

Wild Night 821

Chapter 821 Regrets

As Harry drove the car to the penitentiary where Sara was being held, his eyes caught Candace's hands and how she kept rubbing them together anxiously.

"If you don't feel up to it, I can go inside alone when we get there. You don't have to face her if you don't want to," Harry said softly.

"I have to face her. I need to," Candace said as she looked out of the window.

She had been thinking all about this visit since she woke up that morning. She had been wondering how she was going to feel when she came face to face with Sara.

Would she feel sorry for the woman? Would she feel angry? Would it be hatred? What was she going to say to her? Would she ask her why she did all of that?

"I need to see the face of the woman who had the nerve to sell and abandon her own children for fame. I have to see the face of the woman who was shameless and cruel enough to want to harvest her daughter's organ illegally," Candace said, her voice thick with emotion.

Seeing that she was determined to go on with it, Harry decided to leave her to her thoughts while he focused on his.

A single question lingered in Harry's mind, a curiosity that had gnawed at him ever since he had discovered he had a twin. As they got out of the car, he finally voiced it.

"Candace," he began hesitantly, "I want to know who is older."

Candace stopped, a ghost of a smile playing on her lips. "Does it really matter, Harry?"

He shrugged, a wry smile tugging at the corner of his own mouth. "Maybe not. But it would be nice to know who had the misfortune of being stuck with her a little longer."

A flicker of warmth, a spark of shared experience, ignited in Candace's eyes. For the first time that day, the anger softened, replaced by a flicker of something akin to kinship.

"That would be you. She sold me at birth, remember? You are the one who had the misfortune of being nurtured by her for a week. Maybe that's why you are so mean, you unlucky bastard," Candace said and Harry chuckled as they headed for the building.

The cold, gray walls of the prison stretched high above Harry and Candace as they made their way through the dimly lit corridors. The sterile interior, devoid of warmth or character, smelled faintly of disinfectant and a deeper, more unsettling aroma of regret.

Candace's heart raced with a mixture of anger and apprehension as they approached the visitor's area.

Harry, always composed, walked beside her with a determined stride. They had rehearsed this meeting countless times, but nothing could prepare them for the emotions that would surface when they faced their mother.

They were ushered into a brightly lit room, its white walls reflecting the harsh fluorescent lights with an almost clinical sterility.

As they entered the visitor's room, Sara sat alone at a small table, her eyes downcast. She looked older, wearier, but there was still a hint of the beauty that had once captivated so many.

"Sara," Harry began, his voice low and devoid of warmth.

It was a deliberate choice, a clear distinction from the term "Mom" that would have reeked of a connection he wasn't willing to acknowledge.

Sara flinched at the sound as she looked up, her gaze darting between the twins. But it was the flicker of recognition in her eyes that sent a jolt through Candace as her gaze finally settled on Candace.

Candace felt a primal urge to turn away, to shield herself from the eyes of the callous woman who had birthed her and then ripped a gaping hole in her life, leaving her to navigate a childhood marked by instability and hardship.

"This is my twin sister, Candace. Candace, this is the almighty Sara Walker that chose to decide our fates," Harry said in a form of introduction and sat back to see how Sara would react and how the interaction would go between Sara and Candace.

When Sara had been informed that she had visitors and had been brought here, she had somehow known it would be Harry. She had thought Aaron would be there too, but seeing Candace, she sighed deeply.

Looking at Candace, Sara was sure she would have known that Candace was her daughter even though Janet hadn't shown her Candace's pictures. She didn't need anyone to tell her that. She could see her younger self in Candace. Something she had not seen in Crystal.

Ever since Janet visited her and told her about her biological daughter and grandson, all she could think about Candace and Jamal and all that Janet had said to her.

A shaky breath escaped Sara's lips. "I wondered if you would come to see me," Sara rasped, her voice unfamiliar to Candace.

"Of course, I had to. What's the point of having you locked up in here if I don't come to see how you look in your new home? The prison uniform becomes you," Harry said as he looked her over.

Sara took a deep breath, "I figured you were behind it all. You had your sister all along. How did you find her?" Her voice had lost all traces of the arrogance and pride that usually tinged it.

"That's for me to know, and for you to wonder. You see, life has a way of balancing things out. Evil doesn't win forever. And I'm glad to know I was able to bring you here. This is where a person like you should rot," Harry said and Sara nodded, while Candace merely watched them, listening to the exchange.

"You must be happy to have me locked up here," Sara said, her voice devoid of emotion.

"You have no idea how happy I am. It's like locking up a rabid dog that was on the loose. You'd do all you can to protect people from it. Someone like you shouldn't be an idol that other people should be looking up to. Have you seen what your fans say about you? The people you so wanted to love and worship you that made you abandon your family, they have forgotten all about you in a matter of weeks. Right now, you are a nobody. But guess who is going to remember you forever? And I'm

pretty sure you can guess what we are going to think each time we remember you?" Harry said and Sara nodded.

"I did what I believed was best for me...."

Candace scoffed, a harsh, humorless sound. "Without stopping to consider the children that you birthed? What about the security, the love, the childhood that we deserved? That I deserved? Do you have any idea how hard my life has been? Do you know all I've been through?" Candace asked angrily.

The question hung in the air, a painful accusation. Sara's shoulders slumped, the facade of nonchalance crumbling under the sheer force of Candace's quiet fury.

A single tear escaped her eye, tracing a glistening path down her plastic cheeks. It wasn't a performance, Harry could tell. It was raw, unadulterated regret.

"Candace..."

"Don't," Candace cut her off, venom lacing every word. "Don't you dare say my name. You don't deserve the right. All those years, you lived your high life, while I scraped by. You had the guts to want to harvest my organ and get rid of me. And now you think a few pathetic words will erase that?" Candace snapped, her voice sharp.

Sara's gaze flickered away, shame creeping into her eyes. "I'm not asking you to forgive me. I don't expect you to forgive me or to understand," she whispered, her voice barely audible as tears rolled down her cheeks.

A torrent of emotions she'd spent years suppressing threatened to suffocate her. She longed to reach out, to apologize for ever giving her up in the first place, to explain to Candace that she had tried to find her after she heard of the death of her adoptive parents, but the words wouldn't come. They were choked by the years of silence, the self-serving justifications she'd built to shield herself from the truth.

Candace remained unmoved by the tears that rolled down Sarah's cheeks. The years of anger, the feeling of abandonment, bubbled up within her, threatening to spill over.

"You shouldn't expect anything from me. But you know what," Candace leaned forward, her voice a low growl, "I pity you. You have nothing left. No freedom, no family, not even self-respect. This is all you have: a glimpse of the life you destroyed."

"I deserve that. You can hate me...."

Hate? The concept was alien to Harry. It was an emotion for the weak, for those who couldn't move on. He felt a cold, calculating detachment, a sense of satisfaction at seeing the woman who had abandoned them reduced to this.

"Hate?" Candace repeated, the word a foreign taste on her tongue. "You don't deserve even that from me. Hate takes too much energy, Sara. I... I don't have anything to give you. All I have is this," she gestured towards herself, "a life I built myself, a life far removed from yours. And that is why I came. I wanted you to see the face of the daughter you discarded for your selfish schemes. I hope it was worth it. I hope the years of luxury, affluence and fame was worth all you threw away."

Candace's words, harsh as they were, carried a weight of truth, Sara mused. Candace had built a life, a life far removed from hers. Perhaps, just perhaps, there was still a chance for redemption, not for forgiveness, but for a semblance of peace. Perhaps, by facing the consequences of her actions, she could finally begin to heal the wounds she had inflicted.

Candace stood up abruptly, the chair scraping harshly against the floor with a screech. She met Sara's gaze, her eyes devoid of warmth. "This is over, Sara. This visit, this... whatever this is, it ends now."

"Before we leave, you should know that I had your lawyer draw up your Will with Candace's name on it. She deserves all you own seeing as you sold her in order to get them in the first place," Harry said before Candace could leave and Sara nodded.

None of those things mattered to her anymore. It wasn't like she was going to be released to go back to them. It was best Candace had them than anyone else.

As Harry and Candace headed for the door, Harry hesitated and turned to look at Sara, "I have a question for you, though," Harry said and Sara nodded.

"Anything. You can ask," she said and Candace looked at Harry.

"Who came first. Me or Candace?" Harry asked surprising Sara who hadn't expected such an ordinary question.

"Your sister came first," Sara said and Harry scowled.

"I hope you rot in here," Harry muttered irritably and Candace resisted the urge to laugh as they both walked out of the hall leaving Sara.

Watching them leave, Sara felt crushing weight descend upon her. The anger in Candace's voice, the coldness in Harry's, both echoed the hollowness within her own chest.

The life she'd built, the life she'd believed was so necessary for her happiness, now seemed utterly meaningless. Gone were the cheering crowds, the adoring fans, the luxurious lifestyle. All she had left were the ghosts of the children she'd abandoned, the gaping hole in her heart where a mother's love should have resided.

As the heavy door clanged shut behind them, a single thought echoed in the sterile room: she was truly alone.

She had thought the affluence and fame were all important, and she had thought that she would be satisfied with the knowledge that she had tasted such a life. But it wasn't so.

Her conversation with Janet had broken down some of the walls she had put up around her heart to stop herself from feeling guilty.

Something had shifted within her after Janet left. The anger and defiance that had been a shield for so long had begun to crumble. Seeing Candace now had completely shattered what was left of the shield.

Years of denial cracked, revealing a raw truth. She hadn't just abandoned children; she'd abandoned a part of herself. Candace's words, "the glimpse of the life you destroyed," resonated deeply. The life she had built, the career, the fame – it all seemed hollow now compared to the family she had cast aside.

Ever since Janet's visit, she had been wondering what could have been. How would her life had turned out had she not done all that she did?

What would her life had been as sister, a mother, a grandmother, and a wife?

Aaron had loved her selflessly and after him no other man had come close to showing her half the love he had shown her. Aaron would have no doubt been willing to help her build her career had she been patient.

Couldn't she have had it all? Both the family and career? Couldn't she have set aside her greed and selfishness and thought about other people other than herself for a change?

The life she'd craved, the life she'd sacrificed everything for, had been built on a foundation of sand. Now, the tide of reality had washed it all away, leaving her exposed and vulnerable.

Why did she go so far only to come this low? To end up as a nobody? A criminal with no one beside her. Not even one of those fans who had idolized her.

Her whole life had been in vain. Everything had been for nothing, Sara thought sorrowfully as she was led back to her cell.

Chapter 822 Upset

The moment Harry and Candace got into the car, Candace burst into a fit of laughter and Harry turned to look at her, knowing why she was laughing.

He wasn't exactly surprised; he had known she would find the humor in it, even in a situation like this.

"I didn't expect you to be in such a good mood after seeing her," he said, his voice laced with a hint of concern despite his annoyance.

Candace, still struggling to catch her breath, wiped a tear from her eye.

"I didn't expect to be in a good mood either, but thanks to you I'm fine, kid bro," Candace said with a mischievous grin. Harry wrinkled his nose in mock disgust.

He cleared his throat, "I think we should keep that to ourselves," he mumbled, already knowing it was a lost cause.

"Never. I'm not keeping it to myself," Candace retorted, her smile widening.

Harry scowled. "In case you forgot, we had an agreement," Harry said and Candace's brow arched.

"We did? About what? When?" Candace asked, as her brow furrowed in mock confusion.

Harry gave her a pointed look. "At the hospital where dad was admitted when you first came. We agreed that I was the older twin" Harry said, trying to jog her memory.

"Oh, that? Please, Harry," she scoffed. "I remember very well that you made the agreement, not me. I never agreed to be the younger one," Candace said and Harry narrowed his eyes.

"Are you trying to go back on your word right now because of some nonsense that the witch spouted? Do we even believe her? She could be lying to us about it just to cause some misunderstanding between us," Harry said and Candace's laughter bubbled up again.

