want. But he moved further down my body burying his face between my thighs. And honestly, as soon as his tongue made a first pass at my clit, I wasn't really thinking much anymore. When my back bowed and I came, I grinned because it occurred to me that one day soon I'd be Maddie Morgan, and that the incredible man between my legs was gonna be mine forever.



AFTER MAKING sure we were both late, Luke headed out to the ranch, and I went to work. I parked my car a few blocks down and on the opposite side of Main Street from our salon. It wasn't too busy, but I didn't like to take the spaces close to the door because I wanted those to be available for customers.

The sun was out and the sky was blue, and I was feeling so happy, like my heart was singing in my chest. I could feel it, being Maddie Morgan was gonna suit me. I was so wrapped up in my own happiness that when I first walked

past Kat Bennett, I just grinned at her. I even fleetingly thought, Jesus that is the most glorious mane of natural red hair I have ever seen. And then just as I passed her it occurred to me that I was looking at Kat Bennett, international superstar, but more importantly long lost love of Bill Morgan. She was standing on Main St. in Conway and I was pretty sure the Morgans didn't have a clue.

I wasn't usually one to gossip. But I already thought of myself as part of the Morgan clan and Kat on the corner was big news. Luke needed to know. They all did. To see or not to see Kat was something Bill would need to consider. Somehow I held it together and did make a scene. I rushed through the salon door, frantically pulling my phone from my purse.

As I came Smacking through the salon door, Dee boomed, "You know, you are late a lot more often since Luke moved in." The client in Dee's chair snickered. Then, picking up on my distraction sDeehe asked, "What's got you all in a tizzy?"

I didn't answer. Instead, I fumbled through my purse like a madwoman, wondering where the hell my phone was. Finally, I just flipped the damn bag over and dumped the contents on the floor. My things rolled everywhere. But it worked, I immediately spotted my phone.

A little frantic, Dee inquired again, "Maddie, is everything okay?"

Snatching my phone from the middle of the pile of chaos on the floor, I blurted, "Kat Bennett." And then quickly moved through the motions to call Luke. Unliock phone. Go to favorites. Dial Luke.

"What about her. She grew up here, you know." Dee said, still confused and then added, "Pretty sure she almost killed Billy Morgan when she left."

As the call went through Luke, I emphasized to Dee, "I know. And she's here."

"She's where?" Dee asked startled, suddenly looking as shocked as I felt.

Still waiting for Luke to pick up, I said "Standing on Main Street, walking into the Conway Café."

Dee smirked and then laughed, "Well, if that ain't a shit show waiting to happen, I don't know what is."

Through the phone, Luke said, "Who's walking into the Conway Café and why does Dee think it's a shit show, Mrs. Soon-to-be-Morgan?"

I grinned briefly, relishing the joy that I was going to be his wife for a second before starting to ramble, "Oh my God, I was just on Main Street, and I was walking and I was so happy because I'm so excited that we're getting married, so almost totally missed her. I just smiled at her like a fool. I don't know what you should do. Should you tell him or warn him that she's here?"

I had turned away from her but I could hear Dee giggling at my flustered dump of useless information. Luke was a little more forgiving, but not much. He sweetly said, "Well, my future wifey, I am absolutely madly and head over heels in love with you and proud to call you mine, but in this instance I'm going to need you to provide just a few more details. Who am I warning about what?"

I could feel the embarrassment rising. I was sure my cheeks were turning red when I sputtered out, "Bill. You are warning, Bill." I let out a sigh trying to calm the nervous energy racing in my chest. "Kat Bennett's in town, Luke. I just walked right past her on Main Street."

Luke didn't sound even slightly unhinged when he said, "Well, it's about fucking time." Instead, his tone was determined.

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"I'm gonna take a page of my little brother, Wyatt's play-book." Luke was smiling, I could hear it in his tone. "I'm gonna call Sarah and suggest that maybe she wants a pie for after supper tonight. Suggest that Wyatt and Bill ought to stop by the cafe and pick one up?"

I laughed. "Do you think it'll really be that easy?"

"Maddie, don't you know by now that the Morgans always get their happy endings?" Luke asked sarcastically.

I laughed then, but a couple weeks later he proved it.

We got married on a Sunday night in jeans and cowboy boots after hours over a cherry pie at Hazel's Conway Café. Luke asked Bill to officiate. There was nothing fancy about it. It was casual as could be, and it was perfect. He chose me and I chose him. That was more than enough. I didn't know about how happy the endings would be for the other Morgans just yet, but I was certain that when I became a Morgan my happily ever after found me.

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