

## Becoming Strangers Again Chapter 31

Posted by Adminh, 331

Chapter 31 RYAN As any departure from Canada draws near, I find myself in a state of stagnation regarding Lily. It's rather ironic, isn't it, how I'm putting my position as the chairman of the board on the line? Regrets weigh heavily on my mind, as they do on all of us at some point in our lives. For me, my point of regret lies in how I treated Lily as a mere rebound, only to later divorce her. If only I could rewind time, I solemnly swear upon all that is dear to me that I would have showered her with the love and care she truly deserves. Just as Angelo and I were engrossed in our activities, the shrill ring of the doorbell shattered the momentary peace. Catching each other's gaze. I nodded towards the door, silently urging Angelo to see who it was. "Why don't you go and see who it is! I recall placing an order, I remarked, breaking the brief silence between us. Rising with remarkable swiftness, he sprung from his seat and swung the door open to accept the delivery on my behalf. Returning to the comfort of the living room, he extended the bag to me. It wasn't until I extracted the plastic container from the bag that he realized the contents. "Please don't tell me you've ordered shrimps," he groaned disapprovingly as he observed me unpacking the food. Disregarding his protests, I stole a glance at the wall clock, which struck six in the evening. Without delay, I reached for my phone and dialed Lily's number once more, despite her ongoing refusal to unblock me. Angelo, anxiously awaiting a breakthrough, watched me intently, likely praying for the call to connect. As I withdrew the phone and set it on the table, grasping the fork, he lunged towards me in a desperate attempt to intercept the plate. My glare halted him in his tracks. "The moment your hand touches this plate," I warned sternly, "you'll find yourself relieved of your duties." His eyes widened with a mixture of fear and concern, not for the threat of losing his job, but for the potential harm the shrimp could cause me. "I'd rather risk my job than watch you endanger yourself, he retorted, making another attempt to reach for the plate. Rising to my feet, my hand curled into a tight fist as I delivered a forceful blow, catching him off guard. Staggering backward, he struggled to regain his balance, clearly taken aback by my unexpected reaction. Before he could steady himself, I defiantly speared a shrimp with my fork and popped it into my mouth, chewing and swallowing with deliberate defiance. You have her number, don't you" I snapped at Angelo, the frustration evident in my voice. "Tell her to unblock my damn number!" "You're acting erratically, almost like a complete psychopath!" Angelo's voice reverberated with frustration and concern. "How do you expect to rekindle things with Lily when you pull off bizarre stunts like this? Do you honestly think she'll leave a guy who showers her with flowers just to return to someone who's willing to risk his life for attention?" As the sensation of my throat constricting began to intensify, I coughed repeatedly, trying to clear it, feeling the effects of the shrimp coursing through me. In a swift response to my distress, Angelo darted off to my room, reemerging moments later with my prescribed medication and a bottle of water tightly grasped in his hand. "Take this, he urged, his tone laced with anger. "I promise you, I'll do whatever it takes to convince her to unblock your number" Despite his earnest plea, I chose to ignore his offer, slumping onto the sofa in exhaustion, my breaths coming in ragged gasps. Yet, amidst the discomfort, an unsettling grin stretched across my face, mirroring the chaos of my thoughts. Perhaps, just perhaps, Angelo's words held a kernel of truth; perhaps I

