

## Chapter 51 - Divorced Heiress

The stylists finished styling my hair and doing my makeup. When I saw my reflection in the mirror, I felt really satisfied with the result.

The brown waves of my hair rested on my left shoulder, leaving my right ear visible adorned by my sapphire and diamond earring that my mother gave me. The simple makeup highlighted my facial features, making my long eyelashes look even longer and giving my lips a reddish shade. Everything was perfectly balanced, without being extravagant.

I couldn't be happier with the stylists' work. They understood what I wanted very well and did it in record time.

Abby and my mother couldn't stop complimenting me on how good I looked, and I returned the compliment before going to find Jack to go over tonight's activities just minutes before leaving.

Even though I already knew what I had to do, it didn't hurt to review all the information on my tablet as many times as I deemed necessary.

My father was waiting in the living room, talking to Vincent, while Michelle continued talking on the phone at the mansion door.

I arrived in the room with Abby, Jack, and my mother. The two men didn't hesitate to tell us how perfect we looked, although I could see a bit of sadness and disappointment in Abby's eyes when she saw that Vincent didn't even look at her, though it was obvious that he was doing it on purpose.

Okay, I understand that he was upset with her for how forward she was last night, considering how serious and proper he was, but he could have at least greeted her out of politeness.

I didn't want to meddle in other people's affairs, but seeing my friend so down, I felt like having a serious conversation with my cousin. I didn't intend to force my friend on him, but I would like to remind him of how chivalrous he had always been and that pretending Abby didn't exist was very impolite on his part.

My father assigned us our respective cars. He would go with my mother, Michelle and Jack would go with me, obviously to finalize our plans, and as luck would have it, my friend would go with Vincent. I gave her a subtle look of complicity when my father announced that, and her trembling arm linked with mine as if she was about to faint.

"It's all yours. I hope this time you don't ask him irrelevant questions." I encouraged her as Vincent left the mansion completely serious, ready to leave at any moment. Abby nodded, regaining composure as she took a dramatic breath and followed the man in the black suit.

Before leaving with my two companions, I said goodbye to Tristan, who was standing sadly at the mansion's entrance. I couldn't stay too long saying goodbye or I would end up changing all the plans. I hugged him and left countless kisses on his adorable face, immediately boosting his mood. I left him in Maga's arms before hurrying into the van and heading to the first event of the week.

I was nervous, yes, but I tried to calm myself down while studying the names of some important American brands that would be present and qualified to start a project with Doinel.

I turned off the tablet screen after pressing the dismiss button when the name of Lancaster Collection appeared as one of the top and most important American brands with which I could start a successful collaboration.

Disqualified.

It would be the last company I would start a project with. For the comfort and well-being of everyone, it was better to discard them for future collaborations. Working with Lancaster Collection would be a total and absolute hell, not only for me but also for my son. It would not be pleasant for Amelia and Gina to approach him; they wouldn't hesitate to unleash their venom, even though he was just a child.

I didn't want my son to be around unpleasant people.

"But, Ms. Petit, Lancaster Collection is one of the best options. Working with them would be very beneficial, it's a guaranteed success." Michelle spoke beside me, realizing that I had completely dismissed the best option among all the high-end fashion brands on my tablet, and I gave her a fleeting look.

Yes, she was right, and it wasn't very professional of me to mix personal matters with work, but I would do whatever it took for Tristan's peace of mind. I was terrified of the idea of my son becoming a victim of the attacks from the Lancasters, just like they did to me for years.

"Do you want to do the work for me, Ms. Boyer? We haven't received any proposal from Lancaster Collection, which means they're not interested in working with us at the moment. We have projects to review, I won't divert my attention to a company we would have to convince instead of convincing ourselves for collaboration. It's not the only brand nor the best in the country." I replied sharply, making everything clear and wanting to leave the subject there, feeling a bad taste in my mouth just from hearing that surname.

However, Ms. Boyer seemed like she wanted to push my buttons with what came out of her mouth next.

"Is that it, or is it because your ex-husband is the president of Lancaster Collection? Did your marriage end so badly? Will you keep hiding from him for the rest of your life? Oh, of course. You don't want to face Mr. Alexander or let him know you got pregnant by another man."

I looked at Michelle with a raised eyebrow, maintaining an impressive calm. Her destructive words didn't affect me because they were far from reality, and I had no reason to respond to her ill-intentioned questions.

Clearly, she wanted to ruin my night by bringing up a past that had been buried six feet underground for years, and I wasn't going to allow it. She had no right to meddle in my private life or my affairs.

"If you're so interested in my private life, you can schedule an appointment with Jack. I'll give you an exclusive interview about my life for you to publish in your gossip magazine. Is there anything else, Ms. Boyer?" I asked calmly, with a fake smile on my face.

Michelle, offended, opened her mouth in a perfect 'O' And then closed it, remaining silent for the rest of the way, as she should have been from the beginning.

She better not dare to meddle in my affairs. If Lancaster Collection wasn't offering to collaborate with Doinel, it wouldn't be me who would take the initiative. And if they offered themselves at the last moment, it would be discussed in a board meeting until a decision was made, where she clearly wouldn't be invited.

Breathe, don't let anyone ruin this night.

Soon, I thought about Abby's question again, as if I were a complete and total masochist.

If Alexander found out that I had a child with him and hid it from him for more than three years, he could claim his rights as a father. Not only that, but he could also start a legal process to take away my custody of Tristan, which would require me to find the best lawyer.

No. No, no, no. He wouldn't do that, right? He wouldn't take him away from me, wouldn't separate me from the only good thing he left me. Just the thought of my life without my son's company and laughter made my stomach turn.

No, definitely not. Nobody would find out about his existence, for Tristan's sake.

Chapter 30 Honey-colored eyes part 2

## Chapter 52 - Divorced Heiress

The car stopped in front of the hotel where the opening show would take place. A crowd of fans and journalists were outside waiting for the arrival of some public figures to photograph. Michelle was the first to step out of the car when the door on her side opened. Jack followed her, and he offered me his hand to help me out carefully, adjusting the wrinkles in my dress.

The flashes immediately went off upon my arrival and increased when a handsome and elegant chestnut-eyed man approached, dressed in a stylish gray suit, an impeccable white shirt with not a single wrinkle, and a black tie that matched his olive skin very well. The authentic smile adorning his face made him look even more handsome than he already was.

His eyes traveled from head to toe as he scrutinized me carefully before taking my hand and placing a kiss on the back, as if he didn't care that our names would probably be in the headlines tomorrow.

"You look incredibly beautiful, Ms. Sarah. You'll steal the show with your mere presence." Paul said with a sparkle in his eyes. He looked at me as if I were the most impressive thing he had ever seen in his life, and my cheeks blushed automatically.

I knew Paul arrived at the event hours in advance to do his respective work, but I couldn't have imagined that he would be waiting anxiously for me at the hotel entrance, to receive me in the most gentlemanly way in front of everyone. Every move was being captured by the cameras, and apparently, he didn't care in the slightest.