"First of all, I'm not going back on any word cause I didn't give it in the first place. Not in the verbal or written form. Secondly, there is no misunderstanding here, Harry. I'm pretty sure you wouldn't have a problem believing her had she said you were older than me. Suck it up, Harry. You're the youngest in the family. The last born of the house...."

"Don't say that!" Harry interrupted, his cheeks flushing slightly. "Besides, you are older than Andy, right?"

"Nope," Candace said, popping the 'p'. "I'm not. Andy is actually a couple of months older than me," Candace said with a grin and Harry shook his head.

"I don't care about any of that. I'm older than the both of you," Harry said stubbornly and Candace giggled.

"Aww. How cute. Now you're actually acting like the baby of the house. Want to throw a tantrum? Need a bottle and a rattle?"

Harry glared at her, but it lacked conviction. Candace's laughter filled the car, a sound that Harry was fast becoming to find familiar and comforting.

"It's obvious you are enjoying yourself," Harry said and Candace shrugged.

"It not every day I get to see you worked up this way over nothing," she said with a grin.

"You know what's cute? The baby of the house is going to get married to the baby of the Hank family. You are both a match made in Heaven," Candace said and Harry glared at her.

"Are you really going to be like this?" Harry asked and she grinned.

"Why is it so important to you that you be older than I am?" Candace asked and Harry shrugged.

"I just want to be your big brother," he said and Candace giggled, wondering what it was with guys and not wanting to admit they were younger.

She remembered how Lucas had reacted when Lucy introduced him to them as her kid brother.

"Let's do it this way. I'm still not going to call you my big brother. You can keep acting like it if you want. Even if it's just pretend. I won't tell anyone about it," Candace said and Harry narrowed his eyes.

"For real? Can I trust you?" He asked, and she shrugged.

"Why did you ask her that in front of me, anyway? Were you really thinking you'd be older than me? She gave me a way first. That should be because I came out first," Candace said and Harry sighed.

"Seeing you seemed to break her a bit," Harry said and Candace snorted.

"Don't tell me you fell for those tears? I'm sure she shed those tears only because she was in pain that she didn't get to me before you," Candace said and Harry chuckled.

"Nah. I don't think so," Harry said and Candace rolled her eyes.

"What now? Feeling sorry for your mommy?" Candace asked in a taunting tone and Harry chuckled as he started the car and drove off.

A comfortable silence settled between them for a moment, broken only by the rhythmic hum of the engine. Harry stole a glance at Candace, her profile softened by the sunlight filtering through the window. Despite the revelation about their birth order and the painful visit with their mother, there was a lightness in her eyes that hadn't been there before.

"Are you really okay, though?" Harry asked, genuine concern tinging his voice.

Candace turned to him, her expression turning serious. "Yeah, I am. I meant every word I said to her. I'm not going to waste any more energy being mad at her or hating her. All I wanted was for her to see me, and she saw me. I also wanted to see what she looked like and I've done that. That's closure for me. I have no more business with her. Now, as far as I'm concerned, my mother died when I was born."

Harry nodded, absorbing her words. He understood her perspective but he only wished he felt the same, "Where are you headed now? Home to Andy? Or to see your sugar boy?" Harry asked, changing the subject.

"You can't call him sugar boy anymore, kid brother," Candace said as she glanced at her wrist watch, "And yes, I'm going to see Matt."

After dropping her off at a place where she could get a cab to Matt's place, Harry decided to go to the company since Jade wouldn't be at his place and he didn't want to stay at home alone doing nothing.

The moment Harry arrived at the company he headed directly for Tom's office, and although he knew that Tom was in the middle of a meeting with some executives, he walked into the office.

The door creaked open, momentarily distracting Tom from the mind-numbing presentation on projected quarterly sales figures.

Tom raised a brow as his eyes met Harry's, wondering why Harry had bothered to stop by the office. Sensing that Harry wanted to talk, and he needed a break, Tom sighed, dismissing the executives with a practiced smile.

"Gentlemen," he said, his voice laced with a hint of forced cheer, "let's pick this up later, shall we? Some urgent matters require my immediate attention," Tom said and immediately everyone rose to excuse them.

As the door clicked shut behind the last departing executive, Tom leaned back in his chair, a furrow appearing between his brows. "Alright, Harry, spill it. What's going on? How was the visit to the prison?" Tom asked and Harry scowled.

"Can you believe that Candace came out first?" Harry asked, and Tom looked at him, completely lost for a moment before he burst into a peal of laughter when he got what Harry had just said.

"Really?" Tom asked in amusement.

"I just can't believe that she is older than me," Harry said and Tom grinned.

"Why not?" Tom asked, amused by Harry's displeasure.

"No specific reason. I should prefer to be older," Harry said and Tom chuckled.

"Well, if it makes you feel better you can look at it from this perspective; she might have come out first, but you are older in the family. She might be Sara's first born, but she is your dad's last born," Tom said and Harry grinned, liking the analogy.

"That's right! You are correct," Harry said and Tom laughed.

"I can't believe something as minor as that actually got you upset. What is wrong with you, Harry?" Tom asked and Harry sighed but said nothing.

Tom looked at Harry closely and then narrowed his eyes, "Were you that affected by the visit? Do you feel sorry for Sara?" He asked suspiciously.

"No, I don't," Harry said and Tom shook his head.

"You do. That's the reason you are upset. You wouldn't come to the office just to tell me that Candace is older than you. You came because you're upset," Tom said and Harry scowled.

"I'm not," Harry denied.

"It's okay to admit it, Harry. You know very well that I'm not going to judge you for it. She might have not been the best of mothers, but she was still your mother, so it's only normal that you will feel a little upset over seeing her locked up there and knowing you put her there yourself," Tom said knowingly since he had known from the onset that all of this would be tough on Harry.

Tears gathered in Harry's eyes, but he said nothing as he walked over to the window and stood there with his back to Tom.

"I don't regret putting her there," Harry said after some minutes of silence.

"I know you don't," Tom said and Harry turned to look at him.

"I know it's useless but I feel sad and I'm mad at myself for feeling that way," Harry confessed.

Tom rose from his seat and walked into his office bedroom to pour Harry some whisky. He returned to Harry's side and handed it to him.

"I would have drank with you, but I still have a couple of meetings," he said as he placed a hand on Harry's shoulder.

"All these years I had her picture by my bedside. I talked to her nearly every night. I would dream of her. I would imagine what sort of mother she was. I loved her. I didn't know her but I loved her. I understand that my dad did it with the best of intentions, but I blame him for making me love someone that doesn't exist. I hate her for being this kind of person and not meeting my expectations. Had she abandoned us and lived a good life it wouldn't have been so disappointing. Had she remained where she was and not shown up. Or maybe shown up just to check on us and say hello, it would have been better than coming here with ulterior motives and wanting to get rid of Candace. I hate that she gave me so many things to use against her. I hate that she looked so pitiful today when it has become too late. I thought I would get some satisfaction from seeing her there, but I didn't. Candace said she got closure, but I didn't," Harry said and clenched his jaw when tears gathered in his eyes again.

Tom watched Harry, a well of emotions swirling within his friend. He understood the turmoil – the years spent building a fantasy of a mother shattered by harsh reality.

"It's okay to grieve the mother you never had, Harry," Tom said gently.

"Your feelings are valid. But remember, you don't owe her your forgiveness. She made her choices, and now she has to face the consequences."

Harry took a long sip of the whiskey, the amber liquid burning a comforting path down his throat. He looked at Tom, a flicker of gratitude in his eyes.

"You're right," Harry admitted, his voice raspy as he wiped a stray tear from his cheek. "I don't have to forgive her. But this whole thing just... messes with you, you know?"

Tom nodded. "It does. But you're not alone, Harry. You have Jade and me and your two sisters and your dad and Jamal. Maybe you need Jamal to hold your hand so he can heal your heart," Tom said and a ghost of a smile touched Harry's lips.

"Do you think that maybe Candace is sad too but doesn't want to tell me about it? She went to see Matt," Harry said and Tom raised an eye brow.

"Matt, huh? Well, at least she has him for support if she is sad. He's a good guy, Harry. You should be glad she has him."

Harry nodded, a touch of relief washing over him. "Yeah, you're right. Matt's great. He's been a rock for her long before we came into the picture," Harry said in agreement.

"Then maybe that's all she needs right now. Someone to be there for her, to listen and support her." Tom said, a hint of a smile playing on his lips.

"And you need Jade too. Seeing Sara might not be the closure you needed, but maybe seeing Jade will be the comfort you crave," Tom said and Harry raised a brow.

"Is this your polite way of sending me out of your office?" He asked and Tom chuckled.

"Yes. I need to get back to work. Some of us are busy. Unless of course you need me to give you a hug and a comforting kiss," Tom said with a pucker of his lips and Harry chuckled.

"Thanks. I will pass. Thank you for listening..."

"Get lost," Tom said and Harry grinned as he dropped the empty glass on the table before taking the private elevator.

Alone in his office, Tom picked up his phone and called Jade, "Go to Harry," he said the moment she received the call and hung up.

As he gazed out the window at the bustling city below, he couldn't help being worried for Harry. He prayed and hoped that Harry would feel better.

Chapter 823 Shopping

As Harry headed to his car, he contemplated whether to call Jade or go home and find something to occupy his time. Maybe play a game and chat with Andy. Although that wouldn't be the same as having Jade.

Just having Jade sit next to him and hearing her chatter or seeing her smile would be more than enough for him.

Jade had said she was going to spend the day having fun alone and finding things of interest to do, and he really didn't want to interfere with her program or bother her-- not that he was going to tell her he was upset, anyway. There was no need getting her worried about him.

Before he could make up his mind, his phone buzzed, startling him out of his thoughts. Harry smiled when he saw it was Jade. She was calling him first.

"Hey, goddess. I was just thinking of giving you a call," Harry answered, trying to keep the weariness out of his voice.

"Hey, boo! While you were busy thinking about it, I was busy doing it! Next time, try to beat me to it," She sounded cheerful, a stark contrast to the heaviness weighing on his own heart.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Where are you, pa'ap? Are you back from the visit yet?" Jade asked, her voice brimming with a playful energy that instantly lifted his spirits.

"Yeah. I dropped by the office briefly. But I'm on my way out now. You?"

"Out where? Don't tell me you went to find work to do at the office," Jade said and Harry chuckled.

"Nah. It was nothing like that. I'm heading home now."

"Perfect! You don't have any plans, do you?" Jade asked without answering his question.

"It depends. Do you have something planned out for me?" He asked, hoping she did, since he needed her company.

"I was wondering if you could come shopping with me. It's boring doing it alone. I'm at Ace mall. Can you come over?" She asked hopefully.

The mention of a shopping spree filled Harry with a mix of amusement and apprehension. He wasn't much of a clothes horse, and the thought of navigating aisles of garments sent a low groan through him. But the prospect of spending time with Jade, even if it meant battling shopping bags, was too enticing to resist.

"Sure. Anything for you. I will be there in," Harry checked his wristwatch, "twenty minutes," Harry said and Jade screeched happily before hanging up.

Jade sighed as she returned her phone into her handbag. She was certain that Tom asked her to go to Harry because he was feeling down. And knowing that he had visited his mother in prison earlier, she suspected his mood had a lot to do with that.

She hoped that she would be able to cheer and comfort him now as he always did for her. She couldn't help but think about Candace and wonder how she was doing. She remembered the way Candace had wept when she first found out her biological mother had sold her. She couldn't imagine how Candace must have felt coming face to face with Sara.

Deciding to put her time to good use while she wait for Harry, she dialed Candace's line.

Candace, who was lying on the bed with Matt, with her head resting on his chest sat up when her phone rang.

"It's Jade," she informed Matt as she received the call, "Hey!"

