



## Chapter 13: Betting with the Devil

ELLIE

The memory of what happened in the closet came rushing back, and I felt my face heat up, along with other parts of my body. I had completely forgotten that I would have to face him again after that.

I started staring at my hands while they greeted their partners, lifting my face just enough for Will to kiss my cheek.

I couldn't see Ethan's face, but I could feel his eyes on me. Clearing my throat, I stood up.

"I'll be right back. I'm getting something at the bar," I said, before fleeing the table.

Why was I running away? I wasn't the one who got visibly turned on near him. I mean, I did, but he didn't know that.

"Tough day?" He stopped beside me just a few seconds after I sat down, leaning against the counter.

I glanced at his profile before his eyes met mine. He looked as tired as I felt but still sexy.

"Bad enough to still have to deal with you."

There was something about him that always made me stay on alert, ready to defend myself.

"Lower your weapons. I come in peace."

"Of course you do," I scoffed as the bartender approached.

"Is it so hard to believe?"

"Are you seriously asking that?"

"What would the lady like to drink?" The man asked me with a smile.

He had dark hair and a well-groomed beard.

"May I suggest something?"

"Two whiskeys," Ethan responded dryly, making me stare at his face.

He was glaring at the man with a cold expression.

"Right," the bartender's smile faded completely before he turned his back on us.

"What was that?" I asked, perplexed.

"What?" He turned back to look at me.

"What? You just answered a question that wasn't directed at you and in an extremely rude manner. And you didn't even know if I wanted whiskey."

"I'm sure you need something strong."

"Incredible!" I laughed scornfully, unable to believe it. "You men act like animals fighting for territory, even when you have nothing to do with a

woman."

"What are you talking about?"

"You just acted like we're together."

"I did no such thing."

"Maybe it's something subconscious then," I said sarcastically.

He shrugged. Of course, he wouldn't admit to acting like an arrogant jerk, not in a hundred years.

"Why do you care? Are you interested in the bartender?"

"If I were, it wouldn't be any of your business."

"I was just trying to be a good friend, getting rid of him for you."

"And why would you do that?"

"Zoe said you had a bad day, I thought you didn't need someone trying to get you into bed."

Was he serious? I lowered my head, trying to stifle a laugh.

"You're really unbelievable! First of all, we're not friends. Second, it never occurred to you that maybe that's exactly what I need?"

He took a deep breath.

"And you really think you have the right to say that?"



"Okay, let's try this again. Actually..." He cleared his throat. "I came to apologize for what happened in the lab."

I tried not to recall the feeling of his body against mine. He seemed uncomfortable as he looked at his own hands clasped on the counter. I couldn't miss this opportunity.

"Exactly what are you apologizing for?"

"Are you really going to do this?" He raised an eyebrow.

I offered my best expression of confusion, pretending to be clueless.

"Okay." He shook his head. "I'm apologizing for getting hard when you rubbed that amazing ass of yours against me," he said, looking into my eyes, making me look away.

\*Damn! He knew how to play dirty.\*

"Wow! I thought you were trying to be my friend. But thanks for the compliment, even though you're just objectifying my body. You should try complimenting a woman's intellect one day, it'll leave a much better impression."

"So, what trait of yours do you think I should compliment? Your ability to be extremely kind, pleasant, and welcoming?" he asked, raising a thick eyebrow.

"Ouch! That hurt," I put my hand on my chest. "Sorry, only special people get to see that side of me. You should feel extremely special," I forced a

smile full of sarcasm.

His eyes landed on the small bruise on my knuckles, a result of the punch I'd thrown at the steering wheel earlier.

"Don't worry, the opponent came out much worse."

"I hope so. Seems like it was a really bad day."

"Yeah. The usual... work, an asshole ex coming back to the city, that kind of thing."

Why was I telling him this?

"You punched your ex-boyfriend?" he asked, skeptical.

"No, and he's not my ex-boyfriend."

