

Chapter 203

The morning air was crisp and fresh. I was sat out back with my kindle and a cup of hot coffee. I had woken for the sunrise, unintentionally but I couldn't get back to sleep.

I had my blanket wrapped around my shoulders and was enjoying the peacefulness of the silence around me. I used to do this all the time in my old house, and I had no idea why I stopped.

I hadn't picked up my kindle in forever.

I took a sip of my coffee enjoying the sunrise as it peaked from behind the tall trees. The location of our house will always be one of my favorites'. I loved the open space and the comfort it gave me.

I don't know how long I was sat outside for, but I was on chapter nine of the girl on the train when Jake and my dad got home. He placed a kiss on my forehead before sitting down beside me.

My dad nodded and smiled his hello before heading inside.

"How was last night?". He asked.

"Quiet. I ate pizza and watched tv. Carter dropped by".

"He did?". He frowned.

I nodded. "He seemed a bit off. Talking about gran and stuff".

"Saying what?".

"Honestly what I got from it was him wanting his family back together". And yes, maybe it did feel like he was pushing more for my grans side. Not that I would ever ask him to take sides.

"Sometimes you just have to let everything play out and fix itself".

"Not this". I shook my head. "Not anymore. This had played out for long enough. We fix it tonight and we move on".

"That's my girl". He grinned. "Do you still want me there tonight?".

"Do you not want to come?". I frowned.

"It's not that babe I just don't want to intrude".

"You won't be". I made a face. "And if I'm being honest, I'd much rather, have you there with me". He was my safe place and if things went wrong

then I know I'd have him there to back me up.

But things weren't going to go wrong because I wouldn't let it. I've said it many times before I was done with this, and it was time it was put to bed. My gran wanted to be in my life then so be it.

Sure, we can try and be a family again I wasn't against sorting through our differences.

"Okay baby then we'll all together. Now come inside and get warm".

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I was just out the shower and was currently sitting on the edge of the bed. Do you ever just get those days when you shower and just air dry because you can't be bothered to move?

Yeah, that was me right now. Jake was sleeping so I was getting ready in the other spare bedroom as my dad was using the one, I normally use. We hadn't said much to each other this morning. It was a brief nod of the head and a smile and by the time Jake and I went back inside he was already in bed.

But I'm sure there will be lots to speak about tonight.

I went about getting dressed as quickly and quietly as possible. There was nothing worse than coming off night patrol and not having the peace and quiet to sleep.

I didn't plan to stay home today anyway. I wanted to go out and maybe shop a little. It had been ages since I bought new clothes, and I had decided it was going to be a solo trip.

I didn't bother inviting anyone along, for some reason I wanted to be by myself. I checked my purse for my keys and credit card, pulled on my boots and grabbed my coat on my way out.

I grabbed a coffee for the drive at Starbuck since I was going out of town, and it took about 45 minutes to reach the mall. I loved where we lived but it was a small town. A coffee shop, diner and gas station were the best we had.

For anything else it was a case of jumping in the car and driving to where you wanted to go. I had been driving for about half an hour when my phone started ringing Ryan's name flashing on the screen.

I hadn't heard from him in weeks. He was off at university living his best life and I'd be lying if I said I didn't miss him. I pushed the answer button on my dash.

"Hey". I spoke. "Missing me already?". I joked.

"Always Rocky". He laughed. "Wait are you driving?".

"Yes, but you're coming through the car you're on speakerphone".

"Ah okay".

"Are you okay?". I asked.

"Always shorty. I'm coming home this weekend and wanted to know if you wanted to go for a catch up?".

"Eh yes". I grinned. "When do you get here Friday or Saturday?".

"Friday night but I was thinking we could go out on the Saturday?".

"Like for drinks?". It had been so long since I had been at a club or even in a bar. Yes, I wasn't of age yet but who cares about that.

"Drinks shorty unless you want to do something else?". He offered.

"Drinks are good". I nodded.

"You gonna let me take you to dinner first?". He asked.

I rolled my eyes but couldn't stop myself from smiling. "I mean it would be rude not to wouldn't it".

