



# His Ring, Her Rules

**Author:** *Spooky*

**Category:** Romance, Mystery

**Description:** Vivian Hayes is a wealthy entrepreneur who built the huge Hayes Empire on her own. Vivian is fiercely independent and driven by her ambition. She doesn't have time for diversions, certainly not from Jaxon Dante, her arrogant and vicious corporate adversary. But as Jaxon's empire starts to threaten her business with strange acts of sabotage, Vivian has to make a choice that she never thought she would have to make.

She accepts Jaxon's deceitful offer of a phony marriage that combines their businesses under one name, even though she doesn't want to. She thinks their connection is only business. Vivian has a hard time keeping her cool during her fake engagement because of emotional issues, secrets from her background, and Jaxon's erratic behaviour.

At the same time, Jaxon's best friend, Kena Max, shows an unexpected amount of love and support, which makes Vivian start to rethink her feelings. Vivian is divided between safeguarding her legacy and finding out why Jaxon is so set on getting married. The media is putting more and more pressure on her, her family has high hopes for her, and the wedding of the decade is coming up.

Vivian realises that there is a lot more at risk than simply her business, as rumours about a mystery lady from Jaxon's past named Julia start to spread. The game gets more hazardous and intimate the more she delves.

Will Vivian lose herself in a marriage full of secrets and power struggles, or will she take back control for the sake of her dreams?

**Total Pages (Source):** 36

# Page 1

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Vivian's Point of View.

“What a tiresome gathering, don't you believe?” Jona commented, extending his arms as the meeting ended and people began to leave the room.

“You find every meeting boring, Jona,” I said, rising up as he did.

He rolled his eyes as he collected the folders off the table.

Jonah Zoe has been my personal assistant for the past two years and is a very good friend. He was attractive, with dirty blonde hair, a clean-shaven face, and spectacles (a little round in form). He was full of life, constantly uplifted my spirits when I was stressed or upset, and he knew everything about me, including secrets that no one knew.

We were now in another industry for a meeting attended by one of the most well-known businessmen...and a businesswoman, who was the only one.

My firm, Hayes Companies, or the Hayes Empire as I refer to it, was one of the most successful companies of the time. I worked day and night to get here, and of course, my crew was fantastic; they also worked really hard and gave their all.

I was really pleased with what I had done. It fulfilled all of my youthful fantasies.

I wanted to buy fancy automobiles, homes, and enterprises across the world.

I currently have all of it.

“You coming, Vivian?” Jona said, and I shook out of my thoughts and followed him out of the room.

“We’ll have to wait for a minute; the driver is bringing the car,” Jona said, and I agreed as I began browsing through my phone as he waited alongside me.

We were waiting in the corridor when a man in a black suit passed us, trailed by his helper.

He entered the lift, and I recognized him as the one and only Jaxon Dante.

Our gazes locked, and he maintained a chilly expression as he continued to look at me. I couldn’t take my gaze away, and perhaps it was only me who caught the small grin on his face, but the lift door closed, and I groaned.

Jaxon Dante, my main competitor and the owner of Dante Industries, is an asshole and one of the biggest playboys I’ve ever seen.

He had a strong jawline, a well-chiselled face, broad shoulders, and a tall body. He was attractive, hot, and rich—everything a girl could possibly want.

He accomplished what no one else could at his young age.

The way he spoke, walked and dressed screamed power and money.

He could make anything happen with the snap of a finger, just like Thanos.

People were terrified of him; his simple sentences could make you shiver with horror because he spoke so coldly.

And, to be honest, I was a little terrified of him, just a little, since I’ve learned from

experience not to mess with Jaxon Dante. He may completely annihilate you in a matter of seconds. And, happily, I have never crossed paths with him, nor do I desire to, but defeating his industries and being the finest in the world would be incredible.

If I had only looked at his accomplishments and been asked to kneel down in front of him, I would have done so without hesitation; however, when I consider his temperament, how cold, arrogant, and vicious he is, I simply want to beat the heck out of him.

Maybe I detailed him too much...sorry for that.

Jona summoned the lift, and we boarded it. We arrived on the ground floor and proceeded to my car, where we sat in the backseat while the driver drove.

We eventually arrived at Jona's flat, dropped him off, and made my way to my penthouse. It was among the most costly penthouses in Florida City. I possess numerous other residences that resemble mansions, but when I needed to live alone, aside from my servants, I chose to live in a penthouse.

The lift chimed, and I entered my apartment to be greeted by an incredible aroma of cooking.

Removing my blazer, I entered the kitchen to find Tonia, my chef, preparing something.

"Tonia, I can smell cheese," I said.

"Good evening, Vivian. I'm making chicken alfredo," she informed me.

"My mouth is already watering," I said, making her giggle.

I am a huge gourmet, and I love to cook, but owing to my hectic schedule, I don't have time to cook. Sunday is the only day I spend cooking and trying new dishes.

I returned to my room and changed into shorts and a T-shirt.

Tonia had already set the table, so I quickly sat down and dug in. I sighed gently while eating the spaghetti.

I was still eating when my phone rang, and I answered it to find Jona calling.

“Hey, Jona!”

“Vivian...I received a phone call from Mr. Dante's assistant, who asked me to set up an appointment with you for a private meeting with Mr. Dante,” he continued, causing me to choke on my spaghetti and immediately drink water.

“Are you serious?”

“Yes, Vivian.”

For a second, I wondered what Mr. Dante could possibly say in a private meeting!

“Fine,” I mumbled, “you can fix the meeting for...tomorrow, whenever I am free.”

“Well, I already checked your schedule; you have another meeting at 2 p.m. tomorrow, so you are free before that. Should I fix the meeting at 12 noon?”

“Fine by me. Goodnight.”

After he said goodbye, I hung up the phone.

I was already worried about tomorrow's appointment with Mr. Dante, which was even more unusual because it was private. If he needed to discuss a new project with our firm, he would schedule a regular meeting, but why private?

Jaxon Dante's every activity serves a reason; he would not squander his valuable time like way.

I completed my supper and left the dish in the kitchen because Tonia had already gone to bed, and then I walked to my room, where I checked a few emails and scrolled through Instagram before falling asleep, with Jaxon Dante as my final thought.

Jona welcomed me as I exited the lift and approached his desk, "Good morning, Vivian."

"Good morning," I responded, smiling.

I entered my office and sat in my chair, kicking off the day.

Time passed, and there came a tap on my door, and when I responded, "Come in," Jona entered.

"Just a reminder that you have a meeting with Mr. Dante in fifteen minutes," Jona said, and I nodded.

"Did his assistant tell you anything about the meeting, the reason, or anything?" I asked him, and he shook his head, saying, "He wants to discuss it only with you; his assistant also knows nothing."

I sighed, "Fine..."

He left the workplace with it.

I couldn't say 'no' to the meeting because I knew that if he wanted to meet with me, he would; my opinion wouldn't have mattered.

Jona knocked on the door again fifteen minutes later, and when I granted permission, it opened.

"Mr. Dante is here," he said before turning aside. The devil strode in, and I rose up from my chair. A grey suit, nicely groomed hair, and a chilly expression on his face as he examined my workplace.

He moved farther inside, and Jona exited after closing the door.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Dante," I said firmly, reaching out my hand for a handshake.

He glanced at me briefly before nodding and firmly shaking my hand. A\*\*\*\*\*e... didn't even greet me back.

## Page 2

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As he took his seat on the chair opposite me, I sat down.

“Got a nice office here, Miss Hayes,” he said.

“I am sure, Mr. Dante, you are not here to talk about how good or bad my office is.”  
Whoa, Vivian, where did you get that confidence!?

He didn’t seem happy with my response; I should know how to close my lips.

“Of course, I’m not here to talk about your office,” he nearly yelled.

“I was wondering,” he joked, “that your company has been really successful recently, and as everyone knows, I am the only competitor you have so...”

“So?”

He leaned forward with a sneer on his lips, “Why don’t we merge our companies by marrying each other?”

And for the next minute, I sat there with my mouth open and my eyes wide. I waited for him to claim he was joking, but his serious expression plainly indicated that he was not joking.

Marry him?! Has he gone crazy?!

And combine my company with his? Never!!

I shut my mouth and collected myself.



“You are kidding, right?!” I enquired, but who was I kidding?

“Did I come all the way here to crack some jokes with you?” he said coldly, fiercely, and calmly, sending a shudder down my spine.

“Well...of course not, but what you just said makes no sense.”

“It does make sense, Miss Hayes. You have to marry me, and we will merge our companies and become the best in the world, and who knows, within months, we can even be the richest person in the world.”

“I won’t merge my company with yours, let alone marry you!”

“Listen to me, Miss Hayes,” he said between his teeth, “it is going to benefit both of us. To the world, it would look as if we are real couples, but only you and I will know that this marriage is just for the sake of our companies.”

“Let me make this very plain to you, Mr. Dante: I worked hard all these years to put up my empire, unlike you, who merely got it from your father. I am not marrying you or combining my firm with yours, no matter how

“How much of a benefit is it for me?” I informed him bluntly, and he was struggling to keep his fury under control.

“Don’t forget that it was my father who helped you set up all this.”

Yes, his father, Mr. Levi Dante, was a very modest and sympathetic guy, unlike him, and he helped me immensely; even though I have already returned his favor, I am thankful to him.

“Your father is a great man, Mr. Dante, and I am grateful to him for all he did for me,

but right now, it is you who is asking me to marry you and not your father.”

“Don’t test my patience, Miss Hayes. You know what all I am capable of doing?” his voice rasped.

“I am fully aware of what you are capable of, but right now, you are sitting in my office, and let me remind you that I have more power here right now.”

He threw his fist into my desk, making me cringe.

“Miss Hayes, think about it, or else you will regret all this.”

“Why don’t you accept the fact that you are just afraid that I might overtake your empire in just a few months?” I muttered with rage.

“And besides, to be honest, I have a boyfriend,” said I. Let me tell you, I’m terrible at lying.

“You have a boyfriend?” my conscience enquired. Shut the heck up!

“Boyfriend?” he enquired as if he was already aware that I was lying.

“May I know who that lucky man is?” he said cynically.

Shit! I tried to think of anything as quickly as possible.

“Well...” I trailed off before pressing the intercom and calling Jona in.

“You asked for me, Miss Hayes?” Jona questioned, opening the door.

Damn you, Jona. Whenever we are alone, he calls me by my first name or my surname! I got screwed!

I got up uncomfortably from my chair and stood in front of Jona, with Mr. Dante

following me around.

“Umm...Jona, I was telling Mr. Dante about you... my... boy-boyfriend.” Because my back was to Mr. Dante, I attempted to encourage Jona to go along with the lie, but he was too stunned by what I said and made a strange look.

“Boyfriend? Me?” he said, and I mentally smacked myself.

I whirled around to face Mr. Dante, who was already rising, and grabbed Jona’s arm, shouting, “You see, Mr. Dante? This is Jonah Zoe, my boyfriend!”

“But your ‘boyfriend’s’ face says something else,” Mr. Dante said, amused.

“Actually, our relationship is yet not public, so...he is quiet...shocked that I am mentioning it to you”, I said. But he didn’t seem to believe it, so I grabbed Jona’s face and pressed a little kiss on the corner of his lips, making it appear as if I had kissed him. Jona appeared to be about to pass out.

“That was a very futile attempt to prove him as your boyfriend, Miss Hayes,” that asshole remarked, and I wanted to slam his head against the wall.

“Mr. Zoe, you can leave now,” he said to Jona, then turned around and went. Who the heck is he to command my assistant?!

“Miss Hayes...”

“I do not agree with you, Mr. Dante! You may please leave now! I have a meeting!” I nearly yelled at him.

He pushed his lips in a straight line, trying not to tear me apart. His eyes narrowed as he approached the door; he came to a halt, turned back, and snarled, “You will regret

it, Miss Hayes.” He then left my office with an ugly grin on his face.

God, what am I getting myself into?!

“I do not agree with you, Mr. Dante! You may please leave now! I have a meeting!” I nearly yelled at him.

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As soon as he went, I grabbed the pen stand off my table and flung it against the wall, then stood near my desk, holding myself against it.

What does he think of himself?! God?! He believes he can command anyone. I am not going to agree with him. I really can’t marry him, especially that asshole. Marriage was the final thing on my to-do list; I still had a lot of things to do.

I never had a relationship; I spent my adolescent years preparing and my adulthood carrying out my strategy. I don’t have time for all of this. And I don’t want to merge my firm with his; I know it will benefit me, but I just can’t marry him.

And when he claimed he’d make me regret it, I knew he meant it. And I can’t help but tremble as I consider all the ways he might make me regret turning down his proposition.

I can’t risk losing my company, which is everything I have.

The door sprung open, and a perplexed Jona stepped in, “From when did I become

your boyfriend?! And you almost kissed me, Vivian, what's wrong?! “

“You were supposed to act along with me, not stand there as if you have seen a ghost!” I fumed.

“How was I supposed to know what was happening? I didn't dream that you would do all that. First, you call me in and then introduce me as your boyfriend to Mr. Dante; I should be the one yelling at you. It was not my mistake!” said the man.

Before I could say anything, he marched out of my office and slammed the door.

What the hell?

First, that asshole screwed with my thoughts, and now I've had a fight with a pal. We seldom fight.

Awesome, Vivian!

I sat in my chair, my head between my hands, and attempted to relax myself.

## Page 3

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An hour later, my intercom beeped, and when I pushed the button, Jona remarked coldly, “You have a meeting with the French investors in fifteen minutes.”

“Cancel all the meetings; I’m going home.” He didn’t respond, but I knew he understood.

I was not in the mood to attend any more meetings or do anything, so I took my belongings from my desk and decided to return home.

Walking past Jona’s desk, he did not even look at me. He was angry!

I chose not to say anything to him and went home.

“You’re back early, Vivian,” Tonia replied upon seeing me.

“Yeah...I wasn’t feeling well, so I came back.”

“Are you ok?” she inquired.

“Of course, all I need is some rest,” I said, smiling.

She nodded and smiled back. When I called her, she turned to go, adding, “And Tonia, there’s no need to cook dinner tonight; I’ll make it.”

“Yes, Vivian,” she said before departing.

I know how to make things up to Jona.

Jona likes my smoke-flavored chicken curry, so I decided to prepare it today for him and apologize.

So, I started cooking my curry while marinating the chicken...

Two hours later, my curry was ready, and I packed it with some homemade bread. After dressing casually in jeans and a T-shirt, I went down to my favorite automobile, the Bentley Continental GT.

I instantly drove to his flat and rang the doorbell. A few seconds later, Jona opened his door with a bored attitude, and when he saw me, his eyes brightened slightly.

“What are you doing here?” he questioned, attempting to appear chilly, although I knew it was an assumption. His gaze dropped to the packet I was holding, and I’m sure he could smell the curry instantly.

“Why can’t I come to see my best friend?” I said, sidestepping him and heading inside his flat, keeping the packet on the table.

“Thought Miss Hayes was angry that I couldn’t act along with her lie...” he babbled.

“Come on, bro, you know I could never get angry with you. I am sorry; I was just frustrated and yelled at you,” I apologized, giving him puppy eyes.

He rolled his eyes and grumbled, “Well...what have you brought?”

“Your favourite smoky-flavoured chicken curry! Am I forgiven now?”

“Of course, Miss Hayes,” he laughed.

“Yay!” I cried cheerfully, softly pecking his cheeks.

Jona prepared the table, and we all sat down together for dinner.

“So, what happened today?” Jona enquired, cramming his teeth with food.

“That asshole wanted to marry me.”

“What!?”

“I mean, he wanted to merge our companies by marrying each other...” I told Jona everything.

“And that’s when I called you in, and you know how bad I am at lying, and your expression only made it worse.” By the time I finished talking, Jona’s mouth dropped.

“But...what if he...actually does something...like, you know what he is capable of?” he said, concerned.

“I know, Jona,” I said, “he did threaten me, and I know he will be doing something sooner or later...we just have to be prepared.”

“But I can’t marry him either,” I explained.

“Yes, you can’t marry him, and what if he finds out about...” he trailed off, and I understood precisely what he meant.

“He can never know that...I have tried my best to hide those things for seven years, and no one knows about it till now, so I don’t think that he will get to know about it.” Jona laughed as she said.

I hope he never finds out about all that...



“And Vivian, remember the land that we had to buy in Texas for the new restaurant?” Jona asked, changing the subject.

“Yes?”

“The couple that is living there are not ready to sell the land no matter how much we tried to persuade them,” stated the man.

“What is their problem?”

“They say that it’s difficult to find a new house and all that.”

I paused for a second before saying, “Fine. Find them a decent house and even double the amount we were paying them earlier. I need that land.”

“Ok, Miss Hayes.”

A week had passed...a week of quiet, with nothing happening and everything running perfectly; it seemed like the calm before the storm. He did nothing, but I knew he would because Jaxon Dante should never be underestimated.

I was standing in my office, near the glass wall, scanning the highways. My office was on the 50th level, so the view from here was breathtaking and always soothed me.

My intercom beeped, and I touched the button to hear Jona say, “Miss Naomi from the Finance Department wishes to see you; it is important.”

Miss Naomi was the head of the Finance Department.

“Send her in.”

A few seconds later, there was a tap on the door, and Miss Naomi stepped in with her laptop in hand, appearing afraid. If I am not intimidating, why does she seem pale?

“Good morning, Miss Hayes”, she said.

“Morning”, I answered.

“Ma’am...there is a...problem.”

“Which problem?”

She strolled up to me, set her laptop on my desk, opened it, and began typing.

“Ma’am...suddenly our restaurants in Ohio have started...to incur a loss. We have been going smoothly till yesterday, but suddenly today they incurred losses and not small but huge, and it’s not just one restaurant but all the restaurants in Ohio”, she said, causing me to become pale.

“Show me.”

She showed me her laptop, and she was correct; the losses were large and sudden.

“Ma’am...we are...trying...but...” She was frightened I would yell at her and criticize her, although I know she is not to blame.

“Miss Naomi, you can leave now; try to handle it, and I will see to it.” She nodded before departing.

I massaged my temples with annoyance...

Then I grabbed my phone and left my workplace.

Walking up to Jona's desk, I asked him, "Do I have a meeting today?"

"Yes, you have a meeting in an hour."

"How many meetings do I have today?"

"Just this one."

"Cancel it," I instructed.

"But...why?"

"I will explain later, Jona; just cancel all the meetings. I have more important work to do right now."

"Where are you going?" he enquired in perplexity.

I informed him as I walked away from his desk, "To settle a few things."

I drove as rapidly as possible till I arrived at my destination.

I approached the receptionist's desk and stated, "I want to meet Mr. Dante."

She was still typing on the computer when she said, "Do you have an appointment?"

"Listen to me!" I yelled, forcing her to glance up at me as her eyes widened when she recognized me. "Just tell your boss that 'Vivian Hayes' is here; he must be expecting me."

"Ye-yes, Ma'am." She held the phone to her ears and whispered a few things before standing up and stating, "I will take you to his office, ma'am."

“No need of it; just tell me the floor.”

“70th floor.”

## Page 4

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I turned around and headed to the lift, pressing the button for the 70th level.

The lift doors opened, and I noticed a door at the end of the corridor labeled “The CEO.”

Should have typed ‘The Biggest Arsehole’ instead.

As I was about to knock on the door, it opened to reveal a lady who looked like a model, with unkempt hair and smudged makeup, and she hurried away, giving me a filthy look that made it clear that I had interrupted them as if I cared!

I came in, and there was that arsehole, fixing his tie and running his fingers over his hair.

“What a surprise, Miss Hayes,” he said, smirking.

“Mr. Dante, just stop this already!”

“What?” he questioned, as if he knew nothing.

“The tricks you’re playing to get me to merge my firm with yours will not work! “

That sneer was pasted on his face, and he continued with confidence, “I never lose, Miss Hayes.” He was nothing but an arrogant, annoying jerk who only cared about himself. Oh, how I wished I could knock some sense into him! My ears were red with rage.

I saw him search his coat pocket for something, and then he brought out a cigarette and a lighter, and he began smoking without regard for the fact that I was in the office

and that the smoke may affect me.

“You can’t smoke here! “

He took the cigarette out of his lips and held it between his fingers. “Right now, you’re in my office, and I have more authority here, right? “I can do anything,” he said, mocking me just as I insulted him.

I took a long breath to calm myself and replied, “Look, Mr. Dante, I do not want to merge my company with you, and even if I want, there is no purpose in getting married...I mean, we could just merge everything, so why marry each other? “I was astonished I was able to speak so quietly.

But when I questioned him about that marriage, his jaw clenched, and he took a big drag on his cigarette, tilting his head sideways and entirely disregarding my query.

I should have remained silent, but my tongue has a mind of its own, so I crossed my arms and said, “Of course, you want the public to believe that you merged the firm because we are in love and getting married, not because you are frightened that I would seize your empire, correct? “

His head swung to me, and he said through tight teeth, “Stop assuming things on your own.”

He opened his drawer again, brought out some documents, and told me, “Just sign these papers.”

I laughed, “You are not God, Mr. Dante, and you can’t order me.”

“But I can sure make you beg me.”

I cocked an eyebrow at him, and he went on, “You should be grateful that just a handful of your restaurants have suffered losses. But if it continues at this rate, if you continue to lose millions of dollars each day, you will eventually run out of money and will have no alternative but to sell your firm to me.”

When he finished, my mouth fell.

I stepped closer to him, the desk between us, leaned in, and whispered between clenched teeth, “You are an Arsehole, Jaxon Dante, and I will not give in to you.”

Before he could say anything, I had already left the office.

I stepped closer to him, the desk between us, leaned in, and whispered between clenched teeth, “You are an Arsehole, Jaxon Dante, and I will not give in to you.”

Before he could say anything, I had already left the office.

I was back in my office, pacing back and forth, contemplating what to do about that arsehole, knowing he wouldn’t give up that simply.

And I even told him that he is an arsehole; I can’t believe I did that! I was terrified of him, wasn’t I? Where did I find all this courage?!

I told Jona everything that occurred in his workplace today, and when I told him that I called Jaxon Dante an arsehole on his face, he literally fell on the floor laughing. But when he saw my look, he suddenly sobered up and recognized that instead of laughing, we should be terrified.

Leaning against the desk, I stomped my foot on the floor angrily; my mind was blank; I couldn’t think of anything.

“We need to do something about him,” Jona said as he stood in front of me.

I rolled my eyes and said, “Thanks for telling me; I didn’t know that.” Now, it was his turn to roll his eyes.

Jona then checked the time on his wristwatch and told Vivian, “You should go home.” Take some rest; we’ll talk about it tomorrow.

“By Monday, I will have lost millions! “

“Do you have any plans right now?” “he queried exasperatedly.

I gasped and said, “No.”

“Then there is no point sitting here as we can’t do anything right now,” he commented.

I nodded slowly before turning, grabbing up my phone and laptop, and exiting the office with Jona.

We parted ways in the parking lot, and I went to my apartment. My mind was racing with millions, if not billions, of thoughts, making it difficult to concentrate on the road.

I shook my head, trying not to think for a while since I was not in the mood to die just now.

As I entered the apartment, I groaned and placed my blazer on the couch before taking off my heels.

I got a water bottle out of the fridge and drank it, feeling a chilly sensation down my throat.

I arrived late today, so Tonia must have departed.



I was in no condition to eat supper, so I grabbed a packet of potato chips and went upstairs to my room. After changing into comfortable clothing, I lay on the bed, chewing on the chips and watching Frozen to relax, and before I knew it, I had fallen asleep.

I wore my blazer and checked myself in the mirror one final time before gathering my vehicle keys, phone, and laptop and heading out to the parking lot.

When I arrived at the workplace, everyone greeted me, and as I walked by Jona's desk, he was too preoccupied with his job to see me, so I quietly tapped on it, and he looked up, tensed.

"What happened?" "I questioned him, and he glanced aside, refusing to respond.

"Jona? "and he again did not respond.

"Fine. Mr. Zoe, I need you in my office right now, and this is an order," I said in a professional tone.

He groaned and followed me into my office, closing the door behind him.

"So," I replied, crossing my arms, "I know... we're losing money, but there's something else, right? "

"Well..." he ran his hand through his hair. I motioned for him to continue, and he replied, "Remember the acreage we had to buy in Texas? "

I nodded in answer, and he went on, "Well...earlier, the couple that were living there agreed to sell that land after we doubled the amount, but suddenly today, they refused again."

“What do you mean they refused abruptly? “I enquired, shocked.

“I’m not sure,” he said, lowering his head. “They’re not ready at any cost. I even attempted to double the quantity, but they didn’t agree.”

He raised his head and pushed his spectacles up his nose as they fell downward.

God, what’s going on?

I massaged my temples in exasperation.

I discarded Jona as I continued to think. I know Mr. Dante is behind all of this, and it has now gone too far for me to control.

And there was only one way out of it, even if it meant losing my life and marrying that asshole, but only for the sake of my business.

My firm, my empire, was the only thing I had, and I promised myself that I would do everything for it. I believe now is the moment to act; I can’t let my ego ruin it, never...

I touched the intercom and told Jona, “Call Mr. Dante’s assistant and tell her that I want to speak with him.”

He answered after a second, “Ok.”

I waited for the call, and soon, the phone in my office rang, and Jona said, “I talked to her, and I am directing the call to Mr. Dante.” I hummed in answer.

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After a few seconds, I heard his deep, velvety voice, which sent shivers down my spine: “Hello?” “

Not wanting to waste any time, I said those words that would change my life for the worse. I don’t know what the future holds; would I be able to survive with him, or will I give up?

“Fine. I will marry you! “

I was seated in a restaurant in the late afternoon, and the next day I decided to marry that asshole.

He requested me, no, he commanded me to come here to sign the documents.

It was a fancy restaurant, the type of place where we conducted our meetings.

I was seated in a private eating room that he had reserved as I went through my phone, attempting to divert myself and chill off.

A few minutes after arriving, I noticed someone approaching me out of the corner of my eye, and expecting it to be that asshole, I lifted my head to see someone else.

A man approached me with a nice grin, and I stood up.

“Hi,” he said cordially, standing in front of me, “you must be Miss Hayes.”

He extended his arm for a handshake, and I shook his hand, saying, “Hello...how are

you? “

“I’m Kena Max, Jaxon’s best friend,” he introduced himself. So this is that a\*\*\*\*\*e’s best friend, I assumed.

“Nice to meet you, Mr. Max,” I responded, sitting down opposite him.

“You can call me Kena.”

“Then you can call me Vivian.”

He chuckled and replied, “As you say, Vivian.”

He appeared far nicer to me than that arsehole; at the very least, he had manners.

“You know what,” I said, “your surname reminds me of someone...”

“Magnus Max?” “he finished the sentence for me, and I stared at him in disbelief.

“How did you guess?” “I questioned, letting out a giggle.

“You think I’ve never played Red Dead Redemption 2?”

“That’s amazing!” “I exclaimed, “I mean...we have something in common.”

“That is excellent to hear. I played both games a year ago, and they were very excellent; I fell in love with the characters, particularly Magnus Max.”

“Umm...I actually played the second part, but yeah, I know the story of the first one too, so I am equally attached to Magnus Max as well as John Marston.”

“How about we play the game again sometime?” he questioned, leaning closer to the table.

“Of course.”

“And I’d be calling you Max rather than Kena now,” I said, to which he chuckled, “I’d love to hear you say that.”

Kena Max was such a wonderful man; he was lovely, courteous, and had manners, unlike Jaxon Dante, who acted like an asshole.

I’m wondering why he’s late.

“Where’s that a\*s, I mean, your friend?” I questioned him.

Just as he stepped in, we turned our attention to him, and Kena murmured, “Talk of the devil, and the devil appears.”

I could not help but laugh at him.

Mr. Dante was dressed in a suit as usual, and his unkempt hair suggested that he had been busy with one of his whores, which is why he was late.

“What are you doing here?” he asked Kena, who simply rolled his eyes and said, “Hello to you as well, Jaxon.”

Mr. Dante shot him a scowl before turning his attention to me and forming a little grin on his face, knowing that I had lost and he had won.

He took a seat next to Kena, opposite me.

“You may leave now, Kena,” he remarked once again, to which Kena whimpered, “Mayn’t I watch my brother finally getting engaged?”

“I’m not your brother,” Mr. Dante stated.

“Ok...you are my best friend.”

“Unfortunately,” Mr. Dante remarked, rolling his eyes. Kena pouted his lips.

Anyway, Kena stood up and turned to face me, saying, “It was a joy to meet the great Vivian Hayes. I hope to see you again.

He then brought my hands to his lips and delicately kissed my knuckles, and I responded, “Likewise.”

And he departed...

So it was now just the asshole and myself.

He took out some papers and set them on the table in front of me before pulling out a pen.

“You can read these papers that state that as we marry, we will merge our companies, and it even says that you cannot disclose to the media that our marriage is a forgery, that it is simply an arranged marriage.” And we have to appear like genuine couples in public,” he continued as I glanced at and flipped through the papers.

After reading them, I added, “My assistant, who also happens to be my best friend, knows about this marriage, and...he won’t tell anyone.”

“Fine by me...Kena knows it too, and no one else.”

He studied me closely as he sat back in his chair, waiting for me to sign the paperwork.

I took a deep breath and told myself that I was just doing this for the benefit of my company.

And then... I signed those awful papers, and he laughed evilly at me before signing them himself.

After signing the paperwork, he took out a tiny black box and unwrapped it, revealing a stunning ring with a large oval-shaped diamond in the center.

He pushed the box towards me, and I took the ring and stared at it for a few seconds before deciding to wear it; of course, he was not going to force me to wear it.

I was going to put it on when he stopped me and pulled it from my grasp, and I stared at him, confused.

He astonished me even more when he extended his hand for me to place my hand in. I was taken aback.

