

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

Backup Girl No More

Backup Girl No More Chapter 51

Chapter 51

Chapter 11

Atlas's vision cleared, the haze of rage dissipating, leaving behind nothing but a cold, steely resolve.

"Take her to the police." His voice was devoid of emotion, final.

A sharp gasp filled the air as Ivy struggled to fill her lungs with oxygen, her body wracked with violent coughs. She clutched at her throat, her breath hitching as she stared at him in disbelief, horror mingling with desperation.

"No... you can't do this to me," she choked out, her voice breaking. "Atlas, you love me!" Her eyes glistened with hysteria. "You promised—you said you'd always protect me!"

Atlas didn't spare her a second glance.

With a curt wave of his hand, his security team moved in, grabbing Ivy as she thrashed in their hold, her screams echoing through the vast estate.

The moment the door slammed shut, the house was plunged into an eerie stillness.

Atlas inhaled sharply, forcing his racing heart to steady. "Still no sign of Celeste?"

The answer came quickly. "No, sir. There's been no trace of her."

His throat tightened. Without another word, he turned and ascended the stairs, his footsteps heavy

as he entered our bedroom.

The bed was untouched, the sheets still faintly carrying my scent. Atlas lowered himself onto the mattress, burying his face into the pillows as if he could will me back into existence.

His fingers brushed against a single long strand of hair left behind on the fabric. Carefully, he picked it up, cradling it against his chest.

A breath trembled from his lips. And for the first time in years, a single tear slid silently down his face.

“Celeste... where are you?”

He lay on my pillow, staring at the ceiling, the past rushing back with cruel clarity.

The way I had looked at him on those late nights, my gaze hazy with love.

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The way I had whispered his name, curled up against his chest, believing that I was safe in his arms.

His body jolted upright as a sharp, searing pain shot through his chest.

He gasped for air, but it felt like a weight was pressing down on him, suffocating him.

He had to get out.

Atlas bolted down the stairs, shoving open the front door as he stumbled outside, the cold night air hitting his burning skin.

But it didn't help.

Every shadow, every scent, every lingering memory was like a blade against his already torn-apart

soul.

He staggered toward the driveway, his body moving on instinct, but the crushing grief wouldn't let him go.

Atlas collapsed onto the steps of the grand entrance, his hands gripping his hair, his eyes vacant.

The rain began to fall. Soft at first, then heavier, until it was a downpour.

Yet he didn't move. The icy water seeped into his clothes, his skin, his bones, but the numbness had already settled in long before the rain had.

His body swayed, exhaustion dragging him under.

Then, everything went black.

On the other side of the world.

The midday sun beat down relentlessly, beads of sweat trickling down my skin as I pressed forward, my boots digging into the rocky path.

I was nearly there. My breath was ragged, my limbs heavy, but as I lifted my gaze, my heart swelled.

The mountain peak stood just ahead, towering against the endless blue sky.

A weary smile tugged at my lips. With one last push, I stepped onto the summit.

The world unfolded beneath me—a breathtaking expanse of valleys and rivers, rolling hills and

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endless horizons.

I threw my arms open, letting the wind rush past me, carrying away the last remnants of my old self.

This had been my father's dream—to see the world, to stand atop mountains, to embrace the vastness of the earth.

But he never got the chance. So now, I would do it for him.

For us.

For five years, I had dreamed of traveling. Of seeing more than just the walls of that estate, more than just the same city I had been confined to.

But every time, Atlas had found a reason to stop me.

And so, year after year, I had stayed. For five years, the only sight I had truly seen—was him.

But not anymore. From now on, my world would be filled with landscapes, oceans, stars—everything I had once been denied.

I lifted my camera, capturing the beauty in front of me, the moment frozen in time.

And then, with a small, determined breath, I uploaded it online. A reminder that freedom was always within reach.

“Mr. Whitmore! We’ve found her. Someone posted a photo of her from the mountain summit in Instagram.”

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Atlas took the tablet from his assistant, his fingers tightening around the edges as the screen flickered to life.

Even through the digital display, my presence struck him like a tidal wave.

His pulse pounded as he scrolled through the images I had taken—breathtaking landscapes, golden sunrises, endless oceans stretching far beyond the horizon.

Every shot was a masterpiece. Not just in composition, not just in color, but in something deeper.

Each frame held freedom.

Atlas stared at a particular photo—one of a cliff’s edge, the world vast and infinite beyond it.

