Chapter 2 The airport buzzed with activity , a symphony of distant announcements , hurried footsteps , and rolling suitcases blending into the steady hum of life .

Crowds ebbed and flowed in a rhythm that was both chaotic and strangely orderly .

The cool , filtered air carried faint traces of coffee and jet fuel , grounding Paisley in the reality of her impending departure .

Her high had begun hoarding Just as she was about to step forward to hand her boarding pass to the attendant , her phone buzzed insistently in her pocket .

She slid her ticket across the counter and answered the call without checking the caller ID .

But before she could say a word , Graysons young voice shrilled through the speaker .

1 wam rainbow pasta ! Paisley paused mid step , glancing down at the phone .

It was Dominicks number Theres frozen pasta in the fridge , she replied coolly , her voice even and detached .

She collected her boarding pass and continued walking toward the catc The nanny said its all Canenim .

ponr Graysons voice climbed in pitch , sharp and grating the way childrens voices do when theyre on the verge of a Paisleys lips tightened .

Shed worked hard to instill discipline in Grayson , especially when it came to shouting or making demands in public .

But this naughty boy had his fathers stubborn streak , and lately , her corrections only seemed to irritate him further .

Her tone remained indifferent as she replied with a frown , Then its gone .

Thats not fair , Grayson wailed .

His voice rose again , teetering on the edge of a full blown fit .

Come back right now and make it for me .

I want it Paisley inhaled slowly , her grip on her phone firm but calm .

Ask your precious Marissa to make it for you , she said , her voice laced with an edge that cut through his whining had to The line went silent for a few heartbeats , but it wasnt long before Graysons crying and howling began in earnest , loud enough that Paisley h hold the phone slightly away from her ear .

After a mued scuttle on the other end .

Dominicks deep , irritated wice finally came through .

Paisley , why are you picking a fight with a child : Hes just a kid .

He doesnt understand By this point .

Paisley had stepped into the cabin , her heels clicking softly against the carpeted aisle .

She flashed a polite smile at the flight attendant and handed over her handbag before settling into her seat in first class Reclining slightly , she adjusted her tone to one of detached finality .

If a child doesnt understand , then surely the adults should , dont you think ? Her mind drifted as the seatbelt light blinked on .

Grayson hadnt always been this way .

Up until the age of two , hed been a sweet , clingy little boy who adored her , proudly declaring to anyone whod listen that his mother was the best in the world .

When did that start to change she wondered .

The answer came to her with a pang of bitterness .

It must have been when Marissa came back to Harrowfell Everything Paisley had forbidden , Marissa would indulge .

If Paisley said no to cantly , Marissa would slip it to him behind her back .

If Paisley enforced bedtune rules , Marissa would sneak him out for late night games .

At first , the Vanderbilt family had always looked down upon Paisley .

Slowly but surely , their obvious preference for Marissa over Paisley began to мер Into Graysons perception .

In his young , impressionable mind , Paisley had been recast as a villain- meddling outsider , a scheming woman who broke up the family Dominick , Paisley said family , were divorced now .

Theres no reason for us to keep in touch anymore .

Without waiting for a response , she ended the call and switched off her phone .

As the plane ascended , Paisley stared out the window the city s shrinking beneath her until it was no more than a blur of lights and distant She took a deep breath , the hum of the engines steadying her frayed nerves .

Its over , she thought .

Tve left it all behind Four years later , in the heart of Harrowdell , inside the directors office at the prestigious Harrowfell Hospital , the room exuded an air of understated 174 Dreame Read Romance ..

Download Chapter 2 Juxury , Rich mahogany paneling adorned the walls and soft , ambient lighting cast a warm , golden glow , Paisley , however , had no interest in conforming to the rooms dignified atmosphere .

With her legs casually crossed in an unbothered fashion , she lounged on the plush sofa , leaning back as if she owned the place .

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She exuded an effortless charm , her cautal demeanor oddly endearing Jonathan Walsh , the director of the hospital , strolled over with a wry smile .

He patted Paisley gently on the head .

Youre a mother now , for goodnew ule .

Cant you sit like an adult for once ! Paisley huffed and grudgingly straightened up , though the playful glint in her eyes remained .

She reached into her chic leather tote and pulled out a small neatly packaged bag of herbal tea Here .

