

Wild Night 841

Chapter 841 Lack Of Communication

By the time Lucy was done with her work for the day and it was closing hour, she dialed Tom's line to know if he was still very busy and how much longer she would have to wait for him since she could hardly go into his office now when he was most likely in the middle of a meeting.

He had mentioned something about having an important meeting with investors at around closing hour, so she knew she would have to wait for a bit. But she wanted to know how long she was going to wait so she could look for ways to fill her time.

She frowned when the phone rang once, twice, then went to voicemail. Even though she knew that Tom was very busy this period and had a lot on his plate, she couldn't help the pang of disappointment that shot through her.

Figuring that he probably couldn't take a phone call in the middle of his meeting, she decided to send him a text to see if he would respond to that.

Typing a message, she forced a chipper tone, [Hey Ace. Finished work. Where are you? Miss you already.] Adding a playful emoji at the end, she hit send, hoping it would nudge him to respond.

Lucy's eyes were fixed on the screen and she bit her lower lip as she waited for him to respond.

Frustration bubbled up inside her. Couldn't he at least answer his phone and let her know what was going on? She mused, a crease appearing between her brows.

A niggling worry began to gnaw at her when there was no response after ten minutes. This wasn't like Tom. He usually kept her updated on his schedule, especially when it meant them going home together. She tried calling again but still it didn't connect.

Deciding not to jump to conclusions, Lucy gathered her things. She picked up her blazer and slid into it before walking out of the office with her handbag.

She headed for Tom's office, wanting to check on him and see why he wasn't taking her call. The once-bustling office was now deserted, the silence amplifying her growing unease.

Lucy frowned when she turned the doorknob and the door didn't open.

Tom wouldn't lock his door this way when he had a meeting going on, would he? She mused as she turned the knob once again, but the door was locked.

Instead of calling Tom again, she dialed Harry's line this time, "Hey, sorry to bother you. Have you heard from Tom? I can't seem to reach him," she said the moment Harry received the call.

Harry didn't miss the worry in her tone, "I guess he's still busy with the investors..."

"His office door is locked," she interjected.

"Tom had to take them to see the resort earlier," Harry explained.

"Oh," Lucy murmured, displeased that Tom had left the company without bothering to inform her of his movement.

"Yeah. And you know the network isn't very stable over there yet," Harry said and Lucy sighed.

"I see. By the way, I saw the interview earlier. You guys did great," Lucy said as she headed for the elevator so she could leave now since it was obvious that Tom wouldn't be going home with her.

"Thanks. I'm sorry about Candace's slip," he said apologetically.

"Well, it was bound to come out sooner or later. Although, I tell you I've been receiving curious glances all day. And I'm sure some people are going to want to suggest that I got to where I am because of you or bring back the rumors about you hooking me up with Tom so I can convince him to promote you," Lucy said and Harry raised an eyebrow.

"Does that bother you?"

"Maybe it would have bothered me in the past, but not now. What can they do other than talk behind me? Besides, I'm sure as long as I keep delivering and doing my best here, everyone would get to agree that I deserve my position sooner or later," Lucy said and Harry smiled.

"I'm glad we share the same sentiment," Harry said, and after talking for sometime they hung up just as Lucy exited the building.

Lucy debated whether to try calling Tom again or just head home herself. The thought of navigating the city traffic alone after a long day wasn't appealing, but the alternative – sitting here waiting indefinitely – wasn't much better.

With a sigh, she decided to bite the bullet and hail a cab. Just then, her phone buzzed with a text. It was Tom. Relief washed over her mixed with a healthy dose of annoyance as she read his text.

[Hey, Jewel. I'm so sorry I missed your calls and can't call you back right now. I'm at the resort. Don't get pissed that I didn't mention it. It wasn't planned. It just sort of came up. And now these investors are taking forever to make a decision and I'm stuck here with them for longer than I planned. You can ask Adolf to pick you up. I'm so sorry, love.]

Lucy sighed since she could hear the hint of apology laced with fatigue in his text. [No problem. I'm taking a cab home.] she texted back.

Another text arrived from Tom. [Please don't take a cab. Use one of the cars in the private lot if you can't wait for Adolf. It's safer.]

Lucy appreciated his concern, but the thought of driving one of Tom's luxurious cars home alone didn't appeal to her. [Thanks, but I would rather take a cab. Just meet me at home when you're done, okay?]

[Please take one of the cars. It's not safe for you to be out alone at night.] Tom texted back.

Lucy rolled her eyes. If he could text for this long why didn't he call?

[I will be fine. I'm a grown woman. I can handle a cab ride.] she texted back, and without waiting to receive another text from Tom, she hailed a waiting cab and got in.

She ignored her phone when it buzzed with another text notification and told the cab driver where she was going.

After a moment, she glanced at the message, [Alright, my grown woman. Be safe. And just so you know, Mia has moved in as discussed. There was a change of plan. I will tell you about it when I get home. Need to focus now. Love you and the scowl on your face.]

Lucy rolled her eyes when she saw the last line even though a smile was now playing on her lips.

So, he knew she was displeased. Alright. She would be waiting for him at home, Lucy thought with a sigh as she shoved her phone into her handbag.

The cab ride home was a blur of city lights and honking horns. Lucy leaned back in the seat, a mix of emotions swirling within her. A flicker of annoyance at Tom's lack of communication, and a spark of curiosity about the change of plans regarding Mia's presence in the house.

Even though Tom had said it was impromptu and apologized for it, she couldn't help being annoyed that he had waited until she reached out to him before telling her about it, when he knew very well that she would be waiting for him.

As much as she understood that things like this were bound to happen, that didn't stop her from being peeved.

As the cab pulled up to their familiar gate, Lucy paid the fare and stepped out, the cool night air a welcome change from the stale air conditioning.

The mansion loomed ahead, bright and magnificent. It felt strange, approaching it alone, without Tom's usual presence beside her.

Taking a deep breath, she did the facial recognition identification at the gate and stepped inside.

Although she could have let the cab take her in, but she was in the mood for a little stroll to regulate her emotions before going inside to see Mia and maybe she needed a little exercise since it's been a while she did any.

As she strolled up to the front door, she wondered what could have possibly changed in the plans, since Mia was not expected to move in so soon.

Just as she got to the door, her phone buzzed with a phone call and she pulled it out from her handbag to take the call.

She rolled her eyes when she saw that it was Tom, before receiving the call.

"Before you say anything, I know that you're mad," Tom said before she could speak and she snapped her mouth shut.

"I'm sorry for not communicating my movement to you. I should have called you while I was leaving the office even though it was impromptu, and I shouldn't have waited until after you called to reach out to you. I was carried away. What can I do to make you feel better?" Tom asked and she sighed.

"Why are you calling now? And why were you only texting before?"

"I was still with them. Told them I had to respond to an important email. And now, I'm on my way home to you. Tell me you are home now," Tom said and she shrugged.

"I'm standing outside the front door about to go in," she said, letting go of her annoyance, "So? How did it go? Are they interested in investing?"

"I will give you the details when I get home. Do you want me to get you anything on my way?" Tom asked and Lucy raised a brow.

"Anything?"

"Absolutely anything."

"A bowl of ice cream will be fine. Preferably cookies and cream flavor."

"Got it. Anything else?" Tom asked, wanting to make it up to her for upsetting her.

"No. I'm not letting you off the hook so easily by making you believe you can appease me by spending some money..."

"Bounty chocolate and Danish cookies?"

"Forgiveness is my religion," Lucy said with a grin and Tom chuckled.

"I will get them all, I promise. I want you to be in a better mood by the time I get home," Tom pleaded, and she smiled.

"Alright. I'm not mad anymore but I will try to be in a better mood. Just don't keep me waiting for too long."

"I won't. Do you mind checking on Mia? See how she is settling in?" Tom asked and Lucy rolled her eyes.

"Like you need to ask me to do that before I do it. Bye. Get here soon," she said before hanging up.

As she walked into the house, she headed straight for the guest room which she had asked them to prepare for Mia beforehand.

Before she could knock on the door, it opened and Mia smiled when she saw her, "Hello, Lucy. Thanks for letting me stay here. I'm sorry for any inconvenience my being here might cause," Mia said and Lucy waved it off.

"There is no inconvenience. How are you doing? Have you settled in? Is there something you need or want me to get you?" Lucy asked with a friendly smile and Mia shook her head.

"Nah. I'm fine. Thanks. I was just going to get a bottle of water. I see you just got back from work. You don't have to worry about me," Mia assured her.

"Would you like to have dinner alone in your room or will you join us at the dining?" Lucy asked and Mia paused for a moment.

"I wouldn't want to intrude. It's bad enough that I'm here..."

"It won't be intrusion, trust me. Besides, you are yet to talk with Tom. You have to start getting familiar with him since he would be the one taking care of things when Harry leaves for his vacation in a couple of days," Lucy said and Mia nodded.

"Alright then. I will join you for dinner. Thanks for having me here," Mia said and Lucy smiled.

"I will have one of the domestic staff come get you when dinner is served. I should freshen up now. If you need anything you can let me know," Lucy said before turning to leave.

"Uhm, have you heard from Sonia?" Mia asked, stopping Lucy.

"Oh! Yes. I did speak with her last night," Lucy said and Mia nodded.

"I suppose you told her everything that's going on and asked her not to worry?" Mia asked, and Lucy nodded.

"When next she calls, can I talk to Bryan? I don't know if she's going to tell him or not, but I think he should hear it all directly from me. I can't use my phone right now," Mia said and Lucy nodded.

"Sure. Maybe after dinner I will give her a call and then you can talk to her," Lucy said and Mia smiled.

"I will appreciate that very much. Thank you," Mia said and Lucy walked away.

As Mia watched Lucy leave, she couldn't help but think about how lucky she was to be surrounded by such nice and kindhearted people.

She sighed as she thought about how to go about telling Bryan everything. Although she hoped that Sonia had told him about it already but she doubted it. She knew very well that Bryan would have called to hear from her had he heard from Sonia.

Chapter 842 Stay Safe

After freshening up, Lucy put on one of Tom's tshirts and went to sit at the balcony as she dialed Candace's line.

It didn't take long before Candace received the call, "Hey, Lucy!"

"I never knew you were so proud to have me as your cousin that you couldn't wait to announce me to the world," Lucy teased and Candace closed her eyes as she giggled.

"I'm so sorry about that. It was a slip...."

"There is no need to apologize. I'm fine. I just wanted to know how you were doing. I figured since I didn't call to check on you and know how you were after the visit to the prison, I should call now. So, how are you doing? Still going back tomorrow?"

"I'm fine. And yes, I'm still going back tomorrow. How are you doing? Have any plans to go see your favorite aunt in jail?" Candace asked and Lucy giggled.

"I have no reason to do that. We have no business together. How is Andy doing? You both looked great on TV. And Andy, tell her I absolutely love her voice and she's going to have to entertain us at my Christmas party," Lucy said and Candace giggled.

"She's going to love that. Give me a minute to get her here," Candace said since she was in the living room alone with Matt. Andy and Jade had chosen to give them privacy they didn't ask for and were in the room chatting.

"Andy, Lucy is on the phone. She says you have to entertain the guests at her Christmas party," Candace called out to Andy as she opened the bedroom door.

"How much is she paying? I need to get a manager soon," Andy said, and both Jade and Candace laughed.

"Did you hear her?" Candace asked Lucy who was also laughing.

"You don't need to get a manager. I told you I will do that already. In exchange I get sixty per cent of all you earn," Jade said and both Candace and Andy looked at her incredulously.

"Sixty per cent? Here is your gun, Jade? I'm think you are an armed robber in training," Andy said and they all hollered with laughter.

"Hey, Lucy," Andy greeted as she took the phone from Candace.

"Hey, Andy. You are not a star yet simply because you were featured on television. And you shouldn't charge your family. We are family remember?" Lucy said and Andy rolled her eyes. 2

"Alright. Alright. I will give you a discount. Family should support my craft after all..."

"It's not a craft, Andy. It's your talent," Jade corrected.

"Whatever you call it, family should support it," Andy said and they laughed.

"Anyway, I'm just calling to check on you girls. I take it everyone is fine, so I will leave you to get back to whatever you were doing," Lucy said and Candace took the phone back from Andy.

"By the way, Jade, are you spending the night there?" Lucy asked since it was getting dark already.

"I guess so. Harry is not home yet and he asked me to wait for him," Jade said with a sigh as she glanced at her watch.

"Alright. Have fun," Lucy said to Jade and glanced at her phone when she received an incoming call notification from Lucas.

"Have a safe trip when you leave tomorrow. And give me love to Aaron and Jamal," Lucy told Candace hanging up.

"You guys haven't left yet?" Lucy asked immediately she received Lucas's call.

"We are at the airport, about to leave now. Did Amy receive an invite to the funeral?" Lucas asked, going straight to the reason he had called.

"Yes. She should have gotten to Heden by now. She left in the morning," Lucy said and then pursed her lips.

"Lucas..."

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"Don't ask me any silly questions. I didn't call to be interrogated," Lucas cut in.

"You don't even know what I was going to say yet," Lucy protested with a scowl.

