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Unrepairable Love

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Elizabeth slouched in the doorway, her head hanging low. Kieran's half-finished sentence bounced around in her mind. She shrugged it off and dashed upstairs to check on Lila.

Kieran sat in his car, staring at the hickey on his neck in the rearview mirror, replaying the moment Lila had kissed him. He'd been with plenty of women, but he rarely got tangled up with any of them. He couldn't figure out what had gotten into him earlier; just one kiss from Lila, and he lost all control. What bugged Kieran even more was that he actually kinda liked it.

Next morning, Elizabeth was still snoozing when Lila's scream jolted her awake. Elizabeth cracked open an eye, still half-asleep. She glanced at Lila, rolled over, and tried to catch a few more Z's.

Lila's phone buzzed again; it was her agent, Rebecca Perry. "Oh crap!" Lila freaked out. Elizabeth had to sit up. "What's up?" Elizabeth grabbed her phone, and after seeing the news, she couldn't help but let out a scream too.

Famous Actress and CEO Spotted Kissing at Nightclub, Retreat to Villa Together, CEO Departs Late

Lila sat on the bed, staring blankly at Elizabeth. "Elizabeth, what did I do last night?" Elizabeth was just as puzzled. "What did you guys do?"

The media had photos to back it up, showing Lila and Kieran locking lips at the restaurant door. Elizabeth thought, 'How did I miss this? No wonder when I came back with water, Lila was all over Kieran, Kieran, you dog!'

Rebecca kept blowing up Lila's phone. But now, Lila was freaking out. "Did I kiss Kieran last night?" Elizabeth didn't know, but the photos didn't lie. It looked like Lila really did kiss him. Wait, could the hickey on Kieran's neck be from Lila? Elizabeth wondered.

Rebecca's call came through again, and for the first time, Lila panicked. "Pick it up. Dodging it won't fix anything," Elizabeth nudged her.

Lila took a deep breath and hit the answer button.

On the other end, Rebecca was fuming. "Lila, get your butt to the office right now!" Lila bit her lip. She wanted to go. But when she peeked outside, she realized she was trapped.

"I can't get out; there are reporters everywhere," Lila said awkwardly.

"You!" Rebecca was livid. "I shouldn't have given you the day off yesterday!"

Usually, when Lila and Elizabeth went out, nothing happened. What went wrong last night?

"Bring Mr. Getty so we can all meet. Either both of you deny it, or you admit it," Rebecca sighed.

Lila looked up and asked, "What do you mean by 'admit it'?"

"Say that you two are actually in a relationship," Rebecca said.

Lila was totally against it. "I choose the first option."

"It's not up to you; we might need to ask Mr. Getty too," Rebecca grumbled. "If it was just anyone, no one would care, but it's Mr. Getty. Lila, you hit the jackpot. Actually, Mr. Getty hit the jackpot." Rebecca didn't know who to blame.

To be honest, these two were both drop-dead gorgeous and totally suited each other. But the problem was, there had been no signs between Lila and Kieran. How did they suddenly end up kissing?

Elizabeth was scrolling through Instagram's trending topics, which were all about Lila and Kieran. Luckily, the fans were surprisingly supportive.

User one: [Kieran is so hot! I ship it.] User two: [I watched their kissing video. Can all future CEO dramas be this steamy?] User three: [Who else is obsessed? I replayed the part where Lila kissed Mr. Getty's neck like a hundred times!] User four: [So are they really together? When did this happen? It's so sudden!]

“People seem to be pretty cool with you two,” Elizabeth said softly.

Lila immediately groaned, “Ugh!”

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Elizabeth chuckled at Lila’s reaction. Lila’s face was a billboard of disgust whenever Kieran’s name came up. But now, she was even more angry at herself.

She was huddled in a corner, yanking at her hair, looking like she was having a full-blown existential crisis. “Why the hell did I kiss Kieran? Out of all the people in the bar, why him? This is so freaking embarrassing. Why Kieran?”

Elizabeth strolled over and gave Lila a reassuring pat on the shoulder. Lila let out a heavy sigh, and right then, Elizabeth’s phone buzzed. It was Kieran calling.