But, in any case, I placed my hand in his, and his contact caused a tingling feeling on my hand and butterflies in my stomach.

What the hell?! I'm not supposed to feel that, so I immediately eliminated those sensations, but I couldn't help but notice the tingling sensation on my hand.

He gazed at me before moving the ring down my ring finger.

I was already engaged! (Note the sarcasm.)

He then stood up, and so did I.

"Goodbye, Mr. Dante," I replied as I walked by him, but he grabbed my wrist and

drew me back; I gazed at him, perplexed by his behavior.

“I think it’s Jaxon for you, starting now,” he said.

“I think ‘arsehole’ would be better,” I said, and he became enraged.

“Watch that mouth of yours, Vivian, or else I know how to shut it myself,” he threatened me before walking away, and I couldn’t help but think about how my name sounded on his tongue.

A few days passed...

“I still can’t believe you’re marrying him,” Jona remarked, cramming his teeth with the banoffee pie I baked.

“I can’t believe it either, Jona,” I moaned and set my fork down on the dish.

I cooked banoffee pie on Sunday and invited Jona over to enjoy it with me.

When the media found out about our engagement, they went crazy; it became difficult to even get to my workplace without the paparazzi harassing me with questions.

I had to spend the entire week in my penthouse while that asshole traveled to London on a business trip.

The wedding occurred the next month, and it was dubbed the ‘wedding of the decade’; however, I learned this from one of the news channels.

I was supposed to marry Jaxon Dante, the magnificent Jaxon Dante who doesn’t even know how to appreciate me. I feel like sobbing; did I give up too easily? But I didn’t



have any other option.

“This is the best banoffee pie I’ve ever had,” Jona remarked, and I grinned back, “Thanks.”

But the smile didn’t stay long since I was concerned about everything; my life was about to change.

“Vivian?” Jona called quietly, and I looked up to him.

He offered me a sorrowful grin and clasped my hand.

“Everything will be ok,” he told me. “I know you don’t like him, nor does he like you. You two are strangers getting married, but believe me, I know you are strong, I believe in you, and you can do it.”

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“You are so selfless... you’re marrying him solely to rescue your company. You made so many sacrifices to get here, and you had to go through so much on your own. And I am darn confident you can accomplish it,” he said, and I smiled tightly.

“You know what, there is something else I keep wondering...we can merge our firms without even getting married, so why is he so determined to marry me? “

“You mentioned he is terrified of you...I mean, worried that you would take over his firm, correct? “

I slowly nodded and said, “But...there is something else...that isn’t the only reason, Jona. “I don’t understand him.”

“Perhaps he likes you,” Jona taunted, and I whacked him on the arm.

“Shut up!” “but I couldn’t help but flush. No, he can’t like me! Definitely not.

“Aww... you’re blushing; are you already falling for him?”, “he teased again, and this time, I flung the fork at him, hoping it wouldn’t injure him, but it caught him in the biceps, and he winced.

“Oh my God! “I am sorry, Jona,” I began to fear as I stood up and approached him.

“I...I did not want to harm you; I apologize. Is it painful? “I asked him.

“I’m ok, Vivian. “I’m fine,” he told me, and I exhaled with relief.

“Sorry,” I said before kissing his cheeks, and he grinned.

Mondays are dreadful, even if I enjoy working at my workplace, but I was not in the mood to go today.

My periods began yesterday, so I chose not to go to work today since I needed to recuperate; I notified Jona of this and instructed him to take care of everything.

It was mid-afternoon.

I took a block of Dairy Milk and laid down on the couch in front of the TV in the living room while eating the chocolate, more like licking it so it melts. What's the point of simply chewing and eating the chocolate? The fun comes when it melts and gets smeared across your face and hand, and then you just lick your fingers; I know it's weird.

I also hummed the Dairy Milk song, "Kiss me...close your eyes and miss me...I can read your lips on your fingertips..."

I never said it, but I have always been infatuated with the notion of romance. I used to read those clichè, romantic novels as a youngster, and I always imagined that when I grew up, I would fall in love with someone, marry him, and spend the rest of my life with him.

I have a lot of romantic fantasies, such as going to a ball dance with my love or husband, having my first kiss, and many more.

I never kissed someone; I didn't have the time...

My thoughts were interrupted by the sound of my doorbell, and Tonia ran to open it as I sat silently in the living room, wondering who it could be.

After a minute, Tonia approached and said, "Mr. Dante is here to see you." My eyes opened in astonishment, wondering when he had returned from London and why he

was there.

“Send him in.”

A few seconds later, Jaxon strolled in, dressed in his professional suit, and his eyes landed on me, amused, and I saw the chocolate was smeared across my face and fingers.

“Why didn’t you come into the office today?” he enquired, taking a seat in front of me, the amusement leaving his eyes.

“Why are you concerned?”

“Because I wanted to tell you something in person, but when I went to your office, you weren’t there, so I had to come all the way here,” he stated, already looking frustrated.

“I wasn’t feeling well...it started with my periods.” He hummed in response.

“What would you like to tell me?” I enquired.

“This Saturday”, he said, “you need to come meet my parents.”

His parents?

“I’m busy,” I attempted to give him an excuse.

“You’re a lousy liar, Vivian. I’ve already verified your calendar with your assistant; you’re free,” he sneered, and I wanted to slam his head against the wall.

“Dress properly on Saturday; I’ll pick you up at 8 p.m.,” he said, and I cocked an

eyebrow at him.

“What do you mean by ‘dressing properly’?” “

“I don’t want to give my parents the impression that I’m marrying a child,” he remarked, indicating to my face.

“I’m not a child! “I complained.

“You do act like one.” This dude has nerve. Aargh!

“Whatever...” I rolled my eyes.

“How about your parents?” Have you never mentioned them? “

Shit! Shit! What am I meant to tell him?!

“My parents...I don’t know...” I said, trailing off.

“You don’t know your own parents?” he enquired as if he could see through my untruth.

“It would be better if we did not discuss that topic, Jaxon, and if your parents are concerned about my family, I will see to it...” I said, hoping he would stop questioning me.

He regarded me attentively before getting up, moved to the main entrance as I followed him, and then left without saying anything.

The week flew by, and before I knew it, it was Saturday. When I got home from the office at 6:30 p.m., I immediately took a bath and dried my hair.

I then donned a dress that reached my thighs, had a deep V-neck that displayed my cleavage but wasn't too deep, and bell sleeves; it was white with beautiful floral embroidery, and I let my hair fall over my shoulder.

I donned my sandals, my wristwatch (I am fascinated with wristwatches), and my engagement ring, which he especially reminded me to wear.

It was quarter to eight when I was finally ready, so I walked downstairs to the living room and waited for him.

The doorbell rang around 8 a.m., and I opened it to see Jaxon, who was not wearing a suit for the first time. He did wear a jacket, but not a formal suit, though. He donned black pants, a bluish-white t-shirt, a somewhat darker blue jacket, and white sneakers. He looked good.

"Just good?" my conscience enquired, and I inwardly rolled my eyes. Okay...he looked as gorgeous and sexy as ever.

"If you're done checking me out, we may go," he said, jolting me out of my reverie. I noticed he had seen me staring and blushed.

Anyway, I followed him into the lift, which was odd because it was just the two of us.

"Did you make up the story you're about to tell about your parents?" He broke the stillness.

Shit!

I turned to face him and bit my bottom lip as I answered, "No ." His gaze darted down to my lips for a few seconds before he looked away and cleared his throat.

"Just tell them that your parents died because I have no idea what your problem is;

neither do you deny the fact that your parents are dead, nor do you give any other reason,” he vented.

“You don’t need to get riled up, Jaxon. It’s my problem, and besides that, you are marrying me, not my parents.”

He glared at me, forcing me to take a step back, but my back slammed into the lift’s wall, trapping me between his arms.

“Right... I’m not marrying your parents, but if my parents question you, you’ll be the one to answer them, and believe me, they’re not easy people to persuade, and you’re a terrible liar,” he said, staring at me, but I couldn’t understand because my mind was clouded by his strong cologne and our proximity.

Before I could say anything, the lift dinged, and the doors opened. He gave me one more stare before exiting the lift, and I immediately composed myself and followed him.

I followed him to his black Lamborghini and sat in the back. Okay, it was a horrible idea since he clenched his teeth: “I am not your driver, Vivian. Sit in the front.”

Realizing my error, I swiftly sat in the passenger seat.

He then started the motor and drove out of the parking lot onto the streets. His hold on the steering wheel was so strong that his knuckles were white.

After a 30-minute trip, he arrived at a mansion. His parents nearly lived in a palace.

The guard saw him and promptly opened the door, allowing him to drive in.

I stepped out of the car and took a moment to view the home. Even though I owned

numerous houses, this one was the most gorgeous I had ever seen.

He got out as well and shocked me by intertwining our hands, sending an electric rush through my body as a result of the touch. He then began pulling me towards the mansion, and I recalled that we needed to appear like a couple.

Standing in front of the door, he rang the doorbell, and after a few seconds, one of the maids opened the door to meet us, and Jaxon nodded as I smiled.

He questioned her about his parents, and she said they were waiting for us in the living room.

He dragged me down the halls until we came to another door when he paused and turned to me, muttering, “Act like couples.”

I rolled my eyes involuntarily, eliciting a frown from him. I moved away from him, but he continued to stare at me, so I gave up and quietly tapped on the door before opening it.

So here we go.



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His parents were absorbed in a conversation on the large sofa set in the living room, but when they saw us, they smiled, a warm, pleasant grin that made me feel less uncomfortable, and Mr. Dante (his father), whom I was familiar with, appeared to be overjoyed to see me.

“Finally, I get to meet the great Vivian Hayes,” his mother exclaimed excitedly.

“Oh, please, Mrs. Dante, don’t call me that.” I smiled sweetly.

“Then please don’t call me Mrs. Dante either,” she said, making me giggle.

“As you say...so, what should I call you?”

“Tasha...I don’t mind if you call me mom,” she added, giving me a side hug.

Mom. When was the last time I addressed someone that way, seven years ago?

Calling her mom implies treating her as my mother, which I do not believe I am capable of.

“What are you thinking about?” she asked again, and I simply gave her a sad grin and said, “Tasha would be fine for now.” She nodded, but I could see she was unhappy.

When the doorbell rang, and the maid went to open it, Jaxon scowled and said, “Who else is coming?”

“Kena is also going to be here for dinner,” his mother said, and he grumbled.

A minute later, Kena entered the living room and welcomed Jaxon's parents, following which Tasha exited the room, and he gave me a nice embrace.

"I am glad you are here, Mr. Max," I said to him. I was relieved to have him here; he was much better than Jaxon.

"I knew you'd get bored with your good-for-nothing fiancé, so I came to keep you company," he said, making me laugh, but Jaxon, being Jaxon, simply stared at us.

"Though I will be leaving soon because I have some work," continued the man.

"Why don't you leave now?" Jaxon said abruptly, turning us towards him.

"Well, hello to you too, Jaxon!" Kena cried, eliciting an eye roll from Jaxon and a stiff laugh from me.

"Dinner is ready!" said Tasha, and we all made our way to the dining room, where the table had already been set and heaped with excellent food.

We all sat across the table, and I was trapped with Jaxon since I sat alongside him, Kena opposite me, and Mr. Dante at the head of the table.

Tasha served dinner, and it was so excellent that I gobbled it. As a foodie, I didn't mind how I ate (I never did); I was taking an enormous mouthful of the meal, unconcerned that I was with my in-laws.

Halfway through the dinner, I felt someone stare at me and lift my head to see that everyone was busy eating, but how could I forget about my fiancé, who has a tendency to gaze at people?

I looked at him, and while staring at me, he mouthed, "Eat properly." I rolled my eyes

(as is my tendency) and resumed eating.

A second later, I could feel his hot breath on my neck, and he pushed his mouth near to my ear, murmuring coldly, “Dare you roll your eyes at me.” Then he bit my earlobe and began eating, making the hair on my skin rise up.

My cheeks were hot from his actions, but what could I do? Anyway...I started eating in a more appropriate manner. \*mentally rolls eyes\*

It had been a lovely evening until Tasha asked me the most feared question: “When can we meet your parents?”

I noticed a faint smirk on Jaxon’s face since he knew I was in serious danger.

What do I tell them? My parents have died? No. Or perhaps...yes.

Everyone was focused on me, Tasha, Levi (Jaxon’s father), Kena, and Jaxon.

Levi responded, “Yes, Vivian, you never mentioned your parents.”

“Umm...” I trailed off. “My parents...I actually...lost them seven years ago.”

Half truth and half lie...

Tasha’s attitude turned to one of sympathy, as did everyone else’s, save Jaxon, who knew I was lying.

“Oh...I am so sorry, child...” Tasha began, but I interrupted her, adding, “It’s fine.” I offered everyone a tight grin before continuing to eat.

Good rescue, Vi...Vivian.

Dinner came to a close, and Kena said farewell before leaving, with Jaxon following him to the door, after which I didn't see him return inside.

Levi was in the living room, and I was in the kitchen with Tasha, watching her take her marble cake out of the oven.

"Can you pass me that plate, child?" Tasha requested, removing the cake from the bakeware.

"Of course," I murmured, presenting the platter to her.

She placed the cake on the platter and turned to me, saying, "While I serve this, could you go call Jaxon? I am sure he is in the garden."

I smiled and nodded before heading out of the kitchen. I felt foolish for not asking her where the garden was, so I spent the next five minutes wandering along the corridor until I found a glass door that went to the garden.

Pushing it open, I went out into the fresh air and noticed Jaxon standing alone at a distance, his back to me, smoking.

I cautiously came up to him and stood beside him; despite seeing me, he did not acknowledge my presence.

"Your mother is calling you for dessert," I replied quietly, glancing at the flower garden in front of me.

I heard him hum in answer.

"It's not good for your health, Jaxon. You smoke a lot," I said again when I noticed him not moving.

"You don't get to tell me what's good or bad for me," he said coldly, continuing to

look in front of him.

“I will be your wife soon, and I do have the right to tell you what’s good or not,” I said with ire.

He darkly chuckled prior to turning towards me. “Wife? You will be my wife just on paper, just in the eyes of the public and my parents. Besides that, I don’t consider you my wife, Miss Vivian Hayes. And don’t even think that I am going to obey you, Ever.”

I regretted speaking with him; I felt a stab of hurt in my heart. Even though I know this is a phony marriage, it stung when he declared he would not consider me his wife.

He threw his cigarette on the ground and crushed it with his foot before walking back inside, and I followed.

“So, what else is on my schedule?” I asked Jona, who was sitting in front of me in my office.

“All your meetings for today are over now. You have to go for your... wedding dress trial...”

I let out a breath. “Cancel that and schedule it on some other day.”

“You have been rescheduling it for the past week,” his voice rasped, “and the wedding is next week, Vivian. You need to go today.”

I scratched my temples and said, “I don’t want to, Jona.”

“Whether you want or not, you have to go. You can’t turn up at your wedding in

some jeans and shirt.”

I lowered my head to the table in exasperation. I never heard from Jaxon again after he dropped me at my penthouse when we returned from his parent’s place.

“Mr. Zoe, I order you to leave me alone,” I responded, keeping my head down.

“I am not going to listen to you this time, Vivian. You are going to get your wedding dress TODAY.”

I raised my head, “I can fire you for this behavior, Mr. Zoe.”

“I don’t care if you fire me, but I can’t see your hard work getting destroyed by that so-called fiancé of yours, so GET UP!” he rasped.

He jumped up from his chair, approached me, and grabbed my hand before dragging me.

I eventually got up with tears in my eyes.

“Why should I buy the dress? To get married to someone who doesn’t even respect me a bit. He doesn’t even consider me his wife-to-be. For him, this is all just a game!” I thought as tears gathered in my eyes. Jona looked at me kindly.

Jona held me in a loving hug as I cried into the crook of his neck.

“I don’t want to marry him, Jona. Why can’t he just merge the company without marrying me?” I said. “Save me...he will definitely kill me.”

Jona caressed little circles on my back, “I am sorry, Vivian...but I can’t do anything...”

“He won’t kill you...you are important to him... without you, this company is nothing, and he knows it”, he commented.

I backed away, sniffing and wiping away my tears.

“I’ll tell the driver to get the car ready...come down in five minutes,” he whispered quietly, and I nodded.

He left, and I went to the restroom attached to my office to wash my face.

I glanced in the mirror and saw the vulnerable part of myself that I had left years ago. This is not who I am; I am stronger than this, and I will never give up so quickly.

I’m going to show that asshole that I’m strong enough to marry him and sacrifice my life for the benefit of my company.

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I reapplied my n\*\*e lipstick and exited my office.

As I stepped inside the lift, my phone rang, and Kena's caller ID flashed. I smiled as I lifted it up.

"Hello, Mr. Max."

"Hi there, Vivian," he said. "I was wondering if we could meet..."

"Well, actually I am going to try my wedding dress...I will message you the address; we can meet there only."

"Oh, good. Who else will be there?"

"Just my best friend, a.k.a my assistant."

"Nice, I'll see you there," he said before hanging up.

When I arrived on the ground floor and came out via the building's main door, I noticed Jona already waiting near the car.

I got into the car, he sat next to me, and the driver started the motor.

"Kena Max is also coming there," I informed him.

"The CEO of the Max Enterprises?"



“Yup.”

Kena was also the CEO of his firm and a billionaire...I was dumb not to identify him when we first met, but he was not annoyed.

We worked in separate businesses, so I was unfamiliar with him.

We soon arrived at the business where I was having my dress designed, and as I got out of the car, I noticed Kena already resting against his car.

“Were you waiting for long?” I inquired, hugging him on the side.

“Nah. Just reached here a minute ago.”

Jona approached us and stood by me. I introduced them both, and they shook hands.

“So, let’s go try that goddamn dress,” I exclaimed, making everyone laugh as we all stepped inside.

I met the business owner, who requested us to wait for a few minutes before we all sat on the sofa.

After five minutes, she summoned me to try on the outfit. I walked inside the changing room and put on the dress with the aid of a worker.

The owner looked at me attentively to ensure that the garment suited me exactly. And trust me, it fits my figure well.

I decided to show Kena and Jona the dress, so I gently stepped out while wearing it.

They were both sitting in the same spot, speaking, and I cleared my voice to get their attention.

Their heads turned to face me at the same time, and their jaws fell.

Kena's jaw was wide open, and Jona elbowed him, urging him to close his lips. I flushed at their reaction.

Kena shouted, "Oh My God, Vivian...you are looking... outstanding!" which made me blush even more.

"Yes...you are looking gorgeous," Jona said.

"Thank you," I murmured, smiling shyly.

On your wedding day...

I brushed my fingers over my bridal gown as I stood in front of it in a swimming suit.

Today marked the wedding of the decade. I cannot believe this is occurring, and I am not happy about it. But from today, soon after we marry, our firms will unite into 'Hayes and Dante Industries.'

Jaxon wanted it to be Dante and Hayes Industries, but I convinced him to put my name first.

"Ma'am?" the makeup artist asked, breaking my concentration, "Should we begin?"

I nodded slowly and sat on the chair in front of the mirror as she began applying cosmetics.

I merely called the painters to my penthouse so that I could be comfortable for a few hours.

The wedding was in the evening, and I was becoming more worried with each passing minute.

After an hour, my makeup was finished, and the artist instructed me to put on the outfit.

Wearing the outfit, I stood in front of the full-length mirror and peered at myself. I hope this marriage was real...to be honest, I looked wonderful.

I whirled around, admiring myself, and the door opened as Jona entered.

“Are you...” he stopped off, his gaze fixed on me.

“You look more beautiful with the makeup,” he commented. I grinned in return.

Jona is supposed to be walking me down the aisle. My parents are not here, but I have him. He and I are like siblings, and he offered to escort me down the aisle, which I gladly accepted.

He looked adorable in his navy blue suit and spectacles.

Once again, my eyes began to water, and he whispered, “Remember...”

“You can do it,” we both said together, chuckling.

That’s my favorite thing about him: he’s really encouraging. He kissed my forehead and held my hand before leading me to the car.

When I arrived at the site, I was fascinated by the decorations...it was Jaxon’s pick since he promised me that all I needed to do was buy the dress, and he would handle the rest.

I stood beside Jona before he joined my arm with his, and with one more encouraging grin, we began heading down the aisle.

The route I was on was covered with white rose petals, and it looked lovely.

I noticed Kena standing behind Jaxon, looking gorgeous, and then I spotted him. He looked devilishly gorgeous in his black tuxedo.

He looked at me with a chilly expression as if he couldn't wait to murder me, and I trembled at the prospect.

As I approached Jaxon, I noticed Kena wink at me, and a slight grin appeared on my lips. Jona carefully handed my hand to Jaxon, who gripped it tightly, causing a tingling feeling on the touch.

He made me stand opposite him before the priest began speaking, and I tuned out. Jaxon appeared to have spaced out as well, despite the fact that he was gazing at me, and I had to drop my head.

The priest then glanced at him and responded: "Do you, Jaxon Dante, take Vivian Hayes to be your wife? To have and hold. From this day forward, For better or worse, For richer or poorer, In sickness and in health. To love and to cherish, Till death do you apart?"

No, he did not mean all of that; he could never. "I do," he said with an apathetic expression. I felt like weeping.

The priest then said the exact same thing to me: "Do you, Vivian Hayes, take Jaxon Dante to be your husband? To have and hold. From this day forward, For better or worse, For richer or poorer, In sickness and in health. To love and to cherish, Till death do you apart?"

No. I wanted to shout, but then I looked at Jona, who was supporting me, then at Jaxon's parents, who were overjoyed, and last at Jaxon, who gave me a look that said, "Dare you do anything stupid."

"I do," I eventually murmured, sealing my fate forever. Jaxon smirked, satisfied.

The priest said, "I now pronounce you husband and wife; you may now kiss the bride."

Wait...what?!

Kiss?!

Oh, crap! Why didn't we discuss this earlier?!

I gave Jaxon a terrified expression while he appeared cool.

He took a step towards me, leaned down, and my breath caught.

Will he actually kiss me? I don't want my first kiss to be merely formal.

He moved in closer, eventually placing his lips on the corner of my lips. The same way I kissed Jona the other day.

To the audience, it appeared like we kissed, although we didn't. And the audience roared and applauded.

He let his lips linger for a second before drawing apart, and I let out a breath I hadn't realized I'd held.

Yay, I'm married! I mentally rolled my eyes at the concept.

We were on the way to Jaxon's place. The wedding was concluded, and I was incredibly fatigued.

I swear that if his house isn't beautiful enough, I'll return to live in my penthouse...but these ideas fled the minute I got out of the car and stood in front of his home.

Holy stuff! This home was wonderful; why hadn't I noticed it before? I would have purchased it even if I hadn't seen it from the inside.

Jaxon began heading towards the house, completely ignoring me, and I followed him.

The interior was similarly gorgeous. I have to admit that he has superb taste.

Jaxon didn't say anything and started heading upstairs, and I had no choice but to follow him.

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As he made his way upstairs, he came to a halt in front of a door and eventually stated to me, “This is your room.” That was all he said before I observed him walk towards another door other than mine and enter his bedroom (I guessed).

My phone was continually ringing, disrupting my restful slumber.

I couldn’t recall where I left my phone last night. Still with my eyes closed, I moved my fingers across the bed, hoping to find it.

“Aargh!” I grumbled as I finally opened my eyes and found my phone on the nightstand.

I took it up and answered the phone.

“What?” I said grumpily.

“Vivian?” Jona enquired from the other end.

“You just ruined my peaceful sleep, Jona! Don’t you know what time I usually sleep?!”

“I do know what time you sleep; you sleep till 7:30 in the morning and till 10 on weekends. But if you could just bother to check the time, you will know that it is freaking 10 in the morning, and it’s Monday, and you are still not in the OFFICE!”

“Oh, shit!” I shouted, standing up and searching for the wall clock, which I found at 10:05. I was supposed to arrive at the workplace at 9 a.m.

“Are you coming now?”

I scratched my head as I sank back into the bed, “I don’t think so...I just got married yesterday, and who goes to work on the day of their wedding?”

“Your husband”, he said.

“Remember that your office was going to be shifted to his building from today as you both are now the joint CEOs,” according to him, “and I am here in his building, getting your office set up while he is questioning me that why you are not here yet.”

“Wait...did he ask you to call me?”

“...yes...”

“Couldn’t he call me by himself?”

Jona remained mute, prompting me to speak again: “You know why he didn’t call me himself, right?”

“...yes...”

“And may I know the reason, please, Mr. Zoe?”

“Let it be, Vivian.”

“Mr. Zoe,” I cautioned.

“He said that he doesn’t want to waste his time reminding people about their job. And he said that he can’t tolerate irresponsible people.”

Irresponsible? Just because he is now the joint CEO, he believes that he is alone



accountable, while others are unaware.

Is this a joke? I was managing my firm rather easily on my own.

“I’m not coming today; I’m exhausted, and you should tell that asshole I don’t care.”  
I hung up the phone.

After that, I got up and went to the toilet to freshen up.

After finishing my morning ritual, I decided to explore the home after breakfast because I knew asshole would not give me a tour.

I entered the kitchen to prepare myself breakfast, but there was already a woman there, her back to me, and she was preparing something.

I cleared my voice to get her attention, and she turned around. She appeared to be in her mid-40s, with black hair and a few strands of grey. She smiled warmly at me.

I copied her grin, and she said, “Good morning, Mrs. Dante.”

Mrs. Dante. That sounded really alien.

“I’m Jenny, the housekeeper,” she introduced herself.

“Well, nice to meet you, Jenny and you already know me,” I replied with a laugh, “don’t call me Mrs. Dante; I am not used to it yet; you can call me Vivian.”

“As you say, Vivian. I thought you would have gone to the office, too, because Jaxon was not here.”

I mentally rolled my eyes, “I’m not a workaholic like him; I needed to rest, so I didn’t

go.”

“By the way...what would you like for breakfast? I am going to make waffles, though.”

Waffles...the word alone made me hungry.

“Do you have vanilla ice cream to top that with?” I inquired, making her laugh. “Of course.”

I watched her mix the batter as we spoke about unrelated topics.

She worked with Dante for many years. She nearly reared Jaxon, and he was like a son to her.

She told me about Jaxon’s childhood experiences, and I was surprised to learn how joyful and fun Jaxon was. It was incredible.

“But everything changed after Julia’s death...” she rasped. “Jaxon changed completely.”

Who is Julia? His sister? What about his ex-girlfriend?

Jenny didn’t say anything further about it; she may have assumed I already knew, but the reality is, I have absolutely no idea who she is!

“Umm... who’s Julia?” I eventually enquired.

She turned to face me as she poured the batter into the waffle maker. “Jaxon didn’t tell you?”

“...no...he doesn’t tell me anything.”

“Then, I think it would be better if you asked him only.” As if he’d tell me!

“Please, you can tell me...”

She gently shook her head and returned her focus to the waffles.

A few minutes later, she brought me a dish of chocolate waffles, topped with a hefty scoop of vanilla ice cream and coated with chocolate syrup. Yum.

And it didn’t take me long to finish them.

I was consuming them, but in the back of my mind, it was continually ringing, “Who is Julia?” and why do I believe she is somehow tied to the true purpose of this marriage?

Only Jaxon can answer that. \_\_\_\_\_

It was now dusk, and I was exploring my so-called new home, where I was meant to spend the next, God knows how many years of my life.

The mansion was gorgeous; nearly every wall was made of glass, providing a glimpse of the pool outside.

I was returning to my room when I heard the front door open, and I knew it was Jaxon, so I immediately walked inside, not wanting to confront him.

At least I had a separate room so I could relax for a while. But my calm was short-lived as the door to my room was flung open, revealing an angry-looking Jaxon. Well, he’s always angry.

I tried not to be frightened by his angry expressions as I stood there, arms folded.

“Don’t you know how to knock?”

His jaw clenched as he stepped closer to me, showing me the screen of his phone and asking, “What’s the meaning of this?”

“What?” I asked.

He tapped the screen, and an audio recording of my chat with Jona began to play: “I am not coming today, I am exhausted, and you better tell this to that asshole; I don’t care.”

“Where did you get this recording from?”

He simply disregards my inquiry. “Let me make this clear: I don’t care how you handled your company earlier, but now it is my company even, so you better start to care about it.”

I didn’t say anything; instead, I started to walk toward the toilet, but he grabbed my wrist and pulled me back, “Understood?!”

I rolled my eyes at him, which irritated him tremendously.

The very next second, he threw me into the wall and locked both of my hands over my head, and I drew a big breath, absolutely taken aback by his actions.

There was hardly a space between us; I could feel his breath on my face.

“You better mend your ways, Vivian, or else I will have to punish you,” he said.

Punish you. What did he mean by that?! What would he do?

When I eventually questioned him, “Who’s Julia?” he let go of my hands and took a step back, turning to go.

He came to a halt instantly, his body frozen as his back was turned towards me.

I believed he suffered a heart attack, but my joy was short-lived since he eventually turned around slowly.

“Who told you?” His voice was calm and low, but it sounded deadly.

“Jenny, your housekeeper told me this morning.”

“What did she tell you exactly?” he questioned, taking a step closer to me.

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“The only thing she told me was that ‘everything changed after Julia’s death.’ I questioned her about who she was, but she refused to tell me, claiming that I should be asking you,” I repeated the last word, pointing at him.

“So, I guess you should tell me,” I said.

“You are not supposed to know everything.”

“I do have the right to know I am your...” I paused in mid-sentence, recalling what he said the last time I referred to myself as his wife: “Let it be...goodnight.”

He grinned, moved closer to me, and murmured in my ear, “Good, you learned your lesson. Goodnight.”

As he left my room, I understood how cleverly he had turned the subject.

Since one of my readers requested that I update one more chapter, here it is...

The next morning, just as I was getting ready for the workplace, there was a knock on my door.

