

A Favor 321

Chapter 321

Disbelief twisted in my chest as I tried to make sense of it. After searching for her for so many years, I'd finally seen her—only to lose her again in the blink of an eye.

Inside the store, I wandered through the aisles, so wrapped up in my thoughts that I barely noticed anything around me. Then Daniel pulled me back to the present with a quick kiss.

I blinked in surprise and met his attentive gaze.

"Let's go back to the hospital."

Without a word, I nodded and let him thread his fingers through mine, grateful for the quiet comfort.

Daniel's gaze stayed on me the entire way back, but I kept looking straight ahead, pretending I couldn't feel the weight of his curiosity.

The moment we stepped into the waiting room, his mother looked up.

"Where have you two been? They're moving Rian to a regular room now," she said, glancing between us.

“Really? And the baby? Where is she?”

A laugh slipped out of me when I saw Daniel’s face light up with excitement.

“They’ll bring the baby in once Rian gets settled in her new room.”

Anticipation buzzed as we gathered in Rian’s room, ready to welcome the newest member of the family. Everyone’s faces glowed with joy, but a shadow of disappointment clung to me, stirring my thoughts as I replayed what had happened outside.

I didn’t notice Daniel watching me nonstop, his curiosity growing with every passing moment, trying to figure out what I was hiding.

Applause flooded the room when a nurse walked in, cradling a newborn in her arms. With careful hands, she placed the tiny bundle into Rian’s eager arms.

Seeing Rian smile down at her daughter moved me deeply, and I found myself crying, overwhelmed by the simple joy in front of me.

Before I could wipe my cheeks, Daniel stepped closer and did it for me, his touch surprisingly gentle.

“Why are you crying? It’s just a baby,” he whispered, using his thumbs to brush away my last tears.

“Belle, Dani...” Rian called softly. “Do you want to hold my baby?”

I gave a shy smile and shook my head, while Daniel’s face went a little pale.

I nudged him lightly. “Come on. There’s nothing to be scared of. It’s just a baby,” I said, tugging him toward Rian’s bed.

Rian’s eyes sparkled as she placed her little girl in my arms.

“So what’s this little angel’s name?” I asked, gently tickling the baby’s hand.

“Her name is Joanna Angela, but we’ll call her Jona for short.”

“She’s beautiful. Hi, little Jona.”

My heart swelled as I smiled down at her and pressed a soft kiss to her forehead.

But the warmth faded when I remembered I didn’t truly belong in this family.

Rian must have noticed the change in my expression, because she tapped my arm with a playful look and shook her head.

I offered her a grateful smile.

“Alright, everyone, let’s take a picture!” Gavin called, waving us closer.

He nudged Daniel, and Daniel ended up right beside me.

“Okay, everyone, smile! One, two, three—cheese!”

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For a moment, I stood there, confused. But when I looked around and saw the genuine happiness lighting up everyone’s faces, I finally understood what family really meant.

I told Craig and Bryan every detail about Layla. Bryan didn’t waste any time and sent his team to the last place where I’d seen her. Even with his help, I couldn’t stop myself from returning to that corner every day, clinging to the hope that I would see her again and finally get the answers I’d been searching for.

“Mrs. Kelley, Mr. Kelley wants to speak with you,” Ben said, handing me his phone. Daniel’s name glowed on the screen.

“Hello?”

“Where are you, and why didn’t you answer earlier?”

He didn’t even bother with a greeting. I rolled my eyes and muttered to myself, Not even a hello. Not even a simple greeting.

“Sorry. I didn’t realize you’d tried to reach me. My phone was on silent.”

He let out an exasperated sigh. “Just tell me where you are.”

My eyes flicked to Ben before I answered, “I’m at the studio.”

Ben raised an eyebrow in a silent question, but I pressed a finger to my lips, signaling him to stay quiet. He nodded, understanding immediately.

“Meet me at Ciao Bella at 11:30.”

My heart lurched as I checked the time. It was already 11:25. There was no way I could make it in five minutes, especially when the drive alone took half an hour.

“There are important documents waiting for your signature.”

“More documents? Seriously?” I complained at the thought of signing yet another stack of papers.

“Yes, again. We need your signature on the new project documents before we can send them to Mr. Giovanni’s team.”

“Fine,” I said, not bothering to push for details or repeat the questions I’d asked the last time he summoned me to his office.

