

The Unwanted Bride Of Atticus Fawn Book 2: Chapter 31 - Tips

0 5 minutes read

~CLARISSA~

I stepped forward, but the fire taunted me by moving closer to me in return. It was coming towards me, closing in. If I tried to move again, it would only move closer to me. It's almost like it was trying to reach me. To tell me something.

I had to be losing my mind. Maybe I was dreaming. Maybe if I closed my eyes and pretended that I was asleep, all of this would go away.

The heat was becoming unbearable; it was enough to remind me that it was not a dream like I was hoping it to be.

Was this how my life was going to end? From a fire? A fire that I had no idea where it came from.

There were no signs of a fire when I came here the first time, just whispers that I initially thought were something made up in my mind. Now I knew there was a possibility that I was wrong.

Someone must have intentionally done this. The whispers in my head had fvckngd me to stop, and while I wasn't paying attention to my surroundings, they'd set a fire around me. But still, I would have heard something.

Unless. . . Witches were involved.

They would have been able to start a fire very quickly. My head spun as I tried to figure out what had just happened while also trying to find a way to escape this fire.

"CLARISSA!" I hear a familiar voice shouting my name.

My heart paused for a second.

"CLARISSA!"

My heart skips a beat this time. I couldn't believe it. He was here.

"Where are you?"

I can't stop the smile from forming in my lips despite the fire still blazing around me.

Damon. He'd come for me. Even though his engagement party was today, he still came for me.

Of course, he would. He has always protected me in the past. He was always the one to save me from everyone, including myself.

"I'm here!" I shout, making it easier for him to find me.

How did he know to follow the fire? He was probably used to trouble following me wherever I went. Anywhere danger was present; somehow, I was also there.

I breathed a sigh of relief when I could finally see him, not just hear his voice. His eyes widen when he spots me in the middle of the fire. I could barely get a good view of him because of the flames and it bothered me.

"Wait there." He orders me. "I'm coming to you!"

"No!" I shout. "Don't come here. There are flames everywhere! We can find another way to get me out of here. Get Autumn. I'm sure she can find a way to get rid of these flames. I believe witches are the ones who did this. If I'm right, Autumn is the right one to help me."

If I had listened to Autumn before, none of this would have happened to begin with. I knew I should have told her what I was about to do, she would have been able to talk me out of this stupid idea. Now, I was in this mess and didn't know how to get out of it.

"Witches?" He growls. "What the fvck do witches want with our family again?"

"Get Autumn," I say once more.

"No!" He roars above the fire. "I'm not leaving you here. We don't have much time to get you out of there; I need to move you now!"

I should have known he wouldn't listen to me.

Before I can say anything else, Damon jumps into the fire. I scream the moment the fire touches his skin. Damon doesn't even flinch from the pain. He's so focused on protecting me that he doesn't care that he'd just been injured.

I gasped when he grabbed my waist and held my body tightly against his. He buried his face in my hair as he held me close.

"I'm so glad you're safe." He whispers against my ear. I slowly reach up to wrap my arms around his neck. It felt so good to be in his arms, where I belonged.

The danger was not over, however. We still had to get out of here before it was too late.

I pull away from Damon to examine the wounds on his body. This could have been avoided.

“Why did you do that?” I demand. “You could have gotten seriously hurt!”

“Do you think I care about that?” He asks me. “Do you think anything matters to me when your life is in danger? You should know me better than that by now, Clarissa. Nothing will ever stand in the way of me protecting you.”

My lips part, and I can't help but melt at his words. Why does he always do this? Doesn't he realize by now that it's words like those that make me fall so quickly for him? I was trying to let go of him so he could be with Anya, but how could I do that when he said things like this to me?

I slowly touched one of the red marks on his arm, and he winced.

“We don't have time for this, Clarissa.” He reminds me as he removes his partly burnt suit jacket and covers my body with it. “We need to jump.”

“Are you insane?” I demand. “The fire is much worse than before, and look at how many bruises you have because of it already! I won't let you hurt yourself again because of me!”

“We don't have a choice, do we?” he demands.

“If you had listened to me before, we would have had a choice. Autumn would have easily gotten rid of the fire.” I point out.

“If I had listened to you by the time Autumn had reached you, the fire would have already gotten to you by then.” He growls.

“At least you wouldn't have been in danger,” I mumble.

