



A Relationship That Costs Nothing

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Category: Romance, Fantasy

Description: Raph Blunt and Tonia Casan have been friends for fifteen years. She is now married and no longer a young woman. She is now Raph's old flame instead of his real love. She consistently forgives him despite his frequent infidelity.

Tonia eventually comes to her senses after attempting suicide. This corrupt world is really a contest to see who can be more brazen than the others.

Both people lead their own lives in an open relationship. She can play with his brothers and friends since he's playing with her sister.

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When Raph Blunt called Tonia Cason, the man behind her flipped her over and made her kneel on the bed.

He pistoned into her, which made her lose her equilibrium. She almost hit her head on the wall. He was lucky to catch her waist in time and pull her back, which kept her from getting wounded.

The man typically seemed calm and nice, but in bed he was so crazy that it was nearly alarming. Tonia put a hand on the wall to keep him from almost making her hit it again. After that, she used her other hand to unlock the phone.

The caller ID said that the individual who called was her “Honey.”

The man said, “Who is this?”

She said, “Your cousin.”

He made a noise. “Shouldn’t he be busy banging Ayra right now? Why does he have time to call you?”

“How would I know?”

“Will you answer it?”

“Of course,” Tonia said. “Shouldn’t you stay a little farther away, Sammy?”

Not only did Sammy Bush not stay away, but he also pushed her harder. So, when

Tonia picked up the phone, her voice shook in a rhythmic way. “Hey?”

“What are you doing?” Raph enquired.

“Can’t you see?”

He stopped. “Are you running?”

“No, I’m having s*x.”

“With who?”

“Why don’t you come and see for yourself?” she offered.

“Where are you?”

“The room next to yours.”

For a long time, Raph didn’t say anything. Tonia listened to him breathe and waited without telling him to answer. When she heard his breathing get a little heavier, she suddenly felt better.

They had been dating for ten years and married for five. When he loved her the most, he was ready to die for her. He could sleep with different women now that he didn’t care anymore. He didn’t care how it would make her feel.

Tonia had tried to save the relationship before, though. She had cried, begged, tried to kill herself, and even begged him. She begged him to come back to her because they had been together for 15 years. As long as he came back to her, she could forget about the bad things he had done in the past.

But Raph had simply flirted with his girlfriend over the phone and told her, “In the natural world, no capable male creature has only one partner. Asking a man to spend his life with one woman goes against the rules of nature.”

Tonia had given in. She had silently accepted that Raph may have affairs all over the place as long as he didn't bring them home.

The last straw for her was the day she found out she was pregnant. She had called Raph to tell him to go home, but a woman picked up the phone. She was out of breath and informed Tonia that she and Raph were busy. She had also told Tonia to call back in two hours.

In the end, Tonia climbed up to the roof and leaped off. Her child had died, and so had her spirit. She had been smart since that day.

It didn't matter who his wife was if he wanted to cheat and fall in love with someone else. This world was merely a contest to determine who could be the most shameless.

For a long time, Raph didn't say anything.

Tonia enquired on purpose, “Are you coming over? I'm in the room next door, which is only a few steps away.”

“You can watch a live broadcast in high definition with 3D surround sound. You won't have to pay me for it. Oh, you might be surprised to see who I'm with too! ”

Tonia's vindication grew with every word she said. She wanted to stab Raph with the same knives he had used to stab her.

She didn't aware if they had hurt Raph, but Sammy was angry. He instantly sped up and was stronger. She turned to him and frowned. “Be more gentle.” It aches.

He smiled at her and said, "I'm just going along with you, aren't I?"

He was right. She wanted Raph to hear them loud and clear, and the clearer they were, the better.

Raph finally said, "Tonia."

"Uh? "

"Are you asking me to come with you?" He sneered. "What if I bring Ayra with me?" It will be more fun with all four of us.

Tonia was the one who didn't say anything this time.

"Should we come over?" Raph asked. "

Tonia still didn't say anything.

"I'll take that as a yes." Please wait for us. "We'll be there soon."

"No." Don't come over. I don't want to see Ayra right now.

"That's okay. I can just phone someone else and ask them to come over. But you might have to wait around 30 minutes. Is your boyfriend strong enough to last that long?" Raph said.

Tonia couldn't speak.

"Hello?" Raph asked. Is that all right? "

She threw the phone away and felt bad about herself. How could she lose to him even

when it came to being shameless?

Sammy pulled her up and made her sit on his lap when he saw that she was distracted. He sat back against the headboard, lit a cigarette, and stroked her perfect skin with his other hand. “So, which number am I?”

Tonia came to her senses. “What are you talking about?”

“You want to get back at him, don’t you? How many of his family and friends have you had s*x with? What number am I? “Why are you asking?” she said with a gleam in her eye. ”

“Not a cause. It’s okay if you don’t want to tell me.

Tonia’s heart was in a tangle. She had been taught to be submissive and shy since she was a child. In school, they even dubbed her a “innocent little thing.”

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Raph had been after her for four years, from middle school to high school. Every morning at 6:30 am, he would ride his bike halfway across East-island City to wait outside her house so he could drive her to school.

He would sit next to her in the library and fan her to help keep the bugs away as she studied.

He had worked hard to raise his marks until he was third in the class after she indicated she didn't like males with weak grades. After taking the college admission exam, he got into Busta College.

He got all of his pals together to buy the last of the lollipops that were still available when her favourite one went out of production.

Tonia couldn't comprehend it. How could Raph, who had loved her so deeply, have turned into this?

"Why don't you want to see Ayra?" Sammy moved his legs when he finished his cigarette. He smiled when he saw her bob up and down with his movements. "Does he want to marry her?"

Tonia got even more angry. "Don't ask."

"Looks like I was right."

Tonia didn't say anything. Sammy went on, "You didn't care much about his other loves. Ayra is the only one who has made you cry."

“Could you please stop talking?”

“Mad already?”

Tonia got out of bed and gathered up her clothing that were all over the floor. She put them on and said, “I’m leaving.”

Tonia planned to go straight to the toilet when she got home, but she paused when she noticed someone sitting on the couch in the living room. “What are you doing here?”

Raph was sitting with his legs crossed at the knees and reading the newspaper. “This is my home.” Why can’t I be here? ”

“Your home is with Ayra, not with me.”

He smirked and said, “Are you jealous?”

“As if!”

“Next time, try something else,” Raph replied. “We’ve been together for so long, and I know you too well, Tonia.” You’d sooner kill yourself than sleep with a random guy. You just aren’t that kind of person.

She laughed in frustration. “What kind of person am I?”

He said with confidence, “You couldn’t sleep with anyone if you didn’t care about them. You just wanted me to come back home, right? There was no need for you to lie like way.

“What would you have done if I had really gone to the next room yesterday? What

would you have done if I hadn't seen you there?"

"Didn't you hear us?"

"Listen to what?"

"Someone was talking to me on the phone last night."

Raph gave her a look that said he wanted to see how long she could keep the act going. "Did you pay him to act with you? How much did you pay him?"

Tonia added, "Don't think you know me that well. It's easier to be a slut than a good wife."

"You're all talk and no action."

That made Tonia even angrier. "Why do you think that? I can call him and tell him to come over right away."

"Of course," Raph answered. "Sammy is coming over soon, so he can hear about your s****l adventures as well."

"Who's coming over?"

"Sammy. Have you forgotten him? My cousin Sammy Bush."

Raph opened the door when the doorbell rang. "Sammy, it took you long enough."

Sammy had already put on a clean outfit. He had also cleaned his glasses with gold rims. He'd shoved it into Tonia's body last night.

Sammy grinned. “On the way, I got stuck in traffic.”

When he walked into the house, Tonia was still standing there. He said hello to her with a nod.

“Hello, Tonia.”

She was surprised for a moment, but then she smiled. “Sammy.”

Raph took Sammy to the couch and told Tonia, “Ton, get Sammy a cup of coffee.”

When he called her that, Tonia felt sick. He had called her that name when they were madly in love, but now it made her feel like a snake had crawled all over her. She was chilly, dirty, and unpleasant.

“Ton?”

She frowned. “Can you watch what you say? Don’t call me that.”

Raph laughed. “Okay. Ms. Casan, could you please make Sammy a cup of coffee?”

Tonia didn’t want to look at either of the men again. One of them was too shameless for her, while the other was too good at pretending for her. There was no difference between the two.

She headed to the kitchen, but she didn’t go to make coffee. She only wanted some peace. After all, the kitchen was the farthest from the living room.

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Sammy saw Tonia leave from the living room. He said to Raph, “Did you two fight

again?”

Raph laughed. “No. She’s just having a fit.”

“I think Tonia is a wonderful woman. Are you sure you want to go through with the divorce?”

“That’s why I asked you to come, Sammy. Can you help me write a divorce agreement?”

“You should really think about this,” Sammy remarked. “Tonia’s looks and body will make a lot of people want to be with her when she’s single. You don’t want to regret it.”

Raph stated, “No matter how good a dish is, you’ll get sick of it after a while.”

“Did she say yes?” Sammy questioned.

“She probably won’t. She’s old-fashioned and won’t easily agree to a divorce if she wants to be with me. You need to help me with this, Sammy.”

“How do you want me to help?”

Raph laughed. “Why don’t you go after her?”

Sammy lifted his eyebrow. “Are you kidding?”

“Of course I’m joking!” Raph laughed. “You’re Gramps’ only grandson, though. Stop working so much and get married so you can have a child.”

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“Yes.”

Raph suddenly squinted at an area on Sammy’s neck. “What is this?”

Sammy made his collar tighter.

Raph said, “You weren’t stuck in traffic, were you? You were with a woman! Come on! How could you not tell me you were with someone?”

“It’s not a good time right now,” Sammy remarked. “I’ll introduce you guys when the time is right.”

“Okay, then. I’ll also introduce you to Ayra.”

“Don’t.”

“Why?”

Sammy cleared his throat. “I should stay away.”

Raph laughed. “She’s your new cousin-in-law. There’s no reason to be shy.”

“It wouldn’t be right for us to be together.”

“Why should it bother you if it doesn’t bother me?”

Sammy asked, “Wouldn’t it bother you if Tonia and I were alone in the same room?”

Raph looked like he had heard a joke. “You know, you and Tonia are on the same page when it comes to these things.”

“What do you mean?”

Raph replied, “You both are so conservative, but you like to make these jokes.”

Sammy grinned. “I can help you write the divorce agreement, but Tonia still has to agree to it. In other words, you have to make her give up on you.”

“Yeah, I know. She was just bragging to me about how she slept with another man last night. How is that even possible? You know how innocent and naive she is. She’d rather die than sleep with a stranger.”

Sammy smiled and touched the hickey on his neck without saying anything.

Raph joked, “Why are you touching me? Didn’t you have enough fun last night?”

“Yeah, I didn’t. She had to leave in the middle to take care of something.”

“Wow, what a wildcat! She bites hard, doesn’t she? I can see the marks.”

Sammy leaned back and added, “She’s usually pretty nice. Maybe it’s because the last guy she was with never made her o****m.”

After a while, Tonia’s legs started to give out on her when she was in the kitchen. She didn’t know how long Sammy had been without a woman, but he had been mean to her the night before. Her thighs were shaking until now.

She secretly cursed him and felt stupid. She believed she had given herself to him on a silver platter. She really did know why Raph and Sammy were related now.

Sammy was a false gentleman, but Raph was a real jerk. Both of them were jerks!

She felt terrible since she was still covered in Sammy's spit. She didn't care about the consequences and ran out of the kitchen and into the restroom.

The noise startled Sammy and Raph. Sammy responded, "She must be mad."

Raph remarked, "You know, she might be mad at you."

Sammy made a face. "Oh?

"It's not like I'm home all the time, but you had to come and bother us."

"So, should I leave?"

"No. You're already here, so it doesn't matter. "Raph said, "I'll buy you lunch."

Tonia took a long, relaxing bath. The warm water helped her relax. She was almost asleep when someone pounded on the door, waking her up. "Who is it?"

"Who else?" Raph questioned. "Sammy and I are going to lunch." Do you want to come with us? "

"No."

"Are you sure? "

"Bring Ayra with you." Tonia didn't want to see any of them right now. She stayed in the tub and fell asleep until the water started to become cold. She woke up feeling a little better, but she was still tired.

She yawned and left the bathroom. Then she saw someone in front of her and got scared. She drew her towel securely around her and backed into the bathroom, slamming the door shut. “Why haven’t you guys left yet?”

“We were waiting for you,” Sammy remarked. “You didn’t eat anything this morning and you used a lot of energy last night.” If you don’t eat, your blood sugar will be low.

Tonia frowned. “I’ll get takeaway.”

“It’s not nice.”

“I’ll make something to eat, then.”

Sammy laughed. “Do you have the strength to do that? ”

Tonia was angry. “You-”

“Sammy, I found it.” Raph walked out of the master bedroom. “Why did you want to see our marriage license?”

Sammy had been leaning against the bathroom door and talking to Tonia when he saw Raph walk out. He straightened up and his smile faded a little. “You wanted me to help you write a divorce agreement, right?” I need to know when you all signed up.

“I could have just told you the date.”

“You still remember?”

“Yes.” Today is Ton’s birthday.

Sammy took the marriage licence from him and looked it over. His lips curled a little, but the smile was a little colder this time. "You've been married for five years," he said.

"Yes. Does that have an effect on the divorce?" Raph enquired.

Raph and Tonia had put a picture of themselves on the marriage certificate. Sammy traced it with his finger.

Tonia, who was 24 years old, had her hair in a ponytail and a little bit of baby fat on her face. Her eyes were lively.

The only thing wrong was that her head was inclined towards Raph, which Sammy didn't like.

He gave Raph back the marriage licence and stated, "If the marriage doesn't last long enough, you can ask her to give you some of the wedding gifts back."

Raph laughed. "You've been there for every step of our relationship." You should know better than anyone how long we've been married. Did you need to see the marriage certificate to do that? "

"I just wanted to be sure in case I was wrong," Sammy added.

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Raph nodded. Then, seeming agitated, he told Tonia, “Aren’t you done yet?” You’ve already made Sammy wait for two hours.

Tonia said, “He can keep waiting if he wants.”

Sammy knocked on the door of the toilet and asked, “Are you going to stay in there forever?”

Tonia took a long breath and glanced at the hickey and marks all over her body. She wanted to bite him so badly. “Wait outside.”

Sammy laughed and said, “Okay.” We’ll go out. “There’s no need to hurry.”

He clapped Raph on the shoulder and said, “Come on, let’s go to the living room.”

Tonia stepped out of the bathroom and raced to her room, where she changed into a simple attire of jeans and a T-shirt. Then, before she left, she blew her hair half-dry.

Raph arched an eyebrow. “You still haven’t thrown this outfit away?”

It was a dress that Tonia had worn a lot in college. It was simple and plain, but very comfortable. In the past, she would put on a lot of makeup and dress nicely to match her identity as Raph’s wife.

But now that she had given up on him, she would wear whatever was comfortable. “I didn’t throw you away, did I?” she murmured. I’ve had you for a lot longer than this outfit.

Raph's face got darker. "Whatever." Let's go.

"Go dry your hair all the way before we leave," Sammy remarked with a frown. "It's windy outside."

Tonia responded, "It's not needed." The breeze will help it dry faster.

"Go dry it," said Sammy.

"I won't."

Raph stared at her, and her hair fell over her shoulders and her face was bare. "You look better like this," he remarked, and his voice softened a little.

Tonia looked angry. "Mr. Blunt, it's all your fault that you're such a successful businessman." If I left the house looking like this every day, the news would undoubtedly say that you are a cheap man who won't buy his wife good clothes.

He rubbed his nose and didn't say anything.

Tonia and Raph's love story was a lot like a romance drama. She was a good girl and he was a bad boy at school. After they graduated, they were the perfect couple who helped each other through the hard times of beginning a business.

Raph and a handful of his college friends made a game when he graduated. How many new graduates had money? Raph and Tonia had to rent the basement of a house in the suburbs of Busta City because they didn't have any other options.

Tonia acquired a used gas stove and went to a faraway Market to get supplies because food in the city was too expensive. She also filled up the gas tank herself by carrying it to the gas station. Then she cooked different meals for Raph.

She knew all the prices at the Market by heart. She knew which booth had sales that day and which one would give her a little extra if she spent more than a particular amount.

Fresh fish cost \$5 a pound, so she would wait there until one of the fish died. Then, she would buy it right away for \$1 a pound, which was the price for dead fish.

Tonia had worn the outfit she had on for three years. She had washed it when it got dirty, and the jeans had faded from all the washing. The material of the T-shirt was even thinner now.

Raph also seemed to recall the hard times they had while he was trying to start his business. He touched Sammy on the shoulder and said, "I'll always remember the help you gave us at the time, Sammy."

Three years after starting their business, Raph and his friends made their first game. Because they were new to the business, someone stole their source code.

For the second game, they learnt from their mistakes and didn't let anyone steal their source code. However, a well-known gaming company released a game that was similar to the one they had made. In the end, their small company couldn't compete with the well-known one, and their game failed.

They had finally found an investor for the third game, but the gentleman ran away halfway through. The other game had failed.

Raph had pretty almost given up on his dream. He threw his arms around Tonia as they lay on the bed in their freezing basement and whispered, "I called my cousin, Ton." I want you to go with him when he gets here.

Tonia was about to blow up with wrath. "What do you mean by that?"

“Sammy is good-looking and has a successful career. Once you go with him...
“Things won’t be so hard for you anymore.”

Tonia had hit him in anger. “What do you think I am?”

Raph had suddenly started crying and held her tightly. “I know I’m a failure, Ton. You are extremely pretty and smart. I shouldn’t be taking up your time. But the thought of not seeing you again makes me want to die.

“So you believed we could continue see each other after you told me about your cousin? What? Is it more fun to sleep with your cousin’s girlfriend? ”

Raph grinned through his tears and held her tighter. “Ton, let’s have ravioli for lunch.”

They were short of money and food at the time. Where would the ravioli come from?

Sammy came later. He had been on a business trip to Busta City. When he saw the basement where they lived, he grimaced severely.

Then he saw Tonia moving around the kitchen in her T-shirt and shorts, with her hair loosely tied up. The basement didn’t have any windows, so her face and hands were smeared with grease. But she still smiled at him.

“Sammy, please sit down. While you two drink, I’ll make a few meals.

Tonia made two easy meals: spicy fried peanuts and veggie stir-fry. She made the best food with the simplest ingredients and spices.

Sammy drank some of the cheap wine they had and didn’t like the taste. But when he said, “I’m really jealous of you, Raph,” he was being entirely honest.

Raph had had a few drinks and didn't get what he meant. He smiled and said, "What do you have to be jealous of? The fact that I live in a basement or that I haven't done anything with my life?"

Sammy hadn't said anything.

After that, Raph never mentioned wanting to introduce Tonia to Sammy again.

