

## Chapter 35 The Truth

I watch as Emily walks in with Alaric. Bex glares at him, and for a change, I won't stop her death stares. I'm not sure what to say, though.

"Did I do something wrong?" He looks at Bex, and she glares harder. "Can we talk alone, please?" He laughs slightly at Bex and her attempts to murder him with her eyes.

"Use the kitchen." Emily points to it, and I walk through with him following me. The door closes, and he moves towards me, my hand moving and going up to stop him.

"Okay, so I've done something. What? If I overstepped the mark that night, just say Ruby." He looks at me, waiting.

"Are you fucking joking!" He has to be, he's acting all innocent, there is no fucking way that Beatrix didn't fucking tell him I called around. I fight to hold in the tears.

"No, I'm not. I have no idea what the fuck is going on, Ruby. You were fine on the phone, I get home at seven, and find your keys on the side. What did I do wrong?"

"Alaric, I know. I know you're fucking married to Beatrix!"

"That's what this is over?" He laughs slightly, and my anger grows. "I'm not married; she disappeared; I got an annulment. You could have just asked Ruby."

"I don't understand." I don't. At all.

"I was seventeen when I married her; it wasn't legal. I'm sorry I didn't tell you; I didn't think it was relevant."

"Considering she is living in your house, it's relevant Alaric."

"What?" He looks at me in shock. "No, she isn't. Why would you even think that?"

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe because I showed up at yours, and she was in your kitchen half naked. She talked about how you were married, and referred to me as your assistant that you said was coming to sort an issue. Maybe it's the fact her clothes were all over your bedroom floor!"

My head falls. "You could have just told me, Alaric. To let me walk in and see her there, though, that was fucked up."

"Ruby, I've no fucking idea what you're talking about." He stands looking at me. "Are you sure that is who it was and not a random woman Jake brought back?"

"She had your marriage certificate, Alaric! She went back to your room to get dressed. She was wearing your fucking robe." The tears I had been fighting back rolled down my face, and he moved towards me.

My hand pushes him back. "Okay, I'm still confused as I have no idea what is happening. Just, are you sure she said her name was Beatrix?"

"Yes! Why are you trying to deny it?" I don't understand.

"I'm ringing Jake." I watch as he takes out his phone. I hear him answer.

"Jake, just a second." I watch as he puts it on speakerphone. "Have you heard anything from your mum?" The line goes quiet. "Jake?"

"Yes, she reached out about a week ago. I've spoken to her, why?"

"Spoken to her about what, Jake?" Alaric sits and looks annoyed.

"Me, mostly. She wanted to know about me. I spoke about you and Ruby as she asked if you had moved on. Why?" I looked at Alaric confused.

"Has been in the house?"

"No." Jake's reply is quick.

"Jake, the fucking truth as Ruby showed up and she was there, has she been in the house?"

"Yeah, she visited the other day. You had told me you wouldn't be home, so I told her she could stay. She was gone the next day, though. I told her to be gone before six."

So she wasn't with Alaric?

"Don't fucking leave her in the house alone ever again." Alaric hangs up and looks at me. "I swear I had no fucking idea. I got home, the house was empty and your keys were on the side with a note saying..." His words stop.

"Saying what Alaric?"

"I should have realised; the note said, 'I can't live this life.'" What she had said originally. "I swear I didn't even fucking know she was back."

He walks to me and wraps his arms around me, and this time I let him. "I'm sorry, but she knew my name and said you had mentioned I was your assistant. Then your bed was a mess, and her clothes were all over your room."

"It's fine. I just had no idea. I thought I had hurt you the night before, and you were running." His arms tighten around me.

"You didn't hurt me, Alaric, I swear. Your message was also weird. It sounded different."

"That is my fault. I left my phone in the office and was stuck in a meeting. I passed a note on to my assistant and asked her to message you. I didn't want to put anything weird on it, sorry." He pulls me closer.

"We need to get back. I need to speak to Jake and find out what is happening."

"I'll go home with Bex." I don't think I can go to his and see her again.

"No, you're coming with me. Don't run from me, Ruby."

Running seems like the best thing right now.

"She won't be there. I just need to get everything from Jake and warn him not to let her in again or even speak about me and you to her."

I'm not sure. I glance around the room.

"Okay, you go home with Bex, and when you feel ready, you can message me." He steps back and smiles.

I'm not sure if I want to go back with Bex. I don't want to avoid Alaric, but I'm not sure I can go to his without thinking about her.

"I'll see you later, baby girl." Kissing my head, he turns to leave.

"Wait, I'll come with you." We need to talk, and me hiding away won't make it happen. Walking through, Bex glares at him again.

"You're forgiving him?" She sits shocked.

"He didn't do anything. Jake confirmed that on the phone. Alaric had no idea she was in the house." I can't have her wanting to kill Alaric.

"Fine, no killing Alaric. Where is Beatrix?"

