

Ex Husband 221

Chapter 0221

The bright light coming through my window makes me open my eyes. Instead of getting up immediately, I just stay in bed for a while as I rub my belly and feel my baby move inside me.

I look at the calendar on my bedside table and realize that today I just hit the sixth-month milestone. It's scary to have a baby. The whole journey is filled with uncertainty. I always make sure to thank God each time I pass a milestone with my baby, knowing not all babies get to be born.

After saying a small thank-you prayer, I get up and move downstairs. I could always shower later, but right now I am hungry. With everything that happened yesterday, I forgot to eat.

Thinking about yesterday brings me to what happened with Rowan. I still can't believe that I let him kiss

me or that I actually enjoyed it.

It bugs me so much that I wanted more. I wanted him to deepen the kiss. I wanted him to take it further. I

can blame it on the hormones, but we all know that I'd be lying to myself.

Rowan hurt me so much. The fact that I wanted him yesterday makes me hate myself just a little bit. I

promised myself to move on, yet there I was making out with him in my living room.

I want to believe that Rowan has changed, but I just can't. Even if, by some miracle, he has, don't you

think it's a little too late for us? Too much has already happened for us to make something out of the

mess he created.

Taking out the ingredients for breakfast, I get to work. No matter what I try, I still can't stop thinking about the damn kiss. For heaven's sake, why the hell did this kiss affect me so much? I just don't fucking get it, honestly.

I groan in frustration, wishing I could erase the feel of his lips on mine.

"What's got you so frustrated?" Calvin's voice startles me so much that I let go of the eggs I was holding.

*Jeez, Cal, you scared the living day lights out of me," I say with my hand pressing hard on my beating heart.

"Sorry," he grins. "I thought you heard us, given Gunner and Noah didn't really get inside quietly."

turn to said boys to find them munching on the cookies that I had baked yesterday.

It's okay, I was just a little bit lost in thought.

The grin slips from his face. "Are you still thinking about what happened yesterday with Emma?"

I just nod my head. It was a lie, but he didn't need to know that I was thinking about a totally different thing.

"What are you making for breakfast, mom?" Noah asks

"A fry up" I respond.

“Yes!” Gunner pumps his fist up in the air. “I love fry-ups; it’s like having all your favorite breakfast food at

once

I smile at him. So happy that he is happy. I’m hoping that one day Emma will see the error

mend her fences with Gunner before it’s too late.

“Are you

almost done?” Noah asks. I’m so hungry.”

of her ways and

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“Not yet. Just a few more minutes, and I’ll be done. Why don’t you go wait in the living room while I finish

up?”

“Okay,” they say at the same time, before rushing to the other room.

Cal takes the cleaning tools from me and proceeds to clean up the mess I’d made. “Sorry I brought them

here for breakfast when we should have given you more time to yourself. It’s just that they insisted that

they wanted your breakfast.”

I laugh at that. It's not that Calvin was a bad cook. He just didn't make it like I did. Their word, not mine.

"It's okay. I would have finished cooking and brought some over anyway, so it's not a big deal," I tell him as I get back to frying the eggs.

"How are you holding up, all things considered?" I ask him

"Good." He pauses. "I feel relieved that now everyone knows about Gunner. He's an amazing kid, and he shouldn't be hidden away like a dirty secret. After my grandfather died, I had no one until Gunner was born. I didn't mind it being just the two of us, but I knew it was unfair to him given that his mother had a family. Gunner deserves to know his uncle and grandmother."

In my eyes, Travis and Kate weren't people worth knowing, but they'd treated Noah well, so I guess it was safe for Gunner to be around them.

Shit. I should really let go of my resentment towards them. They were no longer part of my life, so it didn't matter what they did to me before.

You're right, Emma didn't have any right to keep him from her side of the family

morning.

I excuse myself and leave the kitchen.

"Who is it?" I ask my son.

He shrugs his shoulders. "There was no one outside. Just this note."

He hands me the note that had my name written on the front. I feel a chill run down my back when I look

at it

“Alright, you head inside. I’ll be there in a second,” I tell him.