Sammy had given Tonia a bank card before he left. Inside was \$100,000.

They lived on that money for a little over a year. Finally, angel investors were interested in the fourth game that Raph and his friends had made. The first round of funding brought in more than ten million dollars, and the game was a big success.

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This game also helped Raph's company go public, which made him the millionaire he is currently.

He now dressed fine suits and appeared like a successful businessman. He asked, "Have you made the call, Tonia?" with a mischievous smirk.

Tonia was brought out of her thoughts. "What call?"

"You said you wanted to call the guy you were with last night so I could meet him. Now that Sammy is here, invite him over and we can eat together. Sammy and I can help you figure out if he's good enough for you."

Tonia stared at Raph for a long time. They had been friends since they were 14 and were now almost 30. He had been in her life for half of it.

Raph still looked like the cocky teenager he had been when he was a successful businessman. His features had become sharper, but Tonia could still recognise the face of the young guy who loved her more than anything else.

Yes. She couldn't stand to leave him. Raph was like a part of her heart, mind, and soul. Now she had to pull him away.

"Raph." She tilted her head. She smiled, but her eyes were full of sadness. "Are you hoping I won't call him over?"

His smile, which had been a touch sly, faded.

Tonia went on, “I know you want to get a divorce so you can marry Ayra.”

Raph put his head down. It was hard to figure out what he was thinking. He didn’t say yes or no.

I don’t want to let you go; I simply want to know why it has to be Ayra.

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Sammy picked the place they went to eat lunch. It was a quiet bistro with nice design. There was a pond and a little footbridge in the courtyard. There was also a cute little building next to it.

Tonia didn’t say anything. She stared out at the surroundings and her eyes were crimson. Raph shoved the menu towards her. “Anything is fine, Tonia. Just pick what you want.”

She didn’t even bother to look at it. “I want vegetable stir-fry and spicy fried peanuts. You guys can order the other dishes.” Those were the two things she and Raph ate virtually every day. Tonia used to pick up the old leafy vegetables that the Market stall owners had thrown away. She would boil them first to make them taste better before stir-frying them.

Their neighbour gave them the peanuts. He owned a grocery store, and his warehouse had been flooded. He couldn’t sell the peanuts anymore because they had all gotten wet. He had given them all to Raph and Tonia.

The waitress seemed to be in a bad situation. “Our bistro doesn’t have those dishes. Is there anything else you want?”

Raph took a bundle of money out of his wallet and gave it to her. “Think of

something,” he said.

“Yes, sir.” The waitress took the money, wrapped it up and put it in her jeans pocket.

“Pick something, Sammy,” Raph said as he pushed the menu to him.

He asked for a bottle of whisky.

The waitress was surprised. “Is that all?”

“Yeah,” Sammy answered.

It didn’t take long for the food to arrive. There was a plate of spicy fried peanuts that had been bought for cheap somewhere, and a plate of vegetable stir-fry that had clearly been made quickly.

Sammy opened the whisky and poured it into a container. Then he put two glasses in front of himself and Raph.

Raph wiped his face and smiled cynically. “Doesn’t this remind you of that winter in the basement?”

The individuals were the same, the dishes were the same, and even Tonia’s attire were the same.

Sammy responded, “It does.”

Raph’s look grew a little pained. Then, he took a long breath and raised his glass. His Adam’s apple bobbed as he said, “Ton, let’s... Let’s finish on a good note.

Tonia gripped her thigh hard. She hated that she was so weak that she couldn’t stop

her tears from pouring.

Raph took some tissues and gave them to her. “Here.” Stop crying.

She worked hard not to sound like she was going to cry. “Raph, you shouldn’t be so sweet to me right now. Aren’t you worried that I won’t abandon you again? ”

He hesitated before putting the tissues in her hand. She hurled them at him.

Raph told Sammy, “I’ve already told him that everything we own, like the house and the money, will be yours. I’ll offer you half of the company’s stock as well. You won’t have to worry about money for the rest of your life.

Tonia didn’t say anything.

Raph said, “You can also have Mingol.”

They had taken in Mingol when they were still living in the basement. It was only two or three months old at the time. Now, it was 15 years old, sick, and only able to lie on the floor all day. It was hard for it to even walk.

They both realised that their marriage and love were coming to an end, much like their lives.

“You can tell Sammy if you want anything else. “Anything I have is yours,” Raph said.

Tonia scoffed. “I want Ayra’s life.” Will you give it to me? ”

As soon as the words were out, a flirty voice said, “Who wants my life?”

Tonia looked up and saw Ayra. She was wearing a lot of jewellery and a fancy gown. She looked just like Tonia.

Tonia told Sammy that she could deal with all of Raph's former relationships but not Ayra's. She couldn't explain why.

Raph had had sexy and naive ladies in the past, but he had never been serious about them. She could handle them as long as he didn't want to marry them.

Ayra, on the other hand, was Tonia's twin sister.

Tonia didn't get it. She and Ayra looked exactly alike, so why would Raph want Ayra?

She was grossed off by how Raph and Ayra were being kind to each other in front of her. Then, out of nowhere, a glass of juice came in front of her. "You should drink this." Do not drink any alcohol.

Tonia laughed at him. "Your cousin-in-law has changed, Sammy." Why do you continually attempting to tell me what to do? "

He put his lips together and took her tumbler of whisky.

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“Give that to me,” she said, holding out her hand.

He stayed still.

“Give it to me,” she said again.

Sammy looked at her for a moment before agreeing. “Okay.” “You’re not that heavy, anyway,” he said, looking at her figure. “I’ll just carry you home if you get drunk.”

“Raph,” Tonia said, but she didn’t seem to hear him.

She frowned after filling her glass. Then she took the dispenser from Sammy. There was a lot of whisky in it, but she drank it anyhow.

Then she threw the dispenser on the floor, breaking it. “I agree to get a divorce, Raph.” We’re done starting now—no, starting now.

She turned around and left. To her astonishment, she almost fell when she ran into someone at the door. Sammy quickly grabbed her.

She looked at his seat and questioned, “Can you teleport or something?”

He didn’t answer; instead, he added, “Watch out.”

The new person said sorry. “I’m sorry I’m late, Tonia.”

Tonia couldn’t see who the new person was since she was drunk. However, she

remembered phoning Raph's best buddy, Justin McCarl, before she got to the café.

Justin was younger than Raph in college and helped him launch the company. Now, he was the company's deputy CEO and one of Raph's greatest friends.

Tonia felt dizzy, like she was standing on a cloud. "Oh, you're here..."

Justin laughed and said, "I wouldn't dare stand you up, Tonia."

She smiled more and stretched out her hand. "Come on." "Give me a hand."

Justin didn't think much of this. He was ready to take her hand, but she pulled away before they could touch.

She lurched back, as if she had hit a wall. It hurt, and her head spun. "Why is the room getting smaller?" There was a wall there, right? Why is it here now? "

Justin could see she was inebriated. He knew Sammy and responded, "Hi, Sammy."

Sammy nodded and grimaced as he leaned back a little to cling on to Tonia.

"Sammy, why is Tonia so drunk?" Justin asked.

"Hey, Justin, do you know what?" Tonia smiled and glanced up from Sammy's arms. "Your best friend's new wife is over there."

She pointed at Raph and Ayra.

When Justin met Ayra, he couldn't believe his eyes. Was he seeing double?

"What's going on here, Raph?" he questioned. Are you playing a game called "Find

the Difference”? ”

Raph didn't seem happy. “What are you doing here?”

That made Justin bewildered. “Didn't you and Tonia tell me to come? She also told me to hurry up.

“Tonia called you?”

“Yeah.” Justin knew something was wrong, but he didn't know what. He scratched his head in concern. “I can't tell which Tonia called me, though.”

Sammy didn't know what Tonia was doing, so he helped her get up. “Wake up, Tonia.”

She squinted and her face turned red. “What's going on?”

“Did you ask Justin to come here?” Sammy enquired. ”

“Justin... Oh, I see. “Yeah, I did.” She spun around and fell into Justin's arms. Then she replied with a smile, “You wanted me to call my man over, didn't you, Raph? He is here now.

Raph's face changed. He shoved Ayra away and jumped to his feet, pulling Tonia to him. “What the hell are you doing, Tonia?”

She fought hard to get away. “It hurts.” “Let me go...”

“You should make yourself plain. What the hell do you mean? ”

Tonia laughed again. “You asked me to introduce you to my new boyfriend, so I did.

Now you're angry. "Raph, you're so hard to please..."

Raph's face changed a lot, and he pulled Tonia along with him.

"Don't be like this, Raph," Justin urged quickly. "Tonia can't handle how strong you are..."

Raph paused and turned to face him. "I'll take care of this later."

Justin was confused. "What's going on with you two? Why are you acting so strange?"

He wanted to hurry after them to find out what was going on, but Sammy stopped him. "Have they fought?" he questioned. "

"Okay, so don't go over. Let them take care of things on their own.

"Raph doesn't seem right, though. I've never seen him like that before. "It's scary."

Sammy grinned a little. "Don't worry." He wouldn't hurt Tonia in any way, even if he blew up the Earth.

It was hard for Tonia to keep up with Raph. He was virtually pulling her along. By the time they got to the bistro's entrance, she couldn't walk anymore, so she grabbed the pillars next to it and wouldn't let go.

Raph had to stop. "You'd better explain yourself, Tonia." What are you and Justin up to? "She was still out of it. "Don't you already know the answer? Why are you still asking me?"

He laughed in frustration and said, "You're still lying to me."

“Why do you think that?”

He stated with confidence, “There’s nothing between you two.” “I could tell he was lost before; he clearly doesn’t know anything about this.”

Tonia snorted and glanced at him. “You know more about men than I do, Raph. It’s always more fun to sleep with your friend’s wife, isn’t it? I...”

She was no longer able to speak. The whisky had gotten the best of her.

All of a sudden, she was carried off her feet. Raph had already picked her up before she even knew what was going on.

She moved around like a fish out of water. “Raph, what are you doing? Where are you taking me?”

“You want to be a slut, right? I’ll take you to a whorehouse so you can get what you want.”

“Let me go! You’re a jerk, Raph!”

He didn’t say anything at all. Instead, he put her in the backseat of the car and locked the doors. Someone behind him put their arms around his neck when he started the automobile.

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Tonia didn't have much strength, so it was more like she was holding him from behind and resting on his shoulder. She held him close and warned, "If you do anything to me, I'll bite you."

He kissed her forcefully, and it ached. He did it before she could bite him. She then felt him pull her into the driver's seat.

She didn't know how he had done it, but he had picked her up and put her between his chest and the wheel. She was on top of him. They had been together for so long that they knew one other's bodies like the backs of their palms.

Tonia instantly wanted to do something bad, so she rubbed herself against his groin and felt it make a tent in his trousers right away.

She laughed and tilted her head. "Look at how shameless you are, Raph," she remarked as she stared him in the eye.

He exhaled heavily and held her waist tightly, forcing her down onto him. "Come on, you wanted to bite me, didn't you? I'm waiting."

Tonia remembered that her first time having s*x with Raph hadn't gone the way it usually does. It had happened after the party they had after taking their college entrance examinations.

She couldn't handle her alcohol, so half a beer was enough to knock her out. She had fallen asleep on the table and was mumbling nonsense.

The teacher knew that Raph and she were dating, so she called Raph over and told him to “take good care of her.”

Raph had walked slowly to get Tonia home. She wasn’t fully out of it, but she remembered that the moon was bright that night. There were flowers on both sides of the road that smelt good. When they mixed with Raph’s sweat, they smelt even better.

She held on to his wide back like a koala, swinging her legs to the beat of his footsteps. “Raph...” she said softly. He walked slowly, as if he didn’t want to return home right now. “Yeah?”

“It would be great if we could keep going like this.”

“I’d be dead from being tired.”

She laughed and poked him in the shoulder. “Put me down if you think it’s too tiring. Believe it or not, a lot of guys will fight to carry me when I call them!”

Raph hauled her up higher on his back. Tonia wasn’t feeling well because of the drinking, so this almost made her throw up. “What are you up to?”

“How dare you make me angry to my face?”

“Humph!”

“Ton.”

“Yeah?”

“Do you hear me? I’m the only one who can carry you.”

“Uh-huh.”

“Okay.”

All of a sudden, Tonia seemed to come back to her senses. “What if you want to carry another girl, then?”

“You can treat me however you want.”

She smiled and bit his neck. “I’ll kill you with my teeth!”

Raph was particularly sensitive in his neck. Tonia would sometimes blow on it to make fun of him. Then, he would give up right away.

This time, she wanted to do it again. Raph didn’t beg her for compassion like he usually does. He placed her down instead. Tonia stared at him with sleepy eyes. “What’s going on?”

“Ton...” His voice had a tinge of restrained seduction. “Come and bite me.”

Tonia and Raph had been together for 15 years, so they had a lot of memories together. They were like water gushing out of the floodgates and like the air around them.

A simple sentence from their past was now a knife that pierced Tonia in the heart over and over again.

Raph kissed her like a crazy person, and it hurt. He started at the corner of her lips, but she turned her head to get away from him. So he went down and bit her thin neck.

Tonia tried to rush away, but the wheel was behind her and Raph was holding her waist tightly. She could only lift herself up by putting her hands on his shoulders.

But the ceiling of the car was only that high. She paused when her head hit it, and it made her press her chest closer to his face.

Tonia despised how she felt and hit Raph while crying. “Raph, go to Ayra if you want to f**k. Why are you biting me?”

She didn’t seem to hear him. Or maybe he was so upset that he couldn’t contain himself. He shook as he hugged her.

They hadn’t slept together since Raph started cheating on her. They hadn’t had intercourse with each other in more than three years.

He was so excited that it was nearly crazy. It was if they had been taken back to the quiet, secluded lane they had gone down after the class party.

Pain rushed through Tonia, starting in her chest. The feeling made her jump.

Out of nowhere, Raph halted. “Who is he?”

She looked down and saw the hickey on her left b****t. Last night, Sammy put it there.

Tonia smiled and looked down at Raph with a smug look on her face. “Don’t ask. It’s better for you.”

“Did you really sleep with another man last night?”

“Yes!” Tonia chuckled and continued, “He’s better than you.”

Raph stopped talking.

Tonia's voice got louder as she said, "Raph, you know, you've never made me have an o****m in all these years we've been together. But he did, all night long."

"Raph, you're useless. If I'd known how much more the world has to offer, I would have tried it sooner instead of settling on you. If I hadn't slept with another man, I wouldn't have known that there's someone better out there."

"Have you ever made Ayra come?" Tonia asked. "I bet she faked it too. My sister and I are both pretty good actresses."

Raph couldn't say anything as Tonia carefully undid her top and showed him the hickey on her body. "It's not just my chest. It's here, here, and here..."

She pointed between her legs. "Over there, too. Want to look?"

All of a sudden, the automobile horn blared, loud and sharp.

Raph pushed down hard, not caring whether anybody saw him. He hung on to it for a long time and wouldn't let go. He didn't even pay attention when somebody knocked on the window and tapped the hood.

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For the first time, Tonia felt the pleasure of revenge as she looked into Raph's face.

It was full with astonishment, realisation, wrath, and crazy, just like how she felt back then.

When Tonia saw him in the headlines getting close to other women, her heart broke. She intended to kill him and end the world.

Raph finally put down the horn and answered the phone when it rang. "Sammy."

"Open the door," Sammy said. "The traffic cop is here."

Tonia gently buttoned her shirt and got from his lap to sit in the passenger seat.

Raph's clothes were a touch wrinkled, but a little patch would make them look better. He didn't hurry either. He waited for her to get dressed before opening the door and going outside.

"We got a lot of complaints about honking," the officer remarked. "Can you explain?"

Raph said, "It broke."

"Then, how did it stop?"

"I don't know."

At that moment, the officer saw Tonia come out of the car and saw that her face was a little red.

His face quickly changed, and he said, “This is a public space. I know couples can get into fights, but could you take it home next time?”

Raph didn’t say anything.

But Tonia laughed and added, “Officer, you got it wrong. We’re not a couple. He’s my brother-in-law. My sister is his girlfriend.”

“You...”

Tonia laughed at how astonished the cop looked and then walked away.

Justin reached out to steady her as she went up the steps. “Tonia, be careful where you step.”

Tonia smiled when she saw him. “Do you want to sleep with me, Justin?”

“What?” Justin was shocked. “Tonia, you’re drunk.”

“Raph and I are divorced, but if you still want to treat me like your friend’s wife, that’s fine. After all, it makes the hookup even more exciting. Isn’t that how you guys think?”

Justin nervously swallowed. “Did you really break up with Raph?”

“Yes. If you don’t believe me, ask him yourself. Oh, and look at that. There’s a hotel right next door. What do you think? Do you want to do it?”

“I...

“I want to, Justin. Do you have what it takes?”

Bam!

Raph sprung out of nowhere like a wild animal and tackled Justin. After that, the two started to fight.

Justin couldn't fight back at all. “Raph, calm down!” he begged. “I swear there's nothing between me and Tonia!”

But Raph wasn't listening because he was so angry that he couldn't stop himself.

Finally, Sammy came and dragged him away. “Raph, there's nothing going on between him and Tonia.”

“Sammy, you don't know anything,” Raph replied, stopping and breathing hard.

“Yes, I do. The man Tonia slept with last night was me.”

In a flash, the air was full of tension.

Raph couldn't believe what he saw when he looked at Sammy, who just stood there without a care in the world. Ayra clutched on to Raph's arm tightly because she was afraid he would hit her again.

Justin, on the other hand, looked the worst. His spectacles broke into pieces and fell to the ground. His face was damaged, and the corner of his lips was split.

Tonia was beginning to get sober. She felt bad and softly asked Justin, “Are you

okay?”

“Stop it,” Sammy said, pulling her back and pointing to Raph, who looked like he was about to attack.

After that, he looked at Justin. “You should go. Get to a hospital.”

Justin carefully rose up, leaning on a nearby pillar for support. He looked at Raph and then at Tonia. “Hey Tonia, if you and Raph are really done...”

“Go away!”

It was Sammy’s turn to get mad this time.

Raph pushed Ayra out of the way, making her stumble back a few steps and almost fall. But he didn’t care. He ran up to Sammy, his eyes blazing with anger. “Sammy, are you kidding?”

Sammy nodded. “Yes.”

“When did it happen? When did you and Tonia...?”

Sammy sighed deeply and grinned a little. “Raph, you couldn’t take care of her, so I did.”

...

Tonia never went back to the house she and Raph had shared after that.

Sammy took her back to his flat, where they had s*x all day and all night. They ordered food and stayed in bed most of the time. They napped when they were

exhausted, and then they went back to having fun.

Tonia thought she was only awake for a short time each day. She continued having dreams about earthquakes and the world trembling around her.

Sammy picked her up and put her in a warm bath one night. Tonia felt like she had been beaten into a shapeless mass, but as she soaked, she slowly started to feel like herself again.

