A Love Forgotten Chapter 81

Elijah swiftly dragged me away, leaving Teri behind and furiously shouting in place. He drove fast, I was thrown around in the backseat without a seatbelt, forced to grip the seat to steady myself.

Furious, my eyes burned with tears. "Elijah, are you crazy? I'm calling the police!"

Elijah's gaze was fixed on the road ahead, his expression dark and cold. "Go ahead! Tell the police your legal husband took you away. Let's see who cares!"

I wanted to reach for my purse, but Elijah slammed on the brakes. My head smashed hard against the seat in front of me. A wave of dizziness hit me, and everything went black.

I struggled to keep my eyes open to grab my phone, but my body wouldn't cooperate, and I passed bu

When I woke up, I was in an unfamiliar room. It was even more basic than the villa before, and there was a lingering smell of fresh paint.

"You're awake?" Elijah's deep voice echoed from somewhere in the room.

I shot up but was forced to lie back down by the dizziness. Footsteps approached, and Elijah's face appeared above me. In just a few days, he looked worn out, his beard unshaven and his hair unkempt

I clutched my head, weakly asking, "Where have you taken me?"

Elijah drew the curtains, letting in the sunlight. "We're on the outskirts. It's a vacation home I bought as an investment. It's still under renovation."

I struggled to sit up, leaning weakly against the headboard. Elijah stood by the window, staring at the view outside. I glanced around the room.

Sure enough, it wasn't fully furnished yet. The furniture looked half-new, half-old, likely left by the previous

owner.

After taking in the view for a moment, Elijah turned to look at me, his gaze steady but complicated. There was anger in his eyes, but there was also something like helplessness.

I licked my dry lips. "I want some water."

Elijah silently handed me a bottle of mineral water. My hands were still weak from just waking up, and after struggling to twist it open, I had to give up. He took the bottle back and unscrewed it with ease.

"Here." He handed the bottle back to me.

I froze for a moment, hesitating before taking it. Seeing how cautious I was, Elijah let out a bitter laugh." I'm not going to hurt you. You don't have to be this careful around me."

I stayed silent for a while before asking. "How did you know where I was?"

Elijah didn't answer, his gaze darkening. Suddenly, it clicked–Evelyn! She must have been so angry that she told Jocelyn. And Jocelyn, wanting to provoke Elijah, told him my whereabouts.

I slumped back against the headboard, feeling defeated. "Elijah, what exactly do you want from me?"

Elijah shot back, "That's my question to you. What do you want, Ariana?"

Without hesitation, I answered, "I want a divorce."

Elijah replied just as quickly, "Not happening."

We were in a deadlock

I laughed bitterly. "I never thought you'd put up with a woman like me for seven years, all for money."

His tone was icy as he said, "Don't try to provoke me. Whether or not I'm in it for the money has nothing to do with our marriage."

I sighed inwardly. "Why lie to yourself? If it weren't for the Linden Group's financial troubles, you never would've agreed to marry me in the first place."

I flashed him a forced smile. "Elijah, I was wrong before. But it's over now. Can't we just go our separate ways?"

Elijah's voice was cold. "No."

I slumped back against the bed, drained. "Elijah, don't force my hand. I'll hire a lawyer, and I will get a divorce."

He let out a mocking laugh. "Fine! We can go to court. Let's see who breaks first after a few year battles."

I fell silent. A deep sense of despair settled over me.

Elijah wasn't planning on letting me go, nor was he willing to give up that money. What I once thought was the key to winning this love game had turned into the shackles binding me.

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Tears slowly filled my eyes, one after another rolling down my cheeks. Elijah took my cold hand in his, and I heard his voice echoing in my ears.

"Ari, stop being so stubborn. In these past five years, how many times have you threatened divorce? And yet, we're still here, aren't we? I'm never going to divorce you. Ever."

I yanked my hand out of his grasp, my voice Icy as I said, "Fine. Then leave Jocelyn. Never see her again for the rest of your life."

Elijah's face froze instantly. I sneered, mocking him. "What's wrong? Can't do it? If you can't, then don't talk to me about love! Elijah, you disgust me!"

Instead of getting angry at my insult, Elijah's expression softened. "Ari, Jocelyn and I grew up together She's my childhood friend. You can't expect us to cut ties.

"Even if we're just friends, it's impossible for me not to see her."

I let out a cold laugh. "Right, so you're out here publicly flirting with her. You gave her that pink diamond she wanted so badly, let her spread rumors about me, and you even threw her a welcome—home party. Not to mention, you sponsored her solo concert, didn't you?"

Elijah's face turned awkward as I threw accusation after accusation at him. He tried to explain himself. Ari, it's not what you think."