Make it last .

Its a pain in prepare , you know .

The tea itself wasnt difficult to mix , but the ingredients were another matter entirely rare and hard to procurt .

Jonathan chuckled as he took the tea , his expression softening with gratitude .

Youre still the most thoughtful kid I know .

My health practically depends on your herbal concoctions these days .

Sit tight .

Ill pour you some of the coffee I just bought .

Youll love it He handed her a delicate porcelain cup , and Paisley took a careful sip , her discerning palate immediately picking up on the premium quality .

Top notch beans she thought , her approval faint bin clear .

Jonathan leaned against his desk , his gaze warm but probing Passy , how long are you planning to stay in Harrowfell this time ? A while she replied , setting the cup down on the coffee table with a soft clink .

One of her screenplays had recently been adapted , and the production was set to start filming locally .

As the lead writer , she needed to be on site for the shoot .

On top of that , there were other odds and ends demanding her attention .

Jonathan grinned , his eyes sparkling with mischief , Ever thought about coming back here to see some patients ? Maybe teach a few students while youre at it ? Nope .

Not happening Paisley said , cutting him off with a dismissive wave of her hand This wasnt the first time Jonathan had tried to coax her into joining the hospitals ranks , and she had no intention of giving in Jonathan opened his mouth to press the issue further , but before he could get a word out , Paisleys phone buzzed sharply , its timing a small mirade .

She picked it up with a muted sigh of relief and answered quickly , pretending the call was urgent .

Within moments , she was making her exit .

leaving Jonathan behind with an amused shake of his head .

Not long after Paisley left , the administrative director knocked and stepped into the room .

Mr.

Walsh , Mr.

Vanderbilt is here to see you .

Jonathan straightened as Paul Vanderbilt , a spry old gentleman with sharp eyes that missed nothing , entered the office .

His gaze immediately fell on the coffee table , where a glass carafe of freshly brewed coffee sat , steam still curling lazily from the spout .

The fine aroma filled the room , unmistakably from an exclusive roast .

One look at the half empty cup and Pauls shrewd mind began to piece things together .

Paul teased , Well well .

Who was it this time that got you to bring out the top tier coffee you usually dont touch ! Jonathan chuckled , his expression as casual as his tone .

Who else could it be ? Pauls brows lifted in surprise .

You mean the traditional medicine expert youve been talking about ? Jonathan nodded , taking another sip of his coffee .

Too bad you missed her .

If youd come a little earlier , you mightve caught a glimpse , Paul sighed wistfully .

What a pity .

My healths been declining these past few years , so I couldve used some advice ? Jonathan sniffed thoughtfully , setting his cup down with a soft clink , Strange .

I remember you being in great shape a few years ago .

When did things start going downhill ? Paul Trowned , thinking back , About four years ago , I guess ..

It had started when Dominicks divorce drama began .

Ever since then , Paul had been caught in a daily storm of frustration , anger , and stress .

The constant turmoil had taken its toll , leaving him with more ailments than he cared to admit .

Jonathan glanced at Pauls tailored suit and tie , his curiosity piqued , You look sharp today .

Where are you coming from ? Oh , from the office .

My grandson , Dominick , gave in a ride over Paul , ever relaxed , shrugged off his suit jacket and tossed it carelessly onto the nearest chair , making himself at home .

On my way up , I ran into a friends another whos staying here .

Thought Id stop by to say hello .

244 Chapter 2 In the hospital elevator , Paisley leaned against the corner , illy scrolling through her phone to pass the time .

A series of entertainment headlines popped up on her screen , their bolded hashtags catching her eye .

[The Vanderbilt familys heir is spotted with a mystery woman late at night) (Exclusive : Vanderbilt Groups CEO Dominick Vanderbilts imminent engagement) .

The blurry photos accompanying the articles were enough for her to immediately recognize the figures .

One was Dominick .

The other was Marissa .

Imminent engageinent ? So theyre really getting married , huh ? Paisleys lips curled into a cold smile as her thumb froze on the screen .

Her chest tightened with a biner mix of irony and contempt , Dominick had oner sworn to her so earnestly , so convincingly that there was absolutely nothing going on between him and Marissa .

