Chapter 55 : Smoke

Damon's POV

"Quinton, tell me you're kidding", I stared in horror at my laptop screen, seeing a mount of dead bodies loaded out of the plane onto the ground, mostly covered with body bags. A sharp pain went through my chest and I groaned in pain, clenching onto my shirt as if by doing that the pain would go away.

"Damon, are you okay?", Quinton asked before I slammed the phone onto the receiver. My eyes watered as I kept looking at the news, thinking that Layla was possibly one of those lifeless bodies that laid on the ground, it was a horrific scene. People started gathering around and some had to be taken away due to being horrified by what they were seeing.

"It can't be", I whispered to myself, seeming to run out of breath and my heart was beating so fast, it felt like it was trying to rip itself out of my rib cage as my chest tightened, with me trying to let out a loud scream but nothing came out

Not Layla, she can't be dead……she just cant

There must be a flipping huge mistake here

"What are going to do Damon?", Lelo asked, continuing to pace up and down in the lounge in tears before lowering herself onto the floor and cradled her knees to her chest. "What am I going to tell Dylan?"

"It's okay Lelo", Quinton knelt next to her and took her in his arms, his eyes were red from his silent crying, but he was trying to be strong enough for her

Dylan was sleeping in his room, I just put him down, but he wanted to know what was going on. He wanted to know why Aunty Lelo was crying because of his Momma.

"Did something bad happen to Momma?", he asked when I tugged him in, and I couldn't even bear to look him in the eyes

"Why do you think that?"

"Why else would Aunty Lelo be crying because of her?"

"Just go back to sleep bud, I'll tell you everything in the morning", I kissed his forehead and switched off the bed stand lamps

"Goodnight Dadda"

"Good night", I stood up to walk to the door and his eyes followed after me. The confusion in his eyes as we locked eyes just before I closed his door behind me was unbearable.

"Troy, please tell me you have something for me", I placed him on loudspeaker. "I'm with Lelo and Quinton"

" Hey guys"he greeted, but only Quinton greeted him back. Lelo was a quiet mess right now. "Okay, so I checked the airport surveillance cameras and I could see Layla walking in"

"I get that, but can you guarantee that she got on the plane?", I questioned, and he paused for a second, the sound of his typing on his keyboard evident from his line

"Or made it through customs maybe?", Quinton added just before Troy couldn't answer my question

" To answer your questions, there's a time difference between the time Layla entered the airport and the time all passengers boarded on the plane, and it took off ",he explained and all our brows knitted in confusion

"What's that supposed to mean?", I asked, seeking confirmation, and before he could answer me the front door busted open and Layla pushed herself inside tirelessly, dragging her suitcase behind her and dropped to the floor in exhaustion

We all stood up to our feet with our mouths hanging open dropped and watched as she pushed herself up to look at us

"Why you guys looking at me like that?", she shrugged her shoulders a little, her eyes questioned us all and none of us moved or said anything for a second

"Layla!"

I don't know how and when Lelo jumped to meet her, and when she did, she held on tight to her like she was never going to let go

"Thank God you're alive", she sobbed and Layla rubbed her back softly, confusion evident in her face before she locked eyes with me and Quinton

"What's wrong with you two? The both of you look like you've seen a ghost", she addressed the both of us and Quinton sat down and started crying like a whip, causing Layla to break away from Lelo and held her hand to walk to Quinton and knelt in front of him.

"Hey Q...", her voice trailed off as she lifted Quinton face with her hand. "What's going on?"

Quinton kept crying and none of them were giving her the answers to her questions, and so she turned to look at me in confusion, raising her brows at me while she comforted a crying Lelo in her arms

"I'm so glad you're okay", Quinton engulfed her in a hug, and they formed a group hug

" I take it she made it home safely",Troy voice boomed in the room via the speaker, I completely forgot he was still on the phone during all this chaos and crying

I put him on normal call mode. "It seems she wasn't on that plane Troy, thank you for your help"

"It wasn't much, I'm glad she's home safe", he chuckled a little before hanging up

"Is there anyone who's going to tell me what's going on?", Layla asked again, growing impatient with not knowing what was going on and her gaze focused on me, but I looked away

"We thought you were dead", Lelo informed her after she handed her a glass of water to calm down

"Dead?", she prompted in disbelief, sitting beside Quinton. "Why would I be dead?"

"The plane you were supposed to be on crashed on the ground"

"What?", she grasped loudly before covering her mouth with both her hands and paused to think. "That's probably why the next flights to Cape Town were canceled"

"I guess so", Quinton heaved a sigh. "What happened actually?"

"The cab must have driven through a sharp object or something, and we had a flat tire", she started. "Luckily the driver had a spare tire in the trunk of his car, but I got delayed as I waited for him to replace the punctured tire, and so I lost a huge amount of time there and ended up missing my flight. I tried to book the next flight as soon as I got to the airport, but all flights to Cape Town were canceled due to the bad weather. I didn't know about the plane crash, it's terrible".

