

Billionaire's Ex-wife : Craving You Chapter 91

Chapter 91

RAVEL

PRESENT TIME

I had to leave for the hospital with Ravel because that is the only way I will be able to see Elenor.

Stepping out onto the porch, I occupied the passenger seat, awaiting Ravel's conclusion of a conversation with one of his security personnel. Finally, his discussion concluded, and he began his leisurely approach towards me.

My attention was so fixated on Ravel that I remained oblivious to someone's presence beside the car window until the individual boldly opened the door.

Turning my gaze toward the open portal, I raised an inquisitive eyebrow, only to be met by the unmistakable glare in June's expression.

In that fleeting moment, I pondered the idea of simply ignoring her, but I swiftly dismissed that notion, opting instead to address her with a measured tone. "Is there something you require assistance with?"

Her words dripped with annoyance as she declared, "You're occupying my seat. Move to the back." I couldn't help but suppress a chuckle. This was the very same girl who had once been one of my favorites,

"Oh, you'd like me to vacate your seat?" I quipped, and to my amusement, she nodded, seemingly oblivious to the implications of her request. Amused, I reached for the door handle, but she clung to it, her grip surprisingly strong, Ravel's sudden interruption startled both of us. "What on earth are you doing? Why are you holding the door?" he snapped, clearly perplexed by the situation.

Our attention shifted to Ravel, and it was June who found her voice first.

"Ravel, why is she in my seat?" She inquired, her expression one of genuine curiosity. I had to stifle another chuckle at the absurdity of it all. "Could you please ask her to move to the back seat?"

Ravel's glare bore down on her with an intensity that could almost be felt. "Are you going to step away from the door, or must I instruct someone to physically move you out of the way?" His words were laced with irritation.

She retorted with a huff, "Ravel, are you seriously going to disrespect me in front of her? Her tone dripped with indignation.

Resisting the urge to engage in their dispute, I clenched my lower lip and fastened my seatbelt, fixing my gaze firmly on the windshield, attempting to block out the drama unfolding beside me.

Ravel's patience eventually wore thin as June stubbornly refused to budge. He seized her hand forcefully, prying it away from the door and giving her a

gentle but firm shove, causing her to stumble backward.

Ravel then circled the car, slid into the driver's seat, started the engine, and guided the car out of the compound. In a brief moment of calm, he spared me a glance and apologized, "I'm sorry for that.

I offered a tight smile in response, attempting to mask any lingering annoyance. "No harm done," I replied softly, my gaze fixed on the passing Scenery outside.

Ravel, however, refused to let the matter rest. "It's not fine," he insisted, his voice carrying a trace of regret. "She shouldn't have treated you that way. It happened because of me, and I feel the need to apologize."

Turning toward him, I reassured him with a gentle tone. "Really, Ravel, it's alright. I understand." She's a woman in love, and it's natural for her to be protective of what she has with you. I've been there before, but I've moved past that stage now. I'll let the men vie for my attention, let them put in the effort, because I've earned it, and I da mn well deserve it.

He let out a heavy exhale, his fingers tightening their grip on the steering wheel. "How is Daisy?" he inquired, a faint smile gracing his lips. "I can't believe I have a daughter, and I haven't found the time to see her.

His admission caught me somewhat by surprise. "I'm surprised too, I admitted gently. "But I'm sure you had your reasons for not visiting.

He sighed deeply, clearly struggling with his emotions. "I really wanted to," he confessed, his voice laced with regret. "But then that issue with Warren came up, and, well..." He winced, his words trailing off. "I was upset that you didn't believe me, and I couldn't bring myself to face you."

I could feel the weight of unresolved issues lingering, but I chose to deflect for now. "It's okay," I reassured him, attempting to steer the conversation away from my business problems and personal grievances. "We can talk about that later. Right now, let's focus on Elenor, not my business or personal troubles."

He stole another glance at me, his gaze carrying a hint of regret. "For what it's worth," he began, "I tried to persuade Warren to change his mind, but he was adamant."

I met his gaze, and in that shared moment, our eyes seemed to convey mutual sincerity and apology. "It's okay," I replied, offering a faint, understanding smile. "Life can be unpredictable. Warren has made his decision, and I'll have to deal with the consequences of that choice."

Shifting the focus to Elenor, I asked with concern, "What exactly happened to Elenor?"

Ravel's fingers tightened around the steering wheel as he delivered the grim news. "It was a car crash," he explained somberly. "It happened two days ago. Fortunately, bystanders called for an ambulance quickly, and she's currently in a coma, fighting for her life."

I reached forward, gently placing my hand on his forearm and giving it a comforting squeeze. Just as I was about to withdraw my hand, he surprised me by seizing it and intertwining our fingers. A reassuring smile passed between us. "Elenor will fight this," I affirmed with conviction. "She's a fighter through and through."

Ravel's response was tinged with worry as he whispered, "They said the same about my father, and he passed away the next morning." He paused, his eyes clouded with fear. "I really hope Elenor can fight this," he confessed, visibly struggling to confront his fears. "I don't know if I can imagine a world without her."

Without hesitation, I reached forward, covering his hand with mine. "Don't talk about your own death so casually," I chided gently. "Elenor is going to be alright; I'm certain of it. She's not just a fighter; she's a stubborn one at that." His chuckle carried a hint of nostalgia at my description of Elenor. "I can't argue with you on that, she's definitely stubborn," he admitted with a hint of sadness. "I've been working towards hearing her call me 'bluey' again."

I smiled at the memory. "I'm sure she's just as eager to use that name again." Turning the conversation, I asked about Raymond. "What about Raymond? I didn't see him at the hospital, and he wasn't at home either."

Ravel's response took me by surprise. "He traveled back home to scatter his father's ashes."

My eyebrows shot up in astonishment. "His father's ashes? When did his father pass away?"

A sense of regret weighed heavily in his voice as he revealed, "Just a few days ago." He pulled the car over in the hospital's driveway, his expression filled with a deep sense of remorse. "And I wasn't there for him either."

I noted the challenges that seemed to be unfolding in Ravel's life and those close to him. As he stopped the car and prepared to exit, I reached out to stop him before he could open the door. "I believe you," I blurted out suddenly, catching him off guard.

Confused by my unexpected declaration, he turned to me. "You believe me about what?"

I met his gaze with conviction. "Warren," I replied firmly. "I believe that you had nothing to do with what transpired between Warren and me. I don't understand the nature of your conversation with him, and why you've chosen not to share it with me, but I'm certain it has nothing to do with my business." His gaze bore into mine with an intensity that conveyed his profound appreciation, and then, with a gentle touch, he cupped my cheek. "You don't know how long I've yearned to hear those words," he confessed, his voice tinged with gratitude.

Regret welled up within me, and I offered a heartfelt apology. "I'm sorry," I

whispered, my voice filled with remorse. "I should have said it sooner. I should have believed you."

He leaned in closer, his breath brushing against my lips. "Hazel," he murmured softly, "I'm about to do something that might

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upset you, so I apologize in advance." Confusion knitted my brow as I tried to decipher his words, until he closed the gap between us and pressed his lips to mine.

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HAZEL

FOUR YEARS AGO

My relationship with Ravel had taken a notably smoother course lately. Ever since the incident at Anne's place, I hadn't received a single call from her, nor had we accidentally crossed paths. Initially, I couldn't help but wonder why she hadn't reached out, not even to offer an apology for the near-death experience she had put me through. It was only later that I came to the realization that Ravel had taken it upon himself to block her number from my phone.

Contemplating the idea of unblocking her, I weighed the pros and cons. But upon further reflection, I decided to let things be. Perhaps it was for the best if we simply maintained our distance and avoided each other altogether.

A month had passed since the accident, and I was growing increasingly weary of the routine—either staying at home or indulging in lavish outings with Ravel, all funded by him. It gnawed at me that I contributed nothing financially to our household. True, Ravel deposited a generous sum into my account every month, but the fact remained that I yearned to be more than just a financial recipient.

I had never been one to embrace idleness, especially not since my time in rehabilitation. Hence, the urge to do something productive had become an incessant itch. Resting my gaze on the untouched glass of wine in front of me, I realized I had been lost in thought for quite some time.

Ravel, his voice hoarse with concern, broke the silence. "You've been staring at that wine for ages," he pointed out. "Is there something on your mind that you want to talk to me about?"

Seizing the moment, I cleared my throat and looked at Ravel. "I'd like to discuss something with you," I began, and Ravel nodded, his expression encouraging me to continue. "I want to start working," I declared, studying his reaction closely.

His initially relaxed expression shifted to a slight frown. "What do you mean by wanting to work?" he inquired, tilting his head. "Is there something you lack,

Hazel?" he asked, and I shook my head in response. "Then why do you want to work?"

