

## **Ex Husband 191**

### Chapter 191

downstairs in time to see him stumbling through my front door.

an? What the hell man?" I ask as I help him up, supporting his weight,

He was drunk, it wasn't a hard guess. He usually stays clear from drinking too much because of what

happened. Today things seem different. It fucking worried me because the last time he drunk this much

was during his dark times.

I help him take a seat then take mine beside him.

"What happened Ro?" I ask worriedly.

"You were right. Fucking right as always" he stammers. "I messed up big time. How the hell am I going to fix what I destroyed with my bare hands?"

I feel the pain in his voice and it kills me. I love my brother more than anything. When he suffers, I suffer right along with him. I would do anything to take away his pain. His heartaches. But I know I can't. Not really anyway.

"Explain to me why you think you've messed up and where exactly have you messed up?"

He looked distraught. Like his world just collapsed down on him.

"I love her Gabe. I fucking love" he yells.

“Who?”

“Ava!” he shouts. “I fucking love her. It hit me today”

And it hit him hard. This is what I was afraid of. When he finally realizes the fucking truth. My prediction came to pass. The realization is his undoing.

“Why didn’t I realize it sooner? Why did it take me this long? She’ll never believe me if I were to tell her that I loved her. I all but killed her love for me. Spent most of the nine years making her pay for that night. I hurt her so fucking much. She’ll never believe me”

A tear drops down his face. Pain marking his grey eyes that are similar to mine. I feel my heart lurch as waves of pain radiate from him.

“What am I going to do? How am I going to fix all that I broke? How the fuck am I supposed to mend her broken heart when I broke it?”

I grip his shoulder and bring him to me. Rowan isn’t one to show weakness. Even when Emma left him, he

how he would fix what was shattered. He just drank.

+15 BONUS

His shoulders shake as he tries to fight his emotions. My heart goes to him. He is my twin and I fucking

hate seeing him like this. I have no idea how to help him.

Nine years of pain and heartache wasn’t going to be easy to fix. Ava had grown into herself. Risen up from

the ashes like a damn phoenix. She wasn't going to easily allow those that hurt her come near her.

"I don't know Ro, but you're Rowan fucking Woods and you always get what you want. You're going to fix

this and you're going to get Ava back. You never quit, so don't start now"

He straightens and looks forward. His eyes staring at nothing. Completely lost in his mind. 1

"What if she doesn't take me back?" he whispers more to himself.

This isn't my brother. Rowan is assured and confident. The fact he is doubting himself just proves the

power Ava has over him. I fucking believe she has more power than Emma ever had.

The love he had for Emma was you need

easy. Puppy love. That's why it never lasted. That's why it

crumbled at the first sign of trouble. I believe, though not entirely sure that what he may feel for Ava may be stronger. Way fucking stronger.

"You'll just have to give it your best" I whisper back. 1

We stay seated, lost in our own heads, until he falls asleep. I stand up and help him to one of the bedrooms. The one he uses while he is here.

I deposit him on the bed and watch him for a while as he struggles even in his sleep. I want to be confident that he will win Ava back, but I am not. Nine fucking years. That's how long he has hurt her.

I would be surprised if Ava gave him a chance after that. I can only hope. Hope that the love she had for him isn't entirely gone, because I'm not sure he'll survive losing her.

## Chapter 192

Rowan.

My eyes snap open. Rays of light hitting me square in the face. I groan in pain. My head was pounding as

If there was someone using it as a fucking drum.

to realster thall

It takes a while am in my room, in Gabe's house. It's something we both did. He has a

room at my house, and I have one in his.

Groaning, I stand up and head to the bathroom. I turn on the shower and step under it. Using my hands for

support, I lean against the wall and try to put my jumbled thoughts in order. I don't remember much of last

night except drinking

Fuck! How the hell did I get here? How is it possible that I fell in love with Ava and didn't realize it sooner?

The moment the realization hit me, I went straight to the club. I rarely get drunk. I promised myself not to

ever get butt drunk after Noah was born. Normally, I just take a class or two, and that's enough.

