

Wild Night 921

Chapter 921 Clingy Harry

Harry stood in the hallway of Jade's apartment building with his fingers hovering over the doorbell, a nervous excitement thrumming through his veins.

He had spent most of the day thinking about this moment, about seeing Jade again after her housewarming party with the girls.

He took a deep breath, his finger pressing the button with a sense of finality.

Inside the apartment, Jade was tidying up, humming softly to herself happily. She had spent the day with her friends, laughing and chatting, and now she was ready to have some time for herself.

The sound of the doorbell cut through her thoughts. "Sharon must've forgotten something," she muttered, a smile tugging at her lips.

Rushing to the door, she threw it open, ready with a playful admonishment but her eyes widened in surprise before a delighted smile spread across her face when she saw Harry standing there, looking uncharacteristically sheepish under the dim hallway light.

He held a brown paper bag crinkled in one hand, the other rubbing the back of his neck.

"Babe!" she exclaimed, unable to hide her happiness. Seeing her a passerby might think she had not seen Harry in weeks.

"Surprise," he grinned, a hint of nervousness in his voice.

A part of him had been sort of worried that she might not want him around seeing as she had changed a lot in the last two weeks and barely spent time with him even though they were back together, but seeing her excitement at seeing him, his heart lifted.

"What are you doing here by this time of the night?" She asked, a delighted bubble rising in her chest.

"Did you really think I was going to miss having a private housewarming party with you?" he replied, raising an eyebrow playfully, his eyes sparkling with mischief.

Jade laughed, the sound filling the space between them. "Come in, come in," she said, stepping aside to let him in. "I wasn't expecting you at all!"

Harry entered, the scent and warmth of her apartment wrapping around him like an embrace. Harry took in the scene with a soft smile, the little touches of Jade's personality evident in every corner.

"I see you have fully settled in," he observed as he placed the bag on the table, and moved to the couch to sit down.

"Yeah. Thanks to the girls it was quick," she said, and with a playful glint in her eye, she straddled him.

"It would have been even quicker if I was here," he pointed out and she laughed as she leaned down and captured his lips in a kiss, a silent apology for asking him to leave earlier.

Harry pulled her closer, the kiss deepening with a hunger that spoke volumes. When they finally broke apart, both breathless, a comfortable silence settled between them.

"I'm sorry for asking you to leave earlier," Jade said, pulling back slightly to look into his eyes. "I just wanted to spend some time alone with the girls." She murmured, tracing a finger along his jawline.

Harry shook his head, a smile playing on his lips. "It's okay, as long as you had fun," Harry replied, cupping her cheek.

Jade's eyes lit up. "I did! We had a really good time."

Harry raised an eyebrow, feigning mock indignation. "I can't believe you just admitted to having a good time without me."

Jade laughed a melodic sound that made Harry's heart swell. "A good time with the girls is different from a good time with you."

He chuckled. "Oh, really? How different?"

"More... intense," she whispered, her voice husky. "I'm happy you're here now. It's such a nice surprise."

Harry chuckled, his hands sliding up her back. "So, how was your day? What did you girls do?"

Jade sighed contentedly. "We ate, had some drinks, chatted about life, and just enjoyed each other's company. Candace joined us on a video call. It was really nice. What about you? What did you do?"

Harry nodded. "After I left you, I joined Tom at the meeting and after that, we hung out together deliberating on Mia's issue."

Jade's expression turned serious. "What's up with Mia now? Is she okay?"

Harry sighed. "Yeah. Henry is about to make his move on Mia."

Jade's eyes widened in concern. "What is he up to now?"

Harry shook his head. "I'm not here to talk about Henry and Mia."

Jade's expression softened, a playful smile curving her lips. "Oh? What are you here for?" she asked, her tone teasing.

Harry mirrored her smile, his gaze dropping to her mouth. "Just wanted to spend some time with my always-busy girlfriend."

Jade swatted his arm playfully. "Hey, I'm not always busy!"

Harry laughed, the sound deep and rich. "Yes, you are. You're always so busy these days. And I just want to spend some quality time with you and have a feel of your place."

Jade leaned in closer, her lips brushing against his ear. "You should know I'm not too busy for you. I've just been trying to settle in at work and set up my place."

Harry's eyes gleamed with affection. "Now that you're done setting up your place and moving in, can I have you to myself tomorrow since it's not a work day? Maybe we can go on a date tomorrow?"

A warm thrill shot through her. "Yeah. Let's do that. I'd really like that," she replied, leaning into his embrace.

Harry's expression turned more serious. "So, how's therapy going?"

Jade's eyes sparkled with a mix of excitement and relief. "It's been great so far. I'm glad I signed up for it. I can't wait for us to start our couple counseling next month."

Harry nodded, "Me too."

Jade smiled, a thoughtful look crossing her face. "You know, as much as it sucked... everything falling apart... I'm glad it all played out that way. It was an eye-opener for me, and it made me finally take the bull by the horns, and I'm happy now."

"I wish I could say the same. I have mixed feelings about the way everything happened, to be honest. I just wish it didn't have to happen like that. I wish that wasn't what it took to get you to get on this path. I miss the clingy Jade sometimes but I'm also happy you're working on yourself now."

Jade shook her head, a soft smile playing on her lips. "Get used to this Jade. This is the only Jade you're going to be getting. But I don't mind a clingy Harry, though."

Harry laughed, his eyes locking onto hers. "I'm glad you don't mind having a clingy boyfriend, 'cause I intend to be clingy as hell," he murmured, his lips meeting hers in a tender kiss as she laughed.

As their kiss deepened, Harry's hands roamed over her back, pulling her closer, while Jade's fingers tangled in his hair. As the intensity between them grew, their need for each other became unbearable.

Breathless, Harry pulled back slightly, his eyes dark with desire. "How am I supposed to carry you up the ladder to your mezzanine level bed?" he asked, a playful glint in his eye.

Jade laughed the sound husky with desire. "We don't have to go to the bed. The couch or the floor will do just fine."

Harry's eyes gleamed with a mix of amusement and longing. "The floor it is, then."

Jade's lips met his in a fierce kiss, her hands tugging at his shirt. They tumbled to the floor, their laughter mingling with the sound of rustling clothes. The feel of his skin against hers sent shivers down her spine, each touch igniting a fire within her.

As they moved together, their bodies finding a rhythm, Harry's mind spun with the intensity of his emotions. This was what he had been missing, this connection, this love. Jade's touch, her kiss, and her very presence filled him with a sense of completeness he had longed for.

An hour later, they lay tangled together on the floor, their breathing heavy and satisfied. Harry's fingers traced lazy patterns on her back, a contented silence settling over them.

"I've missed this," Jade whispered, her voice barely audible.

Harry tightened his hold on her, his lips brushing against her temple. "Me too," he murmured. "I've missed us."

Jade's heart swelled with love for the man beside her. "I'm so glad you came tonight," she said softly, her fingers tracing the lines of his face.

Harry smiled, his eyes filled with warmth. "I admit that I was sort of worried you wouldn't want to see me," he confessed.

Jade frowned as she pulled away to look into his face, "Why would you ever think that?"

Harry sighed, "I don't know. I just sort of had the feeling that you were still sort of keeping your distance even though you said we were cool now. You've not made any attempt to visit me in two weeks. You've not gone on a date with me. You're usually on your phone during the drive to and from your therapy sessions. We barely talk as much as we used to," he said, and Jade shook her head.

"Aww. It wasn't intentional. I didn't mean to make you feel that way, I promise. And there's never a time when I'm not happy to see you no matter how awkward it might be. I'm sorry you felt that way," she said, leaning forward to kiss his cheek.

Before she could kiss his cheek, he turned so that she kissed his lips instead and they both laughed.

"Are you really happy, goddess?" Harry asked, looking into her face.

Jade nodded, "Yeah. I'm happy."

"That's good. I want you to always be happy," he said, pulling her back to himself.

"What about you? Are you happy?" Jade asked, turning in his arms to look at him.

"I'm happy, but not contented yet. I will be when you're finally my wife and we are living together," he said and she laughed.

"I barely just moved in here and you're talking about living together. I'm going to be here for at least a year, Jonas," she said, and he sighed.

"I figured you'd say that. So, I'm just going to move in with you," he joked and she laughed.

"But seriously, you don't mind, right?" She asked and he shrugged.

"I brought this upon myself, I don't have a choice," he said and she shook her head.

"Don't say that like it's some kind of punishment. I'm not doing this to punish you. I'm doing this because I want to. And it is good for us."

"I know that. Logically it all makes sense. I get it. But I just can't help how I feel," he said and she kissed him.

"You can visit me whenever you want to. I will visit you too. We will go on dates. Everything will be okay," she assured him as she rested her head on his chest.

"I'm sure it will," Harry murmured, kissing her shoulder.

As they lay there, wrapped in each other's arms, Jade felt a sense of peace wash over her. She had found her place, her home, not just in her apartment, but in the heart of the man she loved.

The future stretched out before them, filled with possibilities, and she knew a new chapter was beginning for her. It was a chapter filled with love, with hope, with confidence, and with the promise of a future built together. And for the first time in a long while, Jade felt truly at home.

Chapter 922 Madhouse

An Hour Earlier

Mia emerged from her room, her mother's worried expression meeting her at the threshold. The tension in the air was palpable as they made their way to the living room.

Standing there, in a crisp suit and an air of smug authority, was Henry.

Henry's eyes scanned her, a cruel smile curling on his lips. "Vanessa, my dear," he began, his tone dripping with false affection. "I've come to take you back. It's time to end this charade."

Her mother stepped forward, her voice trembling with restrained anger. "You have no right to be here, Henry. Vanessa doesn't want to see you."

Henry's eyes narrowed, a flash of irritation crossing his face. "Stay out of this. This is between Vanessa and me."

Mia took a deep breath, steadying herself. "What do you want, Henry?"

"I want my wife back," he said, his voice dangerously calm. "You've had your little rebellion, but it's time to return home where you belong."

Mia stood tall, refusing to let him see her fear. "I'm not going anywhere with you, Henry."

Henry's smile faltered a flicker of anger in his eyes. "You don't have a choice, Vanessa. You're coming with me now, or I'll make things very difficult for your family."

Mia glanced at her mother, who was visibly shaking but stood her ground. "And what do you plan to do, Henry? You've already withdrawn your support from the company. There's nothing else you can threaten us with."

Henry's smile returned, colder and more calculating. "You underestimate me, Mia. I have ways of making you comply. If you want to see your father again, I suggest you come with me," he threatened and Mia's heart skipped a beat.

"What did you do to my husband?" Mia's mother asked before Mia could say a word.

"I haven't done anything to him yet, but I will if you anger me any more than you have already done," he said to her before turning to Mia again.

"So, what is it going to be? Will you come with me or do I have to force you?" Henry asked coldly.

Mia glanced at her mother, and her mother shook her head, "Don't go with him, Nessa. Let him do his worst to us. We are not going to stand back and let him hurt you again. I won't," her mother said passionately, pulling Mia to stand behind her.

Mia's heart raced, but she remembered Harry's words: Don't panic. Go along with his plan.

"Don't worry, mom. I have to go with him," Mia said but her mother shook her head.

"No. Don't. You shouldn't worry..."

"I will go with him, Mom. I want to. Don't worry about me," Mia said, squeezing her mother's hand, while Henry smiled triumphantly.

"Good choice," he said as he stepped aside and gestured for her to go through the door.

Mia's mother grabbed her hand as she took a step, "Nessa, you don't have to do this," she pleaded with tears in her eyes.

"Trust me, mom. I'll be fine," Mia said softly, looking into her mother's eyes.