Elizabeth flashed the screen at Lila and smirked, “Your fling just called me.” Lila turned away, her face burning with embarrassment. ‘Why did I start this mess? Damn it!’ Lila thought.

Elizabeth picked up the call, and Kieran’s voice was as cool as ever, “Elizabeth, is Lila with you?”

“Yeah,” Elizabeth replied, glancing at Lila. “She just had a chat with her agent. I assume the company reached out to you too?”

“Yep,” Kieran’s voice was steady, “We either deny it or say we’re dating. I’m calling to see what she wants to do.”

Lila didn’t hesitate, “Deny it, obviously!”

Kieran went silent for a few seconds. Denying it was an option, sure.

“But Lila, you’re too recognizable,” Kieran pointed out. Any fan could easily tell it was Lila who initiated the kiss.

Lila scowled, “So you’re saying we gotta fake being a couple?”

“Got a better idea?” Kieran’s voice was still calm.

Lila was stumped. ‘How about we say it was a behind-the-scenes moment from a shoot Elizabeth suggested.’

“Not very convincing,” Kieran shot back.

Awkward silence. Fala finally muttered, “Let the company handle the PR.” At this point, staying quiet seemed like the best move.

“Silence will only make it worse,” Kieran warned, “Don’t you have an endorsement deal coming up?”

Lila stared at Elizabeth’s phone, thinking, ‘How does Kieran know?’

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Elizabeth glanced out the window and sighed, “Looks like there are more reporters outside.”

“I’ll take care of it,” Kieran’s voice was low but reassuring.

The call ended. Elizabeth and Lila exchanged confused looks, wondering how Kieran planned to handle it.

Elizabeth went to the window. There were people everywhere – on park benches, in the bushes, you name it. Paparazzi were a common sight outside Lila’s house, but today was overkill.

Lila flopped onto the bed, scrolling through Instagram comments. Fans were all over the place. Some were like: [Are they dating? Good for them. Best wishes.] Others were like: [Stay focused on your career, no new shows recently.]

Lila sighed deeply.

Elizabeth suddenly piped up, “Lila, looks like they’re leaving.”

Lila peeked outside. Elizabeth confirmed it – the reporters were packing up. Lila went to the window and saw the reporters leaving, like they got some kind of notification.

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Lila and Elizabeth shared a look, totally knowing this was all Kieran's doing. Lila quickly changed her clothes and said, "Elizabeth, come with me to the office. I'll talk to my agent and own up to this mess."

Yeah, Lila had kissed Kieran first yesterday, and now they were both caught in a scandal. "I'll just say I was wasted and not thinking clearly," Lila said firmly, putting on her hat. Whoever messed up should clean it up.

Elizabeth knew Lila had her reasons. She didn't overthink it and followed Lila downstairs, ready to head out. Both their phones buzzed at the same time. It was the latest news alert.

Kieran responded: [Apologies for stealing the limelight. I've had feelings for Ms. Parker for some time, and after a few drinks last night, I acted impulsively and kissed her. Ms. Parker is innocent, and I apologize to her. Since this has caused her trouble, I hope everyone will just drop it and leave her alone.]

Lila and Elizabeth looked up, their feelings all over the place as they read Kieran's statement. Lila was genuinely shocked that Kieran took all the blame. He didn't say a single bad thing about her; instead, he cleared her name and asked everyone to move on. Lila lowered her eyes, her lashes trembling a bit.

Elizabeth's phone rang; it was Kieran calling. Elizabeth put it on speaker. He sounded chill, "This is sorted. You don't need to say anything more. I'll handle any fallout."

"Mr. Getty," Lila said softly.

"No worries. I'm not exactly a saint, so let them talk. But you, a big star, can't afford that," Kieran said casually.

Lila paused. Her heart skipped a beat for some reason she couldn't explain. This whole mess, caused by her mistake, ended because of Kieran. Lila felt genuinely sorry. "Mr. Getty, I owe you one."

"It's no big deal," Kieran replied. "I gotta go deal with the reporters at my door. Talk later," Kieran chuckled.

The call ended. Elizabeth raised an eyebrow, mimicking Kieran's words, "But you, a big star, can't afford that."