However, I harshly shoved his hand away and demanded coldly. "Then swear to me. Swear on everything that you've never slept with her."

Elijah's face turned dark. He opened his mouth as if to say something but then fell silent, lips clamped

shut.

My heart clenched painfully, waves of nausea rolling through me. He wasn't denying it!

Something must've happened between him and Jocelyn, and that was why he couldn't let her go. His guilt was why he gave in to her every whim. He didn't want to lose me, but he kept favoring her.

Had I known all of this before I lost my memory? Or had I known, but couldn't bear to admit it? Was t why I kept lashing out, making scene after scene to vent my frustration and fear?

that

I had been too in love with him, too afraid to face the fact that Elijah had betrayed me. Too in love, hoping desperately that he'd choose me in the end.

The Ariana before I lost my memory had lost. Lost everything, even nearly her life. I started laughing. though the tears wouldn't stop falling.

Elijah stared at me, guilt and regret written all over his face, but I didn't care to guess what he was feeling anymore. He looked pained and reached for a tissue to wipe my tears

"Get out!" I shoved his hand away and pointed at the door. "Get out! I don't want to see you! Elijah, you are the most disgusting person I have ever met!"

I slapped the tissue out of his hand.

He looked like he was about to explode, but seeing me in such a state, he said nothing. He turned and left the room, slamming the door behind him.

I lay on the bed, letting the tears flow freely. Each tear was a farewell to the past. This body needed to sever its connection to this man, never again shedding another worthless tear for him.

Chap 02

When I groggily woke again, it was already night. My eyes were swollen from crying. I wiped my face, noticing how puffy and sore my eyes were. The house was quiet, but the faint glow of light leaked in from outside.

I dragged myself out of bed, splashed some cold water on my face, and turned on the lights to look for

my purse.

It wasn't in the room, and neither was my phone. I had no choice but to leave the room to search for it.

As soon as I opened the door, I saw Elijah sitting in the living room chain—smoking. The thick smoke made me cough. Elijah heard the noise and looked back at me.

"Are you feeling better?" he asked.

However, I ignored him and continued searching around the living room until I found my purse. But when I opened it, there was no phone inside.

Elijah, sensing my thoughts, spoke coldly, "Your phone's with me,"

Upon hearing that, I got up, ready to leave.

"You can't leave," he said, stepping toward me. "There's no ride—share service out here, and no taxis will come this far. Ariana, let's talk."

I turned and glared at him. Then, without warning, I slapped him hard across the face. The sharp sound echoed through the room as a red handprint blossomed on Elijah's handsome face.

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Elijah didn't expect me to slap him. He clutched his face, staring at me in disbelief.

I sneered, "What is there to talk about? Whether you'll spend Monday, Wednesday, and Friday with me, and Tuesday. Thursday, and Saturday with Jocelyn? Or should we talk about how much of the 500 million I gave you five years ago you'll toss back at me? A few million, or maybe 100 million?

"Elijah, there's nothing left for us to talk about. I don't want to talk to you at all."

I shoved him aside and tried to run, but his arms wrapped tightly around my waist. Before I knew it, I was lifted off the ground.

Panic set in as I screamed, "Let me go!"

Without saying a word, Elijah dragged me back to the bedroom and locked the door behind us. I barely had time to react before he threw me onto the bed.

The Simmons mattress bounced me slightly, almost knocking me back on my feet. Dazed and disoriented, I tried to scramble off the bed, but Elijah's weight came crashing down on me, pinni place.

My cry for help was muffled, and my breath was caught under his suffocating presence. His lips sealed themselves over mine, silencing any protest.

His voice was low and husky as he whispered, "We're not getting divorced, Ari. We'll have a baby. A child will fix everything...

I was trembling in fear, my whole body shaking as his hands tugged at my clothes. Terror gripped me, my mind swirling in chaos as a buried fear clawed its way to the surface.

"Let me go... please..." My voice was barely a whisper, drowning in the waves of panic.

Elijah ignored my pleas, his lips feverishly trailing across my skin. "Stop pretending, Ariana. You're always trying to seduce me, so why act like some innocent saint now?"

His words sent me over the edge, and I lashed out, kicking him with all my might. "Then get lost! You're a monster, Elijah!"

My angry shouts fell on deaf ears as he kept tugging at my flimsy clothes.

Despair washed over me, tears spilling uncontrollably. In a moment of sheer desperation, as Elijah started unbuttoning his own shirt, I mustered all my strength and kicked him away.

Then, with reckless determination, I threw myself toward the door. The impact of my forehead against the wooden door frame echoed loudly.

A warm, sticky sensation trickled down from my forehead, and through the dizziness, I felt blood dripping down my face.

