

Married To My One Night Mistake

Chapter 71: Spending time with you

"That is true. Let's split this," Selen said. She picked up the table knife Clancy had used earlier to cut the sandwich in half. Clancy took his half, and they both ate what was left in a comfortable silence.

That was her way of acknowledging his story. She did not say, "I'm sorry about your grandpa," or offer any typical sympathy. She just let him enjoy the memory of someone he clearly cared about without making it weird.

After they finished, Selen cleared the counter. Clancy looked at his watch and realized how late it actually was. "I have to get back to my hotel now," he said, pushing himself up from the stool.

She did not respond right away. She stood by the sink, clearly thinking about what she wanted to say next. "You can stay here tonight," she said. Clancy froze. He wondered if it was the opposite day. He looked at her in total surprise.

"Really?" He asked, with his voice laced with doubt. "Just to be clear, you are saying that I can sleep here? In your house? All of us under the same roof?" he asked. She nodded her head, yes.

"It is late. Way too late for your driver to get here and then drive you, and I think the estate gates require a special code to let anyone out at this time. The security system changes over late hours."

She brushed a strand of hair back. "And I cannot promise to be awake to tell you what the code is by the time you get down there. Plus, it will make the children's day to see you early in the morning for the first time." She added.

Maybe it was still the familiarity from the game or the excitement from seeing Diana move freely, but she was sincerely offering Clancy of all people, a spot to sleep in her home.

Clancy smiled and nodded. "Alright, thank you. I will take the couch," he said. "Or the guest room, whatever you choose," she said.

As she spoke, her tone immediately shifted back to normal. The brief warmth in her voice vanished, completely free of the concern he thought he had heard earlier when they were laughing and playing and when he made the sandwich. She was back to her usual, practical self.

"The guest room has clean sheets," she added, walking toward the exit of the kitchen.
"There are extra towels in the bathroom if you need them."

Clancy followed her down the hall, trying to keep his footsteps quiet so he would not wake the kids. Selen pulled a heavy blanket from the closet and handed it to him.

"There are fresh towels in the adjoining bathroom," Selen murmured, pointing toward a door on the left. "And the extra blankets are in the closet if the air conditioning gets too cold. I usually keep it low at night."

"This is perfect, Selen. Really, thank you," Clancy said, stepping into the room and setting his car keys down on the wooden nightstand.

"Goodnight, Selen. Thanks again," he said as he stood in front of the room Selen had assigned to him. She gave him a brief nod. "Goodnight. Just turn off the hall light when you are done." she said and went into her room and shut the door.

With a final, brief nod, she pulled the door shut, leaving him alone in the silence of the room. Clancy stood still for a moment, listening to the faint sound of her footsteps retreating down the hall until a distant door clicked shut.

He let out a long, slow breath he had not realized he was holding. Slipping out of his dress shirt, he draped it carefully over the back of a nearby chair and sat down on the edge of the mattress.

The bed was comfortable, a far cry from the couch he had willingly volunteered to sleep on just minutes prior. He observed the neatly arranged room and then he climbed into bed, glad he did not have to drive back to a lonely hotel room, and tried to sleep.

Clancy spent most of the time tossing and turning in bed, his body unfamiliar with the environment. How was it that a man who would always travel for business and could sleep in any hotel, suddenly had insomnia on that particular night where he was sleeping at Selen's home for the first time.

"Was that it? Is that why I can not sleep? Because this is her house?" He wondered.

Or was it because her guest room did not have the smell of hotels that had now become familiar with him- the overly cleaned floors that carried the smell of cleaning agents lingering on them, or the smell of machine fresh sheets and perfume scented air fresheners.

He resisted the urge to take a walk around the house to prevent waking anyone up so early and just shut his eyes close long enough to drift into the abyss of sleep.

The following morning, Clancy woke up and got dressed in his dress shirt from the previous day. He had a pair of clothes in his car that followed him everywhere, but he did not want to be a bother and just waited till he got to his hotel to take a shower.

As he left the guest room, he was welcomed by the sound of the children in their bedrooms with Sarah and their mom. Clancy got to the closest door and gave it a small knock. He waited for an invitation before opening the door and going in.

"No way!" Daniel exclaimed when he saw that it was Clancy who came in. They had never seen him so early during the day. Both boys said hello to Clancy by asking multiple questions all at once.

"Did you stay here last night? Do you live here now? Where is your room? Does that mean that we will see you every time now?" They both interrogated.

Clancy calmed them down, "one at a time please. And to answer most of the questions, no I do not live here, your mom just gave me a place to sleep since it was so late. She is really nice" he said to them. "Mummy is always nice," Daniel said in a soft and low tone and Clancy nodded in agreement.

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"So, are you going back to your house now?" David asked him, noticing that he was already dressed. "Yes, I am" he said, not feeling the need to tell a pair of seven year olds that he stays in a hotel.

"But I wanted to see you guys off to school first. Is that okay?" He asked them and then helped Daniel button up his shirt. They both nodded and continued preparing for school. "I have to go and see your sister now, see you boys downstairs?" Clancy said to them as he got up from where he was previously sat to help them with their ties.

They both nodded and Clancy walked out of their room and headed for the next one, hoping it was Diana's room. He knocked on the door and again waited to be invited inside before he went in. "Hey kiddo," he said to her and she grinned brightly at him.

"If I pass the exams, I can move to a new class with my brothers" she just casually said. "I guess you are all morning people, huh?" He muttered as he walked closer to her. "What exams?" He asked Diana. Diana then turned to her mother to help her explain the details.

"She has been slowly studying for a while after she came back home, to catch up on what she missed in school. And the school is now ready to give her a special condition to continue to another class even though she missed most of school" Selen explained.

"It is not a guarantee that she will resume school physically when they do, but it is a guarantee that she moves up to another class. Until the doctor clears her, we will have to do online classes and tutoring here at home" she added.

Clancy nodded his head slowly in understanding, "when is the exam? How do you write it?" He asked Diana . "In the summer. It is online and I will have a teacher come to me for supervision" she said the part she knew confidently.

He nodded his head slowly, assimilating what she was saying. "That is good news. Do you need help studying?" he asked her. But she shook her head, no. "Well, if you ever do, I am more than willing to be your tutor," he said. Diana muttered a small thank you.

