

Chapter 27

## Chapter 27

[Vivienne]

Harvey and I exchange puzzled glances, both of us caught off guard by the outburst. I look toward the source of the commotion and see a man at a nearby table.

The maître d' quickly approaches him, trying to calm the situation. "Sir, I'm terribly sorry. We will make sure to rectify this immediately. Please, allow us to bring you a new dish."

The man's voice rises further, though he seems to be calming down slightly. "This is outrageous! I've been coming here for years, and I've never been served something this terrible. I demand to speak with the chef."

Harvey sighs, clearly irritated by the interruption. "I guess this is what happens when you're in the public eye. Everyone has their own idea of what's perfect."

I nod, though my attention is still partly on the commotion. The man's back is turned to us, but for some reason, my heart skips a beat.

Is it really possible that he's here?

"Viv?" Harvey puts his hand on mine, successfully jerking me out of my thoughts.

I turn to face him. "Yes. Yes, of course. I'm sorry, I just..." My throat dries and my thoughts feel jumbled. I decide to take a break. "Uh, why

don't you order for both of us. I'll be right back."

My brother looks at me as if he can't quite figure me out. "Are you sure you're okay?"

I nod, not wanting him to worry. "Of course, I just need a little air. I'll be right back. I promise."

Thankfully, he nods and returns his attention to the menu.

I stand up and make my way towards the bathroom, trying to keep my pace steady despite the flutter of anxiety in my chest. I'm deep in my thoughts when I feel someone's presence behind me. A firm hand grabs my arm, making me stop. Goosebumps form on my skin, and instant panic shoots through me. I'm just about to scream when a hand covers my mouth.

"Ssh... What are you doing? Are you crazy?"

His face, so close to mine, finally confirms it. It really is him. But what the hell?

Frustration bubbles under my skin. How dare he just grab me like that and ask me what I'm doing? Who does he think he is?

I twist out of his hold and whirl around to face him, anger blazing in my eyes. "I think what's really crazy is when a man corners a woman in a dark corner, grabs her, and puts his hand over her mouth so she can't even scream for help."

Caden looks taken aback for a moment, but then his expression changes. I can feel my heart rate speed up when his eyes grow dark.

Instead of moving away, he takes another step forward, as if trying to intimidate me with his tall stature and wide frame. "But I'm not just any man, am I? I'm your husband and you're my wife. I can do whatever I want to you."

What did he say? This idiot, I'll show him that I'm no longer under his control. I take a step forward so I'm standing in his personal space and give him a fake sweet smile. "That's where you're wrong. I am no longer your wife, Ex-husband."

A shadow crosses his face, his eyes narrowing slightly as if he's trying to gauge whether I'm lying. "Ex-husband?"

"That's right. Sure, we might not be officially divorced yet, but it doesn't matter. I've already moved on with my life." I don't know why, but it feels important for me to say it like that, and to see the effect of my words. Not on him, but on myself. I want this final assurance that it really is over. That we don't have anything left, even though my heart is still betraying me.

"You don't know what you're saying." His tone is sharp and clipped.

"But I do. I know exactly what I'm saying. But honestly, why do you look so glum? It's not like you never wanted to get out of this marriage. Your parents have been hounding you ever since the day we got married, wanting to get rid of me."

The words tumble out of me like torrential rain, each one lashing out at him in my frustration. "So I think this is perfect. I got what I wanted, and you can go back to being single, just the way you always wanted to be. Or maybe you can finally use this opportunity and get married to Sasha for real. After all, I'm no longer in your way."

The look he gives me is so dark it sends shivers down my spine, but I refuse to look away.

"Is that really what you want? For me to be single, to find someone else?"

"Yes," I say firmly. "That's exactly what I want. I've moved on, and it's time you did too. We're both better off this way."

His eyes narrow, his expression a mix of anger and something else—hurt, maybe. He straightens up, his posture stiffening. "You think you can just erase everything between us like that? You think it's that easy?"

I frown. What is he even talking about? When had he ever cared for anything between us? He was the one who constantly threw his desire for being single in my face, and who used our wedding ring like a bargaining chip. What right did he have to act all wounded now, as if I'm the bad guy?

But I've had enough of his weird mood swings. I can't fall into this spiral all over again.

I turn around and get ready to leave. "It's not my problem if you can't get over the fact that this is over between us. But don't worry, once we get divorced, you'll never hear from me again."

I've barely taken a step forward when strong arms wrap around my waist, and his hot breath grazes my ear, making me shudder.

"Fine. If that's what you want, then I'll let you have it," he growls,

tightening his hold.

I gasp.

"But don't think this is the end of it, Vivienne. I'm not done with you. Not yet anyway. Oh, and one more thing..." He lets go of me but not before forcing me to turn around so I can look him straight in the eyes.

"That boy toy you brought here to get my attention? Well, congratulations, you have my attention now, more than ever."

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