

## 6.

"The wounds you've inflicted on my heart may never fully heal, for the pain runs deeper than mere words can convey"

A world once full of smiles and light had turned dark and cold for Estelle in a matter of seconds. She sat on her bed, her hands curled in her lap as she stared into nothing. It had been five days since she had seen or heard anything from Hunter. By now, she had exhausted all her strength to cry; the only feelings she couldn't shake were fear and sadness. He had refused to respond to her calls or text messages. The only time he responded was by sending a short text saying he had sent their divorce papers through the mailbox as if their marriage meant nothing to him.

A painful scoff escaped her parted lips, and her eyes drew to the envelope sitting tauntingly on her dresser, mocking her with a fate she had yet to accept. Who was she deceiving? She knew their marriage never meant anything to him. She had known for a long time but had deluded herself, hoping the saying that hearts grow together might prove true. Unfortunately, it didn't come to pass in her case. But there was no way she was going to open the envelope, much less sign the papers.

She dragged her eyes away from the envelope just as her phone rang loudly in the silent house. Anyone else would have been startled by the sudden interruption, considering no one else was in the big house, but Estelle didn't even blink. She was already accustomed to the startling noise of her cell phone. She knew who was calling. It was none other than her family. They had been bombarding her cell phone with calls and text messages, urging her to come home. Her brother, Ethan, had said the same thing yesterday, asking her to divorce Hunter and return. But she refused to oblige. Home was here with Hunter, in their matrimonial home. She didn't know how long it would take, but she had vowed to be with him for eternity, and that she would be it. But first, she needed to see Hunter. They said if the mountain doesn't come to Muhammad, then Muhammad must go to the mountain.

It took Estelle all day to search for Hunter in all the locations she thought he might be, but none was fruitful. By the time she decided to check his office, it was already late at night, and the sky was cold and shady as if preparing itself to rain. Estelle's footsteps padded softly as she walked into the empty hall. It was late, and all the staff had retired for the day, but she hoped to find Hunter there, as she was already tired and her feet ached from walking around the city.

As she made her way into the elevator and pressed the button for the top floor, she inserted her hand into her shoulder bag and pulled out a white envelope. A shaky breath escaped her lips. The doctor's words from earlier in the day confirmed it all. She was pregnant, and the white envelope was proof of it. Tears pooled in her eyes, and the fear of rejection threatened to suffocate her with each beep of the elevator as it came closer to the top floor. What would Hunter's reaction be? He would be surprised, yes, but would he be happy? Would he want the baby, or would he reject her and their child?

The elevator dinged open before her thoughts could spiral further into negativity. With a shaky exhalation, she stepped out and walked towards Hunter's office. He would be joyous. He wouldn't reject his child. He wouldn't. Estelle chanted to herself, trying to stay positive as she got closer to the door. However, her thoughts came to an abrupt stop when she heard voices echoing from behind the door.

"Why would you do that?"

Carla? Estelle gasped silently, anger lling her core at the familiar snaky voice. She should have expected to see Carla wherever Hunter was since she was the love of his life and he wouldn't want her out of his sight. The thought sent her heart crying in pain, and she suddenly wished Carla would disappear just as she had two years ago.

"What do you think the world would think of me now? They'll think I'm a home wrecker."

Estelle managed to bite down a scoff. Who is the witch kidding? She had always been a home wrecker, a snake in the grass with a pretty face and a vile personality. It pained Estelle that God would be so unfair as to give such a bad person a beautiful face that made people hesitate before doubting her. Imagining that snake trying to claim innocence for what she had done made Estelle's blood boil. Carla had always been like that—a wolf in sheep's clothing, making people see only the facade she portrayed. And Estelle had been one of her casualties. The urge to push the door open, roughly and painfully pull Carla's hair, and demand that she leave their lives was strong. But Estelle held herself back, interested in hearing Hunter's response. God knew how much she missed his voice.

"The person who wrecked our home and everything isn't you, Carla, it was no other person but Estelle," Hunter's voice rose angrily.

Estelle gasped and stumbled back a little. Her trembling hand, no longer grasping the envelope, rose to cover her mouth as tears she thought were gone sprang to her eyes like a lightning bolt. She? She was the one who wrecked their relationship? How?

"It was all because of her selfishness and possessiveness that we are in this situation. She had this coming, and I do not regret sending her those divorce papers. I would do it over and over again if it means having you back in my life."

Estelle clutched her chest painfully at the harsh, but honest words that spilled from Hunter's mouth. She knew—she knew he would do just exactly as he said and didn't regret the pain he had put her through these past few days. She had been a fool to think coming here, searching for him in hopes their child would change his heart, would make a difference. Her hand tentatively wrapped protectively around her stomach. It wouldn't shock her if he asked for an abortion just to stay with the love of his life.

"So, baby, stop all this and let me kiss you." His voice turned mused, and Estelle could imagine him already kissing Carla or teasing her neck. "I've waited all these years just to have a taste of you again. s\*x hasn't been fun and erotic since you left. I need you badly, Carla, please," he moaned bashfully, like a s\*x-starved goat. Estelle felt disgusted and ashamed of him. Knowingly or unknowingly, he had insinuated just as he said he had pretended to love her—that he had also pretended to enjoy s\*x with her. Estelle balled her fist, and her jaw hardened. She had been foolish not to see all this. She was stupid for waiting on a shameless goat like him.

With a determined step but a tear-soaked face, she marched out of the building, only to stumble into a body as she came around a corner. "Sorry," she muttered, her head bowed. However, as she sidestepped the person to continue her path, a hand grabbed her arm, stopping her.

"Estelle?" A familiar voice inquired. She quickly wiped her face with the back of her free hand before turning around with a smile. "Oh, hi, Dave. Didn't know I would stumble across you."

"I could say the same about you," Dave replied, releasing her arm. He glanced up at the building before turning his gaze back to Estelle. "Are you okay?" he asked sincerely, studying her face. Estelle bit her lower lip, feeling uncomfortable under his scrutinizing stare, which seemed to hone on the word "pity."

"Yeah, I'm fine. I need to be on my way," she said, trying to walk away but getting stopped again.

"You don't look okay, Estelle. Did you..."

"I really should be on my way," she said hurriedly, turning to leave, but Dave held her arm once more.

"Fine! Let me drop you off then."

"I'm fine, really. Thanks," she said, pulling her arm from his grasp and quickly walking out of the hall.

It was raining heavily by now, and Estelle was already soaked by the time she got to her car. However, the moment she entered her car, not caring about wetting the seat, she drove crazily and blindly out of the building. Her knuckles turned white from her tight grip on the wheel. She allowed her heart to shatter, for that would be the last time she would let herself feel this broken because of a man who never wanted her. As soon as she got home, she would sign the goddamn divorce papers and free herself from the hellhole she had sunk into.

She blinked back tears to see clearly as she drove. Her eyes ickered to the side, and her brow furrowed in confusion when her headlights shone on an oncoming car. What the hell? Deep ocean-blue eyes glared at her through the glass before turning back to the road. Hunter? How? Who? Whose voice had she heard talking with Carla in his office then? Was she hallucinating? Had she gone mad? Her eyes followed the car in slow motion until it disappeared into the distance.

Maybe she had hallucinated. That couldn't have been Hunter who just passed her car. But it was him. She would recognize his car and his face even in the dark. Whose voice had she heard talking with Carla in his office then?

Just as she was lost in thought, something slammed into the back of her car. She gasped accompanied by a continuous thud and mused screams of pain.