"You were going to ask if I'm sure I don't have feelings for her. Am I wrong?" He asked and she rolled her eyes.

"Yes, you are wrong," Lucy said but Lucas wasn't listening to her.

"You've asked me before and I've given you a response. I see no reason why you are asking again. Perhaps you think if you ask me again and again my response might change. Well, it's not going to change..."

"Rachel was in my office today," Lucy interjected, seeing as he wasn't ready to listen.

"What? To do what?" Lucas asked in disbelief.

"Yeah. She came crying and begging, wanting me to help her get back with you," Lucy said and Lucas snorted.

"And what did you tell her? Why did you even let her into your office?" Lucas asked and Lucy explained what had happened.

"Amy saw her?" Lucas asked and Lucy raised an eyebrow.

"I just said a lot of things and that's the part you choose to comment on? Yet a couple of minutes ago you went on a long tirade about how you don't like her and stuff when I didn't even ask. You change her locks, go visit Miley's family as her defense lawyer, and drive her around everywhere, and you claim you don't care. Not that I care whether or not you are interested in her. I don't care what you do with your time either. That's your personal business. I know you are a dogooder but it would be in your best interest not to keep doing things that would give Amy the impression that you're interested in her. I'm sure if we all think that way, she would be feeling so too. And most importantly, you shouldn't lie to yourself about how you feel," Lucy said and Lucas frowned.

"You think she might think I'm interested in her because of all I'm doing? I mean, are these not basic stuff that a decent human would do?" Lucas asked and Lucy rolled her eyes.

"Basic? What will you do if she starts developing feelings for you?" Lucy asked, and before Lucas could respond, his flight was announced.

"I have to go now. I will call you when we arrive," Lucas said and Lucy sighed.

"Alright. She asked for your number. Can I give this to her?"

"No. Tell her I don't have a phone. Bye," Lucas said and hung up.

Lucy shook her head as she kept her phone on the table and looked ahead of her.

She really hoped Lucas knew what he was doing, both for his sake and for Amy's. Amy was a nice girl and the last thing she wanted was for him to lead her on unintentionally and break her heart by being emotionally unavailable.

Lucy turned to look into the bedroom when she heard the door open, and her lips curved in a smile when she saw

Tom walk in and her brows shot up when she saw he was carrying a basket.

"Mr Thomas Hank, what is that basket?" She asked from the balcony and Tom smiled as he went to meet her there.

"I went to get the Danish cookies and bounty chocolate, but saw this cute apology gift basket there," Tom said and she shook her head in amusement as she rose to kiss him.

"You do too much some times," she said and he shrugged. "Probably because I love you too much," he said and she smiled as she took the basket from him and set it on the balcony table.

"I think it's because you have too much money to spend. Did you get the ice cream?" Lucy asked without bothering to take a glance at the contents of the basket.

"Wouldn't dare to forget that. It's in the freezer downstairs. You can get it when we go down for dinner."

"Alright. Apology accepted. You must be pretty exhausted. Long day, huh?" She asked and he nodded as he pulled her close and embraced her.

"I missed you. And it was so boring driving solo," he said and she smiled.

"Yeah. I felt the same. Why don't you go in and freshen up? I will have them set the table for dinner, and after we are done, you can tell me about the change in plan regarding Mia, and how it went with the investors. We are having dinner with Mia," Lucy said and Tom sighed.

"I'm exhausted. I'm not in the mood for company apart from yours," he said and she smiled apologetically.

"Sorry, about that. But she's a guest in your home and it's only fitting that you have dinner with her even if it's just for tonight. Or would you rather go to the guest room to welcome her and talk to her?" Lucy asked and Tom chuckled.

"Like you would let me do something like that," Tom said with a yawn.

"What do you mean? I'm not that jealous. You can do that if you want," Lucy said and Tom chuckled.

"Thanks for the permission. By the way, i really wasn't okay with the idea of you taking a cab. No, before you argue, hear me out," Tom said as he placed both hands on her shoulders, and Lucy pressed her lips together.

"I know you still think you are just Lucinda Perry. While it is true that you are you, you are also my girlfriend. You are not dating just anyone, Lucy. You are dating Thomas Hank. You could easily be a target for anybody. Kidnappers or any irate staff or displeased business rivals. I don't think you should relax and let down your guard simply because we no longer have to worry about the Miller family. You need to be more careful. Next time if I'm running late, I'm going to have Adolf pick you up. No argument, please. Your safety is important to me. You can choose to express your displeasure any other way, but don't put yourself at risk ever," Tom said and Lucy nodded. 2

"Alright. I admit that I didn't think of it that way. I'm sorry for not listening to you," she said and he nodded.

"It's fine as long as you are safe. I will go freshen up now," Tom said as he brushed his lips against her forehead before walking away.

Lucy picked up the apology gift basket and followed him inside. She placed it on the table in the room and sat on the couch as she watched Tom undress.

"You should go slowly," she said with a grin and Tom chuckled.

"I'm not giving you a show," he said as he headed for the bathroom stark naked.

"Nice butt, boss," she called after him and he used both palms to cover his butt making her laugh as he disappeared from view.

Once he left, she smiled as she took out the contents of the apology gift basket and shook her head as she read the card tucked inside with a handwritten note from Tom.

[I really don't like to upset you. Forgive me.]

"As if it's the first time he's upsetting me," she thought with an amused smile as she opened the tin of Danish cookies and nibbled on one before going downstairs to supervise the setting of the table so they would include Mia.

Thirty minutes later, Lucy and Mia were seated at the table, and Tom joined them, "I hope I didn't keep you both waiting," Tom said as he sat down.

"No, you didn't. I only just got here," Mia assured him.

"Wouldn't be the first time you kept me waiting today," Lucy said and Tom chuckled.

"I apologize once again for the hundredth time," Tom said and she grinned.

"Apology accepted again. Let's dig in," Lucy said and they all began to eat.

"So, Harry informed me you changed the plans," Tom said halfway into the meal.

"Yes, I did. There's no need to put you all on danger because of me," Mia said and Tom arched a brow.

"You think Henry can hurt us?" Tom asked, while Lucy listened silently.

"I don't think, I know so. I know you're a big shot and all, but Henry comes from a line of big shots and he is a big shot himself. You have no idea how connected he is or how dangerous he is. I know him better than anyone else. I know what he is capable of," Mia said, and Lucy felt a chill run down her spine. ®

"So, don't you think it's going to be just the same when he finds out we all made a fool out of him?" Tom asked even though he felt a bit put off by the way she was underestimating them.

Mia shook her head, "I will make sure he never finds out about your involvement," Mia said and Tom shrugged.

"Let's have it your way then. We will all discuss the details further tomorrow. Let's enjoy our meal," Tom said and they all returned their attention to their meal even though each of them were distracted by their thoughts.

While Mia wondered what Jeff was doing and what he was having for dinner, Tom thought about the pros and cons of Mia's plan, while Lucy couldn't help but worry and wonder.

She wondered what Mia's new plan was and worried about the safety of everyone now that she had heard what Mia said about her husband hurting them.

She could only hope and pray that they would be able to rescue Mia safely from the monster she had married, and everyone would go unscathed.

As Tom and Lucy settled down on the bed a short while later, Lucy had a frown on her face as Tom told her all about Mia's new plan.

"Is that safe? He could kill her," Lucy said and Tom nodded.

"Yeah. I think so too. But if it's what she wants, there is little or nothing we can do about it other than make sure she gets justice," Tom said and Lucy frowned. 2

"If you are willing to go against him to get justice after she dies, why not just do so now and save her further torture?" Lucy asked and Tom nodded.

"That's what I think too. But we can't act rashly. We have to apply wisdom and tread with caution here," Tom said and Lucy sighed as she snuggled closer to him.

"Whatever you do, make sure you stay safe," Lucy said and Tom nodded.

"Sure. Nothing is going to happen to me, I promise."

"Now tell me about the investors," Lucy said and they chatted for a bit until Tom finally gave in to his exhaustion and slept off, halfway into Lucy's story of her visit to the factory.

Chapter 843 Honeymoon Over

After Tom had slept off, Lucy remembered that she has promised Mia that they could give Sonia and Bryan a call after dinner, so she quietly got out of bed and picked up her phone.

She moved silently as she walked out of the bedroom, careful not to disturb Tom's sleep since she knew he was feeling pretty exhausted.

Once she got into the hallway, she called Sonia on Whatsapp and waited patiently for her to receive the call.

"Hey! Shouldn't you be sleeping?" Sonia asked the moment the call connected.

"I should. How are you?" Lucy asked curiously.

"Hm. I'm fine. Just that Bryan insists on no phones and stuff. I can't even write. And he is scowling at me right now as I'm talking to you," Sonia said and Lucy sighed.

"I understand. And let him know I apologize for intruding on your personal time. I won't call again after now. But it's about Mia..."

"What happened to Mia?" Sonia asked in alarm as she sat up.

She would have called Mia by now to check on you, just that she submitted her other phone to Bryan and only this one which Lucy and her editor could reach were on.

"Calm down. Nothing happened to her. At least not yet. And hopefully nothing will happen to her. She moved in with us. She wants to talk to Bryan. You know, like tell him everything. Did you tell him about it already?" Lucy asked and Sonia glanced at Bryan who had been staring at her with a worried frown since she mentioned Mia.

"No. Let me ask him if he can talk to her. I will call you back in five," Sonia said before hanging up.

"What happened to Mia?" Bryan asked watching her.

"She moved in with Tom and Lucy," Sonia said and Bryan frowned.

"Why? What for? Did something happen at their apartment? What about Jeff?" He asked, different thoughts running through his head.

"She wants to talk to you. I think she wants to tell you what's going on. I know you said no calls and all, but I think we should call Lucy back so you talk to her," Sonia said and a worried line formed on Bryan's forehead.

"Okay. But why don't we call her instead? Why Lucy?" Bryan asked and Sonia shrugged.

"That way you don't have to turn on your phone or break the law. See how my emergency phone comes in handy?" She asked with a grin and he scowled.

"Call her then," he said and Sonia dialed Lucy's line.

"He will talk to her," Sonia said and Lucy who was already downstairs and standing in front of the guest room knocked on the door.

"Mia, it's Lucy," she announced so that Mia wouldn't be too startled that someone was at her door by that time of the night.

"Lucy?" Mia asked as she opened the door, "Is everything okay?"

"You wanted to talk to Bryan. He is on the phone," Lucy said as she handed the phone to Mia.

"I will be waiting at the dining," Lucy said before walking away to give Mia the much needed privacy.

"Bryan?" Mia called as she returned inside the bedroom and shut the door behind her.

"Yes, Mia. I'm here. What is this I'm hearing about you moving in with Tom? Did something happen between you and Jeff? Why did you leave the apartment?" Bryan asked curiously.

"No. Nothing happened. Everything is fine," Mia rushed to assure him.

"Then why are you there?" Bryan asked while Sonia tried to act like she didn't know what was going on.

"Uhm, I don't know how to explain it. It's sort of complicated and a long story. But I called to let you know that I might not be here when you get back," Mia said and Sonia frowned.

"What are you talking about, Mia? I thought we agreed that you wouldn't run away and you will stay there until we get back?" Sonia asked and Bryan turned to her.

"What are you talking about? Why is she running away? Why did you both have such a conversation in the first place and I know nothing of it?" Bryan asked and Sonia shook her head.

"Let's just talk to Mia first," Sonia said when she realized she had slipped.

"Where are you going, Mia?" Bryan asked with a frown.

"I'm going home with my husband..."

"What husband? When did you get married? Last I remember you didn't even have a boyfriend," Bryan said, completely confused.

"What? Don't tell me he found you!" Sonia said in alarm and once again Bryan turned to her.

"You know what is going on?" Bryan asked with a frown but instead of responding to his question, Sonia rose.

"I think Mia wants to talk to you and I'm distracting you. I will be outside. When you're both done we can talk," Sonia said and excused herself from the room even though she really wanted to know what Mia was thinking and why she would be going home to her husband.

Bryan watched Sonia with a frown as she walked away, and returned his attention back to the phone in his hand when he heard Mia's voice.

"Bryan, I'm sorry I didn't tell you before now. It's not like I directly told anyone anyway. I'm married. I ran away from my abusive husband by faking my death, and now he knows I'm still alive and is coming to get me. I'm at your brother's place because I asked Harry for help..."

"When? How long has all this been going on? Why am I just hearing of it now?" Bryan asked, hurt that Mia had asked Harry for help and not him who was her boss.

Bryan listened as Mia explained everything to him from the moment Harry began to suspect her of hiding something to when she confirmed his suspicions, to Tyler recognizing her and blowing her cover, down to her moving to Tom's place earlier that day.

By the time Mia was done, Bryan was feeling a plethora of emotions. He was shocked and feeling both angry, sad, and disappointed.

Shocked by the discovery that Mia wasn't even her real name, but Vanessa. Angry that a monster like Henry Rosewood existed on the same earth as them. Sad that Mia had to go through all of that and live in such fear of someone who was supposed to be her protector. Disappointed that Mia didn't trust him enough to tell him all of this and that he was the last to find out what was going on with his own assistant.

"Why? Why didn't you tell me all this time? I thought we were friends?"