“FVCK.” He hissed. “Are you listening to yourself?”

“As a matter of fact, I am.” I snap. “Now we're both stuck in the fire. Why are you even here when your engagement party is happening now?”

He grabs my face in his hand and forces me to look into his eyes, “does this look like the right time to be speaking about any of that, Clarissa?”

I narrow my eyes, “you shouldn't be here. You should be back at the party with the woman you chose to be your wife.”

"I don't care what is happening around me, Clarissa; I don't f*ucking care about anything else as much as I care about your safety." He growls. "As long as you're in danger, I will forget about everything else. fu*ck it all. Nothing else matters when you need me."

My lips part, and my heart does this little annoying flip-flop. Stop it. Don't do that. Don't fall for his words. Don't become weak.

It's already too late. The fire and emptiness in my heart were already disappearing because of his words.

"I don't hear anything," Damon whispers as he looks around us. He pauses and his eyes go wide. "The fire, where the hell did it go?"

I slowly followed his gaze. I couldn't believe my eyes. Something was definitely wrong here.

He was right. The fire was gone. What the hell just happened?

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07 minutes read

~CLARISSA~

"Something is wrong," I whisper. "The fire should still be surrounding us."

How was this even possible?

I was happy it was gone, but it didn't change the fact that nothing made sense. It was here just a minute ago. One minute Damon and I were trying to find a way to escape, and the next, we had nothing to escape from.

"We should get out of here immediately," Damon says as he examines our surroundings. There wasn't any visible danger, but that didn't mean we were safe.

"Whatever caused that fire is still around. They're messing with us. I don't know what they have planned, but we must return to the others. They need to know that we may or may not have another unknown enemy."

Right. Back to the engagement. As soon as we returned, the party would continue as though it had never stopped.

I was sure Anya was making a scene back home since Damon had left to find me during their engagement ceremony. She would be pissed, no doubt. Damon didn't seem

to be bothered about her. He was too busy being frustrated over the decisions I've been making lately.

"I don't want to be there," I whisper. I did not want to go back. Not tonight. Not while that party was still ongoing.

Damon paused his movements so that he could look back at me.

"What?" he asks. I can feel the tension in the air between us increase.

"I don't want to be at that party, Damon," I say. "It's why I came into the woods, to begin with. I don't want to go back there. I'll do anything not to have to witness that ceremony."

He runs a hand down his face and sighs, "Clarissa, you don't expect to remain here after what just happened, do you? And you're crazy if you think I'll leave you here just because you asked me to."

"No," I mumble. "But I'm not going back there either."

Damon looks unhappy with me, or maybe he's upset with our situation. I'm not sure which of those has him angry right now. Judging by the glare he gives me next, it's safe to say that I'm the one he's upset with. But according to him, I'm never the one he's angry with. But it's possible that he has changed his mind after today.

"Do you know what could have happened to you if Autumn didn't tell us that she couldn't find you anywhere?" He demands. "Do you understand the danger you put your life in?"

I press my lips tightly together and glare at him. I'm aware of what I did, but it doesn't mean I'm proud of my actions. Doesn't he realize how painful it would be for me to watch him get engaged to Anya?

"Why do you always do things that endanger your life?" He demands. "Why don't you realize by now that every time something happens to you, my whole f*g world turns upside down?"

My lips part; why did he have to say that to me? Why?

"Why do you always do that?" I demand, answering his question with one of my own.

He frowns, "do what?"

I can still hear the irritation in his voice. He's still angry with me for putting my life in danger yet again. Doesn't he realize by now that I only put my life in danger when it concerns him? If he gave me what I wanted, I wouldn't have to resort to doing these

crazy things to get away from my own emotions.
~CLARISSA~

“Something is wrong,” I whisper. “The fire should still be surrounding us.”

“You always say things like this.” I snap.

“Things like what?” He demands. How can he be this clueless?

“You always say things that no one else would,” I explain. “Dante, Atticus, and Griffin would never tell me that my careless actions turn their whole worlds upside down. They would never get so worked up over my disappearance as you do. You have always protected me more than they have done. I know they care about me also, but it’s different with you. I can sense the difference; I can feel it in my heart. Yet, you keep denying everything. You expect me to forget my feelings when you keep being this protective over me. You expect me to throw everything away when your words make my heart skip a beat every damn time. Don’t you realize by now that your words and actions are why I’m the way I am today?”

