

Wild Night 391

Chapter 391 Clingy Boyfriend

Thirty minutes before the closing hour, Tom's eyes were fixed on the wall clock, following the second's hand as he tapped his fingers impatiently on the desk. At the same time, he halfheartedly listened to the complaints and reports of the resort and hotel managers concerning the challenges they were facing and the new changes they needed to implement in their various branches.

From the moment he had gotten to his office that morning and rearranged his schedule with the help of Harry's secretary, he had barely had five minutes to himself as he had moved from one meeting to the other.

He was feeling completely drained and exhausted, and his brain felt saturated. He couldn't even process what the man, who was now speaking, was saying.

This was supposed to be Harry's meeting, not his, and now he wished he had asked them to postpone this meeting until Harry was available to meet with them, or better still, Harry could have held a zoom meeting with them and saved him this stress.

Thankfully, Harry's secretary was present there, typing down the minute of the meeting, or else they would all have been wasting their time thinking they had his full attention.

He couldn't remember the last time he had been this busy or felt this exhausted. If anything, this made him appreciate Harry's position in his life even more and commend himself on his wisdom in assigning Harry as his Co-CEO.

Harry indeed made his life easier, and now he hoped that his new assistant would resume quickly and be at least half as efficient as Harry had been as his assistant.

Tom sighed inwardly when the man kept going on and on with his boring report. When he couldn't take the self-inflicted torment anymore, he massaged his temple as he cleared his throat, causing the man who had been speaking to stop abruptly.

"I don't know about you all, but this has been a long and busy day for me, and I'm mentally exhausted. Honestly, nothing any of you has said in the last hour has made much sense to me. Can either of you do us all a favor and concisely summarize in five minutes what you have all said so that we can call it a day?" Tom asked as politely as he could muster.

On hearing that, the managers exchanged a look, and thankfully, the only lady amongst them volunteered and briefly explained all they had said to Tom.

Tom listened quietly for some time, and by the time the man was done, he had gotten the crux of the matter, "That wasn't so difficult, was it?" Tom asked as he stood from his seat, wondering why they had spent over an hour complaining about something they could have summarized in five minutes.

"I've heard all your complaints and suggestions. Mr. Jonas and I will discuss and deliberate on them, and we will get back to you," Tom said, indirectly telling them that the meeting was over.

Taking that as their cue to leave, they all trooped out of his office, and Tom turned to Harry's secretary, "I want a printed copy of the minute in five minutes. Send a copy to Harry's email, too," Tom said as he walked over to his desk to tidy it up while Harry's secretary quickly left to do as she had been instructed.

Once Tom glanced at the wall clock and saw that it was less than ten minutes to the closing hour, he picked up his suit jacket from where it hung and left the office with his phone and car key in hand.

He stopped by Harry's office and took the printed copy of the minute from Harry's secretary before taking the general elevator.

Instead of going outside to wait for Lucy, as usual, he went directly to her office, eager to see her since he had not seen her since he dropped her off that morning, and he hadn't found the time to text or call her either.

Immediately Tom opened the office door and walked in; every movement and conversation going on in the office as Lucy's teammates prepared to leave for the day ceased when they saw the CEO in their office.

Tom didn't bother sparing them a glance since his gaze was fixed on the beautiful lady, who was seated behind the glass door, which separated her from her teammates.

As though sensing his gaze on her, Lucy, who had been checking the time and wondering whether she should call Tom or text him, looked up. Instantly, her eyes lit up and her lips curved in a happy smile when she saw him standing outside her office and staring at her through the glass door.

The image evoked a memory in both their minds of the first time Tom had stood by her office door that way, the first day he had resumed as her driver, and she kept him waiting because she was carried away with work. Who would have thought then that she would ever be this excited to see him standing by her office door this way?

She stood from her seat when he opened the door and stepped into her office, and she walked up to him, "To what do I owe this unexpected pleasure, Mr. CEO?" She asked with a grin, not paying any attention to her teammates who were watching them.

"I'm sorry I couldn't call or text all day. I was swamped with work," Tom said apologetically as he dropped everything he was holding on her desk and pulled her to himself, but Lucy resisted.

"We are in my office. Everyone is watching," she reminded him softly with a grin.

"Says the woman that kissed me in the presence of everyone. Or have you forgotten that already? Where is that bold woman?"

"Well, that was after work hours on our way home. People are going to start saying the CEO is making out with an employee send in..."

Before she could finish speaking, Tom walked away from her and opened her office door, "Is there anyone of you here who isn't aware that Director Perry is my girlfriend?" Tom asked, startling both Lucy and her teammates.

"Tom..." Lucy chided as she walked over to him.

Her teammates shook their heads, "We are all aware," one of the men summoned the courage to answer.

"Does any of you have a problem with me kissing my girlfriend in her office after work hours?" Tom asked again, and Lucy elbowed his side to shut him up.

"We don't," another man responded.

"Good. So why are you all still standing there after work hours, staring at us like you have never seen a man in love with a beautiful woman when you should be leaving? Or do you want to work overtime?" Tom asked, and immediately they all picked up their stuff and hurried out of the office, leaving Lucy, who was trying not to laugh.

"Did you really have to do that?" She asked in amusement as she embraced him.

"Tell me you didn't want me to do that," Tom challenged as he wrapped both arms around her and let his chin rest on the top of her head.

"I was kind of hoping you would send them all away," Lucy said with a wide smile as she tried to pull away, but he held on.

"Let's remain like this for a while," Tom pleaded, and Lucy stayed still.

Once Tom broke the hug, he pulled away from her and looked into her face for some moment, leaving her confused as to what was happening. Before she could ask him what was going on, he captured her lips in a slow yet passionate kiss that not only left her breathless but made her whole body tingle.

"I've been thinking of doing this all day," Tom said, his hand on the crook of her neck as he observed her face.

"Doing what?" She asked, blinking at him in confusion.

"Hugging and kissing you," Tom said as he kissed her again before pulling away.

Lucy smiled as she observed his face, "You look beat."

"Yeah, it has been a long day. The only thing that helped me survive was thinking about seeing you and kissing you at the end," Tom said, making Lucy smile.

"We should leave then," Lucy suggested, and they both returned to her desk.

While Tom picked up the stuff he had dropped on her desk, she picked up her handbag and phone, which was on the desk, and they both walked out of the office.

Instead of going outside, they both headed back to Tom's office since the car was parked in his private parking lot, and they would need to walk around the building to get to it if they didn't take Tom's private elevator.

"How was your day?" Tom asked as they both took the elevator to his office floor, and Lucy told him all she had done.

She told him about the phone calls she had made to Lucas, Sonia, and then Priscilla, who she had called to inform that she had accepted their offer and would be coming over during the weekend to sign the contract.

And then she told him how she had left the company for the I-Global fashion factory to see the state of the place and get acquainted with the head of the factory and who had been asking to see and know the new creative director.

"Who drove you there?" Tom asked with a slight frown as they both got into the car.

"I went with two of my teammates: a male and a female. The guy drove us there," Lucy said, but Tom didn't look pleased by that either.

"You didn't tell me you were leaving the company premises today when you were telling me your plans," he pointed out to her without bothering to start the car.

"I didn't plan on doing so either. But I was informed that the head of the factory insisted that they wouldn't work on the new design we sent to them until he sees me," Lucy explained.

"You could have sent me a text to let me know about your whereabouts."

"To the CEO or my boyfriend?" Lucy asked jokingly, but Tom glared at her.

"Lucy, both are the same person, not separate people," he said irritably, and Lucy's brows drew together when she realized he was upset.

"Why are you getting mad at me? You were busy all day, and I was busy too. It naturally didn't occur to me to send a text to let you know I was leaving the office. Now I'm back. Why is it a big deal?" Lucy asked in confusion.

Okay, he was stressed, and he wasn't handling the conversation properly, Tom thought as he took a deep breath, "I'm sorry. I'm letting the stress get to me," Tom said and turned on the car's ignition, but Lucy quickly placed a hand on his arm to stop him from driving.

"I'm sorry I didn't text you," Lucy said, not wanting any tension between them because of something as insignificant as that.

"It's fine," Tom murmured, but she could tell it wasn't. She could tell he just didn't want to talk about it anymore.

"You're not the only one who can read me, you know? I know you're not fine. Why are you making a big deal out of this? I know you are stressed, but you are not the type to lose your cool unnecessarily. I won't know what I did wrong if you don't tell me," she reminded him without taking her hands off his arm since she didn't want him to drive until they had cleared the air between them.

Seeing that she was bent on talking about it, he turned to her, "You left the office with the same set of people that were quick to call you a murderer and speak ill of you days ago..." Lucy opened her mouth to speak, but quickly shut it when he raised a brow as though he was daring her to interrupt him.

"Maybe you have forgotten, but we are yet to handle Anita and her mother, and you can't trust just anyone right now. You can't just trust anyone because they work in the same office space as you. Especially not people like that who have no iota of loyalty to you. Also, I know I asked you not to leave my sight until I've taken care of Anita and her family. Did you know the distance or the location of the factory before today? What if they had taken you elsewhere? I'm not saying this because I'm a clingy boyfriend..."

"You are actually a clingy boyfriend," Lucy murmured under her breath, and Tom paused to glare at her, but before he could say anything, Lucy leaned towards him and embraced him.

"I now understand why you are upset. You are right. I wasn't thinking straight," she said as she pulled away from him and kissed his cheek.

"I'm sorry I wasn't being careful, and I made you worry. I will let you know about all my movements henceforth. I will text you even when I go to the ladies' room," she added with a playful smile, and Tom sighed wearily as he watched her.

She was with him, and she was safe. That was all that mattered. He reminded himself. "Did you have lunch?" He asked, but Lucy poked his chest.

"First, tell me you're no longer mad at me," she insisted as she reached for his hand.

"I wasn't mad at you."

"Liar. You called me Lucy," Lucy pointed out.

"You always call me Tom. Does that mean you're always mad at me?" Tom asked, and she scowled at him since she couldn't argue with that even though she knew she had a valid point too.

"You glared at me," Lucy reminded him.

"When did I glare?" Tom asked, feigning ignorance.

"You looked at me this way when you said, 'Both are the same person,' didn't you?" Lucy said, mimicking his tone and facial expression, and Tom found himself chuckling.

"Alright, I'm no longer upset. Let's leave now. We still have to stop by Harry's place," Tom said, and Lucy smiled as she let go of his hand. Relieved that he was back to his normal self.

"I love you, Ace," Lucy said as she watched him drive out of the parking lot.

"I love you more. So tell me, did Adolf deliver your lunch? And how did the meeting at the factory go?" Tom asked and listened as Lucy told him about it.

Tom's lips curved in amusement as he listened to her. He found it amusing that barely thirty minutes ago, his head had been aching and he had been too exhausted to listen or process what the hotel managers had been saying. Yet, here he was listening to Lucy, and her voice sounded like sweet music to him. Love was just crazy business.

Chapter 392: The Past (1)

"I think I might need to get a bigger bag," Lucas told his parents, who just walked into his bedroom to see him trying unsuccessfully to zip his luggage box.

"You don't need a bigger bag. What you need is to learn how to organize the stuff inside properly," Janet said in amusement as she walked over to him took out everything in the bag.

"Make sure you don't skip your meals, okay?" Janet told Lucas as she helped him carefully arrange his clothes neatly into his luggage box.

"Mom, this is the fifth time you're saying that this evening. Don't worry. I don't intend to starve myself to death," Lucas assured her with a wide smile.

"I'm not saying you intend to starve yourself. I'm just saying eat healthy and hearty meals. You must not lose an ounce of weight," Janet said, giving him a pointed look.

Lucas turned to his father for help, but Andrew shrugged, "Listen to your mom, she knows what she is saying," he said, and Lucas sighed when he realized that they were both going to keep nagging him until he finally leaves.

"Do you want me to send you a picture of every meal I eat? Will that make you feel better?" Lucas asked dryly, and Janet gave him a nod.

"As a matter of fact, yes. A video preferably. I want to see you eating the meal from start to finish," Janet said, and Lucas laughed incredulously .

"I already told you that I'm fine. You need to stop worrying about me. This trip isn't about Rachel. I just need this break to figure out my life and next career move, trust me," Lucas said, and Janet looked at him for a moment before giving him a nod.

"Is there something else you want to add?" Janet asked when she was done, and there was still room in the bag for more.

"Wow! How do you always do that?" Lucas asked in amazement, and Andrew chuckled.

"I ask myself the same question every damn time she does that. It's like a superpower," Andrew said, and Janet laughed softly.