"Friends? We aren't exactly friends. You are my boss," Mia reminded him.

"But we were close," Bryan pointed out.

"Were we?"

"Yes. You scold me and speak to me rudely a lot of the time and I never fired you. All my past assistants were fired for less," Bryan said, annoyed that she didn't think they were close.

"Well, we did become sort of close after Sonia came into the picture, but you are not the type to concern yourself with the personal business of this who work for you, so I couldn't bring my problem to you. I asked Harry for help because he first offered to help. And Harry is the one who brought your brother into the picture," Mia explained and Bryan sighed.

"What can I do to help? I want to help too. Damn it, Mia! I have to," he said and Mia went on to tell him her plan to go back with Henry when he comes to get her.

"Is there no other way? Do you have to go back with him? What's the point of running away all these years if you're going to meekly go back with him? Did you just want to get a taste of freedom and now you are ready to return to the prison?" Bryan asked, not understanding the reason for Mia's decision.

"Sometimes the only way to win is to give the impression that you have failed. I have to stoop to conquer, Bryan. And I have an advantage now that I didn't have three years ago," Mia said and Bryan raised a brow.

"What's that?"

"I have you all in my corner. I had no one three years ago, but now I do, and he doesn't know it. I know Henry Rosewood but he doesn't know me. He knew Vanessa, but he doesn't know anything about Mia. I am confident that things will be different this time. I am playing to win," Mia said and Bryan frowned.

"You never can tell how much he has also changed in the last three years. You shouldn't be so confident that you know what you are getting into," Bryan warned.

"Some things never change, Bryan. I didn't call so you can change my mind. I wanted to let you know I might not be here when you get back and the reason. And to also bid you and Sonia goodbye," Mia said and Bryan scowled.

"Why are you saying goodbye? If you plan to win against your ex-husband, don't you plan to come back here? We will be waiting, so it shouldn't be goodbye," Bryan said and Mia smiled.

"I may not have to work for you when I come back. Working for you has been frustrating," Mia said and Bryan smiled.

"I have enjoyed working with you and I hope you work with me again when you get back. I promise to cause you less headache. I'm sure it will be easier to keep the promise now that I'm married," Bryan said and Mia rolled her eyes.

"If you were married to someone else, I would have believed you, but Sonia is even more crazy than you. Where is Sony? I need to talk to her so I can give the phone back to Lucy. It's pretty late over here and not all of us are honeymooning," Mia said and Bryan chuckled as he rose to go get Sonia.

"So, what if he doesn't come to get you, Mia? Or should I call you Vanessa?" Bryan asked as he walked out of the bedroom.

"No. Vanessa is dead. I'm Mia. And I know he will come," Mia said confidently.

"Babe, Mia wants to talk to you," Bryan said when he saw Sonia pacing at the balcony of their suite.

Sonia quickly took the phone from him, "What's going on, Mia? Why are you going back to him? Did he threaten you?" Sonia asked, worry coloring her voice.

"No. It's my own decision. Thank you, Sonia. Thank you for being a sister I didn't know I needed, and for being a good friend..."

"Don't do that, Mia," Sonia hissed.

"Don't do what?"

"Stop sounding like you are saying goodbye and I'm not going to see you again," Sonia said and Mia sighed.

"I won't be here when you get back..."

"So, you said. I want to know what you plan to do, Mia. Tell me," Sonia said and Mia went on to tell her what she planned.

The writer in Sonia didn't take too long to process the wisdom in her plan, "I think it's a genius idea," Sonia said and Bryan frowned while Mia smiled.

"I guess reading so many crime novels is paying off after all," Mia said and Sonia sighed.

"I'm going to think more on your plan and see a way to make sure it works perfectly, okay? But promise me you will be fine. You know you are my sister," Sonia said, and Mia nodded as tears of gratitude gathered in her eyes.

"I promise," Mia said and Sonia sighed as she hung up.

"Before you get mad and say..."

"I think we should go home," Bryan said, and Sonia frowned.

"Why? You are cutting short our honeymoon because you are mad at me for keeping this away from you? I only knew about it on our wedding day and I didn't know how to bring it up. We said we were going to focus on us and not talk about anything else..."

"Quit rambling. I'm not mad. Disappointed, yes. But not mad. I want us to send her off properly if she is leaving with him. I consider Mia a friend to me, and I know she is a friend to you too. I haven't been a good friend to her, but I want to at least see her off when she leaves. Is that okay?" Bryan asked and Sonia nodded.

"Totally. She needs us too. I would like for us to see her off. We can always go on a vacation some other time, but we don't know when next we might see her," Sonia said and Bryan smiled.

"Relax while I pack our bags."

Chapter 844 Bipolar Disorder

The Wednesday morning sun peeked through the blinds, casting a warm ray of light across the bedroom as Jade slumbered peacefully.

Harry, ever the early riser, decided to use the quiet time to have a quick chat with Candace and Andy before they left for the airport. He found them chatting in the kitchen as they prepared breakfast.

"Good morning, big sisters," Harry greeted them, a smile playing on his lips.

"Good morning, little brother. Want coffee?" Candace asked and when Harry nodded, she went to pour him a mug.

"Thanks," Harry said as he took it from her and then cleared his throat, "Actually, there's something I wanted to talk to you both about before you leave."

Candace and Andy exchanged a curious glance. The smile on their face disappeared, replaced by a shared look of concern.

"Is everything alright, Harry?" Candace asked, wondering why he suddenly seemed so serious.

Harry nodded. "Everything is great, actually. Better than ever, in fact. There's just... something I've been planning, and I figured it's only right that I let you two in on it since you are my siblings."

Intrigue flickered in Andy's eyes. "Planning, huh?"

"Are you planning to ask Jade to marry you?" Candace guessed and Harry raised a brow.

He hadn't intended for it to be so blunt, but now that it was out there, there was no turning back.

"How did you guess?" He asked and seeing that Candace's guess was right, Andy let out a squeal of delight.

She threw her arms around him in a hug. "Oh my god, Harry! That is amazing news!"

"Jade has been spending a lot of time with you. And when she first told me about you, she said you were very old-fashioned and stuff. So I figured the reason you've been doing it all is because you've made up your mind to propose soon," Candace said with a shrug, and clapped him enthusiastically on the back.

"Congrats! Jade is going to be so happy. You're both very lucky to have each other," Candace said, not sure who was more lucky since she knew they were both wonderful people.

He had known they would be happy for him and Jade, still their genuine excitement warmed his heart.

A grin spread across his face, "Thank you. So, the plan is to propose to her while we're on our vacation," Harry explained, "I was hoping you might want to be there when I pop the question."

Candace's eyes sparkled. "Are you kidding? We wouldn't miss it for the world! This is going to be epic!"

Andy winked. "I can't wait to see the surprise on Jade's face. Consider us your official proposal cheerleaders. We will make sure it's a moment she will never forget."

"Our little brother's all grown up," Candace said, nudging him playfully, and they all laughed.

"Is dad aware?" Andy asked, knowing that the news would bring joy to Aaron.

"Yeah. He is," Harry said and Candace grinned.

"But seriously, congratulations, Harry. We are so happy for you both," Candace said and the next few minutes were filled with excited chatter as they discussed the details of the proposal and when to travel over for it.

Two hours later, Matt came over and drove them to the airport, leaving Harry and Jade alone in the house once again.

"So, are you ready to leave? Two days to go," Harry said as he lay on the bed with Jade and she grinned.

"Having you on the bed with me this way during office hours on a work day already feels like the vacation has started," Jade said and Harry laughed.

"So, you came back late yesterday, and we couldn't talk. Want to tell me what is going on?" She asked and Harry sighed deeply.

"I think Mia's husband might be a bit difficult to handle," he confessed.

"Hmm. You think so? Why?" Jade asked, surprised to hear that from a capable man like Harry.

"He won't let her go so easily," Harry said, and went on to explain the phone call to him and all he had said.

"Did you ask Mia how they met? I mean, how he got to marry her?" Jade asked, and Harry frowned.

"No. Why? What has that got to do with anything?" Harry asked, and Jade sighed as she sat up.

"Everything. It has everything to do with it. You first need to know why he married her. Was it an arranged marriage by their families? Was she in love with him? Or did he see her and choose to marry her? Is her family indebted to him, hence they are on his side? What was the dynamics of their relationship? You need to know if it's just a case of an egoistical husband too proud to admit that he has lost his wife because of his wickedness, or if it's a case of an obsessed crazy husband. That would better help you know how to deal with him. It's like profiling him," Jade said and Harry considered it for a moment.

"I could help..."

"No," Harry shook his head before she could finish.

"No what?"

"I don't want you involved in this in any way..."

"Why not? I'm a lawyer and..."

"And you are my girl friend and your safety is my utmost concern," Harry said and Jade rolled her eyes.

"Do you have any idea the kind of cases I've handled and how dangerous they are? This isn't a big deal. I can take care of myself," she said but Harry shook his head.

"If you want to help, do so by talking to just me this way when I update you on what's going on. I don't want you to be directly involved. Stay out of it, okay?" Harry said she and scowled.

"So it's okay for you to do dangerous stuff, but not me?" She asked, and he nodded.

"Yes. I'm the man..."

"And it's my duty to protect you," Jade completed with a roll of her eyes.

"So, who would protect you when you're so busy protecting me and doing dangerous stuff?" Jade asked, eyeing him with disapproval.

"I can protect myself," Harry said and she raised a brow.

"And I can't protect myself? Do you really think so? I can handle a gun better than most men, you know?" Jade asked and Harry sighed.

This wasn't the sort of discussion or argument he expected them to have when they were alone and had the house all to themselves.

"I'm sure you can, but I'd rather you don't have to. Let me handle the guns if there is need for it, and you can get me out of jail with that smart brain of yours if ever I have to use the gun," Harry said and Jade rolled her eyes.

"You know, this is the reason men don't live as long as women. You lot seem to think women can handle anything, and then you end up carrying too many burdens..."

"I don't want to outlive you. I'd rather die before you," Harry said and Jade glared at him as she hit his arm.

"Don't say stuff like that. I don't find it romantic," Jade said and Harry grinned.

"Why? Death is inevitable. I don't want to have to live without you..."

"I don't want to live without you either. But let's not talk about death. I will keep you safe, and you can also keep me safe, okay?" Jade said, and seeing the stubborn set of her lips, Harry knew he was in for another long round of argument if he didn't respond as she expected.

"Okay, ma'am," he said and she smiled, "But you're still not getting involved in Mia's case. Stay out of it. Tom and I will handle it," Harry said and she sighed.

"If you insist. So, what's the plan for today?" Jade asked, changing the subject.

"I will be stopping by the company. We have a meeting..."

"I thought you said you do not have any business at the office until after our vacation?" Jade cut in.

"It's not official business. Mia and Jeff are coming to the company so we can all put her plan into motion," Harry explained.

"I will come with you..."

"Esquire..."

"I don't want to be home alone. I will wait in Lucy's office," she cut him off and he nodded.

"That's fine then. Let's get ready," Harry said, and just as he rose from the bed, his phone buzzed with a phone call.

He raised a brow when he saw that it was Jeff and he received the call, "Did something... Really?" Harry asked with a frown and Jade raised a brow as she watched him.

"Alright. See you soon," Harry said before hanging up.

"What happened?" Jade asked curiously as she watched Harry look at his phone's screen.

"Mia's husband decided not to wait until twenty-four hours to make his move. Get dressed let's get going. I will tell you the details on our way," Harry said and quickly they both got ready and left the house.

"So? What did he do?" Jade asked after they were settled in the car and were on their way to the company.

"He sent some men to the apartment early this morning to get Mia. But Jeff told them that Mia went out without informing him and he is yet to hear from her or see her since then, and all attempts to reach her on phone has yielded nothing. Then they left a number asking him to reach them if he saw or heard from her. And then there has been rumors on different blogs about Vanessa Rosewood, supposed late wife of Henry Rosewood, being spotted somewhere in Ludus. Released by Henry of course," Harry said and Jade pursed her lips.

"Interesting," Jade said thoughtfully, "I believe this is the first of his many moves. He has only just started," Jade said and Harry nodded.

By the time Harry walked into Tom's office a couple of minutes later, Mia and Jeff were already seated there and the moment he walked in, they all turned to him.

"Henry just gave an interview," Mia announced and Harry raised an eyebrow at Tom.

"What did he say?" Harry asked no one in particular.

"It wasn't just him. He was with my father. They confirmed the rumors in quote. Henry shed a few tears of joy. He said I contacted him..." Before she could finish, Tom handed Harry his phone so that he would see it for himself.

On the screen was Henry, looking dignified as ever, and beside him was an older man who Harry believed was Mia's father.

"My attention has been drawn to the rumors making rounds on the internet. I'm surprised that the news is out already. We are happy to announce to the public that my believed wife, Vanessa, whom we thought three years ago, is alive," Henry said, and paused as though to blink back his tears.

"I'm sorry. I've just been so overwhelmed since I heard from her," Henry said, and his assistant handed him a handkerchief which he used to dab at his eyes.

