

Chapter 8 ~ Mason

I answered Sage's phone call and could barely understand her, she was talking so fast. Frantic, rapid-fire words she kept shooting at me. But I caught some key words like Eva and pregnant and paternity test

What the hell was that bitch up to now?

"Sage, sweetheart, slow down. Slow down. I can't understand you. Take a deep breath, kitten, and start over."

She took some deep breaths and I breathed along with her until she was somewhat calmer.

"I just had some texts from Eva. Did you know she was pregnant, Mason?"

Hell fucking no, I didn't! Why was Eva texting Sage about her pregnancy?

"No, I haven't been in touch with her or even talked to anyone who keeps in touch with her. Nate's not stateside now, and he's the only one who really kept in close contact with her."

"She told me that you did more than just kiss her in the alley that night. She said you couldn't resist her, that you've never been able to resist her."

"Sage, listen to me. That's absolutely not true. She's lying. I told you everything that went down with her that night. It was a kiss and nothing else."

"Well, she said the baby is yours and the ultrasound puts her at conceiving on the night of the kiss."

I was shaking my head even though Sage couldn't see me. "She can accuse me all she wants, but there's no possible way I'm the father of her baby, if she's even pregnant. I haven't touched that bitch since before I saw you for the first time."

"Mason," she said, and her voice was shaky, like she was trying not to cry, "If you did anything more than kissing with her that night, now is the time to come clean."

"Sage, on my life, I didn't have sex with her that night or any other since I first saw you. It was a stupid, drunken kiss that one night, then I pushed her away and went for a long walk. By myself. But I guarantee you I did not have sex with her, and I am most definitely not the father of her baby."

"She wants you to take a paternity test, Mason --"

"Oh, hell, no," I snapped. "I am not getting pulled into her fucking drama that she's trying to create. And that's all she's trying to do, Sage, create trouble between us because apparently she'll never grow the hell up and is addicted to drama."

"Mason, wouldn't it be better to do a paternity test and get her off your back?"

"No, Sage, it would not be better because that would be saying there's a chance I could be the father when I know there's no fucking chance in hell that I'm the father because I haven't fucked her since before I met you!"

She was silent for a moment at my outburst. "But Mason, I feel like if you don't do it, she'll claim that you are the father and say that you won't take one because you know this is your baby."

I felt like, deep down, Sage was really saying she wanted me to take it to prove that I hadn't done anything with Eva that could have resulted in a baby, which spoke to her still not trusting me. My fuck up had a long list of repercussions and even though I deserved them, sometimes it was hard to realize that I may never get the life I wanted with Sage because of my idiotic mistake. Consequences, asshole

"She can say whatever she wants to say. I know the truth, and the truth is, I didn't have sex with her and there is no way I'm the baby's father." I let that sink in a minute. "Do you believe me, Sage?"

Silence.

Dead fucking silence.

It felt like my heart was shattering just like Sage's had when she saw the worst ten seconds of my life in an alley with Eva. It doesn't take any time at all to destroy the lives of those you love and yourself, and I'd gladly do penance every day if I could earn Sage's trust again. But this new disaster brought on by Eva was obviously not helping my cause, and that was on me, too.

"I get it," I said to her so ly. "It wasn't fair of me to ask that of you. We were just starting out again, and then this hits."

"I have to be honest, Mason. It concerns me that you don't want to take a paternity test to prove it's not your baby."

"I can see where you're coming from with that. But, Sage, whether you believe me or not, I've never, not once, lied to you. Ever. And I'm not going to start now. If something more than a kiss had happened in that alley, I would have told you. And I know -- the kiss shouldn't have even happened and I may have ruined things between us forever and that's all on my shoulders. But the one thing I can't be accused of is lying to you. I don't need to prove this baby isn't mine because I know there's no way in hell it could be mine."

She was quiet on the other end of the line, so quiet that I had to look at my phone to make sure we were still connected.

"Mason, why would she be saying this if she knew it would be proven false?"

