

Chapter 11: The one.

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The doctor had set the date of the procedure a week after my first visit. My appointment day had arrived and Alvaro said he would pick me up from work because my boss refused to give me the day off.

Julia said she'd cover for me when she got out of school since she was picking up extra shifts. Her dad lost his job and I didn't mind working fewer hours so she can earn a little extra.

I was anxious. I read on the internet how the process went and it seemed simple enough, nothing to be too afraid of. It was just carrying a baby for nine months that concerned me and then the rest of that baby's life.

Motherhood was a big responsibility. It wasn't like having a goldfish. I killed all my goldfish due to my neglecting them. There were some days I forgot to feed them and then there was never time to clean the tank.

I couldn't do that with a baby, I wouldn't but there was this part of me that felt like I wasn't good enough to be a parent. Some people were meant to be parents while others weren't.

And I feared that I could be the latter.

On top of everything, I didn't even know the first thing about babies and I couldn't remember the last time I held one.

"Jane," Mateo called. "What's up with you today? You've been staring at that nasty green lotion bottle for the last ten minutes." Mateo and abuelo didn't know what Alvaro and I had planned.

Alvaro wanted to keep it that way.



I put the lotion bottle back on the shelf. "Can you quiz me?" Mat asked.

I went over to the counter and took a look at his book. "Um, let's see," I flipped through the thick biology textbook. "What do you call the movement of water through a cell?"

I was helping him because I hated the fact that Alvaro sent him with me every day when he could have been home with a tutor. Mateo was stubborn when his tutors came over.

"Don't tell me," he said, tapping on his head with a pencil.

"I'm not going to tell you," I hummed. He made every excuse not to study but I was hard on him for it. He was not going to get away with it while I was around.

"Okay I give up," he sighed and I pushed the book towards him.

"Read that section in the book over and I'll quiz you in the next ten minutes."

"Okay, how do you say I'm tired in Spanish?" He asked. He was being a smart ass since I asked him for an English to Spanish dictionary.

I couldn't keep up with him and Alvaro's conversations sometimes.

"Estoy ca-" I couldn't get the pronunciation.

"Estoy cansada," he said.

The bell on the door went off and Julia walked into the boutique. "Hey," she said, carrying three slushies. She gave Mateo the blue one and gave me the red one, my favourite.

"Did that new shipment of dresses come?" She asked. "The ones with the sequenced belts?"

I went over to the computer to check. "It's expected to come next week. They are going to be a part of the evening collection."

"Great," she beamed, "I was planning on using my store discount so I can get one for prom."

"Prom?" Mateo questioned.

"Yeah. It's still early but I didn't get to go all the other years and I want to make sure nothing stops me this time."

"Oh. Do you have a date already?" Mateo asked.

"Yeah, my best friend Elton asked."

Something happened to Mateo's face. It looked like his eye was twitching while his lips came up in a scary smile. "That's great," he said and I noticed his fists were clenched.

"What are you studying?" Julia peeped at his book.

"Biology," Mateo said.

"That's one of my favourite subjects," she said and Mateo kept his head down.

He and Julia were always talking and giggling at funny videos ever since she picked up the extra shifts. I knew Mateo had a crush on her but he was a shy kid from what I deduced from their conversations.

And I thought it was sweet.

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"So is this what you two do all day?" I turned to see Alvaro at the door.

He walked up to me and took my slushy. "Consume junk food." He took a sip out of it. "Strawberry," he pulled his face.

"What's wrong with strawberries?" I asked, grabbing it out of his hands.

"Here take mine," Mateo said and stood. "I'm not thirsty anyway. I got to get home." He left the store and Julia watched him go with a confused expression on her face.

"Are you ready?" Alvaro asked me.

"As ready as I'll ever be," I muttered. I turned to Julia. "Are you going to be okay?"

"Yeah, I'll be fine." She smiled.

Alvaro led me to his car. "Are you sure about this because there is no going back after this," he said.

