

Married To My One Night Mistake

Chapter 51: Stepping Up

The walk to the cafeteria was very quiet, filled only by the squeak of shoes on the shiny floors of the hospital.

Clancy led the way, his mind racing with a mix of deep anxiety and cautious hope.

Behind him, the two boys trailed closely in silence. Clancy glanced back every few steps, making sure they had not vanished into thin air.

When they entered the spacious cafeteria, it was mostly empty, except for a few staff members whispering in the far corner.

Clancy guided them to a booth near the large windows that faced the parking lot, wanting to give them some space.

He left for a brief moment, returning with three juice boxes, a pack of chocolate chip cookies, and some sliced apples from the counter.

He wanted to make sure they felt comfortable.

"Here you go, fellas," Clancy said gently, sliding the snacks onto the table. "Fuel up," he added.

Daniel immediately grabbed a cookie, his defensive guard lowering just a bit at the sight of food.

David, however, reached for a juice box, his small fingers trembling slightly as he tried to poke the straw into the foil hole.

Clancy reached out, silently taking the box, piercing it perfectly, and handing it back with a warm, reassuring smile that he hoped would put the young boy at ease.

"Thank you," David mumbled, his voice barely a whisper. He took a sip, looking up through his eyelashes.

Daniel swallowed his first bite of cookie and leaned forward, his eyes narrowing with a maturity that felt far too much for his age.

He was not going to let Clancy off the hook easily. "So," Daniel started, his tone questioning.

"Are you really our dad? For real?" he asked.

Clancy took a slow, deep breath, choosing his words with immense care. "I want to be, Daniel," he began to speak.

"I was not there before, and I can not change the past no matter how much I want to. But I am here now, and I want to stay. I want to be a part of your lives." he said.

"Why did you leave?" Daniel pressed, crossing his arms over his chest, demanding an answer.

"I did not know about you kids. And that is not good enough, but sadly, that is the truth" Clancy said honestly, looking directly into Daniel's eyes so the boy could see his absolute sincerity.

"If I had known, nothing on earth would have kept me away from you guys. I would have been there from the very first day."

Daniel sniffed, looking out the window, a little convinced but refusing to show it at the moment.

The tension in his small shoulders remained, but he did not pull away or get up from the table.

David, who had been listening intently while nibbling on the apple, suddenly leaned closer to the table.

Unlike his older brother, the heavy tension seemed to be melting out of him. The idea of having a father, this tall, gentle man who helped with his juice did not scare him. It comforted him deeply.

"Do you- do you like baseball?" David asked softly, his cheeks flushing pink at his own sudden bravery.

Clancy's face lit up, a genuine smile breaking through his earlier anxiety. "I love baseball, David. I used to play when I was a kid. Are you a big fan?" Clancy asked.

David nodded eagerly, his shyness momentarily forgotten. "Daniel is really good at catching. I like running the bases." He said.

"He is not just good, he is the fastest in his class," Daniel interjected, his brotherly pride overshadowing his skepticism for a split second.

He could not help but defend his brother's skills. "Is that so?" Clancy grinned, looking between the two.

"Well, it sounds like we have a built-in team right here. Maybe we can hit the park this weekend and throw a ball around. Only if you guys want to, of course."

David looked at Daniel, silently pleading with his eyes that his brother joined. Then he looked back at Clancy.

"I want to," David said clearly, a tiny, hopeful smile appearing on his face. "I think... I think it would be nice. To have a real dad"

Daniel reached for another apple slice and mumbled, "You will have to buy us a new mitt. Mine is getting too small." He casually said.

Clancy felt a fierce warmth in his chest. It was not a total victory, but the door was open.

"Deal," Clancy said softly. "As many mitts as you need."

Meanwhile, from a distance near the cafeteria entrance, a figure watched them intently. It was JK .

He had been walking down the main corridor when he noticed Clancy leading the two boys inside.

Curiosity had made him stop, and now he stood quietly in the shadow of the doorway, observing the unfolding scene without making a sound.

JK watched the way Clancy interacted with the children. He saw the gentle manner in which Clancy fixed David's juice box, and the patient, unwavering look in his eyes when Daniel confronted him with hard questions.

As Selen's oldest friend, JK was fiercely protective of her and the boys, and he had undeniably harbored serious doubts about Clancy's sudden appearance.

But as he stood there observing from afar, he saw David's shy smile and noticed Daniel's guarded posture begin to soften.

There was a raw, genuine vulnerability in Clancy that was hard to deny. JK remained silent, choosing not to interrupt the fragile moment.

He simply stood there and observed, a thoughtful expression crossing his face as he realized that Clancy might actually be exactly what this family needed.

With a quiet sigh, JK turned away to go find Selen to check on Diana and update her on what he had just witnessed.

Back at the table, the atmosphere had grown noticeably lighter.

They spent the next twenty minutes finishing their snacks, the heavy questions giving way to lighter talk about school, their favorite video games, and how much they both absolutely hated broccoli.

For the first time in years, Clancy felt like he was exactly where he was supposed to be, sitting with his sons.

Chapter 52: A New Member

Julian's wife, Mary, had gone into labour a few days after they had sent the envelope to Selen in Spain.

They had spent hours waiting for the baby. Julian stood outside the hospital maternity ward, staring at the cups of bad lukewarm coffee he had to stay awake.

He pulled out his phone, staring at the screen. No new messages. He wanted to call Clancy, but his brother was halfway across the world.

Julian jammed his phone back into his pocket and continued pacing. For the last six hours, he had been entirely useless.

The nurses had told him to stretch his legs, saying that the waiting night would take a while, which was also code for "get out of our way."

