

Wild Night 811

Chapter 811 We All Have Masks

While Lucy and Lucas were busy conversing, Tom was also busy with Tyler at the balcony.

Tom had a frown on his face as he looked at Tyler, "So, you're saying she visited the clinic three times a week, just to talk to your colleague?"

"Yeah, that's what he said when I asked why she was always visiting him," Tyler confirmed, his brow furrowed in response to Tom's skeptical expression. "Apparently, they were close family friends."

Tom's skepticism intensified. "Close family friends? Did he specify if they were from her side or her husband's? And what kind of conversations would warrant three visits a week? Is he a therapist?"

"No, I didn't ask the details of their friendship or conversations. And no, he isn't a therapist," Tyler said, wondering why Tom was asking all that question.

"Didn't you ever suspect anything?" Tom asked and Tyler hesitated, considering the implications of Tom's questions.

"Are you thinking that maybe they were not just chatting?" Tyler asked when he realized where Tom was going with his questions.

"Didn't it cross your mind even once that there might be more to the visits?" Tom asked and Tyler shook his head.

"Dr Evans would never do such a thing. He loves his wife too much to ever want to have an affair," Tyler said and Tom scowled.

"Is that the best you can think of?" Tom asked in disbelief. "Did you ever notice anything unusual about Mia before or after these visits? Anything at all?" Tom asked again, and this time Tyler's heart skipped a beat.

He hadn't wanted to believe that Sonia was right about the possibility of Mia being on the run from her abusive husband, but now, doubt gnawed at him.

If that was true as Tom's question was making him believe, he didn't want to imagine that Mia had been visiting the hospital that often just to receive treatments, or that Dr Evans had been aware of the fact that she was being abused but had done nothing to help her.

"There was one time I saw her wince as though she were in pain when settling into a seat in his office. But I dismissed it as a harmless ache," he said and Tom nodded.

They were getting somewhere now, Tom thought, "So, do you think it's possible that your colleague was treating the wounds inflicted on her by her husband?" Tom asked and Tyler nodded hesitantly.

"It's possible," Tyler said and Tom sighed deeply.

"Can you tell me more about your colleague?" Tom asked and Tyler went on to tell him all he needed to know about Dr Evans.

Once they were done they returned to join Lucy and Lucas who were laughing over something Lucas had said.

"Do it, let's see how he reacts," Lucy whispered to Lucas just as Tom got to where they were seated.

"By the way, Tom, did Jade send you the pictures she captured of Lucy lying on Tyler's body?" Lucas asked, and Lucy stuck her tongue in her cheek as they watched Tom turn to Tyler.

"Is that true?"

"You heard Lucas. Lucy was lying on me not the other way around. I didn't initiate the contact," Tyler said defensively.

"Why did you let her lie on you?" Tom asked and Tyler looked from Tom to Lucy and Lucas incredulously.

"What do you mean why did I let her lie on me? I was sleeping and I woke up to her lying on my body and hugging me...."

"She hugged you? You hugged another guy?" Tom asked and turned to glare at Lucy who was grinning at him.

"It wasn't a big deal. Are you going to talk to Lucas or can we go up now? I'm exhausted," she said with a pout as she stretched, and Lucas chuckled when Tom's glare transformed into a concerned expression.

"Want me to carry you upstairs?" He asked in a soft voice and Tyler looked from Tom to Lucas who was grinning as he watched Tom and Lucy.

Lucy bobbed her head as she held out both hands to Tom like a baby, and Tom swept her off her feet before turning to Lucas, "I thought I could hangout with you tonight, but as you can see, she needs to go to bed, so let's hangout when next you come around. Make sure to leave Tyler where you found him and come alone," Tom said before taking her away, and Lucy winked at Lucas as they left.

"Is he really that crazy about her or is he putting up a show for my sake?" Tyler asked and Lucas chuckled.

"Does Tom look like he cares about anything other than Lucy? Why would he put up a show for your sake?" Lucas asked and Tyler smiled.

"Well then, I'm happy for Lucy. I don't think I could ever have given her that," Tyler said and Lucas nodded in agreement.

"Yeah. So, what did Tom want to talk about? Did he pay you off to stay away from Lucy for life?" Lucas asked and Tyler chuckled.

"That wouldn't have been such a bad idea," Tyler said and then sighed before going on to tell Lucas what they had discussed.

As Tom carried Lucy up the stairs, she grinned as she looked into his face, "Were you really mad that I hugged Tyler?" She asked and he shook his head.

"Not mad. I wasn't mad, but at the same time I don't like the idea of you being that close to any guy. Does that make sense to you?" He asked, and she nodded.

"Yep. I definitely wouldn't like it if a random girl from your childhood showed up and started hugging and throwing herself at you," Lucy said and Tom arched a brow.

"Then why did you do it then?" He asked and she smiled.

"Because I didn't think of it like this at the time. And also maybe because I trust myself enough to know that nothing would happen between us," Lucy said thoughtfully as she helped Tom open their bedroom door and he carried her in.

"But if the situation was reversed you wouldn't trust me enough?" He asked and she grinned.

"Well, I'm working on that," she said and laughed out loud when Tom threw her on the bed.

"Seriously?" He asked and she grinned.

"Of course, you know I trust you too. To an extent," she added with a giggle and Tom scowled.

"To an extent?" He asked as slowly as he advanced towards her on the bed with a challenging glint in his eyes and she laughed.

"Fully. How can I not trust you fully after all we've been through together in such a short while?" She asked looking into his face with laughing eyes and Tom lowered his lips to hers.

"I was wondering the same thing," he said as he kissed her slowly, causing her toes to tingle.

"I don't know if it's because I was away for two days, but kissing you is making me tingle all over," she said and Tom chuckled as he pulled away.

"Relax, while I will run us a bath," Tom said before walking away.

Lucy had a smile on her face as she stretched out on the bed and then reached for her handbag and took out her phone.

She raised a brow when she saw some missed calls from Sonia and a text asking her to call immediately she sees the text.

Lucy raised a brow as she dialed Sonia's line and almost immediately Sonia received the call.

"What are you doing with your phone when you should be busy honeymooning? And why are you still up till now?" Lucy asked the moment the call connected.

"Where have you been? And where did you leave your phone?" Sonia hissed irritably.

"I was hanging out with Lucas and Tyler downstairs. What's the problem?" Lucy asked with a worried frown and Sonia sighed.

"It's not exactly a problem per se. I need you to help me keep an eye on Mia while I'm away. Do you think you can do that? Maybe just check on her and hangout with her when you can. I'm worried about her, and since I won't be around to do it myself I was hoping you could help me, just until I get back," Sonia explained and Lucy nodded.

"Sure. Of course, I can. I will be stopping over there tomorrow to see Amy. I will check on her while I'm there," Lucy promised and Sonia smiled.

"Thank you so much," Sonia said, glad that Lucy did not bother asking her any questions she didn't have answers to.

"But you shouldn't worry too much. Lucas told me Jeff would be keeping an eye on her too," Lucy said wanting to put Sonia's mind at ease.

"Jeff? Lucas? What's going on?" Sonia asked in confusion.

"Tyler told me about what happened earlier when you asked us to excuse the three of you today. Harry knows about Mia and both Harry and Tom are helping her. Jeff is also involved," Lucy said and Sonia frowned wondering why it seemed like everyone else was aware of what was going on with Mia and she and Bryan were the last to know.

"Babe, the water is ready," Tom said as he stepped out of the bedroom and Lucy lifted a finger to let him know she needed a minute.

"I don't know the details, do you?" Sonia asked and Lucy shook her head.

"Not exactly. Everything I know, I heard from Lucas. But from what he said her husband was abusive and she has lots of scars on her back. Jeff told them that," Lucy said and Sonia's hand clenched in a fist.

"I will call you in the morning before we fly out," Sonia said and after that they hung up.

"Who was that?" Tom asked as Lucy as she kept her phone and got off the bed.

"Sonia. She wanted me to help her keep an eye on Mia until she gets back," Lucy explained as she took off the dress she was wearing.

"Did she tell you why?" Tom asked as he watched her and she shook her head.

"No. But I heard about it from Tyler and Lucas, and I think it's very nice that you and Harry want to help," Lucy said as she took the hand which Tom offered and followed him into the bathroom.

Lucy smiled when she saw what Tom had done. Lavender candles flickered, casting a gentle glow on the steam-filled room.

"It smells relaxing," she said and he smiled.

"I noticed some scented candles at your place the last time, so I figured you like them and got some," he said and she sighed dramatically.

"Tell me something. How did I survive all these years without your love?" She asked, and he chuckled as he took off his clothes.

Lucy couldn't help but feel grateful for this moment, and for the life they were building together.

She stepped closer to Tom and wrapped her arms around him from behind, resting her head against his back.

"Thank you for doing this," she whispered, pressing a gentle kiss to his shoulder.

Tom turned around, his eyes soft as he looked down at her. "Anything for you," he said, leaning down to kiss her forehead.

They stepped into the tub together, the warm water soothing their tired muscles. And as the hot water enveloped them, Lucy sighed, the tension slowly melting away.

They sat in comfortable silence for a while, just enjoying each other's presence.

"I love you," Lucy said suddenly, breaking the silence. Tom smiled at her, feeling his heart swell with love.

"I love you more," he replied, as she reached up to cup his cheek.

She kissed him, a sweet, tender kiss that spoke of her love and devotion to him, and even though Tom was very much aroused, he held himself from making love to her since he knew that she was very exhausted.

After they were done, they returned to the bedroom, and Tom made her lie on her stomach so he could massage her body.

Lucy sighed as he massaged her, "You know, it's hard to imagine that someone like Mia went through something like that. She always looked so vibrant and strong whenever I saw her. I mean, she doesn't look like someone who would let anyone treat her that way," Lucy said thoughtfully.

"Strength comes in many forms, love. And it takes immense courage to leave an abusive relationship, especially when wealth and power are involved. So, you're right about her being strong. You never can tell how long it took her to come up with this persona," Tom said and Lucy nodded.

"I know. And I admire Mia's bravely. I'm sure it was not easy to start over this way. But it makes me wonder what else is hidden beneath the surface. No one wants other people to see their vulnerability. We all have masks," Lucy said with a yawn and Tom smiled.

"Don't you think that goes to tell you that people only let you see what they want you to see? And in turn reminds us to look deeper, to offer support when we can. We should be grateful that we can be there for her," Tom said and Lucy nodded.

"You're right," Lucy said, finding comfort in his warmth and understanding. "Thank you, love."

"What for?" Tom asked and she shrugged.

"For everything. For being here for me and for how you are always willing to offer a helping hand to anyone that needs it. It was thanks to you that I could take off my mask," Lucy said with another yawn and Tom leaned forward and kissed her forehead.

"You don't have to thank me for anything. Besides, you helped me take mine off too," he said and she rolled her eyes.

"That doesn't count as a mask," she said and he smiled.

"That's where you're mistaken. It counts. Everything with you counts," he assured her.

"Everything with me counts as a mask?" Lucy asked with a sleepy yawn and Tom chuckled.

"I think you need to go to sleep now," he said, knowing that she would sleep off in any moment.

"Yeah. So much for the deep tissue massage I dreamt about," she said and Tom chuckled.

"We can always do that some other time after you're well rested," he said and she nodded.

"Yeah. Sure. I love you. Thanks," she said as her eyes closed and Tom grinned as he moved away from her so she could sleep.

"I love you too, Jewel. Sweet dreams."

Chapter 812 Chef Jeff

A relentless thrumming bass line vibrated through Mia's skull, pulling her from the depths of sleep with a groan. Blinking away the last cobwebs of slumber, she focused on the swirling patterns of sunlight on her bedroom ceiling.

The music, thundering from somewhere below, vibrated through the floorboards. Why was it so loud like she was at a club? She mused.

Confused, Mia sat up, hair a tangled mess around her face. Her gaze shot to the source of the music – a portable speaker perched precariously on her desk, flashing like a miniature strobe light.

A movement at the foot of her bed caught her eye and panic flared in her chest, replaced by a surge of cold air as she finally took in the figure sprawled on the floor beside her bed.

Jeff.

There, sprawled across the floor, lay Jeff. His hair was a tousled mess, his face peaceful in slumber, and a faint snore escaped his lips.

Confusion washed over Mia. What was Jeff doing on the floor of her room? She mused.

She shut her eyes tightly when the details of the night before came back to her.

She pressed her lips together and wished the earth would open up and swallow her as she recalled showing Jeff the scars on her back and how he had touched them and she had almost kissed him when he told her that she was beautiful.

After Jeff's declaration, she had wanted to kiss him, but instead had quickly walked away from him, saying she was exhausted and needed to go to bed, so how did he end up in her bedroom? She mused.

While Mia was still seated on her bed willing the ground to open up and swallow her cause she couldn't bear to look Jeff in the face, Jeff stirred, his eyes fluttering open.

He blinked at her when he saw the way she was seated on her bed with eyes shut tightly and lips pressed together, his face creased in confusion. "Mia?" he mumbled, his voice husky with sleep.

Mia's heart skipped a beat when she heard his voice and her eyes flew open as she met his gaze.

"Hey! Good morning," she greeted, a nervous laugh escaping her lips. "Enjoying the floor?"

Jeff chuckled as he sat up, stretching his arms above his head. "Yeah. Good morning," he said rubbing his eyes.

"What are you doing here? And why is the music so loud?" She asked and Jeff met her gaze.

"I guess you don't remember," Jeff said as he rose to turn off the speaker.

"Remember what?" She asked, and Jeff pointed to the bottle of empty whiskey on her bedside.

Immediately she saw the bottle, she winced when she realized that she had been drinking as she usually did at night before going to bed.