had truly spiraled into madness, losing myself in the pursuit of a love that seemed increasingly unattainable. Unable to remain upright, I surrendered to the overwhelming fatigue and lay down, my breaths ragged and wheezy. Through blurry eyes, I observed Angelo pacing the floor, his movements a blur of urgency. Amidst his frantic pacing, he paused to make a phone call, his words lost in the haze of my struggling consciousness. Though I sensed Angelo's presence near me, his words drifted past me, lost in the fog of my oxygen-deprived mind. Consciousness slipped away like sand through my fingers, yet strangely, I found solace in the embrace of oblivion. The shrill beeping of a nearby machine shattered the silence, jolting me awake from what seemed like an eternity. Slowly, the fog lifted, revealing two familiar figures standing by the edge of the bed. As clarity returned, I recognized them as Lily and Angelo. Ignoring their concerned gazes, my fingers fumbled for my phone, a desperate need to confirm if she had finally unblocked me consuming my thoughts. With a sense of urgency, I located it resting on the bedside drawer and clutched it tightly. The movement caught the attention of both figures, prompting them to draw closer, their expressions a mix of apprehension and relief. Ignoring the lingering presence of Lily and Angelo, I extended my trembling hand to dial Lily's number, and to my surprise, the call connected. Lily raised her vibrating phone, her gaze shifting from the device to me with a disdainful scoff. "You really went to such lengths to make me unblock your number?" she remarked, a tone of disbelief in her voice. It was a gamble, a risky move, but the fact that it worked left me void of regret. Angelo, sensing the tension, cleared his throat and excused himself to inform the doctor of my awakened state. "I'm sorry if I scared you." Apologizing in a raspy voice, I attempted to sit up, and Lily, with a mix of concern and annoyance, assisted me. However, amid the fragile moment, my gaze fixated on an unusual sight around her finger. "What's that?" I hissed, my curiosity tinged with a hint of agitation. Her frown deepened as she glanced down at her finger. "What do you think it is?" she retorted, taking a step back. "I'm getting married, Ryan, so please stop all these tricks. A tight clench seized my jaw as I absorbed her revelation. "Why are you even doing this?" She questioned, the weight of confusion and despair evident in her voice. Gazing at the ring adorning her finger, I let out a heavy sigh. "Do you love him?" I inquired, my eyes searching hers for any hint of hesitation. Without a moment's pause, she responded, "Yes, I do. Taking a gentle approach, she shifted my leg aside and settled down beside me. "That's why I need you to stop this, she implored. I don't want to keep hurting Jake. He may have driven me here, but who would be comfortable with their woman's ex constantly disrupting her life?" I met her eyes, remorse evident in my gaze. "I'm sorry if I've caused you any distress, Lily. As I observed the stress etched on her face, a realization dawned on me that perhaps my approach had been flawed. "Even though it pains me that another man is taking you away, I guess I have to accept it so you can find happiness." "Why?" Her voice carried a mix of confusion and frustration, her brows knitting together in a furrowed expression. "Why do you suddenly want me back?" she pressed, her tone tinged with skepticism. "Is it because you saw me with another man?" The subtle gesture of her tongue moistening her lips betrayed her uncertainty. I shook my head, the sincerity in my gaze unwavering. "I've wanted you back since the moment you left, Lily," I confessed, knowing full well the difficulty she might have in believing my words. "Your absence made me realize how much I missed you, how deeply I love you." Her

response cut through the air like a blade. “Yet you came to the hospital with the same reason for our divorce,” she countered, her words leaving me defenseless, grappling for an adequate response. “Let’s not pretend you came to Canada searching for me, because we both know that’s not the case. Sighing heavily, I lowered my gaze to my hand, my fingers tracing patterns upon the surface. The glint of her ring caught my eye once more, sparking a twinge of discomfort. I’m trying to have a baby with Stephanie, I admitted, “Not because I want to, but because I feel like I have no other choice. Her eyes snapped up, “What do you mean? Are you dying?” she questioned. I let out a soft chuckle, trying to ease the tension. “No, I’m not, I reassured her, my tone calm and composed. “But I do need an heir, and I need one urgently.” Her brow furrowed in confusion. “If you’re not facing a life-threatening situation, why the sudden rush to have a child?” she probed, her gaze searching mine for answers I sighed, feeling the weight of her scrutiny. “I need an heir to secure my position as chairman, I explained, the truth laid bare. “Otherwise, I’ll be compelled to marry, and I’m not keen on tying the

knot with Stephanie. Opting for a child seems like the more preferable option.” Her lips formed a thin line as she absorbed my words. “So, essentially, you want to bring a child into a fractured home just to satisfy your own ambitions?” she summarized, her tone laced with disappointment and reproach. Blanking slowly, I was taken aback by her blunt understanding of the situation. “That’s not how everyone sees it, I countered weakly, grappling with the reality of her assessment and the implications of my decisions. 11:39 AM Chapter 31 “That’s because you surround yourself with people as selfish as you are, Ryan,” she retorted, a touch of exasperation coloring her words. She casually tucked a strand of hair behind her ear, her gaze fixed on mine. “Did you come after me, expecting that I’d run into your arms and fulfill your desire for babies?” A moment of silence lingered before I admitted, “I was hoping for that, followed by marriage.” Her expression shifted from disbelief to a mix of disgust and anger. Rising from her seat, she towered over me. “No matter what, you always find a way to remind me that you’re an asshole,” she spat out. Grabbing her purse, she continued, “It’s clear you’re living an unhappy life; don’t drag me into it.” She stomped out of the room and the door closed behind her, leaving me alone to contemplate the consequences of my choices

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Posted by Adminh, ?

### Chapter 32 RYAN

“Are we really leaving?” Angelo’s eyes widened with a mixture of surprise and disbelief, his voice laced with bewilderment. Despite his attempts to conceal his emotions, relief and amusement danced on his face like flickering shadows. “What happened? Did something happen at the company?”

Without acknowledging his questions, I continued to pack my belongings into the bag, determined to complete the task efficiently. The pilot departs in three hours, and I’m not inclined to delay. If you have any last-minute items to collect, now’s the time,”

Pausing by the door, Angelo’s playful demeanor gradually faded, replaced by a more se

rious expression. “Seriously, did something happen?”