Sammy knelt next to the tub and gently touched her cheek. “You can cry if you want to, Tonia.”

She made a face. “Why should I cry? I got my revenge. I’m not going to cry.”

That was true. She had finally gotten back at him.

She slept with Raph’s cousin because he had slept with her sister. An eye for an eye.

Tonia will always remember how shocked and angry Raph looked when he discovered out. She had seen it, and it would stay in her mind forever.

“Are you happy doing all this?” Sammy enquired.

At first, Tonia blankly nodded, then stopped and shook her head. “I thought it would.”

Sammy answered gently, “I understand.”

She gave him a look. “I took advantage of you.”

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“I know.”

“I’m sorry, Sammy. I should also say sorry to Justin. I shouldn’t have gotten either of you involved.”

“Tonia, you couldn’t have gotten me into it if I didn’t want to.”

Tonia smiled at him in a sarcastic way. “I did something dumb again, didn’t I?”

“No,” Sammy told her again.

“When I first found out Raph cheated, I did a lot of dumb things. I looked for his mistress and begged her to leave him by giving her money.”

“And what happened?”

“She took the money and stayed with him anyway. They were still all over each other. She took my money and didn’t even follow through! What a bitch!”

Sammy put a loose hair behind her ear. “Then?”

“Then he was with someone else. I thought that if being nice didn’t work, I would try being mean. I hired someone to kidnap the woman and told her I would throw her in the sea if she didn’t leave him.”

“Did she trust you?”

Tonia laughed with anger. “Raph came and saved her.”

“I understand.”

She sat back and looked up at the ceiling as she started to tell the story of all the crazy and desperate things she had done, like hurting herself and even jumping off a building.

She had also barged into Raph’s office to cause a fuss and put up pictures of him with his mistresses all over the city.

She had gone completely crazy, doing anything and everything to keep her sanity.

“I just don’t get it.” Tonia took a deep breath and tried to stop the tears from falling. “How could he, the man who used to love me so much, stand by and watch me go crazy?”

Sammy kissed her, but Tonia pushed away a little.

He stopped, not sure what to do.

His stare made Tonia feel uncomfortable. “I’m sorry.”

“Let me guess. You’re going to tell me we shouldn’t see each other anymore, right?”

Tonia wanted to deny it, but Sammy had already figured it out.

“Whether it’s me or Justin, we’ve both been used in your little revenge plot against Raph. Now that you’ve gotten what you wanted, I’m no longer useful. So, you’re just going to leave?”

Tonia said in a low voice, “I... I don’t have to leave right away.”

“What do you think of me, Tonia? A toy for your fun?”

She replied, “It takes two to tango. If you say that, I’m just a doll the size of a person to you.”

He laughed. “I never knew you were so free-spirited.”

Tonia didn’t say anything.

“Or do you love Raph so much that you’re willing to plot and scheme to keep him or get back at him? But for people you don’t care about, you’re totally detached.”

Sammy’s voice got lower. “Like me.”

Tonia was confused. “You’re Raph’s cousin.”

“Yeah, and what?”

“To me, you’ve always been my cousin, too.”

“It didn’t seem that way when you knocked on my door.”

Tonia had actually regretted it as soon as she knocked on his door.

Justin was the first person she wanted to hurt. He was Raph’s best friend and business partner, which made him the best candidate. But Justin was away on a business trip.

She had been drinking, and while she was drunk, she looked through her contacts.

Raph couldn't get in touch with most of her pals, but she did end up calling Sammy.

Their talk had been short. Tonia had enquired where he was and then went out to find him immediately away.

Sammy kissed him and then grabbed her up and threw her on the bed as she opened the door to room 3601 at the Star Hotel. No words were spoken. Things just happened.

Tonia thought about it once the booze wore off. She thought Sammy's reaction was strange. He could have merely mentioned he was at a hotel or that he had stopped at the Star Hotel. But he had given her the number of the room.

"Tonia," Sammy questioned, "Do you still love him?"

She shook her head. "I told you it was over between me and him. I used to hold on to all the memories and love that lasted more than ten years. But I've come to terms with the fact that I was the only one stuck in the past. Raph hasn't been that guy for a long time."

"So, what are you going to do now?"

"Divorce."

"And then?"

Tonia thought for a second. "I don't know."

Sammy said, "What about a vacation?"

Tonia turned her back on him and lay onto her side. "I'm tired and don't want to go

anywhere.”

Sammy laughed. “You keep your guard up around me.”

“I’m not.”

“Then why did you say no so quickly? I didn’t even say I’d go with you.”

Tonia stopped talking.

Sammy stood up and lightly tousled her hair. “Don’t stay in there too long, or you’ll get dizzy. I’m going.”

She raised her head. “Where are you going?”

“Why does it matter?”

“This is your place,” she said. “I should be the one to leave.”

“And where would you go?”

Tonia couldn’t go back to the house where she and Raph lived. Both of her parents had gotten married again and established new families. She had nowhere to go.

“Stay here,” Sammy told them. “This isn’t the only flat I have.”

Tonia said, “I’ll just stay here for a few days until I find a new place.”

Sammy hummed. “Your choice.”

Sammy really did move out.

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Tonia slept for days to get over the emotional pain Raph and Ayra brought her and the physical tiredness of sleeping with Sammy over and over again. She started to feel like herself again after a while.

She didn't like takeaway, and there was a tiny grocery store close by. She went on a shopping spree and filled Sammy's empty fridge with food. Before that, it just had a few cans of beer in it.

His flat was big, with more than 1,000 square feet of space. But since he lived alone, only the main bedroom showed traces of use. The study and gym had nice furniture, however the treadmill was dusty.

Tonia cleaned the property from top to bottom for three days because she had nothing else to do. She finally felt like she was back to normal after making her own meals and enjoying the clean space.

She had felt like a different person during her fight with Raph because she was so angry. She hadn't lived; she had just gotten through the hard days.

Tonia sometimes missed the time they spent living in the small cellar in Busta City. Raph's heart was small back then, much like the place. It only had room for her.

It looked like his heart had grown big enough to hold other women now that they had a big house to live in.

Tonia liked to make a lot of different kinds of food. After filling up the fridge again, she suddenly wanted to go all out and make a big meal.

It was right then when Sammy came back. When he saw his usually vacant kitchen full of people and his dining table full of food, he was shocked for a moment.

He saw Tonia through the glass door. She was wearing a pink apron and had her hair loosely clipped up, with a few strands falling across her face as she focused on cooking.

She didn't hear him come in since the pan was so loud. Sammy didn't stop her. He silently took off his shoes, leaned against the kitchen door, and watched her prepare.

Tonia almost screamed when she saw him come out with a dish in hand.

Sammy held her steady with one hand, then immediately let her go to get the pot of soup and put it on the table.

“Why are you back?”

Sammy clicked his tongue. “I wouldn't have known you were getting ready for a feast if I hadn't come back.”

Tonia was a little ashamed and added, “I didn't use your kitchen tools. I bought my own. When I leave, I'll put everything back the way it was.”

Sammy lifted an eyebrow and opened the refrigerator.

Tonia ran after him quickly. “I'll take all of this with me when I leave. By the way, your beer was expired. I'll get you some new ones.”

Sammy then looked at the gym and the study.

Great. Not only were things back to as they were, but it was like she had never been

there.

Tonia trailed following and laughed awkwardly. “Um, about the dust on the desk and treadmill... I can try to put it back if that helps?”

Sammy didn't say anything.

“I've been looking for a place to live. I'll be moving out soon.”

Be quiet.

“Sammy, say something. It's kind of scary when you don't say anything.”

Sammy looked back. “Did you get new forks and knives?”

“Yes, I did.”

“Come on, let's eat.”

Tonia paid close attention to his tone and could see that he wasn't very furious. She was relieved and ran passed him. “Sit down first. I'll get you a new bowl and some cutlery!”

She ran off, and her wavy hair bounced as she did.

Sammy sat at the table and looked about his flat, which had just been changed. He couldn't help but smile as he saw Tonia move around so quickly.

Sammy had seen Tonia for the first time as he was leaving the library after studying for the night. She had been hiding in a nook at the entry, crouching down with several stray cats.

She was so little that she was only a little bit bigger than the cats. It had been pouring outside, and she didn't have an umbrella, so she was definitely stuck there by the rain.

He had began to go towards her with the intention of giving her his umbrella, but Raph had gotten there first. The latter had run up from behind and asked, "Sammy, do you know her?"

Sammy had said no.

"Then let's go," Raph said. He didn't know why Sammy hadn't moved. He looked back at Tonia and saw that she had been crying. Her face was pale and her eyes were red and puffy.

Sammy would find out many years later that it was the day Tonia's parents got a divorce.

Her father had cheated on her mother and had another child with his mistress. Her mother had grabbed Ayra and moved to another country out of anger, leaving her behind.

Once their beloved daughter Tonia was completely alone.

"Sammy, you have a lot of schoolwork to do. You should go home. I'll take her back," Raph remarked.

Sammy wanted to speak up and offer that he could take her home. But before he could finish what he was saying, Raph had already stepped closer to Tonia and knelt down next to her.

A teacher had just called Sammy away, and he had to leave right away.

The second time Sammy saw her, Raph was carrying her on his back and smiling as he introduced her. “Sammy, this is Tonia, my girlfriend.”

Tonia had immediately slipped from Raph’s back and tiptoed over to wipe the wetness off his face with a tissue. She always had a small bag with her that was full of handy stuff, like a magic pouch.

She would give Raph a damp wipe when he was sweaty after a basketball game. His uniform was constantly untidy, so she would stand on a step by the flower bed and meticulously fix it. She would pretend to be a rabbit to make him feel better if he had a fight with his family.

Raph was right when he mentioned that Sammy had seen their whole relationship from start to finish. Sammy just looked up to Raph at that time and wished he had what Raph had.

But every now and again, in the middle of the night, he would think about that stormy night. He’d think about whether he would have been the one with her if he had been the first to talk to Tonia and take her home.

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But Raph was still his cousin. Sammy also knew that he was bad because he would do everything to achieve what he desired.

That's why he decided to move to Busta City, which was very far away, to study law after the college entrance examinations. It was easy to forget about Tonia because of the distance.

Sammy had never been a social person. Sammy liked to be alone, unlike Raph, who was a social butterfly. He didn't even talk to his family much.

His parents had talked about Raph from time to time. He had also wound up in Busta City, they reported, and he had started dating a pretty girl.

She was the one. Tonia.

His parents had also told him that Raph was in love with her and that they were going to get married as soon as they turned 18. But things didn't go as planned.

Raph's business had failed after college, and they had been having a hard time. Sammy's mum and dad told him to check on Raph and see if he could help in any way.

So, Sammy went to see them. Tonia was the first person he saw. She looked pretty much the same, with her wide cheeks, bright eyes, and ponytail.

At that time, she was busy in front of a makeshift stove when she saw him come in. "Sammy! You're here. Raph is out meeting with an investor, but he should be back

soon. Come in and sit down.”

Sammy had gone into the little basement where they resided. It had been dark, wet, and little.

But even though it was big, it had been carefully put together. Raph’s shirt had been hanging properly on a rope outside, and the clothing she had just washed had been hanging there too.

“Tonia, what’s this?” Sammy asked as he pointed to something on the table.

“Oh, that’s a wrist rest I bought for Raph. He codes all the time, and I didn’t want him to get tendonitis.”

“And this?”

“That? Oats overnight. He gets stomachaches a lot, and when he meets with investors, he drinks a lot to help with digestion.”

“What about this?”

Tonia had laughed. “That’s the controller for his game.”

She had grabbed it from his hand and put it in a box in a nice way. “You should really talk to him, Sammy. He always leaves things lying around...”

Sammy didn’t hear the rest. There was just one thing on his mind.

“She loves so much. Why can’t she love me?”

Sammy had felt bad about himself. He had promised himself that he would stop if

this didn't work. But then he heard noises coming from the motel room next door.

A man breathing hard and a woman moaning softly.

He had done it.

It may have been the stress from work or the drink. More likely, it was the woman Raph hired. She was sexy, competent, and impossible for him to resist.

Raph had cheated in either case.

They had been going on all night, and Sammy had been lying in bed, staring at the ceiling.

...

Raph called the next morning and cried, "Sammy, do you have time? I really need a drink."

Raph had quietly drunk glass after glass of alcohol in the pub. Sammy had tried to stop him. "Relax. Your health is important."

But Raph was on the verge. "Please let me drink."

Sammy knew why, so he didn't step in again. In the end, he took Raph home when he was quite drunk.

Tonia had been really worried. While the hangover soup was cooking, she came over and started to clean Raph up, take off his clothing, wipe the vomit off of them, and put him to bed.

She saw Sammy standing there while she was getting Raph's soiled clothing together to wash.

"Sammy, I'm really sorry. I think he ruined your shirt too. Why don't you take it off and I'll wash it for you?"

Based on the nature of their relationship, he should have said no.

But Sammy had said, "Okay."

He had taken off his shirt and was leaning against the doorframe, observing her.

After that, Tonia got a tiny stool and started cleaning the clothing near the door. She washed them, rinsed them, and then hung them up to dry.

It seemed like the garment Tonia had washed was whiter than when he originally bought it.

"Sammy, do you have something important to do later?"

He shook his head. "No."

"Oh, good. Why don't you stay for lunch? You can wait for your shirt to dry."

He said again, "Okay."

Sammy enjoyed to watch Tonia. She had been like a bustling hen, making their hard life seem strangely charming. What did she like about Raph?

Sammy was superior than Raph in every regard, including how he looked, how talented he was, and everything else. The only time he couldn't compete was when

Tonia really needed someone and Raph rushed over.

Sammy had walked away, and it had cost him years of remorse.

Sammy had figured out that cheating was like a habit. The first time was scary. You would think twice the second time. You would give up totally by the third time.

Sammy had set up a lot of women to try to seduce Raph, women who were really good at it and had done it before.

Sometimes Raph said no, but other times he gave in. And every time he gave in, he would be even nicer to Tonia than before.

Tonia, who had no idea what was going on, kept giving their relationship more love, thinking everything was well between them. Their love had grown stronger and sweeter, as if nothing could shatter them.

In the end, Raph was successful. He bought Tonia a spacious house, dressed her in nice clothes, and gave her expensive handbags. They had even tied the knot and made it official.

But Raph didn't go to the honeymoon suite on the night of their wedding. Instead, he had summoned Sammy over for another night of heavy drinking.

He was inebriated and said, "Sammy, I don't know who to tell about some things. You're the only one who knows how much of an asshole I am..."

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Sammy had also been drinking this time. He punched Raph hard and then stormed off, fuelled by booze and rage.

“Sammy!” Raph had yelled after him, but Sammy had gone without looking back.

After that, Raph started dating more women. Some of them Sammy had hired, while others had come to Raph on their own since he had started to get rich.

Sammy had one of those women record her meeting with Raph one day. Then, he forwarded the video right to Tonia’s inbox.

Sammy assumed that Tonia would definitely depart after more than ten years of cheating. But he didn’t think she could take it.

She had cried, battled, and lost it. But in the end, she always forgave.

But this time, Sammy finally got it. Tonia could let go of Raph, but she didn’t want to. She couldn’t let go of the single thing that had kept her going all these years.

Raph had been the one to help her through her worst times. She was so scared of being sad again that she held on to him firmly and wouldn’t let go, no matter what.

She was afraid that the river would take her away or the waves would pull her under.

Sammy imagined he could be her new lifeline because of that. He may take Raph’s place.

Ayra was an unexpected extra. Sammy felt it was time when he found out that Raph had been with her.

He waited six months before Tonia eventually called. When he answered the phone, the hand that had held the cigarette shook.

Tonia's voice was raspy because she had been sobbing. "Where are you?"

Sammy had felt the blood surging through his body. "Room 3601 at the Star Hotel."

She knocked on his door half an hour later and finally entered his life.

Sammy had sighed as he held her in his arms at their most private moment. He wouldn't let her go now that she had come to him.

Tonia had been getting lunch ready all morning. She was shocked when Sammy ate virtually all of the meal in front of him.

"Sammy, have you not eaten anything in the last few days?"

"Yes," Sammy said. "I went on a business trip."

"Didn't they give you food on your trip?"

"The food here is still the best. I didn't like the food."

He felt something touch his foot all of a sudden. He looked down and spotted a golden retriever.

Mingol went slowly and panted deeply as she fought to take each step. She waddled by him and fell at Tonia's feet.

She petted Mingol's fur and asked, "Mingol, you remember Sammy, right?"

"You went back?" Sammy asked.

"Yes, to bring Mingol over."

"Why didn't you bring the rest of your things? Where are they?"

Tonia gazed down. "I've packed everything. I'll move right away once I find a place. I don't want to take up space here, and I don't want to have to move everything twice."

"Is it a lot?" Sammy asked.

"Not really. Just three boxes."

"Do you have plans for this afternoon?"

"No. Why?"

"Come on. I'll help you move."

He took his car keys and went to the door. But Tonia stayed still.

Sammy asked, "What's wrong?"

Tonia took a big breath, as if she were getting ready to do something. "I don't need to. I've already hired movers."

"So?"

“I’ll pay the rent and utilities for the last few days.”

“I don’t need any money.”

Tonia looked up at him and said, “Sammy, let’s be reasonable about this. Let’s not let it get out of hand, okay?”

Sammy looked up. “You think this is a joke?”

“Is it not?”

Sammy said, “No.” “Tonia, you’re smart. You should know what I really want.”

Tonia’s chest got constricted. “That’s not possible.”

“Why?”

“Because you’re Raph’s cousin!” she yelled.

Sammy just smiled. “Is that all?”

“Isn’t that reason enough?”

“I thought you were going to tell me you didn’t love me.”

Tonia stopped talking.

He went on, “As long as that’s not the reason, everything else is fine.” “You don’t have to worry about the rest. I’ll take care of it.”

Tonia quickly found a place to live and moved in with Mingol. But the new flat had

some problems because she was in a hurry.

The unit was newly rented and in a relatively deserted region, and it didn't have any useful utilities. But Mingol was thrilled since there was a big grassy area downstairs where she could play.

Every day, Tonia took her out for walks in the pram she bought. Mingol's health was getting worse, and even walking a few steps made her breathless.

The doctor told her to get ready for the worst after a trip to the vet because Mingol's condition could get worse at any time. Tonia spent as much time as she could with her and tried to make her dying days as happy as they could be.

Matt Duckman, her old class representative, called on the weekend to invite her and Raph to his son's first birthday party. Tonia didn't notify Raph and went to the event by herself in a cab.

The party took place at a restaurant in the middle of the city. Mingol's clinginess made her a little late, so when she got there, most of the visitors were already there.

Matt was not the thin guy he used to be. He was now a father and had a round belly because he was married and had a child. He was extremely happy to hold his son.

