

Chapter 30: A Change in the Story

“Mommy?” Maddy’s soft voice came from the backseat.

“Yeah, honey,” I replied, wiping away the tears that had fallen down my cheeks.

“Was that lady telling the truth?”

“What do you mean?” I asked, hoping she hadn’t heard everything.

“Is Mr. Tate my daddy?”

I inhaled sharply at her question. I didn’t want to answer, but I knew I had to. “Yes, baby, Mr. Tate is your daddy.”

“Good,” she responded simply.

“Why is that good?” I glanced at her through the rearview mirror.

“I like Mr. Tate,” she smiled softly.

As we walked into the apartment, I set my things down while Maddy ran to her room. I collapsed on the couch, my tears threatening to fall again.

It was just like before, just like four years ago. That woman shows up, and I am dismissed as the shame of the Young family.

I turned at a knock at the door and wiped my eyes. I opened the door to see Tate standing outside. “Piper...”

I shook my head. “I have nothing to say, Tate. Go back to New York.” I tried to close the door, but he pushed against it, blocking the way so I couldn’t shut it.

“Please, can I come in?” he said softly.

I stepped aside, knowing I couldn’t fight him. I walked back into the family room and crossed my arms over my chest.

“Nothing you say is going to make me change my mind, Tate. She went too far, and you all let her!” I shouted.

Tate shook his head. “Piper, I didn’t know what to say.”

I scooped, “Obviously. This is exactly like four years ago! She shows up, and everyone listens to her while I get dragged through the mud. Except this time, I’m not letting myself get hurt.

“I mean, what did you think was going to happen? Did you think we would just all be one happy little family? I won’t have that woman in my daughter’s life.”

Tate lowered his head, “I won’t have her in my daughter’s life either.”

“What is that supposed to mean?” I asked.

“It means that I broke it off with her. It’s over. After you left, I realized the same thing.

“This was just like in the Maldives, except this time I’m not losing you,” Tate said, stepping toward me. “Especially when I just found you again.”

I shook my head. “Why on earth would I believe you?”

He stepped closer, his body almost touching mine. I looked up into his honey-colored eyes and fought hard to keep my resolve.

“She’s gone. And she won’t be coming back, ever. I want you. I want Maddy. I’m tired of pretending that letting you go four years ago wasn’t the biggest mistake of my life.”

I shook my head again, feeling the tears stinging the back of my eyes. “Tate, I—”

I was interrupted when his lips crashed to mine, and it was so familiar, so right. His hands cradled my face, knotting through my hair as he kissed me fiercely, and I gave in.

I pulled him close to me, wrapping my arms around his waist as our lips melded.

When he finally pulled away, he looked down at me with a smile. “I love you, Piper Manning. I have always loved you.”

I placed my hands on his chest, feeling the fast beating of his heart against my palms. I laughed as I looked up into his eyes again, giving in to everything I had fought for the last four years.

“I love you too.”

“Mommy?”

I turned to see Maddy staring at us with confusion. I stepped back, pushing some hair behind my ear uncomfortably. “Hey, honey. What did you need?”

She looked up at me and then looked up at Tate. “Did you know you’re my daddy?”

Tate looked at her with wide eyes, glancing at me before turning back to Maddy. “I did know that. Is that okay?”

“Yep,” she shrugged before walking into the kitchen.

Tate stepped toward me again, wrapping his arms around my waist. “Apparently it’s okay.” He kissed my lips softly before letting go and walking into the kitchen to join Maddy.

I sat down on the couch, trying furiously to figure out how this was going to work. “Penny for your thoughts?” Tate asked as he leaned against the doorway of the kitchen a few minutes later.

I shrugged, “Just trying to figure out how this is all going to work.”

Tate nodded his head before sitting beside me on the couch.

“Well, for a while I’ll have to go back and forth. But after that, I don’t see why I can’t move here. Most of my work is over the phone or the computer. I can go to New York when I need to.”

I looked at him with a sideways stare. “You’re serious?”

“I am,” he answered before taking my hand. “I was serious when I said I want you and Maddy. I’m not living away from you again.”

I smiled up at him before kissing his cheek and standing from the couch. “Well then, Mr. Young. Let’s go tell our girl.”