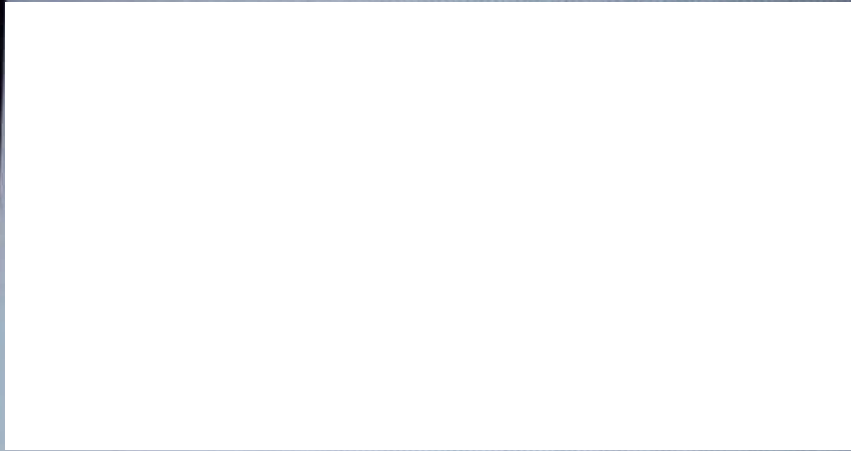


Chapter 111 Many calls and an ancient letter.

Ethan's POV:

When I opened the box, there were only three things inside: a letter, a key, and the object that



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most caught my eye: my grandmother's wedding ring.

I took a few minutes to look at the beauty of the ring inside. I had heard from my grandfather, father, and uncle that its diamonds were very

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precious, rare and very well cut and were of an odd purity. I wasn't a jewelry appraiser, but I was pretty sure that if I took the piece to a specialist, they would tell me it was worth at least a dozen thousand dollars.

The diamonds sparkled under the artificial lights in the kitchen. The drop shape of the main diamond was surrounded by small diamonds, and all of this was surrounded by a structure of very fine gold. In my grandparents' time, only people with a lot of possessions could afford a piece of jewelry like this.

I admired the jewel for another minute or two and then put it back in the box. The key that was inside I had never seen, so I had no idea what that key opened. So I decided to analyze the least enigmatic item in the wooden box: the letter.

"My dear grandson,

If you're reading this letter, it's a sign that I'm gone from this world and that you need help with your marriage. You may never understand the reasons why I wanted you to marry Hannah so badly, so here's my explanation.

Hannah's grandmother was my best friend since childhood. As you know, I was born poor and built

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our empire from scratch. Before your grandmother came into my life, it was my dear Amelia who kept my feet firmly on the ground so that corruption, greed and lust for power would not occupy my thoughts. Amelia and your grandmother are the reason we have so many philanthropic activities that come out from Brown's Enterprise every year, so that we could give back a little of what we acquired.

Well, my grandson, I knew that a woman who had been raised by Amelia would have an innocent heart and that she would think of others first. She wouldn't be someone dazzled by money, like the young Miss Astor who lives going after you like a satellite around the earth.

It was important to me to keep Edward Astor's daughter away from the family heirlooms. I caught her a few times commenting to one of her friends that we were responsible for her father's death. Thoughts like that breed revenge, and being the target of other people's wrath is something I've always wanted to avoid throughout my life, and I'd like you to avoid that too.

Now about the key, it opens a safe in a Swiss bank. You must receive the account information along with the inheritance. If one day everything

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goes wrong, you will be able to access that vault and there will be a plan for a fresh start. A new Brown that I have idealized over the last few years. If everything goes well, my recommendation is that you also have your own ideas and in the end you put them in the safe together with mine and pass the same key on to your heirs.

As for the ring, the whole family knows how special this piece of jewelry is to all of us. You may not remember because you were very young when our dear matriarch Anne passed away from a very serious illness, but she was my corner stone for building everything we have. In very difficult times when we almost gave up, she motivated me to keep going forward, once even pawning this ring so we could pay off debts. I have never worked harder in my life than to get this ring back before it was sold. This ring is a symbol of your grandmother's commitment to me, but it is also a symbol of her commitment to our family, and I know your Hannah is as loyal as my Anne was, and that should be cherished.

Ethan, my grandson, crushes come and go every day, but at the end of the day, if there's love, it can be rebuild. Don't take Hannah for granted ever. She may seem docile, but she is an incredibly strong woman, and with her you can build a life, just as

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Anne and I did so many years ago.

I hope that with this you can reflect and make the right decision. I'm rooting for your future, wherever you are.

Good luck, my grandson.