As I answered the door, Jaxon stood there, all suited up and scanning his phone.

He raised his eyebrows and responded: “We can’t go to the office separately. I don’t want to give the paparazzi a new topic to talk about.”

“So you’re coming with me,” he explained.

I pushed my lips together in a narrow line, thinking about going with him. Well, he is correct; we are meant to act like partners.

“Fine,” I grumbled, walking past him and downstairs for breakfast.

I welcomed Jenny and sat down at the table as she handed me a croissant and a warm cup of coffee.

After breakfast, I followed Jaxon outside to where his car was parked.

He approached his black Lamborghini, which was already parked outside the garage, and I frowned.

“What?” he questioned, noticing the anger on my face.

“I don’t like Lamborghini; I won’t go in that. Take out some other car.”

He ignored my disdain for the automobile and proceeded to get into the driver’s seat when I answered, “Fine. I’ll go on my own.”

If looks could kill, I would have died by now.

He stepped out of that automobile, gave me a deathly gaze, and slammed the door shut.

He entered the garage and, a minute later, pulled out his BMW I8. I was expecting it to be black or white, but it was shiny turquoise. I literally died at the sight of that.

Anyway, I sat in the passenger seat while Jaxon drove. After 15 minutes of perfect stillness, the automobile came to a halt at a red light.

From the corner of my eye, I saw him pull a cigarette from his pocket, and as he was

about to light it, I grabbed it from him.

He was astonished at first, but then he grew enraged, really angry.

“Even I am sitting in the car, and the smoke can harm me, Mr. Dante,” I stated before he could question me.

He tried not to cry as he took a deep breath, and then he pulled something from his pocket again, this time the entire pack of cigarettes.

I pushed in closer, attempting to take the box as well, but his grasp on it tightened.

“The light has turned green,” I told him, prompting him to refocus his attention on the road. His grasp on the box loosened, and I seized the chance to take it away.

“What the hell are you doing?!” he yelled.

But I just chuckled and said, “I win!”

He arched an eyebrow at me and said, “How old are you? Five?”

I poked my tongue out at him before turning to face the window as he muttered under his breath.

“...and this is your office,” Jona stated as we arrived at my new office following a tour of the floor.

Jona ensured that this office looked comparable to the one I had in my building. Everything was practically the same, save for a connecting door between Jaxon’s and my offices.



One month later...

It's been a month since our wedding, and nothing has changed. Every morning, I arrive at the workplace with Jaxon in perfect silence, except for when I ask him a few work-related questions. Nothing else has changed.

"Come in," I responded when someone knocked on my door, and, as predicted, Jona entered.

"What?" I enquired when he remained silent and stood there uneasily.

"S-someone is down at the reception...to meet you."

"That 'someone' must have a name, Jona."

"Tristan and Logan...Adek," he eventually said, making me freeze.

Tristan and Logan Adek.

Can't they leave me alone? They annoy me every few months!

"You know what to do, Jona."

"But Vivian..." I interrupted him; "No, but, Jona, send them away. I don't want to meet them."

"At least they're trying, Vivian," Jona attempted to explain, but I don't give a damn about them!

"I said 'no'."

“Vivian...give them a chance,” he urged.

“I don’t understand why you are taking their side; you are my best friend and my assistant.”

“Because, you have such a beautiful heart, you can even forgive someone who tries to murder you but you are not willing to at least give them a chance, why don’t you understand?”

“Why don’t you understand, Mr. Zoe?! I don’t want to meet them and that’s final!”

“They came all the way from Alaska to spend money, and you can’t just send them away like that.” The line about money irritated me the most.

“If their concern is about their money getting wasted then give them the money for the tickets. Don’t say again that their money is getting wasted by me!”

“And anyway that time is about to end in a few months, you will have to meet them anyway”, Jona quipped.

“So, why don’t they understand that when I gave them a specific time, why don’t they stick to it. Why do they keep disturbing me?!”

“What’s all this commotion about?!” a voice bellowed, and we both looked to Jaxon, who stood at the door that connected both offices.

I sighed deeply and murmured, “Go, Jona.”

He walked away, giving me one final disappointed glance, and I went back to work.

“You can leave, Jaxon unless you also want to argue with me.”

“You’re coming with me to a restaurant for lunch today,” he said, and because I wasn’t in the mood to argue, I answered, “Okay.”

I planned to inform Jona during lunch before going out with Jaxon.

I strolled up to his desk, reading through my phone, and said, “I am going...” but stopped abruptly when I lifted my head and noticed that his desk was vacant. He’s never left so early for lunch.

I phoned him, but he did not answer, so I went to look for him at the cafeteria on the first level.

I scoured the cafeteria for him and eventually saw him. He was sitting at a table, but not alone.

Mr and Mrs Adek sat with their backs to me.

I instructed Jona to tell them to go, but instead he was sitting here enjoying lunch with them.

Great job, Jonah Zoe.

As if he sensed my presence, his eyes met mine and widened in disbelief. He didn’t expect me to discover him eating lunch with them.

Before he could say or do anything, I fled.

I hurriedly exited the building, towards Jaxon’s car, which was already parked outside, and sat inside. \_\_\_\_\_

“You have to eat the food, not play with it,” Jaxon said, noticing me prodding the fried chicken b\*\*\*\*\*t on my plate with a fork.

I didn't say anything and kept prodding it; I expected him to be enraged, but he remarked calmly, "Whom are you planning to murder tonight?"

I looked up at him and asked, "What?"

"You are poking the chicken as if you want to stab someone really badly," he added amusingly, with the slightest of smiles on his lips.

I shook my head slightly, then sliced a piece of chicken and placed it into my mouth.

Jaxon leaned across the table and said, "I'm free tonight, and I can help you murder that person."

I swallowed the chicken and shouted, "Shut up. I am not murdering someone...I am just angry with Jona."

"And you know you look like a gang leader, I always thought about it. The way you blackmail people, the way you can make people disappear...", I went on.

He grinned, leaning back. "You think I'm a gang leader? Seriously?"

"You do act like one."

He teased back, "Just the way you act like a child?" I sneered and began eating, and after a few seconds of feeling his stare on me, he too resumed eating.

We didn't quarrel for the first time in our lives, at least not seriously.

If he could only be like this, and show me some compassion, I might be able to spend the rest of my life with him and adjust to him, but I'm not sure if he can...

“Do you have a boyfriend?” he said unexpectedly, and I detected a note of envy in his tone.

“No.”

“Hmm...good,” he murmured to himself, but I caught it.

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“What about you and your girlfriend?”

“I don’t have any girlfriend.”

I chuckled, adding, “Very funny.”

“I am serious.”

“So, what about that blonde who came out of your office with her lipstick smudged and all?” I related what I had seen that day in his office.

“Oh, that...she was just a one-night stand, nothing else. I don’t do relationships, it’s not my thing,” there was something about the way he spoke those final words that hinted at sadness. Those words carried a deeper significance.

And I am too obstinate to simply forget about Julia. I want to know everything.

“Thanks for the lunch,” I said Jaxon, and he nodded as we left ways and headed to our various offices.

I settled down and beckoned Jona in.

I was calm by this point, and I didn’t want to talk to him about it anymore. I am meant to concentrate on my job rather than other issues.

“Ask Mr. Dan for the sales report,” I said Jona as soon as he entered my office, as I focused on my laptop screen.

He had a sorrowful expression on his face; he knew I was unhappy with what he had done, but when I didn't say anything to him and only asked him to fetch me a file, his mouth opened and closed in astonishment.

“And get a meeting fixed with Mr. King for tomorrow after clarifying it with Jaxon and...”

I looked up at him, and his expression was blank, so I paused in between.

“Did I say something wrong?” I asked him.

“N-no, of...of course not.”

“That's it. You can leave.”

“You don't want to say anything else?” Perhaps I wasn't as composed as I thought, since the instant he said that, I lost my cool.

“What else should I say? That how you went against my orders and instead of sending them away you were having lunch with them?! You were supposed to support me, you are my friend.”

“Let me get this clear”, replied the man, “you are my friend and I will support you but only when you are right. If you are doing something wrong then I am not going to support you at any cost.”

“You think I am doing wrong?”

He pondered for a second before responding, “Yes.”

“Please elaborate.”

He went silent, and the only sound was my hard breathing from yelling.

“I gave them a date. They are supposed to wait till that date and if I don’t meet them then, then they might come bang my office door, I don’t care. But when I have given them a specific date then they need to stick to it”, I said with as little emotion as possible.

He tilted his head sideways, pressed his lips in a tiny line and pushed his spectacles up his nose.

“Will you say something?!” I demanded.

“There’s nothing to say; I’ll schedule the meeting for tomorrow,” he remarked before moving towards the door.

“What did you talk to them about?” I said, causing him to halt.

“Nothing that will destroy your company,” he said before opening the door, but I wasn’t finished.

“Jonah! What did you talk about?!” I asked, jumping up.

“I said nothing!” he cried, which shocked me.

He recognised it and quickly collected himself before speaking in a much calmer tone, “Nothing...just about our friendship and your well-being. That’s all.”

“Woah, woah! What’s all this chaos about?” Kena appeared unexpectedly.

I sighed deeply and sank back in my chair, as Kena strolled in and sat in the chair opposite me.



“I didn’t mean to intrude but I knocked the door twice and no one answered it and then I heard you shouting so, I decided to intervene before you kill anyone. Sorry”, stated the gentleman.

“It’s okay,” I murmured, reclining back in my chair.

Jona, who had been silent, decided to leave the office again, but was stopped this time by Kena, not me.

“Hey, Jonah. You guys had a fight?” Kena asked, looking at him and then at me, but I simply returned my focus to my laptop.

Jona was ready to leave the office when Kena jumped up and grabbed his arm, dragging him inside.

“Okay guys, I don’t know why you had a fight but right now you both are going to say sorry to each other and become friends again”, Kena said. This made me scoff.

“Vivian, get up,” Kena said, to which I answered, “I’m busy.” Jona folded his arms, indicating that even he would not apologise.

He stated to both of us, “Your ego will cost you a friend for a lifetime”.

Kena’s comments hit me. Your ego will cost you a buddy for life. Well, I believe I understand how it feels to lose a buddy, because he was the one best friend I had right now.

He has been with me for the past two years, supporting me through thick and thin.

I finally got up and stood in front of Jona.

I extended my arm for a handshake, saying, “Sorry.”

Jona stared at me first, then at my hand. I swear, if he does not shake my hand, I will murder him.

Slowly, he extended his hand and shook mine, murmuring “Sorry.”

A smile slowly emerged on my face, which proved contagious as Jona smiled as well, and I pulled him in for a hug.

“Me too!” Kena cried, joining us for a group embrace.

The following day...

Standing by Jaxon in the meeting room, I saw everyone leaving. The meeting went well, and it appears that we will be closing the transaction soon.

The last person to go was Mr. King, the owner of King Industries and a calm, attractive man. He was a few years older than me and had lovely green eyes that drew you in. He also had a powerful figure.

Instead of exiting the room, he approached us, shaking hands with Jaxon. I expected him to shake my hand as well, so I stretched it out, but instead, he took my hand and brought it to his lips, kissing my knuckles. Well, it made me flush.

“You are the epitome of beauty with brains,” he remarked, giving me a dazzling grin.

“Oh, thank you so much,” I murmured, withdrawing my hand.

My hair was in a sloppy bun, with a few strands hanging out, so he delicately brushed one behind my ear.

Oh, God. It felt nice.

What? It's okay to feel that way. I've never been romantically connected with someone, so I don't know how it feels to snuggle with your partner or anything like that.

Someone cleared his throat loudly, and we turned to face Jaxon. Oh, I had entirely forgotten his existence. Oops.

Mr. King walked out of the room, leaving me with one final smile.

"Do you think we can close this deal?" I asked Jaxon as I collected my laptop.

"What do you think?" I said again, facing him because he had not spoken.

His jaw was clinched, and his fists were fisted, as if he was attempting to suppress his wrath.

"Fine, don't answer", I rasped. "You are really bipolar, you know that? One moment you are fine, the other moment you seem as if you want to murder someone. Get yourself a therapist, Jaxon."

Saying that, I exited the room. He is insane; what caused him to alter so quickly? I mean, he appeared to be rather delighted after the meeting, while he never says it, you can tell by his look. He has a peaceful expression and appears comfortable, indicating that he is content.

I'm pretty observant.

After a completely silent supper (as usual) with Jaxon at home, I lay on my bed leisurely, doing nothing.

Sometimes it's best to do nothing.

Lying there, I was ready to fall asleep when my phone rang.

“Hello?” I replied casually.

“You got to be kidding me?!”

“Are you mad? What are you talking about?” Jona seemed to have completely lost his head.

“Why did you cancel the deal?”

“What deal?!”

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“Come on! That deal with the King Industries.”

“What do you mean by I cancelled it? I don’t remember doing that?”

“Actually Jaxon did that and he must have told you, you are also the CEO.”

“You are joking, right?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Is he crazy?! Why did he cancel the deal and that too without telling me?!”

“That’s what I am asking you!”

Now it appears like Jaxon has lost his mind.

That transaction would have helped us, and he knows it; he is not that stupid, or perhaps he is.

“Go talk to him and out some sense into him.”

“I’ll try.”

I hung up the phone and walked to Jaxon’s room, knocking twice but getting no response. So, assuming he wasn’t there, I went inside his study, and because the door was slightly open, I could see light streaming from within.

Knocking violently once, I stepped in and saw him smoking in his chair; the entire room smelt of cigarettes.

“You’ve got to be kidding me?!” Why am I echoing Jona’s words? Never mind.

“What?” he enquired, placing his cigarette in the ashtray.

“Why did you cancel the deal?! Are you crazy?! You were happy about it earlier, now what happened?!”

“I changed my mind.”

“That’s not a valid reason! And you didn’t even bother to tell me about it.”

“It was going to benefit us but there are much better deals than that”, remarked the man.

“We missed a goddamn opportunity, Jaxon and that too because of your stupidity!”

“Just because that owner of the King Industries is acquainted with you, doesn’t mean that we accept his deal.”

What’s he talking about?!

“Acquainted?! That was the first time I ever met him.”

“Oh, but it looked as if he really likes you, doesn’t he?”, he responded as he rose.

“Jaxon please, what are you talking about? Why would he like me?”

He approached me till he was extremely near.

“Why else would he kiss your hand, huh?” he asked, slowly raising my hand up to his lips, and before I realised it, he was softly kissing my knuckles in the same manner he did previously.

His lips were gentle against my flesh, leaving a tingling feeling.

“And”, he said, “who brushes the strand of hair behind your ear unless you know them.”

My hair was still in a sloppy bun, and as usual, there were a few strands hanging out. Jaxon brushed a strand of hair behind my ear, as he did before.

What is wrong with him?

“Jaxon...are you jealous?”

His teeth squeezed even more as his gaze locked on mine with an unfathomable feeling.

“No.”

I bit my lower lip.

“Then...why are you...” I couldn’t complete my question as Jaxon lifted his hand and, with his thumb, loosened my bottom lip from where I was chewing; his eyes darkened in the process.

His actions caused me to breathe faster.

He rubbed my lower lip with his thumb and said, “Three words, ten letters. You are mine.”

“Jaxon...are you jealous?”

His teeth squeezed even more as his gaze locked on mine with an unfathomable feeling.

“No.”

I bit my lower lip.

“Then...why are you...” I couldn’t complete my question as Jaxon lifted his hand and, with his thumb, loosened my bottom lip from where I was chewing; his eyes darkened in the process.

His actions caused me to breathe faster.

“You are mine in three words and ten letters,” he said, brushing my lower lip with his thumb.

The color drained from my cheeks; it was the last thing I expected him to say.

“Wha-what?!”

“I don’t like repeating myself. Now go, I’m busy,” he replied, moving away.

“I’m not yours, Jaxon,” I replied confidently.

He can’t own me, right?

“I said it once, and I’m saying it again for the last time,” he turned to me, advancing closer, “Believe it or not, but You. Are. Mine. If anyone tries to touch you again, he will die.”



I should be upset at him right now, but my silly heart found this possessive side of his incredibly appealing.

I mean, no one has ever been so possessive of me, and now this asshole thinks I am his. Wow.

“Does that mean I won’t be able to hang out with any man...you know, a boyfriend?” I wanted to have some fun, and Jaxon’s reaction when I suggested a boyfriend, Oh God! He had such a horrible expression.

“You are married to me! You are my wife; dare you go out with anyone else!”

My wife.

I raised my arms in surrender. “I thought you didn’t consider me as your wife. What did you say that day...’ I don’t consider you my wife, Miss Vivian Hayes.’ Didn’t you say that, huh?”

He didn’t respond.

“And what about you and your... one night stands?”

“I haven’t slept with anyone since we got married.”

I’m not sure why, but I felt relieved to hear that.

“It’s hard to believe. Jaxon Dante, one of the biggest playboys, is saying that he hasn’t slept with anyone for the past month; very funny.”

He grasped my waist, violently pushing me closer as my body squeezed against his, and I put my hand on his chest, establishing some space between us because our near closeness was hurting my brain and body.

“Don’t test me,” he said, gritting his teeth.

My gaze shifted to his lips, which were full, lush, and seductive. Oh, how much I longed to taste them.

Get it together, Vivian!

I appeared to be in a stupor, unable to snap out of it as I continued to stare at his lips, anxiety rising in my gut.

I began to lean in closer, my eyelids blinking, and I could feel his hot breath on my lips.

This is incorrect!

I don’t care whether I regret it later; just now, I needed it.

I was going to kiss his lips, but he took his hand away from my waist, causing me to stumble backward.

What was I doing?

I was taken aback by my actions as I inhaled heavily. Something is clearly wrong with me.

He gazed at me with such intensity that his pupils dilated.

He quickly looked aside, trying not to look at me. My face reddened; would I actually kiss him? And if I do, would he kiss me back? I’m shocked he didn’t murder me because of my conduct.

I hurriedly left the room since I didn't want to be with him just now.

This marriage was only a contract, and it was only for the sake of our businesses; I can't expect him to attempt to make it work.

But do I want this marriage to work?

It's been a week since that...weird occurrence, and I've been avoiding Jaxon as much as possible.

On Friday, Jaxon departed for California for a business meeting. And because it was not necessary for both of us to be present, I chose to remain back. And even though I didn't want to be near him because I was frightened of doing something I would later regret.

My phone rang just as I was about to settle down to sleep.

"Yes?" I replied to Jaxon. He seldom called me unless it was really essential.

"Can you go to my study and search the first drawer for a pale blue color file?"

"OK...wait. What do I have to do after finding it?"

"There are five papers inside; just click their pictures and send them to me."

"OK."

He was ready to hang up when I asked, "Jaxon?"

"Yes?"

“Did you have your...dinner?”

There was silence on the other end, and I expected him to stop the phone or say something offensive, but he did not.

“I did. What about you?”

A wide smile spread across my lips, “Yes, I did. I will send you the pictures, bye.”

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“Bye.”

With a smile still on my face, I approached his study.

Maybe I want this marriage to succeed, and I’m prepared to spend the rest of my life with him. But that will need a significant amount of effort on my part.

When I entered his study, I examined the first drawer but found no files. I investigated the drawer next to it but found nothing.

Where did he keep it?

I explored the second drawer, but instead of finding a file, I discovered something that left me cold.

A pistol.

With shaking hands, I carefully took it up, and the weight verified that it was real.

A friggin gun! Why is it here?! Is Jaxon planning on murdering someone? Or might that someone be me?!

What if he wants to get rid of me so he can become the only owner of the company?

And that could be why he was speaking to me so nicely: he knew I was about to die.

My phone rang, jolting me out of my thoughts, and I noticed Jaxon’s message, “Did

you find it?”

I forgot about the file. I explored the final drawer till I found it, so I immediately took a photo of the papers and texted it to him.

Now, back to the pistol.

Is he actually the gang leader?

What should I do with it?

I took up the rifle, and it's rather hefty.

I carefully took it in my hand and walked to my room, locking the door and sitting on the bed.

Does he even have a license?

If he's going to murder me, he needs to have the gun first.

I concealed the gun inside one of the cupboards.

He will return tomorrow and must respond to my question. With that thinking, I fell asleep.

Jaxon returned in the morning, and I did not say anything to him.

After lunch, as I was going to open the door to my bedroom, I was grabbed by the shoulders and whirled around, coming face-to-face with Jaxon as I backed up against the door.

“Where’s my gun?” he said in a remarkably calm tone.

“W-which gun?” I stammered.

“Stop it, Vivian. Just give me back my pistol. I know it’s with you because you were the last person to enter my study.”

“I-I...I won’t give it back because...you...you will kill me.”

His face wrinkled in astonishment. “Kill you?! Why would I kill you?!”

“So that...you can be the only owner of the company.”

“Don’t be childish, Vivian. Give it back; I am not killing you.”

“I can’t trust you!”

“Look, if I had to kill you, I would have done that a long time back.”

OK, he has a point.

I gave him one more glance before opening the door and going inside to fetch the revolver from the cupboard.

He followed me inside, and before presenting it to him, I said, “Are you a gang leader?”

He had a blank expression on his face before slamming himself.

“Do you even have a license?”

“I do. This gun is just for my protection, Vivian. Neither am I a gang leader, nor am I planning to kill you.”

“Fine,” I grumbled before giving him the pistol.

“Can you teach me?” I said.

Previously, firearms fascinated me.

“What?”

“How to...use a gun?”

He smiled slyly at me, “So that you could kill me? No.”

I pouted, “Please. It just fascinates me.”

He hesitated with himself for a time before saying, “Fine. Follow me.”

“Yay!”

I was so thrilled that I went up to him, climbed on my toes, and kissed his jaw, causing his entire body to stiffen. Uh, oh.

I cleared my throat awkwardly and whispered gently, “Let’s go.”

I followed him downstairs into his gym, which I was unfamiliar with.

I never had a gym at home since it was pointless since I never used it. I can’t even handle diets; how can I do exercise?



There was another door at the end of the gym, and I saw him punch a password into the little box beside the entrance. And the door slid open onto a hallway.

Without saying anything, I followed him inside; the passage led to a hall with various sorts of weaponry displayed on the walls and tables.

On one side of the wall, there were cardboard targets for practice.

“Hold this,” Jaxon replied, handing me a revolver. And I removed the weapon from his grasp.

“Now,” he said, “Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, pointing slightly away from the target. Keep your legs straight and knees soft.”

“Can you repeat?” He gave me those instructions so rapidly that I couldn’t register anything.

He groaned and shook his head.

Instead of repeating, he approached and stood straight behind me, virtually pressing my back against his front.

I could feel his breath on my neck, which made me hot, and his scent invaded my thoughts.

No, not again. Perhaps I should not have asked him to educate me.

He softly grasped my shoulder and positioned it. Next, he bent down slightly and positioned my legs, but as he stood up, he kept his hands on my legs, or should I say they were resting on the side of my thigh, and gently raised his hand up, making sure they were brushing over the curves of my body, causing me to quiver.

He was taunting me.

I wasn't looking at him, but I could tell he was smirking since his touch was having such a negative impact on me.

The torment ceased when his hands stretched up and gently gripped both my biceps.

"What happened, Vivian?" he muttered in my ears in a low, husky, sensual tone that made me gulp.

Don't do all of that.

"No-nothin-g."

"Are you scared?" he said again in that tone, and I could feel his lips on my earlobe.

"No," I said, softly shaking my head.

"Then why are you shivering?" his voice grew louder and huskier as he slid his finger down my bare arm (since I was wearing a sleeveless shirt), causing shivers to spread over my entire body.

I was about to lose my self-control and slam my lips on his, but I didn't.

Instead, I took a step back and handed him the pistol, saying, "Let it be. I don't wanna learn."

"Giving up so early?"

"No, I...I just changed my mood."

His sneer widened as he saw why I was denying it.

“Well...if you don’t want to learn, then let it be,” he added, going past me to keep the pistol back, making sure his arms touched mine.

I looked at his back as he walked in front of me to the table, admiring his broad shoulders, the way his muscles bulged out of the tight black t-shirt he was wearing, and his silky hair.

I swallowed, attempting to calm my surging hormones.

He is going to be the end of me.

I raised my legs, tucking them beneath my knees as I relaxed back in my chair. I held my abdomen; the agony was excruciating.

I seldom experience period pains, but this one seemed like it was exacting revenge on me. I felt like someone was stabbing me with a knife, and I couldn’t focus on my job.

I shouldn’t have come into the office today, but it was Monday, so I had to.

As I rested my head on the back of my chair, a single tear fell from my eyes. The agony was growing excruciating by the minute. I dispatched Jona to purchase the medication, and I have no clue when he will return.

I heard the connecting door open with my back to it. I recognized Jaxon because of his cologne.

“What happened to you?” he enquired after seeing me.

“Cramps” was all I could utter. Even saying something made it hurt more.

Jaxon approached me quickly, frowning as he watched me.

He bowed down to meet my height, as he was so tall.

“You want to go home?”

“It... won’t help. I can’t move...even.”

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“Do you have some medicine?”

“I sent Jona to buy them; he...must be coming...”

He hummed in return, and the next thing I knew, he was lifting me up in his arms (bridal style).

“What are you doing?!” I managed to yell at him since I was taken aback by his actions.

He didn’t say anything but instead led me to his office and gently placed me on the couch there.

I observed him in surprise as he approached his desk and rummaged through a drawer before pulling out a heating belt.

He plugged it near the sofa and then wrapped the belt around my abdomen.

His acts warmed my heart. Maybe he doesn’t say anything or appears frigid, yet deep down...he cares...maybe.

“It will help ease the pain,” he eventually said, standing near the couch, peering down at me from above.

“How do you know it helps relieve pain?” was a reasonable question.

His lips curved up in a faint smile, one that did not convey that it was pleasant.

“You are not the only woman I have ever been with.”

We just heard Jona's voice coming from my office: "Vivian?"

Jaxon stepped through the door, and they both entered a few seconds later.

Jona brought me a glass of water, took out a pill, and helped me stand up before I consumed the medication.

Jaxon stood there, inspecting everything with his hands in his pocket.

After making me ingest the medicine and helping me lay down again, Jona was about to leave the room when Jaxon remarked to him, "Jonah, you may now call me Jaxon."

Jona stared at him, then at me, and I gave him a slight shrug.

Before leaving the room, he said "Okay" gently.

"What was that?" I questioned Jaxon when Jona left the room.

He moved up to his desk and leaned against it, facing me.

"He is your best friend, and I am your husband, which makes him my friend too, and friends don't address each other so formally," he clarified.

"I thought you don't like making lots of friends."

"It depends," he shrugged before sitting in his chair and immersing himself in his job.

"What am I supposed to do now? Just lay here?"

He arched his brow, "Am I supposed to entertain you?"

I pouted my lips and folded my arms, “You should be nice to me; I am on my period! And if I lose my temper, you have no idea what I will do because my mood swings are the worst.”

There was laughter in his eyes, which swiftly faded: “I am working; entertain yourself.”

I groaned to myself when I noticed him immersing himself in a file.

I observed him peruse the file before picking up a piece of paper and starting to write something.

He’d already taken off his coat, so he was wearing a simple white shirt with his sleeves rolled up, and when he wrote, the muscles bulged out. I could not help but gaze at him. He wrinkled his brow in perplexity, and then his expression relaxed once he saw what was written there.

His gorgeous jawline made me want to run my fingers across it so strongly, and being on my period didn’t help matters.

“When I said entertain yourself, I didn’t ask you to drool at me,” he stated abruptly, his gaze fixed on the laptop screen.

My cheeks flushed hot when he saw me drooling at him.

“I wasn’t drooling,” I snapped.

“Of course you will say that, but I know I am very handsome,” he said cockily.

May I hit him?

I laughed: “You know what, I am beautiful too, and I can make you drool at me too.”

Was it presumptuous of me to declare myself beautiful?

He tilted his head at me and said, “Are you challenging me?”

For a brief time, I wondered what could be more hazardous than challenging Jaxon Dante.

“Maybe.”

He restarted typing on his laptop, “Let’s see... who’s gonna win.”

“I thought you wouldn’t waste your so-called precious time on some stupid challenge.”

“A challenge is a challenge. And I like challenges ’cause I love to win.”

Why doesn’t someone instill some humility in him? Oh, yes, they wouldn’t want to die.

“One day, Jaxon Dante,” I stated in a demanding tone, “I will make you drool at me, and you will admit it.”

With his gaze fixed on the laptop, he smirked and said, “I am looking forward to that day.”

Then there was stillness, but for the sound the keyboard made as he wrote, and I glanced at the ceiling.

I lay there motionless while my pain appeared to gradually subside; at least it was manageable now.



After a few minutes of passively looking at the ceiling, I returned my focus to Jaxon.

He had a seductive grimace on his face, pinched his brow as he peered at the TV, and then folded his arms over his chest, causing his muscles to protrude out further. OK, I realize I've been using the term 'bulge' a lot, but what can I do when I have a Greek God sitting in front of me with such strong muscles, and God knows how many packs he has?

He gently moved his head as if to relieve the agony in his neck. Then he lifted his arms over his head and began to slowly lower them.

"Stop flexing," I yelled, causing his hands to freeze in midair.

"Is it bothering you?" he enquired, lowering his hands.

Yes.

"No."

"Then?"

"I don't...like it."

He extended his arms again and placed them at the back of his head, and my gaze followed his every action.

"I have a solution for it," he continued, leaning back and keeping his gaze on me.

"Stop staring. Simple."

Again. Once again, he has made me feel so ashamed.

Well done, Vivian. Well done.

A blush crept up my neck, and my cheeks and ears turned crimson again.

“If you really have been with someone before and you know what will help a girl who is having cramps, then that girl must have also taught you how to talk to a girl who is on her period.”

To be honest, he said nothing offensive, which was really pathetic of me to say, but my mood swings...I can't do anything.