Hed dismissed Paisleys suspicions as baseless jealousy , even calling her irrational and paranoid During their marrage , shed been invisible .

Not once had they appeared in the news together .

Not once had he publicly acknowledged her as his wife .

To the outside world , it was as if she didnt exist , Shed told herself back then that it was just his way Dominicks principle of fiercely guarding his private life from the prying eyes of the media .

She had believed it , justified it , and accepted it .

Now , as she stared at the headlines and photos , a bitter realization settled over her like a storm cloud Principles ? Paisley scoffed inwardly .

Principles can crumble in an instant when it comes to the love , cant they ? As the elevator descended , there was a soft ding , and the movement halted .

The doors slid open , and someone stepped inside .

The newcomer was tall tall enough that his presence immediately cast a shadow across her line of sight .

Without lifting her gaze .

Paisley instinctively shifted slightly to the side , giving the stranger more rooms Her phone vibrated , and a call from Emery Collins flashed on the screen .

She answered , her tone playful and warm as she greeted , Hey , darling .

are you here yet ? On the other end of the line came Emerys apologetic voice .

Paisy , love , Im so sorry .

Something urgent has come up at the shop , and I have to go handle it .

I cant pick you up But dont worry .

Ive sent my friend to pick you up .

He should be there soon .

No worries , I got it .

Paisleys lips curved into a soft smile as she ended the call .

Then , all at once , she felt it a prickling sensation , as though a sharp , cold spotlight had been trained on her .

Her head lifted instinctively , and her eyes collided with a pair of deep , shadowy ones .

It was Dominick .

He stood there , his towering height dominating the confined space .

He was a head taller than her .

The past four years had sharpened him time had carved his once youthful features into something even more defined , more striking His chiseled jawline was sharper now , his cheekbones more pronounced .

And those eyes intense , penetrating , with emotions simmering just beneath the surface were locked directly on her .

Dominick took a single step forward , the distance between them shrinking , his presence heavy and suffocating .

The elevator reached the first floor with a soft chime .

Excuse me , Paisley said , her voice polite but distant .

Without hesitation , she brushed past him , maintaining her composure as though he were nothing more than a stranger in the crowd .

Not a glance was spared , not a moment lingered .

She walked away , poised and indifferent , leaving the echoes of his gaze behind her .

Her heels clicked confidently on the tiled floor , her expression serene , but her heart was steady untouched by the brief encounter .

She had prepared herself for this the moment she decided to return to Harrowfell Running into Dominick was always a possibility , And it didnt matter to her now that it had already happened .

Not anymore .

Whatever they once were , whatever had bound them together , it was all in the past now .

And Paisley had long ago decided she never looked back .

Behind her , Dominicks footsteps echoed with a sharp urgency .

Before Paisley could take another step , a strong hand grabbed her wrist , halting her escape Dominicks voice was low , grating , and filled with restrained fury .

Paisley , youve been gone for four years .

Dont you think you owe me an explanation ? 3/4 Chapter 2 At that , Paisley turned , a soft , ironic laugh slipping past her lips .

Her eyes , bright and unreadable , fixed on him as if he were a stranger .

Mr.

Vanderbilt , she began her tone dripping with cool detachment .

in what capacity are you demanding answers ? As my ex husband ? Dominicks breath hitched , his chest heaving as he struggled to keep his composure .

His gaze bore into hers , the faintest flush of red coloring the corners of his sharp eyes .

Then, as the father of your son , he questioned , each word deliberate , dont I have the right to know where youve been ? She tried to pull her wrist free , but his grip remained unyielding , like a vice .

Her voice , though calm , cut through the tension like a blade .

I gave up my son .

Dominick .

What right do you think you have to demand anything from me ? Dominicks jaw clenched , his teeth grinding audibly as he spat her name through gritted teeth .

Paisley .

The sharp , abrupt sound of two car horns shattered the charged air between them .

Both turned instinctively toward the noise , only to see a sleek car idling just behind Paisley .

The drivers side window rolled down , revealing a strikingly handsome man with meticulously styled hair that dared not defy the hold of his gel .

His smile was dazzling , the kind that could charm anyone on sight .

Paisy he called out , sticking out his head , his voice buoyant and warm , utterly oblivious to the storm brewing in the space between her and Dominick .

Im here for you .

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