

## Wild Night 861

### Chapter 861 Being Alive

Lying on her bed with both her laptop and phone in front of her, Amy sighed deeply when she refreshed her email for the hundredth time and there was no new email.

She had been at it all day since it was Saturday and she didn't have any work to distract her. It was either this or she could revisit the endless photo albums of Miley on her laptop, each picture a fresh stab of grief. Or, she could scroll mindlessly through social media, the forced cheerfulness of others only amplifying her own emptiness. Neither option held much appeal.

Perhaps she should have asked him to give her his email address instead of arrogantly giving him hers? Amy mused, biting her lower lip as she kept her gaze fixed on her phone.

She contemplated giving Lucy a call to find out if she had heard from him yet and to know how he was doing, but she shook her head.

With a click, she refreshed the inbox again. Nothing. Disappointment gnawed at her.

Just as she was about to resign herself to an email-less day, a bright chime announced a new message. A yelp escaped Amy's lips as she picked up her phone.

A wave of disappointment washed over her as she saw the subject line: "URGENT: You Won't Believe This Weight Loss Secret!" Great, spam. She tossed her phone back onto the bed in frustration.

Perhaps he lost the card where she had written her email address, Amy mused as she got off the bed.

But if that was the case, wouldn't he have asked Lucy to get across to her? Unless of course he didn't want to email her. Amy reasoned as she went to the kitchen to get a glass of water.

Standing in the kitchen she paused when she remembered how he had embraced her and kissed her forehead. A smile tugged on her lip as she raised a hand to her forehead and then she giggled as she remembered his explanations.

What was this? Amy asked herself, wondering why she was suddenly thinking about him so much. She shook her head and slapped her cheeks before she continued to the cupboard to pick up a glass, but when she saw the mug Lucas had used the last time hanging on the rack, she picked it up instead.

As she filled the mug with water, she heard the distant chime from her phone and immediately she fled from the kitchen and back to the bedroom to check it.

A giddy shout escaped her lips when she picked up the phone and saw an email from Lucas Perry.

Amy danced around her bed, a happy smile plastered on her face. She spun around, catching her reflection in the full-length mirror. Her eyes widened and she froze.

What was she doing? She should be curled under a blanket, weeping for Miley. Why was she dancing and looking so happy barely a week after Miley's death? What kind of a friend was she? Was it not too soon to be feeling this happy again? Did she have any right to claim she was Miley's best friend if she was feeling this happy over receiving a text from a guy? A guy Miley had wanted?

Guilt settled in her stomach like a heavy stone, and shame flushed through her cheeks as she lowered herself to the bed.

Her lips trembled as tears formed in her eyes and she let them flow down her cheeks unrestrained.

Miley had been a good friend and it was too soon for her to move on this way. It was like a betrayal to their friendship.

As she sat there crying, her phone rang and she reluctantly reached for it when she saw it was Miley's mom.

Amy tried to compose herself as she received the call but a little snuffle gave her away.

"Amy? Are you alright?" She asked, her voice tinged with concern.

"Yes, I am," Amy said, forcing herself to sound cheerful.

"You don't sound okay. Is that nitwit bothering you again? Did something happen?" She asked and Amy shook her head.

"No. Nothing happened. I'm okay," Amy assured her.

"Are you sure?" She asked doubtfully.

"Yes, I am. Are you okay?" Amy asked, wondering why the woman had called her.

"Yes, I'm fine. What are you doing this evening?" She asked and Amy frowned.

"Nothing. I do not have any plans. Why?" She asked, wondering if she wanted to send her on an errand.

"Well, you do now. A beautiful young lady of your age shouldn't be at home doing nothing on a Saturday evening. What would you prefer? A quiet dinner somewhere fancy or fun at a club with friends? You have friends you can hang with, right?" She asked and Amy's frown deepened as her confusion increased.

"I don't understand. Why do I need to do any of that?"

"I was just reading Miley's journal. She said she wouldn't want you to be sad for too long. She said she would prefer that you have all the fun she can't have instead of depriving yourself of it because you are mourning her. After I read it, I thought I should check on you and make sure you are fine," she said, and Amy's lips wobbled.

"Mrs Garwood," she called in a shaky voice.

"She wants you to have fun, Amy. For her. Surely, you can do that much for her, right?" She asked, her voice thick with unshed tears.

"It's too soon," Amy cried.

"Too soon for what, dear?" Miley's mom asked softly.

"It's too soon to stop mourning. To laugh or live like I didn't just lose my best friend," Amy said and Miley's mother sighed.

"How long do you think it should take you to mourn her satisfactorily? A year? Two? Five? Ten? You are alive, Amy. You shouldn't feel guilty about living," she said softly.

"But I feel guilty," Amy confessed tearfully.

"Don't. Miley would have wanted you to be happy. You said it yourself. She loved life, and despite her illness she chose to live and enjoy what little time she had left. Why do you think she would want you to waste your own time mourning?" She asked and Amy nodded.

"You're right," she said as she wiped the tears from her face, "I should be the one consoling you, not the other way around. I'm sorry," Amy said apologetically.

"It's fine. I guess it's true what they say, that Misery loves company. I was down when I called, but I sort of feel better knowing that I'm not alone," she said, and Amy drew in a shaky breath.

Laughing didn't mean she didn't miss Miley, a fierce voice whispered inside her. Neither did it mean she no longer loves Miley. It just meant she was still alive. Still capable of feeling something besides grief.

Taking a deep breath, Amy squared her shoulders. She was going to live for two, she decided as she rose to go wash her face after the call ended.

With a small smile that felt genuine, she clicked on the email once she returned from the bathroom, and Lucas's message filled the screen. It was short and a bit impersonal, but enough to send a warmth through her.

It read [Hey! It's Lucas. I heard from Lucy. I'm perfectly okay. Nothing to worry about. Thanks for your concern. I hope you're good too.]

Amy looked at the message, wondering whether or not she should respond. Deciding that the 'hope you're good' part was begging for a response, she went on to respond to it.

[Hello, Luca! I was beginning to think you changed your mind about exchanging emails. I'm fine. It's good to hear from you. I'm glad that you're okay. What time is it over there?] Amy texted back.

Lucas who was sprawled lazily on his bed picked up his phone when he heard it ping, and his lips twitched when he saw Amy's response.

He had really wanted to stay away from Amy and not send her any emails, but being a man of his word, he had decided to send her an email since he agreed to exchanging emails. Also, after hearing from Amy that she was concerned about him, he had decided to reach out to her to assure her that he was fine.

[It's good to know that you're fine. It's eight in the morning over here.] he texted back.

[Does that mean you just woke up? Am I the first person you're talking to this morning? Why did you decide to send an so early in the morning? Did you perhaps dream of me?] Amy texted, and Lucas was taken aback by her last question.

How could she be so direct? Why would she assume he dreamt of her? He didn't want her attaching any special meanings to his gestures.

[No. I didn't dream of you. I was going to send the email last night but I was too exhausted and I slept off. I decided to send it this morning because I might forget to do so later in the day. And no, you're not the first person I'm talking to. I already spoke with Tyler.] Lucas texted back, and Amy smiled.

[I was only pulling your legs. You don't have to be so serious. You don't plan on taking the next available flight down here to assure me you didn't dream of me, do you?]

Lucas chuckled involuntarily, [I don't plan on doing so. I've got to go now. Be good.]

[You too. Thanks for reaching out. Your email made my day.]

Lucas smiled as he read her message and he couldn't help but be amazed by how easily she always said what she was thinking. Perhaps reaching out to her wasn't such a bad idea, Lucas thought as he got out of bed, ready to start his day.

## Chapter 862 Getting Married To Ryan

Seated in front of her dressing mirror where she had been busy with her skincare routine, Kimberly shook her head as she met her mother's gaze in the mirror.

"Mom," she said as she turned to face her mother, "We've been over this already and I've told you time and again that I don't want this. You know very well that I won't do this. I am not interested in this arrangement," Kimberly said firmly.

"Right now, what you want has to take a backseat. Dawn needs a home. She needs her family. She needs stability. This is the only option your father has given. It's either you get married to Ryan as he has said, or he is never letting Dawn back into this house. That poor girl has been away for long enough. If you are as worried about her as I believe you are, then you should be able to put her first and do this for her sake," her mother said and Kimberly rose from her seat.

"I don't want to get married. Especially not to someone like Ryan. I don't like him. He is arrogant, selfish, greedy and he won't be a good father figure..."

"You don't know any of that for a fact. Ryan might not be as bad as you think. Go on this date with him. Get to know him and just maybe, you might like him. Your father has always wanted you to get married. He wanted you to get married to anyone of your choice but you said you never wanted to get married after what happened to you and he let you be. And now you put us through so much embarrassment because you wanted to force Lawrence's grandson to marry you. Do you think you still have the right to tell your father what you want or do not want when you don't seem to know what you want? Listen to your father and go on this date with Ryan," her mother said, placing both hands on her shoulders.

"And what if I do that and dad still doesn't let Dawn come back?" She asked, and her mother smiled.

"He will. Besides, by then you will be married. Dawn will have to live with you and your husband. Your father can't stop you from doing that," her mother assured her.

Dawn's tear-streaked face came to mind, and she sighed deeply, "What time am I supposed to meet with him?" She asked and her mother smiled.

"The reservation was made for eleven a.m."

Kimberly glanced at the time displayed on her phone's screen. It was past nine already.

"I will get dressed now," she said as she walked over to her closet and her mother smiled in relief.

"I assure you that you are making the right decision for yourself and Dawn. Ryan is a wonderful gentleman..."

"Don't push it, mom," Kimberly said, turning to shake her mom a look.

"Alright. See you downstairs in a bit. I will go let your father know that you will be meeting with Ryan," her mother said excitedly before hurrying away.

Alone in her bedroom, Kimberly sighed as she looked through her closet for something to wear, and she told herself for the millionth time that she had brought all of this upon herself and her poor daughter.

If only she had not gone ahead with the prank. If only she had not been stupid enough to release the false news about her marriage to Tom. Maybe if she hadn't done that, the Hanks would have been willing to take care of Dawn. That would have been better than having her all alone with her governess and domestic staffs.

Then again, there was no use crying over spilt milk. What was done was done, and now all she could do was find a way to handle this and make things right.

Her hands were tied right now since her father had made sure to have all her accounts frozen. So, if marriage was what it would take to set things right, then she would do it.

After dressing up, she went downstairs to join her parents, and her mother nodded in approval at her choice of outfit— a classy purple dress.

"Dad," she called when her father didn't bother to look at her, and her mother sent her a questioning look, wondering what she wanted to say.

"Now that I have agreed to go out with him, can I bring Dawn home?" She asked hopefully.

Her mother shot her father an apologetic look before looking at her, "He said you should get married not just go on dates..."

"The earlier you get married, the sooner you can bring her home. If you want to bring her back today, get married today," he said without sparing her a glance, and Kimberly looked at him for a moment before walking away.

If getting married to Ryan was what it would take to make Dawn happy, then she would do it.

Away from there, Mia stood under the shower and as the hot water sprayed down on her, she tried to block out the knowledge that there were cameras even in the bathroom.

She tried to forget all the cameras and think. The cameras couldn't see into her head, she assured herself.

All she needed to do now, was to figure out what to do about Henry's plan to lock her away in a mental asylum.