He nods his head and gets back in the house. Still feeling out of sorts, like I was surrounded by an air

bubble of danger, I unfold the note.

YOU WILL PAY FOR EVERYTHING.

What the hell? My heart starts pounding as I grip the note tightly. I scan the street, but I don’t see anyone

or anything suspicious.

I

Folding the note, tuck it into my pajama pocket. I enter my house and close the door behind me before

heading to the kitchen.

“What is it?” Cal inquires while looking concerned. “You look spooked.”

“Nothing. There was just no one at the door.” I shrug and try to play it cool while my heart was beating

hard against my chest.

“Maybe it’s a kid playing a prank.”

“You’re probably right,” I mutter.

I finish preparing breakfast, and we eat to our hearts desire. Gunner and Noah share funny stories from school, while Cal shares his from work. Even as I smile and laugh, I can’t help but think about the note.

Something tells me that there is something more to it. I trust my instincts, and it’s telling me that someone is after me.

My life once again seems to be in dange

Chapter 0222

Emma.

“I don’t know what to do, Molly,” I tell her, almost in tears. “They’re so mad at me right now.”

Mom and Travis have refused to pick up my calls or even talk to me. After the disaster at the get-together, I haven’t seen them or talked to them.

Travis ignored me, and mom kicked me out of the house the moment the small function was over. It had been awkward as hell. Absolutely no one talked to me. It was like I didn’t exist. Was this how Ava felt in

the past? It fucking stinks.

“I kept telling you to tell them the truth, but you never listened.” Molly’s voice brings me back to the

present.

She was right. Every time she mentioned that topic, I would shut it down before she even got a word out. The moment I learned of my pregnancy, she begged me to tell them, but I refused. She’s been trying for

I the past eight years. It never worked because I never listened to her. Sometimes I would even get mad. We would argue and then end up not talking for days.

"I know," I whisper tiredly.

I haven't been able to sleep. I had so much going on in my head that it was difficult for me to find peace and sleep.

"No, you don't. I don't think you understand the kind of pain you've caused not only your family but also Gunner and Calvin. A child is a blessing, yet you treated yours like he was an omen. You hid his existence.

like he was nothing. I still don't understand why you did that or how you managed to do it in the first place.

It was easy, honestly. I didn't want a child in the first place. It was so easy to continue as if he didn't exist and to forget about him because I never wanted him. People give up their babies every day, so I don't know why everyone is all up in my ass because of Gunner.

I don't need a lecture, Molly. I need a solution on how to make my family forgive me so we can forget about everything and move on," I ground out through clenched teeth.

"Do you even fucking hear yourself? You don't want a lecture, but that's exactly what you're getting." she firen back. I've supported you in a lot of things, but you know Gunner and Cal are the only ones with Whom I never agreed to what you were doing to them. You're my friend and I'm going to call you out and any that you're a nasty bitch for how you've been treating your own son."

You know very well I never wanted him. Molly. I was only ever supposed to carry Rowan's child. No one

Why couldn't they just fucking understand? Is it a must that I love Gunner simply because I brought him into this world? It's not his choice that he was born, and it's not my fault that I feel the way I feel about

him.

"Well, guess what? Your precious Rowan has a child with someone else, and from the looks of things, he's not planning on having any kind of relationship with you, meaning your dream of having a family with him will remain nothing more than just a damn dream." she snaps.

I deflate immediately. Rowan wants nothing to do with me, more so now that he knows about Gunner.

Ava

va has managed to make me look like the devil to her angel. She's the caring and loving mother, while I'm the evil bitch who doesn't want her own son. She has managed to ruin my perfect image. Why couldn't

she just keep her mouth shut?

"I love you, Emma, with all my heart, but I am glad that Ava exposed the truth. It's time for you to

grow up

and take responsibility. Gunner needs his mother. You've tried running away from this for a long time. It's

time for you to stop and do what you're supposed to do. It's time you acknowledge that you're a mother"

Chapter 0223

The thought of that brings a certain kind of panic inside me. I didn't want to think of that. I didn't want to let go of my dream of being with Rowan. I stay quiet as I fight her words in my head.

