

My last hope

The present day...

Ariana's pov.

"Enough is enough, Ariana. I cannot take this anymore. It will be better if you leave by yourself. Otherwise, I have to complain about you to the boss, and you know he is very cruel, and I doubt he will pay you your remaining salary after this." My supervisor scolded me for being late to work once again. I worked in a superstore named Big Easy in Seattle.

"No, no. Please don't do this to me. I need this job. I need this badly," I pleaded because I actually needed this job. I came late because of the multiple jobs I used to do in a day. There was a lot of work on the shift before this, and because of that, I was late.

"Then you should have done it seriously if you really needed it. But you never came on time and always made excuses every day. I have ignored it most of the time. But it begins to affect income, and now you have become more careless. I can't help you anymore. I also love my job. I don't want to lose it because of you," the supervisor, Jonny, complained.

"No, no. Please, Jonny! Please give me a last chance. You know I do multiple jobs. But I promise it won't happen again," I begged, keeping my self-respect and ego aside.

This time I was ready to do anything not to lose this job. In fact, I was as desperate as a person in the desert for finding a drop of water.

"Stop it, Ariana! Just leave before I call security to throw you out of this store," he growled in disgust.

He was rude today. But he was not like this before. I didn't know what had happened to him. Maybe it was the limit of his patience.

I bowed my head down, and it sank into my chest. I tried a lot but could not make my supervisor agree to give me one more chance. I had been working in this store for three months. That was the most prolonged period I have worked in the same place. I had to keep changing jobs because some problems arose every time. I was really very unlucky to run into problems all the time. But I have accepted it was my destiny now.

The only good thing that happened to me to date was Jack. He came into my life as an angel. My angel. He gave me a motive to live, a reason to smile, and made me feel that I was not alone in this whole world.

Otherwise, my life was meaningless, and I had no one I could call my family. My parents had already left me as an orphan. I had never heard of them.

I was brought up in foster homes. My childhood was spent with beatings and swearing from foster parents. When the authorities found out about me, they shifted me to another foster home when they knew about the abuse. But the situation remained the same. Nothing changed. Again, the same torture and the beating when I demanded food and clothing. They didn't treat us well, though they were supposed to take good care of us.

My luck was not good enough to find a decent foster home, and they didn't even feed us on time. That means I grew up eating only a single meal a day, and when I was small and opened my mouth whenever I was hungry, I only got beatings and slaps in return. I promised myself that I would work hard and study to get a degree and get a decent job to make my life livable like a normal person.

When I turned 16, I ran away because they wanted to rape me.

I remembered the day. There was a party, and everyone was drunk. I was ordered to clean up after the party when some drunk men tried to grab me. I ran far away so they couldn't find me. I attended night school and worked to save for my tuition fees in the daytime. I used to study at night while working shifts, switching between jobs to earn money for college.

Then one bright day, when I was returning from my job, I met Jack, and since then, my life had changed. I found he was also as lonely as I was. Because his brothers were small and didn't want to support him in running his house, his mother was sick and couldn't do anything. His father had left them a long time back and never cared to look back at them. So, he only had all the responsibility of supporting his family financially and emotionally.

He said that the treatment of his mother was very expensive. So he tried to get a loan. But the bank didn't give him any personal loan without any guarantee. After listening to his sad story, I connected more. He was sad, vulnerable, and needed someone to rely on, just like me. I decided to help him. So I worked more to get more money so that I could help him. We were trying to save more money so that his mother's operation could be done very soon. Otherwise, it would be difficult to save her. Time was running out, and I lost this job. We had been saving money for a year, but he still needed more.

I went to meet Jack and found him standing there bowing his head down, seeming lost in some thoughts, looking very upset and sad.

I didn't have a family. I was alone and worried about my future. Jack had his family with him, but he was also alone with his sorrow, having a burden of expenses and medical bills. We both had the burden of ill fate.

My heart raced frantically when I thought about him telling him that I had lost my job.

I slowly walked towards him with a very gloomy heart.

"Jack!" I called out his name.