Tonia came up with a smile. "Matt, congratulations! You have a wife and child, which is the best thing ever!"

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Matt met his wife, Roselyn Maddock, while he was in graduate school. Tonia didn't know Roselyn, but she seemed kind and friendly.

"Nice to meet you, Roselyn," Tonia said.

Roselyn graciously said, "Nice to meet you too, Tonia."

Tonia said, "Congratulations on your new baby! He's so cute."

Matt was quite happy. "Hey, why are you by yourself? Where's Raph? Why didn't he come with you?"

"He's busy."

"Then how did you get here?"

"I got a cab."

Matt said, "That's not okay! Raph is doing very well now. How could he ignore his wife? He should have sent a driver for you."

"Maybe he forgot because he's busy."

Matt felt that something was wrong. "Uh, did you two get into a fight?"

"No."

“Then why—”

Roselyn softly pushed him, telling him to stop talking about it.

But Matt was the type of person who couldn't help but snoop. “You don't know; they've been through so much together in the last ten years. Their relationship is different.”

He looked back at Tonia. “What's going on? If he's bothering you, let me know and I'll talk to him.”

“It's really okay...”

Roselyn couldn't stop Matt from talking, so she took Tonia away from the argument that was getting out of hand. Tonia was thankful.

Roselyn took the baby home for a nap as the event came to an end. Matt took a bunch of his old classmates to karaoke. Tonia didn't want to go, but Matt was so excited that she couldn't say no.

But after she got to karaoke, she wished she hadn't gone.

Raph was there.

Raph affectionately patted Matt's round belly and put an arm around his neck. “Did you get really drunk tonight? Are you still able to drink?”

Matt smiled and swayed a little. “Just wait. I'm going to drink more than you tonight!”

Raph said, “Just make sure your wife doesn't yell at you when you get home.”

“Hey, you shouldn’t be talking! Isn’t Ton going to yell at you when you get home?”

Raph’s smile faded. “Come on. Sit down. You’re heavy. You weigh about 200 pounds.”

Matt fell into the couch and said, “I don’t weigh 200 pounds! You’re lying. Raph, you better be nice to me, or Ton will leave you. I’m not going to help you out.”

Tonia wanted to escape, but Jane Scot had a hold on her.

Jane had been abused at home after marrying into a rich family. She knew about the rumours about Raph and felt a connection with Tonia because they were both going through hard times.

Jane grabbed Tonia and started telling her about all of her problems as soon as she saw her.

“It’s dark in here,” Tonia replied. “You should take off your sunglasses.”

Jane said, “No way!” without thinking, “The bruises around my eyes haven’t gone away yet.”

“Why do you stay with him if he’s hitting you that hard? Aren’t you afraid he’ll kill you? Just go.”

Jane huffed. “It’s easier said than done. You haven’t left Raph, even though he’s been cheating on you.”

Jane’s idea was really clear and to the point.

“Make sure you marry a rich man. There’s always a price to pay. You’re holding onto

your feelings and I'm holding onto my money, so we're pretty much in the same boat."

Tonia didn't say anything.

Jane leaned in and whispered in Tonia's ear, "But just so you know, you need to keep your money close. He can sleep with as many women as he wants, but you can't let him spend all of it on other women."

"Not long ago, I read on the news that the woman Raph is with now is wearing Bulgari from head to toe. And look at you..."

"So what? It's not like it's made of gold threads.

"Don't be so naive. Raph will just spend the money on someone else if you don't.

Tonia remembered the last time she met Ayra at that fancy restaurant. She could sum it up in three words: fancy and expensive.

After her parents divorced, she and Ayra were separated and given to other parents. Their mother took Ayra to another country and changed her last name to cut links with their father.

But after their mother got married again and had more kids, she paid less attention to Ayra and sent her less money.

Ayra used most of the money she made washing dishes overseas to contact Tonia long distance, even though she was living on a tight budget. Eventually, Ayra came home, stopped going to school, and started working to make ends meet.

Tonia was trying to assist Raph launch a business in Busta City at the time. Both

Tonia and Ayra were having a hard time, but going through terrible times together made their relationship stronger.

When Tonia found out that Ayra was Raph's mistress, all the agony she had kept inside for years came out like a volcano, pushing her to a point of no return.

"Tonia. Matt said, "Hey, Tonia."

Tonia didn't want to go over to them, so she took her hand away from Jane and stated, "I have things to do." I had to leave.

"Don't go," Jane said again as she grasped her arm. "We don't get together like this very often. You can't just leave.

Then Jane pulled her over to where the others were. When Tonia saw Raph, he gave her a polite nod, as if he were meeting an old friend. He was polite, stiff, and aloof.

Matt saw the awkward conversation and swiftly dragged Tonia over to sit next to him. "Why are you alone in the corner?" Join us! "

"I have things to do." Tonia said, "You guys have fun."

"Do you really hate me that much?"Raph enquired out of the blue.

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Tonia didn't know what was wrong with him. "No."

"Then, come sit with us."

Tonia was angry. "Did Matt ask you to come?"

Raph didn't say he was sorry. "Yeah." He asked how I was bullying you and claimed he would stand up for you.

Tonia could tell where this was leading. "Are you going to tell everyone?"

"Do whatever you want," Raph said.

Matt said, "You two have been together forever, so why are you fighting now?" to break the tension. Do you remember how you two used to act all sweet in front of the whole class? "

Jane also jumped in. "Tell everyone what? Is it possible that... Ton is going to have a baby? "

"Is that true, Raph?" Matt howled in fake excitement."

Raph looked at Tonia's stomach for a second before looking away. "You should ask her."

Tonia got angry. "Why are you asking me all these questions?"

“Isn’t this your time to vent your frustrations and get some sympathy? I’m not saying anything so you may say what you want. You used to enjoy doing it. It’s your time now! Everyone is here for an unplanned trial. “Go ahead.”

Tonia took a big breath. “Raph, what do you mean?”

“I’m giving you a chance.”

“I don’t want to fight with you in front of everyone, Raph.” It’s Matt’s day today. “Don’t mess it up for others.”

The next second, Raph smashed his glass down, which scared everyone around them.

“Tonia, are you really going to have a baby?” he yelled.

Tonia stopped for a second before she understood what Raph’s inquiry meant. She reached out to take his arm and said, “Don’t make a scene here.” “It’s Matt’s son’s birthday.”

“Tonia.” Raph shook off her hand. “Just answer me.” Who’s the dad? ”

His push was so strong that she fell over.

Matt, who was instantly sober, ran to get Raph. “Are you crazy? What’s the matter with you? If Ton is pregnant, who else may be the father? How could you even think to ask that? ”

Tonia fell onto the table, breaking a bottle of wine in the process.

Jane rushed to help her get up.

Raph was quite angry and stood over her. “Who is it? Tell me! ”

Tonia said with a sneer, “Does it even matter?”

.....

Tonia really wanted to get away from it all, maybe a trip to a faraway place to clear her head, anything to get away from the stress of being with Raph and Sammy for a little while.

But Mingol needed her, which meant she had to stay.

When she eventually arrived home, her phone rang a lot. Most of the calls were from Sammy.

She didn’t want to answer.

Matt sent a few.

Tonia had left the karaoke early, so she didn’t know what transpired after that or how Raph went on to tell everyone about their love.

So, it could only indicate that Matt wanted to know more or was trying to settle the argument. She didn’t want to deal with it either.

Jane only called once.

Tony thought about it and then called back. “Jane?”

“Ton, are you at home?”

“I am.”

“Okay. I’m glad to hear that.

“Yeah, don’t worry.”

“Okay. Then I’ll let you go.

“Goodbye.”

Then Jane said, “Ton” all of a sudden.

“Yeah? ”

“Have you truly been with other men? ”

Tonia stopped talking.

“Ton, if you’ve made up your mind to leave, don’t look back.”

“Right.”

“Last night, Matt was so drunk that he couldn’t stop talking about how great you are,” Jane said with a laugh. He claimed that someone must have set you up and urged Raph not to be stupid. He would never find another wife as perfect as you if he lost you.

Tonia forced a sour grin. “Jane, are you sad? ”

“Disappointed with what? ”

“Nobody set me up.”

Jane thought for a moment and then said, “I understand.” If my husband went bankrupt, I’d pack my bags and go right away. Everyone has a reason for what they do. You love me, and I adore money. I’m out if the money is gone. I get why you left when Raph couldn’t love you anymore.

Tonia remarked, “I thought you’d call me stupid for standing by him when he was down and then leaving him for his mistress now that he’s successful.”

“What’s so stupid about that?” Jane said, “Making yourself live a life that doesn’t make you happy only to make other people happy? That’s just dumb now.

Tonia sat down on her couch after hanging up and thought about what she had just heard.

She felt like a wind-up toy. Every day, she wrapped herself up tightly and danced through joy and enthusiasm, drawing in many admirers with her energy.

But now she just wanted to put herself away and let herself gather dust. There was something comforting about letting yourself fall apart; at least she’d be comfortable.

Tonia was brought back to reality by the doorbell.

Then she realised that she had purchased food online. There weren’t any stores nearby, so she had been relying on delivery to do her shopping since she moved here.

She went to the door and opened it.

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There was a tall, good-looking man in a nice suit standing outside. His hands were full of bulging grocery bags, and he was sweating lightly on his forehead.

He said, "I walked up because the lift was broken."

There always seemed to be problems with the lifts in new buildings.

Tonia questioned, "How did you get here?"

Sammy swung the bags a little. "I wanted to try your food again."

Tonia lived in a little two-bedroom flat that was only a little over 500 square feet. She lived in the smaller bedroom, and Mingol lived in the larger bedroom.

Sammy walked in and looked around the whole facility in a matter of seconds.

He just rubbed his nose and walked away when he saw Mingol lying on the bed in the master bedroom with her tail wagging in greeting.

"How did you even know about this place?" Tonia enquired.

Sammy didn't answer her inquiry. "I've been hungry all day." I recently carried a few dozen pounds of goods up to the 12th floor. "Let me catch my breath first if you're going to question me."

Tonia had no response.

“I’m very hungry. Can you make something? “I haven’t eaten anything all day.”

“What do you want?”

Sammy pointed to the bag of groceries he had brought and said, “I got these at the store.” You decide what to make.

Tonia went over the things, and her frown got worse with each one. “You got ripped off. This tomato is spilling and squashed, while these cucumbers are damaged.

“Really?” Sammy sat down on the couch and seemed nonchalant. “I didn’t notice.”

“Just took what I wanted.”

“You don’t even look at what you buy?”

“Not really.”

Tonia groaned. It made sense. A powerful lawyer like him, who charged seven figures per case, presumably never went to the produce section.

“How much did all of this cost you?”

“1,200 dollars”

“Excuse me, what?”

Sammy said, “I went to Finna Department Store.” They told me that these fruits and vegetables were flown in from the source.

Tonia couldn’t believe it and was flabbergasted. “Who in their right mind buys groceries from a high-end department store?”

“Then where should I get them? ”

“At a grocery store, a farmers’ market, or even online.”

Sammy seemed really confused. “Online?”

“Forget it,” Tonia said, giving up. “You have money to burn.” I won’t waste my time attempting to help you save it. “Just keep going to the department store.”

Tonia chose a simple supper as night fell.

Sammy ate it up quickly, finishing a whole bowl in only a few minutes.

She looked at him in shock. “Have you gone on another business trip? ”

“Yeah.”

“You can’t just starve if you don’t like the food in another country!” There’s always something like bread and milk.

“My stomach can’t take it,” Sammy said, putting a palm on his stomach. “Cold food doesn’t sit well.”

“Your stomach is also sensitive? Raph” Tonia caught herself barely in time.

Sammy shrugged. “Raph drinks too much.” Mine is genetic. Since I was a kid, my stomach has been weak. It doesn’t like the cold and can get acid reflux easily.

Tonia heard this and went to the kitchen to boil some water. She then put it in front of him and quietly took the beer he had brought back.

“Your stomach is too sensitive to drink cold things.”

Sammy’s lips twisted up into a small smile, but he did what he was told. “Okay.”

“Is there enough food for you?”

“Is there anything else?”

Tonia rose up and said, “I’ll toast some bread and fry an egg for you.”

“Sounds good,” Sammy said with a nod.

In a matter of minutes, she made a sandwich with a fried egg, gammon, tomato slices, lettuce, pickles and a lot of cheese on top.

It was twice as big as anything Sammy could get at a convenience store. He looked at the “monster” sandwich on the plate for a long time without moving.

Tonia raised an eyebrow and said, “Is there anything in there that you don’t eat?” Just choose it.

He shook his head and said, “I’ll eat anything.”

“Even if I poisoned it?” she shot back. ”

“I’d eat it even if you put poop in it.”

Tonia was speechless, but Sammy was eager to get started.

She wrinkled her nose and remarked, “God, you’re disgusting.”

“It’s my food, not yours.” “All that matters is that I can handle it.”

“Do your clients realise that the lawyer they hired for a lot of money acts this way in private?”

Sammy laughed softly. “Work is work.” Life is life. “I could eat poop and still win a case.” Tonia was angry, but Sammy seemed happy as he ate. When he was done, Tonia observed, “It’s getting late.” You should go back.

Sammy pulled up his sleeves and said, “I’ll do the dishes before I leave.”

“No need.” I’m fine with just these two bowls.

He started taking the dirty dishes away and went to the kitchen without asking for her permission. A few moments later, she heard water running.

“Ton, where’s the soap for the dishes?”he yelled.

“On the right side of the cabinet, the second shelf.”

“And the towels?”

“Under the cabinets, there’s a drawer.”

“Where’s the bag for the trash?”

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“Do you want me to come over and help?”

“Found it!” Sammy came out of the kitchen with the trash in hand. “I’ll take this down,” he said.

Tonia moved up to get it. “I can do it.” I can’t pay you by the minute.

Sammy stepped aside so she couldn’t reach him. “It’s greasy, and the lift is broken.”

“Stay put, and I’ll be right back.”

She didn’t know what to say.

“Mingol didn’t go for a walk today, did he? I’ll take her down for a little while.

Sammy said, “She can’t just lie around the house all day.”

He was already out the door, one hand holding the trash and the other holding Mingol. Then he ran down the steps.

Tonia went back to her room, feeling a little out of it. She knew something was wrong, but she couldn’t quite put her finger on what it was.

It took her a while, but she finally understood.

What did Sammy just say to her?

Sammy had seen Raph’s car right away when he got there, even though it was parked in the shadows. So he stayed at Tonia’s apartment a little longer before going down.

Mingol was a big golden retriever. Sammy carried her all the way to the ground floor and only let her down when they got there. After throwing away the rubbish, he walked slowly over to where Raph was standing.

Sammy knew Raph had seen him.

Raph's car was parked on the side of the road, and he was smoking while leaning against a lamp post. There were cigarette butts all over the ground surrounding him.

Sammy came up with a little smile. "Hey, you should stop smoking so much." You're going to get married soon. Shouldn't you be getting ready for a baby? "

"I'm already married."

"Isn't a divorce coming soon?" Sammy said back, "I've even written the divorce agreement based on what you said. It should be there by tomorrow morning.

"Thanks, Sammy," Raph said with a snarl. "You're off working in another country, but you still have time to help me with my divorce." Well, you're my cousin."

"Oh, you remember that?" Raph's voice was chilly and angry.

Sammy looked down and tried not to smile. Then he scratched behind Mingol's ears and pointed to Raph. "Mingol, do you still know him?"

Mingol only tilted her head to the side and stuck her tongue out in a silly grin.

Raph bent down and reached out to pet Mingol's head, but she quickly stepped back and hid under Sammy's knees. Raph's hand stayed in the air awkwardly.

Sammy stroked Mingol on the back, and she seemed to like him more.

“The vet says Mingol is getting old and might have some dog dementia,” Sammy added with a smile. She can’t remember what happened before.

Raph took a long breath and stood up slowly. “I’m still her dad, even if she doesn’t remember.” Her mum is Ton.

“Did you know Mingol had puppies?” Sammy asked.

Raph scowled and gulped hard.

“They were born the same year that Tonia got pregnant. She lost the baby when she jumped from the building and was comatose in the ICU.

“Mingol was home alone when she had the puppies, but it was a hard birth and they didn’t make it. If Aunt Windy hadn’t called and told me to check on them, Mingol might have died with them.

Raph’s face became more complicated. “You were the one who brought Mingol to the hospital?”

“Yes. She almost didn’t make it, but they were able to save her. But she’s been in bad shape since then.

Raph was quiet for a minute. “Thanks.”

“You don’t need to say thank you. I mean what I say, Raph. “Let me take care of Tonia or Mingol if you can’t.”

Raph looked down and smiled bitterly. “Since when?”

He didn’t say what, but Sammy knew.

“Do you remember that wet night outside the library while we were in school? ”

Raph remembered and stated, “That was the first time Ton and I met.”

“It was also the first time Ton and I met. I was the first one to see her because you were in a hurry to get back to the dorm to watch the game.

Raph laughed. “So you’ve liked her all this time?”

“Back then, I really thought of her as my cousin-in-law,” Sammy remarked.

They didn’t need to say anything else. They had been cousins for 30 years and could talk to one other without speaking everything out loud.

Raph kept his eyes down and stayed still for what felt like forever.

Sammy didn’t move, either.

Mingol was the only one who felt the cold breeze at night. He pawed at Sammy’s hand and whined gently to go home.

Sammy’s phone rang. He looked at it and smiled. “Hey.”

“I’m looking at the weather, and it looks like it will rain. You should bring Mingol back.

“Okay, yeah. “I’m going upstairs now.”

“Is Mingol okay?”

“Yeah, she’s okay. No problem.

“Then why have you been gone for so long? She can’t walk for that long.

“I ran into someone I know and talked to them for a bit.”

Tonia’s interest was piqued. “In this far-off place?”

“Yes,” Sammy said. “Ton, shut the window tightly.” “Be back soon.”

“Understood.”

“Raph finally spoke out when Sammy hung up the phone. “Tonia’s pregnant.” Count your money so you don’t end yourself raising someone else’s child.

Sammy looked up at him and asked, “How do you know Ton is pregnant?”

Raph said angrily, “Just do the maths yourself.” This is just a friendly reminder.

“Thanks for worrying, but she’s not.”

Raph’s head shot up. “What? ”

“I was just taking out the trash when I saw a pack of sanitary pads in it.”

“So, she... told me a lie? ”

“I don’t think she meant to do that.” It’s likely that you got it wrong, and she didn’t bother to set you straight.

Again, Raph was quiet.

“Raph, Tonia has spoilt you for the last 15 years with her love. You’ve taken everything she’s given you for granted. You don’t even know how lucky you are. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve wanted to be like you.

Raph’s throat felt thick. “I didn’t mean for it to happen.” At first, I didn’t want to. I genuinely did...

“But you still failed, didn’t you? ”

“Sammy, would you have been able to resist if you were in my shoes? We are both men, and you know how much stress I was under...