Elijah shouted my name in panic, but I was too weak to respond. My body crumbled to the ground, and through blurred vision, I saw Elijah rushing toward me.

Just as he reached for me, the door burst open with a crash.

"Ari!" a voice called out urgently.

1 tried to respond, but the blood soaked my vision. Through the fog, I saw someone stride past Elijah and

punch him squarely in the face, knocking him down.

I weakly reached out, but the figure turned and scooped me up into the arms.

*Don't be scared, Ari. You're safe now." The familiar voice tried to comfort me, but as I fought to stay conscious, everything went black.

"Jonathan! Jonathan!"

I jolted awake, shouting

"You're awake?" A calm, gentle voice spoke beside me.

I blinked in confusion, looking around. "Where's my brother?"

Logan's glasses gleamed as he sat by my bedside, his expression unreadable. His voice was quiet but firm. "Your brother's still abroad."

I shook my head, my heart racing. "No, that's impossible! I saw him. He came to save me!"

I tried to get out of bed, but Logan held me down. "Stay in bed and rest," he ordered, his tone serious.

I pushed against him. "You're lying! I saw him. My brother was there, he saved me!"

Logan's eyes flickered with a hint of sadness. "Ari, it was me who saved you. You're mistaken."

"No!" I yelled, struggling harder. "I saw him! It was my brother. It was him! It was him!"

I was frantic, beating my fists against Logan, desperate to cling to the one thing I was sure of.

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"I just want to find Jonathan!"

"I really saw him, I did! It was Jonathan, it was him..." I broke down in tears. "Please, let me go find. Jonathan. I need to see my brother..."

A broad, warm chest enveloped me as though cradling something precious, something irreplaceable.

I caught the familiar scent of pine, mingled with a faint, intoxicating fragrance, the kind only a clean, crisp man carried. I had only ever smelled it on Jonathan.

"Shh. Don't cry, Ari. It's okay. You saw him. It was your brother, you didn't imagine it," he coaxed gently, his voice soothing.

But my sobs only grew louder. Despite my struggles, he held me firmly, refusing to let me get out of bed. He wrapped his arms tightly around me, pinning me down with a calm, steady grip.

"Don't get too worked up. The doctor said you hit your head again, and you can't handle any more sudden triggers." Logan's tone shifted, becoming more commanding.

Slowly, I began to calm down. He stayed there, holding me close, his body pressing mine gently against the bed.

After a while, I whispered, "I'm okay now. You can let me go."

Logan hesitated but finally released me, Still cautious, he sat by the bed, watching me with a serious expression to make sure I wouldn't lose control again.

I wiped my tears away, my voice hoarse. "Where's Jonathan?"

Logan sighed deeply. "He said... he doesn't want to see you right now."

Fresh tears welled up in my eyes. "Why? Please, tell me why! Did I do something unforgivable in the past? Is that why he won't come?"

Logan's lips pressed into a thin line. His silence was all the confirmation I needed.

I started crying again. A tissue appeared in front of me. Through my tear-blurred eyes, I looked up.

Logan handed it to me. "Wipe your tears. Enough crying."

"But... Jonathan..." I choked out. As my emotions surged once more, Logan suddenly placed a hand over my mouth.

"I said, no more crying."

His long fingers covered my lips. His hand was so large that it nearly cupped the entire lower half of my

face.

Seeing that I had finally quieted down, Logan slowly spoke again. "Your brother's still in the country. He just has a few things he needs to figure out, but I believe you two will reconcile."

I looked up at him, teary-eyed, and instinctively clutched his sleeve. "Really?"

Logan nodded, his tone firm. "Yes. But first, you need to rest and heal. Then, you'll fight.

"Fight?" I blinked in confusion. "Fight for what?"

Logan's expression darkened slightly. "Don't you want to take back everything that belongs to you? Don't you want justice?"

Chande

I was stunned at first, but after a long pause, I nodded firmly.

Logan smiled. He patted my head, just as he always did. "Good girl."

I suddenly pressed his hand to my cheek, looking into his eyes with determination. "Logan, you have to help me"

Logan was momentarily taken aback. Slowly, his long fingers brushed away the lingering tears on my face. "Alright," he whispered.

The next day, I learned that after Elijah had dragged me away, Teri had immediately contacted Logan

Logan reported me missing right away, but since it hadn't been long enough to officially file a case, the police weren't too eager to help.

After hiring a lawyer, the authorities finally agreed to check traffic cameras, and they utilized the city's surveillance network to track down Elijah's car.

Halton City was massive. Finding a single vehicle was like searching for a needle in a haystack. Luckily. Elijah hadn't bothered hiding his tracks, and they quickly pinpointed a villa on the outskirts of town. That was where they found me.