"..." The sound of her ringtone interrupted whatever she wanted to say, and Andrew who was holding the phone handed it to her.

Once she saw the name of the caller, Sara, the smile on her face died, and was immediately replaced with annoyance as she rejected the call, and dropped the phone on the bed beside the bag.

"Is there a problem? Who was that?" Lucas asked when he noticed the annoyed expression on his mother's face, and the knowing look on his father's face.

"It's nobody of interest. Have you called to let Lucy know you're going to see her?" Janet asked, changing the subject.

"Not yet. I will give her a call on my way to the airport," Lucas said, and Janet gave him a nod.

"Alright, we'll leave you to finish up and get ready so we can drive you to the airport," Janet said, and picked up her phone before walking out of the bedroom with Andrew following behind her.

Immediately they walked into their bedroom, Andrew looked at her, "You're still not going to speak with her?"

"I told you before. I have nothing to say to her," Janet said, not bothering to act like she didn't know who he was talking about.

"You don't have to say anything. But why not hear what she has to say to you?" Andrew suggested.

"After thirty years? No. I don't think so. I don't want to hear whatever she has to say," Janet said as she looked through her closet for clothes to change into for the drive to the airport.

"Jane, Sara is your sister. Your only relation," Andrew reminded her softly as he walked over to where she was and placed a hand on her shoulder.

"I don't care. Let's not talk about her anymore, Drew," Janet said as she walked away from him, and started taking off her clothes while fuming silently.

She wasn't going to waste a second thinking about her selfish and self-centered sister. As far as she was concerned, Sara died thirty years ago after she stole their father's money and only left a note telling them she was leaving to pursue a career in modelling and they shouldn't search for her.

Things never remained the same for their family after she left. Their father never recovered from the shock, and he died a year later, while their mother had been left broken by both the disappearance of her daughter and the loss of her husband.

Things had been quite difficult for her mother and her as they struggled to repay her father's debts since most of the money Sara had stolen had been given to him for a contract.

Not once in the last thirty years did she reach out to her. So how dare her try to come back after all these years? After all the pain and hardship she had made her face? She was never going to forgive Sara. Never.

"Jane..."

"Lucas is waiting, you should hurry up," Janet said, and walked out of the bedroom before Andrew could say another word to her.

As she walked into the living room, her phone beeped with a message notification and once she saw that it was from Sara, she deleted the text without checking the content, and then she blocked Sara's line.

Few minutes later they were ready to leave for the airport, and once they were seated in the car, Lucas took out his phone and dialed Lucy's line.

Lucy who was now seated on the bed beside Aaron, watched him as he slept restlessly, muttering words at intervals in his sleep.

If she had not chosen to excuse Tom and Harry so they could have a moment to discuss alone, she would have returned to the living room, since was beginning to feel like she was intruding on Aaron's privacy by listening to all he was muttering in his sleep. She knew for a fact that the man wouldn't be happy if he found out she had heard these things.

Despite knowing this, Lucy couldn't deny that she was curious. Perhaps it was Sonia's nosiness that was beginning to rub off on her.

From all she had heard thus far, she had been able to gather that Sara was his wife, and she had left. What she couldn't understand was if this happened before he met Harry's mother, or after. She also could not understand why he was being disturbed by this now. Or was this a recent development? Was Harry aware of this? Lucy wondered.

Unknown to Aaron that he had an audience in his bedroom and the sleeping pills he took was messing with his mind, Aaron relived the events of the past thirty years. How Sara had come into his life.

He was twenty-six years old again. Young, vibrant, and ruggedly handsome.

He was back in his studio apartment which also doubled as his photography studio where he took photos of upcoming models for their portfolios.

Twenty-two years old Sara walked into his studio, clutching her portfolio tightly in her hands as tears ran down her cheeks.

Aaron who had been busy attending to another female model, paused when he saw her, and immediately excused himself to go meet her.

"I thought you were supposed to meet with the CEO of the modeling agency you talked about today, didn't you meet him? Why are you crying?" He asked with concern, but she only cried harder.

Seeing how she was weeping noisily, Aaron led her to the little corner that was his bedroom which he had demarcated from the rest of the photography studio with a curtain. And once she was seated on the bed, he offered her a box of tissues, and excused himself to go discharge the model he had been attending to.

By the time he returned to join her, she had calmed a bit, but he could tell that she was very unhappy, "Do you want to tell me what the problem is?" He asked softly.

"I was duped. All the money I gave him is gone. There is no agency. They were all con artists," Sara said before breaking into a sob.

"Money?" Aaron asked, startled to hear that new piece of information since the couple of times she had told him about having an agency that wanted to sign her, she never mentioned it.

"I gave him all the money I had on me. I have nothing left now. I have no place to go to," Sara cried, and Aaron embraced her awkwardly, since they were not exactly close friends and she only came to the studio to take photos for her portfolio, and sometimes interact with him and other upcoming models in the studio.

"Calm down, and tell me exactly what happened. I'm lost. Who did you give money to? Why would you give money to an agency to sign you as a model? Why didn't you tell me about it?" He asked, confused.

Sara sniffled as she pulled away from him, and looked into his face, "He said the agency was very picky, and he promised to make sure I was selected if I paid him. He said I couldn't tell anyone else about it as that would cause a lot of problems for both of us if I did," Sara explained tearily.

"And you gave him money? How much money are we talking about?" Aaron asked, and when she mentioned the amount of money she paid, his jaws dropped.

"Where did you ever get such an amount of money from?" Aaron asked in surprise, and she looked away from him guiltily.

"It's my life savings. I've been saving for a very long time," she said, and then broke into a sob once again.

"Calm down. Your tears won't solve this. How did you find out it was a scam?" He asked, and by the time she finished narrating everything to him, he sighed.

"Well, you were pretty naive and gullible. However, you won't be the first young lady that has fallen prey to men like that, and you won't be the last either. You have to move on," Aaron said, feeling sorry for her.

"How can I move on? I have nothing. I have no place to go to. I don't have any money. I don't even have a place to stay. He assured me I would move into the accommodation the agency has for their newly signed models after meeting with the CEO today," Sara complained bitterly.

"Where were you staying before now?" Aaron asked in confusion.

"A guesthouse," she said, and Aaron shook his head.

"What about your family?"

"I don't have a family. My parents are late and I'm an only child," Sara cried, and Aaron looked at her with pity.

"I'm sorry about that. Where were you living before you moved into the guesthouse?"

"I was living with a friend, but she threw me out. That was when I met the con artist who duped me," Sara cried, and Aaron sighed, not knowing how to help her.

"You've had quite a tough life for a young lady of your age," Aaron said as he patted her back, and then she looked up at him with teary eyes.

"Can you help me?" She asked, and when he frowned she quickly grabbed his hand.

"I'm not asking you for any money. I could work for you. Clean your apartment, cook for you, do your laundry, even assist you with the models. All I need is a place to stay while I try to find my feet," she pleaded, holding his hands.

Aaron shook his head, "I don't think that's a good idea. Where would you sleep? This place is tiny. It's barely comfortable for me," he said, making her look around the tiny room.

"I could sleep on the couch in the studio," she assured him.

"Please, don't say no. I have nowhere else to go. If you turn me away I would have to wander around in the streets please," she begged, her honey-brown eyes beseeching him to come to her aid.

"I don't need you to do anything for me. You can stay here, but only for three months. Get a job if you must so you can move out to your own place," Aaron said, and she jumped on him happily.

"Thank you so much. I promise you won't regret this," Sara promised, but Aaron said nothing as he stood and returned to attend to his business.

Chapter 393: The Past (2)

Although Aaron had asked Sara to get a job and not bother about helping him out with his chores, Sara paid no attention to him.

Sara went about cleaning the whole place and rearranging everything in a way that the studio became more spacious and started to look homely.

After cleaning and preparing breakfast for them every morning, she would sit around the studio chatting with the models that came around and asking them questions.

Soon, she asked Aaron to teach her how to use the camera so that she could work alongside him whenever he had too many people to attend to at the same time or whenever he wasn't available.

Seeing how much interest she showed in his business, Aaron agreed to teach her all about photography, and soon she became almost as good as he was.

Once she became capable of handling the studio on her own, she encouraged him to start accepting jobs away from the studio as those would fetch him more money.

Taking her advice, he began to travel with some of the models to different locations to take pictures of them in places of their choice, and he started leaving her in charge of the studio.

This not only brought him more money, but it also brought him more exposure, and slowly his client base increased from just upcoming models to supermodels.

Falling in love with Sara had been a very slow but gradual process, and it had little or nothing to do with her beauty. Of course, Sara was a strikingly beautiful woman, but he had seen even more beautiful and desirable women than her.

Being a photographer who mostly dealt with models, he had seen his fair share of beauties in their various states of dress and undress to be moved by the physical attributes of a woman.

Returning to his studio after every long day of work to find her waiting, excited and eager to hear all about his day and the people he had met, had gradually become the highlight of his day.

Seeing all the changes she had made both in his life and in the studio in the short time she had been with him, it was difficult not to be interested in her. She had been so involved in his business that he had almost started to forget about her dreams of becoming a model.

"Sara, can I have a word with you?" Aaron asked one evening, four months after she started living and working with him.

"Do you even need to ask?" Sara asked with an amused smile as she went to sit on the wooden seat across from him that served as their dining.

"It has been four months," Aaron reminded her with a solemn expression. It wasn't that he wanted her to leave, but he needed to know her plans.

"Four months is gone already?" She asked, surprised.

"Yeah. How time flies," Aaron said quietly as he watched her closely, and then she leaned forward in her seat.

"I know you said I can only stay for three months, but can't you change your mind? I really love living here and working with you," Sara said, looking at him with hopeful eyes.

"What about your modeling ambition? Are you not interested in pursuing it anymore? You can't do that if you remain here just taking photos of other models," Aaron reminded her.

"No. I don't want to do that anymore," she said, and Aaron looked at her skeptically.

"Why not?"

"Have you seen the number of models that come in and out of your studio daily? There are models everywhere. I thought because I was pretty and I had the body for it, I was special and could become a supermodel, especially after that bastard gave me false assurance. But I've come to terms with reality. It was a silly dream," Sara said with a shake of her head.

"Listen, Aaron. All I need right now is a chance to prove myself to you. I really do love this job. Employ me, and you won't regret it, I promise," Sara said solemnly, and Aaron smiled at her.

"I can't deny that you have been very helpful in the last four months. I only wanted to be sure that working with me isn't going to hinder your personal ambition in any way..."

"Not at all. I assure you. If anything, this has helped me redirect my focus," she quickly cut in to assure him.

"That's good to know. Since you're good at the job and willing to work with me, I will be paying you for your services from now on. Also, we will be moving out of here soon. I want this place to be solely for work purposes. Maybe we can move into a two-bedroom apartment, and you can have a room to yourself. That way, you can be more comfortable, and you don't have to move your stuff around. What do you think about that?" Aaron asked, and Sara screeched happily as she left her seat and went around the table to embrace him.

"Thank you so much, Aaron. I love you," she said as she gave him a smacking kiss on the lips, and then as though realizing what she had done, her eyes widened, and she quickly pulled away from Aaron, who was looking at her in surprise.

She cleared her throat, "I'm sorry. I don't know what I was thinking. I shouldn't have done that. I'm sorry," she said apologetically, and without waiting for him to respond, she quickly ran away from there and went outside.

Aaron remained where he sat, not knowing what to think or how to feel about Sara's action and then her reaction following it.

He waited for some time, and when she didn't come back inside, he went in search of her and found her seated at the foot of the wooden stairway that led to the studio.

"Why are you out here?" He asked as he joined her and sat beside her.

"I feel embarrassed," she confessed.

"Why? It was a simple mistake. You don't have to feel embarrassed," Aaron assured her.

"It wasn't a mistake, Aaron. I'm in love with you. I've always been in love with you from the first moment I walked into your studio, but you never took note of me," Sara said, surprising Aaron.

"You are in love with me?" He asked in a very low voice, and she gave him a nod.

"Why else would I want to remain by your side? Why do you think you were the first I came to when I was duped?" She asked, and Aaron felt his mouth go dry.

Before now, he had always been so engrossed in his job to get into any serious relationship, especially as most ladies he knew were not interested in going into a relationship with a man who was always surrounded by beautiful half-naked models. So he occasionally he had mixed business with pleasure and had flings with some of the models who were interested in him.

Sara turned to him when he didn't say anything as she had expected him to, "You don't have to feel pressured by my confession or anything. I understand if you don't feel the same way. It would be hard for you to feel the same way when you see such beautiful people every day. I can't be compared with them in any way," she said with a wistful smile.

