

Chapter 26 Unusual Phone Call

I haven't moved since they left the room. Coming here was meant to fix things, but it seems to have made everything worse. I want to believe that staying will give me a chance to fix things. Surely, they will be in a better mood tomorrow.

Even I know that is bullshit. Standing, I grab my bag and leave. Staying the night feels wrong. They are only letting me stay because it's late. Driving back, I consider everything.

Alaric took things the wrong way, I was trying to help, after I made everything worse. Stopping at my place, I quietly go to my room. If Bex hears me, she will be right in here asking everything, and right now, I don't want that.

Taking out my phone, I hit the number.

"Boudoir Bunny."

"Hi, is Mr Hendrix in today?" I've tried every night if I wasn't there in person.

"Just a moment, please." I wait, listening to silence. "Who is it?"

"It's Ruby." Again. The line goes quiet.

"Sorry, he's not in." Why do I feel like he is and that's a lie?

"Can you please pass on a message when he is? Just tell him Ruby is trying to contact him and needs to speak to him as soon as possible."

She agrees, and I hang up, going to sleep.

Waking, I go down and grab a drink. Bex appears in the kitchen, staring at me.

"It went that bad you came straight home?"

"They said I could stay the night, but it felt wrong. There's no fixing it." I shrug, it hurts though. It's not like I committed murder; I slept with a guy before marriage.

"So we're going out tonight, right?" She grins and sits with her coffee.

"Where do you want to go, Bex?"

"Back to Boudoir Bunny, see if my friend is there." Of course, she wants to go there.

"You could go alone, you know." Her eyes widen at my words, and I laugh. "Or not. Don't worry. I will come, and you can try to hunt out your friend."

"Good. Did you get anywhere when you called again? I'm guessing you did."

"No, she asked me to wait, came back, asked who it was, and then said he wasn't there. I feel he was and just lied because he knew it was me." He's good at avoiding people.

"Well, you should have gone."

"It would take an hour to get there. No doubt he left once he knew I rang." He's not a fool.

"True. What are you doing about the course?"

"Sticking to it, it's only a few months. I may as well complete it, get the degree and then do what I want; otherwise, I will hate that I wasted years and all the work for nothing."

She grins. "So we're not losing you!"

"Bex, you wouldn't lose me if I did decide to stop the course. I would still be living here. I'm going out anyway." Standing, I grab my jacket.

"Where to?" She stands with me.

"I'm going to look into the dancing. Maybe I can start on weekends and evenings, but I don't know yet." I want to dance, so right now, I'm going to see if they have space and the whole concept behind it.

"I can kill him for you." I stop and look at her. "Alaric, just say the word. I will break in and make him hurt."

Standing, I laugh. "Thanks, but I don't need you to kill or hurt him."

"It might make you feel better." She stands grinning at me.

"I'll tell you what. You get him in front of me, and I will do it." She nods in agreement.

"I'll work out a plan." Laughing at her words, I hug her. "Have fun." I nod and leave.

My body collapses onto the bed. Bex walks in and sits next to me.

"You look exhausted."

"I feel it, Bex, but it's worth it." I signed up for the dance course a week ago. I've missed dancing, and it's taking a lot to get back into it.

"You and Ivy are leaving me." She sits quietly.

"I'm still here, and so is Ivy." I laugh slightly.

"No, she's always with Oliver. You're either doing your course or dancing. You two barely have time for me."

"How about I drop the dance classes this weekend? We can spend it together. Plus, I still go to Boudoir Bunny with you every Wednesday." That's when her friend is there.

"Yeah, but then I disappear with Lucas, and we don't get time together."

"Okay, give me a minute." Climbing from the bed I knock on Ivy's door and wait, I won't walk in. I watch the door open, and Oliver grins at me.

"Hey, Ruby."

"Hi Oliver, I need Ivy." Walking around him, I go into the bedroom. "Up, get dressed. We're having a girls' night."

Ivy looks at Oliver. "And no, Oliver can not come! Get your ass up." We're having a night together. Bex is right.

As she walks through, she looks at me. "Get ready. Me, you, and Ivy are going out." I tell her.

"And Oliver?" She looks at me.

"I told her he can't come. So get ready." Grabbing a dress I begin to get ready, an hour later I'm sat in the bar with Ivy and Bex. It's cheered her up.

Maybe we neglected her recently. Ivy has been busy and constantly with Oliver. If I wasn't studying or dancing, I was trying to get Alaric to pay attention and speak to me.

"So, you and Oliver?" I look at Ivy. He's staying most nights, but I don't care; it's just unexpected.

"He's sweet." She grins at me.

"That's code for he's good in bed." I laugh at Bex's words.

"No, well, yes. By he's sweet, I mean he is sweet. Is him staying an issue?" Ivy looks at us worriedly.