Gulping down the remnants of my drink, I carefully placed the wine glass on the elegant table and leaned forward earnestly. "I want to work, not because I lack anything," I clarified, "but because I feel like I'm going to go insane if I don't do something productive."

"You already have a job," he pointed out, and I felt a surge of frustration building within me. "I can provide for you if that's what you want, Hazel. You already have a crucial role."

I sighed, realizing that I needed to make my point more explicit. "Ravel, I appreciate everything you do for me, and I love spending time with you," I began, "but I need something more, something that gives me a sense of purpose beyond our relationship."

"You are my muse Hazel. With you I create beautiful jewelry designs. You have a job." He stressed.

My frustration bubbled over, and I snapped, "Can you please stop repeating that!" I emphasized, my tone sharp. "You and I both know that I don't have a job right now." Taking a few deep breaths to calm myself, I continued, "I want to visit Pascal's art gallery and have him coach me through."

Ravel picked up his glass, swirling its contents as he regarded me closely.

"You've just survived a life-threatening situation, Hazel," he pointed out, his voice filled with concern. "And now you're talking about getting a job?"

"I'm okay, Rav," I insisted firmly. "If I'm well enough to enjoy a glass of wine, then I'm strong enough to start looking for work."

He maintained his piercing gaze, as though conducting a business meeting with one of his clients. "Have you considered what people will say?" he asked, his tone measured. "The press captured the moment you were rushed to the hospital. What do you think they'll say if you start working just a month after being discharged?"

"So we'll revisit this discussion in the future?" I inquired, hoping for a compromise. Ravel nodded, but I couldn't shake the feeling that he was merely agreeing to put the matter to rest. "I'm serious, Ravel. We will talk about this in the future."

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He chuckled softly. "Of course, we'll discuss it in the future." The tone in his voice hinted that his response might remain the same, even then.

Then, out of the blue, he broached a different topic. "Have you ever thought about us having a baby?"

My eyebrows shot up in surprise. "Babies?" I hadn't really given it much thought, and I hadn't expected him to either. "I'm not quite ready to be a mother just yet. I'm still learning how to be a wife," I admitted honestly. My life,

as it stood, felt far from being put together enough to take on the role of a mother. “Do you really want to become a father so badly?”

He responded with a casual shrug. “I’m ready whenever you are,” he reiterated, his eyes conveying his sincerity. “I only asked because I wanted to understand your perspective on it.”

I pressed further, seeking clarity. “So you do want to be a father, but you’re not in a hurry?” I didn’t want to be the reason he held back from something he truly desired. If he was ready, I was willing to give it more thought.

“Exactly,” he affirmed, tilting his head slightly. “I want to be a father, but I don’t want to rush you into motherhood.”

His response filled me with warmth and affection for him. We continued chatting about various topics until eventually, fatigue set in, and I expressed my desire to leave. Before we departed, I placed an order for seafood takeout. He responded with a casual shrug. “I’m ready whenever you are,” he reiterated, his eyes conveying his sincerity. “I only asked because I wanted to understand your perspective on it.”

I pressed further, seeking clarity. “So you do want to be a father, but you’re not in a hurry?” I didn’t want to be the reason he held back from something he truly desired. If he was ready, I was willing to give it more thought.

“Exactly,” he affirmed, tilting his head slightly. “I want to be a father, but I don’t want to rush you into motherhood.”

His response made me fall in love with him even more. I felt more warmth and affection for him. We continued chatting about various topics until eventually, fatigue set in, and I expressed my desire to leave. Before we departed, I placed an order for seafood takeout, a delightful way to cap off our evening together.

Yesterday, I had inadvertently overheard June confiding in the other domestic staff that she had never tasted a particular seafood delicacy in her life. That simple statement had imprinted itself in my memory, and I resolved to get her that delicacy someday. And today, as fate would have it, was that someday. The car rolled to a gentle stop, and Ravel graciously helped me out. His hand rested on my waist as he led me into our grand manor. The moment I crossed the threshold, I embarked on a mission to find June, while Ravel headed upstairs to our room.

Eventually, I located her in the kitchen, diligently washing fresh fruit. “Hey,” I called out softly, and she turned to look at me. “I’ve got something for you.” June’s eyes widened with surprise as she looked at the plastic bag I held out toward her. “You got something for me?” she inquired, her curiosity piqued. I nodded with a warm smile. “You mentioned you’ve never tasted seafood before,” I explained, “so I thought today would be a perfect day to change

that.” Her eyes sparkled with excitement, and I couldn’t help but chuckle at her enthusiasm. “But don’t get too excited until you’ve tasted it; you might end up not liking it.”

She accepted the bag with gratitude, her expression filled with appreciation. “Thank you, ma’am,” she said sincerely. “I really appreciate it.”

I waved off her gratitude with a smile. “It’s no big deal; it’s just food,” I replied casually. “Enjoy it.”

Leaving her to savor the newfound delight of seafood, I made my way out of the kitchen and headed to our bedroom, where I found Ravel emerging from the bathroom.

He noticed the smile on my face and inquired, “Why are you smiling like that?” I shrugged playfully. “I like her.”

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His curiosity got the better of him as he arched an eyebrow. “You like who?” “June,” I clarified with a smile that mirrored my genuine fondness for her. “I really like her. I think we’re going to be good friends.”

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JUNE

PRESENT TIME

Later that night, after overcoming the feeling of shame and disgrace caused by Ravel, I decided to stop by the hospital to know how things are going. I have to make sure that I am getting into trouble anytime soon.

Sliding behind the wheel of the sleek car, which had been an unexpected gift from Ravel, I steered my way to the hospital, consciously leaving my security detail behind. As I arrived at the medical facility, a curious scene played out before my eyes: Ravel and Hazel emerged from the hospital’s entrance, and they swiftly departed in their own vehicle.

Feeling relieved that I wouldn’t have to endure her irritating presence, I exited my car and made my way into the hospital. Stepping into Elenor’s room, I discovered Anne seated by her side. As I entered, Anne’s gaze met mine, and she greeted me with a subdued tone, “June... you’re here.”

I nodded in acknowledgment and took a seat beside her. Leaning in slightly, I inquired, “How is Elenor? Have there been any signs of improvement?”

Anne’s response was a solemn shake of her head. “I believe she’ll come around eventually,” I offered in reassurance.

Anne, overcome with emotion, brushed away a tear that had welled up in her eye. She then made a heartfelt request, “Could you please watch over her for a while? I need to step outside and get some fresh air in the garden.”

"Of course," I agreed with a nod. Anne's expression conveyed gratitude as she donned her jacket and exited the room. Once she had left, I took a moment to gather myself before rising to my feet. Stepping closer to Elenor's bedside, I gazed down at her and couldn't help but wonder aloud, "Why did you have to entangle yourself in all of this?"

She remained still and unresponsive, and for a moment a fleeting sense of sympathy washed over me. At least she was fortunate enough to survive the accident. "If only you hadn't been so curious," I muttered, my thoughts echoing in the silence of the room. Life had taken an unexpected turn, and it wasn't supposed to end up like this; at least not for her.

That night, I was acutely aware that Elenor had been eavesdropping on my conversation with Anne. The last thing I needed was for her to spill the beans to Ravel, especially when I hadn't achieved my goals yet. So, in the pursuit of self-preservation, I made a choice I believed was necessary.

All I had to do was peer out through the window, straining to memorize her license plate number. Swiftly, I sent this crucial information to Timothy, along with explicit instructions to ensure she never reached her intended destination. As news of the accident reached my ears and Ravel's presence graced the hospital, I braced myself for his reprimand. However, to my surprise, he said nothing, leaving me with a dawning realization that Elenor hadn't managed to spill the beans to him before the accident occurred. For this, I couldn't have been more grateful.

"Please, stay in this slumber a while longer," I whispered to Elenor, my voice laden with a mix of relief and secrecy. Nobody was privy to the truth behind the accident, which meant I had nothing to fear about being exposed. "I'm on the a journey of marrying Ravel, and I can't afford any complications now. You can wake up after I've achieved that." Leaning down, I gently kissed her cheek, concealing the depths of my deception.

"What are you doing?"

A male voice suddenly broke the silence from behind me, nearly catching me off guard. Swiftly regaining my composure, I turned to find Raymond standing there, his presence an unexpected intrusion.

I sighed softly and retorted, "What does it look like I'm doing?" Returning to my seat, I continued, "How long have you been standing there?"

Raymond moved closer into the room, and his questioning gaze was unwavering. "Long enough to witness you kissing her cheek," he replied, his hand reaching down to gently wipe her cheek, as though erasing the evidence of my kiss. "What I'm curious about is why you did that."

