

# Becoming Strangers Again

Posted by Adminh, ?

Chapter 36 RYAN Upon arriving home, I noticed that it was already quite late, rendering it impractical to make any phone calls. Therefore, I made the conscious decision to postpone reaching out to Lily until the following day, in order to inquire about the matter she wished to discuss earlier. The subsequent morning greeted me with rather disheartening news conveyed by Angelo. It was revealed that we had suffered the loss of one of our clients recently, and to my dismay, today marked the day of his final resting place. As he resided in Canada with his family, it became evident that I must embark on a journey to attend his funeral service. While pondering the situation, the notion of having a representative attend on behalf of our company briefly crossed my mind. However, upon careful consideration, I think you already know what my option will be. Deciding to attend the funeral in Canada and seize the opportunity to visit Lily to uncover the purpose behind her desire to talk, I prepared myself by donning my vintage black suit and carefully tying a matching tie. With a sense of purpose, I made my way to the private airport, where I found the pilot already prepared for departure, allowing us to take off promptly. Upon arrival at the funeral, I made a deliberate choice to switch off my phone as a gesture of reverence towards the departed. In contrast, Angelo kept his phone accessible, anticipating any urgent communication that might arise during the ceremony. As the moment arrived for the old man to be laid to rest, I approached his grieving family to offer my heartfelt condolences. After expressing my sympathies, I began to make my exit. Yet, to my surprise, the wife of the deceased, whose name eluded my memory, chose this moment to play the unlikely role of a matchmaker. The audacity of the woman to play matchmaker at her husband's funeral! I couldn't help but marvel at the sheer absurdity of it all. As she introduced her daughter Martha, it was as if she was forcefully pushing her forward, completely oblivious to the fact that Martha was teetering on pointed heels. "This is my daughter, Martha," As Martha extended her hand for a handshake, I couldn't help but pause for a moment, contemplating the sheer number of hands she might have shaken throughout the condolence period. The thought of the lack of sanitization crossed my mind, making her extended hand seem somewhat awkward. "It's nice to meet you Mr. Williams." With an apologetic smile, I responded, deliberately addressing her by the wrong name, "It's a pleasure to meet you, Mary. It's unfortunate that we have to meet under such circumstances." She smiled tersely in return. "It's Martha, she corrected me. I acknowledged her with a sharp nod, attempting to let them know that I'm done with the conversation as I redirected my attention back to her mother. Eager to conclude the interaction and proceed either to Lily's residence or the hospital, I assumed she would pick up on my subtle cues of disinterest. However, it seemed the woman doesn't just know when to stop, persisting in her endeavors despite my apparent lack of enthusiasm. Didn't my evident disinterest in remembering her daughter's name communicate my lack of investment in her matchmaking endeavors? "Martha majored in business administration at Oxford University," she proudly declared, undeterred by my lack of engagement. "She's now keen to join her father's business following the completion of her studies." Reluctantly, I

shifted my gaze back to the young woman in question, offering a detached yet polite, “Congratulations.” Her smile radiated appreciation. “Thank you.” “I must take my leave now. There’s another important meeting I to depart promptly but she stopped me with her ridiculous need to attend. I turned to leave, assuming she would respect my need offer. “If you’re still in Canada by nightfall, please have dinner with us,” she extended the invitation, her tone hopeful. Halting in my tracks, I mentally counted to five before turning to face her. Angelo couldn’t contain his amusement, emitting a snicker as I prepared my response. “I never dined with your deceased husband,” I informed the seemingly delusional woman, my voice firm with resolve, “what makes you think I would desire to dine with you?” Suddenly embarrassed by my blunt question, she glanced around nervously. “I thought you and my husband were friends?” she queried. Chapter 36 seeking validation for her invitation. With a resigned sigh, I dipped my hands into my pockets, contemplating who had fed her such misconceptions. “If it weren’t for business, your husband and I would have remained mere acquaintances, I clarified, my tone tinged with frustration “If you two weren’t close, then why did you come for his funeral?” she pressed further. “You flew all the way from New York to be here today.” This woman was truly pushing the boundaries. I shot a glance at Angelo, who shook his head in silent admonition, advising me to refrain from expressing the thoughts racing through my mind. Clicking my tongue in frustration, I addressed her, “I am sorry for your loss, Mrs. If you will excuse me. With that, I turned on my heel and walked away from her doorstep. Settling into the car, Angelo couldn’t contain his amusement. “You weren’t planning on being sarcastic with her, were you?” he inquired, his tone tinged with amusement. Dialing Lily’s number on my phone, I muttered, “She was just getting on my nerves. The call remained unanswered, adding to my mounting frustration. “We’re heading for the airport, right?” Angelo questioned, already maneuvering the car out of the driveway. “Where do you suppose Lily might be at this moment?” I posed the question to myself aloud, eliciting a quick glance from Angelo via the rear-view mirror, his gaze tinged with suspicion. “Don’t look at me like that, I snapped at him, my irritation obvious. “She has something to discuss, and I’m simply going to hear her out.” “And you can’t do that over the phone?” Angelo questioned, raising a valid point. Glaring at him. I retorted, “Just stop talking and take me where you think Lily will be.” Angelo steered the car towards the hospital. Upon arrival, he left the engine running and ventured inside to inquire about Lily’s whereabouts in her office. Meanwhile, I remained in the car, idly scrolling through my phone. As Angelo returned to the car, his forehead marked with frown lines, his eyes betrayed a confusion that wasn’t typical. Concern crept in, and I couldn’t ignore the feeling that something was wrong. “Are you okay?” I inquired, meeting his gaze as he blinked slowly at me. “Are you going to tell me what the problem is, or do I have to smack it out of you?” Moistening his lips, he hesitated before posing a seemingly simple question, “How many Dr. Lily works here?” The simplicity of his inquiry heightened my unease. “You know the answer to that question as far as I know, I responded tersely. A momentary fear gripped me as I pressed, “Did something happen?” Leaning back against the car’s plush backrest, Angelo began to recount the what happened in there in vivid detail. “So, as I made my way to the front desk to inquire about Dr. Lily’s current whereabouts, I couldn’t help but overhear a random nurse engaging in conversation with another. She mentioned, quite matter-of-factly, that Dr. Lily had just stepped out to pick up her kids from school. The directive followed