They all went downstairs and the kids had their breakfast, then the boys left for school. He watched how Diana looked at them as she said goodbye. That must be tough on her. She was used to going to school with them, sitting and playing with them at school as well.

But now, she was stuck at home until the doctor said she could go back to school. It was the right thing, but it did not make the sight any less sad. After the boys left, he could not bring himself to say goodbye to her immediately, so he stayed for a few more minutes.

He stayed with her and saw how she took her medication. When the drowsiness from the drugs began to kick in less than five minutes later, "I have to go now, kiddo," Clancy said to Diana . She nodded her head slowly, and he gently planted a kiss on her forehead before walking out and leaving her with Sarah.

Selen, who had been watching from a corner, quickly turned to look away when she saw him headed her way. "Can I offer you a ride to work as a thank you for yesterday?" He asked her.

But before Selen could deny his request, her car was pulled to the driveway. "Good day," Clancy said to her and she muttered a small "good day" back and got into her car.

"Good morning, ma'am. The noise has been fixed, sorry I ran a bit late to pick it up" the driver said to Selen as he got out of the car and she went into the driver's seat.

"It's fine. Thank you, Caleb. And remember to always be available and on alert" she said to him and shut the door. "yes ma'am, have a good day" he said and she drove off, leaving Clancy behind in his car.

Although she left ahead of him, Selen caught a glimpse of Clancy's car for a few seconds, but when she got to the gate that led outside the estate, his car was no longer in sight. She wondered if she was just seeing things or if his vehicle had not just disappeared within the estate.

She shook her head, trying to push the thoughts aside. "Why did she care anyway? He was a grown man and he could go anywhere he wanted to" she said to herself as she drove into the major roads.

When Selen got to work, the first thing that welcomed her in her office was a bouquet of her favourite flowers. She knew that it was not from Clancy, it could not be. The only people that knew her well enough to get her flowers were... "Newton" she said as she read the card that was attached to it.

She smiled at his note and sniffed the flowers. He was inviting her out to lunch with him. She carefully laid the flowers down and rummaged through her bag to find her phone. "Have you received my parcel?" He asked immediately and he answered the phone.

"Yes, and I would like to have lunch with you, Newton," she said to him. "Great, the address is on the back of the card but I will text it to you again" he said. "You know that you did not have to get me flowers to ask me to lunch, right?" Selen said to him.

"I know that I may not have to. But I want you to know that I wanted to," he said, making it clear that what he did was a decision and not what he thought was a requirement. Selen blushed at his words and they both went back to work with excitement for lunch later that day.

Chapter 73: Having your person

The restaurant Newton chose was a modern, lively grill downtown loud enough that they did not have to whisper, but private enough that they could actually hear each other.

He was already sitting at a booth near the back, checking something on his tablet, but he shut the screen the second he saw her walk through the door. "Hey," he said, sliding out of the booth to give her a quick, one-armed hug. "You made it past the lunchtime traffic." He said, referring to the traffic that came with that time of the day.

"Barely," Selen said, sliding into the booth and dropping her bag onto the seat beside her. "The main intersection by the office is blocked off. It is chaos out there. I might have to do the rest of my work at home instead of spending my remaining work hours in traffic" she said.

"That means you get to spend more time with me here," Newton said with a small laugh, handing her a menu. "Way to find a silver lining" Selen said back and collected the tablet from him.

"I already ordered some sparkling water for the table. How has your morning been?" he said. "Chaotic," Selen responded, opening the menu. "But the flowers definitely helped. They really brightened up my desk." She said honestly.

"Good. That was the plan," Newton smiled. "Though I do not think I'm very subtle about it." He said to her and Selen smiled at him in response. The waiter came by, and they kept their orders simple. Once the waiter took the menus away, Newton leaned forward, resting his forearms on the table.

"So, how is Diana doing? Did the doctor give any updates on the medication switch?"

"She's actually doing okay. She now moves on her own without help. Although a bit drowsy in the mornings, she's managing" Selen said, feeling a bit of the tension leave her shoulders.

It was a relief to talk about it with someone who just listened. "The school actually agreed to let her take a placement exam this summer. If she passes, she moves up to the next class with her brothers, even though she's doing online learning from home." She added.

"Wow, that is huge," Newton said, nodding. "She is a smart kid. Honestly, she'll probably breeze through it. I need to get her a congratulatory present when she passes" he said. Selen smiled at his confidence in her daughter.

"She is incredibly determined to keep up with the boys." Selen said. "She gets that stubborn streak from you," Newton teased, making Selen laugh. "And how are the boys handling everything?"

"They are fine, just busy with school and sports, and family time" Selen said, taking a sip of her water. "They miss having her around during the day, but they make up for it when they get home. The house is never quiet for long."

"Well, make sure you take care of yourself too," Newton said as the waiter returned and set down their plates. "You spend so much time coordinating everyone else's schedules that I worry you forget to eat or sleep."

Selen nodded slowly, picking up her fork.

The conversation shifted easily from there. Newton told her about a ridiculous argument two of his project managers had gotten into over a missing page of a document that ended up halting a floor plan review for two hours.

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They talked about her new studio and how she was working toward launching it. It was normal, everyday conversation, and that was exactly what Selen needed. She was just a person having lunch with a guy who genuinely liked her company.

As they finished up their food, Newton looked at her, his tone becoming a bit more grounded but keeping its casual upfrontness. "I thought of a name but I am still skeptical about it" she said with hesitation. "Go on, what is it?" He asked. "three D, as in my three kids and also that painted works are like 3D pictures. Or is it too cliché?" she said to him.

Newton was smiling in awe at how smart she was. "Selen, I think that three D is a perfect name" he said with a full grin on his face. Selen nodded slowly in agreement. "I just

worry that most people might not get the meaning," she said, sincerely casting her worries.

"Anyone who does not get it should probably not even be in an art studio in the first place" he joked, trying to loosen the tension she had and it worked because Selen began to laugh at his statement.

When they finished with their lunch, Newton spoke up again, "look, I know your plate is completely full right now with Diana's recovery and the boys. I do not expect you to have everything figured out, and I do not expect a lot of your time. I just want you to know I'm here for whatever you may need" he said.

Selen looked at him, feeling a genuine sense of relief. There was no pressure in his voice, no hidden demands. "Thanks, Newton. That honestly means a lot." He paid the bill and they walked out to the parking lot together.

