

## Chapter 34 Lost

I stand staring at her, unsure of what I should say. What do I fucking say?

"Alarie's not married." That is all I can manage, Alarie would have said. Surely he would have?

As she moves and picks up a bag, I notice the suitcase on the floor.

"Not that it has anything to do with you, but yes, we are." I watch as she puts a piece of paper on the counter. Do I want to look? I let my eyes fall on it and regret it instantly as it confirms he is.

"Jake's working till six." She smiles at me sweetly.

"I'm not here to see Jake." I'm not even sure why I'm here right now.

"Oh, sorry. I just assumed. You must be Ruby. Alarie mentioned you were his assistant. He mentioned you may call, and I needed to disappear while you solved an issue."

Assistant? Why would he say I'm his assistant to her? I don't even know how to reply to that.

"I'm going to the toilet." That is all I can think to say. Rushing upstairs, I go into the bathroom and close the door, my body staying against it. I can't hide.

Unlocking the door, I step out and stop. Walking through, I go to Alarie's room. Pushing the door open, I stop. His bed is a mess, and there are women's clothes on the floor around his room.

Shaking my head, I walk back down.

"I'll maybe see you later, Ruby. I need to get dressed."

Why would he not say he married her and isn't divorced? Why the hell is she walking around practically naked in his robe and saying I'm his assistant? I was ready to call myself out for overreacting, but his room...

His text was vague, saying we should talk. She's here, in the house alone. She couldn't have gotten in without someone letting her in. So, was the message because she showed up?

I don't get why he referred to me as his assistant, she knew I was coming, she said he had told her I was. Taking out my phone, I look at it. My head falls forward, and I feel like screaming and demanding answers.

Dropping the keys on the counter, I turn and walk out. If I stay, I will go crazy. I'm also not willing to stay to have it confirmed that he took her back. Why was she even there, in the house?

Getting in the car, I begin driving. I was so sure I could stand there and wait and let him explain, but even his message was off. It wasn't how he would usually talk to me. Hearing my phone ring, I switch it off and soon find myself parked outside my parents' house.

I'm not even sure why I came here. It's not like they will make anything better. Yet, going back to Bex and Ivy means facing their questions, which I would rather not do.

Bex! Her messages said SOS. Then, at Alarie's, she messaged saying we needed to talk, and she found out something important.

So, did she know? My head shakes. She couldn't have known. Still, I'm not ready to go back yet. I need time to consider this. Driving, I stop five minutes later.

Walking to the door, I knock and watch it open.

"Ruby?" Emily looks at me. "Come in." Smiling, she moves out of the way, and I step in. "I didn't think we would see you again." She smiles at me and walks through, and I follow.

"I was driving and ended up at my parents, but it's not a good idea that I go there." I laugh, and she nods.

"Yeah, your parents didn't react well when half the church saw that video of you, Jake and his dad." My eyes roll.

"So you saw it as well?" I don't understand who sent it to them.

"Yeah. I find it hilarious that you left here as a good little church girl, saving yourself for marriage, hardly ever drinking. Then within three years, you're, well, seen as a whore."

We laugh, and I nod. "You're not, but yeah, you left, slept with a guy, then his dad. Apparently, you also party as well these days." She grins and sits facing me.

"I enjoyed my freedom." I didn't realise how little I had until I left here and broke free from my parents. If there is one person around here who I know won't tell my parents things and is just as shunned as me, it's Emily.

"Okay, so what's happened? You had a whole new life, friends and shit."

"He's married, Emily."

"And?" She grins, and I laugh.

"I forgot you wouldn't care." She's the last person to help.

"Sorry, but the way I see it. If he is willing to do it, their marriage is void, and the wife should take everything she can and run."

"He's not seen her in twenty years, Emily, so it's not the same."

"Then why are you sulking he's married? It's been twenty years." She sits laughing.

"It's not that he's married. That I could forget, but she called me his assistant, was half naked in his house, and his room said she's been in it."

Her mouth drops open. "First love and all that makes you weak." She shrugs her shoulders like it's nothing.

"That's bullshit, I wouldn't fuck Jake again if I were with someone."

"Did you love him, though?" She looks at me, and I know I didn't. "Exactly. Now consider you met some new guy, and in a month, you were with this Daddy Dom. Would it tempt you?"

"That's different. That's a month away, not twenty years."

"Okay, what do you know about their relationship?" I sit down and explain to her what Alarie said, and she looks at me like I'm a fool. Am I?

"She left, no warning, just a note. Unfinished business."

I groan, and my head falls forward. "I forgot how fucking bad you were."

She laughs and hands me a glass. "I'm real, honest, and maybe a little bit brutal! You want my view?" I nod, unsure why, even though I know I won't like it.