After I returned the phone to Ben, we got into the car and headed to the restaurant Daniel had chosen.

“Ben, Mark, could you do me a favor?” I turned to my bodyguards as the car moved steadily toward my meeting with Daniel. “If my husband asks where I’ve been, just tell him I was at the studio all day. Tell him I barely left.”

“But, ma’am...”

“Please, Ben.”

“Mrs. Sophia, why don’t you just tell him you’re still looking for the woman you saw the last time we came here?”

I let out a slow sigh and shook my head.

“I can’t, Ben. What happened back then is in the past, and it has nothing to do with my husband. I don’t want to talk to him about it.”

Neither of them pressed any further.

When we arrived at the restaurant, I greeted the hostess near the entrance. “Good afternoon. Could you take me to the table Mr. Daniel Kelley reserved?”

“Are you Mrs. Sophia Kelley?”

“Yes.”

“This way, ma’am.”

As I followed her, my gaze drifted around the restaurant, sweeping over the people at the various tables. Long before she finished leading me, I’d already spotted him seated near the bar, unmistakable even in a crowd.

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“You don’t need to walk me over. I see him. Thank you for your help.”

“It’s my pleasure, ma’am. Do you need anything else?”

I shook my head, reassuring her. “That’s all for now. Thank you again.”

Turning my attention back to Daniel, I made my way between the tables. His expression was completely serious as he spoke quietly into his phone. The moment our eyes met, he hung up and rose from his seat.

What I didn’t expect was for him to cup my face in his hands and kiss me right there—quick, bold, and unapologetic.

“Did something delay you?” he asked as soon as he pulled back.

My heart was still pounding from the kiss when he pulled out the chair across from him.

“Wow,” I let out a short laugh, surprised by how easily he could make me nervous just by being himself.

As I sat, I noticed a group of teenage girls gathered at a nearby table. They were whispering to one another, their eyes not at all subtle as they stared at Daniel, pointing and giggling about something. I glanced at my husband and realized he had no idea how much attention he was drawing.

“What is it?” he asked, his tone hovering somewhere between curiosity and irritation.

Shrugging, I gave him a soothing smile. Then I pushed back my chair and walked toward the girls’ table.

“Where are you going?”

I acted like I hadn’t heard him and headed straight for the three girls.

“Hi!” I greeted them, wearing the friendliest smile I could manage. Just as I expected, confusion flickered across their faces. With a slight tilt of my head toward Daniel, I kept my voice light. “Do you know that guy over there?”

All three of them shook their heads. I leaned in closer, lowered my voice, and whispered to the girl nearest me, “Trust me, you’re crushing on the wrong person. He actually likes men.”

She nearly choked, shooting a nervous glance toward Daniel before leaning in to share the “secret” with her friends. Their faces twisted in shock.

“But... didn’t he just kiss you?”

I let out a dramatic laugh, waving a hand through the air. “That kiss? I was just putting on a show.”

“No way. I can’t believe he likes men,” she murmured, completely deflated.

Her friend clicked her tongue. “What a disappointment. He’s way too attractive to be unavailable.”

“Lily, honestly, it seems like all the handsome guys these days end up being gay,” the third one added.

Trying not to laugh, I gave them a sympathetic look.

“I guess you’re right. Especially with him.” I shrugged again, holding back another laugh as I turned on my heel and headed back to Daniel’s table.

On the way, I shot Ben a quick wink. He had followed every word of that exchange with a smile, standing close behind me. When I returned to our table, he just shook his head, struggling to hide his amusement.

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“What exactly did you say to those girls? Why do they keep looking over here?” Daniel asked the moment I sat, suspicion written all over his face.

“Oh, nothing,” I said brightly. “I just told them how unbelievably handsome you are.”

I kept my expression sweet and innocent.

He stared at me. “Do you really expect me to believe that?”

“If you’re so curious, you can go over there and ask them yourself.”

His eyes stayed fixed on the girls across the room, and he shrugged as if my words barely registered.

“By the way, I went ahead and ordered for us while I was waiting.”

“Okay. Where are those documents you said I needed to sign?” I asked.

“I left them at the office.”

My mouth fell open.

This felt painfully familiar.

For a moment, I didn't know whether to laugh or scold him. He didn't even look me in the eyes.

