

The Unwanted Wife: Revenge After Divorce

Chapter 089

AMELIA

It was morning. I had woken up a few hours before, but I hadn't even thought of leaving my room. I just lay on the bed, staring up at the ceiling in silence. They were two reasons I was hiding away in my room: I wasn't ready to speak to anyone yet. And the second- the most important reason- was that I couldn't stop thinking about what had happened last night.

With a sigh, I turned over to my side. It was a wonder I had gotten any sleep at all considering the state of mind I had been in. The sadness I had felt after Damian had made his odd proposal was nothing compared to the gut wrenching sorrow I felt now. My agony had somehow created a rope of despair around my heart and with each passing moment, I felt like it would crush me to death.

'I will always protect you from myself.'

Those words echoed in my head over and over again. How did a man, a good man, get to the point where he thought of himself like he was some kind of monster, a monster I needed protecting from?

But when I recalled all that he had told me about his dysfunctional family, I was able to understand his pain. I had thought my life was tough, what with Noah divorcing me, my best friend betraying me, and all that, but Damian had had it worse. I knew I could not have endured what he had and come out unscathed.

He was broken and I feared that he was beyond redemption. He'd managed to seal his heart from fear that he would turn out like his father, a man he bore no resemblance to in attitude.

Why was life so hard? Why did the man I love have to be the one with such a horrible past? Why was he so broken? Why couldn't I fix him?

I felt something warm and wet slide down my cheeks. I tried to hold the tears in but I couldn't. I stopped trying and let them have free rein as I wondered whether I would ever be able to change Damian's mind about love. Whether he would someday let go of all the hurt in his heart.

"Never," I murmured.

But a part of me believed otherwise. A part of me believed I was giving up too easily, letting him wallow in his self misery. And I felt guilty for that.

Had I tried everything in my power to change his mind? People said love was worth fighting for. Surely, it wouldn't make sense for me to just give up on Damian. Though I hadn't been lucky with love, I was sure that love was a beautiful thing. We have both been hurt before. We were imperfect, broken, but perhaps we could heal each other somehow. Perhaps I could make Damian believe that not all relationships would end like that of his parents. That there was still hope for us despite what he believed.

I slid off my bed with a sense of purpose. It was still very early in the morning, almost an hour before dawn, but I knew I would not be able to sleep anymore.

The feeling of hopelessness and defeat was gone as I considered the possibility of changing Damian. In its place was a determination to help him overcome his fears.

I got dressed, decided to take a stroll around the grounds until everyone woke up and I could have a conversation with Damian. I couldn't resist looking into the tent where he usually slept. I was surprised to find it empty. The bed barely looked slept in. I was about going into the house when I caught sight of a familiar figure that turned out to be him.

I went closer. It was a windy morning. Damian stood on top of a heap of golden sand that looked black in the dim light preceding dawn. The wind blew particles of sand all around him. It tousled his hair, made the loose, unbuttoned shirt billow out behind him, but he didn't seem to notice. He stood as still as a sculpture, staring out towards the vast desert.

"Damian," I called out when I got close enough to be heard over the moaning of the wind.

Slowly, he began to turn. With a sinking heart, I saw nothing of the man I had spoken to last night. He was still the same old handsome Damian, but the expression he wore was cold and forbidding in the extreme. It was like he was wearing a mask, an invisible one, but still there. This took me back to the early days of our marriage, when he had related to me like he was a robot.

He seemed to be waiting for me to say something, so I smiled, "You're up really early today."

His head bobbed up and down stiffly, slowly and he turned once more to resume gazing at the landscape.

"Are you... okay?" I asked, coming to a stop beside him. "You don't look- I mean, you look troubled."

"Oh. I am fine. Very fine."

To reassure me of that fact, he proceeded to give me a forced smile that looked more like a grimace.

I frowned. I was tired of this. Tired of the games and the lies. Why did he have to lie to me constantly? If he was scared of hurting me, he should let me in. I could deal with the painful truth. It did not make any sense.

"Why are you lying?" I hissed.

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He raised one arched brow, still not looking at me. "And what am I supposed to have lied about?"

"Was last night some sort of joke to you?"

"Last night," he repeated. "I'm afraid I can't remember anything that happened last night which is of great importance."

I sucked in a breath, my anger abating with each passing second. Instead of anger, I felt pity. Damian was so used to being all put together, to having everything under control. It couldn't have been easy, telling me all about his vulnerabilities. Now, he was probably feeling slightly ashamed of himself.

"I know this must all be very hard for you and I understand." I paused, took a moment to go through all I had just said in my head. It was important that I said the right things so I didn't scare him off. "I'm happy you confided in me about... your family. It has made me understand you better. I know you care deeply about me, but you're just scared of letting yourself love me. Don't be scared to. Please."

He barked out an unkind laugh. He looked me full in the face this time, his lips curving into a sneering smile.

"You are obviously having petty dreams, Amelia, because I don't know what you mean when you used-" He swallowed convulsively. "-that word." Of course, the word he was talking about was love. "I never said I felt that way about you, did I? I think- no I'm sure- that it's better if you focus on the offer I made earlier during our road trip. I'm a realistic man, Amelia, and I can say that there will be no fairy tale ending for us."

"You can't mean that," I breathed. "You can't just block your heart an-"

"I wonder how you can know what I do or do not mean," he said quietly. "I assure you that in this case, that I mean every word I say. We are not getting younger and I'm sure you know that. Don't waste your time dreaming about something you can't have. You can't save everyone, Amelia. I mean that."

"No, you don't. You are just trying to push me away," I tried to stop my lips from quivering. "I can't save everyone but I won't let you remain cold and dead inside."

He went on in the same maddeningly calm tone. "And you are wrong. If I wanted to push you away, I would not have drawn up a contract to extend our marriage now, would I?"

I scoffed. "You don't just want to confront the feelings you have for me. Admit it. That's the first step towards healing." He muttered something that sounded a lot like delusional. I ignored that, and laid my hand on his arm. Underneath my fingers, I felt his muscles tense. "Where is the man I spoke with last night, the one who was brave enough to confront his emotions? Where is he?"

He shifted a little. The movement dislodged my hold on his arm.

"He does not exist," Damian ground out. "Trust me, Amelia, the man you want me to be will only hurt you."

"Is that what you told yourself this morning? Is that how you managed to convince yourself you're on the right path?"

"There's only one person on the right path and it's definitely not the one who's delusional about love."

I bit back a sob and nodded. "Okay." Without another word, I stormed back to my room, trembles of agony coursing through my body.

DAMIAN

I stood there, my shoulders slumped in defeat. I desired to love Amelia, but whenever I even so much as thought about the possibility of it, I balked. There was no way I could give her the love she deserved. If I attempted to... love her, I would only end up hurting her and then, she'd hate me. She'd hate me and leave eventually.

The last thing I wanted was to be a terrible husband like my father was to my mother. A contract marriage would leave Amelia with no expectations. She couldn't see it now, of course, but I knew I was right.

There was also the possibility that she could fall out of love for with me too. That made me scared, so scared. How would I be able to pick up the broken pieces of my life if I allowed myself to love her and that love was taken from me?

There was only one way and it was my way-a contract marriage.