

Chapter 42 - Submitting to My Best Friend's Dad by Scarlett Rossi

Becca.

When James came to find me, I was rather pleased. I was enjoying my time with Neal, but I had come with James, and he had promised an evening with me, even though the current conversation between Neal and James seemed anything but pleasant.

"The auction is about to start, so I think we should take our seats," James said, holding his arm out for me, which I slowly took.

"That's wonderful. What's the charity this year?" Neal asked as he followed behind us.

"The money goes to the breast cancer society to help with treatments," James said hesitantly as his eyes met mine.

I wasn't sure if he had remembered my mother, but if he did, then he would have known my mother died from breast cancer. I hadn't realized this was what the charity gala was for, but now that I knew, it brought back memories.

Holding myself together, I let James lead me to the table where we would be sitting. I had imagined the rest of the evening would go well, but instead, I found that Allison and Tally were sitting at our table, as well as Allegra and Charles.

"Oh, wonderful. Becca, you're joining us," Allison replied with a fake smile as she rolled her eyes.

"Cut it out, Allison," James bit out as we took our seats.

"I was being nice," Allison gasped. "Jesus, James. Maybe you need a drink."

Of course, this would be Allison's reaction. The way she flaunted herself, as if she was the poor ex-wife being thrust into the presence of her husband's new lover. It was pathetic, and I was over her and Tally's bullshit.

Taliana, though, had her eyes set on Neal, and he didn't seem to notice her.

"So, how have you been enjoying yourself?" Charles asked me, breaking me from my train of thought.

"Oh—it's lovely," I said softly as James slid his hand under the table to rest on my thigh. Looking up at him, I could see the twinkle in his eye, but I couldn't help but feel like I was nothing but a distraction to him this evening.

People kept looking at us, and Allison kept making her snide comments.

It was horrendous, and as much as I was saying my evening was lovely, it only really had been when I was dancing with Neal. With James, it had been nothing but drama until this point.

As the auctioning began, I found many people were very generous with their donation amounts. Not to mention the people sitting at my table.

"The next piece is an original painting by Lesslie Pachelli. Starting bid twenty-thousand."

The painting was beautiful, and James nudged me slowly. "Do you like it?"

"Like what?" I asked, with confusion.

"That painting," he whispered with a smile.

"Yes, it's beautiful," I replied. "The painter has talent."

James nodded before holding up the white card in his hand. "Twenty-thousand."

"James, what are you doing?" I gasped, looking at the others at the table.

"You said you like it. So I'm buying it for you." He shrugged his shoulders.

"Are you serious right now?" Allison scoffed. "You're wasting money on that?"

Sighing, I shook my head as others started bidding on the painting as well. There was no way I was going to let James waste that kind of money on a painting. I didn't even have a place to put it if I did get it.

"Fifty-thousand," Neal's voice caught my attention, and looking at him, I gasped.

A smile crossed his lips as he looked at me, and Allegra shrugged her shoulders as if him betting on the item was no big deal.

"Sixty-thousand," James countered.

"Eighty-thousand," Neal responded.

It took a minute for me to realize what was going on, and before I could reply again, James responded. "One hundred-thousand."

"James, enough," I said, looking at him. "What are you doing?"

"I'm getting the painting for you."

"I don't need it," I replied, shaking my head. "That's a lot of money. Please stop."

"The money goes to charity, Becca. It's my donation."

"Sold, for one-hundred and fifty thousand to Mr. Neal Saville," the auctioneer said, catching both mine and James' attention.

We had been so caught up in our argument, we hadn't noticed Neal had rebid on the painting and won it. For a moment, I thought James was going to lose it, but instead, he stared at Neal with a tight-lipped smile. "Congratulations."

"Thank you, James. It feels good to buy the item knowing that the money is going to a good cause. It's something close to my heart."

Looking at Neal and Allegra, I watched her take his hand in a comforting notion, her eyes slowly meeting mine, giving me a small smile. "Our mother passed away from breast cancer."

Nodding my head, I tried to hold back my emotions. "I know how you feel. So did mine."

There was an awkward silence at the table for a moment as James took my hand and squeezed it lightly. I wasn't sure how to feel, but knowing someone else understood the pain I felt over losing my mother made me feel not so alone in the moment.

"Enough with this grimness. We need more drinks," Allison interjected, breaking the silence.