"For three years I thought my wife was dead. I mourned and wept every night, devastated by the death of my precious wife. You can't imagine what joy I feel knowing that she survived that terrible accident," he said and then paused again.

"Although she lost her memory, hence she couldn't reach out to us all this time, but I'm glad she finally regained her memory and called me. I thank you all for mourning with me when I mourned, and for rejoicing with me now that I'm rejoicing. I can't imagine the magnitude of suffering my dearest wife must have endured in the last couple of years away from us, especially considering her mental health challenge," he paused again to let it sink in.

"For years we have been managing her bipolar disorder..."

"Bipolar?" Harry asked, looking at Mia.

"He is trying to make me out to be the crazy wife that way even if I come out to defend myself or say anything, no one would listen to the crazy wife who is lucky enough to be married to such a powerful man who dotes on her in spite of her mental condition," Mia said, amazed by how Henry had managed to use the media again.

Harry returned his attention to the phone again, "I can only imagine how bad it must have gotten now. I don't say this to shame my wife or to expose our dirty linens. I'm saying this so that everyone would understand and sympathize with my beloved wife. I will be going to get her and soon she will get all the medical help she needs and take her place beside me again," he said and Mia's father nodded.

"You have been such a wonderful husband to my daughter and an amazing son-in-law. Thank you for the patience and love you've shown my daughter. Even on days when her condition is so bad that she becomes violent and accuses you of all sorts of things, not once have you been ashamed nor thought of divorcing her. Thank you, Henry. I hope you are able to bring her home to us. Vanessa, I hope you come back home to us. We love you and can't wait to have you back with us," Mia's father said, looking directly at the camera and Mia closed her eyes.

Harry sighed as he returned the phone to Tom, "Well, I don't think this changes much," Harry said as he sat down on the sofa.

"It doesn't affect my plan. I expected this, I just didn't expect the bipolar part," Mia said, and Jeff reached out a hand to squeeze hers.

Before Tom could speak, his phone buzzed with a call notification and he looked at Mia, and then at Harry, "It's Henry," Tom announced, and they all looked at him with interest.

Chapter 845 Three Months

The tension in the office was thick enough to cut with a knife following Tom's announcement.

"Why is he calling you? Did he find out about your involvement already?" Jeff asked, trying to figure out what was going on.

"I won't know if I don't take the call. Everyone, be silent," Tom ordered as he received the call.

Tom, ever the professional, answered the call with a neutral, "Mr. Rosewood? To what do I owe this unexpected pleasure?"

A booming voice filled the speaker. "Mr Hank, it's good to hear from you. I understand my wife works at your company..."

Tom cut in, "Your wife? I'm sure you are mistaken..."

"I am never mistaken, Mr Hank. I wouldn't call you if I wasn't certain," Henry said stiffly, irritated at being interrupted.

"My apologies then. Let's assume you are right. I'm not very familiar with my staff. As I'm sure you know now, Mr Harry Jonas is in a better position to help..."

"I don't need the help of your underling," Henry cut in, annoyed that Tom was referring him to someone else when he had personally chosen him for the task.

"He is co-CEO and has equal authority as I do. He is not an underling," Tom said through gritted teeth, annoyed at the insult to Harry.

Harry on the other hand, shook his head at Tom, gesturing for him to be cool and keep his head in the game.

Henry's voice grew colder. "I didn't call to be lectured about the hierarchy at your organization, Mr Hank. I have zero care for it. My wife has been working as your brother's assistant for some time now, under a false identity. I believe you know her as Mia Johnson, but her true name is Vanessa Rosewood. I'm on my way down to Ludus, and I want you to keep her in your custody until I get there. She is not mentally sound and might spew a lot of gibberish. I urge you to pay no heed to her words. Can I trust you to assure her safety until I get there?"

"If I may ask, why is she here under false identity? And she hasn't given us any reasons to doubt her mental capacity. To the best of my knowledge, Mia is very sound mentally," Tom said and a beat of silence followed.

Henry clearly hadn't expected him to question him. "I didn't call to be questioned by you. All I expect is for you to find her and keep her safe until I arrive. That shouldn't be too difficult, should it?" Henry asked and Tom exchanged a glance with Harry and Mia.

The man's audacity was astounding, and if they had not already agreed to go along with Mia's plan, he would have preferred to rough him up a little.

"Not at all. We are happy to help in any way we can, Mr. Rosewood," Tom said, his voice steady.

"I will count on you," Henry said, and the call ended abruptly.

"You almost lost your temper," Harry noted.

"Didn't you hear him sounding like I'm his errand boy or something," Tom said and Harry chuckled.

"That's how he talks to everyone," Mia said apologetically.

"He called me your underling, didn't he, boss?" Harry asked and Tom scowled.

"I would like to lose my fist in his face when all this is over," Tom said and they focused on Mia.

"How did you get to be business partners with a person like that?" Jeff asked the question that had been on his mind all this time.

"That is not important right now. Mia, how did you meet him? I mean, was it an arranged marriage or was it love?" Harry asked and they all frowned.

"What has that got to do with anything?" Mia asked in confusion.

"Maybe nothing. Maybe everything. Indulge me,"

Mia fidgeted under the combined scrutiny of them all. "Well," she began hesitantly, "it wasn't exactly love at first sight. My family... they were having financial problems and at the company was at the brink of collapse. Henry, on the other hand..."

She trailed off, a bitter edge creeping into her voice. Harry leaned forward, his gaze encouraging. "He had money, influence. He offered a way out for you and your family, didn't he?"

Mia nodded, a flicker of shame in her eyes. "It wasn't as simple as that. There were... conditions. He offered them a loan, a lifeline, on one condition – I would marry him."

"So, it was a business arrangement?" Tom asked, his voice devoid of judgment.

Mia gave a small, humorless laugh. "Business? More like a hostage situation. My family practically owed themselves to him. I didn't want to be part of it, but my parents would rather sell me to him than declare bankruptcy."

"Did you ever love him?" Harry pressed gently.

Mia's silence spoke volumes. Finally, she sighed, "There was a time when I thought I did. But love shouldn't feel like suffocation. Love shouldn't make you question your own sanity. On second thought, I don't think there was ever any love between us. At least not from my end. I wasn't in love with him. But I did respect him. At first he was charming, attentive. Everything I thought I wanted. But it didn't take long for the facade to crumble. He became controlling, possessive. Any friends I had, any interests I pursued – he disapproved of them all. He wouldn't let me work, wouldn't let me have any friends. I felt like a gilded cage bird. He would punish me for the slightest offence. He abused me in every way." Mia shook her head.

"When I couldn't take it anymore. I had to escape. I knew I couldn't go back to my family, not with the way they worshiped Henry. So, I took a chance and fled, hoping to never set eyes on him again," she finished.

"Before Henry's proposal to save your family from their financial crisis, did you know him personally? I mean, had he ever shown any interest in you before then?" Harry asked and Mia shook her head.

"Think carefully," Harry said and she frowned as she thought about it.

"Now that I think about it, I think I first met him two years before my family had financial crisis," Mia said with a nod.

"Yes?" Jeff asked and Mia nodded.

"We met at a party years ago when I was still in college, and he tried to talk to me but I blew him off," Mia said with a frown.

"You blew him off? You blew Henry Rosewood off?" Harry asked, to see if she was beginning to get a clear picture of what happened.

"I didn't know who he was then. And I really didn't care to know. I wasn't interested in him or anyone else. I was forced to the party. I had a boyfriend then," Mia said and then looked at Harry.

"We've never talked about that and I really didn't remember that," Mia said and Harry nodded.

"Do you think he might have had something to do with what happened with your family just so he could have control over them, and you?" Harry asked and Mia narrowed her eyes thoughtfully.

"I wouldn't put that past him. He is exactly that kind of person," Mia said, and she rose from her seat.

"I don't want to believe that Henry was responsible for that. I don't want to believe that my family went through such financial problems and I was made to marry him just because I blew him off when I was a teenager," Mia said as she began to pace around the office.

"Is that what you think happened? Is that why you asked her about how they met?" Tom asked Harry, and he shook his head.

"I had no idea something like that happened. I never would have suspected it nor thought of it. It was Jade's suggestion. She said knowing the dynamics of their relationship and profiling him would help us know better how to deal with him. So, at least now we can see that there was more to the reason he married her," Harry said and they both looked at Mia when she laughed humorlessly.

"If there is something learned about him, it's the fact that no one says no to Henry Rosewood. No one rejects him. Often times I would watch him destroy things in blind rage when something didn't go his way. I would listen to him plot on how to take revenge, yet I didn't even know he was taking his revenge on me," Mia laughed humorlessly.

"Can you believe it? All this while I kept wondering how he could treat me so badly. I kept asking myself what I did to deserve such torture— such hatred. I didn't realize he was punishing me for something I don't even remember. How would I have ever guessed that I lived such a pathetic life for the past ten years simply because I refused to talk to a stranger at a party when I was nineteen?"

Maybe that's why he kept tormenting me— because I failed to remember," Mia said, and her body shook as she broke into a sob.

Jeff looked at Tom and Harry, and when they stared right back at him, he rose to go comfort Mia. He wrapped his arms around her and held her as she cried.

Neither of them said a word as Mia cried, and they waited until she had composed herself, and then she looked from Harry to Tom.

"So, now that we know that, what now?" She asked, and Harry shrugged.

"You tell us. Apart from destroying things in blind rage, what did he do each time he was refused something or rejected?" Harry asked and Mia sighed deeply.

"He ruined it to make sure no one else used it. And even when it was offered back to him, he destroyed it. He makes sure it is useless both to him and to everyone else," Mia said and smiled sadly, "Just like me. That's what he has been doing all these years, and like a fool I didn't even see it. All those miscarriages. It wasn't a mistake. He didn't want me to have his baby." Mia shut her eyes, and for the first time since she miscarried her babies, she was genuinely glad that she had not birthed any child for a person like that.

"You rejected him once again yesterday when you asked for a divorce," Harry reminded her.

"Mia, I don't think we should go with your idea. He might really kill you this time," Jeff said with a frown.

"Not if I kill him first. I won't die by Henry's hand. Never. I know he won't stop until he does what he wants, and now that I know exactly why he did that to me and is after me, I am more determined to win. Tom, when he gets here, deliver me to him. Please," Mia said, and Tom gave her a nod.

"He won't be letting me step out of the house or use any electronic devices, so I will give you a list of the companies he uses for everything regarding the house, including his domestic staff. You can try to buy over whichever of the companies you can, and those you can't buy, you can place some reliable people in them. I will make sure there is always need for a new staff and repairs around the house. Let's have them sent to the house. That way we can communicate through them and I won't be surrounded only by Henry's people. Slowly, I want to take over all he has until he is left with nothing and then I will make him face legal consequences for all he did to me," Mia said with a determined set of her jaw.

"Let's do that. We can start by getting the doctor to be on your side since he is such a trusted friend," Harry said and Mia nodded.

"I promise to make it worth your time and worth every money you spend," Mia promised.

"You don't have to. Buying the companies is business too," Tom said and Mia took a deep breath.

"I don't mind working as one of the staff in the house. That way I can keep an eye on you," Jeff offered and Mia shook her head.

"No. That's too risky. And I'm sure he knows your face. If he recognizes you, it is game over," Mia said and Jeff shook his head.

"He won't recognize me. Not if I disguise myself. I've worked in the entertainment industry long enough to know how to disguise myself," Jeff said and Tom and Harry exchanged a look.

"I don't think that's a bad idea," Harry said and Tom nodded, but Mia shook her head.

"I want to do it. Besides, does he interact with all the staff in the house? I'm sure the place is large enough for him not to notice me at all," Jeff said and Mia frowned.

"What about Bryan? We both can't leave. You are his manager..."

"I'm sure Bryan can manage without me. This is a matter of life and death, so I trust he will understand," Jeff said while Tom and Harry watched them both as they argued back and forth.

"That's the only way I can be comfortable with you doing this," Jeff said and Mia sighed.

"Okay. But you had better make sure the disguise is good and you don't get caught, else I'm going to kill you myself," Mia threatened.

"I will rather kill myself than put you in danger," Jeff said and Tom made a face at Harry, making him chuckle at the mushiness being exhibited by the two.

"Alright. So, what's the time frame for all of this? How long will you need to pull it off?" Harry asked, and Mia smiled, but it didn't touch her eyes.

"Three months."

Chapter 846 Fine Gentleman.

The rain lashed against the funeral home windows, a relentless drumbeat that mirrored the rhythm of Amy's pounding heart. Each drop felt like a tiny hammer blow, chipping away at the fragile dam of her composure.

Inside, the air was thick with the scent of lilies and subdued grief. Amy sat stiffly in the second pew, her black dress clinging uncomfortably to her damp skin.

Amy looked across the aisle, her gaze landing on the simple golden casket adorned with a single spray of white roses.

It was absurd, unthinkable, that vibrant, life-loving Miley was in there. A couple of weeks ago, they'd been giggling over coffee, planning weekend adventures. Now, all that remained was a cold, unfeeling box.

Her gaze darted from the casket to Miley's tear-streaked parents who were seated in the first pew, their faces etched with a grief so raw it seemed to have leached the color from their skin.