"So you made me come all the way here for nothing?"

"Not at all. It wasn't for nothing. At least we get to eat together," he replied, taking a slow sip of water.

"You're kidding. You just wanted company for lunch?"

"Is it that strange that I want to share a meal with my own wife?"

Hearing him call me his wife made me swallow hard.

Just as I was about to respond, a waiter appeared at our table carrying plates that made my mouth water. He set a steaming chicken dish in front of Daniel, along with a glossy chocolate cannoli and a pizza dripping with bubbling cheese.

Then he placed a bowl of salad in front of me—a mountain of lettuce, cucumbers, and tomatoes.

I could only stare in disbelief.

I blinked several times, trying to process what was happening. Daniel didn't seem fazed at all. He twirled his fork into his creamy pasta and looked at me.

"You're not eating," he pointed out.

"And my lunch?" I asked.

"That is your lunch, isn't it?"

A laugh escaped me as I stared at the vegetables. "Seriously? You only ordered me a salad?"

He barely paused, simply nodding as he finished a bite of pasta. "Why not? Isn't that what people order when they're watching their weight or avoiding meat?"

That answer made me burst out laughing.

"Tell me, is that what you learned from your exes?" I asked with a light laugh. Then I leaned forward. "Let me make something clear, darling. I'm not one of those women who avoids real food just to keep a scale happy. Vegetables don't scare me, but pasta and steak are always welcome on my plate. And for the record, I'm definitely not a vegetarian."

I turned to the waiter. "Could you bring me a glass of Masseto red wine, please?"

"Of course, ma'am."

I picked up the menu and flipped through it with anticipation, scanning the best Italian dishes on offer.

"Anything else?"

Just as I was about to close the menu, I realized I hadn't chosen another drink.

"Could you also bring me sparkling water?" I asked with a small gesture and a polite smile.

"Of course, ma'am," he replied, writing it down.

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When he stepped away, I glanced at Daniel. "Would you mind passing me the menu again?"

Daniel looked at the spread in front of us, eyebrows lifting in disbelief. "Do you honestly think you can finish all that?"

I didn't answer him. Instead, when the waiter returned, I smiled sweetly.

"Please bring me a plate of lemon ricotta pasta, those baked turkey meatballs, some toasted ravioli, and to finish, two generous portions of tiramisu."

Then I turned to Daniel, unable to stop myself from grinning.

"Brace yourself. I'm about to show you how it's done. Every bite will be pure glory. This is exactly what I've been missing."

When the dishes arrived, my senses nearly short-circuited. The creamy scent of ricotta blended with the savory aroma of meatballs and the warm toastiness of fresh ravioli, making my mouth water.

"Alright, it's time to eat!" I declared, clapping my hands with enthusiasm.

Daniel blinked, confused by my sudden burst of energy. "Wait. What did you just say?"

"I said let's eat! Don't just sit there—eat!"

Without wasting another second, we dove into the feast like it was our favorite sport, laughing between bites as the table turned into a mess with every passing minute.

Neither of us noticed that, across the room, someone else was watching us—silently tracking every bite and every word.

Savoring my last bite of tiramisu, I barely noticed Daniel's phone vibrating until he stood and excused himself in a low voice, leaving me alone at the table.

I glanced around the bustling restaurant, hoping to spot someone I knew. Instead, my eyes landed on someone I never wanted to see again—an old adversary.

A chill ran through me as I wondered how long he'd been sitting there, watching in silence. Had he been observing me since I walked in?

His gaze met mine and, with a smug smile, he lifted his wineglass in a mocking toast. My hand jerked, and my dessert spoon clattered to the floor.

Ben was at my side in an instant, picking up the spoon and signaling the waiter. "Mrs. Sophia, are you alright?"

"Félix De Luca," I murmured, unable to tear my eyes away from his taunting smile.

Daniel's familiar voice snapped me out of it. "Who is Félix De Luca?"

The question hit so hard I nearly choked. Had I really said his name out loud? How much had Daniel heard?

He sat back down, frowning. "Sophia, who is this Félix De Luca?"

I hesitated, searching for an answer. When I looked back to where Félix had been, his seat was empty. I scanned the restaurant, but he had vanished without a trace.

"You look a little shaken, Sophia. Are you feeling alright?"