Yesterday, though, I needed it. I needed it badly

There is no remedy for what I was feeling. No fucking cure. How do you even begin to deal with the

realization

hurting?

t you love the woman that you hated? The same woman you spent nine fucking wears

I sigh and get out of the bathroom. Feeling like I have aged at least thirty years. I haven't been this out of

sorts in years.

After getting dressed, I head downstairs. I find Gabe having breakfast.

"Where is June?" I ask, referring to his housekeeper.

"She's made us breakfast and left. She said that she wanted an early start to the market so she could get

fresh veggies."

June had a thing against buying from grocery stores. For some reason, she believed that they weren't as

fresh or organic as they wanted us to believe. She buys all vegetables, fruits, meat, eggs, and milk from

the local market, which is owned by a bunch of farmers.

“How are you feeling?” Gabe asks as I pour myself some coffee,

“Like I’ve been hit by a truck,”

When I realized that I loved Ava, part of me wanted to rush back to her house and tell her immediately. I

would have if my rational side hadn’t won. It was too soon to tell her. She wouldn’t have believed me at

+15 BONUS

I’ve never been scared, but with this new awareness, I was fucking terrified. Is this how she used to feel? Loving me but also knowing that I hate her?

“About yesterday,” Gabe begins, “I thought you swore never to get drunk ever again.”

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“I know, but I needed it. I needed to numb the pain. You can’t understand how difficult it was to realize that I love Ava. That all this time I’ve caused her nothing but pain. It was suffocating me to know that I may have lost my chance with her all because I couldn’t let go of my bitterness”

I pretend I don’t notice it every time I show up to pick Noah up, and she frowns at me in disapproval. Or when, at times, she looks at me with nothing but hate and resentment.

I ignore it, trying to let it not affect me because I crave her. I follow her around like a damn lost puppy, begging for any scraps of affection she’ll give me. Even if it’s bitterness, I take it because it’s the only way to be near her.

I never thought of what she went through at my hands. What she is dishing out is nothing compared to what I did to her. Yet it still fucking hurts. How the hell did she survive me for those nine fucking years?

she wants nothi

to do with me. Wants me to be completely out of her life for good. I want to give her that because she deserves better, but I can't let her go no matter how I fucking try. 1

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"How did that happen? The last time I checked, you were sure you were in love with Emma." Gabe asks me, looking puzzled.

"Yes, but weren't you the one that insisted that I had suppressed feelings for Ava?"

I remember how adamant he was about that. He wouldn't let it go, even after I told him countless times that I wasn't in love with Ava. I guess he just knows me better than I know myself. He saw something I didn't want to recognize.

"My gut was telling me you loved Ava, but your insistence at times made me doubt that maybe I was wrong."

I sigh. "You were fucking right. My only wish is that I had relegalized this sooner. Maybe then it would have been easier to mend what I broke"

I stare off into space. Lost in the bitter memories. Memories where I had her, but instead of cherishing her I ruined her. I broke her. My actions and words chipped at her heart slowly by slowly until there was nothing left.

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+15 BONUS

"I honestly don't wish to be in your shoes" Gabe whistles and I glare at him. "But you still haven't

answered me I want to know when it happened. When did you fall for her?"

don't know. I can't pinpoint the exact time. Maybe it happened when we were still married, or maybe it's

a recent thing. All I know is that I love her now."

I run my hand through my hair. I was frustrated and fucking scared. What a lousy time to realize you

someone!

love

I think it was always there. Probably came after Noah was born. I also think you didn't allow yourself to love her because you held on to the memory of Emma. She was your first love, so you assumed she was your true love. You can't live with someone for nine years and not feel a thing for them. I know you, Ro. You wouldn't even have touched her if you didn't feel something for her."

"Sex is a biological process. I just got what I needed from her while still hating her. I am ashamed to say there were times I imagined she was Emma." I tell him, feeling sick to the core at how I treated her.

