

Chapter 66

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[Vivienne]

I get back to my hospital room without waiting for him to say anything more.

What's even the point? It's not like I didn't see this coming.

Everything was right in front of me, and yet... yet I thought... I prayed for it to be a lie, a misunderstanding, but it wasn't.

It was all real.

He really did betray me, sleeping with his family friend/assistant behind my back.

The nerve of that asshole.

I take a deep breath and pour a glass of water for myself.

Just then, the door opens, and Rosita rushes in.


"Sorry, sorry, something came up at work and I was trying to make sure —" she stops, looking at my face carefully, probably not missing the way I'm breaking down right now. "Hey..." she holds my arm and cups my face. "What's wrong? Is it the pain? And why are you out of bed? You're supposed to be resting, Viv? What's going on?"

And I tell her what's going on. I tell her what I saw. And I tell her how everything I did for that man all these years was nothing but a joke to him.

"That son of a bitch," she mutters when I finally finish, her voice



trembling with barely restrained fury. "I always knew he was a snake, but this? God, Viv, I'm so sorry."

I laugh, but it's hollow, bitter. "Sorry? What for? For me being a fucking idiot? For being naive and stupid and utterly ignorant?" I sit on the bed, fiddling with the hem of my gown. "Maybe I deserve this. I hurt my family, my friends, you... all for that one person who never really cared about me. There were always rumors about him and Sasha, but I tried to convince myself that maybe, just maybe, that's all they were—just stupid rumors. But maybe they weren't... just some stupid rumors. They were the truth. One I hoped so badly was a lie." 

"Don't do that," Rosita says firmly, shaking her head. "Don't you dare blame yourself for his bullshit. This isn't on you, Viv. He's the one who fucked up. He's the one who didn't deserve you."

"Doesn't change the fact that he didn't want a child with me," I say, my voice breaking despite my best efforts. "He didn't want a life with me. He wanted her. Always her. And I can't tell you how humiliating that is. It's like a slap in the face. It's like he wants me to know how little he thinks of me, even when we were fucking married."

"Fuck him," Rosita snaps, grabbing my shoulders and shaking me out of my shock. "You hear me? Fuck. Him. He's a coward and a liar, and he's not worth a single tear. If he wants Sasha, then he can have her and all the fucking baggage that comes with her. But you? You're stronger than this. You are such an amazing woman, he doesn't even know. But one day, he will. One day that fucking asshole will realize what he truly lost, and he's going to regret it, for the rest of his life."

I feel like crying, but I'm not going to. Ro is right. I've shed enough tears for that asshole.

But no more.

I wipe my soaked eyes with the back of my hands. “You’re right. I’ve wasted enough time and tears on him. I don’t owe him anything—not my tears, not my pain, not my regrets. He made his choice, and it’s time I made mine.”

Rosita nods, her grip on my shoulders softening as she pulls me into a tight hug. “That’s my girl. You’re going to get through this, Viv. And when you come out on the other side, you’ll be stronger, smarter, and so much better off. He doesn’t deserve to be a part of your life, and you deserve more than to be dragged down by his bullshit.”

I nod, believing her, believing in myself.

When I feel better, we pull away and she sits next to me on the bed.

“You know what you need right now?” She turns to face me, her eyes sparkling with that familiar excitement that always seems to light up a room. “A vacation. Seriously, you need a break from all this. Just imagine it—no drama, no bullshit, just you and me somewhere far away from all of this fucking mess.”

She pauses for a moment, her expression softening. “We could find a beautiful, peaceful place. Somewhere with sunshine, fresh air, and maybe even a beach. You could finally unwind, let go of all the stress, and just breathe. And we could do it together! How awesome is that? It’s been so long since we’ve had any real time for ourselves. We could explore a new city, sip cocktails by the pool, and stay up late talking about everything and nothing. Plus, I could really use some inspiration for the Elena Matthews project, and what better way to get those creative juices flowing than by being somewhere new and exciting?”

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A vacation—an escape—sounded like exactly what I needed.

“Yeah, maybe you’re right,” I say, my voice a little stronger now. “A vacation sounds like a damn good idea.

Rosita’s grin widens, and nudges me playfully. “That’s the spirit! We’ll find some place perfect, just for us. Hell, we can even go crazy—drink too much, flirt with strangers, dance until our feet ache. Whatever the fuck we want, because we fucking deserve it.”