A lump formed in Amy's throat, threatening to choke back the torrent of emotions churning within her. Beside her, her mother ever the pillar of strength, had tears glistening in her own eyes, the lines around her eyes deepening with each silent sob.

Amy's mother had practically raised Miley and she had been like a daughter to her. So, being in Miley's funeral, was like attending the funeral of another daughter. Having lost one in the past, this was a painful reminder of her loss as well as a fresh loss.

Amy squeezed her mother's hand and a choked sob escaped her lips. Amy, unable to bear it any longer, pulled her into a tight embrace.

The officiant, a kind-faced priest with a gentle voice, spoke in hushed tones about the brevity and fleeting nature of life. He talked about the importance of cherishing loved ones and the enduring power of memories. His words were a balm to some, a source of irritation to others.

Lost in the whirlpool of her own sorrow, Amy barely registered the eulogy he delivered, a generic recitation of life and loss. The only reality for her was the gold casket a few feet away, the final, cruel container that held her vibrant, funny, exasperating best friend.

Finally, the priest concluded his remarks. A hush fell over the gathering as the rain seemed to pause for breath.

As the eulogy approached, a wave of nausea washed over Amy. Public speaking had never been her forte, but how could she not deliver one last tribute to her best friend? How could she not honor Miley's wish?

A hush fell over the gathering and all eyes turned towards Amy as she was called forward.

"Are you ready, Amy?" The priest asked softly.

Miley had left a will in her journal stating that she didn't want halfhearted tributes. She wanted only Amy to talk about her, since Amy was the only one, apart from her parents who knew her best and had loved her so fiercely—the sister she never had.

Taking a deep, shaky breath, Amy rose from the chair, her legs trembling slightly. Amy stepped forward, her legs shaky despite the short distance towards the podium.

Standing at the podium, she took a deep breath as she surveyed the faces before her, a sea of grief-stricken faces, most of them strangers, some neighbors, a handful of classmates who, like her, were grappling with the sudden loss of a friend, some of the domestic staff at the Garwood mansion both retired and current ones, and a few distant relatives, all whose lives were touched in one way or another by Miley.

Her gaze met Mrs. Garwood's her eyes filled with a desperate plea. Amy knew what she needed – a glimpse of Miley, the girl they both loved, in the midst of their grief.

Amy picked up the microphone. It microphone felt cold and foreign in her damp hand. "Everyone," she began, her voice surprisingly steady. "Thank you all for coming today to celebrate the life of Miley Garwood."

"Miley... My Miley," she began, her voice wavering. A beat of silence stretched before her, and then, the words began to flow.

"Miley wasn't just my best friend," Amy began, her voice cracking slightly. "She was my sister. My confidant. The other half of my heart. My soul mate. My sunshine on a cloudy day. The missing puzzle piece that made my world complete."

A choked sob rippled through the crowd and tears welled in Amy's eyes again, blurring her vision. But Amy refused to falter. She waited for the wave of emotion to pass before continuing.

"Miley wasn't afraid to be herself," Amy continued, her voice regaining its strength. "She embraced life with a contagious enthusiasm, her laughter echoing through every room she entered. She had this incredible ability to find the joy in anything and an uncanny ability to see the good in everyone. Her kindness knew no bounds."

A choked sob escaped her lips, but she pressed on, the memories of her time with Miley lending her strength.

A flicker of a smile touched Mr. Garwood's lips as Amy painted a vivid picture of their friendship. From whispered secrets under the covers to late-night adventures, from karaoke nights butchering pop songs to sharing dreams and anxieties. Each story she shared elicited a chuckle or a snuffle from the crowd, a testament to the life they were mourning.

A watery smile touched Amy's lips as she recalled a particularly embarrassing incident from their teenage years. A poorly planned attempt at dyeing their hair blonde had resulted in a disastrous shade of orange, a secret they'd only shared with each other. A ripple of soft laughter passed through the crowd, a welcome break from the suffocating grief.

Tears welled up in Amy's eyes as she spoke of Miley's unwavering support, her fierce loyalty, and the unwavering belief she had instilled in Amy to chase her dreams, no matter how crazy they seemed.

"She wasn't perfect," Amy admitted, a ghost of a smile playing on her own lips. "She wouldn't be human if she was. But then again, I don't think she was human. Miley was an angel, howbeit a pigheaded angel. She was the most stubborn person I ever knew, but also the sweetest."

A sob wracked Mrs. Garwood's body, and her husband reached out to comfort her. Tears welled up in his own eyes.

"Miley had this incredible strength, a determination to live life to the fullest. And even when death stared her in the face, she still chose to live her life to the fullest. She taught me to embrace the unexpected, to chase after my dreams no matter how crazy they seemed. And most importantly, she taught me the true meaning of love and friendship. She taught me the importance of seizing every moment. And for that, I will be eternally grateful," Amy paused, tears blurring her vision.

"She may be gone," Amy continued, "but her spirit lives on in all of us. In the kindness we show, the laughter we share, and the courage we find to chase our dreams, a little piece of Miley will always be with us."

A collective snuffle filled the air, and taking a deep breath, Amy concluded, "Miley," she choked out, her voice thick with emotion, "you left a gaping hole in my life. In all our lives. A void that can never be filled. But your spirit, your laughter, your zest for life and wavering love— those will stay with us forever and be forever etched in my heart. I will carry you in my heart, a constant reminder to live life to the fullest, just like you did."

Amy's gaze lingered at the lifeless casket. "I miss you, my dearest friend," she whispered, "This isn't goodbye. It's a see you later. Until we meet again, you will forever be the brightest star in my sky."

As the last words left her lips, a wave of emotion washed over her, and the crowd erupted in applause. Tears streamed down Amy's face, a mixture of grief and love.

With a final, shaky breath, she stepped away from the podium, and as she made her way back to her seat, she caught a glimpse of someone who looked like Lucas walking out of the hall.

Before she could go after him, Miley's mom rose from her seat and embraced her, "Thank you, Amy. Thank you for sending her off so beautifully. No one could have done it better than you did," she cried.

Amy cast one last glance in the direction Lucas had taken, and she hugged Miley's mother back, hoping that Lucas would hang around long enough for her to express her gratitude to him.

A couple of hours later after Miley had been buried, the crowd filed out slowly, a somber procession of black umbrellas battling the relentless rain.

Amy lingered, helping Mrs. Garwood sort out some thank you cards for the attendees. Her heart ached for the grieving parents, the raw pain etched on their faces a constant reminder of her own loss.

As the last guest departed, Amy noticed a lone figure standing at the Lobby, and her heart skipped a beat.

Lucas.

Relief and surprise washed over her in equal measure when she saw him. She had kept looking around for him since she saw him earlier, but thought he had left when she didn't see him. She had even thought she probably imagined him being there, but seeing him standing there, she was happy.

She hurried towards him, hoping to catch him before he disappeared again.

"Luca," Amy said, her voice hoarse. "I didn't expect to see you here."

He straightened, offering a smile as his gaze swept over her face. "Your eulogy was beautiful. Miley would have loved it."

"Thank you," Amy replied, her heart swelling with gratitude. "I couldn't have done it without you. Thanks for going out of your way to help me."

"It was just the right thing to do," he said and Amy smiled.

"And thanks for helping me change the locks. You can let me know how much it cost..."

Lucas smiled. "I won't do that. It wasn't much," Lucas said and Amy looked at him.

"How can I repay your kindness?"

"There is nothing to repay. It's the human thing to do. When someone is down, and you can help, you should lift them up. But if you really want to repay me, extend the same kindness to someone else when you see they need it," Lucas said, and Amy smiled this time, touched by Lucas' kind nature.

There was a pause, a charged silence that hung heavy in the air. Amy tilted her head, studying him. "I thought you left the country already," she finally ventured.

"I was supposed to leave last night," Lucas admitted, his gaze flickering away. "But..."

"But?" Amy prompted, a hint of curiosity creeping into her voice.

He hesitated, then took a deep breath. "Lucy spoke to me. She suggested that you know, maybe I was leading you on by being so nice."

Amy blinked. "Leading me on?"

Well, she had not thought he was leading her on. She has figured he was being himself. And if her heart had fluttered because of his gestures, it had fluttered of its own accord.

"Yeah," Lucas rubbed the back of his neck, his cheeks flushing slightly. "She thought I might be giving you the wrong impression."

Amy's amusement bubbled over into a soft laugh. "So you canceled your flight just to tell me you were being... nice?"

Lucas winced. "Well, not exactly. I came to pay my last respect to Miley and to clear the air. Let you know I don't have any... romantic interest in you. I was just being myself, being helpful."

Amy raised an eyebrow, a playful smile tugging at her lips. "Helpful? By coming to my best friend's funeral just to... tell me you're not interested in me? You couldn't send it as a text or call when you arrived? Or even an email?"

Lucas flushed a deeper shade of red. "Look, it might sound stupid, but I didn't want you to get the wrong idea. I wanted to tell you in person."

"Is it that important to you that I don't get the wrong idea? What if I already got the wrong idea and I'm interested in you? Or what if doing this just made me become even more interested in you?" Amy asked, and Lucas blinked at her, taken aback by her questions.

"Amy— I— I'm sorry if you feel that way, but I'm not ready for any of that," Lucas said honestly.

Amy's smile softened. "So, you're not interested in me not because you don't like me, but because you're not ready?" She asked, and Lucas couldn't help being flustered by her bluntness.

"Amy..."

"It's okay. I understand. I'm not exactly ready at the moment either. And for the record, I appreciate your help more than you know. Thanks for being there for me when I really needed someone," Amy said,

A hint of relief flickered in Lucas's eyes. "So... we're good?"

"Of course, we are good," Amy confirmed, extending her hand. "Thanks again, for everything."

Lucas took her hand, his fingers warm and surprisingly strong. "Sure."

"I should get going now. Tyler is waiting at the airport," Lucas said, and Amy nodded.

They stood in comfortable silence for a moment longer, staring at each other.

"Can I maybe call you some time? Or text? Or email?" Amy asked breaking the silence, and Lucas hesitated.

"You said we were friends. Friends do that much," Amy reminded him.

"Emails," Lucas decided, and Amy smiled.

"Less personal, huh? Why don't we do it this way, I will give you my email address and leave it up to you to decide if you want to send me an email or not?" Amy asked and before Lucas could respond, she quickly scribbled her email address on one of the thank you cards and tucked it in the pocket of his jacket.

A hesitant smile graced her lips, "And maybe when next you visit your sister, you could let me buy you a drink or coffee. Whichever you want. Just as friends, of course. My way of saying thank you."

And maybe then you can tell me what you said to them, to make them change their mind about me," Amy said, even though deep down she knew she was asking that because she wanted to be able to hangout with him again.

Lucas held her gaze, not sure why he felt once again like she was subtly reeling him in.

"I will think about it," Lucas said, and with a final nod, he walked away.

As Amy watched him leave, she felt a warmth bloom in her chest amidst the grief.

How did such a sweet guy ever get involved with someone like Rachel? She mused as she turned around to return inside.

"Amy? Who was that fine gentleman?" Her mother asked, startling her.

"That was Lu... Dr Perry," she said, and her mother raised a brow.

"Dr Perry? Why didn't you bring him in? I would have loved to thank him," her mother said, Mrs Garwood who had come out in search of Amy heard her.

"Lucas Perry was here?" She asked, and Amy nodded.

"He left in a haste to catch his flight," Amy explained, and Mrs Garwood nodded.

"I see. He did say he wouldn't be able to make it to the funeral because he had to travel back. I guess he wanted to see you," she said thoughtfully but Amy said nothing.

Miley had written so much about Lucas in her journal, and she had expressed her regret at how things ended between them and Lucas and how she wished Amy would be able to resolve things with him or at least end up with a man like Lucas if not Lucas himself. Miley had implied that there was chemistry between the two.

"He is such a fine young man," Amy's mother said and Mrs Garwood nodded in agreement.

"I learned from Miley's journal that she tried to matchmake you both," Mrs Garwood said and Amy blushed.

"She really liked him," Amy said simply.

"I'm sure she did. It is quite easy to see why," Mrs Garwood said with a small smile.

"I guess this is the first time you're seeing him since your misunderstanding?" She asked, and Amy shook her head.

"I work as his twin sister's secretary. We met last weekend when he visited. He was very helpful," Amy said and Mrs Garwood smiled.

This just confirmed what her and her husband had thought about Lucas' visit. After thinking about all he had said, they had concluded that Lucas had not only come to pay condolence but he had also subtly tried to convince them of Amy's innocence without revealing his intent.

He had acted like he had not seen Amy for a long time, yet Amy had confirmed she saw him the last weekend. That meant Amy wasn't even aware of all he had told them, cause if she was, she wouldn't have said she met last weekend.

As they all returned inside, she silently prayed that Miley's wish would come through for Amy.

A good person like Amy deserved a kind and thoughtful gentleman like Lucas. Like Miley had said, they would be a perfect fit.

Chapter 847 Pre-Vacation Treat

Lucy's gaze was fixed on her laptop screen as she read the progress report from each department in her team, while she also tried to give Jade her attention.

Across from her desk, Jade was perched on the visitor's chair, her brow furrowed as she scrolled through her phone while she waited for Harry to be done with the meeting in Tom's office.