For a long moment, he didn’t speak.

He didn’t know if he was remembering the promise he once made—to take me around the world. Or

if he was realizing just how far I had already gone without him.

His throat tightened. “Book me the next flight to A-Country,” he ordered, his voice clipped, urgent.

“And keep tracking her location. I want updates every hour.”

Atlas arrived at the hotel where I was. He stood outside the door, his hand raised, fingers curled into

a hesitant fist.

He couldn't knock. His entire body was rigid, every breath he took uneven.

In the end, he didn't knock. He sank onto the floor outside the door, resting his back against the cold wood.

And he waited through the night, through the long hours of silence, his thoughts a chaotic storm.

When morning came, the sound of footsteps broke his trance.

A hotel staff member had come to clean the room.

Atlas lifted his head, his muscles stiff from staying in the same position for too long.

"She's already gone," the housekeeper said casually, unlocking the door. "Left early this morning. Didn't check out, though."

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Atlas felt as though someone had dumped ice water over his chest.

He pushed himself to his feet, swaying slightly, his exhaustion finally catching up to him.

The address his assistant provided led him to a public park.

He sprinted through the streets, his heart hammering, his breath ragged.

He had to find me. If he was just a second too late—if I disappeared from his sight again—he didn't

know if he'd ever see me again.

Then—his footsteps faltered.

By the fountain, I stood with her back to him, sunlight dancing off the lens of my camera as I reached up to feed the pigeons.

I laughed softly as a bird flapped too close, my face tilting toward the sky.

And for a moment, Atlas forgot how to breathe. Happier than he had seen me in years.

I spun lightly with the birds, my hair catching in the breeze, my smile so bright it was almost painful

to look at.

It was the kind of smile I had never worn when I was with him.

Atlas felt something in his chest tighten and twist, an ache deep in his ribs.

He wanted to be happy for me. And yet—he wasn't ready to lose me.

After a long moment, he finally forced himself to move. Not to my side. But to the opposite end of the

bench.

Close enough to be near me, far enough to keep his distance.

When he spoke, his voice was hoarse, as if he had forgotten how to use it.

“Celeste,” he murmured. “I’m sorry.”

I didn't reply.

Atlas let out a slow, shaky breath. His fingers curled against his knees, his entire body tense.

“I thought... I thought that what I felt for you was guilt,” he confessed, his tone full of self-loathing. “For so many years, I kept telling myself that. That every time I held you, every time I cared for you,

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every time I needed you—it was just guilt.”

“But then you left.” His voice cracked. “And I realized that I love you.”

He exhaled a shaky breath, his head tilting back, his eyes burning.

“I know you'll never forgive me,” he continued. “I know I've lost the right to ask anything of you. But

please...”

He swallowed. “Let me stay by your side.”

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The air was filled with the soft cooing of pigeons, their wings fluttering against the bright blue sky. Children's laughter rang through the square, pure and unburdened, a stark contrast to the silence stretching between us.

For a long time, I didn't speak. Then, finally, I turned to Atlas.

"You don't deserve to stay by my side, Atlas," I said. "Nothing you have belongs to me. It belongs to

Ivy. Wasn't that what you intended all along?"

His face stiffened, but I didn't stop.

"I've spent years living in the illusion you created, believing every lie you fed me," I continued, my words as steady as my heartbeat. "Do you have any idea how much I hated myself when I finally

saw the truth?"

His fingers twitched slightly, his entire body unmoving.

I let out a slow breath, my expression unreadable. "I hated myself for loving you."

I let the words sink in, let them twist through the air like a blade cutting deep. "I hated myself for loving the man who destroyed everything I had."

Atlas flinched, barely perceptible, but I caught it.

And just like that, the last remnants of anger drained from my body. I looked at the face I had known for twenty years. The man who had shared my bed for five.

And suddenly—there was no more hatred left in me.

Perhaps, in every life, there was a person meant to wound you so deeply that you'd never be the same again.

I rose to my feet, gazing down at him. A soft, detached smile curved my lips, but it never reached my

eyes.

"Atlas," I said, my voice light, almost gentle. "I will never forgive you."

The summer sun beat down on us, but he looked frozen.

I watched as his lips parted slightly, then curled into something almost pitiful. “Celeste,” he

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whispered, “but I love you. I really, truly love you.”

His voice was so quiet, carried away by the wind before it ever reached me.