Reluctantly, her mother let go of her hand and Mia headed for the door.

As they got into the car, the sound of the child lock clicking into place was subtle but unmistakable.

Mia glanced at Henry, his face stony as he started the car and focused on the road ahead.

Despite Harry's assurance, her heart began to race as she noticed they weren't heading towards the house, but she forced herself to stay calm and to think rationally.

"Where are we going?" she asked, her voice as steady as she could manage.

"Where mad people like you are kept," he replied coldly without taking his gaze off the road.

Mia's pulse quickened. "But we both know I'm not mad."

"Do we? Time will tell," Henry said, a smirk playing at the corners of his mouth.

The car sped along, covering miles that seemed to stretch endlessly. The landscape became more desolate, buildings giving way to empty fields and dense woods.

Mia's anxiety grew with each passing mile. She tried to memorize landmarks, but the scenery was unfamiliar.

Eventually, they arrived at a dilapidated building surrounded by high, rusted fences. Weeds and overgrown shrubs dominated the grounds, and the place exuded an air of abandonment and decay.

"Where are we?" Mia asked, her voice tinged with fear.

Henry turned off the engine and smiled grimly at her. "A madhouse reserved specially for you. You'll spend the rest of your life in here," he said, pleased with himself for finally succeeding in getting her here.

Although it had taken him two weeks to work it out, he had finally achieved his plans.

In the last two weeks since Vanessa had left, all he could think about was how to teach her and her family a lesson for daring to defy him the way they had done.

He had not said a word to Diana in the last two weeks, and she had been smart to stay out of his way.

The only reason he had not descended on her was because of his love for her and the child she was carrying in her womb. For that reason he had stayed away from her and from the house.

Now that he had gotten Vanessa here, he could finally forgive Diana for messing with his plans and go ahead to marry her.

Mia's breath caught in her throat. "You won't get away with this," she said, her voice shaking but defiant. "My parents know you took me. They will definitely find me."

Henry's smile twisted into a sneer. "Do you really think your parents will go unpunished after disrespecting me the way they did? Now that you're taking care of, guess who I'm going to deal with next?"

"What are you planning to do to them?" she demanded, dread coiling in her stomach.

"Don't worry," Henry replied with a chilling calmness. "You will hear all about it from your prison. Get down." He ordered as he got out of the car with the car keys.

Mia closed her eyes, forcing herself to calm down and remember that Harry and Tom had her back, but no matter how hard she tried, she couldn't shake off the fear.

Before Mia could calm herself, Henry opened her door, grabbed her arm, and dragged her out of the car. She struggled, her feet digging into the ground, but his grip was ironclad.

He yanked her by her hair, forcing her to stumble and nearly fall, her scalp burning from the pain as he dragged her inside.

The asylum's interior was even worse than its exterior. The air was thick with the scent of mildew and neglect. Dim lights flickered overhead, casting eerie shadows on the crumbling walls. The sound of their footsteps echoed ominously through the empty halls.

Henry pushed her through a series of corridors, each more decayed than the last until they reached the final room down the hall.

Unlike the rest of the building, the room seemed to have been renovated recently. Inside, two men and a lady stood waiting.

The moment Henry pushed Mia into the room, he frowned when he saw the unfamiliar faces, "Who are you? Where's Ramsey?" Henry barked, his eyes narrowing in suspicion.

They exchanged glances, and then the leader of the group stepped forward. "Ramsey got held up. He sent us instead."

Henry's eyes darted around the room, his instincts on high alert. "I've never seen any of you? Why didn't Ramsey call to let me know he was sending new people?" he demanded, his voice low and threatening.

Before the man could respond, a man emerged from behind Henry. In a swift, practiced motion, he jabbed a needle into his neck.

Henry's eyes widened in shock as he tried to turn around, but his body betrayed him. The sedative took effect almost instantly, and he crumpled to the floor, unconscious.

Mia stood frozen, her heart pounding in her chest. The leader of the group stepped forward, his expression softening slightly as he looked at her.

"Are you okay?" he asked, his voice surprisingly gentle.

Mia nodded numbly, unable to process what had just happened. "Who are you?" she finally managed to ask, her voice barely above a whisper.

"We're friends," the man replied. "We're here to help you."

Mia felt a rush of relief, her knees threatening to give way. "Thank you," she said, her voice trembling with emotion.

The man nodded and gestured to the others. "I will get her out of here and get rid of his car. Tie him up," he added, pointing to Henry's limp form.

As they led her out of the asylum, Mia felt a mix of gratitude and hope. Once again, Tom and Harry had proved that she could put her complete trust in them.

She had no idea what was going to happen next, or what they planned to do to Henry, but she didn't care. He had walked right into his own trap so whatever happened to him was what he deserved.

All she cared about now was the fact that she was safe now. That was all that mattered. She could finally escape Henry's grasp for good.

Hello, dearest readers!

After thinking about it for some time, I've decided that Jamal and Dawn's story will be Volume 2 instead of starting a new book for them.

Chapter 923 Living Hell

As they drove away from the decrepit asylum, Mia clutched her trembling hands in her lap, her mind replaying the harrowing events over and over.

The adrenaline that had kept her composed now drained away, leaving her feeling raw. The realization of how close she had come to being locked up here for life had Tom and Harry not been a step ahead of Henry overwhelmed her, and she broke into uncontrollable sobs.

The man driving the car, who had introduced himself as Barry, glanced at her through the rearview mirror with a look of understanding and sympathy.

"You're safe now," he said gently, his voice a soothing balm to her frayed nerves. "We'll get you home."

Mia could only nod, her sobs making it impossible to form words. The ride seemed to stretch on forever, but eventually, familiar landmarks began to appear, signaling that they were nearing her neighborhood. The sense of relief that washed over her was almost too much to bear.

When the car finally pulled up in front of her house, Mia took a deep, shaky breath, trying to compose herself.

As soon as the car door opened, her mother, Maria, rushed out, her face a mixture of worry and relief.

"Nessa!" She cried, enveloping her daughter in a tight embrace the moment she stepped out of the car. "Oh, thank God you're safe."

Mia clung to her mother, her body shaking with the force of her sobs. "Mom," she managed to choke out, her voice breaking.

Her mother stroked her hair, whispering soothing words. "It's okay, sweetheart. You're home now. You're safe."

Mia's father, Robert, appeared at the door, his expression grave. "What happened? Where did he take you?" he asked, his voice tense with concern.

Mia couldn't answer. The words were trapped in her throat, suffocated by her tears. She shook her head, her sobs intensifying.

"Let's get you inside," Maria said softly, guiding Mia toward the house. "You need to rest."

They led her to her bedroom, the familiar surroundings offering a small measure of comfort. Maria helped her out of her shoes and gently tucked her into bed. "Just rest, honey," she said, brushing a strand of hair from Mia's face. "We'll talk later."

Mia nodded weakly, her eyes heavy with exhaustion. As Maria left the room, closing the door softly behind her, Mia finally allowed herself to close her eyes, the weight of the day pulling her into a restless sleep.

Robert paced the living room, his mind racing with questions and worries. His wife just joined him when Barry knocked on the door, reminding them that Mia had not returned alone and she had been dropped off.

Immediately, Robert opened the door, "I'm so sorry I didn't think to thank you. Thank you for bringing my daughter home. If you don't mind me asking, who are you? And how did you find her?" Robert asked, assuming that he had rescued Mia from Henry.

After he got home earlier and his wife told him that Henry had taken Mia back to his house, they had hurried over to Henry's place but had met only Diana, who told them Henry had not been home since the previous day.

"I'm Barry. I have to leave in a moment, so listen carefully," Barry said urgently. "You're going to receive a call for an interview soon. It's important that you accept it."

"An interview?" Robert asked, confused. "About what?"

"About your daughter's mental state," Barry replied. "It's crucial that you take this opportunity to set the record straight and expose Henry's true nature."

Robert's heart pounded in his chest. "I understand. I'll do it."

"Good," Barry said and as he turned to leave, Mia's mother stopped him.

"Where did you find her? Where did that monster take her? Why is she not saying anything?"

Barry sighed, "I think she is in the best position to answer your questions."

"Are you the one who sent me those documents two weeks ago? The proof of Henry's deeds?" Robert asked and Barry nodded.

"Yes, I did. I have to leave now," Barry said with a polite nod before walking away.

As soon as he drove off, Robert's phone rang. He took a deep breath and answered when he saw it was an unfamiliar number. "Hello?"

"Mr. Lawson," a professional-sounding voice said. "This is Amelia Hayes from the Daily Tribune. We'd like to interview you regarding your daughter's recent ordeal and her mental health. Would you be available to speak with us?"

Robert's grip tightened on the phone. "Yes, I would. When would you like to schedule the interview?"

"We can conduct the interview over the phone right now if that's convenient for you," Amelia suggested.

Robert glanced down the hallway that led to Mia's bedroom, then nodded to himself. "Yes, now is fine."

"Thank you, Mr. Lawson," Amelia said, her tone professional but empathetic. "First, let me say that we're all very concerned about your daughter's well-being. Can you tell us what happened happened?"

Robert took a deep breath, gathering his thoughts. "Yes. I will tell you everything."

Amelia paused for a moment, her voice becoming more serious. "Mr. Lawson, can you tell us about your daughter's mental state?"

Robert's jaw tightened. "Vanessa is not mentally ill. She is perfectly fine. Henry has been using these allegations to control and manipulate her. He's a dangerous man, and he needs to be stopped."

"But you also stated that she wasn't..."

"I lied. I'm ashamed of myself as her father. I lied because I didn't want to go against Henry. But now I do not care. My daughter's life and happiness are more important to me than anything else, so I'm going to say the truth," Robert said, his voice firm.

"I want people to understand that Vanessa is a victim of abuse. She's been through a lot, but she's strong, and we're doing everything we can to support her now. She didn't lose her memory. She ran away from him because of all he did to her but he managed to find her and bring her back. No one should have to go through what Vanessa has endured. I'm glad she has signed the divorce papers now and is home with us."

"Thank you, Mr. Lawson," Amelia said. "We'll make sure your message is heard."

As Robert ended the call, he felt a mix of relief and determination. He knew the interview was just the first step in a long battle to protect his daughter and hold Henry accountable. But for now, he was grateful that she was home and safe.

Away from there, Diana paced around her room, her mind a whirlwind of anxiety and determination.

The events of the past two weeks had left her deeply unsettled and now she couldn't shake the gnawing worry about where Henry might have taken Vanessa.

Henry's erratic behavior and sinister intentions had escalated beyond her control, and waiting for her anonymous ally to take action seemed increasingly futile.

The clock on the wall ticked relentlessly, each second amplifying her impatience. She had to do something before he returned. She had to make her move now.

Diana's resolve solidified. She couldn't afford to wait any longer. She walked to her closet, pushing aside a row of hanging clothes to reveal a hidden compartment she had made for herself.

Inside, she had meticulously prepared everything she would need for this moment: documents, evidence, and a small bag containing a syringe and a vial of clear liquid.

As she reached for the bag, her phone buzzed on the nightstand. Startled, she picked it up and her heart skipped a beat as she received the call when she saw it was from her anonymous ally.

"Hello?" she said, her voice a mix of urgency and hope.

"It's done," Barry said, his tone calm and composed. "Henry has been delivered to you. You're free to do with him as you please."

Diana's breath caught in her throat. "Where is he?"

"I've sent you the location. Check your messages," Barry replied. "Be careful, Diana. This is your chance to end this."

"Thank you," she said, her voice barely above a whisper. She ended the call and quickly opened the message. The address of the asylum appeared on her screen.

Picking up her bag, she headed for the door, but before she could get to the door, the doorbell rang.