"Because apparently she's a total fucking psychopath who got pissed when I blocked her number? Because she wants me not to be together with you? Because she loves bathing in the fucking misery of others? I don't know why the hell she's saying I'm the father of her baby, Sage, but I know at the very least it's to cause trouble between us, and she's fucking succeeding."

"Mason," she sighed, then didn't say anything else.

"Ask me. Ask me straight out to do it," I ordered her.

A pause, then, "Mason, will you take the paternity test?"

"For you, Sage, yes. If it will make you feel better, I'll do it."

"Thank you, Mason," she sighed, and I could hear the relief in her voice.

Only for you, Sage. I'm only doing this for you

I consulted a lawyer the next day, Mark Granger, and after I explained the crazy-bitch situation, he advised me to do a legal paternity test. He said being proactive could prevent Eva from filing a civil lawsuit where the first step would be the court determining if enough evidence existed to compel me to take a paternity test.

He also insisted on doing a legal DNA test because they had strict sample collection protocols that showed the samples came from the proper individuals and no tampering took place when the samples were drawn.

"You want a legal, chain-of-custody paternity test that's witnessed and provides results that are admissible in court," Mark told me solemnly.

He told me that after the blood samples were taken, they would be sent to the lab in tamper-proof envelopes that maintained the secure chain of custody. The laboratory would test each sample twice to ensure the accuracy of the results.

"It'll take about three to five days to get the results," Mark said, "and then you can put the matter to rest. If you want, they can mail the results to you or email them or you can go to their website with a special code."

This involved Mark having to contact Eva -- no way was I calling that bitch or talking to her -- and we arranged to have our blood drawn the next day. Mark and I showed up as soon as the lab opened since I was hoping to avoid Eva and he said she and I didn't have to be there at the same time. She was arriving with her lawyer as I was driving away, and it took everything in me to not run her down.

Four days later, Sage was over at my place for dinner when I received an email notification. Checking my phone, I told her that the results were in.

"You want it to say that you're excluded as the biological father, right? That means there's zero chance that you're the biological father?" she asked. Apparently someone had been studying paternity test results.

"Right," I said. "If you're the father, it will say you're not excluded as the biological father, which means there's pretty much a one hundred percent probability that you're the father."

She smiled at me, hopeful, calm, steady. The last few days she'd been tense while we waited on the official results and I'd tried not to feel discouraged that she didn't believe me when I told her there was no way I could be the father of Eva's baby. That's what happened when you blew your partner's trust.

I opened the email, clicked a link, entered my code and looked at the results of my paternity test, Sage looking over my shoulder.

The alleged father is not excluded as the biological father...Based on testing results obtained from analyses of the DNA..., the probability of paternity is 99.9999997%.

"What -- wait -- that means...you're the father of Eva's baby," she breathed as we both read the words over and over again, trying to understand how this could possibly be true. There was no way.

I shot out of my seat and faced Sage, but she was backing away from me, the tears in her eyes ready to fall.

"You lied," she accused me.

"No, Sage. I'm telling you the truth. I am not the father of her baby."

"All evidence to the contrary," she hissed at me. "You said it yourself, this was a legal, witnessed, tamper proof test, and the results don't lie, Mason. Congratulations on becoming a father."

Her phone dinged at that moment and she glanced at the screen, the tears finally spilling down her face, and she swiped at them furiously.

"Oh, perfect," she said, turning her phone's screen to face me. There was a close up of the paternity results showing proof that I was the father of her baby. And under it, just a short text that was vicious in its brevity.

I told you so.

"Sage, listen to me, I'm telling you the truth," I begged her, desperate for her to believe me. "There's something odd, something happened, but I am not that baby's father. That's the truth. You have got to believe me."

"God, Mason, give it up, would you?" she bit out each word. "All the lies, all the manipulation, you two really deserve each other. Don't call me or contact me ever again, Mason. You fooled me into coming back to you once. I won't be that stupid again."

With that, she whirled and fucking bolted for the front door, racing to get out of my life.

My own phone chimed after that.

Unknown number: **Guess we have a lot to talk about to prepare for our baby.**

I threw that motherfucking phone across the room where it shattered, much like my life just had.