

## Chapter 122

DAMIAN

I desperately fought the urge to fidget. I was not some erring four year old brought into the principal's office for goodness sake!

Myra who was smiling down at the card I was holding out to her was certainly no principal.

Besides, I had already read what Amelia had written so it came as no surprise. That meant I wasn't supposed to be this tense.

Myra took the feelings card from between my tight fingers. It was a struggle for me to finally let it go because it felt like I was giving her a piece of my essence. If she noticed how tightly I was holding on to it, she did not comment. She merely waited patiently until I had relinquished my hold on it before taking it and reading it.

I leaned back immediately against the comfortable couch and waited for her verdict. For what seemed like several endless minutes, I watched her eyes dart left and right as she read. When she was done, she closed the card and smiled at me.

"It's just I had thought. It is now quite obvious that you are not the monster you think you are. You have been so scared of yourself," she said quietly. "This card can prove it. But you disagree?"

She must have seen the expression of utter disbelief on my face to have asked that question.

"Yes. I'm not as good and blameless as Amelia has painted me. The thing is I still have no idea why she still sees me as a good person despite all I have done."

"And what exactly have you done?"

I glanced at the therapist, and saw that the little notebook was out. Her pen was poised over the paper, ready to take down words, words that would enable her to dissect my brain so to speak. It seemed the therapy session had begun officially after all, but now I wasn't worried about spilling my guts. Not really. I just wanted to get the way I really felt off my chest.

"I have failed her," I said. "I have done that over and over again in so many different ways and yet- and yet she wrote that about me." I gestured to the feelings card lying now on her lap.

"Maybe she was just trying to be nice to me because how could she even write that?"

Myra's answer was prompt and straight to the point. "I'll tell you why, Mr Donovan. Your wife understands a very important fact that you seem to have overlooked. She understands that you are human and are capable of making mistakes. She doesn't judge you for it because... aren't we all imperfect? Besides, she highlighted some things she dislikes about you." She picked up the card, skimmed through its contents once more. "Amelia genuinely thinks you are one of the best men she has ever met and from I've seen of you so far, I'm very inclined to agree with her. Tell me, would your mother describe your father that way... as a good man, as perhaps the best choice of a partner?"

Hell no! I thought but did not say.

If anything, my father was the worst choice she had ever made. Just the fact that he was my father had scarred me in ways I hadn't thought possible hence my need to undergo therapy.

I phrased my answer in a more acceptable way by shaking my head.

"Now tell me. Do you in all honesty think you are like your father?" Myra asked. "Do you think that you'll hurt Amelia like your father hurt your mother?"

My eyes widened and for the first time in many years, I felt small—almost invisible.

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Anton waited until the bartender had served us drinks before leaning slightly forward to ask, "So how are the therapy sessions going?"

"Really well," I admitted. "They have been going really well. For the first time in forever, I finally felt free enough to talk about what happened when I was a child. The feeling is..." I paused to grope mentally for a word that would best describe how I felt now; light, unburdened, free, like a weight- an invisible one- had been taken off me. "... liberating. It felt really good to let out all of the hate and anger I felt towards my parents. I may not be totally rid of the pain yet but I'm loads better now. Or maybe that's what she has convinced me to believe."

"I completely agree. Even I can tell. I told you-"

I tipped my glass in Anton's direction.

"Don't you dare say you told me so," I joked.

"Well I did. I told you so."

"Anton..."

He shrugged. "But it's the truth. I knew therapy would work wonders for you and now look at you. You even look years younger. I'm really happy for you, man."

"Can you stop pulling my legs?" I chuckled. "I feel exposed whenever I'm there but in a good way."

"That's the point, man," Anton replied. "You will be able to talk about yourself freely."

"You know what else I want to do? I want to make a fresh start. I want to propose properly to Amelia, re-do a private wedding and in fact do everything I missed out on because of all the hate I had bottled in. What do you think?" When Anton didn't reply, I looked up from my glass to him, and found him staring at me with surprise written all over his face. I replayed my last two sentences in my head, and found nothing wanting. "What? Did I say something wrong?"

Anton shook his head slowly. "It's not that you said anything wrong. It's actually a matter of what you said. So I have to ask, is my best friend still in there? Or has he been replaced by a sugary sweet version?"

I gave him an eye roll.

"It's an improved version," I stated. "Besides, I could have said the same thing about you just a few days ago when you were giving me a lifetime's worth of relationship advice because of Queenie. You should have seen your face. Far worse than mine at the moment."

Anton chuckled and shook his head. "Well it worked, didn't it?"

I nodded.

And then I began to hope that it was not too late for me to make amends. Now I regretted a whole lot of things that I had done.

I regretted not realizing sooner that I could be the kind of man Amelia wanted, the kind of man I wanted myself to be right now. It turned out Amelia's demands were far from unreasonable after all.

"Penny for your thoughts?" Anton said with a hand on my arm. "You look like you have a lot on your mind. Care to share?"

"I was thinking about some things."

"Things like what?"

"I'm wondering if I'm suddenly beginning to realise that I can be Amelia's type of man because our marriage contract ends in about six weeks." Saying it out loud somehow made it worse. I scrubbed a hand over my face. "Damn! That means I have just six weeks to make things right. I don't know if it's even possible to repair all the damage I have done in the little time I have. I mean, what if Amelia isn't in to me anymore? It's possible and I wouldn't blame her for it. I've certainly messed up these past few months. Even you can attest to that."

Anton held up one hand then the other. "And you're weighing the time you used in screwing things up with the time you have to make things right?"

"Yeah. I mean that's right, isn't it?"

"Wrong," Anton said without hesitation. "It doesn't matter how much time you have left with Amelia. What matters most is the amount of effort you put in so you don't loose her."

There! Anton had just put his finger on my greatest fear.

"I can't imagine losing Amelia. Just the mere thought of the contract ending in a few short weeks drives me crazy. I start to ask myself how I will cope if I come home and Amelia isn't there to smile at me, to welcome me home." A little smile curved my lips as I remembered that this was not always the case. A lot of times she got mad at me, although it was usually more of my fault than hers. "Or to yell at me whenever I mess up. I would miss those times too. Oh and believe it or not she looks cute when she's mad and when she yells. But I really hate it when she cries."

"Holy crow!" Anton exclaimed in mock horror. "It's worse than I thought. What has that therapist done to you? You just spilled a lot of sentimental stuff. What next? Are we to hold hands and hug now?"

"In your dreams," I said with a laugh. "I'm just telling you how I feel."

Anton patted me on my shoulder, causing me to spill my drink a little- purposely I presumed- from the mischievous glint in his eyes.

"Let's focus on telling her how you feel and er- I think the best place to start will be by proposing to her properly. Don't you think so?"

"My very thoughts. I'm already making plans to propose to her."

"Good. Good. I will handle getting you the engagement and wedding rings. I know a really good jewelry store."

"Thanks but I've already ordered the rings myself. Once they arrive, I'll propose."