

Make Him Regret It

On good days, I love my best friend. On really bad days, I remind myself she means well.

But today? Today is a horrible day, and I'm furious.

"Hades's asshole" isn't even a high enough scale. I yank my hands out of hers, my anger so hot I actually consider shoving her off the couch – until I notice how close the coffee table is and wince.

I'm mad. But not mad enough to injure her. Yet.

"I can't believe you!" I shoot up from the couch and storm toward my bedroom. Tessa is right behind me.

"You're overreacting, Em. It's not even a bad thing!"

I whip off my left slipper and hurl it at her head, but she's got baseball reflexes from years of playing catch with her dad – and dodges effortlessly.

She glares, pointing a finger at me like she's about to scold a misbehaving puppy. "Give me one valid reason why you're mad, and I'll back off."

I hate when she does this. Puts me on the spot, makes my brain short-circuit, then steamrolls me into agreeing with her. "I just broke up with Zane!"

"Access denied." She starts ticking off her fingers. "One, he's a fucker. Two, you're supposed to be moving on. Three, he's getting married and literally invited you to his wedding. On a goddamn cruise."

She crosses her arms, staring at me like I'm the one making decisions for her. "Emilia Janice Carter. You can't be serious."

I launch my second slipper at her, and this time, it lands – right on her shoulder.

"You do not call me that!" I fume. "And it's the principle of the thing! You're always going on about how controlling Zane is, but you're just as bad! You should have told me he was engaged. It wasn't your place to keep it from me, and you should've asked before signing me up for anything!"

"Don't you dare guilt-trip me." She's fuming now too. "I didn't sign you up for shit, I suggested something. And do not compare me to that good-for-nothing lowlife."

She takes a breath, then pins me with a look so serious I can't look away. "Pray tell, what's your plan? He's hosting a month-long wedding cruise. I know you. You'll never reject the invite. You'll go, torture yourself, then come home and expect me to pick up the pieces."

I press my lips together. I have nothing to say.

She exhales, like she knew she'd win this argument. "I'm not going with you. But if you agree to my idea – because I'd never force you into anything – then not only will you have a date the entire trip, but you'll get to rub it in his smug, asshole of a face."

She leans in, eyes gleaming. "Just imagine it, Em. His ex-fiancée... dating his favourite hockey player."

I didn't need to be a PR manager – or a mind reader – to know how this looked.

Zane was obsessed with Liam Calloway. That much, I remember. Back in college, he once refused to let me sit in the front seat of his car because Liam had been there a few hours ago, and he didn't want me "messing up his good luck charm." 2

I thought he was joking and got in anyway. We had a massive fight. Then his team lost the game, and he lost it on me, yelling about how he "couldn't have a girl that couldn't fucking listen."

The memory makes my mouth taste bitter. I remember crying to Tess, wondering why he didn't just date Liam if he meant so much to him.

Tess watches me closely, still grinning mischievously, but I can tell she's still really pissed. Just barely keeping it together. Then, without another word, she turns and heads to her room. Probably to cool off, and it's probably for the best, too. If she stayed, we'd just start fighting again. 1

She pauses in the doorway. "Think about it all you want, but I'm having dinner with Liam tonight. It's at that Thai place I mentioned." She glances at me. "Not pressuring you or anything, but if you're okay with it, this could be your first official date in the public eye. I can tell Liam to ditch the sunglasses and facemask. Dress up. But only if it's what you want, 'kay?"

Her eyes soften, like she sees something in my face I don't even realise I'm showing. "I love you, Emilia. Even if it doesn't feel like it sometimes."
"

Then she disappears into her room, shutting the door softly behind her.

And finally, for the first time today, I can breathe.

_____ 1

I've never been good at makeup. I pull up a YouTube tutorial on mascara and nearly melt into my bed.

I can count on one of Tessa's perfectly manicured hands the number of times I've worn it at all – and only on secret outings with her, ones Zane never knew about. She'd sit me down, tilt my chin up, and "pretty me up," as she called it. I know I could knock on her door right now, ask for help, and erase all the tension between us. But I don't want to. Not yet.

Zane hated when I wore makeup. Sometimes, he'd yell just for finding a tube of lip gloss in my purse.

I shake my head. That's a pathetic excuse for not even knowing how to put on mascara. I remember the look Tess gave me the first time I told her I avoided it because of him.

Now, I'm sitting on my bed, wearing the prettiest dress I own, it's a gorgeous white one Tess bought me for my birthday last year. I add hoop earrings, then gather my curls into a simple ponytail. They shrink easily anyway, so there's no point in letting them down.

The YouTube video was easier to follow than I expected. Turns out, I already had most of the products, thanks to Tess. And when I look in the mirror, I think I did a pretty decent job.

Then, a thought creeps in. Was it worth it? All those years pretending I didn't like makeup. Pretending I didn't want to look as beautiful as the girls on social media.

I guess Zane leaving me has some perks. Now, I can do things like this without worrying if he approves.

I grab a black purse and steal one last glance at myself in the mirror. My

breath catches.

I look... pretty.

My eyes burn with unshed tears.

When was the last time I liked the way I looked?

When was the last time I was allowed to care?

I open my door.

Tessa is standing outside, her hand frozen mid-air, about to knock. She sees me and stops, lips parting slightly, but she says nothing.

So I speak instead.

"I'm ready." I lift my chin. "I'll make that asshole regret wasting ten years of my life."

Tessa gives me the biggest, shit eating grin ever.



Ms. Anonymous



Author

Chapter 5 has been updated, it's no longer repeated I apologise for that. Enjoy the update!



45