

Wild Night 801

Chapter 801 Tone It Down

Candace who was getting ready to take a quick nap after they just got home that morning, glanced at the door when Andy knocked.

"Can I come in?" Andy asked, knowing that Candace was alone in the bedroom since she had seen Matt and Lucy going downstairs a short while ago.

Being the best friends of the couple, they were both working together to ensure that everything went perfectly, so they were going to oversee what the event planners were doing.

"There goes my nap," Candace muttered to herself before calling out to Andy to come in.

"I thought we agreed on taking a quick nap?" Candace asked and Andy sighed deeply.

"How can I go to sleep when Jade chose to talk to Harry? I mean we all spent the night together and he just dropped us off, yet she is talking to him over the phone like she hasn't seen him in forever," Andy complained, and Candace laughed softly.

"She is quite clingy."

"Clingy? I think that's an understatement. I would be irritated if I was Harry. I honestly don't know how he can be so patient. Take last night for instance, her behaviour made me cringe," Andy said and Candace sighed.

"Do you want to talk to her about it?" Candace asked and Andy narrowed her eyes.

"The question is, why haven't you talked to her about it? I'm sure you've noticed it before now," Andy said and Candace shrugged.

"I try to tell her jokingly. Also I figured it's just her person, and maybe I don't understand that because I was not raised or given the princess treatment like she was. Besides, Harry isn't complaining. You see how he dotes on her," she said and Andy shook her head.

"I get that she is crazily in love with him and Harry is not complaining right now, but if we don't advice her to tone it down, she is just going to get worse until Harry can't stand it again. You saw how Harry asked to speak with Mia in private and she wanted to join them, and she went on and on about how she feels like Mia is hiding something. You also heard her talk about how annoyed she was that her own brother was spending time with Harry. I don't know, I think someone needs to ask her to tone it down," Andy said and Candace sighed.

"You can give it a shot then," Candace said and Andy nodded.

"Sure. I will. By the way, I kissed Tyler last night," Andy announced as she lay face up on the bed.

"You kissed who?" Candace asked, her disbelief hanging heavily in the air.

"Why are you acting so shocked like you didn't know I was capable of that? Stop overreacting," Andy retorted, her tone laced with a hint of defensiveness as she rolled her eyes at Candace's incredulity.

Candace's concern deepened as she struggled to comprehend Andy's impulsive actions. "I just didn't expect you to do something like that. Why did you kiss him? Do you have a thing for him?" she questioned, her brows furrowing in confusion.

Andy's expression turned incredulous at the suggestion. "Of course, not! Why would I have a thing for him? He was hitting on me, I wasn't interested but I did want to see if I would at least enjoy kissing him, so I kissed him, and I didn't feel a thing," she explained nonchalantly.

Candace's initial shock transformed into a mixture of frustration and concern as she struggled to find the right words to express her thoughts. "What kind of idiot goes about kissing people to..."

"Idiots called, Andy. Satisfied?" Andy interjected with a wry smile, the tension momentarily broken as Candace's lips twitched in reluctant amusement.

But Candace's amusement quickly faded, replaced by a somber reminder of the life they had left behind. "Quit acting recklessly, Andy. We are not the same people we were," she urged softly, her words a gentle yet firm reminder of the stakes involved in their new life.

Andy's gaze bore into Candace's, a sudden vulnerability shining through her usually confident facade. "Let me ask you something, Candace. Do I embarrass you?" she questioned, catching Candace off guard with the unexpected inquiry.

"What? What do you mean by that?" Candace asked, her confusion evident as she struggled to make sense of Andy's words.

"You heard me right."

As the weight of Andy's question hung in the air, Candace's mind raced, searching for the right words to reassure her sister. She could see the vulnerability in Andy's eyes, a vulnerability she rarely showed, and it tugged at her heartstrings.

"Candace, answer me," Andy pressed, her voice tinged with uncertainty.

Candace took a moment to gather her thoughts, realizing the significance of Andy's question.

"Andy, of course you don't embarrass me. Why would you even think something like that? You're my sister, and I love you. Nothing could ever change that," she replied earnestly, reaching out to gently grasp Andy's hand.

"Are you sure about that? You've been acting differently lately. Ever since you found your biological family and met all these wonderful people, it's like you're always trying to change me into someone I'm not. This is me, Candace. I'm not you. I'm not like any one of those outstanding ladies we now have in our lives. I love every one of them and admire what they made of themselves, but I'm not going to try to be either of them. You can do that, but don't try to make me into someone I'm not. It makes me uncomfortable. I understand that I'm a stark reminder of your past which you are so desperately trying to live behind...."

Candace's heart clenched at the raw honesty in Andy's words, realizing the impact of her own actions on her sister.

"Can you please, shut up and let me talk?" Candace cut in, tears gleaming in her eyes.

Andy blinked away the tears which were already pooling in her eyes as she stopped talking.

"Andy, I'm so sorry if it's seemed that way. It's not because I feel embarrassed or ashamed. I just want us to fit in. Maybe a part of me still feels like we are undergoing a test or something, and if we make any mistakes we might lose all of these. It's not about you. It's me. I'm sorry," Candace said, her voice filled with sincerity.

"I don't want to fit in. I don't care about fitting in. I know it's important to you, but honestly, that's not my thing. I love being myself. I don't want to lose my individuality. If you think I'm going to make things awkward for you here, I could leave. I really want you to be happy," Andy said, her voice softening as she met Candace's gaze.

Candace shook her head, "No. Not at all. I love you the way you are. I love having you here. I would rather give up all of these than lose you. You're more family to me than anyone else here. I'm sorry. I really am," Candace said and a wave of relief washed over Andy's features, the tension in her shoulders easing slightly at Candace's words.

Andy nodded, a flicker of understanding passing between them. "You're my family too. And we are not giving up anything or anyone. I want all of it. Aaron, Harry, and all of these. We're in this together, Candace. We always have been, and we always will be," Andy said, and Candace squeezed Andy's hand reassuringly, a silent promise passing between them.

"You're right, Andy. We're stronger together. No matter what challenges come our way, we'll face them together, as sisters," she affirmed, a newfound determination shining in her eyes.

"No. No more challenges. I'm tired of facing challenges, all I want to face now is money and handsome men," Andy said with a grin, and Candace giggled.

"What are you both laughing about," Jade asked from behind the closed door as she knocked on it.

"Are you done with your phone call with Harry?" Andy asked, since she had excused Jade in the bedroom when she was talking to Harry.

"Yeah. I like spending time with the Jonas. So, when I'm not talking with my man, I like to be with his sisters," Jade said as she walked into the bedroom and joined them on the bed.

"Jade, can I talk to you about something?" Andy asked and Jade nodded.

"Sure. Anything."

Andy exchanged a quick glance with Candace before speaking. "We've noticed some things lately, and we think it's important to talk about them."

Jade furrowed her brows, a hint of concern crossing her features. "What things?"

Andy glanced at Candace again, and Candace gave her a nod to go ahead.

"It's about your behavior, Jade. We've noticed that sometimes you come across as a bit... well, spoiled."

Jade's eyes widened in surprise, a hint of defensiveness creeping into her voice. "What do you mean by that?"

Candace jumped in, her tone reassuring yet honest. "What she means is that sometimes you can be a bit too clingy and excessively jealous when it comes to Harry."

"Well, that and the fact that you act childish sometimes. Take last night for example. You really didn't have to act that way. If you thought Lucy's statement was directed at you, you could have brought it up with her later. You didn't have to act that way at the party and make things awkward. You almost ruined the atmosphere of the party," Andy said bluntly.

Jade's cheeks flushed with embarrassment as she realized the gravity of their words. "I-I'm sorry. I didn't realize it was that bad."

"It was. What you did was cringeworthy," Andy said and Candace winced.

"What did you mean by I'm too clingy and excessively jealous? Did Harry say something to you?" Jade asked Candace, wondering where that was coming from.

Candace shook her head immediately. "No, he didn't. We both know Harry wouldn't discuss something like that with anyone but you. It's just that we've been observing you. We know you care about him, Jade. And that's wonderful. But sometimes, being too clingy or jealous can put strain on a relationship. It's important to trust each other and give each other space. Trust me, I know what I'm talking about," Candace said, thinking about how clingy and jealous Jero had been too.

Andy added, "Harry might be willing to put up with it now, but it could become tiring for him later on. We just want what's best for both of you. I hope you understand that I am not saying this to offend you. I'm only telling you this because I care about you. I think you're a wonderful person, but you just need to tone down your clinginess and jealousy a bit," Andy said, sensing that Jade's feelings were hurt.

Jade's shoulders sagged with the weight of their words, "Can you give me instances? Like tell me when you observed these so I can better understand what you mean?" She asked, and seeing the sad look on her face, Candace felt slightly guilty.

"You don't have to feel so bad, Jade. We are not trying to hurt your feelings. We just want your relationship to be better. I'm sorry if we overstepped," Candace said and Jade shook her head.

"No. It's alright. I appreciate it. I-I just didn't realize I was doing too much. And the last thing I want is for Harry to get tired of me. So, tell me all you observed so I can know what areas I need to tone it down and give Harry more space," she said and Andy told her all she had observed from Sogal till now.

Jade took a deep breath when Andy was done, "How can I help it? Do you have any suggestions?" She asked, looking from Andy to Candace.

"Let Harry have a life outside you. Everything he does shouldn't revolve around you. Give him space to do his own stuff and let him be the one to decide if he wants you to be involved in them. Do the same for yourself. And about your conduct outside Harry, we can work on it together. I'd rather Candace or the others don't shut you up in the presence of others like they did yesterday in front of Lucas and Tyler," Andy said and Jade nodded.

"Thank you, Andy. I've heard all you said. I will do my best to work on it," Jade said as she rose and Candace raised a brow.

"Where are you going?"

"To my room. I need to do something," Jade said and they watched as she walked away.

"I think we hurt her feelings," Candace said with a concerned frown.

"She will be fine. It's for her own good," Andy said and Candace sighed deeply not liking the thought that Jade was probably going to her bedroom to sulk.

"Don't you think it's her individuality and we are trying to change her like you accused me of doing to you?" Candace asked and Andy shook her head.

"That is different from what you were trying to do with me. I'm not trying to change her. I'm advising her to tone it down so it doesn't affect her relationship. Even though Harry is our brother, we knew Jade before him, and that means we have to look out for her, and them both. If she was dating someone else and not Harry, I will advise her the same," Andy said simply and then yawned.

"I guess you're right," Candace said with a thoughtful nod.

"Of course, I am. Since she is done with the phone call, I should go back to the room to nap now and maybe cheer her up too. If you wake up before me, wake me up so we can get ready in time for the wedding," Andy said as she rose to leave.

Chapter 802 I've Got Your Back

The soft morning light filtered through the sheer curtains, casting a warm glow across the bedroom where Bryan and Sonia lay on the bed.

The air was filled with a sense of anticipation, a palpable excitement that seemed to dance between them as they savored the quiet moments before the whirlwind of their wedding day.

"What?" Sonia asked Bryan who lay beside her on the bed, grinning as he watched her face while she tried unsuccessfully to sleep.

Bryan pressed a tender kiss to Sonia's forehead, his fingers tracing gentle circles on her belly. "Can you believe it, babe?" he murmured, his voice filled with wonder.

"In just a few hours, we'll be husband and wife, and you are going to be mine forever," he said, and Sonia giggled.

"I thought I was yours already," she said and he grinned.

"Officially mine," Bryan said as he held her hand in his.

"How do you feel about walking down the aisle with me today?" He asked and Sonia smiled widely.

"Excited. I feel very excited. I'm looking forward to the future with you," Sonia said as she smiled up at him, her eyes sparkling with happiness.

"Me too. I can't wait to come home to you and our little Ryso," he said and she rested her hand over his on her belly.

"All of this is still a little hard to believe, but I couldn't be more excited to start this new chapter with you, Bryan. To build a life together, to raise our little one... it's everything I've ever dreamed of," she said, her eyes filling up with tears.

Bryan's heart swelled with love as he looked at Sonia, marveling at the strength and resilience she had shown throughout their journey together.

"Last night as we answered those questions, it occurred to me that I've always been in awe of you from the moment we met. And even now as the time draws nearer to the moment when we will exchange our vows, I'm more convinced of my love for you now more than ever," Bryan said and Sonia smiled softly.

From the moment they had met, she had known that he was the one she wanted to spend the rest of her life with, and now, as they stood on the precipice of matrimony, that conviction burned brighter than ever as she held his gaze.