Something appeared to have snapped in him, for the fun expression on his face had vanished as he narrowed his eyes at me. He stared at me for a bit, then glanced away, closed his eyes briefly, and I watched him gasp as his Adam's apple went up and down before returning to work.

What the hell just happened?!

Did I say something offensive? I do not think so.

“Jaxon?”

“I'm busy,” was the quick, chilly response.

He was not busy two minutes ago.

When he mentioned that woman, did he mean Julia? Is that why he suddenly changed?

What the heck did I do? I mentally face-palmed myself.

Whoever she was, she was important to him, and he had lost her. Therefore, I reminded him of her.

A minute later, he rose, pulled out a cigarette and a lighter, and quietly exited the room.

I'm not sure of anything else because I fell asleep.

I awoke with a blanket wrapped over me and curled up in a ball.

Stretching my body, I gently sat up; my cramps were gone. Sitting up, I noticed Jaxon had already packed up.

"We're leaving; Jonah has already packed your belongings, and they're in the car," he remarked, seeing me awake.

I nodded gently in return.

He picked up his laptop and moved by me, but as he approached the door, his back was turned to me, and I noticed him sigh heavily.

He turned around and returned to where I was seated.

"You OK now?"

"Yes, thank you."

He extended his hand to me to take, and I stared up at him, then at his hand, before eventually placing my hand in his and getting up.

As soon as I stood up, he released my hand and walked towards the door, with me following behind him.

It was Friday evening when I finished my work and began collecting my belongings.

Jaxon informed me that he would be late, so I went home alone till Kena called and asked me to his place to play Red Dead Redemption 2.

I enthusiastically agreed and arrived at his apartment at seven p.m. without telling Jaxon.

“Take cover, Kena! More O’Driscolls are on their way!” I cried to Kena as he battled the O’Driscolls, and I just sat there and watched him play because I didn’t know how to fight. I mean, I’ve never been able to kill someone properly in that game, but Kena was an expert at it.

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Empty pizza boxes were scattered around us while we played and ate pizza for dinner.

Kena yelled, “Finally!” after killing all of the adversaries, and then he turned off the PS4 because we had been playing for a while.

“I didn’t realize it was too late,” he remarked, looking at the wall clock.

He was correct—it was already quarter past ten.

“Kena?”

“Hmm?”

“You and Jaxon are childhood friends, right?”

He appeared perplexed when I suddenly asked him a question.

“Umm...yes. Why?”

“Nothing...I just...is Jaxon angry with you?” I’d wanted to question him for a long time since they’re closest friends, but they don’t behave that way. Jaxon does not even disguise his discomfort with his presence.

“No...he is not angry,” he replied, avoiding eye contact with me.

“But why does he act like that towards you?”

He sighed and lay back on the couch, “We’ve been like that since we were kids, Vivian. There’s nothing wrong.”

“No, I know it’s not necessary for two friends to show affection for each other, but Jaxon seems to not like you. I don’t mean to offend you, but he does accept you as his best friend, but you both don’t seem to get along; why?”

He closed his eyes for a second before opening them, still straight ahead.

“First of all...I am not supposed to tell you much, but all I can say is that he and I grew up together, and we were best of friends, but for the past ten years, he has built a wall around himself, and I have been trying for the past ten years to break that wall and hang out and do kinds of stuff like we used to before but he just doesn’t listen to me...we are still friends, we are like siblings, we love each other but Jaxon is...broken.”

I could only realize that Jaxon was broken. Why?

“What happened ten years back?”

“I can’t tell you...he will kill me. But all I can say is that Julia died ten years back, and since then...he had been blaming himself for her death.”

“Why is he blaming himself?!”

He gave me a sorrowful look and said, “You should ask him about that, not me, because I don’t want to die single.”

I let out a tiny giggle, but I wasn’t finished asking questions. “At least you can tell me what relationship he had with her, please?”

He glanced at me for a few seconds, unsure whether to tell me or not. He eventually uttered what he wanted to say: “Julia, Jaxon, and I were best friends, our families were friends, and we three grew up together; we were inseparable until death took her away. That’s all I can tell you.”

His eyes were hollow as he talked about her; they had lost their dearest buddy.

“Don’t tell Jaxon I told you all this because he doesn’t like to talk about all this to anyone,” according to him.

“I won’t tell him anything,” I told him, offering him a modest grin that he did not return.

“I should go... it’s very late”, and I responded with “Bye, Kena.”

I was ready to leave the penthouse when he said, “And Vivian?”

I turned around. “Yes?”

“Please... don’t leave him.”

I didn’t respond since I was still absorbing his remarks.

He went on: “He doesn’t show it, but...he needs you. He is broken, but I know that you can fix him up. He tries to be strong but believe me, he is not...he is very soft-hearted, but we all experience some things in our lives that change us. Give him some time; he is short-tempered. I know it is difficult sometimes to tolerate him, but please...just try.”

“You know what, he is a very possessive person even. Once, he got jealous just because I was talking to a boy who joined our school. I was helping him out, and he

got so jealous about that. He doesn't like sharing his things, but he has a heart of gold."

"I don't give up easily," I told him, smiling.

I think I'm going to stick with Jaxon for a long time...

Entering the home, I opted to stroll silently to my bedroom without waking Jaxon because it was about eleven p.m. and I had been out for so long without informing him where I was going that my phone's battery had expired, and I am sure he attempted to contact me.

But my attempt to sneak into my bedroom was foiled when I reached the top of the stairs and saw Jaxon standing there with crossed arms and a furious expression.

"Where were you?" he questioned.

"Um...I was with Kena," I informed him but then remembered it may have sounded like something different to him, so I hastily added, "We were playing games."

"I mean...on the PS4," I repeated since my statements had two meanings.

"What happened to your phone?"

"Its battery has died," I said.

He took a few steps closer to me, "You seem to spend a lot of time with Kena."

"He's my friend! Now don't tell me you are jealous just because I went to his house and I hang out with him, blah...blah...blah."



He went closer, and our closeness was already messing with my thoughts.

“Who said I was jealous?” he said, cocking his head.

“You don’t always have to use the exact words to express your feeling, and you can indirectly express it. And right now, you, Mr. Jaxon Dante, are jealous just because I was with your best friend. Right?”

“You two had dinner together?” He enquired, entirely ignoring what I had stated.

“Yes.”

“Was that a date?”

“You crazy?! Date? Seriously?! He is my friend, Jaxon. F-R-I-E-N-D!”

He studied my face for a few seconds before turning around and walking to his room.

“Why can’t you trust me? I am married to you, and I won’t cheat no matter what!” I said.

He paused in his tracks, took long breaths, and then turned around and approached me.

“It’s not about trust,” he said, his eyes brimming with inscrutable passion.

“But...” he moved closer, “you should remember who you belong to.”

Why can’t he keep some distance?

“Umm...what-whatever,” I mumbled and twisted sideways to get away from him, but

I was quickly pushed up against the wall, my arms held over my head. We were so close that the tips of our noses touched.

Not again!

I felt really hot all of a sudden, and the reason was my spouse, who, if he hadn't been an asshole to me, I would have fallen for him right away.

“What are you doing?”

He dropped his head and buried his nose in the crook of my collar.

“Who do you belong to?” he murmured softly.

I was too astonished to talk; his hot breath on my neck and his lips brushing over my collarbone were driving me insane.

“Vivian, who do you belong to?” he said in an angry tone, although his voice remained low and husky.

I resolved to respond swiftly to him in order to separate myself from him.

“Vivian-” he spoke again, but I stopped him off since I knew what he was about to say.

“You.”

As I spoke, I could feel him smile against my neck, but he didn't pull away; instead, he remained like that for a minute longer, making me lose my composure with each passing minute; he eventually freed my hands locked above my head and lifted his head from my neck.

“Good,” he grinned and then ruffled my hair like I was a child.

“No!” I complained, pulling his hand from my hair since I am usually upset when someone touches my hair.

But it didn’t stop him from ruffling my hair; on the contrary, he ruffled it even more since he knew I was becoming annoyed.

I pouted my lips unhappily, and he halted, his gaze darkening.

“Stop pouting your lips,” he said.

“Why?” Perhaps I know why.

“Just don’t.”

“Afraid to lose control?” I teased him, knowing full well that I was playing with fire.

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He leaned forward, grinning, and added, “Lose control, huh? Actually, you should be the one to be afraid of losing it.”

“Me?...never...”

“How many times do I have to remind you that you are a bad liar?”

“I know how to...not lose control. I never lost it in 27 years of my life.”

He lifted his brow in astonishment, “Don’t tell me you’ve never kissed anyone.”

“I never did,” I said honestly, avoiding eye contact with him.

He put out a tiny giggle, making me irritated.

“There is nothing funny about it!” I folded my arms. He chuckled once more.

“Fine! Laugh at me...I am leaving,” I turned sideways and proceeded to my room.

But before I entered my room, I heard him remark, “For how long can you resist me, Vivian?”

I didn’t respond; I just said goodbye and closed the door.

But really, how long?

Who is waiting for their first kiss? Me: ?

So, I decided to post more frequently because...my exams are coming soon...and I don't want to be bothered when studying.

I looked out the glass wall, down at the roads. I was fatigued, both physically and psychologically.

I've been looking for inner peace and contentment for years, but I haven't found it.

Seven years ago, I desired money, power, and glory. And I hoped that with it, I would find peace, but I was mistaken.

I was still dissatisfied with my life, and now I don't want money.

I've always known what would satisfy me, but I can't seem to locate it. My soulmate is everything I desire and will continue to crave throughout my life.

I strolled up to my desk and took out my old diary, in which I used to write about my love aspirations.

Flickering through the pages, I came upon one in which I had written a little note to my sweetheart. And I read it out quietly:

"To my Soulmate,

I wish I could be in your arms right now, and all other problems would vanish because only you and I would matter, and the storm would calm down because I would find my missing piece because I would find YOU.

I exhaled, smiling at my letter to someone I didn't even know; I had no idea who he was, how he was, or where he was. Did God even make one for me?

The letters and words were ancient, yet they still made sense to me; my partner was all I needed.

And now...I am married to Jaxon. Could he be my soulmate? I thought about it but could not come up with a response.

If my soulmate is out there, he will find me anyway.

A knock on my door interrupted my thoughts as I offered Jona permission to enter.

“You should leave for your meeting,” he reminded me.

“Yeah, thanks.”

Grabbing my bag, I left the office and eventually arrived at one of my restaurants, where I would meet with one of our clients.

With Jona following me, we arrived at a secluded room where our client was already sitting, and the meeting began...

As the meeting concluded, I stood up, shook hands with the client, and exited the restaurant.

As I walked out of the restaurant, I asked Jona, “Where’s the car?”

“I’ll call the driver,” he responded, and after speaking with the driver, he told me that the car would be here in a minute.

“Will you mind if I go get some pantry items? I actually ran out of them,” Jona pleaded with puppy eyes, and I couldn’t say no to him.

“Just give me five minutes,” he said, and I urged him to go.

As he went, I began going up and down the street until I came upon an alley, which stood out because of the faint cries I could hear.

As I moved into the alley, I noticed a tiny girl sitting with her back against the wall, one leg tucked under her, the other spread on the ground.

Her head was down as she wept, wearing a filthy dress with blonde hair.

I approached her gently.

“What happened?” I said, dropping down beside her.

She stopped sobbing and gently lifted her head; tears soiled her cute, innocent face, and those brown eyes looked very familiar.

Her gaze melted my heart, and I wanted to cry when I saw her condition.

“I-I...am lost”, she wailed.

Oh, God.

“And...” she said, “m-my leg...hurts a lot.”

I softly grabbed her cheek and wiped away her tears.

“I’ll send you back home, I promise,” I informed her.

“But my leg... it’s paining.”

I examined her swollen left leg, and when I gently touched it, she winced loudly.

Her leg was sprained.

“Vivian, what—” I heard Jona say from behind me, but he stopped when he saw that female.

I carefully picked her up in my arms, trying not to injure her, and Jona could tell she was hurt.

I carried her to the car and carefully set her down.

“To the hospital, immediately!” I urged the driver while sitting alongside her, and Jona sat in the passenger seat.

“How long has your leg been hurting?” I questioned her.

Sniffing, she murmured, “Since morning.” It was 1 p.m. now; how could she have endured such discomfort for so long?

“What’s your name?”

“Rose.”

“Your full name will help me send you back home.”

“Rose...Adek.”

It cannot be. Jona turned to face me as I spoke her name. I nodded gently to him, and he sat back straight, sighing.



I returned her gaze, “Is your father’s name...Jeff Adek, and your mother’s name, Lilia Adek?”

She nodded eagerly, her eyes light up with enthusiasm, “You know them?”

How the hell could she get lost in Florida while living in Alaska?!

“...yes.”

“You live in Alaska, then how come you got lost here?”

“I came here with my parents two days back. We had to go to the airport for our flight, but the airport was very, very crowded, and before entering the airport, I got lost.”

“Two days?! Did you even eat anything?!”

That was a foolish question.

She began weeping again and shook her head.

I gave her a side hug and informed her that I would bring her home as quickly as possible.

“Jona, find her parents’ phone numbers and inform them that she is with...me and that I will send her home soon,” I told Jona, who nodded.

“She must avoid any major movements for at least two days,” the doctor told me after I wrapped Rose’s leg.

“What about traveling in a plane?”

“It would be better not to travel for a day or two even if you carry her in your arms.”

I nodded at the doctor before exiting the room, where I saw Rose seated on Jona’s lap on a chair.

I gently removed her from his lap and instructed Jona to get some clothing for her.

I cannot picture a six-year-old child surviving on the streets for two days!

I suppose she’ll be staying with me for the time being.

I’ll deal with Jaxon, hopefully.

“Where are we going?” she said as I entered the car.

“To my house,” I said, smiling at her to make her feel at ease.

“But dad-”

I ended our conversation: “The doctor said not to travel, so I can’t send you home right now. You will have to stay with me.”

“Your parents are already informed, and don’t worry, you are safe with me,” said I.

“But...I am hungry.”

I offered her a sorrowful grin and said, “I understand...I will get you fed as soon as we get home.” She nodded in agreement.

It was quiet inside the car until she added, “I think...I have seen you somewhere.”

“Really?”

“You look familiar...” she trailed off, trying to remember.

“Oh! I didn’t even ask your name,” she said innocently, making me giggle.

“My name is Vi...Vivian.”

“Vi.. Vivian?”

“No,” I moaned, “only Vivian.”

“Oh.”

“Is that your house?!” Rose screamed as I got out of the car, holding her in my arms.

“Yes. You like it?”

“I love it!” she said, making me giggle.

I escorted her inside and had her seat on the sofa.

And I went straight into the kitchen to prepare something for her to eat because Jenny had taken the day off.

While I was making Mac and cheese for her, I offered her a packet of chips to chew on.

Jona arrived halfway through the cooking process, and I led her up to my bedroom after telling her to check on the Mac and cheese.

I know I order Jona frequently, but he is much like my sibling and doesn’t like it.

## Page 17

*Source Creation Date: July 3, 2025, 7:14 am*

I helped Rose bathe and clothed her in clean clothing.

Jona had already poured the Mac and cheese into a bowl before I arrived downstairs, and I assisted her in eating.

Rose was sitting on the couch after having a sleep, watching Frozen; it appears that we are both big lovers of the movie.

It was almost 7 p.m., and the day had been long.

The front door opened, and Jaxon entered; I had entirely forgotten about him.

He didn't even notice Rose as he marched up to me and shouted, "You left early, and you didn't..."

He came to a sudden halt when his gaze rested on her, and they both exchanged questioning glances.

"Who's she?!" he yelled at me, dragging me into a corner.

"She got lost, and her leg is sprained, and the doctor said not to travel either, so I can't send her back to her house, which happens to be in Alaska. Please let her stay for a day and two, and then I will send her back, plea—"

"Fine."

He was staring at me intently, and I looked at him with wide eyes; had he really

agreed to me that easily?

“What?”

“I said it’s fine, you can keep her.”

“I thought...you would not like the fact that I brought some girl here...”

“I have a heart, too, Vivian...I am not a monster,” he added quietly.

Kena’s words resonated in my ear: “He has a golden heart.”

“Well...um...thanks.”

I was going to walk, but he held me back and asked, “Why does she resemble your daughter?”

“What part of ‘I haven’t even kissed anyone,’ you don’t understand?!”

He rolled his eyes, “You both have exactly the same eyes.”

“It can be a coincidence.”

Well, that was not a coincidence.

“Whatever,” he said, and I saw him walk over to her.

Thankfully, he agreed.

“Whatever,” he said, and I saw him walk over to her.

Thank God he consented!

I left them alone and went to take a shower.

When I got down to the living room, I saw Jaxon and Rose sitting together on the couch, watching Frozen; their sight warmed my heart. They both looked adorable together, just like father and daughter...wait, what am I thinking?

“I don’t like this guy, Hans,” Rose said, making Jaxon grimace. “Why?”

“Because he is not a good guy...you will see.”

“But he looks good to me. See, he is helping everyone.”

“No. He is not good; he just wants to rule Arendelle.”

I cleared my throat and approached them, asking Jaxon, “Did you make something for dinner?”

“Dinner? Why should I make it?”

“You could have at least made something, Jaxon! I am so tired, and now I will have to make the dinner even!”

“I can’t make dinner unless you want me to burn down the whole kitchen.”

I folded my arms in surprise: “You don’t know how to cook?”

“There is nothing shocking in that.”

“Of course it is,” I said as I sat down on the couch with Rose in between us. “I

wanted my husband to be able to cook.”

“Unfortunately, your husband doesn’t know how to cook; now shut up.”

“Are you both fighting?” Rose questioned quietly, glancing between us with curiosity.

I looked at her, then at Jaxon, and answered softly, “No, we are not fighting.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll order something,” Jaxon explained.

“I’ll eat pizza!” I said, suddenly feeling thrilled.

“Me too!” Rose chimed in, making us both laugh.

“All right,” he murmured, a little smile on his lips as he took out his phone.

“You will be sleeping with me,” I said to Rose as I entered my bedroom, holding her in my arms.

“OK.”

I positioned her on one side of the bed and pulled the blanket over her.

“Vivian?”

“Yes?” I said as I charged my phone.

“You and Jaxon are married, right?” she enquired as I climbed onto the bed and slept alongside her, facing her.

“Yes.”

“Then why are you both sleeping separately?” she enquired innocently, entirely oblivious to our circumstances.

I tried to think of a suitable response, but all I could say was, “I am actually angry with him; that’s why.”

“Oh.”

After some thought, I asked her, “Do you want to talk to your mother?”

“Yes!”

I smiled at her and walked over to my cabinet, pulling out a phone that I only use when I need to contact someone and don’t want that person to have my personal phone number.

It’s fine to chat with Lilia. I continued chanting in my head.

I decided to video contact her and dialed the number Jona had given me.

As soon as the phone began to ring, I handed it to Rose while sitting next to her and watching her to ensure I was not visible during the call.

Lilia answered the phone, her eyes widening with astonishment. “Emm?!”

“Mom!”

“Are you OK? Where are you right now? Did you eat anything?”



I mentally rolled my eyes as she asked questions. Of course, I fed her. If they had been a bit more responsible, she would have joined them.

“Mom, my leg was sprained, but Vivian took me to the hospital and treated it, as you can see,” Rose remarked, exposing her legs.

“And she has such a big house; it even has a swimming pool, and everything here is so beautiful. And we ate pizza, and we all watched Frozen.”

Lilia smiled at her.

I carefully grabbed the phone from her hand and purchased it in front of Lilia, who was taken aback. Even I was surprised since I never expected to talk to her, but then I recalled that my problem was not with Lilia.

“Hello, Lili,” I murmured in a hushed voice.

“Umm...hi, L...I mean Vivian.”

“I just wanted to say that Rose is staying with me for now, and as soon as her leg heals a bit, I will send her back. And don’t tell anyone else that...I talked to you.”

She gave a nudge, “Thank you, Vivian, for keeping her, and if you say, I can come to fetch her myself.”

“No, it’s OK. I will send her along with Jona, my best friend, in my jet. You don’t need to come.”

“As you say. And you look more beautiful now, Vivian.” I smiled back at her and mumbled a quick thank you.

“Does Emm know that you...”

“No, she doesn’t, and I don’t want her to. Bye.” I cut her off and hung up.

I turned off the phone, put it back in the cabinet, and sighed deeply.

I told Rose, “You should sleep now,” and she nodded and lay down.

I slept next to her, turned out the light, and kissed her forehead lightly.

“Goodnight, Rose.”

She yawned, “Goodnight, Vivian.”

I spent most of my morning explaining Rose to Jenny, and it was the weekend, so I was free!

I am aware that I am quite juvenile.

“Can I go somewhere?” Rose said, sitting opposite me at the dining table while Jenny prepared our breakfast.

“No, you cannot go anywhere; you should rest,” she said regretfully.

“But I’ll get bored,” she said.

She is just like me.

“No, you won’t. I am here to entertain you, babe.”

Jenny discreetly served us cheese omelets. And I started eating it while Rose was still

unhappy.

I adore children, but they can be quite demanding of your patience at times.

Jaxon strolled down just then, dressed casually in jeans and a T-shirt. As he stepped into the kitchen, he looked between me, who was eating comfortably, and Rose, who was sitting with her arms folded.

He bent down and asked Rose, “What happened?”

“Vivian said I couldn’t go anywhere,” she said regretfully.

He took a minute to stare at me before returning his gaze to her. “Where do you want to go?”

My jaw fell.

“I am not stupid for not sending her back home because her leg is sprained! And here you are taking her out!”, I spat.

“It’s not like I am sending her to a race or something. We can go to a park, and you can carry her.”

“A park, yay!” she said.

I rolled my eyes and continued eating my meal while Jaxon joined us and talked to her throughout.

In such a case, we may send her back.

“Vivian hurry!” I heard Rose yell as I hurriedly changed into jeans and a crop top.

## Page 18

*Source Creation Date: July 3, 2025, 7:15 am*

I opened the door to find an eager Jaxon and an agitated Rose in his arms.

Walking down the stairs, I told Jaxon, “I also invited Jona and Kena.”

He deadpanned, “We’re going for a stroll, not a picnic.”

“Whatever...the more, the merrier,” I smiled.

“Now, who wants to eat ice cream?” Kena asked everyone as we spread on the bedsheet I had brought along.

“Me!” Jona, Rose, and I yelled in answer.

Rose is quite personable; minutes after meeting Kena, she was talking to him in a way that I had never done before.

“Bring one for Jaxon, too,” I replied, despite the fact that Jaxon had told us he didn’t want to eat.

“I don’t want to eat!” he yelled at me.

“Oh, you will,” I responded, tugging his cheeks, really annoying him.

I grinned at Kena and told him to get one for Jaxon. He winked back and then went to get the ice cream.

Rose wanted Jona to take her around the park, too, when Kena departed, so Jona and

Rose left, leaving only Jaxon and me alone.

Jaxon said, “I can’t believe you turned a simple walk into a family picnic.”

“I just made it better,” I said, rolling my eyes. “You were the one who suggested the park.”

He grumbled something under his breath, and I softly lay down on the sheet with my back to the sky. It felt good, but that feeling only lasted a few seconds since I could smell the smoke from the cigarettes.

I stood up, annoyed, and scowled at Jaxon, who was sitting there smoking and looking at nothing in particular.

But then my eyes softened; he seemed so buried in his thoughts, and I felt bad because I knew who he was thinking about. I wish I could do something.

I quietly called out, “Jaxon?” to get him to stop thinking.

He seemed surprised and said, “Y-yeah?”

I moved closer to him and put my hand on his shoulder. “Are you okay?”

He looked at my hand on his shoulder and then at me. “Of course I’m fine,” he said.

“But you don’t—”

“I’m fine, Vivian.”

I carefully took my hand off his shoulder, feeling sorry that he wouldn’t talk to me.

Kena, Jona, and Rose showed up right then with ice cream cones in their hands.

“Please don’t smoke near her,” I pleaded in a low voice, and he hurriedly threw it away.

Kena gave us our ice cream, and even Jaxon, this time, didn’t complain about not eating it. He just took it.

We all talked to each other while sitting on the sheet, but Jaxon scarcely said anything.

I felt something warm and soft brush my hand at some point, and when I looked down, I saw Jaxon’s hand intertwined with mine. He continued eating his ice cream and looked at Kena, Jona, and Rose, who were talking to each other.

I put my hand in his, and a warm, pleasant smile spread across my face.

I told Rose and Jaxon, who were sitting on the couch watching Frozen two and talking, “It’s almost eleven. Why don’t you both go to bed?”

Jaxon turned off the TV, took Rose up, and went to my room. I followed them.

He gently put her on the bed and kissed her forehead, saying, “Goodnight.”

He said goodbye to me and then left, but Rose stopped him and said, “You didn’t give her a goodnight kiss.”

He looked at her in a strange way before staring at me with my eyes wide open.  
Will he give me a kiss goodnight?

“It’s...o okay, Rose,” I said, trying to make her understand, but she only scowled.

“But why? Dad kisses mum goodnight every day.”

I turned to Jaxon for aid, but he just shrugged and moved closer to me until he was only a few inches away. Then he bent down and kissed my forehead very lightly, letting his lips linger there and making my pulse skip a beat.

He said, “Goodnight, Vivian,” in a low voice before leaving the room.

I got out of the car at the airport, in front of my private plane, with Rose in my arms. She gasped when she saw the jet.

Jaxon stepped out, and then Jona, who would be going with Rose, followed.

“What am I going to do?” she questioned in shock.

“Yes.”

I gave her to Jona, but before that, she gripped me fiercely, throwing her little arms around my neck and burying her head in the crook of my neck.

“I’ll miss you, Vivian,” she said softly, as my eyes filled with tears.

I responded, “I will miss you too, babe,” and ruffled her hair.

“And thank you so, so, so much for looking after me.”

“I liked it. I like kids.”

We kissed one other’s cheeks after she kissed mine.

Then she did the same thing with Jaxon, telling him she would miss him too. He

kissed her cheeks, and she kissed his forehead. Then Jona brought her inside the plane after she waved goodbye to us one more time.

“Why didn’t you go with her?” Jaxon said, moving closer to me. My body tightened at his words.

“I have a lot of work.”

“It’s Sunday.”

“Umm...” I stopped talking and tried to think of an answer.

He replied in a threatening tone, “You do know that most of what you do is very suspicious and questionable.”

“Wh-what do you mean?”

He put his mouth near to my ear and muttered, “Very soon, Vivian.” The way he used my name made me shudder because I knew he was up to something I wouldn’t like.

A few weeks later...

As I walked by Jaxon’s room, I saw that his door was slightly open, and I could hear him talking on the phone.

Why hasn’t he gone yet?

He was meant to go for a dinner meeting, and he should have left by now, or he would be late.

I knocked lightly and stepped inside to find him standing in front of the mirror with a



file in one hand and the phone squeezed between his shoulder and ear as he struggled to button up his white shirt with the other.

He glanced at me for a second, then back to the file he was holding. He was on the phone with his assistant, I think.

He told me, “I’m already late, you better find that file! Look in the cupboard behind my desk.”

He was trying to button his shirt, but he couldn’t because he was complaining.

I stepped up to him, took his hand off, and started buttoning up the shirt myself. He stared down at me in astonishment, but he kept talking.

I saw his body, and the six-packs made my throat dry because he was so hot. I shook my head hastily to get rid of all those ideas.

I gently buttoned up the shirt, starting at the bottom and working my way up to the top button. I also left the button on the collar open.

“Now hurry up and meet me outside the restaurant; I’m leaving in a minute,” he said before hanging up the phone.

I moved over to his bed, where his coat was perfectly folded, and grabbed it up. I stood behind him with the coat in my hand while he placed his hands inside it and adjusted it.

He then went on to fix the collar button that I had left open, but I stopped him and said, “Don’t.”

He glanced at me with confusion and raised an eyebrow.

“It looks better when it’s open,” I said quietly.

He grinned and said, “It? Or me?”

I shrugged my eyes, but I couldn’t stop the blush from creeping up my cheeks. “Whatever.”

But he consented, and while I watched closely, he swiftly put on his shoes and wristwatch.

He didn’t complain when I helped him get dressed. Could it be a sign of improvement in our relationship?

I questioned him, “When will you be back?” as I followed him out of his room.

“Why? Are you going to miss me?” he joked as he went down the stairs.

I said, “Of course not. I was just asking.”

“Late,” he said before leaving the house.

I can’t believe it’s been three months since we got married. Has anything changed? I don’t think so, but Jaxon does see me as his wife now. And he also says he owns me.

He is unusual and bizarre, and sometimes I want to smack him or beat some sense into him, but there is something about him that draws me to him. Maybe it’s how he acted with Rose; he was nice to her. Or maybe the way he held my hand that day.

I thought I only wanted him for s\*x, but there is more to it than that. I know that I will have to spend the rest of my life with him since he is my spouse.

I knew that no matter what, I was wedded to him. As his wife, it's my job to take care of him, even if he doesn't care about me.

I can't deny that I want him. I want him, and I know that he could want me, too, but he's simply terrified. And I'm not the type of person who would push myself on him.

## Page 19

*Source Creation Date: July 3, 2025, 7:15 am*

I want to make sure that I fix his bond with Kena and get him to stop smoking while I'm with him. And, of course, you should find out why this marriage is happening. How can I not remember that? That question has been bothering me since the beginning.

But I still need to be at least a friend to him...

It was midnight, and Jaxon still hadn't come back. He should have come back a few hours ago, but he didn't.

I was starting to worry...

I was going to call him again because he didn't answer my phone, but then I heard the front door open and then slam shut.

I saw a Jaxon heading up the stairs with disheveled hair and the first few buttons of his shirt undone when I left my room. He seemed unhappy...

When he walked by, I said, "Jaxon?" but he didn't look at me.

