

SWORN
(Book 4 of the Worn Series)
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Chapter One

Rain cascades from a dark sky like clear crystal curtain and lands on the wet street pavements with the ease of maple syrup on a pancake. It's been raining for three hours. Before then the sun had been scorching hot while the atmosphere scented rain.

Like most people I had anticipated the weather but not the length. It's the first week of November, usually it consisted of hot dry days and mosquitoes infested nights. This year is different. November opened with a series of heavy rains and weather changes.

I turn back to the room stifling a sigh. I don't want to draw Lawyer's attention because—well it's just annoying. Why is he here and not Taylor? But his eyes rise from the file he is discussing with Julian and he looks at me questionably. I just shrug and move from the window as fast as my protruding stomach allows me.

I wish it could stop raining so that I can take my swollen ankles for a little spin. My body aches for movement since all I ever do is sit around because gynecologist Lawyer forgets that I am pregnant not in a wheelchair. I cast him an annoyed look as I make my way to the kitchen rubbing my tummy.

'Is she always this irritated?' I hear Julian whisper to Lawyer.

'It gets worse by the day.' Lawyer whispers back

'Taylor owes you for this.'

Lawyer scoffs, 'watching a child grow is amazing.'

'ugh don't start the speech with me—besides you are not watching a baby grow—you are watching Heather grow fat and heavy each day, it's really cute though.'

Julian doesn't see me until I walk over to him and smack him at the back of his head.

'Ow,' he yelps then turns to give me a grin, 'what?'

'If you call me fat again I will hurt you.'

Lawyer laughs, 'she means it man.'

'I said you are fat and cute—I mean well.'

Lawyer rolls his eyes and looks at me. 'You hungry?'

'I want a walk my legs hurt.'

Julian's eyes fall to my swollen legs and he breathes out a whistle. I glare at him.

'I don't know how you are going to walk on those.'

I give him another smack on the head.

'Ow what is wrong with you?'

I ignore him and turn to Lawyer, 'so?'

'Eat something first.'

'I am not hungry.'

‘It’s for the baby.’

I place a hand on my stomach, ‘your caring is so touching.’

‘It’s my niece.’

‘It’s a girl?’ Julian raises an eyebrow.

‘Yes,’ Lawyer answers

I smile at the thought. We just went for a scan and found out that I am having a girl. The news helped to lighten my dark world a little. And these two worked their magic to pull me out of my dark depression. It’s been three months since Taylor left. It’s been hard. It still is. If it wasn’t for Lawyer and Julian I wouldn’t have made it.

‘Judith is coming over with Celine in half an hour time.’ Julian tells me.

I beam, ‘really?’

I look at Lawyer who nods in affirmation. I almost jump with excitement but my heavy body won’t allow that one. The mother in me smiles warmly while my other brain companions do happy dances. Mostly because Celine gets to tell me everything that is happening out there. Things that Lawyer and Julian keep from me. Just knowing that Taylor is okay and understanding what he is doing helps me to come out of my depression as well. According to Celine, the clan members now believe that I am with Lawyer, they stopped trying to bait Taylor by using me. They wouldn’t dare touch anything that belongs to Lawyer—he has a reputation which I haven’t figured out. There is just something dark and dangerous about him. Something that he has in common with Taylor.

‘Yes they will be here just right about now.’ Lawyer announces and three seconds later there is a knock at the door. Julian raises an eyebrow at my wide smile and I shrug in return.

‘Guess who’s home!’ Celine announces singsongly as she steps into the living room with three shopping bags. Judith follows right behind her with three more.

‘Does she ever come quietly?’ Lawyer mutters to himself while I walk over to them.

‘Don’t you dare try to carry anything, Lawyer get over here?’ Celine yells.

‘Judith here let me help you.’ Julian jumps to his feet and rushes to take the bags from Judith.

‘Thank you.’ Judith smiles at him.

‘With pleasure.’ Julian’s mouth stretches into a slow smile, ‘why don’t you take a seat and relax and I will take care of these.’

‘That little—.’ Lawyer mutters angrily before he stands and with three strides he reaches Julian, ‘give me those.’ He snatches the bags from him and marches towards the kitchen.

Julian purses his lips suppressing a laugh and Celine gapes after him.

‘Let me take those Celine.’ Judith starts coming towards her

‘Don’t you dare—one of these stupid men should help me with my luggage.’ Celine growls.

‘I agree.’ Julian deadpans and takes Judith’s arm, ‘I will have Lawyer pour some drinks.’

Celine gapes at him as he takes Judith to the kitchen.

‘I swear!’ Celine mutters angrily before marching to the kitchen with her bags. I start to snicker, shaking my head as their voices bounces back and forth in the kitchen while Celine is giving them her piece of mind.

The days have been weird. Or almost unbelievably rushing by while I try not to get swallowed by the gaping hole within me. Or the spectacle that my life has turned out to be. But it’s never boring with these guys around. Really.