Upon hearing this, I nervously asked Teri, "Was it really Jonathan?"

Teri nodded. "Yes. Your brother rushed here the moment he heard. He was the one who kicked down the

door."

"Mr. Wood tried to stop him, but there was no holding him back. After you passed out, your brother went mad and punched Elijah several times.

"If the police hadn't arrived, that scumbag might not have seen the next sunrise."

Upon hearing that, a mixture of joy and unease filled my heart. I was happy that Jonathan still cared about me, that he still saw me as his precious little sister.

But at the same time, I was terrified—would Jonathan ever forgive me?

As if sensing my thoughts, Teri smiled reassuringly. "Ari, just focus on getting better. Everything will fall into place afterward."

A Love Forgotten Chapter 85

I lowered my head, nervously picking at my nails.

Upon seeing my defeated expression, Teri panicked. "Don't be like this! You didn't see how your brother went crazy when he found out Elijah had taken you.

"If someone had handed him a knife, he wouldn't have hesitated to turn that scumbag into minced meat."

Her words gave me a bit of strength.

Teri asked, "So, what are you planning to do next?"

I lifted my head and, with determination, said, "Recover, hire a lawyer, and file for divorce!"

Healing wasn't hard since I only had surface wounds. But because I had hit the back of my head when I fell from the second floor, Frank wasn't willing to discharge me so easily.

I had to undergo monitoring and a full-body checkup, along with observation. When Frank saw me with my head wrapped in bandages like a mummy, he let out a deep sigh

I forced a smile. "Dr. Drake, sorry to trouble you again.

Frank adjusted his medical gloves, his expression calm. "It's no trouble."

Seeing his indifferent demeanor made me feel uneasy. I had caused Frank a lot of trouble recently, with him tending to my endless injuries every time.

I cautiously explained, "Dr. Drake, I didn't do this on purpose.

Frank nodded. "I know. You were just unlucky to run into a scumbag. If you end up hurt because of him again, I won't mind giving him a 'humanitarian surgery

I blinked, surprised. Frank usually stayed out of people's personal matters. He was the type to finish his work without asking questions or offering opinions. But this time....

I asked, "What did you mean by "humanitarian surgery?

While organizing medication and needles, Frank responded in a flat tone, "In my understanding, a humanitarian surgery is for those whose bodies are overloaded with scumbag genes, causing their behavior to go beyond that of normal humans.

"For people like that, the only cure is surgery—to completely sever any organs or functions that could lead

to criminal behavior."

I was speechless. Wow. That was harsh!

After preparing the medication, Frank gave me a faint smile. "So, next time that scumbag tries to hurt you, make sure you tell me first."

Warmth bloomed in my chest. Frank, who was usually so distant, ruffled my hair like I was his little sister.

"I know everything you've been through. Don't worry. I'll protect you, just like Mr. Wood does. Of course, only because we're friends."

I couldn't help but give him a light hug. "Thank you."

Frank pushed me away, looking disgusted. "I'm wearing sterile clothing, and now you've gotten it dirty."

After that, he inserted the IV needle and, unable to resist, added, "Stay strong. Everything will get better"

Tears welled up in my eyes. Frank was the first true friend I'd made outside of Teri. This feeling was wonderful.

While recovering at the hospital, I contacted the Wood Group's legal team through Logan. According to Teri, Elijah had been released after five days in custody.

Outraged, Teri fumed, "He's guilty of kidnapping and attempted assault! How could they let him go?"

One of the lawyers, a refined middle–aged man, adjusted his glasses and explained gently, "It's because they're married.

"Mr. Linden's legal team argued that it was merely a marital dispute. He only admitted to acting impulsively and denies the charges of kidnapping and attempted assault."

Teri slammed her fist on the table, furious. "He denies it, so it didn't happen? He literally dragged Ari away! And he... he..."

The lawyer shook his head. "Unfortunately, given that they're married and Mr. Linden took Ms. Yo property they both own, the police have classified it as a domestic dispute."

Teri pounded the table again, seething with anger.

Suddenly, a sharp–dressed female lawyer, who had been silent,

Poke up. "Ms. Stuart, marriage

certificates often shield men who commit violence or crimes within the marriage.

*They receive reduced punishment—or sometimes, no punishment at all. It's a common issue.

Teri stared at her, realizing the woman was struggling to keep her emotions in check.

I quietly asked the middle-aged lawyer, "Mr. Webb, are you suggesting that I shouldn't pursue charges

against Elijah for kidnapping me and... and for attempting to assault me?"

Mr. Webb nodded. "I would advise Ms. York to focus all her energy on filing for divorce. Concentrate on determining what you can recover from Mr. Linden in the settlement."