“I could have,” Sammy said with confidence. “Yeah, I’m a male, and it would have been hard for me to resist temptation too. But I knew that if I passed that boundary, I might never see her again. I couldn’t take that chance.

He then asked, “Raph, would you have done it if you had known that sleeping with that woman would kill you the next day?”

Raph didn’t say anything.

“You wouldn’t. Life is valuable, and no amount of temporary pleasure is worth losing it. You would be scared. You’d run for your life if you saw her, no matter how gorgeous she was.

“You only acted out because you knew Tonia loved you too much to leave. You thought the consequences wouldn’t be too bad, so you hurt her without holding back.”

Raph thought there was a rock on his chest. It was hard to breathe every time.

“You should be thankful that Tonia came to me and not someone else,” Sammy said.

“Grateful? How am I supposed to be grateful? From now on, she’ll be my cousin-in-law. Is that supposed to make it better?” Sammy said, “It’s a hell of a lot better than her sleeping with some random guy. You backed her into a corner. If she had really hit rock bottom and hooked up with some scumbag, can you imagine what could have happened?

“Maybe she would have been sold into s*x slavery, locked up in a secluded village, chained up, and made to have kids. Or maybe someone would blackmail her with a s*x tape, saying that it would be made public online if she didn’t pay. How would she go on living after that?

“So, would it really be so bad to call her your cousin-in-law?”

Raph took a long breath, let his shoulders drop, and smelt like booze all over. “Sammy, you can say all of this because you won.”

Sammy responded, “No one wins here.” “You lost the one who loved you the most. Tonia fought for years to keep from drowning in misery. And me? I wasted 15 years of my life.

“If I had gone after her first and taken her home that night, none of this would have happened.”

“Raph,” Sammy said, “let me give you one more bit of advise. Don’t make things worse.”

“Is that a threat?”

“Yes.” Tonia is finally getting back on her feet and beginning over. Don’t bother her or show up outside her building like a lovesick idiot.

“She doesn’t need it, and to be honest, I don’t think she ever wants to see you again.”

Tonia had already shut all the windows by the time Sammy arrived back upstairs. The atmosphere was so warm and comfortable that his glasses fogged up.

Mingol ran up to her, wagged her tail, and begged for her attention.

Mingol licked Tonia, and she couldn’t help but chuckle. “Hey! I just took a shower!”

Mingol didn’t get it. She only knew that Tonia smelt good and that she liked her very much.

The air smelt like citrus body wash and a little amount of steam that was still there.

Sammy took off his spectacles, and because he was so short-sighted, the room became a blur. But he didn’t care. Even though this place was little, it felt like home.

Sammy became Tonia’s personal delivery man from that day on. She didn’t have time to go food shopping, so he made it a point to bring her fresh fruits and veggies every day after work. He would even get Mingol little things for the house, snacks,

and toys from time to time.

Tonia lived by herself and could never finish all the food she made, so Sammy was happy to eat the leftovers. Most evenings, he would go home without bothering anyone. But on stormy nights, he would silently go to bed in the master bedroom and sleep with Mingol.

A night of storms that came out of nowhere was the genuine turning point in their relationship. The wind was so strong that it shook the windows.

The new building she was staying in wasn't doing well. The lift was broken, and the power went out too. The whole flat went dark.

Tonia was very afraid of thunder. She buried herself behind the sheets, but she couldn't stop worrying about Mingol.

At that moment, Sammy knocked on the door. "Can I come in, Tonia?"

She was so scared that her teeth chattered and her throat was closed so she couldn't talk.

He told her, "I won't do anything." "I'm just worried about you."

Sammy said, "Mingol is too. She's been whining," when Tonia didn't say anything.

Tonia could hear Mingol's gentle whimpering. She took a deep breath and opened the door, even though it was dark.

Sammy stood there with Mingol in one arm and his phone torch in the other. The instant he noticed her pale, scared face, his features softened.

He picked up both Mingol and her and put them back in her little bed, where they snuggled under the sheets. “Don’t worry. I’ll be with you both.”

Tonia had no idea when the storm was over. She just knew that when she woke up, Mingol was cuddled up in her arms and Sammy was next to her.

Mingol was a soft ball of fluff in her arms, and Sammy’s warm, firm chest rested against her back.

Tonia was like the bacon in a sandwich, perfectly placed between the two. But she had to agree that this warm, stifling feeling was nice. It made her feel needed, loved, and cherished without conditions.

They were the things that Raph had never given her.

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Tonia met Raph again outside the courthouse. Sammy had taken her there. When she saw Raph and Ayra enter together, she was surprised that she didn't feel the same hatred she had before.

Ayra said "Tonia" gently.

Tonia nodded with ease. "Let's go inside."

That day, the courthouse was busier and more crowded than normal.

"You have to take a number and wait in queue today," a cashier told them. "It'll probably take a while."

Tonia was a little surprised. "Now you need a number to get a divorce?"

The clerk laughed. "Today is Valentine's Day. Are you here to get a divorce?"

Tonia suddenly got why there were so many people. A lot of couples were being married at the courtroom on Valentine's Day.

Raph said, "There are too many people here today. We should probably come back later."

Sammy said, "There's a long queue for marriage, but the divorce section is pretty empty. You can get it done right away." Tonia didn't have time to answer.

Raph was speechless and shook his head with a smile that said he was happy.

Sammy patted him on the back. “It’s better to get it over with. It makes things easier for everyone.”

The divorce procedure was weird. Tonia and Raph sat next to each other at the counter, and someone else stood behind each of them.

Frank Cisco, the gentleman at the counter, laughed at the strange sight and said, “Looks like you’ve both already found your next partner, huh?”

Raph instantly said no. “No, we haven’t.”

Sammy, on the other hand, laughed, “Yeah. It’s Valentine’s Day. We’ll just go to the city clerk’s office after this and get married right away.”

Tonia turned to face him.

Sammy put a hand on her shoulder gently. “Just kidding.”

After that, Tonia and Raph gave up all the papers that were needed.

Frank quickly went over their modest divorce agreement and asked, “Are you both okay with how the assets are divided here?”

Raph nodded. “Yes.”

“And you?”

Tonia also nodded. “Yes.”

“Okay. So, there are no problems with dividing the assets. Do you have kids?”

Raph shook his head. “No.”

Tonia stopped. “We had one.”

Frank stopped for a second and seemed bewildered. “You... put the child up for adoption?”

Tonia shook her head. “No. I didn’t carry it to term.”

Frank became a little angry. “I was asking if you two have kids to make sure you both agree on who gets them.”

“I didn’t mean to,” Tonia said. “I’ve never been through a divorce before.” “No, we don’t have kids.”

“Okay. That settles it. If you both agree, just sign this form at the bottom.”

Tonia filled out the paperwork, signed it, and handed it to Raph with the pen and paper. “Your turn.”

Raph didn’t move. His hands were at his sides.

Frank enquired, “Are you still not sure about something?”

Raph shut his eyes for a moment, then suddenly took Tonia’s hand and started heading to the door.

Tonia was shocked. “What are you doing, Raph?”

Raph kept going without saying anything.

Ayra wanted to follow, but Sammy gently stopped her. She was surprised and said, “Aren’t you worried about Tonia?”

Sammy said, “I want her to choose for herself.” There’s nothing I can do if she can’t let him go.

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Raph dragged Tonia all the way outside, past the doors of the courthouse.

Tonia pulled her hand away and said, “What the hell are you doing?”

“I don’t want to do this,” Raph remarked. “I don’t want a divorce.”

Tonia stood still and took a long breath. “You wanted this.”

“Okay, I really do regret it now.”

“Where was your regret when I gave you all those chances?” You only regret now that you see me with Sammy,” Tonia said fiercely. Are you really sorry, or are you just mad that I’m happy without you? ”

Raph looked at her with disbelief. “Ton, you weren’t like this before.”

“Yes.” I’m not just the whore anymore; I’m also the bitch. And you know what, Raph? “You turned me into this.”

Raph didn’t know what to say.

“Let’s go back inside and finish this.”

Raph suddenly grabbed her and pulled her into his arms, holding her close. “Ton... Ton, I made a mistake. Sorry. Please, let’s not break up. Can we start over? We can do this.

Tonia fought him, but Raph just held on tighter. Finally, she stamped on his foot, and her heel sunk in firmly.

Raph moaned in pain and let her go, so she hurriedly moved back. She picked up a wood that was lying nearby and held it hard. “Stay away from me!”

More than anything else, her actions hurt Raph.

The Tonia he knew would have melted into his arms, but now she was on guard and scared.

“Ton.” Raph moved closer. “Okay, let’s go back to Busta City for a while.” I acquired the building above the basement where we used to live. We can live there for a while, like we used to. Please? ”

“Stay back!”

“Or we can go on a trip. We never went on a trip for our honeymoon. I’ll make it up to you. You always liked the ocean, right? “I’ll take you to the most gorgeous beaches.

“Raph!”

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Tonia stayed her ground as he got closer and closer, the stick in her hand now pressing at his neck.

“Ton, please give me one more chance.” “Just one.”

“It’s too late now,” Tonia said firmly. “I’m pregnant.”

Raph stopped moving. “But Sammy said you’re not—”

“He’s not me.” How would he know? ”

Raph swallowed hard, holding on to a glimmer of hope. “How far along?”

Tonia answered coldly, “It’s not yours.” Let’s go back and finish the forms.

She turned around and went back inside, where Sammy was waiting for her. “Are you okay?”

She nodded. “What is he going to do? Hit me? ”

Sammy laughed. “That’s a good point.”

Tonia sat down and waited. Raph still hadn’t come back after a few minutes.

She groaned and said to Ayra, “Can you go get him?” Let’s just get things over with.

Ayra bit her lip and went outdoors.

Ayra came back with Raph a little while later. She gave him a pen and pointed to the blank place on the form. "Sign it," she said.

Tonia saw out of the corner of her eye that Raph's hand was shaking so much that he could hardly grasp the pen. In the end, Ayra had to help him sign by guiding his hand.

"Done, Tonia."

"Thanks."

Ayra grinned and said, "No problem."

The papers was turned in, and soon the divorce certificate was ready.

Tonia felt like the person she used to be had really died the day she jumped off that skyscraper as the official stamp pushed down.

"Do we have to give back the marriage licence?" Tonia took it out of her bag and gave it to him.

Raph remarked in a low voice, "I didn't bring mine."

Tonia was angry. "Go home and get it."

"I lost track of where I put it." I can't find it.

Sammy stepped in and said, "The last time you showed it to me, you left it under the coffee table in the living room."

Raph stared up at him, and his eyes were hard to read.

“I can have it sent over by a courier if you want,” Sammy said. ”

Frank cut in, “No need.” We no longer take marriage certificates. You can keep it.”

“Oh, thank you,” Raph said with a breath of relief.

Then Tonia got up and left without looking back.

Sammy followed her. “Where are we going now?”

“Where can I get a paper shredder?”

“Most likely a store that sells office supplies.”

“Bring me there.”

“But it’s not easy to tear up a marriage certificate.”

Tonia considered for a second. “Then I’ll set it on fire.”

“Okay,” Sammy said with a smirk.

“Did you really get a divorce from him?”

Tonia and Jane had lunch together. This time, Jane donned a mask and sunglasses.

Tonia stared at her with concern. “You can’t keep living like this.” How much cash do you need? “Jane laughed. “What? Is the rich lady who just got divorced going to save me from my misery? ”

Tonia was really thinking about it.

Raph had fulfilled his word. He had given her all of her assets, but she didn't know if Sammy had anything to do with it. After all, property division was his job as a lawyer.

Jane waved it off. "No, you should keep that money." There are a lot of people out there that want to catch a rich single woman like you. "Pretty boys can trick you, so be careful."

Tonia thought about a certain handsome boy who just so happened to be much richer than she was.

Raph had told her once that Sammy was Robert Blunt's only grandchild. Robert intended Sammy to take over the family business, but Sammy became a lawyer instead.

Robert was so angry that he sent many ladies to seduce Sammy in the hopes that one of them would give him a great-grandchild. But no matter what Robert did, Sammy wouldn't give in.

Robert had changed his mind about going after Sammy and instead started pushing women towards Sammy's father. When Sammy's mother found out, it almost led to their divorce.

"Ton, take care of yourself," Jane urged. "

"Yes." You too.

"I-

Jane began to speak, but her face changed all of a sudden, and she hastily ducked down.

Tonia looked outdoors and saw someone.

Sammy strolled over with a bag of groceries in his hand.

Tonia was shocked. “Did you install a tracker on me? How do you always know where I am? ”

Sammy looked down and saw Jane hiding under the table.

Jane put her hands together and begged without saying a word.

Before answering, Sammy stepped to the side so that Jane couldn’t see him.

“I was going to go home after getting some groceries, but I ran into a client on the way.” He had to come this way, so I drove him there.

“A client? ”

“Yes.”

Tonia abruptly put two and two together when Jane seemed frightened. She questioned right away, “Is he still in your car?”

Sammy nodded and said, “Yes.” I came to get you, and he’s in the car waiting.

“I’m just going to the toilet,” Tonia said. “Wait for me in the car.”

Sammy played along. “There’s not much room to park here.” I’ll relocate the car to the lot in front of you and then come back for you.

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“Not necessary. It’s only a short stroll. “I’ll see you there.”

Sammy didn’t push it. “Okay.”

Tonia then carefully spread out her garment to conceal Jane as much as she could. She eventually let out a breath of relief when she saw Sammy drive away.

Jane hurriedly fixed her mask and sunglasses, then took a scarf out of her suitcase and wrapped it snugly around her head. “Ton, I have something to do,” she said. Okay, I’ll catch you next time. ”

“Jane...” Tonia sounded worried.

She didn’t know who Sammy’s client in the car was, but she could tell something was wrong because of how Jane was acting. But she didn’t want to get involved in other people’s business; she was only worried about her buddy.

Jane saw right through her concerns and laughed it off. “Don’t worry about it.” I really need to go.

“Just be careful.” “Let me know if anything happens.”

Jane’s eyes were welling up with tears. “What good would it do to call you? ”

“Then, call the cops.”

Jane didn’t care. “I know what I’m doing.” Next time, let’s talk.

She then snuck out, bent over, and looked around nervously before jumping into a cab and driving off in the other way.

Tonia waited there for ten more minutes to give Jane a little more time. She finally paid the bill and went after making sure Jane was far enough away.

It was easy to see Sammy's car parked at the far end of the lot. He stepped out as she walked up and opened the door for her. "I didn't spend too much at Finna today." I went to the store and spent less than \$60.

Tonia's head was all over the place, so she could barely hum back in a distracted way.

The passenger laughed and said, "When did you become such a homebody?"

Sammy said, "When a CEO is at home, he has to deal with groceries and chores."

The man thought about it and said, "That's fair."

Tonia got into the backseat, where there were bags of goods that Sammy had bought. She could see the man in the front passenger seat in the rearview mirror.

He was good-looking, grown-up, and gave off an aura of confidence. Even though he was dressed casually, everything about him screamed money.

Tonia even knew the watch on his wrist because Raph had the same one. It was worth more than six million dollars.

Once Tonia was situated, Sammy started driving. Sammy questioned, "Is this the place?" as they passed a building with the national flag on it. "

The man nodded. “Yes.” “Just let me off at the door.”

He waved to Sammy before stepping out and said, “Don’t forget to send me an invite to your wedding.”

Sammy smiled and said, “You got it.”

“Who is he?” Tonia said as she watched the man walk away. Hey

“An employee here,” Sammy said, pointing to the sign above the door.

People thought of Sammy as a legal counsel, and the people who worked in that building were government workers.

Tonia nodded to show she understood. “What is his name?”

“Lincoln Scot.”

Tonia was shocked. “Scot?”

So, he was Jane’s relative?

Sammy tapped his fingers on the steering wheel as if he were thinking about whether or not to tell her more. Finally, he took a long breath and stated, “Lincoln is 42 years old.” “Never been married.”

“You mean... Is he gay? ”

“No.”

“Then...” Tonia couldn’t continue her sentence because a scary thought started to

form in her head.

Tonia couldn't sleep that night since she kept tossing and turning.

She couldn't stop thinking about Jane's fearful face, Lincoln's dubious s****l orientation, and the famous rich heir who was said to abuse Jane all the time.

Tonia couldn't figure it out. Maybe she was simply too scared to think about it too much. The world was more dirtier than she had ever thought.

Raph's unclear relationship with his sister-in-law and her own confusing relationship with Sammy made her fear she had already gone too far by going against the rules. But what happened today made her even more confused.

She couldn't sleep, so she went to the living room to get some water and noticed Sammy sitting on the couch. He took the laptop off his lap and grimaced a little as he went to get her a coat.

"It's cold at night," he added as he put the coat over her. Why are you only wearing your PJs? "

It was cold, but Tonia felt even colder in her heart than in her body.

"Are you working extra hours?" She asked.

"Yes and no," he said.

"Then what are you up to? "

"I knew you wouldn't be able to sleep, so I stayed up to help you figure things out."

Tonia didn't say anything.

Sammy was worried that she would become chilly, so he wrapped her snugly in the coat and drew her closer to the couch.

"Ton, the world isn't just black and white. Loyalty is hard to find in the world of adults. Why do films and TV shows make love seem like a wonderful and beautiful thing? That's because it's hard to find and valuable. It's so rare in real life that it's put on a pedestal."

"Are you talking about Raph or Lincoln?" Tonia asked. "

"Both," he answered in a low voice.

"Sammy, I need to ask you something."

"Go ahead."

"Did Lincoln or Jane's husband give her the bruises?"

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Sammy grinned a little. “I thought you’d ask me if those two are in the kind of relationship you think they are.”

Tonia looked away and glanced at her toes. It didn’t appear like there was a need to check that again.

“Jane is an illegitimate daughter who her father had outside of marriage. The Scot family never officially recognised her, so she grew up with her mother. According to the family tree, Lincoln should be Jane’s uncle.”

Sammy paused there and didn’t say anything else.

Tonia questioned, “What about the rich heir she married? Is he related to Lincoln?”

“Yes. The Scot family has been important in the legal world for a long time. Jane’s husband wanted to get to know them better and found out that Jane was the estranged daughter of the Scot family. He married her, thinking that Lincoln would be nice to him because she was his niece.”

“But Lincoln, who was stubborn and cruel, didn’t show mercy and even went after him harder?”

“Jane’s husband got the wrong idea and took the wrong person away.”

Tonia was at a loss for words.

“Lincoln and Jane’s business can’t be made public. It would hurt both the Scot

family's reputation and Lincoln's career. And as far as I know, Jane didn't want any of it. She married her husband solely to get away from Lincoln.

Tonia finally got it.

Jane's husband was hitting her since he found out about her scandalous relationship with her uncle. He assumed that Lincoln not only didn't help but also wanted to get back at him by trying to ruin his family.

