

Chapter 71 - Divorced Heiress

"So, are you finally going to tell me? What happened with Alexander? Does he know about Tristan?" He asked, moving his chair closer to me. He was ruining the peaceful atmosphere by reminding me of the incident at the event.

I finished the rest of my third glass of champagne and settled into my seat before taking a breath.

"More or less." I replied, looking at him intently, and his curious gaze locked with mine. After all, I had told him that I would tell him what was going on.

"Michelle Boyer told him about my son, but considering she knows very little about Tristan, God knows how she told him. Now she thinks my son is from any man and claims him as if it affects her. She's unable to suspect that he's his, even when I tried to imply it. Anger won't let him analyze the situation clearly. " I mocked, remembering how incredibly slow he was.

"I see." Paul responded and chuckled, teasing Alexander.

"Are you going to tell him someday?" He asked after a few seconds lost in his thoughts.

"I have to do it, he's the father, he has the right to know his son. I would prefer Tristan to stay away from the Lancasters a thousand times, but I can't keep hiding it. I'll tell him at the closing parade. Today, I was about to invite him to my house so that he could meet Tristan earlier than planned, but he interrupted me in a very unpleasant way. It's impossible to talk to him when he's so disturbed." I told him a small part of that phone call that left me stunned at the time, and he looked at me with a furrowed brow.

"Are you really going to tell him?" He asked incredulously, and I looked at him confused.

Did he not hear what I said? I nodded my head in response, as if it were the most obvious thing, and he let out a humorless laugh.

"After all, after what he did to you, how badly his family has treated you, are you going to allow him to get close to Tristan? I don't think it's a good idea."

I raised an eyebrow, not understanding why he disagreed with my decision. Maybe it's not what I wanted, but it's the right thing for my son. I couldn't continue being selfish, Tristan had a father and he needed to know him.

"Why are you telling me this? Alexander is the father, and he has the right to know. I have made the decision to tell him, and yes, I will allow him to get close to Tristan if he wishes." I responded, creating a tense and uncomfortable atmosphere.

It annoyed me that he reacted that way. As much as they hurt me in the past, Tristan shouldn't have to pay the consequences.

Maybe I should have thought about that before, but I was so hurt, so blinded by resentment, that I thought I was doing my son a favor by keeping him away from that family, when it was the opposite.

In the future, he could reproach me for allowing him to grow up without his father, and that would hurt me more than anything in the world.

Paul remained silent for a few seconds and looked out of the window as he ran his hands through his chestnut hair. Then, he looked back at me with a calmer expression and nodded before taking my hand across the table.

"You're right, Sari, I'm sorry for reacting that way, it's just that the news caught me off guard. You know how much I adore Tristan and want the best for him and for you." He said, lowering his guard when he noticed the sincerity in his words, although I still felt somewhat uncomfortable.

"I know." I responded simply, looking at his hand that was unconsciously playing with my fingers.

Paul noticed how tense I was and poured another glass of champagne for both of us. But before taking a sip, he pulled out a burgundy-colored box from somewhere, and I couldn't help but feel surprised.

"Sari, I don't want to make you feel uncomfortable, that's not my intention. I want you to feel free and relaxed with me. I think I achieved that until I brought up Alexander, so I won't meddle in that matter unless you ask me to." He said.

Gradually, my muscles relaxed, and I felt calm and tension-free.

Paul opened the box, revealing a beautiful gold pendant with a small, delicate heart-shaped emerald stone surrounded by small Swarovski crystals. My goodness.

"I saw this pendant and thought of you. It's simple, yet so beautiful, it makes you want to look at it for hours and treasure it like the most valuable thing. This emerald stone reminded me of your eyes, with that enchanting look that is sometimes filled with complicity. No one else could wear this pendant like you." He said.

I was speechless because I never expected Paul to give me such a beautiful piece of jewelry. It was simple, yet it could catch anyone's attention, especially with those words that flowed so naturally.

"Paul, you shouldn't have bothered." I said with a hint of shame. Only one man had ever given me jewelry in my life, and that was my father, so receiving a gift like this felt a bit strange.

Paul stood up from his chair with a faint smile and approached me. To be more precise, he stood behind me and gently pushed my hair to one side before carefully placing the pendant on me. His fingers brushed against my nape, and my skin tingled from the contact, while a wave of warmth traveled through my stomach, making me feel extremely strange.

After finishing his impeccable work, he offered me his hand to help me stand up from the chair. I didn't know what his next move would be, but I still got up and stood face to face with him. He didn't let go of my hand, and I didn't do anything to make him release it.

"It's not much compared to what you deserve. It's our first date, and I wanted to make it as special as possible. Now you carry me in your chest, and I hope you'll let me enter your heart soon." He said, sliding his fingers down my right arm, causing a tingling sensation, until they reached my chin.

For the first time all night, I felt nervous about his proximity, but I didn't look away from his eyes that were gazing at me intently. His free hand gently held me by the waist, bringing my body closer to his, leaving only a few centimeters between us where our breaths mixed together, and I knew what he wanted to do.

My mind debated whether it was a good idea to let him continue or if I should stop him before we did something that maybe we would regret tomorrow.

I got lost in the sparkle of his brown eyes that were looking at me with tenderness, conveying warmth and causing my hands to tremble for a few seconds.

I opened my mouth to tell him that what was going through his mind wasn't a good idea, and his hesitant eyes traveled to my lips. Before I could utter a word, he closed the distance between us, firmly pressing his lips against mine.

My body froze as his soft lips, flavored with champagne, timidly moved, inviting me to join the kiss. My breathing became unsteady, and I felt the nerves completely consuming me. He cradled my cheek in his hand and I let myself go with the moment, reciprocating Paul's unexpected kiss.

I felt my heartbeats increasing more and more, and when I felt his hand traveling from my waist to my back, I realized what I was doing.

He was kissing me. On the first date!

I slowly pulled away from his lips, breaking the kiss that was making me lose my sanity. I didn't want to open my eyes because I felt his scrutinizing gaze on my face.

Neither of us said a word, however, his hand remained on my back and the other on my cheek, as if he didn't want to let go of me at any moment. I made my best effort to calm down my racing heart and my suddenly agitated breathing, as if I had just run a marathon.

I shouldn't feel this way.

Finally, I opened my eyes and met his gaze, ignoring his lips that were just moments ago on mine.

"Paul, this..." I dared to speak after a few seconds of complete silence, but I didn't know what to say without sounding rude.

This what?

This shouldn't have happened.

This was moving too fast.

This was wrong.

"I know it was too fast." He said, realizing that he couldn't continue with whatever he was about to say.

"And I'm sorry if it was uncomfortable for you, but I couldn't resist and I don't regret it. You don't know how long I waited for this."

I took a step back, freeing myself from his grasp on my back, and shook my head, processing what just happened.

"Sari, you can forget it if you feel more comfortable and pretend like it never happened. I apologize again. Let's go home."

Forget it. Pretend like it never happened.

Of course!

As if it was as easy as saying it.

How was I supposed to forget that Paul kissed me?

How was I supposed to forget the sensations it aroused in me?

How was I supposed to pretend like it never happened?

How could I forget it, when I actually enjoyed that kiss?

Chapter 44 One year of collaboration.

Chapter 72 - Divorced Heiress

I spent the morning in my room playing with Tristan, taking advantage of the most time possible by his side, compensating for the hours of absence due to work.

The door of my room opened and Abby entered still in her pajamas.

"Aunt Abby is here." She said excitedly as she jumped onto the bed, near Tristan.

"Why haven't you changed?" I asked, amused, looking at her. It seemed like she just woke up, it showed on her sleepy face.

"Well, I don't have much to do today, and besides, your father is very busy with Ms. Boyer. I hope he kicks her out, she may be a good worker, but she earned her dismissal."

I raised my eyebrows, surprised, and looked at the time on my cellphone, it was 11. I thought my father was going to wait to sign the collaboration contract and then ask her to resign.

"By the way, how was the date with my brother? I didn't hear you guys arrive, you must have had a great time because Paul is in a very good mood."

Immediately, I remembered the kiss from last night and how little we talked on the way back home. I was immersed in my thoughts, hoping that kiss wouldn't ruin the friendship we had for so many years.

"Yes, we had a good time, you know how Paul is." I responded without going into details, because if I told her that we kissed, she would make a fuss.

