

Wild Night 831

Chapter 831 Henry Rosewood

Mia jolted awake, gasping for breath. Her heart hammered against her ribs, a frantic drumbeat echoing the terror of the nightmare that had just ripped her from sleep.

Sweat clung to her skin, the sheets twisted tangled around her legs. Disoriented for a moment, she scanned the room, the familiar cozy glow of their bedside lamp a beacon in the darkness and the familiar outline of Jeff's sleeping form beside her a comforting presence.

A tremor ran through her body as the remnants of the nightmare clung to her. It had been vivid, a suffocating dream where Henry loomed over her bed, his face twisted in a cruel smile. It felt so real, like his cold breath was tickling her cheek, his mocking voice echoing in her ears.

"Mia?" Jeff stirred beside her, his voice gravelly with sleep, was a soothing balm to her racing pulse.

"Are you alright?" He asked as he sat up, his brow furrowed with worry. In the warm light, his face was etched with concern, his brown eyes gentle and caring.

Mia took a shuddering breath, willing the phantom sensation of his icy grip on her wrist to fade.

"Y-yeah," she stammered, her voice trembling. Relief washed over her as his warm hand covered hers, a solid anchor in the storm of her fear.

"Did you have a nightmare?" he asked as he watched her face.

Tears welled up in Mia's eyes. How could she describe the terror that had gripped her, the feeling of being watched, trapped? "Yes," she confessed, her voice barely a whisper.

"Do you want to talk about it?" he asked, his voice soft.

Mia hesitated. Talking about Henry always felt like opening a fresh wound, a constant reminder of the darkness she'd escaped. But something about the lingering raw terror and the unsettling details of the dream, made her yearn for solace.

Mia nodded, wrapping her arms around herself, "It was... him again," she whispered, her voice thick with dread.

Jeff knew exactly who "him" referred to. He'd heard bits and pieces of Mia's past, and knew too well the physical and emotional scars Henry had left etched on her body and soul.

Taking a deep, shuddering breath, she spoke. "I...I dreamt he was standing here, right beside the bed. Just watching me sleep. It felt so real, like he could reach out and touch me."

Jeff's jaw clenched. He hated the thought of that man ever having had any power over Mia. He squeezed her hand, his voice reassuring. "It was just a dream. A bad one, but it wasn't real. And you don't have to worry. Whatever nightmares you have, I will be here when you wake up."

Part of Mia knew he was right. Henry was miles away, likely living his luxurious life with no thought of her. But the unsettling conversation with Alicia had planted a seed of doubt. What if there was a connection?

"But what if it wasn't?" Mia whispered, the fear creeping back into her voice. "What if Alicia was right? What if someone..."

"Hey, hey. Calm down," Jeff cut her off, his voice firm yet gentle. "We will figure this out, alright? I won't let him get to you, I promise," Jeff said confidently.

"Okay," she agreed, her voice calmer now. "But I need the plate number Alicia sent. I need to send it to..."

"Harry? I sent it to Harry already," Jeff said and Mia frowned.

"Why would you do that?" She asked as she drew back from him.

"I know he is involved in this. I told him I wanted to help too...."

"That doesn't mean you should go behind me and handle MY business. I could have reached out to him and talked to him about this myself. I am the one who asked for his help. I didn't ask you to step in and play middle man," Mia snapped irritably and Jeff watched her silently.

"I'm not trying to take control of your life, Mia. I'm here to help," he said calmly, knowing the root of her anger.

"Well, it seems to me like you are taking control. First you come in here every damn night acting like some damn man of the house, and then you're making me cook and now you go behind me and handle my business," Mia hissed, and Jeff sighed deeply.

"I'm not making you do anything, Mia. I'm not your father and neither am I your husband..."

"You are a man just like them and you all act the same. You go about acting like a woman needs you to tell them what to do and fix their life," Mia continued and Jeff shook his head as he got off the bed.

"Alright. Stop it. Stop right there. Talking to you in this state won't work. I understand that you're not in the best frame of mind right now and you're only lashing out because you are scared. I'm trying to be patient with you right now. I'm trying my best to be an understanding friend, but I won't stay up by this time of the night to have a fight with you. Nah. I won't do that. If you won't stay calm and have a reasonable conversation without throwing such insulting accusations at me, you'd have to fight yourself, not me. When you are calm, I will be in the living room," Jeff said and without waiting for her to respond, he picked up a pillow and headed for the door.

Mia wanted to stop him from leaving but she held back as she watched him walk away. He was right. He didn't deserve any of those unkind things she had said. He was different from her father and Henry, and comparing him to them was very insulting.

With a sigh she got off the bed and went to meet him in the living room.

Jeff wasn't surprised to hear her coming to find him so soon when he heard the door open. If there was one thing he liked about her, it was how quickly she calmed down.

He remembered how she had gone off at him in the same manner some time ago when she was drunk and it had been because she also assumed then that he was trying to control her.

"You didn't deserve that. I'm sorry," Mia said without meeting his gaze when she stopped in front of him.

"Which part?" Jeff asked with a raised brow.

"All of it," she said, and he nodded.

"Let's be clear on something. If you don't want me coming to your bedroom..."

"I do want you coming. I appreciate it. I'm sorry I went off that way. I didn't mean that. I shouldn't have said any of that," Mia cut in.

"I'm not making you cook..."

"Yes. I know. I know. It's just that I really don't want you handling my business without my knowledge. This is my life. It's my problem. I want to not only feel in control, I also need to be in control," Mia said, searching his face to see if he understood her.

"I'm sorry I got you mad," Mia said and Jeff sighed as he held out a hand to her and she took it.

Jeff pulled her close so that she was sitting beside him on the couch, "I'm not mad. At least not yet. I understand that what happened was horrible, Mia. It takes time to move on from something like that. But try not to say stuff like that to me. You might say you don't mean it, and even if I know you don't mean it, that doesn't make it less hurtful. I'm a human, not a robot. Words get to me too. I'm only trying to help. I won't talk to Harry about you behind you or without your knowledge next time," Jeff said and Mia nodded.

"Thanks," she said, and Jeff nodded.

They both sat there in silence for some time until Mia rose, "I'm going back in," she said, and Jeff nodded.

When she saw that Jeff wasn't making any move to follow her back to her bedroom, she cleared her throat.

"Are you not coming?" She asked cautiously.

"I didn't want to just follow you back acting like some damn man of the house," Jeff said with an easy smile.

"I apologized and told you I didn't mean it," she reminded him.

"Yeah. You did. But now I'm not going to do anything you don't ask me to do. You want control? You have control," Jeff said and Mia sighed deeply.

"So, what do you want me to do now?" she asked and Jeff shook his head.

"You don't need any man to tell you what to do," Jeff said with a grin and Mia scowled.

"I never figured you to be so petty," she said and he chuckled.

"Now you know I'm petty. Before you say anything to me next time, you should think twice," Jeff said and she rolled her eyes.

"You know what? Suit yourself," she hissed as she headed back to her bedroom, and Jeff shook his head in amusement as he watched her go.

Away from there, the burnished mahogany gleamed beneath Henry Rosewood's polished shoes as he stood gazing out of his expansive office window.

The cityscape stretched before him, a concrete jungle teeming with life, yet none of it seemed to penetrate the fog of his thoughts.

It has been three long years since Vanessa, his wife, had vanished in that car crash.

He winced at the memory. It wasn't the crash itself that had haunted him, but the events leading up to it. The cruel words, the barbed taunts, the emotional manipulation - a toxic cocktail he'd force-fed their marriage. When the news of her accident and death arrived, a part of him had been devastated, another part...strangely relieved.

Then, two days ago, Dr. Evans, his trusted friend, had dropped a bombshell during their hangout. A woman bearing an uncanny resemblance to Vanessa had been spotted in Ludus.

At first he had dismissed it and thought nothing of it since his wife was long dead, but when he remembered that her body had not been found till date, he had immediately contacted Discreet Investigations, one of Ludus's most prestigious private investigator firm.

Now, the initial report sat nestled amidst a pile of unopened emails on his desk. Apprehension gnawed at him. What if it wasn't Vanessa? What if it was just a cruel twist of fate, a figment of someone's imagination?

With a shaky hand, Henry clicked on the email. A flurry of photos populated the screen. The first one he clicked on stopped his breath.

There she was, seated in a fancy restaurant, a shock of a auburn hair framing a face that mirrored Vanessa's in its youthful vibrance.

Although Vanessa's hair had been black, there was no denying that this was his wife. He didn't need anyone to tell him. He knew her as much as he knew the back of his hand.

A closer look at the face revealed subtle differences – a softer set to the hazel eyes, a smile that wasn't guarded by the faintest hint of fear.

This woman, this Mia as the caption identified her, exuded a quiet confidence Vanessa had never possessed.

Had she played him for a fool all along? Had the meek, timid woman he had married been an elaborate act?

The photos certainly hinted at a different Vanessa, a woman with a spark in her eyes, a woman who wasn't perpetually flinching under his gaze.

The image of her submissive form, the way she would shrink under his booming voice, sent a fresh wave of fury crashing over him.

He gritted his teeth as he scrolled through the pictures, each image chipped away at the carefully constructed image of grief he had presented to the world.

Vanessa, or should he say Mia, the woman who had dared to play him for a fool, was alive and seemingly thriving.

Anger burned a hot ember in his gut. His wife had chosen to disappear, to rebuild her life under a new identity. A life far from the gilded cage he had built for her.

Henry gripped the armrest of his mahogany chair, knuckles turning white when he came upon a photo of Mia standing by the roadside laughing with with some lanky nobody named Jeff, presumably her housemate and colleague.

The next photo was of them both standing in front of a door and Jeff her supposed housemate tucking her hair behind her ear. The very thought of her living with another man and of him touching her, made Henry clench his jaw.

He walked away from the computer to stand by the window since the photos continued to mock him, each one a fresh barb to his already fuming ego.

The view outside his window blurred as a cold fury ignited within him. "Three years," he growled, the words a low rumble in his chest.

Three years of mourning, of carefully cultivated grief, of playing the part of the bereaved husband to a tee. All a sham, it seemed.

The woman who had sworn to stand by him, to be his trophy wife, had vanished, leaving him to shoulder the charade alone.

For all he knew, Jeff could be her lover and she had fled with him to start up a new life else where. The whore!

The thought of her laughter in those photos, the carefree way she leaned against the nobody, sent a tremor of rage through him.

"Mia," he spat the name, the unfamiliar moniker a further insult. The name itself was a cheap disguise for the woman who dared to be Vanessa Rosewood.

Reinventing herself? He scoffed as he walked back to stand by his desk.

Vanessa had always possessed a flair for the dramatic, a thirst for attention. This elaborate escape was just another one of her games.

But Henry Rosewood wasn't a man to be played. He had built his financial empire from the ground up, regardless of his family's fortune. He was a ruthless titan in a world that respected power and Vanessa had made a fool of him.

He slammed his fist on the polished mahogany desk, the sound echoing through the opulent office and sending a tremor through the crystal decanter perched precariously on the edge. The amber liquid sloshed but held. Unlike his carefully constructed composure.

This wasn't about guilt or shame. This was about control. He had built her. He had molded her, shaped her into the perfect wife, the perfect public image for Henry Rosewood. And she had thrown it all away for a life with some scruffy nobody in a far-flung country?

This escape, this pathetic attempt at a new life, was a betrayal he wouldn't tolerate. He wouldn't have it. Vanessa wouldn't get away with this. She would return to her gilded cage, a reminder of who she belonged to.

Vanessa Rosewood belonged by his side. Not as some cowering ghost, but as a reminder of who held the power, who called the shots. He had built an empire, and she, his wife, would play her part within it.

Henry Rosewood wouldn't be mocked. He would have his revenge.

Chapter 832 Team Meeting

The insistent trill of the phone sliced through Amy's restless sleep and dream. It wasn't a dream filled with laughter and sunshine, but a restless one haunted by the echoing silence of Miley's absence. She fumbled for the phone, blinking away the remnants of the dream and the dull ache in her chest that had become a constant companion these past four days.

"Hello?" she rasped, her voice thick with sleep and grief.

"Amy, it's Mom," came her mother's voice, laced with a tremor that mirrored the unease blooming in Amy's stomach.

