

Right Time, Wrong Brother

Chapter 1 - Joey

I know exactly when it happened. When my heart shattered into a million pieces.

When my best friend, the man I was secretly in love with, got down on one knee in the middle of the restaurant, surrounded by our friends and proposed—to a woman he'd been seeing for only a couple months.

"I tell you, Joey." Jake had mumbled three nights earlier, snuggled up on the couch, with me. "I think Phoebe might be the one."

Yeah? If she was the one, then where was she? Not there, with us, watching shitty horror movies and eating trashy food, wrapped up under a blanket. Not falling asleep against Jake's shoulder, being completely serene in his arms.

So, if she wasn't there, doing those things with him... why did she get to wake up next to Jake? Why did she deserve the huge, almost 2-carat diamond ring his grandmother had given him? Why did she deserve to wear the beautiful ivory wedding dress, handed down through Jake's family for the last seventy years?

My lip had trembled as Phoebe, as fake as could be, had gushed and squealed, nodding as if her damned head was on a spring. Seeing Jake grin and stand, putting the ring on her finger; had made me realize I had never been an option for him.

I'd had my heart set on being with Jake but obviously, I'd just taken too long in making my move and someone else had taken up the spot I had quietly and secretly reserved.

I had been cordial to them; wishing them luck, telling Jake I was happy for him. I could see he didn't believe me but didn't say anything. I didn't stay long after the proposal and the friendship between Jake and I pretty much died.

The wedding was set for only a month later.

A month. Way to absolutely destroy my heart.

Jake had all but avoided me for the first three weeks, claiming Phoebe had him running around like a chicken with its head cut off, chasing wedding supplies he could only get from certain places.

I googled it... the shit she was searching for, was cheap and could be bought on eBay for under a hundred dollars. I knew what she was up to. She had him running around, so he had less time with me, and I had less time to talk him out of it, because she knew I didn't like her gold-digging ass.

It was no secret Jake was a high-paid businessman and had properties which bought in a tidy sum every month. But none of that had ever interested me. I only wanted Jake, because I was in love with him and had been, since we'd been ten.

Now, only a week out from the wedding, I was sitting here, staring at the ugliest dress in the world, while Jake sat on the sofa opposite, staring at the floor, and Phoebe stood over me, tapping her foot on the ground impatiently.

"Obviously we're going to have to get the straps reinforced to compensate for your larger—" I glared at Phoebe who in return frowned, biting her lip so she didn't say anything snarky to me. "And it might be a good idea to watch what you eat for the next week. Maybe head to the gym? Sauna? You wouldn't want something to happen to the dress and you pop a seam, because you—"

"Phoebe, enough."

I blinked as I looked over at Jake, seeing the flush to his cheeks. He didn't look at me, as he ran his hand through his hair, hair which had been cut shorter. No doubt Phoebe's doing, and it only accentuated Jake's larger than average forehead. Something he'd always been conscious of.

Phoebe stomped her foot a little, as her tone changed from the snappy one, she'd just been speaking to me in, to a whine. "What Jakey? I told you; she just doesn't fit into the bridal party. She is not the right size, or coloring. She's too pale and to—"

"Phoebe, Jolene is my best friend, she will be in the main party, or there will be no wedding." A glimmer of hope sparked in me, this might be the fight they needed, for Jake to realize he was making a mistake. Jake looked up at Phoebe, not even glancing in my direction. "But if you like, at the reception, we can sit her at the table with your aunt? Instead of up with us."

That little glimmer went poof! with his words.

I closed my eyes, as Phoebe sighed. "Okay, I guess I can deal with that."

I put the lid on the box on my lap and slid it to the seat next to me and folded my hands in my lap, as Jake stood and hugged his fiancée, who giggled. I hated it when they kissed and hugged in front of me, it made me only more aware of the inadequacies I had as a partner for Jake and Phoebe loved to

rub it in too. Giving me sideways glares as she kissed the man I had set my heart on.

“Then that’s settled.” I looked up at Jake, who had his arm around Phoebe’s shoulders, grinning from ear to ear, as Phoebe melded against him. Just another blatant show he was off limits. “Joey, we’ll keep the dress with us, until Saturday. You’re going to look great in it.”

Phoebe scooped up the dress, as if it was a baby and flicked her hair, looking at Jake. “Baby, I’ll go wait in the car. Don’t take too long. We have that dinner reservation at eight.”

Jake nodded, kissing Phoebe again and as she turned to my front door, she glared at me.

All I wanted, was to jump to my feet, crash tackle the bitch and break something squishy.

Preferably her nose.

Let’s see her be the beautiful bride then...

“Joey.” I turned my head, looking at Jake, as he crouched in front of me. “Are you okay?”

No... no I’m not. I’m in love—

I didn’t voice my emotions to Jake, instead I lowered my gaze from his and nodded. “Yeah, just tired. I’ve been doing back-to-back shifts at the hospital, to get time off for my vacation.”

The moment Jake and Phoebe announced their wedding would only be a month after their engagement, I had booked a week off, to go to Hawaii. I’d always wanted to go and had one day hoped to go with Jake. I’d been squirreling money away for it since I had started working at the hospital. I had enough for me to go for a week. So that’s where I was going, in the hopes of forgetting what had happened.

“Oh, you got time booked off?”

“Yeah, I’m going to go and spend a week in Hawaii.” I grinned and Jake’s face reddened.

“Oh... well, we might see you there.”

I blinked and the smile fell from my lips. “Are you fucking kidding me?”

His face reddened further, and he turned his head away. “Phoebe has always wanted to go to Hawaii...”

“Well, enjoy.” I spat, sinking back into the sofa, folding my arms over my chest. “Now, you better go, before she starts beeping the horn like an impatient dog.”

Jake’s gaze snapped to mine, and I caught the first glimpse of anger aimed at me in the thirteen years we’d been friends. It left quickly and he stood, leaving my tiny bungalow, slamming the door behind him.

“Fuck.” I lifted my hands and buried my face in them, trying to hold off the sobbing, until I heard Jake’s car leave. The sound of the vehicle pulling out of my driveway had my stomach dropping to the floor and I cried until my chest hurt.

Of all the places they had to pick for a honeymoon, it had to be Hawaii.

My dream destination.

I’d only ever dreamed of going there and now I could afford to; the experience was about to be ruined, because they would be there too.

“Like fuck.”

Reaching to the side, I picked up my phone and bought up the airline’s number. Dialing it, I waited for it to connect. Once the woman had said her hellos, I bunkered down for what I knew would be a marathon in trying to get my money back.