"Hey, you. Are you okay?" Jade asked with concern.

"Why wouldn't I be okay? And why do you sound like we didn't see this morning? You know I'm okay," Candace said with an amused smile.

"Are you sure? How did the visit go?" Jade asked and Candace shrugged.

"It was uneventful. Nothing memorable about it," Candace said dismissively.

Knowing Candace and how she liked to pretend like everything was right even when she was dying inside, Jade sighed. "Where are you?"

"I'm with Matt. Trust me, I'm okay," Candace said when she realized that Jade had called because she was worried about her.

"If you say so. Have fun then," Jade said, but before she could hang up, Candace stopped her.

"Jade?"

"Yeah?"

"Thanks for checking on me. Maybe you should check on Harry. I think he is sort of sad," Candace said and Jade raised a brow.

"You think? Or he is sad? Which is it?" She asked, wanting to know if Harry had said so or she had only suspected it, and just how sad he was.

"It's just a feeling. I don't know. I might be wrong. Just check on him. Okay?" Candace said and Jade sighed.

"Alright. Thanks. Give my regards to Matt," Jade said before hanging up.

As Candace dropped her phone, Matt sighed, "Are you really okay?" He asked, since she had not said much since she got to his place.

"Yeah."

"So, why won't you tell me about the meeting? How did it go?" He asked and she shrugged.

"There is nothing to tell. It was pretty ordinary. She shed a few crocodile tears and I told her my piece," Candace said dismissively.

"So, why can't you meet my gaze? Look into my eyes," Matt urged her softly, running a hand down her arm.

"Why do you all keep sounding like I'm expected to feel a certain way because I met her? Yes, I saw her for the first time today, so what? Why should that affect me or my day? It wasn't a pleasant meeting. I thought I was going to ask her why she did that and how she could do such a thing, but when I saw her I realized there was no point. What is done is done, and her answers won't change anything. They will only be excused to me. I don't hate her. I don't like. I'm not mad at her either. I just don't care about her one way or the other and I can't be bothered. I just want to continue my day like that visit didn't happen. So, can we stop talking about it?" Candace asked and Matt bobbed his head since he had gotten the reaction he wanted from her.

He had been a bit worried when she walked in earlier and went straight to the bedroom to lie down on the bed.

Back at the Mall, Jade checked the time again and when she saw that ten minutes had passed, she decided to go wait for Harry in front of the mall.

Arriving at the mall, Harry spotted Jade waiting by the entrance, looking radiant in a sundress that danced around her knees as she waved him over.

"Hey, baby!" she said, excitement dancing in her eyes as Harry got to where she stood after entrusting the parking of his car to the valet.

"Did I keep you waiting for long?" Harry asked as he looked her over, the mere sight of her casting away the remnant of gloom.

"Not at all. Let's go in. I want to splurge a little," she said with an infectious smile that had Harry smiling back at her.

He couldn't help but notice how the afternoon light caught the highlights of her hair, how her eyes sparkled with delight, how her voice carried an unspoken concern beneath the surface.

Jade raised a brow when Harry took out his wallet. "What is that for?" She asked and shook her head as she watched him take out a black card.

"No. Not your money. I'm not exactly poor, you know? I might not be as wealthy as you, but I am wealthy too. I have my untouched trust fund, monthly allowance sent by my grandfather and Tom. My fat salary, etcetera," Jade said as she pulled out her own black card and flashed it in front of him.

"Point noted. I'm so lucky to have a wealthy girlfriend," Harry said with a grin as he returned his card into his wallet.

"Yes, you are. Now let's go in," she said as she took Harry's hand and pulled him with her excitedly.

"So, what are you splurging on?" Harry asked and Jade winked.

"You will see," she said, not giving her plan away.

Harry smiled as he let her lead him, curious to see what she termed splurging and what she wanted to get.

Instead of heading towards the usual women's clothing stores, she took a sharp turn towards a different section. He raised an eyebrow in question.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"Ah, you'll see," she winked again, an air of mischievous secrecy surrounding her.

Harry's heart warmed at her thoughtfulness when he realized the shopping was for him. He had almost forgotten that he needed to get some stuff for their trip.

"You don't have to do this...."

"I want to," Jade said cutting him off.

"What about your clothes?" Harry asked and she shook her head.

"I already got all I need. The girls joined me in shopping. It was so much fun. Now hush and follow me," Jade ordered and Harry shook his head as he did as she asked.

He followed her through the mall, watching as she picked out outdoor outfits he would need for their vacation, her eyes lighting up with each new find.

The next few hours were a whirlwind. Jade, seemingly possessed by an uncharacteristic shopping frenzy, dragged him from store to store, pulling clothes from racks, insisting he try them on, refusing to let him escape with anything resembling his usual attire.

He found himself bewilderedly holding out floral patterned and vintage shirts, trying on pants and shorts he wasn't sure he would ever buy for himself, and debating the merits of different sunglasses and hats. Every time he tried to voice his hesitation, Jade would playfully shut him down.

And what struck him the most was how she seemed to know his brands of choice. That told him how observant she was and how much she paid attention to his wardrobe.

The initial bewilderment gradually gave way to amusement. He found himself laughing as she critiqued his fashion choices, her playful commentary chasing away the shadows lurking at the back of his mind. The playful banter and her infectious enthusiasm gradually brightened him and he found himself laughing more easily now.

Chapter 824 Just Trust Me

After a few hours of shopping, exhaustion finally caught up with Harry and Jade. Emerging from a sporting goods store, both loaded down with bags, Jade linked her arm with his.

"Whoa," Harry exclaimed, leaning against a nearby wall, "that was...a lot."

"But it was more satisfying and fun than having someone else shop for you, was it not?" Jade asked with a grin.

"It was only satisfying and fun because I did it with you," Harry he admitted, a grin tugging at the corners of his lips and her smile widened.

"Excellent response!" she declared, clapping her hands with the enthusiasm of a child. "Now, how about a reward? You look like you could use a very expensive meal."

Harry couldn't argue with that. His stomach rumbled in agreement. He did not have breakfast before leaving the house that morning and it was evening already.

"Let's do that then," Harry said and they both took the bags to the car and Harry drove them to Philip's restaurant.

As they settled down on their table, a waiter approached to take their order and Jade smiled as she looked up from the menu, "I want the most delicious and expensive dish here. Same goes for the wine," Jade ordered and Harry shook his head in amusement as he watched her.

After the waiter left he cocked a brow, "Why are you spending so much today?" He asked and she shrugged.

"Just want to appreciate and spoil my man," she said with a wink and Harry chuckled.

"Tom called you, didn't he?" He asked knowingly.

"Tom? Yeah. Why?" Jade asked with a blank expression.

"He asked you to do all this?" Harry asked and Jade rolled her eyes.

"Why would he be the one to tell me how to treat my man?" Jade asked and when Harry continued to stare at her she sighed.

"Just so you know, I was at the mall to shop for you. But when Tom called and asked me to go to you, I figured, why not make you come to me instead? So, this wasn't Tom's idea. It was mine," Jade said and Harry sighed.

"I'm fine," Harry said, and she nodded.

"Of course. How can you not be fine after spending over four hours in the company of your beautiful goddess? I'd be offended if you said you were not fine," She said with a soft smile and Harry chuckled.

"You are right. I was sort of downcast but you brightened my mood," Harry said and Jade watched him in silence for a moment.

"I wasn't going to ask you about it. I was just going to do my best to cheer you up, but I think should. How did the visit go?" Jade asked and Harry shrugged.

"Nothing special about it," Harry said and Jade raised a brow.

"If so, why were you downcast?" Jade asked and Harry sighed.

"It's nothing...."

"Harry Jonas!" Jade snapped, "Don't get on my nerves. Don't you dare," she warned, and Harry's lips curved in a smile.

"Why are you getting upset?" Harry asked in amusement and she scowled.

"Why won't I get upset? You admitted you weren't okay before you got here, and now I'm asking you what was wrong and you're telling me it's nothing. Does that make sense to you? Didn't we agree to be more open with each other and to have honest conversations?" She asked heatedly and Harry chuckled.

"Was this the manner I convinced you to tell me what was wrong at Bryan's place?" He asked and she considered him for a moment.

"You can't talk here? Should I lead you to the ladies' room and threaten not to leave there until you spill it?" She asked and he laughed again.

"I'm glad I can crack you up. Now are you going to tell me why you were upset or do I have to...." The rest of her words trailed off when the waiter returned with their order.

"So?" Jade asked after the order left.

"Let's talk about it after dinner," he said and she nodded.

"Alright then. Let's do that," Jade said and went on to tell him all that she had been doing since she left the house.

Once they got to the car after dinner, Jade looked at him, "Dinner is over now," she said and Harry nodded.

He was silent for a moment and after a while he sighed as he went on to tell her all about the visit and the pang of unexpected sadness he had felt for Sara.

As he spoke, Jade listened intently, her face a canvas of emotions reflecting his own as her hand reached out to rest on his arm in a silent gesture of support. She didn't interrupt, just offered a silent space for him to release his turmoil. He talked until his voice grew hoarse, the raw emotions finally finding their way out.

When he finished, a heavy silence settled between them. He braced himself for questions or for her to tell him he wasn't supposed to feel that way, but Jade said nothing. Instead, Jade simply pulled him close, wrapping her arms around him in a tight embrace.

Harry didn't realize how much he had wanted a hug until he leaned into her warmth, the familiar scent of her hair a soothing balm to his frayed nerves.

He buried his face in her shoulder, letting out a shaky breath. The dam finally broke, and a single tear escaped, rolling down his cheek. He felt her hand gently stroking his hair, a silent reassurance that he wasn't alone.

He didn't know how long they sat there, lost in the comforting silence of their embrace. But slowly, the tension began to ease from his shoulders, replaced by a sense of quiet acceptance.

When he finally pulled back, his eyes met hers. They were filled with understanding and unwavering love as she brushed the tears away from his face.

"What am I going to do about you, Jonas? You look even hot when you cry," Jade joked unexpectedly and Harry chuckled,

"I'm sure there is nothing I'm going to say that you don't know already. So, I won't bore either of us with unnecessary talk. She made her choices and now she is suffering the consequence. Bad or good, she is still your mother. You are human to feel the way you do. You can decide whether to forgive her or not, it is entirely up to you. Make the choice that makes you happy and everyone else will adjust," Jade said and Harry nodded.

"Thank you," he whispered, his voice thick with emotion. "For everything."

Without responding Jade pulled him close for a kiss, "I'm happy I could be here for you. Now take me to Tom's," Jade said since she had planned to go back home that day.

"How about you spend the night at Tom's place too? I don't want you to be alone. You can chat with Tom and then spend the night with me," Jade suggested since she was hesitant to leave him when he wasn't really in a good mood and she didn't want to return to his place either.

"Candace and Andy...."

"They can come too. There is enough room for everyone. And Andy has never been to Tom's house. She should see it before she leaves," Jade said and Harry shook his head.

"It's not your invitation to give, love. Would you like someone else to do that to you?" He asked and she shook her head.

"No. You're right. Should I ask Tom and Lucy then? I'm sure they won't mind," She asked and Harry shook his head.

"Don't worry. I am fine already. I feel better after spending time with you. And we can talk some more over the phone until either of us goes to bed," Harry said and Jade sighed deeply.

"This is one of the reasons I need to get my own place. I think I should move out of Tom's...."

"No," Harry said before she could finish, even though he understood her need for her own space.

Jade arched a brow. "Why not?" She asked, and he shrugged.

"It will be a waste when you have so many places available to you. You're going to be spending more time at my place than his anyway," he said, not wanting to tell her he intended to get married to her in a couple of months.

"But I need my own space too...."

"I know, and I understand. I'm not trying to impose my decision on you. Just trust me," Harry said and she sighed.