His eyes widen at my words, it’s weird, but I don’t think Damon has even realized what he’s been doing all along. I don’t think he’s ever considered that he was partly the reason for this.

My words had just opened his eyes. I didn’t want him to stop doing the things that I loved. I didn’t want him to change his behavior towards me now that he understood what it was doing to me. I didn’t want to regret saying this to him either.

“Clarissa,” he whispers as he steps closer to me.

I didn’t want another apology from him. I was tired of his apologies. I wanted him to fight for me instead of saying there was no chance for us. I wanted him to tell me he wanted me just as desperately as I needed him. There were so many things that I dreamed of, and all of them included Damon.

“Don’t.” I stop him as he stops a few inches away from my body. “Don’t apologize. I’m tired of your apologies, Damon. I don’t want to listen to another one from you.”

“How can I fix any of this when you don’t even accept my apology?” He whispers. I can hear the pain in his voice, and it tugs at my heart. Why does every word out of his mouth affect me this much?

“I wish things were different, Clarissa.” He confesses. “I do. I wish my parents hadn’t adopted you. I wish I had met you under different circumstances. However, if they hadn’t adopted you, I may have never met you. I may have never gotten the chance to

protect you the way that I love doing. In a way, I'm glad that they did, I'm glad that I got the chance to have you close to me. I have mixed emotions about the entire thing. It's crazy but I don't think my life would have been the same without you in it."

My lips part. I couldn't believe those words were coming from Damon's mouth. What did this mean? Was this the closest thing to a confession I would ever get from him?

I kept receiving mixed signals from Damon. One minute it felt like he wanted Anya and only her. The next, it felt like I was the one that he wanted. And maybe, I felt this way because Damon himself had no idea what he wanted. He was torn between the both of us.

"If I didn't share the same last name as yours, if we had met under different circumstances, just two strangers who happened to like each other. Would you have chosen to be with me then? Would you have given me everything that I want now?" I ask him desperately.

I wanted to hear his response to that question. I needed to listen to him tell me yes.

His eyes searched mine, and my heart was racing in my chest, unable to keep up with my emotions.

His eyes searched mine, and my heart was racing in my chest, unable to keep up with my emotions.

"Please, Damon," I beg. "Tell me that we would have had a chance. Tell me what I want to hear for once."

What's wrong with me? It's not like his answer would change our situation now. What difference would it make? Why did I need to hear it from his mouth?

His face looks like he's in pain as he seems to have an inner battle within himself.

"Clarissa—"

He doesn't get to finish. He doesn't get to answer me because we hear footsteps and someone calling his name.

No.

No. No. No.

Why was she here?

Why did she come to ruin this moment for us?

“DAMON?” Anya screams once more when she doesn’t get a response.

Damon looks like he wants to apologize yet again. He doesn’t take his eyes away from me. He’s searching my face for something. I hear Dante’s voice next; they’re growing closer to us.

“Answer me, please.”

“Would it change anything now, Clarissa?” He asks me gently. “There’s no use in me answering something that will never happen.”

“It may not change anything now, but it means something to me,” I tell him. “Just knowing there was ever a possibility for us would mean everything to me, Damon. Everything to me.”

His eyes grow softer at my words, and I can tell it’s affected him significantly.

“DAMON!” Anya shouts when she sees us.

He breaks eye contact with me to look at her and Dante. I don’t turn to them; I’m still gazing at Damon. I’m still waiting for his answer.

“What happened here?” Dante asks as he looks around us.

Damon attempts to walk over to them, but I grab his arm. He looks back at me, knowing what I’m asking for. He knows that I’m still waiting for him to say the one thing that I want to hear.

His gaze lingers on my hand on his arm for a few seconds before he lifts his eyes to look directly into mine. He swallows before he says, “yes.”

It’s just one word. Just one word. But it makes my heart scream with joy. This means that he did want me. This means that I was right all along. I wasn’t crazy for thinking Damon wanted me as well.

It also meant that he was only marrying Anya to push me away. He didn’t want her in the way I thought in the past. Damon was marrying her to protect me. He wanted to protect me from everyone else and their reactions if they ever found out about my feelings for him. Autumn was right all along.