Frustration seeped into my actions as I forcefully shoved a shirt into the box, causing a dull thud. “Taven’t we spent enough time here!” I countered, my annoyance evident. “We have responsibilities to attend to, it’s time to return to work.”

He held his gaze on me for a fleeting moment, then delivered a crisp nod before gracefully exiting the room. With each garment I crammed into my suitcase, the memory of the ring adorning Lily’s finger loomed larger. How had that even come about? Weren’t they experiencing issues? And how had it ended in a proposal?

Having packed what was necessary, I took a brief shower and changed into attire suitable for traveling, before walking out of my room to reach my car. A member of the security team adeptly managed my boxes as I made my way.

Seated comfortably in the back, I retrieved my phone and dialed Lily’s number. Angelo assumed his position in the driver’s seat, stealing a glance at me through the rear-view mirror before setting the vehicle in motion.

Eventually, Lily answered the call. “Hey,” I exhaled softly, mindful not to utter anything that

might unsettle her. “How are you?” My words were measured, aimed at maintaining a sense of ease in our conversation. “I’m fine.” She replied. “Is everything okay?”

I cleared my throat, still trying not to dwell on the fact that there is an engagement ring on her finger. “I’m leaving Canada as we speak,” I informed her, “and I felt it will only be fair to let you know.” Since I practically made her uncomfortable with my stay.

She fell silent for a while. “Are you leaving because of what I said the last time?” She asked and I smiled at the fact that even though she is trying to deny it, she still cares. “Look, I was upset and I let it lead everything I say and for that I apologize.”

“I didn’t call you for you to apologize Lily, it’s fine.” I can’t eat my cake and have it. I had my time with her and I ruined it, so I should let her have her own share of happiness. “Don’t let that dickhead treat you the way I treated you, you deserve more than that.”

She sighed. “I know Ryan, I figured it out the day I walked out of our marriage.” I heard something beep in the background. “I have to go Ryan, duty calls and I wish you a safe trip back to New York, and please do not return, not unless it is very important.”

She disconnected the call and I winced at her last statement. She could have avoided saying that, but I guess she just wanted to be brutal. 1

Throughout the journey back to New York, I maintained a solemn demeanor, opting not to engage in conversation with anyone, including Angelo. Instead, I busied myself during the duration of the flight by carefully combing through the multitude of emails that had accumulated during my absence. I took great care to respond to those that warranted immediate attention while intentionally disregarding those of lesser importance.

Upon our arrival, I saw to it that my suitcase was promptly dispatched to the manor before making an impromptu stop at the office. The sight of my unexpected return seemed to elicit surprise among the staff. At that moment, I took mental note of those scheduled to join us next month as well as those individuals whose employment statuses were on shaky ground. Immersing myself

in the day’s workload served as a temporary distraction, allowing me to momentarily forget about the troubles of my personal life, particularly the lingering thoughts of Lily and her impending wedding. Despite my best efforts to focus

solely on work, my mind occasionally drifted back to the things that happened in Canada.

a. Angelo, ever attentive, seemed to sense my sore mood, wisely choosing to maintain his distance and afford me the peace and quiet I evidently sought. 11:39 AM

Chapter 32

“Sir,” Angelo’s voice pierced through my weariness, bringing me back to the present moment. “We’ve arrived, sir.”

Blinking away the haze of exhaustion, I found myself parked in the familiar confines of my driveway. Rubbing my eyes to shake off the fatigue, I seized my suitcase, swung open the door, and stepped out onto the pavement. As Angelo drove the car into its designated spot, I made my way into the silent embrace of the living room.

True to my preferences, the house enveloped me in silence, with the staff discreetly avoiding my path. I had made it abundantly clear that encountering unfamiliar faces within the confines of my home was a displeasure I preferred to avoid, and they diligently honored my wishes. Ascending the stairs with a near-silent tread, I made my way to my room. Pushing the door open, I was greeted by an unwelcome sight that instantly dampened my spirits.

Stephanie lay sprawled across my bed, her attire leaving little to the imagination as she delved into the pages of a book. The creak of the door opening elicited a startled yelp from her, swiftly followed by a relaxed demeanor upon spotting me. Her lips curved into an instant smile of recognition. “Hey,” she greeted, rolling off the bed to close the distance between us, enfolding me in a warm embrace. “Nobody mentioned you were coming home.”

As we parted, she leaned in for a kiss, but I instinctively turned my head, offering only my cheek in response. Stephanie’s expression briefly registered a flicker of disappointment before she brushed it off with a nonchalant shrug. “I missed you,” she whispered softly, her words laced with genuine affection, before releasing me from her embrace. Bending gracefully, she retrieved my suitcase, placing it on the solitary chair in the room, then reached for my jacket. However, already expecting her movement, I swiftly removed the jacket myself, an unexpected discomfort creeping over me at the prospect of her touch.

