

Chapter 15 Seeing Wyatt

Liana

I walk to the car with mixed feelings. I signed the contract, and I am confused that I do not feel dirty or devastated. In fact, I am calm about it. I guess I am not as honourable as I thought.

“That was quick,” Drew says in surprise when I get into the car.

“We were interrupted by Angela,” I roll my eyes. I am furious at Angela. Her behaviour is despicable, and I would love to tear her a new one. But I am also amused and satisfied by the way Axel handled her when he stuck up for me. “And you’re right. She’s deranged.”

“Told you,” he laughs heartedly. “Do you have to report back to Axel when she leaves?”

“No,” I shake my head. “I’ll see him tonight. I’m on my way to lunch with a friend. I’ll take an Uber home.”

“But what about the stuff that you wanted to pick up?” Drew asks confused.

“Another time,” I shrug. “I can’t expect you to hang around for me.”

“Nonsense,” he argues. “We’ll do it after your lunch.”

“Are you sure?” I ask doubtful. “Because it’s really not urgent.”

“Dead sure,” he gives me a stern look. “It also gives me an excuse to see my buddy at the auto shop.”

“Thanks, Drew,” I smile gratefully, and get out of the car. “I’ll see you later.”

Hastily I walk to the restaurant where I will be meeting Nina. I am glad I am wearing sneakers because it is quite a distance. I know I could have asked Drew to drop me off, but it is still hours until lunch. Now I am killing time and getting some much-needed exercise.

At the restaurant, I request a table for two and order a glass of water. Eagerly I take out the envelope that Axel gave me. I am dying to know what is inside. Hopefully, it is information on my studies.

As I take out a single sheet of paper, and a bank card drops onto the table. Frowning, I pick it up and notice it has my name on it. How is this possible?

I unfold the paper and read it.

“Son of a bitch,” I grunt as I place the contents back into the envelope.

Axel opened a bank account in my name and deposited fifty thousand dollars. In case of an emergency, as he puts it. I do not know if I should be grateful or suspicious. Yes, it is kind and sweet of him to think of me and try to help. But how the hell did he manage to get it done in such a short period? I asked him for help a mere twenty-four hours ago. Personalized cards can take up to two weeks.

And why would he do such a thing? What does he want in return?

My cell phone chimes next to me, and I notice the email notification. Absentmindedly, I open the email but sit up straight when I realize what I am looking at. It is a confirmation of Dad’s surgery.

Giddy with excitement, I call my mother.

“Mom, I did it,” I say happily when she answers. “I got a job, and a loan and Dad will be ne-

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“Finally,” Mom sighs in my ear. “I was so worried when I didn’t hear anything from you. Why haven’t you called? Why aren’t you home yet?”

I close my eyes and sigh inward. Pleasing my mother is impossible. It does not matter how well I do; it is never good enough. Over the years I have learned to live with it. That is how she is and has always been. I cannot change her; I can only accept her and deal with it.

But sometimes, like now, I wish that she would notice my sacrifices and praise me. She can never know how I got the money, but I wish I could tell her exactly how much I am paying. Just for once, I would like to hear that I am good enough and that she is proud of me and that she appreciates what I do.

“Mom, I can’t come home,” I say with a tired voice. “I just signed my contract of employment and cannot possibly request leave.”

“But your father is gravely ill,” she protests with a shrill voice. “You’re entitled to family leave.”

“Not in the first hour, Mom,” I say urgently. “My boss is lenient enough to give me leave on the day of Dad’s operation, but I cannot come home right now.”

“It’s always some drama with you,” Mom huffs. “But at least you got the money. I just hope your father understands why his only daughter cannot find a way to see him.”

There it is, I close my eyes and rub my forehead. The ever-popular emotional blackmail – and my mother is the master in that department.

“I’m sorry, Mother,” I sigh. “I did the best that I could.”

“Fine,” Mom groans and it is as if I can hear her roll her eyes at me. “Now that you have a job, you can start sending money again.”

It is not a question or a request. It is an order.

“I’ll try my best,” my voice sounds tiny in my own ears. “But with repaying the loan, I won’t have much to spare.”

Truth is, I am not earning a single penny and I refuse to touch the money from the account that Axel opened. Especially not to send home.

“I know you’ll work something out,” Mom is suddenly friendly again.

“Yes, Mom,” I whimper and get the tears of hopelessness. “Mom, I must go. I’ll talk to you later, okay?”

I close my eyes and take deep breaths to calm myself.

“Another water?” The waiter sounds irritated, and I look at him. I know what he is thinking. I do not have money to order anything and is only wasting his time. Well, he is not entirely wrong.

“No,” I shake my head and look at my watch. “My friend will join me in about fifteen minutes and then we’ll order to eat.”

“I’ll come back then,” he smiles friendly when he hears that he still has a chance of earning a tip.

I sigh inwardly as I absentmindedly start playing with the centerpiece on the table. My mother’s words ruined my excitement. Just as I thought that things are moving in the right direction, she slams me down.

There is no way that I will be able to work, study and satisfy Axel’s needs. And it breaks my heart that I must yet again sacrifice my dreams. I have no alternative but to inform Axel that I no longer want to study. I lied to my mother that I have a job and she is expecting money.

“You look unhappy,” Nina says, and I look up at her in surprise. “Why are you unhappy?”

“My mother,” I mumble and try to smile.

“Oh,” Nina nods and takes a seat. She knows everything about my family. Including my mother’s demands. I do not need to explain it to her.

The waiter eagerly appears next to our table, and we place our order.

“What’s up with the smile?” I eye her suspiciously.

“I met someone,” she whispers with twinkling eyes. “And he’s oh, so yummy.”

“Do tell,” I say eagerly as I lean forward. I can do with a distraction from my own drama.

“His name is Wilson,” she sighs dreamily. “And he’s an accountant, and I met him at the gym.”

“The gym?” I gape at her. “You hate to exercise.”

“I didn’t say I was exercising,” she snorts. “I had to drop off samples from our new cleaning range. I didn’t even notice him, but when I left, he followed me and now I have a date.”

“Good for you,” I smile brightly. “When can I meet him?”

“Hold the horses,” Nina laughs. “We still have to go on the date.”

The waiter serves our food and I eat while Nina raves on about Wilson. By the time we say goodbye and go our separate ways, my mood has lifted, and my mother’s demands were buried in the back of my mind.

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As promised, I tell Drew everything about me and Wyatt as we drive to the house that was supposed to be my wedding gift.

“Do you want me to go with you?” Drew asks sympathetically as I take deep breaths to build enough courage to knock on the door.

“No ... yes ... I don’t know,” I look at him nervously.

“Got it,” he smiles and opens his door. “I’ll stay out of sight but close enough if you need me, okay?”

“Thanks,” I nod and walk to the door.

My entire body is trembling when I lift my hand and ring the doorbell. This is the first time that I will face him since he attacked me and Nina. Suddenly my mouth turns dry, and anxiously threatens to overpower me. I am about to turn around and leave when Wyatt opens the door.

“What do you want?” He smiles devilishly as he lazily leans against the doorframe and crosses his arms in front of his chest. “Are you here to crawl back to me?”

I am at a loss for words and my throat tightens up as he steps closer and reaches for me.