"Are you trying to make me more nervous?" Because he certainly wasn't helping ease the nerves.

"No, I just want to know if you're sure. Because if this goes as planned we are tied together for life." I let out a shallow breath, sliding into the passenger's seat. Alvaro got into the car and pulled out of the parking lot.

Every day, he checked on me to make sure I was okay. I liked that he took the initiative to check up on me if he missed dinner— due to his work.

Though our conversations were brief and formal I could feel his concern grow for me over the passing days. "You've been trying to get into contact with your brother?" He inquired and I turned to look out the

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window.

I should have known he'd be keeping tabs on my phone.

I know he said that I would get the chance to speak to Jason once a month and I was a coward never having the courage to ask him when I'd get my first call because I was afraid his mood would change.

And for once it just felt good to sleep without someone wanting to kill me. "I just wanted to know if he was okay. But his phone doesn't even ring. It goes straight to voicemail."

"I told you he would be," he sounded irritated. "You still don't trust me... Do you?"

"Trust is earned, Alvaro. Besides you don't trust me either." That was a fact.

"You think I don't trust you, darling?" He snorted, "I trust you enough to be the mother of my firstborn. That should be enough." That was different. He could have asked anyone to mother his children.

He was just forced to have me because he married me in front of his grandfather. Even with the way this child would be conceived it wouldn't be because we loved each other it would just be fulfilling the terms and agreements of a contract for him.

I wasn't doubting his love for the child. I've seen the way he is with Mateo and he is great with him but I just couldn't believe he chose to have a baby with me because he trusted me when I felt otherwise.

I knew he didn't trust me because he never shared anything personal about his life or past with me. He spoke to me as one spoke to someone they worked with.

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And that's all I was to him. Just a means to an end.

He parked the car in the parking lot of the gynaecologist's surgery. He shut off the car engine and his hand went over my hand that was on my lap. He locked our fingers as he looked straight ahead. "I don't know the first thing about being a dad," he said, his brows knitting together as he thought. "With Mateo it's different. I found him when he was already five."

"I don't know the first thing about being a mom either," I said and he turned to look at me. He let out a breath, squeezing my hand before letting go.

We got out of the car and he walked ahead of me to the surgery. I was trailing behind him again and this time he didn't turn to look back at me.

He held the door open for me to walk in and we just looked at each other for a second. I wondered if he did that so I could change my mind.

I proceeded inside to find the receptionist. "Mr and Mrs Castillo," she checked her watch, "always on time. The doctor will see you now."

We went through the hall to find the doctor was already preparing his medical instruments. "And how are the soon-to-be parents doing today?" He asked.

"That positive that it will work, doc?" Alvaro asked.

"Mr Castillo. Your wife is healthy and there seem to be no major issues. I am positive that this will work. She just needs to be careful for the next two months. Avoid stress and over exerting herself." Alvaro nodded. "Just follow me to the next room so we can take a sample from you. In the meantime Mrs Castillo you can change into the paper gown on the table,

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" the doctor said, leaving with Alvaro.

I began taking my clothes off and I pulled the paper gown over me. I folded my clothes and stacked them neatly in the corner of the room. I sat atop the examination table and waited.

As I waited I felt my anxiety come back. I took deep breaths wishing I had someone I could speak to or maybe even a hand to squeeze for comfort.

Usually, a woman would turn to their mother but I couldn't tell my mom this. I didn't even tell her I was married yet. How would I even have that conversation, 'hey mom, how are you just to let you know I married a man you and dad haven't met yet oh and I'm having a baby.'

My parents were on the strict side of life. They believed in each person being responsible for themselves. When Jason and I turned eighteen they gave us both a year to move out and start being responsible for ourselves.

Jason was older than me so it scared me as a teen knowing one day I'd be left to fend for myself. My parents moved to Oregon after I moved out and I got a great opportunity in Canada as a product merchandiser so I left.

Things were going great until the company I worked at, went bankrupt. Jason insisted I move back and he let me live with him for a while until I got the job at Ebonies.