"Don't say that," Aaron scolded her.

"But it's the truth. I'm just a pretty stupid homeless girl who was too naive to know she was being scammed," she said with a self-deprecating smile, and Aaron shook his head.

"You're better than that. Everyone makes mistakes, and you can't keep beating yourself over it. Let's go inside. It's getting cold," Aaron said and led her back inside the studio.

It took Aaron some more weeks before he finally opened up to her about how he felt, and once he did, Sara was over the moon

with joy. Their relationship had started perfectly. Maybe too perfectly.

It seemed to Aaron that they were a match made in heaven, and their love was written in the stars.

And he had fallen hopelessly in love with her, giving her all of him and all he had.

Some months later, they moved from the studio to their apartment as planned. But not as employer and employee, but instead as lovers.

And a year later, he was over the moon with joy when she announced over dinner that she was pregnant.

"Pregnant?" He had asked quietly since he wasn't sure if that was what she wanted even though it was everything he wanted. A little boy or girl that looked like them.

Sara bobbed her head, "I'm so stupid," she said with quivering lips as she buried her face in her palms and cried.

Startled and heartbroken by her tears, Aaron took her into his arms and consoled her, "You are not stupid. Please stop crying," Aaron said as he patted her back and kissed away her tears.

"If you don't want the baby, we can abort the pregnancy," Aaron assured her as she cried, and as if that seemed to reassure her of something, she looked up at him as tears flowed down her cheeks.

"What about you? What do you want?" She asked with a snuffle, and Aaron shrugged.

"I already consider you my family, and I would love us to keep the pregnancy. But only if you want to. It's your body, so you should be able to decide what you want. If we are keeping the baby, we should get married and make it official," Aaron said, and she looked away from him.

"I need to think about it," she told him after a while.

"Take all the time you need, but also keep in mind that if we're going to abort the pregnancy, we have to do it fast to avoid complications," he reminded her.

Three days later, Sara informed him that she had decided to keep the child, but on certain conditions, one of them being that he would open a bank account for her and deposit a sum of money for both her and the baby. She needed assurance that she wouldn't be left stranded with their baby if he suddenly decided that he was no longer interested in her in the future.

Aaron, being blinded by love, and trusting that nothing could go wrong with their relationship, not only opened the account at her request but also made her a signatory to his business account as well after their intimate wedding. And that didn't stop him from paying her monthly salary since she insisted that regardless of their relationship, she was his employee and had to be paid.

Soon they returned to their normal routine, with Aaron traveling around with clients while Sara stayed back to attend to the clients at the studio.

When they both went for her ultrasound some weeks later, and they found out she was carrying twins, Aaron's joy knew no bounds at the thought of not having just one but two kids who had their genes.

That was the first time Sara let it slip that she had been born a triplet when the attending sonographer asked if her family had a history of multiple pregnancies.

"You have a twin brother and sister? I thought you said you were an only child?" Aaron asked after they left the doctor's office.

"They both died during childbirth, and only I survived," Sara had said without looking at him.

So he could better care for her, he employed someone to assist with taking care of the chores at home and hired someone else to be at the studio with her so that she wouldn't stress herself too much.

Aaron also started declining jobs that would make him travel too far away from home, as he always made sure he could return every night to be with her.

Not long after that time, it was confirmed that she was pregnant with a boy and a girl, and Aaron's joy was full. As far as he was concerned, everything was perfect, or so he thought until he traveled out of town for a quick job and received a call from the maid at home informing him that Sara was on her way to the hospital alone and she was carrying her hospital bag for delivery.

"But the baby is not due until next month," Aaron said with a frown, and he asked the maid to accompany Sara, but the maid said Sara insisted on going alone and that she was just going for a routine check-up.

Not feeling comfortable with it, Aaron immediately abandoned all he was doing, and by the time he arrived some hours later and got to the hospital where they had registered her, he didn't find her there.

He called Sara to find out where she was, and she sent him the address of a different hospital and her room number.

Once he arrived at the hospital, he headed directly for the room, and when he walked in, he saw Sara lying on the bed, cradling a baby in her arms.

"Why didn't you call me? What happened? You're supposed to put to birth next month," Aaron asked in confusion.

"I was spotting, so I was worried," she said without looking away from the baby.

"I'm so sorry I wasn't here with you, baby," Aaron said apologetically as he went to her and kissed her forehead before looking down at the bundle in her arms with awe.

"She looks so beautiful," Aaron said, thinking the baby in her arms was their daughter.

"He. This is your son, Aaron. Here, take him," she said as she offered the baby to him.

"Our son," Aaron corrected with a proud smile as he carefully carried the baby, who looked so fragile.

"Where is she, Sara? Where is our daughter?" Aaron asked when he noticed that the second baby wasn't anywhere in sight, and Sara didn't seem excited or happy. She just looked dull.

"She didn't make it," Sara said in a flat voice devoid of emotion as she looked up at him with blank eyes.

Aaron's heart didn't just skip a beat. It cracked, "She didn't make what?" He asked, refusing to believe what he had heard.

"She died."

"No. No," Aaron repeated with a shake of his head as tears gathered in his eyes.

"She can't die. How can you say that so easily? Where is she? I need to see her for myself," Aaron said, and as though sensing his father's agitation, the baby in his arms began to cry.

Sara pressed a button by her bedside, and a nurse came in to take the baby from Aaron, "We still need to carry out some tests on the baby," the nurse informed Aaron as she took the baby from him.

"Where is she? I want to see her," Aaron asked as the nurse walked away with the baby.

"You can't see her. I already asked the doctor to get rid of the body," Sara said, and Aaron looked at her in disbelief.

"You did what?"

"There was no need to keep the body. I didn't know when you would get here, and I didn't want to see it or just leave it," Sara said without emotion.

Aaron staggered back in shock, "Please tell me you're kidding."

"Why would I kid about something like this?" She asked, and Aaron looked at her like she had just slapped him in the face.

"How could you do that? How could you do that to me, Sara? She was my baby too. I had a right to see her. To hold her and kiss her goodbye!" Aaron cried, and Sara turned away from him.

He never received any explanation or apology from Sara after that. A few days later, after she returned

from the hospital with the baby, he returned from the studio to find that she had left after taking all the money in his safe, cleared the money in the account he opened for her and the baby, and made a large withdrawal from his business account.

The only thing she had left behind was a short note telling him that she had come to the realization that she couldn't live that way with him. She wasn't cut out for marriage or motherhood, and she wanted more for herself. She was leaving the country for Italy, where she intended to pursue her dreams as a model, and he shouldn't bother searching for her. If he truly loved her, he should forget about her and consider the money she took as her payment for carrying his child.

Chapter 394: The Past (3)

It was safe to say that Aaron's world had come crashing down around him when he read that letter. His life never remained the same after that experience.

Disregarding all she had said in the letter, he tried to find her in the weeks and months that followed, but all his effort had been futile. It was as though she had disappeared into thin air. He had later found out from one of the models Sara had been close to that she had pleaded with one of the supermodels who often came to his studio to hook her up with her agent some months earlier, and they had agreed that she move to Milan after she puts to birth. Regardless of his discovery he had found a way to reach her through the supermodel and when he did, he begged her desperately not to abandon him and their baby. He had assured her that she could be married to him and still pursue her career, that he would support her in every way even if it meant moving to wherever she was.

She had told him plainly that she wasn't interested in him or the baby. She was never coming back, so he should move on and never bother her again.

That had been the eyeopener he needed to understand that Sara had been using him the whole time. And she had only agreed to keep the pregnancy so that she would not be stranded.

He had wept, not for the loss of his money or for the trust she had broken along with his heart which was now completely shattered beyond repair. He had wept instead for his newborn child, who had lost his twin sister and had now lost his mother.

He had wept for his newborn son, who had been unfortunate enough to come through a stupid father like him. A father who had been dumb enough to have blindly fallen for someone like Sara and had chosen such a mother for him.

He would have been devastated had she stolen all he had and taken Harry with her when she left, but he still would have preferred she had done that instead of leaving behind such a fragile baby who not only needed his mother's love and affection but also needed to suckle on his mother's breast.

Growing up, he had always believed that growing up without a loving mother was way more difficult on a child than growing up without a father. He had always thought that every child needed a mother's love.

Having lost his own mother at an early age, not because she died, but because she had abandoned him so she could get married without her partner knowing she was a single mother, he knew and understood what it felt like to be abandoned by one's own mother.

He knew what it felt like to be picked on by other kids and how painful it had been for him to grow up with the knowledge that his own mother had not loved him enough to want him. She had been ashamed of him. And now he was broken because he had just subjected his own son to the same fate as he had faced.

How stupid could he have been not to have seen all the signs? He should have known that someone like Sara could never give up on her ambition. How could he have let himself be blinded by love?

Aaron wept as he looked down at his innocent baby boy, who was sleeping peacefully in his cot. He told himself that there was no time for regrets or to mourn. Sara had made her decision, and now he needed to step up to the responsibility he now had.

He resolved within himself to never let Harry be affected by his mother's absence. He promised both himself and the sleeping infant that he would love him more than enough for two so that never in his life would he feel unloved or unwanted.

He promised himself that he would show Harry both the love of a father and a mother and would never let him know that his mother had abandoned him. That was the only way he believed his boy could grow into a happy and confident young man.

Having made that decision, he shut down his studio and sold off all he had. Taking the baby with him, he moved to a different place to start his life afresh.

A place where no one knew about him or Sara. And when anyone asked about his baby's mother, he simply told them he was a widower who lost his wife while she was delivering their baby. After being rejected by his mother and the one woman he had loved enough to get married to, Aaron had been unable to bring himself to get involved with another woman, so he had decided to raise his son himself.

Lucy, who was still seated on the bed beside Aaron, watched with concern as he continued to move uncomfortably in his sleep while muttering Sara's name at intervals.

Her eyes widened in alarm when he suddenly began to groan like he was in severe pain, and just as she got off the bed, wanting to go and get Harry, Aaron started speaking.

"Why Sara? Please don't do this to us," He cried, tears rolling down the side of his face, and she paused when she realized that his pain was more emotional than physical.

Us? Was he talking about himself and Harry? Did that mean Sara was Harry's late mom too, and they had a daughter together? What happened to Harry's sister? Lucy wondered as she returned to sit beside him.

Tears gathered in her eyes as she watched the sweet, cheerful man she had spoken with just the previous day cry in his sleep like a baby. Was he still so devastated by the loss of his wife? Was that why he never remarried? Was Harry aware of this?

She sat back, wondering what to do since she couldn't possibly go and call Harry just because his father was crying and talking in his sleep.

"Harry, I'm sorry!" Aaron cried, and unable to bear his anguish anymore, Lucy rose from the bed and walked out of the bedroom. Seeing him this way was making her feel deeply sad, and she didn't want her mood to be affected more than it already was.

As Lucy approached the living room, her steps faltered when she overheard Tom speaking, and she heard what he was saying, "I still think it's best you find out who this Sara lady is that keeps calling him. Your father doesn't need to know about it. If you feel too guilty about doing it, you don't have to get involved, I could help you do it," Tom offered, and Harry sighed as he shook his head.

"I don't think I should do that. It would be the same as deceiving him or lying to him," Harry said, and Tom raised a brow.

"Where is the lie in it? It's not like he's going to know anything about it. It's only a lie if he asks you," Tom pointed out, but Harry shook his head.

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"It's the same thing. Although it's hard to ignore it, I really want to trust him that he will tell me about whatever is bothering him, so I will wait. I can only hope that I won't regret the wait," Harry said, making Lucy's brows pull together in confusion.

Were they talking about the same Sara his father had been talking about in his sleep or was it someone else? She wondered. Deciding not to eavesdrop anymore, she made her presence known as she joined them.

"How is Aaron doing?" Tom asked as he glanced at his wristwatch.

"He is still asleep," Lucy said without giving any details, and neither did she meet their gaze as she returned to her seat.

"We should leave now if we want to have dinner with Jamal," Tom said, and Lucy almost sighed in relief as she quickly grabbed her handbag.

"Give my regards to Aaron when he wakes up. And if you change your mind, let me know," Tom told Harry as he picked up his wineglass and gulped down the content.

"Don't bother yourself about it. I won't change my mind," Harry said as he escorted them to the door.

"Thanks for coming, LuLu," Harry said as he embraced Lucy after she slid her feet into her shoes, and she forced a smile.

"Give my love to Aaron, and tell him I will visit him another time," Lucy said, and Harry gave her a nod.

