

Wild Night 911

Chapter 911 No Slipups

Harry stood in front of his bedroom mirror, the events of the day playing out in his mind as he unbuttoned his shirt slowly, preparing for bed.

He sighed deeply as he thought about Jade's distant attitude towards him and he told himself that he deserved that for hurting her feelings.

As Harry slipped into a comfortable pair of pajamas, he heard his phone vibrate on the nightstand and walked over to pick it up.

Seeing Candace's name flashing on the screen. His heart skipped a beat as he realized that he hadn't returned her call since she last reached out.

He answered the call, his voice tinged with guilt. "Hey. I'm sorry I haven't gotten back to you."

Candace's voice was warm but concerned. "It's fine. I heard what happened from dad. Have you been able to resolve things with her now?"

Harry sat down on the edge of his bed, rubbing his temple. "Yeah. We talked things over," he said in a tired voice.

"Are you okay?" Candace asked, her brows pulled together in concern.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Just... a lot on my mind. How's dad, Andy and Jamal?" Harry asked, wanting to change the subject.

"Everyone is okay. Andy wants to speak with you," Candace said, and Harry heard a shuffling sound on the other end of the line, followed by Andy's cheerful voice.

"Hey, Harry! How are you doing?"

"I'm alright. It's been a while. How are you doing?" Harry asked, happy to hear from them both.

"I'm alright. Thought I should let you know I'm coming to Ludus within the week," Andy said and Harry straightened up, curiosity piqued.

"What for?"

"Two reasons. First, I want to be more proactive in my search for Cassidy. And secondly I also want to discuss my career plans with you," Andy explained.

"Why are you coming to Ludus to search for him?" Harry asked with interest.

"I remembered he told me something some time ago. He owns club S & G, and since I can't go to the club here in Sogal, I figured I visit the one in Ludus," she explained.

"I see. Are you coming to the house?" Harry asked thoughtfully.

"No, I'll be staying at my own place. Who knows? He might show up if he knows I'm there. But I'll definitely drop by your office for us to talk," she replied.

Harry nodded, even though she couldn't see him. "That's fine by me. Just let me know when you arrive."

"I guess Jamal has gone to bed?" he asked, genuinely interested in his nephew's well-being.

Candace's voice came back on the line, cheerful. "Yes, he has. By the way, did Dad tell you about his woman friend?"

"He only mentioned it in passing. He refused to give me details. Why? Do you know who she is?" Harry asked excitedly.

Candace laughed. "I don't. But you should see him! He always runs off to his room whenever she calls to talk to her in private. It's hilarious."

Harry chuckled, picturing his father acting like a smitten teenager. "He must like her a lot," Harry said, feeling a warmth spread through him.

"Yeah. I think so. He's so happy these days and there's an extra spring to his steps," Andy supplied from the side.

Harry grinned, glad to hear that their father was finding happiness. "I'm happy to know he's fine."

"I was so worried about him going to Ludus, but seeing how happy he is now, I'm so glad he did," Candace admitted.

Harry leaned back against the headboard, a small smile playing on his lips. "I'm glad too."

As they continued talking, Harry's phone buzzed with an incoming call notification. He glanced at the screen and saw Tom's name.

"Hey, I have an incoming call and I need to take it. It's Tom."

"Alright, take care, Harry," Candace said, her voice full of warmth and concern.

"I will call you when I leave for Ludus," Andy added before they hung up.

"What's up?" Harry asked the moment he received Tom's call.

Tom's voice was urgent. "I just got off the phone with Jeff. Henry is making his move now. You need to reach out to Mia's parents at once. Barry has sent the files to them."

Harry felt a knot tighten in his stomach. "That was quick," Harry said, since they had not expected Henry to make his move so soon.

"Have you reached out to Diana yet?" Harry asked as he got off the bed.

"I plan to do that immediately we hang up," Tom said and Harry's mind raced as he absorbed the information.

"Okay, I'll call them right away and get back to you," Harry said before hanging up.

After ending the call, Harry took a deep breath, the weight of the conversation he was about to have with Mia's parents heavy on his shoulders.

He knew they had to handle the situation delicately, for Mia's sake. Taking a deep breath, he dialed Barry's number so he would connect him to Mia's parents.

Harry walked over to the living room as he waited for Barry to connect the call, and after a few rings, a gruff voice answered.

"Hello?" Vanessa's father sounded wary.

"Hello, Mr. Lawson. Did you receive the package we sent you?" Harry's voice was steady, masking the tension he felt.

"Who is this?" the voice demanded, laced with a hint of suspicion.

"That's not important," Harry said, his voice steady. "Did you receive the package?"

Silence hung heavy in the air for a beat too long. Harry could practically hear the man's confusion churning on the other side.

"Package? What package?" the man finally asked, a frown etched into his voice.

Frustration bubbled up in Harry's chest, threatening to boil over. "The file," he clarified, forcing his voice low. "The evidence of how your supposed son-in-law ruined your company."

There was a scoff on the other end. "Henry? Nonsense! That boy saved my company. He's been a godsend."

Harry's jaw clenched. The man's obliviousness was infuriating. "Take a closer look at those files," he pressed, his voice tight. "You'll find everything you need to know. Henry, was behind the collapse of your company. He orchestrated the whole thing."

"That's impossible," Mr. Lawson replied, his tone sharp with disbelief. "Henry was my savior. He helped us when we were at our lowest."

Harry took a deep breath, trying to calm himself, "He isn't the savior you think he is. Have you taken a look at the documents attached to the file? Please..."

"Who are you, and why are you telling me this?" the man cut in, suspicion hardening into anger.

"Who I am doesn't matter," Harry said, his voice firm. "What matters is that you understand the danger your daughter is in. Henry is not the man you believe him to be. You need to be worried about Vanessa, whom you've left with a crazy man."

A heavy silence descended Harry paused, letting the silence amplify the gravity of his next words. "Tell me," Harry continued, his voice gravelly, "how did Vanessa meet Henry? And why did he marry her? Ask her. Ask her to show you the scars on her back. Then, you might just understand the price your daughter is paying for your misplaced trust and obsession with money."

"I... I don't understand," the man stammered. "This can't be true. Did Vanessa put you up to this?"

Urgency laced Harry's voice as he spoke again, "If you love your daughter and do not want to lose her for real this time, I suggest you do not tell Henry any of this. And most importantly, you should call him now and go over to pay them a visit. Do not waste time..."

"Wait," the man sputtered, panic lacing his voice. "Who are you doing this for? And what do you want? Is Vanessa really in danger?" His breath hitched. "What do you want me to do?"

"Call Henry. Tell him you're coming over to see your daughter. But do not, under any circumstances, reveal anything to Henry yet. Bid your time, and you will see Henry for who and what he really is," Harry warned.

"Alright," he agreed, his voice filled with a mix of determination and confusion.

Harry knew the seed of doubt was firmly planted. He ended the call with a curt, "Think about your daughter, and act wise and fast."

Harry sat back on the couch, exhaling deeply. He hoped Vanessa's father would heed his warning. The stakes were high, and Mia's safety depended on it.

On the other end of the call, Mia's father sat in his study, the phone still pressed to his ear even after the line had gone dead.

His mind raced with the implications of what he had just heard. Although he still wasn't entirely convinced that Henry was the monster that had just been painted, he quickly dialed Henry's number, his heart pounding in his chest.

"Good morning, Henry. My wife and I are coming over to see Vanessa," he said, thinking that there was no harm in taking necessary precaution.

He would take a closer look at the files later, but for now, he needed to act just in case the caller had been right and Henry had plans of hurting Vanessa for real.

Henry's voice was smooth, as always. "Of course, Robert. Is everything alright?"

"We just want to see our daughter. We haven't spent time with her since her return," he replied, trying to sound natural.

Henry hesitated for a moment. "Very well."

As Henry ended the call, he turned to Mia, who was sitting beside him in the car, her eyes reflecting a mixture of confusion and apprehension.

"What's going on?" Mia asked, her voice trembling.

"Your parents are coming over. We need to go back home," Henry said, his tone firm. "And don't mention the divorce to them, understand?"

Mia nodded, wondering what was going on and if perhaps Tom and Harry had a hand in this change of plans.

As they turned the car around, Henry's mind raced. He needed to be careful. The sudden visit from Robert and his wife was unexpected, and he couldn't afford any slip-ups.

He was glad that they had called before visiting, else everything would have been a mess had they gone to the house first and met Diana.

He didn't want either her parents or Diana to know what he planned to do to Vanessa.

Back at the mansion, Diana paced around her bedroom, wondering what Henry was up to and hoping Mia would be safe.

As she paced, her phone rang and she received the call immediately she recognized the untraceable number.

"I think I made a mistake. I asked Henry to divorce his wife and he made her sign the papers today. But I think he is up to something. He just left with his wife and I don't think she's safe," she rambled the moment she received the call.

"I'm aware," Tom said simply, "Don't worry, he's going to bring her back soon."

"You know so? How? How do you know he will be bringing her back soon?" Diana asked curiously.

"That isn't important right now. For now, when he gets back with his wife, her parents are going to visit, mention the divorce in their presence and have her leave with them. That way she will be safe," Tom said, and Diana nodded.

"Her parents are coming over?" She asked with interest.

"Yes. If you want to keep her safe do that. I'm going to deliver Henry to you on a platter soon to do with him as you please," Tom promised before hanging up.

Chapter 912 I'm Done With You

The front gates of the sprawling estate swung open, and Mia's parents' car rolled up the driveway, gravel crunching under the tires.

The mansion loomed ahead, its pristine façade belying the turmoil within. As they parked, Maria glanced at her husband, anxiety etched on her face.

"Do you think she's alright?" she asked, her voice trembling.

Robert had told her all about his phone call with an unknown person, and Maria had told her husband that she believed every word of it, since Vanessa had complained to them in the first year of her marriage that he was hitting her, but they had told her to endure and he would change.

She had also pointed out that if Henry could accuse Vanessa of being insane and made him say his own daughter was crazy on television, then she believed there was no end to his cruelty.

"We'll find out soon enough," Robert replied, his jaw set. They stepped out of the car, each with a mixture of hope and dread.

Diana, who had been expecting them since Tom's call, greeted them at the door with a polite smile, masking her curiosity. "You're welcome. Please, come in."

Diana led them to the sitting room, "Please, make yourselves comfortable," Diana said and as she turned to leave, Maria stopped her.

"Please, can you get Vanessa for us?" She asked with a polite smile.

"Vanessa? I thought you knew, she left the house with Mr Rosewood a while ago. He said he was dropping her off at your home since they are getting a divorce," Diana said and Robert and Maria exchanged a glance, both feeling a sense of unease.

Having said that, Diana disappeared into the kitchen, where Margaret and Jeff were busy preparing for lunch.

"Margaret, could you prepare some refreshments for the Lawsons in the sitting room?" Diana asked.

Margaret, wiping her hands on a towel, looked up with a nod. "Of course. What would you like me to serve?"

"Some tea and light snacks will be fine," Diana replied. "And Josh, would you mind assisting Margaret with the tray?"

Jeff had been curious ever since Mika informed them that Mia's parents had arrived. "Sure, I'll help," he said, eager to see what was happening.