I got up from the bed and put on my sandals. I was going to my father's office to confirm what Abby said. It seemed strange that he hadn't called me before.

"Nothing else? No details for your best friend, don't do this to me, Sarah, don't you have any sympathy for me?"

I laughed at her dramatic scene while she hugged Tristan as if he were a doll.

"Tristan, tell your mom that I'm dying to know at least where they went, not even Paul wants to tell me, they're traitors."

"No, Aunt Abby, no."

My laughter increased as I saw Tristan scolding Abby while moving his little index finger from side to side.

"Little traitor, but I still love you." Abby attacked Tristan with kisses on his face and my son laughed out loud.

"Abby, nothing happened that you need to know. I'm going to see my father, I don't know why he hasn't called me to discuss Michelle's case." I lifted Tristan, distancing him from Abby, and fixed his shirt that had become wrinkled.

"I want to go, I want to mock that harpy to her face for making such bad decisions. " Abby said, jumping up, and looked at her clothes.

"But first, I'm going to change, I'll catch up with you in a moment." She ran out of the room and I shook my head amusedly.

How she loved to see the world burn.

I reached the ground floor and let Tristan down so he could walk with me to my father's office. I was ready to confront Michelle for her recklessness.

I knocked on the door with my knuckles and after a few seconds, my father opened it, looking surprised by my unexpected presence with my son, and I noticed a hint of nervousness in his eyes.

"Sarah, you shouldn't be here." He said, without the intention of letting me enter his office, although I could clearly see Michelle inside, sitting and looking downcast.

"Why not? Of course I should be here, I'm just as involved in this as Ms. Boyer." I gave my father a disapproving look, he himself told me that he would call me when he met with Michelle.

My father rubbed his forehead with his fingers and after a few seconds, he let me pass into his office. Along with Tristan, I entered the office and was stunned to see that not only Michelle was inside, but also the representative from Innova, Julian Ferrer, and also...

"Bad man, mommy, the bad man." Tristan pointed with his little finger at the dark-haired man sitting on the individual couch, who looked at the frightened little boy clinging to my leg with a furrowed brow.

Bad man?

He was the man who ruined my baby's ice cream and, on top of that, he gave him a dirty look that made him cry as if it was his fault that his stupid pants got dirty.

This was incredible.

Out of all the men I could have imagined, it never crossed my mind that it would be Alexander Lancaster, nor did I imagine that the three of us would be in the same place today.

So, had he already encountered his own son? And he scared him! Tristan was afraid of him. Was there anything that Alexander couldn't ruin?

"Come here, my boy." I lifted Tristan in my arms and he hid his head in the hollow of my neck, as if he didn't want to see that man, who looked at me with curiosity and a shadowy gaze, not missing the slightest movement I made with my son in my arms. I couldn't help but feel intimidated and very nervous.

"Don't be afraid, he won't do anything to you, I won't allow it."

I comforted my son while stroking his back to regain his trust, but it was evident that being in the same place as the bad man affected him.

God, now I had to find a way for him to stop fearing him. He was his father, and at some point, they would come close to getting to know each other.

"Is everything alright?" My father whispered when he approached me after closing the door.

I nodded my head and gestured with my hand for him not to worry about Tristan. After all, it was me who insisted on entering the office. Why didn't they tell me he was here?

"I apologize for the interruption, she is my vice president, Sarah. Sarah, this is Mr. Ferrer, CEO of Innova, and Mr. Lancaster, well, you already know each other." My dad introduced me to the two men, and my body tensed as they both stood up to greet me.

For my part, I shook hands with Julian, who was absent the first two nights of fashion week. It was the first time I saw him in person, and I must admit he looked taller and more serious in person. I didn't know his exact age, but he was on the list of young entrepreneurs.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Ferrer, thank you for coming." I smiled in response, revealing a pair of dimples in his cheeks.

"The pleasure is mine. It's an honor for me to be here." He said with a deep and very masculine voice.

"I finally have the joy of meeting you in person, I must admit you look more beautiful than in the photos." He let go of my hand and proceeded to compliment me in front of everyone, as if he didn't care that anyone could hear.

A throat clearing interrupted our introduction, and I looked at the cause of it, meeting Alexander's honey eyes. He seemed irritated, or maybe it was just my imagination.

"Mr. Lancaster, welcome." I barely greeted him before turning around without waiting for his response and sitting in the empty chair in front of my father's desk. Though Tristan was restless on my lap, he stayed hidden in my chest and occasionally stared at Alexander with fear and curiosity. I didn't want to look at him, but with my son's gaze, I knew I couldn't take my eyes off him.

My father explained to me that both brand representatives were present for the collaboration's signing. Yes, Doinel would have a double collaboration, giving an opportunity to a rising company and another that was already well-positioned, ensuring the success of the project, as the risks were minimal. This would be a great job, no doubt, with the impeccable work of three brands with designs that will make an impact.

Before I arrived, my father informed them of the last-minute decision and that both accepted the terms and conditions. It seemed that the issue with Michelle had not reached its end yet. Being in the presence of the two collaborators, we couldn't talk about it, but she knew that there was no miracle that could save her.

The two collaborators signed the contract that Michelle had prepared and sent in advance for them to study before our meeting, agreeing with what was established. Alexander placed the pen on the desk, giving me space to sign the contract.

Suddenly, the memory of both of us signing the marriage certificate came to mind and I immediately dismissed it. How ridiculous! How could I even remember that moment?

I needed therapy.

After congratulating Julian and Alexander and wishing them the best, my father gave them some instructions for the moment of the presentation of the collaborators and apologized before asking them to wait for us outside.

Both of them left and I could feel more at ease, just like Tristan, who ended up hugging me and then playing with my fingers.

God.

And this was only the beginning of a year of collaboration with Alexander.

Chapter 45 I need to know it.

Chapter 73 - Divorced Heiress

My father began to scold Michelle, listing the mistakes she had made and how as a result, she would have to submit her resignation letter. The audacious woman dared to deny everything, and I couldn't help but let out a humorless laugh.

"Ms. Boyer, I remind you that the person involved is waiting outside. If you have such a bad memory, I can bring him in so that he can tell us how things happened." I said. Her body tensed next to me, and she gave me a furious look.

She turned her gaze back to my father and nodded her head, not having any other options since she was caught between a rock and a hard place.

"Alright, I have violated the agreement. I have told Mr. Lancaster about it, but I didn't have any ill intentions. I thought it would be good for him to know..." Michelle said.

"That is a decision that is not up to you. He is my son, and I decide who, when, and how to tell him. It shouldn't concern you whether Mr. Lancaster knows or not." I said before setting Tristan down on the ground, as he was restless and uncomfortable on my lap.

My father went on to give her a sermon and said that he wouldn't take legal action because he had worked for the company for many years.

He gave her a deadline to submit her resignation letter and return to Paris. Michelle left the office defeated, leaving me alone with my father and with Tristan, who was now playing with the ornaments on the coffee table.

"Why didn't you tell me he was here?" I asked, making sure no one was listening.

"It was a last-minute decision, I'm sorry, daughter. Before going to Ms. Boyer, I had to sign the contract and moved the meeting up, I forgot to let you know." He apologized to me, knowing that if he had told me earlier, I wouldn't have brought Tristan with me.

"Will you tell him now?" He asked curiously, and I looked at my son for a moment, recalling how scared he was of Alexander.

"I suppose it's for the best. Why wait any longer?" I responded, feeling the nerves bubbling up in my system.

This wouldn't be an easy task.

"You have my full support, it is certainly for the best. Seize this opportunity that is here and tell him who Tristan's father is before fear for that man grows in Tristan." He said. I nodded and gave my father a smile. I didn't know what I would do without him and his advice.

I took my son's little hand and walked with him and my father to the living room, where the pair of men were waiting. Julian was sitting on the couch with his legs crossed, and Alexander was standing, pacing back and forth as if he were impatient.

As he noticed our presence, he locked his eyes on me and the little one walking at my side. I couldn't decipher his gaze, but he seemed distressed, and that made my stomach churn with nervousness.

"Apologies for the delay, I had important matters to attend to. Would you like to toast with champagne? Or is it too early to drink alcohol?" My father amusingly asked, taking a seat next to Julian. I also sat down but on the individual sofa, looking for the right moment to speak to Alexander.

The cheerful chestnut-haired man accepted a glass of champagne, as it was the best way to seal deals. Alexander barely responded, just agreeing with Julian, and my father asked Maga to bring the bottle of the finest reserve.