"Alright then. If that's what you want I will keep shuttling between your place, Tom's and Bryan's and being a nuisance to everyone," she said and shook his head.

"You're not a nuisance to anyone," he assured her, "And stop speaking so poorly of the love of my life. I don't like it," he chided and her lips twitched.

"Whatever," she muttered as she turned away from him even though she was pleased with what he had just said.

Away from there, after Tom was done with his last meeting of the day, he walked into the bedroom in his office where Lucy had been waiting, and found her fast asleep on the bed.

He sat by the edge of the bed and watched her as she slept with a peaceful smile on her face.

He reached out and brushed a tendril of hair from her face. And Lucy's eyes fluttered open at the touch.

"Are you done?" She asked with a yawn as she sat up.

"Yes. I'm sorry I kept you waiting," he said and she shook her head.

"It's alright. I guess that's one of the things I signed up for when I agreed to date a man of your status," she said and Tom smiled.

"Samantha called earlier to ask if we had anything special in mind for dinner," Lucy said and Tom arched a brow.

"That's unlike her to ask. What did you tell her?" Tom asked, wondering why his cook had done that.

"I told her she has been doing a great job so far, and she doesn't have to ask me that," Lucy said and Tom smiled.

"Go on," he said, knowing the conversation wasn't over.

"She said she thought as the lady of the house I would like to have more say on how the home was being run. And I told her if there was anything I didn't like, I would let her know, but so far, I trust her judgement," Lucy said and Tom smiled.

He was pleased that she accepted her role easily and that she was getting along with his domestic workers.

"Do you really trust her judgement?" Tom asked and she nodded.

"She has been doing a good job taking care of you and running the house all this while before I appeared. I don't think that should change. You haven't made any complaint about her meals. And you know how much I love them too. I'm not much of a cook, and I can't really be bothered about trying to figure out what to prepare for breakfast, lunch and dinner. In summary, let her keep doing her thing. I love her," Lucy said and Tom chuckled.

"Alright then. Ready to leave?" He asked and she nodded.

"Give me a minute to fix my makeup," Lucy said and quickly did that, "I'm ready to go," she said when she was done.

"So, today's date is a stroll?" He asked as they left the office.

"Yeah. I should probably give Lucas a call to find out if he was able to do as he planned," Lucy said, thinking of how dull Amy had been at the office all day.

Once they got into the car, Lucy dialed Lucas' line and after the fourth ring he received the call.

"Hey! What's up?" Lucas who had just stepped out of the shower asked.

"That's what I called to ask you. What's up? Were you able to meet with Miley's parents?" Lucy asked without beating around the bush.

"Yeah, I did," Lucas said, thinking about his meeting with Miley's parents.

Chapter 825 Wednesday

Lucas' fingers drummed nervously on the steering wheel as he pulled up to the imposing iron gates of the Garwood estate. The house loomed ahead, a sprawling Georgian mansion that spoke of old money and quiet prestige. Its manicured lawns stretched out like a green velvet carpet, and a fountain splashed merrily in the center of a circular driveway.

Although he couldn't help but dread meeting Miley's parents, who he had never met, in their time of grief, he felt compelled to pay his respects and to intercede on Amy's behalf.

Amy, consumed by guilt and ostracized by the very people she cared about, desperately needed someone to advocate for her. Taking a deep breath, Lucas adjusted his tie and stepped out of the car. The air hung heavy with the scent of freshly cut grass and blooming roses.

Although nervousness gnawed at his stomach, Lucas steeled himself for the task ahead.

A uniformed maid, her eyes echoing the sorrow that clung to the house like a shroud, answered the heavy oak door. "Dr Perry?" she inquired, her voice a gentle murmur.

"Yes, that's me."

"They have been expecting you since Dr Drew called to inform them that a friend of Miley is coming over. Please, come in." She ushered him into a grand foyer.

Sunlight streamed through a high arched window, illuminating a space that was opulent yet tastefully decorated. Crystal chandeliers glittered overhead, casting rainbows on the polished marble floor. Expensive paintings adorned the walls, and a grand staircase curved gracefully towards the upper floor.

Lucas shifted uncomfortably in the plush velvet upholstery he had been offered as he waited for Miley's parents to join him.

A knot of tension tightened in his stomach as the heavy oak door creaked open. Mrs. Garwood stood behind it, her face etched with sadness.

Lucas saw a faint echo of Miley in the woman's blue eyes, a color that stood out amidst the sea of familiar brown hair that ran in the Garwood family.

"Dr Perry?" she inquired, her voice a strained murmur.

Lucas rose, smoothing down his tie. "Mrs. Garwood," he said, his voice sincere. "I'm so sorry for your loss. Miley was a wonderful person."

Her eyes welled up, a flicker of appreciation battling the storm of emotions on her face. "Thank you, Doctor. Please, come in."

He followed her into a richly furnished sitting room, the air thick with a potent mix of grief.

Family photos adorned the mantelpiece, showcasing a younger Miley with her parents, a radiant smile mirroring the one he remembered.

There, in the younger Mrs. Garwood's bright smile and Mr. Garwood's crinkled blue eyes, Lucas saw the undeniable source of Miley's captivating grin and sparkling azure eyes, a stark contrast to the dominant brown hair that framed both parents' faces.

A pang of loss shot through him, and he cleared his throat awkwardly.

"I didn't know Miley had any friends here, so we were surprised when Dr Drew mentioned that you were coming over. And I'm surprised it is you. Surely, you remember me, don't you?"

Lucas blinked, momentarily thrown off guard. He had treated countless patients over the years, and while he faintly recognized Mrs. Garwood, the memory wasn't strong enough to connect it to Miley.

"My apologies, Mrs. Garwood," he admitted, a touch of embarrassment coloring his voice. "I see many patients, and unfortunately, faces sometimes..."

A gruff voice cut him off. "Doctor Perry, surely you remember us," Mr. Garwood entered the room then, his face grim.

"Dr Drew was out of town on the day of our routine check up and we were assigned to you. I said you were too young to know anything."

A spark of recognition ignited in Lucas's mind. It had been the same day he met Tom's parents for the first time.

Shame washed over him as he realized he'd never connected the dots between the Garwoods from the clinic and Miley, the vibrant friend he'd met by chance.

"Of course," Lucas said, forcing a smile, "Mr. and Mrs. Garwood. I apologize, it's been a while. I should have recognized you both sooner."

"It's alright. Please sit. I had no idea you knew our daughter. If I may ask, how long have you known her?" Mr Garwood asked with interest.

"I met her during a dark time in my life. I had just resigned from the hospital that day. I was drunk and passed out in a bar and she took me home. I'm embarrassed to admit that to you," Lucas added when both Miley's parents exchanged a look.

"She was like an Angel. Bright and cheerful," Lucas continued, reminiscing on what little time he had spent with her.

"That's our Miley. She was so full of life. Until she wasn't," her mother said with a sniffle.

"Did you know about her condition?" Her dad asked, and Lucas nodded.

"Yes, I did. She told me she found out about it three weeks prior our meeting," Lucas said and they looked at him closely.

"And?"

"And she didn't want anyone to feel sorry for her. She wanted to tick the items on her bucket list and have fun, not stay stuck on any hospital bed receiving useless treatment and wasting valuable time as she knew she would if her parents found out about her condition," Lucas said since he had decided not to directly tell them he was here in Amy's defense.

He had thought about it long and hard and decided that the best way to show them Amy was innocent of whatever they thought she did wrong, was to show them that Amy's only crime had been that she was too weak to say no to their very stubborn daughter.

"What bucket list?" Her mom asked with a frown, wanting to know what Miley had wanted to do so badly that she would keep her condition away from them and not receive treatment.

"She wanted to get married and have a kid. I believe she mostly wanted a kid because she didn't want you both to feel lonely after she was gone. She wanted to leave you a grandchild," Lucas said, and Mrs Garwood's eyes teared up as she looked at her husband and he extended a hand which she took as tears rolled down her cheeks.

"She told you that?" Mr Garwood asked, and Lucas nodded.

"Yeah. I suppose I came here because I feel sort of bad. We were not in best of terms as at the time we parted ways," He said and they looked at him in confusion.

"Why? What happened?" Mrs Garwood asked.

"I thought her plan was stupid and I told her so. I mean, she was dying. She didn't even tell anyone about it. Not her parents, not even her best friend...."

Mrs. Garwood's eyes narrowed. "You know Amy?" she spat, the name laced with bitterness. "The one who let our daughter suffer while she kept quiet?"

Lucas winced inwardly. "I met her through Miley. That was when she flew over to Heden upon hearing of Miley's condition. She was distraught and wouldn't stop crying...."

"You were talking about why you fell out with our daughter," Miley's father reminded Lucas, not wanting to hear anything about Amy.

"Oh, yeah. Well, she wanted me to marry her...."

"What?" Miley's mother asked in disbelief.

Although Lucas was the type of son-in-law they would have loved her to bring home to them, she couldn't believe that Miley would actually come up with such a ridiculous plan.

"That was my exact reaction too. I felt even more insulted because she offered to pay me for it. I was to get married to her and help her have a baby. I was too offended by her suggestion I left. I cut her off and I left," Lucas finished.

"I don't understand. How did she plan to have a baby when she had barely six months left?" Miley's father asked as Lucas had hoped he would.

"That was where Amy came in. I was annoyed by her illogical and blind loyalty to Miley. I get that Miley threatened to cut her off and run off on her own if she decides to tell you both about her condition, but how could she keep it to herself? Why would she take a break from work just to watch over Miley and ensure that Miley was fine? Why would she offer to be Miley's surrogate just so she can hold on to a part of Miley? She is a young lady who should worry about what men might think when they find out she has had a baby, but she got mad when I told her all of that. Her love and loyalty for Miley is irrational. If she was doing it because she wanted to get paid, it would have been better, but she made it clear she didn't want anything other than to have a part of Miley with her forever. She even yelled at me and embarrassed me in public. She kept insisting that Miley was stubborn and once she had her mind made up, nothing could be done to change it and she would rather be by Miley's side and make all her wishes come true than have Miley cut her off. Does that make sense?" Lucas asked with righteous indignation.

A flicker of understanding softened Mrs. Garwood's expression as she listened to Lucas, his tone gentle but firm.

"It was all Miley's idea and Amy went along with it?" Miley's dad asked, exchanging a look with his wife, while Lucas pretended not to know why he was asking her that.

"Totally. Miley was fiercely independent, and she didn't want to burden you with the worry. She..." he hesitated, searching for the right words, "she wanted to fight it on her own terms. Amy heard about the bucket list first from me before she heard it from Miley. Why do you ask?" Lucas asked and Miley's dad shook his head without saying a word.

He didn't see the need in telling Lucas that Miley had gone ahead with her plan and in the end had settled for a bastard who dared to threaten them for money.

The conversation flowed, laced with tears and raw emotions. Lucas talked about the fear and frustration he knew Amy must have felt, caught between her loyalty to Miley and the desperate wish to intervene.

By the end, the anger in Mr Garwood's eyes had softened, replaced by a profound sadness and acceptance.

"We just wanted to know," Mr. Garwood finally spoke, his voice hoarse. "We just wanted to be there for our little girl."

Lucas nodded, his heart heavy. He knew there were no easy answers, no way to rewind time and rewrite the tragic story. But he hoped, with a sliver of optimism, that his visit had shed a light on Amy's actions, mending a fractured friendship in the face of an unimaginable loss.

"Believe me when I say I have never seen such love and loyalty between friends. I might have left because I was mad at them, but I admired what they shared. Miley was so lucky to have had such a good friend as Amy by her side. I can't imagine how Miley would have fared had Amy not known about her condition and stayed by her side. I'm sure Amy must be so distraught right now. Is she here right now? Can I say hello to her?" Lucas asked, pretending not to know that Amy was not there.

"No. She is not here at the moment," Miley's mom said with tears in her eyes.