for all emergency patients under her care to be temporarily transferred to Dr. Gideon's supervision." My incredulity was obvious as I interrupted him, finding the entire narrative utterly implausible. "What utter nonsense is this? Lily isn't a mother, and Becky, as far as I know, doesn't reside in Canada. There's absolutely no likelihood that the children she allegedly went to pick up belong to Becky." Acknowledging my skepticism with a nod, Angelo mused, "I had the same thought. I mean, when exactly did she give birth to a child old enough to be enrolled in school?" My mind ran multiple thoughts at a time. If, by some bizarre twist of fate, she did indeed go to pick up a child from school, then that would suggest she's headed home. Drive us to her house," I instructed. Angelo acknowledged my directive with a sharp nod, the car engine revving to life as he maneuvered us out of the hospital's driveway. As the familiar road leading to Lily's house came into view, I found myself still grappling with the unfolding events and the mystery surrounding Lily's sudden involvement with children. Taking a calculated turn onto the well-trodden path leading up to her residence, Angelo guided the car with precision. I instructed him to park a safe distance from the gate as we awaited any sign of Lily's arrival. "What if she's already home!" Angelo queried, his voice tinged with uncertainty. "We'll give it forty-five minutes," I replied decisively. "If she doesn't show up by then, you'll drive up to the gate and inform her security 11:40 AM Chapter 36 that she has an unexpected guest. We settled into our wait, the passing minutes stretching out before us. After just fifteen minutes, a sleek black car zoomed past us, unmistakably belonging to Lily, considering the absence of neighbors in the vicinity. Angelo wasted no time in pursuing Lily's car, employing the horn to signal our demand for her attention. Her vehicle glided to a halt near the gate, awaiting its slow opening, while I disembarked from our car and approached hers. Despite the tinted windows, I could sense Lily's gaze fixed upon me. I could feel it, unnerving almost. As I closed the distance, one of her security personnel attempted to block my path, his hand outstretched in a misguided effort to deter me. Angelo swiftly intervened, forcefully pushing the security aside. "What gives you the right to dare touch a Williams like that?" Angelo's voice boomed with authority, asserting our presence in the face of outnumbered opposition. Despite the tension, I realized the odds were stacked against us. It became clear that I wouldn't make it to Lily's car. After a tense pause, the driver's door swung open, and Lily emerged, exuding an air of

composed authority as she made her way towards us. "Let him go, she commanded the security personnel, who had now formed a protective circle around Angelo and me. Slowly, the circle of security personnel dissolved as Lily's authoritative command took effect. "What are you doing here, Ryan?" Lily's inquiry cut through the tension, but my focus remained fixed on the tinted windows of her car. It was as if an invisible force compelled me to peer inside, perhaps driven by curiosity. "I came for a funeral here and thought it best to see you in person to discuss matters instead of having you travel to New York," I explained, my gaze flickering back to the car briefly. "Why didn't you call me?" Lily's voice betrayed a hint of hurt. "At least let me know that you're here?" "I did call you," I interjected, setting the record straight, "but you didn't pick up." Just as I was about to broach the topic Angelo overheard at the hospital, the window unexpectedly rolled down, revealing a little boy who bore an uncanny resemblance to... me? He poked his head out urgently, his voice breaking the momentary silence. "Mummy! I need

to use the toilet fast!" My eyes darted from the boy to Lily, whose complexion paled visibly, her shock evident. The air grew heavy with unspoken questions. "Is that my son?" My voice quivered with a mixture of disbelief and dawning realization.