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Lila ran to the sofa and flopped down, her mind in chaos. “Why do I feel like you’re falling for him?” Elizabeth squatted next to Lila, resting her face in her hands with a gossipy look. “Was Mr. Getty always so responsible? I don’t remember that!” Elizabeth raised an eyebrow, looking thoughtful.

‘Isn’t Kieran just a jerk? What’s up with Kieran today?’ Elizabeth thought. “Could he be trying to win you over as a spokesperson?” Elizabeth speculated, rubbing her chin.

“Who would dare to use me with this scandal?” Lila sighed. “Guess I’ll take a break.” She’d need to lay low for at least a month before going out again.

“Elizabeth, I’m never drinking again,” Lila said, hugging Elizabeth, full of regret.

“Just take it as a lesson,” Elizabeth patted Lila’s head and smiled. “Perfect timing. Take a month off, and we can go to the cruise party in a few days.”

Lila looked up at Elizabeth and asked, “What cruise party?”

“You don’t know? It’s the annual cruise party in Lisbon. Lots of people come, and it’s just a wild time.” Elizabeth explained.

Lila pouted, “Will there be drinking?”

Elizabeth replied, “Probably.”

Lila immediately refused! “What’s wrong? Are you scared?” Elizabeth tapped Lila’s head.

Elizabeth suddenly got a reminder from the hospital. She stood up and said, “Lila, I can’t stay with you. I have to go back to the hospital today.”

“Go ahead. Don’t worry about me!” Lila lay on the sofa, feeling hopeless.

“I’ll come back to keep you company tonight,” Elizabeth said before leaving.

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Elizabeth was chilling by the elevator when, bam, she bumped into Henry and Allen. Henry and Allen gave her heavy, serious looks. Elizabeth figured some

stuff should just stay in the past. As long as the Russells didn't mess with her again, she wasn't going to hold a grudge forever. Allen felt awkward and turned away, avoiding Elizabeth's eyes. Elizabeth stepped into the elevator without saying a word to either of them.

After she left, Henry finally spoke up, "Mom, we've been through enough. Let's not go after Elizabeth anymore." Allen let out a deep sigh, feeling regretful. She knew she'd been too hasty.

"Henry, Esme's really stressing me out," Allen said, super frustrated. Henry's face was complicated. Mentioning Esme made him think of Elizabeth.

Elizabeth and Laura walked out together in their white coats. Elizabeth turned to Laura, "Laura, thanks a ton. If it weren't for you that day, I might've been stuck all night." Laura shook her head. "Nah, don't mention it. Actually, the first person I called was Mr. Tudor," Laura said.

Elizabeth was a bit taken aback. No wonder Alexander showed up that day. "So, he was pretty worried about you when he heard," Laura said, watching Elizabeth's reaction. Elizabeth kept her cool and smiled a bit. "Guess that means he's got a shred of conscience left." If he wasn't worried at all, then Alexander would be a heartless jerk.

"Dr. Percy, are you really just going to let things slide with Mr. Tudor? I always thought you two were a good match. That Esme's got nothing on you," Laura said softly. Elizabeth just smiled and brushed it off, not wanting to keep talking about Alexander.

Elizabeth and Laura pushed open the conference room door and saw Donna packing up her things. "What are you doing?" Laura asked, looking at Donna. Donna looked totally worn out. She was an Esme supporter, and now that Esme was gone, what was she still doing here? Plus, everyone in the department pretty much disliked her. No one said it to her face, but Donna knew they all talked smack behind her back.

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"Time for rounds," Amanda knocked on the door, calling everyone to get moving. "Coming." Everyone grabbed their cases and files and followed Amanda for rounds. "Let's check out the patient admitted last night," Amanda said, pushing open the door to room 2999. Elizabeth followed Amanda and

saw the patient's name, Gabriel. Elizabeth looked at the bed. Gabriel had his eyes closed, looking pale as a ghost.

Elizabeth thought, 'Gabriel? Isn't this the guy Nolan asked me about? The one from prison who started with food poisoning and then had heart problems?' "Is there no one in charge of this patient?" Amanda asked, looking back. Laura was eager, but Elizabeth jumped in first, "I'll take charge." Amanda glanced at her and said, "Alright."

