

## Chapter 42 My Biggest Secret

I listen to the ringing, waiting for Max to answer. I can't make anything worse. Everything is already blowing up.

"Hello, Ruby." His voice comes through, and I'm shocked by his welcome. How would he know it was me? "What can I do for you?" He sounds so smug.

My mind fights to find something to ask, but there are no words coming to me. I hear him laugh, and I begin to feel annoyed.

"Why are you helping Beatrix?" I will start with that, and then I can maybe help Alaric.

"She is helping me, Ruby."

"Helping you what?" Why would Beatrix help him?

"You know that video made me look weak. Even now, people still fucking talk about it. There was no way I would let you walk after that." I laugh at his words.

"Why Beatrix Max?" I don't get why her.

"Why not? She found me after seeing the video. She needed something I had, and I needed her to make a call for me." He explains, and I hear someone in the background. He laughs lightly. "I need to go. You're not getting answers about the plan, Ruby. You will find that out in time." The call suddenly ends.

Well, that didn't help.

"Baby girl." I glance up and see Alaric walk into the room. "I need to go out and will be back late, so don't wait up." Leaning forward, he kisses me. "Your friends, if they are here late, let them sleep in the spare rooms. Jake won't be leaving, but don't let Beatrix back in." He looks at me worriedly.

"I promise I won't." He nods at my words and walks out. Turning, I go back to the laptop and decide to do work.

The buzz has me walk to the intercom. Glancing at the screen, I see Oliver's car. Hitting the button, I watch the gate open and then close behind them.

A moment later, I open the door and watch them walk in.

"I'm going to see Jake." Oliver walks past me and disappears up the stairs.

"Okay, let's get some drinks." Bex sits down and looks at me. "Alcohol is good." She grins at me.

Laughing, I walk through to the other room. Grabbing three glasses and a bottle, I walk back to her and Ivy. Filling out glasses, they look at me, waiting for me to talk.

"Actually!" Ivy raises her hand. "Before you tell us, what happened with her?"

Of course, she wants to know that. "She showed up claiming she left something. She went upstairs, got her earrings, and I followed. Then, she started talking about my course, she helped Max, and apparently went to see my parents, then she hit me." I explain and watch their eyes widen.

"Why?" Ivy looks at me, asking the question I want to know the answer to.

"For money. If she causes enough issues, Alaric will give her the money to leave." Bex explains.

"While I think that's true, it feels wrong. She can get the money easier in other ways." I explain, knowing that this feels more like an attack on me.

"That's what I'm thinking," Ivy confirms and agrees with me.

"Okay, so what is this thing we don't know?" Bex asks, waiting for me to explain.

"Something happened when I was sixteen. Me and my parents had discussed what I would do at University after college. It was then I found out that I would be stopping most of my dance classes after college. So I rebelled." I say this and watch Bex's eyes widen.

"That weekend, my parents left for some weird trip, so I held a party. No one local had ever got in trouble, I stole alcohol from my parents room. I planned to just drink, break free of the rules, even if just for a night." My fingers pick at the skin around the nails.

"Jess had asked for a drink, so I poured her one, handed it to her, poured myself one, and before I had even walked back into the room, she collapsed, unable to breathe. Turned out she allergic to some of the ingredients, the anaphylatic reaction mixed with the amount of alcohol she had already drank was deadly for her."

I stop speaking, and the room stays quiet. All I wanted was to fight back against my parents, but it ended awfully.

"Babes, that wasn't your fault," Ivy says as she moves to me and hugs me. "Anyone at that party could have poured her that drink," she says, trying to reassure me.

"There would have been no party without me, though. Some of them had never drank." They only drank because of me.

"Bullshit, you want to know whose fault it is?" Bex looks at me. "The adults, we know Ruby. Alcohol, sex, all that was hidden from you, maybe had it not, you would have known things that other sixteen-year-olds had. Hell, her own parents could have explained that certain drinks wouldn't be good for her." Bex explains and tries to prove I'm not to blame.

Still, regardless of what is said, part of me will always feel to blame. I planned that party, invited them, and knew some of them had never drunk, so part of the blame is mine.

Sitting, we talk, and I watch the hours pass by. I don't drink much, so I'm more conscious when Alaric comes back. Jake shows them to the spare rooms, and I go into Alaric's. It's nearly midnight now. I've had one message from Alaric checking that everything is fine, but nothing else.

Running a bath, I lie back in it. I don't care what anyone else thinks. I only care that Bex and Ivy know the truth. Now, I don't care if Beatrix uses my past against me. I don't care if everyone finds out.

"Baby girl." I smile hearing Alaric, turning my head I see him at the door.

"Are you joining me?" I can hope, I smile and watch as he strips, well, he didn't need much convincing. I laugh slightly and watch as he steps into the bath behind me. His arms wrap around my body.

"You should be asleep; it's late." His words are quiet, and he holds me against him.

"They had only gone to bed like half an hour ago, Sir; I would still be awake. Did you get things sorted?" I'm guessing there was an issue.

"I had left during a meeting, so had to clear up some things. Went to the other location, sorted issues there." His words stop and he kisses my neck, today has been long. So, while I want sex, I won't even bother tonight. I'm surprised I'm still awake.

"How did things go with Ivy and Bex?" He peers down at me, waiting for my answer.

"Good, they know now. I don't care about anyone else finding out; I just wanted to make sure they knew the truth and heard it from me first." Right now, Beatrix can do with the information as she likes.

"Ruby, even if she only told part of the story, and they didn't know the rest, Bex and Ivy would speak to you and get the truth. They care for you and wouldn't believe someone else's story without hearing yours." His words make me smile. I've no idea how I ended up with Bex and Ivy as my friends, but I'm glad.

Sitting, we talk, and I feel myself falling asleep against him as we do, unable to stay awake any longer.