This time I had no doubts. This time I knew I was not hallucinating. After today, I would never believe anything he said to me that claimed the opposite. I wouldn’t let him trick me into believing that Anya was the one he wanted. I knew now that I was doing the right thing before by fighting for us. Now I had to persuade Damon to do the same. I had to show him that there was always a chance when two people were right for each other. And we were definitely right for each other. He couldn’t tell me otherwise.

I couldn't believe this. My heart has never been this happy.

Damon wanted me.

He wanted me!

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2 5 minutes read

~DAMON~

I couldn't resist telling her the truth. I couldn't resist giving her what she wanted to hear for once. I knew it wouldn't change a single thing between us, and I was aware that it might only make things worse. However, I couldn't say no to her today, not after almost losing her.

My heart still raced from seeing her surrounded by those flames. I was terrified of losing Clarissa. I always knew there was a great chance that she was my weakness, but now I was one hundred percent sure that she was. No one terrified me the way that she did. I've never wanted to protect anyone the way I've always wanted to protect her.

I would never be able to live with myself if anything ever happened to her. It bothers me that something terrible could have happened to her today, and I wouldn't have known anything until it was too late.

If Autumn hadn't gone into her room before the engagement ceremony, I could have lost her, and I would have never been able to forgive myself. I couldn't let something like that happen again.

I knew I was the one to push her into doing something so careless. I was the one that hurt her feelings and made her act out. I couldn't make that mistake again. I had to be very careful with my words and actions around Clarissa.

I had to protect her from everything, including herself. I knew now that I also had to protect her from my selfish actions. I knew it would cause me more trouble in the future, but from now on, I had to pay closer attention to her. I had to ensure she wasn't plotting anything dangerous that could harm her. From now on, I will keep a close watch on her. Nothing and no one would stop me from doing what I had to in order to keep her safe.

I would do f*g anything for Clarissa. Anything. Anything except what she was asking from me. That was the only thing I couldn't give to her. Everything else I would go to the end of the earth to get for her.

“Damon?” Anya calls once more. Clarissa slowly lets go of my arm, and I turn towards Dante.

“When I arrived, Clarissa was surrounded by fire,” I explain to them. I didn’t know how to explain what happened, however. Even I was still trying to come to terms with it.

“Surrounded by fire?” He demands. “How did she end up in that situation?”

I shrug my shoulders, “I think we may be under attack like the last time. And by witches once again.”

Anya stiffens at my words.

“Witches?” She asks cautiously. “Why do you think that?”

“Clarissa believes witches were responsible for the fire, and I agree. The fire disappeared while I was trying to get her out of it. Only a witch would be capable of playing tricks like that. There was no water, nothing at all to make that fire disappear as it did.”

“This is not good,” Dante growls. “Not good at all. We need to get back to our parents. We have to tell them what’s happening. We can’t let our guards down again. We almost lost so much the last time that we did. We need to be prepared for anything.”

“Before we go,” Anya mumbles as she turns towards Clarissa. “Why the hell did you come here during our engagement party? The entire thing is ruined because of you. All of the guests are already leaving. My special night is ruined because of your carelessness Clarissa!”

I stiffen at her tone. While I understood why she was upset, I didn’t like anyone speaking to Clarissa like that, especially not after what she just went through.

“Anya.” I try to calm her down. “We can have a better discussion at home. This is not the time for any of this.”

She glared at Clarissa, and even Dante looked upset with her.

“Why did you put your life in danger like that again?” He asks her. “Clarissa, you should know better than this by now. You’re not a child. You should make smarter choices. You’re lucky that Damon came in time to get you.”

I don’t think Clarissa is listening to either one of them. Her entire mood changed the second I’d given her the answer she was waiting for. It seems as though she’s still thinking about it.

“Are you even listening to us?” Anya demands.

“That’s enough.” I roar. “I agree that she may not have done the right thing by coming here on her own during the party, but that doesn’t take away from the fact that she was almost killed tonight. Give her some time to process everything before you ask her all of these questions.”

I can feel Clarissa’s eyes on me, and I know that if I look at her, I’ll see the girl that I gave my heart to a long time ago. The same girl that always looked at me like I was her hero. No girl had ever looked at me like that before I met her. I was a selfish bastard who did everything to see that look on her face. I loved the way she made me feel. I loved doing things just for her.