"Thank you, Mr. Dubois. You look very elegant tonight." I responded to him with the same cordial tone he used with me, and he let out a silent chuckle while looking at his outfit.

"I have my reasons. " He said with complicity and a half-smile. The heat rose to my cheeks as I remembered the date we would have after the banquet, I had no idea where we were going and that made me somewhat nervous.

Before I could even ask him a question, my parents appeared, interrupting any word that was about to come out of my mouth. They greeted Paul and a few seconds later, my attention turned to the newcomers.

Vincent got out of the just parked truck with a serious expression, without a hint of grace, and offered his hand to Abby to help her out. She had a smile from ear to ear, looking at the journalists like a diva, as she hooked her arm with my cousin.

By the way they both left the house, each on their own, I could tell that Abby, in her own way, forced Vincent to behave like a gentleman tonight, or he was acting on his own to keep up appearances in front of the media.

I disliked either of the two options, but I didn't want to dwell on it too much.

I turned my attention to my father, who ordered us to pose for the cameras. The flashes almost blinded me, but I didn't stop smiling without showing my teeth, while Paul held me by the waist.

"It would be a crime if your image doesn't appear on the cover of magazines tomorrow. " Paul whispered in my ear before discreetly kissing the top of my head.

I gave him a look without responding, the corners of his lips were slightly curved, forming an almost non-existent smile. He shifted his gaze from the cameras to me and gave me a genuine smile that made me smile.

My smile vanished when I saw the car that had just parked at the entrance, a few meters away from us. Amelia got out of the back seat of the Range Rover wearing a red dress, and barely waited a second to smile at the only journalist who noticed her.

My curiosity was aroused when the man in the passenger seat hurried to take out a wheelchair, but I didn't want to see anymore when I realized that the dark-haired, honey-eyed man I detested was yet to come out. Maybe he stubbed his pinky toe and that was why he needed a wheelchair.

"We should go inside." I said to Paul, turning my gaze back to him as I hooked my arm with his.

"Your wish is my command." Paul replied, ready to guide me inside the hotel, but my father stopped us before we took a single step.

"Before we go in, I would like to pose with my wife and my vice president. I hope you don't mind if I borrow her for a few seconds, Paul." My father said, extending his hand for me to take and I quickly glanced at the newcomers.

I didn't want to run into them, especially not in this moment in front of so many cameras, although it seemed inevitable, as Amelia approached slowly on one side of the wheelchair being occupied by Alexander, who looked physically very different from the last time I saw him in Paris.

Seeing him didn't even make me feel anger like I had imagined before, I felt nothing for him, not even a hair moved.

"She's all yours, Mr. Doinel." Paul's voice made me look back at my father and I let go of Paul's arm to position myself between my parents and smile at the cameras.

"I don't want to ruin this moment." I muttered under my breath for only my parents to hear.

"But Alexander just arrived with his mother and they're approaching."

My mother couldn't hide her reaction as soon as she found out and turned her head towards the entrance, checking that they were just a few meters away from joining us. My father, on the other hand, remained calm, smiling at the cameras like a gentleman, although I could tell that his muscles were tense.

"They better not mess with you, because there are still scores to settle and I wouldn't mind settling them in front of the cameras." My mother spoke with anger but didn't erase her smile, as she looked away from the Lancasters.

"Dear, don't lose your composure over a family without manners. Tonight, we're going to enjoy our first family night at Fashion Week. The day will come when they'll have to swallow their venom when they find out who Sarah really is." My father murmured, glancing sideways at the pair of people who were about to reach our side.

"And who is Sarah? We all know that she is a gold digger, tell me something I don't know." Amelia intervened in the family conversation in a low voice, but loud enough for only us to hear.

I looked at her with an arched eyebrow without losing my composure, her words no longer affected me at all, she could keep saying whatever she wanted about me.

I gave a quick and bitter look to Alexander when he looked at her with a furrowed brow and clenched fists on his legs, his muscles tightened, at the same time his breathing became heavy, it seemed like he wanted to say something, but something was preventing him.

Whatever happened to him to end up like this was not my business, however, I could see something different in him when his eyes met mine, the shame and the sparkle with which he looked at me made my pulse quicken. I looked at his mother, dissipating the slightest feeling in my chest through her honey-colored eyes.

"Who is this rude lady?" Asked my mother, evidently annoyed, and I gave her a look so that she wouldn't even bother exchanging words with Amelia, it was not worth it.

"If you know me so well, then it shouldn't matter to you, nor should you meddle in other people's conversations, did you leave your manners at home?" I calmly replied, without erasing the slight smile.

Her face twisted at my response, and before she started spewing her venom, a hand passed around my waist, and I knew it was Paul by the exquisite fragrance of his perfume.

"Shall we go in, Sari?"

I lifted my face to look at him when he asked that question that would save me from the unpleasant presence of the elder harpy and her shameless son.

"Of course." I replied before linking our arms, while he took my purse to carry it for me.

"With your permission, enjoy the event."

I turned around and walked in silence, with cheeks burning with anger, next to Paul into the interior of the hotel, while I held onto the train of my dress so as not to stumble.

Once we arrived at the hall where the opening fashion show would take place, I exhaled the air I had unknowingly held, Paul caressed my hand resting on his arm and gave me a reassuring smile, although it wasn't enough to get over that ordeal with that pair.

I didn't realize how spectacular the place looked until Paul guided me to the reserved seats for Doinel, which were being occupied by Abby, Vincent, Michelle, and Jack, only my parents were missing, who walked behind us in complete silence, Paul and me.

I sat in my respective seat and furrowed my brow upon seeing a male figure standing on the other side of the catwalk.

My head nearly exploded thinking how it was possible for him to be there talking with Gina and Mike, if just a moment ago he was outside with Amelia, and in a wheelchair!

I must be hallucinating.

I needed a break from the Lancaster family or I would end up going completely crazy.

Chapter 31 Closing cycles.

## Chapter 53 - Divorced Heiress

During the opening show, I dedicated myself to admire each design that passed in front of my eyes. I had forced myself to set aside the Lancaster family and everything related to them, in order to focus on what was truly important, so I didn't see any of the family members again.

With my mother, I shared opinions about some striking designs, how well the models wore them, and the quality of the fabrics; there was definitely a lot of potential on the runway.

My father looked serious, and I would have thought it was his expression at these types of events, if it weren't for him telling me before the show started, "We'll talk at home."

I didn't ask or say a word about it, because I knew it was referring to the unpleasant encounter with Amelia and her son. Since then, he hadn't hidden the displeasure on his face about how I was treated by my ex-mother-in-law, and rightfully so. I could see the lecture coming; I deserved it for enduring her for years without doing anything to defend myself.

Foolish.

"Okay, I don't want to distract you or anything, but the one who shall not be named hasn't stopped staring at you since he arrived. He must be dying inside seeing what he lost for a bitch."

Abby whispered in my ear from the seat behind me. Despite the loud volume of the live music, I could hear her clearly.

I didn't even dare to search for the man with my gaze; he wasn't worth it.