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Chapter 37 RYAN Lily's face drained of color before my eyes, but I was too stunned to fully comprehend it. I turned to Angelo, silently seeking confirmation that I wasn't the only witness to this sudden change. "Are those kids you picked up from school yours?" I blurted out, my gaze flickering back to the car. "Actually, scratch that. Could they be mine?" Confusion and disbelief warred within me. On one hand, I dreaded the thought of Lily having children with another man. On the other, the idea that she might have kept our kids hidden from me for nearly seven years was incomprehensible. Lily approached tentatively. "Let's go inside and talk about this, Ryan," she suggested. "Of course, we're going to discuss this!" I hissed, my steps quickening towards my car. "Open the gate!" I barked at her security team. The gate swung open, allowing Angelo to follow Lily into the compound. As I pulled into the parking lot, I observed Lily alighting from the car, while one of her security personnel opened the back door. To my astonishment, instead of one, three children emerged from the vehicle. "What in the world?" Angelo muttered beside me, his voice laced with disbelief. Anger surged through me. "You have three kids with her, and she..." He trailed off, exhaling heavily before stepping out of the car. Two of the children, who bore a slight resemblance to each other, remained close to their mother's side. The third child, who peeked out of the window, darted into the building. Frozen in place, I watched the trio of boys, stunned by the revelation. Lily cleared her throat, breaking the tense silence. "Can we please go inside?" she requested, her voice strained with apprehension. Struck dumbfounded, I found myself wordlessly trailing Lily's lead as we made our way into the house. The trio of little boys ascended the staircase, disappearing from sight, likely retreating to their designated rooms. Meanwhile, Angelo tactfully excused himself under the guise of a phone call, though I knew it was just an excuse to give us a moment. Sinking into the soft cushions of the sofa, I cradled my head in my hands, grappling with a whirlwind of emotions swirling within me. "What in the world is happening here?" How could Lily possibly have kept such a big secret from me for all this time? Lily settled beside me, "I was going to tell you Ryan." With a tentative gesture, she reached out to touch my hand, but I flinched away, my heart heavy with betrayal. "You we were planning to tell me this, Lily?" I uttered, my voice a mixture of disbelief and hurt. Unable to contain the storm raging within me, I rose to my feet, pacing the room in restless agitation. Three children, Lily. Three innocent lives, and you saw fit to keep them hidden from me all this while?" Standing in response, Lily's voice remained remarkably composed, a stark contrast to the storm brewing inside me. "Ryan, you really need to calm down. We must engage in a civilized conversation about this. Shouting and arguing will not lead us anywhere constructive." "And will an apology change the fact that I missed everything in their

lives?" I countered, the frustration evident in my tone. She struggled to form a response, her silence speaking volumes. "What could you possibly have to say, Lily? Nothing justifies keeping my kids away from me!" "I'm sorry," she whispered softly, her voice barely audible. "I truly am sorry. I don't know what I was thinking, but all I can say is that I am sorry. I halted in my tracks, turning to stare at her incredulously. "Do you hate me that much?" I whispered, the pain evident in my voice. "Do you hate me enough to keep my children away from me? To allow another man to take my place in their lives?" She sighed, the weight of the situation heavy upon us both. "What can I do to make this better, Ryan?" she asked, her voice tinged with desperation. Scoffing bitterly, I raised my head and cast my gaze skyward, attempting to quell the raging storm of anger within me. "I don't know. maybe you can turn back the hands of time to when they were born so I could have spent every moment with them, or perhaps you can magically erase the look of strangers from their eyes. 11:40 AM Chapter 37 As she took another tentative step toward me, I instinctively retreated, the space between us a chasm of unresolved emotions. "Ryan... her voice pleaded, reaching out to me. Shaking my head in disbelief, I scanned the room, ensuring I hadn't overlooked anything. "I can't do this with you right now, I muttered, my resolve faltering as I stormed out of the living room, deaf to her calls behind me. Just as I stepped outside, I collided with Jake, the intensity of our gaze locking in a silent standoff. My eyes darted to the five plastic bags he held, undoubtedly filled with takeout—a sight that only stoked the flames of my simmering fury My fist clenched and trembled behind me, the wild, untamed part of my being clamoring to break free from its restraints. "Sir." Angelo's voice cut through the haze, a desperate attempt to pull me back from the brink of that feral mood threatening to consume me. Ignoring his words, I remained lost in the tumult of my own emotions until his firm grip closed around my forearm, grounding me in the present, "Ryan, let's go. The kids are watching from their window," That simple statement jolted me back to reality. Reluctantly tearing my gaze away from Jake, I followed Angelo's direction. He nodded towards the left, and I followed his gaze to the window where two heads peered out. They waved, their attention fixed on Jake, not me. "Don't lay the blame solely on Lily," Jake rasped. "Remember, none of this would have happened if you hadn't walked away from her." Suppressing the urge to unleash my pent-up frustration on Jake for the sake of the children observing us, I bit my tongue and held back, though my simmering anger pulsed beneath the surface. Moving closer to him, I kept my fists clenched at my sides. "I'm so furious with Lily that I can't even think straight. I feel utterly betrayed, to the point where I can't even bear to look her in the face, I admitted, my voice laced with raw emotion. "But understand this, Jake: my anger won't last forever." Angelo let out a weary sigh before respectfully stepping away, allowing us a moment of privacy. "I can't sustain my anger towards Lily indefinitely, and I think you should be aware of that," I stated firmly, meeting Jake's gaze head-on. His eyes swept over me, assessing my words with a confidence that irked me. "And what am I supposed to do with

that information?" he retorted, his tone brimming with self-assurance. Grinning, I stepped back. "Just so you know, I am coming back for my family." I grew up in a home where my father was present but absent. I never saw him or his affection very often,