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He looked at me sincerely. "In my opinion, this is the best punishment for the abuser."

The female lawyer immediately chimed in, "Exactly! Ms. York, we will do everything we can to help you."

I slowly nodded, feeling a spark of hope return to my eyes. "Alright!"

Elijah walked out of the police station, still bearing visible injuries. As soon as Jocelyn saw him, she rushed over. Tears filled her eyes as she hugged him tightly.

"Elijah, you must've suffered so much in there!"

She immediately began ranting, blaming the police for being heartless and detaining him for five days despite all her efforts to pull strings.

"I tried everything, Elijah. They said... they said you were under investigation for illegal detainm and attempted assault, so they had no choice but to keep you-"

Before she could finish, Elijah silently got into the car, not saying a word. He sat in the back seat, his wounded face expressionless, but his eyes were filled with an icy coldness.

Jocelyn hurried to climb in beside him, urging the driver, "Drive, drive!"

d.....

The car pulled away, leaving the station behind. Elijah remained silent, staring out of the window, his face dark and unreadable.

Jocelyn tried to snuggle up to him, her voice soft and sweet. "Elijah, what's wrong? Why won't you talk to me?"

Elijah glanced at her briefly, shifting away without a word. Her expression fell, hurt flashing across her face.

Her eyes filled with tears as she spoke in a trembling voice. "Elijah, I know you're upset, but I haven't been able to eat or sleep properly these past few days. I've been so worried about you..."

She continued, "I know it wasn't your fault... It's all Ariana's doing-

Elijah, who had been silent until now, shot her a cold look, instantly silencing her. That look sent a shiver down Jocelyn's spine. It was unfamiliar, terrifying

She shrank back. "Elijah, I... I wasn't trying to speak ill of Ms. York. She's the one who made all this happen to you...

Elijah's voice was emotionless as he said, "She knows.

Jocelyn blinked in confusion. "Knows what?"

"She knows we slept together," Elijah said, his tone flat.

Jocelyn gasped. "How is that possible? I didn't say anything!"

Elijah turned his gaze back to the window. "She figured it out on her own."

A flicker of disdain crossed Jocelyn's face, and her voice became soft and fragile. "What do we do now. Elijah? What if Ms. York tries to get back at me? I'm so scared

She leaned into his chest, but in the next moment, Elijah's hand coldly pushed her away. Stunned, Jocelyn called out his name in a wounded tone.

"Elijah..."

Elijah's face remained impassive. "I'm tired. I want to rest."

Jocelyn hesitated and timidly asked, "What about the welcome home party?"

Elijah's lips curved into a strange smile. "It'll go on as planned."

Her eyes lit up with joy. "Really?"

Realizing she might've gotten too excited, she quickly lowered her head and meekly added, "Elijah, I know you're not in a good mood after everything. Maybe we should postpone the welcome—home party for a few days?

"At least, perhaps until you've had time to rest, and we've cleared things up with Ms. York... then we can. invite everyone over again."

Elijah remained silent, his expression distant.

Jocelyn grew more anxious. "Elijah, say something."

Elijah said coldly, "Postpone it for three days. Then, invite everyone as planned."

Jocelyn frowned, confused. "Do you mean... still invite Ms. York?"

Elijah's lips twisted into a faint, sarcastic smile. "Yes."

A Love Forgotten Chapter 87

After the check-up, the wound on my forehead had healed, leaving only a faint scar.

I stared at the reflection of a haggard woman in the mirror. The vibrant, youthful version of myself at 18 had become a distant memory, and I'd come to accept who I was now.

But there was still a deep ache in my chest. Seven years of my youth, and all the love I gave, led me to this miserable end.

I wiped the fog from the mirror with a harsh stroke and began applying makeup meticulously. No one would laugh at me. I won't allow it. No one!

So, when I appeared in front of Mr. Webb, I was a completely new person–fresh and radiant. I used my bangs to cover the scar on my forehead, and for the first time in a long while, I felt alive again.

When Teri saw me, her eyes lit up. "Ari!"

I gave a bitter smile. "Do I look okay?"

Her eyes sparkled with amazement. "More than okay! Ari, you're stunning!

"I've always said that when you dress up, you can wipe the floor with all those fake girls a million times over Jocelyn? Please. She's not even in the same league as you, in looks or style."

I squeezed her hand. "I'm fine now, but Elijah isn't. He doesn't deserve me-he only deserves someone like Jocelyn."

Teri's eyes welled up with tears, and she suddenly threw her arms around me, sobbing. "It's about time! You horrible person! You've worried me for seven whole years! You finally realize how amazing you are. Ari, you deserve so much better!"