"Really? Did you imagine you were fucking Emma because you missed her or because you needed something to hold you back? Something that would guard you from enjoying the intimacy between you and Ava because you felt that enjoying sex with her would be a betrayal to the memories of Emma that you held on to for dear life?"

I sit on the stool completely dumbfounded. I never thought about it like that. I admit I was attracted to her, otherwise, how would I explain how the hell I was able to get it up and going? Maybe Gabe was right, and I used Emma as an escape from what I truly felt for Ava.

In my head, I had already betrayed the love of my life once; how then could I betray her over and over again by sleeping with and enjoying Ava's body? It all made sense in my head then, but now I'm starting to realize that Emma was never the love of my fucking life.

"Fuck. I messed up big time," I holler, feeling like a crashing weight was on my shoulders.

"Do you love Emma?" he asks and shake my head in a no.

"Are you sure? Is all the love you had for her completely gone?"

I think about it for a minute before answering.

"Yes. When she first came back, I thought that it would be our second chance at love. It took a while to realize that it felt all kinds of wrong. I didn't even allow her to kiss me for fucks sake. That should have been my first clue that I was done with her. That and the jealousy I felt towards Ethan"

+15 BONUS can't begin to explain the rage I felt every time I imagined Ava and Ethan together. It was all consuming and volatile

guess it look losing her to make you realize what you felt for her. It took seeing her happy with another man to bring forth the love you suppressed. You held on to Emma because of the way things ended abruptly between the two of you. None of you got any closure. That's why you held on to each other's memories for so long"

get what he is saying, and fuck does it make sense, but it doesn't help my case. So much damage has already been done. I said words I could never take back. Did things that will forever be imprinted on her mind. I destroyed her with my own two hands. It

"What are you going to do?" he asks me after a while.

I don't know. I was blinded by Emma before, but not anymore. Ava is fucking beautiful, and she can get any man she wants. There are already some who are sniffing around her, as Noah clearly likes informing me.

I feel so dejected. What is to stop her from falling in love with someone else?

She was not only beautiful but also intelligent, caring, kind, and loving. She has a heart of gold, and she loves fiercely. Any man would be lucky to have her.

I mean, fuck, she was able to change Ethan. I saw it in his eyes. He had fallen for her. Any woman who is capable of making a man change his ways is a fucking saint. I was a fucking idiot for not realizing the treasure I had.

Gabe claps me on the shoulder. "I'm sure you'll figure it out. I'm positive of that"

I wish I was as confident in myself as he was in me, because deep down I know I don't deserve her, and my biggest fear is losing her to someone who does deserve her love.

"I honestly don't wish to be in your shoes" Gabe whistles and I glare at him. "But you still haven't answered me. I want to know when it happened. When did you fall for her?"

"I don't know. I can't pinpoint the exact time. Maybe it happened when we were still married, or maybe it's a recent thing. All I know is that I love her now."

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and volatile.

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my biggest fear is losing her to someone who does deserve her love.

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How are you doing?" mom asks through the phone. "And how are the baby and Noah?"

Once again they were out of the country for a business meeting. It didn't come as a surprise to me that

they had their own private jet since Rowan did too. He had his own and there was also a family one. I

have never used his. Never been inside it. Probably because we rarely went to any trips together.

When my wealth rose to great heights, I thought of buying a jet of my own, but I quickly shot the idea

down. What the hell would I use it for? I rarely went anywhere that will necessitate me needing one of my

own. If I had to go somewhere, I usually hired one or I'd just fly business class.

"Ava?"

"Sorry mom. We're all doing well. We just miss you guys so much"

And it was true. They've been gone for a week and they'll be away for another week. Noah and I missed them like crazy. It's surprising how they've become such a big part of our lives in such a short time.

"We miss you too. Your dad says hi by the way. He said he'll talk to you in the evening when he isn't so busy"

"That's all right"

"So, have you bought anything new for the baby? Four months isn't long. Soon he or she will be here" just as always, excitement rings in her voice when she talks about the baby.