I make my way to the nearest couch and a grateful sigh escapes me as I position my body between two pillows. Outside, the rain has stopped and that sweet rain scented sunlight has just chased the darkness away. I long to be outside right now. Outside walks help me stop thinking.

It's the only time that my mind is not going through the paraphernalia of my screwed up life trying to figure out how I ended up here. With people I barely know as my only family. With a child on the way and I have no idea how to rescue them from this life I have mindlessly jumped into.

Those kind of thoughts about how mad I was when Taylor decided to leave me just like that. At first it was grief, then it was anger. Now I just can't believe it. We had started building our lives together and he suddenly decided to do the other part on his own. It is a world full of danger and cruelty but I can't help feel that he used me as an excuse to give in to what he has been fighting so long within him.

My thoughts are deep and lead to deeper ones. That's why I need to stop thinking.

'Here you go.' Celine emerges from the kitchen with a glass of juice and sits next to me on the couch. She puts the juice on the coffee table before folding her hands on her lap and facing me.

The woman is always so well put together and not a hair out of place. I used to think she was a perfectionist before I knew her story. It's her outside shell.

'How are we these days?'

My lips curve into a small smile, 'better than most days.' I gesture at my swollen ankles

'Yeek—you need to stretch those limps.'

'I have been trying to negotiate with the boys.'

Celine rolls her eyes, 'what do they know? Those annoying little brats.'

I glance towards the kitchen where I can hear their three voices, clearly squabbling like always.

'Don't worry—Julian keeps an eye on Lawyer. Judith will be fine, let's go for a walk.'

I glance at the kitchen again as Celine holds my arm, helping me up, 'shouldn't we tell them?'

Celine shrugs, 'we are just in the premises—lets go to the small garden by the gate.'

I nod and within minutes we are outside. Everything looks fresh and lively with the combination of rain, sunlight and mud.

'They are contract signing today.' Celine says, her eyes forward. That tells me it's really bad.

'It's over?' I scowl. Because I want it over. I had long given up the doing-what's-right team to just wanting Taylor back. Because that's what he said— not in words. But if he just gives them what they want. I had thought a lot about this. We could leave the country and live far from them.

'They are finalizing the deal today.' Celine sighs,

Silence falls for a moment as I get what Celine is not saying.

'It's never going to end.' I swallow the dark feeling that creeps up within me, 'they will want more won't they?'

'Gluttony.' Celine agrees, 'he will never let Taylor go—the man is obsessed with his son.' She turns to face me, 'Taylor is making this choice.'

I give her a strange look because somehow I have a feeling this is the part that she tells me to run. I know that look too well.

'I am not going anywhere.'

Celine raises an eyebrow, 'I have been updating you on this for months now Heather—I tried to tell you how this will turn out in many different ways and not have to say it directly.'

I let out a shaky breath, 'then say it.' I whisper, 'what makes you think that I can't take the truth?'

Celine shakes her head, 'you may think that you do and some time you are going to convince yourself that you are too cowardly to not fight... Listen Heather, that's exactly how I ended up here—a puppet.'

I drag in a long breath and wet my dry lips, 'tell me Celine.'

She gives me a long look before she nods, 'alright—Taylor is not coming back. In more detail—Mr. Abiwu is not letting him go. Taylor made the choice... I knew he would come to this, the little nut head never listens, stubborn as his father...' she pauses when she sees tears in my eyes, 'oh no don't you become that person Heather. Once you start crying, you will carry on in tears for long.'

'When did you become the philosopher?' my voice is raw.

Her eyes settles on my protruding stomach, 'think about what is best for the innocent child within you Heather.'

That's all I ever think about.

'You can't shed tears now, you need to swallow them and think clearly.'

I look at her; confused, this is another side of Celine I haven't seen before. The woman has multiple personalities and it just explains how screwed up I am to be relying on her so much now. Believing everything she says. I must be insane.

'Look around you—does it feel like a passing dream or can you live that way forever?'

I scowl at her. What is she talking about now? Since when did quack woman start using riddles?

I close my eyes to calm my racing heart. I knew already didn't I? Maybe—but I liked to hope against hope. When he walked out that door months ago—it didn't feel like a forever goodbye.

How did we come from a dream wedding full of promises to this day that feels like all that had been a little fantasy I had and now I have woken up from it?

We don't say any word to each other on the way back to Lawyer's apartment. I have a feeling Celine isn't telling me something that she is indirectly telling me. But I am done trying to figure out quack woman, my head aches.

Besides, I pretty much still have no graphic clear idea what the hell is going on. I mean of course I could always try to find out the details the Jonny English way because that's how I would end up doing things anyway—clumsy and messy and well just pure luck. Okay respect for the legends.