"I'm fine. Really. Don't worry about me." I finished the last sip of wine, hoping it would settle my nerves, and then I stood.

Daniel rose too, reaching for his wallet. "Are you done eating?"

I nodded quickly and dug for my own wallet in my bag.

He frowned, realizing what I intended. "What do you think you're doing?" he asked, confused.

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"I just wanted to pay my part."

He shook his head, walked to the register, and said, "It's not necessary. I'll take care of the bill."

Not wanting to argue, I slipped my wallet back into my bag and focused on leaving as quickly as possible.

"You still haven't answered my question, Sophia. Who is Félix De Luca?" he insisted as he drove me to the studio this time—something he'd never done before.

"He's just someone from my past, Daniel. I don't want to get into details." I stared out the window, letting out a tired sigh.

He shot me a glance, searching my face for answers. "Was he an ex-boyfriend or something?"

Without meeting his eyes, I sank deeper into my seat. "No, Daniel. He wasn't."

"Then what was he to you?" His voice rose suddenly, startling me.

"I already told you. He's just someone from my past. I don't care anymore," I said, finally meeting his gaze, trying to be clear.

“Then tell me what he was to you, Sophia.” His voice shook with anger. “If he wasn’t an ex-boyfriend, are you telling me he’s your ex-husband?”

The question made me let out a derisive laugh. “Seriously? If I’d been married to him before, do you think you and I would be sitting here married now?” I looked at him straight on. “Why do you care so much who he is to me?”

He snapped back, “I don’t care! Why would I care who you spent time with before? I’m only worried about what people might say! My reputation is on the line, Sophia. And let’s not forget—we never included anything in our agreement about you not seeing other men while we’re married. Or did that slip your mind?”

A cold, humorless laugh escaped me. His sudden outburst only confused me more. It wasn’t as if I’d done anything wrong—Félix’s name had simply slipped out.

“Relax, Daniel. I haven’t forgotten any of our terms,” I said quietly, trying to end the conversation.

He gave a short nod, his voice turning icy. “Good. As soon as we finish the project with Mr. Giovanni, I’ll file for divorce immediately. After that, you’re free to live however you want.”

I watched him turn away and focus on his phone, leaving a heavy silence between us.

Understanding Daniel was never easy. Some days he surprised me with a kind word or a small act of warmth, but the next moment he pulled away, his mood shifting so fast it felt like I was sitting beside a stranger.

Trying to shake off the confusion, I focused on the scenery sliding past the window and let my thoughts scatter.

We didn't speak for the rest of the drive. He didn't even look at me when I got out, and there was no goodbye when I closed the car door behind me.

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When I stepped into the studio, Craig rushed over with a grin. "A bouquet for our resident beauty, sent by the one and only T. M.," he murmured, holding out a lavish bundle of red roses.

I pursed my lips and only took the card, heading straight for my desk. Craig stayed there, bewildered, still holding the bouquet as he hovered in the doorway.

"Why the long face, gorgeous?" he asked, but I was already absorbed in the message printed on the small card.

"I hope your day starts with a smile. Have a wonderful day, beautiful," I read.

"Maybe we should open a flower shop, Craig. With all these deliveries, we'd have plenty of inventory."

He blinked at me. "Are you serious?"

I shot him a playful look, and I couldn't help smiling.

He rolled his eyes at my nonsense. "Sophia, do you have any idea who's behind all these flowers?" he asked, nodding toward the growing collection on the counter beside my desk.

For almost two weeks, fresh bouquets had been arriving every day, each one marked with the same mysterious initials: T. M.

"I even asked our students if any of them had those initials, but I found nothing. No one matches."

"You actually asked our students about that?" I lifted my brows, surprised.

He gave me a mischievous grin. "Of course. I'm just as curious as you are about your secret admirer."

I glanced back at the latest card, reading the message again, trying to find a clue.

Changing the subject, Craig asked, "So? Any news with your search for Layla?"

I let out a sigh and told him everything that had happened that morning—the uncomfortable encounter with Félix at the restaurant, and Daniel's strange mood shift the moment he heard the name.

When I finished, I noticed Craig trying to hide a smile. “Why are you looking at me like that?” I asked, genuinely confused.

He gave me a knowing look. “Don’t you think your husband is jealous?”

I sighed and rolled my eyes. “Oh, please. Don’t start that again.”