It was when I lived with Jason I realized he had a problem with money. Gambling, overspending on women and alcohol. My brother loved the party lifestyle while I was the opposite.

While I lived with him I bailed him out of some shitty situations even after I moved out he still came to me whenever he was in financial distress.

We only had each other, both of us didn't want to ask our parents for help in any way.

We didn't want to show them weakness. I tried to keep in contact with my parents over the years, but they were always busy when I called and I got the feeling they didn't want to talk to me. 1

The doctor walked into the room. "Are you ready, Mrs Castillo?" He asked setting a tray of medical instruments on the table.

If I had one promise that I could make to my child, it would be that I would never be like my mom. I would give them all the love and support no matter how old they got, I would be there.

Because they say the world is lonely when you have no friends but the world is dark, bleak and void when you couldn't even have your parents as support in your greatest times of need. 1

I laid back on the doctor's examination table and he started the procedure. Alvaro came into the room and I noticed he had a book. He put the book aside and walked over to me. He pushed my hair out of my face. Taking my hand. "You got this," he said, his green orbs captivating me as the doctor worked.

After the procedure was done. The doctor left the room and Alvaro helped me up. He got my clothes from the corner of the room and he knelt in front of me. Helping me put on my underwear and pants. He kissed my calve. "You were so brave," he said.

"You don't have to do that I can-"

He looked up at me and he looked vulnerable. "I want to," he said. He pulled my pants up and buttoned them at the top. I looked at my shirt and

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he turned around, facing his back to me and giving me privacy. I took off the paper gown and put my shirt on.

I tapped his shoulder when I was done and he turned around. He moved to touch my face, wiping my tears away. "Are you okay?" He asked.

I was crying because I didn't expect him to do that for me. He wrapped his arms around me and I cried into his chest. He held me tight and let me cry on him for a while.

I pulled away to look at him and he had an uneasy look in his eyes. "What do we do now?" He asked.

"We wait," I shrugged and he moved to grab the book he left on the table.

"Do you regret it?" He asked and I shook my head.

Alvaro kept his hand around my waist as we walked through the narrow hallway. I was leaning into him because I needed the comfort and he was willing to give it.

The doctor was waiting for us at the reception area. "The discomfort won't last long Mrs Castillo. Please avoid strong pain medication and I'll see you after you take a pregnancy test. If the results for the pregnancy tests are negative after a month please come back so I can do a check."

Alvaro paid the receptionist and we left the surgery together. There was a slight chill in the air making the hair on my body stand. I felt sleepy and the warmth radiating from Alvaro's body was coaxing me into laziness.

He opened the car door for me and I got in. He closed the door rounding the car to get into the driver's seat. "Are you comfortable?" He asked and I had to wonder if he was going to be fussing over me for the next few weeks.

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"I'm fine." I smiled. "Thank you for being with me in there."

He rubbed the pad of his thumb over my cheek, looking deep into my eyes. He leaned in and pressed a kiss on my forehead. "We're in this together," he uttered.

He drove us home and I placed a hand on my stomach. It would grow four times the size it was and I didn't seem to mind. "I'm going to get fat." I smiled.

He grinned. "I didn't exactly marry you for your tiny waistline," he joked, "besides I don't mind a woman with a little something extra."

I could feel a hot blush on my cheeks. "Shut up."

He parked the car in the garage and the sun was just beginning to set. We walked into the house to see Mateo hunched over a textbook in the living room.

"Hey," Alvaro said and Mateo murmured a response. "You okay, mi hijo?"

"Dinner is ready," Cynthia announced walking into the room.

Mateo didn't move from his position. "Mateo?" Alvaro called and he looked up.

"Yes?" Mateo's voice was flat and dry of emotion.

"Come and have something to eat," Alvaro said and Mateo stood. Alvaro put his arm around Mateo's shoulder as they walked to the dining room. "Are you sick, mi hijo?" He asked.