I groan at her words, and she laughs.

"I'm kidding, I'm kidding. Kinda." She moves and hugs me. "I'm guessing you're not coming home and are sorting shit out?"

"Yeah, I'll be back tomorrow." Hugging me, she looks at Alaric. "How is this working? I came in his car."

"Here." I hand her my keys. I watch as she leaves, turning I look at Emily. "Thanks for not throwing me out." I hug her, and she laughs.

"I'm happy to house the pastor's devil child anytime."

"I'm never returning, ever." Laughing I hug her again and walk out. Getting in the car, we sit in silence.

"I'm sorry. I should have told you about us getting married, even if I got an annulment. I had no fucking idea she had been Ruby."

"Alaric, it's fine stop apologising." It's not on him. Had I just fucking messaged, maybe things would have got sorted quickly?

"I think it's safe to say we have both perfected this ghosting thing, so we don't do it again, okay?" He looks at me, and I laugh. He's not wrong. First, he ghosted me, and then I ghosted him. An hour later, he stops outside, and we walk in.

Jake looks up at us. "I didn't think it would be an issue for her to come here," he says, looking at Alaric.

"Jake, you should have told me she had gotten in touch." Alaric walks over and makes a drink. He looks at me, and I nod. Taking the glass, I sit down.

"I'm an adult; it's not like I'm a kid. I didn't think you would need to know." Jake confused. "What happened?"

"What happened is, Ruby showed up. Your mum told her we were married, stood here basically naked, and made it out as if I had fucked her and called Ruby an assistant." Alaric shouts.

"I'm sorry. She was asking me about me, then she asked how you were and if I had a mum around growing up, and then she asked if you had moved on at all. I didn't think." He's looking at me full of apology.

"Jake, it's fine." I smile at him.

"No, it fucking isn't! You let her in, Jake, not only that but let her stay the night and left here alone?"

"I didn't see the issue." Jake sits confused, and I don't, either, other than me finding her here. Oh, I do.

"All my business stuff is out for her to find, everything, Jake. Not to mention she was in my fucking room." Alaric sits next to me. "Forget it. What does she want?"

"She said she searched for me for years. She wants to get to know me." Jake looks at him.

"Bullshit! She's not here for you." Alaric shouts.

"Alaric." That's fucked up. I stare at him.

"Sorry, but if that were it, she wouldn't have done that to you. She might have stayed, but she wouldn't have done all that unless she is hoping to gain something, and she's using you to do it." He looks at Jake.

"You're wrong. She came to see me." Jake turns and leaves.

"Alaric, even if you're right, that is fucking cruel."

"He's an adult."

I laugh and nod. "It's still his mum. Just because he's an adult doesn't mean it wouldn't hurt."

"Sorry. I almost lost you, so I panicked." His arms wrapped around me. "I'll go speak to him." Kissing me, he walked off. I finished the drink and took out my phone.

Turning it on, I watch an influx of messages, missed calls, and voicemails. Going through them, I can see I hurt Alaric. To him, I just disappeared, and he was clearly convinced he had gone too far the night before.

I need to make him aware that I would have said the safe word if he had. It's weird to think that things were great, and then they blew up, partly because I didn't speak to him.

He had said he loved me, and I didn't even remember that. For him to go from saying he loved me to getting back with his ex was crazy.

I look up and saw Alaric walk to me.

"Sorted. I apologised for what I said. He promises not to let her in unless I'm here, then I know for sure she isn't doing anything. Even then, I'm not sure I'm comfortable with her coming here."

"It's not his fault Alaric." It's easy to blame Jake, but it isn't. "Yes, he's an adult, but it's his mum. He had never met her, so of course, he didn't see the harm in letting her in and stay. He won't have sat there thinking she's asking this question to cause issues." Jake isn't to blame.

"I know, and I apologised for that as well. We need to talk. We've both done it now. We've faced an issue and found it easier to run and hide than to talk about it." My head nods at his words. I'm good at running, and apparently, so is he. He actually is better than me at it. He found me twenty-four hours later, while I took weeks.

"So, I will cook, and then we will sit, eat, and talk. There will be no more running when we're faced with issues." His arms wrap around my body.

"I'm sorry for running." I smile at him.

"I deserved it, based on what she said. I deserved you burning the house down with me in it." He chuckles slightly and kisses me. I panicked. I know I did.

The knocking causes him to step back. I watch as he disappears through the doorway and hear the door.

"Alaric." She's here, I don't move, I stay standing staring at the doorway.

"I should slam the door in your face, but I won't. We need to talk, and you need to fucking listen." He walks through, and I see her following; her body stops, and she glances from Alaric to me.

She smiles slightly at me, and it's a sinister one.

"Don't, whatever you plan to say and lie about don't. What do you want? Because I know you're not here for Jake." Alaric looks at her, and she keeps her eyes on me. I want to run and hide, but I won't.