Amy sat up, fully awake now. "Hey, Mom. Everything alright? Why the early call?" She asked as she squinted at the alarm clock on the nightstand. It was barely six on a Tuesday morning.

There was a beat of silence on the other end of the line, then a sigh. "I just received an unexpected text."

Amy's stomach clenched. "Unexpected? From who?"

"Mrs. Garwood," her mother confessed.

Amy's breath hitched. Ever since the incident with Miley, all communication between them and the Garwoods had ceased. They were persona non grata, banished from Miley's life and, it seemed, from her death as well.

"What did she want?" Amy asked, bracing herself for the worst.

"She... she asked me to tell you," her mother fumbled, "that Miley's funeral is tomorrow, Wednesday. And that we are welcome to attend."

Amy's numb heart lurched. A funeral? Miley? This couldn't be real. "But... I thought they didn't..." Her voice trailed off, unable to voice the accusation.

"I know, dear," her mother interrupted gently. "I was just as surprised. Apparently, Mrs. Garwood... well, something changed her mind."

Intrigue clawed at the edges Amy's grief. What could have possibly caused such a turnabout? The Garwoods had been adamant about cutting all ties.

"Did you find out why?" Amy pressed.

There was another pause, longer this time. "I couldn't ask her. I mean, she was kind enough to invite us, so it wouldn't be logical to ask her that. But I asked the cook. She mentioned something about a visit from a Dr. Perry. I guess something he said changed their mind about you."

Amy's heart stuttered in her chest. Lucas? He wouldn't. He couldn't have...

"Dr. Lucas Perry?" Amy mumbled.

"Do you know him, Amy?" Her mother asked curiously.

A wave of warmth washed over Amy. Lucas wouldn't have told her, wouldn't have wanted to take credit. But the thought of him intervening, of using his influence to give her a chance to say goodbye to Miley... it was overwhelming.

"Yes. He's a friend, Mom," Amy managed, her voice thick with unshed tears.

"A very good one I see," her mother said, "Well, we owe him a huge debt of gratitude," her mother said firmly. "Let's talk about it when we meet. You will be able to make it for the funeral, right?"

The question grounded Amy. "The funeral is tomorrow, right? I should be there."

"Absolutely," her mother agreed. "Can you get on a flight soon?"

"I will have to stop by the office first, clear some things up," Amy said, already leaping out of bed.

"Don't worry, Mom, I'll be there."

"I will be expecting you," her mother responded before hanging up.

Hanging up, Amy felt a surge of emotions. Sadness for Miley, a bittersweet gratitude for Lucas. He may have left without saying goodbye to her, but it was obvious that he had thought about her and gone out of his way to help her and comfort her.

It wouldn't be out of place for her to ask Lucy for Lucas' number so she would express her gratitude to him. She would like to thank him for his help.

Knowing that she didn't have much time to dally about it she was going to handle her backlog at the office before traveling, Amy hurriedly got ready for the work.

She felt sort of ashamed and shameless at the same time to be thinking of asking Lucy for some time off to attend Miley's funeral.

She felt ashamed because she knew it would look like she was taking advantage of Lucy's kindness, and shameless because even though she knew that, she still wanted to do it. She couldn't afford to miss Miley's funeral.

Amy forced herself through the morning routine at work. Her fingers flew across the keyboard, clearing emails and scheduling appointments, but her mind was a whirlpool of grief and a nascent hope. Every completed task felt like a small victory, a step closer to getting on the plane and to Miley.

The office door swung open, announcing Lucy's. Amy rose, a practiced smile gracing her lips as she followed Lucy into her office, "Good morning, Lucy."

"Good morning, Amy. How are you?" Lucy asked pleasantly as she took off her blazer and hung it on her coat rack beside her desk.

"I'm fine. Thank you," Amy said and before she could say anything, Lucy glanced at the clock.

"Alright. Tell me what I have on my schedule for today, and then you can go get everyone. I'd like to address the team," she said, and although Amy wanted to ask her permission to leave, Amy decided to wait and do so after the team meeting.

Amy went on to rattle off the day's agenda, her voice oddly steady. "A visit to the factory at 11 AM, conference call at 2 PM, reports due by the end of the day," she finished, and Lucy nodded, making

a mental note to inform Tom that she wouldn't be available for lunch since she would be out inspecting the factory and having a meeting with the workers.

"Alright. Thanks. You can ask everyone to come in now," Lucy said as she took her laptop to the conference table which was now in her office.

Five minutes later, Lucy sat at the head of the conference table, her laptop open in front of her. Around her, her team members gathered, each with their own notes and ideas to contribute.

"Alright, everyone," Lucy began, her voice clear and authoritative. "Let's get started. First, I want to thank you all for your hard work and dedication. We've had a successful quarter, and from the reports thus far, our summer collection has been a massive success, exceeding our expectation. Good job, everyone," Lucy said and they all clapped.

"Having said that, I will go straight to today's agenda. As you know, the Paris fashion week for the spring/summer collections is just two months away. I know we have never participated in it before now," Lucy said, and they all turned to the door when Tom walked in.

Lucy raised a brow, wanting to excuse herself to go attend to him, but he shook his head, signaling her to go ahead, while he went to sit behind her desk to watch her do her thing.

"Back when I was in Heden, I always wondered why we never took part in those events, and now that I'm here, I'm hoping I can make it happen. I want to make it happen. However, two months is not enough time to prepare and submit an application. So, I'm going to be submitting an application for us to participate in the Fall/Winter collection fashion week. That gives us enough time to prepare," Lucy said and paused to meet each team member's gaze.

The team members nodded, some jotting down notes as Lucy spoke. Seeing that they were following, she flipped a digital presentation onto the screen, each page showcasing a mood board bursting with vibrant colors and innovative silhouettes.

"We will be aiming for boldness," Lucy declared, her voice ringing with authority.

"Forget safe and predictable. We want to push boundaries, create a collection that makes a statement. I want us to think outside the box with this collection. Let's explore new fabrics, new colors, new silhouettes. I want our designs to be bold, innovative, and most importantly, marketable."

A murmur of excitement rippled through the room. Amy, leaned forward, a thoughtful frown on her usually serene face. "Lucy, the concept is phenomenal," she said, "but the fabric sourcing for these experimental materials might be a challenge."

Lucy acknowledged the concern with a curt nod. "I understand, Amy. And I want you to head up a task force specifically dedicated to sourcing. We will explore alternative vendors, even consider partnerships with emerging textile companies if necessary. I also want us to prioritize sustainability in our designs. I-Global is committed to reducing our environmental impact, and our fashion line should reflect that commitment."

She paused, allowing her words to sink in before continuing. "Lastly, I want each of you to come to our next meeting with three new design concepts. I want to see your creativity at work, so don't be afraid to take risks."

"And what if after all this work we do not receive an invitation?" One of the guys in the team asked.

"We will be invited. And if for any reason we do not receive an invitation, we will host our own fashion week," Lucy said and they all clapped happily while Tom who was watching, smiled.

A young intern, Emily, piped up, her voice barely a whisper. "What about the marketing campaign, Ms. Perry?"

Lucy's smile was sharp. "Excellent question, Emily. We're going all out with social media. We need a viral campaign that generates buzz long before the fashion week. Think influencer marketing, interactive content, something that captures the essence of the collection's audacity. We are going to make them notice us. They are going to want us on their stage," Lucy said with determination.

"Now, I will split you up into departments and assign specific roles to each department. I expect daily progress reports from each department, no exceptions."

The next couple of minutes flew by in a flurry of ideas and challenges. Lucy fielded questions, offered solutions, and kept the energy high. It was a masterclass in leadership, a display of both vision and meticulous planning.

"I have complete faith that we are going to make a huge splash in Paris. Remember, we won't just be showcasing clothes, we will be showcasing a story. Let's tell the world what I-G clothing line is all about: bold designs, impeccable quality, and a commitment to innovation."

As everyone trooped out of her office, Tom rose up to clap for her, "Bravo, my lady! Bravo!" He said, and she laughed as she closed her laptop.

"You know, if I wasn't already crazy about you, watching you do your thing just now was a huge turn on," Tom said and Lucy grinned.

"Thanks. I feel the same way when I watch you do your thing," Lucy said with a wink as she joined him and Tom chuckled.

"What are you doing here anyway? I thought you were supposed to be busy?" She asked, and her gaze drifted to the door where Amy was standing.

"Excuse me for a moment," Lucy said before Tom could respond, and she went out to meet Amy, who was circling outside her door.

"Amy, is everything alright?" she asked, her voice laced with concern.

Amy hesitated, "I'm very sorry for what I'm about to say, Lucy," Amy said without meeting Lucy's gaze.

Sensing that she knew what Amy wanted to say, Lucy raised an eyebrow, a gentle amusement replacing the concern. "Apology accepted. Now, say it."

Taking a deep breath, Amy explained the unexpected call from her mother, the news of Miley's funeral, and the even more unexpected invitation from Mrs. Garwood. Finally, she confessed, "I know it's a lot to ask, especially considering that you let me take some time off before and I don't want it to seem like I'm taking advantage of your kindness, but would it be possible... could I take three days off? I need to go to Miley's funeral tomorrow. I promise not to take any more breaks from work even if I'm ill and dying I will show up. Please, Lucy. I really need to say goodbye to her," Amy pleaded.

To Amy's surprise, Lucy's expression softened, a flicker of understanding passing through her eyes, "Amy, there's no need to apologize," she said gently. "Of course you can go. Miley was your best friend. I'm glad that you've been able to resolve things with her family and you can attend the funeral."

A wave of relief washed over Amy. "Thank you, Lucy. Thank you so much," Amy said and Lucy smiled.

"It's fine, Amy. Really," Lucy said and turned around to return to her office but Amy stopped her.

"Lucy," Amy started hesitantly, "Did Lucas tell you he visited Miley's family and talked to them on my behalf?"

Lucy's gaze flickered for a moment, a barely perceptible flicker of emotion crossing her face. She seemed on the verge of denial, then she simply shrugged.

"Lucas has a way of... helping people."

"I need to thank him," Amy said, her voice filled with determination. "Can I have his contact number?"

"Actually, Lucas doesn't have a phone. He communicates with us using Tyler's phone, and I will have to ask him first before giving that to you," Lucy said apologetically.

"I understand. Please thank him on my behalf, and let him know I will appreciate it if he lets me give him a call," Amy said and Lucy nodded.

"I will tell him just that. You should be on your way, Amy," Lucy said and Amy nodded as she hurried away, while Lucy went back to meet Tom.

As Amy hurried out of the company, a familiar figure brushed past her, and she frowned as she looked back.

What was Rachel doing at the company?

Chapter 833 I Was Desperate

After Lucy's conversation with Amy, she returned to the office to join Tom. "So, where were we, Mr CEO?" Lucy asked with a grin.

Tom, who had been engrossed in his phone, looked up at her approach and jerked his head towards the door.

"I guess she has been informed of the funeral," Tom said and Lucy nodded as she sat on the edge of the desk close to Tom.

"Yeah. She is leaving now. By the way, I will be leaving the office by eleven. I need to pay a visit to the factory. I want to see what they are working on and have a meeting with them," Lucy said and Tom leaned back in his chair, a thoughtful look in his eyes.

"Everything alright? You didn't mention anything about the factory visit earlier. What prompted the sudden need?" He asked curiously.

"It's not exactly sudden. It has been scheduled since my last visit there and to be honest, I forgot about it until Amy talked about it earlier. We're launching Fall/Winter soon, and you know how critical this season is. I have to make sure everything is in place," Lucy said and Tom smiled.

"Always the perfectionist, Jewel. Makes the rest of us look bad," he joked.

A smile tugged at Lucy's lips. "Gotta earn my man more money to splurge on me," Lucy said with a wink making Tom laugh.

"So, are you driving? Who else is going with you?" Tom asked curiously.

"Trina and Ron. Ron will be driving. You know you haven't told me why you are in my office yet," Lucy reminded him.

"I called but you weren't taking your call," Tom began, a playful glint in his eyes. "Stuck in a meeting, phone on vibrate in your purse – the classic executive excuse, eh?"

Lucy chuckled, "Guilty as charged," Lucy confirmed, reaching for her handbag and retrieving her phone. "Sorry about that."