When they reached her car, Selen unlocked the doors and turned to face him. "Thank you for lunch, Newton. And for the distraction. I really needed an hour where I was not thinking about a million things at once" she said.

"Anytime. Really, anytime. Just call me and I will be down to take a break from my own busy life" Newton said. He stepped in a bit closer and gave her a warm, lingering hug. He kept things comfortable and natural, reading her mood perfectly.

"Call me later tonight if you are free, even if it is just to vent about the kids' homework." He said.

"I might take you up on that," Selen said with a smile. She got into her car and started the engine. As she pulled out of the parking lot, the heavy, anxious feeling that usually lived in her chest felt just a little bit lighter.

Chapter 74: A day at the beach

School was finally over for the boys and Diana had just finished her exams. They were finally going on their long awaited beach day.

The shores of the Costa del Sol were moderately occupied by families that wanted to get a head start on the beach in the summer before it became too crowded to have fun.

Selen kept her eyes firmly on Diana. The young girl was wearing a wide-brimmed sun hat and a light, long-sleeved shirt, her skin thoroughly slathered in sunscreen.

So far, Diana was keeping her promise. She sat under the massive blue beach umbrella, helping Sarah build an elaborate sandcastle, while David and Daniel desperately tried to dig a moat around it before the tide came in.

Clancy was right in the middle of the chaos, his trousers rolled up to his knees, completely soaked in saltwater. He was laughing loudly, his face flushed from the heat, looking less like a high-powered businessman and more like an overgrown kid.

Selen sat on her beach towel a few paces back, a pair of dark sunglasses hiding her intense gaze. She pulled out her phone to check the time. A fresh text from Newton was waiting for her. "How is the beach? Weather holding up?" he had asked.

She began to type a reply. "It is beautiful. Diana is doing well, staying in the shade. The boys are- " she did not get to finish her text when she was distracted by a call from Daniel. "Mummy! Look!" Daniel's shout interrupted her.

She looked up to see Daniel pointing proudly at a massive crab Clancy had somehow managed to trap inside a plastic bucket. The kids were crowding around it, squealing with a mixture of delight and terror.

Selen smiled, hitting send on her half-finished text, and tucked the phone back into her bag. She had promised herself she would be present today. Because unlike the kids, she had no days off. So their holiday would consist of her still going to work.

As the afternoon rolled on, Clancy walked over to Selen's umbrella, shaking water from his hair like a dog. He dropped down onto the sand beside her, completely unbothered by the grains sticking to his damp skin.

"They are having a blast," Clancy said, stating the obvious and wiping sweat from his forehead. He looked over at the kids, his expression softening. "Diana has not complained once about being tired." He said with worry in his tone.

"She is stubborn," Selen replied, keeping her tone neutral. "She knows that if she complains, we pack up and leave immediately. But I am keeping a close eye on her." Selen said. Clancy looked at her side profile, his smile fading into something more serious.

"Thank you for coming, Selen. I know you did not have to." he said. Selen kept her sunglasses on, staring out at the point where the sea met the sky. "I did it for them, Clancy. They deserved this after everything they have been through." She responded.

Before Clancy could respond, David came running over, kicking up sand. "Mummy, Clancy! Sarah says the ice cream truck is down the boardwalk! Can we go? Please?" He asked with a heavy breath from all the running.

Clancy immediately stood up, slapping the sand off his legs. "Come on, kiddo. We will get every flavour they have and give it a try." He said, making David scream, "yay!" In celebration. "Remember, Diana can only have one scoop each!" Selen yelled at their retreating backs.

She was slowly being introduced back to her regular kids diet and they could not risk anything that would ruin her body's quick recovery.

By the time the sun began to dip, the entire group was exhausted. Clancy and Sarah packed up the heavy umbrellas and coolers, loading them into the back of the large SUV Clancy had rented for the trip.

The kids piled into the back rows, David and Daniel already nodding off against each other's shoulders, while Diana held onto a small seashell she had found, her eyes heavy.

Sarah sat in the middle of the back row, keeping an eye on the sleeping boys, while Clancy and Selen sat in the middle row with Diana in between them. The driver steered the vehicle out of the beach parking lot and onto the highway that was supposed to lead them back toward the city.

They had only been driving for about ten minutes when the traffic came to a grinding halt. A long line of red brake lights stretched out as far as the eye could see. Clancy tapped his fingers impatiently against his thighs.

"What's going on?" Selen asked, leaning forward to look through the windshield. "Looks like the roads have been blocked," Clancy muttered, furrowing his eyebrows in frustration.

He rolled down his window as they approached a temporary barrier. A police officer in a vest was waving cars down and pointing them away from the highway. The driver stopped the car next to the officer and spoke to him in, asking for clarification.

Selen watched Clancy's face harden as the officer replied, gesturing aggressively toward the road ahead. After a brief exchange, they thanked him and rolled the window back up, steering the SUV down the narrow detour road.

"What did he say?" Selen asked. She immediately thought of Diana . They needed a clear route back in case of an emergency.

"There is a massive rockslide about two kilometers up," Clancy explained, his voice tight.

"The heavy rains from last week loosened the cliffs. They have closed the entire highway section for the night. They are saying it won't be cleared until tomorrow afternoon at the earliest." the driver added. "Tomorrow afternoon?!" Selen's voice rose slightly.

She looked back at the kids. Diana was already asleep. "Clancy, we can not just sit in traffic all night. Diana needs a proper bed, and we still need to be around a hospital at all times" Selen said with anxiousness laced in her voice.

Clancy's tone instantly shifted into a calm, reassuring one. He reached out, almost touching her hand before pulling back. "I am not going to let you guys sleep in a car." he said with a certain tone.

Chapter 75: A family night out

"The hotels in this immediate area will be booked solid within the hour by everyone else caught in this traffic," Sarah noted from the back, already looking at her phone. "I am checking online now, and everything nearby is showing zero availability." She announced.

Clancy caught Selen's worried eyes beside him. A small, knowing smile played on his lips. "We do not need a hotel," Clancy said smoothly, "take us to the villa in this area. You know it right?" he instructed the driver and he nodded, steering the wheel to take a sharp right turn onto a private, paved road that wound upward into the coastal hills, away from the clogged detour traffic.

"Where are we going, Clancy?" Selen asked as she looked out the window. The road was lined with high white walls and lush Mediterranean greenery.

