

Divorced My Cheating Husband, Married A Billionaire

Chapter 16: Collaboration Request

Back to the present.

At King's Enterprises Headquarters.

Adrian held his chin high as he moved his wheelchair into the conference room. There was an ongoing commotion, and he knew why.

"This is the third project the ACE Construction Firm has taken from us."

"Well, the same company owns a metal factory. It's understandable how they could offer a lower bid."

"It isn't just the bid!" Adrian's father, Anthony King, said. "From what I have gathered, the ACE Construction Firm offered to redesign the Megaworld Entertainment Plaza. They found a fault in the initial design!"

"They gained favor because they went above and beyond their service!" Anthony added. "Why didn't we see that? Huh? Didn't we hire the best engineers? That is a hundred-billion-dollar project we lost!"

"Fredrick, Brett? Answer me!" Anthony questioned.

Just then, Adrian appeared before them. His calm expression silenced everyone. He found his place, and Clint sat beside him. Then he asked, "I thought the meeting was at eight-thirty. It's still eight in the morning."

"An important matter needs to be addressed. Don't you know?" Adrian's father informed.

"I have heard," Adrian said nonchalantly before glancing at his stepbrother, Fredrick. "I'm sorry our construction firm lost the bid."

Adrian smiled inside as Fredrick narrowed his eyes.

Fredrick looked at Anthony and said, "Father, this is a temporary setback. Director Monroe and I are going to work something out."

Anthony King was the chairman of the King's Enterprises, whereas Fredrick was the CEO. Adrian's father still had a say in everything despite Fredrick's position.

The conference room had a long table. Anthony and Fredrick sat on both ends while the directors and their assistants occupied the other seats. Adrian was next to his father, Anthony. Across from him was Director Brett Monroe. He had been leading the construction firm for three years, and he was someone Adrian had worked with.

Director Monroe was settled near Director Gina Gibson. Gina oversaw the local supermarket in Halliport, The King's Supermarket. Seated next to Clint was Director Noel West, the executive managing King's Pay, a financial technology platform. Last, Anthony's second wife, T King, was the director of the fashion line.

If Adrian was to be completely honest, T, his stepmother, only got the position because she was Anthony's wife. Her company was two years old but remained stagnant, barely making even.

"Do you have any plans, Fredrick?" Anthony asked. "The construction firm is about to complete its existing project, yet we don't have any new one." With a sigh, Anthony admitted, "We haven't been doing well since - since last year."

Adrian watched as Fredrick and Director Monroe looked at each other. Then, Fredrick revealed, "We have given this a considerable amount of thought."

With a pause, Fredrick revealed, "We are going to offer our help to ACE Construction Firm. We have been in the industry for ten years. They will be honored to accept a collaboration."

Clint ended up coughing. When everyone stared at him, he said, "Sorry. My throat was itchy."

Adrian only squinted. His stepbrother could wish, but he would never approve of such cooperation. Why would he share a hundred billion-dollar project?

"And how do we do that?" Noel West said. "The CEO of ACE Construction Firm is a very secretive man. No one knows who he is. Only the stand-in CEO, Engineer Philips, entertains partnership requests."

"We will go through him, of course," Director Monroe proposed.

Anthony King hissed. He turned to his son and asked, "What do you think, Adrian?"

That surprised Adrian. It had been a long time since his father asked for his opinion. Still, Adrian glanced at his father and replied, "I think the CEO of ACE Construction Firm is a very capable person. Director Monroe, or our CEO, should match his level of competency."

"You -" Fredrick pointed a finger at Adrian. "You think you are better than me?"

"I did not say that. I said, whoever is the CEO of ACE Construction Firm is better than you," Adrian said.

"How dare you say that about my son?!" This time, T expressed her anger. She looked at Anthony and demanded, "You should fire him! He is disrespecting our CEO!"

"I think he simply stated a fact. Whoever is the CEO of ACE Construction Company is wise and committed. He bagged three major projects across the state in three years despite it being a new company," Gina said, and Noel echoed the same.