She didn't want to imagine being locked away as that would ruin all of their plans. Not that she didn't trust Jeff and the others to find her and get her out of wherever Henry takes her, it was just that she needed to be right here in the house to do whatever needed to do to rid herself of Henry.

What was the psychiatrist's examination going to be about? She mused as she turned off the shower and put on her bathrobe before walking out of the bathroom into her bedroom.

Opening her closet, she was taken aback to see that everything was arranged there exactly the way she had left it. It seemed like nothing had changed. The only difference was that they all seemed to have been recently laundered.

Why did Henry not remarry? Why did he leave her bedroom the same way it had been for the last three years? Had he really not had a companion in all that time? Was that possible? Why? Had he been searching for another victim? She mused as she put on an ankle length black dress with gold embroidery.

Just as she sat down on her bed, her mother walked into the bedroom without knocking.

"Vanessa," her mother called softly as she went to sit on the edge of the bed, "How are you my darling?" She asked, reaching for her hand, but Mia said nothing as she gazed at her mother, wondering whether her father or Henry had sent her to test her.

"How could you do that to me, Vanessa? How could you fake your own death? Do you know how devastated I have been? Do you have any idea how guilty I felt all these years?" Her mother asked, but she remained mute, unwilling to fall into this trap, peradventure it was planned.

"Can you please say something?" Her mother pleaded with tears in her eyes.

"I'm sorry I made you worry. I'm back now, so there is nothing for you to worry about anymore. I promise to be on my best behavior," Mia said flatly as though she was reciting a pledge and her mother's face fell.

"I'm sorry I didn't do anything to help you..."

"I'm past that now. I have accepted my fate. Let's not talk about the past," Mia cut in firmly, and her mother sighed deeply.

"How have you been? What have you been up to? Is it true that you were living with a man?" Her mother asked.

"If you don't mind, I'd love to rest my head. I'm feeling exhausted," Mia said as she lay down and turned her back to her mother.

Before her mother could say another word, Henry returned to the bedroom with a middle aged man whom Mia assumed to be the psychiatrist and she sat up.

"If you don't mind, can you excuse us?" Henry asked her mother, and she gave him a nod before walking out of the bedroom.

"This is my wife, Vanessa. Vanessa, this is Doctor Adams. Please, examine her thoroughly and let me know how bad her situation is. I will give you both some privacy," Henry said politely, and then flashed Mia a smile before walking away.

Doctor Adams pulled his seat closer to the bed and stared at Mia, "Hello, Mrs Rosewood, it's a pleasure to make your acquaintance," he said with a polite bow, and Mia smiled politely.

"I wish I could say the same. But I'm not so sure I'm pleased about meeting you under such circumstance," she said and he smiled back and nodded.

"That is quite understandable. But you don't have to worry, I'm sure this meeting wouldn't be entirely unpleasant," he promised.

"I can only hope so," Mia said as she watched the man.

"I was informed that you were involved in an accident," he asked, and Mia nodded.

"Yes. A very terrible one."

"And you lost your memory?" He asked and Mia's smile faltered.

"Are you asking or telling me?" She asked, wanting to know if Henry had asked the doctor to test her to see if she would reveal something she wasn't supposed to reveal.

"I'm asking because I was told so. But I'd like to hear it directly from you. You can be honest with me. Whatever we discuss here will be strictly confidential," he said, his eyes friendly.

Mia smiled. She didn't care whether he was real or not. As far as she was concerned, anyone who came from Henry was not to be trusted.

Perhaps if she didn't know Henry, she would have fallen for this load of bullshit, but she knew Henry well enough to know that he was testing her.

"I'm sure it will be strictly confidential. But as my husband already told you, I lost my memory. I called him the moment I regained my memory," Mia said easily.

"And your condition? I mean your bipolar. How have you been managing it in the last three years?" He asked, watching her closely and she shrugged.

"I lost my memory so I didn't know I had that," Mia said and he raised an eyebrow.

"Didn't you have severe mood swings over the last couple of years? Or did nothing happen to make you seek mental evaluation?" He asked, and she shook her head.

"I never had any reason to."

"How do you feel now? Any headaches or mood swings? Have you fully regained your memory?" He asked as he jotted down something.

"I do have headaches often but no mood swings. And I haven't been able to entirely remember everything yet. But I'm hopeful that now that I have returned home to my beloved husband, I will be able to remember everything. For now, I'm not in haste to regain my memory. I only want to spend time with my husband and catch up on all that I have missed," Mia said and the doctor nodded.

"I see. I will prescribe some medication for your headache. Do you have trouble sleeping?" He asked, and Mia shook her head.

"I sleep quite well," she lied, and he nodded once again and took out his card.

"Here is my card. You can call me if you need anything or..."

"Why don't you give that to my husband on your way out? I'm lousy with cards and I'm afraid I might misplace it. I will take it from him if I need it," she said and he gave her a nod as he rose.

"I will do that. Enjoy the rest of your day, ma'am," he said and she gave him a nod and watched as he walked away.

Five minutes later, Henry walked into the bedroom, "I guess you are smart after all. Keep in mind that the moment you misbehave I will have you taken away and you will spend the rest of your life

in a mental asylum. Don't dare me, Vanessa. Be a good girl," he said, and as he turned to leave, she stopped him,

"Henry," she called in a fearful voice as she rose from the bed and he turned.

Mia went down on her knees, "I'm sorry. For acting in such a silly way and ignoring you at that party. I'm sorry for being a terrible and selfish wife and for attempting to run away. I'm sorry I asked for a divorce. Please give me another chance. I promise to serve you and to spend the rest of my life making it up to you. I know now that you are in charge. You own me. Not just me. You own my family. I will do whatever you ask without questions going forward. I will submit myself to you completely," Mia said with tears in her eyes.

Henry looked at her with an amused smile, "You must be very scared of being locked away in a madhouse," he said with a chuckle before walking away.

Mia suddenly felt the urge to laugh, but because of the cameras, she covered her face with her hands and pretended to cry instead.

She liked that he believed she was scared. It was better for her this way. This was what stooping to conquer meant. She would make sure to let him believe he was in charge.

All she needed to do now was get familiar with the house staff so she could find a way to get rid of them and replace them with her own people.

She couldn't wait for Jeff to get here. She would sleep better at night knowing that he was under the same roof with her.

Chapter 863 Two Weeks?

The butterflies in Kimberly's stomach performed a frantic ballet as she pulled into the restaurant's valet lane. Eleven AM had arrived far too quickly, and the pep talk her mother delivered about Ryan being a "wonderful gentleman" did little to calm her nerves.

Taking a deep breath, she adjusted the straps of her purple dress and stepped out of the car. Although Kimberly had been to that restaurant a couple of times in the past for business meetings, she had never felt this anxious as she walked through the doors.

Inside, the restaurant was a symphony of soft lighting, warm chatter, and the clinking of silverware. A hostess with a welcoming smile guided her towards a corner table where Ryan sat waiting.

He sat by a window, a bored expression etched on his face. He looked up as the hostess led her towards him, a flicker of annoyance crossing his features before he schooled it into a charming smile.

"Kimberly, you look stunning," he said, rising to greet her. His voice was deeper than she remembered, a smooth baritone that sent a shiver down her spine.

He held out a chair for her, his gaze lingering on her for a beat longer than necessary.

"Thank you, Ryan," she mumbled as she settled into the plush seat.

"Sorry I'm a bit late. Traffic was horrendous."

A white lie, but she wasn't sure how much honesty this date could handle right now. The silence that followed stretched on uncomfortably as Ryan watched her.



"I hope you won't always use this excuse in the future," Ryan finally spoke, breaking the awkward tension. "By the way, you look more beautiful than I remember."

They had both known each other for years since they had attended middle and high school together and usually hung out in the same circles growing up until Ryan left the country.

"Thanks. You don't look bad yourself," Kimberly said, hoping that he would have changed and wouldn't be as bad as she remembered.

"So, tell me about yourself, Kimberly," he said and she shrugged.

"What's there to tell? You know me," Kimberly said and he shook his head.

"Nope. We may be acquainted but we don't really know each other. Tell me about you. Something other than the basics," he said as a waiter joined them.

After the waiter left with her order, Kimberly launched into a rehearsed spiel about her job, her words sounding hollow even to her own ears. Ryan listened politely, nodding occasionally, but his gaze seemed more interested in the bustling scene outside the window than her.

"You know, I've been waiting for you to tell me about your illegitimate daughter," Ryan said and Kimberly raised a brow.

"Illegitimate? What gives you the right to refer to her as that?" Kimberly asked, not liking his tone.

"Isn't she illegitimate? Are you married to her father?" he asked flatly.

"You asked me to tell you something other than the basics. The fact that I have a daughter is a basic detail of my life that I'm sure everyone in the country knows about. And I believe you know about it too," Kimberly said, choosing to ignore his rudeness.

"So, what happens when we get married? Would you want her to live with us? Or will you be taking her to her father's family?" Ryan asked as he raised his glass of wine to his lips.

"When we get married? Isn't it too soon to be talking about marriage? And do you have a problem with my daughter living with me?" She asked and he shook his head.

"Not at all. I would love to see her. I've heard about her and how brilliant she is. And no. It's not too soon to talk about marriage since I'm sure we would be getting married. You look good enough for me and your background is okay regardless of the fact that you have a child. And I know I'm a catch. I'm good looking, wealthy, charming, funny and all that any woman in her right senses would want," Ryan said and Kimberly smiled wryly.

"What's funny?" He asked and she shook her head.

"You're exactly like I remember," she said, not knowing whether to be pleased or not that she had not misjudged him.

"Everyone says that," he said with a pleased smile as their order arrived.

As the date continued, Kimberly found herself struggling to find common ground with Ryan. He regaled her with tales of his latest business venture, his voice laced with a self-importance that grated on her nerves. There was no spark, no genuine curiosity about her life.

Halfway through the main course, she excused herself to visit the restroom, stealing a moment to check her phone. A single text from her mother sat on the screen: "How's it going?"

With a sigh, Kimberly typed a reply: "Not great. He is all I said he is, and boring too."

Hitting send, she leaned against the cool marble counter, a wave of despair washing over her. Was this really her only option? Sacrificing her happiness to secure Dawn's future?

Well, if Dawn was happy, then she could be happy regardless of who she was married to. Dawn's happiness was her priority right now. She had selfishly brought Dawn into this world so she owed it to Dawn to secure her future.

As Kimberly returned to the table, she saw Ryan flirting with a lady and when they saw her approaching, they quickly exchanged numbers and the lady walked away.

"So, when do we meet again? We have to talk about the wedding details," Ryan asked as she took her seat.

"Already?" She asked, surprised that he seemed like he was more in a haste to marry her than she was.

"Yes. Do you have a problem with that?"

"Shouldn't we take some time to get to know ourselves better? I mean, there is no hurry," Kimberly said and Ryan shook his head.

"What's there to know that we can't figure out while married? I'm more interested in our sexual compatibility. Perhaps we can check that before getting married? You don't have a problem with that, right? I mean, it's not like you're a virgin. You had a kid for such a geezer after all," he said, and Kimberly's hand balled into a fist under the table.

"Whose idea was this arrangement?" Kimberly asked curiously.

"Our parents. Why?"

"I'm just wondering if you are being this way because you are interested in me," Kimberly said and Ryan snorted.