Her sobbing pulled at my heartstrings. It was only now that I realized how much pain and helplessness my best friend had carried, watching me chase after Elijah all these years

My eyes reddened, and I patted her gently. "Don't cry, Mr. Webb is watching us. Let's get to work."

Teri hastily wiped her tears and nodded. "Yeah! Let's get down to business."

She added one last thing. "Ari, you've got this."

I smiled at her before turning to sit across from Mr. Webb and his team..

Mr. Webb adjusted his glasses and smiled faintly. "Alright. Let's begin." He leaned forward slightly. "But first, one last question for Ms. Ariana"

"Go ahead," I said.

Mr. Webb's expression turned serious. "Ms. Ariana, are you truly determined to go through with this divorce?"

I nodded. "Yes." After my response, I couldn't help but ask, "Mr. Webb, why do you keep asking me this?"

Mr. Webb's face became even more solemn. "Because as we've reviewed your case, we've found that this divorce will be extremely challenging. And there's substantial evidence that might hinder your ability to recover marital assets."

His tone was grave. "Ms. Ariana, you need to be prepared for a long and difficult legal battle."

I nodded again. "I'm ready."

Mr. Webb shook his head. "No. I don't think you understand. This case will be harder than you can

imagine. Your reputation will take a hit-you'll face slander, insults, and challenges you can't yet foresee."

I

I fell silent. Mr. Webb waited patiently for my answer.

After a full minute, I looked up, my gaze steady. "Yes, I'm ready. I'll face it all."

The conversation and evidence gathering with Mr. Webb's team was a hundred times harder than ! expected.

Because of my memory loss, I couldn't recall any of the agreements Elijah and I had made, either before or after the marriage. I didn't even understand how I'd been persuaded to transfer 50 million dollars to his

пате.

The evidence collection was proving to be a nightmare, but luckily, Mr. Webb's team was incredibly experienced.

They traced every possible lead, piecing together clues about the situation back then. They even obtained financial records from Elijah's company during that period.

After several rounds of questioning that afternoon, my head felt like it was spinning out of control. The constant effort to recall left me dizzy and disoriented.

Teri noticed how pale I looked and pulled me aside to rest multiple times. However, I shook my head but pushed through four straight hours of interrogation from the lawyers

By the time Mr. Webb and his team left, I was utterly drained, slumping back into my chair. My mind was. in a haze like it had been scrambled beyond recognition

The vertigo from my concussion flared up again, and I dry—heaved a few times but couldn't bring anything up.

Teri's voice was full of concern. "Ari, take a break. I'll get you some water."

She left the room to fetch it, and I leaned back in the chair, angrily knocking my head with my fist. Exhausted, I buried my face in my hands

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Suddenly, a carton of milk was handed to me from behind.

However, I shook my head. "I don't feel like drinking it. I'm uncomfortable."

A moment later, a warm towel was passed to me. With a sigh, I reluctantly took it and placed it haphazardly on my forehead. The warm steam helped to relax my tense nerves, and I finally let out a long breath.

"Teri, thank you," I said gratefully. "If it weren't for you being here with me, I would've lost it a long time ago. I swear, from now on, you're my family. Seriously, what was I thinking when I fell for him?"

I sighed again, voice sinking lower. "Do you think the amnesia was the universe's way of saying even it couldn't bear to watch?"

"Maybe it's the universe's way of giving you a fresh start a calm voice answered from behind me.

Startled, I jumped, and with a loud crack, my neck twisted painfully. I gingerly took the towel off my face and turned to see Logan, wincing from the discomfort.

"H-how long have you been here?" I asked, trying to hide my surprise.

Logan chuckled softly. "Long enough to hear your sighing." My face, already warm from the steam, flushed even redder. He noticed something was off and asked, "What's wrong with your neck?"

Embarrassed, I mumbled, "I-1 strained it just now." Logan blinked in surprise before a faint smile tugged at the corners of his lips.

He reached out, placing his hand gently on the back of my neck. A sharp pain shot through me, and I let out a small yelp.

"Is it here?" he asked.

Tears welled up in my eyes, and I nodded.

"Hold on, I'll massage it. It'll hurt at first, but just bear with me," he said as his hand began to press more firmly.

The pain surged, and I couldn't help but cry out, "Ouch! That hurts."

*Just hold on. It's going to hurt a bit, but it'll get better," he reassured me.

I couldn't even nod. Moving made it worse. As he applied more pressure, the soreness spread through my body. I couldn't stop myself from making embarrassing sounds.

Tears streamed down my face uncontrollably. A crick in the neck-this was pure agony. After a few moments, I realized just how mortifying my noises were

Desperately, I bit my lip to stop myself from making any more sounds, and Logan's voice came from above me.