Diana froze, her mind racing. She hurried to the door and opened it to find Henry's lawyer standing there, a briefcase in hand and an air of impatience about him.

"Diana," he said with a curt nod. "I'm here to meet with Henry. He asked me to come over to pick up his divorce papers."

Diana's heart pounded. "When did he tell you this?"

"In the morning," the lawyer replied, his gaze scrutinizing her.

She forced a calm smile. "Of course, come in. I will get the papers."

Leaving the lawyer in the foyer, Diana made her way to Henry's study. She rifled through the neatly organized desk until she found the envelope containing the divorce papers. Her hands trembled slightly as she took it back to the lawyer.

"Here you go," she said, handing him the envelope.

The lawyer glanced at her with suspicion. "Where is Henry? I need his signature on a few more documents."

Diana's mind raced for an explanation. "He hasn't returned home yet. I'm not sure where he is. But you can leave the documents. I'm sure he will sign them when he gets back."

The lawyer frowned but nodded. "I will take these for now. Thank you."

As soon as the lawyer left, Diana grabbed her bag and headed to her car. She drove through the dark streets, her mind a maelstrom of thoughts and emotions. The drive to the asylum felt interminable, each passing second fueling her determination.

When she finally arrived, the eerie silence of the place sent a shiver down her spine. She parked her car and walked briskly to the building, her resolve unwavering. The air inside was cold and oppressive, the remnants of its dark history palpable.

Following Barry's instructions, she made her way to the secluded room deep within the asylum. There, lying on a narrow bed, was Henry, unconscious and restrained and very much alone.

A mixture of relief and anger surged through her. She approached him cautiously, her eyes narrowing as she studied his motionless form.

Instead of waking him, Diana opened her bag and took out the syringe and vial. With steady hands, she drew the liquid into the syringe and approached Henry. Her heart pounded in her chest, but her resolve remained firm.

She injected the liquid into his arm and sat down to wait for the substance to take effect and for Henry to wake up.

Diana didn't have to wait for very long before his eyes fluttered open.

By the time Henry regained consciousness, he couldn't move. Panic flickered in his gaze as he realized his predicament, and his eyes widened in surprise when he saw Diana standing over him with a menacing smile curling her lips.

"Hello, Henry," she said, her voice dripping with cold satisfaction. "Welcome to your new reality."

Henry's eyes widened in fear, his body unresponsive to his desperate attempts to move. Diana leaned closer, her eyes blazing with a mixture of triumph and fury.

"Your life is about to become a living hell," she whispered, her words a chilling promise. "And I will make sure you suffer for every pain you've inflicted."

Henry's eyes darted around the room, his breathing rapid and shallow. He was completely at her mercy, and the realization of his helplessness sent a wave of terror through him.

"Do not bother attempting to move. You can neither move nor speak. I'm going to treat you like the animal you are. You have no idea how much I've waited for this day. How much I've longed to see you look so helpless," she said as she straightened up, her smile fading as she regarded him with cold detachment.

"This is just the beginning, Henry. I will make sure you pay for everything you've done. And I will destroy all you've worked so hard to build."

Leaving him bound and paralyzed, she walked out of the room, the echoes of her footsteps reverberating through the silent corridors.

She felt a sense of grim satisfaction knowing that she had taken control, and Henry would never be able to harm anyone again.

Instead of going back to the house, she drove to Mia's home to see if she had gotten home now and if she was alright.

Chapter 924 A Friend

Jeff paced his hotel room, his mind a storm of worry and fear. He hadn't heard from Mia since their last conversation, and each passing minute felt like an eternity.

He replayed her words over and over, the anxiety gnawing at him relentlessly. Frustrated, he tossed the phone onto the couch and ran a hand through his hair.

Sick with worry, Jeff finally decided he couldn't wait any longer. He picked up his phone and dialed Tom's number disregarding the fact that it was late at night over there in Ludus.

His heart pounded as he waited for an answer. "Tom, sorry to disturb you so late in the night," he said urgently when Tom picked up. "Have you heard from Mia? I can't get in touch with her, and I'm losing my mind here."

Gruff

Tom's voice was gruff with exhaustion since he had only just gone to bed, "I understand. Call Barry. He knows what's going on. He will explain everything."

"Barry?" Jeff repeated, a flicker of hope igniting. "Alright, I will call him. Thanks, Tom. Sorry for disturbing your sleep once," Jeff apologized as he hung up.

Jeff quickly dialed Barry's number, his fingers trembling. After a few rings, Barry answered.

"Barry, it's Jeff. I need to know what's happening with Mia. Is she okay?"

Barry's voice was calm. "Yes. Mia is at home now. She's safe. We managed to get her away from Henry."

"Henry took her? What happened?" Jeff asked and Barry calmly explained everything to him.

Relief flooded Jeff, and he sagged against the wall. "Thank God. Thank you, Barry. I will head over there now."

Without wasting another second, Jeff grabbed his room key and rushed out the door. The drive to Mia's house felt agonizingly slow, but he finally arrived, his heart pounding with anticipation.

He hurried up the steps and knocked on the door, trying to calm his racing thoughts.

The door opened to reveal Mia's father, Robert, his expression wary and tense. "Can I help you?"

Jeff took a deep breath. "Mr. Lawson, I'm Vanessa's friend. I need to see her," Jeff explained and Robert let him in.

"Vanessa is indisposed right now, so you can't see her," Robert said, his brows pulled together as he tried to place Jeff's face and why he looked so familiar.

Maria, who was seated in the living room, raised her head when Jeff walked in, and she recognized him instantly, "Aren't you one of Henry's domestic staff? What are you doing here?"

Recognition flickered in Robert's eyes, followed by a surge of anger. "You work for Henry? Get out of here. We don't want anyone associated with that man near our daughter."

"Please," Jeff implored, his voice breaking with desperation. "I'm not associated with him. Just tell Vanessa I'm here. I'm sure she would want to see me. If she doesn't want to see me, I will leave."

Robert's eyes narrowed. "I said, get out. If you don't leave now, I'll make you." Robert threatened.

"Please leave. Our daughter has been through enough in one day. We don't want any more drama for her," Maria pleaded.

Desperate, Jeff shouted, "Vanessa! Vanessa, are you in there? Please, come down!"

Robert's face turned red with fury. He grabbed Jeff by the collar and began pushing him toward the door. "I told you to leave!"

Jeff struggled, calling out again. "Vanessa! Please, I need to see you!"

Upstairs, curled up in her bed, Mia's sobs were interrupted by a familiar voice. At first, she thought she was imagining it, but when she heard it again, she sat up, her heart racing.

She hurried out of her room and rushed down the stairs when she heard the voices. When she reached the foot of the stairs, she saw her father push Jeff.

"Dad, stop!" she cried out, her voice shaky. "Stop it!"

Robert froze, his grip on Jeff loosening. Mia ran to Jeff, throwing her arms around him and bursting into tears. Jeff held her tightly, his own eyes moist with relief.

"Mia," he whispered, his voice choked with emotion. "I'm so glad you're okay."

Mia clung to him, sobbing into his shoulder. "Jeff, I was so scared. I didn't know what to do."

Robert and Maria exchanged a look, confusion, and concern etched on their faces. "What's going on here?" Robert demanded, his tone softer but still stern.

Before any of them could answer, Diana walked in through the still-open door, her eyes widening in surprise at the scene before her.

"Vanessa? Josh?" Diana called, and immediately Mia and Josh separated when they heard her voice.

"Diana?" Mia said, her voice tinged with shock as she looked from Diana to Jeff.

Diana's gaze shifted from Mia to Jeff, her expression unreadable. "Josh? What are you doing here?"

Jeff gently pulled away from Mia, though he kept a protective arm around her. "I came to see her. I needed to make sure she was okay."

Diana nodded slowly, "Did you two know each other? You don't exactly seem like you're mere acquaintances," She observed, her tone tinged with suspicion.

"Why are you here?" Maria asked Diana with a frown.

"I'm here to check on Vanessa, to find out how she is doing," Diana explained, looking away from Jeff and Mia.

"Why do you care? Are you not Henry's mistress? Did he send you here?" Robert asked and Mia stepped away from Jeff to Diana.

"We are all on the same side," Mia said softly, causing her parents to frown.

"And Josh too?" Diana asked suspiciously, glancing at Jeff.

Although Jeff had not meant for his cover to be blown, he nodded, "Yes."

"I don't understand what's going on, but I think we all need to sit down. You all go to the living room. I will get snacks and some tea," Maria said as she shut the door and headed for the kitchen with her husband while the others headed to the living room.

"Who are you?" Diana asked Jeff once they were seated, "And how long have you known each other?" Diana asked Mia.

Jeff and Mia exchanged a look, not sure what or how much to reveal to her, but Jeff figured that since she now knew he was close to Mia, he couldn't deny it. The best he could do was not to make any slips.

"We met for the first time when I started working in the house. We became friends..."

"How? I don't understand. Who are you?" she narrowed her eyes when something suddenly occurred to her.

"Are you the one I've been speaking with over the phone? You asked me to let go of the former chef so you could come in, didn't you?" Diana asked, and Jeff shook his head.

"I think you are focusing on the wrong thing. It doesn't matter who I am or how I got here. What matters is that we are on the same team," Jeff said, and Mia nodded, understanding what Jeff was doing.

Diana sighed, "So, why did you come into the house? What was your plan?" Diana asked as Maria and Robert returned.

"I wanted to find something I could use against Henry. But then I realized that the security in the house was too much and I couldn't do anything. I wanted to leave but when I saw how she was being treated I felt really bad and decided to hang around for her sake to make sure she doesn't get hurt," Jeff lied.

Diana frowned since his explanation wasn't really making sense to her, but before she could ask any more questions, Robert spoke, "I'm sorry for treating you that way earlier. I had no idea you were looking out for my daughter."

"No. It's okay. I understand. I appreciate that if it wasn't me you would have kept away any threats from her," Jeff rushed to assure him.

"Thank you very much for looking out for my daughter," Maria said as she handed him a cup of tea while Mia looked at Diana with interest.

"Won't Henry be mad that you came to see me?" Mia asked, wanting to check if Diana knew that Henry was missing.

"He isn't in any position to be mad at anyone right now. I just want to know what happened. I heard from your parents that he took you earlier, and then I saw him in a hilarious state. How did that happen?" Diana asked, looking at Mia curiously.

"You saw him? Where? How?" Mia's father asked curiously.

"At an abandoned Asylum. Is that where he took you?" Diana asked and Vanessa nodded.

Vanessa took a deep breath and then told them how Henry had dragged her there and how the people there had turned on him and injected him instead of her and let her go.

"There is some sort of poetic justice to this, isn't it? He took you to the Asylum but ended up being admitted there instead. Just like he wished to do to you, I'm going to make sure he spends what's left of his miserable life in there. You don't have to worry about anything, Nessa. You can go. I've handed the divorce papers to his lawyer to process it. You should leave the country. Go to somewhere far away. You can come back after you hear of his death if you want to," Diana advised.

"Won't that make me a suspect if they find out he is missing..."

"Not at all. He won't be missing. Don't worry. He bought the dilapidated asylum himself because he was trying to keep his mental state a secret. And now his mental health has deteriorated and he doesn't even want to let anyone else close to him," Diana said with a confident smile.

"I will handle it all," she assured them.

"What if you get caught?" Mia asked with a frown.

"I plan to turn myself in after I kill him anyway. But for now, I just want to enjoy ruining him and all he has," Diana said and Mia sighed.

"Is it worth it? Ruining your life just so you can ruin a person like him?" Mia asked with a frown.