Together, they prepared a tray with a teapot, cups, and an assortment of finger sandwiches and pastries. As they entered the sitting room, Robert and Maria looked up, their faces reflecting their inner turmoil.

"Tea and some snacks. Please, help yourselves." Diana said, as they set the tray down on the coffee table.

Neither of Mia's parents were interested in the refreshments, so they stayed put as they waited patiently for Henry to return with their daughter.

Just as they began lose their patience, the front door opened. Henry and Mia walked in, while Mia's expression was tensed, Henry's face tightened with irritation.

"Mom? Dad? What are you doing here?" Mia asked as her parents rose from their seat and her mother rushed to her side.

Diana, feigning surprise, stepped forward. "I'm curious about the same thing. Why are Vanessa's parents here, Henry? I thought you were dropping her off at their house. Did you change your mind about the divorce? Or did they come here to ask you to change your mind? You promised me, Henry."

Maria and Robert's heads snapped towards Diana, their expressions a mix of shock and confusion. "Divorce? Who's getting divorced?" Maria demanded, looking from Diana to Henry and Mia.

Mia lowered her head, unable to meet her parents' gaze. Henry shot Diana a disapproving look. "Diana, this is not your concern. Please, excuse us."

As Diana left, she muttered under her breath, "I hope you take your daughter with you. I have no intention to keep sharing Henry with her."

Maria and Robert turned to Henry, their faces full of questions. "What is going on here?" Robert asked, his voice stern. "We want an explanation."

Henry forced a smile, trying to regain control of the situation. "It's just a misunderstanding. There's no need to worry."

Robert's eyes narrowed. "We want to hear from our daughter. What is happening, Vanessa?" He asked, surprising Mia, who couldn't believe her father had just asked her opinion.

Mia remained silent, her eyes fixed on the floor as she made a show of trembling so that both Henry and her parents will believe she was terrified.

Her mother reached out, taking her hand. "Vanessa, come with me, let's talk in private while your father speaks with Henry."

Henry stepped forward, his smile fading. "There's no need for that. Everything is fine and we can all talk here."

"You both should go inside while I have a word with Henry," Robert said, his voice firm.

As Mia made to leave with her mother, Henry grabbed her hand and his grip on her tightened as he smiled at her, warning her with his eyes not to defy him.

Mia gave him a nod and followed her mother inside to her bedroom. Her mother glanced at the cameras mounted on different corners of the ceiling. "I trust there are no cameras in the bathroom. Let's go into the bathroom," she whispered.

Mia followed her mother into the bathroom, her heart pounding as she wondered what was going on and why her parents were acting so out of character and drying Henry.

Inside the bathroom, Maria turned to her daughter, her eyes filled with concern. "I want to see your back. Show me your back."

Mia's eyes widened in surprise. "Why do you want to see my back?"

"Just show me. Please," her mother insisted, her voice trembling with emotion.

Reluctantly, Mia turned around and lifted her shirt, revealing the scars that marred her skin. Margaret let out a horrified gasp, tears streaming down her face.

"Oh, Vanessa, why didn't you tell us?" She asked, and Mia turned to face her mother, her eyes gleaming with anger.

"Why didn't I tell you? What did you do when I told you he hit me? What did you do when I told you he whipped my back until I bled and miscarried my baby? What would you have done?" She asked harshly.

Maria shook her head, her sobs growing louder. "We had no idea it got this bad. When you stopped coming to complain I assumed it was because he stopped. How did this happen? How did you meet Henry? Why did he marry you?"

"Why are you asking me that when you know very well..."

"The real reason, Vanessa. We need to know the real reason why he wanted to marry you," her mother cut in.

Mia hesitated, realizing that her parents might have been reached by Tom and Harry, hence the change in their behavior. She wondered what they must have told them.

Mia went on to tell her mom how she had met Henry and why Henry had married her and was treating her that way.

As she spoke, her mother pulled her into a tight embrace. "I'm so sorry, Vanessa. We had no idea. We should have been there for you. We should have seen the signs. I should have been a better mother." her mother wept.

As much as Mia appreciated this, she didn't have it in her to comfort her mother not when she still had a lot of resentment towards her parents.

Maria wiped her tears, her resolve hardening. "Is it true that Henry wants a divorce?"

Mia nodded. "Yes. He had me sign the papers this morning. His mistress, Diana, is pregnant," Mia revealed even though she knew Diana's pregnancy wasn't real.

Maria's eyes widened in shock. "That... that monster."

Mia nodded, her voice shaking. "He took me out saying he was going to drop me off at the house but when he got a call from Dad, he brought me back. I have no idea what he is up to."

Maria took her daughter's hand, her eyes blazing with determination. "We've had enough. You're coming home with us."

"Mom, no. I don't think..."

"Come with me," her mother cut her off, taking her hand and leading her away.

They left the bathroom and rejoined Robert and Henry in the living room. Maria stood tall, her voice firm as she faced both her husband and Henry. "Vanessa is coming home with us."

Henry's eyes narrowed as he rose. "You can't take her with you. She's my wife."

Robert rose and stepped in front of his wife and daughter, "Not anymore. Vanessa is coming home with us, and you have no say in the matter," Robert said, his voice cold.

Seeing her parents being unusually brave, Mia felt a surge of courage. "You were going to drop me off at home, weren't you? I want to leave with my parents. I've signed the divorce papers, so there is no reason for me to remain here."

"SHUT IT!" Henry roared at her, causing Margaret who was eavesdropping with Mika and Jeff to flinch.

"You both should go to the car," Robert said to his wife and daughter.

Now that he was seeing Henry's true color, he had no doubt that all that he had been told about him was true. He was going to look deeper into the file he received, and God help Henry if he found out that he had a hand in the fall of his company.

Henry's face twisted with rage as Vanessa headed for the door with her mother. "If you take her, I'll cut you off. My company will no longer do business with yours and I'm sure you know what that means."

Robert met his gaze, unflinching. "Do as you wish. I won't sacrifice my daughter's happiness for business anymore."

Henry's fury erupted. "Vanessa come back here!" He ordered, and she stopped and met his gaze.

"No, Henry. I'm done with you. Last time I faked my death to leave, but this time I'm walking out through the door." With that, she turned and walked out of the house, her parents following close behind.

Seeing how his plan had been ruined, Henry's rage boiled over, and he began to destroy everything in the living room, throwing vases and overturning furniture.

Diana, hearing the commotion, stepped out of her room. "Henry, stop!" she cried, trying to calm him down.

Henry turned on her, his eyes wild. "This is all your fault!" He roared as he stepped towards her.

Seeing how furious he was, Diana ran back into the bedroom for shelter, locking the door behind her, and deciding to wait for his rage to pass.

As she shut the door behind her, she laughed silently, happy to see Henry feeling so frustrated.

Diana wasn't the only one who was happy. Jeff had a smirk on his face too as he stepped out of the house and went outside to go watch Mia leave with her parents.

Jeff had no idea what Tom and Harry had done, but he felt glad that Mia had such capable people like them in her corner, and he was glad that he had trusted them and stayed out.

Most importantly, he was proud of Mia for standing up for herself the way she had done. He looked forward to how they were going to wrap up this whole thing.

Outside, Mia climbed into the car with her parents, feeling a mixture of relief and fear. Relief because she was leaving Henry's house, and fear because she was leaving Jeff behind.

As they drove away, she looked back at the house and saw Jeff standing there and watching them leave.

Her mother took her hand. "We'll get through this, sweetheart. I promise."

"Don't worry about him. We won't let him lay his hands on you ever again, and I will make him pay for all he has done," her father promised too.

Vanessa nodded, not because she had any trust in them or believed that this was the end of her encounter with Henry, but because she trusted Tom and Harry. She knew that this was far from over, but for now, she wasn't under his roof, and that was all that mattered most to her.

Chapter 913 Your Attitude

Jade woke up to shrill cry of her alarm clock on Monday morning, yet, instead of the usual groggy resistance, a jolt of pure excitement ripped her from sleep. Today was the day.

She stretched leisurely, savoring the moment before swinging her legs over the side of the bed and standing up.

Today wasn't just any Monday; it was her first day at I-Global, and she couldn't wait to get back to the office after such a long hiatus.

Today was going to be the start of something new, and she was ready to meet her new colleagues and dive into her work with fresh energy. The thought of a fresh start, new faces, and the exhilarating challenge of proving herself had her practically vibrating with energy.

Her heart raced with excitement as she walked over to her wardrobe, running her fingers over the array of clothes hanging neatly.

Today required something special, something that made a statement. Her hand paused on a navy blue pant-suit, stylishly tailored to fit her perfectly. She pulled it out, admiring the sleek lines and the way it exuded confidence and professionalism.

Not wanting to dwell on anything else but work, Jade quickly went in to freshen up so she would be ready to leave for the office with Tom and Lucy.

She knew that going back to work would help her all around. She was her most confident when it involved her job, and right now, she needed all the confidence boost in the world.

As she slipped into the suit, she felt a surge of determination. She wasn't going to hide under her brothers' shadows. She was Jade Hank, after all.

She was going to make a name for herself here in the exact same way she had succeeded in Varis and made a name for herself there.

After a quick glance in the mirror to ensure everything was in place, Jade grabbed her bag and headed out of her bedroom.

The smell of freshly brewed coffee wafted through the air as she went down the stairs, and she followed it to the kitchen where she found Tom and Lucy, both equally ready for work.

"Wow, Jade," Tom whistled, a playful grin spreading across his face. "You look sharp!"

Lucy, ever the fashionista, appraised her outfit with a discerning eye. "Love the suit! It looks perfect on you. Classic yet stylish. Perfect first impression material."

Jade smiled, twirling a bit to showcase the elegant fabric. "Thanks, guys. I thought I'd make a good impression on my first day. No need to worry, I won't let you down on the fashion front."

Tom chuckled, setting down his coffee mug. "So, are you taking your own car to work today, or do you want to join us?"

Jade raised an eyebrow and tilted her head, amusement sparkling in her eyes. "Why would I take a different car? We're all headed to the same place, right?" She asked as she poured herself some coffee.

Lucy, ever perceptive, picked up on the unspoken worry. "Just thought maybe... In case you feel uncomfortable..."

"Why would I feel uncomfortable?" Jade asked, completely lost now.

"You know, first day and all, some people might get the wrong idea if you showed up with the CEO or think you got the job just because you're the CEO's sister." Lucy explained, her tone gentle but concerned.

Jade laughed, a light, carefree sound. "Even the chief judge here in Ludus admitted that I have an impressive record. Do you know what that means? I've worked hard, Lu, harder than most who are older than me. I've taken on risky and life threatening cases. I proved myself. I'm here because I want to be here, and anyone who thinks otherwise is a fool, and honestly, I have nothing to prove to a fool. And if they're so bothered about it, they should go get a job at their own brother's company," she said, mixing in the cream and sugar into her coffee.

Tom chuckled, clearly pleased with her confidence. Here was the fiery, independent Jade he knew and loved, back and ready to take on the world. Tom beamed with pride at his sister's confidence.

Lucy, too, couldn't help but admire Jade's confidence, her own worries easing. "Well said, Jade."

"Thanks. So? Aren't we having breakfast before we leave?" Jade asked when she noticed that Tom was merely drinking from a mug of coffee while Lucy was having a glass of juice.

"Adolf usually delivers our breakfast to the office," Lucy explained.