"I own a small estate up here," Clancy replied casually, as if mentioning he had a spare jacket in the trunk. "It is a private villa. It's fully staffed, it is almost as good as ready with just a few ticks left so it is not open for booking yet.

And it is barely ten minutes from where we are right now, excellent security, and more than enough rooms for everyone." He said.

Selen stared at him, a mixture of relief and annoyance washing over her. Of course he owned a villa here. "You just happen to have a villa right around the corner?" she asked, raising an eyebrow.

"When you do multiple businesses as much as I do, you learn to buy property in places with potential like this." Clancy shrugged, though his eyes gleamed with satisfaction. He glanced back at the sleeping kids.

"They will have proper beds, a home-cooked meal, and we can wait out the road clearance in total comfort. What do you say, Selen?" he asked her. They were now packed at a corner of the road, awaiting Selen's confirmation.

Selen looked back at Diana's peaceful, sleeping face, then out at the chaotic mess of traffic they were successfully leaving behind. She let out a long, defeated breath.

"Fine," Selen said, leaning back into her seat. "Lead the way." she said and leaned into the chair.

Clancy tapped his phone's screen and placed the phone to his ear. The call was answered after two rings. "Mr. Avelino?" his personal assistant, Patrick, said. "Patrick, sorry for the late call," Clancy said, dropping his voice to a tone lower.

"We have run into a major roadblock near Málaga. I am diverting us to the hillside estate. Contact Elena and the staff immediately. We need four rooms prepped and a light dinner laid out. We will be there in under ten minutes." "Right away, sir," Patrick replied and Clancy hung up.

Selen watched Clancy from her seat. His transition from relaxed beachgoer to decisive executive was seamless, bringing her a reluctant sense of relief that everything was going to be fine. Minutes later, the SUV climbed a steep road, approaching towering, heavy gates, which swung inward smoothly to reveal the villa.

The villa was beautiful, and just being there already made one's mind at ease. As the car parked, a woman named Elena stepped out with two staff members to help with the bags. The next hour passed in a blur with everyone moving around to get themselves settled in.

Clancy carried the sleeping boys upstairs while Sarah settled into her own room. Selen guided a half asleep Diana to bed, verified her evening dosage, and watched her drift off into the soft pillows.

By midnight, the villa had fallen silent. The staff had retired much earlier in the day to their quarters, leaving a spread of food on the kitchen island for anyone who needed it. Selen, who was unable to quiet her racing mind, slipped out of her bedroom.

She walked down the cold hallway to Diana's room, gently opening the door to peep inside. Diana was breathing evenly, and looked peaceful in her sleep. Selen let out a quiet breath. "She is doing perfectly. I just checked" a voice whispered from behind her.

Selen flinched slightly but did not jump. Clancy was leaning against the wall, holding two glasses of water. He had changed into a clean white shirt from the spares he always carried with him, although his hair was still as messy as it was from the beach.

He offered her a glass. "Thanks," Selen murmured, taking the glass from him.

They walked together toward a wide balcony that directly overlooked the sea. The night air was cooler now, making Selen shiver in her light dress.

Everything she packed for the beach, including spare clothes were all light. Clancy walked toward a cupboard and brought a shawl. He gently draped it over her shoulders and she whispered a small thank you to him. Below them, they could see the highway at a distance. It was still a stagnant line of red brake lights.

"You don't stop worrying, do you?" Clancy asked softly, leaning against the railing. "I am their mother, it is my job to worry," Selen replied, looking out at the dark water. "Hey, recovery relies on structure. Unexpected detours are not just an inconvenience for her."

Selen said.

"I know," Clancy said. He turned his head to look at her, his expression stripped of his usual corporate armor. "But you handled it. You always do. They are very lucky kids to have you as their mother." he said to her in honesty and admiration. "I am also lucky to have them," she said.

The yellow light from the light caught the sharp lines of his jaw, and the intense focus in his eyes made the space between them feel suddenly very small. Clancy took a half step closer. His casual confidence slipped away, replaced by a raw hesitation. Selen did not move back.

The quiet sound of the wind hitting the trees seemed to fade. Clancy reached up, his fingers brushing a stray lock of hair away from her cheek, his thumb lingering near her jawline. Selen's breath hitched. She looked from his eyes down to his lips, and Clancy followed her gaze, his head tilting slightly as he began to lean in.

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Chapter 76: It was a moment

Selen still did not try to make a move to stop Clancy. Instead, she found herself closing her eyes gently and waiting. Waiting for Clancy's lips to hit hers.

The sound of footsteps on the dry grass outside broke the silence, instantly cutting through the tension. Selen stepped back, his hand dropping from her face. Clancy cleared his throat and adjusted his shirt, his usual neutral expression snapping right back into place.

"Did you hear that?" Selen asked, her voice dropping to a normal whisper. "I will have a look. It is most likely the guard doing a night watch" Clancy said. He put his glass down on the railing and began to walk back inside.

The mood was entirely gone. Selen tightened the shawl around her shoulders, suddenly feeling exhausted. "I am going to bed," Selen said, causing Clancy to turn back around and face her. "We need to leave early if we want to beat the traffic tomorrow." She added.

Clancy nodded in acknowledgement. "Good night, Selen. See you in the morning." he said to her. Selen went into her room and shut the door, finally letting out her breath. "What was that?" She asked herself as she sunk into the soft sheets of her bed.

Clancy had confirmed that it was the security guard just as he had presumed and went back to his bedroom with a fortitude that he and Selen undeniably had a moment back there on the porch.

"Maybe there was hope after all. And it was closer than I thought or imagined" he thought to himself as he maintained the smile on his lips, even as he drifted to sleep.

***the following morning**

Selen's phone rang first the following morning, relieving her of the most uncomfortable sleep she had in years. The bed was extremely comfortable, perhaps too comfortable since she began to relate its comfort to how she now felt toward Clancy.

She had spent hours tossing and turning in her bed, trying to push past the constant replaying of last night's scenes from her head. She scolded herself for even stepping out that night.

The only reason she did- Diana, was even fast asleep and she could barely sleep for three straight hours without waking up and trying to go back to sleep again.

She snatched the phone from the nightstand, checking the screen before the noise could wake anyone else. It was her local traffic alert app, flashing a notification that the main highway below the hills had finally been cleared of the wreckage.

She had installed the app immediately when they got into the villa so that they could be back on the road as soon as the traffic cleared up.

