

Mr. President You Are The Daddy Of My Triplets Chapter 1

Chapter 1 – 1- Odd Query

Marissa looked up at her friend's forehead which had several lines while pressing the ultrasound device on her belly moving it back and forth.

"What? Is there a problem?" She asked Dr. Sophia James who was not only like her elder sister and friend but also a big name in the gynecological department.

"This PCOS has messed up my cycles already, Sophie. I don't know how else to control my sugar cravings anymore." She complained putting her head on the pillow praying silently that it wasn't another cyst on the screen.

"Umm ... it's not the cyst, Marissa," Sophia passed over a soft cotton napkin to her assistant who wiped off the gel from Marissa's belly.

Once Marissa was seated opposite her, Dr. Sophia leaned back in her seat and observed her face, "When did you get your last period?"

"Oh, I think it was two months back, but it was more like spotting," Marissa leaned forward to place her elbows on the table, "What is it, Sophia? Is it something serious?"

She was already tensed due to her husband Rafael Sinclair whose blindfold would be taken off today after three days of his eye surgery.

A small smile crossed Dr. Sophia's lips, "I know you are already anxious, Marissa because today Rafael will come to know about the reality that all this time when he was blind, his wife was not Valerie but you. "

Marissa gave a nervous nod and pursed her lips.

"But I think he won't stay mad at you once you tell him you are pregnant." Marissa's eyes snapped up to Sophia's face.

What? Pregnant?

Sophia nodded with a smile, "Now you need to stay happy and take a good nutritious diet for your babies."

Marissa felt her heartbeat stopping and her hand moved to her flat belly, "Babies? Twins?"

Two years back she had to marry Rafael Sinclair in place of her sister who fled away from the wedding because she couldn't marry a blind man.

Rafael Sinclair was drop-dead gorgeous, president of the Sinclair group of industries, and was very much in love with Valerie.

In an accident, he lost his eyes and after expensive treatments, doctors decided to wait a bit so that they could operate his eyes. They were quite hopeful for the success of the operation.

However, on the wedding day, Valerie decided to escape from the venue and Marissa had no choice but to take her sister's place.

Rafael's mother Nina Sinclaire cried before Marissa and begged her to accept her blind son's proposal or he would give up on life.

Marissa was a lot different from Valerie. She had been a shy and quiet kind of girl whose world used to revolve around books.

Four years back when her sister brought Rafael to introduce him to the family that's when she met him.

He had become her instant crush, but she couldn't say much due to her elder sister Valerie. Valerie was a beautiful carefree soul who was crazy about boys and parties. From a very young age, boys used to adore her and fell for her like moths around a flame.

Valarie and Rafael were crazily in love and wanted to get married in a hurry except when Rafael met a car accident and lost his eyes.

Valerie went quiet after that. She used to visit Rafael in hospital and Marissa could feel that the spark was missing.

"Rubbish," her mom Vicky Aaron snubbed her once, "your sister is upset but she loves Rafael like anything. Stop thinking negative about her."

Due to Rafael's disturbed mental state, both families decided to arrange the wedding, and everyone seemed happy about the decision except Valerie.

Marissa could see sadness in her eyes but as always Mom used to brush it off.

However, everyone was shocked when Valerie was found missing from the dressing room leaving behind just a small note of apology that said, "Sorry. I can't marry a blind man."

Marissa was used as a scapegoat and her mom made her wear the wedding gown in place of her sister.

The only thing similar between Marissa and Valerie was their voices. Nobody could detect whose voice was it and that worked for both the families.

Since she got married to him, she became Valerie to everyone around her. Only Dr. Sophia was the one who used to call her by her real name in her clinic.

Rafael at last had a successful eye operation and today doctors were supposed to take off the blindfold. Marissa was already very nervous, but both the families had assured her that they would support her in front of Rafael.

He needed to accept that the girl he married two years back was not Valerie but her younger sister Marissa.

On her way back to the hospital, she was continuously smiling like a fool looking out of the car window. Her pregnancy report was in her purse, and she could imagine Rafael's happiness.

"Now no more hide and seek, Mr. President," she told him silently, "I'm your wife and you need to accept it, love. We are going to be parents and that's it. You are mine and today I'll tell you how much I love you."

She rubbed her belly lovingly and closed her eyes in pure bliss.

The last two years of their married life had been heavenly. They talked about books, literature, and philosophy. Rafael often used to remark how he never had such kind of meaningful conversation with her.

"How come my wife has become so knowledgeable?" he used to tease her before kissing her passionately and Marissa used to melt into his body and lips.

She even helped him in taking care of the business. He taught her a lot about how to make billion-dollar deals and the ways meetings should be presided over.

In short, they had supported each other in every aspect.

She felt her heartbeat stopping when the car halted in front of the hospital.

"Time to claim your daddy as Mrs. Marissa Sinclair." She told her unborn babies letting out a long sigh. When she reached the corridor, she could feel her heart drumming inside her chest.

With fingers crossed she took out the envelope from her purse that had her pregnancy report and opened the private room's door where Rafael was brought after the operation.

Her steps faltered when she saw the scene before her eyes. Her husband Rafael Sinclair was there sitting on the bed without a blindfold. His green eyes were darting around in the room excitedly while he was laughing hard at something.

His one arm was around a woman's waist who was standing close to him leaning her forehead against his shoulder. The way only a wife was supposed to stand.

Only Marissa had the right to stand like this.

Who was she?

Just then the woman decided to raise her face and her teary gaze met Marissa.

"Valerie!" Marissa whispered to herself.

What the actual...

What was she doing here?

"Oh, Rafael," Valerie sobbed, "I can't believe you can finally see me."

"Stop crying, my love." he wiped her eyes gently.

My love? That's what Rafael used to call me.

ME!

Just then Rafael's eyes fell on her, "Marissa! My little Greene. My favorite sister-in-law. How come you are here? That too so soon."

He was told that his wife's sister had moved abroad for studies. Ignoring him, Marissa shot a sharp gaze at her sister.

"Valerie. What do you think you are doing here?" a hush fell in the room by her odd query.

hapter 2 – 2- Have Some Shame

"What do you mean by that, Marissa." Instead of Valerie, Rafael asked her, "Naturally! She is my wife, and she is the one who is supposed to stay with me. Who were you expecting by the way?"

His voice might be friendly, but the dangerous undertones suggested, he would not listen to a word against his beloved wife.

“Excuse me,” His mom Nina Sinclair held Marissa’s elbow, “I can take care of this,” she said with a forced smile and guided her rigid figure out of the hospital room, “What’s the matter with you, Marissa? Can’t you see? It’s just three days to his surgery. He is watching the world after three damn years. Don’t you create any drama!

Marissa found herself speechless for a moment. This was the same woman who begged her two years back to marry her son and now she was ... acting so weird.

“B...but mom. You know I am his wife and...”

Slap!

“Are you fu*cking out of your mind, Marissa?” Placing her hand on her stinging cheek, Marissa stared at her mother-in-law dumbly, “Are you so much after his name and wealth that you have forgotten the fact that he might be hurt once he comes to know about our arrangement?”

Marissa couldn’t believe that she was double-crossed. However, she wasn’t giving up on her love without putting up a fight.

She pushed passed Nina Sinclair and went back inside the room to talk to her husband.

“Marissa! Stop!” Nina came after her pleading, but Marissa walked up to Rafael and stopped just close to Valerie.

“Rafael. I need to talk to you. Alone!” The way she talked to him, he couldn’t help but wonder how confident she had gotten after getting her education and exposure from abroad.