He stopped mattering to me a long time ago; I no longer felt anything for Alexander. My heart didn't skip a beat, and my hair didn't move anymore.

His actions took care of killing any feeling with the worst betrayal. I wasn't going to tolerate, let alone forgive, infidelity. Adding to that, the gems of his mother and sister, I was more than done with the Lancasters.

I got over him, it was difficult to completely remove him from my heart, but the wounds healed thanks to Tristan and the unconditional love from everyone around me. The only thing I could feel for Alexander now was pity.

"Let him keep looking at whatever he wants, I don't care at all." I responded indifferently, not taking my eyes off the models showcasing the Spring-Summer collection from Lancaster Collection. I couldn't deny that they excelled with the designs they were launching.

Paul noticed what we were talking about and glanced at Abby while squirming in his seat, trying to get comfortable.

"I know you don't care about that jerk at all, and I congratulate you for it, but I'm curious. Do you know what happened to him? Did he have an accident or something? He looks very different, even his skin is paler as if he hasn't seen a little sun in his life." My friend whispered again, unaware of the discomfort she was causing Paul as she gossiped openly.

Now that she mentioned it, I realized that I was not the only one who had noticed a big change in Alexander, especially that he was using a wheelchair.

I couldn't resist Abby's contagious curiosity and discreetly looked at the seats on the other side of the runway until I met a shining gaze that conveyed tenderness and warmth, something I hadn't seen before from him. It made my skin tingle, and a tingling sensation lodged itself in my stomach. I wanted to slap myself for allowing myself to feel whatever it was I was feeling with just his gaze.

I shuddered as a chill ran down my spine and felt compelled to quickly look away from the dark-haired man who almost managed to intimidate me. I had no idea why he was looking at me like that. Maybe it was because of guilt or maybe it was because I refused to accept Gina's apologies.

Whatever it was, it made me really uncomfortable.

"I have no idea what happened to him, and I repeat, I couldn't care less." I returned my attention to the new models coming out one after another, trying to erase that lingering gaze from my mind.

"Do you know what seems strange and has made me think more than usual? It's that in the latest news I saw about him, he wasn't in a wheelchair and looked as he always did, with his athlete's body and cold gaze. That man over there even seems tender, with no malice in his eyes. Is it perhaps a weird marketing strategy?" Abby kept talking about that man who kept staring at me from the other side, and I turned my head to give my friend an expressionless look.

Although it also made me curious, as I thought I saw a different Alexander from the man in the wheelchair, nevertheless, I didn't dwell on the matter as much as Abby did, and I preferred it to remain silent, considering the subject closed, as I didn't have answers to her questions.

In what language should I tell her that I didn't care?

Where could I find the power button?

"Abby, could you please be quiet? Sarah has already told you that she doesn't care, let's enjoy the show, that's why we came." Paul scolded her, giving her a stern look, and only then could the topic of my ex-husband be dropped, allowing her to settle into her seat in complete silence.

I expected her to complain in her mind about her brother's interruption.

"I hope you don't mind that I intervened." He whispered apologetically near my face, while he took my hand on my crossed legs and I gave him a smile without showing my teeth.

"On the contrary, thank you for making her quiet, this is not a good time for her antics." I whispered back to him, and he smiled before kissing my knuckles, causing a tingling sensation to run through my arm, reaching my neck.

I ignored that feeling and once again focused all my attention on the show in front of me without further interruptions, and without letting go of Paul's hand, it somehow made me feel comfortable with its soft and warm touch.

Chapter 31 Closing cycles part 2

## Chapter 54 - Divorced Heiress

Some time later, the show came to an end, giving way to the presentation of the designers and representatives of each brand featured in the opening show. It was obvious that Alexander would make an appearance on the runway at this point, and honestly, I wanted to savor the beautiful experience of the Spring-Summer designs, I didn't need to see more.

I had already set my sights on the good work of the brands that wanted to work with Doinel, and that was more than enough. At the banquet, I would personally introduce myself to each of them

and also congratulate them on the great work they have done. Along with Jack and Michelle, we would find the best options for collaboration.

"Shall we head to the banquet? I can't stand another second sitting down." I asked my parents before I started feeling uncomfortable again at the thought of crossing paths with Alexander, when he made his appearance. Just thinking about that look from a moment ago...

"Of course, we've seen enough." My father's words felt like they had a double meaning, but I didn't pay much attention to it, as we would have a serious and long father-daughter talk when we got home.

"Whoever wants to stay is free to do so, we'll go ahead to the banquet." My father announced to the entire Doinel team. To my surprise, everyone stood up from their seats except for Michelle, who wanted to continue enjoying the show.

Paul offered me his arm as we got up from our seats, and I took it before following in my parents' footsteps to the banquet hall, leaving behind the opening show that had come to an end for tonight, along with the negative vibes I suddenly felt.

"You can't stand Alexander's presence, can you?" Paul spoke as soon as we crossed the exit door. It sounded more like an affirmation than a question.

I wasn't obligated to answer Paul, however, I wanted to clarify my situation before starting the week he asked for to get closer to each other. After all, if I thought about opening my heart again, Paul was the most suitable person, and I didn't say that because of his persistence or his obvious interest in me, but because I felt it in my heart.

"I can't stand the Lancaster family's presence in general, they have all hurt me in their own way, yet I'm happy to divorce them before it was too late." I calmly responded as I walked at a reasonable distance from my parents.

No member of the Lancaster family was exempt from entering the list of people who hurt me, including Alexander's grandfather, whom I only encountered twice during my time as Mrs. Lancaster.

Obviously, Amelia had a lot to do with the old man looking at me as if I were inferior, like a despicable being, barely acknowledging my presence and not taking the time to truly get to know me. Everyone let themselves be influenced by my blank family background.

"When you say 'too late,' what do you mean?" He curiously asked, looking down at me, and I didn't find it difficult to respond, "Tristan."

If the Lancaster family had found out about my pregnancy, my son would have been born into an unpleasant family environment. Amelia alone would have prevented him from becoming the happy and loved child he had always been. I was relieved that my son didn't have to go through what I went through because of my foolishness and compliance.

"The Lancasters wouldn't have allowed me to divorce with an heir on the way, and not for the happiness of a new addition to the family, but because of what people would say, and if they did allow it, it would be with the condition of me giving up my child. It would have been very tragic."

"Do you plan on telling him someday?" He asked, catching me off guard and avoiding the question for a long time. I knew Alexander had the right to know, but the fear of losing him overwhelmed me.

"I don't want to talk about it, it's complicated." I replied with no desire to continue discussing the Lancasters. Did everyone agree to bring up this topic again?

"Okay, I understand. However, I think you should close those chapters. I know this trip is just for business, but I would like you to return to Paris with a weight lifted off your shoulders, not only for me or my intentions to be with you, but for you, for your peace of mind." He said. I let out a bitter laugh and looked at him with a furrowed brow.

Closing chapters? That was absurd.

I did that the moment I signed the divorce certificate.

Why was he saying this to me?