I couldn't help but roll my eyes; Raymond had always possessed a keen sense of observation, fitting seamlessly into his surroundings while keeping a watchful eye. "Why do you think I kissed her?" I asked, my tone tinged with

frustration. He

stared at me with a stoic expression, awaiting an answer. After a moment's pause, I finally conceded, "I miss her, Raymond. I miss her smile and everything about her."

Raymond tilted his head skeptically. "I find that rather hard to believe. You and Elenor weren't particularly close when she was conscious, and I can hazard a guess that she isn't exactly your staunchest ally, given her support for Hazel and Ravel. So, that leaves me wondering why you'd kiss her."

I couldn't help but concede that Raymond's powers of observation were indeed formidable. "Believe whatever you want, Raymond," I replied with a hint of irritation. "I've already explained my reasons. While we may not have been the closest, she is, after all, my future sister-in-law, and I consider her part of the family."

Raymond raised an eyebrow at my choice of words. "Future what?" he chuckled, then took a seat across from me, pulling out his phone and scrolling through it.

I couldn't help but scoff, my annoyance mounting as Raymond laughed.

"What's so funny?" I demanded, my irritation growing. "Do you doubt that Ravel and I will end up getting married?" He continued to ignore me, engrossed in his phone.

"Raymond!" I snapped, my patience wearing thin. He finally glanced up, but his attention still seemed divided. I decided to assert my authority, reminding him, "Let's not forget that you work for my boyfriend. When I ask a question, I expect an answer."

He blinked at me slowly, adopting a mocking tone. "Your boyfriend didn't inform you, I suppose?" he inquired, arching an eyebrow. "I've resigned."

My jaw dropped in utter astonishment. "You resigned?" I repeated, struggling to comprehend his revelation. "Why? Did you have a falling out with Ravel?"

Raymond remained unyielding, his response curt. "I owe you no explanations."

My patience with Raymond's insolence ran thin, prompting me to grab my purse and rise from my seat. "Anne stepped out for some fresh air. When she returns, just let her know that something urgent came up, and I had to leave," I instructed him, not bothering to wait for his response as I exited the room.

Frustration lingered as I navigated the hospital's corridors, my mind preoccupied with Raymond's vexing attitude. Upon reaching my car, I set off to meet Timothy, carefully selecting a remote location to ensure our meeting remained discreet. My desire to keep my association with him hidden stemmed from a deep sense of caution; one could never predict the future.

Ten long minutes passed before Timothy appeared, donned in a face mask

and a cap that concealed his features. As he settled into the car, he couldn't help but voice his curiosity. "Why do you persist in paying me with cash?"

"Because I want to ensure nothing can be traced back to me," I replied firmly, emphasizing my need for discretion. "Does the method of payment truly matter? The crucial thing is that you've received your full payment."

Timothy nodded, acknowledging my point. I handed him an envelope, and he promptly opened it, meticulously counting the money right before my eyes. Satisfied that the envelope contained the agreed-upon sum, he stowed it away and offered a parting sentiment, "It's been a pleasure doing business with you ma'am."

Of course he'll say that. Who wouldn't when they just received full payment for their job.

I leaned closer, a stern reminder in my voice. "Just remember, any missteps on your part, and my name should never cross your lips."

"Rest assured, Timothy makes no mistakes," he assured me, his confidence unwavering.

I couldn't help but hope that Timothy was being sincere, as any misstep on his part could jeopardize my meticulously laid plans. "If everything unfolds as intended," I said, contemplating the future, "I'll have another task for you."

"I am always available for more jobs ma'am."

A wry smile crossed my lips as I contemplated the surprise that awaited Anne and Ravel. They were in for something they'd never see coming, and I was determined to see my plans through to perfection.

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"Very soon, very very soon, I'll need you to do something for me outside New York."

"Do you mind me asking what the work is about?"

"You'll find out when the time is right."

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COMMENT

Chapter 94

RAVEL

THREE YEARS AGO

As the one-week countdown to my first wedding anniversary with Hazel begins, anticipation courses through me. I find myself eagerly awaiting the moment when I can present her with the meticulously prepared gifts I've gathered for her. What makes this occasion even more special is the fact that her birthday is just a few days after our anniversary, turning this into a delightful dual celebration.

Walking into the luxurious penthouse, I trailed behind the real estate agent,

taking in the grandeur of the place. "This is truly impressive," I remarked, personally admiring the elegant furniture and tasteful decor that adorned the penthouse. Yet, I couldn't help but remind myself that this space wasn't for me; I was acquiring it solely for Hazel. I envisioned her redesigning this penthouse to reflect her unique style. With conviction, I turned to the agent and declared, "I'll take this," a decision that seemed to fill the agent with contagious excitement as we moved forward to seal the deal.

"I know you would," she exclaimed, smiling joyously. "This is one of the most sought-after houses in the area, Southwark, and I assure you that you'll enjoy all the benefits that..."

Mr.

I didn't let her finish and interjected, "Can I sign the documents, please? If you don't mind, I have other matters that require my attention." She nodded understandingly and swiftly produced the necessary documents. With purpose, I signed the papers and handed her the signed check. "Once the requested changes to the lighting are made, please forward the keys to my office address."

"Yes, sir."

With no further business to attend to, I exited the penthouse, making my way toward my awaiting car. Raymond held the door open for me, and after circling the car, he took his place in the driver's seat. As we pulled away, he asked, "Do you like this one?"

-I nodded thoughtfully. "I do think Hazel will appreciate it, although she'll certainly want to put her personal touch on the interior decorations." Knowing Hazel's passion for art, I couldn't help but notice the absence of any artwork in the house. I've decided to let her select artwork for the place on her own; it'll be a canvas for her creativity.

"I am glad you found something." He muttered. Raymond's response caught me off guard, and I lifted my head to study his expression. "What?" he blurted out defensively.

"Why do you sound like you're tired of this house-hunting journey?" I asked, genuinely curious.

He let out a small scoff. "Well, that's because I am," he deadpanned. "It's past ten in the evening, and we've been at this since morning."

I shot him a stern look. "You might be the only employee I know who openly complains to his boss about being tired of his job," I remarked, a hint of amusement in my voice. Raymond chuckled in response.

As we continued our journey, my phone chimed in my pocket, prompting me to pull it out and check the message. My brows furrowed in frustration as I realized it was yet another strange message from the same unknown sender. Raymond, noticing my concern in the rear-view mirror, inquired, "What's

wrong? Is everything okay?"

My frown deepened. "I've been receiving these bizarre messages from the same person for a while now," I muttered, my irritation growing. "I've tried calling the number countless times, but it's always unavailable."

Raymond's expression mirrored my concern. "What do the messages say?" he asked.

"The wa nker behind these messages is persistently urging me to divorce my wife," I responded with growing frustration, "and what makes this message stand out is its threatening tone." I tapped on the message to read it aloud for Raymond, my voice tinged with unease. "It states, "You have a mere two weeks to present divorce papers to Hazel, or else she will end up getting hurt. The sheer audacity of this threat is deeply unsettling"

Raymond's concern was palpable as he spoke. "This is a matter of utmost seriousness, sir. I'll promptly have our team launch an investigation. Rest assured, we'll track down this person before they have any opportunity to harm Hazel."

The gravity of the situation weighed heavily on me. These messages had never before contained threats directed at Hazel. "I insist we immediately enhance her security measures," I instructed firmly. "We simply cannot afford to take any chances, especially when it concerns Hazel's safety."

"I'll take swift action on that, boss," Raymond affirmed, his unwavering focus now squarely on ensuring Hazel's well-being and security.

The car came to a smooth stop outside our porch, and I reached for my briefcase. "Make sure you keep this from Hazel," I advised Raymond, my tone laced with concern. Hazel had a knack for worrying unnecessarily, and I didn't want her to be unduly alarmed. With that, I opened the car door, stepped out, and made my way into the house.

As I entered our home, my first priority was to find Hazel. It didn't take long, and I discovered her in the dining room, engrossed in a game of Scrabble with one of our domestic staffs, June. She looked up with a beaming smile when she spotted me walking in, her focused expression giving way to warmth.

"Hello, husband," she greeted, setting aside the Scrabble board to envelop me in a hug. Leaning down, I pressed a gentle kiss to her lips, savoring the familiar comfort of being in my wife's embrace. Finally pulling away, I smiled down at her. "You seem quite busy," I observed, noting the sca ttered tiles on the table.

Hazel's grin was infectious, and she proudly declared, "Yep, and I'm winning against June." Instinctively, I glanced up at June, only to find her staring at us intently.

"How about you go ahead and take a shower while I get dinner ready?" Hazel suggested, her tone warm and inviting.

