

## Chapter 71 End of the Line

### Moana

The gap that existed between Edrick and I could never be bridged; I knew that now.

Our ride home was silent. The steak that I could still taste on my tongue now tasted foul. To think that I had spent the entire day feeling as though we could have some semblance of normalcy; even if we never became romantically involved, why couldn't we still be proud of what we had created between us? Why did he always have to hide me and Ella? Would the new baby also face the same struggle of having a father who didn't want anyone to know about his or her existence?

We went home that night, still without a word spoken between us. I took Ella to bed with only a brief word of thanks for everything he did that day, but after that, I didn't look at him again.

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On Monday morning, I awoke to the sound of someone knocking on my door.

“Come in,” I called, sitting up and rubbing my eyes. The door cracked open and Selina poked her head in.

Your first appointment is in a couple of hours,” she said. “I’ve already made breakfast for you. Come and eat before you get dressed.”

I sighed, having completely forgotten about my appointment that day, and climbed out of bed. As I followed Selina to the dining room in my robe, I noticed that Edrick was nowhere to be found.

“Is Edrick coming to the appointment?” I asked as I sat down at the table and began to spread butter on my toast.

Selina shook her head while she poured some hot coffee into my cup. “He has something to deal with at work, but he may come later.”

I frowned, feeling my shoulders droop a little. It was my first prenatal appointment; I was hoping Edrick would be there to see the first ultrasound, seeing as how he was the father, after all.

“I guess I’ll go alone, then,” I said, taking a bite of toast.

“Nonsense,” Selina said. “I’ll be going with you.”

At the very least, hearing that Selina would be there with me was a bit of a comfort. “Thank you,” I replied with a smile. “That would be nice.”

After I ate, I hurried back to my room to shower and get ready for the day. I brushed my teeth and combed my hair, put on a loose-fitting dress and comfortable shoes, then met Selina out in the foyer. As we took the elevator down, I realized that this was only the second time that I’d ever seen her going out into public, with the first time being my first day of employment. She had changed out of her housekeeper uniform and was wearing a crisp linen dress and held her purse stiffly in front of her.

“Do you ever go out?” I asked as we walked across the lobby.

“Rarely,” she said. “Only if I have to.”

“You never want to go out with friends for a meal or anything like that?”

Selina simply shrugged. “No one ever invites me.”

As she said that, I felt my heart ache a little for her. I decided, then and there, that I would start inviting Selina out more — even if just on my morning walks with Ella.

We got into the car and drove away. On the way to the hospital, Selina explained that the hospital we would be going to was a special werewolf hospital that was actually owned by the Morgan family, so I would get the best treatment; not that I couldn't have gathered that myself, just from the enormous modern building with the Morgan family logo on the sign. When we walked into the hospital, I was even more taken aback by how sleek and clean the hospital was. The hospital I went to for the abortion was nice, but this one was even better — and when we took the elevator up to the obstetrics and gynecology department, I was floored.

Not only was the department spacious, clean, and modern, but there were also several other well-to-do werewolf couples in the waiting room. I even recognized a few of them as well-known celebrities. Of course, they all looked up at Selina and I when we entered and gave me a dirty look.

“Don't stare,” Selina whispered to me as we approached the counter. I quickly averted my gaze, feeling embarrassed as I realized that I probably looked like a deer in headlights.

“Hello, the receptionist said. “Name?”

“Moana Fowler,” I replied.

The receptionist looked me up and down for a moment before clicking around on her computer. Just then, another couple came in behind us. I glanced over my shoulder to see that they were also a well-known werewolf couple that I'd seen in various television shows. I felt my face go red as they looked at me, and I quickly looked back at the receptionist.

“Miss, I’m going to have to ask you to step out of the way so I can assist our werewolf clients first,” the receptionist suddenly said, shooting me a dirty glare.

My jaw dropped. “I was here first,” I said. “And I have an appointment—”

“Yes, but this is a werewolf hospital, and our policy is to always serve werewolves first.”

Suddenly, Selina stepped in. “I’m a werewolf,” she said proudly. “A gamma. And I’m escorting this young woman.”

The receptionist only stared blankly at Selina for a moment before rolling her eyes and waving the other couple forward. Selina grabbed me by the arm and pulled me to the side, fuming. “If only they knew…” she growled under her breath, shooting the receptionist an angry look. “The father of your baby pays her salary!”