I laugh, a real one this time, the idea of it all lifting some of the heaviness off my chest.

“Let’s do it, Ro. Let’s get the hell out of here.”



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[Vivienne]

We decide to go to the Bahamas to get away from the city and all its drama, even if just for a little while.

I feel bad for leaving work like that, especially with the deadline for the next project Harvey and his company are looking forward to, but he insisted I go.

“You deserve this,” he told me. “And it’s just for a week. We’ll be fine. And when you come back, we can talk about how things are going to go from here.”

“But what about Kim? If she —”

He didn’t let me finish. “For now, just focus on yourself. I’ll have someone keep an eye on her so she doesn’t get the chance to cause any more trouble. Go. Have a nice time. And call me if you need anything, okay? I’m always here.”

And so, a week later, I’m boarding a plane to a foreign country. As the plane soars through the sky, taking me to a place where I can let go of all my worries, my thoughts return to the person I’m trying to forget—Caden.

But maybe this trip down memory lane is necessary—to finally rip him out of my system.

I still remember the day we first met.

— — —

Flashback

"Do I look alright?" Vivienne asked her college roommate, inspecting the short black dress in the mirror.

The two of them were getting ready to attend a surprise party thrown by one of the seniors. A college kid who lived with his family in the city had managed to throw a rager at his penthouse. Almost everyone on campus had heard about it and was invited.

"Holy cow! You girls are still not ready yet?" Another of their friends, Anna, stormed in and joined Vivienne at the mirror. "How are you two going to manage in that traffic if we don't get going, like, right now?"

Grace laughed, grabbing her purse from the bed. "Don't worry, I already asked Daniel to come pick us up."

"Perfect!" Vivienne grinned.

It was a fifteen-minute drive from campus to the city where the house party was, and even though Daniel's car wasn't spacious, the three of them somehow managed to get in without anyone messing up their hair or ruining their dresses.

"Hey, so have you got any gorgeous friends at the party?" Anna asked, too excited and nervous to stay still for more than a few seconds.

Daniel glanced at her through the rearview mirror and rolled his eyes. "Do you have any idea how many people are going to be there? The guy literally posted on I*****m that there's free booze. I think everyone on campus might show up tonight."

"Even better." Grace laughed and took a selfie. "We'll be sure to find a

couple of hotties if it's as packed as you say it's going to be."

Vivienne grinned. "Are you guys seriously planning to bring guys back to our dorm tonight? We live in the girls' dorm! Do you really think we won't get busted?"

"No one's getting busted." Grace shook her head as if Vivienne was saying the silliest thing she'd ever heard. "And even if we do, we'll deal with it. This is college, Viv, not a convent. If we don't have some fun now and then, we're wasting this opportunity."

Anna nodded eagerly. "Plus, who's going to check up on us? They only have security in the boys' dorm, the lecture halls, and other official places. The guards on our floor don't care, and neither does the head. It'll be fine!"

Vivienne could already feel the adrenaline kicking in. "Alright, you might be right."

Daniel shook his head. "You're all gonna be in deep shit if you get busted."

Grace leaned closer and kissed her boyfriend's cheek. "Aww, is the big bad boy afraid we'll get caught? Are you planning to turn me down when I try to get some later tonight? I mean, you can say it; maybe I'll stop knocking at the wrong door."

"What are you talking about?" He laughed and shrugged. "You won't. Because you know there's only one guy on campus you'll be knocking at."

The three girls laughed.

"Oh my God, you guys are disgusting. Get a room," Anna muttered, tossing napkins at them.

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By the time they rolled up to the party, it was exactly what Vivienne expected—chaos. The penthouse was packed with sweaty, half-dressed students, some grinding to the ear-splitting music, others making out like there was no tomorrow.

“It’s a madhouse in here. Try not to get lost,” Grace murmured in her ear as they stepped inside.

Daniel, Anna, and Grace headed toward the living room, but Vivienne hung back when her phone buzzed in her bag. Her brother’s name flashed on the screen.

“Shit!” She ducked back into the elevator, hoping to take the call without him hearing the party raging in the background. If he found out she was at some rager, he’d lose his mind.

Just as the door closed, someone hurried inside and slammed right into her.

That’s when she saw him. For the first time.

The most fucking gorgeous guy she’d ever laid eyes on.

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