“No such thing is happening,” her own mom Vicky Aaron hissed from the corner of the room, “this is a happy moment for the family, and we must give Valerie and Rafael some privacy. Now let’s go out.” She said with a smile and for the first time Marissa felt the urge to kill her mom.

“I’m not going anywhere, Mom,” Marissa challenged her mom stubbornly and turned her gaze to Rafael, “I’m NOT leaving this room until we have a word in private.”

“Behave yourself, Marissa.” Nina Sinclair tried to speak gently this time. Before Valerie could say something, Rafael spoke,

“Alright. If she needs to talk. Then we better get some privacy.”

“But, darling. I don’t want to leave you right now,” Valerie placed her arms around him with a pout, “Can’t you talk to her later?”

Rafael kissed her hand and gave a gentle shake to his head, "Just a few minutes, my love."

Marissa felt her heart breaking into tiny pieces. She was the love of his love. Not Valerie.

While leaving the room, she didn't miss the evil glint in Valerie's eyes but ignored her. Right now, her mind was on no one, but her husband, the love of her life. Father of her unborn kids.

"What is it, Marissa?" Rafael's eyes narrowed into thin slits. She opened her mouth to speak but he raised his hand to stop her from speaking.

"Listen, little Greene. I know you always had a crush on me." The revelation left her tongue-tied.

"Yes. I have always known since we first met. And that's not a bad thing, Marissa. I always took you as a caring sister-in-law and nothing else. You were always like a little sister to me and that's it. I respect you as Valerie's little sister but if you think that you can own me by creating this drama then you are in for a surprise. I don't give a damn about you. Got it?"

Marissa stood there like a fool not knowing what else to say.

"All this time..." she started, "all this time I was the one who stayed beside you... I'm your wife and ..."

"Enough, Marissa." She could hear annoyance in his voice and that hurt her like anything. For the last two years, he had been her lover and best friend, and now...

Now he was treating her like a stranger. Like she was nothing but just trash.

Their families started coming back inside. Looking at them curiously, Valerie at once darted towards Rafael, "Honey. Are you alright? What does she want from you?" she then turned her hateful gaze to her sister and shrieked in anger, "Shame on you, Marissa. You have turned our happy moment into an embarrassing one."

Marissa didn't want to give up. Not so easily. What would she tell her kids? That I gave up on your father without even putting up a fight?

"I was the one who married you, Rafael," She managed with a sob. His hand that was going to hold Valerie remained there in mid-air, "I was the one who married you and stayed with you for the past two years, Rafael. I know everything...I know everything about you. You also know me like no other man. You... you touched me ... I... I gave you my virg*inity." She came out of the trance when heard surprised gasps around her.

“How shameless you are!” her mom held her arm and gave her a wild shove, “how dare you talk to your brother-in-law like that.”

Despite people’s whispers in the room, her eyes kept gazing at the face that used to lean on her for kissing and licking her face.

“Please ...” she joined her hands, “please don’t kick me out of your life just like that, Rafael.” Closing her eyes she let the tears fall on her face.

“I can’t take this anymore,” Valerie shook her head and stepped back from Rafael.

“Valerie!” Rafael’s eyes at last moved to his beloved, “Please...”

“Just get your hospital discharge, hubby. I’ll wait for you at home.” Valerie planted a soft kiss on his cheek and left the room without a backward glance.

“I was mistaken, Marissa.” He chuckled, “I thought that you were a kind-hearted girl with morals. I guess I was wrong. Your mom was right. Have shame and leave the room. Now!” he roared making everyone in that room jump in fright.

Marissa pursed her quivering lips. There was no use in fighting the battle that she had already lost.

Turning on her heels, she got out of the room.

“Marissa.” She halted in the hospital’s corridor when heard her mother-in-law’s voice. A glimmer of hope came into her heart.

Chapter 3 – 3- Best Two Years

“Mom!” she quickly wiped her tears with the back of her hand and turned to her.

“Now drop the act, Marissa. Let’s face the truth. I’m not your mom and you are not my daughter in law...”

“B...but...”

“No ifs and buts, Marissa. You were there when Valerie wasn’t available. Accept it! He loves her. He’ll never leave her. In his mind, she is the one who stayed beside him all this time.”

“B... but you can tell him that...”

“Tell what? That you are his wife? No way!” there was a sarcastic smirk playing on her lips, “Just be practical, Marissa. Thank your stars that you got a chance to enjoy our family’s wealth all this time. You got the chance to sleep beside him when all the girls

were dying just to have a glimpse of him. You had a lavish life all this time. What more do you want, love?"

Marissa closed her eyes in disappointment, "That means... that means you used me. Right?" a humorless chuckle slipped through her mouth.

"So did you!" Nina shrugged her shoulders, "If you want, I can pay you so that you can live a comfortable life."

"What if..." Marissa swallowed hard, "What if I had conceived during that time? What if we had a baby? What would you do then?"

Nina brought her face dangerously close to Marissa, "I would have killed him."

Marissa gasped but the evil woman nodded at her, "That's right. Sinclair's heir will only be born from a woman who is extremely beautiful and looks classy beside my handsome son. You are not fit to carry Sinclair's heir. We have got standards, girl."

With a sinking heart, Marissa took a step back and tried to smile, "Noted."

When she was leaving the hospital, she wanted to cry at the top of her lungs. They used her. All of them used her.

"What will I tell my babies?" she cried leaning back her head to the back seat of the cab. For the past two years, she had been traveling in luxury cars but today she was again back to square one.

When she reached the Sinclair residence there was silence in the living room. Two maids were cleaning the furniture and Marissa realized these weren't the same faces she was used to seeing every day.

Nina Sinclair had gone too far when she had replaced all the servants of the house.

It was dangerous to stay in this house. If by any chance, Nina came to know about her pregnancy she might kill her babies.

"No. I can't do that." She quickly went to her bedroom and opened the door only to find Valerie already inside.

"Here. Pack your bags and leave. Just try to make it quick." She placed two huge empty bags on the floor.

Marissa looked around the room where she had spent the most amazing time of her life with her husband. In the initial days, how he used to get depressed, and she vowed never to leave his side.

"I'm sorry, Rafael for not keeping my word. But our babies' lives are in danger, honey." She needed to be strong for her kids' sake.

She didn't have any proof of her wedding, nor she had any witnesses. Whenever Rafael used to call any of his office assistants, Nina would never let her come face to face with any of them.

The couple always stayed indoors because Rafael never wanted to go out. He did insist her to go out and enjoy parties or shopping, but she never left his side.

Once or twice when they wanted to have an outdoor dinner then Nina arranged everything in their private gardens.

They rarely had romantic candlelight dinners because it was useless for Rafael and she was not interested because all she craved, was his company.

It didn't take much time to pack when she had to fill only one bag. Valerie stayed there all the time keeping an eye on her.

"Sorry. I can't take risks. Our valuables should stay safe." She explained to her younger sister with an evil smirk.

Once Marissa was done, she picked up her bag and started descending the stairs.

There was nothing except her clothes and documents. She couldn't continue her education just to give twenty-four-hour company to her husband.

She came down and went to the kitchen to pour herself some iced water when she heard some commotion in the living room.

"Rafael. You made it early," she saw Valerie striding towards him with a smile, "welcome home."

Rafael threw a careless glance in Marissa's direction and then smiled at Valerie.

"I wanted to have lunch with my wife." He pulled the chair and sat down, "So what is there for lunch?"

For the first time, Marissa felt Valerie getting nervous, "I ... I need to ask ... the chef."

"Chef?" he frowned upon looking up, "You always cooked food for me. Why not now? Remember? You promised me to make my favorite beef Fajita when I get discharged," he then held her hand, "Never mind. Just give me your company."