She could remember him knocking on her door and asking if he could come in, and she asked him in, but that was as much as she could remember. She really hoped she had not made any blunders.

Seeing that she didn't seem to remember it all, Jeff decided to explain, "I brought the speaker because you said noise and music helps you drown out your fears. I told you I was bringing the club to you since you couldn't go out to the club," he said and she frowned.

"You did? What did I say when you said that?" She asked, twisting her hair around her finger awkwardly.

Jeff chuckled, "You chose to connect your phone to the speaker and be the 'dj of this club' in your own words," he said and she winced.

A memory surfaced - her drunken giggle, the way she had asked him to dance with her. Shame mingled with amusement. "I did, huh?" She asked, looking away from him.

"Yup," he said, his grin widening as he realized she was slowly getting back her memory. "And then you proceeded to tell me all about your childhood fear of clowns."

Mia groaned, burying her face in her hands. "Please tell me I didn't."

"Unfortunately, you did," he confirmed, his voice teasing.

"Anything else I need to know before I take my life?" She asked, and he chuckled.

"Nah. You were pretty much well behaved until you slept off," he said and then she sighed as she looked at him with a serious expression.

"So, why did you sleep on the floor? I mean, you could have left after I slept off," She said, and he held her gaze.

"I didn't want you to be alone now that I know why you always go out at night," he said and she looked away.

The warmth in his voice sent a flutter through her stomach. "You didn't have to stay," she said, her voice barely above a whisper.

"I thought you said you weren't going to push me away anymore?" He asked and her gaze shifted back to him.

"I'm not pushing you away. I'm just saying you didn't have to," she said quietly.

"I wanted to stay here and watch over you because I care about you," Jeff confessed, his gaze locking with hers.

His words hung in the air, charged with unspoken meaning. Mia felt her cheeks flush as heat spread through her. Why was he always so comfortable with throwing the word 'care' around so easily?

The awkward silence stretched between them, filled only by the sounds coming from outside. Then, Mia broke into a laugh.

"This is weird, isn't it?"

Jeff couldn't help but smile, "Is it?"

"Yeah. A little," she admitted, her voice lighter now. "But maybe not in a bad way."

"I guess not, cause I don't feel weird at all," he said and then looked at her for a moment, "You don't seem hungover."

"Nah. I'm good. Apart from my poor memory, I usually don't suffer hangovers," she said and he nodded.

"Coffee?"

Mia nodded, "Yes, please. And thanks," she said, making him cock a brow.

"What for?" Jeff asked and she shrugged.

"For last night," she said, leaving Jeff to wonder if she was talking about their conversation or their private party.

"You're welcome. Why don't you freshen up while I fix us something for breakfast?" Jeff offered, and she nodded.

As Jeff headed for the door, she stopped him, "Jeff?"

"Yeah?"

"Is your cooking lesson offer still standing?" She asked and Jeff grinned.

"Sure. Whenever you are ready," he said before walking away.

Once he left, Mia sighed as she looked at the door with a little smile playing on her lips.

She was glad that he did not bring up anything about their discussion or the scars. And thanks to his humor, he had made an ordinarily awkward situation less awkward for her.

She was glad that she had accepted his offer of friendship. If she was going to hang around here as she planned to, she was going to need the friendship, Mia thought as she rose to go freshen up.

The aroma of freshly brewed coffee lured Mia out of the bathroom, and she stumbled into the kitchen, hair damp and face scrubbed, dressed in an oversized tshirt and shorts.

She found Jeff standing by the counter taking out all he needed to fix breakfast, and instead of saying anything she stood back and took a moment to look him over.

She smiled as she took in his new appearance once again. Not bad looking at all. Maybe now he would be able to get a girlfriend if he put his mind to it, Mia mused.

As though he could sense her presence, Jeff turned to look at her with a grin.

"Are you ready for your first lesson?" he asked, his voice warm and teasing.

"So soon?" Mia asked as she grabbed a mug and poured herself a generous dose of caffeine.

"No better time to start than now. But if you're not ready, we can do so some other time," Jeff said and Mia sighed.

"Let's start now. What are you preparing today?" She asked as she set aside the mug.

"Scrambled eggs and toast are the simplest things in the world. Today, you will be a master of the basics," he said as he gestured to a bowl.

"Now, crack those eggs into the bowl. Careful not to get shell in," he ordered pointing to the eggs.

Mia hesitantly cracked the eggs, flinching as a bit of yolk dripped onto her hand. Jeff laughed as he grabbed her hand and wiped it clean with a damp cloth.

"See, easy," he said, his touch sending a jolt through her. "Now, whisk them together, like you did the last time," he said as he handed her the whisk.

Although she had done it just two days ago, now she didn't seem to remember what she was doing as she clumsily whisked it.

Jeff chuckled as he held her hand and showed her how to whisk it, "Do it like you're conducting an orchestra," he said, guiding her hand gently.

"Slow and steady. Imagine you're creating fluffy clouds," he murmured, his voice close to her ear.

His warmth sent a blush creeping up her neck, and Mia tried to focus on the eggs and not on the closeness, "I think I get it now," she said when she couldn't bear it anymore, and Jeff stepped aside to let her continue.

Mia focused her attention on the eggs under Jeff's watchful gaze and soon, the eggs were whisked into a smooth, golden mixture.

"Now, the toast," Jeff announced, putting a slice in the toaster. "It's the crispy foundation for our eggy kingdom."

Jeff showed her how to prepare the toast, slathering it with butter and jam. The aroma of warm bread filled the air.

"Perfect," Jeff said when she was done with the toast, and he led her to the stove. He poured butter into the pan, the sizzling sound making Mia jump.

"Don't be scared," he said, his voice calm and reassuring.

"Now, the heat," he said, adjusting the flame. "Too high, and they'll turn into rubber. Too low, and they'll be forever gooey."

"Just pour the eggs in slowly, like pouring sunshine onto a canvas."

"How do you come up with all these descriptions?" She asked, her eyes gleaming with amusement.

"I don't know. I'm not thinking about it. Just trying to make the class fun for you. Now focus," Jeff said and following his instructions, Mia poured the eggs into the pan.

They spread unevenly, clinging stubbornly to the bottom. Panic welled up, threatening to drown her newfound confidence. But Jeff was there, his calm voice guiding her. He taught her how to gently nudge the eggs with a spatula without overcooking them, coaxing them into fluffy curds. He showed her how to fold them over, creating a soft, eggy delight.

"See? You're a natural. Just a few more seconds, and breakfast will be ready," Jeff said and Mia smiled.

Finally, they plated the eggs onto the toast, adding salt with a flourish. The aroma of breakfast filled the air as they sat at the dining to eat.

Mia stared at her plate, a sense of accomplishment washing over her.

"I did that," she whispered, surprised by the pride in her voice.

Jeff took a bite, his eyes twinkling. "You most certainly did," he agreed, "and it's delicious. Not bad for a first attempt, I must say."

Mia took a bite, surprised by the deliciousness. The eggs were fluffy and flavorful, the toast perfectly crisp. It wasn't Michelin-starred cuisine, but it was hers, made with Jeff's patient guidance.

"See?" Jeff said, a proud smile on his face as he watched the surprised smile on her face.

"Just follow my lead, Mia, and you'll be a kitchen wizard in no time," Jeff said and Mia smiled back, a warmth spreading through her chest that had nothing to do with the scrambled eggs.

"You like to brag a lot, don't you?" Mia asked and he shook his head.

"I'm actually being very modest right now," he said and she giggled.

They ate in comfortable silence, the simple meal tasting like a victory. Mia couldn't remember the last time she'd enjoyed food so much, not just for its taste, but for the shared experience of creating it.

"Thank you, Jeff," she said, her voice thick with emotion. "For the breakfast, and for teaching me," Mia said when they were done eating.

Jeff smiled, his eyes warm. "Anytime," he said. "Now, the real question is – are you ready to take on lunch?"

Mia laughed, a genuine, carefree sound. "Maybe tomorrow, chef. Let's savor this victory first," she said as they cleared the table and Jeff chuckled.

"Notice how your name sounds like Chef? Chef Jeff?" She joked and Jeff laughed.

After they were done with the dishes, Mia looked at Jeff as she dried her hands, "You know," she said, a spark of excitement igniting in her eyes, "this breakfast thing was fun. Maybe next time, we can try something a little plex?"

"Complex, huh? We haven't even started yet and you're sounding this cocky," Jeff said a playful smile on his lips as he watched her laugh.

Jeff wasn't sure if Mia realized that she was a lot more open now than she had ever been around him, and not only were her eyes which were usually guarded and dull, sparkling now, but her laughter sounded more true and beautiful too.

Perhaps she was this way now because she didn't have the weight of her pasts weighing her down anymore now that she had shared part of it, and she didn't need to worry about hiding anything from him anymore.

Whatever her reason was for being this way, he hoped that she would keep being this happy. He was going to do all he could to keep her this way.

Chapter 813 New Keys

Amy lay sprawled on Lucy's bed, her thoughts swirling in a murky haze of grief and numbness. The tears that had poured freely earlier had dried, leaving behind a dull ache, an emptiness that echoed with the absence of Miley's laughter. The world felt muted without her.

A chime of the doorbell pierced the silence, jolting Amy from her grief-stricken reverie.

For a brief moment, a spark of hope flickered in her chest, Maybe it was Lucas, coming to check on her, his comforting presence a balm to her raw emotions.

She hurried to answer it, half-expecting to see Lucas standing on the other side. But when she opened the door and saw Mia, her heart sank.

"Good morning, Amy!" Mia greeted cheerfully and then her smile waned when she saw Amy's physical state.

"Are you alright?" Mia asked with a concerned frown.

Amy tried to flash her a smile, but her face refused to cooperate with the pretense, "Yeah," Amy said in a cracked voice and then cleared her throat.

"You don't look okay. Are you ill? Is something wrong?" Mia asked, forgetting that she had only come to deliver Lucy's car key to Amy, since they had returned past midnight and had been unable to give it to her then.

And she had volunteered to deliver the key to Amy when she saw how reluctant Jeff had been to do it himself.

Amy shook her head, "I'm not ill. It's here," she said touching her chest as tears pooled in her eyes.

"I lost my best friend," she explained and compassion shone in Mia's eyes.

"Oh, dear! I'm so sorry," Mia said as she reached for Amy's hand without thinking.

"Do you need company? Perhaps you'd like me to listen while you talk about her or hand you tissues and hold you while you cry?" Mia asked and even though Amy appreciated her offer, she shook her head.

"No, thanks. I'm sure you have better things to do with your time," Amy said and Mia shook her head.

"No, I don't," she said, since the only thing she had planned on doing was playing a game of scrabble with Jeff, and she was sure he wouldn't mind postponing it.

"Thanks, Mia. I appreciate it, but I think I will rather be alone right now," Amy said, and Mia nodded.

"Alright then. If you need company, you can let me know. I have nothing much to do since Bryan and Sonia are away on their honeymoon," Mia said, reminding Amy about the wedding which she had been invited to but had been unable to attend. The same wedding that had brought Lucas into the country.

"Speaking about Bryan, here. Lucy asked us to give you the car key. She said you can use it to move around while you're here," Mia said and Amy took the key from her.

"Thanks," Amy said and Mia flashed her smile.

"If you need company, all you need to do is ring the door bell, okay?" Mia said and Amy nodded.

"Sure. Thank you," Amy said once again, and Mia gave her a nod before walking away.

Amy sighed as she shut the door and returned to the bedroom. She couldn't help wondering how much longer Lucas would hang around now that the wedding was over.

No sooner had she gotten back on the bed before the doorbell rang and as she rose to get the door this time she couldn't help wondering if it was Mia coming back because she forgot to deliver a message or perhaps Lucas.

When Amy opened the door this time, she saw Lucy standing at the doorstep with a strained smile on her face and a lunch pack in hand.

"Hey, Amy. I hope I'm not interrupting anything. Is it okay if I come in?" Lucy asked and Amy held the door open.

"Of course," Amy said, wondering why Lucy was asking her that in her own apartment.

"Are you sure? It's okay if you don't want company," Lucy said, just in case Amy was letting her in simply because it was her apartment.

"It's fine," Amy said, forcing a weak smile as she gestured for Lucy to enter

As they settled into the living room, Lucy's eyes scanned Amy's face, taking in the telltale signs of grief that lingered there.

"I heard from Lucas. I'm sorry I didn't call to check on you. I just didn't know what to say to you over the phone or how to console you. How are you holding up?" she asked softly, reaching out to squeeze Amy's hand.

Tears welled up in Amy's eyes, and she buried her face in her hands, unable to hold back the flood of emotion. Lucy moved closer, wrapping her arms around Amy in a comforting embrace.

The dam within Amy broke again and the tears which had stopped flowing came back, streaming down her face, hot and raw. "Miley's gone, Lucy," she choked out, her voice thick with grief. "My best friend... she is gone. I miss her so much, Lucy. I know she was dying, but I can't believe she is gone. I feel so empty and lost."

Tears gathered in Lucy's eyes as she tried to offer her comfort. Lucy couldn't imagine how she would feel if she ever lost Sonia. She didn't want to ever imagine it.

"It's okay to grieve, Amy," Lucy said, her voice soothing. "Miley was a huge part of your life, and it's natural to feel lost without her."

Amy clung to Lucy as she cried, her shoulders shaking with silent sobs, the pain pouring out in ragged breaths, each tear a desperate plea for the impossible.

Lucy held her tighter, tears dropping from her eyes as she offered silent support while Amy let out her grief. After a few moments, Amy's sobs began to subside, and she lifted her head, wiping away her tears with the back of her hand.

"I keep thinking about our last time together and I really wish I knew it would be the last time I see her, or talk to her, or hold her. I just wish... I wish I could have said goodbye," she whispered with a snuffle.