"How am I supposed to buy anything when everyone around me already has? This baby will have more than in enough and a lot to choose from" I laugh.

The baby's room was full of stuff. I thought that mom, dad, Letty and Corrine were bad. That was before Reaper came into the picture.

He has been sending cute little gifts since I allowed him to be part of his or her life. I don't even get when or where he goes shopping when he is in hiding. Everything he has bought is in color pink. Just like with

Noah and Ethan, he also believes that it will be a baby girl.

My smile falls as soon as thoughts of him pass through my mind. I know I promised him, but I can't help but feel guilty. This was the man that murdered my adoptive father after all. We may not have gotten

along with Father, but he still raised me.

“I can’t wait for the baby to be born. I missed Noah’s birth so I’m making up with this baby” her voice pulls

Can I call you back mom? I was meeting up with Letty and Corrine for a lunch date and I see them pulling  
up

It probably wasn’t them, but my mood had already been shot down to hell.

“Sure. Talk to you later. I love you Ava”

“I love you too mom” I say, then hang up the phone.

I sigh as I place my phone down at the table. The moment I do that, my conflicting thoughts immediately  
attack.

Father wasn’t the only issue associated with Reaper. There was also Rowan. Sure, he wasn’t my favorite person, but he was Noah’s father. Reaper was hell bent on revenge and losing Rowan would destroy Noah.

There was also the likelihood that he would go after those Rowan loved. Noah loved the same people, well except for Emma that is. I just didn’t know what to do because part of me felt like I had made a mistake giving him a chance. The other part just told me to trust my instincts and my instincts told me it  
was the right move.

“What are you thinking so hard about?” Corrine’s voice startles

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“Fuck, you scared me” I put my hand on my chest as if that would slow down my beating hard.

“Sorry. I thought you saw me coming in” she says looking sheepish.

I was so lost in my thoughts that I hadn’t realized that they had entered the private booth.

“It’s okay...I just have a lot on mind”

“Care to share?” Letty asks, taking her seat.

I shake my head. “Not really”

It’s not that I didn’t want to share, it’s just that I didn’t know how to. How do I even begin telling them that the criminal everyone is tirelessly searching for is my baby’s uncle? Or that we have been in contact and

as if that wasn’t worse I permitted him to be in my baby’s life?

“Does this have to do with Rowan again?” Letty leans forward. Her eyes sparkling for some odd reason.”

Travis said that Rowan called him a few days ago and he was butt drunk”

I frown at that. I can’t remember the last time Rowan got drunk. He stopped drinking too much after Noah

was born. Plus he’s gone radio silent since that night he showed up unexpectedly at my house.

I still can't believe that I punched him. It felt good because I've wanted to do that for a long time.

"Why was he drunk?" Corrine asks, seeming curious

Letty shrugs her shoulders as she answers. "Neither Travis or I know, but I bet Gabe knows and I double bet that Ava has an idea".

They both turn to look at me expectantly. I shift uncomfortably on my chair.

"Spill it, Ava" Letty commands.

"Honestly, I don't know anything. The last time I saw him, he turned up unexpectedly at my house at night. His behavior was odd so I asked him to leave"

"Describe odd?" Corrine pushes.

"He got jealous when Noah mentioned that Re-" I catch myself before I can say his name. "Noah mentioned something about suitors and he went ballistic saying I belonged to him and he wasn't going to allow me to whore myself to other men"

"Ooh, so possessive. I never thought I would see the day when Rowan becomes possessive towards you" Letty says all dreamy..

I just look at her like she was losing her grip on reality.

"You can't be serious, Letty. This is Rowan we are talking about. The same man that told me over and over again that I meant nothing to him. That he would never love me because he hates my fucking guts"

The pain I used to feel was mainly replaced by anger. All the heartbreak I went through and all for what?

He is still a thorn on my side.

