



24 Chapter TWENTY FOUR

Theme: A bruised heart 1

(FLASHBACK TO TEN YEARS AGO)

WINSLOW, ARIZONA.

(IN THE EVENING AT THE BEACH HOUSE)

Bethany sat on the swing still expecting Ace not wanting to give up. But after several hours of waiting on the porch simply looking at the sea, the hurt that came with the realization was surprisingly sharp, painful and shocking even as she told herself that it no big deal. She knew she was lying.

Ace had given her the most beautiful night of her life. She expected him to be here by now but it seems like she was wasting her time waiting for him to return. Bethany made her way down the steps, looked back at the beach house before walking away finally, telling herself that it was over. She had allowed herself to be used by a stranger who only wanted to satisfy his lustful desires. She pushed away the thoughts of regret and hopes to get over this pain soon. And she was left with a heart surprisingly bruised.

GOLDEN HOTEL

LATE NIGHT

The meeting with the investors just ended, the team went on from one project into another then to the next until Ace got tired and bored of the discussion in the board room. Ace knew someday he would have to get used to the idea of spending hours in the conference room just discussing business with investors and board of directors.

"You did well today, I am so proud of you. So son, I arranged a room for you at the top floor please go to bed now. We will be leaving as early as possible so make sure you get enough rest." Mr Clark smiled.

"Okay dad." Ace answered.

He never expected the meeting with board of directors and investors to take that long. During the course of the meeting, he had prayed silently for Bethany to still be at the beach house.

"Alright son. I will just go ahead and rest now." Mr Clark walked away.

"Are you okay Ace? You were not looking too good during the meeting." Mr Mark asked.

He had watched Ace throughout the meeting as he recorded the minutes of the meeting together with the new female secretary hired for Mr Clark.

Ace thought of what to say to Mr Mark that



would grant him a free access to go back to the beach house. "I really need to get to the beach house." He said looking worried.

Mr Mark eyebrows snapped up together. "Why do you need to go back there? Your dad must never find out that I let you into the beach house!" Mr Mark gritted in a low tone.

"I..I..left my wallet there..and some other stuffs in it are really important. I left in a rush without remembering to take it." Ace lied.

Mr Mark shook his head in disapproval. "You can't go back there, your dad might request for your presence so what do I say? You can't go back to the beach house and moreover you can get a new wallet." Mr Mark objected with a serious look on his face.

"Please Mr Mark, I left some important stuffs in it..like my school identity card. Just help me this once." Ace Clark stated with a pleading look on his face.

"I am sorry, Ace. I am not ready to lose my job." Mr Mark disagreed.

"Okay fine, it's either you persuade my dad to let me stay for a month, I get your car keys right now Or I will tell my dad you allowed me into the beach house? What's your take?" Ace didn't have any choice than to state these



conditions. He was desperate.

Mr Mark shook his head in disbelief. "I can't persuade your dad to let you stay for a month. So I guess I don't have any choice than to choose the best condition that would help secure my job." Mr Mark handed his car keys to Ace.

Ace smile broadened. "Nice choice." He breathed out.

"Go to the beach house to get your wallet and be fast about it. I will be waiting out here till you return." Mr Mark replied with a stern look on his face.

"It won't take long." Ace walked away at a close run.

He raced down to the garage as fast as his legs could carry him. Making a decision that he would persuade Bethany to come with him to Los Angeles since she wasn't accepted in this damn town.

Once he returned back to Los Angeles, he was sure that his dad would give back his credit cards and unfreeze his accounts and give back the things he took from him. Ace was rich enough to foot her college bills and make her dream come true. He would then plead with his dad to cancel his wedding plans with Camila



because right now Bethany was the woman he wanted to spend the rest of his life with.

RIVERA HOME

Ivy unlocked the door and walked into her bedroom quietly without wanting to disturb her parents. She wasn't ready to hear them scold and nag at her for spending the night out yesterday.

Emily stood up from the bed abruptly when Ivy walked into their bedroom. "Ivy!" She got out of bed and rushed to hug her sister.

"Where have you been? I was so worried about you. I searched everywhere you always stay but couldn't find you." Emily noticed her sister's stiffness.

She withdrew from the embrace to look at her sister. "Are you okay?" Emily asked with a concerned look on her face.

Ivy nodded her head slowly. "Yes...I am fine and..you don't need to worry about me." Ivy faked a smile on her face.

"Well I can't help but worry about you. Aunt Julia called too she wanted to talk to you. She was really worried about you too." Emily reported.

"I still feel sorry for causing such a mess at her wedding. And I am sorry for making you

worry about me." Ivy apologized in the lowest tone she could muster.

"It's not your fault so you don't need to apologize. Aunt Julia said she will see you when she comes back from her honeymoon." Emily smiled brightly at her sister.

"Okay." Ivy nodded.

