

Becoming Strangers Again Chapter 21

Posted by Adminh, 505

Chapter 21 Ryan I found myself drawing near to him, the proximity prompting a fleeting thought. Upon reflection, I determined that confronting him was unnecessary, as there truly wasn't a valid reason for such a confrontation. I was not inclined to lower myself to the level of engaging in a public standoff with him. My reasoning was fortified by the awareness that there could be individuals present, armed with smartphones, ready to capture any potential altercation on video. Choosing to err on the side of caution, I retraced my steps, deliberately walking back to my car. As I drove away, my security detail followed closely behind, ensuring my safety. Upon re-entering the penthouse, I couldn't help but notice the unusual silence and calmness that pervaded the space. "Stephanie?!" I called the silence, but my voice echoed unanswered in the stillness. With a furrowed brow, I directed my gaze towards Angelo, our head of security, expecting him to have the answers. "Where is she?" I inquired sharply, fully aware that all security matters funneled through him before reaching me. "Where's Stephanie!" I pressed further, striding purposefully towards the bar to pour myself a drink. "She's gone to the airport," Angelo replied, causing me to abruptly stop in my tracks. I lifted my head, blinking in disbelief, silently demanding clarification. "I received the message while we were still at the hospital's parking lot," he explained, as if the timing was of any relevance to me. Disregarding the timing of his message, I pressed on, my tone firm. "But why is she at the airport? Is she there to pick someone up?" I demanded, hoping for a reasonable explanation. The thought of her abandoning her responsibilities after my concerted efforts to seek solutions left a bitter taste in my mouth. It had better be a legitimate reason, for I wouldn't tolerate leaving my business in limbo only for her to up and leave without a valid explanation. Angelo, visibly uneasy under my scrutiny, shifted his gaze away. "She's leaving, sir," he admitted reluctantly. I scoffed at the revelation. "When did she book a ticket?" I queried. This means that she had her ticket earlier this morning before our heated argument. "And why wasn't I informed?" I demanded, feeling a pang of frustration at the lack of transparency. Unable to provide a satisfactory response, Angelo remained fixated on his shoes. "I apologize, sir," he murmured softly. Exhaling heavily, I redirected my focus to the drink before me. "When is her flight?" I inquired, resigned to the reality of her departure. Glancing at his watch, Angelo replied, "It's scheduled to depart in the next hour. He paused briefly before offering a solution. "I could intercept her before she boards, or I could contact Tim to bring her back if you prefer. Contemplating my options, I made a decisive choice. "Let her go," I declared. I am not going to stop her or go after her. Nodding in acknowledgment, Angelo briskly departed the living room, perhaps seeking refuge from what he perceived as my anger and frustration. Whether he accurately gauged my emotions was inconsequential at the moment. In all honesty, I harbored a certain indifference to whether she chose to depart or remain. The only reservation I held pertained to the desire for a known acquaintance, rather than a stranger, to be the mother of my child. Were it not for that consideration, I might have sought a willing individual to bear a child, regardless of gender. Settling onto a bar stool, I contemplatively cradled the glass of whiskey in my hand. The amber liquid swirled within as I pondered the situation. "I want you to investigate someone for me," I mused aloud, turning around with the intention of addressing Angelo—only to realize he

