

The Unwanted Bride Of Atticus Fawn Book 2: Chapter 26 - Tips

0 4 minutes read

~CLARISSA~

Damon has been avoiding me ever since the little incident in his room. I haven't seen him around. He's not at home during the day, and he only returns at night when he's sure I'm deep in sleep.

He was doing everything to keep the distance between the two of us. Now I knew he was doing everything in his power to ensure that nothing inappropriate happened between us again.

He wanted his engagement with Anya to arrive without any hiccups. And to him, that would occur as long as I didn't interfere.

I bite my bottom lip in frustration. Everything I tried backfired on me, every one of my plans to bring me closer to him. I was running out of options. I wasn't sure what else there was that I could do.

That night, it was never my intention to go back into his room. The dream was the only reason I went to him. He was the person I trusted the most to confide in. He was the person that always made me feel better. Just being by his side has always made me calm when everything around me felt like it was destroying me.

It was never part of my plan to do what I did. I didn't regret it but I missed him so much. If I had known he would have acted this way, I would have never pushed him.

There just wasn't much I could do when he was hiding from me.

My Damon has never been a damn coward. He's never been this way. Was avoiding me really that important to him? Did his engagement with Anya mean more to him than I did?

He wasn't returning any of my messages, and every time I asked someone to tell me where he was, no one had an answer to give me. He was lying to everyone about his whereabouts or maybe he was asking them to lie to me. I trusted Autumn the most out of everyone in the house other than Damon but sadly even she had no clue where Damon had been.

There was one more day, just one more day before that such engagement party, and nothing that I did to stop it had worked. I couldn't avoid it any longer; it was happening. Tomorrow I would have no choice but to watch Damon announce his engagement to her in front of hundreds of guests. He would be doing the one thing I wished that he'd

do with me. I've always dreamt of him announcing our marriage to every possible person on this planet, but Anya would be the one getting her wishes fulfilled. She'd won this battle.

The smirk she gave me as she walked into our home proved that even she knew she'd won this time. She looked around the house like she owned it. Now that she is closer than ever to getting Damon's last name, she feels entitled to his family's possessions.

I felt sick to my stomach. I didn't believe for one second that this woman loved Damon. If she did, I would have acted differently. I would have stepped down and let this marriage happen peacefully.

But I would not let Damon destroy his life because of her. I would not let her take his happiness away. He may not know his mistake now, but I would not stop until he realized it.

"Everything looks so beautiful." Anya says in her fake 'happy' tone. "Don't you think so, Clarissa?"

Autumn holds my hand to stop me from saying anything that could cause problems for me.

"It is beautiful," Autumn answers for me. "Do you know where Damon is?" She asks her.

She squeezes my hand, letting me know she was asking this question only because of me. She was hoping that Anya could help us find him.

"Why do you ask?" She answers her question with one of her own.

Autumn shrugs her shoulders, "I'm just curious. We are just concerned that Damon might have second thoughts about the engagement. He hasn't taken part in any of the decorations; in fact, he hasn't been around to plan the party at all. It's almost like he doesn't want it to happen."

Anya narrows her eyes, "I can assure you that Damon is pleased about our engagement party. He can't stop talking about it. He's been spending all of his time with me, choosing out my dress and helping me find a hairdresser and makeup artist. He's been doing everything for me; just because you don't see him in the house doesn't mean he isn't excited about getting engaged to the love of his life."

I try not to be affected by her words but fail miserably. All this time, he's been with her. While I've been in pain thinking about him getting engaged to her, he's been having the time of his life with her. He's been shopping with her, giving her his opinion on dresses, and making her happy.

I wasn't just hurt anymore. I was angry. Very angry. With him. With her.

I'm about to say something when footsteps catch my attention. It isn't just the footsteps; it's the scent that hits me as well.

It's him.

Damon.

He's here.

Anya looks behind us, but I don't bother turning around to look at him like I usually do. I'm too angry to look at him.

"Damon!" Anya greets him with a bright smile. "We were just talking about you."

I can feel his body tense at her words.

"You were?" He asks hesitantly.

I can't believe I haven't seen him since that night in his room. I can't believe that he was so okay with not seeing me for that long. I can't believe that I was the only one that was in pain all this time.

I don't wait to listen to their conversation. I walk away, not fast but slowly, very slowly. I wanted his gaze to burn into my back. I wanted him to watch me walking away from him. I knew how much he hated that more than anything else. He hated when I didn't acknowledge his presence.