In other words, this is me right here. I am terrified of knowing what all this is about. I like living in oblivion because that's how I turned out to be when I got screwed over by life. Maybe it's an excuse but I can smooth that one over by saying no one is perfect.

Chapter Two

‘So have you thought of a name?’ Judith is all starry eyed excited as she comes to sit next to me on the couch. With my feet prepped up on a stuffy foot stool, gift from Julian, I turn my body to face her.

‘Something tells me you have been playing with the alphabet.’

Judith shrugs, ‘I have been around when most of my little cousins were born. The name can be a crisis if you haven’t stuck to one early enough.’

‘I still can’t believe your aunts and uncles are still young enough to keep breeding.’

Judith gapes at me, ‘you should hear yourself nowadays... you speak strangely.’

I try to glare at her but I know what she is talking about. Up to now I still can’t figure out how I finished my dissertation with clear reasonable English.

‘So what did you come up with?’

‘It’s a long list but Celine crossed most of them out because they were too touchy—whatever that means.’

I glance at the direction of the kitchen where Julian, Celine and Lawyer are probably discussing things that they don’t want me to hear or Judith. I had long given up eavesdropping on them. I mean what could possibly go worse than the situation that I am in right now? My brain companions nod in agreement. From what I have gathered so far besides what Celine told me earlier, things seem to be topsy-turvy that other side of the world lately.

‘Let’s hear them then.’ I say bringing my mind back to the present. How I wish I was in Judith’s position. Totally oblivious to what is happening around here. If she had any idea at all she would run for the hills. The story was simply that Taylor had to go on a trip outside the country and as the dotting husband that he is, he ordered me to stay with Lawyer until he gets back. This is the third time Judith is visiting me so she hasn’t figured out that I have been living here for the past four months already.

‘Are you sure you and Taylor haven’t discussed names yet?’ Judith raises both her eyebrows.

I take a deep breath to calm the raging feeling that rises at the mention of the normal things I could be doing with Taylor. I had long given up on the prospect that he would just suddenly return.

There were moments that his absence and the betrayal that came along with his decision heavily settled on me. I had no one left in my life. My father is dead, my family left and never tried to contact me. I can’t even think about my relatives lest I bring this life upon them. If they were not a part of it already.

I tried to contact my mother once and she was untraceable. It seems they all went into hiding. There are times I wonder what my life would have been like if I had never met those guys in college. But just a passing thought because I never think of Stephan. With the way I felt when I met Taylor I could easily say that Stephan and I were a mere prelude.

Taylor was the main story. The one that completely captured my audience and turned everything upside down. The confusion, the mixed feelings. I am mad at him, I blame him—I love him—I miss him. I want him to come back. I don’t.

‘No, he has this family loyalty complex thing about him. I don’t want my child named after some great aunt.’

Judith scoffs, ‘seriously?’

‘Besides, something will come up I am sure. Just fire up one of the names you have figured out.’

‘Okay’ Judith raises a palm, ‘I have April and Darien.’

‘Darien is a male name!’

‘Scans could be wrong—I have seen it a lot of times.’

I roll my eyes, ‘right.’

Judith is about to say something when her phone rings. She scowls as she lifts it to read the name of the caller. ‘Malcom?’

I raise an eyebrow, she shrugs.

‘I told you I was going to visit Heather today surely you can handle some things without Me.’ she gives me a can-you-believe-it look, ‘why what’s wrong?’ a sigh, ‘Malcom I am not having this conversation with you I told you to drop it.’ A laugh then her eyes widen in alarm, ‘you are what?’

I sit up straight as she lowers her phone and seem frozen for a moment. ‘What’s wrong Judith?’

She raises a hand to silence me and seem to be listening for something. Exactly five heartbeats pass and she sags back against the couch in relief.

‘Can you believe the guy?’

‘What happened?’

Judith shakes her head, ‘Malcom has been obsessed by the theory that Lawyer is dangerous since he saw him that day at the Church. We are leaders of the youth group we shouldn’t go around slandering people.’

I just nod, it seems Malcom had better instincts than my best friend.

‘Now he’s been acting strange.’

I sigh, ‘Judith darling, he’s in love, so he’s being protective.’

Judith’s eyes widen, ‘don’t be ridiculous. We are best friends—we have been for years.’

‘It’s not his fault that you friend-zoned him and now he thinks there is competition.’

‘With Lawyer?’ even as she masks her face with shock I can still see a lingering something in her eyes. Something I saw in my own eyes the first days I met Taylor.

‘Men like to mark their territory.’

Judith laughs then she quickly sobers when a knock comes at the door.

‘I got it.’ Julian strides from the kitchen straight to the front door. Judith is watching the front door with wide eyes and I am wondering what is going on. Julian pulls the door open and steps back a little in surprise before collecting himself and going into full alert mode. Did I mention that these guys seem to almost transform when the time called for it?

‘Hey Judith you know any Malcom?’ Julian calls out without taking his eyes off the man standing at the front door.