"Mama, look at that mean man." Tristan whispered to me as he sat on my lap, continuously looking at Alexander, who had his eyes fixed on us as if he wasn't listening to the conversation that was taking place between my father and Julian.

"He's not mean, my love. He didn't do it on purpose. It was an accident, but I will ask him to apologize to you and buy you another ice cream, alright?" I said. Tristan nodded excitedly at the mention of ice cream, and I couldn't help but let out a giggle.

"Ice cream, yes, ice cream." He clapped his hands and my heart almost melted from my beautiful and intelligent son.

"Ms. Petit, can you give me a few minutes of your time?" I stopped looking at Tristan to raise my gaze and meet Alexander who looked expressionless, my son hugged me hiding his face from him and I caressed him to calm him down.

"I need to talk to you, can you?"

"I can, I'll leave my child with Maga and join you." I said before getting up from my seat and hugging Tristan's body that clung to me as if his life depended on it.

"No, Ms. Petit, take the child." He said with a cold voice and my skin instantly bristled.

I would have preferred to tell him the truth with Tristan far away, but if that was what he wanted, I was not going to oppose it.

Alexander left to the parking lot after apologizing to those present and all I did was follow him, feeling the effects on my stomach and my legs trembling like jelly, I was afraid of falling due to nerves, but I remained strong for Tristan.

He reached the side of his car and stopped to turn to look at me, I didn't know if it should be me who starts to let everything out.

"I'm listening, Mr. Lancaster." I preferred he spoke first, while searching for the right words to tell him that he was Tristan's father.

Alexander snorted, while looking at the back of the child who didn't even want to look at him and he looked at me after a few seconds in which it seemed like he was overthinking.

"Last night... Last night you told me something that has left me a little unsettled." He said with a firm voice, although there was a hint of nervousness.

"I told you many things, please, be clearer." I responded, finishing clarifying my mind, I had already thought of the right words I was going to use.

"You told me that if anyone were the father of that child, he wouldn't be answering my questions, even though it's your private life and you shouldn't have to give me explanations. So I understood it and now that I see it, I feel... I feel something in my chest telling me that I'm not so far from reality. But I need to hear it from your own mouth, Sarah. Tell me, I need to know."

I looked at him surprised, because I didn't imagine he would be able to think clearly about my words, but apparently he had been thinking about it all night and all day, enough to finally understand the message I wanted to give him.

I took a deep breath and was forced to calm my nerves and the accelerated beats of my heart that I could hear in my ears.

Calm down, this was the right moment.

I stared at his honey-colored eyes, which looked at me impatiently, waiting for an answer from me, the answer he knew, the answer I hid thinking it would be best for everyone, but I didn't realize the damage it would cause to my son.

I stroked Tristan's dark hair, as if he was giving me the strength I needed to let go of the answer, and nodded my head.

"You're right, Alexander." I responded without beating around the bush and a barely audible gasp escaped his mouth. His tough expression was replaced by one of disbelief and he barely blinked. His gaze fixed on the back of the little black-haired boy who didn't even want to look at him, and I could see how his eyes welled up with tears.

"You're the father of my son."

Chapter 46 Dad.

Chapter 74 - Divorced Heiress

Saying what I had kept for years was liberating, I felt like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders, but a pang appeared in my chest when I saw the surprised face, full of disbelief and pain at the same time, his gloomy and crystallized gaze settled on Tristan's back, who was tense and trembling with fear.

At that moment, I realized how selfish I had been for not letting him know about his son, I was very wrong to think it was the best thing to do.

If someone had hidden my own son from me for more than three years, I would have gone crazy.

"He...." The words barely came out of his mouth, he was in a state of shock without taking his eyes off Tristan.

"He is my son? But... But, why didn't you tell me?" His voice came out almost in a whisper and a tear escaped his eye, but it was quickly wiped away by his finger. Seeing him like that, for the first time in my life, my heart shrank in my chest.

Before, I hadn't imagined that I would be telling the truth to Alexander, and now that I was doing it, I felt his shock and unease as if it were my own.

A knot formed in my throat and my vision blurred with the tears that welled up in my eyes, remembering the day the pregnancy test came out positive, my excitement to go and tell him, and the disappointment I felt when I arrived at his office.

"We both know how it happened, the only day in six months of indifference that you dared to touch me. Of course I was going to tell you, why do you think I came back early from my vacation week in Orlando? I was going to surprise you, but I was the one who got surprised." I said with anger, stirring up old wounds that I thought had healed completely, but they hadn't.

Now I felt like I was still raw, not because I still felt something for Alexander, because no, but because of how poorly he had treated me despite my loyalty, my dedication, all the love I gave him, how good of a girlfriend and wife I was, yet he ended up cheating on me.

If he wasn't capable of being faithful or if he didn't feel the same way I did, why did he propose to me?

"So, did you do all this for revenge? Is that what you're telling me?" Suddenly, his voice became harsh and he took a step towards me.

I couldn't help but let out a laugh without any enthusiasm, which served to wipe away the tears that had accumulated in my eyes.

"Revenge? If I wanted to get back at you, I would do it in a different way, not by using my son who would be the most affected by all this. It's a shame you didn't get to know me completely,

I'm not the type of person who seeks revenge." I said, putting aside the depressive feelings that would make me appear weak.

Tristan shifted in my arms and without letting go of my neck, he looked shyly and fearfully at Alexander, the latter swallowed what he was going to say when he saw his son's face.

On my part, I didn't say anything else in front of my son, even though he was young and there were things he didn't understand, I didn't want to give him another bad impression of Alexander by seeing me arguing with him.

"What's his name?" He asked as he slowly approached him with his hand, but he stopped before even touching him when Tristan moved aside, avoiding his hand with fear.

My son had never been afraid of anyone before, and Alexander had earned that fear.

"Tristan."

Alexander looked at me, his expression was no longer as harsh as before, rather he seemed affected by Tristan's rejection.

"My boy, look, he's not bad, he wants to say hello." I said to my son to make him lower his guard with Alexander, his sweet gaze lingered on me for a few seconds and then traveled to the man in front of him.

When I thought he would agree, he clung to my neck again without taking his eyes off Alexander.

"I...I had no idea that he...." Alexander soon became embarrassed, because he knew what he had done to make him react that way.

Before I could say anything else, Paul appeared after getting out of the van, which I didn't realize when he arrived. He stopped beside me and shot a sharp look at Alexander.

"Is everything okay?" He asked, interrupting the heartfelt moment, earning a unfriendly look from Alexander.

He caressed Tristan's hair, and upon realizing Paul's presence, Tristan squirmed in my arms with a smile from ear to ear.

"Papau!" He stretched out his arms, showing his eagerness to go with him. I couldn't help but feel uncomfortable with how my son called Paul, especially in front of his real father.

Alexander looked at Paul with disdain, and I noticed his tense muscles.

"Hey, little one, come here, look what I brought you." Paul said, receiving Tristan in his arms, showing him a box of dinosaurs of all sizes and colors.

"It's all right, Paul." I looked at Alexander, who looked furious with Paul's unexpected presence, and I thought it would be appropriate for them to leave with Tristan to talk without any limitations.

"Could you take him inside? Tell Maga to prepare him some chopped fruits, I'll join him in a moment."

"I'll prepare it, honey."

"No."

All eyes turned to the dark-haired man who was not pleased with Paul, including the curious Tristan, who stopped admiring his new toys.

"Take him, please." I asked Paul again, and he left with Tristan, not without casting a scornful look at Alexander.

"Look..."

"No, listen to me, Sarah." He interrupted.

"First, you hide the existence of that child from me for years and let him call another man dad. I won't allow that. As his father, I have the right, and yet you don't even let me get to know him. Three years! Sarah, you kept it from me for three damn years. Do you know what could happen if I decide to fight for custody?"

I remained calm until he mentioned the last part.

My breathing became heavy, and I felt a stabbing pain in my chest that made it hard for me to breathe.

No, he wouldn't dare.

"Alexander, it's evident that there is much to discuss, and this is not the appropriate place. I just want you to know that I wouldn't let my son call another man father, and if I kept it hidden from you for so many years, it was for the reasons that we both know. Now I ask you, wouldn't it be detrimental to Tristan if you take away his custody? Do you know how he will be treated by your family? Do you want to do that to your son? He has grown up in an environment of love, and it is more than evident that he is not accustomed to mistreatment, judging by the fear he has of you with just a look." I paused, thinking of a solution for Alexander to abandon that idea.