“He’s right,” Dante says with a sigh. “I’m sorry, Clarissa.”

He walks over to her and pulls her into his arms. I tried to remind myself that he was my brother and not an enemy trying to take her away from me.

“I’m glad you’re safe.” He tells her right before he finally pulls away.

It took me a while to realize that Anya glared at me the entire time.

Damn it.

I still had to deal with her for walking out of our engagement party.

“How could you do this?” She whispered as we started our walk back to the house.

“I’m sorry.” I apologize. I’ve been giving out plenty of apologies recently. So far, it hasn’t solved any of my problems.

“Is that all you have to say to me?” She demands. “It was supposed to be our special night, Damon, and somehow you managed to make it all about Clarissa.”

“Was I supposed just to leave her there to die?” I growl. “If you were in her situation, would you have preferred that I’d left you there to die?”

She narrows her eyes, “that’s different, and you know it. For starters, I wouldn’t have been stupid enough to put myself in a situation like that!”

“Careful,” I warn her. I didn’t want to hear a single bad word about Clarissa. I would not allow it.

She sighs, “we shouldn’t be arguing on such a special day. I just wanted this day to be all about us. I’m so disappointed that I didn’t get to enjoy today with you. I was looking

forward to finally calling you my fiancé. You have no idea how devastated I am that it was called off because of this.”

I sigh, “Anya—”

“No.” She stops me. “It’s okay. This just made me realize how badly I want to marry you. Let’s forget about the engagement party. We don’t need to have another one after tonight.”

I frown, “what are you saying?”

“Let’s go straight into the wedding!” She sings happily. “Let’s get married next week! It doesn’t even have to be big as long as I have your last name and live in the same home as you!”

I stop moving, and so do Clarissa and Dante behind us.

Married? Next week? Those were the only words that were spinning in my head over and over again.

I slowly turn around to glance at Clarissa and wish I hadn’t. The look on her face did something to my heart. Something I would never be able to forget. Never.

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0 6 minutes read

~CLARISSA~

I don’t want to believe I’ve heard her correctly.

How could she ask for the wedding to be next week? That was impossible! I could barely survive this engagement night; what would happen on his wedding day?

Anya knew what she was doing. At this point, she was intentionally trying to ruin my life. And she was going a b****y good job at it. I had to stop her. I had to do everything in my power to prevent this from happening.

There was no doubt in my mind that she was rushing to marry Damon. She knew that I didn’t want it to happen. She knew that I was willing to do anything to stop it, and she wouldn’t make it easy for me. After today, she was more determined than ever for this wedding to happen. She knew that I was a bigger threat than she initially thought.

How could she not care about the engagement party? She was willing to skip it as long as it meant she could quickly marry Damon. This wasn't about marrying him anymore. This was personal.

This meant I had even less time to convince Damon to fight for us instead of letting me go.

I couldn't play safe anymore; I had to take all the risks to make Damon mine.

Anya kept proving to me that she never loved Dante or Damon. She knew Dante could hear everything she was saying, yet she moved up the wedding while he listened.

I could sense his pain for the entire walk back to the house. He didn't bother repeating a word after her announcement. How could she so easily hurt him when all he's ever done was protect her? Dante has always been crazy about her, his eyes have always only been for her. Atticus was interested in Autumn even if he never knew it until after their marriage and Damon, I knew where his heart really was. But Dante has always loved Anya and only her. She never deserved him, she never deserved any of them.

It bothered me that Damon didn't try once to say no to her. He could have asked for the date to be a later one, but he just left her to do as she pleased, even after what had happened earlier.

He was determined to make me forget about him even though it was clear that his decision wouldn't just hurt me but him as well.

"Where have you been?" Atticus demands when he sees the four of us walking through the gates.

"Please don't tell me you were in that forest again, Clarissa." He adds as he takes one look at me. "Have you learned nothing after what happened there in the past?"

I bite my lip as he glares at me. I did not want to disappoint anyone, and I didn't want to cause any trouble for them; my emotions always made me act without thinking. I was not proud of it. But I would not change it either. I did what I had to do. I wasn't going to sit down and watch the person that I loved get engaged to an awful woman who did not love him.