“You should have called,” she remarked, a note of mild reproach in her tone. “I would have loved to pick you up from the airport myself.”

Stepping into the closet, I began the task of unbuttoning my shirt while Stephanie lingered in the doorway, her gaze. “What brings you to my house in my absence?” fixed upon me.

Her brows furrowed in a slight frown. I came because I missed you and needed a reminder of you, she admitted. Pausing in my actions, I glanced at her reflection in the full-length mirror. “And what about my parents? Did you stay with them for over two weeks just because you missed me?” I couldn’t quite comprehend why she would inconvenience others when she had her own home.

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“I saw the news about you and Lily, and I became concerned, Ryan,” she explained, attempting to justify her unexpected presence. “My parents are disappointed that we aren’t married yet, so I couldn’t turn to them for support regarding our relationship. That’s why I went to your parents. at your

My jaw tensed as I listened to her explanation. “Don’t,” I growled, my voice edged with frustration. “Don’t approach my parents at own convenience, Stephanie. They’re not your in-laws, so you have no business with them.”

In the mirror’s reflection, I caught sight of her fist clenching tightly. “What’s that supposed to mean, Ryan?” she retorted, her voice laced with hurt and frustration. “We’ve been together for over six years. Don’t you think it’s overdue to make me your wife?” She threw her hands up in exasperation. “But heaven forbid, I’m not even your fiancée yet!”

Turning to face her fully, I interlocked my fingers and met her gaze, a sense of clarity dawning upon me. Lily’s words echoed in my mind, resonating with a truth I couldn’t deny. Considering

bringing a child into this kind of relationship with Stephanie would be selfish. It would only subject that child to the anguish of a broken home, a pain I knew all too well.

“This is over,” I declared, and she froze. I’m breaking up with you, Stephanie.”

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Chapter 33 STEPHANIE ‘I can’t wrap my head around the fact that you’re breaking up with me,’ I murmured softly, the words more for my own understanding than for his ears. “You simply can’t just decide to break up with me!” I exclaimed, the tone of my voice rising with each word, accompanied by an incredulous shake of my head. “Who exactly do you think you are, initiating this relationship and then abruptly terminating it?” His response was swift, cutting through the tense air of the room. “The very same way you once believed you held the authority to end it years ago,” he retorted sharply, casually depositing his shirt into the laundry hamper. With purposeful strides, he made his way out of the closer toward the bathroom, his movements deliberate, and I found myself trailing in his wake, my steps echoing his. “Let’s not escalate this situation unnecessarily, Stephanie,” he urged. “Don’t make a big deal out of it.” Ryan attempted to enter the bathroom, but I intercepted him, positioning myself to block his path. “This is already a big deal, Ryan!” I yelled directly into his face, the frustration evident in my voice. “We’ve been together for six years, and I’ve proudly announced to everyone, including the internet, that we were destined for marriage. So yes, it’s a huge deal!” I asserted firmly, determined not him make a spectacle of me. let With a weary sigh. Ryan ran his hand down his face, his expression betraying a hint of exasperation. I understand your feelings, and I apologize for any false hopes I may have given you about marriage, but we simply can’t continue like this,” he explained, attempting once more to bypass me. Refusing to yield, I blocked his path again, adamant that he provide a satisfactory explanation for his decision. “For the sake of any less appearances, you can always claim that you ended things with me. I’ll take the blame,” He offered, thinking it will make this harder and painful. I let out a scoff, unable to contain my disbelief. “You’re absolutely insane, Ryan.” I bit down hard on my lips, desperately trying to stifle the tears that threatened to spill over, the taste of blood mingling with the bitter emotions. “Do you honestly believe that fabricating a narrative where I’m the one ending things will magically fix everything?” I spat out, frustration and hurt evident in my words. “What about my time? What about my emotions?” Ryan’s response came in a