I lifted my camera, turning away from him, capturing the smiles of strangers—the joy of those who had never known the kind of pain I had endured.

In the corner of my frame, there was only one figure hunched over on a bench, his face buried in his hands. The only one who didn’t belong.

“Sis, will you take a picture for us?” A small, excited voice tugged at my sleeve.

I turned to see a boy, no older than five, clutching a flower crown while his sister giggled beside him, reaching up to place it on his head.

A genuine smile broke across my lips for the first time in a long while.

“Of course,” I said, raising my camera.

The shutter clicked, freezing their innocence in time. And just for a moment, I thought of another day, two decades ago.

A five-year-old Atlas had woven a tiny grass bracelet and slipped it onto my wrist, his eyes full of childish devotion as he whispered:

“I’ll always protect you, Celeste. I won’t let anyone hurt you.”

Back then, there had been no lies in his eyes—only me.

A sudden warmth pressed against my back, pulling me from my thoughts.

A breath-warm and painfully familiar—brushed against my ear, sending an unwanted shiver through me. Atlas’s arms wrapped around me tightly, almost desperately, locking me in place.

I stiffened.

His embrace was suffocating, as if he thought that if he just held me close enough, I wouldn’t slip

away.

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I pushed him away. And this time, I didn't stop.

I walked into the trees, disappearing into the dense forest, leaving Atlas behind.

But after a long silence, his voice—hoarse and quiet—drifted through the air behind me.

“I understand now, Celeste.”

One Month Later

The salty breeze carried the scent of the ocean, mixing with the rich aroma of freshly brewed coffee.

I sat by the window of a small seaside café, fingers curled around the warmth of my cup, watching the waves crash against the shore.

Laughter and chatter filled the air, the easy conversations of passing tourists blending into the background—until one sentence broke through the noise.

“Did you

hear? The CEO of Whitmore Enterprises turned himself in!”

A woman gasped. “What? Atlas Whitmore? Why?”

“He confessed to everything,” someone else said, lowering their voice. “Destroyed his father-in-law’s

company with underhanded tactics, manipulated his wife, caused her father’s death, and—God, the

most awful part is—he was the reason she lost her baby.”

“Jesus,” someone muttered. “The woman he loved... she suffered so much because of him.”

I stilled.

My grip on the cup tightened slightly before I forced myself to relax. Lowering my gaze, I unlocked

my phone. The news was already waiting for me.

The top story—the first image—was of Atlas being escorted into custody, his expression unreadable.

I skimmed through the article, my eyes catching on one particular quote.

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“If it weren’t for Ivy, I never would have taken the blame for all these years. I never liked her, but I could never bring myself to do something that would destroy someone’s life.” Nathaniel’s voice.

I exhaled slowly, setting my phone aside just as a waiter approached my table.

“Miss Laurent, your package.” I blinked, taking the envelope from him with mild curiosity. Sliding my fingers under the seal, I unfolded the contents.

Two documents.

The first—A divorce agreement. At the bottom, in bold, precise strokes, was Atlas’s signature.

The second—A transfer of assets. Everything he owned—his properties, his shares, his wealth—had been signed over to me.

Every last piece of his empire, handed to me without hesitation.

At the bottom of the envelope was a small folded note. I knew the handwriting before I even opened

it.

Atlas’s.

“Celeste, don’t refuse it.”

“I promised you—I will never appear in your life again.”

“May you be as free as the wind, happy and safe.”

I stared at the note for a long time. Then, slowly, I smiled. For the first time, he understood me.

I tore the letter into pieces, letting the shreds fall onto the table like the remnants of a past I no longer

carried.

Lifting my cup once more, I took a slow sip.

The coffee was rich, carrying a subtle bitterness that lingered on my tongue—one that didn't overwhelm but instead invited me to savor it.

Reaching for my camera, I turned toward the horizon, capturing the endless expanse of the ocean, the seagulls circling above, the small, stubborn flowers growing between the cracks of the rocks.

With a quiet sense of finality, I post this on my Instagram:

A new beginning.

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Chapter 1

Chapter 1

“What are you watching?”

Pax slipped his arms around me from behind, his breath warm against my skin. A featherlight kiss landed on my earlobe, sending a shiver down my spine.

His gaze shifted to my phone screen.

For a long moment, he said nothing. Then, with a low chuckle, he reached up and covered my eyes.

