



YOU ARE READING MASON AND SAGE

ROMANCE

Mason and Sage were two weeks away from their wedding until, in a moment of weakness, he made a mistake and kissed his ex-girlfriend. After Sage left him, he had to prove to her that he regretted that kiss like nothing else and earn back her love a...

#alpha #angst #angstwithhappyending #cheating

by GroveltoHEA

Strangely enough, time both slows to a crawl and speeds by faster than light as you're waiting for life as you know it to end. By the time my fiancé pulled into the driveway, three hours after I'd seen him with her, I'd proven why women were the ultimate multitaskers. In those 180 minutes, while my heart was shattering and my dreams were crumbling into dust, I'd called my supervisor, accepted the travel physician assistant's assignment that would take me to the other side of the country, packed all of my clothing into two suitcases and a duffel bag, put them in my trunk with my purse, and backed my car into the neighbor's driveway. Since she was away on vacation, she wouldn't care, especially because I was going to be gone within minutes of Mason arriving home. I'd considered just leaving the bastard a note, but I wanted – needed – him to look me in the eye and see how he'd destroyed me. The beautiful ring he'd given me when he'd proposed was tucked safely in a pocket in my purse. Knowing he'd paid an exorbitant amount for it, I knew I could pawn it for a tidy sum of money that I'd donate to a local women's shelter in his name. ☹

Not one light was on in the house, so I saw the instant his headlights turned into our driveway. I'd been sitting in the dark for the last ten minutes, letting the stillness cocoon me, breathing deeply, beating the hurt back (unsuccessfully, I must admit), mopping up my tears, and wondering how we had come to this. I'd known about Eva. When we'd discussed our exes, he'd been upfront that they'd had a chaotic, intense, on-again-off-again relationship for years. When I'd asked him why he was willing to put up with such a rollercoaster, he'd said, "There was just something that drew us together, but that was before I knew what a real relationship could be like."

Since he'd spoken of her in the past tense, promising that he had no lingering feelings for her, I'd let it go. After all, I was the woman in his life, I had his love, I had the ring on my finger. I knew that she occasionally came into town, but he always told me when she tried to get in touch with him and that he always refused to meet her. I didn't even mention that he should maybe block her number, lose her contact and not text her at all, even to refuse a meet up. I tried to focus on the fact that he wasn't meeting her. Until tonight, apparently.

And, boy, how he'd mellow tonight. He and the guys were getting together to mourn the devastating death of one of their fellow Marines, someone he'd served with during his time with her. I'd discovered his phone that he'd forgotten at home, and I'd also seen a text come through from her while I held it in my hands: I'm worried about you, Mase. I'm coming to the bar to make sure you're OK until I'd seen that text, I'd been debating taking his phone to him – he'd been insistent that he just needed time with his friends tonight – but her text decided me. I'd be taking his phone to him at the bar. And we all knew how that had gone.

He came into the house quietly, assuming I was asleep upstairs, and turned to lock the door and throw the deadbolt. He rested his forehead against the door, hands clenched in fists on either side of his head, his body sagging in the dim glow from the street light. That alone told me his state of mind. He was a Marine through and through and held his body as such. Mason never slouched or relaxed that steel spine, unless we were cuddled on the couch together. Semper paratus, I thought sadly of the Marine motto – always faithful. Oh, the irony. He was still slumped against the door. Was he thinking about how to end our engagement? Was he feeling any guilt? Was he trying to think about what lies he needed to tell me? Was he planning on how soon he could see her again?

After a few minutes, he pushed away from the door with a heavy exhale, toed his shoes on, and turned to head upstairs.

"Late night," I said quietly as I turned on the table lamp.

He startled and faced me. "I thought you'd be asleep by now."

"Couldn't sleep. Had a lot on my mind," I said softly. "So, how were the guys? Where'd you end up?"

He looked uncomfortable, I could tell. He was not a liar by nature – at least as far as I knew, but, as tonight had proven, apparently I didn't know much – so this was going to be a struggle for him.

"We went to O'Reilly's." That much was true.

"I'm surprised you didn't have to Uber home."