had withdrawn earlier. My jaw clenched in frustration, and I resorted to calling out his name. Swiftly, he raced back into the living room. “Do not stray too far from my sight,” I snapped, my tone reflecting my irritation. That is precisely what I generously compensate you for. “I understand, sir,” Angelo replied, his demeanor contrite as he inclined his head slightly in a gesture of apology. Rubbing my temples, I felt the weight of frustration settling over me, dampening my mood. “Look into Jake Joshua for me, I instructed, the determination evident in my voice. I need to uncover his flaws or weaknesses to dismantle their relationship. “Find something substantial I can leverage against him, something that will place him at a disadvantage.” “Consider it done, sir, Angelo affirmed, his tone resolute in its commitment to the task. I took another swig of whiskey, “Have Tim send “I paused mid-sentence, recalling Stephanie’s departure alongside my security detail, a detail she wasn’t even footing the bill for. “Have any available security personnel send flowers to Lily,” I amended, a mischievous grin playing at the corners of my lips. She’ll be thrown off when she realizes the flowers are from me. Chuckling softly, I retrieved my phone from the countertop and swiftly forwarded Lily’s address to Angelo. “You won’t be granted access past the gate, so ensure that whoever delivers the flowers understands they must be received, even if it’s only by the gatekeepers. Impress upon them the importance of ensuring Lily receives them promptly “Understood, boss, Angelo acknowledged. 0 11:33 AM Chapter 21 I gestured for Angelo to leave, waving him away with a dismissive flick of my hand. Leaning further against the bar counter, I rested my elbow on its surface, propping my cheek up with my hand, Lost in thought, I eventually sensed a presence behind me. Turning, I discovered Angelo still lingering there, his presence an unwelcome intrusion. “What are you still doing here?” I demanded sharply, irritation creeping into my voice. He blinked rapidly, taken aback by my abruptness. “You instructed me to remain within your sight, he reminded me tentatively. I’ve already arranged for Verdo to deliver the flowers to Lily” I shot him a withering glare. “What time is it, Angelo?” I snapped, my patience wearing thin. Glancing down at his wristwatch, he answered promptly. “It’s past eleven in the morning, sir.” I rubbed my temples in frustration. And where do you suppose she is at this moment?” I pressed, my irritation mounting “At the hospital, he replied without hesitation. “Then why in the world would you have the flowers delivered to her house?” I exclaimed, incredulous at his oversight. Another apology escaped from Angelo’s lips, his contrition palpable in the air. “I apologize, sir. I’ll ensure he delivers it to her office,” he offered, his voice tinged with sincerity A faint realization dawned on me delivering the flowers to her office was a far more sensible solution. If they arrived there, she would undoubtedly receive them. With a weary sigh. I pushed myself off the stool and made my way over to the living area, collapsing onto the nearest surface. “I’m upset, Angelo, I confessed, the weight of my emotions heavy upon me. I was a familiar routine between us. Whenever I found myself in a state of discontent, I would vocalize my feelings to Angelo, who, in turn, would attempt to decipher the root cause of my distress and propose potential solutions. Sometimes, I heeded his advice; other times, I remained obstinate in my resolve, “What’s troubling you, sir?” Angelo inquired gently. Gazing up at the chandelier, I struggled to the thoughts brewing within me. “I haven’t truly been happy for many years, Angelo, I reflected, the words escaping in a hushed tone. “But I can’t recall a time when I’ve felt this profoundly upset and frustrated in just as many years.” He listened intently. “When did you start feeling this way?” he inquired,

his voice soft with concern. “The moment I laid eyes on her, I admitted, the memory of Lily treating me like a stranger at the hospital still fresh in my mind. A brief silence followed, during which I could sense Angelo grappling with the identity of the person in question. When he couldn’t deduce it, he pressed for clarification. “Who is this she, sir?” he ventured cautiously. I couldn’t help but scoff at his uncertainty. I almost thought you’d figure it out, I remarked dryly, my frustration seeping into my tone. Downing the remaining contents of my glass, I carefully set it down on the marble surface with a decisive clink “Lily. It’s Lily, I clarified, the bitterness evident in my voice. “She’s your ex–wife, sir,” Angelo pointed out, stating the obvious. “Surely you didn’t expect her to greet you with open warmly n arms, ready to embrace you Having granted Angelo the liberty to speak truthfully during our discussions, he was free to voice his thoughts without fear of my reaction. “Can’t people go through divorce and still be friends?” I mused aloud, though the notion of merely being friends with Lily unsettled me deeply, “If that were the root of your frustration, you wouldn’t have me investigating her boyfriend,” Angelo observed, cutting to the heart of the “Are you upset that she moved on?” matter The judgment laced in his tone caught me off guard, prompting me to sit up and fix him with a glare. “Why do you sound like that?” I hissed, challenging the implication behind his words, He blinked at me,

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Chapter 22 LILY Ryan decided to cancel their appointment with Dr. Sarah, I reached out to Dr. Sarah over the phone to inquire about the reason behind Ryan’s cancellation. It was uncommon for her to inform me about patient cancellations, but perhaps because I had recommended Ryan, she felt inclined to share the details with me. “Did something happen?” I asked, seeking clarification. “I have no idea what happened, Ma’am,” Dr. Sarah responded, disregarding my preference for addressing me by my last name. “He just called a few minutes ago to cancel” Considering the situation, I couldn’t help but wonder if Stephanie might be pregnant. The possibility seemed plausible. I apologize for any inconvenience, Dr. Sarah, I conveyed sympathetically. I imagined Dr. Sarah had already rearranged her schedule to accommodate Ryan’s treatment for the entire month, thereby turning down numerous other patients, only to face a last–minute cancellation. Well, who cares, right? At least they made amends by paying for the damages and compensating for the time and efforts wasted. “I apologize once again, Dr. Sarah. Rest assured. I will ensure this won’t happen again in the future.” “It’s fine,” Dr. Sarah replied, waving off my apology as if it were inconsequential, “I didn’t call you for you to apologize or feel bad; I just felt that it was only right for you to know. I have to get back to work now! “Absolutely.” I responded, acknowledging her words before ending the call A sense of relief washed over me as I processed the situation. “This turn of events could actually work in my favor, I mumbled to myself, trying to manage my expectations. Their cancellation implies that he is leaving Canada, and if that’s the case. I can finally bring my kids back home” Lost in contemplation and attempting to temper my excitement, my phone suddenly rang. A grin spread across my face as lighting up the screen. I accepted the call, swiping the receive button and bringing the phone to my