“Oh, come on, Sophia. I remember exactly how he looked at you at his parents’ party—not to mention how he acted at the hospital when you were holding Rian’s baby.”

“Craig, he was surrounded by family and friends. Of course he had to play the role of the devoted husband. It’s all just for appearances,” I insisted, hoping he’d drop it, but he leaned in, still unconvinced.

“Then when he kissed you right in front of his parents, you’re telling me that was all an act too?”

“That’s exactly what I’m saying. He wanted everyone to believe we’re a happy couple. You saw it yourself—he only does it when there’s an audience.”

“That night, I saw more than one kiss, Sophia. He looked like he couldn’t keep his hands off you.”

I rolled my eyes and laughed. “You’re imagining things, Craig. He only kissed me twice. You probably drank too much and lost count.”

“Oh, yeah? Then explain how he was looking at you when you had Jona in your arms. Are you going to say that was for appearances too?”

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With an exasperated sigh, I shook my head and reached for my laptop, determined to end Craig’s relentless teasing.

“Craig, can we drop this, please? There’s nothing to talk about,” I said firmly, avoiding his gaze as I turned on the computer.

“Why do you always dodge this conversation, Sophia?” He dragged the chair in front of me closer and sat down, refusing to let it go. “What are you so afraid to admit?”

The moment he suggested I might have feelings for my husband, I went cold, caught completely off guard.

“You’re completely wrong, Craig. There’s nothing between us, and I’m not afraid of anything.”

He shrugged, that smug smile still on his lips. “If you say so.”

Craig pushed his chair back and headed for the door, and for a moment I was sure he was finally letting it go. But just as his hand touched the doorknob, he turned around and began singing in a dramatic, taunting tone—drawing out the word “denial” as if it were the punchline.

“It’s ‘Denial,’ a song by Sugababes,” he added with a grin.

I clenched my fists, snatched a pen from the edge of my desk, and threw it at him. It skidded harmlessly across the floor, landing nowhere near Craig. He only laughed, slipped out the door, and kept humming that ridiculous tune.

“Denial suits you better, Craig! It really does.”

Daniel’s POV:

“Sophia!”

My desperate shout came from outside her bedroom door just as I was about to call it a night. It was nearly eleven, and I’d barely set down my briefcase after a late meeting.

She had fallen back into the same nightmare, and the words she muttered were the same ones I’d heard the first time I found her like this.

But something felt worse tonight. She was trembling from head to toe, fear tightening her face so much that I stepped in to wake her.

“Sophia.”

I took her hand and gently shook her shoulder. “No! Don’t do this, please!” Her voice cracked as she cried at whatever she was seeing.

“Sophia, wake up!” I let go of her hand and shook her again, hoping she would come back to herself. But the name she screamed stole the air from my lungs.

“No! Félix, please, stop!”

I went still.

Félix? Was she talking about that Félix De Luca? My jaw clenched before I even realized it.

“Help! Someone help me, please!”

For God’s sake—why was she begging for help?

I tried again to wake her, but what she did next froze me in place.

“No! Please, don’t touch me! No, no, no!” She jolted away and curled up, hugging her knees as she sobbed.

“Hey, I’m here.” I reached for her hand, but she recoiled, refusing to even look at me. “Sophia, it’s me—Daniel. Look at me.”

She lifted her head, her eyes red and glossy with tears. When she finally recognized me, her entire expression shifted in an instant.

“What are you doing here?” Her voice broke, thick with disbelief and worry.

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“Is the Félix you were calling out in your dream the same man we saw at the restaurant tonight?”

“How do you know that? Did you hear me?”

“You were screaming in your sleep,” I replied, not letting her dodge the question. “You kept asking for help. You kept begging him to stop. What happened between you and Félix?”

Instead of answering, she wiped her tears and turned her face away, refusing to look at me.

“Thank you for waking me. I’m fine now. You should go get some rest.”

“You still haven’t answered me. Did Félix hurt you?”

She shook her head again—silent, unconvincing.

“Are these nightmares connected to your past?” I pressed, softer this time. “Sophia, be honest with me. Did Félix do something to you?”

She looked me in the eyes then and let out a laugh that didn’t fit the moment at all.

“I appreciate your concern, Mr. Kelley, but truly, I’m fine. Please go back to your room.”

