

Chapter 28 Issues

I wake up alone in Alarie's bed. It's only half six. Getting dressed, I walk down and stop when I see Jake in the kitchen.

"He's at work. He got called in." He barely looks at me as he talks; he continues to cook, which amuses me.

Sitting for about five minutes, I watch him fail and can't stop laughing.

"You mocking me doesn't help."

Tightening my lips, I nod and hear him swear as he burns himself.

"Okay, move." Walking over, I push him out of the way.

"I was doing fine."

I turn to him and hold up the bacon. "Fine? It looks like you threw it on a campfire for an hour." I snap the bacon in half and laugh.

"That's how I like it." He shrugs slightly, so I hand it to him.

"Then eat it." I wait, watching as he looks from it to me. "Exactly. Before you try cooking so much, stick to one. Once you get used to cooking one thing, then make it two. You trying to cook a full breakfast won't work."

"I was doing fine."

"Just move before you burn the house down." He looks at me, offended.

"I'm not that bad." My eyes roll. He is that bad. The fact that the bacon is black and crumbles like ash says he is. Turning, I smell burning.

"Jake, what else are you cooking?" I open the oven and find it empty.

"Nothing." He shrugs slightly. I look around, seeing smoke from the toaster; pulling the plug, I turn to him. "Oh, yeah, I was making toasts." He shrugs, and the fire alarms go off.

"Open the windows, and stay out of every kitchen forever." Turning, I look in the toaster. What the hell? I hear the door and turn to see Alarie walk in.

"I said don't cook!" He walks over and looks at the mess.

"Sorry, I thought I would be fine." Jake stands confused.

"Fine? You set the kitchen on fire last week, and now you're trying again?" Alarie sighs. "You want to cook fine but learn first. Have someone with you so they can stop you from doing anything stupid." He pulls the toaster forward. "Why would you put cheese on the bread and in a toaster?"

"I was failing at cooking bacon and other things, so I decided to make a toastie." Jake shrugs, and I stand laughing.

"Just get something on the way before you're late. I will clean up." Alarie shakes his head, looking around the kitchen.

"I made bacon!" Jake's shoulders shrug, and Alarie picks it up.

"It's like charcoal, just...forget it, go." I watch as Jake leaves. "I swear if you fucking laugh." Alarie turns and looks at me, my mouth in a tight line. "I thought he could cook. How did he survive?"

"He had money, Alarie, so he didn't need to cook. I also know whoever he was dating cooked for him. I'm sorry. It was amusing to watch, so I just watched him for a bit, then realised that was the wrong choice."

I should have stopped him, but it was funny. Walking over, I helped him clean up the mess.

"What sort of idiot puts fucking cheese in a toaster!" He grabs it and throws it in the bin.

"That could be Bex's fault." He turns and looks at me, confused.

"She did it, and he didn't learn not to?" He laughs slightly.

"No, she has those weird bag things that you put the stuff in and then in the toaster. Jake didn't realise he needed those bags." He doesn't reply; he just scrapes the burnt food off the bottom of the pans.

He looks stressed, and I feel like it isn't just Jake and his failure at cooking.

"Is everything okay?" I smile at him.

"Fine, yeah."

"That's a lie, what's wrong?" He isn't OK.

"Just work, that is all; I only came back to get some files; I knew I should have reminded him not to cook." He throws the pan in the bin. I don't blame him. There's no saving that. Kissing my cheek, he walks out.

I stand and wait. Five minutes later, I walk through and see the door open to his hidden rooms. I walk in, planning to find him.

"Just get it worked out. Once I have sorted things out here, I'll drive down in a bit."

Stepping into the office, I watched him put the phone down and grab some files. "I'm going to be busy until later. Are you staying here or going home?" He looked at me and grabbed more things.

"How about I come with you?"

He looks at me. "I'm going to be in and out of meetings all day."

"Which is fine." I smile at him.

"Okay, then you can come." He walks out, and I follow. Sitting in the car, I look at him.

There's more—I'm not sure what—but he seems stressed and doesn't speak on the drive there. Walking into a building, he guides me through and into an office; as he turns, I stop him.

"What is going on?" Something is.

"Nothing. Most of the businesses are locked down, meaning only those who know about them can get in. After Jake just arrived, I figured all locations should be, except for on the meet-and-greet nights. It's just a lot to get sorted."

I move in front of him.

"You weren't this stressed before."

"Sorry, I'm fine, I swear. As I said, I announced the changes that night but took a step back for a week to sort things out with Jake, which made everything fuck up. It will be fine." Kissing me, he walks out.

Walking further in I sit and take out my phone, messaging Bex and Ivy I let them know I'm okay. I will update them properly later when I see them. About an hour later, there is a knock, and the door opens.