I walk up the stairs and straight into my bedroom. I lock the door and drop to the ground. I clutch my dress tightly as I try to find my breath.

I was losing him. I was losing Damon. Very soon, he would belong to Anya for good, and I wouldn't be able to fight for him anymore. I would have no choice but to accept defeat.

What could I do to stop all of this? What could I do to end this stupid engagement party?

The Unwanted Bride Of Atticus Fawn Book 2: Chapter 27 - Tips

0 7 minutes read

~CLARISSA~

A knock on the door forces me to get up from the ground. I didn't want anyone but Autumn to see me like this. If it were her, she would have called my name.

I walk over to the door and unlock it. My breath hitches when I see Damon standing in front of me.

I gasp at the look on his face.

I was wrong. So very wrong.

He wasn't as unbothered like Anya made it seem. Dark circles were under his eyes, his lips were dry, and his face looked like he hadn't slept in days. What has he been through these past few days without being by my side? Is it possible that he's like this because of me?

This was not the face of someone happy about their engagement; this was the face of someone that was having doubts.

"Did you eat anything today?" He asks, breaking the silence.

My lips part. Was that seriously the first question he had for me? It's been days. He's been ignoring all of my messages. He never once explained what he'd been up to. This is the longest we've ever been apart. And this is the first thing that he says to me?

I fold my arms stubbornly and glare at him.

He winced at the look I gave him. Good. I wanted him to know exactly how angry I was at him. It's the angriest I've ever felt.

"Is there a reason you are in my room right now?" I demand. "Or are you here to apologize for something I don't want an apology for again?"

He swallows and takes a step in my direction. "I wouldn't do that if I were you," I warn him. "I can't think clearly when you're near me, and this is the one time I want to be thinking clearly."

He pauses, and I can see the confusion in his eyes.

"Why are you here, Damon?" I demand. "Shouldn't you be with Anya picking out more dresses? Shouldn't you be with her to ensure she's happy and cared for? Or are you suddenly finished with ignoring me?"

He frowns at me. "Picking out dresses?"

I narrow my eyes. "Isn't that what you've been up to all this time? Spending all your time with Anya? Isn't that why you've ignored me and acted like I no longer exist?"

His jaw clenches, "Austin and Hunter asked for my help. After everything they did for Autumn and Atticus, I couldn't say no. I've been helping them find a groom for Hunter's sister since Atticus was busy. Hunter seems to think that his sister is secretly meeting one of the Blackners; he doesn't want her to get involved with them since the Blackners aren't allowed to have mates. I wasn't out with Anya all this time. I don't know where you've heard that, but it isn't true."

Of course, Anya lied to me, and I foolishly believed her. It was clear that her dishonest ways didn't change, even though she wanted everyone to think that she was different.

Her lie just made everything easier for me. I knew I wasn't doing the wrong thing by fighting for Damon anymore. She was the same woman she was in the past.

If she lied to me about this, there was no doubt in my mind that Anya didn't already know of my feelings for Damon. Of course, she knew. She was intentionally trying to hurt my feelings.

"I came to apologize." He finally says.

"Of course," I mumble. "To apologize. Just like I expected."

"Please let me finish, Clarissa." He begs.

I don't say anything. I waited for him to say what he wanted even though I knew I wouldn't like it.

"I've been avoiding this thing between us." He finally says.

This thing? Was that what he was calling it? Still, this was the last thing I was expecting him to say. I thought he would never acknowledge what happened between us.

"I know that you must think the worst of me. I've always protected you from everything. I've always tried my best to make you happy. Not once did I ever think I would be the reason that you're sad. I never thought I would ever be saying no to you." He explains in a sad tone. "I've always thought that I was so protective over you because I saw you like a sister. . ."

"Don't." I stop him. "Don't call me your sister. Never do that."

He closes his eyes. "That's the f*g problem. Isn't it? I don't see you like a sister. If I did, I would have never done what I did that night."

What was he trying to say to me?

"I can't let myself do that anymore. I can't allow myself to feel anything for you, at least not these inappropriate feelings. There's no chance of anything ever happening between the two of us. We are supposed to act like family, like siblings, that's what my parents expect from us, and it's what outsiders expect as well. If we go against it, there will be plenty of trouble ahead. To avoid anything bad happening, I need you to agree with me. I need you to stop trying to change things between us."

I can't believe he's saying this to me. Does he think that it's easy to throw away my feelings and act like they never existed to begin with? How weak does he think my feelings for him are? How weak are his feelings for me? Is it that easy for him to push it aside and marry Anya?