"Paul, I closed those chapters years ago." I replied simply, containing the urge to laugh in his face at the nonsense he had just said. The truth was, the topic was starting to make me uncomfortable.

"That's what I thought until I saw how tense you were when you saw your ex-husband again, and because you preferred to leave the opening ceremony before seeing him representing his company. I know you have your reasons, but if you had closed those chapters, you wouldn't have felt anything for him when you saw him again." He said calmly, before entering the banquet hall where people were already seated at their reserved tables.

I looked at him amused, although inside I was starting to get exasperated by the topic that wouldn't lead us anywhere.

"I didn't feel anything for him." I said irritated and disgusted just at the thought of making the mistake of feeling something for Alexander again.

That was not going to happen again. It would be very foolish of me to fall into the hands of a man who knew nothing about loyalty and respect, a man who stopped loving me if he ever truly loved me. I didn't need his breadcrumbs; I deserved more than that.

"Don't get me wrong, honey. I'm not talking about feelings of love, nor am I insinuating that you're still in love with him because I know you're not. I'm talking about resentment, bitterness, hatred, and anger that you still carry within you. Are you going to tell me you don't feel all or

most of what I just mentioned?" He asked. I stopped to think about it more calmly, brushing off the discomfort that talking about the Lancasters caused me, and even letting pass the way he called me honey.

Finally, I nodded my head, agreeing with him.

Of course, I felt anger and disgust just by looking at him. I couldn't even hear his name without the resentment rising in my chest uncontrollably.

"What could I feel after finding out he was cheating on me with my supposed friend? It's the worst betrayal." I replied, feeling a bad taste in my mouth as I recalled the moment I caught them in Alexander's office.

How unpleasant.

Paul offered me a chair at the table reserved for Doinel, and I sat down delicately. Paul was about to sit next to me, but before that, he leaned in, placing his hand on the table, and looked at me intently as he spoke.

"So, you can't say you feel nothing for him. I know it was devastating for you, but do you think you can look at him and not feel the slightest discomfort in your chest? Why don't you give it a try? If you let me, I can help you close that chapter." He said with a smile, leaving me motionless in my seat and above all, pensive.

Would I ever be able to look at Alexander without feeling boiling anger?

And if that were the case, what was Paul supposed to do to help me?

Chapter 32 The problems are approaching.

## Chapter 55 - Divorced Heiress

Paul took a seat, leaving the topic unfinished, when the guests began to arrive. However, he couldn't stop thinking about his words.

The only thing he could do to "close" that cycle was to talk to Alexander, but he had nothing to talk to him about that wasn't about Tristan, and honestly, he was terrified.

Michelle arrived at the table, ten minutes after leaving the event hall. I frowned at her almost nonexistent smile, after having a sour face all night.

I preferred not to give importance to Ms. Boyer and listened attentively to the welcome speech and gratitude from the event hosts, leading to the toast. With a smile from ear to ear, I clinked glasses with each and every member of Team Doinel.

I enjoyed the sweet fruity taste of the sparkling champagne before my assistant appeared in my field of vision.

"Ms. Sarah, it's the right time to greet the representatives of the brands interested in collaborating with Doinel, you tell me where we start, I have the list prepared." Jack appeared by my side, impeccably dressed in his suit and with his champagne glass in hand. I nodded my head as I placed my glass on the table.

"Of course! Let's start right now. I'll be back in a moment, Paul." I informed my companion before getting up from my seat with grace.

"Good luck, Sari." Paul said, settling into his chair, and I responded with a smile.

I turned to Jack, scanning the room and searching for the candidates who truly surprised me with their designs tonight.

"How about we start with..." I left the words hanging in the air when my father intervened, coming to my side.

"Please, Jack, could you wait a few minutes before starting the work? I would like to dance this piece with Sarah, it's my favorite, I hope you don't mind, it won't take long." My father said with a smile from ear to ear, offering me his hand.

I looked at him surprised and shook my head slightly, letting him know that I didn't agree with dancing tonight. Nonetheless, he remained firm and I knew there was nothing that would change his mind, he would dance with his daughter, whether I liked it or not.

"Of course, it's not a bother, Mr. Doinel, it's all yours. I'll be waiting, Ms. Sarah." Jack replied, stepping back to clear the way for us towards the dance floor, where other couples were already dancing to the rhythm of that melodious live piano and violin piece.

Resigned, I took my father's hand and let him guide me.

"I haven't danced this type of music in a long time, I think I've lost practice. I hope I won't embarrass you." I joked as we arrived at the center of the dance floor, at a reasonable distance from the other couples.

"But what are you saying, you don't need practice, you've inherited your mother's good dancing legs, besides, I wouldn't mind making a fool of myself if it's with my Sari."

My cheeks blushed at my father's kind words and he quickly placed his hand on my waist to start our dance.

I looked with a smile at my father's face as we swayed back and forth to the soft music. It had been years since I danced with my father and I admitted that doing it again filled me with joy. It reminded me of those times when he taught me to dance in his office while his favorite piano pieces played.

Now, years later, we were at such an important event, sharing a special moment that I didn't realize I had missed.

My dress swayed gently as I followed the steps of my father, who danced very well for his age, until the rhythm of the music increased, causing my father to spin me on my heels.

"I've noticed that Mrs. Lancaster doesn't like you at all, it's not the first time she has treated you like that, am I right?"

I looked at my father expressionless and remembered Amelia's words when we met at the entrance.

I felt bad for not telling my own father about that information, but I knew he wouldn't like to know how I was treated by those people in the past. I preferred to keep it to myself rather than disappoint him with my foolishness, and now, he had found out on his own and I was starting to regret not being honest from the beginning.

It wasn't right to keep that information to myself, but what could I do about it? Nothing. I could only handle any attacks from the Lancasters on my own, and so far, I was doing well. Otherwise, they wouldn't have bothered to call me to apologize.

"Father, can we leave that subject for later? I want to enjoy my first important event alongside the best man that could exist." I said, embarrassed to be discovered by my father, and in such a way.

"I'll let it pass just this once because we have a pending conversation when we get home. There are many things I would like to discuss with you, and it's not about the company."

I remained silent because I already knew that the conversation would be about my ex-husband and his family.

"What about Paul? You're going to meet after the banquet, or at least that's what a little bird told me. He's making a good effort to please you."

"Mr. Doinel! How nosy you are tonight." I pretended to be indignant and my father chuckled.

"I like Paul." I confessed before spinning on my heels again.

"I know you like him, but not in the same way he likes you. I'll tell you just one thing. Paul is a good guy, and I'm not saying that just because he's the son of my best friends. However, don't

feel pressured to accept being his partner if you don't feel it. He must respect that. You don't always get what you want, and... Oh no. Problems are approaching."

I was so focused on taking mental note of his advice that I felt confused when he said that last part while looking behind me.

I looked at my father with a furrowed brow, completely puzzled, and soon understood what he was referring to.

"Mr. Leonardo Doinel, Ms. Sarah Petit. I'm sorry to interrupt you after such a great show, but I would like to talk to you about business. Lancaster Collection is interested in cooperating with Doinel."