ear. "Hello, love" "Hey," Jake's voice greeted me, the rasp in his tone evident. "What's your lunch like? Are you occupied at the moment!" saw Jake's number "Not too busy for you, I teased, relishing the playful banter with Jake, whose chuckle echoed through the phone. "You want to take me out for lunch? I inquired, already gathering my belongings. Although my initial plan was to grab lunch at the hospital's canteen, the notion of dining out suddenly seemed far more enticing. "Yes, I want to have lunch with you, he affirmed "I'll see you in ten." With the call concluded, I swiftly grabbed my purse, preparing to depart for our usual spot—the nearby restaurant we frequented. It was a convenient choice, situated in the middle of both of our locations Ten minutes ticked by, and to my surprise, Jake had yet to make an appearance—a departure from his usual punctuality. Despite attempting to reach him by phone, my calls went unanswered. Resigned to the delay. I decided to proceed with placing an order. My hunger pangs demanded attention, leading me to select extra-large rolls and a bottle of Coke to satiate my appetite. Just as I savored the first bite, my phone began to ring I quickly swallowed the lump forming in my throat as Jake's name flashed on my phone screen. "What's wrong? You got me worried," I blurted out, realizing that I had ordered lunch primarily to keep my mind occupied. The prospect of an idle mind conjuring up all sorts of scenarios was not one I wanted to entertain "I'm sorry, Lily," Jake's voice came through in a remorseful whisper, causing a pang of concern to ripple through me, but I won't be showing up for lunch." A furrow formed between my brows. "Why?" My decision to forego the hospital canteen had been motivated by the desire to spend time with Jake. "Did something happen?" He began to explain about an impromptu meeting with a client, expressing his apologies for the unexpected change in plans, but I couldn't help but interrupt his rambling. "It's fine," I interjected, trying to convey understanding despite the slight disappointment. This is his first time of doing something like this, "I understand." I've equally left him standing a few times due to an impromptu surgery. "I'm already eating, so I'll just hasten up and return to the " My words caught in my throat as Ryan materialized, standing in front of the vacant seat that should have been reserved for Jake. The unexpected sight left me momentarily speechless, my mind struggling to process the situation. Did something happen? His concern was evident, mingling "Lily?" Jake's soft voice brought me back to the ongoing conversation. "Are you okay? D with the confusion clouding my thoughts. I cleared my throat, regaining my composure. "Yes, I was just distracted for a moment. I'll just finish mine and get back to the hospital" a moment," I replied, steadying my voice. "As I was saying. I've already "Alright," Jake responded, his tone understanding. "I'll talk to you later, after the meeting. I love you, Lily." 11:34 AM Chapter 22 "I love you too." I reciprocated before the call disconnected, leaving me to confront Mykel's unexpected presence. "What are you doing?" I inquired. lifting my gaze to meet his.. He dared to flash a smile in response. "Can I at least sit down!" With a resigned sigh, I continued munching on my rolls. "Would it make any difference?" I posed the question, skepticism coloring my tone, as I took a sip of Coke "Yes, it would," he asserted, his expression sincere. Meeting his gaze, I weighed his words carefully. "I won't sit if you don't want me to sit." I scoffed, feeling a hint of exasperation creeping in. "Will you leave if I want you to leave?" I retorted, the edge in my voice softening as he chuckled in response Ignoring his presence, I focused on my snack, hoping that if I ignored him long enough, he would eventually take the hint and depart. Yet, it seemed my hopes were misplaced. "Please, can I sit, Lily? I just want us

to talk," he implored. Wondering how my lunch had taken such an unexpected turn, I gestured towards the empty seat beside me. "Sure, let's get this over and done with," I relented, resignation evident in my tone. Glancing around, I noted Angelo's absence, reflecting on how, once upon a time, I had yearned to be in his constant company like Ryan's shadow. Now, however, I couldn't help but feel a sense of pity for him. "What do you want to talk about!" Relaxing back, Mykel's gaze lingered on my Coke as though he hadn't eaten in days. "I was reflecting last night, and I figured out that I've not actually apologized to you for what I did to you in the past," he confessed, his tone earnest. Tilting my head, I regarded him with a mixture of curiosity and wariness. "Before we go into the apology, I have a question for you," I interjected, seizing the opportunity to address my lingering doubts. He nodded, silently encouraging me to proceed. "How did you know to find me here?" A smirk tugged at the corners of his lips. "Should I tell you a common lie or the truth?" he quipped, his gaze meeting mine. When I remained silent, he elaborated, "It was purely coincidental" I narrowed my eyes at him, knowing all too well that Ryan never believed in coincidences. "How exactly did you find me here!" I pressed, a note of skepticism coloring my tone. "I was informed that you frequented this place for lunch, so I decided to stop by," he explained matter-of-factly. "I also knew that you often came here with your boyfriend, and I wasn't going to approach you if you were with him. But while you were answering the call, I realized he wasn't showing up." "Right, I acknowledged, finishing the last portion of the rolls before delicately wiping my mouth with the provided napkin. "So you were really going to leave if Jake was with me?" I couldn't help but express my doubt. He smiled, his demeanor softening. "No, I would have waited for an opportunity to talk to you," he admitted, his sincerity evident. I rolled my eyes in response, unconvinced by his words. Leaning forward, he placed both elbows on the table, his expression earnest. "I broke my promise, I admit that, and for that, I'd like to ask for your forgiveness." I watched him intently as he began to speak. "I am sorry it

