

Chapter 84

Precipice

Ava only stared at the check in Noah's hand, not making a move to take it from him. Noah's brow furrowed, "What's wrong, A? This is a good thing. We're moving forward." She nodded numbly. There were too many emotions buzzing around inside her all at once. Her thoughts were deafening. "No, I'm excited. Really, it just feels too...real, you know? I can't believe that the contract's already up!" He rubbed her back, "Time flies, doesn't it?"

Ava swallowed as images from her dream came rising back up to the surface, like a monster lurking in the deep. There was the root of her discomfort; time really had flown by, so much so that she hadn't even realized that her deal with Xavier had been coming to an end.

Now, Ava had no idea what would come next. And what's more, she had nothing left to hide behind. Her dream had left her with the sinking feeling

that she'd come to a crossroad. Would she keep living her dream life with Noah, or would she finally face her problems head-on?

The slip of paper in Noah's hand told her that whatever she chose, it would solely be her decision to make. She was a free female, but the shadows that plagued her were as real today as they always had been and always would be if she didn't begin taking agency for herself.

"What comes next, Noah?" She asked. "Now that my contract with Xavier is up, that means my contract with you is finished, too."

Noah stared at her for a few silent moments before setting the check down on the bedside table. Then, he took both of Ava's hands between his, "Anything you want, A. We've been living a good life here, right? You've enjoyed Shady Oak despite the fact that I've been working a lot recently?"

A small smile played on her lips, "The exciting world of angel investment waits for no one."

Noah's eyes crinkled at the corners, "Right. I just want you to know that I have no expectations from you, Ava. Your life is your own, and you should feel free to enjoy that."

"I think that I've been enjoying it too much, is the problem," she sighed. "I've been ignoring some really important things that need to be addressed. For my own peace of mind if nothing else."

Noah brought her hands to his lips, "Is any of that something that I can help you with?"

Ava shrugged helplessly, "I wouldn't even know that until I put in the work to identify the source of my concerns. But I do have a plan on what I should do next!"

"Yeah?" Noah asked.

Ava nodded, "It involves a witch."

Noah's expression immediately darkened, "Where did you find a witch?"

"There's one that lives in town. She did a tarot reading for me a little while back, and a lot of what she said really got to me. In a good way," Ava rushed to add. "She helped me see some of the areas I've been slacking in, and I think that she can help me tie up those loose ends."

"You should be careful of witches, A. They operate differently than we do."

Ava frowned a little, taken aback by the sincerity in his words, "You're starting to sound like my brother. Where is Aiden, anyway?"

Noah looked as if he wanted to press the issue but didn't, which she was grateful for. Speaking to Marnie was Ava's only halfway decent plan at the moment, and she didn't want a bunch of urban legends to come between her and her answers.

"He's spending the day back in the city."

Ava cocked an eyebrow, "That was convenient of him."

Noah's lips turned up in a sly little smile, "He didn't want to impede on our celebration."

Ava rose to her knees and began peppering whisper-soft kisses along Noah's jaw, "You mean he didn't want to be around to hear the fireworks go off?"

"That could be it, too." Noah turned his head, capturing Ava's lips with his own. The kiss he gave her was thorough but slow - too slow for the need that settled into her bones and made her blood begin to boil.

When she tried to deepen the kiss, Noah took her wrists in his hands and held them to her lap, forcing her to keep still as he took his time exploring her mouth, sliding his tongue against hers in an achingly slow dance that

stoked the heat rising in her, making Ava shift unconsciously, desperately looking to satisfy the growing ache between her thighs.

"Patience, A." Noah's voice was deep with his own lust but as infuriatingly in control as ever, "We have nothing but time."

"I want you," she said.

"And I want to savor you," Noah countered, pulling Ava until she straddled his lap.

Ava immediately settled in, pressing her core snugly against the thickening bulge in his lap. She began to move, making Noah suck in a breath, only for him to cease her movements with two firm hands on either of her hips.