Judith mutters something under her breath before she gets on her feet and start for the door. She pushes Julian out of the way and faces her friend. I can’t hear what they are saying as they exchange words back and forth between them. Julian inches away from them but continues to watch with his arms folded and an amused look on his face.

Malcom says something, looking directly at Julian whose mouth pulls into a smirk and he waggles his eyebrows at him. Oh no, this is really bad. My brain companions and I report to one another.

Then an interesting thing happens. Like everything else in my life that just suddenly occurs to surprise the living day lights out of me. Malcom pushes past Judith who stumbles a little before holding on to the door for support. Julian waves his hand at a livid Malcom and does a dramatic bow as the man enters the living room and stands confidently in the middle directly

under the chandelier. Because my wild imagination pictures the thing falling on him. It's a dangerous world after all.

'They are criminals!' he yells as if he is standing in the middle of a football field and he has thousand people to announce to.

Lawyer and Celine rush to the living room and halt to a stop at the scene before them. Judith gets over her shock and rushes to hold Malcom's arm.

'Just stop, let's just go.'

Malcom yanks his arm from her hold, 'no I am not going anywhere. And since you can't stay away from them I have something to say.' He looks at me, my heart skips at the disgust on his face, 'stay away from Judith. She doesn't belong to this group. You don't have to pretend to be whoever you are. You can just stay at this side of your world and Judith can stay at hers.'

'Stop it.' Judith says sternly coming to stand in front of Malcom, 'you need to leave now Malcom.'

Malcom doesn't remove his eyes from me, 'tell her Heather. Tell her the truth, for her safety sake.'

Judith scowls 'Malcom!'

Julian quietly closes the door and sits in a chair that is close to it. Lawyer and Celine remain silent but do not take their eyes off Malcom whose hateful gaze is fixed on me.

'Where is Taylor? Have you seen him for a while now?' he is asking Judith.

'I never visit that often and it's none of your business. Let's just go.'

Why is Malcom doing this? If he has really figured out the truth he should be smart enough to not come and cause a scene like this.

'Not until Heather herself tells you why you shouldn't even be here.' Malcom raises his voice then turns to Lawyer, 'or maybe she shouldn't.'

Lawyer folds his arms across his chest, 'Judith come over here.'

I am alarmed by the cool voice Lawyer has inhibited. I have seen these people in many scenarios. In conclusion, Malcom is screwed if he doesn't shut his mouth up and get the hell out of here. But I am more shocked when Judith simply peels herself from Malcom's side and walks to stand with Lawyer who easily slips his hand across her waist and pulls her to him.

Blood leaves my face the same time it leaves Malcom's. Oh crap! That's what I said—says my wild mind.

'Are you leaving or you are staying.' Lawyer asks a shocked Malcom. It takes him a while to recover himself before he swallows and a strangled laugh escapes his mouth.

'Judith?'

Judith closes her eyes and turns away from him, burying her face into Lawyer's shoulder. Double crap. I feel the contents of my stomach coming back up my throat. What I feared the most has come upon me. What in the living hell made me think that Lawyer would take my good advice and leave my friend alone?

'So you chose this? You are going to end up like her.' He turns to me again with a cruel smile, 'you can only see things on the outside you have no idea what a wreck she is now.'

Everyone has two sides. This is Malcom's. I had no idea his personality is close to the range of Mr. Abiwu's when it comes to cruel words. Julian stands from his chair and places a hand on his shoulder.

'Mate—be careful how you address Heather.'

Malcom lets out a sardonic laugh, 'oh right—she is the wife of that criminal, so are you a princess now? Judith you also want to be a princess because I can see you are not unaware of what they are... you were raised better than that.'

Judith raises her face to look at her friend. 'Malcom just go.'

'I am not leaving you here.' He declares, 'you can do better than this.'

'Mate if a girl over looks you for another guy that means she thinks the guy is better than you,' Julian flashes a small smile at him. Malcom pushes his hand away.

'Get your hand off me.'

Julian raises his hand and returns to his chair.

'So you are staying?' Lawyer asks.

'I am not leaving without Judith.'

I then turn to meet my friend's eyes. She has to get him out of here.

'Malcom you need to go.' Judith tells him.

'O ho—I am positive your father will be thrilled by your new boyfriend huh.'

'Mal you are not five anymore okay? Leave my family out of this.'

Malcom turns to me, 'soon your family will end up like hers. Vanished from the face of the earth.'

'Okay that's enough!' Celine comes to stand in front of me and plants her fists on her hips, 'listen here lover boy—you know nothing about Heather's family just get your girlfriend and leave.'

'She is not his girlfriend.' Lawyer glares at her then turns to Malcom, 'you can either leave now dude or you can rest upon the protection of the people who sent you.'

Oh no. I remove my feet from the stool and I am on my feet as fast as my huge body allows me.