“my kids will not grow up in a broken home Jake, and not even your silly self can stop IL  
Jake’s expression shifted instantly, his features contorting with anger. “You do realize  
that Lily and I are engaged, right?” he shot back, his tone tinged with defiance.  
Throwing my head back, I laughed heartily, the sound ringing out into the air. “And you  
think that’s going to deter me?” I challenged, sweeping my gaze over him. “Even if you  
were married to her, it wouldn’t stop me.” As the tension mounted, the front door swung  
open, and Lily emerged, her gaze flitting between Jake and me. “What’s going on  
here?” she inquired. “What do you think is going on?” I growled at Lily, frustration and  
hurt evident in my voice. “A man shows up with five plastic bags, acting like he’s here to  
have dinner with my kids as if they’re his. Giving Jake one last stern glare, I climbed into  
the car and instructed Angelo to drive away. The ride to one of our hotels in Canada  
was filled with a heavy silence. Angelo, sensing my need for solitude, turned on the  
music, allowing me to get lost in my thoughts Not a word passed between us until  
Angelo parked the car in the hotel’s lot. As he turned off the engine, he faced me.  
“What’s on your mind?” My gaze shifted slowly to him. “What if they don’t like me?” I  
mumbled, the mere thought tightening my heart. “What if they choose Jake over me?”  
Angelo sighed reassuringly. “They are your sons, Ryan. Developing a liking for you will  
come naturally.” I harbored doubts. “It’s not that simple, I argued, my past experience  
coloring my perspective. “I never developed any liking for my father “That’s because he  
didn’t make an effort, Angelo countered, offering a glimmer of hope. “Make an effort,  
show them that you care, and 2/3 11:40 AM Chapter 37 watch how things fall into  
place.” I wished it were as straightforward as he made it sound. “On the bright side,” he  
continued, “I believe you just resolved your issue with the board. You not only have an  
heir they desire, but heirs, and you don’t have to entertain the idea of marrying  
Stephanie or worrying about fathering another child.”

Posted by **Adminh**, ?

Chapter 38 LILY “What was that all about?” I inquired of Jake the moment we crossed  
the threshold into the living room. “What exactly did you say to him?” Dropping the  
crinkled plastic bag with a thud onto the sleek surface of the dining table, Jake pivoted  
towards me, his expression morphing into one of slight bewilderment as he folded his  
arms and met my gaze with a furrowed brow. “What led you to believe that I’m the one  
who instigated something with him, and not the other way around?” he questioned me,  
his tone tinged with a hint of exasperation. “Why did you automatically assume that the  
fault lies with me?” I found myself at a loss as to why I had jumped to such a conclusion.  
“I apologize,” I interjected hastily, the words tumbling from my lips in a rush, “that  
statement was ill–considered Shaking his head in a gesture of mild exasperation, Jake  
began to stride purposefully towards the kitchen, his footsteps echoing softly against the  
tiled floor, and I trailed closely in his wake, my curiosity still burning bright. “Could you at  
least tell me what happened out there, Jake?” “I told him not to hold you accountable  
because none of this is your fault,” Jake responded, his voice tinged with a hint of  
frustration. “Care to guess his reaction to my words?” “That I’m to shoulder all the  
blame?” I mused aloud, feeling the weight of Ryan’s disappointment pressing down on  
me. “Ryan’s clearly upset with me, and I can empathize with that. But please, don’t let  
whatever he said about me get to you. As Jake pulled out three plates, he began