"Unfortunately, that's the only way to destroy a person like Henry. Only a monster can destroy a monster like him. And I don't mind being that monster. He destroyed my family. Do you know how it feels to attend to an emergency call at the hospital only to find out the victim is your only family? My only brother, Nick committed suicide because of him. He was the only family I had. His wife was heavily pregnant and she went into premature labor when he died. Her blood pressure was too

high and she died, and so did the baby. Do you know what that feels like? Losing all the family you have in the twinkle of an eye? I am dead inside, Vanessa. And destroying Henry is the only thing keeping me alive," Diana said with a deep sigh.

"I have to go back to him. Go live your life, Vanessa. Forget your past and be happy. You too, Josh. I don't know what he might have done to you but don't worry. I will pay him back for every one of you," Diana promised as she rose.

"This is all so heart-wrenching," Maria said as they all sighed deeply.

Mia embraced Diana, "I'm sorry for all the pain Henry has caused you."

"As I am for all he has done to you," Diana said, patting Vanessa's back.

"Be safe," Diana whispered to Vanessa before pulling away, and with a nod at the rest of them, she headed for the door.

They all remained silent for a while after she left, and then Mia turned to Jeff, "I suppose Tom knew about Diana's plan?"

"Yeah. I guess so," Jeff said.

"Who is Tom?" Robert asked in confusion.

"And who are you?" Maria asked looking at Jeff.

"A friend," Jeff and Mia said in unison and then smiled at each other.

Chapter 925 I'm Yours

The moment Andy woke up in the morning and saw that Cassidy was still fast asleep beside her, she smiled as she watched him sleep, feeling very contented and sated.

Despite the fact that they had spent all night talking and making love, she still couldn't believe that Cassidy was sleeping right next to her.

She picked up her phone to capture his sleeping face, but just as she raised it to take a picture, Cassidy reached out without opening his eyes and snatched the phone from her hand, startling her.

"What? You were awake?" She asked, looking closely into his face to see if his eyes were open.

His lips curved in a smile even as his eyes remained closed, "My eyes don't have to be open simply because I'm awake. My ears are open," he said as his eyes slowly drifted open.

"You can't take pictures of me, Andy," he said softly.

"Why? You're worried someone might see them or something?" She asked, and he nodded.

"It's bad enough that I'm here when I should be dead. I'm not supposed to leave traces of me behind," he explained and Andy sighed inwardly but smiled at him.

"I understand. Are you hungry? I'm famished," she said as she rolled off the bed not minding that she was naked and Cassidy watched her.

Heading to the closet, she picked out a skimpy Mickey Mouse dress which she wore as she headed out of the bedroom.

Cassidy combed his fingers through his hair. He had planned to leave before she woke up but had ended up sleeping for much longer than he planned.

Getting up from the bed, he put on his clothes and went to join her in the kitchen.

Andy turned when she heard him behind her, "I hope you don't mind pancakes," she said as she moved around getting all she needed.

"Don't we need to talk?" He asked and she shrugged.

"I thought we already did all the talking last night," she said without pausing.

"Andy," Cassidy called softly, and she stopped and turned to him.

"I have told you what I want, Alex. If you want to tell me how you're going to make it happen, then let's hear it. If you want to make excuses about how you think it's a bad idea like I sense you want to do, I advise you to keep it to yourself," she said and then returned to making the pancakes.

Cassidy's lips twitched in amusement as he watched her. He had not expected her to be this resolute in wanting to be with him when he decided to visit her. He wasn't sure yet if it was a good or bad thing. He sighed as he went to sit by the island while he watched her silently as she fixed breakfast.

After working in silence for some time she turned to him, "I really think this can work. So, instead of thinking about all the reasons why it won't work, why not think about how we can make work? I want to be with you. I know we didn't start well, but I really do like you now. As much as I hate to admit it, I was sexually attracted to you in the past because, despite the situation, you mastered my body and gave as much pleasure as you received, but in the little time I spent at your place, I got to see a different side to you. I learned to like you and even admire you. Everyone has a past, and I do not want to focus on your past. I want to focus on the future. Your future. Our future. That's what I want. So, can you please give us a chance?" She asked, holding his gaze.

"What if you regret it?" He asked and she shrugged.

"What if it's the best decision of my life? I won't know the answer to that until I give it a try," she countered.

"Your family. Do you think they are going to approve..."

"They all know how I feel about you. My dad, Harry, Candace, and even my friends know. They may not totally understand it, but they accept it," she said and he sighed.

"I don't think you know what you're getting yourself into, Andy," he insisted.

"Tell me. What do you think I'm getting myself into?" She asked as she set the plate of pancakes down on the island.

"I won't be here for you, Andy. You won't have a regular partner. I can't give you my time. You'd be lonely. You're setting yourself up for a life of loneliness, Andy. Why would you do that to yourself when you can have someone more suitable and settle down?" Cassidy asked as Andy came to stand in front of him.

"One question. Are you reluctant to do this because you're worried about me? Or is it about you?" She asked thoughtfully.

Cassidy hesitated for a moment, "I'm doing this for you, Andy. I am trying not to be selfish," he said and she smiled.

"Do you know something I've learned in the last couple of weeks?" She asked, and Andy looked at her as he waited for her to tell him.

"Not everyone would have a conventional marriage or relationship. Maybe I'm not cut out for the regular kind of relationship no matter how beautiful it is. Besides, with my career, I might not have the time to be a regular wife or girlfriend to anyone either. I want this with you. I don't care about what we have not fitting into anyone's ideals. It is ideal enough for me and I want it to be for you too," she said as she leaned forward and captured his lips in a kiss.

Cassidy groaned as his arms went around her and he pulled her closer to him so that her breast was pressed against his chest.

Just as he deepened the kiss, Andy broke the kiss and pulled away, "Tell me you will be my man," she said, holding his gaze.

"Andy..."

"Say it, Alex. Say you're mine," she insisted.

Cassidy sighed weakly, "Are you sure you want this?"

"I have never been more certain of anything in my life."

"I'm not going to let you change your mind later," he warned.

"I'm not going to change my mind," she promised.

"I can only visit you once a month and we can't have any pictures together or go out in public together," he said and she paused her lips.

"No pictures at all? Not even with an unregistered phone or a digital camera?" She asked and he shook his head.

"I don't want any trace of me anywhere," he said and she nodded.

"And you can't go out with me even in disguise?" She asked and he nodded.

"I can't do even that. Do you understand now what you're getting into?"

"And when you visit once a month how long can you stay with me?" She asked thoughtfully.

"Only for a couple of days. A week max," he said and she smiled.

"So, you'll be here for a week?" She asked with a grin.

"No. I'm leaving tomorrow," he said and she scowled.

"Will you bring Mari along with you when next you come?" She asked and he shook his head.

"How can I have you to myself in that time if I bring her with me?" He asked and she grinned.

"Then will you drop her off at other times?" She asked and he sighed.

"Andy..."

"It will be good for her, I assure you. It's not like anyone knows she is related to you. She doesn't have to be stuck in that Island. If you want she can live here with me and go to good schools here. Allow her to grow up normally instead of living there with retirees. I will take good care of her," Andy offered but he shook his head.

"I can't be away from my daughter. Besides, there are other kids on the Island and there's a school there," he said with a frown.

"I'm not asking you to be away. Think of it as a boarding school. She will come to be with you on the island during her school breaks and you can see her whenever you visit. Think of here as your second home," Andy suggested.

"This is a lot to process, Andy."

"I know. And don't think I'm just being impulsive by bringing it up now. I've been thinking about all of these for weeks. That's to tell you how hard I've been thinking about you and how to make us work. It would be perfect," Andy said and Cassidy sighed.

"I will need some time to think about it," Cassidy said and Andy smiled.

"That's good enough for me. I can't wait for Mari to meet my nephew. I think they are going to get along really fine," she said and Cassidy raised a brow.

"I haven't agreed yet," he reminded her.

"You haven't agreed yet to her schooling here, not to her visit. She is going to visit me, and I'm going to introduce her to Jamal when she does," Andy said with a grin.

"Why do you sound like you want to matchmake them?" Cassidy asked with a frown.

Andy rolled her eyes, "Jamal is my nephew and Mari is more like my daughter because I'm her daddy's girlfriend. That makes them cousins. And Jamal has a girlfriend already, so relax," she said and Cassidy sighed.

"The pancakes are getting cold. Didn't you say you were hungry?" He asked and she nodded.

"We will get to it after you say it," she reminded him.

"You're mine, Andy," Cassidy said, and she grinned.

"And?"

"I'm yours," he said and she kissed him before she stepped away to pour coffee into two mugs.

As Cassidy watched her, he rubbed his eyes wondering how he was going to handle all the changes that Andy wanted him to make. He really wanted her in his life and he was happy that she wanted him too, but he needed to figure out a way to handle everything.

As Andy placed the mug in front of him she smiled when she saw the thoughtful frown on his face, "We will make this work, Alex. And you will see that I'm right," she promised.

"Let's hope so," he said as he picked up his mug and took a sip from the coffee.

Chapter 926 Breakfast In Bed

Tom stirred, his arm instinctively reaching out to find Lucy. His fingers brushed against the soft skin of her back, and he smiled, eyes still closed, as he pulled her closer.

Lucy let out a contented sigh, nestling her head into the crook of Tom's shoulder. She lifted her head slightly, her lips brushing against his collarbone as she whispered, "Good morning, love."

Tom opened his eyes, blinking away the remnants of sleep, and gazed down at her. Her hair was tousled, a cascade of black curls that framed her face, and her eyes sparkled with love as she met his gaze.

"Good morning, beautiful," he murmured, his voice thick with affection. He tilted her chin up and kissed her gently, savoring the sweetness of her lips.

They lay there for a while, wrapped in each other's arms, and Tom caressed her, tracing lazy patterns on her back with his fingertips.

Lucy shivered slightly at his touch, a smile playing on her lips. "Do we have to get up?" Lucy asked, her voice a sleepy murmur as she nuzzled against Tom's chest.

Tom chuckled softly, the vibration of his laughter reverberating through her. "Not yet," he said, his hand moving to stroke her hair. "We can stay here a little longer."

Lucy smiled, her eyes fluttering closed again. "Good, because I like it right here," she whispered, her fingers tracing the outline of Tom's jaw.

Tom watched her, his heart swelling with love. Every moment with Lucy felt like a precious gift, and he cherished these quiet, intimate mornings when it was just the two of them.

He leaned down and kissed her forehead, lingering there as he breathed in the familiar, comforting scent of her. After a while, Tom slightly, propped himself up on one elbow to get a better look at her. "How did I get so lucky?" he mused, his eyes twinkling with mischief.

Lucy opened her eyes and gazed up at him, a playful smile curving her lips. "I'm the lucky one," she countered, reaching up to touch his cheek. "You make every day better."

Tom's expression softened, and he took her hand in his, bringing it to his lips. "I love you, Jewel," he said simply, the words carrying the weight of all the emotions he felt for her.

"I love you too," Lucy replied, her eyes shimmering with sincerity. She pulled him down for another kiss, this one deeper, more lingering as if they were trying to pour all their feelings into that one moment.

When they finally broke apart, both were breathless and smiling. "You haven't told me how the housewarming went. You came back late and went to bed before I could be done with my phone call." He reminded her.

"Sorry about that. I was exhausted. Her place is nice, and the housewarming was really fun. Her landlady is really fun and young too. I think she's going to take good care of Jade. She seems to like Jade a lot," Lucy said, thinking about Sharon.

"Are you saying that because you don't want me to worry?" Tom asked with a knowing smile and Lucy grinned.