Marissa knew what he was talking about. The way he used to sit in the kitchen while she cooked his favorite food. She kept looking at Rafael and wanted to slap hard across his face to tell him that it was all a mistake.

He was making a blunder.

"I'm leaving Rafael," she tried to shift his attention to her.

"I wish you could have lunch with us, Marissa. But you have become so self-centered and so stubborn in your ways, you selfish woman! I would prefer that you don't stay at my place any longer."

He said without meeting her gaze, "Go and learn to stand on your two feet instead of eyeing my money, and stop dreaming of taking advantage of my blindness. I'm no more blind."

Marissa couldn't take it anymore, "I regret breaking it to you, Rafael Sinclair but you are now a blind man who can't see anything around you. Three days back you weren't blind. You were able to see everything when you were blind."

"Marissa!" her ex-mother-in-law cooed, "have lunch with us. As Valerie's sister, I will love it if you join us."

Marissa knew why Nina was doing that. Just to show Rafael how she was not in a hurry to get rid of her.

For once Marissa had an evil glint in her eyes, "Sure, Nina. If you say so." Ignoring Nina's pale face she took a seat right next to Rafael.

Before Rafael could protest, Valerie gave him, her best smile, "It's OK, Rafael. After all, she is my sister and will leave soon."

Just to save their faces, both women weren't showing their evil sides to him.

"Fine," he muttered and waited when servants started placing the hot piping dishes on the table.

The first bite Rafael took from his plate, he stopped and closed his eyes.

"This isn't the same taste that I became habitual of," he told more to himself, examining the meatloaf on his plate.

"Maybe lack of eyesight made you more sensitive to your taste buds," Valerie offered him the explanation that seemed to convince him.

“There are so many things that will transform, Rafael.” Marissa muttered toying with her food, “Too sad! You won’t realize it today.”

Rafael who had stopped eating his food tilted his head sideways to look at the woman who used to be so reserved and shy when he started dating Valerie.

Marissa could feel his green eyes on her face. They all might be curious about what she was talking about because only Rafael could hear her. They surely hit their foot with an axe when they not only offered her to stay for lunch but didn’t mind her sitting next to him.

“Watch out your tongue, Marissa. Another word against my wife and you might regret it.” This time Marissa met his green eyes wondering if she would ever be able to see them again.

“You be happy, Rafael.” She smiled sincerely, “You might regret it too, once I’m gone.” She felt Rafael going rigid. Finishing the food on her plate, she dragged back her chair to stand up.

“Bye, everyone.”

She picked up her bag ignoring Rafael’s curious glances. Her survival mode was on, and she didn’t want to create further issues.

“Let’s get you out of here, my babies. This place isn’t for you.” With that, she left the house where she spent the best two years of her life.

Chapter 4 – 4- Keep An Eye

“That bas*tard. At least he should be man enough to listen to your story,” Sophia felt sorry for her crying friend who was seated on the couch in front of her, “he should have given you a fair chance.”

Marissa crashed at her only friend’s apartment last night because she didn’t know where else to go.

“I don’t know, Sophie,” Marissa’s legs were folded up, and her chin was leaning on her knees, “How is it possible that Valerie was there right after the surgery? It seems... it seems like ... she was keeping the tabs on Rafael.”

“Or maybe there was someone else from the family who was giving her all the information,” Sophia said meaningfully.

Marissa didn’t remark. She didn’t even need a divorce as her marriage was registered as Valerie Aaron.

At the time of the wedding, Nina didn't let the priest speak her name.

"What are your plans, Marissa?" Sophia asked her and passed over the plate that had apple pieces.

"I need to get out of here, Sophia. My kids might be in danger." Then she told everything to her friend who was horrified when she heard about Nina Sinclair.

"Two years back, this lady acted as if she had the best interests for you. You better make it quick. But where will you go, my friend?" Marissa chuckled softly not knowing what to say.

She didn't know anyone outside the Sangua city.

Just then Sophia straightened with excitement and snapped her fingers, "Why don't you move to Kanderton?"

"Kanderton? But I don't have anyone there."

"Silly. My grandfather lives there. Start a new life. Let's go together and make a fresh start." Marissa was already shaking her head,

"No! You can't risk your life because of me. Your clinic is doing very good here. Why would you make the move?"

"OK. Then maybe go there and I can join you later!" Sophia raised her one shoulder and that made Marissa smile.

"By the way," Sophia placed her Coke can on the table and looked at her, "I sent my clinic rider to deliver the ultrasound report to you. Did you receive it?"

Marissa shook her head with a frown, "I have my pregnancy report in my purse but there is no..." she held her breath, "what do you mean by ... you sent a rider?"

She got up from the couch.

Sophia was also on her feet. She quickly dialed a number and waited for the call to be received, "Don't worry. Let me ask the rider. Maybe when he didn't find you, he kept the report envelope with him."

Just then the call was received, "

"Hey! Mike. I asked you to deliver that envelope to Mrs. Sinclair. Do you have it with you?" she asked him, crossing her fingers.

“Yes. I dropped it on my way home. Mrs. Sinclair received it with a smile.” before Sophia could ask more, the man’s voice appeared on speaker, “She seems to be the mother-in-law of your friend, she was very sweet and thanked me a lot.”

Marissa’s face had gone pale.

“I ... I think... Nina received it.” She said in a breathless whisper, “If she knows about this pregnancy then her men will definitely come after me.”

Sophia was fidgeting her fingers with worry, “Listen, love.” She made Marissa sit on the couch and crouched close to her, “I’m calling my grandpa. You just pack your bags and catch the earliest flight.”

Rafael looked at his wife lovingly who was giggling while reading something on her phone.

“What’s so funny?” Nina Sinclair asked her with a smile admiring internally how they looked perfect together.

“Oh. These memes keep popping up and most of them are hilarious,” she placed her phone aside and leaned her head on Rafael’s shoulder.

“Now you two are together. Just take care of each other. I need to return to my house,” Nina made the announcement.

“Oh, mom. You should stay some more.” Valerie said with a pout, but Nina dismissed it with a wave of her hand,

“My business needs me. Now it’s time, you two take on the responsibilities and bring a Sinclair heir.” Nina had her own boutique business that was quite established.

Just then Valerie’s eyes fell on a silver tray placed on the center table, “Is it today’s mail?”

“No,” Nina shrugged carelessly, “some of it came last night. I was having a splitting headache, so I just placed them all together after receiving them. They all are for Rafael if I remember correctly,” Grabbing her bag she got to her feet.

Rafael and Valerie also stood up.

“I’ll walk her to the car,” Valerie squeezed his hand, and he kissed her lips. He saw his favorite women walking out of the door and smiled.

He was blessed with everything in life.

The woman he loved was here, he had gotten back his eyesight.

His gaze fell back on the stack of envelopes lying on the silver platter. He casually walked up and picked them up.

Most of them were from his office, just some printed sh*t that was not that important. Two envelopes were from the banks who wanted him to give them a chance to invest. However, the last envelope was a light lemon color and was not sealed.

He flipped it to see the name.

Marissa Aaron.

Several lines appeared on his forehead.

Why was Marissa's envelope delivered here?

He tried reading the logo on the envelope.

Sophia James MD: Head of Gynecology Clinic.

He took out the folded sheet from the envelope and opened it.

"Dr Sophia is Valerie's doctor and was treating her for cysts." He mumbled running his gaze on the paper.

There were small black-and-white graphics of something that seemed strange to his eyes. What was it?

A cyst?

Maybe just like Valerie she also had these. When he was blind, Valerie used to visit her gynecologist friend Dr. Sophia to get checked.