"Say something." He begs. "Please. I hate when you ignore me, Clarissa."

"And do you think it's easy for me when you do the same to me?" I demand. "Do you think it makes me happy when you leave home for days and don't tell me anything? Do you think it doesn't affect me when you ignore my calls and messages? If it bothers you when I ignore you, why do you do it to me?"

He closes his eyes in pain. "I didn't know how to deal with my feelings or yours. I needed time away to think. I didn't want to see you until I was prepared to be near you again."

"You needed to prepare yourself to be near me?" I ask in horror. "It's never been that way between us in the past, Damon. We've never had these problems."

"I know," he whispers. "I hate it. That's why I want things to return to where they were."

"I'm sorry, but I can't do that." I apologize. "You have no idea how hard any of this is for me. You have no idea what I've been through all these years, keeping what was in my heart a secret from you and everyone else."

I can see the glassy stare in his eyes as he pleads with me.

"Clarissa, I need to protect you." He insists. "I have to protect you from the things you have no clue would happen if things change between us. Please, listen to me. If you care about me at all, listen to me. Nothing can ever happen between us. Things cannot change. Think about our family and the reports that will hit the headlines as soon as anyone gets to find out that something is happening between the two of us. I'm preventing all of that from taking place."

"I don't care!" I snap. "Don't you get it by now, Damon? Nothing in this world scares me as much as losing you does! You have no idea just how much you mean to me. You have no idea what my heart—"

He grabs my hair and pulls me towards him.

“Don’t say it.” He whispers with his forehead pressed against mine. “Please don’t say it. If you say what’s on your mind, everything will change between us, and I don’t want it to. I don’t want things to change between us, Clarissa. It’s good, just the way that it is. We don’t need to complicate things. We don’t need to bring trouble upon our lives.”

There is complete silence after those words leave his mouth. He’s serious about this. I can’t believe Damon is so desperate to get me to forget about my feelings for him.

It hurts.

Why was he so determined to make me forget about everything? Was this because of Anya?

“She’s the one that you love.” I gasp, finally understanding everything. “All this time, I thought that there was a possibility that you didn’t know what you truly wanted. But that’s not true. You want her. You want to marry her. I never stood a chance. I’ve been wrong this entire time.”

I’ve been forcing myself onto him without realizing that I was the one he didn’t want. If he wanted me, he would have fought for me all along.

What the hell was I thinking? I was so blinded by my love that I didn’t take a second to think about him and what he truly wanted.

I knew that Anya would make him unhappy, but if she was what he wanted, I had to step back. I had to let him stay with the person he wanted to stay with.

I pull away from him to walk over to the window. “I’m sorry, Damon.” I apologize. “I’m sorry for everything. I didn’t realize until now that I was wrong for wanting to be more to you. I didn’t realize how unhappy I was making you.”

“Clarissa, you have it all—” he tries to say.

“No.” I snap. “You wanted things to return to normal between us. You’re getting your wish. I won’t try to stop this wedding. I won’t try to be something more. I won’t burden you with talks of my feelings, and I definitely won’t try anything inappropriate anymore. You have made your decision very clear; I’m giving you exactly what you want. All I’ve ever wanted was for you to be happy, Damon. I didn’t want to believe that Anya was your true happiness, but I know now. I won’t make the same mistakes twice.”

He’s about to say something when the door opens.

“There you two are,” Atticus says. “We were looking everywhere for you. We need some extra help with the rest of the decorations.”

I don’t turn to look at them. I can’t let Atticus see me like this.

I know there is plenty that Damon still wants to tell me, but I'm done with this discussion. If I stayed any longer with him, I would lose my composure and go straight back to how I acted before.

I couldn't believe I was indeed giving up like this. It was different when I thought that Damon wanted me as well, but now that I knew he wanted Anya, I couldn't continue with this.

It was over.

Everything was over.

The Unwanted Bride Of Atticus Fawn Book 2: Chapter 28 - Tips

0 6 minutes read

~CLARISSA~

There were so many things happening around me. Last-minute decorations were being hung on the walls; caterers were walking up and down the hallways. We had one hour left before guests started to arrive. Just one hour.

There were pictures of Damon and Anya added to our home. Pictures that would haunt me every time I had to look at them. Anya was the one to request it. She wanted things done very similarly to Autumn's marriage to Atticus. It's like she was trying to relive their marriage through Damon. If they did anything differently, she complained that they treated Autumn better than they did her.