Bryan brushed a strand of hair away from Sonia's face, his touch gentle and tender. "You're going to be the most beautiful bride in the world," he whispered, his voice filled with awe. "I can't wait to see you walking down the aisle, to say 'I do' and make you my wife," he said as he lowered his head to kiss her belly.

Sonia's cheeks flushed with color at his words, her heart fluttering with excitement. "And I can't wait to become your wife, Bryan," she replied, her voice filled with emotion. "To stand by your side, to love and support you in all that we do... it's a dream come true."

"I know I've told you this a couple of times already, but I want to keep pledging my undying love to you. I promise to love and cherish you every single day, Sony. I promise to be with you through every step of our life together. I promise not to put anyone above you. No matter how cute our daughter might be, you will always be my number one baby," Bryan promised and Sonia giggled.

"We don't know the gender yet," she said and he shrugged.

"I'm sure it's a girl. A girl who looks as beautiful as you. But she would take after me in being calm. I don't think I can handle two crazy ladies at a time," he said and she giggled.

"You fell in love with me because I'm crazy," she reminded him.

"Would you want a daughter like you? Would you be able to handle her?" He asked, and she thought about it for a moment before giggling and shaking her head.

"I don't think so," she said, and Bryan chuckled.

"Exactly what I thought," he said, and Sonia sighed deeply.

"You know, last night I was just thinking. This is where our story ends, you know?" She asked, and he cocked a brow.

"What do you mean?"

"Our wedding. It ends with, and they lived happily ever after. That's how romance novels end," she said with a shrug.

"Well, you're the author. You don't have to end it here if you don't want to," he pointed out.

"I want to. I'm satisfied. It makes sense that our story ended first even though we were the last to meet amongst everyone else," she said and Bryan looked at her with questioning eyes.

"How were we the last to meet? We started before everyone else," he pointed out.

"Tom and Lucy met before we did. Harry and Jade has known each other for years. Matt and Candace has been chatting on the dating app for months before we met," she said, and Bryan nodded.

"You're right. But we started dating before them all," he said and she grinned.

"Yep. And we are getting married before them too. That's all thanks to me for knowing what I wanted and pursuing it stubbornly," Sonia said and Bryan chuckled.

"True. Thanks for forcing your way into my life," he said and she grinned.

"You're welcome, baby," she said as she leaned forward and kissed him.

"It's been a while since we spent time together this way. I'm so happy that we get to do it on the morning of the first day of the rest of our lives together," Bryan said and she smiled.

"Me too. I'm glad that the girls came around. Having time here really helped uplift my mood. And last night was lovely," she said and Bryan smiled.

"Lucy has been great. I should take her out on a date one of these days. Just the two of us. What do you think?" Bryan suggested and Sonia giggled.

"I can't imagine just the two of you alone together, but it would be cute," she said with a wide smile, pleased that Bryan was thinking of ways to get closer to Lucy.

"So, now that you're feeling better, are you up for a honeymoon trip?" Bryan asked and Sonia looked at him incredulously as she sat up.

"Even if I wasn't feeling better, we still would have had to go on a honeymoon trip. The only reason I didn't ask you about it this whole time was because I wanted you to surprise me. Don't tell me you weren't making any plans," Sonia said and Bryan shrugged.

"I thought you wouldn't want to be alone with me," he said and she frowned.

"So, what are you saying? Are we not going somewhere far away for our honeymoon?" She asked and Bryan grinned.

"We are. Tom offered to cover for all our honeymoon expenses," Bryan said and Sonia's eyes lit up.

"He did? Aww, that's so lovely," Sonia said and Bryan nodded.

"Yeah. So, we can leave tomorrow after you get some rest today. I don't want you being stressed out," he said and before Sonia could respond, her phone rang with a call from Mia, informing her she was downstairs.

"Why is she disturbing you when you should be resting? Don't worry. Stay here. I will go meet her myself," Bryan said, and Sonia rolled her eyes.

"Don't bother. I want to talk to her," Sonia said as she rose.

"About what?" Bryan asked, and Sonia shrugged.

"I want her to help me interview the housekeepers and cleaners who would be coming while we are away. I need them to be here by the time we get back from our honeymoon," Sonia explained and Bryan nodded.

"Alright."

"By the way, have you noticed anything weird about Mia? How much do you know her?" Sonia asked casually.

"Weird? Everything about Mia is weird," Bryan said in amusement.

"Like what?" Sonia asked, not wanting to sound serious since she didn't want Bryan to ask her why she was asking.

Like Jade she had also noticed Mia's reaction to Tyler's question, and she suspected that Tyler was the reason Mia hadn't shown up at the party last night, despite what Jeff had said about being ill.

After hearing Jade say that Harry had said Mia looked familiar too, and everything else that Jade had said, Sonia was convinced that Mia was probably hiding something just like Jade had said.

But because she loved Mia like a sister, she had not wanted Jade to dig deeper into Mia's business because she knew very well that Jade would be doing that only to satisfy her curiosity and not because she cared about Mia. She didn't want whatever Mia was hiding to become public business.

"Her dress sense. the way she speaks and acts. Just about everything. Before she started working for me I used to change assistants every couple of months, but look at her. She has been working for me almost two years now. That in itself is weird," Bryan said and Sonia nodded.

"Why do you ask?" Bryan asked and she shook her head.

"I'm just curious about her. That's all. I'm going down now. Don't want to keep her waiting," Sonia said as she headed for the door.

The moment she walked into the living room, Mia rose with an apologetic smile on her face, "I'm so sorry I couldn't make it last night," Mia said apologetically, and Sonia smiled.

"Although I missed you, I'm sure you had your reason for being absent. Let's take a walk around the garden, Mia. I'm feeling too restless to sit still and I need the fresh air," Sonia said, and Mia walked outside with her.

"Do you feel better now? Jeff said you were feeling ill last night," Sonia said after she was sure they were alone and Mia nodded.

"I feel much better now," Mia assured her.

"Does that mean you will be at the wedding and won't fall ill before then? Tyler will be at the wedding, you know? Aren't you avoiding him?" Sonia asked, and Mia stopped walking abruptly.

Sonia turned to look at her and her heart broke when she saw how pale Mia looked, "No, Mia. He didn't say anything to me," Sonia rushed to assure her when she saw the fear in Mia's eyes.

"Then how did you know?"

"How did I know you were avoiding him?" Sonia asked and Mia nodded.

"I'm a writer, Mia. It's my job to read between the lines and notice things. You were weird yesterday when Tyler said you looked familiar, and it got me thinking. And when you didn't show up at the party, I figured it was because you knew he would be there," Sonia said and Mia sighed.

"I'm sorry, Sonia...."

"You have nothing to be sorry for, Mia. Absolutely nothing. Let's keep walking," Sonia said, and without thinking she took Mia's hand and intertwined both their hands as they walked.

"You know, I loved you from the moment we met. Remember when we first met?" Sonia asked, and Mia's stiff lips curved with a smile.

"I saw you on the night Bryan proposed to you, but we met at the airport when we picked you up during your surprise visit" Mia said and Sonia giggled.

"Yeah. At first I thought you would be one of those stiff assistants who are silently in love with their bosses and wouldn't want any other ladies coming around him," Sonia said and Mia laughed out loud.

"In love with Bryan? Why would I ever be in love with someone as annoying as him? I was rooting for you from the very day," Mia assured her and Sonia nodded.

"Yeah. I quickly realized that when we met. Mia, I want you to know that I don't just see you as Bryan's assistant. I see you as a friend and a sister. And if you ever need to talk, I'm here. Whatever it is that you are hiding will stay hidden, I promise. I will talk to Tyler to make sure he keeps whatever he knows to himself," Sonia promised, and tears gathered in Mia's eyes as her lips wobbled, surprised by the warmth and love in Sonia's tone.

"I just want you to promise me one thing," Sonia said, and Mia stopped to look at her, wondering what it was.

"I want you to promise me that you will still be here when I get back from my honeymoon. Don't run away, Mia. You are safe here," Sonia said knowingly, and this time, Mia broke into a sob and Sonia embraced her.

"Whatever it is, Mia. Whatever it is I will help you. I've got your back, I promise," Sonia murmured softly as she patted her back.

Chapter 803 Spoilt. Clingy. Jealous

Jade lay stomach down on the bed, with her head turned to the side on the pillow and let out a deep sigh as she thought about what Candace and Andy had just told her.

The words Andy and Candace had said to her earlier echoed in her mind, their gentle admonishments cutting deeper than she cared to admit.

She knew they meant well, and knew that their concern stemmed from a place of love, but still, her feelings were bruised.

"Spoilt.... Clingy.... Jealous...." The words hung in the air, weighing heavily on her heart.

She couldn't deny the truth in their words, couldn't ignore the nagging feeling that perhaps they were right.

She loved Harry more than anything, wanted nothing more than to spend every waking moment by his side, but she couldn't shake the feeling of insecurity that gnawed at her insides.

What if they were right and Harry was probably getting tired of her clinginess already but wasn't saying anything about it because he didn't want to hurt her feelings?

As she lay there, lost in thought, Jade couldn't help but think that maybe she was being this clingy right now because she wasn't working yet and didn't have a job to occupy her mind and time.

When she was busy with Rebekah's case, she had barely had time for Harry and wouldn't have concerned herself too much with whatever he was doing since she was too busy herself to care.

And maybe it was because she didn't have her own place yet, her own space to call home.

The thought of getting her own place had crossed her mind countless times, but she always pushed it aside, dismissing it as an unnecessary expense when she already had a room in both her brothers' houses.

She couldn't justify spending money on rent when she knew she would soon be moving in with Harry after they got married.

But now, as she lay on her bed, she couldn't help but wonder if having her own space would help her give Harry and everyone else the space they seemed to need from her.

They were all beginning to make her feel like she was a nuisance and as much as she always tried to dismiss it playfully, it was beginning to get to her.

But even as the idea of getting her own place lingered in her mind, doubts crept in.

What if getting her own place didn't solve anything? What if her clinginess was rooted in something deeper, something she couldn't simply escape by moving out? The uncertainty gnawed at her, chipping away at her resolve.

Lost in her thoughts, Jade was startled when Andy walked into the room, concern etched into her features. "Are you okay?" she asked softly, her voice filled with genuine concern.

Jade forced a smile onto her lips, not wanting her to know how much she had been affected by their words.

"Yeah, I'm fine," she replied, her voice betraying none of the turmoil churning inside her. "Just... thinking," she said as she sat up on the bed.

Andy approached her cautiously, her brow furrowed with worry. "I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings earlier," she said, her voice laced with regret. "I didn't mean to upset you. I just thought I should look out for you by telling you that," Andy said softly.

"No, it's okay," Jade replied, her voice barely above a whisper.

"You were right. I've been... I've been too clingy, too possessive. And I know it's not healthy for me or for Harry. It was just sort of hard hearing that," Jade said with a shrug.

Andy nodded understandingly, her expression softening with empathy. "It's okay to feel that way. I would feel the same if I was told any of that," she reassured her as she sat down on the bed.

"If you don't mind me asking, Is Harry your first boyfriend?" Andy asked after they were both silent for some time.

Jade shook her head, "No," she said, and after a moment's hesitation she told Andy all about Todd and how their relationship had been.

"I see. I think maybe you need to remember that you are worthy of love and respect, and you don't need to cling to someone to feel validated," Andy said softly.

"You sound just like my dad," Jade said with a tender smile.

"I do?" Andy asked with a grin and Jade nodded.

"Although, I don't think I'm clinging to Harry to feel validated. It's just that everyone around here has their own person. Sonia has Lucy, Candace has got you, and she has Matt too. Tom has Lucy. Bryan has Sonia. Harry is my own person. I enjoy his company. I enjoy being with him all the time. I'm just so interested in him that I want to know all that is going on in his life at all times. And I understand that this might not be healthy like you and Candace said," she explained with a sigh.

"How did you cope before Harry?" Andy asked curiously and she shrugged.

"Work. I buried myself in work. I was all about my work. When I work I don't think about anything else. So, maybe I'm just being this way because I'm bored, I don't know. Perhaps I should get my own place and make new friends and stuff," Jade said, and even as the words left her lips, Andy could tell she didn't like the idea.

"I just don't know what to do or where to start," Jade said and Andy pursed her lips as she thought about it.