And that was when his eyes fell on the words written on the bottom of the paper.

'Based on ultrasound examination, the images depict the presence of two distinct fetal sacs indicative of twins.'

He felt disturbed after reading those words. Was Marissa expecting twins? Was it the reason she was upset?

Pregnancy hormones?

He felt guilt taking place in his heart. He could show her more empathy.

Maybe the father wasn't ready to take the responsibility.

"What are you reading, babe?" Valerie asked him, closing the living door behind her.

"Nothing. Just an official letter."

"Put it away right now. Have you forgotten? Doctors haven't allowed you to do reading this soon."

He abruptly dropped the envelope on the table with a twitch of the corner of his lips.

"Are you joining me in the bedroom?" she asked kissing his lips.

"Umm hmm. In a while," he saw her climbing the stairs and when he was sure she had gone inside the bedroom, he took out his phone to make a call.

The phone rang twice before his call was received, "Marissa. Where are you?"

He could hear different voices in the background and a distant announcement on the mic, she seemed to be in a crowded place.

Like an airport.

He wanted to offer her, his support.

He wanted to tell her that he would be there for her.

"Y...you called? You at last called me?" he felt her hopes getting high and had to roll his eyes.

Damn. He hated crying women.

"For God's sake, Marissa. Can you stop being this dramatic? I called you for my support. I just saw your report. Let me offer some help. Let me know about your account details. Tell me who is the father so that I can beat him to a pulp."

He got a little frustrated when she fell silent.

"Marissa! You there?"

In answer, he heard her teary laughter, "Listen, Simba. Hakuna Matata. Ok? Bye."

She had disconnected the call without accepting his financial aid. She didn't even bother to tell him about the father of the baby. Or was she planning to pin it on him? And then he felt his body freezing.

Simba? Hakuna Matata?

These were the same words Valerie used to tease him when he was blind. A popular phrase from Lion King ... meant 'no problems' ... 'no worries'.

How did Marissa know about these? Or did Valerie share it with her?

There was something extremely wrong, but his mind couldn't register what it was.

"Babe. Are you coming up?" he jilted a little when heard Valerie's voice.

"I'm coming, love." He called out and started taking slow steps to the staircase.

"You might regret it too once I'm gone." Marissa's words echoed in his head. Without realizing what he was doing, he clutched the ultrasound report to his chest. Like it was something very precious.

He needed to find out what was going on and for that, he was willing to hire the best private investigators.

He made a quick call to someone, "I need to know everything about Marissa within twelve hours. Keep an eye on her."

Chapter 5 – 5- CCTV

"Mrs. Richard," Sophia took off her reading glasses, "You need to change your diet. Lose those extra pounds and see how you'll notice this shocking surge in your energy."

Her patient was sitting there with a pout, "I love butter croissants." She complained and Sophia suppressed her smile,

"I'm sure, you do, Mrs. Richard. Everything is good in moderation. In most of the treatments, it's eighty percent diet and twenty percent meds. Sometimes a good diet can reverse the effects."

She started scribbling something on her writing pad, "I'm writing some medicines. Take them for a week and come back to me."

She took the liberty of yawning loudly in the confines of her office when the last patient left her room.

It was already evening, and she wanted to get laid by a handsome this weekend. She didn't believe in relationships and the living example before her eyes was of Marissa.

She frowned when heard the ringing of her phone.

“Marissa?” she chuckled and took the call, “Think of the devil ... How are you doing?”

“Oh, I’m doing good. Grandpa Flint is taking very good care of me. Why are you still in the office by the way?”

It had been three days since Marissa left the city. Sophia didn’t want to attract any kind of attention by trying to follow her. She was planning to join her in a few weeks.

“Had lots of patients today. How are my nieces doing?”

“What! Nieces!” Marissa laughed hard on the other side of the phone, “How do you know they are nieces? They might be nephews too. Or maybe it’s one boy and one girl!”

Sophia chuckled and felt good when she sensed the happiness in her friend’s voice. The change of place seemed to do her good.

Just then the door to her office opened with a thud and her assistant stepped inside with a worried face, “What is it, Doris?” Sophia had concern in her voice.

She momentarily forgot that the call was not disconnected, and Marissa was still on the line.

“There is this gentleman, and he is insisting on meeting you.”

Sophia leaned back in her seat and closed her eyes, “Does he have an appointment?”

“No, ma’am. He doesn’t but he is not ready to leave. I asked him to meet some other gynecologist, but he only wants to talk to you.”

“Hmm,” Sophia straightened with a sigh, “Let him in.”

“Listen, love,” remembering Marissa, she glued the phone to her ear, “I need to see this man. He better be handsome otherwise I’m not entertaining him.” She said the last part in a teasing manner.

Marissa chuckled and cut the call after the quick goodbyes.

However, nothing in the world had prepared Dr. Sophia to face the man she was least expecting, “Are you Sophia James? Marissa Aaron’s doctor?”

“W...what? W...who are you, sir?” Sophia knew very well who he was. Damn! She didn’t understand why she was stuttering like that.

What was he doing here?

"This doesn't answer my question. Are you Marissa Aaron's doctor?" he placed his palms on the desk leaning forward his brooding figure.

Suddenly, Sophia felt like the room was shrinking due to the heavy aura of this man. He was nothing that she had seen of him in newspapers and magazines.

He was the classic definition of drop-dead gorgeous. Marissa didn't do justice when she told her how handsome he was.

"Sir..." she swallowed hard and even managed a smile, "even if I'm. I am not allowed to share it with anyone without her consent."

Rafael pursed his lips tightly, looking into the eyes of Sophia James who was finding it difficult to maintain eye contact with his green orbs.

He reached inside his pocket and took out the crumbled envelope to wave it in her face, "This came from your office. You might remember your clinic logo." He said sarcastically.

"Sir!" Sophia raised her hand this time to stop him, "I didn't deny anything. I already said I can't jeopardize my client's privacy. We have strict policies to..."

He brushed his fingers through his black locks in frustration and then decided to take the seat in front of her, "Listen. Just tell me one thing. Have you ever treated my wife here? Valerie Sinclair?"

When Sophia didn't respond, he brought softness in his tone, "I know about your client's privacy, and I respect that. Here I'm just asking about my wife. Valerie Sinclair."

Sophia felt sorry for him when she saw the worry lines on his face.

"Umm. Why don't you ask your wife instead, Mr. Rafael Sinclair?" his eyes snapped up to her face,

"How do you know I'm Rafael Sinclair." Sophia tried to control her rugged breathing. She was trying her best not to show panic on her face.

"Of course. Half of the country knows you, sir. You might be a businessman, yet people take you as some kind of celebrity."

Sophia's mind was racing by now. She needed to divert his mind from the issue at hand, "By the way, I'm so happy to have you at my office. Can... can ... I... I mean ... can you give me an autograph?"

She quickly extended her medical writing pad towards the handsome man who seemed confused for some reason.

“And I would also like to have a selfie with you. You know? For publicity reasons? By tomorrow my clinic will be crowded like anything. I would like to put a caption on Social Media post ... Mr. Sinclair is found in our clinic for the treatment of his ...” she giggled with fake embarrassment, blabbering like a child, “I’m sorry ... I meant to say your wife. Mr. Sinclair honored us by visiting along with his wife for her fertility treatment... Ha-ha.”

“Are you out of your fu*cking mind?” he stood up abruptly causing the chair to fall back, “I’m here worried sick for someone and you are coming up with these outrageous demands. I can make sure to get your license canceled.” Sophia’s face placed at the threat.

