

## ***BACKUP GIRL NO MORE: ADIOS TO MY V-CARD AND MY FIRST LOVE***

### **Backup Girl No More**

Chapter 11

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Here's a culturally adapted version that captures the complex social dynamics:

Mom said Aiden took off traveling with friends right after getting his acceptance letter. He'd barely been home since. His mom kept asking about my return date though.

The day I flew back, my parents picked me up at the airport in formal wear. When I woke up from my jet-lagged nap in the car, we were pulling up to a luxury hotel. Still groggy, I let Mom lead me into the lobby.

That's when I saw Aiden for the first time in months.

My feet stopped dead.

He stood by the fountain in a perfectly tailored suit, his tall frame cutting an elegant figure. One

summer had stripped away the last traces of boyhood, transforming him into exactly the man I'd always imagined he'd become.

My emotions churned as the meeting I'd avoided for so long happened without warning.

Seeing my confusion, Mom whispered, "Honey, it's Aiden's graduation celebration. We came straight

here."

Dad added, "Since you didn't want a party, Aiden arranged to have his on your return date. Kind of a joint celebration."

As if sensing us, Aiden turned, his eyes meeting mine.

My heart skipped.

Despite preparing myself for this moment all summer, I felt my courage wavering.

Aiden started toward us, but Madison appeared, sliding her arm through his.

“Brooklyn! You’re back! I’m so glad we can finally meet properly. I always saw you two together, but never got the chance to introduce myself even though we shared so many classes.”

Her politeness demanded a response. I managed a tight smile and a nod.

Aiden looked uncomfortable. “She’s nothing special,” he said stiffly. “Just a stubborn kid. Thought

she might stay hidden in Boston forever.”

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I stayed silent, words failing me.

Madison’s silver evening gown sparkled with every movement, making her glow. She looked perfect

beside him.

I glanced down at my travel outfit – white tee, jeans, sneakers, messy hair – looking like I’d just rolled

out of bed for a coffee run.

Mom leaned in, whispering, “I brought you a dress – you can change in the powder room.”

I shook my head. What was the point? This wasn’t my celebration.

Aiden kept watching me, his expression unreadable. Madison’s eyes darted between us. An

awkward silence fell.

Thankfully, more guests arrived. Madison pulled Aiden away to greet them, every inch the perfect

hostess.

I quickly dragged Mom toward the ballroom, eager to escape.

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The celebration was intimate – just family and close friends from high school. Still, the grand ballroom felt overwhelming.

Everyone’s eyes widened when they saw me there, like they’d seen a ghost. I could almost hear their thoughts: “What’s she doing here after everything?”

I just smiled politely and made small talk, playing dumb. But you couldn’t miss their not–so–subtle

glances, the whispered conversations that stopped when I walked by. Four years of high school had

taught me exactly what gossip looked like.

Needing to escape, I stepped onto the terrace for fresh air. That’s when I heard voices from around

the corner where his friends had cornered him by the service entrance.

“Seriously? I thought she was done with you after the whole Madison thing at the party. Now she’s

crawling back?”

Aiden’s laugh was cold, entitled – a sound I’d never heard from him before.

“Please. She’s just being dramatic. Give her a few days – you really think she’d walk away after all these years? She doesn’t know how to exist without me.”

“I don’t know, man,” his friend said. “Brooklyn’s pretty great. All those years together, the way she’d drop everything for you... most guys would kill for a girl like that.”

“Yeah, childhood sweetheart versus dream girl – that’s rough. What’s your game plan?”

Aiden was quiet for a moment. When he spoke, his voice was calculated.

“Look, Brooklyn’s great, sure. Sweet girl, totally devoted. But it feels like settling, you know? I’m eighteen – who wants to be tied down to their high school girlfriend forever? That’s such a cliché. I want to experience college life, meet new people... besides,” he laughed, “she’ll always be there waiting, keeping the light on like a good little girlfriend.”

His friend went quiet. Finally punched his arm. “You’re such an asshole.”

I couldn’t stomach another word. I slipped away silently, my designer sneakers soundless on the

marble floor.

The evening air hit my face as I rounded the corner, and I finally let the tears fall. Six years of memories played through my mind like a highlight reel of my own stupidity. Every shared secret,

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every late-night call, every “I’ll always be there for you” – all just convenient lies from someone who

saw me as a backup plan.

I leaned against the balcony railing, watching the city lights blur through my tears, hating myself for being so blind for so long. For believing that the boy next door routine meant something real. For thinking that growing up together meant growing old together.

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The celebration had gone from uncomfortable to unbearable.

Aiden’s mom couldn’t contain her excitement to see me, hovering over me throughout dinner like nothing had changed.

“Brooklyn, honey, you’ll freeze in those New York winters. Let’s have Aiden take you to Saks tomorrow – they have the most amazing winter collection.”

“That’s okay, Mrs. Carter. I can shop online, or hit the stores once I’m there.”

She beamed at my mom across the table. “I already got their whole dorm setup – matching comforter sets, those adorable string lights everyone’s doing now. And the warmest North Face jackets – you know how brutal those East Coast winters can be. Don’t worry about a thing, Karen.”

Mom shifted in her seat, probably thinking how all that winter gear would gather dust in sunny California. But she plastered on her best social smile and murmured her thanks.

Madison’s perfect smile cracked slightly, but Mrs. Carter didn’t notice.

“Once you’re both at Columbia, you’ll be all each other has. Aiden, promise me you’ll look after Brooklyn. No more of this fighting nonsense.”

Aiden rolled his eyes. “Mom, please. She’s not exactly helpless.”