“It’s okay,” I said. I’d been dealing with treatment like this as a human for my entire life; it was nothing new to me.

“It is not alright,” Selina said. Just then, she stormed back over to the desk and slammed her hands on the counter. “I’m demanding that you treat this young lady with respect!” she said. “You’re being terribly rude.”

The receptionist narrowed her eyes. I tried to step in to calm Selina down, but it was no use. The receptionist then picked up her phone and dialed a number.

“Hi— Yes— We have a human here who wants to be seen. Mhm. Yes, she has a werewolf escort, but they’re being incredibly disruptive to the other patients. Okay. Thank you.” The receptionist hung up. “I’ve just called security,” she said to Selina. “If you don’t want to be escorted out, then I suggest you leave.”

Selina's frown deepened. Meanwhile, the werewolf couple at the desk, as well as all of the others in the waiting room, were staring at us with a combination of incredulity and mockingness on their faces.

"You can't seriously tell me that you're turning away an expecting mother," she said. "This is ludicrous!"

The receptionist shrugged. "I don't make the rules. If you had just let me serve the polite werewolf customers ahead of you, then you could be checked in by now. But you're just causing a scene."

"It's really okay, Selina," I said, touching her arm. "I can find another doctor."

Just then, the doors swung open. In walked a man in a black suit and tie, who had the look of the hospital director.

And beside him, in walked Edrick.

## Chapter 72 Love at First Sight

### Moana

My eyes widened when I saw Edrick, but at the same time, my body relaxed knowing that he was here to — hopefully — help us. He glanced over at me, but clearly didn't want anyone to know we were together, and walked up to the desk.

“Is there a problem here?” he asked the receptionist.

“Yes, Mr. Morgan,” she said, gesturing to me, “this woman is a human and she's trying to be served before werewolves. It's our policy to serve werewolves first.” Her eyes were wide as she spoke, and her voice shook a bit. I could tell that she knew that she would be in deep trouble if Edrick Morgan himself was here.

“Well, break policy just this once,” he said. He turned to the werewolf couple next, who still stood nearby looking utterly confused. “So sorry about that,” he said, then turned to Selina and me and addressed us. “I'll take you to the VIP room.”

With that, he turned on his heel and began to walk toward the examination rooms. Meanwhile, the director dealt with the receptionist and the werewolf couple. I couldn't make out exactly what was being said to the receptionist, but she seemed as though she was being reprimanded — and rightfully so, in my opinion. Just because it was policy to serve humans

after werewolves didn't mean that it was morally right to treat humans like inferiors.

Still, I followed Edrick, keeping my head down to avoid the strange looks from other patients with Selina trailing behind me. Once we were out of the waiting room, I let out a sigh of relief.

"Thank you," Selina said, scurrying along to keep up with Edrick. "That receptionist—"

"It's okay," Edrick said calmly. "She was only doing what she thought was right... It is policy to serve werewolves first."

Selina frowned, but said nothing. Edrick led us to a spacious private room. Selina went to sit on a chair in the hallway to give us some privacy, but Edrick stopped her and gestured for her to come in with us. "You deserve to see the baby, too, don't you think?" he asked.

The housekeeper's eyes widened. She looked back and forth between Edrick's face and mine, finally landing on mine. I nodded approvingly with a smile. "I'd like you to see it."

Her face went red, but she followed us in, where the doctor was waiting.

The doctor, a middle-aged woman with mousy brown hair, welcomed us with a smile.

"Good morning," the doctor said, holding out her hand for me to shake. "I'm Doctor Melrose. I'll have the pleasure of being your doctor for the duration of this pregnancy; if you ever need anything, you can always call me, no matter the time of day or night. Here's my card." She pulled a business card out of her pocket, which I took gratefully. Seeing as how nervous I was becoming over the effects of a werewolf pregnancy on my body, I already had a whole host of questions to ask the doctor.

Next, the doctor helped me up on the bed. She asked if it was okay to lift up my dress for the examination around Edrick and Selina, to which I nodded — and she covered my lower half with a sheet, which wasn't

entirely necessary, but I supposed it would make things a little less awkward around Edrick in particular.