"I honestly t

think he has come to the realization that he wants you. Why do you think he wants to be

around you every time?" Corrine asks her eyes pinning mine. 1

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"Even if that's true, which I highly doubt, it doesn't matter. It's a little too late. I gave him countless

opportunities during the nine years we were married and he wasted them all. He gave me nothing in

return except pain. I just don't see things the way you guys do"

They're quiet. Both staring at me like they want to say something, but don't know how. For now, all I want.

is to let this Rowan issue go. I don't want to think about him or his sudden change in behavior. I already

had too much on my plate without adding him to the mix. 1

"Look, I know you guys want to see me happy and for some reason you think I'll find that happiness with Rowan, but you're wrong. Our relationship was doomed from the moment we said 'I do' years ago. We are toxic for each other. I loved him and hated him at the same time while he only hated me. I tried transforming myself into something I'm not just so he would love me and that didn't work. Even if I were to try now, it wouldn't work. The love I had for him is buried under tons of pain, heartbreak, resentment and bitterness. So please I beg you, let's just let this issue go okay?"

Ex-Husband's Regret by Evelyn M.M

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want me to get my fairytale ending and they believe that will only happen with Rowan. Why couldn't they understand that just because they want him to love me doesn't

make it a reality?

Sure, Rowan was acting differently, but I believe it's just a phase. Men like what they can't have. He wants me now because he can't have me. Soon enough he'll get bored of the chase and go back to his true love. If I give in I'll be left in another load of heartbreak after he realizes I am not what he wants.

"Let's just focus on what we came here for" I tell them after silence descends on us.

"Alright" Corrine replies.

"Fine" Letty grumbles.

I sigh in relief. Happy they were willing to let it go for now. I know Letty will look for an opportunity to bring

it up again, but I'll deal with it when she does.

"Can we go to an ice cream shop or something? For some reason this fancy ass place is getting on my

nerves with all the snobbish waiters and waitresses" Letty says out of nowhere.

"We could go to my restaurant" Corrine adds.

I don't know why they didn't think of that in the first place. Instead of saying anything, I keep quiet.

"Nah. Have you ever been to an ice cream shop or a fast food restaurant?" Letty turns to face Corrine whose eyes shift nervously.

She shakes her head. "Not really"

"Great. Today is your lucky day. We'll have lunch at a fast food restaurant then have a froyo or ice cream at an ice cream shop, then we'll head to your office to discuss our business progress so far"

I smile at the deer caught in headlights look that Corrine has plastered on her face. It's time we introduce her to the normal world. Which in my opinion is way better than the stuck up people who surround us.

Letty pulls Corrine up, while I stand up.

"What if I get food poisoning? I heard that such restaurants aren't entirely hygienic when they handle food." Corrine complains as she tries to wiggle out of Letty's grasp.

"So what? You'll get a bad case of diarrhea and after a few days of pooping your intestines

Laughing, I walk behind them as I listen to their banter. It was so refreshing.

I was contemplating on how thankful I am for having such friends, when her bitter voice kills every single joy I was feeling.

"Look what we have here? It's the pregnant whore"

I turn to my side to find Christine staring at me with nothing but hatred in her eyes.

enough, Emma was standing right next to her.

As if that wasn't

I close my eyes and let out a breath while wondering why the hell did god hate me so much,

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I look to the heavens before calming myself. I didn't need a lot of stress right now.

"Hello Christine, hello Emma," I say in a controlled voice.

I didn't want to deal with drama today. So I was going to be as civil as I could, then remove myself from this situation.

Christine scoffs, but I don't pay her any attention. My focus was on Emma. She still had the sling around her shoulder. Seeing it there reminded me of that day. The way she willingly took a bullet for me.

I wanted to reach out to her after that incident, but I wasn't sure if my actions would be welcomed. In her eyes, I was probably still her nemesis.

My eyes pierces hers. "I never got the chance to thank you for what you did, but I'll forever be grateful," I tell her, motioning to her shoulder.