"Well, it's the truth. But I also want you to know that she will be fine. She really looked so happy yesterday. I've never seen her that way before," Lucy said and Tom smiled.

"Never?"

"I mean I've seen her happy before, but not exactly that way. She seemed different in a really cool way. In all, it was a fun girls' time," she said and Tom nodded.

"I'm glad you had fun. I was quite occupied with my meeting and then the phone calls," he said and Lucy nodded.

"Talking about phone calls, I think I heard you talking on the phone in the middle of the night. Who were you talking to?" She asked curiously.

"It was Jeff. He called to find out what was going on with Mia," Tom explained.

"Why? Did something happen?" She asked, and Tom briefed her on all that had happened.

"I'm glad you were a step ahead. What happens to Henry now?" She asked curiously.

Tom shrugged, "I don't know. I have handed him to Diana to do as she pleases," he said and she narrowed her eyes

"As she pleases? Didn't you say she planned to kill him?" She asked with raised a brow.

"I had an agreement with her. I told her I would hand him to her if she helped Mia get out. She did. I don't care what she does with him," he said and she frowned.

"You don't care if he is murdered?" She asked incredulously as she sat up.

Tom cursed himself for so easily opening up to her when he had told Harry he wasn't going to tell anyone and they would keep it between themselves.

"As long as I'm not the one doing the murdering, should it be a problem?" He asked, and her frown deepened.

"I don't know much about law, but I do know you will be an accessory to murder," she said and Tom sighed.

"She doesn't even know who I am..."

"But you do. And I do," she cut in.

Before Tom could argue further she raised a finger, "I'm not saying this because I care about him. I don't care whether he lives or dies. I'm not saying this either because I think you're going to get caught. I'm saying this because I don't think murder is something you should have on your conscience. No matter how filthy a person is, having their death on your conscience is tough," Lucy said, and Tom looked at her, realizing she was thinking about her own past.

"If he doesn't die, he's going to keep going after Mia. I don't mind having his death on my conscience. I'm sorry I told you about it," he said, raising her hand to his lip and kissing her palm.

"If news of this ever gets out it could be very damaging to your reputation," she said, worried.

"It won't get out. She doesn't have any links to me. That's why I asked Jeff to not do anything but only to keep an eye on Mia. That way even the Hendersons can't trace anything to me," he said and Lucy sighed.

"Are you..."

"Forget I told you anything, Jewel. Please, do not worry about it," he said, holding her gaze and she sighed.

"I will try," she said, and he smiled.

"How about breakfast in bed?" Tom suggested, changing the subject.

Lucy laughed softly. "That sounds perfect," she agreed. "But only if you're not the one making it."

Tom scowled but his eyes were alight with laughter. "I'll go see what Samantha prepared and come serve you, my Queen," he said, rolling out of bed.

"It's called breakfast in bed 'cause I'm serving it in bed, Jewel. You're not coming with me," he said when she held out a hand to him to help her up.

"I want to use the bathroom," she explained with a small laugh.

"Oh," Tom said with a chuckle as he took her hand and helped her up.

Tom picked up his phone as he headed for the door, "You can freshen up while you wait since this might take a minute and I need to call Harry." The moment he shut the door behind him, he dialed Harry's as he headed down the stairs.

Away from there, Harry stirred from sleep when his phone rang, and he groaned when he saw Tom's name flashing on the screen.

He rubbed his eyes and answered the call, his voice thick with sleep. "Hey. What's up?" He asked as he sat up and looked around for Jade who wasn't on the bed.

"Morning, Harry. Sorry to wake you," Tom began, his tone urgent but still quiet enough not to disturb the calm morning atmosphere. "I thought you'd be up."

"I had a late night. Spent the night at Jade's," he explained and Tom grinned.

"Really? I guess things are back to normal between you two now then," he said, since Harry had complained to him about the state of things the previous day.

"Yeah. We've trashed it all out. I'm sure you didn't call so early in the morning to chit-chat. What's up? Did something happen?" Harry asked as he got out of bed and went down to the living room in search of Jade.

"No, nothing new. I just... It's just that I told Lucy about it. About leaving Henry to Diana. She wasn't exactly thrilled," Tom admitted, his voice carrying a hint of regret.

Harry sighed. "Tom, we agreed to keep this between us for a reason. But what's done is done. How did she take it?"

"Not well," Tom replied, leaning against the banister the stairs. "She's worried about the legal implications, and more than that, she's worried about the toll it might take on me. She thinks having his death on my conscience would be too much. From her experience, that is."

"Well, she's got a point," Harry said thoughtfully. "But we can't change what's already in motion. We can only try to manage it as best as we can."

Tom nodded, even though Harry couldn't see him. "Yeah, I get that. I just... I don't want her to worry as I know she will. She's been through enough already."

"Then make sure she knows you're handling it. Keep her in the loop just enough so she doesn't feel left out, but not so much that she gets more worried," Harry advised.

"Yeah, sure," Tom said and they both sighed.

"I guess now that Lucy knows, it's only a matter of time before the others find out too. I don't want to have to face Jade over this. So, maybe you should see if you can talk to Diana. Maybe there's a way to resolve this without... you know."

"I'll think about it," Tom said, though he wasn't convinced there was any way to resolve things peacefully with Henry involved. "Thanks, Harry."

"Anytime," Harry replied. "Let's talk later. I need to find my baby," he said before hanging up.

Tom slipped his phone into his pocket as he continued downstairs to the kitchen to see what Samantha had prepared.

"Good morning, Samantha," Tom greeted as he walked in, and she smiled as she looked up from the oven.

"Good morning, Tom. I will serve breakfast now," she said, but he shook his head.

"Thanks, but I'm taking it up to the bedroom. Also, can you show me how to whip up something quickly? Anything I can add to the breakfast tray handmade by me?" He asked, wanting to put in a little effort himself.

"Sure. Do you have anything in mind?" She asked with a grin as she walked over to where he stood.

"I don't know. Something easy that wouldn't take a lot of time since I don't want to keep her waiting and I don't want her to bust me either," he said with a grin.

"Hmm. Maybe scrambled eggs," she suggested and Tom nodded.

"That should be easy enough. Let's get to it then," he said, and Samantha guided him as he made the scrambled eggs.

With the breakfast tray loaded ten minutes later, Tom made his way back upstairs. Lucy was sitting up in bed, scrolling through her phone, but she looked up when the door opened and smiled when she saw him.

"Breakfast is served, my queen," Tom said with a playful bow, setting the tray down on the bed.

Lucy laughed, the sound like music to his ears. "You're too much, my king," she said, but her eyes shone with affection.

They settled back into bed, the tray between them. Lucy took a bite of the bacon and moaned in delight. "This is amazing."

Tom grinned as he raised a forkful of the scrambled eggs to her lips, "Try this."

Lucy accepted it and as she chewed, Tom watched her with a wide smile making her raise a brow, "Why are you watching me instead of eating."

"Do you like the scrambled eggs?" Tom asked, and then she paused and grinned.

"You made it, didn't you?" She asked and giggled when he bobbed his head.

"Hm. Who knew you could cook?"

Tom grinned. "I certainly didn't, but I wanted to impress you," Tom said simply. "You deserve the best, and I want to give that to you."

Lucy reached across the tray and took his hand, her eyes softening. "You already do, love. Every day."

They ate their breakfast, sharing bites and laughter, and after they finished eating, Lucy leaned back against the pillows, her hand entwined with Tom's. "Let's stay like this all day," she suggested, her voice a contented whisper.

Tom smiled, his heart full. "I'd like that," he said, leaning in to kiss her softly. "I'd like that very much."

They spent the rest of the morning in each other's company, talking, laughing, and simply enjoying the quiet intimacy of their shared space.

For Tom, it was a reminder of what truly mattered. Lucy meant everything to him, and spending time with her this way was his favorite thing to do.

Chapter 927 Virtual Date

When Harry did not find Jade anywhere in the house, he figured that she had gone to her Sunday morning yoga class as usual so he decided to surprise her with breakfast.

He headed to the kitchen, only to realize he had no idea where anything was since Jade had just moved in. She had unpacked the essentials, but finding the right items in an unfamiliar kitchen was like navigating a maze.

He opened cabinets and drawers, searching for the basics, and after a few minutes of clattering and searching, he managed to gather everything he needed.

Just as he was about to start cooking, the front door creaked open. Jade walked in, still dressed in her yoga outfit – a fitted tank top and leggings that hugged her figure. Her short hair was pulled back into a messy bun, and a light sheen of sweat glistened on her skin.

She paused in the doorway, a smile spreading across her face as she took in the sight of Harry standing shirtless in the kitchen, his hair still tousled from sleep. "Do you have any idea how sexy you look right now," she said, her eyes twinkling with amusement.

Harry turned to face her, a grin spreading across his face. "Good morning to you too, goddess. And no, I don't. Tell me," he teased, striking a pose.

Jade laughed, the sound warm and sexy to Harry's ears. "Very," she replied, walking over to him.

She rose on her tiptoes and kissed him lightly on the lips. "Good morning, sexy. You looked so sweet in your sleep and I didn't want to disturb you when I stepped out for my class," she said and Harry nodded.

"I figured. Do you need to stretch out?" Harry asked, running his hand down her sides and Jade giggled when he grabbed her ass.

"No, I don't. What I need to do is freshen up," she said and Harry chuckled.

"You ruined my attempt to surprise you with breakfast. Go freshen up and I'll have it ready before you're done," he said and she shook her head.

"What was it you said the last time? Bonding over cooking. Let's do that. I'll go freshen up. Don't start without me," she added, kissing him briefly, and Harry tapped her ass, making her giggle as she headed towards the bathroom.

"Need me to scrub your back?" Harry asked and Jade laughed.

"The bathroom isn't big enough for two," she called back as she took off her clothes.

"You know, I remember a time when you were the one begging for this," he said as he followed her.

"If you don't keep your voice down, Sharon is going to hear you," Jade pointed out.

"I don't care," Harry said in a loud voice, and Jade laughed as she walked into the bathroom.

"If you don't keep your voice down, Sharon is going to hear you," Jade pointed out.

"I don't care," Harry said in a loud voice, and Jade laughed as she walked into the bathroom.

Harry waited until she turned on the shower before getting out of his clothes and walking into the tight space.

Jade laughed, "I knew you were going to do this."

"I'm glad I didn't disappoint you," he said as he bent down and kissed the nape of her neck while his arms went around her and he grabbed her boobs making her sigh softly.

A stab of lust shot through her when she felt his erection behind her and when he flicked his thumbs over her nipples which had grown taut with desire and she moaned.

Harry rained kisses from her neck to her shoulder and down her back, and even though the water from the shower was cold, Jade felt hot all over.

She started to turn around so she could kiss him, but Harry held her in place, using one hand to hold her two hands above her head, and he slid into her very wet core from behind.

As he thrust in and out of her slowly, Jade cried out with pleasure.

"If you don't keep your voice down, your landlady is going to hear you," Harry whispered in a husky voice.

Jade giggled, "You bastard!"

Harry chuckled as he increased his pace, and soon they were both panting and moaning as they both climaxed.

Done with their shower they both stepped out of the bathroom and as they dressed up Jade eyed Harry with amusement, "You didn't scrub my back, you know?"

"You said the bathroom wasn't big enough for two," he reminded her with a grin.

"But that didn't stop you from doing anything, did it?" She asked with a giggle.

"Scrubbing your back needed more room than that did, and I focused on scrubbing somewhere else," he said with a wink.

"You're so naughty," she said and he chuckled.

"And I know you like it," Harry said as he pulled her to himself and kissed her.

After that, they made their way to the kitchen, and together they started preparing breakfast. They worked in tandem, laughing and joking as they moved around each other.