As Jade and Andy sat on the edge of the bed, they delved into a heartfelt conversation about practical ways Jade could work on herself.

"First of all, you should know that you are doing the right thing by acknowledging it and wanting to change. Now to the practical part of what to do, let's break it down," Andy began, her voice gentle yet firm.

"First things first, setting boundaries. You need to establish clear boundaries in your relationship with Harry to give both of you the space you need to grow individually."

Jade nodded, the idea resonating with her. "Yeah, you're right. Lately I've been so focused on being with Harry all the time that I haven't given either of us the chance to breathe."

Andy smiled encouragingly. "Exactly. So, start by carving out some 'me' time for yourself. Find activities or hobbies that you enjoy and dedicate some time each day to pursue them. At least you can do this until you start working again. When do you plan to start working?"

"After our vacation," Jade explained and Andy nodded.

"Good. So, apart from your job, I still think you should pick out hobbies. It could be anything from painting to yoga to going for a walk in the park to joining a reading club. The key is to focus on yourself and your own happiness. Not just while you're dating but even after you get married," Andy said and Jade's eyes brightened at the suggestion.

"That sounds like a good idea. I used to love dancing when I was younger. Perhaps I can find a hobby related to dancing," she said and Andy nodded in approval.

"That's perfect. And while you're at it, make sure to communicate your needs and boundaries to Harry. Let him know that you love spending time with him, but you both also need time to recharge and pursue your own interests. Ask him to help you in anyway he can so you can stop being so clingy. I'm sure he will be willing to help," Andy said and Jade nodded.

"I can do that. I'm sure he will want to help," Jade said thoughtfully.

Andy gave her a reassuring smile. "Sure. And remember, communication is key. If you're feeling insecure or anxious about something, don't hesitate to talk to Harry about it. Keeping things bottled up will only make matters worse."

"I suppose you're talking about the stuff with Mia?" Jade asked, and Andy nodded.

"I'm not asking you to ask him any personal or direct questions. I'm just saying you should communicate your feelings," Andy said and Jade nodded with understanding, making a mental note to be more open and honest with Harry about her feelings.

"And finally, I don't think it's okay that you think everyone has everyone and you only have Harry. You do have your brothers, and you have us all. Harry is not all you have. We are your friends," Andy said and Jade smiled.

"I know. It's just that I feel different when I'm with Harry. The way he loves me and treats me. He is my own person...."

"Wow! Too bad for me cause I don't have my own person," Andy cut in and Jade smiled.

"That's not what I mean," Jade said and Andy nodded.

"I know. And I understand that Harry dotes on you. I want it to remain this way hence I'm saying all I'm saying. But you know what? Different strokes for different folks. Who knows? Maybe Harry actually does love all that clinginess and possessiveness of yours, so maybe you should ask him. If he says he wants you to make some adjustments, you go ahead and do it. If he says he is cool with you this way, disregard all we said...."

"No. I'm going to change. I know I need to work on this, for my own sake and for Harry's too. Harry is not the only one in my life and all I do shouldn't revolve around him. Y'all are my friends and if you think my behavior needs some adjustments, I should work on it. As you said, even though Harry might find it cute right now, there is no guaranty that he won't become irritated by it later. I'd rather work on being my own person and being happy on my own. I can't rely on Harry for all the happiness and fun in my life. It would put too much pressure on him and strain on our relationship," Jade said and Andy gave her a proud smile.

"I'm glad you're being a big girl about this. Thanks," Andy said and Jade shook her head.

"No. Thank you, Andy. I should be thanking you for being honest with me," Jade said, her voice filled with gratitude. "I really appreciate you talking to me about this. I know that my behavior won't change overnight, but I do know that thanks to your advise, I'm going to build a healthier and happier relationship with Harry," Jade said and Andy gave her a warm hug.

"Anytime, Jade. I'm always here for you. And remember, you're stronger than you think. You've got this," Andy assured her.

After their conversation, Jade felt lighter, as if a weight had been lifted off her shoulders. She knew she still had work to do, but she also knew that she could overcome her insecurities or whatever it was that was making her so clingy and build a healthier, happier relationship with Harry.

"I believe I owe Sony and Lucy an apology for acting the way I did last night," Jade said and Andy smiled with approval.

"Yes, you do. I need to sleep," Andy said with a yawn as she lay on the bed.

"Me too. I will apologize to them while we dress up later," Jade said as she joined Andy on the bed.

"How many romantic relationships have you been in, Andy?" Jade asked after they were silent for a while.

"None. I haven't gotten the butterflies for anyone yet," Andy said without opening her eyes.

"So, how did you get to know so much about relationships?" Jade asked and Andy yawned.

"It's not relationships that I know about. It's people I know about, and trust me, I've mixed up with all kinds of people, especially men, to know how they think," Andy said as she adjusted her pillow.

"If you've not been in relationship how have you mixed up with men?"

Andy opened her eyes to look at Jade, "I was a stripper, remember? Guess the gender who patronized me most?" She asked dryly and Jade laughed.

"Jade, I don't know about you, but I need to sleep. Let's talk when I wake up," Andy said and just like that she dozed off leaving Jade to think about all that they had discussed.

Chapter 804 Wedding Preparations

Desmond walked into the bedroom he shared with his wife to see if she was ready for them to leave, and just as he opened his mouth to complain about her delaying them, he paused when he noticed that she was wiping her eyes.

"Are you alright, Eve?" He asked as he drew closer to her, and she sniffled as she bobbed her head.

"I'm fine. I'm just very happy. I just can't get over the fact that one of our babies are getting married," she said with a shaky smile and Desmond smiled.

"Well, the man you're referring to as your baby is about to give you a grandbaby, so he isn't much of a baby anymore," he said and she laughed softly.

"I know that, silly. But where did all the time go, Des? It feels like just yesterday when he wouldn't go to bed without being cuddled, and now he is about to start his own family," she said and he shrugged.

"I guess time does fly when you're doing something you love, and you did love raising them. And I think the time went to you monitoring their lives and trying to make sure they all lived decently, even though you failed woefully with Bryan until Sonia showed up and made a decent man out of him," Desmond said with a chuckle when Evelyn scowled at him playfully.

Evelyn was glad that despite how sad Desmond had been following the death of his father, he was better now and his laughter touched his eyes without the sadness hovering around it.

Spending the last couple of weeks alone with him on a vacation had been wonderful and it had felt like they were on a honeymoon and not just an old couple traveling the world for fun.

It seemed like once she had removed her children from the top place in her mind, and set herself and her husband there, she had rediscovered her youth and passion for life.

"Are you ready to leave now? Andrew and Janet are waiting downstairs," Desmond said and she nodded as she rose.

"Yes, I'm ready. What about Tom?"

"He left a short while ago. Adolf is driving us."

"Alright. Let's go officially welcome another daughter," she said, and he smiled.

"That's the spirit," he said as he held out an arm to her, but instead of taking his hand, Evelyn looked him over.

"By the way, you look dashing, Des," she said and he grinned.

"I do, don't I?" He asked as he gazed down at the navy blue tuxedo.

"You sure do," she said as she drew closer to him and adjusted the collar of his shirt.

"You look beautiful. I fear you might outshine the bride and all the young ladies there. I'm glad our son is the groom, else I would have feared he might abandon his bride and propose to you," he said, admiring his wife's radiant beauty, he couldn't help but feel a surge of pride and admiration.

Evelyn, an epitome of grace and elegance in her ensemble, giggled.

She wore a floor-length gown in a rich shade of midnight blue, its flowing silhouette accentuating her figure and graceful curves.

"Let's act like I believe you. Thanks," she said as he brushed his lips against hers.

"Let's not keep Janet and Andrew waiting," Evelyn said and with a final adjustment to his tie and a loving glance exchanged between them, Desmond offered Evelyn his arm, and together they made their way downstairs.

Away from there, in Bryan and Sonia's house, the atmosphere was no less electric as the bridal party prepared for the momentous occasion.

Sonia was surrounded by Lucy, Mia, and the rest of the girls as they helped her with the finishing touches of her bridal ensemble since they were all dressed themselves.

They all bustled around her, their laughter filling the room as they prepared for the momentous occasion ahead.

The strands of Sonia's golden blonde hair, was deftly woven into an intricate braided crown that cascaded down her back in a waterfall of curls.

The makeup artist outdid herself by making Sonia's makeup very subtle yet made sure she accentuated Sonia's striking green eyes with a touch of shimmering eyeshadow and adding a hint of rosy blush to her cheeks.

Andy and Candace helped Sonia into her gown of delicate ivory lace, its flowing silhouette accentuating Sonia's slender frame and graceful curves.

As Sonia slipped into the gown, she felt a surge of emotion wash over her, the weight of the moment finally sinking in.

Lucy, ever the voice of reason, stepped back to admire the finished look, her eyes sparkling with admiration. "You look absolutely stunning, Sony. You are the most beautiful bride I've ever set eyes on," she exclaimed, her voice filled with genuine admiration.

"Bryan won't know what hit him when he sees you walking down the aisle," Andy said and Sonia smiled, her heart swelling with gratitude for her friends' unwavering support.

"Thank you, everyone," she said, her voice choked with emotion. "I couldn't have asked for a better group of friends to share this day with."

"No, no. No tears. You can't ruin your makeup. Look upwards and blink," Candace ordered, and Sonia laughed as she did as Candace instructed.

"Is my bump obvious?" Sonia asked and they all shook their heads after looking her over.

"Not at all. You don't look pregnant. As long as you're able to manage the spits, you're good," Lucy assured her.

"Jade? You've been awfully quiet, are you alright?" Sonia asked and Jade nodded.

"Sure," she said, and then glanced at Andy before looking at Sonia and Lucy.

"I'm sorry about last night," she said and Sonia frowned.

"Is that why you seem moody? I already forgot about that," Sonia assured her.

"I'm sorry you felt I was picking on you," Lucy said and Jade nodded.

"Thanks. I should probably go check on Bryan since we are done here," Jade said and excused herself.

"She is not okay, is she?" Sonia asked with a concerned frown.

"She is okay," Andy assured her.

"I should go check on her," Candace said and Andy gave her a pointed look.

"Let her be. If she says she is okay, then she is fine. If you don't want her acting like a baby, stop treating her like one," Andy said firmly and Sonia raised a brow.

"Did something happen?"

"Yes. Love happened to Sonia and Bryan, and that's why we are all here today," Andy said with a sweet smile making everyone laugh.

"Good. Let's focus on the reason we are here," she said taking the attention away from Jade back to Sonia.

They turned to the door when a knock sounded on it, and Lucy answered it, "Evelyn! Mom!" Lucy exclaimed happily as she embraced Evelyn and then her mom.

"Where is my soon-to-be daughter-in-law?" Evelyn asked, and Sonia smiled brightly as she rose to face Evelyn.

"Oh, my darling! You look exquisite, Sony," Evelyn said with a wide smile as she embraced Sonia.

"Thanks, Evelyn. I thought you'd both come over yesterday," she said and Evelyn smiled.

"Well, yesterday was for you young ones to have fun. We had our own fun. How are you doing? And how is my grand baby?" Evelyn asked and Sonia smiled.

"We are fine. I've missed you. Where is Desmond?" She asked, and Evelyn jerked her head outside.

"He's checking on Bryan. I came to see how you're doing," Evelyn said and while she was talking to Sonia, Janet and Lucy were talking until Janet glanced at Candace and she held out her hand to Candace.

"How are you doing? How is my Jamal?" Janet asked as she embraced Candace.

"I'm fine, and Jamal is okay. We left him behind with his grandfather," Candace explained and Lucy took Andy's hand and pulled her over.

"Mom, meet Andy, your other niece," Lucy said and Janet's eyes lit up.

"Andy? I've heard a lot about you from Lucy," Janet said as she embraced Andy.

"Really? What did she say?" Andy asked curiously and Janet laughed.

"She said I was going to love you when I meet you, and I do love you already," Janet said and Andy smiled.

"I love you too, aunt," Andy said while Candace watched, amused by how easy it was for Andy to bond with everyone.

Here she was, still feeling awkward and struggling with all the new relationships but Andy was already calling Janet, aunt, when she was still having a hard time doing that.

Perhaps it was so easy for Andy because she wasn't directly related to them, Candace thought.

After they had exchanged pleasantries with everyone in the room, Evelyn and Janet excused them, and just as they stepped into the living room, Lucas walked in with Tyler and Jeff, and Janet screeched happily.