He felt a mix of profound and terrifying adrenaline rush. Every time a door opened the large double doors of the maternity ward, his shoulders tensed up. But nothing was wrong, it was just the slow process of birth.

During the early hours of the morning, the heavy wood door to the delivery wing swung open. A nurse came out and called Julian.

"Julian? You can come back in now. It's happening," she said. He checked the wall clock. Ten minutes before three. Ten minutes before his entire life was going to flip around.

Julian walked fast enough that his sneakers squeaked loudly on the floor. He sanitized his hands at the dispenser by the door as instructed, then he stepped into the delivery room. The room was bright, almost painfully so.

His wife was pale, sweat making strands of hair glue to her forehead, but her grip when she grabbed his hand was strong enough to crush bone.

Julian stood by her head, leaning in close. He did not say any of the things he had practiced for when this day would come. He just kept repeating, "You are doing great, you are almost there," like a broken record.

He could feel his own heart hammering against his ribs at an intense speed.

At exactly three am, the doctor pulled a tiny, loud baby into the harsh light of the room.

The baby let out a high-pitched, angry shriek that immediately filled the space. The relief that washed over Julian was so sudden it made him dizzy. It was a girl.

The nurse wiped her down quickly and laid her right onto his wife's chest. Julian looked at the wet, wrinkly little face of his daughter and let out a breath he felt like he had been holding since midnight.

He reached down and touched her tiny, wet foot. She stopped crying for a second, her little toes curling around his index finger.

Twelve hours later, Julian was gripping the steering wheel so tight his knuckles were almost white. His wife and the baby were asleep in the back, and he checked his rearview mirror every five seconds.

When he pulled up to his house, the front door was already wide open. His father, Jimmy was standing on the porch steps, squinting into the afternoon sun. Behind him stood his mother and his sister, Katherine.

They did not even wait for Julian to shut off the engine before they started coming down the driveway to meet them.

Julian got out and carefully unbuckled the car seat from the back, holding the plastic handle of the baby's carrier with both hands carefully.

He carried her into the living room, setting the seat down on the coffee table. With the rest of the family following behind him.

Mary had gone straight to their bedroom to rest some more and they tried to keep their voices as low as possible to not disturb the new mom.

Julian's mother, Rose was the first one over, "Oh my goodness," she whispered, her hands hovering over the car seat like she was afraid to break the little girl.

"Look at those cheeks, Julian." she said with teary eyes.

Julian's home was filled with sounds of excitement and celebration. Julian's baby had been brought home and that was the first time their family had been blessed to see their grandchild. It was a thing of immense joy for them.

Until now, they had not laid eyes on Clancy's children, Katherine was unable to give birth to children of her own without a miscarriage sweeping in to take away whatever hope she had after the pregnancy.

This was their first chance at experiencing such in their home. And for some of them, they feared that it would be last.

Everyone laughed as they reunited with family over the joyous celebration of new life.

"Oh, Julian. She is the prettiest baby girl I have ever seen. My beautiful niece." Julian's sister praised her niece once again.

Jimmy walked over slowly, he stood over the baby still in her seat, with his hands jammed deep into his pockets. But as he looked down at the newborn, his face cracked into a massive grin.

He reached out one big, rough hand and gently poked the baby's tiny fist. The baby made a little grunting noise in her sleep, and Jimmy laughed out loud, a sound of pure shock.

Katherine squeezed past her dad, her eyes carrying joy and pain. "Let me look at her again" she muttered, keeping her voice down but vibrating with excitement.

She leaned over the seat, staring at the baby's tiny dark hair. "She looks exactly like the old pictures of you, Julian. Look at her nose." She said and giggled.

The three of them stood there in a tight circle around the coffee table, completely hypnotized by the tiny person sleeping in the fleece blanket.

Nobody was talking anymore. They just watched her breathe, completely in awe of how small she was. The house, which had felt empty for so long, suddenly felt completely full again.

Julian watched his father's eyes crinkle at the corners, a rare sight for a man who usually expressed emotion through a heavy nod. The old man just kept staring at the tiny fingernails, shaking his head in disbelief.

Chapter 53: A Listening Ear

For just a little while, the heavy, lingering worry that usually dominated the Avelino household was gone. The focus shifted entirely to a brand new beginning of life.

Julian wished that his brother was standing there next to him making a joke about how she looked like him as a baby or something.

But looking at his family gathered around the baby girl, Julian knew that whenever Clancy finally made it back, he would be coming home to a very good place. Or at least one better than how he had left it.

Julian felt a profound sense of relief wash over him as he watched his father gently trace the edge of the baby's blanket. It was a rare moment of absolute stillness for their family, a quiet peace that everyone had desperately needed for months. They had a long road ahead, but today was perfect.

Clancy was still in the hospital with his daughter when he was called for a meeting. And for the first time, he sent a representative, his personal assistant, Patrick, to go on his behalf.

The meeting was not urgent, it was just one of those things he had always attended by himself. But not this time. This time he had an excuse to not go. He had a family to be around for.

After the day he had lunch in the cafeteria with his son, he was making sure that he showed them that he was a man of his word.

If it meant showing up consistently for one hundred days, then he would. Just so he could show them he meant it when he said that he was there to stay with them and for them.

On the day he received the news of his brother's child, he was with Selen. They had just walked out of Diana's room after she had fallen asleep and were waiting outside her door in case she needed anything.

They could not manage to be in the room for hours unending and they could not help but feel pity for her because she had to stay in there.

Her body was still recovering and they did not want to risk her body to infections or viruses, it was after all a hospital with lots of sick people.