Damon didn't try to speak to me again after what happened in my room, but I wasn't exactly giving him a chance either.

This time, I was the one that was avoiding him. I knew that avoiding him would affect him even more than if I was by his side, just like he'd done to me the past few days. However, this time, I wasn't doing it intentionally. This time, I was avoiding him for my own good. My heart needed to distance myself from him if I wanted to survive seeing him with her. This was for me. I was being selfish. To protect myself from any more heart ache.

I was giving him what he asked from me. He couldn't have it both ways. He wanted things to go back to normal between us, but I knew there was no chance of that. My heart was broken; it could never be the same again. Every time I looked at him, I would feel pain from his rejection. He may not have openly said the words to me, but it was a clear rejection. He chose Anya. He always chose her. I just refused to accept it in the past. It was my fault for not seeing what was right in front of me. I denied it until Damon

came out and told me himself. He didn't think he had to in the past but after many failed attempts to get closer to him, he realized that it had to be done.

I stare at the dress in the mirror. I was dressed, not in the white I once wanted to wear, but in black. This was supposed to be my engagement party, but sadly, I was never lucky enough to get anything I wanted in this life. The one person that fought to give me everything I wanted would soon belong to someone else.

I knew it was only a matter of time before Autumn barged into my room to check on me. I didn't want to wait for that to happen. I needed space. I needed time to clear my mind. I didn't want to be here when the engagement was happening. I didn't want to see Damon next to Anya, nor did I want to listen to the announcement that would completely shatter my heart.

I opened my room door and cautiously looked to both sides, checking if anyone was there. When I didn't see anyone, I quickly ran for the stairs. I was aware that I would have to pass early guests and possibly family members to get to the exit, but it was a risk I had to take. Hopefully, everyone would be too busy with the party to pay attention to me.

When no one was looking, I ran out of the house and headed straight for the woods. I knew it should be the last place to go after what happened the last time I went there looking for Damon, but I needed to be alone. Staying in the house was not an option for me. Taking a vehicle was also not an option. I had to be close to home.

If I tried to explain to anyone, they wouldn't understand; they would only force me to stay and watch the one thing that would destroy me.

The moment I entered the forest, my feet started to move on their own. I could feel the wind gushing in my ear with how fast I moved; the night drew closer. I had less than an hour left before my worst nightmare came true.

I don't know how long I kept running; all I knew was that I kept going further and further away from my home.

A whisper against my ear totally surprises me and forces me to stop. I grabbed onto a tree and held on as I tried to find my breath. What was that? I wasn't sure what I'd heard, but it was enough to make me worry. Was I not alone like I initially thought?

My heart was racing, and I hoped I wasn't in danger like the last time. No one was around to help me this time. They wouldn't even know that I was in danger since they would still think I was somewhere inside our home.

I slowly took in my surroundings; I could see the leaves falling to the ground and hear the sounds of nature. But there was no other sound or sight of anything that I had to worry about. Maybe I'd misheard the whispers.

My frustration over the party had me imagining things that weren't even there. It was messing with my mind. I knew it was only a matter of time before I completely lost all sanity.

Get a grip on yourself, Clarissa.

I had to find a way to cool down before I did something stupid. The time for that had already passed now that I thought about it. This was something stupid. Leaving home while everyone was busy preparing for a big engagement party.

Whenever it concerned Damon, I always did things without thinking correctly. I knew that he would freak out if he realized that I wasn't home. But I wasn't going back there. Not now; I would deal with the consequences later. For now, I would stay here and enjoy the sound of nature.

I had to hope that no one noticed I was missing and started a search party to look for me. That would be embarrassing. I should have said something to Autumn, at least. If she'd known, she would have covered for me.

I close my eyes. I couldn't think about that right now. I had to think about myself and my future. To me, Damon has always been my future. Without him, I wasn't sure what to do with my life.

All of my memories of him kept repeating in my mind. I couldn't get him out of my head. I was hurting. It felt like someone was purposefully trying to rip my heart out of my chest.

I knew that he felt our connection; I knew that he at least understood that my feelings for him were nothing like my feelings for anyone else. He knew that I didn't see him as my brother. It's why he asked me not to say anything. It's why he asked me not to complicate things.

I never thought there would come a day when I would willingly let Damon get engaged to that woman.

I've never been one to back down. I've always fought for what I wanted. But this time was different; this time, Damon was the one to ask me to behave; he was the one to ask me to let things happen without causing any trouble.

