

CHAPTER 17: DON'T TOUCH WHAT'S MINE

JACE POV

Ella's actions Christmas Day were amusing, for a while, but then as the day went on, I became annoyed by her avoiding me. I understand that everything that took place that morning was a little much, but she needs to learn and understand that I'm not going anywhere. I figured I would give her some space and left the next day with my parents; I had things that I had to take care of anyway, and I prefer doing it before school started back up.

As soon as me and my folks got home, I logged into the social media app that is popular amongst the crowd that I hang with, and I can see the location of where some of them are. Checking out the time, I should have known that most would be either at the coffee shop or the new ice cream shop. I grab the keys to my jeep and head uptown, not knowing exactly what I'm going to say except that the bullying needs to stop, now that Ella is mine.

The coffee shop is busy for this time of day, but since it's winter break, the high schoolers are all hanging out instead of being home. I'm sure parents love this time of year, when their already hormonal teenagers are hyped up on caffeine by the time they return home from a long work day. I spot Kaylee and her posse in a corner booth, so I redirect myself over to her. I'm glad to see that her friend Callie is with her, since it was her account that the video originated from

Kaylee's face brightens when she sees me headed their way, "Hey Jace, are you looking for me?"

I nod my greeting at her other friends before responding, "Actually, I was looking for both you and Callie. Do you mind coming with me?"

She chuckles, and glances around the table nervously, "I don't know what you've heard about me, but I'm not into threesomes with other girls!" Her friends laugh at her joke and she laughs with them, until she sees the serious look on my face.

"You never have to worry about me wanting that from you, Kaylee." Her face turns beet red but she doesn't budge.

"Well, whatever you have to say, you can say in front of my girls!" She huffs and leans back in her seat, crossing her arms over her chest.

I reach my hand out toward Callie, "Phone, now!" I snap my fingers when she takes too long to hand it over. When it lands in the palm of my hand, I turn it on and go straight to her gallery. The original video is the second one from the top, and the edited version is the very first one. I hit play on the original, listening to the real conversation. Looking around the table, I notice some of the faces that her friends are making as they stare at Callie and Kaylee. I then play the edited one and it's the same one that was posted to her social media page. I hit delete on both videos and then go into her cloud and delete it from there as well before handing her phone back to her.

Kaylee, being the conniving bitch that she is, glances at her friend, feigning shock, "Oh my God, Callie! You edited the real conversation? Why would you do that to poor Ella?"

Callie's bottom lip begins to tremble, "What? Kaylee, you..."

I cut her off, "Kaylee, don't be placing blame on her. This is all you! You just had your gullible friend record and post, so it wouldn't come back to you. How dumb do you think I am?"

"Jace, I swear, I knew nothing.."

"Shut the fuck up, Kaylee!" I raise my voice at her, making her mouth snap shut automatically, "I'm going to say this one time, and one time only...stay away from Ella! She is now with me, and under my protection, and anybody who bullies her or causes any kind of ill-will, will have to answer to me, and believe me when I say that very harsh punishments will be handed out to those who ignore my warning!" Everyone sitting at Kaylee's booth and the surrounding booths sit with their mouths hanging open.

Without saying anything else, I turn and leave, heading to my next destination. Two down, two more to go. Everybody will hear about my warning by the end of the day, but first, there are two guys that need to hear it from me first, before it explodes on social media.

I find Toby and Brandon at Toby's house playing video games. I've never understood the addiction to playing the stupid things. The one game that every guy in our school seems to play, COD or COP, or whatever the name is, is just too lame for me. I'd rather be out doing something, or even working and making money, then sitting on my ass playing video games all day. At least I know

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Don't Touch What's Mine

where to find them, though.

