

SAVE

MONA KASTEN

YOU

ROMAN

LYX



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MONA BOX

Save You

Novel

digital

LYX

## About this book

Ruby thought that she and James could master everything together. But when James' family is shaken by a heavy blow of fate, they have to admit that their love never really had a chance. Because instead of trusting her, James broke her heart. Ruby has so many questions. But she also knows that James' answers wouldn't change anything. They belong to different worlds, and the sooner Ruby returns to her old life, the better. Especially since her biggest goal – studying at Oxford – is now within reach and she can't afford any more distractions anyway. But forgetting James is anything but easy. It's not just the memories of their time together that always catch up with Ruby when she least expects it. There is also James, who knows that his behavior was unforgivable, and yet he does everything he can to win Ruby back. But can she dare to put her heart on the line again?

For Kim

# Playlist

Delicate – Damien Rice  
You and Me – Niall Horan  
Lonely (feat. Lil Wayne – Demi Lovato  
Dress – Taylor Swift  
You Are – GOT7  
Never Be the Same – Camila Cabello  
Sticky Leaves – Linying  
Lights On – Shawn Mendes  
If I Be Wrong – Wolf Larsen  
No Promises (feat. Demi Lovato) [Acoustic] – Cheat Codes

All the promises that we made,  
it means nothing.

GERSEY, IT MEANS NOTHING



Lydia

James is drunk. Or drugged up. Or both.

He has not been properly responsive for three days. He doesn't do anything, except have a kind of permanent party in our salon, empty one bottle of alcohol after the other and pretend that nothing has happened. I don't understand how he can be like that. Apparently, he doesn't care at all that our family is now finally in ruins.

"I think that's his way of mourning."

I look at Cyril from the side. He is the only one who knows what happened. I told him the night James got drunk at his party and made out with Elaine in front of Ruby. Someone had to help me bring James home without Percy or Dad knowing what condition he was in. Since our families are close friends, Cy and I have known each other since childhood. And even though Dad made me promise not to tell anyone about the Mum thing before the official press release, I know that I can trust him and that he keeps the secret to himself – even from Wren, Keshav and Alistair.

Without his help, I would not have made it through the last few days. He has persuaded Dad to leave James alone for a few days and made it clear to the other boys that they shouldn't ask any questions for now. They stick to it, although I have the feeling that with each passing day it is harder for them to watch James destroy himself.

While my brother is doing everything he can to cloud his mind, I can only think about how things should go on for me now. My mum is dead. Graham's mother died seven years ago. The little boy growing inside me will not have a grandma.

Seriously. That's what's going through my head in a continuous loop. Instead of grieving, I ponder the fact that my baby will never experience the embrace of a loving grandmother. What's wrong with me?

But I can't do anything about it. The thoughts in my head take on a life of their own – one follows the next until I finally sink into horror scenarios and get so afraid of the future that I can't think of anything else. It's as if I've

been in shock for three days. Something probably broke terribly in both James and me when Dad told us what had happened.

"I don't know how to help him," I whisper as I watch James tilt his head back and empty his glass. It hurts to watch how much he suffers. He can't go on like this forever. At some point, he will have to face reality. And in my opinion, there is only one person in this world who can help him with this.

Once again, I take out my phone and dial Ruby's number, but she doesn't pick up again. I want to be mad at her, but I can't. If I had caught Graham with someone else, I wouldn't want to have anything to do with him or anyone in his environment.

"Are you calling her again?" asks Cy with a skeptical look at my phone. When I nod, he frowns disapprovingly. His reaction does not surprise me. Cyril is of the opinion that Ruby is nothing more than a gold digger who is after James' legacy. I know that's not true, but once Cyril has made up his mind about someone, it's hard to convince him otherwise. And as much as that frustrates me, I can't blame him. Because that's nothing more than his way of taking care of his friends.

"He doesn't listen to any of us. I think she could prevent him from going completely crazy." My voice sounds strange to my own ears. So cold and soundless – but it looks completely different inside me.

I can hardly stand upright in pain. It's as if someone has tied me up and I haven't been able to tie the knots of the ropes for days. As if my thoughts were moving in a carousel that doesn't want to stop and from which I just can't jump. Nothing seems to make sense anymore, and the more I fight against the helplessness growing in me, the more comprehensive it becomes.