yell, a volatile mix of anger and apology. Tve said I'm sorry! What more do you w want from me?" My lips trembled, and the tears flowed freely down my cheeks. And what about the company?" I questioned, desperately trying to come up with an excuse to make him change his mind. "Are you giving up on that too?" "Don't concern yourself with that," he rasped, his voice strained with resolve. "I'll find a solution, but for now, I need you to gather every trace of your presence in this house and depart. You have a week to comply. After that, I'll be changing the locks and instructing security to bar your entry to my property." The audacity of his words fueled my indignation. Did he truly believe he could treat me like a disposable object? "This is about Lily, isn't it?" I challenged, the truth slowly making sense to me. Ryan hadn't entertained the idea of ending things before our trip to Canada. "Has she agreed to be the mother of your children? Is that why you're pushing me away?" Ryan remained silent for a fleeting moment, his cold, grey eyes scrutinizing my expression as if seeking answers from the question I asked. This has nothing to do with Lily, he finally asserted, his tone devoid of emotion. "It's more about the realization that I didn't take you back out of love, nor did I end my marriage because of love," he confessed, his tongue darting out to moisten his lips, a familiar gesture when he grappled with finding the right words. "It was more like I was captivated by the notion of you, and now, that allure has faded. "So you're not doing this because you suddenly believe you love Lily just because you've crossed paths with her again?" I inquired skeptically, not because it would alter the current predicament, but because it might make me feel less like a fool. "I'm not making this decision based on a newfound belief that I love Lily," he asserted, "It's rooted in the undeniable fact that I still harbor feelings for her. I love Lily, but the choice to end this wasn't solely driven by my resurfaced emotions for her." A pause lingered, as if he expected the weight of his words to settle in. "Regardless of encountering Lily or not, this breakup was inevitable. With those words, he gently pulled me aside by placing his hands on my forearm, leaving me standing there as he walked into the bathroom and closed the door. I stood in silence, staring at the closed door, the sound of the shower a distant echo. How did today turn into such heartbreak? Coming to Ryan's house, I never expected being on the receiving end of a breakup. 1/2 0 11:40 AM Chapter 33 Contrary to his expectations, I didn't leave. I waited on his bed until he emerged from the shower, having changed into more. presentable attire. He came to an abrupt halt upon seeing me, clearly taken aback by my unexpected presence. "I have a favor to ask," I stated, my eyes fixed on a spot on the floor, unable to meet his gaze. Wrapped in a towel, his muscular frame accentuated, he folded his arms, causing his muscles to ripple. I stole a quick glance before redirecting my eyes elsewhere. "Let me be the one to break the news of our breakup to the press or paparazzi," I requested, my voice steady despite the turmoil within. He shrugged nonchalantly. "You know I couldn't care less about them." But recent events suggested otherwise, especially when it came to Lily. "I won't make the announcement right away," I continued, meeting his gaze as he turned his attention back to me. "Let the rumors about you and Lily fade away. I don't want people thinking our issues stem from them. Besides, I want to wait until you've figured out how to handle the board at your company." His gaze remained indifferent as he stated, "I told you not to worry about the company or the board." Angrily, I poked my tongue into my cheek, frustration bubbling within. "Well, my motive to keep this breakup

between us isn't solely for your benefit. I needed a plan to bring him back to me, so I'd rather the people not know what's going on. Once again, he shrugged dismissively. "Do whatever you want." Feeling a surge of anger, I stormed off the bed, grabbed my purse, and made my exit, purposefully slamming the door to make sure he felt the weight of my frustration. In a desperate attempt to gain insight, I had someone investigate Lily. Upon discovering her engagement, I took matters into my own hands and paid one of the most influential bloggers to expose the story. Now, the news of Lily's engagement was spreading like wildfire, a calculated move in the game to reclaim what was lost. Now that Ryan would be perceived as a cheater if he pursued Lily, I strategized my next move. I arranged a meeting with my father, who had been disappointed in my inability to get Ryan to propose or become pregnant. As I approached him in the restaurant, I could feel his disappointment piercing through his gaze. Sitting down, I braced myself for his disapproval. "This better be important; I have important matters to attend to, he grumbled. \*Ryan ended our relationship, I confessed, feeling the weight of his scrutiny intensify. His glare sharpened. "So, you find it acceptable to inform me of your failure to accomplish the one thing I've asked of you after investing so much money in grooming you to be every man's ideal woman?" he rebuked, his disappointment apparent. "Isn't it every father's responsibility?" I retorted, challenging his notion of my worth. "I am going to win him back, but I'll need your assistance. Intrigued, he tilted his head. "What do you need my help with?" "I want you to speak to his board members," I explained, laying out my strategy. "Urge them to exert more pressure on him to get married. Have them threaten his position. Without a plan to counter that, he'll be left with no choice but to come back to me."

## Becoming Strangers Again

Posted by Adminh, ?