I nodded and planted another quick kiss on her lips before making my way out of the dining room. I took my time in the shower, using the opportunity to trim my beard. When I eventually emerged from the bathroom, clad in nothing but a towel wrapped around my waist, I heard a knock at the bedroom door.

"Come in!" I called out.

The door swung open, and June entered. I had expected her to simply state her reason for being in my bedroom, but she surprised me by taking her time to appraise me, her eyes slowly traversing my body. Irritated, I finally snapped, "What do you want?" My sharp tone conveyed that her behavior was unacceptable.

June cleared her throat and quickly averted her gaze, a hint of embarrassment evident in her demeanor. "Ma'am asked me to call you down for dinner," she informed me, her voice slightly shaky.

I couldn't help but wonder why Hazel had sent June to fetch me. "Where is she?" I inquired.

"She went to find Mr. Raymond and invite him to join you both for dinner," June replied.

I nodded in acknowledgment. "I'll be downstairs shortly." She began to turn and walk away, but I halted her with a firm tone. "June," she stopped in her tracks, "you are not allowed into my bedroom anymore." My message was clear, and I wanted to ensure there was no misunderstanding about her boundaries.

Her eyes widened slightly in acknowledgment, and she nodded before gracefully exiting the room. After changing into more appropriate yet comfortable attire, I made my way downstairs to join the others for dinner. To my surprise, I found Eleanor already seated in the dining room, accompanied by Raymond and Hazel. She greeted me with a mischievous grin. "Hello, bluey."

I couldn't help but roll my eyes at her playful teasing as I took a seat next to Hazel. "How many times have I told you to stop calling me that?" I retorted, my tone carrying a blend of amusement and mild exasperation. Our interactions, filled with familiar banter, always brought a sense of warmth to my life.

Eleanor scoffed, her playful demeanor unwavering. "I know deep down, you like it when I call you Bluey," she teased before beginning to plate her dinner and assisting Raymond. Her curiosity then got the better of her. "It's your wedding anniversary soon, so what are you guys planning?"

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Raymond, clearly uninterested in discussing the matter, shook his head and replied with his mouth full, "How about you mind your business?"

Eleanor, undeterred, shot back, "I'm sure the couple isn't complaining."

I couldn't help but glare at her. "Actually, I am. Butt out of my marriage business."

She shrugged, seemingly unfazed by my irritation. "Well, if you two are throwing a party, don't forget to send me an invite."

I corrected her with a smile, "We're not throwing a party." I'm taking my wife to Greece for the whole week.

The excitement of the impending anniversary trip is something I am really looking forward to.

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SEND GIFT

Chapter 95

RAVEL

PRESENT TIME

I accompanied Hazel to the apartment she had thoughtfully secured for her temporary residence. Although I had generously extended the offer of one of the penthouses, particularly the one I had personally bought for her, she gracefully declined, firmly asserting that she had already settled the rental fee and had no intentions of seeking a reimbursement. A hunch crept into my mind, suggesting that her reluctance to accept any form of assistance from me might be intertwined with June's presence in our lives. This inkling grew stronger when, in a sincere attempt to compensate her for the expense she had incurred on renting the place, she courteously rebuffed my offer.

As our vehicle pulled into the designated parking area of her rented apartment, I shifted my gaze towards her and broke into a warm smile. "I truly appreciate your presence," I expressed with sincerity in my voice.

A soft smile graced her lips as she posed the inviting question, "Would you like to join me for a late-night coffee?" I couldn't resist such a gesture. "If you feel the need to head to the hospital, I completely understand," she added, displaying her considerate nature.

I pondered the situation briefly. "Anne is there with her, and she'll keep me informed if anything arises. Besides, Raymond returned today, and I'm certain he's with her," I assured her as I removed the key from the ignition and stepped out of the vehicle.

Hazel also exited the car, and she shared a crucial piece of information, "Daisy is in there with her nanny." Her words halted my tracks. "You don't have to come up if you don't want to," she kindly offered.

me in

I weighed my options, realizing it had been far too long since I should have seen my daughter. I glanced down at my empty hands, a hint of regret

coloring my expression. "You should have informed me earlier so I could have picked up something for her," I mused, acknowledging the missed opportunity to bring a little gift for Daisy.

Her laughter danced through the moment as she playfully teased, "She's just two, Ravel. I'm certain she won't mind your visit without a gift." Together, we entered the elevator, continuing our light-hearted banter. "My daughter is not materialistic," she quipped, eliciting another shared chuckle between us. uncommon

As we strolled down the hallway, my steps came to an abrupt halt in front of her door. My nerves seemed to betray me, an occurrence for someone like me. It was curious how Hazel had the power to make me feel this way. I moistened my lips nervously, my uncertainty betraying my usual composure. "What if she doesn't like me?" I found myself blurting out.

Her laughter bubbled forth again, clearly finding my momentary vulnerability amusing. "She's just two years and a few months old, Ravel, and trust me, Daisy is very open to anyone, as long as you're kind to her. Just remember to smile a lot," she reassured me with a playful grin, dispelling my doubts with her gentle guidance.

I enthusiastically nodded in agreement, allowing Hazel to open the door and guide me inside. The moment we stepped into the living room, my heart was immediately captured by another human presence.

It was the unmistakable figure of Daisy, whose striking resemblance to me left no doubt about her identity. As she raised her head, her gaze first locked onto mine, and then she slowly shifted it towards Hazel. In that fleeting moment, our eyes connected, but she quickly turned her attention back to Hazel. Her face lit up with an infectious, radiant smile, her eyes brimming with warmth.

I fought to suppress any twinge of pain that may have surfaced from the realization that my daughter seemed indifferent to my presence. It wasn't her fault, after all. This was her first time seeing me. In a burst of excitement, Daisy exclaimed, "Mama!" before rising to her feet.

Hazel's whispered reminder to "remember to smile at her" echoed in my ears as the adorable little girl rose to her feet and dashed over to Hazel. In Hazel's arms, Daisy was met with a shower of affectionate kisses, which, in turn, evoked joyful giggles from her.

I observed their endearing interaction, patiently awaiting Hazel to take the lead. I understood that she wouldn't introduce

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me as her father just yet; Daisy was still a young child, and we would let her come to that realization on her own.

After countless kisses and a chorus of giggles, Hazel gently redirected Daisy's attention toward me. I summoned the widest, warmest smile I could muster. In this moment, it was the most precious offering I could provide: my smile, love, and support.

Hazel, speaking in a tender tone, inquired, "Would you like to say hi to mommy's friend?"

A shy nod from Daisy signaled her willingness, and Hazel gently lowered her to the floor. Kneeling to her eye level, I placed one knee on the ground, ready to make her acquaintance. To my pleasant surprise, Daisy extended her tiny hand for a handshake, a gesture that caught me off guard. I glanced briefly at Hazel, who nodded in encouragement, urging me to accept the gesture. With gentle care, I enclosed her delicate hand within my own.

"I am Daisy," she introduced herself softly, her innocence and charm shining through.

My already wide smile couldn't help but broaden further. "I am Ravel," I replied, offering my own introduction. "I'm Mummy's close friend."

She glanced at Hazel briefly before returning her gaze to me, her curious innocence shining brightly. "Closer than Uncle David?" she inquired innocently.

I fought to maintain my smile, determined not to let any other emotions surface. It irked me to think that David was even a point of comparison in my daughter's mind, especially since he had no rightful claim to the title of "uncle." "Yes," I affirmed, "closer than David."

I took a gentle step forward, requesting, "Can I give you a hug?" Daisy looked to Hazel for approval, and upon receiving a nod, she inched closer. Her tiny hands encircled my neck as my larger ones enveloped her delicate frame. It was an embrace that filled me with overwhelming emotion.

Daisy's sweet voice whispered in my ear, "Are you feeling sad? Mama said to give hugs to people when they're feeling sad."

My eyes welled with tears, touched by her kindness. "I am happy," I whispered in response, answering her question. "I am overly happy, which is why I requested a hug." Tears rolled down my cheeks. "I am happy to finally meet you."

Daisy's curious gaze fixed upon me as she confessed, "I've seen your pictures in Mama's room." Her revelation caused my eyebrows to shoot up to my hairline, a mixture of surprise and intrigue washing over me.

I turned to Hazel, a smug expression playing on my lips as I inquired, "Have you?"

Daisy nodded in confirmation, but the smugness quickly faded when Daisy continued, "But your pictures make her sad. She cries a lot every time she

stares at them.”

The revelation struck a chord, leaving me somewhat disarmed by the emotional impact my actions and betrayal seemed to have on Hazel.

