



Ugly News

Chapter 4

Bella

Two years later

The blaring sound of the alarm jolted me awake. Groggily, I stumbled out of bed and made my way to the bathroom to commence my daily routine. After freshening up, I headed downstairs to join my family for breakfast.

A tender kiss graced my grandma's cheek as I took my usual seat at the table. Mom was busy preparing our morning meal.

"Good morning, Mimi. How are you feeling today?" I inquired, concern evident in my voice.

Despite her persistent coughing, Mimi managed to ash me a radiant smile. "Ecstatic," she wheezed, punctuating her response with a thumbs-up. I couldn't help but return the smile.

"Sorry to disappoint, Mom, but Dr. Spencer is on leave today. Another doctor will be seeing you," Mom relayed, setting a bowl of porridge in front of Mimi.

I chuckled at Mimi's dismayed expression. "I want pumpkin pie, not this dreadful liquid," she grumbled.

"Mom, please cooperate. Finish your breakfast; we have a doctor's appointment afterward, and Bella—" Mom urged gently, her eyes conveying fatigue. Sensing her unspoken request, I interjected.

"I'll attend the therapy session today, Mom," I assured her, taking a sip of orange juice.

A relieved smile adorned her lips. "That's my girl. I know it's tough, but it's for your own well-being," she armed, and I nodded in understanding.

I despised therapy. It felt like futile attempts to unearth memories I desperately wished to bury.

"So, Doctor Spencer, huh? Good eye, Mimi," I teased, wiping porridge from the corner of her lips.

Suddenly, Mimi's tone shifted, veering into territory I wasn't prepared for. "How come I've never seen you with a boy, Bella? Why aren't you dating?"

My hand froze, and I exchanged a wary glance with Mom. Mimi was unaware of my trauma; to her, we had relocated simply to be closer to family.

"Because she's been occupied with her studies,"

Mimi scoffed, unconvinced. "Nonsense! You can study all your life, but youth slips away. Young love is a precious thing. I remember my rst boyfriend—blue eyes, brown curly hair. Wasn't he just the cutest?" she reminisced, clapping her hands in delight.

Mom intervened, feeding Mimi another spoonful of porridge. "You married him, Mom," she reminded her gently, and I couldn't help but laugh.

"I did, didn't I?" Mimi mused, casting a fond glance at her wedding band. Despite her failing memory, the love she shared with Grandpa remained etched in her heart.

"I wish you could nd a boy who loves you like my husband loved me," Mimi remarked wistfully, her words piercing through my thoughts.

How could I explain that I harbored no desire for love or companionship? I craved solitude, wary of the vulnerabilities that came with opening up to another.

"There's still time for that. Come on, Mom, let's get you ready, and Bella, you should start getting ready too. It's almost nine," Mom prompted, guiding Mimi back to her room.

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The feeling of betrayal is like a sharp knife plunging deep into your chest, twisting and turning with every heartbeat. It's a relentless ache that gnaws at your insides, leaving you hollow and shattered. It's the sinking realization that someone you trusted implicitly has stabbed you in the back, leaving scars that may never fully heal. Betrayal leaves you questioning everything you thought you knew, eroding the very foundation of your beliefs and leaving you adrift in a sea of doubt and despair. It's a pain that cuts deeper than any physical wound, leaving an indelible mark on your soul.

"So, Bella, have you made any new friends in the past couple of months?" Dr. Linda inquired, adjusting her glasses.

I didn't want to be here, dredging up memories I'd rather leave buried. Each session felt like reopening wounds I struggled to heal.

Memories ashed in my mind when I found myself in the hospital that day, shattered. Mom became my condante, the only person I trusted with my pain. She urged me to stand up to Ariella's cruelty, but I felt powerless against her words. Ariella was right—I was ugly, unwanted, a target for ridicule. I begged Mom to take me away, and we sought refuge with Mimi after Grandpa's recent passing. I enrolled in a local school but shut myself off from everyone. Ariella's insults echoed in my mind, poisoning my self-image. I immersed myself in my studies, nding solace in academia while pushing away any notion of friendship or love.

The mere thought of forming connections terried me. Compliments felt like lies, reminders of Ariella's taunts.

Therapy became a necessary evil. Reluctantly, I divulged my torment to Dr. Linda at Mom's behest. I followed her guidance, striving for improvement.

"No," I replied curtly to her question about friends.

"Have you attempted to make any?" she pressed.

My jaw tightened. "I don't want friends, Linda. How many times do I have to say it? This is why I stopped these sessions!" I snapped, immediately regretting my outburst.

"I'm sorry, Linda," I offered, sheepishly.

"It's okay, Bella. Have some water," she replied, extending a glass.

"What do you see when you look in the mirror?" she asked gently.

Initially, such questions elicited defensive reactions but now I knew what she wanted to hear, "I don't think I'm ugly anymore, Linda,"

"You were never ugly, Bella. Society's beauty standards are arbitrary. Everyone goes through the phase of puberty and you've blossomed, but Ariella's manipulation still haunts you, I believe all you need is good company of friends and eventually you will be able to get rid of this trauma." she reassured, handing me a mirror.

Staring at my reection, I saw traces of the girl I used to be, but the sparkle in her eyes had dimmed.

"Apart from Ariella, nobody called you ugly—" Dr. Linda began.

"What about the pictures! They mocked me, Linda. They bullied me for dating someone they thought I wasn't worthy of. It wasn't fair!" I interjected, my emotions spilling over.

"Their cruelty echoes in my mind. I hear their laughter every night, plagued by nightmares. I can't trust anyone's intentions. I'm alone, but content. Please, stop asking about friends. I won't make any. I've been hurt before, and I won't subject myself to it again," I declared, rising from my seat.

Dr. Linda set aside her notepad, rising to comfort me. "I'm glad you shared, Bella. I won't push you. If you ever need to talk, I'm here," she reassured, patting my back as I left.

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It's not that I never tried. I began to take care of myself, dressing up nicely, learning how to do makeup. I did all this not to impress anyone, but to make myself feel better. Yet, the idea of trusting someone with myself felt impossible and suffocating.

I don't think I would be able to recover from this. My new schoolmates found me strange too because of my quietness. Some boys tried to approach me, but I knew the moment they found a better option, they would treat me like trash, just like Marcus did. And I had had enough.

When I returned home, my mom was sitting at the coffee table with two envelopes in her hand.

"Hey," I greeted her.

"Hey, you're back early. How did the session go?" Mom asked, her eyes red and swollen.

"Dr. Linda said I don't need them anymore. I am ne, Mom, but why do you look so down? Where is Mimi?"

"In her room. Belle... Mimi is not well, I'm afraid. She doesn't have much time."

No... not Mimi, please.

Mom began to cry, and I tried to console her. After calming her down, I went to check on Mimi, who was fast asleep. Tears streamed down my face as I looked at her.

Mom found me in Mimi's room and told me to come outside.

I wiped my tears and asked her, "How much time does she have?"

"The doctors said three months. She will be shifted to the hospital tomorrow."

"Does she know?" I asked Mom, more tears streaming down my face. My mom slowly shook her head negatively, tears falling from her eyes.