took me over six years to seek forgiveness," he admitted, his voice heavy with remorse. His gaze dropped to his hands, fingers fidgeting nervously. "I messed up, Lily, and instead of facing the truth, I buried myself in denial." I continued to observe him, silently urging him to continue. "Why?" I finally interjected, unable to contain the question any longer. "Why did you cheat on me with Stephanie?" He shook his head adamantly. "I never cheated on you with Stephanie," he asserted softly, his tone carrying a hint of frustration. "I didn't have anything to do with her until after the divorce." "I saw her kiss you in the parking lot that day," I countered, the memory still vivid in my mind. His brow furrowed as he tried to recall the incident. "That was the first time I kissed her since she returned," he admitted with a heavy sigh, his lower lip caught between his teeth. "I understand that cheating doesn't necessarily involve physical contact with the other person, so I suppose you could say that I cheated on you with my thoughts. But I never touched her physically until after the divorce." "What do you want from me?" I asked, my voice tinged with a mixture of exhaustion and apprehension. "Your forgiveness," he pleaded earnestly. "At the very least, civility. I want you to be able to look at me without wanting to tear me apart." As if on cue, my wristwatch chimed, signaling the end of my break. I rose to my feet, "I'm relieved that you didn't mention friendship in all of this," I remarked, inciting his gaze unwaveringly. Despite the frown that creased his brow, I

knew I had to speak my truth. "I'll be civil with you, but we can't be friends. I can't look at you without being reminded of the heartbreak I endured." Wah my piece said, I turned and walked away, leaving him to grapple with the weight of his actions and the consequences they had wrought.

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Chapter 23 LILY I decided to take a break from work for the weekend because, well, I'm human and I need some downtime too. So, Jake and I snuggled up on the sofa, wrapped in a warm blanket, with a bowl of popcorn as we settled in to watch a romantic movie I picked out. However, it seemed like Jake wasn't really feeling the movie. He was more engrossed in his phone than the storyline. Teasingly, I remarked, "You should've picked the movie yourself finding his lack of interest quite amusing. There was a time when he would really try to get into the movie, but this time, he didn't even bother. I reassured him, "Don't worry, it's your turn to choose the next movie we watch" His chest vibrated with laughter, a deep rumble that echoed through the room. "I don't know why you chose such a gruesome movie," he commented, his face contorting in distaste at the sound of yet another person meeting a grisly end on screen. "Perhaps you've grown accustomed to it because of your background as a medical doctor. You're probably more desensitized to blood than I am. After all, I work in real estate management; blood isn't exactly a common sight in my line of work. As his phone pinged, stealing his attention once again, a sudden tension crept into his body, his muscles tightening visibly. Sensing his change in demeanor, I paused the movie and looked up at him, concern evident in my expression. "What's going on? Did something happen!" My own phone chimed intermittently in the background. With a furrowed brow, Jake turned his screen toward me, his face etched with anger. "When did this happen?" he growled, his voice low and menacing Taking the phone from his outstretched hand, I glanced at the screen, greeted by the sight of a picture capturing a moment between me and Ryan from the restaurant the other day. The mischievous glint in Ryan's eyes and the way I was gazing at him could easily be misinterpreted in the wrong context. "It's not what I think, I mumbled, the words tumbling out in a rush as I handed the phone back to him, my heart pounding with apprehension. "He just met up with me the other day when you couldn't make it to lunch, Jake's glare pierced through me. "And why was he smirking like that he demanded, his voice still dripping with anger. "Why are you two even this close to each other?" With a heavy sigh, I averted my gaze. "He wanted to apologize for what happened in the past, you know, for the sake of civility, I explained, my voice tinged with frustration. "I swear to you, I didn't even spend up to thirty minutes with him." Pinching the bridge of his nose, Jake's agitation remained evident. "And why didn't you tell me about meeting him?" he pressed, his tone laced with hurt. "Why didn't you mention that you had lunch with him?" The atmosphere soured, and I knew there was nothing I could say or do to salvage the mood. I didn't think it was important, I confessed, my voice barely above a whisper. Perplexed, Jake leapt to his feet, causing me to flinch as he towered over me. "What do you mean you didn't think it was important?" he demanded, running his fingers through his hair in frustration. "How is