Clancy's phone had been ringing consistently but he continued to decline the call. "You should take that, it could be urgent" she said as she motioned to the phone in his hand.

"Hello, Julian" he said as he answered the call and stood up from the chair he was previously on.

Selen could not help but try to eavesdrop on his conversation. She remembered Julian, and she remembered the silence in her suffering.

"Wow, congratulations. I- I am sorry, I forgot that she was due anytime soon. I should have checked in, the baby is my niece after all. But I just have a lot going on right now and-" he was saying over the phone.

It seemed like his brother interrupted him and he was silent. Julian was not taking any offence to Clancy.

It did not matter if he had issues with his brother or not, his niece was innocent. And he was in a better place to be at peace with everyone.

Selen could still hear Clancy. Was it true? Did he have a baby? What did she care? She was done with them anyway.

"I mean it when I say this, it would be an honour to be her god father, but I do not think that I am the right person for the role. I could barely be there for my own kids and I would hate for her to feel my negligence and incompetence as well" he said.

Clancy had now moved further away from Selen's ear shot, and she would not have heard him if she had not scooted closer to the end of the bench.

Clancy believed that Selen could not hear him and that she did not care enough to know what he was talking about with his brother, which was why he did not suspect that she would be eavesdropping.

Selen felt a split second of pity for Clancy as she heard what he said. "Did he really see himself like that?" She wondered. "Fine, if you insist then. I will tell you by tomorrow, I just need to sleep on it" he said.

"Yeah, it is a big deal. Congratulations, brother. It is a blessing to be able to witness the birth of your child" he said and hung up shortly after.

Selen hurriedly went back to where she was previously seated when he was with her and held an expressionless face.

She watched him as he calmly walked in and sat back down without any expression on his face.

"Thank you for making me take that. It was important" he said. And that was all he said to her and they fell back into their usual silence.

A little part of her hoped that Clancy would tell her about the baby to satisfy the part of her conscience that made her feel guilty for eavesdropping, but he said nothing.

How could he anyway? She had cut them all off. And the only reason why he was there was because he gave her an ultimatum with her daughter's life on the balance.

The boys soon came rushing in with Newton and their nanny Sarah. "Hey kiddos," Clancy said as he got up and went to them.

"Hey," they said simultaneously. They had not given him a title yet so they found a way to go around it- by not attaching a title.

"How was school today?" He asked as they both walked toward their mother. "School was good," David said as he hugged his mom.

"But we miss Diana in school," Daniel whispered his answer. "Hey, come here, baby," Selen said and stretched her hand to him.

"I know you miss seeing her in school, and very soon, she will be able to join you in school again. You will be able to have school lunches together. Everything will be back to normal again soon" Selen said to both of them.

She was not just saying it to them but also to herself... everything would be fine.

Chapter 54: A Familiar Rhythm

After the boys went into Diana's room with Clancy to see her, Selen stayed behind to speak with Sarah. She needed to know how the boys were doing.

"They are fine, ma'am. If there is ever an issue, I will call you first," she assured Selen as she reached into her shoulder bag and took out a pile of envelopes.

"Here Miss Selen, your mail for the week," she said as she handed them over to her.

"Thank you so much, Sarah," she said as she smiled at her.

Sarah did not have to do all the extra work she did, but she did them anyway.

Selen had always been good to her, and for the first time, Selen needed her help. And she was going to make sure to help as much as she could.

Sarah gave Selen's hand a quick squeeze, told her to stay strong, and then walked down the hallway toward the exit.

As Selen scanned through the mails, her fingers sorting through utility bills and grocery flyers, Clancy's voice broke the quiet. "Selen, she is awake," he called out from the doorway.

She ended up leaving the mail on the waiting room table without checking them all.

Amongst the discarded mail sat a rather large, heavy envelope postmarked from Kent, England, addressed to her.

Newton walked into the hospital yet again just as he had done for weeks now. The familiar smell of bleach and medicine hit him, a reminder of how much time they had spent waiting here.

Except that evening when he had the argument with Clancy over Selen, he had not spoken more than two words to Clancy ever since. They simply avoided each other.

But this was not about Clancy; none of it was. Newton cared about Selen too much to stay away just because of a part of her past.

He walked into the ward, expecting to see Clancy standing or sitting on the bench across Diana's door. And for the first time, he was surprised to see that it was just Selen sitting on the bench alone. She looked incredibly tired under the bright lights.

"Hey," he said quietly as he walked up to her.

"Hey, Newton," she responded back, her voice sounding flat and drained. "How are you doing?" He asked her.

She knew that he cared for her, but she was genuinely getting tired of being asked that question over and over again by everyone. It felt like a constant reminder of how bad things were.

When she looked up at him and saw his genuinely concerned expression, she could not say what was really on her mind. She did not want to complain or break down in front of him. Instead, she just gave a small nod and looked at the floor.

"I am managing, Newton," she whispered, adjusting herself a bit on the bench. "Just taking it one hour at a time." she answered.

Newton sat down, leaving some space between them. "Where is Clancy? I thought he would be here as usual." he asked her.

He did not like Clancy because of what he knew about him. But even he could not deny that Clancy's presence was helpful to Selen.

"He went to the cafeteria to get some coffee, and to take the boys to the courtyard," Selen answered, rubbing her forehead.

Newton nodded, looking toward Diana's door. "And Diana ? How has she been doing since she woke up?" he asked with concern for the little girl who was fighting hard to stay with her family.

"She is still weak," Selen said, her eyes tearing up before she wiped them away. Then she began to speak again, "you know, every time she goes back to sleep, I worry she won't wake up again." she said truthfully.