Dressing up quickly in her plain beach clothes from the day before, she checked on Diana one more time. Her daughter was still resting quietly, unaffected by the change in environment.

The day at the beach and the drugs had taken their effect and her body was now trying to regain its strength by a long nap.

She checked the time once again to know when she would wake her up for her medication and then walked away. She then stepped out into the hallway and walked down to the kitchen, needing a cup of coffee to shake off her exhaustion.

The villa was already alive with quiet activity. Elena and another staff member were busy preparing a breakfast spread of fresh fruit, pastries, and eggs. Clancy was already there, sitting at the kitchen island.

He looked perfectly put together in a sharp navy polo, reading through documents on his tablet. There was no trace of the messy-haired man from the balcony last night.

"Good morning," Clancy said, looking up. His voice was completely neutral, the exact same tone he used with his personal assistant.

"Elena just brewed fresh coffee. Help yourself." he said and motioned to the coffee jug sitting on the table before him.

"Morning," Selen replied, keeping her distance as she poured herself a cup. "The highway is clear. I just got an alert." She said to Clancy, still not looking at him. "I saw," Clancy nodded, tapping his screen.

"I already had Patrick look into it. The rock slide is completely gone. If we leave within the hour, we can beat the morning rush and get the kids home without any more delays."

Sarah walked in a moment later, "good morning," she said and sat on the chair at the end of the table, yawned, and immediately reached for the food that was spread on the table. "Miss Selen, please tell me we are leaving soon. I need my regular routine." she said.

"We are leaving in forty-five minutes," Clancy told her, standing up from his chair. He looked back at Selen, his eyes holding her gaze for just a second longer than business required.

"I will wake the boys and you can wake Diana up. Then the staff will get the SUV loaded while Sarah finishes up with the kids." He said and walked away after.

Selen watched him walk out toward the stairs. The strange tension from the night before had not completely disappeared, it had just been packed away behind tight schedules and travel plans. She took a sip of her coffee, ready to get back to reality.

Upstairs, the sound of the boys waking up began to echo through the high ceilings of the villa. Daniel and David, fully recharged from their long sleep, were already racing down the hallway, completely oblivious to the adult drama that had unfolded just hours prior.

Clancy escorted them down, a boy flanking each side, as he directed them straight to the breakfast table. "Eat up, boys," Clancy instructed, his tone warm but firm. "We have a long drive ahead and I want us on the road before the sun gets too high."

Elena moved efficiently around the kitchen, packing a small basket with bottled water, fresh fruit, and wrapped sandwiches for the road. Selen watched her, grateful for the hospitality. She quickly finished her coffee and went back upstairs to wake Diana.

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Chapter 77: A Jealous Newton

Diana opened her eyes slowly, squinting against the bright sunlight pouring through the light curtains. "Where are we, Mom?" she asked, her voice small and groggy. "We are at your father's villa in the hills," Selen explained gently, sitting on the edge of the plush mattress.

The words had left her mouth before she could try to rearrange them. This was the first time she was referring to Clancy as their father in front of any of the kids. Although he was indeed their father, she was never put in a position to say it to them.

She was avoiding putting any kind of pressure on them when it came to accepting Clancy. But with how Diana went on without acknowledging what she said was like a big deal, she continued to speak. Maybe she needed to be less guarded about Clancy's relationship with the kids.

"The traffic on the highway was bad last night, so we stayed here. Remember? You had your meds in the dining room before going back to sleep" she said and Diana nodded as she recalled the faint memory of being in the unfamiliar room with her mom.

"But the roads are open now, sweetie. It's time to take your morning medication and get ready to go home." She said to her. Diana nodded obediently. Selen arranged for food to be brought in and Diana ate a bit before swallowing her pills with a sip of water Selen handed her.

Routine was everything for Diana, and Selen could see the slight anxiety in her daughter's eyes from waking up in an unfamiliar room. Selen worked quickly, packing their minimal beach gear back into their bags to minimize any further disruption.

By the time they descended the stairs, Clancy's staff had already moved their bags out of the SUV to another car that was parked beside it. Elena stood by the front door, offering a polite goodbye. Clancy thanked her briefly, handing over a few final instructions regarding the villa's remaining maintenance before turning his full attention to the family.

His driver had already taken his position at the driver's seat, Sarah took her spot in the back row next to the boys, while Diana climbed into the middle row.

Selen hesitated joining the boys at the back seat and trading places with Sarah for a fraction of a second before she took her seat beside Diana. She knew avoiding the front row would only make things more awkward.

Clancy opened the door from the other side and took a seat beside Diana. As soon as the doors locked, the driver started the engine, and the heavy security gates swung open, he steered the SUV down the private road, leaving the quiet and peaceful Villa behind.

Within ten minutes, they were merging back onto the main highway. The traffic was moving at normal speeds, the red brake lights from the night before were completely gone, leaving only the sea to their right.

Inside the car, the silence was heavy, ever so often filled only by the quiet murmurs of the boys playing a game in the back. Selen kept her eyes fixed on the road ahead, refusing to glance to her left.

Yet, the memory of Clancy's fingers brushing her cheek, the warmth of his breath, and the sudden vulnerability in his eyes stayed vivid. He was driving with his usual casual confidence, one hand relaxed on the steering wheel, looking in control.

"Are you doing okay, Diana?" Clancy asked suddenly, breaking the silence as he checked on the little girl that sat beside him. "I'm okay," Diana replied, her voice calm. "The bed was big." She casually added. "It is a pretty nice house," Clancy added softly, his voice dropping slightly.

Selen felt a shift in the air, she turned her head slightly to look at him. His profile was sharp against the morning light, his expression entirely focused on the highway.

"Thank you for last night, Clancy," Selen said quietly, her voice low enough that the kids would not notice the change in tone.

Clancy did not turn his head, but a small, familiar smile touched the corner of his lips. "You do not need to thank me, Selen. I told you that I take care of what's important. And you are all important" he responded.

His words hung in the space between them, a quiet confirmation that despite the daylight and the return to reality, the boundary between them had shifted and the dynamic would never be exactly the same again.

Newton glanced at his phone for what seemed to be the hundredth time. And to the rest of the people in the room with him, it was.

He had an early morning meeting that day and to him, it was some kind of way to taunt him even more. He read the last text message he had received from Selen the evening of the previous day.