"No worries. I figured," Tom said, glancing at his wristwatch. "My first meeting ended early. And I want us to watch Harry's interview together if you are not too busy. It's starting soon."

Lucy groaned. "Shoot! I completely forgot about that. I have to leave for the meeting at the factory by eleven," Lucy said and Tom smiled.

"That means we still have an hour before you leave. Do you have any meeting before then?" He asked and she shook her head.

"Nope," Lucy said, relief washing over her. The prospect of spending some time with Tom, watching the interview they had all been looking forward to for weeks, was a welcome respite.

"Good. Let's go to my office..." Tom began, before a sharp buzz cut him short. The intercom on Lucy's desk crackled to life.

Lucy raised an eyebrow, then reached for the receiver. Tom watched her intently as her brow furrowed in a frown as she listened to what was being said.

"I see," Lucy said, her voice clipped. "Ask one of the security men to escort her up." Lucy said before replacing the receiver.

"That was reception. A lady is here to see me but she wouldn't give her name," Lucy explained.

A flicker of unease crossed Tom's face. "Then why did you ask them to let her in if you don't know who she is?" Tom asked in confusion.

"That's why I asked them to escort her up. Besides, you're here," she said and Tom shook his head, his lips pursed.

"I'm pretty sure you would have done the same had I not been here. You should be more careful, Jewel. The fact that she refused to give her name alone should make you turn her away. Anonymity is a red flag," he said with disapproval.

Lucy dismissed his concern with a wave of her hand. "Let's just wait and see who it is," Lucy said as she settled down behind her desk.

Lucy glanced at her phone when it buzzed with an incoming call and she raised a brow when she saw that Amy was calling.

"It's Amy," Lucy told Tom before receiving the call, "Did you forget something?" Lucy asked curiously.

"Actually, yes," Amy replied hesitantly. "I forgot to mention that I left your apartment key under the doormat. Thank you so much for letting me stay at your apartment. I will be returning to my place when I get back. Lucas helped me change the locks," Amy said and Lucy's brow shot up.

Lucas helping Amy change locks? Lucas seemed to be doing quite a lot for Amy. It seemed her brother was more involved in Amy's life than she realized.

"I see. That's fine. As long as you're alright," Lucy said and before she could hang up, Amy spoke again.

"Uhm, I wasn't sure if I should mention this, but I saw someone familiar on my way out. Rachel."

A jolt of electricity seemed to crackle through the air at the mention of that name. Lucy's face hardened, her jaw clenching involuntarily. Tom watched the shift in her demeanor with a mixture of concern and curiosity.

"Rachel?" Lucy hissed, her voice laced with a dangerous edge.

Tom's brow shot up in surprise. "Rachel?" he echoed, his gaze flitting between Lucy and the phone.

What was she doing here? Tom mused as his expression hardened.

"Yes." Amy said hesitantly on the other end of the line. "I thought you should know. I don't know if she is there to see you or not," Amy said since she remembered Miley telling her about Rachel's relationship with Lucas and all that Rachel had done.

A beat of silence followed as Lucy seemed to process the information. How dare Rachel show up there after all she had put their family through? Lucy mused.

The silence stretched, heavy with the weight of the past and the betrayal that still festered. Finally, Lucy spoke, her voice low and dangerous. "Thanks for letting me know. I'm pretty sure she is here to see me," Lucy said and after the call ended she looked at Tom.

"I guess now we know the identity of your visitor and the reason she refused to give her name," Tom said and before she could respond a knock sounded on her door and they both turned to see a security guard usher Rachel into the office.

The once vibrant, self-assured Rachel stood before them a crumpled mess. Her designer clothes, usually impeccably styled, were wrinkled and stained. Her face, usually meticulously made-up, was pale and streaked with tears. The moment the guard saw Tom, he bowed his head politely, his eyes filled with a flicker of recognition.

But it was Rachel who stole the show. In a dramatic flourish, she went straight to her knees, landing with a soft thud on the plush carpet of Lucy's office. Her mascara-rimmed eyes darted between Lucy and Tom, a flicker of desperation battling with the remnants of her former arrogance.

"Lucy! Oh, I'm so glad Mr. Hank is here too," Rachel cried, her voice cracking with emotion. The practiced confidence that had once flowed from her was replaced by a raw vulnerability that was as shocking as it was unexpected.

Lucy, however, remained unmoved. Her gaze was a glacial blue, her posture rigid with suppressed anger. "What are you doing here, Rachel?" she asked, her voice devoid of warmth, each word a carefully aimed ice pick.

"Please help me," Rachel pleaded, her voice trembling. "I'm sorry for everything. Please help me..."

Lucy's lips formed a thin, humorless line. Help you?" Lucy cut in, her voice laced with a dangerous edge. "After everything you've done? After the lies, the betrayal? You expect me to simply forget?"

"What lies? I never lied or betrayed you. I've only ever loved Lucas. My only crime was asking him to choose between us and I'm very sorry...."

"Seriously? That's your only offense?" Lucy cut in with a humorless laugh as she turned to Tom, "Can you believe her right now?"

"If that's your only crime, why are you here then? You want her to help you get back with Lucas?" Tom asked when it dawned on him that Rachel was not yet aware that they were aware of the role she had played in Lucy's abduction and scandal.

Rachel bobbed her head as tears stream down her cheeks. "Yes. I'm so sorry. I miss Lucas. I can't live without him. I need him," Rachel cried.

"Lucas is what is important to you right now? You are not worried about your dad going to jail and your family losing everything? Lucas is your problem?" Lucy asked with a shake of her head.

"Please, Lucy. I know he is here. I saw Sonia's wedding pictures. Please help me," Rachel pleaded.

15:30

Tom, ever the silent observer, watched the exchange with a keen eye. Though a part of him wanted to ask the security guard to take Rachel away, but he knew it was best to leave it up to Lucy.

"Do you really expect me to help you after all you put me and my family through? Did you think we will never find out what you did? How you gave Jamie the information he needed to abduct me?" Lucy asked and watched as color drained from Rachel's face and her eyes widened.

"You are surprised, aren't you? Yes. I was just as surprised. I was even more surprised to know you told your cousin, Anita, about my past so she could use it against me," Lucy said and Rachel shook her head in denial.

"No. No, Lucy. That's not true. Whoever told you that is lying against me. I didn't do any of that. No. No, Lucy. Please listen to me. I didn't know Anita wanted to use that information against you. I didn't expect her to twist it that way either. I'm sorry, Lucy. Please believe me. I know there is nothing I can say to make it right. But please, Lucy, you have to believe me I didn't know Jamie wanted to abduct you either. I never knew his plan. I swear on my life. He only told me he was interested in you and would like me to help him get to you by giving him information about you. I agreed because I thought he wanted you to be his girlfriend and if you had a boyfriend you would spend less time with Lucas. I never knew he had other plans. I swear, Lucy, I never knew he was going to do that. I was desperate. I didn't know what else to do," Rachel cried.

A humorless scoff escaped Lucy's lips. "Desperate? Desperate to come between my twin brother and I? Explain yourself, Rachel," she said, her voice as cold as the arctic wind. "Why should I help you, after everything you've done? You even got my mom arrested. What makes you think anyone

in my family is ever going to forgive you and accept you? Give it up, Rachel. The ship with Lucas in it has long sailed. You won't be receiving help from me," Lucy said and Rachel broke into a sob.

The sight of Rachel crying, however, did little to soften Lucy's resolve. She had learned the hard way not to be swayed by such theatrics.

"I have to get back to work. See her out, and make sure she never shows up around here again. Have a good life, Rachel," Lucy said, and watched as the security guard led a weeping Rachel away.

Lucy drew in a deep breath as the door closed behind them, and Tom looked at her with concern, "Are you okay?" He asked, and she gave him a nod.

"Better than I thought I would be when I see her. I don't think I'm as upset now as I was weeks ago," Lucy said and Tom raised a brow.

"Really? Why not?" He asked, and she shrugged.

"I don't know. Maybe I've healed a great deal and I've accepted what happened as my past and I've moved past it. Or maybe I'm still moving past it," she said and Tom smiled.

"That's good to know," Tom said as he glanced at his watch. "Let's go to my office. The interview has started."

Chapter 834 The Talk Show (1)

The plush velvet armchairs sat empty under the stark glare of the studio lights. Anticipation crackled in the air as a hush fell over the audience.

The morning's episode of the prestigious Eric Howell Live promised an exclusive.

As the cameras rolled, Harry strode onto the stage oozing a confident aura. Flanked by Candace, her composure a stark contrast to the tremor in her hands, and Andy, whose fierce determination masked a vulnerability, the trio presented a portrait of a beautiful family.

"Welcome back, everyone," Eric Howell's booming voice filled the studio. "Today, we have a special episode in store for you. Joining us are Harry Jonas, Co-CEO of I-Global Group, along with two beautiful ladies, Candace Jonas, and Andy Jonas. Harry, thank you for choosing our show to share this very personal journey."

"Thank you, Eric," Harry replied, his voice steady and confident. "It is a pleasure to be here."

Alicia, the co-host known for her disarming warmth, turned to the sisters. "Thank you both for joining us. It takes courage to share your story, and we appreciate you being here. It's a gift to your viewers," she said, her voice warm and inviting.

Candace offered an hesitant smile, her gaze flitting between the audience where Matt was seated, and the cameras. Andy, however, held Alicia's eyes, a flicker of defiance sparking within them.

Jade, who was seated beside Matt in the audience, held her breath as she looked at them, feeling very nervous even though she wasn't the one on the stage. The last time she had been here was to witness Rebekah's downfall, and she had come along with a bowl of popcorn to entertain herself, but this time she hadn't even been able to touch her breakfast.

Everyone seated there meant a lot to her, and she was specially worried about Candace since she knew how nervous Candace was.

"Let's start from the beginning," Alicia began, her gaze soft yet probing. "Mr. Jonas..."

"Just Harry is fine," Harry cut her or ex

"Just Harry then," Alicia joked, and everyone laughed.

"In recent times there has been rumors about your relationship with the recently convicted Sara Walker. Some claim she is your biological mother, others claim she is your older lover, and there are some who say she was your late mother's friend. Can you clear the air and tell us the nature of your relationship with her?" Alicia asked with a curious smile.

Harry gave her a nod as he leaned back in his seat, "Sara walker is my biological mother," Harry said, and both Eric Howell and Alicia exchanged a surprised look.

"Sara Walker is your mother? For real? She denied that rumor when it first came up, and if I remember correctly, you always said your mother was late and you were raised by only your father, who never remarried. Am I wrong?" Eric inquired.

"No, you are not wrong. That was exactly what I thought all these years. My father made me believe she was dead. I only found out the truth some time ago," Harry said quietly.

"That must have come as a shock to you," Alicia said with a thoughtful expression, and Harry smiled wryly.

"That is quite an understatement. The discovery was earth-shattering," he admitted with a sigh, "But thanks to having the best quality of people around me, I was able to find my balance," Harry said, and his eyes sought Jade's in the audience.

"Before we delve further into your relationship with Sara Walker, we would like to know your relationship with these beautiful ladies. Some time ago, Ms Candace Jonas was seen walking down the red carpet by your side and it caused quite the buzz in the media since everyone was curious to know who she was. Can you tell us about your relationship with them?" Alicia asked and Harry turned to smile at Candace and Andy.

"They are both my elder sisters," Harry said, and everyone looked at them in surprise, including Jade whose jaw dropped.

Elder? She mused, and met Harry's amused gaze, while Candace and Andy who had been a bit tense looked at Harry.

Forgetting the cameras as Harry had wanted her to, Candace scowled at him, "I thought that was meant to be a family top secret?" She asked, and Harry grinned.

"He did say he didn't want you to have anything over him," Andy reminded Candace and the three of them laughed.

"Did you say sisters? Elder sisters?" Eric asked in disbelief, and Harry smiled.

"As a matter of fact, Candace is my twin sister," Harry clarified.

"Oh, my God! This is huge!" Alicia said excitedly as she looked from Candace to Harry and back again.

"I think I can see the resemblance now. Can you see it, Eric?" She asked, and Eric looked from Harry to Candace who were smiling.

"I think so," Eric said, and then shook his head.

"Are you messing with us, Harry? Or is this for real?" Eric asked suspiciously and Harry chuckled.