"Should I have him deliver yours as well?" Samantha who had been silent the whole time asked.

"No. I'd rather eat in the car. It's my first day at work. As much as I don't care what they think, I don't want to give anyone the wrong impression," Jade said as she drank from her coffee.

"Alright," Samantha said as she quickly helped Jade pack her breakfast.

Once they finished their coffee, they headed to the car. Tom took the wheel, Lucy sat in the passenger seat, and Jade settled in the back, ready to eat her toasts and egg as they drove to the office.

As Jade ate, she gazed out the window, admiring the city that was bathed in the warm morning sun.

Tom broke the silence in the car. "So, Jade, I heard you want to move out. Is that true?"

Jade nodded, her gaze shifting from the window to her brother as she tried to swallow the morsel of food in her mouth. "Yes, it is. I think it's time for a change."

Lucy turned in her seat, a hint of concern in her eyes. "Would you like to move into my apartment? I mean, it's vacant now and you wouldn't have to worry about the logistics."

Jade shook her head, a reassuring smile on her face. "Thanks, Lucy, but I don't need your help. I want my own place and I want to do this on my own," she explained, and Lucy nodded, understanding perfectly what Jade meant.

"Do you need me to ask the director in charge of our real estates to find you a place?" Tom offered.

"No. I'm on it already. Thanks," Jade insisted, and Tom exchanged a look with Lucy who simply shrugged.

"What about the therapy?" Tom asked curiously.

"I already reached out to the therapist yesterday. I booked a session with her for tomorrow. I didn't want to start work today and do that today as well," Jade explained and Tom nodded.

"That's fine," Tom said and they settled in silence again as Jade ate.

"How's it going with Mia's case?" Jade asked curiously after she was done eating.

"She moved out of Henry's place," Tom said and Jade raised a brow.

"So soon? How did it happen?" She asked, and Tom intimated her with all the details.

"Don't you think he might find a way to hurt her now that she defied him directly?" Jade asked with concern.

"We have our eyes on him. He won't be able to hurt her, don't worry," Tom said confidently as he stopped the car in front of the company.

Jade felt a surge of excitement as she got out of the car, and Tom got out too and handed the car key to one of the security men to take the car to his private parking lot.

As they walked in, they spotted Harry who had walked in a while ago and was walking ahead of them. Jade's heart skipped a beat, but she maintained her composure and smiled at him.

"Harry," Tom called out to Harry, and he turned.

His heart skipped a beat when he saw Jade and met her gaze. Jade flashed him a smile as they drew closer to him.

"Good morning, Harry! How are you doing?" she asked, her voice cheerful.

Harry, caught off guard by her friendly greeting, blinked in surprise. Should he be worried about this friendly Jade? Or relieved that the frost between them seemed to be thawing?

"Good morning, Jade. I'm okay. How are you?" Harry asked, trying to regain his composure.

"Great, thanks! Starting a new chapter today," she replied, her smile unwavering. "You have a good day, alright?"

She turned to Tom and Lucy who were staring at them both, "I'm off. Have a good day," Jade said with a wave before walking away.

Harry watched her go, then turned to Tom and Lucy. "What was that?" he asked with a frown.

Lucy raised a brow, her expression neutral. "What was what?" She asked, not seeing anything wrong in what Jade had done.

"Is it just me or did you see what I'm talking about?" Harry asked Tom since he believed Tom would understand him better.

Tom chuckled, amused by the exchange, "I did. Would you have preferred if she was cold?" He asked, and Lucy resisted the urge to roll her eyes at them both.

"I'm off," Lucy said as she leaned in to kiss Tom on the cheek. "Have a nice day you two," she said to them both before heading to the elevator.

"Wait up. I don't see why the hurry when we are all taking the elevator," Tom said as he and Harry followed.

Lucy joined Jade in the elevator, and before the doors could close, Tom and Harry stepped inside too.

Although Jade could feel Harry's gaze on her, she didn't spare him a glance as she busied with her phone and once the elevator door opened at her floor, she got out of the elevator, and Harry got out with her to Tom's amusement.

"Jade," he called before she could walk away and she looked at him.

"Yes, Harry?" She asked with a friendly smile.

"What are you doing?" He asked and she shook her head.

"Like what?"

"Your attitude."

"What about it?" She asked, and his brows pulled together.

He didn't know how to explain it, but he wasn't comfortable, "Why are you being so friendly?"

"Friendly? You were the one who said we didn't have to be enemies..."

"And you said you couldn't," he reminded her.

"So, you'd rather I act like we are enemies? At work?" She asked, and he shook his head.

"No. That's not what I mean," Harry said, while Jade stared at him patiently like she had all the time in the world.

"Make up your mind, Harry. And let me know what you decide when you're done," she said with a small smile, and squeezed his hand gently before walking away.

As Jade walked away, the smile slid off her face and she took a deep breath. She wished he knew just how hard seeing him was, and how she was trying her best to stay away from him until she was confident that she could be with him without any of those unhealthy feelings cropping up and getting in the way.

Chapter 914 That Hurt A Lot

As Harry walked briskly to his office, his mind swirled with thoughts of Jade. He couldn't shake the unease he felt after their brief exchange.

As he reached Tom's office, he knocked twice before stepping in.

Tom looked up from his desk, his expression a mix of curiosity and concern. "How did it go with Jade?" he asked, leaning back in his chair.

Harry sighed deeply, rubbing his eyes. "I don't know, Tom. I just don't know."

Tom gestured for Harry to take a seat. "You said you were going to support her decision, remember?"

"And I meant it. I do support her," Harry said, frustration evident in his voice. "But I don't understand why she's acting this way."

"What way?" Tom asked, his brow furrowing.

"I can't explain it," Harry admitted, shaking his head. "She's struggling with the distance between us, I know it, but she's pretending to be okay. She's keeping me at arm's length, and it's driving me crazy. Why is she still doing this even after I apologized and asked that we go back to how things were before? Even if she doesn't want us to go back to our relationship yet, can we just be cool?"

Tom nodded slowly, absorbing Harry's words. "Give her some time, Harry. Just be patient. I'm sure she will come around soon."

Harry sighed again, a weary sound that spoke volumes. "I know she will come around eventually, but it's hard to be patient. As a matter of fact, I've run out of patience."

"I get it," Tom said sympathetically. "Right from childhood Jade has always been the sensitive type. She easily withdraws into her shell at the slightest threat of anything that hurts her feelings. So, maybe you'd like to be more careful in the future."

"This has taught me, I guess."

Do you want us to talk about business? Perhaps it will distract you?" Tom suggested.

Harry took a deep breath, "Yeah. Let's do that. I need a distraction," Harry said, trying to push his personal feelings aside.

After thirty minutes, they both decided it wasn't working, so Tom asked Harry to get out of his office and go find a way to take care of his problem.

Meanwhile, Jade was settling into her new office in the legal unit. Her office was spacious and modern, with floor-to-ceiling windows that offered a stunning view of the city, with a large mahogany desk dominating the center of the room.

As she tried to organize herself and settle in, a soft knock on the door drew her attention. She looked up to see Dame, her new assistant, standing hesitantly at the threshold.

"I'm sorry to bother you, Ms. Hank," she greeted with a warm smile. "I just wanted to check if you need anything."

"Please, call me Jade. And no, I'm good for now. Just getting settled." Jade replied, returning the smile.

"Alright, Jade. If you need anything, don't hesitate to ask," Dame said before stepping back out.

Jade appreciated the gesture. She knew that building a good rapport with her team was crucial, and Dame seemed like a good person to have by her side.

As she continued to organize her office, Jade's thoughts drifted to her new colleagues. She was eager to meet them, to understand the dynamics of the team, and to find her place within it.

Around mid-morning, Jade decided to take a break and explore the office. She walked through the halls, observing the bustling activity. People moved with purpose, their conversations were a blend of professional jargon and casual banter. She smiled at a few who nodded in her direction, feeling a sense of belonging beginning to take root.

A middle-aged woman with short, curly hair stepped forward, extending her hand. "Welcome, Jade. I'm Jenny, head of the legal team. It's great to have you with us."

She made her way to the legal department's common area, a bright and airy space with comfortable seating and a coffee station. A few of her new colleagues were gathered there, engaged in animated discussion.

As Jade approached them, her presence drew their attention.

"Hi, I'm Jade Hank," she introduced herself with a confident smile. "I just started today."

A middle-aged woman with short, curly hair stepped forward, extending her hand. "Welcome, Jade. I'm Jenny, head of the legal team. It's great to have you with us."

"Thank you, ma'am. I'm excited to be here," Jade replied, shaking her hand.

"Jenny is just fine," she corrected and Jade nodded.

The others introduced themselves in turn, and she smiled when Samson introduced himself, recognizing him from the anniversary party as the guy who had approached Candace.

Soon Jade found herself immersed in conversation. They talked about their current projects, shared a few office anecdotes, and made plans for a team lunch later in the week.

Jade felt a warmth spread through her as she realized she was already starting to connect with her new team.

As they all returned to their offices, Jenny invited Jade to her office, and Jade followed, hoping that now she would receive her tasks.

Once they walked into the office, Jenny turned to her, "I take it you're here to work, yes?" She asked, and Jade frowned.

"Why else would I be here if not to work?" Jade asked in confusion.

The lady shrugged, "I just needed to confirm. With your brother and your man being the CEOs, I wasn't sure what to do when I heard you were joining us, especially since they both specifically asked me separately not to give you any dangerous or tedious tasks," she said, and Jade frowned.

"They did?"

"Yes. And I'm not saying this because I'm upset or because I disapprove. Do not get me wrong. I just want to know if you share the same sentiments with them. They might be my superiors, but you are still my subordinate, and I do not like it when men tell women what to do," she said and Jade smiled.

"So, if you want to just come to the office, sit down, and stare at your nails in admiration, let me know so I don't bother you with any serious assignments," Jenny said and Jade decided that she liked her straight-to-the-point attitude.

"I'm here to work, Jenny, and to work hard. I made a name for myself and worked too hard in Varis to come here and be mediocre. And I also do not like men telling me what to do especially when it comes to my career. The only reason I moved here was because I wanted to be closer to my family, and I was tired of my former workplace. So, please help me," Jade said and Jenny nodded.

"Alright then. Do not expect me to treat you specially though. I expect you to be punctual and to put in your best as everyone else does," she said, and Jade smiled.

"And you won't get anything less," Jade promised and Jenny nodded with approval.

"From your details which were submitted, I see that you've been practicing criminal law," she said, and Jade nodded.

"That's right."

"Alright then. We will start with the easy ones and ease you slowly into how things are done here. And now that I-Global has an entertainment subsidiary, maybe you'll have to be the legal representative of some of them," she said, and when Jade nodded, Jenny gave her some case files before dismissing her.

Returning to her office, Jade felt a renewed sense of purpose as she sat down at her desk and began reviewing the case files she had been given.

She knew that making the move from being a criminal lawyer to a corporate lawyer was going to be a tedious process, but she was glad now that she had taken the time to specialize in both areas.

Hours passed as Jade lost herself in her work. She analyzed contracts, drafted legal opinions, and prepared for upcoming meetings.

Her legal mind was sharp, and she navigated through the complexities with ease. It was in these moments, buried in the details of a case, that she felt most alive and confident.