I don't know what I expected, but it wasn't for her to scoff at me in disdain. Sure, I know we would never be the best of friends, but I had hoped that with what happened to us, we would put our differences aside.

"I don't need your fucking thanks, and what the hell made you think that I got shot for you?" she asks, her

face scrunching up in disgust.

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I sigh and shake my head. I guess nothing has changed. The bitch I was used to was firmly back in place.

“Whatever Emma, I’m still thankful.”

Corrine and Letty look behind them when they realize that I’m not following them. They stop before turning back. A murderous look on both their faces.

I’ve known them for a short time, but fuck do I love my friends.

“What the hell is going on here? You better not be causing trouble for Ava, or I swear I’ll destroy you,”

Corrine warns, her voice taking a deadly tone.

“Oh, look, our mousy Ava went and got herself some friends; how nice,” Christine mocks. I could literally

taste the bitterness in her voice.

Letty steps towards them, her hands fisted, but I stop her. I didn’t need a fight right now. What I needed.

was peace and tranquility.

“She’s not worth it, Letty. She’s nothing but a resentful, hateful bitch.” I tell my friend, pleading with my

eyes to let it go.

“I’m not worth it?” Christine scoffs, turning towards Emma before looking back at me. “You’re the one who isn’t worth it. You’re unwanted and hated. No one in your family likes you. As if that isn’t bad enough, you also spread your legs for anyone. Do you even know who your baby’s father is?”

Throwing my hands up in the air, I turn towards my friends. “Why the hell does everyone think I’m a whore? I’ve slept with two men. Two fucking men! If that makes me a whore, then what the hell is she?” I ask, pointing at Christine.

“You bitch!” she screams, shards of hatred directed at me.

“What? I’m telling the truth. I am damn sure you have slept with most of the eligible married and unmarried men in this city.”

“Shut up!” she screams, losing it. “It’s because of you that I lost my job! You made Rowan fire me.”

To be honest, I laugh at that. It was so funny and so silly. Like could she seriously hear herself? She wasn’t making any sense.

“I can’t make Rowan do anything even if I wanted to! He fired you because he realized what a lousy human being you are.”

“I’m gonna kill you,” she yells again.

She steps forward to attack me, but Emma stops her. Her action surprises me, but I don’t let it linger too much in my brain. I was done with confusing behaviors from those around me.

I totally ignore Christine as she curses me and focus on Emma.

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“You think she’s your friend, but she’s not.” I begin, “Don’t let her fool you. Did you know she tried her best to seduce Rowan and get him to sleep with her? She even offered to be his mistress, but he refused her.”

Emma looks shocked. Her eyes dancing between mine and Christine. Christine, on the other hand, looks totally afraid because she knows she’s about to lose her hold on Emma.

“She’s lying, Emma. Don’t listen to her!”

“Am I? Ask anyone in our social circle, and they’ll tell you the same thing. Haven’t you ever wondered why she hates me so much? It’s because I was married to the man she wanted for herself. She’s been chasing after him from the moment he hired her as his secretary. It’s no secret she wants him.”

“Is this true?” Emma asks in a deadly voice as Christine nervously nibbles her lips.

She took a bullet for me. The least I could do was open her fucking eyes to the person she considered a true friend.

I can explain,” she pleads, but Emma doesn’t listen as she blows up on her.

I tune them out and turn to my friends. “Let’s go. My work here is done.”

I turn around just as I hear a slap echoing in the parking lot. Swiveling my head, I look back and see Christine cradling her cheek. Emma had slapped her hard. I wasn’t sorry for her. The bitch deserved it after what she put me through.

We walk until we can no longer hear them, Sagging against a car, I take a deep breath.

“That was awesome. The way you stood up against her was amazing.” Letty yells happily.

I give them a small smile.

“Thanks. I’m so sorry to have to do this to you two, but I need to go home. I’m so freaking tired, and my feet are aching.” I tell them.

For some reason I feel drained and tired. I just want to go home, de–stress and take a very long nap.

“Are you sure?” Letty asks.