"Don't I have better things to do with my time than to come on your show to mess with you?" Harry asked, and Eric nodded.

"You are right. I believe you," Eric said and then Alicia's jaw dropped dramatically as of something just hit her.

"If you are twins, does that mean Sara Walker is your mom too?" Alicia asked Candace, and feeling relaxed by all the jokes already, Candace nodded.

"And you?" Alicia asked Andy, and she shook her head.

"No. Sara Walker is not my mother. Candace and I have been together since our childhood days at the orphanage. I was recently adopted by Aaron Jonas," Andy explained, and Alicia frowned.

"Did you just say, orphanage? Why would Candace be at the orphanage when both her parents are alive and doing quite well?" Alicia asked, and Harry gave Candace a nod to speak.

"And if you don't mind me asking, if you are Sara's daughter, does that mean you are the daughter whose organ she intended to harvest illegally that ended in her arrest?" Eric asked, and Candace nodded as Andy reached for her hand.

"Yes, I was the one whose organ she tried unsuccessfully to harvest. And up until a couple of months ago, I never knew anything about my biological family. I was just an orphan and the only family I had was my brilliant seven year old son and my sister, Andy," Candace said quietly.

"If it's not too much to ask, can you tell us how you got to know about your biological family? And how got reunited with them?" Alicia asked in a soft voice.

"I would also like to know how you ended up at the orphanage," Eric added.

"It's a long story..."

"I'm pretty sure it's an interesting one, and I'm here for it. We are all here for it. Right, Eric?" Alicia asked, and Eric nodded.

"Yes, Candace. We would love to hear all about it," Eric said and Candace drew a deep breath.

"Like I already said, until some weeks ago, I knew nothing about my biological family. It all started when I met my boyfriend, Matt Swift..." as soon as the words left her lips, her eyes widened in surprise when she realized what she had just publicly announced, and her gaze went to Matt who was grinning from the audience, and she shook her head and pressed her lips together.

"Matt Swift? The actor, Matt Swift, is your boyfriend?" Eric asked in surprise.

"I guess that explains why he is in the audience," Alicia said with a grin.

"I guess you just took your relationship to the next level," Andy whispered to Candace and Harry chuckled.

"There is a lot to unpack in this morning's episode. I'm beginning to feel like it should be a series," Eric said and they all laughed.

"I agree with you. There is so much to talk about," Alicia said with a nod.

"That was a slip..."

"Are you saying he isn't your boyfriend?" Eric asked, and Candace shook her head.

"No. That's not what I mean. I'm just saying I... that is not part of this interview," Candace said, feeling flustered.

"Alright. Maybe we can have you both as guests some time in the nearest future," Eric said and Candace shook her head.

"Don't count on it," Candace muttered to Harry's amusement.

"Please go on with what you were saying before that very significant slip," Alicia said, steering the conversation back to the discussion.

"I... we were on the run. Or perhaps I should say, we were in hiding, Andy and I. Not from the law, but from my son's father..."

"You should probably explain why we were in hiding," Andy cut in, still holding onto Candace's hand in silent support.

"True. I was going to ask that. Also, you started earlier by saying it all started when you met Matt Swift. I'm a little confused," Alicia said and Candace nodded.

"I think it would be better to start from the beginning as Andy suggested. That way it's easier to explain the role Matt played in helping me find my family," Candace said and went on to talk about how they left the orphanage home and took up a waitressing job at a bar where she met Jero

She explained the kind of life Jero led, without making any reference to the Legion Cartel. She talked about how they ran away after testifying against Jero and having him locked up.

When it was time to talk about being a stripper, Candace's breath hitched. Her grip on Andy's hand tightened.

"In order to take care of bills, we..."

"It's okay, Candace. I'm sure it must have been hard on you. You don't have to give us the details of all you had to do," Alicia said as she leaned forward in her seat and took Candace's second hand.

Tears gathered in Candace's eyes, and surprisingly there were tears in Andy's eyes too as she reached out and brushed Candace's tears away.

"I want to say it. I need to say it and get it out," Candace said, and Harry smiled at her proudly and Matt also smiled from where he sat.

Candace took a deep breath, "We worked as exotic dancers. I was a stripper."

"An exotic dancer? For real? And here I was thinking you were going to say something terrible. Not to trivialize how you feel about it, but I think exotic dancing is a beautiful art."

"Right?" Andy asked enthusiastically.

"Right. And it isn't illegal. I mean, you're an entertainer. I really don't see anything wrong in having a beautiful body and having people pay to see you dance in your own skin. I mean, you have a son, right? Yet your body is still so beautiful that you can work as an exotic dancer? You should be

proud! I go to the beach and people see me in my bikini but no one is paying for it. But an exotic dancer gets on the stage in a bikini or whatever costume and money falls from every angle. It's really not fair," Alicia said incredulously.

"You never can tell. Maybe if you do some dance moves in your bikini money will fall," Andy suggested and Alicia laughed.

"I will need to learn some sexy moves from you then," Alicia said and Andy pursed her lips as though considering it.

"I will have to charge you for it," she said and Alicia laughed.

"Unlike Candace, you don't seem troubled by the occupation," Eric observed, and Andy nodded.

"Am I supposed to be worried? Contrary to the negative stereotype that has stigmatized the career, exotic dancing is not the same as prostitution. And exotic dancers are not drug addicts or uneducated. Most of the ladies I've worked with are either doing it because it is their passion and for others like Candace it is to earn good money to take care of themselves and pursue a degree," Andy said and Eric nodded, looking at her with interest.

"What about you? Why did you do it?" He asked, and Andy smiled.

"For the fun of it and the money. I started the job first and convinced Candace to do the same since the pay was good and it would enable us take care of our little boy and Candace's college expenses," Andy said, and Alicia looked at Candace with interest.

"You are in college?" She asked, and Candace nodded.

"Yeah."

"She is studying law," Andy said proudly while Harry simply sat back, and listened to the interactions with a smile.

"Wow! Law? That's impressive," Alicia said and Candace smiled shyly.

"Thanks."

"What about you?" Eric asked Andy.

"What about me?" Andy asked lost.

"Are you in college too?" He asked and she shook her head.

"No, I'm not. I've been saving up to go into music," Andy said and Eric's brow shot up.

"Music?" He asked with interest, "Want to be the next Cardi B?" He asked and she laughed.

"Nah. Cardi B is Cardi B, and Andy is Andy. I don't want to be anyone. I want to be me," Andy said and Eric smiled.

"Andy has the best vocals I've heard. I get goosebumps listening to her sing some times, and I can't wait for the world to enjoy what she has to offer," Candace said with a proud smile.

"Aww. Now you make me really want to hear her sing," Alicia said and turned to Andy.

"What kind of music would you like to do? Want to give us a glimpse of what we should be expecting from you?" Alicia asked and Andy grinned.

"For real? You want me sing?" She asked, and Eric nodded.

"Yes. We would love our stage to be the first to witness what you've got," Eric said and Andy grinned.

"Why don't I do that when we are done? I think we are getting sidetracked from the whole subject of the interview," Andy suggested, and they nodded.

"That's right. There is just so much to talk about. Harry, your sisters are as interesting as they are beautiful," Eric said, and Harry chuckled.

"You can say that again," Harry said with a proud smile.

"Let's take a little break, and when we get back, Candace can tell us how she ended up at the orphanage and got reunited with her biological family. I can't wait!" Alicia said excitedly.

Chapter 835 The Talk Show (2)

"Oh, my God! I can't believe I just told the whole world I was a stripper," she whispered, her voice thick with emotion.

Candace considered this, a flicker of hope rekindled in her eyes. Perhaps the shame she'd carried for so long was misplaced.

"And they didn't judge you," Andy pointed out, "In fact, Alicia seemed to think it was empowering."

Candace considered this, a flicker of hope rekindled in her eyes. Perhaps the shame she'd carried for so long was misplaced.

"You both did so well," Harry said warmly, "You were amazing."

Candace offered him a watery smile. "Thanks. I never thought I'd be telling my whole life story on national television."

"Neither did I," Andy admitted, "But here we are," Andy said and she rose when Alicia signalled her over to join her and Eric.

Matt, who had been grinning from ear to ear throughout the interview, came forward took Candace's other hand. "You were absolutely incredible. I'm so proud of you."

Candace's cheeks flushed a rosy pink. Despite the audience, Matt's words sent a shiver down her spine. Maybe, just maybe, going public with their relationship wasn't such a bad idea after all.

"Why? Because she just told the world about your relationship?" Harry asked dryly.

"That. And because she is incredible," Matt said without taking his gaze away from Candace, while Harry shifted his attention to Jade.

"Enjoying the show?" He asked and she shook her head.

"I'm feeling too anxious to enjoy it. I can't imagine how you must all feel if I'm this strung out. I'm going to give you a massage later, okay?"

"Alright lovebirds," Andy teased, nudging them playfully as she joined them again. "Save the mush for later. We have a show to finish," Andy said to Jade and Matt as she sat down.

A fresh wave of nervous energy surged through Candace as the commercial break ended, but this time it was different. It was a nervous excitement, a thrill of anticipation. She was ready to tell her story, the whole unfiltered truth, no matter how messy or painful it might be.

Eric and Alicia reappeared, their smiles wider than ever as the red light flickered back on.

"Alright folks, Welcome back! We are still here with the Jonas siblings." Boomed Eric.

"We have a lot more to unpack here. Candace, before the break, you were about to tell us how you ended up at the orphanage. We're all eager to hear your story," Alicia said, wasting no time in steering the conversation back to Candace's story.

Candace took a deep breath, stealing a glance at Matt's encouraging smile. She straightened her shoulders and met Alicia's gaze. "As I was saying before," she began, "I met Matt. Don't ask me how. It's not part of the story," Candace said before either Eric or Alicia could ask her, and they both smiled and gave her a nod to go on.

"I told Matt about our situation, and because he wanted to keep us safe, he reached out to his best friend's sister who is a brilliant lawyer, Jade Hank. She coincidentally happened to be the lawyer who handled the case that sent my baby daddy to jail," Candace said and Alicia looked stunned by the revelation.

"Oh, my! What a coincidence," Alicia said and Eric nodded.

"And that's not the best part of it. Jade Hank also happens to be the sister to Thomas Hank who is Harry's best friend," Candace added, stunning them even more since they were yet to make the connection.

"Things like this makes us believe it's a small world," Eric said in amazement.

Candace spent the next couple of minutes recounting the details of how Harry had joined Jade in helping her even without knowing she was his sister.

How her and her son had ended up staying with Tom and how her baby daddy had sent her a package containing details about her past.

"Wait! Wasn't he in jail? Did he get released?" Alicia asked and Candace smiled.

"I'm not sure about that. It was a gift. He had it delivered. Said he had been working on it before he got arrested," Candace said since they had agreed not to give out details of Jero and the cartel since giving out too many details would make the remaining members of the cartel think they were a threat.

"You mean he helped you find your family?" Alicia asked and Candace nodded.

"In a way. But it seemed my family already found me before I found them," Candace said, and Eric turned to Harry.

"Before she tells us how she ended up at the orphanage, how about you tell us how you found her?" Eric asked with interest.

"It's simple. Sara showed up wanting to meet me. On hearing that my biological mother was alive. I asked my dad why he lied, and he confessed that she abandoned me when I was a week old. I also

got to learn I had a twin sister who supposedly died at birth. Upon further investigation we realized she didn't die as our father was made to believe, but she was actually sold at birth," Harry said, earning him a gasp from both Alicia and the crowd.

"Sold? Sara Walker sold her daughter? Candace?" Alicia asked, turning to look at Candace with sad eyes.

"If you followed the news of what happened to Wilson Peterson a couple of weeks ago, you would better understand how I ended up at the orphanage. The couple who bought me from Sara was Gregory Peterson and his wife," Candace said stunning everyone once again.

"What? It's all related? This leaves me to wonder, if everything that has happened in the last couple of weeks is related or purely coincidence," Eric said and Harry shrugged.

"Maybe it's just karma doing its thing at the right time," Harry said with a grin.

"Oh, Candace. All of these must have been so tough on you," Alicia said, and Candace forced a smile.

