

Kickass 462

Chapter 462

Abby

As Karl and I head wordlessly back into the pub, I'm torn between relief and a whirlwind of emotions. The warmth of the crowded room envelopes us, a stark contrast to the cold intimacy of the alley. The lively chatter and laughter of the patrons are soothing to my ears, but my mind is still racing.

Karl and I don't say a word to each other as we head down the narrow hallway, but I don't think we need to. I can feel his presence behind me, and I know he's watching me. He's probably confused, just like I am.

And maybe that's okay.

But keeping something like this from my best friend—no, not just keeping it from her, but rather lying to her completely—isn't right. It's not right at all, and I feel like the worst friend imaginable in my current drunken state.

I realize that keeping this secret from Chloe is just going to end up in flames, but I feel trapped. It doesn't feel like it's the right time to reveal what's happening with Karl and me. Hell, maybe there never will be a 'right' time.

Besides, we're just... hooking up. It could end at any moment, and I don't want to drag Chloe into something that might just fizzle out or end in disaster. If it ends in the latter manner, I know she'll just blame Karl, and I can't have that. Not now.

As we rejoin our friends at the table, the familiar faces and ongoing conversations provide a temporary distraction. I try to focus on the present moment, on the stories being shared, the jokes, and the laughter.

But my thoughts keep drifting back to Karl and the alley, to Leah's knowing look, and to the looming worry about Chloe's reaction when she undoubtedly finds out.

To drown out my thoughts, I find myself reaching for my drink more often. One glass turns into two, and then three.

The warmth of the alcohol fills me, numbing my worries and dulling my senses. The music in the pub blends into a pleasant hum, the conversations around me become a comforting blur.

“And so I told him,” John says, his voice sounding warm and fuzzy in my current state, “Anton, if you can’t handle the heat—”

“Yes, yes, ‘get out of the kitchen’,” Anton says with a dismissive wave of his hand. “And I say to that, to hell with your heat! This kitchen is ventilated!”

I’m laughing louder now, the weight of the evening’s events feeling lighter with each sip. The glasses on the table multiply, and I lose track of how much I’ve had to drink. My movements become less coordinated, my laughter a bit too loud.

“Oh, shoot,” I mutter to myself as I reach for my glass and find it empty. “Guess I gotta get another. Another round, everyone?”

My friends cheer, and many of them are probably just as drunk as I am. Or at least, that’s what I tell myself. I stand and begin to make my way over to the bar, but my shoe catches on a raised floorboard and I stumble. I manage to stay upright, but that’s almost not the case.

Karl, who has been watching me with a mix of amusement and concern, finally stands up and makes his way over to me. “Alright, Abby, I think it’s time to get you home,” he says, shaking his head with a chuckle. “Sorry, guys. You’ll have to get your own round of drinks.”

I look up at him, my vision slightly blurred. “Home? But the party’s just getting started,” I protest, my words slurring slightly.

He leans down, his hands gently grasping my arms to steady me. “You’ve had enough, Abby. Let’s get you back before I have to scrape you up off of the floor,” he says, a playful smile on his lips.