

I was startled by Trey's voice in my bedroom. He immediately saw my disheveled state, and I could only imagine how bad I looked. He was on his feet in a moment and at my side. I saw him looking at me as if he were taking inventory of some prized possession. It didn't take him long to figure out what I'd been about.

"Oh baby; what have you done?" he asked, his voice cracking with emotion.

I saw the flash of pain that crossed over his face. It was evident in his voice. That was all that it took to push me over the edge. I dissolved into tears, immediately dropping to the floor in a sitting position, where I quickly covered my face with my hands. Trey was like an ice statue staring at me. He didn't move for what seemed like an eternity. He finally picked me up and took me into the bathroom.

Somewhere in the distance, I heard the sound of the bathtub being filled up. I stood silently while Trey peeled my clothes off and tossed them into the dirty clothes basket. He lifted me with his strong arms and gently placed me into the warm tub of water. He got my liquid bath soap and sponge and washed my body gently and thoroughly.

He shampooed my hair and rinsed it. He lifted me from the tub and dried me with a clean, soft towel. I felt his hands as they dressed me in clean underwear, and pulled a nightgown down over my body. Then, he took me by the hand and led me back to my bed where the covers had been pulled back. I quietly climbed into my bed, curling up on my side. He tucked me in, kissed me gently on the forehead and turned the light off next to my bed. He left me in a shroud of darkness where I wept until I finally fell into an exhausted sleep.

I awoke the following morning, seeing by my nightstand clock that it was almost noon. I couldn't believe that I'd slept that long undisturbed.

I immediately jumped from my bed and opened the door to the adjoining nursery. I was in a panic. I knew that Trey knew what had happened last night. Though he didn't know who was involved, he certainly knew that I'd been unfaithful to him. Or had I? I mean we had discussed the fine points of our separation. I had set the terms, hadn't I?

I didn't want to analyze the technicality of it all at the moment. What if he'd taken Preston from me forever? She wasn't in her crib or her room. I quickly returned to my room and put my robe on to go downstairs. I flew down the staircase. As I reached the bottom, I could hear my dad talking to her from his study.

"No, no sweetheart," he said gently, "You can't touch those. They could break and hurt you, Preston."

I went through the door to his study. She was standing along one of his bookshelves and had reached up grabbing one of his expensive Hummel figurines.

“No Preston,” I said, a bit more sternly than I'd intended. She turned seeing me. Her face brightened up as she clutched the figurine and came bouncing over to me. I reached down picking her up and managed to get it away from her, placing it back on the shelf.

Her little face contorted unhappily. She started crying, and she twisted in my arms, trying to turn from me so that she could reach back down and grab the figurine. I stepped further from the bookcase which only made her more determined to get down from me.

“Stop,” I said crossly, “You aren't supposed to touch that Preston. You were told 'no!'.”

She buried her face into my shoulder sobbing now. It seemed my daughter and I weren't getting off to a good start this morning.

“Good morning,” my father said. “Preston and I we're working it out, you know?”

I looked at him quizzically.

He continued. “You see, the point is for the child to understand what they can and cannot have. The decision to put the figurine back on the shelf, and know not to touch it again, needed to come from her.”

“She very well might have broken it first, Dad.”

“I understand that,” he replied with a slight smile, “But it might've been worth it for a lesson well learned, right?”

*Okay - clearly he has a message in there for me. Did Trey ---?*

“Where's Trey?” I asked, looking around. “I need to talk to him.”

“He's gone,” my father said with a shrug. “He returned to Atlanta early it seems.”

My father rose from his chair and took the still sobbing Preston from me, talking soothingly to her and explaining why she shouldn't touch things that were breakable.

I looked at my father's face. He had the 'stoic judge' look going. He was unreadable; yet somehow I knew that he knew.

Trey wouldn't have told him. My father simply read people and their actions. That was his gift. That's probably what made him a phenomenal judge.

“How long ago did he leave?” I asked in a semi-panicky tone.

My father looked at his watch. “His plane took off about ten minutes ago if it's on schedule. I'm sure you can call him later when he's home. Why the rush to talk to him all of a sudden? You barely acknowledged him while he was here.”

I felt the sting of my father's words. Though they were gently stated, they cut like a knife. Maybe I deserved the pain that I was now feeling. It appeared that my father was giving me an 'emotional spanking.' Maybe it was long overdue.

"He's my husband, Dad," I replied with a shrug. "There are things we need to discuss; and apologies that need to be made."

"There will be plenty of time for that darling daughter. Why don't you get dressed? I'll tend to Preston until then."

I returned to my suite, selecting jeans and a sweater for the day. I picked my phone up from the nightstand. A text message from Trey had come in earlier:

*"I felt it best I return to Atlanta. You and I need to discuss whether our marriage is salvageable. It's your move. I won't be calling you."*

My heart lurched when I read the text. What had I done? I hated myself with every inch of my being. I was disgusted with my behavior.