Hearing that, Lucy could understand better why Lucas had decided to embark on that trip to talk to Miley's family, and she hoped for Amy's sake that Miley's parents would give him listening ears.

Not knowing what to say to that, Lucy squeezed Amy's hands gently, and just remained quiet as she listened to Amy pour out her heart.

"Thank you, Lucy. You and Lucas have been so helpful and I don't know how I could ever repay the kindness."

"You don't have to thank me, Amy. We are happy to help. And I'm glad Lucas could be here for you when I wasn't," Lucy said and as they sat together in quiet companionship, Amy's thoughts drifted to Lucas, and she couldn't help but feel a pang of sadness at his absence.

"Speaking of which, how is Lucas doing? I hope he didn't get sick from being under the rain with me," she asked, trying to sound casual even though what she really wanted to know was why Lucas had not stopped over to check on her since the previous morning.

"He is fine. I came over after seeing him off to the airport," Lucy said and Amy's heart skipped a beat.

"The airport? He left already?" She asked, trying to keep her voice steady.

"Yeah, he had to take care of some business urgently," Lucy said and Amy felt a knot form in her stomach at Lucy's words, an unexpected wave of hurt washing over her at the knowledge that Lucas left without a word to her.

"I see," Amy said, trying not to look or sound hurt.

She tried to remind herself that he traveled down for something, and she wasn't part of the reason he made the trip. Meeting her here had been by chance and he had been a gentleman enough to offer her as much help as he could during his short stay here.

It was wrong of her to expect anything more from him than he had already done, when she should be feeling grateful for all he did despite their difference.

It was also wrong for her to feel hurt that he left without a word. He didn't owe her anything.

He might have said they were friends, but she knew that had only been a thing of the moment. Lucas had no reason to want to be friends with her considering their past interaction and how she had acted like an idiot and had been rude to him because she was too embarrassed and proud to admit that her choice to support Miley's decision had been wrong.

"Are you okay?" Lucy asked since even though Amy tried to maintain a neutral expression, she had caught the flicker of disappointment that crossed Amy's face.

"Yeah. Sure," Amy said and Lucy smiled.

"You know," she said gently, "you don't have to pretend around me. If you're disappointed about Lucas leaving without a word to you, it's okay to say so. I would be upset too. As a matter of fact, I

didn't even know he was leaving so soon until I heard it from Tom after we got home from the party last night," Lucy said and Amy shook her head.

"I don't have any reason to be upset. We are not that close. He was just so helpful and I wish I had the chance to thank him, that's all," Amy said and Lucy nodded.

"Don't worry, I will extend your gratitude to him if that's what you want. Here. I brought you something to eat. I will get out of your hair now since I'm sure you would want to be alone," Lucy said as she rose since she still had to drop by Mia's apartment and go get ready for her date with Tom.

"Thank you again, Lucy," Amy said, rising as well. "For everything."

Lucy squeezed her hand warmly. "Anytime. Call me if you need anything."

"I will. Thanks," Amy said as she walked Lucy to the door and waved goodbye as she watched her go over to the apartment next door.

Turning back into the apartment, Amy's thoughts drifted back to Lucas. She wondered why he hadn't said anything to her about leaving, why he hadn't even stopped by to say goodbye.

As she lay on the bed pondering this, the doorbell rang, interrupting her thoughts. This time around she didn't bother wondering if it was Lucas since she knew he wasn't in Ludus.

She went to get the door and was surprised to find a delivery man standing there with a package.

"Delivery for Amy Grant," he said, and Amy's heart skipped a beat.

Who could be sending her a package, especially here, at Lucy's place? A wave of suspicion washed over her. Did Malone find out about her being here?

"I'm Amy Grant. May I know who sent the package?" Amy asked cautiously and watched as the delivery man turned the package so she could see what was written on it.

Confusion battled with a flicker of warmth when she saw the sender's name on it: Lucas Perry.

What could Lucas have sent her? Why would he send her something now, after leaving without a word? Taking a deep breath, she signed for the package and thanked the delivery man.

Her curiosity piqued, she returned inside with the package, eager to open it and see what it was.

Inside, nestled in tissue paper, was a set of shiny new keys. A small note lay beside them. It read,
[Amy,

I know things are incredibly tough right now, and I worried you might not have the energy or remember to change the locks as we talked about. I hope you don't mind that I got it done. Those are the new keys to your apartment.

I understand the pain you're carrying, but please know that this hurt won't stay forever. One day, when you think of Miley, I hope it brings a smile and a warmth to your heart, knowing you were blessed to have such an angel in your life.

Remember, Miley's love for you isn't gone. It lives on in every shared memory, every lesson learned, every laugh you shared. Hold onto those precious moments, let them be your comfort and strength.

Grief is a journey, not a destination. Take each day as it comes, be gentle with yourself, and feel whatever you need to feel. Most importantly, take care of yourself, Amy. - Luca]

Tears welled up in Amy's eyes as she finished the letter. Lucas's words, though simple, resonated deep within her. The weight of his thoughtfulness, especially with everything he was likely dealing with himself, touched her deeply.

She clutched the keys, the cool metal grounding her in the present as her lips curved in a small smile at his reference to himself as Luca.

Lucas was the most thoughtful man she had ever met and she hoped that she would get a chance to express her gratitude to him and maybe repay his kindness some time in the future.

Chapter 814 Breakfast In Bed

Sunlight, filtered through the sheer curtains, danced across Jade's eyelids, coaxing them open.

Fatigue clung to her limbs, a souvenir of the festivities of the last two nights. The wedding had been a whirlwind of laughter, dancing, and maybe a few too many celebratory drinks.

Yet, amidst the exhaustion, a delightful aroma tickled her nose. Bacon? Pancakes? The scent of breakfast in bed was practically a love song on a Sunday morning.

Jade propped herself up on her elbows, a smile already tugging at her lips. Her gaze landed on a tray adorned with a plate piled high with fluffy pancakes, crispy bacon, and perfectly scrambled eggs. Beside it, a steaming mug promised freshly brewed coffee. In the chair next to the bed, Harry, sat nursing his own mug, a lazy smile gracing his face as he watched her wake up.

"Good morning, sleepy goddess," he said, his voice low and warm. "Sleep well?"

"Like a log, knowing you were next to me. Breakfast in bed, huh?" She asked and Harry nodded.

"Yup. Figured you might need a little coaxing to wake up."

Jade's smile bloomed into a grin. "You are a lifesaver. I swear, my feet still haven't forgiven me for those heels and the dance moves."

She reached for the coffee as she sat up and took a grateful sip. "Did Candace and Andy prepare these?"

He shook his head, a playful glint in his eyes. "Nope, I did. I decided to make breakfast for the beautiful ladies in my life. But don't worry, yours tastes much sweeter. I made sure to save the best for you," he said with a wink, and she giggled as she reached for a pancake.

"Nope. No. Go wash your hands first," he ordered and she frowned.

"What's the point of breakfast in bed if I have to stand up to go wash anything?" She asked with a pout.

"I can't believe I have to educate you on hygiene...."

"Fine. Okay. I will go wash my hands and my teeth while at it. Geez!" Jade said as she got off the bed, and Harry grinned as he watched her leave.

Harry remained where he sat, sipping from his coffee and thinking about what he wanted to say to her.

"I'm back. See?" Jade asked, showing him her wet hands, "I deliberately chose not to dry them just so you see that I washed them. What else should I do? Shower before eating?" She asked, and Harry chuckled.

"Kiss me," he said and she scowled at him as she leaned forward to kiss him.

"Now go dry your hands," he said, and laughed out when she raised her hands to show him she had dried her hands on his shirt.

"Are you not eating?" Jade asked as she set the tray on the middle of the bed and sat down.

"I am," Harry said as he joined her on the bed.

Between bites, Jade chatted about snippets of the wedding. Harry listened patiently, his gaze soft and attentive.

As they finished their breakfast, a comfortable silence settled between them, punctuated only by the clinking of cutlery.

Jade sighed in satisfaction after she was done eating. "You deserve a medal. This was delicious," Jade said and Harry smiled.

"Thanks."

"See? That's the way you should compliment a person when they prepare a meal for you," Jade said, and Harry looked at her, lost for a moment.

"I thought you always bragged about how you were cursed with an excellent memory? How come you don't know what I'm talking about?" Jade asked incredulously.

"What are you talking about?" Harry asked and she rolled her eyes.

"Remember not saying anything when you tasted my meal for the first time?" She asked and a smile tugged on Harry's lips.

"Your meal? I remember wanting to say a lot when I tasted it but you were too shy and even covered your face with a pillow he said with a suggestive smile, and Jade blushed.

"Don't be naughty, you know the meal I'm talking about," she said and Harry chuckled.

"No, I don't. I can only think of one meal right now, and it is found...." Jade giggled as she stuffed the last piece of pancake into his mouth to shut him up.

"For Christ's sake, Harry!" She snapped, and he laughed as she chewed.

"Okay. Alright. Fine. Your presence made me uncomfortable so I wanted to make you uncomfortable too when I noticed you seemed to be waiting for a feedback. But it was nice. Very nice," Harry said and Jade smiled.

"Thinking about it, I think visiting you then was what changed things between us," Jade said as she remembered all about that day.

"You think? That was when you confessed your feelings to me after wasting our time with all your games" Harry said and she grinned.

"I wasn't playing games. I wasn't sure how to come right out and talk to you. Tom said you were old fashioned and wouldn't want me to ask you out directly. And have you considered that I wouldn't

have had to play all that game had you simply told me how you felt from the beginning?" Jade asked and he snorted.

"You were so hot that day. Thinking about it now, I remember how wet I was," Jade said and Harry grinned.

"Really? You like me being a bad boy that much? Turns you on, huh?" He asked, wiggling his brows and she giggled.

"I can't help being turned on by every version of you. Whether you're being a bad boy, or a gentleman, or a strict CEO, I love all that parts that make up Harry Jonas," she said and Harry smiled at her.

"As I love all the parts that make up Jade Hank. The clingy, jealous, spoilt brat and all of that. The only part I'm willing to touch is the insecure part seeing how much it bothers you and affects you. And as you know, if my baby is not happy, I'm not happy. So, can we continue that conversation from where we stopped?" Harry asked, a serious expression replacing his playful one.

"Why don't I take care of the dishes first?" Jade suggested, wanting to rise but Harry stopped her.

"I will take care of it while you freshen up," Harry said as he rose.

"I still want to see Candace and Andy...."

"They are not in. They went out over an hour ago. Candace left to see Matt, and Andy decided to explore the city and also spend some time at her own place," Harry said and Jade narrowed her eyes.

"Did you talk to them about this?" She asked and Harry nodded.

"Yes, I did. Don't worry, I wasn't harsh. I just asked them to advise you without dragging me and our relationship into it. Every relationship is peculiar and special in its own way, and what works for one couple wouldn't work for the next. And sugar, I would really appreciate it if you let it sink into your pretty little head..."

"My head isn't little," Jade cut in.

"Your pretty enormous head then," Harry corrected and Jade giggled.

"Let it sink into your head that when it comes to you, no one knows or understands how much I adore you. So, listening to what others have to say about our relationship might actually not be favorable to us," Harry said and Jade nodded.

"Alright. I will go freshen up and you can do the dishes. I never really like doing dishes anyway, with or without dishwashers," Jade said and Harry chuckled as he picked up the tray.

"Lucky us that I don't mind doing the dishes," Harry said as he walked away while Jade went in to freshen up.

Thirty minutes later, Jade lay nestled against Harry's chest on the bed. Harry trailed a finger down her arm, sending shivers dancing across her skin as they lay in comfortable silence for a while, simply enjoying each other's presence.

However, the unspoken conversation hung in the air, a weight they both acknowledged.

So," Harry began, his voice soft but determined, "where were we?"

Jade took a deep breath, the warmth of his arm wrapped around her body a grounding anchor. "We were talking about working on being able to spend some time apart," she said, her voice barely above a whisper.

"Right," he nodded, as he ran a hand down her arm. "And how you feel like you might be...too much."

"Clingy, insecure," Jade supplied, the words tasting bitter on her tongue.

Harry sat up and adjusted so that they could look at each other.

"Listen, Sugar," Harry said, his gaze meeting hers, "I love your passionate nature. It's one of the things that drew me to you in the first place. But I also understand your concerns. We both need space to grow as individuals, to pursue our own passions and interests."

Jade nodded, her heart clenching at the thought of being apart, even for a short while.

"But being apart doesn't mean being disconnected," Harry continued, his voice gentle. "Maybe we could set aside specific times for just us, phone calls or dates, and then have separate time for our own hobbies and friends."

The idea resonated with Jade. It offered a structure, a way to balance her desire for closeness with the need for individual space. "That could work," she admitted, thinking about signing up for dance lessons and maybe yoga. Anything that would give her less time to be in other people's business and also let her give Harry a bit of space.

"Good. We will make it work in a way that when I'm doing something else that doesn't involve you, you can be doing something else that doesn't involve me as well. That way you won't be bored, and when we talk or see we can have other things to talk about. I also think all of this is temporary, anyway. I know how you can be when you're working on a case. You are usually too busy to worry about me," Harry said and Jade nodded.

"True," she said, thinking about how busy she had been before her grandfather died and even when they returned from their trip recently and she had to conclude Rebekah's case.

She had stayed away from Sara's case since she had decided that no matter how terrible Sara might be, she didn't want to be directly responsible for locking her boyfriend's mother away. Harry could do that himself.

"Also communication," Harry said, taking her hand, "open and honest communication is key. If you're feeling insecure, don't bottle it up. Talk to me, and we can work through it together."

