

CHAPTER 19: KARMA

Morning came way too fast for my liking. After a night of being woken up, countless times, just so the nurses could get my vitals, my eyes feel like sandpaper. I thought being in the hospital, people would sympathize with you, and let you sleep in, but no; it's the complete opposite. They tell you to rest, but they don't allow you to when they are constantly in and out of your room.

It's seven thirty in the morning, and another nurse is back in my room, "Good morning, Ella! My name is Joan, and I'll be your nurse for this shift." Her smile is warm and genuine, but I don't care at this point. To me, she's the devil's spawn!

"It isn't good unless I can sleep in, and we can both see that isn't happening," I grunt and then shove my face down, and into the soft pillow.

Nurse Joan has the audacity to chuckle, as though I was making some kind of joke, "Someone isn't a morning person," I hear her moving around my room, making all kinds of noise, "Don't mind me, dear, I'll be in and out in no time at all. You can just lay there while I work."

Yeah right! I roll to my back slowly and open my tired eyes, lifting my hand so she can place the pulse oximeter on my finger. There's no way I'm going to get back to sleep now, so I might as well start my day. Hope everybody has fun dealing with Ella cranky pants today. It's bad enough that I feel as though I've been run over by one of those big concrete roller trucks that you see when the city paves the streets. Now I have to deal with being sore and tired!

"All your vitals are in perfect range, that's what I like to see," she says cheerfully, "Are you ready to order some breakfast?"

I've heard horror, stories about hospital food, and I really don't want to be the one to see how much truth there is to it, "Uh, if it's okay, I'd like to have my parents bring me something when they come this morning."

She looks at my chart, "I don't see what it will hurt, it has nothing in your chart saying you're on a restricted diet," she gives me another one of her warm smiles, * Just let me know if you change your mind and I'll bring you in a menu."

"Okay, thank you, Joan." It's hard to remain angry at the little spawn when she smiles at me like that. She's an older lady, so I'm sure she has grandkids because that's the vibe that I get from her.

Glancing around my room, I let out a sigh of relief when I see that my parents left my phone on the table beside my bed, on the charger and all. I reach over, forgetting that the doctor told me that I have two broken ribs. Damn Kaylee for kicking me so hard; / really hope karma finds her! I pick up my phone and speed dial my mom.

"Good morning, sweet girl!" My mom says as soon as she answers, "We are just about to leave the house. The kids need to be dropped off at school first and then we will be right over. How are you feeling this morning?"

"Like a truck ran me over and then backed up just to do it again and again." I answer.

“Oh honey, I’m so sorry you’re hurting so much! I wish I could take the pain away!” I can hear her voice crack, so I change the subject before I have her in tears, “I’ll heal and will be fine in no time, but hey, I was wondering if you could bring me some breakfast when you come. I’m really not excited about hospital food,” I cringe, “I shouldn’t have to suffer any more than I already am.”

I get my mom to giggle, making me feel so much better, “Of course, sweetie! Are you wanting anything special?”

“Actually, I slept like crap last night, so if you can stop at the coffee shop and grab a tall white mocha with an extra shot of caffeine, that would be great! They also have these really good breakfast sandwiches, the ham, cheese, and bacon croissant ones are my favorite.”

“Okay, baby. We will be there soon.” She says before ending the call.

I lay back and close my eyes, hoping I can get a little nap in before they get here. Unfortunately, my mind has other plans as it wanders to a certain green-eye boy. The things he said last night about how he will always come back for me. It’s sweet, and yet, a little creepy, as if he means to stalk me no matter what. I’m not sure how I would feel about that, but I do know that he was right about how he’s the only one that can make me feel the way I do when he takes control. I have to give him one thing, He’s going to make a good Dom one day, I just don’t know if he will be mine. The thought excites me but scares me at the same time because I’ve read about those kinds of relationships, but I don’t think living it outside of the bedroom is for me.

I sigh, “Why did you have to change, Jace?” I say out loud to myself, but who am I kidding, really? I didn’t start crushing on him

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until he started bullying me. I’m pretty sure it was the dominance that he had over me, that stirred my feelings for him. I just don’t think I’m ready to explore that side of me just yet. I want to concentrate on my education first, and then, if he still wants to try, then maybe I can give him a chance, but he still has to prove himself to me.

A knock at my door startles me and my head whips to the doorway. A policeman and policewoman stand there waiting for me to allow them to enter. I give them a small smile and wave them in. I need to get this over with and I’m glad they are here before my parents, because there are certain aspects of the attack that I don’t want my mom and dad to know about. I’m their little girl and no parent wants to hear that their daughter had been sexually assaulted.

The male has a stern look on his face while the female gives me a sympathetic smile. I’m sure they sent the female to try and make it easier on me, but it doesn’t matter because my throat is already tightening up knowing that it’s going to have to retell my story. To make it even more uncomfortable, neither one sit down, so they stand over me with a notepad in hand, waiting for me to start.

“I’m guessing I should start, huh?” I snicker nervously.