"I don't think requesting a collaboration with ACE Construction Firm is the best solution. They will see it as a desperate move on our part," Adrian said. "We should just focus on getting other projects."

"The Williams are renovating their building. The local government has a few road widening projects," Adrian suggested.

"But those are petty projects!" Fredrick objected. "It is not in our portfolio!"

"Beggars can't be choosers," Adrian said.

"That's it -" Fredrick slammed his hand against the table and said to Adrian, "Are you forgetting that I am the CEO? Are you forgetting that you lost your chances because you had leaked company data -"

"I already said I had nothing to do with it!" Adrian shot back. "You keep pinning that on me when all you have is an email trail that happened while I was away!"

"Either way, Adrian, you couldn't handle being the CEO. What image are you going to show the world?" T pointed out. "You are disabled!" "Enough!" Anthony scolded. "How many times do we have to discuss this!"

Anthony snapped at Adrian and warned, "Adrian, you must accept that Fredrick is now the CEO. As one of the directors, you should cooperate by helping your brother."

Yes, that was true. Adrian lost the CEO race primarily due to leaked company information, the evidence of which was an outgoing email that happened while Adrian was on vacation. The second reason was his disability.

Three years ago, Adrian's condition

was not as good as it was today. The board of directors saw his disability as a hindrance to

attracting business partners clients. Thus, they voted in favor of Fredrick and assigned Adrian to the company's healthcare entity.

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"And I already said that our construction firm should find jobs for our people. Otherwise, we will be obliged to pay salaries when no work is ongoing. We must make the most of what is available, regardless if it is within our portfolio or not," Adrian retorted.

With a sigh, Anthony said to Fredrick, "Try to collaborate with Ace Construction Firm, but if they do not agree, then we will go with Adrian's suggestion

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"But, Dad -"

Fredrick tried to reason, but Anthony

raised a finger. He said, "We have over two thousand employees in our construction business. Where will we get the money to pay them during idle time? A project, any project, no matter how small it is, is

better than nothing." Content

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Later that day, Adrian was working on his laptop from his office when Clint walked in with the news. He said, "Engineer Philips has received the call.

The King's Enterprises are offering a collaboration. I told him right away to decline the offer."

Adrian glared at his assistant. He asked, "Are you the CEO?"

"Ah, no, Boss. I'm sorry," Clint regretfully said. "I'll call Engineer Philips."

"Good," Adrian said. "Tell him that I decline the collaboration."

"Eh, that's exactly what I did, Boss," Clint said hesitantly.

"All directives should come from me, even if you know what I would say," Adrian reminded, and the poor assistant nodded.

"You are the boss," Clint confirmed.

When Adrian was alone in his office, he leaned back in his seat and mused, 'Father, Fredrick, how would you react if you find out I am the CEO of ACE Construction Firm?'

He smirked and softly muttered, "I look forward to that day."

Chapter 17: A Good Guy

[Miss Allen, you must pick up your belongings, or Mr. Martin will throw them away.]

On a Wednesday morning, Riley read the text from the Human Resource Department of Brey Jewelry & Apparel Co. She checked the wall clock and groaned, "Again. It's this room. It's making me oversleep."

It was 10 AM. Ever since Riley moved into Adrian's home, she had been waking up late.

"How could Brian be so heartless? Did he forget that I was his wife for four years? He cheated on me, divorced me, and now, he wants to throw away my things?" Riley muttered.

She replied: [I'll pick up my things later today].

Her dismissal was never formalized, so Riley never got to collect her belongings from the office.

Riley hurriedly bathed and got changed. When she descended the stairs, she noticed Linda going over some photos on an old album from the living room.

"Oh, Riley, good morning!" Linda greeted.

"Good Morning, Aunt Linda." Riley looked around and asked, "Has Adrian left?"

Riley hadn't seen Adrian for two days. By the time she woke up, he was already gone, and she always fell asleep before he got back. According to Clint, Adrian had been very busy lately, but Riley hoped they would see each other soon. After all, they now lived in the same house.