"It's a bit complicated. You sure you can handle it?" Laura asked, worried. Elizabeth nodded. "No problem." "Okay, if you need help, just holler," Laura said with a gentle smile. Elizabeth gave her an "OK" sign. Elizabeth took another look at the patient on the bed. She suddenly felt like this guy looked really familiar. Have I seen him somewhere before? she wondered. Elizabeth frowned and used her hand to cover half of Gabriel's face. Yeah, it seemed so.

"Elizabeth, you leaving?" Amanda called out to her.

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Elizabeth spun around and followed, "I'm coming." She didn't forget to shoot a quick glance back at Gabriel. He looked like the puppet master behind Alexander's kidnapping. Too bad; Elizabeth only caught a glimpse of the guy's eyes back then; she had no clue about his full appearance or name. Later, she got hurt and took forever to wake up. They said the culprit had already been caught, so she didn't stress about it afterward. If he really was the one who nabbed Alexander, he deserved whatever was coming to him. Karma's a b*tch.

Elizabeth wrapped up her morning grind and checked today's gossip on her phone. Everyone was all over Kieran, roasting and dragging him.

User one: [This is classic Kieran. Dude's got zero respect for women!] User two: [What a power move! Honestly, they kinda look good together. Hope Mr. Getty can win over Lila.] User three: [Being drunk ain't an excuse to force a kiss on someone. Total scumbag!]

Elizabeth let out a sigh. The elevator doors slid open, and she headed to the outpatient pharmacy to grab meds for a patient. "Hey, I'm here to pick up meds for Samuel Walker from cardiothoracic surgery," Elizabeth knocked on the pickup window. The nurse nodded and turned to fetch the meds.

Elizabeth glanced towards the door out of sheer boredom and suddenly spotted a familiar face. It was Esme. At the same time, Esme was making her

way over. Elizabeth pursed her lips and called inside, "Got it yet?" She really didn't want to deal with Esme. "Hold on, Dr. Percy," the nurse was bagging the meds.

Right then, Esme chimed in, "Elizabeth, what a coincidence. Picking up meds?" Elizabeth was speechless. No dodging it, so she decided to face it head-on. Elizabeth turned around, hands in her white coat pockets, and smiled at Esme, "Yep. Ms. Russell..."

Esme replied, "It's Alexander. He got hurt saving you last time. I'm here with him to change his dressing, and I also asked the doctor to prescribe me some calming meds." Elizabeth nodded, ignoring Alexander's situation and zeroing in on Esme's last statement. "Ms. Russell, you should take good care of yourself."

Esme brushed off Elizabeth's words and kept on flaunting. "Elizabeth, starting today, me and Alexander are good. Thanks for bringing him back." Elizabeth immediately raised her hand, signaling, "Hold up. He's not some object. What do you mean by giving him back? He loves you; you deserve it!" Elizabeth squinted and smiled sweetly.

Esme stepped forward, and Elizabeth instantly took a step back. Esme was relentless and grabbed Elizabeth's hand. With no escape, Elizabeth let Esme hold her hand. Elizabeth heard Esme pitifully ask, "Can we not be at odds like before, okay?" Elizabeth awkwardly smiled and silently pulled her hand back.

"Let's put the past behind us," Esme continued. Elizabeth cut her off, "Esme, let's just not see each other from now on." Esme knew Elizabeth well. Since Elizabeth said that, she really wouldn't hold a grudge for what Esme had done. As long as Elizabeth stayed out of it and Esme played nice with Alexander, Esme would soon marry him. Esme was thrilled. "Thanks, Elizabeth."

Just then, Alexander was coming over. Seeing Elizabeth and Esme together, he immediately walked over. Elizabeth just gave him a quick glance and bolted. Alexander watched her leave, feeling something slip away inside, very uncomfortable.

"What did you two talk about?" Alexander asked Esme. Esme shook her head. Looking at Alexander, she suddenly had an idea. "Nothing much. I joked that I was about to become your bride." Alexander's face darkened, and he frowned. "What did she say?" Esme's lips curled into a sweet smile. "Elizabeth said she wishes us happiness."