"Were your co-workers in that plane?", Lelo asked and Layla shook her head

"No, they were only flying to Cape Town this evening"

"I'm so glad you're safely home", Lelo gave her a side hug again, letting out a short sob

"Me too", Quinton engulfed them both in another group hug. I stood up, took my car keys and stepped outside to take a drive. This was overwhelming. I needed some fresh air.

"What's wrong with him?", I heard Layla ask when I closed the door behind me

I found myself driving around the city, feeling as numb as I had ever felt since the day Layla walked out on me. I didn't know how I feel, but I also didn't understand why I felt this way. Layla was okay, alive and safe at home. Why do I have this unshakable feeling tightened around my chest?. I should feel relieved and hopeful for what tomorrow holds, but I can't stop wondering what would have become of me without her?

She and I hadn't been together for two years, but I had Dylan to remind me of her existence each time he came back from her, beaming with happiness. We weren't close, but she was still there, in my heart, in my mind and in my dreams.

What would have become of me if she was no longer a living existence in my life?

Hours later, I found myself parked back in front of Layla's apartment block, but I couldn't bring myself to walk in there and face her, sitting in the car seemed to be an option. Layla walked Lelo out and accompanied her to her car, and they shared a long hug before Lelo got into her car and drove off. This death scare really shook her.

On her way back into the apartment, she probably spotted my car minutes later, I heard a knock of the passenger window and I turned my head to see her, bending at level with her arms folded. I hesitated before I could open the door, and she slid inside to sit on the passenger seat. I had my eyes dropped to my lap the entire time she sat beside me, and we sat in comfortable silence for a few minutes before she said something.

"You hardly ever said a word to me since I came back, the least you could do is look at me"

I kept quiet and when she realized that I wasn't going to look at her, she sighed heavily

"I thought we agreed to talk about things this time Damon and be more open and honest about whatever is bothering us, or even how we feel", she placed her hand on my arm and I shrugged a little, feeling my eyes watering a little

"I don't know how I feel", I finally turned my head to look her in the eyes. "I could have lost you today Layla"

"But you didn't lose me because I'm still here, alive and kicking", she joked at the end, but I didn't find it amusing, and she realized. "Look Damon, there was a reason was I missed that flight, I don't know why, but it seems God has other plans for me, and I'm eternally grateful for everything and everyone around me. I understand the death scare took a toll on you and the others, but I'm here, with you. Isn't that something to be grateful for?"

"It is but-"

"No buts"

"I don't know what I would've done without you Lay", I said, and she smiled as it was the first time I ever called her Lay. When you around Lelo for that long, you quickly adapt to the things she says and how she said them.

"I'm not going anywhere", she took my hand in hers, and I gave a little nod. "How about we go inside? It's cold outside".

"Sure"

We got out of the car, and she led the way into her apartment, but I stopped walking and watched her as she walked towards the door. She must have realized I stopped and turned to walk back to me and when she reached me, I let her wrap her arms around me in a long hug, warm hug.

"I don't like seeing you like this, please say something"

"You could have died if I dropped you at the airport", I finally admitted the one guilt that slowly eating me up." Imagine if I actually took you to the airport on time, I could have dropped you off at your death Layla".

Her features softened as she cupped my face in her hands. "Let's not think about that right now, okay?"

"Okay", I nodded, and she wiped my tears off before holding out her hand to pull me inside the apartment and I let her

She was okay and safe, that's all that mattered

Ella's POV

"What can I get for you?", the waitress asked me while she held her pen and notepad at close range, ready to scribble down my order

"Nothing for now, I'm waiting for someone"

She gave a short nod. "Anything to drink in the meantime?"

"Just water with a slice of lime"

"Coming right up", she smiled, and I thanked her before she disappeared at the back and within minutes, she placed the glass of water on the table, and I thanked her once more before she promised to come back again later to take my order

I took my phone to check my emails. Being a lawyer was draining, I had to keep up with work even on my free time to avoid being behind.

The restaurant door opened and the little bell on top of it announced the arrival of the potential customer. She had her sunglasses on as she skimmed around the room and finally spotted me. It looked like she drew a breath before walking towards me. God, she was beautiful and had the gorgeous figure of a model. She looked so classy and sophisticated and had stunning long legs that could probably wrap twice around the waist of a man. Her long, brunette hair was loose and the fan behind me made it seem like she was in a movie as it was like she was walking towards me in slow motion. Damn she's gorgeous, like just walked out of a magazine cover kind of drop dead gorgeous. She stopped at my booth and slid to slid opposite me.

"You must be Ella?", she took of her sunglasses and fixed her gaze on me. Her makeup was just so perfect, how does she do it? Make looking beautiful so easy?

