

Chapter 50

[Vivienne]

The moment I'm out of Caden's sight, I practically break down.

My heart feels like it's about to explode, and my eyes sting with whatever tears I have left for that man.

Thankfully, I find a bathroom on the floor, and before I know it, I'm rushing toward it. I've barely cried my heart out when the sound of the door opening reaches my ears. I stiffen, quickly turning on the tap to wash my face.

But the face that reflects in the mirror in front of me makes me cry even harder.

"Oh, Viv!" Rosita comes running and hugs me from behind. "I'm so sorry, sweetheart."

I scoff out a sad chuckle. "Why are you sorry? You don't even know what happened."

"Right," she says. "But I know it wasn't good, and that's enough."

I try to pull myself together, but all my efforts are in vain. The tears keep coming, each one a release of the pain and frustration that's been building up inside me for far too long.

"I can't believe he said those things to me," I whisper, his voice, his words grating on my nerves. "It's like he's a completely different person. How could I have been so blind?"

"You weren't blind, Viv. You loved him, and you saw what you wanted to see. We all do that sometimes."

"But I should have known better," I choke out. "I should have seen who he really was before it got this far."

"Stop blaming yourself, Viv," she says, pulling away to make me look into her eyes. "This is not your fault. I don't know what he said to you, but I can tell you with conviction that it's all crap. If he thinks you're not good enough for him, then he's the kind of jerk you don't need in your life. Do you hear me? You can't take whatever he said seriously. Because it's not true, and that's why it doesn't matter. After everything you've been through, you can't give him that power over you. You just can't."

I nod, wiping my eyes, though the tears don't seem to want to stop.

"I know you're right," I bite my lip. "But it's so hard to believe it right now. He got into my head, made me doubt everything about myself. It's like I don't even know who I am anymore."

"You're Vivienne Sinclair," She says firmly, gripping my shoulders as if to physically anchor me. "You're strong, you're resilient, and you're so much more than what he tried to reduce you to. Don't let him win. Don't let him take away who you are. You have so much ahead of you, Viv. This is just a chapter—a terrible, painful chapter—but it's not the end of your story. You have so much to do. You have so many plans, remember? You came to me that day because you had a vision. You shared that vision with me. And I absolutely loved it. And I'm here right now, telling you, that take whatever time you need to deal with these feelings, but once you're done, you are never turning

back again. You are never letting that asshole get the better of you. And you will never stop until you reach your destination. Do you hear me, Viv? Am I making myself absolutely clear to you?" 2

She's right—I can't let Caden have this power over me anymore. I've already lost too much, and I refuse to lose myself too.

"Yes," I say, my voice steadier now. "You're right. I'm not going to let him win."

"That's the spirit," she says, smiling widely. "We'll get through this together, okay? You're not alone."

I nod, grateful for her support. "Thank you, Ro. I don't know what I'd do without you."

"Hey, that's what friends are for, right?" She gives my shoulders a gentle squeeze before letting go. "Now, let's get you cleaned up and out of here. You've got a life to reclaim."

When the hour I gave Caden is up, I roll my shoulders and head for Detective Lopez's office. It's late, but Rosita sticks with me, saying she's not leaving until we're done with this. For the hundredth time, I'm thankful for a friend like her.

"Wait!" A voice calls out, making us stop in our tracks. We turn to see who's interrupting us now, and my eyes land on the last person I want to see right now.

"What the hell do you want now?" I snap, exhausted and fed up.

Sasha struts over, her damn high heels clacking loudly, making me

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want to rip her eyes out. She finally stops and smirks. "I have to say, for the first time ever, I'm actually glad to see you."

"I'm not even going to pretend I get what you're on about." I shake my head, ready to walk away.

She gasps dramatically, making me roll my eyes. "Oh, come on, Vivienne. No need to be such a sore loser. You were never good enough to win, but at least try to handle losing with some grace."

"Oh, for fuck's sake!" Rosita groans, rubbing her face. "Are you going to smash her face in, Viv, or should I? I gotta be honest, my hands are itching to do it right now."



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