From your grandfather,

Michael"

As much as I was curious about the vault and what ideas my grandfather might have for eventually rebuilding our business, there were two things that intrigued me. Why hadn't he told me that Tess held us responsible for her father's murder? And why was such a precious asset as my late grandmother's ring already in my possession even before the inventory was completed?

My grandfather certainly wouldn't leave any loose ends. In his last will we would probably read that he left the ring for me. Well, not so much for me. Knowing his wishes, I'm sure he'd want me to give the ring to Hannah, in the event of a proposal for a renewal of vows, or in case we got into a fight so serious that I had to ask her to marry me again. This inheritance was not mine, but hers. And in that case, I would gladly offer it to her.

As for Tess, I knew my grandfather too well to think he would make such a silly comment. He wasn't lighthearted, so if he'd heard that Tess held us responsible for Edward's death, he knew she could eventually get revenge on the family. Today I see further, but I know that my grandfather used delicate words to warn me because he knew when he should gently call my attention and when he should rant that I was wrong.

All this time I thought I knew better, when I was completely under the spell of Tess and her web of lies. I just needed to know how far her plan with Alexander went. With any luck, the bugs I had implanted would offer me insights I could use in my revenge.

Then I had another idea and called Piero from my prepaid phone. I've noticed that in my most recent frequent calls, I've been calling Piero more than Eric himself.

"Ethan," Piero answered on the second ring.

"Piero, I need one more favor. Do you know anyone who forges certificates?" I asked him.

"What are you up to this time?" Piero asked me suspiciously.

"I just need to show someone a fake divorce

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certificate. As if the divorce was properly registered. She's not a professional, so she wouldn't be able to tell."

"I understand. Well, I know a guy. Send me the

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names, dates and other necessary details on a record and I'll take care of it," Piero told me.

"Thanks, man. Bill me as usual," I told him and ended the call.

I didn't want to get more involved with Dante's crowd, but it looked like there was unfortunately no other way for now. All my normal friends and

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connections didn't work with the kind of questionable connections I needed right now.

The next person I called (this time through my official line) was Police Detective Pratt, who was in charge of the incident that happened at the manor.

"Mr. Brown, I hope everything is alright?" Detective Pratt answered the call with that question.

"I'm fine, Detective. I actually called to find out about the status of the investigation," I told him.

"Ah yes. The ballistics came up with interesting conclusions," Detective Pratt told me reticently.

"Really? And what were those conclusions?" I asked him curiously.

"Unfortunately sir, we don't discuss cases over the phone. But I'll be happy to receive you at the police station tomorrow to talk about the case, what do you think?" Detective Pratt proposed to me.

"No problem," I told him. "Can you see me tomorrow at 8am?" I suggested.

"Sure, see you in the morning, sir," Detective Pratt told me and hung up.

It seemed to me that all the pieces were coming

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together in a fruitful way. Tess was confident that we were getting married in a few weeks. These fake divorce papers would make her believe and probably the interesting conclusions the detective was mentioning would point to Tess. It was only a matter of time to bring her down. If she didn't end up in jail, she'd probably be out of our lives all the same.

The problem in this whole equation was Alexander. I had tried to help his company with a merger last year, and although he had no alternative, I really thought he was relieved that I had done it. I wondered what I had done to him that he wanted to get back at me so badly when I was the one who reached out to him in a time of need.

I needed to know more deeply about his involvement in this whole story. Whether he was just bewitched by Tess and taking advantage of a breach in our relationship or whether he was involved heart and soul in a revenge mission against me and my family. I wondered if I could come to any conclusions before the whole plan with Tess was unraveled.

Well, when you want to set a trap against a businessman, start with his company. Before it got

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too late, I decided to call Simmons and get him out of the fridge.

"Mr. Brown! I have lots of updates to tell you! I have some clues to Mrs. Brown's whereabouts that I'd like to share with you, sir, if you have time to see me soon," Simmons said, trying to show that he was still able to do the service.

"Forget about Hannah, Simmons. I don't want to know her whereabouts anymore," I told him.

"Sir...?" Simmons asked me confused.

"Hannah disappeared and told me she wants a divorce, and I'm going to give it to her," I said, and I realized that my voice had cracked slightly, because that was a dangerous possibility. But then, I decided not to think about it anymore and told him, "I want you to focus on another investigation for me now."

"Yes sir. What do you need?"

"I need you to investigate my partner, Alexander Thorn-Ramsey. Especially his company," I told him.

"I'll work on it, sir," Simmons told me.

"And Simmons?" I told him.

"Yes, sir?" he promptly asked.

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"Be quick this time," I told him sternly.

"Of course, sir," he told me and hung up.

Now no more calls for today. Tomorrow the day would be full. I had an agenda to fulfill.



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