"When is the funeral? Maybe I can see Amy at the funeral," Lucas said hopefully.

"On Wednesday. Amy should be here by then," Miley's mother said after exchanging a look with her husband.

"That's too bad. I doubt I would be able to see her before leaving for Husla again. I came in on Friday for a friend's wedding and I have to leave tomorrow," Lucas said regretfully, glad that there was a possibility of Amy being allowed to attend the funeral.

As Lucas rose to leave, Mrs. Garwood reached out and grasped his hand, a tremor in her voice. "Thank you, Doctor," she said, the title a formality they both understood. "Thank you for coming over and for telling us all these. I kept wondering why she would keep her condition away from us and all of that, but you've answered all my questions."

Lucas squeezed her hand gently. "There are no words, Mrs. Garwood. But please know, Miley loved you both very much."

Leaving the opulent mansion behind, the weight of the conversation lingered, but there was a lightness in his heart. He couldn't bring Miley back, but he had helped bridge a gap, a small act of comfort in the face of overwhelming grief. He hoped that somehow, somewhere, Miley would be at peace knowing that her family and the friend she cherished were no longer divided.

"So? How did it go?" Lucy asked, bringing Lucas back to the present.

"I believe it went well. You should give her some days off to attend the funeral. It's on Wednesday," Lucas said and Lucy sighed.

"Sure. I will. Thank you, Lucas. Thanks for helping her clear the air," Lucy said before hanging up.

Chapter 826 Clearing The Air

As Tom and Lucy pulled into the compound after their stroll that evening, they found Harry's car parked in front of the house, with Harry and Jade standing beside it.

Tom pulled over beside them. "What are you doing here?" Tom asked Harry as he got out of the car to join them.

"What? You're not happy to see me?" Harry asked dryly.

"I'm always happy to see you. The question is why are you here," Tom said, giving Jade a questioning look as he wondered if Harry was there because she had not gone to meet him as he asked her to.

"He brought me home. We were out all day, so he came to drop me off," Jade explained just as Lucy joined them.

"Hello, HaHa! Hey, Jade!" Lucy greeted with a pleasant smile, "How did the visit go?" Lucy asked Harry and he shrugged.

"She shed tears...."

"Tears?" Lucy echoed in disbelief.

"It was unexpected. She seemed sort of regretful after seeing Candace," Harry said and Lucy snorted.

"She was probably feeling regretful that she lost her opportunity to find Candace before you did," Lucy said and Harry chuckled.

"Candace said the same thing," Harry said, while Tom looked at Jade with a frown.

"Are you both just getting back from the office or did you go somewhere?" Harry asked curiously.

"Tom finished late, and we both went on a stroll afterward," Lucy said while Tom kept his gaze on Jade.

"What I don't get is why Harry is dropping you off here. I mean, you've been at his place for a while now, so how come you are coming back here now when you should be with him? Or did Harry ask to be left alone?" Tom asked, looking from Jade to Harry.

Jade looked at Harry, unable to explain what had prompted her decision to Tom, and Harry shook his head at Tom, "I'm fine. She did more than enough already and I'm feeling much better," Harry assured Tom.

"Take a look at all those shopping bags in the backseat. She got me all of that. I never knew shopping could make someone feel better," Harry said and Jade grinned.

"Welcome to the world of therapeutic shopping," Jade said and Lucy giggled.

"Or maybe you're just too exhausted from the experience to feel anything else," Tom pointed out jokingly, earning laughs from Harry and Lucy. Jade scowled at him playfully.

"No. It was actually the company. Being with her always makes me feel better. Thanks for asking her to cheer me up," Harry assured Tom.

"I didn't need to be asked. If you had come to me first instead of Tom, I would have cheered you up right away. But it's fine you went to him first. At least I got to show you I can cheer you up faster than Tom," Jade said with a wink and they all laughed.

"Why don't I go in and leave you guys to talk? You will call me when you get home, right?" Jade asked, and Harry smiled at her, impressed by how much effort he could see she was putting into being less clingy.

"How about I call you as I drive out so you can keep me company all the way till I get home?" he asked and she smiled happily.

"That's fine too. I love you," Jade said as she leaned forward and kissed him.

"I love you much more," Harry said as Jade stepped away from him.

"I should leave you guys to talk as well. Give my regards to Candace and Andy. I will be looking forward to seeing the interview tomorrow," Lucy said to Harry before turning to Tom, "I will be in the bedroom," Lucy told Tom.

"Don't freshen up without me," he said with a wink and she grinned.

"That was too much information," he said and Tom raised a brow.

"I didn't say anything..."

"You said a lot without saying nothing," Harry said and Tom snorted.

"I wasn't talking even to you," Tom pointed out and Lucy giggled as she walked away with Jade while Harry shook his head.

"How are you getting ready for your vacation?" Lucy asked Jade excitedly as they both walked inside the house.

Jade shrugged. "Everything is in place. All that is left is for Harry to wrap up all that he is doing," Jade said but she didn't sound as excited as Lucy expected so Lucy turned to her.

"Are you okay?" She asked with a slight frown.

"Yeah," Jade said as she continued walking.

"Are you sure? You don't sound like yourself," Lucy said and Jade arched a brow.

"And how do myself sound? Childish, immature? Making everything about myself?" Jade asked, her voice tinged with irritation.

Lucy frowned as she stopped walking. "I only meant you don't sound excited as usual. Where is that coming from?" Lucy asked, completely taken aback by Jade's outburst.

"Isn't that what you think of me?" Jade asked as she stopped walking and turned to look at Lucy.

Lucy raised a brow, "Why would I think that of you? If this is about what happened on the yacht, I already apologized and made it clear to you that I wasn't referring to you. Looking at you when I made the statement was a coincidence. I really don't know what else you want me to say," Lucy said, irritated by Jade's insistence to hold on to an offense she didn't commit.

"Really? Was it a coincidence? Why do I feel like you all must have discussed about how Jade likes to make everything about herself and your subconscious made you look at me at that exact time because it was embedded in your mind?" Jade asked and Lucy took a deep breath.

"I see no reason you'd think I have nothing better to do with my time than to gossip about you. And who are the people you think would sit down to discuss you? I will take it that you had a rough day and you're taking it out on me," Lucy said in a tight voice and without waiting for Jade to respond, she resumed walking and climbed up the stairs.

Jade sighed as she watched Lucy go, and then she hurried after her, "Lucy..."

Lucy took a deep breath as she turned to face Jade, "Jade, I really don't want to argue or fight with you. Maybe you haven't noticed it, but I don't particularly like being on bad terms with people close to me. So, please, whatever this is, leave me out of it. I didn't discuss about you with anyone. I

didn't direct my statement to you. If it were your party, I would say the same thing to all the guests present. I thought you would be excited about your vacation and when I noticed you didn't seem excited I wanted to know if you were fine. It's not my business. I shouldn't have asked. I'm sorry..."

"I'm sorry," Jade said, cutting off her diatribe.

"I was upset. I just don't like the way you've all been treating me...."

"And how have I been treating you?" Lucy asked, giving her a pointed look.

"You shut me up in front of strangers when we were getting ready for the all white party," she reminded Lucy.

"I didn't do it because I disrespect you. I shut you up because we were all talking too much and even though you all didn't notice, the makeup artists and stylists were not exactly pleased that we were slowing down their work. I'm sorry if that offended you. It was nothing personal. I would have shut up any of the others too had they spoken when you did. And I remember very well that you shut Sonia up too," Lucy said and Jade looked at her for a moment.

Jade sighed. "Can we talk for a moment? In my bedroom?" Jade asked and Lucy shrugged.

Lucy followed Jade as she led the way to her bedroom, and after they were inside and seated, Jade looked at Lucy.

"I want to ask you a question. I want a sincere response," she said and Lucy gave her a nod.

"Do you think I'm spoilt? Clingy?" She asked and Lucy couldn't help but wonder who could have spoken to her. She doubted that Harry could have said all that to her.

"What do you mean by spoilt?" Lucy asked, wanting to understand where she was coming from in order to answer her question.

"I don't know. Maybe I always make things about myself... no, I'm not referring to the statement you made," Jade corrected quickly when Lucy rolled her eyes.

"I honestly don't know what you mean by that. But I don't think you make things about yourself. I think you are cool. I love how you are always excited," Lucy said but Jade eyed her doubtfully.

"I'm not saying there aren't times that it would be best you calm down, but overall, you're not bad. You're cool," Lucy said, giving her a thumbs up.

"And clingy? Do you think I'm too clingy and jealous when it comes to Harry? Like how I asked to join him and Mia?" Jade asked and Lucy laughed.

"I'm pretty sure I would do the same if I were in your shoes. Maybe I'm clingy too, who knows? But if Harry isn't complaining why are you worried? Or did he complain?" Lucy asked and Jade shook her head.

"No. He didn't. I was just thinking about it. I want to tone it down," Jade said with a shrug.

"Honestly, Jade, if you ask me, I think you are doing fine and shouldn't tone down anything unless Harry wants you to. You are more expressive of your feelings than the rest of us, and if you ask me, I think it's a good thing," Lucy said and Jade looked at her hopefully.

"Do you really think so?" She asked, and Lucy gave her a nod.

"Of course. I wouldn't say what I don't mean to you. But I have one advise though. Or you can call it a suggestion," Lucy said and Jade nodded.

"Go on."

"You know how Harry is. Don't give him reasons to speak to you harshly in public," Lucy said and Jade nodded thoughtfully.

"You mean like how I asked to join him when he wanted to speak with Mia alone, right?" She asked and Lucy nodded.

"Yes. I think as long as you understand your partner, you'd know how to handle your relationship. But other than that, I don't think you're spoilt or clingy," Lucy said and Jade smiled.

"I'm sorry I assumed you thought of me that way," Jade said, meaning it.

"Can I ask why you thought so?"

"Andy and Candace talked to me on Saturday. Although, I already trashed things out with Candace. I assumed that you and Sonia might also think I'm immature..."

"They said you were immature?" Lucy asked with a slight frown, unable to imagine why they would say that to her.

"Spoilt was the word used," Jade said and went on to tell her all they had said.

When she was done, Lucy reached out a hand to pat her hand.

"That must have stung a little. I'm sorry. I'm sure they didn't mean to hurt your feelings," Lucy said and Jade shrugged.

"It' stung more than a little. I was just going to withdraw from you all and keep to myself since I'm too immature to hangout with you guys," Jade said and Lucy nodded.

"I can understand why you'd make such a decision. But we all can't be expected to act the same way. Can I ask you a question?" Lucy asked and Jade nodded.

"Why did you confront me that way in front of others during the party on the yacht?"

"Well, I thought you were picking on me," Jade said and Lucy nodded.

"Why did it have to be right there, at that time in front of the others? Why didn't you do it later in private?" Lucy asked and Jade frowned.

"If you could pick on me right there in front of them at that time, why do I have to wait until later to confront you in private? I should do so in front of everyone too so they know it's not okay to pick on me. I won't let anyone walk over me," Jade said and Lucy nodded.

"I thought as much. You're a reasonable person, Jade. As much as I didn't like it because I really wasn't picking on you and the argument was sort of affecting the mood of the party, your reason for doing what you did is valid too. You are not immature or spoilt," Lucy said and Jade smiled.

"Thanks, Lucy. I feel much better. Although I'm still going to work on myself, but I'm glad to know I'm not as unreasonable or silly as I've been feeling for some days now. Although Harry tried to

reassure me, but he's my boyfriend. It's only normal that he would try to make me feel better. But hearing this from you also helps," Jade said and Lucy squeezed her hand.

"I'm glad I could help. And I can assure you that Sonia doesn't think you are spoilt either. And now that I know how you feel, I promise to be more mindful of my words to you and to not shut you up in public ever again," Lucy said and Jade smiled.