"I will. By the way, Tom told me you overheard some employees insulting us. What are their names? And what department do they work in?" Harry asked, and Lucy glared at Tom, who was still putting on his shoes.

"I handled it already, so you don't need to know their names. If it repeats itself, then I will personally submit their names to you," Lucy promised, but Harry wasn't having that.

"Rumors like that do not only harm you, they also harm the image of the company, and we have to make an example out of anyone that spreads such rumors for others to learn from it. If you won't give me their names, I can as well check the security footage of the passageway and find out those who went into the restroom at the same time as you," Harry said, and Lucy looked at Tom with pleading eyes before turning them to Harry.

"Please don't do that. Tom already fired an employee last week. If you fire those two as well this week, it's going to put me in a difficult position as everyone would think I'm the reason you're both doing this. No one is going to really care about what they did wrong. Please let it go just this once." Harry exchanged a look with Tom before looking at her, "What difference is it going to make if we let it go this once and then discipline another set later when they speak ill of us in the future? I don't have to handle this myself. I could relay it to the human resource department and have them take care of it," Harry said, but Lucy shook her head.

"It's not necessary. Let's not concern ourselves with things like that. We have more important things to worry about," Lucy pleaded.

"Just let it go," Tom told Harry as he slapped his arm, "We will stop by after work tomorrow if you're unable to make it to the office. Goodnight," Tom said before leading Lucy away.

Once they got into the car and had strapped their seatbelts, Tom turned to her, "Are you going to tell me what is wrong?" He asked, looking at her with curious concern.

"Did I say anything was wrong?" Lucy asked as she reached into her handbag for her phone, and once she took it out, she was surprised to see that she had two missed call notifications and a text.

"You don't have to say anything. You looked sad and uncomfortable when you returned from Aaron's bedroom," Tom pointed out, but Lucy's gaze was focused on her phone.

"Lucas called. I forgot that I placed my phone on silence during the meeting at the factory," Lucy said as she clicked on Lucas' text.

"I'm on my way to the airport. I'm stopping by Ludus to see you before leaving for my vacation. I will be at the hotel I stayed at the last time with dad."

"He is on his way to Ludus," Lucy informed Tom as she dialed Lucas' line, but the call did not connect.

"Really? Is everything alright?" Tom asked, and Lucy gave him a nod.

"He said he wants to see me before leaving for his vacation," she explained.

"That's good then," Tom said as he turned on the car's ignition and drove off.

Lucy fell silent and glanced out the window as she pondered on all she had heard in Aaron's bedroom and tried to reconcile it with what she had overheard Tom and Harry talk about. She had a lot of questions to ask, but there was nobody to ask.

She contemplated whether or not she should tell Tom about what she had heard or just keep it to herself.

Although she felt that she should probably tell Tom about it, but at the same time, she wasn't sure it was right to tell him all she had heard. This was Aaron's private business which he had let out during a moment of vulnerability, and she had just been there by chance to hear it. It wasn't her place to tell Tom or anyone else about it. She knew for a fact that she wouldn't like anyone to do that to her.

She also knew that Tom and Harry would probably not be happy with her if they learned that she had seen Aaron in that state or got to know all she had heard him say, yet had kept it to herself.

Tom noticed her silence but said nothing as he continued to drive, believing that she would tell him what was on her mind when she was ready to do so. He had done his part by asking, making it clear that he noticed something was wrong. All he could do now was wait for her.

Unable to hold back her curiosity anymore, Lucy turned to Tom, "Why did Aaron never remarry?" She asked out of the blues, and Tom turned to look at her, surprised by her question.

He shrugged, "It's understandable. According to Harry, his father deeply loved his mother, and he was devastated by her death. He didn't want anyone else, so he devoted his life to loving and taking care of their love son. Why do you ask?" Tom asked, and Lucy shrugged.

"I'm just curious. It must have been tough for him," she said with a sad sigh, and Tom looked at her in confusion before returning his attention to the road.

What was going on in her mind? Why was she suddenly thinking about Aaron and feeling sad that he had raised Harry alone? Tom wondered.

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Before Tom could say anything, she spoke again, "I guess Harry was an only child? He doesn't have siblings, does he?" She asked, wanting to know about the daughter Aaron had mentioned.

Tom spared her another glance, "No. Harry is an only child."

"Do you know the name of Harry's mother?"

"What is going on? Did something happen while you were in his bedroom?" Tom asked, wanting to understand exactly what was going on in her head. If there was one thing he knew about Lucy, she wasn't a busybody that got involved in other people's business unless it affected her, and something told him she wasn't asking merely to satisfy her curiosity.

Chapter 395: Guess What?

"Where are we going to?" Candace asked as Jade drove the car out of the hotel's parking lot.

Immediately after Jade returned from her appointment at the law firm, she had asked Candace to dress up so they could go out, and every attempt by Candace to find out where they were going had proved futile.

"Don't worry, you'll find out when we get there," Jade said with a secret smile.

"You are not taking me to Jero, are you?" Candace asked suspiciously, and Jade sighed as she shook her head.

"Relax. We are not meeting with Jero until he has fulfilled his end of the agreement. I noticed you've been rubbing your back and shoulder as though they're stiff, so I thought you needed to relax. I booked you an appointment at a friend's spa," Jade assured her, and Candace relaxed a bit.

"Do we have the time to do this? Aren't you supposed to be there when Jero leads the police to the Cartel lords?" Candace asked after a little pause.

"I changed my mind about going. I thought it might be too risky, so I alerted different state security agencies of the plan. That way, there won't be any foul play. Don't worry, Jero and the legions will be apprehended as planned tonight," Jade assured her with a confident smile, and Candace gave her a nod.

"Thank you."

"Don't mention it," Jade said dismissively as she fixed her eyes on the road.

"About last night... I'm sorry if I was too hard on you," Jade said, and Candace looked at her.

"You weren't. I was wrong to have done what I did without speaking with you. I would have done the same if I was in your shoes," Candace assured her.

She had thought long and hard about her conversation with Jade concerning asking Tom and Lucy to become Jamal's guardians, and she agreed with Jade for calling her out on her bullshit.

"Thanks for your understanding," Jade said, and they both lapsed into silence.

Neither of them said a word to each other for some time since they were both occupied with thoughts of their own. After a while, Jade turned to Candace, "You know, I just realized that I don't know much about you despite the fact that we've been through a lot together in the course of this case," Jade said and Candace turned weary eyes to her.

"There's nothing much to know about me. You pretty much know everything there is to know," Candace said, and Jade shrugged.

"I can count a number of things I don't know about you. For example, I don't know how you met Andy," Jade said, wanting to engage Candace in a conversation since she wasn't comfortable with Candace's silence.

At the mention of Andy's name, Candace's lips curved in a smile, "Andy is my family. We grew up together at the orphanage home. She has always been there for as long as I can remember."

Jade smiled when she heard the warmth in Candace's voice. Jade had come to realize that the only time there ever seemed to be warmth when Candace spoke was when she was either talking about her son or Andy.

"I'm sorry to ask, but I was just wondering. How long did you live at the orphanage? I mean, when did you start living there? Did you ever get to find out how you wound up at the orphanage?" Jade asked thoughtfully.

"You are wondering if my parents abandoned me or if I lost them at an early age," Candace said, and Jade flashed her an apologetic smile.

"I'm sorry if my question made you uncomfortable," Jade said, and Candace smiled at her.

"Do you know that apart from trying to get away from Jero and the cartel, I started studying law because I admire you?" Candace asked, and Jade blinked at her in surprise.

"Me?"

Candace's smile widened as she gave her a nod, "Yeah. The first time we met, you were always so confident, honest, and straightforward. Although, you are different now," Candace said, and Jade raised a brow.

"How so?"

"You were always so stiff, and you never let things get personal or asked questions unrelated to the case. You did help us a lot, but you kept your emotional distance," Candace said, and Jade smiled.

"Is this your polite way of saying I'm nosy and you no longer admire me?" Jade asked with a grin, and Candace laughed softly.

"Not at all. I still like you. You seem more relaxed now."

"Is that a good or a bad thing?" Jade asked curiously.

"It's good. You seem happier and even more confident now," Candace said, and Jade smiled when she remembered her mother had said something similar to her.

"Anyway, to answer your question. It is both. I lost my parents, and my family abandoned me," Candace said, making Jade blink in confusion.

"I'm lost."

"The sisters at the orphanage home where I was raised said I was brought to them by a man when I was three years old. According to them, I was a very sickly child. No one wanted a sickly child, and by the time I stopped being so ill, I was already a teenager, and no one wanted to adopt such a grown-up," Candace said in a flat voice as though that didn't bother her in any way.

"That's sad. Who took you to the orphanage? Your father?" Jade asked with a confused frown.

Candace's lips curved in a rueful smile, "Not exactly. According to the sisters, the man who dumped me was my father's brother. He claimed that I had been adopted, and since his brother and sister-in-law were dead, and I was such a sickly kid, he couldn't raise me, so he left me at the orphanage and paid a huge sum of money," Candace said, and Jade felt her heart break.

"Don't you want to find out who he is and know more about your family?"

"There is no need for that. At first, I wanted to find my family. Hence I asked those questions, but when I was told he paid them to take me from him, I saw no reason for me to find him. Andy and I left the orphanage home when we became adults. I'm okay with having just Andy and Jamal in my life," Candace said, but Jade wasn't satisfied.

"I'm sorry about that," Jade said apologetically, and Candace sighed.

"It's fine. Right now, all I want is to get Jero out of the way so that Jamal can grow up in a decent home," she said, and Jade glanced at her

"About wanting to get Jero out..."

"Let's not discuss about that. What you don't know about wouldn't hurt you," Candace cut in, and Jade sighed in resignation. It seemed like Candace was set on her plans. She was going to have to try a different approach.

After Jade drove into the parking lot of the mall and got out of the car, she led Candace into the building and up to Aurora's spa.

Apart from bringing Candace there to help her relax, Jade had also come because she wanted to see Aurora and find a way to discourage her from meeting with Harry again.

"Darling!" Aurora, who had been expecting Jade for the past twenty minutes, greeted happily once she sighted them. Jade smiled as Aurora embraced her.

"Guess what?" Aurora asked excitedly as she took Jade's hand and led her to her office, which would afford them more privacy, while Candace followed them.

"What?" Jade asked curiously as she followed Aurora, wondering why the lady seemed unusually excited.

"I just got off the phone with Harry a while ago, and you won't believe what he said!" Aurora said, making Jade's smile falter as her heart skipped several beats.

"What did he say?" She asked as they walked into the office and sat down.

"He asked me to accompany him to I-Global's anniversary event as his date! Can you believe that?" Aurora asked in a high-pitched voice as she laughed happily, while Jade felt her throat constrict as she tried to speak.

"Harry said that?" Jade asked, trying to force a smile while Candace watched her reaction with interest while wondering who Harry was.

"Yes. Jade, you have no idea how happy I was when he said that. I felt like dancing in the air. By the way, I'm going to visit him next week, and I will be... Oh, lest I forget! He said I should ask you

to give me his shirt. He said he left it behind in the closet in his suite. He wants me to bring it along with me while coming," Aurora said, and Jade's heart broke even more.

"He said all that?" She asked in a slightly shaky voice, and Aurora bobbed her head.

"He might be starting to like me, right? What do you think?" Aurora asked, and Jade shrugged.

"I... I don't know," Jade said with a shake of her head, confused about everything. What was Harry up to? Wasn't he interested in her? Or had she and everyone else been mistaken?

"You said he doesn't really have ladies in his life, right? This has to mean something. Listen, Jade, if things work out between Harry and me, you're going to be my maid of honor, I promise you,"

Aurora said with a wide smile as she embraced Jade, and Candace almost rolled her eyes.

Although she had nothing personal against Aurora, she couldn't help wondering if Aurora was blind or just plain stupid. It was obvious from Jade's reaction that she wasn't happy about the progress between her and Harry, so why was she saying all of that? Candace wondered as she continued to watch both ladies.

"So, can you tell me more about Harry? I mean his personal tastes: favorite color and all that. I want to know as much as I can before going to see him. I'm going to sweep him off his..." The rest of Aurora's words trailed off when Candace cleared her throat.

Aurora looked at her in confusion for a moment as though she was wondering who Candace was, and then she remembered, "Oh! I'm sorry," Aurora said with an apologetic smile while Jade turned to Candace, who she had forgotten about for a moment.

"Aurora, meet my friend, Candace. Candace, meet Aurora. She's the one I told you about. She needs to relax," Jade said with a cheerful smile as she looked at Candace, but looking into her eyes, Candace could tell she wasn't okay.

