

Save Myself From Desperation by Cara Agnes

Chapter 6

The next morning dawned with gentle, warm sunlight streaming through the window.

Ashley's eyelashes fluttered as she slowly awakened from her slumber.

She gazed at the unfamiliar ceiling overhead. It took her a moment to realize she was in Valentin's room.

She and Valentin got their marriage license yesterday, and she would be living there from now on.

Ashley got up from the bed, noticing the healing scar on her calf.

The ointment Valentin had Gavyn bring over was proving quite effective.

At breakfast, Zain sat at the head of the table, with Ashley taking her place beside Valentin.

Zain couldn't help but beam with joy when he looked at Ashley. "Valentin, let's pick a good day soon to hold the wedding ceremony for you and Ashley! It'll also be the perfect time to announce your marriage!"

Valentin nodded slightly. "Okay."

Ashley was startled, and under the table, she gently kicked his leg with hers.

Valentin's breath hitched, and he glanced down to see Ashley's leg gently against his.

Through their thin clothes, he could distinctly feel the softness and warmth of her leg.

Valentin's gaze darkened.

He looked at her and seemed to question with his eyes, "What's wrong?"

Ashley leaned in and whispered in his ear, "We just signed a divorce agreement yesterday, agreeing to divorce in a year. Announcing our marriage now will make the divorce more troublesome, won't it?"

Valentin frowned.

Ashley continued in a low voice, "So, let's skip the wedding for now and keep the marriage secret, okay?"

His gaze darkening, Valentin looked at her intently for a long time before turning away without expression.

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Ashley turned to Zain and smiled, "Let's not rush the wedding. We can talk about it later. However, Zain was eager for grandchildren.

"Ashley, the wedding is ultimately up to you. It's okay if you want to hold it later, but don't make me wait too long."

Ashley smiled politely and said something else, smoothly steering the conversation away from the wedding topic.

After breakfast, Zain returned to the Kingsley Manor because he didn't live at the

Kingsley Villa.

It was the weekend, and Valentin didn't have to go to the office.

He sat on the living room sofa, wearing a loose, thin sweater, flipping through a finance magazine with a casual yet noble demeanor. His hands had pronounced knuckles.

Remembering the ointment from last night, Ashley rolled her eyes and went upstairs to fetch it. Approaching Valentin with the ointment, she coughed awkwardly and said, "This ointment is really effective. You have a bite mark on your wrist. Maybe you can try it?"

He didn't look up from his magazine. "No need."

Ashley blinked. "You want to keep that bite mark forever?"

Finally, he looked up from the magazine and stared at her, his tone cold. "Aren't you always thinking about divorcing me? Why bother with this?"

Ashley didn't know how to respond.

He scrutinized her, his eyes intense and piercing. "What if I want to keep this mark?"

Ashley was choked by his words.

She thought, 'What a strange preference.

"Who likes to keep scars on themselves?"

"I remembered I did not bite him that hard, yet the mark left,

"Fine, since he doesn't want to use the ointment, I won't insist. She turned to leave.

Valentin casually stretched out his legs.

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Focused on the ointment, Ashley stumbled over his legs, losing her balance and falling towards him.

The next moment, she was caught in his strong embrace.

Valentin had reached out and held her.

Ashley found herself almost lying on him, their bodies pressed together. Unexpectedly, she felt Valentin's warm, firm chest against her.

With one arm around her waist, he looked down. "Are you alright?"

Ashley, close to him, felt his warm breath on her neck when he asked her, sending tingles of excitement down her spine.

She shivered, her ears burning hot.

"Thank you!"

She quickly got up, thanked him, and hurried away, clearly uneasy.

Valentin raised an eyebrow, watching her flee, and then he moved his legs backward that had been in the way.

Gavyn, just entering the living room, was shocked to see Valentin intentionally tripping Ashley!

Back in her room, Ashley touched her neck until the tingles of excitement faded, then let out a long sigh.

She set the ointment on the dressing table, and her phone buzzed.

She received a message.

[Congratulations, you've passed the preliminary round of Show Your Dance. Please attend the semifinals in a week. The theme is "White". We look forward to your performance.]

Ashley almost forgot about the competition.

Previously, Jessica wanted to enter a modern dance contest, had dragged her along to

sign up.

Jessica was talented and confident, having danced for many years.

Jessica, aware of Ashley's background in dance, cunningly coaxed her into entering the dance competition under the pretense of deepening their sisterly bond. Jessica's real plan was to shine brighter by

comparison, positioning Ashley as the plain foil to her own glamorous,

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swan-like elegance.

Keenly aware of Jessica's ulterior motives, Ashley still chose to participate, driven by her eagerness to ingratiate herself with the Ramos family. She followed Jessica's lead in everything, including entering the competition.

In the preliminary round, Jessica's manipulation was evident. She dressed Ashley in an unsuitable outfit, starkly contrasting with her own elegant attire. This clever ploy made Jessica stand out as a vision of grace and beauty, effortlessly clinching the top spot in the initial round.

Ashley had been immersed in dance since her early years, lovingly trained by her grandmother. She had effortlessly mastered every dance form. When she was at a casual performance at a school event, she once caught the eye of Megan Rice, a renowned dancer, who saw potential in her.

Despite being handed the most unsuitable costumes, Ashley was able to show her innate talent.

However, she deliberately underperformed, aiming to curry favor with the Ramos family, unbothered by being overshadowed by Jessica. She believed this humility would earn her their respect.

But her efforts were met with nothing but derision from her brothers, who cruelly mocked her for being over-confident, embarrassing the Ramos family. They even asserted Jessica's superiority in every way, belittling Ashley's talents.

Upon receiving that surprising message on her phone, Ashley thought in disbelief, 'Did I really advance in the preliminaries?'

"And now, I'll face Jessica in the next round."

With beautiful eyes, she smiled faintly as she thought, 'This time, I'm curious to see if Jessica can still claim the top spot in the semifinals.'

The semifinal round's theme was White, a challenge in modern dance.

Many practiced modern dance, but few excelled in it.

With a focused mind, Ashley made a performance that embodied the theme, and then she made intensive rehearsals.

Valentin, aware of her competition, had no particular comment.

Gavyn, keen and observant, already knew everything, thinking, 'Mr.

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Kingsley seems quite unconstrained about Ms. Ramos' choices, almost as if he's content to stand behind her, supporting whatever she decides to do.

Time swiftly moved on, and the week of the competition arrived.

Ashley unexpectedly encountered Jessica and Jeremy backstage when arriving at the venue on time.

A dapper, handsome man accompanied Jessica and Jeremy.
He was Frankie Ramos. Ashley recognized with just a cold gaze.
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