"Women are all the same to me. But then again, you're more suitable for marriage than most because of your background, so I can overlook the fact that you are a single mom," he said with a condescending smile.

"So, why do you seem in a hurry to get married to me?" She asked and he shrugged.

"I'm at risk of losing my inheritance. I was given an ultimatum," he said and she nodded. They seemed to be in a similar situation.

"But don't you care that I might not like you?" She asked and he shook his head.

"Although there is nothing not to like about me, it's better for us both if you don't like me too much. That way you won't pester me with your affection, and I can do my own stuff without you getting in my way. If you think about it, we are a good match. All I will be needing from you is an heir and maybe sex once in a while. You will also be by my side when we have public functions and family stuff. Aside that, you can live as you want with your daughter," he said, and Kimberly considered it for a moment.

"Why sex from me? I don't expect fidelity from you, so you can get sex from whoever you please," she said, and he smiled.

"That was actually for your sake, not mine. I'm glad you do not expect fidelity. So, we can leave out the sex after you have a child for me. Is that okay?" He asked, and she pursed her lips as she considered it.

Live with him as housemates, and be a couple for fancy. She wouldn't mind having another child. Dawn would be less lonely if she had a sibling.

She could do that. She could live with his arrogance and self-centeredness as long as they stayed out of each other's way, Kimberly thought with a nod, "Yes. It's okay."

"So, deal?" He asked, extending a hand.

"I have a condition," Kimberly said and he raised an eyebrow as he withdrew his hand.

"What's that?"

"A Prenup. We have to sign a prenup," she said, and he smirked.

"Let's do that then," he said as he extended a hand again.

"Deal," Kimberly said as she shook hands with him.

"How soon can we get married?" She asked as she withdrew her hand.

"How soon do you want us to? A month is fine by me," he said and she shook her head not wanting to leave Dawn alone for that much time.

"What about two weeks?"

"Will that be enough time to plan a wedding? We are both from influential families and our guests need to be given an invitation..."

"Let's work with that. Discuss with your family and I will discuss with mine," Kimberly cut in, and he smiled.

"See? I knew we were a perfect match," Ryan said as he rose.

"I will send an engagement ring across to you tomorrow. What's your ring size?" He asked looking at her hand.

"Size 9," she said and he nodded as he dropped some bills on the table.

"You will get your ring tomorrow. It was nice meeting you," he said with a wink before walking away.

Kimberly drew a deep breath as she watched him walk away, and after a moment she left too.

The moment she got home and walked into the house, she saw her mom in the living room, "How did it go?" Her mother asked, rising to meet her.

"We are getting married in two weeks. Does the date work for you?" She asked, and her mother frowned.

"Two weeks? I thought you didn't..."

"Dawn will have to be here before the wedding, right? Please talk to, dad. She has to be here," Kimberly cut in.

"Kim..."

"You can begin the wedding preparations. I'm going in to get some rest. I have a headache," Kimberly said, and walked away without another word.

She was never going to forgive her parents for taking things this far. She was going to get married to Ryan and after she got back all that was hers from her father and had secured them, she would be sure to cut him off the same way he had cut off Dawn.

Chapter 864 Instagram Handle

Lucy sat on the kitchen island, eyes sparkling with barely contained mirth as Tom gingerly extracted a casserole dish from the oven.

He cradled the casserole dish as if presenting a royal crown, a hopeful smile plastered on his face. Then, he took a bite.

Seeing the grimace on his face, she didn't need to taste it to know it was a profound disappointment.

She tittered with barely controlled laughter and Tom shot her a mock glare, but the corners of his mouth twitched in suppressed amusement as he scraped the offending casserole into the bin with a resounding clang.

"Alright. Alright. One more try," he said stubbornly, as he pulled up another recipe video on his phone, the determined set of his jaw a comical contrast to the flour smudged across his cheek.

"You've been at this for almost two hours..."

"Just a few tweaks," he muttered, more to himself than Lucy. "This time, I've got it."

"That's what you said the last two times. By the time you get this right, it would probably be morning," Lucy said and Tom frowned.

"You're not helping, Jewel. You should not be discouraging me when I'm trying so hard to impress you," Tom said with displeasure.

"I do appreciate your effort, and I'm more than a little bit impressed by your ability to create different inedible shades of casserole in such a short time," Lucy said, struggling to stifle laughter as she hopped off the Island.

Tom sent her a wounded look. "Hey, I'm a quick learner! Besides, practice makes perfect."

"And apparently, perfect takes a long time," Lucy teased, reaching out to brush a stray bit of flour off his cheek. "How about we give your culinary skills a break? We can do this when we are both not hungry. I'm famished," she said and Tom looked at her, his eyes filled with concern.

"You should have just said so," he said as he washed his hands and took off his apron.

"Where are you going?" She asked in amusement.

"To check if there are any leftovers in the freezer," he said and her eyes twinkled.

"Or we could go out. You know, it's been a while since we last spent some time at my apartment. How about we go over there to spend the night?" She suggested.

"But you just said you're very hungry," Tom reminded her, since he didn't want to take her stomach ulcer lightly.

"I still have some danish cookies and bounty chocolates. I can munch on that," she said, and Tom narrowed his eyes.

"Why not munch on them while I fix dinner?" He asked and she laughed.

"No, thanks. I don't think an edible dinner will be ready any time soon. And I would love us to go out and do something fun. We've been indoors all day. And as much as I love and enjoy your company, I want to do something else," she said and Tom eyed her for a moment.

"If that's what you want. Don't say I never cooked for you," he warned making her grin.

"I wouldn't dare say that. This memory will be with me for a life time," she promised.

"So, what else do you want us to do? Go to a restaurant? Would you like to eat at that new Thai place we saw the last time?" He asked and she shrugged.

"We can do that. And I would love us to go clubbing tonight," she said and Tom looked at her incredulously.

"So much for being an introvert," he said with a shake of his head and she giggled.

"You have yourself to blame for that. I was living quietly until you showed up. So, why don't you clean up the mess you made here so we can be on our way?" She asked and he raised a brow.

"Are you not going to help me? I mean, I did the cooking..." he trailed off when Lucy burst into a fit of laughter.

"What's funny?" He asked, and she pointed at him.

"The fact that you have the guts to refer to what you did as cooking," she said amidst her laughed and Tom glared at her playfully.

"That's rude."

"That's a fact. Clean up the mess you made, my love. If you had stopped after the first attempt as I asked you to, you wouldn't have messed up the whole place. Don't worry. I will keep you company while you clean up. But first let me go ease myself," she said, and Tom scowled as he watched her walk away.

Lucy returned a couple of minutes later and giggled when she overheard him cussing angrily as he washed the pots.

"Need my help?" She asked sweetly.

"No. Thanks. Go enjoy your snacks," he growled and she giggled.

"Why are you so sweet tempered, my darling," she asked and she laughed when Tom glared at her.

"Alright. I will help," Lucy said as she went to join him at the sink.

"You don't have to help. It's my mess. I will clean it. Go eat your bounties," Tom said and Lucy giggled.

"Bounties can wait while I clean up my man's mess. Besides, you made the mess for my sake," she said and then poked his side playfully.

"Why are you so mad? Look at the bright side. Your efforts here was not wasted. You accomplished something," she said and Tom looked at her.

"I did?" He asked and she nodded, "And what is that?" He asked suspiciously.

"You may not have succeeded in filling my belly with food, but you filled it with laughter thanks to your nonexistent culinary skills," she said, her eyes dancing with laughter and this time Tom laughed.

He couldn't help but be charmed by her infectious laughter, even if it was at his expense.

"Thanks, Jewel. I hope you remember this day. I will return this favor," he promised and she leaned closer and kissed him.

"I may not be a great cook but I can do much better than this. Why don't I do the washing while you clean and mop?" She offered and Tom readily agreed.

Thirty minutes later once they were done cleaning, Tom collapsed on the barstool by the island, "I'm so glad I have domestic staff," he said and Lucy laughed softly as she dried her hands.

"What would you do if you weren't so wealthy?" She asked and shrugged.

"We had domestic staff growing up. I never would have been so broke that I couldn't afford to have one," he said and she nodded.

"I often forget you're not only wealthy but also come from a wealthy background," Lucy said as she picked up her phone to check the time.

"Let's go clean up so we can leave," she said as she took Tom's hand and pulled him up.

As they headed upstairs to their bedroom, Lucy's phone rang and she smiled when she saw that the call was from Andy.

"I think Jamal wants to talk to me," she told Tom as she received the call.

"Hello, Andy!" Lucy greeted pleasantly as they continued up the stairs.

"Hey, Luce! Can you talk right now?" Andy asked hopefully.

"Sure. Jamal wants to speak with me, I suppose?" She asked and Andy scowled.

"What makes you think I am calling just because of Jamal? You sound like I don't call you unless Jamal is involved," she complained and Lucy giggled.

"We both know we all do more of chats. Kindly pass the phone to Jam," Lucy said and Andy rolled her eyes as she passed the phone to Jamal.

"Lucy!" Jamal greeted excitedly and Lucy grinned.

"How is my sweetest Jam in the world doing?" Lucy asked as they walked into the bedroom.

"I'm fine. I miss you," Jamal said and Lucy grinned.

"I miss you too. I promise to visit you soon," Lucy said and Jamal bobbed his head.

"Will you bring Tom along when coming?" He asked and Lucy glanced at Tom as she placed the phone on speaker.

"Do you want me to bring Tom along when coming?" She asked and Tom arched an eyebrow.

"Yes. I want to show him my company," Jamal said and Tom smiled.

"I guess you miss me too," Tom said as he took the phone from Lucy.

"A little. Not as much as I miss Lucy," he said and Tom shrugged.

"That's good enough for me. I miss you too, so I will see you soon," Tom said and Jamal smiled happily.

"Are you not going to tell her the reason you wanted to talk to her?" Andy reminded Jamal.

"There is a reason aside missing me?" Lucy asked as she took the phone from Tom.

"Will you bring Dawn too?" Jamal asked, and Lucy exchanged a look with Tom.

"Oh! Dawn is really far away right now and I can't bring her with me," Lucy said softly.

"Can we go see her when you come?" Jamal asked and Lucy pursed her lips.

"Is there something you want to give to her?" Lucy asked curiously.

"She said she doesn't have any friends. I want to play with her and make sure she is fine," Jamal said and Lucy smiled.

"That is very thoughtful of you, Jam. But we can't see her now..."

"Can we talk to her on the phone?" He asked again.

"Why don't we talk about it when I come over?" Lucy asked weakly.

"When are you coming?" Jamal asked excitedly.

"Soon. I will come soon," she promised.

"He saw me going through some Instagram pictures and he wanted to know if there were pictures of Dawn. You once mentioned something about Dawn having an Instagram account, so I was wondering if we could get her handle from you," Andy asked from the background, explaining the reason for the call.

"Sure. I will text it to you now," Lucy promised.

"Just so you know, Jamal plans to marry Dawn. So I guess if you're lucky enough you're going to be a grand godmother to both their kids in the future," Andy said making Tom and Lucy laugh.

"I will be looking forward to that. Goodluck, Jam," Lucy said before hanging up.

After texting the Instagram details to Andy, Lucy glanced at Jamal, "I guess you can have me all to yourself now that Jamal has moved on from me to Dawn," Lucy said and Tom laughed.

"He must like her a lot," Tom said, amused.