It was a scary thought and also a valid one. Being in the hospital for so long, seeing different people go in and out, and only a few coming back out made the thoughts fill her head.

The doctors said she was out of danger, but she could not help but wonder for how long it would be. Would her child be fine forever, or was she dreaming too high?

Newton reached out and placed a brief, comforting hand on her shoulder. "She is tough, Selen. She will make it. But you need to take care of yourself too. You look like you have not been sleeping for long" he said.

"I have. Clancy and I take turns to watch her at night" she claimed. "Every time I close my eyes, I start worrying about everything. There are just too many things to handle right now."

As she said that, she suddenly remembered the mail she had left on the table. "What's wrong? You look like you just remembered something bad." he asked her.

Selen shook her head, forcing herself to focus. "Nothing. Just some chores I forgot about. Sarah brought the mail, and I left it sitting there. It can wait. Diana is the only thing that matters right now." she said.

"No, check your mail. You have time to check your mail, Selen. Nothing is going to happen to Diana. Plus, you have been away from work for a while, there could be something important in there" he said and handed them to her.

As Selen went through them, with Newton silently beside her, Clancy walked in.

"I will leave you to get some rest, Selen. I will be back to check in on you tomorrow morning," Newton said. Selen nodded and said a small thank you for the basket of fruits he gave her and he got up to leave.

Newton gave Clancy a brief, serious look, like he was warning him silently to keep the peace, then turned around and walked toward the elevators.

Clancy watched him until the elevator doors closed. Once Newton was gone, he sat down next to Selen. "Sarah is with them now," he said to Selen concerning the boys and they fell into a silence that was slowly becoming comfortable for them.

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For the first time since Diana's transplant, Selen went home. It took a lot of convincing from JK, Sarah and even Clancy to get her to spend a night at home.

As each day went by, she began to look sick due to the stress and tiredness from trying to stay awake for as long as possible. "How could I bring myself to sleep at home when my baby girl is here?" She had said.

"What if she needs something? What if she needs me?" She asked them. "You are her mother and she will always need you. But we will try to do as much as we can to do whatever she might need" Clancy said.

She pouted her lower lips involuntarily and internally deliberated on it. "You do not even have to sleep. Just go home, freshen up in your bathroom and lay down on your own bed" Sarah said.

It was as if she could hear Selen's thoughts. Selen surrendered, "fine, I will just wait for her to-" "No!" they all scolded.

"I could drop you off," Clancy offered. "You are too tired to drive and I also need to get a few items from my hotel, my driver is already waiting outside," he said.

"Hotel?" Selen wondered internally. She had barely spoken to him long enough to know about his living conditions.

And since he spent a very short amount of time going to pick up his change of clothes, she just assumed he lived around. She did not care enough to know if her assumptions were right or not.

She and Clancy walked out of the hospital together and he escorted them to his car, where his driver was waiting outside.

He opened the door for her and asked her for her address so he could place it in the car's map. He shut her door before going to his side of the car. And that was when Selen had the chance to actually look at Clancy.

They had both been confined in the hospital for weeks and she had barely looked at him long enough to see that he equally had eye bags like she did.

She had not realised when the driver drove out of the hospital and that she had been staring at him the entire time. "Are you okay?" He asked her.

Selen immediately looked away and nodded her head, "yes, I am just cold" she said in a low tone. Clancy immediately ordered the driver to reduce the air conditioner for her.

She was not entirely telling a lie. But she had not realised how cold she was until he called her attention.

"Have you been staying at a hotel all these months since you came here?" She asked him, letting her curiosity get the best of her.

"Yeah, I have. But it is one of my hotels, so it's not been a bother" he said to her. He would usually glance at her as he spoke and it made her look away whenever he did.

"So how do you always get your change of clothes so quickly?" She asked him. Clancy smiled a bit. This was the first time she was showing interest in something that concerned him.

"My assistant brings them. I just pick them up downstairs. That way, I don't spend a lot of time away" he said truthfully.

Selen did not want to feel any kind of emotion toward him. But at that moment, there was a little time she felt his genuineness and she had a feeling of gratitude.

They were silent for the rest of the ride after that. "Take a left turn here," the car's automated voice said, breaking the silence. The driver parked in her driveway and helped her open her door, while Clancy helped her with the bag she carried.

He was about to get back into his car and leave when Selen called out to him. "Clancy," she called. He turned around to face her.

"Would you like to get something to eat or drink before you go? I'm sure Sarah made the chef stock up the fridge with loads of foods" she said.

"I am not softening toward him. I'm just inviting him for breakfast," she said to herself as Clancy shut his car off and walked toward the entrance of the house.

He had not expected the invitation. But he was not going to decline as well. He took long strides and met up with her.

Selen led them to the kitchen where she immediately began to rummage through the stocked refrigerator for food for them. "Brocoli?" She asked him as she raised a container of steamed broccoli.

"Uh, no, thank you," he said. His response made her have a small smile on her lips as she remembered that the boys would usually say the same thing whenever she asked them. But unlike the boys, she could not make Clancy eat it against his will.

"Peas then?" She said in a tone that made it look like his answer mattered. Meanwhile, she was already plating their food and setting it in the microwave.

Clancy smiled at her and just waited quietly. They ate in silence, with only the sounds of cutlery hitting their plates echoing in the kitchen.

When they finished, Clancy insisted on doing the dishes, "you fed me, the least I could do is load the dishwasher and dry the plates" he said as he took her plate out of her hand and loaded the dishwasher.

"Thank you," she said to him. "You are welcome. It's no trouble" he said. "No, I mean thank you. For everything. For helping Diana , and even helping me in the hospital" she said.

