

## Chapter 43 The Mole On Her Chest

The first bid for the tanzanite came from paddle number 888.

Vivian might've been the one holding it, but that paddle belonged to Brandon.

Millie's attention drifted toward her.

And she wasn't the only one. Nearly every head had turned in Vivian's direction.

Although the second floor offered privacy for guests that needed privacy, the layout let guests choose whether to be seen or not.

Vivian had opted for the spotlight.

Brandon remained in the dim section behind her. From the first floor, people could barely make out his silhouette, let alone his face.

Charles knew well the tanzanite was donated by Millie since he handled it for her. He also knew exactly why she'd decided to part with it. The moment he spotted Vivian making a bid, rage surged in him. He nearly rose from his seat.

Millie's stare sharpened on Vivian, who still wore that pleasant little smile.

She had every intention of selling the tanzanite and donating to charity tonight, but she would've handed it to a stranger off the street before letting Vivian have it.

At his seat, Brandon watched Vivian lift the paddle again.

"You like it?" he asked quietly, voice steady.

Vivian responded with a small nod, her smile unchanged.

Brandon didn't follow up. His gaze returned to the dazzling tanzanite beneath the gallery lights.

He recognized the tanzanite.

Millie and he had come across it together in early March.

That day, they'd just endured another long lunch with his grandparents, who once again asked when they planned to have children.

While heading back to their mansion, they drove past Crobert's biggest jewelry store in his Aston Martin. The gem had been displayed right there in the front window.

The March evening was cold, but the inside of the car felt comfortable.

He remembered Millie watching the gem a little longer than usual. He'd asked her the same thing he asked Vivian tonight. "You like it?"

She'd smiled faintly and said, "I was just thinking.. if we conceive a baby now, the due date would be in December. And December's birthstones are tanzanite and turquoise."

Then she added, "So it's kind of funny that we saw tanzanite now."

He'd looked at the stone again and asked, "Birthstones? Do they mean anything?"

"Apparently, tanzanite represents love and eternity. Turquoise is supposed to bring victory and success," Millie had replied. "If I had to choose, I'd go with tanzanite."

She'd turned to him, her smile softer. "Because I'd want to tell our child their parents will always love them."

He had raised an eyebrow and teased. "I'll go with turquoise then. I just want our kid to be successful. Always winning"

She hadn't appreciated that. He had tried to smooth things over. "Either way, our kid deserves the best."

But she hadn't cared about any of that. When he offered to buy the tanzanite, she got annoyed. So he dropped the subject.

They had driven home in silence, but the tension melted away once the car stopped. From the car to the bedroom, they didn't speak much. What followed was breathless and fiery.

He could still see it clearly—the way she moved, the heat of her skin, the scent that lingered on her neck.

And that small mole just above her chest, he'd always been fond of it.

Brandon shut his eyes. His throat tightened. He picked up his glass and drank slowly.

Who had ended up buying that tanzanite? And how had it found its way here, to this charity auction?

Just as the weight in his chest began to settle, a hand reached forward from the seat beside him. Nails painted a shade like pale moonlight curled around a bidding paddle—elegant, deliberate, and quiet.

"Following bidder 888's offer, bidder 823 has entered at nine hundred thousand dollars!"

Both Brandon and Vivian turned their heads.

The seat, the hand holding the paddle—it could only be Serena.

In an instant, the entire room stirred again. Conversations broke out across the villa, the atmosphere thick with curiosity.

"Brandon hasn't attended a charity auction in person in two years, and this is his first bid tonight. For something like that, who'd be foolish enough to go up against him?"

"Exactly. The tanzanite looks good, sure, but it's not some one-of-a-kind treasure. I wouldn't bother."

"Same here. If it were a blue diamond, I might've raised my hand."

"I thought it was Vivian who placed the bid, not Brandon."

"It makes no difference. She used Brandon's paddle, and he let her. That counts just the same."

Heads nodded around the room. That was how things worked in their world.

Unless an item was rare or symbolic, deference was expected.

"I checked. The second one placing the bid is the woman Charles came with—name's Serena."

This new piece of information sent a ripple through the crowd.

"What is this about? Is Charles trying to provoke Brandon?"

"Hard to say. Charles has always been erratic. No telling what he's thinking now."

As the other guests murmured and guessed Oakley was also on the second floor, laughing so hard he had to brace himself against the table.

"Charles really is an idiot. Grandpa's already furious with him, and now this? He's digging his own grave. I won't even have to lift a hand, he'll take care of himself."

Near the back, another man sat quietly in the shadows. He said nothing simply swirled the wine in his glass before taking a measured sip.

At the same time, Vivian could hardly believe someone had dared to challenge her bid.

This was all part of her strategy.

She hadn't planned to compete for anything extravagant or meaningless. Just something in between, enough to leave a mark without seeming excessive.

The tanzanite fit that goal perfectly.

She could easily say it was a playful gesture to use Brandon's paddle, but she'd use her own money since she wanted to contribute to charity.

After tonight, this tanzanite would be their symbol, something to mark her connection with Brandon.

Besides, whatever she spent now, he'd make it up to her later. He always did.

Not to mention, the attention online alone would bring her a decent return.

It was their first bid of the night. According to the usual unspoken rules, that should've been enough for others to step back. She'd even bumped the price by an extra hundred thousand, making it eight hundred thousand. She never imagined Serena would respond.

Whose decision was it? Did Serena act on her own? Or was Charles behind it? Were they testing her? Trying to stir trouble? Or were they aiming at Brandon? For what reason though?

She had no answers. And now, she wasn't sure if she should go in again.

The gem's value sat around a million. Her limit was 1.2 million. Beyond that, it just wasn't worth it.

As Vivian weighed her options, the auctioneer carried on.

He called out, asking if anyone else wanted to place a bid.

After a second's pause, Vivian lifted the paddle again.

She didn't believe Serena would keep pushing

"Bidder number 888 has returned with a bid of one million dollars."

A ripple of voices moved through the audience.

"They increased the bid again. They must really want it."

"Will 823 follow?"

All eyes turned toward Millie's section.

Before the auctioneer could say more, Millie lifted her hand.

"Bidder 823 has placed a new bid—one point one million."

Vivian gritted her teeth and scribbled down another bid. She couldn't lose.

"Bidder 888 bids again—1.2 million!"

And right away, Millie raised the bid again.

"Bidder 823 bids again—1.5 million!"



Hi! Baby! I miss you!

Check