He sat on the bed and looked down at the floor as I followed him into his room. I sat next to him.

"Why are you...here?" he said in a drunken voice.

He was inebriated.

I questioned, “Did you drive yourself?”

He glanced at me and said, “No, I called Jack.” Jack was his driver.

“That’s good.”

He was inebriated, but not too much. He looked to be in control.

I cautiously reached out and caressed his cheeks, which made his whole body stiffen, but I didn’t stop cupping his cheek.

I enquired very quietly, “What’s wrong?”

He glanced at me with perplexity, then closed his eyes for a time. The scowl on his face went away, but only for a second before it came back when he opened his eyes.

He gently took my hand off his cheek and said, “Nothing.”

I brushed my fingers through his smooth, soft hair to make it a little neater. “I am your wife, so you can tell me,” I said.

He let out a big sigh.

I carefully leaned my head against his forearm while I was seated next to him.

He suddenly said, “You are too good for me, Vivian,” which surprised me. I looked up at him, and he was staring at me so intensely that I melted.

“You are too good,” he continued again. “I don’t deserve you. You don’t deserve to be in a marriage like this. You have such a wonderful heart. Why can’t you hate me? And why can’t I hate you too?”

“I keep hurting you, and you keep coming back...”

He looked at me with a storm in his eyes. He could be drunk a lot, or else he wouldn't say those things while he's sober.

“You—” he started again, but I stopped him.

“Shhh...go to sleep, Jaxon,” I said, keeping my finger on his lips. I'm worried he'll say something he regrets.

He took off his coat and then began to unbutton his shirt, but his hands were shaking so much that I helped him take it off.

His biceps, abs, and muscles, oh God!

He stood up and unbuckled his trousers. I hurriedly shielded my eyes and said, “You can't change here!”

He didn't listen to me, though, and took it off as I glanced through my hand and saw him standing there in his boxers.

Oh my God!

I stood up and walked towards the door, keeping my eyes on the floor. Just as I was about to open it, he shouted, “Stay.”

“But—”

“Please.”

Can you believe that Jaxon Dante said please to me? Okay, maybe I'm overreacting.

He lay down on one side of the bed, and as I was still standing there, he patted the spot next to him.

I gulped and got into the duvet next to him, my heart racing.

I turned my back to him, but the next thing I knew, he had his arm around my waist and was pulling me into his rock-hard chest. He then buried his face in the crook of my neck.

I was so astonished by what he did that I was going to ask him about it, but then I heard him snoring softly.

How could he fall asleep so quickly?

I have no idea what will happen tomorrow when he is sober and knows what occurred today.

Please, God, help me!

The sun was shining right on my face, and I sighed. Who the heck took down the curtains?

I opened my eyes in anger, and then I yelled.

When I opened my eyes, I saw Jaxon lying next to me with his elbow propped up, staring at me with a scowl. His hair appeared moist, so it seemed like he had already had a bath. Why didn't he wake me up earlier?

"Could you please tell me what you're doing in my room?" he requested.

"Especially, what are you doing on my bed?" he said.

I got up upright while he was still lying there and said, “Um...you were drunk last night...”

“So, you used me?”

I couldn’t believe it. “What?! No, of course not!”

“Then?”

“You made me stay with you,” I murmured, looking down.

He doesn’t remember anything, and what if he doesn’t trust me?

He sat up and replied, “You could have left anyway.”

I got out of bed and ran my fingers through my hair. “But you insisted.”

He got up, too. “But it wasn’t like I handcuffed you or anything. You could have left. Or you could have left after I fell asleep.”

“I thought about it, but you had a strong hold on me, and if I had left, you would have woken up.”

“So what?”

“What do you mean by ‘so what’? You were sleeping, and I didn’t want to wake you up, and... that’s all.”

He stepped over and crossed his arms. “It wasn’t that big of a deal. I wouldn’t have killed you or anything if I had woken up.”

“You looked really sad, Jaxon. And—”



“Why didn’t you just leave me alone?”

I stopped. Jaxon is very different when he’s drunk and when he’s sober. Drunk Jaxon wanted me to remain, but sober Jaxon wanted to know why I didn’t leave him alone.

“Because...” I stopped talking, which made him frown.

“Why?”

“Because I care about you, Jaxon.”

The frown went away, and now he was just gazing at me. His expression was blank as if he couldn’t understand anything that I said or did.

He turned around and didn’t look me in the eye. He turned his back to me and replied, “I never asked you to care for me.”

I was shocked when he said that. It destroyed my heart. I didn’t want him to care for me, too; I only wanted him to know that I did. All he had to say was, “I never asked you to care about me.”

“That doesn’t matter, Jaxon. You’re my husband, and I just care about you. It doesn’t matter if you asked me or not.”

“Leave me alone.”

That was it; I left his room right away.

Why Jaxon why? Why don’t you want me to take care of you? Can I fix you?

Again.

He ignored me again. As soon as the meeting was over, he went without even looking at me. He doesn't continually gaze at me, but he does know who I am.

He hasn't talked to me in a week. He avoided me ever since the day I left his room. He goes to work much earlier than I do, and I have to go to work alone. He gets home extremely late. And if he gets home early and has to have supper with me, he simply sits there quietly and focuses on the food.

*Source Creation Date: July 3, 2025, 7:15 am*

Was it making me feel bad? Yes, of course!

I can't believe he didn't say a thing to me the whole week! He could have recalled what he said to me that day while he was intoxicated, but it wasn't a huge issue. I wasn't judging him.

I had to phone Kena and seek aid since I had no other choice.

I phoned him from my workplace and said, "Hello?"

"Hey, Vivian! How's it going?"

"I am fine, Kena. I hope I didn't bother you," I murmured in a hushed voice.

"Of course not! What happened?"

I said, "Jaxon... he's not talking to me."

"Okay, do you know why?"

I told him everything that occurred that day. When I was done, he let out a big sigh and said, "I understand, Vivian. If you want him to talk to you, you have to make him. He won't start a conversation on his own. Just go bother him, trouble him, and make him talk."

"I'll try, but what he said that day wasn't a big deal, Kena. And when I told him I cared about him later, he looked scared, like he was afraid of something."

“I can’t say anything, Vivian, because if Jaxon finds out about this, our friendship will be even worse than it already is.”

“Do you know why?”

“I do. I’ve known him since the day we were born. He’s just scared…”

“Why are you afraid?”

“Bye, Vivian.”

“But—” I couldn’t finish my statement because he hung up the phone.

Why won’t anyone just tell me the truth? I put my hands on my head.

Jona came in through the door and sat down in the chair next to my desk.

“What happened now?”

I took my head out of my hands and made a pout, and tears started to gather in the corners of my eyes.

I’m an extremely emotional person.

Jona came next to me in a flash, holding me while I sat.

“I still can’t find him, Jona,” I said, as a single tear fell down my face.

Jona swiftly wiped away that tear, and I sniffed and wiped my eyes with the back of my hand.

Jona perched on the desk and looked at me with interest.

“I don’t want to talk to him,” I said, folding my hands. I saw that Jona was smiling a little.

“You think it’s funny?” I yelled.

He shook his head and said, “Nope. The funny thing is that my best friend is really falling for someone.”

I kept saying in my brain, “No, I’m not falling for him.”

“Stop being silly! I’m not falling for Jaxon.”

He laughed and replied, “I never said Jaxon’s name. I just said, someone.”

Damn it!

“Go away!” I shouted, my cheeks getting hot.

He laughed even harder as he got up from the desk. He added with a dreamy look in his eye, “Vivian is falling in love...”

“I don’t want to fall in love with him!”

“Don’t plan who you’ll fall in love with. Let your heart decide, not your mind.”

“Stop those love ideas right now!”

“They’re true, believe it or not. And I know more about love than you do.”

I rolled my eyes and said, “You can’t even get a girlfriend.”

“Vivian, you’re changing the subject.”

I grinned and said, “Oh, am I?”

But then I discovered something and hit him in the arms. I whispered-shouted, “You idiot! His office is right next to mine. What if he heard us talking?!”

“Don’t worry. I saw him leave work for a reason.”

“Thank God!” I said with relief.

After a few seconds of stillness, Jona said, “Should we go out for lunch or something tomorrow?”

“Sorry, Jona, but I have to take care of something important.”

He frowned and made a pout to make it look more dramatic. I grabbed his cheeks and said, “Get yourself a girlfriend, bro.” He was really sweet.

And his frown got even deeper, which made me giggle.

Mr. Jaxon Dante was ready to leave the home in the middle of the day, but I had other intentions.

“Jaxon?” I yelled as I ran down the stairs and reached him just as he was about to answer the door.

He didn’t talk to me, but this time he had to.

“Jaxon, listen,” I whispered as I grabbed his arms. He already looked angry.

I stood in front of him and blocked the door. “Why are you ignoring me?”

Not paying attention.

“What did I do?”

He turned his head away from me so I couldn’t see him.

“Come on, Jaxon! Stop acting like a kid. You say I’m acting like a kid, but right now, you are acting like one.”

When he didn’t answer, I said, “Okay... I’m sorry. I don’t even know why you’re mad at me, but I’m sorry. Just stop ignoring me, or else I’ll keep bothering you for the rest of your life until you beg me to leave you, and I won’t leave you.”

His eyes sparkled with laughter. Maybe my acting is working.

Finally, he murmured, “I’m getting late,” and gently moved me away from the door.

“Where are you going?” I asked, but he wouldn’t respond.

When I saw him head towards the garage without looking at me, I whimpered, “Aargh!”

I believed he was talking to me!

I felt he wanted me to bother him right away, and he asked me to do so.

I hurriedly grabbed the keys to my car and started the motor of my Aston Martin before I started to pursue him.

But I lost him as he rounded the corner.

I pulled over to the side of the road and contacted his driver. “Do you know where Jaxon is going right now?”

“He has to be going to the...hospital.”

“Hospital? Why? Just tell me where the hospital is.”

I started driving towards the address his driver gave me. It was a place for people with cancer to get care. I think the Dante Industry constructed it, and that’s what I recall.

I spotted Jaxon’s car parked at the hospital as soon as I got there. He got out of his car just after I parked mine.

He had a bundle of balloons in one hand and a bag that seemed full of toys and candy in the other. That was quite strange.

When I got out of the car and hurried up to him, he looked surprised to see me.

“What are you doing here?” he said between clenched teeth.

“I can ask you the same thing.”

“Vivian, come back!”

“Look, we’re in public, and if someone sees us fighting in the street, just think about how bad your reputation will be.”

He clenched his teeth and grumbled under his breath as he started to move inside. I stepped next to him.



I inquired, “Who are these balloons for?” when we got into the lift.

“Someone.”

I elbowed him in the chest and said, “Don’t be a jerk. Tell me!”

He scowled at me for a moment, then his expression softened. He cleared his throat and looked forward. “You will see.”

The lift dinged, and we got out. I followed him to a ward that I soon learned was for kids with cancer.

The ward’s walls were adorned with bright cartoons, and my heart hurt when I saw perhaps 10 to 12 kids there.

When we pushed open the glass door, everyone turned to look at us and shouted, “Jaxon is here!”

And in a flash, Jaxon was on the floor, and all the kids ran up to him and hugged him in a big group.

He has been here before.

It was the first time in my life that I saw him grin, not just a little smile or a smirk, but a big smile with his lovely teeth showing. He seemed younger, happier, and more carefree. His grin was so lovely and sweet that it made my heart melt.

The image in front of me made my heart feel even better. Jaxon gave everyone a few balloons along with the presents and candy he bought.

A big smile sprang to my face without me wanting it to.

“Nice to meet you, Mrs. Dante,” a nurse suddenly said next to me.

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I smiled and said, “Nice to meet you, too.”

I looked at him again and saw him seated on the floor with his legs crossed, surrounded by kids who were no older than 10.

The nurse remarked, “He comes here every month.”

“And every time he gives them toys, candy, or whatever else the kids want, she said.

“The nicest part is that he is paying for everyone’s therapy.”

“Everyone? You mean the whole hospital?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t know why the media says he’s a cold-hearted person. He’s so kind and generous.”

I couldn’t help but feel a big amount of affection for my husband, who was sitting there with the kids, talking and laughing. “A heart of gold,” Kena said again and again.

I proceeded carefully towards him, and as I got to him, everyone stared at me with interest.

“Who’s she?” a girl of five years old whispered to Jaxon.

When he saw me, Jaxon’s smile dimmed a little, and he told the girl, “She’s my

wife.”

I don’t know why, but it made me feel nice when he called me his wife.

The girl became enthusiastic and said, “Your wife?! She is so beautiful!”

I could still hear Jaxon say, “I know,” even though he murmured.

And then his cheeks turned a little pink. Is he blushing?

She came towards me when I crouched down to her level.

“Hi, my name is Nana,” she said in a kind way.

“Hi, Nana. My name is Vivian. You are very cute.” I reached out my hand to shake hers, and she carefully shook mine.

“Thanks.”

At that moment, all the other kids came up to me and introduced themselves one by one. They were all really nice.

As we stood up to go, one of the youngsters, Joseph, said, “Will you come again?”

“Yes, we will,” Jaxon said to him.

We said farewell to each and every one of them.

I sat in the passenger seat of Jaxon’s car and ordered my driver to pick up my car when I left the hospital.

As Jaxon drove, he still had a slight smile on his face, and I sat there and admired

him. It wasn't his looks that made him who he was. Anyone who thinks he is arrogant should see this side of him.

I called him arrogant and a lot of other things, but I learned that he is so lovely inside. He doesn't reveal this part of himself to me; he always appears cold and cruel, but I know that deep down, he cares. He cares about everyone, even if he doesn't express it.

"Do you want me to send you to a mental hospital?" he abruptly said. "You've been staring at me with a stupid smile on your face for the past two minutes."

"I was just admiring you," I said honestly.

He looked at me and then back at the road. "I know I'm very handsome, thank you."

I rolled my eyes and said, "Not your looks, stupid. You should admire someone for their inner beauty, not their outer beauty."

"Don't say you like me."

I laughed and said, "Never. Why should I fall for you? There are better men out there."

"You can't fall for anyone else while you're married to me," he said, clenching his teeth.

I answered, "Yeah...yeah...I know. It's so sad that I can't fall in love with anyone." This made him angrier.

"Are you jealous, Mr. Jaxon Dante?" I said when he didn't answer. "I can smell something burning."

He looked adorable with his nose pinched, and his eyebrows furrowed. “I’m not jealous!”

I said, “Oh, I know you are.”

He pulled over, and I noticed we were already home.

Before I got out of the car, I turned to him and kissed his cheeks, which surprised him. “You look cute when you’re jealous.”

I got out of the automobile after that.

He didn’t realize that he was the only one I wanted to fall for.

Bored.

I was very bored because it was Sunday and I had nothing to do. My husband was in his study, as he always is. Doesn’t he get tired?

Thank goodness he was chatting to me now, or otherwise, I would have to bother him even more.

After tossing and turning in bed for another minute, I decided to get Jaxon up and take him out for lunch or something.

I walked up to his study, knocked on the door, and went in. He was sitting in a chair with a laptop in front of him.

The spectacles he was wearing made him appear incredibly gorgeous, which was the best thing about him.

He looked at me for a second and then went back to work.

I questioned him, “Are you working?” but I shouldn’t have since he answered, “No, I’m dancing.”

I rolled my eyes.

I came up and leaned on his desk. “You work all the time; let’s go somewhere. I’m getting bored.”

“Don’t you have a job?”

“Please, I don’t work on Sundays. I’m not an idiot.”

He arched an eyebrow and said, “Are you calling me dumb?”

“Yes, I am. What are you going to do?”

“Are you really curious?”

His question made me pay attention: “Yes...no...”

He stood up quickly, took off his spectacles, and as soon as he stepped towards me, I shouted and rushed for the door.

He looked after me, and just as I was about to open the door to my room, he picked me up and slung me over his shoulder.

“Uh oh, someone is in trouble,” he replied with a smile before taking me back to his study.

He closed the door to his study and set me down, then pushed me against the door.

“You were saying?” he questioned, edging closer until there was almost no space between us.

He softly gripped my bare bicep and began to stroke circles with his thumb.

Don’t wear garments without sleeves around him.

“Speak,” he murmured, getting closer to my face. I closed my eyes.

“No-nothin-g,” I stammered.

“Nothing?” He spoke in a low voice, and I could feel his breath on my lips as his lips lingered over mine.

He bent down, and I could feel his lips on my neck.

“Vivian, your feistiness is messing with my mind,” he said against my neck. Then I felt his lips on the back of my neck. He then ran his lips up and down my neck, kissing me all over and making my legs go numb. He gave me a kiss.

Beneath my ear, I softly nipped the flesh, and I couldn’t help but whimper, which made me wince.

I could feel him smile, and then he drew away, leaving me breathless.

“Did I leave you all hot and bothered, Mrs. Dante?” he said with a sneer.

I said “arsehole” under my breath, then walked out of the study and slammed the door. I could hear him giggle.



I yelled at Jona and Kena, who were laughing loudly after I told them what had happened in the last several days, “This isn’t funny, guys! Stop it!”

We were in a café right now, drinking our coffee. Because my spouse wouldn’t go anyplace with me, I had to phone them.

“And she says she doesn’t love him,” Kena said, which made me grimace even more.

“I was just impressed by what he did. If I admire someone, it doesn’t mean I love them.”

“But you care about him too, and you were so upset when he didn’t talk to you,” Jona replied.

“Since he is my husband...”

“About a month ago, you didn’t care about your husband,” Jona replied.

“The thing is, I’ve spent some time with him, and I know him. That’s why I care about him. And Jona, you know how easily I get attached to people.”

“Whatever...” Jona said, rolling his eyes.

“But,” Kena replied, “you will fall in love with him sooner or later.”

I know that I will fall in love with him deep down. That concept worried me.

I’m a strange person. If you leave me with a man and tell me I have to fall in love with him in two weeks, I will. You know what? I’ll fall in love with him in about a week.

I know I'm nuts.

The phone that was on the table rang, and the screen flashed up with Jaxon's name. And a picture I shot of us together recently showed up.

When they saw it, Jona and Kena looked at each other, and I stared at them.

I answered the phone and said, "Hello?"

"Vivian?"

"Yes?"

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“Where are you?”

“Um...in the café with Kena and Jona. I told you I was going.”

“Are you sure you’re not alone with Kena?”

“What the hell, Jaxon? What does that mean?”

“First, you wouldn’t come with me, and now that I’m out with them, you’re not sure about me!” I said.

“Don’t worry, I was just kidding, dear.”

Darling.

“Very funny,” I said as I rolled my eyes.

“But come back home soon. Bye.”

“Okay, okay. Bye,” I murmured as I hung up the phone.

Kena said, “It looks like someone was jealous.”

“He’s an asshole. He’s jealous of you and thinks we’re dating.”

Kena and Jona both chuckled. Kena moved in closer and added, “Vivian, you are like my sister.”

“Yeah, I know.”

“But why isn’t he also jealous of Jonah?” Kena wondered.

“Because he knows he’s like my brother, and he even walked me down the aisle.”

“Oh.”

“Don’t tell me you’re watching this movie again,” Jaxon sighed as soon as he walked into the living room and spotted me watching Frozen.

“What’s wrong with it? I love Frozen.”

“But you should have been asleep by now. You have work tomorrow.”

“Stop acting like my dad. You have work tomorrow, too.”

“I know that.”

“Then I also know that.”

I looked away from the movie to see that his jaws were tight.

What makes him so angry?

With a sigh, I stood up and walked up to him. I stood on my toes and put my arms around his neck.

“Mr. Dante, stop getting mad over little things. It’s not good for your health.”

I pressed my nose against his with that.

What am I doing?

He seemed astonished by what I did, and I was too. I kissed his cheeks and said, “Goodnight,” and then I left him standing there, confused.

The next day...

When I knocked on his bedroom door, Jaxon opened it.

I questioned him, “Don’t you want to eat?”

“I am not hungry,” he said, which made me frown.

“Okay, did you eat lunch?”

“Yes, I did.”

“And—”

He stopped me off and said, “I’m busy, Vivian.”

“Okay...”

I returned to my room. He merely gets chilly when I indicate that I care about him. Kena claimed he was scared, but what was he scared of? When someone cares about you, it doesn’t scare you; it feels nice. But he was Jaxon Dante.

And maybe it was still too early for dinner. It was just eight o’clock, but Jenny made supper early tonight, so I thought I’d have dinner early, but he doesn’t seem to like to eat early.

You still need to learn a lot about him.

Around 9, I heard a big noise that sounded like something dropped down, or maybe a lot of stuff fell down.

I hurriedly left my room and went to Jaxon's room to see if he was there, but he wasn't. I then walked towards his study. When I got there, I saw that all of the paperwork on his desk was on the floor, along with the pens and even his laptop. He was standing there, leaning on the desk and attempting to calm himself.

Why did he get so upset and chuck everything?

I knew it wasn't the proper moment to ask him questions because he might toss me, too, so I just moved closer and bent down to pick up the objects.

"Leave it," he responded in a remarkably calm voice.

But I was too obstinate to pay attention to him.

I ignored him and picked up a few files, put them back on his desk, and then leaned down to get more.

"Go away, Vivian," he said again, this time in a low, annoyed voice.

Did I pay attention to him? No, of course not.

When I put another stack of paperwork on his desk, he lost it.

He yelled, "Get the hell out of here!" and that was enough to make me jump back in dread. I have seen him mad before, but this was nothing like that. His eyes were red.

I glanced at him with wide eyes because I was so afraid, and before I realized it, tears were welling up in my eyes.

I had only one tear on my face as I ran out of his study before I could cry more in front of him. But I noticed a look of remorse cross his face first.

It seemed like hours of crying while I lay on my bed. He had shouted at me before, but this time, it was too much. He sounded so menacing.

I didn't even say anything; I was just scooping up his stuff.

I guess I should have just gone when he ordered me to and not touched anything. But then again, it wasn't that big of an issue.

I got up and walked to the balcony for some fresh air once my tears dried.

I stood there for a while, buried in my thoughts, and I didn't even hear the door to my room open.

I recognized it when Jaxon arrived and stood next to me softly.

I thought about leaving right away, but what he said stunned me.

"I'm sorry."

I couldn't believe what I heard, so I turned to him and said, "What?"

He said, "I'm not saying that again now," which made me mad.

Why can't he put his ego aside for a while?

“Then keep this up, and I won’t accept your apology.” I went to go, but Jaxon pulled me back.

In a flash, he pushed me against the railing with both of his arms around me.

He was too near for my comfort.

He looked at me in a way that made me swallow, and I bit my lip. He looked down at my lips for a few seconds, and when he looked up, his eyes were so black. He softly held my neck, with his thumb resting exactly below my ear.

He glanced at my lips again, and I licked them without meaning to. His eyes moved back and forth between my lips and eyes, and before I realized it, he kissed me hard.

Fireworks.

That’s how I felt when I could feel his lips on mine, kissing me hard but with passion. I could feel the butterflies in my tummy when I finally kissed someone for the first time.

He held my waist tightly while I ran my fingers through his hair.

I could taste the cigarette, but it didn’t matter. Nothing mattered because his lips were so soft and sweet on mine. It felt like I was in heaven.

At first, I couldn’t move because I was so frightened and surprised by what had occurred. But then he squeezed my waist, and I gasped, and he seized that chance to put his tongue in my mouth.

We wrestled for control of our tongues, but he wouldn’t let me win. Instead, he licked every inch of my mouth.



But just as suddenly as the kiss began, it ended as he pulled away, making me sigh because I missed the touch.

I had never seen Jaxon look like that before. He was standing there with disheveled hair and swollen lips, breathing rapidly, and his face showed confusion, amazement, and disbelief. I was out of breath, too.

He couldn't believe what had just transpired or how he had lost control. Jaxon Dante, who usually knew what he was going to do next, seemed really perplexed and didn't know what to do next.

After looking at each other in disbelief, Jaxon turned around and walked away.

That kiss felt like a fantasy.

I think he shouldn't have kissed me since he is neglecting me again. He could be angry because he couldn't resist, or there might be another reason.

But the truth is that I'm ignoring him, too. A little bit since that kiss made things really awkward; even if we're married, our marriage was simply for our businesses. Even though it wasn't in the contract, I created certain restrictions for myself that said we couldn't be emotionally or physically involved with one other. I absolutely broke that, and he did, too.

He hasn't talked to me in four days, and I've only been fantasizing about that kiss since then. I could still feel it. Not that I'm complaining, but that was one of the nicest feelings ever.

Do I want to kiss him again? Of course.

I told Jona and Kena about the kiss, and they looked blank for a second before

assaulting me with questions like, “Did he start it?” “How did it feel?” and “Was it slow or rough?” Seriously?

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Who asks these kinds of questions? My pals are nuts!

Their inquiries made me so ashamed that I became crimson, and then they started their drama again, saying, “Vivian is falling in love.”

I’m not in love! ...Or maybe I am? No, no, I’m not in love! I am not sure what will happen if I fall in love with him and tell him, as he can make a big deal out of a kiss.

But would he ever love me back, even if I fell in love with him?

“You are worthless!” My father’s scream rang in my ears, and tears started to well up in my eyes.

My brother said, “You are nothing but a burden,” and a tear fell from my eye.

My mum added, “We have to buy you medicine so you don’t get worse, and then we’ll have to take you to the hospital and pay the bills. They are so expensive these days.” More tears started to pour.

“Stop wasting my money. You’re good for nothing. You just waste my money,” Father said.

“Such low grades? What will everyone think? Why can’t you be like your brother and stop being a disgrace?” he yelled.

“Sometimes it seems like God sent you into our lives just to get back at us. You are a punishment for us,” Mom stated.

“Stop smiling. What are you so happy about?”

“Everyone said, “You don’t deserve this family’s name! You’re not worth it.”

“Can’t you be quieter and stop being so rude? Your father will be ashamed to call you his daughter,” Mom said. I was already weeping.

“Why send you to school? You don’t even study right, and you’re just wasting your father’s money.”

How can someone love me? Why would anyone love someone who is useless?

I can’t expect Jaxon to love me back, and it would be best if I didn’t fall in love with him, either.

I adore him, too.

I walked to Jaxon’s door at 10 at night because I wanted him to talk to me.

I knocked again and didn’t get an answer, so I carefully opened the door and found the room vacant.

He has to be in his office.

I was going to close the door, but something on the nightstand made me stop. A frame for a picture. Why didn’t I see this before?

Because I’m a curious person, I went over and picked it up.

Jaxon’s image showed him as a teenager with his arms around the shoulders of a girl his age.

I gasped when I saw the picture of the girl. For a second, I believed it was me, but

then I saw that it was someone else who looked like me. Was she my doppelganger? She had the same hair, eyes, and facial form as myself.

Who is she? Is she Julia?

She didn't look precisely like me, but for a second, anyone could have thought she was me.

I took the picture frame and headed to Jaxon's study. As usual, he was working when I got there.

When he noticed me, he turned his focus back to his laptop, but then something must have hit him because he turned his head towards me and got up right away.

"Where did you get that frame?"

"I went to look for you and found it in your room," I said.

"Is she—" I couldn't finish my statement because he took the frame from my fingers and looked at it closely.

I eventually enquired, "Is she Julia?"

He turned around and went to his desk, where he kept the frame in the drawer.

I murmured quietly as I walked closer to him, "She looks like me."

"Please, tell me...is she Julia?" I pleaded again, and he finally looked at me.

"Yes," he said, his voice barely above a whisper.

“And why does she look like me? Do you know? For a second, I thought it was me.”

He looked down and wouldn't answer me.

Then, like a flash of lightning, it hit me: “Is she the reason you married me? Because I look like her?”

His eyes met mine, and a whirlwind of feelings surged inside them.

“Please tell me, Jaxon! How long will you keep it a secret? I know that merging the company wasn't your only goal,” I begged.

His face shifted from calm to furious, which terrified me, but I didn't show it.

He stepped up to me and grabbed both of my wrists. He gazed at me like he could see straight into my soul.

“And what about all those secrets that are buried inside you?” he said, making me quiver beneath his piercing gaze. “Because I know you are not the Vivian Hayes that the world knows you to be.”

I felt a chill go down my spine. “What are you talking about?”

He grinned wickedly and said, “You know exactly what I'm talking about, Clara Adek.”

My mind and body stopped working. How the hell did he find out about it?

“Am I right, Clara?”

“Don't call me that!” I yelled.

“Why? Isn’t that your name, Clara?”

“That’s not my name! My name is Vivian Hayes!”

“Lie; you’ve been lying about yourself for the past seven years. It’s hard to believe that you’ve been running your business under a fake name, Clara.”

“Please stop! I don’t like that name. Please don’t call me that.”

“You never heard me call you that before. And trust me, from now on, that’s all I’m going to call you.”

I was already crying. No one has been able to discover this for seven years, yet this man accomplished it in less than four months. Wow.

I asked him, “How did you find out? I did everything I could to keep it a secret.”

“I think this is going to be a long talk. We should sit down, right?” He smiled.

He pulled me to the couch and had me sit down next to him, so I had to do as he said.

He questioned, “Why are you crying?” as he saw the tears on my face.

He seemed worried and reached in to wipe my tears with his thumb.

He said to himself, “Oh, God!”

“Clara, stop crying.”

I brushed away my tears and looked down, sniffing. I don’t know what will happen if he knows it now.

He repeated, “Look at me,” but I remained gazing at the floor. He carefully put his hands around my neck and moved my head towards him, raising my chin with his fingers.

He eventually added, “I’m not going to tell the media about this.” His voice was calm, and I felt a wave of relief rush over me.

I looked into his eyes and knew he wasn’t lying.

I mumbled, “Thank you.”

“But why did you do all this?”

“First, tell me how you found out about this.”

