

## Chapter 44

[Vivienne]

We pull up to the emergency room, and I bolt out of the car, rushing inside to get help while Rosita stays with Michael. Paramedics quickly roll out a gurney, and we transfer Michael onto it. As they wheel him inside, Rosita and I follow, my guilt and worry pounding in my chest.

"I'm so sorry, Ro. I really didn't mean for this to happen," I tell her, feeling terrible. I'm terrified that I've caused serious damage to the kind man. But Rosita doesn't look as mad as she should be—I mean, I did hurt someone she knows, and from their conversation, I can tell they are good friends.

"I know, Viv. It was an honest mistake," she replies, squeezing my hand reassuringly. "Let's just hope he's okay."

We wait in the waiting room, which feels like an eternity. Finally, a doctor shows up, holding a clipboard.

"He's going to be fine," she says with a reassuring smile. "He's got a mild concussion and a nasty bump on his head, but nothing too serious. We'll keep him here for a few hours for observation, but he should be good to go by evening."

I let out a huge sigh of relief. "Thank God. Can we see him?"

The doctor nods and leads us to Michael's room. He's lying on the bed, looking dazed but otherwise okay. When he sees us, he

manages a weak grin.

"Well, this is a hell of a way to spend an afternoon," he says, trying to joke.

"I'm really sorry, Michael. I didn't mean to knock you out," I say, but he just waves it off.

He chuckles, wincing at the pain. "It's fine. Just remember to keep the laptop away from me next time."

Rosita shakes her head, smiling. "You're lucky, you know. Not everyone gets a dramatic display of friendship like that."

Michael grins. "Yeah, I guess I'm a bit of an idiot for that."

We stay for a while, and he seems to perk up with each minute that passes.

He seems like a good guy.

Strange, just when I thought there weren't any good men left—save for my brother, dad, Marcus, and Elijah—this guy just pops up out of nowhere.

"So, what do you say, Viv?" Rosita asks, pulling me out of my thoughts.

I can't believe I zoned out and missed what she said. "Say what?"

Michael laughs. "And here I thought she'd be more attentive, especially since she knocked me out so hard."

"I'm so sorry about that, Michael."

"I'm just messing with you," he grins, waving a hand. "Anyway, we were just talking about dinner. Since you offered to make it up to me earlier, Rosita and I decided on a dinner. I hope you don't mind. The four of us can hang out together, get to know each other better. It might even be fun. You, me, Ro, and my boyfriend, Jax."

I smile, grateful for their understanding. "Of course, I'd love that. Just let me know what day works best for you two, and I'll be there. But really, Michael, thank you for being so understanding. I truly am sorry about earlier."

"No worries, V," he says with a wink. "It's been a long time since a woman beat me up, so this is actually kinda exciting."

Is this guy serious? I can't help but laugh. "Why do I get the feeling that this wasn't your first time getting beaten up? Does that happen a lot? Like, every other weekend or something?"

He shrugs, looking nonchalant. "I'm not gonna lie. With this kind of face," he says, motioning toward his face, "it's hard to help a female patient without getting their boyfriends, husbands, or even their dads jealous. When those guys start threatening you with violence, well, there are bound to be some bruises and maybe some blood involved."

"Really?"

He shrugs. "I've learned to live with it."

"And you still love your job?"

He chuckles. "Yeah. I'm passionate about what I do, and it feels good to help people."

I can respect that.

Rosita looks between us. "Okay, you two, before you start falling in love and all, let's talk about what kind of dinner we should have. Something nice and simple. No fancy restaurants, Viv. I don't think I can take any more high-class meals anytime soon."

"That sounds great to me," I agree. After the week I've had, I feel like I deserve something more casual. "How about we just make something at my new place?"

"New place?" she asks, looking as shocked as I expected. "What are you talking about?"

I wince. "Yeah, I've been planning to move out and be on my own. I've depended on others long enough, and it's time for me to make it on my own. So, I recently invested in a loft that overlooks Central Park. It's big, cozy, and has an amazing kitchen. Plus, you don't have to walk up flights of stairs—I had an elevator installed for easy access, and it's very spacious."

"That's great news, Viv. But are your mom and dad on board with this? Last time I checked, your parents were a bit overprotective when it comes to you."

I know what she's saying. "I know. I haven't told them yet. I was hoping to have that conversation soon, though."



She shakes her head, chuckling. "Good luck with that one, girl. But anyway, tell me more about your place."

So I do.

I'm almost done telling them about the extra storage space that comes with the place when my phone rings. I pick up reluctantly.

"Miss Vivienne Sinclair, is it?" the man on the line asks.

"This is Detective Lopez. You filed a complaint this morning?"

I almost forgot about it. "Yes, yes, I did. I left a voicemail when I got a new number."

"Yes, you did. That's why I called to give you an update. Can you come to the precinct by any chance? It's important."

I look at Rosita and nod. "Of course, Detective. I'll be right there."



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