"LUCAS!" She cried as she hurried over to embrace Lucas who was laughing.

"When did you get here? Why didn't you tell me you were coming? Tyler? You look all grown now," Janet said, looking from Lucas to Tyler happily.

"Lucas is grown too," Tyler said and they all laughed just as Andrew and Desmond stepped into the living room and saw him.

"Lucas?" Andrew called in surprise.

"Why do you both look so surprised. You don't expect me to miss Sony's wedding, do you? She is my second sister after all," Lucas said as he embraced his father.

"Lucas, you look much better now than you were the last time," Evelyn said as she embraced him.

While they were all talking to Lucas, Jeff left to go meet Bryan while Tyler decided to look around if he would see Mia.

He met Jade who was coming out of Bryan's bedroom, and when he asked of Mia, she directed him to Sonia's bedroom, and Tyler headed there.

He knocked on the door, and Lucy opened, "Hey, Tyler!" She said, and immediately Mia and Sonia heard her, they exchanged a look when they heard him ask for Mia.

"Why is he asking for Mia when you're the one he kissed?" Candace whispered Andy and she rolled her eyes.

"We only kissed, not exchange vows," Andy whispered back.

"Lu, let him come in," Sonia said, and Lucy held out the door to let him in.

"Can you girls excuse us, please?" Sonia asked, and without asking her what was going on, Lucy, Candace and Andy left the room, leaving her alone with Mia and Tyler.

"Sony, I want to speak with her alone," Tyler said and Sonia shook her head.

"No, Ty. Say whatever you want to say to her in front of me, and then when you're done I have something to say to you," Sonia said and Tyler sighed.

"I know who you are...."

"Who you thought I was. Not who I am. You don't know anything about me," Mia cut in quietly.

"Ty, Mia is a very close friend of mine. As a matter of fact, I consider her my sister. I don't know what you think you know about her, but I will appreciate it if you keep it to yourself," Sonia said and Tyler sighed.

"That is the reason I wanted to talk to her. I may have mentioned to my colleague that I saw someone like her...."

"You may have or you did?" Sonia asked when Mia went pale.

"I did. I'm not sure if he took me seriously or not. But I thought I should let her know. I'm sorry. I don't mean to cause any problems for you, and maybe because of my curiosity I might have made you uncomfortable. I apologize," Tyler said to Mia.

"How much did you tell your colleague?" Sonia asked, seeing as Mia was frozen and not saying anything.

"Just that I saw someone that really looked like her in Ludus working for Bryan Hank," Tyler said and Sonia sighed deeply.

That was more than enough information as far as Sonia was concerned.

Chapter 805 Flaws And All

Tyler's admission hung in the air like a dark cloud, suffocating Mia with its implications.

Mia's breath caught in her throat, her mind reeling with the implications of Tyler's words. If her husband knew she was alive, if he knew where to find her, there was no telling what he might do. The thought sent a bolt of terror coursing through her veins, paralyzing her with fear.

She felt a wave of nausea wash over her as she realized the gravity of the situation, the very real danger that now threatened to engulf her.

Her thoughts spiraled out of control, each one more terrifying than the last. What if her abusive husband had found her? What if he was already on his way to Ludus, his anger and violence

simmering just beneath the surface? The mere thought sent a wave of panic crashing over her, her heart hammering in her chest like a jackhammer.

"I need to leave. I need to go away. He is going to find me. He is going to find me. I need to run far away," Mia said as she rose, her eyes shining dull with fear.

"Mia, stop," Sonia said, reaching out a hand to stop her, but Mia shook her head.

She could hear Sonia, but in that moment she couldn't see Sonia. Her mind was consumed with visions of the nightmare she had fought so hard to leave behind.

Sonia's hand on her shoulder brought her back to the present, grounding her in the reality of the moment. "Mia, listen to me. We'll figure this out. We'll keep you safe, I promise," Sonia said in a calm and steady voice.

"I'm sorry. I'm very sorry. I didn't mean to cause any problems for you," Tyler said apologetically but his voice sounded distant, his words lost in the whirlwind of Mia's thoughts.

Mia couldn't find it in herself to respond, her throat constricted with a knot of fear that threatened to choke her. Every nerve in her body screamed at her to run, to flee to safety before it was too late. But where could she go?

Mia's chest tightened with every breath, her heart pounding in her ears like a drumbeat of dread. The walls seemed to close in around her, suffocating her with the weight of her fear. She couldn't shake the image of her abusive husband's face, twisted with rage and fueled by a thirst for vengeance.

Unable to stay in the room anymore, Mia blindly stumbled out of it, while Sonia watched her helplessly.

Tyler wanted to go after her but Sonia stopped him, "Let her be, Ty. I believe you've done enough," Sonia said, sounding harsher than she had planned.

"It wasn't intentional, Sony. I didn't mean to cause any trouble...."

"But you did. Tell me something, Ty, is she a wanted criminal?" Sonia asked and Tyler shook his head.

"No, she isn't."

"Then why couldn't you let her be? What do you think could be the reason a grown up lady like herself would be hiding?" She asked and Tyler shook his head.

"I have no idea. From what little I know about her, she is from a very influential family and her husband is a wonderful man...."

"She is married?" Sonia cut in, surprised by that piece of information and Tyler nodded.

"If he is as wonderful as you claim, do you think she will be here away from him? What woman would run away from a wonderful husband? Did you see her reaction just now? That was fear, Tyler. She was terrified. What does that tell you?" She asked and Tyler looked at her for a moment.

"You don't think her husband was hitting her, do you?" He asked, horrified at the thought that he might just have exposed her to the abusive husband she was hiding from.

"Fix it. Give your colleague a call and let him or her know that you were wrong about the lady you saw, and she is Bryan's fiancée's sister...."

"You both don't answer the same surname," Tyler pointed out.

"Then make it half sister...."

"That won't work, Sony. You had an interview and talked about your family. You didn't mention a sister then," Tyler pointed out.

"Then find a way to fix this mess, Tyler! I can't deal with it right now. So, fix it!" Sonia snapped at him, unable to hide her irritation.

Away from there, Jeff who had just stepped out of Bryan's bedroom, quickly ran to Mia when he saw her staggering down the hallway.

"Mia? Are you okay?" He asked when he noticed that she was gasping for air, and he placed an arm around her shoulder and led her to the patio, away from the bustle of the wedding.

Jeff couldn't help but notice that her entire body was trembling violently as he held her and he couldn't help but wonder what could have triggered such a reaction.

After he made her sit, he squatted in front of her so he could look into her face, "Breathe, Mia. Breathe slowly. In and out," Jeff urged softly, holding her hand and massaging her palm gently.

Mia was silent for sometime, her chest heaving as she struggled to regain control of her breathing. She clutched Jeff's hand tightly, drawing strength from his reassuring presence as she fought against the tide of panic threatening to overwhelm her.

Mia forced herself to focus on the rhythm of her breath, inhaling deeply through her nose and exhaling slowly through her mouth. Gradually, the tightness in her chest began to loosen, the rapid beat of her heart slowing to a more manageable pace.

"Everything is going to be alright. You're going to be just fine. I'm right here. I will make sure of it," Jeff murmured softly, his soothing words washing over her.

As she settled down, she realized she was holding on to Jeff's hand and she slowly let go of it as she focused her gaze on his face.

"Do you want to leave before the wedding starts? I can take you back home," Jeff offered and tears gathered in Mia's eyes at the gentleness in his tone and the kindness she could see in his eyes.

She shook her head, "I have to be here for Sonia," she said in a cracked voice and then cleared her throat.

"Thanks. I'm fine now," she said, and Jeff gave her a nod despite the worry in his eyes.

Jeff straightened and took the seat opposite her, "Did Tyler say anything to you?" He asked in concern.

Mia said nothing and neither did she look at him, knowing that there was no way she could tell him what Tyler had said without having to give him some personal details of her life.

Sensing that she didn't want to talk about it, Jeff sighed, "I spoke with Tyler last night. I know who he thinks you are," he said, wanting to let her know that he wasn't totally oblivious to what was going on with her.

Mia's head snapped up as she looked at him. Just how many people did Tyler talk to about her? Mia mused, feeling a surge of anger rise within her, hot and fierce, but she pushed it down, knowing that now was not the time for that.

"Let's talk about it later. I have to go back inside. The wedding is about to start," she said and Jeff gave her a nod as he watched her walk away.

He had been thinking about it all morning and had been contemplating whether or not to tell Bryan what he now knew, since Bryan was their employer, but he had decided not to do it.

He had figured that if Bryan was going to hear about it from anyone, it was best he heard it directly from Mia.

Away from there, as Harry arrived at Bryan's house for the wedding, he couldn't help but notice how the atmosphere was buzzing with excitement, guests milling about in their finest attire, laughter and chatter filling the air.

Although the bachelor bachelorette party had been an intimate affair, the wedding wasn't entirely so. Some of Bryan's colleagues in the entertainment industry and a couple of his old time friends graced the occasion as well as some friends of Evelyn and Desmond, and Sonia's editor.

Amidst the celebration, Harry's eyes searched for one person in particular: Jade.

Spotting her across the garden talking to someone, Harry smiled, but as he approached her, he couldn't shake the feeling that something was amiss.

He was very much aware that Jade had seen him, but she had acted like she didn't. And her usual vibrant demeanor was replaced by a tense expression, her eyes downcast, her movements guarded.

Concern gnawed at Harry's insides as he drew closer to her. He had been worried about her during his drive down when it occurred to him that she had failed to call to nag him about missing him and hurrying him to be on his way.

He had figured that maybe she was too busy with the preparations hence she didn't call him, but seeing her like this now, he realized that something was wrong.

Harry made his way over to Jade, determination shining in his eyes. He needed to know what was wrong, needed to make sure she was okay.

Jade, who had seen Harry arrive earlier but had carried on with her conversation with one of Bryan's old friends, tried not to look in Harry's direction as he made his way to her.

"Hey, goddess," Harry greeted as he stopped beside her.

"Hi! You're here," she said with a stiff smile and the person she had been talking to turned to talk to someone else's.

"You okay?" he asked softly, reaching out to gently touch her arm.

Jade forced a smile onto her lips, but it didn't reach her eyes. "Yeah, I'm fine," she replied, her voice tight with forced cheerfulness.

But Harry wasn't convinced. He could see through her facade. "You don't seem fine to me," he pressed, his voice gentle yet firm.

"What's wrong, esquire?" He asked, his brow furrowed with worry.

He knew he had not done anything wrong. They had ended their phone call earlier that morning on a cheerful note with her telling him how much she missed him and couldn't wait for the wedding to be over so that Lucy could return to Tom and she would have him all to herself again.

So, where was the attitude coming from?

Jade hesitated for a moment, her gaze flickering away from his. "It's nothing, really," she murmured, but Harry could hear the tremor in her voice.

Harry's heart clenched at the sight of her struggling to keep up her facade. He knew Jade well enough to recognize when something was bothering her, and he wasn't about to let her brush it off so easily.

Knowing that this was going to be a private conversation, Harry took her hand firmly and led her into the house, "Lead the way to your bedroom," he said and Jade took him there.

Harry ignored everyone else as he followed her inside, making a mental note to go say hello to her parents and Lucy's parents after they were done.

The moment they shut the door behind them, Harry faces her, "Now tell me what the problem is. Did someone get you upset?" He asked, his voice soft with concern, but Jade said nothing as her fingers twisted nervously in the fabric of her dress.

"Tell me, else we are not leaving here. You're going to miss your brother's wedding," Harry said firmly.

Jade hesitated, her eyes flickering with uncertainty. She knew she couldn't keep up the pretense.

Finally, she let out a shaky breath, her walls crumbling under Harry's unwavering gaze. "Okay, fine," she relented, her voice barely above a whisper. "I just... I'm trying to give you some space. I feel like I'm too jealous, too clingy."

Harry's heart ached at her confession, a pang of guilt washing over him. He had never wanted Jade to feel this way in their relationship, and the thought that he might have inadvertently contributed to her distress weighed heavily on his conscience.

"Too jealous? Clingy? What put the idea in your head? Did I say or do anything to make you feel that way?" Harry asked with a slight frown.

"No. It's not you. I was just thinking about us. You might not feel that way or complain now but eventually you might be irritated by it," Jade said, not wanting to mention anything about her conversation with Andy and Candace.

"Esquire, listen to me," Harry said firmly, cupping her face in his hands and forcing her to meet his gaze.