Before the conversation could delve further into uncomfortable territory, Hazel intervened, taking Daisy’s hand and gently guiding her away. “I think you have said enough.” She redirected her attention to the other lady in the living room, inquiring, “Has she had dinner yet?”

The young lady nodded and responded, “Yes ma’am, she had dinner a while ago.”

Hazel’s phone rang from her purse, and she retrieved it, stealing a quick glance at the screen. In that brief moment, I managed to catch a glimpse of the caller’s identity – none other than David. Hazel politely excused herself to take the call, leaving me to engage in a delightful storytelling session with Daisy. She regaled me with countless tales of princesses, towers, and wicked witches, which kept me thoroughly entertained.

As time passed and Hazel failed to return, I decided to entrust Daisy to her nanny’s care temporarily and set off to find Hazel. My search led me to the hallway, where I discovered her engaged in a heated argument with David. Respecting their privacy, I chose not to eavesdrop, even though my curiosity gnawed at me, and I quietly returned to the living room.

Thirty minutes later, Hazel returned to the living room. Despite her efforts to maintain a relaxed demeanor for Daisy’s sake, I could discern that something had unsettled her. “Is everything okay?” I inquired, studying her closely.

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She nodded and settled down beside me, her eyes fixed on Daisy as she played with my Rolex. “If you can stay for one more hour, you can read her favorite bedtime story.”

I chuckled, recognizing the story she was referring to. “The one about the wicked witch who locked the princess in a tower?” I asked, and Hazel joined in with a soft chuckle.

“She already told you the story?” she asked, and I nodded in confirmation. Her response was reassuring. “Well, that’s good news.”

“Yeah?” I inquired.

Hazel nodded and affirmed, “It means that she likes you.”

Chapter 96

DAVID

PRESENT TIME

I was acutely aware that she wasn’t residing in Seattle, long before I stumbled upon the news of Ravel Southwark’s reconciliation with his ex-wife, confirming my suspicions about her absence from Seattle. The rekindling of their

relationship deeply vexes me, leading me to question whether I've been excessively indulgent in expressing my affection for her. Perhaps it's time to convey the depths of my devotion, to make her comprehend the extent to which I'm willing to go in pursuit of her love.

Countless sacrifices have been made to bridge the physical gap between us, and numerous painstaking efforts have been invested to earn her trust. I am resolute in my determination not to squander all that I've worked so hard to attain.

My frantic pacing came to an abrupt halt as I fished out my phone and initiated the call to her number. My nerves were in disarray as I anxiously nibbled on my fingernails, desperately awaiting her response. It wasn't until she finally picked up that I realized I had been holding my breath.

With a sigh of relief, I exhaled and couldn't help but let out my frustration.

"Why on earth did you let the phone ring for so long before answering?!" I snapped, my concern tinged with a hint of suspicion. Was she with him? Was that why she hadn't immediately answered my call? "Hazel?!"

Her response was measured but laced with irritation. "If you don't stop shouting at me, I might just disconnect this call," she warned softly, though I could discern her underlying agitation – a testament to how well I knew her. I composed myself, taking deep breaths in an attempt to regain my composure. "Why didn't you pick up immediately when I called?" I inquired once more, this time with a gentler tone.

Hazel's response was measured. "I did answer your call, David," she emphasized, her voice carrying a hint of exasperation. "I merely took a few moments to step away before responding. It's not like I missed your call or anything."

But the notion that she had stepped away to answer my call struck a nerve.

"You're with him, aren't you?" I hissed, my frustration getting the better of me.

"Why the hell did you need to move away to take my call, Hazel?"

"Stop yelling at me, David!" she snapped back, her voice rising in pitch. "I don't know what's gotten into you tonight, but if you

don't calm down, I'm going to end this call. Consider this your final warning, David."

My fingers clenched around the wine glass so tightly that it snapped, shattering into countless pieces, some shards piercing my skin. Yet, the physical pain was inconsequential compared to the emotional turmoil I was enduring. "Is Daisy there with him?" I pressed, my voice laden with dread.

Hazel let out a weary sigh. "Why did you call me, David?"

Confirmation of Daisy's presence with him lingered unspoken, a silence that spoke volumes. Ravel was indeed with Daisy. What kind of facade were they

attempting to create? A façade of a blissful, harmonious family?

“Goodnight, Hazel,” I muttered before abruptly ending the call. Continuing this conversation would only lead to saying things we both regretted. I had invested too much to let Ravel undermine all my efforts.

Taking swift action, I went online and booked the next available flight to New York. My objective was clear: I needed to meet with June to ascertain if she had any concrete plans. If not, I was fully prepared to take matters into my own hands, as I had done countless times before.

Upon touching down in New York, I promptly called June, urging her to meet with me. She appeared genuinely surprised that I had made the trip. After she provided me with an address to meet at, I wasted no time and headed there.

As I spotted her car from a distance, I slid inside and closed the door with determination. “Do you realize that Ravel and Hazel have been spending time with their daughter Daisy?” I blurted out.

June raised an eyebrow, a sly smile playing on her lips. “I had no idea you were so fond of her,” she noted with a teasing tone.

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“You think I traveled all the way from Seattle to New York just to hear your vague hints?” I hissed, my patience wearing thin. “Do you have any concrete plans in motion?”

Her grin widened, and she nodded confidently. “Very soon, Ravel will be mine,” she declared,

I pressed further, my frustration mounting. “What’s your plan?”

She casually rubbed her hand over her stomach. “I might be carrying Ravel’s child as we speak.”

My eyes narrowed in suspicion. “You’re not even sure.”

Her response was tinged with annoyance. “I would have been sure if you hadn’t called me out of the blue.”

With a heavy sigh, I turned to look out of the window. “Do you genuinely believe Ravel will marry you just because you might be carrying his child?”

She shrugged nonchalantly. “The heart is a fragile organ, and the best time to penetrate it is during its vulnerable state,”

I fixed her with a stern glare. “Get to the point,” I demanded.

She smirked, her eyes gleaming with a devious glint. “Ravel is elated about the prospect of having a child,” she began, her voice taking on a chilling tone.

“I intend to take that child away from him, and when his heart is broken over the loss, I’ll fill the void with my own.”

My eyes widened in shock and anger. “Are you out of your mind? You think I would ever let you harm Daisy?”

She rolled her eyes dismissively. “If Hazel were to lose Daisy, she’d be heartbroken and shattered,” she continued, her plan unfolding before me.

“Use that moment of her vulnerability to plant your seed in her. Let’s see how their relationship survives if I’m carrying Ravel’s child, and she’s carrying yours.”

Her ruthless scheme left me speechless, torn between anger, disbelief and the urge to have Hazel all to myself.

SEND GIFT

COMMENT

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Chapter 97

RAVEL

THREE YEARS AGO

The relentless messages from the anonymous sender were escalating the tension, leaving me exasperated. Raymond entered my office, his expression mirroring my own frustration. As he pulled out a chair and settled into it with a frustrated sigh, his face tightened with annoyance.

“You wouldn’t mind if I helped myself to a drink, would you?” he asked, nodding toward the glass on my desk. I shook my head, granting silent permission. He seized the glass and downed its contents in one swift gulp, his irritation palpable.

“I can’t recall the last time I felt this infuriated,” he muttered angrily, running his fingers through his hair as he struggled to make sense of the disturbing messages.

“I am taking your reaction as you didn’t find anything tangible on who that bastard is right?”

Observing his weary nod, it was clear that Raymond had hit a dead end in his pursuit: “The sender is crafty, operating from a gaming center,” he confirmed, his frustration echoing my own. “But interrogating college and high school students seeking refuge from the rigors of life and school is neither practical nor ethical.”

“Have you checked the CCTV footage?” I inquired, hoping for a breakthrough. He nodded solemnly. “I’ve reviewed the footage thoroughly. There’s no discernible pattern. No new faces showing up when the messages are sent, nor any recurring visitors to the gaming center at those times.”

My frustration intensified, and I rubbed my temples, pondering the motive behind this relentless harassment. “What could this person possibly gain from driving a wedge between Hazel and me?” I mused aloud, shaking my head in disbelief. “I don’t have any crazed exes, and the ones from my past have long moved on to families of their own. Who could be behind this juvenile game?”

Raymond’s uncertainty hung in the air like a heavy cloud. “I wish I had the answer to that question, boss,” he admitted with a heavy sigh. “Rest assured,

someone is actively investigating this, and we won't rest until we uncover the identity of the culprit."

Returning to my work on the laptop, I sensed Raymond's lingering gaze upon me. Raising an inquisitive eyebrow, I prompted him, "Is there something you'd like to share?"

He cleared his throat before cautiously speaking, "What if, just a big 'what if, it's Mrs. Southwark?"

I couldn't hide my astonishment. "My mother?" I echoed, the idea seeming almost absurd.