"Selen, you do not have to ever feel like you need to thank me. If at all, I owe you a thank you and apology. Thank you for giving me another chance to be involved in your lives and an apology for how I did it" he said.

"I just hope you do not only see it as me taking advantage of the situation, which I was, but also that I genuinely would do anything to be a part of your lives, Selen" he said to her.

Chapter 56: A father's love

The dishwasher turned off and Clancy took the dishes out and began to dry them. Selen came to his side to help. It was just two plates, there was no use asking the staff.

"That is the thing here, Clancy. I let you into their lives, but not mine. It is inevitable that we will have to tolerate each other for the sake of the kids. But that's about it." she said.

"And I am not going to remain your wife. I have confirmed that there was no divorce the entire time I thought that there was. But that is all going to change soon." She said,

"Selen, I am going to fight for us. Divorce or not, I still want to be a part of your life and not just the kids" he said to her.

He was now facing her as they slightly leaned on the sink. "I want to move on with my life, Clancy. And I can not do that with the marriage hanging over my head" she said.

"I do not want it to affect you in any way. What I am saying is that I want to move on by your side. I just want you to know this- divorce or not, Selen, I am still going to be here. I am not going to be as foolish as I was before all those years ago" he confessed.

He was letting his feelings and intentions known to her from the beginning. "I have to go upstairs now," Selen said. That was a cue that their conversation was over.

"I will see myself out," Clancy said and headed out.

Clancy spent a few minutes at his place and headed back to the hospital. As he got in, he did not take the usual straight line to the ICU where Diana was, instead, he headed for the financial unit of the hospital.

"Hello, I would like to clear up any outstanding payments on my daughter's tab" he said to the nurse he met. "Okay, right this way, sir" the nurse said and led him inside.

"Good day, Sir. Please, take a seat." the woman behind the desk said to him. "My daughter, Diana Williams had a bone marrow surgery about six weeks ago, I want to clear the bill from then" he said.

"She began to type on her keyboard. "Okay, it is stated here that her Surgery bills have been paid for by her mother. And the only unpaid bill here is from her stay days in the hospital.

And due to her current record of no debt, we thought it best to wait till she was in a better state of mind" she said. "Okay, then. Here is my bank card and information. For every pending due up until today. And for every day or anything else, charge it to that card" he said.

The lady nodded and took the paper from Clancy and he headed out after signing the necessary forms and the forms that permitted them to use the card as he instructed.

Clancy went back to Diana 's ward and stayed there with JK and Sarah. They sat in the awkward silence because they had all made a promise to Selen and they all cared for her. A few hours of silence was not a big deal.

Sarah had to leave to get the boys from school and Clancy immediately volunteered to take her. "I will drive you there," he said.

"Uh, no, sir. You shouldn't worry, the driver will take me" Sarah said. "But I am here" Clancy insisted and got on his feet.

JK wanted to interrupt because he did not know how much Selen wanted him involved in their lives. "Plus, I have never picked them up from school before. I want to know how it feels," he said, making JK's resolve to break.

"Sarah, let him take you. You will go in and pick them up as usual, and he will wait in the car, since he offered to drive" JK said, emphasizing on the drive part.

Clancy gave JK a small nod of appreciation and left with Sarah. But not before looking at his daughter through the door.

At the end of the day, the children were his. And if his friend could give him access to the kids, then he had to watch from the sidelines and not be totally involved. Plus, JK also had plans of his own.

After JK was sure that Cancy and Sarah left, he asked the nurse to send someone from the finance department to their ward since he could not leave Diana alone.

When the lady met JK, she was confused as to why he was trying to clear up an already cleared tab. "What? Who was it?" He asked her. He had suspected that it would be

Newton, but after the lady said that the payments were made today in her office, he became more curious.

Selen had gone home, and he was with her the entire time she was in the hospital, and Clancy had left as well. Who could it be?

"It was her father, Sir. Mr Clancy Avelino" she stated. JK thanked her and she left. "That is one lucky lady. She has so many people around her who are willing to help her," she said in admiration to herself as she went back to her office.

Clancy and Sarah arrived at the children's school and Sarah went in to get them. He had not realised that he was nervously tapping the steering of his car until Sarah mentioned it during the drive.

She did not realise how much of a big deal it was to Clancy until then. He was having his firsts with his kids. And today, it was his first time picking them up from school. Something that he had feared that he would never be able to do when he could not find them.

Immediately they spotted Clancy in the car, the boys ran toward him in excitement. He got out of the car and stretched his arms out for a hug, and to his surprise, they ran into his arms. It was the first time they had hugged and he found himself being emotional.

Chapter 57: Being Helpful

Selen had successfully taken the longest shower she had in weeks. But for the past three hours, she found herself tossing and turning in her bed, unable to sleep.

She did not know if it was because of her conversation with Clancy, or because of the worry she had for Diana. After taking a dose of prescribed nerve pills, she was calm and slowly drifted to sleep. Before she fell asleep, she set an alarm to wake her up in a couple of hours.

Meanwhile, at the hospital, Clancy had returned with Sarah and the boys. "Where is mommy?" Daniel asked no one in particular. "Sweetie, remember when I told you that your mom would be going to rest at home for a bit?" She asked him and he nodded yes in response.

"Well, she is currently doing that. Which is why we will be spending a few more minutes here with your sister. So your mum can have the house to herself" she said. "Yay!" The boys yelled at the excitement of spending more time around their sister.

They did not care if she slept all through their visit, as long as they were around her.

"Okay. Come on, let's go wash up and then see Diana ," Clancy said to them. "Actually, Sarah can take them. Do you mind staying back for a while?" He said to Clancy. Clancy could tell that the energy had shifted and it was not the same as when he had left.