He let out a sigh, and I didn't see it coming when his hands gently grabbed my shoulders, causing a tingling sensation that ran through me to the tips of my fingers. I furrowed my brow, looking at him as if he had lost his mind.

Just moments ago, he was furious and implying that he would take away custody of our son, and now he looked at me with warm and teary eyes.

"Sarah, it's not fair what you've been through because of me. You don't know how much I regret not giving you your place or realizing what you were going through with my family and Rachel. God, there's an explanation for that."

I let out a slight laugh and averted my gaze to anywhere but his face.

"We owe ourselves a conversation, at least to peacefully coexist for Tristan's sake. Let's do it for him."

I nodded, agreeing, looking back into his eyes, which seemed nostalgic. I didn't want to touch on past issues, especially if they had to do with Rachel. There was nothing that justified his infidelity. Still, I accepted for Tristan's sake, because he was the only thing we had in common.

"It's too late for regrets, but I accept. Tomorrow at three, I'll send you the location. I'll be waiting with Tristan." I said without adding anything else and let go of his hold, which was starting to make me uncomfortable.

"Please, tell him that I am not bad, it hurts me that he rejects me in that way, I... I want to meet him, I want to approach my son without him being afraid of me. I'm sorry for scaring him, but I had dirtied my pants and I was about to attend a meeting. It wasn't my intention, I... I."

"Alright, I'll see what I can do, after all, I suppose you both need to make up for lost time, if that's what you prefer." I interrupted him when I saw that he didn't know what to say. He was embarrassed by the incident.

"That's what I want the most right now." He said with a warm voice, with tenderness and a sparkle in his eyes that I had never seen before.

I nodded my head and without further ado, I entered the house with a racing heartbeat.

I reached the kitchen, calming the beating of my heart and the nerves that were still bubbling in my system.

I had accomplished what I thought would be the most difficult part, Alexander already knew about Tristan, earlier than planned, and he loved him, I knew because I had never seen him so moved.

Now, there was a small detail that I had to solve. I had to find a solution for Tristan to stop fearing his father because tomorrow, he would finally spend time with him, he would meet the man who would soon be called dad.

Chapter 47 Faces we see.

Chapter 75 - Divorced Heiress

The unexpected visit from Alexander and the news I gave him without anesthesia had me thinking more than I should have.

First, I didn't want him to dare to fight for Tristan's custody. It wouldn't be good for my son to live in an environment full of venomous snakes. On the other hand, I couldn't stand being away from him. His place was with me. He didn't lack anything, and I was not referring to material things, but rather to love and the warmth of his family.

And even though he was missing his biological father, he didn't lack the paternal figure that my father, Vincent, and Paul had always been, although the latter had spent more time away from him due to work issues.

I couldn't imagine Tristan treating Alexander as his father. To him, he was a stranger and a wicked man. But it was all my fault for hiding his existence. It was in my hands to help them recover their relationship and the lost time.

"Do you agree?" Paul's question snapped me out of my thoughts, and I looked at him regretfully for not having heard a word of what he was saying.

"Huh? Sorry, Paul, I didn't hear you." I confessed embarrassedly. Tristan handed me one of his toy dinosaurs to join the game he was playing with Paul.

Paul looked at me expressionlessly for a few seconds.

"Since you came back from talking to Alexander, you've been very distracted." He said, shifting his attention back to Tristan.

"I was telling you that if you agree, we can go out tomorrow with Tristan. He needs to have fun. Since he arrived, he hasn't left this house with anyone other than Maga." He said while continuing to play with the dinosaur in his hand.

"I don't think it's possible. Tomorrow I'm taking him with Alexander." I responded, joining the game where Tristan saved us from the evil dinosaur. However, Paul remained motionless, leaving the game unfinished to look at me.

"Are you serious? You'll take him with him just like that?" He asked with a raised eyebrow, as if it bothered him that Tristan would be around Alexander.

"Yes, he's his father. They need to make up for the lost time." I replied as if it were the most obvious thing in the world.

Sometimes Paul's attitude irritated me when it came to Alexander assuming his role as a father. I understand that he was not the person he liked the most because of the harm he caused me, but why wasn't he supporting me with this decision that terrified me? Why, instead of encouraging me, was he making me doubt whether I was doing the right thing?

"I'll go with you, I mean, in case things get out of control. It wouldn't be good for the two of them to be alone with a man like Alexander. He may appear to want to be a good father, but we can't judge a book by its cover." He said. Of course, I wasn't going to accept that.

Although I didn't trust Alexander at all, he was going to spend time with his son for the first time. Furthermore, we had a lot to discuss and agree upon for Tristan's well-being. It wouldn't be comfortable or convenient for Paul to interfere in something that only Alexander and I could resolve.

"Paul, don't you know me by now? If he wants to do something that harms Tristan, I would fight tooth and nail to protect him if necessary. Nothing will happen. It will be in a public place, so you can relax." I said calmly, although his attitude bothered me a little inside.

Paul let out a tired sigh and simply nodded his head. However, from his expression, he didn't seem completely convinced.

"At least, will you accept an invitation to have dinner tonight? I promise that nothing will happen that you don't want." He suddenly changed the subject, and I almost blushed when I remembered the kiss on the cruise.

"Of course." I replied before saying any more words. My phone rang, and I smiled when I saw the person calling me.

"Give me a second, I need to answer this." I said and walked away from the couch where we were playing in Tristan's room, heading towards the window to answer the call.

"Ms. Petit, I have all the information you requested, I'm arriving at your house, this is going to interest you."

The man I hired gave me good news and my mood skyrocketed.

I apologized to Paul and left a kiss on Tristan's head before heading to the parking lot to wait for the man. A few minutes later, Joseph's silver car appeared in my field of vision and I invited him to enter my father's empty office.

"Tell me, what information do you have?" I asked, sitting on the couch next to Joseph, who had a yellow envelope in his hands.

"It was easy to get information from the paparazzi, the difficult part was finding evidence. Mrs. Amelia Lancaster, Gina Lancaster, and Rachel Duncan are behind the defamations against you." Upon hearing the name of that woman, my eyebrow raised to its highest point.

Of course, I expected the mention of the Lancasters, but Rachel? That was unexpected. She was so involved with that family that she joined in their wrongdoing without thinking of the consequences.

She was now added to the list of people deserving their punishment.

"What evidence did you get?" I asked, interested in the matter, and he handed me the envelope in his hands.

I didn't wait a second and opened it to discover the contents. There was a recorder and several papers that I glanced at quickly. They were three payment receipts in the name of the journalist who dared to take countless pictures of me, and the accounts were in the names of the three involved.

"The recorder contains the confession of the paparazzi. He admitted that he was hired to follow you and photograph you in compromising situations. He also admits that he was the one who published the fake news about you and spread it on social media. The documents are the payments in three parts that he received from the three women, one hundred thousand dollars each for a dirty job. There's also a document with instructions that he had to follow. In short, they wanted to destroy you." I grinned, satisfied with Joseph's great work and in record time. This was what I needed to take action.

I listened to the recording where Joseph asked him questions with a severe voice, worthy of a thug, and the other man's voice trembled and was filled with panic.

Indeed, he admitted that he received money from Amelia, Gina, and Rachel to defame me by taking any photograph out of context. The more compromising the news, the more money he would receive.

"You've done a great job, Joseph." I congratulated him on his performance and quickly transferred the other half of the promised money, plus an extra bonus for the time it took him to get everything I needed.

"I have already transferred the remaining amount. I am very pleased with your service."

Joseph checked his bank account on his phone, and his eyes widened significantly upon seeing the transferred amount. He cleared his throat and regained his composure.

"You are very generous, Ms. Petit. It is an honor for me to have left you satisfied with my work."

I thanked Joseph before accompanying him to the door for him to leave.

I looked at the envelope in my hands, thinking about how much I was going to enjoy giving those women who had caused me so much harm what they deserved.

They had just dug their own grave.

Chapter 48 I invite you to have an ice cream.

Chapter 76 - Divorced Heiress

ALEXANDER.

Sarah's unexpected return caused a stir in more than one person, including myself, and it was not just because of the cold and tough person she had become, a strong woman who was not intimidated by anyone.