“Don't watch that... it's embarrassing.”

The video kept playing.

On the screen, Pax was in a ballet dress, balancing on tiptoes, spinning in wobbly circles. His movements were clumsy, awkward. But his expression—so focused, so serious—made my chest tighten.

My throat felt dry.

“Was it worth it?” I asked softly.

He had gone this far—putting on a dress, performing ballet, throwing away his pride—all to earn enough to buy me a measly \$10 apple cake.

Was it really worth it?

“Of course it was.”

He answered without hesitation, his voice lazy, as if it was the easiest thing in the world.

“This is nothing.”

“When I make real money one day, I’ll buy you designer bags. The kind that cost a hundred grand.”

He paused after saying that, as if something had just occurred to him.

I clenched my fingers into a fist. But on my face, there was still only a soft smile.

“Alright,” I said.

We lived in a cramped, rundown apartment in the heart of the city slums.

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Chapter 1.

The room was so small that once the bed was in, there was barely space for anything else.

A hundred grand.

It sounded like a figure from another world, impossibly out of reach.

And yet, today—I had heard it twice.

Pax didn’t know that I had been there that night, watching his performance from the crowd.

I was dressed in a clumsy, oversized Santa Claus suit, my face hidden beneath a tangled mess of cheap synthetic white hair. The glue used to stick it on must have been low-quality—I felt an itch creeping across my skin, and soon, red splotches broke out along my jawline.

The event coordinator took one look at me and told me to head backstage to clean up.

That was when I passed by a room with its door left slightly ajar.

And I heard his voice.

“Yeah, I’m kind of over it. Never in my life have I lived in a place that shitty,” Pax said casually. His

tone was light, unfamiliar—nothing like the man I thought I knew.

“The market’s right downstairs. If you don’t close the window, the whole room reeks of rotting fish and shrimp.”

Laughter rippled through the room. Someone chimed in, voice full of amusement.

“You really went all out, huh? Dressing up like that was a bold move.”

“After tonight, she’ll probably be completely devoted to you.”

“As if she’d ever find out that when Nina had her birthday, you bought her a \$100,000 designer bag without even blinking.”

Laughter erupted again.

“\$100,000.”

That number rang in my head, over and over.

Someone snorted. “So, Pax, how long are you planning to keep up this poor-boy act?”

“Nina’s coming back in seven days. If she finds out you’ve been fooling around with some random

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girl, you’re screwed.”

“Exactly. And poor girls are clingy as hell. You better hope she doesn’t get too attached.”

Pax let out a lazy chuckle. “What’s there to worry about? In seven days, I’ll break up with her.”

“And if she doesn’t let go?”

“Then I’ll handle it,” he said, stretching as if this whole thing was no more than a minor inconvenience. “Worst case, I fake some memory loss and act like I don’t know her at all.”

His laugh was careless. “What could she possibly do about it?”

I stood frozen outside the door.

So he had been faking it all along.

The struggle, the sacrifices—the nights spent in our cramped little apartment, pretending we were scraping by together.

And seven days from now, he was planning to end things.

I thought I would storm in and slap him across the face.

But I didn’t.

I turned and walked away, heading back to the room I was supposed to be in.

Facing the mirror, I slowly peeled off the cheap white hair. The glue had irritated my skin, leaving my chin swollen and sore.

I stared at my reflection—at the ridiculous red patches, the remnants of that awful costume.

Then, suddenly, I laughed. Pax didn’t know that I had been lying to him, too. I once promised that I would love him forever. But when it came down to a choice between my future and him—I had never planned to choose him.

My plane ticket was already booked.

Departure date—ironically—seven days from now.

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Chapter 2.

Chapter 2

The room was so small that there was almost no space in the kitchen opposite the bed.

The water in the pot was boiling, and the steam was rising, blurring the edges of the dim space.

Parks stood by the stove, wearing only a white vest, with broad shoulders and a thin waist, and his muscles trembling with every move.

He threw the pasta into the boiling water skillfully, and his rhythmic movements were almost calming.

“Tonight, I’m going to make your favorite tomato pasta.” He said, with a hint of playful warmth in his voice. Then he turned around, frowned his black eyebrows, and showed a mischievous expression. “You’d better eat two bowls, otherwise you’ll be in trouble tonight.”

There was not even a decent dining table in the room.

I sat cross-legged on the bed, looking at him as usual.