He let Sarah take them and walked to JK. "You paid the stay tab for Diana ," JK stated. Clancy nodded his head, "yes, she is my daughter" he stated.

"I know that she is. And I also know that Selen does not know about this. She would hate to feel indebted to you" he said. "But I have paid for it. And trust me when I say this, her being indebted to me is that last thing on my mind right now" Clancy said.

"It may be, but it will not stop how she will feel when she finds out" JK insisted. "Listen, I know how protective you are when it comes to Selen and the kids. But this has more to do with Diana than Selen" Clancy said.

"Okay, then you will have no problem telling her yourself then" JK said. "No, I was actually thinking that you could say that you paid it. I don't care who takes the credit" Clancy said.

After JK confronted him, he wanted him to cover up so Selen would not try to return the money thinking it was some kind of persuasive bribe. Especially after their conversation less than an hour before.

"This is not the first time you're doing this, is it?" JK asked Clancy. He noticed how smoothly the words rolled out of his tongue and his unchanging expression as well.

"You have done this before, helping her from afar." JK stated. He was good with people and he knew what he saw in Clancy. "Maybe, maybe not. It does not matter if I was the one who helped with the bills or if it was you. The point is that the tab has been cleared and also for the coming days" he said.

He did not answer JK's question and that was all the answer he needed. "Maybe he was trying to atone for his sins and he takes these actions as some kind of penance." JK thought to himself as he watched Clancy walk away to meet with the kids.

As the sun began to set, Selen got up and headed back to the hospital. She called Sarah to bring them home so she could see them and maybe spend some time with them before going back to Diana 's side.

"Mummy, you're home!" David yelled as he ran to hug his mom. "Hey baby," she said to him and kissed his forehead. "Hey," she said and did the same to Daniel.

I thought we could eat together before I go back. What do you boys think?" She said to them as they went inside.

They both agreed and went up to change while Selen set up the table. She wanted to do it herself. She knew that Diana's hospitalisation would be affecting them as well. And she wanted to catch up with them, even if it was just for an hour.

When the boys came back down, they joined her in the dining room and began to eat. "So tell me, how is school?" Selen asked them when they finished eating. "Fine, my class writes a letter to Diana every day. We will keep them until she returns, so she can read them all, by herself" David said.

"Aww, that's sweet," Selen smiled at their thoughtfulness. "Daniel, do you have anything that you would like to add?" She asked Daniel. "Is it okay to call him Dad?" Daniel asked, putting Selen in a shock induced silence.

She had not expected that question but she was going to answer as best as she could, "you are moving at your own pace, my love. You can choose to do that, but only because you want to and not because you feel you have to" she said to him.

Although it was Daniel who asked the question, David was very interested in the question and the answer Selen gave as well.

"He is nice. He said we could play baseball sometime soon" David casually said. Although she did not want him involved with her, she was happy that her boys had good things to say..

She had let him in their lives and their relationship with Clancy felt like her responsibility. So she liked knowing that they were treated well by him.

After that, they talked some more about various things that were happening in their lives and fell asleep.

After placing them in their bedrooms, she picked up the mail from the bag she carried from the hospital and sorted them out.

Some of them were invitations, some were "get well soon" cards addressed to their home, and a few from work. After sorting them by relevance, she was left with one envelope from England.

She opened it up and carefully took out its content.

Married To My One Night Mistake

Selen read the letter and the documents from Clancy's family. She wondered if he knew about it or if they went solo on this, just as they had with her life seven years ago.

After all, they had a history of making major decisions behind her back, and this felt the same.

She folded everything back, placed it in a drawer in her bedroom, and locked it up. She left the house and headed for the hospital with a firm conviction- focusing on her children was much more important than Clancy's family and whatever trust fund they had set up for her kids.

She did not need their help, and she never did. She was not ready to spend time thinking about them, their past actions against her and her babies, or what she faced during it.

When she got to the hospital, she had already decided not to confront Clancy about the letter. His family was going to get the exact same thing she got years ago when she wondered why they treated her so poorly- silence.

When she walked into the waiting area, JK and Clancy were seated in silence. JK was just staring at the door to Diana's room, while Clancy continued typing on his phone. It was the first time she had seen him so completely immersed in his phone, barely paying attention to the room.

"Hey," she said. JK immediately got up to greet her. "How are you feeling? Better, yeah?" he asked as he helped her with the extra bags she carried. She nodded her head, appreciative of his help.

Now, it was Clancy's turn to go. It was completely impromptu, but he had no choice but to leave. Some urgent documents required his immediate attention, and the digital location of the files was completely inaccessible to anyone else, even his personal assistant.

"Sorry, I have to leave for a few hours. I have this work thing I need to do urgently," he said to Selen. "It's fine. You can stay back and rest later, I will watch her tonight," she said, keeping her tone completely neutral.

"No, I will be back. I will be away for just two hours or three tops," he said, before turning and leaving down the corridor. Once he was gone, Selen turned to her friend.

"Okay JK, I have to go down to the finance department to prevent the bills from piling up, so do you mind staying for a few more minutes?" she asked him.

"There is no need for you to do that, the bills have been cleared," JK said. He knew she was going to find out anyway as soon as she reached the front desk. It was best he told her before she found out that he already knew and had kept her in the dark.

She was his friend, and he was not going to hide things from her or take credit for something he did not do. "What? Did you pay? No, I cannot let you do that. I have to pay you back, where is the statement?" she said insistently, already reaching for her bag.