I usually did the opposite of what he asked me to do, depending on his request.

I never got to see how he looked for the party. I was sure he looked the kind of good that left a girl completely speechless and unable to look at anything else but him.

If it were our engagement party, I wouldn't be able to look away. People would have to drag me away from him since I'd want to spend every second by his side.

I cover my face with my hands and let out a stifled scream of frustration. It wasn't my engagement party. It was Anya's.

I felt trapped and confused. And stuck.

Why was this happening to me? Why? Why couldn't Damon willingly be mine? Why did everything around us constantly push us away from each other?

A sudden crackling caught my attention, and I slowly lifted my face from my hands. It took me a few seconds to determine what caused the sound. My eyes widened in shock as the reddish flames roared before me.

Fire.

First, it started as barely anything, but now it was a growing monster ready to pounce on me.

I couldn't believe this.

The forest was on fire. It was actually on fire.

Where did it come from? As far as I knew, I was the only one here. I would have heard if anyone was trying to start a fire.

It surrounded me. I picked myself off the ground and searched for a path to escape the hungry flames.

How did this even happen? And why was the fire a perfect circle around me?

The Unwanted Bride Of Atticus Fawn Book 2: Chapter 29 - Tips

0 8 minutes read

~DAMON~

The guests were already arriving, but there was still no sign of Clarissa. I kept looking at the door, hoping to see her, but disappointment kept on hitting me when I saw everyone except her.

I knew I didn't leave things on good terms between us. I couldn't sleep last night. She was all I could think about. Getting engaged to Anya hadn't even crossed my mind once. Clarissa had taken over my thoughts, and I knew it would be that way for a long, long time. Nothing could erase her from my mind, not even myself.

I couldn't get her words out of my head. She thought that I had no feelings for her. She thought that I wanted to be with Anya and not her. She doesn't realize how wrong she is.

I wanted to correct her. I wanted to tell her the truth, but I knew that if I did, she wouldn't stop trying to change things between us. I had to let her believe it if I wanted her to forget about us being a possibility.

It still bothered me that I had to hurt her in order to keep her safe. Clarissa hasn't been thrown into our world the way that my family has been in the past. She doesn't understand how hostile the world was when they got an opportunity to bring an influential family like ours to the ground. I didn't want her to take the fall for the rest of us.

"You should be happy," Atticus says as he joins my side. "But you look anything but that. It's your engagement party to Anya. At one point in your life, you wanted this more than anything else. There was a point where both Dante and I wished that we were in your position today. Of course, that's before I realized my true feelings for Autumn."

I sigh, "you always know how to read me like an open book. I don't even know how to feel right now. I'm confused by my feelings."

He chuckles, "are you sure this is what you want, Damon? I know we've had our differences, but I would hate to see you go down the wrong path."

I inhale sharply at his question. This wasn't about me or what I wanted. This was about protecting Clarissa from what she thought she wanted. I didn't care what I had to do as long as I knew she would be safe from any harm, whether it be physical or emotional.

"I know this is what I must do," I answer him truthfully. "I have to do this."

He raises one brow at me, "ah," he whispers, "this is what you must do. Tell me again, why do you think this is what you have to do?"

I knew he would read between the lines. I knew that he would understand that this wedding wasn't happening because I wanted it to happen but for a completely different reason.

That was one answer that I couldn't give him. I couldn't explain it without telling him everything that had happened between Clarissa and me in the past couple of days. I

couldn't explain to him what I meant without telling him that I had feelings for someone that he considered his sister, something that I was also supposed to do.

Anya walks into the room then, and there are gasps throughout it as everyone sees her dress. Judging by the thrilled look on her face, she was overjoyed by their reactions. Anya always loved being the center of attention. She loved to be the best dressed and have the nicest jewels amongst those around her.

The opposite of Clarissa.

While Anya loved attention, Clarissa would feel uncomfortable under all the stares. What was I doing? Why the hell was I even comparing the two of them? They were two completely different women. Both were amazing in their own ways.

"Have you seen Clarissa?" I ask him. I needed an answer before Anya came any closer to us. If she heard me asking about Clarissa, she would become angry, and I didn't want to ruin her night due to my own problems. I'd already done plenty to hurt her feelings, and I promised her to try not to do anything to betray her again.

Anya never found out who the girl was that I had feelings for. If she realized how crazy I acted for Clarissa, it would be a clear indication, and I didn't want that to happen. If it did, it would cause more problems for all three of us.