It’s hard to believe that a person who was born rich and was pampered and admired by those around him could act this drama so realistically.

Parks came over with a bowl, and his tone was very gentle, “Be careful of your hands.”

Then, as if he remembered something, he looked at me and his expression became serious.

“Baby, can we talk for a second?”

I looked up at him.

Before he finished speaking, his cell phone rang.

He glanced at the caller ID.

At that moment, the expression on his face changed.

He answered the phone without hesitation, turned slightly, and whispered.

“There is an urgent job, and the salary is two hundred yuan more than usual,”

“Sweetheart, just eat something first, okay?”

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Chapter 2

His voice was as gentle as ever, warm and coaxing, the way he always was when he wanted me to

listen.

“I took this job,” he continued, watching me carefully. “Let me make it up to you tomorrow—I’ll take you out for a tasty meal.”

After answering the phone, he instinctively leaned over and prepared to kiss me.

I stepped back and walked in front of him.

“You’re in a hurry, right?” I whispered. “Then let’s go.”

“Okay.”

He agreed without hesitation, grabbing a jacket from the back of the chair. He draped it over his shoulders and hurried away.

I stayed where I was, still sitting on the bed, until my legs were numb.

The pasta were cold and hard, and I had no appetite at all.

I took a bite.

It was awful.

So awful, in fact, that I felt tears stinging my eyes.

Funny.

I thought I had made my choice.

I told myself I wouldn’t get hurt. None of this mattered anymore.

But something inside me still trembled as I saw the name flash across the screen – Nina.

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Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

By the time Pax returned, the night was deep, and I had long since gone to bed.

He moved carefully, leaning down to press a featherlight kiss to my forehead.

For a long moment, he said nothing.

Then, in a voice so low I almost thought I imagined it, he whispered, “I’m sorry.”

The words barely reached my ears, but they lingered, unsettling something in my chest.

He washed up quickly, the quiet rustling of water and fabric filling the tiny room. Then, with the same cautiousness, he slipped into bed beside me.

Our bed was cheap and rickety—just shifting slightly made the frame creak. I turned onto my side,

careful not to wake him.

Moonlight spilled in through the window, casting pale shadows across the walls.

I glanced up.

Pax was already asleep. His face was calm, his features relaxed in a way they never were when he

was awake.

I reached for his phone, my fingers moving instinctively over the familiar passcode.

It unlocked without hesitation.

Nina was back.

And the reason he had rushed out tonight—was to pick her up.

In the group chat, his friends were already having their fun:

“Nina’s back earlier than expected. Let’s see how Pax gets out of this one.”

“Tsk, so you’re still going back to that shabby little apartment tonight?”

“You haven’t broken up with her yet? Damn, don’t tell me you’re actually getting attached?”

Pax’s reply was simple.

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Chapter 3,

“Fuck off.”

Then, a message from Nina herself:

“I heard you’ve been seeing someone these past two years?”

He had read it.

But he didn’t reply.

Two years.

I hadn’t even realized it had been that long.

For over seven hundred days and nights, Pax and I had shared this tiny, suffocating space.

We had worked endlessly, saving every penny, with nothing to rely on but each other.

We had nothing else.

I locked the phone and stared blankly at the ceiling.

In the silence, his steady breathing filled the room.

Then, somewhere between wakefulness and sleep, Pax shifted.

His arm draped over my waist, pulling me close.

Half-conscious, voice slurred, he murmured against my ear.

I listened carefully, waiting for the words to form.

It was the same as before. “I’m sorry.”

I lifted a hand, covering my eyes. But really, there was nothing to be sorry for. We had gotten what

we wanted.

Seven days from now, he would return to being Lord. Pax.

And I—I would be gone.

Adios To My Card

My First Love

1.

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Chapter 4

I never expected Nina to come looking for me.

The restaurant was crowded that evening, the warm glow of the overhead lights casting soft reflections on the polished wooden tables. I barely looked at her when I set down the dish, just another customer in the endless stream of faces I served every day.

“Enjoy your meal,” I said, the words automatic, practiced.

But then—she spoke.

“You’re Cecilia?”

The way she said my name sent a slow chill through me.

I turned my head, finally meeting her gaze.

She was watching me, appraising me like I was something cheap on a store shelf, something barely

worth a glance, let alone her attention. Her perfectly manicured fingers toyed with the stem of her wine glass, a smirk playing at the corner of her lips.