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Elizabeth's silhouette vanished into the hallway, and Esme's voice drifted to his ears: "She also said if we tie the knot, we gotta invite her."

Alexander's face was already icy, and now it looked even worse. 'Invite her for what, to stir up trouble?' he thought.

Esme watched Alexander's mood closely; she could totally tell he was pissed. Esme bit her lip. Alexander still gave a damn about Elizabeth's reaction. She had to hustle to keep Alexander wrapped around her finger!

Just as Esme was about to bounce, she overheard a nurse on the phone: "Dr. Percy, there's a patient named Gabriel you forgot to give meds to."

Esme's head snapped around. Alexander perked up at the name too. 'Is it the Gabriel from the slammer?'

"Which room's he in?" Alexander leaned in to ask.

Seeing it was Alexander, the nurse spilled the room number. Alexander turned to Esme, "Let's check it out."

Esme frowned and clung to Alexander's arm. "Do we really have to?"

"What, you scared?" Alexander shot Esme a glare. "He won't come after you; he's super sick."

Esme hesitated but then trailed after Alexander.

In the Cardiothoracic Department, Sunny was momentarily stunned seeing Esme, then figured she was there to visit a patient. Esme looked all tiny and cute next to Alexander. Two caretakers stood guard at Gabriel's door. After Alexander flashed his ID, they let him in.

Seeing Alexander and Esme made Gabriel's heart rate spike. Esme noticed the rising numbers on the monitor and rolled her eyes internally. It's just asking Gabriel to lie, but he's scared of everything! Esme thought.

But Gabriel had a strong will to live. She'd tried to "off" Gabriel twice to avoid future messes, but each time he got saved.

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Gabriel glared at Esme, his fists clenched tight, but he couldn't speak. "This vile woman! I agreed to keep quiet, yet she still wants me dead!" Gabriel fumed inwardly.

Alexander noticed Gabriel's hostile look towards Esme. Esme played the scared card and hid beside Alexander. "Alexander..."

"Is it him?" Alexander asked Esme.

Esme nodded. "Yeah, it was him. He stabbed me in the back with a dagger and tossed me into the sea."

Gabriel's eyes widened. Alexander sensed Gabriel had something to say. "What do you wanna say?" Alexander leaned in.

Gabriel's hand slowly pointed at Esme. Esme squinted, signaling Gabriel to think twice! Otherwise, his family would pay the price!

Gabriel saw the threat in Esme's eyes and backed down. Seeing Gabriel close his eyes, Alexander turned back to Esme.

Esme looked all scared, swallowing hard. "Alexander, can we bounce? He's giving me the creeps."

Alexander raised an eyebrow. "Alright."

Gabriel watched them leave, and his blood pressure slowly leveled out. With someone as ruthless as Esme, he might not have much time left. Alexander closed the door, his grip tightening on the doorknob. Alexander thought, 'Last time I saw Gabriel in prison, he praised Esme. But now, why's he so freaked out seeing her?'

Later that night, Elizabeth had just rolled up to Lila's villa when she saw the door swing open. In her view were not just Lila but also Lila's agent, Rebecca. "Rebecca, you're here," Elizabeth said, surprised.

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Lila was decked out in a black and white tracksuit, hat, and mask, looking like she was ready to rob a bank. "Is she heading out?" Elizabeth wondered.

Rebecca chimed in, “This whole mess is Lila’s fault, but Mr. Getty took the heat for her. I’m dragging Lila to treat Mr. Getty to a meal. Since we’re all buddies, Ms. Percy, why don’t you tag along?”

Elizabeth blinked, a bit taken aback. Lila nodded eagerly and latched onto Elizabeth’s arm, practically begging her to come.

“Alright,” Elizabeth shrugged.

They picked a swanky private restaurant on the thirtieth floor. The place was super exclusive; they could zip up from the underground parking lot without bumping into a soul. As soon as the elevator doors slid open, they were at the restaurant’s entrance. A waiter led them inside, took a left, and pointed to a room.

