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LILY

“Does Mom really have to come?” I groan to my dad quietly after dinner that same night.

It seemed that as soon as he finished eating, Mason fell straight to sleep.

“She does. She won’t be here long,” Dad whispers, glancing over at Mason.

“Do you really like him?” he asks, leaning forward.

“I do,” I snap, crossing my arms over my chest.

“Me too.” Dad smiles slightly as he watches Mason.

“He hasn’t left you, you know,” he adds, sitting back up.

“The longest he’s been out of the room is when Brittany and Liam were here for a five-minute shower. I don’t know when he sleeps. Sarah said he’s up most of the night talking to you.”

Dad’s mouth twitches into a small smile.

“He’s pretty amazing,” I whisper, watching Mason frown slightly in his sleep.

“I wasn’t expecting you to start dating someone from Greendale,” Dad says a little too casually.

“I don’t care about the stupid rivalry,” I immediately answer.

“I know.”

“I’ve talked to my boss, and I won’t be traveling again until you go to college.”

“What?” I gasp, turning to face him to see if he is serious.

“I shouldn’t have worked away so much in the first place, but Mom somehow convinced me we needed the extra money and you didn’t mind.”

Seems like today is the day for excuses.

They couldn't even give me twenty-four hours to be awake and come to grips with things before they cleared their conscience.

"I don't care if you work away now. I'm used to it," I mumble, fighting back a yawn.

"You get some sleep. We'll talk later," Dad replies before he kisses my head for the second time today.

I'm woken with a jump, not knowing where I am.

The dark room is unfamiliar yet familiar at the same time.

"You're okay, princess." Mason's voice fills my ears, making me remember I'm in the hospital.

"What's the time?" I whisper, squinting while my eyes adjust.

"Just after two. The nurses will be here to check on you soon," he whispers back.

"How long have you been awake?" I ask, finding the bed control that has the night-light button on and turning it on.

"I woke up about ten minutes after you fell asleep," he whispers, giving me a sad smile.

"Your dad left once I woke up," he adds when I look to where he was sitting.

"He said he liked you," I say, reaching for the water next to me, but Mason grabs it before I can get it and brings the straw to my lips.

"I've hardly spoken to him," he admits as he puts the cup back down.

"He mainly did the talking. He told me all about a little Lily," he adds with a smirk.

"Oh god. What did he say?" I groan, thinking of every single embarrassing thing I've ever done in my life.

“Nothing bad.” He shakes his head.

“Just that you would have a meltdown every time you had to wear a bathing suit, or the time you were visiting your grandma and wanted to paint her a pic—”

“Okay, that’s enough of memory lane.” I cut him off, feeling my cheeks burn at the memory of four-year-old Lily.

“Don’t worry, princess, I still love you.” He chuckles, leaning forward like he’s going to kiss me.

I close my eyes and part my lips, ready for him, but instead he kisses the side of my mouth, making me frown and fling my eyes open.

“Kiss me,” I demand impatiently and purse my lips again.

“Soon.” He winks just as the door slowly opens and the same doctor comes in with a nurse.

“Oh, you’re awake,” the doctor says, looking at me, surprised.

“Did Mason wake you up?” She smiles as she comes to stand next to me.

“No.” I shake my head.

“Hmm, well, if he does, you tell me.” She winks before looking at Mason and sighing.

“Yes,” he replies, rolling his eyes before she even says anything.

“How long?” she asks, looking him up and down.

“Twenty minutes,” he grumbles, slinking further down in his seat as the nurse starts attaching things to me.

“You don’t have to stay up all night.” She sighs again, looking over her shoulder at me.

“She’s awake now,” she adds quietly before turning back to face me.

“How are you feeling?” Sarah smiles down at me before glancing over the clipboard the nurse hands her.

"My head hurts a bit, and I'm tired, but I feel okay," I tell her truthfully.

"That's really good. I think we will start weaning the pain meds in the morning then." She nods, scribbling something down.

