

## Chapter 105: Selling my soul.

Ethan's POV:

I was thankful that I was there for Hannah and our baby when he was born. Although deep down I suspected that our... activities triggered the premature birth of our baby (and every time that I've seen Hannah worried about that I wanted to kick myself), I've been worried that when the time came, I wouldn't be there for them, but that didn't happen.

After Hannah went home, we had a conversation about Tess and her plan to tie me up as her husband. I was still trying to reconcile the sweet girl that I met when I was younger with the monster that was pretending to be pregnant to force me into marriage, but maybe everyone but me knew who she really was. Well, that day that I caught her on my bed with Alexander certainly opened up my eyes and I knew that she needed to pay for what she did.

I had some thoughts on how to make this reckoning happen, and after telling Hannah my idea, I had her permission to go on with my plan. My permission was granted, but that didn't mean that she was happy with what I was going to do, and that was creating a certain tension between us. My displeasure was doubled when I had to leave the shores the next morning. First, because I didn't want to be away from Hannah and baby Michael so soon, and second because of what I was about to do.

I arrived at the oce in the middle of the morning and Eric had a true deluge of messages left for me.

"Sir, Mr. Callahan called for the umpteenth time. He demands a meeting with you as soon as possible or he says that the rm is going to lose that project in Dubai if he doesn't get it," Eric told me as soon as I sat on my chair at my oce.

"Give him a call and schedule something with him this afternoon," I told him simply. "What about the rest?" I asked.

"Well, most of them you've been contacting from wherever you are on these trips, but Miss Astor calls the oce thrice a day," Eric told me a little embarrassed. He knew about my involvement with Tess in the past, but he clearly liked Hannah more, so although he kept his professionalism and never made a comment about it, I knew that he wasn't happy for Hannah.

"I stopped ghosting her and called her yesterday, so I believe her calls will stop," I told him.

"Right. And there is a third one who is calling the oce frequently. Mr. Dante Rossi, sir. I'm sorry sir, but he seems to know a lot about you, even though I've never heard about him," Eric told me.

I grimaced. What the hell! Dante knew that he wasn't supposed to call me at my oce. This man was calling with the sole purpose of collecting. I needed to check on this Faberge egg as soon as I could and keep this man out of our lives again.

I nodded at Eric and murmured: "Don't worry. I will call him myself."

Eric was discreet enough to just agree with me. "Right, sir. I'll email you the rest of the messages. These were the most frequent callers," he told me.

"Thank you, Eric," I told him so he could resume his activities. He nodded and left my oce.

I met Tess for lunch that day, as I've agreed before and it took me an Herculean amount of effort to pretend that everything was all right.

"Oh, Ethan, dear, where have you been?" She asked me after kissing me and hugging me at the restaurant door. I was pretty sure that she was hoping that some stupid tabloid would take a picture of us and make it into something that would hurt Hannah. She put her arm through mine as we entered the restaurant, holding me tight.

"I've been working a lot out of the city, Tess," I told her hoping that she would swallow my poor excuse.

"You are not ghosting me, are you?" She asked me suspiciously. "After all, we are going to raise a child together," she admonished me.

I sighed. She was always so preoccupied with herself that all that she could be worried about was the fact that I was ghosting her. "No, I'm not going to leave my child bereft, Tess. I'm not that kind of monster," I told her.

"Obviously not, Ethan, but you already have a baby with Hannah, who ran away from the consequences of her acts. I'm worried that your love might be divided," she told me.

"I promise you that I will love our baby as much as I love Michael," I told her.

"Michael? So is he born already? Did you guys already name him?" Tess asked worriedly.

I made a face. "How could I know, Tess? You just reminded me that Hannah ran away! This is just the name that we agreed on for him. I just hope that wherever she is, she will keep my grandpa's name," I told her.

"And haven't you found her yet?" Tess asked me suspiciously.

"Of course, not. Otherwise, I would already have brought her back to the city," I told her.

"So, where have you been all this time, Ethan?" She crossed her arms in her chest demanding an answer.

"I know that you never wanted to hear about my businesses, but I've been to the northwest crop plant and production recently. They had a humongous volume of rainwater recently, and part of the plant fell and needed reconstruction services fast. Since most of my engineers have other projects to attend to, I'm personally dedicating some time to this project in particular. Besides, I know the owner personally," I explained to her.

She looked at my face for a couple of seconds, probably deciding if she would believe what I was saying, and then nally she mumbled: "Well, of course, you have work to do. I'm sorry for suspecting you."