"Have you eaten? Do you want some bread? I kept some for you." Emily pestered.

Ivy couldn't help but smile at her sister for caring for her. "Don't worry, I am fine." She walked towards the bathroom but Emily blocked her pathway and stood in front of her.

"Ivy, something is wrong. Is it about what happened and what mom said to you at the wedding?" Emily asked.

Ivy turned away and walked back to the bed. She crashed on her bed. "No it is not about what happened at the wedding. As a matter of fact, I am over that incident. I just-"

Emily cuts in sharply. "Then what Ivy? Tell me you look sad than I have ever seen you before. Did someone hurt you? Where did you spend the night?" Emily questioned frantically.

Tears welled up in her eyes but she tried to hide it. "Emily..I am fine..you don't need to worry



too much about me." She said shakily.

"But Ivy—"

Ivy interrupted her statement. "I just..want to be alone right now. I will answer all your questions later." She pulled the blanket over her head to let the hot tears streamed down from her cheeks

THE BEACH HOUSE

Ace pulled up in front of the beach house and ran into the house. "Bethany! Bethany! Bethany!" He screamed out making his way to the kitchen, rooms, bathroom but couldn't find her.

She left. The words registered to him.

Ace hit the wall nearby and stamped his feet several times before stepping out of the house and then he sat on the swing as he wondered what he would do to find Bethany. He blamed himself for not at least getting to know more about her, he should have pestered her or at least get her phone number.

His gaze drifted to the wooden floor and then he saw a tiny necklace laying right near his leather-booted foot.

"This..this..is Bethany's necklace." He picked the gold necklace with a tiny heart shaped pendant.

He remembered seeing this on her neck during their love making. He had even toyed with it while she was asleep. He stood up and bounce down the steps and made his way to the beach. And then he saw a lady like figure sitting by the sea.

"Bethany." He whispered to himself a smile curving his lips and he took to his heels but when he got there the figure disappeared.

And it dawn on him that he was hallucinating. Bethany was gone.

He brought out his phone when it vibrated in his pocket. It was Mr Mark.

"Ace where are you? Have you gotten to the beach house?! You should come back to the hotel now." Mr Mark snapped at him.

"Mr Mark.." He called out unsteadily.

"Hey Ace, are you alright?" Mr Mark asked in a calm tone.

Ace didn't know when a tear dropped down his right cheek. "I will be on my way now but you have to help me out with something tonight." He sniffed and stared down at the necklace on his



palm.

Mr Mark was silent.

She wasn't there anymore and it made his heart ache. This feeling was all new to Ace and he didn't know what to do. Mr Mark was the only person he could trust to help him out.

"I need you to help me find a girl. She stays in this town." Ace rushed out his words.

"What? A girl? How do I help you find a girl? The last time I checked I am the head of secretaries in your father's company and not a detective or private investigator." Mr Mark countered.

"Her name is Bethany." Ace mumbled.

It registered on Mr Mark that Ace didn't go there to get any wallet. "Hold up are you serious about this now? You want me to help you find a girl? Ace have you been messing around with some girls in this town under my close watch?!" Mr Mark asked in a slightly raised tone.

"No..no it is not what you think....I mean it just happened - just do this for me and I promise to reward you." Ace pleaded.

Mr Mark breathed out. "Do you know where she lives? Or just say anything that can help me find her." He asked.



"No I don't know much about her. But I am talking about an eighteen years old girl with a blond hair and..she is not too tall. She looks pale -" Ace gave Mr Mark Bethany's description.

Mr Mark sighed. "But why do you need to find her?" He asked.

"I just need to find her. You can't possibly understand the way I feel about this girl." Ace answered.

They were just together for just one night but Ace was already attracted to her.

"So what do we do? It's pretty late right now and we are leaving town early tomorrow." Mr Mark replied.

"That's why I need to find her. I can't live town without seeing her." Ace told Mr Mark his plans to bring Bethany along with him if she was willing.

Mr Mark face contorted with disbelief when he heard Ace's plan to bring a girl to Los Angeles. He couldn't do what Ace was asking of him. Ace had it all wrong. Bringing the girl to Los Angeles might make Ace lose focus again on his plan of paying attention to his studies. And it was wrong of Ace to want to take the girl away without her parent's permission. And so Mr Mark decided not to put in so much effort in finding Bethany.



He wanted the best for Ace and this was his own way of helping him secure his future as the heir of Clark businesses. And moreover there was no way he could help find the girl without her biological information.

Mr Mark heaved a sigh of frustration. "Ace come back to the hotel then we can know what to do. Get down here as soon as you can."

Ace went back to the hotel and Mr Mark helped him call a friend that has been in that town as a cop for a very long time. Mr Mark gave out the details Ace gave to his friend. But some minutes later, the cop called back and said that there was no one with such name in that town after checking through the system for registered residents of that town.