Then, she let out a soft laugh—sharp, disdainful.

“Do you even have more than a hundred dollars on you right now?” Her voice dripped with mockery. “Where the hell did you crawl out from, huh?”

I didn’t react.

I just looked at her, my expression giving nothing away.

She smirked, tapping a nail against the glass. “Two years by Pax’s side. You must be good at playing

your cards.”

“But tell me—do you even know who he really is?”

I tilted my head slightly. “And if I do?”

Nina scoffed. “Then I’d say you’re dumber than you look.”

Pax family's youngest son, their golden boy. The one who had been spoiled, adored, shielded from the real world his entire life.

Chapter 4.

Her gaze flickered with amusement, as if she could already see the cracks forming beneath my calm.

"You don't belong in his world." She leaned forward slightly, voice lowering into something almost gentle. "Be smart about this. Pack your things and leave."

I held my ground. "Or what?"

Her smile widened, but it didn't reach her eyes. "Or you'll stick around just long enough to be discarded. And trust me, that won't be pretty."

I said nothing.

Because, really—what was there to say?

Instead, I turned on my heel, ready to walk away.

But she moved faster.

She shot up from her seat and reached for my wrist, her grip delicate but insistent.

Without thinking, I pulled back. I hadn't even used much force.

And yet—

She staggered, heels slipping against the polished floor, her body tilting—falling.

The tablecloth went with her, dragging plates and glasses down in a cascading crash of shattering porcelain.

The entire restaurant seemed to go still.

For a moment, all I could hear was the sharp ring of broken ceramic against tile.

Then like a switch had flipped—Nina changed.

Gone was the sharp, arrogant woman from seconds ago.

Her expression crumpled, tears welling in her wide, delicate eyes.

“A–Pax...” she whispered, voice trembling, fragile.

I barely had a second to react before a sudden force shoved me aside.

Pax.

Chapter 4

He pushed past me without hesitation, kneeling beside her.

His brows were drawn together, jaw tight with concern. His hand reached out, gently brushing against her leg,

There was a shallow cut on her calf, barely noticeable against her pale skin. It was just a scrape—so small that if he had arrived a minute later it would have healed.

But Nina gasped, face twisting as if she had been grievously wounded.

“It hurts...” she whimpered.

How absurd.

And yet—Pax looked at her as though she were bleeding out in his arms.

Then, slowly, he lifted his gaze to mine.

Cold. Unforgiving.

His voice was quiet, but razor–sharp.

“Why did you push her?”

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Chapter 5

Chapter 5

The air was thick with the heat of summer, heavy and stifling. But I—standing there, listening to her words—felt nothing but cold seeping into my bones.

Nina’s voice was smooth, deliberate. Every syllable she spoke was like the careful edge of a knife,

meant to cut clean and deep.

“She knew all along, Pax. She knew exactly who you were. She was only with you for the money.”

For a moment, Pax just stood there.

Motionless.

As if the accusation had stolen the breath from his lungs.

His brows drew together, eyes searching mine, desperate for something—denial, maybe.

Reassurance.

“You... knew?” His voice was quiet, cautious, like he wasn’t sure he wanted to hear my answer.

I met his gaze for a fleeting second before lowering my eyes.

Yes.

I knew.

I had found out just yesterday.

But the truth didn’t matter anymore.

Because Pax didn’t believe me.

A sharp, breathless laugh escaped him, bitter and hollow. He ran a hand through his hair, shaking his head as if trying to piece together something that no longer made sense.

“Cecilia, I have to admit—you’re a damn good actress.”

The irony nearly made me laugh.

He was the one who had lied.

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Chapter 5

The one who had spun an entire world of fiction, played a part so flawlessly that even I had believed

it.

And yet he was the one who was angry?

“You were with me... for money?” His voice was hoarse, weighted with something thick and unreadable.

“You really had me fooled.” His lips curled into something that wasn’t quite a smile. “Two years. Two years, and you never slipped up. You must’ve been laughing at me this whole time.”

I said nothing.

Because what was there to say?

Pax had already decided on the truth he wanted to believe.

He thought he had me figured out. Thought he had pulled back the curtain and exposed the person I

really was.

And in a way, he wasn’t entirely wrong.

Yes, I loved money.

Loved it enough to work myself into exhaustion, to count every single dollar as if my life depended

on it.

That I had been saving, clawing my way toward an escape, so I can afford my studies abroad. To finish the education I had been forced to abandon.