"And mentally? How are you?" she asks, sitting on the edge of the bed.

"I'm okay, I guess," I mumble, looking down at the blanket.

"It's just a lot, you know?"

"Like, I find out I died and then my dad and friend are being all nice and want me to forgive them, but I don't know what I want to do." I sigh as I fiddle with a loose thread on the blanket.

"Do you want me to set you up with a therapist?"

"I'll be fine." I decline, knowing I just want some time to think things over.

"Well, the offer is always there. For both of you," she states, looking back at Mason and giving him a pointed look.

"I'm fine," he grunts with an eye roll.

"What do I even say to her?" I groan to Mason the next morning as I pick at one of the blueberry muffins Brittany dropped off, demanding we both eat before rushing off again.

"Whatever you want to," he mumbles in reply, moving his muffin to the small table next to my bed.

"Have you spoken to her yet?" I ask curiously before taking a large bite of the muffin.

"Nope." He shakes his head.

"What about your mom?" I ask quietly once I've swallowed my mouthful.

"Brittany's been texting Tayla and Gemma. Apparently, she's out with her new boyfriend most of the time to notice I haven't been around." He sighs.

“Why haven’t you texted them?” I question, and his face instantly becomes sheepish.

“I may have smashed my phone when you didn’t pick up my call,” he mumbles with slightly red cheeks.

“You didn’t?” I gasp as I hear the door open, but I don’t take my eyes off Mason.

“Lily-Pad.” Dad’s voice cuts through the room, making Mason glance over his shoulder and scowl.

I slowly drag my eyes away from him to my father and my mother.

“Lily, I’m so glad you’re awake.” Mom sighs as she sits down in the seat Dad usually sits in.

“Same,” I mutter before shoving the last of the muffin in my mouth.

“How many times have I told you to be more ladylike?” She sighs before looking over at a frowning Dad.

“Heather,” he warns.

“Can you give us a minute?” Mom sharply asks Mason.

“No,” I answer immediately. “He stays.” I add, begging him with my eyes not to leave me.

“We need to have a family discussion,” Mom counters, making me roll my eyes.

She could’ve been having these “discussions” for the past year and a half if she didn’t just up and abandon me.

“He stays,” Dad agrees, moving from the foot of the bed to stand next to Mason. “Tell her,” Dad orders in an authoritative tone I’ve never heard from him before.

“Lily.” Mom sighs, reaching for my hand, but I simply move it out of her reach. “When I was younger, I was reckless,” she begins, making Dad snort. “I was what I guess you’d call a party girl.”

She sighs as tears begin to fill her eyes. "I met your dad in college, and we ended up getting pregnant and got married not long after we found out," she explains as I frown.

Mom didn't have me until she was twenty-five.

"That baby, Preston," she says as tears begin to pool in her eyes. "He died when he was a couple of weeks old," she whispers, wiping the fallen tears.

"I dropped out of college and was just broken for years until I met Alex," Mom whispers, looking over to my dad.

I follow her eyes and see Dad with an expressionless, stony face.

"I had an affair and got pregnant with you."

"What?" I gasp, spinning back so fast to face her it hurts my head.

"Don't interrupt me," she snaps. "Then you were born and were fine, and I just had this resentment. I was always asking why couldn't Preston have lived instead.

"And as you got older, the more and more I just wanted Preston back. I just know in my heart he would've never treated me the way you did.

"So when the chance came up to travel with Murray, I jumped on it."

I turn away from my mom to look at Dad. Well, he's not really my dad. His hand is on a mad-looking Mason's shoulder with white knuckles. "Is it true?" I whisper, my voice breaking.

Dad gives me a slight nod, and that's all it takes for me to break down into sobs.

"Stop being so dramatic, Lily," Mom scolds, making me cry harder.

I feel like my whole life has been a lie.

"You can go now, Heather," Dad states as I continue to sob. I feel arms wrap around my shaking body and instantly cling to Mason, knowing straight away it's him.

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