"Mom, enough," Tally finally said after a moment. "Can you just stop talking for now? You're embarrassing me with the way you're acting. They lost their mother to this disease."

Shock filled me as my eyes widened in surprise at what she said. Even her own mother looked at her, trying to see if she had just heard her correctly.

"Excuse me—" Allison gasped.

"You're excused," Tally interrupted before her eyes turned back to Neal. "I'm so sorry about that. She forgets sometimes how reality can be. Perhaps, we can have coffee sometime. I'd love to know more about your business."

Tally was something else. One moment she is eye-f*cking Neal from across the table, and the next, she is rudely shutting down her mother—which I was proud of her for—but then she was also trying to hook up with Neal.

She never ceases to amaze me. There is always a form of desperation in her eyes.

She sought attention from any rich man who would give it to her.

Neal, however, chuckled and shook his head. "As lovely as I am sure that sounds, I think I will have to pass on that."

"What—" Tally said softly, looking at her mother, who narrowed her eyes at Neal.

"So, how is everyone enjoying the night?" I blurted, not wanting the conversation to get any more tense than it was.

"Oh, it's been interesting," Allegra replied, sipping on her wine.

"That's for sure," James commented, drinking his whiskey.

Shaking my head, I placed my napkin down upon the table. I was done with the evening. I came to enjoy myself, and with the way everyone was acting, I couldn't do it.

All I wanted to do was go back to the apartment, grab a glass of wine, and get into my pajamas. "I think I should go."

"What?" James said, looking at me confused. "Becca—"

"No, she's right. She should go," Allison snapped. "At least for once she is paying attention. She isn't where she is meant to be. Perhaps you need to go back up north."

I was done with her attitude. Anger boiled inside me at her words.

"F*ck you, Allison. You think you're hot shit, and you don't even belong here. You're broke, and trying to get your daughter to hook up with Neal for his money. Every man here should be wary of the two of you. Why can't you leave me the f*ck alone?"

Standing, she seethed in anger, her fists clenched and eyes bulging.

"How dare you?" she screamed. "You have no right to speak to me like that, you little home-wrecker. He was a married man."

"What are you talking about?" James looked at her with confusion. "We aren't married and my seeing her was recent—"

James paused for a moment and scoffed before laughter escaped him. "Have you been telling people I was sleeping with her while we were married?"

I should have known she would tell people that. There were rumors, and I had hoped they weren't true, but now that James mentioned it, I couldn't believe it.

"You're pathetic, Allison. James hates you because you were a horrible mother and a horrible wife. You deserve the life you have created for yourself, and you will die alone one day because of it."

Turning on my heels, I stormed away from the table. Allegra's voice called to me as I passed through the ballroom again and made my way towards the front door.

The thought of spending another moment in there with them was exhausting. To think I had actually thought this night would be memorable. The kind of memories this night would bring were not ones I wanted to remember.

"Becca—" James' voice called as the sound of his footsteps quickly came up behind me. "Rebecca! Would you stop?"

Spinning around, I stared at him, shaking my head. "Why? I'm not staying here for another moment. I thought tonight was going to be amazing for us, and instead it turned into a shit show."

Running his hand over his face, he sighed at me. "Can we not act like this here?"

"Seriously? That's your comment? I'm sorry if you don't want to be embarrassed by me being upset. Perhaps you shouldn't have brought me here then."

"Perhaps I shouldn't have." His words were like a slap in the face, and as I stared at him, I saw the guilt quickly build. "Becca, that's not what I meant."

"No, that's exactly what you meant, James," I said, feeling the strain at the back of my throat. I didn't want to cry, but I had every right to.

"Becca—" he said again, stepping closer to me. "Don't be like this."

"No, please. It's okay I get it."

Turning away from him, I headed down the steps and kept walking until I arrived at the valet and asked them to call a car for me.

It didn't take a genius to figure out that my situation was anything but great, and as the car pulled away, I watched James turn around and go back into the building.

I wasn't sure why I thought he would chase after me, but I was also glad he hadn't. What I needed was a break from everything, and in reality, I just wanted time to consider what I was really doing.

I was in too far over my head, and even though it felt great to put Allison in her place, I had made a fool of myself in front of everyone close to her. Their lifestyle wasn't something made for me. I was nothing but an outsider, and I don't know why I thought I could fit in.

Perhaps it was time for me to go home and stop pretending.