"What if what happens last time happens again? I mean, what if Tom decides that he wants to spend time with you during the little time we schedule for ourselves?" She asked and Harry smiled.

"I'm not jealous of Tom. I'm not asking that cause I'm jealous. He is my brother and I love him. It's just that I don't like you choosing to spend time with him over me," Jade said honestly and Harry nodded.

"That was a one time thing. I assure you that it won't happen again. Also, Tom and I already agreed to resume our weekly hangouts. That way, he won't intrude on our time together. And if for any

reason he shows up randomly like he did the last time, I will let you chase him away, after all, he is your brother and won't hate you for it," Harry said with a reassuring smile.

"What if he doesn't leave?"

"Then we will just have to pay him back in his own coin until he gets the message," Harry said with a grin and Jade laughed.

"I think I like that idea," she said, thinking of all the ways she could frustrate Tom knowing how much he loved to spend time alone with Lucy.

"But I don't think it will get to that. Tom didn't do it to piss you off. And I know very well that after seeing how much you didn't like it, he won't repeat it," Harry said, since he knew Tom that much.

"If you say so."

From there, the conversation flowed, easy and honest, as they explored their individual needs and expectations.

They discussed their love languages, realizing that quality time together, even if it was just a shared walk or a movie night, held more value to them both than constant texting or phone calls. They acknowledged the importance of supporting each other's passions, even if they didn't always share them.

"Is there anything else you want to tell me or ask me?" Harry asked and Jade pursed her lips thoughtfully.

"I'm not asking this because I'm jealous or because I don't trust you. And it's okay if you choose not to answer my question. I'm only asking cause I'm curious," Jade said without meeting his gaze and Harry raised a brow.

"Go on," he said and Jade spared him a glance.

"What's going on between you and Mia?" She asked, looking away from him again.

Harry looked at her for a moment, "Mia used to be the wife of one of our business partners," Harry said, and Jade blinked in surprise.

"What?" Of all things she had expected him to say, that was not in the list.

"Remember how I said she looked familiar the first time I saw her?" Harry asked and Jade nodded.

"Is this business partner based in Husla?" She asked and Harry raised a brow.

"How did you know that?" He asked and Jade shrugged.

"She was being weird when Tyler said she looked familiar, so I figured it had to be in Husla since that is where he is based," Jade said and Harry smiled.

"I'm always in awe of how brilliant you are," he said and she beamed a smile at him.

"Thank you. So, why does she keep denying her identity?" Jade asked and tears filled her eyes as Harry explained the situation to her.

"That's so terrible," Jade said and Harry nodded.

"We are going to do all we can to help her, and break a couple of laws if need be," Harry said and Jade held his gaze for a moment and sighed.

"Just be careful while at it. Is suppose this is going to affect our vacation?" She asked, and Harry shook his head.

"No, it won't. I promise," he said and she rolled her eyes.

"I won't mind even if it does. Her safety should come first. We can always go on our vacation when you don't have to worry about other things," she said and Harry smiled at her with pride in his eyes.

"That's so thoughtful of you. But you don't have to worry. Tom is here, and Jeff is living with her, so she will be safe. We will go on our vacation as planned," Harry said and Jade met his gaze, her eyes filled with love and gratitude.

"I love you, Jonas," she said and Harry grinned.

"I can bet not as much as I love you," he said and she shook her head.

"Don't bet on that."

Chapter 815 Sexual Sadism

After Mia returned from Lucy's apartment earlier, she had met Jeff waiting for her in the living room with his laptop which they were to use to play the game of Scrabble.

Now as they played, a playful smirk tugged at her lips as she maneuvered the virtual tiles, forming a word that would earn her triple word score and likely leave Jeff scrambling, while Jeff's gaze lingered on the elegant way her delicate fingers moved.

"You have really pretty hands," Jeff said and Mia flashed him a smile.

"Thanks. You said the same thing the other day," Mia said as she leaned back in her chair, stretching as the satisfying snap of a triple word score echoed through the room.

"Triple word score, Jeff. Looks like you're about to go down." She declared, her voice laced with playful challenge.

Jeff chuckled, leaning forward to admire the word she had played.

"Don't be so cocky, Mia. It's too soon," he countered, his voice low and playful. "I still have a few hidden gems left up my sleeve."

"Sure. Give it your best shot," Mia said as she watched him, waiting to see how he would outplay her.

Jeff's brow furrowed in concentration as he watched the screen trying to strategize his next move.

"It's okay to give up, Jeff," Mia said with a sweet smile.

"Never. I never give up on anything. I've never given up on anything in my life and I'm not about to start now," Jeff said and she laughed.

"Well, I guess that's why I'm here to teach you that sometimes it's good to know when to give up. You know, save yourself the stress and save my time," Mia said and Jeff looked at her.

"And maybe I'm here to teach you that you should never give up, don't you think?" Jeff asked, his tone serious.

"Teach me then," Mia said, her tone challenging as she held his gaze and jerked her head to the laptop screen, "show me."

"What's in it for me if I do so?" He asked and she raised a brow.

"Then you would have thought me not to give up, isn't that the point?" She asked, and he looked at her for a moment before giving her a nod.

"Alright, let's go with that," he said as he returned his gaze to the laptop screen, giving it the whole of his attention.

When the doorbell rang, Mia rose to go get the door, leaving Jeff who was still brainstorming on all the possible ways he could beat Mia and prove to her that giving up wasn't always the best.

"Hey, Lucy!" Mia greeted with a warm smile when she opened the door and saw Lucy standing there.

"Hi, Mia! Good morning! How are you doing?" Lucy asked as she looked at Mia, trying not to let her face give away the sympathy she was feeling.

"I'm fine. Were you visiting Amy? She looked so devastated when I stopped by earlier to drop off the car key," Mia said and Lucy nodded.

"Yeah. I wanted to stop by and see how you're doing, and also to thank you once again for helping me look out for Amy the other night," Lucy said and Mia waved it off with a smile.

"That's nothing. I'm glad I could help," Mia said, and then they both fell into an awkward silence as Lucy looked at her not knowing what to say or do.

"Uhm, what about Jeff?" Lucy asked as she picked her brain, trying to find something to say.

"Jeff is okay," Mia said, looking at Lucy and wondering why it seemed like Lucy was struggling to hold a conversation with her.

"And you? How are you doing, Mia?" Lucy asked and Mia smiled.

"I'm fine. You asked already, and I told you I'm fine. Did Sonia send you over to check on me?" Mia asked and Lucy buried her face in her hands, making Mia laugh.

"Yes. She did. She is worried about you, and I am too," Lucy admitted.

"You don't have to worry. And she doesn't have to worry either, I'm okay. I was playing a game of scrabble with Jeff before you stopped over...."

"YES! I did it!" Jeff screamed from inside making Mia's lips twitch as Lucy jumped in surprise.

"Do you want to come in?" Mia asked, since it seemed like Lucy wasn't done yet.

"Can I? Maybe just briefly. I promise not to take up too much of your time," Lucy said and Mia smiled.

"It's okay even if you do. Come in," Mia said, and Lucy walked in with her.

The moment Lucy walked into the living room, her lips curved in a smile when she was flooded by memories of her and Tom in this apartment.

Her first romantic dinner with Tom when he asked her to be his fake girlfriend and she asked him if they were going to have sex that night

Thinking about that date gave her an idea of what to wear for her date with Tom tonight.

"Why are you blushing so furiously?" Mia asked when Lucy remained standing after she was seated.

Lucy smiled as she focused on Mia and Jeff who were staring at her, "I guess I forgot the fond memories this apartment holds for Tom and I," she said and Mia narrowed her eyes.

"You didn't do anything on the couch, right? Which was Tom's bedroom? Do we need to change the beds? And maybe the chairs?" Mia asked suspiciously, making both Lucy and Jeff laugh.

"Why would you change anything? Don't you stay at hotels? Do you change stuff there?" Jeff asked before Lucy could respond.

"I don't know the identity or faces of those who stayed there before me. I don't want to start imagining stuff about them in my head," Mia said and Lucy laughed softly.

"You don't have to worry about changing anything. I can assure you that nothing happened," Lucy said as she sat down.

"Hello, Jeff," Lucy greeted as Mia went to sit beside Jeff to see the word he had played.

"Hello. Ms Perry," Jeff greeted and Lucy's brow arched at the formality.

"Lucy is just fine," she said and Jeff nodded.

"I wasn't sure whether or not I should refer to you casually," Jeff explained and Mia shook her head.

"You're always such a gentleman, Jeff," Mia said and Jeff looked at her.

"Why do you sound like it's a bad thing?" He asked and she shook her head.

"It's not like it's a bad thing...."

"It's not a bad thing. It would have been presumptuous of me to assume that I am close enough to her to address her by her first name. It's basic manners," Jeff said and Lucy nodded.

"Then I guess I should apologize for being so mannerless as to refer to you as Jeff," Lucy said and Mia turned to Jeff with a raised brow, waiting for his response.

"Well, it's different. You are my employer's girlfriend...."

"Give it a rest, Jeff. The point is, she called you by your first name first, so you should have been a gentleman and addressed her by her first name as well so she doesn't have to feel bad and mannerless as she is feeling now. Right, Lucy?" Mia asked and Lucy laughed.

"There is no reason to make him feel bad. He was right and I was wrong," Lucy said easily.

"I apologize for that, Mister?" Lucy asked, since she didn't know Jeff's last name.

"Winfrey. But Jeff is good," Jeff said and Lucy nodded.

"So, I guess now I can call you Jeff, and you can call me Lucy, right?" She asked and he nodded.

"I'm sorry I interrupted your game. I just stopped by to see how Mia was doing," Lucy said and Jeff glanced at Mia, wondering if she had told Lucy about everything.

"Sonia asked her to check on me," Mia explained.

"Yes. And, I'm very sorry about Tyler's actions. I know you must feel very offended. He's usually not the type to be a blabbermouth," Lucy said apologetically.

"You don't have to apologize on his behalf. I'm not mad at him anymore, but I just really I don't get to see him anymore, that's all," Mia said honestly.

"That's fine. I promised not to take up too much of your time. I should leave now and let you continue your game. Will you let me know if you need anything?" Lucy asked and Mia smiled.

"What could I possibly need? I'm fine. Don't worry about me, and ask Sonia not to worry too. I'm okay as you can see," Mia said and Lucy nodded as she rose.

As Mia escorted her to the door, Lucy remembered what Tom had asked her to find out from Mia, and she hesitated.

"Go on," Mia said, sensing that Lucy wanted to say something to her.

"Tyler said you used to visit his colleague...."

"Who is his colleague?" Mia cut in, since she still didn't know exactly who Tyler was.

"A doctor back in Husla. You used to visit the doctor about three times a week," Lucy said and Mia nodded.

"Yeah. What about it?"

"The guys wanted to know if the doctor was working for you or your husband," Lucy said and Mia raised a brow.

"By guys you mean Tom and Harry?" Mia asked and Lucy nodded.

"I visited him because he was on my husband's payroll and so was the only person he allowed to treat me," Mia explained.

"And he didn't attempt to find out what was wrong? Or help you?" Lucy asked, her gaze full of pity.

"No, he didn't help. I'm sure he knew what was wrong. Don't look at me that way, Lucy. I really do not like it," Mia said and Lucy nodded.

"Alright. I'm sorry. I just feel really terrible thinking about what you must have experienced. Can I hug you?" Lucy asked and Mia shrugged.

"I guess. If it will make you feel better," Mia said and Lucy embraced her.

"Hang in there, Mia. I trust the guys to take care of all of it. And I hope you won't be mad if I ask this, have you gone for therapy yet?" Lucy asked as she pulled away and Mia's brows pulled together.

"I can't believe I'm saying this to someone else, and I'm sorry if it sounds offensive. But if you haven't, I could recommend my therapist. She is pretty good," Lucy said and Mia sighed.

"I tried a couple of therapists but I really couldn't open up about my problem so they couldn't exactly help me. I will consider it again after everything is taken care of," Mia said and Lucy nodded.

"That's fine. I should get going now. Thanks," Lucy said as she stepped out of the apartment and Mia shut the door behind her.

"So, you did play a good game," Mia said as she returned to the living room to continue her game with Jeff, but she saw him seated there with a serious expression on his face.

"Can we talk, Mia?" Jeff asked and she sat down.

"What do you want to talk about?" She asked, guessing that he wanted to ask her more questions about her past.

"Why did you look like you were having a panic attack yesterday? And what did you talk to Harry about?" Jeff asked curiously.

Not seeing any reason to hide anything from him anymore, Mia went on to answer his questions honestly.

"What did Harry say? Does he have a plan?" Jeff asked, since Harry had not told him anything about the plan.

Jeff listened patiently as Mia told him what Harry had said and when she was done, he nodded, satisfied by Harry's plan.

"Can I ask how you got those scars?" He asked and she sighed since the scars were the least of what her husband had done even though the experience had always left her feeling like an animal.

"Inflicting pain gives him pleasure. I mean sexual pleasure. He suffers from sexual sadism disorder. So, he whips me most times or cuts into my back in order to get off," Mia said without meeting Jeff's gaze.

Chapter 816 Art Gallery Date

Alone in her house, since Candace had dropped her off before going to visit Matt, Andy sat at the balcony, staring at the bottle of wine she had picked from the wine cellar and wondering if Cassidy had deliberately placed it there.

She remembered the brand all so well. That had been the wine Cassidy had been drinking when she was led to him the very first night of their encounter.

She still remembered how Jero had walked into the living room while she was seeing a soap opera with Candace and had thrown a skimpy dress at her, asking her to change into it and follow him.

"Why? Where are you taking her?" Candace had asked with a frown as she picked up the dress.

"Stay out of it, pea," Jero had said before turning to Andy.