The male nods, but the female touches my hand, “Take all the time you need. We know how tough it is to have to relive what you went through.”

When she says the word tough, it takes me back to when Jace told me he was proud of me for being so strong through this. I can do this, otherwise, they will get away with it, and probably try doing it again, if not to me, then to someone else. I don't know how people who I went to school with my whole life, other than Mason, could do this to me. I close my eyes and swallow, but when I open my eyes again, I'm no longer in the hospital, but in my car, driving home and I begin talking

"Toby Anderson, Brandon Feeny, Mason Baker, and Kaylee Simpson," I state all of their names first, "Those were the ones who attacked me last night, and yes, it was premeditated." I go on to tell them about Kaylee bumping into me and being extra nice to me, and then all the events that followed.

"Miss Baxter," the male looks up at me when he finishes writing down everything I just reported, "Do you know of any reason why they would target you?"

"I can tell you that Kaylee is jealous, because a guy she likes is interested in me, instead of her. As for the guys, the only thing I can think of is that they did it for her. Toby attacked me once before because she asked him to." I go on to explain that incident as well. I'm in the middle of telling them of my attack in the restroom when my parents come walking in.

My mom stops dead in her tracks when she hears me report how Toby had tried raping me, "Oh my God! Ella, why didn't you say anything?"

I look down at my hands, "Because it was taken care of, and I didn't want you to worry about me."

My mom drops my breakfast bag down on my tray and leans over, hugging me gently, "Ella, you need to tell us stuff like this! How are we supposed to protect you if we don't know about it? Did this same boy do this to you last night, too?"

I nod, "Along with two other boys and a girl."

It's my father who gasps, and then paces the room with his hands on his hips, "We're going to press charges on all four of them!! want them arrested today!"

*Calm down, Mr. Baxter. Let us finish taking your daughter's statement, and then we need to go talk to the others that were supposedly involved."

"Supposedly?" My dad's face turns red, "Are you calling my daughter a liar?"

"Dad..."

"No, Ella! What you went through is not something anybody should lie about, and if you said it was them, then it was them, and they are going to pay!"

"Please, Ethan, calm down," my mom walks over to my dad, "The police are only doing their job, they need to interview everyone and then collect any evidence that there may be. You're a lawyer, dear, you know this. You can't change the law because it's your daughter that is involved."

He closes his eyes and takes a few deep breaths, "You're right, I'm sorry," he turns to the police officers, "I'm sorry, please forgive the outburst."

The female smiles and nods, "It's quite alright. We are used to this, and it's perfectly understandable why you would feel this way." She glances back at me, "If you are one hundred percent sure that they are your attackers, then an arrest shouldn't be a

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problem. It's finding the evidence to prove their guilt that could possibly cause a problem."

The male officer speaks up, "Are they all at least eighteen?"

#nod, "I believe so."

His mouth tightens into a straight line, "Okay then, we will go and arrest all four, but they will be able to post bail once they see the judge. Then it just gets messy from there, but since your father is a lawyer, you probably know all that."

I nod my head, "Yeah, I do."

"Alright, we will let you get some rest, and we will be in contact." He shakes my hand, and then both my parents' hands before the female officer does the same.

Once it's just me and my parents in the room, I sigh heavily, "I'm glad that part is over." I struggle to try and sit up, so My mom and dad help me from each side of the bed. I reach for the food bag and practically salivate at the aroma that comes from it, "Coffee?" | lift my brow.

"Oh yeah!" My dad goes over to the counter by the door where he set the cup down.

Meanwhile, my mom pulls a chair up to the side of my bed, "Honey, I know this is hard to talk to us about, because we are your parents, but you would tell us if you were r-raped last night, wouldn't you?" She barely gets the word out of her mouth.

I'm just about to bite into my sandwich when she asks me that question, so I sigh, and set my food back down, "Toby came close. He was about to, but then Kaylee came up and stopped him. That's when she started kicking me."

"Kaylee Simpson? I thought you were friends?" my mom questions.

"We were never friends, Mom, only acquaintances, and that was two years ago."

"But why would she assault you like that?"

Now I'm wishing that my parents were here from the beginning, so I don't have to explain everything again, and how do I tell them that it's all because Jace wants me and not her? This is more complicated than I thought.

"She's jealous for some reason." I leave it at that and hope that it will be enough, but my father, the lawyer doesn't accept it.

"Ella, what aren't you telling us?" He looks at me sternly.

Rolling my eyes, I set my sandwich down again. At this rate, it will be cold and gross by the time I'm able to eat it! I take a drink of my coffee, "Kaylee has had a crush on Jace, and she thinks that I've ruined it for her because he told her that he wants me." I duck my head as I feel my face heat up.

"Oh wow." My mom sits back in her chair, "So, you and Jace...?"

"No I don't know. He wants to be with me, but I don't know what I want yet because I want to concentrate on school."

"Well, I didn't see that coming." My dad snickers.

"Can I please eat now?"