Chapter 34 LILY I can't believe it. Here I am, trending again, but this time, I'm not alone. Jake's right there with me in the spotlight. I have no idea how but somehow, the media caught wind of my engagement with Jake, and now, it's all anyone can talk about. They never paid me any mind before. They never showed any curiosity about me, which allowed me to keep my pregnancy secret from Ryan and raise our child away from the prying eyes of the internet. But now, I can't even guarantee that privacy anymore, and it's sending me into a panic. It's only been a week since I brought them home from Becky's place. Just one week of enjoying their presence, just one week of seeing their faces every day for almost a month, and now, I'm freaking out. "You have to calm down, Jake and Becky said simultaneously, their voices merging into one, but I far from being calm. "He isn't going to find out." Becky attempted to reassure me, her efforts falling short. I continued my restless pacing, my mind spinning with worry, Jake rose from his seat and gently grasped my shoulders, halting my frenetic movements. "I need you to calm down, babe," he urged, his voice a soothing balm. "Pacing all over the place isn't going to solve anything." 1 Drawing a deep breath, I attempted to steady my racing heart. I'm calm," I muttered, inhaling deeply once more. Jake guided me to the sofa, easing me into its embrace. He adjusted the camera so that I could see Becky's concerned expression on the screen. The press is closing in on me. It's only a matter of



time before the paparazzi discovers them.” Becky let out a heavy, exasperated sigh, the weight of her concern written all over her face. “Perhaps it’s time to consider telling him before he inadvertently discovers the truth, she suggested, her voice tinged with urgency. The room fell into a hushed stillness as her words settled over us like a heavy blanket. Gradually, I lifted my head, fixing Becky with an intense, searching gaze. “What’s with the look?” She challenged, her tone edged with frustration. “You’re the one who mentioned how desperate he is for an heir. Can you imagine his reaction if he uncovers the truth that you’ve kept them hidden for over six long years?” “And do you honestly believe that revealing the truth will change anything?” Jake interjected, his tone laced with skepticism. “Let’s face it, he’s desperate for an heir. He won’t just leave the kids with her. He’ll fight tooth and nail for custody.” A sharp, piercing headache throbbed at my temples, intensifying with each passing moment. “This has nothing to do with you, does it?” I whispered, my voice barely audible, directed at Jake, who stiffened visibly beside me. I mean, ensuring that Ryan knows about our engagement seems well within your capabilities, doesn’t it?” “Lily!” Becky’s tone carried a blend of admonishment and empathy, her concern evident in the furrow of her brow. “I understand you’re feeling anxious and your thoughts are scattered, but try not to address him like that. Do you honestly believe he’d take any action that might endanger the kids? Or jeopardize your happiness?” With a weary sigh, I ran my hands down my face, feeling the weight of exhaustion settling upon my shoulders. Turning towards Jake, I noticed the hurt etched in his expression, a silent reproach for my harsh words. “I’m sorry, I murmured, my voice laced with regret. “I didn’t intend for it to come out that way.” In response, Jake offered a weak smile, his forgiveness evident despite the lingering sting of my words. Pushing himself up from the sofa, he stared down at me, “I’ll fetch you a cold bottle of water. It might help you unwind a bit. With that, he strode towards the kitchen. Shifting my attention back to Becky. I couldn’t help but voice my uncertainty. “Do you truly believe it’s the right choice to tell him?” I queried, the confusion swirling in my mind spilling out through my words. Becky’s affirmation came with a nod. “He deserves to know, Lily, and those kids deserve to know their father too,” The sound of Jake’s footsteps reached my ears, and as he approached, Becky continued, “I understand he messed up, Lily, but divorces happen. It’s not reason enough to keep him away from his own kids.” Jake handed me the bottle, taking a seat beside me. “Please tell me you’re not seriously considering what Becky is saying,” he implored, his concern etched across his face. Becky’s response was swift and sharp. “What do you mean by that?” she hissed, her voice tinged with indignation. “How would you feel if the kids you’ve longed for were being kept from you by your ex-girlfriend?” A heavy silence hung in the air as Jake absorbed her words. “It doesn’t feel good, does it?” “Fine,” I conceded with a mumble, feeling the weight of their arguments pressing down on me. “I’ll talk to him about it when I summon the courage to do so.” Running my fingers through my hair, I pondered aloud, “How do I even tell a man that he has six-year-old sons?” 11:40 AM Chapter 34 “I don’t know how,” Becky responded, her concern etched on her face, “but you’d better act quickly because the paparazzi are relentless. They’ll uncover those boys sooner than you can imagine.” Feeling utterly drained and emotionally spent, I rose from the sofa with heavy limbs. “I’m exhausted, Becky. I need to get some sleep,” I muttered wearily, retreating to my bedroom. As the darkness of night enveloped the world, I stirred from my slumber, disoriented by the eerie stillness. With a sense of