My steps abruptly stopped upon hearing that cold male voice that seemed so familiar, the voice to which I was once addicted and now found so repulsive.

Unintentionally, I tightly held my father's hand, as if I could stop myself from feeling angry at his blatant presence, and I turned around to meet his cold eyes that still had a certain sparkle but remained arrogant.

Chapter 33 To talk?

## Chapter 56 - Divorced Heiress

His honey-like gaze pierced mine, causing a wave of heat to run through my body. I looked at him indifferently and with annoyance for interrupting such a special dance with my father. Now I realized that his gaze was nothing like the tender one he used to transmit; it was completely different.

I must admit that I was surprised to see him standing there, with more color in his skin than when I last saw him a few hours ago. So Abby's conclusion during the show made sense.

A strange marketing strategy.

Or perhaps it was a miracle.

Whatever it was, it didn't prevent me from feeling upset by his presence. However, what surprised me the most was seeing him accompanied by Michelle Boyer, who still maintained a smirk on her face, the same one I saw when she arrived at our table after staying longer at the show. Then I understood why his demeanor had changed.

He stayed at the show to speak with Alexander about the projects we had in mind. Now he knew that Doinel was analyzing the best proposal from the best brands of the night for a collaboration. This was a golden opportunity for anyone, as the advantages outweighed the risks, not to mention that the lucky brand would become known worldwide in no time.

It seemed that Ms. Boyer wanted to meddle in my work, and I was starting to think that bringing her along was not a good idea when clearly I could do her job without any problem.

"Mr. Lancaster, you could have waited until the dance was over. You interrupted a very important conversation." My father said next to me, with his cheeks visibly red, intervening before I said anything disrespectful.

I took a deep breath and loosened my grip on my father's arm. I knew very well that we would soon be face to face, so I had to face this unpleasant encounter like a professional. After all, I was here for work. If Ms. Boyer thought that this would disturb my peace, she was very wrong.

"Don't worry, Mr. Doinel. Please, follow us to a more suitable place for our conversation." I spoke calmly and gently pulled my father's arm to lead him off the dance floor and join the couple who interrupted us, to the first empty space I saw.

"I imagine that Ms. Boyer has given you all the details about the project, right?"

I looked at Michelle with one raised eyebrow, and her smile disappeared immediately when she realized my father was looking at her with a furrowed brow.

I turned my gaze back to Alexander, waiting for a response, and caught him discreetly scanning me from head to toe, making me uncomfortable.

"Yes, Ms. Boyer has informed me that you are looking for the best American brand to collaborate on the launch of the next four collections. Lancaster Collection is a very solid company. It has been considered the best haute couture company. The designs and quality are better than any presented tonight. Both of us would benefit from a collaboration."

Alexander seemed excited about the idea of working with Doinel. After all, he had always admired the great Leonardo and seen him as an example to follow, so collaborating with Doinel would be like a dream come true.

And a nightmare for me.

I glanced at my father, who was processing Alexander's words. He looked displeased with what Michelle had done, but at this moment, there was nothing he could do, as we had agreed that if Lancaster Collection presented their proposal, we would make a decision in a board meeting.

"You are underestimating the work of others, Mr. Lancaster. Plus, we don't have your proposal to compare it with the other options. It's not even possible for us to consider it, no matter how good

your company may be." I said coldly and indifferently, holding onto the few hopes I had left to definitively dismiss Lancaster Collection from the project.

Alexander sketched a smug smile, and I knew he wouldn't sit idly or give up easily. I looked at him impassively, waiting for him to play his last card.

"You're wrong, Ms. Petit. My assistant will be responsible for delivering our proposal to Ms. Boyer in a few hours. I hope there will be impartiality in choosing the most viable option." He replied, not wiping away that annoying smile that was starting to irritate me.

How was it possible that Michelle sought him out to discuss the Doinel project?

How dare he challenge me like that?

Your company might be named the best in the country, but if the board of directors considered there were better options than Lancaster, it wouldn't be my fault.

"Ms. Boyer, how attentive." My father said, looking at the woman standing beside Alexander, and she turned red. I could see her embarrassed face, and it was not unwarranted.

She did the opposite of what I told her.

I made it very clear that we were not going to take the first step for Lancaster to give us their proposal, and it was the first thing she did.

"In any case, I should send it to my assistant, Jack Laurent. Ms. Boyer should only deal with contract matters, am I right, Ms. Boyer?" I asked, giving her a stern look to show how upset I was with what she did. She nodded in response to my question.

"I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the high-quality designs presented tonight."

"Oh, thank you very much, and there's no problem with that. My assistant will get in touch with Jack Laurent. It was a pleasure doing business with you, Ms. Boyer." Alexander said, discreetly dismissing Michelle, who immediately understood that she was no longer needed.

"We'll be waiting. If there's nothing else to discuss, I'll take my leave. Mr. Doinel, I'll be greeting the representatives of the brands that were showcased on the runway. Excuse me." I let go of my father's arm.

I wanted to stay as far away from Alexander as possible. I despised his mere presence, I couldn't stand him. He was not even worth looking at.

Before walking back to the table, I stopped when I heard Alexander.

"Ms. Petit, before you leave, I'd like to talk to you." He said, and my body tensed upon hearing that. I looked at him expressionless.

Talk?

Chapter 34 One less weight off my shoulders.

## Chapter 57 - Divorced Heiress

I had nothing good to talk about, I still hadn't given him the green light for collaboration with Doinel, and I didn't think I would ever give it to him.

I was about to refuse his request, but my father hurried to speak, causing my indignation.

"I'll leave you alone, Sarah, don't take long, there's still a lot to do." He said, squeezing my hand before going to the table without waiting for me to say a word, because he knew I was going to refuse.

I knew very well why he was doing it, despite the fact that he didn't like Alexander at all, he never agreed with me hiding Tristan's existence from him. He hoped that I would tell him someday and he was taking advantage of this opportunity to let him know.

"Be brief, Mr. Lancaster." I said, dismissing the idea of mentioning Tristan, at least not on this occasion.

"I want to apologize for the altercation at Mike's bar, I have learned how things went and Gina is being punished." He said, with his intense gaze on my face, and I raised an eyebrow at the topic he was bringing up.

"I think I made it clear that I expect apologies from Mrs. Lancaster, she offended me, not anyone else. Don't you think it's unfair to speak on her behalf? If she's not here, it's because she's not willing to do it, so you shouldn't even accept her apologies if they're not sincere." I replied curtly, showing my disagreement with his intervention.

I knew Gina and her mother very well. Just as Amelia refused to apologize to me over three years ago when the scandal of the alleged infidelity on my part began, Gina was doing the same, pride prevented them, for them it was humiliating to submit themselves to the woman they treated as they pleased.

"I have no reason to lie to you, Gina refuses to apologize, however, on this occasion I apologize for myself. I have ordered Mike to demand an apology from you without knowing the facts

beforehand. I admit I have acted unjustly." My brow furrowed upon hearing his confession, and anger grew within me uncontrollably.