“This is going to be a little cold,” she said as she picked up a tube of ultrasound gel. She squeezed a generous amount on my belly, which I gladly accepted over the internal ultrasound that I had when I went for the abortion. “Just a little pressure now...”

The room fell silent as the doctor moved the probe around on my belly. The only sound that filled the room was the soft sound of my own pulse echoing from inside my body on the ultrasound machine.

“And... There’s your little one!” Doctor Melrose exclaimed.

I gasped. On the screen, for the first time, we saw the little fetus inside of me. It was tiny, not even the size of an avocado, but it was there and it was alive. Seeing it for the first time filled me with such a strong and vast array of emotions that I didn’t even know what to do with myself.

“Looks like it’s going to be a healthy little one,” Doctor Melrose said with a smile. “Give it a few more months, and we’ll be able to tell the s\*x. What are you hoping for?”

I blushed, dabbing at the tears of joy in my eyes with a handkerchief. “I don’t know... I don’t think I would have a preference. What about you, Edrick?”

I looked up at him, and just then, I realized I was holding his hands tightly without even knowing it. I suddenly felt a little inappropriate and quickly released them, but he didn’t even seem to notice as he was staring intently at the screen with a childlike wonder on his face that I’d never seen him display before.

“Edrick?” Selina asked.

He shook his head and blinked rapidly as he was broken from his trance. “Sorry... Uh, I wouldn’t mind if it was a boy or a girl, honestly.”



Doctor Melrose smiled. “It’s funny,” she said, “in my years of working as an obstetrician, I often hear that same thing. I think that most people have a preference until they see the fetus for the first time, and then they suddenly don’t care about the s\*x so long as it’s healthy.”

“It’s true,” Selina chimed in. “I was a midwife for many years... I saw some of the most stony-faced fathers who only ever wished for a boy ultimately melt into puddles of pure love when they held their baby girls for the first time.”

As Selina spoke, I glanced up at Edrick again and imagined how his face would look when he held our baby for the first time.

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After my appointment, Edrick led us out of the hospital through a private entrance and drove us home. He didn’t say much during the car ride, but I could see a slight sparkle in his eyes that had yet to go away even when we pulled up to the penthouse.

Selina, who also had a new spring in her step after the ultrasound, helped me get out of the car. She chatted about heating up some soup that she’d prepared in advance for me since the ultrasound took some strength out of me as we took the elevator — meanwhile, Edrick continued to stare off dreamily into space as though he was somewhere else entirely. Watching him made me feel overwhelmed with emotion; despite all of our troubles, I was glad to know that he would at least love our baby.

However, that dreamy expression changed when the elevator doors opened to reveal the sound of Verona’s voice coming from the living room.

“Mom?” Edrick called, furrowing his brow as he followed the sound of her voice. I followed behind him, grateful then that I was wearing a loose-fitting dress to hide my belly.

“Hello, darling,” she said, getting up from where she was sitting on the couch with Ella. “I hope you don’t mind a surprise visit.” She kissed him on the cheek, then came over and kissed me on the cheek as well.

“Not at all,” Edrick said as he began to guide his mother back over to the living room. “It’s just a little unexpected.”

“Well, that is the whole point of a surprise,” she chortled.

Suddenly, I started to feel a little lightheaded from the events of the morning. Selina, seeing this, took my arm and led me to the kitchen. “Come, I’ll make you that soup,” she said quietly, and together we left Edrick and his mother to continue their conversation privately in the living room.

I let out a sigh of relief as I sat down on the stool by the kitchen counter and watched Selina pull a bowl out of the cupboard. She clicked on the stove, then pulled a pot out of the fridge and set it down on the burner.

Behind me, however, I heard Verona’s voice drop low. It sounded as though she didn’t want anyone else to hear... Which meant that I couldn’t help myself from pricking my ears to listen.

“Edrick... Is she pregnant?”

## Chapter 73 Keeping Secrets

Edrick

“Edrick...” My mother dropped her tone of voice and leaned closer to me. She took my hand in hers and gave me a serious, knowing look that only a mother could have. “Is she pregnant?”

I frowned, hiding the fact that my heart had just started beating rapidly. “What?” I said, shaking my head. “What makes you think that?”