Harry measured out flour and sugar while Jade whisked eggs and milk. They exchanged smiles and playful glances, the air filled with the delicious scent of fresh coffee and cooking batter.

When the pancakes were finally ready, they piled them high on a plate and added generous dollops of whipped cream and fresh strawberries.

Harry carried the plate to the living room, and Jade followed with the steaming mugs of coffee.

They settled back on the couch by the window, the pancakes balanced between them and the coffee mugs within easy reach.

Jade cut into a pancake and held out a forkful for Harry. "Open wide," she teased, and he obliged, savoring the sweet, fluffy bite.

"Perfect, as always," he said, his eyes twinkling with affection.

They fed each other bites of pancake, laughing and talking about everything and nothing, and after a while Harry took a deep breath, knowing he needed to talk to Jade about Henry.

"There is something I think I should tell you," he began, his voice suddenly serious.

Jade looked up, her expression shifting to concern. "What is it?"

"It's about Mia, Diana, and Henry," Harry said, explaining the situation in detail. He watched as Jade's eyes widened in shock and then narrowed in worry.

"So, you're considering... letting her kill him?" she asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

Harry nodded slowly. "It's an option. But it's not one we take lightly. Diana has her own reasons, and we're trying to protect Mia."

Jade shook her head, her eyes pleading. "Harry, there has to be another way. I don't want any of us involved in murder. Whether directly or indirectly. I'm not saying this simply because of my profession. It's too much. We need to find another solution."

Harry took her hand, squeezing it gently. "I understand. We'll explore all options. But we have to be prepared for the worst."

Jade sighed, squeezing his hand back. "I don't care what you and Tom have been involved in before now, but I don't want you doing anything dirty or illegal. Promise me you will do everything you can to avoid it."

"I promise," Harry said firmly, looking into her beautiful eyes.

"That's good enough for me," she said, and they resumed eating.

Harry decided to change the subject to something lighter. "So, are you ready for our date today?"

Jade's face lit up with excitement. "I am more than ready. I've been looking forward to it," she said, and as they talked about all they wanted to do together the tension between them eased.

After breakfast, they cleaned up the kitchen together and went about getting ready for their movie date.

Jade chose a light summer dress that flowed around her as she moved, while Harry opted for casual jeans and a comfortable shirt.

As they left the house, hand in hand, the morning stretched out lazily before them, a perfect mix of love, laughter, and togetherness.

Away from there, Amy woke up to the delightful sound of a message notification, and she smiled as she picked up the phone to check what she knew was a text from Lucas.

[Good morning, sleepyhead. Did you sleep well?]

Amy's heart fluttered at the sight of his message. She quickly typed a response, her fingers dancing over the keys.

[Morning, Doc Luca! I did sleep well, thanks to your lullaby. How has your day been?]

She waited, her eyes fixed on the screen, and within moments, his reply came in.

[Not bad. I tried to keep busy while I waited for you to wake. I've been looking forward to talking to you again all day.]

Amy's cheeks flushed a light pink at that. She couldn't help but smile as she typed her response.

[You know how to make a girl smile.]

Lucas chuckled as he read her response. He had been in an unusually good mood all day thanks to Amy.

[Glad I could make you smile as you've made me smile all day. What's on your agenda for today?]

Amy grinned as she read his response, it seemed like now that Lucas had told her how he felt he seemed more at ease in speaking his mind.

[So, you smiled all day? Tell me about it.] Amy texted with a silly grin on her face.

[Why are we texting? I'm calling you now. I'd like to hear all about] Amy texted again and immediately dialed his line.

Lucas chuckled as he received her call, "Tell me," Amy said excitedly.

"Alright. I will give you an example. You won't believe I was staring at the television with a grin on my face while watching the morning news with Tyler and it wasn't until he pointed it out to me that I realized I was grinning at the news of an earthquake," Lucas said and Amy howled with laughter.

"He must have thought you'd gone crazy," Amy said and Lucas laughed.

"He simply said, 'I take it you've fixed things with Amy, seeing how you're grinning at such tragic news' I couldn't deny it so I walked away," Lucas said and Amy giggled.

"So, Tyler knows, huh?" Amy asked, wondering how Tyler figured it was about her.

"I didn't say anything to him. He has always believed that I felt something for you regardless of what I said," Lucas explained.

"Because you were kind to me?" She asked curiously.

"I have no idea. You'll have to ask him yourself if you want to know what goes on in his head."

"Perhaps I should. I'd like to talk to him when next he's with you," Amy said and Lucas shook his head.

"I didn't mean that literally," Lucas said and Amy giggled.

"Too bad you already planted the idea in my head."

"Alright then. I will let you know when next he's around. What's your plan for the day? Going out?" Lucas asked curiously.

"Doing laundry and cleaning the house, and maybe I'll spend the day smiling sillily and thinking about you while I wait for you to wake up," Amy said and Lucas laughed.

They continued their playful banter, the flirtation between them growing more evident with each message.

"You know, I was thinking... What if we had a virtual date tonight? It doesn't mean we are in a relationship. I mean, just as friends," Lucas suggested, and Amy's eyes widened in surprise and excitement.

"A virtual date? That sounds intriguing. What do you have in mind?" She asked with a curious smile.

"How about dinner and a movie? We can cook together and then watch the same movie while video chatting," he said and Amy's heart raced at the idea.

It was the perfect way to bridge the distance between them but she wasn't sure how it was going to work.

"That sounds perfect. But what about the timing?" Amy asked thoughtfully.

They deliberated on the timing for a while until they found a convenient time for both of them.

"Perfect I will handle the movie and we can decide on the recipe together depending on what we both have," Lucas suggested.

"It's a date! See you tomorrow," Lucas said and Amy giggled.

"See you tonight."

Chapter 928 Win Or Lose Together

Diana was jolted awake by the shrill ring of her phone cutting through the stillness of the night. Disoriented, she glanced at the clock on her bedside table and frowned when she saw the time—4:37 AM.

It was barely two hours since she slept. After her visit to Mia's place, she had driven back home ruminating on what Mia had said about ruining her life because of Henry.

It had taken a while for sleep to come because she kept thinking about all the things she wanted to do to Henry, but when it finally came, it had been filled with dreams of Henry's torment and her own sense of justice served.

Who could be calling so early in the morning? She mused, and her heart raced as she fumbled to grab her phone, her bleary eyes squinting at the screen.

The caller ID displayed a number she recognized all too well. It was her blackmailer turned partner in crime.

Immediately, she sat up and swiped to answer. "Hello," she breathed, her voice hushed and strained.

"Have you gotten to Henry? What did you do to him?" Tom's voice was low and urgent.

"Yes, I saw him where you left him. Thank you for fulfilling your promise and handing him over to me. You don't have to worry about him anymore. Leave Henry to me," Diana said confidently.

There was a pause, "I'm worried. I don't want you to kill him," Tom said with a sigh.

Her brow furrowed in irritation. "Why do you suddenly care about Henry?"

"I don't," Tom assured her. "I just don't want to be an accessory to murder."

Diana sighed, trying to maintain her composure. "I assure you, I won't incriminate you. I'm going to do this myself and turn myself in. No one will ever know I had help. I don't even know who you are, anyway, so there is nothing for you to fear."

Tom's voice was firm. "There has to be another way for you to get what you want without killing him. I suggest you think of something else."

Diana's patience was wearing thin. "I'm not handing him over to the police. I don't trust the law."

"I don't either," Tom admitted, "but we need to come up with a punishment worse than death—something that won't cause you to stain your hands with Henry's dirty blood. He's not worth it. You are a doctor, Diana, not a murderer. Henry isn't worth it."

Diana's grip on the phone tightened, but she forced herself to remain calm. "Fine. I wasn't planning on killing him anytime soon anyway. I will think about it and come up with something. How can I reach you when I have a new plan and need your help?"

"Try dialing back this number. I'll call you," Tom said before hanging up.

Diana stared at the phone, seething with frustration. She threw back the covers and swung her legs over the side of the bed, her mind racing.

Tom's interference had thrown a wrench into her plans, but his words lingered in her mind the same way Mia's had lingered.

Maybe they were right; killing Henry would be too easy, too final. She needed something that would make him suffer for a really long time.

She paced the bedroom, her thoughts churning. After what felt like hours, an idea began to form. She needed to make Henry's life a living hell, a torment that would last for the rest of his days.

The solution came to her in a flash of inspiration: an accident. If Henry were to survive but be left permanently paralyzed and unable to move or speak, she could stay by his side as the loving wife.

She would let him watch her destroy everything he had built but he would be powerless to do anything about it. That would be a fate worse than death for him.

Determined, Diana grabbed her phone and tried dialing back the number. The call bounced back as usual, but five minutes later he called back as promised.

"I have a plan," she said without preamble. "But I need your help. I need to get Henry into an accident..."

"Isn't that the same as murder?" Tom cut in impatiently.

"No. It won't be fatal but it will be just enough to paralyze him. What I mean is, it has to be perfectly staged as an accident. He is paralyzed already."

Tom was silent for a moment, processing her words. "Won't that be suspicious?" he finally asked.

"No," Diana replied confidently. "Not when he has alcohol in his system. He has been drinking heavily since Vanessa left anyway. And I'm going to infuse some drugs and alcohol into his system. I will plant some drugs around his study so they believe he takes drugs. While he is in the hospital I will insist on marrying him since I'm pregnant for him..."

"But you're not really pregnant," Tom pointed out.

"I'm going to have a miscarriage. I will get a doctor to confirm my miscarriage," Diana said and Tom thought about Tyler but decided against it.

"I will have Dr Evans confirm it. Since he is Henry's doctor it will be more believable," Tom said and Diana frowned.

"How do you plan to get him to do that? He's really loyal to Henry and could expose everything," Diana pointed out.

"Trust me, and leave it to me," Tom assured her since he was willing to help her as long as she didn't kill Henry.

There was a long pause before she spoke again, "Alright. By the way, did you know about the new chef? Is he working for you?" She asked curiously.

No matter how hard she had thought about it, she had not bought the story Jeff had told her about knowing Vanessa while in the house.

The way she had seen them clinging to each other, they had been more like lovers than mere friends. And she knew for a fact that they couldn't have developed such a friendship in the brief period since Jeff started working in the house. Not when Henry's cameras were all over the place. They would have seen and known something.

"What about the new chef?" He asked, hoping Jeff had not blown his cover.

"I met him at Vanessa's place and they seemed to be really close," she said and Tom swore under his breath.

"What did he tell you?" Tom asked and Diana raised a brow.

"Judging by your question I take it he is your person then. Does that mean you were looking out for Vanessa from the start? You used me to help her get out?" she asked thoughtfully.

"He is not my person. I already told you why I asked you to fire the former chef. It was a test to see how cooperative you would be. Is there anything else you need me to do for you?" Tom asked, changing the subject.

Diana decided to let it go since she didn't mind whether or not Jeff and Mia were lovers as long as they didn't get in her way and they were safe.

Diana outlined her plan, her voice calm and measured, and Tom listened intently, occasionally interjecting with questions or suggestions. By the time they finished the call, Diana felt a grim satisfaction. She had a plan, and with help, she would see it through.

As she hung up, a sense of resolve settled over her. Henry would pay for what he had done, maybe not with his life as she had intended, but with his suffering. And Diana would be there to witness every agonizing moment until he drew his last breath.

Away from there, Tom was seething as he dialed Jeff's line, not minding that it was still the early hours of the morning over there since Jeff had done the same to him.

It took a couple of rings before Jeff received the call, his voice rough with sleep, "Tom?" He asked as he sat up on his bed in the hotel room where he had lodged for the night.