"Emma?" she calls.

I know her; she wants me to agree. She wants me to tell her that I'll think about it, but I don't want to.

I'm saved from answering her when a knock sounds on my door.

have to go, Molly. There is someone at the door" I tell her in a hurry as I walk towards said door.

"Don't think I don't know what you're doing, Em. This..."

I hang up the phone before she can finish her sentence.

Opening the door, I'm surprised to find mom on the other side. She wasn't smiling, but hope still bubbles

inside me.

She doesn't wait for an invitation, she just walks in.

"I'm going to make this short," she says, and all the hope that I had a moment ago shrinks and dies.

I close the door and face her. Looking at her, I fight my tears when I notice the angry fire dancing behind her eyes.

"I want to meet my grandson. I expect you to properly introduce him to me," she begins. "You're also going to acknowledge him as your son and part of the Sharp family. You're going to establish a bond with him, get to know him, and you're going to include him in your life. Am I understood?"

I stare at her wide-eyed. She couldn't be serious, right? Was she really going to force me to get to know him?

"You can't be serious, Mom. I don't want to know him!" I shout, appalled by the idea.

I've regretted him since I learned I was pregnant, so how could I turn around and try and build a life with him?

The flicker of fire I had seen in mom's eyes turns into a blazing inferno. She raises her hand, and I react too slowly. The smack on my face leaves me confused for a while. Still not able to understand what just happened.

place a hand on my cheek and look at her in disbelief. She has never slapped me before. Never.

"You listen to me and listen well; I'm going to give you one chance to fix things with your son and the man you cruelly used and discarded, or I swear to you, Emma, I will disown you. Mark my words. You continue down the path you're walking, and I'll consider you dead to me." She pauses, before continuing.

"I know my behavior towards your sister may have contributed to your reasoning. It was wrong of me to ignore her and treat her like she didn't exist. I regret it every day and I won't let you make the same

mistake. Fix what you've broken"

She doesn't give me a chance to say anything before she walks past me, opens the door and leaves. I'm

left standing staring at the spot she stood a few minutes ago.

The ultimatum she gave me keeps playing in my head. Either get to know Gunner or lose my family. I

know my mother and she doesn't give out empty threats. I no longer had a choice.

Why did Ava have to find out the truth?

My heart hardens as I think of her, and fury fills me.

I

Fuck. I hate that bitch. She should have just kept her fucking mouth shut.

Chapter 0224

Rowan.

It's been two days since the truth came out, and I still can't get over the kiss.

When I dipped my head to kiss Ava, I expected her to push me away. Worse, to slap me. I can't deny that I was surprised when she let me kiss her. That surprise soon turned into happiness and joy.

I can't fucking believe that I went so long without her kisses. Her lips were soft, and her mouth is

addictive. I could spend my entire life just kissing her, and I would be happy.

Again, I say, I was fucking foolish. Every time I denied Ava a kiss when we were married, I thought I was punishing her. I didn't realize what I was missing out on. For that, I will always be regretful because |

missed out on so many things.

I'm currently in my office, and I can't focus for shit. I have business meetings in the next few days, yet the

only thing that played in my mind is that kiss.

I feel like a fucking teenager all over again. Kissing her and then having her reciprocate was similar to the thrill of getting a first kiss from a girl. It left me excited. I felt like I was on top of the world.

“What has you grinning like an idiot?” Gabe’s voice interrupts me.

I look up just as he drops on the seat in front of my desk.

“Nothing” I say, clearing my throat.

That’s definitely something. If I have to guess, then I think it’s something related to Ava”

I don’t say anything, but we know that he is spot on.

“So what happened?” he asks curiously.

I debate whether to tell him. Finally I give in. He was my twin. What is the use of hiding it from him?

“I kissed Ava and she fucking let me” I tell him proudly.

It felt so fucking good. Like I had achieved something miraculous. Those few minutes where she didn’t

push me away gave me hope. Hope that maybe she still felt something for me.