I have lost one of the most important people in my life. I don't know how I'm going to get through this alone. I need my twin brother. But James does nothing but numb himself and destroy everything that gets in his way. The last time I saw my father was on Wednesday. He is on the road, meeting with lawyers and consultants to discuss the future of the Beaufort Companies. He doesn't have a minute left for Mum's funeral, on the other hand – for that, he has hired a planner named Julia, who has been going in and out of our house in the last few days as if she were part of the family.

At the thought of Mum's funeral, my throat tightens. I can't breathe anymore, my eyes start to burn. I hastily turn away, but Cyril notices.

"Lydia ..." he whispers and gently reaches for my hand.

I withdraw it from him and leave the room without another word. I don't

want the boys to see me cry. At some point, they won't be held back anymore and will start asking questions despite Cyril's warning. None of them fell on their heads. James has never behaved like this. Even if he goes overboard every now and then, he usually always knows where his limits are. The others have long since noticed that this is not the case at the moment. The fact that Keshav started to make one liquor bottle after the other disappear from the bar, and Alistair accidentally flushed the few grams of cocaine James had left down the toilet, speaks for itself.

I can't wait until the secrecy finally comes to an end. In a few minutes, at exactly fifteen o'clock, the news of Mum's death will go public, and then not only the boys would know about it - but the whole world. In my mind's eye, I can already see the headlines and the reporters on our doorstep and the school. Nausea overcomes me, and I stagger down the hallway until I arrive at the library.

The pale glow of the lamps illuminates the countless shelves on which time-honored leather-bound books stand. I lean on the shelves as I cross the room with shaky knees. At the very back of the window is an armchair covered in dark red velvet. Even as a child, this was my favorite place in our house. This is where I hid when I wanted to have my peace and quiet – from the boys, from my dad, from the expectations that the name Beaufort brings with it.

The sight of this little reading corner makes my tears flow even more violently. I let myself fall into the chair, pull my legs up and wrap my arms around them. Then I bury my face at the knees and cry softly.

Everything around me seems so unreal to me. As if it were a bad dream that I can wake up from if I just try hard enough. I wish I could go back to the summer of a year and a half ago, to a world where my mum is still alive and Graham can hug me when I'm feeling bad.

While I wipe my eyes with one hand, I take my cell phone out of my pocket with the other. When I unlock the display, I discover nothing but black mascara traces on the back of my hand.

I go into my contacts. Graham is still stored directly under James in my favorites, even though I haven't spoken to him for months. He doesn't know anything about our baby, let alone that my mum died. I complied with his wish and did not call him again. Never in my life has anything been so difficult for me. For more than two years, we had almost daily contact with each other – and then suddenly it stopped, from one day to the next. At the

time, it seemed like cold turkey to me.

And now... I have a relapse. As if by magic, I dial his number and listen to the dial tone with bated breath. After a moment, it disappears. I close my eyes and try hard to hear whether he has taken off or not. At this moment, I have the feeling that I could drown in the lonely helplessness that I have felt for days.

"No more calls. We had agreed on that," he says quietly. The sound of his soft, raspy voice finishes me off. My body is shaken by a violent sobbing. I press my free hand to my mouth so that Graham doesn't hear it.

But it is too late for that.

"Lydia?"

I sense the panic in his voice, but I can't say anything, just shake my head. My breath is uncontrolled and much too fast.

Graham doesn't hang up. He stays on the receiver and makes quiet, soothing sounds. On the one hand, hearing him stirs me up completely, but on the other hand, it feels so incredibly familiar that I press the phone even harder to my ear. I think his voice was one of the reasons I fell in love with him back then – long before I even saw him for the first time. I remember the hours of phone calls, my hot, aching ear, the fact that I woke up and Graham was still on the phone. His voice soft and soft, deep and at least as penetrating as his golden-brown eyes.

I always felt safe with Graham. For a long time he was my rock. I have him to thank for the fact that I was able to put the Gregg thing behind me at some point and look forward again.

And although I'm completely exhausted, this feeling of security is just fighting its way back up. Just hearing his voice helps me to become somewhat conscious. I don't know how long I've been sitting there like this, but little by little my tears are drying up.

"What's going on?" he finally whispers.

I can't answer. All I can do is make a helpless sound.

He remains silent for a minute. I can hear him inhale a few times, as if he wants to say something, but at the last moment he always holds back. When he finally speaks, his voice is low and painful: "There is nothing I would rather do than go to you now and be there for you."

I close my eyes and imagine him sitting in his apartment, at the old wooden table that looks like it would break apart at any moment. Graham describes it as "antique", but in reality he simply took it from the bulky waste

and repainted it.

"I know," I whisper.