Because the previous day was his off day, he had lodged in a hotel since he didn't have a house there to go back to, and he planned to return to Henry's house the next day and stay there until it was all over so as not to arouse further suspicion.

"When did you plan to let me know you blew your cover and Diana found out you were there for Mia?" Tom asked, unable to keep the annoyance from his tone.

Jeff sighed, "It's nothing for you to worry about. I handled it. I told her I had my personal vendetta against Henry and I met Mia right there in the house...."

"Does that make sense to you? If you were in Diana's shoes would you buy the shit you just said? If she decides to look into you, it is only a matter of time before she finds out you are Bryan's manager and lives with Mia, and guess what? Bryan would naturally become the suspect behind these calls. And by telling her you're there on a mission it means you have also exposed the domestic staff agency that sent you there. If things become a mess and they are questioned, don't you think I will be fingered?" Tom asked incredulously.

Jeff sighed deeply, "I realize I messed up. I'm sorry. I didn't expect Diana to show up at Mia's place. I thought with Henry out of the picture it was safe to see her," Jeff said apologetically.

"It doesn't matter now. We have to make sure everything is wrapped up perfectly. Remain in the house with Diana for some time. Since you told her you have a personal vendetta against Henry, prove it by offering to help her with whatever she plans. I've spoken to her. She can't kill him. Make sure she doesn't. I will tell you when it's safe to leave. And neither you nor Mia can come back to Ludus immediately," Tom said and Jeff nodded.

"I understand. What about Mia? Can she at least leave here and go somewhere else until all of this is over? Diana suggested she leave," Jeff explained.

"No. She should remain there for the time being. It would be suspicious if she left too soon. And she should be there to see what becomes of Henry," Tom said and Jeff nodded.

"Alright. Thanks. And I'm sorry once again," Jeff apologized.

"I understand you miss her and want to be with her. But you should try to be more careful else you're going to expose us all to danger," Tom said before hanging up.

Done with his phone calls, he returned to join Lucy, who was waiting in bed for them to see a movie.

"So? What did she say?" She asked hopefully and he gave her a nod.

"She came up with a new plan. She won't kill him," he said and Lucy smiled, relief written all over her face.

"Thank you," she said as she pecked his lips.

"I should be thanking you. Sometimes it's easy to make bad decisions simply because I can get away with it. And for a moment I didn't see a big deal in killing him because I was convinced he doesn't deserve to live. I'm glad I have you to keep me in check and make sure I don't lose my humanity. And thank you for not judging me for my momentary lapse in judgment," Tom said, holding her gaze.

"There's nothing to thank me for. It's my duty as your partner to not let you make such mistakes. We are a team, Ace. If something affects you, it affects me too. We win together. We lose together," she said and Tom smiled.

"I like the sound of that. We win together, we lose together. I hope we have more wins than losses," he said before capturing her lips in a kiss.

"Me too."

Chapter 929: First Date

The rest of the day flew by in a blur for Amy as she thought about their upcoming virtual date. By the time 8:30 PM rolled around, she had set up her kitchen and was ready with her ingredients.

They had decided to make something light since it was going to be a late dinner for her, and an early breakfast for Lucas, and they had made their choice based on the ingredients Lucas had at home since it would be easier for Amy to get the ingredients she needed since it was daytime over there in Ludus.

She quickly freshened up, packed back her hair in a bun, and did a little makeup. Looking at her reflection in the mirror, she giggled.

It was funny and weird dressing up for a date in her house. And she knew if Miley was here, Miley would frown upon her modest choice of outfit, Amy thought with a pensive smile as she looked down at her outfit- a black halter neck bodycon dress that stopped just below her knees.

"Hey, best girl, I have a virtual date with, Dr Hottie. It's going to be our first date," Amy said with a small smile as she stared back at the mirror.

"What do you think about my dress? Is it good enough or should I wear something sexier?" She asked and laughed when her hairbrush suddenly fell off the edge of the dressing table. "Well, guess what? I don't care whether you like my dress enough or not. If you wanted to have a say you shouldn't have left me the way you did," Amy said with a sigh.

She was startled when her phone suddenly started ringing and she quickly picked it up when she saw it was a video call from Lucas and the time was exactly 9 PM.

As the call connected, Lucas's face appeared on her screen, and she couldn't help but grin. "Hey, there. Good morning," she greeted him.

"Good morning, beautiful," he replied with a warm smile.

"Did you sleep well?" She asked with a soft smile, and he nodded.

"Yeah. Really well. Couldn't wait for morning to come," he said with a wink and Amy giggled.

"I never would have figured you to be this type," she said, and Lucas raised a brow.

"What type?"

Still grinning she shook her head, unable to find the right words to explain it, "I don't know. You just seem really different," she said as she headed for the kitchen and Lucas nodded.

"You still haven't answered my question. How different?"

Amy giggled, "I'm not sure I can find the right words. It's just that you're different. My first impression of you was that you were a..."

"A geek or a dork?" He asked with amusement and she grinned.

"Those aren't the exact words I would have preferred to use, but I think you get the gist," she said and Lucas chuckled.

"Now, why would you think so?" Lucas asked with interest.

"You always looked so calm and I would never have guessed you could even wink at a lady," she said and he laughed out loud.

"You're killing me, Amy," he said as he laughed heartily and she laughed too as she watched him laugh.

"Well, I wouldn't wink or be this way with just anyone. I guess I do it only because I feel comfortable with you," Lucas said after he had settled down and Amy nodded.

"Yeah. I understand. Like the forehead kiss thing," she said and pressed her lips together to keep from laughing when Lucas glared at her playfully as his face flushed with embarrassment.

"Why would you bring that up right now?" He asked and she giggled.

"Because you said you only do that to people you're close to," she said and Lucas shook his head.

"You know what? Let's just go fix our meal," he said and she giggled.

"But we will still need to make conversation while we fix dinner," she pointed out with a teasing smile.

"Sure. Let's focus on you. Let's talk about your day and all you did," Lucas said and Amy grinned.

"Alright," she said, winking at him.

As Lucas stepped out of his bedroom to head for the kitchen, his smile vanished when he saw Tyler standing by the doorway of his room with an amused smile.

"What now? Shouldn't you be sleeping in as usual?" Lucas asked wearily, and Tyler nodded.

"I should. But I couldn't. Why? Because you my dear friend were laughing like a maniac and I needed to be sure you had not gone bonkers," Tyler said with a grin and Amy listened with amusement.

Lucas snorted, "You can go back to bed now that you know I'm sane."

"And let Amy kill you after hearing you say 'you're killing me, Amy'?" Tyler asked, mimicking Lucas' tone and Amy giggled while Lucas scowled at Tyler.

"I want to say hello to Tyler," Amy said and Lucas scowled at her.

"C'mon. Not now. We have to hurry so you can go to bed early. Tomorrow is a work day,"

Lucas reminded her.

"Saying hello for a minute won't change anything," Amy said amused and Lucas glanced from her to Tyler who was still watching him with an I told you so grin.

"Here. Amy wants to say hello," Lucas said with resignation.

"Amy? Which Amy? Is it the Amy we met in Ludus? Or a new Amy?" Tyler asked dramatically as he took the phone from Lucas and Amy laughed while Lucas glared at him.

"I will be waiting in the kitchen. Bring it over when you're done. And watch what you say," Lucas warned Tyler before walking away.

Tyler grinned as he looked at Amy with twinkling eyes, "Hello, Amy."

"Hello, Tyler. How have you been?" she asked with a pleasant smile.

"Great! And you?"

"I'm fine too."

"I can see that. I'm glad to see you looking so bright," he said, reminding her that the last time they had seen her she had been looking disheveled.

"Thanks," Amy said and Tyler nodded.

"Thank you, too. It's good to see Lucas this cheerful," Tyler said and Amy laughed.

"I haven't done anything. He has done a lot more for me than I have for him. And I have no idea how to repay him," Amy said and Tyler shrugged.

"Maybe there is nothing to repay. It's good to hear from you, Amy. I should get the phone back to him before he goes crazy," Tyler said and Amy smiled.

"It's nice talking to you too," Amy said and waited as Tyler headed for the kitchen.

As Tyler got close to the kitchen and within earshot of Lucas he winked at Amy, "So, as I was saying, when we were in middle school, Lucas used to..."

"What is wrong with you!" Lucas yelled as he hurried over and snatched the phone from Tyler while both Tyler and Amy laughed.

Lucas glared at Tyler, "Didn't I ask you to watch what you say?" He asked and Tyler raised both hands.

"I didn't say anything, I promise. I'm going back to the safety of my bedroom," Tyler said with a chuckle as he walked away.

Lucas scowled as he returned his attention to Amy, who was still laughing, "Aren't you enjoying this a little too much?" He asked eyeing her with disapproval.

"I think I am," she admitted and Lucas shook his head but his lips twitched with amusement.

"Ready to cook?"

Amy nodded, "Absolutely."

They chatted and laughed as they prepared the pasta, the distance between them melting away with each shared moment.

"So, tell me," Lucas said as he stirred his sauce, "what's one thing you've always wanted to do but haven't yet?"

Amy paused, thinking. "Honestly?" she asked with a shy smile.

"Yeah."

"Sex. I'm really curious about it," she said and Lucas raised a brow and when he saw her blush, his eyes widened in disbelief.

"Hold on. If you've never done it how did you plan on being a surrogate?" He asked, and when she shrugged he shook his head.

"You were crazier than I thought," he said, and she laughed.

In the past she probably would have taken offense at that, but things were different now. "So, what about you? What have you always wanted to do?" She asked curiously.

Lucas's eyes twinkled. "We are not done talking about you and what you just said. Why haven't you? What is stopping you?"

Amy shrugged, "Nothing really. Or maybe not nothing. It's just that I've not been in a relationship. And I want my first time to be special sort of. I... this is crazy. Why am I telling you this?" Amy asked, feeling embarrassed and Lucas chuckled.

"Because I asked?" He said rhetorically, "And why are you embarrassed?"

"How can I not be embarrassed discussing something so private with you? And there's the fear of you misunderstanding," Amy said with a shrug.

"Alright. Let's change the subject if you are embarrassed and you don't have to worry, I won't misunderstand. And to answer your question, I've always wanted to vacation on a cruise ship."

"Like the Titanic?" Amy asked and Lucas chuckled.

"Why does everyone bring up the Titanic when I say it? You're not scared of being on a cruise ship, are you?" Lucas asked and Amy raised a brow.

"Not exactly. Why?"

"Then maybe we can do that together someday?"

Amy's heart fluttered at the thought. "I'd love that."

As they finished cooking, they plated their dishes and moved to their respective bedrooms, setting up for the movie.

"By the way, have I told you?" Lucas asked as she sat down and she raised a brow.

"Told me what?"

"I love your dress. And you look beautiful," he said with a grin, and she flushed with pleasure.

"Thanks," she said and Lucas' eyes twinkled.

"By the way, It feels good to know that I'm going to be your first boyfriend," he said and she raised a brow.

"Who said you're going to be my boyfriend?" She asked, her lips twitching with amusement.

"Me. I just told you so," he said with a wink and she giggled.

"So, what are we watching?" Amy asked.

Lucas grinned. "It's a surprise. You'll see," Lucas said as he clicked on his laptop and sent her the link to share his screen.

Once Amy had done that, Lucas started the movie and Amy was delighted to see it was a rom-com.

They remained on the video call as they ate and watched the movie both chatting and reacting to the scenes together.

Despite being miles apart, it felt like they were sitting side by side and the distance between them seemed to shrink with each word, each laugh, each shared moment.