Raymond nodded earnestly. "It's no secret that she has reservations about Hazel being your wife, and we haven't heard much from her since that accident," he leaned in closer. "For all we know, she could have arranged for someone to harass you through those texts, hoping you'd become so concerned for Hazel's safety that you'd contemplate divorcing her."

My skepticism regarding Anne's involvement remained evident in my scoffing response. "Anne can't be that naive," I retorted, my disbelief in her capacity to think I'd divorce Hazel over such trivial messages apparent. "I'll arrange for someone to discreetly keep an eye on her. If she is truly the mastermind behind this, she's bound to slip up one day."

Acknowledging my decision, Raymond began to rise from his seat, ready to depart. However, as he made his move, my phone emitted a distinctive ping. Reacting swiftly, I picked up the device and noticed the familiar sender's name, prompting me to halt Raymond in his tracks. "Wait!" I called out, causing him to pause and pivot back towards me. "Hold on a moment, they've sent another message."

Raymond's curiosity was piqued as he slipped his hands into his pockets, waiting for details. "What does it say?" he inquired.

Expecting a similar text to the previous ones, I opened the message, only to be confronted with an unexpected surprise: a video. My brows furrowed in perplexity. "It's not a text," I informed Raymond, who promptly closed the gap between us, eager to witness the content of the video.

Clicking on the video, we watched it play out. The video contained when Hazel was screaming at her ex-boss Harrison. That bastard is already dead, why am I watching a video of him?

<<<"What the fuck is your problem?!" she spat at him. The fool tried to approach her but she glared at him, grabbing the artifact next to her. "If you dare come close to me again, I am going to smash your head with this artifact and I am going to crush your balls with it after slicing your throat.">>>

Raymond cast a quick, knowing glance my way. "Could this possibly be what I suspect?" he queried, his eyes reflecting a mix of concern and curiosity.

I responded with a subtle nod, affirming his suspicion. "I believe this is the

video capturing the day Harrison attempted to sexually harass her.” My voice quivered with a potent blend of anger and frustration. “If only that vile individual were still breathing, I would have personally administered justice. But why, in the name of reason, would this imbecile send me such incriminating evidence?”

Raymond, just as bewildered, raised his shoulders in a helpless shrug. “We’ll need to get to the bottom of this enigma. I’m certain the sender’s motives will be unveiled in due time.”

Almost as if anticipating Raymond’s declaration, my phone emitted a subtle ping, heralding the arrival of another message. from the mysterious sender. Raymond leaned in closer, eager to decipher the incoming text.

Raymond’s gaze remained unwavering as we both stared at the chilling image displayed on my phone – a case report detailing Harrison’s gruesome demise. According to the report, he had met a brutal end with his head crushed by a familiar object. Next to the text was a photo of that very artifact, the same one Hazel had once used to threaten him. The document continued, detailing how Harrison’s assailant had subjected him to further horrors, smashing his genitals with that same object before ultimately ending his life by slicing his throat open with a butter knife.

Silence hung heavily between us, no words necessary to convey the grim understanding that had settled upon us both. The implications were clear. My phone pinged once more, breaking the eerie stillness. This time, a new image emerged, depicting Hazel holding the very butter knife mentioned in the report, accompanied by a chilling message.

HARRISON DIED ACCORDING TO HOW HAZEL THREATENED HIM AND THERE IS A PICTURE OF HER HOLDING THE MURDER WEAPON THAT SAME DAY. THIS WILL MAKE A VERY GOOD CASE IF TAKEN TO THE COP. YOU HAVE THREE DAYS TO GIVE HAZEL THOSE DIVORCE PAPERS OR I WILL TAKE ACTIONS. P.S I KNOW YOU WERE THERE THAT NIGHT WITH YOUR BODY GUARD. I AM SURE THE AUTHORITIES WILL ALSO WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU WERE DOING THERE AND WHY YOU DELIBERATELY STAYED AWAY FROM THE CAMERA.

A cold sweat drenched me, mirroring the ominous weight of the situation. Raymond, equally defeated, found his way around the table and sank into a chair. He voiced the unease that had settled upon us both. “What’s the plan, bossman? He’s got a pretty damning case.”

I ran my hand down my face, struggling to make sense of this twisted web. “If Hazel claims he tried to assault her, they’ll question why she never reported it to the authorities. Their assumption will be that she’d already taken matters into her own hands.” The situation was a nightmarish tangle, a real possibility that she could be wrongfully convicted. “I need you to track down that ba

stard, Raymond. They're out to destroy our happiness."

Raymond's shoulders slumped as he absorbed my decision. "I'm truly sorry, boss, but given the circumstances, it's going to take considerably longer than three days to track down that individual. We need to come up with a more comprehensive plan."

I leaned back in my chair, my mind racing with the implications of what I was about to do. "Give my lawyer a call," I reiterated, emphasizing the gravity of the situation. "Instruct him to prepare the divorce papers, starting the process with

Hazel."

Raymond's eyes widened, disbelief etched across his face. "You're really going through with this? Divorcing Hazel?"

With a heavy sigh, I confirmed my decision, determination burning in my eyes, "I have no choice, at least for now. But once we locate that despicable person, I'll do everything in my power to reunite with my wife."

Raymond's expression darkened, and he shook his head with a heavy sigh.

"Boss, you know Hazel won't sign those divorce

SEND GIFT

papers

without a solid reason. She's not going to let go easily."

A sense of remorse and pain surged within me as I realized the harsh truth.

"I'll do whatever it takes to make her sign them," I declared firmly, my resolve unwavering. "Even if it means resorting to things that will make her despise me. We have to protect her from this threat, no matter the cost."

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Chapter 98

HAZEL

PRESENT TIME

I've been residing in the city of New York for the past three days, and it saddens me deeply that Eleanor remains in a coma, her condition unchanged. While I navigate my professional commitments through the virtual realm, it is Agatha who gallantly conducts our in-person meetings.

To be candid, my communication with David has grown sparse lately.

Following our conversation three nights ago, I've chosen to maintain some distance. I refrain from pestering him for updates on his work, knowing well his competence and capability to handle his responsibilities without a hitch.

Agatha, too, hasn't voiced any grievances regarding his performance, reinforcing my belief that everything progresses seamlessly on his front.

What brings me a sense of relief, amidst these trying times, is that Daisy's school is presently on holiday. This temporary respite ensures I need not

concern myself with her missing any school days during this challenging period.

During my three-day tenure of visiting the hospital, fortune has favored me by preventing any chance encounters with Anne. Our initial meeting at this very hospital upon my arrival left much to be desired. Yet, I scarcely paid her any heed at the time, as my primary concern rested upon Ravel and his well-being. Now that I've ascertained his mental and emotional stability, I find myself ill-prepared to endure her potential barbs, hence my gratitude for our impeccable timing-I make a hasty exit before she arrives.

Raymond interjected with a remark that lingered in the air, "One of these forthcoming days, I must carve out a moment to meet your daughter. From the images I've seen, it's quite evident that you and Ravel have brought a truly beautiful child into this world."

I responded with a warm smile. "Indeed, there's plenty of time, so if you can't manage it now, there will always be opportunities later." I understood his reluctance to leave Elenor's side completely. My gaze briefly shifted towards Ravel, contemplating that if our roles were reversed, I, too, would find it challenging to be away from him.

However, as fate would have it, the door to the hospital room swung open, revealing Anne's presence. I couldn't help but lament my luck; it seemed that just thinking about her moments ago had jinxed the situation. Oddly, everyone in the room, including Raymond, seemed to disregard her presence.

Uncertain whether I should join the silence, I opted to offer a modicum of respect by acknowledging her, even though she hardly deserved it. "It's nice to see you again, Anne," I greeted her with a forced politeness.

Anne's harsh words pierced through the air as she took her seat, fixing a glare upon me. "Perhaps you should cease with the pretense, so your well-wishing for Elenor might actually hold some effectiveness," she retorted.

I could feel her glare burning into me. "I'll keep that in mind," I murmured, biting my lower lip and averting my gaze.

Before the tension could escalate further, Ravel stepped in. "How about we step out for a coffee?" he proposed.

I welcomed the idea enthusiastically. "Yes, please," I replied, reaching for my purse and rising from my seat. Ravel's hand gently rested on my waist, and I couldn't help but notice Anne's eyes tracking the movement.

Anne, with an air of detachment, offered a parting comment. "Don't be gone too long. Your sister might awaken and want to see you,"

Ravel met her remark with a composed stare. "I would dearly love for my sister to wake up, but I don't believe my face will be the first she wishes to see upon waking. That face is already here in the room with her."