"I guess. I hope he is able to connect with her on Instagram. You never can tell what she might be going through right now," Lucy said with a sad sigh.

"Don't get all moody now. You said you wanted to go out. Let's get ready," Tom urged her, knowing how moody she got whenever she thought of Dawn.

"Aren't you curious or worried about her? Don't you care about her?" Lucy asked, unable to understand how he could not be moved.

"I do," Tom said simply before walking away to go freshen up.

#### Chapter 865 I Know Him

While Andy was busy setting up an Instagram profile for Jamal with her phone so they could use his account to send Dawn a message request, Jamal was busy checking out the pictures on Dawn's profile.

"Aunt Andy, Dawn is so pretty," Jamal said for the hundredth time and Andy giggled amused by how smitten he was.

"Yes, she is," Andy said for the hundredth time as well.

"Look, she is laughing here," Jamal said happily and Andy looked at the video and smiled at Dawn's infectious laughter.

"She is so adorable," Andy said and even though Jamal didn't quite understand the meaning of the word, he knew it was a nice compliment so he nodded in agreement.

They both looked up at Candace when she walked into the house, and slumped on the couch.

"Welcome. Why did you come back so late?" Andy asked distractedly while Jamal, after taking one look at his mom, walked away.

"You won't believe what happened to me today," Candace said, and Andy looked at her when she heard the tiredness in her voice.

"What happened?" She asked, wondering why Candace looked so exhausted.

"I was hounded by reporters," Candace said and she smiled when Jamal returned with a glass of water.

"Welcome, mummy. How was school today? Are you alright?" He asked as he handed the glass to her.

Candace said nothing as she drank from it and when she was done she looked at him, "I have no idea what I did right in my life to deserve you, Jam. But you're the best son any mother could ask for. Thanks. I feel quite better now," she said and Jamal smiled as he sat down beside her.

"And the best nephew any aunt could ask for," Andy said, reaching out to ruffle his hair.

"So, what happened with the reporters?" Andy asked and Candace shook her head as she recounted what had happened that morning.

"...I thought it was over. But when I came out after my classes, I saw a couple of them waiting around by my car," Candace said with a slight frown.

"What did you do then?" Andy asked, amused.

"I left the car. A course mate was kind enough to offer me a ride. She brought her car around and I got into it before they could spot me. Where is dad? I'm hoping he can send someone to get the car," Candace said while Jamal listened to her with interest.

"I'm sure he can do that. He is upstairs. He spent the day tending to his flowers," Andy explained.



"You know, now I think I can pretty much understand why Tom didn't want to be on the spotlight and hid his identity for years. I do not like this attention," Candace stated.

"What is a spotlight?" Jamal asked with interest.

Andy turned on the flashlight on her phone and shone it on Jamal's face making him laugh, "When everywhere is dark and the light is shining on you this way, you are in the spotlight. It means everyone can see you even when you can't see them all," Andy explained.

"I don't like it. I'm going hide like Tom," Jamal said with a frown.

"Why not? You wanted to be an actor, didn't you? That would have put you in the spotlight," Candace reminded him.

"Now I don't want to be an actor. I want to be rich..."

"Like Tom," Candace and Andy said simultaneously, completing his sentence and they all laughed.

"You both don't have to worry. I'm going to be on the spotlight enough for everyone in the family. Next time I will drop you off at school and take all that attention you don't want. You should have called me to pick you up anyway," Andy said and Candace shook her head.

"Next time I will tell them where to find you so they can leave me alone," Candace said and Andy gave her a thumbs up.

"Don't you think you should start getting used to this, though? I mean, your man is in the spotlight..."

"There are actors whose partners are not in the spotlight. I'd love to live lowkey," Candace maintained.

"Good luck with that," Andy said and seeing that it seemed like they were done with the serious conversation, Jamal looked at him mom.

"I talked to Tom and Lucy," Jamal announced.

"You did? When?" Candace asked with a wide smile since she knew how much Jamal loved to talk to them.

"Not long ago. Lucy said they will visit soon. And then I saw pretty pictures of Dawn. Do you want to see?" Jamal asked as he reached for Andy's phone to show his mom the pictures.

"By the way, Jam, if you want to hide your identity like Tom, maybe we shouldn't create an Instagram account for you," Andy said and Candace frowned.

"What Instagram account?" She asked in confusion as Jamal showed her the pictures.

"I remembered what you and Lucy said about Dawn having an Instagram account, so we were creating an account so that Jamal can reach her through it," Andy explained.

Candace who was distractedly looking at the pictures and listening to Andy frowned, "You know how I feel about putting kids on the social media space, Andy..."

"We don't have to put up his pictures or put out any private detail. It's just an avenue for him to check on her that's all," Andy said and Candace sighed.

"And you think her mother is going to allow an anonymous account user talk to her little kid? Why don't we chat the mom up directly? That way she can let us know if she wants them to keep in touch or not. I'm sure Dawn doesn't have direct access to her Instagram," Candace said as she rose.

"You are right. Why didn't I think of that?" Andy asked as she took her phone from Jamal to search for Kimberly's profile.

"Her name is Kimberly Moore. I'm sure you can easily find her on Instagram since she has a verified account," Candace said to Andy and then turned to Jamal, "We can look at Dawn's pictures after I freshen up," she promised before walking away.

After Candace left, Andy found Kimberly's account and she sent her a message, [Hello, Kimberly! I'm Andy Jonas. Lucy's cousin. My nephew, Jamal, is Dawn's friend and would like to say hello.]

Kimberly who was lying on her bed and thinking about her decision to get married to Ryan sighed when her phone buzzed with a message notification and she reluctantly picked it up to see what it was.

At first she wanted to ignore the message, but then she remembered that Dawn had mentioned something about a kid who was close to Lucy and something about fighting with the kid called Jamal.

Dawn had never really mixed up with other kids before now, and now that Dawn was so lonely, she figured that it wouldn't be a bad idea to let him get in touch with Dawn until she brought Dawn home.

[Hello! Dawn isn't here at the moment. I will find out from her if she wants to talk to Jamal and will have her governess give you a call. But can I call you on video call? I should know Jamal before letting him speak with Dawn.] Kimberly texted back.

"Jam! Dawn's mom just texted back," Andy informed Jamal who was now looking at Dawn's pictures on Andy's laptop, and immediately Jamal ran over to her side.

"What did she say? Is Dawn there?" Jamal asked happily.

"Dawn's mom wants to say hello to you first. Do you want to say hello to her?" Andy asked, and Jamal bobbed his head.

Andy texted back, letting Kimberly know that it was okay for her to call, and immediately Kimberly called Andy on video call.

"Hello! I'm Andy. And this is my nephew, Jamal. Jam, say hello," Andy said as she pulled Jamal closer and Kimberly smiled when she saw Jamal's handsome face.

"Hello! It's nice meeting you both. Jamal, Dawn told me you fought with her," Kimberly said, wanting to judge Jamal's personality through his response.

"She fought with me. I didn't want to fight her. But we made up. We are friends now. And I like her. I miss her," Jamal said and Kimberly smiled.

"That's good to know. Dawn isn't with me right now but I will let her know you want to speak with her and get her governess to give you a call. Please be good to her, okay?" Kimberly said and Jamal nodded.

"I promise to be good to her," he said and Kimberly nodded.

"Thank you for reaching out," Kimberly said to both Andy and Jamal before hanging up.

She dialed Dawn's governess line and the lady received the call on the third ring.

"Good day, ma'am. Do you want me to put Ms Dawn on the line?" She asked politely as she headed for the music room where Dawn was being taught how to play the piano.

"Yes. But not yet. How is she doing?" Kimberly asked, her heart aching at the thought that Dawn was lonely and sad.

"She is doing well. She hasn't cried for you since the last time," she said and Kimberly sighed.

"Let me talk to her," Kimberly said and the governess stepped inside the music room.

"Ms Dawn, your mother is on the phone for you," she said politely and Dawn politely excused herself from her music teacher before going to take the phone from her governess.

"Hello, mommy," Dawn said unenthusiastically.

"Hey, darling! You don't sound excited to hear from mommy," Kimberly said but Dawn said nothing.

"Are you mad at mummy?" Kimberly asked but Dawn remained mute.

"Well, I have news that might cheer you up. I just spoke with your friend. Can you guess who?"

Who?" Dawn asked, her curiosity piqued.

"Jamal! Do you know him?" She asked, and Dawn's face lit up with a smile as she bobbed her head.

There was a brief pause, then a delighted squeal erupted from the other end of the line causing Kimberly to smile.

Kimberly's heart swelled. Dawn's innocent excitement caused a flood of relief to wash over her, mixed with a bittersweet pang.

"Yes. Jamal. I know him."

"He wants to talk to you. He said he misses you," Kimberly said and Dawn pursed her lips.

"What about Lucy? Did she call too?" She asked hopefully.

"Would you like to talk to Jamal?" Kimberly asked, ignoring Dawn's question since she couldn't explain to Dawn that Lucy probably wasn't going to call to check on her because of what she had done.

"Yes, please. Yes," Dawn said, happy at the prospect of hearing from Jamal.

"Alright then. Give the phone to your governess. And don't worry, sweetheart. Mommy will be there to get you soon, okay?" Kimberly promised.

"Okay, mommy," Dawn said before handing the phone to her governess.

Kimberly instructed the governess on what to do and then sent Andy's instagram handle to her to enable her reach out to them.

Dawn stood there, moving from foot to foot as she waited impatiently for her governess to give Jamal a call.

Although they had done more of arguing and bickering during their time together. She missed Jamal a lot.

She blushed when she remembered what Jamal had whispered to her when she was leaving.

He was so silly. What made him think she was going to get married to him when they grew up?

Chapter 866 You're So Pretty

The wait felt excruciating for Jamal. He fidgeted in his seat, bouncing his leg and chewing his bottom lip.

Finally, the phone buzzed in Andy's hand, the notification announcing a video call. "It's her!" she exclaimed, a wide grin splitting her face.

Jamal, who had been bouncing on the balls of his feet with anticipation, practically shoved himself into Andy's lap. The screen flickered to life, revealing a woman with a stern looking face, followed by a small girl with bright hazel eyes and a head full of dark curls.

Jamal's face lit up like a Christmas tree when he saw her face, "Dawn?" Jamal boomed into the receiver, his voice a stark contrast to the tiny, hesitant voice that came through on the other end.

Dawn's eyes widened as she saw Jamal. "Jamal?" Dawn's voice was barely a whisper, laced with a shyness that made Andy grin.

"Dawn! Is that really you?" Jamal's voice practically vibrated with excitement as he waved enthusiastically.

"Guess what?" Jamal asked with a grin.

Dawn tilted her head, her gaze flickering between Jamal and her governess. "What?" she whispered, a shy smile gracing her lips.

"I miss you!" Jamal blurted, his voice brimming with sincerity.

A giggle escaped Dawn's lips, and she ducked her head shyly. "I miss you too," she mumbled, then quickly hid behind her hand, suddenly overwhelmed by the enormity of actually talking to Jamal.

Andy felt a warm glow spread through her chest. This was exactly what she'd hoped for when she set up the phone call. These two little ones getting to chat and keep their friendship alive.

"Can you believe it?" Jamal continued, oblivious to Dawn's shyness. "We finally get to talk! Aunt Andy let me see all your pictures on your Instagram. You're so pretty!"

