

Chapter 3

On Monday during lunch, I met Mel. She handed me a small bag from a fancy store, and I looked at her, confused.

"My mom asked me to give this to you. She said it's perfect for you and doesn't suit her," Mel said with a big smile.

I opened the bag, and inside was the perfume I had worn to the ball. A huge smile spread across my face. I loved that perfume, and it was part of the best night of my life. I just hoped that my best night hadn't left me with an STD as a souvenir. With that thought, I thanked Mel and told her I'd call her mom later, then mentioned I wanted to call the lab to schedule some tests.

I called the laboratory and was informed that I needed a doctor's prescription to get the tests covered by health insurance. Thank God the company provided health insurance for employees because otherwise, I wouldn't know what to do. My salary wasn't high, and what little was left after covering college expenses went to helping at home, since my mom didn't work outside the house and my dad didn't make much as a driver.

So I made a doctor's appointment, but the earliest available slot was two weeks away, and I waited anxiously. The more days passed, the more nervous I became, though Mel did everything to calm me down. On the scheduled date, she went to the doctor's with me. With the list of tests in hand, she personally scheduled the lab work and insisted on accompanying me. Three weeks had passed since the party when I finally got the tests done. The results came back five days later, and I returned to the doctor. Of course, Mel was with me.

The doctor checked the results and looked me in the eyes:

"Miss Catherine, your health is excellent. You're healthy. But from now on, you'll need to take better care of yourself."

I breathed a sigh of relief, but was I really about to get lectured by the doctor for having unprotected sex with a stranger? Well, I deserved it - not using protection was stupid, I could have caught a disease. And then he continued:

"Congratulations, you're pregnant! I'm going to refer you to an OB-GYN for prenatal care..."

I didn't hear anything else, just the blood pulsing in my ears. I couldn't believe this! Pregnant? How would I explain this? It's not possible. Me, of all people, the perfect goody-two-shoes who never stepped out of line, who always considered the consequences before doing anything, who was always responsible - the first time I let rationality slide, I ended up pregnant and didn't even know who the father was! Mel held my hand and kept repeating:

"Calm down, Cat, everything will be okay!"

How could everything be okay? I didn't even know who the father was. *Shit!* I would have to tell my parents, their only daughter would break their hearts. They would be disappointed, hate me, and kick me out of the house. How could I explain that I don't even know what the father of my child looks like? I was already hyperventilating. Suddenly, I felt the doctor taking my hand and speaking calmly:

"Easy now, dear! The situation, from what I can see, isn't ideal, but you can't get this nervous, it will harm your baby. Now you have to take care of yourself for the baby's sake. I'm sure the people who love you will support and help you. But you need to calm down because only you can ensure this baby develops healthily and is born strong. Do you understand me?"

I looked at that short, white-haired, slightly chubby gentleman, with his glasses perched on the tip of his nose, and nodded positively. Somehow he calmed me down a bit, maybe because his eyes sparkled with a kindness and understanding that we rarely see these days. The doctor asked his secretary to bring me some chamomile tea, and while I drank it and tried to calm down, he gave all the information to Melissa, who listened attentively.

We left the office and Melissa took me to a diner, saying we needed to eat something. As soon as I sat down, I felt the tears falling. My friend hugged me and told me once again that I wasn't alone. I looked at her and said:

"The only thing I'm sure of right now is that I want you and Fred to be my child's godparents because I know you'll support them and give them lots of love."

Her eyes sparkled, and she burst into tears, responding between sobs:

"I'll be the best godmother in the world and I'll always be close to our baby! And I'm sure Fred will be very happy too!"

She assured me she would always be by my side, made it clear that I wouldn't go through anything alone, and that she would be with me when I talked to my parents. My parents... oh! I started thinking and decided I wouldn't hide it from them for even a day; I would tell them that very night. I wouldn't go to college, I would go home to talk to them. Mel immediately supported me and said:

"Let's go then, I'm with you!"

When we arrived at my house, my parents were startled, and my mom came right over, worried:

"Girls, didn't you go to class today? Is everything okay?"

"Not really, Mom. I need to talk to you both."

My parents immediately realized it was something very serious. We all sat in the living room and I told them what was happening, admitting I had been irresponsible by hooking up with a stranger at the party. I obviously didn't go into details, but I made it clear that I couldn't find my child's father again. The disappointment in their eyes was evident. My mother was sobbing uncontrollably, saying I was ruined. My father hadn't said anything yet. Seeing how upset my mother was, Melissa quickly went to the kitchen and came back with a glass of sugar water for her. Melissa always gives sugar water to nervous people, saying it calms them down - I never understood that.