Of course, Alexander would take his family's side. That was why I never dared to tell him about the humiliations his family subjected me to.

"I hope you have learned to seek the truth before making any decisions, as you are always being a puppet manipulated by your own family. Don't worry, Mr. Lancaster, nothing new has happened with your sister." I said in a cold voice, repressing the contempt for the Lancasters that threatened to come to light in front of so many people.

Alexander seemed taken aback by my outburst of emotions, as if I were insinuating something he was unaware of.

That was exactly how it was.

"Sarah, I need you to answer a question. Has my family always treated you like that?" He asked, setting aside the way he initially spoke to me so cordially, now he seemed restless to know the answer, so much so that he started addressing me informally.

I let out a bitter laugh and looked into his honey-colored eyes which suddenly became shiny.

"Is that important now?" I responded with another question, unable to believe that he was so blind as to not realize that mistreatment was nothing new.

Alexander took a step towards me, the same step I took back to maintain distance.

"Answer."

I could sense a hint of desperation in his voice, as if the most important thing right now was to hear my answer.

"And if it were so, it's too late to do anything about it. You have chosen to be with Mrs. Rachel, you should worry more about her instead of asking me these kinds of questions. I'm sorry, but this conversation won't go anywhere. I have more important things to do." I replied, ready to leave and end the conversation that would only reopen wounds that were already healed, but Alexander lightly grabbed my arm, stopping any movement I was about to make, and I gave him a scathing look as I felt his touch burn my skin.

"Could you let go of me?"

"Sarah, Rachel's situation is something I would like to clarify with you, but my family, damn it, why did you hide it from me? I could..." I interrupted before he started with reproaches or regrets, it was too late for that.

"There's nothing to clarify, I know what I saw and I'm not asking for explanations, we are happily divorced. And... What do you mean, 'I could'? It was rare to see you at home, and when you arrived, the only thing I got from you was your indifference, how could I talk to you if you had more important matters in your office? And not to mention that you were devoted to your mother and your sister, whose side were you going to take? Your beloved family, or your wife whom you didn't even look at."

Without realizing it, I also started addressing him informally, revealing the reason why I preferred to hide it.

What I didn't mention was that I also did it out of love for Alexander, to avoid future confrontations with his family. I was so eager to be accepted that I allowed all of that, I was the only one to blame for not leaving on time, for not defending myself from the beginning.

Alexander's hurtful gaze didn't make me feel the slightest hint of remorse. He wanted an answer, and I was giving it to him with all the details.

"Sarah, no, it's not like that." He said, taking a step towards me again, and this time I didn't step back, because I wanted to look directly into his eyes before speaking.

"Be that as it may, we are divorced, I don't need explanations and neither do you. We are strangers, remember? I accept your apologies and I will be waiting for apologies from your sister." I took a step to leave, but Alexander grabbed my arm again, and I spoke before he could say a word. "Anything else, Mr. Lancaster? If it's about your proposal, you can rest assured, I won't mix personal matters with work. If the board decides in favor of your brand, I won't do anything to stop it. You should go back to your wheelchair, you looked better that way.

His confused gaze changed to an expression that I couldn't decipher, he seemed distressed and surprised.

"Not the wheelchair..." He started to say, but was interrupted by Amelia's voice, and I took advantage of his frustration to look at his mother and free myself from his uncomfortable and unpleasant grip.

"Don't tell me you came back to once again wrap my son around your finger, because let me tell you that you're wasting your time, did you already take every last penny from Paul Dubois?"

An unfunny smile adorned my face, and I raised my chin to look at her with annoyance.

"Mrs. Lancaster, I don't waste my time with such unpleasant people, starting with you. And just so you know, I don't need a man's money, I leave that to you, ma'am, since you are not capable of supporting yourself." I responded, satisfied with seeing her face distorted with anger.

"I think everything is more than clear, Mr. Lancaster." I said, turning my gaze back to Alexander, referring to his mother's behavior.

"With your permission."

Without waiting for another word, I walked away from the Lancasters, flaunting my high heels and ignoring the unpleasant heat that ran through my body, prioritizing the satisfaction I felt in returning the blow to Amelia.

I don't know if I should consider myself ruthless and frivolous, but I loved seeing the distorted and humiliated faces of the Lancasters.

After all, I managed to feel a little relieved, as if I had lifted a weight off my shoulders.

Chapter 35 Lancaster Brothers.

## Chapter 58 - Divorced Heiress

I finished greeting and exchanging a few words with the representatives of the brands tonight, some were friendlier than others, but it didn't stop the smile from disappearing from my face.

My ankles were starting to hurt and Jack and I decided to return to the table after congratulating Emma on her Spring-Summer collection, her company was the most qualified for the collaboration, after Lancaster Collection.

Being a few meters from Doinel's table, a slight bump on my leg made me stop in my tracks and turn around to confront whoever did it. I looked down at the person in the wheelchair, finding myself once again looking into their hazel eyes, but something was off. This wasn't the man I spoke to about an hour and a half ago.

This man was the one I bumped into at the entrance with his mother and the one I saw on the other side of the runway, I knew it from the sparkle in his eyes, from the tenderness in his gaze that sent shivers down my spine.

There were no traces of that cold and arrogant Alexander, in fact, now that I was looking at him more closely, I realized his hazel eyes had hints of green, his skin was paler, just as Abby said, as if he hadn't seen the sun in his life.

I pondered my words more than I should have before letting them out, I felt perplexed, very confused.

"Mr. Lancaster. Is there something that you don't understand?" I asked, feeling nervous under his intense gaze. He then moved his trembling hand away from the wheelchair's control to extend it towards me, waiting for me to shake it with mine.

"Sarah Doinel." He said in a hoarse and deep voice, barely audible. My body shivered before becoming completely still, while I looked at him with a furrowed brow.

Definitely, he was not Alexander.

Who was he?

How did he know that my real last name was Doinel?

"Who are you?" I muttered with a strained voice, feeling like my heart was about to burst out of my chest at any moment.

I looked at him, waiting for an answer, but it seemed like he struggled to say a word. His hand was still extended, and I didn't dare touch it, thinking that a Lancaster I didn't know seemed to know who I really was.

"Oh, no, don't even think about it. You won't ensnare my brother. There are plenty of candidates for you tonight, but don't you dare set your eyes on the Lancaster family. You're not welcome." Gina appeared, taking control of the wheelchair from behind the dark-haired man, preventing him from operating it with the buttons.

I looked at Gina, catching my breath, and although I wanted to defend myself once again against her, my mind went blank. I didn't even know what to say. I didn't know who this man was, even though I initially thought he was Alexander.

Did Alexander have a twin?

How did I never know?

I cleared my throat, dismissing the questions in my mind, and became agitated when I heard the voice of the unknown man.

"Gina, shut up!"

Gina's body tensed up and she looked surprised at the dark-haired man next to her, incredulously looking at his face.

"If you disrespect her again, you'll get to know me." He snapped, his face turning red, showing his annoyance with the woman by his side.