"Damn right shorty. I'm looking forward to it and I kinda miss you".

"I miss you too Ryan". I would leave the college chat until I see him Saturday. We had lots to catch up on and I wanted to know how uni was treating him.

"Right, I gotta get to class. See you Saturday beautiful".

Talking to Ryan brightened my mood massively. Not that I was in a mood but hearing from him made me smile and I liked that he hadn't forgotten about me. I pulled into the parking lot of the mall and switched off my engine.

I took my lukewarm coffee with me as I made my way inside the mall. Thankfully the weather was okay today. A little dull but the chill in the air was gone. First stop I made was Ulta. I wanted new skincare, and my foundation had gone dry.

I spent some time looking at different foundations, I picked up some new moisturiser and serum along with a new exfoliating scrub. Was it bad I wanted to start looking after myself again?

These past few weeks felt like I had let myself go a little and by that, I mean I wasn't really fussed on my appearance or anything else anymore. I honestly didn't have the energy to care about it, but I wanted to.

I wanted to start getting a routine back. Don't get me wrong I wasn't vain and you're lucky I washed my hair once a week but small changes, right? I smiled to myself I was being ridiculous.

I paid for my things and whilst at the checkout was guilted into buying Alien by Thierry Mulger and when I say guilted, I mean it was my favourite and I was running low.

Jake has always told me the card was to use and today I wanted to use it.

I left and stopped at Costa for another coffee and a bacon and cheese sandwich. I was watching TikTok's and enjoying my own company until Alanna's name started flashing on my screen.

I was tempted to send her to voicemail but of course I didn't.

"Hello?". I answered.

"Hey girl where are you?".

"At the mall". I took a bite of my sandwich. "I needed a few things".

"And you didn't invite me?". She huffed.

I rolled my eyes and smiled. Being dramatic as always. "You could come meet me if you like?".

"Nah I can't be bothered driving. How are you feeling about tonight?". She asked.

"It's just dinner Alanna". It wasn't a big deal, and I wasn't going to make it a big deal.

"I know". She spoke. "But isn't it the first time you've all been together?".

"It is". I wasn't sure what she was getting at. "But like I said it's just dinner".

"Do you think it'll be weird?". She asked.

"No, because we're all adults and no one is going to make it weird". Like I had said a thousand times I was over it.

"Oh, okay. Are you sure you're, okay?"

"I'm good but can I ask you something?". I took a sip of my coffee.

"Of course, anything".

"Is everything okay with you and Carter?". Maybe I was pushing boundaries and yes, it was none of my business, but I had to ask.

Hopefully, she doesn't hit me with being the fixer again. I was simply curious after our conversation last night. He didn't seem himself at all.

"We're good as far as I know. Did he say something to you?"

"No, it's fine he just didn't seem himself last night". I didn't want to get into it too much. I wanted to enjoy the rest of today.

"He's fine Leah and if he isn't he's not said anything to me".

Maybe he was fine, and I was just overthinking like I always do.

"Okay well I'm going to go I'll see you later". I ended the call and tucked back into my sandwich.

When my phone started vibrating again a groan fell from my lips. Seriously? This time it was my gran. Why did I suddenly become nervous?

"Hello?". I answered.

"Hey sweetheart".

Silence.

Was she going to continue?

"Gran". I spoke.

"I was just calling to see if you were still coming tonight and if steak is, okay?"

"Yeah, we're still coming, and steak is fine. Have we still to be there for 8?". I asked.

"Yes, 8 is fine sweetheart".

Is that all she wanted? I feel she had more to say.

"Okay then I'll see you tonight". I spoke.

"Okay honey I'll see you tonight".

I lost track of time. It wasn't until I was shopping around target, and

checked my phone did I realise the time. It was almost 4. I had a message from Jake and two missed calls.

I quickly texted him telling him I was on my way. I checked out my things, made my way to my car and was on the way home all within 15 minutes.

I sure as hell shopped today. It had been ages since I bought myself anything and well today, I may have gone a little overboard.