"Hi, I'm Mr Hendrix's Secretary. Do you want a drink?"

"I'm good, thank you." She nods and walks out. Two hours later, I'm still sitting alone. Sighing, I stand and walk out. I see the woman look up.

"Is he busy?" I'm guessing he's still in a meeting.

"He's busy but doesn't have company, so follow me. I will show you the way." Nodding to her, I follow her through the building. This one is different to the place I usually visit.

When she gets to the door, she knocks and steps back. I hear Alarie and walk in. His eyes widen.

"Shit, I forgot you were here."

I laugh and glance at the papers surrounding him on the table. Walking over, I push the papers back and sit on the table.

"It's fine. I thought you had people to help?" He has an entire workforce, and those guests he had were also people who helped.

"They are spread across other locations. As I said, I put through the order to change things and didn't watch, so everything that could go wrong has. Because I said not to contact me, they tried fixing it and made things worse." He smiles at me, and his head falls forward onto my lap.

"How much did you sleep last night?" I watch him sit up.

"About two hours, I'm fine though." He lifts his cup and finds it empty. I watch him press a button, and the woman walks in.

"Can you grab me another coffee, please, Rosa?"

My head shakes at him. "No, get him some water."

He looks at me, shocked. "I think you're high enough on coffee right now," I smirk, and he nods.

"Water will do." His words are quiet.

"Let me help." I might not be able to, but I can try.

"I can't expect that." His head shakes.

"Alarie, I'm here, let me help. Even if it's organising fucking files. Let me help."

He sits looking at me. "You really want to help?"

"I wouldn't have suggested it, Alarie, so let me help rather than try to do everything alone."

He nods and reaches into his pocket. His hand reaches out, and I watch him place his keys in mine. I look at him, confused.

"Take my car, go to the location you usually visit. Tell them I sent you to fix the issue."

"I can't take your car." He will be stuck here.

"Look, I have a bike here. I will take that home and drive to yours in your car."

"I'm not sure you should be driving that far." He's not slept and is stressed.

"I'll be fine, and no more coffee, I swear."

"Fine, what is the issue that needs fixing?" He hasn't told me that.

"Currently, half of the foyer is full of boxes. Find out if it was a worker's error or the manufacturer's error. Then fix where to put the items or work to get them sent back; if it was a worker, tell them to fix it."

Moving, I take my keys from my bag and hand them to him.

"I'll be about an hour. I just need to do one more meeting, and then things here are fixed." He smiles and kisses me. I walk out, get in his car, and sit feeling weird.

If I crash, how much will he cry for the car? I laugh at that thought and begin the drive there. Hours later, I stop outside the building, walk in, and almost trip over a box.

Glancing towards the desk, the woman looks at me.

"Mr Hendrix sent me to fix the issue."

She smiles and looks at me, full of relief. "Susie, is somewhere, she ordered she has the invoice."

"Can you find Susie, please?" I don't know who she is. I watch her nod and walk off. I laugh slightly, thinking it's common sense to move the boxes away from doorways.

She walks back through with a woman following. "May I suggest that you move the boxes and pile them on each other so they aren't blocking doors? This is a fire safety hazard." Even I know that. She nods and walks off.

"Hi, I'm Susie." She hands me papers. "It wasn't me. There is no way I would order five hundred!" I look at the papers. Yeah, this says fifty.

"Okay, where can I sit and use a phone?"

"This way." She walks through, and I follow. "I did try to call the manufacturer, but they are refusing to listen or accept it is their mistake."

"Okay, how do you order? On the phone, email? Is there a confirmation of the order?" That will help.

"I will get it up on the system for you." I follow her into the office and sit down. She points to the screen. Yeah, that's fifty. How did they end up with five hundred?

"Everything you need is there." She smiles and walks out. I look through the things again. Something isn't right, and I stop when I see it.

They aren't singles; they are sold in bulk of ten. Ten times fifty is five hundred. It was Susie's fault, although I don't want to tell her she has to fix it.

When I call the number, I go from person to person. The best I can do is agree to keep one hundred; they will collect the four hundred tomorrow.

The door opens, and I watch Susie walk in.

"It's sorted."

"How? When I rang, they refused to acknowledge they had messed up and then refused to collect the extra as well."

"I checked. They didn't mess up. The item was sold in bulk of ten, meaning your fifty was five hundred." She still shook her head at my listened. Maybe had she realised and spoken to them, accepting the mistake, they would have listened?

"They will come and collect four hundred tomorrow and refund them." She nods and rushes out. Would Alarie really have driven hours to fix this? I laugh at the thought.