My mother folded her arms across her chest and narrowed her eyes. “Edrick, I’m your mother. You can’t lie to me.” There was a long silence after she spoke, but her eyes never wavered from mine. Even in her old age, she was still just as astute and level-headed as ever. I had never been able to lie to my mother, and she knew that. Finally, I caved.

“Yes,” I replied quietly. “She is pregnant.”

“I knew it,” my mother said. I could tell that she was hiding a bit of a smirk at her miniature victory, but at the same time, she was dead serious. “Is it yours?”

I didn’t answer right away. I felt a lump rise in my throat after being put on the spot. Sure, I was planning on telling my mother eventually, but now? Like this? It felt so out of the blue, and I had no time at all to prepare an explanation.

“It’s not—”

“You know, the way you act around Ella,” my mother interrupted, lowering her voice even more, “if you had another illegitimate child... It would only cause more problems for you, for the daughter you already have, and the baby. Not to mention the emotional toll it would take on that poor girl to feel like she birthed a baby that could never be truly loved by its father.”

I shook my head. “It’s not mine, mom,” I lied, this time taking care to hide my lie even though it pained me to hide something like this from my mother. “It’s someone else’s.”

My mother went silent for a moment. I could practically see the gears turning in her head; I knew that she didn’t believe me. “Darling, I already heard all about your visit to the hospital this morning,” she admitted. “You know, the couples that you let her ahead of are well known, after all, and they were very put out by the entire thing. But I digress, and it was well within your rights to do such a thing if you felt it necessary. If it wasn’t yours, though, why would you bother going to the doctor’s appointments with her? And why would you care so much as to go against our hospital’s policy like that?”

I started to panic again. “I only wanted to help her,” I lied once more. “She doesn’t have anyone else, and those human doctors...” What was I supposed to say? That I cared about my daughter’s nanny out of the kindness of my heart and didn’t want her visiting some shoddy doctor who wouldn’t give her and the baby in her belly the best care possible? My mother would never believe it; she had always been an intuitive woman, and even now, I knew that she didn’t believe me one bit.

But, much to my surprise, she didn’t question further. “Well then,” she said with a slight sigh, leaning back in her chair. “That’s very nice of you. I wish her all the best in her pregnancy.”

Just then, Selina emerged from the kitchen with tea. She set the tray down, then began to pour a cup for my mother.

“Oh, thank you, but that won’t be necessary,” my mother said, standing. “I only wanted to pop in for a few minutes. I should be going now.”

Selina seemed a bit surprised, as was I — but I obliged, honestly relieved to know that such a difficult conversation was over for now. At the same time, however, I couldn’t help but feel guilty for lying to my mother... And I couldn’t help but feel even more guilty when I saw Moana standing in the kitchen, watching me.

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After my mother left, I retreated to my office for the remainder of the day. I spent the majority of my time there pacing back and forth in my study, wondering what to do. I would have to address this soon; eventually, my family would find out. I couldn’t hide it forever, and already I was on thin ice for blatantly lying to my mother’s face like that in a way that no son ever should. But what was I supposed to do? I was put on the spot, and I hadn’t prepared yet. While my mother was a perfectly reasonable and kind woman, I simply wasn’t ready for the consequences yet, and what if she told my father?

Unless she told my father already... But no, I told myself; if he knew, he would have certainly been here by now, berating me for hours. That was what he had done with Ella, and she was a purebred werewolf. I could only imagine his reaction when he found out that I was not only getting ready to bring another illegitimate child into the family, but a half-human one at that.

Finally, dinner time came and I decided to emerge from my office to join Ella and Moana. They were already sitting at the table when I arrived. Moana was tucking a napkin into the front of Ella’s shirt while Ella stared hungrily at the plate of steak and potatoes in front of her.

“Sorry I’m a little late,” I said, sitting down in my chair. “Work got ahead of me this afternoon.” Of course, I wasn’t going to divulge to Moana that I’d actually spent the afternoon doing nothing but pondering how to tell my mother about the baby, and I especially wasn’t going to tell her that in front of Ella.

Moana didn’t answer. I didn’t think much of it at first and began to cut my steak, but when the table remained silent whereas Moana would have normally begun to ask Ella questions about her day by now, I began to get suspicious. When I glanced up from my steak, I saw her glaring at me. She quickly looked away and popped a bite of glistening steak into her mouth, chewing slowly, but I saw the look she gave me. It was akin to the look she gave me in the kitchen when my mother left earlier that day.