Dawn's cheeks flushed a rosy pink. "Thank you," she said, her voice barely above a whisper.

The conversation wasn't much more than shy greetings and awkward giggles at first. Jamal excitedly told Dawn about his aunt Andy, and his new house and starting a new school. And he told her about his new bicycle and his grandfather's company.

And when he ran out of things to tell her, he peppered her with questions about her day and all she was up to and Dawn, in turn, described her latest piano lesson.

Andy watched the exchange with amusement. This was adorable. On one hand, there was Jamal, practically bursting with news and boundless energy. On the other, there was Dawn, a shy little flower slowly unfolding under Jamal's infectious enthusiasm.

His relentless enthusiasm drew out a few more words from her with each passing minute. Andy watched, impressed with Jamal's patience. He clearly understood that Dawn needed a little coaxing to come out of her shell.

"Are you happy?" Jamal asked, and even though Dawn had not been happy since she left the Hank home, she bobbed her head because she was very happy talking to Jamal.

"And guess what?" Jamal declared triumphantly, "Lucy and Tom are going to visit soon! They said so!"

Dawn's eyes widened, "Are they going to visit me too?" She asked hopefully, her voice small but determined.

"When they come see me, I'm going to ask them to bring me to you so we can play together and then you can teach me how to play your piano and I will teach you how to ride your bike," Jamal said and Dawn giggled, a sound like tinkling bells.

"Maybe."

As the conversation continued, Andy noticed Dawn becoming more comfortable, her voice growing a little bolder.

Dawn's smile faded slightly when her governess announced that she had chatted enough and it was time to return to her lessons, but she didn't dwell on it. Instead, she turned back to Jamal, her eyes bright. "Will you call me again soon?"

"Of course!" Jamal exclaimed, practically vibrating with excitement. "My aunt Andy made an Instagram account for me. You can call me and I can call you too!"

A hesitant smile bloomed on Dawn's face. "Okay," she agreed, her voice barely a whisper.

"She has to go now. Say goodbye," Andy told Jamal and he nodded.

"Dawn? Remember what I told you when you were leaving?" Jamal asked, and Dawn blushed, making Andy wonder what Jamal had told Dawn.

"I'm going to be very rich when I grow up and I will buy you a house and a car and take care of you," Jamal promised and Andy's heart melted.

"I'm going to be rich too," Dawn said confidently.

"I will still take care of you," Jamal said and before Dawn could say anything else, the governess took the phone from her.

"Ms Dawn needs to return to her piano lesson. She will talk to you some other time. Thanks for calling," the governess said and hung up the call.

As the call ended, Andy could tell that Jamal wasn't too happy about it so she ruffled his hair.

"Wasn't that fun? You finally got to talk to Dawn," she said, wanting him to focus on the bright side.

Jamal beamed. "Yeah! And I have Dawn's Instagram now! I can talk to her whenever I want to, right?"

"I don't think you can," Andy said honestly.

Judging by the behavior of her governess, Andy knew that they might need to reach out to Kimberly before the governess would let Dawn take their calls whenever they called.

"But you heard Dawn..."

"Dawn doesn't have control over her device. Her governess does. And if you call when she is supposed to be having her lessons, she might not be allowed to talk to you," Andy explained calmly and Jamal sighed deeply.

"What did you tell her when she was leaving?" Andy asked and Jamal shook his head.

"It is a secret. It's between the two of us," he said and Andy arched an eyebrow.

"Really? Your favorite aunt doesn't deserve to know? After all the time I spent trying to help you contact her?" She asked and Jamal looked at her for a moment before deciding that she deserved to be let in on the secret.

"You can't tell anyone else, okay?" Jamal said and Andy nodded solemnly.

"I won't tell. I promise."

"I told her she is my Lucy. And she is the one I'm going to get married to when I grow up," Jamal said and Andy giggled.

"Why are you keeping it a secret? You already told everyone you're going to marry her," Andy reminded him.

"I didn't tell anyone what I told her," he pointed out and Andy grinned.

"I see. I guess you've proposed in advance. So, did she accept?"

"I didn't ask. I told her," Jamal said and Andy chuckled.

"What if she doesn't want to?" Andy asked curiously.

"She is going to want to. You heard her say she missed me too," Jamal said confidently.

"I want to grow up quickly," Jamal said and Andy laughed.

"Slow down champ. Don't be in a haste to grow up. I'm not in haste to grow old," Andy said and when Candace called out to Jamal from the top of the staircase, Jamal ran off to answer his mom leaving Andy alone.

Alone, Andy sighed deeply. The little girl had somewhat reminded her of Cassidy's daughter, Maribel. She couldn't help but wonder how the little doll was doing. And how her father was doing too.

Was he ever going to reach out to her? And if even he did, what was the possibility of them being together?

Cassidy was supposed to be a dead man, so he couldn't possibly come live with her here, and she couldn't imagine spending her life on that island either, so was there really any hope of being with him? She didn't think so.

Why did things have to be so complicated? She mused wearily.

Away from there, in Sonia's home, Bryan, Sonia, and Jeff were seated in the living room discussing the way forward.

"You know what I think? If Jeff has to go to Mia, we need someone who looks a bit like him to pass as his replacement. It would be super suspicious if Jeff disappears shortly after Mia. Think about it this way, if Mia's husband were to see Jeff in the house and think he looks familiar, he might send those men to check if Jeff is still here. What do you think will happen?" Sonia asked, looking from Bryan to Jeff.

"You have a point. But how do we get someone that looks just like him?" Bryan asked thoughtfully.

"It doesn't have to be a doppelgänger. Someone of the same body build, and similar features is good enough. All the person has to do is assume his identity for some time. Wear his clothes. Live in the apartment..."

"Like that girl did for Candace?" Bryan cut in and Sonia nodded.

"Precisely. The plan has to be foolproof, else Mia and Jeff would be walking into a deathtrap," Sonia said and they all went quiet for a moment as they thought about everything.

"Maybe we can ask Harry to help us find someone," Bryan suggested.

"I think I know someone that can do it. My cousin. He can easily pass for me unless you look closely," Jeff, who had been quiet, finally spoke.

Sonia looked at him hopefully, "Really? That's good then. But doesn't he have a job and stuff?"

"He won't mind coming over to help. Besides, he's going to get paid," Jeff said and they all nodded.

"Why not try contacting him now let's see if he's up for it?" Bryan suggested and Jeff took out his phone and called his cousin.

The moment the call connected, Jeff dove right down to business. "Hey, Joe! Quick one. I have an important job for you. Pay is good. It's going to take a couple months and you have to move down to Ludus for the time being. Can you do it?" Jeff asked.

"How soon do you want me to come over? And what do I need to do?" He asked and Jeff smiled.

"If you can get into the next flight available flight, I will owe you for life. I'm going on a trip in a couple of days, I don't want Bryan or anyone else to find out. Can you cover for me and pretend to be more while I'm away?" Jeff asked and Bryan and Sonia exchanged a look, wondering why he lied.

"C'mon Jeff. We might look a little alike, but there is no way they're not going to know I am someone else," he pointed out, "Besides, I can't begin to train my beards and stuff to look like you in such a short time."

"You don't have to worry about that. I got rid of my beards already. I still look a little strange to them right now because I did that. And if you do a good job, no one is going to know that you're someone else," Jeff promised.

"Are you sure? I don't want to be charged with impersonation..."

"Do you trust me?" Jeff asked and he sighed.

"With my life."

"Then do this for me," Jeff said and after he agreed to come the next day, Jeff thanked him and hung up the call.

"Why did you lie to him?" Bryan asked curiously.

"He will do a better job if he doesn't know the truth. Besides, he might try to stop me if he knows how dangerous this might be. It's best he doesn't know and just focuses on deceiving everyone," Jeff explained.

"So? Is he coming tomorrow?" Sonia asked since she had heard Jeff talk about the next available flight.

"Yes. But that would be late in the evening since he needs to take care of some personal business and wrap up loose ends," Jeff said and they nodded in understanding.

Sonia sighed, "I wonder how Mia is doing. They should have arrived by now," she said and picked up her phone to check if there was any news online about Vanessa Rosewood and Henry Rosewood.

It didn't take a minute before the images popped up, "He took her home dressed this way?" Sonia asked in disbelief when she saw how vulnerable Mia looked in her sleeping clothes and indoor footwear at the airport.

Immediately, Jeff and Bryan moved close to her to see what she was saying and Jeff gritted his teeth when he saw how uncomfortable Mia looked.

"I'm going to kill that bastard with my own hands," Jeff promised, his face dark with anger when they saw more pictures of Mia, especially at the welcome back party in the mansion.

"He clearly did this to humiliate her. He knew they were coming home to reporters and to a welcome party, yet he didn't think to bring her more befitting clothes," Sonia said, feeling very annoyed.

"Calm down, babe," Bryan said, holding her hand.

"I'm trying to. Maybe we shouldn't have let her leave with him. Maybe we should have all put up a fight and shown him we were behind Mia. Maybe he would have changed his mind and..."

"You told Mia it was a good idea," Bryan reminded her calmly.

"Maybe I was wrong. I have been known to be wrong. What if he hurts her? What if he breaks her again?" Sonia asked, tears in her eyes.

"As much as I hate to say this, Mia knew what she was getting into when she chose to go back home with him. She will take care of herself until we are able to help her, so trust her and don't worry too much," Jeff said and Bryan nodded in agreement.

"Let's trust Mia, and wait until Jeff can go over to join her, okay?" Bryan said and Sonia sighed.

"Let's not go easy on him. Okay, Jeff?" Sonia said, and Jeff gave her a nod.

There was no way he was going to go easy on Henry. Not after all he had done to Mia.

Chapter 867 Miscarriage



The aroma of lemongrass and ginger hung heavy in the air as Tom and Lucy exited the bustling Thai restaurant, brown paper bags filled with their dinner for the evening securely clutched in their hands.

Lucy inhaled deeply, her stomach growling in anticipation.

"That smells heavenly. I can't wait to dig in," she said, her eyes sparkling with delight. "I'm starving."

Tom chuckled, nudging her playfully with his elbow. "You wouldn't be so famished if you hadn't insisted on those Danish cookies earlier instead of my cuisine."

Lucy stuck out her tongue, a mischievous glint in her eyes. "Are you sure you want us to talk about that disaster? I'm trying hard to forget about it."

"Whatever," Tom muttered as they got into the car.

As Tom settled into the driver's seat, his phone buzzed with an incoming call. He glanced at the screen and a smile tugged at his lips. "It's my parents," he announced, holding up the phone for Lucy to see it was a foreign number and she smiled.

"Why don't I drive while you talk to them? Since this might take a while and we don't know when next they might reach you?" She asked and he shook his head.

"We are not in a hurry. So let's talk to them before we leave. You can dig in since you're very hungry," he suggested as he answered the call, a smile playing on his lips. "Hey, Mom, Dad. How's the sugarmooning going?" He teased, making both his parents laugh.

"Everything is great, darling," Evelyn's voice, warm and familiar, crackled through the receiver, filling the car. "How are you doing?"

"I'm good," Tom replied. "Just picked up some takeout. We're on our way to Lucy's place."

"That's great. We were just wondering how you're all doing. We don't want to bother Jade since she is on her vacation with Harry, and we don't want to bother the honeymooners either," she said and Tom nodded.