"Ella Brown, it's a pleasure to finally meet you", I extended my hand out for a handshake, but her eyes dropped mine and to my hanging hand in disgust, it was evident that she wasn't interested, and I withdrew my hand away without showing my disappointment

"What do you want from me Ella?", she asked, going straight to the point on why we're here. My kind of woman.

"Straight to business, I like it", I cracked a smile. "I want you to demand Dylan back from Damon and Layla"

"Are you out of your mind?", her jaw dropped a little before leaning in closer to whisper. "I can't do that"

"And why the hell not?"

"I signed a contract, legally giving him up. Damon would sue me down to the very undergarments I'm wearing, so I'm sorry I can't", she folded her arms and I smirked mischievously.

"I don't think you have a choice here Miss Crane"

Her eyebrow raised. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"How do you think Damon will feel when he finds out that he's probably raising another man's child?", I asked, titling my head to the side and her face dropped a little

"You have no proof that", she replied sternly

"That's because you got rid of the one person who would reveal your despicable lies and deceit, not only that you also tempered with the paternity test results. You hired a hit man to murder Dylan's potential father, didn't you, Scarlett?", I said as I rose my brow and watched her fiddle in her seat uncomfortably, trying by all means to portray her poker face, but I knew she was intimidated.

"What were you hoping to archive with getting pregnant with Dylan and getting away with the murder of the man who's possibly his father?", I asked, and she opened her mouth to say something but quickly closed it

"I'll tell you why", I took a sip of my water to quench my thirst. I was enjoying this so much that I loved the look on her face right now. "You wanted to trap Damon into divorcing Layla and marrying you instead, isn't that right? And when Damon wasn't having any of it, you decided you wanted nothing to do with the baby and gave him up to the Kingsley's to raise him up as their own. But the question is, what will Damon do to you when he learns what you've done to him? To his family? . If I was you, I'd worry bout saving my own behind than a stupid contract", I leaned closer to her that my eyes bore into hers. "I can make things really difficult for you if you don't do as I say.

"Why are you doing this?", she asked, withholding the tears from falling from her eyes

《Flashback》

"Why are we doing this?", I asked her as she stood in front of me. She laughed out loud as she took a tip of her red wine and paused to savour the taste in her mouth.

"That kid is like a strong bond Layla and Damon share. Without him, their perfect, happily family front will shatter and go up in flames", she laughed deviously as she took another sip.

"Amber, this is too much. I don't think I can do this", I said, and she stared at me, eyes fuming in anger. She suddenly smashed the wine glass on the wall and pinned me down on the couch where I was sitting, chocking me.

"Listen to me, you little bitch. You're the reason Daniel is rotting behind bars right now, you failed to keep him out of jail. If you actually did your job, I wouldn't have had to take matters into my own hands right now. This is your fault. You owe me", she spat dangerously at me as her grip on my neck tightened each second. I tried pushing her off me, but she was too strong. I could feel each breath leaving my body and my eyes rolled to the back of my head. I couldn't breathe anymore, and I admitted defeat, she was going to kill me and probably burn my body or bury me in her backyard. I heard rumors of her, she was the girlfriend of the notorious crime lord, Daniel Woods. She murdered people for him, seeking approval from him, wanting to prove herself worthy to him and today, it was the end of me.

I felt her hands untangle themselves from my neck and I could actually feel my neck expanding, and I began to inhale some oxygen back into my lungs. I coughed as I quickly got away from her, crawling as far as I could so that there was a clear distance between us just in case she tries to pull such a stunt again, but she started laughing as she shook her head.

"Now look at what you made me do", she looked at me, still trying to catch my breath and holding my surely brushing neck. "You're making me the bad guy here, and I'm not",

She reached into her bag and pulled out a gun as my eyes widened as I quicky skimmed a way to escape. I was still too disoriented to attempt to start running. I'll have a bullet in my brain even before I reach the freaking door.

"Amber, we can talk about this ", I pleaded as she walked towards me, tears in my eyes." We can speed up Daniels parole process, pay off the judge, anything please", I cried out loud, and she shook her head as she knelt next to me as she compassionately wiped my tears off my face.

"I'm afraid that's not going to happen Ella. Daniel is gone for good, he's good as dead right now, he's no good to me on the inside. There's nothing you can do about it, he has to serve his time", she placed the gun under my chin and I closed my eyes shut as I was even shaking in fear.

"You got us into this mess Ella, and you'll get us out", she dangerously calm as she sighed. "So tell me Ella, are you in-", she wiped off some tears that were streaming down my face." Or -" she pressed the gun on my face as she smiled enthusiastically. "You're out?

I opened my eyes to her smirking at me

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Scarlet's glowing eyes were looking directly into mine when she repeated her previous question again. "Why are you doing this?"

It's either this, or I lose my life

"Let's just say, there's a score to settle"

Continue reading next part