"You are not too clingy, and you have absolutely nothing to be jealous about. I love you just the way you are, and I wouldn't change a single thing about you."

Jade's eyes welled with tears at his words, her heart overflowing with emotion. "But Harry, I just... I don't want to be like this," she admitted, her voice trembling with vulnerability.

"You don't want to be like what?"

"Too clingy. I want to be able to give you space and let you have fun. I want us both to be able to exist separately. I don't want to feel insecure or jealous," she said and Harry's heart broke at the raw honesty in her words.

He wrapped his arms around her, pulling her close and pressing a tender kiss to her forehead. "Look at me, sugar," he murmured, his voice filled with love and sincerity.

"You are a work in progress. Remember we talked about your feeling of insecurity before we started our relationship. I told you then and I will remind you now that you are more than enough for me. You are everything I've ever wanted and more. I love you, not in spite of your clinginess, but because of it. It shows me how much you care and how deeply you love me, and I wouldn't trade that for anything in the world. I understand that you would rather spend all of your time with me, and I assure you I feel the same way too. But we can work on being able to spend some time apart if it will help you feel better about yourself. For now, let's go attend the wedding, we can talk more about it later," Harry said as he kissed the top of her nose.

In that moment, Jade felt a weight lift off her shoulders, and a sense of relief washed over her as she realized once again that she didn't have to be perfect, and that Harry loved her flaws and all.

Chapter 806 BrySon Wedding.

Despite all of the drama that had been going on with everyone else, once it was time for the wedding, they all made their way to the garden at Sonia's backyard, where love was about to bloom.

The setting sun cast a warm glow on the blooms, and their fragrance mingled with the hushed anticipation buzzing through the air.

Holding on to Andrew's arm, Sonia, the radiant bride, glided down the makeshift aisle, formed by the bridal party and groomsmen who stood on opposite sides, facing each other.

Despite the occasional grimace from morning sickness, Sonia's eyes sparkled with love as they locked on Bryan, who stood at the altar, handsome and nervous, ready to embark on this journey with her.

Almost all eyes were on Sonia, Lucy's especially, and her cheeks hurt from smiling so much as she watched her best friend, while Tom watched her.

Harry, who was seated in amongst the audience, focused his gaze on Jade as well while he kept wondering who could have triggered Jade, since he knew her well enough to know those thoughts didn't just come to her. Someone had said something and he wondered who it was.

Neither Sonia nor Bryan heard the opening speech of the officiant as they gazed at each other with smiling faces.

"Are you alright, babe?" Bryan asked, his voice laced with concern when he saw the trickle of sweat on her forehead and noticed she was a bit breathless as a wave of nausea swept over her.

Sonia flashed him a smile, "I guess Ryso is trying to make his presence known," she whispered quietly and he smiled at her.

"Don't worry, I asked the officiant to be quick with everything. We will be done with the official part soon, and then we can sneak away and have some peace and quiet, just you, me, and our little Angel," Bryan whispered his promise.

"No, way. We have to be here for our wedding reception. We can leave after the toast," Sonia said, and they both looked up when the officiant cleared his throat.

"Are you both done now? Can we continue?" He asked and everyone laughed, including Bryan and Sonia who seemed to have forgotten about everyone else.

As the laughter subsided, the officiant continued, his voice warm and inviting.

"You have both chosen to write your vows, and it is with these words you express your binding promises to love, honor, and cherish one another. If you are ready to make these promises to each other I invite you now to face each other and declare your intentions."

Turning to Bryan, the officiant spoke, "When you're ready you may begin."

"Sonia, from the moment you said yes to my fake proposal, I knew I was doomed. But what I didn't realize back then was that I was doomed to spend the rest of my life loving you and laughing with you, my green eyes witch. When I first gazed into your green eyes, I knew I was in trouble, but little did I know it was the kind of trouble you willingly face, the kind that makes your heart sing and your stomach do somersaults."

The crowd chuckled, Sonia's smile widening. He grinned back, his love for her sparkling in his eyes.

"You're my muse, my partner in crime, and the most stubborn woman I know, a quality I find strangely endearing. I promise to always trust you whether or not the facts add up. I promise to always protect you. I promise to honor you with my body and with my heart. I promise to face every adventure with you, from exploring new places to navigating the uncharted territory of parenthood. I promise to face every challenge, and to be by your side at every midnight diaper change. I promise to be your rock, your anchor, your shoulder to cry on. I promise to make you laugh, even when you think you can't. Most importantly, babe, I promise to love you with every fiber of my being, through morning sickness and sleepless nights, through laughter and mood swings, through weight gain and every thing else. You are my best friend, my confidante, and the love of my life. Thank you for choosing me, for making me a better man, and for letting me share this crazy, messy, wonderful journey with you," Bryan said and tears welled up in Sonia's eyes, blurring the faces around her. She squeezed Bryan's hand, her heart overflowing with love as she smiled at him through the tears in her eyes.

Lucy leaned forward to dab at her tears even though she had tears of her own in her eyes.

Sonia sniffled as she took a sheet of paper from Lucy, "Being a romance author one would think I would have the best and most romantic of words to express how I feel about you, but I don't. I've given all of them to the characters in my stories," Sonia said, and everyone laughed.

"Or maybe it's just my pregnancy brain. So, forgive in advance cause this is going to be a simple one compared to your beautiful piece. Maybe we should have stuck to the traditional vows," Sonia murmured and everyone laughed.

"Sorry, I have to read from here. My pregnancy brain won't let me remember it all, and I don't want to have it mixed up," Sonia said as she unfolded the sheet.

"I love you, Bryan Hank, by the old gods and new. I promise not to watch movies we started together without you. Or at least pretend it's the first time I've watched it when we watch it again. I promise to remind you of important dates, unless it's your ex-girlfriend's birthday— no promises there," Sonia said and everyone laughed.

"I promise to be your biggest fan, your loudest cheerleader and supporter, and your peace. I promise to be your home. Most importantly, Bryan, I promise to love you fiercely, unconditionally, and with every beat of my ever-growing heart. Thank you for being my home, for giving me a family, for making me feel safe, and for showing me what true love really is. I will love you for as long as I breathe, and with you, I'm ready to build a lifetime of laughter, and love," Sonia promised.

After the exchange of vows, they exchanged rings, and as they kissed, fireworks lit up the night sky.

Once they were done with the official part of the wedding, soft music filled the air as everyone took their seats, eagerly anticipating the festivities to come.

As the guests ate and drank, Lucy, stood up from her seat at the head table, a glass of champagne in hand. She cleared her throat, her eyes shining with emotion as she prepared to make her toast.

"Good evening, everyone," Lucy began, her voice clear and confident. "Today, we celebrate not only the union of two wonderful people, but also the beginning of a beautiful journey filled with love, laughter, and endless joy."

She raised her glass, the crystal catching the light as she continued, "To Sonia and Bryan, may your marriage be as strong and resilient as the love that brought you together. May you always find laughter in the midst of challenges, strength in each other's arms, and comfort in the quiet moments. May you weather every storm hand-in-hand, emerge stronger, and always remember the spark that ignited your love today."

Lucy paused, her gaze finding Sonia, their eyes locked in a silent conversation. A warm smile bloomed on her face, filled with memories of late-night talks, shared secrets, and unwavering support.

"Sonia," she continued, her voice catching slightly, "you've been my rock, my confidante, and my sister in all but blood. Watching you find love as genuine and vibrant as yours fills my heart with immense joy. And Bryan," she turned to him, her smile widening, "you complement her perfectly. You bring out the best in her, make her laugh, and love her fiercely. You're both lucky to have found each other."

Her eyes swept over the assembled guests, faces filled with happiness and admiration. "But I know I'm not alone in this. Almost here has witnessed your journey, the ups and downs, the laughter and tears, and the unwavering love that shines brighter than any diamond. Tonight, we celebrate not just your wedding, but the beautiful story you've already built together."

Raising her glass once more, her voice resonated with warmth. "To Sonia and Bryan, may your life together be a tapestry woven with love, laughter, and countless adventures. May every thread strengthen your bond, and every color brighten your journey. Cheers to the newlyweds!"

An eruption of applause filled the room, echoing Lucy's heartfelt sentiments. Sonia and Bryan beamed, Sonia's eyes glistening with tears and gratitude as she blew Lucy a kiss.

"That was such a beautiful speech, babe," Tom said to Lucy and she grinned at him.

"Thanks. You have no idea how long it took me to come up with that," she said with a grin.

"You just had to include tapestry and fashion stuff to tell everyone you are into fashion, didn't you?" Lucas teased and Lucy giggled.

While everyone was having fun, Tyler couldn't help casting guilty glances at Mia who stood at the edge of the crowd, her expression unreadable. He knew he had caused her undue stress and anxiety, and he silently berated himself for his thoughtlessness.

Mia, for her part, was annoyed at Tyler's persistent glances, her patience wearing thin. She couldn't understand why he couldn't just leave her alone, especially on a day as important as this.

Determined to enjoy the moment, she ignored him, pushing thoughts of Tyler and her past aside.

"May I have this dance?" Jeff asked from behind her, startling her.

"What?" She asked, surprised.

"I want to dance with you. You shouldn't be a mere spectator," Jeff said and Mia shook her head.

"No. I don't want to dance," even as she objected, Jeff took her hand and pulled her with him to dancefloor where everyone were now dancing with the Sonia and Bryan.

"Are you okay?" Andy asked Tyler and he turned to her.

"Yeah. Just a bit distracted," he said and she nodded as she looked at Lucas.

"Hey, cuz! Care to dance with me?" She asked, and Lucas grinned as he rose.

"How can I say no to such a beautiful lady?" He asked as he extended his arm to her, and she took it and let him lead them to the dancefloor.

"My heart is filled with so much joy right now, it feels like I'm the one who just got married," Lucy said to Tom as they danced.

"To who?" Tom asked, and Lucy giggled.

"Who else would I get married to if not you?" She asked with a grin.

"Good to know. So, now you're coming back home with me tonight, right?" Tom asked and Lucy grinned.

"Of course. I've missed you so much," she said with a deep sigh.

"Well, I missed you much more. If you were to get married, what sort of wedding would you want?" Tom asked and Lucy smiled.

"A traditional wedding. I'd love to get married in a church and have a big reception," she said and Tom raised a brow.

"But you don't go to church."

"It's what I want. I want it to look like a royal wedding," she said and Tom nodded thoughtfully.

"I can make that happen if you agree to marry me," he said and she giggled.

"I know you can. Go dance with your mom," Lucy said, pushing him in the direction of Evelyn, as she went to dance with Desmond.

Some feet from them, Jade and Harry danced slowly with Jade resting her head on Harry's chest.

"Will you come home with me tonight?" Harry asked, and Jade looked up at him, unsure.

"You're not going to say no to clingy boyfriend, are you?" Harry asked and Jade's lips twitched in amusement.

"I want us to talk," Harry said and Jade sighed.

"What about Candace and Andy?" She asked, and he raised a brow.

"What about them?"

"Won't you want to spend some time alone with them?" She asked and he held her gaze.

"Is there a reason I can't spend time with them and you? Besides, they won't be sharing my bed with me, will they?" He said and she sighed.

"Alright. I will go with you tonight," she said and Harry kissed her forehead.

He was going to have a talk with Candace and Andy. After thinking about it, he knew that Lucy wouldn't have said anything to Jade. It had to be either Sonia, Candace, or Andy, and he doubted that Sonia would have the time for that when she was preparing for her wedding.

"Harry? Can I talk to you?" Mia asked, causing Harry to pull away from Jade to look at her.

Chapter 807 I Need Your Help

As the music played softly in the background, Mia and Jeff swayed gently on the dance floor, caught up in the moment.

Mia's heart was heavy with the weight of everything that had happened, and she couldn't shake the feeling that Jeff had asked her to dance cause he wanted to ask some questions or tell her something.

"Did you bring me out here to dance because you wanted to say something?" Mia asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

Jeff looked down at her, his eyes soft and understanding. "No. We already agreed to talk after the party. I just want you to have fun. So, let's say this is me trying to distract you from whatever you were thinking."

Mia studied his face for a moment, as though she was searching for any hint of deceit. "Why are you doing all of this?" she asked, her voice tinged with suspicion.

"Doing all of what?" Jeff asked innocently even though he knew what she was asking.

"Why are you being so kind to me?"

Jeff sighed, his gaze never wavering from hers. "I don't need a reason to be kind to you or anyone. And in case you forgot, you're my subordinate at work, my housemate, and my friend, so I care about you."