"Sure, sweetie," my mom stands up, "We are going to go find the nurse or doctor and see how soon we can take you home."

"That would be great! These hospital gowns are not my style, and the color is all wrong for my complexion." I joke.

Once I'm alone, I bite into my sandwich and moan. All I want to do is fill my belly and soak in a nice hot bathtub, but I'll have to wait on the latter, unless they let me go down and soak in the one reserved for soon-to-be-mothers in maternity. Once my food is

gone, I lean back against the mattress, turning my head to stare out the window. It looks like a beautiful day outside, but I know the temps are frigid. My mind wanders to the four people whose day is about to go to crap, but they did this to themselves, and I don't feel the least bit bad for them.

My parents were able to talk the doctor into releasing me, so now I'm being wheeled down the hallway, heading for the exit, when I happen to glance in one of the rooms on the way. I place my hands on the wheels and tell my mom to stop.

"Go back," I tell her and point to the room that we just passed.

It looks to be an examination room, and there, sitting on the table as they wait for the doctor, is no other but Kaylee Simpson. She doesn't see me because she's too busy looking at her phone, so it gives me time to study her. She doesn't look much better than

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me, with her face all swollen and bruised. I can see black and blue marks on her arms as well, but she's swinging her legs as though they are perfectly fine.

"Is that...?"

I nod, "Yeah, it's Kaylee."

My mom surprises the crap out of me when the next words out of her mouth are, "Well, karma is a bitch, isn't it?"

Kaylee glances up just as my mouth drops from my mom's statement. Her eyes widen when she realizes that it's me, but then she glares right at me. Then, mom takes it a step further and knocks on the door, getting Kaylee's mom's attention as well.

"I do hope your daughter has learned her lesson. Having three guys beat my daughter and then she, herself kicking my daughter when she was already down, is bound to have karma come back around. Doesn't look like she's half as bad as my daughter is –it' sa pity."

"Mom!" | gasp.

"What are you talking about?" Kaylee's mom glances at me and gasps herself. She turns to her daughter, "Did you have something to do with this?"

Kaylee rolls her eyes, "Don't believe her, mom. She's just a dumb slut from school."

Thank God my father walks up, because he's the one that grabs my mom's waist when she goes full force towards the room. My mother struggles to get out of his arms but he whispers something in her ear, and she settles down. He lets her go and she walks to the exit while my dad takes hold of my wheelchair.

"I apologize for my wife's behavior, Mrs. Simpson. The police will be in contact with your daughter, concerning the assault on my daughter last night, as well as the three guys that your daughter was with. If you have any questions, you can have your lawyer contact me at my office." He turns and wheels me out the door to our waiting car.

"The nerve of that little bitch!" It's the first thing out of mom's mouth when we reach the car.

"Elaine!"

"What do you expect me to do, Ethan? She was sitting there telling her mother that our Ella is a dumb slut!" she glares back at the hospital, "I think she better take a better look at her own daughter before she believes anything out of her mouth!"

I can't help the giggle that bubbles up and out my mouth. My father glances at me, and I can see the small grin on his face while his back is to my mom. He tries to be as gentle as he can while helping me into the car. Before he can shut the door, though, we hear someone call out to us. I look around my dad and see Kaylee's mom quickly making her way over. She holds up her hand when my dad goes to say something.

"Please hear me out," she glances at me, "I'm sorry if my daughter had something to do with your injuries. I don't know what's

gotten into her over the past year, she's changed. This isn't how she was brought up."

I nod, "I don't blame you, Mrs. Simpson, Kaylee has issues, and needs help, but those are just my thoughts."

"I'll definitely be looking into that, depending on what the charges are against her for this." I can tell by the look on her face that she feels guilty for her daughter's actions, "I know I have no right to ask this, but do you happen to know who would have beat my daughter up last night? She was at a friend's house, and they all got beat up."

“How would my daughter know who went after your daughter, when she was lying in a hospital bed because of your daughter?” My dad’s anger is beginning to rise the more Mrs. Simpson talks.

“I understand, believe me I do, but as a mother, I still need to know. Was there anyone else that knew about your daughter’s incident?”

“Only our neighbor because he’s the one Ella called, but he was at the hospital.” My dad responds.

“And you saw him here yourself?” she asks.

“Yes, both my wife and I, and Jace were all here with Ella last night.” He confirms before shutting my door, but my mom’s window is still open, “Maybe you should ask the three guys she was with last night since they seem to like beating women! Maybe our girls can match hand marks or something.” I hear my dad say sarcastically.

“I’m sorry, I just had to ask.” The woman turns and walks back into the hospital.

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The nerve of that woman, trying to blame someone that we know for her daughter’s injuries! What she said earlier, though, about Kaylee and her friends getting beat up; if she was with the three guys, does that mean they were the ones that were beat up? Jace left for a little bit, and then came back, but he looked fine, there wasn’t a scratch on him. I glance at my dad in the rearview mirror and our eyes meet. I’m pretty sure we are thinking the same thing did Jace have something to do with the beatings?

Coming Home