"I have something important to discuss with everyone," Damon says as he tries to distract Atticus and the others from scolding me. I knew that he intended to protect me yet again. Protecting me was always the one thing that came first for Damon; it came naturally for him. That's why I'm not that surprised by his actions anymore. I wish he could see into my heart; I wish he could feel my emotions. Only then would he realize that he was making the wrong decision.

Most guests must have already left since the house was almost empty when I stepped inside. They must have already announced that the engagement party was canceled.

"We think that it's possible we are being targeted by witches again," Damon tells our family the second he had everyone in the family room.

"Why would you say that?" Atticus demands.

"When Clarissa was in the forest, she was trapped by fire; it was surrounding her." He explains. "Fire doesn't just form a perfect circle like that without some kind of interference."

I'm happy that he's doing all of the talking for me. I was still shocked after hearing about Anya's decision to move up the wedding.

"You were surrounded by fire?" Autumn asks me in horror. "That's awful. Who on earth will want to hurt you?"

"She may not be the target," Griffin says. "The target could be one of us or all of us. She was just easy to get to since she was on her own in the middle of the forest while we were all preoccupied with the party. It was the perfect opportunity to strike, and I believe it was only just a warning. They want to scare us. Whoever it is, they want us to be aware of them; they want us to know they're close. It must be a sick game to them."

"But still," Atticus cuts in. "It's not like they would have known Clarissa wouldn't have been at the engagement party."

"It means that they have eyes on us." Grandfather says. "They've been watching us, waiting for a chance to attack. They weren't expecting Damon to leave the party to find her. We're lucky that she is still alive. Clarissa, it would help if you were more careful from now on. We can't lose you."

Everyone gets quiet at his warning.

"I'll take Clarissa to her room," Damon says suddenly. He could probably sense that I was still losing my mind over his wedding announcement. "She needs to get some rest. She is still in shock from everything."

Autumn hugs me, and so does everyone else after her.

Damon and I are silent as he walks me to my room. I don't know what to say. I was not about to congratulate him. He knows that my mood will only worsen after what Anya said.

"I'm not going to let you marry her." I blurt out as soon as I enter my room. He's standing by the door, looking at me, just looking. Waiting.

“What did you say?” He finally asks after a few seconds pass.

“I said I’m not going to let you marry her,” I repeat for his sake. I wanted to make my intentions clear. I wanted him to be prepared because I was not planning on letting him go.

Damon’s eyes widen in surprise at my words.

“Clarissa—”

“Why are you marrying someone that doesn’t truly love you?” I demand. “It was so easy for her to throw Dante out of her life; what makes you think she wouldn’t do the same to you?”

It bothered me that Damon was so quickly accepting all of this. He should be fighting back. He should be fighting for us!

He sighs and walks into the room. I watch as he gently shuts the door behind him before turning his attention back to me.

“This is something that has to be done.” He says gently. “I know it’s not something you’re happy about, but it is my decision.”

I narrow my eyes, “why are you doing this? I can tell that you’re not happy. I know you better than anyone else, Damon. You’re not happy. You’re miserable.”

“Clarissa, please, try to understand.” He pleads. “I can’t have you acting recklessly again. I can’t watch you hurt yourself because of the decisions that I’ve made. I’m doing all this to f*g protect you, and you’re not helping me by walking straight into the danger.”

My eyes widen. I was right all along. In his twisted way, Damon was protecting me. Did he think that he was somehow protecting me from myself? Was he hoping I would give up on us after he married Anya?

“Damon, please don’t do this. You’re not protecting me by marrying her. You’re klling me instead!” I exclaim. “You’re taking all the joy out of my life by choosing to be with her. I can’t stand seeing you with her. Can’t you tell what it’s doing to me? Isn’t it obvious that I’m hurting?”

He walks over to me and grabs my shoulders, “this pain is nothing compared to the pain you will feel if anyone ever found out about us. Your life would be a f*g mess. Everyone will judge you. Because I’m a Fawn by bl00d, they will not treat me as badly as they would you. Please try to understand!”

“I don’t care about any of that, Damon!” I shout. “I want to be with you. Only you. No one else. Why can’t you see how badly I want us to be more than what we are now? I don’t

want to be your sister. I could never be your sister. It's unfair. I've never wanted anything or anyone as much as I want you. How do you expect me to watch you marry Anya and not do anything about it?"

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0 8 minutes read

~DAMON~

No words have ever cut deeper than these spoken by Clarissa.