"Your room is ready. You can come with me, and I will have one of the girls take you there. Jade, wait right here, and I'll get you something to drink while we discuss, and you wait for her," Aurora said with a wide smile as she walked away, leaving Candace to follow her.

Candace looked at Jade for a moment as though she wanted to say something to her but decided against it. This wasn't the time or place to say anything. Jade had been very good to her, and if the only way she could reciprocate Jade's kindness was by helping her snatch Aurora's boyfriend, whoever this Harry guy was, then she was going to help her.

"I will be waiting for you," Jade told Candace with a wide smile as she watched her walk away, and the moment she closed the door behind her, Jade let out a sigh.

She didn't know what to think about this information from Aurora. She didn't even know whether to laugh or cry at the sudden turn of events. What was Harry thinking? She had told him just the previous day that she didn't want him going out on a date with anyone because she was jealous. She understood why he was meeting with Aurora. That was her fault. She had hooked them up, and he had promised to go on a date with her before now, and as the gentleman he was, he couldn't go back on his word. That was understandable.

But how could he invite her to the anniversary party as his partner? Why would he do something like that? And what was that madness about asking her to give that shirt to Aurora? The same shirt she had told him she was wearing without undies? Jade thought with a hiss of annoyance.

In fact, she wasn't going to worry about Harry right now. She had something more pressing to take care of. She reminded herself as she took out her phone and dialed Matt's line. If she couldn't stop Candace from doing something stupid, she believed that Matt could.

Chapter 396: Who Is Harry?

"Tell me, Lu. Did something happen while you were in the bedroom with Aaron?" Tom asked again when it seemed to him like Lucy was taking too long to answer his first question.

Lucy bit her lower lip as she contemplated telling him the truth. Although she was trying to be fair to Aaron, but putting herself on Tom's shoe as well, she knew she would definitely want him to tell her the truth if he was the one that heard Sonia's father say something in his sleep that might help Sonia understand what was going on with her father.

"He was crying in his sleep and calling out to someone named Sara," Lucy said, deciding to tell him the truth, and immediately Tom stepped on the brake pedal abruptly causing the car come to a screeching halt.

His sudden action made Lucy's heart skip a beat, and the car behind them, which almost rammed into theirs honked at them angrily.

"What exactly did he say?" Tom asked, ignoring the angry blares of horn behind him.

Lucy called out an apology to the driver who was swearing at Tom as he drove past them, before looking at Tom, "Are you trying to get us killed? We are in the middle of the road," Lucy reminded him, alarmed by his action.

"I'm sorry," Tom said as he drove away from there until he found a safe spot to park by the side of the road. Once he parked the car, he turned it off before turning to look at Lucy.

"Did he say anything else?" Tom asked, and when he saw something flicker in Lucy's eyes, he frowned.

"You weren't going to say anything about this had I not asked?" Tom asked, not pleased that she had been planning to withhold such important information about his best friend's father from him.

"I wasn't sure it was in my place to say anything. I'm still not sure I'm doing the right thing either. I don't think Aaron would be pleased to know that I was there while he slept and I heard whatever he said in his sleep. I know I wouldn't be pleased to know someone eavesdropped on my private thoughts while I slept, and not only eavesdropped but told others about it," Lucy said, and the edges around Tom's eyes hardened.

"I am others to you? You consider me on the same level as others?" Tom asked, and Lucy frowned at him.

"That's not what I meant, Tom. Don't twist my words or try to misunderstand me. If you were in Aaron's shoes would you want this?" Lucy asked, and Tom took a deep breath.

"Let me ask you a question. If Harry was Sonia, and you were me, how would you want me to handle this? Would you be pleased if I kept something like this away from you? No explanations. Just a yes or no would do," Tom said, and Lucy sighed as she looked at him.

"No. I know what you mean. I understand."

"Good. If you do, then tell me what you heard. You can't keep whatever you heard to yourself, Lu. This is not only important to Harry, it is important to me too. If something affects Harry, it affects me as well. And I like to believe you consider my problem as yours in the same manner. If you heard anything in Aaron's bedroom that might help us understand what is going on with Aaron, you should say so," Tom said, and Lucy took a deep breath.

"You don't think this is the same as breaking into Aaron's phone? I heard Harry tell you that he wants to trust his father and hear whatever it is directly from him," Lucy said, and Tom shrugged.

"That is Harry. I'm not Harry. If it affects Harry, it affects me and I have to find a way to fix it. Harry would do the same for me," Tom said, and Lucy sighed.

"I don't have to tell Harry anything about it. I will find a way to fix it for both Harry and Aaron," Tom promised, and Lucy gave him a nod.

"I don't think it's as easy as you think. I'm confused. I heard you and Harry talking about a Sara that has been calling Aaron. I'm not sure it's the same Sara that Aaron was talking about in his sleep," Lucy said, and Tom raised a brow.

"What do you mean?"

"I think the Sara, Aaron was talking about is Harry's mother or maybe Aaron was married to someone else before they had Harry. And that Sara bore a daughter for Aaron," Lucy said, and Tom frowned as she relayed the words to him exactly the way Aaron had said it.

"Maybe it's not the same Sara. Harry's mother died when Harry was a baby. Besides, Harry's late mother's name was Bella, not Sara," Tom said thoughtfully.

"It depends. I couldn't tell if he was heartbroken because she died or she left him. Let's assume she left him. If that's the case, it could be the same Sara who is calling him now. Maybe she is an ex who he knew before Harry's mother, and she is trying to come back to his life?" Lucy suggested instead.

"But according to Aaron, Harry's mother was his only one true love," Tom countered.

"That doesn't mean he wasn't romantically involved with other women before he met her. After all, you can say that I'm your one true love, but you have also been involved with other women in the past before me," Lucy reminded Tom, and although he wanted to argue, he knew that she had a point.

"But if that is the case, and she is just his ex trying to reunite with him, why is he trying so hard to hide it from Harry?" Tom asked no one in particular.

"On second thought, he could only have been this hurt if Sara was his first love. He cried and begged in his sleep for her not to leave. What if he lied about Harry's mother being his first love and this Sara lady is actually his first love and that's why he's hiding her from Harry? Maybe he doesn't want Harry to find out that he lied about Harry's mother being his first love. That could be why he was apologizing to Harry in his sleep," Lucy said thoughtfully.

"It doesn't make sense. Why would he lie about something like that? And why does she keep calling when he doesn't want to speak with her? Or does it have anything to do with the daughter he mentioned?" Tom asked, and Lucy sighed.

"Why don't we continue this conversation at home after dinner?" Lucy said when she glanced at her wristwatch, and saw that the time was almost 8 PM already.

"You're right. Jamal needs to go to bed by ten," Tom said when he suddenly remembered that Jamal was probably still waiting for them, and he resumed driving.

As expected, Jamal was waiting by the foot of the stairs when they got home, and immediately he saw them he ran up to embrace Lucy.

"I kept trying to convince him to have his dinner, but he insisted on waiting to eat with you both," Samantha said as she joined them.

"We kept you waiting, didn't we? I'm sorry," Lucy said with a bright smile as she crouched down in front of him and kissed his cheek.

"It's fine. I'm glad you're here now," Jamal said with an embarrassed smile as he raised both hands to his cheeks.

"I guess only females receive hugs from you," Tom said dryly, and both Lucy and Samantha laughed as Jamal looked up at him and went to embrace him.

"Are you going out after dinner? Or can we playing games tonight?" Jamal asked hopefully.

"We can play games after dinner," Tom assured him.

"When are you calling my mom? You promised to call her," Jamal reminded them, and they exchanged a look.

"We can do so now," Tom said before looking at Lucy, "You can go in to freshen up while I call his mom. If I don't join you by the time you're done, then come down for dinner," Tom said, since he knew Lucy still needed privacy to change.

"Alright. Why don't I take those to the bedroom?" She asked as she took his suit jacket and the documents he was holding from him.

Tom tugged off his tie and handed it to her too, "Thank you."

"I will be back shortly," she told Jamal before walking away.

"I will set the table," Samantha said as she left, and Jamal and Tom also walked over to sit at the Den. Once they were seated, Tom dialed Jade's line.

Away from there, in Aurora's spa, Jade tried not to grit her teeth as Aurora went on and on about Harry and her plans to capture his heart when she meets him again.

"How about you accompany me shopping this weekend? I need to get some new clothes for my trip," Aurora said, but Jade shook her head.

"Can't. I will be busy with work," Jade said as she glanced at the wall clock in Aurora's office, wondering why Candace wasn't out yet.

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She couldn't believe that Aurora had been chattering endlessly for over an hour already and all she was saying revolved around Harry. She wished she could shut the woman up or change the subject, but every time she changed the subject, Aurora always found a way to take it back.

"Oh, that's such a shame! So when can I get his t-shirt from you? He says it's his favorite t-shirt and he can't sleep without it," Aurora said, and Jade was almost tempted to snort at that. Favorite shirt my ass.

"Now that I think about it, I don't think the t-shirt is in the closet. I had them clean up his suite yesterday, and I didn't see anything in the closet when I moved my stuff into it. You know I'm staying in his bedroom," Jade said wanting to get a rise from Aurora.

Aurora raised a brow, "You're staying in Harry's bedroom? Is he aware of that?" Aurora asked, and Jade smiled sweetly.

"Sure, he is. We were staying there together alone the last time you visited, remember?" Jade asked, hoping that would turn Aurora off, but Aurora smiled.

"Harry must really adore you as a little sister to be looking out for you this way. It's a very attractive attribute," Aurora said, disappointing Jade.

"When next he calls you, help me tell him I had them to throw it out already. I didn't know the shirt was so important to him," Jade said with a bright smile.

"You asked them to throw it out? That's so sad. I don't think Harry is going to like that. Can you tell me what the shirt looks like? Maybe I can get him a new one. That might just help me score a brownie point with him," Aurora said with a thoughtful smile, and Jade tried not to scowl.

"Do you love him that much?" Jade asked, wanting to see if it would be possible to discourage Aurora from trying so hard to win Harry's heart.

Aurora giggled, "Love? C'mon, Jade! You don't expect me to have fallen in love so easily with him already, do you? I'm not that naive. From all I heard from you and from what I've read about him on the internet, he's a very decent guy. I confirmed that the last time I met him so I think he will make a great partner for me. He's someone I know I can grow to love. I'm trying to make things work between us, but for now it's solely physical attraction on my part," Aurora said, and Jade almost sighed in relief.

"Oh, that's great! It's always a good start," Jade said with a nod.

As long as Aurora wasn't in love with Harry yet, that was a good enough for her. She knew for a fact that Harry wasn't going to touch Aurora or have sex with her even if she seduced him, so there was nothing to worry about in that regard.

Fortunately for Jade, before the conversation could progress any further, Candace returned looking more relaxed than she had been earlier, "I'm done," she told Jade, and immediately Jade stood up.

"Great! We can leave now," she said excitedly before looking at Aurora.

"We need to leave now. And don't forget to deliver my message to Harry," Jade said, and Aurora smiled as she escorted them out of her office.

"Of course. By the way, I noticed you no longer refer to him as old uncle Harry," Aurora pointed out, while Candace listened to them with interest.

"Maybe that's because I no longer see him that way. He's too young and cute to be called that don't you think?" Jade asked with a giggle, and Aurora laughed too as she agreed with her, while Candace's lips twitched in amusement.

Once they got into the elevator, and Aurora left them, Jade let out a sigh of relief, "Thank God we are out of there. If we stayed there for an extra five minutes my jawbone would most likely have fractured. My jaws ache from smiling and laughing so hard when I didn't want to," Jade said as she rubbed her jaw, and Candace giggled.

"Who is Harry?" Candace asked curiously.

"Harry is Tom's best friend. Why?" Jade asked, and Candace raised a brow.

"You are in love with your brother's best friend?" Candace asked, and Jade giggled when she heard the concern in Candace's voice.

Had she been that obvious? How did Candace know she was in love with Harry? Before Jade could respond, her phone started to ring and she took it out from her handbag and received the call when she saw that it was from Tom.

Chapter 397: Tell Him

"Mom says to pass the phone to you," Jamal informed Tom after he was done speaking with his mother.

Tom received the phone from Jamal, "Hello, This is Tom," He said politely, since it was the first time he was speaking with Candace since he read her letter.

Candace cleared her throat, "Thanks for looking after Jamal. He says he's happy, and you are both having dinner with him," Candace said with gratitude.

"You're welcome," Tom said as he looked at the kid who was sitting beside him and looking at him curiously.