"Relax. Don't tense up against my hand."

I gave a small nod in response, murmuring in agreement. Then, with a sharp crack, my neck suddenly loosened up. 1 let out a loud "Ah!" and instinctively grabbed onto the front of his shirt.

At that exact moment, a gasp came from the doorway. Logan and I both looked up, only to see Teri standing there, one hand covering her eyes while holding a cup of water with the other.

"I didn't see anything! I swear I didn't see anything!" she exclaimed.

"Teri, no, it's not what it looks like." I tried to explain quickly.

However, Teri waved me off. "Oh, I get it. I just remembered something I need to take care of. You two. carry on, carry on."

With that, she quickly slipped out of the room, thoughtfully closing the door behind her.

Awkwardly, I glanced at Logan. "Um... Teri definitely misunderstood. I mean, we weren't. I mean, nothing happened."

Logan's hand returned to my neck. "Does it feel better now?"

It was only then that I realized the pain had actually disappeared. I tilted my head from side to side experimentally, smiling in surprise.

"It doesn't hurt anymore! Wow, Logan, you're a miracle worker!"

Logan smiled slightly. "I'll give it another massage. If I don't, you might end up with another crick."

As he spoke, his hands resumed their gentle, rhythmic motions. The room fell into a comfortable silence, and I couldn't help but stare at the shadows of the two of us on the wall.

It looked like he was holding me close, his head resting gently against mine, his hand protectively cradling my neck

My face grew hot again, the blush spreading from my cheeks down to my neck. Suddenly, Logan let out a soft laugh

Flustered, I stammered, "W-why are you laughing?"

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Logan didn't say anything. He just kept pressing on my neck with those skilled hands. I had to admit that his massage was working. The tension in my neck began to ease with every careful press.

"Um... you don't need to keep going. It's fine now," I whispered, barely audible.

However, he didn't hear me. Focused and determined, Logan continued his slow, deliberate motions. I found myself glancing at the shadows cast on the wall.

His profile was strikingly handsome. The sunlight fell on his face, casting a soft silhouette on the wall, sharp and clean, like a work of art. Even the stray strands of his hair fell in perfect arcs.

I lifted my head slightly, watching as the shadow of my own face nestled under his chin. The image before me felt peaceful, almost too perfect.

My heart warmed, a sweetness spreading inside me, as if I had gone back to being 18 again, carefree full of hope.

For a brief moment, I let myself imagine. What if the first man I'd been drawn to was Logan? A soft, kind man like him could never hurt me. I could love him without regret, without fear.

If he had been the one... maybe I wouldn't have suffered so much in love. Maybe I wouldn't have lost so many battles.

I was so lost in thought, watching our shadows, that I didn't realize his hand had stilled on my neck. Then, suddenly, his face was right in front of mine.

"Uh..." I stammered.

Logan's hand steadied me, his glasses reflecting the soft light as he gazed at me in silence. He held my breath, unable to tear my eyes away from his.

Dust motes swirled in the beams of light filtering through the window, drifting lazily around him. The sunlight illuminated his well-defined features, lingering on his lips that always seemed to carry a gentle smile, unlike Elijah's cold, tight-lipped expression.

Logan's lips looked warm, like they held laughter just waiting to be shared. He stared at me for what felt like forever, then a slow smile tugged at the corners of his mouth.

"Wh- why are you smiling?" I asked, my eyes darting away nervously.

Logan brushed a stray lock of hair behind my ear, his voice soft as he said, "I'm not laughing at you. I just think you're adorable, Ari."

I blinked in disbelief. "Adorable? Me?"

He nodded. "Yes. You're very adorable."

always get into trou

1 ducked my head, embarrassed. "I'm not adorable. I'm stubborn. I always get into trouble."

"And you blush very easily," Logan teased, tilting my chin up to meet his gaze, his eyes glinting with

amusement

"I–I do not..." I mumbled, feeling the heat rise to my cheeks. But before I could say more, his lips were on

mine.

My mind went blank, a soft buzzing in my ears as my heart raced in my chest. Time seemed to stretch, and I was only aware of his warmth and presence. It wasn't until he slowly pulled away that I realized I'd been holding my breath.

"Wait, no, th-that wasn't supposed to happen..." I stuttered, tripping over my words,

Logan's eyes danced with silent laughter, watching me flustered and confused. I shot to my feet, nearly knocking over my chair in my rush to leave.

"Lum, I need to go back to my room," I blurted out, backing away.

But before I could make it very far, Logan grabbed my wrist and gently pulled me back into his arms. I froze, my mind going blank again as I found myself pressed against his chest, his strong arms wrapped around me.

