

Chapter 7

Iris:

My heart raced against my ribcage as my eyes met Dean's. The one man who had the effect to both my heart and mind, and that was something that came as a surprise to me, especially after all this time of being away.

I had to fight back looking down at my feet as I refused to come out as weak in front of the man who broke everything in me. I had to play the strong act, even if it wasn't how I was feeling. The man was the last person who was supposed to see me in a broken state, especially since he knew that he broke more in me than any other person could have.

The man not only broke my pride, but he also broke my heart by both cheating and wanting a divorce to begin with. And I was thankful for the fact that I chose to accept the divorce and no longer live with a scandalous excuse of a marriage that only seemed to break my heart more and more by the day. The man wasn't worth the fuss, it only saddened me that it took me years into the marriage and years after it to realize that I was worth a lot more than the hell that I lived through.

The way the man looked at me was enough to break my heart and soul, and that was something that I couldn't find myself forgiving him for. My little one has lived wondering where her father was for as long as she could remember, and that was something that broke my heart, especially since I knew that I was telling her that her father was the hero that every girl wanted to have when he was the exact opposite, at least to me. I didn't know how he would be treating her, but judging by how he treated me, I knew that he wouldn't be better as a dad toward her.

I sat on my father's chair, my heart aching at the fact that he was sick. However, I was more than thankful for the fact that he had agreed to at least accept going back to treatment. I didn't want him giving up on his body, and whatever the expenses were, I was more than willing to take care of them. My dad knew very well what I would do for him, and though it saddened me that he reached this point, I knew to be happy that I was going to be the backbone that he needed through this.

"Is Mr. Ashton okay?" One of the men sitting beside Dean asked and I nodded. Dad wouldn't want anyone knowing that he was very sick. If he wanted it, then he would have announced it himself; therefore, I knew not to cross my limits as to talk about what didn't concern me, especially in a state like this. One wrong word could cost us a lot, and though it didn't matter to me as I knew that things would manage to be better as time went by, I still didn't want to risk ruining what my father has spent years building and maintaining.

"He is a little ill, and for that, I am here. However, he should be back soon enough." I said and the man nodded in understanding. Dean looked at me for a few seconds, studying my expression before choosing to get up. Thankfully, he didn't ask any questions, not yet anyway. But I knew that he would, and I wanted to be out of the office before that happened.

The man could read me like an open book, and despite me masking my feelings and emotions with a monotonous expression, I knew that he could see through what I was hiding. He knew that something was wrong, and that was something that I didn't like.

If anything, the last thing I wanted or needed was to feel like I was being questioned by my ex about anything concerning my life. The pain that I was in because of him was more than enough, and that was something that he knew very well.

"Well, considering that we are all here, we can start with our meeting..." Dean said, looking me in the eye as he spoke. His eyes spoke into my soul, and I could tell that he was well aware that dad wasn't just a 'little' sick. There have been times when he was sick, very sick, but he would still come to meetings. But now he was beyond just that. However, no one knew about his disease, and I knew why he didn't want to make it public. The last thing he wanted or needed was to be a public image, and paparazzi had no respect for privacy. If anything, they mostly lived on invading people's lives and private matters.

The others on the table nodded, wanting to start the meeting. However, I stayed completely still as I studied my ex's expression, trying to read it. And I had to fight back a frown as I saw regret in his once proud eyes. The man who had the whole world bending to his knees as he claimed seemed to be regretting something, but whatever it was, I didn't know; however, I wasn't going to ask. If anything, I shouldn't be caring

to begin with.

"Yes, Mr. Dean, you can start with your meeting..."

"What is really going on with your father?" Dean asked, stopping me from leaving the room. I had to fight back, turning to punch the man in the face, reminding myself that the man was my father's partner, and it was only normal for him to ask; otherwise, he could be considered rude, especially since he knew my father well enough to know how he was when it came to work.

"I don't think that it concerns you. If it did, he would have told you himself." I said, snapping at him. He stayed quiet, listening to me before he raised an eyebrow. The thing was, him and my father have indeed cut so many ties between them after everything that happened between us.

Dean was mostly thankful for the fact that he and my father agreed to keep ties of work after our divorce. He knew the drama that happened a while before the divorce, and regardless of not knowing what initially happened between them both. I knew that things were different now, and that dad did not forgive him for what happened.

If anything, I didn't blame him. My father trusted him with his only child, and all he did was break me. It was something that I couldn't get over, and that was something that I knew that even Dean knew. The patience that I showed toward him just wore off one day, and that was when I decided that things needed to stop and change.

"I am your father's partner, Iris." He said as I opened the door to leave. I hated admitting it, but I hated having too many things that needed to be collected, and for some reason, being the 'newest' member on the table, Dean had the men questioning my plans and what I was going to do. And that fact alone was what delayed me as I needed to collect my things, papers, and files.

"Then as I told you, you can call him and ask, or find him at one of the hospitals. I am not going to associate in meaningless conversations with you." I said, glaring at the man who looked down at his feet, avoiding my eyes. I wouldn't even be here if it were up to me. If anything, I would have just sold my shares within this region to someone else. The last thing that I needed was to sit on the same

table with the man who broke me, and yet, here I was.

"You are acting out of anger, Iris." He said, his tone holding a pain that I didn't think that I would hear. The man was a fool if he thought or believed that I would be sparing him a second glance or second. If anything, he was lucky that I was even speaking to him right now. That alone took more courage from me than I thought that I would have as a person, and I couldn't help but feel somewhat thankful for it.

"I wonder why," I said sarcastically, making the man tense behind me. "I will show myself out of the door..."



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