And through it all, these past two years, he had been playing his own role to perfection.

The struggling man. The devoted lover. The boy who had nothing.

Every meal he cooked, every dime he counted, every carefully constructed illusion—he had played the part so well.

And I?

I had never once asked for more than he gave.

Nothing more. Nothing less.

A quiet chuckle broke through the tension.

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Chapter 5.

Nina, still resting lightly against Pax, tilted her head at me, amusement curling at the edges of her mouth.

“Poor people,” she mused, shaking her head in mock sympathy. “They’re always selfish. Always greedy.”

Then, as if something about the scene before her was deeply entertaining, she turned to Pax, eyes gleaming.

“Are you sure, Pax?” she asked, her voice soft, lilting, dripping with quiet mockery.

“Are you sure she’s the one you want to be with?”

My Card and My First Love

Chapter 6

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Chapter 6

Pax was gone.

Not just gone—erased.

His things had disappeared overnight, vanishing so cleanly that if not for the faint indentation his side of the mattress still held, I might have thought he had never been here at all

The small, suffocating apartment we had shared for the past two years now felt eerily... spacious.

I stood in the center of the room, staring at the empty space where his belongings used to be. The closet door, once barely able to close from the weight of our combined mess, now hung slightly ajar—hollow, unburdened.

Even his scent, that faint mix of cedar and citrus, was already beginning to fade.

He hadn’t left a note.

No message. No half-hearted explanation scrawled on a scrap of paper.

Nothing

Just silence.

I swallowed, exhaling slowly

So, that was it, a clean break.

A quiet, unspoken ending.

Maybe this was for the best.

This way, at least, I wasn't the one who had to walk away first.

Two days ago, I had posted a question online on Reddit:

"I'm leaving the country in seven days. I haven't told my boyfriend yet. How do I break it to him?"

The comments had been ruthless.

Selfish. Cruel. Heartless.

Chapter 6

They accused me of never planning a future with him, of leading him on, of being too much of a coward to be honest.

And the worst part?

They were right.

Between him and my future, I chose my future.

I had never truly considered another option.

I wanted to laugh at how absurd it all was, but my lips wouldn't move, frozen in something tight and

bitter.

And yet...

Now that I thought about it, Pax's act had never been flawless.

The cracks had always been there, thin and almost imperceptible, but there nonetheless.

The night we met, I was working a part-time shift at a bar when a drunk customer grabbed my wrist, pulling me closer with the kind of entitlement that came from knowing no one would stop him.

Pax had.

He had stepped in, effortlessly peeling the man's fingers off my arm, his presence alone enough to make the guy stumble back with a mumbled curse.

He hadn't just defended me—he had handled the situation, smooth and composed, as if confrontation was something he had been raised to navigate.

Then he turned to me, gaze flickering over my face, checking.

“Are you okay?”

His voice had been calm, steady. And before I even had a chance to answer, he had taken my phone,

punched in his number, and saved it.

I should have known then.

The way he carried himself—the quiet confidence, the unconscious authority—it wasn't something a struggling college student could fake.

But he had smiled, easy and unbothered, and said,

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Chapter 6

“I'm just a scholarship kid trying to get by.”

That expensive suit he had been wearing? Borrowed from set, he claimed.

“Some talent agency needed a background actor to play a rich heir. Lucky me, huh? This is probably

the nicest thing I'll ever wear.”

And I had believed him.

I was even naïve enough to help him look for more part-time jobs, thinking I was helping him the

way he had helped me.

The rest was predictable.

He chased, I hesitated.

He persisted, I fell.

We moved into this tiny apartment together, vowing to work hard, to build something—a future.

But I understood now.

That future was just something I had to fight for, sounds so ridiculous.....

What I had thought was struggling together had only been a game to him—an experiment, a pastime, a lie he lived simply because he could.

I didn't turn on the light.

The room felt too empty, too unfamiliar in the dark.

Then my phone vibrated twice against the nightstand. The screen flickered to life, casting a faint glow across the sheets.

A message—Pax.

An image—My passport.

“Accidentally took this with me.”

My fingers curled around the edge of the blanket, the fabric cool beneath my skin.

A second message appeared.

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Chapter 6.

“Why are you even getting this? Where exactly are you going?”

Stared at the words, my pulse skipping for reasons I didn't understand.

vivie

and and My First Love