"I thought you were the number one enemy of casual relationships."

"Why are we talking about this? Better yet, why are we even talking? If you're trying to pretend to be my friend to get me into bed, you should give up. I've had enough of that."

"Have you considered that I might just be trying to get to know you better?"

I knew exactly what he was trying to do and why.

"I don't want you to try to get to know me."

"What's your problem with me?"



Wasn't it obvious?

"You know exactly what it is."

"You said no, and I understood the first time."

"Then why are you still here?"

"Can I only talk to you if I'm interested in sex?"

"Don't underestimate my intelligence. I've met plenty of guys like you. At least be honest for once in your life and admit that you wouldn't be trying to talk to me if you weren't interested in getting me into bed."

"People talk, Miss Brown. Sometimes with no ulterior motive," he said with a serious, almost convincing expression.

If I didn't know that men could lie so well that they even convinced themselves they were telling the truth, I might have believed him.

"Then look me in the eye and tell me you don't want to sleep with me," I forced myself to look at him, holding his gaze and regretting it immediately.

"I can't do that. Because it would be a lie," he said seriously.

"Exactly."

"That doesn't mean I'm talking to you because of that."

"But I think it means exactly that."

"God! I don't know what happened to you, but not all men are complete assholes."

"Said the guy who tried to get me into bed after two minutes of conversation."

His mouth stretched into a weak smile before his expression turned into something darker and more sensual.

"You can pretend you didn't want it."

"You're so full of yourself. Must be a Morgan genetic trait."

"My brother would be disappointed to hear you say that. He's been pushing hard for me to stay away from you."

The bartender approached and served two glasses, without looking at me or smiling, or saying a single word. Then he left us again.

"He really thinks I'd fall for you?"

"You talk as if it's impossible."

"Because it is," I sighed.

Bennett was out of his mind if he thought I could ever fall for his brother. I might find him attractive, but fall for him?

"I'll enjoy watching you eat those words."

"Did you say you \*will\*?" I frowned.

Did he have some intention of taking this further?

"You can deny it, but I know exactly the reaction I provoke in you," he said with conviction, his gaze sweeping over my entire body, making me uncomfortable.

I grabbed the glass and took a sip of the whiskey, which burned as it went down my throat.

"What reaction? Irritation? Dislike? Hatred?"

"Fear, desire, restlessness."

Fuck. How could he know that he caused exactly that in me?

"Don't worry, Miss Brown, I'll be ready for you when you admit how much you want this."

"You're completely insane."

I tried to avoid the subject; he was starting to make me uncomfortable.

"Let's make a bet."

"A bet?"

"Go out with me once."

Go out with him? Why would I go out with him?

"To give you the chance to try to molest me?" I teased. "No, thanks."



"I won't do anything you don't want."

"What nonsense!" I scoffed. "You hate me and I hate you. Why should we go out?"

"The bet is to prove who's right."

"I don't need to prove anything. I know I'm right."

Lie. Something about Ethan Morgan screamed danger, and I knew I should keep as far away as possible.

"If you have nothing to lose, why not accept?"

"What would I gain from it? You want to conduct an experiment for which I already have the answer."

"Or are you just scared?"

I rolled my eyes.

"Suppose I accept, what do I get out of it? Because I need at least one reward if I have to go out with you."

"The reward is getting rid of me."

"You'll stop bothering me?"

"Absolutely."

"And what would be your reward?"

"Proving you wrong is the reward."

"Your idea is to try to seduce me?"

"I don't need to resort to that."

"You won't touch me without my permission, right?" I had to make sure. I could guarantee I'd keep my hands to myself, but what if he tried something?

"Yes."

"So, all I have to do is this to get rid of you?"

Something told me this was the worst idea in the world. But if it would make him give up and leave me alone, I wouldn't miss the chance.

"Yes."

"Promise?"

"You have my word."

"Then I accept," I declared, making him smile as if he had just won a prize, setting off all the alarm bells in my head.

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