

Chapter 61

[Vivienne]

"Vivienne!" my brother gasps as soon as he sees me, worry and relief flashing in his dark eyes. He walks up to my bedside, and Rosita immediately rises from her seat.

"I need to take a few work calls. I'll give you two some privacy," she practically blurts out.

I want to argue and ask her to stay, but the flush on her face and her embarrassment makes me stop and shut my mouth. It's not her usual look, but I have a feeling it has something to do with the two men now in my hospital room.

I try to hide a grin as she ducks her head and makes a quick exit. I look back at my brother and then at Elijah.

"Let me guess. Marcus told you about this."

"Yeah." Harvey looks down at my bandaged hand. "Thank fucking God he did, or I'd never have known my baby sister was dealing with this alone. Why the hell didn't you call me?"

"Well, first of all, I didn't have time to call anyone. And secondly, it's just a burn. Nothing I can't handle myself."

Elijah looks down at my face, disappointed with what just came out of my mouth. "Did the doctors say how long it'll take to heal?"

"I'm not sure, but at least a couple of weeks...maybe?"

He nods, hands stuffed deep into his pockets, the picture of masculine

elegance and power. Elijah's always been that kind of man—a man who knows how to carry himself well. Harvey, too, has always been tall, dark, and handsome. Even with his hair messed up and stubble growing on his cheeks, he's still a sight for sore eyes.

"Do we know who did this?" Harvey asks.

I open my mouth to give him a name but then bite my tongue.

If I tell them about Avery, things will escalate quickly. Harvey would do whatever he could to find her and destroy her, and Elijah would probably do the same. They're not the type to hold back when it comes to protecting those they care about.

"No, not yet," I shake my head. "But that's okay. The doctors say there's nothing to worry about."

My brother doesn't look convinced. "Don't do that."

"Don't do what?"

"You're trying to downplay this. Stop it. Someone literally threw coffee on your face, and it was fucking hot enough to leave burns. Just tell us what happened and we'll handle everything."

But that's the problem. I can't tell him.

"Harvey, I'm okay. Really. Even if I know who did this, I can handle it myself. We've talked about this, haven't we? You don't have to babysit me. I'm an adult, remember?"

"Well, that didn't stop some lunatic from attacking you in broad daylight. Do you have any idea how close you came to getting seriously hurt?"

“Harvey, come on—”

“I’m serious, Vivienne,” he growls, cutting me off. “You need to take this seriously. This wasn’t a fucking prank.”

Elijah seems to agree—and why wouldn’t he? The two of them are practically best friends. “Harvey’s right. If the coffee was thrown hot enough to cause burns, the intent was clearly malicious, which makes it a crime. You can’t let something like this go unpunished.”

I hate that they’re right, but I still can’t tell them—not before at least trying to handle this myself. If every time I get into trouble, my brother and my lawyer jump in to rescue me, how will I learn to protect myself?

I take a deep breath.

“Listen, I know I could’ve been seriously hurt, but I wasn’t. I’m okay. It hurts like a bitch, but it’ll get better. Besides, even if it was some random person trying to mess with me, the last thing I need is for you guys to go on a witch hunt. Trust me, I can handle this. You both are too high up on the social ladder to be running around punching people. That’s not a good look.”

“What does that even mean?” Harvey frowns, confused.

I snicker and give him a cheeky smile, or at least try to, with how uncomfortable it feels to move my face right now. “Never mind. Don’t worry, boys, I’ve got this. It’ll all blow over soon.” I look at my bandaged hand and let out a frustrated sigh. “Anyway, you didn’t tell Mom and Dad, did you? I’m going to, just... not now. It’ll only freak them out more than they already are, and you know how much of a worrywart Mom is.”

Harvey leans back in his chair, looking defeated. “You’re such an idiot.

We all want you safe and sound. But it seems that's too much to ask of you these days."

"Hey!"

"No. We're going to discuss this once you're out of here, and we're not taking no for an answer. Understood? Don't you dare keep us out of this," he says, then looks at his phone. "I should talk to your doctor. Elijah will keep you company for now."

Once Harvey leaves, Elijah pulls the chair closer and sits down.

He takes my hand in his and feels the bandage wrapped around my palm.

"You know who did this, don't you?" he says, his sharp eyes locking onto mine. "Harvey might never doubt you, but I'm an advocate. I can always tell when people are lying. So, tell me, who was it?"

I feel a bit embarrassed for even trying to hide something from him. I should have known he would never buy my act of lying.

But before I can open my mouth, the door opens, and someone comes in.

My heart thuds to a stop in my chest when I see Caden—my ex-husband—, standing there, looking as solemn as ever.

But then, his dark eyes narrow on Elijah's hand on mine and he arches an eyebrow.

"Is this a bad time?"