“Thanks,” Rebecca nodded, dismissing the waiter. Rebecca knocked, and Kieran’s muffled voice came from inside, “Come in.”

The door swung open, and Elizabeth and Lila saw Kieran chilling in the middle of the room. He was rocking a black suit, looking all business. Lila peeled off her mask and hat. Rebecca nudged her in front of Kieran. Kieran lounged on the sofa, while Lila stood there, her expression indescribable.

Rebecca shot Lila a stern look. “Apologize to Mr. Getty.” Kieran raised an eyebrow at Lila.

Honestly, this was a tough pill for Lila to swallow. Lila had a fiery temper. Especially since she couldn’t stand Kieran, apologizing to him was like pulling teeth. But yeah, this mess was on her.

“Spit it out!” Rebecca gently nudged Lila’s arm. Elizabeth sat across from Kieran, way more chill than Lila. Stars gotta listen to their agents, no choice there. Lila’s eyes met Kieran’s, then darted down, spotting a hickey on his neck.

Lila was speechless.

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Kieran waited patiently, thinking Lila was just struggling to find the words. Lila had rehearsed her apology and thank-you speech a million times, but seeing that hickey threw her off completely. She was fuming inside. Why does it have to be Kieran?

Rebecca sighed and nudged Lila again. Lila frowned and blurted out, “Mr. Getty.”

“Forget it,” Kieran cut her off. For someone as proud as Lila, apologizing was brutal. Lila’s words were cut short by Kieran. Her eyelashes fluttered, and Kieran said, “Big star, have a seat.”

Even though Kieran interrupted her, Lila still wanted to say, “I’m sorry for causing you trouble.” Kieran paused and looked up at Lila. She was genuinely sincere.

Kieran smiled, “It’s no big deal. I don’t mind at all.”

“If you need any compensation,” Lila started, but he interrupted, “What about you? I don’t want you offering yourself as repayment.”

Lila was speechless. Elizabeth propped her face on her hand, glaring at Kieran. “Kieran, quit flirting with her.”

Kieran cleared his throat and turned to Rebecca. “Rebecca, we’re all friends here. No need to be so uptight. Let’s grab a bite and chill.”

“All friends? That’s perfect!” Rebecca laughed, finally relaxing a bit. After all, this was Kieran, and the Getty Group was a big deal. If they ticked off the Getty Group, Lila’s career could be toast.

‘Sit down,’ Kieran glanced at Lila. Lila wanted to sit next to Elizabeth, but Rebecca had already snagged that spot. So, the only seat left was next to Kieran. Lila hesitated for a split second and then sat down. Rebecca kept giving Lila looks.

Lila picked up a teacup and tried to act all gentle. “Mr. Getty, I apologize to you.”

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“Chill out,” Kieran clinked his glass against hers. Lila being all polite? Yeah, that was still weird for him. He was way more used to the old Lila, the one who’d give him the cold shoulder and snap back with a few sharp words.

“Alright, let’s call it a wrap!” Rebecca clapped her hands. “Thanks a ton, Mr. Getty. Seriously, if you need anything else down the line, we got your back.” Rebecca was a pro; her words were smooth as butter.

Just as Elizabeth was about to take a sip of water, her phone buzzed.

Sunny: [Dr. Percy, Gabriel’s critical. Hurry back now.]

Elizabeth shot up from her seat. “Emergency at the hospital, gotta bounce.” Before anyone could react, she was already out the door. Lila was left in shock.

At the hospital, Amanda was already there. “What’s the deal?” Elizabeth threw on her white coat and hustled to the ward.

Amanda looked confused. “They said something’s stuck, and he can’t breathe.”

“Anyone been in his room? He hasn’t eaten all day, so what’s stuck?” Elizabeth pushed open the ward door. Sunny was inside, working with Laura.

“Dr. Dixon’s here too?” Elizabeth was surprised. Laura nodded; she was on the night shift.

“Patient’s vitals are tanking. Blood pressure’s dropping. No foreign object found.” Laura handed over to Amanda like a pro. Amanda checked Gabriel’s pupils and the monitors. His blood pressure and heart rate were tanking.

“His heart’s stopped,” Sunny said immediately. Amanda barked, “Get the defib. Prep the adrenaline.”