I don't bother knocking or ringing the doorbell, because more than likely, they won't hear me with their headphones on and screaming at each other, so I just walk right on in. I make my way to the back of the house and down the back stairs to the family! game room. Just as I said, both guys are here, each on a different monitor, screaming into the mics as they have their guy running around shooting others in the game. Neither one have noticed my presence, so I walk over to the light switch that I know controls the power to the gaming systems, and flip it off.

"What the fuck, man!" Toby curses.

"Dude, did your parents not pay the power bill?" Brandon jokes sarcastically.

"Shut the fuck up, B!" Toby sneers at his friend.

"Now that I have your undivided attention..." | clap my hands once and walk over to them as they both swivel in their chairs.

"Lame move, bro! I was winning against this dick!" Brandon nods towards Toby.

"Fuck you, you were not!" Toby turns to me, "Who the fuck let you in anyway? I don't remember inviting you over.

"That's because you didn't," I shrug, but since I need to talk to both of you, I figured I'd do it when you were together."

He rolls his eyes, "What is it now?"

glare at him, "I'd lose that temper if I were you. I'm not really in the mood for attitude, besides, my visit is mainly Brandon's fault, so you can thank him." I lean against the pool table, crossing my legs at my ankles and wrapping my fingers around the edge on each side of me, "I want to clear up a few things that should have been done a long time ago. Two years ago, someone told me a lie which made me take action against my best friend. Ella has suffered quite a bit by my hands, and for no reason at all, only because I was jealous after being lied to. Now that I know the truth, I'm going to do everything I can to make it up to her."

Brandon and Toby glance at each other as though they know where this is going.

"Ella is mine, so any harm done to her is a direct attack against me. Toby," I glare at my ex best friend, "You know damn well what will happen if you try touching what's mine. How about you let our buddy, Brandon, over here know what is at stake."

"Look, man..."

I hold my hand up, stopping Brandon from going on, "I've seen the original video, Brandon. I heard everything you said to Ella," / push myself away from the pool table, towards the two guys still sitting in their gaming chairs, "You try and proposition my girl one more time, or touch a hair on her head," I glance between the two, "what I did to Toby will look like nothing compared to what I will do next."

Brandon looks at Toby, "What's he talking about? What did he do?"

"Did you not see our little friend here when he took time off from school. Oh, that's right, he told you that it happened while boxing at the gym."

Brandon widens his eyes at Toby, "You lied to me?"

Toby doesn't say anything, just glares at me the whole time, while I smirk back at him. I think I've gotten my point across, so I walk back to the light switch and flip it back on. I then go back up the stairs, grab an apple from the kitchen island, toss it in the air before taking a bite, and then walk out the front door. Now, all I got to do is wait until Ella comes back home, so we can finally go on our first date.

Unfortunately, Ella continued to avoid me throughout the rest of break, and even through the first week back at school. I mostly walked through the halls trying to come up with ways to get her attention, but I never once saw her. I do know that she no longer meets with Mason, and I'm glad that she can at least obey me in that, but now I'm getting frustrated by her absence in my life, and my hand is itching to take it out on that little ass of hers.

I'm sitting at the table, finishing my supper with mom and dad when my mom brings up Ella, "I didn't know that Ella graduated early, Jace." I look over at her in surprise.

"Where did you hear that from?" Like I really need to ask, but honestly, I'm hoping she heard it from someone other than Elaine, so then it may not be true.

I ran into Elaine this morning on my way to the store and she was telling me all about it. Friday was her last day of high school." She reaches for the alfredo noodles, so she doesn't notice the scowl on my face. Today is Sunday, so why am I just hearing about

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Don't Touch What's Mine

this, and why hasn't she told me?

Putting my head down, I twirl my fork into the noodles, "No, I haven't really seen Ella since Christmas, so I knew nothing about it."

"It's sad that the two of you are no longer as close as you used to be," moms sighs, "Elaine and I always talked how we would be in-laws someday."

My dad chuckles and rolls his eyes as he glances at me, "Your mother, always the romantic."