"He never fell out of love with her. When she showed up, he realised those feelings didn't go away; they were just buried under years of hurt from her leaving without a word. He's ready and willing to give her the world if she promises to stay, and he realises you were nothing but fun."

"Ouch, thanks."

"You wanted my view."

I finish the drink and watch the night disappear as I catch up with her. She is the only outcast I know around here. She's disappointed that her attempts to turn me bad failed, yet somehow Jake's attempts worked.

Waking, my head hurts. I drank a lot, but I needed time to consider this. I know I have to talk to Alarie, but I feel better avoiding it. I'm scared that this is over.

I destroyed any chance I had of my parents talking to me for Alarie, I was ready to move closer to him, I risked everyone hating me and turning on me for choosing him.

Now, I'm sitting here wondering if that was a mistake if he has taken her back. I destroyed so much for him for nothing.

"When are you leaving?" Emily looks at me and hands me a coffee. As I take a drink, I cough.

"What the hell, Emily?"

She laughs and sits. "What? It's only a bit of rum. Stop sulking." God, how did I manage to avoid her attempts to turn me bad? I laugh at that thought.

"I'm not sure when I'm leaving."

"Well, you can stay as long as you want. I'm hated anyway, so I may as well house an escaped Pastor's bible daughter turned demon." I groan at her words, and she laughs. "Okay, okay, I will stop."

"I'm surprised you still live here." I wouldn't, not when everyone in this town sees her as bad.

"You wouldn't believe how fucking amazing it is to walk the streets and know they hate me but can't touch me. Why would I leave just because they think I'm a troublemaker and a bad influence?"

She's right; she shouldn't leave, but I can't see myself living here. Even if my parents moved, I had noticed everyone staring at me in disgust when I came back after I fucked Jake. Those looks were worse last night when people saw me.

"Yeah, stay living here and give them hell."

"That's the point, Ruby; I'm bringing hell to their little slice of heaven." Yeah, she's a bad influence. I laugh slightly. My day disappears as she catches me up on everything that has happened.

The friends I had, seem to be totally still invested in staying saints, and it just confirms that I made the right choice in choosing to study away from here. I would still be one of them. Sure, I lost my parents, and they disowned me, but I have my own life.

We turn, hearing knocking.

"No one ever knocks on my door, Ruby. What sort of people do you have coming here?" She looks at me.

Laughing, I nod. "Not me. No one would know I'm here. So whoever it is, is for you." No one knows I'm here, and even if someone went to my parents, they wouldn't know about Emily.

I watch her walk to the door, and a moment later she walks back through, my head raises and I see Bex.

"How did you find me?" She shouldn't have found me.

"I went to your parents. They weren't very welcoming; I asked if you had friends or anyone around here. They said the only person who would willingly let you in is someone called Emily at this address."

Of course, she went to my parents.

"You were ignoring my calls and messages. I figured you were busy with Alarie, but then he showed up confused because your phone was off, and you left his keys at his place?" She looks at me, waiting.

"He's married." She stares at me. I watch her go to talk and raise my hand. She's going to do what I did, think it's nothing. It's been twenty years. Sitting, I explain everything, from her being in his house half-naked to calling me his assistant and such.

Finishing explaining, I watch her anger grow. "I'll kill him."

"Oh, fuck sake Bex, no killing people!" Every time, I laugh and hug her. "I'll speak to him when I get my head around the fact that this could possibly be over for good."

"You really think he will end it?" Bex stares at me.

"I don't know what to think Bex. I'm trying to get the courage to face him. He could literally admit he loves her and is taking her back, he could admit he fucked her and claimed I was an assistant, so I wanted time to get ready for the hurt."

"How much time do you need, Ruby? As the longer you hide the harder it will be to go back and face him." She stares at me, and I know she is right.

The longer I hide, the harder it is to leave here. I haven't even turned my phone on because I'm scared of what his messages will say.

"Here." Emily walks in with a glass, and I take it. When I am about to take a drink, Bex stops me.

"Yeah, you know how you ignored my messages, the SOS ones?"

"Did you find your shoe?" I look at her, and she laughs.

"For a change, it wasn't my shoe missing."

"Your brain?" That's the next thing she might have misplaced.

"Okay, nothing was missing. Here, read this." She takes out her phone and does something. Handing it to me, I take it from her and read.

Company Evalote recalls batches of contraception pills due to manufacturing error and reduced effectiveness.

I stare at the screen.

"I found the box from yours, and the batch number matches them. So, yeah, good luck, mummy."

My eyes go to her. "No, that's not possible." It's not possible.

I turn, hearing the knocking.

"Oh, by the way, I let Alarie follow me." She smiles at me, and I glare at her. Is she set to torture me?