"You know you can't leave any comments, right?" Lucy asked when it seemed like Jade was fighting the urge to not comment.

Since Jade got to her office, she had been busy going through the comments on every blog post that carried the press statement of Mia's husband.

"I'm honestly contemplating opening an anonymous account just to respond. How can he say she is crazy? How can her own father say such words?" Jade asked as she met Lucy's gaze, her eyes filled with tears.

It amazed Lucy how Jade could be so angry and fiercely loyal to Mia whom she didn't seem very close to.

Without waiting for Lucy to respond Jade continued, "I can't even imagine how she must feel. It's one thing for her husband to do this, but her dad? What kind of father does this to their own child? Isn't he supposed to love and protect her? If he being her dad is like this, why won't her husband treat her like shit? No one deserves this, Lu," Jade said as she swiped at her tears, and Lucy looked away from Jade.

She was a sympathetic crier and she knew that soon she would begin to cry as well so she looked at her computer monitor.

"Maybe her husband has something over her father and made him say all of that," Lucy said logically.

"I know that might be the case. But shouldn't a father be willing to lose everything to protect their daughter regardless of what is at stake? Shouldn't he be willing to lose even his life if that is what it would take to keep his daughter safe?" Jade asked and Lucy looked at Jade.

"I don't mean to lecture you, Jade, since you're the lawyer here. But I mean, by now you should know that the world is not a bed of roses. Every father isn't like your dad or mine. There are some who would rather use their kids as a shield than protect them," Lucy said logically.

"Yes, I am aware. I know all of that. This isn't a case I'm handling, so I don't have to be logical right now. I can afford to be emotional. And even if it was a case I was handling, I would feel this way too. God knows how many times I cried myself to sleep after going through some cases. The world is such a mean place," Jade said and Lucy nodded in agreement.

"You are right," Lucy said, and for a moment she couldn't help but think about what Mia's life must have been like before now if her dad and husband were this way and going to such length to make her come back.

"You okay, Luce?" Jade's voice cut through the fog of her thoughts.

"Yeah. Just thinking," Lucy admitted. "About Mia's husband. He seems very determined to get her back. And I think he is really dangerous. The whole situation gives me the creeps."

Jade nodded, "When Harry first told me about him, I thought it was just a case of an abusive husband, but after he told me about the phone call, and after seeing this clip, I don't think so. His eyes are dead cold. He is soulless."

Lucy shuddered, "Let's talk about something else. By the way, I was thinking about our conversation the other night," Lucy said and Jade arched an eyebrow.

"Which?"

"The one about being clingy and exercising boundaries," Lucy said and Jade sighed.

"That. What about it?" She asked curiously.

"I think I need to get a hobby too," Lucy said and Jade looked at her, surprised since that wasn't what she had been expecting Lucy to say.

"Why? Did anyone complain about you being clingy?" Jade asked and Lucy giggled.

"You don't only need to have boundaries because of clinginess or anything. It is important for every relationship to have healthy boundaries. Besides, before now I was sort of shut out from the rest of the world and all I did was work and stay locked up indoors. Now I want to be able to do more. And thanks to our conversation, I realized I needed a hobby aside reading novels," Lucy said and Jade pursed her lips.

"Have you figured out what you want to do now?" She asked, and Lucy grinned as she nodded.

"Yes. I want to take cooking classes," Lucy said, thinking that she would like to learn how to prepare all of Tom's favorite dishes and add some new ones to it, and also be able to make really nice meals for the kids she wanted to have with Tom.

She really liked how Evelyn had given them a leave, and taken to the kitchen to prepare all their meals during their stay at the family house. She would like to be able to do that in the future too.

"Cooking? You can't cook?" Jade asked, taken aback.

Lucy laughed, "I can make edible meal. But it can't hold a candle to the meals Samantha makes. I can't subject Tom to such barely tolerable meals," Lucy explained and Jade smiled.

"So, you're doing it for Tom?" She asked, and Lucy shrugged.

"And for myself too. For fun. After that I'm going to take up other classes too," Lucy said, and Jade smiled, impressed.

"I'm glad I was able to inspire you," Jade said and Lucy giggled.

"Thanks. And you can't tell Tom about it though. I want it to be a surprise when I prepare his meal," Lucy said and Jade grinned.

"My lips are sealed then," Jade promised, "By the way, have you heard from Sonia?" Jade asked and Lucy nodded.

"She's having the time of her life, and our little Ryso in the oven seems to be having fun too. Sony said she hasn't been experiencing any nausea," Lucy said and Jade giggled.

"I suppose the baby wanted them to tie the knot," Jade said and Lucy laughed too.

Their conversation was interrupted by the sharp trill of Jade's phone. She glanced at the screen, and a surprised smile lit up her face. "It's Aurora!"

Jade tapped the answer button on her phone. "Hey Aura, what's up?"

Lucy leaned back in her chair, listening as Jade's voice filled the room.

"Hey Jades! How is your day going?" Aurora's voice crackled through the phone, a hint of mischief lacing her tone.

"The usual. Nothing much to do," Jade replied, rolling her eyes playfully.

"You home? At Harry's or Tom's?" Aurora asked, her tone curious.

"I'm at Lucy's office whiling away my time while I wait for Harry to finish up with a meeting. Why? Wanna pay me a visit?"

Aurora chuckled. "Was wondering if you'd be interested in a little pampering session this afternoon?"

Jade's eyebrows shot up. "A spa day? Seriously?"

"Absolutely! Consider it a pre-vacation treat. You know, before you jet off with Harry to exotic locations." Aurora's voice held a teasing edge.

"Pre-vacation?" Jade echoed. "I like the sound of that," she said and Aurora laughed.

"You didn't think I'd forget you mentioned you'd be leaving this weekend, did you?" She asked, and a sheepish grin spread across Jade's face.

"It's not that I thought you'd forget, I just didn't think you'd make a big deal out of it," Jade admitted.

"My girlfriend is going on a vacation with the guy she hooked me with that helped me meet my fiancé. It's a super big deal," Aurora said and Jade giggled.

"You can also consider it an official Maid of Honor pampering session," Aurora said and Jade grinned.

"Maid of Honor pampering, huh? Wouldn't miss it for the world," Jade declared.

"Excellent! You can come over now. And maybe when Harry is done with his meeting and if he's interested, he can join you," Aurora said and Jade grinned.

"Thanks for including him. When can I come over?" Jade asked as she glanced over at Lucy, who was watching the exchange with a knowing smile.

"Right away if you're available. Need me to come get you?" Aurora offered and a warmth bloomed in Jade's chest.

"Nah, don't bother yourself on my account. I will be on my way now."

"See you soon, Jades!" Aurora said as she hung up.

Jade's smile widened, her eyes sparkling with excitement and a giddy smile plastered across her face. "Looks like I'm out of here, Lu. Spa day beckons! She wants to give me a pre-vacation pampering session."

"Pre-vacation, huh? Sounds amazing," Lucy said with a smile. "But are you just going to ditch Harry like that?"

Jade shrugged as she gathered her things, "I will let him know my plans changed. He will understand. Besides, the offer includes him too. A couple bonding experience," She said with a wink as she stood up.

"Thanks for the company, even with all the work you are drowning in," Jade said gesturing at Lucy's desk and laptop.

"Anytime," Lucy replied. "Have loads of fun."

"Will do." With a wave, Jade sashayed out of the office.

Leaving Lucy's office, Jade practically skipped down the hallway, a spring in her step brought on by the unexpected spa day invitation. Reaching for her phone, she dialed Harry's number. It rang twice before his voice filled her ear.

"Hey, busy boo," she chirped.

"Hey yourself," Harry replied, his voice laced with a hint of amusement as he walked away from the others.

"Everything okay? Tired of waiting?"

"Not really," Jade admitted. "Actually, plans have changed a little. Aurora just called and invited me to a spa day this afternoon. A pre-vacation treat, she called it. And the offer extends to you too if you're interested."

A chuckle escaped Harry's lips. "A spa day, huh? Sounds pretty darn good to me. Consider me in. Give me ten minutes and we will be out," Harry said and Jade pursed her lips.

"I was going to take a cab..."

"You don't have to. We are done here. Ten minutes, esquire," Harry said and she sighed.

"Can I wait in your office?" She asked as she retraced her steps.

"Sure," he said and she hung up and went to his office to wait.

"I don't remember the last time I had a good massage," Harry said fifteen minutes later as they drove out of the company premises.

"A massage? Well, I'm sure you won't mind being massaged by a masseur, 'cause there's no way I'm letting a lady touch you," she said and Harry chuckled.

"Why not? What are you scared of? Besides, you will be there," Harry said and Jade looked at him with a frown.

"I'm not scared of anything. I just don't want anyone touching my man," she said and Harry chuckled.

"Really?"

"Yes, Jonas. Yes," she said and he laughed.

"How do I get a massage then?" He asked and she shrugged.

"I will buy you a good body massage chair if you want," she said and he grinned as he turned to spare her a glance.

"And you think I can't afford to get one myself? Nothing beats the human hands. It touches spots that the massage chair can't touch."

"The masseurs do have human hands," Jade pointed out.

"There is no way I'm letting a man touch me. I prefer female human hands..."

"Well, good news, your girlfriend is both female and human and she has two hands," Jade said raising her hands for his inspection and Harry chuckled.

"Alright. So, can I get a massage from my female human girlfriend with two hands today?" He asked with a suggestive wink and she laughed.

"So, that was where you were headed. Well, I will think about it after we enjoy our couple bonding spa day," she said with a happy smile.

Twenty minutes later, they walked through the doors of Aurora's spa.

The receptionist, a young lady with a warm smile and knowing eyes, greeted them.

"Jade? Welcome! Aurora's been expecting you. She's just finishing up with a client, but why don't you take a seat in the waiting area and have some herbal tea?" She suggested.

Settling into a plush couch, Jade received a mug of fragrant tea, but Harry politely declined.

Moments later, Aurora emerged, a radiant smile lighting up her face and Jade handed Harry her mug as she rose to greet Aurora.

"Jades!" she exclaimed, pulling Jade into a tight hug. "So glad you could make it! I thought Harry wasn't coming until later. You're welcome Harry," Aurora said as she smiled at Harry.

"Thanks. You have a lovely place here. I take it you've purchased the place," Harry said and she nodded.

"Yeah. And I've moved completely too," Aurora said and Jade looked at her in surprise.

"Really? When? Why didn't you say anything?" Jade asked excitedly.

"Come let me show you around," Aurora said to Jade and then turned to Harry, "We will be back shortly, Harry," Aurora said and when he gave them a nod she led Jade away.

"So? When?" Jade asked as she followed Aurora.

"Thursday."

"What? That is almost a week ago and you didn't even say anything to me!" Jade said and Aurora smiled.

"I was going to tell you when we met at the yacht party but there was no time. Same with the wedding. And I've been busy setting up this place to my own taste, so I invited you over to break the news to you today," Aurora explained and Jade embraced her happily.

"I'm so happy for you, Aura. The place looks fabulous already. And I'm happy to finally have a friend here," Jade said and Aurora arched a brow.

"Shouldn't that be my line? You have Sonia, Lucy, Candace and now Andy," she pointed out.

"Candace and Andy are not based here. They live in Sogal. And that aside, they are all more like my sisters-in-law, compared to you who is a friend. And I've known you longer than them too," Jade said and Aurora smiled.

"Still, you all have a special relationship. One I love and admire," Aurora said and Jade smiled.

"I guess. Still, it would also be nice to have you here. Sony and Lucy are best friends, and same goes for Candace and Andy. I want my own friend too. And now I have you here," Jade said and Aurora giggled.

"Well, I'm glad you think of me that way. The feeling is mutual," Aurora said and they continued their tour around before going back to join Harry.

"Let's get you both into comfy robes. We have a whole afternoon of pampering ahead of us," Aurora said as she ushered them into a luxurious couples' treatment room.

"No massages for Harry. I don't want any lady touching my man or seeing his perfect body," Jade whispered to Aurora and she laughed softly as Harry chuckled.

"Whatever you want, Jades. Whatever you want."

Chapter 848 Chef

The humid Ludus air hit Sonia like a warm slap as she stepped out of the airport. Beside her, Bryan wrestled with their luggage, a bemused smile tugging at his lips.

"Welcome back to reality," Bryan said and Sonia forced a smile.

Reality felt a little heavier than usual. The decision to cut their honeymoon short had gnawed at her, but the image of Mia's tear-streaked face during their last time together at her wedding, wouldn't let her relax. She needed to see her friend, offer whatever support she could and say goodbye before she leaves.

"Alright," Sonia straightened her shoulders, a flicker of determination in her eyes. "First things first. I need to call Lucy."

Bryan raised an eyebrow. "Lucy? What for?"

"We need to find out if Mia is at Tom's..."

"Aren't you forgetting that she will be at work by now? Why not call Mia directly?" Bryan asked and Sonia shook her head.

"I'm not calling to ask if Lucy is at home. I just want to know if Mia is still at Tom's. Mia's phone is off, remember?" Sonia said and Bryan slapped his forehead.