'Malcom please just go.' I tell him, 'you don't know what you are talking about.'

A smirk comes on his mouth, 'oh I know exactly what I am talking about. And I am not going to turn my back and return home and pretend like it was every other Sunday not when you dragged Judith into all this.'

Julian crosses his leg on top of the other and catches Lawyer's eye daringly. I start to move towards Malcom but Celine holds me. The woman is strong.

'Let's talk Mal.' Lawyer flashes a smile.

'No I want Judith.'

I meet Judith's eyes silently pleading with her.

'Okay I will go,' she announces and rushes to stand with Malcom, 'he is leaving.'

'I'm afraid that card is already past.' Julian sits back in his chair, 'now I am too curious to know the source of your accusations to just let you go Mal.'

Lawyer chuckles, 'me too—that is just to the point to have found on Google.'

'And now we want to know how many people you told that you are going to rescue your girlfriend from the criminals.'

'It's about time you loons get leaked out.' Celine mumbles.

'Shut up Celine this is men's business.' Lawyer says, 'Judith babe come here.'

And Judith obeys again. She walks straight into his open arms and obliges immediately when Lawyer assaults her lips with a rough long kiss that has a shocked silence descend into the room. Lawyer breaks away from her and looks at Malcom with an evil smile.

'I always wanted to get my point across the little twit, it's about time.' He lets go of Judith and strides towards Malcom the same time Julian leaves his chair and approaches the

shocked man. Malcom does not even mind the two men who are crowding him. His eyes are fixed on Judith with the most hurtful look I have ever witnessed in a human's eyes. Well maybe except mine.

'No stop it.' I yell as Julian and Lawyer grab either one of Malcom's arms and drags him out of the living room towards Lawyer's home office. Celine's death grip remains on me.

I know nothing good is going to come out of that office. Nothing ever comes out of offices except chaos. I know from experience.

'Relax they are just going to question him.' Celine relaxes her hold of me and guides me back to the couch, 'you need to sit and breathe in.'

'Easy for you to say.' I mumble as I sit back on the couch. Judith comes to sit where she had been sitting before and I can barely look at her.

Celine takes the couch facing both of us.

'This is just screwed up isn't it?'

'You don't say.' Judith agrees with her.

My brain companions and I have just frozen in place for a moment. I have been expecting a lot of crazy for many a times since crazy have been unfolding in my life. And I am saying again that I did not expect this level of crazy at all.

I mean what are the odds that Judith is way ahead of me and knows everything and has been playing Dr Jekyll and Hyde all along? Close to none. I once again have been illusive to believe that Judith would never be a part of this. But that public hot kiss spoke volumes. Volumes as in—I don't know that girl at all.

Chapter Three

I think Celine and Judith are waiting for me to speak first. Only the problem is that I launch silent mode when I am overwhelmed or upset. My brain companions need to sit for a meeting and reach a decision before my mouth announces it.

Well I can't control everyone's life, my sense says, logic agrees and reminds me that I am not successful when it comes to running life anyway I may as well have given up the dream.

But would she have stayed clear of him if I had told her the truth? Emotion and heart wonder. I don't think so. Wild nods thoughtfully, like every other twisted fate of my life lately wouldn't have avoided becoming the third party to the sudden addition of the x-men team.

Because hey, the three looked ready to jump for one another back there when Malcom was firing bullets. The man is always so laid back and kind every time I meet him I never knew his dark side was this overpowering. He could be in the same league with Lawyer or even Charlie—maybe even Alex.

Don't go there. The last thing I need right now is to think about that psycho. Because I have a feeling I will be seeing that psycho soon enough. Mr. Abiwu would be very pleased to learn that two people from the church he always kept a false holy appearance have found out who he is. Yeah it's getting exciting.

'She is on over drive.' Judith tells Celine who nods silently, 'I didn't intent for her to find out this way.'

‘Me neither.’ Celine says

‘I didn’t think Malcom would really dig around.’

Celine scoffs, ‘dig in what? Somebody probably told him. It was bound to happen seeing how you and Lawyer never kept your relationship secret.’

‘I think Heather can argue with that.’

‘Few people are like Heather. She practically switches off everything else when she is dealing with a huge thing—it’s a rare talent—that always lends her in the gutter.’

‘I am right here.’ I mumble managing to lift my eyes to look at her but do not have enough energy to glare.

‘Oh you are back—so what’s the verdict?’

Judith glares at her for me, ‘this is not funny Celine.’

‘Hey I didn’t do anything wrong here—I merely always try to keep people like you and Heather away from these men but lately I haven’t been successful.’

I shake my head to clear the fog forming in my mind, ‘listen you two—I don’t want any jokes I want the whole story and I want it now.’ I stare at them and they shift nervously.

‘Taylor has rubbed off on her,’ Celine mutters. I glare at her and she clamps her mouth shut before she flashes me a cheeky smile.