"Yes, dear. Adrian leaves very early every day. He did check on you," Linda reported.

"He checked on me?" Riley asked in surprise.

Linda nodded, saying, "Yes, he knocked on your door at around six, just before he left."

"Oh, god. I've been sleeping like a log since I got here," Riley murmured while massaging her neck.

"Isn't that great? You deserve some good rest. Your face has brightened a little since you got here," Linda said before smiling.

Linda turned toward the other housekeeper, who was wiping the furniture, and instructed, "Tell Rose that Riley will have breakfast now."

"Come." Linda gestured for Riley to take the seat next to her. She said, "Let's check some old photos of Adrian while Rose is still preparing your breakfast."

"Um. Okay," Riley happily took the seat beside Linda. They scanned photos of Adrian as a child, most of which included a picture of Adrian's mother. "Adrian loved his mom so much. She passed away when he was in high school. He was so heartbroken back then," Linda described.

"I remember he said it was a tough time for him," Riley recounted.

"He must have trusted you for him to talk about his mom. Were you and Adrian good friends?" Linda asked politely.

"Good friends?" Riley echoed. "Yeah, we were friends, but we never really got close... Maybe we didn't get a chance to? Because of his accident?"

"I see," Linda said. She maintained an amiable smile before flipping to the next photo set.

"Oh, that car," Riley pointed to an old Porsche Adrian used to drive in college. "He used to drive this in school."

"Yes, he did," Linda confirmed.

Riley smiled, thinking back. She disclosed, "He-um. He gave me a lift once. That was the first time we had a decent conversation."

"Really?" Linda asked. "Tell me about it."

Riley chuckled and said, "Well, it was a rainy day."

FLASHBACK

Seven years ago.

Riley was off to school but got caught in the rain while waiting for a bus. She ran to the bus stop and waited, but the next bus was full. "Great. I'm going to be late," Riley grumbled after she checked her watch.

Suddenly, a gray Porsche pulled over in front of her. The windows rolled down, revealing the great Adrian King.

As usual, he looked dashing, even in casual clothes. The women around Riley were over the moon at the sight of him.

"Going to school? Get in," Adrian said, surprising Riley.

Riley looked back and around her. She pointed to herself and asked him, "Are you talking to me?"

"Obviously," Adrian responded with a brow raised. "If you don't want to be late, hop in."

Riley hesitated, but she looked up at the angry skies and the number of people waiting for the bus. She realized this was her only chance to get to school faster. She gulped and stared at Adrian, asking, "You are not going to kill me, right?"

"What?" Adrian asked. "If you don't want to the -"

She quickly opened the door and hopped in, saying, "Thanks."

Adrian did not respond. Instead, he drove in the direction of the university.

They did not speak to each other during the drive and the silence was killing Riley. So, she looked around Adrian's car. She noticed a woman's picture mounted above the touch screen of his car. She asked, "Your mom?"

Adrian looked at the picture briefly and replied, "Yes."

"She is pretty," Riley complimented.

"Thank you. She meant everything to me," Adrian said.

"Meant?" Riley inquired.

"She passed away when I was in high school," Adrian revealed.

Riley fell silent. She softly said, "I'm sorry."

While watching the road, Adrian answered, "It's okay. It was a long time. I have coped."

Then, they rode in silence again until

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they arrived at Halliport University. Adrian pulled over at the school's entrance. Before opening the door for her he grabbed his sports jacket from behind and gave it to Riley. He said, "Cover yourself with this."

Riley accepted the jacket reluctantly. Then she asked, "Aren't you getting off?"

"My class is not until after lunch. I'm going to meet my dad at the Plaza Hotel," Adrian revealed.

Riley's mouth fell open in shock. The Plaza Hotel was in the opposite direction of the school! She asked, "Then why did you drop me off?"

Adrian looked at Riley strangely. He lazily replied, "Because I saw the panic in your face and knew you were running late for school."