"No, Oliver can come any time he wants Ivy." I don't want her feeling like he can't.

"Yeah, just save a night or two for me." Bex laughs, and I nod.

I watch as Bex gets drunk, and Ivy sits laughing. "You're not drinking?" she asks. I look at her, and I turn my eyes away from Bex and where she is dancing.

"No, I figured I would escort her home. I knew she would go past the limit, so I won't be drinking."

"Well, that's two of us. I have work in the morning, so I won't drink." Ivy points towards Bex. "It's good. She's drinking enough for us both."

I laugh and nod, it's the truth, she really is. My phone rings, grabbing it from the bag I answer.

"Yes?" Is this Oliver checking on Ivy? I laugh; he seems like the type to me.

"Ruby, it's Jake." Oh, God, no. I don't reply; I just sit quietly. "Look, can we talk? By talk, I mean me apologising and us sorting things out, not like dating, just, let's explain."

"Jake, I don't know." I'm torn right now.

"Please. I won't make any moves, and I don't expect you to want to get back with me. I know I need to explain."

"Okay, fine. When and where?"

"I've got work early, so can you come here and us talk now?"

"Where is here, Jake?" He actually has a job, which is unusual.

"My dads."

Shit, that's not happening.

"Ruby?"

"Jake, I'm not sure that's a good idea." Alaric is avoiding me.

"My dad isn't here. I swear. I need time to explain things and apologise in person."

"Okay, I will see you soon." Hanging up, I look at Ivy. "Can you get her home safe?"

"You're bailing?" She stares at me.

"Yes, I will be back tomorrow morning." Standing, I hug her and leave. Nearly three hours later, I stopped at the gate, pressed the button, and waited.

"Come in, Ruby." I hear Jake and relax. Driving in, I park the car and walk to the door. I watch it open and stand shocked. "Yeah, I'm in a suit, don't start." He smirks and waits for me to walk in.

"Sorry, it's just not like you to wear a suit."

"Things have changed. Can I get you a drink?" He walks to the kitchen, and I follow. This is awkward and damn weird.

"Coffee, thanks." He nods and makes it. I stand quietly, and he hands me the cup.

"Look, I'm sorry. For everything, the using you, cheating on you, what I did at that party."

"Jake, you don't need to apologise." It's done. Nothing can change it.

"I do." He sits and looks at the cup. "I did love you, Ruby. That wasn't a lie. I just got caught up in things that weren't good, and I was blind." Is he really going to make excuses?

"Jake, it's over." I don't get why he's doing this.

"I know, but you should know the truth. There's a club I was involved with, but I got in too far. Most of the guys there had relationships and were married but cheated. I had seen it all. They weren't comfortable with it. So, I slept with a woman to make it look like I was on their side. Which only dragged me in deeper."

"Jake, I don't understand?" This makes no sense.

"It was a private club. I knew about a lot of men, high profile ones, who were cheating on their wives, doing drugs, and shit. I was too clean, and they suspected I was there to get info, I wasn't. The only thing I could think was to join them, so yes, I cheated, and yes, I did drugs with them. I just wanted to apologise and explain."

Nodding, I take a drink of the coffee. "Why wouldn't you just leave?" That's what most would do.

"Leave? I had seen things, Ruby; if I left, they had nothing on me. They wouldn't have let me, so I did things so they knew their secrets were safe as they knew mine."

"It sounds like you're making excuses." I get it, but it still does.

"I'm not. I had a choice, and I fucked things up. What I said was wrong and cruel. That was all me, I turned into an asshole, I accept that. It took losing everything to realise how bad I got. I didn't just play the role. I became what they were." He sighs and looks around us. "I changed. I realised at that party that I had almost shared the videos, and that's why I walked out. That's why I never returned. That isn't who I was, yeah, I would sleep around, dump women quickly. I'd never have done that, though; never had I cheated. So I'm sorry."

All I can do is nod at him. He's changed; he looks more like the Jake I had originally met—the one I saw away from the crowds, the one I saw in private and fell for.

"I accept your apology, Jake; you seem to be doing well." I point at him.

"I'm working but dropped the course because it's not for me. So I work full time. I'm saving up to buy my own place."

Wait. "I thought your dad was giving you money?" He said he would. At the party, Alaric said he would give him the money.

"We spoke. He didn't want to give me the money, but he would have. I told him not to. All it would do is push me back into the life before. It's been a month, and I honestly am grateful he cut me off. If he hadn't, I would still be in that club and likely be worse."

I smile, nodding. "I'm glad, Jake. I knew something had changed, but I didn't know what. It's good to see you have figured it out, though." I hug him, and he nods.

"Thanks Ruby, out of everyone, you were the only one I wanted to apologise to, the only one who truly deserved it that I hurt." He smiles at me, and I nod.