transferring the food from the crinkled plastic takeout container. "Quite the opposite," he continued, his tone somber, "he mentioned returning for his family, and that includes you. He even made a point about that engagement ring on your finger not deterring him." "I'm certain he doesn't mean it," I interjected, my thoughts swirling with a mixture of guilt and disbelief. "I mean, he has every right to be upset with me, but asserting ownership over me and the kids? That's a whole other level." "He really meant it," Jake argued, his tone heavy with concern, as he carried the plates to the dining table. I followed suit, balancing the other plate in my hands as I joined him. "He even said that if we were married, he'd still come for you, which implies that even marriage wouldn't deter him, Jake continued, his voice tinged with frustration. Letting out a weary sigh, I sank into the chair and cradled my head in my hands. The main issue shouldn't be what Ryan said because I have no intention of returning to him for any reason. But I'm terrified he might try to take my kids away from me." "I wish I had the perfect words to comfort you, but I don't, Jake admitted softly, his hand resting reassuringly on my shoulder. "However, I promise to stand by you every step of the way if you promise to stand by me too. Before I could respond, the sound of hurried footsteps echoed down the stairs. "Do you think I should bring up their dad now?" I pondered aloud, feeling it might be best to address the situation before their next encounter with Ryan. "No time is ever truly perfect," Jake replied with a thoughtful gaze, "Just share it with them when you feel ready, although I do wish they could see me as their father," he added with a sad smile. "Speaking of which, did I mention that Ethan called me 'dad' some time ago!" The thought of Ethan referring to Jake as 'dad' would have filled me with joy in the past. However, considering our current circumstances, I couldn't muster the same excitement now, knowing it could only add to Ethan's confusion. With a heavy heart, I awaited the arrival of the three boys, their footsteps eventually echoing down the stairs. "What have I said about running down the stairs?" I gently reminded them upon their arrival. Liam settled beside me, dragging a chair closer. "I reminded them the same thing, he muttered softly. "Good evening, Uncle Jake," he greeted, his tone respectful yet distant. Jake affectionately tousled Liam's hair before pushing the other plate towards him. However, Liam seemed notably disinterested in the food, his thoughts clearly elsewhere. After a hectic thirty minutes of ensuring the boys ate without any mishaps, we finally wrapped up dinner, and a member of the staff promptly cleared away the plates. "I'm going to finish my homework." Liam mumbled. 11:41 AM Chapter 38 As he made a move to leave his seat, I called out to him, halting his step. "Wait!" I beckoned, and he paused, turning back to face me. "I want to have a chat with all of you about something." His gaze shifted between Jake and me as he resumed his seat. Moistening my lips, I exchanged glances with each of my children, pondering the best way to broach the topic. "What is it mummy?" Liam asked. "I know you've all wanted to meet your dad, even if it's not something you've spoken about, I began pensively, "well, the time has come. He's here and eager to meet all of you. Noah's face lit up with excitement. "Really?" he exclaimed eagerly. I nodded, hoping beyond hope that it would turn out as positively as I portrayed it. "He's genuinely thrilled to meet you all, them, though the uncertainty gnawed at me. Disappointment would be hard to bear for them if things didn't go as hoped. I assured "I thought uncle Jake is our father?" Ethan's innocent inquiry cut through the air, causing Liam to face-palm himself in exasperation. "He's not our father, Liam clarified on our behalf, his tone tinged with frustration, "he's

just our uncle. Right, Uncle Jake?" Liam turned his gaze expectantly towards Jake, who seemed reluctant to answer the question. With a forced smile, Jake nodded. "Yes," he

affirmed, his tone strained, "I'm just your Uncle Jake." "But our father," Liam interjected once more, his voice tinged with a mixture of hurt and confusion, "if he wanted to meet us so badly, why didn't he show up sooner? Liam's voice dropped to a whisper. "Why did he wait until my friends laughed at me for not having a father before showing up?" My frown deepened at this revelation. "Your friends laughed at you for not having a father?" I echoed, disbelief coloring my tone. Those shouldn't even be called friends at this point. Who raised these bitter kids? "Did they bully you?" Liam gazed at the artifact resting on the dining table, a contemplative expression etched across his features. "I made it clear to them that you better than not only their mommy and daddy, but also their grandmommy and granddaddy," he remarked solemnly. "That's right, son. I outrank them all," I replied with a hint of playful pride, prompting Jake to chuckle warmly at the exchange. Emotion swelling within me, I extended my arms, inviting Liam for a hug. He hesitated for a moment, his gaze lingering on my outstretched arms, before shaking his head in amusement. Jake's infectious laughter filled the room, lifting the tension and drawing a smile from Ethan, despite his confusion over the sudden laughter from Jake. At least Jake is making the atmosphere a bit relaxing, although Noah and Liam aren't laughing. "Your father has been away for quite some time, but he's back for you, just as he promised," I reassured them earnestly. Noah, however, voiced his sentiment quietly, "We don't need another daddy; we already have Uncle Jake." Liam nodded in agreement. "Tell him we don't want him," he asserted. Panic surged within me, and I turned to Jake, silently pleading for assistance. Without hesitation, Jake settled into the vacant seat beside Liam, gesturing for Noah to join them. Noah approached, and Jake enveloped him in a comforting embrace. "How about giving him a chance to shower you with the love he couldn't before? If it doesn't work out, we'll reconsider his role as 'Daddy.'" Jake proposed. "So, can we give Daddy a chance? Jake asked, a wide smile lighting up his face. Noah and Ethan readily nodded, their curiosity and willingness apparent. However, Liam maintained a slight frown. "Liam, Jake encouraged gently. Reluctantly, Liam admitted, "I don't want to call him Daddy," his words barely audible. "You don't have to, Jake reassured him, his tone gentle yet firm. "You can address him by his name if you prefer, okay?" Liam nodded reluctantly. "Okay," he conceded, his voice barely above a whisper, "So, are we all in agreement about giving Daddy a chance?" I posed the question, a hint of skepticism lingering as I feared Liam might retract his tentative acceptance. I was adamant about not imposing anything on him. 11:41 AM Chapter 38 As they all nodded in unison, a wave of relief washed over me, and I released a heavy breath I hadn't realized I'd been holding. Tears welled up in my eyes, obscuring my vision momentarily. I could feel the breathlessness creeping in, but I don't need a paper bag when I have my kids. "Do you want to give mummy a hug?" I offered, and before I could finish, Ethan and Noah leaped out of their seats, eager to embrace me. Liam, however, remained seated, his reluctance palpable. My gaze pleaded with him until, begrudgingly, he rose from his seat and joined the embrace. Whilst hugging them, I turned to Jake and mouthed a big thank you to him. He handled the situation a lot more better than I would. 11:41 AM Chapter 39



# Becoming Strangers Again

Posted by Adminh, ?