"Well, it wasn't exactly easy getting to know that I was sold by my biological mother, lost my supposed adoptive parents and got abandoned at the orphanage," Candace admitted, her voice thick with emotion. "And finding out Sara was searching for me, not because she was remorseful and wanted a reunion, but because she needed a piece of my liver, that was sort of hard to swallow," Candace said, and Alicia extended a hand to her.

"Of course. I can only imagine how that must have made you feel. You are such a strong woman, Candace. And I'm sorry you've been through so much struggle," Alicia said softly as Candace struggled not to cry.

"How did all of these make you feel, Andy? How did you feel about Candace finding her biological family?" Eric asked so that Candace would be able to compose herself.

Andy smiled, "I'm still reeling from the surprise and joy of it. At first I was a bit skeptical, you know? I was like, what if they don't accept me? What if they don't have room for me? But after meeting Harry and our dad, I don't see it as Candace finding her biological family. I think it's our family. It feels as though I found where I belong too. And maybe my own biological family might have left me at the orphanage for me to find my true family. Oh, fuck! I think I'm going to cry," Andy said as her voice hitched, and they all laughed, while Candace squeezed her hand.

"Why were you not present at I-Global's anniversary dinner party? Or were you there but just didn't feature in the photos?" Eric asked and Andy smiled.

"Nah. I wasn't there. Someone had to stay back at home with our dad and Jamal. I offered to do so. You know, I'm trying to win brownie points with the old man so I can be his favorite," Andy joked and they all laughed.

They had all agreed not to say anything about Andy being abducted and being away during the initial reunion, in order to simplify things and to not expose Cassidy to whoever was possibly looking.

"Harry, what about you? How do you feel having two older sisters?" Alicia asked and Harry grinned.

"You know how you don't have something and you're fine? And then you suddenly have it and you begin to wonder how you've lived without it your whole life? That's how I feel. I feel incredibly lucky to have these two exceptionally beautiful and strong women in my life as my sisters. And I got the most brilliant and handsome seven year old in the world as my nephew. It's amazing, really," Harry said with a heartfelt smile.

"I have to ask, how did you feel knowing about their past? I mean, seeing how well you've lived and how they had to go through so much?" Eric asked, and Harry drew a deep breath.

"I felt sad that they had to pass through so much struggle, and proud of them for staying strong. I believe they did what they had to do to survive and take care of each other, and they did a damn good job. I'm proud of them. I'm proud of the women they are and I'm proud to call them my sisters," Harry said and this time both Candace and Andy became teary.

"Candace and Andy, what has been the best part of being part of the Jonas family for you individually?" Eric asked and Candace smiled.

"The quality of people I've come to be connected to. Before now, Jade Hank was mostly a lawyer but now she is a friend and sister to me. And I value her friendship so much," Candace said, meeting Jade's gaze, and Jade blew her a kiss, "And then there is my cousin, Lucy Perry...."

"Lucy Perry? As in Lucinda Perry? Thomas Hank's girlfriend? How? I had no idea she was related to you, Harry," Eric asked in disbelief and Candace closed her eyes when she realized she had made yet another revelation that wasn't part of their plan.

"Well, that's not part of this interview," Harry said with a small smile since he knew very well that Lucy wouldn't want to draw such attention to herself.

"We did say this interview is supposed to be in series. Maybe we can bring back Candace and Matt for another episode, and maybe convince Thomas Hank and Lucinda Perry to be our guests here," Eric said with a resigned smile.

"I wish you good luck with that," Harry said and Eric grinned.

"We will talk about that off camera. I'm sure you can convince them all on my behalf," Eric said and Harry chuckled.

"As interesting as this episode has been, it's time to call it a wrap. That was an incredible journey, Candace," Eric said, his booming voice softened with empathy. "You both are truly remarkable young women."

Candace's eyes welled up with tears, a mixture of relief, joy, and gratitude. She had finally found her voice, and the world had listened.

"Thank you, Eric," Candace replied, her voice trembling slightly as she wiped a stray tear from her cheek. "It means a lot to hear that."

"Thank you for having us," Andy said with a polite smile.

Alicia leaned forward, her eyes sparkling with curiosity. "There's still so much we don't know! What's your relationship with Sara Walker like now? And I'm sure everyone wants to hear the juicy

details about you and Matt Swift! I'm hoping we can convince you to come again. Until then, we will close today's show with Andy's performance. Andy, what's your music name?"

Andy grinned, "Brandy," she said excitedly, happy that they were giving her the platform to advertise herself to their millions of viewers.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we present to you, the latest superstar in the country, Brandy. Do not forget to tune in same time next week," Eric said before letting Andy take over the stage.

Chapter 836 Awkward Morning

After the interview ended, and they were done chitchatting with Eric and Alicia, they all trooped outside and were surprised to see a swarm of reporters vying for their attention with cameras flashing in their faces.

Not new to this, Harry and Matt covered the ladies, allowing them to get into the car since they had done enough talking for the day, and once they were safely inside, Harry turned to address the reporters who were throwing questions at him and Matt.

"Mr Jonas, what is your relationship with Sara now?"

"Mr Jonas, have you been to the prison to visit your mother?"

"Matt, is Candace Jonas really your girlfriend?"

"Matt, how serious is your relationship with her?"

"Mr Jonas were you responsible for your mother's arrest?"

"Mr Jonas, are you behind what happened to Wilson Peterson? Are you the man that was mentioned in his interview?"

"I thought we said everything already. Why are reporters here?" Candace asked as they all looked out the window of the car.

"You find reporters anywhere there is news, and you my darling made a lot of shocking revelations today. I wouldn't be surprised if reporters hound you for the next couple of days. And speaking of the revelations you made, are you sure law is the right discipline for you? For a prospective lawyer, you sure do make a lot of slips," Jade said as she looked back at Candace from the front seat.

"I was going to say the same thing," Andy said with a giggle when Candace cringed.

"Don't even remind me of any of that. I know I messed up," she said Andy rolled her eyes.

"Don't be silly, Candace.m," Andy scoffed playfully, though a hint of pride glinted in her eyes. "You did beautifully in spite of the slips."

"Thanks. I'm just glad I didn't reveal any major secret. Although, I hope Lucy forgives me for dragging her into this mess," Candace said and Andy raised a brow.

"And Matt?" Andy asked and Candace sighed.

"Matt doesn't mind. He has always wanted to go public with our relationship. I was the one holding back," Candace said with a shrug.

"You were both incredible. You had everyone in the audience laughing and sniffing," Jade said, her voice filled with admiration.

"For a moment there, I thought Candace was going to break down in tears, but she held her own. You did really good, Candace," Andy said in agreement to what Jade had said.

Candace smiled, "I was able to do it because you were there with me, Andy. And thank you, Jade. You know very well that all of these wouldn't have been possible without your quick wit."

"Yes. I played one of the major roles in this reunion. I deserve my own interview," Jade said playfully and they all laughed.

"By the way, Andy. You were wonderful! I'm sure everyone who watched the show can't wait to stream your music," Candace said and Andy grinned.

"Yes! I was going to comment on that before I was distracted by the reporters. Andy, I never knew you were so talented. You are going to have to employ me to be your legal representative when you become a star," Jade said and Andy laughed.

"I am going to have to? Are you asking or telling me? And why does it have to be when I become a star?" Andy asked in amusement.

"Because I'm a gold digger and I love associating with very successful people," Jade said with a wink and they all laughed.

"By the way, are you ready for your vacation? Want us to teach you a couple of sexy moves?" Andy asked and Jade grinned.

"I would absolutely love that. You know I got all that sexy stuff already," she said with a grin and they laughed.

"Because you've been so wonderful, I will teach you for free," Andy said and Jade clapped happily.

"I'm glad you are all having fun," Harry said as he got into the car and Jade turned to him.

"You looked so hot up there," Jade said and Harry chuckled.

"I think I'm always going to look hot to you regardless of what I do," Harry said as he leaned forward to kiss her, and Andy and Candace covered their eyes making Harry and Jade laugh.

"You shouldn't be making out in front of your big sisters," Andy said playfully.

"We were not making out..."

"That!" Jade exclaimed before Harry could finish speaking, "They are both older than you? When did you find out? And why didn't you tell me?" Jade asked, and Harry's ears burned red.

"We found out yesterday. He asked Sara. I guess he was too embarrassed to tell his girlfriend that he is the youngest in the family," Candace said with a giggle.

"Aww. There's nothing to be embarrassed about, baby. That just makes us have one more thing in common, and I think it's hot," Jade said with a grin as she playfully poked Harry's chest and he chuckled while Candace and Andy shook their heads.

"Let's go home," Harry said as he started the car, and Candace looked at him.

"Where is Matt?"

"He didn't come with us, did he? He brought his own car and is leaving..."

"Leaving? He left without saying anything to me?" Candace asked in disbelief.

"He will meet us at home," Harry said and Candace's frown deepened.

"He is driving alone. Why didn't he ask me to join him if he's going in the same direction?"

"Probably because the reporters surrounded us before he could say anything, and keeping you away from them is more important to him than having you ride with him," Andy suggested.

"And you know you can just dial his line and ask him instead of asking me?" Harry asked and Candace scowled.

"Since we will see him at home, let's just go," she said and Harry gave her a nod.

"Yes, ma'am," he said as he drove out of there.

The ride was filled with a buzz of energy. Candace and Andy recounted their favorite moments from the interview, and Jade talked about how anxious she had been on their behalf.

As they pulled into the parking lot of Harry's residence a short while later, Harry reached for his phone, checking for missed calls. A single notification stood out— a missed call from one of his men.

A peculiar feeling settled in his gut as he turned to Jade who was still in the car while Candace and Andy were getting out.

"Everything alright?" Jade asked, sensing his sudden shift in mood.

"I need to make an important call. And I may have to go out for a bit. There has been a development regarding Mia," he explained.

Anxiety flickered in Jade's eyes. "Is she alright?"

"For now she is. But I have to make sure she remains so. Will you wait for me?" Harry asked and Jade nodded.

"Sure."

"Will you spend the night?" He asked hopefully.

"Maybe if you tamper with the clocks, I will," she said and he chuckled.

"I think I'm just going to get rid of the clocks and make a no wristwatch or phones policy when you're around," he said, and Jade giggled as she kissed him.

"Be good," she said before getting out of the car, and Harry let out a deep breath as he watched them all head for the elevator.

Alone in his car now, he returned the call, and a gruff voice answered on the other end.

"Mr. Jonas?" the voice inquired.

"That's right," Harry replied, "What did you find?" Harry asked, his voice cautious.

"The plate number you sent belongs to Discreet Investigations. A private security firm," he said, confirming what Harry already suspected.

Henry Rosewood had heard of Mia and he had hired a private investigator to track her down to confirm if she was indeed his wife.

"Alright. I will let you know if I need your help again," Harry said before hanging up, and he dialed Tom's line, hoping his phone was close to him, since they both had a habit of leaving their phone in a drawer when they were in a meeting to avoid distractions.

Tom, who was in the middle of a meeting but had left his phone close to him because Lucy had left the company premises for the factory, and he wanted to be available if she tried to reach him for anything, looked at his phone when it buzzed.

He raised a brow when he saw the call was from Harry and he rose, "Please give me a moment. This is important," he said as he picked up his phone and received the call.

"Is it urgent? I'm in the middle of a meeting," he said the moment the call connected.

"It's just as we suspected. The car Alicia spotted belongs to a private investigation firm," Harry announced.

"We will proceed as planned but we will have to bring all plans forward. Go see her as we discussed last night. I will take it up from there after you leave," Tom said and without another word Harry hung up.

Away from there, Jeff and Mia were in their respective bedrooms, both feeling awkward about the event of that morning.

That morning, Mia had woken up with Jeff's morning erection firmly pressed against her backside, and his hand cupping one of her boobs.

She had laid very still, trying to fight back her arousal as she waited for him to wake up and leave for his bedroom.

Not long after she woke up, Jeff had woken up and the moment he realized where his hand was resting on and how his erection was pressing against Mia, his breath caught and his heart beat quickened.

Knowing that he was fully awake, Mia stayed still, although his breath that fanned her neck made it increasingly difficult for her to remain that way.

Jeff held his breath as he very slowly raised his hand and shifted away from her, and without meaning to, Mia let out a sigh of relief that took Jeff by surprise.