"But you know I can't, don't you?"

Something breaks in the salon. I hear the clinking of glass, and immediately afterwards someone shouts loudly. Whether it's out of pain or for fun, I can't say, but nevertheless I straighten up immediately. I can't let James get physically injured now.

"I'm sorry I called," I whisper in a broken voice and end the conversation.

My heart stings as I rise and leave the sheltered little corner to check on my brother.

Ember

My sister is sick.

Under normal circumstances, I would say that this is nothing unusual – after all, it's December, it's sub-zero temperatures outside, and no matter where you go, people sniffle and cough. So it's actually only a matter of time before you get infected.

Only – my sister is never ill. Really never.

When Ruby came home late at night three days ago and went to bed without a single word, I didn't think anything of it. After all, she had just completed an application marathon in Oxford, which was certainly not only mentally but also physically demanding. But when she claimed the next day that she had a cold and couldn't go to school, I became skeptical. Anyone who knows Ruby knows very well that she would drag herself to class with a fever for fear of missing something important.

Today is Saturday, and in the meantime I'm really worried. Ruby has hardly left her room. She lies in her bed, reads one book after the other and pretends that a cold is to blame for her red eyes. But she can't fool me. Something bad happened, and it drives me crazy that she doesn't tell me what.

At the moment, I'm watching her through the crack in the door as she stirs her soup without eating any of it. I can't remember ever having experienced her like this before. Her face is pale, and there are bluish circles under her eyes that are getting darker with each passing day. Her hair is greasy and hangs down uncombed on both sides of her face, and she also

wears the same baggy clothes as yesterday and the day before yesterday. Normally, Ruby is the definition of "ordered". Not only when it comes to their planner or the school, but also when it comes to their appearance. I didn't even know she had baggy clothes at all.

"Stop crouching in front of my door," she says suddenly, and I cringe when caught. I pretend that I wanted to enter her room anyway and push myself through the door.

Ruby looks at me with a raised eyebrow. Then she puts the soup next to the bed on the tray on which I brought it to her. I suppress a sigh.

"If you don't eat it, I'll eat it," I threaten with a nod to the soup, which unfortunately doesn't have the desired effect. Ruby only makes a vague hand gesture.

"Don't force yourself."

With a frustrated sound, I sink onto the edge of her bed. "I have left you alone with all my difficulty in the last few days, because I have noticed that you are not particularly keen on talking, but ... I'm really worried about you."

Ruby pulls her blanket up to her chin so that only her head peeks out. Her gaze is cloudy and sad, as if what has happened is catching up with her at this moment with full force. But then she blinks and is back – or at least pretends to. Since last Wednesday, there has been a strange expression in her eyes. It seems to me that she is only physically present, but mentally somewhere else entirely.

"I just have a cold. It will be back soon," she says tonelessly, almost sounding like one of those dead computer voices that you know from announcements for waiting loops and hotlines, as if she had been replaced by a robot.

Ruby turns her face to the wall and pulls the ceiling up even further – a clear indication that the conversation is over for her. I sigh and am just about to get up again when her glowing cell phone on the bedside table catches my attention. I lean forward a bit to see the display.

"Lin is calling you," I murmur.

"I don't care," it comes back muffled.

Frowning, I watch as the call breaks off and shortly afterwards the number of missed calls appears on the display. It is in the double-digit range. "She's called you more than ten times, Ruby. Whatever happened, you won't be able to hide forever."

My sister just grumbles.



Mum told me to give her time, but it's getting harder and harder every day to watch Ruby suffer. You don't have to be a genius to put one and one together and come to the conclusion that James Beaufort and his stupid friends probably have their fingers in the whole thing.

However, I thought that Ruby had long since ticked off the topic of Beaufort. So what happened? And when?

I tried to analyze the situation as Ruby would do in my place, and made a list in my mind:

1. Ruby was in Oxford for the applicant interviews.
2. When she came back, everything was still in perfect order.
3. In the evening, Lydia Beaufort showed up at our door, and Ruby disappeared with her.
4. After that, everything was different: Ruby hid away and hardly spoke a word since.
5. Why???

Ok. Ruby's list would probably be a lot more structured, but at least I've put things in a logical order and know: Whatever it was, it must have happened on Wednesday night.

But where did Lydia go with her?

My gaze wanders from Ruby, of whom only the hairline is now sticking out from under the blanket, to the cell phone and back again. He certainly won't miss her, I'm pretty sure of that.