"Autumn left a few minutes ago to bring her out of her room." He informs me. "As you already know, Clarissa, just like Dante, is not reacting well to this engagement party. I'm afraid we may not be able to persuade her to join the rest of us."

Dante was also not here. He'd chosen to skip the party, and I wasn't about to force him to watch something like this. I shouldn't force Clarissa either; if this were something that would hurt her, it would be better that she wasn't around to see it. Though, I just wished that I could see her, just once. I wanted to gaze at her as much as possible before I placed a ring on Anya's finger. My selfish heart wanted to see her as much as she would let me.

"I can't find her." A familiar voice says.

I spun around to see Autumn behind us.

She was talking about Clarissa, no doubt. But why couldn't she find her? Wasn't she supposed to be in her room?

"What do you mean you can't find her?" I demand. "Where is Clarissa?"

"I've looked everywhere for her." She informs me. "Her dress isn't in the room, which means that she did get dressed to attend the party. However, she isn't here. I've searched the entire mansion. Clarissa is not here."

I can hear the panic in her voice. Suddenly, I felt dizzy; everything in the room was beginning to spin. I couldn't think properly now that I knew Clarissa was not in the mansion.

I knew what she was like. I knew what she was capable of doing when she was hurt.

fvck! I should have expected this from her. I should have known that she would have done something like this. I should have asked the guards to keep an eye on her. To prevent her from leaving and doing something reckless.

I loosened my tie and examined all the faces in the room that were visible to me. I was still hoping that she was somewhere in the crowd, even though I already knew she wasn't there. I would know, after all, I was searching all of the faces earlier looking for her.

She wasn't here.

Where the fvck was she then? Where did she run off to?

"Continue to search inside," I order them. "I will ask the guards if they saw anything that could help us find her. If she isn't in the mansion, it only means she's left. She isn't home."

I had to hope that, for once, Clarissa didn't do anything crazy that could put her life in danger. Anya spots me walking through the crowd, and she immediately pushes her way toward me. She thinks that I'm coming for her, but she doesn't realize that I am trying to leave the party.

Her eyes widen when I try to go around her. She grabs my arm to stop me from going any further. I couldn't deal with this right now. I had to get to Clarissa. The engagement party could wait. She was more important than this.

"Where are you going?" Anya demands. "It's almost time for the announcement. Everyone is waiting for us. You can't leave now!"

"We can't find Clarissa," I inform her. There was no point in lying to her; she had to know the truth. "I have to find her. This party can't happen unless I know that she's okay."

She looks horrified by my words. Damn it. I hated that look on her face, but there was nothing that I could do about it. I was becoming impatient, and I knew if I didn't find Clarissa within the next hour, I would lose my f*g mind.

“What do you mean you can’t find her?” She demands as her eyes narrow. “Are you sure she isn’t just doing this to mess with us? You know just as much as I do that Clarissa does not want us to get married. She dislikes me; she has always hated me even though I’ve been nothing but nice to her. It’s unfair, Damon. It’s unfair that you always pick her side over mine. Why are you letting her ruin this beautiful night for us? If you walk out of here, people are going to talk; they’re going to laugh at me. Please, for once, think about me and not Clarissa.”

I shoved my hands into my pocket and rocked back and forth in my shoes. She didn’t know Clarissa as I did. While Clarissa didn’t want to attend this party, I was sure she wasn’t intentionally trying to sabotage this night for us. It was all just too much for her, and she may have acted on her emotions. Whatever the case may be, I had to find her.

“Please, Anya, please try to understand. I have to find her.” I plead with her. She had to understand. She had to.

“I can’t believe you’re doing this out of all the nights. Tonight is the night you choose to walk out of here to look for someone that may or may not be in danger!” She snaps. “In case you haven’t realized, Damon, she is your sister, not your freaking wife. Everyone here can look for her. Why do you need to do it?”

“I’m sorry.”

That’s all I say as I storm out of the house. I couldn’t listen to Anya’s words any longer. I was losing time.

Something in my heart tells me that she’s in danger. I could feel it pounding in my chest, begging me to protect her. To keep her safe.

Where the hell are you, Clarissa?

The guards look up as soon as they see me approaching them.

“Did Clarissa leave the mansion earlier?” I ask Kyle.

He nods, “she left over an hour ago.”

Damn it.

“Did you happen to see where she went?” I demand. “Did she take a vehicle with her?”

“No.” He shook his head. “She didn’t need to take a vehicle. She went straight into the woods.”