“I’m sorry. It’s just that you are so handsome that I lost my mind.” This time her face was sad. Rafael kept staring at her face with expressionless eyes and Sophia got scared.

What if she went too far with all this?

“Ms. Sophia James.” He hissed between his clenched teeth, “I’ll return tomorrow, and you better be prepared. I need to know my answers otherwise I might bring a police official to get the CCTV footage.”

Chapter 6 – 6- Not Adding Up!

Sophia let out a long sigh of relief when he left. And then her heart almost stopped when she remembered what he had said.

He was planning to come the next day too.

“If he comes to know that Marissa was the one who often visited me and Valerie never came to my office, I’ll be in trouble. He might go after my friend and grill her about the babies’ father.”

She didn’t want to destroy Marissa’s secret.

Rafael’s mother and Valerie would be after the kids and Rafael would never trust or believe Marissa against Valerie or his mom.

She needed to come up with a proper plan.

“Where were you?” for some reason, he felt irritated when heard Valerie’s voice upon entering the bedroom, “Doctor asked you to at least spend six months indoors, Rafael. I don’t know why you are not following his instructions.”

By the end of it, her voice had turned teary, and Rafael felt guilt making its way into his heart, "I'm sorry, love. It's just... I am getting tired of staying back home. I am not even allowed to read my office files, how am I going to spend six damn months."

Valerie quickly leaned her face against his chest, "Well. I have a few ideas in mind if you agree." She started playing with his collar button. There was a sly smile playing on her lips when she offered them to him by raising her face temptingly.

Rafael thanked in his heart for the shift of her focus and started sucking her lips. The same ones that tasted... that tasted like ...

He pulled back with a frown. Valerie who was about to let out a loud moan at the kiss looked into his eyes with a dreamy look on her face, "Are you alright, love?"

He nodded and pinched her chin, bumping his nose with her, "Do you know what your lips taste like?"

He was expecting her to answer him as she always used to do.

"Strawberry!"

But she didn't. Instead, she tightened the grip of her arms around his neck and kissed his chin,

"Umm hmm. I don't know. Tell me." She urged a little seductively.

"Why? Don't you know how they taste?" he started tickling her belly playfully enjoying her giggles.

And then something crossed his mind and he looked at her laughing face, "Oranges. It's always been oranges. That sweetness mixed with tanginess."

He waited for her to argue that it was always strawberries and never oranges. She kept teasing his lips with hers without any comment.

There was something extremely wrong. But what was it? Valerie was always there with him. Two years ago, when he met the accident, she used to stay at the hospital twenty-four-seven.

She had kissed him hard when their parents suggested the wedding in the hospital room. Her hand remained intertwined through his fingers during the wedding ceremony.

After the wedding when he feared that she was chained to home due to his lack of social life, she never complained and accepted the change.

Then why little Greene was telling him, it was not Valerie but her?

He came out of his thoughts when Valerie kept teasing him with her lips. That night he made love to Valerie, and she responded to him with the same passion.

By the end of it when she went to sleep, he kept thinking hard in the dark.

“No. As a husband, he was supposed to trust his wife. He couldn’t let a third person say any rubbish against Valerie. Tomorrow when he would go back to Dr. Sophia James, a higher official from the court and a senior lawyer would accompany him.

Once when Valerie’s tongue slipped, she told him that Dr. Sophia was not only her gynecologist but also a very good friend of hers.

He picked up his phone and sent a message to his friend Joseph, “Can you meet me tomorrow in my office?”

Joseph’s reply came instantly, “Rafael, my friend. How are you? Are you even allowed to use your phone? Your wife and mom didn’t let me meet you for two years. They are too protective of you.”

Joseph and Rafael only interacted with each other on the phone. The only explanation offered by Nina was, “Once you’re healthy, you are free to go wherever you want.”

Rafael closed his eyes with a smile. His mother would never break his trust. For some reason, she never liked Marissa and he never doubted her instincts.

Was Marissa always this selfish and this greedy?

Well. There were some unanswered questions that he needed to know from Sophia James.

“Where are you going?” Valerie asked him in a sleepy voice when she didn’t find him on the bed beside her. He was wearing a tie, standing before the mirror.

He felt strange seeing himself wearing a suit after two years.

“Rafael, you shouldn’t ...” her husband didn’t let her speak,

“Don’t worry about me, Valerie. My assistants will be there to do the job. I promise I’ll be careful.”

He planted a quick kiss on her lips and left the room.

On his way outside, he asked the servants not to disturb Valerie in her sleep. Like last evening, the driver took him to Sophia’s clinic.

His lawyer friend and a higher official man were already waiting for him in the parking lot. He greeted them and walked inside.

The same receptionist greeted them and then her face got pale when she remembered that he was the same man who barged in Sophia's clinic without an appointment.

He seemed like an influential man.

"Inform Ms. Sophia James that we are here," Rafael told the assistant impatiently. He knew once he would look at the CCTV footage he could get peaceful sleep at night.

"I trust my wife and this little investigation is for the peace of my heart." He tried explaining himself.

"Sir. Dr Sophia hasn't arrived yet."

His forehead wrinkled into several lines.

"Haven't arrived yet? Is she usually this late or ..." he trailed off when the assistant started shaking her head.

"No, sir. She is usually on time but today she asked me to cancel all her appointments as she is sick. Can I arrange your meeting with another gynecologist who is an expert in..." Rafael had already turned on his heels.

The higher official showed his badge to the assistant, "Sophia James address. Quick!" the assistant hurriedly grabbed a paper and pen and jotted down the address.

"Are we going to her place?" Rafael asked the man impatiently once they were outside.

"No. I'm sending my men there. Just wait for five minutes." He spoke to someone on the phone and Rafael started pacing around impatiently.

After a few minutes, the man's phone started ringing, "Yes! ... Speak ... what?"

Rafael's eyes traveled to the man's shocked face.

"What happened?" he inquired.

"Dr. Sophia. Last night she gave urgent notice to her landlord on call that she is moving out of town. She collected her important stuff with her rider's help and left."

"What are you saying!" Rafael snarled walking up to him, "There must be a way to find out where she has gone."

The man swallowed hard and shook his head, “My men tried to find out. She didn’t leave any trail behind.

We can’t find her destination unless we get help from someone who knows the system. Maybe someone from the security in charge or airport staff.”

Rafael clutched his hands tightly into fists.

No. He wasn’t giving up that easily. He vowed to find out Marissa and Sophia... and the father of Marissa’s kids.

Something was not adding up here.

Chapter 7 – 7- Time To Shine

For the first time, Rafael didn’t like it when he saw Valerie’s name flashing on his phone screen, “Hey!”

“Rafael. Just wanted to keep a check on you. You know how much I care about you, sweetheart.”

He hummed into the phone as if he was too busy with his work.

“In the past two years, I kept tabs on you and didn’t stop asking about your well-being. Whether we were together or not.” She made her voice a little husky and Rafael found it odd when he felt like she was faking it.

What is happening to me? Is this how husband and wife should behave when a third person tries to cause a drift in their relationship?

“But why would you do that, Valerie, when I was always with you?” he asked her, keeping his tone casual.

She hesitated for a bit, “Of course, Raf. Tha ... that’s what... I mean... yes... ha-ha. How... how can I forget that... I was with you all the time.”

He plastered the smile for her sake and invented a lie, “Yeah. All the time. Except when I went for those two days to a Therapy program right after two months of our wedding. Remember?”

She giggled again, “Yeah, yeah. How I missed you for those two days.”

“OK, love. My executives are here, and I need to carry on this meeting. Don’t worry. I’ll not stress my eyes.”