restlessness gnawing at my core, I slid off the bed and set out in search of Jake. I found him at the back, shrouded in shadows, the glow of his cigarette illuminating his silhouette against the night. Surprised by the sight, I cleared my throat, breaking the silence. "I didn't know you smoked," I confessed as I approached him cautiously. Exhaling a cloud of smoke into the crisp night air, Jake turned to meet my gaze, his expression unreadable in the dim light. I quit a few years ago. he responded quietly. "If you quit, why are you suddenly smoking again?" I questioned. I am the one under pressure, and he is the one smoking. Flattening the cigarette in the ashtray nearby, he turned towards me, but my attention remained fixed on the ashtray, an unfamiliar object that seemed out of place. Jake reached out, grasping my hand gently. "I feel like I'm on the brink of losing you, he confessed, his voice tinged with vulnerability. Furrowing my brow, I met his gaze, puzzled by his sudden apprehension. "Why would you think that?" With a hesitant lick of his lips, he shifted his focus to the engagement ring adorning my finger. "Co-parenting has a way of bringing people together, Lily, he explained, his voice laden with uncertainty. "And I fear you might drift back to him." I recognized the familiar thread of his insecurities resurfacing, clouding his judgment. "Many people co-parent without reconciling," I countered, my tone firm yet understanding. "They move forward separately, without any intention of rekindling what was lost." He shook his head, his expression contorted with evident discomfort. "That only happens when both parties have lost interest in each other," he countered, his words heavy with conviction. "Your situation is different, Lily. Ryan still wants you back, and he'll use any opportunity to win you over again." "Well, I don't want him back," I hissed, my frustration boiling over as I withdrew my hand from his grasp. "Besides, he knows I'm

engaged to you. – "We are engaged," he emphasized, stating the obvious. "But engagement isn't a barrier strong enough to keep a determined man away." I glared at him, my patience wearing thin. "Are you suggesting we rush into marriage before I even tell Ryan about his sons?" I demanded, my voice edged with defiance. He met my gaze with unwavering intensity. "Is that too much to ask?" My gaze narrowed with frustration. "You said you weren't going to pressure me into getting married to you, so what is this?" "You equally told me that you weren't going to tell Ryan about his babies, so what is going on now?" Jake retorted, the tension between us escalating. I could feel my anger intensifying, a storm brewing in the air. "What would you rather have me do? Let him find out on his own and fight for custody?" My fists clenched angrily. "Yes, I may be rich, wealthy enough to secure the best lawyer, but Ryan has the influence to sway the judge in his favor." Taking a deep breath, I attempted to regain control of my emotions. "I need to tell him myself. Maybe then he won't be too angry, and he won't contemplate taking me to court." He sighed once again. "I'm sorry," he mumbled, a note of remorse in his voice. "I really should learn to have faith in your love for me." I nodded in agreement. "You really should."

## **Becoming Strangers Again**

Posted by Adminh, ?

Chapter 35 RYAN “An emergency board meeting? What in the world does that even mean? Who had the audacity to call for a meeting without consulting me? Lex exclaimed, feeling a surge of frustration. “Do you have any inkling about the purpose of this meeting?” I inquired. My father responded with a scoff, his tone tinged with disappointment. “Of course, the meeting is centered around you,” he retorted sharply. “Ample time has been provided for you to address their demands, yet you’ve taken no action. His voice dripped with disappointment “At this point. I find myself wishing for another son. Perhaps then, I wouldn’t have to waste my time dealing with you.” I wonder what generation these men emerged from. How can one’s credibility be defined solely by their ability to have a family? Does that even make sense?” I pondered aloud, with you at the conference hall, I informed, hoping to shift the conversation away Tam literally en route to a meeting. I’ll catch up with the crazy board members, “You’re heading to a meeting?” He exclaimed incredulously, his tone laced with disbelief. Are you kidding me, son I instinctively Instead of strategizing moved the phone away from my car, fearing the potential damage to my eardrums from his vehement react | instinctively a counterattack, considering the evident connection of this meeting to you, you’re simply heading to another meeting? Don’t you think it’s wise to have someone represent you?” he suggested. Gazing out the window, I observed the scene with absent-minded detachment, my thoughts consumed by tons of concerns. “I refuse to delegate representation in a business meeting that holds the potential to yield millions, merely because I’ve surrounded myself with inept and foolish board members,” He sighed heavily, the weariness evident in his voice. “What’s your plan. Ryan?” he asked, sounding exasperated. “You can’t afford to be late for a meeting that is about you?” “Tim going to be late, I argued stubbornly. “Since you’ll be there early, you might as well inform them of the reason for my delay. If they have the luxury of time at their disposal, then I’ll assist them in making the most of it. “I have to go. I need to review the meeting material one more time. Without waiting for his response. I promptly ended the call. Angelo’s eyes met mine through the rear-view mirror, his expression tinged with concern. “What’s your plan?” he asked, his voice carrying a hint of apprehension. “Whether you agree with it or not, these are individuals rooted in old-fashioned ideologies. You stand as the inaugural CEO in your family’s lineage to ascend to the position unmarried. Moreover, you’ve become the first to experience divorce while holding office, and you’ve reached this age without parenthood. Essentially, they seek assurance that your leadership won’t veer the company off course, given their belief that you struggle with commitment.” “I vehemently deny any allegation of commitment issues,” I retorted, my tone sharp with frustration. “I understand your perspective, Angelo nodded in agreement, his voice tinged with empathy, “but unfortunately, the board doesn’t share that sentiment. He sighed, “You’ll need to devise a strategic plan before they contemplate removing you from office.” “The plan is to sign this deal, take it to the conference room and ask them how they prefer me having a child over this.” I responded. Reaching for the document for the meeting. I skimmed through it. Angelo taking notice of the fact that I do not want to talk about it anymore kept his mouth shut and continued driving. We were almost close to venue for the business meeting when my phone rang. I glanced down and saw Lily’s name on the screen. My brow jumped to my hairline in surprise that she is actually calling me. Quickly swiping the receive button. I placed the phone to my “Lily?” did something happen? She doesn’t think I have