He turned to look at me, giving me a small smile. It seemed a forced one when he had to smile while his mother was about to die in the hospital.

"Ariana! How are you, baby?" He asked as he came forward.

He wrapped his arms around my shoulders and hugged me. I closed my eyes and breathed in his musky, dark, manly scent, which gave me a kind of relief and security to know that someone in this big world thought and cared about me, only me.

"Jack!" I pulled away from him, but his eyes never left my face.

I bit my lips, still conflicted about telling him about my job.

"What's wrong, babe? You look tense," he knew me so well.

"Yes, Jack! I... I have bad news for you," I finally mustered the courage to tell him.

He sneered before replying.

"What can be worse now? Everything happening around me is already so unfortunate. I don't think anything could be worse than that. I am already living in hell," he sighed, taking a deep breath before turning to me.

"Tell me, Ariana. I am ready for all the bad coming my way," he made a stern face which scared me.

I was scared, very terrified of losing him. After living alone for all my life, I didn't want to be alone again. I liked it when he stood beside me and held my hand when the nights were darker. I used to feel alive when he looked at me as if I was the most precious thing in this world. His existence filled my heart with immense gratitude for the peace and joy he brought into my life. I felt a sense of calm and happiness in this world when he was around. He was a source of comfort and joy in my life.

What if he left me, thinking I was a useless shit and he should not have wasted his time?

The mere thought of returning to my previous existence without him filled me with fear and trepidation. Admitting to him that I had not been able to maintain that job made me uneasy. It... it pained me to admit that I had failed to maintain his trust and confidence in me.

"J..Jack! I.. I.. lost my j...job," I tended to stutter when I felt nervous.

"You what?" He yelled, making me inch. His body shook with anger and he balled his fists to his side. I instinctively took a step away.

"You lost this job? Are you serious? How can you do this?" He shouted at me again. I squeezed my eyes shut, grabbing both the corners of my dress in my hands.

I kept my eyes closed and waited for him to hit me. He used to do it when he was outraged.

I waited for the pain, but it never came. He turned his back and began to take deep breaths to calm himself. I felt his back rise and fall, hinting his chest was heaving loudly. He had anger issues, and I knew about it. I allowed him to express his anger towards me because it seemed like he needed an outlet. It was clear that he didn't intend to behave that way, but occasionally he struggled with managing his emotions.

I had often been perceived as a target for others to take their frustrations out on me. I was well acquainted with this..

Unlike others, I was aware that Jack had no intention of causing me harm. He was seriously hiding the issues inside his body and his mind. He was, in fact, taking pills. He had never hidden anything from me. Unlike other people who used to hurt me for their fun and enjoyment, Jack only hit me when he was furious and out of control, and he couldn't control himself no matter what. Then he cried later and apologized to me for assaulting me in his anger.

Scared and nervous, I slowly opened my eyes and found that he was watching me with serious determination in his eyes.

"Ariana, let bygones be bygones. I actually came to tell you something very important. I heard about a job offer. But this is only for women. So I can not apply for that job. They are paying well, and all our problems will sort out if you can get that job," he informed me with enthusiasm.

"Of course, Jack. I will try my best to get that job. Tell me, when is the interview?" I was ready and desperate.

"Today, and the job is on a ship. You have to travel most of the time, so..." he told me.

"On a ship? But you know that I am pursuing my studies. How could I continue my classes when I am on the ship, Jack? Do you know how important my studies are to me?" I protested. Attending my classes was crucial, I couldn't afford to miss them. Acquiring a scholarship was the only viable choice to cover the expenses of attending college, which can be quite expensive.

"I know, baby. I know you want to get admission to a degree course. But this time, we desperately need this job and money. The doctor has told me my mum won't survive if the treatment is stopped. I wish I were a lady so that I could do the need to do that job anywhere, and we will have sufficient money by that time to start our own business. And you can continue your studies after that. You can also carry on your classes online while being on the ship. Please, love, this job is our last hope. You must do it," he pleaded, and I found it impossible to refuse his request.

"Okay, Jack, I will do it," I conformed.