"If there's anything else, I'm next door," I say, even though I know she won't accept the offer anyway. Then I get up with an extra-loud sigh and reach for my cell phone at lightning speed. I slide it into the sleeve of my loose knitted sweater and tiptoe back to my own room.

When I close the door quietly behind me, I breathe a sigh of relief – and immediately have a guilty conscience. My gaze twitches to the wall, as if Ruby could see me from her bed. She will probably never speak a word to me again if she finds out that I have disregarded her privacy so much. At the same time, as a sister, it is also my duty to find out how I can help her. Or?

I go to my desk and sit down on the creaking chair. Then I take the cell phone out of my sleeve. My sister makes a huge secret of what's going on at school, but of course I know what kind of people she goes to Maxton Hall with: boys and girls whose parents are aristocrats, actors, politicians or entrepreneurs and have so much influence in our country that they are often mentioned in the news. I've been following a few of Ruby's classmates on

Instagram for a while now and I've also noticed the rumors about them. Just the idea of what these people could have done to Ruby turns my stomach.

I hesitate for a moment, then I unlock Ruby's phone and tap the call log. Not only Lin has contacted her, but also a number that is not stored in her cell phone appears several times. Without further ado, I call Lin's contact – after all, she is the only person from Ruby's ominous school that I know personally. I hesitantly lift the receiver to my ear. The dial tone sounds only once, then it takes off.

"Ruby," I hear Lin say breathlessly. "At last. How are you?"

"Lin—it's me, Ember," I interrupt before she can continue.

"Ember? What—"

"Ruby isn't doing very well."

Lin falls silent for a moment. Then she says slowly: "That's understandable, after what happened."

"What happened?" I burst out. "What the hell happened, Lin? Ruby doesn't talk to me, and I'm incredibly worried. Did Beaufort do something to her? If so, I'll be this toad—"

"Ember." Now she's the one who interrupts me. "What are you talking about?"

I furrow my forehead. "What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about the fact that Ruby wrote to me on Wednesday that she had gotten along with James Beaufort, and I learned today that his mother died the Monday before."

## 2

Ruby

Ember is knocking on my door again.

I wish I had the energy to send them away. I can understand that she's worried, but I just don't feel able to get up to do anything or talk to anyone right now. Even if that someone is my sister.

"Ruby, Lin is on the phone."

Frowning, I pull the blanket off my face and turn around. Ember stands in front of my bed and holds a cell phone in her outstretched hand. I squint my eyes. This is my cell phone. And on the display, Lin's name shines at me.

"You took my cell phone?" I ask wearily. I feel how deep indignation wants to germinate inside me, but the feeling disappears just as quickly as it came. In the last few days, my body has felt like a black hole that has swallowed up any emotions before they have even had a chance to reach me.

Nothing really gets through to me anymore, I don't feel like anything. Getting out of my bed exhausts me every time as if I had run a marathon, I haven't gone down the stairs for three days. Since I've been visiting Maxton Hall, I haven't missed a day of class, but just the idea of showering, getting dressed and being around people for six to ten hours overwhelms me. Not to mention that I couldn't bear to see James. I would probably collapse like a withered flower at the sight of him. Or I would burst into tears.

"Tell her I'll call her back," I murmur. My voice is scratchy because I have spoken so little in the last few days.

Ember doesn't budge. "But you should talk to her now."

"But I don't want to talk to her now." What I want is a little time to get back on my feet. Three days are not enough to ask Lin and her questions. I only wrote her a short message on Wednesday. She doesn't know exactly what happened between me and James at Oxford, and I don't have the strength to tell her about it at the moment. Or of what happened afterwards. I would like to forget the whole last week and pretend that everything is as usual. Unfortunately, this is not possible as long as I don't even manage to get out of my bed.

"Please, Ruby," Ember says, looking at me intently, "I don't know why you're so sad and why you don't talk to me about it, but... Lin just told me something. And I think you really ought to talk."

I scowl at Ember, but when I see her determined expression, I know I've lost. She won't disappear from my room until I talk to Lin. In some things we are just too similar, and stubbornness is definitely one of them.

Resigned, I stretch out my hand and take the cell phone.

"Lin?"

"Ruby, sweetie, we need to talk urgently."

Her tone of voice tells me that she knows.

She knows what James did.

She knows that he ripped my heart out with both hands, only to throw it on the floor and trample on it.

And if Lin knows, the rest of the school certainly knows it too.

"I don't want to talk about James," I croak. "I don't ever want to talk about him again, okay?"