"I guess you don't mind bothering me since I am not honeymooning or vacationing like the rest of you," Tom said and both Lucy and Evelyn laughed.

"Precisely. Have you heard from them? How are they doing?" Evelyn asked with concern.

Thus far she had kept her word about not intruding in their lives too much, and she restricted her phone calls to once a week just so she would intimate herself with what was going on with them as she toured the world with her husband.

"Jade is okay. Bryan and Sonia are back..."

"So soon? It's barely a week. Did something happen?" Evelyn asked, her voice sharpened a touch.

Tom hesitated, debating how much to share over the phone. He looked at Lucy who was busy sniffing the takeouts and shook his head in amusement as he reached out and opened one of the brown bags and gestures to her to eat already instead of just sniffing it.

"Well, it's about Mia..."

"Mia? What about her? Did something happen to her?" Evelyn asked in concern.

"No. Not exactly. It's just that Mia's husband came..." Tom paused, wondering if that was the best way to answer the question since his mother didn't know about her being married.

"Henry found her? I had a feeling something like this might happen. I should have told Bryan," Evelyn said, sounding worried.

"What do you mean?" Tom asked, surprised.

"You knew she was married?" Tom asked in confusion and Lucy looked at him with interest since she couldn't hear the conversation on Evelyn's end but she could piece it together from Tom's end.

"Of course. I recognized her the moment she first began to work for Bryan. I confronted her, and although she didn't exactly tell me what happened between them, I knew she was running for her life. I offered to intervene, but she said was too scared and pleaded that I turn a blind eye," Evelyn explained to Tom.

"I almost forgot that you are familiar with the Rosewoods," Tom said with a sigh.

"You forgot I linked you with them when you were in dire need of foreign investors?" Evelyn asked and Tom nodded.

"Yeah. You're right," he said and Evelyn raised a brow.

"So, what is going on? How did he find her? And why did Bryan and Sonia come back? Was there any serious trouble?" Evelyn asked with a concerned frown.

Tom went on to explain the situation as best as he could, giving her all the details and how Mia had voluntarily decided to go back with Henry.

"What?!" Evelyn shrieked, her voice filled with disbelief. "Is she serious? He could murder her!"

"We are taking precautions to make sure that doesn't happen," Tom said and explained Mia's plan to her.

"Still, that plan is dangerous. And why didn't she tell me about it. I could have handled it easily," Evelyn said with a frown.

"Handled it?" Tom echoed, surprised. "How?"

"Yes. I would have made sure he signed the divorce papers without her leaving with him. I know the Rosewoods pretty well. I could have spoken with Henry's parents and asked them to call him to order and make sure he signs the papers divorce papers," she said. "They're a powerful family, but they also rely heavily on their public image. A scandal like this could hurt them," she said and Tom shook his head.

"Don't you think he could divorce her and still find a way to hurt her? He clearly married her to punish her. And if you get involved, they would know we are behind Mia. That's something she is trying to avoid," Tom said and Evelyn sighed.

"You have a point. Have you been able to purchase the company that supplies his domestic staff?" Evelyn asked curiously.

"That's proving a little difficult. We've taken over other companies. Harry was able to acquire the company in charge of his security as well as the company that handles his maintenance services," Tom explained.

"Maybe you don't need to purchase it. The Rosewoods have stepped on a lot of toes and people are probably just waiting for the right opportunity to bring them down. What company is that? Let me see if I can help."

"EliteHouse Inc."

"I thought as much. The Hendersons won't sell no matter how much you offer. However I believe I can be of help," she said and Tom narrowed his eyes.

"How?"

"I believe I still have Mrs Henderson's contact information. Your grandfather rendered tremendous help to their family in the past and she wanted me to get married to her brother. They might be able to help if I reach out to them," she said and hope flickered in Tom's chest.

"That would be incredible. We've been worried about how to get Jeff into the house."

"Don't worry, darling," Evelyn said reassuringly. "I will get on it immediately I hang up. Now, enough about that. How's Lucy? Tell her I said hello."

Tom glanced at Lucy who was eating like her life depended on it. A smile played on his lips. "She says hi."

"Give her my love. And Tom, be careful with Henry. And don't hesitate to call if anything else happens."

"I will keep you updated. Thanks. Let me say hello to dad."

Tom exchanged a few words with his father before hanging up. Tom leaned back in his seat, feeling a sense of relief mixed with the tantalizing aroma of the food.

"What's going on? She knows about Mia's husband?" Lucy asked with a mouthful of Pad See Ew.

"Yes," Tom said as he went on to summarize his conversation with his mom.

"Well, that was..." Lucy began, searching for the right word.

Tom finished her sentence. "Unexpected? Interesting?"

Lucy nodded. "Unexpected is the word. Your parents seem to know everyone important."

Tom laughed. "My mom, you mean? My dad doesn't care about things like that. But my mom made a lot of connections working as my grandfather's aide. And seeing as he was always traveling from one country to another, it was easy for her to meet so many important people and connect with them. This is a huge weight off my shoulders."

"Yeah. She is such a lifesaver," Lucy said as she raised a spring roll to Tom's lips so he could take a bite.

Tom bit into it and groaned, "Let's leave this place already, else we might end up having dinner here," he said as he started the car and drove out of the parking lot.

Lucy giggled, "See? This is what really good should taste like..."

"Lucinda Perry!" Thomas growled as he kept his eyes on the road and she gasped.

"I can't believe you just called me that!" Lucy said in disbelief.

"Why not? Isn't that your given name?" Tom asked and Lucy shook her head.

"Well, anyone else can call me that, not you! I thought we already agreed on that?" She asked as she eyed him with annoyance.

"Agreed on what?"

"I'm only Jewel, babe, baby, love, and the likes to you. Not Lucy!" She hissed and he chuckled.

"I didn't call you Lucy. I called you Lucinda," he pointed out.

"Isn't that worse than calling me Lucy? Huh, Thomas?" She asked and he laughed.

"Thomas, huh?"

"Yeah! Thomas Hank!" She said and he chuckled again.

"I love the sound of my name on your lips, Lucinda," he drawled.

Before Lucy could respond, her phone rang and she smiled when she saw it was Sonia and received the call immediately, "Hey, baby..."

"Lucy!" The single word was a desperate plea, a cry for help that shattered the carefree facade of the evening.

On hearing the pain and distress in her voice, the smile slid off her face.

"What's going on? Is everything okay? Where is Bryan?" Lucy asked in alarm.

Tom, sensing the sudden change, whipped his head around, his smile dissolving into a frown etched with concern.

"I think I'm having a miscarriage," Sonia cried.

Lucy's heart lurched, a cold dread washing over her. Her mind raced, desperately searching for the right words, the right comfort, but all she could manage was a choked, "Oh my God, Sonia."

"Lucy? What's wrong?" Tom asked as his frown deepened.

Terror welled up in Lucy's chest, constricting her throat and making it difficult to breathe. She forced the words out, a choked whisper that sent a jolt of fear through Tom. "Sonia... miscarriage..."

#### Chapter 868 Did I Lose My Baby?

Without a word, Tom slammed on the brakes, the car lurching to a stop at the side of the road. Lucy barely noticed, her entire focus on Sonia's ragged breaths on the other end of the line.

The fragrant lemongrass and ginger that had filled the car just moments ago seemed to vanish, replaced by a cold dread that settled in Lucy's stomach.

"I'm bleeding," Sonia stammered, a tremor in her voice betraying her fear.

Lucy could hear Bryan's frantic voice in the background, a counterpoint to Sonia's choked sobs. Tears welled up in her eyes, blurring her vision.

Tom looked at Lucy whose normally bright eyes were wide with terror and he reached for her hand which was trembling, "Find out where they are."

Panic clawed at Lucy's throat, squeezing the words out in a strangled whisper, "Where are you right now?"

"I'm losing my baby, Lu," she said, as though she was in a daze and couldn't hear Lucy's question.

Lucy squeezed her eyes shut, trying to hold back the tears that welled up. She could practically feel Sonia's fear radiating through the phone.

Seeing as Lucy was too terrified to offer Sonia any comfort he took the phone from her, "Sony, calm down. Is Bryan there? Where are you?" Tom asked calmly.

A choked sob escaped from the phone. "He's... he's calling the ambulance," Sonia said between breaths.

"Put Bryan on," he said, his voice gruff but steady.

The next few minutes were a blur. Tom spoke with a calm urgency, directing Bryan to go to the nearest hospital. Lucy sat beside him, tears streaming down her face, a silent prayer forming on her lips. The takeout bags lay forgotten on the back seat, the delicious aroma now a mockery of their earlier carefree mood.

As soon as Tom gave the phone back to her, he threw the car into gear, the engine roaring to life and he sped through the city streets, sirens wailing in the distance a grim soundtrack to their frantic journey.

"We'll be there," Lucy forced the words out, her voice thick with emotion. "Just stay calm, Sonia. We're on our way," Lucy said to Sonia before hanging up.

Her trembling hands dropped to her lap. Lucy was grateful that it was Tom behind the wheel. As much as she tried to calm herself, her hands kept trembling.

As Tom drove, Lucy sobbed. She sobbed as flashes of Sonia ran through her head. She remembered how Sonia had wept when she found out she was pregnant.

She remembered how distraught Sonia had been at the thought that she would have to abort the pregnancy because she believed that Bryan wouldn't want it.

She remembered how happy Sonia had been when Bryan had said he wanted them to keep the baby. She remembered Sonia's joy when Bryan had proposed and how she had said she was happy she could now have a family of her own.

Sonia had been so excited with the idea of having her baby and she couldn't imagine Sonia losing it.

"God, no. Please no," Lucy cried.

"Calm down. You won't be of any help to her if you are this way. We don't know for sure if she had a miscarriage..."

"She said..."

"It doesn't matter what she said. She isn't a doctor. Calm down, love," Tom said calmly and Lucy sniffled as she brushed her tears away.

"I'm trying to be calm," she said and Tom reached and her hand.

Lucy tapped her feet impatiently as Tom pushed the car to its limits. Traffic lights seemed to appear at every corner, each red blink a cruel eternity.

Lucy stole a glance at his face, the grim determination mirrored in her own reflection in the side window.

Just then, Tom's phone buzzed. He snatched it up, the caller ID a welcome sight. "Bryan?" he answered, his voice tight with urgency.

"Tom, we're at the hospital. They're taking Sonia in now," Bryan announced, his voice laced with panic.

"Alright, calm down. We are close by," Tom said, offering a reassurance he himself didn't quite feel. "We will be there in a few minutes."

Ending the call, Tom threw a worried glance at Lucy. Her face was pale, but her jaw was set, a silent testament to her strength. He squeezed her hand, a wordless promise of support.

The rest of the journey was a blur. They tore into the hospital parking lot, tires screeching in protest.

Lucy practically leaped out of the car before it came to a complete stop, Tom close behind her. They raced through the automatic doors, the sterile scent of disinfectant filling their nostrils.

Just inside the waiting area, they spotted Bryan. He was pacing back and forth, his face etched with worry, and his hands raking through his hair. He was a picture of raw desperation. His usually neat hair ruffled in agitation.

Lucy sprinted towards him, reaching him in a heartbeat, "Bryan, what's going on? Where is she? How is she?" Lucy asked, her voice thick with concern as the tears in her eyes threatened to fall.