Yeah. Sorry for bailing out on you like this.”

It’s no problem, We understand. Dealing with those two is a headache. Go home and get some rest; we

can postpone the meeting for another day.” Corrine adds, holding my hand reassuringly.

“What are you going to do now?” i ask them. I felt bad for canceling, but I also know that I need to get

home.

“We’ll continue with Letty’s insane plans and get some greasy food,” Corrine answers with what

resembles a wince.

After hugging them and telling them goodbye, I get in my car and leave.

I should really consider hiring a driver," I tell myself.

I was short, so with my big belly, it was starting to get really uncomfortable being behind the wheels.

Around forty minutes later, I pull into my driveway. I park my car and get inside the house.

I

"Thank God you're here miss, Ava." My nanny all but screams while rushing towards me.

I put my bag down. I feel panic trying to claw its way inside me, but I push it down.

"What's wrong?"

Before she can answer, Noah comes rushing down the stairs. He takes my hand and pulls me towards the

stairs.

"Slow down, Noah. What's wrong?"

He looks at me, tears swimming in his eyes. "It's Gunner. He won't stop crying, and he won't tell me what's wrong. I don't know how to help him."

I tried calling Calvin, but he didn't pick up," the nanny says loudly behind us.

I nod my head and let Noah pull me up the stairs and into his room. We enter, and I find Gunner curled into a corner. His head between his legs. Arms around himself. He was sobbing. Gut-wrenching cries.

My heart sinks. His pain breaking my heart into tiny little pieces. He has come to mean a lot to me. Seeing him like this was literally causing me physical pain.

Chapter 0199

I struggle, but finally kneel before him.

“Honey, what’s wrong?” I ask gently as I touch his arm softly.

The moment he hears my voice, he lunges at me. His arms circle my neck and he holds on for dear life. I fall on my butt on the soft carpet and end up sitting with him in my arms.

“Baby, talk to me...” I plead while rubbing his back.

1—I just don’t understand. You’re a great mother and you live with Noah. He told me that you and his dad

aren’t together, but you still love him so much. So why does my mother not love me?” he hiccups.

Struggling to get the words out.

My heart goes to him. I hold him close to me. Hoping that he can feel my love for him radiating from me.

“I’ve only met her once. She doesn’t want to see me or be near me. Am I a bad boy? Does she hate me so much? I just don’t understand why she doesn’t love me” he cries.

I can’t stop the tears that run down my face. I feel my heart squeeze. My throat bobbles as I try to contain my emotion. I pull him even closer. As if I could absorb his pain and take it into my own body.

“Dad say I am not a bad boy and I’ve tried my best to always be good, but she still doesn’t want me. It hurts, Ava. It hurts so much in here” he lets go of me for a while then pounds on his chest.

I grasp his hand in mine and stop his actions. I kiss his cheeks, then his forehead, before running my finger down his cheek.

“I don’t have all the answers to your questions, but I know you’re a great little boy. It may not mean much, but I love you, Gunner, just as much as I love Noah. If I were to have another son, then I would probably pray to the heavens that it would be you.” I take a breath before continuing.

“Don’t ever doubt yourself, honey. We may not know your mother, but it’s her loss because you’re awesome, and we’re so glad you came into our lives. Never put yourself down, Gunner. Ever. Because there are people who love you so much.”

I pour out my heart to him. Hoping it will be enough to pull him back to us. Everything I said is the truth. I Just hope he believes me.

He stops crying. His eyes focused on mine.

You mean that? You love me?” He asks timidly, making the need to find his mother and beat the crap out of her rise within me.

“Of course. You’re a part of Noah and me now, so how can we not love you?” I reply, wiping away the tear

stains

He calms down, then leans forward and kisses my cheek.

I love you guys too. I’m so glad our dog sneaked into your yard that day, because then we met you and Noah, I’ve been a lot happier since I met you two.

His words brings tears to my eyes. Damn it. The kid was too sweet.

"I'm glad we met you too, Gunner." Noah adds, and I nod in agreement.