"Oh stop," she slaps his hand playfully, "is it too much to ask for a daughter-in-law that I already consider a daughter?"

"Whoa, mom, I haven't even graduated yet. Why are you trying to marry me off?" I joke.

"I'm not," she gets defensive, "I'm just saying, I'm sad that you aren't close anymore, but I know how people grow apart, so..."

Nothing else is mentioned about Ella or the Baxter's, so I finish my chicken alfredo and rinse my plate off before sticking it in the dishwasher. I go up to my room and log into the online Dom classes that I like to take, just to keep up with everything and make sure I don't ever fuck up as I dominate over a sub. I don't ever want to hurt Ella unintentionally. These are just more like refresher courses, but I think I may sign up for some more in-class sessions for more hands on experience.

I'm in the middle of reading about Shibari, the Japanese erotic practice of rope bondage, when my phone starts to vibrate. My forehead crinkles when I see the name on the caller ID, "Ella...?"

"Jace..." her voice cracks indicating that something is wrong.

"What's wrong, baby?"

"Jace, can you come find me?"

"Where are you, Ella?" Find her? I don't understand what's going on.

\*B-By the t-tree line on the c-curve into t-town." She doesn't sound like herself as she stutters out where to find her, "Please hurry...I hurt so bad..."

The line goes quiet, but I know the call is still connected, so I call out to her a few times, but still get no answer. Something is terribly wrong, so I grab my coat and keys and dash down the stairs, not stopping to say anything to my parents as I run out the front door. I drive faster than the speed limit until I get to the curve and have to slow down. When I get to the center of the curve, I see Ella's car on the shoulder of the road, the trunk is wide open and the headlights are on. It isn't until I get out of my car that I hear her car still running.

I run up to the driver side and look inside, finding nothing, but then I remember what she said. I turn the lights and the car off, and then head toward the tree line. I have no flashlight, so I pull out my phone and

use that flashlight. I swing the light around while calling out Ella's name, my heart is racing a mile a minute. It takes a little bit but I finally see a lump on the ground about twenty feet from me and I start running towards it.

"ELLA..OH MY GOD, ELLA!" I drop to my knees and lift her into my arms, but it only makes her cry out, "Oh shit, I'm so sorry, baby!" I try holding her gently as I lift my phone to call 911. Examining her mostly naked form, I begin to see red, and my body starts to tremble, "What the fuck happened? Who did this to you?"

"You came for me..thank you!"

"Of course I came for you! I will always come for you, Ella!" I have the phone to my ear and as soon as the dispatcher picks up, frantically tell her what's going on and that we need an ambulance. I hang up with them and hold Ella closer to me, "Hold on, Ella, we're going to get you to the hospital. Let me call your parents..."

"NOO..." she winces, "not until I'm at the hospital. I don't want them seeing me like this."

I look down at all the swelling and bruises on her face and body, and realize that she's right. We can't let her parents see her like this. Hell, I wish I didn't have to see her like this, because all I want to do is go find the bastards who did this and make them pay!

"Okay, yeah. I'll call them once we get there. I will also make sure they know to clean you up before letting your parents see you." | choke out a sob that I can't hold in any longer, "Damn it Ella, who did this to you?"

"Promise you won't do anything that will land you in jail, and I will tell you."

"You can't make me promise that, baby. Whoever did this needs to pay!"

Even naked and battered; she graces me with a small smile, "Okay, well at least promise not to kill them. I can't have you going to

Don't Touch What's Mine

death row because of me."

"I promise, Ella. I won't kill anybody, I promise."

"You were right, you know."

I'm a bit confused at her words, "I'm right all the time, but what is it I was right about this time?"

"You're a smartass, do you know that?" She winces again, making me even angrier, but I try to keep up the tough guy act for her.

"Watch it, babe. You will heal at some point, and then you will be sorry for not watching that mouth of yours."

I watch as she reaches for her collar, "Always gotta be in Dom mode," she muses, and I smile. She is so strong, trying to stay tough through this.