In that moment, three pairs of eyes bore into Raymond, who skillfully feigned

detachment by immersing himself in his phone. Anne's derisive scoff nearly provoked a chuckle from me. It seemed that her children had sworn off the idea of accepting any partner she might choose for them.

Kavel guided me out of the room and directly to his car. With chivalry, he held the door open for me before taking his place behind the wheel, starting the engine. His words carried a weight of sincerity. "You've been dealing with this for ages, and I'm sorry that I haven't been able to rectify it."

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Chapter 98

I raised an eyebrow, puzzled. "What are you talking about?"

"Anne," he clarified. "I'm sorry she spoke to you like that."

I dismissed his apology with a wave of my hand. "It's okay. I've grown accustomed to her hostility, and it no longer affects me."

Ravel maintained a sense of responsibility. "Nevertheless, I should apologize," he muttered as he steered the car out of the parking lot.

I reassured him once more, feeling unfazed by Anne's behavior. In fact, I found it more amusing than anything, and at times, downright childish.

Someday, I thought to myself, I might just respond in kind. "It's alright, Ravel. I'm not upset," I assured him. "Could we head to a coffee shop that's quite far from here, though?" I'd rather avoid any chance of bumping into June.

"Of course," he agreed, taking us to a café located far from the hospital, his office, and his home, where the likelihood of encountering June seemed slim.

Just as he parked the car, I gazed out the window and spotted someone unexpected. My brows furrowed in confusion. "Isn't that David?" I murmured to myself. I couldn't help but wonder what had brought him to New York.

"Did you say something?" Ravel inquired with curiosity.

Disregarding his question, I hastily retrieved my phone and dialed David's number, all while keeping a close eye on him as he climbed into a taxi. After a few rings, he finally answered.

"Hazel?" he greeted.

"Are you at your office right now?" I inquired, urgency in my tone, and waited anxiously for his response.

His reply was swift, though it was evident he wasn't being entirely truthful.

"Yes. Why?"

"I've been trying to reach Agatha, but she's not answering my calls," I fibbed, keeping my tone steady. "Could you please give her the phone or let her know to call me back?"

David, still not being entirely truthful, responded, "Agatha is currently not in the building. I believe she stepped out to grab some coffee. However, I'll make sure to convey your message and have her call you back when she returns."

"Alright, thank you," I replied, swiftly ending the call before he could offer any further explanations. Questions swirled in my mind. Why was he lying about being in New York? What was he concealing, and why?

SEND GIFT

Chapter 99

RAVEL

PRESENT TIME

I appreciate Hazel's presence here in New York, yet I harbor a profound aversion for the circumstances that brought her to this place. It has now been three long and arduous weeks since Eleanor fell into a deep, ominous coma. In the somber confines of the hospital, the medical professionals offer their reassurances, assuring us that all will eventually be well. They emphasize that her prolonged unconsciousness is not a harbinger of despair.

Optimism is the fragile lifeline we cling to during these trying times, for there exists no other recourse. Hazel has essentially taken up residence in the hospital, steadfastly remaining by Eleanor's side until Anne arrives. Only when Anne arrives in the evening does Hazel consider bringing her day to a close. As the night unfurled, mirroring countless others, I steered her car towards her home. In the dimly lit parking lot, I silenced the engine and turned my gaze towards Hazel, drawing her full attention to me. "There's been something weighing on my mind all day," I confided, my words laced with concern.

"Please don't misunderstand me, but I can't help but your business. You've been here for three weeks now, hasn't it had an impact on your work?" worry about

Hazel responded with a nonchalant shrug, then gently shook her head. "It's moments like these that make us appreciate technology," she remarked, her smile radiant. "I've managed to keep my business afloat from here, and considering the cancellation of the exhibition, there hasn't been an overwhelming workload to contend with, anyways."

My brow furrowed in concern. "You canceled the exhibition?" Hazel nodded in affirmation, and a pang of sympathy coursed through me. "I'm genuinely sorry that I couldn't be of any assistance." However, I couldn't help but think about the repercussions Warren and the others would face; they were certainly going to hear from me.

Hazel's response was resolute. "I'd rather bear the legal fees than contend with a potential exhibition failure," she whispered, her voice unwavering. "I'm choosing to view this as one of the risks inherent in the world of business management."

I stared at her intently, admiration swelling within me for her pragmatic outlook. "I'm immensely proud of you, Hazel," I murmured, my heart swelling

with pride. "You've transformed into a successful businesswoman with an exceptional mindset. I couldn't recall feeling prouder of anyone. Leaning in, I gently cupped her jaw. "You promised you'd handle this on your own, and you've done just that."

A radiant smile graced Hazel's face. "I know, right?"

"Come closer," I whispered softly, drawing her into a warm embrace. Her hands found their place around my neck, and T held her close, our whispers shared in this intimate moment. "If it ever becomes too overwhelming for you to handle, don't hesitate to lean on me," I murmured, my voice filled with sincerity. "I know you're more than capable, but I want to be there for you."

"I will," she whispered in response, her voice a delicate promise. "Just don't disappear when I start bringing all my problems to your doorstep."

I chuckled affectionately. "Never," I assured her. Pulling back slightly, I cupped her cheek tenderly. "May I kiss you?" I inquired, seeking permission. Her parted lips and audible breath seemed to grant the answer I sought. Without further hesitation, I leaned in and gently pressed my lips to hers, sealing our connection with a sweet, affectionate kiss.

In that suspended moment, I remained perfectly still, granting her space and time to decide how to proceed. Her silence spoke volumes, and as she didn't resist, I initiated a gentle movement of my lips, savoring the exquisite taste of her mouth. The elation that surged through me was indescribable when she met my kiss with a fervent response, her lips dancing in beautiful synchrony with mine. My hand, substantial and warm, cradled her cheek, angling her head to perfection as our kiss deepened. Tracing my finger slowly along her neck, I felt the rapid tempo of her pulse beneath my touch, a testament to the intensity of our connection.

Encouraging her to part her lips, I tugged gently at her lower lip, inviting her to open when she did, my tongue fought with hers, seeking dominance as we licked the corners of our mouth.

After what seemed like an eternity yet passed in the blink of an eye, Hazel gently withdrew. Her breath still ragged, she leaned in, resting her forehead against mine. "Ravel," she whispered, her voice barely audible, "what are we doing here? Why am I in this car, sharing a kiss with a man who has a woman waiting for him back home?" She reluctantly pulled back.

I licked my lips, savoring the lingering taste of her presence. My gaze locked

onto Hazel's, and in that poignant moment, I reached a resolute decision.

"Tonight," I declared, "I'm going to end things with her."

Hazel couldn't help but roll her eyes, a hint of skepticism in her expression.

"And why is that?" she retorted, a teasing tone tainting her words. "Is it because you want to keep indulging in these stolen moments without the weight of guilt?"

I met her gaze with unwavering sincerity. "No," I confessed, my voice carrying the weight of my intentions. "It's because I've chosen to deal with the situation without risking losing you." Memories of almost losing her to David haunted me, and I had no desire to relive that heartache.

Her frown deepened as she probed further, her eyes searching mine. "What situation?" she pressed, her curiosity apparent.

I sighed, a heavy weight of guilt settling upon me. "It's not important," I deflected, avoiding her question momentarily. "I know I've caused you immense pain, Hazel, and I'm genuinely sorry." My gaze dropped to the floor briefly before returning to her, filled with remorse. "If I could turn back time and change my choices, I would, but since that's impossible, I'm committed to making amends." I took a breath, steeling myself for the next step. "And the first step is ending things with June."

Hazel continued to study me closely, her expression contemplative as if trying to decipher something. "I still don't quite understand, Ravel," she confessed, folding her arms and blinking slowly. "Why did you cheat? Did you truly love June?"

I hesitated briefly, torn between complete transparency and sparing her the sordid details. I don't want her to get back to me just because she sees me as her hero.

Ultimately, I chose to be honest. "Hazel," I confessed, my voice carrying a hint of regret, "June was merely a ploy to coax you into signing the divorce papers. I didn't have any genuine feelings for her."

She fixed me with a searching gaze, her brow furrowed. "But you did have sex with her in our bedroom?" she pressed, her voice trembling with a mix of anger and hurt.

It didn't go beyond the point where I found myself with her nipples in my mouth, As I tried to explain myself, I desperately added, "I know this won't bring you any comfort, but please believe me when I say I never f ucked her that night or any other night after."

Her eyes narrowed, filled with anger and hurt. "It doesn't matter if you didn't physically penetrate her," she retorted sharply,

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her voice laced with pain. "To me, it's all the same thing." Her words hit me

like a ton of bricks, making me realize the gravity of the situation. If the roles were reversed, and I had discovered her in a similar position, with another man's lips on her nipple, I would undoubtedly consider it a betrayal of our relationship.