Elizabeth grabbed the defibrillator, and Sunny got the adrenaline ready. “Clear.” Amanda rubbed the paddles together, eyes on the monitors. The lines were almost flat.

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Elizabeth frowned, staring at Gabriel with a mix of emotions. Elizabeth stepped up. “Ms. Carter, let me take over.” Amanda nodded and stepped aside. Elizabeth kept at it.

Six minutes in, everyone was on edge. Elizabeth refused to put down the defibrillator, sweat dripping from her forehead. Just as the monitors flatlined and Amanda was about to call it, the machine beeped. Everyone’s eyes snapped to the monitor; the heartbeat was coming back!

Elizabeth jumped in with manual chest compressions, giving it her all. The indicators started to improve. Elizabeth had a thought and called out, “Laura, I’m beat. Your turn.” Laura nodded and took over quickly.

Once things stabilized, Elizabeth stepped out to catch her breath. Amanda gave her a pat on the shoulder. Elizabeth looked up to see Amanda smiling. “Calm and steady, never giving up. You nailed it.”

Laura came out and saw them. Elizabeth stood up. “Laura.” Laura pursed her lips. “He’s stable now. But he won’t last long.”

Elizabeth was confused. Laura handed over Gabriel’s full-body scan. The report showed his organs were shot, especially his heart and liver. No way he could handle heart surgery.

“Just do your best,” Amanda patted both Laura and Elizabeth on the shoulders. It was already ten o’clock. They’d been at it for hours.

“Laura, go home to Howard. I’ll cover your shift,” Elizabeth said. Laura shook her head. “No need. Howard can handle himself.”

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“But he’s still a kid,” Elizabeth frowned.

Laura chuckled. “He’ll grow up. Think of it as early training. You and Ms. Carter should go chill.”

Elizabeth stayed quiet. She didn’t say much more and left with Amanda. In the elevator, Elizabeth watched the numbers change and heard Amanda say, “She’s busting her butt for that assistant director gig.”

“Is she up for it?” Elizabeth asked Amanda.

Amanda grinned knowingly. “Oh, totally.”

Besides Mark, Laura was the best fit. Amanda’s words made it clear to Elizabeth: the assistant director spot was basically Laura’s.

On her way home, Elizabeth got a call from Lila.

“Done chatting?” Elizabeth teased.

Lila sounded bummed. “Yeah, all done. My agent dragged me away. Don’t miss me too much.”

“Will I ever see my Lila again?” Elizabeth joked.

Lila replied, “Catch you at the cruise party.”

On the weekend, Elizabeth yawned as she came downstairs. Declan saw her looking sleepy and knocked on the table. “Elizabeth, I’m meeting someone for tennis today. Wanna join?”

Elizabeth looked up and replied, “Sure.”

“Then go change. I’ll wait outside,” Declan said, happy she agreed. She needed some exercise; otherwise, she’d get all sluggish. The weather was awesome today, sunny and perfect for sports. Elizabeth wore a white t-shirt and a black skirt.

At the tennis club, as their car pulled up, the club owner came out to greet them. “Mr. Percy, Ms. Percy, welcome!”

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Elizabeth followed Declan, giving the owner a polite smile.

“I’ve got a reservation,” Declan told the owner.

“Mr. Brooks is already waiting,” the owner pointed inside.

Declan led Elizabeth in. As soon as they entered the court, they heard the sound of rackets hitting tennis balls. There weren’t many people today, mostly girls. In front of court number ten, Elizabeth saw the guy she met in the car the other day, Kyle. So Declan’s tennis buddy was Kyle.

Elizabeth felt a headache. Declan was already fifty but still played tennis with Kyle, who was in his twenties. Elizabeth doubted if Declan could keep up.

Kyle smiled and extended his hand to Elizabeth. “Ms. Percy, nice to see you again.”

“Hey, Mr. Brooks,” Elizabeth nodded, quickly shaking Kyle’s hand before letting go. Kyle looked down and acknowledged with a hum.

“I need to take a call. You two go ahead,” Declan said, turning to answer his phone.