"I love you, Rafael. Just remember ... that ... I don't want you to lose your eyes ever again." She said softly and Rafael felt hurt...betrayed.

"I love you too. Don't worry, Valerie. Just remember... Hakuna Matata."

"What!" she laughed on the other side, "what does it mean?"

"Nothing, Valerie. Nothing. It's just a cute dialogue of a movie." He disconnected the phone and tossed it on the desk before meeting the gaze of his best friend Joseph.

Rafael signed some papers and moved the file to his assistant, "Take it, Liam. And ask the builders to follow the contract deadlines so that we can start hiring the new staff for our new offices in Kanderton."

Liam nodded and picked up the file. Just recently he had found that Kanderton was a developing city and had a very good scope for their business.

"I feel like you are part of some movie," Joseph said munching some crisps when Liam left, "maybe a suspense thriller."

They were seated in Rafael's office of Sinclair Industries after such a long time.

"You are saying that Marissa made a claim that she was the one who spent these past two years with you. On the other hand, your mom didn't get you to meet anyone. Why do you think she did that?"

"Maybe because my psychiatrist suggested it. According to him I might have felt left out." Rafael shrugged and took a sip of his coffee.

"And why would a psychiatrist suggest something so outrageous, Rafael? Instead of helping you mingle among other people, he is suggesting you give up your social life. Strange."

Rafael stood up and loosened the tie around his neck.

"I need to find out about Dr. Sophia and Marissa. Something is telling me, they both are together. Sophia knows something about this whole drama that's the reason she flew away."

"By the way," Joseph also got to his feet, "why are you so adamant in finding these women? Let them live their life and you stay happy with yours."

Rafael was looking out the glass door observing the city lights. He didn't give any reaction to Joseph's questions.

He didn't move when he felt his friend's hand on his shoulder, "Don't keep it inside you. Tell me. Why are you looking for them?" And for the first time, Rafael felt this sudden urge to cry.

"B...Because if... if Marissa is telling the truth, then... then ... I think... those kids... those twins are mine."

Joseph went still for a moment, "Goodness!" he whispered, and Rafael nodded with a sarcastic smirk.

"Did you talk to your mom or Valerie about it?" Rafael shook his head at his friend's query,

"No, I didn't. Asking these questions might mean alerting them. Valerie is not the same anymore."

"Why? Weren't you dating her before the accident? How can you say that?"

Because whenever I suck those kissable lips, they no more give me the taste of strawberries. I crave that taste.

He didn't say it out loud but something in his expression made Joseph feel sorry for him.

"She doesn't remember Hakuna Matata... a phrase from Lion King. I just lied to her that I went to a therapy program right after two months of our marriage. She went along with it but... I never went to any therapy program... in fact... in fact, I always stayed home after getting blind."

He explained to his friend and for a few minutes, heavy silence hung in the room.

"Joseph. Help me." This time there was pleading in his voice, "Help me in finding out Marissa and her kids. I might be wrong, but I need to confirm before taking the next step."

He wasn't able to get Marissa's teary voice out of his mind before she left. She knew about Hakuna Matata, and she already predicted that he would regret it once she was gone.

Rafael closed his eyes.

I need to find you, strawberry. I need to find you, my sugar. Where have you gone?

"I'm so happy that you made it here in time," Marissa held Sophia's hand while sitting beside her on the couch.

“Me too. The first time he entered in my office, I knew he was having doubts.” Sophia again touched the iced water glass to her lips.

She didn’t take the risk of going home and left for Kanderton straight from her office. Thankfully her trusted cleaning lady got the documents delivered to her office. It was not wise to stay there anymore.

Rafael’s men might be keeping an eye on her every move.

“How is your pregnancy?” Sophia gave a little pat to her friend’s belly, “How are the babies?”

“They are good. It’s just the morning sickness that’s bothering me. Otherwise, it’s quite smooth.” Marissa started fidgeting her fingers in nervousness.

“What’s the matter? You seem upset.” Marissa nodded her head trying to control her quivering lips, “I was trying for college admissions. Before getting married to Rafael I was planning to start my MBA.”

“Then? I think one is supposed to take the entrance test.” Marissa nodded and gave her a shaky grin,

“I know. I’m getting to that part. I gave the test and today I got to know...”

“For God’s sake, Marissa. Speak up! My heart is sinking.”

“I got to know that...” she exhaled a long breath, “that I have failed the test.” Marissa couldn’t take it anymore and started crying.

“Hey! Girl!” Sophia at once moved closer to her friend and pulled her into a tight hug.

“Sophia. I was such an intelligent girl before I got married to him. I left everything for his happiness. And now I have nothing in my hands.”

“Who said you are no longer an intelligent girl?” Both the girls jumped up when Grandpa Flint’s voice got to their ears.

“Don’t ever talk like that. You are NOT empty-handed. Ok?” Grandpa Flint said sternly, “You have kids, silly girl. Once they are here, see how your world will change for good.”

“But Grandpa. My initial plan was to do an MBA to land in a big multinational. How will I raise my kids without a good job? I wanted to give the best life to my kids.” She said brokenly.

They were Rafael’s kids and deserved a lavish lifestyle as Sinclair’s heirs.

“Marissa. Look up!” Grandpa Flint placed his coffee cup aside and took the chair to sit opposite her, “Listen, girl. Who the hell told you that you can only give a good lifestyle to your kids by achieving an MBA degree?”

“Then what else should I do?” Marissa accepted the napkin from Sophia and wiped her nose, “The only thing I might be doing is waitressing. That’s what I can do best, I guess.”

“Can you put some positive thoughts in that head of yours, girl?” Grandpa Flint snubbed her like a gentle father who couldn’t let his daughter think of herself as someone small.

Marissa kept crying and could feel Sophia rubbing her hand on her back to console her.

“Marissa. Listen to me,” Flint held the hands of the crying girl, “Maybe that’s what fate wants you to do. Why work under someone when you can start your own business.”

“Business?” Marissa quit crying and eyed the old man as if he had lost his mind, “What business? I don’t even have any money for investment.”

“The business idea I have in mind might not need a huge investment.” Marissa didn’t say anything and kept looking at Flint’s wrinkled face.

“All these days, I have been eating the food you are cooking for me in this kitchen,” Flint pointed towards the stove where the chicken broth was simmering on a very low flame, “Start a food business.”

“What!”

“What!” this time Sophia also screamed along with Marissa.

“Food business?”

“Yeah. Food business. You have got taste in your hands, silly. Has anyone ever told you, your hands have got this magic?”

Marissa had quit crying.

“I have seen you preparing food with so much love... and so much passion. For you, it’s like therapy. Make that therapy your career.”

Sophia started nodding her head, “Grandpa Flint is right. Start a food business, Marissa. Who knows, in the future, you might be doing successful catering in all the top organizations. Maybe... someday, when that university invites you to cater to their guests you can just show them your middle finger.”

For the first time, Marissa found her first smile, “Oh God, Sophia! Flint! You two are something,” she said with a giggle.

Sophia threw her hand around her neck and squeezed her to her side, “Let’s conquer the world, Marissa Aaron. Along with my nieces, let’s show the world who we are. It’s time to shine!”

Chapter 8 – 8- Hidden

(Six months later)

“How is your handsome husband, girl?” Valerie rolled her eyes when Geena asked her about Rafael.

Her friends used to envy her all the time. Valerie did hit a jackpot when she married Rafael. A handsome billionaire who could fulfill all his wife’s demands.

“He is good,” She said with a careless shrug.

“How is he coping with his eyesight.”

“Well. He did act odd a few days post-surgery but then everything went back to normal.” She squeezed her eyes in excitement.