"I was going to," JK said, stopping her. "But I was not the one who paid, Selen. It was Clancy. I found out when I wanted to clear the tab myself. And the clerk said it appears

like he will be the one paying for a while, too. He put his card on file for everything." he said.

"What? Clancy?" she asked in surprise. She instinctively looked around the hallway for him before remembering that he had just left.

Selen did not say anything else after that.

She sat down and stared at the floor, processing the news. She would wait for him to return and find out his real intentions for clearing the debt and making a commitment to keep paying.

She was incredibly grateful that her child's medical expenses were taken care of. However, she was highly skeptical about where the help came from, and she was not about to let her guard down just yet.

Selen went down to the finance department and confirmed everything JK said. Clancy had placed a black card for all future expenses.

Three hours later, Clancy walked back in. He still looked visibly tired like he did in the morning. His expression sharpened the moment he saw Selen still sitting in the exact same chair. The tension in the corridor spiked instantly.

Clancy took the seat he had been on before he left, placing his jacket on an empty chair nearby. "How is Diana ? Did the doctor come by while I was gone?" He asked Selen.

"She is stable. She woke up for a bit, puked, and then went back to sleep," Selen said. Her voice was flat, completely devoid of any emotion.

She turned her head slowly to look at him directly, her eyes boring into his. "I went down to the billing office after you left." She said, hoping to get a reaction from him. And she did.

Clancy paused, his hand freezing halfway through pocketing his phone. He closed his eyes for a brief second, a subtle tightening around his jaw revealing his frustration. He realized immediately that JK must have clued her in before leaving.

"Selen, look-" he began to say but she interrupted him. "Why did you pay the bills, Clancy?" she interrupted, her tone sharp but kept quiet enough not to draw the attention of the nurses at the nearby station.

"And why did you put your black card on file for all future treatments without consulting me first?" Clancy sighed deeply, running a hand over his hair and rubbing the bridge of his nose.

"Because it needed to be done, Selen. You are already dealing with enough stress right now, and the absolute last thing you need to worry about is a stack of medical invoices piling up on your kitchen counter. I have the financial means to handle it, so I did. It is really that simple." He said.

"I did not ask for your charity," Selen said. "Good, because it is not charity," Clancy said, but Selen was not done.

Chapter 59: Being Hopeful

"I told you before, I handle my own responsibilities. I have been doing it alone for seven years, and I do not intend to stop now. Most importantly, I do not want to owe you anything." Selen said.

"Like I said, it is not charity, and you do not owe me a single dime," Clancy said, his voice rising slightly before he caught himself. He scooted closer to her to avoid being loud, his expression turning intense.

"Diana is my priority too, Selen. Whether you like it or not, whether you want to admit it or not, I care about what happens to her. This is not some calculated power move to gain leverage over you. I just wanted to take the financial pressure off your shoulders so you can breathe." He said.

Selen stared at him, her sharp eyes trying to read any sign of deceit. Her mind instantly flashed back to the locked drawer in her bedroom containing the heavy, embossed letter from his family.

The timing was entirely too suspicious. She wondered again if this was a coordinated effort between Clancy and his parents to buy their way back into her life, or if Clancy was acting entirely on his own, completely ignorant of his family's maneuvering behind the scenes.

"If this is about your family, then-" she started, testing the waters to see how he would react to the mention of them. "My family has absolutely nothing to do with this," Clancy cut in quickly.

"They do not even know that I am at this hospital. They do not know anything about Diana's situation. This is strictly between you and me, Selen. I paid the bills because I wanted to protect my daughter, not because anyone in my family told me to or gave me permission." He cleared up.

Selen remained completely silent for a long moment, studying his reaction. He seemed genuinely angry at the mention of his relatives, which made her think he might actually be telling the truth about being in the dark.

However, betrayal had taught her never to trust a clean surface. She was still deeply skeptical, but looking at the door of Diana's room, she knew she had to be open to anything being possible.

"Fine," Selen said slowly. But I am not letting you foot the entire bill permanently, and I will not be indebted to you." She said,

Clancy looked like he wanted to argue, his mouth opening to protest the idea of a repayment plan, but he saw the stubborn, unyielding glint in her eyes and relented.

He knew that pushing her too hard right now would only cause her to walk away entirely. "We can talk about that later. For now, just let me handle the administrative side so you can focus on her."

When the doctor came in, the discussion about the bills was instantly pushed to the back of her mind. Her focus shifted entirely to the door of her daughter's room, waiting for the one update that actually mattered.

Selen and Clancy stood at a corner as the doctor went over Diana's vitals. "Everything looks good. If she continues to progress like this, then once her new stem cells successfully start making white blood cells, and her mouth sores and nausea begin to clear up, she can move home in a week or two.

Although, she will still have to undergo serious observation" the doctor said. "Hear that baby? You may be able to go home soon. You will get to sleep in your bed. Just keep on fighting," Selen whispered to Diana. Diana tried to slowly nod.

"Just to confirm, Miss Williams, you do live within an hour from the hospital right?" the doctor asked her. "Yes, thirty- five minutes away, and forty five in traffic," she said.

"Okay then, because we will need you to be near the hospital during this phase, an hour away at most. Until then, see you soon, Diana. Excuse me, Miss Williams." the doctor said and excused herself from the room.

*** two weeks later***

Everyone stood outside Diana's room as the doctors gave her a last clearing to leave the hospital. Except Diana, Selen had to be the happiest person in the ward that day.

"Remember, we expect clinic visits 2 to 3 times a week to check her blood counts and ensure her body is accepting the new cells safely. Her clinic visits will decrease to every few weeks." The doctor said to Selen as they wheeled her out of the room.