It's the first time she's been so clear about her feelings. She's always given little hints through her actions, but it's the first time her words have been this clear. I've always been able to control myself, telling myself that I was wrong, that she meant something else. But this time, it was so clear that I couldn't deny her words.

She doesn't realize how happy it makes me to know that I'm the one that she wants. She doesn't realize that I want her too. I've wanted her for so f*g long that it physically hurts to be this close to her and not have her in my arms. I'm tempted to dip my head lower to touch my lips to hers. I'm tempted to nip at her earlobe and suck on the skin behind her ear. I'm tempted to bite her neck and claim what was rightfully mine since the start.

Mine.

fvck.

Why have I always been this possessive over her? My possessiveness has only grown over the past few days. I was so possessive over her that I would literally kill anyone that touched her inappropriately.

Damn it, I almost killed myself the last time I lost control around her.

Did all Fawns have the same t*e to deal with? Atticus was also supposed to love only Anya, but somehow Autumn could gain his heart without even trying. It was the same with me. I was thought only to have eyes for Anya, but somehow Clarissa is all that I can see. She has always been by my side, and she's someone I trust more than anyone else in this world.

Happiness for me meant having her by my side. Nothing could ever feel as good as having her in my arms, close to me, where I could touch and smell her.

This only meant that I would be miserable after marrying Anya. I would lose the one person that made me happy. But I would do it all again as long as she got to live a normal life.

I couldn't deny my feelings anymore. It was clear as day that I wanted Clarissa and not Anya. I would always care for Anya, and I would always protect her, but I didn't want her in the way that I wanted Clarissa. It was different.

But even this fact couldn't change our faith. It was already too late for us. It was too late the moment my family chose her. I couldn't let her see how affected I was by her words. I couldn't let her think that she'd won. If she knew that she was breaking down the walls I'd put up to keep her safe; she would keep pushing. I knew Clarissa; she never stopped fighting unless she felt there was nothing left to fight for.

"I'm sorry, Clarissa." I apologize even though I knew it would only annoy her. She hates when I apologize to her, and maybe that's partly why I always do it. I don't want to bring her closer to me; I want to push her away. "You should get some rest. You've had a long day."

"This isn't over." She threatens me.

I turned away from her, ready to leave, before I made another big mistake.

"If you can marry someone you don't want, I could do the same." She threatens me.

I pause midway.

Marry someone she didn't want to marry? To get back at me? Was that some sick twisted revenge?

What the fvck?

Suddenly, my feet can't move, not even an inch forward. I'm stuck on the ground, shocked by her threat. I never once thought about it. If I married Anya, that meant Clarissa would also, one day, marry. Someone else. Someone that wasn't me. How the hell was I ever supposed to be okay with that? No man has ever been good enough for Clarissa. She's always been better than everyone around her, in my eyes.

How does she always know exactly what to say to pierce my heart? How did she know that it would kll me inside to even think about her with another man?

I can hear her footsteps closing in on me. The moment that she appears in front of me, my eyes lifts from the ground to focus on her.

Was this a real threat, or was she only saying this to get under my skin? Would she truly marry another man just to hurt me? Would she destroy her life because I was destroying mine to protect her?

She wouldn't. She wouldn't dare.

"Will that make you feel better?" She asks me. "Would you be happier with me if I found someone else to love? Someone else to kiss and touch. Someone else to hold me. Someone else to make me feel the things that only you make me feel. Would that make you proud, Damon?"

"Stop it."

They were just two words from me, but they were words that marked my breaking point. They were words torn from my chest.

"Why?" She demands. "Why should I stop it?"

I bite my lip to stop saying something I would regret.

"I'm sure you'll love that, wouldn't you?" She demands. "Another man holding me, telling me how much he loves me. You'll love it if he puts a ring on my finger and gives me his last name. You'll love it if he puts his hand—"

I grab her by her face and pull her closer to me. "I said stop it," I growl.

Her lips part slightly, but she's glaring at me with those eyes I've grown to love so much. Eyes that saw straight through me. Eyes that brightened my entire day. Eyes that have somehow grown to hate me. Eyes that I was ashamed to look directly at.

"If it's this hard for you by just hearing this, imagine how difficult it would be if it happened for real. Imagine how hard it would be for you if you had to go through the same thing that you're putting me through right now."