Unable to hold her gaze, I stared at her purse which was resting on her thigh. "I'm sorry," I apologized, my voice tinged with sincerity. "What can I do to make things better? To make you forgive me?"

She sighed, weariness evident in her eyes. "Just focus on being a good father to Daisy," she replied, her voice carrying a mixture of resignation and hope. She attempted to open the car door, as if eager to put some distance between us, but I couldn't let her go just yet. I reached forward and grabbed her arm, stopping her from leaving.

"I am absolutely committed to being a good father to Daisy," I reiterated, my grip on her hand firm but gentle. "I'll give her all the love and care she deserves, more than my own parents ever gave me. But what I truly want to understand, Hazel, is what it will take to be a good husband to you again." She gently withdrew her hand from my grasp, the brief connection severed. "Good night, Ravel," she whispered softly. This time, I didn't intervene as she opened the car door and stepped out.

She took a few steps away from the car, and I couldn't let her leave without one last declaration. Rolling down my window, I poked my head out. "Hazel Blacks!" I called out, and she halted, turning around to face me.

"I won't give up until I have 'Southwark' attached to your name once more!" I declared with determination. A few people in the parking lot couldn't help but react, offering cooing sounds of approval, which only served to embarrass Hazel further. I couldn't help but chuckle as she buried her neck deeper into her coat to hide her blush. "I love you, Hazel Blacks!" I proclaimed, the words echoing in the night air.

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18+

RAVEL

THREE YEARS AGO

The looming deadline set by the mysterious sender for delivering the divorce papers to Hazel falls upon us tomorrow. I've already consulted with my attorney, who guarantees that the necessary paperwork will be prepared by then. I can honestly say I've never feared a day with such apprehension in all my years.

In the midst of my unease, the bathroom door slowly swung open, revealing Hazel draped in a luxurious, pristine-white towel. She teasingly dangled a container of body lotion before me, her eyes pleading, "Could you do me a

favor and assist with my back, darling?”

Absolutely not. “Come closer,” I whispered, fully aware that this might be our final opportunity for such intimacy in the foreseeable future. Hazel gracefully settled beside me on the bed, placing the body cream in my hand and turning to present her back, the towel gradually falling away.

I pressed a tender kiss onto her exposed skin before commencing with the lotion, my fingers working with gentle dedication, melding it into her supple flesh. My hands continued their sensual massage even after the cream had been applied.

Sensing the weight of our impending separation, I leaned in, kissing her back with a gentle fervor. “Hazel,” I uttered in a low, impassioned voice, “I love you more than words can convey.” She turned to meet my gaze, and our lips met in a passionate kiss. “My love for you is so profound that your absence feels like a suffocating void,” I confessed, breathlessly.

Tonight, consumed by an overwhelming sense of suffocation, I couldn’t bear to take things slow with Hazel.

Tonight, the air was heavy with an undeniable urgency, as if every breath threatened to suffocate me. Hazel’s lips crashed against mine, a desperate hunger mirroring my own desires. Fingers trembling with anticipation, she fumbled to undo the buttons of my shirt, while I hastily discarded the remaining towel that clung to her body, carelessly discarding it onto the cold floor.

In our shared frenzy, we moved with a clumsy eagerness, our bodies entangled in a dance of passion. As she forcefully removed my shirt, I struggled to free myself from the confines of my pants. Yet, before I could fully disentangle myself, Hazel’s hands found the waistband of my boxer briefs, her determination evident. With a subtle lift of my hips, I aided her in removing the final barrier, allowing our desires to intertwine without restraint.

As soon as my throbbing cock is released into her delicate, velvety hand, a surge of electricity courses through my veins. I instinctively pulled her towards me, my hand reaching around her to hold my cock as she glided down over my length. With a powerful thrust, I penetrated her from below, causing a symphony of pleasure to escape our lips in perfect harmony.

“Rav...” she moaned, her voice a mixture of ecstasy and disbelief. “I’ll never cease to be amazed by your incredible size.”

Our mouths collided in a passionate frenzy, our tongues dancing in sync with our bodies. Her nails dug into my bare chest, leaving a trail of fiery sensations in their wake. My fingertips dug into her hips, guiding her with a primal urgency, urging her to ravish me with an intensity that matches my own. The sensation of being enveloped by her warmth and tightness is unparalleled a sensation that transcends any other pleasure known to man.

I adore the intimate connection I share with my wife, but it is her radiant smile that truly captivates my heart. It is a smile that lights up my world, a smile that brings me immeasurable joy and contentment. In that moment, as our bodies intertwine and our desires intertwine, I am reminded once again that nothing compares to the sheer bliss of being with her.

As I slid my free hand between us, I sought out her clitoris, eager to provide her with a moment of intense pleasure. The sound of her moaning my name only fueled my desire, knowing that I wouldn't be able to hold on for much longer. It was inevitable that I would soon release myself inside her.

As I skillfully rubbed her clit in firm, circular motions, her pussy tightened around me, a clear sign of her pleasure. The sensation elicited a hiss of satisfaction from me, prompting me to thrust my hips with even more force. In response, she bit

down on

my lower lip and ran her fingers down my chest, leaving a trail of sensation in their wake.

"Come for me, Hazel!" I urged, my voice filled with a mix of desire and urgency. "I need you to climax before I embarrass myself in front of my wife." The intensity of the moment pushed me to the edge, and I could already feel myself teetering on the brink of release.

With a smile pressed against my lips, she moved her hips in perfect harmony with my touch on her clitoris. A loud moan escaped her, signaling that she was on the brink of ecstasy. Skillfully pinching her clitoris just the way she adored, I was rewarded with the sight of her body convulsing as she experienced a powerful climax. Her lips formed my name, escaping in a wild screech as pleasure consumed her. The intensity of her cries drove me to the edge.

Leaning in, I sucked on her neck with enough force to leave a mark, marking her as mine. At the same time, my body tensed up, my balls tightening.

Grinding against her, I let out a deep groan as I released my seed, ensuring that she took every last drop.

As she wrapped her arms around my neck, she hugged me tightly, and I found myself burying my nose against her flesh, inhaling her unique, sweaty scent. I couldn't resist licking her salty skin, branding her with my teeth. In that moment, I felt a surge of desire, hardening again like a teenager.

The thought of surviving without her seemed unbearable. With her in my arms, I effortlessly

flipped her over, and we tumbled onto the bed. Our lips met in a deep, passionate kiss. I swiftly discarded my pants, which had pooled around my feet, and then I slowly entered her once more. As I stared into her eyes, I made sure to remind her of my love, hoping that she would remember this when I inevitably came begging for her forgiveness in the future.

We indulged in hours of teasing, tasting, and pleasuring each other. It felt as if I couldn't keep my desire at bay, constantly craving her. The hours passed by, until eventually, both of us grew tired and satisfied.

As Hazel finally drifted off to sleep, her breathing became steady and calm. It was clear that I had exhausted her completely. I gently placed a kiss on her forehead, feeling the steady beat of her heart against my bare chest.

Leaning in closer to her sleeping form, I whispered softly, "I'm sorry, Hazel. I'm sorry that our plans didn't unfold the way we had hoped." I kissed her once more, my lips lingering on her skin. "I promised you a fairytale marriage, but now I find myself on the verge of offering you a messy divorce."

A single tear escaped my eye, tracing a path down my cheek. I let out a bitter chuckle, quickly wiping it away. "How is it possible for a man to make love to his wife for hours, only to find himself shedding tears the very next moment?"

As she stirred, I carefully inclined my neck to check if her slumber remained undisturbed. Enchanted by the serenity of her sleeping visage, I couldn't resist the urge to capture the moment, reaching for my phone to discreetly snap a photo.

With a sigh, I whispered softly to her, my voice laced with regret, "I genuinely hope that someday, against all odds, you might find it in your heart to forgive me, even though I am well aware that I don't deserve it in the slightest."

I was resolute about one thing, though. As I watched her lying there, vulnerable and naked, wrapped in peaceful repose, I made a silent vow to myself. "No matter what the future holds, even if you find solace in the arms of another man," I thought, "I will fight relentlessly until I have you in this same tender embrace once more."

Hazel stirred once more, her eyes gradually parting to gaze sleepily upon me. "How are you still awake?" she mumbled, her tiredness evident as she struggled to keep her eyes open.

I couldn't help but smile down at her, leaning in to plant a gentle kiss upon her forehead. "Go to sleep, Hazel," I softly urged.

Returning my smile, she nestled herself more snugly against my body. With a resigned sigh, I closed my eyes, attempting to coax sleep to embrace me, even though I knew it wouldn't come easily, if at all.