“And you didn’t think to report this to me?” I demand roughly.

"I-I'm sorry." He stutters. "I didn't know I had to report this to you or anyone else. I was not informed of this before."

fvck!

Why did she go back into those woods after what happened the last time she was in there? I didn't think Clarissa would take such a crazy risk again. Why didn't she tell anyone? If she didn't want to tell me, she could have at least said something to Autumn!

I was losing my damn mind. How far in the forest did she wander off to? How long would it take me to find her?

Something in the air catches my attention before I can take a step forward toward the woods.

I frown. It didn't take me long to figure out what it was.

It's smoke.

I can smell it also.

"Is there a fire somewhere?" I ask as I look around us.

The guards shrug their shoulders. The music from inside was blasting loudly, and it was hard to hear them above the noise. Did they turn the music up louder in the past few seconds? It was probably my brothers trying to distract the crowd from my disappearance.

They're pointing to something behind me. I follow their gazes, and when I see what they're pointing at, my body stops moving, rooted to the ground.

There was indeed a fire. But it wasn't in the house.

It was deep in the woods. . .where Clarissa was.

Oh, fvck.

The Unwanted Bride Of Atticus Fawn Book 2: Chapter 30 - Tips

0 7 minutes read

~ANYA~

I couldn't believe that this was happening on my engagement night! Everything was going as planned until a few minutes ago. Somehow Clarissa had found a way to make

this night about her. The b!tchy girl always knew how to destroy my life with her tricks. She wasn't as innocent as everyone wanted me to believe. She was anything but innocent. She was an evil, manipulative b!tch.

Just when I was getting things to go my way, she destroyed them for me. I should have seen this coming. I should have been prepared.

I wanted to see the pain on her face today when Damon announced our engagement in front of everyone. Yet, the stupid girl had chosen to be a coward. She ran before anything could happen instead of staying as she should have.

"What's happening?" Dante asks as he joins my side.

He wasn't here earlier, when did he arrive?

"I thought you weren't attending the party?" I ask him, pretending to care.

He stiffens, "I didn't want to, but I thought I should at least be there for you and Damon. It may not be a happy occasion for me, but it is one for the both of you."

I nod, "thank you, Dante. I'm happy that you came, but right now, everything is a mess, and I'm losing my mind!"

He frowns, "where is Damon?"

I bite my lip in frustration. "He left," I mumble angrily.

His eyes narrow, "he left you? Alone? On your engagement night?"

"Don't let her manipulate you," Griffin says behind us. "Clarissa is missing. We're all looking for her, including Damon."

I narrowed my eyes; Griffin was constantly pushing my buttons. I disliked him just as much as I hated Clarissa. Why was he even listening to our conversation? It had nothing to do with him.

"Clarissa is missing?" He asks Griffin. "Where was the last place you saw her?"

"She was supposed to be in her room." He explains to him. "But it turns out that she isn't even at home. Damon went to look for her, but we have no idea where he went either. He disappeared just like she did."

"Maybe she's in the woods," Dante suggests. "She did that the last time we couldn't find her."

“Would she take a risk like that after what happened recently?” Griffin asks. “I don’t want to believe she’d do something like that.”

“Oh, trust me,” I say. “She is capable of doing something that stupid. I’m sure all of you are worrying for no reason. She will be back soon. I’m more worried about Damon. What would all of these people think if he didn’t return soon? It would look like he left me!”

“That wouldn’t be the worst thing in the world now, would it?” Griffin asks me.

“There’s no time for this,” Dante growls. “The sooner we find Damon and Clarissa, the sooner everything can move forward.”

He was right. As much as I wanted to forget about Clarissa tonight, I knew that they had to find her for this engagement to happen still. If I wanted it to happen tonight, I’d have no choice but to help them find her.

The forest was probably a good place to start searching for her. If she wasn’t here and if no vehicles were missing, then she had to have left on foot. We needed to speak to the guards.

“We should search the woods,” I tell Dante. “We can go together. Everyone else could wait here and keep looking for her.”

I wanted time alone with Dante. I still wanted him under my control. Even though I was marrying Damon, I wanted Dante to be under my spell. I loved having both of them do anything for me. Unlike Damon, Dante still listened to every word that I spoke to him. He always did everything I asked him to do for me. I didn’t want to lose that.