"How much do you think you know about me?" she asked quietly, her eyes searching his for answers.

"I don't know anything about you other than what you've shown me all these while...."

"You know what I mean. How much did Tyler tell you?" She asked and Jeff shook his head.

"He didn't say much other than the fact that you look like someone he used to know. Vanessa Rosewood. But after what I saw this morning, I know something for a fact. You need help, and I'm going to help you however I can if you let me," Jeff said and Mia felt a lump form in her throat at his words.

She had spent so long pushing people away, building walls around herself to protect her herself since the people she had loved had been the ones who hurt her most and exposed her to abuse.

Until now, she had been living without getting attached to anyone so that if she had to run away again, she wouldn't be held back by anything or anyone, but in the last two days she had come to realize that the people around her now were people who genuinely cared about her, even more than her own parents and family did, and she didn't know how to react.

Mia felt her eyes welling up with tears, overwhelmed by the kindness and understanding being shown her by Jeff, Sonia and Harry.

She didn't want to leave these people and go start afresh somewhere else. She didn't want to lose what she had here. She couldn't keep running forever.

If she was going to ever have to face her abusive husband, she wanted to do it with these people beside her. These people who had taught her that family didn't always have to be related to you by blood. These people who now seemed like her family.

"Thank you, Jeff," she whispered, her voice barely audible over the music. "Thank you for being here for me."

"Anytime, Mia. Anytime," Jeff said as Mia stepped away from him.

"Excuse me. I need to speak to Harry," Mia said as she gazed around the dancefloor and once her eyes settled on Harry, she headed in his direction, leaving Jeff to wonder why she suddenly wanted to talk to Harry.

"Harry? Can I talk to you?" Mia asked once she stopped beside Jade and Harry who were dancing.

Harry looked from Mia to Jade, "This is important. Can you give me a moment alone with her?" Harry asked and Jade swallowed past the lump of jealousy in her throat as she bobbed her head.

Harry kissed her lips before walking away with Mia, while Jade returned to the table to sit down since she didn't want to stand alone on the dancefloor.

"Is everything alright?" Harry asked Mia as they found a quiet spot to talk.

"I need your help," Mia said, and Harry raised a brow when he heard the desperation in her tone.

"Did something happen?" He asked, and she nodded as she told him about Tyler and what he had done.

"I see. Well, it was expected. They were bound to find out about you sooner or later, so it's best you come out now instead of hiding," Harry said and watched as Mia scratched her left hand with her right nails.

"You don't have to be scared, Mia, if he makes any attempt to hurt you, he will have us to contend with...."

"Us?" She asked and Harry nodded.

"Yes. You have Tom's full support too," Harry said and Mia took a deep breath.

"What should I do?" She asked, and Harry held her gaze.

"Send your husband a divorce letter. Don't worry, I will make sure he signs it without drama and I will ensure the process goes smoothly and quietly. You can reach out to your family if you want to let them know you're alive and want nothing to do with them. Also, if you want, you can retain your original name or legally change your name. This way you no longer have to live as a dead person. You can be free," Harry said and Mia frowned.

"I don't think it's going to be that easy," she said, doubting that her abusive ex-husband would let her go just like that when he finds out how she had made a fool of him in order to be free from him.

"That's for me to handle. Play your part and I will handle everything else," Harry said and Mia nodded.

"Alright. I will do it," Mia said and Harry smiled in approval.

"You made the right decision," Harry said, glad that she was finally letting them help her.

Back at the dancefloor, as Lucy released Desmond so she could go catch her breath, Desmond went after Jade, while Lucy went to sit down beside Tyler.

"What's up? I noticed you've been unusually quiet all evening," Lucy said and Tyler shook his head.

"It's nothing," he said and she raised a brow.

"Really?" Lucy asked and Tyler sighed.

"I shouldn't have come here. I think my being here is making a mess of things," Tyler said and Lucy frowned.

"Why would you think that? Sony is very happy to have you at her wedding, you know? And I'm happy to see you after such a long time," Lucy said and Tyler shrugged as he looked at his hand.

"Sonia is mad. I'm sure she wishes I didn't come. Mia is mad too. I made a mistake," Tyler said with a deep frown.

"Want to talk about it?" Lucy asked and Tyler shrugged, seeing no reason why he couldn't tell Lucy about it especially since he knew how good Lucy was at keeping secrets.

"Mia looks like someone I used to know. A colleague of mine had a friend who always showed up at the hospital. The friend died some years ago, and when I saw Mia, she looked exactly like the dead lady," Tyler said and Lucy nodded thoughtfully.

"I guess that was why you told her she looked like someone you used to know," Lucy said and Tyler nodded.

"I don't know the details, but it seems like she faked her death to hide from someone, probably an abusive husband and I may have blown her cover by telling my colleague about her. Now Sonia is mad and Mia is upset," Tyler said and Lucy pursed her lips.

"Are you very close to your colleague?" She asked and Tyler nodded.

"Yes. We hangout weekly. Why?" He asked and she sighed.

"You didn't know the situation. I'm sure you wouldn't have said anything had you known the situation. Sonia and Mia has every right to be upset, but you shouldn't beat yourself over it. It wasn't intentional. I would tell Sonia about it too if I saw someone everyone thought was dead," Lucy said and Tyler frowned.

"Are you saying that to make me feel better?" He asked and she nodded.

"Is it working?" She asked and Tyler smiled.

"Why are you smiling? What are you saying to him to make him smile?" Tom asked with a scowl as he joined them, and both Lucy and Tyler laughed.

"She said if I had come earlier, she wouldn't have been with you," Tyler said and Tom chuckled wickedly.

"You don't sound like you want to make it back to your home in one piece," Tom said and Lucy grinned.

"Is that a threat?" Tyler asked with a frown.

"I would have said, ask the last guy I told that, but he is nowhere to be found," Tom said with a shake of his head.

"Tyler is a guest, you shouldn't be threatening your guests," Lucy chided him, "Let's take a spin, Ty," Lucy said, extending a hand to Tyler, and Tom frowned.

"Why do you want to dance with another man?" He asked with displeasure.

"Because Tyler looks lonely. If you offer to dance with him, I will sit back," Lucy said with a grin and Tom nodded at the same time as Tyler shook his head.

"Sure, I will dance with him," Tom said and Lucy tittered with laughter while Tyler scowled at Tom.

"Why would I want to dance with you?"

"Because I don't want you dancing with my girlfriend," Tom said and while they were still arguing, Andrew came and took Lucy with him to the dancefloor leaving a satisfied Tom and Tyler behind.

"Who would have thought that a big shot CEO like you would be so insecure or feel threatened by me?" Tyler taunted and Tom chuckled.

"Insecure? Nah. I'm far from insecure. I just don't like to see my girl on the arms of another guy who isn't her brother or father," Tom said lazily as he sat down.

"I'm like a brother to her," Tyler said and Tom chuckled.

"Yeah. That's all you're going to remain. Like a brother. Forever trapped in the zone between brother and friend," Tom said and Tyler glared at him making Tom chuckle more.

"It's your turn, Tyler. Let's go dance," Andy said as her and Lucas returned to the table.

"Lucky you," Tom said with a grin as Andy pulled Tyler away.

"How is it going, Tom?!" Lucas asked as he sat down.

"Everything is great. How are things going with you? My offer is still standing, remember?" Tom said and Lucas smiled.

"Yeah, about that, I accept your offer. I have Lucy's permission," Lucas said and Tom cocked his brow.

"You told her?"

"Yes. I had to make sure she was okay with me working for her boyfriend," Lucas said and Tom nodded.

"When did you tell her about it? I hope you also explained to her that I didn't tell her about it because you asked me not to?" Tom said and Lucas chuckled.

"Why do you sound like you're scared?"

"Because I don't want her to think I'm keep secrets from her. I promised not to," Tom said and Lucas grinned.

"Don't worry, I told her and she understands."

"Will you be free tomorrow? Let's hangout. Just me, you, Tyler and Harry," Tom said and Lucas smiled.

"I thought you don't like Tyler?"

"Why wouldn't I like him? I'm cool with him, I just like to make him think I'm not," Tom said and Lucas chuckled.

"Really?"

"Yes. Lucy told me about him before we started dating. If he's important to her, he is important to me. I'm cool," Tom said and Lucas shook his head in amazement.

"You're so cool," Lucas said giving Tom a thumbs up and Tom laughed.

"So? Will you be available?" Tom asked and Lucas shook his head.

"Nah. I need to leave for Heden in the morning," Lucas said and Tom frowned.

"Why? What's happening there?" He asked, hoping Lucas wasn't making that trip because of Rachael.

"It's about Amy's misunderstanding with her best friend's family. I figured I stop over and try to clear the air since I don't know when they might hold the funeral. Hopefully they will forgive her and let her attend the funeral so she can say a proper goodbye to her friend," Lucas said and Tom smiled.

"Now who is the cool one?" Tom asked and Lucas chuckled.

"Hey, cousin!" Harry said as he joined them.

"His name is Lucas," Tom said and Harry shrugged.

"I'm aware."

"Oh, you are? I thought you called him that only because you forgot his name," Tom said and both Harry and Lucas chuckled.

"Nah. I called him that to get on your nerves since you keep forgetting that Lucy is my cousin," Harry said as his gaze moved over the dancefloor.

"I saw you leaving with Mia earlier," Tom said and Harry nodded as he glanced at Lucas.

"She decided she needs our help, thanks to Lucas' friend," Harry said and Lucas looked at him in confusion.

"Tyler? What did he do?" Lucas asked with a worried frown.

Before Harry could say anything, Jeff joined them at the table, since he was curious to know why Mia had wanted to speak to Harry.

If Harry knew about her problem and was helping her out, he wanted to be part of it.

Chapter 808 Deep Scars

The moment Jeff joined them, neither of them said a word as all three of them looked at Jeff, wanting to know what he wanted.

"Harry, I would like to have a word with you in private," Jeff said and Harry frowned.

"Why? Is there is a huge Bryan scandal I need to know about right now?" Harry asked and Jeff shook his head.

"Then I'm sure anything else can wait, especially if it's about work. I'm off working hours right now. So let's talk...."

"It's about Mia," Jeff said and Harry cocked a brow.

"What about her?" Harry asked as his gaze shifted from Jeff to the spot he had left Mia, and he relaxed when he saw her seated there.

"I saw her with you a moment ago. What were you both talking about?" Jeff asked since he could see that Harry had no plans of giving him a private audience.

Perhaps if he asked openly and Harry wanted it to be their private discussion, Harry would give him the private audience he needed.

"Is this a joke? Do you really expect me to tell you what I was discussing with her in private?" Harry asked incredulously while Tom and Lucas said nothing as they listened to the exchange.

"No, it's not a joke. I want to know what you were both talking about," Jeff said, his expression and tone serious and unyielding.

"Why do you want to know? Is she your girlfriend and you're jealous that Harry talked to her privately? Or is there something you don't want her to report to Harry?" Tom asked, curious to know why Jeff seemed so serious.

"No, she is not my girlfriend, but I've known her longer than either of you, so I believe I have a right to know what's going on. You know who she is, don't you? Her true identity?" Jeff asked, not caring that he was speaking so informally with his new employers.

He had thought about it before approaching them and he figured that Harry knew what Mia was hiding.

He had after all been there when Harry met Mia for the first time and told her she looked familiar. He had been there at Sonia's engagement party when Harry excused Mia before they could leave to talk to her. And now, in the middle of their conversation she had left him to go talk to Harry. All of that had to mean that Harry was aware of what was going on.

"What about it?" Harry asked calmly after exchanging a look with Tom.

Lucas on the other hand couldn't help but wonder what Jeff was talking about since just the other night in the car he had denied what Tyler had said about Mia looking like Vanessa Rosewood.

"Did she ask for your help? I want to help too," Jeff said and Harry frowned.

"You're making all this fuss because you want to help? Why are you telling me that? Tell her you want to help," Harry said and Jeff frowned.

"I already did...."

"Then go ahead and help her. Why do you need to know what we talked about before you help her?" Harry said and Tom chuckled when Jeff glared at Harry.

"What? You want to fight me?" Harry asked making Lucas also laugh.

"Quit annoying him, Harry, else he might really punch you," Tom said and Harry snorted.

"I'd like to see him try," Harry said and then sighed when Jeff kept looking at him and waiting for a response.

"Don't worry, we will handle it. There is nothing for you to do...."