She cleared her throat again, "I also want to apologize for making you uncomfortable by leaving that letter behind. I had no right to do that. If it makes you feel better you can get rid of it. I wasn't thinking straight. I'm sorry," Candace said apologetically, and Tom sighed.

"Don't worry about it. Just be careful and make sure you return safely. You can be rest assured that Jamal will be well taken care of," Tom promised, and Candace relaxed a bit.

"Thank you," Candace said in a quiet voice that made Tom feel sorry for her.

After his conversation with Harry earlier, he had tried to put together everything that he had learned from Jade, Harry, and Lucy, concerning Candace, and he felt like he hadn't been very kind to her, and had treated her with indifference.

Candace was an orphan who had led quite a difficult life. She had been involved with a terrible and dangerous man that she could only escape from because he was sent to jail. She had to become a stripper to make ends meet, and the only person she called her sister had been kidnapped. Now she had to leave her son in the care of strangers. How hard could life be for a young lady like her?

He had put Jade in Candace's show, and that had made him realize that he would wish for Jade to be treated better than the way he was treating Candace. He needed to do better.

"You don't have to worry about anything else. Just ensure you take care of yourself and come back safely. I will make sure you and Jamal are well taken care of when you return," Tom promised, and Candace smiled.

"Thank you. I will return the phone to Jade now," Candace said before giving the phone to Jade.

"How are things going over there? How is Lucy?"

"She is fine. You are both okay, right?" Tom asked with concern, as Jade tried to connect her phone to the car's Bluetooth speaker so she could drive comfortably.

"Sure. Have you seen Harry today?" Jade asked curiously.

"Yeah. Lucy and I left his apartment a while ago. Have you spoken with him again?" Tom asked as he picked the remote and turned on the television so that Jamal could watch a cartoon while he spoke with Jade.

"No. How was he when you saw him? And how is his father's health?"

"Although he is very worried about his father, he's fine. I didn't get to see his dad because he was asleep," Tom said, and looked down at his hand which was resting on his thigh when Jamal placed his hand in his.

"Any progress on Anita's issue? And what about Lucy's twin? How is he handling everything? Also, have you heard from Bryan and mom? Do you know if they've met Simon yet?" Jade asked curiously, and Tom rolled his eyes.

"How many questions do you expect me to answer at the same time? How about we have a conference call instead?" Tom suggested, thinking that it was better he told everyone about the progress on Anita's issue once and for all since he was tired of repeating the story.

"Yes. That's a good idea. I'm driving right now. I'll call you and the others when I get to the hotel," Jade said, and just as she wanted to end the call she remembered her conversation with Aurora.

"Tom?" She called before he could hang up.

"Yeah?" Tom asked as he turned to look at Samantha who had just walked in to inform him that the table was set for dinner.

"Did Harry tell you that he asked Aurora to accompany him to the anniversary dinner as his partner?" Jade asked, and Tom who had been about to stand up, paused.

"Aurora?" Tom asked, wondering who that was.

"The lady I told you about," Jade reminded him.

"The one you matchmade with Harry?" Tom asked, and Jade gritted her teeth, while Candace listened to the conversation between the siblings with interest.

"Yes, that one. Do you think I should be worried? She is visiting him next week," Jade said, and Tom's brows shot up.

"Harry didn't mention anything about that to me. When did she tell you this? Or was it Harry who told you about it?" Tom asked with a slight frown, as he wondered what Harry was up to.

"No. Aurora did. I left her spa a while ago. So, Harry didn't mention anything to you about her or being interested in someone?" Jade asked, and Tom's eyes narrowed as he recalled what Harry had said the previous evening about having a date, and about surprising them soon.

"Tom?"

"Well, he did mention something about having a date last night during dinner, but we didn't take it too seriously," Tom said apologetically, and Jade's heart skipped a beat.

"He did? What exactly did he say?" Jade asked, beginning to really feel worried now.

"He didn't give any details. He only told us he had a date and would surprise us soon. I thought he was joking. I'm sorry, Jady. I'll find out more about it, and let you know if he's serious, okay?" Tom said, feeling sorry for his sister.

"Maybe I should have listened to you," Jade murmured to herself sadly, thinking that Harry had probably changed his mind about her because she had tried to talk dirty with him the previous day. Maybe she had taken things too far.

"Why? Did you do or say anything to him?" Tom asked curiously.

There was no way she could tell Tom that she had tried talking dirty with his best friend over the phone, or that she had directly told him that she wanted to live rent-free in his head. Not after he had warned her to let Harry chase her, and not to throw herself at him.

"Nevermind. I will give you and the others a call when I get home. Give my love to Lucy," Jade said before hanging up.

Once she did, she let out a sigh as she looked ahead of her. It didn't bother her that she was making such a phone call in front of Candace. The only thing that bothered her at that moment was that she was at the verge of losing Harry and she didn't know what to do about it. Should she call him or not?

"I guess that answers my question," Candace said thoughtfully, and Jade turned to spare her a glance.

"What question?"

"I was going to ask if your brother was aware of your feelings for his best friend and if he would be okay with it," Candace said, and Jade's lips curved in a smile despite her sadness.

"Tom loves Harry like a brother, and Harry is a great guy so there's no reason for him to disapprove. Even my mom approves of my feelings for him," Jade said with a small smile.

"I don't suppose Harry knows that you like him?" Candace asked curiously.

"I'm not sure..."

"You are not sure? You are in love with him, you didn't tell him how you feel and then you went on to hook him up with another lady and now you're feeling sad about it?"

"Is it just me, or was there a silent 'Are you crazy?' at the end of your question?" Jade asked, trying to find humor in the situation.

Candace's lips twitched with amusement, "I thought you would miss that."

"I'm a lawyer. Nothing gets past me," Jade said, and Candace snorted.

"The man you love is about to get past you literally," Candace muttered dryly, and Jade tittered with laughter.

"Remind me again, why are we not friends?" Jade asked, loving Candace's sense of humor.

"Because we were on opposite sides of the law when we met?" Candace asked, and Jade giggled.

"Well, I hooked him up with Aurora before I realized that I was interested in him. And now you can see their progress for yourself," Jade said with a sigh, and Candace shook her head.

"Even your own feelings got past you, yet you said nothing gets past you," Candace said with a roll of her eyes.

"Can you just let that line go?" Jade asked with a giggle, glad that Candace was trying to make light of the situation. She was feeling sad enough already.

"What do you plan to do? Give up?"

"Giving up is not an option."

"Good. I never figured you for the type to give up. Do you think he likes you? Is he attracted to you?" Candace asked, wanting to know how she could be of help.

"I don't know. I like to believe so. My mom and brothers says he likes me, and Sonia also believes that Harry is interested in me but he has never made any move. Not even when we stayed alone for a couple of days."

"You were alone with him? Why didn't you tell him how you feel?" Candace suggested.

"I'm not sure telling him how I feel is the wise thing to do," Jade said, and Candace looked at her incredulously.

"It's okay for everyone else to know of your feelings for him apart from him? I never thought you were a coward," Candace said, and Jade pursed her lips.

"That's not it."

"Then what is it?" Candace asked with a slightly raised brow.

"Harry is not that kind of person. He is old-fashioned," she said with a shrug.

"So what if he is old-fashioned? Who said because he is old-fashioned you can't directly let him know you like him? You never can tell, maybe that's all he's been waiting for," Candace said and Jade sighed.

She couldn't believe the number of advisers she had on just this issue. There was Tom, Sonia, and now Candace. Whose advise was she supposed to take?

"Have you ever tried to seduce him?" Candace asked, and Jade's eyes widened in surprise.

"I just told you the man is old-fashioned and you're asking if I've tried to seduce him? Harry is not that kind of man. Besides, he was always uncomfortable the few times I wore skimpy or revealing clothes around him. He doesn't like me dressing that way around him," Jade said, and Candace smiled.

"I think he is attracted to you. And I think you should tell him how you feel."

"Tom says I shouldn't."

"Do you always do what you're told?" Candace asked with a slightly raised brow.

"Not always. Only when it's important."

"Then trust me, and tell him how you feel. You have nothing to lose if he doesn't feel the same way," Candace said, but Jade shook her head.

"I've got a lot to lose. My self-respect, my friendship with him, and then there is that Aurora thing. I would die of embarrassment. No, I can't."

Chapter 398: New Friendship

"Okay. So you won't tell him how you feel about him, and you won't give up. So what's your big plan? I'm sure you have one, right?" Candace asked, and Jade eyed her with displeasure.

"I never knew you to be this sarcastic," Jade said, and Candace shrugged.

"I guess it's safe to say it got past you," Candace said with a straight face, and Jade laughed softly.

"So? What's the big plan?" Candace asked once again.

"I haven't come up with any yet. I just might sabotage their date," Jade said with a shrug.

"Just how many dates do you plan on sabotaging? I don't see your spa friend giving up just because of a few hiccups in their date plans. And just so you know, if you keep being this passive you just might be walking down the aisle with Harry but not as his wife, as his wife's maid of honor," Candace said as Jade pulled into the parking lot of the hotel.

"For someone who is not in talking terms with her boyfriend, you sure do know how to give relationship advice," Jade said dryly as she turned off the car.

"Matt is not my boyfriend..."

"I never even mentioned his name," Jade cut in with a shrug.

"You didn't need to. Unlike you I don't skirt around issues. I confront them head on," Candace fired back as they both unbuckled their seatbelt.

"Touché. I'm hungry, let's go in," Jade said as she got out of the car, and Candace did the same.

"Is that you trying to avoid the subject?" Candace asked as they both walked into the hotel, and Jade glanced at her curiously.

"No. This is just me wondering why you are so interested in the subject," Jade said, and Candace shrugged.

"It's not the subject I'm interested in. It's you I'm interested in. You have been nice to me and your family has been very accommodating. So the least I can do to pay you back is to help you secure the man you love if he is as great as you've painted him," Candace said as they headed for the elevator.

"So if Matt isn't your boyfriend, what is he to you?" Jade asked, and Candace turned to her with a slightly raised brow.

"Why are you bringing Matt into this?"

"I have to understand the dynamics of your own love life before I take any relationship advice from you. Tom is in a good relationship with Lucy, and so is Sonia with Bryan. I can trust their experience in that field," Jade said reasonably as they walked into the elevator, and Candace turned to her with an unreadable expression.

"Of course, you should take their advice. It wouldn't make sense for a sensible lawyer like you to accept a relationship advice from a stripper like me who was in a toxic relationship with one of the senior members of a drug cartel, and is even considering murdering him just to be rid of him," Candace said with a straight face.

"I'm sorry. That wasn't what I meant," Jade said with a slight frown as she pressed the button for their floor.

"I know you wouldn't say something like that to me. So I'm trying to blackmail you emotionally into listening to me. Did it work?" Candace asked, flashing Jade a smile that made her laugh.

"It almost did. On a serious note, what's up with you and Matt? You know he really likes you, right? And don't deny it, I know you like him too," Jade said, wanting to be sure that Candace felt the same way about Matt, since she had placed a call across to him already, and she didn't want Candace to be mad at her if or when Matt shows up. She wasn't sure yet if Matt was going to show up since she had only told him about Candace's crazy plan and where they were. If he loved her, she expected him to try to stop her.

"He is a nice guy, so it's hard not to like him. Apart from the fact that I'm older than him, I'm not necessarily sure we are right for each other. Or maybe it's just wrong timing. Right now I'm worried about Jero and how to take care of him once and for all. I'm also worried about Andy, who I don't have the least idea where she is at this moment, I'm concerned about I and Jamal's future. If I don't go back to stripping what can I do to earn me enough money? That's the only way I've been able to afford taking care of Jamal and I. My whole life is a mess right now, whereas his life is perfect. If I get involved with him, people would want to dig into myself and find out stuff about me, and you know how it is. There is nothing pleasant about my life that should be on the news. I don't want Jamal finding out about me that way either. Do you think I'm crazy for wanting to just be friends with him?" Candace asked as they walked out of the elevator and headed for their suite.

Jade sighed, "I think you're doing too much worrying and not living enough," Jade said, as she unlocked the door, and they both walked into the suite and shut the door behind them.

"If you were in my shoes you'd worry even more," Candace assured her as they both took off their shoes.

"Okay, let's take everything you have said one at a time. I know you said you don't want us to talk about Jero again and you don't want me to try to talk you out of your plans, but just give me listening ears for five minutes, okay? I'm not talking to you as a lawyer trying to apprehend Jero now, but as your friend. I like to believe that we are friends or at least on our way to being friends," Jade said as they sat on the couch instead of heading to their bedrooms.

