

## Chapter 12 Evening Guests

Alaric has been gone a lot. Jake has been attached to the controller, which I'm grateful for. It keeps him off my back and prevents him from acting like a doting boyfriend.

His phone rings, and he glances at it briefly before ignoring it; I continue to read my book and hear it again. Groaning, he pushes the phone towards me.

"Answer."

Glancing, I see the name.

"It's your dad, Jake."

"Right, so answer." Sighing, I hit the button and held it to my ear.

"Hi Alaric, Jake is busy."

"Well, tell him to get off it. I have guests coming, and I'm not having him lying around like a damn slob." The phone cuts off.

"You need to get off that. Apparently, he has guests coming." I'm not sure which guests. He sighs and turns it off.

"It's fine, I had plans anyway." He walks off upstairs. What plans? I sit waiting, and half an hour later, he walks back down, looking ready to go out.

"What's happening?"

He shrugs and grabs his jacket. "Like I know, but I have plans."

"Jake, you're really going to out and leave me here?" Is he fucking joking?

"We're not together, right? You did say that."

My eyes roll. "No, we're not. This is your father's house, though. You can't just fuck off and leave me here with him and his guests."

"Watch me." Turning, he leaves. Great. Grabbing my phone, I message Ivy and Bex. Maybe one of them two could come get me? Ten minutes later, my phone rings.

"Bex?"

"I can't get to you Ruby, not quick. Where is Jake?"

"Fucked off. I need to get out of here." I can't stay and see people I don't know.

"Okay, give me some time. I will call you back and let you know."

"Thanks Bex, just let me know if you or Ivy can get me." I hang up and turn.

"You're leaving?" Alaric looks at me.

"Jake has gone." I shrug slightly.

"But you weren't staying for Jake." He stands confused.

"You have guests." I can't stay.

"Right? They won't be here for long, so join us." I laugh. "Ruby, don't run. Get ready and join us. You may as well. I doubt anyone can get here quick enough to pick you up before my guests even leave."

"Fine." I give up fighting this.

"Where did he say he was going?" He sits and looks at me.

"Out, he didn't tell me much."

Sighing, he nods. "These people are important. Should I sign my businesses to Jake, these are the people who will be on the board. He can't always avoid them." He glances at his phone and then back at me. "Get ready, Ruby."

Nodding, I walk off. Getting into Jake's room, I get showered and changed. Walking down, Alaric is in a large room. I call it the guest room more because the times he's used it was for large gatherings.

"Sounds good." He stands with his phone to his ear while looking through some papers. "Page seventy-eight, that has a lot of issues."

I sit and wait.

"I'm glad you noticed. Now you have to get it fixed and sent over again for me to check it a final time. I'll speak to you tomorrow." He gathers the papers and turns, stopping when he sees me.

"How long have you been sitting here?"

"About twenty seconds, not long."

Nodding, he walks to the door, and his phone rings. "I'll be back down soon," he says. He walks off, and I stay where I am. A few minutes later, I hear the door.

Walking over, I open it.

"Hi, here for Mr Hendrix." The guy steps in with others following him.

"He's just on a call. If you want to go through," I point to the room, and he nods. I watch them walk through, following them into the room. I stand awkwardly and watch as they grab drinks and sit talking.

I shouldn't be here. I go to leave and Alaric walks through, he smiles at me.

"She's not a maid." A guy looks from Alaric to me. "You also don't hire servers and such, so who is she?" They all look towards me with interest.

Alaric chuckles. "She's going to give me insight into the business from an outsider's perspective. She can tell me how she felt before and after she walked into the place."

I don't even know what his business is. What the hell?

"So you found her at the business and kidnapped her for feedback?" The guy laughs.

"Ignore him." A woman hits the guy slightly. "I'm Jasmine. It's nice to meet you." She smiles at me.

"This is Ruby." Alaric pulls me in and hands me a drink. I sit but don't speak.

"So, what are your first impressions?" Jasmine smiles at me. I don't even know what his business is.

Alaric leans into my ear. Oh, now he's going to tell me. I almost laugh until I hear his words: "Boudoir Bunny." My body stills. That's why he said, kind of, when I asked if he worked there. He owns the club!

They are looking at me, waiting.

"I thought it was very welcoming, not just the building and atmosphere but also the people. There were no looks from people that suggested they were wondering why I was there or like they believed I didn't belong."

Walking in and seeing people smile at me and then go back to their own things was reassuring. Had people been staring and watching me, I don't think I would have stayed.

"Everyone is welcoming." One of the women smiles at me. "How did you find out about it? As you spoke in a way that tells me you hadn't been somewhere like that before."

"Honestly? I was just searching and came across it. I read up about it online before deciding to go."

"You went in blind?" One of the guys sits, shocked.

"I did, yes. What I thought I knew about the world was not real." I was completely blind, and they must be able to sense that.

"And Alaric offered you advice." Jasmine laughs.

"He gave me a contract to read through and use as a starting guide for research. It helped." It did, as there was so much in it I had no idea about.

"And even though you had no idea about it, you didn't get scared away?" A guy looks at me.

"No, as I said, it was welcoming."

"Well, I think Ruby's presence here just proved Alaric right. It's welcoming, considering her lack of knowledge. The fact that she didn't run confirms it's fine." Jasmine smiles.

They talk while sitting, and I sometimes join in. I need to ask about this. I had no idea it was his place. From the sounds of it, that isn't the only club he owns. Just how many does he run?

Hell, I had no idea. I knew he had businesses or assumed based on his money, but I never even connected the dots. That day, despite that date being the compulsory day to wear one, he walked around the building without a mask.

People nodded at him as he passed, including the guy at the bar. Everything screamed he owned it, and I just didn't see.