Bryan embraced her, more for himself than for her sake, and wrapping her arms tightly around him, Lucy squeezed her eyes shut. "Bryan," she whispered, her voice trembling slightly.

Bryan clung to her for a moment, his body wracked with silent sobs. Tom placed a hand on his shoulder, "Bryan, it's okay. Everything will be fine," Tom soothed, "We are here now. Everything will be fine," Tom said calmly even though he was just as worried and scared as them both.

"What happened?" he asked gently.

Bryan pulled away from Lucy, wiping at his eyes with a shaky hand as he tried to compose himself. "We were talking one moment, and I stepped out to see Jeff off," he explained, his voice choked with emotion. "The next thing I know, I come back to find her crying, doubled over with abdominal cramps. Then..." He hesitated, his voice dropping to a whisper, "the bleeding started."

A fresh wave of terror washed over Lucy, but she forced it down. Now wasn't the time to panic. They needed to be strong for Sonia.

The air hung heavy with unspoken fears. Just then, a doctor in white scrubs emerged from the examination room and approached them, his expression unreadable.

They rushed towards him, and relief flooded them when the doctor offered a tired smile.

"Mr Hank," he addressed Bryan, his gaze settling on Bryan and then shifted to Tom and Lucy before returning to Bryan, "It appears to be a threatened abortion, but thankfully, both your wife and the baby are safe. She's resting comfortably now, but we'll keep her overnight for observation."

A collective sigh of relief swept through the group. The tension that had been building for the past hour slowly dissipated. Bryan pulled Lucy into a tight embrace, burying his face in her hair as he wept in gratitude.

"Thank God she is okay. My babies are okay," Bryan wept happily.

Tears of relief streamed down Lucy's face, soaking his shirt. "Thank God," she whispered, her voice thick with emotion.

Watching them, Tom felt himself tear up a bit so he turned away. He could very well understand Bryan's fears. He doubted anyone would be able to comfort or console him if it was Lucy who was in such a situation.

The Doctor cleared his throat. "If you'd like to follow me, I can take you to your wife's room. She won't be waking up soon. She is asleep and needs all the rest she can get."

Bryan wiped his eyes with a shaky hand. "Yes, of course. Thank you. Yes," he said, turning to Lucy and Tom. "Come on, let's go see her."

Lucy nodded, wiping her own tears. Relief and joy bubbled within her as she took Tom's hand and they followed Bryan and the doctor down the corridor, the earlier fear a distant memory.

The initial shock had subsided, replaced by an overwhelming sense of gratitude. They had come so close to losing something precious.

The scare had been a harsh reminder of the fragility of life, but it had also brought them closer. In the face of potential loss, they had found strength in their shared love and support for Sonia and their unborn child.

Plans of dinner and going to the club totally forgotten, Tom and Lucy spent the night at the hospital with Bryan, taking turns keeping vigil with Bryan beside Sonia, since Bryan had refused to take so much as a step away from Sonia's side.

When dawn finally broke, painting the sky in hues of pink and orange, Sonia opened her eyes and tears gathered in her eyes when she saw Bryan seated beside her and holding her hands.

The moment Bryan saw her eyes open, he quickly rose, "How are you feeling? Are you okay?" He whispered and her lips trembled.

"Did we lose Ryso? Did I lose my baby?" She asked fearfully and Bryan shook his head.

"No. It was a threatened abortion. Ryso is okay. Are you fine?" He asked and she looked at him doubtfully.

"Don't lie to me, Bryan. I was bleeding..."

"I could never lie to you, love. Not with something like that. Our Ryso is fine. He is strong just like his mom," he said, and tears of relief rolled down the sides of her eyes.

The ordeal had taken its toll, but Sonia was alive, and their baby was safe. In that shared moment of fragile hope, a new appreciation for life blossomed within them, a silent promise to cherish each other and the miracle they had almost lost.

Lucy who had slept off the other side of the bed woke up and when she saw that Sonia was awake she quickly rose, "Sony!" She called and Sonia's gaze shifted to her since she hadn't noticed her presence before.

"I'm sorry I scared you all and..."

"None of that matters. You are fine, and our baby is safe, that's all that matters," Bryan said and Lucy nodded as she leaned down to embrace her.

"I will go get the doctor," Bryan said before leaving the room.

"I'm so glad you're okay, and our baby is fine. I was terrified," Lucy said and Sonia bobbed her head.

"Me too. I was so scared. I thought I was going to lose it. I thought it was going to leave because it knew I wanted to abort it the first time. I don't know what I would have done if I lost it, Lucy," Sonia cried, and Lucy's heart ached since she had never seen Sonia look so fragile and vulnerable.

"I'm glad we won't ever have to find out," Lucy said just as Bryan returned with the doctor and Tom also joined them.

#### Chapter 869 No Risk, No Reward

The early morning sun cast a golden glow over the cityscape as Tom weaved through the light traffic, a total contrast to their hurried arrival at the hospital the night before.

Lucy, nestled comfortably beside him, finally let out a long sigh of relief. "Thank goodness it's all okay," Lucy finally said, her voice thick with lingering emotion. "I can't believe how scared I was.

Tom glanced over at her, his expression mirroring her own. "Me neither," Tom admitted, squeezing her hand briefly. "I swear, I aged ten years in those few hours."

"Really? You didn't look the least bit fazed. I don't mean you were not concerned. I mean, you just looked so calm," Lucy said and Tom nodded.

"We can't all break down that way. That was my niece or nephew we were talking about. Of course, I was terrified but I couldn't show it. Now when you were that way. And seeing Bryan like that... it was rough."

"Yeah. But I still think he held it together surprisingly well, considering," Lucy said, her voice laced with admiration.

"True. I doubt I would have been that strong had I been in his shoes," Tom said and Lucy looked at him.

"I'm sure you would have been great. You would never let me see you that worried when I'm freaking out myself," Lucy said confidently.

"Maybe," he said and a comfortable silence descended upon them for a moment, broken only by the soft hum of the engine.



Lucy was relieved since the doctor had assured them that Sonia was fine and could go home if she wanted to, but she needed to be on bed rest and had to take some medication since her progesterone level was low.

Despite the doctor's assurance, Bryan had however insisted that Sonia stay in the hospital until evening so that she would be observed further.

Tom's stomach rumbled loudly, shattering the quiet. He chuckled sheepishly. "Now, I'm starving. Not having anything to eat since breakfast yesterday finally caught up with me."

Lucy laughed, a sound tinged with exhaustion. "Me too. Though I think I'm more sleepy than hungry. All that emotional roller coaster takes a lot out of you."

"Yeah. We can get something for breakfast and have Adolf bring lunch to us while we nap," Tom suggested and Lucy nodded in agreement.

"Perfect. I can't believe we have all these food in the car with us but can't eat them," Lucy said, referring to the remnant of the takeouts in bags which lay in the back seat waiting to be disposed.

"You should be glad you ate a bit from it. I got only a bite of the spring roll," Tom said and Lucy yawned.

"I guess so." Lucy snuggled deeper into her seat, her eyelids drooping.

Tom grinned. "Any particular place in mind for breakfast? Or anything in mind you want to have?"

"Nope," Lucy said, yawning widely. "Maybe we can stop by a bakery and pick up something," Lucy said with her eyes closed.

"And after breakfast, straight to bed?"

"That's a perfect plan," Lucy murmured her voice thick with sleep.

A couple of minutes later, Tom pulled into a familiar cafe they passed often and Lucy opened her eyes.

"Wait while I get us something for breakfast," he said when he saw how exhausted she looked.

"I love you," Lucy agreed, her eyes closing back.

By the time Tom returned a short while later with some bagels and pastries, and a cup of latte for himself with a cup of iced mint chocolate for Lucy, she had dozed off again.

Lucy opened her eyes when she heard him get into the car, "I can't believe I dozed off," she said with a tired smile as Tom placed the cups in the cup holder.

"You can adjust the seat and get some rest," Tom assured her as he took a bagel and bit into it.

"Nah. I can sleep when we get home. It's better to eat now so I can go right to bed when we walk into the place," Lucy said as she picked up a bagel from the takeout bag, and Tom chuckled.

They enjoyed a leisurely breakfast as Tom drove, and once they finished eating, Lucy stretched languidly in her seat, while a satisfied sigh escaped Tom's lips.

He turned to spare Lucy a glance. "So," he began, a playful glint in his eyes. "Club still on your agenda for tonight?"

Lucy shook her head. "It's Monday tomorrow."

He feigned surprise. "Monday? Really? I had no idea."

"Hilarious," Lucy deadpanned. "But seriously, work."

Tom chuckled. "Right. That pesky work thing." He paused for a moment, a teasing smile playing on his lips. "Did that ever stop you before, though? Like the night we met?"

Lucy's cheeks warmed at the memory. "That was a one-time lapse in judgment," she protested, though a grin tugged at the corners of her mouth.

"Can you imagine what would have happened had you not been the CEO? How could I be so late to work on my first day there?" She asked incredulously.

Tom raised an eyebrow. "Didn't you have good reason for it, though? I was told you had a good excuse..." Tom trailed off with a chuckle when Lucy hit his arm.

"Harry was such an arse. Don't even remind me of that. I cringe each time I remember the ridiculous lie I told that day," Lucy said and Tom chuckled.

"Lucky you, I was the CEO, and I still am. So you can sleep in and go late to work if you want seeing as that lapse in judgment that brought us here," he said and Lucy rolled her eyes, a smile blooming on her face.

"Maybe I need to make more lapses in judgment," she said and Tom bobbed his head.

"Exactly my point! You need to do that. But only with me. So how come we both come up with a better daring list for you now that you have ticked every item on the other list?" He asked and Lucy giggled.

"What would you put on the list?" She asked, and he shrugged.

"Get married to Thomas Hank. Have kids with Thomas Hank. Live happily ever after with Thomas Hank," he said with a wink and she grinned.

"That's a very daring list," she said and he nodded.

"And rewarding too. No risk, no reward," he said and she smiled.

"I will come up with my list myself. And we won't be going clubbing tonight. You know we have to go back to see Sonia, and then return to your place," she said, changing the subject.

Tom arched a brow. "Why do we have to go back to my place? We could go to work from your place," Tom pointed out, "And even spend the whole week there."

"That won't be a bad idea. But we would have Adolf going to and fro to bring us food. That would be too stressful for him," Lucy said and Tom shook his head.

"He isn't driving me or anyone at the moment. He can do that much. Besides, he is paying paid to drive, so he can as well drive the food down to your place," Tom said and Lucy smiled.

"Alright then. Let's spend the week at my place," she said happily.

"And while we are on the subject, after the close of work, you don't have to wait for me going forward. Adolf will be at the company to pick you up at the close of work each day," Tom said and Lucy raised a brow.

"You don't want us to go home together anymore?" She asked and he nodded.

"For now. I really didn't like seeing you sleeping on your desk. You can wait to me at home. I will feel more at ease that way," he said, and she sighed.

"Alright then," she said with a nod, thinking that she could use the time to do other more productive things for herself.

Just as they walked into Lucy's place a couple of minutes later, Lucy's phone rang and she raised a brow when she saw the call was from Candace, wondering why Candace was calling so early in the morning.

"It's Candace," she told Tom.

"I will quickly freshen up while you take the call," he said as he headed for the bathroom while Lucy received the call/

"Good morning," Lucy greeted with a yawn.