"Yeah. I forgot," he said as he hailed a cab.

"So, where are we headed? Home or to Tom's place?" Bryan asked as the cab approached them.

"Let's head to Tom's. I will give Lucy a call when we get into the cab, and if she says that Mia isn't there, we can just change our direction," Sonia said as the cab stopped in front of them and they got in.

As they weaved through the chaotic Ludus traffic, Sonia pulled out her phone and dialed Lucy's number.

"Hey baby," she greeted when Lucy picked up.

"Why are you calling me now? Isn't it nighttime over there?" Lucy asked as she glanced at the wall clock in her office.

"In Paris, yes. But not over here. We are back in Ludus," Sonia explained.

A beat of silence followed before Lucy replied, a hint of surprise in her voice. "Is everything alright? Weren't you supposed to spend three weeks in Paris for your honeymoon?"

"We decided to cut it short," she mumbled.

"Because of the issue with to Mia, I suppose? You really didn't have to cut short your honeymoon. Tom, Harry and Jeff are handling everything. This is your honeymoon. You should make the best of it. And before you say you can always do it next time, I beg to defer. A honeymoon is different from a vacation. You only do it once," Lucy said and Sonia rolled her eyes.

"I didn't call to be lectured, Lu. Mia is important to me, and you know it. And she is important to Bryan too. If she is not going to be there when we get back, then it's only right that we cut our trip short and see her off properly. How do you think I'm going to be able to enjoy my honeymoon if I'm worried about her?" Sonia asked and Lucy nodded.

"I guess you are right. You have every reason to be worried. Even I am worried after seeing her husband's press release," Lucy said and Sonia frowned.

"Her husband?" Sonia asked and turned when Bryan whispered to her.

"You haven't asked her where Mia is," Bryan reminded her. "We were wondering, is Mia still at Tom's place?" Sonia asked curiously.

"I think so. She was at Tom's office earlier, but she has left with Jeff, so I guess they went back to the house," Lucy said and Sonia nodded. .

"Cool. So, what were you saying about Mia's husband? Did something happen?" Sonia asked with interest while Bryan tried not to look too curious as he waited for Sonia to finish the call and tell him what Lucy had said.

They couldn't exactly put the phone on speaker and let the driver hear whatever Lucy was saying. Somethings were meant to be private.

"Uhm, I can't get into it right now," Lucy said when one of her team members knocked on the glass door and walked into her office.

"But maybe you can watch it. It's one of the hot topics online. He basically painted Mia as a crazy lady. He called her bipolar and her dad was there to support his claim," Lucy said and Sonia sighed.

"Alright. I should let you get back to work now," Sonia said before hanging up.

"What did she say?" Bryan asked after the call ended.

He listened as Sonia halfheartedly told him what little Lucy had said while she busied with trying to find the press release on the internet.

Once she found it, she played the video and she and Bryan watched it. As they watched it, fury bubbled up inside Sonia and the weight of the situation settled heavily on her shoulders.

Cutting their honeymoon short had been a difficult decision, but after seeing the video, she knew it had been the right one. Mia needed her friends now more than ever.

Sending her anger, Bryan reached for her hand and squeezed it, "Don't worry. Mia will be okay. We will all make sure of it," he said and Sonia nodded.

Away from there in Tom's house, Jeff and Mia walked into the guest bedroom, and the door clicked shut behind them, leaving a heavy silence in its wake.

Mia set her purse down on the nightstand, and sat on the bed. Jeff, ever the attentive friend, hovered by the door.

"Are you comfortable here, Mia? Were you able to sleep last night?" he asked, his voice laced with concern as he sat on the vanity stool.

He had been dying to ask her how she was doing and if she had slept well- if she had missed him, but he had been unable to do so earlier until now.

Mia forced a smile. "As comfortable as one can be under the circumstances," she replied. "And I managed to get some sleep... eventually. Had to learn to sleep with the sound of my own thoughts again. It took quite a long time before I slept off," Mia confessed.

Jeff's brow furrowed. "Do you want me to spend the night?"

Mia nodded, "Yeah. But not because I'm scared or because I can't go to sleep."

"Why then?" Jeff asked curiously.

"Because I don't know when next I may be able to lie beside you or if I might be able to. So, I want to do so tonight," she said and Jeff's gaze softened as a brief silence settled between them.

"This whole thing... it must be incredibly difficult for you. Coupled with today's revelation," Jeff said after some time.

She nodded, a flicker of despair crossing her face. "But it has to be done. I'm taking back my life."

"I agree. But are you very sure about this plan, Mia?" His voice was laced with concern. "Going back to his house? Will you ever be able to go to sleep at night?"

A steely glint entered her eyes. "Absolutely. I refuse to lose sleep over this bully anymore. I absolutely refuse. This is what he wants. A life where I live in abject fear of him. It won't happen anymore," she said with stubborn determination.

Jeff tilted his head. "And you believe you can win over his loyalists? Get them on your side? Can you trust his people? Can you be sure they will turn on him?"

Mia shook her head. A small, humorless smile played on her lips. "Henry doesn't inspire loyalty, Jeff. He inspires fear. There's a difference. He doesn't have loyalists, just terrified pawns. That's what I plan to use. I will make them see him for the monster he is. I will make them realize it's only a matter of time before he would turn on them if the situation serves him," Mia said and Jeff looked at her skeptically.

"And three months? Isn't that too much time to spend with him?" He asked and her eyes narrowed.

"It could be less," she said, her voice low and dangerous. "But it mustn't be more. Three months is what it might take. He needs to feel secure, let down his guard. Then, and only then, can I make my move."

Jeff remained silent for a moment, his gaze holding a mixture of worry and admiration. "I know I've said this before, but I'm going to ask again just to be sure," he began, his voice gentle, "are you sure you're strong enough for this? This is a dangerous game you're wanting to play, and you can't change your mind once he comes to get you tomorrow," Jeff said and Mia met his gaze, her eyes blazing with a steely resolve.

"Stronger than you think, Jeff. And frankly, I don't have much of a choice, do I? I'm going to do this, Jeff. And I do not intend to change my mind," she said confidently.

"Alright. I'm all in with you then. If we win, we win together. If we lose, we lose together," he said, and Mia held his gaze.

"Are you sure about that?" Mia asked, and Jeff nodded.

"Totally. I'm thinking, do you have male chefs in the house? I could come in as a chef. That way I can keep making sure you are well fed," Jeff said and Mia's lips curved in a smile.

"What is it with you and feeding me?" She asked, and he shrugged.

"I love to know you are feeding well. A healthy diet is important for a healthy body and mind. I want you to always be healthy. Also, you need all the energy you can get right now," he said and she sighed.

"So?" He asked, and she frowned in confusion.

"So what?"

"Do you think I can get a job as a chef?" He asked hopefully.

"I don't know how much things might have changed around there. But Henry is a very cautious person and he is particular about the people that prepare and serve his meal. No random person can work as his chef. But I think it would be nice if you worked as a chef in the house. It would be easier to communicate with you that way," Mia said and Jeff nodded in agreement.

"I thought so too."

"So... will you spend the night?" Mia asked, and before he could respond, a knock sounded on the door and Mia went to open it.

She was delightfully shocked to see Sonia standing there.

Chapter 849 Threesome

"Sonia? What are you doing here when you should be honeymooning?" Mia asked, surprise lacing her voice.

On hearing Sonia's name, Jeff, who had been hovering by the doorway, materialized beside them.

"That is not important right now," Sonia said, her voice firm but laced with a tremor of emotion.

She reached out and pulled Mia into a tight hug, her embrace a silent reassurance in the face of the unexpected turn of events.

"Sonia? Did Bryan come with you? Or did you both have a fight?" Jeff asked, a frown creasing his forehead.

He knew all too well how Sonia and Bryan reacted in times of crisis. When Lucy's scandal had erupted, Sonia hadn't hesitated to break up and leave Bryan in the middle of a crucial photoshoot to fly across the country and be with her friend. Similarly, when Derek's issue had come up and they fought, Bryan had flown down to Ludus alone, leaving Sonia behind at his family home.

Sonia and Mia broke their embrace and Mia shook her head, a hint of a smile tugging at the corner of her lips as they both turned to look at Jeff. "What a question to ask," she said, her voice dry.

Sonia raised an eyebrow, her expression mirroring Mia's amusement. "Did you do something to make us fight?" she countered, her tone playful.

Jeff threw his hands up defensively. "Of course not! I'm just asking because of... well, you know, your history together," he stammered, his cheeks flushing slightly under their combined scrutiny.

Sonia rolled her eyes, a familiar spark of mischief returning to her gaze. "Bryan's waiting in the living room. You can go catch up with him and ask him questions. We will be with you both shortly," she said, her voice firm yet laced with an underlying warmth.

With that, she turned back to Mia, a more serious expression settling on her face. Jeff, sensing the need for space, gave them a quick nod and excused himself to go meet Bryan.

As the door to the room clicked shut behind him, Mia smiled at Sonia.

"How are you?" Sonia asked, her concern evident. Her gaze swept over Mia's face, searching for any sign of strain or fatigue.

Mia returned the smile, feeling a wave of gratitude wash over her. "As you can see, I'm okay," she said, her voice stronger than she had expected it to be. "The question now is, how are you? What are you doing here? Why are you not in Paris?" Mia asked as they both went to sit on the edge of their bed.

"I'm okay. How do you expect me to be there after hearing about your plans? My sister is in danger and I can't focus on anything else," Sonia said and Mia looked at her with eyes filled with warmth and gratitude.

"Really? You cut short your honeymoon for my sake? Was Bryan okay with it?" She asked, and Sonia nodded.

"As a matter of fact, it was his idea. We both just couldn't stay there anymore. Not after hearing all that from you," Sonia said as she took Mia's hand.

Mia took a deep breath and released it slowly. "Thank you, Sony. This means a whole lot to me," she said, and Sonia waved it off.

"I saw the press release. No offense, Mia, but that guy is a bastard. And your dad? I have no words," Sonia said with a shake of her head and Mia smiled.

"Thanks to Harry, today I was able to realize and understand my situation better," Mia said, and Sonia looked at her with interest.

"What are you talking about?" She asked, and Mia told her all they had discussed in Tom's office and how she realized the reason and how Henry had come to marry her.

"Oh, my god!" Sonia said as she rubbed on her arms to get rid of the goosepimples that had risen on her arms as she listened to Mia.

"Yeah. Now I have even more reason to want to break free," Mia said and Sonia squeezed her hand.

"This must not be easy for you," Sonia said and Mia shrugged.

"Thankfully I don't have to do any of it alone. I have you all. Jeff has been so helpful. You won't believe he offered to go with me," Mia said and Sonia raised an eyebrow.

"Really? Is there something there? I mean, between you two," Sonia asked when she remembered what Lucy had said the last time about Jeff and Mia.

Mia smiled, "Honestly? I don't know. He keeps giving me reasons to believe he might be interested in me, but so far he hasn't made any moves or said anything. He only talks about how he cares about me. Do you think someone who only cares about me just as his colleague and housemate would be willing to risk their life to go with me and work as a chef just to make sure I'm safe?" Mia asked and Sonia shook her head.

"I don't think so," Sonia said and Mia nodded.

"Me too."

"Do you like him? Romantically?" Sonia asked and this time Mia grinned.

"If you had asked me this question over a week ago, I would have given you a definite no. But I'm not so sure now. He is so handsome, especially with his beards down. And he is cute in a lot of ways. You won't believe that he has been sleeping in my bedroom because I told him I have difficulty sleeping at night," Mia said and Sonia's eyes widened.

"Your bedroom? Are you both doing it?" Sonia asked in a whisper and Mia laughed softly.

"I said in my bedroom, not on my bed. Well, that was until two nights ago when I invited him to sleep on my bed," Mia said and laughed again when Sonia looked completely surprised.

"You invited him into your bed?" Sonia asked, surprised and amused that Mia had the time for all of these despite what was going on with her.

"Yeah. I did. Don't look so surprised. It was nothing sexual. There was nothing sexual either. We only cuddled," Mia said and Sonia shook her head.

"I guess you like him. I didn't see that coming. You and Jeff?" Sonia said with a shake of her head.

"Well, maybe there is nothing to see coming. Like I said, he didn't say anything about being interested in me. His actions make me think so, but he hasn't said anything of the like," Mia said and Sonia sighed.

"I'm sort of surprised there is still time for romance in your life considering everything," Sonia said and Mia smiled.

"I'm even more surprised I'm even thinking of it right now. But I'm happy I am. It tells me how much I've changed, and it makes me look forward to more coming changes," she said and Sonia nodded.

"I guess that's a good thing. Let's go see Bryan. He is waiting to see you," Sonia said and they both rose and headed for the door.

"I didn't know you would both be coming back so soon. I asked the housekeeper to resume on Monday," Mia said and Sonia waved it off.

"It's fine. We plan to stay here until he comes to get you. We can as well stay until Monday before we leave. When do you think he might get here?" Sonia asked as she led Mia to the dining where Bryan was waiting, since Samantha was preparing a late lunch for them.

"It depends on when he left there. He should get here by Friday morning," Mia said and Sonia smiled.