He looked at the door and said, "Go."

Riley held his jacket just before opening the car door. She said, "Thank you, Adrian. You aren't such a bad person after all."

"Contrary to whatever you think of me, Riley, I am actually... a good guy," Adrian said, and even after Riley shut the door behind her, his words lingered in her head.

END OF FLASHBACK

"And that was how it started," Riley said to Linda. "When we saw each other next, I returned his jacket, and we talked. I initially thought he was a snob and all, but as it turned out, he was a good person."

"He really is, Riley," Linda said. "Sometimes, he is just misunderstood."

Riley fell silent. Then, she thought about Brian, "Wonder why he and Brian became estranged."

"Yes, Brian," Linda said with a sigh. "When you see him, why don't you ask him?"

Riley was taken aback to hear Linda say those words. She pondered before replying, "I actually did, but Brian never gave me a straight answer. If I see him, I might ask again, but I probably don't want to see him."

Linda laughed and said, "That's fine, dear." She held Riley's hand and said, "It's probably best you move on. Forget about Brian."

It no longer surprised Riley that Linda knew about Brian. Perhaps Adrian had mentioned her divorce too. But as Adrian said, Linda was like family to him, so Riley supposed she was someone she could open up to about her failed marriage.

"I know some people would say that everybody deserves a second chance, but I say, why would I risk getting stabbed in the back again!" Linda exclaimed.

Riley chuckled. She answered, "That's a very reasonable point because I did give Brian a second chance and only got stabbed again."

"Oh, you gave him a second chance?" Linda asked before pulling

Riley into a hug. She caressed Riley's back and said, "I wish I was there to tell you not to give him a chance, Riley, but either way, it's over now. You have a whole new life ahead of you..."

Linda smiled before she resumed, "With Adrian."

Riley did not know why, but she felt her cheeks burned at Linda's suggestion.

Chapter 18: Who Saved Me?

"Ri, is this hospital safe?" Renee asked while Riley was sketching another jewelry design.

Riley raised a brow and asked, "Of course, Mom. Why did you ask?"

Renee frowned and said, "I - I." She leaned back in her hospital bed and resumed, "Don't want another heart attack."

Riley's mother spoke better now, but her voice was still weak. Hearing her mother's concern, she sat on the bed next to Renee and reassured, "We are in a new hospital, Mom. It's a safe and secure environment. No one from Brian's mistress will disturb us. And you have Miranda and Loraine, who are always here for you."Content held

Miranda and Loraine were Renee's caregivers. They took turns tending to Renee, especially when Riley was not around.

"No one can enter?" Renee asked.

"Yes, mom. Adr - I mean, I had given them specific instructions not to let anyone else enter your room," Riley revealed. "Rest assured, the hospital has stringent security measures in place. Only the necessary medical staff are allowed to see you."

Renee nodded and sighed. She said, "Good."

A knock on the door interrupted their conversation. A lady walked in, saying, "Good afternoon, Miss Allen. Let's have some simple physical therapy today."

Miranda, the caregiver, walked in with the therapist, and that was Riley's cue to leave. She kissed her mother's forehead and said, "Mom, I'm leaving early today because I need to collect my things from the office, but I'll be here early tomorrow."

"I love you, Riley," Renee said.

Riley's heart warmed at her mother's words. She replied, "I love you too, Mom."

Riley arrived at Brey Jewelry & Apparel Co. at four in the afternoon. She went straight to her office and packed up her things. As she did, she could not help but be woeful. This had been her life for the past four years, but she had to give it up.

"Fuck you, Brian," Riley muttered as she stuffed the last of her belongings in a box.

The employees watched her from the glass windows of her office the entire time. Now and then, she noticed them whispering to each other. Riley could only imagine what was going on in their minds. 'Poor Mrs. Martin had now been replaced by a younger woman.'

Riley had two boxes to carry, so she decided to have Max, the driver, help her take her things. Before she could make the call, Brian's assistant knocked on the open door. The assistant said, "Mister Martin would like to speak with you."