Gabe grins at me with happiness. “That good progress.”

Yes I say then groan. “Well it was going well until she reminded something I told her and push me away

You see, the thing about hurting someone is that when you try to make amends, you fight against the

That's what happened with Ava yesterday. The memory of my words came back. That, along with the pain that she must have felt when I flung those words at her.

Those two reminded her that I was the enemy. I was the one that hurt and caused her pain. Those two served as a warning. They warned her that trusting me could lead to more pain. So she did what any sane.

person would do in that situation; she asked me to leave.

"What did you tell her?"

I I

I didn't want to repeat those words, but I did. I told Gabe everything, from how Emma lied and manipulated me. To how I angrily went to Ava's house and told her those cruel words.

When I'm done, Gabe is staring at me with an unreadable expression.

"You're an idiot and an asshole" he says, not mincing words.

I run my hands down my face. "Don't I know it"

"I'm not even going to bother with telling you how wrong you were. The fact that you're beating yourself

up is enough"

I don't even know how she used to stand me. I can't stand myself every time I think about what I put Ava through. It makes me appreciate her more, knowing she tolerated me for all those years. Not a lot of

women would have put up with my shit.

"On the bright side, she was receptive. That's got to mean something, right?" he asks after a while. To

I was about to agree when something hits me.

1

"What if it's just the hormones?" I ask in panic running my hand through my hair. "Due to the pregnancy hormones, most women go through an increase in libido. Maybe that is it. Fuck."

Chapter 0225

All the hope I had shrivels up and dies. Hell. Will I ever get a chance to make things right? Is it even

possible to win her back?

"I doubt that's the only thing. We both know Ava. If she didn't want it, she wouldn't have let you. Hormones be damned," he tries to encourage me, but I'm not really feeling it right now.

My door opens, and Travis enters. He looks like hell. He crosses over and takes a seat next to Gabe.

"You look like shit" Gabe informs him.

Travis just sighs. "I know. I feel like it too."

Things are a fucking mess after finding out that his precious sister has a child whom she has kept a

secret for eight years.

“How are things?” I ask.

“Bad. I can’t stand being in the same room as Emma right now. Mom too. In fact, she gave Emma an ultimatum. Either she builds a relationship with Gunner or she cuts her off from her life.”

Both Gabe and I stare at him in shock. Never have I ever imagined that Kate would threaten to disown

Emma.

Even when Ava and I messed up, she never disowned her. Sure, she and James gave her the cold

shoulder, but they never cut her off.

“Are you serious?” Gabe speaks.

“As serious as a heart attack,” he mutters before taking a deep breath. “Anyway, I don’t want to talk about

that, let alone think about it. What were you talking about before I came in?” he asks, changing the subject.

“Ava” Gabe answers.

“What about Ava?”

He has the tortured look he usually wears every time Ava is mentioned. I know he now feels even worse

after how he talked to her that day.

“I think that Rowari may have a chance of winning her.” Gabe answers.

Travis looks confused. It’s then that I realize he has no idea about my feelings towards Ava.

“Why? Are you pursuing her?” He looks puzzled, Like he’s trying to piece things together.

“Yes,” I growl. “You have a problem with that?”

“No,” he sighs. I’m guessing you have feelings for her, right? That’s okay. She deserves to be happy and

we all know that you were her dream.”

“You’re not angry with him?” Gabe looks at me before looking at Travis.

I wanted to hear his answer. Not that it mattered. Even if he were pissed, it wouldn’t have changed a thing. If getting Ava means losing his friendship, then so be it.

“Why would I be angry?”

“Well, because of Emma. You were the biggest supporter of their relationship.”

“Yes, that’s before I realized that he may not love her anymore. When Emma came back, he acted

differently. It was like the spark between them had died. It was pretty easy to see it, though he was

fighting it. His actions just spoke louder than his words.” He pauses, then continues.

“It’s time we all let go of the past. All three of them—four if we count Calvin—have been suffering because

of the love Rowan and Emma had when they were young. I see what neither of us saw back then. That young love wasn’t meant to be. Sooner or later. One way or another, it would have died. My advice for you, my friend, is to seize the present. I’ve learned that life is unpredictable and you never know what time you have left with your loved ones.”