Jade raised her head when a knock sounded on her door, and she was surprised when Harry walked in.

"Harry," she said, not bothering to hide her surprise.

"Not entirely. I'm waiting to move my stuff over. My books and... talking about moving my stuff, I need to give Aurora a call," she said and Harry watched her, amazed at how different she looked seated behind her desk.

"I see you've settled in," he said stopping in the middle of the office as he looked around her office wanting to make sure everything was in place and it was okay for her.

"Not entirely. I'm waiting to move my stuff over. My books and... talking about moving my stuff, I need to give Aurora a call," she said and Harry watched her, amazed at how different she looked seated behind her desk.

He had seen her in her work mode several times in the past and had even worked with her and been a sounding board for her, but seeing her dressed this way and behind a desk hit differently.

"What? Is there something on my face?" Jade asked when she noticed the grin on Harry's face.

"You're glowing," he said, and she grinned.

"Am I?" She asked, momentarily forgetting the emotional distance she had created between them.

"Yeah. And it's beautiful to see you this way. It's a first for me," he said and she nodded.

"I guess so," she said as she watched him.

"What brings you to my office, boss?" She asked, and Harry met her gaze.

"I came to see how MY WOMAN, has settled in," he said, emphasizing that part.

Jade sighed, "Harry..."

"No, you listen Jade. I'm doing my best here. Yes, I made a mistake and hurt you unintentionally because I was hurting too, but I have apologized for it. And I won't keep letting you push me away this way. I want to be patient with you as I've always been, but I've ran out of patience. You want to work on yourself? That's fine by me, but I won't let you keep up with this thing you're doing..."

"This thing I'm doing?" Jade asked with a raised brow.

"Yes. This thing you're doing. Life's short, Jade. Too short for us to be doing what makes us unhappy. If you're eventually going to be with me after working this out, then why not just be with me, and let's work it out together? We don't know if we have thirty years, twenty, or even just a year together. What if you're told that I'm dying or suffering from a terminal disease right now? Will you still keep this up? I could drop dead in a year..."

"Shut up, Jonas. No one is dropping dead or having any diseases," Jade said, not wanting to imagine the picture he was painting.

"Maybe not. But you get the point, right? I've been out of my mind all day unable to focus on work. And you know how much I love work, right? But right now I love you even far more than I love my job," Harry said and Jade felt butterflies flutter in her stomach.

She cleared her throat, "Why are you telling me all this in the middle of work?" She asked weakly.

"You said I should let you know when I make up my mind. This is me doing that. Stop with the attitude. You can move into your own place if that's what you really want, and you don't have to visit me if you don't want to. I will visit you, take you out on proper dates, and drive you to and from your therapy sessions, and we can go on couple counseling together and have lunch together during lunch breaks when either of us is not too busy. I want to do all of that with you, so, can you please stop frustrating me? I need to be in a good emotional state to function properly and right now

I'm unable to do it. So, can you compromise and meet me in the middle?" He asked, still standing where he was.

"Are you saying all that simply because you need to be in a good emotional state to function at work?" She asked, and when Harry glared at her, she pressed her lips together to keep from laughing.

As Jade rose from her seat, she cursed herself for being weak as she walked up to him, and when she stopped in front of him, she shrugged, "I'm in the middle now, so what?"

"You're in the middle?" Harry asked, and when she shrugged, he narrowed his eyes.

"Prove it."

"How?" She asked, and Harry smiled.

"Hug me and kiss me," he said, and she rolled her eyes as she embraced him.

Harry let out a deep breath as he wrapped his arms around her, feeling very relieved that she had listened.

As they pulled apart, Jade met his gaze, "Never threaten me with a breakup or say you regret doing anything with me. That hurt a lot," she said, tears gathering in her eyes.

Harry nodded as he cupped her face with his hands, "I'm sorry. I lost my mind when I saw your packed bags," he said and she nodded.

"I won't do that ever again. I will fight out whatever with you instead of packing up," she promised and Harry nodded as he leaned forward, touching his forehead to hers.

"I love you, esquire. I love you so damned much and too much. I would never hurt you intentionally. I'm sorry I didn't put much thought into the proposal plan and I left room for you to misunderstand things. I promise to do better going forward," he said and she smiled.

"I'm sorry for not trusting you enough too and for everything I said," she said and Harry nodded.

"Can we forget it all now?" He asked, she nodded.

"Yes. Let's move on. I don't want us to go back to how things were. I want us to be better, for ourselves and for each other," she said, and Harry nodded.

"Let's do that," he agreed, and they sealed it with a kiss.

Chapter 915 I Miss You.

The Rosewood mansion settled into a tense quiet as the rumble of Henry's departing car faded into the distance.

It was almost midnight and Henry had been on a destruction rampage all day, yelling and destroying things while everyone cowered in fear.

Now that he had left, Jeff, Margaret, and Mika, stood amidst the wreckage, looking around the debris-strewn living room.

As Margaret and Mika set to work to clean up the living room, Jeff stood aside as he surveyed the scene of Henry's tantrum— a broken lamp, shattered vases, shattered glass table, cushions disemboweled spewing their innards onto the rug, toppled coffee stools.

Each broken piece on the floor seemed to hold a silent echo of the events that transpired earlier in the day.

"Aren't you going to help?" Mika asked, and Jeff glanced at him.

"That doesn't fit my job description. I was employed to cook, not clean after the boss' mess. I'm off to bed," he said, tucking his hands into his pockets as he walked away.

A whirlwind of emotions swirled within him as he headed for the servant quarter as Henry called it.

Relief warred with a gnawing worry. Relief that Mia was finally out of Henry's grasp, worry for her safety now that she was out of his sight and he had no idea what kind of stunt Henry would pull next.

As he walked into his tiny room, he replayed the events of the day in his mind as he freshened up and changed into his pajamas.

The confrontation in the living room between Mia's parents and Henry. Their unexpected courage had been exhilarating. He had seen the shock on Henry's face when her father said he didn't mind not doing business with him anymore.

He sat on the edge of the bed, and smiled to himself, thinking about Mia's bravery. He had watched her stand up to Henry, a man who thrived on intimidation, and it had been nothing short of inspiring.

He had seen the raw defiance in Mia's eyes, the fear masked by her resolve. Jeff replayed the scene in his mind, reliving the surge of protectiveness that had washed over him as he witnessed Henry's unreasonable possessiveness.

A smirk twitched on Jeff's lips. Henry, the powerful, reduced to a petulant child throwing a fit. It was a strangely empowering sight.

In all, he couldn't shake the image of Mia's departure, her face a mixture of relief and trepidation. He hoped she was safe, finally away from Henry's oppressive presence.

Lost in his thoughts, the sudden shrill of his phone startled him. He picked it up and hesitated when he saw the unfamiliar number flashing on the screen, but something urged him to answer.

"Hello?" he said cautiously.

"Jeff? It's Mia. How are you doing?" she asked softly.

Relief washed over him, warm and immediate, and he couldn't help but smile. "How are you? I should be asking how you're doing," Jeff said as he rose and walked into the bathroom, turning on the shower.

"I'm fine," she assured him, putting his worries to rest.

"I'm so sorry I couldn't call sooner. I've been busy talking with my parents, and my mom wouldn't let me out of her sight, and I could only call you now because she's asleep. This is actually her phone," Mia explained.

Jeff leaned back against the wall, comforted by the sound of her voice. "It's fine. I'm just so glad you called. Is it okay to call from her phone, though?"

"Yes, but I'm getting a phone for myself tomorrow. I just wanted to reach out and let you know I'm okay," she explained.

"It's alright. I'm glad you're fine. And you did good earlier," he said and Mia sighed.

"Whatever he plans, I believe Tom and Harry will always be a step ahead of him," Jeff said confidently.

"I was so scared, Jeff. For a moment there, I thought he might..." She didn't finish the sentence, but the unspoken fear hung heavy in the air.

Jeff closed his eyes, picturing Henry's rage-contorted face. "I worried about that too, but your father wouldn't have let him touch you. That I am sure of."

"Yea. He didn't, thanks to my parents," Mia said, "But this isn't over. I know Henry. He's going to find a way to get to me again," Mia said, sounding more resigned to the idea; than scared.

"Whatever he plans, I believe Tom and Harry will always be a step ahead of him," Jeff said confidently.

"True. I've realized that I underestimated them," Mia admitted. "How are things over there?"

Jeff sighed, glancing around the bathroom as if Henry might burst in at any moment. "He was so furious after you left. He was on a destructive rampage for hours and tore up the living room. He left a short while ago. Margaret and Mika are still busy cleaning up the mess he made. The house feels tense, more like a storm waiting to break."

He could almost hear her gasp. "Oh no. Is Diana alright?" Mia asked, knowing that he would most likely turn on Diana since he always transferred his aggression to her when things didn't go his way, and in this case, he might blame Diana for saying all she did to her parents.

A flicker of surprise coursed through Jeff. Concern for Diana, even in this situation, spoke volumes about Mia's character.

"She locked herself up in her room when he tried to attack her. She hadn't stepped out since then. She's probably waiting for his fury to pass," Jeff replied.

"I'm worried about her," Mia confessed. "Please keep an eye on her, Jeff. Just in case."

The sincerity in her voice tugged at his heart. "I'll keep an eye on her, don't worry," Jeff promised.

"Thank you, Jeff," Mia said, wondering what she did to deserve Jeff's affection.

"Always. By the way, your parents...they were amazing today. It was like watching a miracle unfold," Jeff said, and Mia's heart swelled with pride.

"I know right? I think Tom and Harry reached out to them and convinced them that Henry wasn't who they believed him to be. Also, they've decided to go public with news of the divorce," Mia said. "That way, Henry can't back out of it. My dad plans to say Henry made him say I was mentally unstable. All that's left now is to find the right people to cover the news," Mia confided.

"That's brilliant," Jeff said, feeling a surge of optimism. "And I don't think that should be a problem. Tom and Harry can make it happen if you want it. But don't let your parents go ahead with it without first hearing from Tom and Harry," Jeff advised.

"Yeah. You're right. I plan on giving them a call after I get a phone tomorrow. I need to know what they are planning now since it is obvious my plan failed. In the meantime, I'm glad that I'm not under Henry's roof anymore."

"Me too," Jeff said.

"How much longer do you think this will take? When are you leaving there?" Mia asked, hoping he would be leaving the next day.

"That depends on whatever Tom and Harry have planned out."

"I hope you leave soon," Mia said, not wanting him to be there any longer than was necessary.

"All that matters to me is that you're out of here now. Besides, I don't think it's wise that I leave immediately after you. That would raise suspicions. And I'd rather leave after he has been taken care of. That way I can keep an eye on things from here. Don't worry about me. I'll be fine."

"I miss you," she whispered.

Jeff smiled, though she couldn't see him, "What do you miss about me?" He asked curiously.

"Cooking with you, eating with you, playing games with you, working with you, and lying with you on the same bed," she said, and he grinned.

"That's a lot," he joked, and she giggled.

A low murmur reached his ears, followed by a "Okay, Mom."

"Sorry," she apologized in a hushed voice. "Gotta go. My mom's awake."

He could hear the smile in her voice. "Don't worry," he said. "Stay safe, Mia."

"You too, Jeff. Don't take unnecessary risks," she warned before hanging up.