"Are you up?" Jeff asked as he sat up, mortified by the thought that she had been awake the whole time and knew what had happened.

"Yes. I just woke up. Why?" Mia asked, pretending to yawn as she sat up.

Jeff looked at her, not sure whether to believe her or not, and true to his suspicions, her blushed.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do that," he said and she nodded.

"It's fine. After all you did warn me that something like this could happen," Mia said without meeting his gaze.

"I wasn't taking advantage of the proximity..."

"It's fine. I understand. Don't make it anymore awkward than it already is," Mia pleaded, and Jeff nodded.

"I'm sorry. I will be in my bedroom," Jeff said, and without waiting for her to say a word, he picked up his pillow and left.

Since then, he had been in his bedroom, and she in hers. Neither of them had bothered to ask the other about breakfast.

The shrill sound of the doorbell interrupted the awkward tension filled silence in the house as both Mia and Jeff stepped out of their bedrooms to see who was at the door.

They both exchanged a glance, "Did you order for something?" Jeff asked, since Mia was fond of doing that.

"No. Maybe it's Alicia again," Mia offered, a tremor in her voice betraying the hope she didn't quite believe in.

Jeff shook his head, a grim line forming around his mouth. "I saw her leave for work through my bedroom window."

"Oh, you're now spying on neighbors too. I suppose you took over from her to keep watch on the neighborhood in her absence," Mia joked and Jeff chuckled.

When the doorbell rang again, Jeff looked at Mia, "Wait here. I will see who is at the door," he said as he went to answer the door.

He looked through peephole and was both relieved and surprised to see Harry standing there.

"It's Harry," Jeff called to Mia as he unlocked the door, and a wave of relief washed over her.

Chapter 837 Making The Call

Even though Harry was there for serious business, he couldn't help but look around at the apartment he had gotten Tom on short notice for his crazy pursuit of Lucy.

Now it seemed like all of that had happened such a long time ago, when it was only three months ago.

"I'm sorry to bother you in the middle of the day," Harry said as he focused on Mia, and then shifted his gaze to Jeff as he wondered why they had not answered the call immediately, and why it seemed like there was some sort of tension between the two.

"It's not a bother. I'm glad you're here. I was going to inform you about what Alicia told us, but Jeff said he told you about it already," Mia said as she gestured for him to sit.

"What can I offer you? Wine? Tea? Coffee?" She asked, standing there like a proper hostess.

"Your time," Harry said as he gestured to Mia to sit down.

Mia exchanged a worried glance with Jeff before prep wedding to take the seat opposite Harry, and Harry didn't miss how Jeff sat beside her like a supportive partner.

"We looked into the plate number that was sent last night. The car belongs to a private investigator firm called Discreet Investigations," Harry said and held Mia's gaze, allowing the implication of his words to sink in.

Although she had suspected it, that didn't stop the cold dread that coiled in her stomach or the fear that washed over her at the thought of Henry knowing exactly where she was and that she had fooled him.

Feeling vulnerable and exposed, she wrapped her arms around herself, and Jeff placed a comforting hand on her shoulder.

"It's Henry. I know it. He sent them. What do we do now?" Mia whispered, fear lacing her voice.

"We will move on with our plans. Now that he knows you are alive, or is probably still just suspecting it, you should take the bold step of giving him a call and asking for a divorce," Harry said and Mia's eyes bulged.

"A call?" She asked, recoiling at the thought of talking to her husband.

"Yes, Mia. I am here. Jeff is here too...."

"No. You don't understand. You can't understand. I can't talk to him. I don't want to talk to him," Mia protested, at the verge of tears.

Jeff felt her body tremble under his hand which was resting on her shoulders, and he sighed, "Can't her just send him the divorce papers? Does she really need to speak to him?" Jeff asked with a concerned frown.

"She has to. There is no easy way around this," Harry said to Jeff before facing Mia again, "I'm not asking you to meet with him. But if you want to be free from him, you'd have to face him sooner or later. If he senses that he still has an iota of power or control over you, despite the distance and despite all the time you've spent away from him, he would use it against you," Harry said reasonably.

"He's going to kill me. You won't be able to save me from him," Mia said fearfully.

"If you truly believe that, why did you ask for my help? Why didn't you just run off to start over somewhere else?" Harry asked and Mia took a deep breath.

"Because I have so many wonderful people around me and I don't want to leave. I would rather stay here and fight than run away," Mia said, and Harry nodded.

"Good. Then fight. How can you say you are fighting if you won't even talk to him? If you can't even talk to him over the phone, what would you do if he shows up here to confirm for sure that you're alive?" Harry asked and Jeff nodded.

"Harry is right, Mia. You should summon the courage to face him. I know you. You are brave and strong. You can talk to him. You can yell at him the way you do to Bryan and I when we screw up," Jeff said and Mia frowned.

"That's different..."

"It's not. You are going to have to face him now or later. The sooner you do, the better. Someone like him won't sign any divorce papers you send unless he sees you or talks to you. Why? He would want to confirm that the power differential between you both is still in place. Our role is to protect

you from him to make sure any physical harm doesn't come to you. But only YOU can end things with him properly. You only need to find the courage," Harry said, and Mia took a deep breath.

"Alright. I will," Mia said, and Harry nodded with approval.

"Good. I will call him now..."

"NOW? Like right NOW?" She asked, and Harry nodded.

"Yes, Mia. Right now. I told you we are acting fast. Before he confirms your existence for himself, you need to reveal it yourself. Else, he can change the narrative," Harry said, and Mia nodded.

"Okay. Let's do it. Let's call him then. I will get my phone..."

"No. Let's use my phone," Harry suggested.

"Your phone?"

"Yes. That way he knows I'm involved and he can't just reach you..."

Mia shook her head. "I don't think he should know you are involved yet. I will call him myself. Listen in on the call so you can better understand the kind of person he is," Mia said and Harry nodded.

"If that's what you want. Let's do it," Harry said but Jeff shook his head.

"Why not use my phone? He won't know it isn't Mia's phone. And..."

"Stay out of it, Jeff. I don't want you to get involved directly. If a private investigator was snooping around here, chances are, he already knows of your existence. And trust me, Henry is a very jealous and dangerous man. He is terrifying," Mia said and Jeff nodded.

"You've made that quite clear. But that doesn't mean I'm going to be afraid of him. He's a man just like me..."

"No. He's nothing like you. And he's not a man. Henry is a beast. A wild one that hides behind his charitable deeds. If you want to help me, help me on my terms. I will go get my phone," Mia said, and with that she walked away to go get her phone.

"Do you think it's okay for her to contact him with her own phone?" Jeff asked and Harry nodded.

"She might be terrified of him, but she is smart. I expected her to offer to call him directly. It's best he doesn't know anyone else is involved right now," Harry said and Jeff's brows pulled together.

"Then how will you be helping her? Will she really be alright? Will you be able to protect her from him?" Jeff asked, and Harry arched a brow.

"Will you be able to protect her from him?" Harry retorted.

"I will do whatever it takes to keep her safe," Jeff said and Harry nodded.

"Then I suppose we should be glad we have you to protect her from him then," Harry said and Jeff scowled at Harry who in turn grinned at him.

Mia returned with her phone and as she sat down, she looked at Harry, "I think I should let you know for the last time that Henry is dangerous, and things can get very dangerous and complicated for you..."

"You don't know me, Mia," Harry said simply.

"Can you not get involved? I mean, not directly. I don't want Henry to know I have anyone with me on this. I won't be able to live with myself if anyone of you gets hurt because of me. And I also think it will be better for him to deal with hidden enemies he doesn't know who are just as powerful as he is. I will rather have you behind me as a hidden card," Mia said, and Harry looked at Jeff.

"I told you she's smart, didn't I?" Harry asked and Jeff frowned.

"Mia, no one is going to get hurt..."

"I was married to him for years. I know Henry. You don't. If I'm going to fight, I will rather fight my own way. I'm glad to know I have you all behind me. That alone gives me the courage I need. I will give him a call now," Mia said, and even though she was trembling inside, she dialed the number that was still very much etched on her memory and placed the call on speaker so that Harry and Jeff could listen in on the phone call.

It didn't take long before the familiar voice came up, sending a shudder down her spine, "Henry Rosewood speaking," he said in his usual arrogant tone.

Mia swallowed past the lump that had formed in her throat as her heart thudded really fast against the walls of her chest, "It's Mi... Vanessa," she said in a shaky voice that was unfamiliar to both Jeff and Harry.

Chapter 838 For Better Or Worse

The tension in the room was thick enough to choke on. Mia's voice, barely a whisper, hung in the air as the phone speaker crackled on the other end.

The weight of the past and the uncertainty of the future pressed down on her, each heartbeat a drumbeat of anticipation.

Jeff, his hand tight on Mia's shoulder, exchanged a worried glance with Harry.

A beat of silence stretched into an eternity, punctuated only by Mia's ragged breathing. Then, a voice, colder than the winter wind, cut through the tense silence.

"Vanessa?" Henry's voice boomed through the speaker, disbelief tinged with a flicker of something that might have been anger. "Is that really you?"

Mia flinched at the sound, squeezing her eyes shut. "Yes," she croaked, her voice gaining a sliver of strength with each syllable. "It's me."

There was another pause, this one filled with a tangible shift in the air pressure. When Henry spoke again, his voice was laced with a dangerous calm. "When did you return from the dead?"

"That is not important," Mia countered, her voice surprisingly steady. "What matters is that I'm alive."

"Not important?" His voice rose, a hint of his true nature peeking through. "You disappear for three years, presumed dead, and now you think you can just call me without an explanation?"

"There is nothing to explain," Mia countered, her voice gaining strength with each word. "But that's not why I called."

"Then why did you call?" Henry demanded, the phone rattling on his end. "Better still, where are you? You can tell me whatever you have to say when we meet," Henry said, not wanting to hear what she had to say until she answered his questions.

The question hung heavy in the air. Jeff's grip on Mia's shoulder tightened, and Harry leaned forward, his eyes fixed on her face. This was the pivotal point, the moment where the fragile peace she had built could crumble.

"I don't want to meet. Where I am isn't your business, Henry..."

"Not my business? Don't I, your husband, deserve to know what happened? Shouldn't you at least tell me where you have been and what you have been doing for the past three years while I mourned your loss?" Henry asked, and Mia scoffed.

"No, Henry. You don't deserve shit from me! And if I wanted you to know where I was, I wouldn't have disappeared in the first place or taken so long to reach out to you," Mia said, surprising everyone in the room, even herself.

The tremor in her voice was still present, but it was overshadowed by a newfound determination. "What matters right now and the reason I called is that I want a divorce."

Jeff, unable to contain his surprise, let out a low whistle. Even Harry, who had prepared himself for a volatile reaction, raised an eyebrow. This approach, defying Henry's expectations, seemed to throw him off balance.

The silence that followed this declaration was deafening. It stretched on for what felt like an eternity, each tick of the clock a nail being hammered into the coffin of their past. Finally, a cold laugh sent shivers down Mia's spine.

"A divorce?" Henry's voice dripped with icy sarcasm. "Don't you think it's a little late for that, Vanessa? After all this time, you think you can just waltz back in and demand something like that?"

Mia gritted her teeth, her anger rising to counter the fear. "I wasn't waltzing in," she retorted, her voice gaining strength. "I was simply making a request. Or should I say, a demand. I refuse to remain tied to you."

"Don't be ridiculous, Vanessa. You can't just call and..."

"Yes, I can, Henry," Mia interrupted, her voice firm. "You and I are done. I want out."

Another silence, this time laced with a barely concealed threat. "Do you think this is a game, Vanessa? You can't just disappear and then reappear to ask for a divorce after three years."

Mia's jaw clenched. "Disappeared?" she echoed, her voice sharp with anger. "Don't you dare rewrite history. You were the reason I left. If I knew of a better way to escape from the torment that was marriage to you, I would have done it much earlier and not waited that long."

A flicker of surprise crossed Harry's face. This wasn't just Mia making a clean break. She was taking back the narrative, challenging the image Henry had constructed.

"Don't be dramatic, Vanessa," Henry scoffed. "We will discuss this when I see you."

"You won't be seeing me. And there is nothing to discuss," Mia countered, her voice unwavering. "I will send you the papers."