Elizabeth watched Declan’s back and then looked at the young people on the court. “My dad seems to be the oldest one here,” Elizabeth said to Kyle.

Kyle laughed. “Declan’s older, but young at heart. He chose this place...”

Elizabeth blinked and asked Kyle, “Are you working with the Percy family?”

“Yeah,” Kyle responded calmly and tossed a ball to Elizabeth. “Wanna play a game?”

Elizabeth caught it, looking at Kyle with mixed feelings. Elizabeth didn’t know how to describe Kyle. He was different from Joseph, whose gentle elegance made people feel soft inside. But Kyle was calm and distant, polite yet with a hint of aggression. Elizabeth couldn’t be bothered to delve into people’s minds. She raised the tennis ball high and said, “Let’s do this!”

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When Declan rolled back, he spotted Elizabeth swinging her racket on the court. Relief washed over his face. The Elizabeth he remembered was always full of energy, never bogged down by life's noise, messing up her groove. Elizabeth's stamina was solid; she kept up with Kyle without any problem. Of course, Elizabeth had no clue if Kyle was taking it easy on her.

“Not every day you see a girl play tennis this well,” Kyle said, not holding back on the praise.

Elizabeth took a swig of water and shot him a glance. “Thanks.”

“We should play together next time,” Kyle said, holding his racket, his tone chill and respectful.

“Sure.” Elizabeth nodded and then called out to Declan, “Dad.” Since they got to the tennis hall, Declan had been glued to his phone, and Elizabeth had no idea what he was up to. Today's spot seemed picked just for her.

Elizabeth wiped her sweat and suddenly heard someone outside say, “Mr. Tudor’s here too? And he brought his fiancée, is that true?” The staff all rushed out to see what was up. Elizabeth didn’t catch what they were saying. When she looked up, she saw Alexander and a few friends strolling in.

No matter the time or place, or what he was wearing, Alexander always had a crowd around him and could easily grab everyone's attention. Today, Alexander was rocking a black t-shirt and loose sweatpants. Since college, Alexander rarely dressed like this. He looked great. Having seen Alexander in suits and shirts countless times, his casual attire now evoked a sense of nostalgia in Elizabeth.

At that moment, Alexander also noticed Elizabeth. But soon, his gaze shifted to Kyle standing next to her. Alexander frowned.

Elizabeth saw Alexander and Kyle’s gazes lock in the air and couldn’t help but wonder, ‘Do they know each other?’ Kyle stood up and walked towards Alexander. With everyone watching, Kyle smiled and said coldly, “Alexander, long time no see.”

Alexander squinted, looking at Kyle’s outstretched hand, and replied, “Yeah, long time no see, Kyle.” Elizabeth frowned, trying to figure out their relationship. Alexander’s gaze followed Kyle’s towards Elizabeth.

Chapter 390

Is Kyle getting close to Elizabeth? Alexander thought. Kyle glanced back and smiled. “Ms. Percy’s got some serious tennis skills. Mr. Tudor, how about a match?” Kyle had played tennis with Elizabeth. Alexander pursed his lips, feeling an inexplicable annoyance. He raised the corners of his mouth and replied, “Sure.”

“How about 2v2?” Kyle asked.

“Okay,” Alexander replied calmly.

Kyle asked Elizabeth, “Ms. Percy, 2v2, you down for a match?” Elizabeth shrugged, indifferent.

“Then Mr. Tudor, pick someone?” Kyle’s eyes had a cold glint. Alexander looked at Elizabeth, then scanned the few friends behind him and randomly pointed to someone.

When Declan finished his call and came back, the four people on the court were already deep into the match. Declan was puzzled. “Why is Alexander here? Elizabeth, watch out!” Declan was quickly drawn to the game. Elizabeth fiercely returned every ball Alexander hit while they played. Alexander didn’t want to target Elizabeth, so after a few rounds, he intentionally aimed at Kyle. Kyle had already noticed and deliberately stayed around Elizabeth. If Alexander wanted to hit Kyle, he’d end up hitting Elizabeth. Alexander realized Kyle was doing it on purpose. After a few more rounds, because Alexander couldn’t bring himself to hit hard, the game stayed at a stalemate.