Chapter 39 RYAN The following day demanded my swift return to New York, as pressing business matters awaited my attention. My stay in Canada was meant to be brief, lasting no more than a day. However, deep down, a twinge of apprehension about facing my children may have hastened my departure. What if they questioned the prolonged absence I'd had from their lives? The truth—that their mother intentionally kept them away from me—was too painful to reveal. With no other acceptable excuse in sight, I found myself grappling with the inevitable. As Angelo steered us towards the office, a heavy silence enveloped us. Finally, he broke the quietude with a pointed question, "Will you be discussing this with your father? Raising my eyes from the glow of my phone, I emphatically shook my head. He has absolutely no reason to be in the loop about this," I asserted. I do not see the need to utter a single word to anyone until I could wrap my head around the situation. The unwelcome advice and opinions from others was not needed at this early stage, where I was still trying to come to terms with the news. Angelo skillfully steered the car into a parking space, and as I got off, I briskly made my way to the office, with him quietly trailing behind. However, my purposeful stride came to an abrupt halt when I spotted Lora, my sister, occupying the reception space adjacent to my office. Arching a curious brow, I approached her with a hint of surprise coloring my expression. "What brings you here?" we hardly see each other, not unless necessary. We do not even pay each other a visit. It wasn't usually like this, but how we grew apart. I am yet to understand. As Lora caught sight of me, she swiftly rose to her feet, her demeanor tinged with a hint of reproach. "Took you quite a while to make it to work," she remarked dryly. "I understand you're not exactly thrilled to see me, and believe me, the feeling is most definitely mutual but at least have the courtesy to return my calls I entered the office, Lora trailing behind. "What do you want?" I inquired, my tone curt. Seating herself comfortably on the sofa, she crossed her legs with an air of self-assurance. "I'm filing for divorce," she declared matter-of-factly. Taking a seat directly opposite her, I mirrored her posture, meeting her gaze with an air of detached indifference. "And why is that any concern of mine? Despite my attempts to lend an ear to Lora in the past, each effort had been met with disappointment. "You never bothered to inform me about your previous divorces. Why should this be any different?" A wry smile played at the corners of her lips. "Because this time, I need a lawyer, she deadpanned. Already feeling the weight of disinterest settling in, I made no effort to conceal my lack of enthusiasm for prolonging the conversation. "Again, how is that my business?" I stated bluntly, my tone a reflection of the detachment I felt. "My lawyer passed away last week, so I'm in need of a competent replacement, Lora replied, her voice tinged with a hint of desperation. "Do you happen to have any recommendations?" Exhaling audibly, I ran a tired hand down my face, the weariness of the situation etched in the lines of my expression. "And why exactly are you divorcing Hagg? What did he do?" I asked, despite my efforts to remain aloof. Folding her hands in a gesture of guarded defensiveness, Lora's countenance hardened in an instant. "What Hagg did or didn't do isn't any of your business, she shot back, her tone laced with an angry edge. "I find it rather surprising that you even remember his name, considering your absence at

the wedding “Don’t lay the blame on me for not showing up,” I retorted sharply, my patience wearing thin. “I grew weary of being a guest at your weddings.” “Do you have a lawyer in mind to recommend or not? Lora retorted, prompting an involuntary roll of my eyes. “No, I don’t,” I replied curtly, my response lacking any hint of hesitation or apology. Observing her nod, I anticipated her departure, yet she seemed to settle even deeper into the sofa, defying the unspoken expectation. My eyebrows furrowed in mild irritation. “Aren’t you leaving?” I inquired pointedly, my patience wearing thin. She shook her head in response, a stubborn defiance gleaming in her eyes. “I bumped into Stephane, and she’s hoping I can help mend things between you two,” she explained. “So, what’s going on? Why are you two having problems?” 11:41 AM Chapter 39 Amirthless chuckle escaped my lips, tinged with a bitter irony. “Why attempt to fix our relationship when you’re unable to mend your own!” I questioned pointedly. People often seek to offer solutions to others’ problems while failing to address their own. “Just leave, Lora. I have an important meeting to attend,” I concluded. Her laughter, devoid of any amusement, filled the air as she rose from the sofa, her movements deliberate and devoid of hesitation. “I honestly couldn’t care less about whether you patch things up with her or not. My only mention of it was a promise to Stephanie, she declared, her tone blunt and matter-of-fact. With a swift motion, she grabbed her purse and fixed me with a pointed stare. “I have no interest in the details of your situation, but I must caution you about Stephanie. That girl seems more desperate than I am, and that’s a dangerous trait. Without waiting for my response, she turned on her heel and swept out of my office. At the end of the workday, I made my way home, the weight of the day’s events heavy on my mind. However, during my journey home, I couldn’t resist the temptation to go online and catch up on the latest news and updates. To my dismay, a picture of Stephanie and me, undoubtedly taken months ago, was not only trending on her social media story but was also making waves across various platforms. “Should I make a statement that our relationship is over?” 1 queried Angelo, frustration evident in my tone. “Stephanie’s constant posting of these pictures is really getting under my skin. This is the third one she’s posted this week.” Angelo shot me a doubletake, momentarily taken aback before refocusing his attention on the road. “You ended things with Stephanie? Why am I just hearing about this now?” Letting out a resigned sigh, I tossed my phone onto the seat beside me, the weight of the situation settling heavily upon me. Just answer the question, Angelo, I urged, eager for his perspective. “What held you back from making the statement all this time?”