There were no traces left of the Sarah from before, and I had a bad taste in my mouth thinking that I had a lot to do with her change.

More than one person was amazed by her, even Alexis, in fact, showed great progress in his therapies since that night he saw her. I didn't know where he found the strength to apologize to Gina for his behavior towards Sarah.

For a moment, I thought he recognized her from the news because he mentioned her name several times until I heard the truth from her own mouth, and I felt inexplicably uncomfortable and annoyed.

They met that night at the place I should have never taken him, I found it surprising how much of a coincidence it was.

Since Alexis told me, I'd been wondering why she didn't tell me herself. Until she told me she didn't know she had a twin, then I concluded that she thought the person she saw years ago was me and not him. Was that why she knew my name in college?

It all made sense now.

Not only was Alexis fascinated by her, but I also added myself to the long list when I saw her after a long time at the welcome banquet.

Flashback.

After successfully finishing the opening parade, a representative from Doinel approached me to inform me about the project they would be carrying out. I had no idea that Doinel was looking for an American brand to collaborate with, immediately I was interested when they said that my company was the most qualified for this project, I just had to send a proposal and talk to the collaboration manager.

Sarah.

She told me she was expecting me at the banquet and immediately I ordered my assistant to prepare a good proposal and focus on the most beneficial project with minimal risk, it was the best I could do in the shortest time, it was just a matter of modification.

In the banquet hall, I was finishing giving instructions to my assistant when I saw the delicate and elegant silhouette of a woman on the dance floor, it was impossible for me to take my eyes off her.

That woman was naturally beautiful, her beauty left me momentarily speechless.

-Who is that woman?- I asked my assistant who was sitting next to me at the table assigned to the Lancasters.

I hoped Cristina knew something about that classy woman who had me amazed and without even being able to clearly see her face, as I had never seen her before, otherwise, I would have remembered her.

I carefully observed her exposed back, thanks to the neckline of that dress that made her stand out from the others. Her brown hair was motionless on her shoulder, giving me a wonderful view of her white and delicate skin.

Her silver dress swayed from side to side as she danced with an older man whose face I couldn't see either. Maybe that man was her father, as they both danced to the music, immersed in a conversation that only they knew.

But that idea vanished when Cristina replied.

-It's Sarah Petit, sir, your ex-wife.- My heart skipped a beat upon hearing Cristina's words, I looked at her unable to believe that she was talking about that woman I divorced more than three years ago.

The same woman I saw on Mike's security cameras the night before.

My ex-wife?

Sarah Petit.

End of flashback.

She awakened something in me, and it puzzled me because it was impossible not to get angry every time I saw her with another man. And I went insane when the same woman who approached me at the parade gave me news that I didn't expect at all.

Sarah had a son.

And my mood worsened when she confirmed it herself. I took advantage of the fact that Leonardo Doinel invited me to his house to face her and have her clarify what she tried to tell me on the phone. I had a vague feeling in my chest that wouldn't leave me. Standing in front of her, with that child in her arms, the same one I made cry when I stumbled upon him and dirtied my pants with that cream.

For some strange reason, I felt miserable an hour later, a discomfort lodged in my chest and it was much more than guilt for not measuring my actions with an innocent.

I understood everything when she uttered those words.

- You are the father of my child.-

I plunged into a state of shock from which I luckily emerged in time, my body trembled secretly and my heart shrank.

I was a father.

Sarah had my child.

I had a firstborn and until now I had no idea.

I missed such a wonderful stage, I missed the pregnancy, the birth, and the growth of my heir.

A Lancaster.

I felt overwhelmed by the mix of feelings. I wanted to scold Sarah for hiding such important information from me, for both of us. I wanted to hug her with that child in between. I wanted to snatch the child away and shout in her face that she had no right to keep me away from my child for so many years.

In the end, all I did was shed a tear without taking my eyes off the little dark-haired boy who was hiding from me, he was so afraid of me, he looked at me as if I were a monster and in that moment I became one without realizing it.

Tristan's rejection was as painful as a rusted dagger stabbing my heart over and over without mercy.

My own son despised me, didn't even want to see me.

With Alexis, I felt miserable and like the worst person in the world for what I had done, but nothing compared to seeing the fear in my son's honey-colored eyes and how he treated another man as if he were his father.

That was going to change today.

Nerves bubbled in my system and I looked with a smile on my face at the gift I had in my hands, I chose it myself and hoped he would like it, although I had no idea what a three-year-old would like. The children's park was big, however, the location Sarah gave me was accurate and it wasn't difficult to find them.

- Hello. - I greeted nervously. - I'm sorry if I made you wait. -

I looked at Sarah for a few seconds, who was happily talking to the little version of me, and a feeling of warmth settled in my chest. I looked away towards Tristan, afraid he would reject me again, but to my luck, his tender gaze studied me from head to toe.

- Hello, don't worry, we arrived not long ago. - Sarah said, erasing the beautiful smile she had before I arrived and whispered something to Tristan who was in her arms.

- Hello. - He waved his little hand in greeting and my heart melted, erasing the negative thoughts immediately.

- Little Tristan, I brought you a gift. - I handed him the gift-wrapped box and his eyes lit up.

He reached out to take it, but he stopped before looking at Sarah, as if he was waiting for her approval.

- Go ahead, it's yours. - She said with a smile that made her look even more beautiful than she already was.

The honey-colored eyes of the little one looked at me timidly and I couldn't help but smile at him. There was no doubt that he was my son, he looked so much like me, I could even compare it to a photograph of myself as a child and anyone could say it was the same person.

Tristan took the box and with Sarah's help, he opened it, his brow furrowed in confusion as he saw the contents and Sarah looked at me as if I were crazy.

- A tablet? For a three-year-old? - Although it seemed like a scolding, she looked amused at my gift.

I felt embarrassed because it was the first thing that came to mind. I repeat, I didn't know what a three-year-old would like.

- Yes, well, for him to watch cartoons, they installed more than a hundred children's games. Is that wrong? - I asked fearfully, afraid that I had chosen a bad gift. Sarah cleared her throat and hid her amused expression.

-No, it's okay for the first time. You've tried and that's what matters. But Mom, are we going to keep this gift and use it at home, right? - She spoke to Tristan as if they had their own language, and I looked at them in awe as the dark-Haired boy handed her the box without hesitating.

-Yes, Mom. Thank you, sir.- My heart melted for the second time in less than five minutes, and I wanted to lift him in my arms, give him a hug, feel his warmth and his little body, but that could scare him, so I held back.

Everything in due time.

-It's nothing, son.- That word came out so naturally that I felt inexplicably happy, like a child in an amusement park.

Sarah looked at me in surprise, her body was still, and I was afraid she would drop the child from her arms. I couldn't think of anything else to bring her out of that state than to say.

-Before we have our conversation, I invite you to have ice cream.-

Chapter 49 Our marriage was a joke.

Chapter 77 - Divorced Heiress

Tristan was so happy with his ice cream and enjoying the games at the park that my heart filled with emotion every time I saw him smile.

It had been hard for me to convince him to stop fearing Alexander. After insisting and persuading him so much, I ended up telling him that the man would buy him a new ice cream as a reward for the one he spilled, but I didn't imagine that Alexander would actually do it.

Both of them ordered vanilla, and Alexander helped Tristan eat it. It moved me to witness that, but I didn't want to show it.

Tristan ended up falling asleep in my arms after a long afternoon of playing, making and undoing things with his father. In the end, he liked Alexander more than I could have imagined. Alexander earned it with the effort he made, despite it being his first day as a father.

-Tristan is undoubtedly a wonderful child.- Alexander said without taking his eyes off Tristan's sweet and relaxed face as he slept peacefully. -You shouldn't have hidden it from me. Do you know everything I've missed?- He asked, taking him gently in his arms and admiring him with a nostalgic smile.

I felt a pang in my chest because I understood what he meant. He missed an important and unique stage of his son's life - He missed his birth, his first words, his first steps - So many things that, no matter how small, were extremely important.

Now, seeing Alexander make every effort to make Tristan happy, get to know him, and treat him as he deserved, I questioned my decisions. I had acted on my own.