"There was a rock slide and the roads were totally blocked. Thankfully Clancy has a villa around and we are currently getting settled in for the night" she had texted. He had sent her two more messages since then but she had not responded yet.

Clancy was already there to the rescue. He did not get the chance to tell her that he could find her a room in some hotels in the area because he knew the owners. But that was fine, as long as Selen was okay.

He deliberated sending a third but he feared that a third message would be too clingy of him. But how else was he supposed to act? The woman he cared for was spending the night with her ex husband. Their kids were there too. It sounded like they were being one big happy family and he was the intruder.

"Matters of the heart," he thought to himself internally as he shook his head. "Do you not like the idea, sir?" one of his project managers asked him, causing him to come to reality while he was still in a meeting.

"N- no, go on, please." he said, hating how distracted he was that day. The meeting continued for about an hour more before everyone was dismissed to resume work at their independent offices.

As he walked out of the conference room, a call came in, it was Selen. Finally! "Hello? Selen?" He said immediately he answered the call.

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Chapter 78: Clearly a love triangle

As soon as Newton answered the phone, Selen immediately began to explain because she could only imagine him being worried about her not responding to him in over twelve hours.

"Hey, yesterday was so hectic and I barely had enough time to be on my phone and respond to your texts. And we left bright and early this morning, so-" Newton interrupted her, his jealousy flying out the window immediately he heard her voice.

"No, it's fine. I was just worried about you and the kids." He said. "I'm glad that you are all fine. When will you be returning to the city? I missed you all" he asked her the question on his mind. And when Selen mentioned that they were a few minutes away, he felt better.

"And how is Diana?" He asked her. Selen looked back and stared at Diana who was just staring out the window of the SUV in silence with a small smile on her face. "She is great. I think this might have actually been good for her." She said truthfully to Newton.

Clancy had been on his phone, typing away orders to his workers, but when Clancy heard this, a smile appeared on his lips. This felt like the closest he would get of Selen's honest opinion about the beach day and he was taking it. "Okay, although I have to be at work as soon as I arrive, we could have coffee later," she said to Newton.

Clancy could not help the small scowl that made its way to his face. She was having lunch with him? Maybe it was her other friend, JK, who tried to convince himself. And work?

"You have had a long twenty-four hours, don't you think you should skip work to rest up even just for today?" He asked her in a low tone.

"I need to show up. Even if it is just for an hour" she responded stubbornly, her soft tone had vanished with the call. Clancy did not argue. After that, the silence resumed and Selen stared outside her window while Clancy took out his phone and resumed typing away.

Diana was slowly drifting to sleep alongside the boys at the back seat when their home slowly came into view. The driver stopped at the gate and rolled the windows down, "the other car is with us," the driver said, referencing the second car that had been following them the entire time with their bags.

After their routine security check, they let the car in. And as soon as the two cars pulled into their driveway, the kids woke up, relieving the adults of carrying them up to their rooms. Everyone trooped out of the car and headed inside while both drivers carried the bags, baskets and coolers inside.

"Alright kiddos, I have to go now" Clancy announced immediately after the last bag was dropped. The children said goodbye to him and he left in one of the cars to his new home in Spain- The place he wanted to become their home one day.

Everything was done. From the individual paint colours in each room to the playground outside. Everything was ready for them to live in. The home looked like a vacation home. One that you could feel comfortable in whenever you came in but you knew that it was not your only home

He would be lying if he said he wanted this to be their main house. He wanted all of them to be in England together. Which was why when he reconnected with the kids, he made the interior to convey his intentions.

But he could not just rip them away from what they were used to, that would be selfish of him. Especially to the kids, they were just getting used to him, there was no way they would easily forgive him if he took them away from the places and people they had known their entire lives.

He came out of the house and got into the car. "To The Primrose" He said to his driver after giving the house one last look. The primrose was the name of one of his hotels and that was where he would be spending the next couple of days.

He was not going to stay there unless it was with his family. That was the point of building the home, it was for all of them.

As Clancy changed into a more comfortable set of clothes, he saw a text message from his father. During the past years Clancy's father only ever texted him once every year.

Jimmy believed that if a matter was urgent then a call was the best way to relay the message faster. And since they were never in positions where their calls did not go through, they never changed the pattern. Except once a year.

Every year, Jimmy would text his son exactly three days to his birthday and they would do some sort of reckoning of what Clancy had achieved in the past year the day after the message. They did this two days before the main date of his birthday.

They usually spent the day doing the most random things. Sometimes it was as simple as taking a walk around a park. But those few hours made young Clancy want to do something significant before his next birthday.

And for the past seven years, they did not do that. But his father was holding on to the faith that his son had genuinely grown to accept and learn from what he had been faced with over the past years.

If Clancy accepted, it was going to be a hell of a walk that they were going to have with all that happened within the past year in his life and catching up on the six years before that. He read the text message, the exact same that his father sent every year, "What would you like to do on the 17th?" The text read.

Clancy read the text over and over again. Exactly the same as years ago. He was not even in the same city as his father, but that was not an excuse for someone with a private jet, was it?

Chapter 79: An Opening line

For months, Clancy had been in Spain, rekindling with his wife and kids. Maybe a day back in England was not a bad idea. He also thought about his brother's reminder about his daughter's godfather position.

If he was going to say yes, then he had to be there for the ceremony that same weekend.

Clancy could not help but think if it was perhaps a sign. A sign from him to his family that all grudges were buried and forgotten. A sign that he was becoming a better person by taking up the responsibility to be a godfather to his little niece.

And a sign that he could be a better father to his kids and an even better husband than he was to Selen in the past.

Selen and Newton sat in the cafeteria of her work place at a booth by the corner. Amidst the chaos of lunch traffic, most of the workers had already grabbed their food and retreated to their desks, leaving the corner booth isolated, providing a thin veil of privacy.

Newton wrapped his hands around his warm mug, searching Selen's face. She looked exhausted, the dark circles under her eyes betraying the hectic nature of the past twenty-four hours, yet there was a lingering brightness in

her expression. It was the look of someone whose spirit had been lightened, even if her body was spent.

"You look like you're a million miles away," Newton said softly, breaking the silence. He offered a warm smile, though a subtle tightness in his jaw revealed his underlying anxiety.

Selen blinked, pulling herself out of her thoughts. "Sorry. I guess I'm just more tired than I realized. It has been a whirlwind." she said honestly.