"I walked around for a while to sober up before I drove home." Was that what you called what they'd been doing in the alley? He held his hand out to me. "Come up to bed?"

At that point, I got up and walked closer to him, looking him right in the eye. "I would, but you smell like Eva's cheap perfume." Stench of Wench.

Deer in the headlights.

"I'll save you the trouble of coming up with a lame excuse. I was coming to bring you your phone. I walked past the alley near the front door and saw you with your tongue halfway down her throat and her hands fumbling with your belt buckle. Guess sound really bounces off that dumpster because I heard her begging you to fuck her clear as day."

His head dropped, then snapped up so his eyes met mine.

His tortured eyes.

His regretful eyes.

His guilty eyes.

"Sweetheart, it was a mistake, a mistake I knew I made right away."

"But it sure wasn't a mistake until after you stuck your dick in her, right? Funny how it's never a mistake until you're caught."

"I didn't fuck her!" His hand went to his neck and he took a step toward me, but I backed away like he had some contagious disease. Come to think of it, he might have if he hadn't gloved up with his precious Eva. "I admit we got carried away and we were kissing, but it didn't mean anything, Sage, and it didn't go any further than that. I swear to you, it didn't mean anything. I've been in a bad headspace about Drake and it just...happened. I love you"

"Well, you have a funny way of showing it. Personally, I prefer my expressions of love to come from a man who's not sporting the scent of another woman all over his body. That could just be me, though."

He took another step toward me and, again, I made a countermove and kept my distance. "I'm sorry, Sage. I'm so fucking sorry. I swear, it was a one-off and will never happen again."

"Fortunately, I won't be around to see if that's true or not. We're done. You're free to have as many high-class dumpster hookups as you want."

"No," he protested, moving so fast I couldn't evade. His large hands grabbed my upper arms firmly but not hurting me in any way. "No, we are not done. I'm not going to let you end us over something that meant absolutely nothing."

"Unbelievable! You're like an entire Jeopardy category of Stupid-Ass Things Men Say When They're Caught Cheating." I leaned toward him, my finger pointing at him. "Let's get one thing straight: I'm not the one ending us. You did, when you made a choice to hook up with your ex. Me leaving is just the fallout from that choice."

"Dammit, Sage, I don't love her. I love you. You're the one I want to marry. Swear on everything holy that it was meaningless to me – it was just kissing. I stopped her before she could undo my belt. It meant nothing."

"Funny, because it meant everything to me. It meant the end of my future with you." I took a second to beat back the tears that wanted to erupt from me again. "You broke my heart tonight, Mase, and it hurts that much more because of all the men I know, I never, not in a million years, would've thought you'd betray me."

He flinched at the word "betray," his hands reflexively gripping me tighter, but I barreled on.

"I thought you were a man of honor, a man of integrity, a man of unquestionable loyalty I could trust implicitly. But tonight, I found out just how wrong I was. You are none of those things."

"This was a huge lapse in judgment, sweetheart, and I'm so fucking sorry. You're the woman I love, and you are the only woman I want to spend my life with. We're going to talk this through, Sage. We're going to do whatever we have to in order to get past this, and we will. I promise I'll do whatever it takes to earn back your trust. There isn't anything I wouldn't do for you."

"Except keep your body exclusively for me," I said as he flinched, his mouth pinching into a tight line. I had anticipated him wanting to talk it out, so I'd made a plan as I was packing. "But I can't even think about talking to you while you still smell like her."

"Give me two minutes to shower and change clothes," he said, relieved I was willing to talk, thinking he'd be able to coax me into giving him another chance. After all, our wedding was only two weeks away. "Promise me you'll be here when I get out of the shower."

Promise me." His fingers dug into my arms, his desperation an almost tangible thing.

He knew I'd never go back on my word, but for the first time in my life, I lied, looking him in the eye as I uttered those two little words. "I promise."

He ran up the stairs, and I pulled a note from my pocket. It was simple and to the point:

I guess we both broke promises tonight.

After propping it by a framed picture of us, I walked out the door, ran to my car and left him – and my heart – behind.