My Great Escape Led Me to You

Chapter 7

At first, Emily Blair didn't react. Not until Andrew Lane suddenly grabbed her chin, his fingertips digging into her soft skin as he forced her to look up at him.

"Emily Blair," he said, his voice cold and sharp, his dark eyes shadowed with something unreadable. "What's with the attitude?"

That's when it hit her-he'd called her "Emily Blair," just as she'd called him "Andrew Lane," instead of the familiar "Andrew."

Her fingers twisted in the bedsheet as she struggled to keep her tone steady. "Nothing. I'm just tired and want to sleep."

Andrew let out a quiet, scornful laugh, his grip tightening. "And you really think I'm going to believe that?"

Emily knew she had to make things clear between them, to draw a line before things got even messier.

"What happened this afternoon... my mom said things she shouldn't have. I apologize for her. Those words weren't how I really feel."

In the dark, her voice was clear and unwavering, her eyes wide and honest.

"Andrew, I'll be better from now on. I won't bother you anymore."

She hesitated, then forced herself to finish, "And I promise, I never meant to try and seduce you."

The words were hard to get out, but at least she'd said them.

Andrew abruptly let go of her and snatched a book from the desk, tossing it in front of her. The book fell open, and on the pages Emily saw her own neat handwriting— page after page filled with the name "Andrew Lane."

It was everywhere. Line after line. "Andrew Lane." Her breath caught, her face draining of color.

Those were pages she'd written before everything changed. She'd never had a chance to destroy them—and now Andrew Lane had found them.

He seized her chin again, his gaze sharp and icy as a winter night. "Next time you lie, make sure you hide your tracks first."

With that, he left.

Whatever sleepiness Emily had felt evaporated. She grabbed the notebook and tore out every page where she'd written his name, ripping them into shreds.

A year ago, things hadn't been like this between them. When she'd first come to live with the Lanes, Andrew had been the one to show her around, to listen patiently to her endless chatter, to bring her a mug of warm milk at night—the perfect older brother.

But all that ended the day Isabella Austin returned from abroad.

Emily would never forget how Isabella had handed Andrew the love letter she'd written in secret, then draped herself around him like a beautiful, sinuous serpent, winding her white arms around his neck for everyone to see.

And Andrew, always so composed, had simply let her. He hadn't protested when Isabella clung to him in front of everyone, letting rumors swirl, letting her whisper, "Andrew, I don't like other girls around you. Not even a high school kid."

"Andrew, if you had to choose-me or Emily Blair?"

Andrew's answer had been swift and merciless. "You."

Emily still remembered the disgust in his eyes, the coldness in his voice. "Emily

Blair, don't you ever project those filthy feelings onto me."

In his eyes, her love was like garbage in a sewer-something revolting, not even worth a glance.

The fear she'd felt then, the shame, still haunted her. Now, all she wanted was to get as far away from him as possible.

Dragging herself back from the memory, Emily lay down wearily on her bed.

She'd gone to bed late, but the next morning someone burst into her room, yanking her out of sleep.

"Get up! Mr. Lane is leaving on a business trip, and you'd better get yourself ready too."

Emily buried her face in the covers, biting back her frustration. "I told you, I'm not going!"

Emma George, the housekeeper, wasn't having it. She grabbed Emily and pulled her out of bed. "It's summer break. You've got plenty of time. Like it or not, you're going. This isn't up for debate!"