"I want to do something. How about I go beat up the beast that gave her such hideous marks on her body? Do you know how I feel every night when I hear her crying?" Jeff asked angrily, and the humor disappeared from Tom and Lucas's face as they all frowned.

"There are marks on her body? And she cries every night?" He asked in a low voice not wanting to believe that her husband had not just hit her but had left actual scars on her body.

"Deep scars on the upper part of her back. I didn't see the whole of her back. It's the first time I'm seeing them. She was in the shower when I got home this morning so she had to get the door. I guess she forgot about it cause she answered the door wrapped in her towel and I saw her back. I was sick to the stomach when I saw it. Those were no ordinary scars. It was like there were scars

upon already formed scars. Those were deliberately inflicted marks. They looked like torture marks. It made me sick to think about how anyone could have done that to someone else," Jeff's hands were balled in a fist as he spoke, and each word that left his lips left a murderous glint in the eyes of the men he were talking to.

Perhaps it was because they all had sisters, each felt deeply affected by the kind of picture he had just painted and they all glanced in Mia's direction and saw her just staring at the dancefloor with a blank expression.

Although Jeff knew that he was divulging too much information to them, he needed them to understand just how bad Mia's abuse had been so that they would put more effort into whatever they planned to do to help her.

Harry clenched his teeth as he looked at Mia, understanding better all she had told him that day at his office and why she had said she didn't think the plan was going to be that easy.

Any man who would beat his wife and leave scars on her that way, was an animal who wouldn't want to let go of his prey so easily.

Getting him to sign the divorce papers wouldn't be enough. They needed to teach him a lesson and make him pay for his brutality.

Harry held Tom's gaze, each thinking about how to repay the violence despite the fact that the man in question was one of their foreign investors.

"We will take care of him," Tom said, answering Harry's silent question, and Harry nodded in agreement.

"If you want to help, you can keep an eye on Mia. Make sure she doesn't suddenly decide to bolt out of fear. And also just keep an eye on her in case he sends someone to her before we execute our plans," Harry told Jeff and he nodded.

"I won't let her out of my sight. Thank you. I will excuse you now," Jeff said before leaving them to go join Mia again.

After Jeff left, Tom turned to Harry, "What did Tyler do?" He asked curiously, wanting to know what Tyler had to do with Mia.

After Harry was done, Lucas sighed, "I'm sorry Tyler caused all this trouble. I'm sure he didn't mean to. He was very surprised to see her and wanted to confirm from his colleague whom she used to visit often at the hospital," Lucas said apologetically, knowing that Tyler must be feeling pretty bad about everything.

"Don't worry about it. He didn't cause any trouble. Thanks to him, Mia is more willing to act now. So it's okay," Harry assured Lucas.

"Why was she always visiting his colleague? Was he the one treating her wounds? Does that mean his colleague was aware of the abuse but said nothing? Was the colleague her friend or her husband's friend?" Tom asked Lucas and he shook his head.

"I have no idea," Lucas said, thinking about what Tom had just said.

"We will get details of this colleague from Tyler and find out for ourselves. For now, I'm going to dance with my sisters," Harry said and rose to go find Candace on the dance-floor.

"You've danced with her long enough. It's my turn," Harry told Matt, and he stepped aside without argument to let Harry dance with Candace.

"I take it you want to scold me for talking to Jade," Candace said knowingly since she had seen them both earlier going into Jade's bedroom.

"So, it was you," Harry said quietly as they danced slowly.

"We didn't mean to cause any trouble," Candace said defensively, not sure she wanted to face Harry's anger since she had not seen him angry before.

"We? Andy? Was Lucy and Sonia involved too?" He asked and she shook her head.

"No. It was just Andy and I. We were only looking out for her," Candace said and Harry sighed.

"What exactly did you say to her?" He asked, and Candace explained all that they had said.

"We told her that mostly for her sake...."

"I understand that you told her that with good intentions, but you shouldn't have said anything about the possibility of getting tired of her. She is dealing with enough feelings of insecurity already, and you both didn't have to add to that. I know Jade. I know her more than you both do or could ever do. You see that brat attitude? I have always been aware of it even before I fell in love with her. The clinginess and jealousy, I don't mind it one bit. I know her and I know her flaws and I'm helping her work on them. I understand that she is your friend, and you have every right to advise her, just do not make her feel I have an issue with who she is," Harry cut in firmly.

"I'm sorry," Candace murmured without looking into his face.

"It's fine. I just wanted to clear that up with you. That's all," Harry said as he continued dancing with her.

"So, are you still hanging out with your baby boyfriend or are you coming home tonight with your big brother?" He asked in a playful tone, surprising Candace by the sudden switch in the tone of their conversation.

"Why do you seem surprised? I'm not mad. I was just trashing the issue with you, big brother to little sister," he said and this time she laughed.

"I will come home with you. We need to talk about the details of the interview," she said and he nodded.

"Alright. Go back to dancing with your baby boyfriend. I should go dance with Andy too. No partiality," he said and Candace laughed softly as she watched him go take Andy from Tyler.

After dancing, the elders were the first to leave since it was late in the night already, and after the party ended and it was time to leave Lucas looked at Tom and Lucy.

"Why don't Tyler and I come with you, so that Jeff and Mia can take the car home? I'm not looking forward to driving that distance tonight," Lucas said even though his actual reason for doing that was because he didn't want Tyler and Mia in the same car knowing that it would make them all uncomfortable.

"Sure. You can ask Jeff to give the key to Amy. She can use the car for the time being," Lucy said and Lucas nodded as he went to do as she said.

Lucas didn't miss the relief on Mia's face as he handed the car key to Jeff after telling them he and Tyler would be going with Lucy and Tom.

Although, Lucas was tempted to ask them to check on Amy and find out how she was doing, he refrained from doing so.

They had their own problems to deal with and he couldn't add Amy to that. And he also didn't want to seem more concerned or involved in Amy's business than was necessary. He had done what he could for her and was still going the extra mile to help her resolve things in Heden. That was good enough to satisfy his conscience. He wouldn't have any reason to worry about Amy anymore after he returned to Husla.

"I'm so glad the wedding is over. I can relax now," Lucy said with a deep sigh, feeling very happy as they got into the car.

"And I can have you to myself again," Tom said and she giggled.

"No mushy talk please. Y'all need to respect my feelings," Tyler said and they all laughed as Tom drove off.

Chapter 809 Beautiful Scars

As Jeff and Mia arrived home, the clock striking past midnight, the house was enveloped in a serene silence, a stark contrast to the bustling energy of the wedding they had just left.

Mia lingered by the door, her thoughts swirling in her mind, unsure of how to broach the subject that had been weighing heavily on her heart since she had told Jeff that they could talk about everything later.

"Goodnight, Mia," Jeff said softly, breaking the silence as he moved to head to his room.

Mia hesitated for a moment before stopping him. "Wait, Jeff. Can we talk?" she asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

Jeff turned back, concern etched on his face. "Is everything okay?" he asked, his tone filled with genuine worry.

Mia nodded slowly. "I just... I think we should talk now," she said, her voice wavering slightly.

"We don't have to talk about it right now. It's past midnight...."

"I'd rather talk about it now and get it over with," Mia said and Jeff studied her for a moment before sighing resignedly.

Although he was exhausted and wished it could wait, he was also curious to hear what she had to say.

"Alright, give me a moment to get a glass of water," he said as he headed for the kitchen.

Mia took a deep breath as she watched him walk away, and she tried to organize all she had to say to him.

Deciding that she needed a glass of water too, Mia went after him, her heart pounding in her chest.

Jeff, who had poured some water into two glasses and had just finished drinking his, looked at her when she walked in and handed one of the glasses to her.

Her hand trembled ever so slightly as she took the glass from him, but Jeff noticed and said nothing as they both went to sit at the dining.

Jeff sat across from her, his expression calm and attentive as he watched her sip from her glass of water.

"What did you want to talk about?" Jeff asked, his voice gentle.

Mia took a deep breath, gathering her thoughts. "I... I've been thinking a lot about what you said earlier, about how you don't need a reason to be supportive of me. And... I realize that I've been pushing you away despite all your attempts to show me that you care, and I don't want to do that anymore," she said, her voice filled with emotion.

The tremor in Mia's voice was barely a whisper, yet it crackled with raw honesty, slicing through the room like a fragile shard of glass. Each word she uttered was a confession, a tear in the carefully constructed facade she'd worn for so long.

"I've never had anyone... truly care," she choked out, the words catching in her throat like a sob. Her eyes, usually veiled with a practiced indifference, welled up, mirroring the storm brewing within.

Jeff said nothing as he watched her, and listened to her speak, since he could tell that she wasn't done yet.

Unable to sit still, Mia rose from her seat, "I've never been able to rely on anyone, so it's sort of a new experience for me. Usually when I'm asked how I'm doing, the only response expected from me is a positive one, regardless of how I am feeling. I could be bleeding to death, but all that would be expected from me is a smile on my face and a simple I'm fine."

The words tumbled out of Mia like a dam bursting. Each syllable held the weight of years spent carrying silent burdens, masking wounds with practiced smiles. Her voice, usually guarded, cracked with every sentence, raw and exposed. Tears threatened to spill, shimmering on the edge of her lashes like unshed rain as she let herself remember all the times she had actually been bleeding inside and had wanted someone to ask how she was doing and mean it but no one, not even her parents had bothered enough to look past the fake smiles. They had in fact expected her to wear a smile regardless of how she was feeling.

"I've always kept to myself. I've always tried to maintain an emotional distance from everyone believing that no one truly cares, but being here and having you all care about me this way... It's a new experience. It's strange and overwhelming," she admitted, her voice barely audible.

"It's... scary, opening myself up, letting someone in. This feeling of being seen, of being cared for... It's unfamiliar, terrifying even, but it's also... beautiful, and for the first time, I don't want to be alone anymore. I don't want to fight alone or run. I want to believe that maybe, just maybe, care isn't just a mirage, that connection is possible. I want to believe that I truly have people who care about me and are willing to stand by me," she said as tears spilled down her cheeks, each one a testament to the dam finally breaking.

The pain, though raw and agonizing, was laced with a newfound vulnerability, a tentative step towards connection.

Jeff listened quietly, his eyes never leaving her face. "Mia, you should believe it. I'm here for you, no matter what. I care about you, and I want to help you through whatever you're going through," he said, his words sincere.

Mia nodded, unable to say anything past the lump in her throat. She had thought about it and even though Jeff wasn't the type to pry or ask too many questions, he had shown her on different occasions that he cared about her, and as such he deserved to know her.

"You can ask me whatever you want to know about me," Mia offered after a short moment of silence since she knew he had questions.

Jeff met her gaze, the raw emotion in her eyes etching itself onto his memory. He could ask about her family, her dreams, the pain etched on her scars, but something held him back. Instead, he chose a question that had gnawed at him since they moved in together and he noticed her lifestyle.

"Why the endless string of blind dates? Why spend your nights with strangers?" He asked, and although his words were blunt, they held no judgment.

His gaze held a genuine curiosity, seeking to understand the woman beneath the guarded exterior.

Mia looked at him, surprised by the unexpected question. She had expected him to ask about the scars, or about whatever Tyler had told him, not about how she spent her nights.

"It's not always like that," she clarified as she sat back down, her voice barely above a whisper.

"I don't go home with them. And most times I hang out at the club. It's just..." She paused, searching for the right words. "I find it hard to sleep at night. I always have nightmares, so it's usually easier to fall asleep after getting wasted."

"So you just hangout with random men and don't go home with them? Just to kill time?" He asked and she nodded.

Silence bloomed again, thicker this time, heavier with unspoken truths. Jeff's brows furrowed, concern etching lines on his forehead.

"What about sleeping pills?" he asked gently.

Mia shook her head, "Not for the nightmares."

The weight of her confession settled between them and Jeff reached out, his hand hovering hesitantly over hers. Mia met his touch, her fingers intertwining with his, seeking solace in the warmth.

"Is that why you I hear you crying most times at night?" He asked, and she nodded.

"You've never gone home with any of those men? What about the occasions you didn't come back home?" He asked softly.

"How can you expect me to be intimate with anyone? You saw the hideous scars. What man in his right senses would desire me when they see those scars?" She asked as she pulled her hand away, retreating into herself.

Shame burned in her chest, a familiar heat that threatened to consume her, as she looked away from him, waiting for his reaction.