"I will appreciate that. Thanks," Jade said and Lucy rose to leave.

"And, I'm very much excited about the vacation," Jade said with a wide smile before Lucy could leave.

Lucy grinned, "I'm sure you are. Good night, Jade," Lucy said before walking out of the bedroom.

Chapter 827 Human CCTV

As Jeff and Mia stepped out of the cab, the glow of the streetlights illuminated the contentment and laughter on their faces.

They had just enjoyed a delightful dinner, the kind that leaves you feeling warm and satisfied, both from the food and the company.

As they walked to the door, Jeff glanced at Mia beside him, her face flushed from the wine and the warmth of their shared meal. Her brown eyes sparkled with amusement, her lips still curved in a smile.

"Did you see the look on that poor waiter's face when you ordered the chocolate lava cake for an appetizer?" Jeff asked his own smile wide enough to show off the dimple in his cheek.

Mia giggled as she handed the key to Jeff to unlock the door. The rich, decadent chocolate lingered on Mia's tongue, a sweet counterpoint to the tangy red wine.

"He looked like I'd personally insulted his Nonna's recipe."

"But seriously, Mia, molten chocolate for an appetizer? Genius!" Jeff said, giving her a thumbs up before proceeding to open the door.

Mia swatted him playfully on the arm. "I told you to trust me," she winked, "Besides, it made up for the disaster that was your attempt at pronouncing that French dish."

Jeff, a blush creeping up his neck, feigned offense. "Hey! I blame the accent wall at the restaurant. It was distracting."

Mia's laughter echoed into the quiet night, the sound like wind chimes dancing in a breeze.

As she laughed, Jeff brushed a stray curl from Mia's forehead, the gesture surprisingly tender. Mia blinked, surprised by the warmth that spread through her chest. Had he always been this...touchy? She mused.

Neither of them noticed the dark figure lurking in the shadows across the street, a single glint of light reflecting off a camera lens.

The door closed behind them as they walked into the apartment, and Jeff leaned in to switch on the light, casting long shadows that danced on the worn floral wallpaper.

"Alright," Mia announced, stretching her arms above her head with a satisfied sigh. "It's time to retire to bed."

They had been busy all morning because she had to interview some of the domestic staff sent to work for Sonia and Bryan. Jeff had offered to assist her and they had spent hours doing that, hence she had offered to treat Jeff to a fancy dinner.

"Let me know when you're done freshening up," Jeff said before Mia could head for her bedroom and she paused to look at him.

"Seriously, Jeff, how long are you going to keep sleeping in my bedroom?" She asked, since she had woken up that morning to find him on the floor once again.

"I don't know. Maybe as long as it takes to chase away your nightmares," Jeff said with a shrug.

Mia snorted, "And if it takes a lifetime?" She asked in amusement.

"Then you're stuck with me for that long," Jeff said with a wink that made butterflies flutter in her belly.

They were both saved from the further awkward conversation by the sound of the doorbell, and they both turned to the door.

"Did you order anything? I didn't," Mia asked Jeff with a slight frown.

"Probably your nosy neighbor friend. I will check," Jeff said as he went to answer the door, while Mia remained where she stood with a guarded expression.

"Hello there!" Alicia said once Jeff opened the door, and Jeff turned to give Mia and I told you so look.

"I'm sorry to be a bother. I brought you some freshly baked apple pies, and I have something important to tell you. It won't take long I promise," she said, since she needed to go prepare for Harry's interview.

Jeff looked at Mia, and she shrugged, so he let Alicia in. "Did something happen?" Mia asked as she went to sit with Alicia while Jeff took the tray of apple pies to put it away.

"Do you have plumbing issues? Did you send for a plumber?" Alicia asked and Mia frowned.

"No, we didn't," Mia said, and Jeff raised a brow when he heard the question.

"Why do you ask?" Jeff asked as he also sat down.

"Earlier today while you were away, someone came around. A tall looking man dressed in overalls. I noticed him looking around like he was trying to find a spare key and when he didn't, he wanted to pick the door or something, I can't tell. But I confronted him. He said the lady living here sent for him to take care of some plumbing problem, so I asked him to leave and come back when you're home or to give you a call so I speak to you. And then he received a call and said it was a wrong address. He got into a waiting car and left," Alicia said, and Mia's heart raced as she heard the words, and she exchanged a look with Jeff.

"You don't believe him?" Jeff asked, and Alicia nodded.

"I watched him for a while before confronting him. When he got here at first he was taking pictures of the house. And I decided to bring this to your attention now because I saw the same car drive past a couple of minutes ago. This is the plate number," Alicia said as she showed them her phone's screen, to reveal she had captured the car and plate number.

Although Jeff wasn't really a fan of Alicia's nosiness, it was proving useful to them at the moment and he appreciated it.

Jeff took his phone and took a picture of Alicia's screen so he could send it to Harry. He was sure Harry would be able to use his connection to find out who the person was.

"Thanks," Jeff said, and Alicia nodded as she rose to leave.

"I'm curious about something though. How come you're always observing everyone and everything going on in the neighborhood?" Jeff asked and Alicia giggled.

"I grew up with my grandmother. She used to do that a lot. I mean stand by the window. She called it keeping watch over her neighbors. Once she saved someone from robbery, and another from a violent partner. I liked it. I wanted to be more like her," she said with a shrug.

"I see. Thanks for the information," Jeff said, and Alicia nodded before glancing at Mia who was unusually quiet.

"Mia? Are you alright?" Alicia asked and Mia nodded even though she was trembling inside.

"Yes. Thanks." She forced a smile but didn't rise.

Jeff saw Alicia to the door, and after she left he returned to Mia's side and placed a hand over hers.

"It is Henry. I know it. He sent someone to keep an eye on me. Probably to confirm if what I'm sure he has heard is true," Mia said in a shaky voice.

"Calm down," he said softly.

"He knows where I am. It's only a matter of time before he shows up," Mia said and Jeff crouched down in front of her and held her chin so that she would look into his face.

"It doesn't matter whether or not he knows where you are. I won't let him hurt you. You have my word, Mia. He won't hurt even a strand of your hair. I will keep you safe," Jeff promised as he held Mia's gaze with his brown eyes.

"You don't know him, Jeff..."

"I know more than enough already. You are tired. Go freshen up and go to bed. I will join you after I freshen up," Jeff said and Mia glanced at the door hesitantly.

"Tomorrow we will change the lock and set up a burglary alarm system. We can have security cameras in the house too," he said, wanting to make her relax.

"Can we really do that?" She asked hopefully, and Jeff nodded.

"Although I think we have a more reliable human burglary alarm and CCTV in Alicia," Jeff said to make her laugh, and she rewarded him with a giggle.

"Don't worry, Mia. You will be okay," Jeff promised, and when she nodded he rose, and she did the same.

"Thanks, Jeff," she said before walking away to her bedroom.

After watching her leave, Jeff waited until he heard her bedroom door close before dialing Harry's line.

After telling Harry what Alicia had said, and sending the plate number of the car to Harry, Jeff went into his bedroom to freshen up.

After he was done, he went to Mia's bedroom and knocked on the door, "Mia? Can I come in?" He asked, and Mia opened the door.

"Again with the loud music?" She asked when she saw he was carrying the speaker again along with a blanket and pillow.

"Anything to make you sleep well," Jeff said with a wink as he walked past her into the bedroom.

Mia watched Jeff as he spread the blanket on the floor, and she cleared her throat, "How about you join me on the bed instead?" she asked, and Jeff looked at her, taken aback by her offer.

"I mean, I'm not comfortable that you have to sleep on the hard floor this way simply because you're watching over me. Or maybe I could sleep on the floor while you take the bed," she quickly explained, not wanting him to misunderstand her offer.

"I never complained. The floor is fine," Jeff assured her.

"Not to me. It makes me uncomfortable. I'd rather you join me in bed," she insisted.

Jeff stared at her for a moment before letting out a deep breath. "If you insist. Just don't blame me for whatever happens," Jeff said and she raised a brow.

"Whatever happens like what?" Mia asked in confusion.

"I'm not saying anything would happen. I'm just saying don't blame me if anything happens," Jeff rephrased.

"And I'm asking, anything like what?" Mia repeated.

Jeff looked at her directly, "It's been long I shared a bed with a lady. I could cuddle you or stuff. I'm not saying I will. I'm saying I could," Jeff said as honestly as he could muster and Mia's heart fluttered.

"You know what I think? I think I should stay on the floor," Jeff said awkwardly when she remained quiet.

Mia swallowed, her heart racing, "I still think you should join me on the bed."

Chapter 828 Paris

Mia's offer hung in the air, a question mark defying the usual boundaries of their friendship. Jeff, ever the pragmatist, blinked a few times, processing the unexpected turn of events.

The sudden shift in Mia's tone sent a jolt through Jeff. Her earlier vulnerability had transformed into a quiet confidence that left him flustered.

The air in the room crackled with a tension that had nothing to do with the threat of Henry as Mia stood by the bed with her gaze fixed on Jeff.

Jeff ran his fingers through his hair, torn between wanting to protect her and wanting to explore whatever feeling bubbled within him.

"Mia," he began, his voice a husky murmur, "are you sure? I wouldn't want to make things... uncomfortable."

Part of her, the cautious side honed by years with Henry, wanted to take back her offer and retreat. But another, more daring part, the one awakened by laughter and shared moments together, felt a tug towards the shared warmth of the bed.

Mia bit her lip, her gaze flickering between Jeff and the inviting expanse of her bed. Fear of Henry gnawed at her, but a new, unfamiliar warmth bloomed in her chest whenever Jeff's hand brushed against hers. The thought of him sleeping on the cold floor fueled a strange protectiveness within her.

Her gaze held his, a silent challenge that both scared and exhilarated her. "Positive," she said, her voice barely above a whisper. "Unless you're afraid?"

The playful jab sent a spark down Jeff's spine. Afraid? The only thing he was terrified of was letting her down.

"I'm not afraid of anything," Jeff assured her.

"Good, then it shouldn't be a problem," she said, and then shrugged, "besides, you know, with Henry lurking around, maybe a little extra security measure wouldn't hurt."

Jeff chuckled, the sound surprisingly warm. "Security, huh? Alright, security it is. But just so you know, as I warned, I might take advantage of that close proximity."

Mia's cheeks burned a familiar shade of red. "I can handle it," she retorted, trying to sound braver than she felt.

He raised an eyebrow, a playful smirk tugging at the corner of his lips. "We'll see about that," he said as he placed his pillow on the bed.

Mia's eyes followed his movements but she didn't budge from where she stood.

Taking a deep breath, Jeff offered a lopsided grin. "Do not worry. We each get half the bed. No cuddling, no funny business," he assured her as he set the speaker on the nightstand and turned on the music, the low hum of music replacing the pounding in his chest.

Mia nodded, biting her lip nervously. The air crackled with unspoken tension, a silent dance neither of them seemed willing to break.

Finally, Jeff made the first move. He gestured towards the bed. "Ladies first."

Mia smiled as she got on the bed and slipped under the covers, leaving just enough space for him to join her.

He joined her on the bed, the mattress dipping slightly with his weight. It was a small movement, yet it felt monumental in the charged atmosphere.

Jeff took a deep breath, his heart hammering against his ribs as the scent of her shampoo washed over him. As he settled beside her, their bodies brushed, sending a jolt of electricity through him.

They lay there in a tense silence, neither daring to move due to the intimacy of the situation.

Mia's gaze darted towards Jeff, then quickly flicked away. Her cheeks burned a shade hotter than the apple pie cooling on the counter in the kitchen.

Jeff could feel the heat radiating off her body, a tangible reminder of the woman beside him.

"You know," she said, her voice barely a whisper, "I don't mind the cuddling," she said, a nervous tremor in her voice.

The statement hung heavy in the air as Jeff glanced at her. "Are you sure about that?" he asked, his own voice thick with unspoken desire.