I cleared my throat and took a sip of my wine.

“Delicious steak,” I said, just wanting to fill the awkward silence. “Another craving?”

“No.” Moana’s voice was sharp and quick, like a jab with a knife. “It’s just what Selina happened to prepare tonight.”

I swallowed, unable to ignore the fresh tone in Moana’s voice, but I figured that it was just the pregnancy hormones, or maybe she was tired. Regardless, I wouldn’t argue. After all, as the man in the baby supply store said, I shouldn’t argue with the mother of my child.

“Well,” I said, cutting another piece of meat, “I’m sure Selina knows what you like, and what’s good for the baby as well. I’m happy to see you eating such hearty meals.”

Suddenly, Moana dropped her fork and her knife on her plate with a clang and abruptly pushed her chair back. She tossed her balled-up napkin down on the table with a frown, causing even Ella to look up from her meal and give her a confused look.

“I’m actually not feeling well,” she said. “I’m going to lie down. Ella, come get me when you’re finished, alright?”

Ella nodded slowly. Moana cast me one last dirty glance before turning on her heel and walking briskly out of the room.

## Chapter 74 Just Another Mood

### Moana

Hearing how Edrick refused to admit that the baby was his to his own mother hurt me deeply. I found myself hardly able to speak or eat all day after overhearing him, and although I wanted to tell myself that he was only put on the spot when Verona asked about the pregnancy, I knew deep down that it was really because he was embarrassed to have a baby with someone from a lower social status. If he had simply denied my pregnancy, it would have been one thing, but to claim it was another man's baby altogether hurt me to my core.

After Verona left, I found that tears were coming to my eyes. I decided to leave my soup unfinished and ran off to my room to cry without anyone seeing me.

Once I was inside my room, I felt my emotions take over. I took a deep breath, steadying myself, and walked over to my mirror to will myself not to cry. As I looked at myself, however, and took in the appearance of my growing belly and my red eyes, I couldn't hold it in anymore. A few tears began to roll down my cheeks.

I took in a deep, shaky breath and dug my fingers into the wood of my dresser.

Just then, there was a soft knock on the door. Before I could even gather myself enough to answer, the door cracked open. It was Selina.



“You didn’t finish your soup,” she said, eyeing me as I quickly wiped the tears from my cheeks with the back of my hand.

I shook my head. “I just lost my appetite. I’m sorry. It really was good soup, anyway.”

Selina stared at me for a moment, then, without permission, opened my door and stepped in. I caught a glimpse of the other maids behind her, who both quickly gasped and darted out of sight when they realized I saw them. I couldn’t help but let out a sigh. “You might as well all come in, since you’re eavesdropping,” I said.

After a moment, Lily and Amy entered, too. Amy closed the door behind them and shot me a concerned look as I walked over to my armchair and sat down.

“Go on,” I said, feeling a little irritated. “Tell me how I’m being overly emotional.”

There was a bit of a silence. Selina cleared her throat and opened her mouth to say something, but before she could, Amy spoke instead. “He’ll come around, Moana,” she said gently. She came over to me and sat down on the ottoman next to my chair, then reached out and patted my hand. “I think he just needs a little time, that’s all.”

I couldn’t help but think that I’d already given Edrick plenty of time, but the maid’s kind words still lifted my spirits a little.

“Right, Selina?” Amy said, turning to face the older housekeeper. “Mr. Morgan is just slow to open up sometimes, but he’s not all bad.”

Selina cleared her throat once again. She seemed uncomfortable, and patted her apron absentmindedly as her eyes darted back and forth as though she was searching for the right words.

“Edrick really isn’t all bad,” she finally said. “Deep down, he’s a good man who means well. But, Moana—” She paused, pursing her lips. “Don’t forget that he’s a wealthy CEO from the esteemed Morgan family.

Expecting him to be forthcoming with his feelings about someone from a lower class is like asking a fish to climb a tree.”