“Odd?” Geena sipped her iced tea, “What did he do?”

“Like ... he used to put a blindfold before making love to me,” Valerie said with a blush and Geena rolled back her eyes in ecstasy,

“So let me spell it out for you. He is filthy rich, handsome, and then kinky as well. What a wild combo! Woah!”

Valerie shook her head in amusement, “After putting on the blindfold, he used to suck my lips intensely as if... as if he was trying to taste them. He used to feel every part of my body with that blindfold covering his eyes.”

“What? Every part?” there was a dreamy look on Geena’s face when she saw the red hue on Valerie’s cheek getting darker, “Girl. This is some real bedroom shit. Did he ever tell you the reason?”

“No! He just said that he wanted to feel me like he used to do when he was blind.” Valerie was taking small sips of her iced coffee latte.

“Does he...” Geena leaned forward to be a little discreet, “Does he know that you were absent from his life for two years and that Marissa was the one...”

“Shh...” Valerie hurriedly ran a gaze around her and sighed with relief when found very few customers sitting around, “Geena. Please. We don’t need to discuss it anymore.”

Only Geena and Nina were the ones who knew the details. Thankfully her mom also stood with her and helped her in getting back what was rightfully hers.

“Hey. I’m not discussing it. It was just a question...” This time she threw the straw and took a big chug from her cup, “You are damn lucky that I’m Rafael’s cousin. Otherwise, nobody could have stopped me from getting him.” She wiped her mouth delicately with a napkin and Valerie couldn’t even smile.

She needed to talk to Nina about this girl. She seemed to be bad news.

After getting out of the car she fixed her dark shades and went inside the house where Rafael was sitting in the living room watching a TV show.

Valerie’s steps faltered a little. Wasn’t he supposed to be in the office?

“Hey! How come you are early?” she walked up to him and then sat on his lap after planting a kiss on his lips.

“I just wanted to come home and rest a little. After attending these meetings, I felt my energy drained.”

“Oh,” Valerie quickly kicked off her sandals and then started tracing her finger softly on his face, tracing every feature, “What do you say?” she asked in a hoarse whisper, “should we go to the bedroom, and I pump more energy into this body of yours?” she licked her lower lips a little seductively.

However, her expression changed when she saw him holding her by her waist and making her sit beside him, “No thanks. I’m more interested in watching TV.”

For a moment, Valerie felt insulted. It had been months since they got intimate. Last time, he made love with a blindfold on his eyes because he wanted to feel her body.

After that, there was no intimacy. She tried getting closer to him a few times, but he didn’t seem to get it up.

Initially, she thought that it might be the after-effects of his surgery. But no man lost his hardness after a mere eye surgery. That didn’t make sense.

Frustration surged through her veins like a hot lava.

"It's been days, honey. Why are you depriving me of your love?" He didn't even bother to look at her.

"I'm sorry, Valerie. But this is how it is. If you want, you can leave me and find yourself another man. I won't keep you tied to myself." At last, his Emerald green eyes met hers, "I'm ready to give you a handsome alimony."

Valerie gulped down in sheer panic. She didn't do all that hard work to handover him the title of the most eligible bachelor on a silver platter.

She kept chewing her lower lip trying to control her tears. The same act that once used to make him horny, his eyes were now glued to the TV screen.

"What went wrong, Rafael? Why are you being like this?" she at last held his hand and gave it a gentle squeeze.

"I dunno. Maybe a psychological issue." He said curving down his lips.

Valerie wanted to cry. He was sitting there as if she was nothing but a showpiece in his enormous luxurious house.

She had started getting tired of getting rejected by him. Her way of coping was to tell fake stories about his lovemaking to her friends.

Even Nina had started asking her to go for fertility treatments. She wanted an heir for Sinclair Empire.

"Are you up for couple counseling?" she asked him hopefully.

For a minute Rafael felt remorseful but none of it was his fault. He didn't know what to do anymore with this relationship.

He did try to get close to her. They snuggled for long hours, all naked in bed. But he couldn't get the desire back.

During blindness, he used to enjoy her body every night. The way she used to show him how every part of her body wanted him.

Or maybe it wasn't Valerie's body at all. It had been ages since he last tasted those strawberries. His hands were still looking for those perfect boobs that used to fill his hands so perfectly.

He headed back from his thoughts to his present with a jump when felt her hand on his shoulder, "Just say yes, baby. Let's go for couple counseling."

Rafael at last nodded his head in agreement and got to his feet.

“Where are you going?” she asked his back. He didn’t stop at her query.

“Office,” she frowned at the answer. Wasn’t he home because he wanted to take a rest?

After sitting in his car, Rafael leaned back his head on the back seat. If that report was true, Marissa would deliver the twin babies after three months.

“I’d love to have kids with you,” Once, he had told her after making love, “If we ever have a son, I’ll name him Alexander.”

“And what if it will be a girl?” she asked him, gliding down her hand on his toned and sleek abs.

He had held her hand to stop it from going down any further, and spoke in a dangerously low voice, “Then I’ll name her Valerie.”

A lone tear escaped his eyes, sliding down his cheek. His investigators were working so hard to look for them, but God knows where they were hidden.

Chapter 9 – 9- Deep Void

Marissa was sitting on a chair jotting down something on the writing pad. Her small food business was slowly expanding but she was avoiding taking any more orders now.

Though there were still three months in her delivery, but her doctors had strictly asked her not to put work pressure. The triplet pregnancy required more care and support.

Yes. She was expecting triplets.

The third sac was not visible on her first ultrasound and was now getting bigger along with the other two.

She sometimes felt like she was so lucky to be blessed with three babies. She might not have Rafael with her, but his three kids were growing in her belly.

“You are sitting there for too long, Marissa.” Sophia placed her bag on the couch and strode to the kitchen to get herself iced water.

Having a gynecologist friend might have its perks but the most difficult thing for Marissa was, that Sophia was making her follow every instruction from her doctors quite strictly.

Though she was herself a gynecologist but due to security reasons she had started freelancing for pharmaceutical companies.

They both knew that they couldn't hide forever, but Sophia made it a point not to get a job. Rafael was not a fool and would start his search from all the Maternity homes and hospitals.

Sophia and Flint had been her true friends and her biggest support.

"Instead of keeping an eye on a pregnant woman, go and find yourself a job!" Marissa stuck out her tongue to annoy her friend. Sophia placed a bottle on the desk,

"Here. Drink this. Coconut water. Best for babies and their mommy." Marissa opened the bottle at once. She must have taken one or two sips when she placed back the bottle with a hiss.

Sophia's ears perked up at the sound, "What is it?"

"Nothing. Just those Braxton Hicks contractions. My body must be preparing itself for the birth." She told her friend and got busy with the orders' record.

She was working hard enough to at least buy a laptop so that her business records could be computerized.

Deep inside she knew, she would meet Rafael someday. She wanted to show him that she was not as weak as he had thought of her. One day she wished she could spit on his face and tell him that she was never after his money. That day while facing him she would give him the impression of a strong woman who was thriving financially to support her babies.

Big companies had already started contacting her and she wanted to expand her staff too after the birth of her babies.

"You haven't named your business yet. You should do it to apply for the logo and all." Sophia suggested.

"AHC!" Marissa gave her a sheepish smile, "Alexander's Homestyle Catering!"

"Wow! That's catchy!" Thankfully Sophia didn't ask her about the name Alexander.

Marissa nodded in satisfaction and then hissed again, "I knew you'd like it ... oh ... oui."

"Marissa," Sophia turned and looked sharply at her friend when she heard her gasp, "Marissa. You look pale. Is the pain too much?"