I’m quiet as I listen to him. There was an air of foreboding that filled the room at his words. I feel the chill

all the way down to my bones.

“When did you get so wise?” I chuckle as I try to clear the heavy atmosphere.

They both chuckle, but it’s forced. I know they can both feel it in the air.

I don’t know what it is, but I had this premonition that something bad would fucking happen.

Travis was right. I wasn’t going to waste time because you never fucking know.

I’m going to go on this trip and the moment I get back, I’m going to tell Ava the truth. It was time I confessed my feelings for her.

Chapter 0226

Ava.

I haven’t been able to get the freaking note out of my head. It’s all I think about.

I wanted to believe that it was nothing but a prank, but I’m not so sure. Not when I get a bad feeling every

time I read it.

I've thought about reporting, but I don't want to make a big deal out of it. It was just one note. What if Cal was right and it turned out that it was just a stupid prank?

My phone rings, making me jump. I put the mop down and pick it up. When I see Rowan's name flashing. I

almost hang up, but I don't.

"Hello." I force my voice to sound emotionless.

"Hey, how are you?" he asks, sounding a bit unsure.

I swear, I'll never get used to this version of Rowan. It was just so unlike him. It's like he woke up one day and was a different person. If he has truly changed, then it's going to take some time to get used to him.

"Did you need anything?"

"Yeah. I just want to let you know that I'll be going on a business trip for a few days," he informs me,

which makes me a bit confused.

"Oh, okay, so you wanted me to let Noah know?"

Noah was at school. He will be disappointed since he doesn't like Rowan going on trips, but he'll

understand nonetheless.

He pauses before answering. "He already knows, but I wanted you to know too."

I'm a bit stunned. Rowan never used to tell me when he went on business trips. He would leave in the morning and not come back. It's as I set aside food for him that Noah would let me know that Rowan wasn't coming back. He used to tell our son, but not me.

It was disrespectful. He never cared about that, though. He knew that it hurt me every time he did it, and that's why he continued doing it.

I really don't see how that's any of my business, Rowan. I'm not your wife or your keeper." I try to keep the snappy tone away, but it's hard.

Nowadays, he does something nice, and it just reminds me of the opposite action he took before. It's

"I know, but I thought it was a simple courtesy to let you know," he says, slowly as if he were dealing with an unpredictable, rabid animal.

Against my better judgment, I snorted. "Courtesy? You sure lacked it when we were married, so I don't see the need of it now."

We stay quiet after that for a while before I speak up again.

"You know what, it doesn't matter because I don't want to fight with you."

He sighs. "Neither do I," he pauses. "Look, my jet is ready, but when I get back, we need to talk. There is something I have to tell you; it's important."

I

I immediately get curious. "Can't you tell me now?"

"No. It's something that I need to tell you face-to-face"

One thing about me is that I hate waiting. When you tell me something like that, then you make me wait before you tell me what you want to say, it usually wreaks havoc inside me. I'll spend the entire duration overthinking and coming up with scenarios that may not be true.

"Can't you just tell me? I hate waiting."

"I know, but this will have to wait." He pauses, and I hear other voices on his end. "I have to go. Take care;

we'll talk when I get back."

Before I can say anything more, the line goes dead. I groan in frustration. Damn it. What the hell does he

want to talk about?

"Ava," the shout, brings me out of my musing.

I sigh in defeat. Now I was going to be in a weird state until Rowan tells me what he wanted us to talk about.

"In the kitchen," I shout back

Heard his footsteps before he walks into the kitchen. I don't know if it's just today he had his glasses on, and he looked super nerdy in a hot kind of way.

me, but Cal looks out of sorts.

Chapter 0227

"What is it? You're yelling my name like it's the end of the world," I tell him once I realize he still hasn't

said a word.

His eyes were wide as if he just discovered something huge. I stare at him. He has a sweat shirt and sweat pants. At first I'm confused why he wasn't at work, but then I remember that today is day off.