‘Well to cut a long story short—I started seeing Lawyer after that dinner.’ Judith shares calmly, ‘I am not going to offer the reasons and I am not adding anything else to the story.’

I lick my dry lips, ‘so he told you everything?’

Judith nods ‘he had to—two men came to harass me at my work place.’

I scowl at her. Did that make any sense?

Celine decides to elaborate for me, ‘Charlie and Luther wanted to assassinate Judith at her work place. Well naturally she didn’t think they would pull out guns on her.’

‘Real guns.’ Judith adds

‘Because she had seen them at the wedding and they were relatives of Lawyer’s – its every girl’s dream to be accepted by the family of the guy you love.’ Celine says with a laugh in her voice.

‘Alright.’ I say swallowing the lump in my throat, ‘so what’s the status at the moment?’

Celine looks at Judith who shakes her head, ‘you tell her.’

‘I am not the one dating Lawyer—who according to the clans out there is Heather’s husband.’

‘No he is not.’ I state firmly, ‘Judith—I had a serious talk with Lawyer to leave you alone.’

Celine laughs and Judith looks embarrassed, ‘it was the other way round actually.’ She mumbles.

I put my head into my hands. I think I have a headache or brain ache—what’s the difference?

I have nothing to lose. My family were already part of the train of doom. I have no other relatives and the only person I am determined to protect is my baby who at the moment is reminding me that we have to eat. Judith has her whole family to worry about. I don’t think she fully understands what she has gotten herself into, and if the great uncles are involved it proves the situation worse than it seems. Where there are the great uncles, there is Mr. Abiwu.

I don’t need to say anything else.

I slowly stand up. None of them move to help me because I cast them death glares and froze them in place. It’s been hard to just move around lately. My back aches, some nights I

barely sleep and don't get me started on the trips to the bathroom. It's like it waits until night for my bladder to start releasing everything.

I shuffle my way towards the kitchen where a lunch that was underway was left half way after Malcom stormed in with his accusations. I wonder what they are doing to him in there—beating him up. I shiver, okay, those two were a part of the throng but they are never eagerly violent like that loon who tried to shoot at me.

Or the one that held a knife to my throat. That day flashes in my mind. I shake my head. I start making a sandwich while pushing the thought of Taylor aside. I mean I still ask myself what happened. One moment we were trying to share living space with Lawyer and before I know it I am being dragged to Lawyer's house under threats. Yeah it wasn't easy to bring me here. I am only here because I dare not try to outrun any of those guys with this large stomach.

I will just have a sandwich. I put the last slice of bread on top of the sandwich hill and press it down because it feels good. A silly smile curves on my face as I literally tackle the sandwich to the chopping board.

My eyes fall on the wedding band on my finger, quickly erasing the smile on my face. When this feeling comes upon me I am only ever able to mutter 'damn you Taylor!' And I close my eyes, take a deep breath to put a lid on something dark deeply wedged inside my heart that could never be erased. I think.

Why couldn't he be here like we had planned? Or maybe like I had planned because it seems to me that we didn't have the same plans at all. How long had he been planning to vanish and leave me with his cousin and his other quack woman cousin who I have hired as my informant? Celine still doesn't want to show me pictures. I just always have to rely on the words that come out of her mouth. I must be desperate. I realise as I put a little more pressure on the sandwich.

'He cares Heather!'

Lawyer's voice snaps me out of my thoughts and I realise that my eyes were stinging with unshed tears. I blink them away and I stand up straight, releasing the sandwich from the confinements of my palms. It puffs up a little like its taking a deep breath the same moment I turn to lock my eyes with him.

'I hope you know that in the deepest part of your heart.' He looks sincere. It's the first time Lawyer openly talks about Taylor since he left. Lawyer is always avoiding the topic. I know it's because he is afraid to let something slip. He hasn't figured out that Celine is my spy. Two can play at this game.

'Cut it out Lawyer.' I glare at him clenching my fists.

His lips twitches a little. Is he finding my ire amusing? 'Okay.' He mutters.

'What the hell did you do?'

He actually smiles and sinks his hands into his pockets, 'I am not going to apologize for Judith.'

Oh wow, that's just--- wow--- I am literally imagining this is a Korean drama scenario. When you are so shocked and annoyed at the same time because you are dealing with cocky ajhussis

'Have you thought of the danger you have put her in?'

He nods, 'I regret that she got exposed to all this mess.'

'You don't look regretful to me.'

'I am not good with that.'

'I am beginning to think you are not very good with common sense Lawyer.'

Silence falls for a moment, as we share challenging gazes.

‘You know what I told Taylor when he came with the whole I love her I can’t leave her alone story?—I told him the same thing. All he had to do was do all he can to never see you again—and days later I hear that he is married.’

I shake my head, ‘this isn’t about Taylor—this is about you. This is about my friend who you are dragging into this mess. It’s about her family being exposed to the crazy great uncles and all other lunatics out there who think they run the world.’