Done with the phone call, Jeff walked out of the bathroom, and room, deciding to go check on Diana before going to bed, since he had promised to keep an eye on her.

He knocked on the door once, "Are you alright, ma'am? It's Josh," Jeff called softly as he knocked.

Diana walked over to the door and opened it a crack, peering out, "Is there a problem?" She asked as she looked him over, wondering why he was at her door dressed in pajamas.

"No, ma'am. I was going to bed and decided to see if you needed anything. You didn't come out for dinner, and Mr Rosewood left the house," Jeff explained and she raised a brow.

"He left? When?" Diana asked as she opened the door wider and stepped out.

"About an hour ago," Jeff explained.

"Thanks for letting me know. You can go to bed. I'll sort myself out," Diana said, and seeing that she was okay, Jeff gave her a nod before walking away.

Diana walked into the living room to see Margaret and Mika finishing up, and when they saw her, they gave her polite nods, both inwardly blaming her for all the mess, since they had no idea exactly what was going on.

Diana took a deep breath as she surveyed the living room. She couldn't begin to imagine how obsessed he must be with Vanessa for him to have gone berserk in that manner because she left.

She knew that she had taken a big risk by doing what she had done, and if she wasn't careful, Henry would turn on her soon.

She could only hope now that the man who had asked her to do it, would deliver Henry to her as he had promised, else she would have no other choice but to poison Henry to death or kill him in his sleep if he so much as laid a hand on her as he had been about to do earlier.

Chapter 916 Housewarming Party

Two Weeks Later

The day dawned bright and warm, a perfect Saturday morning for moving. Harry had been at Tom's place since early in the morning to help Jade pack the last of her belongings.

Cardboard boxes, taped and labeled, were stacked outside the front door, and the faint sound of rustling echoed through the house as Jade and Harry made final preparations.

Her stuff had been delivered from Varis earlier in the week but had been brought down to Tom's place because her new place had been undergoing maintenance.

"Are you sure you've got everything?" Tom asked, hoisting a box labeled "Kitchen" into his arms.

Jade glanced around the now-bare bedroom, memories of the past few weeks flitting through her mind. She gave a firm nod. "Yeah, I think so. Thanks for helping, Tom."

Tom gave her a reassuring smile. "It's nothing. Sorry, I can't come with you to see your new place. I have an important meeting with some shareholders," Tom said as he headed for the door and she followed.

"It's fine. You can always visit whenever. And I have Harry with me to help lift the heavy stuff," Jade assured him.

"Give my love to Lucy," Jade said, since Lucy had spent the night at Sonia's place and wasn't back yet.

"Sure. Let me know if you need anything," Tom said, and as they stepped outside, they met Harry and Adolf who were organizing the stuff into the car.

"I suppose that is the last box?" Harry asked, and Jade gave him a nod.

"Let's get it loaded up," Harry said and Adolf took the box from Tom and carefully placed it in the car trunk before they shut it.

"I'm ready to leave," she said as she got into the car, excited about being in her own space now.

After her Yoga class a week ago, she had mentioned to Sharon that she was trying to get a place and all the places she had seen weren't exactly what she was looking for. Sharon had then told her that she had a vacant apartment on top of the Yoga studio and asked if Jade would like to check it out.

Jade had taken one look at the space which was beside Sharon's apartment and decided that she wanted there to be her place. Aside from the fact that the place looked really nice, it was a convenient location and she had been excited about the place since the lease was signed.

Sharon promised to have the place ready by the weekend for her to move in, and here they were now.

With the car packed to the brim, Harry and Jade set off for her new apartment. The drive was filled with light-hearted banter and the hum of the radio, a mix of pop tunes playing softly in the background.

"Thanks for going through the stress, Jonas, even though you really didn't want me to move," Jade said after some time.

Harry sighed, "No problem. Just promise me you'll keep this new place cleaner than the last one."

Jade rolled her eyes and smirked. "I'll try, but don't hold your breath," she said and Harry chuckled.

"I plan to get a cleaner since I'll be too busy for that, and honestly, it's really not my thing," Jade said and he chuckled, shaking his head.

"Want me to talk to my cleaner? She can take care of your place. She is pretty good," he offered.

"I've seen how well she takes care of your place. You can give me her number and I'll talk to her myself," Jade said and Harry nodded.

As they pulled up to the building, Jade spotted Sharon, her yoga instructor, friend, and now landlord, waiting by the entrance.

"Sharon!" Jade called out, stepping out of the car. She waved, a broad smile spreading across her face.

Sharon approached them a wide grin on her face. "For a moment there, I thought you changed your mind about moving today. Welcome to your new home!"

"Thank you, Sharon," Jade said and then turned to Harry. "Harry, this is Sharon. Sharon, this is my boyfriend, Harry," Jade said, and Sharon wiggled her brows at Harry playfully before extending a hand to Harry.

"Nice to meet you, Harry. We met briefly last time you came to the studio looking for Jade."

Harry shook her hand, smiling. "Yes, I remember. Good to see you again."

"Come on, let's get you settled," Sharon said, gesturing toward the stairs. "I've got the keys ready."

They hauled the boxes up the narrow staircase, the steps creaking slightly under their weight. Jade's apartment was a charming loft with large windows that let in plenty of natural light. The wooden floors gleamed and were freshly polished, and the open floor plan gave the space a spacious feel.

A cozy living area with a large, plush sofa which the last occupant had left was situated near the windows, with a small kitchen area to the side, complete with modern appliances and a breakfast bar. A ladder led up to a mezzanine level where a bed was set up, overlooking the living space below.

"This place is amazing," Harry confessed, setting down a box labeled "Books" on the kitchen counter.

Jade beamed, glancing around. "I know, right? I can't wait to get settled in."

As they were arranging the boxes, the sound of footsteps echoed up the stairs, followed by familiar voices.

"Surprise!" Lucy, Sonia, Andy, and Aurora called out in unison, appearing at the doorway with wide grins and arms full of groceries and gift bags.

Jade's eyes widened in delight. "Oh my gosh! What are you all doing here? How did you locate this place?"

"We came to help you move and to have a housewarming party," Sonia said excitedly, setting a bag down on the counter.

"Locating here was the easy part. You told us about your yoga studio, and you did say your apartment was in the same building," Lucy reminded her.

Jade laughed, hugging each of them in turn. "You guys are the best!" She said and then turned to Harry.

Reading her gaze, Harry raised an eyebrow, a hint of reluctance in his expression. "Well, I guess my job here is done."

Jade giggled, patting Harry's shoulder. "I know, I know. But I want to enjoy some girl time. You understand, right?"

Harry sighed dramatically but smiled. "Alright, I'll leave you to it. But call me if you need anything, okay?"

"I will. Thanks," Jade said, giving him one last hug before he headed out.

Once Harry was gone, Andy nudged Jade. "I can't believe you just kicked him out. Way to go, girl," Andy said and both Jade and the others laughed.

"Need I remind you that you're talking about your brother? And I didn't kick him out. It'd be a bit awkward having him here as the only guy with all of you ladies," she said and they all nodded in agreement.

Andy had been in Ludus for almost two weeks now as she had said she would, and had gone to the club every night since her arrival, hoping that word of it would get to Cassidy and he would reach out to her.

She has also met with Tom and Harry regarding managing her career, and they are presently working on getting her signed to a reputable record label.

Jade introduced Sharon to the others. "Girls, this is Sharon. Sharon owns the building and lives next door. She is also my yoga instructor. Sharon, this is Lucy, Sonia, Andy, and Aurora," Jade said, pointing to each of them for easy identification.

"Nice to meet you all," Sharon said warmly.

The girls exchanged pleasantries with her before they all got to work, unpacking boxes and rearranging furniture.

Sharon helped them, chatting and laughing as they worked. Lucy opened the box filled with kitchen utensils and began sorting through it.

The atmosphere was filled with the clatter of dishes being put away, the rustle of clothing being hung up, and the cheerful hum of conversation.

"This place is really nice, Jade. I'm so envious of you, Jade," Sonia said, glancing around.

"Yeah, it is. Unpacking this way reminds me of when Tom helped me unpack when I first moved down here. I thought he was just being a nice neighbor."

"Little did you know he was a sneaky creep after your heart," Sonia said and the room erupted in laughter.

"So, girls," Aurora said, pausing to catch her breath. "Are you ready for the couple's fishing trip next week?"

Jade smiled, looking forward to the trip. "I can't wait. It's going to be a nice break."

Sonia who was seated on the sofa and eating a cookie chimed in, "It'll be a great time. I'm really looking forward to it."

Lucy nodded, excitement in her eyes. "Me too! I've never been on a fishing trip before."

"Why are you girls talking about your couple trip in front of me when I'm not invited?" Andy asked, rolling her eyes, "I really think this is unfair."

"Sorry, dear. It can't be helped," Aurora said, flashing her an apologetic smile.

"How is it going with your mission, anyway? Any word from him yet?" Sonia asked and Andy shook her head.

"Nope. Nothing yet. But I'm optimistic that he will reach out soon. This is better than doing nothing," she said, and they nodded and smiled at her, apart from Aurora and Sharon who had no idea what they were talking about.

"Sony, are you really here to help or eat?" Jade joked, and Sonia grinned.

"Sorry. My baby just wants to watch her aunt unpack and celebrate with her," Sonia said with a wink, rubbing her tummy which had rounded slightly with a little bump, and they laughed.

As they finished unpacking, Jade turned to Sharon. "How's Em? Why I haven't seen her?" Jade asked, referring to Sharon's six-year-old daughter.

Sharon's face softened. "She's with her dad this week. I only get her for a week every month."

Jade nodded sympathetically. "I bet you miss her a lot."

"I do. But I am the one who wanted it to be this way. We make the most of our time together," Sharon assured Jade.

By the time they were done, the apartment looked like home. The kitchen was stocked, the furniture was arranged, and the personal touches that Jade had brought with her were in place. They stood back, admiring their handiwork.

"This place looks great," Andy said, wiping her hands on her jeans. "You're all set, Jade."

Jade grinned, feeling a sense of accomplishment. "Thanks, everyone. I couldn't have done it without you."

"You're welcome. Now it's time for the housewarming," Sonia announced happily.

They gathered around the small dining table, which Sonia had adorned with snacks and drinks they had brought for the housewarming. The chatter flowed easily, filled with stories, jokes, and the comfort of close friends.

Jade felt a warm glow in her chest as she looked around at each of them and her new home. For the first time in a long time, she felt genuinely happy with her life, and it had nothing to do with her relationship with Harry.

She was grateful for her friends, for their support, and this new chapter in her life. And most especially she was glad that she had decided to make this move.

Chapter 917 Ghosting

Seated in a cab, Amy stared out of the cab window as the city lights flickered by, and thoughts whirled in her mind.

She tried to focus on the excitement of seeing a late-night movie, but her heart was heavy, weighed down by the absence of her weekend buddy.

It had been two weeks since she last heard from Lucas, and every day since had been a battle against her own thoughts and feelings.

She had kept wondering what she could have done to deserve being ghosted by Lucas that way.

She had even sent him a series of texts apologizing for the prank about meeting someone at the spa, yet there had been no response from him.

She glanced at her phone as she had been doing in the last two weeks, half expecting a notification to pop up, though she had convinced herself not to care anymore.