Something inside me stirred, leaving me unstable for a few seconds. I didn't know if I should feel satisfied with Gina's indignant expression or uncomfortable because the stranger was defending me from his own sister.

"Brother, you... you. I can't believe it."

I took a deep breath that helped me fully recover.

If I stayed close to the Lancasters, I would go crazy.

"Ms. Lancaster, again with the same topic? What makes you think I would be interested in your family again? Why don't you mind your own business instead of following me everywhere? I'm starting to think you've missed me." I said playfully, giving her an indifferent look.

Gina looked at me angrily and let out a bitter laugh.

"Of course! I missed you, but only to clean every corner of the house, because that's all you're good for, huh? What would people think of you if they found out that you were nothing more than a servant for the Lancasters? I assure you, they wouldn't even have considered you as Vice President of Doinel."

Gina had a smile on her face, as if she had hurt me with her words.

I raised one of my eyebrows and looked behind her with amusement on my face, then I looked back at the man in the wheelchair who was struggling to speak, holding Gina's hand tightly. But I didn't want to listen to him again; this was none of his business. I didn't even know who he was or where he came from, but at least now I knew he was Alexander's twin, someone I didn't know existed.

"That speaks poorly of the Lancasters, not of me, and at least I'm good for something, unlike you who is good for nothing but humiliating yourself." I said, feeling calmer after calming the nerves that the Alexander clone had stirred up. I half-smiled and looked at the figure behind Gina.

"Mr. Alexander, you're late to join the pleasant conversation."

Gina's smile vanished immediately and she turned to face Alexander's cold and hard gaze, the real Alexander, who had heard enough to answer the question he asked me hours ago.

"So, is that how you treated Ms. Petit?" Alexander asked, his voice as cold as ice, causing Gina to shiver and take a step back in fear.

"Alexander, no, let me explain to you, I wanted to apologize to her for what happened at the bar, but she started to attack me..." Gina blatantly lied in front of me and Alexander's twin, but she was interrupted by a stern voice.

"How dare you lie in front of me? Who has been responsible for this girl's education all this time? It's obvious that they have done a terrible job, what a disappointment, Gina." The stranger spoke with difficulty but so clearly and rigorously that it left his siblings speechless, not to mention Gina, who looked miserable and clearly affected by his words.

"What a relief to know that there is a sensible Lancaster." I said calmly, intervening in the touching family scene, with a hint of amusement in my voice. I had had enough of them, although I never knew the name of the third Lancaster.

"Excuse me."

I continued on my way to the table and this time I was not interrupted by a wheelchair, nor by a hand on my arm, nor by the voice of any of them.

I couldn't help but think about the twin who seemed to know more about me than I knew about him, and I didn't know if that could be detrimental to my father's plans.

The time to introduce myself as his daughter was near and we all wanted him to be the one to break the news. We had to take precautions or change our plans drastically.

As soon as I sat in my chair, Paul's worried voice caught my attention.

"Did they do something to you? Are you okay?" I nodded, pushing away my thoughts. I could only talk to my father about the matter and find a solution.

"Yes, I'm fine, don't worry." I glanced at the seats at the table and only Jack was focused on his cell phone, there were no traces of the others.

"When you tell me, I'll get you out of this suffocating place for you." I looked at him, putting aside the nerves that were bubbling in my system, and when I was about to tell him "right now." A male voice echoed throughout the banquet hall, grabbing everyone's attention.

I looked at the stage and saw Alexander next to his twin, furrowing my brow in total confusion and irritation.

How many more times would I have to see him?

He greeted everyone present through the microphone as he began a speech of gratitude and blah blah blah.

"Would you like to leave right now?" I asked when Paul took my hand on the table.

"Your wish is my command." Said a smiling Paul, as he stood up from his chair and pulled mine to help me.

I got up from my seat, ready to grab my things, say goodbye to everyone, and get lost with Paul to God knows where, when I listened carefully to Alexander's words from the stage.

"Anyway. Tonight, I publicly present my twin brother, who was in a coma for thirteen years. Alexis Lancaster."

What?

He was in a coma all this time?

Alexis.

Chapter 36 I would do anything for you.

## Chapter 59 - Divorced Heiress

The surprise of all those present was more than evident, even Jack, who was oblivious to everything and everyone, was astonished by the news that Alexander was giving on stage.

If the hall had been in complete silence, the collective gasp would have been heard.

The honey-green eyes of this person named Alexis met mine and a chill ran through my body. I held onto Paul's arm, regaining the strength that was threatening to leave my body, and I didn't understand why.

Questions began to swirl in my head, without taking my eyes off that man in the wheelchair, and the more I thought, the more I trembled.

Why did I never know of his existence?

Why was he hidden until this moment that he just woke up?

What was so grave that happened to him to end up like this?

Why did this stranger defend me from his own sister in that manner?

And the most perplexing.

If he was in a coma for thirteen years, how did he know my name and my real last name?

My real last name!

Not even Alexander knew it, and although I blurted it out the first time I saw him years ago, out of nerves from being caught by my escort in the underground race, he never remembered, and it was not surprising coming from Alexander.

My legs almost gave way, remembering the moment Alexis came to me to greet me with his trembling voice, as if it was difficult for him to speak. But if it was so difficult for him to utter a single word, how did he manage to reprimand Gina a moment ago?

Although he looked so fragile and tender, he had a strong character and power. I could say he surpassed Alexander himself, as he was able to put Gina in her place with the intention of defending me.

There was something about him that left me with a sense of intrigue and unease. I was taken by a powerful feeling of anguish mixed with surprise, and it was impossible for me to look away from the mysterious Alexis Lancaster.

"I won't go into details, as it is the Lancaster family's private life. Nevertheless, I take advantage of this important night to present him to the media and announce that, once he recovers, he will be part of the Lancaster Collection. You are seeing the face of the next vice president. Please applaud." I snapped out of my reverie when everyone applauded in shock at the bomb that Alexander just dropped, giving the media plenty to talk about.

No one expected this.

"Sari, honey, shall we go?"

I broke eye contact with Alexis when I heard Paul's calm voice and looked at him thoughtfully.

Now that I thought about it, I wasn't sure if it was a good idea to go on this date with Paul now that there was so much at stake. Knowing that Alexis knew me so well, I had to do something about it before it was too late.

I had to tell my father because the only solution I saw to this is to bring forward the presentation of the Doinel heiress to the media. I needed to stay to find a solution, but I also didn't want to be rude to Paul, especially when I agreed to go out with him without rejecting him.

"Yes, yes. Jack, I have to leave, please inform me if Lancaster Collection's proposal arrives." I informed my assistant, and paused when I was about to leave with Paul. I approached Jack, close enough so that no one could hear what I was about to say.

"The twin brother of Alexander knows my true identity. This can be detrimental to my father's plans. Try to find out something about that man, what happened for him to end up in a coma for thirteen years, where it happened, why they hid it, or how he knows my last name. What are his intentions? Anything! I need information. I ask you to inform my father about this and find out if the Lancasters are already aware of this."