"I don't have anything to -" Riley paused. Did she really have nothing to ask or say to Brian? Actually, she did. So, she agreed. "Okay, I'll go."

She followed the assistant to Brian's office, and after she was alone in front of the man who had crushed her heart into a million pieces, she asked, "What is it?"

Brian was clearly waiting for her. He wasn't busy with anything and already had his arms crossed against his chest. Brian's blue eyes, which Riley used to think were gorgeous, now look boring in her view.

"I have another contract for you to sign," Brian disclosed before pushing a folder toward Riley. "Read it."

Riley frowned and grabbed the document. Brian was going to give her their marital home provided that she would not file any legal actions against him and Claire, more specifically, adultery.

"Claire's mother told me." Brian got up and said, "Apparently, you are cooking something up. You want to contest the divorce? You want more money? You want to sue me and Claire? Won't you ever let this go, Riley?"

"You can have the house and consider it as an added settlement," Brian proposed. Each of his words was strongly emphasized.

"I said that to your lover's mother

because she blasted me in front of

my mother! I asked her nicely to leave, but Claire's mother was stubborn Riley retorted. She explained everything that happened that day, "My mother ended up having a heart attack! I had to move my mother immediately to another hospital so that she could be safe from the likes of you and Claire's family!"

"What?" Brian was stunned, but he quickly recovered and blamed Riley. "Mara would not have been mad if you did not push Claire -"

"I did not push your goddamn

woman! I don't know how many

times I have to tell you that! Do you not know me at all, Brian? Weren't we together for four years? You should know what kind of person I am?" Riley shot back. "How could you simply believe a woman you just met for a few months over me,

Brian?"

"I don't know, Riley. People change because of jealousy," Brian pointed out. "And you are very jealous of Claire."

"Jealous?" Riley could not believe her ears. She was appalled by Brian's suggestion!

"You know what? I'm done trying to

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prove my innocence to you. I don't ever want to see you again, so -" Riley signed the documents and crushed the part where she could have the house. She counter-signed it and said, "And I don't fucking want that house! The thought of me staying in a house that we lived in makes me sick!"

Riley marched back to the door. She was about to leave, but she suddenly remembered something. She turned to Brian and asked, "There is something that I want to know."

"What is it?" Brian questioned.

"Seven years ago, remember I told you that I fell into the water at the beach? You said you were the one who saved me, but was it really you?" Riley finally raised.

Brian's mouth rounded. His brows met, and suddenly, beads of sweat formed on his forehead. He replied, "That was a long time ago, Riley. Why does it matter -"

"It matters to me!" Riley angrily said. "Were you the one who saved me? Yes or no?"

When Brian did not answer, Riley raised her voice and asked again, "Did you save me seven years ago on that beach, Brian? Yes or no?"

"Look, when you caught me putting a box of chocolates on your desk, you immediately assumed it was me," Brian declared. "I never really owned up to saving you. I just never corrected you -"

"What?!" Riley snapped. "How could you, Brian?"

"What does it matter anyway, Riley? That was a long time ago!" Brian said.

"It matters to me, Brian!" Riley repeated loudly. She took a full turn before asking in irritation, "Why did you even put another box of chocolate in my desk if -"

Brian's mouth fell open. He clenched his jaws before finally admitting, "Adrian, he - he asked me to-"

Then, Brian's phone rang. He answered the call and said, "Claire, I'll be there."

After ending the call with his lover, he said to Riley, "I need to go."

For the past three days, Riley had fallen asleep before Adrian arrived home, but not today. No. She would not let that evening pass without asking

him.

The second Adrian entered the villa, Riley walked towards him and asked, "Adrian, seven years ago, I fell into the water by the beach's jetty. Were you the one who saved me?"

Chapter 19: Adrian's Response

FLASHBACK

More than six years ago.

Over the past few months, Riley's secret rescuer had given her four boxes of chocolate. After the first instance, she received her requested Matcha flavor a month later. From her marketing class, the following two chocolates were taped to her school locker.