Angelo asked, his expression still registering the shock of the news. “She begged me to let her be the one to announce it to the public I explained wearily, the memory of Stephanie’s pleading words still fresh in my mind. “But now, she’s really starting to get on my nerves.” “I think you should bring it to her attention and insist she makes the public statement about your relationship or else you’ll do it yourself, Angelo suggested, offering a pragmatic solution. 1 considered his advice. “That seems fair, I acknowledged. Angelo cleared his throat, cautiously broaching another topic. “If you don’t mind me asking,” he began, “why did you end things with Stephanie? Is it because of Lily?” “Partly. I admitted candidly. “The thought of ending things with her had been lingering, but it took seeing Lily to push me to act on it.” Sensing his scrutinizing gaze through the rear-view mirror, I met his eyes. “Is there something you want to say?” I

asked, a hint of challenge in my tone. Clearing his throat, Angelo addressed a concern that had evidently been weighing on him. "You're not going to disrupt Lily's relationship just because you found out she has your babies, right?" he pressed, his words laced with a plea for restraint. As I remained silent, he continued, "She's engaged, meaning she's about to start planning her wedding. Please don't jeopardize things for her." Tearing my gaze away from the rear-view mirror, I shifted my focus to the passing scenery outside. "I refuse to let my children grow up in a broken home, I muttered under my breath "Now, that's just selfish, Angelo countered, his voice tinged with reproach. "You're the one who shattered the home. Why should Lily be the one to bear the brunt of it?" His words struck a nerve, and I fixed him with a steely glare. "Hiding my kids from me for seven years, with no intention of ever revealing the truth until circumstances forced her hand, is more than enough to pay for the crime of losing her, I retorted sharply. "Ryna Angelo attempted to interject, but I cut him off with a sharp gesture. "Let me finish," I snapped, my tone clipped with impatience. He mumbled an apology, and I continued. "Lily won't suffer, I can assure you of that." "You'll force her to end a relationship with someone she loves, Angelo deadpanned, "That, in itself, is enough suffering, if you ask me. "I intend to rekindle her love for me, but for that to happen, I must put an end to whatever she has with that man." I asserted firmly. My children will not be raised by another man, nor will I allow another woman to raise them. 11:41 AM Chapter 40

## Becoming Strangers Again

Posted by Adminh, ?

Chapter 40 LILY For an entire week, the absence of communication from Ryan left me grappling with doubts, and I found myself second-guessing the decision to inform my kids about their father. I know it is too much to take in, going to bed without any parental responsibilities and then waking up as a father to three. However, I reasoned that Ryan required sufficient time to absorb the news. My simple wish was for him to acknowledge my calls or respond to my messages. Despite persistent attempts through texts and calls, there was total silence on his end. It reached a point where Jake, sensing my frustration, advised me to cease my efforts, emphasizing that if Ryan genuinely desires involvement in the kids' lives, he would eventually initiate contact or make an appearance. Unexpectedly, today happened to be the day when circumstances took an unexpected turn. He decided to show up today. Bringing my car to a stop near the gate, I disembarked and made my way toward Ryan's vehicle. "Hey, I greeted, a faint smile playing on my lips, "What brings you here? It would have been nice if you had given me a heads-up." My response was met with a lack of reciprocation as his gaze drifted past me towards my car. "Are they inside?" Instinctively, I followed his line of sight before shaking my head. "No, they're with their nanny. I had to pick them up from school since she was out sick." I gestured toward one of the security guards. "Could you please open the gate?" Tossing my car keys to one of them, I turned back to Ryan. "Do you mind if I catch a ride with you? Responding with a sharp nod, devoid of any acknowledgment or warmth, Ryan swiftly entered his car, ignited the engine, and kept his gaze fixed on me through the windshield as I completed my round around the vehicle. The gate widened,