"Maybe that was the point of those scars. To make sure I'm never able to be with anyone else if ever I escaped. So, to answer your question, no. I didn't go home with anyone. I spent those nights at the club because I realized that the noise and music drowns out my fear."

The despair in her voice hung heavy in the air. Jeff saw the pain in her eyes, the fear of rejection, of being seen as broken, flawed. He knew then that he couldn't offer platitudes, empty promises. He needed to understand, to see her scars not as flaws, but as a testament to her strength, her resilience.

He reached for her hand again, this time meeting her gaze head-on. "Mia," he said, his voice firm yet gentle, "show me your scars."

Mia recoiled, a gasp escaping her lips. "No, you don't understand-"

"Please," he persisted, his eyes filled with an unwavering sincerity. "Let me see them, not as a burden, but as a part of you, a story you deserve to tell."

Mia shook her head. Even though Jeff had caught a glimpse of it earlier that day, the thought of letting him see it all filled her with horror.

"I don't think seeing your scars would change the way I see you or what I think about you. Your scars don't define you, Mia. They tell a part of your story, but they are not you. Let me see it," Jeff pressed.

Mia hesitated, her heart hammering against her ribs. But something in Jeff's gaze, a flicker of understanding, a hint of acceptance, gave her the courage to nod.

Slowly, she rose and turned her back to him, and Jeff rose as well to stand behind her.

She lifted her hair and Jeff reached for the zipper of her dress and she stiffened, her breath catching in her throat as Jeff undid her zip, exposing the hidden map of her past.

The silence that followed wasn't one of shock or pity, but of quiet respect.

"Can I touch them?" Jeff asked softly and Mia shut her eyes as she gave him a nod.

She knew that by doing this they were both crossing a line in their relationship. If she could reveal her scars to him and let him touch them, then there was no way she could keep anything else from him, since her scars were her biggest secrets.

Although Mia couldn't see Jeff's face, she felt the tenderness in his touch as he traced her scars with his finger.

Tears streamed down her face and she trembled as Jeff came to stand in front of her, his eyes filled with an emotion she couldn't quite decipher.

"They're beautiful," he said, his voice thick with emotion. "They tell a story of strength, of survival. And you, Mia, you are beautiful too, scars and all. And any man in his right senses would find you desirable in spite of your beautiful scars, of which I'm not an exception," Jeff said softly, as he brushed her tears away.

Although Jeff wanted to ask her about each of the scars and about how she ended up being married to such an animal, he knew that he would get those answers in time. For now, all he wanted was to offer comfort.

Chapter 810 Two Whole Days

The moment Lucy and Tom walked into their bedroom, a grin stretched across Tom's face as he dropped her luggage on the rug beside the bed, before pulling her into a tight embrace.

Two days. Just two days separated from Lucy, but it felt like an eternity. Even though he'd seen her every day, it wasn't the same as having her right here in the sanctuary of their bedroom.

"I missed you so damned much, my homecoming queen," he whispered and Lucy smiled, her eyes twinkling with amusement at his obvious joy.

Lucy giggled, playfully pushing him away. "Slow down, Romeo, I was only gone for two days."

He feigned hurt, clutching his chest dramatically. "Two days, Juliet," he declared, his voice mock-serious. "Two whole days without your sunshine gracing this bedroom."

Her smile softened, a touch of warmth replacing the amusement. "You make it sound like I was gone for years, not just a couple of days."

"It might as well have been," he confessed, his voice sincere. "The house felt... empty without you. And the bedroom was cold without your smile. You know your smile warms the room more than any lamp."

She swatted his arm playfully. "Exaggerator."

"Maybe," he conceded, pulling her closer. "But it's true. You light up this place, babe. Having you here feels... right. It hasn't felt like home without you these past two days," He said as he brushed a strand of hair from her face, his gaze lingering on the hint of exhaustion in her eyes.

"I missed you too even though I knew I would be back soon, it felt like a part of me was missing while we were apart," she admitted, her voice dropping to a whisper as she leaned into his touch.

"Welcome home, Lucy," he murmured as he buried his face in her hair, inhaling the sweet scent of perfume and sunshine that was uniquely hers.

"Home," Lucy echoed as her arms went around his waist.

In that simple word, spoken in the familiar haven of their bedroom was the feeling of belonging, of two pieces finally clicking into place, and they both knew, with a certainty that settled deep in both their hearts, that this was where they truly belonged, together.

"You look pretty exhausted, babe. I will run you a bath so you can relax and go to bed while I go share a nightcap with Lucas and Tyler," Tom said as he pulled away from her.

"Really? Just a moment ago you sounded like you couldn't afford to let me out of your sight again, now you're leaving me?" She asked dryly and he chuckled.

"Yeah, so you can light up the bedroom with your presence," he joked, and she giggled.

Lucy frowned, "He is leaving in the morning? Where to? He told me he would be around until Monday," Lucy said and Tom nodded.

"I guess his original plan changed because of the turn of things with Amy," Tom said and Lucy's frown deepened.

"Why is he leaving because of Amy when he can stay here?" Lucy asked and Tom smiled at her misunderstanding.

"He is not leaving because Amy is at your apartment. He is leaving because he wants to go help Amy resolve things with Miley's family," Tom explained.

"Oh! I see. That makes sense," Lucy said thoughtfully.

"Do you think that maybe Lucas likes Amy?" Tom asked and Lucy shook her head.

"No. Why?" She asked, wondering why Tom was saying the same thing that Sonia had said.

Tom shrugged, "Nothing. I'm just wondering why he is doing what he is doing," Tom said and Lucy nodded.

"Well, since Lucas is leaving tomorrow, I need to talk to him too. So, why don't we do it this way. You freshen up while I go have a word with him, and when you're done you can have your nightcap with him while I retire for the night?" She asked and Tom nodded.

"Alright then. By the way, Lucas told me that you now know about my job offer to him," he said and she looked at him.

"Yeah. Why didn't you ask me before asking him?"

"Because I know my girlfriend well enough to know that she wouldn't mind," he said and she giggled.

"Are you trying to play that card right now?" She asked, knowing he responded that way because of how she responded when he asked her why she didn't seek his opinion before promising to move in with Sonia.

Tom grinned, "I see you caught on. My baby is super smart," Tom said and she shook her head.

"I'm done with you," she said as she headed for the door.

"How can you leave without kissing me?" Tom asked and Lucy rolled her eyes as she returned to kiss him.

She brushed her lips against his but Tom held her and deepened the kiss until she moaned and leaned into him, and then he pulled away.

"That's more like it," he said with a grin.

"Would you like to shower twice? Now and then later?" She asked with a wink making his chuckle.

"You look exhausted," he reminded her.

"Yes, I am. I'm in need of a deep tissue massage," she said with a coy smile.

"You hear me? A really deep massage. You will use your hands for some areas, and some other organ for other areas. I believe we can call it a happy ending massage at the end of the night," she said with a suggestive smile and Tom laughed out loud.

"You're so naughty," he said, and she grinned.

"And I know you love me that way," she said as she headed for the door.

"Do you want to discuss something private with him or can I join you? Maybe I could talk with Tyler while you talk with Lucas. That way we can come back up together. I don't want you to sleep off before I get back," Tom said and Lucy thought about it for a second.

"Why don't we get out of these clothes first?" She asked when she realized she was still wearing her bridesmaid dress and Tom was still wearing his suit.

"Good idea. Let's do that," Tom said and they spent the next couple of minutes changing into more comfortable clothes.

After they were done, they returned downstairs to join Lucas and Tyler who were at the bar chilling and talking, since Tom had said he would join them there shortly.

"Tom just informed me you are leaving tomorrow. Why didn't you say anything?" Lucy asked as she sat down.

"Maybe because I knew he was going to tell you?" Lucas said with a chuckle.

"What if he didn't?" She hissed and he smiled.

"It escaped me. Besides, I didn't think you would think it's a big deal. Unless you are saying you miss me so much and would want to spend more time with me," Lucas teased.

"I was actually looking forward to that. Tom said you're leaving because you want to help Amy resolve her issue with Miley's family. Is that right?" She asked and Lucas raised a brow.

"Why are you asking me that? Would Tom lie to you?" Lucas asked and Lucy glared at him, while Tom and Tyler chuckled.

"Tyler, let's speak in private for a moment," Tom said, and led Tyler away since he and Harry had agreed that he would be the one to get the details of Tyler's colleague from him so they could leave Lucas out of whatever they were doing.

After Tom and Tyler left, Lucy looked at Lucas, "Do you like Amy?" She asked, and he frowned.

"Where is that coming from?" Lucas asked in confusion, wondering if Amy told Lucy about the forehead kiss.

"It's just a question. Are you interested in her?" Lucy asked again, wanting to be sure of his feelings for her.

"No. I'm not," Lucas said without thinking twice.

"Are you sure?"

"Why are you asking? Did she say something to you?" He asked, and when Lucy shook her head, he sighed.

"Listen, Amy is cool. She is pretty and stuff, but I'm not cut out for any of that right now. I'm doing all I can for her for two main reasons. One, because I knew her and Miley, and I admired their friendship. It would be wrong to sit back and do nothing when she is being treated this way by Miley's parents when I know she only respected their daughter's wish. Secondly, I'm doing this because I know she is a good person. She stood up for you when you were in the middle of that scandal, so it's only right that I stand up for her too," Lucas said and Lucy nodded in agreement.

"Alright. I wasn't asking because I'm against it or anything. I just wanted to know how you feel, that's all. You know I like Amy," Lucy said and Lucas nodded.

"Yeah. You should check on her tomorrow. She was in a pretty bad shape when we saw her earlier today. And please, don't tell her anything about me going to meet with Miley's parents," Lucas said and Lucy arched a brow.

"Why not?"

"Because I just don't want her to know about it," he said with a shrug.

"Alright. If you say so. How do you feel about Miley's death though? Are you okay? I know you liked her," Lucy said and a smile touched Lucas' lips as he thought of her.

"I'm fine. It wasn't unexpected after all," he said and then Lucy looked at him with a serious expression.

"I saw you, Harry, Tom, and Jeff talking earlier. It looked pretty serious. Does it have anything to do with Mia and Tyler recognizing her? Is that the reason Tom wants to talk with Tyler?" She asked and Lucas nodded.

"I think so. Tyler feels pretty bad about it even though I've assured him that Harry said it wasn't a problem," Lucas said and Lucy pursed her lips thoughtfully.

"I would feel bad too if I were in his shoes. He let his curiosity get the best of him and now he has presented a wrong first impression. They're all going to think he has loose lips," Lucy said with a sigh.

"Let's talk about something else," Lucas said with a grin and Lucy raised a brow.

"What do you want to talk about? And why are you grinning like an idiot?" She asked with an amused smile.

"Your engagement. What's the plan? Are you going down on one knee with a ring?" He asked and she giggled.

"Or are you just going to ask? What's an engagement without a ring?" Lucas asked and Lucy nodded in agreement.

"Sonia suggested I don't get a ring for myself, so that Tom would have the opportunity to wear me a ring of his choice. But I plan on getting him a ring," she said and Lucas chuckled.

"And going down on a knee?" He asked, mirth dancing in his eyes at the prospect of seeing his sister do such a thing. He was certain he was going to die from laughter that day.

"What's with you and going down on a knee? No, I'm not doing that. And there is no way I'm telling you my plan," Lucy said and Lucas laughed out loud.

"I can't wait to see what you have up your sleeves for my beloved brother in-law. And in case you haven't figured it out already, I totally approve of him," Lucas said and Lucy giggled.

"You're good, right? How are you feeling up here?" Lucy asked, touching her head.

Lucas smiled, "I'm very fine," Lucas assured her.

"Sure?" She asked, and he nodded.

"Sure. I can't wait to move down here. A lot seem to be going on around here, and everyone seems to be dating everyone. It's hard to keep up," Lucas said and Lucy giggled.

"Yeah, there is no dull moment around here. And our cousins? What do you think about them?" Lucy asked and Lucas smiled.

"Harry is pretty cool. I can see why he is Tom's best friend. Andy is fun to be around, and Candace... she is... I don't know how to place her, she seems a bit reserved. She reminds me of you in a way. You before you met Tom," Lucas said and Lucy smiled.

"The more time you spend around her, the more open she becomes," Lucy said and Lucas nodded.

"I'm sure. So, tell me more about Andy. I was expecting two cousins. How did I end up with three?" He asked, and Lucy went on to tell him about Andy and Candace.