"Hurry up. I don't have all evening," he ordered.

"No, Jero. She is not going anywhere with you if you don't tell me where you're taking her, and why she has to wear such a dress," Candace insisted stubbornly.

"Fine. If you must know, I want to introduce her to someone. He's going to give her a job in his company. He likes ladies to dress up nice, that's why I want her to wear that," Jero said to Candace before turning to glare at Andy who was still standing there.

"A job? What kind of job? What's the name of the company?" Candace asked as Andy reluctantly went in to change.

"You ask too many questions, and you know I don't like it," Jero snapped irritably, startling two years old Jamal who was asleep on the couch beside Candace.

Candace quickly picked up Jamal who was crying to pacify him, while Jero walked over to the refrigerator to take a can of beer.

The moment Andy stepped out dressed in the mini dress and a heeled sandals, Jero nodded in approval as he looked her over, "Let's go."

"Take care of yourself, Andy," Candace called to Andy as she walked out with Jero.

"The man you are going to be working for, his name is Cassidy Bank. Make sure you're on your best behavior and you do whatever he asks you to do, okay? Do not do anything to embarrass me, else there will be hell to pay. You can't keep leeching off me. You should at least bring something to the table," Jero said as he parked the car in front of a club.

"Are we meeting him here? In a club?" Andy asked with a frown.

"Do you have a problem with it?" Jero asked harshly, making her press her lips together as she followed him.

Jero led her around the club to the private and secluded rooms reserved for the VIP guests.

Jero rang the doorbell on one of the rooms and the door was opened by a huge man dressed in black suit.

The moment the man saw Jero, and saw Andy beside him, he shut the door and returned inside. He came back a short while later.

"The boss said you can leave, and only her can come inside," he informed Jero, and with a nod Jero stepped back.

"I'm sure you can find your way back after your meeting. Be on your best behavior," Jero warned and walked away before Andy could say anything.

"Come with me," the huge man in black suit said as he held the door wider for her to go in.

Twenty-two years old Andy walked into the room, and there he was, dressed in a white button down shirt and white trousers. His shirt was halfway undone and the belt of his trousers was loose.

Cassidy was seated on the bed with a bottle of wine in his left hand and a cigar in his right hand.

"Leave us alone," Cassidy said, dismissing the man.

"Hi—"

"Strip," Cassidy ordered, cutting off whatever Andy had to say.

"What?" Andy asked, taken aback by his order.

Cassidy looked at her, his expression bored and annoyed, "You heard me the first time. Take off your dress," he growled and she frowned, wondering what sort of job required her to strip.

"Shouldn't I introduce myself...." Andy gasped and jumped back in shock when Cassidy threw the bottle of wine and smashed it against the wall behind her.

"I don't care who or what you are. Take off your damned clothes!" Cassidy yelled.

Andy shook her head to shake off the memory. She didn't want to think about it, she decided with a sigh as she rose from her seat.

She doubted that Cassidy would have added that wine to the cellar deliberately when he knew the kind of memory the wine would bring back.

She picked up the bottle of wine and took it back to the cellar. Maybe he liked the brand and had kept it there for himself not her sake, she decided.

As much as she didn't like to remember that experience, lately she had been thinking about it a lot.

She had been thinking a lot about her past with Cassidy, and she wasn't sure if it was because she missed him or it was because she had forgiven him or maybe it was her mind's way of reminding her of all that had happened so she would realize that getting over whatever she was feeling was best for her.

Perhaps Candace was right, and she was feeling the way she was because of the Stockholm effect.

Was it normal for her to have feelings for someone who had sexually violated her regardless of his reasons? Someone who paid to have sex with her?

Was it normal that she was desperately hoping that he would visit or that they would meet again? Andy mused as she moved around the house.

Maybe she needed to get her head checked. There was probably something wrong with her.

Over the course of the celebrations she had taken her time to study everyone and the dynamics of their relationships.

Sonia, Lucy, Jade, Aurora, and even Candace were involved with cool and calm headed men. Men who adored them and had real stuff going for them, so why was she interested in a man with such a dark past?

One who was hiding from both the law and outlaws?

Even if there was the possibility of anything happening between them if they ever crossed paths, she was going to have to go back to that island to live in hiding with him, and she wasn't cut out for that kind of life.

Liking or wanting him was an exercise in futility.

If for anything they crossed paths in the future, then maybe they could be friends.

She would keep the house since it was a gift, but she wouldn't wait for him to show up or hope to see him. She was just going to go about living her life and hope that some day she would find the kind of love she deserved.

Away from there, Amy sighed deeply when her doorbell rang again, and she rose to go answer the door, wondering why everyone wouldn't leave her alone.

She was surprised to see Lucy standing there with an awkward smile, "I'm very very sorry to bother you, Amy. You have no idea how sorry I am. But if you don't mind sharing your space for a little mind, can I come in to get ready for my date?" She asked and Amy looked at her incredulously.

"Of course, you can. This is your apartment and I'm the one in your space...."

"Well, it's your space at the moment," Lucy said as she walked inside the bedroom.

"Do you want me to help you get ready?" Amy offered.

"Oh, no. You don't have to worry about me. You can go do whatever you were doing before I bothered you," Lucy said and Amy walked out of the bedroom to give her the privacy she needed.

Lucy had a grin on her face as she looked through her closet to take out the clothes she had worn on their first date.

She dialed Tom's line once she brought out the clothes and set them on the bed.

"Change of plan, love," Lucy announced the moment Tom received the call.

"You're not cancelling our date, are you?" He asked with a frown.

"Not at all. But I was thinking. Instead of going to the gallery together, how about I meet you there?" She asked and Tom raised a brow.

"Why? Are you going somewhere else?"

"Not exactly. I want you to go ahead. I will join you in a bit. Adolf can drive me to the gallery," Lucy said since it was almost time for their date already.

"And your clothes? Won't you have to come home to dress up?" Tom asked curiously.

"Don't worry about me. I will dress up from my place. I just want us to do something different. I will tell you about it when we meet," Lucy said and Tom sighed.

"Alright. I will be waiting for you at the gallery," Tom said before hanging up, wondering what she was up to.

An hour later, The air hung heavy with the scent of old paper and oil paints as Lucy walked into the gallery, her heart pounding a familiar rhythm against her ribs.

Lucy scanned the sun-dappled hallway, searching for the familiar form of Tom since he wasn't by the entrance.

Suddenly, she spotted him. He stood before a large Monet water lily painting, his back turned to her.

The sunlight streamed through the high window, casting a warm glow on his broad shoulders. He seemed lost in the brushstrokes, a rare calmness radiating from him.

With a playful smile, Lucy decided to surprise him. She walked stealthily across the polished marble floor, her sequin blue dress whispering against her thighs— the same dress she'd worn on their very first, awkward dinner date at his apartment.

"Guess who?" Lucy asked in a false deep voice as she stood behind Tom and covered his eyes with her hands.

Tom chuckled, "I already caught a whiff of your perfume," he said as he turned to look at her.

"You look..." he began, his voice trailing off as he took in the dress. "It's... that dress."

Lucy grinned. "You remembered," she said with a bright smile.

He nodded, a hint of amusement in his eyes. "Of course I did. Why would I forget a dress of such importance?" He asked and then leaned closer to her.

"The good thing about wearing it now is that you won't have to wonder whether or not I will make love to you tonight," he said with a teasing smile, making Lucy giggle.

"Well, I wore the same set of undies I wore that night. This is your second chance," she said and Tom grinned.

"By the way, I'm sorry I kept you waiting," Lucy said, changing the subject.

"I don't mind waiting, as long as it's for you," he said, and then gestured towards the painting. "I got lost in the lilies. Monet always had a way of transporting me..." He trailed off, his gaze lingering on her.

"Who needs to get lost in artworks, when there is you? You're so beautiful, Jewel. I need to have a painting of you. One in my office, and another in the bedroom at home," he said softly and Lucy grinned.

"Go easy with the flattery, love. You're going to get some tonight whether or not you flatter me," she said and he chuckled.

"I'm being serious. What was I thinking not making love to you that night?" He asked and she grinned.

"You were thinking about tricking me into becoming your fake girlfriend. Let's take a look around. Impress me with your knowledge of art," Lucy suggested, and Tom extended an arm to her and she hooked her arm with his.

As they navigated the gallery, Tom surprised Lucy by effortlessly weaving tales about the art. He pointed out details in a Monet, the way the light danced on the water lilies, the hidden symbolism in a Chagall, and explained the symbolism hidden within a Bruegel landscape.

Lucy equally surprised and delighted him with her insightful observations and genuine enthusiasm.

"This place is captivating," she whispered, turning to Tom.

He smiled, his eyes crinkling at the corners. "It suits you, doesn't it? Full of hidden depths and unexpected beauty," he said and she raised a brow.

"Unexpected beauty? Why is my beauty unexpected?" She asked and he chuckled.

"I thought we were talking about the gallery and the paintings?"

"We were, until you said that making it sound like you were referring to me," Lucy said with a pout and Tom laughed softly.

"Your beauty is actually beyond expectation," he assured her as he urged her along with his hand on her lower back.

"And what I meant to say was that this place reminds me of you. Beautiful, full of hidden depths, and always leaving me wanting more," Tom said and Lucy grinned as she stopped to look at him.

"I leave you wanting more, huh? More of what?"

"More of everything. I don't think I could ever get enough of you," he said and she smiled.

"My jaw is going to hurt so much from smiling because of all these sweet compliments from you," Lucy said as they continued moving.

They paused before a vibrant Picasso. Lucy traced the bold lines with her finger, a thoughtful look creasing her brow.

"It's chaotic," she said, "but somehow, it works."

"Perhaps that's the beauty of it," Tom replied, his voice softer than usual.

"Life is chaotic, Lucy, full of unexpected strokes and surprising twists. But sometimes, the chaos creates something beautiful, something unique," Tom said and Lucy mulled on it for a moment.

"I guess you are right in a way," Lucy said and then looked at him seriously.

"How come I never knew you were such an art aficionado?" She asked and Tom shrugged.

"I guess there is a lot we still don't know about each other, seeing as I didn't know you knew so much about art either," Tom said and Lucy smiled.

"Isn't that the beauty of all this? We can slowly discover it all. I'm not in haste to know everything about you. Are you?" She asked, and Tom shook his head.

"Not at all. Hopefully, we have forever to do that. By the way, I got you a little present," Tom said as he pulled out a small velvet box and presented her with a delicate silver pendant, shaped like a blooming sunflower, the flower's center adorned with a single sparkling diamond.

"This reminded me of you," he said, his voice soft. "Bright, vibrant, and full of warmth."

Tears welled up in Lucy's eyes as she touched the pendant, the cool metal a stark contrast to the heat rising in her cheeks.

"You know I'm all of that because you showed up in my life, right? You are the diamond at the center of my life," Lucy said and Tom leaned in and kissed her.

"I was actually going to say that to you," Tom said as he tried to pull away but Lucy's arm went around his neck to keep him in place.

"Hello, everyone! This absolutely gorgeous man here is the love of my life," Lucy announced loudly, surprising Tom, and the patrons around clapped for them while Lucy grinned up at a flustered Tom.

"Did you think I could only do that when I'm drunk?" She asked and he grinned.

Chapter 817 Tampering With Time

As Harry and Jade lay on his bed seeing a movie, Harry's eyes drifted to the wall clock and when he saw that it was almost 4 PM, it occurred to him that Jade would be wanting to leave soon.

She had said she would be going back to Tom's place by 5 PM, but he didn't want her to leave. He didn't want to spend a moment without her in the house with him.

"I'm hungry. How about we go make lunch," he suggested, wanting to distract her so she wouldn't know what time it was until it would be too late for her to go home.

"I'm not hungry yet. Besides the movie has not ended yet. What time is it?" Jade asked and before she could glance at the clock, Harry kissed her.

"We can continue the movie while we eat. You know, I read somewhere that cooking together is one of the best ways for couples to bond," Harry said distracting her from her question.

"I see you've been doing your research on how couples bond. Are you trying to say you want to bond deeper with me?" Jade asked with a teasing smile, and Harry nodded.

"You caught me. Let's go bond over lunch," Harry said as he rose from the bed and pulled her up with him.

"I need to ease myself first. I've been holding it in because I didn't want to pause the movie," Jade said as she hurried to the bathroom, and immediately she left, Harry took down the wall clock and reset time.

Done with that, he picked up her phone and placed it inside the drawer with his own, before going to the living room to also reset the wall clock there.

He knew he could easily ask her to stay, and she would love to stay, but knowing her, he knew very well that even though she would want to stay, she would be reluctant to do so because she wouldn't want it to seem like she was not actively trying to work on her supposed clinginess, and then she would worry about what Andy and Candace might think when they come back to see her in the house after she had said she would be leaving.

He would prefer to act like the clingy one who tricked her into staying than make her worry about not actively working on giving him space— space that he didn't even ask for or need.

As Jade walked out of the bathroom, she glanced at the clock in his bedroom and she frowned when she saw it was past one.

Did the clock stop working? She mused and then her lips twitched in amusement when it occurred to her that it didn't make sense that the clock stopped walking.

The last time she checked the time it had been past two, so why would it be past one now? Was the clock working backwards? She mused in amusement as she walked over to the bed to pick up her phone.

When she didn't find her phone, she narrowed her eyes as she looked at the door. Did Harry hide her phone? She mused as she walked over to the drawer and opened it.

She grinned when she saw both their phones in the drawer. She checked the time and when she saw that it was past almost 4 PM, it occurred to her that Harry didn't want her to leave hence he had adjusted the clock and hid her phone.

Jade giggled as she shut the drawer. Why didn't he just say he didn't want her to leave instead of going through all that stress? Wasn't he the one that talked about proper communication earlier? She mused as she headed for the living room.

