

CHAPTER 009: All About Finn

~~SLOANE~~

"All we have to do is go to the wedding, give Delilah enough time to think she's happy, and then destroy it," Finn says. "Simple as that."

I and Finn are in one of his parents' guest rooms—one Finn announced as my room. I'm sitting on the edge of a plush, overstuffed bed with way too many pillows, while Finn paces in circles. 1

I just watch him.

It's not even the pacing that annoys me. It's the delusion.

"Have you thought about how she'd hate you afterward?" I ask, folding my hands in my lap to keep them from fidgeting.

"Hate? That's a strong word," he scoffs. "Delilah can't hate me. She'll be angry at me for a couple of days, and then we'll be back together."

God.

The worst part?

He's probably right.

Of course she won't hate him. She'll scream and cry and maybe toss a vase, but she'll let him back in. She always does. It's like a sick game of emotional fetch—he throws himself at her, she walks away, then whistles, and back he goes.



I grind my molars.

"I'm just saying," I press, "destroying a wedding might be easy to visualize, but when it comes to actually doing it, it's not as easy as you think. First of all, what could you possibly say that would make Hunter cancel the wedding? Because Delilah wouldn't."

He stops pacing.

"Simple," he says. "I tell him she's been sleeping with me. No man likes to be cheated on."

I almost choke.

"Don't you see the irony in that statement?" I say.

"What?"

"You like being cheated on, Finn."

He squints at me like I'm missing the bigger picture. "That's different."

"How?"

"It's different when the person's the love of your life."

I drag a pillow onto my lap before I throw it at his face.

"You're not even giving yourself a chance to find someone else. She's your first and only girlfriend. There are other people out there for you, Finn. You just have to step outside the Delilah Vortex and actually look."

He pauses, looking at me like I just said the moon isn't real.

"You and Delilah are the only people who get me."



Then leave Delilah and come to me, I almost say. But that would be stupid and pathetic, even for me.

I clamp my lips shut.

"It's not going to work," I say instead.

"What's not going to work?"

"Hunter already knows she was sleeping with you. He's marrying her anyway."

He jerks his head. "Wait, what? How the hell do you know that?"

I hesitate.

"Your brother told me."

His expression cracks. "Knox?"

"Yeah."

There's a pause. "Seems you two had enough time to talk while fondling each other by the window."

"We were not—"

"What else did he say, Sloane?"

"In terms of what?"

"About me. Did he tell you anything crazy?"

I raise a brow. "Is there something crazy about you that I should know?"



Finn sighs and moves to sit beside me on the bed. His fingers find mine, warm and familiar.

"Listen, Sloane. You have to stay away from my brother. Most times we're civil toward each other. Nice, even. But sometimes... the rivalry between us? It gets ugly. He could use you to get to me. I don't want that to happen." His voice drops. "Other than Delilah and my family, you're all I have left. You mean the world to me. I don't want to see you get hurt."

It should make me melt.

It almost does.

But there's something in those words that sets me off.

"Is there a history between you and your brother?" I ask.

He tenses. "Why?"

"Because you're obviously hiding something. Why would you assume he'd use me if there wasn't something serious that happened between you two?"

"Knox is just Knox. He's unpredictable. I'm trying to look out for you."

"I can handle myself, thank you very much."

"Come on, Sloane—"

"Why should I believe you?" I cut in. "You've barely mentioned his name in the entire time I've known you. And I've known you a long time. I had to hear from him that you both live in the same city. And his best friend—Hunter—is Delilah's fiancé. Did you know this?"



"I did."

"And you didn't think to tell me?"

"I'm sorry, okay? Just stay away from Knox. He's a womanizer with really bad morals."

"You mean because he owns a sex club?"

His eyes widen. "He told you that?"

"Yep. Another thing you didn't."

He exhales. "Don't you see it? He's trying to come between us. Telling you all this shit so you'll start a fight." 3

"Maybe if you'd told me in the first place, I wouldn't need to start a fight."

"I can't do this right now, Sloane. My head is already full trying to solve the Delilah problem —"

"There it is," I snap. "It's always about you, isn't it? Everything. Is. About. You. Finn." 3

He throws his arms up, dramatic as ever. "What do you want? Just tell me. I'll do it. I can't be fighting with my girlfriend and my best friend at the same time." 3

"You're not fighting with Delilah. She's leaving you."

"Help me get her back!"

"I'm the one fighting with you, Finn!" 1



He throws himself off the bed, flopping to the floor like a wounded deer.

"Finn?" I say, my heart in my throat.

I scramble off the mattress, kneeling beside him.

He doesn't move.

I push at his arm until he rolls over, and I see the tears streaming down his face. 12

"I can't fight with you too, Sloane," he whispers. "Please." 4

My chest squeezes.

"Okay. Okay, get up."

He lets me drag him up.

"I promise," he mutters, wiping his eyes, "it's not always about me. You're just so perfect that you hardly have problems that aren't from the characters in those books you read." 3

I hug him, saying, "I understand."

And I do.

But then I pull back. "How about... if I say one of my problems out loud, and you distract yourself by solving it?"

He frowns. "What problem is that?"

I take a breath.

"So you see... when your brother took me to a sex shop and told me he



owns a sex club and toy company—”

“He took you to a sex shop?!”

“Shut up, Finn. Don’t interrupt me.”

“Okay. Sorry.”

“I became... weirdly intrigued about these things.”

He’s blinking like I just told him I joined a cult. “Okay...”

“Back in college, I never got to explore. I was focused on academics and graduated valedictorian.”

“Which is what I loved about you. You were level-headed and driven. You even forced me to graduate, remember? No one believed I would. You’ve got the dream life now. A good job at an IT firm. A hundred and fifty grand a year in salary. You’re killing it.”

“Yeah, but I’m not in college anymore, Finn. And most people think I’m antisocial.”

“I don’t. You’re the most social person I know.”

“You’re lying.”

“Come on, Sloane. I’m supposed to boost your ego.”

“Not by lying.”

He laughs. “Fine. Maybe you are antisocial. But still lovable.”

I cross my arms. “I might be going through a midlife crisis. I want to explore... immorality.”



He frowns. "As much as I hate the idea of you going rogue, I can help you. If you're doing this, you might as well do it the right way and with the right person."

"You'll do that for me?"

"What are friends for?" he says. "Get dressed. We're going to a strip club. I bet you've never been in one."

I blink.

"You mean that?"

"I know just the right one."

I launch myself at him, squeezing the breath out of him with a hug. Then I tear across the room to the closet, pulling things out swiftly.

"What dress is that?" Finn asks as I select something black and scandalous.

"I bought it."

"You're buying dresses like this now?"

I don't reply. I'm too busy grabbing shoes and accessories, adrenaline buzzing.

I bolt toward the bathroom.

"We're going to a strip club!" I sing as I reach the door.

"Oh dear God," I hear him mutter behind me. "What have I done?"