"Clancy's doing, I assume?" Newton asked. He kept his tone casual, but the name hung heavily between them. He had tried to convince himself that Clancy was just a shadow from her past, a necessary tie because of the children, but the billionaire's constant presence in Spain was a thorn in his side.

Selen sighed, tracing the rim of her coffee cup. "When he arranged a beach day for Diana and the boys. Honestly, Newton, I wanted to be annoyed. I wanted to just get it over with. But seeing how happy the kids were... Diana actually smiled. She has not looked that relaxed in months." She said, looking up.

"I have to give him credit. He is really trying to build a bridge with them." she said truthfully. Newton swallowed hard, his coffee suddenly tasting bitter. He forced a nod. "That is good, Selen. Truly. The kids deserve a biological father who cares. I just-" he paused.

"I worry about you. I worry about what this constant back and forth is doing to your peace of mind. You went off the grid for twelve hours. That is not like you." he said. "The reception at the coastal house was terrible, and honestly, I just turned my phone off for a while," she said honestly, her voice dropping into a defensive tone.

"I needed to focus on the kids. I did not mean to make you worry." "I know," Newton replied quickly, reaching across the table to touch her hand. "I trust you. It is just hard watching you get pulled back into a world that broke you once before without fighting the urge to pull you and the kids away." he said.

The words hit a nerve. Selen looked away, staring out the cafeteria window. Was she being pulled back? Clancy's wealth and influence were undeniable, but it was his quiet restraint over the last few days that confused her most.

The old Clancy would have demanded attention, forcing his way into her schedule and her life. This new version seemed content to wait in the margins, and wait for her to notice.

Meanwhile, across the city at The Primrose, Clancy stood before the windows of his penthouse suite. He had changed into a cashmere sweater and dark trousers, a contrast to his casual beach attire from the day before.

His phone sat on the coffee table, the glowing screen displaying his father's text message. It was Jimmy's way of extending an olive branch without ever acknowledging the fractures in their relationship.

He picked up the phone. If he went back to England, it would not be to brag about a new hotel or a successful merger. It would be to show his father that he was finally learning how to be a man who anchored his family.

Spain had become a sanctuary where he could slowly reweave himself into Selen and the children's lives. Leaving, even for a few days, felt like leaving his post unguarded. He knew Newton was waiting for any opportunity to fill the spaces he left behind.

The scowl returned to his face as he remembered the phone call from earlier, the way Selen's voice softened for Newton, only to harden the moment she spoke to him.

But true change required him to face his past, not just hide from it in a villa.

He needed to heal the rift with his own father if he ever hoped to be a blueprint for his own boys. He wanted to be a man worthy of the family home he had just finished building.

Back at the cafeteria, Newton noticed the subtle shift in Selen's demeanor, the way she seemed physically present but emotionally guarded. "Wait, are you going back to work after this?" Newton asked Selen when he noticed she did not have her bag with her.

"Just for an hour or two," Selen said, checking her watch. "I have a few files to update." She said, "You are running yourself ragged, Selen," Newton said with gentle frustration.

"You do not have to carry the weight of the world alone. You know I'm here. I want to help." He said in honesty. Selen offered a soft smile.

"I know you do, Newton, and I appreciate it more than you know. But my work keeps me grounded. It is the one thing that belongs entirely to me. Not to Clancy, not to my past, nor to my past. Just me." she said with finality.

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Chapter 80: Being good enough

Newton recognized the finality in Selen's tone and he knew better than to push when she drew that line. He gave her hand one last squeeze before sliding out of the booth.

"Alright. I will let you get to it. But promise me you will rest tonight." Newton said and took his hand out for a handshake, causing Selen to laugh. "I promise," she said with a small smile and shook his hand in agreement.

"If I did not have a meeting to get to, I would have stayed with you until you left. But this handshake has to be done, " he said. Selen gave a small laugh and said goodbye to him.

After Newton left, Selen sat alone in the booth, the silence of the empty cafeteria washing over her.

She gathered her things, slung her bag over her shoulder, and walked toward the exit doors, wondering if the fragile peace they had found on the beach was just a temporary truce, or the beginning of a completely new Chapter.

Clancy arrived at Selen's home later that evening. He had still not responded to his family just yet, which was why he came back to see them on the same day. They hung out for a bit, but the kids went to bed early, leaving Clancy to move around in the silence of the home.

The quiet of the house was heavy, a contrast to the chaotic energy from a few minutes ago. Upstairs, the boys were fast asleep, completely worn out from the day's activities.

In the living room, Clancy stood near the large glass windows overlooking the courtyard, his jacket thrown over the back of a couch. He held his phone in his hand, the screen glowing with his father's text message.

He had not replied. He was torn.

Part of him felt the pull of the old routine, the unspoken demand of the Avelino family legacy. Another part of him looked around this house, the life he had abandoned and was now desperately trying to wedge himself back into.

And he felt like leaving even for a few days might shatter the fragile peace he was trying to build.

The front door clicked open. Selen walked in. She looked exhausted, her hair slightly tousled from the wind, her body clearly weighed down by the hectic day. All she was looking forward to was her bed.

She stopped when she saw Clancy standing there. "You are still here?" Selen asked, her voice tight, with very little warmth in it. "I thought you said goodbye to the kids and left for your hotel?" she asked.

They were not as close and she and Newton, and not even JK. But she was not going to treat him like a stranger every single day he came into her home just because she was worried about the night at the villa repeating itself again.

"I was going to," Clancy said, keeping his distance. He turned to face her, running a hand through his hair. He slowly walked closer to where she stood and Selen got to look at him properly.

Although he still looked handsome like he usually did, the tiredness was also evident in his eyes. She saw his eyes and they had bags beneath them.

As she turned around to leave, Clancy spoke. "I got a text from my father. It's the same one he sends every year a few days before my birthday for us to hang out. And my brother keeps hounding me about his request for me being the godfather for my niece this weekend. If I say yes to my dad, I have to fly back to England tonight to make the ceremony as well." he said.

Selen turned around and leaned against the edge of the staircase, crossing her arms. He had followed behind her as he spoke, and they both ended up at the same spot. She stared at him analytically, mapping the hesitation written all over his face.

He had no one else to talk to about it. Or at least no one that he believed would give him unbiased advice. So he found himself talking about it to Selen.