Tonia now understood why Jane wouldn't leave her husband, even though he had hurt her. She had acted like a wealth digger so that she could stay away from her powerful and important uncle.

All of a sudden, Tonia felt really sad.

"What are you thinking about?" Sammy asked.

Tonia smiled sadly. "I thought I had been through a lot of pain when I cut my wrists and jumped off buildings. I now feel like I was simply a kid living in an ivory tower.

Sammy tenderly tousled her tangled hair and said, "You've always been a good girl."

"What about you?" Tonia asked, "You've handled so many cases, so you must have seen worse than this." Do you think I'm acting like a child? "

Sammy shook his head firmly. "It's because I've seen so much dirt that I value your innocence even more." I'd like you to stay a kid forever if I could.

It looked like growing up constantly hurt in some way.

Tonia grew up a lot and talked less after two blows in a row. However, she saw

things in a new way. So, when Raph called, she didn't ignore him this time.

"Ton," Raph said gently.

"Mr. "Blunt," Tonia said.

Raph was so upset that he couldn't talk for a long time.

"Do you need something?" Tonia enquired.

She almost thought she was hearing things, but it felt like she could hear his heart hurting on the other end of the queue.

He finally spoke up and said, "Grandpa is having his birthday party this weekend. He has been enquiring about you and hoped that we can all go to the banquet together. This year, he will be 90 years old, and his health isn't good. The doctor thinks this could be his final birthday.

"Could you please not bring up our divorce right now?"

When he was younger, Lanre Blunt had fought in a war. As a result, he experienced health problems that would not go away. He lived to be 90 years old only because he had the greatest medical care money could buy.

Lanre had always been nice to her, though. Tonia liked him because he liked to tell her stories about the past.

She thought about it and then said yes.

It rained a lot the night before the birthday party.

Raph got there at 5:00 am and waited downstairs for a while. It was cold in the morning, so he sent her a text instead of calling her on WhatsApp, which she had already banned.

He wrote, “I’m downstairs to pick you up.”

He had just put his phone away when he saw Tonia leave the building.

She was wearing a heavy coat and looked like she had gained a little weight since he last saw her. Her small face got a little rounder, which made her look like a cute little penguin.

Tonia saw Raph too and waved back with a smile. “What are you doing here?”

For a minute, Raph felt a wave of nostalgia.

It was just like when he used to ride his bike across half of Busta City to bring her a hot, roasted sweet potato. She would walk out of her dorm with a big smile on her face, wave at him, and then run to him like a little bird with her arms wide spread.

Raph bent down a little and spread his arms, ready to catch his little bird as he always did.

But the next second, someone behind her grabbed her hand.

Sammy gently drew Tonia back and placed the scarf around her neck. “Blunt Estate is in the suburbs. It will be cold there, so dress warmly.”

“I know,” Tonia responded with a pout.

Sammy tapped her forehead lightly. “Can’t take my nagging anymore?”

“Since last night, you’ve been talking about this over and over. I’m going to the suburbs, not some snowy place. How cold could it be?”

“Okay, but don’t come to me with cramps the next time you have your period.”

“I’ll complain! I’ll complain all day and make you crazy.”

Sammy couldn’t help but chuckle. “Then you should drink a lot of water, or your throat will hurt.”

“Okay, okay. I have to go now,” Tonia said anxiously.

“Wait. Your gloves.” He took her gloves out of his coat pocket and put them on her hands.

Then he took her hand and walked with her to Raph.

“Good morning, Raph,” Sammy said.

That salutation felt like a cold blade piercing into Raph’s chest. Now he was her ex-husband. Sammy was her current partner, the one next to her, and he was just an outsider.

Raph smiled on purpose. “I came to get Tonia.”

Sammy said, “No need. I’ll take her.”

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“Do you not have work today?”

“Nope! I took the day off to wish your grandfather a happy birthday.”

“Are you worried I’ll take her away and not give her back?” Raph enquired in a light-hearted way.

“What are you talking about?” Sammy said, looking entirely uninterested. “Mr. Blunt Senior is also an elder in my family. I have to pay my respects because it’s his 90th birthday.”

“Really?”

“What else?”

Raph joked, “I thought you were worried about Tonia and me getting back together.”

Sammy answered quietly, “I know she wouldn’t.”

“Are you really that sure? After all, Ton and I used to be...” Raph stopped.

“I trust her,” Sammy said, interrupting.

Raph couldn’t say anything.

“But just to be clear, I think you should be careful what you call her. For now, you can call her by her name. After we’re married, she’ll be your cousin-in-law.”

The birthday party for Lanre was really big. A lot of important people from Bathlo City came to pay their respects to Raph.

His business had developed quickly, and many people had heard rumours that he was going to enter the Silicon Market before the end of the year to compete with popular games like Realm of Wars.

Raph was stuck in a swarm of people and couldn't move. He looked across to Tonia. She was sitting on the floor next to Lanre and talking to him like a cute young child. Lanre laughed hard at her funny words.

Raph remarked, "Excuse me, I need to say hello to my grandpa," as he moved through the crowd.

He got there just in time to hear the happy chatter and laughter all around them.

"Lanre gestured to Tonia, who was next to him, and exclaimed, "You've spoilt her rotten! Now she can say whatever she wants."

Tonia smiled slyly and said in a playful voice, "But I'm not wrong, am I? If you were 50 years younger, every girl in Bathlo City would be crazy about you!"

"No way! My wife would have ripped my ear off!" Lanre laughed.

"No problem," Tonia said. "She can't hear anything, so she's probably dancing with the little angels in heaven right now."

She covered her ears with her gloved hands and shook her head while she talked. She looked so cute and ridiculous that everyone around them laughed again.

Windy Bright, Raph's mother, was also happy. But when she spotted Raph coming,

she walked over and touched him on the shoulder.

“You’ve finally come to your senses, haven’t you? It’s good that you and Ton made up. She seems happier now than she did before you got married, and she’s even put on a little weight. Seeing the two of you like this finally makes your father and me feel better,” Windy stated.

Raph’s smile turned sour. “Yes.”

“Have you stopped talking to those other women?”

“Yes. It’s done.”

“That’s good. Ton was there for you when things got tough. If you ever left her for those other women, people would talk about you behind your back.”

Raph took a big breath and drank the champagne in his palm. “I get it, Mom.”

“Good. Now go wish your grandfather a happy birthday,” Windy said.

Raph stabilised himself and then knelt down next to Lanre’s wheelchair. “I wish you a long, healthy life and endless happiness, Grandpa.”

Lanre was quite happy. “You’re finally here, Raph. I haven’t seen you all night. Ton has been keeping me company.”

“I ran into some business partners and got caught up talking to them,” Raph said as an excuse.

Lanre said, “Family is what matters most. Business comes and goes. Those people out there are all fair-weather friends. When you’re on top, they come to you, but

when you fall, they'll be the first to step on you."

"At the end of the day, only those who really love you will be there for you through thick and thin."

"Yes, I know," Raph said in a tight voice.

Lanre took Tonia's hand and put it firmly in Raph's. "You two have to take care of each other, Raph and Ton."

Raph and Tonia didn't say anything.

"I'm tired now," Lanre replied in a gentle voice. "You kids go have fun." I'd prefer to take a break for a little.

Windy walked forward and said, "Let me push you back to your room, Dad."

Tonia hurriedly pulled her hand back as Lanre was wheeled away. She still had gloves on and hadn't touched Raph's flesh directly, but she felt the need to pull back.

Raph's fingers reflexively clenched, seeking to cling on, but it was too late. All that was left in his palm was the faint feeling of her knitted glove brushing against his flesh. It felt soft and warm, exactly like her.

But in the flash of an eye, another man grabbed her hand.

Sammy took her hand and raised it to his lips, breathing warm air on her fingers. "Are you cold?"

Tonia laughed. "How about you?"

“A little,” Sammy said.

“Then you should do something helpful. If you move around a little, you won’t feel cold.

Sammy raised an eyebrow and said, “What are you up to now?”

“Carry me back later,” Tonia responded with a smile.

Sammy laughed. “It’s 25 miles from here to my house.” And you want me to take you all the way back? ”

“Mm-hm.” Do you think you can pull it off? ”

“Of course!” A man can’t claim he can’t.

Tonia cuddled up to him and teased him, “Hey, I heard that a man starts to lose his strength when he turns 35.” You don’t have a lot of time left, do you? ”

“Tonia, I’m going on vacation next week.”

“So?”

“Are you really sure you want to make me mad like this?”

Tonia quickly backed down. She sank to her knees in a dramatic way and raised both of her gloved hands in a thumbs-up. “Just kidding!” You’re the best! ”

Sammy’s heart warmed as she did something nice for him.

It also made Raph feel better. He saw Sammy’s bigger hands tenderly wrap over Raph’s smaller ones and tuck them into the pockets of his coat to keep them warm.

“Raph,” Sammy remarked, “we’ve already said happy birthday to Mr. Blunt Senior, so I’m going to take Tonia home now.”

Raph came to his senses. “The banquet hasn’t even started yet.” Why don’t you remain and eat before you leave? ”

“No, thanks,” Sammy said. “It’ll take until evening if I carry her all the way home.”

“Time waits for no one,” Raph said in shock. “Oh, I see...”

“Say goodbye to Mr. Blunt Senior for me,” Sammy said as he stroked his shoulder.

“Okay.”

Sammy started to walk away with his arm around Tonia.

“Hey, Tonia!” Raph said out of the blue.

He didn’t know why he called out to her. His voice shook, and he opened his lips to say something but couldn’t think of anything. “Is there anything more you need?” Tonia enquired.

Raph forced a smile, but it seemed more painful than if he had been crying. After a long time, he was able to ask, “Can we still be friends in the future?”

It shouldn’t be that horrible that they couldn’t even say hello to each other on the street. Tonia thought for a bit and then replied, “I think it’s best if we stay away from each other.”

“Do you really have to cut me off so completely?” Raph questioned regretfully. ”

“Isn’t this what you wanted?” Tonia shot back.”

“But now I...”

Raph didn’t want that anymore. He tightened his hands at his sides, and his knuckles turned white.

Tonia let out a quiet sigh. “Raph, I guess you’re right. Let’s leave each other on good terms.

Sammy was already bent down in front of her. “Are you getting on or not?”

They were still at Blunt Estate, where guests and family were everywhere. But Tonia clambered onto Sammy’s back without thinking twice, like a calm little cat.

Sammy shifted her weight a little. “You’ve gotten a little heavier.”

Tonia pinched his cheek and said, “You feel that way because your stamina is running out.” No one is immune to the curse of getting older, huh? ”

Sammy turned his head like he was going to bite her hand.

Tonia hastily moved out of the way. “Are you part dog or something?”

“Yes! Didn’t you know? ”

“Pfft! I think you’re more like a pig! ”

“Humph!”

They both gently left Blunt Estate.

It was like they didn’t see or care about the people who were looking at them and whispering.

A curious stranger walked up to Raph. “Mr. Blunt, why did Mrs. Blunt go with that guy? ”

“That’s my cousin,” Raph said in a short voice.

“Oh, your cousin treats his in-laws like kids.” “Your families seem to get along well,” the guest said.

“Yeah,” Raph said without caring.

“But isn’t today Mr. Blunt Senior’s huge birthday party? Shouldn’t your wife be here to take care of things? Why is she going?

Raph frowned. “Are you worried about my business?”

“No, no! I was just curious...”

Raph had already left the courtyard and gone back into the villa before the guy could finish.

He couldn't tell if his hearing was too strong or if the people behind him were just too loud, but even as he sped up, almost breaking into a run, the whispers kept drilling into his ears.

“Don't you know? They've been dating for a while and even live together.”

“Seriously? Does Mr. Blunt know that his wife is cheating on him? He must know, right?”

“How could he not know? They were all over each other in front of him, so he must have known.”

“Is he really just letting it happen?”

“Who knows? But Mr. Blunt has a lot of other women on the side. Maybe their families set up their marriage, so they don't really love each other.”

“That's possible. Maybe that's why they each have their own love lives.”

Not really feelings?

Raph almost ran back to his room.

Raph reflected, “Our relationship... It had a base of 15 years.”

Valentine's Day, February 14th, was the day Tonia and Sammy were going to get married.

Tonia wasn't particularly looking forward to being married anymore. She thought that couples came together and fell apart as fate decided. She wasn't sure they would be together till the end, even with someone like Sammy.

She even started to believe that Raph could have been right about one thing as time went on.

It was against basic biological inclinations to expect a man to be faithful to one woman for life. This was especially true for Sammy. He was good-looking, smart, and came from a well-known family. He would have to deal with much more temptations than Raph.

It was equally true that the opposite was true. She also couldn't promise that she would always love Sammy. She used to think she would love Raph forever, but now she had moved on with Sammy. People would become different. No one actually knew what would happen in the future until the day they died.

But things were hard for Sammy. He was 33 years old and the only son, so his family was putting a lot of pressure on him. At first, they didn't want him to marry her because they thought it would be a difficult situation because of all the turmoil with Raph.

But when they saw their son, who was a die-hard bachelor, eventually decide to settle down, they reluctantly accepted.

Tonia thought about marriage for a few days after Sammy brought it up.

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In the end, she agreed to let them have a wedding to make the older members of the Bush family happy, but she was adamant that they not get a marriage licence.

Sammy attempted to get her to change her mind for a long time, but she wouldn't. He then used force because he thought that a gentle approach wasn't working. So, he dragged her into bed and "disciplined" her for a week.

Tonia got up and left happy after having fun. Still, she wouldn't change her mind.

She even said before she left, "If you keep pushing me to get married, then we're done here."

Sammy had to give in and agree to her requirements.

The Bush family, on the other hand, took the wedding quite seriously. They planned a big event that was even more over-the-top than her first marriage to Raph. There were more than 20 different wedding attire.

Tonia was tired from changing into them one after the other. "Do we really have to do this? It's such a pain."

Sammy, on the other hand, was all smiles. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime event," he said calmly, "It has to be grand."

She told him, "It's my second time."

Sammy was speechless and could only beg her in a very polite way.

Don't let Tonia's nice and kind look mislead you. Her way of thinking has altered a lot after what occurred with Raph. She was still nice, pleasant, and polite to other people, but there was a new strength and resolve below.

She would only say one thing if she was pushed too far: "I don't agree. If you don't like it, find someone else to marry you."

Sammy would always give in in the end.

They went through the ceremonies one by one, and until it was time for the concluding event of the night, which was toasting each table.

Tonia had put on a dress that was off-white and showed off her slim, exquisite body. She appeared like a classic beauty from an ancient painting with her hair loosely curled and put back with a simple hairpin.

Sammy whispered in her ear as they walked around, "I'll buy you more body-hugging gowns in the future."

Tonia, who was a little drunk, gazed up at him with a sweet grin. "Do I look good?"

"Very," he said in a low voice.

She added, "Three or four dresses in different styles should be enough."

Sammy leaned in even closer and spoke in a low, taunting manner. "That's not enough for me to rip."

Tonia's cheeks turned red when she softly smacked his arm.

Sammy's heart ached with love and want as he watched her bashful face. He had

trouble focussing on toasting their visitors. He would look at her when he could.

Lincoln led the way to the table where his coworkers were sitting. He mocked them, “Guys, we can’t let Sammy stay sober tonight! Come on! Drink up! Let’s make sure he’s completely wasted!”

The gang of young men was excited and crowded around, putting down the glasses and pouring spirits directly from the decanters instead. Everyone ran at Sammy.

Sammy let out a sigh of defeat.

In court, they were sometimes his most dangerous enemies. Sometimes they were friends who would drink with him and make jokes. He was quite close to all of them, so it was hard to say no.

But he had already made a toast with the elders earlier. He had already been to ten tables. He could still drink, but his liver was starting to feel the strain.

Lincoln stepped forward, smiling as he looked at Tonia. He made fun of Sammy by saying, “You’re a lucky guy! Look at you marrying such a young girl!”

Sammy didn’t even try to dispute it. He was five years older than Tonia. He couldn’t dispute with it; she had still been a little girl while he was already an adult.

He took the decanter that Lincoln gave him. It had four ounces of vodka in it, and Sammy drank it all in one go. Lincoln then looked at Tonia. “Ms. Casan, we are kind of related. Your maid of honour is my niece.”

Tonia nodded, but then she immediately stepped forward to stand in front of Jane to protect her.

She wouldn't have thought twice about it in the past. But after finding out the truth about Lincoln and Jane, she didn't know what to do. So, she kept acting courteous. "Hi."

Lincoln laughed out loud. "Sammy is like a brother to me. Are you more like a sister-in-law, or should I think of you as my niece?"

Sammy got in between them. "Stick with niece."

Lincoln laughed and clicked his tongue. "I'm like an uncle to you, too, if she's like a niece to me."

Sammy said, "It's still better than sister-in-law."

Most of the people in their tight group knew what had happened between Raph and Tonia. And Sammy had converted his cousin-in-law into his own wife, so the term was now a little bit forbidden for him.

Lincoln laughed. "Okay. You can call me 'Uncle Lincoln' from now on, just like Jane does."

Tonia said, "I'll just call you Mr. Scot."

Lincoln looked at Sammy and saw that she didn't want to talk about it, so he didn't push the matter. He clinked his glass to hers and remarked, "That's fine."

Sammy wouldn't let Tonia drink from the small glass of wine she was holding. He snatched it from her and drank it all. "I'll drink for her. If you want to give someone drinks, give them to me. I'm here to drink as much as you want."

"Good! That's what we like to hear. Get some sleep, Tonia. Sammy won't be sober

enough for the main event tonight!” someone yelled.

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Tonia was secretly glad.

She seems to have unwittingly upset him with what she said the other day. He had been going to the gym every day, and his energy levels had gone through the roof. She wouldn't have been able to get out of bed if she hadn't been getting ready for the wedding.

But she still tried to calm them down by adding, "You're all his good friends. There will be plenty of chances to drink together in the future. No need to go overboard today, as it's bad for his health. As long as you're having fun, that's what matters."

Someone joked, "Oh, look at that! Tonia feels bad for him!"

Tonia didn't try to hide how worried she was. "He shouldn't drink too much because his stomach is sensitive."

"Oh, my! Someone really cares about you, Sammy!"

Sammy's vision was already a little fuzzy, but he could hear everything Tonia said. Her voice was sweet and kind, and every word showed how much she cared for him. He was very happy.

"Don't worry. I know what I can and can't do," he remarked on purpose.

Tonia did what he thought she would do: she pouted and lightly punched him in the chest. "Calm down, okay?"

“Okay.” Sammy bent down and kissed her on the cheek. “Understood.”

Lincoln finally stood out and said, “Okay, okay. Since Tonia has spoken, let’s give Sammy a break this time.”

Sammy grinned. “Thanks. I’ll buy you drinks another time, and then we can really let loose.”

“Okay! You better do what you said.”