"I'm glad I still have all of tonight and tomorrow to be with you," Sonia said and Mia shook her head.

"No. You might have left Paris, but it's still your honeymoon. Don't be with me. Be with Bryan. I assure you that okay and I have everything in control," Mia said and Sonia rolled her eyes.

"Bryan and I will be with you together," Sonia said and Mia shook her head.

"I don't do threesomes," she said and Sonia giggled.

"For real? You don't?"

"Eww, Sony. You should have simply said you didn't mean a threesome. Why ask me that and make it seem like you want one?" Mia asked and Sonia giggled.

"I've fantasized about the idea of having a threesome. But not with another girl. I prefer two guys. Bryan and some other hunk. But Bryan is going to murder me now if I dare to mention it to him," she said and Mia laughed.

"Why not another lady? Why two guys?" Mia asked and Sonia shook her head.

"I want to be the center of attention. I don't want to have to pleasure any lady. And I don't want her looking at my man in any way," Sonia said and Mia shook her head.

"I thought you'd be normal by now but you're still very crazy," Mia said in amusement.

"Totally crazy, I assure you," she said as they arrived at the dining where Bryan and Jeff were seated while their meal was being served.

"I was going to come get you after it was served," Bryan said with a small smile as he looked at Sonia, and then his gaze shifted to Mia and he rose from his seat and held out his arms to her.

"That's awkward, Bryan. Nah. No hugs. Nah. I don't hug my bosses," Mia said with a shake of her head and Sonia who was standing behind her pushed her forward into Bryan's arms while Jeff chuckled.

Bryan said nothing for a moment as he simply embraced her and then when he pulled away he looked into her face, "I'm sorry you had to go through all of that, had to hide your identity for so long because you were scared of being exposed. I'm also sorry that our wedding exposed you," he said and she shook her head.

"You don't have to apologize for that. It was bound to happen sooner or later. I'm sure Jeff has brought you up to speed with what's happening now," Mia said as she went to sit on one of the dining seats beside Jeff but opposite Bryan.

"Yes. He did. And he also told me I'm managerless and assistantless right now," Bryan said and Mia winced.

"I'm sorry..."

"Nah. Don't be. I'm glad he will be there with you. It makes me feel at ease. We can know how you're doing by communicating with him," Bryan said and Sonia nodded in agreement.

"I'm not sure we can find a replacement in such short notice. And..."

"We were talking about that already. Since Jeff can't go over immediately. He will take at least a week to tidy up his end. He can organize everything for a smooth and easy handover to my next assistant. Since the arrangement is only for three months, I will get a temporary manager and assistant so that you can return to your positions if you still want to after this is all over," Bryan said and they both smiled in gratitude.

"That's fine. We can spend the night doing just that," Mia suggested and Jeff nodded while Sonia narrowed her eyes as she looked from Mia to Jeff and then back again.

"We can help too," Sonia offered and they all shook their heads.

"You can't. You need to rest. As a matter of fact, you're going in to do just that after we eat," Bryan said firmly and Sonia rolled her eyes.

"Yeah. You don't have to worry. We can handle everything," Jeff assured her.

"Yes. We will handle things ourselves. You both need to get some rest after your long flight," Mia suggested.

"Alright. Let's dig in now before the meal gets cold and Samantha's effort goes to waste. We can continue in the morning," Bryan said and with that they turned their attention to their meal.

As they ate, Jeff and Mia asked them about Paris and Sonia excitedly filled them in on all the beautiful places they had visited and showed them pictures.

After they were done eating, Bryan took Sonia to their bedroom upstairs, while Mia and Jeff returned to the guestroom downstairs.

Chapter 850 What Is Stopping Us?

As Mia and Jeff went through Mia's laptop, revising Bryan's current contracts and bookings that were lined up for him after his honeymoon, Mia kept stealing glances at Jeff.

His brow furrowed in concentration as he scrolled through an email, his jaw clenched as he meticulously reviewed a clause in a new contract.

The muscles on his forearm flexed with each click on the keyboard. He looked incredibly handsome even with the weight of responsibility etched on his face. He looked so dependable. So... safe. Words she had never really associated with a man before.

A wave of unfamiliar warmth washed over her, laced with a sharp undercurrent of longing.

Should she ask him? Should she just blurt it out and get it over with? Did he feel something for her, or was he really just doing all of this because it was the kind of person he was?

Was it just the stress of going back with Henry clouding her judgment or was there a genuine spark between them? She stole another glance, and saw Jeff staring at her.

A blush crept up her cheeks as their eyes met and he arched an eyebrow in question. She quickly averted her gaze, pretending to be engrossed in an email herself.

Jeff tilted his head, his eyes searching her face, "Everything alright, Mia?" he asked, his voice gentle.

"Yeah, everything's fine," she mumbled, forcing a smile.

Jeff frowned slightly, "Alright. If you say so," Jeff said simply, his voice devoid of judgment.

Mia bristled internally. She almost hated how easily he conceded. Did he just let that go so easily? Didn't he want to press her, to know what was swirling in her head?

Part of her wanted him to press her, to pry until she revealed the tangled mess of emotions swirling inside her.

They worked in silence for a few more minutes, the only sounds the rhythmic click of the keyboard and their own shallow breaths. Finally, Mia couldn't hold it in any longer.

Frustration bubbled up inside her. "Why aren't you pushing me, Jeff?" she blurted out before she could stop herself.

Jeff looked up again, a hint of amusement dancing in his eyes as he met her gaze. "Push you? What do you mean?" He asked even though he knew what she meant.

"When I said there wasn't anything on my mind," Mia clarified, sounding slightly annoyed. "Why didn't you try to find out what it was?"

He raised an eyebrow, "Since when did I become your interrogator? One moment you say you don't want me making you do things or controlling you, and now you want me to pressure you into talking when you don't want to?"

"I don't know," she admitted, her voice barely a whisper. "Maybe I just expect you to be more curious. How can you agree just like that? I practically had a neon sign flashing over my head saying 'ask me!' Don't you want to know what I'm thinking?"

His smile softened. "I do." he agreed, his gaze holding hers.

"So, why not ask until I am forced to say it?" She asked and he shook his head.

"Look, Mia," Jeff said, his voice laced with amusement, "We are both adults. If something is on your mind that you want me to know, you can simply say it without expecting me to pressure you into talking. I won't play such games with you. If you want to speak, go on. If not, let's keep working," Jeff said firmly.

Mia took a deep breath, her heart pounding in her chest. This was it. Now or never. She met his gaze squarely. "Uhm. Alright," she said, and then cleared her throat, while Jeff kept his gaze on her.

"Go on."

"If I asked you to..." she began, then trailed off, her voice barely above a whisper. "Would you...?"

Jeff leaned closer, his gaze intense. "Would I what?"

"Uhm, would you..." She hesitated, her cheeks flushing crimson. Taking a deep breath, she blurted out, "would you have sex with me, Jeff?"

The question hung heavy in the air, and for a moment, the only sound was the soft hum of the laptop fan.

A shadow crossed his face, a flicker of something she couldn't decipher. "Today?" He asked, and she nodded.

"No," he said, his voice gentle and firm, "I wouldn't."

Rejection, swift and sharp, sent a wave of sadness crashing over her. He didn't want her. It was that simple. Mia's heart sank and disappointment washed over her, sharp and searing.

She forced a smile, trying to mask the hurt, "Oh, okay. No worries," she said and looked away from him so she could blink away the tears of shame and disappointment that now stung her eyes.

Sensing her dejection, Jeff watched her for a moment without saying a word, and then he sighed, "Mia..."

"It's fine. You don't have to say anything. I mean, I understand. It's understandable that you don't want me that way. I'm sorry for making assumptions. I just thought maybe there was something. But I should have known better. Why would you be interested in someone like me? I have a lot of baggage and then I have those ugly scars and..."

"Shut up, Mia. You're babbling," Jeff said quietly and he reached out and took her hand.

Mia tried to pull her hand away, but he held her firmly, "I didn't say I did not want you. I said I wouldn't have sex with you if you asked me to today."

Mia looked at him then, "What about tomorrow?"

He shook his head again, "I wouldn't," he said and she scowled at him as she snatched her hand from his grip.

"So, what's the difference? I'm not your type, am I?" She asked and this time Jeff smiled.

"Honestly? I didn't even know I had a type until I got close to you," he said and she frowned.

"What do you mean?" Mia asked in confusion.

"Is that what you really want, Mia?" he asked, his voice gentle. "You want me to sleep with you?"

"You didn't answer my question. What did you mean? Am I your type or not?" Mia asked without answering his question.

"Do you want to have sex with me or do you want to know how I feel about you?" Jeff asked and Mia shrugged.

"Both. But I can't do one without knowing about the other. So, tell me what you meant," Mia said and Jeff held her gaze.

"I didn't have a type in mind until I realized I had a thing for you. It means you are very much my type or rather the prototype of my types. Beautiful, bold, strong, intelligent, funny, kind, playful, honest," he shrugged.

"Don't flatter me. I'm not all that," she said as she turned away from him, her cheeks burning.

Jeff smiled, "Yes, you are. You are all of that and more. So, tell me. Do you really want to have sex with me?"

Mia bit her lip, unsure of how to respond. Part of her wanted to run, to hide from the sudden rawness of her emotions. But another part, a stronger part, forced her to be honest.

"Yes," she admitted, her voice barely a whisper. "A part of me does."

"Why?" Jeff asked, his voice soft and devoid of judgment. "Why do you want this, Mia?"

She met his gaze again, the truth spilling from her lips before she could stop herself. "I... I just want to hold onto the memory," she confessed. "The memory of feeling... wanted. Of not being alone in the coming weeks."

His eyes softened, a hint of understanding flickering in their depths. "Is that all?" he asked gently. "Is this just about the situation, or... is there something more? Do you like me, Mia?"

Hesitantly, she met his gaze. "I... I think so," she whispered. "I think I like you, Jeff. A lot."

She hesitated, then nodded slowly. "I think so. I think I like you, Jeff. These past few days... with everything that's happened, you've been a rock. A constant source of support, of... of something more."

"So, it could be just gratitude. Maybe you're mixing it up..."

"No. That's not it. I know it's not just gratitude. Maybe it's because you look so damned fine after getting your makeover. Or maybe I'm just horny because I haven't had sex in longer than I care to remember. But I really think I like you. I mean, even being horny, I don't want to do it with just anyone. It's you I want. Alright. I think I'm rambling again. I'm going to shut up now," she said and pressed her lips together.

A slow smile spread across Jeff's face, and his dimples winked at her. "Then take your time, Mia. Figure out what it is you feel and want. When you are sure, let me know. And then, maybe, we can talk about this again." He said as he squeezed her hand gently.

"Talk again? Not even doing it? But talking? What's there to talk about? Don't you feel sexually attracted to me?" Mia asked and Jeff frowned.

"Of course I do. I just told you that you're my type. How can you still ask that?" Jeff asked in disbelief.

"Then what is stopping you? What is stopping us from doing it now? Time is not on our side. In a day or two from now, Henry will be here. I don't want to have any regrets," She said and Jeff sighed as he took both her hands this time.

"I'm positive that time is on my side. Time isn't going anywhere, Mia, we are. I'm not going to touch you or do anything until you are a fully divorced lady. Henry might not deserve you, but you are still married to him and bound to him by law. I don't want any allegation he might have against you to have any element of truth in it. So, no matter how much I want you, I won't let you commit adultery. Not with me," Jeff said softly.

"Is that the reason you said you won't have sex with me?" Mia asked, and he nodded.

A flicker of hope sparked within her. His words weren't a rejection. Maybe there was a chance. Maybe this wasn't the end. Squeezing his hand back, she offered him a tentative smile. "Alright, Jeff. Thank you."

"You are welcome. So, can you stop ogling me now and focus on what we have to do?" Jeff asked and Mia rolled her eyes.

"Not yet. When did you realize you liked me?" Mia asked curiously.

"Why do you ask?" Jeff asked and she shrugged.

"I'm just curious. You never gave me any reason to feel uncomfortable around you," she said and Jeff shrugged.

"When I thought you were pregnant," he said and her eyes widened in disbelief.

"What?" She asked, not expecting that.

"I always thought you were weird. I just didn't realize I liked you. But when I thought you were pregnant, I felt sort of saddened by the thought," he admitted.

"You were sad yet you cooked up a storm the next morning?" She asked in disbelief.

"Well, if you are pregnant you need food. I couldn't be mad at you for being pregnant when I didn't even know I was interested in you," Jeff said reasonably.

"Was that the reason you kept talking without meeting my gaze that morning?" Mia asked in amusement.

Jeff shrugged without saying anything and pretended to be busy on the laptop. Not having it, Mia shut the laptop, "Does that mean you meant it when you said you were interested in me last week? She asked, and he raised an eyebrow.

"What do you think?"

"Why then did you deny... oh! Because I said you were making me uncomfortable you said you weren't interested in me romantically," Mia said and Jeff met her gaze.

"And now you're the one making me uncomfortable with your ogling," he said and Mia grinned.

"Who would have thought the table would turn in such a short time?" She asked and he angled his head.

"I told you time is on my side. You're proof of it," he said with a wink.