She remembered when they first spoke in her office and how he said he had not spoken to his family in years, from when he found out that they had sent her away. So far, everything he said had shown that the gap in their relationship was more serious than she thought.

"And you are standing in my living room because you have not decided." She stated the obvious. "I do not know if I should go," Clancy admitted, looking away from her.

"Things are... complicated here. The kids are just getting used to me being around. If I pack up and fly to London right now, it looks like I am running back to my old life the second I get tired. Like I am reenacting the past" he said.

Selen let out a deep breath. She walked closer to him, her eyes locking onto his. She was not going to coddle his guilt, but she was not going to let him use the children as an excuse to hide from his responsibilities either.

"You already missed being there for our kids at that point in their lives, why miss another?" she asked rhetorically. Clancy flinched. The words were a direct hit, slicing through his hesitation.

He stared at her, the silence between them stretching tight and uncomfortable.

"The kids did not have you for years, Clancy," Selen continued, "you can not fix that by hovering over them every single second now out of guilt.

But your niece? Your brother? They are asking for you now. If you start slipping away from your family obligations over there because you are hiding out in Spain, you are just repeating the same pattern of locking yourself away when things get complicated." she said.

Clancy looked at her, his jaw tightening. "I'm not hiding." he said stubbornly. "Then prove it," Selen countered sharply.

"Go to England. Face your father. Be a godfather to that little girl. Show up for the people who are actually reaching out to you. Do not use the kids as a shield to avoid dealing with your own family." Selen said.

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Chapter 81: A Solo trip to England

The bluntness of Selen's words was exactly what Clancy needed to hear. There was no tenderness in her delivery, but there was an undeniable truth to it. She was convincing him not with affection, but with the raw logic of accountability.

Clancy knew she was right. He could not be a better father to his own children if he was still running away from the ghosts of his own upbringing. He took a slow, deep breath and nodded once. "I will go," he simply declared.

Right there, he picked up his phone, dialed a number, "Patrick," Clancy said as soon as his assistant picked up. "Yes, Mr. Avelino?"

"I am leaving Spain tonight. I am flying back to Kent," Clancy commanded, his voice shifting instantly into the authoritative, decisive rhythm of a man running an empire.

"I need you to take full charge of the Spanish operations while I am away. I want this region running seamlessly, Patrick. Is that understood?" He said authoritatively.

"Perfectly, sir," Patrick replied without hesitation. "I will oversee everything here. Your flight coordinates will be sent to your driver within ten minutes." Patrick said.

"Good. Have the jet ready by the time I reach the hanger," he said. "And one more thing, Patrick. This one is personal," he said and turned to Selen who was watching him, so he took a few steps away from her.

"I need you to be here for my wife and kids. Be around them whenever you can and tell me whatever they may need even before they realise it" he said. "Okay, sir," Patrick replied.

Clancy hung up the phone and turned back to Selen. A decision had been made. "I will call the boys from the jet," Clancy said, holding her gaze for a brief second. "Thank you for the blunt honesty," he added with utmost sincerity.

"Take it as a thank you for your sandwich" she said and went up the stairs. Clancy gave a genuine smile at her words and yelled to her retreating frame.

"Say goodbye to the kids for me!" he added. "Will do!" She responded, not stopping in her tracks and he walked away, neither of them turning around again.

Clancy walked out into the cool night, where his driver was already waiting by the car. Clancy climbed into the back, and his phone buzzed with the flight details from Patrick.

"To the hangar," Clancy ordered. "Yes sir," his driver responded as they drove out of Selen's driveway.

When they reached the airfield, his private jet was prepped and waiting on the tarmac. Clancy boarded immediately, nodding to the flight crew as he took his seat by the window.

"We are cleared for departure, Mr. Avelino," the flight attendant said. "Flight time is just over two hours." She announced

"Thank you. Let's go," Clancy replied. As they jet off into the sky, he took out his phone and responded to his father's message, "The golf course at the club sounds good" he texted his father and then called his brother.

"Julian, I would be honoured to be my niece's godfather" he said and Julian's excitement was evident in his tone.

Their conversation was rescheduled for when he landed and they hung up. As Clancy placed his phone down, he felt a sense of relief wash over him.

Things were not perfect yet, but this was the most he had been at peace with all of his family in years. And it felt almost perfect to him.

*** the following day in Kent, England"

Clancy watched the white ball slice through the air before landing a few metres away from the hole.

His father, Jimmy, held his position for a second before finally lowering the club.

"You are overthinking the swing, Clancy," Jimmy said, resting the club head on the grass.

He kept his eyes on the distance. "You always did that. Just hit the damn thing." He said as he swung his club in the air in demonstration.

Clancy tightened his grip on his own club. "I'm not thinking about the swing, Dad." he defended. "Then you are thinking about Spain," his father said, stepping aside to give Clancy a clear view of his shot.

"Julian told us that you accepted the godfather position. He was relieved. He was worried that you would say no." His father said.

Clancy stepped up and aligned his boots. "Of course I accepted. I am here, am I not? I took the flight for the ceremony this Sunday." Clancy said.

"Being here physically is fine, but it does not mean your head is in it," Jimmy said, pulling a scorecard from his pocket to write down his score.

"A godfather is not just a title you accept to please your brother. It is a promise to be there for that little girl if anything happens to her parents." His father said.

Clancy took a breath, drew the club back, and swung. Jimmy let out a short laugh. "Too much tension in your wrists." His father stated. "Yeah," Clancy agreed, his voice dropping as they started walking toward the carts.

"Selen and I... it's better than it was. The months in Spain have been quiet. But there's still a wall between us. I look at her, and I can see she is just waiting for the old Clancy to show up again." Clancy said honestly.

Jimmy stopped walking and turned his sharp eyes toward his son. "And will he?"

The question was blunt. Clancy met his father's gaze.

"No. I have changed. Taking this responsibility for Julian's daughter... I want it to be a sign. For Julian, for you, but mostly for Selen. A sign that the past is buried. That I can handle responsibility. That I can be a better father and husband." He said with honesty.

Jimmy resumed walking, as he spoke, "Signs do not mean anything, Clancy. Women like Selen do not care about symbolic gestures. They care about consistency.

You think accepting your role automatically makes you a better husband or father?

Tomorrow, do not just stand at an altar in a nice suit holding Julian's baby. Show up every single day when things get boring or difficult." his father advised.