Tonia didn’t move. She wasn’t bashful; she just didn’t want to walk since her feet hurt so much after wearing high heels all day. Staying put was the least unpleasant choice.

“Ton...” Jane immediately patted Tonia on the arm.

“What’s going on?”

“Raph’s here,” Jane whispered as she leaned in.

Tonia didn’t think Raph would come.

Raph had turned down the invitation, even though Sammy had brought it to him in person. He had told her that he would be gone on a business trip. Sammy hadn’t pushed. Raph would just feel weird going to their wedding, after all.

Sammy watched Tonia closely to see how she would respond when he told her.

But Tonia didn’t do much in response. She just said, “It’s his choice.”

She knew that words all too well. When she pleaded Raph over and over again, even

threatening to hurt herself to stop him from cheating, he always said the same thing: “It’s up to you.”

...

Raph didn’t get there until nightfall.

At that point, the whole wedding ceremony was over. Sammy was walking Tonia from table to table, making toasts. Raph really didn’t plan on arriving.

He couldn’t even think about Tonia in a wedding dress saying her vows to another guy. Just thinking about it made his heart feel like it was going to break.

Windy had told Sammy, “I have to go to the wedding because I’m his aunt, but I’ll go alone. You do your thing.”

Raph had said yes. He had already made plans to fly to York that day. He felt bad as soon as he got to the airport. He ran back as fast as he could. He was lucky to be there in time to see her.

Tonia looked great. She wasn’t the sweet and gentle girl she had been when she was younger. The 28-year-old version of her had a polished elegance, and she was both girlish and sophisticated at the same time.

Her face was still attractive and delicate, but her body and the way she moved showed that she was a woman of grace.

Maybe she felt calm and at ease now since she’d gone through so many hard times in her life. It made her much more interesting.

Jane was the first person he saw. He noticed her say something in Tonia’s ear, and

then Tonia turned to look at him. Raph instantly got frightened.

He stopped for a second when their eyes met. He didn't know if he should go up to her and congratulate her in person.

But Tonia made the choice for him.

She pulled on Sammy's arm, and they walked over together, holding hands.

He got a glass of wine from Sammy. "Raph, you did it. Let's raise a glass."

Raph respectfully said no, "I drove here, so I can't drink."

"I've booked the whole hotel. All of the guests are staying here tonight. I'll get you a room ready," Sammy said.

"There's no need," Raph said. "I was supposed to fly to York today, but I had to come to congratulate you two. I'm leaving for an early flight tomorrow morning."

Raph appeared set on not drinking this glass of wine.

Sammy grinned and didn't say anything else.

"Okay. We'll have a real drink together when you get back from your trip."

"We'll see how it goes."

Sammy didn't say anything else, but Tonia motioned for Jane to bring over a pitcher of juice.

She filled a glass for herself, and Jane filled another and gave it to Raph.

He didn't take it.

"Mr. Blunt, if you can't drink, let's toast with juice instead," Tonia replied in a calm voice. "Thank you for coming to my wedding." I'll drink to you with this.

With that, she drank the whole glass.

"Exactly," Jane said as she pushed the glass into Raph's palm. You should at least have one toast since you're here to congratulate the new couple. Isn't that true, Mr. Blunt? "

Raph took the glass in his palm and tried to grin, but it was bitter. He looked up at Tonia and said, "You want me to drink this no matter what, don't you?"

"No," Tonia said, shaking her head. I drank my. You have the choice.

Raph seemed to accept his fate. He nodded slowly. When he glanced back up, there was a glimmer of something unshed in his eyes, it was either resentment, or maybe longing.

He chuckled softly. "Okay." Then I'll drink this glass of juice. You both deserve a big "Congratulations!" Sammy and Tonia! I hope you have a long, happy marriage and a happy life.

"Thank you for coming today," Tonia added.

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“Of course I’d come to your wedding,” Raph said, his voice a little strangled.

But then another person came up and lifted a glass to Tonia. “Congratulations on your wedding!”

“Thank you for coming today,” Tonia said with a smile.

Raph instantly thought he was thinking too much about it. Tonia’s remarks didn’t mean anything special; she was just being nice and thanking him for being there. It was the same way she talked to any other guest.

She thought he had finally become just another regular person in the crowd, just like everyone else.

Raph’s shoulders dropped a little.

Sammy saw and clapped him on the back. “Thanks, Raph.”

Raph wanted to ask, “Are you thanking me for being here today?” Or are you thanking me for being stupid and letting Tonia go to you? ”

But all he could say when he opened his mouth was, “Take good care of her.”

Sammy nodded and said, “I will.”

“Don’t pick on her. She’s too nice to talk back when you disagree with her.

Sammy laughed softly. “Don’t worry.” Her tongue is sharp now. I wouldn’t even think about starting a fight with her.

“Is that true?”

“Raph, people change,” Sammy replied. “Aunt Windy told me that you’re not going to Silicon anymore.” Are you going to York instead? ”

“Yeah,” Raph said.

“I don’t know much about the gaming industry, but if you need help with anything legal, don’t hesitate to call me,” Sammy said.

Raph smiled a little. “I don’t think I’d hire you again.” I lost my wife the last time I did it.

“Stop it,” Sammy said as he lightly punched his shoulder.

At that moment, Jane said Tonia, “There are still a few tables left to toast.” The class monitor and the rest of the group are waiting for you.

“Okay.” Tonia nodded and then looked at Raph. “The class monitor is also here. Want to get back in touch with them? ”

“No.” There are things I need to do. “Hey, I just wanted to stop by and see you two,” Raph said.

“Okay, then. “Have a safe trip,” Tonia remarked.

His eyes stayed on Tonia’s hand, which was still as thin and lovely as ever. But now, another guy grasped it tightly.

“Ton,” Raph yelled.

Tonia stopped and said, “What is it?”

“Can you light a cigarette for me?”he said softly.

Tonia looked at him for a time, then Sammy told her to “Go on.”

Raph pulled out a Zippo lighter that wouldn’t blow out. Its gold case used to be brilliant, but with time it had faded and worn down.

Tonia knew right away what it was. It was the present she had bought him for his 20th birthday. She had worked part-time for a month to save up for it.

She thought he had thrown it away a long time ago, yet here it was. She grabbed it from his palm as he came in closer and put a cigarette between his lips.

Tonia tried to light the cigarette by flicking the lighter, but it wouldn’t work.

Raph was shaking, and soon it got worse and he couldn’t stop it.

Tonia steadied the cigarette with one hand and brought the flame closer with the other until it finally caught.

Then she gave him the lighter back.

He said, “Thank you,” in a low voice.

“You’re welcome.” She turned around and left with Sammy.

He just had the ten seconds it required to start a cigarette.

Sammy bent down a little to fit Tonia's height. He said softly, "I think I've seen that lighter before." Tonia said, "It was a popular design back then." If you've seen it, it's not unexpected.

Sammy didn't push the issue, but he remembered it quite well.

A long time ago on New Year's Day, Raph had the lighter in his hand and was showing it out like it was a precious possession. When he met Sammy, he held it up proudly and exclaimed, "Look, Sammy, Ton got me this." Isn't it lovely? "

Tonia's life was really good after the wedding.

Tonia thought that marrying Sammy was a good idea, even though Kelvin sometimes asked when they planned to have kids.

He was an adult, so he was emotionally stable, attentive, and kind. She was the one in charge of most of their relationship, even if he had very strong desires in the bedroom. Sammy rarely spoke out against her.

Sammy had informed Tonia that he was going to buy a new house for them and fix it up the way she wanted it.

His present flat was designed in a simple black-and-white style that wasn't very warm and cosy. Tonia's modest apartment was a little out of the way, and the bed was too small.

Tonia still seemed to be on guard. Her bedroom still only had a single bed that was just over three feet wide.

Luckily, they were both thin. Sammy didn't mind holding her close while they slept, even though it was cramped. But after a while, he started to worry that his lower back

would give out 20 years too soon.

He talked to Tonia about it, but she didn't seem very excited about it.

Sammy understood why. Tonia didn't mind buying a house. In fact, with his income or even her own savings, it was easy to get a new place.

Tonia didn't want to buy a new house with him because of what it meant. She had already given in by going through the wedding ceremony to please the Bush family elders. She didn't want to get married again.

Sammy understood, so he put the idea on wait for now. But in doing so, he ended up being the one left feeling insecure.

After a few months of adjustment, Tonia had completely returned her vitality. She was even more extroverted than before. She and Jane created a food blogging account together. Tonia handled the cooking, and Jane took care of the filming and editing.

At first, Sammy believed it was just a fun project for Tonia to undertake with her closest friend. As long as it made her happy, that was all that mattered. But to his amazement, within three months, their account had over 200,000 followers.

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One evening, Sammy was working late. He had Tonia's live broadcast playing on his phone as background noise.

A coworker strolled by. He didn't see the screen but heard the voice. Clicking his tongue, he mocked, "Mr. Bush, I didn't know you were into watching female streamers."

Sammy didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "That's my wife."

"What? That's your wife?" The colleague immediately pulled up a chair, intrigued. "Wow, she's so young and cute! She appears like she's ten years younger than you."

Sammy's expression hardened. "She's only five years younger."

"Still, she's younger. She's adorable and looks just like the girl I used to have a crush on back in school."

Sammy's expression darkened even further. "Can't you at least pay attention to the food?"

"What man watches a live stream for the food and not the girl?"

That phrase hit Sammy like a warning bell. The whole time, he'd been hearing Tonia say things like, "Thank you, sir" and "Thank you, boss".

There were only men in the audience!

Yet, tonight's subject for the live stream was women's wellness recipes. Why were there so many men watching?

Sammy couldn't focus on work anymore. He rushed straight home. Then, he purposely made his presence known on camera by going past so everyone could see him.

Tonia quickly saw that he was obscuring the screen. She grimaced in displeasure and said, "What are you doing?"

Sammy slumped down on the couch, still annoyed. "I'm hungry. I want to eat.

"I figured you'd eat out since you were working late." I didn't make anything for you," Tonia said.

"And what are those?" Sammy asked, pointing at the table full of plates. "

Tonia couldn't help but laugh out loud.

"What's so funny?" he said with a frown.

Tonia moved over softly, sat on his knee, and put her arms around his neck. Then she kissed him and said, "I was just messing with you." I cooked you some soup.

Sammy's eyes eventually lightened up a little. "I thought you were too busy answering your 'sirs' and 'bosses' in the live stream to remember me."

Tonia leaned up close and murmured softly in his ear, "I made you..." Soup with lentils and meat.

When Sammy arrived to work the next day, he was really happy. The cleaning lady

could tell.

“Mr. Bush, you seem really happy. Did you win another case? ”

Sammy cleared his throat. He wanted to remark that he was really happy with how the beef and lentil soup he had the night before made him feel, but he couldn't say it out loud.

He shook the pink bag he was carrying and said, “My wife made lunch for me.”

The maid understood right away. “Your wife must be a great cook.”

“Yes. She's wonderful.

“Mr. Bush, you've changed since you got married. You worked late last night and your wife must have felt terrible for you.”

Sammy felt at peace for some reason after hearing her remarks.

“Yes, that's right. She felt so bad for me that she made me a whole feast. It was a huge spread!”

“Oh, really?”

“Yes. She made all kinds of delicious food for me to eat.”

Before he could finish talking, someone tapped him on the shoulder.

Lincoln, who was in his uniform, laughed and said, “Miss, you should stop asking him about that. He's in the middle of his honeymoon period. The more we hear him talk about it, the more jealous we'll all be.”

The cleaning lady responded in a joking way, “Mr. Scot, if you’re so jealous, why don’t you get married?”

She had no idea what was going on with Lincoln, but Sammy did.

He tried to avoid answering the issue by stating, “Mr. Scot here has very high standards. He won’t settle for just any woman. He’ll have to take his time picking his partner.”

Lincoln agreed, saying, “That’s right. It would be hard to find another woman like your wife. These days, women can barely cook instant noodles, so the only way we can enjoy a feast is to eat out.”

Sammy raised his head and added, “Then it feels like I’m eating out every day.”

“Yeah. It’s like having your own chef.”

After a time, the cleaning lady went back to work.

“Why are you here today? Is there a new case?” Sammy questioned.

Lincoln scratched his head. “Can’t I find you if there aren’t any cases?”

“Of course you can. Why don’t we go out for drinks after work?”

“How about we go to your place instead?”

Sammy knew what he wanted. He wanted to meet Jane because she had been hiding from him.

Sammy didn’t want to invite him over without asking Tonia first because he knew

she was quite protective of Jane.

“That’s Tonia’s house. I don’t know if I can bring people home.”

Lincoln smiled. “Okay. Why don’t you go home and ask for permission tonight?”

“Of course. I’ll talk to her about it.”

Lincoln sighed deeply and patted Sammy’s shoulder firmly.

“Wow, I’m so jealous of you. You took your shot when the time was right and didn’t care what anyone else thought. You just got with the woman you wanted to be with because you wanted to.”

“Our situations are very different.”

Tonia was his cousin-in-law, although they weren’t connected by blood.

Lincoln answered, “Just you wait. Maybe I’ll take a chance one day. No one will be able to tell me what to do when I’m out of this uniform.”

“Even if you don’t wear that uniform, you’re still a member of the Scot family.”

He may take off the uniform, but he would always be a member of the Scot family. The Scots would never let him bring discredit to the family name.

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Lincoln's smile dimmed a little. He said in a light-hearted way, "It would have been great if Jane had cheated on her husband back then..."

"Stop talking nonsense and get back to work," Sammy said with a smile. What do you think the other guys will do if you're not here? "

"Make sure you ask Tonia for permission."

"Of course."

When Sammy got home, he told Tonia about Lincoln's request.

Tonia had difficulties sleeping that night. Sammy felt bad for her and wished he hadn't told her about Lincoln's request. He thought he should have made up an excuse to say no to Lincoln.

He put his arms around Tonia's waist and pulled her closer. "You don't have to worry about it anymore." I'll say no to him tomorrow.

"That's not it. I think I hear someone calling my name.

Sammy held his breath and listened for a bit. "I don't hear anything."

"I'm confused, too." As soon as I close my eyes, I feel like someone is calling my name.

Sammy pondered about Ayra. "What if anything bad happened to Ayra? "

Tonia had no idea. She thought Ayra was probably OK because she was with Raph.

Sammy took up her phone and put it in front of her. “If you’re worried, why don’t you call her?”

Tonia stayed still.

“Are you still mad at her?”

Tonia shook her head. “We’re twins.” I could never stay mad at her.

“Then, give her a call.”

Sammy decided what to do and called Ayra’s number. It took a while for the call to be answered.

“Hey?”

“Sammy, it’s Ayra.”

“Hey, Sammy,” Ayra said, and her voice sounded a little strained.

“How are you? Tonia is quite worried about you.

“I’m back in York.”

Sammy and Tonia were both really startled.

“Did Raph go with you?” Sammy questioned. ”

“No.” I haven’t talked to him in a while.

“Hey, you guys...”

“Sammy, please tell Tonia I’m sorry. I’m too embarrassed to talk to her.

“Are you still coming back then? ”

“Not likely. That man doesn’t treat Mom well, and she’s not getting any younger. I don’t want her to be pushed around, so I’ll stay here to keep an eye on her.

Tonia picked up the phone and said, “Ayra...”

Ayra’s feelings got the best of her soon, and she began to cry.

Tonia was also furious. “I don’t blame you for what you did, but you have to take care of yourself no matter where you are, okay?”

“Tonia...”

“Yes.”

“Tonia...”

“I’m here.”

This talk ended their fight. Tonia claimed they were twins, thus she couldn’t stay upset at Ayra.

Sammy understood exactly what was going on. Tonia had always been like this, constantly forgiving Raph or Ayra.

She often forgot about how much pain the people she cared about caused her. It

wasn't because she was nice; it was because she wanted to be loved.

Sammy hugged her from behind.

Tonia felt he had something to say, so she turned around and said, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing." You should keep talking to Ayra.

"She hung up."

"Is she all right? "

"Yes. It's likely because of Mom. There was a problem with her marriage to that foreigner. It might also be that she misses me.

"Do you want me to go with you to York?"

Tonia thought about it and shook her head. "You shouldn't take time off work for that." I'll go by myself in a little bit.

"I can't let you leave by yourself. I should also see my mother-in-law, don't you think? Tonia's eyes darted around a bit. "Let's talk about that later."

Sammy couldn't help but feel a bit sad. Whenever they talked about marriage, Tonia would always try to change the subject. Sammy was used to it by now. At least he could fall asleep with her in his arms, which was something he would never have dreamed of in the past.

...

Tonia was right. Someone was chanting her name over and over again.

“Tonia...”

“I’m here.”

“Tonia, my sweet Tonia...”

“Mr. Blunt, I’m here.”

Raph suddenly opened his eyes. He glanced at the woman in his arms in the moonlight.

She was a freshman in college. She had a round face, sparkling eyes, and a ponytail. She was a very kind person.

Tyler Lowe was her name, not Tonia. She also called him “Mr.” “Blunt.”

Raph was wide awake. No other woman would ever call him “Raph” again.

Tyler opened her eyes and was a little bewildered. Why was the man who had treated her like his most precious jewel so chilly to her all of a sudden?

She felt she had done something wrong, so she swiftly grabbed his arm and swung it playfully. “Mr. Thank you for sharing my birthday with me, Blunt. I can’t believe how happy this birthday is.

Raph enquired, “What made you happy?” as he looked off into the horizon. ”

“Because you made a fireworks spectacular specifically for me. It’s even bigger than the ones you see in amusement parks. I imagine the fireworks could be seen from all throughout the city! ”

“And that made you happy?”

“Of course!” Tyler put her head on Raph’s shoulder and whispered, “Thank you, Mr. Blunt.”

“Thank you, but not me.”

“Who should I thank then? ”

Who does she need to thank?

He could see himself and Tonia in the basement of Busta City, imagining their future together.

He was still a young man with little at the time. He took Tonia in his arms and laid his chin on her soft hair as he thought about how bright their future would be.

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“Tonia, I’ll be wealthy once the game comes out. That’s when I want to put on a fireworks spectacular that’s even better than the ones in theme parks. I want to spell out your name with the fireworks so that everyone in the city would know it’s your birthday.

Tonia laughed gleefully as he held her. “Sure.” Then it’s a deal.

“Yes. I also wish to buy you a villa in the good part of Busta City. A very nice one.

“Of course.” In the yard, I’ll plant a lot of roses.

“Then I get you a Rolls-Royce.” One that is pink.

Tonia smiled. “But I don’t have a licence to drive.”

“Then I’ll get you a driver.”

“I don’t want that.” I don’t like being in a small, closed environment with someone I don’t know.

“Okay. “I’ll drive you.”

“Mr. Blunt, the future big shot, will be my driver? That would be a great honour.

“Of course!” You will be my wife. You deserve everything you get.

“Raph, you’re so good to me,” Tonia said as she rested against his chest.