As she walked into the living room, she could hear Harry moving around in the kitchen, so she decided to first check the clock in the living room to see if he had tampered with it too before joining him in the kitchen.

She shook her head in amusement when she saw that he had also adjusted it as he had done the one in the bedroom.

As she headed for the kitchen, she decided that she was just going to act like she didn't know what he was doing, and play along with him so she could see how far he was willing to go just to keep her there with him.

Jade leaned against the doorway, watching Harry bustling around the kitchen, a mischievous glint in her eyes. "What are we making, Jonas?" she asked, her tone teasing.

Harry turned to her with a grin, holding up a couple of recipe books. "Just a simple pasta dish with a secret ingredient," he winked, then added a dramatic flourish, "Love!"

Jade giggled, "Pasta, huh? Sounds... adventurous." Her voice dripped with mock seriousness.

Harry cleared his throat, "Hey! Sometimes simple works."

"We don't have all day, Jonas. Why don't we just order takeout instead?" She asked and Harry looked at her with disapproval.

"Take-out?" He repeated as if the concept was foreign to him, "Where is the fun in that? Cooking together is part of the experience. Plus, we can't bond over takeouts. But hey, if that's what you're craving, I'm all for it," Harry said, feigning nonchalance.

Jade couldn't help but let out a small laugh, "Alright. Let's bond over your secret ingredient pasta creation. What's the time anyway?" She asked, wanting to see if he would lie to her.

Harry glanced at his wristwatch, "It's lunch o'clock. Time to cook," he said with a grin and Jade burst into laughter, delighted by his response.

"You can chop the vegetables and I'll handle the pasta," Harry said and she readily agreed, her amusement bubbling beneath the surface.

Soon they both fell into a comfortable rhythm of chopping, stirring, and laughing. As they worked, Harry subtly glanced at his wristwatch and saw that it was almost 5 PM.

He knew he couldn't keep the charade up forever but now he was content to enjoy this stolen time with her even if it meant resorting to such silly tactics.

Once they were done preparing the meal and sat down to eat at the dining, Jade arched a brow, "So, what other bonding experiences do you have planned for us, Mr. 'Cooking-is-the-new-romance'?" Jade asked as they ate.

Harry chuckled, "I have some games in mind. But first, let's eat," he said, and Jade frowned.

"What's the time?" She asked, and Harry glanced at his watch.

"Why do you keep checking the time as though you're in a hurry to leave me? It's time to eat. Focus on your meal," he said with a grin as he raised a forkful of pasta to her lips and she giggled as she ate.

Jade stole glances at Harry as they ate, her heart filled with warmth and love for him. He might have gone to some absurd lengths to keep her there, but it was the effort and genuine desire for connection that truly touched her.

After eating, they did the dishes together and Jade sighed, "I should go get ready to leave," Jade said as she dried her hands and Harry frowned.

"We didn't finish seeing the movie earlier, did we? Let's go complete it before you leave," Harry said, and Jade giggled as he lifted her and took her to the bedroom.

"Have you seen my phone?" Jade asked, pretending to look for it on the bed.

"I'm sure it's around here somewhere. Don't worry, I will help you find it when we are done," Harry said, and Jade giggled as Harry pulled her close so that her head was resting on his shoulder and patted her back as they continued the movie.

As the credits rolled, Jade stretched, her gaze lingering on the screen for a moment before she turned to Harry with a smile. "That was a good movie," she said, and Harry nodded.

"Let's see another movie," Harry suggested and Jade pointed to the wall clock.

"I think there is something wrong with the time. It should be later than that," Jade said wanting to see what Harry would say.

Harry's brows pulled together. "Really?" He asked without meeting her gaze and she grinned.

"I should get going now," she said as she started to rise but Harry pulled her back down.

"The elevator is sort of faulty...."

"No, it's not. You're a terrible liar, Jonas," Jade said a playful smirk tugging at the corners of her lips.

"Alright. Fine. You caught me. The elevator is not faulty. I just don't want you to leave yet," he said, and she raised a brow.

"Yet?"

"Tonight. I don't want you to leave ever. The house is unbearably empty without you," he confessed and she smiled.

"But you won't be alone. Candace and Andy will be here soon," she pointed out.

"They are not you, are they?" He asked and her smile widened.

"So, is that the reason you tampered with the clocks and hid my phone in the drawer?" She asked as her lips curved into a knowing smile.

Harry cleared his throat, feeling his cheeks flush. "How did you know I tampered with the clocks?" Harry asked and Jade giggled.

"Your ears are burning red. Don't you think you're forgetting that your girlfriend is a brilliant lawyer?" Jade asked and Harry rubbed the bridge of his nose.

"I didn't forget. I was only hoping you'd be too distracted to notice. If you knew I tampered with the clocks and hid your phone, why didn't you say anything? And why did you keep asking what the time was?" He asked with a scowl and she grinned.

"What fun would it be to know the truth and not tease you?" Jade asked as she kissed the tip of his nose and before Harry could respond the doorbell rang.

"I guess Candace and Andy are back," Jade said as she rose to go say hello to them since she had not seen them all day.

Harry held her hand before she could leave, "You're staying, right?" He asked, and her smile softened.

"Seeing how much effort you put into getting me to stay, it wouldn't be nice of me to leave my clingy boyfriend, would it?" Jade asked with a wink and Harry chuckled.

"What's the time now?" She asked and he glanced at his watch.

"It's past seven," he said and she nodded.

"Fix the clock, Jonas, and don't come out yet. Stay in there and reflect on your behavior," she said with a wink and Harry laughed.

"I want to talk to Candace," she explained before walking out of the room, leaving Harry who was shaking his head at himself stuck somewhere between amusement and embarrassment.

"Hey, Jade! The house smells foody." Andy sniffed the air as they walked in and shut the door behind them.

"Harry and I made pasta. We left some for you both. How was your day?" Jade asked looking from one to the other.

"Candace had dinner with Matt already, so I guess what's left is all mine," Andy said as she kicked off her shoes and followed the foody aroma to the kitchen.

"Mine was good. I'm glad you haven't left yet. I was hoping to talk to you," Candace said as she picked up Andy's shoes.

"I wanted to talk to you too. Do you want to freshen up first and talk later?" Jade asked and Candace shrugged.

"Give me ten minutes to get out of these clothes and join you. Where is Harry?" Candace asked as she headed down to their bedroom.

"He's in the bedroom. I will be waiting at the dining," Jade called after Candace as she went to meet Andy in the kitchen.

Andy who was serving some of the food on to a dish turned when Jade walked in.

"I got an earful from Harry last night. I'm sorry for my unsolicited advise...."

"Don't do that, Andy. I did appreciate it," Jade cut in.

"I'm sure you did. But Harry was also right. All relationships are not the same. What works for one may not work for the other, and everyone can't be the same either. Advising you to be a certain way is somewhat arrogant if you think about it, cause that's like saying I'm better and know better or my way is better. You should be yourself and not mind people like us," Andy said and Jade frowned.

"Are you upset?"

"No, I'm not. Just being my usual honest self. What do I know to be advising anyone? Do I even know enough to give advise to anyone? My life is pretty messed up and instead of focusing on fixing myself I'm here giving my unsolicited advise to someone who has her life in order," Andy said and Jade shook her head.

"What's wrong? Do you want to talk about it?" She asked and Andy sighed deeply and shook her head.

"No. I'm okay. Nothing to talk about. Just ranting. I'm sorry," Andy said and Jade nodded as Andy walked past her with the plate of food and headed for the bedroom.

Chapter 818 Big Bro

Jade was still seated in the dining with a frown etched between her brows as she tried to figure out what was up with Andy when Candace returned.

"I'm back. I hope I didn't keep you waiting for too long," Candace announced as she took the seat opposite Jade.

Jade glanced up at her, "You didn't. Is Andy okay? She didn't seem fine," Jade asked, concern coloring her tone.

Candace nodded, a hint of worry in her eyes. "She's a bit tipsy. I guess she had a little too much to drink at her place," Candace said and Jade sighed.

"I see. So, what did you want to talk about?" Jade asked, her voice tinged with weariness.

Candace hesitated, her gaze searching Jade's face. "You know how Andy and I were talking to you yesterday?" she began tentatively, and Jade gave her a nod.

"Well, she mentioned something about me shutting you up in front of Lucas and Tyler. So, today we got talking and I wanted to know why she said that, and she sort of implied that I've been talking to you rudely. I was wondering if you think so too?" she asked, her tone tinged with apprehension.

Jade's eyebrow shot up, "Why are you asking me that? Shouldn't you be able to answer the question yourself? Think about the way you talk to me, especially in public, if I did the same to you, would you appreciate it or not?" Jade asked since that was what she had wanted to talk to Candace about.

Candace's brow furrowed, her confusion evident as she wondered why Jade sounded so upset. "Is that a yes?" She pressed, seeking clarification.

"Yes, Candace. It is a yes. I don't like the way you talk to me in public," Jade said, her tone tinged with hurt.

"Why didn't you say anything?" Candace asked in confusion.

"At first it was fun. I assumed it was like the banters between you and Harry, but it has become increasingly embarrassing and annoying. Now it feels like you are always wanting to oppose me at every turn whether we are alone or in public and it hurts my feelings. That is what I wanted to talk to you about." Jade's eyes glistened with unshed tears as she struggled to compose herself.

Candace hadn't realized the impact her behavior was having on Jade, and it weighed heavily on her conscience.

"I...."

"Please let me finish. I was going to talk to you about it before you brought it up. So kindly let me exhaust all I want to say," Jade said and Candace gave her a nod to continue.

"I know I do not have the best of behavior, and I might act childish and immature a times, but I don't think it is okay for you all, especially you, Candace, to shut me up in front of others. If you all think I'm too childish and immature to hang out with you, then I will have to stop being friends with you. I don't want to be around people who act like I'm a nuisance or make me feel so bad about myself. Maybe it's best I relate with you going forward as just Harry's sister," Jade said, wiping off the tears that had rolled down her cheeks.

"You shouldn't say that, Jade. We've come a long way. You know your friendship means a lot to me," Candace said, her voice filled with sincerity.

"I don't think it does. If it did, you would treat me with more respect. Isn't friendship supposed to be about having each other's back and covering each other's flaws in public and dealing with them in private? Andy seems to be my only friend among all of you. She has never shut me up in public yet she is the one who brought up the subject yesterday...."

Candace shook her head to stop her, "I didn't know how to go about it. I wasn't sure if I should talk to you, and that was why I always tried to jokingly tell you the truth bluntly," Candace said even though she wasn't sure jokingly and bluntly made sense together.

"Jokingly tell me the truth bluntly? What truth have you told me, Candace? That I make everything about myself? Like you did on the yacht in front of everyone? Do you think I just show up and choose to make everything myself? Is that the way you would want me to tell you about yourself in public?"

Candace's heart ached at Jade's words, and a pang of guilt coursed through her. "Jade, I swear to you, I didn't mean to disrespect you. I love you too much to ever want to do that. I admit that most times I like to get on your nerves by taunting you just for fun, but not once have I thought of disrespecting you. I love and respect you too much to want to do that. I've told you several times before how much I look up to you and how you're part of the reason I chose to study law...."

"Yes, that was before you got close to me. And as the saying goes, familiarity breeds contempt. Maybe I should have kept our relationship at a professional level. I know I'm not perfect and I still have a lot to work on, but I'd rather do it beside people who genuinely love me," Jade cut her off, her heart burning more and more as she spoke.

"C'mon, Jade. You know very much that I love you. We all do. I had no idea I was hurting you, Jade. I'm truly sorry I made you feel this way. Believe me, I never meant to hurt you. I only talk to you that way because of our closeness. I wouldn't speak that way to a stranger or someone I'm not close to, would I? I never thought you'd take it so personally. I'm sure Sonia and Lucy didn't mean to be rude to you either," Candace said, her voice filled with regret as she reached out to hold Jade's hand.

Jade sat silently, her emotions swirling inside her. She wanted to believe Candace's words, but the hurt ran deep. She valued their friendship, but recent events had left her feeling isolated and unappreciated.

She needed to clear this up because they were beginning to make her feel like it was best to shut up around them rather than have them shut her up, and if that was the case, then she would rather not spend time with them anymore.

"It will never happen again, I promise, twin sister-in-law," Candace said, tugging on Jade's arm playfully.

A hesitant smile tugged on Jade's lips, "Are you sure?"

"Of course. There is no reason for you to make all that threat about treating me as Harry's sister. You hurt my feelings, you know? I wouldn't be here or have any of these without your help," Candace said and Jade sighed.

"Alright. Maybe I overreacted," Jade said, her voice softening. "I appreciate your apology, and I know you didn't mean to hurt me. I just needed to let you know how I felt about the way you talk to me," Jade said and Candace nodded, her expression filled with remorse.

"I understand, Jade. Just know that I value our friendship more than you think, and I promise to do better going forward."

Jade managed a small smile, touched by Candace's sincerity. "Thank you, Candace. I value our friendship too."

"By this, I'm not saying you can't correct me when I'm wrong. I'd just rather you do it when we are alone, and also you shouldn't always taunt me or oppose everything I say for fun. It's not fun for me," Jade said and Candace nodded.

"Noted. I promise to be a better friend going forward," she said and Jade sighed, relieved to have poured it all out.

"Are you both done? This is so boring," Harry said with a yawn from where he stood watching them and they both turned to scowl at him.

"I thought I asked you to stay out and reflect on your behavior?" She asked and he grinned.

"I'm done reflecting. Plus, I came out to fix the clock in the living room," Harry said as he walked over to where they sat.

"Did something happen to the clock?" Candace asked as she rose.

