

## Chapter 43 His Silence

When I wake, I'm alone in bed. Glancing around, I grab my phone and see the time. It's nearly nine. Opening the message from Alaric, I smile.

Be good today, baby girl; I'll be home this evening and see you then. A x

Hitting reply, I type out a message.

I will try, but I may get bored here all alone and go play in your hidden room. x

I imagine his face when he reads the message and I laugh; getting ready, I walk down and see Ivy and Bex.

"You're still here?" I thought they would have left.

"Of course, we're still here; we will leave later. Right now, we need to know about you and Alaric." Bex says, and I look at her, confused. "Oh, come on. You moved your stuff in Ruby." Bex explains, and I laugh.

"I didn't move my things in," I reply. She knows I didn't because it was literally one bag of items.

"Technically, you did. I thought this was just fun." Ivy says, and I nod at her.

"I thought it was just fun, but things changed." My words are quiet, and I shrug.

"You love him." Bex teases, and I laugh.

"He knows I do," I reply, and they stare at me.

"Wait you said it to him first?" Ivy asks. My head shakes at her.

"No, he said it first." It's what reassured me and made me feel safe saying it.

"When, how? We need details." Bex says while getting comfy on the chair.

"The first time we were in bed, I was falling asleep, and he said it. I wanted to reply but was too tired to even react. He said it in the kitchen here, and I said it back that time." It felt like the right time.

"You're going to be living here soon," Bex announces, and I laugh. "I mean it. I know I keep giving you a hard time about it, but if you get in a place where you want to, then do it." She smiles at me.

"Bex, I'm not moving out." She has it wrong.

"You are," Ivy says, and I turn to look at her. "Ruby, even I know going forward, our place will be your call in place. The place where you come to visit one night a month, and this place you will be every night. Even if you don't move your stuff in here, you're living here." Ivy speaks and looks at me like I'm a fool.

"When were you planning on coming home, Ruby?" Bex asks, and I shrug.

"I don't know, I hadn't thought of it." There is too much happening for me to even consider it.

"That is my point exactly." Ivy laughs her words. "You're in denial."

My eyes roll at her, but maybe she is right. I didn't consider when I would be going back. Alaric hasn't asked when I am going home, and his message this morning shows he thinks I will be staying tonight.

"Oh god, I'm blind." My words are laugh, and they nod, laughing with me.

"It's fine. We can always come to visit. We can also still meet up and go to the club." Bex's words remind me of Lucas.

"And Lucas?" I want to know about him.

"We met at the club once since you left and came here, and apparently, we're out tomorrow for a meal." She smiles at me.

"He finally got the courage to ask you out on a date!" I'm glad; she deserves someone who understands her.

"No, Alaric told me this morning. It's a double date." Her words made me laugh. I was thinking that Lucas had asked her out, but apparently not.

"He's clearly nice if he's scared to ask you out on a real date." Ivy smiles at her. At least this double date means I can ask him things and check he is okay.

"Right, we will go. I'll see you tomorrow. We're meeting near the club." Bex stands and hugs me.

"I want check-in messages, Ruby!" Laughing, I nod. "Oh, and eat. I forgot to tell you." I watch them leave and sit in silence for a short while.

Sighing, I walk to the kitchen and get some toast before sitting with the laptop and doing work. I watch the entire disappear as I get lost in the work and search for things local to do with dancing.

The sound of the door has me turning and looking at it. I watch as Alaric walks in. He's smiling way too much.

"I brought food back, baby girl, so finish up; we're talking." He walks into the kitchen. I save my work and put the laptop away, then join him in the kitchen. "Sit." He points at the chair, and I move and sit with him.

"Where is Jake?" I've not seen him all day.

"Working, he's helping me until he decides if he will help with the businesses full-time or get another job," Alaric explains and then points at my food.

Sitting, I begin to eat.

"So, I have an admission to make." His words cause me to look up at him.

"Yesterday and today, I haven't been working, baby girl." His words shocked me.

"Alaric, what were you doing?" Why did he pretend to be working when he wasn't?

"Fixing your issues." He smiles at me, and my eyes widen. "You should get a response from the investigation stating that you're not going to be removed, but you will have the choice between attending the classes left or just concentrating on your work." He explains.

"I said to leave it. How did you do it?" My words are barely a whisper.

"I removed the funding I give and said I wouldn't give scholarships to those going there anymore. Then, I got a few very close business friends to threaten to do the same if the situation wasn't resolved."

I relax slightly. "That's all you did?"

"Do you want the truth or a lie, baby girl?" He asks, and my head falls forward.

"The truth," I say, knowing that I can't hide away in a lie.

"We may have told them that they need to investigate Max and his behaviour around females and ensure the students know they are protected if they speak. So right now, Max is not allowed on campus until they carry out a full investigation." His words are calm, very calm considering he has possibly made things worse with Max.

"You're not eating baby girl."

My eyes roll at his words. "I don't feel well. There's too much stress."

Sighing, he nods. "You need to eat, but I need to add to that stress, baby girl." He explains, and my eyes look up at him. "I met your parents."

Oh fuck. "Alaric!" Why would he do that?

"Stop panicking; after Beatrix went and spoke to them, I had to."

He doesn't realise how bad that is. "Nothing will make it better, Alaric. The only thing is time and me staying out of their lives." Every time I return, things get worse.

"Baby girl, your parents still care about you. Even I could tell that they are just stuck into the belief of how things should be. Don't wipe out any hope that they will one day listen." He smiles at me, and clearly, he believes that, but something tells me that my parents just acted nice to him to appear like the perfect parents.

"You realise Max won't let this go." He's going to come for me.

"He probably won't, baby girl; if he does anything while they are investigating, it confirms everything. Stop worrying. Now, you need to decide what you're doing. Are you still taking the two classes a week or just working from home?" He looked at me, waiting for an answer.

All I do in the classes is the work anyway, the only difference is if I need help someone is there. "I'll do it from home. I'll get it done quicker." I'm also not looking forward to going back to classes. Everyone will know what happened with the drugs and now know that Max is gone.

Staying away will be less drama.