As the movie credits rolled and their virtual date came to an end, Amy felt a deep sense of contentment. "This was more fun than I anticipated."

"The feeling is mutual. You should go to bed now, Amy. It's past midnight already."

"Do we have to wait until the weekend to talk again, buddy?" Amy asked hesitantly.

"Do you think I could wait until the weekend to talk to you? Let's just be everyday buddies,"

Lucas said and Amy's eyes twinkled with delight as she giggled.

"Everyday buddies. I like that. This makes it easier to hang up and go to bed now. Goodnight, Luca," she said softly.

"Goodnight, Amy. Sweet dreams," he replied.

Amy ended the call, her heart full. This was a perfect first date.

Chapter 930: It's Contagious

Amy woke up with a sense of exhilaration that she hadn't felt in a long time when her alarm went off on Monday morning.

Her first thought was of Lucas, and she quickly grabbed her phone from the nightstand.

She smiled when she saw that Lucas had sent her a text, [Good morning, beautiful] Lucas's text read.

Her fingers danced over the keyboard, sending back a quick reply. [Hey, Luca. I had a wonderful time last night.]

Lucas responded almost immediately, [Me too. I can't wait for our next date. Have a fantastic day, Amy.]

[Not so fast, doc. Let's talk.] Amy texted and immediately dialed Lucas' line.

"Won't you be late?" Lucas asked the moment he received the call.

Amy placed the call on speaker, "Talking to you for a minute won't make me late. How was your day?" she asked with a smile as she got out of bed and headed for the bathroom.

"It was okay. Did you wake up tired?" Lucas asked with concern.

Amy placed the phone by the sink and picked up her toothbrush and paste. "Nope. I'm fine," Amy said, assuming he had asked because she had gone to bed late.

"That's good then. I thought you'd wake up tired considering the fact that you've been running about in my mind all day," he said, and Amy burst out laughing.

"Jeez! What sort of a line is that?" She asked and Lucas chuckled.

"Heard it somewhere. Wanted to try it out on you because I thought it was funny," he said and she giggled.

"By the way, I keep forgetting to ask, why did you prank me the last time? I mean the whole spa guy prank," he asked and she smiled.

"I sort of wanted to gauge our friendship. I mean, I couldn't outrightly ask you if you thought of me as more than a friend considering all you've told me before then. I wanted to know if I should let myself feel what I was feeling or sign up on a dating app," she said before brushing her teeth.

"A dating app? You wanted to sign up on one?" He asked, surprised.

She spat out before responding, "Yes. I thought I should meet other people and stuff. I didn't want to be a bother to you," she explained.

"I see. I'm glad you did that then. As much as I didn't like it, it helped me put things in perspective..."

"Yeah. Took you two whole weeks to figure out what you wanted," Amy said grudgingly.

"It's not like you're ready to date anyway," Lucas said defensively. "So, did you sign up on the app while I was away?" He asked curiously.

"Yes. As a matter of fact, I have my first date this weekend..."

"AMY!" Lucas called, and she giggled.

"Just kidding. I couldn't. I just kept putting it off. And I really wasn't in the mood to meet anyone," she said and Lucas relaxed.

"That's good then. Amy, you're going to be late to work if we keep talking. Go get ready. Don't forget to send me a picture," he said and she grinned.

"Alright. Sweet dreams, Luca. Try not to wake up too tired since I know you'd be running around my mind all day," she said and Lucas chuckled.

"Enjoy your day," Lucas said before hanging up.

Smiling, got ready for work. She quickly went through her morning routine, her mind replaying the details of their virtual date.

A feeling of warmth spread through her at the memory of his laughter and the way he looked at her through the screen.

By the time she arrived at the office, Amy was practically floating. She greeted everyone she walked past cheerfully, the moodiness of the last week replaced with a sparkling smile.

Amy found herself lost in thoughts of Lucas, a constant smile playing on her lips as she organized Lucy's desk while humming a happy tune.

"Someone looks happy today," Lucy observed with a smile, catching sight of Amy's radiant expression as she walked into her office.

Amy blushed, "Good morning. I just had a really good weekend, that's all."

"The weekend must have been really good seeing as you seem to be in an exceptionally good mood today," Lucy observed with a smile.

"Yes, it was," Amy admitted, the blush creeping up her cheeks.

"By the way, how are things with Lucas? Have you heard from him yet?" Lucy asked before Amy could leave since she had deduced from Amy's question the past week that something was wrong between her and Lucas.

Amy hesitated for a moment, feeling a slight flutter of nerves. But the excitement of sharing her news with someone was too much to contain. Amy nodded, her smile widening as she took the seat opposite Lucy. "Yes. I had a virtual date with Lucas last night."

Lucy raised an eyebrow, her curiosity piqued as she leaned back in her chair, a teasing glint in her eyes. "Is that why you look so happy today? Last week you seemed really moody, but now... it's like you're a completely different person."

Amy bobbed her head eagerly. "Yes, it was amazing. We cooked together and watched a movie. It felt so real like he was right there with me."

Lucy chuckled, her expression softening. "I'm glad to hear that, Amy. It sounds like you both had a great time."

"We did," Amy said, then her smile faltered slightly as she looked at Lucy, her eyes searching for any sign of discomfort. "Are you sure you're okay with this? With me being involved with your brother?"

Lucy reached across the desk, placing a reassuring hand on Amy's. "You have my full blessing, Amy. You don't have to worry about anything."

Relief washed over Amy, and she squeezed Lucy's hand gratefully. "Thank you, Lucy. That means a lot to me."

Lucy smiled warmly. "Now, go on. Enjoy your day and keep that happiness shining. It's contagious."

As Amy left Lucy's office, she felt a weight lift off her shoulders. She practically skipped back to her desk, her heart full of joy and excitement. Lucy watched her go, a grin spreading across her face.

Lucy leaned back in her chair, tapping her pen thoughtfully against the desk. She couldn't help but wonder when Lucas planned to tell her about his relationship with Amy.

The thought of her brother finding happiness filled her with a sense of contentment. She knew Lucas deserved to be with someone as kind and wonderful as Amy.

Away from there, as Andy stirred from sleep that morning, the very first thought on her mind was that Cassidy was gone.

Somehow she didn't need to open her eyes to know it. She could feel it in the emptiness and silence she felt all around.

As if to confirm it, she reached out, her fingers trailing over the space, her heart sinking a little when she felt the coolness of the sheets which had been warm with Cassidy's body. Sitting up, she glanced around the room, still hoping to catch a glimpse of him. But the room was silent and still, with only the soft morning light filtering through the curtains.

She slid out of bed, wrapping herself in her robe, and padded barefoot around the house, searching for any sign of him.

Her heart ached with each empty room she checked, her mind racing with thoughts of not seeing him again. When she reached the dining room, she stopped in her tracks, a smile spreading across her face.

The table was set for breakfast. A plate of French toast with scrambled eggs and bacon, and a pot of coffee waited for her. Beside the plate, a note was propped up, Cassidy's neat handwriting bringing tears to her eyes.

[I had to leave early and didn't want to wake you because I hate saying goodbye to you. I'll call you as soon as I arrive, and I promise to visit again this time next month. I love you and will miss you terribly. Please enjoy the breakfast I made for you. Love, Alex.]

Andy smiled through her tears, her heart swelling with love and gratitude. She was relieved that she didn't have to worry about not seeing him again. And she was glad that he had not left without a word and had left her a note.

She sat down, taking a deep breath before picking up a fork and digging into the French toast. They were still warm, crispy, and delicious. She savored each bite, her mind drifting back to their time together.

While she was still eating, the doorbell rang, pulling her out of her thoughts. She frowned, wondering who could be visiting so early. Wiping her mouth, she stood and walked to the door, her curiosity piqued.

Opening the door, she was surprised to see Harry and Jade standing there, looking concerned.

"Good morning," Jade greeted with a bright smile.

"Harry? Jade? Come in. What are you doing here so early?" Andy asked, her surprise evident in her voice.

Harry glanced at Jade before answering, "Candace has been trying to reach you since yesterday. She was worried when she couldn't get through, so we came to check on you. Needed to make sure you are fine."

Andy's heart warmed at their concern. "I'm fine. I just needed some time alone. I'm sorry for worrying you all," she said, not wanting to tell them about Cassidy's visit yet.

She wanted to relish the memory before sharing it with anyone else. Apart from Candace though. Cause she couldn't wait to share it with Candace.

Harry's brow furrowed, "Some time alone? Is everything okay?" He asked, and she nodded. Although Harry wasn't convinced, he nodded. "We're just glad you're okay."

Jade, however, was eyeing Andy closely. "Do you mind if I borrow a scarf from your closet, Andy? Can you help me out upstairs?"

Andy nodded, slightly confused but willing to help. "Sure, come on."

She led Jade upstairs to her bedroom, closing the door behind them. As soon as the door clicked shut, Jade turned to Andy with a mischievous grin.

"Was Cassidy here to visit you?" Jade asked, her eyes sparkling with curiosity.

Andy's eyes widened in surprise. "How did you know?"

Jade chuckled and led Andy to the mirror. "Look at your neck. The scarf I'm borrowing is for your neck."

Andy glanced at her reflection, a giggle escaping her lips when she saw the hickey. "It could have been anyone," she said with a roll of her eyes.

Jade raised an eyebrow, a knowing smile on her lips. "Anyone else wouldn't make you glow this way or look this happy. And we both know you wouldn't have turned off your phone for just anyone."

Andy's cheeks flushed, and she nodded. "Okay, fine. Cassidy was here. But you have to keep it a secret, Jade."

Jade winked. "Your secret is safe with me."

Andy's smile faded slightly when she remembered something, "You won't try to get him arrested or something, right?"

Jade smiled, "As long as he treats you well and doesn't cause any trouble, I have no reason to get a dead man arrested."

Andy nodded, "He won't cause any trouble, I promise."

Jade nodded, her expression softening. "Good. Now, I have to get to work, but I hope to hear some nice details later," she said with a wink.

Andy giggled, shaking her head. "I'm not sharing any details."

Jade laughed, "We'll see about that. Now let's go down before Harry comes up here to find us," Jade said and they returned downstairs.

"You didn't beg the scarf?" Harry asked and Jade shook her head.

"She doesn't have what I want. Let's leave else we will be later than we already are. Unlike you, I have superiors to answer to," Jade said and Harry nodded.

"Why are you both here together? Who is harboring who in who's house?" she asked with a grin.

"I spent the weekend at Jade's. Got to go. And I hope you haven't forgotten you're coming in today to meet with the CEO of the record label you're signing with?" Harry asked and Andy nodded.

"Sure. The meeting is at eleven. I'll be there," she said and Harry gave her a quick hug. "See you later, Andy," he said and Jade winked at Andy.

"Don't forget to stop by my office for a quick chat," she said and Andy giggled.

"See you later then," she said, and after seeing them off, Andy returned inside and turned her phone back.

She dialed Candace's line and as soon as Candace picked up, her worried voice filled the line.

"Andy! Where have you been? We've been trying to reach you! And Dad has been sick with worry!"

Andy couldn't help but laugh. "Calm down, Candace. I will call Dad. Besides, it was just for one day." "You call twenty-four hours JUST? How could you be so irrespo..."

"Cassidy was here," Andy said, cutting her off.

There was a moment of stunned silence before Candace screeched happily, making Andy laugh even harder.

"Your plan worked? Tell me everything! How did you both meet? Was it at the club? Did he

come to the house? What did he say? Don't leave out anything. Well, maybe you can censor some parts," she said and Andy giggled.

Andy took a deep breath and started to recount everything from the moment she walked in and felt his presence in the dark hour, her heart full as she shared her happiness with her sister and best friend.