having lunch with your ex not something that's important enough to tell me about?" I never expected this situation to escalate as it did. "Jake, please listen, I began, hoping to get a chance to explain the sultation of things.. "We weren't planning to have lunch together. It was supposed to be my lunch, a date that you unfortunately couldn't make it to. Ryan just showed up unexpectedly and said he wanted to talk. I felt caught off guard and didn't know how to decline. He scoffed incredulously, his expression a mix of disbelief and frustration. "You couldn't say no!" he questioned, his voice tinged with disappointment as he grabbed his jacket from the sofa. "I do not have the time to deal with this not he muttered before storming upstairs, the weight of his steps echoing through the house. Left alone on the sofa, I wrapped myself tighter in the blanket, the heaviness of the situation settling around me like a shroud. Switching off the television, I absently scrolled through the comments, each one carrying its own weight of judgment and speculation. It was disheartening to see how many people were quick to assume the worst, urging caution and warning against potentially damaging what they perceived as a budding romance between Stephanie and Ryan. Shaking my head in disbelief, I continued to sift through the comments until exhaustion finally pulled me into a fitful slumber on the sofa. When I awoke the next morning, the house was eerily quiet, devoid of Jake's presence. His absence was so obvious. his car missing from its usual spot in the parking lot. He had left without a word. Leaving for work, a heavy sullenness draped over me like a suffocating shroud. Throughout the drive, I persistently dialed Jake's number, each call met with silence. Desperation tinged my fingers as I sent a pleading text, urging him to reach out whenever he could. As I neared the hospital, a swarm of paparazzi awaited me at the gates. How they discovered my workplace remained a mystery, amplifying my frustration and confusion. Muttering curses under my breath, I swiftly diverted my route, steering towards the bridge. Utilizing the hospital's emergency exit, I drove into the parking lot. 11:34 AM Chapter 23 Bringing the car to a halt, I rested my forehead against the steering wheel, the weight of the situation pressing down on me like an unbearable burden. The spotlight that once accompanied my divorce from Ryan had faded, but its sudden reappearance now felt suffocating and unwelcome. Stepping out of the car, I entered the elevator, steeling myself for the day ahead. However, even within the hospital walls, the prying gazes of nurses and fellow doctors felt like an added layer of scrutiny. Although they didn't have the courage to say it to my face, but I know they are discussing me. During lunchtime, I opted to remain in my office, my appetite overshadowed by a mix of emotions. I couldn't decide which troubled me more: the fact that I was suddenly thrust into the spotlight over something I hadn't done, or the disheartening silence from the one person I had hoped would believe in me. The sudden ring of my phone shattered the stillness of my office, sparking a flicker of hope that it might be Jake finally returning my call. However, the caller ID displayed an unfamiliar number, leaving me momentarily puzzled. Despite my reservations, I answered the call, knowing that only those close to me would have this number. Pressing the phone to my ear, I hesitantly greeted, "Hello?" "Lily," a familiar voice breathed out, instantly causing a knot of tension to form in my stomach. "It's Ryan." My frown deepened at the sound of his voice. "What do you want. Ryan?" I hissed, unable to conceal the

edge of bitterness in my tone. "Haven't you caused enough harm already?" My relationship was already strained, and the relentless presence of paparazzi outside the hospital only added to the chaos, hindering the movement of ambulances and patients alike. "Do I need to ask that question again?" He cleared his throat, his voice betraying a hint of remorse. "I called to apologize." "When aren't you apologizing?" I snapped angrily, unable to contain the frustration boiling within me. "For heaven's sake, Ryan, stop appearing wherever I am! You bring nothing but trouble?" He winced, "I deserve that, he mumbled, his voice tinged with remorse. "And I promise you, Lily, I'm going to fix this." "Fix what?" I retorted, my voice laced with bitterness. "My boyfriend won't even talk to me! How do you plan to fix that?" His silence spoke volumes. "Well I pressed, my frustration reaching its peak. "Cat got your tongue? How do you plan to mend my relationship?" "I can't say I'm not pleased about that, he muttered. "But as for the paparazzi outside your hospital and trailing your every move. I'll handle that, I promise." "Just do as you please, I replied tersely, my skepticism dripping from my tone. I had learned the hard way not to place too much faith in his promises. "When we had that conversation, I certainly wasn't expecting this level of media scrutiny, I continued. I want this resolved before my children get home. Otherwise, they'll be thrust into the spotlight, alongside me, for the whole world to see. "You'll have to trust me, Lily, Ryan pleaded. "Trust?" I scoffed bitterly. "That's a strong word, Ryan, one that I can't offer you again." There was a brief silence on the line before Ryan spoke again. "Like I said earlier. I'll handle the paparazzi, but I can't do anything about your relationship. If your boyfriend is having issues with you over such trivial matters, then you shouldn't be with him at all" The call abruptly disconnected.