He sighed and said, “I’ve been suspicious of you since the day I came to invite you to my parents’ house. You got so nervous talking about your parents. If they had died, you could have easily admitted it, but they are still alive.”

After we got married, I heard you and Jonah bickering in your office one day.

“But that was just a regular talk.”

He smiled and said, “That’s where you’re wrong. It wasn’t a normal conversation. The great Vivian Hayes, or should I say the great Vivian Hayes Dante, who is one of the most ‘humble’ people, was refusing to meet someone who had been trying to reach her for years. Isn’t that strange?”

I mentally slapped myself in the face for being so dumb.

He asked, “They were your parents, right?” and I slowly nodded.



“And that girl, Rose, was—”

“I said, “My niece,” and that was all I had to conceal.

“And you knew that.”

“Not at first, but when she told me her full name, and I asked about her parent’s name, I knew she was my niece. That’s why our eyes looked so much alike.”

“Yeah, I got it.”

“And now...why did you change your identity?” he said.

“To be honest, my reason for changing my identity isn’t that big. It wasn’t big enough for me to leave my home, which is why I’m not telling you.”

“Do you think I will find your reason funny?”

“Maybe...”

“Stop the drama and tell me.”

“I was tired. I was tired of my family. They always made fun of me for being useless, a burden to them, and wasting their money. For six years, I heard the same things over and over again. I wasn’t a stupid 12-year-old girl who could ignore what they said. At fifteen, I decided to run away a few years later. The only reason I was still with them was for money.”

Jaxon looked at me with interest, so I kept going. “They didn’t treat me like a maid, but they also didn’t treat me like their daughter. They took care of me, but only because they didn’t want me to get sick enough to go to the hospital and have to pay

the bills. I had a place to live and food to eat, but I never got any attention.”

I finally got into college, and as soon as the last exams were over, I left a letter for them and ran away from the hostel. I had already saved up a lot of money, so I used that. Later, I changed my whole identity so that the cops or my family wouldn't be able to find me easily. I changed my look a little; I used to have platinum blonde hair, but I dyed it and took off my glasses. I did everything I could to stay away from them. Then, I finished my studies while working a lot of part-time jobs. Once, the cops found me, but they couldn't make a 21-year-old girl go back home; I was old enough to make my own decisions.

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I stopped because Jaxon was staring at me.

I questioned him, “What?”

“Are you kidding me?”

I rolled my eyes and said, “No, I hate my family. All they cared about was money. And I was the one who wasted their so-called hard-earned money.”

But what is my net worth right now? \$50 billion. I’m the sixth richest person in the world. They should have learned their lesson by now.

“What did you say in that letter you left?”

“I wrote that I’m not going to die (not that they care) and that I might come back...exactly seven years from today.”

“You said you’d go back?”

“I said I might, and that’s why I put the word “might” in double-quotes.”

“So, you’re not going back?”

“Of course not.”

“And when is that date?”

“Just a month later, on July 20,” I said.

“Isn’t that your birthday?”

“Yes.”

He fell back on the couch and rubbed his temples as if all of this knowledge was too much for him to handle. “God! I married a crazy woman. You ran away at 20 and are now the sixth richest person in the world at almost 28. Unbelievable!”

I can’t believe it.

He sat up straight again and asked, “What about your friends? You must have friends?”

And that question made me sad since my buddies were like family to me. My four dearest pals were always there for me, and I abandoned them all.

“Yes, I did. My four best friends were Rick Caston, Tara Biden, Tyler Andy, and Sam Kian. I loved them, but I had to leave them. I still keep an eye on them. Tara and Tyler are in Florida, and Rick and Sam are in Alaska.”

“Don’t you miss them?”

“I miss them the most.”

“And you still aren’t going back.”

“Let’s not talk about it. I don’t know what to say.”

I sat back and placed my head on the couch, scratching my temples. That’s when I

recalled.

I sat up straight and told him, “I told you everything, Jaxon, and now you have to tell me everything, too.”

His whole body got stiff, and his teeth clinched.

“I don’t want to,” he said.

“That’s not fair! You made me tell you everything, and now you’re not ready to tell your side of the story!”

“Don’t make me!” he yelled.

I jumped up violently and said, “I knew it!” Then, I marched out of the room.

I told him everything, even things that only Jona knew.

I sat on the side of my bed with my arms crossed. Why can’t he say? I realize it’s hard for you to talk about someone who died and was so close to him, but I need to know why this marriage happened.

I could tell it was Jaxon when the door to my room opened because of his scent. I didn’t even glance back at him.

He came and sat next to me on the edge of the bed, and we didn’t say anything.

He said, “Julia Steiner...she was my best friend,” with his head down a minute later.

I gazed up at him as he kept looking down at the ground.

He went on, “Julia, Kena, and I grew up together. Our families were friends, and so were we. We were inseparable and went to the same school. We used to study and play together. I had everything I ever wanted. My father was a billionaire, and I had great friends.”

He took a deep breath and said, “When I was about to turn eighteen, I started to fall in love with Julia. Before I knew it, I was in love with her; it wasn’t just a crush. I loved her but was afraid to tell her because I knew it would ruin our friendship, so I never did. Months went by, and it was hard for me to see her talking and flirting with other boys.”

As I watched him sadly, he ran his fingers through his hair.

“One day, when she came over to my house, I told her everything. I told her how I felt about her and that I loved her.”

When he didn’t go on, I questioned, “What did she say?”

He looked up at me and let out a low, thin laugh. That’s when I saw that his eyes were moist.

“The way she reacted was to be expected. She got upset and stated we couldn’t be together. When I attempted to explain, she got angry with me and stormed out of my house.

An hour later, we heard that she had been in an accident. We all rushed to the hospital and found out that she had some internal injuries but was okay. But then the doctors told us that she had cancer. She had a cancerous tumor, and they suggested surgery as soon as possible. I didn’t see her for the first few days, but when I did, I apologized. She said she would think about it when she got better. She died during the operation. She died because of me.

Oh God!

“Jaxon, she didn’t die because of you. She died of cancer, not because of that accident.”

He raised his head and said, “Can’t you see? That accident made her tumor worse. If it hadn’t happened, she might have lived. She could have been with me right now.”

“You can’t blame yourself, Jaxon. It was her fate. She had to die, and you couldn’t have saved her anyway.”

“I lost her. I lost my love; I lost my best friend. I was in love with her, and she died. If I hadn’t fallen in love with her, she would have lived. My love killed her. I’m too scared to fall in love again because I can’t risk someone’s life again.”

It seemed like he was warning me that he was terrified to fall in love and that he would never fall in love with me. He was giving me a heads-up.

“But,” I said, putting my hand on his shoulder, “it’s not your fault.”

“It’s of no use. You can never erase that pain from your heart and those memories from your brain; you just learn to live with it.”

I put my head on his forearm as if I could sense his suffering.

“And then,” he said again after a minute, “I saw you two years ago at a business party. For a moment, I thought, ‘Julia is standing there,’ and I had to literally rub my eyes to make sure. But then I realized it wasn’t Julia but someone else who looked almost like her. I’ve known you for two years, waiting for the right time to suggest that we merge our companies through marriage. I wasn’t worried about your company taking over mine; I just wanted you to believe that. I married you because I

didn't want to lose Julia again...I didn't want to."

"I...", he said, sounding lost for words. "I was selfish, I know. But I didn't want to lose Julia again. You were just like her in every way—physically, in your attitude, in the way you talked. I'm sorry; I didn't want you to know the real reason because I know you would think I'm selfish and leave me."

I went up and sat on his lap before I could understand what I was doing. I threw my arms securely around his neck and put my head on his shoulder.

He questioned in a confused voice, "What are you doing?"

"Please, just let me hug you," I said as I tightened my grip on him.

He didn't embrace me back, and his body was so rigid. But after a minute, he gently put one of his arms around my waist. Then, as I exhaled in happiness, he wrapped his other arm around me and strengthened his grasp. He hugged me back, then put his head on my neck, and I felt something moist on my shoulder. He was weeping.

I couldn't see his face, but feeling his sobs on my shoulder literally crushed my heart.

I can't ever leave him.

We stayed like that for a long time, and when I eventually drew away, his face looked so shattered.

"All you need sometimes is a warm hug," I whispered quietly while still sitting on his lap.

I kissed his forehead and wiped away his tears.

"Like Olaf?" he quipped out of the blue to attempt to make things better.



I smiled a little and said, “You remember?”

“Of course I do. You guys made me watch that movie so many times,” he said with a smile, alluding to Rose.

I smiled and put my forehead against his. Then I said, “Everything will be okay.”

I stood up from his lap, and just as I was about to move, he grabbed my wrist and stopped me.

I turned around to see him looking at me with an inscrutable look on his face, and then he got up.

“Please don’t leave me again,” he begged in a voice that was barely a whisper.

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I got closer, put both of my hands around his palm, and brought it to my lips. I kissed his hand softly and said, "I'm never leaving you."

He carefully put his palm on both of my cheeks, glanced at my lips, then back at me, and then, very slowly, closed his eyes and kissed me.

His lips slid slowly against mine, and my eyes fluttered closed. It wasn't like the first kiss we had; it was extremely gentle, soft, sweet, and passionate, and it made my knees weak as I threw my arms around his neck for support.

This time, I didn't taste the smoke; instead, I tasted mint as I opened my lips for him. When he caressed my lips with his tongue and then went into every nook and cranny of my mouth, my heart skipped a beat. He put all of his feelings into it.

He took his hand off my cheeks, and without breaking the kiss, he abruptly picked me up and wrapped my legs around his body. He then carried me to the bed and carefully laid me down.

And gently pulled away from the kiss, leaving us both panting for air.

He hovered over me, out of breath, and touched my bottom lip with his thumb. It was swollen from the kiss.

"Jaxon?" I murmured, out of breath, and he looked up at me.

"Who...did you...kiss me as?" I said quietly, trying not to hurt his feelings.

"What?"

“Did you kiss me as Julia or as me?”

He looked into my eyes for a minute as if he was looking for something. Then he shut his eyes and opened them again.

He held my cheek and whispered, “I kissed you as Clara...I kissed you as my wife.”

I just needed to hear that before I kissed him again and gripped his face. He climbed over me, pinned my arms over my head, and kissed me deeply. He kissed me quickly and then bit my bottom lip softly before leaving.

He kissed my forehead and let his lips stay there for a while. Then he kissed both of my cheeks, rolled over, and wrapped his arm around my waist to draw me closer.

“Let me sleep with you in my arms; it makes me feel safe,” he said.

“But last time you got mad,” I added, and I don’t know why, but I said it in a whisper.

“I promise I won’t.”

He kissed my hair, and then we both fell asleep in each other’s arms.

At that moment, being in his arms made me feel the calm and happiness I had been looking for for years.

He was everything I needed.

Jaxon’s point of view:

I woke up next to my wife with one of my hands around her waist and the other on

my stomach.

I like calling her my wife. Sounds excellent.

I smiled as I looked at her sleeping comfortably, and brushed a few strands of hair out of her face.

I carefully stroked her face with my finger, starting at her forehead and moving down to her eyes, then her cheeks, and finally her bottom lip.

When her eyelids flickered open, I carefully stroked her face.

“Good morning,” she murmured in a raspy voice.

“Morning,” I said, kissing the tip of her nose.

She was so tired that she fell asleep again in less than a minute. It was Saturday, so she could sleep as long as she wanted. I carefully exited the room, trying not to wake her awake.

I went into my study and opened one of the drawers to get a file. That’s when I saw the picture frame that Clara brought me last night. I snatched it up and ran my finger over Julia’s photo.

I said, “I’m sorry,” and a tear fell from my eye.

After what occurred, I don’t think I can fall in love again. I loved Julia and lost her. I don’t want to fall in love again because I don’t want to put anyone else’s life in danger.

What was I thinking when I kissed her again last night? Why did I kiss her? Why did I embrace her again? Why did I tell her to stay? Why does my heart race so fast when

I think of her?

This isn't right. I'm not meant to like her. I can't.

So why did I give her false hopes last night? I kissed her like she was the most important thing in the world. I felt safe in her embrace. I don't want her to go. I need her, but I can't love her.

Why is all of this so hard?

I married her to make sure I didn't lose her again, but I didn't anticipate falling in love with her. No, no, no; I can't fall for her.

It feels great that she cares about me, but it's also worrisome.

When she told me she loved me, my heart skipped a beat and melted. But what did I say back? I never told you to care about me. Dumb.

I was worried that if she started to care about me and spoke to me sweetly, I might fall for her. Damn! I'm still afraid!

I walked down to my gym, took off my shirt, and started pounding the punching bag.

Why Am I Giving Her False Hope?

I will simply harm her again. I keep hurting her, yet she always remains with me. I don't deserve her.

I have to push her away, or she may get harmed. If she loves me and I don't love her back, it will pain me too.

But I really need her.

I finally felt safe in her embrace after all these years. I slept like a baby. After I told her everything, I didn't feel like smoking to calm down since she gave me a loving hug.

I smiled as I remembered her saying, "All we need sometimes is a warm hug."

I adore how her body responds to my touch, how her face became pale when I informed her she was mine, and how she smiled at me in the car on the way back from the hospital. I liked how she looked at me with adoration.

I adore how she tries to make me envious and does a good job at it.

Spunkiness. I liked how much she kissed me back. I liked that she stayed with me that night while I was inebriated. I liked how she asked me whether I had eaten dinner. I liked how she encouraged me to stop smoking since it is bad for my health. I liked how she said I look cute when I'm mad.

I liked how she assisted Rose and bought her house. I thought it was great that she was willing to give up her life for her firm.

I love...

No, no. Heart, you stupid! Stop hammering so hard. You are not falling in love with her! Why don't you get it?

You can't love her! You are not good enough for her. You will just put her life in danger!

I hit the punching bag one last time and then laid my forehead on it to calm myself.

“Jaxon?” I heard her voice.

Great!

“Are you okay?” she questioned as she stood next to me.

No.

“Yes.”

“Look at me,” she said, and I did.

When did I start taking commands from her?

“Did you eat breakfast?” Here we go again.

“No.”

“Come on, you can work out later. First, eat something,” she urged, grabbing my hand and pulling me towards the door. She gave me my shirt, which I hurriedly put on.

Tell me you don’t care about me. Get out of here and leave me alone. I will harm you.

But she didn’t read my thinking and kept pulling me to the kitchen and making me sit at the table.

She looked down at my knuckles, which were injured since I was pounding the bag without a glove.

“Look what happened to your knuckles. You should be careful,” she added as she left the kitchen. She returned back a minute later with a first-aid kit.

She put the package on the table and pulled out a cotton ball, which she dipped in an antiseptic. She took my hand and gently pushed the cotton on my knuckles, which made me grimace a little. She quickly said she was sorry.

I couldn't take my eyes off her as she carefully took care of my injuries.

Please don't do this.

A piece of hair fell on her face, which really bothered her. Before she could get rid of it, I brushed it back myself, and she glanced up at me and smiled, which made my heart skip a beat. Then she went back to what she was doing.

She kissed the back of my hand once she was done.

She is making me nuts.

She then walked to the kitchen counter, got two plates, and put one in front of me and one in front of her.

“I hope you don't mind that I gave Jenny a day off. I made strawberry and chocolate crepes today,” she said.

“It's fine.”

The crepes looked excellent, so I took a piece off and put it in my mouth. My lips curled up in pleasure because they were so tasty.

She watched me eat attentively and then said, “Do you like it?”



“They’re good,” I said, and she smiled brightly.

One day, her grin will kill me.

“I love to cook because good food brings people together,” she said while filling her teeth with the pancake. I watched her eat without worrying about how she looked.

She took my plate with her after we ate and put it in the washbasin to wash later.

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I don't know why, but I followed her and stood close behind her as she put the dishes in the washbasin. When she turned around, I saw that she had chocolate syrup on the tips of her lips.

I instantly leaned forward because her lips looked so good.

What are you up to, Jaxon?! You said you wouldn't kiss her!

One more time. I thought.

No, you shouldn't do this.

I had already kissed her before I realized it, and my heart skipped a beat. I could tell she was astonished since she didn't answer right away, but then she kissed me back just as passionately.

I kissed her deeper and twisted my fingers in her hair. Our tongues danced together, and she tasted like chocolate and strawberries. At first, the kiss was gradual, but then I wanted to kiss her right away. I sucked on her lips and bit them, but I stopped before I lost control.

I carefully pulled away and opened my eyes to discover that she was still gasping for air.

After a few seconds, she opened her eyes, and we gazed at each other while still breathing heavily.

“Umm...” I attempted to say something, “There was chocolate syrup on the top of your lips.”

She tried not to chuckle, but her eyes sparkled with delight. “I was going to...clean it.”

What a fantastic way to make oneself seem bad! I smacked my head on the wall in my mind.

“Oh... okay...I will be in the study,” I said, and then I quickly turned around and went so she wouldn’t notice how red my face was getting.

I can’t even remember the last time I was embarrassed.

What are you doing to me?

Someone knocked on the door of my study, and as predicted, Clara came in.

“Jaxon, can you come with me for a minute?” she said.

“I’m busy.”

“Busy, busy, busy,” she remarked as she walked to the desk. “Jaxon, you need to learn how to make time for people. Your business could cost you some of the best times in your life.”

I gazed at her. Where does she get these conversations?

“So, Mrs. Dante, what big moment am I missing right now?” I inquired as I leaned back in my chair.

“I’ll show you, but you have to come with me,” she said with a pout. How could I say no to that?

“Fine,” I said, and then I got up. I saw her smile—or was it a smirk?

What is she doing?

She led me to her room, and before unlocking the door, she moved aside and told me to walk inside.

I gave her a dubious look and opened the door. When I went inside, I saw Kena sitting on her bed, nonchalantly looking through his phone.

He looked up, and his eyes became bigger, too. Before we could figure out what was going on, we heard the door click, and we were both stuck in the room.

“Open this door right now!” I yelled to her, but all I heard was her laugh.

“This door won’t open until you two work out what’s wrong. By the way, I’m going shopping. I’ll be back in an hour or two. Since no one else is home, you’re stuck in there until I get back.”

“Clara, come back!” I cried, but all I could hear was her laughter before I heard her footsteps moving down the stairs.

She will pay for this!

I looked back at Kena, who was now partly reclining on the bed, and continued looking through his phone like nothing had occurred.

I snapped, “You are with her in this, right?”

He put down his phone and added, "I'm not with her. She just called me here and told me to wait in her room."

He lay down on the bed like he owned it.

"Get out of bed; it's not yours."

"Oh, right," he answered with a laugh. "It's my friend's bed, and she doesn't mind."

"So, she's your friend now?" I crossed my arms.

"Of course she is. At least she doesn't treat me the way my other friend has been treating me for so many years," you could see he was saddened by the way he said it.

"What's wrong with you, Kena?"

He sprang up and went up to me. "What's your problem, Jaxon?!" I simply narrowed my eyes at him.

He asked, "What did I do to you?" "You've been ignoring me for years, and even then, I tried to fix our friendship, but you don't even try. Why are you ignoring me? I've known you since the day I was born, and then suddenly, because Julia died, you started to avoid me. What did I do? She was my best friend too, and her death broke me too, but I never ignored you. Just because you loved her romantically doesn't mean you were more broken than anyone else!"

I couldn't think of anything to say.

He pushed my shoulder and cried, "I needed you...when she died...I was also sad...I needed my other best friend, but when I came to you, you sent me back saying you didn't want to talk to anyone. I waited...I gave you some time, but you never even

asked me once if I was okay or not.”

His tears made my eyes moist, too. Why do I keep making people weep these days?

“You think you were the only one who was hurt by her death? No, I was there too. I thought of her as my sister, and losing her was hard for me, but I never pushed you away.

That day when I became CEO, you came so late to the party, Jaxon. I was waiting for you. I wanted you to be there when Dad told everyone I was the new CEO.

And what about when you became CEO? I was there early because I wanted to watch my closest friend, my brother, take over his father’s firm.

Why am I so dumb? I wanted to beat my head against the wall!

After Julia died, I really walled myself off from the world. All I did was study, and when I became CEO, I worked all the time and didn’t care about anything else.

Kena’s words made me see how badly I messed up everything.

I didn’t know what to reply when Kena said, “Kena...I...I.”

Hey Kena, I’m sorry .No.

Sorry, I didn’t pay attention to you. No way.

“I’m so sorry, Kena,” I said, and by now I was crying. “I didn’t know I was wrong—”

“That’s your problem, Jaxon! You never see when you’re wrong.”

“Please forgive me. I don’t know what to say to you. You tried to fix our friendship, but I was too stupid to let you in. I’m sorry—”

“Let it be,” he murmured as he turned back and perched on the side of the bed. “Your apology won’t change anything. Everything is already ruined.”

“No, it’s not.”

I sat next to him and didn’t say anything for a long.

I eventually said, “Do you want to go out for drinks tonight?”

I told him, “We can hang out again like we used to and try to fix our friendship. That’s the least I can do.” He just stared at me.

I assumed he would say no and dispute more. He had the right to yell at me, but he agreed to me faster than I thought. “But you are paying for the drinks.”

I chuckled a little as he said, “Of course.”

Then he hugged me, and I hugged him back, understanding how much I missed our friendship.

“Jaxon, you’re such an asshole,” he murmured as he pulled away from the embrace.

“Trust me, Vivian has told me that a thousand times.”

“She’s correct.”

“But right now,” I continued as I lay on the bed, “I need to do something about her.”

“What are you going to do? I swear I’ll kill you if you give her a divorce!”

“Whoa, whoa,” I responded, sitting up straight. “Where did this divorce thing come from?”

He rolled his eyes and said, “You’re so dumb that you can do anything.”

“But what are you going to do about her?” he questioned.

I grabbed my temples in exasperation and said, “I don’t know... I’m scared... I’m scared that if I fall in love with her, what happened to Julia will happen to her too.”



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“Mr. Jaxon Dante, I wonder how you got to be the CEO when you are so stupid.”

“Don’t talk like her,” I urged, pointing to how he spoke my complete name.

“Oh, I’ve been spending a lot of time with her lately, that’s why,” he said, and I knew he was joking.

I gave him a death stare.

“Why? Are you jealous, Jaxon?”

I gave him another deathly look, but he just laughed and said, “Relax, she’s like my sister.”

“Stop making every other girl your sister,” I said, rolling my eyes. “You’ll die single.”

“What do you want me to do? Ask Vivian out on a date?”

I told him, “If you ask her out, you’ll be dead.”

“Seems like you’re really falling for her,” that helped me remember what I wanted to say to him.

“No, I’m not falling for her. I don’t want to because she’ll get hurt.”

“Jaxon, stop being dumb.”

“Call me stupid again, and I’ll punch you,” I said as he rolled his eyes.

“Listen, I get why you’re scared, but what happened to Julia is different, and so is your case with Vivian.”

“Julia’s reaction to your confession was understandable. She was your friend, and of course, she felt awkward when you told her how you felt. But Vivian is your wife, Jaxon. You can’t expect to stay married and not fall in love with each other,” he said.

“All of this is just making me mad!” I yelled.

“Now, stop being a coward and deal with how you feel.”

“But I...I don’t deserve her. She’s too good for me and—”

“Stop this drama, will you?” he said, cutting me off.

He reprimanded, “You are not a made-up character in a clichéd love story.”

“What if something happens to her?” I questioned sadly.

“Please, Jaxon, please! Nothing will happen to her. Your love won’t kill her!”

I raked my fingers through my hair in anger.

Do I already adore her?

I asked Jaxon, “How did it go?” when he walked into the home as I was getting a drink of water.

“It was good,” he said as he got closer to me.

I was really glad when Jaxon and Kena finally talked to each other and worked out their difficulties. They went out for drinks tonight, which made me more happier.

He replied, “But...you are going to pay for what you did. You literally locked us in a room!” as I set the glass down on the kitchen counter.

“I had to do that to get you both to talk without running away,” I said with a smile that made him frown.

I was tired and headed to my room with him following me. Just as I was ready to open the door, he asked, “Where are you going?”

“Um...I guess to sleep.”

“You’re not sleeping in that room right now; come sleep in our bedroom.”

Did he just say “our bedroom”?

I asked the dumbest question: “Are you sure?”

“Why not?”

“Okay, I’ll just change and come.”

He nodded and then went inside his room, or I should say our room.

I hurriedly put on my pajamas and a T-shirt before walking into his room.

He was standing at the glass windows and looking outdoors as I walked into our room.

When he heard the door close, he turned to me and stated, “Tomorrow, your wardrobe will be moved into this room, whether you like it or not.”

Was he truly striving to make this marriage work and be like a genuine couple?

“Am I whining?”

“You shouldn’t,” he replied before heading into the restroom. I got comfy on the bed and lay down.

He came out of the restroom a minute later wearing only his boxers, which made me blush a lot. I looked away from him so he wouldn’t notice me looking at him.

When he lay down next to me, the bed sunk, and the only light in the room came from the moonlight pouring through the window.

I could feel him move closer, and his hand curled around my waist, pulling me closer. As I came closer to him, I put my head on his naked chest, and he put his arm around my waist.

I was whole.

We were both totally awake as Jaxon massaged little circles on my waist. The only sound was our slow breathing.

I could hear his heartbeat when I put my ear to his chest. It was thumping really quickly.

I put my hand in the middle of his chest and questioned, “Why is your heart beating so fast?”

He stopped rubbing circles on my waist and moved his hand up to stroke my hair softly.

“It’s nothing,” he said.

I groaned and said, “You don’t tell me anything, Jaxon.”

“I’ve already told you a lot about myself.”

“I don’t know you very well,” I said softly.

“Do you want me to read my biography?”

I grinned and said, “I’d love to hear that.”

I thought he was joking, but then he started talking: “My name is Jaxon Dante, and I am the joint CEO of Hayes Dante Industries. I was born on November 3, 1991, to Levi and Tasha Dante. I am their only child. I love Italian food, and my favorite color is turquoise blue.”

I thought he was done, but then he said, “At eighteen, something happened that broke me up, and for many years I didn’t realize how messed up I was until I met my wife, who is a feisty little thing. She is too good for me; she keeps asking me if I ate or not, scolds me for smoking, tends to my wounds, and helps me fix my friendship.”

He wasn’t inebriated. He was sober, yet what he was saying was hard to believe.

I looked at him as he looked at the ceiling, and I kept my hand on his chest.

He went on, “She’s feisty, and her feistiness messes with my mind. She’s crazy, and she drives me crazy, too, but...she keeps me sane. She gave me the comfort I’ve been looking for for so many years. She told me I’m missing all the precious moments of my life...little does she know that she’s the only precious thing I don’t want to lose. I keep hurting her, but she stays with me even though I keep pushing her away. I don’t

want to lose her because if I do, I'll lose myself too.

Who are you, and what did you do to my husband? This isn't the man I married.

No one has informed me that I keep them sane or that I am important to them. No one has ever said that they will do everything to keep me.

But this guy...

I carefully climbed on top of him, and we looked into each other's eyes. I couldn't see his face well, but his eyes shined, and a tear fell from my face and hit his cheeks. He brushed away my tears with his thumb and held my face in his hands.

"Jaxon," I said so quietly that I couldn't even hear it.

"Thank you," he said back.

"For what?"

"For all of it."

"I didn't even do anything," I muttered, and he said, "You have no idea, Clara."

I laid my forehead on his and closed my eyes. He did the same.

I was so happy to have him as my spouse at that moment. There were times when I wanted to run away from him, but just now, everything seemed worth the suffering.

I kissed him without thinking twice, and he kissed me back right away, placing his arms around my waist so I wouldn't fall.

I put my hands on his shoulders, and he opened his mouth. This time, he let me take charge as I moved my tongue around in his mouth. At first, the kiss was light and slow, but as our tongues danced together, the desperation grew with each passing second.

I slipped my hands from his shoulder down to his abs and carefully dragged my finger over them, which made him snarl.

He took my hand and whispered in my ear, “You better stop, or I’ll lose it.”

“I don’t want to,” I mumbled back, kissing him hard this time. In less than a second, he rolled me over, and his eyes got darker.

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He kissed my jaw and then my neck, and I bit my lips to keep from moaning. He sucked on a nice region at the base of my neck, and I couldn't help but groan.

"Tell me to stop," he said hoarsely as he moved his lips over mine.

"No."

He kissed me hard on the lips, his hands moving over my body, and then he pulled away and whispered, "You have no idea what you're saying."

"I want you, Jaxon," I whispered with a sigh.

He said in a husky voice while biting my earlobe, "I want you too, Clara."

I didn't think twice before he brought me to a whole new level of bliss as we consummated our marriage, and he loved my body in ways I could never have imagined.

I slowly opened my eyes, and every muscle in my body hurt. Jaxon was already awake and was tracing my face with his finger like he had done before.

When he saw me wake up, he buried his head in the crook of my neck and started kissing it softly.

He murmured in my ear, "How are you?"

"Painful."



He muttered gently, “Sorry.”

“It’s...okay...I don’t mind it,” I said, feeling a blush rise up my neck.

He grinned against my neck and said, “Of course you don’t mind it.” I became red.

“Oh shit!” I yelled out of nowhere. “We’re going to be late for work!”

He grinned quietly, “It’s Sunday.”

“Oh...”

He laughed again, pulled his head away from my neck, kissed the tip of my nose, and then got up and went into the restroom.

The next day...

I was delighted today because I was humming the tune “I Won’t Say I’m in Love” and spinning my chair around. I don’t know either.

I couldn’t stop thinking about Jaxon. He was on my mind all the time. I still remember everything he said to me that night. I can’t help but blush when I think about all that transpired.

I was so lost in my thoughts that I didn’t even notice it was lunchtime until Jona and Kena came into my office.

“Someone looks very happy today,” Jona said with a sly smile at Kena.

Not again.

“Do you mind telling us why your face is glowing?” Kena questioned, and I turned red right away.

Kena responded, “You’re already blushing. What did we miss?”