Mia swallowed, Her cheeks were flushed and her heart pounded a frantic rhythm against her ribs as she gave him a nod.

Jeff, sensing her apprehension, offered a reassuring smile. "We don't have to do anything we are not comfortable with," he said softly as he looked into her Hazel eyes.

As she gazed back into his eyes in that moment, the fear of Henry seemed to recede, replaced by a different kind of anticipation.

"I'm comfortable with it if you are," she said quietly, and with a slow nod, Jeff pulled her into his arms, the embrace strong yet gentle as she molded her body willingly to his.

Mia could feel the heat radiating from Jeff's body, a comforting presence that chased away the lingering chill of fear.

The air buzzed with unspoken words and unspoken desires. Jeff cleared his throat, breaking the silence between them.

"So," he finally managed, his voice rough with suppressed tension, "what kind of nightmares are we chasing away tonight?"

Mia hesitated for a moment, "More like a stalker," she murmured, a hint of fear creeping back into her voice.

Jeff's hand hovered over hers. Her fingers twitched, then hesitantly intertwined with his. The warmth of his touch sent a shiver down her spine.

"Don't worry," he said, his voice low and reassuring. "You are safe with me."

Mia squeezed his hand, her eyes welling up with unshed tears. In that moment, nestled beside him, the threat of Henry felt distant. All that mattered was the warmth of his touch and the promise of safety etched in his gaze.

"What did you think of the script Donald sent for Bryan?" Jeff asked, wanting to distract himself from all he was thinking.

Mia couldn't help but let out a surprised laugh. The question, so mundane in the face of the situation, was a welcome distraction. "Honestly? It was terrible," she confessed, a smile playing on her lips.

Jeff feigned shock. "Terrible? But it had explosions and a talking dog!"

Mia rolled her eyes, a genuine smile gracing her features for the first time since they'd discovered the unwelcome visitor.

"We both know Bryan would never read that script past the first page. He won't take the role," Mia said confidently.

"I wonder what the screenwriter was thinking," Jeff said in amusement.

"I don't think the writer was thinking," Mia said and Jeff chuckled, a sound that sent a thrill of warmth down Mia's spine.

Maybe, just maybe, amidst the fear and uncertainty, there was space for a little normalcy, a sliver of laughter to push back the darkness.

Mia looked forward to a future where laughter and shared meals weren't overshadowed by fear. One where a man with kind eyes and a teasing smile offered not just protection, but maybe, just maybe, something more.

Away from there, while Lucy was waiting for Tom to join her in the bedroom, her phone buzzed with a video call. A smile bloomed on her face as she saw Sonia's name pop up.

Lucy's smile widened as she received the call saw Sonia's face glowing on the screen. "Hey, best girl!" Sonia greeted, her voice tinged with a tropical lilt.

Happy to see Sonia so excited, Lucy giggled, the sound echoing in the quiet room. "I've been waiting for your call all day," she admitted.

"Sorry, baby," Sonia apologized, her background a blur of palm trees and turquoise water. "We were too busy getting lost in paradise. Besides, I knew you'd be swamped at the office and didn't want to disturb you. How are you? Did you manage to see Mia?"

"Yeah. I was there yesterday. But I think she is doing just fine with Jeff by her side," Lucy said and Sonia arched a brow.

"Jeff?"

"Yeah. They seemed to be having fun and I interrupted their game. I didn't realize they were very close," Lucy said and Sonia narrowed her eyes.

Lucy wasn't the type to notice such things, and if she did, it meant Mia and Jeff had seemed closer than usual.

"They seemed very close?" Sonia asked and Lucy nodded.

"Yep. I just got that vibe from them. Especially Jeff. Anyway, Mia is fine. How are you? And how's our bun in the oven doing? Tell me about Paris!" Lucy's excitement bubbled over, eager to hear about Sonia's honeymoon adventures.

Sonia chuckled, "Alright, alright, settle down, you spinster!" she teased.

"Spinster? Seriously, Sony?" Lucy asked with a giggle.

"Well, isn't that what you are? Are you married?" Sonia asked with a grin, flashing her ring in front of the camera and Lucy laughed some more.

"Whatever. Just tell me about Paris," Lucy said and Sonia sighed dreamily.

"Paris is magical, Lu. The food, the sights, the people... everything is just so perfect. The only little challenge at first was communication, but we got someone to escort us. You know, like a translator. Makes things easier. And the little one seems to be enjoying the Parisian air too. No morning sickness yet, thank goodness!" Sonia said and Lucy laughed happily.

"Little wonder you seem so excited," Lucy said and Sonia tilted the phone to reveal Bryan, standing a couple of feet away from her with a glass of wine in hand.

"Say hello to my beloved husband," Sonia said and Bryan grinned at Lucy, waving enthusiastically. "Hey, Lucy! How's the fort holding up?"

Lucy waved back, a warm smile gracing her lips. "Holding strong, Bryan. Thanks for taking such good care of her."

"Just doing my duty," he winked.

"Well, you should be commended for taking your duty so seriously and doing a good job of it," Lucy said and Bryan grinned.

"I agree. Bryan has been absolutely amazing," Sonia said and blew Bryan a kiss, making him chuckle, while Lucy grinned.

"Enough of your romance. Do it in my absence. Are you going to tell me about the adventures or not?" She asked and Sonia grinned.

"You know I will. I have been making videos just for you," Sonia said and the couple of minutes melted away as Lucy listened to Sonia's detailed tales of their honeymoon adventures.

Sonia talked about the Eiffel Tower shimmering in the moonlight, the romantic walks along the Seine, and the mouthwatering culinary discoveries.

"I think that's enough for today. I need to go back to my husband. I will check in again tomorrow," Sonia said with a wink and Lucy laughed as she hung up.

Lucy felt a surge of happiness for Sonia. The glow in her friend's eyes spoke volumes, and Lucy knew this trip was exactly what Sonia needed.

Suddenly, the bedroom door creaked open, and Tom walked in, a tired sigh escaping his lips.

He had just finished chatting with Harry and was about to go in when Harry received Jeff's call, and so he had to stay back so they could discuss the way forward, since he would be the one handling Mia's case in Harry's absence.

"For a moment there, I thought you decided to leave with Harry," she said with a grin and Tom chuckled.

"I'm sorry I kept you waiting for this long," Tom said and Lucy nodded as she got off the bed.

"I'm sure if it wasn't important you would have come in a long time ago. Plus I've been busy myself, so I wasn't idle. I'm very hungry. Let's freshen up and go have dinner," Lucy said and together they took off their clothes and headed for the bathroom.

Chapter 829 Yoga

A wave of worry washed over Harry as he pulled out of Tom's driveway. He had a lot swirling in his head, thanks to the conversation with Tom which had taken much longer than expected because of Jeff's call.

Guilt gnawed at him for keeping Jade waiting for so long, and with a quick tap on his phone, her voice filled the car, a welcome distraction.

"Don't tell me you're just leaving now. Or did you forget to call and you're home now?" Jade asked with a pout when she received the call.

Although she had wanted to call to find out if he had forgotten to call her, she had held back, wanting to wait to see if and when he would call.

He could practically hear the pout in her voice, even though he couldn't see her. "The conversation with Tom took longer than planned. I'm sorry," Harry said thinking she was upset because he had kept her waiting for long.

"So, you are really just leaving now? It's been over an hour already, and you must be exhausted," she said, worried about him still being out when he had looked so tired earlier.

His heart squeezed at her worry and he smiled, "Don't fret, esquire," he assured her, his voice softening, "I'm okay. I will get home in no time. What have you been up to?" He asked curiously.

"Nothing much. I had a nice chat with Lucy for a while and then after freshening up I got busy checking out some Yoga and dance classes online." A tired yawn escaped her lips.

"Yoga, huh? Want to be more flexible?" Harry teased, a playful grin evident even through the phone.

"Oh, you rascal. Get your dirty mind out of the gutter!" she said, a giggle bubbling up in her throat.

"What dirty mind? I only asked an innocent question," he defended himself with a chuckle.

"Like I don't know you and your mischievous ways. Don't even try to play innocent. We both know what you mean," she said dryly.

"Really? Alright. Why don't you tell me what you think I mean? Tell me let's see if that's what I really mean. I'd like to know the kind of dirty thoughts swirling around that brilliant mind of yours," Harry said, his voice dipping into a husky whisper.

"You're not going to be hearing it from me, you pervert," she said and Harry chuckled.

"It takes one to know one. Besides, what do you call the lover of a pervert? A pervertess, I presume?" He asked and Jade's laughter bubbled over the phone, warning him inside out.

"I wouldn't call myself that. Anyway, I'm thinking of registering at a Yoga school after we get back from our vacation. I would have done so now, but since we are leaving this weekend I thought it would be a waste," Jade said and a smile played on Harry's lips as he envisioned Jade in a yoga class.

"Have you decided on the yoga school to attend?" Harry asked, wanting to know if she was settling for a place closer to his or Tom's.

"Not yet. I would need to go check them out in person first. But I have my eyes on two," she said and Harry sighed.

"You don't have to make up your mind yet. You can just do that after we get back from our vacation," he suggested, since he believed that having engaged her, and with their wedding plans in view, she would choose a yoga school closer to their home.

"That's called procrastination, Jonas. I didn't figure you out to be a procrastinator," she said, her voice laced with amusement.

"Thinking again, I think maybe you should start the classes before we leave for the vacation. All those fancy stretches could come in handy, you know?" Harry said and Jade laughed out loud

"There you go again with your dirty thoughts, Jonas," she said, her voice laced with mock-seriousness.

"There is no pleasing you, is there? I wonder why you keep misunderstanding me," He asked with a chuckle.

"Misunderstanding you? Really? Tell me how the fancy stretches would come in handy during the vacation then," Jade said in amusement.

"I only meant that maybe you could teach me a pose or two. Practice your stretches together," he said with a grin.

"Yeah, right," Jade countered with a laugh.

The conversation flowed easily, filled with lighthearted banter and a shared excitement about their upcoming vacation.

The thought of their getaway sent a thrill through Harry. He couldn't wait to whisk Jade away to a beautiful seaside resort, far from Ludus and all the work and drama. He could almost picture the white sand beaches, the turquoise water, and the look of surprise on Jade's face when he pops the question.

The image was so idyllic, it almost felt surreal. Harry knew he had responsibilities, but for now, he allowed himself to revel in the anticipation.

"Hey, I just pulled up to my place," Harry said as he pulled into the parking lot of his apartment building.

"That's such a relief. I suppose my job is done," Jade said and Harry raised a brow as he got out of his car.

"Not so fast, girlfriend. Why do you sound like you're in a hurry to hang up? You have to stay on the phone until I walk through the door," Harry said and Jade smiled.

"Jeez! You're so clingy," she joked, and Harry chuckled.

"I can't help it. I love my girlfriend too much," Harry said and they continued chatting until he got to his door.

The moment walked into his apartment, Candace and Andy who were in the living room turned to look at him, and realizing that they were waiting for him, he sighed.

"I'm in now. Thanks for keeping me company. I love you," Harry said before hanging up.

"Hey, you two," he said, his voice warm. "What are you doing up so late? Everything alright?" He asked as he sat beside Andy.

"Everything's alright now that you're here. We were getting worried sick! Why are you so late?" Andy asked, her voice laced with concern.

Harry looked from Andy to Candace whose eyes was also filled with a similar mix of worry and relief.

Harry's smile faltered slightly. He hadn't expected them to be waiting for him, and a flicker of guilt crossed his mind for not letting them know about his movement.

"I'm sorry. I didn't expect you both to be worried. I was busy. What did you think would happen?" Harry asked in amusement.

"I thought you'd probably be hiding somewhere crying your eyes out," Candace said and Harry chuckled, the warmth of their concern washing over him.

