

Chapter 29 Don't You Dare Stop Me

ELLIE

"I'm sorry if I ever made you go through that," he said, and when he opened his eyes, they were glassy.

I felt my own eyes well up.

"Good night, Todd," I said before heading back to my room, my chest tightening with a familiar ache.

I never wanted to feel that again. I needed to get over whatever I still felt for Todd.

Maybe there was a time when I wished he'd suffer as much as I had, but not anymore. I just wanted him to be at peace.

It was time to leave all of this behind. We needed to move on, without resentment.

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Todd was still on my couch when I got up the next morning. I had already showered and changed into my workout clothes when I stopped in front of him.

I nudged him, trying to wake him up. He groaned, shifting before cracking one eye open.

"El?"

"You need to get up. I'm heading out."

His eyes swept over my body, assessing. Then he sat up and stretched.

"Going to the gym?" he asked, yawning.

"Yeah."

"Walking?"

"Maybe. Why?"

"Can I come with you?"

"Not hungover?" I crossed my arms, skeptical.

"Nothing a shower won't fix."

"I can't wait."

"I promise, five minutes."

Move on without resentment, Ellie. Don't forget.

I sighed.

"Then hurry up."

On the way to the gym, I managed to talk to Todd just enough to find out he had come back to the country because he was now responsible for exporting his family's winery's wines to the U.S.

Todd's family—whom I had never met—had been the biggest barrier between us, forcing him to return to Italy to expand the business.

And now that they had, they were shipping wine all over the country. Todd's life still revolved around work. Nothing seemed to have changed.

We went our separate ways once we arrived at the gym, and I only saw him again after my workout. He was sitting at the front desk and stood when he saw me.

Was he waiting for me? I walked toward the exit, aware that he was following.

"El?" he called, making me stop on the sidewalk.

"What?" I turned, trying not to look at the sweaty shirt clinging to his muscular chest.

Next time, Ellie, remember not to date hot guys—because it's hell when they become your ex.

"Can I buy you a coffee as an apology for last night?"

"It's fine. No need."

I hoped he wouldn't mistake my kindness for "I'm giving you a second chance."

"But you haven't had breakfast yet, have you? Neither have I. And I really do want to apologize—if we could just talk for a bit."

"Alright," I sighed, giving in.

I'd take the opportunity to make it clear that we could be civil, even friendly, but nothing more.

We walked almost three blocks to the café and bar where I usually had breakfast with Anna.

They served amazing coffee and the best pancakes in Manhattan, and honestly, I was starving.

We sat at a corner table. The conversation with Todd remained light while we waited for our food, even while we ate. But I could feel us approaching the inevitable, uncomfortable talk—where I'd have to shut down any hope he might still have.

He cleared his throat before speaking.

"I really am sorry for showing up at your door last night," he said, closing his eyes with a nervous smile and pressing his fingers to his forehead. "I'm dying of embarrassment right now."

"It's okay, happens in the best of families. Who hasn't knocked on an ex's door drunk?" I teased.

"You?"

"Yeah, except maybe me. Thanks for making me feel even less normal than I already do."

"You're incredible, and you know it." He smiled, gorgeous, sexy, and charming.

Just enough to remind me how little it would take for me to slip up.

Hell. You're going down the wrong road, Ellie.

"I think I need to make something clear—" I started, but the bar's door suddenly swung open, grabbing my attention.

My heart pounded, and my entire body froze as Ethan walked in, followed by Will.

Shit. What were they doing here? Their clothes made it clear they were coming back from a run. I watched as they approached a table.

Will sat first. Then, as if some invisible force drew us together, Ethan's gaze met mine as he stood beside the table, scanning the room like he was looking for something.

I wished I could disappear.

My whole body came alive with the memory of what we did in his apartment.

"Ellie?" Todd's voice snapped me out of my trance.

"What?" I swallowed hard.

"You were saying?"

My heart was pounding in my chest, and my hands started to sweat.

"Excuse me: I need to use the restroom," I said, getting up and grabbing my bag.

I hurried toward the bathroom at the back of the restaurant and placed my bag on the marble sink, staring at my reflection in the mirror as I tried to steady my breathing.

Shit. Shit. Shit.

Why the hell did he have to show up here?

As if seeing him wasn't bad enough, I looked like absolute shit after my workout.

I pulled off the long-sleeve shirt I had over my sports bra, feeling the heat rise, then turned on the faucet to wash my hands.

I was debating whether I should stay hidden in the bathroom for half an hour and text Todd to leave without me when I heard the door open.

I jolted, my whole body trembling, nearly letting out a scream when I caught sight of his back. I stood frozen, watching as he locked the door before turning to face me.

"What are you doing here?" I asked, my heart pounding wildly.

Mr. Morgan crossed his arms over his muscular chest, his expression unreadable. He was wearing a gray shirt, black sweatpants, and black sneakers.

"One day." He closed his eyes, shaking his head, his jaw clenched, making his irritation obvious. "You barely waited a day before running back to your little ex?"

His words were dripping with sarcasm and anger.

"What?"

Did he think Todd and I were back together?

"Or maybe I'm wrong, and you didn't even wait twenty-four hours after we fucked to let him fuck you."

My blood boiled, and rage took over. I stepped forward, stopping right in front of him, before slapping him hard across the face.

"Don't you dare talk to me like that!" I growled.

He closed his eyes, biting down on his lower lip before grabbing my waist roughly and spinning us around, slamming my back against the door.

Pressing his body against mine, he crushed my breasts with his broad chest, making me feel how hard he was against my stomach.

He raised my arms, pinning my hands above my head.

"Tell me you didn't fuck him," he demanded through clenched teeth.

"Go fuck yourself, you son of a bitch!" I snapped, trying to break free.

"Say it!" he growled, gripping my chin with one hand.

"Do you think I'm a slut?"

"Is that a no?"

"Go to hell!"

I wanted to kick him in the balls.

"Good. That's all I needed to know," he said, yanking up my black sports bra with one hand, exposing my breasts, and sending a surge of adrenaline through my body.

"What the hell are you doing?" I panted as he stared at my breasts with a satisfied smirk.

He ran a finger over one of the marks he'd left just below one of my nipples.

The bastard was admiring the marks he'd left on me?

"Wrap your legs around me," he ordered, holding my gaze.

I had no idea what we were doing or how my anger was turning into arousal and pure, raw desire. A wild, urgent need that soaked my panties.

I didn't care about the consequences or the fact that I was all sweaty—I just wanted him to keep touching me. So I obeyed, wrapping my legs around his waist.

I completely lost myself when I felt his cock pressing between my legs, making me moan. He leaned down just enough to take my breast into his mouth, sucking my nipple hard.

I bit my lower lip to stifle a moan as he bit down, making me arch my chest toward him.

"I'm letting go of your hands. Don't you dare stop me."

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