The tension at the table could’ve been cut with a knife until Madison chimed in, her voice dripping

with false sweetness.

“Don’t worry, Mrs. Carter. I’ll take good care of Aiden in New York. Besides, Brooklyn will be too

busy in California to worry about him.”

The silence was deafening. Three heads snapped up.

“California?”

Madison’s eyes widened in mock surprise. “Oh, Aiden, didn’t you know? It was posted on the school’s acceptance wall... but I guess you haven’t been around much.”

Every eye at the table turned to me.

Under their collective stare, I managed a small nod.

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Mom jumped in, her voice artificially bright. “Brooklyn decided Stanford would be a better fit. Their program is actually ranked...”

“Bullshit,” Aiden cut her off, his fingers closing around my wrist. “I watched you accept Columbia. I was literally there.”

His grip tightened, sparking my anger.

“Yeah, well, plans change. Not that it’s any of your business.”

He stared at me like I’d grown a second head, then let out a harsh laugh.

“This is a joke, right? You? Miss ‘Call–Aiden–To–Kill–The–Spider’? You’re suddenly moving across the

country?”

I pulled up my Stanford acceptance letter and thrust my phone at him.

He studied it like a detective with evidence, zooming in and out as if the pixels might rearrange themselves. Finally, his face hardened into something I’d never seen before.

Before anyone could react, he yanked me out of my chair and toward the exit, ignoring the startled looks from nearby tables.

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He practically shoved me into the hotel’s private lounge, the door slamming behind us with a final sounding click.

Blocking the exit with his six-foot frame, Aiden towered over me, his perfectly tailored suit doing nothing to hide the tension in his shoulders. His voice shook with a mixture of anger and disbelief.

“Real mature, Brooklyn! Throwing away everything we planned just to spite me? Running off to Stanford? We had our whole future mapped out!”

I lifted my chin, finally finding the courage I’d spent all summer building. My voice came out steadier than I felt.

“I’m allowed to have my own dreams. Why does my entire life have to revolve around your plans? God, Aiden, do you even hear yourself?”

I took a deep breath and delivered the blow I’d been holding back: “And be honest – are you really angry about broken promises, or because you’re losing your convenient backup girl?”

The color drained from his face. His perfect prep school composure cracked. “What’s that supposed to mean? Jesus, Brooklyn... Don’t make it sound so... cheap. We’re adults. That night... that night was mutual. Don’t tell me you’re still hung up on it?”

Humiliation burned in my chest, but I forced myself to meet his gaze. After all these years, I owed myself that much.

“If you like Madison, just say it. I’m not pathetic enough to chase someone who doesn’t want me. But you knew exactly how I felt about you, and you watched me throw myself at you like some lovesick fool. Did you enjoy the ego boost? Having your childhood friend so desperately in love with you. while you chased the popular girl?”

He still didn’t get it. That’s the thing about people like Aiden – they never understand that people don’t walk away until hope is completely dead.

Hit with the unvarnished truth, Aiden’s face flushed red. He stumbled back like I’d physically struck him, his back hitting the expensive wallpaper. “How can you... what are you even... you...” For once in his life, the golden boy was speechless.

Finally, he straightened his tie – a nervous habit I’d watched him develop since his first Model UN conference. “We’ve known each other since third grade. We’re seniors now. Since you’ve chosen to throw away a decade of friendship, let’s not pretend anymore. Have fun in California.”

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With that, he fled the hotel, leaving ten years of memories hanging in the air between us. The same way he used to flee when we were kids and I beat him at Mario Kart – always running when things

didn’t go his way.

Chapter 15

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I managed to avoid seeing Aiden again until move-in day, though it wasn’t easy living next door. I’d time my coffee runs and grocery trips for when his car wasn’t in the driveway. Started taking the long way to everywhere, just in case.

Maya sent me his Instagram post – a perfectly filtered photo of him and Madison at some rooftop party, his caption announcing they were official. I deleted the notification without opening it, but not before catching a glimpse of the likes piling up. All our mutual friends, already accepting this new reality.

I went through my social media with surgical precision, blocking anyone connected to him. His friends, his cousins, even his little sister who used to borrow my makeup. There was no point keeping any windows into his life open anymore. Some doors need to stay firmly shut.

But the universe has a twisted sense of humor – we ran into them at JFK. Madison was there, of course, looking like she'd stepped out of a travel influencer's feed in her matching luggage set and designer sweats. Her carefully curated airport look made my jeans and Columbia hoodie (bought before everything fell apart) feel suddenly childish.

Aiden barely managed a stiff "Hello" to my parents before storming off. He looked right through me like I was just another stranger in the crowded terminal.

We quickly scattered in different directions, everyone pretending this wasn't painfully awkward. No one looking back, because looking back meant acknowledging what we'd all lost.

At the security checkpoint, I caught one last glimpse of him heading to his gate – the one for New

York-bound flights. He must have felt my gaze because he turned, just for a moment. One final cold

look before he disappeared through the doors, Madison's hand tucked perfectly in his.

Just like that, the boy who'd been there for every major moment of my life – first day of school, braces, driver's test, prom – was walking toward a different future. The boy who knew all my secrets,

all my fears, all my dreams. Or at least, the dreams I'd had before I learned to dream bigger than just being his.

Our paths were finally diverging.

"Good luck with your life," I thought silently, watching his retreating back. Some childhood stories don't get happy endings. Some prince charmings turn out to be just boys who never learned to see beyond themselves.

I turned toward my own gate, ticket to San Francisco clutched in my hand. Stanford was waiting,

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and for the first time in my life, I was writing own story – no co–author needed.

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