-Yes, I know very well.- I said, stretching my legs on the grass, trying to find a more comfortable position. -Have you told your family about him?-

-No.- He responded almost immediately, and something told me he wasn't telling me the truth. I looked at him with a raised eyebrow, and his hesitant gaze met mine. -Only Alexis knows, but not completely. I told him I had a child but didn't say with whom. By now, he must be suspecting that I've fathered a child, anyway he was going to know tomorrow. I would tell all our close ones, but first, I had to put my plan against the Lancasters and Rachel into action. I wanted to make sure first that my son would be safe far away from those three vipers. I know what you must be thinking, and I just want you to know that I won't let anyone hurt him. Whoever messes with him will regret it, regardless of whether it turns out to be my family.-

Although his response didn't put me at ease, I appreciated that gesture on his part. But I wasn't sure if he meant it seriously, because I knew very well that he was manipulated by his family. I didn't know how much importance he would give to Tristan or if he would prioritize the pair of vipers.

-Just don't let your mother and sister walk all over him, that's all I ask from the bottom of my heart. If I am doing the right thing, you should do it too and keep him as far away as possible.-

-Sarah, regarding that, why did you hide from me that my family treated you badly? And this time, I don't want half-hearted answers.- He said. I let out a tired sigh. Didn't he understand last time when I answered his question? -I already told you, you would have taken their side or not given it any importance. You didn't have time to deal with my affairs. Plus, I preferred to avoid any disputes just to be a good wife. I really wanted the family to be at peace, even if it disturbed my tranquility.- I answered sincerely and without sounding as haughty as before.

At this moment, we both had our guard down, and we were doing it for Tristan because there were many things we had to put an end to or we would be stuck in the same situation forever, which would ultimately harm our son.

-You were my wife, if I had known, I would have put an end to it from the beginning. You shouldn't have hidden it from me, if only...-

-Yes, maybe I shouldn't have kept quiet, or maybe if you had been more observant, you would have realized it at the time. But what's done is done. Now, I just want you to remember that I will defend myself against any attack from your family, and I hope it doesn't affect our relationship with Tristan. Besides, it's evident that I'm not the only one who has hidden information during our marriage.- I changed the course of the conversation, referring to the topic of his twin.

-And I won't do anything to defend my family if they brought it upon themselves. I give you my word, it's the least I can do for you after all. Now, there's nothing else that matters to me except Tristan.- He looked at me with a smile, and that managed to calm me down just a little, because

saying something was one thing, but actually doing it was something entirely different. -If you're referring to Alexis, yes, I hid it from you because I'm the one to blame for Alexis being in that wheelchair. It's a very bitter and unpleasant story for me.- He said with a distant look as if the most unpleasant images were passing through his mind. Something inside me clicked, and soon I tied up loose ends, arriving at a conclusion that gave me chills just imagining it.

I looked at him curiously, waiting for him to say something, but he was so immersed in his thoughts that I dared to say what was so difficult for him.

-You were driving the car that left Alexis in that state.- I said, more of a statement than a question. Suddenly his eyes traveled to meet mine and I could see that I was right by the anguish that shone in his gaze.

-How did you know what happened? Did Alexis tell you anything?- He asked. I shook my head and remained silent. How could I tell him that I had sent someone to investigate Alexis? Silence reigned for a few seconds, during which we stared into nothingness. I was waiting for him to speak, while he seemed even more immersed in his thoughts.

Until finally, he spoke. -That night, Alexis was going to stay home to prepare everything for college, but I had a hobby that didn't fit at all with our lifestyle or social class. I liked to race in illegal races. That night would be the last one we would spend together before each of us went to our respective campuses, and I messed it all up when I begged Alexis to accompany me in my car to the last race. He never agreed, for him it was enough to be in that place. So I had a plan B, invite his best friend, she would say yes, but Alexis cared so much about the people around him that he ended up going so as not to involve anyone else. I got my way.- He said bitterly, slowly understanding more and more.

He practically dragged him into the car, putting pressure on him to agree to go in his car, but, how could he know what would happen next? No one can predict it.

-But it's not your fault, you didn't do it on purpose, you just wanted to spend time with your brother...-

-No, Sarah. Before getting into the car, I was drunk, do you realize how reckless I was? Do you realize that I could have prevented him from ending up like that? If I hadn't insisted, he wouldn't have lost so many years of his life bedridden. There is no one else to blame but me. Sarah, he noticed my condition when the race started and asked me to stop, he unbuckled his seatbelt to wait for me to drop him off in the middle of the road, but I got angry at his behavior and lost control, I crashed the car into a wall and my airbag deployed before I realized what was happening. The windshield was broken and Alexis was there, with half his body on the hood and covered in blood. When we arrived at the hospital, I made a deal with my family and some lawyers who were trying to protect me from all responsibility, I had to keep silent, no one, absolutely no one could find out that I was the drunk driver. All to save myself from the law, but there was no way to save myself from my guilt, from how bad I felt for so many years, years in which I lived for him, hoping he would wake up one day.-

It was evident that it was difficult for him to tell that tragic event for him and that, in a way, he was as committed to keeping that secret as I was committed to hiding my identity since I was a child. On the one hand, I could understand him, and now that he broke the pact with his family and lawyers, I felt it was my turn to tell him my real name.

Why not?

After all, everyone would know tomorrow.

-I'm not...-

-I know what you're going to say, that you're nobody to judge, but there's more. Somehow, Rachel found out everything that happened that night.- Alexander interrupted me abruptly, and I looked at him with a displeased expression when that name came out of his mouth, just when I was about to tell him everything, absolutely everything. -And she blackmailed me, she showed me the evidence that made me look bad. Her condition for not telling the authorities was that I be with her...-

I let out a grim laugh, interrupting his moving story.

God, this couldn't be true. Did he want to wash his hands that way?

He was ruining what we had achieved with just one lie.

-So, the great Alexander Lancaster chose to deceive his poor wife instead of telling her the truth from the beginning. What kind of marriage did we have?- I said that also for myself and for everything I had hidden from him.

Our marriage was a joke!

-No! It's not like that, Sarah. I didn't agree, but she threatened to harm you. And before you say I could report her, she could do the same to me and I would spend many years in prison. I felt trapped between the devil and the deep blue sea.-My body froze upon hearing that and I didn't know whether to believe their words. How could I after so many years?

But, if everything turned out to be true, I was going to make them pay for each and every one of them with what I have prepared for her and the pair of vipers.

Chapter 50 I considered her my friend.

Chapter 78 - Divorced Heiress

No matter how much I thought and thought, I didn't understand why Rachel hated me so much. We were good friends in college, I was there for her when she needed me, even in her worst moments.

I would never understand her reasons for wanting to harm me, hurt me, and defame me.

Was it because of Alexander?

I cleared the way for her three years ago, what more did she want from me?

She was messing with the wrong person and she would regret it.

Whatever the reason may be, Alexander cheated on me with her, he had many options to put her in her place and he chose the easiest one, honestly, he could have done more, of course, if he really ever loved me.

It was too late for regrets, we both left everything behind and overcame everything that happened, now all that united us was Tristan and we had to think about the well-being of our son.

Alexander ended up taking us to the mansion, although I insisted that I would go with my driver, but suddenly, Tristan desperately wanted to go with him and I couldn't continue refusing.

On the way home, I remained silent, Tristan was talking to Alexander like never before and occasionally he would translate what he wanted to say, after all, the first outing of father and son didn't turn out so bad.

When he stopped his car in the house's parking lot, he took Tristan to hug him and it was impossible not to be moved, the little one became attached so quickly after being so afraid of him.

-After fashion week, I will take him home to meet Alexis and I will tell my mother and Gina the news. I won't take him to them until I make sure he will be well treated.- He informed me while combing his black hair, making me feel uncomfortable in my seat.

Not only did I not like the idea of the women in his family even approaching him, but at the end of fashion week, we would all return to Paris, and although his company was selected for the collaboration with Doinel, I highly doubt he would be the representative to travel to Paris, how could he leave Lancaster Collection adrift?

-We will return to Paris after fashion week, I would prefer those women not to even come near him.- I said without hesitation, and he looked at me with a furrowed brow.

His eyes darkened and I could see his breathing become heavy.

-You can't do this, Sarah, you have kept him away from me for over three years, and now that you let me know about him, you want to separate him from me again, you're not being fair.- He responded with a cold voice, completely different from how he had been speaking since we met.

-I know it's not fair, but I'm not going to stay when I have an important project to carry out, I'm not going to disappoint my father by throwing everything away like this. Besides, your family has been playing dirty and I will teach them a lesson. I'm not the same Sarah who could be manipulated.- I replied with a voice even colder than his, and he stayed silent, looking at me without saying a word.