I knew it would be f*cking hard. I never said that it would be easy. I knew I would experience more pain than her if she married another man. But there was nothing I could do about it. Why was Clarissa not understanding what I was trying to show her? What else did I have to do for her to understand that this thing between us could end her life for good?

"What the hell is going on in here?" A voice demands.

I freeze.

It was Atticus.

I was so lost in Clarissa that I didn't realize someone had opened the door. I slowly drag my gaze from her face to stare at my brother, who's standing at the doorway. He's looking at the both of us, and I can see thoughts racing through his mind.

Clarissa pulls away from me to look at Atticus.

"Damon was giving me a lecture on my bad behavior." She lies. "Unfortunately for him, I'm not going to listen to a single word he's saying to me."

Atticus frowns, "why won't you listen to him? Don't tell me you still haven't learned your lesson, Clarissa. What else must happen before you learn to behave yourself?"

She folds her arms stubbornly, "I'll behave when I get what I want."

My head snaps up at her words. I knew what she wanted. As much as it thrilled me to know that it was me, it also pained me to know that I couldn't give it to her.

Atticus frowns at her words, and now his attention is solely on her.

"And what do you want?" He asks her. I knew Clarissa wasn't crazy enough to tell him the truth, but I was still on high alert.

Autumn barges into the room just then. "I can ask her that question. She'll faster tell me than tell you. After all, she loves me the most."

Clarissa looks relieved to see her.

She pushes both of us out of the room so that she can be alone with her. Autumn was good at distracting Atticus, very good at it. Her actions make me believe that she knows about Clarissa and me. Those two have become inseparable ever since Autumn married Atticus. They were closer than Autumn and Anya ever was in the past. I was happy that Clarissa had her in her life.

"Is there something going on between you and Clarissa that I should know about?" Atticus asks me suddenly.

I tried to act unbothered by his question, but my head was spinning with the possibility of him knowing that I had feelings for her. It was the last question I was ever expecting to hear from him.

I swallow, "what would give you that idea?" I ask nonchalantly.

"I have reason to believe that her reckless behavior recently is somehow linked to you." He answers me.

“So far, it’s only when you do something drastic that Clarissa acts out this way. And somehow, you’re always the one running after her. Just like today. It’s also inappropriate for you to be alone in her room like you were just now.” He points out.

I press my lips tightly together and turn to face him. “It’s not the first time I’ve been in a room alone with her. Why is it suddenly a problem for you?”

He shrugs, “even though Clarissa was adopted, she’s still my sister. She may not have the Fawn blood, but she has our name. I want to think that you think of her the same way that I do. However, I’ve noticed that you’re more protective over her than you should be. And she’s also a little overprotective over you. I’m beginning to worry. I’m hoping that I’m wrong about this. If not, I know you know the trouble this will cause.”

My hand tightens into a fist, “I can assure you, brother, nothing weird is happening between us. If you’ll excuse me, there is something else that I have to do besides have this conversation with you.”

He nods and watches me as I walk away. I don’t think he believes me.

This wasn’t good. If Atticus had noticed something, he would keep an eye on us from now on.

I had to be more careful than ever now. I had to make sure that Clarissa didn’t do anything drastic again.

“Where have you been?” Anya demands when she sees me again. “It shouldn’t take that long to walk Clarissa to her room. Everyone will get the wrong idea about the two of you if you keep doing things like that.”

I swallow—First Atticus, now her. I couldn’t give her any more reasons to believe that Clarissa was the woman in my heart. She already knew that there was someone other than her that I cared deeply about; I promised myself to keep everyone from finding out who that person was.

“I’m sorry about tonight.” I apologize. “I knew how much you were looking forward to it.”

She sighs and hugs me, “it doesn’t matter anymore. I’m happy that we can get married soon and forget all about this day. But this time, I need you to hire someone to monitor Clarissa. She must stay out of danger for us to have a perfect wedding. I’m tired of her reckless behavior.”

I was also aware that I had to keep an eye on Clarissa, but I wasn’t going to hire someone to do the job for me. Anya didn’t need to know that.

I can’t bring myself to wrap my arms around her. I couldn’t bring myself to hug her even though I knew that she would soon be my wife.

I don't know what I was doing. I don't know if it's the right thing anymore.

All I care about is keeping Clarissa safe. That's all that mattered to me—protecting her.