

Chapter 38 Official Termination of the Supplemental

Moana

Edrick and I quickly pulled away from each other, rushing to fix ourselves. I pulled my nightgown back down around my legs and tied my robe around myself, fixing my hair while Edrick quickly buckled his belt once more.

“Hello?” Ella called again. “It’s okay, Princess,” Edrick called, steadying his heavy breathing. “You can come in.”

Ella cracked the door open and poked her head in. Her hair was a mess and her eyelids drooped sleepily as she rubbed them and yawned, but there was also a hint of fear and sadness on her teary-eyed face. She looked as though she had been crying — I couldn’t quite tell if it was from the sound of Edrick and I fighting or from a bad dream. Maybe both. “I had a bad dream, Moana,” she said quietly and tearfully. “I came to look for you, but it sounds like you’re fighting...” Her tiny voice was quivering so much that it made my heart ache.

“What? No,” I said, rushing over to her and crouching to her level. “Your daddy and I were just talking.”

“Oh. I thought I heard yelling.”

“We just got excited, that’s all,” I said softly, standing and guiding the tired little girl out of the room. “Come on. Let’s get you to bed.”

I led Ella back to her room by her hand and laid her down in bed. “Why was my daddy in your room?” she asked as I tucked her in.

Shaking my head, I reached out and brushed a bit of hair out of her face. “He just needed to talk to me. You don’t have to worry about a thing, understand?”

Ella nodded her head. I kissed her forehead and tucked her in a bit tighter before turning to go back to my room, but before I could, a tiny hand shot out and grabbed my nightgown. As I turned back to face her, I saw that there were still tears in my eyes.

“Will you stay with me?”

I sighed, glancing over my shoulder toward the door. If Edrick was still expecting me to sleep with him, this could only cause more trouble... But at the same time, I thought that both Edrick and I knew that sleeping together would also only cause more unnecessary trouble — and my job, first and foremost, was to take care of Ella above all else.

“Sure,” I replied, going around to the other side of the bed and climbing under the covers. “I’ll stay.”

When I woke up in the morning, I had Ella snuggled tightly into my arms. She still seemed dead asleep from her late night, so I let her sleep in and quietly crawled out of bed before slipping out of her room and back into mine to get ready for the day.

I half expected to find Edrick passed out on my bed after how drunk he had been the night before, but he wasn’t. Nevertheless, it was Sunday, and I knew that I would likely be seeing him that morning. My heart beat

heavily in my chest as I got ready for the day and steeled myself for our likely uncomfortable interaction.

When I emerged into the living area, it was almost as if Edrick was waiting for me. He was sitting at the small round table by the big window in the living room with a cup of coffee and a newspaper in his hand.

“Oh,” I said, surprised that he was even awake so early after how drunk he was the night before. Did he even sleep at all? “Good morning.”

Without a word, Edrick coldly stood and gathered up his coffee and his newspaper. “Come to my study,” he said before brusquely turning on his heel and storming off to his study.

I felt a lump rise in my throat as I followed him. Was he going to fire me? I had mentioned quitting the night before during our argument, but I didn’t really mean it; I had been drinking a bit, too, and said some things during the heat of the argument that I now knew I didn’t mean.

“Sit.” He gestured with his coffee cup toward the chair across from his desk. I did as I was told and swallowed the lump in my throat, formulating a potential speech in my head that could save my job if he truly was going to fire me.

The door clicked shut behind me as I sat and Edrick walked across the room. He calmly set his coffee cup down and sat across from me.

“I’m sorry about last night,” I blurted out. The words floated out of my mouth so rapidly that it almost didn’t feel like I was in control. “We were both drunk, and I know I shouldn’t have gone to that exhibit—”

“I slept like a baby last night, even without you there,” Edrick interrupted. His voice was just as cold and ruthless as the day I met him, nothing at all like the man I had seen in the orphanage as we baked cookies together. “I don’t think I need your services anymore.”

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My heart leaped up into my throat. “Are you firing me?”

Edrick shook his head, then pulled open a drawer in his desk and began to rifle through it. “Not firing you. Just ending our supplemental agreement. Officially.”

I watched, shocked, as he retrieved the supplemental contract for our sleeping agreement out of his desk, then ripped it in half in front of me and tossed it in the trash. I opened my mouth to speak, but before I could, he spoke again.

“I seem to be cured of my insomnia. Thank you for your help, but there’s no need for this arrangement to continue.”

I didn’t know what to say; the words were there, but they wouldn’t come. I wanted to call him a liar. I knew that he hadn’t slept at all judging from the dark circles under his eyes and the tired expression on his face, but I knew that there was no point. And perhaps Edrick was right in ending our agreement. It had, after all, caused nothing but trouble. If it weren’t for Elle knocking on my door last night, we would’ve had sex again and it only would’ve made everything that much worse.

“You may go now,” Edrick said as I continued to sit there with my eyes wide. Without another word, he picked up his newspaper and opened it with a flick of the paper, effectively shielding his face from me. I quietly stood, gathered the rest of my dignity, and walked out of the room.

As I emerged from the study and closed the door behind me, I couldn't help but notice that I was somewhat disappointed. Even though our sleeping arrangement had come with its fair share of disadvantages, I knew that it would feel strange to sleep alone again... And I would be lying if I didn't admit to myself that I would miss the feeling of Edrick sleeping beside me.

Mina was equally as disappointed in the termination of our agreement. She didn't say much about it, but I could tell that it had almost made her grow a little weaker. Her presence in my mind felt more faint.

And the distance between Edrick and I grew larger once again.