granting us passage. "Ryan..." I uttered, hoping to capture even a fraction of his attention, yet he remained distant, not sparing a glance in my direction. "What's the plan?" Finally, after what felt like an eternity, he shifted his gaze toward me. "What do you think the plan is?" he replied flatly, his tone lacking any hint of emotion. "Of course, I'm here to see my kids." Nodding in resignation, I settled back into my seat, fixing my gaze forward. "I understand that you're upset with me, Ryan, but could you please make an effort to temper that anger whenever we're in the presence of the kids? They'll undoubtedly pick up on it, especially Liam." Suddenly, his countenance softened, a flicker of recognition crossing his face. "Liam?" he repeated softly, releasing a deep exhale, "that's his name?" With a nod, I completed their names, "Liam, Ethan, and Noah." A gentle smile graced my lips as I thought of my children. "Noah is a sweetheart, they all are, but he is the quietest among them. He rarely argues and is willing to comply with any request you make. However, Liam and Ethan, especially Liam, will question it endlessly." For the first time since our encounter outside the gate, Ryan reciprocated with a smile, diffusing some of the tension in the car. Bringing the car to a halt on the driveway, he switched off the engine and began to exit the vehicle. Following his lead, I stepped out of the car. "They'll likely be in their room working on assignments," I suggested. "If you wait in the living room, I have a chance to talk to them. Perhaps you could join us for dinner later. Reaching for the back door, Ryan opened it and retrieved three gift bags that had gone unnoticed by me until now. "Did you tell them about me?" he inquired, his tone tinged with curiosity and perhaps a hint of apprehension. I nodded, feeling a nervous tension grip me as I bit my lip anxiously. "I mentioned that their father is back and would love to meet them. Why am I the nervous one when it should be Ryan? "And what was their reaction?" he probed further, his gaze searching for clues. It wouldn't bode well to say that the kids perceive Jake as their father figure and are resistant to the idea of another paternal figure. "Ethan and Noah seem fine with it, but Liam is a bit hesitant to accept you," I admitted cautiously, choosing my words carefully. Ryan's expression softened as he pondered my response, his tongue poking into his cheek while his left hand found its way into his 11:41 AM Chapter 40 pocket. "Why is he hesitant?" he inquired, pausing by the door. "What did he say?" "Oh, damn," I muttered under my breath, feeling a knot of anxiety tighten in my stomach. "He's questioning why you've been absent all this time and only showing up now." His once-relaxed expression hardened into one of anger. "His anger is completely justified," he spat out, his tone seething with frustration. "I would have asked the same question." Catching sight of my nervous habit of biting my finger, he softened slightly. "Don't worry, I'm not going to let them know that I was unaware of their existence because you kept them away from me. I'm not that heartless. With a gesture toward the door, he instructed, "Lead the way." I pushed the door open and stepped inside, confirming my suspicion that the living room was deserted. Gesturing toward the sofa, I offered, "Please, have a seat. I'll go call them." Leaving Ryan in the living room, I ascended the stairs and made my way to their study room. As I pushed the door open, a wave of warmth washed over me as their faces lit up at the sight of my arrival. Noah, in his usual behavior, was the first to spring from his seat, racing towards me and enveloping my legs in his tiny embrace. Bending down, I scooped him up into my arms and planted a kiss on his cheek. Moving over to the other boys, I bestowed kisses on their cheeks as well before casting my eyes over their work. "There's someone I want you all to meet, I announced

nervously. Noah and Ethan's smiles widened instantly, Ethan's dimples becoming more pronounced, their eyes sparkling with excitement. Noah wasted no time in speaking up. "Is our father here?" I nodded, mirroring their smiles. "Yes, he's in the living room, and he's eager to see all of you." Noah and Ethan promptly closed their books, signaling their readiness to meet Ryan. Liam, however, remained visibly hesitant, his reluctance casting a shadow over the moment. With Noah and Ethan's hands securely in mine, I guided them downstairs. As we descended, Ryan's back was turned towards us, his focus fixed on the family portrait adorned with a picture of Georgina. "That's our grandmother, Ethan offered, unprompted, breaking the silence and drawing Ryan's attention away from the picture. Turning around, Ryan's eyes glistened with emotion as he beheld the children. Anxious, he glanced in my direction, seeking reassurance, and I responded with an encouraging nod. Gathering his composure, he moistened his lips before stepping forward, his smile masking his nervousness. "Hi, he greeted warmly, lowering himself to their eye level. "Hi, I'm Ryan Williams." Noah blinked shyly, his curiosity shining through his eyes. "Mummy said you're our daddy," he observed, his gaze searching Ryan's face for confirmation. Ryan stole another glance at me, and I mustered a strained smile to offer him some support. Redirecting his focus to Noah, Ryan spoke with warmth, "Yes, I'm your father, and I'm very happy to see you." He extended the gift bag towards Noah. "I brought you something" Noah beamed at

Ryan, his eyes bright with anticipation. Thank you," he said, accepting the gift with genuine gratitude. Ryan's eyes welled up with emotion as he fought back tears, his heart undoubtedly overflowing with a mix of joy and apprehension. Turning to Ethan, he continued, "I got something for you too." With gentle care, he handed the gift to Ethan before shifting his attention to Liam. "And for you too." Ethan and Liam murmured their thanks as they accepted their gifts. "Can I please get a hug?" Ryan requested, his eyes brimming with longing. Ethan and Noah hesitantly approached him, wrapping themselves in his embrace. Ryan planted tender kisses on their cheeks before turning his gaze to Liam, his expression hopeful, awaiting his response. Rather than moving forward, Liam took a step back, seeking refuge behind me. A silent exchange passed between him and Ryan until Liam redirected his gaze to me. "Can I go continue my homework, mummy?" he asked, subtly expressing his discomfort. "You don't want to give him a hug?" I dared to ask, and he nodded in response. Gazing apologetically at Ryan, I acknowledged the reality that I couldn't compel Liam to do something he wasn't comfortable with. "Sure. You can go, love," I affirmed, understanding his need for space. With that, Liam walked out of the living room, vanishing up the stairs.