"Well, I was busy doing other things. After dropping you off, I went to the company and then after that I went shopping with Jade... Oh, no!" Harry exclaimed when he suddenly remembered that he had left all the shopping bags in the car.

"What's wrong?" Andy asked, startled.

"I left the shopping bags in the car," he complained, not looking forward to going down to get them.

"We can go get them for you," Candace offered, surprising Harry who narrowed his eyes at her.

"Why are you suddenly being so nice to me?" He asked suspiciously since it was unlike Candace to show that she was worried about him or anything like that.

"You know why," Candace said with a wink and Harry looked at her for a moment before remembering why.

"Why?" Andy asked, looking from Candace to Harry.

"Because Sara said Candace is the older twin. It's out in the open now," Harry said and Andy raised a brow.

"For real? So, you're like our baby brother? Aww," Andy cooed and Harry chuckled.

"I guess so," he said, amused when Andy patted his back.

"Why did you have to say it so easily when I already promised to keep it to myself?" Candace scowled.

"Because I don't like anyone having any hold over me," Harry said and she rolled her eyes.

"If you knew that, why did you act so worried about it earlier?" She asked and Harry shrugged.

"I wanted to make you feel special," he said and she scowled at him.

"So, you've been shopping all evening?" Andy asked and Harry shook his head.

"Had dinner and then dropped her off at Tom's, and spent some time chatting with Tom," Harry said and they nodded.

"Well, dad called. He asked after you, and I told him I haven't seen you since we got back from there," Candace said and Harry nodded.

"But I like you being my big brother more, you know? I like the way you always throw the word around. Talk to your big brother. Tell big brother what you want and stuff," Andy said mimicking Harry's voice and both Harry and Candace chuckled.

"I'm exhausted. It's been a long day. I'm going to go in and freshen up," Harry said as he rose.

Andy held out a hand to him, "Hand over your car keys. Your big sisters will help you get the shopping bags," Andy said with a sweet smile as she rose too and Harry chuckled.

"As long as you don't ruffle my hair, I don't mind anything else you do," Harry said as he placed the car key in Andy's outstretched hand.

As he headed for his bedroom, Candace reached out a hand and ruffled his hair, "Sleep well, pumpkin. Your big sisters love you," She said with a wink, and Andy giggled while Harry glared at her playfully.

"I'm not going to bed yet. We have to discuss about the interview and go over the possible questions once again before going to bed," Harry said but Candace shook her head.

"You look really exhausted. Don't worry about the interview, Andy and I have been going over the questions Alicia sent all evening. Go to bed. We will leave your shopping bags in the living room," Candace said and Harry thanked them as he headed for his bedroom.

Harry smiled to himself when he heard Candace and Andy laughing as Candace told Andy how he had reacted when Sara told them she came first.

He was glad that Candace was alright. He had been worried that she would be down after the visit, but it was good to see that she was okay.

Chapter 830 Lonely Dinner

Dawn stood by the dining, tears rolling down her eyes as she refused to sit down for her lone dinner.

It was over a month already since she was brought back to the country by her governess and she had only seen her mom once and was yet to set her eyes on either of her grandparents.

"I want my mom," she cried to her governess, who had been put in charge of her.

"Miss Dawn, we have been over this already. Your mother can't come to you now. Next week she will visit you. Until then, you have to be a nice young lady and dine alone, else you won't see her," Her governess said but that only made Dawn to cry harder.

"I want to go home. I miss my mom. I miss my grandfather and grandmother. I want to see them," Dawn cried, and the housekeeper who stood by the dining table sniffled, earning her a warning glare from the governess.

"And I told you that sometimes in life you can't get everything you want. I will put a video call across to your mother now, and she will keep you company while you eat. Is that good enough?" She asked, and Dawn bobbed her head.

"Now wipe your tears and sit down," the governess ordered and Dawn did as she was told.

"No. No. Not with your hands. You are not a baby," she chided when Dawn used the back of her hand to swipe at her tears.

The housekeeper quickly picked up the tissue box on the table and handed it to Dawn and she carefully took a piece from it and wiped her tears.

The governess walked away from Dawn before dialing Kimberly's line, and Kimberly who was in the middle of dinner with her parents and some business partners rose, "Please excuse me," she said politely as she walked away to receive the call.

"What's wrong? Is Dawn okay?" Kimberly asked with a worried frown.

"She is refusing to eat again and is crying. She wants to see you," the governess explained and Kimberly's heart broke at the thought of Dawn crying.

She wished the situation could be helped but she couldn't do anything yet. There would be no point in getting cut off and going to suffer with Dawn.

The only way she could take care of Dawn and give her the kind of life she deserved, was to patiently try to get her father to forgive her and accept Dawn.

"You can't keep calling me each time she cries this way. This arrangement is going to remain this way for some time so she has to get used to not seeing me for the time being," Kimberly said and the governess nodded.

"I understand, but she doesn't. Maybe you should explain to her..."

"Tell her I'm busy with work and I can't talk to her now. I will call her before she goes to bed..."

"Can she just see your fac..." before the governess could finish, Kimberly hung up the call.

The governess heaved a deep sigh before returning to meet Dawn who was waiting eagerly to speak to her mom.

"I'm sorry, Miss Dawn, your mom is busy with work and can't talk to you now. But she says if you're a good girl and you eat your dinner, she will call before you go to bed," the governess said, and Dawn's shoulders slumped as she bowed her head, her eyes downcast.

"Do you want me to eat with you?" The governess offered when she saw that Dawn's tears were dropping again.

Dawn shook her head as she picked up her cutlery. Although she didn't feel like eating, she had to be a big girl and eat so that her mom would call.

Now she wished she had remained with Lucy and everyone else. Even though they had been unfriendly towards her at first, they had all eaten together.

She wished Jamal was there with her to fight with her over the sitting arrangement or over anything else.

"I want Lucy," Dawn said, and the governess glanced at the housekeeper who hurried away to get Dawn's stuffed panda.

Once she brought it, Dawn rose from her seat and placed it there and went to sit at the right side of it picturing it to be Lucy.

Jamal could sit at the left hand side of Lucy while she stayed at the right. Her lips curved in a smile as she imagined Lucy and Jamal eating with her, while the housekeeper and governess watched her, wondering what she was thinking.

Away from there, no sooner had Harry walked into his bedroom and taken off his clothes before his phone rang with a phone call from his father.

"Hey, dad!" Harry greeted as he sat on the edge of his bed wearing only his underpants.

"How are you, Harry?" Aaron asked quietly.

"Uncle Harry, I miss you," Jamal called from behind Aaron, surprising Aaron who had left him in bed just some minutes ago.

"You should be sleeping, child," Harry heard Aaron chide him.

"I can't sleep. You left before I fell asleep properly," he heard Jamal complain and smiled.

"You've slept too much beside your mother that you can't sleep in your own bed alone," Aaron said with a shake of his head as he let Jamal join him on the couch before returning his attention to the phone call.

"Say hello to Jamal so he can return to his bedroom. He's been wanting to talk to you," Aaron said before handing the phone to Jamal.

"Hello, Jam. How's my favorite nephew doing?" Harry asked with a wide smile, happy to talk to Jamal.

"When mom and aunt Andy have other kids, will I remain your favorite?" Jamal asked making Aaron and Harry laugh.

"Of course," Harry assured him.

"Alright. How are you doing? How is Lucy and Tom and everyone?" Jamal asked and Harry smiled.

"They are very fine. We all miss you a lot," Harry said and Jamal nodded.

"I miss you all too. How is Dawn?" Jamal asked, and Harry raised a brow.

"Dawn?"

"Yes."

"I suppose she is fine. Why are you asking? Do you miss her? I thought you both were always fighting over Lucy's attention?" Harry asked with interest.

"We made up. She is my friend now. I will like to talk to her," Jamal said and Harry sighed.

"I don't think that will be possible, Jam. She is very far away and we can't get access to her," Harry said apologetically.

"Lucy told you the same thing. Why are you asking Harry?" Aaron asked with a shake of his head.

Jamal frowned, "Does that mean I won't see her or speak to her again?"

"That might be possible in the future, but not anytime soon," Harry said and Jamal sighed.

"How near is the future?" He asked, making Aaron laugh, and Harry who had been trying to hold back his amusement at the question couldn't help but laugh too.

"Even tomorrow is the future," Harry said, and Jamal frowned.

"How can tomorrow be the future when tomorrow is soon and you said not anytime soon but in the future?" Jamal asked and Harry massaged his temple.

"You've asked enough questions, boy. Now go back to bed, else I won't let you play with your bike tomorrow," Aaron said to Harry's relief.

"Will you come to my room? Or should I go to your room?" Jamal asked grudgingly as he rose.

"Go to my room. I will join you after my phone call," Aaron said and with that Jamal left.

"He has been talking about Dawn a lot. I think Dawn is his second Lucy," Aaron told Harry.

"At least he has moved from crushing on someone old enough to be his mom to crushing on someone younger than him. We don't have to be worried about him dating older women," Harry said and Aaron chuckled.

"How are you?" Aaron asked, sounding serious again.

"I'm fine. And you? How are you?"

"I'm okay. How did the meeting go? How is she?" Aaron asked and if it was before, Harry would have been mad at the note of concern he heard in his father's voice, but now he was just tired.

"The meeting went well. She said Candace is older than me," Harry said, and Aaron nodded.

"I figured. How is her health?" Aaron asked and Harry scowled.

"Was I supposed to ask her? I don't care about her enough to want to know about that. And you shouldn't either," Harry said and Aaron sighed.

"She is my wife," Aaron reminded him quietly.

"WAS!" Harry corrected angrily.

"Is. Maybe it hasn't occurred to you yet that we never got divorced," Aaron said and Harry frowned.

"That's because it wasn't even a real marriage in the first place..."

"I married her for better or worse, Harry. It might have been a bad decision, but I did. And she gave me two wonderful kids regardless of everything else she did. I understand you both can't forgive her. I haven't forgiven her either. I won't. But I can't bring myself hate her. Don't blame me for still caring about her. I know she doesn't deserve it..."

"Is that why you never remarried? Because you didn't divorce her?" Harry asked, cutting him off.

"I didn't divorce her because I didn't want to. And I didn't remarry because I didn't want to either. After Candace and Andy returns, I'm going to fly down to see her," Aaron said and Harry frowned.

"I don't want you to see her. The last time you were in contact with her it affected your heart," Harry said and Aaron shook his head.

"The only thing that affected my heart was my worry about her contacting you and how you would react to it. Its different now. I want to see her. I want to talk to her and ask her some questions so I can have my closure," Aaron said and Harry raised a brow.

"Closure?"

"Yes. And I'm going to divorce her now," Aaron said and Harry relaxed.

"Do you need me to..."

"No. I don't need your help. I can handle my business myself," Aaron cut him off, and Harry smiled.

"Alright. Maybe after you get divorced I can take you to a club and get you a girlfriend," Harry suggested and Aaron chuckled.

"I can get myself a girlfriend if I need one. Mind your business," Aaron said and Harry raised a brow.

"I don't remember you minding your business when you kept interfering in my personal life..."

"You're my son, so you're business..."

"And you're my father, so you're my business. And maybe this time you should leave it up to me to choose the right woman for you, seeing as you made such a shitty first choice," Harry said and Aaron chuckled.

"Well, that shitty first choice birthed you, and maybe that's why you're so full of shit," Aaron fired back making Harry laugh.

"So, would you want to remarry? Just so you know, I'm not interested in having younger siblings at my age," Harry said, making Aaron laugh.

"You want to remain the youngest in the family. You like being the last born, huh?" Aaron taunted.

"Bye," Harry said, and hung up the call before his father could say anything else.

The thought of his father finally being free from his feelings for Sara and moving on made his lips curve in a smile. He wondered what his father's ideal type of woman would be and if he would ever remarry. He hoped so.