"Papers? You think a piece of paper will change anything between us?" Henry spat.

"It will be the legal end of our marriage," Mia said, her voice betraying a hint of the fear that still gripped her. "That's all I need. Isn't it better for you this way? Everyone already thinks I'm dead already anyway, so it won't be a big deal. All you have to do is sign the papers quietly. I don't care about your money. I won't be asking for a dime. All I need is your signature on the papers."

Another tense silence followed. Then, Henry spoke, his voice a low growl. "I'm never going to divorce you, Vanessa. Never. I married you for better or worse, and it's going to remain that way. I've told you this countless times in the time we were together, I come from a lineage of people who stuck together. There has never been a history of divorce in my family, and it won't begin with me. No one might know, but I will know. Henry Rosewood is not a failure. For the love I have for you, I will forgive your foolery and give you one chance, just one chance. Drop whatever you are doing over there and whoever you're doing it with, and come back home to me. I will tell everyone you didn't die as we thought. You lost your memory for years but only just regained it and that is why you have found your way back home now. All will be forgiven and you can take your place by my side once again. You have twenty-four hours to make up your mind. If you don't take this chance and you make me come get you myself, you will be punished for ever thinking of making a fool of me. I guess you must have forgotten who I am because you've been away from me for so long. I am Henry Rosewood, and no one- not even you my darling wife will get away with publicly humiliating me."

The phone call ended abruptly, leaving them in a stunned silence.

The threat hung heavy in the air, a poisonous cloud threatening to engulf them. Mia let out a shaky breath, her body slumping against Jeff's side. He wrapped his arm around her, his touch a source of comfort in the aftermath of the emotional storm.

Harry, his jaw clenched tight, stared at the wall. There was no doubt in his mind – Henry was far from finished. But for the first time, he saw a glimmer of hope in Mia's eyes. She had faced her past, and while the journey ahead would be far from easy, she had taken the first step towards reclaiming her life.

"You were right. He is not going to let go of you easily," Harry finally said, his voice low.

Mia raised her head, a steely glint in her eyes. "I am willing to do whatever it takes to be free of him." Mia said, her voice sharp with determination.

"Good," Harry said and Mia sighed as she looked from Harry to Jeff, a flicker of gratitude crossing her face.

"Thank you Harry. And you too, Jeff."

Jeff squeezed her shoulder. "Always."

They sat in silence for a moment longer, the weight of the phone call settling upon them. But beneath the fear and uncertainty, there was a newfound resolve – she wasn't fighting Henry alone, and she wouldn't back down.

"Alright," Harry finally said, breaking the silence. "Let's get to work. We need a plan, a way to ensure your safety and expedite this divorce."

"Yes. Let's get this done," Mia said with a nod.

The battle lines had been drawn. And while the path ahead remained shrouded in uncertainty, with the support of Harry and Jeff and everyone else, she was finally ready to fight for her future.

Before Harry could say another word, Mia's phone buzzed with a phone call, and she stiffened when she recognized the number displayed on the screen.

"My father is calling," Mia informed them.

"Do you want to talk to him?" Harry asked and Mia took a deep breath before giving him a nod.

"I should. I'm sure Henry must have asked him to talk some sense into me," Mia said and then angling her chin defiantly, she received the call and once again placed it on speaker.

"Vanessa? Is that really you?" A male voice asked from the other end of the line.

"I'm Mia now. I'm not Vanessa anymore," Mia said flatly.

"What madness has come over you! You mean to tell me your husband was right? You faked your death and ran away? How could you do something so shameful and disgraceful? Do you have any idea how heartbroken your mother have been? How do you expect us to look at Henry...."

"Why am I not surprised? Three years, and you still haven't changed. I received your call hoping that maybe, just maybe, you might have felt sorry that I died that way and are happy that I'm alive and you have a second chance to correct your mistakes, but it's obvious that you are still exactly the same. You care more about yourself than you have ever cared for me. You haven't heard or seen me in three years and the first thing you do is scold me. Since that is the case, I have no business with you. Your daughter, Vanessa, is dead," Mia said, and without waiting to hear another word from him, she ended the call and switched off her phone.

"I was going to ask you to do that. They might want to come get you. I think you need to disappear," Harry said and held up a finger to stop her from interrupting him.

"I am not saying you should leave like you planned to. You just can't stay here now that he knows you are here. Your safety is important. How about you move to Tom's place? His place is secure and no one will think to look for you there. You can stay there for sometime until we have gotten him to sign the papers and we will make sure he gets a restraining order to stay away from you," Harry said, and Mia nodded.

"I will like that. I don't think I will be able to sleep comfortably here anymore, now that I know that he knows where to find me," Mia said and Harry nodded.

"Good. Your phone has to stay off so it can't be tracked. Matter of fact, you should leave it here. We will proceed with sending him the divorce papers. I will have someone keep an eye on his movements," Harry said and Mia nodded.

"I will be leaving for my vacation this weekend, but Tom will take care of everything. Living at his place makes it easier. I will keep in touch with you and him," Harry said and Jeff looked at him curiously.

"When can she go there? I mean, if she leaves during the day, isn't there a chance to whoever is keeping an eye on her might see her go there?" Jeff asked with concern.

"Can Jeff come with me? I just can't leave him here. I don't want to think of what he might do to Jeff if he finds him here and doesn't see me," Mia said and Jeff shook his head.

"He can't do anything to me..."

"She is right. You can become an Achilles heel for her. You should go with her," Harry said, and Jeff shook his head.

"He can't hurt me..."

"He can. Listen to me, and come away with me," Mia said, her eyes pleading with him to listen to her.

Jeff sighed. "Alright then. But my question has not been answered yet. When do we leave?" Jeff asked and Harry picked up his phone and dialed a number.

"Is everywhere clear?" He asked, and listened for a moment before hanging up.

"Now. Get what you need and I will drop you off."

Chapter 839 Journal And Flash Drive

The moment Amy arrived at the airport in Heden, she didn't bother going home to her mother, instead she took a cab and headed straight to the Garwood estate.

Although she was still feeling very anxious about facing Miley's parents considering her last experience with them, but she wanted to see them first and find out if she could help out with the funeral arrangements.

As the cab pulled up to the imposing iron gates, she clasped both her hands together as though that would calm her.

As the Georgian mansion came into view and she beheld the manicured lawn and fountain, she couldn't help but remember all the times she had ran about this place with Miley or even taken evening strolls together.

Tears blurred her eyes, and she quickly brushed the tear that rolled down her cheeks away, not wanting to be seen in such an emotional state.

She was sure that everyone inside was in a state of mourning. There was no need for her to go in there and show them how sad she was. She had to pull herself together for Miley's sake.

"Are you not getting down?" The cab driver asked, breaking into her thoughts, and immediately she dipped her hand into her handbag and paid him before getting down.

As she walked to the door with her little luggage box, she couldn't help but wonder what Lucas must have thought of the place when he visited.

She shook her head to get rid of thoughts of Lucas. She didn't want to think of him right now. She took a deep breath as she knocked on the door.

Formerly she wouldn't need to knock and would just open the door and walk in because they were like one big family. But now, she was reluctant to do so.

"Amy! You are here. I'm so glad you could make it. How have you been?" A uniformed maid greeted as she opened the door and Amy forced a smile.

"I'm fine. Are they in?" Amy asked, not wanting to chit chat since she knew the maid would want to gossip.

"Yes. Mr Garwood is in his study, and Mrs Garwood is upstairs. Come in," she said, and Amy followed her in.

"You know, when we heard about what happened, I kept telling everyone that there was no way you would try to cheat the young mistress. She loved you like a sister and I know you loved her too..."

"Can we please not talk about that? Let them know I'm here. Please," Amy said politely, and although the maid wasn't pleased, she gave Amy a nod and left to do as Amy had requested.

Amy did not sit down or go beyond the foyer even though she knew every nook and cranny of the house like she knew the back of her hands. She stood right there like a visitor, waiting to know if she was fully forgiven and understood or if she had merely been invited based on formality.

As she stood there, she remembered all the times her and Miley had stood here together. She remembered the first time her mother brought her to the house and how she had met Miley.

"Amy," Mrs Garwood called softly in a voice that threatened to break into a sob at the slightest provocation.

Amy turned to look at Mrs Garwood, and one look into the woman's grief stricken face, tears gathered in Amy's eyes and she went on her knees.

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry for causing you so much heartache and pain," Amy cried and immediately Mrs Garwood went to her, tears dropping from her eyes as she placed both hands on her shoulders to pull her up.

A choked sob escaped Mrs. Garwood's lips, but she held firm. "Amy, honey, get up. This isn't your fault," She said as she pulled Amy up.

Amy shook her head, tears streaming down her face. "Yes, it is! I should have told you. Miley made me promise not to, but I should have known better. I should have fought harder for her."

Grief and a flicker of anger clouded Mrs. Garwood's eyes. "Miley was a stubborn child, Amy. We both know that. But you loved her, and she loved you. Blaming yourself won't bring her back," she said as she embraced her.

The embrace was long and tight, a silent understanding passing between them that transcended words. Amy could feel the raw grief radiating from the older woman, a grief that mirrored her own.

When they finally pulled apart, Mrs. Garwood's eyes, red-rimmed and swollen, held a glimmer of the forgiveness Amy had desperately craved, as she led Amy into the sitting room.

"Miley's friend, Dr Lucas, told us everything," she whispered, her voice thick with emotion. "About Miley's wishes, and how you honored them."

Relief washed over Amy, momentarily easing the suffocating weight of guilt. "He did?"

"Yes," Mrs. Garwood confirmed, her grip tightening on Amy's shoulders. "He told us about Miley's wishes and how strongly she felt about keeping her condition away from us. We were angry, Amy, so very angry. But Lucas... he made us understand. It doesn't make it any easier, but we understand better now."

Shame prickled at Amy's skin. "I should have told you. I know that. I'm sorry I couldn't tell you..."

"We know, darling," Mrs. Garwood said, her voice softening further. "We know. And honestly, a part of us understands. It must have been incredibly difficult for her, and for you too."

A shaky breath escaped Amy. "It was. It was the hardest secret I've ever kept. She didn't want you to worry, and she didn't want you to hold her back from doing all she wanted either."

A tear escaped Mrs. Garwood's eye and traced a path down her cheek. She wiped it away with the back of her hand. "We miss her terribly, Amy. Although she hasn't been here in months, the house feels so empty knowing we will never hear her laughter in it again."

"I miss her too, Mrs. Garwood," Amy choked out, tears finally spilling down her own face. "More than you can ever know."

Mrs. Garwood pulled Amy into a tight embrace, the scent of her perfume and regret filling Amy's senses. They stood there for a long moment, clinging to each other, the shared grief forging a fragile bridge of understanding between them.

Finally, Mrs. Garwood stepped back, wiping at her eyes. "Would you like some tea, Amy? And perhaps something to eat? You must be exhausted from your trip."

"A glass of water will do," Amy replied, her voice hoarse. "Thank you, Mrs. Garwood."

A flicker of a sad smile touched Mrs. Garwood's lips. "There is no need for formalities, dear. We've always loved you like a daughter and you are still family. And I'm sorry that I let my pain and anger get the best of me. I should have trusted you enough to not doubt your love and loyalty to Miley."

The weight of their unspoken bond settled on Amy. Tears streamed down her face, a mixture of grief and relief. The dam had broken, and the pent-up emotions of the past couple of weeks since Miley collapsed in her arms came flooding out.

Mrs. Garwood led her to a nearby armchair, offering a comforting hand on her shoulder. As Amy sobbed, the years of shared laughter and memories with Miley played in her mind. The house, once a symbol of joy, now echoed with the absence of her friend.

"What can I do?" Amy finally managed to choke out, wiping her tears with a shaky hand.

"Pull yourself together while I get you a glass of water," Mrs Garwood said before walking away.

By the time she returned a short moment later with a glass of water, Amy stood looking at the framed photos on the wall, each one a snapshot of a happier time, a time when laughter filled the house and Miley's smile was a constant feature.

A fresh wave of grief threatened to engulf her, but she forced it down, determined to be strong for Mrs. Garwood and for Miley's memory.

"Here," Mrs Garwood said, and Amy took the glass from her thankfully.