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Posted by Adminh, ?

Chapter 24 LILY It's day two and things are not getting any better at all. I had believed the assumption that the next day, the paparazzi wouldn't be on my cane as intensely as they were the previous day and that they would chaster less but I was wrong. If anything, it was as if they went ahead and brought with them those that couldn't make it yesterday. Jake hasn't called back either and I am too stubborn to go to his house. If it were a scenario that I did something wrong. I would have done everything to make sure that I fix it. But seeing that this isn't my fault, I do not want to sweat myself over it. Getting ready for work. I first FaceTime Becky, spoke with my sons before leaving for the day. As usual, upon reaching the gate and witnessing the swarm of paparazzi outside, I swiftly reversed course and utilized the emergency exit. After pulling over, I entered the building, took the elevator, and ascended to the main floor. Arriving at my office, I was surprised to find two unexpected visitors waiting outside. Mentally preparing myself for potential trouble, I approached them. "The emergency floor is five floors below, I deadpanned, swiping my passcard to open the door. "Quit trying to be sarcastic, Victoria snapped as she followed me into my office with her sor "I wasn't trying to be sarcastic, I deadpanned in response. "Considering you and your son are

waiting impatiently outside my office, I assume it must be an emergency.” As she settled herself comfortably on the plush sofa, I took a moment to hang up my coat, ensuring it was neatly arranged before I turned my attention to the humidifier, flicking it on with a soft hum. Taking my place beside her, I sank into the cushions, crossing my legs as I observed her son with keen interest, wondering just how long he would remain his mother’s puppet pupper, I don’t think I have ever heard him speak without being cued in by his mother. *Victoria,” I began politely, breaking the silence, “how may I be of assistance to you today?” With a derisive snort, Victoria retorted, her tone laced with disdain. “We are not friends, so kindly refrain from addressing me by my first name. You will address me by my last name” Maintaining my composure, I responded with a genial smile, canting my head slightly as I regarded her with mild amusement. “Ah, but Victoria.” F countered smoothly, “you are in my space Victoria, in my office, so I will address you anyhow I want. Remind me to call you by your last name when I visit your home.” She knows that is never going to happen. “I am not going to ask again, what do you want?” “For you to step down willingly so my son James can take over,” she stated bluntly. The amused smile on my face slowly transformed into a deepening frown. “How long will you keep repeating the same nonsense?” I snapped, my patience wearing thin. “If you find it endlessly entertaining, I assure you. I do not share your enthusiasm.” Mirroring my posture, she crossed her arms defiantly. This time is different, Lily,” she asserted, her tone resolute. “I am involving the board of directors. You will face a vote to be ousted as director, and my son will be nominated. His victory is assured.” Suppressing my rising irritation, I poked my tongue into my cheek and counted to five, ensuring my anger didn’t dictate my response. “On what basis?” I drawled out. By what criteria are they going to remove me as the director?” Even in the hypothetical scenario of my dismissal, a prospect I deemed highly impossible. I would still command the highest dividends and interest. Thus, I failed to comprehend the source of her agitation. “Do I need to spell it out for your she queried, her tone dripping with condescension, and I responded with an exaggerated roll of my eyes “The presence of those paparazzi outside, disrupting hospital activities, is justification enough,” she continued, her words hitting a clenched instinctively; I had anticipated she would bring up the paparazzi. a nerve. My jaw “Do you comprehend the number of accident victims redirected to other hospitals simply to evade the chaos caused by the paparazzi!” “And how, pray tell, are you privy to such information?” I retorted, inwardly seething at her audacity, considering she didn’t even work at the hospital. “I have my sources,” she replied with a sly smile, a hint of triumph in her demeanor. “Perhaps I’ll commission one of those bloggers to shed light on the matter, she continued, her grin widening “Maybe if I apply enough pressure through the media, your removal will happen even faster The shrill sound of the emergency bell echoed through my office, jolting me to my feet as I prepared to don my scrubs. “I trust you understand the meaning of that sound, I remarked dryly, a hint of sarcasm in my tone. “Oh, but forgive me, you’re not exactly versed in the ways of the medical profession, I added, addressing Victoria’s apparent ignorance. Her son leaned in, whispering an explanation to her. “That alarm indicates she’s needed in the emergency unit,” he explained. “In short, we shouki Chapter 24 make our exit” I couldn’t help but huff in mild amusement. “At least your son grasps the situation.” I remarked casually as I made my way toward the small walk-in compartment where my scrubs awaited. “Would you like to remain while I change?” Without a word, Victoria snatched