A million things are going through my head, trying to figure out on what might have happened. Aside from her bra and ripped shirt, she is naked, making me wonder if whoever did this had sexually assaulted her, and if so, to what extent?

“Enough stalling, Ella.”

“You were right about Mason. He was in on everything.”

“What do you mean?”

“He was pretending to be my friend, he was in on the attack in the restroom, and he was here tonight with your two friends and her.” I knew that fucker was up to something! Wait, did she seriously just say who I think she said?

“Toby and Brandon were part of this and fucking Kaylee?”

She nods, confirming what she said. I hear the sirens in the distances, and I thank God that it didn’t take them long.

Caressing her cheek, I smile at her, “You’ve been a good girl, Ella baby, rest now. I hear the ambulance coming.”

“Yeah, I think I will rest now...” I hear her mumble, and then she passes out.

I follow the ambulance to the hospital and walk in beside Ella as the paramedics roll the gurney through the ER doors. Nobody stops me from being with her until we get to a pair of double doors, and they inform me that only medical personnel are allowed through.

I kiss Ella’s lips, “I’ll be right here waiting for you, baby!” They rush her through the doors as a nurse comes walking up to me.

“Are you next of kin to the patient?” she asks, holding a pen to a clipboard.

I shake my head no, “Not yet, but I will be once I get her to marry me.” “I’m sorry, sir. I won’t be able to update you on her condition then. Do you have the names of her parents?”

My hands ball into fists at being told that I can’t get any information about her, but I should have known that already. Ella doesn’t want her parents here right away, so I’m not quite sure what I should tell the nurse who is standing here, waiting for an answer.

I rub the back of my neck, trying to calm down, “Um, I do know them because they are my next door neighbors, but Ella told me not to call her parents right away, because she doesn’t want them seeing her the way she is. Will you wait to call them if I give you their names?”

“I can’t promise you that, sir.” The nurse sounds annoyed, but I don’t fucking care.

“She’s fucking eighteen years old, so I expect you to wait until she wakes up if you want to know her next of kin, then! I’m respecting her wishes and you need to do the same. If you’re not going to allow me in to see her, then I’m not going to help you out.

She huffs, “Well, I guess the police will just have to handle it then!” she stomps away from me and goes straight to the nurse’s station and picks up the phone. I can only assume that she’s calling the police to have them come down.

Fuck! I want to stay until I know she’s going to be okay, but I don’t want the cops sticking their noses in this until I get my revenge. I pace back and forth for a while until I decide to sit down in one of the chairs, putting my head in my hands. I fist my hair as I rock back and forth. Forty-five minutes later, a nurse steps out from the doors they took Ella through and I jump up.

“Is she okay?”

72 150

Don’t Touch What’s Mine

“Are you her next of kin?”

“Damn it! I just need to know if she’s going to be okay!” .

.The nurse studies me for a moment, and must take pity on me, because she uses her head by nodding, telling me to follow her. We stop just around the corner, “I can’t tell you everything, but I can tell you that the young lady is going to be okay. She looks worse than she is, but she does have some mending to do.”

“Was she raped?” I haven’t been able to get it out of my head, and I need to know.

Again, the nurse stares at me, but then she shakes her head, “No, your girlfriend is still intact.”

A heavy sigh has me sliding down the wall, and relief floods me. Looking back up at the nurse, I ask her one more question, “Has she been cleaned up? She didn’t want me calling her parents until you guys took care of her.”

The nurse gives me a gentle smile, “They are doing that now. She should be ready to see visitors by the time they get here.” She smiles once more and then leaves me sitting on the floor.

Now that I know she’s going to be okay, I can call her parents and then I’ll leave to go find the fuckers who dared to touch her. I would love to wait, so I can see her, but I’m running out of time. As soon as the cops get her to talk, there will be no way for me to go after them; it’s now or never.

Jude