"Nothing that should bother you. Are you up for a chat? Let's go over the details of our interview," Harry said and Candace nodded.

"Yes, but I don't think Andy might be up for it. She is a bit down," Candace said and Harry frowned.

"Down? Why? Did something happen?" Harry asked in concern.

"None that I know of. She was in a good mood when I dropped her off earlier, but by the time I went to pick her up, she was a bit tipsy and sullen," Candace said and Jade nodded.

"Yeah. I noticed too," Jade said and Harry sighed.

"Do you think I should check on her?" He asked Candace, and she shrugged.

"Go check on her. Maybe she might tell you what's wrong," Jade suggested since she was very concerned about Andy.

Harry nodded and walked over to Andy's bedroom. He knocked on the door gently and opened it when he heard Andy's grunt.

"What's up with my sweetest baby sister," he greeted as he walked in and Andy smiled involuntarily.

"Hey!" Andy greeted as she set aside her empty plate.

"The pasta was pretty nice. Thanks," Andy said and Harry gestured towards the bed.

"Can I sit?"

"Of course. Sure," Andy said with a nod and Harry sat down.

"Are you okay?" Harry asked, and Andy smiled.

"I'm okay. I suppose I'm just having a mood swing," Andy said and Harry nodded.

"Do you want to tell your big brother what triggered it?" Harry asked and she sighed deeply.

"A bottle of wine," she said and Harry cocked a brow.

"You want a bottle of wine?" He asked and she giggled.

"No. That's not what I mean. The wine back at my place reminded me of Cassidy. It's stupid. I probably shouldn't be telling you this, but then again, why the hell not?" Andy said and Harry nodded.

"The wine? I suppose it's a particular brand you both shared? Did it make you miss him?" He asked as he adjusted on the bed so that his back was resting on the backrest.

"Yes. A particular brand. It led me to think about a bunch of other stuff."

Harry listened quietly as she told him all that she had been thinking and as she told him about how she had met Cassidy and everything about their relationship, tears fell from her eyes.

Sensing that she didn't need him to comfort her but wanted him to listen to what she was saying, Harry simply took her hand in his in silent comfort and let her keep talking.

Once she was done, she looked at him, "Do you also think it's Stockholm syndrome?" She asked and Harry shrugged.

"What do you think? It's your feelings. You know what you feel better than I do. Do you think it's Stockholm syndrome?" Harry asked and she shook her head.

"I checked it out on the internet. What I feel isn't the same as the symptoms I saw online. But it doesn't make sense that I have feelings for someone like Cassidy despite all that happened between us, does it?" She asked and Harry smiled.

"You know, when it comes to emotions like love, it doesn't always make sense. The heart wants what it wants. And it would be foolish to beat yourself over it. And you my dearest Andy, is no fool. Leave it to time and chance. Want to know what I have learned from my relationship with Jade? What will be will be. If it isn't love, the feeling will go over time or you will meet someone else and get over him. If it is love, and he feels the same way as I know he does, I don't think you should hold him on to his past. I would burn down the world if anyone so much as lay a finger on Jade, so don't judge him by what he did when he was in pain. Sometimes our pain is capable of blinding us to the pain of others. And hurting people hurts people and bleeds on others. If it's meant to be, I'm sure you both will find a way to meet again. Until then, don't spend what little time I have with you pining over another man. It makes me jealous," Harry finished with a mock scowl, and Andy grinned.

"Geez, Harry! I really didn't want to talk about this, but I'm glad I talked to you. I feel much lighter. I didn't want to talk to Candace 'cause she believes whatever I'm feeling is Stockholm syndrome, and I didn't think she would understand or approve my feelings," Andy confessed.

"Well, good thing you talked to me. So, is that all that was bothering you?" Harry asked, and she nodded.

"Do you want to go to bed now or are you up for a chat and maybe a group movie night?" He asked and she smiled.

"The chat and group movie sounds like a better alternative to sleeping," she said and Harry rose and held out a hand to her.

"I have to freshen up first. I will join you guys when I'm done," she said and Harry picked up the plate she had used in eating.

"I will be waiting for you then," Harry said as he headed for the door.

"Big bro?" Andy called, and Harry smiled as he turned to look at her.

"I love you," she said, and Harry grinned.

"I love you too. Don't keep us waiting," Harry said before walking out.

Once he shut the door behind him, Harry sighed. It seemed like all the ladies in his life were in need of therapy. He might just have to employ one therapist to attend to all of them and heal them from their various traumas.

He returned to the living room to see Jade and Candace chatting about Sonia's wedding, and he smiled when he saw how excited Jade was about their conversation.

Seeing them that way, no one would believe that they had both just had such a heated conversation a while ago with most of the heat coming from Jade's end.

That was one of the things he loved about Jade. How she was a baby heart and never seemed to hold grudges.

And he liked that Jade had been able to express her feelings and both of them had been able to resolve things. The last thing he wanted was for the lady he wanted to be his partner for life to not get along with his twin sister.

"Have you talked to Andy? How is she?" Jade asked when she noticed Harry's presence.

"She is fine. Was just having a mood swing," Harry said as he took the plate to the kitchen and Jade followed him.

As Harry washed the plate, Jade pecked his cheek and he turned to smile at her, "What did I do to deserve that?"

"It's a thank you," Jade said with a grin.

"What for?"

"For doing what you did. I know you well enough to do that for my sake," Jade said and he shook his head as he dried his hand.

"It was for my sake too. I want you here. I love having you here," Harry said and Jade's smile softened.

"You know, you've changed a whole lot," she said, her voice teasing yet gentle.

"How?" He asked as he carried her and made her sit on the kitchen island while he stood between her wide legs.

"You know, you and your principles. The old Harry wouldn't be caught dead tampering with clocks and lying to keep me here," she said with a teasing smile.

He winced internally, the memory of his past self still fresh. The thought of sharing his living space, especially with a woman he wasn't married to, had felt like a violation of his personal code. His principles, once so rigid, now felt archaic and restrictive in light of how he felt about Jade.

"You are right," he admitted, his voice laced with introspection.

He met her gaze, his eyes sincere. "I wouldn't have believed it three months ago. I used to think I knew exactly what I wanted, and what I believed in. But being with you has challenged those beliefs in the best way possible. It's made me realize that sometimes, our principles are tested by the people we love, and we learn that life isn't always black and white, that sometimes the best choices are the ones that make our hearts happy, even if they don't always fit neatly into our pre-defined boxes. So, maybe what I needed was someone to challenge my rigid ways, to show me that happiness sometimes lies outside of our comfort zones."

Jade's smile bloomed as she reached out, her hand gently brushing his chin. "Well, I'm glad I got to be the one to challenge your rigid ways, Mr. Not-So-Principled-Anymore," she said and Harry chuckled as he kissed her while she wrapped both arms around him.

Chapter 819 Reunion

After their date at the gallery, Lucy and Tom had decided to see a movie together at the cinema within the mall where the gallery was located, before going to have dinner.

Seated in the cinema, the dim glow of the movie screen faded to black, and the credits rolled.

As everyone trooped out, Lucy leaned against Tom's shoulder with one hand covering her face so that no one would see her.

Tom chuckled, his hand finding hers under the armrest. The popcorn bucket sat between them, half-empty, a testament to their stolen moments of sneak-kisses and whispered jokes during the film.

"Everyone has left. We should go now, unless you want to see another movie," Tom said and Lucy looked around before smiling at him.

"Should we see it again? I loved every bit of it," Lucy said, her eyes gleaming with excitement.

"I guess that was why you kept jumping and yelling at the characters? So unlike you to exhibit such behavior," Tom said in amusement as he rose and pulled her up.

"No one knew it was me. The hall was dark and no one could see my face. And just to be extra sure I covered my face," she said with a grin.

"But everyone saw my face. So, they know I'm dating a loud lady. Whenever they see me again and you're with me, they will know you are the one," he pointed out.

"Or they will assume you dumped that loud lady for this dignified me," she said and Tom chuckled.

"So, this is the way you act when no one is watching?" He asked, his tone teasing.

"Only in front of you," she assured him with a wink and they both laughed as they exited the cinema.

The cool night air washed over them as they stepped out of the mall. Streetlights cast a warm glow, illuminating the bustling city life.

"So? Where are we having dinner?" Lucy asked, and Tom pointed ahead of them.

"There is a nice Italian restaurant up front. Let's go have dinner there," Tom said and hand in hand, they walked, their steps in sync as they talked about their favorite parts of the movie while Tom teased Lucy about her jump at the unexpected plot twist.

They reached the cozy Italian restaurant tucked away on a side street. The aroma of garlic and basil teased their senses, inviting them in.

Inside the restaurant, the atmosphere was a soothing symphony of low murmurs, clinking cutlery, and the soft jazz playing in the background. The red-checkered tablecloths and candlelit ambiance created an intimate atmosphere. Lucy and Tom took the seat by a window, overlooking the bustling street.

"How did you know of a homely place like this?" Lucy asked as she picked up the menu.

"Don't tell me you brought a lady here in the past," she said with narrowed eyes before Tom could respond.

Tom chuckled, "Is that the best you can think of?" He asked with a shake of his head.

"This used to be one of my favorite spots before I-Global became what it is now. Harry and I lived not far from here," Tom said and Lucy looked at him with interest.

"You know, I've never really thought of you as not this wealthy CEO. I mean, I've thought of you as my driver and stuff," she said with a grin, "but I mean I've never thought about your life before I-Global became what it is now," Lucy said thoughtfully.

"I guess that's one of the reasons I wanted us to come here. I wanted to show you this part of my life. Although a lot has changed around here now," Tom said and Lucy raised a brow.

"One of the reasons?"

"Of course. There are many reasons. I wanted you to have fun. I wanted you to relax. The list goes on," Tom said and Lucy nodded as she glanced at the menu.

As she perused the menu, Lucy glanced at Tom and noticed the smile playing on his lips as he watched her and she arched a brow, "What's making you smile?" She asked, her lips curving in a smile.

"Did you really have to say that earlier?" Tom asked with a chuckle.

"Say what?" she asked playfully, though she knew exactly what he was referring to.

"Say I'm the love of your life in front of everyone," Tom said with a somewhat shy smile that amused her.

"Well, you are, aren't you?" Lucy countered, a mischievous grin spreading across her face, and her eyes twinkling with amusement.

"Yes, I am. But...."

"There are no buts, love. You are mine and I wanted everyone to know. I thought we were done with that. If you keep talking about it, I just might make the announcement here too," she threatened with a grin and Tom chuckled.

"What if I beat you to it? Are you sure you want to keep this up?" Tom asked and Lucy giggled.

"Why did you look so flustered back there anyway? That was so unlike you," Lucy said and Tom laughed.

"What you did was totally unexpected," Tom said as he signalled to a waiter to serve them.

"Well, you should start getting used to it," Lucy said and Tom smiled before turning to the waiter.

While they waited for their orders, they conversed. Lucy told Tom about the visit to Mia and what Mia had said about the doctor being on her husband's payroll and she talked about how the apartment had brought back memories.

Their orders were served and as they ate, they shared stories from their past, their conversation flowing effortlessly.

Their laughter mingled with the soft clinking of glasses as they toasted to their unexpected turn of events and all that had brought them to this point.

Halfway through their meal a voice cut through their intimate conversation. "Lucy? Is that really you?"

Startled, Lucy turned around to see a blonde lady with a familiar smile and her eyes widened in surprise.

There, standing beside their table, was Chloe, her high school classmate, a vibrant smile etching her face.

"Chloe! Oh my god, it's been ages!" Lucy exclaimed, genuine surprise tinged with warmth as she jumped up to hug her former class mate.

Years seemed to melt away as they embraced, exchanging excited greetings.

"We were just about to leave and I saw you," Chloe said excitedly. "It's been, what, six years?"

"Seven," Lucy corrected, and time seemed to rewind, bringing a flood of memories.

Lucy remembered Chloe as the witty, popular girl who always had a mischievous twinkle in her eye. They weren't very close friends since Sonia was more than enough friend for one person to handle, but they had all been cheerleaders and Chloe had been the captain.

"What are you doing here?" Chloe asked and Lucy raised a brow.

"Does it look like I'm grocery shopping? Of course I'm having dinner," Lucy said and they both laughed.

"Wow! You look gorgeous, Lu! You've always been a looker after all," Chloe said and Lucy grinned.

"You're one to talk. Did you take a look at yourself before stepping out? You look stunning," Lucy said dramatically.

"By the way, I saw the news about you some time ago. I was going to reach out but I didn't know how to. And I didn't want it to feel like I was doing so for gossip. How are you?" Chloe asked, concern coloring her wide brown eyes.

"Thanks. I'm very fine now," Lucy said with a bright smile, while Tom watched Lucy, loving how confident she looked and sounded.

"By the way, I saw news of Sony's wedding to Bryan Hank. I was over the moon. Kept telling my husband how we were all class mates. Speaking of my husband," she said, turning to look at the tall man with a friendly smile, who was standing behind her.

"Lucy, meet my husband, Noah Templeton. Noah, This is Lucinda Perry. I've mentioned her a couple of times, remember?" She asked and Lucy narrowed her eyes.

"I didn't know you were married. Congrats," Lucy said to her before looking at her husband, "What did she mention me for? Nothing bad I hope?" Lucy asked Noah who smiled at her.

"She has mentioned everyone from her high to me, and I don't even know who is who anymore. Are you the one that snatched your best friend's boyfriend?" He asked and Lucy shook her head immediately making Noah and Chloe laugh.

"Don't tease her," Chloe said as she elbowed his side.

"Then you're one of the good ones I guess," he said making Lucy laugh.

"It's such a relief to know that. It's nice meeting you," Lucy said and then turned to Tom.