her purse, shooting me one final glare before storming out of my office, her son trailing behind. Shaking my head at her dramatic behavior, I entered the compartment and swiftly changed into my scrub attire before hurrying off to the emergency unit, ready to attend to the urgent needs of the hospital. Before the clock struck four in the afternoon, exhaustion enveloped me, having spent over eight grueling hours in the operating room. As I collapsed onto the sofa in my office, a groan escaped my lips, and I longed for a much-needed massage session to alleviate the strain. My face at the sight of Becky's name. Swiping to accept the My phone buzzed on the table, and I reached out to grab it. A wide smile spread across my call, I brought the phone to my ear. "Hello, girlfriend?" "Hey," she greeted warmly. "I promised to call you so we could have a lengthy chat about what's been going on, but wrangling these kids hasn't been a walk in the park" Instantly, a pang of guilt washed over me. I'm truly sorry for adding to your stress, Becky" She snorted lightly. "I didn't mention it to make you feel guilty. Besides, the nanny is returning tomorrow, so the load will lighten up a bit "I appreciate your understanding, Becky, I responded sincerely. why were yo you and Ryan sharing the same space. She chuckled, dismissing my apologies. "Really, love, it's fine. But I am curious about one thing – why and why was he sporting that smug smirk!" I proceeded to recount the entire encounter to her, and she listened in silence until I had narrated every detail. Her initial reaction was sharp and pointed. That bastard is a catalyst for trouble." Her frustration evident. "Why the hell is he apologizing? We don't need his apology; what we need is for him to rectify the mess he caused online." Amused by her fiery response, I couldn't help but chuckle. "Even if I were at fault, I know you'd have my back, Becky, He mentioned he would take care of it, but as of now, nothing has transpired" She snorted in response. "Do you want me to fly down to Canada and give has balls a swift kick!" Her offer, though laced with humor, reflected the depth of her loyalty and protectiveness Well a kick to the balls isn't exactly what he needs right now if he's aiming to get his girl pregnant. We chatted about various random topics until we bid each other goodbye At seven in the evening, I packed up my belongings and officially clocked out, eager to head straight home. As I approached my gate. I couldn't help but notice a familiar car parked nearby, with a man standing beside it

holding what appeared to be a bouquet, Drawing nearer. I recognized the figure as Jake. A smile tugged at the corners of my lips involuntarily. I pulled over and approached him, though I kept my expression neutral, heaven knows I felt entitled to the apology he was about to deliver He met my gaze with remorseful eyes. "Hey, he began softly, and I simply blinked in response. I know I messed up, and I'm sorry, he continued, extending the bouquet toward me, though I made no move to accept it. "My jealousy got the best of me, clouding my judgment" "I called and texted. I pointed out fladly, my tone devoid of emotion. "And yet, you ignored every single one of them. And now, suddenly, you want me to lend you a listening car winced visibly at my words. "I'm sorry," he murmured, unable to meet my gaze. His eyes dropped to his shoes in shame. I truly am, Lily. I messed up big time, and I regret it deeply, he confessed, his voice heavy with remorse, When I remained silent, he sank to his knees. "I'm sorry, Lily," he repeated earnestly. With a sigh, I squatted down and accepted the bouquet from him. "Stand up, I instructed gently. As he lifted his head, I couldn't help but tease. "I suddenly feel hungry. Stand up, let's go inside, but you're the one cooking." Driving together to

my place, I dropped my bag in the living room and headed to the kitchen to assess our options. I showed him where to find the necessary ingredients before disappearing upstairs to take a quick shower, leaving him to handle the kitchen duties. As I stood under the soothing cascade of water, the sound of Jake's voice drifted through the bathroom from the other side of the door. He informed me that I had left my phone in the kitchen and that it was ringing incessantly. "Please, pick it up and let them know I'll call back after I'm done showering," I called out, my voice echoing in the tiled space. I waited for a moment, expecting Jake to relay the message to the caller, before calling out to him again. "Who was that?" "Ryan" Chapter 25

Becoming Strangers Again

Posted by Adminh, ?