anything to do with the leaked news right?" "Hey," she greeted softly, her voice almost sounding weak, as if she had a cold. "Are you busy? I need to discuss something very important with you. There was a heavy exhale before she continued, "I could come down to New York tomorrow so we can meet and discuss. Angelo pulled over to a parking lot but kept the car running, giving me space to finish my call. Glancing at the time displayed on the dashboard, I felt the urgency of the upcoming meeting. "I really want to hear you out, Lily, but I have a very important meeting that I have to attend, and I'm already running late, I explained with a sense of regret coloring my words. Ad cloned by Google. 11:40 AM P Chapter 35 "Oh," she sounded a bit disappointed. "Sure. Just be sure to call me and let me know when you're available so we can meet and discuss." "Sure, I'll do that," I promised, hesitating to end the call. "Are you okay? You sound sick," I inquired, genuine concern evident in my voice. Once again, she emitted a tired sigh that resonated with the weariness of someone nursing a minor cold. "It's just a minor cold, nothing to worry about, she reassured me, her voice carrying a hint of fatigue. In the background, I detected the sound of a door opening and closing. "I have to go," she stated abruptly, without affording me the chance to respond, and the call was swiftly terminated. As I pulled the phone away from my ear, I found myself staring at the now blank screen for a lingering moment. Gathering the files beside me, I stepped out of the car, and Angelo, dutifully turning off the engine, joined me as we walked towards the entrance. My secretary, having arrived ahead of us, greeted us at the entrance, bearing her own set of files. Together, we made our way into the building, ready for the meeting. The meeting proceeded with its usual smoothness—after all, I am Ryan Williams, and my touch seems to transmute everything into financial success. Following the productive session, we drove directly to the office. Despite our tardiness, a delay of a whole hour, I instructed Angelo to take his time. Eventually, we arrived, and I strode into a gathering of predominantly elderly gentlemen engaged in murmured conversations. As soon as I entered, all eyes turned to me, their glares laden with irritation. "Do you realize we've been waiting for over an hour?" one of them demanded, the frustration evident in his tone. Taking a seat next to my father, I replied coolly, "My apologies for prioritizing the responsibilities I'm paid to fulfill. My gaze swept across the assembly, sensing the tension thickening in the air. "So, I presume this meeting revolves

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around my apparent failure to impregnate a woman yet." "Your perceived lack of commitment to crucial life aspects raises doubts about your suitability for this position," another member of the group asserted, his tone accusatory. Raising an eyebrow incredulously, I retorted, "Forgive me, but I'm still in search of a willing partner to bear my offspring." I hissed, the sarcasm evident in my voice. "Perhaps you can offer up your daughter; I hear she's of legal age." The man's face flushed crimson with anger. "What did you just say?!" he demanded, his voice tinged with fury. My father shot me a glare before attempting to intercede on my behalf. "Please, don't take his words to heart, he implored, his tone tinged with desperation. "He's just under a lot of stress." I will not allow you to speak for me as though I'm a child," I reprimanded my father sternly, my tone unwavering. "And I meant every word I said." Murmurs rippled through the room,

but I silenced them with a resounding thud as I slammed the documents of the business deal I had secured earlier onto the conference table, Tm out there, putting in the hard work to make all of you wealthier, and yet here you are, attempting to gauge my credibility based on whether or not I have a child?! Are you serious?!" The man seated beside me eyed the documents with curiosity. "What is that?" he inquired, his attention momentarily diverted from the heated exchange "That," I hissed, jabbing a finger at the document, "is a deal worth eight hundred million dollars, a feat I doubt any of you could achieve." The frustration seeped through my words. "Do you even comprehend how ungrateful you all appear right now?!" Rising to my feet, too enraged to remain seated, I continued, "I'll satisfy your obsession with my personal life. I'll have a child before the year is out, so get off my back!" With that declaration, I stormed out of the conference