Each chocolate box had a friendly note.

2nd chocolate box: [Matcha. Your special request. Stay away from danger, Riley.]

3rd chocolate box: [Just checking in on you, Riley.]

4th chocolate box: [Glad you are not trying to kill yourself these days, Riley.]

Sometimes, Riley thought her secret savior was acting like the big brother she never had. Nonetheless, she happily ate her treat each time she received one. Of course, she did not get any chocolates in each semester break.

In the third semester of her second year in college, Riley walked into the university with people gossiping around.

"Adrian King won't be back to school. He met an accident. They say he is going to be paralyzed."

"No! I love Adrian King!"

"That can't be."

"Oh, my god," Riley echoed what she heard. "Adrian had an accident. I hope he is okay."

As Riley made her way to her classroom, she encountered Brian. Immediately, Riley asked, "How is Adrian?"

"He is better now. He got surgery, and it saved his legs, but he will need therapy." Brian shook his head and revealed, "It happened two weeks ago in Sweden."

Riley did not feel like she had the right to ask further. She wasn't that close with Adrian, but she sure appreciated his friendship, no matter how brief it was. She weakly said, "Tell him I said hi, and I hope he gets better soon."

"I will," Brian answered. "Hey, what classes do you have? Can I check yours? Maybe we have classes together."

As it turned out, Riley had Science class with Brian, so they often met at least three times a week.

One morning, Riley arrived early for her Science class. Her Digital Design class professor ended their discussion early. When she entered the classroom, she caught Brian putting a box of Royce Nama chocolate on her desk!

"Brian!" Riley called before rushing over. Her eyes widened at the box of chocolate, saying, "It was you? It was you all along? Six months ago, I fell from the beach jetty and almost drowned. You were the one who saved me!"

"Um." Brian raised a brow. He said, "Um -"

Riley picked up the box of chocolate and said, "You did this?"

"Um, yeah?" Brian replied.

"I can't believe it!" Riley was relieved that it was Brian, someone she knew. Tears stung her eyes as she said, "Oh, my god, Brian. Thank you so much. I could have died if you didn't save me."

For some time, Riley had been thinking about this mysterious person. She had always wondered who he was, what he looked like, and if he was a good individual.

Overwhelmed to finally meet her savior, Riley unwittingly embraced Brian, and he hugged her back. When she pulled away, she asked with a bright smile, "How can I ever repay you?"

After she said that, Brian's eyes glinted. He said, "Well, I have been really meaning to ask you out on a date. Will you?"

Riley was stunned. From the start, Brian was no stranger. Knowing he was her rescuer further strengthened her trust in him. So, she said, "Let's start with a friendly date."

Brian chuckled. He said, "You know I have always been friendly."

"So, why didn't you tell me it was you?" Riley asked.

Brian shook his head and answered, "At first, I just didn't know how to, but I was planning to tell you, Riley. You -" He laughed again and said, "You caught me before I could get a chance to tell you."

END OF FLASHBACK

It was past ten in the evening. Riley was walking back and forth in the villa's living room. She recounted whatever she could on the day she caught Brian putting a box of Royce Nama Chocolate on her desk in science class.

"Come to think of it, I did assume it was Brian," Riley mumbled. "But he could have told me otherwise! And he answered my succeeding questions. He even made excuses for keeping it a secret from me!"

It was no wonder Brian always avoided discussing how he saved her. Because whatever he came up with was all made up!

Riley walked in circles again. That evening, she was still dressed from when she went to the hospital and to the office. She did not know how long she had been waiting for Adrian, but soon, the double doors to the villa opened.

"Riley? Why are you still awake?" Adrian asked, surprised to see her.

Clint instead pushed Adrian's wheelchair into the living room. Riley walked towards Adrian and asked, "Adrian, seven years ago, I fell into the water by the beach's jetty. Were you the one who saved me?"

'It could only be Adrian. He left me the same box of chocolate last Sunday. Then Brian mentioned Adrian during their confrontation. It has to be Adrian!' Riley screamed in her head.