She sighed as Noah's grip slid from her hips to the taut globes of her ass. His strong hands squeezed her, drawing a moan from her lips as she planted open-mouthed kisses down his throat. When she stopped to swirl her tongue around his thudding pulse, Noah rewarded her with a sharp open-palmed smack that she felt clear through her silk sleep shorts.

Ava didn't bother trying to muffle her cry as she reveled in the slickening between her legs. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders and buried her face in his neck, collapsing into his broad chest and opening herself up to his ministrations.

"Again, Noah."

She felt his deep chuckle vibrate through her, sending sweet electric pulses through her. Ava couldn't get enough of this male. It was almost as if he'd been made for her. Almost... "Always so bossy, A."

The delicious sting of his palm connecting with her skin momentarily took her breath away. He took away the sting of his strike with a deep massage, his fingers biting into the oversensitive flesh, causing its own tantalizing agony. "You want to try playing harder, Ava?"

Noah's voice in her ear was rich with a promise to explore the passions she'd been yearning for ever since their first encounter together back in her room at the club. Noah had always, always gone at her pace, sensitive of her wariness at the newness of sex.

It may have been strange that she was more comfortable with pain than the intimacy of pleasure, but he never questioned her, only made sure to give her the most gratifying experiences imaginable. In this, she trusted him implicitly. Ava nodded, "What did you have in mind?"

Noah rose to his feet, taking Ava with him as he stood. He made his way around to the foot of the bed, where he dropped her, sending her tumbling to the sheets below.

"Hands and knees," he ordered.

Ava quickly complied, lowering her face to the bed when Noah placed a firm palm against the middle of her back.

"Now, take your shorts down."

Ava shivered at the command in his voice as she hooked her thumbs in the waistband of her silk sleep shorts and pulled them down over the curve of her hips and down her legs. Noah made a deep appreciative noise deep in his chest when she bared herself to him. When the shorts reached her knees, he told her to stop.

Her breath came in short bursts, belying how aware she was of herself and her male in this moment. She was vulnerable and constricting in a way that was all new to her. Instead of the fear this position should have brought her, Ava only felt heady with anticipation.

Every inch of her skin felt hyper-sensitized and overeager, waiting for Noah's next touch. She heard the sound of a metal buckle sliding open and leather gliding through cotton.

"If you need me to stop, don't hesitate to say so."

Ava nodded, "I remember."

"Good."

The whistle of leather through air was the only warning she got before the belt made first contact with the already smarting skin of her ass. Ava yelped but held herself still as Noah laid into her, lashing her sensitive cheeks with his belt over and over.

Ava had to remind herself to breathe as the whooping consumed her to the point of distraction. For those moments, her entire world became the sounds of leather on skin and the gasping moans of her own cries. It was exhilarating, damn near all-consuming, to give herself over to someone so completely.

When the tears came, she gave herself over to the catharsis, momentarily purging herself of the fear and doubt that consumed her waking moments.

"God, you're beautiful, Ava."

The lashes stopped, replaced by Noah's warm, strong hands massaging away the sting even as his touch set fire coursing through the myriad of welts crisscrossing her behind. Soon, his tongue joined in the lavishing, soothing her enflamed skin with languid kisses before dropping lower to make her forget about her pain altogether.

Ava groaned and leaned back, pressing herself closer to Noah's probing.

"That's it, A. Take what you need from me."

Noah's hand came up to run circles around her clit, making Ava jump. She continued riding his tongue as his lips and fingers worked her up into a firestorm, pushing her toward the precipice. Suddenly, Noah's tongue swiped upward, running circles around the rim of her ass, sending her careening over the edge.

Ava's body tensed and shook as her orgasm washed over her, Noah's exploring tongue wringing contraction after delicious contraction from her already exhausted body.

They both froze when the distinctive chime of the doorbell rang throughout the house. Ava caught her breath while Noah pulled back, reaching for his phone to see who could possibly be at the door. He only glanced at his phone before going ashen.

"For fuck's sake...." He muttered.

Ava rose to sit at the edge of the bed, wincing as she put pressure on her freshly bruised ass. "Who is it?"

Noah's gorgeous face twisted into a scowl, "My mother."