‘I am capable of protecting Judith.’

Yes I’ve heard all that before and more.

I glare at him some more before I push my big self away from the counter to leave the kitchen. Lawyer takes a hold of my hand. ‘You haven’t eaten.’

I yank my hand from him, ‘don’t touch me.’

Instead of letting go of me. He takes my other arm and makes me to face him, ‘I am to take care of you and that’s what I am doing. You need to eat.’

I close my eyes and take a deep breath. I have been doing that a lot lately, this little person within me must have one hell of self-restraint. Wish I could say just like me but oh well—can’t have everything I suppose.

‘Fine.’ I open my eyes and return to my sandwich. I press it down again, punishing it for Lawyer’s sins before I sit on the stool and lift it to my mouth. If I start eating he can leave the room.

He looks at me for a few long infuriating minutes, or rather tempting minutes—the mayonnaise and tomato sauce, which one hurts much? My fingers twitch to throw something at him if he doesn’t get his eyes off me in the next mini-seconds.

He finally moves to the fridge and I am praying that he isn’t taking a snack to sit here with me and try to reason with me right now. It’s literally a death wish. I take a bite of my sandwich, not even tasting it and he comes to place a glass of juice beside me.

He plants a hand on the counter surface before leaning close to my ear, his breath tickling my neck he says, ‘I know you don’t like sharing—but what am I to do when your husband comes back?’

Ok that’s it! I turn on him the same time Celine walks into the kitchen, ‘Law, Julian needs you and get away from her.’

He flashes a small smile at me before straightening up and striding out of the kitchen.

‘Leave too.’ I say before Celine opens her mouth to say anything else.

‘Is there an expiry date for this stalemate?’ she asks.

‘No, but I order you to come pick me up tomorrow I don’t want to have to go with either one of the men to the hospital.’

‘Okay.’ Celine flashes an uneasy smile, ‘I hope you blow your steams all night about this and we can talk more about it in the morning.’

I lift my eyes to glare at her. She clamps her mouth shut and turns to leave the same moment Judith shows up at the door.

‘Bye Judith.’ I say and they both turn back and walk out. I slowly take another bite of my sandwich in the now silent kitchen.

Chapter Four

I walk out of the doors rubbing my tummy lovingly as Celine put her dark shades back on. This is the reason why I didn't want to come with one of the guys. This is a hospital, a delicate place and these people have a thing about dark images I still can't figure out where they adopted it from.

'So the baby is fine?' Celine asks the same question she's been popping since the third floor. I am now tempted to tell her something that would put her into a full blown panic mode, just for fun.

'Fine, healthy as a horse.'

Celine breathes, 'then what took you so long to come out- she was just supposed to examine you, a quick and normal procedure.'

'Well you are not a medical practitioner and it wasn't that long.'

It was half an hour because the doctor and I spoke a little bit too much about the baby and my emotions got a better of me, I couldn't help but be sad that Taylor wasn't there to experience this. I cried too. So it took fifteen minutes for them to calm me down and another five to convince them not to call my sister who they assumed was Celine.

'Well you don't look fine.' Celine hedges.

I stop walking and turn to face her. I grab her purse and start going through it while she is wondering what I am doing. I find another pair of shades and I put them on to cover my- what I think must be puffy eyes.

'Heather.'

'Just take me to the house.' I snap.

'I want to know what is wrong!' Celine demands taking her purse back from me.

I plant my hand on my hips in the middle of the hospital parking lot and Celine glances around uneasily as I transition into full blown hysterical mode.

'What is wrong Celine? Seriously? All you have to do is drive me to my appointment and return me to house arrest. I don't want to be in the same car with Lawyer because the last time I let him drive me I almost got killed by one of the great uncles—and Julian—I may strangle him before we even reach the destination considering the stress I have been under the past few hours—oh and did I mention that I keep wondering what they did with Malcom but I couldn't ask Lawyer because well he is not very forthcoming and I am too mad at him for coming on to my friend to talk to him about anything serious, because he is not the type to take anything serious...and I am months away to bringing my child into the world without Taylor here.' My voice breaks at the last words. Tears brim in my eyes- thank god for the dark glasses.

Celine raises two palms at me, 'okay—I'm sorry, let's just go home.'

'Home—I don't want to go anywhere.' I make a sharp turn and march away from her.

'Heather!' she calls after me and I keep going.

Gosh I wish I was able to stride faster or even break into a run. Because that's what I really want to do right now—run. I walk past cars and soon I am out of the parking lot and walking towards the small gate where a number of people are filling in for visiting hours.

'Taxi mama?' a young man waves at me and I shake my head before I walk out through the small gate. I take a deep breath as the sun caresses my skin.