Just then Marissa clutched her tummy tightly and screamed in agony.

She stood up with one hand on her back and the other placed on her protruded belly that looked heavy due to three babies.

Sophia reached to her in a jiffy to support her.

“Take me to the couch. These must be fake contractions.” She tried to put up a brave façade for her friend’s sake when another contraction hit her.

Sophia made her sit on the couch to make a call for an ambulance. These pains didn’t look normal to her.

While Sophia was dialing the number her eyes fell on Marissa’s legs and she screamed in panic, “Oh, God. Marissa. Blood.”

Marissa looked down and found blood trickling down her legs drenching her clothes and the couch.

“Relax! Just relax. Take a deep breath.” Sitting in the backseat of the car of a kind neighbor, Sophia was wiping her forehead with a wet washcloth and all Marissa wanted to do was to die.

Her grip on Sophia’s hand was so tight that Sophia thought her wrist might crack any minute.

“S... Sophia... I want him.” Tears started falling on her face and Sophia knew who she was referring to. All this time she kept a brave face and kept struggling.

She never tried to bring his name to any discussion. But today it felt like she was giving up.

Sophia knew that Rafael was his first love but that as*shole didn’t even listen to her side and discarded her.

His blind trust in Valerie and Nina might cost his kids’ lives.

“Marissa. He wasn’t worth it. If he was, he’d be right here holding your hand.”

Marissa felt like the space between her legs was ripping off if she didn’t reach the hospital on time.

When her feeble body couldn’t take it anymore, her eyes rolled back, and she slipped into oblivion.

Her eyes fluttered to the noises in her head,

“Get an Oxygen mask.”

“Stabilize her breathing.”

“Check her vitals!”

“Bring the damn crash cart!”

“Counter check on internal bleeding!”

She felt as if someone was barking orders in her sleep. She wanted all of them to go quiet because she wanted to sleep.

She wanted to sleep on his chest, “Rafael,”

She drifted into deep sleep thinking of him. When she got back her consciousness there was silence around her.

“Hey, sweetheart. Welcome back.” This was the first voice that reached her ear.

“Sophia!” her hand crawled to her flat tummy, “Babies. My babies. Sophia, where are my babies?”

Instead of answering her, Sophia broke the eye contact and tried to smile which faltered.

“Sophia,” she asked in a feeble voice, “my babies? Are they alright?” Several tears started traveling from her lids to her ears, absorbing in her green hospital gown.

“Marissa.” Sophia wiped her face, “Don’t worry. The doctors are with them. They will make it.”

“What? Where are they?”

Just then a nurse came inside, “Ms. Sophia we need you to sign a form. The babies might not make it. One of them has already slipped into Coma.”

“My babies!” Marissa cried brokenly, “Rafael. Look what I’m going through without you.” After that, she slipped back into that deep void.

Chapter 10 – 10- Kanderton city? Yes!

Rafael who was sleeping peacefully jolted awake, his heart was pounding in his chest like a drumbeat. He looked around as he struggled to make sense of the darkness around him.

“Honey, are you alright?” He heard Valerie’s sleeping voice beside him.

Instead of responding to her, he laid back in the darkness feeling his breath that was coming in shallow gasps.

What kind of dream was it?

Why was he dreaming about Marissa when his heart knew that she was a liar?

Why did he want to strangle her neck at one moment while at another moment he wanted her to come back to him and ask for help?

“Love, was it a bad dream? Why is your heart beating super-fast?

Valerie placed her cheek on his chest which was now wet due to the sweat. However, the air conditioning of the room was working fine.

He gently pushed his wife to make her lay on the pillow and got up.

“Where are you going?” She asked him, holding his hand to stop him from leaving the bed.

“I’ll be back in a few minutes,” He patted her hand and left the room. Right now, he wanted a strong drink.

“So that’s how it would work from now on. Right, Marissa? You are planning to haunt my dreams?” He hoped she was OK and had enough help around her. When he could not take it anymore, he placed his phone on the counter and started dialing the number.

He did not feel ashamed when he heard his friend Joseph’s sleepy voice.

“Rafael? Is everything alright, man?”

“We need to find her.” Rafael uttered just one sentence, “We need to find her, Joseph. There is something wrong around here. I don’t want to doubt my wife, but we need to find her, Joseph.”

“Hey, man. What’s the matter with you? We already talked about it, didn’t we? This is past midnight and right now we can’t do anything for anyone. I promise we will find her. I assure you that we will do anything to look for her. You just need to have patience, my friend.”

Patience?

That was what Rafael did not have. He wished he could be decisive when Marissa was begging him to believe her. If she intended to betray him or if she was eyeing his wealth, then why did she hide her pregnancy?

She could have pinned her pregnancy on him, but she didn't. Instead, she preferred to leave the city without even informing him.

He almost jumped when he felt Valerie's hand on his shoulder.

"You should have gone to sleep." He said without looking up and took a big chug of his drink from the glass. He placed the glass on the counter a little forcefully.

"Go to sleep? Without you? When you are not there beside me? No Rafael, it is not happening. We already stayed away for too long, now I want your closeness."

Rafael who had touched the glass to his lips to take another sip went still when he heard her remark. He slowly turned to look into her eyes and smirked, "We stayed away? Since when? What I remember is we were quite inseparable from each other for the last two years."

Valerie's face paled for a minute, and she quickly tried to cover it up with a nervous chuckle, "No, you fool. I wasn't talking about those two years silly."

She then placed her hand on his arm quite delicately, "I was talking about those three days when you had your surgery, and you were kept away from me to recover."

Rafael nodded as if he was easily convinced. In all honesty, he found this remark not only stupid but amusing.

Valerie seemed to take a sigh of relief for coming up with such a smart thing on time.

For Rafael, it was a blessing in disguise. He had gotten the answers to what he was looking for.

He needed to find Marissa.

"Once I find you, I'll not only apologize to you, but I promise you Marissa if you will forgive me, then Rafael Sinclair will worship the ground you will walk on."

"I promise I will spoil you to bits."

"If you are the one who stayed married to me when I was blind then you are supposed to stay beside me, Marissa."

"The one who stayed with me at my worst deserves me at my best."

“Just give me a chance Marissa. Wherever you are, just give me a chance. Because this guilt will keep killing me until and unless you don’t forgive me.”

Thinking to himself he laid back on the bed when Valerie climbed on his hard muscular body and started nuzzling her nose in his neck.

“Darling! Don’t you think it’s been time? Our counselor thinks we should get intimate quite frequently. The eye surgeon asked you to avoid sudden movements but now it’s almost six months. Don’t you miss me?” By the end of it, her voice had turned husky as her hand crawled inside his pants. Yet he was quick to hold it.

“Not now, V. I am still feeling pain in my eyes,” With that, he covered his eyes by placing his arm on it.

Valerie who had disappointment written across her face gulped and then offered a quivering smile, “It’s ok, love. Anyways, you are not going anywhere. I should show some patience.”

Once he was sure she had gone to sleep, he changed his side and stared at the wall, “Just pray for yourself, Valerie. Because you have only witnessed my soft and loving side, once you encounter my evil side, I’m sure you won’t be able to bear with it.”

He closed his eyes with determination. I will never stop looking for you Marissa Sinclair until and unless I find you.

He picked up his phone and saw the screen. A message was there from Joseph, “Rafael. How about we go to Kanderton for your office visit? Change of place might do you good.”

He agreed with his friend. He needed to be away from here. For some reason, he felt like Kanderton City was calling for him. As if this place wanted him there.

Rafael thought for a moment and typed... “Yes.”