My Great Escape Led Me to You

Chapter 12

Amelia Lane's lips curled with a mocking smile as she recited the words from the love letter, her tone slow and pointed.

"Andrew, I've always been there, watching you from behind. Would you ever turn around and notice me?"

As Amelia's voice echoed in the room, Emily Blair's fists clenched tighter and tighter, her knuckles turning white.

There was no denying it—she had written those words. Before everything changed, before she was given another chance at life, she'd scribbled that letter, still lost in foolish daydreams about Andrew Lane. But she'd always been careful, hiding her letters far out of sight. There was no way she would have left it in Andrew's room herself.

There was only one explanation.

Someone must have stolen it and planted it there.

Maybe it was Amelia Lane. Or perhaps Isabella Austin.

"That's enough."

Andrew Lane's voice cut through, low and rough, simmering with anger. His eyes were sharp and cold. "I don't want to hear any more."

Amelia snapped her mouth shut, scoffing as she shoved the letter into Emily's arms like it was something filthy.

Even after all she'd been through-even with the lessons of her second chance- Emily couldn't pretend Andrew's icy stare didn't affect her. A chill settled in her bones.

"Emily Blair," he said, his tone biting, "you'd better have a good explanation for this."

Isabella Austin stepped forward, gently tugging Andrew's sleeve. Her voice was soft, almost coaxing. "Emily's just a kid, Andrew. There's no need to get upset or take it to heart."

She turned to Emily, her eyes full of affected concern. "But you really should focus on your studies, Emily. Don't get distracted by these silly ideas."

Andrew's gaze never softened. "I warned you before," he said coldly. "Don't lay your dirty little schemes on me. Don't push your luck."

Emily drew a slow, steady breath. "I didn't put that letter in your room. Someone else did."

Amelia snorted. "Someone else? Who would stoop so low, Emily? You just can't stand to see my brother with Isabella, so you pull something like this."

Emily ignored her. She met Andrew's hard gaze straight on. "Andrew, I was wrong. I should have said this properly, so there'd be no more misunderstanding."

His expression didn't change—still cold, still distant.

She pressed on. "I'm telling you now, officially: I don't have feelings for you anymore. Not now, not ever."

Andrew's fingers, resting on Isabella's shoulder, twitched almost imperceptibly.

Isabella glanced up at him, searching his face, her heart skipping a beat when she noticed his eyes locked on Emily.

Emily continued, her voice steadier now. "Before, I was wrong. I liked the wrong person. I was blind, and shameless enough to chase after you."

"I see that now, and I'll change."

"But from now on, I will never have these disgusting thoughts again. I'll keep my distance—always. I'll never cross that line again."

Admitting her feelings were shameful left Emily feeling oddly lighter, as if a heavy stone had been lifted from her chest.

She stared at Andrew for a long moment, then picked up the letter-one she'd nearly forgotten ever writing.

Right in front of him, she tore it into pieces, letting the scraps flutter to the floor.

Andrew looked like he was about to interrupt, but she pressed on. "One last thing, Andrew Lane: from now on, we're finished. I'll make sure there's a clear line between us."

As soon as the words left her lips, she leaned forward toward him, intending to make her point crystal clear.

So she didn't see the flash of surprise in Andrew's eyes, or the way he pressed his lips together, a brief frown flickering across his face.

When she straightened up, Emily realized Isabella Austin and Amelia Lane had slipped out at some point. Now, it was just her and Andrew left in the room. Her heart skipped a beat.

It was only then that she sensed the twist lurking beneath the surface of this whole setup.

Spinning around, she caught sight of the door slamming shut with a heavy thud, plunging the room into silence.

There was no time to see Andrew's reaction; she rushed to the door, desperately twisting the handle, trying to wrench it open.

But after a few frantic turns, the handle came loose in her grip, leaving her standing there, breathless, clutching the broken piece in her hand.