"I'm so sorry. Did I wake you up?" Candace asked in a worried voice.

"No. Is everything okay?" Lucy asked, more interested in knowing the reason for Candace's call.

"Yeah. Well, I called for two reasons. My dad is coming to Ludus to see Sara. I'm sort of worried about him. Do you think you could accompany him? I don't know, maybe drive him there? Or should I say, convince him to let you go with him? I know it's a lot to ask but I would have come with him myself if he didn't insist on traveling alone," Candace explained.

"No. It's not a lot to ask. When is he coming? Maybe if you can find out the time of his flight, I will go pick him up at the airport. I'm sure he will let me drive him to his destination when he sees me. He will realize how concerned you are," Lucy said and Candace smiled in relief.

"You're such a life saver. Thanks," Candace said since she had been very worried about it.

"Don't mention. How are you? Was Jam able to talk to Dawn?" Lucy asked curiously.

"That brings me back to the second reason I called. Yes, Jamal spoke with her and she's okay. Are you aware that Kimberly is engaged?" Candace asked and Lucy frowned.

"Kimberly? As in Dawn's mom? Since when?" Lucy asked, wondering how Kimberly could be in a relationship and be engaged so soon when she had released such a news about her and Tom barely some weeks ago.

"It seems like the families were keeping it hush, but there are rumors of it online with a picture of her and the man in question..."

"It could be a rumor. News like that spread between her and Tom, remember?" Lucy pointed out.

"Well, the man confirmed that he was marrying her," Candace said and Lucy frowned.

"Well, that's sudden. Congrats to her. So, Dawn is fine, right?" Lucy asked curiously.

"Yes. But Andy said she seemed sort of lonely. And she asked if you were going to visit her," Candace said and Lucy sighed.

"I wish I could. Maybe when I visit I could say hello to her when she talks with Jamal," Lucy said hopefully.

"Or maybe Tom would let you speak to her now that Kimberly is getting married and you don't have to worry about her causing any more problems for you," Candace said and Lucy smiled.

"You have a point. I hope so," Lucy said with a yawn.

"You seem tired," Candace observed.

"Yeah. Spent the night at the hospital. Sonia had a threatened abortion," Lucy said and Candace gasped.

"Oh, my God! How is she doing? It was just threatened right? Ryso is fine, right?" Candace asked, sounding very concerned.

"Yeah. The doctor said they are both okay, but she is still at the hospital being observed. Bryan insisted she stays there," Lucy said and Candace let out a relieved sigh.

"Can I give her a call now or do you think she might be resting?"

"Maybe you can do so later in the day. She was sleeping when we left the hospital," Lucy said and Candace sighed.

"I'm glad they're fine. I will let you get some rest now and let you know my dad's flight details later. My regards to Tom."

"Give me love to Jam and the others," Lucy said before hanging up.

Seeing as Tom was still in the bathroom, she got on the bed and in less than a minute, she slept off.

#### Chapter 870 Dinner Invitation

Sonia shifted uncomfortably in the stiff hospital bed, wishing Bryan would listen so they could go back to the warmth of their own bed.

Despite the lingering fatigue in her body, a sense of calm washed over her. The doctor's reassurance echoed in her ears: everything was going to be okay.

Reaching for Bryan's hand, she squeezed it gently. "Hey," she said softly. "You okay?"

Bryan eyes, usually a vibrant blue, were rimmed red and filled with a mixture of relief and terror, and his face etched with worry lines.

"Okay?" he echoed, his voice thick with emotion. "Sonia, you had me scared half to death! One minute we were talking, the next..." He trailed off, unable to voice the horrifying image that had flashed through his mind.

Sonia offered him a weak smile. "I know, babe. I was scared too. But the doctor said everything is fine. We just need to take it easy for a while."

Bryan shook his head, his voice trembling slightly. "Easy? You won't be taking it easy anywhere. When we get home, you're not getting out of bed. You're staying put, all day, every day. Resting."

Sonia chuckled, a soft sound that sent a wave of relief through Bryan. "Bryan, I will need to use the bathroom at some point, even if I'm resting."

He waved his hand dismissively. "Don't worry about that. I'll carry you. You won't even have to move a muscle."

Sonia's smile widened. "Bryan, you're being ridiculous. I can walk to the bathroom."

"No, you can't. You won't," he insisted, his voice surprisingly firm. "You need to rest. I don't want you thinking about anything, doing anything. Just focus on getting better."

"Were you very scared?" She asked, looking at him in concern.

He squeezed her hand, his knuckles white. "Scared doesn't even begin to describe it. Seeing you in pain, the bleeding... I thought..." His voice trailed off, a choked sob escaping his lips.

"I thought I was going to lose you both. I can't. I don't want to ever have to live without you," Bryan said and reared gathered in Sonia's eyes as she reached out and brushed a comforting hand across his cheek.

"Hey, shh," she soothed. "It's okay now. We're both okay."

"And I'm going to make sure you both remain so. No lifting, no bending, no stressing. You just relax and think about nothing."

Sonia couldn't help but tease him. "But what about all the work I have to do? Remember I have a deadline for my novel?"

"Mr Conner can wait," he declared dismissively. "The world can wait. Right now, all that matters is you and the little one."

Their moment was interrupted by a knock on the door. Jeff peeked in, a hesitant smile on his face as he held up a brown paper bag. "Hey, how's everyone doing?"

"We're okay," Bryan said, his voice gruff. "Thanks for coming, Jeff."

Jeff entered the room, setting the bag on the bedside table. "Made you some broth."

Sonia's eyes lit up. "Thank you, Jeff. I'm sorry we bothered you..."

Jeff grinned. "I don't mind being bothered by you two. I'm just glad to hear everything is alright."

They conversed a bit and Jeff tried to lighten the mood. Finally, after a while, Jeff announced he needed to get back to work organizing all that was needed for his cousin to make a smooth transition.

As he left, Sonia reached for the bag, intending to grab a bite.

"Here," Bryan said, taking the bag before she could. "Let me."

He opened the bag, retrieved a container of soup, and carefully spooned it to her lips.

"Seriously, Bryan, I can feed myself," she protested weakly.

He ignored her protest, his jaw set in a determined line. "Just open your mouth. That's all you have to do."

"But..."

"No bending. No lifting. No stressing. You're carrying our baby, so let me carry you and take care of you both, okay?"

Sonia sighed, a small smile playing on her lips. Despite the annoyance at his overprotectiveness, it was hard to deny the warmth that flooded her heart.

It was moments like this, moments of simple tenderness, that reminded her why she loved this man so much. His worry might be a little overboard, but it stemmed from a place of deep love and concern.

This was Bryan, the man who loved her so fiercely, the man who would carry her to the bathroom if need be.

The tiny life growing within her felt even more precious than before, and she knew Bryan would be an incredible father, a little overprotective perhaps, but an incredible father nonetheless.

She opened her mouth, accepting the spoonful of soup. As she ate the soup, content filled her and a sense of peace settled over her, a warm glow radiating through her despite the discomfort.

They had come close to losing something precious, but they were okay. And for now, that was all that mattered. She leaned into him, feeling safe and loved in his arms, and drifted off to sleep, the rhythmic beeping of the heart monitor a soothing lullaby.

Away from there, Amy lay on her bed, staring at her bedroom ceiling as she contemplated whether or not to send Lucas an email.

In her hand, her phone felt heavy, a battleground of indecision. Should she send the email? The question had been plaguing her since she woke up that morning and it was over an hour already.

Taking a deep breath, she reread the draft she had written and deleted countless times. It was simple, a casual inquiry: [Hey Lucas, how's your day going? You're the first person I thought to reach out to this morning, so feel free to interpret that however you want – maybe I dreamt about you ;)]

A small smile played on her lips as she reread the message. It was casual, friendly, with a hint of playful teasing. It was harmless, right? Just a friendly message to a friend.

With a final click, she hit send. A wave of nervous anticipation washed over her, followed by a pang of regret. Maybe it was a bad idea. Maybe it would just complicate things further and make him feel like she was coming on to him strongly.

Far away from there, Lucas was sprawled on the couch opposite Tyler as they both watched an episode of House MD.

A notification chime on his phone startled Lucas, and he glanced down at the notification.

Amy's name sent a jolt through him, a mixture of surprise and a flicker of something he couldn't quite place.

He hadn't been expecting an email from her so soon, since they had texted that morning before he left for his classes.

He hesitated, his thumb hovering over the screen. Was this a good idea? To open a message that could potentially stir up a storm of emotions he wasn't prepared for? If he opened it, he knew he was most likely going to respond, and he worried that it would encourage Amy to keep texting him until it became a routine for them.

"Luke, you okay?" Tyler asked, when he said something and Lucas didn't respond.

"Yeah, fine," Lucas mumbled, his eyes glued to his phone.

"Anything wrong?" Tyler pressed as he took in Lucas' facial expression.

Lucas sighed. "Nothing. Just... a message."

"What does it say?" Tyler asked and Lucas shook her head.

"I haven't opened it yet."

"The message is from Amy I suppose?" Tyler guessed, a knowing smirk playing on his lips.

"How did you know?" Lucas snapped, surprised by his own defensiveness.

Tyler held his hands up in mock surrender. "Easy there, tiger. You sort of get this strained expression whenever Amy's involved."

Lucas scoffed. "Strained expression? What are you talking about?"

"Like you're caught between wanting to run towards her and wanting to run away at the same time."

Lucas bristled. "That's nonsense. We're not even close friends or anything."

He didn't want to admit it, but Tyler's words held a sliver of truth. Amy was a tangled mess of emotions for him and he wasn't exactly sure why he felt that way about her.

And why was she even texting him by this time? He knew it was barely eight in the morning over there in Ludus.

Tyler's eyebrows shot up. "Well, open it then!"

"I never said I wasn't going to open it!" Lucas growled as he stared down at the phone, his finger hovering over the notification.

Sensing that Tyler was still watching him, he opened the message. The playful tone of her message sent a jolt through him, a mixture of confusion and a flicker of something he couldn't quite define.

"What's the hold-up?" Tyler asked, his voice laced with amusement as he watched him.

Before Lucas could respond, Tyler's phone buzzed again. This time, it was a message from Dr. Evans.

"Hold that thought," Tyler said to Lucas, his gaze flicking to the new message.

"What's wrong? Emergency?" Lucas asked when he saw the frown on Tyler's face.

"It's an invitation to dinner with the Rosewoods tomorrow," Lucas said with a sigh. "Mr Rosewood invited me, some kind of thank you for helping him find his wife."

"Oh, boy," Lucas said, knowing how Tyler probably felt about going to dine there now that he knew the whole truth.

"Do you think I should tell Tom about this?" Tyler asked, and Lucas nodded.

"Yeah," Lucas said and rose, "Let's call it a night then. I'm tired already. Say hello to Lucy."

"I guess you are going to respond to her email? Why not just give her your number so you can both chat properly instead of..."

"Mind your business," Lucas muttered as he headed for his bedroom.

"Nah. I told you I'm never minding my business anymore when it concerns you and your relationships. I did that once. Im never doing that again," Tyler called after him and Lucas chuckled as he walked into his bedroom, not bothering to give Tyler any response.

Alone now, Tyler took a deep breath as he dialed Lucy's line. He was going to tell Tom about the invitation, and if Tom asked him to reject it, he would do just that.