Diana was still weak, but her excitement was very evident. She had spent months in that room, sleeping, eating, even puking there. She got so used to it that she knew how many steps it took from the bed to the door. And finally, she was going back to her home to be with her mom and brothers.

Everyone followed Diana back home, including Clancy who drove behind them. JK drove Selen and the kids, while Newton and Clancy followed behind them.

For Diana , the smell of the hospital was finally gone, it was now replaced by the normal scent of her uncle JK's car. She sat in the backseat, watching the familiar roads go by. She was finally on her way home.

In the front seat, her mom could not stop smiling. Next to Diana were her brothers, they kept whispering to each other and giggling, clearly hiding a secret.

"Are we almost there?" Diana asked, her impatience evident. Her voice was still a bit quiet, but she had a little more energy than before.

"Just a few more blocks, baby," Selen said, catching her eye in the rearview mirror.

When the car pulled into their driveway, the boys scrambled out of their seats before the engine even stopped. "Wait in the car for one minute!" Daniel yelled as they ran to the front door.

Selen opened the door as JK helped her by wheeling Diana inside the house carefully, making sure not to hurt her healing stomach. As Clancy and Newton parked.

Chapter 60: Healing the Body and the Heart

"Okay, come in!" David called out. JK pushed Diana into the sitting room, where their voice sounded from.

"Surprise!" her brothers shouted. The sitting room looked different. They had moved the couches to the walls. They had hung simple string lights across the ceiling to look like stars, and the coffee table was loaded with board games.

Diana smiled brightly and Clancy helped her get off the wheelchair and into the adjustable couch close to the board games.

Clancy spent almost every day in Selen's home, hanging out with the kids. They usually hung out in the backyard right after school, turning the grass into their main playground.

On any given afternoon, they would play quick soccer matches where the rules changed constantly, or just lie down and look at the clouds.

Selen's house had quickly become a comfortable spot for Clancy, filled with the loud, messy noise of the kids and the normal routine of a busy home.

He had become a regular part of their day, a steady adult who knew how to keep things safe while still letting them have fun. He was being a dad to them and every day, when he would leave. He left with the joy of the day spent, and hopefulness of the day ahead.

Those quiet afternoons were a huge relief after the stressful months they had all been through. Diana was slowly healing now, working her way back to full strength during the second phase of her recovery.

The hardest days of hospital isolation and heavy treatments were over. Now, she was in the stage where her body was building a new immune system. She still had check ups, a very clean environment, stuck to a strict medication schedule, and had to wear a protective mask outside, but being back home with her brothers was exactly what she needed.

"Hey, what's going on with you guys lately?" Clancy asked them as they sat in the yard.

Selen watched them from the chair at the exit of the kitchen, totally unable to hear their conversation but she could see them clearly. She took a sip from her mug, watching them as she worked on her computer.

There was a lot of energy coming from the three siblings today. They were huddled together in a tight circle, whispering with wide eyes and pointing their fingers. Clancy sat flat on the grass right in front of them, looking amused and curious. Whatever they were planning, they were taking it very seriously.

"We want to get mummy a birthday present," Daniel said, speaking up without thinking. "Daniel, shh!" Diana and David said at the same time, cautioning their brother. Diana quickly put her hand over her mouth, while David reached over to nudge Daniel's shoulder.

Both of them immediately looked back toward the kitchen porch, making sure their mother had not heard a word.

"What? You said that MOM should not find out. He is not mom," Daniel said defensively, crossing his arms. To a seven year old, the rule was simple- keep it a secret from Mom.

Clancy was not their Mom, so it did not count. "Oh, is it a secret?" Clancy asked them, lowering his voice to a whisper to match their tone. The three children nodded their heads in unison.

"Okay, if I promise to keep the secret, will you keep me in on it?" he asked them, leaning forward. He did not want them getting into things alone. He always wanted to make sure that they were safe. And the way to do that for him was to get involved with whatever they were planning.

Over the past few months, he had watched these kids handle a lot of stress, and he wanted to make sure he was always there to support them. Whether it was a basic problem or a secret project, Clancy wanted to help.

"We want to get mom a drawing of her. We have a photo we will copy," Diana said slowly, taking over the explanation now that the secret was out. She reached into her pocket and pulled out a slightly crumpled photograph. It was a normal photo of Selen laughing, looking happy and relaxed.

Clancy looked at the photo a bit longer than he was supposed to and just admired her beauty. He then nodded and smiled at the thoughtfulness that came with the present. He looked at the photo, then back at the kids.

She was an artist after all, she would appreciate art. Especially their art. Selen spent her nights painting pieces to sell to galleries, but Clancy knew that a drawing made by her own kids would mean much more to her than any expensive painting.

"Okay, what can I do to help?" He asked.

They looked at each other, trading looks to see who should speak. Finally, as though appointed as the spokesman for the group, David spoke.

"We need more art supplies," they said, lowering their voices again. David explained their main problem. They had used up all their good drawing paper, and their colored pencils were worn down to tiny pieces. "But if we ask Mum for new ones, she is going to ask why we need them so soon."

Clancy laughed quietly, understanding their dilemma. "I will take care of it," he said. "I will get you the proper supplies. Good sketching paper, real drawing pencils, and everything else you need." he said with assurance.

The kids looked incredibly relieved. Forgetting about keeping things quiet, they excitedly hugged him for helping them with their problem. They moved in all at once, giving him a big group hug.

Clancy laughed, wrapping his arms around them, making sure to keep his grip gentle around Diana's side because of her recovery.

Selen, who was still watching them, wondered what Clancy had done to make them so happy that they were all engulfing him in a group hug. It was not often that all three of her kids agreed on something so quickly, or showed that much affection at once.