Jack's dark eyes looked at me with concern, and I gestured for him to remain calm so as not to draw attention.

"Ms. Sarah, that is bad news. Mr. Doinel is the one who should release the news about his heiress. It would not be convenient for the media to find out from third parties. In my opinion, you should talk to your father first, and I will gather information about that gentleman. You know how counterproductive this can be."

Jack's opinion coincided with mine. It would be very imprudent on my part to leave and leave everything in chaos, risking my father's plans and his reputation.

I took a quick glance at Paul, who was waiting for me carefree, unaware of the disaster that needed to be stopped as soon as possible.

Behind Paul, I saw my father approaching the table with my mother, and I signaled him to come closer as soon as he laid his eyes on me.

"Mr. Lancaster never ceases to amaze me, he's a box full of surprises, a twin brother and no one knew, he hid it so well." My father said as he reached my side and I regained my composure.

"Well, he's not that different from us." I said, referring to how well he hid his daughter after the day they tried to kidnap me. Many said his heiress had been in Germany all this time, others said she was kept hidden on one of his properties unable to leave, and the last thing heard was that she was in a convent of nuns.

What imagination.

My father looked at me as if I had hit the nail on the head. Without further ado, I revealed the news that needed to be addressed.

"Alexis knows my identity. I don't know how, I had never seen him in my life. I was married to his twin brother and didn't know of his existence until now." I said, feeling suffocated by the situation, so much so that I almost raised my voice.

My parents were alarmed immediately, and I didn't know what to do. I felt that somehow it was my fault, but I didn't understand anything. This whole situation was very confusing. Only by talking to Alexis could I find out how he knew my last name.

Chapter 36 I would do anything for you part 2

## Chapter 60 - Divorced Heiress

My mother sat down in the chair as if her strength in her legs had disappeared suddenly. My father, on the other hand, remained unperturbed, although he couldn't hide the surprise on his face.

"How does he know? He just said he was in a coma for thirteen years. Are you sure of what you're saying?" My father asked calmly before taking a glass of champagne from the tray carried by a waiter.

"I am sure, and I have no idea how he knows. I ordered Jack to investigate it. I don't feel very comfortable with the situation, especially since he is a member of the Lancaster family." I said in a low voice as some people passed by us.

"Very well. Do you know what this means, Sarah? We have to expedite our plans. We can't wait for the launch of the first Doinel collection with the collaboration." My father said, releasing what he had been thinking from the beginning, and I let out a tired sigh. He looked at Paul, realizing he was still standing at a discreet distance, not interfering in our conversation.

"I know you have a date with Paul, but it's best to postpone it for now, at least until we can find out or resolve something by reaching an agreement. We can't allow the information to be revealed by third parties. We don't know with what intention and in what way they would do it. It's a task that falls on me." He said. I nodded my head, fully agreeing with my father.

"I'll tell Paul." I said, not having any other options at the moment.

"He will understand. It's not something that can be taken lightly." My father said as I passed by his side.

I approached Paul, and he smiled sideways when he saw me.

"You can't leave yet." Paul said, sounding more like an affirmation before I said a word.

"Paul, there have been some unforeseen events that need to be resolved before we leave. We can leave it for later or maybe tomorrow." I said. Paul took a deep breath, and I felt bad for what I was doing, but I had no other options.

I couldn't just leave as if I didn't care about the situation I was in and the one I was leaving my parents in.

"I understand. Do you want me to stay?" He asked after a few seconds of silence. Although I had changed all the plans, he didn't seem angry. He understood and didn't oppose at all.

"Of course, you're still my companion tonight." I said.

Paul nodded with a smile, and the desire to embrace him overwhelmed me. He was so good to me in many ways, still being that unconditional friend despite my behavior.

Without further thought, I plunged into his arms, and we embraced, regaining the strength and confidence I thought I had lost.

Without consulting my father, I approached the place where Alexis was after he came down from the stage with his brother. Unfortunately, he wasn't alone. Alexander was still with him as they greeted the guests, who showed their astonishment at the news.

It wasn't until Alexis noticed my presence that he distanced himself from Alexander without his notice and approached me as if he knew I was there for him.

I took a sip of my champagne, which I had served before leaving the Doinel team's table, attempting to clear my throat with the sweet drink. I did not take my eyes off of his eyes for a moment, and when his chair was in front of me, I asked the first questions without anesthesia.

"How do you know my name? Where did you find out? Or have you been investigating me? Did you tell your family?" I asked, appearing calm, although inside I was dying of curiosity and panic because of the information he had.

He licked his lips before opening them to speak with some difficulty, keeping the sparkle in his eyes that never seems to leave.

"You are Sarah Doinel. And no, I haven't investigated you, don't you remember that you told me?"

I furrowed my brow, feeling even more confused than I was a moment ago.

When did I tell him? I had no idea of his existence, how could I have told him?

Unless in his state of coma, some paranormal force showed him a panorama of his family and what they did to Leonardo Doinel's heiress.

No, even in my head it sounded totally absurd. What nonsense was I thinking? I was going crazy.

"So, I told you. Does your family know?" I asked again before taking another sip of my champagne, staying calm. I couldn't lose the little sanity I had left, and the more I talked to Alexis, the more chilling the subject became.

"No, for some strange reason they refer to you as Ms. Petit, and I prefer not to mention something that I ignore. Are you married?" He asked, discreetly looking at my fingers in search of a wedding ring, but all I had were the jewels that my mother chose for tonight and that matched my dress. I let out a graceless laugh at his question.

Didn't his family tell him?

Didn't he know that I was married to Alexander?

On the other hand, I was relieved to know that he hadn't said anything about my real surname, although he still hadn't told me how he knew.

"Fortunately, no," I said before getting closer to his level to speak so that no one could hear us. My nostrils were filled with the exquisite and expensive masculine perfume that suddenly seemed strangely familiar.

"Would you keep a secret for me? No one should find out that my last name is Doinel, I swear it's for a good cause, would you do that for me?" I whispered near his face, with my gaze locked in his silent honey-green eyes, and my skin tingled when his hesitant eyes settled on my lips for a few seconds.

Despite this, I didn't move away from Alexis, and he didn't seem to want to move away either.

"I would do anything for you." He whispered in the same way as me, looking back into my eyes, and a tingling sensation settled in my chest.

I didn't trust the Lancasters at all, but something inside me made me trust his word, and if I wasn't mistaken with that feeling, I could soon find out how he knew my last name because I was a hundred percent sure that I had never mentioned it to him, not even in dreams. There had to be something behind all of this.

I regained my composure, moving away from his face and with a smile from above, I extended my hand for him to shake, I was introducing myself even though he knew my name and I knew his.

"I'm Sarah Petit." I introduced myself with my mother's last name, the one that no one knew, because for everyone else, she was Joelle Doinel.

"Alex." He shook my hand with his, with a half-smile on his face, and a warmth ran through my hand to my nape. I swallowed nervously, feeling nervous without knowing exactly why.

"Alexis Lancaster."