Her resolve was tested when the device buzzed in her hand. Her heart skipped a beat, and she hesitated before looking at the screen. When she saw Lucas's name, her heart skipped a beat, but a surge of anger and pain coursed through her.

A part of her, the part that still held onto the sound of his laughter and the warmth of his smile, yearned to hear his voice.

But the memory of his silence, the sting of rejection, held her back, and with a finality that surprised even her, Amy swiped the message away, deleting it without a second glance.

He didn't deserve her reply, not after treating her that way and disappearing like a ghost. She didn't need to see what he had to say after ignoring her for two whole weeks.

She had been worried out of her mind, calling and texting and when there was no response from him, she had gone as far as asking Lucy two days ago how Lucas was doing and when last she heard from him.

When Lucy told her Lucas was fine and she had spoken to Lucas hours earlier that day, she confirmed that Lucas was indeed intentionally ignoring her. The realization had stung more than she wanted to admit.

Her eyes filled with unshed tears as she blocked his number, a sense of finality settling in her chest.

"If he doesn't want to be friends, then I won't force it," she whispered to herself, trying to believe the words.

As she sat back, the cab driver glanced at her in the rearview mirror, sensing her distress but saying nothing.

Amy appreciated the silence, using the quiet to gather her thoughts. They were both probably better off that way.

Maybe it was best this way. Clean break. No messy goodbyes, no lingering hope. They both had their lives and their problems.

She was still dealing with the loss of Miley and learning to be happy again. And Lucas was dealing with his mess too, so the friendship between them was not going to work. It was time to move on.

Meanwhile, away from there, Lucas stared at his phone, a pit of dread forming in his stomach.

Thirty minutes had ticked by, and Amy hadn't responded to his text. He reread the message, a simple apology and plea, hoping it wouldn't appear too pathetic.

He had sent the text to Amy, hoping she would respond. As the minutes ticked by with no reply, his anxiety grew.

He was almost out of his mind after not talking to Amy for two weeks, and he knew that if he stayed one more day without hearing from her, he would lose it completely.

His heart hammered against his ribs as he dialed her number.

One ring. Two. Voicemail. Disappointment clawed at him. He tried again, with the same result. Panic started to set in.

Confused and worried, he tried texting again, only to realize his messages weren't delivering.

Had he messed up so badly that she'd blocked him? The thought was unbearable.

Desperate, Lucas headed for Tyler's room, not minding that it was still early in the morning and Tyler was probably still asleep.

Tyler being a light sleeper stirred in his sleep when his bedroom door opened, and he looked up to see Lucas. "What's up?" he asked, noticing the distress on Lucas's face.

"I need to borrow your phone," Lucas said, trying to mask his frustration.

Tyler's curiosity piqued, but he handed over his phone without question. "Sure, here you go."

Lucas took the phone and walked out of the bedroom, leaving Tyler to go back to sleep since it was his day off.

As he walked to his bedroom, he quickly typed out a message to Amy: [I know I messed up. I'm sorry. Can we talk?]

Amy's phone buzzed again, and she sighed, expecting a spam message since no one else texted her on weekends apart from Lucas and she had blocked him.

When she saw the unfamiliar number, she frowned since it had Husla's code. She knew it was from Lucas. Her breath caught in her throat as she opened the text to see what he had to say.

After reading it, she considered ignoring it but remembered all the times Lucas had been there for her even when she didn't deserve it, and her resolve weakened.

Reluctantly, she unblocked his number and texted back, [You had better have a solid explanation for the disappearing act you pulled. I'm waiting for your call.]

Almost immediately, Lucas called and she received the call but stayed silent, waiting for him to explain.

"Amy?" He called, his voice tinged with relief.

Hearing his voice, Amy's heart skipped a beat but she refused to respond.

"I know I was an ass," Lucas began, his voice sincere. "I shouldn't have ghosted you the way I did, and without an explanation too. I really needed to sort out something. I admit that I didn't handle it well. I don't know what I was thinking. It was a jerk move and I don't blame you if you're mad..."

"And I didn't deserve a simple, Amy I need some time to myself kinda explanation?" Amy cut in, "Why couldn't you just communicate it to me? We are two mature adults, are we not? What did you need to sort out that you couldn't talk about?" Amy asked, and though her voice was cold, her heart ached for answers.

Lucas took a deep breath. "My feelings for you. I needed to sort out my feelings for you, Amy," he confessed.

Amy's heart skipped a beat and she paused. "What do you mean by that?" She asked, in a barely audible voice, taken aback by his unexpected confession.

"I realized I liked you more than I should," Lucas confessed, the words spilling out in a rush.

"More than you should? Is there some unit of measurement to know how much you should like a friend?" Amy asked in confusion.

"Not as a friend. I like you more than a friend should, and it scared me."

"Why?" She asked, her voice thick with emotion.

"There's no easy answer, Amy," he admitted, his voice low. "The truth is, after you... you know, talked about meeting someone at the spa..."

He hesitated, the memory of Sam's kiss a ghost on his lips. Shame burned in his gut. How could he tell her the truth without making it sound worse than it was?

"It threw me. It stung more than it should," he finally finished, the words hollow even to his own ears. "I realized I liked you more than I thought and I needed some space to figure out what to do since I wasn't ready for a relationship."

There was another pause, and this time, he could almost hear the question forming in her mind.

"And have you done that? Figured out what to do?"

"No. I still don't know if I'm ready to go into another relationship yet. The only thing I have figured out is that not talking to you is driving me crazy and I miss you. I miss our friendship."

Amy drew a deep breath, "Who said you had to be in a relationship with everyone you liked? And what makes you think I would want to be in a relationship with you even if you were ready to be in one with me? Isn't that a bit presumptuous?"

Lucas was taken aback by her response. "I... I don't know. I just thought..."

"You thought wrong," Amy interrupted, her voice softening. "You didn't give me a chance to understand or to talk. You just disappeared."

Lucas was silent for a moment, processing her words. "I'm sorry, Amy. I really am. I messed up, and I know I hurt you."

Amy sighed, the anger slowly dissipating. "I was worried about you. I thought something had happened. And then to find out you were deliberately ignoring me... it hurt. I expected better from you."

"I didn't mean to hurt you," Lucas said earnestly. "I was trying to figure out what to do with these feelings, but I handled it terribly."

Amy took a deep breath, considering his words. "You should have talked to me, Lucas. We could have figured it out together and I would have helped you out of your misery by rejecting your feelings."

"You would reject my feelings?" Lucas asked in disbelief and she laughed.

"Yes, I would. I don't want to be your rebound. I deserve better than that," she said and Lucas sighed.

"I know," Lucas admitted. "Can we start over? Can we at least try to talk this out?"

Amy's heart softened, and she nodded, even though he couldn't see her. "Okay. Let's talk. But that would be later," she said as the cab pulled up to the movie theater.

"I'm going to see a late-night movie. I will call you when I am done. Is that okay?"

"Yes. Sure. I will wait," Lucas said and Amy smiled as she hung up.

Amy thanked the driver as she paid, and stepped out, feeling a mix of hope and uncertainty.

She didn't know what the future held for her and Lucas, but for now, she was willing to give him and their friendship another chance.

Chapter 918 A One Time Thing

Amy settled into her seat at the cinema, a grin on her face as the movie began to play. The darkened theater was filled with excited murmurs and the rustling of popcorn bags. Yet, her thoughts were far from the screen.

She replayed her conversation with Lucas in her mind, over and over again. The memory of his voice, the sincerity in his apology, and his unexpected confession sent butterflies fluttering in her stomach.

As the movie unfolded, Amy found herself barely registering the plot. Her mind was a whirl of emotions. She remembered the initial shock of Lucas's confession, the way her heart had skipped a beat.

His admission that he liked her more than a friend had been unexpected, but it had stirred something within her. She couldn't help but feel a mix of excitement and confusion.

The flickering images on the screen were lost on her as she thought about Lucas. She had missed him more than she had realized during the two weeks of silence. Despite the hurt and confusion, the sound of his voice had brought a sense of comfort and familiarity. She couldn't help but wonder what the future held for them.

Suddenly, the lights in the theater came back on, and the credits began to roll. Amy blinked, surprised that the movie was over already.

She hadn't followed it at all, despite having looked forward to it all week. She gathered her belongings and made her way out of the theater, feeling a mix of disappointment at not following the movie and anticipation at talking to Lucas again.

As she stepped outside into the cool night air, she flagged down a cab and the moment she was settled, she pulled out her phone and sent Lucas a text: [Hey, are you up for a phone call?]

Within seconds, her phone rang. She giggled as she saw Lucas's name on the screen. "Hey," she answered, her voice tinged with excitement.

"Hey, Amy," Lucas's voice was warm and relieved. "How was the movie?"

"It was... interesting," she replied, though she couldn't remember a single detail.

"Interesting? What was it about?" Lucas asked, curious.

Shame tinged her cheeks as a laugh bubbled up. "I... well, I didn't really pay attention, I was too distracted," she confessed, her voice barely a whisper.

"Distracted? By what?" Lucas's tone was teasing.

"By you," she admitted, her cheeks flushing. "I couldn't stop thinking about our conversation."

There was a pause on the other end of the line before Lucas spoke again. "Can we talk about what I said now?"

"Not right now. I'm still on my way home. I'd like to be settled when we talk about it. I reached out just because I wanted to talk to you while on transit. So, why don't you tell me what I've missed in the last two weeks since we last talked?"

Lucas chuckled, the sound bringing a smile to Amy's face. "I missed the sound of your laughter," Amy said, and Lucas felt a flutter in his chest.

"As I missed yours," he admitted, realizing it had become easier to admit his feelings.

"So? What did I miss?" Amy asked with a grin.

"Well, let me see... There have been a few funny incidents. You have no idea how distracted I have been," he said and her grin widened.

"Tell me one," she urged him.

"Like the time I was so distracted thinking about you that I poured orange juice into my cereal instead of milk," Lucas said, laughing at himself.

Amy burst into laughter, picturing the scene. "Did you actually eat it?"

"I tried," Lucas admitted, laughing along with her. "It was terrible."

"What else?" Amy asked, eager to hear more.

"There was also the time I was at the grocery store, and I completely zoned out while the cashier was talking to me. I just stood there, staring off into space. The poor guy had to wave his hand in

front of my face to get my attention and when I finally looked up, I realized I was yet to purchase anything but joined the line."

Amy giggled, imagining Lucas in that situation. "Sounds like you've been having quite an interesting time."

"I didn't expect any of this. It's not been the same without talking to you," Lucas said softly.

Amy's heart warmed at his words. "I've missed you too. Unfortunately or should I say fortunately? I didn't have any of these funny experience so I have nothing to share. I was just so worried and trying to figure out what I did and stuff," she said as the cab pulled up in front of her building.

Without a word she paid the driver and stepped out. "I'm home now," she told Lucas as she unlocked her door. "We can talk."

Lucas's voice was hesitant. "Amy, what do you want me to do about my feelings for you? Does it make you uncomfortable? I'll understand if it makes you uncomfortable."

She took a deep breath, considering her response. "No. It doesn't make me uncomfortable. As a matter of fact I'm flattered by it. But I don't think we should date. At least not right now."

Lucas was silent for a moment. "What do you mean?"