Mateo shook his head. "Just tired." I knew it was something more and

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that something was Julia. She was the only person his age he had contact with. He had feelings for her and knowing someone else was taking her to prom was probably upsetting him.

I followed them into the dining room to see Cynthia and Marianne set the table. "Cynthia, I would like you to prepare meals from this book from now," Alvaro gave her the book he got from the surgery.

"Healthy eating while-" her eyes lit up.

"Um that's all for now," Alvaro said, cutting her off. "And thank you for this meal it looks delicious."

Cynthia read the cover over and she grinned at me. I gave her a small smile. "Yes sir, Mr Castillo," she said and left the room with Marianne.

"Eat," Alvaro said looking at me. Cynthia had made quesadillas.

We tucked into our food and Mateo just stared at his plate pushing the food around. Alvaro watched him with concern. "You know abuelo says he wants to take you to Dubai for that formula one car race you like so much."

"Mmm," Mateo sighed.

"It's some time next month," Alvaro continued but Mateo didn't seem like he was listening. "Mi hijo?"

"I want to go back to high school," Mateo said and Alvaro dropped his fork.

"What?" Alvaro looked at him, "why all of a sudden?"

"I think I'm ready to be around people my own age," Mateo responded,

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with a despondent look on his face.

"Ah, I see," Alvaro said and his eyes fell on me. "What high school were you thinking of?" He asked Mateo.

"The one a street away from Jane's work," he said.

Alvaro thought about it. "And which high school does Julia go to?" Alvaro looked at me again and I kept my head down pretending to be focused on my food.

I peeped to see Mateo's ears turn red at Alvaro's accusations. "You are willing to go to school because of a girl!" this seemed to make Alvaro a little mad.

Mateo dropped his fork and pushed himself away from the table. "What if I just want to go because I want to experience what it's like to be a high school student."

"Don't give me that," Alvaro said, "you had the chance to be a high school student and you kept screwing around because you wanted to be like me."

"And you don't want me to be like you," Mateo threw his hands up in frustration. "You want me to better," Mateo said, putting high inclination on the word better. "Then let me go be better."

"I would if I knew it wasn't just for a girl. Mi hijo, don't make this girl your world because then what happens if she hurts you?"

"What makes you think she'll hurt me?" Mateo asked.

"For one, you don't know anything about women." Alvaro pointed out.

"And you know everything. You think they are all evil!" Mateo argued and Alvaro began massaging his temples.

"I don't think that they all are evil. It's just that you never know what to expect with women, mi hijo."

"What if she's the one," Mateo sounded certain about that.

Alvaro's chest rumbled with cynical laughter. "You're sixteen, mi hijo. You don't know what the one looks like."

"And you do?" Mateo asked and Alvaro's face went blank. "You've never loved anyone."

"We're not talking about me," Alvaro said, "were talking about you. You're being reckless and impulsive if you are doing this for a girl."

"Look Al, if I get hurt I'll deal with it, but I want to be around people my own age. I want to start food fights and- and drink cheap liquor under the bleachers."

"This is you pleading your case to go back to school?" Alvaro questioned.

"You know what I mean," Mateo said.

There was silence for a minute and my fork poked the plate a little too loud causing them to both look at me. "Jane," they both said at the same time and my eyes widened. I did not want to be a part of this conversation so I stuffed a big chunk of food into my mouth so I couldn't talk.

They both sighed and I chuckled with my mouth full. This seemed to amuse both of them and they visibly cooled down. "You're not going to stop nagging me about this until I give in?" Alvaro sighed.

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"Nope," Mateo grinned. "It is my right to an education."

Alvaro popped the cork on the wine bottle. "Oh, now it's your right," he said sarcastically. He poured himself a glass of red wine and chugged it down. "I'll take you down there in the morning. But those grades better be up to scratch."

"Yes!" Mateo cheered jumping up from his seat. He jumped on Alvaro, hugging him and kissing him on top of the head. "Thank you," he said.

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