A smile breaks from his lips and transforms his whole face. He was a carbon copy of his dad, but there

was just something about his smile.

Looking at him closely, something tags at my brain, but no matter what, I just couldn't place why his smile.

seemed really familiar or why I feel like things are about to unravel.

Chapter 0200

Calvin had called immediately he got the missed call notification. He'd explained that the reason he didn't pick up is because he was in a meeting and his phone had been silent.

I He wanted to come home right away, but told him that everything was now fine. That I had taken care of the situation and that Gunner was fine. He wasn't crying anymore. Neither was he sad. That was enough

for me.

He was reluctant, but he finally agreed given that his meeting would run late.

Now here I was cooking dinner for us. With thousands of thoughts running through my head. It's like I

can't get a break from my own thoughts. They're constantly there and now there some that are added

concerning Gunner.

“What are we having for dinner mom?” Noah asks sitting down at the counter.

“Yes, what? I am starving” Gunner adds smiling at me.

There it was again. That damn smile. It’s not that I hated it. I could never hate any smile Gunner gives me. It’s just that it fucking bothers me so much. There was something about it that I just couldn’t place my finger on. 1

“I’m not sure” I tell them. “Why don’t we see what my craving will pick?”

Noah smiles wide and turns to Gunner. “Mom has insane cravings. Sometimes they’re really great and other times it’s totally disgusting”

Gunner nods his head. “Can I help?”

“Sure. Why don’t you flour the chicken?” I tell him.

Noah wasn’t really that helpful in the kitchen. In fact he was a complete disaster. That’s why he normally never helps unless it’s something he can actually do. Something he won’t mess up.

I got out the marinating sliced chicken breasts and the Ziploc bag of seasoned flour and handed them over to Gunner.

He took them willingly with a smile on his face. One thing I learned about him was that he loved food and he also loved cooking. He was going to make a very lucky woman happy one day if he continued like this.

As for you, Noah, you can help with the dessert” I turn to him.

At least that’s easy and I won’t mess it up” he says grinning, making both me and Gunner laugh,

He was self-aware. I liked that about him.

“Now, if you get the buttermilk marinade on your fingers, don’t get it near your eyes. It’ll burn because of the Tabasco and salt that is in it” I warn Gunner.

“Okay”

We get to work. Chatting and simply having fun. I was so glad that I could give this to Gunner. So happy that I was able to give him happiness. I couldn’t take away all his pain and sadness, but this had to be

enough for now.

He was a lovely boy. Shy at first, but when you got to know him, you realize how amazing he is. I just

couldn’t understand why his mother would do this to him.

From what little I gathered. She doesn’t want to be in his life, I don’t know if it’s by choice or maybe forced circumstances, all I know is that it was hurting Gunner. The last thing I want is for him to grow up

I

with issues just like me.

“This is what I’ve always wished and prayed for his low voice pulls me back to the present.

“What?” Noah asks him.

Gunner takes deep breath before answering. “This. Having a mom by my side. Watching her cook and cooking alongside her. That kind of thing. Don’t get me wrong, dad is amazing but he is a dad. He can never be my mom”

Damn it. There goes my heart shattering into pieces for this little boy. If I could, I would give him the world, but that is not possible. Some things just aren't possible. Like how Noah wants Rowan and I to get back together.

"You okay, honey?" I ask him.

He smiles up at me. "Yes. I have you, Noah and dad. That is enough. I know you're not my real mom, but you're like a mom to me already."

I leave what I am doing and give him a hug before kissing his forehead.

"Damn!" Noah groans.

"Language!" I chastise him and he goes quiet.

"I'm sorry mom." Noah says after a while. "I've been pushing and pushing for you and dad to get back together without realizing how lucky I am that you're both in my life. Will you forgive me?">

I open my arms for him and he immediately steps into them. I close them around him before kissing his

"You're forgiven" I tell him while letting him go.

"I'll keep praying and hoping, but I'll stop pushing so much."