"Cal?" I call

He shakes his head. "Oh sorry. I don't know if this is too soon, but I wanted to ask you something"

First Rowan wanted to talk about something, and now Cal wants to ask me something. With how he was fidgeting, I just knew that I probably wouldn't like what he said.

"Okay, go ahead."

He's quiet for a while before he takes a deep breath.

"I want to ask you out on a date." 1

"What?" I stammer, staring at him wide-eyed.

Did I hear him right? It can't be. There is just no way he would ask me that. We were just friends.

“Will you go out with me on a date?” He asks, this time with his a clearer voice. “I know it’s probably too early, but I think this is for the best. We could help each other get over our past hurts. It would be easy since we understand each other.”

¶

I continue staring at him. My mind refuses to function. Surely he could see that his idea was absurd, and I’m not thinking this to be mean or anything. He was basically suggesting that we should be each other’s rebound. Rebounds never really end well. 2

“Say something, please, Ava,” he begs once he realizes that I haven’t spoken a word. 1

I look to the floor before looking at him as I try to find a suitable and reasonable answer that won’t hurt him.

“You’re a really great man, Calvin and any woman would be lucky to date you..” I begin.

“But?” he prompts.

But I don’t think this is a great idea.” I sigh. “First of all, we’ve both come out of situations that have been really painful, and jumping into a relationship isn’t ideal for any of us. Second, I’m not ready to date. The one and only time I did after my divorce from Rowan, I ended up pregnant hv

fell in love with a man who loved Emma, and Rowan nearly destroyed me in the end. I’m not about to

make that mistake again.” a

He deflates and stays quiet. I feel bad for bursting his bubble, but getting involved with him while he was still in love with Emma was bound to end in disaster. I need peace. What I don’t need is falling for yet

another man who is in love with Emma.

“You’re right. I’m sorry,” he says quietly before he turns and leaves through the backdoor.

“Calvin,” I call him, but he doesn’t answer.

I follow him only to find he has already crossed the threshold to his side of the yard. I sigh and

the house, just as my doorbell rings.

I get out of the kitchen and move to the hallway, all the while feeling a sense of de ja vu.

When I open the door, there is no one there. Just another not.

I pick it up and open it. It was smeared in what I think is blood, but the words were clear.

TIME IS TICKING AVA. HAVE YOU SAID GOODBYE TO YOUR LOVED ONES?

get

back in

I drop the note in horror and look at it, willing it to disappear, I was now sure that this wasn’t a prank. Someone was targeting me again, the only question is who and why.

Chapter 0228

“What’s up, Ava?”

We rarely talk. Most of the time, it’s just a message here and there. All of them consist of him letting me know he has sent a package and me thanking him for it.

I know it's dangerous, but he's the only one I can think of to help me right now. I won't lie. The second note has totally scared the crap out of me.

"I need your help, Reaper," I simply state. There was no need for small talk. Plus, from what I've learned about him, he doesn't like them.

It took some time before I finally had the courage to call him. I've been debating whether I should go to the police or him. Finally, reason won over. The last time I was in danger, the police weren't able to help. Reaper knew what was happening the whole time. 1

I reasoned that maybe he would be able to help me catch whoever was after me.

"Okay, what is it?" he asks curiously. Probably because I've never asked him for anything.

"Someone seems to be after."

"Oh, is it about the notes you've been getting?"

I am shocked, but not at the same time. See? This is why I thought he would be the best person to help.

me. He was a step ahead of me 1

"Yes," I answer. "Do you know who's behind it, and how do you even know about them?"

I crossed my fingers, hoping that he knew. It would be even better if he was in the process of taking care of the problem for me. After all, didn't he promise me his protection?

"I have my sources... I don't know who's behind them, but my source tells me that the person who leaves. them usually wears a mask and a long black coat. From what he gathered, he thinks it's a woman."

I try to think about which woman would want to harm me, but I come up short. This past few months, I've offended a lot of people, with Emma being the most recent. It was just hard to tell who could hold such a big resentment that they would threaten me. 1

Why didn't he stop whoever the person is?" I ask.