"Fine," Candace said with a sigh

Jade looked at Candace with a serious expression, "I noticed that all the worries you expressed are centered around Andy and Jamal. Imagine Andy coming back to meet you, only to hear that you're in jail for murdering Jero? Have you considered how Andy would feel if she finds out about your plan?"

Jade continued without waiting for her to respond, "You claim you are worried about Jamal finding out you were a stripper, but you haven't given any thoughts to how he will feel when he finds out his father was involved in drug crimes and his stripper mother went to jail for murdering his father, have you? Let's assume that Tom and Lucy adopts him as you wanted them to, do you think his life will be better or remain the same after he learns of your so-called sacrifice for him? Are you really willing to throw your whole life away because you made the mistake of getting involved with Jero? I like to believe that you are smarter than that," Jade said, and paused for her words to sink in.

"Honestly, I think your plan is stupid. I promised you before, and I'm repeating it, I will make sure Jero gets a death sentence so that you never have to worry about him again. I have evidence of the private investigator he murdered, and that is enough to make him pay. All I'm asking is that you don't make any plans that will ruin all our joint efforts. I'm not saying this as a lawyer. I'm telling you this as your friend," Jade said as she reached for Candace's hand, and rubbed it reassuringly.

"Jade..."

"It's not that complicated. You can reconsider your stance on a relationship with Matt after we've gotten Jero out of the way," Jade interjected.

"Getting Jero out of the way isn't all I mentioned. Matt is a celebrity and I'm a..."

"Everyone has a past, Candace. You did all you needed to do to get to where you are now. I don't think there is anything to be ashamed of. Did Matt say anything about it to make you feel uncomfortable about being a stripper?"

"No, he didn't. And this is not about Matt..."

"You think Jamal would love or respect you less because you stripped to take care of his bills? How are you different from those celebrities, Cardi B and the likes who expose so much skin in their musical videos and even on stage to entertain their fans?" Jade asked, and Candace sighed.

"It's all entertainment. Whether you're dancing naked in the club for a private audience or you're doing it on the stage for the public. I don't think they're better than you, so there's no reason for you to be ashamed," Jade finished, and Candace took a deep breath.

"I still have to worry about Andy. You don't expect me to move on with my life when I don't even know where she is or how she is doing."

"That's you making up silly excuses. I'm sure if Andy shows up today you'll still find something else to worry about. To think you called me a coward when you're actually the coward who is scared of being happy," Jade said with a shake of her head.

"I'm not scared of being happy," Candace denied.

"Yes, you are. And you're too scared to admit it to yourself. You don't have to go back to stripping. Jamal is part of the family already, and so are you. If anything from your past comes up, we will be there to take care of it," Jade promised, and Candace eyed her skeptically.

"We seem to be trading advice tonight. I will consider all you have said if you give Harry a call and tell him how you feel," Candace said, and Jade giggled.

"Why are we back to that?"

"Because that is what started this whole conversation in the first place."

"Okay, how about we do it this way. After I've taken care of this case and ensured that Jero gets a death sentence, I will confess my feelings to Harry and at the same time you accept Matt?"

"Jade..."

"Yes. What's the worse that can happen? Let's do it together. Let's prove to each other that we are not cowards," Jade said enthusiastically.

"And what happens if things progress more between Harry and your spa friend before then?" Candace asked, and Jade narrowed her eyes thoughtfully.

"I will take my chances. For now I need to focus on this case. I can't afford to get distracted," Jade said with resolve, and Candace sighed.

"If you say so," Candace said as she stood up.

Jade heaved a sigh, "I feel like getting wasted tonight. When last did you get wasted?" She asked as she picked up her handbag and shoes.

"I have a kid to take care of. I haven't gotten wasted for a moment since I had Jamal," Candace said, and Jade shrieked in disbelief.

"That is horrifyingly unimaginable! Tell you what, let's go clubbing tomorrow night. And you are not permitted to say no! Consider this an order from your friend and senior colleague. There is no Jamal here to worry about, so we can both get completely wasted. It will be just two sinfully beautiful and intelligent single women having fun. I would have said let's get wasted tonight, but I need to be clear headed when they call to tell me about the arrest," Jade said, and Candace smiled. She couldn't remember ever having such a lengthy girly conversation with anyone else apart from Andy. She was even more surprised by the rate at which she was getting along with Jade.

"Alright. Let's do that tomorrow."

"Goodnight then. I have a family conference call to attend to," Jade said with a wave as she headed for her bedroom.

Thinking about family, Jade's thoughts drifted to what Candace had said about being abandoned by a man that had claimed to be her uncle. There was something fishy about the story. If the man had enough money to pay the orphanage home, why didn't he get a nurse and nanny to take care of his brother's child? Perhaps she should look into it for Candace? It would be nice if she found her family, especially if she was from a well to do family.

She was sure either Tom or Harry could look into it for her. All she needed was to find a way to get more information from Candace about the orphanage where she had been raised. Jade smiled at the thought.

Chapter 399: Finding A Husband

"Can you believe that he unfollowed me?" Miley asked Amy in disbelief as she glanced through her list of Instagram followers for the second time trying to confirm what she already knew.

"Who?" Amy asked as she put down her laptop and moved closer to Miley so that she could see

who or what Miley was talking about. "Who else? Lucas, of course. He followed me and then he unfollowed me," Miley complained with a pout, and Amy raised a brow. 0 "So? Why does that bother you? He left. He said he is not interested in being friends with you and you showed him the door. So it shouldn't matter whether or not he's following you unless of course you are still half expecting him to knock on the door," Amy said with a knowing smile. "He's mean. I can't believe he really left just like that and did not come back," Miley said with a sad sigh. "We don't have the time to worry about Dr. Mottle right now. Let's focus on finding you a husband," Amy said, trying to help Miley focus on the task at hand.

"Maybe I should call him?" Miley asked, and Amy looked at her skeptically. "No. Don't. Let him be," Amy said as she picked up her laptop and brought it to Miley so she would look at the 'Husband For Hire' ad displayed on the screen, "What do you think?"

"I think I should call him. At least to find out if he's okay," Miley said as she pushed the laptop away from her. "Are you sure you're interested in getting a husband? Or is Lucas the man you have in mind? You've been poring over his pictures all day, and have given little or no attention to all I've been trying to put in place for our husband hunt," Amy said, and Miley's brows pulled together. "It's difficult to focus on anything when you're worried about someone," Miley pointed out "He already advised you to worry about yourself, and I think you should do that. He can take care of himself so stop worrying your head about him," Amy said with disapproval. "It's not like I like to just sit here spending what precious little time I have left worrying about a stranger I met barely seventy-two hours ago, but I can't help being worried about him," Miley said as she looked at Amy with puppy eyes, and Amy sighed. "Fine. Call him and let's move on," Amy said, jerking her head towards Miley's phone. "How about your help me get his phone number so I can call him?" Miley asked with an embarrassed smile, and Amy raised a brow. 0 "What? You didn't have his number this whole time and you were talking about giving him a call?" Amy asked in disbelief. Miley shrugged, "I was too busy enjoying his company so it didn't occur to me to take his number. You said you would do anything for me, right? I want to find out how he's doing and if he got home safely. Just to be sure he's not sitting alone in a bar drinking himself to stupor. Please?" She asked, batting her lashes at Amy. 0 "How am I supposed to get his number?" Amy asked, not the least bit pleased about this.

"His twin sister is your boss, remember? You can tell her your dying friend wants her cute brother's number," Miley suggested, and Amy eyed her in annoyance.

"Can you stop throwing that word around? It's bad enough to know that you're ill, I don't need to be reminded that of it all the time," Amy hissed at her. 0

"Fine. I'm sorry. Just get me his number, please? "Fine. Let me see what I can do," Amy said as she picked up her phone and dialed Lucy's line and placed the call on speaker. Lucy who was hurrying down the Lairs to join Tom and Jamal at the dining, paused midstairs when her phone started to ring, and she received the call when she saw that it was from Amy. "Hey! How are you doing? I was going to call you tomorrow," Lucy greeted as she slowly walked down the stairs. Amy cleared her throat, as she looked at Miley, "I'm sorry to call you by this time. I hope I'm not interrupting anything?" Amy asked politely. "Not at all. Is everything okay? How is your friend doing? Have you seen her yet?" Lucy asked, and Miley smiled when she heard the concern in Lucy's voice. Seeing Amy's reluctance to speak, Miley snatched the phone from her, "Hello, Lucy! This is Miley, Amy's ill friend," Miley said before Amy could stop her. "Oh! Hello!" Lucy greeted uncertainly, confused as to why she was speaking with Amy's best friend. "First of all I want to thank you for letting Amy leave to spend time with me. That was so kind of you, and it means so much to me," Miley said, and Lucy smiled sadly. She sounded like a really nice person. "It's the least I could do.

I'm sorry about your health," Lucy said apologetically. "Thank you. I was wondering if I could get Lucas' phone number from you?" Miley asked, and Lucy's brows creased as she stopped at the foot of the stairs.

"Lucas?" "Yes. Your twin brother," Miley affirmed. "You know Lucas? Is he your doctor?" Lucy asked, trying to understand the connection.

"Not exactly. Perhaps he would have been if he didn't resign from his job. I'd really like to speak with him. Or you can send my phone number to him and ask him to give me a call that it's important," Miley said, and Lucy raised a brow.

She seemed to know a lot about him. How close was she to Lucas? Probably not close enough since she didn't have his number, but from the way she sounded Lucy could tell that her interest wasn't solely concerning doctor to patient relationship, else Amy wouldn't be so silent. "He is on his way to Ludus right now, so I can't reach him until morning. I will deliver your message to him when I speak with him," Lucy said, and Miley's brows pulled together. "Ludus?" Miley said thoughtfully, and Amy shook her head as she took the phone from her. "I'm sorry for the inconvenience, Director Perry. She doesn't mean any harm. She is friends with your brother and they kind of parted on not-too-good terms earlier, and she is worried about him..." "You're blabbing, Amy," Miley cut in with a shake of her head. "Don't worry about it. I will send her message across to Lucas. I will text you Lucas' number when I've informed him about it," Lucy assured Amy before hanging up. "Now that we have gotten that out of the way, I'm going to send out the ad now, so that people can start applying, and we can start interviewing prospective candidates," Amy said, and raised a brow when Miley rose up from the couch.

"Why aren't you saying anything? And where are you going?" Amy asked curiously.

"Don't send out the ad yet. I want to meet with Lucas one more time so I can make up my mind," Miley said with a determined look in her eyes. 0

"Make up your mind on what?" "On whether or not I want Lucas. I'm not comfortable with the idea of meeting random strangers, and I don't think meeting him was a coincidence..."0

"Miley! He's not even interested in being friends with you, yet you want to ask him to marry you?" Amy asked as though she had lost her mind. "We should at least try. If he turns me down, we will find another way. Let's book the next available flight to Ludus while we get our stuff ready," Miley said as she headed for the bedroom.

"But I only just got here from Ludus last night. I haven't even unpacked my bag yet you want me to move again," Amy complained as she followed her. "It's a good thing you haven't unpacked your bags yet. If Lucas turns us down, we can just stay back in Ludus and find us a husband," Miley said as she walked over to her closet and started taking out some clothes. Away from there, after having dinner with Jamal, Tom and Lucy stayed back in the Den to watch a show on Nickelodeon with him while he sat down between them with his head resting on Lucy's body. Even though their eyes were fixed on the television, their minds were far from there as they both thought about Aaron and tried to figure out if both Saras were the same people. Who Sara could be and what she wanted from Aaron.

After some time, Tom sighed, and turned to Lucy, "Do you have any plans for the weekend?"

"Have I told you I called Priscilla about accepting their offer today? I'll be going to sign the contract with them on Saturday," Lucy informed Tom, and he raised a brow.

"How long would that take? Tom asked, and Lucy shrugged. "I can't tell. We might need to talk about my work schedule and all of that. Why?" Lucy asked curiously. "I already have plans for you this weekend," Tom said, and Lucy raised a brow. "What sort of plans?" "Well, for one I realized that we've never gone on a date so I was going to take you out for dinner," Tom said, and Lucy's brows

pulled together as she thought about it. "I went on one with you as the CEO," she reminded him. "That wasn't a date." "We went to the club together the other night," she pointed out with a grin, and Tom chuckled at the memory. "That wasn't a date either. What I mean is that we haven't been out together on an official date as a couple," Tom said, and Lucy nodded. "True. But since it's a dinner date your plan isn't affected. My meeting with them is by noon." "I was going to take you to the spa and salon for a makeover and then we go out together for dinner," Tom said, and Jamal whose eyes had been fixed on the TV looked from one adult to the other when he heard dinner.