Finally, my father spoke:

"You made a huge mistake and there's no going back."

My parents were very simple people. My father was a tall, strong man, and my mother was an older version of me, but both had great character and solid principles they always made sure to pass on to me. Hearing my father emphasize that I had messed up made my heart ache even more. I started crying and said:

"I know, Dad, I was irresponsible. But there's nothing I can do now. I'll drop out of college to raise my child. And I'm going to pack my bags..."

"Pack your bags? You're very mistaken if you think you're leaving this house like that. You made a mistake, and you disappointed us, but we love you, we'll get through this and we'll help you. You're not alone, my daughter! And neither is this child!" My father said this and my heart filled with hope.

"But Dad, I brought shame to you..."

"You're not the first and won't be the last single mother in this world. We would have liked things to be different for you, not so difficult. You've always been so responsible! But if this is how it is, we'll face it together. You won't leave college - more than ever, you need to grow in life to take care of your child. You're going to be a single mother, your responsibility is huge. We'll help you, and even though it will be difficult, everything will work out."

Melissa was already crying and quickly spoke to my parents:

"Anthony, Miss Selina, you can count on me, I'll help with everything! Besides, I'm this baby's godmother, Cat is like a sister to me, and I'll always be around."

My parents looked at her gratefully. I looked at those three feeling completely blessed to have them in my life, full of love for them and experiencing a totally new feeling for that little being still growing inside me, whose existence I had just discovered!

As difficult as being a single mother would be, that night at the ball was the best night of my life. I could never forget those violet-blue eyes looking at me with adoration during our furtive encounter and everything my body experienced that night. I would always have that sweet memory with me.

The following months were difficult. I kept the dress, shoes, mask, and perfume that Mel's mother gave me in a box. On difficult days, I would open that box and relive that night in my memory.

Although I had a peaceful pregnancy, people's comments and cruelty were hard to bear. To make matters worse, after they got married, my ex and my cousin moved in with her parents, who lived on the same street as us. They made sure to humiliate me with nasty comments whenever they saw me and spread throughout the neighborhood that I didn't know who my child's father was and that I was a loose woman, which was why Claude had left me. I wanted to kill them! Kelly's mother, who was my mother's sister, never missed a chance to come to our house and torment us, saying how fortunate it was that her daughter wasn't like me, that she was a good girl who had married a decent man. She seemed to have forgotten that that whore had stolen my boyfriend and had sex with him in my bed.

But I swallowed it all; it wasn't worth arguing with these people, and I didn't want to transmit negative feelings to my child. As the days went by, I loved that baby more and more. I had no idea such love could exist. Everything I did, I did for him. I would protect him from everything; I would give my life to him. And surprisingly, during the pregnancy, everything seemed to flow in my favor, things were falling into place and working out.

My boss was great, understood my situation, and even gave me a small raise, which was a huge help! Mel and Fred showered me with attention, they were in love with their godchild even before knowing if it would be a girl or boy. They insisted on buying everything for the nursery, which turned out beautiful. Mel accompanied me to all appointments and every test, never missing anything. She even organized two baby showers - one at the company and another at college. My child would come into the world surrounded by love.

I found out I was having a boy and decided to name him Peter. And so it was. Peter was born healthy, with a pair of huge violet-blue eyes that would never let me forget the night that changed my life, but was also the best night I'd ever had! I would never forget that man!

My son was surrounded by love from the first moment. My parents were enchanted by their grandson. Mel and Fred came to our house every day to see their godson and check how we were doing. Mel was always there supporting me in everything. Her parents also came to visit Peter and said they would be honorary grandparents since they considered me their daughter too, which I found beautiful. They also surrounded me with care. They insisted on giving the stroller as a gift, and the day Peter was born, they came to the maternity ward with a huge basket of flowers and welcome balloons.

After my maternity leave ended, my son stayed in my mother's care while I was at work and college. I worked hard and devoted all my time not spent at college or work to my son. With the help of my parents and my son's godparents, I managed everything and didn't miss any semester in college, graduating alongside my friend Melissa. It was a great moment for me and my family. With my diploma in hand, I would now pursue a better future, with the firm purpose that my son would never lack anything.