I mean, it's reasonable. If you see a strange person leaving such notes, you stop them.

"He didn't think much of it until the second note. That's when he started getting suspicious."

I can't really blame him. I didn't think too much into it until the second note, too.

"What do the notes contain?"

"Give me a second. Let me send you a picture."

I snap a picture of them side by side and then send it to him. He's quiet while he's studying them. I can't help but think of how I could get into trouble if the police ever found out.

Reaper

was s

still in hiding, and the police were still on his case. I took a risk with him. A risk that could put me in prison for being his accomplice and hiding his whereabouts.

In my defense, I don't really know where he's hiding, and we rarely communicate, but I don't think that would be enough to convince the jury of my innocence.

"Looks like whoever it is has a grudge and wants to hurt you," he finally says.

“Gee thanks Sherlock” I tell him sarcastically. “I’ve already gathered that...you know, with the whole say

goodbye to your loved ones thing”

ing my death. It’s even

I didn’t want to be snappy, but I was on edge. It’s scary to know someone is planning my death. It’s event

scarier because I’m pregnant. If I die, my baby dies, too. I can’t have that.

“There’s not much I can gather except that,” he sighs. “Who have you offended in recent months? Who do

you think could be angry enough to want revenge? Let’s start there.”

“I honestly don’t know, Reaper. You seem to know everything that goes on around me, so you know that I’ve made a lot of people angry these past few months.”

“Okay then. Just send me a list of those you’ve crossed, and I’ll see what I can do. Okay?” he asks.

I nod my head before realizing he can’t see me. “Okay”

Chapter 0229

“Don’t worry, Ava. We’ll catch this bastard. There is no way I’ll allow

he assures me, his voice taking a soft note.

“Thanks”

We talk a little bit longer before we hang up.

nor her to hurt you or my niece,”

I don't get up from my spot on the couch. There were a million things to do in the house, yet I didn't have any energy left in me. Plus, with all my thoughts and fears, I couldn't focus, even if I wanted to.

I don't know how long I was there before I heard keys juggle and then my front door open. I turn around when I hear footsteps. Mom and dad walk hand in hand.

I smile at them. Those two were so in love that they were always joined at the hip most of the time. It was

really cute.

“Hey,” I greet them as I sit up right.

Mom takes a seat next to me while dad takes the one on the opposite.

“Hey too, baby,” dad says.

“Hi, my love,” mom greets back.

I will never get used to the look of love in their eyes. It was everything for me. With them, I didn't have to wonder or guess. It was written all over their faces.

“What do I owe the pleasure of your visit... Not that I don't like having you guys here or anything like that.”

They give each other a look before Mom turns to fully face me.

“Well, there are a few things we would like to discuss,” she says, and I nod my head.

“First of all, I just want to thank you, my darling.” She begins with teary eyes. “Ethan called us yesterday. I know he has done awful things to you, but you don’t know how good it felt talking to him. He told us that you’re the one that pushed him to get in touch with us and after thinking about it, he realized he couldn’t do without family and we are his family.”

I smile at her. Ethan and I mainly communicate through letters. Only once in a while does he call. I

haven’t gone to see him since that first time, but I know that will change once the baby is born. He or she deserves to know their father.

It’s nothing mom. –

“No. It’s something,” she insists. “Thank you so much because I had missed my son.”

I cringe at that. It’s still weird hearing her call him that, given that I’ve slept with the man, I will never get used to that.

I hug her and peck her cheeks. “Anything for you guys.

We hug for a while before we let each other go. Dad waits until Mom dries her tears.

“What is the other thing you wanted to talk to me about?”

He clears his throat. “Right. We want to introduce you to society as our daughter and heir.”

I knew this was coming somehow, but that doesn't stop my mouth from hanging open.

"Are you sure?" I stammer.

I wasn't really sure myself, but I've been postponing it for so long. They've wanted to announce our relationship for so long, but I've been dragging my feet. I wasn't ashamed of being their daughter; I just didn't want the scrutiny that came with being their daughter.

