

# DON'T START NOW by Tara September

## EXCERPT

With a thrust of her hips, Eve scooted the large, leather chair closer to the boardroom table. As she slid, her bare arm accidentally brushed Adam's. She almost gasped at the intimate skin-on-skin contact.

*Holy crap!*

The innocuous swipe felt as though a trail of warm, liquid chocolate had been sensually brushed up her skin, and damn if she didn't have an urge to lick it off. Biting down on her bottom lip, she noticed how his hand clenched his chair's plastic armrest.

Had he felt the heat, too, or was he annoyed that she'd accidentally touched him? She folded her hands together on the table, fighting the sudden need to brush against him once more to find out. "Sorry," she mumbled, trying to keep her voice low so as not to interrupt Nik, who was berating Carl for failing to get someone official on record.

Adam whispered back, "How's it going, speed racer?"

"What?" she asked, turning sharply to look at him, the faux-leather seat making a rubbery noise as she swayed. No one else seemed to hear it, but to her, each awkward squeak was deafening.

How could Adam possibly know about her minor run-in with the law? She grimaced just thinking about her morning ordeal. Eve blinked, remembering, and her heart thudded as red and blue lights strobed across the inside of her eyelids for a moment. If that sheriff hadn't nabbed her for doing a rolling stop, Eve wouldn't have been late at all. Seriously, who got pulled over for that? For Pete's sake, she was only making a right-hand turn onto an empty street. The same as every morning since she'd moved to the Southwest Florida gated community six months ago. Didn't the police department have bigger fish to fry? Apparently not.

"My contacts over at the precinct texted that O'Malley issued you a ticket this morning," Adam explained.

Eve opened her mouth in shock and again cursed herself at her stupidity for not doing a full, three-second stop. She hadn't planned on telling anyone about the humiliating experience, but of course Adam, of all people, had found out. Given his government and city beat, she shouldn't be surprised. He probably had plenty of buddies at the station. Not sure what to say, she pressed her lips

firmly together. She searched his rugged profile, trying to gather her wits, but instead noticed again how his thick, black hair curled around the tips of his ears and the collar of his shirt.

He grinned. “I’m surprised you didn’t bat those baby blues at him and talk your way out of it. Didn’t know O’Malley had such resolve.”

Snapping open her laptop, Eve refused to take his bait and get into yet another tête-à-tête with him, especially not in front of their chief. But Adam waited for her to respond, and dammit, she couldn’t keep quiet. “I’ve never been pulled over before,” she admitted in a whisper only he could hear. “I could barely find my registration and insurance card.”

“Don’t worry, speedy, I got you.”

His teasing she was used to, but was he trying to reassure her? “You got me?” she asked, dumbfounded.

He nodded, bringing his elbows up on the table alongside her. She leaned closer to hear his next words. “Go ahead and contest the ticket. O’Malley won’t show up in court, so it won’t go on your record or ping your insurance. After all, he’ll be too busy to appear, what with going to the Yankees–Red Sox spring training game at JetBlue Park. You owe me, though. I was really looking forward to that matchup.”

What kind of bizzaro world was this? They were barely work friends. She would never have thought to ask for his help in this matter. Perhaps she was still asleep. Maybe she’d never gotten that traffic ticket to begin with and was still curled up in bed. She shot a nervous glance around the room, but no one seemed to be paying them any attention. “Are you serious?”

He quirked a brow. “About owing me? Damn serious. I had seats right behind home plate. But yes, consider the traffic violation dropped.”

“Wow, thank you!” An ounce or two of Eve’s morning stress released with her exhale, causing her posture to sag. The fine, combined with her insurance rates going up, would have blown her budget. She’d just saved up enough to fly to Atlanta to meet face-to-face with a prospective literary agent, too. Her travel guide plans wouldn’t have to be pushed back after all. “Of course. I owe you big. Whatever you want, just name it,” she rushed out in excited relief.

His stormy, gray eyes darkened before once again returning to their usual state of aloof amusement. With a lopsided grin, he bent closer to whisper in her ear. “Be careful, Evie, I mean to collect.” His voice was a silky, hot caress. This time, she couldn’t control the gasp that escaped her suddenly dry mouth.