

## Chapter 4

I was discharged a week later, my leg still in a cast, my heart colder than stone. Devon was there, of course, playing the dutiful caretaker. He offered his arm, his gentle smile. I looked straight through him, my gaze fixed on a point beyond his shoulder. My father had sent a private car, driven by Jordan Hall, the pragmatic guitarist. He had been lurking in the hospital hallway, watching me with an unreadable expression.

"Amira, are you sure you don't want Devon to help you?" Jordan asked, his voice smooth, as I hobbled past Devon without a word.

"I'm fine," I clipped, my voice devoid of emotion. I got into the car, painstakingly maneuvering my cast. Jordan followed, sliding into the driver's seat. Devon stood there, visibly stunned, his perfect facade cracking for a split second. Then his face reset, a mask of controlled indifference.

The ride home was quiet, save for Jordan's attempts at light conversation. "So, Amira, rough week, huh? Mr. Estrada is worried about you."

I kept my gaze fixed out the window, watching the blur of the city. "I'm fine," I repeated, the words feeling foreign and hollow.

He sighed. "Yeah, not really convincing, princess. Look, I know you've been through a lot. How about I take you out? There's a charity auction tonight for a children's hospital. Always a good distraction. My treat."

I smirked, a cold, bitter arch of my lips. "Your treat? With Papa's money, I suppose?"

He bristled slightly. "I have my own money, Amira. More than enough. It'd be nice to see you out. Come on, for old times' sake."

I turned to him then, a flicker of something new in my eyes. Not warmth, but calculation. "Alright, Jordan," I said, a dangerous edge to my voice. "Let's go to your auction."

He looked surprised, then a wide smile spread across his face. I saw the triumph in his eyes. He thought he was winning me over. He thought he was playing me. He had no idea I was about to play him.

The auction house was a whirlwind of glittering gowns, sharp suits, and hushed, important conversations. The air hummed with wealth and power. I leaned on my crutches, my injured leg a constant, painful reminder of Devon's cruelty. But tonight, the pain fueled me.

The highlight of the evening was a stunning vintage ruby necklace. It shimmered under the spotlights, each facet catching the light, drawing every eye in the room. It was exquisite, regal, utterly captivating. And as soon as I saw it, I knew I had to have it. Not because I wanted it for myself, not really. But because I knew.

Just as the bidding began, they walked in. Devon, handsome and arrogant in a bespoke tuxedo, and Delilah, draped in a delicate silk gown, clinging to his arm. Her eyes, wide and innocent, immediately locked onto the ruby necklace. A familiar, greedy glint flickered in their depths.

I knew she would want it. And I knew Devon would get it for her. This was their game.

The bidding started, slow and steady. Delilah, sitting demurely beside Devon, raised her paddle. She bid a few times, then, with an exaggerated sigh, lowered it, casting a mournful glance at Devon. The classic damsel in distress.

Devon's eyes, cold and hard, met mine across the room. A flash of contempt. He knew I wanted it. He probably thought I wanted it for him to give me, like some sort of peace offering. He probably thought I still cared.

He raised his paddle, a clear, resonant call. "One-point-five million!" he announced, his voice echoing through the hushed room. It was a ridiculously high jump, designed to intimidate, to shut down the competition. For me. To publicly secure the prize for his Delilah.

A ripple of murmurs went through the crowd. Everyone was staring, whispering about the dramatic bid, the tension between the Estrada heiress and the rising rock star. The public humiliation was a bitter pill. But I refused to choke on it.

My hand shot up, paddle held high. "Two million!" My voice, though a little shaky, rang clear.

Devon's eyes narrowed. Delilah's innocent facade fractured, a flash of pure anger distorting her pretty features. They expected me to back down, to be embarrassed. They expected me to be the weak Amira they had always known.

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They were wrong.

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