"I think we should remain friends for the time being," Amy explained. "I remember you coming to the funeral weeks ago because you didn't want me to have any funny ideas and stuff," Amy said with a rueful smile.

Lucas winced. "I didn't plan for any of this to happen," Lucas said quietly.

"I know. And I understand too. That's why I'm saying we should remain friends until we're both emotionally sound enough to be in a relationship. I don't want you to think you have feelings for me when I might only be a rebound. And I don't want to assume that what I feel for you is love when it might only be gratitude. I want us both to be absolutely sure of what we're feeling. I didn't stay single for this long to jump into a relationship without giving it due thought. I know you're responsible, and I admire you in a lot of ways, but I think for both our sakes there is no reason to be in a haste. Let's continue as we have been doing and see how is goes."

Lucas listened quietly, processing her words. He had to admit that he liked her response. It made sense in a lot of ways and took off any pressures he might be feeling about going into another relationship too soon.

"Thank you, Amy. I feel much better now," he said, and she smiled, feeling relieved.

"I'm glad you understand."

"I do. And I have a confession to make," Lucas said, his voice hesitant.

Amy's curiosity was piqued. "What is it?"

"I'm not sure how to say this, or if I'm supposed to even tell you. But knowing myself I won't be at ease until I tell you about it," he said and took a deep breath, "I made out with someone," Lucas admitted.

Amy was taken aback. "You did? When?" She asked with a frown wondering how he could confess his feelings to her and make out with someone else.

"That day. After you told me about meeting someone at the spa," Lucas replied.

"How? What happened?" She asked curiously.

Lucas went on to explain the situation and what had happened with Sam and how he had to stop after calling her name.

Amy couldn't help but laugh. "You did what?"

"Yeah," Lucas said, sounding sheepish. "It was silly. I shouldn't have done that. So, that's it. That's what I did. I'm not sure why I'm telling you, but I just think you should know. And it's okay if you're mad."

"I'm not mad," Amy said, still giggling. "We're not exactly dating or exclusive yet. And although I don't exactly like the thought of you kissing someone else, your lips are yours," she said softly.

Lucas smiled, thinking about the difference between Amy and Rachel. He knew that if it were Rachel, she would have thrown a huge fit. "You're amazing, Amy."

"Thanks," she said softly, "But the fact that I said your lips are yours and that we are not exclusive yet doesn't mean it's okay to keep making out with other. You know that, right?"

Lucas smiled, "Of course, I do. It was a one time thing. I'm not a cheat, I promise."

Amy smiled, "Well, thanks for telling me about it. And you should know this doesn't change how I see you. If anything, it makes me happy that you could open up to me," she said and Lucas let out a relieved sigh.

"I'm glad to hear that. Thank you. It's late. You should go to bed," Lucas said, since it was already past midnight.

"I want to stay up and talk to you," Amy said as she took off her clothes. "You owe me two weeks' worth of conversation. So you better have some good stories."

Lucas laughed, feeling a sense of happiness he hadn't felt in weeks. "Okay."

Lucas launched into a tale about a disastrous cooking attempt, where he had confused sugar with salt and ended up with a horribly inedible dish.

Amy listened, laughing and teasing him. For a while, it felt like old times, and the hurt of the past two weeks began to fade.

When Lucas ran out of stories to tell, he asked, "What about you? What have you been up to?"

Amy sighed. "Not much, really. Just the usual. I spent the weekends mostly worrying and finding things to distract myself."

Lucas's voice softened. "I'm sorry, Amy. I didn't mean to put you through that."

"It's okay," she said. "Just don't do it again."

"I won't," he promised.

As the conversation continued, they talked about everything and nothing, filling the gaps left by the past two weeks. Amy felt a sense of contentment, knowing that their friendship and easy rapport was still in place.

Eventually, Amy's voice grew softer as fatigue set in. "I should let you get some sleep," Lucas said reluctantly.

"Yeah, I guess so," Amy agreed, with a yawn though she didn't want to end the call, "why don't you sing until sleep off?"

She asked and Lucas chuckled, "I don't have a good voice."

"I wasn't asking you to go audition somewhere. I just want to sleep off listening to your voice," Amy said and Lucas sighed.

"Alright," Lucas said as he thought about what song to sing.

After thinking for some time settled for an easy lullaby and as he sang, Amy slowly drifted off to sleep.

"Goodnight, Luca," she whispered sleepily.

"Goodnight, Amy," Lucas said, and waited until he didn't hear anymore sound before hanging up.

As he hung up, Lucas felt a sense of hope. Their friendship had survived a rough patch, and he believed it would only grow stronger from here.

Chapter 919 Don't Panic

Seated in front of her dressing mirror, Mia felt the gentle tug of the brush as her mother meticulously worked through the tangles in her freshly washed hair.

Her eyes were closed, savoring the rare moment of peace, though her mind was far from quiet.

Her mother's presence was a sort of comfort. Despite the lingering resentment Mia felt for her parents' complicity in her arranged marriage to Henry, their recent actions showed genuine remorse.

They had risked everything to rescue her from Henry's clutches, and that spoke volumes. It was a small step toward rebuilding trust, but it was a step nonetheless.

Following the altercation with Henry, he had publicly withdrawn his support from the company, but thankfully, her father was unfazed by that and was working hard to get other investors now.

Although her parents had wanted to go ahead with making the news of her divorce public, but Tom had pointed out that they didn't have any evidence since Henry was with the paper and could easily discredit their claim. And he had also suggested that for Diana's sake she shouldn't do that since if they backed Henry to a corner he might want to harm Diana, and they couldn't let that happen since Diana had acted under his instructions to help Mia leave with her parents.

The last two weeks since leaving Henry had been a surreal experience. For the first time since her marriage to him, Mia felt really happy, because she now had the support of her family.

Although the happiness was tainted by the ever-present fear of Henry's retribution. Every creak of the house and every unexpected sound made her heart race, but the assurance from Tom and Harry that they were keeping a vigilant watch over Henry gave her some semblance of calm.

"Are you sure you don't want to go to the salon?" her mother asked softly, breaking the silence.

"You don't have to worry about Henry. I'm sure he won't dare try to harass you publicly."

Mia opened her eyes and met her mother's gaze in the mirror. Her mother's concern was evident in her eyes, a mix of guilt and love. "I'd rather remain indoors," Mia replied, her voice steady but firm.

"But you have been indoors for the last two weeks," her mother pointed out, her tone gently insistent.

"I will remain indoors until Henry is taken care of. I don't want to take any risks, Mom. Trust me, I know him better than anyone else. He's a madman, and he won't stop until he gets what he wants. And no matter how much I trust you to keep me safe, I'm not going to thrust myself out there for him to get me. Henry has eyes and hands everywhere to do his dirty jobs."

Her mother sighed deeply, the weight of her regret palpable. "I'm sorry you have to go through all of this because of us."

"It's not because of you," Mia said, her voice softening. "You may have played a role, no doubt, but this is all on Henry. Don't worry. I believe it will be over soon enough."

"If you say so. I'm done," her mother said, setting down the hair dryer.

Mia looked at herself in the mirror, her hair now smooth and glossy. She reached out and touched her mother's hand, a silent gesture of forgiveness and understanding. Her mother squeezed her hand in return, tears glistening in her eyes.

"Thank you, Mom," Mia whispered.

Her mother nodded, unable to speak. The bond between them, though strained, was slowly healing. They stayed there in silence for a moment, the air thick with unspoken words and shared pain.

"Why don't we make some tea," Mia suggested, wanting to prolong the moment of peace.

Her mother smiled back, a glimmer of hope in her eyes. "I'd like that," her mother said, and together they walked to the kitchen.

As they worked side by side, Mia felt a sense of normalcy returning. It was fragile, like a delicate piece of glass, but it was there.

"Do you remember how we used to have tea parties when I was little?" Mia asked, a hint of nostalgia in her voice.

Her mother laughed softly. "Of course. You always insisted on using the fancy china."

Mia smiled, the memory warming her heart. "Those were good times."

"They were," her mother agreed, a wistful look in her eyes.

As they sat down with their tea, Mia felt a sense of contentment. She took a deep breath, letting the warmth of the tea and the love of her family fill her with strength. It was a fleeting moment of tranquility, but it was enough to give her strength.

The doorbell rang, startling them both. Mia's heart raced, but she forced herself to stay calm. Her mother stood up to answer the door, her expression cautious.

"Stay here. It's probably just a neighbor," she said, trying to reassure Mia.

Mia nodded, though her anxiety spiked. She listened intently as her mother opened the door and exchanged a few words with the visitor. A moment later, her mother returned, holding a package.

"It's a package for you," she said, handing it to Mia.

"For me?" Mia asked as she took the package, her curiosity piqued.

She couldn't imagine who would be delivering a package to her. She opened it carefully, revealing a single rose flower and a novel.

"Who sent this?" she asked, looking up at her mom.

Her mother shook her head. "There was no note and the delivery man didn't say."

Mia's brows pulled together as she opened the novel and tears filled her eyes when she saw Jeff's neat handwriting on the front page of the novel.

[Hey, beautiful. Today is my day off. I was out and wanted to get you something since I can't visit you. I hope this makes you smile. Think of me when you read it. Winks. Your Guardian Angel]

"What does it say? Who is it from?" Her mother asked when she saw her teary smile.

"It's from a dear friend," Mia said, her voice choked with emotion as she brushed off her tears.

She turned to her mother, a small smile playing on her lips. "I need a moment to give my friend a call," Mia said, excusing herself as she headed for her room.

Alone in her room, Mia smiled as she dialed Jeff's line. Jeff picked on the second ring.

"I guess you got my gift," he said, and she grinned.

"I did. Why didn't you tell me it was your day off or that you were sending me anything when we spoke last night," Mia pointed out.

"I heard ladies love to read them. Don't you?" He asked, and she giggled.

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"It was meant to be a surprise. I kept wondering what to get you and decided to settle for that since I know you love to read," he said and Mia smiled.

"Thanks. I will definitely think about you as the male lead when reading," she teased and Jeff chuckled.

"You haven't checked what the book is about? Have you?" He asked, laughing softly.

"It's a romance novel. Isn't?" She asked, narrowing her eyes as she went to pick up the book.

Mia's jaw dropped when she saw it was an erotica, "How could you?" She asked laughing in disbelief.

"I heard ladies love to read them. Don't you?" He asked, and she giggled.

"I've never read an erotica," she confessed.

"That's good then. It means I got you your first erotica so you have to read it," he said, and she sighed.

"You realize eroticas have a way of turning someone on, right?" She asked in a low voice.

"Yeah. I know that. Why?" Jeff asked innocently.

"What am I supposed to do if I'm turned on?"

"Think about me when you pleasure yourself of course," he said in a husky voice, and she frowned.

"Pleasure myself? I don't know how to do that," she said in a quiet voice.

"You don't?" Jeff asked, surprised by that.

Mia blushed as she shook her head even though she knew he couldn't see her. "No."

"Interesting. The more I get to know you the more interesting I find you," Jeff said and Mia bit her lip.

"Do you do it? I mean pleasure yourself?" She asked curiously and Jeff smiled at the innocence in her voice.

Before Jeff could respond, Mia's phone buzzed with a phone call from Harry, and just then her mother knocked on her bedroom door.