Seeing Adrian averting her gaze, Riley repeated, "Please tell me. I need to know."

"I think that's my cue to leave," Clint said, and Adrian nodded in approval.

After Clint left, Adrian returned his attention to Riley. He softly

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responded, "Seven years ago, when you walked out of that floating restaurant and bar, I followed shortly

after you. My father called me,

teffing me I must get home."

"I saw you eating your chocolate from afar, and I saw you fall into the water. I ran as fast as I could and jumped in to save you," Adrian added. "It took me a while to free you because your feet got tangled into a."

"I brought you to shore and

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performed CPR, but even after you were breathing, you didn't regain consciousness. So, I brought you to the hospital," Adrian slowly narrated. "I'm sorry I left you there, but I needed to be home urgentlyd only left after the medical staff assured me you were out of danger. I made sure to pay the bill before heading out."

Hearing it all, Riley felt her heart constricting. Her lips trembled as she asked, "Why didn't you tell me it was you?"

Adrian gasped before responding, "I simply did not need the recognition, and I did not know how you would react."

He cleared his throat and resumed,

"But when I gave you the first box of chocolate, became amused by your reaction Chow you demanded the next flavor. It encouraged me to keep the mystery going. I was planning to tell you when I get back from my vacation, but -"

"You got into an accident," Riley finished for him.

"Yes," Adrian replied. "And I was gone for a year."

"When I returned, Brian and I were no longer on good terms, and you were already his girlfriend," Adrian described. "There was no more point in

telling you then."

"But Brian owned up to it. He said that he was the one who saved me." Riley revealed.

"He." Adrian's face stiffened, and his hand balled into a fist. He clarified, "Brian said he was the one who saved you?"

Riley nodded.

Dead air fell upon them. It felt like a minute before Adrian revealed, "That might have been my fault."

"What?" Riley asked.

Chapter 20: Would You Fall For Me?

Riley was stunned by Adrian's reply. She asked, "What?"

"You see, two weeks after my surgery, my grandfather informed me of a package from Japan that had arrived in Halliport. I remembered you," Adrian recounted. His voice was calm, and he spoke unhurriedly. "So, when Brian called me next, I told him to give you one box of chocolate."

"I told him the truth, that I rescued you from drowning," Adrian revealed. "But I forbade Brian from telling you it was me. I wanted to tell you personally."

"However." Adrian sighed and explained, "Days later, I fully understood the gravity of my situation. I could no longer play basketball. I can't join marathons and that - that I might be stuck in a wheelchair all my life."

"I lost interest in everything, Riley. So, when Brian and I next talked to each other, I told him to stop giving you chocolates and never tell you how I saved you. I told him I did not know when I could return to Halliport," Adrian informed. "Perhaps his actions were meant to cover for me - I don't know, but it was wrong to make you believe he was the one who saved you."

"It was!" Riley echoed angrily. "You have no idea, Adrian."

Riley wanted to say that she had imagined who her savior was and how she had longed to meet him. Of course, Brian's claim made her admire him!

"I'm sorry. It was partly my fault, to begin with. I should have told you it was me." Adrian moved his wheelchair closer to Riley. He appealed, "Forgive me."

"I" Riley was truly hurt learning of this, but she couldn't bring herself to be mad at Adrian. "I really wished you had told me."

"If I had known I would get injured, I would have just told you before I left for Sweden," Adrian pointed out.

"Brian and I lost touch. Back then, he suddenly stopped calling." Adrian frowned, narrating, "I tried calling Brian many times. All my calls went to voicemail, and all my messages were never seen."

"I wanted to know what went on at the university, with my friends, with everybody. Sure, my grandfather often visited me, but I wanted my friends too. Everyone stopped calling me. Their lives moved on while I was stuck in a foreign country to recuperate. Brian was the last person I thought would ever ditch me," Adrian described. "Because of what he did, I felt earnestly betrayed."