“Sophia—”

“There are many things I can’t explain to you.” A long silence stretched between us. “Honestly, it’s probably better if I keep them to myself. We aren’t really together. We’re not even friends. Soon we’ll each go our separate ways. The less you know about me, the better it will be for both of us.”

“Why won’t you try to open up to me? Maybe I can help.”

She laughed again, but her tears betrayed her. With trembling hands, she wiped her face and shook her head.

"It's not possible, Mr. Kelley." She pressed her palms to her cheeks, as if she could erase her pain. I was about to ask again, but she cut me off with an exhausted look.

"Please. I just want to be alone. I need to sleep."

There was nothing else I could do. With a sigh, I turned toward the door. When I glanced back one last time, she was already curled up, her back to me.

I closed the door softly behind me and pulled out my phone to call my mother immediately. As I walked toward my own room, I listened to the phone ring, silently begging her to answer quickly. I couldn't stand the thought of waiting until morning.

She finally picked up after what felt like an eternity. "Sweetheart, what is it? Why are you calling so late? Did something happen? Is Sophia alright?"

"No, Mom. Nothing's wrong. We're both fine," I said, cutting her off before she could imagine the worst.

"Then tell me what's going on. Why are you calling in the middle of the night?"

I hesitated, then let out a deep sigh.

“I need to ask you something about Sophia.”

“What is it?”

“Mom, do you happen to know a man named Félix De Luca? Is he connected to Sophia in any way?”

My mother went quiet.

“Mom? Are you still there?”

“How did you come across that name?”

“That isn’t important right now. I just need to know if you know anything about him.”

“Sweetheart, I’m really not the person you should be asking about this.”

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“Then you do know who he is,” I said, catching the sound of her sigh. “Please, Mom. I need the truth about this man.”

“Listen, son—”

“Mom, she has nightmares almost every night. I hear her screaming for help, and she keeps saying Félix’s name. It’s scaring me.”

“I had no idea she was going through that. Is she okay now?”

“She calmed down, but she won’t tell me anything.”

“Only Sophia can give you the answers you’re looking for. It’s her story, not mine.”

“So you’re saying you can’t tell me anything at all?”

“I can’t talk to you about this, Daniel. You have to understand.”

“I guess I’ll have to find out on my own.”

“What do you mean by that? What are you going to do?”

“If you won’t give me answers, I’ll figure it out myself.”

“Daniel Kel—”

Before she could finish, I ended the call.

“I’m sorry, Mom, but I can’t just turn a blind eye when something is clearly wrong,” I muttered.

This wasn’t the first time I’d seen Sophia tormented by her dreams, but tonight was different. Hearing her scream the name of the man we’d run into at dinner was terrifying. How could I do nothing?

“Sophia, what are you hiding from me? Who is this Félix De Luca, and what role does he play in your past?” I wondered.

A memory flashed through my mind—returning to our table and seeing her face pale as paper.

And I couldn’t shake the night outside the hospital. Back in the convenience store, her reaction made no sense. Why had she been so desperate to chase that woman?

I set my phone on the nightstand and sat on the edge of the bed. Rubbing my temples, I remembered another scene—Sophia standing in the middle of the mall, tears streaming down her face as she argued with her mother.

What was she hiding? She was like a mystery that refused to reveal its secrets, and I couldn't rest until I pieced everything together.

"Andrew, clear my entire schedule for today," I told him the moment he stepped into my office the next morning.

He looked up, frowning in confusion. "Is something going on? Why are you canceling everything?" he asked, handing me a stack of financial reports.

"I have something urgent to handle. That's all I can say."

"And lunch with Mr. and Mrs. Giovanni? It's scheduled for eleven-thirty."

"Tell them there's an emergency, or use any excuse you want. I just can't go today."

Andrew let out a long sigh and flopped onto the sofa, clearly unimpressed with my decision.

Then he clicked his tongue, slipping into that familiar dramatic air. “Honestly, this is the best part of my job—making up ridiculous stories and putting on a show to cover your absence. My talent for terrible excuses is unmatched,” he said, rolling his eyes.

“Oh, yeah?” A faint smile tugged at my lips. “Sounds like you’re not happy. Maybe it’s time you start packing your things. Your days as my assistant might be coming to an end.”

Also, let me share this for the second half of the year dear readers, Joshua 1:9 “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”