"We just had dinner," he reminded them, and Lucy smiled as she patted his hair softly. "Yes, we just had dinner, but we are not talking about tonight," Lucy corrected. "Can I come too?" Jamal asked, and Tom shook his head. "Nope. You can't. I will take you out with me during the day when Lucy is busy, but at night I want Lucy to myself," Tom said, and Jamal turned to him. "Why?" "Because she is my girlfriend," Tom said reasonably. "So I can have her to myself too if she is my girlfriend?" Jamal asked, and Lucy laughed out loud while Tom eyed him. "Why would you want to have her to yourself?" "Because I like her," Jamal said, and this time Tom scowled at him.

"She can't be your girlfriend because she is mine already. And if you keep this up I'm going to..." The rest of Tom's threat trailed off when his phone started ringing and he glared at Jamal before reaching for the phone which was on the table.

"This discussion is not over yet," Tom promised when he saw that it was a Skype call from Jade. "It's Jade. I'll be in the study," Tom told Lucy before walking away to receive the call, leaving Lucy and Jamal who were both laughing. "Tommy, I haven't added Bryan yet, I wanted to first ask you for a favor," Jade pleaded immediately Tom received the call, and he raised a brow.

"You're asking for a lot of favors lately. What is it this time?" Tom asked as he went to sit behind his desk.

"I was speaking with Candace about how she ended up at the orphanage and there is something suspicious about the story," Jade said, and went on to tell Tom what Candace had told her.

"Do you think you could look into it, or should I ask Harry for help?" Jade asked, and Tom shook his head.

"No, don't bother Harry. He has enough on his mind already. Find out the name of the orphanage home and I'll look into it myself," Tom assured her. "Thanks. I knew I could count on you. I'll call Bryan now," Jade said before dialing Bryan's line to add him to the call..

Chapter 400 I Can't

After having his dinner, Harry kept himself busy by watching some shows on the television so he wouldn't worry about his father or be tempted to go pick up his phone and find out who that Sara lady was and what she wanted from his father.

Trying to distract himself from that line of thought, his thoughts drifted to Jade and he glanced at the wall clock. The time was past nine already, so he knew that she must have met Aurora by now, and Aurora would have delivered his message to her, so why hadn't she called yet?

Or did Aurora forget to deliver his message? He wondered as he glanced at his phone with a frown contemplating whether or not to call her or Aurora to find out the outcome of their discussion.

If he called her what would he say was his reason for calling? Perhaps he could say he wanted to find out how the case was going and if Jero had led them to the cartel yet. Harry shook his head. That would be too early. He needed to wait some more.

Seeing as he was unable to focus on the television show because he was restless, Harry stood up and walked over to the dining. The best way to distract himself was to get engrossed in work.

He opened his laptop and started going through the minute of Tom's meeting with the hotel and resort managers which his secretary had emailed to him.

Harry tried to give the documents on his screen his full attention even though his gaze drifted to his phone from time to time. After working for about an hour, Harry raised his head when his phone started ringing, and he quickly grabbed it when he saw that it was Aurora. He waited for a second and took a deep breath before receiving the call.

"Hey!" He greeted casually, not wanting to sound too excited.

"I'm sorry I'm calling again. I hope I'm not disturbing your sleep or work?" Aurora asked apologetically.

"Not at all. It's fine. Is there a problem?" Harry asked, eager to know what she had called to say.

"Not at all. Jade left here a while ago. Remember I told you I was expecting Jade?" Aurora asked, and Harry grinned.

"Yeah, I think I vaguely remember you mentioned something like that. Why?" Harry asked innocently.

"Well, I told her about the t-shirt you wanted me to get from the suite, but she said she didn't see any. She said she had them clean the suite when she moved in, and the closet was empty," Aurora said, and Harry narrowed his eyes.

"She said the closet was empty?" Harry asked, wondering what Jade was up to. They both knew that she had seen the shirt since she had told him she was wearing his shirt without any undies, so why did she lie?

"Yes. If you show me a picture of the t-shirt I could get you a new one," Aurora suggested.

"That won't be necessary. I can arrange for it myself, so please don't bother about it and just show up as planned," Harry rushed to assure her.

"Alright then. I can't wait to see you," Aurora said, and Harry smiled.

"Do you have a place in mind you'd want us to go?" Harry asked, and Aurora narrowed her eyes thoughtfully.

"I'll think about it and let you know tomorrow," Aurora said, and Harry nodded..

"That's fine. By the way, did you tell her about our date?" Harry asked, and Aurora's brows pulled together.

"Jade? I did. Why? Was I not supposed to? I figured I could tell her about it since you asked me to get your t-shirt from her," Aurora explained.

"It's not a problem. I was just asking to know. She must have been excited to know that the two people she set up together are going on a date," Harry said, as Aurora giggled.

"She seemed more surprised than excited. It almost seemed like she didn't believe you were capable of being involved with a lady," Aurora said with a grin.

"Really?" Harry asked with a chuckle.

"Yeah. Well, I'm glad you're doing this with me..."

Doing what with her? Harry mused, hoping she wasn't thinking they were in a relationship because he asked her to accompany him to the anniversary dinner.

"Aurora?" Harry cut in before she could finish.

"Yeah?"

"Don't get your hopes up. I'd hate to disappoint you..."

Aurora cut in with a giggle, "You can't disappoint me even if you tried" she assured him.

"I hope so. Why don't we continue tomorrow? I need to get busy now," Harry said as he stood up when he noticed his father standing in the living room looking at him.

"Alright. Talk to you tomorrow, goodnight," Aurora said before hanging up.

"You're up. How do you feel?" Harry asked as he went to meet his father.

"Very drowsy. I feel weak. It took a while before I could get off the bed," Aaron complained.

"It's because of the sleeping pills. Lucy and Tom were here earlier to see you. They said they will visit again," Harry said, and Aaron gave him a nod.

He half expected Harry to quiz him about Sara and ask him why he had overreacted earlier, but it seemed like Harry didn't want to talk about. Or maybe not yet.

"Who were you speaking with just now?" Aaron asked curiously.

"That was the lady I told you about. She's visiting next week and we are going on a date," Harry said as he looked his father over, "Why don't you have a seat, so I can get you something to eat?" Harry suggested, and Aaron did as he was told.

"Do you love her?" Aaron asked as Harry walked over to the kitchen.

"No. But she's decent and fun," Harry called back, while Aaron watched him move around the kitchen.

"What about Jade?" Aaron asked curiously.

"Dad, I already told you to forget about what I told you in the past," Harry said calmly. He was too relieved and thankful that his father was feeling better to be upset by his question.

"But I think she is interested in you as you are in her," Aaron said, and as expected Harry walked out of the kitchen to face his father.

"Why do you think so? Have you met or spoken with her?" Harry asked, and Aaron gave him a nod.

"Yeah. I was here when she came to get her stuff. I asked her not to let you know she saw me since I wanted it to be a surprise," Aaron said, and Harry raised a brow.

"What did you both talk about?"

"I can't tell you that. It's between her and me. Don't waste your time with someone else when you're in love with another," Aaron advised.

"Dad, what do you want? Do you want me to be in a relationship or is it Jade you want?" Harry asked dryly.

"I want you to be happy. I want you to have a happy family. I didn't have that, I want that for you. And I think Jade will make you happy. Having Jade, you have a whole new family. The Hanks, Lucy, and everyone else," Aaron said with a shrug.

"They are family to me already. I don't need to be involved with Jade to get them. If I get together with Aurora I get an even bigger family. I have the Hanks, and Aurora's family. I could establish my own community," Harry said with a grin, and Aaron chuckled.

"I'm serious," Aaron said, and Harry gave him a nod.

"I'm still trying to figure out whatever is between me and Jade. I'm not in a hurry, you shouldn't be too if my happiness is what you truly want. Don't worry about anything and just trust me, dad," Harry said as he looked into Aaron's eyes, and Aaron sighed before giving him a nod.

"Take all the time you need," Aaron said, and Harry smiled at him.

Harry's happiness was more important to him than anything else in the world. He was going to find a way to tell Harry the truth, but not now. He needed Harry to be settled in a relationship first.

Until then he was going to find a way to meet with Sara and find out exactly what she wanted from Harry. If it was money for her treatment, he would give her any amount she needed so she would disappear or at least give him some more time before telling Harry the truth.

"What are you doing here?" Rebekah asked when she walked into her house and saw her eldest daughter, Bernice, seated in the living room watching television while sipping from a glass of juice.

Bernice stood up immediately she heard her mother's voice, "Where are you coming from by this time of the night? I've been waiting all evening. I called but it wasn't connecting," Bernice said, and Rebekah eyed her with disapproval.

She was in a foul mood, and this wasn't the way she had planned on spending the rest of her night. She had been out with Tiffany's father-in-law and had turned off her phone because Adam had kept calling and disturbing her. And Tiffany's father-in-law had left her unsatisfied after he rushed off to attend to family business, so she had been planning on coming home to finish the work with her vibrator or inviting one of her young lovers.

"Why are you waiting for me by this time in MY house when you should be in yours?" Rebekah asked trying to control her temper.

"I moved out. I got into a fight with Adam and he hit me. I can't stay married to him anymore. I would have brought the kids with me but he insisted that I don't take them with me so..."

"You can't," Rebekah cut in before Bernice could finish, and she looked at her mother with a confused frown.

"I can't leave the kids with him?" Bernice asked, and Rebekah glared at her.

"You can't stay here. Go back home to your husband now!" Rebekah snapped at her.

"Did you hear a word of what I said? Adam hit me! He put his hands on me. I can't remain married to him! I can't do it!" Bernice yelled back at her mother in frustration.

"You probably did something that made him do that to you. I told you before, you nag a lot and men don't like that. Also, you are always snooping around and interfering in his business, no man wants that. The young man takes care of you and the kids, what more do you need? If you want peace in your home, you need to learn to behave yourself. Now go get your stuff and go back home this minute. You will apologize to Adam until he accepts you back. I will give him a call," Rebekah said as she walked past Bernice and headed for the stairs.

"I'm not leaving. My marriage with Adam is over! It's not all about money, mom!"

"Mother!" Rebekah corrected icily as she turned to glare at her calcitrant daughter, "And you're wrong about that. It is all about Money! Without money you're nobody! Without money you're nothing. You can live without love, but you can never live without money!"

"What's the point of having it when I'm depressed? I'm not happy! I'm feeling less confident about myself with each passing day! I don't want to continue with this marriage anymore. He doesn't love me. He never has, and he obviously never will. I need to be loved," Bernice cried, while Rebekah just looked at her with disapproval.

"Love? You want love? Fine. Go for it. But I won't let you do that from under my roof. Go get your stuff and get out of my house before I get back here," Rebekah spat out as she started walking up the stairs.

"Why are you doing this? Why can't you be more understanding? Adam took my car and cards. I have no where else to go. Why can't I stay here with you?" Bernice asked as she followed her mother.

Rebekah paused and turned to her once again, her eyes blazing with rage, "I'm so disappointed in you, Bernice. You are my eldest daughter and unfortunately the most foolish amongst your sisters. I don't associate myself with failures. Don't delude yourself into thinking I will open my arms to welcome you here. Like I cut off your father, I will cut you off too, and you will be an example to any of your sisters that dares to go against me. Don't make me ask the staff to throw you out. Leave!" Rebekah ordered quietly before walking away to her bedroom, while Bernice stood by the stairs and tears of disbelief dropped from her eyes as she watched her mother disappear from her sight.

Knowing her mother, Bernice had no doubt that she would ask the staff to throw out her stuff if she didn't leave herself, so she went to her bedroom and picked up her luggage bags. As she left the house, she dialed Tiffany's number.

"Hey, Benny!" Tiffany greeted immediately after she received the call.

"Can I come over to your house tonight?" Bernice asked with a snuffle.

Hearing her snuffle, Tiffany who had a facial mask on her face sat up immediately, "Are you alright? Is everything okay?" She asked with concern.

"Not exactly. I just need a place to sleep and someone to talk to," Bernice said in a shaky voice.

"Sure. You can come over."

"I don't have any money on me. Can you pay the cab when I get there?" Bernice asked, surprising Tiffany even more.

"You don't have any money on you? You know what? Come over. I'll ask one of the housekeepers to wait outside with some money for the cab. I'll be waiting," Tiffany said, and Bernice thanked her before hanging up.