The older housekeeper’s words made my heart sink, but I supposed that she was right. I stared down at the floor for several moments as I absentmindedly rested my hand on my belly. What sort of a future was I setting my baby up for? If Edrick couldn’t even admit to his own mother that he was the father of my baby, and if he was willing to make me look bad by implying that I was impregnated by a stranger or someone unworthy of being in the baby’s life, then was that fair to the baby? It almost made me wonder if the baby would be better off not knowing his or her father at all.

“I’m sorry, Moana,” Selina said finally. I could tell that she didn’t mean to hurt me.

I looked up at her and managed a weak smile, then stood. “It’s alright. Thank you for being honest.”

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For the remainder of that day, Edrick stayed in his study. He only finally emerged for dinner, and by that point I was still fuming over his words from earlier that day. When he tried to talk to me at the dinner table and showed concern for my health, I finally couldn’t handle it and abruptly stood up.

“I’m actually not feeling well,” I said brusquely, pushing my chair back. “I’m going to lie down. Ella, come get me when you’re finished, alright?”

As I walked away, I threw one last angry glance at Edrick.

I knew I’d been too harsh and sarcastic just then — but at the moment, I just wanted to get away and be alone. Thankfully, Edrick didn’t follow me, and I was able to put Ella to bed that night without further incident.

I was walking back to my room, however, when I ran into Edrick. He seemed to be specifically looking for me and I felt a lump rise in my throat.

“Can you just talk to me?” He said, folding his arms.

“What’s to talk about?” I asked. Then, sidestepping around him: “I’m just going to bed. Goodnight.”

But it seemed that Edrick wasn’t satisfied. He followed me into my room, then closed the door behind himself and gave me an annoyed look. “I’m running out of patience with your sarcastic attitude,” he said coldly before I had a chance to kick him out of my room. “I don’t appreciate you acting that way in front of Ella like you did at dinner.”

I raised an eyebrow. “I’m sorry,” I said, “but—”

“I think you should take a day off,” he said. As he spoke, his demeanor softened a little and his arms fell back to his sides. “I know you’re having pregnancy mood swings, so we don’t need to dwell on it. Just take the day tomorrow to rest and relax.”

I felt my mouth hanging open at his words. Before I could tell him that he was wrong and that my mood today had nothing at all to do with my pregnancy hormones, he suddenly turned on his heel and opened the door again.

“Goodnight,” he said. Then, without another word, he walked out and shut the door behind him.

Once I was alone, I scowled and curled my hands up into fists. Did he really not realize the real reason behind my mood, or was he simply choosing to disregard it? Here, I was, thinking that Edrick was changing and starting to see me as an equal, and yet — in the same day, he not only refused to tell his own mother that the little werewolf in my belly was his baby, but he also completely belittled my true emotions and simplified them down to nothing but a “mood”.

## Chapter 75 Loveless Family

### Moana

The next morning, I decided to take Edrick's offer for a day off and went to the orphanage to get out of the penthouse for a while. I was still incredibly hurt and angry by Edrick's refusal to admit that the baby was his to his own mother, but at the very least, I knew that a day out might lift my spirits just a little.

As I arrived at the orphanage, I already began to feel just a little bit better.

"Hello?" I called as I walked in. I didn't get a response, but I heard the children's voices coming from the recreation room as they laughed and played, and it made me smile a bit. I walked over to the recreation room and stopped in my tracks when I saw Ethan playing with the children.

They didn't see me at first. Ethan was giving them an art lesson and was walking around the room, looking at all of the children's artwork and giving them compliments. Seeing how sweet he was being with the children made me smile, but at the same time, it made me feel sad knowing that his brother was seemingly incapable of having such truly genuine kindness and love for anything except his pristine image.

Suddenly, as I stood in the doorway, one of the children jerked her head up from her intense scribbling and gasped, pointing at me with her chubby little finger. "Moana's here!" she shouted.

All at once, the children erupted into cheers and swarmed me like little bumble bees. I couldn't help but laugh as they bombarded me, and I caught Ethan's eye from behind. He was smiling at me, but as his eyes traveled down to my belly and his smile faded, I knew that my dress didn't hide my pregnancy well enough today.

Regardless, Ethan seemed to keep his thoughts to himself, which was a welcome relief. I spent the afternoon helping him with the children, and we all had a wonderful time making artwork and playing with clay. When it was finally over, Sophia thanked us and whisked the children away for dinner, leaving us alone for the first time that day.