I nodded at her and murmured: "no problem."

And then, she tried to change the topic and asked effusively: "So, what are we going to eat? I thought that we could have sushi," she proposed.

I arched my eyebrows: "but I thought that pregnant women should avoid sushi and any other raw meats," I told her. Maybe, catching her on a lie wouldn't be that hard after all.

She opened her mouth, astonished, realizing what she just told me. "Oh, I forgot, you're right. Maybe we should stick to the steak," she told me with a weak smile on her face.

I nodded at her and pretended that she didn't commit such a mistake.

"Ethan, dear. I have to ask you something," she told me a little while later.

"And what is it, Tess?" I asked her back.

"Are you really giving up on divorcing Hannah? I mean, she is gone for months now. You don't even know about your son with her and still, you're not leaving it behind you..." she told me.

"I... I don't know what to do, Tess. I need to nd them for my son's sake, but I have no idea where the hell they are!" I exclaimed and made a worried face.

Looking like a lost dog on a move-in day made my claim even more plausible.

"You can always count on me, dear," Tess told me and held my hand. I bet that she was doing this gesture to see if someone would snap a picture of us and post it in a gossip tabloid.

"Thanks for that, Tess," I told her.

"Could you at least consider moving on with your life?" She insisted.

"I will move on, as soon as I know what is going on with them. You know, I can't abandon a child of mine," I told her.

She sighed and murmured: "Fine, I will wait then."

"Why are you in such a hurry to get married this time, Tess?" I couldn't resist the temptation and asked her.

"It's just because you promised to marry me as soon as Michael died, and I've been waiting for months now and nothing, Ethan. Besides, we are in the perfect conditions to get married now: your wife is gone, she gave you the divorce papers, and we are about to have our own baby. It is important to me that our baby grows up in a consolidated family. Or have you forgotten that I lost my mother very early and my father when I was still in my teens?" She asked me with big eyes.

"Got it. I'll see what I can do, but rst I have to weigh all the possibilities, okay?" I told her. Yes, I had my own reasons for moving forward with a marriage proposal to Tess, but I didn't want it to be that easy for her. She needed to pay for sleeping in my own bed with one of the people I thought was among my best friends.

"Well, that's better than nothing," Tess mumbled.

After that, we placed our order.

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Later that day, I sent Hannah a message through a burn phone just to tell her that I was thinking about them and went back to business. There was a lot of work to catch up and I must be better prepared next time. But I had a shady task that I should perform alone. So, I requested to change rooms at the hotel where I was staying. Maybe I was becoming paranoid, but my former room could have been bugged while I was away.

It was past midnight when I reached for a special phone and decided to call someone who I shouldn't even be thinking about.

He picked up on the second ring.

"This is Dante. Who is it, Hannah or Ethan?" Dante asked on the other side of the line.

"It's Ethan. You'll never talk to her again, Dante," I told him assertively.

"That's open for discussion. She was the one who called me asking for a favor, not the opposite," Dante retorted.

"Let's go straight to business," I told him.

"So, do you have my Fabergé egg, as I asked you?" Dante asked me immediately.

"Not yet," I told him.

"What the hell! Why are you calling me then? To provoke me to the point I send someone to collect your debts?" Dante asked me even before I could tell him anything else.

"I didn't call for this, but if you really want to know, I am meeting the representative responsible for my grandfather's inventory tomorrow to check who is with the egg," I told him.

"So, why did you call me then?" Dante asked me impatiently.

"I need another favor. I need someone who can blackmail two people and won't leave a trace," I told him.

"Well, get me the egg and we can talk about it," Dante told me.

"I am here asking for a vote of condence, Dante," I insisted.

Dante sighed and said: "Fine. Damn it, I'm doing all this just because you are Hannah's husband, and still, you said that I'll never see my little girl again."

"No, you won't. You have to understand that she has someone else taking care of her safety. You need to back off from her," I told Dante.

"Is this her wish?" Dante asked me.

"Yeah, it is. And her husband's too. You have to understand that she is scared of you, Dante," I told him. Maybe that way he would get the message and would stay away from my family.

"Alright. I'll respect her will and will back off as a good father gure should do," he told me.

"She isn't your daughter," I told him.

"I don't care about blood bonds, you \*\*\*\*. And I will send you someone who will help with your demand. As always, I will send my bill later," Dante told me and killed the call.

And there I was again selling my soul to the devil.