I responded, “You didn’t miss anything, idiots.”

“Something definitely happened between you two,” Kena said as he walked up to me and put his hand on my shoulder.

Jona moved closer and put his hand on my other shoulder. They were both staring at me so suspiciously that I flushed crimson.

Jona remarked, “You better tell us, or we’ll start making our own guesses.”

“Why don’t you all go bother Jaxon like you bother me? I’m sure he’ll tell you,” I remarked.

Kena said, “What’s the point of asking Jaxon?”

I eventually uttered or murmured, “We consummated our marriage,” knowing that they wouldn’t leave me till I told them.

They both yelled, “What?!” so loudly that I’m sure Jaxon heard it.

“Go ahead and shout it on a loudspeaker, you idiots,” I said.

Kena responded, “We want the details!”

“Not in your dreams!”

“But what made you both do that?” Jona said.

“I’m not telling you anything! I’m going to lunch. Go ask Jaxon for the details; I’m sure he’ll tell you everything,” I said in a sarcastic tone.

“What details?” I heard Jaxon say all of a sudden.

Can I be more embarrassed?

Kena and Jona looked at me and then at Jaxon with a naughty look.

I asked Jaxon, “We’re going out for lunch. Do you want to come?” to change the subject.

He said, “I’ll be there in a minute,” and then he went back into his office. I sighed.

I glared at each of them and pushed them away.

I threw my vehicle keys to Jona, who caught them and shouted, “Go get my car; we’re coming.”

They both eventually departed after giving me one last glance. I walked into Jaxon’s office, and he turned to look at me while he was wearing his jacket.

“Let’s go,” he replied, putting his arm over my shoulder tightly.

“What were you all talking about?” he said as we got into the lift.

“They’re insane! Forget it.”

I flushed again when I thought about what we had talked about, and Jaxon seemed to

notice because he replied, “I guess I know what you guys were talking about.”

I groaned and covered my face in the side of his chest, which made him chuckle. Hearing him laugh made my heart overflow with love.

Did I say I love you?

Oh, God...

It was the night before my birthday. I was delighted because I usually get thrilled about my birthday, even when I’m going to turn 28. But I told my family and friends that I might come back on this day, seven years later, and those seven years are up tomorrow.

But I don’t want to go back. I don’t want to see them.

Lastly, I’m happy, content, and at peace with my life because of Jaxon. He is everything I need, and I have him with me right now.

In the last month, our connection has gotten a lot better. We feel like a true couple today, and he treats me the way I always wanted to be treated. He cares for me, is lovely, and is kind-hearted. That’s all I want.

His friendship with Kena appears to become better every day. We eat lunch together virtually every day. Me, Jaxon, Kena, and Jona are all buddies.

But my insane buddies still won’t quit bothering me with their strange queries. The day I informed him we had s\*x, they started asking me virtually every day if we had s\*x again.

And to be honest, we did.

Back to the core issue: should I go back? But what will I do when I go back? Say, I'm sorry. No.

Jaxon told me to go back, but I didn't want to.

Jaxon asked me, "What are you thinking about, sweetheart?" as he sat next to me on the bed.

"Nothing important..."

"Where were you?" I questioned him because he had just come into the bedroom.

"In the study."

"Again, Jaxon, why do you work so much?"

He answered, "Because I want to be the richest person in the world," with a lot of pride.

I said, "Stop being so ambitious. Aren't you happy being the fourth richest person?"

"Not yet."

"What do you want to do with all that money?"

"Everything in the world."

"But you can't buy love, happiness, or peace with that."

He bent down and murmured in my ear, "I guess I already have all those things," while running his finger over my cheeks.

His words made me melt.

He moved in closer and murmured against my lips, “You are my serenity, you are my pleasure, you are my... Clara, everything. I don’t need anything else if I have you with me. “

How can I not adore this guy?

He kissed me on the lips for a second and then walked away.

I quipped, “That was really cheesy,” which made him laugh quietly. “You make me say things I never thought I would say.”

I smiled and said, “You’re welcome.”

He kissed the tip of my nose and said, “I’m coming in a minute.”

I said, “Where are you going?” “

“Be patient, sweetheart,” he said, and then he left. I got up and sat cross-legged on the bed without saying a word.

He came back in a minute, exactly as he said he would, but this time, he brought a tray.

He came up to the bed, put the tray on it, and sat down next to me. There was a chocolate mug cake on the tray.

He kissed me lightly on the lips again, this time for a few more seconds. But before I could deepen the kiss, he drew away and said, “Happy Birthday, my beautiful wife.” Thanks for staying alive with me.

I practically lunged at him and grabbed him fiercely, throwing my arms around his neck as he held me closely with his arms.

“Thank you,” I said with a smile as I pulled back.

“You’re welcome,” he replied as he kissed my forehead.

I turned around and glanced at the tray and the cupcake.

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He anxiously massaged the back of his neck and added, “I tried to make you a mug cake, but it was the first time I ever made anything, so I don’t know how it tastes.”

“You made this? “

He nodded and said, “I might have broken one of the mugs, and the batter might have spilled on the kitchen counter.”

He seemed so scared that I would yell at him for shattering the cup and making a mess in the kitchen. I just laughed and kissed his cheeks.

“Thanks a lot... Don’t worry; I’ll clean the kitchen.

He got a little candle out of his pocket and put it on the cake. Then he took out his lighter, but I glared at him.

He stared at me and then at the lighter in his palm. “Um... I promise I’m trying to quit smoking, but you can’t expect me to do it in a day...”

“Okay, fine.” “Light the candle.”

He lit the candle and urged me to make a wish. What could I ask for when I already have everything I want?

I stared intently into his eyes before closing mine.

“I want him to be my soulmate and spend the rest of my life with him.” That’s what I



hoped for before I blew out the flame.

I took a mouthful of the cake with the spoon while he watched me with interest.

“Can I eat it?” He enquired with interest, and I offered him the spoon so he could try it himself.

He yelled, “What the hell?!” as soon as he ate it. That’s much too sweet... “Don’t eat it, or you’ll get a sugar rush.”

He seemed uncomfortable, but I didn’t care how the cake tasted because he worked hard to make me happy.

“Hey... “It’s okay...you tried to make it, and that’s enough for me,” I murmured as I pulled his cheeks.

“But what else do you have for me? I enquired with excitement.

“Trust me, you won’t like it.”

“Why? Is it really that bad? “

“Promise you won’t laugh.”

“I won’t.”

He stood up, left the room, and came back a minute later with something in his hand that I couldn’t see.

He sat next to me and gave me a white piece of paper. When I grabbed it, I saw that it was a birthday card.

The paper was white and had a photo of us from our wedding on the front. When I opened it, it said, “Happy Birthday, Clara.”

I tried to keep back my laughter, but I couldn’t and ended up laughing so hard that I fell back on the bed and held my stomach.

“Oh God! “You made a card for me,” I said, and Jaxon frowned.

“I know it’s not good, but all the ideas on YouTube were too hard, and what can I buy you when you have everything?” He moaned, making me stop laughing.

I got up and wiped the tears that had come from laughing.

“You’re so adorable! “Wow, I can’t believe you made me a card,” I murmured as I sat on his knee.

He rolled his eyes and said, “You can throw it away.” I know it’s not good, but I wasn’t going to offer it to you anyhow.

“Get rid of it? I’m going to frame it.

“You won’t.”

“I will.”

“Clara,” he said, which made me laugh.

“Anyway,” he said, “what do you want?” “

“You are right; I already have everything,” I said, shaking my head and looking at him with love and admiration.

I kissed him and threw my arms around his neck as he wrapped his arms around my waist.

He opened his mouth, and the soft, sweet kiss evolved into a hard one as he pushed his tongue into my mouth. His tongue went all over my mouth, and then he sucked on my bottom lip.

I pulled away from the kiss to get some breath, and then he kissed my jaw and neck.

When he started stroking circles beneath my t-shirt and then sucking on the base of my neck, I knew it was going to be a long night.

After answering over a thousand birthday messages from my followers and a few acquaintances, I put my phone down.

Jaxon wasn't there when I got up this morning. He left me a note claiming that something urgent had come up and he wouldn't be back until the evening. Seriously? He left me alone on my birthday!

I didn't want to host a big party for my birthday or anything like that. I just wanted to invite a few close friends around for good food and a cake. That's all.

Jaxon said he could plan a party for me if I wanted to celebrate, but I said no.

I was going to cut a cake with Jaxon, Kena, and Jona in the evening, but Jaxon isn't here. Jona claimed he was busy since he was going to see his mother, and Kena came to see me in the afternoon but didn't bring me a present. I didn't want anything, but I was just teasing him.

Jaxon texted me and said he would be back in an hour and instructed me to get dressed. For what? I previously told him I didn't want a huge party.

I woke up, cleaned up, and put on a basic outfit since I didn't know what he was going to do.

I put on very little makeup: some blush, n\*\*e lipstick, and mascara. I was ready in less than half an hour.

I was becoming bored, so I put on a movie and watched it as I waited for him in our room.

Someone knocked on my door, and I responded, "Come in."

Jenny came in and said, "Someone is here to see you."

"Who?"

"I can't tell you the name."

"What do you mean by that? Is it Jaxon? "

"I think you should come and see for yourself." She departed before I could ask her any more questions, which left me confused.

I turned off the TV and went down to the living room. I could hear someone whispering.

I stopped moving as soon as I got inside the living room.

Someone knocked on my door, and I responded, "Come in."

Jenny came in and said, "Someone is here to see you."

“Who?”

“I can’t tell you the name.”

“What do you mean by that? Is it Jaxon? “

“I think you should come and see for yourself.” She departed before I could ask her any more questions, which left me confused.

I turned off the TV and came down to the living room. I could hear someone whispering.

I stopped moving as soon as I got to the living room.

“Her house is huge!” Tara said,

“Of course, it will be big, you idiot.” “She is so rich,” Sam added.

I couldn’t help but gasp, which made them look at me.

Everything stopped.

I stood there, transfixed, looking at my dearest buddies who were standing there with blank faces.

What are they doing here? I’m not unhappy, but...

Rick stretched her hand out to Tyler, who took off her sandals and gave them to Rick. This broke my train of thinking.

Oh no!

It seems like I'm in trouble.

My best buddies chased me, and I screamed and ran for my life.

I ran up the stairs as fast as I could and opened the door to our bedroom. I was going to lock the door, but they were quick to stop me and burst in.

"Guys, I can explain!" I yelled,

"What are you going to explain? Rick cried, "Get out of the way!" before tossing the slipper at me. Thank goodness it didn't touch me.

I leaped over the bed, and they all held me down on it. Then they climbed over it and hit me a couple of times.

Ouch! Well, I earned that.

"Hey, it's my birthday! Please have some sympathy for me! "

They eventually got off of me and stood by the bed as I gasped and tried to regain my breath.

They stood there with their arms crossed and a frown on their face.

"I am sorry," I eventually murmured in a very gentle voice.

"Sorry for what?" "Shut up!" Tara shouted.

"That's how you left us seven years ago and made us all worry that you were dead. Then, five years later, you told us that you were alive and one of the richest people in the world!" Rick yelled,

“I didn’t want to talk to anyone and believe me, it really hurt me to leave you all, but I had no choice,” I said.

“You could have called us later!” “Sam said,”

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“And you said you would come back on this day, but you didn’t!” “Tyler said,”

“And I took the job here in this city just so I could meet you, but when I came to your office, they sent me back because you were too busy to meet anyone,” Tara yelled.

“Believe me, no one told me you came,” I said to justify myself, “even though I knew you and Tyler were only in FL.”

“How do you know?”

“Well, my investigators constantly brought me up to date on what you guys were doing. I know that Rick got engaged a few months ago, but the rest of you are still single.

“Wait a minute,” Tara said, and then she hit me on the shoulder. “You got married without us!”

“I’m sorry about that. The marriage happened so quickly that I couldn’t do anything.”

“By sudden, what do you mean? You were in a relationship, right?” Rick asked,

“No.” It was a marriage that was planned.

“What?!” They all yelled, “They all exclaimed.”

“Why don’t we all sit down quietly, and then I can tell you everything?” I looked at them eagerly, and they all looked at each other before ultimately consenting.



So, I told them everything about Jaxon, starting with the day he came to my office and ending with what happened last night. I told them everything about him and how our relationship had changed over the past few months, including the details about Julia, our first kiss, and...well, you know what.

When I was done, their mouths were open in shock.

“And now you adore him?” Sam asked.

I nodded and said, “Yes.”

“But,” I replied, “did Jaxon bring you all here?”

“Yes,” they all said.

He brought them all here. That’s why he wasn’t home. He did it for me. He knew I missed my pals, so he brought them all here. Oh, Jaxon.

“Don’t tell me you’re lost in his thoughts again,” Sam grumbled, and I hurled a pillow at her.

“Did he send his jet to get both of you?” I questioned Rick and Sam, and they both said yes.

Rick asked Sam, “He also sent someone...what was his name?”

“Jonah,” Sam said.

That’s why they were both so busy.

Rick added, “Your husband called me this morning and said, ‘This is Jaxon Dante speaking; would you like to meet your old friend Clara Adek, also known as Vivian

Hayes Dante?””

She added, “I said, ‘Are you kidding?’ and he said he was serious and that his driver would pick me up in an hour with Sam, who he told me to tell.”

Rick said, “He was very bossy,” which made me laugh. “I know.”

Tyler remarked, “And...” “You won’t believe he came to my flat this afternoon.”

“Did he go to your house?” I questioned.

“Yes. Can you believe it? I opened the door, and he was there. He reached out his hand and said, ‘Hi, I’m Jaxon Dante.’ I almost passed out; I was about to fall down, but he grasped my hand before.”

“And his voice is so deep and husky, oh God. It made me want to jump at him,” Tyler added in a dreamy voice.

“Do you dare to do that? He is mine,” I hissed.

“Are you getting jealous?” she said in a mocking tone.

“Yes! Because he’s my husband, and you can’t talk about him like that.”

But they all laughed at what I said, which made me even angrier.

The doorbell rang, and Jenny opened the door. Jaxon, who looked exhausted, went in with a big white package in his hand.

As soon as they all glanced at him, they started to talk to each other.

Jaxon walked over and put the box on the table in the middle of the room. He remarked gently, “Your birthday cake. And, of course, it’s better than that mug cake.”

“Thank you,” I answered with a smile.

“But where are Kena and Jona?”

“They wanted to give you some time alone with your friends because Jona is very tired. You can celebrate with them later.”

“Okay...”

“Now, go cut the cake. I’m ready to eat it.” I kissed his cheeks and laughed before opening the box to show him the beautiful cake.

Everyone said, “Whoa!”

I looked over at Jaxon and saw him standing there with a smile on his face. I grabbed the knife and sliced the cake, and everyone clapped.

I cut off a little piece and ate it first. It was extremely good, with chocolate and strawberry flavors, my fave.

I then grabbed a tiny portion and gave it to Jaxon, who then gave it back to me, brushed his lips against mine, and said, “Happy Birthday, wifey.”

I became red and said, “Thanks.”

He grinned at me and added, “They can stay here for the night.”

I heard Sam say, “Aww...love is in the air!” and I whirled around to give her a

deathly scowl. Then I shifted my focus to him and saw that he was staring at me with amusement.

Then he kissed me on the forehead and said, “Have fun.”

He then exited the living room and walked upstairs.

My friends were lying on my old bed and talking to each other. Most of the time, they were asking me questions, and they still weren’t forgiving me. They were still mad, but since it was my birthday, they put their anger aside for now.

I said goodbye to everyone at midnight and walked to Jaxon’s room, which was also our bedroom.

I believed he was unhappy again when I saw him standing on the balcony and looking at nothing in particular. But when I got closer, I realized that he was smiling.

I was glad to see him smiling.

“How many cigarettes did you smoke while you were standing here?” I asked.

He turned his head towards me and said, “I know you’re not here to ask how many cigarettes I smoked, Mrs. Dante.” He made fun of me the same way I made fun of him in my office.

“Stop making fun of me, Jaxon,” I complained.

“I can’t believe how angry you made me with what you said that day.”

“But that was a long time ago, and I hated you then.”

“You don’t hate me anymore?”

“Not at all.”

“Okay...just tell me how many cigarettes you smoked?” I said again.

“None.”

“Really?”

“Yes, dear.”

“That’s a lot of progress.”

“Go have fun with your friends,” they said.

I sighed and said, “I just came to thank you for today. Thank you so much for inviting them here.”

“It’s your birthday gift,” he whispered quietly. “That’s the only thing you didn’t have, and I know you missed them a lot.”

I put my arms around his body and buried my head in his chest. He put his hands around my waist and set his chin on top of my head.

I whispered “Thank you” against his body, and he kissed the top of my head.

Even though we were leaving, we remained staring at one other, and I didn’t notice we were both leaning in for a kiss. He was ready to kiss me when his lips brushed against mine, but one of my insane pals yelled, “Clara?!”

I grumbled, which made him grin. “Go, have fun with them.”

He kissed me on the lips, and I asked, “Are you sure you won’t miss me?”

He held back a giggle and said, “No.”

I got on my toes and held myself up with my hands on his shoulder. I murmured in his ear in a husky voice to taunt him, “You sure you won’t miss me when you’re alone in bed?” Then I kissed him beneath the ear. I kept kissing him lightly, moving from his ear to his neck, and then I moved my lips up to his jaw and kissed him very near to his lips.

His eyes got darker, and he was going to grab my head and kiss me, but I drew back right away and said, “Did I leave you all hot and bothered, Mr. Dante?”

I winked at him and walked away, but not before I heard him growl in anger.

We all sat down at the dining table for breakfast, and I mean Rick, Sam, Tyler, Tara, Jaxon, Kena, Jona, and myself, of course.

And because there wasn’t enough room at the dining table, Jaxon and I sat on the kitchen counter. Rick and Sam will be traveling to Alaska in a few hours because tomorrow is Monday.

I grinned as I saw everyone talk to each other like they were old friends.

I muttered “thank you” into Jaxon’s ear and placed my head on his shoulder.

He grinned down at me with love, kissed the top of my head, and put his arm over my shoulder.

I noticed Kena flirting with Tyler while she flushed. I shook my head a little. He won't change.

I was so exhausted that I closed my eyes and rested my head on his shoulder. I recognized that the sounds in the kitchen had ceased when I opened my eyes a minute later. Then I heard Kena exclaim, "Look at those two lovebirds!"

I opened my eyes and saw everyone gazing at us. Jaxon was giving Kena a murderous scowl.

I sighed and pulled my head away from his shoulder, which made everyone, even Jaxon, laugh.

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Tyler informed me, “You will make it up to us by taking us on vacation,” and we were all at the airport to hand off Rick and Sam. “And you will pay for everything.”

“Okay...okay...I got it.”

We all said goodbye with a hug, and then Rick and Sam got aboard my jet.

I shall miss them, but I’m glad that Tyler and Tara are here with me.

One week later...

No, no, no. This can’t happen.

I strolled around the toilet at work with the pregnancy test in my hand. Yes.

I’m having a baby.

Oh my God!

I can’t believe it!

I took a pregnancy test because I hadn’t had my period in a while, and it said I was pregnant.

Damn!

Am I joyful or sad? I can’t make up my mind. Should I feel good? Yes, but what



about Jaxon? What if he doesn't want it?

Oh my God!

What do I do?

Should I keep this baby? Yes. Should I be terrified to tell Jaxon this? Yes. Will Jaxon be thrilled to hear about it? I don't know. Does Jaxon want a kid? I have no idea. What will he do about this? I really don't know!

I put my head against the wall of the bathroom and started to weep. Why am I so emotional?

I should be delighted about this, yet I'm sobbing!

I need to go tell Jaxon this because he needs to know. But...

No, I won't tell him right now. I will wait a few days and get it verified by a gynecologist first.

Someone knocked on the door, and I was a little surprised.

"Vivian? Are you okay?" I heard Jona say.

"Yes...yes...I am coming."

I wiped my tears away and opened the door to see Jona standing there, looking frightened.

He questioned, "You've been in there for a long time; are you sure you're okay?"

I didn't answer, though. Instead, I swallowed hard, took the pregnancy test off the counter, and held it up to him.

At first, his eyebrows wrinkled in perplexity, but then his eyes steadily opened in amazement.

"YOU ARE—" he was going to yell, but I swiftly stopped him by putting my palm over his lips.

He responded, "What?" when I took my hand away.

"Don't say it to Jaxon."

"But why?"

"Please, Jona, I don't know if he wants it or not. I'm just scared and need to see a doctor first to make sure."

I threw the exam away in the trash before I left, and then I sank down in my chair with my head in my hands.

"But Vivian," he added, leaning against the desk next to me, "he needs to know; it's his baby too."

"Talk softly, Jona. I know he needs to know, but I'm not ready to tell him yet. I just need some time," I muttered.

"Are you happy?"

"Of course I am! You know I love kids, and having my own is... amazing. I can't put it into words, but I'm not sure about Jaxon..."

“Please fix my appointment with a gynecologist,” I said.

“For now?”

“Yes, as soon as I can.”

He nodded, kissed my head, and said, “Everything will be fine.” Then he left my office.

I really hope so.

“Congratulations, Mrs. Dante, you are two weeks pregnant!” the lady doctor said, and I offered her a sorrowful grin.

It’s official: I’m pregnant.

I was delighted all over, but I was also scared that Jaxon wouldn’t be happy about it.

But I decided it would be better to be joyful right now because I’m keeping it even if Jaxon doesn’t want it. No matter what.

I can also take care of my child by myself. Wait, where did that idea come from? Jaxon needs to say yes... I’m not leaving this baby or Jaxon; I adore him more than anything else.

I drove back to the workplace fast so that Jaxon wouldn’t ask me why I wasn’t there.

Jona came into my office after seeing me. When I walked into my office, I spotted Kena already there, drumming his fingers on my desk. He grinned a lot when he saw me.

Jona said softly, "I just told him that you are pregnant; he promised not to tell Jaxon."

"Not a problem."

Kena stood in front of me and said, "So, is it confirmed?"

They both stared at me with interest and when I nodded excitedly, they hugged me so tightly that it hurt my bones.

I was able to remark, "You're smothering me," and they swiftly moved away.

Kena murmured, "I can't believe it!"

I said, "I can't believe it either."

"Don't you have your own business to run?" Jaxon asked Kena, as he always did.

We all stopped. Did he hear us?

Kena said to Jaxon, "I just came to ask Vivian for permission for something."

Do I have your permission? For what?

"Umm...for what?" I questioned him.

He grinned, and I saw a small blush on his face. He scratched the back of his neck uncomfortably and continued, "Would you mind if I took your friend Tyler out on a date?"

Is he joking?

“Are you serious?”

“Of course!”

“Then why the hell are you asking me, dumbass?”

He didn’t get what I was saying at first, but when he did, he was overjoyed.

“Yay, thanks!” he said with joy as he pulled me in for a hug.

“At least you found someone,” Jaxon said, rolling his eyes and making Kena frown.

“Good job, bro,” Jaxon said in a mocking way.

I was sitting there with Jaxon lying on the bed and his head on my lap. I was running my fingers over his hair.

I’ve been trying to get up the nerve to tell Jaxon about my pregnancy for the last ten minutes, but I can’t. I simply can’t do it right now.

It is strange to think that Jaxon will be the father and I will be the mother. We will have our own child.

Kids are very sweet and innocent. Their innocence truly steals your heart. They might be frustrating at times, but I adore them.

Jaxon leaned his head back to get a closer look at me and added, “What are you smiling about?” I didn’t know I was smiling until he said that.

“Just random thoughts...”

He grinned and said, “About me?”

I rolled my eyes and said, “Who else can I think of?”

He stood up and faced me, our faces only a few inches away.

He continued in a husky voice, “You shouldn’t even think about anyone else, or I know how to punish you.” He ran his thumb sensually over my lower lip.

I went in to kiss him, but he quickly moved away with a smile and lay back down on my lap.

I moaned in anger.

He said, “Did I leave you—”

I went down and kissed him before he could finish. He was really surprised by what I did, but then he grinned against my lips and kissed me back with a lot of passion as I held his face in my hands. It wasn’t a long kiss, just a brief, delicious one that made your lips tingle.

He smiled at me profoundly and made me flush as I pulled back. I sat up straight.

After a minute, he continued, “We’re going to Paris next week to meet with the French investors.”

“But why? You can go alone. Why me?” I said, frowning.

“You know how important this meeting is, Clara. You have to be there.”

“I don’t want to go; I don’t like Paris...”

“Oh, really? How many times have you been there?”

“Not even once because I don’t like it.”

“Do you have a personal reason to hate it?”

“Yes.”

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Paris. City of love.

As a romantic person, I always wanted my boyfriend or spouse or whoever to propose to me in front of the Eiffel Tower. But because I'm already married and can't ask Jaxon to propose to me, I don't want to go there.

"Clara, don't be a baby. You're coming with me. If you don't, I'll drag you there," he added in a serious voice.

"But Jaxon—"

He got up from my lap and went into the restroom, saying, "My decision is final."

I guess I have no choice but to agree with him...

I'm sorry, but I really ran out of ideas and conversation for this chapter. I was thinking, "How the hell am I writing?" halfway through this chapter.

He stated in a severe voice, "Clara, don't be a child. You are coming with me, and if you don't, I will drag you there."

"But Jaxon—"

He got up from my lap and went into the restroom, saying, "My decision is final!"

I guess I have to agree with him...



I gently lay down to attempt to sleep, and a few minutes later, Jaxon came and lay down next to me. He drew me to his chest, with my back on his chest and his arm around my waist.

I shut my eyes and heard him say in my ear, “Sorry, I didn’t mean to yell at you... But you’re still coming with me.”

I smiled and turned around, burying my head in his chest as he kissed my forehead instead of answering.

After a long meeting, we went to our presidential suite in Paris. We arrived here two days ago, and all we’ve done is work and work and work! Today was the last meeting, and we would be departing in a day or two.

Jaxon asked me where I wanted to go in the evening.

“I don’t know any places, but I can’t go back without seeing the Eiffel Tower.”

“Okay, then put on your clothes.”

I quickly rushed into the bathroom, cleaned up, and put on a shirt and jeans instead of a dress since I like jeans more.

As Jaxon and I licked our ice creams, I was really thrilled to walk around the Eiffel Tower.

He held the ice cream in one hand and put his other arm around my shoulder.

We heard some others clapping soon after that. We looked over to a couple; the man was down on one knee with a ring in his hand, and the girl was covering her mouth with her palm in shock and crying.

Everyone was waiting for the girl to say yes, and people crowded around them. When she eventually answered yes, everyone clapped as the pair kissed.

I wasn't envious, but witnessing her get proposed to in front of the Eiffel Tower in the City of Love made my heart hurt.

That's what I've always wanted.

I exhaled heavily, which made Jaxon turn to me and ask, "What happened?"

I shook my head and said, "Nothing...can we go back? I'm tired."

"But we didn't see much."

"Please... I want to go back to our room."

"Okay...come on."

I was upset. I could ask Jaxon for it, and I know he would be happy to make my dream come true, but what's the point of asking someone when you know they will say yes?

When we got to our room, I was still in a bad mood, which Jaxon certainly detected since he questioned again, "Are you sure you're okay?"

"Yes, I'm fine."

He looked at me again for a long time and then walked into the bathroom to change while I took my diary out of my purse.

I opened the page where I jotted down my dreams and read them again. I wasn't sure

whether I would have enough money to go to Paris when I wrote this, but now I'm in Paris, and my dream hasn't come true; I'm so near but so distant.

I heard the door to the bathroom open, so I hurriedly put the diary back in my bag before Jaxon could see it. Then I raced by him into the bathroom.

I woke up in the morning, and the opposite side of my bed was chilly. Where did Jaxon go?

I thought he was in the bathroom, but he wasn't there. I got up and performed my morning routine. When I walked out of my room and into the living room, I found him sitting on the couch, chatting on the phone and drinking coffee.

He smiled at me, said he was sorry and walked into the bedroom to chat as I sat there eating the croissant he had previously ordered.

When he got back, he said, "I'm leaving now, but I'll pick you up at 7. A dress will be coming soon; dress nicely because we're going somewhere."

"Where? A party?" I said with interest.

He said, "You will see," and then he kissed my lips before departing the suite.

I lay down on the couch, turned on the TV, and caressed my stomach. I suddenly felt enthusiastic about the life that was developing inside me.

I was pregnant for over a month.

Every day that goes by, it feels more and more like a crime to keep cause from Jaxon.

A few hours later, the doorbell rang. When I opened it, I saw a man with a package in

his hand.

“Mr. Dante sent it for you, Madame,” he said in a strong French accent. I smiled politely and accepted the package from him.

I opened it in the bedroom and saw a beautiful red outfit. It looked amazing. I ran my palm over the cloth in awe; Jaxon made a great decision.

I took a shower and treated myself, then put on a little makeup and the dress. When I stepped in front of the mirror, I was startled at how I looked.

I looked great.

The outfit fit me flawlessly. How did he know my size?

When I looked at the clock, it was 7:01, and someone knocked on the bedroom door.

I hurriedly put on my sandals and answered the door. Jaxon was standing there in a tight black shirt and grey trousers, which made me gasp at how good he looked.

After I looked him over from head to toe, I looked up and saw that he was still gazing at me with his mouth open. My cheeks flushed crimson, much like my outfit.

I cleared my throat, and he instantly stopped thinking and looked me in the eye. He moved closer to me and ran his finger over the side of my cheeks, which made me feel tingly.

“You look absolutely stunning, sweetheart; beautiful.” He whispered so quietly as if he couldn’t believe what he was witnessing.

I smiled a little and said, “You just lost the challenge, Mr. Dante.”

He frowned and blinked his eyes a few times, not quite getting what I meant. But then he slowly realized what I meant, and his frown went away.