"Long time no see," Ethan said as we cleaned up the mess left behind in the recreation room.

"Yeah," I said, clearing my throat nervously. The last time we saw each other was at our dinner date. At the time, he had asked if I was pregnant jokingly. Now, I was clearly pregnant. "I know what you're gonna ask," I said, turning to face him with confidence. "It's okay. Ask."

Ethan's face went red. He glanced briefly at the floor, then ran a hand through his hair. "Uh... Are you...?"

"Yes," I replied.

"So does that mean that... When we went out..."

I nodded. "You were right that night. I just wasn't ready to admit it. I'm sorry for lying to you."

Ethan shook his head vehemently. "No, it's perfectly fine," he said gently. "It's your right to choose who to tell and when to tell them. But if you don't mind me asking... Is it Edrick's?"

I felt my heart leap into my throat as I wondered if it would be appropriate to tell Ethan. If Edrick wasn't even willing to tell his own mother that he was the father of my baby, then was it really my place to tell his brother?

Finally, I decided against it, and I shook my head.

“No. It’s my ex-boyfriend’s.”

“Oh.” Ethan looked a little disbelieving, but he didn’t say anything else about it. But suddenly, at the mention of Edrick and the thought of how he couldn’t tell his mother about our baby, I felt a tear come to my eye. I quickly wiped it away and sniffled, turning away, but Ethan saw it already and rushed over to me.

“Are you alright?” he asked. “I’m sorry if my questions bothered you. I didn’t mean to—”

I shook my head. “No, not at all,” I replied. “It’s nothing like that. I don’t mind the questions. It’s just...”

Ethan c\*\*\*\*d his head and touched my shoulder. “What is it?” he said quietly. “You know you can talk to me. We’re friends.”

I smiled a bit at his kind words. It was a comfort to have a good friend to talk to, although I wished I could only be completely honest with him. Still, I needed someone to vent to who wasn’t Selina or the maids, and it was hard to resist Ethan’s kind and sweet face.

“I just worry that I’m bringing this baby into a bad situation,” I admitted, taking care not to share too much and spill the big secret. “I might need to raise this baby without other family members, and I don’t know if I can do that while still giving him or her a safe and happy life.”

Ethan was silent for a moment. He sucked on his lower lip and nodded slowly as he digested my words, then finally spoke. “I know I don’t have much experience of the outside world since I grew up in the lap of luxury with the Morgan family,” he said quietly, “so maybe I shouldn’t say this, but... I think my life would have been better if I was just raised by my mom. Even if it was just the two of us, and even if we didn’t have a lot of money. I don’t think I would’ve needed anyone else, really. So... I think

if you wanted to raise the baby by yourself, it would be okay with your love.”

Ethan’s kind words brought another tear to my eye. For the first time in a while, I felt comforted. Maybe I could do this on my own if I needed to.

“Of course...” he continued, breaking my train of thought, “you know I would always love to help you support this child if you ever needed it.” His voice was soft and sweet, and when he finished speaking, he looked down at the floor. I was so moved by his kindness that, without thinking or even hesitating, I pulled him into a tight hug. He stiffened for a moment out of surprise, but then wrapped his arms around me and held me tightly.

When we pulled away, I felt as though a massive weight had been lifted off of my shoulders.

“Thank you, Ethan,” I said gently. “You’re a really good friend.”

Ethan smiled and squeezed my shoulder. “Of course,” he replied. “It’s what friends are for.”

We fell silent for a moment. Just then, however, I glanced up at the clock and realized that it was already late. I quickly got my things together; Ethan offered me another ride home, but Edrick had insisted that I bring the driver with me, so it wasn’t necessary — not to mention the fact that it wouldn’t bode well if I pulled up to the penthouse with Ethan again after another argument with Edrick. So, I hugged my friend goodbye and climbed into the back of the waiting car.

As I was driven home, I looked out the window at the city lights. They were so colorful at night, and after the entire day, I felt immensely better. A slight smile twitched at the corners of my lips as I looked at them. Maybe, if I had to, I really could take care of this baby on my own.

As the city lights passed by, I had another thought: I thought to myself that I should start saving more money so I could take my baby away from this loveless family.