Suddenly, he settled in his seat, turning his body to face me, with Tristan sitting on his long legs.

He was going to defend his precious family, I could see it coming.

-Your father? What father are you talking about? You're not supposed to...- My eyes widened as I realized what had come out of my mouth and his words hung in the air, as if he had found the answer to his question. -It can't be.- He whispered to himself and looked towards the entrance of the house for a few seconds before turning to look at me again.

I didn't know what to do to get out of this situation, although the most sensible thing would be to tell the truth, after all, both of us let out a few secrets that somehow harmed our marriage, even before he cheated on me.

-Yes, I have a father.- I blurted out after taking a breath and took Tristan, who wanted me to hold him after witnessing Alexander's sudden lack of interest, although he was just confused and astonished, which made me realize there was no turning back. He was going to find out anyway. I opened my mouth to speak, but my words were silenced by theirs.

-You're Leonardo Doinel's daughter.- He said confidently, his eyes almost popping out of his head. -That's why he made you vice president overnight, put you in charge of the project, fired one of his best employees, and why you were dancing that night as if you've known each other forever and taking photos with him at the café. You're not his lover, you're his daughter.- He continued, while I remained expressionless, as if he had solved an unsolvable case.

I nodded my head in agreement, and he covered his mouth in surprise, his eyes fixed on me as if he were seeing a ghost.

-You're right, you were married to the daughter of the man you admire so much. I'm Sarah Doinel.- I said, causing his body to freeze. Hearing it come from my own mouth seemed even more bewildering and surprising.

I felt inexplicably relieved. Hiding my true identity for so many years was not an easy task.

It wasn't until Tristan burst into laughter that Alexander snapped out of his shock. He blinked more times than necessary and looked at the little dark-haired boy, who was mocking his expression.

-Sarah Doinel, you're Sarah Doinel, but... but where did you get Petit from? Why didn't you ever tell me?- He asked, running his hands over his face. I almost joined Tristan's laughter, but I held back, knowing that this was a very serious and delicate matter.

-The Petit is from my mother, everyone knows her as Joelle Doinel.- I said, his eyes still wide open and I had to look away to not lose my focus. -If I didn't tell you, it's because I couldn't. I had enough reasons, and I imagine that as a loyal follower of Leonardo, you know that I was almost kidnapped as a child. That's the main reason.-

-Mama, look at Ales.- Tristan continued laughing at Alexander, unaware of the delicate issue we were discussing.

I looked back at Alexander, now with both hands covering his cheeks and his mouth slightly open. Was that how he would have reacted if I had said it in public as my father had planned?

Perhaps he would have been more discreet in front of so many people. That was why, with only him, Tristan, and me present, he didn't make any effort to hide his astonishment.

-Main reason? Are there more reasons why you kept it hidden as if it were nothing? Oh God, was I married to a stranger?- I rolled my eyes in annoyance, because even though my last name was different, I was still the same person.

-You were married to someone who was always loyal to you until the very end, whether as Sarah Petit or Sarah Doinel. And yes, there is another reason, but there's no point in talking about it anymore.- I said as my phone rang, displaying Paul's name on the screen.

-Do you want to keep hiding things? What are we doing then? Aren't we doing this for Tristan?- He asked, visibly upset, but I didn't want to tell him that I abandoned my family to be with him; it would sound so pathetic.

The phone kept ringing, and I signaled him to wait a second. The call could be work-related, and I didn't want to be discussing such an embarrassing topic here.

-Paul.- I said, and heard an irritated sigh next to me.

-Sari, are you okay? I see that Alexander's car has been parked for a long time. Did he do something to you? Did he do something to Tristan?- I pursed my lips, hearing his concern, and looked through every window of the house.

Had he been watching the car since it arrived? That was uncomfortable.

-Yes, I'm fine. I'll be inside in a moment. Is everything ready for today's event?- I asked, abruptly changing the subject.

-Yes, we're just waiting for you.- He said, sounding less worried now, and I saw him peering out of his room window, looking at the car.-So everything is ready, I'll go right away.- I didn't expect

him to say anything else and hung up the call. -I have to go, and you too.- I said, grabbing my things and the gift that Alexander gave to Tristan.

When I was about to open the door, Alexander's arm reached the door, preventing me from getting out of his car, making me feel really uncomfortable with his closeness.

-Not until you let it all out, Sarah Doinel.- I raised one eyebrow and moved as far away as possible from his scrutinizing gaze. Luckily, Tristan jumped into his arms, causing him to move away from me and I was able to release the breath I was holding.

Why so interested in knowing? What would he gain? Would anything change? Of course not.

And since nothing was going to change, I decided to let it go so that he would let me go once and for all before he invaded my personal space again.

-I gave up my family to marry you, that's it, satisfied?- I said, calmly releasing the words, and now, not expecting him to stop me or say anything else, I got out of his car without even looking at him.

I turned the car around and extended my arms to Tristan to get him out of the car. Although he seemed to want to refuse, he jumped into my arms when he saw my face without a smile.

I didn't look at Alexander again until he spoke.

-I hope one day you can forgive me. You did everything and gave everything for our marriage and didn't receive even a quarter of it.- I gave him a fleeting glance, meeting his eyes that seemed sad and hurt.

A bitter taste appeared in my mouth, and I turned as if I hadn't heard that.

Could I ever forgive him someday?

Chapter 50 I considered her my friend part 2

Chapter 79 - Divorced Heiress

My nerves were shattered, not even the good attention from the stylists managed to relax me behind the scenes, not even if they added a relaxing massage, nothing could keep me calm for more than three seconds.

The last day of fashion week arrived, and we were just minutes away from starting the final runway show. Of course, I would make an appearance on the catwalk alongside my father, but

that wasn't what had me on edge. It was what I had prepared for the end of the show. I prayed that everything would go very well for me because there were three people, and perhaps more, who would have three heart attacks.

The whole afternoon was hectic. Everyone was nervous and anxious because everything had to go perfectly. The models were more than excited, and some still needed to finish fixing their outfits.

Paul appeared in my field of vision with a steaming cup and placed it on the coffee table.

-I brought you Valerian tea for the nerves.- He said, looking at me through the mirror, and soon a smile appeared on his face. -You look beautiful.-

-Thank you, Paul, although I'm not sure I can hold it with my trembling hands. I'll probably spill it before even trying a drop.- I admitted, embarrassed, and he chuckled.

-Of course, you can. I'll go back to my seat. Good luck, darling. You'll do great.- He gave a long kiss on my forehead and winked at me before leaving the way he came.

Paul went out of his way to make me comfortable in any circumstance, and I already felt guilty for it.

The dress I was going to wear tonight, an exclusive design by Patrick for Doinel, was hanging and ready to be put on when the stylists finished their work.

Then, a figure appeared in the mirror, and nervousness was replaced by a pleasant sensation in my chest.

-Are you really going to dare to appear in public, after everything that's said about you? If I were you, I wouldn't dare to show up publicly again.- Her malicious smile made my night, and I couldn't help but laugh at her words.

-It's a relief that you and I don't have even the slightest resemblance. I have nothing to fear. On the other hand, Ms. Rachel, you should be more than ashamed of what you've done.- I responded calmly, looking at her reflection in the mirror.

I didn't know what she was doing here; I hadn't seen a trace of her in the previous days.

Her smile didn't fade; instead, it widened.

-I have nothing to be ashamed of. But you, a woman who entered a big company by sleeping with top executives, you're a disgrace to empowered women who strive to reach such a high position.- She said as if it would affect me, and all she managed to do was make me laugh without humor. I gave her a disdainful look before again admiring the great work of the stylists.

-Are you supposed to be one of those women?- I asked sarcastically, and the shameless woman nodded as if she were proud of herself. -Really? How low must a woman sink to blackmail a man into sleeping with her? Are you a worthy representative of empowered women? Thanks, but a woman without dignity, without an ounce of empathy, and with such a dark and envious heart does not represent me.- Her face turned all colors and she looked at me with a frown.

-I don't know what you're talking about. Alexander slept with me of his own free will. I would never blackmail him.- Rachel said, her body tensing as Alexander appeared behind her.