"Let's go to the study to meet my husband," she said after Amy was done drinking, and together they headed there.

Entering the study, Amy found Mr. Garwood seated behind his desk, his face etched with grief. He looked older, his shoulders slumped in defeat. Seeing him like this, Amy's heart ached.

"Honey," Mrs. Garwood announced softly, "Amy's here."

Mr. Garwood looked up, his eyes filled with a mixture of sadness and anger. But as his gaze met Amy's, a flicker of understanding replaced the anger. He rose from his chair, his movements slow and stiff.

"Amy," he said, his voice hoarse. "Thank you for coming."

"Thanks for letting me come despite what I did," Amy said shamefacedly.

"Come. Sit down and tell me all that my baby did and how she spent her last active moments," he said, gesturing to her to sit down, and both Amy and Mrs Garwood sat down.

"I don't know where to start..."

"You can start from the moment you found out about her health," Mrs Garwood suggested and Amy went on to tell them everything without sparing any details.

The Garwoods laughed and cried as they listened to Amy's story. She told them how Miley had wanted Lucas and how she had tried to matchmake her with Lucas.

By the time Amy was done with her story, Miley's mom was sobbing while her husband wrapped his arms around her as he comforted her while also battling with his own tears.

"Thank you, Amy. Thank you for being with her all through," Mr Garwood said, and Amy sniffled as she reached into her handbag for Miley's journal and a flash drive.

"You should have this," Amy said, and they looked at her in confusion.

"I came upon it as I was packing her stuff at my place. It belongs to Miley. It seems she started keeping a journal from the moment she found out about her health. I haven't read through it. I couldn't bring myself to do that. I believe it's more for you than it is for me. And the flash drive contains all the pictures and videos of her I was able to capture in the time I spent with her," Amy said and tears fell from Mrs Garwood's eyes as she took the journal and flash drive from Amy.

"Thank you so much, Amy. This means a lot to me," she said and Amy nodded.

"Forgive me for asking. But about the surrogacy..."

Amy shook her head, "I'm not pregnant. It didn't work out," she said without meeting their gaze, "And I'm sorry I..."

"We are the ones who are sorry. Your only offense was selflessly going along with all our princess wanted. We are sorry for being so harsh and unfair," Mr Garwood said and Amy nodded without saying anything.

"What about the jerk that wanted to marry her for money? I hope he is not bothering you?" Mr Garwood asked, and Amy shook her head, not wanting to bother them.

"He is bothering you, is he not?" Mrs Garwood asked suspiciously.

"You don't have to worry about it. I reported him to the police already," Amy said and the couple exchanged a look.

"Don't worry. I will take care of it and make sure he never bothers you again. Miley put you in this mess and it's only fitting that we get you out of it," Mr Garwood said and Amy sighed deeply, grateful for their forgiveness and kindness.

"Thank you. Can I know the plans for the funeral? Is there something I can do," Amy asked and they went on to tell her about the funeral arrangements.

"You will be staying here for the duration of your stay, right?" Mrs Garwood asked, and even though Amy had planned to go home to her mother initially, she nodded.

"Good. You can use your usual bedroom. Go in to have some rest. You can go up to see her bedroom when you're ready. I've been in there every day since she passed on," Mrs Garwood said sadly.

"I will do that. Thank you," Amy said as she rose to leave.

As Amy walked away, she couldn't help but feel even more grateful to Lucas for helping her sort things out without being asked.

As the door shut behind Amy, the Garwoods settled down to take a look at the content of the flash drive, desperate for whatever would connect them to their daughter.

Chapter 840 Mia's Plan

The car was silent as Harry drove Mia and Jeff to Tom's residence. Each of them was occupied by their own thoughts.

While Harry was thinking about Henry Rosewood and how to help Mia make sure he signed the divorce documents without drama, Mia was thinking about her phone call with Henry and her father, and wondering what they planned to do next now that they knew she was alive.

Jeff on the other hand was wondering if moving with Mia was the right thing to do. As much as he understood that Henry would want to hold him responsible for Mia's absence if he came to find Mia and she was missing, he also thought going into hiding with her would give them the idea that he was Mia's lover or something and he wasn't sure that was good.

Not because he didn't want to be Mia's lover but because Henry could easily change the narrative and make it seem like she was asking for a divorce because of him and not because he had been abusing her.

"Is Tom aware that I will be staying at his place?" Mia asked thoughtfully after a while and Harry met her gaze through the rearview mirror since she was seated at the back while Jeff was seated in front with Harry.

"Of course. It was his idea," Harry said and Mia nodded.

"How do you plan to convince Henry to sign the divorce papers?" Mia asked curiously.

"We have some men digging up dirt..." Harry's voice trailed off when Mia suddenly burst into a humorless laughter.

"Dirts? Seriously?" She asked, laughing so hard that Harry frowned while Jeff turned in his seat to look at her, wondering what was amusing her.

"What's funny?" Harry asked in confusion.

"I'm sorry I'm laughing, Harry. But you must be dreaming if you think Henry is the kind of man blackmails work on. Do you think I don't have dirts on him? Do you even have any idea how much dirts I have on him? Yet here I am," Mia said with a shake of her head.

"Listen," she said before Harry could speak again. "I know you mean well, and I appreciate it, but your way won't work this time. Trust me, I know Henry. Henry doesn't give in to blackmail. You heard him, he doesn't give in to failure..."

"Don't you think your fear of him is making you overestimate him? He might not be as powerful as you think he is," Jeff said and Mia shook her head.

"How much dirt do you have on him? Do you have evidence?" Harry asked before Mia could respond to what Jeff had said.

"That's the point, Harry. It's not just dirt, it's evidence. Financial crimes, tax evasion, and lots more, enough to bury him. But what good would it do? Henry's a master manipulator. He covers his tracks well. He thrives on scandal. He'd spin it, make himself the victim and somehow anything I have could be spun as hearsay. He has all the major news outlets in his palms. That's why a clean divorce is the only way. No mudslinging, no public spectacle. Just a clean break, but he won't give me that. And that is the exact reason I had to go to that extent to run away in spite of all I had against him. So, no, Jeff. I'm not overestimating him. I fear him because I know exactly who and what he is, and if you knew half of what I know, you'd think twice about crossing paths with him," Mia said with a confidence that left no doubt that she knew what she was saying.

A tense silence settled in the car again. broken only by the rhythmic hum of the engine as they neared Tom's residence.

Jeff, feeling helpless, turned back around, his gaze fixed out the window. Harry, however, tapped his fingers thoughtfully on the steering wheel.

Judging by what he had heard in Henry's tone and what Mia had said, it seemed like their usual tactics won't work on Henry and they would have to apply caution both for their sake and Mia's sake.

"So, what do you suggest?" Harry finally asked. "You've made it clear you don't want him to know we are directly involved, and you don't think blackmailing him will work either. We can't just walk in there and ask him nicely, can we?"

"Don't you think we that maybe we can use a bit of force to make him sign it? I would love to punch him in the face," Jeff said and Mia tilted her head, considering.

"There might be another way. A way that doesn't involve force, threats or digging up dirt," she said quietly.

"What is it?" Harry and Jeff asked in unison, both eager for a different approach.

Mia pursed her lips, a glimmer of determination in her eyes. "It's a gamble, but it might just work. It involves appealing to his ego, not threatening it." She paused, letting the suspense build. "We need to make him think this divorce is his idea."

Jeff's brows furrowed. "His idea? But why would he agree to that?"

"Because," Mia said, a steely glint entering her eyes, "we're going to give him a reason to think he's better off without me."

"How? What are you thinking?" Harry asked, and this time she smiled as the idea began to take form in her head.

Maybe, just maybe she finally had what it would take to face him. It might cost her life or give her her freedom. What was life without risks? This was a risk she was willing to take for her freedom.

"Mia? Say something," Jeff urged her.

"Now that I have you behind me, I'm going to let him come get him..."

"What are you talking about?" Jeff asked in disbelief.

"You heard me right. I'm going to let him find me and take me back..."

"You couldn't even talk to him over the phone a moment ago. How are you going to live with him? Mia, I don't think..."

"I can't live this way forever, Jeff. This is my life. I need to take control of it. I tried running from him, but it didn't work. Now I have to run back the same way I came and do the chasing. But first, let's see what he would do next. Knowing Henry, he would first try to get the attention of the public by publicizing the news of my survival. He most likely wouldn't say I ran away. You heard what he said. He would say I lost my memory. His ego wouldn't let him admit that I ran away from him. Harry, that is where you and Tom will have to come in. Make him believe that you are on his side by letting him know I'm hiding out at Tom's place. You are his business partners after all," Mia said and Harry frowned.

"Why would you want to be exposed to him again? He could kill you. The public might not know what you did, but he knows you tried to run from him. What if he kills you this time?" Harry asked and she shrugged.

"Then maybe I'm better off dead..."

"Mia!" Jeff growled angrily, "How can you say that? After all you've been through shouldn't you be fighting to live now? What about those of us that are now involved in this with you? How do you expect us to feel knowing we couldn't protect you after all?" Jeff asked heatedly.

"Relax, Jeff. No one would be dying. I'm a lot stronger now than I was before I left Henry, and I have you all. Things are way different now. But it's the only way," Mia said while Harry remained silent as he thought about what Mia had proposed they do.

Mia's words hung heavy in the air, the tension in the car amping up by the second. Jeff's anger was understandable, but Harry, ever the pragmatist, saw the potential in her plan.

"Why aren't you saying anything?" Jeff asked Harry under his breath.

"Is there something in particular that you want me to say?" Harry asked while Mia relaxed in her seat as she listened to them whispering.

"You said you were going to help her. It isn't helping her if you let her walk back into the lion's den. You should discourage her from this crazy plan," Jeff pointed out.

"She wasn't asking for my permission. She asked me to help her and she has just told us how she thinks we can help her. You haven't heard all she has to say about her plan yet you assume you know better..."

"It's not about knowing better! It's about keeping her safe!" Jeff interjected and Harry turned to spare him a glance.

"And do you think you care about her safety more than she does?" Harry asked and Mia's lips twitched as she watched Jeff frown.

"I'm just saying..."

"Relax, Jeff, I know what I'm doing," Mia said softly, touched by his genuine concern for her, "If Henry is going to have to hurt anyone for me to get my freedom, I'd rather it is me."

"Let's hear the rest of your plan, Mia," Harry said as he drove through Tom's gate.

Mia went on to tell them about her plan, and even after Harry had parked the car, neither of them got out of the car as they Mia continued to speak.

"But what if he sees through it?" Jeff interjected, his voice laced with worry. "He's not stupid, Mia."

"He is arrogant," Mia corrected, "and blinded by his ego. He will see what he wants to see, especially if we present everything with a perfect bow," Mia said confidently.

The plan was risky, a high-stakes poker game where they were betting Mia's safety for her freedom. Yet, amidst the trepidation, a flicker of hope flickered in the car. It was a long shot, but it was a chance. A chance to finally outsmart Henry and reclaim Mia's life.

Jeff remained silent for a moment, then let out a deep breath. Although he didn't like the plan, he could see it working.

"Alright, Mia," Harry said, his voice firm. "We are in. We will do everything we can to keep you safe and get you the clean break you deserve," he promised.

"I'm still worried, Mia. But if this is what you want, I'm with you," Jeff said, and they all got out of the car.

As Harry opened the trunk of his car for them to get out their luggage, Jeff hesitated in taking out his bag, "If you are going to let him take you back, don't you think it's best I go back to the apartment while you stay here? It won't be good for him to think there is something going on between us. I mean, he could hurt you more if he thinks you cheated on him. And maybe if he shows up at the apartment, I can point him in your direction too," Jeff suggested.

Although Mia didn't exactly like the idea since she wanted Jeff there with her and possibly sharing a room with her, gave him a nod. "Okay. But you don't have to leave right away, right?" She asked, and he gave her a nod while Harry watched them both, wondering once again what was going on between them.

After leading them into the house and having the housekeeper show Mia to the guestroom that had been prepared for her on Lucy's instruction, Harry left them and headed for Tom's office so he could discuss the change of plan with Tom.

He knew that Tom had wanted nothing more than for them to mess Henry up both physically and reputation wise, but that would have to wait. The most important thing was for Mia to first get her freedom. Every other thing could follow after that.