I thought he would defend himself and say he didn't lose the challenge, but he didn't. Instead, a little smile appeared on his lips.

He moved closer and softly stroked his hand over the curves of my body. "If this is what I get to see when I lose, then losing was worth it."

I bit my lips to stop myself from smiling, but later, I saw I had put on lipstick.

He came in for a kiss, but I put my hand on his chest and pushed him away, saying, "You will ruin my makeup." He tilted his head at what I said.

He grumbled a little and then whispered in my ear, "If you don't let me kiss you now, this dress is going to get torn tonight...by me." Hearing his words made me quiver, which worried me but also aroused me.

I pushed him aside and said, "We'll see."

He smiled and said, "Hmm... we'll see."

As I sat in the backseat next to Jaxon, I kept thinking about whether or not I should ask him.

Finally, I said, "Is it a...date?"

He glanced at me and said, "What do you think?"

"How can I know?..."

He gazed forward and replied gently after a moment, “It’s a date.”

A date. Sounds fantastic. I’ve never gone on a date before, so let’s see what happens on my first one.

I’m finally going on a date with my hubby at the age of 28. Very hilarious.

Jaxon took something out of his pocket while we were sitting in the van for the last 20 minutes. I couldn’t see what he had in his hand since it was dark in the car.

I felt something soft touch my eyelids, and before I knew it, I was blinded with velvet material. I could feel how delicate it was.

“Jaxon?”

“Believe me, darling.”

“But—”

He put his finger over my lips and said, “Shh...be patient.”

I really did trust him; I trust him with my life. A few months ago, I definitely would have been scared that he was going to push me off a cliff, but right now, I didn’t have any worries.

A few minutes later, I felt the car stop, and I heard Jaxon’s door open. A little later, he opened my door and helped me out of the car.

As we traveled a few meters, he abruptly picked me up and carried me to God knows where.

He then let me go and took off my blindfold, which made me gasp as I saw what was in front of me. A little patio with stunning golden lights all over it. There is a table in the middle with white linen on it and two golden seats. And the terrace had a view of the Eiffel Tower, which was even more amazing.

“Hope you like this, my love.”

“This is... this is great, Jaxon.”

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He took my hand and led me to the patio, but instead of sitting down on the chairs, we stopped a few steps before it.

He grasped both of my hands and looked me in the eyes. “I really s\*\*k at giving cheesy speeches, but I’ll try,” he replied.

Vivian Hayes Dante, or should I say, Clara Dante, you made me mad the moment I walked into your office. I wanted to calm you down and shut your crazy mouth, but over time, I realized that this is what I need. You are what I need. I want to spend the rest of my life with you; I want to grow old with you. I want to see you grow old... I want to see wrinkles on your face, and I won’t mind it, either. I want to hold you in my arms; I want to be in your arms; I want you to give me a warm hug whenever I feel low.

He stopped, and at that time, I was doing everything I could to keep from crying. He got closer and put his forehead on mine.

“You are my everything, Clara. I can’t risk losing you ever. I have said this before, and I am saying this again: you keep me sane. You are what I have been craving for the past ten years of my life.”

He pulled back, and I was already weeping.

“Look,” he replied, “I really don’t want to get married again, but there is one thing I can ask you.”

Please don’t tell me he’s going to ask.



He looked for something in his back pocket and then brought out a little jewelry box. I cried.

I had no idea this would happen. I assumed it was just a date.

He took my right hand and knelt down to open the box, which had a ring.

“Will you always be mine?”

It was hard to believe that my fantasy came true: Jaxon was proposing to me. It didn't matter that it wasn't for marriage; all that mattered was that he was kneeling in front of me.

I could never have imagined this in a million years.

“Jaxon,” I cried.

“Are you going to run away from me? Is that why you aren't saying anything? I swear I will get you kidnapped from anywhere in the world.”

“Yes...I am all yours, Jaxon. Forever and ever,” I said.

Jaxon pulled the ring out and put it on my right ring finger.

He got up and gave me a hard embrace as I cried on his shoulder.

He softly rubbed little circles on my back and murmured, “You are crying as if I asked you to give yourself to me.”

I punched him in the back as my arms were over his neck, and he laughed.

I pulled away and held both of his cheeks in my hands as I softly kissed him. He slipped his hand that was on my back down and gripped my waist, drawing me further closer.

I tilted my head to deepen the kiss, which made it salty because of my tears. It wasn't very deep, but it was deep enough for me to pour my feelings into it when my tongue touched his. As I was leaving, I kissed him one more time on the jaw.

"Now your makeup won't get messed up," he said with a laugh.

I muttered, "You ruined my mood, idiot," and pushed myself away from him.

He laughed quietly, kissed the side of my head, and then walked me to the table, where he drew out a chair and sat me down.

He sat down in front of me and stated, "So, your dream has come true now?"

"How...how do you know?"

He didn't answer; he simply grinned at me and tapped something on his phone. A couple of waiters showed up out of nowhere with platters of food within a minute.

"Jaxon...did someone tell you?"

He leaned in and said, "Do you think I won't notice that you acted differently yesterday after seeing that couple? It was pretty clear, so I just asked your friends later, and here we are..."

I smiled and thought about how brilliant my hubby was. He did that to make me happy. And at that moment, it was hard for me not to tell him how much I loved him. I know that if I do, he will flee for the hills.

“Why are you staring at me like that?”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

He responded, “Like...you are very lucky to have me,” in a cocky way.

But “I am” meant there was nothing to conceal.

“Okay, enough with the cheesy talk. I can’t take it anymore. Let’s eat; I’m hungry.”

When I told him that, he was certainly uncomfortable. Every time I say something like that, he becomes uncomfortable. Forget it.

The dinner was great, and the view in front of me, both Jaxon and the Eiffel Tower, made it much better.

When we were done eating, he stood up and held out his hand to me. “Dance?”

I nodded, took his hand, and stood up. That’s when I saw that there were already some speakers there that I hadn’t noticed earlier.

He grasped my left arm with his right hand and put his left arm around my waist while I put my hand around his neck.

The music started playing, and at first, it was instrumental. We gently swayed to the music while looking into each other’s eyes.

When the words started, I knew it was the song “Tale as old as time” from Beauty and the Beast.

“True as it can be, a story as old as time, barely even friends, then someone bends

unexpectedly.”

As the second paragraph began, Jaxon started to mumble the words to the song while looking intently into my eyes. “Just a small change, Small, to say the least. Both were a bit terrified; Neither one prepared  
The beast and the beauty.

I recognized that the song fit our circumstances. We weren’t even friends yet. I bent...

He spun me around and then grasped me by the waist again while he kept whispering the words.

“Always the same, always a surprise, always as before, and always as sure as the sun will rise (Oh, oh, oh, oh)”

We both closed our eyes, and he leaned closer and put his forehead against mine.

“Always the same, always a surprise, always as before, always just as sure

The sun shall rise (Oh, oh, oh).

He twisted me around so that my back was against his front, and we swayed softly to the music. He bent down and put his chin on my shoulder, his lips brushing across my flesh.

“Once upon a time (ooh, ooh, ooh), a tune as old as a song, bittersweet and strange, finding you can change, learning you were wrong...”

There was one thing I knew for sure: I would tell him about my pregnancy tonight.

I ran my fingers through my hair in annoyance while sitting on the side of the bed.  
Why am I so anxious?

I didn't do anything wrong.

Jaxon came into the bedroom, plugged in his phone, and was ready to lie down when I asked, "Jaxon?"

"Yes?"

"Um...I need to tell you something."

He walked over and crouched down in front of me and said, "Yes?"

"I am pregnant," I exclaimed in one breath, and I didn't even know what I was saying.

"Sorry, what?"

I took a big breath, swallowed loudly, and closed my eyes. "I-I...am...pregnant."

I gently opened my eyes and saw that his face was blank, and his mouth was wide open.

I kept saying in my brain, "Please be happy."

He mumbled, "You...you are pregnant," but it wasn't a question; he was just telling himself.

He stood up slowly and said to himself, "She is pregnant." Then he walked out of the room, and my heart broke because he looked so astonished. He is not happy.

I bit my lips to keep from crying and put my hand on my tummy.

He isn't pleased, and of course, he doesn't want to be a dad yet. But I want this baby. I want our baby.

I don't even know if he loves me or not. I haven't told him how I feel, and I'm already pregnant. It must have been a shock for him.

I stayed in that posture because I was too numb to move. What if he tells me to get an abortion?

I heard him walk in and saw that he had unkempt hair like he had run his fingers through it a thousand times.

This time, instead of a blank look, he seemed like he couldn't believe what he saw.

He stood in front of me and said, "Say that again." I didn't say anything since I didn't know what to say.

"Clara, say that again," he asked in a louder voice.

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“Am I pregnant?” I wasn’t sure either because of the way he asked me to say it again.

In a flash, I was thrown back on the bed, and Jaxon leaped on top of me.

“Jaxon, wha—” He put his lips on mine to stop me.

He kissed me hard and moved his hands all over my body. Without thinking, my hands slipped into his hair as I kissed him back just as hard. He kissed me so forcefully that I didn’t know if he was punishing me or what.

He didn’t let me take charge, so his tongue traced my mouth.

He only pulled back when we ran out of air.

He was still on top of me, holding himself up with both hands, breathing fiercely, and smiling so big that his eyes sparkled.

When he said, “I’m going to be a dad!” I cried.

“We’re going to be parents, Clara!”

“We will have our own baby!”

He kept saying, “I can’t believe I’m going to be a father!”

I was crying by now because I was so delighted for him. He saw my tears, and his smile dimmed. “Don’t you want it, Clara? Oh God! I’m sorry...if you don’t—”

“Why will I not want it?” I cut him off.

“Why are you crying then?”

“I’m crying because you’re happy. I thought you didn’t want it.”

“Me? I love kids, honey. They make me so happy!”

I was worried for no reason.

He took off my t-shirt in a second, and I was just in my bra when he started kissing my stomach.

He kissed my stomach, my b\*\*\*\*t, my neck, and eventually my lips again for a few seconds.

“You make me so happy, Clara,” he said softly as he kissed my jaw. “We will be parents.”

“Yes, we are going to be parents,” I murmured back.

Point of View of the Third Person:

The lift dinged, and the doors opened to the floor of her office. Clara took a careful stroll towards her workplace so that Jaxon wouldn’t find out she was there.

Jonah got up right away and hurried to her when he spotted her. “Jaxon said you wouldn’t come today,” he remarked.

She shook her head lightly and replied, “That’s what Jaxon said, Jona. But I’m here because I wanted to go to the office. Ever since I told him I was pregnant, he won’t



let me do anything, as if something will happen even if I take one step.”

“Vivian, he is just worried about you. He will be very angry to see you here.”

Clara knew that Jaxon would be angry when he saw her there, even though he warned her not to go and ordered her to remain home and recover this morning.

“I’m the CEO too, Jona. He is not my boss. I can make decisions.”

“But...” Jonah trailed off, and Clara was startled as his eyes got a little bigger as he peered at her shoulder.

She turned around because she saw that he was gazing at something behind her. When she did, she saw Jaxon standing there with his arms crossed and looked irritated.

“I think I told you clearly not to come to the office, Mrs. Dante. Didn’t I? Or was I speaking Spanish?” Jaxon said before she could say anything.

Clara was probably terrified since Jaxon’s tone was scary, and his rage was not a pleasant thing to observe.

Still, she said with confidence, “There is nothing wrong with working while I am pregnant.”

She opened her mouth to say more, but Jaxon grabbed her hand and started pulling her to his office.

She looked at Jonah and hoped he would help her, but he only shrugged in response.

Jaxon shut the door behind him and pushed her against it.

“I told you not to come.”

“Please, Jaxon, you can’t expect me to stay home all day and do nothing. I’m pregnant, for God’s sake! I’m not dying.”

When she said “dying,” Jaxon’s mood altered. The word brought back some bad memories he didn’t want to have again.

Clara saw it when he looked at her with blank eyes and thought about what happened with Julia. What if anything occurs to Clara because of the pregnancy or during the delivery?

Flashback:

Jaxon walked back and forth in front of Julia’s hospital room. He had been feeling guilty for two days since she had an accident.

He couldn’t even make himself meet her. If only he hadn’t told Julia how he felt, and if only she hadn’t left his house in a rage and driven back without thinking.

He somehow found the strength to go into her room after taking a big breath.

She was lying on the bed, looking pale. The girl who used to be so happy appeared so weak and boring.

She had her eyes closed, but when she heard someone come in, she gently opened them. Jaxon looked down and moved over to her. He discreetly perched on the stool next to her bed.

“I’m so sorry,” he said, tears welling up in his eyes.

“Why are you sorry?” she questioned in a shaky voice.

He looked up at her and saw that she was gazing at him. He couldn't even look her in the eyes, so he looked down again.

"I'm so sorry. You got so mad because of me, and then you had an accident. I'm so sorry. I didn't even have the courage to come meet you here. I'm so sorry," he continued, and by now, tears were streaming down his face.

Julia didn't say anything at first, but after a minute, she remarked, "It's not your fault."

He looked up again, but this time he didn't look down. Instead, his eyes were fixated on her face, where he could see some hair sprouting.

He stood up and leaned over to her, brushing his finger over the hair that was sprouting on her face. He frowned and said, "What happened to your face?"

She had been gazing at him the whole time, but when he asked her a question, she glanced aside and tried not to meet his eyes.

"Julia?" He tilted her chin towards him and said, "You are hiding something."

"I am fine," she murmured, although she wasn't sure.

"Please...tell me..." Jaxon said as he sat down on the stool and grasped her hand.

She muttered, "I have a tumor that is cancerous."

Jaxon could only think of cancer.

He was so shocked that he didn't expect her to say this.

"What?!"

“I have a cancerous tumor, Jaxon,” she added a little louder.

“How? How long?”

“Three years.”

“Three years? You never showed any signs!”

“It’s a rare cancer. The signs were my periods being irregular and the strange hair growth on my face that I was able to hide.”

“But...but,” he said, not knowing what to say.

Julia put her other hand on his and squeezed it lightly. “I’ll be fine... I’m getting surgery in a few days... I’ll be fine...”

But she didn’t. Jaxon watched as her casket was lowered into the grave. She didn’t live through the surgery.

The crying had stopped long ago... His tears dried up after he sobbed all night.

He lost her, his best friend, his love, and a part of himself.

He was numb all over, and the numbness was slowly spreading through his body and enveloping his heart. He felt empty of any feelings.

Kena felt nothing, even when he put his head on his forearm and cried.

She was gone...

Clara reached out and delicately caressed his face, bringing him back to reality.

“Jaxon?”

He shook his head softly and took a step back, but it didn't help.

He went to his desk and took out a cigarette, but Clara took it from him before he could light it.

“Why are you smoking? You said you wouldn't.”

“Give it back, Clara,” he said, but he didn't want to fight.

“No. What happened to you all of a sudden?”

He shut his eyes for a few seconds to try to calm down, but it was impossible since the memories he thought he had finally forgotten came flooding back. Memories hit hard and more than once. Every time they hit, it stung.

He said softly, “Please, Clara... I need it...”

Clara flung it on the floor and hugged him, peering into his lifeless eyes.

“Tell me what's wrong...”

He mumbled, “You can't die, Clara. You can't leave me. You are not dying.” He wasn't even sure what he was saying.

At first, she didn't see what he meant, but then she did. It devastated her to see him so weak and scared of losing her.

“I'm not going to leave you, Jaxon. Nothing is going to happen to me. I'll always be right next to you,” she said softly.

Jaxon grabbed her waist and drew her forward, hugging her tightly in his arms because he was afraid he would lose her if he didn't hold her close.

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He pulled away, put his hand on both of her cheeks, and kissed her forehead, then both of her eyes, then both of her cheeks, left one and right one, and finally the tip of her nose as Clara closed her eyes. He then kissed every part of her face, loving her, and finally kissed her lips softly, slowly, and gently for a few seconds.

Clara gently opened her eyes, but he still had his eyes closed.

He opened his eyes when he was convinced he could fully manage his feelings.

He suddenly remarked, “I told you not to come to work.”

Clara groaned and went back to Jaxon, who was still upset. She thought, “He has more mood swings than I do.”

They were curled up on the couch, watching a movie together. She turned off the TV when the final credits started to roll.

As she snuggled closer to him, she murmured, “What’s your favorite word?”

“Is there really such a thing as a favorite word?”

She rolled her eyes and said, “Yes, it is. Don’t you have a word that always inspires you?”

“Nope. What’s your, by the way?”

“Believe and hope,” she continued. “Those two things are very important. Hope is

what keeps us alive. A hope that the future might be better...that the future might be beautiful no matter what is happening right now.”

Jaxon gazed at her with respect and said, “If that’s true, then you are my hope.”

Jaxon glanced up at him with dazzling eyes, and he said, “You are my hope...a hope that you will make me forget what happened in the past. A hope that I might be able to spend a day without thinking about her.”

Clara knew what Jaxon was talking about when he didn’t use Julia’s name. She sat on his lap with her knees on each side of his waist.

“Umm...I wrote something a few days ago. Do you want to hear it?”

“Go ahead.”

She picked up her phone and opened the notepad. She typed a few sentences, even though she knew them by heart. She simply didn’t want to look him in the eye when she read them.

She cleared her throat and then added in a soothing voice, “Let me fix your broken heart so it swells with love again...so it falls in love again...”

She stopped for a second to look at him and saw that he was confused, which made her wonder if she should keep on or not.

But she had to keep going, “So that it falls in love...with me...cause I...cause I love you.”

She put her phone down and swallowed hard before looking back at him. He had a blank look on his face.



She put her hand on his heart and said, “I love you, Jaxon. I love everything about you, every single thing.”

He wanted to say something, “Clara...”

“It’s okay if you don’t love me back,” she said, pressing her hand tighter on his heart and placing her forehead against his. “But just let me love you, let me fix you, let me take care of you...”

As she cried, the hand that had been pushed on his heart slowly turned into a fist.

“I’ve already given myself to you, Clara; I’m all yours.”

She kissed him passionately, putting all of her feelings into it, and he kissed her back just as fiercely.

Jaxon got home at midnight, and he had previously informed Clara he would be late.

He didn’t go to his bedroom; instead, he went to his study and fell asleep in the chair.

She told him she loved him, and he wanted to speak those words back to her and tell her how much he loved her. He was about to say those words, but something stopped him: fear. The dread that anything like what happened to Julia would happen to her, too.

He was with Kena and told him everything that occurred. Kena then scolded him nicely and asked why he didn’t say it back when he loved her so much. And again, he said dread.

Fear keeps us from taking advantage of the chances that come our way, just like Jaxon did when he didn’t tell his sentiments.

Jaxon opened a drawer, took out the picture frame, and looked at Julia's picture for a minute. Then he said, "I'm sorry, Julia...but I guess I'm moving on. I'm not forgetting you, but I'm moving on from the past and those sad memories because I want to tell Clara how much I love her. Of course, those memories will still be there, but I'm letting go of my fear from now on."

That girl is wild and reckless, just like you, and she has stolen my heart.

She is the one who keeps my heart pounding. She is my hope and like oxygen to me. She makes me feel alive again, exactly like I did before. We didn't get off to a good start, but now I can't even think of leaving her.

He ran his finger over her photo one final time before putting it back in the drawer and locking it up for good.

When Clara stated it was okay that he didn't love her back, she was lying. Of course, it wasn't okay. Of course, it hurt her. It hurt her soul when he didn't say it back. She was longing to hear those words from him, but she couldn't make him say them.

It was almost midnight when she stopped crying and was prepared to go to bed because Jaxon claimed he would be late.

But as the door opened, Jaxon stepped in, and she didn't look him in the eye.

Then, all of a sudden, he was in front of her, holding her face in his hands and staring at her.

"Were you crying?"

"Umm... I'm fine, Jaxon."

She carefully took his hands off her face and went into the restroom to calm herself, but Jaxon's comments made her pause.

"I love you, Clara Dante."

She thought she was dreaming. Her body tensed up when he said it, but everything was real when she turned around, and he said it again: "I love you...I love you, Vivian Hayes Dante and I love you, Clara Dante. You seem to have my heart and soul. I'm sorry I couldn't say it sooner; I was scared, but I'm not anymore because I know you'll be with me forever..."

"Say it again," Clara said as she stepped closer to him and held his shirt in her fingers.

"Sweetheart, I love you."

She muttered, "I love you too, Jaxon," as she buried her head in his chest.

She wanted to speak more, but Jaxon wouldn't allow her. Instead, he bent down and kissed her lips in a way that was different from the other kisses they had shared.

It was rough, hard, passionate, and slow all at once. Everything else faded away because, at that moment, they were the only things that mattered.

A few months later...

I questioned Jaxon for the millionth time, "You really think I can do this?"

"You can't go back now."

Before I got out of the car, I took a big breath, and Jaxon followed me. The house

looked precisely the same as it did seven years ago. The house where I grew up, the house where I first walked, the house where I played, the house where I studied, and the house I left seven years ago.

The cream hue on the walls was deteriorating, and there were pots of plants hanging from the wall.

Jaxon gripped my hand and pulled me towards the main gate that led to the tiny grass in front of the home. I didn't move.

"Jaxon, please, we should go back," I begged him in a low voice so that no one else could hear us.

"It took me a month to get you to come here, Clara, and we won't go back until you talk to your parents and ask for their forgiveness."

"But... do you think they would forgive me? They must be glad I'm gone for good."

"That's why they come to Florida almost every few months. They want to meet you, Clara. You said you would come back, but you didn't."

I held his hand firmly and said, "I'm scared. Let's just go back. I'll do whatever you say."

In a harsh voice, he continued, "All I want you to do is go inside and talk to them."  
"I'm not asking you to suddenly become close to them... just talk to them."

"Why does it bother you?"

He held my face in his hands and said, "Because I love you, sweetheart. I just want you to be free because I know you think about them almost every day. I know your

heart isn't satisfied yet because you know you broke your promise."

I sighed and closed my eyes as I caressed my tummy where our boy was developing. I was almost eight months pregnant.

"I won't be in there for more than fifteen minutes," I said before going up the few steps to the door and giving Jaxon one last glance in case he changed his mind. He didn't, so I rang the doorbell.

I waited a minute for the door to open, and that minute felt like an hour before it eventually did.

I thought my parents, my brother, or Lilia would open the door. Instead, as soon as it opened, we heard Rose yell, "Vivian!"

I went down to her level and smiled warmly. "Hey, babe. How are you?"

She said, "You came to see me?" with excitement, ignoring what I had just asked.

"Yes."

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She smiled a lot, then turned around and saw Jaxon standing there and raced to him.

“Hey, princess,” Jaxon said as he scooped her up and flicked her nose.

When Jaxon put her down, I told her, “Can you go tell your grandparents that...” I stopped and looked at Jaxon, who told me to keep on. “Just tell them that...Clara is here.”

“Clara?” Rose said, tilting her head. “But your name is Vivian.”

“Later, I’ll explain it to you. Just go tell them.”

“But grandma and grandpa left an hour ago. Mom and Dad are here. Should I tell them?”

“Yes, please.”

She nodded and then ran back inside, yelling, “Mom?!”

I asked Jaxon, “Do you still think I can do this?”

He gripped my hand and rubbed circles on the back of my palm. “I believe in you more than anyone or anything else,” he said, kissing my head.

“Stop copying lines from Frozen,” I said softly.

He rolled his eyes and said, “That’s what happens when you make me watch that a

thousand times.”

We heard someone gasp, “Clara?” before I could say anything.

“Hey, Lili,” I said with a sorrowful grin.

“Wha.. at”

Jeff exclaimed, “Clara?!” from behind her, and Rose stared at us in astonishment.

At that moment, I simply wanted the ground to open up and swallow me. I couldn’t face him.

I attempted to back up a little bit, but Jaxon gripped my waist and stopped me from running.

“Umm...I-I...came to...meet you...all,” It was hard to say anything because I hadn’t seen my brother and sister-in-law in seven years.

“Rose said, ‘Mom and Dad aren’t home. When will they be back?’”

“They must be coming,” Lili said.

“Umm... it’s okay, we can come back later,” I said, looking at Jaxon optimistically. He flashed me a deathly glance that made me swallow.

Jaxon added, “If you don’t mind, we can wait for them inside.” In fact, everyone is in a forceful tone.

“Yeah, umm... of course,” Jeff responded before moving back from the door and motioning for us to walk ahead.

When I walked into that house, all the awful memories came rushing back to me. I believed I would never see them again, but now I'm here with my husband, begging for forgiveness. Shouldn't they be the ones to say sorry?

Lili took us to the living room, which appeared different from how it had previously. We sat on the couch, and Jaxon placed his hand around my waist and rubbed little circles there.

Lili and Jeff sat across from us while Rose stood there staring at us in perplexity.

"Emm, go play inside," Lili murmured softly to her. She pouted bitterly before walking inside.

When she departed, there was an awkward stillness. Jeff and Lili both looked at my tummy and then at Jaxon.

Lili broke the pause by saying, "Umm...I saw your post, Vi-Vivian. Congratulations on both your wedding and your... pregnancy."

"Thanks," I said quietly, and I noticed Lili softly nudge Jeff.

"Yeah...congratulations!" he eventually said. I swallowed hard and said a little thank you.

"Do you want something to drink? Water? Coffee? Anything?" she asked us.

I said, "Just water," because my throat was getting dry. She got up and departed right away, leaving us with Jeff.

"Umm...", Jeff tried to say something, "I'm sorry for everything I said to you—"

"I think we should wait for them," I said, interrupting him with a forced grin. He



agreed.

Jaxon stayed still and watched everything. He had an extremely scary look on his face that screamed, “hurt her, and you will die.” This made Jeff almost sweat.

Lili came back with a tray and put it on the center table in front of us. I grabbed a glass of water and sipped it to soothe my parched throat.

Lili gave it to Jaxon, but he respectfully turned it down.

We heard the door open and then a voice as I put my drink down.

“Why is there a car parked outside?” Mom enquired.

“Are we having guests?” Dad asked.

And I stopped.

It’s time to deal with everything. But before that, I looked at Jaxon, who gave me an encouraging look, and we both stood up.

“Jeff—” Mom stopped talking as she walked into the living room and saw me or us.

I buried my nails into my hand to calm down. She looked the same, but she had dropped a lot of weight, and her hair was progressively becoming white. Dad froze, too, when he saw everything.

I broke the pause by saying, “I-I...came back...as I said...I got...late, I was...busy.”

What am I talking about?

“Cl-Clara?” Mom’s voice shook, and her lower lip shook, too.

If you start sobbing and make a scene about how much you miss me, I'll be there for you. I wanted to say something out loud, but I changed my mind.

I muttered to Jaxon, "What do you want me to say?!"

"Say you're sorry," he muttered back. I rolled my eyes, and he glared at me.

I anxiously stroked the back of my neck and said, "I'm sorry."

I wasn't going to say anything else since I knew I had done something wrong, but they should say sorry, too.

I was surprised when my mum hugged me the following minute.

I stood there awkwardly, not sure what to do next, and she held me hard.

I cautiously put one of my hands on her back when she didn't draw away after 10 seconds.

She eventually let me go, and when she did, she held my cheeks, and her eyes were moist. (I rolled my eyes in my head.)

Jaxon was smiling a little bit at me.

"You...c-came back," she said in a low voice.

I didn't answer; I just nodded curtly.

Dad, who had been watching us the whole time, came up and stood next to her. He softly ran his fingers over my head.

He glanced at Mom, and they both stared at each other. Then they both responded, "We are sorry."

At least they knew they were wrong.

Dad responded, “We are really sorry. We should have never said those things to you. We realized our mistake after you left.”

“It’s...okay. I came back just like I said,” I replied gently, and Jaxon looked proud.

They exhaled and seemed relieved.

I took Jaxon’s hand and said, “This is Jaxon (as you all know). I got married, and I’m having a baby.”

They all glanced at Jaxon as he smiled at them as my parents shook hands and spoke and talked.

I’m leaving out the details, but in the end, they said they were sorry, and I forgave them and said I would keep in touch with them.

As we drove back to Florida, I unbuckled my seatbelt and moved closer to Jaxon, resting my head on his chest. Jaxon stroked circles on my belly with his hand.

“I am really tired. We could have gone back tomorrow,” I said.

“And then you wouldn’t have been able to go to their engagement party.”

“Don’t you think an engagement party is a waste of time? I never liked the idea of it.”

“Yes, but Kena was really looking forward to it.”

“Well, Tyler was excited too...”

Do you remember Kena asking me if she could date Tyler? It turned out that they were perfect for one other. Kena asked her to marry him after they had been dating for over six months.

Their wedding is in two months now.

I was quite thrilled for them. They love each other very much.

And it was a big surprise when Jona started dating Tara. What got things going?

One day, Jona ran into her at a coffee shop and spilled her coffee. To make up for it, he bought her a cup of coffee, and that's how it all started. I know it's a cliché, but I'm thrilled for them too.

I asked Jaxon, "Have you thought of a name?"

He stared down at my tummy with love before asking, "Have you?"

"I did. What about Monik?"

Jaxon only frowned and said, "Really?"

"Yes, really. Like your name would be better," I said with a sigh.

"Want to hear my name? It's better."

"Go ahead."

"Selena."

"Selena," I said again, and to be honest, it sounded great.

I couldn't help but grin as I gazed down at my tummy and put my palm on it. "Selena Hayes Dante."

I bit my lips to stifle my big smile and looked at Jaxon, who was also beaming.

“It’s okay.”

“I know,” he said with a grin.

He murmured again, “Selena Hayes Dante,” staring at my tummy. I stared at him with love, and he smiled the whole time.

“I love you,” I said in a whisper.

He smiled at me and leaned in closer. He muttered, “I love you, too,” on my lips and crushed his lips against mine.

He was the calm, happiness, and contentment I had been looking for all these years.

He was the one for me.

End