“Let’s go,” Dante tells me, and I quickly leave. It was better than staying here and having everyone feel sorry for me. I knew what they were all thinking. They thought that Damon was having second thoughts about the entire thing. They didn’t realize that this was all because of that stupid girl. Her family refused to tell the guests what was happening; they protected her like they always did. Everyone always had to clean up after Clarissa’s mess. She did things without thinking, and everyone else was left to pick up the pieces for her.

Just as we were leaving, I spotted someone I shouldn’t have. I freeze. Dante notices that I’ve stopped, and he immediately walks over to me.

“What’s wrong?” He asks.

Willow. What was she doing here? Why was my sister here? Did she follow me here?

As far as I knew, she never left our home. I've always told her to stay there, that it was unsafe to leave the house. Then why the hell was she here? And how long has she been disobeying me?

Her eyes fell on me, and her face brightened when she saw me.

Oh no.

"Anya?" Dante tries once more to speak to me.

"Anya!" Willow shouts my name.

Oh no. No. No. No.

Dante can't know that she's my sister. His gaze moves from me to her, and my heart freezes at what I see next. No. It can't be.

I watched as Willow's eyes widened the moment her eyes fell on Dante. Her mouth forms a small 'o', and her cheeks are red.

She likes him.

My sister likes Dante.

This is not good. She'd just met him. She hadn't even spoken a word to him.

I had to get her out of here before she did something stupid.

I was so focused on her that I hadn't realized that Dante was frozen beside me as he gazed at her. Please tell me this is a nightmare. Please tell me that I will wake up, and this will all be just a f*g dream.

"How does she know your name?" He asks me. "Who is she? I've never seen her around before."

"She's a friend I invited to the party." I lie.

"She isn't dressed for an engagement party." Dante points out as he gazes at her jeans.

I press my lips tightly together. "She isn't rich like you, Dante. This is all that she could afford."

"I—"

Before he can say anything else, I cut him off, "I need to tell her what's happening. Can you wait for me?"

He initially looks hesitant to leave us, but he eventually listens to me like he usually does.

I grab Willow's arm when he leaves and pull her as far away from the house as possible. I needed to ensure that no one was looking at us.

"We should search the woods," I tell Dante. "We can go together. Everyone else could wait here and keep looking for her."

"What the hell are you doing here?" I demand from her. "You shouldn't be here!"

She looks down at her feet as I scold her, "I'm sorry." She apologizes. "I told you before that it gets lonely now that mother isn't home with us. I miss her. And when you aren't home, I have no one to speak to. It's hard, sister. I just wanted to spend some time with you, to meet your friends. I have none."

I sigh and lift my hands into the air, "I told you it's dangerous. I told you that when it was safe, I would introduce you to everyone."

"That's partly why I came also." She informs me. "I saw a strange man snooping around the house earlier. He ran when he realized that someone was still at home."

I stopped moving at her words. Someone was at our house while she was home alone? Who the hell could that be? If the person ran when they realized someone was home, it only meant that it was an enemy. Someone that was trying to get information on me.

This wasn't good. This wasn't good at all.

"Are you upset with me?" Willow asks unhappily.

"Of course not," I assure her. "I'm proud of you for finding me and being brave. You did the right thing by coming to find me after you saw that man. I need you to give me a description of him when we get home. I need to find out who he was and why he was there."

She nods and looks behind me. "Is there a party inside?"

"Yes, but you can't stay here," I tell her. "I'll have someone come and pick you up. You will be safe with them. Trust me."

She nods, "will it be that man you were just with earlier?"

My back stiffens at her question, "no. It will not be him. I have somewhere that I need to be with him right now."

She looks disappointed by my words, which bothers me more than it should. I knew it was likely just a crush; it was understandable since Dante was a good-looking man. However, I didn't like the idea of my sister liking him, even if it was just a harmless crush.

"If anyone asks who you are. Tell them that you're my friend. Okay?"

She frowns. "But I'm your sister."

I nod, "I know, but these people don't need to know that."

Her forehead creases, "are you ashamed of me? Is it because of the way I'm dressed? I don't have on a pretty dress as you do."

"Of course not, Willow," I tell her. "I could never be ashamed of you. One day you will understand why I asked you to do this for me. But please, I don't have time to explain this to you."

She sighs, "I guess I can do that. I don't like to lie, but if you ask me to, I will."

I smile, "thank you, Willow. I'll wait with you until my friend shows up to pick you up."

If only they could get here quickly before Dante returns. It could get worse if Griffin or the others come here and see her. They won't be as understanding as Dante was. I'm sure that they wouldn't believe a word that I said.

I had to get Willow out of this place as quickly as possible.