"Nessa, can you come out here for a minute?" Her mother called in a strained voice causing her to frown.

"I think something is up. I will call you back," Mia said, hanging up as she quickly received Harry's call.

"Henry is about to make his move now. Don't panic. Go along with his plan Everything is under control," Harry said immediately she received the call, and she took a deep breath.

"Alright."

Mia felt a sudden surge of determination as she headed for the door. She was ready to face whatever came next with courage and resolve, knowing that she was not alone.

She would not let Henry control her happiness any longer. She had a complete support system now, and she would use it to her advantage. She would fight for her happiness, and she would win.

Chapter 920 Sneak In

The starless night was cloaked in a thick blanket of darkness as Andy drove back to her house, the road illuminated only by the city lights.

The housewarming party at Jade's had finally come to an end, and the quiet solitude of the drive was a sharp difference from the lively chatter and laughter that had filled the evening.

Candace had joined the party virtually and it had been so much fun.

Andy's phone rang, breaking into her thoughts and she glanced at the screen and smiled when she saw Harry's name flash across it. She answered with a swipe, her voice steady.

"I'm no longer with your girl," Andy announced before Harry could speak.

"Great!" Harry's voice came through, slightly muffled. "How did it go? Has everyone else left?"

"Yeah, everyone's gone," Andy replied, her eyes fixed on the road ahead. "Jade's alone now."

Harry sighed in relief. "Thanks for letting me know. I appreciate it."

"No problem," Andy said, her voice softening. "Take care, Harry."

"You too, Andy. Drive safe," he added before the call ended.

As she continued driving, her thoughts began to drift. Cassidy. His name echoed in her mind like a haunting refrain.

Once again she was going home, and she desperately wished and hoped that he'd visit her.

Since she arrived in Ludus, she had done so much to get his attention, but he remained in hiding and it was beginning to make her wonder if he had completely forgotten about her after letting her go.

It was frustrating, maddening even, to return to the house every day and night without the surprise of his presence, or at least a text from him when she so desperately wanted to hear from him.

The city lights blurred past her as she wondered how much longer it would take. What more could she do? What else did she need to do to make him come see her? The questions churned in her mind, creating a storm of uncertainty and longing.

When she finally pulled up to her apartment building, the darkness seemed to press in closer. She turned off the engine, the sudden silence almost deafening.

The night air was cool against her skin as she stepped out of the car, the keys jangling softly in her hand.

Just as Andy entered her house, flicking on the hallway light. The glow spread weakly, barely pushing back the shadows.

She paused just inside the door, a strange feeling prickling at the back of her mind. Perhaps it was because of the times she had spent hiding and working as a stripper, her sixth sense was very developed and she could tell that something was off.

The air seemed heavier, the silence more profound. She stood there, her senses on high alert, trying to pinpoint what was wrong.

Before she could process her thoughts, a voice emerged from inside the living room, startling her. "Are you going to stand there all night, Andy? Or do you plan to come in?"

Her heart leaped into her throat, and she hurried towards the sound, her pulse quickening. "Alex?" she breathed, barely believing her ears.

She reached for the light switch, but before she could turn it on, he grabbed her hand, pulling her back into the shadows, his breath hot on her neck.

"Why have you been trying to get my attention, Andy?" Cassidy's grip was firm, his presence overwhelming in the dark.

"What do you want?" he asked, his voice low and intense. "Why do you want to see me again?"

She took a shaky breath, her heart pounding in her chest. "I want you," she confessed, her voice trembling with the weight of her emotions.

He sighed, the sound heavy with frustration. "You shouldn't. We both know it won't work," he said, his tone rough. "You know you can't have me."

"Why not?" she demanded, her voice rising with desperation.

Cassidy's frustration seemed to grow, his grip on her tightening. "I promised I would let you go, Andy. You're making it hard for me. Do you have any idea how hard I've tried to not reach out to you this whole time? I'm trying to keep my promise to you," he said through gritted teeth.

"What if I don't want you to? What if I no longer mind about the past."

"I do. I mind. You need to move on, Andy."

"What if I can't? Do you think I haven't tried? I can't get over you. I don't want to. I want you. I've been longing for your touch. Make love to me," Andy said suddenly, her voice a mix of plea and demand.

Cassidy stiffened, his breath catching. "I don't think it's a good idea," he said, his voice barely above a whisper.

"Let me worry about that," she countered, her determination clear.

Before he could protest further, she turned in his arms and kissed him, her lips pressing against his with a fierce intensity.

For a moment, Cassidy didn't move, his body rigid with conflict. But then he gave in, his arms wrapping around her, pulling her closer.

The kiss deepened, filled with a desperate passion that spoke of longing and unresolved emotions.

Andy's hands roamed over his back, feeling the tension in his muscles. She poured all her feelings into the kiss, hoping to break through the walls he had built around himself.

Cassidy responded, his kiss growing more urgent, more demanding. The darkness around them seemed to amplify their senses, every touch, every breath, more intense.

Andy could feel Cassidy's hesitance melting away with each kiss, each caress, his initial resistance giving way to the raw, unfiltered desire they both felt.

Cassidy's hands were everywhere all at once, caressing her back, kneading her boobs and ass, sliding under her shirt, tracing patterns on her skin that made her shiver. His breath was hot against her neck as he pressed kisses along her jawline, down to the sensitive spot just below her ear.

Cassidy's hands moved to her hips, pulling her against him, his breath ragged, and Andy arched into him, her fingers working to unbutton his shirt, her breath coming in short, sharp gasps.

Andy felt the heat between them growing, her own hands exploring the familiar but still electrifying landscape of his body.

They moved together to the room, the air thick with the mingled scent of their longing and desperation as they stumbled through the darkness, their movements clumsy and frantic.

Cassidy's hands tangled in her hair, his lips never leaving hers. The world outside ceased to exist, leaving only the two of them in a whirlwind of passion and need.

As they got to the bed, Cassidy pulled back, "Andy, are you sure about this?" He whispered, his voice rough with need and something deeper, something unresolved.

In response, she pulled him back to herself and captured his lips again, her kiss answering the question better than words ever could. She wanted him, needed him, and there was no turning back now.

Clothes were discarded in a hurried, almost frantic fashion, the fabric falling to the floor in forgotten heaps beside the bed.

Cassidy's touch was both gentle and demanding, his hands mapping out every curve of her body, relearning the terrain they had once known so well.

Andy's fingers dug into his shoulders as he kissed her nipples, her body arching and twisting beneath his, a silent plea for more.

Cassidy kissed her nipples all the way down to the spot between her thighs that most needed his attention and as he pleased her with his tongue and fingers, Andy cried out in pleasure.

After she had orgasmed, Cassidy pulled away and lay on the bed beside her, causing Andy to turn on her side to look at him.

She could feel the tension in him, the war within him between holding back and giving in completely.

"Please, Cassidy," Andy whispered, her voice a mix of plea and command. "Don't hold back. I need all of you."

Something in her words seemed to break through his last barrier of resistance. With a groan, Cassidy rolled over and positioned himself on top of her.

Andy arched her waist and met his thrust as he slid into her. Their movements were a dance, a familiar rhythm that had been dormant for too long.

Andy's moans filled the room, mingling with Cassidy's low groans, the sound of their passion echoing off the walls.

As they moved together, their bodies entwined, Andy felt a rush of emotions that went beyond the physical. This was about more than just desire; it was about connection and about healing old wounds.

Every touch, every kiss, was a reminder of the passion they shared and what they had missed.

As Cassidy's movements grew more urgent, more insistent, Andy matched his intensity, their bodies moving in perfect harmony, driven by a need that had been simmering beneath the surface for far too long.

In the dark, time seemed to blur, the world outside fading away until there was nothing but the two of them.

Andy felt a shuddering release as they reached the peak together, their cries of pleasure mingling in the air. For a moment, everything else ceased to matter, their past, their pain, all of it swallowed up in the pure, unadulterated connection they shared.

Breathless and trembling, they collapsed together and Cassidy's arms wrapped around her, pulling her close, his breath warm against her skin.

Andy nestled into him, her head resting on his chest, listening to the rapid beat of his heart.

For a long time, they lay there in silence, their bodies still intertwined, the room filled with the afterglow of their lovemaking. Andy felt a sense of peace as if she had finally found a part of herself that had been missing.

But reality soon began to intrude, and Cassidy knew they couldn't stay like this forever.

As if sensing his thoughts Andy sighed, "What happens now?" she asked softly, her voice barely above a whisper.

Cassidy sighed, his expression conflicted. "I don't know, Andy," he admitted.

Andy nodded, understanding the truth in his words. "I want you, Cas," she whispered.

"Why? You shouldn't want me, Andy. You have everything going for you right now. You should focus on building your life. Meeting someone more deserving. I don't deserve you, Andy. I could never be good enough for you," he said, and Andy drew a deep breath.

While Cassidy struggled with his response, she reached for the bedside switch on turned on the light so she could see his face.

"Wanting you has never been the problem, Andy," he said, trying to adjust his eyes to the sudden brightness of the room.

"Good," Andy said as she lay down beside him again, resting her head on his shoulder.

"But that doesn't mean this is going to work," he said, in case she had misinterpreted his statement.

"We have to try," she said firmly. "We owe it to ourselves to see if we can make this work."

Cassidy's eyes softened, and he leaned in to press a gentle kiss to her shoulder. "It's not that easy. You have your life here, and I have mine there. What do you think would happen to you and your career if anyone finds out who your partner is? Do you think that is something you'd be able to hide?"

"You're right," she said quietly. "But we will try. Let's take it one day at a time and see where it leads us. And you know there's always the option of you getting a surgery and changing your face, right?" She asked, and he chuckled.

"That's not an option."

"Why not?" She asked with a frown.

"Apart from the fact that I like my face a lot, and don't want to change it, Mari likes it too. I can't give her a new daddy," he said, and Andy sat up when she realized she had yet to inquire about her.

"You're right. I didn't think of that. I like your face too. How's she doing?" Andy asked curiously.

"She misses you a lot. She said you promised to take her to an amusement park. Why did you do that?" Cassidy asked and she frowned.

"I never promised her that. I only said there were lots of fun places in Sogal and if she EVER visits me, I will take her to an amusement park," Andy said and Cassidy chuckled.

"I like seeing and hearing you laugh, but unfortunately you don't do that often," Andy said with a soft smile as she looked at him.

"There isn't much to laugh about in my life," he said, and her heart broke for him.

"Let's make this work, Cassidy. One day at a time, that's all I ask for. We don't have to make public appearances. You can sneak in this way and surprise me whenever you can in the middle of the night. And you can arrange for me to visit you whenever I can. Can't we do that? And maybe you can bring Mari over too, so she sees what the rest of the world is like over here," Andy suggested.

Cassidy took a deep breath, "I will think about it."

Andy smiled, a sense of hope blossoming in her chest. "I'd really like that," she said, snuggling closer to him.

As they lay there, wrapped in each other's arms, Andy felt a newfound determination take root within her. She had tried hard to get Cassidy's attention, and now that she had it, she wasn't going to let go easily.

Rolling on top of him, she smiled, "I don't know how much time we've got, but I don't intend to waste it," she said with a wink, making him laugh as she lowered her lips to his.

She knew they had a long road ahead of them, but as long as they faced it together, she believed they could overcome any obstacle.