Chapter 25 RYAN It's quite amusing, really, how I find myself here in Canada without any concrete reason to justify my presence. The person I intended to do the fertility treatment with is currently back in New York City. Despite the workload piling up back at the office, I've somehow managed to frame this situation as an unplanned vacation of sorts. With my bathrobe draped around me, I sauntered into the living room, pushing aside strands of wet hair obstructing my view. Angelo, upon catching sight of me, promptly rose to his feet. Suppressing a smirk, I gestured for him to resume his movie-watching endeavor. Making my way to the bar, I casually reached for a bottle of champagne, along with two crystal-clear glasses. Returning to the sofa, I extended one of the glasses to Angelo, but he politely declined with a shake of his head, citing his duty obligations. "I shouldn't indulge in drinks while on duty," he explained. Glancing at the wall clock, I couldn't help but scoff. "It's well past eight in the evening, Angelo. Your shift has ended, I remarked, urging him to accept the drink. "Take it," I insisted thrusting the glass toward him. However, he persisted in his refusal, pointing out, Tom takes over when you fall asleep, so as long as you are awake, I am still on duty." Feeling a surge of frustration, I felt my jaw clenching, my grip tightening around the stem of the champagne flute. "Take it. Angelo, I growled, the intensity of my tone leaving no room for negotiation. "I am not asking." Recognizing my lack of tolerance for his stubbornness, Angelo relented and accepted the glass I offered. I deftly uncorked the bottle, pouring a measured amount into his awaiting glass before settling onto the adjacent sofa. Pouring myself a glassful, I delicately placed the bottle on the smooth marble floor. Stretching out on the sofa, I absently reached for my phone, fingers gliding effortlessly over its smooth surface. With a flick of my thumb, I went to Lily's contact, and I smiled involuntarily at the way she answered my call the last time. Dialing her number, I waited for her to either pick or decline my call. I am betting my money on decline because I know she is very much upset with me. It rang for a very long time and to my surprise, she answered. "Hello," a male voice greeted from the other end, catching me off guard. Instantly, my brows furrowed in confusion. "Hello!" the voice repeated, prompting me for a response, while I grappled with the unexpected turn of events. Removing the phone from my ear, I double-checked the number I had dialed, confirming that it indeed matched Lily's contact. "Give the phone to Lily" I commanded tersely, discarding any semblance of civility toward someone who held little significance

in my regard “And who is this?” the male voice persisted, prompting recognition to dawn upon me. It was Jake, Lily’s boyfriend. My frown deepened as confusion mingled with the irritation bubbling within me. Weren’t they experiencing relationship problem and disagreements? What was he doing with her at this late hour? “This is Ryan,” I revealed, figuring that adding fuel to the already burning flame in their relationship will end in my favour. “Now be a good boy and pass the phone to Lily.” Jake emitted a scornful scoff. “Do you even know who you are talking to?” he retorted, his tone tinged with a hint of defiance. “Jake,” I uttered with a deadpan tone, ensuring he detected the aloofness in my voice. “What difference does it make if you are the one speaking? Now, do as I asked and pass the phone to Lily,” I reiterated, my indifference obvious even through the phone. I could feel Angelo’s gaze fixed on me, but frankly, I couldn’t care less about his opinion at that moment. A bitter chuckle emanated from the other end, followed by an abrupt end to the call. Pulling the phone away from my ear, I shot a glare at the blank screen, frustration simmering beneath the surface. “Did he end the call?” Angelo inquired, drawing my attention. I redirected my glare toward him, his gaze averting mine as he returned his attention to the music video playing on the television. “I don’t know what is more amusing, the fact that you are surprised Jake picked up the call, or how he ended the call after you spoke to him rudely, he remarked, his tone tinged with subtle amusement, “Did I ask for your opinion?” I snapped, my glare intensifying as I redirected my frustration towards Angelo. “Or is it the alcohol?” He mumbled an apology, quickly retreating to mind his own business shifted Taking a sip of champagne, I swiftly composed a text message to Lily, demanding her immediate call in response. Chucking the phone aside, I focus to the video playing out before me. What about what I asked on Jake?” I inquired, turning my attention back to Angelo. my “I’m still looking into it, he responded, his tone tinged with a hint of uncertainty. “So far, I have found nothing” “You have to find something, I muttered with frustration. Sighing heavily, I resolved to address a more pressing matter. “How many major bloggers and news outlets do we have available right u “Right now!” Angelrechned incredulously, his surprise evident in his tone. 11:35 AM Chapter 23 I shot him another glare. “I didn’t stutter, did I?” Tim sorry.” Angelo quickly interjected, his tone tinged with remorse as he sought to diffuse the tension in the room. “I’ll give them a call and ascertain their availability” Retrieving his phone, he scrolled through his contacts, his fingers moving with purpose. “May I know the purpose of the call?” he queried, his attention momentarily divided between his task and our conversation. However, receiving no immediate response from me, he hastened to explain the reason for his question, I need to know what information to pass to them, sir.” “I want to secure an exclusive interview regarding the circulating images of Lily and me on the internet,” I replied, my voice measured and firm. “Find me a news outlet capable of circulating my interview to the widest possible audience.” A subtle flicker of astonishment danced across Angelo’s features, quickly masked by a veneer of professionalism. “That would be NewsInfo,” he confirmed, already initiating the call to make the necessary arrangements.. 1 rose from the comfort of the sofa, making my way to my bedroom to prepare for the forthcoming interview. Thirty minutes later, I found myself seated in the refined ambiance of my dining room, facing my laptop with a commanding presence, engaged in a Zoom call with Carlos, the