-Are you sure, Rachel?- Alexander said, and her face turned pale. -Who were you going to kill if I didn't comply?-

My nerves almost got the better of me, thinking that Alexander might reveal my true last name, thus ruining the surprise I had prepared.

-I... I... No, you're lying, Alexander. I would never...-

-Sarah, I'll leave you the evidence of what we talked about. You can see countless photos of yourself everywhere you went. Rachel had you under surveillance, she hired a hitman to shoot when she gave the order. It took me a while, but I finally got them. Enjoy the fashion show.- Alexander left an envelope next to the steaming tea, and I was petrified for a few seconds, just hearing the word hitman.

Of course, I didn't believe him when he mentioned it, but if the evidence he mentioned was in that envelope, I couldn't hesitate any longer.

I quickly took the envelope, seeing Rachel's intentions of taking it from the table, and hid it under my silk robe.

Could Rachel have the cold-bloodedness to send someone to kill me?

What kind of woman was this?

-That's not true, it's a setup, you shouldn't believe that man. He cheated on you, remember? He... he...- Rachel looked miserable and completely nervous.

The little I knew about her was that this was her attitude when she felt cornered, trying to manipulate the situation to her liking and wash her hands of such an accusation.

-Don't try to cloud the issue. Please disappear from my sight before I call the police.- I said, and she gave me a furious look. Without saying anything else, she hurriedly left, leaving me with the stylists who were struggling to hide their astonishment at the spectacle, although they failed in their attempt.

And to think that I once considered her my friend.

Chapter 80 - Divorced Heiress

The stylists left me alone backstage when they finished their work. I took the time to put on the tight-fitting dress for tonight.

I looked once again at the envelope that Alexander left me before leaving me with that woman. I hadn't dared to look at the photos, but I couldn't stop thinking about how cruel and perverse Rachel was. I put aside the hesitations and checked the content.

A discomfort settled in my stomach as I saw the photos one by one. I appeared in all of them, at home, in the car, at Alexander's company, in the Lancaster villa, at the mall, in public and private places. It wasn't some sort of montage, because I remembered every moment of every image.

Rachel always had me under surveillance with a hitman, she had me in her sights, with a simple order she could have ended my life. Was she capable of going so far for a man?

But, most importantly, where did she get the money to hire a hitman for such a long time? Despite her wealthy family, she wasn't the kind of person who would throw money away.

After seeing all the images that left me petrified and breathless, I knew what to do for the sake of everyone. Rachel was a danger, and something inside me told me that there was someone sponsoring her twisted plans. I hope I was not wrong.

My father's voice echoed throughout the place, the fashion show had come to an end, making way for Leonardo Doinel's appearance on stage. My father greeted everyone present and congratulated the brands of all the collections for such good work.

-After four years, Doinel has returned as a special guest to such an important event in the fashion world and we're making a strong comeback. As you know, we were looking for a standout brand for the collaboration with Doinel. We already have the chosen ones, but before that, I want to make an official introduction. Please give a round of applause to the person who will be leading such an important project titled 'First Love,' my right-Hand, my vice president.- My father introduced me as he had planned, because he wanted me to debut for the first time wearing one of Doinel's most exclusive garments, what better time than fashion week, and he preferred me to remain calm, without too much pressure from the audience.

I walked out backstage, with my head held high and all eyes on me. I took a deep breath and forced a nearly non-existent smile as I strutted on my heels, just as I had been taught.

The applause didn't take long to come, and they ceased when my father began to describe the wine-colored chiffon piece with hand-Sewn and meticulously distributed diamonds.

Among the audience were the Lancasters and Rachel, who looked at me with indifference.

Soon, there were murmurs from people calling me Doinel's lover. My smile widened, and I stopped next to my father, who managed to hear some attacks against me.

-I want to take this opportunity to debunk some rumors that have been circulating on social media, accusing me of being one of 'the many lovers' of Sarah and that's why I have appointed her as Vice President of Doinel.- He paused and took my hand, wearing a wide smile that filled me with confidence and self-assurance. -That position has been waiting for her since the moment she was born. She has proven to have the intelligence, the audacity, and is capable and worthy of this position. You know her as Sarah Petit, but on this occasion, I will introduce her by her true last name. Sarah Doinel, my only daughter and heir to all my fortune.-

The silence that followed my father's words was so profound that the collective gasp of surprise and disbelief from the majority of those present could be heard. My eyes traveled to the three women sitting together on my left, and I had to hold back a laugh when I saw their miserable expressions.

Gina's face turned all shades of red as she looked at me with her mouth wide open. One of her hands held onto Amelia's waist, and with the other hand, she fanned the pale face of the woman who seemed about to faint. Rachel, on the other hand, looked at me incredulously and fearfully, her panicked eyes scanning everywhere, as if looking for someone to escape to.

Oh no, I wasn't going to let them leave at the best part.

A couple of applause opened the way for the rest, including Alexander and Alexis, who applauded enthusiastically, both smiling and not as surprised as the others, as they were the only ones who knew my true identity, otherwise, they would be as shocked as the eldest viper. - Thank you very much to all those present, it is an honor for me to be in charge of such an important company, with which I have always dreamed of being a part of, following in the footsteps of my father, the great Leonardo Doinel. And now that I am a part of it and of a great project, I am pleased to bring you good news. We have not only chosen one brand for collaboration with Doinel, but two. Please applause for Julian from Innova and Alexander from Lancaster Collection. They have done a good job of convincing us that their brands will live up to expectations.- The applause resonated again and my gaze returned to the Lancasters, who seemed to want to disappear with a single snap, they didn't know what to do. - Now, going back to the topic. As most of you know, false news about alleged affairs with my own father Leonardo Doinel and with my cousin Vincent Lefevbre have been spread. - My gaze did not veer away from the three women, as if accusing them without uttering a single word.

Amelia's body tensed up even more, Gina whispered something to her mother and tried to get up from her seat, Rachel was a bundle of nerves and looked at me with panic in her eyes before walking quickly towards the exit, but she was stopped by three security guards. The rats try to

escape. - I have taken legal measures against those responsible for such defamation against me, but before that, I will show you the evidence that verifies who is behind these fake news. - I said with a sarcastic smile, and the screen behind me lit up.

The images started to pass one by one, while the audio of the paparazzi played, who ended up confessing everything thanks to Joseph's work, confirming that he was hired by the three women to take compromising photos and deliberately take them out of context, regardless of who was involved, they just wanted to ruin my reputation and destroy me by showing me with a messy love life after my divorce from Alexander.

- Soon, the payment receipts with the names of the three women appeared, along with the letter of instructions that the poor man had to follow. When the man's audio ended, the audio that I cunningly recorded when Rachel visited me backstage started playing. A smile appeared on my face when the best part arrived.

- Who were you going to kill if I didn't comply?-

- I... I... No, you're lying Alexander. I could never...-

- Sarah, I leave you the evidence of what we talked about. You can see countless pictures of yourself everywhere you went, Rachel was keeping an eye on you, she hired a hitman to shoot when she gave the order. It took me a while, but I finally did it. Enjoy the fashion show. -

Everyone's astonishment was immense and they immediately started looking at the responsible parties for these actions, especially the woman who was once labeled as Alexander's lover, and now was not far from being a criminal. Gina tried in every way to deny it, shouting that she would never do such a thing, that she came from an important and powerful family just like her mother and had no need to stoop so low. In fact, she sought help from Alexander or Alexis, but none of them moved from their places. The evidence spoke for itself and her mother was already unconscious in a chair, how could she come out clean from this? Her own family no longer believed in them. Rachel wanted to escape the grip of the guards, but it was impossible, especially now that the police officers arrived and handcuffed her wrists behind her back. - It's all false, it's a misunderstanding! I didn't hire anyone! I'm not capable of killing even a fly! Let me go! - Rachel yelled from her place, filled with rage, and I ignored her.

- I have sued them for defamation against me and they better hope that Leonardo Doinel and Vincent Lefevbre do not press charges for defamation. And Rachel is also charged with attempted murder, I hope she finds a good lawyer. You may take them away. -

The officers took Rachel and, as best they could, they also took Amelia and a Gina who was crying inconsolably. - It's all false, how can you believe that woman? Don't you know who I am? I'm Gina Lancaster! Don't take pictures of me, you imbecile! What will people from my social circle say? Sarah, you'll pay for this!-

Those women disappeared from my sight and I couldn't feel more satisfied. Sarah Doinel has arrived.