"Yes. It's time, and I want the whole world to know that you're our child." Mom says. "It's a blessing that we were able to find you. I just want us to share that with the world."

I think about it for a while. What was the use of denying them? There were already rumors, given that Noah and I have been seen with them on numerous occasions.

"Alright then," I finally give them my answer.

Mom squeals and literally launches herself at me. "Thank you so much. I'll start the preparation. Maybe we can go old school and hold a ball in your honor."

I just smile at her. We talk for a little while. It mostly consisted of her telling dad and me the ideas she has for the ball.

I want to be happy and excited, but I can't. Not when I still don't know who the new threat is.

Chapter 0230

I've been obsessing for the last few days over the note. I just wanted to nail whoever this person is so

life. that I could move on peacefully with my

I hated that I was now jumpy and scared all the damn time. Noah has even noticed that I haven't been myself. Every time he asks, I just tell him that I am okay when I am clearly not.

My life was so simple back when I was married to Rowan as compared to now. The only thing I worried about was whether or not he would come for dinner or if he would ever love me. I know I used to be in constant pain, but I'd pick that over dying any day.

I haven't had a moment of peace since I divorced Rowan. An attempt on my life was made three times. My car was blown up, my house burned down, and I was kidnapped twice. After I agreed to Reaper being in my life, I thought that things would settle down, but no... Now someone was after me. Again.

"Mom, can I go over at Gunner's?" Noah asks, scaring the crap out of me.

I try to calm my heart down. See what I mean when I say I'm jumpy?

He looks at me funny, but I ignore it and force my lips into a semblance of a smile.

"Sure, use the back door, though, okay?"

He nods his head, and I stand up. I wanted to make sure that he crossed over to Calvin's side safely and that he got inside his house.

"Today we are going to play games. Last time I won, this time Gunner hopes that he wins," he tells me as we walk.

"That's good"

I haven't seen Calvin since that day in my kitchen. He has been avoiding me as much as he can. I'm not sure if it's because he's embarrassed or because he was hurt by my rejection. Maybe it is both.

Anyway, I've been giving him space because I didn't want things to be even more awkward than they already were.

"See you later, mom, Noah says as he crosses over to Cal's.

After I've made sure he is in their house, I turn back and head into ours.

get Inside, and not even a minute later, there is a knock on my door. I approach it with trepidation. I was hoping it wasn't another note.

I open the door and find Rowan. Fuck. I'd forgotten that we were supposed to talk. With everything tha

has happened, the talk was the least of my worries.

"Hey," he asks, shoving his hands inside his pocket.

He looked really nervous. Again, this was something I wasn't used to when it came to him.

"Come in," I tell him while scanning the area.

The last thing I needed was a note arriving while he was here with me.

He gives me a look.

"What?" I ask.

"I thought you would put up a fight."

"Do you want to come in or not?" I ask in irritation.

He gives me one last look before he enters my house. Without waiting too long. I close the door afraid

that someone is watching me.

I've become so paranoid over the past few days that sometimes it terrifies me. The sooner we deal with this issue the better for my mental state.

I take a seat in my recliner. I bought it a few weeks ago because it helped relieve my back pain. I even had to change my mattress because it made my back pain worse.

"So, what did you want to talk to me about?" I stare into his eyes. "It sounded pretty important. Is it about

Noah?"

He takes a deep breath before releasing. "No. It's about us."

I stare at him, confused, wondering if he had truly lost his mind. What the hell was he even talking about, for goodness sake?

"There is no us, Rowan. You seem to be forgetting that a lot lately."

I didn't want to do this with him. Not when I had so much going on.

"Just listen to me, please," he pleads, his voice soft.

Something about the desperation in his voice stops me. I don't know what it is, but I don't want to put too much thought into it. Instead, I shut my mouth and focus on him.

He doesn't talk for a while nich

"I love you," he finally says.

My mouth drops open, and I gape at him like a fish out of water. He wasn't seated that far from me, so reach out and feel his forehead for a fever.

"Are you high? Running a fever? Or maybe I just didn't hear you, right"