Raph felt bad about what he had done. He also thought she was too trusting. She trusted every word of the empty promises.

“Tonia, do you really think I could keep my promises in the future?”

“I’m okay with it either way.” What matters is the thought.

“Trust me, Ton. I promise to make your life better.

“Don’t work too hard.” Things are going pretty well right now. I don’t need a fancy automobile or a great house. “All I want is for you to be happy.”

“Mr. Blunt, why are you so sad?” “Raph wiped the wetness off his face. “Am I?”

“Did I say something that made you mad?”

“No.”

Tyler didn’t feel good. “Mr. “Blunt, please tell me if I did something wrong...”

“You didn’t do anything wrong.” Stop thinking about it too much.

“Mr. Blunt...

“Okay, Tonia, give me another hug.”

“Okay,” Tyler said.

Tyler wanted to hug Raph, but he was the one who held her tightly.

Raph’s back curved a little as he held her tighter. It was as if he were attempting to

pull her into his body.

Tyler's friends always thought she was really lucky. Her boyfriend was affluent and good-looking, and he would probably do everything she wanted.

But that simply made her feel bad about herself. She was just a normal college student. Even if she was pretty, Raph would have met a lot of other pretty women.

Why would he be so nice to a normal woman like her?

"Mr. Do you really love me, Blunt? "

"Yes." "I love you, Tonia." Raph's voice sounded a little raspy.

"Why do you love me?"

"Because you're the best woman in the world."

"Mr. "Blunt, I..." Tyler said, blushing. "Do you want to do it with me?"

Raph was still confused. "What?"

Tyler pulled him away a little bit. Then, she tiptoed up to kiss him on the lips. She was very new to this, but she found the strength to keep trying. But the next second, he pushed her away very hard.

Tyler was confused. "Mr. Blunt, what's the matter? "

Raph frowned and said, "Don't touch me."

"But you told me you loved me. "Since we're in love, it's only natural for us to do

something like this...”

“Let’s break up,” Raph remarked in a frigid voice.

Tyler never saw Raph again after that day. She couldn’t even get through to him on the phone or see him when she went to his workplace.

Tyler couldn’t believe this had happened. How could the man who said he loved her a second ago abandon her without even a hint of hesitation?

She was only 18 and didn’t know what was going on. Was the love of the rich truly so changeable?

She didn’t get it when Raph said he loved her, and she still didn’t get it after he departed.

Being young had its benefits, like the need to find out what was going on.

Finally, she bumped into Justin near the door of the Blunt Group. She had met him twice before. She knew he was Raph’s business partner and close friend, and at that point, he was her last chance of finding Raph.

“Mr. McCarl! ”

Justin paused in his steps. “Do I recognise you? ”

“Did you forget about me?” “Hi, I’m Tyler.”

Justin was shocked. “Tonia?”

Tyler thought Justin had a bit of an accent, so he didn’t say things quite right. She

nodded and said, “That’s right.”

Justin grinned. Then he shook his head and sighed. “You’re not Tonia.”

“I really am.” This is my student ID. Look! ”

He accepted it and looked at it. “And who are you to Mr. Blunt?” he enquired with a raised eyebrow. ”

“I’m his girlfriend.”

“Tyler? That’s what it is, then.

Tyler was even more bewildered. “Mr. I can’t seem to find Mr. Blunt anymore, McCarl. Could you please get in touch with him for me? ”

“I’m very sorry,” Justin said as he gave her ID back. I don’t work here anymore. I came today to quit my job. “I can’t help you.”

“Isn’t he your best friend?”

Justin didn’t explain himself; instead, he remarked politely, “Don’t bother waiting for him anymore.” You will never see him again.

Tyler was angry. “I just want to know why. Why can he end things with me so firmly when he loved me so much? ”

Justin didn’t know what to say to her. The truth was too harsh for her.

“Don’t even bother.” “Go home.”

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Tyler and Raph had broken up, but Raph still sent Tyler gifts for the next month. He got her a fancy villa in the nicer section of Busta City, a pink Rolls-Royce, and even hired a driver for her.

She looked at the contract the lawyer gave her. She bit her lip and said, “Where is he?” Why won’t he see me? ”

“Mr. Blunt won’t be able to make it.

“Why not?”

“Because he...” The lawyer paused for a second. “He really can’t do it.”

Tyler gave up. She asked one more question: “Will he look for me again?”

“That’s what Mr. Blunt wanted me to tell you. He told me to tell you to look for a wonderful man who loves you. “Forget about him and be happy.”

Tyler was still thinking about Raph. She searched the Internet for any traces of him and finally found his Twitter account in Justin’s list of people he follows.

How did she know it was his? The account ID was “Loving Tonia Forever.”

Tonia, not Tyler.

The posts were about how he felt for a woman named Tonia.

His Tonia was a whiner. She liked to act spoilt sometimes, but she was incredibly strong-willed and a brilliant cook.

He tweeted for the last time the day before. The tweet's location was a quiet spot in the suburbs of Busta City that she had never heard of before.

The tweet said, "I hope you'll be happy, Tonia."

Six months after Tonia married Sammy, Mingol died.

Tonia had been getting ready for that moment, yet it still felt like all the memories of the last 15 years of her life were gone with Mingol.

She called a pet cremation centre and travelled to Busta City by herself. She spread Mingol's ashes beside the tree where she and Raph first met her.

"Tonia. You are Tonia, right? "

Tonia knew the woman in front of her. "Mrs. Stella.

More than ten years had gone by. Judy Cuzzy, her old landlady, was holding her grandson's hand. He was about five years old.

With a smile, Judy enquired, "Are you here for a visit?"

"No," Tonia said, shaking her head. I'm simply here for a visit.

"Your boyfriend came to visit for a while a while ago. I was curious as to why you didn't go with him. I tried to ask him, but he wouldn't say anything.

"Did he come to stay here?"

“Yes. He stayed for more than six months. He just moved out last month. You didn’t know about that? ”

“We’re no longer together.”

“Really?” Judy said with a sigh. ”

“Yes.” Are you still renting this home out, Mrs. Stella? ”

“What? Your lover has already... I mean, Raph owns this place. “I don’t own this place anymore.”

Tonia was in a trance and thought that Raph had said he wanted to bring her here to remember the nice times they had when they were intoxicated. So he really did buy the home.

Judy said, “This area is probably going to be torn down soon.” It’s nice that you came by to see us. Soon, this site will be gone for good.

Tonia said goodbye to Judy and went to the basement. She had simply planned to look through the windows, but when she got closer, she saw that the door was open. She walked in and was shocked by what she saw.

Everything was just like it used to be. The stove, gas hob, cutting board and single-size bed were all in the same places they had always been, even Raph’s game system, down to the smallest detail.

She remembered vividly that she had sold all of those items before she left the city. She threw away the ones she couldn’t sell. How did Raph get everything back to how it used to be?

Tonia had no idea, and she didn't even want to know.

...

Sammy called Tonia as she got to the airport.

"Are you at the airport?"

"Yes." In approximately ten minutes, I'll be there.

Sammy's voice was a touch rough. "Tonia, don't get on the plane." Please wait for me at Busta City. "I'll be there in two hours."

"Are you coming here on business?"

Sammy thought for a moment. "Yeah."

"Why does your voice sound strange? Are you really okay? "

"I'm okay. I'm going on a work trip. Have fun in the city for a few days. "Once I'm done with work, we can go back together."

When Sammy got there, he was wearing a black coat and holding her white coat. "It's getting cold," he said.

While she waited for him at the airport, Tonia did nothing. For some reason, she thought that Sammy's journey to Busta City was too sudden.

It looked like he wasn't there for her at all.

...

Sammy got a call from a police station in Busta City two hours ago.

“We spotted an automobile in a reservoir that wasn’t being used in our area. There was a body inside the automobile. We also found a driver’s license. It said Raph Blunt on it.

“We couldn’t find his parents’ phone numbers, only his cousin’s. Can you please come over and check to see if the body is real?”

Sammy was shocked. “He’s got a lot of friends in Busta City. Could someone have taken his car and...”

The police officer stated, “That’s true. We only found the driver’s license. It doesn’t prove that the body is him. It could be someone else.”

The cops said that, but it was evident that the possibilities of that happening were quite low.

Sammy told Tonia to “wait here at the entrance” when they got to the police station. “There’s something I need to do at the police station. I’ll be back out soon.”

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Then, he went into the station with the coroner.

The body has already started to swell up from being underwater. Sammy saw a scar on the body's arm, but it was hard to tell what it used to look like.

When they were kids, Raph fell from a tree while they were playing together and acquired that scar.

Sammy went to the Blunt house and got some things that Raph's parents had used to make sure there were no mistakes.

The police would be able to get their DNA and match it to the body in that way.

The coroner remarked, "We've already ruled out the possibility of homicide. This won't be a criminal case."

Sammy nodded. "Did you find any signs of alcohol in the body? Could he have been driving while drunk? Or maybe he didn't see the lake because it was dark?"

The coroner said, "There were no signs of alcohol. Based on our calculations, he should have died around three days ago in the afternoon. The lighting should have been good enough, so there was no way he could have missed it."

"Then... an accident?"

"It looks like a suicide."

Sammy didn't know what to say.

“We detected a lot of sleeping tablets in his system. There was also a lot of half-burnt coal in the car. The tape on the inside of the car doors kept the gaps closed tightly. The police had to cut off the whole door before they could get the body out.

Sammy was shocked.

“He must have really wanted to die.” That's why he tried so many things at once.

Sammy shut his eyes.

“But we also found something else.” I think it's connected to why he killed himself.

“What is it? ”

The coroner gave Sammy an autopsy report and said, “Look at this.”

Sammy's phone made a noise. He got an email. Raph had planned to send the email.

“Did I scare you, Sammy? I'm going to have to ask you to take care of my funeral. Don't tell my parents; just let them think I'm going to stay in York for good. And don't tell Tonia either.”

Raph went to see Ayra a year ago. She was holding a knife and pushing it on his throat. “Raph Blunt, how dare you cheat on my sister? I'll kill you!”

Raph smiled. He didn't even try to fight back.

“You don't have to do it. I'll be dead soon.”

“What do you mean?”

Raph developed cancer in his liver.

“At first, it was just cirrhosis of the liver. I didn’t want to tell Tonia because she would cry and be scared. I put off treatment over and over again until it finally got to this point.”

Ayra couldn’t believe it.

“How could this happen?”

Raph shrugged. “I don’t know. Maybe it was because I drank a lot when I was starting my own business, or maybe God loves the games I make and wanted me to be with him sooner.”

Ayra couldn’t think of anything to say as she sat there with her hands tightly gripped.

“Will you help me, Ayra?”

Ayra shook her head.

“You want Tonia to have a good life, right?” She nodded.

“Then, please help me.”

Ayra hadn’t had much time to talk to Raph before because he was so busy. When Tonia came over, she was primarily alone herself at home. But she could sense that Tonia loved him very much.

Ayra and Tonia were twins, but they didn’t have the telepathic link that twins were

said to have. Still, Ayra loved Tonia.

Tonia was there for her when she needed someone to talk to, especially after their parents split up. Ayra just cared for her in the world.

Raph's explanation finally helped her understand why things had changed so much in the last six months.

Raph's smile was sad, yet there was also a hint of happiness about it. "I went out with one woman after another. I acted like I loved them. I acted like I was having s*x with them. I even acted like I was having s*x with them before her.

"But she wouldn't consent to a divorce no matter what. I don't have any more ideas. You're my last choice.

Ayra bit her lip. "You want me to... play a part with you? "

"Yes." Ayra, I'm really sorry about this. She loves me so much, but what will she do when I'm gone? "

Ayra knew what he meant. Tonia loved him so deeply that she could put up with him cheating on her several times. She was fine with anything as long as they didn't have a divorce.

If Raph died, Tonia would undoubtedly lose the desire to live. Their relationship was too deep.

They fell in love when they were young and helped each other through the darkest times in their lives. They had always been happy together.

Tonia once stated that death was the only thing that could keep them apart.

Who would have thought that it would happen just like that?

Ayra would never forget that day. She and Raph both anticipated Tonia would get mad and opt to get a divorce after seeing the private images of her and Raph.

After that, she would probably never talk to Raph again.

Tonia didn't do any of that. She was pregnant at the time. She went up to the balcony and jumped down.

When Ayra received the news, he felt that Raph's spirit had left his body. He ran to the hospital like a crazy person, but he didn't walk in. Instead, he hid behind a garbage can in a corner near to a stairway. He cried and clinched his teeth.

He then mumbled, "Everything's fine as long as he's here..."

Ayra gazed at the tall man standing outside the ICU. He had a strong presence and looked extremely grown up and calm. His face also looked a little like Raph's.

Ayra later learnt that the man was Raph's cousin, Sammy Bush.

Raph said to her, "I wanted her to go with Sammy after my first try at creating my own business failed. In every way, he was superior than me.

"But your sister was a stubborn idiot. She would have stayed with me in that damp basement instead of breaking up with me..."

"Does Tonia like Sammy?"

"Yes. Even though he has never said anything, I can tell that he really likes Tonia."

Raph laughed and said, “How can you be so sure that Tonia will go to him when she sees us together and gets upset?” “Sammy has been waiting for this chance for 15 years. He will find a way to make it happen. If he can’t even do that, it would be a huge disappointment. Then I’ll find another man for Tonia.”

After three months of treatment, Tonia was eventually moved out of the ICU. She lost her child and was hurt badly. Even yet, she still didn’t want to obtain a divorce.

Ayra and Raph spoke about it and decided to do something more crazy.

She started wearing expensive clothes that she didn’t enjoy and a lot of jewellery. She also had to act like a bitch who was attempting to get her brother-in-law to sleep with her.

She would see the pain and hopelessness in Tonia’s eyes again and over again. It was like she finally got the psychic connection that twins are supposed to have. She was heartbroken much like Tonia.

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She couldn't put the feeling into words. It was like unseen hands had reached into her chest, taken out her heart, and squeezed it over and over again.

She finally got a call from Raph one day. He said, "We did it."

She and Raph hid in room 3602 of the Star Hotel. She observed Tonia, who was inebriated, knock on the door of the room next to hers.

It was Sammy who opened the door.

She saw Tonia jump into Sammy's arms. She also saw Sammy give her a kiss.

Raph witnessed everything too.

"Does it bother you?"

Raph's face showed a mix of emotions, but he swiftly accepted what had happened. "I'm upset, but I'm also happy."

Ayra was there as Raph and Tonia were getting ready to end their marriage. She felt bad about it, but Tonia didn't appear to blame her for it.

Tonia was quite calm and in control. She was rude to everyone, even Ayra and Raph.

After the divorce was final, Sammy took Tonia away.

Ayra walked to the front of the courthouse. "It's time for me to go. The show is

over.”

“Where are you going to go?”

“I bet Tonia doesn’t want to see me again. I’m going to another country.”

“You’re sisters.” She will forgive you.

“I don’t really want her to forgive me. I’m worried that one day I’ll tell her the truth. If that happened, it would certainly hurt her more.

Raph’s Adam’s apple moved. “Don’t tell her.” If I’m dead to her, she can only be happy with Sammy.

“Okay.”

Raph told her, “I’ll give you half of my company’s shares,” before she departed. Thanks for your help, Ayra.

“Why aren’t you sending it all to Tonia?”

“She’ll start to doubt. Tonia is really brilliant. I can’t allow her take the chance of finding out the truth.

“Okay. I’ll keep them for you. When Tonia has a child, I’ll give the shares to her.

Raph smiled. “Ayra, do you hate me?” Because of me, you will never be as close to Tonia as you used to be.

“It doesn’t matter as long as she can be happy.”

Tonia got a letter from Raph.

The letter said, “Tonia, you might never read this letter, but I still want to write it.” Take this as a letter to myself.

“Tonia, Sammy informed me that if he had been the one to talk to you when you were at your lowest point that night 15 years ago, things would have gone differently for all three of us.

“I really thought about that for a long time. He was correct. Things would have gone differently. You would have loved him and had a good life with him.

“You wouldn’t have to deal with the problems that come with being poor. You wouldn’t even have to cook. Most significantly, you wouldn’t have to face the sorrow of being betrayed by the man you loved.

“I would still want to be the first one to get to you if I could go back in time.

“Tonia, I can’t give up on what we had. Those 15 years together felt like a dream to me.

“I felt like a man who was dying of thirst and found an oasis. I knew that the oasis would do even better in another man’s hands, but I was selfish and didn’t want to let go.

“Maybe I’m simply a horrible person. I was selfish and just thought about myself. It’s definitely God’s punishment for me to end up like this. Tonia, I stayed in the basement in Busta City for a bit. I convinced some folks to buy back everything we used to own.

“As for the stuff that couldn’t be found, I tried my best to find replacements that looked similar.

“But too much time had gone by. I couldn’t find your small gas cooker. I went to all

the flea Markets in the city. I called in favors, offered a greater price online to buy it, and even hired 100 people to look for it.

“I still couldn’t find anything in the end. That day, I felt terribly despondent. I sat on the bed and stroked the portion of the bed where you used to lay.

“It seemed like I was seeing things that weren’t there. The sheets felt warm, like you had just slept on them.

“But I knew it was all in my head. It was something that would never happen.

“Tonia, I’m really thankful that you were in my life, even if I’ve been nothing but a failure. The best days of my life were the last 15 years.

“Sometimes I think you were an angel sent from heaven to help me because I was so sad, but that wasn’t fair to you.

“You wouldn’t have to go through so much sorrow if you had fell for Sammy instead.

“I had no more ideas, Tonia. I tried many times. I held hands with other women because I wanted you to leave and give up on me.

“But you’re a stupid fool. Why are you being so stubborn? How could you forgive someone who cheated on you so easily?

“Tonia, if I had 50 more years to live, I would want to spend them all with you.

“I promised I would put on a fireworks show for you in Colaria.” I promised you I’d buy you a fancy villa with a garden where you could put roses. And that pink Rolls-Royce, too. I can buy all of that for you right now, but I have to restrain myself from giving it to you.

“I’m scared you might fall even more in love with me. I’m scared you’ll never get over my death.”

“You’ve leaped off a building and cut your wrists before. I understand. You appear weak, yet you aren’t terrified of death. You also assured me that death was the only thing that could separate us from being together.

“I’m scared. I’m scared you’ll kill yourself once I die.

“Tonia, you’re such a great person. You are still very young. You deserve a better life than this.

“Please forgive me for being impulsive. This time, I made the choice to push you towards Sammy without your permission.

“But Sammy really cares about you. He loves you just as much as I do. I’m glad that he is taking care of you.

“You have to lead a happy life, Tonia. You have to, okay?

“I hope the path ahead of you is smooth and easy. I hope that everyone you meet is nice to you. I wish you a good future.

“Even if you forget me and aren’t the same woman I knew, you’ll always be the woman I love.”