For a moment, Lin is completely silent. Then she takes a deep breath. "Ember told me you left with Lydia on Wednesday night."

I don't say anything, but just fiddle around with my free hand on the hem of my blanket.

"Did you find out there?"

I let out a soundless laugh. "What do you mean? That he's an asshole?"

Lin sighs. "Has Lydia really not told you anything?"

"What was she supposed to have told me?" I ask hesitantly.

"Ruby... Did you see my message just now?"

Lin's tone is so cautious that I suddenly feel cold and hot at the same time. I swallow dry. "No... I haven't looked at my cell phone since Wednesday."

Lin takes a deep breath. "Then you really don't know yet."

"What don't I know yet?"

"Ruby, are you sitting?"

I sit up in bed.

You don't ask anyone this question unless something absolutely terrible has happened. All of a sudden, the image of James together with Elaine, stoned in this pool, is replaced by a much more gruesome image. James, who crashed and injured himself. James, who is in hospital.

"What's going on?" I croak.

"Cordelia Beaufort died last Monday."

It takes me a moment to realize what Lin just said.

Cordelia Beaufort died last Monday.

An unbearable silence spreads between us.

James' mother is dead. Since Monday.

I remember our intimate kisses, his hands restlessly running over my naked body, the overwhelming feeling when he was inside me.

It's impossible that James already knew that evening – that night. Even he is not such a good actor. No, he and Lydia must have found out for themselves on Wednesday.

I hear Lin speaking, but I can't concentrate on her words. I am too busy in my mind to ask myself whether it can really be that Mortimer Beaufort concealed from his children for two days that their mother had died. And if so, how terrible must James and Lydia have felt when they came home on Wednesday and found out?

I remember Lydia's swollen, red eyes when she stood at my door and asked if James was with me. Of the empty and emotionless look with which James looked at me. And the moment when he jumped into the pool and destroyed everything that had been created between us the night before.

A painful throbbing spreads through my body. I take the cell phone off my ear and turn on the speaker. Then I click through my messages. I open the history that appears under an unknown number. Three unread messages open:

Ruby. I'm so sorry. I can explain everything to you.

Please come back to Cyril or tell me where you are so Percy can pick you up. Our mum died. James is going crazy. I don't know what to do.

"Lin," I whisper. "Is that really true?"

"Yes," Lin whispers back. "A press release went out earlier, and less than half a minute later the news was everywhere."

Silence spreads between us again. Thousands of thoughts are swirling around in my head at once. Nothing seems to make sense anymore. Nothing but this one feeling that comes over me so suddenly and violently that the next words bubble out of me as if by themselves: "I have to go to him."

For the first time, I see the gray stone wall that surrounds the Beaufort estate. A huge iron gate blocks the entrance, in front of it a dozen people cavort with

cameras and microphones in their hands.

"Rats like that," Lin murmurs, bringing her car to a stop a few meters in front of them. Immediately the reporters start moving and come running towards us.

Lin leans forward and presses the button that locks the car doors from the inside. "Call Lydia to open the gate."

I am so grateful that she is by my side at this moment and keeps a clear head. She asked me, without even a second's hesitation, if she should drive me, and was standing in front of my house less than half an hour after our phone call. Any doubt about how deep Lins and my friendship goes has vanished into thin air at that moment.

I take my cell phone out of my pocket and call the number that has contacted me several times in the last few days.

It takes a few seconds for Lydia to pick up.

"Hello?" Her voice sounds just as nasal as on Wednesday evening when we drove together to Cyril's house.

"I am standing in front of your house. Could you open the gate?" I ask, trying to cover my face with one arm at the same time. I don't know if this has the desired effect. The reporters are now standing directly at Lin's car and shouting questions to us that I don't understand.

"Ruby? What...?"

Someone starts banging on my window. Lin and I flinch violently.

"As soon as possible, perhaps?"

"Wait a minute," Lydia replies, then hangs up.

It takes about half a minute until the gate opens and someone approaches our car. Only when the person is only a few meters away from us do I recognize him.

It's Percy.

The sight of the chauffeur makes my heart skip a beat. Without warning, memories come over me. Memories of a day in London that started beautifully but ended badly. And of a night when James lovingly took care of me because his friends had misbehaved and pushed me into a pool.

He squeezes past the reporters and gestures for Lin to roll down her window.

"Go through the gate to the front of the house, miss. These people are liable to prosecution if they enter the property. They will not follow you."

Lin nods, and after Percy gets the reporters to move aside, she steers the