"Is that the reason why you were angry at Brian?" Riley asked. "Because he stopped being your friend?"

"Partly," Adrian replied.

"What?" Riley clarified. "There is more?"

"It's like I said, Riley. He betrayed me. I asked him a favor, but instead, he took something important from me," Adrian revealed.

"Took something from you?" Riley asked. "He couldn't just pay it back or return it?"

"What he took was something money can't buy," Adrian revealed. "Return? It's more complicated than that."

Riley was bemused. All the more, she was curious about Adrian and Brian's conflict. She wanted to pry further; however, Adrian looked at her and said, "Riley, our disagreement is between us, and I would rather move on from the past. But, for lying to you, I'll see that he gets punished."

"He should!" Riley exclaimed. "The fact that he lied to me and made me believe he was the one who saved me - it matters to me. I - I gave my heart to him because of that."

Adrian's body tensed, and Riley noticed it. He blinked a few times before asking, "Will you always fall for the person who saves you, Riley? Did that mean you would have fallen for me?"

"I - I." The question took her aback. Her heart fluttered as she stared at Adrian's serious expression. Silently, she asked herself, 'Would I have fallen for Adrian?'

"I guess, maybe the old Adrian, not this Adrian sitting on a wheelchair?" Adrian suggested, his voice tinged with pain.

"What are you saying, Adrian?" Riley asked. "I'm not shallow."

"Then, would you?" Adrian asked again. "Would you fall for me?"

This time, Riley felt heat crawling up to her cheeks. She responded, "Did you like me back then?"

"Are you fond of answering a question with a question?" Adrian reacted.

Riley felt more embarrassed than

ever. Yes, she was evading answering directly because who wouldn't want to be in love with Adrian King? Regardless of whether he was in a wheelchair, he had all the qualities of a good man. He had saved her not just once but twice now. So far, Riley only had good things to say about Adrian.

Moreover, Adrian was very

handsome. To Riley, his sitting in a wheelchair did not reduce his good looks.

"Never mind," Adrian said. "You don't need to answer -"

"Yes," Riley said immediately. "I think." Her heart was racing, and her hands were cold. She could not fathom the nervousness that was taking over her.

"I think you are not difficult to love, Adrian." Riley found the courage to say, "Regardless of whether you are in a wheelchair. I think you are a very capable person - strong-willed."

She chuckled and added, "I'd say you are better than any man who can use their legs just fine but has not been through any difficulties in life. I think you are perfectly molded."

Silence stretched between them for

a few seconds. Adrian's gray eyes kept staring into Riley's green orbs. Despite that, Riley found it very hard to read him. She wondered if her response satisfied him or not. Thankfully, he eventually said,

"Thank you, Riley." Content belongs

Adrian's face faintly smiled. He said, "You know, my own father considers my disability a hindrance, so for you to say that means a lot to me."

'What? His father looks down on him?' Riley could not believe what she heard. She empathized, "I'm sorry to hear that, Adrian."

"It's fine," Adrian said. "I have accepted it. I have told you this. We have become estranged since he remarried, but going back to you, what made you bring up the incident seven years ago?"

"I will act on all my plans once your divorce is finalized. I don't want my plans to get in the way of your divorce because that is what we want your freedom," Adrian said.

With a nod, Riley acknowledged, "Very much. I hate him now, more than ever."

"In due time, you will have your freedom," Adrian remarked.

Yet again, silence fell upon them. Adrian suddenly looked around and then back to Riley, asking, "Have you eaten?"

"I wasn't in the mood," Riley admitted.

"Let's eat together," Adrian said. He maneuvered his wheelchair toward the kitchen, calling the housekeeper, "Rose? Please prepare dinner for Riley and me."

As Adrian moved his wheelchair, Riley could not help but chase after him. She put her arms around him from behind and said, "Adrian, thank you so much for saving me, then and now. How can I ever repay you?"

Dead air fell upon them again. Adrian moved his wheelchair to face Riley. He declared, "Just be my loyal wife after we marry."