"Meet the absolute love of my life, Thomas Hank. Babe, meet Chloe, our cheerleading captain," Lucy introduced with a proud smile and Tom rose.

"It's a delight to meet you," Chloe said as she shook Tom's hand and Noah did the same.

"I'm so sorry to interrupt your date this way. How about we exchange phone numbers so we can catch up later? I would totally love to catch up with you and Sony. And talking about catching up. Have you heard about the reunion coming up soon?" Chloe asked, and Lucy's stomach lurched.

"I haven't heard anything about it," she admitted hesitantly.

"Oh, well, you have to come. You haven't joined us in years, and it's been way too long. And guess what the theme is for this year's reunion? PROM!" Chloe exclaimed, her enthusiasm infectious.

Lucy hesitated, a flicker of discomfort crossing her face. "Actually, I don't think I..." she began, searching for the right words.

Before she could finish, Chloe cut in, her voice bubbling with excitement. "Oh, Lucy, you absolutely have to come! It's the perfect opportunity to reminisce about the good old days. You can bring the absolute love of your life with you as your official plus one. The more, the merrier, right?"

Seeing how Lucy's mood had changed, Tom's hand unconsciously reached for Lucy's in a silent gesture of support. Lucy, however, remained silent, caught in a web of conflicting emotions.

The thought of prom in her high school held a tinge of anxiety, yet Tom's encouraging hold on her hand offered a sense of grounding.

Seeing Lucy's hesitation, Chloe continued, "Come on, Lucy! We haven't seen you in ages. Sony has to come too. It will be so much fun with you both. And this time, no one has to hide to take alcohol since we are all of age. And maybe we can don our cheerleading uniform once again for old time sake," she said with a wink.

Lucy glanced at Tom, seeking his opinion. His expression was a mix of curiosity and understanding. He squeezed her hand gently, as if to say, "The decision is yours."

Taking a deep breath, Lucy knew she couldn't ignore the invitation entirely. "I'll... I'll think about it and see what I can do," she finally said, a hint of uncertainty lacing her voice.

Chloe beamed, her eyes sparkling with joy. "That's great! We will see you there then! I should have your number so I can add you to the class group and send you the details. And guess what? We will be voting for prom queen too. I totally think you should contest for it."

With that they exchanged phone numbers, and Chloe left with Noah, leaving Lucy and Tom alone at their table.

Tom watched Lucy closely as she picked up her wineglass and drank from it with a small frown between her brows and he reached for her hand.

"Does the idea of a reunion make you that nervous?" He asked as he intertwined their fingers.

Lucy shrugged, "Sort of."

"Even when you will be having a prom date as handsome as me?" He asked with a teasing smile and her lips twitched.

"It just brings back lots of bad memories," she said, remembering how Jamie had threatened all the guys who had asked her to go to prom with them and how she had been unable to make it to prom herself.

"Am I not hot enough to distract your mind from those bad memories? I mean, the major thing on your mind should be getting me out of my clothes as your prom date, shouldn't it?" Tom asked and Lucy grinned.

"I'm being serious," she said and Tom nodded.

"Me too," he said as he resumed eating even though the food was cool now.

As they ate in silence, Lucy thought about how funny it was that they met someone she knew in a place like this coincidentally and then she narrowed her eyes when something clicked in her brain.

Just few weeks ago she had been telling Tom how she had wanted to be prom queen, and all of a sudden her former classmate was showing up in a restaurant he had chosen, at the same time they were here, to tell her about a prom reunion.

"Tom?" Lucy called, and he smiled at her.

"Yes, baby," he said and Lucy giggled.

"I'm not dense, you know?" She asked and he looked at her innocently.

"What are you talking about?"

"Do you really expect me to believe that all of this is coincidence?" She asked, since she knew very well how he had played this same coincidence card the first time making her believe he was her neighbor and driver by coincidence.

"I don't understand what you're saying," he said and Lucy laughed softly.

"What did you do? Just how far did you go to pull this off? Why?" She asked, forgetting all about her anxiety about the reunion.

"I still don't know...." Tom laughed when she picked a vegetable from a plate and threw it at him.

"Alright. Fine. I will tell you," he said laughing and she looked at him with a soft smile.

"I just don't want you to ever miss out on anything. And I don't want you to only have bad memories about prom. Did you see the way you looked and sounded before she brought up the reunion? You were happy to see her. I've never seen you look that way. And you didn't seem like an introvert in any way. It was easier picturing the Lucy you told me about the last time on our way to your place in Heden. I'm sure you will be happy to see all your other classmates as well. I want to see you in your element. I want you to remember what you were like before it all happened. Do you think you can do that for me?" Tom asked and tears gathered in Lucy's eyes.

"How far did you go to arrange this? And just how many people did you pay? Did Sonia help?" She asked and Tom shook his head.

"No. I wanted to do it myself. I didn't do much. I only made a couple of phone calls. And trust me, there is no length I won't go and no amount of money I won't spend to make you happy. So? Will you go to the reunion and take me with you as your prom date?" He asked and she brushed her tear away as she bobbed her head.

"I can't let you go through all this stress and not go for it, can I?" She asked with a snuffle.

"You can. But I'm hoping you won't," Tom said and she smiled, her eyes sparkling with love for him.

"As long as you're going to be by my side, I will do it," she said and to Tom's surprise she rose and went around the table to his side and kissed him.

"You seem to love public displays of affection more than me these days," Tom said with a chuckle.

"What can I do when you keep sweeping me off my feet this way? Let's leave now before I'm tempted to make another announcement here," Lucy said and Tom chuckled as he rose.

"So, did you make up that story about frequenting here and living somewhere nearby in the good old days," she asked after Tom took care of the bills and they walked out.

"No. I didn't. I told you it was one of the reasons I brought you here, didn't I?" Tom asked as they walked down back to the mall where their car was parked.

"And meeting Chloe by coincidence was another?" She asked and Tom chuckled.

"I guess."

"I don't know what to do with you, Tom."

"Love me," Tom said and she grinned.

"If I love you any more than I already do, then my heart is going to burst or I'm going to go crazy and just keep screaming 'I love Thomas Hank' wherever I go. Is that what you want?" Lucy asked and Tom chuckled.

"I actually think you're crazy already," he said and she laughed.

"Yeah. I think so to."

Chapter 820 Early Morning Chat

Tom had a smile on his face as he woke up on Monday morning to kisses on his face.

"What are you doing?" He asked Lucy as he tried to open his eyes but she kept kissing both eyes one after the other.

"Waking you up," Lucy said as she pulled away from him and Tom chuckled.

"You seem to have woken up with lots of energy," Tom observed as he looked into her smiling face.

"Lots of love you mean," she corrected and Tom laughed as he glanced at the alarm clock by the bed.

"It's not even six yet," he complained.

"Yeah. That's because I woke up early and wanted us to spend some time together before we get ready for work. Are you complaining?" She asked and Tom chuckled as he rubbed his eyes.

"Isn't that usually my thing?" He asked, amused by her excessive show of love.

"Well, it's now my thing. I'm hungry," she complained and Tom sat up.

"Let's go find something for you to eat then," he said and she grinned.

"What I want to eat is right here," she said with a naughty smile and Tom laughed out loud.

"For Christ's sake, Jewel, what has gotten into you?" Tom asked and she grinned.

"Nothing yet, but I'm hoping you will get into me soon or inside me preferably," she said with a wink making him laugh harder.

"It's too early for all these laughter," Tom said and Lucy smiled.

"Well, I want you to start your day with a healthy dose of laughter," she said and Tom pulled her close and hugged her as he let out a deep sigh.

"Thank you, Jewel. You make me so happy," he said and she wrapped her arms around him and patted the back of his head.

"You make me happy too," she said as she pulled back to look into his face.

"Are you really hungry?" He asked and she grinned.

"Nah. I woke up really hungry. Just wanted to make you laugh. Today is going to be a busy day for you since Harry isn't coming to the office, right?" Lucy asked and he groaned.

"Please don't remind me. And it's not just going to be today. He will only be coming in on Wednesday to wrap up some loose ends before leaving for his vacation," Tom said and Lucy smiled.

"I guess we won't be able to have our dates anymore after work," she said and Tom frowned.

"Why not?"

"Because you might have to leave work later than usual because of your meetings and stuff, and you will definitely have more work to do," she pointed out.

"Well, we still have to keep up with our dates even if it's for only thirty minutes or an hour," he said and she raised a brow.

"Are you sure about that?" She asked and he nodded.

"Yeah. Let's go find you something to eat," Tom said as he tried to get off the bed but Lucy pushed him back on.

"Don't worry. I can get myself something. Do you need anything?" She asked as she rose from the bed.

"A cup of coffee will be appreciated. I should spend some time looking over some documents before we get ready for work," Tom said and Lucy arched a brow.

"Who is the workaholic now? I woke you to spend time with me but you'd rather spend it looking over some documents. Don't tell me your love for me is going down now because my love for you increased?" Lucy asked with narrowed eyes and Tom chuckled.

"As if that could happen. You could never love me more than I love you, but let's leave that argument for another day. Take your time to eat while I work and when you get back you will have my full attention," Tom promised and smacked her ass as she walked away.

As Lucy arrived downstairs and headed for the kitchen, she noticed that the light at the dining was on, and she paused when she saw Desmond seated there with a distant look on his face.

"Good morning, Desmond," she greeted when she noticed that he was lost in thought and was yet to notice her presence.

"Lucy. Good morning, Lucy. Why are you up so early?" Desmond asked, surprised by the company.

"I should be asking you that. I will be getting ready to leave for work soon, but your flight doesn't leave until noon, so why are you seated here alone?" Lucy asked curiously as she moved closer to him.

"I couldn't sleep and I didn't want to disturb Eve, so I came down to have a quiet moment to myself. And a cup of coffee," he said and she looked at him with a concerned expression.

"Are you okay? Do you want to talk? Or should I leave you to your quiet moment?" She asked, and Desmond looked at her for a moment and sighed.

"Why are you down here?" He asked curiously.

"I woke up hungry. Wanted to get something to eat," she said and Desmond nodded.

"Get to it then. Maybe I can keep you company while you eat," he said and she flashed him a smile before going into the kitchen.

Lucy returned a couple of minutes later with some sandwiches and a glass of juice.

"So, why couldn't you sleep? Are you okay?" Lucy asked and Desmond smiled as he watched her bite into her sandwich.

"You've changed a lot," Desmond observed.

"I have?" Lucy asked with a grin and Desmond smiled back.

"You know you have," Desmond said as he watched her eat.

"It depends on what you mean. What kind of change are you talking about?" Lucy asked as she watched Desmond, her eyes gleaming.

"You look happier and more easygoing," Desmond said and Lucy giggled.

"I am happier thanks to your son. But don't think I didn't notice that you didn't answer my question. Why couldn't you sleep?" Lucy asked and Desmond chuckled.

"You've become nosy too," Desmond said and Lucy laughed.

"Your family taught me that. I take it you don't want to tell me what's wrong," Lucy said and Desmond sighed deeply.

"It's nothing serious. I've just been having a hard time sleeping lately," he said and Lucy nodded.

"You must be getting old," she joked and he laughed.

"I suppose so. You've changed your mind about getting married to Tom, haven't you?" Desmond asked, and Lucy raised a brow.

"How did you come to that conclusion? And why are we back to talking about me when you refused to talk about you?" Lucy asked and Desmond laughed.

"There is nothing to talk about me. I'm just a boring old man. Nothing fun is going on in my life," Desmond said and Lucy snorted.

"Apart from traveling around the world with the love of your life. I wish I was you," she said and he chuckled.

"Did I tell you, you're more fun now too?" Desmond asked and Lucy pouted.

"So, I wasn't fun before now? You are hurting my feelings."

"I said more fun, Lucy. More fun," Desmond said and she flashed him a smile.

"Have I told you, you're my favorite Hank apart from Tom?" She asked and Desmond laughed.

"I thought it was Sonia?" Desmond said and Lucy gasped.

"How did I forget she is a Hank now? I guess you come after her," she said and Desmond laughed, feeling genuinely amused by this new Lucy.

"I can settle for that. Thanks for making me laugh, Lucy," Desmond said and she smiled.

"You can keep a secret, right?" Lucy asked, and Desmond shrugged.

"If you want me to," he said and she leaned closer to him.

"I plan to propose to Tom at the Christmas party. He doesn't know I've changed my mind yet. I plan to surprise him," she said with a mischievous smile and Desmond grinned.

He had always known that Lucy was going to eventually change her mind about getting married after she settled comfortably into her relationship with Tom, and he was pleased to see that he had not been wrong.

"I thought as much. I'm happy for you, Lucy. You've come such a long way in such a short time. I'm proud of you," he said and Lucy raised a brow.

"Why do you sound like my dad? You should be happy for Tom," she said and he chuckled.

"I'm happy for you both, but I'm happier for you. This tells me you're overcoming your trauma and you're in a good place in your head. That is why I'm proud of you," he said and Lucy sighed deeply.

"You're right. And once again, it's mostly thanks to Tom. You raised a perfect man for me, Desmond. Thank you so much," she said and he nodded.

"I guess the next time we see will be at the Christmas party where you will be proposing to him," he said with a pleased smile.

"Evelyn will be over the moon with joy. Thank you for changing your mind, Lucy," Desmond said and they both turned when they heard footsteps.

"Seriously? You woke me up to spend time with me but you're here with my dad while I'm waiting for you?" Tom asked incredulously.

"Sorry, love. I saw him sitting here alone so I decided to keep him company," Lucy said as Tom took the seat opposite her.

"I will leave you both then. I have to go back to bed before Eve wakes up," Desmond said as he rose.

"Thank you, Lucy. You've made my morning," Desmond said and leaned down to peck her before walking away.