He leaned down, his breath warm against my skin. His eyes locked onto mine, the closeness making my pulse race.

"Why are you running away?" he whispered.

I didn't have an answer. All I could focus on was how close we were, how overwhelming it all felt. My heart pounded in my chest, and a strange, unfamiliar feeling flooded through me—something like the flutter of a first love, something I hadn't felt in a long time.

Without thinking, I buried my face in his chest, hiding from the intensity of his gaze. I heard him chuckle softly, the sound vibrating through his chest.

We stood there in silence for a while, holding each other, until I finally stepped back, breaking the embrace.

Logan studied my face, flushed and red from the overwhelming emotions of the moment. His voice was gentle when he spoke.

"Don't worry. I won't touch you until you've figured things out for yourself."

I mumbled something under my breath, but the words were so quiet that Logan couldn't hear them.

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He asked, "What did you say?"

I cleared my throat, my face flushing red as I stammered, "I mean... it's not like... we can't. Can we hold

hands?"

Logan was visibly taken aback for a moment, but then he chuckled again.

I glanced at him, muttering under my breath, "We... we already kissed..."

This time, he definitely heard me. Slowly, he nodded, his tone playful. "You're right. We already kissed. Pretending to play it cool now would just be silly."

My face burned with embarrassment. "That's not what meant..."

I didn't even get to finish my sentence when Logan suddenly pulled me in again, capturing my lips for another kiss.

This time, I was more aware, more present, and I found myself awkwardly trying to respond. I had no idea what had gotten into him, but his body was growing hotter, pressing closer.

Realizing where things were headed, I quickly pushed him away while I still had some semblance of self- control left.

We stood there for a moment, a small distance between us, both struggling to catch our breath and calm down.

"Uh today doesn't count," I blurted out.

Logan's eyes darkened, his curiosity piqued. "What doesn't count?"

I avoided his gaze, nervously glancing around the room. "I mean today... it doesn't count as... you know, touching me."

Logan finally understood, and the realization hit him. He couldn't hold back his laughter. At first, he tried to suppress it, but soon enough, he was laughing loudly

I panicked and hurriedly covered his mouth with my hand. "Don't laugh! Teri's still around!"

His dark eyes sparkled, brighter than I had ever seen them. I was momentarily stunned, caught off guard by how breathtaking he looked when he smiled like that.

Logan hugged me gently, his voice soft as he whispered, "Alright. It doesn't count. It does starting from next time though, you silly girl,"

I stammered awkwardly, "Wh-who says there'll be a next time?"

His smirk deepened. "You don't want there to be a next time?"

Without thinking, I blurted, "Of course I do, I- The words slipped out before I could stop them.

Realizing what I had just said, I wanted to disappear on the spot. What was wrong

with me?

"Well, it's getting late. I'll take you to dinner," he said casually, heading for the door. I followed behind, feeling awkward and flustered

The room we were in was a small, private meeting room, so when we stepped out, we entered the large, open living room.

Logan glanced back at me and said, "Go change into something nicer. I'm taking you to a dinner event."

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"A dinner event? 1 repeated in surprise.

He nodded. "Yes,"

1 hesitated. "Do I have to o

Since everything had happened, I'd developed an aversion to leaving the house. I didn't even want to go downstairs most days.

Logan shook his head. "Yes, you have to. Besides, it's been three or four days since you've gone out."

I weakly protested, "But I went to the hospital."

Logan gave me a patient look. I sighed, realizing he wasn't going to let me off the hook. "Fine. I'll change. Give me half an hour."

I headed to my room to get ready. The moment I opened the door, Teri practically jumped out at me from

inside.

"Why are you here?" I asked, startled.

Teri hopped off the bed, her face full of mischief. She circled me, inspecting me from head to toe, even going so far as to sniff the air around me.

"What are you doing?" I asked, baffled.

With a sly grin, Teri said, "You kissed him, didn't you?"

I nearly jumped out of my skin. "No! I didn't! Don't say stuff like that!"

Her grin only widened. "Oh, come on! I can smell it on you. There's men's cologne mixed with your scent. Don't lie to me, girl."

Mortified, I rushed into my walk—in closet, desperately looking for something to wear. A whole row of dresses hung in front of me, but I was too flustered to pick one properly.

Teri, seeing my state, casually grabbed a bright pink dress and tossed it at me. "Here, little girl. This one."

I glanced at the dress, wrinkling my nose. "No way! It's like Barbie pink."

Teri snorted and threw it back at me. "Wear it. It makes you look younger. Logan will definitely like it."

I shot her a glare before reluctantly burying myself back in the racks, searching for something less outrageous.