‘Heather?’ a female voice breaks into my thoughts and I turn towards the voice catching that it sounds very familiar. The woman in question has a wide smile on her face as she marched towards me and stretches her hand, ‘how have you been,’

It takes a precious half a minute for my chaotic brain to finally recognize detective Alice. The recognition immediately bringing a jump start to my heart before it starts beating erratically.

‘Detective Alice.’

‘Please just Alice, I am not working.’

I nod, ‘Alice.’

‘You look good.’

My hand comes to my tummy, I have been feeling like a fat cow for months now but I appreciate her comment. ‘Thanks?’ I say it like a question

‘How is it going?’

‘Oh—just three more months.’

‘Oh lovely, you and your husband must be very happy.’

It comes again, that damn dark feeling. I fist the material of my dress into one hand and force a smile, ‘yeas we are... how is work?’

She rolls her eyes, ‘fine.’

‘Solved any cases lately?’

‘Some’ she nods at the hospital, ‘you are not driving?’

I glance behind me, Celine’s car is nowhere in sight, ‘I had a fight with the driver.’ I say as I return my gaze back to Alice, ‘I guess I will have to catch a taxi home.’

Alice scowls a little, ‘I could give you a ride.’

‘Oh its fine I don’t want to impose on you.’

‘I would love to... like I said I am off duty.’

She takes my arm and leads me across the road towards a blue Honda vitz. She opens the passenger door for me and I slide in, my ankles start screaming at me for the stress I have put then through the last few minutes.

‘Man I hate October, no holidays, no breaks, not even a birthday on my side.’

I chuckle, ‘right!’

She smiles and glances at me as she joins the traffic, ‘so is it a boy or a girl?’

‘It’s a girl.’

‘Oh lucky you—I have three boys, I love them but sometimes I feel like they conspire with their father against me.’

A huge grin breaks on my face, ‘sometimes girls just have to stick to each other,’

‘Right.’ She chuckles. ‘So have you two thought of a name?’

I inhale to keep the dark feeling with the sense of loss I feel for the things I should be doing together with Taylor.

‘No, not really, I am still just trying to survive sharing everything with somebody else.’

‘It gets better believe me, I’ve done it three times.’

I turn to smile at her, it’s nice to talk to someone. Even if it’s the same detective who is currently investigating my father’s murder and if she has any intuition she would know where to look or stay away from it.

My phone buzzes in my purse. It’s a small light sling bag I had almost forgotten I had it strapped at my side. I fish out my phone. It’s Celine. I saved her number with a picture of her with little horns on her head yesterday. It was for making fun but now it sort of fits.

‘I’m on my way home.’ I tell her before she says anything

‘Heather are you mad? You can’t give that woman Lawyer’s address—she looks feminine and normal but she is the same pest who has guys sleeping outside your apartment for days after your father’s murder.’

‘Yes I am aware of that.’

‘So what the hell are you doing in her car?’

‘I will see you at home.’

‘Heather.’ She practically yells and do I sense a pleading in her voice, ‘those two will have my head if you show up at the apartment with a detective, please just give her your old address and I will meet you there.’

‘Why should I do that?’

Celine lets out a frustrated grunt, ‘listen, if you do this one thing for me I will break up Lawyer and Judith.’

I raise my eyebrows before I realise that she can’t see me, ‘what?’

‘It’s for the best I am with you okay—and I give you my word.’

‘You shouldn’t prattle promises you can’t keep, even in desperation,’

‘I am desperate right now.’

I sigh, ‘fine, see you there.’ I end the call before she make me do some there silly things.

‘That the driver?’ Alice asks

‘Yeah she wants to make amends.’

Alice raises an eyebrow at me before looking back at the road.

‘My sister in law.’ I explain and she chuckles.

The rest of the drive is silent until we reach the gate. I haven’t been here in three months. The place looks the same, nothing has changed. I tell her to drop me at the gate.

‘Thank you Alice.’

‘Sure, it was nice seeing you again Heather.’ She smile gently, ‘it’s good to see you doing well after what you have been through.’

And she wants to fish for information.

‘Yeah it gets better with time.’

I wave at her car as it drives away. I wait for it to disappear down the road before I take out my phone and dial Celine’s number.

‘I am here— where are you?’

‘Five minutes.’

I sigh and decide to wait for her in the little gardens. I ease down a wooden bench before stretching my legs in front of me trying to relax and erase all thoughts from my mind. I can’t believe Celine just made a deal to break up Lawyer and Judith? In fact there are many things I can’t believe right now.

My phone buzzes minutes later and I fish it out of my little bag

‘Better be here.’

‘Where are you?’ it’s Lawyer.

‘What?’

‘Where is Celine? I am trying to call her but her phone is off.’

I scowl, ‘I just spoke to her minutes ago.’

‘What do you mean you just spoke to her minutes ago aren’t you with her?’ his voices rises.

‘No I am not I am waiting for her to pick me up—are you okay?’

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